

Living

MAGAZINE

Fresh FINDS

Local vendors bring flavor, passion and community to farmers markets

Locally owned

Local businesses highlight achievements and share history inside.

Meet Taylor Johnson
EDUCATION

Sausage and cheese breakfast bake
RECIPE

Grant boosts outdoor summer movies
COMMUNITY



Catie Mullen ★★★★★

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WELCOME

A FRESH take on farmers markets

For years, I dismissed farmers markets as little more than roadside produce stands — tables of fruits and vegetables, nothing more. I didn't cook. I didn't grocery shop. I didn't care.

Then, a few years ago, I wandered into a local farmers market — and my view changed. There was honey, still sweet from the hive. Bread, warm and crusty. Homemade jelly. Even wine. But the real surprise wasn't what was for sale. It was the atmosphere.

Farmers markets aren't just about food. They are about people. Music drifts through the aisles. Vendors chat with regulars. Shoppers linger instead of rushing. It is part market, part gathering — and entirely its own experience.

At its heart, a farmers market is a place where producers sell directly to consumers. But "farmer" is a broad label, and that is the point. Alongside fresh produce, you will find plants, baked goods, prepared foods and more.

Some markets are small and unassuming. Others take over entire city blocks. They are not permanent. They don't last all year. And that's exactly why they matter. Much like the Shamrock Shake I seem to seek out each spring, their short season makes them something to look forward to.

Farmers markets have been around for centuries, long before modern grocery stores reshaped how we shop. But, in recent decades, demand for fresh, local food has brought them back.

And for the grammar-minded: It is "farmers market," not farmer's or farmers'. The Associated Press keeps it clean — no possessive — so we do, too.

In this month's cover story, we take you inside your local farmers market and introduce you to the people who make them worth the trip. ■



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Katie and Mark Bond, Forest Home Farms, sell their products at the farmers market. Photo by Todd Rullestad

Fresh

FINDS

Local vendors bring flavor, passion and community to farmers markets

By Ashley Rullestad

Longer days and warmer nights can only mean one thing — farmers market season is back. With fresh-picked produce, handcrafted goods and sweet treats, the market is a weekly gathering place for both vendors and visitors.

Johnston Farmers Market

As the weather warms, it is almost time for the kickoff of the Johnston Farmers Market at The Yard. The market started 35 years ago with only 10 vendors and now features more than 50 throughout the season.

“The Johnston Garden Club, led by Mary Jane Paez, started the market with the help of ISU landscape design students in 1989,” Molly Moore, the city’s recreation coordinator, says. “Back then, garden club volunteers ran the market throughout the season. The market was later passed to the Johnston Lions Club, which managed it until 2022, when the city took over.”

Market highlights include live music each week featuring local artists from around the metro, as well as a partnership with Kids Markets on Tuesday, June 16. Young entrepreneurs will set up shop, share products, build real-world business skills and connect with families eager to support kid-run businesses.

Kids can enjoy farmers market-themed activities each week, provided by PBS Kids. Visitors can also enjoy the splash pad and The Yard while shopping, dining and enjoying treats.

The market will run Tuesdays, June 2 through Sept. 29, from 4 to 7 p.m. It is located at Johnston Town Center, between City Hall and the GrandStay Hotel at 6221 Merle Hay Road. For details, check out the Johnston Farmers Market on Facebook and Instagram.

JOHNSTON FARMERS MARKET

Enjoy a variety of vendors and food as well as live music and kids activities.

WHEN: Tuesdays, June 2 through Sept. 29, from 4-7 p.m.

WHERE: The Yard at Johnston Town Center, 6221 Merle Hay Road

Cooking with love

Annette Jamerson runs the AJ’s Catering food tent, offering soul food favorites for hungry shoppers. Her motto is “cooking with love from my soul.”

“I’m still new at it, as I’ve been doing the market for three years now. My catering service is more personal, and I put my all into it.”

Jamerson works at Corteva and decided to try the market after seeing information seeking vendors. She appreciates the market because it gives the community and neighbors a chance to try new food and products firsthand.



The Johnston farmers market starts June 2 and features live entertainment and more fun.



Jamerson’s menu includes smoked gouda mac and cheese, salmon, roasted chicken, jerk chicken, shrimp and grits, Philly steak sliders, and an Earth bowl — rice topped with salmon or chicken, vegetables and a mango garnish or cilantro-lime sauce.

She also values the connections she has made with community members who use and refer her services. Networking and meeting local

customers are great ways to promote a business — and it’s fun, she says.

“It’s a family environment,” Jamerson says. “I notice the same families come every week. I love the entertainment — it’s fun. I love my neighbors at the market, and, most of all, the customers. They gave us a chance and look forward to our products. The laughter of the kids, the unity and diversity are great.”



Annette Jamerson sells soul food favorites at the market.

Making a personal connection

Mark and Katie Bond, owners of Forest Home Farms, were new to the market last year. The couple raises cattle to sell beef directly to consumers.

“Forest Home Farms is built on hard work, faith and a deep respect for the land and the animals we raise,” Katie says. “We take pride in producing high-quality beef in a way that honors both tradition and care, ensuring our cattle are well-fed, well-treated and raised responsibly. This isn’t just a business for us; it’s a lifestyle rooted in family values, early mornings, long days and a commitment to providing wholesome food to our community.”

Getting involved in the Johnston market was a natural step for the Bonds. They wanted to connect more directly with customers and share their story beyond the ranch. The market offered that opportunity — a place where local producers and community members come together.

Farmers markets create a personal connection you don’t get in a store. Customers can ask questions, learn how the beef is raised and feel confident in what they are buying. It builds trust and relationships, not just transactions.

“It also allows us to educate people about the importance of supporting local farms and understanding the journey food takes from pasture to plate,” Katie says.

Like Jamerson, the Bonds appreciate the market’s sense of community.

“It’s more than just a place to sell — it’s a place to connect,” Katie says. “We love seeing familiar faces each week, meeting new customers and being surrounded by other hardworking vendors who are just as passionate about what they do. The support from the community is incredible, and it makes all the early mornings and long days worth it.”





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FEATURE

“Dabbling” in breads and sweets

Autumn Wolter has been baking since she was a little girl in the kitchen with her mom.

“About five years ago, I started dabbling in bread-making as a way to pass the time in college. Not long after, I inherited a sourdough starter, and the rest is history. From there, I began experimenting with and perfecting a variety of breads and sweets.”

In January 2024, Wolter decided to take the leap and begin selling her products. Becoming a vendor was the next step in growing her business and expanding her reach.

Wolter likes that people come to markets specifically to shop local and support small businesses, creating a special environment for both vendors and customers. She had visited the Johnston Farmers Market before and enjoyed the atmosphere. After researching other markets, she decided Johnston was the perfect fit, especially since it is the community where she is based.

“Being a vendor at the Johnston Farmers Market is truly special. Many of the same customers come back week after week, which allows me to build genuine connections. The market is the perfect size — not so large that I can’t spend time talking with people, but busy enough to have a great turnout and steady support.” ■



Autumn Wolter owns Autumn’s Sourdough Co., one of the market vendors.

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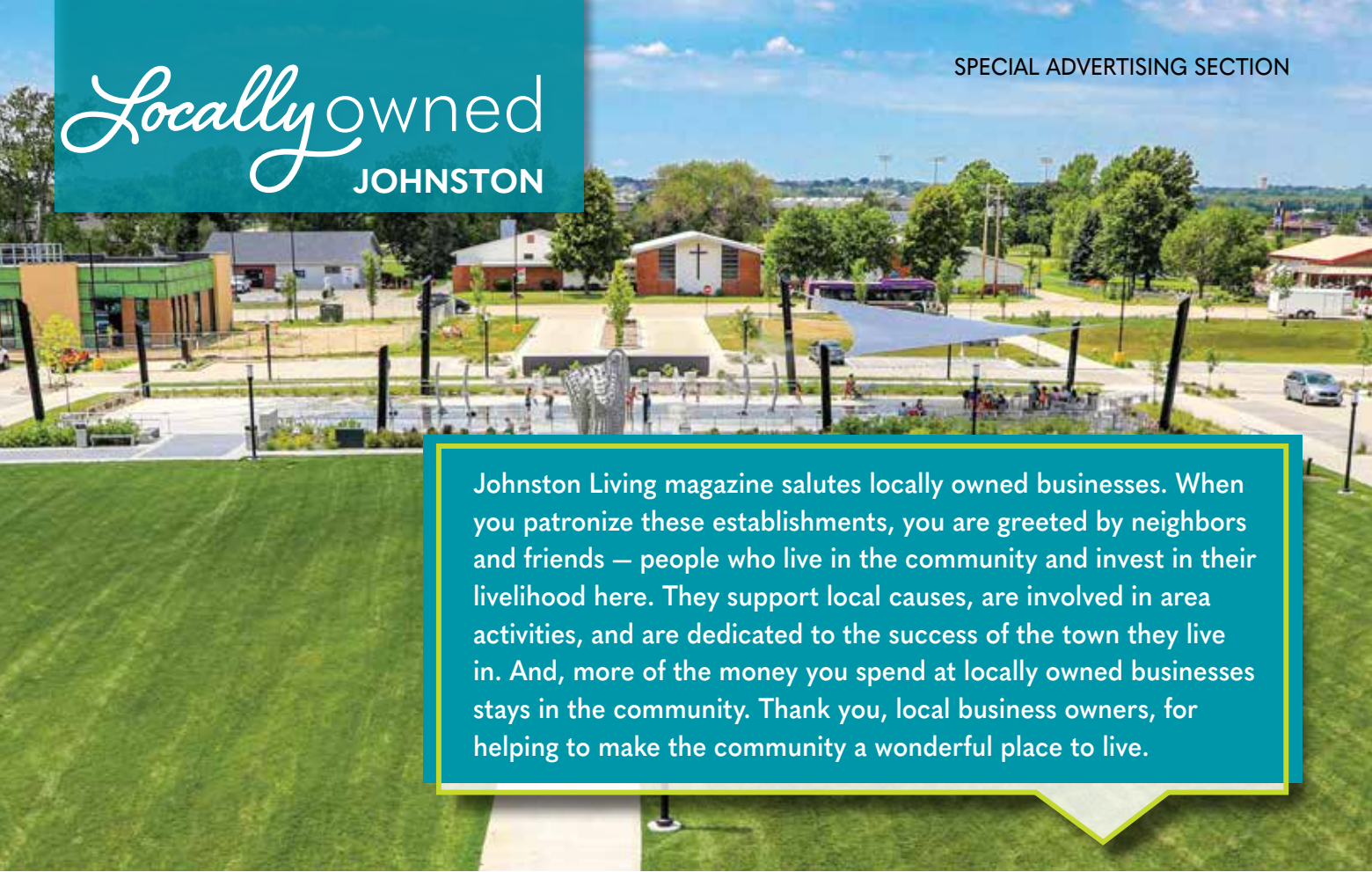


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Johnston Living magazine salutes locally owned businesses. When you patronize these establishments, you are greeted by neighbors and friends – people who live in the community and invest in their livelihood here. They support local causes, are involved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



PINEY RIDGE GREENHOUSE



OWNER: Ron, Ann and Joel Borwick
ADDRESS: 6355 NW 51st Street, Johnston
PHONE: 515-276-9554
WEBSITE: pineyridgegreenhouse.com



Piney Ridge is a seasonal retail garden center offering a wide variety of annual, perennial, herb and vegetable plants, as well as pottery and garden essentials. We open April 1st each Spring. Gift certificates are available year-round through our website.

Our story begins over 50 years ago. Our first greenhouse was built in Johnston in 1975. Ann drove around the metro in an old bus, drumming up wholesale customers while Ron stayed behind as head grower. Since those humble beginnings we have expanded and grown along with the city.

Like Johnston, we have adapted and re-built through Iowa's weather challenges (including the flood of '93 & the meso-cyclone of '98). No matter what Iowa's weather dishes out, our resilient staff and plants grow with the flow.

Our mission is to offer the healthiest plants grown in an earth-friendly way, including using integrated pest management.

Our first employees were simply friends from the neighborhood. Over the years our reputation for unique, high-quality plants has attracted a staff of enthusiastic and experienced gardeners. Their expertise and passion continue to lead our business toward all that is new and exciting in gardening.

Come out to see us. A Spring walk through our largest greenhouse is often described as a spirit-lifting experience. There's nothing like vibrant color to cure after a long winter.

SPRING STARTS HERE!



TOM MILLER - EXP REALTY, LLC

Photo credit: Jason Walmsmith

OWNER: Tom Miller
ADDRESS: Johnston, IA
PHONE: 515-729-2362
WEBSITE: www.tommillerhomes.com

Rooted in Johnston: The Story Behind Tom Miller's Real Estate Business

Most people selling a home have one question they are afraid to ask out loud: can I actually trust this person with the biggest financial decision of my life? Tom Miller has one answer to that question. The truth. From the very first conversation. Until his clients walk away knowing they got the absolute best outcome possible.

Tom Miller graduated from Johnston High School in 1993. He and his wife, Miki, raised their three daughters here, all Johnston graduates. His parents, Bob and Mary, are familiar faces to longtime residents. Mary taught first grade in Johnston for more than ten years before joining Bob at the family's community bank at the corner of Merle Hay and Pioneer Parkway.

Real estate is in the family's DNA. Tom's grandfather operated a real estate agency in Des Moines after World War II and continued that work through the 1970s. Tom spent more than a decade in banking, evaluating properties and helping borrowers navigate major financial decisions. Across four generations the Millers have helped people in central Iowa with the biggest decisions of their lives.

That banking background still shapes how Tom works. He studies market data, pricing trends and buyer behavior the way he

once studied balance sheets. He sees patterns other agents miss. And he never tells a client what they want to hear just to win their business.

His clients notice.

One described it this way: "Tom actually talked us out of buying a house because he believed our current home was a better investment. He wanted what was right for us, not just a sale."

Another highlighted his approach to pricing: "Tom prepared a detailed market analysis and recommended a price nearly \$100,000 higher than other agents suggested. Our home sold in three days."

Those are not the stories of an agent chasing a commission. Those are the stories of an advisor protecting a client's wealth.

Today Tom operates through eXp Realty. He works directly with clients on their schedule. Recently he introduced a brand built around the symbol of an oak tree, a nod to his family's heritage. "The oak represents strength, longevity and deep roots," Tom says. "Those are the same qualities I bring to my clients every day."

If you are thinking about making a move, call or text Tom at 515-729-2362 or visit tommillerhomes.com. A conversation costs nothing and it starts with the truth. It is as simple as sending a text. Licensed to sell real estate in Iowa as Thomas R. Miller.

On many evenings you will find him at Ceres Pond, casting a line into the water behind his Green Meadows home.



Locally owned
JOHNSTON



AMEGA GARAGE DOORS

OWNER: The Carter Family
ADDRESS: 4901 NW 57th Ave., Johnston
PHONE: 515-633-2119
WEBSITE: www.amegagaragedoors.com

Amega Garage Doors has built a reputation rooted in tradition, hard work, and a commitment to honest service. Founded in 1986 by Dwayne Carter and David Buck Carter, the company officially opened its first shop in 1991 at 2404 ML King Parkway. Over the years, the business experienced steady growth, relocating in the late 1990s before eventually settling into its current location in Johnston in 2018. Now celebrating 40 years of family ownership, Amega stands as a testament to dedication passed down through generations.

The company's story is deeply tied to family heritage. With roots in the garage door industry dating back to the 1950s, Amega represents four generations of experience, with a fifth generation already poised to carry the legacy forward. This continuity has shaped the company's values and approach, emphasizing integrity, craftsmanship, and long-term relationships with customers. Leadership transitioned to the next generation in 2025, ensuring that the founding principles remain firmly in place while embracing continued growth.

From humble beginnings, Amega has expanded significantly and now employs a team of 20 professionals. The company provides comprehensive services, including installation and repair for all types of garage doors. Their expertise spans residential properties, commercial projects, and new

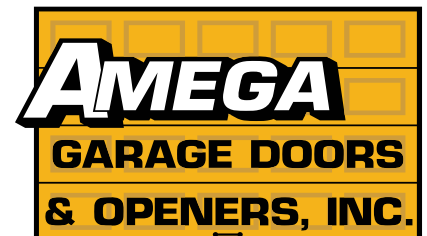
home construction, allowing them to meet a wide range of customer needs. This versatility has contributed to their strong reputation throughout the Des Moines area.

What sets Amega apart is its unwavering commitment to honesty and customer service. In an industry where customers can sometimes encounter unnecessary upselling or inflated pricing, Amega focuses on straightforward solutions and fair costs. Their team prioritizes transparency, ensuring that customers receive only the services and parts they truly need. This approach has fostered trust and loyalty within the community.

Amega also takes pride in its local roots. The family has lived in the Des Moines area since the 1950s and remains deeply connected to the community. The company actively supports local schools, sports teams, and organizations, reinforcing its role as more than just a service provider.

As Amega looks to the future, growth remains a priority. The company continues to expand its services while maintaining the personal touch that has defined it for decades. With a focus on fast, friendly, and efficient service, Amega Garage Doors remains dedicated to helping customers resolve issues quickly and affordably. Their commitment to quality and community ensures that their legacy will continue for generations to come.

Ya betta call Amega!





J TOWN AUTO

OWNER: Trevor Christensen

ADDRESS: 4700 NW 62nd Ave., Johnston, IA

PHONE: 515-251-5839

WEBSITE: www.jtownauto.com

In the heart of Johnston, J Town Auto has earned a strong reputation as a trusted, locally owned auto repair shop dedicated to serving its community with honesty and expertise. For 29 years, they have been helping drivers throughout Johnston and the surrounding metro stay safe and confident on the road, building lasting relationships along the way.

J Town Auto provides a comprehensive range of automotive services designed to meet both everyday and unexpected needs. Routine maintenance services such as oil changes, tire rotations, alignments, and brake inspections help extend the life of vehicles and prevent larger issues down the road. In addition, their experienced technicians handle more complex repairs, including engine diagnostics, transmission work, suspension repairs, and heating and cooling system service. Whether it's a simple fix or a more involved repair, customers can rely on their team for thorough, high-quality work.

One of the key areas where J Town Auto stands out is in advanced diagnostic services. Using up-to-date technology and equipment, their technicians are able to quickly and accurately identify issues, saving customers time, money, and unnecessary

guesswork. This commitment to precision ensures repairs are done right the first time.

J Town Auto also offers towing services. With just one call, our towing specialists will be there to take your vehicle back to our shop for repair services. You'll appreciate our affordable towing services and our guarantee that your vehicle will make it back to our shop safely.

What truly makes J Town Auto unique, however, is their approach to customer care. As a locally owned business, they prioritize relationships over transactions. Every customer is treated like a neighbor, and the team takes pride in clearly explaining vehicle concerns, outlining options, and helping customers make informed decisions without pressure. That level of transparency and trust has earned them a loyal customer base and strong word-of-mouth referrals.

Beyond the shop, J Town Auto remains committed to the community they serve. Supporting local residents and businesses is a core part of who they are, and their continued presence reflects their dedication to Johnston's growth and well-being.

For drivers seeking reliable service, honest guidance, and a hometown feel, J Town Auto continues to be a dependable choice in Johnston.



SAUSAGE and cheese breakfast bake is easy, filling and practical

Mornings get busy, which is why I love having a breakfast recipe I can rely on. This one checks every box for me. It is incredibly easy to make — just mix, pour and bake — with simple ingredients I usually already have in the fridge. No complicated steps. No mess. No standing over the stove while trying to get ready for the day. I love the idea of cooking once and enjoying for days.



What I appreciate most is how protein-packed this recipe is. Between the eggs, sausage and cheeses, it is the kind of breakfast that actually keeps you full and focused all morning. I am not reaching for a snack an hour later, which makes a big difference on busy days.

It is also perfectly sized for real life. The recipe makes enough for two people to enjoy breakfast for a couple of days, which means less cooking and more convenience. Or, double the batch and freeze some for future quick meals. I can warm up a slice and have a hot, satisfying meal in minutes. Easy, filling and practical — exactly how breakfast should be. ■

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

Savory sausage and cheese breakfast bake

INGREDIENTS:

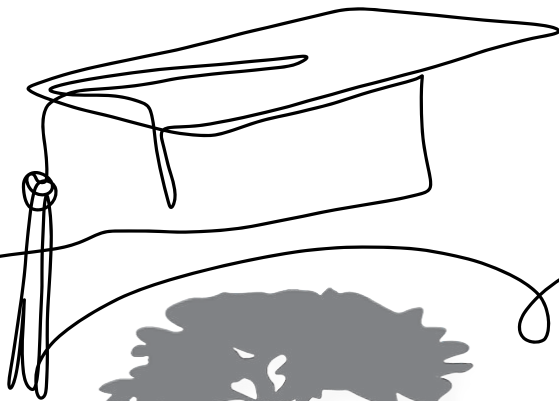
- 8 large eggs
- 1/4 cup water
- 2/3 cup cottage cheese
- 1/2 cup shredded mozzarella cheese
- 1/2 package of Jimmy Dean breakfast sausage cooked, crumbled
- 1 teaspoon Nature's Seasoning



DIRECTIONS:

- Preheat oven to 350 F. Lightly grease a small baking dish (8-inch by 8-inch works well).
- Blend eggs, water and cottage cheese for 10-15 seconds in a blender.
- Combine with mozzarella and sausage and pour into the prepared baking dish. Spread evenly.
- Bake for 30-35 minutes or until the center is set and the top is lightly golden. Rest for 5 minutes, then slice and serve.
- Vary this recipe by adding sauteed onions, peppers or mushrooms. Pictured is the original recipe plus a version with peppers and mushrooms. ■

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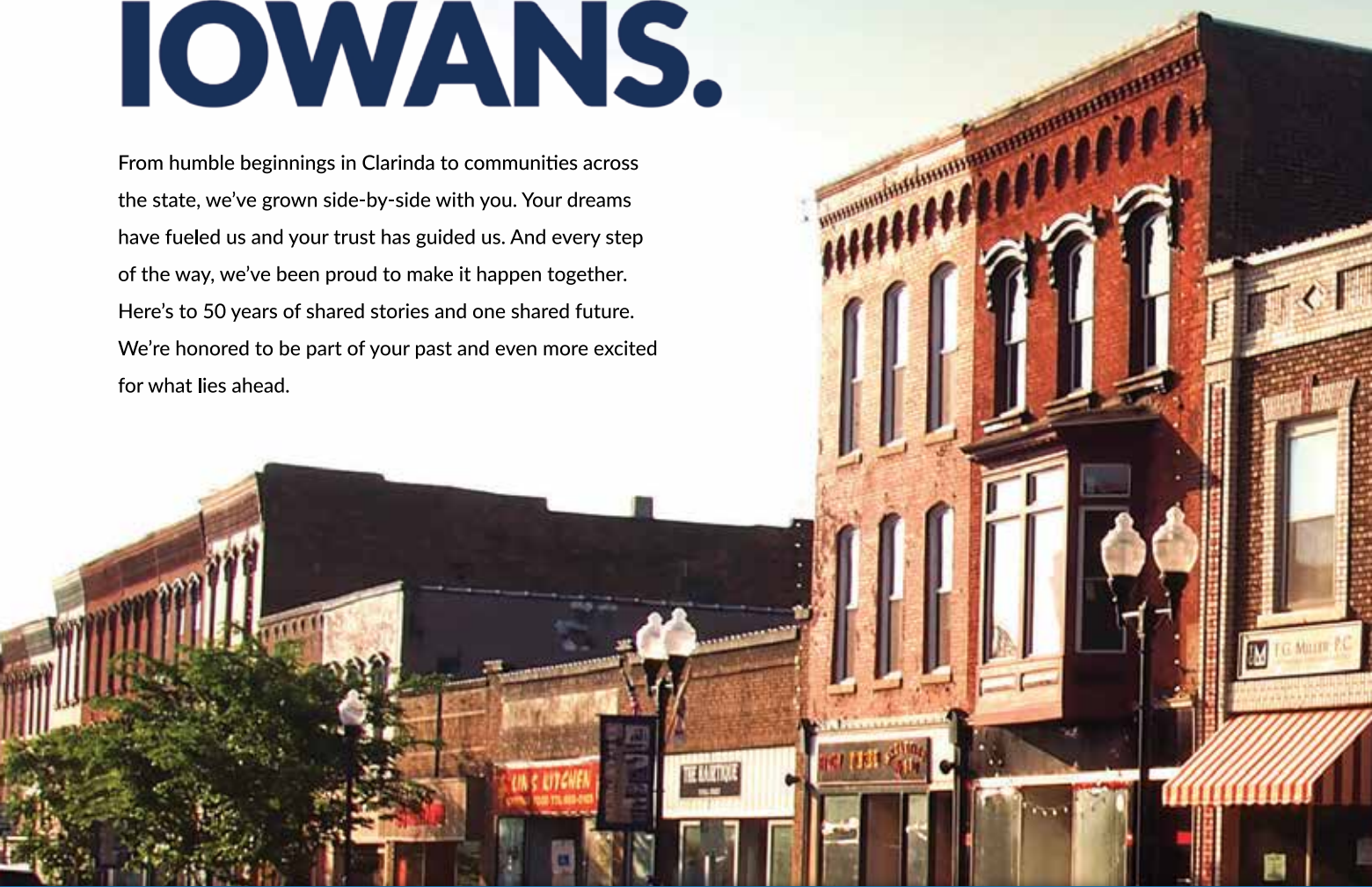
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CROWN POINT COMMUNITY CENTER AND SENIOR DINING CENTER

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Register for the Johnston Green Days Doubles Pickleball Tournament June 12

The second annual Johnston Green Days Doubles Pickleball Tournament will be held at Crown Point Community Center on June 12 from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Teams will compete in fast-paced, single-elimination matches! Whether you're a seasoned player or a newcomer, enjoy a day of friendly competition and community spirit. All teams must register in advance. Brackets will be announced on June 5 and split by age and/or skill level depending on registrations. Games will be best of 3 to 11 (win by 2). Visit www.cityofjohnston.com/RecDesk to register.



Attend the Ridgedale Heights Park Ribbon Cutting

Join us on May 18 at 5 p.m. for a ribbon cutting celebrating the opening of Ridgedale Heights Park. This community park, located at 6737 NW 106 St. in Johnston, features:

- o An accessible basketball court with wheelchair-friendly surfaces for inclusive play.
- o A shelter that includes a covered area with ramps and accessible seating for all visitors.
- o An inclusive playground equipped with rubber tiles and adaptive play equipment for children of all abilities.
- o A wide, paved walking trail that is wheelchair accessible, with resting spots along the way.



Re-Opening Party at Crown Point Community Center

Residents 55+ are invited to help celebrate one year since the Crown Point Community Center reopening with the first annual Spring Party on May 15 from 5 to 7:30 p.m. Enjoy live music from local band Asphalt & Stained Glass. Dinner from Palmers Deli will include punch, salad, and a chicken tetrazzini — tender chicken, mushrooms, and pasta baked in a cream sauce with parmesan and sherry — followed by dessert. Cost is \$12 per person. Visit www.cityofjohnston.com/RecDesk to register.



CITY NEWSLETTER MAY 2026

Johnston Farmers Market Opening June 2 at the Johnston Town Center

The 2026 Johnston Farmers Market will open Tuesday, June 2, and operate every Tuesday from 4 – 7 pm until September 29. The market is located at the Johnston Town Center, between City Hall and the Grandstay Hotel, 6221 Merle Hay Road.

Whether you are looking for fresh fruits, vegetables and herbs, or homemade baked goods, craft and woodwork items, or jewelry, you'll find it at the Johnston Farmers Market!

Sales begin promptly at 4 p.m. and live performances from several local musicians truly makes the market the place to be!



Additionally, The Johnston Farmers Market will partner with Kids Markets for a special event on Tuesday, June 16.

Kids Markets is a nonprofit organization that gives children hands-on experience running their own small businesses at community markets. Children choose what to sell, set up their booths, talk with customers, and handle money in a supervised, real-world setting. The program helps build confidence, leadership, and communication skills. Learn more at kidsmarkets.com.

Ride Your Bicycle with the Johnston Mayor May 13

Wejoin us for the Mayor's Bike Ride on Wednesday, May 13, from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.!

The ride will begin at the back lot of Corteva off South Drive, ride through the Johnston's trails, and end at Terra Park Large Shelter to enjoy lunch.

All ages are welcome. No registration is needed.

Bring your own bikes and helmets, but lunch is provided (or bring your own).

2026 MAYOR'S BIKE RIDE

MEET IN THE BACK LOT OF CORTEVA OFF SOUTH DRIVE, NO REGISTRATION REQUIRED

WEDNESDAY, MAY 13, 2026
STARTS AT 11:30 AM

LUNCH TO FOLLOW AT TERRA PARK

Johnston
TERRA PARK

Bike Ride Route: 3.65 miles

Ride Start: Corteva Parking Lot, South Drive

Ride End: Terra Park Picnic Shelter, Pioneer Parkway



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INVESTMENT

By Daniel Rundahl

STAYING the course during market volatility

As a child, I remember a conversation on the farm with my grandfather about listening to and learning from animals. Growing up on a dairy farm in southwest Wisconsin, I absorbed lessons about patterns, patience and the steady rhythms of life — lessons that apply surprisingly well to investing.



Market volatility often reveals more about investor psychology than about underlying fundamentals. When prices swing sharply, many investors abandon long-term strategies in favor of short-term reactions driven by fear or greed. While markets evolve, human behavior tends to repeat itself.

During downturns, panic selling is a common response. Investors see losses and rush to “cut” them, often locking in declines that might have been temporary. This was evident during the 2008 financial crisis or the dot-com bubble, when enthusiasm for high-growth technology stocks quickly turned to fear, and many exited after prices had already fallen.

On the other side of volatility, strong market rallies can lead to overconfidence and “herd behavior.” Investors often chase performance, buying assets that have already risen significantly. This fear of missing out can inflate bubbles and increase risk, reinforcing the inverted cycle of buying high and selling low.

One of the strongest arguments for disciplined investing is the importance of staying invested to capture the market’s best days. Historically, a large portion of long-term returns comes from a small number of strong trading days — often occurring during periods of heightened uncertainty. Missing even a few of these days can significantly reduce overall returns. During the COVID-19 market downturn, some of the strongest gains occurred shortly after the greatest losses, making it difficult for those who left the market to re-enter at the right time.

This creates a paradox: The days that feel the most uncertain are often the ones that deliver the greatest growth. Because these moments are unpredictable and often staggered around market lows, attempting to time the market becomes extremely challenging — even for professionals.

History consistently supports the value of “staying the course.” Investors who maintained diversified portfolios through major downturns, such as the 2008 crisis, generally recovered and benefited from the market’s long-term upward trend. Similarly, those who continued investing during the volatility of 2020 not only experienced the recovery, but also had the opportunity to buy investments “on sale.”

Strategies like dollar-cost averaging reinforce this disciplined approach. By investing consistently regardless of market conditions, investors naturally purchase more shares when prices are low and fewer when prices are high. This reduces the emotional burden of timing decisions and helps smooth out market fluctuations over time.

Ultimately, successful investing is less about predicting short-term movements and more about maintaining exposure to long-term growth. Volatility is inevitable, but missing the market’s strongest periods can be more damaging than enduring temporary losses. Patience, diversification and consistency remain key principles — much like the steady lessons learned from life on the farm. ■

Information provided by Daniel Rundahl, Financial Advisor, Rundahl Financial Consultants, 8230 Hickman Road, Suite 300, Clive, 515-727-1701, drundahl@rundahlfinancial.com, www.rundahlfinancialconsultants.com.

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THE IMPORTANCE of a will

Nobody wants to think about how their loved ones will cope when they die, but it is important to plan effectively to ensure a smooth transition of your wealth. An estate plan is the legal documents that outline who you want to be in charge of settling your affairs and where you want your assets to pass. It can include a will, powers of attorney, trusts and more.



One of the most important documents is a last will and testament. A will nominates an executor who will be responsible for wrapping up your estate: paying final bills, selling assets and distributing your wealth to your beneficiaries.

Naming beneficiaries is one of the essential parts of a will. You might want to leave everything equally to your children. Perhaps one of your siblings is estranged from you. Maybe a child with special needs cannot receive money directly. You may want to make a special bequest to a charity. A will contains instructions for making these final distributions.

Without a will, however, state law decides who receives your assets. That can lead to a long, stressful court process. The law doesn't take personal preference or family dynamics into consideration when the

intestate statute is applied. Instead, there are broad categories of people who receive your money.

In one case our firm handled, the decedent's wife predeceased him, and they didn't have any children. In fact, he didn't have any immediate relatives at all because both he and his wife were only children. We identified 26 different remote relatives, many of whom were second cousins once- or twice-removed. Although we may be inadvertently responsible for a huge family reunion, this amateur genealogy could have been avoided by simply drafting a will.

Life events, like getting married, changing careers, or having your children leave home often mean it is time to review your plan. More serious events — the death of a loved one, inheriting a sum of money, or receiving a concerning medical diagnosis — are also good reasons to review and update.

Estate planning is easy to ignore because it involves thinking about death and visiting a lawyer. Procrastinating is easy. Turn to a reputable attorney who practices in estate planning to help you craft the best plan for you. ■

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

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Registration is required for all
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FAITH By Erica Schieffer

WHAT WE carry with us

There is something about graduation season that feels like standing on the edge of something — equal parts exciting and uncertain. Caps are tossed, celebrations are planned and, underneath it all, is a quieter reality: Life is about to change. Routines shift. Friendships stretch. Familiar places become memories.



It's not just graduates who feel it. Parents, siblings, even younger students sense that something is different. In seasons like this, it is easy to focus on what is next — new schools, new opportunities, new responsibilities. But transitions have a way of reminding us how much we need something steady to hold on to.

Connection doesn't have to disappear just because circumstances change. The relationships that have shaped us, the values we have grown into, and the quiet practices that ground us can come with us. Growth often means moving forward — but it doesn't have to mean starting over. There is a quiet strength in staying rooted, even while stepping into something new.

So, whether this season finds you celebrating a milestone or simply navigating change, it may be worth asking: What do I want to carry with me? Because, while much may change, the things that matter most are often the ones we choose to keep close. ■

Information provided by Erica Schieffer, Director of Youth Ministry, Saint Mary of Nazareth Catholic Church, 4600 Meredith Drive, Des Moines, 515-251-7568, ericas@stmarysdsm.org.

PLAN AHEAD By Scott Eriksen

ADVANCE planning offers peace of mind

Planning ahead is one of the kindest gifts you can give the people you love. Many families tell us that the greatest benefit of advance planning is the sense of calm it brings during an otherwise overwhelming time. When important decisions have already been made, your family is free to focus on what truly matters: being together, supporting one another and honoring a life well-lived without added stress or uncertainty.



There can also be meaningful financial benefits to planning and paying in advance. Designed to give families confidence and clarity about future expenses, you can have your selected services and merchandise guaranteed — protecting your family from the impact of rising costs over time.

Whether you are just beginning to think about your wishes or you are ready to put a full plan in place, starting the conversation can be simple and should be completely pressure-free. Advanced planning counselors are here to listen, answer questions, and help you explore your options at your own pace. They will meet you where you are and make sure your preferences are thoughtfully recorded.

Every family deserves compassionate care and affordable options, regardless of budget or preferences. Advance planning is simply about creating peace of mind — for yourself and for those who mean the most to you. ■

Information provided by Scott Eriksen, Director of Hamilton's Advanced Planning, Hamilton's Funeral Home, 605 Lyon St., Des Moines, 515-697-3670, www.HamiltonsFuneralHome.com.

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MEET Taylor Johnson

Career, school choice “meant to be”

Taylor Johnson moved to Johnston right out of college in 2018, when she accepted a position at Lawson Elementary School as a fourth-grade teacher. Eight years later, she says she loves where she landed.

Johnson grew up in Boone and thought she would end up in a similarly sized community. When her current role opened, her mother encouraged her to apply.

“Her maiden name is Lawson, and, for whatever reason, that felt like a sign,” Johnson says. “Though it wasn’t what I initially had my sights set on, there’s truly no place I’d rather be.”

Johnson says it is funny to think back on her early years, because, from the moment she walked into her interview, the people at the school made her feel like she belonged.

“That feeling has only deepened as I’ve become more immersed in the community,” she says.

For Johnson, becoming a teacher was always the plan.

“I suppose you could say it’s in my blood. My grandparents were both teachers, along with my uncles and aunt, and now both my brother and I have joined the profession,” she says. “Growing up, I spent my summers playing school in my grandma’s living room with old worksheets she had saved for me. I had a classroom set up in my parents’ basement, complete with bulletin boards, desks and a whiteboard, so I’m truly living out my childhood dream.”

The best part of the job, Johnson says, is building connections with students and their families. She has now taught siblings of former students and finds joy in watching Lawson families grow.

“Every kid who’s been in my class knows the door to Room 208 is always open to them, and few things fill my cup more than having former students come back for a hug and a visit,” she says.

Like any job, there are challenges.

“When you’re dealing with young children you care deeply about, everything feels heavier,” she says. “I’ve sat with kids on some of the worst days of their lives, and that’s not something you leave at the door when the school day ends. At the same time, there’s a sense of pride in being that person who can offer a safe space.”

One of Johnson’s favorite memories is of her first class of fourth graders, who are now juniors in high school.

“There were lots of learning moments for me, but they stuck by my side while we grew together, so that bond runs deep,” she says. “I stay in touch with many of them, but it will always feel a little strange to see them as adults.”

For Johnson, the years have only confirmed what she believed: She is exactly where she’s meant to be. ■

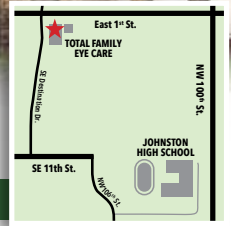


Taylor Johnson applied for a position at Lawson Elementary at the urging of her mother, and, eight years later, she is still glad she did.

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HOME HEALTH

By Stacey Miller

HOME HOSPICE: Comfort, familiarity and support

In a recent national survey, seven in 10 Americans said, if they were diagnosed with a life-limiting illness, they would prefer to spend their time in familiar surroundings with the routines and comforts they count on. In other words, they'd want to be home.

For families facing end-of-life decisions, that preference has helped drive growing interest in hospice care delivered at home. While inpatient hospice centers remain an important option, home-based hospice offers a different kind of experience — one centered on comfort, familiarity and personalized support.



Understanding hospice at home

Hospice is not limited to a specific location. It's a philosophy of care focused on comfort and quality of life, typically for individuals with a serious illness who no longer are pursuing curative treatment. When provided at home, hospice services are brought directly to wherever a person lives, whether that is a private residence, apartment or community setting.

Care at home generally includes pain and symptom management, emotional and spiritual support, and assistance with daily needs that may become difficult over time. The goal is to help individuals remain as comfortable and engaged as possible and to support those close to them.

A team approach to care

One of the defining aspects of hospice is its team-based model. Families typically work with a group of professionals who collaborate to meet medical, emotional and practical needs. This may include registered nurses who oversee care plans and medications, nursing assistants who provide direct support, and social workers who help navigate resources and decisions. Many programs also offer volunteers, spiritual care providers and specialized services such as music therapy or pet visits. Together, this team adapts as needs change, aligning with the individual's condition and preferences.

When hospice is not the right fit

Not every situation calls for hospice. For individuals managing serious illness while still pursuing treatment, palliative care can provide similar layers of support without the same eligibility requirements.

Palliative care focuses on symptom management, emotional support and planning for future care needs. In some cases, it can serve as a bridge, helping families transition if hospice becomes appropriate later.

Practical considerations

Deciding on hospice at home involves both emotional and logistical factors. Families often weigh a loved one's wishes alongside the realities of caregiving, the suitability of the home environment, and the availability of support. Financial questions are also common. Medicare and many private insurers typically cover a wide range of hospice services, though details can vary.

Ultimately, there is no single "right" choice. What matters most is finding an approach that honors the individual's preferences while providing the level of care and support the family needs. ■

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 wesleylife.org or call 515- 978-2777.



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Upcoming in Johnston Living magazine

Play sets, play houses and tree houses:

Share the stories of your memorable play sets, play houses and tree houses. Perhaps your family has play structures that entertain your kids for hours. Or maybe you have memories of the play house you enjoyed as a child. Big or small, if it creates happy times, let us know. Email tammy@iowalivingmagazines.com.

Johnston Historical Society 1902 Simpson House Museum Open

6161 Northglenn Drive, Johnston

The Johnston Historical Society 1902 Simpson House Museum will be open on the second Sunday of each month from 2-4 p.m. through December of 2026. Guided tours will be available. The museum is also open during Johnston Commons park events, including Sundae in the Park on Sunday, Aug. 2 from 6-8 p.m. The museum is also open by appointment by contacting johnstonhistoricalsociety@gmail.com or by calling 515-330-0687 for an appointment.

Celebrate Spring in the Park

Water Works Park, 2201 George Flagg Parkway, Des Moines

• Styx with special guest Cheap Trick

Trick: Thursday, May 21, 6 p.m.

Experience a legendary night of arena-rock anthems, powerhouse vocals and nonstop hits from Styx with special guest Cheap Trick, two Rock and Roll Hall of Fame era icons. From “Come Sail Away” and “Renegade,” to “I Want You to Want Me” and “Surrender,” this is classic rock at full throttle as the Willis Summer Series heats up. Tickets available at www.ticketmaster.com/event/06006383E039973A.

• **Live performances:** Monday, June 15, 6 p.m. The Kerry and Linda Killinger Foundation Community Series features live performances on the Killinger Family Stage throughout the summer. The Des Moines Performing Arts takes the stage in June, featuring a national touring act in the park. Stay tuned for the performance announcement. Learn more at www.waterworkspark.org/events-in-the-park/community-series.

Gold Star Military Museum events

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

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

Johnston Historical Society Simpson restoration program

Thursday, May 14, 6:30-8 p.m.

Johnston Public Library, 6700 Merle Hay Road

The Johnston Historical Society will give a program at the Johnston Library. The story of the acquisition, moving and restoration of the Simpson house, Simpson barn and the windmill will be told. The house has become a museum and the barn has been gifted to the city in “turn key” condition. The windmill completes the farmyard.

Polk County Conservation events

Visit www.polkcountyiowa.gov/conservation/events for information about upcoming programs offered by Polk County Conservation and for registration links.

• **World Migratory Bird Day.** Saturday, May 9, 8 a.m. to 1 p.m., Jester Park Nature Center, 12130 N.W. 128th St., Granger. Join the Iowa DNR and Polk County Conservation for a high-flying celebration of World Migratory Bird Day. This is a morning of hands-on family fun. Get up close with majestic birds at our live raptor programs, sharpen your eagle eyes on a guided nature walk, and use binoculars to spot travelers stopping by the park. From interactive migration games for the kids to inspiring success stories for the grown-ups, you’ll discover the incredible superpowers these birds use to travel thousands of miles. Come find out how your family can help them thrive right in your own backyard. Free, all ages welcome.

• **Creekology Hike.** Saturday, May 9, 1-2 p.m., Mally’s Park, 5792 N.E. Berwick Drive, Berwick. Join a naturalist as they lead a hike down Four Mile Creek. We’ll explore the many sciences a creek walk offers, like geology, archaeology, paleontology, limnology and biology, to name just a few. Not sure what all those “ologies” are about? Then join us to find out. Wear old clothes and sturdy shoes/boots that can get wet, as we’ll be hiking in the creek/water. Free, all ages welcome.

Des Moines Downtown Farmers Market

Saturday, May 2 to Oct. 31, 7 a.m. to noon, 8 a.m. to noon in October
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, spanning 12 city blocks from Water Street to Fifth Street. For more information visit www.dsmpartnership.com/desmoinesfarmersmarket.



Mother’s Day Breakfast Buffet and Bake Sale

Sunday, May 10, 8 a.m. to 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, all-you-can-eat pancakes (including blueberry and chocolate chip), orange juice, milk and coffee. Cost is \$11 and \$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.



CITYVIEW Midday Mixer
Saturday, May 30, 1-4 p.m.
The District at Prairie Trail, S.W. District Drive, Ankeny

Enjoy summer cocktails to kick off the season. Check in is at El Presidente. Cost is \$25 for advance tickets, \$35 at the door. For tickets, scan the QR code. ■



IMPORTANCE of preventive care

Preventive care is all about staying one step ahead of health problems instead of dealing with them after they show up. Rather than waiting until you feel sick or something goes wrong, it focuses on regular checkups, screenings, vaccines and everyday habits that help keep your body and mind in good shape. It is a simple idea, but it can make a big difference in how you feel now and in the future.



One of the biggest benefits of preventive care is catching issues early. Routine things like blood pressure checks, cholesterol tests, or annual physicals can spot potential problems before they turn into something more serious. When conditions are found early, they are usually easier to treat and manage. For example, noticing high blood pressure early can help you make changes that prevent heart disease or stroke later. It is much easier to deal with a small issue now than a major one down the road.

Preventive care also helps you build healthier everyday habits. During regular doctor visits, you often get advice about eating better, staying active, improving sleep and managing stress. These are not huge, overwhelming changes — they're small steps that add up over time. Going for a walk a few times a week, drinking more water, or cutting back on processed foods can have a real impact on your health. Over time, these habits can lower your risk of chronic conditions like diabetes, obesity and heart disease.

Vaccines are another important part of preventive care. They protect you from serious illnesses and help prevent those illnesses from spreading to others. Staying up to date on vaccinations doesn't just benefit you — it also helps protect people who are more vulnerable, like young children, older adults or those with weakened immune systems.

There is also a financial benefit to staying on top of your health. Preventive care is usually much less expensive than treating serious conditions later. Hospital visits, surgeries and long-term medications can be costly, while routine checkups and screenings are typically more affordable. Taking care of your health early can save you both money and stress in the long run.

At the end of the day, preventive care is about feeling better and living well. When you make your health a priority, you are more likely to stay active, have more energy and enjoy your daily life. It is not about being perfect — it is about being consistent. A little effort now can go a long way in helping you stay healthy and avoid bigger problems later. ■

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

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RESULTS FROM APRIL POLL: April is National Hope Month.

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A vacation.....	6%
Someone to do all your chores.....	5%
Better relationships.....	0%

JOHNSTON awarded public art grant

Johnston has received a \$9,750 Public Art Grant from Bravo Greater Des Moines to enhance the city's free outdoor summer film series hosted at The Yard.

"This funding is a tremendous opportunity for our community," Economic Development Director Josh Laraby said. "It not only supports the arts, but also encourages connection and collaboration among our diverse residents. These outdoor films bring our community together and emphasize the importance of gathering in the green spaces that our city values."

To further enrich the experience, the city plans to feature local artists providing pre-show entertainment. Attendees can look forward to engaging activities like balloon art and face painting, making each screening a memorable outing for families and individuals alike.

The high-quality LED screen will allow the movies to begin at 6:30 p.m. Movie screenings are scheduled for Thursdays on June 11, July 9, July 30, Aug. 20 and Sept. 10. The upgraded screen will allow for earlier start times, ensuring that families with young children can enjoy the films comfortably and increase overall community attendance. ■

The May 2011 Johnston Living magazine featured the story, "Love thy neighbor: Johnston churches reach out to the community." The cover photo featured June Peters and Bonnie McCaughey, members of the Johnston Piecemakers, a First Baptist Church group that creates quilts for those in need. Also included were Jessica Chadwick and Summer Peters of the Johnston Piecemakers; Johnston Evangelical Free Church member Lorraine Allgood at the church's food pantry; and Sunday school students at St. Paul Presbyterian Church planting a garden. ■



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OUT & ABOUT



Johnston Chamber held a ribbon cutting for Pathways Learning Academy on March 26.



Bobbi Evans and Alesha Benkert at the Johnston Chamber ribbon cutting for Pathways Learning Academy on March 26.



Snow White, Spider-Man and Spider-Woman at the Johnston Chamber ribbon cutting for Pathways Learning Academy on March 26.



Ben Cheese, Matthew Urness and Ramsey Morgan at the Johnston High School Boys Track Meet April 14 at Johnston Stadium.



Bryce Beachem, Kanaan Reinders and Gage Hoppenworth at the Johnston High School Boys Track Meet April 14 at Johnston Stadium.



Ansh Patel and Tay Ohr-Rottler at the Johnston High School Boys Track Meet April 14 at Johnston Stadium.



Will Sheer and Jack Crossland at the Johnston High School Boys Track Meet April 14 at Johnston Stadium.



Saylor and Scout Anderson got their picture taken with the Easter Bunny at the Easter Vendor Pop Up April 4 at Charlie Rae's.



Nature Reclaimed, Natalie Clark, Barb Bass and Katy Clark at the Easter Vendor Pop Up April 4 at Charlie Rae's.



Dad's Garage Custom Woodwork, Brandon Killam and Phil Parrott at the Easter Vendor Pop Up April 4 at Charlie Rae's.

OUT & ABOUT



Paws at Home Decor, Amanda Young and Polly Thiel, at the Easter Vendor Pop Up April 4 at Charlie Rae's.



Pictured are Rita Holter, Braedi Kinman, Nancy Brown (owner) and Charli Haney at the Easter Vendor Pop Up April 4 at Charlie Rae's.



Posies owner, Jill Frey, at the Easter Vendor Pop Up April 4 at Charlie Rae's.



Alixandra Phototgraphy, Kiya Hood with Alixandra Rethman, at the Easter Vendor Pop Up April 4 at Charlie Rae's.



Styled by JJ, Julia Bradshaw, at the Easter Vendor Pop Up April 4 at Charlie Rae's.



Paula Bierle and Chad Fye at the Johnston Chamber Bring Your Own Business (BYOB) April 1 at Cheba Hut.



Tony Junk and Samantha Howell at the Johnston Chamber Bring Your Own Business (BYOB) April 1 at Cheba Hut.



Kris Howard and Jenni Buchanan at the Johnston Chamber Bring Your Own Business (BYOB) April 1 at Cheba Hut.



Andrea Hodapp and Brenda Ballard at the Johnston Chamber Bring Your Own Business (BYOB) April 1 at Cheba Hut.



Dan Fitzgerald and Tanner Storbeck at the Johnston Chamber Bring Your Own Business (BYOB) April 1 at Cheba Hut.



Julia Bradshaw and Annie Mielke at the Johnston Chamber Bring Your Own Business (BYOB) April 1 at Cheba Hut.



Ryan Rohlf and Cory Howell at the Johnston Chamber Bring Your Own Business (BYOB) April 1 at Cheba Hut.



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