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Living

MAGAZINE

A 'fur-ever' HOME

Residents share stories about the animals they rescued.

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TO THE rescue

Some of you have spent a great deal of money on your cat or dog, and you have a wonderful pet. Some of you spent the same or more, and you have a lousy pet. I am convinced that getting a good pet is often the luck of the draw. Much like with children, genetics and upbringing are important, but they don't help explain how one from the same litter can be so drastically different from the next one.



Jolene and I have had six pets during our time together — two cats and four dogs. We reluctantly inherited the first cat, D.C., from Jolene's parents who went south for the winter. The other cat, Reggie, was adopted from the Animal Rescue League. Both were good cats, as far as cats go.

Our first dog, Roxy, was from a rescue league specific to the breed. It was delivered to us from Missouri, and the dog that showed up didn't look anything like the one on the website. But, that was OK, as we loved that little, chubby, tail-less dog anyway.

We adopted the next dog, Max, from a neighbor's friend who was moving out of the country. It was a purebred that he wrote a big check for. Our third and fourth dogs, Kobie and Layla, came from rescue leagues again.

These were all adult dogs when we got them, and all but one have since died. Jolene called them "short-term investments." Her words, not mine. The lone survivor is not fond of babies, so it was shipped off to Jolene's brother in Washington state for a simpler life once our grandson was born.

We didn't pay more than \$40 for any pet we had, including adoption fees. We may have paid more for the right pet, but we simply didn't see the need to do so, and we were happy to adopt rescue animals that needed a home. They certainly all had their quirks. In my experience, every pet does. For that matter, every human does, too.

Meanwhile, rescue animals have warmed the hearts of many pet-owners, and they continue to do so. We share a few of their stories in this issue in hopes that you may be inspired to open your home to a rescue pet as well.

Have a great month and thanks for reading. ■

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A 'fur-ever' HOME

Residents share stories about the animals they rescued.

By Ashley Rullestad

Abandoned. Abused. Neglected. The world is full of animals — big and small — that don't know the comfort of a full belly, a warm place to sleep, and the love of a caring owner. Some people seek out these needy animals when looking to add a pet to their family. Others come across them unexpectedly and are moved to rescue them. Whatever the case, rescued pets often give their humans as much love as they receive.

Jennifer Brennan enjoys having a stream of foster kittens running through her home. Photo by Todd Rullestad

A zoo of one's own

Jennifer Brennan has a passion for animals and has had many pets, including dogs, cats, hamsters, mice, fish and frogs, along the way. Her first rescue experience was in high school when her family rescued a pregnant cat off the street.

“We adopted her and saw her kittens through until they could also be adopted. When we moved to Iowa, I knew I wanted to volunteer, but I wasn't sure what I wanted to do. I saw a post on Facebook for the ARL needing fosters, with a photo of a senior cat. We contacted the ARL, and we got that cat.”

That was March of 2015. The family fell in love with Betty, and she became part of the family. They fostered her for three years, without anyone ever inquiring to adopt her. When she passed, the family decided to foster a pair of kittens. From there, Brennan fell in love with neonates and watching them grow. Since then, the family has fostered more than 200 animals, mostly cats, since 2015.

Some of those animals also never left. They

have kept four cats total since 2015, as well as a hamster and two rats.

“Sometimes an animal just feels like part of the family, and it's too hard to let them go. Also, when a kitten comes in hissy and spitty, and you've socialized them into a warm fluffy loving cat, it's especially hard to give them up. And Funyun's stubby tail was too cute to give up.

“It is also rewarding to nurse sick and orphaned kittens to health, watch them grow into well socialized, happy kittens, knowing they will be part of a loving family,” Brennan says.

The Brennans enjoy having a steady stream of kittens running through the house, and they miss it then they don't have fosters.

If you're interested in fostering, Brennan says to start slow and be patient. The foster group you work with will have lots of information to help you, and there are also tons of videos online to help.

“Be kind to yourself as you learn — and enjoy it,” she says.

The chicken cat

Roni Argetsinger's sister, Dori, is an animal person and has, since they were little kids, rescued animals. At one time, the sisters had chickens in their basement. Dori rescued a



Roni Argetsinger rescued Fidge after he was found alone in a chicken coop.

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squirrel named Jeffrey that lived with her for years. She also rescued a ground squirrel named Peanut. She has had ducks, too. Now, she rescues cats.

“She has bottle fed many, many kittens that people bring to her to save. I believe she has more than 10 living with her now. Two are handicapped, and one she found along the road that had been hit by a car. Another had been shot in a domestic abuse case. She has quite the crew.”

In 2024, one of Roni’s more senior cats passed away from heart failure, which left them with one older cat. A couple of months later, someone found a lone brand-new baby kitten, eyes still closed, no mother in sight, in their chicken coop, and the chickens were not happy. They heard about Dori, and she took this little one in. She was able to bottle feed him, and he survived. She was able to coerce Roni and her husband into adopting him.

Dori had named him Fidget because he never, ever held still. She figured he fidgeted away from his mother, so his name stuck, Fidge for short. He came to live with Roni at about 10 weeks old. Their veterinarian and all of his staff, however, refer to him as “Spicy.” Fidge does not like the vet, and it takes him a long time to warm up to most visitors to the Argetsinger home. However, he is also the most loving cat and has attached himself to Roni’s husband, Michael. His favorite place to sleep is on Michael’s lap where he then sucks on his paw.

“I have a photo from this past Christmas. The photo looks majestic. However, Fidge wreaked havoc on that tree all season long. I



Roni Argetsinger and her rescue cat, Fidge.

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FEATURE

am positive that I have seen our other older cat just shake his head at some of the antics that Fidge pulls off in our house.”

Dori continues to rescue cats, and Roni isn't the only recipient. Her son, who lives in Ames, also has one of her rescues — a deaf cat. Her daughter in Omaha has another. Though they love their cats, Roni and Dori also want to remind people to get their pets spayed and neutered to control the animal population.

“For us, the best thing about having pets and giving them a good home is the fact that they are loyal friends. We can trust them with any information. They listen to us and are not judgmental at all. And we can tell they love us.”

A dog's life

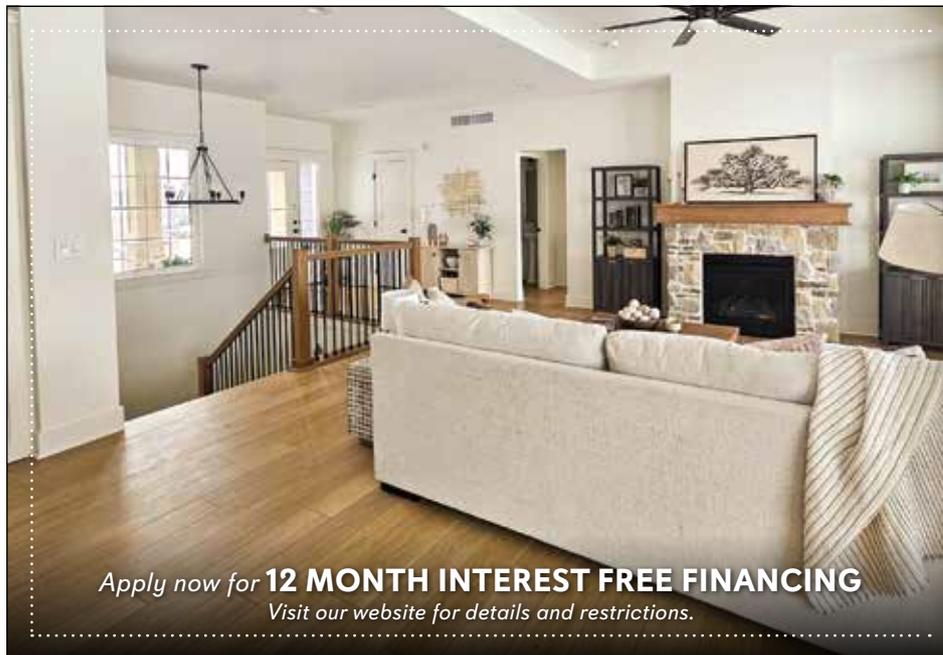
Kris Baerenwald and Jerry Bowhay are the happy pet parents to three dogs and two cats, all rescued. They all have come from different places, but now they're one happy family.

Emily, their medium-sized mixed breed, was found through petfinder.com. The local humane society had found her walking around downtown Williamsburg, and Kris jokes that she just didn't make it to the outlet mall before being picked up. Emily turned Sweet Sixteen on Feb. 14, and they had professional portraits taken of her for the occasion.

They have other two rescues as well. They got George, a pure-bred Shih Tzu, when he was just 7 months old after his owner died suddenly.



Kris Baerenwald and Jerry Bowhay knew their dog, Jack, was meant to join their family.



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FEATURE

“She was the neighbor of a good friend,” Kris says. “After she told us about him, we had to have him. Then there is Jack, our newest member of our family. We drove down to the Chariton Humane Society for him. We were looking for a male dog, and we were planning on calling him Jack after Jerry’s deceased father. I saw his picture, that caught my eye, and his name was already Jack. We went down the next day.”

Little was known about Jack, just that he and his siblings were surrendered. He was 4 months old and already a good size pup. He displayed some possession aggression. Kris did some research and got a DNA test showing Jack is a super mutt, meaning there are seven or more breeds found in his DNA.

“Now I understand some of the things he does. I found a trainer who gave us some good tips and, a year later, he is the sweetest dog who listens well and is very affectionate. He gets along fabulously with the others, including the cats — honestly, he is afraid of them. Some people are surprised that he has changed so much, but again, with love, safety and patience, you will gain so much love back.”

The couple like supporting rescues because they say they are important. In some cases, before they are rescued, the only interaction an animal has had is with a human who wasn’t caring or even nice.

“I want to give them the opportunity to see that not all humans are like that, and that there are humans like me, that will give them love, safety and fun.” ■



Kris Baerenwald’s rescue dog, Emily, just turned 16.



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THIRD Jump START vehicle giveaway

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

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

The giveaway was made possible through the donation of the vehicle from a customer of the local shop and the collective effort of Shade Tree Auto's technicians, advisors and leadership team, who inspected, repaired and prepared the vehicle to ensure it was dependable and ready for daily use. Local vendors such as Arnold's Motor Supply and Factory Motor Parts also played a role by supporting the Jump START mission through donations and helping spread awareness of the program. Non-profit partnerships with 1-800-Charity Cars and 214Life.org helped with the taxable donation and title transfer.

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



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

and offer genuine support during a critical moment.

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

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

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Locally owned ANKENY

Ankeny Living magazine salutes locally owned businesses. When you patronize these establishments, you are greeted by neighbors and friends — people who live in the community and invest in their livelihood here. They support local causes, are involved in area activities, and are dedicated to the success of the town they live in. And, more of the money you spend at locally owned businesses stays in the community. Thank you, local business owners, for helping to make the community a wonderful place to live.

Photo courtesy of Uptown Ankeny



SUNMED/ YOUR CBD STORE

Locally owned
ANKENY

OWNER: Lacie Navin

ADDRESS: 2732 SE Delaware Ave, Suite 160, Ankeny

PHONE: 515-964-9862

WEBSITE: www.greenonyxinhealth.com



SUNMED/Your CBD Store is a leading destination for customers seeking quality products, a big selection, and a welcoming local shopping experience! The store offers a thoughtfully selected mix of everyday wellness products and specialty items designed to support healthy, balanced lifestyles with modern plant-based products.

A major focus of the store is health and wellness. SUNMED/Your CBD Store proudly carries nutrition products from Clean Simple Eats, including high-quality protein powders, electrolyte drink mixes, and other supplements that help customers fuel workouts, maintain energy, and support daily nutrition and hydration goals. The store also offers natural wellness products such as essential oils from doTERRA.

These oils are commonly used for aromatherapy, relaxation, and creating a calming home environment, giving customers natural tools to support overall well-being.

In addition, SUNMED/Your CBD Store carries High Quality hemp-derived THC products (and THC free hemp products as well) that comply with regulations approved by the State of Iowa. The store offers drinks, gummies, oils, pain relief creams, and SO much more!

With friendly service, quality wellness products, and a commitment to the local community, SUNMED/Your CBD Store continues to grow as a trusted neighborhood shopping destination for residents in Ankeny and surrounding areas.



LUCKY GAL TATTOO & PIERCING

Locally owned
ANKENY

Left to Right: Michele Pruisner, Curt Peterson, Ricky Hathaway, Susie Maj, Macee Pruisner, Bri Brown, Amy Ross, Cameron Kelly, Bailey Carpenter, Meressa Moriarity

OWNERS: Chris & Michele Pruisner
ADDRESS: 1550 N Ankeny Blvd, Ste. 104, Ankeny
PHONE: 515-257-7940
WEBSITE: www.luckygaltattoo.com



Lucky Gal Tattoo & Piercing has grown steadily since opening in 2011, establishing itself as a trusted, locally owned studio known for artistic excellence, professionalism, and a strong commitment to client safety. Over the years, the Ankeny-based studio has built a loyal following and has been voted “Best of Des Moines” tattoo and piercing studio for nine consecutive years.

The studio offers a wide range of services, including custom tattoos, professional body piercings, laser tattoo removal, laser hair removal, and paramedical tattooing such as 3D areola restoration, scar camouflage, and gender-affirming services. Each service is performed using professional-grade equipment and strict hygiene standards to ensure clients receive

exceptional artistry in a safe, comfortable environment.

As the studio has grown, Lucky Gal Tattoo & Piercing has expanded its team of talented artists and specialists, bringing together professionals with diverse styles and expertise to help bring clients’ ideas and personal stories to life through body art.

The business also remains active in the Des Moines community through charitable initiatives, sponsorships, and support for local schools and events.

“Thank you to every client who has trusted us with your stories and visions,” said owners Chris and Michele Pruisner.

“We wouldn’t be here without you, and we’re excited to make the next 15 years even bigger.”



The Pietig Family

ANKENY FAMILY VISION CENTER

Locally owned
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OWNERS: Dr. Mandy Pietig & Dr. Todd Pietig
ADDRESS: 311 N Ankeny Blvd, Ankeny
PHONE: 515-964-1671
WEBSITE: www.afvcweb.com



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For nearly 50 years, Ankeny Family Vision Center has cared for generations of families in our community. Founded by Dr. Ken Hansen, the practice was entrusted to the Pietig family ten years ago so this legacy of care could continue. Todd and Mandy Pietig have proudly called Ankeny home for nearly 20 years and are enjoying raising their three sons here.

Their oldest son, Alex (14), will soon begin working in the clinic while continuing his long-standing role mowing the clinic lawn. Austin (11) is expanding his skills by helping wash the exterior windows, and the youngest, Max (8), mostly just enjoys the suckers and Tootsie Rolls at the front desk.

We believe the best care begins with relationships. Our team takes the time to listen, understand your needs, and treat every patient with the same compassion we would show our own family and friends. We proudly provide specialized services including advanced dry eye treatments, specialty contact lenses—from bifocals to myopia control—along with care for glaucoma, macular degeneration, and vision and sports therapy.

While we invest in the latest technology and innovative treatments, our mission remains simple: to enhance your quality of life and build relationships that last for generations.

Our family is here to take care of your family.



Standing: Jenn Perry-Thoren, Tracy Kroeger, Deanna Pannell, Aubri Lamb and Vanessa Prado.
Kneeling: Bri Houlihan, Brianna Ditsworth, Jasmine Bieghler, Esmeralda Prado and Sam Wheeler

WHOLESOME PET ESSENTIALS

Locally owned
ANKENY

OWNERS: Bob Leavens & Tracy Kroeger
ADDRESS: 2005 S Ankeny Blvd, Ste 200, Ankeny
PHONE: 515-289-2006
WEBSITE: www.wholesomepetessentials.com



Wholesome Pet Essentials has grown steadily since opening as a locally and family-owned pet supply and grooming store focused on high-quality nutrition and holistic care. Over its many years serving Ankeny and the greater Polk County community, the business has built a loyal customer base through personalized service, premium products, and a team deeply knowledgeable about pet health and wellbeing

From full-service grooming and self-serve wash stations to a carefully curated selection of natural and wholesome pet foods, treats, toys, supplements, and accessories, the store continues expanding what it offers to meet diverse pet needs. Recent updates to the product lineup include new nutritional brands

and specialty items that reflect current trends in pet wellness.

Staff growth has been notable as well, with experienced groomers and new sales associates joining in recent years, further enhancing the client experience.

The store engages with the local community through sponsorships, educational outreach, and participation in pet-related events, reinforcing its role as a trusted neighborhood resource for pet parents. With a welcoming atmosphere and commitment to quality, Wholesome Pet Essentials remains a standout independent business in Ankeny's small business landscape.



ANKENY FAMILY COUNSELING

Locally owned
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OWNER: Vicki Ailey Roberson
ADDRESS: 1910 SW Plaza Shops Ln, Ankeny
PHONE: 515-508-1150
WEBSITE: www.ankenyfamilycounseling.com



Founded in 2015 by licensed mental health counselor Vicki Ailey Roberson, Ankeny Family Counseling has become a trusted source of emotional support and therapeutic care for families and individuals throughout the Ankeny and Des Moines metro area.

What truly sets our practice apart is our deep connection to the community. Vicki grew up right here in Ankeny, and her passion for supporting local families is at the heart of everything we do. As a hometown practice, we understand the values, pressures, and everyday experiences that shape life in our community.

At Ankeny Family Counseling, we are proud to serve our neighbors, friends, and fellow residents. We are committed to creating a warm, welcoming space where clients feel heard, supported, and respected. Our mission is simple: to help individuals and families thrive through life's challenges by combining professional expertise with compassionate, personalized care.

Our team provides a wide range of services, including individual therapy, marriage counseling, child and adolescent therapy, treatment for anxiety and depression, trauma therapy, and performance-focused services such as sports psychology. Our licensed clinicians use evidence-based approaches—including EMDR, CBT, relational therapy, and family systems therapy—to develop treatment plans tailored to each client's unique needs and goals.

Recently, we moved into a larger and more inviting location, allowing us to expand our services and create an even more comfortable and supportive environment for those we serve. Whether you're managing everyday stress or navigating deeper emotional challenges, our team is here to help—because we're not just a counseling practice; we're part of this community, and we care deeply about helping our neighbors thrive.

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The care of families and their loved ones is the very reason for our business. Whether the choice is to have a traditional funeral with viewing and burial, or a simple cremation, all of the services we offer are provided by our own staff, on site, with care and compassion. The appearance of a loved one at their funeral is important. We understand that and take great pride in the work we do. We handle all of the preparation work at our licensed facility with licensed staff.

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Our Cemetery:

Ankeny Memorial Gardens was established in 1967. Ankeny Memorial Gardens has provided a dignified final resting place for thousands of residents and has become a meaningful landmark in Ankeny.

Beyond serving as a burial site, Ankeny Memorial Gardens has also become a place for community remembrance. Each year on Memorial Day, residents gather at 10:30 am for a service honoring veterans. A special area known as the Walk of Honor recognizes military service members.



The **ONLY** poll mailed to residential households. **VOTE NOW!**

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.

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FOOD AND DRINK

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

AUTOMOTIVE

- Auto Service
- Auto Body Shop
- Car Dealership

COMMUNITY

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

SHOPPING

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

ENTERTAINMENT

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

HEALTH/BEAUTY

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

HEALTH/BEAUTY

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

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- Place for Guests to Stay
- Contractor/Construction Services/Remodeling
- Cleaning Company
- Painting Company
- Home Builder

A PRANK turned proposal

McKinley remembers a fun engagement story.

One thing about Chelsea McKinley and her husband, Cody, is that they have never been ones to take life too seriously.

“Life can be hard sometimes, and laughter keeps us going,” McKinley says.

The couple married in August 2012 at Ankeny United Methodist Church, with their wedding reception following at the FFA Enrichment Center on the DMACC campus.

But before that came a fun — and funny — engagement story. It was April 1, 2011, around 5:30 a.m. McKinley was awake and getting ready to head to work when she went to put on jewelry to complete her outfit. There, she found a green Ames Silversmithing box with a Post-it note on top that said, “Why don’t you wear this today?”

She opened the box, and inside was a slightly smaller green leather box with a gold clasp.

“My heart started racing because I just knew this was the moment, the proposal I had been waiting for (Cody and I had been dating for around five years),” McKinley shares. “I opened the smaller box, and it was, in fact, a ring box; however, it was empty, except for a small Post-it note that said, ‘Happy April Fool’s Day.’ I naturally was disappointed and upset.”

McKinley went into the other room where Cody was and asked where he got a ring box like that, telling him his prank was successful because she thought a proposal was happening.

“I turn around to leave the room, and when I turned back, Cody was holding my engagement ring in his hand,” McKinley recalls. “I naturally asked him if the ring was real, because of the empty ring boxes, and he assured me it was very real, as was this proposal. I said yes, put the ring on and headed into work.”

When she shared the news with her co-workers, they laughed and didn’t really believe her — it was April Fool’s Day, after all — but, upon seeing the ring, they quickly switched to cheers of congratulations.

Even amid the pranks, the proposal was meaningful to McKinley because the execution was so well thought out.

“I was on an emotional rollercoaster and completely taken off guard,” she says. “I was excited then disappointed then excited again all in the span of about five minutes. I also knew Cody had worked hard to pull this proposal off, not to mention the thought he put into designing my engagement ring.”

Prior to proposing, Cody had asked his future father-in-law for his blessing, which he wholeheartedly gave. Even more special, the engagement took place in the couple’s home — the same place where they later welcomed their two children five and seven years later.

McKinley has enjoyed reflecting on the engagement story, especially now.

“We were surrounded by supportive family and friends and celebrated 13 years of marriage last year,” she says. “This year marks 18 years of life in Ankeny for Cody and me, and we feel so blessed to be surrounded by such an amazing community.” ■



When Chelsea McKinley’s husband, Cody, first proposed, it was an April Fools Day joke, but he quickly became serious with a real proposal.



NEWS BRIEF

DR. DREIBELBEIS joins On With Life

As part of On With Life’s goal to deliver high-quality, coordinated medical care across all settings, Dr. Eric Dreibelbeis has been appointed chief medical officer. This new role will provide medical leadership for the organization, help build collaborative relationships with other providers in the community, and develop initiatives to enhance care for those served through On With Life’s various programs.



“Bringing on a chief medical officer has been a long-time goal of On With Life,” said CEO Jean Shelton. “Dr. Dreibelbeis has an impressive background in clinical leadership, medical education and quality improvement. We look forward to his leadership and to the positive impact he will have on our persons served, families, staff and mission.”

Dr. Dreibelbeis has come back to his home state of Iowa after spending seven years in Alaska, where he most recently served as the chief medical officer at St. Elias Specialty Hospital in Anchorage. He is board certified in internal medicine and brings extensive experience in hospital medicine, medical oversight and committee leadership to On With Life.

“Like On With Life, I am committed to patient safety and process improvement,” said Dr. Dreibelbeis. “I was drawn to On With Life’s person-centered approach to care and am excited to work alongside a team that is so passionate about what they do.” ■

Check for cancellations

Upcoming in Ankeny 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.

Rotary Clubs of Ankeny Roaring '20s Charity Event

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

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

Passion Studios Free Intro Session

Friday, April 10, 6:30 p.m.
Passion Studios, 114 N.W. 5th St., Suite 203, Ankeny

"I've always wanted to play that instrument..." Does this sound like you? Students at Passion Studios learn in two to three months what takes traditional lessons two or more years to learn. Attend this free 45-minute session to learn more about their methods, see a sample lesson in action and get answers for any questions you may have. You'll also tour the studio, meet staff and hear their personal stories.

25th Year Celebration "Let Us Sing"

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

The Ankeny Community Chorus is celebrating its 25th year with a celebration concert, "Let Us Sing" for the public.

The Sparkle Run

May 3
Ankeny DMACC campus

The Sparkle Run is held each year in remembrance of Ankeny student Erin Moomey. Over the past 11 years, run organizers have donated hundreds of thousands of dollars to several organizations. Last year, they donated \$33,500 to Unravel Iowa, which works to fund pediatric cancer research in Iowa. This year, organizers are supporting a cause near and dear to Erin's heart: therapy dogs. Blank Children's Hospital will be working with canine assistants to add an in-house therapy dog. In addition, the Sparkle Run will also be supporting the American Cancer Society's PAWS program, which serves the University of Iowa's Stead Family Children's Hospital with trained dogs. Packet pick-up and family activities will be held on race day at 2 p.m., with the 5K walk/run and one mile fun run for kids. The cost is \$30 per person for ages 19 and older and \$20 per person for those 18 and younger and includes a T-shirt, which can be picked up the day of the event. To register or make a donation, visit sparklerun.org or check out The Sparkle Run on Facebook.

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GOOD FRIDAY
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April 4 at 8pm

EASTER
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EVENTS IN THE AREA

Check for cancellations

Spring Classes at the Ankeny Art Center

1520 S.W. Ordinance Road, Ankeny

For information and to register for classes, visit www.ankenyartcenter.org.

Adult Spring Classes

- Watercolor Basics: Thursdays, March 26 to May 14, 9:30-11:30 a.m.
- Drawing II: Mondays, March 23 to May 11, 6:30-8:30 p.m.
- Acrylic II: Wednesdays, March 25 to May 13, 6:30-8:30 p.m.
- Watercolor II: Tuesdays, March 24 to May 12, 9:30-11:30 a.m.; Tuesdays, March 24 to May 12, 6:30-8:30 p.m.

Kids Spring Classes

- Grades K-4 Drawing: Saturdays, April 4-25, 9-10:30 a.m.
- Grades K-4 Pottery Sculpture: Saturdays, April 4-25, 10:30 a.m. to noon
- Grades 5-8 Pottery Wheel: Saturdays, April 4-25, 9-11 a.m.
- Grades 5-8 Painting: Saturdays, April 4-25, 10:30 a.m. to noon

Ankeny Art Center Arts Festival

Saturday, May 16, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Uptown Ankeny

Mark your calendar for the third annual Ankeny Art Center Arts Festival. ■

NEWS BRIEF

SPELLING Bee winner

Caleb DeVan is the champion of the first-ever Living History Farms Spelling Bee. A 14-year-old eighth grader at Southview Middle School in Ankeny, Caleb outlasted nine fellow competitors to claim the title and earn a coveted spot at the Scripps National Spelling Bee in Washington, D.C., this May. Photo by Paul Houston ■



TAKE THE POLL

WHICH OF THESE FIRST SIGNS OF SPRING IS YOUR FAVORITE?

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3. Jacket weather
4. Green grass
5. Flowers blooming

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Job change?

Whether retiring or changing jobs, you'll want to know your retirement account options.

There are four potential options for your 401(k) when leaving an employer:

- Leave it in your former employer's 401(k) plan, if allowed by the plan.
- Move it to your new employer's 401(k) plan, if you've changed employers and your new employer plan allows it.
- Roll the account over to an individual retirement account (IRA).
- Cash it out, which is subject to potential tax consequences.

We can talk through your financial goals and find the option that works best for you.



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INVESTMENT

By Jakeb Bakken

THE REAL meaning of diversification in investing

We have all heard the phrase, "Don't put all your eggs in one basket." It is solid investing advice that emphasizes the importance of diversifying your investments. Unfortunately, some people think it means spreading their money across multiple financial institutions, often working with several different financial advisors.

However, when financial professionals talk about diversification, they are referring to diversifying your investment assets, not your accounts. Confusing the two could hurt your financial future.



Scattered accounts may affect costs, paperwork and advice. Spreading assets among multiple financial institutions could lead to drawbacks. First, multiple providers may mean multiple account fees, transaction costs and mutual fund expenses that can add up quickly. Generally, the more assets you have with one financial provider, the more opportunities for reducing or eliminating these costs.

Scattered accounts also could increase paperwork. You will receive multiple monthly statements and numerous tax forms, making it harder to see the big picture of your financial health. This can lead to missed opportunities and poor decision-making.

Finally, working with multiple financial advisors may result in conflicting advice and duplicated investment strategies. Without a comprehensive view of your entire portfolio, each financial advisor may recommend investments that don't work well together, potentially delaying your progress toward reaching financial goals.

There's strength in consolidation. Consolidating your accounts with a single financial advisor gives you opportunities to develop a closer, more comprehensive relationship with someone who understands your complete financial picture. This financial advisor can provide informed guidance and help eliminate any conflicting advice from working with multiple professionals.

Consolidation also makes it easier to implement a well-diversified portfolio that fits your risk tolerance. With investments all in one place, you can see exactly how your assets are allocated and make strategic adjustments as needed. It becomes simpler to gauge aggregate investment returns, assess your portfolio assets and rebalance when necessary.

For retirement planning, consolidation can be especially valuable. IRAs at different providers can be consolidated at any time without tax consequences when assets are transferred directly between providers. When you retire, your 401(k) can typically be rolled over into an IRA, streamlining your retirement income strategy.

True diversification still matters. While consolidating accounts makes sense, diversifying your actual investments remains crucial. A good financial advisor will help you carefully build a balanced mix of stocks and bonds appropriate for your age and goals. As you approach retirement, this typically means shifting toward a more balanced portfolio that still provides growth to combat inflation while offering stability and income.

Diversification goes beyond types of investments. Take bonds, for instance: You can diversify by bond type (municipal, corporate and government), bond maturity (through a strategy called "laddering") and bond sector to spread risk across different parts of the economy.

How to get started. If your savings and investment accounts are scattered among various financial institutions, consider consolidating everything with one trusted financial advisor. The streamlined record-keeping, potential for reduced fees and comprehensive financial guidance can help improve your wealth-building potential while making your financial life simpler to manage. ■

Information provided by Jakeb Bakken CFP®, AAMS®, Financial Advisor, 917 E. First St., Schneider's Square, Suite D, Ankeny, IA 50021, 515-964-0808. This article was written by Edward Jones for use by your local Edward Jones Financial Advisor. Edward Jones, Member SIPC

EMPTY

When I was a child, our church would host Easter egg hunts for the community. I can vividly remember running through the grass to gather as many Easter eggs as I could find. Admittedly, my singular focus was the candy inside the egg. If I was lucky, the egg would contain a small Snickers bar. If I was unlucky, there would be a 2- or 3-year-old Tootsie roll, which was more likely to break a sweet tooth than satisfy one.



Occasionally, I would open an Easter egg and discover something seemingly worse than rock-hard, stale old candy. Occasionally, I would open a plastic egg and find it...

Empty.

The disappointment and/or dissatisfaction of the empty Easter egg pales in comparison to the emptiness we often discover as adults. We find ourselves searching for things that satisfy: meaning, purpose, hope, peace and belonging. Perhaps you have felt the sting of making your way to the place where the “candy” was supposed to be only to find the proverbial Easter egg full of something unhelpful or even harmful. Maybe you’ve courageously run to the place you were told would have everything you needed only to find it empty.

My job is serving as a pastor at a protestant church. Even though I, too, have felt the cold and lonely experience of emptiness, I have also known the joy that can only come because a tomb was empty. In my faith tradition, my hope is grounded in the truth that a place which was supposed to entomb a Savior was discovered empty on that first Easter morning.

My faith and scripture inform me that, though Jesus Christ was buried and his body filled a tomb, God’s love and promise were that nothing can separate us from God’s love — not even death. The empty tomb where Jesus’ body once lay is a reminder that Jesus is alive and that places or things which are empty are not the end of the story.

This Easter season, I want to encourage you that your story is not over. If you are feeling empty or abandoned, I pray you hear that “empty” can be the place you walk away from with a God that promises never to leave you alone. If you are worried the empty feeling is because you have missed out or made too many mistakes, know that, in this very moment, God loves you and offers to provide you with what you need.

When I open an empty Easter egg this year, I will give thanks for the reminder that I never have to worry about feeling totally empty or alone again. On Easter, I celebrate that Jesus Christ is alive forevermore. I am confident that God does not lead us toward things that are empty to leave us there but rather walks with us beyond emptiness into a life filled with hope, purpose and peace.

God loves you. I love you. Happy Easter! Because the tomb is empty, I now know that my heart never need be... ■

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

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Ankeny First United Methodist Church

EASTER
morning worship

Uptown Campus
206 SW Walnut St.
6:00am, 9am, 10:30am

Christian Life Center
710 NE 36th St.
9am, 10:30am

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For more information about our multi-campus church, visit us at
www.ankenyfirst.org

MEET Logan Dabb

BASP site director helps kids shine.

Logan Dabb currently serves as the site leader for Crocker and Prairie Trail elementary schools as a part of the Before and After School Program (BASP). He started his work with BASP in 2018 as a junior in high school as a program assistant at Northeast Elementary and slowly climbed to the position he holds today at Crocker.

“I began wanting to work in this program because it offered a new experience every day, and it is very different from any other childcare program in the state. It slowly grew into a love of being a leader and being a person that all staff and students can look up to as a role model or just someone they can trust.”

Dabb’s favorite thing about being at Crocker this year is how supportive and welcoming the staff has been, from the principals to the teachers, nutrition staff and the custodians.

From day one, Dabb has felt like a valued member of the Crocker family. Though his work has had ups and downs, he says he has truly enjoyed working with a new team and new students navigating new experiences that he hasn’t had before at other sites.

“Some of the biggest challenges I experience are that every day is unique and offers a new challenge, so going into the day is like rolling a 20-sided dice. The work I do is so rewarding; there is nothing better than feeling as if you have made a difference in someone’s day. I take a lot of pride in offering a safe and fun space for our BASP kids to spend their time after school.”

If he’s not working, Dabb likes to spend time with family, friends and his girlfriend. He is an avid reader and tries to get a few chapters read every day.

“I have also recently been enthralled in the television competition ‘Survivor,’ so that’s a fun thing taking up a lot of my time right now,” he says. ■



Logan Dabb enjoys that each day is different at the Before and After School Program.

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MEET Kallie Simmons

A career change to teaching was just the ticket.

Kallie Simmons is an eighth-grade literacy teacher at Northview Middle School. Her path to teaching was non-traditional. She worked in insurance at Farm Bureau right out of college. At 25, she decided to join Teach for America and was assigned an elementary teaching position in a rural, impoverished town outside of Memphis, Tennessee.



Kallie Simmons says she enjoys teaching at the middle school level where kids are growing so much as learners and people.

“My long-term plan wasn’t to teach. I thought I wanted to go into education research, but I fell in love with being in the classroom and the promise of public education. I can’t imagine doing anything else now,” she says.

Simmons is now in her second year in Ankeny and says she enjoys her position teaching middle school.

“It is such an exciting time with so many opportunities for growth for them, both as learners and as people. As for literacy, I’ve always been a big reader and writer. It’s really fun to see students connect with a text or an idea.”

Simmons’ early teaching experiences were in a challenging setting, and she says she often felt like she was pushing uphill against impossible odds. Ankeny is quite different from that, and she says she is excited to feel like she has the resources and opportunity to push students to the next level in their learning, adding that the administration is supportive, and the students come ready for the challenges of eighth grade.

Like many teachers, Simmons thinks one of the best things about being a teacher is hearing from students years later about what they learned in class and how it impacted them in some way.

“I love when students come back to see me, or when they send emails and letters. The biggest challenge? Teaching is such people-driven work, and, because of that, there are just moments you observe and are part of that are heartbreaking and hard to detach from after work.”

When she isn’t at school, you will find Simmons spending time with her 3-year-old son, Jack. They frequent the library and parks and like to attend events at Northview. In the summer, they spend a lot of time at the pool.

“In terms of hobbies, I’m training for a half-marathon, and I’m a member of Powerlife Yoga and Barre, so I take classes there frequently. Jack and I also like to cook and bake together, and we have a big garden in the summer.” ■

BOELMAN joins First National Bank

First National Bank announced the appointment of Troy Boelman as senior vice president and commercial lending officer serving the Ankeny market. Boelman brings extensive experience in commercial banking and a proven track record in business development, reinforcing First National Bank’s commitment to growth in Ankeny and the greater Des Moines Metro area.



“We are excited to welcome Troy to our commercial banking team,” said Dean M. Whitaker, metro market commercial team leader at First National Bank. “His expertise in commercial banking and dedication to business development make him a tremendous asset to our team and the communities we serve.”

Boelman holds a Bachelor of Business Administration degree in Finance from the University of Iowa, which has served as a strong foundation throughout his successful career in commercial banking.

Prior to joining First National Bank, Boelman served as commercial relationship manager at Lincoln Savings Bank. He is deeply engaged in the Ankeny community, currently serving as a board member of the Ankeny Area Chamber of Commerce, board president of the Mid Iowa Development Fund, and as a member and past president of the Rotary Club of Ankeny. He has also served on the board of the Ankeny Business and Industry Collaborative.

Boelman resides in Ankeny and has three children — Brooke, Margaret and Troy Casjen (“Caz”). In his new role, Troy will focus on commercial business development, servicing existing portfolios, and contributing to the continued success of First National Bank. ■

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STOP the sniffles with Sick Day Soup

(Feature Impact) Coughs and sniffles don't have to derail you for long – not with a fresh, homemade stockpot full of Sick Day Chicken Noodle Soup.

Loaded with rotisserie chicken, celery and carrots, it's sure to warm you from the inside-out as a warm, comforting meal. Plus, with eight servings, this dish can help solve dinnertime dilemmas throughout the week by storing leftovers in the refrigerator and reheating on the stove.

Warm up your winter meals with more comforting ideas available at Culinary.net. ■

Sick Day Chicken Noodle Soup

Recipe adapted from Tastes Better from Scratch

Prep time: 20 minutes

Cook time: 20 minutes

Servings: 8

INGREDIENTS

- 1/2 tablespoon butter
- 2 ribs celery, diced
- 3-4 large carrots, diced
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 10 cups chicken stock or broth
- 1/8 teaspoon dried rosemary
- 1/8 teaspoon dried thyme
- 1/8 teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes
- salt, to taste
- pepper, to taste
- chicken bouillon cubes (optional)
- 4 cups dry egg noodles
- 3 cups cooked rotisserie chicken

DIRECTIONS

- In large stockpot over medium-high heat, saute butter, celery and carrots 3 minutes. Add garlic and cook 30 seconds.



Photo courtesy of Shutterstock

- Add chicken stock or broth and season with rosemary, thyme and crushed red pepper. Add salt and pepper, to taste. Taste and add chicken bouillon cubes, if desired, for flavor.
- Bring to boil. Add noodles and cook until al dente. Remove from heat once noodles are tender.
- Add chicken. Taste and adjust seasoning as desired.

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MEET the library board of trustees



The Ankeny Kirkendall Public Library Board of Trustees, from left: Amber Sommerfeld; Miranda Piepho, secretary; John Meyer; Fred Schuster, president; Heather Stephenson; Nancy Medema, vice-president; and Gene Lucht.

The Ankeny Kirkendall Public Library is governed by a board of trustees, which holds administrative authority to manage library affairs such as hiring a director, budgets, policies, strategic planning and advocacy. Public meetings are held the third Thursday of each month at 6:30 p.m. in the council chambers on the second floor of the library. The following are some statements on what a library means to them:

“The library means education, information, health and entertainment.”

“Libraries are a magical oasis. Libraries provide opportunities for community and are the only place you can spend as much time as you want without the expectation of spending money. Libraries are a community’s greatest resource.”

“The library represents lifelong learning, access to opportunity, and the heart of a strong community. It is a place where curiosity is encouraged, knowledge is shared freely, and people of all ages are supported in growing, learning and connecting.”

“Libraries are more than buildings filled with books — they are centers of learning, access, connection and opportunity. Serving on a library board is about protecting and strengthening that mission for everyone in the community.” ■

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SPRING is coming... and so are the parasites

Every spring, as the weather warms and pets spend more time outside, we start seeing the same unwelcome visitors return: fleas, ticks and mosquitoes.



Parasite prevention is one of the easiest ways to protect your pet's health. Fleas, ticks and mosquitoes aren't just annoying; they can transmit diseases and other parasites such as Lyme disease, ehrlichiosis and heartworm disease. These infections can cause significant illness and often require extensive treatment. And cats aren't immune either. Even indoor cats can pick up fleas brought in on clothing, other pets or visitors. Prevention, on the other hand, is simple, safe and far less stressful for both pets and their people.

With so many options available, though, choosing the right preventative can feel overwhelming. The short answer? Lifestyle. The best option depends on your pet's outdoor exposure, activity level and what fits best with your routine.

Flea and tick protection. Most flea and tick preventatives fall into three main categories.

- Topical treatments like Revolution and Frontline are applied to the skin and absorbed through the skin's oils. They're easy to apply monthly and are a good option for pets that refuse pills. However, frequent bathing or swimming may reduce effectiveness, and some pets with sensitive skin may develop irritation or hair loss at the application site.

- Oral chewable medications have become very popular. Products like NexGard, Bravecto, Simparica and Credelio are given every one to three months depending on the medication. Because they work systemically, they aren't affected by bathing or swimming, and many pets happily take them as a treat.

- A newer option for dogs is an injectable flea and tick preventative, which provides protection for an entire year with a single injection. This can be especially helpful for dogs who are difficult to medicate at home and helps ensure consistent protection (no missed doses).

Heartworm prevention. Heartworm disease is spread by mosquitoes and can be life-

threatening, but it is almost entirely preventable. Preventatives come in several forms, including monthly chewables, topical medications, or a once-yearly injectable option for dogs. Some chewables also include flea and tick protection, offering convenient all-in-one coverage.

Spring is a great time to revisit your pet's parasite prevention plan, but protection should always be year-round (yes, even in Iowa). Fleas thrive indoors regardless of the season, and some ticks remain active even during the winter months.

The good news is that we now have more safe and effective options than ever before. Your veterinary team can help you choose the preventative that best fits your pet's lifestyle and keeps them protected all year long. Because when it comes to parasites, the goal isn't just treatment, it's keeping our pets comfortable, healthy and able to enjoy the seasons right alongside us. ■

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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TALKING with a loved one about care at home

Starting a conversation with a family member about at-home support can feel uncomfortable. Many people worry about saying the wrong thing, creating tension, or being perceived as overstepping.



Yet when approached thoughtfully, these discussions can become productive, collaborative moments that help everyone feel more prepared for the future. Recent national surveys tell us 93% of older adults want to remain in their homes as they age, making conversations about at-home services and care increasingly relevant for families planning ahead.

A successful conversation often begins with the right conditions. Choosing a calm, familiar setting allows both people to feel at ease and focused. While moments of frustration or struggle might feel like natural openings, those situations can heighten emotions and defensiveness. A planned, unhurried conversation is more likely to lead to

understanding.

Framing also matters. Rather than positioning at-home care as a response to decline, it can be helpful to focus on what it makes possible. Many people are more receptive when the discussion centers on quality of life, independence, and support rather than on decline and loss.

As you prepare for the conversation, consider these practical tips:

- Focus on benefits, not problems. Highlight how receiving supportive services at home — such as help with grocery shopping, cleaning, cooking, organizing, and/or pet care — can support daily routines, provide companionship, and help your loved one remain safely at home.
- Research options. Gathering information ahead of time can help address concerns, while researching together can empower your loved one and keep them involved in decisions.
- Address cost and logistics openly. To decrease uncertainty, discuss pricing, financial resources, scheduling, and how care would fit into existing routines.
- Offer reassurance and patience. Aging-

related decisions often carry emotional weight. Let your loved one know you are there to support them, regardless of the timeline.

- Keep the door open. One conversation does not need to resolve everything. If your loved one is hesitant, suggest revisiting the topic later after they have had time to think.

- Providing reassurance is especially important. Life transitions can bring fear, grief, or resistance, even when support is needed. Consistent encouragement and listening can help build trust and reduce anxiety over time.

- Follow-up is just as critical as the first discussion. Checking in later reinforces that the conversation was about partnership, not pressure. If at-home care eventually is introduced, ongoing communication can help ensure the care plan continues to meet your loved one's needs. ■

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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WELLNESS

By Christopher M. Renze, D.C.

BENEFITS of B vitamins

B vitamins are a group of essential, water-soluble nutrients that play a central role in maintaining overall health. Rather than being a single vitamin, the B-complex includes eight distinct vitamins that work together to support energy production, nervous system function, cardiovascular health and cellular metabolism. Because the body does not store most B vitamins in significant amounts, regular intake through diet or supplementation is crucial.

One of the most important benefits of B vitamins is their role in energy metabolism. Vitamins such as B1 (thiamine), B2 (riboflavin), B3 (niacin) and B5 (pantothenic acid) help convert carbohydrates, fats and proteins into usable energy at the cellular level. While B vitamins do not provide energy directly like calories do, they are required for the biochemical reactions that allow the body to efficiently use fuel. Low levels can contribute to fatigue, weakness and reduced stamina.

B vitamins are also essential for brain and nervous system health. Vitamin B6 (pyridoxine) is involved in the production of neurotransmitters that influence mood, focus and sleep. Folate (B9) and vitamin B12 (cobalamin) are critical for maintaining healthy nerve cells and supporting cognitive function. Deficiencies, especially in B12, can lead to symptoms such as memory problems, numbness or tingling in the extremities, balance issues and mental fog, particularly in older adults.

Another key function of B vitamins is their role in red blood cell formation and oxygen transport. Folate, B6, and B12 help the body produce healthy red blood cells and prevent certain types of anemia. Adequate red blood cell production ensures that oxygen is efficiently delivered to tissues, supporting physical endurance, mental clarity and overall vitality.

B vitamins also contribute to cardiovascular health. Folate, B6 and B12 help regulate homocysteine levels in the blood. Elevated homocysteine has been associated with an increased risk of cardiovascular disease, so maintaining balanced levels may support heart and blood vessel health over time.

In addition, B vitamins support healthy skin, hair and nails. Biotin (B7) is particularly well known for its role in hair strength and nail integrity, while riboflavin and niacin help maintain healthy skin and mucous membranes. These vitamins also support proper cell turnover, contributing to overall tissue health.

B vitamins are found in a wide range of foods, including whole grains, leafy green vegetables, eggs, dairy products, meat, fish, legumes and nuts. Certain individuals — such as older adults, people under chronic stress, those with digestive disorders, or individuals following vegetarian or vegan diets — may be at higher risk for deficiency.

In summary, B vitamins are vital nutrients that support energy production, brain and nerve function, cardiovascular health and overall well-being. Ensuring adequate intake can play a meaningful role in supporting both daily performance and long-term health.

If you or someone you know is suffering from numbness, tingling or pain and have not found the relief, please consider chiropractic. They may be able to help. ■

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

BIOIDENTICAL hormone therapy

For years, many women avoided hormone therapy due to fear created by early studies that were widely misunderstood or misinterpreted. Much of the concern stemmed from the early 2000s reporting around hormone therapy, which led many women to believe all hormones were unsafe. Today, we understand far more about the role hormones play in women's health and the importance of individualized treatment.



Bioidentical Hormone Replacement Therapy (BHRT) uses hormones that are structurally identical to those produced by the human body. One of the most important hormones for women is estradiol, a form of estrogen that supports bone health, cardiovascular health, brain function, skin quality, and overall well-being. When appropriately prescribed and monitored by a qualified medical provider, estradiol therapy can be both safe and effective for many women experiencing symptoms of hormonal decline.

Modern BHRT offers several delivery options that allow treatment to be tailored to each patient's needs. Common methods include subcutaneous hormone pellets, which provide a steady release of hormones over several months, as well as transdermal patches and topical creams that deliver hormones through the skin. These methods allow for consistent hormone levels while avoiding the metabolic effects associated with oral hormone pills.

With updated research and individualized care, BHRT is helping women safely restore balance, improve quality of life, and feel like themselves again. ■

Provided by Dr. Stephanie Koos, RenuYou MedSpa, 1705 N. Ankeny Blvd., Suite B, Ankeny, www.renuyouaestheticsandbotox.com, 515-330-8900.

PLAN AHEAD

By Sarah Masteller

WITH SPRING and summer approaching...

Are you planning for that special trip? Will you be traveling to spend time with family? Perhaps you will be traveling outside of the country.

Have you ever thought about what would happen if something unfortunate happened during the time you were away and you needed the services of a funeral home?

We don't like to think about these things, but, the truth is, they can happen. And when they do, having a plan in place can make a world of difference.

Perhaps a travel plan is something for you to consider: a plan that would take care of everything and bring your loved one back home if such an unfortunate situation occurred.

You might be surprised how affordable these plans are, and they can provide a great deal of peace of mind for those traveling.

Visit with your funeral home of choice and ask if they offer a travel plan.

Better to have a plan in place and not need it than to wish you had done something to prepare. ■



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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CHAIRS make mark at fair



Geoffrey Grimes has had two giant Adirondack chairs displayed at the Iowa State Fair for people to enjoy and use for photos.

Ankeny's Geoffrey Grimes is known for constructing Adirondack chairs and partnering with charitable organizations, often in the form of donating chairs to be auctioned off. Ankeny Living featured his efforts in an earlier story and now provides an update.

Grimes has had two giant Adirondack chairs displayed at the Iowa State Fair for people to enjoy and use for photos.



"Since the article ran, the chairs have been getting even more attention at the Iowa State Fair," Grimes says, "Josephine's Glazed Doughnuts has reached out and is interested in having chairs placed near their stand during the fair. It's been exciting to see vendors requesting them as photo spots and gathering places for fairgoers. What started as a fun build has really turned into something people are engaging with families taking photos, kids climbing up, and now vendors wanting to be part of it.

"I also try to give back locally whenever possible," Grimes adds. "Through my work and projects, I donate and support local schools and other local charities whenever I can." ■

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ESTATE planning: Don't leave a mess

In more than 30 years of practice, I have helped families through countless estates. Some are nearly insolvent; others have millions of dollars of assets. In every estate, pre-planning was the difference between easy administration and a logistical nightmare. An organized and easily understood estate plan is a gift to those you leave behind.



First, prepare a will or trust. These are written documents, drafted by an attorney, which direct the distribution of your assets. The executor or trustee is the person in charge of finalizing your affairs. The rest of the document is a set of instructions that directs who inherits assets. If your will is out of date (or you've never created one), update it.

Second, you should have a durable financial power of attorney. The financial power of attorney names an agent you trust to help manage your financial affairs. You can control the timing of when it goes into effect.

Third, you need advance medical directives. The health care power of attorney appoints someone to make medical decisions for you if you can't make them yourself. The living will sets out your

wishes for end-of-life care. You should discuss both these documents with the people you are assigning, so they understand your wishes.

Fourth, make sure you have beneficiaries listed on all assets you can. The beneficiary designation supersedes the will or trust, so the asset goes directly to the beneficiary and doesn't go through probate. Make sure your beneficiary designations are up to date. Too often, I have seen assets designated to someone who died years before or to a guardian for children who are now adults.

Fifth, pre-arrange your funeral and pre-pay it if you can. When a family is grieving, they don't always make the best decisions. Take that burden off of them by putting basic arrangements in place.

Lastly, have a family conversation. It is not easy to ponder mortality. But, as difficult as this subject may be, it is important that someone knows your wishes and where key information can be found.

Lack of planning can leave a mess for your loved ones. If you have questions about how to update your estate plan, contact an attorney who has the experience and knowledge to assist you. ■

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

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WHAT IS a high-yield debit account?

A high-yield debit account lets you earn a higher interest rate on the money you use every day. This can be a great option if you're looking for a flexible account that works for you, not just holds your money. Instead of the balance sitting idle, it earns interest while still staying fully accessible.



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- Interest is paid monthly

- Often offers rates comparable to some savings accounts or certificates of deposit (CDs)
- No lock-up period
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 - You can spend or move funds whenever you need
 - Digital banking access
- High-yield debit accounts work with normal banking tools:
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 - Transfers and bill pay

Be sure to understand the minimum balance or any transaction requirements to avoid any fees. Think of it as a checking account with the earning power of a savings account.

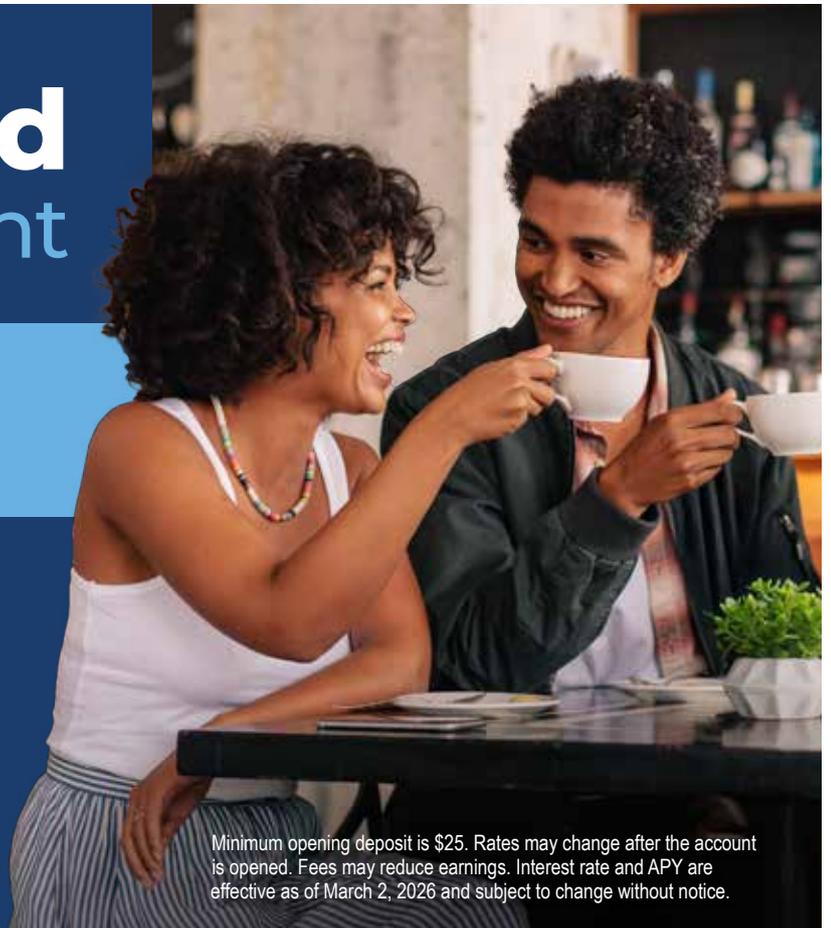
Speak with a banker to see if a high-yield debit account is right for you. ■

Information provided by Tracy Gibson, VP, Ankeny Branch Manager, 515-965-2497, tgibson@bankerstrust.com, 1925 N. Ankeny Blvd., Ankeny, IA 50023.

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A GENTLE reason to return to baking

Kramer turns kitchen into a place of healing.

Grief knows no boundaries.

Jessica Kramer and her husband, Ted, know this all too well, unfortunately. They've had their lion's share of it. And then some.

On Dec. 26, 2008, their older son, Brevin, a spry 8 years old at the time, died tragically in an auto accident. An unimaginable toll on the soul for the Kramers.

But grief wasn't through with the family just yet. On Aug. 15, 2025, another son, Nolan, passed away unexpectedly from a heart muscle disorder. No symptoms, no warnings, just a sudden, shattering void from the loss of yet another one of their offspring. Two of their four children. Gone forever.

The holiday season of 2025 felt impossibly heavy. Kramer avoided decorations, unable to face Christmas without Nolan's infectious holiday spirit. One sleepless November night, scrolling Facebook, she spotted a post from the Friends of the Ankeny Library regarding The Great Ankeny Bake Off: Winter Wonderland contest on Dec. 14 at Ankeny Kirkendall Public Library. Judging would be Andrew Fuller, owner of Sugar Freak Show in Des Moines and Season One winner of the television show, "Is It Cake?"

As it was, Fuller was a favorite of Nolan and his girlfriend, Bergan Rinker. They had enjoyed watching baking competitions.

"Baking and cooking had been something Nolan enjoyed with me from a young age, and, as he grew older, it became something he enjoyed independently and with Bergan," Kramer says.

An idea blossomed that night. Enter the contest with Bergan, honor Nolan's memory, support the library, and find a sliver of joy. There was one problem, though. The kitchen had become a painful place, with memories of Nolan in every drawer and cupboard.

"It still feels unreal much of the time," Kramer admits. "Our loss and grief is still fresh and painfully strong. But the contest gave me a gentle reason to return to that space and face memories in a way that felt honoring instead of overwhelming."

And so she did.

Participating was emotional. The kitchen, painful with memories in every utensil, became a space to face those recollections gently, honoring rather than drowning in them; it was a healing of sorts.

The contest day arrived. Cakes lined tables, each with a number for voting. Judges scored on taste, appearance and theme, and then the bakers were called forward as judges tasted, asked questions and gave feedback. Kramer's Winter Wonderland cake hadn't gone as planned. She was tired from pulling an all-nighter making it. Then the layers refused to stack. Transporting it was a nightmare.

But then something unexpected happened: She won.

"When they called my number for first place, I didn't move," Kramer recalls. "Bergan had to tell me they were calling me. It was hard to believe I won, especially knowing how many talented bakers and amazing cakes were in the room."



Jessica Kramer, right, recently won The Great Ankeny Bake Off: Winter Wonderland contest on Dec. 14 at the Ankeny Kirkendall Public Library. She is pictured here with another contestant, Bergan Rinker, the girlfriend of Kramer's son, Nolan, who tragically passed away last August. The two entered the contest as a way of honoring him.

There could be joy amid all the sorrow after all. Victory isn't always about triumphing over others. Sometimes it's simply the act of taking one more step forward. Living another day.

"When it comes to baking, you can follow every recipe and still have the outcome change without warning," Kramer says. "Life works the same way. Sometimes the most meaningful victories aren't about winning at all, but about showing up and finding your way forward, one step at a time." ■

NEWS BRIEF

BODYBAR Pilates opens in Ankeny

BODYBAR Pilates announced the opening of its new BODYBAR Ankeny at 1630 S. Ankeny Blvd., Suite 116. The BODYBAR method is a fiercely effective workout experience, powered by Pilates, that helps individuals discover their physical potential and enhance their overall well-being, both on and off the Reformer.

"BODYBAR Pilates' mission is to cultivate a balanced, athletic and real community," said

Kalene Hoffmann, owner, BODYBAR Pilates Ankeny. "Our expert-led classes cater to all fitness levels in a welcoming environment, utilizing state-of-the-art Pilates equipment. We welcome everyone to come in and try Pilates at our studio and see how it can help anyone achieve their long-term fitness goals."

BODYBAR Pilates in Ankeny is owned by Kalene Hoffmann and Cassie DaLuzVieira. Kalene and Cassie have been

part of the BODYBAR community since 2022, bringing the brand to Wichita, Kansas. They currently operate two studios in Wichita and one in Kansas City, and are now thrilled to introduce BODYBAR Pilates to Ankeny. Cassie also serves as a master trainer for BODYBAR Pilates, traveling nationwide to train instructors, ensuring the Ankeny community will receive top-level guidance from day one. ■

THE POWER of the chamber



Ankeny doesn't grow by accident. It grows because business owners, nonprofit leaders, educators and community partners choose to invest here. They choose to show up. They choose to lead. And they choose to be part of something bigger than themselves.

That is the power of the Ankeny Area Chamber of Commerce.

A chamber membership is not simply a transaction. It is a declaration. It says you believe in collaboration over competition. It says you are committed to visibility, credibility and long-term growth. It says you want your business to be woven into the fabric of this thriving community.

Through strategic networking events like Lattes & Leads, Business After Hours, ribbon cuttings and professional development workshops, our members build relationships that turn into referrals, partnerships and measurable growth. Your listing in our online directory enhances your digital presence. Sponsorships elevate your brand in front of influential leaders and decision-makers. Advocacy efforts ensure your voice is represented in conversations that shape Ankeny's future.

However, the greatest benefit of membership is engagement. When you attend an event, join a committee, serve on a taskforce, or mentor a new member, you strengthen not only your business, but the entire ecosystem around you. Visibility builds trust. Trust builds opportunity. Opportunity builds momentum.

Right now, we are in the final weeks of our Total Resource Campaign (TRC). This is your opportunity to secure high-impact sponsorships and marketing packages that align with your goals for the year ahead. A few strategic opportunities remain, and once they are filled, they are gone. If increasing brand exposure, deepening relationships, and positioning your business as a community leader are priorities in 2026, now is the time to act.

If you are unsure how to maximize your membership benefits, want to explore sponsorship options, or simply need a sounding board as you plan for the year ahead, let's connect. I would welcome the opportunity to sit down over coffee, learn more about your goals, and help you leverage your membership with intention. The chamber exists for one purpose: to serve our members.

Ankeny's future is being built right now. Thank you for choosing to be part of it. ■

Information provided by Tony PeterSmith, Director of Membership & Engagement, Ankeny Area Chamber of Commerce, www.ankeny.org.





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OUT & ABOUT



Staff members at Right Dose, A Guardian Pharmacy, front row, from left: Jolene Moran, Kim Messer, Megan Anderson, Brigitte Niedermann, Adinda Davie, Edgar Maritim, and, back row: Mileisha Ramey, Susan Jiron, Cara Whipple, Stefany Hunter, Laura Estes, Rockford Anderson, Allie Droste, Brad Kline and Angie Olson.



Right Dose, A Guardian Pharmacy held a ribbon cutting ceremony with the Ankeny Area Chamber of Commerce on Feb. 17 at its new location, 335 S.E. Oralabor Road.



Sara Wilson and Emily Van Kley at the Ankeny Area Chamber of Commerce Business After Hours on Feb. 12, sponsored by Barb Wiedenman & Associates at the Ankeny Golf & Country Club.



Tony PeterSmith and Cody Gebauer at the Ankeny Area Chamber of Commerce Business After Hours on Feb. 12 at the Ankeny Golf & Country Club.



Robert Seaberg and Jaden Adams at the Ankeny Area Chamber of Commerce Business After Hours on Feb. 12 at the Ankeny Golf & Country Club.



Mackenzie Massey and Rhonda Danner at the Ankeny Area Chamber of Commerce Business After Hours on Feb. 12 at the Ankeny Golf & Country Club.



Joseph Webb and Adam Lenze at the Ankeny Area Chamber of Commerce Business After Hours on Feb. 12 at the Ankeny Golf & Country Club.



Alyssa Frieseh and Trisha Goode at the Ankeny Area Chamber of Commerce Business After Hours on Feb. 12 at the Ankeny Golf & Country Club.



Kate Tatro, Erika Zarate and Hazel Ayala at the Ankeny Area Chamber of Commerce Business After Hours on Feb. 12 at the Ankeny Golf & Country Club.



Travis Lamphere, Denise Johnson and Jake Belitz at the Ankeny Area Chamber of Commerce Business After Hours on Feb. 12 at the Ankeny Golf & Country Club.

OUT & ABOUT

LATTES & Leads

The Feb. 24 Lattes & Leads was hosted by the Ankeny Area Chamber and sponsored by Designed 2 Move Spine & Sport, 1360 N.W. 18th St., Suite 101.



Ranel Wallace, Melissa Mitchell, Aaron Rickelman, Abbi Rickelman, Katie Joens and Brady Dougherty



Katie Joens and Melissa Mitchell



Tim Ure and Andy Schnurr



Bryan Carsten and Steve Canon



Shanie Dasrath and Angie Rippin



Stacey Shaffer, Ranel Wallace and Todd Wehr



Jamie Wilson and Michele Hurley



Lisa Michel and Meredith Beattie



Adam Lenze and Garrison Goodlett



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SPECIAL ADVERTISING SECTION

HOW TO CHOOSE GARAGE DOORS

Garage doors are often an afterthought to homeowners — but they shouldn't be. Garage doors are the first thing most notice about a home, so when it comes to choosing them for a new home or replacing them, significant thought and research should take place. If your garage faces the front of the house, a new door could dramatically improve your curb appeal and change the overall look of your home. If you're selling, worn, dated doors tend to say a lot about the condition of the rest of the home. A garage door is also an excellent security asset for your home, allowing you to secure your vehicle inside. If you're thinking about installing a new garage door, you may be surprised at just how many options are on the market — and how affordably they can be installed.

THE LOOK

Garage doors have seen an explosion in styles, materials and colors that are designed to match the architecture of any home, from rural barns to craftsman bungalows or sleek

urban getaways. So if you thought your choices were limited to simple sheet metal styles, think again. You should also pay close attention to the materials. Today's garage doors can be made from expensive hardwoods, textured vinyl, fiberglass or basic aluminum, all of which will have a big impact on the look and longevity of your doors. Pay close attention to the maintenance needs of whatever material you choose. Some will hold their color longer than others, and real wood doors can require regular staining and sealing every few years to keep them looking spectacular.

INSULATION

Depending on climate, the insulation of your garage door can be an important factor to help reduce your energy bills. This is especially important in heated garages. But even an insulated door on unheated garages can make a positive impact on your energy usage if it can keep the hot and cold weather away from the interior of your house. ■

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