

# Living

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# WHY SHOULD YOU HIRE AN ATTORNEY FOR DIVORCE AND CUSTODY MATTERS?



By McKenzie Ellis

Family law issues – whether that’s a formal divorce proceeding or a custody case – can be some of the most stressful and emotional challenges that a person faces. When the case impacts your family, future, and financial wellbeing, it is important to have someone in your corner to help you navigate the process and protect your future self.

Below are just a few reasons why having an attorney from the start can make a meaningful difference in your life:

## 1. Complexity of the Legal System

- a. Courts have strict rules, deadlines, evidence requirements and courtroom procedures. Small mistakes can lead to big (and sometimes unfavorable) consequences. Attorneys ensure that deadlines are met, paperwork is drafted correctly and provide you with the strongest possible case based on the facts and law.

## 2. Emotional Decision-making

- a. Cases dealing with divorce or minor children can often involve anger, hurt, fear, grief, and uncertainty. While these feelings are completely normal, they can also lead to clouded judgment. Having an attorney provides you with objective guidance focused on your long-term interests and well-being. The attorney’s role is to protect you through the process and prevent impulse decision-making.

## 3. Financial well-being:

- a. Family law involves far more than the emotional separation between parties—it’s a significant financial transition as well.

These cases often include division of property/debts, child and spousal support, division of retirement accounts, effects to your taxes and more. A trained attorney has foresight and knowledge to fight for the best financial outcome that doesn’t leave you in hardship down the road.

## 3. Your child or children:

- a. Custody and visitation decisions shape the daily lives of everyone involved. Factors like stability, schooling, children’s expenses, and day-to-day logistics can either support healthy co-parenting or create ongoing confusion. Working with an attorney who understands your family’s unique needs can help reduce stress, provide clarity, and prevent future conflicts before they arise.

## 5. The cost of modification:

- a. When a judge signs a final order in a divorce or custody case, any future changes must meet strict legal standards. Courts generally prefer to keep families out of ongoing litigation whenever possible, which makes modifications harder to obtain (and often more expensive) than the original case. In matters that aren’t high-conflict, carefully crafted and specific legal language in the initial order can prevent misunderstandings and reduce the likelihood of future disputes.

**Bottomline:** There’s no reason to navigate a divorce or custody matter alone. Having an advocate in your corner is important when your children, finances, and future are at stake. Attorneys bring clarity, protection, and strategy during an overwhelming time in your life.

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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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Caitie Hart has Valkyrie and shieldmaiden tattoos in honor of her Norwegian roots.

# Celebrating HERITAGE

Residents reflect on the traditions that connect them to home

By Rachel Harrington

Family heritage shapes identity in deeply personal ways, connecting generations through stories, traditions and shared values. For some, those connections are rooted in centuries-old immigration journeys. For others, they are preserved through food, family businesses or a commitment to education. For many, family history is not just something to remember — it is something to actively live out today.



## Ancestors from Norway

For Caitie Hart, aspects of her maternal heritage have remained an important part of her life.

“My dominant heritage is from Oslo, Norway,” Hart says. “I’m the fourth generation in the United States since my great-great-grandfather, Mikkal Bakke, immigrated here in 1889.”

For more than a century, Hart’s family has carried on a love for its Norwegian heritage, along with traditions and vocations passed down through generations.

After immigrating, Bakke settled in Ottosen in Humboldt County, Iowa, according to census records.

“His family lived there for decades,” Hart says. “We believe Mikkal came to the U.S. with a son, Peter, from a previous marriage. In Iowa, he married another Norwegian woman, Christina Nelson. They had five children, including my great-grandfather, Theodore Bakke.”

Theodore later married Hart’s great-grandmother, a Des Moines native, in 1944 at ages 40 and 34. He attended Iowa State University and was the first in the family to go to college.

Hart’s grandfather, Andy Bakke, was born in 1945 on a farmstead near what is now Summerset Winery. In addition to farming, he worked at Diamond Animal Health in Des Moines. After graduating from Indianola High School, he joined the Coast Guard.

“While stationed in Juneau, Alaska, he met my grandma,” Hart says.

The couple homesteaded there for a time then lived in New Orleans before moving back to Iowa in 1969 during Hurricane Camille. Hart’s mom was born in New Orleans.

Hart says her great-grandfather spoke fluent Norwegian and English and retained a Norwegian accent. Her great-grandparents died in 1977 and 1994.

Hart and her sister were born in 1990 and 1992. The family moved back to Iowa in 1994, where Hart lived in the home her grandfather grew up in until 2018.

“That’s how long we had the house and farmland in our family,” she says.

Hart has also taken an interest in genealogy. “We actually have the names of all our ancestors — even Mikkal’s parents,” she says. “Many were farmers or house servants.”

She takes pride in her heritage in both personal and symbolic ways.

“I even have Valkyrie and shieldmaiden tattoos on my forearms to honor my roots,” Hart says.



Weston and Betsy Sharp and Gwendolyn, Foster and Bravo on their trip to Idaho to meet Betsy’s half-sister’s adopted family, “The Sharps.”

Holiday traditions remain especially meaningful.

“We celebrate Christmas big, like Norwegians do,” she says. “One of my favorite cookies is pfeffernusse. We make them every year, along with krumkake, almond spritz and sandbakkels.”

Hart says she hopes to one day visit Oslo and see where her family once lived.

## Families find historic connection

Exploring one’s genealogy can be a fascinating endeavor. Weston Sharp had long known parts of his family history dating back to the 1800s, but a recent discovery revealed that his family and his wife, Betsy’s, family have connections.

“We initially met Betsy’s half-sister, Julie, in 2021 in Georgia,” Weston says. “In fall 2025, we traveled to Idaho to meet her adoptive family and learned her adoptive father, John Sharp, is very into genealogy.”

John Sharp began researching possible connections between the families — and found one dating back to the early 1600s.

He discovered that his ancestor, Samuel Sharp, and Weston’s ancestor, Issak Sharp, were brothers who traveled aboard the *Sea Venture*, part of a fleet bound for Jamestown, Virginia.

“The journey was wild and interrupted by a hurricane, but they eventually made it,” Weston says. “I was shocked. I thought my family came over in the 1800s.”

Betsy was equally surprised.

“Sharp is such a common name,” she says. “I didn’t think there would be any connection.”

Issak’s descendants settled in Kentucky, while Samuel’s line moved to Tennessee and eventually to northeastern Idaho, where Betsy’s sister was adopted.

Later records also revealed ties to Warren County, Iowa.

Betsy’s family discovered a relative buried in a small cemetery on the south end of town: her third-great-grandfather, Zaccheus Proctor Lee, Jr., who died in 1884.

“He had one daughter, Cedelia, who married Michael Murray,” Betsy says. “He was born in Ireland and, according to family stories, stowed away on a potato ship to come to America.”

Weston’s great-grandfather, Oscar Sharp, later moved from Confidence, Iowa, to Indianola to serve as state auditor after working as Wayne County auditor.

Since settling in the area, the Sharp family has built a lasting aviation legacy.

Weston’s grandfather began flying a crop duster in 1947 from a small private airstrip on their property. Each generation since has continued the family business.

“As far as we know, it’s the oldest registered private airport in Iowa,” Weston says.

The airstrip has even attracted notable visitors. Weston says Neil Armstrong was once flown around Iowa from the family airport prior to his moon landing.

Now, the next generation may carry on the tradition.

“Our kids are interested,” Weston says. “They could become the fourth generation to continue the business and support local farms.”

**Kristine Nagel**

Kristine Nagel’s pride in her family heritage is reflected in her family’s food, work ethic and commitment to education.

Nagel’s great-grandfather, Augustan Ponce de Leon Flot, was born in Abita Springs, Louisiana. He was of Choctaw and French descent and worked as a fur trader and merchant.

He married a woman of African American and French heritage, and, together, they had 17 children.

“One of them, my grandfather, Percy Joseph Flott, was what you’d call textbook Creole,” Nagel says. “They were devout Catholics and very poor, but my great-grandfather understood the value of education.”

He established the first school in Abita Springs, laying a foundation that would influence generations.

During World War II, six of the siblings were drafted. Percy served but, because of racial discrimination, was assigned to work as a cook, Nagel says.

After the war, the family moved north to Omaha, Nebraska, seeking better opportunities than the segregated South provided. During that time, they simplified their surname from “de la Flot” to “Flott.”

Percy went on to build an impressive legacy. He owned and operated a Cajun restaurant for 12 years, ran an ice cream shop, started a lawn and landscaping business, managed a 75-acre produce farm supplying local Hy-Vee stores, and became a certified arborist. He also served on a school board and later operated rental properties and a catering business.

“What I love is that more than half of his children attended college,” Nagel says. “Out of my 46 cousins, nearly all have gone to college.”

She credits her grandfather’s emphasis on education.

“The Army limited him to the kitchen,” she says. “He turned that into a livelihood and used it to put his kids through school.”

Today, Nagel continues that legacy by mentoring youth and promoting education, including teaching financial literacy through



Kristine Nagel says her grandfather Percy Flott was “textbook Creole.”



Kristine Nagel and her husband, Jared, and children Christian, Kayslie, Wyatt and Veyla.



Kristine Nagel’s great-grandfather, Augustan Ponce de Leon Flot, was of Choctaw and French descent. He married a woman of African American and French heritage, and, together, they had 17 children.

organizations like the Boys and Girls Clubs of America.

Food remains another important connection to her heritage.

“Everyone in my family cooks,” she says. “My son’s favorite meal is my grandpa’s red beans and rice. We also love gumbo and jambalaya.”

In 2025, the family hosted a public Flott

family gumbo cook-off in Omaha, featuring about 20 entries.

“They loved to dance and laugh around good food,” Nagel says. “A packed house was never too many people.”

Even when they’re apart, Nagel stays connected with family through shared stories and memories — preserving a heritage that continues to grow with each generation. ■

# 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. ■

# DOG bite laws: What every owner should know

Our canine companions can add a great deal of joy to our lives. Dogs have been with us from the beginning of civilization and are often considered “part of the family.” Unfortunately, sometimes they can get out of control and cause harm to others. Because of this, Iowa has long recognized liability on the part of the owner for damages.



Iowa Code Chapter 351.28 provides in part: “The owner of a dog shall be liable to an injured party for all damages done by the dog when the dog is caught in the action of worrying, maiming or killing a domestic animal, or the dog is attacking or attempting to bite a person, except when the party damaged is doing an unlawful act directly contributing to the injury.”

This law is a “strict liability” statute, which attaches liability to the owner regardless of whether the owner is negligent or not. As indicated, the only exception is when the person injured is committing an unlawful act.

In a case involving a dog groomer who was bitten by a dog and sued for damages, the owners asserted that the dog groomer had assumed the care, custody and control of the dog, was negligent and assumed the risk of her injuries. The Iowa Supreme Court said that the dog bite statute only allows the owner a defense when the injured party is doing an unlawful act. Therefore, the dog groomer could proceed with her case, and the defenses raised by the owner were not available. *Sec Collins v. Kenealy, 492 N.W.2d 679 (Iowa 1992).*

The dog bite statute has existed since 1913 and is well settled law. In a favorite quote from a 1919 case, the Supreme Court in *Brown v. Moyer, 186 Iowa 1322, 171 NW 297 (1919)* observed: Thus the law says to the dog: “Don’t attack or attempt to bite a good man. If you do, the penalty is death, and your master must respond in damages for the consequences of your act. You may, however, attack and bite a bad man caught in the doing of an unlawful act, tear him to pieces, chew him up, and the law approves your act.”

This particular case had that the owner of a dog that had simply knocked the plaintiff down but was not attacking was not liable for damages.

Conclusion: Dog owners should realize they can be liable for their dog’s behavior whether they were negligent or not. Mose homeowner’s or renter’s insurance policies provide coverages for damages caused by dogs. However, in many cases, certain breeds may be excluded. ■

Information provided by Ken Winjum, The Winjum Law Firm, P.L.C., 1220 Sunset Drive., Suite 103, Norwalk, 515-981-5220, [www.winjumlaw.com](http://www.winjumlaw.com).

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## AT-HOME CARE services can help individuals remain in their homes longer

For many people, home represents stability, comfort and a lifetime of memories. Surveys consistently show most older adults prefer to remain in their homes as they age rather than move to a new living environment.



Yet remaining at home can present challenges for individuals and their families. Caregiving responsibilities often fall to family members who must balance work, household duties and personal commitments. This can create stress, exhaustion and, sometimes, discord.

At-home care services are increasingly used to help address those challenges. By assisting with daily activities and companionship, these services can help individuals maintain independence while lightening the load for family caregivers.

**Supporting independence.** Families sometimes hesitate to seek outside help because they worry it may adversely impact a loved one's independence. In many cases, the opposite can be true. When individuals receive assistance with everyday tasks, such as household chores, personal care, or transportation, they may be able to remain safely in their homes for a longer time. Professional caregivers can also provide support in a way that allows individuals to maintain privacy and autonomy while still receiving help when needed. Regular assistance also can add structure and predictability to daily life, helping both individuals and their families establish more manageable routines.

**Reducing the risk of injuries.** Health concerns such as mobility limitations, chronic pain, vision issues and osteoporosis can increase the risk of falls among aging adults. Falls remain one of the leading causes of injury and disability for older individuals. At-home care providers often help decrease that risk by assisting with activities that might otherwise be physically demanding, such as bathing, cleaning or navigating stairs. Some organizations also offer home safety assessments that identify potential hazards and recommend changes that can improve safety.

**Encouraging physical and social activity.** Remaining active both physically and socially is an important factor in overall well-being. Individuals who rely heavily on family members for transportation or care may become isolated over time. At-home support can help address this by providing companionship and helping individuals stay engaged in everyday activities. Caregivers may assist with outings, walks, hobbies, or other routines that encourage movement and social interaction. Even small activities such as walking a dog or spending time outdoors can help individuals maintain a sense of normalcy and independence.

**Supporting family caregivers.** Providing care for a loved one can be emotionally meaningful but also physically and mentally demanding. Introducing professional support can help restore balance. With some caregiving responsibilities shared, family members may experience less stress and have more time for work, personal health and meaningful time with their loved one. ■

Stacey Miller is executive director of WesleyLife at Home, which offers a broad network of services, including medical and non-medical at-home care. Visit weslifelife.org or call 515- 978-2777.

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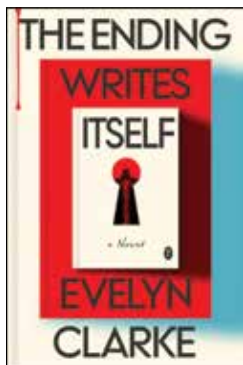


## 'The Ending Writes Itself'

As a lifelong reader and word collector, I love a bit of metafiction. A story about stories will always perk my ears. The skilled pair of authors writing under the name of Evelyn Clarke has given me that in spades. This one has a ton of buzz for a reason. Clever, emotional, perceptive, addictive — this is a storyteller's story if I ever read one.

The synopsis reads like a "Knives Out" movie. Six struggling authors are brought together to a private island to finish the final book of a famous, now dead, bestselling author. They have 72 hours to write their way into fame and fortune. Naturally, schemes arise and danger creeps. This is a locked room mystery with a devastatingly flawed set of characters and biting satire of the publishing industry — all at the same time.

Observations about writing, character arcs, endings and the ever-present human desire for closure make this a perfect mix of thoughtful and playful. Charming and satirical in equal measure, this is the kind of book you finish at 2 a.m. and immediately want to press into a friend's hands. Or write a gushing review of. ■ — Review by Julie Goodrich



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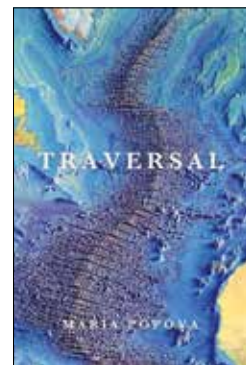
## 'Traversal'

Reading this book feels a bit like wandering into the world's most enchanting dinner party. Pull up a chair and suddenly you're listening to Mary Shelley discuss creation while Walt Whitman waxes poetic about the soul of the universe, and then Frederick Douglass is reminding us all that moral courage is a form of genius. One minute you're contemplating continental drift with Alfred Wegener; the next you're pondering the nature of consciousness, love and the color blue.

Popova writes with the curiosity of someone so in love with the world that she sees connections that feel so hidden, yet so obvious. She understands that science and poetry are all just different dialects of the same cosmic language.

Sometimes the writing feels so dense, but then a sentence lands like a small miracle, and you can't remember why you were struggling at all. This is one of the most powerful books I've ever read. It feels less like reading and more like uncovering a secret you forgot you knew. It's part intellectual history, part philosophical mixtape, and wholly satisfying for anyone who likes their nonfiction a little star-dusted and gloriously alive. ■

— Review by Julie Goodrich



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# THE SPRING tune-up

Prepping for seasonal travel

Winter is officially in the rearview mirror. If you have been navigating an Iowan winter, your vehicle has likely spent the last few months fighting for its life against road salt, potholes and freezing cold. It's time to ditch



the "winter beater" energy and prepare your ride for car peak season. Here is how to transition from survival mode to show-room ready:

**1. The rubber swap and pressure check.** If you've been rocking winter tires, swap them for your sticky summer sets immediately. Winter compounds turn into greasy marshmallows in the heat. While you're at it, check your PSI — cold air shrinks, warm air expands. Don't let a "low tire" light ruin your stance.

**2. The great salt exorcism.** Road salt is the natural enemy of steel. By this time of year, Iowans have had plenty of it. Give your car a

forensic-level wash. Focus on the undercarriage and wheel wells where salt hides and brews rust. Finish with a high-quality wax to make that paint pop under the spring sun.

**3. Breathe easy: filters and fluids.** Your engine and cabin filters are likely packed with winter road grit and salt dust. Swap them out so your turbo can breathe unrestricted and your interior doesn't smell like a damp locker room. Top off your fluids — especially that wiper juice — because spring showers bring... well, lots of mud and bug splatter.

**4. Vitals: belts, brakes, batteries and blades.** Cold weather makes rubber brittle. Inspect your belts and hoses for cracks before they decide to leave you stranded on the highway. Test your battery; winter takes a massive toll on cranking amps. Check those pads and rotors — salt and moisture can cause seizing or uneven wear. Finally, wiper blades. If they are streaking, squeaking or "chattering," replace them immediately.

**5. The emergency kit refresh.** It is time

to reorganize. Swap the heavy blankets and ice scrapers for sunscreen and bug spray. Keep the jumper cables and a flashlight but ensure you are ready for a spontaneous mountain run or a beach day.

Keep it boosted, keep it clean, and keep it off the flatbed. If you are unsure about what your vehicle needs to bring its maintenance up to date, hit up your local specialist service bay. They know your vehicle best.

**Pro-Tip:** Imports often have specific service intervals and specialized fluids that "general" shops might miss. If you are unsure about your DSG service, VANOS health, or timing belt tension, hit up your local specialist service bay. They know your vehicle's quirks better than you know your own redline.

Keep it boosted, keep it clean and keep it on the pavement. ■

Information provided by Chris Werner, owner and lead technician, Werner's Elite Auto, 506 1/2 E. Euclid Ave., Indianola, 515-259-0122, [www.wernerseliteauto.com](http://www.wernerseliteauto.com).



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# FINISH spring gardening chores



Spring, spring, sprung... time to start getting some gardening done. Spring blooms are brightening the gardens; snowdrops, crocus, daffodils and tulips are emerging. Take a few moments to mark this first color with a garden map or flag. This will help you plant your summer perennials and annuals without digging up these established bulbs. While doing this, think about adding some lily bulbs or peonies to sunny areas (they are available now). They will hide the leaves of the spring bulbs that have bloomed.

Indoors, tomatoes and peppers are started, along with other veggies and flowers to plant out when the threat of frost is over. Outside, you can start your cool season veggies: radish, leaf lettuce, spinach, onion sets and potatoes. Have your kids or grandkids help you, making and marking the rows, planting the seeds (even use seed tape if the seeds are small or you are working with younger kids) and then tending them through harvest. While you are enjoying that bountiful produce this summer, consider entering it in the Warren County and/or the Iowa State Fair. Premium books are online.

We are eager to clean gardens off, pruning back perennials and annuals we missed last fall, but delay as long as possible. Until days are consistently above 50 degrees, bees and beneficial insects are using hollow stems and refuse to hide until warmer temps bring blooms and food sources. Once we can clean up, trim Annabelle hydrangeas and spirea (except Bridal Wreath spirea, trim after blooming) close to the ground, cut grasses back before new growth emerges, prune roses and Paniculata hydrangeas back to the highest bud. Kids can help here as well, moving refuse to the compost bin and other tasks.

This is the perfect time to dig and split daylilies, hosta and monarda. Doing so now will allow the clumps to fill out, forming a symmetrical mound, instead of looking chopped up. It is also a great time to thin out (and/or plant new) Trumpet and Oriental lily bulbs. Remember to do this after the soil can be easily worked and is not wet, otherwise you will have a clumpy mess all summer long.

Do you plant patio planters or other containers for your gardens? Now is the time to design containers and determine what tropicals and annuals you will need, so when it is time to shop, you are ready. Even have your kids (or grandkids) design and care for one all summer. (They can enter it in the Warren County or Iowa State Fair.) If you are using elephant ears, cannas, caladiums or bananas (there is a hardy banana that can grow to 10 feet tall here), consider purchasing them now, potting up and putting them in a sunny window to get started, and you will have growing plants to put into gardens and containers.

Finally, keep feeding and watering your bird friends. Food and water will attract the migrating birds to your garden and help keep them there through the summer, as food sources become plentiful with nectar and seeds from the flower garden and trees.

Full planting season is almost here. Finish your spring chores and get ready to plant for summer blooms. ■

Information provided by Barry Laws, co-owner, Quilted Gardens Nursery and Landscaping, 19635 130th Ave., Indianola, 515-720-3089, [www.quiltedgardens.com](http://www.quiltedgardens.com).



**QUILTED GARDENS NURSERY**

# Season Opening

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# MARKETS don't move in straight lines — volatility is normal

Market volatility is a normal occurrence, but it can be tough to handle when your money is at stake. There's no foolproof way to handle the ups and downs of the market, however, the following tips can help.



**Diversification:** Diversifying your portfolio is one of the key ways you can help handle market volatility. Asset classes often perform differently under different market conditions; spreading assets across a variety of different investments like stocks, bonds and cash alternatives has the potential to help manage your overall risk.

**Time horizon:** As the markets go up and down, it's easy to become too focused on day-to-day returns. Instead, keep your eyes on your long-term investing goals. If you still have years to invest, don't overreact to short-term price fluctuations.

**Staying disciplined:** When the market declines and unrealized losses begin to pile up, you may be tempted to pull out of the market altogether and look for less volatile investments, as the small returns that typically accompany lower-risk investments may seem attractive when higher-risk investments are posting negative returns. Before you change your investment strategy, make sure you are doing it for the right reasons, by aligning decisions with your goals and time horizon.

**Dollar cost averaging:** With dollar cost averaging, you don't try to "time the market" by buying shares when the price is the lowest. Instead, you invest the same amount of money at regular intervals over time. Although dollar cost averaging doesn't guarantee you a profit or protect against investment loss, over time, a regular fixed dollar investment may result in an average price per share that is lower than the average market price. A workplace savings plan, like a 401(k) plan, in which the same amount is deducted from each paycheck and

invested through the plan, is one of the most well-known examples of dollar cost averaging in action.

**Portfolio check-up:** Review your portfolio at least once a year, more frequently if the market is volatile, or when there have been significant changes in your life. You may need to rebalance your portfolio to bring it back in line with your investment goals and risk tolerance or redesign it so that it better suits your current needs. Don't hesitate to seek guidance when deciding which investment options might make sense for you. ■

At City State Bank, we are here to help. For more information, please contact Kourtne Klocko with City State Bank Trust & Investments at 515-981-1400. Not FDIC insured. Not deposits or other obligations of the bank and are not guaranteed by the bank. Are subject to investment risk, including possible loss of principal. City State Bank does not provide legal advice. Each taxpayer should seek independent advice from a tax and/or legal professional. These materials are based upon publicly available information that may change at any time without notice.

## Mortgage Rate Relief Program

Giving you extra purchasing power in today's economy



**\$6 Million in Grant Funds Allocated to the Mortgage Rate Relief Program to Provide Affordable Homeownership**

Beginning March 2, 2026, City State Bank can access Mortgage Rate Relief funds on a first-come, first-served basis subject to funding availability.



**CONTACT:**

**Ryan Williams**  
Indianola  
515-961-7000  
NMLS #1471728

### Program highlights:

- ✓ 30-year fixed rate – Up to a 1.5% interest rate reduction below the current market rate for qualified homebuyers.
- ✓ Mortgage Rate relief is available to homebuyers earning up to 80% of area median income (AMI), determined by the Federal Housing Finance Agency's Underserved Areas Data.
- ✓ Available for purchase transactions only, primary residence, 1-4 family dwellings.



All credit products subject to approval. Terms and conditions apply. Offered in partnership with the Federal Home Loan Bank of Des Moines.

1510 N. 1st Street | Indianola | 515-961-7000 | [citystatebank.com](http://citystatebank.com)



Check for cancellations

## Upcoming in Indianola 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](mailto:tammy@iowalivingmagazines.com).

**Fishing:** Share your stories about the enjoyment of fishing. Perhaps you fished with your father as a child, fished in an interesting place, participated in fishing competitions. If it is related to fishing, drop us a note! Email [tammy@iowalivingmagazines.com](mailto:tammy@iowalivingmagazines.com).

### Indianola Public Library Events

207 N. B St., Indianola

Visit the website to register for events: <https://indianola.librarycalendar.com/events/month/2026/01>.

#### KIDS

- Kids Create: Saturday, April 18, 2-3 p.m., grades K-5
- After School Bingo: Monday, April 20, 3:30-4:30 p.m. Grades 3-5
- Chess Club: Thursday, April 23, 6-7 p.m.

#### STORYTIME

- Storytime with Janis: Tuesdays and Thursdays through April, 10:30-11 a.m.
- Saturday Storytime: Saturdays through April, 10:30-11:15 a.m.
- Storytime: Mondays, April 13 and 20, 6-6:30 p.m.

#### TEENS

- Teen Hangout: Wednesdays through April, 2:30-4:30 p.m.
- Teen Art Cart: Saturdays through April, all day.
- Chess Club: Thursday, April 23, 6-7 p.m.
- High School Book Club: Tuesday, May 5, 3:15-4:15 p.m.

#### FAMILIES

- Library Playdate: Saturdays through April, all day.
- Family Lego Club: Monday, April 27, 6-7 p.m.

#### ADULTS

- Morning Book Club: Fridays, April 10 and May 8, 10-11 a.m.
- Evening Book Club: Tuesday, April 28, 6:30-7:30 p.m.
- Edible Container Design: Monday, May 4 and Thursday, May 7, 6:30-7:30 p.m. Registration required.

#### EVERYONE

- Local Authors Fair: Saturday, April 11, 1-4 p.m.

### Free Community Meal

Tuesdays, 5:30-6:30 p.m.

Lighthouse Community Center,  
109 W. Boston Ave., Indianola

Free home-cooked meal every Tuesday. Everyone is welcome. Come and enjoy food and fellowship with individuals and organizations in the community.

### Welcome to Medicare seminar

Thursday, May 7, 5:30-7:30 p.m.

Indianola Activity Center,  
2204 W. Second Ave., Indianola

Getting ready to retire? This free seminar is designed to help introduce you to the different parts of Medicare and offer free, unbiased guidance. The Senior Health Insurance Information Program (SHIIP) provides assistance with understanding Medicare so people make informed decisions. SHIIP services are free, unbiased and confidential. The seminar covers all parts of Medicare (A through D). Sign up today, call 515-962-5375 by April 28 to RSVP.



### 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/WDMLA>.



### Trivia at The Groggy Dog

Tuesdays, 7-9 p.m.

The Groggy Dog, 116 W.  
Ashland Ave., Indianola

Grab some friends, bring an appetite and your love for knowledge and beer. Five dollar draws, prizes, fun and good competition. The place to be on a Tuesday night.

### Indianola Parks and Recreation and Hy-Vee Special needs events

Various dates

Indianola Activity Center,  
2204 W. Second Ave.

Individuals with disabilities of all ages and their families, chaperones, respite providers and SCL workers are invited to attend these free drop-in events with dancing, fun and pizza provided by Indianola Hy-Vee.

- Hy-Vee Special Friends Let's Glow Crazy Dance: Friday, April 17, 6-7:30 p.m.
- Hy-Vee Special Friends Luau Dance: Friday, June 5, 6-7:30 p.m.

### 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.

Check for cancellations

## Des Moines Community Orchestra Spring Concert

Sunday, May 10, 2 p.m.  
Valley High School's  
Staplin Auditorium,  
3650 Woodland Ave.,  
West Des Moines

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



## 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.

## 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.

## The Ingersoll Shows

The Ingersoll, 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": 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.

• **"The Roommate": Sharon needs a roommate. Robyn needs to disappear.** When the two women become unlikely housemates, their lives quickly take unexpected turns. Sharon's quiet routine is disrupted by Robyn's mysterious past and bold outlook on life, and what begins as a simple living arrangement soon spirals into something far more thrilling — and dangerous. "The Roommate" by Jen Silverman is a deliciously dark, off-beat comedy about second acts, unexpected friendships, and the intoxicating allure of reinvention. Performances run May 14–17 and May 28–31, for a limited engagement of ten performances.

• **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](http://www.theingersoll.com/events) or at [Ticketmaster.com/TheIngersoll](https://www.ticketmaster.com/TheIngersoll). ■



# CAN ACUPUNCTURE and chiropractic care help with my vagus nerve?

Acupuncture and chiropractic care are two holistic approaches that can positively influence the vagus nerve, a critical component of the nervous system responsible for regulating functions like heart rate, digestion and stress response.



As part of the parasympathetic nervous system, the vagus nerve has these functions:

- **Regulates heart rate:** It helps slow the heart rate when needed.
  - **Aids digestion:** It signals your stomach to produce digestive juices and helps move food through your intestines.
  - **Controls reflex actions:** Such as coughing, sneezing and swallowing.
  - **Connects to emotional health:** It plays a role in stress response and relaxation, influencing feelings of calm and well-being.
  - **Supports vocal cords:** Essential for speech and swallowing functions.
- Essentially, the vagus nerve is a critical player

in maintaining balance in your body's automatic processes.

### Acupuncture and the vagus nerve

Research suggests that acupuncture can activate the vagus nerve by choosing a treatment that will influence the pathways of the vagus nerve. For example, auricular (or ear acupuncture) can enhance vagal tone, which is the nerve's ability to regulate bodily functions effectively. Improved vagal tone has been linked to reduced inflammation, better digestion and a calmer stress response. Clinical trials have demonstrated improvements in heart rate variability and respiratory sinus arrhythmias, indicating increased vagal activity.

### Chiropractic care and the vagus nerve

Chiropractic care focuses on spinal alignment and its impact on the nervous system. Misalignments, or subluxations, in the spine can interfere with the vagus nerve's communication between the brain and body. Chiropractors use manual adjustments to correct these

misalignments, potentially restoring proper vagal function. For instance, adjustments in the cervical spine (neck region) can directly influence the vagus nerve, which passes through this area. Chiropractic care may also help manage stress and improve overall well-being by optimizing nervous system health.

### Synergistic benefits

While acupuncture focuses on stimulating specific points to enhance vagal activity, chiropractic care addresses structural issues that may impede nerve function. Together, these therapies can promote a balanced autonomic nervous system, reduce stress and improve overall health.

Research supports the effectiveness of both acupuncture and chiropractic care in influencing the vagus nerve. ■

Information provided by Dr. Renee Dalrymple, LAc, SEED Meditation Instructor, Soaring Crane Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine, 14849 130th Ave., Indianola, 515-962-9093, call or text.

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# TAX TIPS for people with hearing loss

If you have hearing loss, you may qualify for special tax deductions for hearing-care-related expenses that can help reduce your overall tax burden — and keep more money in your pocket.

Enlisting the help of an accountant to determine your eligibility is always a good idea, but here's some general information about the IRS tax deductions that everyone with hearing loss should be aware of.

## How much can I claim?

If you itemize deductions instead of using the standard deduction, you can claim uninsured medical and dental costs, including those pertaining to hearing health care, as a tax-deductible expense.

However, your overall uninsured medical and dental expenses must collectively total more



than 7.5% of your adjusted gross income (AGI) for you to claim them as an itemized deduction. For example, if your AGI is \$60,000, 7.5% of that amount is \$4,500. If your qualifying medical expenses are \$4,500 or less, you are not permitted to deduct them. If your expenses exceed that amount (for example, they're \$7,000), you may deduct the amount over 7.5%, which is \$2,500 (\$7,000–\$4,500 = \$2,500).

## What expenses can I claim as a deduction?

Uninsured hearing health costs you can claim as a medical expense may include payments for: hearing aids, batteries, repairs and maintenance; telephone equipment, including captioned phones, phones with special ringers and teleprinters, as well as their repair costs; TVs and related accessories that provide captioning and amplify sound, as well as their repair costs; improvements to your home for special burglar alarms, smoke detectors and doorbells; and transportation to and from hearing health appointments.

## Are hearing device donations tax deductible?

Yes, but only if you itemize deductions rather than taking the standard deduction. You can claim a deduction for the fair market value of any hearing device you donated during the previous tax year.

## Help your hearing and your budget

Hearing better is priceless. It can enhance communication skills, improve relationships and allow you to rediscover your zest for life. For people with hearing loss who don't have insurance that covers hearing devices or accessories, tax deductions can make their hearing health costs more manageable.

If you're struggling to hear, don't put off getting help for any reason — financial or otherwise. Schedule a hearing evaluation today. ■

Information provided by Dr. Kelly Cook, Audiologist, Iowa Hearing Center, 1228 Sunset Drive, Suite B, Norwalk, 515-416-5990, [www.iowahearingcenter.com](http://www.iowahearingcenter.com).



# Did You Know?

From hearing aids to evaluations, some hearing care expenses may qualify for tax deductions.

## Hear Better. Save More at Tax Time.

Call (515) 416-5990 to schedule an appointment today!




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1228 Sunset Dr., Ste. B  
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[www.iowahearingcenter.com](http://www.iowahearingcenter.com)



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*For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. - Ephesians 2:10*

## FAITH

By Tom Vanderbilt

# HOPE in uncertain times

### Anchored in the resurrection of Christ

I've heard it said that, if one spends too much time in the future, one can develop anxiety. Worries about the uncertainties of our world — personal trials, global conflicts, economic pressures or daily anxieties — can cause us to spend too much time and energy fretting about a future that is often outside our control, wondering how everything will turn out.



As Christians, we have a remedy for anxiety: hope. Hope is not just wishful thinking or positive feelings or “pie in the sky” promises. Hope is an anchor, sure and steadfast, tied to the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

St. Paul declares in 1 Corinthians 15: “If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied. But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep” (vv. 19–20). Because Christ rose bodily on Easter morning, defeating sin, death and the devil, our future is secure. His resurrection guarantees our own: as He lives, so shall we live eternally with Him.

This means that our story will have the kind of ending that is only found in fairy tales: We will live happily ever after with our resurrected Savior. ■

Article provided by Pastor Tom Vanderbilt, Mount Calvary Church, Indianola.

## WELLNESS

By Jen Penisten-Clark

# INNOVATIVE aesthetic and wellness technologies

Non-invasive aesthetic and wellness technologies have become increasingly popular for people seeking effective results without surgery or downtime. Three innovative treatments leading this trend are Emface, Emsculpt, and Emsella, each designed to target different areas of the body while improving both appearance and overall wellness.



Emface is a revolutionary facial treatment that combines radiofrequency energy with electromagnetic muscle stimulation to rejuvenate the face. The treatment works by heating the skin to stimulate collagen production while simultaneously strengthening facial muscles through gentle contractions. This dual action helps lift the cheeks, brow, and jawline while smoothing fine lines.

Emsculpt focuses on body contouring and muscle strengthening. Using high-intensity focused electromagnetic technology, the device stimulates powerful muscle contractions that are far more intense than what can be achieved through traditional exercise. These contractions help build muscle and reduce fat in areas such as the abdomen, buttocks, arms, and thighs.

Emsella is designed to strengthen the pelvic floor muscles, which play an important role in bladder control and core stability. The treatment uses electromagnetic energy to stimulate thousands of pelvic floor contractions during a single session, similar to performing Kegel exercises. ■

Information provided by Jen Penisten-Clark, MSN, RN, NP-C, CEO/owner, Vivid Life Spa, 1951 E. 18th St., Suite 105, Norwalk, 515-850-7848, vividlifespaspa.com.

# STARK finds her artistic niche

Especially enjoys life drawing and using charcoal

Sophie Stark is a rising artist born and raised in Indianola. A member of an artistic family, she grew up searching for the best medium in which to express herself — one that is fulfilling and that others can enjoy.

“My family is full of artists,” she says. “My grandma was an art teacher, my dad is a photographer, and my cousins are in a band. I was always in creative spaces as a kid.”

Despite the artistry around her, Stark didn’t feel like pursuing any of the niches her family members enjoyed. She felt like being a musician or vocalist was not her specialty, and despite her dad wanting to teach her photography, it did not fit her idea of artistic expression.

After graduating from Indianola High School, Stark attended the University of Northern Iowa to pursue a bachelor’s degree in art with an emphasis in studio art.

“Art was always my ‘plan B,’ but I never really had a ‘plan A,’” she says. While studying, she noticed the difference in what she was pursuing and other niches.

“My dad and brother are both realistic and logical thinkers, and the photography that they do mirrors that,” Stark explains. “Drawing allows me to be more expressive than that.”

Life drawing is one of Stark’s favorite pursuits, and she enjoys using charcoal.

“I find charcoal interesting in how it falls onto the paper,” she shares. “It is difficult to work with, erases easily, and it can be both light and dark. I find I have a heavy hand when I use it.”

Recently, Stark displayed some of her artwork at Savor the Rise on Indianola’s town square.

“I just asked if I could hang some there,” she says. “Deja, the owner at Savor the Rise, likes to periodically invite different artists to bring their work in. Sometimes you just have to ask. I feel like a lot of artists like to talk about their art, and it helps to keep conversations going.”

Many of the pieces she showed at Savor the Rise are of a live model.

Some are charcoal art, and others are collage artwork. Her displayed artwork includes two oil pieces, nine collages, and five life drawings.

The collage pieces are mostly abstract art. A set of five collages are a color theory project in various mediums ranging from the monochromatic to salt, among others.

“The others were salvaged off another work I’d done and wasn’t proud of and wanted to change because it didn’t feel like my art,” Stark shares. “I added more

to it with things that I’d collected over the years. I also ripped off pieces that I didn’t like and displayed those individually. I learned that, as you grow as an artist, you learn that not every piece has to be your favorite.”

Stark encourages aspiring artists to learn how to both be open to the input and advice of others while simultaneously remaining authentic to the artist inside.

“Listen to technical advice, but learn to differentiate it from opinions,” she says. ■



Sophie Stark comes from a family of artists but pursued her own artistic passions.

## LOOKING BACK



The April 2018 Indianola Living magazine featured the story, “Tightening the belt: Indianola residents benefit from the discipline of martial arts.” The front page photo featured Alex Lerch, Madison Phillips, Hannah Price, Nathan Barth and Master Netsch. ■

# HEARSHMAN builds cars and family bonds

Grandson takes over 1966 Ford Mustang GT project.

Refurbishing a car takes a lot of time, energy and dedication. No one knows that better than Tim Hearshman. His grandson, Ronnie Duncan, has spent a large portion of the last several years learning tips and tricks for rebuilding cars with Hearshman. The car that has meant the most to their relationship gave them the opportunity to spend time together that they had not previously had.

“While driving through Fairfield in mid-2019, my grandpa saw the shell of a 1966 Ford Mustang GT in a field,” Duncan says. “He drove to the farmer’s house and asked if he’d be willing to sell the car. The farmer wasn’t looking to sell it, but said, for the right price, he would. My grandpa offered him \$500, and the farmer took it.”

The car was literally just a shell, though it came with a motor that wasn’t working 100% correctly.

The 1966 Ford Mustang GT is one of only 4,000 that were manufactured like it. Base models were usually built with drum brakes all around, but this one was built with front disc brakes that provided faster heat ups and cool downs so it could compete in races such as Le Mans in Europe. The original color was green, though the only part of the car that still had the original paint on it was a front quarter panel. The rest of the car was rusted through.

The first four years of its restoration were done without Duncan even being aware of the car.

“I was living in Wisconsin, so I didn’t know about the project,” Duncan says. “When I got back from Wisconsin, among the many cars my grandpa was working on, the Mustang caught my eye. It became a learning curve for me as I was getting into that profession myself. My grandpa ended up being diagnosed with Parkinson’s disease, and he couldn’t work on the car anymore. He just couldn’t maintain the same grip that he used to have.”

In late 2024, Duncan ended up with the Mustang. It came with two motors because his grandpa was going to do a big block swap, but he asked if Duncan would do the original one first. Duncan followed through with that and got the Mustang running and road worthy. He



Ronnie Duncan with the 1966 Ford Mustang GT that he and his grandfather worked to rebuild.

also got a color code to try to match the new paint to the original as closely as possible. It took him about a year and a half to complete the remainder of the refurbishment.

“I would still call and ask my grandpa questions and get advice from him in bits and pieces over the phone,” Duncan shares.

Duncan plans to start using the Mustang convertible daily this year, especially during the summer.

“I work and live in town, so it won’t do much damage to it,” he says.

Duncan also plans to take it to some car shows this summer where he will show off its bright green paint and pearly white leather-type canvas top. The Mustang still has almost all the original interior, including the gearshift and glove box. The seats were reupholstered by Hearshman, as well as replacing the carpet. Duncan hopes to earn a win like he did last year when he earned a spot in the Top 25 for young adults younger than 25 years old. ■



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## OUT & ABOUT

# RIBBON cutting

A ribbon cutting was held at Buffalo Wild Wings Go on March 11.



The crew at the ribbon cutting for Buffalo Wild Wings Go on March 11.



Railee Ellison, Miriah Putz, Emmalee Parker, Rileigh Pierce and Imani lyles



Bryce Johnson, Mike Visser and Tara Bosteder



Jack McGonigal and Rich Anderson



Kristy Brouillet and Alysha Martin



Lexie McLain and Makayla Seemann



Amy Feser and Abby Kinsey



Jamie Henderson and Pat O'Meara



Jackie Raffety and Courtney Silliman

# TRIVIA Night

Trivia Night was held March 10 at The Groggy Dog.



TJ Griffiths, aka Dasher Wolf



Rhonda Marchant and Wade Marchant



Bob Fox



Cliff Hall



Stephanie Wireman



Julie Fellner



Greg Marchant and Sharon Sallee



Kathy and Drew Gocken



Sarah Fox and Rachel and Kurt Gocken



Schantelle Jones, Shawn Crook, Paul Songayllo and Jody Wadle



TJ Griffiths, Renee Cross and Sandy and Terry Dillinger

# MEET Aaron Lester

From biology to behavior: Teacher finds his calling

Aaron Lester wears several hats at Indianola High School. He co-teaches with two other teachers: English 11/12 with Kevin Barnes and physical science with Christine Price. He also teaches two classes of his own called Human Relations and heads the behavior disorder program at IHS.

“It is a special education program that focuses on social, emotional and behavioral improvement,” he says.

“My grandma, my mom and my dad were all teachers,” he shares.

However, Lester did not initially set out to become a teacher himself.

“I got my biology degree at Simpson College,” he says. “Initially, I wanted to join the Peace Corps and use it, but, in the middle of the summer, I felt the urgency of needing a job. I met a woman at a job fair at the University of Northern Iowa who told me about behavior disorder programs. I first applied to two biology positions with no luck, so I went to Centerville and applied for a behavior disorder program. They gave me a conditional license with three years to get my endorsement.”

The endorsement required 20 to 30 additional credit hours.

“Some of the classes I had taken at Simpson applied toward the endorsement, but I spent the next three years earning the rest,” Lester explains.

For nine years, Lester taught in Centerville and started the behavior disorder program there. He moved back to Indianola in 2000 and has been teaching at Indianola High School ever since.

“It’s amazing that I have been doing it so long,” he admits. “I had a professor while earning my endorsement who said the average lifespan of a special education BD teacher is three years because it is tough.”

Some of the biggest challenges of Lester’s job include helping students learn to leave what is going on outside of school behind so they can focus on something positive for their future.

“It’s hard for adults to do that, too,” he says. “Relationships and communication have always been my go-to over the years, and it has helped me immensely. I don’t always do it right, and I open myself up to criticism. Relationships and communication with students, parents and my students’ teachers are key. Getting parents to support what I’m doing at school is huge.”

Lester enjoys when former students return as guest speakers.

“I’ve been around long enough that I have some of my former students’ kids in class,” he says. “I appreciate when students tell me what I’ve taught them matters and when I see them succeed and walk across the stage, even if it took a while to get there. It also keeps me going to see former students out in the community, and they say hello.”

He also enjoys coaching basketball and applying some of the same teaching strategies on the court.

“It is neat to see how different groups of kids react to instruction,” Lester shares.

“I have been absolutely blessed by my wife, Michelle, my family and all the great administrators I’ve had over the years supporting me,” Lester says. “A supportive administration is huge.” ■



In addition to teaching duties, Aaron Lester heads the behavior disorder program at IHS.

# WHY isn’t this working?

As a kid, I sometimes accompanied my dad when he would open his place of business for the cleaning crew. With several hours to kill, he would at times give me coins to use with the pop machine onsite. This was many years ago, but even by then this machine was a relic from the past, dispensing thick glass bottles of off-brands you have never heard of. Until the machine was satisfied that you had paid, there was no way you were going to be able to pull one of the bottles from its heavy, metal grip.

I think this is how a lot of people view what it is like to pray to God. He is this machine I want something from, but He may or may not be satisfied with how I’ve made my request. Maybe I’ll pull and yank and work at it but to no avail. In the end, I still won’t get what I want. I’ll just be frustrated and tired. Or worse, I’ll end up getting something out of Him but not the selection that I wanted.

True prayer as God describes it is nothing like that.

First, God isn’t some impersonal machine I have to try to finesse to get what I want. Jesus tells us in Matthew 6:7-8, “When you pray, don’t babble like the idolaters, since they imagine they’ll be heard for their many words. Don’t be like them, because your Father knows the things you need before you ask Him.” The one who trusts Christ can approach God as a child approaches a loving Father, one who already knows the true needs of the child.

Second, prayer is so much bigger and more significant than me just trying to get what I want. We read in James 4:2-3 “You do not have because you do not ask. You ask and don’t receive because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your evil desires.” The true desire of my heart affects my prayers.

And third, God is not a trickster randomly giving out “zonks” as answers. His response, even when it wasn’t what we thought we wanted, is not meant to harm us. As Christ says in Luke 11:13 “If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?” ■



Information provided by Kevin Mayer, New Heights Church, 200 E. First Ave., Indianola, 515-442-5111.

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