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MAGAZINE

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Residents share stories about the animals they rescued.



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WELCOME

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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Altoona police officer Dixie Walker adopted Nala, a rescued German shepherd puppy, that now works with her during community outreach.

A 'fur-ever' HOME

Residents share stories about the animals they rescued.

By Sean Dengler

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.



Jim and Jeri Spizale adopted Otis from a pet rescue organization.

A wonderful experience

After losing their previous rescue dog, Moe, and missing having a puppy around, Jim and Jeri Spizale were shopping at Pet Supplies in Altoona when Forever Home Dog Rescue was showing rescue dogs. That is when Otis entered their lives.

“He was very calm and came up to us to be petted,” Jim says. “We liked him right away and asked about adopting him.”

Otis has become a thriving companion.

“He’s smart, funny and follows us around like a little shadow,” Jeri says. “We like how he’ll cuddle with us, go on long walks and do his ‘zoomies’ in the yard and when we feed him.”

Otis, now 1.5 years old, had to adjust when he was brought home.

“We knew he might have a few accidents at first until he adjusted to us, and he would run to our front door to look for his previous owner for the first few days,” Jim says. “But once he got used to us and our routine, he settled in. He was used to being kennel-trained, which we did for a few nights because I believe they feel it’s their safe place. Now he sleeps in his bed right next to ours and is by our sides constantly.”

When adopting a rescue dog, there are several considerations.

“As far as what to expect, it depends on the dog’s personality and life experience,” Jeri says. “In our case, Otis was in a foster home



Nala enjoys meeting the public and has a variety of certifications.

with a stable environment and around other dogs. I think they respond well to a quiet, safe environment with a predictable routine — like regular walks and feeding times — that makes them feel secure and protected.”

Adopting from a rescue is important to the Spizales.

“I would tell anyone looking to adopt to research the organization or owners to verify the dog has been treated humanely and cared for,” Jim says. “It’s a commitment you should take seriously, as you become their entire life, and they depend on you not just physically but emotionally.”

“Your reward will be a loyal companion who will make you smile every time they greet you when you come home,” Jeri adds. “It’s a bond of unconditional love everyone should experience.”

A multifaceted pooch

Nala was destined not only to be a family dog but also a working dog for Altoona police officer Dixie Walker.

“My family had made a big decision to add a new four-legged puppy into our home. We had our eyes set on an Animal Rescue League litter of eight German shepherd puppies,” Walker says. “Nala and her siblings were abandoned and rescued by the ARL in Polk County. I was informed the litter was approximately 6 weeks old. The litter was very young and had to be treated for parasites and kennel cough. Nala’s



foster family lived in Altoona, and we instantly fell in love with one playful puppy who decided my 3-year-old daughter would be her forever human.”

The opportunity came at a pivotal time in Walker’s life.

“At the time, I had recently been assigned to the Community Outreach Team and primarily work as a school resource officer with the elementary schools in Altoona,” Walker says. “We had six certified dual-purpose K-9s (apprehension and narcotics). My goal, as I entered my new role, was to think of new ways to connect with our community and focus more on the mental health area.”

It made sense to bring her personal and professional lives together. Walker wanted to introduce the Crisis Canine of the Midlands program to her command staff. She brought Nala, then 10 weeks old, to their interview to begin yearlong training to become the new crisis K-9 team for the Altoona Police Department.

Nala became certified in Canine Good Citizen, Canine Good Citizen Urban, Canine Good Citizen Advanced, Crisis Response Therapy Team K-9 Academy and United States Police Canine Association Police Therapy. Nala, now 1.5 years old and proven to be 100% German shepherd through a DNA test, has been great on the job, Walker says.

“Serving within schools and alongside first



Molly, JJ and Fancy complete the Hadsall family.



Michele and Corey Hadsall have a history of rescuing pets.



responders, Nala provides comfort, reassurance and emotional support to both children and adults during challenging moments,” Walker says. “Her natural enthusiasm, paired with her gentle and intuitive spirit, allows her to connect effortlessly with those in need.”

Nala seems to be living her best life.

“Beyond her certification and training, it’s her joyful personality that truly sets her apart,” Walker says. “Nala has a remarkable way of leaving every room a little brighter and every person smiling a little bigger. She is more than a therapy dog — she is a steady source of comfort, compassion and hope within her community.”

Nala’s story is one reason others should consider adopting rescue animals, Walker says.

“Nala stepped up to the plate at 10 weeks old and did not back away when the obstacles got difficult,” Walker says. “Nala was the youngest puppy to get certified through the Crisis Response Therapy Team K-9 Academy at only 7 months. Working K-9s are typically bred for their purpose, and not every dog is successful. Nala is just starting her journey, proving she can meet the qualities and requirements to be a successful crisis K-9.”

A life full of rescues

For Michele and Corey Hadsall, adopting rescues is just part of their lives.

“Our latest rescue dog, JJ, is a purebred golden retriever,” Michele says. “He came from Animal Lifeline of Iowa, which is a special-needs no-kill shelter.”

JJ, unfortunately, had an issue.

“He was a year old at the time,” Michele says. “He came from a breeder. He was about 6 weeks old when his leg was broken. It was never fixed, and it just kind of continued to grow. His front right leg is about an inch shorter than the other one. Animal Lifeline and the vet clinic had fitted him with a brace to level him out.”

In April 2019, another pooch joined the household.

“We found Fancy, our second-latest rescue dog, on the Facebook page for Hope Animal Rescue of Iowa,” Michele says. “She was coming up on a transport from Oklahoma, and they needed a foster, and you could do foster-to-adopt.”

After their previous cat died in 2022, Michele and Corey decided to get another.

“If you want a cat, what kind of a cat do you want?” Michele asked Corey.

“I had a calico growing up,” Corey responded.

“You’re in luck,” Michele replied. “We have a calico kitten at the shelter at Animal Lifeline of Iowa.”

“I showed him her picture, and he fell in love,” Michele adds.

Molly joined the Hadsalls, JJ and Fancy in September 2022, and the rest is history.

These rescue animals deserve a chance, Michele says.

“Why wouldn’t you want to save their life? There are shelters across the nation that have to euthanize animals because of overpopulation,” she says. “They don’t have the space and need

to help control the population. They just make great family pets.”

Each of her rescues has different but similar traits.

“From what I’ve experienced with all of the rescues we have taken in, they are just very loving,” Michele says. “They’re just so much fun to be around and so much fun to play with.”

“Every time I get out of the shower and go to dry my hair, JJ just loves to be blown dry,” she continues. “Fancy loves to curl up and cuddle. They both absolutely adore the cat. The cat absolutely adores them. She’s not all cuddly with us because she’s a cat, but she loves to have the dogs chase her and rubs up on them.”

Michele says her pets’ personalities truly shined once they left the shelter and entered a comfortable home.

“It completely changes their lives — as well as yours,” she says.

Importance of adopting

It was a no-brainer for Mary Rish and her husband to adopt a rescue animal.

“No question — adopt a rescue animal,” Mary says. “My husband and I have always had rescue animals, and we grew up with rescue animals.”

Mary has adopted multiple pets over the years.

“Thundersnow was from Safe Home Rescue at an event in PetSmart,” Mary says. “Turd was from Furry Friends Refuge at Smitten Kitten. Frankie was a feral cat we were feeding until we brought him in. We have also gotten cats at the



Mary Rish's cats are all rescue animals with very different personalities.



Lu Ann Link says that rescue animals "tug at your heart."

Animal Rescue League."

Each cat has a different personality.

"Our rescue animals are all different and so funny," Mary says. "We just love having them around and seeing their goofy antics. Thunder is a bathroom cat that helps me get ready in the morning, Turd is the stalker, and Frankie is a cuddler."

She also believes others should adopt rescue animals.

"Rescue animals are the best. They are no different than any other animal but, through no fault of their own, ended up in a shelter."

When adopting a rescue from a shelter, people need to be patient.

"People should expect a dog or any rescue animal to be afraid for a little bit until they get used to their new home," Mary says. "It will take some time for adjustments. Shelters are stressful places for animals to be in, so they need time to adjust. They need a safe space to go to when they feel overwhelmed."

Doing research before adopting is also vital in the process, Mary says.

"Make sure to research the type of animal you want before going out to adopt or even purchase. Each breed has different characteristics, needs and health conditions. You have to make sure the pet fits your lifestyle. If you're active, then a more active dog is great. If you want a lap dog, then an active dog would not be the best choice. Each breed also has different health needs and problems, so be familiar with those to make sure that is something you can handle and are willing to

deal with."

Mary also believes there is a type of rescue that needs extra love.

"Adopt a senior pet. They are the ones that are afraid, missing their previous owners and need love."

A lifetime of service

As a retired junior high science teacher and lover of nature, Lu Ann Link appreciates rescue animals.

"The rescue ones seem a little more receptive," Lu Ann says. "They want to be helped. They know you're helping them, and they're very loving. All animals are loving creatures, but rescue animals kind of tug at your heart."

It is a two-way street, Lu Ann says.

"You feel like you're helping them, and, in many ways, they're helping you not be lonely and keeping you active."

She has felt this from Little G, her cat, which she got from people who rescued him in Ankeny. Originally from southern Iowa, Little G was already spoken for, but that changed.

"He was brought back to them twice because he was so wild," Lu Ann says. "Finally, they reached out to me and said, 'If you're still interested, would you mind taking Little G?'"

Lu Ann brought Little G home, and they learned a lot about each other.

"I've had him for a couple of years, but he's still kind of wild to the point where he hasn't learned how to retract his claws," Lu Ann says.

"He's learning, but it seems like he's kind of slow. If he wants something, like different food, he lets me know by climbing up my leg."

Little G also comforts her dog, Annie, which she got from her neighbor. As a puppy, Annie needed a lot of attention because she could crawl over baby gates and just about everything.

"It's kind of cute how they get along," Lu Ann says.

Little G, formerly known as Little Ginger Boy, is 4 years old and outweighs her 11-pound dog, Annie, which is 11 years old.

"My dog is used to herding," Lu Ann says. "And she can't herd Little G at all. Little G goes the opposite way. It's funny to watch them interact."

Little G brings Lu Ann a lot of enjoyment.

"I like it when he gets the zoomies and zooms around the house," Lu Ann says. "He's running up and down and all around as fast as he possibly can. If he's trying to catch my dog, Annie, they chase each other around. I just like seeing them enjoy being with each other."

Little G also has another favorite pastime.

"He likes to watch the outdoor animals," Lu Ann says. "It's fun to watch him watch the creatures outside, and he gets all excited when the squirrels start running around."

When it comes to adopting a rescue animal, Lu Ann believes in persistence.

"I feel like people should be committed to the rescue and try to help the animal," Lu Ann says. "I guess I never give up." ■

ALTOONA Public Library programs



APRIL LIBRARY PROGRAMS

The Altoona Public Library provides free online resumé assistance through Brainfuse's JobNow at www.altoonalibrary.com. You can find resumé templates (in English and Spanish), informative articles on how to write a great resumé, and even get live help writing or editing a resumé in the afternoons or evenings. All you need to access these resources, at home or at the library, is your APL card.

ADULT PROGRAMMING – AGES 18-PLUS

- **E-Waste Drive**, Saturday, April 11, from 1-3 p.m. Empty that drawer of old electronics you have been hoarding. Stop by the library, and we will recycle your old and nonworking e-waste for you. Limited to two bags of items per person. No registration required.
- **Conservation Trivia Night**, Wednesday, April 15, at 5:30 p.m. Think you know nature? Prove it at Conservation Trivia, hosted by Iowa State University Extension and Outreach–Polk County. Bring your team of three to five trivia masters for a fun, fast-paced game covering wildlife, ecosystems and environmental action. Registration required.
- **Adaptive Equipment Education**, Tuesday, April 21, at 6 p.m. Occupational therapy student Jessie Woodyard will provide live demonstrations of adaptive and assistive equipment, followed by optional consultations offering individualized guidance. This program is tailored to older adults and their caregivers who want to maintain safety, independence and confidence while aging in place. No registration required.
- **Designing With Cricut**, Wednesday, April 22, at 6 p.m. If you've used a Cricut before but want to learn how to create more complex designs, now is your chance. In this session, we will explore how to use Cricut Design Space to create a custom project. Registration required.

CHILDREN'S PROGRAMMING

- **Craftpalooza**, Wednesday, April 1, from 3:30-4:30 p.m. Drop in and explore our craft stash to complete a project of your choice. Grades K–6. No registration required.
- **Fun Size Kitchen**, Monday, April 6, at 12:30 p.m. Come to the library

to make a sweet snack based on a book. This month we will be making strawberry shortcake cups. Ages 5 and younger. Registration required.

- **Sweet STEM**, Wednesday, April 15, at 3:30 p.m. Test your skills at our Sweet STEM challenge. Create a candy launcher, build a candy structure and more. Grades K–6. Registration required.

TEEN PROGRAMMING – GRADES 6–12

- **Teen Interview Skills Workshop**, Monday, April 13, from 6-7 p.m. Learn how to put your best self forward and shine in interviews. Whether you are interviewing for a job or college, how you present yourself makes all the difference. Join speakers from Youth and Shelter Services for tips and tricks for a successful interview. Registration required.
- **Teen Maker Lab**, Saturday, April 18, from 1-3 p.m. The Maker Lab is a chance for you to learn how to use the equipment in our Maker Hub. This month, we are drawing digital art masterpieces on the iPads using the Procreate app. Finished projects will be displayed in the library lobby. Registration required.
- **Teen Resumé Workshop**, Thursday, April 23, from 6-7 p.m. Are you planning to apply for scholarships or a part-time job? Join special guest Haley Peeler, director of the Career Center at Grand View University, for a workshop covering how to create a successful resumé. She will go over what information should go on your resumé, identifying and highlighting your skills, and how to put your best self forward and stand out in the crowd. Registration required.

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FINISHING the school year strong

As the school year begins to wind down, many students and families start thinking about final grades, end-of-year tests, and preparing for the next grade level. The last few months of school can make a big difference in a student's confidence and academic success.



Finishing the year strong not only improves report cards, but it also helps students build the skills they need for the future. One of the best ways to support students during this important time is through personalized tutoring.

Every student learns differently. In a traditional classroom, teachers work hard to meet the needs of many students at once, but it can be difficult to give each child the individualized attention they may need. That is where personalized tutoring can make a big impact. At tutoring centers, students can begin with a comprehensive assessment that identifies their unique strengths and areas for improvement.

From there, instructors create a customized learning plan designed specifically for that student.

Personalized tutoring allows students to focus on exactly what they need most. Whether a student is struggling with reading comprehension, math concepts, or study skills, experienced instructors provide targeted instruction that helps close learning gaps and strengthen foundational skills. This focused approach helps students gain a deeper understanding of the material they are learning in school.

Another key benefit of personalized tutoring is the confidence it builds. When students begin to understand concepts that once felt difficult, they start to believe in their own abilities. That confidence often carries over into the classroom, where students become more willing to participate, ask questions and tackle challenging assignments. As confidence grows, so does motivation.

The end of the school year is also a great opportunity to prepare for what comes next. By

strengthening important skills now, students can enter the next grade level feeling prepared and ready to succeed. Rather than spending the summer trying to catch up, they can focus on maintaining and building upon the progress they have already made.

The goal is not just to improve grades, but to help students become confident, independent learners. With personalized tutoring, supportive instructors and proven teaching methods, students receive the guidance they need to finish the school year strong and start the next one even stronger.

For families looking to give their child an academic boost before the school year ends, personalized tutoring can make all the difference. The end goal is to partner with families to help students reach their full potential and achieve lasting success in school and beyond. ■

Information provided by Angela Jones, Owner and Center Director of Sylvan Learning of Altoona, 301 Center Place, Suite C-1, Altoona, 515-957-2923, Angela.Jones@sylvanlearning.com.




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MEET Nile Horak

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After graduating from the Dallas Center-Grimes Community School District, Nile Horak studied elementary education at Iowa State University. This school year, he began his first year of teaching with the Southeast Polk Community School District. He teaches fifth grade at Willowbrook Elementary School.



Nile Horak helps host a coffee crew and a Wordle club.

“I heard great things about Southeast Polk from friends who had completed student teaching there and others in the Des Moines area. It is a diverse school with a great reputation, and I have always wanted to teach in a larger school district,” Horak says.

Horak says Willowbrook Elementary School is full of teachers who care about their students and collaborate in teams to provide strong instruction. He said everyone works together to ensure students are learning while also having fun.

“We put extra emphasis on celebrating students’ successes. Our goal is to prepare kids to use their learning in real-world situations through a diverse curriculum,” Horak says, adding he enjoys working with fifth-grade students because he appreciates their sense of humor and willingness to learn. As part of his classroom activities, Horak’s students participate in jobs and clubs once a month. During this time, Horak typically works with third- through fifth-grade students.

For the job activity, Horak helps host a coffee crew. Together, they create fun and unique coffee drinks for teachers in the building. For the club activity, Horak helps host a Wordle club. Common starting words the club uses include “phase,” “pants” and “gamer.”

“I try to make school an enjoyable place for students to want to be and to learn,” Horak says. “I enjoy making my students laugh during instruction to keep them engaged. It is rewarding to see them enjoy the process of learning.”

After completing his first year of teaching, Horak plans to spend time improving his instruction. He also works a summer job in landscaping after the school year ends. This summer, Horak said he is looking forward to spending time outdoors, reading and spending time with his two dogs, Wes and Daffy. ■



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A CONSUMMATE foster

When the Animal Rescue League put out a call for help with an influx of puppies needing foster homes, Jessica Sporleder stepped forward.

“I was working from home and figured I was in a great position to foster puppies,” Sporleder says. “Plus, my kids were pretty excited about the idea as well. That’s how it started. I knew I wanted to help the ARL and provide a safe, loving home for animals in need.”

Sporleder has seen first hand the value of fostering dogs.

“We love being able to see the transition from the first day we get a dog or puppy to the day they leave our home for their forever family. It’s a beautiful transformation that happens when an animal feels loved, safe and cared for. Some of these animals have never had that in their lives, and we are honored to provide many of their ‘first’ experiences.”

And the animals aren’t the only ones to benefit, she adds.

“Having pets in the home improves mental health by lowering cortisol and increasing serotonin, dopamine and oxytocin,” Sporleder says. “In plain terms, pets can reduce stress and boost your mood. Fostering these rescue animals has had a big impact on my mental health, as well as that of my kids.”

The family often takes the dogs and puppies out with them.

“I take our foster dogs and puppies with us to my kids’ baseball, softball and football games,” Sporleder says. “It not only gives the animals an opportunity to socialize with a variety of people and experience new situations, but several of our fosters have met their forever families during these outings.”

Sporleder also takes her foster puppies to businesses for ARL Cuddle Breaks, which are business-sponsored mental health breaks for employees.

Of course, fostering isn’t without challenges.

“Many people struggle with the ‘letting them go’ part of fostering,” she says. “My kids did at first, crying quite a bit when we had to adopt out our first couple of litters of puppies. But my husband and I went into this adventure knowing there are always more animals that need our help after the ones in our care.”

The Sporleders have fostered 233 dogs and puppies — mostly puppies — since August 2022 and haven’t foster-failed yet — meaning they have not decided to adopt any of them.

“Our trick to letting them go is trying to find them homes within our network of friends and family, the Altoona community and surrounding areas, or by taking them out in public,” Sporleder says. “When I know the families these animals will end up with, it makes letting them go a lot easier.”

Fostering puppies can be especially challenging, she says.

“The chewing, biting and potty training — it’s not for everyone. We’ve even had several litters of neonate puppies, some with their mothers and some without, meaning we were bottle-feeding every two hours or so. It’s like having a newborn baby in the house — times four or five or more.”

The most difficult times are when a foster dies, Sporleder says.

“Some of these animals come to us from horrific situations and do not survive,” she says. “I’ve had more losses of neonate puppies recently than anyone should have to bear, and that’s been tough for my children as well. However, we loved them with everything we had, and they died in a safe place.

“We have several tiny urns on our shelves next to our own pets who



Jessica Sporleder and her family have fostered 233 dogs, mostly puppies, and find it rewarding to prepare them for their forever homes.

have passed, keeping them together in a place of remembrance. Rescuing animals doesn’t always work out the way we want it to, but most people don’t see that side of it or the toll it takes on shelter staff and fosters.”

Because of her experiences, Sporleder says others should consider adopting a rescue animal.

“Rescue animals just want to be loved and find a place to call home. Don’t we all? Most rescue animals can be some of the best pets because they understand second chances. They know what it’s like to have nothing. They want to be in a home where they feel safe and taken care of, because, for many of them, they’ve never known what that feels like. Rescue animals have so much love to give.”

For those considering adoption, Sporleder says there are several common misconceptions about rescue animals.

“Most pets are in shelters because of human issues, not pet issues,” Sporleder says. “Many times, pets are surrendered because of personal situations, changes in the home or other circumstances unrelated to the pet. These are not ‘damaged’ or ‘broken’ animals. They may just need space to decompress or the right owner who can give them what they need.”

For those interested in fostering, Sporleder has simple advice.

“All of the central Iowa shelters are looking for fosters to add to their networks. If you are interested in getting your temporary pet fix, consider fostering. Shelters are very flexible and allow you to foster as much or as little as you want or are able to.

“Any break these animals can get from the shelter — even if it’s only for a day — can have a big impact on their mental health and their adoptability. Fostering saves lives.” ■

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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515-318-6307
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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.



Benefits of a high-yield account

- Everyday convenience
- You can use it just like a traditional checking account:
 - Make purchases with a debit card
 - Pay bills
 - Transfer money
 - Withdraw cash at ATMs
 - Deposit checks
 - Access funds anytime
- Earn interest on your balance
- Earns interest on everyday spending money
- Interest is paid monthly
- Often offers rates comparable to some savings accounts or

certificates of deposit (CDs)

- No lock-up period
- Unlike a CD:
 - You do not have to leave your money untouched
 - You can spend or move funds whenever you need
 - Digital banking access
- High-yield debit accounts work with normal banking tools:
 - Online banking
 - Mobile banking apps
 - Mobile check deposit
 - 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.

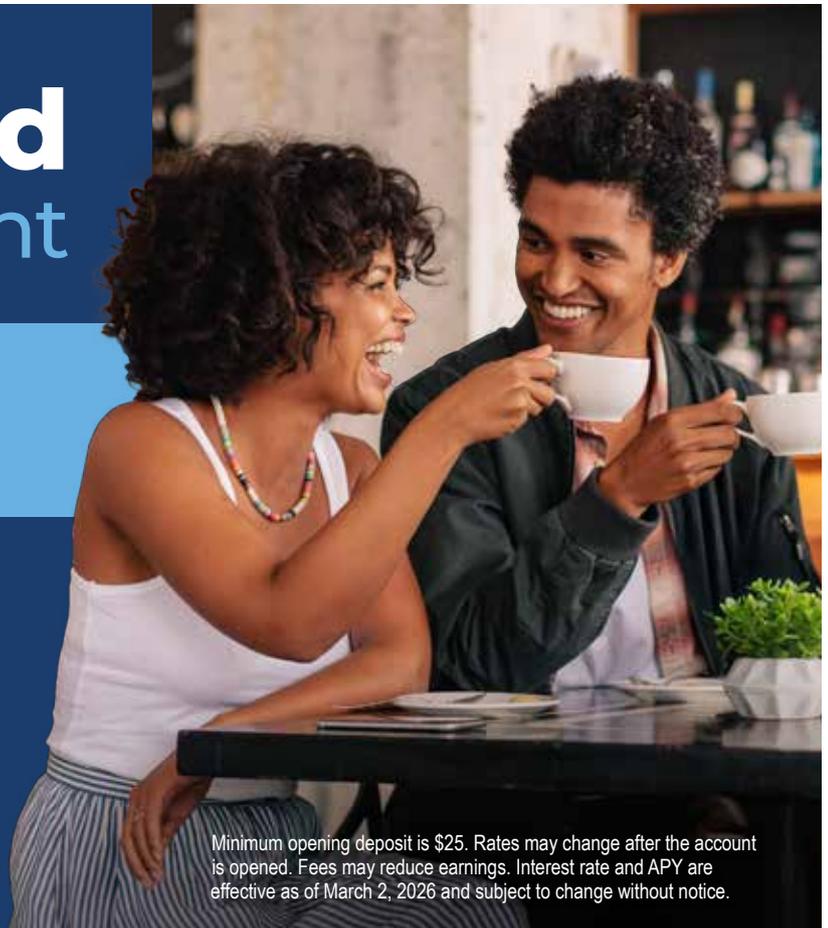
Speak with a banker to see if a high-yield debit account is right for you. ■

Information provided by 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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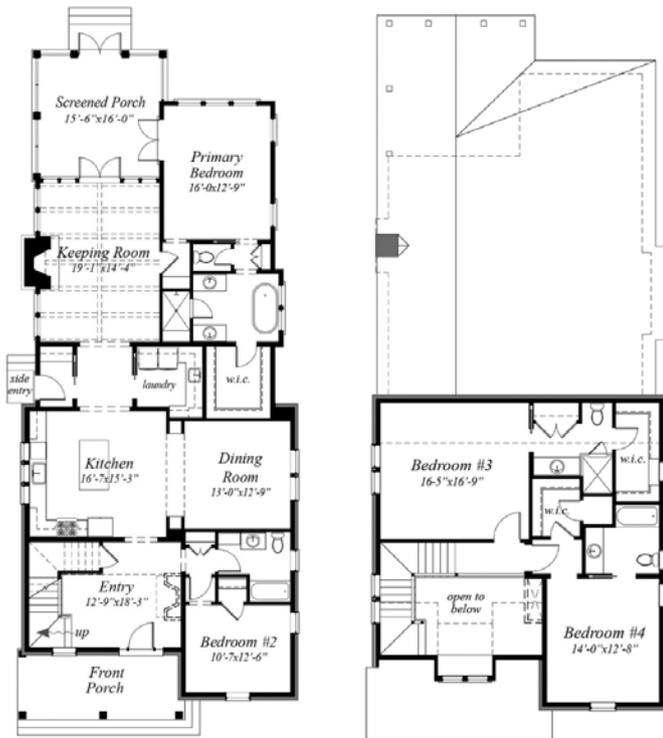
Minimum opening deposit is \$25. Rates may change after the account is opened. Fees may reduce earnings. Interest rate and APY are effective as of March 2, 2026 and subject to change without notice.

EDGEWOOD Court

Shed dormers, a gable roof, and jack arches above the windows create street-front beauty and interest.

Inside, the kitchen island is almost like a table and it can double as a workspace. Placing the sink and kitchen appliances on the perimeter makes the island an oasis of functional space. Step into this spacious living room with its a warm and welcoming beamed ceiling, generous fireplace, and shiplap walls that continue from the kitchen.

French doors open into the living room or out to the yard from this expansive screened porch. A vaulted ceiling with a louvered end gable makes this perfect for comfortable indoor-outdoor living. ■



DETAILS

2,746 Sq Ft
 Floors: 2
 Bedrooms: 4
 Bathrooms: 4
 Foundation: Slab

SQUARE FEET

Main Floor: 1,961
 Upper Floor: 785
 Total Conditioned: 2,746
 Front Porch: 164
 Rear Porch: 219

DIMENSIONS

Width: 32'-6"
 Depth: 80'-3"
 Height: 28'-0"

HOUSE LEVELS

Upper floor: Ceiling Heights 9'-0"
 Main floor: Ceiling Heights 9'-0"

CONSTRUCTION

Wall Construction: 2x6
 Exterior Finish: Brick, Lap Siding
 Roof Pitch: 8:12

FEATURES

Kitchen: Island, L-Shaped
 Primary Bedroom: Tub, Double Sink, Shower, Porch, Private Toilet, Walk-in Closet
 Additional: Fireplace, Porch, Screened Porch

‘Queen of Faces’

Books with layers are always going to draw me in. This delightfully dark and gritty fantasy explores identity, power, resilience and the madness of survival all packaged in a riveting, magical story.

Set in a politically charged world where appearance and perception can be as dangerous as any weapon, we follow Ana, a girl on the brink of some terrible choices. She is stuck in a dying body with no real way out. Desperate, she lies her way into an even more perilous situation where she must navigate court intrigue, shifting loyalties and threats from every side.

Ana’s journey is as much internal as it is external, grappling with who she is and what authenticity means in a world where people shift bodies as easily as outfits. She has to maneuver through complex political dynamics, learn how to find allies, build relationships and survive the unsurvivable.

This is a gritty, morally gray story with perfect pacing. Lord’s prose is accessible and vivid — sometimes so sharp I felt torn to shreds by the end. I can’t wait for the next one. ■ — Review by Julie Goodrich



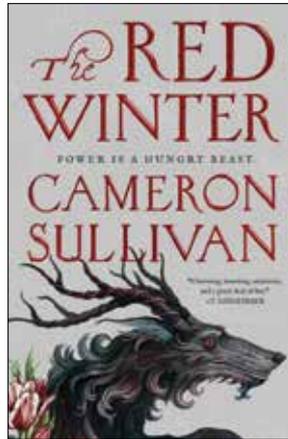
By Petra Lord
2/3/26
432 pages
\$22.99
Henry Holt & Co.

‘The Red Winter’

Perhaps I am a bit jaded, but I wasn’t sure I could take another werewolf story. I am delighted to say that I was very wrong in judging it so harshly. I know it is winter in Iowa, and we are all sick of it, but Sullivan plunges us into a frost-bitten landscape full of mysteries that is far more enchanting than any snow-bound story ought to be. This is a story within a story, within a story. It even has a fourth story in the footnotes, one of my very favorite tropes.

We open in the modern world with the immortal wizard Sebastian being reminded of an adventure from long ago. Aably abetted by his pet succubus, Livia, we learn of his sweet romance with a nobleman, their terrifying adventure in the French countryside, and how Joan of Arc really happened. Despite the gore and humorous asides peppered throughout, this really is an epic fantasy tale with enough romance to make all the BookTok people swoon.

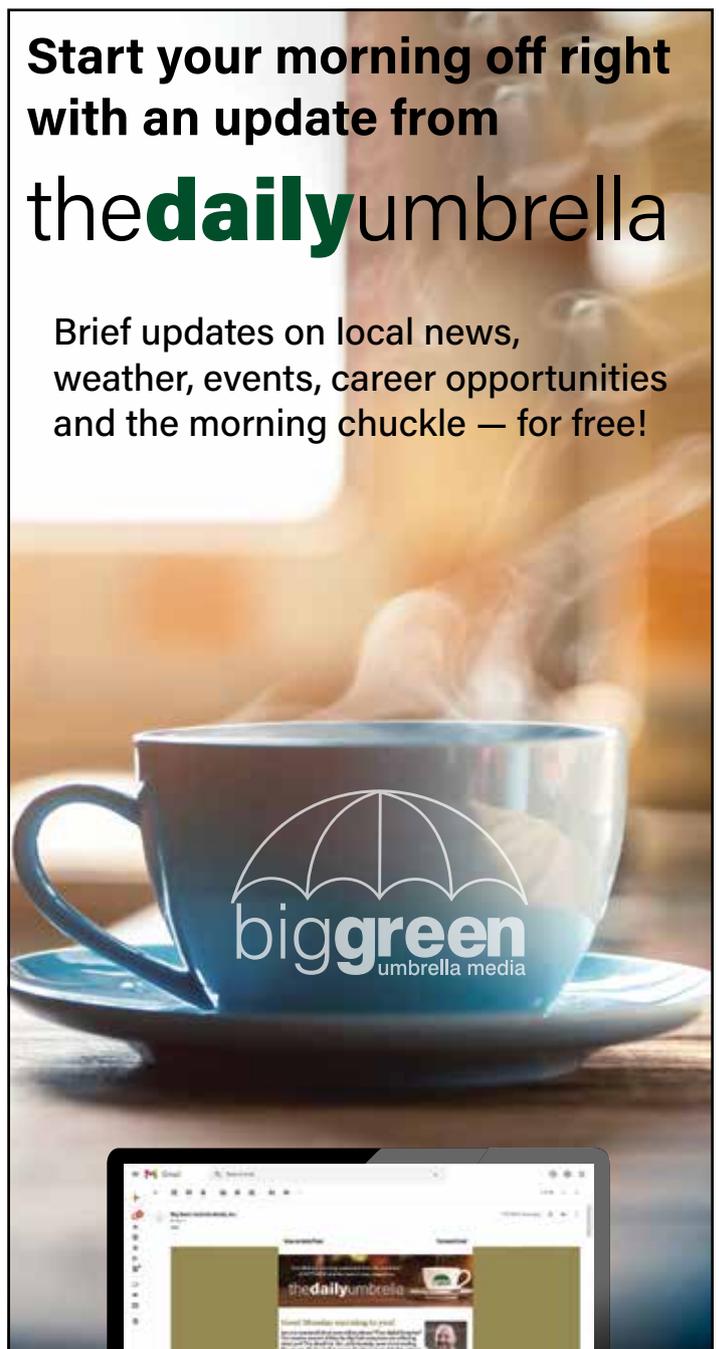
Fast-paced, well-written and awash with magic, this book absolutely swept me away. If you are the audiobook type, I can’t recommend the narrators highly enough. They were perfect. ■ — Review by Julie Goodrich



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TIRED? Come to Jesus this Easter

Life can be exhausting.

We are bombarded with news — often more than we can process. Political division wears us down. Social media algorithms subtly divide and isolate us while stirring up comparison, envy and anxiety. The pressure to keep up and not miss out fills our calendars until many of us quietly long for rest. Even our relationships, as meaningful as they are, can become complicated and emotionally draining.



It leaves many of us asking: Why am I so tired?

Jesus understood the weariness of life and offered an incredible invitation: “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28).

That is an amazing promise. Not temporary relief. Not just a day off. Real rest.

Jesus offers a different kind of life. It is not a life we manufacture by finally organizing our schedules or managing stress better. It is a life that is given — a life lived with Him. A life where our souls can breathe again.

This is where Easter comes in.

Easter is often associated with eggs, candy and family meals, but the heart of Easter is far more powerful. It tells the story of Jesus confronting the deepest problems of our world — and of our own hearts.

Jesus died on a cross to deal with the brokenness that runs through humanity: the selfishness, fear and guilt that exhaust us and drain us of life. But the story didn't end there. Three days later, Jesus rose from the dead.

His resurrection wasn't just a miracle — it was a preview of what God intends to do for the entire world. One day, God will restore everything that has been broken. For those who trust Him, that new life begins even now.

In other words, Easter is not just about life after death. It's about new life today — a rescue from exhaustion and a restoration of hope.

The first people who encountered the risen Jesus were overwhelmed. Jesus tells them, “Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me” (Matthew 28:10). There was a place where people could meet the risen Jesus. A place where ordinary people could encounter hope.

That is still true today.

This Easter, millions of people around the world will gather in churches to hear this story again — the story of Jesus, new life and real rest.

If you're feeling weary, discouraged or simply curious, check out one of the great churches in our community this Easter. Put yourself in a place where you can meet Jesus.

You just might discover that Jesus' invitation is still open today: “Come to me... and I will give you rest.” ■

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

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SLEEPING well impacts well-being

How would you like to get sick less often, maintain a healthy weight, reduce your stress level and lower your risk for serious health problems? All it takes is one thing: Get more sleep. Your health and the way you feel when you are awake depends significantly on what happens when you are sleeping.



According to the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute, inadequate sleep can raise your risk for chronic health problems. Sleep affects your heart and circulatory system, metabolism, respiratory system and immune system. People who do not get enough sleep, either by going to bed too late, getting up too early, or waking up multiple times during the night, have an increased risk of coronary heart disease, high blood pressure, obesity and stroke. Sleep enables our bodies to repair themselves and be ready for the next day.

Unfortunately, getting sleep becomes harder as we age. Our bodies produce less melatonin (the sleep hormone) as we age, which results in us waking up multiple times during the night, waking up earlier in the morning, and having a harder time falling asleep at night. Losing sleep is an annoying problem to have. There are a few things we can do to help improve our sleep as we age.

Stick to a schedule. If we develop a more consistent sleep routine, by not only going to bed at the same time each night but following the same

nighttime routine, such as having a cup of warm decaffeinated tea before bed, it can help train our body and mind that it is time for us to sleep.

Avoid stimulating activities an hour before bed. Shut the TV off and get off your phone. Read a book or listen to quiet music.

Keep physical activity a part of your daily routine. Regular exercise, as well as spending time outdoors each day, can help promote sleep. Hopkins School of Medicine has found that “the effects of aerobic exercise on sleep appear to be similar to those of sleeping pills.”

Reduce bedroom distractions. Prohibit electronics in your bedroom and create a space that lets your mind slow down and your body relax. Temperature changes can interrupt your sleep, so add optional blanket layers so you can add or throw off covers as you sleep. Practicing progressive muscle relaxation once you are in bed has been shown to help with sleep disturbances. Progressive muscle relaxation involves tensing and then relaxing all of the muscle groups in your body.

Also, I love a good nap, but, if you are not sleeping well at night, naps are hurting you, not helping you. If you are going to nap, try taking them in the morning or early afternoon.

Sleep is vital to our overall health. Make sleeping well a part of your self-care routine. ■

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

OPTIMIZING nervous system function

The sympathetic nervous system, fight or flight response, isn't the enemy. It is critical for survival, responding to acute danger, reacting to challenges, and taking action in stressful or emergency situations. But when the sympathetic nervous system is activated for too long, beyond just the immediate response to a stressor, the body gets stuck in a protective overdrive.

When the body is stuck in a sympathetic state, it physically and emotionally becomes less flexible and more reactive. Healing, growth and development, learning and processing, and empathy become secondary to survival. The stress response never fully turns off. It might not appear like panic or anxiousness but can look like sensory sensitivities, digestive issues, emotional reactivity, disrupted sleep patterns, allergies, immune system weakness (frequent sickness), skin issues, developmental delays, struggling at school, difficulty focusing or transitioning, bedwetting or toe-walking.

Body signals are often misunderstood as singular issues or attributed to personality, when often they are the body sounding the alarm that the sympathetic nervous system is stuck in a protective pattern. Children (and adults) don't need to be "fixed"; we need to recognize the pattern beneath the symptoms. The body isn't misbehaving; it is protecting. Nervous system-focused chiropractors can partner with families to identify stress patterns and optimize nervous system function. Chiropractic adjustments remove interference in the nervous system and move the body from a sympathetic state to a parasympathetic state. Chiropractic adjustments prime the nervous system to appropriately adapt to stressors when they arise. Nervous system-focused chiropractors look at the child or adult as a whole, not just diagnoses or symptoms, and create a plan to restore healing and function. ■

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

WELLNESS

By Nikki Morgan

VITAMIN C key to skincare

April marks National Vitamin C Day, offering the perfect opportunity to spotlight one of skincare's most celebrated ingredients. While vitamin C is commonly associated with immune health, its benefits for the skin have made it a staple in many dermatologist-recommended routines.

Vitamin C is a powerful antioxidant, meaning it helps neutralize free radicals — unstable molecules created by environmental factors such as UV exposure, pollution and daily stressors. These free radicals can accelerate visible signs of aging, contributing to dullness, fine lines and uneven skin tone. By helping protect the skin from damage, vitamin C supports a healthier complexion.

One of vitamin C's most notable benefits is its ability to support collagen production. Collagen is the protein responsible for maintaining the skin's structure and firmness, but natural levels decline over time. Incorporating topical vitamin C can promote smoother skin.

Vitamin C is also widely known for its brightening effects. It can help reduce the appearance of dark spots and discoloration, leaving skin looking more radiant and even toned.

Formulation matters when it comes to effectiveness. Medical-grade skincare brands such as SkinCeuticals and SkinMedica have invested extensively in antioxidant research to create stable vitamin C formulations designed to penetrate the skin and deliver consistent results. ■

Information provided by Nikki Morgan, DNP, ARNP, SkinFusion, 200 Second St. S.E., Altoona, 515-967-0587, www.skinfusionfx.com, nikki.skinfusionfx@gmail.com



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EXPLORE cannabis for wellness

More adults than ever are reconsidering their relationship with cannabis. What was once mostly associated with recreation or stigma is now being talked about in a different context: wellness.

As people pay closer attention to sleep, stress, recovery and overall health, many are starting to look beyond traditional options. Cannabis-derived products, especially those containing CBD or low levels of THC, have started to enter that conversation.

Part of the reason is the body's endocannabinoid system. This system plays a role in regulating balance across several functions including sleep, mood, inflammation and stress response.

For some adults, cannabis offers an alternative to habits that can leave them feeling sluggish or run down the next day. Others become curious after hearing friends or family talk about products designed to support sleep, relaxation or everyday balance.

The variety of products surprises many shoppers. Cannabis products come in many forms including beverages, gummies, capsules, tinctures and topicals. Options can vary in CBD, THC and other cannabinoid content, allowing people to explore what works best for them.

Talking with knowledgeable retailers can make the experience easier to navigate. As understanding grows, cannabis is becoming part of the broader conversation around modern wellness. ■

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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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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Coming up in 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.

Farmers market vendors: Do you enjoy selling your products at local farmers market? Tell us how you benefit from farmers markets and what tips you can share with others wanting to get involved. Email tammy@iowalivingmagazines.com.

Programs at Edencrest at The Tuscany

1600 Eighth St. S.E., Altoona

• **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.

WDM Elks Spring Style Show Fundraiser

Saturday, April 11,
10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

West Des Moines Elks Lodge
No. 2752, 2060 N.W. 94th St.,
Clive

Tickets for the Spring Style Show are \$15 each or reserve a table for eight for \$140 or a table for four for \$70. Doors open at 10 a.m., with the style show starting at 11 a.m. and a salad luncheon to follow. Many vendors will be present, including Purple Poppy, Salon Classic and others. Funds raised will benefit Veterans Children's Christmas and other Elks charities and outreach.

Live Music at Prairie Meadows

1 Prairie Meadows Drive, Altoona

- March 27, 8-11 p.m. Adam Whitehead
- March 28, 8-11 p.m. Richie Lee and the Fabulous '50s
- March 31, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Jim Dandy and the Kountry Rebels
- April 3, 8 p.m. Beggar's Bargain
- April 4, 8 p.m., Lincoln Highway
- April 7, 11 a.m. Dale Menning and the Stardusters
- April 10, 7 p.m. REO Survivor
- April 11, 8 p.m. Aftershock
- April 14, 11 a.m. Sentimental Swing
- April 17, 8 p.m. The Detour Band
- April 18, 8 p.m. Jesse and the Medicine Men
- April 21, 11 a.m. Clarksville Station
- April 24, 8 p.m. Final Mix
- April 25, 8 p.m. Dick Danger Band
- April 28, 11 a.m. Cowboy Kix



Des Moines Community Orchestra Spring Concert

Sunday, May 10, 2 p.m.

Drake University Sheslow Auditorium,
2507 University Ave., Des Moines

Enjoy the Des Moines Community Orchestra in concert with guest conductor Kara Mather and featured soloist Dr. Kevin Allemagne on the clarinet.

Capital City Card Convention

Friday, March 27 to Sunday, March 29
Iowa Events Center, 730 Third St.,
Des Moines

Iowa's largest sports card show features 240-plus tables of action. More information available at www.iowaeventscenter.com/events/detail/capital-city-card-convention-8.



Can Play Fore All Golf Outing

Friday, April 24, 3-7 p.m.
RecPlex, 6500 Grand Ave.,
West Des Moines

Join Can Play and the 2026 West Des Moines Leadership Academy for a fun, small-format golf outing supporting accessible outdoor recreation and youth programming. Golfers will play through a creative course designed by community members and local businesses, built entirely from non-perishable food items to benefit Can Play's programming. All proceeds will benefit Can Play, whose mission is to bring adapted and no cost recreational programs to our communities by removing barriers to play. Register and donate online at <https://givebutter.com/WDMMLA>.

Des Moines Art Center Museum Highlights Tour

Saturdays, 1-2 p.m.

Des Moines Art Center,
4700 Grand Ave., Des Moines

Discover the vast variety of the Des Moines Art Center's permanent collections during the Museum Highlights Tour. This tour offers a unique journey through the galleries, featuring a selection of timeless paintings, sculptures and more. Join knowledgeable guides to uncover the stories, techniques and inspirations behind the art on view, and experience the highlights of the Art Center in a fresh and engaging way. This guided tour is perfect for art enthusiasts of all ages. Free to all, no registration required.

EVENTS IN THE AREA

Be sure to check for cancelations.

Bill Owens: Work and Leisure

Through April 19

John Brady Print Gallery, Des Moines Art Center,
4700 Grand Ave., Des Moines

Bill Owens documented the suburbs in the 1970s, capturing the lives of prosperous, predominantly white Americans at a moment after the cultural shifts of the 1960s but before the dawn of the digital age of computers and video games in the 1980s. His photographs were compiled in the best-selling coffee table books "Leisure" (1972), "Our Kind of People" (1975), and "Working: I Do It For the Money" (1977). The images in this exhibition, taken from all three of these series and shot mainly in California and the Midwest, reveal Owens' unique comedic eye as he seems to lightly poke fun at his subjects while clearly enjoying their company, finding both the genuine and the absurd in everyday life.

The Iowa Files: A History Series

Various dates, 3 p.m.

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

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

• **April 12: Colfax, the Spring City.** In the 1870s, underground mineral water, which was a cure-all health craze at the time, was discovered in Colfax. The water sparked health resort and bottling industries which made Colfax a world famous destination at the turn of the 20th Century. Kevin Williams, Cofax Historical Society's board president, will share information and pictures about this little-known boom in Colfax.

• **May 17: Villisca; Living With a Mystery.** On the morning of June 10, 1912, Josiah and Sarah Moore, along with their four children and two young overnight guests, were found brutally murdered in their home. Dr. Edgar V. Epperly has written dozens of articles and blog entries and appeared on CourtTV and other radio and television programs. He will be joined by filmmakers Kelly and Tammy Rundle, whose 2004 documentary explores the crime's aftermath in a small town.

Unmasking the Singer

Saturday, March 28

Val Air Ballroom, 301 Ashworth Road, West Des Moines

The Salvation Army's Unmasking the Singer, sponsored by KDSM FOX 17 and Prairie Meadows, is already ramping up the excitement for 2026. The event will feature round-table seating for the main area — offering a more sociable atmosphere for the audience. Val Air also has a main stage as well as the old side stage, allowing for a set-up more similar to that of The Masked Singer on FOX. Tables of eight start at \$250 and up. Individual table seats are \$50 and general admission is \$35. Light snacks will be provided, and beverages will be available for purchase. For more information or to buy tickets, visit www.bit.ly/UMTS2026.

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

The Ingersoll 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.

• **"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.

• **The Classic Stones Live: Wednesday, April 15, and Thursday, April 16.** Widely recognized as the most premier Rolling Stones tribute in the world, this eight-piece band recreates the raw energy, swagger and sound of The Stones in their legendary prime. From iconic saxophone lines to unforgettable backing vocals, every detail is meticulously performed in original tunings. Dining begins at 5:30 p.m. with the show at 7:30 p.m. both nights.

• **Isn't She Lovely, a Mother's Day Music Show starring Patricia Holly: May 8 and May 10,** offering both an evening and matinee option for families celebrating together. On May 8, dining will be at 5:30 p.m. and show at 7:30 p.m. On May 10, Dining is at 11 a.m. and show is at 1 p.m.

• **Shaun Johnson Big Band Experience - '90s Country: June 6.** Matinee performance features dining at 11 a.m. and show at 1 p.m. Evening performance starts with dining at 5:30 p.m. and show at 7:30 p.m.

Tickets are available at www.theingersoll.com/events or at Ticketmaster.com/TheIngersoll.

Scam Prevention Seminar

Thursday, April 16, 10 a.m.

Ramsey Village Continuing Care,
1611 27th St., Des Moines

Every day, someone becomes a victim of fraud. Don't let it be you. Learn common scam tactics, prevention tips, and how to report scams. Presenter is the Iowa Department of Insurance and Financial Services. Refreshments and pastries will be served. RSVP to Kelly, 515-802-0822, or Kelly.Baughman@ramseyvillage.org. ■

TAKE THE POLL

WHICH OF THESE FIRST SIGNS OF SPRING IS YOUR FAVORITE?

1. Birds singing
2. Thunderstorms
3. Jacket weather
4. Green grass
5. Flowers blooming

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Living
MAGAZINES



SCAN THE QR CODE TO VOTE!

A PROPOSAL, memories and a father's legacy

Sjobloms engaged at Hoyt Sherman Place



Kelsey and Kody Sjoblom after their proposal at Hoyt Sherman Place on May 28, 2017. Kelsey shows off her engagement ring. Photo courtesy of Kelsey Sjoblom

On Sunday, May 28, 2017, in an empty but fully lit auditorium at Hoyt Sherman Place, Kody Sjoblom dropped to one knee and asked Kelsey Leppert to be his wife. Hidden throughout the room were their moms, sisters and friends photographing the proposal.

“It was pretty clear what was happening when we walked into the building, and there was nobody there. I was like, ‘Oh! This is happening now,’” Kelsey says.

Hoyt Sherman Place has been a landmark in Des Moines since 1923 and was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1977, deeming it worthy of preservation. In 2004, it underwent a \$4.7 million restoration project to return it to its original glory. Kelsey’s dad, Ricky Leppert, was the project manager under The Weitz Company.

The project was one of Ricky’s favorites, and he took a lot of pride in it.

“I heard a lot of stories about this, as it was ongoing, when he’d share about his day at dinner,” Kelsey says.

Hoyt Sherman Place holds a special place in the hearts of Kelsey’s family. During the restoration, the families of workers on the project were able to visit and view the progress for a day. Kelsey even got to touch the ceiling.

Although Kody had other ideas for how to propose to Kelsey — including popping the question on their trip to Europe — he chose



Kelsey, Harper, Kody and Reagan Sjoblom pose together. Photo by Ivory House Photography

Hoyt Sherman Place because he knew the significance it held for her.

In 2011, Kelsey’s dad passed away from cancer.

Ricky was an incredible man and a great caretaker and provider for his family, Kelsey says. He loved what he did and put all his heart into it, but, above all, his family was the most important thing to him.

Kody and Ricky never had the chance to meet.

“Which is just the biggest shame in the world, because they would have gotten on so well — they would have just clicked,” Kelsey says. “They both love hunting and fishing. They’re just very similar people, so it’s really sad that they never got to meet.”

Being a traditionalist, Kody asked Kelsey’s family for permission to propose.

“I thought, well, I don’t have the opportunity to ask Ricky, so I better do it in a place where I can get some kind of signoff on it,” Kody says.

He wanted Ricky to be included in the day, even though he wasn’t able to be there physically.

Kelsey knew immediately, once it was clear what was happening, why Kody had chosen Hoyt Sherman Place.

“He knows and understands why this place is important to me and my family, and it was a really special way of going about it,” she says.

Coordinating the evening couldn’t have

gone better for Kody. When he called the site facilitator to inquire about an available date, she loved the idea and was able to reserve the space for them on a Sunday afternoon that was, coincidentally — but working to his advantage — his mom’s birthday.

They had plans to meet Kody’s mom at Americana for her birthday dinner, but Kody said he had to pick up tickets from Hoyt Sherman Place first. Kelsey, suspicious because it was a Sunday and wondering if they were even open, went along.

They walked into the lit auditorium and up to the stage, both knowing full well what was about to happen.

In the moments before saying yes, Kelsey was filled with happiness and gratitude for the man she had in her life.

“Knowing he took the time and effort to plan something that would be that special to me, since my dad was not able to be there, it meant a lot,” she says. “I don’t know if he could have done it better.”

Kody, Kelsey, their moms and everyone who was there to witness the proposal went to Americana afterward to celebrate and even received a free bottle of champagne.

Nearly a year later, on May 26, 2018, Kody Sjoblom and Kelsey Leppert were married. Now the two live in Altoona and have two daughters, Harper and Reagan. ■

ANNUAL Awards Dinner open to the public

I'm pretty sure most of us are more than happy to shed the dreary month of February and gladly welcome March. It is a month of unpredictable weather, tournament brackets, the hope of spring and daylight savings time. For many, it is an opportunity to get away and enjoy a vacation (or staycation) before jumping headfirst into all the activities and events of late winter and early spring.



For the chamber and the Altoona business community, March is when the planning for our spring and summer events begins in earnest. The first big event is our Annual Awards Dinner, which is just around the corner on Friday evening, April 10. We are pleased to be back at Prairie Meadows this year and have decided we would love to make this event open to our community and not just our local businesses. This is a wonderful evening of networking and celebrating local folks and businesses doing great things for the good of this community. We are proud of the accomplishments of our member businesses and think the celebration should include our loyal customers who support us. You can get your tickets by going to www.altoonachamber.org/events. They sell out quickly, so don't hesitate. We are grateful for our Premier and Presenting sponsors, Prairie Meadows, Honda of Altoona, Meta, and Polk County, as well as the many other business partners and sponsors that make this evening magical.

We would love to see you at the Annual Awards Dinner, or any one of the many events we have planned this year. Mark your calendar so you don't miss the fun of what is next this spring.

SAVE THE DATE

- Annual Awards Dinner, Friday, April 10
- Business 101: The Power of Capital, Thursday, April 16
- The Enabling Garden Plant Sale, Saturday, April 18
- Women of Vision Health Panel, Wednesday, April 29
- Iowa Donor Network Ribbon Cutting Ceremony, Thursday, April 30 ■

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

SPRING IS COMING

YOU'RE INVITED TO A
GARDEN PARTY

THE ENABLING GARDEN
FRIDAY, MAY 29TH
6-8PM

HOSTED BY:
**THE ALTOONA CHAMBER
OF COMMERCE**

TICKETS: \$30PP
CATERED MEAL LIVE MUSIC
DRINKS & AUCTION

OUT & ABOUT



Angela Jones and Paul Hartwell at Perk Before Work hosted by Altoona Campus on March 3.



Eric Yoerger, Jennifer Armatis and Adam Boose at Perk Before Work hosted by Altoona Campus on March 3.



Heather Sievers and JD Davis at Perk Before Work hosted by Altoona Campus on March 3.



Jen Holschag Young and Linda Lawson at Perk Before Work hosted by Altoona Campus on March 3.



Tim Hainey and Rob Cramer at Perk Before Work hosted by Altoona Campus on March 3.



Tom Kilts and Amy Heuermann-Kilts of Major Lawn Care with their Eastern Polk County Residents' Choice certificates for lawn care and landscaping.



Caring Hands Outreach Center earned favorite Thrift Store, Consignment Store and Nonprofit in the recent Eastern Polk County Residents' Choice Poll.



Fireside Grill earned Favorite Restaurant for Lunch, runner up for Favorite Bar and Catering Company and JoLynn Scheirmeister for favorite server/bartender in the recent Eastern Polk County Residents' Choice poll.



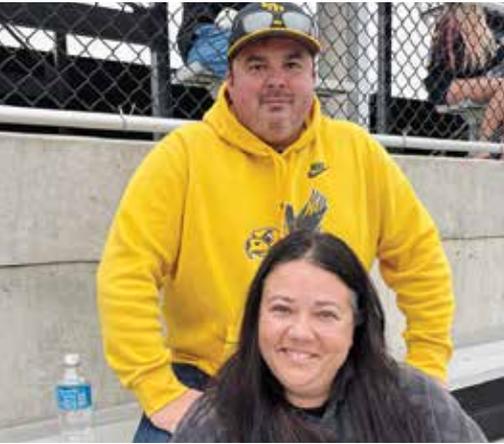
Isaac Saldana, Brandon Phares, Malorie Vandelune, Robey Bell, Jason Crooks, Jeremy Seley and Lindsay McMillen of Ted's Body Shop with their winning Residents' Choice certificate for Favorite Eastern Polk County Auto Body Shop.



The Insurance Station was voted Favorite Insurance Agency in the Eastern Polk County Residents' Choice Poll. Front row: Nicole Almburg, Jared Vincent, Monica Lafrenz, Liv Dowling, Kelly Lamb; and, back row: Caden Sykes, Eric Seifert and Kade Somers.

SEP TRACK and Field

Southeast Polk Rams boys track and field competed March 10.



Rich and Chantelle Armintrout



Eric and Brenda Vonnahmeat



Sarah and Brent Swanson



Rylee and Jayne Thovson



Amy and Adam Sherwood



Arron and Bodhi Trunnel



Deanna Trunnel, Katie Cox and Brooke Brinkmeier



Tiffany Metheny, Teresa Metheny and Tim Metheny

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MISCELLANEOUS

CEDAR RAPIDS LARGEST Flea Market and Garage Sale held at Lindale Mall, old Younkers store. Saturday, March 28th, 9am to 7pm and Sunday, March 29th, 9am to 5pm. 200 vendors! Space is still available. 515-298-3968 (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)

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paying for your service, call now for a free quote and see how much you can save! 1-833-472-7954. (mcn)

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ALTOONA

MARCH 2026

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CITY HALL

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FAX: 515-967-0842

Open 8 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Monday – Friday

Mayor Dean O'Connor

515-967-5136

City Council Members

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Scott Duer 515-418-2227

Kyle Mertz 515-954-8470

Jerry Evans 515-967-5136

Julie Stewart 515-967-5136

City Administrator

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Police Chief

515-967-5132

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Library Director

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Fax: 515-967-6934

Water Billing

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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 a.m. to 7 p.m.

HELP SHAPE THE FUTURE OF ALTOONA'S 1ST AVENUE & OLDE TOWN!

Altoona is planning for the next chapter of 1st Avenue and Olde Town to create a vibrant, connected, and welcoming community. This effort will shape the look and feel of the corridor and Olde Town, reflecting the community's vision for public art and gathering spaces while honoring Altoona's History and supporting its growth.

Find more information at the project website altoonaforward.com.

COMMUNITY ROUNDTABLE

Learn more about the project and share your ideas.

When: Monday, March 30th

Time: 5:30-7:30pm

Location: City Hall, Council Chambers (900 Venbury Dr SW)

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 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. for Streets and Utilities, and 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. for Finance. Scan the QR code for more details and to apply now!



SPRING CLEANUP IS JUST AROUND THE CORNER!

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

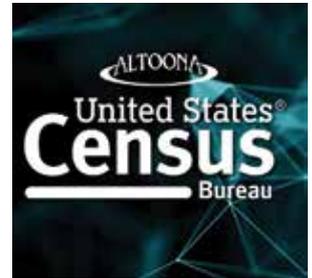
Residents living South of Railroad should have items at the curb by 6 AM on April 13.

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

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





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