

# Living

# 'I Do'

Residents share their marriage proposal stories.

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# 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 Sean Dengler**

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.

Austin and Dr. Courtney Norman were engaged on a beach in Florida.

## Nobody knew

Starting to date during the pandemic in 2020 was difficult for these “middle aged” divorcees. April Parsons and Nick Feldman were not accustomed to the online dating scene. April met Nick on Zoosk based on a friend’s recommendation after trying other dating sites.

Despite April being born and raised and living in Creston her entire life and Nick being born and raised and living in Des Moines, the two “clicked.”

“We had a lot in common. Both going through a divorce, wanting a friendship that could possibly turn into a relationship, both have kids, etc. We started chatting through the app,” April says. “Then we went to phone calls, then hours and hours of Facetime calls. We connected almost instantly.”

In 2021, Nick asked April to move from her small town to “the city.” They decided to settle in Altoona since Nick’s kids attend school there. While they knew they wanted to be together forever, neither had wedding bells on the top of their mind.

“Marriage was never the plan because we had both been through that before. We wanted to be together forever but didn’t need marriage for that,” April says. “As time passed, I wanted something more. I didn’t like being in my 40s and saying, ‘boyfriend and girlfriend.’ It sounded like we were in high school.”

April thought Nick also didn’t want to get married, but she was mistaken.

“Turns out that he had my ring for over two years, just waiting for the right moment.”

This past New Year’s Eve, April and Nick went to visit April’s family in Creston after work to exchange Christmas gifts. It turns out, she received the best gift.

“My son arrived, and we were all in the kitchen, talking and joking around,” April says. “Next thing I know, I turned around, and Nick was down on his knee proposing. He had waited until my mom and son could be there for the proposal. Of course, I said yes.

“None of us had any idea this was going to happen. He said he didn’t tell anyone because he knows we all tell each other everything and can’t keep a secret,” April laughs.

With wedding bells in the future, it is full steam ahead.

“Our plan is to have a big party or reception to get all our family and friends together, and we will get married there. Nothing fancy, as we have both been married before,” April says. “But we want to celebrate with those that we love.”



Nick Feldman had an engagement ring for April Parsons for two years before he proposed.



April Parsons and Nick Feldman met online. She lived in Creston, and he lived in Des Moines.

## From a cruise to true love

It all began on a cruise for Austin and Dr. Courtney Norman.

“We met in high school on a cruise in Hawaii,” Austin says. “I’m from Altoona, originally, and my wife’s from the Seattle area. We became really good friends on the cruise, exchanged phone numbers, and, being teenagers, it was like a, ‘We’ll probably never see each other again’ type thing.”

With daily communication, the friendship grew. Courtney invited Austin to her senior prom, and the two began dating. Austin recommended Courtney tour Iowa State’s exercise science program since she wanted to be a physical therapist. This led to her deciding to start her adventure at Iowa State. Then, Austin decided to join the military.

“I left her in Iowa for almost two years,” Austin says. “We were like, ‘Wow, this long-distancing really sucks.’ The only support network she had in Iowa was my family.”

This less-than-ideal scenario led to a better opportunity.

“We’re like, ‘All right, let’s get married,’ ” Austin says. “I was 20; she was 19. It was supposed to be an elopement. We’ll just get married real quick, cheap, in Charleston, South Carolina, which is where I was stationed at the time. The proposal was on a beach in Florida. My family’s Christmas tradition every year was Madeira Beach, Florida.”

While knowing he was going to propose six months prior, the proposal came during an activity families like to do when they are all



Austin and Dr. Courtney Norman and their family

together.

“We had booked family photos on the beach,” Austin says. “Halfway through, I had my family and hers sneak behind us with the ‘Will you marry me?’ signs. Transitioning from one pose to the next, I got down on one knee and gave the romantic spiel that I had prepared. Photos captured it quite well in my opinion, too. She said, ‘Yes,’ and we took more photos and went out to dinner as a family to celebrate.”

Courtney was unsuspecting of the proposal.

“We had talked about waiting until I was done with college and continuing to do long-distance and making it work,” she says. “So, I



Mike Morgan proposed to Nikki on stage at a Keith Urban concert.



Mike and Nikki Morgan at their wedding.

was not expecting it.”

Having both families at the family photos was exceptional for Courtney.

“That was really special to me. I liked having our family involved. I didn’t necessarily want some big public thing, just having family there since they supported us the whole time. Our parents letting us essentially be together and kind of in this weird way that our relationship started, it was really special to have them as a part of it.”

To bring it full circle, the Normans honeymooned on the same cruise on which they met.

### Somebody like you

When Mike and Nikki Morgan started dating in January of 2015, Nikki invited him to the Tree Town Music Festival in Forest City to camp and enjoy the festivities. After having a blast, it became an annual tradition.

“Fast forward to Memorial Day Weekend 2018,” Nikki says. “Tree Town had a great lineup. We all planned the trip again and had some other friends with us in addition to my family. The headliner that Saturday night was Keith Urban.”

With general admission tickets, Nikki and company sat in lawn chairs far from the main stage. This changed.

“A man came up to my sister and her friends and asked if they wanted VIP stickers to be up front to see Keith,” Nikki says. “They, of course, wanted to get up there but explained to the guy that there were 10 of us. He pulled out a roll of stickers and gave us each one.”

During Keith’s performance, everyone was having a wonderful time in the pit.

“My sister’s husband, Alyssa, races sprint

cars, and he had a race going on at the time, so Mike and Larry (my stepdad), said they were going back to the camper to check on the race,” Nikki explains. “After another song, Keith starts talking to the crowd. I wasn’t really paying attention, but suddenly my sister says, ‘Why is Mike up on stage?’

“Keith then says, ‘Nikki, where are you at baby,’ and some girls shoved me up onto the stage. He handed the microphone to Mike, where he dropped to one knee and proposed. We both got to hug him... He then dedicated a song ‘Parallel Line’ to us.”

While Nikki thought this was spontaneous, Mike had been planning. How it went was not the original plan.

“Come to find out, Mike had tried getting in contact with Cole Swindell leading up to Tree Town, another artist in the lineup, because he wanted to propose during his performance, but he never heard back,” Nikki says. “When they went back to the camper, they had actually cut down the blind from the windshield and used a Sharpie to write ‘Keith, will you please let me propose on stage’ and folded it up to smuggle it to some girls in the front row, who held the sign up while sitting on their boyfriends’ shoulders, and Keith saw it.”

Nikki was clueless.

“I was behind them, so I knew they had a sign but had no idea what it said.”

This proposal made the rest of the weekend extremely exciting.

“We were celebrities the rest of the weekend,” Nikki laughs. “Everywhere we went, people recognized us as Nikki and Mike. Needless to say, it was an unforgettable Memorial Day weekend. Oh, and Alyssa’s husband won his race that night, too.”

### A winning proposal

After meeting at Simpson College during the first couple of days of their freshman year, Jake and Madelynn Gibney became fast friends.

“We started dating in November of that year,” Madelynn says.

Moving ahead to their junior year of college in April of 2017, they were both incredibly involved in the Greek community at Simpson.

“I was a Tri Delta, and he was an Alpha Tau Omega,” Madelynn says. “That spring our two houses were paired together for Greek week, which is a week-long competition which ends with Greek awards. The winner gets a very large trophy and bragging rights for the next year.”

Jake and Madelynn were planning to participate together in the lip sync competition to compete for a prize bigger than Madelynn knew.

“One of the biggest activities in this competition is lip sync, which is a 15-minute dance routine, and you get graded on the dance, song choice based on theme and costumes,” Madelynn explains. “So, Jake planned for months that he was going to propose at the end of our routine, and I came to find out afterward that so many people knew for weeks, and I had no clue.”

Even her friends kept their mouths shut.

“We have friends who told us afterward that they had accidentally almost spilled the beans a couple of times, but I never noticed anything.”

Soon, she found out many people knew.

“Pretty much immediately afterward, people came up to me telling me they were in on it or they had heard about it, but I was so clueless.”



Jake Gibney proposed to Madelynn after they finished a number in a lip sync contest.



Jake and Madelynn Gibney have been married eight years.

With both families in attendance, Jake proposed with his 105-year-old grandmother's engagement ring, which had been passed down for generations. It was the cherry on top of the cake. Madelynn's emotions after their whirlwind lip sync performance were in full force.

"I was in utter shock and so confused," she says. "I was expecting (a proposal), but I thought it was happening the following weekend because he had planned for us to spend the weekend with his family. He also did not say anything during the proposal. I just used context clues with the down on one knee and ring in a box. Afterwards, he told me he was so nervous he forgot to ask, but, luckily, I understood what was happening.

"We'll be married for eight years in August, and we have two kids, Theo, 6, and Scarlett, 3," Madelynn adds. "We moved to Altoona in July



Candice and Jeremy Huss were engaged at a food court with the help of their children.

of 2023."

For those wondering how the couple did in the lip sync competition, Madelynn succinctly says, "We did win."

### Feeling the love

For Candice Huss, it all started as a typical day shopping with her daughters at Jordan Creek Mall.

"On Dec. 24, 2018, my incredible boyfriend of eight years, Jeremy Huss, took four of our precious children and me to Jordan Creek Mall," Candice says. "We experienced an unforgettable day of shopping, a movie, and quality time together."

What was a typical day became something more.

"Afterwards, we headed to the food court to grab supper," Candice says. "My soon-to-be husband took our youngest children to the bathroom, and, when he returned, our oldest two children, ages 13 and 10, surprised me with a life-changing question: Would I join our beautiful family and marry their amazing dad?"

Considering Jeremy told Candice he did not plan to get married again after a previous marriage, this was a surprise to Candice.

"Initially, I was in disbelief, knowing my husband-to-be's playful nature, but he reassured me he was completely serious."

Candice says she felt loved, blessed and overjoyed, and her heart felt like it was going to explode with happiness. Candice knew the answer.

"Overwhelmed with emotion, I tearfully accepted, and he took me to choose my dream ring. We tied the knot in September 2020, and it was truly a dream come true."

### Long distance love

With their relationship starting later in life and spanning across several states, this relationship was special.

"Jeff and I met online," Nancy Hanna says.



Jeff Hanna proposed to Nancy in front of her co-workers during a surprise visit.

"Jeff was restarting after almost 30 years of marriage, and I was 53 and never married."

While Jeff lived in Altoona, and Nancy lived in Mitchellville, Jeff was thinking about returning home to Ohio. Six months after they began dating, Jeff did move to Ohio, and the couple spent the next eight months dating long distance. Since Jeff was a pastor, Nancy would travel to see him on weekends. When Jeff had an extended weekend off and chose not to come to Iowa, Nancy was not impressed.

"It was Labor Day Weekend, 2010, and I was a little miffed at Jeff because, even though he had four days off, he was not headed to Iowa," Nancy says.

Nancy planned to gather with family over the Labor Day weekend, and this meant she was not making the trip to the Buckeye State. Before she could get to her weekend, she still had to go to work in her role as the dean of students at Summit Middle School in Johnston.

"That afternoon, a teacher's meeting was called as the superintendent was coming to talk with staff. People were getting restless, as the school day was officially over," Nancy says. "I was one of those restless people."

It was not going well for Nancy.

"As frustration was setting in, I was called up by a co-worker. They had an issue to take care of," Nancy says.

This issue was to be resolved in another location with her assistant principal, Kevin.

"The setting was such that the library was open to the second floor so all staff could see Kevin and I going upstairs. Kevin was talking to me and then got me to turn around."

It was a setup.

"There was Jeff, down on one knee, asking for my hand in marriage," Nancy says. "I — and the staff — were surprised and ecstatic."

Then came a quick turnaround for a wedding.

"We were married two months later and still love the love 14 years later," Nancy says. ■

# ALTOONA Public Library programs



## ANNUAL STAFF TRAINING

- Plan ahead for a midweek closure at the end of March. Altoona Public Library will be closed on Wednesday, March 25, for our annual staff training. You can still return books to any of the outdoor drops, pick up holds at the outdoor locker, and access digital items at our website, [www.altoonalibrary.com](http://www.altoonalibrary.com).

## ADULT PROGRAMMING – Ages 18 and older

- **Mindful Painting**, Monday, March 9 at 6:30 p.m. Unlock your creativity and calm your mind during this watercolor painting session. The focus is on the process, not the product, and it doesn't matter if you're a beginner or a seasoned artist. All materials will be provided. Registration required.
- **Weep, Wail, Write**, Saturday, March 21 at 1 p.m. Have you experienced loss and are still trying to find the words to define it? Have you been thinking of starting a journal to write some of your thoughts down? If so, join our guest, artist Claudine Cheatem, for Weep, Wail, Write, a class that uses creative writing to help individuals process grief. Registration required.
- **Learn to Play Mah Jongg**, Tuesday, March 24 at 1 p.m. Join the Dealt Hand for an introduction to American Mah Jongg. This 100-year-old game is experiencing a new resurgence, and we'll help you get up to speed. Participants will leave the class with a functional understanding of the game and a handy reference sheet. Registration required.

## CHILDREN'S PROGRAMMING

- **Tiny Art**, Tuesday, March 17 from 10-11 a.m. Be a part of our Tiny Art Show. We will provide a mini canvas and paint for you to create a masterpiece. All creations will be displayed at the library through

April. Grades PreK-6.  
Registration required.

- **Pokémon Club**, Wednesday, March 18 from 3:30-4:30 p.m. Pokémon fans, stop by for themed crafts, activities and games. Show off your cards, play or chat with other fans. Grades K-6. No registration required.
- **Play Dough Playtime**, Tuesday, March 31 from 10-11 a.m. Come squish, smooch, roll and flatten play dough at our activity stations and learn about the benefits children are gaining by playing and exploring. Ages 5 and younger. No registration required.

## TEEN PROGRAMMING – Grades 6-12

- **Teen-y Tiny Art**, Thursday, March 12 from 6-7 p.m. Create a masterpiece to be featured in our APL Tiny Art Gallery. We'll have tiny canvases and paint ready for your creation. Artwork will be displayed at the library through April. No registration required.
- **Needle Felting**, Monday, March 16 from 3-4 p.m. Learn the basics of needle felting. We'll have all the supplies you need to transform wool into a 3D sculpted object. No registration required.
- **Pet Portraits**, Wednesday, March 18 from 1-2 p.m. Turn your pet or favorite animal into a pop-art-style portrait. Send in a picture of your pet or favorite animal, and we'll have everything ready for you to create your masterpiece. Registration required.

### Altoona Public Library

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Sunday: 2-5 p.m.

To find a complete list of events and to register, visit the website at [altoonalibrary.com](http://altoonalibrary.com). Click on the Upcoming Events tab. ■



## NEWS BRIEFS

### BANK IOWA announces key leadership change

Bank Iowa announced a key leadership change in the metro area. Ryan Jensen, the bank's newest mortgage loan officer, will serve the central Iowa community from Bank Iowa's Altoona location.

Jensen began his banking career with Bank Iowa in Northeast Iowa in the late 1990s. From there, he spent more than two decades in the financial and real estate industries, holding influential positions within top-tier enterprises, including Principal Financial Group, USA Mortgage and Re/Max Precision.



Ryan Jensen

Jensen is a long-time financial services professional with an added passion for volunteering. This makes him a good fit for Bank Iowa, which aspires to be a center of influence in its communities.

Jensen, a former small business owner and entrepreneur, founded the community networking group, Brewing Up Business. He continues to lead the organization as a volunteer today, connecting professionals and local small business owners to help them grow and achieve the goals unique to each member. Every Brewing Up Business meeting also spotlights a local non-profit, giving the causes an expanded platform for sharing their mission. ■

### REP. GUSTOFF welcomes Southeast Polk FFA



Rep. Bill Gustoff (R-Des Moines) welcomed members of the Southeast Polk FFA chapter to the Iowa House during the FFA Legislative Symposium.

### FEBRUARY'S Iowa Living Magazines Poll of the Month

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IOWA Living MAGAZINES CITYVIEW

# MEET Noah Sturtz

Returns to district where he graduated

As a Southeast Polk alumnus, Noah Sturtz had the dream of being a teacher and working in his hometown school district. Sturtz enjoyed his school years with the district and attributes that to the phenomenal teachers who helped guide his path over the years. After graduating from Southeast Polk in the spring of 2020, Sturtz worked as a substitute associate from 2020-2023 while attending DMACC and transferring to Iowa State University where he earned a bachelor's degree in elementary education and endorsements in K-8 ELA and reading.



Noah Sturtz is in his first year as a special education teacher for the Southeast Polk Junior High School.

This school year is Sturtz' first year teaching, and he currently works as a special education teacher for the Southeast Polk Junior High School. He is also working on his special education endorsement with an executive director position to fill his current role.

"I enjoy working with junior high students because I can be more realistic and have deeper, more meaningful conversations with them. I love seeing their personalities develop and hearing about their ideas, goals and aspirations as they begin thinking about high school and their future," Sturtz says.

For Sturtz, a typical day as a special education teacher includes two periods of teaching Strat 1 students who need additional support in fluency, comprehension and writing. He also co-teaches three block periods throughout the day.

Sturtz' students also participate in fun and engaging activities, such as Trashketball. During this activity, students work in teams to answer questions, steal questions, and earn points by throwing a tennis ball into a trash can from different distances.

Another lesson his students really enjoyed involved watching a YouTube video about how to make a YouTube video. His students then used the video to practice comprehension and writing by creating their own video scripts.

"One of the biggest rewards of being an educator is seeing my students grow in their understanding and recognizing the progress they make throughout the year. I have also appreciated joining an amazing team that has spent years crafting and refining lessons," Sturtz says.

During the remainder of the school year, Sturtz is looking forward to continuing to grow his teacher voice, strengthen his content knowledge, and learn more effective strategies to help support his students. He says he is also looking forward to the challenges ahead, knowing that each struggle will help shape him into a stronger educator. ■

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# SEP PROJECTS receive Innovation Grants



SEPEF board members presented a ceremonial check for \$30,000 at the Jan. 22 Southeast Polk Board of Education meeting.

Southeast Polk educators will soon start 10 new, innovative projects in classrooms thanks to \$30,000 in Innovation Grants from the Southeast Polk Education Foundation (SEPEF), including two grants sponsored by Meta.

#### Sponsored by Meta:

- Multicolor 3D printers to enhance students' learning by exploring STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) concepts across multiple subjects. — Kim McCoy-Parker and Kim Powell, Four Mile Elementary
- MIDI keyboards, microphones and recording equipment to provide students hands-on experience with music technology for composing, recording, producing and performing music digitally. — Joel Schoening, SEP Middle School

#### Additional Innovation Grant recipients:

- Fish and shrimp to launch a new project for hands-on learning about natural selection and hereditary traits for science students, with opportunities to learn about water quality, plumbing and more through management of the fish and shrimp tanks. — James Wenman, SEP Junior High
- Two adaptable “Nine-Square in the Air” sets of Railyard Fitness Equipment to be shared across all SEP elementary school and SEP Middle School physical education classes. The equipment adjusts for different ages and skill levels, and teachers aim to increase social

interaction and improve motor skills while engaging and challenging students. — SEP Elementary and Middle School physical education teachers

- New library of books, written in Spanish, which will be available in the high school library to increase language proficiency in world language students. — Josef Sallen, SEP High School/DMACC Career Advantage
- Escape room materials to engage students in new ways as they review class concepts leading up to end-of-unit tests and assessments. — Jared Cochran, SEP Middle School
- Twelve Kodak digital cameras for Photography and Design students, allowing them to capture high-quality images for classwork and portfolios, and for multiple students to have access to cameras at one time. — Anne Otte, Susan Whinery, Chad Willeford, Sydnee McMains; SEP High School
- Multilingual books to be shared across all 11 district libraries, supporting literacy development, representation and family engagement for English Speakers of Other Languages students and their families, as well as classroom use for learning about world languages, cultural awareness and global studies. — Angela Shannon, District Teaching and Learning Department; Christine Bartels, Amy Drake, Rebecca Eremieff, Jennifer Houlette, Kia Moran, district-wide Teacher Librarian Team
- Portable digital microscopes, which

will allow students to take learning out of the classroom and into natural environments in collaborative, engaging lessons. Digital microscopes also improve accessibility for students with visual impairments and allow group learning, not just individual use. — Danielle Hoenig, Allison McPherren, Kylie Fisher, Natalie McAreavy, Hannah Horton, Caitlin Gonzales, Cassie Harrington, SEP High School

- Support for The Amazing Chemistry Show's involvement in Mitchellville Elementary's annual science fair. — Blake Kielman and Steven Overbergen, Mitchellville Elementary

SEPEF board members presented a ceremonial check for \$30,000 at the Jan. 22 Southeast Polk Board of Education meeting and recognized grant recipients at halftime of the SEP boys' basketball game on Jan. 23.

Since 2015, the SEP Education Foundation has awarded more than \$322,000 in grants to Southeast Polk district educators.

An independently governed nonprofit organization, the Southeast Polk Education Foundation works with SEP staff and educators to enhance opportunities for Southeast Polk students from pre-kindergarten through 12th grade by funding grants for projects that fall outside the school district's normal funding stream. SEPEF is the only funding organization with a mission to fund grants for our SEP teachers. Learn more at [sepef.org](http://sepef.org). ■

# 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](http://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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# WHAT YOU should know about opening a checking account

While opening a checking account is a simple process, it requires some preparation. Let's go through the four most frequently asked questions about opening a checking account to make sure you choose the right account for you, bring the necessary documents and understand your options for opening the account online or in person.



**1. Which checking account is right for you?** The right checking account type for you depends on how frequently you plan to use a debit card, if you plan to receive a direct deposit, if you keep a higher balance in your account, and even your age and choice of opening a single or joint account. Most financial institutions offer a variety of checking accounts based on these factors, so be sure to familiarize yourself with the options before

deciding which one is right for you.

**2. Which documents do I need to provide when I open a checking account?** When you're opening a new account of any kind, you'll need to bring a few pieces of information, such as: at least one form of photo ID, Social Security number, date of birth, proof of address, and a deposit to put into your new account. If you're opening a joint account, be sure both owners of the account are present, and have the appropriate documents needed when opening the account.

**3. Can you open a checking account online?** Opening an account online is a convenient option if you don't live near a branch, have a schedule that conflicts with a bank's operating hours or simply prefer to go through the process at home.

Use caution if you plan to complete the process of opening a checking account online while using public Wi-Fi because you will be entering personal information into your device

while connected to an unsecure network. If possible, use a secured Wi-Fi network any time you are opening an account or interacting with your financial institution online.

**4. What is the benefit of opening a checking account with a banker?** A banker can provide a more in-depth explanation of different checking account options available to you, fees to be aware of and additional products that could benefit you. It's helpful to have any questions addressed by your banker during the process rather than having to call a customer support line. If you're a first-time customer, opening a checking account is a great time to get acquainted with your banker so you know whom to contact if you need assistance in the future. ■

Information provided by Mary Simon, VP, Altoona Branch Manager, 3820 Eighth St. S.W., Altoona, 515-245-5480, MSimon@BankersTrust.com. Bankers Trust NMLS ID: 440379.

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## V. BOYS TRACK

DATE	TIME	OPPONENT	LOCATION
3/9	2:00 PM	Boys A.D. Dickinson Relays	UNI-Dome
3/24	4:30 PM	Johnston Inv.	Johnston HS
3/24	4:30 PM	Urb. Boys JV/9 T/F Inv.	Urb. HS Frerichs Field
3/26	4:30 PM	Waukee Early Bird - Meet	Timberline
4/2	3:30 PM	Rams Relays Boys	SEP Multi-P. Sta.
4/7	4:30 PM	Urb. Inv.	Urb. HS Frerichs Field
4/7	4:30 PM	Urb. Inv.	Urb. HS Frerichs Field
4/9	4:30 PM	M.Town Kenny Dean Relays	M.Town HS Field
4/11	8:30 AM	'25 Jim Duncan Inv.	Drake Sta.
4/14	4:30 PM	Johnston Inv.	Johnston HS
4/16	4:30 PM	'25 ADM Boys Inv.	ADM HS Tiger Sta.
4/21	4:00 PM	'26 Jagaur Boys T/F Invite	Northview MS
4/23	8:00 AM	116th D. Relays	Drake Sta.
4/24	8:00 AM	116th D. Relays	Drake Sta.
4/25	8:00 AM	116th D. Relays	Drake Sta.
4/28	4:15 PM	Carlisle Invite	Carlisle HS
4/30	4:00 PM	NW Boys Relays	NW HS Sta.
5/7	4:00 PM	CIML Conference Meet	NW HS Sta.
5/21	9:00 AM	4A	
5/22	9:00 AM	4A	
5/23	9:00 AM	4A	

## V. GIRLS TRACK

DATE	TIME	OPPONENT	LOCATION
3/10	2:00 PM	A.D. Dickinson Relays	UNI-Dome
3/28	11:00 AM	Sherwood Relays	Iowa City High
3/31	3:30 PM	Rams Relays	SEP Multi-P. Sta.
4/4	11:00 AM	Mustang Classic	DCG HS DCG HS Track
4/7	4:30 PM	Craig Oldham Inv.	Johnston HS
4/11	8:30 AM	'25 Jim Duncan Inv.	Drake Sta.
4/14	4:15 PM	Lee Town Relays	DM East Williams
4/16	4:15 PM	Ron Werling Invite	Indianola Sta.
4/20	4:30 PM	BD-Farrar Invite	BD-Farrar HS
4/23	8:00 AM	116th D. Relays	Drake Sta.
4/24	8:00 AM	116th D. Relays	Drake Sta.
4/25	8:00 AM	116th D. Relays	Drake Sta.
4/30	4:30 PM	Tulip Time Relays	Pella HS
5/7	4:00 PM	CIML Conference Meet	Johnston HS
5/21	9:00 AM	4A Girls State	
5/22	9:00 AM	4A Girls State	
5/23	9:00 AM	4A Girls State	

## V. BOYS TENNIS

DATE	TIME	OPPONENT	LOCATION
4/3	11:00 AM	Triangular	Indianola HS Tennis Cts.
4/7	11:30 AM	Johnston	SEP HS
4/7	11:30 AM	Johnston	SEP HS Tennis Cts.
4/7	4:00 PM	N. Polk	SEP HS Tennis Cts.
4/14	4:00 PM	Valley	Valley Southwoods HS
4/21	4:00 PM	Waukee	NW HS Tennis Cts.
4/23	4:00 PM	Waukee NW	NW HS Tennis Cts.
4/27	4:00 PM	M.Town	M.Town HS Ct. Complex
4/28	4:00 PM	Ankeny	SEP HS Tennis Cts.
4/30	4:00 PM	Urb.	W. Johnston Tennis Cts.
5/5	4:00 PM	Dowling Catholic	SEP HS Tennis Cts.
5/7	4:00 PM	Ankeny Cen.	5/7 - SEP vs. Cen.
5/8	1:00 PM	N. Polk Tournament	N. Polk HS Tennis Cts.



## FOR ALL RAMS SCHEDULES

Schedules are subject to change.  
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## SPORTS SCHEDULE

SPRING 2026

### V. BOYS SOCCER

DATE	TIME	OPPONENT	LOCATION
3/26	7:30 PM	Norwalk	Norwalk Warrior Sta.
3/30	6:15 PM	Knoxville	SEP HS Multi-P. Sta.
4/2	7:30 PM	Urb.	Urb. HS Frerichs Field
4/3	7:30 PM	Indianola	SEP Multi-P. Sta. HS
4/7	7:30 PM	Johnston	SEP Multi-P. Sta. HS Sta.
4/10	6:00 PM	Davenport North	SEP Multi-P. Sta. HS Sta.
4/14	7:30 PM	Valley	Valley Sta.
4/17	7:00 PM	Council Bluffs Lincoln	Gale Wickersham Sta.
4/20	7:30 PM	Newton	H. A. Lynn Sta.
4/21	4:00 PM	Waukee	Timberline
4/24	7:30 PM	DCG	SEP Multi-P. Sta.
4/28	7:30 PM	Waukee NW	NW HS Sta.
5/1	7:30 PM	Ankeny	SEP Multi-P. Sta.
5/5	6:45 PM	Iowa City West	Iowa City West HS
5/8	4:00 PM	'Life is Bigger' Inv.	Davenport North HS
5/9	8:00 AM	'Life is Bigger' Inv.	Davenport North HS
5/12	7:30 PM	Dowling Catholic	SEP Multi-P. Sta.
5/15	7:30 PM	Ankeny Cen.	SEP Multi-P. Sta.

### V. GIRLS SOCCER

DATE	TIME	OPPONENT	LOCATION
4/3	7:00 PM	DCG	DCG HS DCG HS
4/6	7:30 PM	Johnston	Johnston HS
4/9	6:15 PM	Gilbert	SEP Multi-P. Sta.
4/11	8:00 AM	T.J Showcase	Gale Wickersham C.
4/14	7:30 PM	Valley	SEP Multi-P. Sta.
4/16	6:45 PM	Norwalk	SEP Multi-P. Sta. HS
4/21	7:30 PM	Waukee	SEP Multi-P. Sta.
4/23	6:45 PM	Des Moines Christian	SEP Multi-P. Sta. HS
4/28	7:30 PM	Waukee NW	SEP Multi-P. Sta. HS
4/30	6:00 PM	Pella	SEP Multi-P. Sta. HS
5/1	7:30 PM	Ankeny	Ankeny HS AHS
5/7	6:00 PM	Carlisle	Carlisle HS
5/8	7:00 PM	BD-Farrar	BD-Farrar HS
5/12	7:30 PM	Dowling Catholic	Dowling Catholic HS
5/15	7:30 PM	Cen. vs. SEP	Ankeny Cen.
5/18	7:30 PM	Urb.	SEP Multi-P. Sta. HS
5/21	7:30 PM	Ames	SEP Multi-P. Sta. HS

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# WHO IS Jesus, and why does it matter?



There is a tension in our society. An anxiety in our country. A frustration in our world. There are problems, and we can't seem to fix them. Oh, we keep trying for sure. We invent new things, elect new leaders, reform, try again, buy more things and take more vacations. But the ache remains. The disillusionment lingers.

What if the answer to our deepest problems isn't found in ourselves?

Most people have heard of Jesus. A brilliant teacher. A moral leader. The central figure of Christianity. But Jesus claimed to be far more than that. He claimed to be God — entering the world He created to establish a new kind of reality filled with justice, love and wholeness.

If that sounds hard to believe, consider this: Even secular historians agree Jesus existed. The ripple effects of his life have changed the course of history. Our calendar, culture and values are deeply shaped by Jesus, and billions still follow Him today.

And, so, here we are today. We know the world is not as it should be. We know we are not as we should be. We carry regrets, guilt, selfishness and wounds we can't seem to heal. No product or politician can meet our deepest needs.

Jesus didn't come to be a nice guy or simply a good teacher. He came to be a world changer — the One who would make all things new and all things right. In his death, Jesus took upon himself all the brokenness of this world. In his resurrection, Jesus became the example of what would eventually happen to the whole world. In his ascension to heaven, Jesus promised to come back and transform all things into a new reality in which, "He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away" (Revelation 21:4). This is the world-changing Jesus.

Until then, Jesus invites us to learn to live in His new reality of justice, love and wholeness. It starts with confessing the ways our own lives don't line up with His new reality. Then we receive His forgiveness, freedom from our past, and His power to live differently.

If Jesus really is who He claimed to be, getting to know Him may be the most important decision we ever make.

And, when you get discouraged about yourself or your world, remember that Jesus came to make it new.

You are invited to be part of that. ■

Information provided by Pastor Nathan Anenson, Lutheran Church of the Cross, 1701 Eighth St. S.W., Altoona, 515-967-4818.

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# THINK about heart health

February is a time to think about hearts. While Valentine hearts, flowers and chocolates are important (and delicious), this month is also a perfect time to focus on a different kind of heart: our own.



February is American Heart Month. This is the month the American Heart Association encourages you to learn about and prioritize your heart health. Heart disease and stroke are the leading causes of death in the United States. One out of every five people will develop heart failure, and most cases are preventable.

As you get older, your heart changes. Aging can cause changes in your blood vessels, and your heart may no longer beat as fast during physical activity. These changes can increase the risk of heart disease. The most common change in our hearts due to aging is an increase in the stiffness of the large arteries. This stiffness can result in high blood pressure. Signs of heart disease include pain, numbness/tingling in the shoulders, arms, back or jaw. It can also cause dizziness, confusion, tiredness and headaches.

The good news is that small, manageable changes can make a significant difference. Improving eating habits is a great place to start.

Choose items that are low in sodium and increase your intake of fruits and vegetables. Follow your doctor's orders and take your medication as prescribed. If you smoke, quit. Smoking damages the artery walls. Even if you have smoked for years, quitting now can lower your risk of heart disease.

Increasing physical activity is another important step. The Centers for Disease Control advises us to "move more and sit less." You should get at least 150 minutes of exercise per week. If that feels overwhelming, break it into smaller chunks throughout the day. Choose activities you enjoy so exercise feels fun rather than like a chore. Try walking, gardening, bowling or other hobbies that keep you moving.

One of the wonderful benefits of living in a senior community is having access to exercise classes that are tailored to work with those over the age of 55 or those with physical limitations. You also get the built-in support of friends living next door to help motivate you to participate.

Grab a friend and come up with a plan you can commit to, and don't forget to make it fun. Challenge one another and find ways to celebrate your successes. ■

Information provided by Stephanie Proper, executive director, Valley View Village, 2571 Guthrie Ave., Des Moines, 515-265-2571.

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## HEALTH

By Dr. Kari Swain and Dr. Elizabeth Ellrich

### HEALTHY habits to love yourself well

During this season of love, take time to check in with yourself and incorporate these healthy habits to love yourself well.

**Have your nervous system checked.** Our lives are filled with physical, emotional and environmental stressors that wreak havoc on our nervous system function. A neurological chiropractic exam identifies areas of nervous system stress and assesses heart rate variability to measure the patient's ability to adapt to daily and eventful stressors. A chiropractor trained in these methods can work with patients to create individual care plans addressing their unique needs to get them feeling and functioning optimally.

Chiropractic adjustments reduce nervous system stress and increase the body and brain's ability to adapt to stress. Adjustments disrupt the sympathetic, fight or flight, dominance that stress gets us stuck in and restores the body to a parasympathetic, rest and restore, state.

**Prioritize sleep.** Your hormones, mood, digestion, energy levels and overall brain and body function are completely dependent on the rest and regeneration that happens during sleep.

**Go for a walk.** Movement and fresh air are good for the body and the mind.

**Take a mental break.** Pause running around checking things off your to do list and halt scrolling social media to take 10 minutes for yourself. Practice deep breathing or do a short meditation.

**Supplement with high quality essential nutrients.** You can't supplement your way out of a poor diet, but even with a nutritious diet there are nutrients we are not getting enough of. Talk to your holistic healthcare provider about what supplements are right for you and your health goals. ■

Information provided by Dr. Kari Swain and Dr. Elizabeth Ellrich, Swain Chiropractic, 410 Center Place S.W., Altoona, 515-967-9300.

## HEALTH

By Ashley Powell

### CBD and THC: Where you buy matters

As the hemp industry continues to grow, so does the number of places offering products. For consumers, that expansion brings opportunity but also confusion. Not all stores operate with the same standards, education or commitment to customer experience.

For many people, walking into a hemp or CBD store for the first time can feel overwhelming. Product types, cannabinoid blends, dosing and intended effects can vary widely. That is why knowledgeable guidance has become one of the most valuable parts of the shopping experience.

Stores that invest in education, staff training and customer support tend to stand out in their communities. Certified hemp consultants and experienced team members can help customers understand differences in THC and CBD levels, minor cannabinoids, and product formats. This kind of one-on-one guidance allows people to make informed decisions rather than guessing.

Community recognition often reflects that level of trust. When customers consistently support the same businesses year after year, it signals more than product availability. It reflects service, transparency and a willingness to meet people where they are in their wellness journey.

As hemp continues to evolve, consumers are becoming more selective about where they shop. Access matters, but so do education, comfort and confidence in what you are purchasing.

In a growing industry, trust is not built overnight. It is earned through consistency, service and the relationships built within the community. ■

Information provided by Ashley Powell, CBD American Shaman, 800 S. 50th St., No. 106, West Des Moines, 515-380-5251, and 3418 Eighth St. S.W., No. 3, Altoona, 515-967-4036.



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## START your bridal skin prep early

Glowing wedding-day skin doesn't happen overnight. For summer brides, the key to a flawless, camera-ready complexion is consistency — not last-minute treatments. Starting early allows time to build collagen, improve texture and ensure your skin responds beautifully to each step in your plan.



One of the most effective foundational treatments is microneedling. By stimulating natural collagen production, microneedling improves overall tone, texture and firmness while softening the appearance of fine lines and pores. A series of three treatments spaced four weeks apart is typically recommended. Beginning several months before the big day allows the skin to regenerate gradually for natural, refined results.

For that coveted “glassy” glow, DiamondGlow is a popular choice. This treatment exfoliates the skin, deeply cleans pores with suction, and infuses targeted treatment serums for immediate radiance. Brides are encouraged to start DiamondGlow two to four months in advance to ensure their skin responds well. It can also be performed between microneedling sessions to maintain hydration and brightness throughout the preparation process.

Dermaplaning is another bridal favorite. This gentle exfoliation removes dead skin and peach fuzz, leaving the complexion smooth and luminous. It enhances product absorption and creates a flawless canvas for makeup. As with any treatment, trying it ahead of time ensures the best results.

Finally, clinical-grade skincare at home is the icing on the cake. Professional treatments build the glow — daily consistency helps maintain it all the way down the aisle. ■

Information provided by Nikki Morgan, DNP, ARNP, SkinFusion, 200 Second St. S.E., Altoona, 515-967-0587, [www.skinfusionfx.com](http://www.skinfusionfx.com), [nikki.skinfusionfx@gmail.com](mailto:nikki.skinfusionfx@gmail.com)

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## WHY would I prepay funeral expenses?

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



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

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

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

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

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**Note about calendar events:** This magazine is delivered the fourth 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.

## Coming up in the Altoona Living magazine:

**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](mailto:tammy@iowalivingmagazines.com).

## Lionel Bart's "Oliver! Jr." Weekends to March 8, Fridays 7 p.m., Saturdays and Sundays 2 p.m. CAP Theatre, 201 First Ave. S., Altoona

The streets of Victorian England will come to life when CAP Theatre presents the musical "Oliver! JR.," based on the novel "Oliver Twist" by Charles Dickens and adapted from the full-length musical by Lionel Bart — who wrote the book, music and lyrics — this beloved production follows a trusting young orphan named Oliver Twist as he searches for a place where he truly belongs. Ticket prices range from \$12–\$18. For more information or to purchase tickets, visit [www.captheatre.org](http://www.captheatre.org).

## 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/>.

## Programs at Edencrest at The Tuscany

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• **Coffee and Connections, Friday, Feb. 27, 9–10 a.m.** Come out and have some coffee and pastries and get to know our team and network among each other.

• **Telecommunications Access Iowa, Thursday, March 12, 1–2 p.m.** TAI officials will share details about their statewide program that helps individuals access specialized telecommunications equipment, including amplified phones, captioned phones, and other adaptive devices that support easier communication.

• **EveryStep, Thursday, April 16, 1–2 p.m.** EveryStep and Dr. Mouser will present an informative, one-hour overview of their compassionate care and support services, including hospice, home care, grief support and community health programs designed to help individuals and families navigate life's transitions. Light snacks and refreshments will be provided.

For more information on programs, call Mallory Wentland, 515-850-6119.



## 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](http://www.friendlysonsiowa.com) for more information.



## Live Music at Prairie Meadows

Prairie Meadows, 1 Prairie Meadows Drive, Altoona

- Feb. 27, 8–11 p.m. Jordan Beem and John Griffiths
- Feb. 28, 8–11 p.m. Matt Woods Band
- March 3, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., Gaylin Sudik and Friends
- March 6, 8–11 p.m., Back To Vinyl
- March 7, 8–11 p.m., 80 Grit
- March 10, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., Ken Frette and the Country Classics
- March 13, 8–11 p.m., Mike Walsh Band
- March 14, 8–11 p.m., The Savage Freds
- March 17, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., Company's Comin'
- March 20, 8–11 p.m., Anthony Koester Band
- March 21, 8–11 p.m., Sierra Griggs
- March 24, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., Tom Hofer and the Iowa Playboys



## 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 [chocolatewalk.dmcityview.com](http://chocolatewalk.dmcityview.com).

Be sure to check for cancelations.

## Dine & Dance with CultureALL

Come savor authentic ethnic cuisine and music presented by local talent. **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 community partners by visiting [CultureALL.org/events](http://CultureALL.org/events).

## The Iowa Files: A History Series

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 Saturday, 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>.

## The Terrace Hill Partnership presents the Tea & Talk Series

Saturdays, Feb. 28 and March 7, 2 p.m.  
Terrace Hill Drawing Room, 2300 Grand Ave., Des Moines

The Terrace Hill Partnership presents the Tea & Talk series.

Guests will hear from local speakers, who will cover topics centered around arts and culture, conservation and gardening, historic architecture, and book publishing and illustration. Speakers will give short presentations in Terrace Hill's Drawing



Room. Tickets are \$10 per program or \$35 for a season pass. The speakers are donating their time, and all proceeds will benefit the gardens of Terrace Hill. Tickets are available on Eventbrite at <https://ttheatealkseries2026.eventbrite.com> or by calling the Terrace Hill office at 515-281-7205. Tickets must be purchased in advance.

- **Feb. 28:** Scott Allen, Historic Practice Leader, OPN Architects, Terrace Hill - B.F. Allen Greenhouse Reconstruction.

- **March 7:** Susan Schmid and Tara Gartin, Author & Illustrator of *No Company for Christmas*, *Turning Terrace Hill into a Book*.

## The Ingersoll Spring 2026 Shows

3711 Ingersoll Ave., Des Moines

The Ingersoll announces some exciting additions to its spring performance lineup. Spanning world-class traditional music and beloved musical theater, these new shows promise unforgettable moments of live entertainment in the heart of the community.

- **Altan - 40th Anniversary Tour: March 8.** Dining at 4:30 p.m., Show at 6:30 p.m.

- **Church Basement Ladies: March 26–29, April 2–5 and April 9–12.** Matinee performances will have dining at 11 a.m., and the show beginning at 1 p.m. Evening performances will have dining at 5:30 p.m., and the show beginning at 7:30 p.m.

Tickets are available at [www.theingersoll.com/events](http://www.theingersoll.com/events) or at [Ticketmaster.com/TheIngersoll](http://Ticketmaster.com/TheIngersoll).

## Iowa Home Expo

Friday, March 13 to Sunday, March 15  
Iowa State Fairgrounds Jacobson Center,  
3000 E. Grand Ave., Des Moines

Whether you're planning on upgrading your home or need a reliable contractor to fix your leaking roof, the Iowa Home Expo is the spot to find all local remodeling experts. The Iowa Home Expo hosts local and national exhibitors offering exclusive deals and discounts. You'll save both time and money attending the Iowa Home Expo. Hours are: Friday, March 13, noon to 6 p.m.; Saturday, March 14, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.; and Sunday, March 15, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. More information available at <https://iowahomeexpo.com/>. ■

# OUT & ABOUT



Dan Axline, owner, and Jennifer Sherrill at Altoona Ace Hardware, runner-up for Residents' Choice for Favorite Home Improvement Retail Store and Outdoor Lawn Equipment Store.



Matt Weber, store manager, and John Kamienski, meat department manager, at Fareway - Altoona, Residents' Choice for Favorite Grocery Store.



Best Day Coffee was Residents' Choice for Favorite Coffee Shop.



Katie D. and Katie S. of Altoona Veterinary Hospital, runner-up for Residents' Choice for Favorite Veterinary Care.



Southeast Polk High School RISE Student Ambassadors Cail Farley, Riley Miller and Emma Wiederstein at the Altoona Chamber Noon Networking on Jan. 20.



McKinnley Long and Taylor Steiner at Altoona Smiles, Residents' Choice for favorite dental office.



Sam Winn and Dr. Elizabeth Ellrich at the Altoona Chamber Noon Networking on Jan. 20.



Jen Holschlag and Cheri Sorensen at the Altoona Chamber Noon Networking on Jan. 20.



Kaleb Greb, Emily Brown, Tonia Johnson, Stephanie Bitner, Laurel Marshall and Mitch Thede at Welgaard CPAs and Advisors, Residents' Choice for Favorite Accounting Firm.



Angela Jones, Kyle Lee and Rob Cramer at the Altoona Chamber Noon Networking on Jan. 20.

## THE MONTH of love

February is the Month of love... right? Whether we like all the things that come with the Valentine holiday or not, it gives us something to focus on in the middle of this dreary winter after all the Christmas craziness.

For the Chamber, we use this month to give our local businesses a boost with our LOVE LOCAL Campaign. This little project that was created not that many years ago has seen community participation grow by leaps and bounds in the past few years due to our social media presence and reputation.

This year, we changed our game a little bit with our themed baskets. These are the four we did this year:

- Couples Basket
- Galentines (for the ladies)
- Bromance (for the men) and
- Love Bugs (for the kiddos)

With participation from several local businesses, these baskets were bursting full of goodies that four lucky winners would get to enjoy. All we asked was for our community to Like and Follow our chamber page, share the post and to Like and Follow all the businesses who donated to the baskets.

As a business owner, it was fun watching the “likes and follow” numbers increase daily. It was impressive. I am convinced that the residents of Altoona and its surrounding communities are some of the most loyal people around, and it is a privilege to contribute to something that creates such buzz and enjoyment to our community.

So, how can you give back and show your love, outside of following and liking all the participating businesses? Stop into our local businesses (including those that didn't participate in the baskets), and share with others why you love supporting local.

### Upcoming events and programming to add to your calendars:

- **Perk Before Work**, Tuesday, March 3 at 7:30 a.m. at the Altoona Campus
  - **Noon Networking** at Guadalajara Mexican Restaurant, Tuesday, March 17 (yep, wear green) at noon
  - **Women of Vision with Allie Jones**, 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. at The Carriage House at PCA Real Estate

### Save the date:

- **Altoona Chamber of Commerce Annual Awards Dinner**, Friday, April 10 at Prairie Meadows
  - **Wine & Craft Beer Fest 15th Anniversary Kick-off to Summer Party**. Tickets go on sale April 27. ■

Information provided by Twila Shreves, 2026 Altoona Chamber President, Owner, Hidden Treasures Gifts and Book-Tea-Que.



2026  
*Annual Dinner*  
La Cote d'Azur

Friday, April 10<sup>th</sup> |  
Cocktails at 6PM  
Dinner at 7 PM

Prairie Meadows  
Skinner Ballroom  
\$75/person  
\$560 for table 8

Celebrate a great year of  
community excellence with  
delicious food, meaningful  
connections and more!

Purchase tickets on our  
website  
[www.altoonachamber.org/  
events](http://www.altoonachamber.org/events)

# BOWL Bash

The Eastern Polk County Rotary Bowl Bash was held at Great Escape on Feb. 6.



Norma Bettis, Chris Schonridge and Marie Pipes



Becca Squiers, Andrea Stanfel and Steve Pedersen



Larry Archibald and Anne Miller



Scott Discus and Bryan Gordon



Rob Sieh and Cory Ohoriko



Steve Mather and John Krois



David Harper and Ned Looney



David Mathews and Barron Geiger



Carol Seals and Evelyn Templeton



Steve Hall and Carl Sprague

# OUT & ABOUT



Wes Weuve and Keith Williamson



Becky Flannery, Joe Flannery, Beth Bylund, Tom Bylund and Laura Redoutey



Curt Gauze and Mike Hamilton



Rodger Comer and Cheryl Mongar



Linda Marcum and Bill Wenig



Michael Fitzlaff, Denis Fitzlaff and Wanda Gaigher



Allen Kehm, David Campbell and Eric Smith



Shari Weif, Judy Leedy and Elena Bird-Sorensen



Brenda Wieneke, Steve Wieneke and Galen Howsare

# CLASSIFIEDS

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## WANT TO BUY

WANT TO BUY your manufactured or mobile home 1990 and newer CENTURY HOMES of OSKALOOSA 641-672-2344 (mcn)

## AUTOMOBILES

GOT AN UNWANTED CAR??? DONATE IT TO PATRIOTIC HEARTS. Fast free pick up. Patriotic Hearts' programs help veterans find work or start their own business. Call 24/7: 1-833-485-1046. (mcn)

Get a break on your taxes! Donate your car, truck, or SUV to assist the blind and visually impaired. Arrange a swift, no-cost vehicle pickup and secure a generous tax credit for 2025. Call Heritage for the Blind Today at 1-855-977-7030 today! (mcn)

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)

## CABLE/INTERNET

AFFORDABLE TV & INTERNET. If you are overpaying for your service, call now for a free quote and see how much you can save! 1-833-472-7954. (mcn)

DIRECTV- All your entertainment. Nothing

on your roof! Sign up for Directv and get your first three months of Max, Paramount+, Showtime, Starz, MGM+ and Cinemax included. Choice package \$84.99/mo. Some restrictions apply. Call DIRECTV 1-866-296-1409. (mcn)

## FINANCIAL

Inflation is at 40 year highs. Interest rates are way up. Credit Cards. Medical Bills. Car Loans. Do you have \$10k or more in debt? Call NATIONAL DEBT RELIEF and find out how to pay off your debt for significantly less than what you owe! FREE quote: Call 1-866-552-0649. (mcn)

## HEALTH & MEDICAL

DENTAL INSURANCE from Physicians Mutual Insurance Company. Coverage for 400 plus procedures. Real dental insurance - NOT just a discount plan. Do not wait! Call now! Get your FREE Dental Information Kit with all the details! 1-855-973-9175 www.dental50plus.com/midwest #6258 (mcn)

PORTABLE OXYGEN CONCENTRATOR May Be Covered by Medicare! Reclaim independence and mobility with the compact design and long-lasting battery of Inogen One. Free information kit! Call 844-716-2411. (mcn)

STOP OVERPAYING FOR HEALTH INSURANCE! A recent study shows that a majority of people struggle to pay for health coverage. Let us show you how much you can save. Call Now for a no-obligation quote: 1-888-772-8454. You will need to have your zip code to connect to the right provider. (mcn)

ATTENTION OXYGEN THERAPY USERS! Discover Oxygen Therapy That Moves with You with Inogen Portable Oxygen Concentrators. FREE information kit. Call 1-833-650-5916. (mcn)

AUDIEN HEARING. The world's first hearing aid with touchscreen controls. No tiny buttons, apps or prescriptions. 45-day risk free trial. Free shipping. Lifetime support. More than 1.5 mil-

lion happy customers. Call Audien 1-866-698-3418 (mcn)

## HOME SERVICES

Don't Pay For Covered Home Repairs Again! Our home warranty covers ALL MAJOR SYSTEMS AND APPLIANCES. We stand by our service and if we can't fix it, we'll replace it! Pick the plan that fits your budget! Call: 1-833-816-2128. (mcn)

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)

## MISCELLANEOUS

Reach over 1.4 million homes for just \$249! Advertise your business or item with a classified ad in the Midwest Free Community Papers. Simple, cost-effective, and powerful. One call, and you're done! Boost your visibility now! 888-899-6327. (mcn)

NEED NEW FLOORING? Call today to schedule a FREE in-home estimate on Carpeting & Flooring. Call Today! 1-833-641-6323. (mcn)

INJURED IN AN ACCIDENT? Don't Accept the insurance company's first offer. Many injured parties are entitled to cash settlements in the \$1000's. Get a free evaluation to see what your case is really worth. 100% Free Evaluation. Call Now: 1-833-879-1534. (mcn)

Prepare for power outages today with a Generac Home Standby Generator. Act now to receive a FREE 5-Year warranty with qualifying purchase. Call 1-877-228-5789 today to schedule a free quote. It's not just a generator. It's a power move. (mcn)

THE BATHROOM OF YOUR DREAMS in as lit-

tle as 1 day. Limited Time Offer - \$1000 off or No Payments and No Interest for 18 months for customers who qualify. BCI Bath & Shower. Many options available. Quality materials & professional installation. Senior & Military Discounts Available. Call Today! 1-833-618-1178. (mcn)

Replace your roof with the best looking and longest lasting material steel from Erie Metal Roofs! Three styles and multiple colors available. Guaranteed to last a lifetime! Limited Time Offer- up to 50% off installation + Additional 10% off install (for military, health workers & 1st responders.) Call Erie Metal Roofs: 1-844-907-2386. (mcn)

NO MORE CLEANING out gutters. Guaranteed! LeafFilter is backed by a no-clog guarantee and lifetime transferrable warranty. Call today 1-855-577-1268 to schedule a FREE inspection and no obligation estimate. Get 15% off your entire order. Plus, Military & Seniors get an additional 10% off. Limited time only. Restrictions apply, see representative for warranty and offer details. (mcn)

## REAL ESTATE

WE BUY HOUSES for Cash AS-IS! No repairs. No fuss. Any condition. Easy process: Call, get cash offer and get paid. Call today for your fair cash offer: 1-888-715-0513. (mcn)

## WANT TO BUY

ALL MILITARY ITEMS WANTED: WW1, WW2, Korea, Vietnam. Medals, knives, guns, helmets, daggers, uniforms, all items wanted. Also Indian arrowheads and artifacts. Single items or collections. Paying cash. 563-581-9568 (mcn)

CASH PAID FOR HIGH-END MEN'S SPORT WATCHES! Rolex, Breitling, Omega, Patek Philippe, Heuer, Daytona, GMT, Submariner and Speedmaster. Call 1-833-641-6646. (mcn)

WE BUY VINTAGE GUITARS! Looking for 1920-1980 Gibson, Martin, Fender, Gretsch, Epiphone, Guild, Mosrite, Rickenbacker, Prairie State, D'Angelico, Stromberg. And Gibson Mandolins / Banjos. 1-833-641-7028. (mcn)

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**FREE TOILET + \$1,500 OFF**

For your FREE information kit and our Senior Discounts, Call Today Toll-Free  
**1-855-417-1306**

**safestep**

\*Free toilet with purchase and installation of a walk-in tub or walk-in shower only. Offer available while supplies last. No cash value. Must present offer at time of purchase. Cannot be combined with any other offer. Market restrictions may apply. Offer available in select markets only. C.S.B. 1002163 NCBS 0002599 1003445 10191106000

**Jacuzzi Bath Remodel**

**Safety. Style. Stress-Free Installation.**

**SPECIAL OFFER**  
**FREE Fixtures and FREE Shower Door**

CALL NOW  
1.866.753.9521

Add terms apply. Offer subject to change and may be limited. Cannot be combined with other offers. Expires 3/31/26.

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**LIMITED TIME OFFER**  
**50% OFF Installation**

**FREE ESTIMATE SCHEDULE TODAY!**  
Call 1.833.370.1234

**CALL TODAY! 1.833.370.1234**

New orders only. Does not include material costs. Cannot be combined with any other offer. Minimum purchase required. Other restrictions may apply. This is an advertisement placed on behalf of Erie Construction Mid-West, Inc ("Erie"). Offer terms and conditions may apply and the offer may not be available in your area. If you call the number provided, you consent to being contacted by telephone, SMS text message, email, pre-recorded messages by Erie or its affiliates and service providers using automated technologies notwithstanding if you are on a DO NOT CALL list or register. Please review our Privacy Policy and Terms of Use on homeservices.compliance.com. All rights reserved. License numbers available at eriehome.com/erielicenses/

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**LeafFilter**  
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Claim by: 02/28/2026

We install year-round!

**15% OFF + 10% Discount For Seniors + Military**

Get a FREE full gutter inspection and estimate: **1-855-595-2102**  
**Promo: 285**

\*\*Promotional offer includes 15% off plus an additional 10% off for qualified veterans and/or seniors. One coupon per household. No obligation estimate valid for 1 year. See Representative for full warranty details.  
AZ ROC344027 AR 366920925 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 IR010524 NY 266192 NE 50145-24 NV 86990 NJ 130H13285000 NM 408693 ND 47304 OR 218294 PA PA179643 RI GC-41354 TN 10981 UT 10736358-5501 VT 174-0008071 WA 2705169495 WA LEAF10763PG WV WV0569112 \*The leading consumer reporting agency conducted a 16 month outdoor test of gutter guards in 2010 and recognized LeafFilter as the "#1 rated professionally installed gutter guard system in America.

# ALTOONA

FEBRUARY 2026

City of Altoona • 900 Venbury Drive • Altoona, IA 50009 • 515-967-5136

## CITY HALL

900 Venbury Drive

Altoona, IA 50009

Phone: 515-967-5136

FAX: 515-967-0842

Open 8 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Monday – Friday

Mayor Dean O'Connor

515-967-5136

City Council Members

Jayne McFadden 515-967-5136

Scott Duer 515-418-2227

Kyle Mertz 515-954-8470

Jerry Evans 515-967-5136

Julie Stewart 515-967-5136

City Administrator

515-967-5136

City Clerk

515-967-5136

Police Chief

515-967-5132

Fire Chief

515-967-2216

Library Director

515-967-3881

Fax: 515-967-6934

Water Billing

515-967-5136

Building Department/  
Code Enforcement

515-967-5138

Building Official

515-967-5138

Planning & Zoning  
Department

515-967-5136

Public Works Director

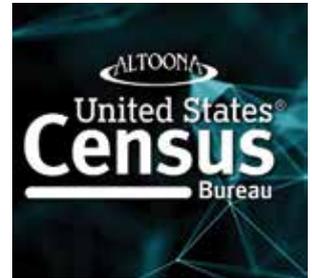
515-967-5136

Human Resources

515-967-5136

## SPECIAL CENSUS

The City of Altoona is currently conducting a Special Census. Residents who would like more information or prefer to complete their census by phone may call 515-214-1759. The Altoona Census Office is available to take calls from 8 AM-7 PM



## ROTATING ART DISPLAY

The Rotating Art Display at the Altoona Public Library has a new artist! Please help us welcome Bradford Johnson and his work to the Rotating Art Display. You can see his work for the next few months at the Altoona Public Library! To be a part of the Rotating Art Display, submit your work at Altoona-iowa.com



## SPRING CLEANUP IS JUST AROUND THE CORNER!

Spring Cleanup for Altoona will take place April 13-16, 2026.

**Residents living South of Railroad** should have items at the curb by 6 AM on April 13.

**Residents living North of Railroad** should have items at the curb by 6 AM on April 15.

This is a great opportunity to get rid of large items or extra garbage right at your curb! Wondering what's accepted? Learn more: [www.WhereItShouldGo.com/SpringCleanup](http://www.WhereItShouldGo.com/SpringCleanup)



## SEASONAL HIRING

The City of Altoona is now accepting applications for seasonal summer positions in the Streets, Utilities, and Finance departments. These positions run Monday through Friday, with hours of 7:30 AM-4 PM for Streets and Utilities, and 8 AM-4:30 PM for Finance. Scan the QR code for more details and to apply now!



## TIRE DROP-OFF EVENT

Spinning your wheels trying to get rid of an old tire or two? We can help! Altoona has partnered with Metro Waste Authority for a tire drop-off event April 13-16, from 6 AM-6 PM. During this event, residents can drop off up to five tires at 406 5th Ave. SW free of charge. Tires from tractors and bicycles, or solid tires from lawnmowers or golf carts, are not accepted. Learn more: [www.WhereItShouldGo.com/TireDropOff](http://www.WhereItShouldGo.com/TireDropOff)



**ALTOONA**  
1011 35<sup>th</sup> ST SW  
3 Bed  
2 Bath

**\$289,950**

**ALTOONA**  
907 7<sup>th</sup> AVE SE #16  
2 Bed  
2 Bath

**\$148,000**

**ALTOONA**  
705 35<sup>th</sup> ST SW  
4 Bed  
3 Bath

**\$460,000**

**ALTOONA**  
3217 LAKEVIEW DR SE  
3 Bed  
3 Bath

**\$445,000**

**ALTOONA**  
713 17<sup>th</sup> Ave SW  
3 Bed  
3 Bath

**\$399,500**

**ALTOONA**  
1110 SANDALWOOD CT SW  
5 Bed  
4 Bath

**\$425,000**

**ALTOONA**  
1005 6<sup>th</sup> ST NW  
3 Bed  
2 Bath

**\$259,000**

**ALTOONA**  
1267 BENTWOOD CT  
4 Bed  
3 Bath

**\$362,500**

**ALTOONA**  
1429 25<sup>th</sup> AVE SW  
5 Bed  
3 Bath

**SIMILAR TO**  
**\$695,000**

**ALTOONA**  
545 MAGGIE LN  
2 Bed  
2 Bath

**\$198,900**

**BONDURANT**  
307 NE ASPEN DR  
4 Bed  
4 Bath

**\$525,000**

**PLEASANT HILL**  
625 NE 72nd ST  
5 Bed  
5 Bath

**\$1.5M**



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