

# Living

MAGAZINE

# Celebrating HERITAGE

Residents reflect on the traditions  
that connect them to home

**Meet Reed Nenonen**

EDUCATION

**The comfort of a savory lasagna**

RECIPE

**The Wearmouth family's rescue dog journey**

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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 Sean Dengler**

The smell of fresh tortillas, the rhythm of folkloric dance and the stories passed down through generations all carry something deeper than tradition — they carry identity. For three local residents, Mexican heritage isn't just remembered; it's honored and shared.



Gaby Lozano and her husband, Tracy Edmiston, have visited many places in Mexico, where her parents grew up.



### Keeping traditions alive

Coming from an immigrant family, Gaby Lozano never needed to “find” her heritage.

“I never actually had to connect,” Gaby says. “My parents are immigrants and didn’t speak English to me. I was always in the kitchen with my mom, learning her recipes and hearing about her upbringing.”

That upbringing has shaped how she lives today.

“I’ve visited Mexico frequently,” Gaby says. “I’ve stayed with family, learned about where they’re from and about important figures who shaped the nation. I speak both Spanish and English fluently. I cook from scratch and make my own seasonings and sauces.”

Her travels have taken her across the country.

“I’ve been to Chihuahua, Parral, Juárez, San Luis Potosí, Aguascalientes and the Riviera Maya,” she says. “I’ve seen the original founding site of Chihuahua and toured one of Pancho Villa’s homes. I also visited La Cascada de Basaseachi, a waterfall in the land where the Tarahumara people live.”

Family stories remain especially meaningful. “It’s incredible how my Abuelita

(grandmother) raised 11 kids in extreme poverty,” Gaby says. “She was resourceful and made every peso stretch. My mom and her siblings didn’t really get toys, but, on holidays, my abuela made giant pots of buñuelos out of flour and sugar.”

She also takes pride in Mexico’s deep historical roots.

“There is so much history — the early use of tomatoes, corn, cocoa — even the concept of zero,” she says. “So much traces back to Indigenous civilizations in Mexico and Central America. Those influences later spread to Europe.”

For Gaby, visiting Mexico offers two perspectives.

“There are two types of experiences,” she says. “There are tourist areas and resorts, and then there’s everyday life when visiting family. Even in those struggles, though, we have the best cheese, tortillas and fresh salsas every day.”

While she doesn’t plan to move there, her connection remains strong.

“I may love my family, the simple lifestyle and the history, but right now I feel it’s most important to pass on those traditions to the next generation,” she says.



Residents in Jennifer Juarez’s native Mexico create elaborate “sawdust carpets.”

### Heritage of dance

For Jennifer Juarez, her heritage is central to her identity.

“Being Mexican has always been a big part of who I am,” Jennifer says. “As I’ve gotten older, I’ve realized how important it is to stay connected to those roots. It helps me feel closer to my family, my ancestors and where they come from.”

Food, traditions and celebrations all play a role.

“Our family traditions make me feel connected to my ancestors,” she says. “Cooking recipes passed down through generations connects me to the places my family comes from, and celebrations bring us together as a community.”

Dance is another meaningful connection.

“One of the most important ways I connect to my heritage is through a Mexican folkloric dance group, GF Jóvenes Embajadores, which my mother-in-law started in 2002,” Jennifer says. “My husband and I began helping last summer. It’s been a meaningful experience because we’re helping keep traditional dances and music alive and sharing them with our community.”



Jennifer Juarez grew up in her grandmother's home.

She values passing those traditions on.

"It's also a way to teach younger generations about their heritage," she says.

Jennifer has traveled to several places in Mexico, including her hometown of Uriangato, Guanajuato, and her husband's hometown of Zapopan, Jalisco.

"Learning about the history of each place I visit is one of my favorite things," she says. "Every region has something unique."

One trip, in particular, stands out.

"A favorite memory is visiting the house my great-grandparents built," Jennifer says. "No one lives there anymore, but it's still standing. Walking through it and hearing stories from my family made it a very special experience."

Sharing her culture is something she values deeply.

"Whether it's through food, celebrations or dance, these traditions bring people together," she says. "Sharing my heritage is a way of showing who I am and helping others understand me better."

### The uniqueness of communities

Antonio Romero embraces both sides of his identity.

"Heritage has always been very important to me," Antonio says. "I was born in Des Moines, so I'm American, but my parents are first-generation immigrants from Mexico. I'm proud to be both."

Watching his parents' sacrifices has had a lasting impact.

"Seeing how hard my parents worked to give my sister and me a better life is something I can never really repay," he says.

Food is a central part of that connection.

"Getting together with friends and family and eating traditional foods like tamales, pozole and tostadas — I could go on forever about tacos," he says. "It's a big part of who we are."

Music has also taken on new meaning over time.

"I've found that, as I've gotten older, I've started enjoying Spanish music more," Antonio says. "It's funny because, when we were younger, we'd tell our parents to turn it off. Now we're the ones playing it. It's kind of a full-circle moment."

Film has become another important outlet, leading to his involvement with the Des Moines Latino Film Festival.

"I'm the vice president of the Latino Center of Iowa board," Antonio says. "The festival brings together not just Latinos, but the entire community. We showcase critically acclaimed films, including ones recognized at Cannes and Sundance, so people in Iowa can experience different Latino stories and perspectives."

For Antonio, culture is meant to be shared.

"Culture is a powerful way to connect," he says. "Through music, food, film and art, people can experience what makes different communities unique."



Antonio Romero with his parents, Antonio Sr. and Claudia Lemus, and sister, Katya Romero.

### It's the conversation

Having her heritage be a part of her life has been significant to Reyna Immerfall.

"It's been a pretty big part of my life," she says. "Just growing up, always having a ton of cousins around, my immediate family being close by. It's been important to my mom. She passed several years ago, so just being able to carry on those traditions, customs, it means a lot."

An important time for her family to connect to her heritage is at Christmas.

"My sisters come stay at my house," Reyna says. "The whole family comes in, and we spend all day making tamales. The whole house gets involved."

"We're preparing the meat, the chile, and all of that stuff in the morning," she continues. "Then we get the whole family around the table, boys and girls alike, to spread the masa. Everybody gets a role in that. Lots of conversation takes place. It's a way for us to reconnect and see what everybody has going on in their lives."

This tradition was passed down from her mom, Carmen, who wanted to carry on Reyna's grandparents' tradition.

"After my grandparents passed away, we just continued to do it at our house," Reyna says. "It was important to her for us to know how it was done — and not necessarily the how, but you kind of figured out it was the why. It was a way



For Reyna Immerfall, the tradition of making tamales at Christmas time isn't about the food and work preparing it. The tradition is about family gathering and conversation.

for myself and my sisters to put down whatever we had at school and whatever was going on and connect again with each other, whether we liked it or not."

Passing down this tradition has been worth it, she says.

"That's why it's important to me, too," Reyna says. "I know my kids give me the eye rolls, like, 'Oh, we got to do this.' 'Yeah, you do.'"



But about five minutes in, you forget about the work that you're doing then just appreciate the company you're with."

As this tradition has expanded through the years to involve T-shirts, connecting with one's heritage still remains crucial to Reyna.

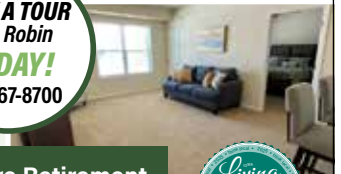
"It's about our ancestors and where they came from. It is about the food that brings us together. It's just about the reconnecting and bringing everybody together, too. You're working on this food for 10 hours, but the conversation that you have during that time, you'll not get in any other setting. Even though it feels forced, it comes naturally once you get into the groove of it." ■

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# MAKE summer count

Stay ahead academically with summer tutoring

Summer break is a time for relaxation, fun and family, but it can also be a time when students lose important academic skills. Known as the “summer slide,” this learning loss can set students back by months before the next school year even begins. Fortunately, there is a solution that balances learning and summer fun: tutoring.



**The summer slide is real:** Research shows that students can lose up to two to three months of math and reading skills over the summer. For many families, this means the new school year begins with review instead of progress. Over time, these gaps can add up, making it harder for students to stay confident and keep up with their peers.

**A smarter way to spend summer:** Tutoring can offer a different kind of summer experience — one that blends personalized learning

with motivation and fun. Instead of long, overwhelming sessions, students can engage in targeted instruction designed specifically for their needs. Whether your child needs to catch up, keep up, or get ahead, personalized plans meet them where they are.

**Personalized learning that works:** No two learning plans are the same. Each student should begin with an assessment that identifies strengths and areas for growth. From there, instructors create a customized plan focused on building skills, confidence and independence. This individualized approach ensures that every minute spent learning is meaningful and productive.

**Building confidence, not just skills:** Academic success isn't just about knowing the material — it is about believing you can succeed. A supportive environment helps students rebuild confidence, reduce frustration and develop a positive attitude toward learning. When students feel successful, they are more likely to stay motivated and engaged — not just

in summer, but throughout the school year.

**Flexible for busy summer schedules:** Summer is filled with vacations, camps and family time. For that reason, programs should be designed to be flexible. Scheduling options should let students continue learning without missing out on summer fun.

**Give your child an advantage:** Instead of spending the first months of school catching up, students walk in prepared, confident and ready to succeed. It is not just about preventing learning loss — it is about creating momentum.

Make this summer count: Summer doesn't have to be a setback. It can be a season of growth, confidence and success. Give your child the tools they need to thrive — this summer and beyond. ■

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

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The April 2011 Altoona Living magazine featured the story, “My first car: Residents share their stories, advice.” The cover photo featured Kalen Stapp and her 2001 gray Lexus. Also interviewed were Michael Menke about his 1979 Chevy Monte Carlo, Clay and Sara Swihart about their first cars and Mike Bingaman, whose first car was a 1954 Chevy. ■

# MEET Reed Nenonen

Third-grade teacher brings energy, innovation

After growing up in St. Louis, Reed Nenonen came to Des Moines to study elementary education at Drake University. As a college student, he fell in love with the city and decided to remain in the area after graduation.

Nenonen also taught at Altoona Elementary School during his final semester of college and was excited when a third-grade position became available in the district. Now in his second year with the Southeast Polk Community School District, he teaches third grade at Willowbrook Elementary School.

“Southeast Polk has passionate educators all around, especially with a large number of them being former students of the district. I work alongside some of the most knowledgeable and driven educators,” Nenonen says. “They are one of the reasons for my growth as a teacher, as well as why I enjoy coming to school every day.”

One of Nenonen’s favorite classroom activities this school year involved working with robots purchased by the district. The robots can dance, change colors, move, look around and speak as programmed by students. Nenonen introduced the robots to help students learn block coding and build excitement for technology.

After exploring different possibilities, the class held a showcase of student coding projects. Some students programmed their robots to form shapes, while others made them dance. Nenonen says that, regardless of the outcome, it was rewarding to see what each group created through exploration.

“Third grade is one of the biggest transitions in elementary school,” Nenonen says. “There is a significant jump in academics as students continue to hone their reading and writing skills while also learning fractions, multiplication and division for the first time. My favorite part of my job is teaching. It feels like a puzzle — figuring out new ways to teach my students things they have never learned before.”

The class also worked together to fill a chart recognizing positive behavior and growth. When the chart was completed, students chose a classroom reward, often selecting extra recess or lunch in the classroom. This year, one option was a “minions” day, with Nenonen as Gru leading a classroom of yellow shirts, overalls, goggles and bandanas.

“Third grade is when students come out of their shell,” Nenonen says. “Their personalities grow and change. They develop more independence and deepen their understanding of the world. I feel very fortunate to help them navigate this transition.”

As the end of the school year approaches, Nenonen looks forward to field days and assemblies. After a year of hard work, he says it is a chance to enjoy time with students one last time before summer. He also looks forward to traveling during the break. ■



Reed Nenonen says teaching “feels like a puzzle — figuring out new ways to teach my students things they have never learned before.”

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### ADULT PROGRAMMING — AGES 18 AND OLDER

- **Glowforge Basics, Saturday, May 2 at 1 p.m.** Interested in using our Glowforge Pro in the Maker Hub? This is where to start. We will go over safety, cleaning, materials and basic operation. Once you have completed the session, you will be issued a certificate allowing you to use the Glowforge independently. Registration is required.
- **Paint Your Pet, Wednesday, May 6 at 6 p.m.** Take a picture of your favorite pet or other animal and turn it into a hand-painted masterpiece. All supplies are provided. Registration is required.
- **Batik Tote Bags, Wednesday, May 20 at 6 p.m.** Learn how to make a colorful, functional wax-resist tote bag. All supplies are provided. Registration is required.

### CHILDREN'S PROGRAMMING

- **Paint Along with Miss Amber, Wednesday, May 6 at 3:30 p.m.** Miss Amber will lead a painting class for kids. Follow along to create a masterpiece. For grades K-6. Registration is required.
- **LEGO Club, Tuesday, May 12 at 5:30 p.m. or Wednesday, May 27 at 3:30 p.m.** Come to the library to build a LEGO masterpiece. We supply the LEGOs; you bring the creativity. For grades K-6. Registration is required.
- **Crafty Kids, Monday, May 18 at 6 p.m.** Get crafty and design a foam squishy. For grades pre-K through 6. Registration is required.

### TEEN PROGRAMMING — GRADES 6-12

- **VR Night, Monday, May 4 from 6 to 7 p.m.** Virtual reality, actual awesomeness. Try painting in VR, solve puzzles in The Room, relax with PowerWash Simulator, or try games like Job Simulator and Beat Saber. Meta Quest VR headsets are funded by a grant from Meta's Altoona Data Center. No registration is required.
- **Craft Buffet, Thursday, May 14 from 6 to 7 p.m.** Drop in and help us clean out our craft supplies before summer. We will offer a variety of fun projects to choose from. No registration is required.

- **Game Night, Thursday, May 28 from 6 to 7 p.m.** It is game on at the library. Hang out in the meeting room with snacks and a variety of games. Play the Nintendo Switch on the TV or enjoy games like UNO, Exploding Kittens, Taco Cat Goat Cheese Pizza and more from our collection. No registration is required.

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



# welcome

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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. ■

# THE VALUE of banking at a branch

While the advantages of online banking are undeniable, the value of banking in person at a branch is often overlooked. There are certain aspects of in-branch banking, such as personalized guidance, access to full products and services and real-time solutions, that make a trip to your bank worth your time.



tailored specifically to your unique situation.

Personal connection, combined with face-to-face communication, can make all the difference, and they can play a key role in reaching your financial goals. They are an important part of your banking experience that online services are unable to replicate.

### Access to full products and services

When you visit your bank in person, you gain access to its full suite of products and services, not just what's included online. There could be a better opportunity for you to receive special offers by simply visiting the branch. You may even learn about a product or service you didn't know was available before your visit.

There are also certain banking tasks that are best to do in person at a branch. Depositing large amounts of money is one of them. Additionally, most banks offer safe deposit boxes, which are an in-branch service meant to serve as a private and secure place for you to store your most valuable items. Many

branches also provide notary services, making it convenient to handle legal documents while you're there.

### Real-time solutions

Another important advantage of in-person banking is the ability to receive real-time solutions when urgent issues arise. If you notice anything suspicious on your account, a banker can review the activity and identify a plan of action for you all in one visit. Urgent matters don't have to be as stressful when you have an expert to address and fix problems on the spot.

Finding the balance between using in-person and digital banking services will help you make the most of your financial experience. The next time you need financial advice or just want to meet your banker, consider stopping by your local bank for support. ■

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

### Personalized guidance

It is helpful to have someone you can trust to guide you through important financial decisions, no matter how small or complex they are. One of the best parts of in-person banking is the ability to discuss your financial needs directly with an expert. When your banker has a better understanding of where you are and where you want to be, it is easier for them to offer expert advice and financial solutions



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25 debit transactions. A "debit transaction" for the purpose of this section means a debit to your Bonus Account that originated from an ACH, Bankers Trust bill payment, drafting checks, or use of your debit card as a method of payment or purchase. Qualifying debit card transactions must post and settle during the 60 days from account opening. A "debit transaction" does not include debits to your Bonus Account that originated from ATM withdrawals or other debits to your Bonus Account; and,

2 direct (ACH) and/or Mobile deposits of at least \$200 each must post and settle during the 60 days from account opening. A "deposit" for the purposes of this section does not include ATM deposit, deposits made in person, account-to-account transfers, or other deposits to your Bonus Account.

Eligibility will be verified 60 days after the Bonus Account's opening. Bonus will only be credited if the account is currently in an open status with a positive balance. Should you have met all eligibility requirements and are not subject to the limitations and exclusions contained herein, the bonus will be credited to the Bonus Account within 75 days of its opening. Limit one bonus per household. Offer not available to existing Bankers Trust checking customers or those that have had a checking account with Bankers Trust within six months of Bonus Account opening. Employees of Bankers Trust and/or its affiliates are not eligible for bonus. Offer available for a limited time. Open a primary checking account by June 30, 2026. Early closing fee of \$400 will be charged if your Bonus Account is closed within 12 months of opening. Annual Percentage Yield (APY) on Break Free Checking Plus is 0.60% for balances less than \$5,000.00 and 0.55% for balances \$5,000.00 and over, effective March 27, 2026, and subject to change without notice. Fees may reduce earnings. Rate may change after the account is opened.

# FINDING the right fit

## The Wearmouth family's rescue dog journey

For Derek Wearmouth, adopting his 9-year-old long-haired Jack Russell terrier, Joey, from Forever Home Dog Rescue was about finding a companion.

"We ended up getting him because he was closer in age to our other Jack Russell, Rex, who is 9 1/2," Derek says. "He was kind of lonely. He grew up with our other dog, Roxy, who died in March last year. We wanted to get a dog that was around the same age with the same temperament, and that's how we found Joey."

Joey had been passed between several homes due to his barking.

"There aren't a lot of Jack Russells up for adoption," Derek says. "We spent about four months looking, and I kind of wrote him off because I thought somebody was going to adopt him or already had."

That was not the case. After 10 months of trying to find a new home, Joey was given a chance by Derek and his family.

"This is my first time getting a dog from a rescue," Derek says. "We've always raised Jack Russells from puppies."

The transition was not smooth at first. Joey barked frequently and required treatment for ear problems.

"He had dietary needs and things like that, which we knew going into it," Derek says. "He's allergic to everything under the sun, but it's fine. It's my wife and me and our 15-year-old son, and he gets along with us."

Since the adoption, Joey's situation has improved, Derek says.

"It has gotten better. He's had some training that he didn't have before," Derek says. "I told my wife the other day, the training we've been giving him is more structured than what he had in the past with his previous owner."

The barking has also improved.

"It took him a while to adjust, but he still barks," Derek says. "But not at the rate he did when we first got him."

Derek enjoys having Joey around.

"I like Joey mainly because I'm a big fan of Jack Russells," he says. "They all have their own attitude and personality. They're very smart but also super independent. They're prone to ignoring you, and they're very stubborn. They're also very good at problem-solving, and that's how we train them around here."

When bored, Derek will hide treats for Joey to find — an activity that has helped Joey fit right in with the family.

"It's good to rescue animals, especially if you have a need like we did,"

Derek says. "Puppies don't always fit for people. A lot of people look for specific breeds because of their personalities and how they interact, especially when you already have a dog. We wanted a dog that had some age on him, and the only real place you can find that is through adoption." ■



Joey, a 9-year-old Jack Russell terrier, was adopted to be a companion for Derek Wearmouth's other dog, Rex, also a 9-year-old Jack Russell terrier.





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# WHY HAVE Christians let me down?



Have you ever known someone who talks a lot about faith — but lives very differently?

Maybe it is a classmate who posts Bible verses but treats people poorly. A boss who brings up faith but leads with ego instead of integrity. A church leader you respected who turned out to be living a double life. Experiences like these are not just disappointing — they can be deeply confusing and painful.

If that's part of your story, it is worth saying clearly: I'm sorry. That is not how it is supposed to be.

Jesus felt the same way. Some of his strongest words were not directed at people who were struggling. They were aimed at those who pretended they had it all together. He called out hypocrisy not because people failed, but because they hid behind appearances instead of seeking real change.

Here is the tension: Christians aren't perfect. They face the same pressures, temptations and failures as anyone else. Faith doesn't instantly fix a person; it begins a process. And, sometimes, people who claim that faith still act in ways that are inconsistent or hurtful.

So, what do you do when that happens?

In the book of Acts, there were two Jesus followers, Paul and Barnabas, who were mistreated by religious people. They were sharing a message of hope and instead were met with hostility and abuse. They had every reason to walk away — to become cynical or bitter.

But they didn't.

Instead, they refused to let the actions of a few people rob them of something deeper and good. Scripture says, "So they shook the dust off their feet.... And the disciples were filled with joy...." (Acts 13:51-52).

That phrase — shake the dust off — is powerful. Sometimes it means making a conscious choice not to carry bitterness forward. Other times, it is a longer journey that includes honest conversations, counseling and prayer. Either way, it is about refusing to let someone else's failure define your future.

Because, holding on to hurt can quietly shape us. And while it may feel justified, it rarely leads to the kind of life we actually want. It is hard to experience joy while holding on to resentment.

If you have been let down by Christians, your reaction makes sense. But it is worth asking: Was it Jesus who failed you or people who didn't fully reflect him?

There is an important difference.

Faith was never meant to be placed in people, who will always fall short. Rather faith is an invitation to trust the One who doesn't fail.

Because, while people may let you down, the story of Jesus points to something better — and invites us, slowly and imperfectly, to become part of it. ■

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

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# THE BENEFITS of plants and gardening

The first day of spring was in March, and, being in the Midwest, we haven't had the opportunity to really enjoy spring weather, but it is coming. With the warm weather, it is time to dig out your trowel and gardening gloves, or maybe just eliminate the work and buy a nice potted plant. Either way, the long-awaited planting season is here.

There are so many mental and physical health benefits to gardening or simply caring for indoor potted plants. Just being around plants is beneficial. When humans breathe, we exhale carbon dioxide from the body and inhale oxygen. Plants do the opposite; they release oxygen for us to breathe and absorb the carbon dioxide that we exhale. Plants help eliminate harmful toxins and purify the air.

Indoor plants have been found to reduce stress levels. House plants can often help their caretakers feel more soothed and comforted. Some studies show that plants in the rooms of patients recovering from illness or surgery required fewer pain medications and had shorter hospital stays. Plants can also help add moisture to a room, which increases humidity and helps prevent dry coughs or sore throats.



Good houseplants to purchase for your home are spider plants, ivy, ferns and more. These plants are known for filtering toxins and improving mental health by boosting color, which can reduce anxiety. For seniors who have a hard time getting out of the house, caring for a plant could provide a much-needed activity that could help lessen loneliness or depression.

Outdoor gardening also has numerous health benefits. Working in the garden, digging and pulling weeds, is a workout, and, while it not only burns calories, it is also good for your heart. It also increases your hand strength. Keeping your hands as strong as possible can help you stay independent for a longer period of time. Gardening outside can also give you that much-needed dose of vitamin D. We need that sunlight after being inside all winter long. Vitamin D increases your calcium levels, and increased calcium levels mean increased bone strength.

Staying mentally and physically strong is important for leading a long and healthy life. Check for senior living that offers a gardening club that not only helps keep the community beautiful but also helps encourage members to stay active and young. ■

Information provided by Dave Zahn, Sales Director, Valley View Village, 2571 Guthrie Ave., Des Moines, 515-265-2571.



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## HEALTH

By Dr. Kari Swain and Dr. Elizabeth Ellrich

### ARE you supporting your child's brain?

The brain's ability to reorganize, adapt and form new neural connections is called neuroplasticity. In children, this process happens at a rapid pace, making the early years a critical window for healthy brain development. What many parents don't realize is that the nervous system plays a foundational role in how well that development unfolds.

Nervous system stress disrupts communication between the brain and the body. When signals are distorted or blocked, the effects can show up as developmental delays, learning difficulties, behavioral challenges, attention issues, immune deficiencies, sleep challenges, digestive issues and more.

Chiropractors are nervous system doctors, some specifically trained to identify dysfunction through a thorough neurological examination. Specific chiropractic adjustments remove interference and restore full nervous system function. Restored communication supports neuroplasticity, allowing the brain to better adapt, learn and develop. Improvement in focus, behavioral issues, motor skills and academic performance are expressions of a nervous system functioning without interference.

Studies show chiropractic care can improve cognitive function and academic performance. Children receiving chiropractic care showed improved reading comprehension and greater reduction in ADHD symptoms. Children with developmental delays showed significant improvement in motor skills and overall development.

Neuroplasticity is essential for children's development and well-being, and chiropractic care plays a crucial role by restoring proper nervous system function and supporting healthy development. A board-certified pediatric chiropractor trained in nervous system-focused care will create an individualized plan to support your child's nervous system, giving their brain the foundation it needs to grow and thrive. ■

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

## WELLNESS

By Nikki Morgan

### THE importance of skin checks

May is Skin Cancer Awareness Month, a reminder of how important it is to care for and protect our skin. Skin cancer is the most common cancer in the United States, but the encouraging news is that it is often highly treatable when caught early.

For me, this awareness is also personal. I lost my dad to melanoma at the age of 41. I was a senior in high school when he was diagnosed and only 20 when he passed. His story is one of the many reasons I am so passionate about helping others understand the importance of early detection and prevention.

Skin changes can be easy to overlook. A new spot, a mole that looks different, or an area that doesn't heal properly can all be warning signs. Taking time each month to check your skin — and knowing what is normal for you — can make a significant difference.

Prevention is just as important as detection. Wearing a broad-spectrum SPF daily, even on cloudy days, is one of the simplest and most effective ways to protect your skin. Reapplying sunscreen, wearing protective clothing, and seeking shade during peak sun hours are small habits that can have a lasting impact.

Your skin is your body's largest organ, and taking care of it is an investment in your long-term health. Awareness, consistency and early action truly save lives. ■

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



*May is Skin Cancer Awareness Month*

# Skin Cancer Screening Event

**FREE SKIN CHECKS**  
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**Date: Wednesday, May 6**  
**Time: 4:30-7:00PM**  
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200 2<sup>nd</sup> St SE, Ste 1 Altoona Iowa 50009

*Please RSVP to 515-967-0587 if you plan to attend!*



515-967-0587  
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## A DIFFERENT way to wind down

The way people unwind at the end of the day is starting to shift. More people are taking a closer look at alcohol and how it actually affects their sleep, mood, and how they feel the next day.



At the end of the day, alcohol is a toxin. Even in smaller amounts, it can impact energy, recovery, and overall wellness. Because of that, a lot of people are starting to look for options that help them relax without working against their body. Two that keep coming up are kava and kanna. Both are natural plants, but they feel very different.

Kava is often used in place of that evening drink. Instead of the buzz and next-day drag, it helps the body relax while keeping your mind clear. Most people describe it as tension slowly melting away. You feel calm, settled and still able to be present or social. In higher amounts, it can feel more sedating, which is why some people use it to help with sleep.

Kanna is a different experience. It is more about mood than full-body relaxation. People tend to use it during the day when stress is building or when they feel overwhelmed. It is often described as taking the edge off mentally, helping you feel more positive, patient and clear. Some people also notice they feel more open or talkative.

As people explore new ways to unwind, options like these are becoming part of everyday routines. If you are curious, talking with someone knowledgeable can help you figure out what might work best for you. ■

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

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## 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

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**Note about calendar events:** This magazine is delivered the fourth Thursday of each month. Calendar items included are events happening after the delivery date and extend into the following month. If you receive and read your magazine upon delivery, you will not miss out on any calendar items.

## Coming up in the Altoona Living magazine:

**Farmers market vendors:** Do you enjoy selling your products at local farmers markets? Tell us your experiences and what tips you can share with others wanting to get involved. Email [tammy@iowalivingmagazines.com](mailto:tammy@iowalivingmagazines.com).

**Fishing:** Share your fishing stories. 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).

## Ann Moyna Memorial Fundraiser

### Various dates and locations

The Fifth Annual Ann Moyna Memorial Fundraiser will be hosted again in Altoona starting with a golf outing on Friday, May 1, at Terrace Hills Golf Course, followed by an after-party at Brightside Aleworks. Registration for the golfing is now closed. On Saturday, May 2, will be an afternoon of fun at Fireside Grille with a bags tournament, silent auction, live music, and plenty of time to socialize. Those interested who cannot attend one of the live events can donate online with a credit card via the GoFundMe page: <https://gofund.me/542e2c4d3>.

- After Party: Friday, May 1, 6-9 p.m. Brightside Aleworks, 480 Center Place, Altoona.

- Bags Tournament: Saturday, May 2, noon to 5 p.m., Fireside Bar & Grille, 523 Eighth S.E., Altoona. \$50 per team. Visit <https://annmoyna.com/#fundraiser> for registration information.

- Silent Auction: Saturday, May 2, bidding closes at 9 p.m., Fireside Bar & Grille. Featuring items donated by local businesses. If you would like to contribute an item to the auction, contact: Nikki Thomas, 641-777-7165, email: [nikki.m.thomas@gmail.com](mailto:nikki.m.thomas@gmail.com), or Jereme Thomas, 515-321-9246. email: [jereme@frogmo.com](mailto:jereme@frogmo.com).

- Live Music: Saturday, May 2, 4-6 p.m. Pat Bump, 7-10 p.m. Brody Hedrick Music. Fireside Bar & Grille.

- Remembrance Mass: Sunday, May 3, 8 a.m. Rosary, 8:30 a.m. Mass, Ss. John and Paul Catholic Church, 1401 First Ave. S., Altoona.



## Live Music at Prairie Meadows

1 Prairie Meadows Drive, Altoona

- May 1, 7 p.m., Alan Jackson Tribute Featuring Doug Brewin
- May 2, 9-11 p.m., Keith Wells and the Tonky Stompers
- May 5, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., Craig Swalwell Band
- May 8, 10 p.m. to midnight, Grind
- May 9, 10 p.m. to midnight, Mark Doty and The Cause
- May 12, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., Tommy Browder and the Country River Band
- May 14, 7 p.m., Neil Diamond Tribute Featuring Steve Berry
- May 15, 10 p.m. to midnight, Hold On
- May 16, 10 p.m. to midnight, Gut Feeling
- May 19, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., Jerry Beauchamp Band
- May 22, 10 p.m. to midnight, Richie Lee and the Fabulous 50s
- May 23, 10 p.m. to midnight, Motley Scroe
- May 26, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., Company's Comin'
- May 29, 10 p.m. to midnight, Anthony Koester Band
- May 30, 10 p.m. to midnight, Zachary Freedom

## Des Moines Art Center Museum Highlights Tour

Saturdays, 1-2 p.m.

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.



## Mothers Day Breakfast Buffet and Bake Sale

Sunday, May 10, 8 a.m. until noon

West Des Moines Elks Lodge, 2060 N.W. 94th St., Clive

Enjoy a delicious Mother's Day breakfast, which includes biscuits and gravy, French toast, scrambled eggs, bacon, sausage patties, cheesy potatoes, and all-you-can-eat pancakes (including blueberry and chocolate chip pancakes), orange juice, milk and coffee. Cost is \$11, \$5 for children younger than 10. Enjoy a bloody mary or mimosa for \$3.50. Proceeds support the Elks Hoop Shoot Program, other youth activities and veteran activities.



## Downtown Farmers Market

Saturday, May 2 to Oct. 31, 7 a.m. to noon

Historic Court District, Downtown Des Moines

The 2026 season will feature 305 vendors, including 43 new participants, with 75 produce and agriculture vendors highlighting the region's strong farming community. Vendors represent 74 cities across 42 Iowa counties and span 12 city blocks from Water Street to Fifth Street. For more information visit [www.dsmpartnership.com/desmoinesfarmersmarket/](http://www.dsmpartnership.com/desmoinesfarmersmarket/).

Be sure to check for cancelations.

## Greater Des Moines Botanical Garden Spring Programs

909 Robert D. Ray Drive, Des Moines

For information and tickets, visit <https://dmbotanicalgarden.com/>.

• **Bulbs and Brews: Tuesday, April 28, 5:30-6:30 p.m. or 7-8 p.m.** Stroll through peak spring color on a guided tour with Director of Horticulture Aaron Harpold while enjoying a local craft beer or kombucha. Two tour times. Drink included. Limited-time bloom experience. See these spectacular displays before they fade for the season.

• **Summer Camp Registration Open:** Give your child a summer of discovery, creativity and outdoor adventure. These nature-based camps combine science, art, exploration and play in a safe, inspiring environment led by experienced educators. Perfect for students entering grades 1-5.

• **Spring Garden Market Preview Evening: Thursday, May 7, 5:30-8 p.m.** Be first to shop the Spring Garden Market during this exclusive sip-and-shop event featuring early plant access, a signature drink, hors d'oeuvres, expert guidance from horticulture staff and door prizes. Upgrade to the Cultivator Ticket to demonstrate your support of the garden's missions, and for early entry, special recognition and exclusive perks.

• **Flora Mother's Day Buffet Brunch: Sunday, May 10, Seatings at 9 a.m., 11 a.m., and 1 p.m.** Enjoy a delicious buffet brunch in a beautiful garden setting. Reservations required at [flora@dmbotanicalgarden.com](mailto:flora@dmbotanicalgarden.com) or at 515-323-6288.

## Meat & Skeet Fundraiser

Friday, May 8, 8 a.m. or 1 p.m.

Doc's Hunt Club, 29475 Prospect Circle, Adel

This fundraiser for Wildwood Hills Ranch helps support essential programs for vulnerable youth and veterans. Participants will form teams of five and navigate through 12 shooting stations, all while enjoying the camaraderie of fellow supporters and the competition of the sport. Between the morning and afternoon shoots, a BBQ feast will be served and a short program held outlining the effects of the funds raised at the event. The event will also feature a silent auction and a 50/50 split. Tickets available by scanning the QR code.



## Give Life 5K

Saturday, May 2, 8:30 a.m.  
Raccoon River Park, West Des Moines

Iowa Donor Network honors those who have given the gift of life, celebrates the lives of organ and tissue recipients, and recognizes those who continue to wait for a life-saving transplant at the annual Give Life 5K. This is a family-friendly event so, no matter your skill level, the event is open to everyone. Join us to honor and support those who have been impacted by organ and tissue donation and celebrate the gift of life by registering for the Give Life 5K today. Visit [GiveLife5K.com](http://GiveLife5K.com).



## 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.

## NAMI Iowa's Beautiful Minds

Thursday, May 21, 6-8:30 p.m.  
The Tea Room, 713 Walnut St., Unit 600, Des Moines

In honor of Mental Health Awareness Month, NAMI Iowa will host a dinner and live entertainment fundraiser dedicated to breaking the stigma surrounding mental illness. This inspiring evening features powerful storytelling and performances that highlight the lived experiences of individuals navigating mental health challenges. Proceeds from this event directly support NAMI Iowa's education, advocacy and support programs serving communities across the state. Purchase tickets or become a sponsor by scanning the QR code. ■



## Middle River Arts Festival

Saturday, May 2  
Madison County Conservation Center, 2508 Pammel Park Trail, Winterset

The Middle River Arts Festival will take place at the Madison County Conservation Center in Pammel Park, hosted by the Winterset Art Center. This event is scheduled for one day, is free of charge and open to the public.

## Central Iowa Wind Ensemble presents FEAST!

Sunday, May 3, 3 p.m.  
Staplin Performing Arts Center, 3650 Woodland Ave., West Des Moines

Join the Central Iowa Wind Ensemble with a musical feast, literally. Its final concert, FEAST!, pairs amazing music with the flavors of the metro. With spicy selections like Wine Dark Sea, Party Potatoes (yes, you heard that right, a tuba concerto about potatoes), and Godzilla Eats Las Vegas, the group is serving up a musical menu like nothing you've ever experienced before. Purchase tickets at [www.ciwe.org/feast/](http://www.ciwe.org/feast/).



# ANNUAL Dinner

The Altoona Area Chamber of Commerce annual dinner was held April 10 at Prairie Meadows.



Altoona Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors: Nikki Morgan, Twila Shreves, Gina Vitritto, Brett McAllister, Amy Ferguson, Steven Bruxvoort, Nikki Barkhaus, Pennie Carroll, Anthony Meyer, and Jon Yesulis. Photo by Isenberger Photography



Robin Bartalos presents the Young Professional of the Year award to Riley Wilkie with The Duerson Corporation. Photo by Isenberger Photography



Libby Adams with 515 Design Creative accepts the Impact Award from Nikki Morgan. Photo by Isenberger Photography



Kaylie Fields with VisionBank accepts The Newell Franklin Award presented by Rick Kroeger and Ryan Guentzel. Photo by Isenberger Photography



Chris Barr presents the Entrepreneurial Spirit Award to Joni Bell with Great Caterers of Iowa, along with Allison Vetter. Photo by Isenberger Photography



Twila Shreves presents the Volunteer of the Year Award to Bev Sells of the Arts & Culture Commission. Photo by Isenberger Photography



The Outstanding Citizen of the Year Award was present to Southeast Polk Dollars for Scholars. Pictured are Mayor Dean O'Connor, Lori Slings, Kari Swain, Carrie Sponheim, Tiffany Filloon, Jodi Minard, Jenny Rhinehart, Stephanie Groom and Belinda Rhinehart. Photo by Isenberger Photography



Kylie Walker, Mike Wiskus and Robin Bartalos



Kelsie Vanderflute and Kari Holm



Lindsay McMillen and Megan Vore



Riley Wilkie and Kody Wilkie

# SPRING is busy with chamber events

Spring is finally here, which means the busy chamber season of events and activities has begun. Our main event is the annual Awards Dinner, and, this year, it was held on April 10. We were incredibly pleased to return to Prairie Meadows Event Center with a full house and an evening that transported guests to the sunlit glamour of the French Riviera. La Côte d'Azur was hosted by Melissa Horton and Kennedy Wilson alongside the AACC Board of Directors. This much-anticipated event combined warm community celebration with purposeful recognition of local business leadership.



Guests arrived to Riviera-inspired décor that set a relaxed yet elegant tone. Our evening started with a welcome to our members from the new president and CEO of Prairie Meadows, Brian Ohorilko. After dinner, our program acknowledged the many accomplishments of our business community over the past year and invited our attendees to connect, celebrate and look forward to shared opportunities ahead. Here are the awards that were presented:

- Outstanding Citizen Award
- Impact Award
- Small Business Award
- Young Professional Award
- Entrepreneurial Spirit Award
- Corporate Star Award
- Volunteer of the Year Award

La Côte d'Azur also underscored the importance of sponsorship and volunteer support. Several local partners helped bring the theme to life by the festive atmosphere. A big thank you to our hosts, sponsors and volunteers who helped to make the evening both enjoyable and productive.

Looking ahead, the Chamber invites you to upcoming spring events.

**For our chamber members:**

- **May 14: Business 101:** How to Protect Yourself from Voice Cloning, Fake Receipts and other AI Scams with Chad Ratashak of Midwest Frontier Consulting.
- **May 20: 2026 Regional After Hours**

**Events for our community:**

- **May 29: The Enabling Garden, Garden Party Fundraiser** hosted by the Altoona Chamber of Commerce, 6-8 p.m. at the Enabling Garden. Tickets are \$30, which includes catered meal, live music and an auction.
- **June 5: Wine and Craft Beer Fest 15th Anniversary Party**, 5-8 p.m. at Civic Plaza. Tickets are \$20 or six for \$110 and are on sale now.

If you'd like more details about the events listed above, then check out our newly designed website at [www.altoonachamber.org](http://www.altoonachamber.org). As a matter of fact, I encourage you to visit our website regardless. It lists our members, upcoming events, citywide garage sale dates, registration forms and more. ■

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

JOIN THE ALTOONA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE  
FOR OUR

# 15<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF

## WINE & CRAFT BEER FEST

Civic Plaza  
Altoona, Iowa

JUNE 5TH 2026  
5:00 - 8:00 PM

**TICKET INFORMATION**  
\$20 PP IN ADVANCE  
\$110 (BOOKLET OF 6)  
\$30 AT THE DOOR

MIKE MOODY  
*and the*

SPONSORED BY

# WOMEN of Vision

Women of Vision was held March 25 at Pennie Carroll & Associates.



Kari Swain and Sam Winn



Amy Karis and Emily Jaeger



Christina DeSutter and Christine Brandon



Tami Swartwood and Melissa Horton



Kristen Potter and Kendal Burzacott



Ann Buck and Tammy Christenson



Haley Buick, Christina De Sumter and Jordan Rich



Stephanie McCuen and Morgan Prescott



Jessica Hodges and Laura Augero



Heather Sievers and Cassie Riley



Gina Boakye and Stephanie Gudenkauf

# OUT & ABOUT



Adam Boose and Dr. Anthony Meyer at the ribbon cutting for Abelardo's held by the Altoona Chamber of Commerce on March 27.



The Altoona Chamber of Commerce celebrated a ribbon cutting for Abelardo's on March 27.



Mary Simon and Tami Swartwood at the ribbon cutting for Abelardo's held by the Altoona Chamber of Commerce on March 27.



Kyle Lee and Chad Quick at the ribbon cutting for Abelardo's held by the Altoona Chamber of Commerce on March 27.



Angelica Gallardo and Karla Rangel at the ribbon cutting for Abelardo's held by the Altoona Chamber of Commerce on March 27.



Nikki Barkhaus, Mayor Dean O'Connor and Mark Holm at the Altoona Area Chamber of Commerce annual dinner on April 10 at Prairie Meadows.



Jon Yesulis, Libbey Adams, Matt Adams and Josh Anderson at the Altoona Area Chamber of Commerce annual dinner on April 10 at Prairie Meadows.



Julie West and Brent Isenberger at the Altoona Area Chamber of Commerce annual dinner on April 10 at Prairie Meadows.



Alyssa McCarl and Lisa Vanbaale Capital at the Altoona Area Chamber of Commerce annual dinner on April 10 at Prairie Meadows.



Mason Burkhart and Mary Burkhart at the Altoona Area Chamber of Commerce annual dinner on April 10 at Prairie Meadows.

# CLASSIFIEDS

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

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## HOME SERVICES

QUALITY CUSTOM CABINETRY: Kitchen Remodel? We build, deliver, and install your cabinets. New home furnishing available. Solid wood doors and trim. Free quotes. R&L Cabinets. 26441 Cty. Road U, Norwalk, WI 54648. 608-647-9271, 7:30-8 a.m. CDT. (mcn)

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

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JACUZZI BATH REMODEL can install a new, custom bath or shower in as little as one day. For a limited time, waiving ALL installation costs! (Additional terms apply. Subject to change and vary by dealer. (Offer ends 12/27/26) Call 1-855-414-0768 (mcn)

## MISCELLANEOUS

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

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

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

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**APRIL 2026**

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

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**FAX: 515-967-0842**

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**515-967-5136**

**Public Works Director**

**515-967-5136**

**Human Resources**

**515-967-5136**

## **ALTOONA FORWARD**

Altoona is planning for the future of 1st Avenue and Olde Town to shape a vibrant, connected, and welcoming community. The project will define the future character of the corridor and Olde Town, capturing the community's vision for art, community spaces, connectivity, celebration of local history and growth.

### **THROUGH THIS PROCESS, WE WILL:**

- Create a shared community vision and guidance for future investment
- Explore opportunities for street improvements, amenities and public art
- Evaluate development possibilities
- Outline strategies for funding, phasing and implementation

Your input is critical to guiding each step of the process. Head to [altoonafoward.com](http://altoonafoward.com) and use the interactive map to share your big ideas and concerns for the future of Altoona. Click the Add Marker button to drop a pin at a location within Altoona that represents your comment.

## **ALTOONA TRIFECTA: A DAY IN ALTOONA**

Join the Arts & Culture Commission for a fun-filled community celebration at Olde Town Plaza featuring a mural ribbon cutting, live entertainment from Brody Hedrick & Cooper Terrill, food trucks, and beverages. The event also includes the Olde Town Plaza dedication and updates on local revitalization and arts & culture projects. Fun for all ages! It's happening at the Olde Town Plaza on May 16th from 11 -pm!

## **BRUSH DROP-OFF EVENTS**

The City of Altoona's next Brush Drop-Off will happen on May 2nd from 8:00am-Noon.

You can access the drop-off site using the Utilities service road from 8th Street SW. Continue south on the road, past the Utilities Department buildings, and continue up the hill. The brush drop-off will be on your left.

Only branches and small diameter (12" or less) trunks are allowed. No bundles of leaves or bushes allowed. Branches with leaves attached will be accepted. Residents should bring proof of address in the city to utilize this service.

For additional questions, contact City Hall at (515) 967-5136.

## **NEW ARTIST FOR THE ROTATING ART DISPLAY**

The Rotating Art Display at the Altoona Public Library has a new artist! Please help us welcome Gary Hoard and his work to the Rotating Art Display. You can see his work for the next few months at the Altoona Public Library!

## **SIDEWALK INSPECTION PROGRAM**

The City of Altoona performs yearly sidewalk inspections to preserve the quality and accessibility of our public sidewalk system. In the coming weeks, you will see employees of the city walking and marking defective panels with pink spray paint. More information will be mailed to affected properties later this summer.





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