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Residents reflect on the traditions that connect them to home

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WELCOME

CELEBRATING my heritage — a wee bit

“My people” celebrated March 17. If you are Irish, chances are you did, too. If you are not Irish, there is still a good chance you celebrated anyway. That seems to be how St. Patrick’s Day works.

I say “my people” in the most affectionate way possible, mostly because I am reasonably confident I am Irish. I am also told I am German. And French. And possibly a little Native American. But, thanks to my mother’s side of the family, Irish is the one that tends to show up the loudest.

Mom and her siblings fit the Irish profile quite well: short in stature, red-haired, light-skinned, Catholic and full of vinegar. And by “full of vinegar,” I mean they had opinions.

Family history backs up my Irish claim. My grandmother’s maiden name was Leonard. Her father, Patrick Leonard, was born near Carlow, Ireland, in 1866. And, if that isn’t enough proof, my grandson — appropriately named Callahan — arrived in 2025 with a head full of red hair. Genetics doesn’t get much clearer than that. Somewhere in Ireland, an ancestor is nodding proudly and probably ordering another potato.

Speaking of potatoes, let’s address a few stereotypes. Do the Irish really love potatoes that much? Is everyone named Mary? Are they obsessed with the weather? Do they enjoy a good fight but still manage to remain friendly afterward? And do they really say “wee” all the time?

I can’t answer all of those questions with scientific certainty, but I can say this: If someone offers me a baked potato, I’m not going to turn it down.

Personally, I enjoy poking a little fun at my Irish roots while also celebrating them. Truth be told, most of us are a mix of several backgrounds anyway. Somewhere in the family tree, there is probably an Irishman, a German, a Frenchman and someone arguing loudly about the weather.

At the end of the day, we probably have more in common than we realize. That’s worth celebrating. Still, there’s nothing wrong with taking a little pride in where you came from — at least a wee bit.

Have a great month and thanks for reading. ■

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Celebrating HERITAGE

Residents reflect on the traditions that connect them to home

By Ashley Rullestad

The aroma of fresh pita, the sweetness of Rosca de Reyes and the bright marigolds of Día de Muertos all have a place in Johnston. For some local families, culture isn't just remembered — it is cooked, shared and celebrated across generations.

The Garcia family



Minka Kajtazovic makes hand-stretched dough with her 4-year-old granddaughter, Eloise McNerney.

Part of the community

Minka Kajtazovic and her family relocated as political refugees from Bosnia to the Des Moines area in 1996 and have lived in Johnston since 2006.

“We have loved raising our children — and now grandchildren — in Johnston because of the small community, great schools and parks, and proximity to a mid-sized city,” Kajtazovic says.

The Kajtazoviks maintain a strong connection to the Bosnian culture, both personally and professionally. They own and operate Europa Groceries on Merle Hay Road, the original Bosnian store in the Des Moines area. The shop sells foods from across Europe with a focus on products from the Balkans and Eastern Europe.

While they share many aspects of their culture with family, friends and neighbors, food and coffee are among the most common. They cook traditional dishes and, through their store, have access to familiar brands and snacks from home.

For items that cannot easily be imported, such as fresh vegetables, they grow their own. Their garden includes a Bosnian flat bean variety and a specialty pepper.

They also source quince and chestnuts from a specialty farm. Cooking is a family activity,

often involving time-intensive recipes such as homemade pita and baklava with hand-stretched dough.

“One other thing to know about Bosnian culture is that there is a strong hospitality tradition, usually involving coffee,” Kajtazovic says. “A coffee date with a Bosnian person means hours of conversation and many pours.”

The Kajtazoviks have found their neighbors and the broader community to be welcoming, she says.

“I have very good American customers,” Minka says. “Some have Balkan or Eastern European spouses, some are looking for foods they discovered while traveling, and some are simply curious and adventurous eaters.”

A beautiful mixture

Tania Barbosa is of Mexican-Lebanese heritage. Her great-grandparents left Lebanon and settled in Mexico. After many years, they returned to Lebanon when her grandfather was 3. Decades later, amid civil unrest, he chose to move his family back to Mexico. Tania’s mother was 11 at the time.

“The family lived in an apartment where they became very good friends with the neighbors — my father’s family,” Barbosa says. “That’s where they met, fell in love and married.”

Mexico has a large Lebanese community, allowing her family to remain connected to their roots.

“Saturday lunches at my grandparents’ home were the best,” she says. “We would often hear conversations in a mix of Arabic, French and Spanish.”

Growing up in a multicultural household inspired Barbosa to pursue international business. Early in her career, she joined DuPont and later accepted an international assignment in Wilmington, Delaware, where she lived for 13 years. She met her now ex-husband there, and after he received a job offer in Iowa, they relocated with their two children.

“Today, my circle of friends includes a Brazilian friend and another Lebanese couple,” Barbosa says. “When we get together, we share traditional dishes from our countries.”

One of her favorite traditions is hosting an annual gathering to celebrate Epiphany with a Kings’ cake, known as Rosca de Reyes.

“We are very proud of our history and enjoy passing traditions from one generation to the next,” Barbosa says.

The ring-shaped bread is decorated with candied fruit to resemble a crown and contains small figurines hidden inside. Guests each cut a slice, and those who find a figurine take on hosting duties for a later celebration on Feb. 2,

known as Candlemas.

Since moving to the United States, Barbosa has continued the tradition with her children and friends.

“This year, my daughter found one of the figurines, so I gathered friends to make tamales while enjoying dinner,” she says. “I cooked falafel while we prepared tamales. As you can see, the mix of my two cultures is always present.”

From Mexico with love

Candy Garcia-Maciel says her heart remains connected to her roots.

“I came here from Mexico to visit my dad’s family and study English after finishing my degree in business,” she says. “I thought I knew the path my life would take, but destiny had other plans.”

What began as a temporary stay became permanent after she met her partner.

“After more than 10 years, this country has become an important part of who I am,” she says.

Garcia-Maciel stays connected with her mother and sister in Mexico by speaking with them nearly every day. They share photos during



Tania Barbosa hosts friends and family to celebrate Epiphany and cut the Kings’ cake.

holidays and celebrations to feel close despite the distance.

She honors her heritage in many ways, including celebrating Día de Muertos.

“It is such a deeply emotional and sacred tradition for me,” she says. “I prepare flowers, food and favorite drinks as a way of saying, ‘You are still with us. You are still loved. You are never

forgotten.’ ”

Cooking is another way she shares her culture. She enjoys preparing Mexican dishes and creating videos that tell the story behind each meal.

Her friends in Iowa have embraced her traditions, especially her homemade pozole and tamales verdes.

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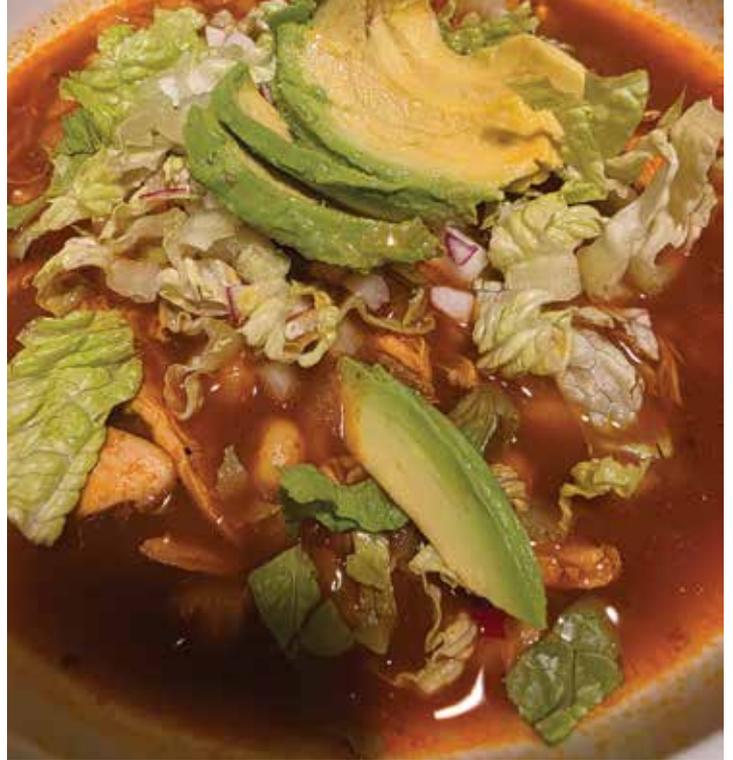
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FEATURE



Candy Garcia-Maciell celebrates Dia de los Muertos each year.



Candy Garcia-Maciell makes homemade posole to celebrate her Mexican heritage.

At the same time, she values the traditions of her adopted home. “Living between two cultures has taught me that love has no borders,” Garcia-Maciell says. “Home can exist in more than one place. One gave me my roots, and the other helped me grow.” ■

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VARSIY GIRLS TRACK

DATE	TIME	OPPONENT	LOCATION
Apr 2	4:15PM	Hawkette Invite	Northview Middle School
Apr 7	4:30PM	Craig Oldham Inv.	Johnston High School
Apr 11	8:00AM	Jim Duncan Inv.	Drake Stadium Track
Apr 14	4:15PM	Jim Duea Relays	Ames High School Ames
Apr 16	4:00PM	Jaguar Girls T/F Meet	Northview Middle School
Apr 20	4:00PM	Larry Weier Inv.	Dowling Catholic High School

VARSIY GIRLS GOLF

DATE	TIME	OPPONENT	LOCATION
Apr 13	12:00PM	Jaguar Invite	Briarwood Club of Ankeny
Apr 15	9:00PM	CIML Triangular	A.H. Blank Golf Course
Apr 20	10:00AM	Lamson Invite	Willow Creek Golf Course
Apr 22	3:30PM	CIML Triangular	Sugar Creek Golf Course
Apr 23	12:00PM	Lancer Girls Golf Inv.	Glynns Creek Golf Course
Apr 28	11:00AM	Multiple Schools	Hunters Ridge Golf Course
Apr 30	9:00AM	CIML Triangular	Otter Creek Golf Course
May 4	9:00AM	Dragon Invite	Jester Park Golf Course
May 6	9:00AM	Multiple Schools	Jester Park Golf Course

VARSIY BOYS TRACK

DATE	TIME	OPPONENT	LOCATION
Apr 4	10:00AM	Valley Relays	Valley High School
Apr 7	4:30PM	Urbandale Inv.	Urbandale High School
Apr 11	8:30AM	Jim Duncan Inv.	Drake Stadium Track
Apr 14	4:15PM	Johnston Inv.	Johnston High School
Apr 16	4:30PM	Multiple Schools	Urbandale High School
Apr 20	4:30PM	Valley HS Boys JV Invite	Valley High School
Apr 28	4:30PM	Comet Boys Invite	North Polk High School
May 1	4:30PM	Valley Quad	Valley High School Tiger
May 4	4:30PM	North Polk Coed Invite	North Polk High School

VARSIY BOYS TENNIS

DATE	TIME	OPPONENT	LOCATION
Apr 7	11:30AM	Tennis Triangular	Southeast Polk High School Tennis Courts
Apr 7	11:30AM	Southeast Polk	Southeast Polk High School Tennis Courts
Apr 7	2:00PM	North Polk	Southeast Polk High School Tennis Courts
Apr 11	10:00AM	Johnston Invitational	Johnston High School
Apr 14	4:00PM	Waukee	Johnston High School
Apr 16	4:00PM	Waukee Northwest	Northwest High School
Apr 21	4:00PM	Ankeny	Johnston High School
Apr 23	4:00PM	Urbandale	Walker Johnston Tennis Courts
Apr 24	10:00AM	Multiple Schools	Prairie Ridge Sports Complex
Apr 28	4:00PM	Dowling Catholic	Johnston High School
Apr 30	4:00PM	Valley	Crossroads Park Tennis Courts
May 5	4:00PM	Ankeny Centennial	Johnston High School
May 7	10:00AM	Triangular	Ames High Baseball & Softball Tennis Court



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VARSITY GIRLS SOCCER

DATE	TIME	OPPONENT	LOCATION
Apr 3	7:30PM	Prairie	Johnston High School
Apr 6	7:30PM	Southeast Polk	Johnston High School
Apr 9	7:30PM	Dallas Center-Grimes	Dallas Center-Grimes High School
Apr 13	7:00PM	Waukee	Timberline Stadium
Apr 17	7:30PM	Waukee Northwest	Johnston High School
Apr 21	7:30PM	Ankeny	Ankeny High School
Apr 23	7:30PM	Maryville	Maryville High School
Apr 28	7:30PM	Urbandale	Johnston High School
Apr 30	7:30PM	Dowling Catholic	Dowling Catholic High School
May 2	2:30PM	Linn-Mar	Johnston High School
May 4	7:15PM	Iowa City West	Iowa City West High School
May 8	7:30PM	Valley	Johnston High School
May 12	7:30PM	Ankeny Centennial	Ankeny Centennial High School
May 14	7:15PM	Des Moines Christian	Johnston High School
May 16	12:00PM	Des Moines Roosevelt	Mediacom Stadium
May 18	7:30PM	Mason City	Johnston High School
May 21	7:30PM	Colfax-Mingo	Johnston High School

VARSITY BOYS SOCCER

DATE	TIME	OPPONENT	LOCATION
Apr 4	1:00PM	Lincoln Southwest	Seacrest Field Den Hartog Soccer Field
Apr 7	7:30PM	Southeast Polk	Southeast Polk High School
Apr 9	7:30PM	Ames	Johnston High School
Apr 11	12:00PM	Prairie	Urbandale High School
Apr 13	7:30PM	Waukee	Johnston High School
Apr 18	9:30AM	Omaha Central	Johnston High School
Apr 18	3:30PM	Iowa City West	Johnston High School
Apr 21	7:30PM	Ankeny	Johnston High School
Apr 28	7:30PM	Urbandale	Urbandale High School
Apr 30	7:30PM	Indianola	Indianola Stadium
May 1	7:30PM	Dowling Catholic	Johnston High School
May 5	7:30PM	Waukee Northwest	Northwest High School
May 8	7:30PM	Valley	Valley Stadium
May 12	7:30PM	Ankeny Centennial	Johnston High School
May 22	6:00PM	Iowa City Liberty	Johnston High School



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THE COMFORT of a savory lasagna

There are few things in life more comforting than a warm kitchen filled with the savory aroma of lasagna baking in the oven — any time of the year. It is the kind of smell that draws everyone in, pulling family members from each corner of the house to ask, “Is it ready yet?”



This hearty lasagna has become a true family favorite in our home. With rich layers of seasoned meat, creamy ricotta, tender pasta and plenty of melted cheese (I suggest adding more than what this recipe calls for), it is the ultimate comfort food. Lasagna is more than just dinner — it is a tradition. This dish has even been selected as our dinner for Christmas and Thanksgiving many years, as it truly is a treasured recipe — and the leftovers taste even better the next day. This recipe represents the simple joy in sharing something homemade and delicious with the people you love. I need to warn you, though, the sauce takes some time to cook, but it is well worth the wait. Enjoy!

Information provided by Jolene Goodman, vice president of Big Green Umbrella Media.

Lasagna

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 pound ground hamburger
- 1 cup chopped onion
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- 1/4 cup chopped fresh parsley, divided
- 1 28-ounce can whole tomatoes, undrained and chopped
- 1 14.5-ounce can Italian-styled stewed tomatoes, undrained and chopped
- 1 six-ounce tomato paste
- 1 eight-ounce can tomato sauce
- 2 teaspoons dried oregano
- 1 teaspoon dried basil
- 1/2 teaspoon black pepper
- Water to boil noodles
- 12 uncooked lasagna noodles
- 1 large egg white, beaten
- 2 cups cottage cheese
- 1/2 cup shredded parmesan cheese
- 1 15-ounce carton fat-free ricotta
- 2 cups shredded mozzarella cheese

DIRECTIONS:

- Brown hamburger and drain grease. Set aside. In the same pan, coat with cooking spray, sauté onion and garlic

for 5 minutes. Add beef back in. Add 2 tablespoons parsley, chopped whole tomatoes and next six ingredients. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat, cover and simmer for 20 minutes. Uncover and simmer for 15 minutes. Set aside.

- Boil water and cook noodles for 12 minutes or until “al dente.” Drain and set aside.
- Preheat oven to 350 F. In another bowl, combine 2 tablespoons parsley, egg white, cottage cheese, parmesan cheese and ricotta cheese.
- Spray a 9-inch by 13-inch pan with cooking spray and spread 1 cup tomato/beef mixture on the bottom of the pan. Place 3 noodles on tomato/beef mixture, top with half of cottage cheese mix, then 2 cups of tomato/beef mixture, and 2/3 cup of mozzarella. Repeat. Place another layer of noodles on top, then spread with remaining tomato/beef mixture.
- Cover with aluminum foil and bake for 1 hour. Then, sprinkle with 2/3 cup of provolone and bake uncovered for another 10 minutes. Take out of oven and let rest for 10 minutes. ■

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MEET Jayme Spanhut

Teaching and loving big in kindergarten



Jayme Spanhut and her students dressed like they were 100 years old on the 100th day of school.

Jayme Spanhut, a kindergarten teacher at Timber Ridge Elementary, is the kind of teacher you want teaching your children.

In her classroom, you will hear songs, see kids playing and witness learning made fun.

As a teacher in a room full of 5- and 6-year-olds, Spanhut says her students keep her young at heart and give the best hugs.

“Building relationships with my students and providing a learning space where they feel loved and safe is a high priority for me,” Spanhut says. “I want anyone who enters my classroom to know they are loved big.”

Spanhut enjoys her students so much she often says the world would be a better place if it were more like kindergarten.

“They have so much joy and love learning new things,” she says. “Every day is the ‘best day ever,’ as one of my students tells me. They remind me daily of the little joys all around me, and when it is a hard day, one of them draws me a picture, gives me a hug or tells me I’m beautiful. Then one of them calls me mom or grandma. It just makes me laugh and touches my heart.”

Spanhut has been teaching kindergarten in Johnston since Timber Ridge Elementary opened in 2007. She previously taught preschool for two years in the Martinsdale-St. Marys School District.

In 2014, her family moved to southeast Iowa to be closer to relatives. While there, she held a long-term substitute position in two kindergarten classrooms. After a year, she realized how much they missed the Des Moines area.

Her family eventually moved back, and Spanhut taught first grade for one year in the Dallas Center-Grimes School District. A year later, she was hired back at Timber Ridge to teach kindergarten.

This marks Spanhut’s 21st year of teaching. She has always been surrounded by educators. Her mother and grandmother taught kindergarten, and her aunt taught first grade. She has fond memories of helping them in their classrooms.

“I loved playing teacher and even had a classroom in the basement of my house growing up, where I taught my neighborhood friends,” Spanhut says. “My dad was also a teacher and coach, and I basically grew up in the classroom and gym.”

Her grandmother, Jan, recently passed away, and Spanhut can still recite the “New Shoes” poem she used with her kindergarten students.

“I’ve continued her legacy of teaching and loving big,” she says.

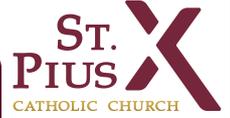
In 2018, Spanhut expanded her skill set and earned a master’s degree from Drake University. ■

JOIN US FOR EASTER

- **March 29** – Palm Sunday
- **April 2** – Holy Thursday
- **April 3** – Good Friday
- **April 4** – Holy Saturday
- **April 5** – Easter Sunday

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Volunteer for Kites on the Green on May 2

The annual Kites on the Green festival will take place on Saturday, May 2, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. at Johnston Commons Park. This green space is located near the Johnston Public Library. It is a yearly event that provides an opportunity for families to come together and fly kites while maintaining social distancing protocols. The weather is expected to be beautiful.



Volunteers are needed for several shifts on May 2. The volunteers may need to help children and families build kits, assist in special activities, or help with cleanup. To volunteer, please visit www.cityofjohnston.com/KOTGVolunteer.



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- **Planning & Zoning Commission** - Two openings, five-year term
- **Library Board** – Two openings, six-year term



If you are interested in serving, visit www.cityofjohnston.com/boardsandcommissions for an application or contact City Hall at 515-278-2344.

Learn to play MahJongg

Know how to play MahJongg and want to play with some friends? Join us for this game of skill, strategy and luck, similar to Rummy, but played with small tiles instead of cards. Join attendees at Crown Point on select Mondays, from 10:30 to 11:30 a.m. Visit www.cityofjohnston.com/RecDesk to register.

For more information about the city, please visit www.cityofjohnston.com



CITY NEWSLETTER APRIL 2026

Residential tree sale begins April 6

The City of Johnston is offering a special deal on trees to its residents. Each tree will cost \$75, and the sale begins on Tuesday, April 6 on RecDes, www.cityofjohnston.com/RecDesk. Residents can purchase the trees online, but must create an account beforehand to expedite the purchase process. If you want to know more about the trees available, visit www.cityofjohnston.com/1598.

The trees will be ready for pickup on Tuesday, May 5, between 4:00 to 7:00 p.m. in the Crown Point Community Center parking lot. There are overstory, ornamental and conifer trees available.

Each property owner can purchase only one tree, and it is encouraged that they purchase during the sale, as the supply is limited. If you have pre-ordered a tree, you will need to show your receipt as proof of payment when you come to pick it up. Any trees not picked up during the allocated time will be considered a donation to the city's tree-planting program.



Have Your Say: Johnston Community Satisfaction Survey

The City of Johnston has partnered with ETC to evaluate how satisfied residents are with various aspects of our community.

This is your chance to express your views on important matters such as road conditions, public safety, recreational parks, walking and biking trails, and the overall quality of city services. Your input will play a vital role in helping city leaders pinpoint areas that need improvement and in shaping future investments.

The survey contains a variety of topics, and your input matters. We strongly encourage all selected residents to take a few minutes to share their insights and experiences. Let's work together to enhance Johnston and make it an even better place for everyone to live, work, and enjoy.



Sign up for the Kids Market, June 16

The Johnston Farmers Market will partner with Kids Markets for one special event on **Tuesday, June 16, from 4:00 to 7:00 p.m.** Kids Markets is a nonprofit organization that gives children hands-on experience running their own small businesses at community markets. Children choose what to sell, set up their booths, talk with customers, and handle money in a supervised, real-world setting. The program helps build confidence, leadership, and communication skills.

Families can learn more about the program, view upcoming market dates, and apply for a booth at kidsmarkets.com.

Take part in the Earth Day Trash Bash on April 22

Join us for the Earth Day Trash Bash on Wednesday, April 22, from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. We'll be planting, mulching, and cleaning up trash around Johnston. Individuals and groups can register by Sunday, April 19. Please meet at the Large Shelter at Terra Park at 1:00 p.m. to fill out a waiver and receive instructions and supplies. Some groups will need to carpool to their project locations, so plan accordingly as parking may be limited. Remember to return all borrowed items to the Large Shelter by 3:00 p.m. Visit www.cityofjohnston.com/RecDesk to sign up today.

For more information about the city, please call 515.278.2344

FOUR STAGES of raising money-smart kids

Good financial habits are a little like brushing your teeth. When you learn them early, they become second nature, and you carry them with you for life. And while money can feel complicated, especially today, the foundation starts simply.

Parents can begin the conversation with young children, and young adults can build on those basics as they take on more responsibility. Step by step, these habits create confidence that helps build long-term financial security and a more fulfilling life.

The following are the four key stages of financial growth.

Stage 1: For young children, the goal is to make money feel simple and manageable. A great place to start is with three jars labeled “Spend,” “Save” and “Share.” When kids can actually see their money grow or shrink, the idea starts to make sense. Saving also introduces them to goal setting, and working toward paying for a small toy or outing teaches patience. Most importantly, you’re helping your children see money as a tool they can understand easily and use with confidence.

Stage 2: If you have tweens (children roughly 9 to 12 years old), they are usually ready for slightly bigger financial ideas. This is a great time for them to earn money through chores or small jobs, helping them see the connection between effort and reward and building a sense of ownership. Conversations about needs versus wants also become more meaningful, because kids are now making real choices with money they earned themselves. Your tween may be ready for a simple savings account to watch their savings grow or a reloadable cash card for spending.

Stage 3: By the time teens reach high school or young adulthood, budgeting becomes essential. This doesn’t need to be overly strict or complicated. A simple system that helps them track deposits and withdrawals can make all the difference. Whether they use an app, a paper notebook or a spreadsheet, the real goal is awareness. Teenagers also benefit from learning how credit works. Understanding how to build a healthy credit score and how to use credit wisely protects them from costly mistakes in later life.

Stage 4: Then come the early working years, when habits shift from learning to building. One of the smartest steps at this stage is paying yourself first. Automatic transfers to savings or retirement accounts help establish stability without extra effort. Even small retirement contributions matter more than most people realize because time allows compounding to do the heavy lifting. This is also when young adults can start organizing their money into different buckets for rent, automobile payments, emergencies, retirement and everyday spending. These habits help lay the groundwork for financial freedom down the road.

Throughout every stage, the theme is confidence. Each small success creates a sense of control, and each good habit makes the next one easier. Over time, these habits turn into a lifetime of financial security and fulfillment. When you start strong and stay consistent, money becomes a tool that helps your children support the lives they want. ■

This article was written by Edward Jones for use by Tim Hanstad, your local Edward Jones Financial Advisor. Edward Jones, Member SIPC



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WHAT IS a trust?

Creating an estate plan is the way to ensure that your assets pass to your loved ones following your death. There are several different estate planning options, but a common one is to create a trust.

A trust is comprised of three separate parties: a grantor, a trustee, and the beneficiaries. The grantor (or settlor) creates the trust. The trustee manages the assets held within the trust. The beneficiaries are the individuals or groups who receive the benefits provided by the trust.

There are two main types of trusts that a person can create as part of an estate plan: a living trust and a testamentary trust.

A living trust — also called a revocable trust — is created during the grantor’s lifetime, and the grantor funds the trust while still alive. The trust contains provisions as to how you choose for your assets to be distributed after you die. You can name a trustee to manage the assets in the trust, or you can act as the initial trustee.

The grantor has the authority to decide when and to whom trust distributions are made. The grantor can also change the trust, appoint



a new trustee, or revoke the trust entirely.

Living trusts are good options for planning for potential incapacity. They are a good way to manage assets during your lifetime as well as have an orderly plan for disposition after you die. Further, living trusts allow those settling the estate to avoid probate and get the assets distributed to the beneficiaries more quickly and efficiently.

The second type of trust is a testamentary trust. Testamentary trusts are trusts which are created within a person’s will. Because they are not created until the death of the grantor, testamentary trusts do not hold any assets or have any power until the grantor has died. After the grantor’s death, assets are transferred into a trust for the benefit of the beneficiaries. Testamentary trusts are most commonly created in a will for the benefit of minor children, a spouse, or a disabled adult child.

When created properly, trusts are an efficient and effective way to ensure that loved ones receive your assets. Be sure to consult with an experienced attorney when choosing a trust for your estate planning. ■

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

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FAITH

By Jill Alonzo

THE FAITH of St. Monica

I want to introduce you to a woman who experienced incredible hardship in life. She married young to a man who turned out to be bad husband material. He drank too much, cheated with numerous women, and had a foul temper. He never physically hurt her but had no problem attacking with words. Adding to their marital problems was the woman's mother-in-law, who lived with them and was also a hothead.



Why put up with this? Why not leave? Well, despite everything, there was potential in this man. They were a family with three children. They made a commitment, and they honored their vows. Though he didn't practice himself, her husband respected her faith, especially the way she lived it, showing kindness and care, even when others chose to be ugly.

The woman's faith gave her the strength and courage she needed. She prayed intensely for her family, patiently persisting for years. She trusted God and gave it all to him.

God heard those prayers and answered them. Before their deaths, her mother-in-law and husband became followers of Christ, as did her children, including the son who took after his father.

Meet St. Monica. Her troubled son was St. Augustine.

Does any of this hardship sound familiar? Give it to God. ■

Information provided by Jill Alonzo, Director of Family Faith Formation, Saint Mary of Nazareth Catholic Church, 4600 Meredith Drive, Des Moines, 515-276-7589, jilla@stmarysdsm.org.

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PLAN AHEAD

By Robert Christensen

WHY SHOULD I write my obituary?

We all look at them. They help honor the memory of the person who died, and they serve as a notice of the death itself. Writing an obituary is essentially writing a life narrative. You have lived a lot of life, and there is no better way to get a zoomed-out view of yourself and your life than to write your own obituary. It is a life review.



It is an opportunity to identify details that make you proud, and you may even uncover areas of your life that you realize are unfinished. This can offer you an opportunity to reroute paths that may have led you astray from those accomplishments.

Some questions that can help you as you get started with this activity include:

- Are there specific things I want my family and friends to remember about me?
- What are the most important roles I have played in life?
- Is there any advice or guidance I want to pass along to others?
- What are my most important accomplishments, and what am I most proud of?

Advanced funeral planning is ultimately about making things easier for those you love. Writing your own obituary is a simple, but meaningful way to help accomplish this. ■

Information provided by Robert Christensen, Advanced Planning Counselor, Hamilton's Funeral Home, 515-697-3671

THE BENEFITS of pet insurance

Pet insurance has become an increasingly important consideration for pet owners, reflecting the growing recognition that pets are cherished members of the family. Just as health insurance protects humans from unexpected medical expenses, pet insurance provides financial security and peace of mind when it comes to caring for animals. With the rising costs of veterinary care, having a reliable insurance plan can make a significant difference in both the quality of treatment a pet receives and the financial stability of its owner.



One of the primary reasons pet insurance is important is the unpredictability of accidents and illnesses. Pets, like humans, can develop chronic conditions, suffer injuries or require emergency care at any time. Treatments such as surgeries, diagnostic tests and medications can quickly become expensive, sometimes costing thousands of dollars. Without insurance, pet owners may face difficult decisions about whether they can afford necessary care. Pet insurance helps alleviate this burden by covering a substantial portion of these costs, allowing owners to focus on what truly matters — the health and well-being of their pet.

Another key benefit of pet insurance is access to a wider range of treatment options. When financial constraints are less of a concern, pet owners are more likely to pursue advanced medical procedures or specialized care they might otherwise decline. This can lead to earlier diagnoses, better treatment outcomes and longer, healthier lives for pets. In many cases, insurance plans also cover preventive care, such as vaccinations and routine check-ups, encouraging proactive health management.

Pet insurance also promotes responsible pet ownership. Knowing that unexpected expenses are covered can make individuals more confident in adopting or caring for pets. It ensures that pets are not neglected or surrendered due to financial hardship. Additionally, it helps owners budget more effectively by replacing unpredictable, high-cost emergencies with manageable monthly premiums.

Despite its advantages, some pet owners hesitate to invest in insurance, often questioning whether it is worth the cost. However, when compared to the potential expenses of a single major medical event, insurance premiums are often relatively modest. Even if a pet remains healthy, the peace of mind that comes with being prepared for the unexpected is invaluable.

In conclusion, pet insurance is an essential tool for modern pet ownership. It safeguards against financial strain, improves access to quality veterinary care, and supports responsible decision-making. As veterinary medicine continues to advance and costs rise, pet insurance is no longer a luxury but a practical and compassionate investment in a pet's lifelong health. ■

Information provided by Janis Van Ahn, Health Insurance Advisor LLC, 5870 Merle Hay Road, Suite A, Johnston, 515-225-9994, jvanahn@health-insadvisor.com.

The April 2011 Johnston Living magazine featured the story, "Looking forward: Johnston's comprehensive plan a guide for the future."

The front page featured a photo of Mayor Paula Dierenfeld and City Councilmember Jim Hibbs. ■



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EVENTS IN THE AREA

Be sure to check for cancelations

Upcoming in Johnston Living magazine

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

Spring Cleanup

Spring cleanup in Johnston will take place April 20-23. Residents living west of N.W. 86th Street are scheduled for cleanup on April 20 and 21, while those living east of N.W. 86th Street will have their cleanup on April 22 and 23. As winter comes to a close, it's a great time to think about your own spring cleaning tasks. Learn more at www.cityofjohnston.com/675/Spring-Cleanup.

Kite Building Workshop

Saturday, April 11, 2-4 p.m.
Johnston Public Library, Merle Hay Road, Johnston

Prepare for the Kites on the Green festival by attending a free Kite Building Workshop at the Johnston Public Library on Saturday, April 11, from 2-4 p.m. Kite kits and supplies will be provided.

Lions Club Pancake Breakfast

Saturday, April 18, 7-11 a.m.
Johnston Middle School cafeteria, 6501 N.W. 62nd Ave., Johnston

The Johnston Lions Club is hosting its annual Pancake Breakfast. The breakfast features delicious pancakes including gluten-free pancakes, sausage, scrambled eggs, juice and coffee. Tickets are \$10 at the door and kids 5 and younger are free. Proceeds will benefit the Lions Club Service Projects.



Firefighters Pancake Breakfast

Saturday, April 25, 7-11 a.m.
Public Safety Center, 2001 S.W. Sixth St., Grimes

Join the Johnston-Grimes Firefighters Foundation for a pancake breakfast at the new Public Safety Center. ■

Fun programs with Parks and Recreation

Check out the Parks and Recreation classes offered for ages 16 and older. A variety of fun activities, trips and exciting nights are available to enjoy. Spring programs will keep you busy and entertained. Registration is open now. Look at the programs and learn more: <https://www.flipsnack.com/BD99ED5EFB5/spring-2026-parks-recreation-programs/full-view.html>



Gold Star Military Museum events

Camp Dodge, 7105 N.W. 70th Ave., Johnston

• Free Museum Tours: Saturdays, 11:30 a.m. the museum offers free docent-led tours.

Brunch and Bowling with the Easter Bunny

Saturday, April 4, seating times 9:45-10:45 a.m.
Backpocket Pin and Pixel, 6205 Merle Hay Road, Suite 100, Johnston

Brunch and Bowling with the Easter Bunny includes face painting and Easter Bunny for the kids, as well as half-price bowling for all. Ages 13 and older are \$20 per person, while those younger than 13 are \$15 (kid-sized portions). Both tickets include one breakfast entree and one beverage of your choice from a special menu. For more information, visit the event Facebook page, www.facebook.com/share/1H14iVhdXr/. Make reservations at <https://forms.gle/oXTHG6R5JTU16nuc7>.

The business will be closed to the public during this event so the only way to get in is with a reservation.



LIBRARY

SPRING into JPL

Kite building, teen space, parenting and more

Get a fresh start at the library this April. You can fly a kite, test your building skills, make crafts, party with Mario and start your spring

cleaning. Read on for more details.

Get ready for Johnston's Kites on the Green Festival by attending a Kite Building Workshop on Saturday, April 11, from 2-4 p.m. Attendees will receive a free kite kit, instructions on how to assemble it and a chance to test their new kites. No registration is required.

Do you have budding architects in your family? Register them for LEGO Club. Monthly meetings feature a new theme or challenge and a chance to build with LEGO bricks. This month's meeting is Monday, April 13, from 4-5 p.m.

It's an afternoon of maximum crafting cuteness at Kawaii Craft Day: Decoden Decorating. On Thursday, April 23, from 1-2:30 p.m., teens in grades 6-12 can watch adorable animal videos while making decoden art, a Japanese style of decorating everyday items with whipped clay "frosting," rhinestones and charms.

School is out Friday, April 24. Teens can join us for Extended Teen Space Hours from 1-5:30 p.m. No School Nostalgia: Movie & Craft begins at 1 p.m. with a showing of "Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse," along with Shrinky Dinks and snacks. Jackbox Games begin at 3 p.m., followed by Kahoot! Trivia: Name That Tune Edition at 4 p.m.

Kids in grades K-5 can celebrate their no-school day at the Mushroom Kingdom Mario Party. From 1-2:30 p.m., Mario fans can enjoy snacks, crafts, Mario Kart racing and other activities.

Shred Day is back. Bring up to three disposable containers of confidential documents to the library parking lot on Saturday, April 25, from 9 a.m. to noon for on-site shredding by Shred-it. No registration is required.

Have spring fever? Head to the library for Press Play. This open playtime for you and your children will be held Tuesday, April 28, from 10:30-11:30 a.m. in the Storytime Room. There will be books, sensory bins and play prompts to get you started.

Looking to recharge your parenting perspective? Join us Wednesday, April 29, at 6:30 p.m. for "The Best Thing: Finding Joy and Purpose in Parenting a Child With Special Needs." Drawing from her book, Dawn Schneider will share insights into how parents can transform challenges into inspiration.

More information about events and resources at the Johnston Public Library are available at www.johnstonlibrary.com or by calling 515-278-5233. ■

Johnston Public Library

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www.johnstonlibrary.com

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Friday - Saturday, 9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

Sunday, 1-5 p.m.



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FROM ARMY BAND to community stage

Allemande finds balance through the arts.

For Johnston resident Kevin Allemande, the Des Moines Community Orchestra is a special part of his life.

He joined the orchestra in 2015, shortly after moving back to central Iowa. In the area, Allemande explains, there are only two ensembles of this kind: the Des Moines Symphony Orchestra and the Des Moines Community Orchestra.

“With only two permanent clarinet positions in a typical orchestra, compared with the many seats in the string sections, woodwind openings are rare and exceptionally competitive,” he says.

The Des Moines Symphony Orchestra is largely made up of musicians whose careers are rooted in full-time performance and teaching. Its clarinetists are both university professors devoted to the instrument and gifted performers.

“Given that my professional life is in the field of mental health, the Des Moines Community Orchestra was a more natural fit for my schedule and abilities,” Allemande says. “After reaching out, I began subbing in the clarinet section, gradually becoming part of the ensemble’s musical fabric. Eventually, I was offered the principal clarinet position — an opportunity I continue to cherish today.”

In addition to playing, Allemande was elected to serve as president of the orchestra’s board of directors, helping with the overall management

and operation of the organization.

Allemande got his start in music — particularly the clarinet — during his adolescence. After graduating from high school, he was recruited by the U.S. Army Band.

For four years, he performed for presidents, dignitaries and recording artists, while traveling and maintaining a full-time career as a soldier-musician.

Allemande later earned two masters degrees — one in social work and one in family sciences — and a doctorate in psychology, specializing in family therapy and family sciences.

Today, he runs his own mental health therapy practice, which relates to his work in music in numerous ways.

“What’s fascinating is how consistently the research affirms what many of us intuitively know: Music and the arts play a powerful role in human development and emotional well-being,” he says. “Studies repeatedly show that engaging with the arts helps us manage stress, build resilience and lead more fulfilling lives.”

That connection shines through in Allemande’s work with the Des Moines Community Orchestra, and he hopes other community members take advantage of it, too.

“Because the Des Moines Community Orchestra is committed to presenting concerts free of charge, it helps remove financial barriers that might otherwise keep some community members from enjoying live orchestral music,” he says. “While a handful of our musicians make their living in music, most come from a wide range of professions and life experiences. Together, they demonstrate something essential: Music isn’t a luxury, but a vital part of a healthy, fulfilling life — one that connects us, sustains us and reminds us of the beauty we create when we gather to play.”

This Mother’s Day, Allemande will step forward as the featured soloist, performing Mozart’s Clarinet Concerto under the baton of his friend and fellow musician Kara Mather, who started a string program through the community education wing of Johnston Community Schools with the goal of establishing a permanent string program within the district.

Ultimately, Allemande hopes community members will attend a Des Moines Community Orchestra concert.

“There’s something for everyone,” he says. ■



Kevin Allemande blends a career in mental health with a passion for performance in the Des Moines Community Orchestra.

TAKE OUR POLL

APRIL IS NATIONAL HOPE MONTH. Which do you hope for most?

1. A surprise windfall of cash
2. Better health
3. Better relationships
4. Someone to do all your chores
5. A vacation

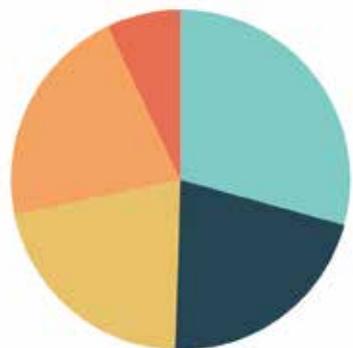
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- Green grass 21%
- Flowers blooming 21%
- Jacket weather 7%



CHAMBER Reception

Johnston Chamber held its Annual Reception at Hyperion Field Club March 5.



The Cork 50131 was awarded the 2025 Jackpot award. Pictured are Leif Gustafson, Samantha Howell, Tricia Gustafson and Dan Fitzgerald.



Julia Bradshaw with Styled by JJ Boutique was presented the 2025 Jetsetter award. Pictured are Samantha Howell, Julia Bradshaw and Dan Fitzgerald.



Sharm Sisler, outgoing chamber treasurer; Samantha Howell, chamber CEO; and Dan Fitzgerald, outgoing chamber president



Paula Bierle with Purple Poppy Boutique was presented the 2025 Jewel award. Pictured are Samantha Howell, Paula Bierle and Dan Fitzgerald.



Mike Frey and Jill Frey



Brenda Ballard and Annie Mielke



Promod Chalil and Joe Parrish



Samantha Howell and Jeresa Powell



Jenni Buchanan and London Heim



Laura Arneson, Elizabeth VanGundy and Christine DiSabato



Mayor Paula Dierenfeld and Davis Roederer

OUT & ABOUT



Joe Culver and Leann Culver at the Johnston Chamber Annual Reception March 5 at Hyperion Field Club.



Jill Altringer and Dan Fitzgerald at the Johnston Chamber Annual Reception March 5 at Hyperion Field Club.



Jake Covarrubias and Ali Covarrubias at the Johnston Chamber Annual Reception March 5 at Hyperion Field Club.



Nancy Brown, Julia Bradshaw and Paula Bierle at the Johnston Chamber Annual Reception March 5 at Hyperion Field Club.



Shay Sullivan, Reagan Danczak and Avis Askelson at the JHS Girls Basketball State Championship game March 6 at the Casey's Center.



Jaden Houser, Maxwell George and Tyson Sires at the JHS Girls Basketball State Championship game March 6 at the Casey's Center.



Lydia Clark, Izzy Gray and Lakyn Moreno at the JHS Girls Basketball State Championship game March 6 at the Casey's Center.



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