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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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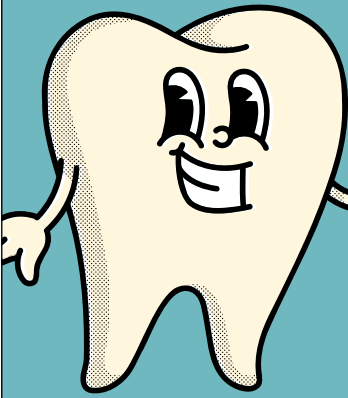
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Chris and Nichole Swisher have been setting up booths at farmers markets for their farm, ChrisCole Gardens, since 2011 and now manage the Norwalk farmers market.

Fresh FINDS

Local vendors bring flavor, passion and community to farmers markets

By Rachel Harrington

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.

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WHERE: Norwalk Christian Church, 701 Main St., Norwalk

Cultivating produce — and connection

Chris and Nichole Swisher have been setting up booths at farmers markets for their farm, ChrisCole Gardens, since 2011, and they have run the Norwalk Farmers Market since 2016.

“When we began, there were only three vendors, and the farmers market was not advertised or promoted on social media,” Nichole says. “We offered to start advertising, and the gentleman who had been running it happily passed over the reins. Now there are about 45 participating vendors.”

Chris is the green thumb behind the fresh produce ChrisCole Gardens offers.

“We have four to five tables set up at the farmers market full of vegetables like squash, tomatoes, jalapeño and bell peppers,” Nichole says. “Chris grows the produce, and I figure out what to do with what we don’t sell fresh. We follow Iowa cottage food law for all our products, and we offer canned items like hot jams, sauces, barbecue rub, mustard slaw, various relishes and pickles. We keep bees, and our main product is raw Norwalk honey. It is my favorite item we bring.”

They offer many honey varieties, from pure honey to hot honey, including jalapeño and ghost pepper. They also make 10 different dipping dressing mixes with no salt or sugar. In addition to food items, the Swishers offer fun products such as 3D-printed dragons, polished rocks and jewelry created by their daughter.

They started much smaller when they began in 2011.

“We only did jam then,” she says. “As I perfected that, I moved on to a second product, then a third. Our daughter began offering her jewelry about five or six years ago. We couldn’t sell canned goods until one or two years ago. We like to change things throughout the season so people don’t get bored. If we try something new and it doesn’t sell, we try something different.”

The Swishers prepare for the market



The Swishers’ ChrisCole Gardens booth features produce as well as their honey varieites.

year-round, both as a vendor and as market manager.

“In January, we update the market application, if needed,” Nichole explains. “We secure insurance, coordinate with the church where we host the market and get things lined up. By mid-March, we start scheduling posts online and approving vendors. Each vendor gets an individual Facebook post highlighting their booth. We also secure coverage in the local newspaper and listings in publications like Norwalk Living magazine, print signs and ask the community to help display them.”

Nichole also asks local businesses and churches to post flyers or signs promoting the market.

The Swishers work to bring both quality products and community support to the market.

“Our market is an accepted member of the Iowa Farmers Market Nutrition Program,” she says. “WIC participants and seniors can receive \$5 checks to use for fresh produce or honey. Vendors who complete the program training can participate.”

“In May, I get excited to see our regular customers and the other vendors,” Nichole adds. “We see them every week, and it really feels like a community bringing people together. Chris enjoys bringing all the vegetables he’s grown from seed and seeing all the colors of summer — fresh and local.”

Baking, brewing and building a dream

Laura and David Millheim are the owners of Red Gate Farm. This will be their third year participating in the Norwalk Farmers Market. Prior to Norwalk, they sold at Fridays at the Farm in Cumming and the Indianola farmers market.

“Fridays at the Farm wasn’t the right fit for us, so we decided to give Norwalk a try and have loved it ever since,” Millheim says.

Red Gate Farm is a small operation.

“Some people may call it a hobby farm, but we don’t like that term because we see this as our retirement — even though we’ll still be working,” she says. “We started with baking but have expanded to selling chicken eggs and unique jams and jellies. We harvest produce such as wild black raspberries, cherries, garden huckleberries and rhubarb.”

This year, they plan to introduce a line of health and wellness teas designed for sleep, energy, relaxation and digestion, along with seasonal blends for fall and winter. They will also offer tea infusers for loose-leaf tea and provide a different sample each week.

“I make 12 varieties of jellies, unless I come across a new recipe I want to try,” Millheim says. “We offer samples since the flavors are so unique.”

Flavors include basil, black raspberry

bourbon, black forest, caramel apple, cherry almond, Christmas jam, garden huckleberry, margarita (with tequila cooked in), peach hot pepper, rhubarb and strawberry lemonade.

“Basil is my personal favorite,” she adds. “I grow the basil, make it into an infusion and freeze it until I’m ready to use it. Basil jelly doesn’t taste like basil leaves — it’s more savory and slightly sweet. I like it on sourdough bread or an English muffin with butter. It’s one of the top flavors people ask to sample.”

Many of the Millheims’ tasks take place during the growing season, though they dry or freeze ingredients for later use. Each week, they spend a couple of days preparing for the market. Millheim bakes four varieties of yeast bread, along with scones and sourdough.

“I also make chocolate sweet rolls and kolaches,” she says. “Kolaches are baked the morning of the market because I want them as fresh as possible.” Her favorite breads are plain sourdough and almond, while the bestseller is a cinnamon twist loaf. Other offerings include garlic pull-apart bread, everything bagel with cream cheese, rustic sourdough and orange cranberry sourdough. They also offer petite loaves that are easier



Laura and David Millheim are the owners of Red Gate Farm and bring their products to the farmers market.



to finish and freeze well.

Millheim says she enjoys building relationships with customers and fellow vendors.

“I wouldn’t be at the farmers market if I didn’t believe in what I bring,” she says. “Selling is nice, but I really enjoy talking with people and finding common ground.”

She hopes her husband, David, will be able to join her at the booth this year.

Bringing art to the market

While many vendors offer food and produce, Sarah McBee brings art to the market.

“I am the art teacher at Norwalk Middle School,” she says. “I’ve participated in the Norwalk and Indianola farmers markets for four years. When I got married, I started making watercolor greeting cards and thank-you notes. I only planned to make about 10, but I ended up with many more. My husband asked what I was going to do with them, and I decided to bring them to the farmers market.”

McBee is self-taught in watercolor. She uses watercolor paper with colorful backings and creates a range of designs, often pairing humorous illustrations with matching phrases.

“More recently, I’ve shifted toward offering gift sets,” she says. “I pair cards with magnets or fused glass items I make at my other job at Indianola Glass Creations.” Examples include fused glass cookies paired with bowl-themed cards, lemon designs with zesty phrases and succulent-themed sets with sayings like “Aloe you vera much.”

In addition to cards, McBee creates clay gnomes.

“I have a kiln at home where I fire them,” she says. “I experiment with different glazes, and they’re probably my favorite item to make.”

Both the cards and gnomes are produced year-round, but the smoked salsa she sells is seasonal. Her husband, Skyler, makes the salsa using tomatoes from their garden and her parents’ garden.

“We had tasted smoked salsa before, and he decided to try making it,” McBee says. “People loved it, so he kept going. He made the salsa, and I oversaw production — even though I’m not usually in the kitchen.”

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FEATURE



Sarah and Skyler McBee bring Sarah's art to the market, as well as other creations and their salsa.

"One couple stopped by and said they were on their way home to make salsa," she says. "They tried ours and ended up taking several jars home."

McBee keeps her booth setup simple.

"Less is more," she says. "I usually have three tables with tablecloths and occasionally a card display stand."

This year, her market season may be shorter.

"I've accepted a teaching job in Oklahoma, near Tulsa," she says. "I plan to participate as long as I can, likely through June."

As a teacher, McBee values the connections she builds at the market.

"I love seeing my students out in the community," she says. "It helps build relationships beyond the classroom. They're a big reason I participate." ■

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IN NEED of a lift?

It might come as a shock to some people, but did you know that the Bible is chock full of lament? Lament, what? Yes, that is right; the Bible records lots of people who faced loss, tragedy, death, etc., and weren't afraid to express their innermost feelings. To lament means to express deep grief, sorrow or regret, and there is a lot of it in the Bible. In fact, there is a whole book of the Bible called Lamentations.

It seems there is always something going on in our lives that drives us toward lament — a friend dying of cancer, a child experiencing bullying, a parent facing the end of their life, a relationship that ends prematurely, a marriage on the rocks, the list could go on. You've no doubt experienced your own seasons of lament.

Fear not — even Jesus lamented. One day, He was told that one of his closest friends, Lazarus, had died. Jesus was so overcome with emotion at the loss of his dear friend that John 11:35, the shortest verse in the Bible, says, "Jesus wept." The Gospels also record Jesus so overcome by the problems and spiritual needs of people that he wept over entire cities. Jesus knows what it is like to have a broken heart.

So, where does one turn for encouragement during times of lament? Countless people through the course of time have found great solace in the Psalms. For example, Psalm 42:5 says, "Why, my soul, are you so dejected? Why are you in such turmoil?" I would say the writer of this psalm endured his own periods of lament, didn't he? He goes on in the verse to say, "Put your hope in God, for I will still praise him, my Savior and my God." The psalmist found hope — hope in God and hope in His Word. Let me remind you as well, there IS hope. The realities of life in this world will always include loss, tragedy, death and hopelessness. We all have our days and even seasons of lament. But, God in heaven loves you and stands ready to lift you up in these times. And that is exactly what He will do when you turn to His Word the Bible and immerse your mind in its truths. Psalm 55:22 encourage us to "Cast your burden on the Lord, and he will sustain you."

Are you lamenting today? Go to the Psalms and be encouraged. Here are a few good places to start: Psalm 10, 13, 22, 42, 43, 88 and 130. Put your hope in God and let Him soothe your aching soul. No one can do that like He can. ■

Pastor Rob Jones is the senior pastor of Fellowship Community Church in Norwalk. The church was founded under his leadership in 1995.



BACK to basics

Diversification and asset allocation

When investing, particularly for long-term goals, there are two concepts you will likely hear about over and over again: diversification and asset allocation. Diversification helps limit exposure to loss in any one investment or one type of investment, while asset allocation provides a blueprint to help guide your investment decisions. Understanding how the two work can help you put together a portfolio that targets your specific needs.



Diversification: Spreading out risk

Diversification refers to the process of investing in a number of different securities to help manage risk. The theory is that, if some investments in your portfolio decline in value, others may rise or hold steady. For example, say you wanted to invest in stocks. Rather than investing in just domestic stocks, you could diversify your portfolio by investing in foreign stocks as well. Or you could choose to include the stocks of different size companies (small-cap, mid-cap, and/or large-cap stocks). If your primary objective is to invest in bonds for income, you could choose both government and corporate bonds to potentially take advantage of their different risk/return profiles. You might also choose bonds of different maturities because long-term bonds tend to react more dramatically to changes in interest rates than short-term bonds. As interest rates rise, bond prices typically fall.

Asset allocation: Investing strategically

Asset allocation is a strategic approach to diversifying your portfolio among different asset classes that seeks to pursue the highest potential return within a certain level of risk. After carefully considering your investment goals, time horizon, and risk tolerance, you would then invest different percentages of your portfolio in targeted asset classes to pursue your goals. A careful analysis of these three personal factors can help you make strategic choices that are suitable for your needs.

Rebalance to stay on target

Over time, an asset allocation can shift simply due to changing market performance. For example, in years when the stock market performs particularly well, a portfolio may become overweighted in stocks. In years when bonds outperform, they may end up comprising a larger-than-desired percentage of the portfolio. In these situations, a little rebalancing may be in order by selling securities in the overweighted asset class and directing the proceeds into the underweighted ones, or by directing new investments into the underweighted asset class until the desired allocation is achieved. ■

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MAYOR'S MOMENT

Residents of Norwalk,

It is my honor to share several recent proclamations recognizing important causes, professions, and community values that help make Norwalk such a strong and vibrant city. These proclamations highlight the people, services, and efforts that contribute to our quality of life, and they reflect the pride we have in our growing community.

The City of Norwalk proudly recognized **Local News Day on April 9, 2026**, highlighting the importance of trusted local journalism in keeping residents informed, engaged, and connected. Local news strengthens civic participation, transparency, and accountability while sharing the stories that define our community. We thank all local journalists and news organizations for their service.

The City also proclaimed **National Public Safety Telecommunicators Week, April 12–18, 2026**, honoring the professionals who are often the first point of contact during emergencies. Their calmness, compassion, and dedication help protect residents, visitors, police officers, firefighters, and paramedics every day. We thank WestCom Emergency Communications Center and all telecommunicators for helping keep Norwalk safe.



Tom Phillips,
Mayor

SCAN TO READ THE FULL MAYOR'S MOMENT



EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT!

Jared Osterloh,
Norwalk Fire Department



The City of Norwalk is proud to highlight Jared Osterloh, a dedicated part-time Firefighter/Paramedic with the Norwalk Fire Department. In his role, Jared serves the community not only as a first responder, but also as a neighbor—bringing a unique perspective to the work he does every day.

What Jared enjoys most about his role is the opportunity to serve the community where he lives. Being able to respond to calls for people he may later see at the grocery store, local sporting events, or around the neighborhood makes the work especially meaningful. He finds it incredibly rewarding to support individuals during some of their most difficult moments and then see them again later doing well.

One particularly memorable experience came shortly after he and his family moved to Norwalk, when he was able to assist a neighbor on a call. That moment not only stood out professionally, but also personally, as that neighbor has since become a close family friend—highlighting the strong sense of connection that comes with serving in a close-knit community.

Outside of work, Jared stays busy with his family, often attending cross-country, track, and gymnastics meets. Each summer, the family pitches in to help his wife prepare her classroom for the upcoming school year. When he finds time for himself, he enjoys reading, running, working out, and hiking.

"Meet Me on the Mississippi" River Rhythms & Lunch Cruise



Date: Wednesday, August 5
Depart: 6:45 am (from City State Bank Norwalk Fieldhouse)
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Location: Moline, Illinois
Registration: May 4 - July 12, 2026

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*If full when trying to register, please place your names on the waitlist so we are notified of the interest!!



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As mowing season begins, the City of Norwalk reminds residents to help keep our streets safe and clean by **not blowing grass clippings into the roadway.**

Grass left on streets can create dangerous slick conditions for **motorcycles, bicycles, and pedestrians**, increasing the risk of crashes and injuries. It can also clog storm drains and create drainage issues during rain events.

Per City Code, Chapter 105, **all yard waste must be placed into a container** for proper disposal.

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HEATING & COOLING

By Dale Adams

INSTANT discounts and rebates

Did you know that nearly half of the energy used in your home goes to your heating and cooling? Are you considering upgrading a heating and cooling system in 2026? You may qualify for some instant discounts. MidAmerican Energy reveals their residential energy rebate program every January for the current year. MidAmerican Energy is following a similar model in 2026 as in the previous year with “instant discounts” versus “rebates” playing the biggest role in the program. The only rebates you will see in HVAC are for smart thermostats, which can yield you up to \$100 per unit, and electric heat pump water heaters, which will yield a rebate up to \$225. Instead of a rebate, instant discounts are available for other equipment installations. Let's talk details.



Instant discount opportunities

The instant discounts program incentivizes local distributors to stock energy-efficient equipment, making it easier for you to find more energy-saving models in your area and reduce your energy bills and overall carbon footprint. Instant discounts are only available through participating providers, and the discount is automatically deducted from the purchase price — no paperwork needed. Check if your preferred HVAC contractor participates in the MidAmerican Energy Instant Discounts program.

Examples of equipment and discount are: air-source heat pumps*, \$300 - \$563/unit; cold climate air-source heat pumps*, \$563 - \$713/unit; central air conditioners, \$263 - \$413/unit; central air conditioners (large), \$150/ton; ductless split heat pumps*, \$375/unit; cold climate ductless split heat pumps*, \$525/unit; geothermal heat pumps, \$900 - \$1,200/unit; desuperheater, \$113/unit; heat pump water heaters, \$225/unit; Natural gas furnaces, \$2.40/MBtuh.

Keep the following in mind

- Review the Iowa qualifications and conditions pages on the MidAmerican Energy HVAC Rebates page to make sure you qualify. www.midamericanenergy.com/ia_qualifications-and-conditions
- Equipment must be purchased, installed and operating between Jan. 1 and Dec. 31, 2026, to be eligible for rebates or incentives.
- Instant discounts are only available by purchasing your equipment through a participating Instant Discounts provider.
- Instant discounts cannot be combined with any other rebate or incentive program, including prescriptive rebates.
- Check the date. Be sure to apply for rebates within 90 days of purchase or by Dec. 31, 2026, whichever comes first.

It's so important to know that efficiency is key. Obviously, efficiency most importantly translates into energy savings for you, which means less money spent on your utility bills. MidAmerican Energy reserves its rebates and instant discounts for the most efficient equipment.

When you're investigating your options, be sure to ask your HVAC expert about the system efficiency and rebate/discount qualification. It's common for companies to quote basic model equipment that is generally lower efficiency because those systems' upfront costs are going to be lower. Remember to discuss the comparison between the upfront savings versus the backend savings. A few hundred dollars at the time of purchase may seem like a lot, but, if you imagine the energy savings throughout the life of the equipment, it could and will likely outweigh that. If you are getting bids, be sure to ask those questions, and compare apples to apples. ■

Do you still have questions? Visit www.tripleahomeservices.com for additional information. Dale and Natasha love to answer questions. Give them a call at 515-868-2779.

MOTORCYCLISTS: Make sure you are covered

As the weather warms up this time of year, riding a motorcycle can be one of life's great pleasures. Riding a motorcycle can be an expression of the freedom we enjoy living in this country. Of course, motorcycle safety is always an important factor to keep in mind.



As motorcyclists know, it is crucial to protect oneself on the road from potentially dangerous drivers. Motorists can make mistakes, and when an accident involves a motorcyclist, severe injuries can result.

Buy enough uninsured motorist/underinsured motorist coverage

We have seen cases where motorcyclists have been struck by uninsured drivers or drivers with minimal insurance. In Iowa, a person can operate a vehicle with as little as \$20,000 in liability insurance. This is an amount which has not changed in decades. If a motorcyclist suffers from a serious injury such as fractured bones or a head injury, the amount of available funds from an underinsured driver will be exhausted quickly.

It is extremely important that a motorcyclist purchase ample uninsured and underinsured motorist coverage. This coverage will provide amounts for the damages incurred by the motorcyclist and/or passenger. As with liability policies, uninsured/underinsured policies can have limits as low as \$20,000 per person. It is our opinion that no one should purchase (or sell) such a low-limit policy because of the potential severity of injuries if an accident occurs.

An example from a few years back comes to mind. A motorcyclist was struck by a young driver, causing the motorcyclist to lose a leg. The vehicle driver had minimum limits of \$20,000, and the motorcyclist had purchased a policy on the internet with minimum underinsured motorist limits of \$20,000. After medical bills, there was very little available for a life changing loss.

Exclusions in uninsured motorist/underinsured motorist car policies

Most car policies with uninsured and underinsured motorist provisions cover damages to policyholders regardless of whether they are in the vehicle when the injury occurs. For example, a pedestrian who is injured by an uninsured driver may be able to recover from his or her car policy if such coverage exists.

We have seen, however, that many such policies have exclusions directed at persons operating a motorcycle. Often, the exclusion will provide that there is no coverage if the insured is operating a motorized vehicle with fewer than four wheels. The obvious intent is to reduce the risk to the insurance company for injuries that the insured did not pay a premium for.

Conclusion: One should enjoy the fun, thrill and freedom of the motorcycle ride. However, make sure you have protected yourself (and your passengers) from those who are less than responsible. Failure to do so may be life changing. ■

Information provided by Ken Winjum, The Winjum Law Firm, P.L.C., 1220 Sunset Drive., Suite 103, Norwalk, 515-981-5220, www.winjumlaw.com.

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A HEART for service

Chapman finds purpose in quiet acts of care.



Karen Chapman is one of three coordinators for the Norwalk Area Food Pantry. In her role, she is responsible for ordering food, creating weekly distribution lists, completing weekly and monthly reports and communicating with volunteers.

Through the pantry, Chapman and many other volunteers help provide food each week to families and individuals in need. The work requires organization, consistency and a strong network of volunteers committed to showing up week after week.

In addition to her work at the pantry, Chapman also volunteers at her church by making bread for communion, helping in the media room



Jason Siemens, Edward Jones, presents the Neighbor Spotlight certificate to Karen Chapman.

each week, and preparing meals to go with a women’s group for families staying at the Ronald McDonald House. Together, these efforts reflect her ongoing commitment to serving others in both structured and behind-the-scenes ways.

“It is great to meet and get to know the other volunteers,” Chapman says. “I also enjoy talking to the people who use the pantry. Many express their appreciation for what is provided and the volunteers working, especially in the inclement weather we had this winter.”

Over time, those interactions have become one of the most meaningful parts of her experience. Chapman says the connections formed — both with fellow volunteers and those served — are what make the work especially rewarding and keep her coming back.

One of her favorite memories came in the form of a heartfelt thank-you.

She recalls receiving a letter, along with a monetary donation and a family’s pantry card they no longer needed.

“The letter expressed their appreciation for our help during a difficult time they faced and were happy to say they were no longer in need of the pantry,” she says. “It is a joy to help those in need.”

For Chapman, it is the simple act of showing up each week that makes a lasting difference. ■

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Do you know a neighbor who deserves recognition?
Nominate at tammy@iowalivingmagazines.com.

WHAT PEOPLE often overlook when choosing assisted living

Choosing an assisted living community is a big decision that often comes with a long checklist of questions about cost, care and availability. In the search process, families sometimes get caught up in amenities and real estate, overlooking the factors that truly matter most: daily quality of life and long-term satisfaction.



Look beyond amenities: Focus on daily life

It's easy to compare floor plans or amenities, but what truly shapes quality of life is how each day feels. When touring, check for these factors: Are residents engaged and active? Is there a sense of routine, purpose and connection? A strong calendar of activities and opportunities for social interaction can make a meaningful difference in both mental and physical well-being.

Don't underestimate the importance of food

Meals are more than just nutrition; they're a central part of the day and often a key social experience. Ask questions like: Is there variety in the menu? Are meals prepared fresh? Do residents have choices including a variety of meal options and what time of day they can eat? Dining quality can reveal a lot about a community's overall approach to care and hospitality.

Personalized care matters more than you think

Care needs can change over time, so flexibility is essential. Look for communities that: Offer customized care plans, tailored to the individual. Take time to understand individual preferences and routines. Can provide additional support as needs evolve. This kind of individualized approach helps residents maintain independence while receiving the right level of care.

Understand what's included (and what's not)

Pricing structures can vary widely. Taking a closer look at what is included can prevent unexpected costs later. Communities that offer multiple services under one roof can: simplify coordination, reduce reliance on outside providers and create a more seamless experience for residents and families.

Pay attention to the atmosphere

Sometimes, the most telling factor is how a community feels. Consider: Do staff and residents interact naturally? Does it feel welcoming and comfortable? Is there a sense of community? Smaller or more close-knit environments often foster stronger relationships and a greater sense of belonging.

The bottom line

Choosing assisted living isn't just about finding a place to live. It's about finding a community where someone can truly feel at home. Looking beyond the basics and focusing on daily experience, connection and flexibility can make all the difference. ■

Information provided by Holland Farms, 2800 Sunset Drive, Norwalk, IA 50211, www.hollandfarmsliving.com, 515-608-0364.



5th Anniversary Open House Celebration at Holland Farms in Norwalk

Thursday, May 28, 2026

5:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.

2800 Sunset Drive

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lfoster@hollandfarmsliving.com



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www.hollandfarmsliving.com

Check for cancellations

Note about calendar events: This magazine is delivered the second 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.

Upcoming in Norwalk 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 entertains 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.



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.



Norwalk Women's Connection Event

May 19, 6:30-8 p.m.

Luana Savings Bank community room, 9321 Market Place Drive

The Norwalk Women's Connection is now taking registrations for its May 19 event. This month will feature Aging Resources of Central Iowa's spokesperson Stephanie LaBenz, MS, R, LD. Labenz is a nutrition and wellness specialist. She will share information and have a question and answer time. Lynne McFarland, from Oskaloosa will be the guest speaker. McFarland will share how to take a honest look at how to be WHOLE in life. Reservations are \$16 each and cash or check is accepted. Grab a friend and join the group for good food, friendship and maybe win a door prize. Register by calling Annette at 515-490-7683 or email at Jungbluthtwo@telecom.net.



Coffee and Camaraderie

First Tuesdays of the month, 10 a.m. to noon

Norwalk United Methodist Church, 1100 Gordon Ave.

All veterans and service members are invited for a morning of coffee and camaraderie, a morning of connection and community. Whether you're a veteran, active-duty member, spouse or caregiver, everyone is welcome. Enjoy coffee and come together to form new friendships and share stories and experiences.



Farmers Market underway

Tuesdays through Oct. 13, 4-6:30 p.m.

Norwalk Christian Church parking lot, 701 Main St.

The 2026 Norwalk's Farmers Market season is underway. The market will offer locally grown fruit and vegetables, baked goods, meat, eggs, local honey, fresh flowers, crafts and much more.

Norwalk Easter Public Library Events

1051 North Ave., Norwalk
norwalklibrary.org

Register for events at <https://norwalklibrary.org/calendar/>. Closed all day Monday, May 18, for collection inventory, and Monday, May 25, for Memorial Day.

KIDS

- Storytime: Tuesdays in June, 10:30 a.m.
- Babytime: Thursdays in June, 9:30 a.m.
- Music and Movement: Thursdays in June, 10:30 a.m.

TWEENS

- Tween Hangout: Monday, June 8, 1:30 p.m.

TEENS

- Teen Takeover Hangout: Thursdays, 3:30 p.m.
- TLC-led Social Deception Games: Tuesday, June 9, 4 p.m.

ADULTS

- Forever Fit: Mondays and Wednesdays, 9 a.m. and 10 a.m.
- Play Create Connect: Tuesdays, 1 p.m.
- Brown Bag Book Club: The Quiet Librarian: Thursday, June 11, 12:30 p.m.

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EVENTS IN THE AREA

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

Check for cancellations

Middlebrook Mercantile Events

4125 Cumming Ave., Cumming

- Friday, May 15, 6-9 p.m. Live Music: Chris Ranallo
- Sunday, May 17, 2-5 p.m. Live Music: The Tighten Up All Stars
- Wednesday, May 20, 5-8 p.m. Guest Bartender and Charity Night: Friends of Des Moines Parks
- Thursday, May 21, 6 p.m. Trivia
- Friday, May 22, 6-9 p.m. Live Music: David Watson
- Saturday, May 23, 6-9 p.m. Open Mic Night
- Sunday, May 24, 2-5 p.m. Live Music: Weary Ramblers
- Wednesday, May 27, 6 p.m. Music Bingo
- Friday, May 29, 6-9 p.m. Live Music: Jeremy Alvarez and James Biehn
- Saturday, May 30, 6-9 p.m. Live Music: Heath Alan
- Sunday, May 31, 2-5 p.m. Live Music: Opus Taylor
- Wednesday, June 3, 5-8 p.m. Guest Bartender and Charity Night: Children's Cancer Connection
- Thursday, June 4, 6 p.m. Trivia
- Friday, June 5, 6-9 p.m. Live Music: Patresa Hartman
- Saturday, June 6, 6-9 p.m. Live Music: Hot Off the Grill
- Sunday, June 7, 2-5 p.m. Live Music: Malcolm Wells and the Two Timers
- Wednesday, June 10, 6 p.m. Music Bingo
- Friday, June 12, 6-9 p.m. Live Music: The Foxes with Casey Joe Collins, Bus Owen & Danny Russell Wolf
- Saturday, June 13, 6-9 p.m. Live Music: Tony McGhee
- Sunday, June 14, 2-5 p.m. Live Music: Other Brothers
- Wednesday, June 17, 6-7 p.m. Information Session: What Is Middlebrook?
- Thursday, June 18, 6 p.m. Trivia
- Friday, June 19, 6-9 p.m. Live Music: Ava Lemon
- Saturday, June 20, 6-9 p.m. Live Music: Bob Dorr and The Blue Two
- Sunday, June 21, 2-5 p.m. Live Music: The Fabulous TruTones
- Wednesday, June 24, 6 p.m. Music Bingo
- Friday, June 26, 6-9 p.m. Live Music: Of a Feather
- Saturday, June 27, 6-9 p.m. Open Mic Night
- Sunday, June 28, 2-5 p.m. Live Music: Matt Terronez Band



When Headstones Talk

Saturday, June 20, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

West side of I.O.O.F. Cemetery, .6 mile south of Highway 92 on Jefferson Way

Help clean old gravestones and uncover symbols and words. Supplies provided. Watch The Cemetery Guy and team resurrect the broken and fallen and learn about some of the people buried at the cemetery. Picnic lunch provided. Free event, donations encouraged, no R.S.V.P, no rain date.

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EVENTS IN THE AREA

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Check for cancellations

Levitt AMP Earlham Music Series 2026 Food n' Drink Lineup

Sundays at 6 p.m.

Earlham City Park, Earlham

- **May 31:** Music: Olivia Fox, Michael Zellmer-McMahan. Food trucks: Karam's Grill, Deardorff Highland Cattle, Sabores De Mexico, Street Sweets, Jodee Sodees.
- **June 7:** Music: Denitia, Emma Butterworth. Food trucks: Hotel Luna, Off the Griddle, C'est La Crepe, Jodee Sodees.
- **June 14:** Music: Ozone Creations, Robert Deitch. Food trucks: Smokin' Bad Decisions, Iowa Noodz, Jack Frost Drink Lab.
- **June 21:** Music: Braided Janes, Soten Taiko Drums. Food trucks: Karam's Grill, Pho Wheels & Sushi, C'est La Crepe, Jodee Sodees.
- **June 28:** Music: Shannon Curfman, Iowa Military Veterans Band. Food trucks: Deardorff Highland Cattle, Sabores De Mexico, Zipp's Pizza, C'est La Crepe, Jack Frost Drink Lab.
- **July 12:** Music: The Elders, Banjokat. Food trucks: Hotel Luna, Snappy's BBQ, Street Sweets.
- **July 19:** Music: BYOBrass, Beth and Brandon. Food trucks: Hotsy Totsy, Pho Wheels & Sushi, Street Sweets, Jack Frost Drink Lab.
- **Aug. 2:** Music: Leon Timbo, Carol Montag Music. Food trucks: Hotsy Totsy, Sabores De Mexico, Street Sweets, Jack Frost Drink Lab.
- **Aug. 9:** Music: Newfound Road, Cedar County Cobras. Food trucks: Karam's Grill, Hotsy Totsy, C'est La Crepe.
- **Aug. 16:** Music: XOLEX, Bone People. Food trucks: Hotel Luna, Snappy's BBQ, Pho Wheels & Sushi, Street Sweets.

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. 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.

Celebrate Spring in the Park

Water Works Park, 2201 George Flagg Parkway, Des Moines

• **Styx with special guest Cheap 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 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. ■



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Who will be voted favorite in Warren County?

We all have our favorite local people, places and things. And now it's time to share your choices and honor those who deserve the recognition.

Make your voice be heard and cast your votes in the 2026 Warren County Residents' Choice Poll. This contest is being hosted by Iowa Living magazines, and the results will publish in our Indianola and Norwalk August editions. You can vote in one or every category, or anywhere in between.

HURRY! POLL CLOSSES JULY 3, 2026.

See rules and vote at www.iowalivingmagazines.com/residentspoll. One vote per resident, please.

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FOOD AND DRINK

- Restaurant
- Restaurant for Breakfast
- Restaurant for Lunch
- Restaurant for Dinner
- Restaurant for Dessert
- Place for Ice Cream
- Pizza Establishment
- Bar
- Coffee Shop
- Brewery/Distillery/Winery
- Bakery
- Catering Company
- Server/Bartender (First and last name)

AUTO BODY

- Auto Service
- Auto Body Shop
- Car Dealership
- Auto Parts Store

COMMUNITY

- Preschool/Daycare
- School (name of building)
- Park
- Community Festival or Event
- Church
- Pastor
- Chamber of Commerce

SHOPPING

- Grocery Store
- Boutique
- Retail Store
- Florist
- Home Improvement Retail Store
- Appliance Store
- Liquor Store
- Nursery or Garden Center
- Place to Purchase a Gift for a Man
- Place to Purchase a Gift for a Woman
- Thrift Store

ENTERTAINMENT

- Dad/Child Date Spot
- Mom/Child Date Spot
- Place to Take Your Mom and Dad
- Place to Take Your Kids or Grandkids
- Place for Children's Birthday Parties
- Event Venue
- Golf Course

HEALTH/BEAUTY

- Hair Salon
- Health Clinic
- Dental Office
- Orthodontist Office
- Mental Health Services
- Chiropractic Office
- Vision Care
- Health Club or Gym

- Pharmacy
- Hearing Center
- Cosmetic Services
- Physical Therapy
- Dance Studio
- Gymnastics Studio
- Tumbling Studio
- CBD Store

OTHER PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

- Financial Planner
- Law Firm
- Accounting Firm
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- Dog Groomer
- Pet Care
- Lawn Care Business
- Landscaping Company
- Heating and Cooling Business
- Electrician
- Plumber
- Senior Living Facility
- Insurance Agency
- Realtor
- Bank/Credit Union
- Photographer
- Place for Guests to Stay
- Pest Control
- Tree Service
- Home Builder
- Home General Contractor
- Exterior Contractor (siding, roofing, windows, doors)

NORWAL

SUMMER SCHEDULE 2026

VARSITY SOFTBALL

DATE	TIME	OPPONENT	LOCATION	DATE	TIME	OPPONENT	LOCATION
May 18	7:00PM	Southeast Polk	Southeast Polk Baseball/Softball Complex	June 13	9:00AM	Xavier Classic Day 2	Xavier High School Softball Field
May 20	7:00PM	Ankeny Centennial	Ankeny Centennial High School	June 15	7:00PM	Bondurant-Farrar	Bondurant-Farrar High School
May 21	7:00PM	Johnston	Johnston Middle School	June 17	7:15PM	Pella Christian	Pella Christian High School
May 26	7:00PM	Interstate 35	I-35 High School	June 19	5:30PM	Pella	Norwalk Middle School Baseball/Softball Complex
May 27	5:30PM	Newton	H.A. Lynn Softball Field	June 19	7:30PM	Pella	Norwalk Middle School Baseball/Softball Complex
May 27	7:00PM	Newton	H.A. Lynn Softball Field	June 20	11:00AM	Wayne	Oskaloosa High School
June 1	5:30PM	Pella Christian	Norwalk Middle School Baseball/Softball Complex	June 20	2:35PM	Ottumwa	Oskaloosa High School
June 1	7:30PM	Pella Christian	Norwalk Middle School Baseball/Softball Complex	June 22	7:30PM	Oskaloosa	Oskaloosa High School
June 2	7:15PM	ADM	ADM High School Softball Field 1	June 24	5:30PM	Indianola	Indianola High School
June 3	7:30PM	Pella	Pella High School	June 24	7:30PM	Indianola	Indianola High School
June 5	5:30PM	Oskaloosa	Norwalk Middle School Baseball/Softball Complex	June 25	7:30PM	Dallas Center-Grimes	Norwalk Middle School
June 5	7:30PM	Oskaloosa	Norwalk Middle School Baseball/Softball Complex	June 30	Winterset	7:15PM	Norwalk Middle School Baseball/Softball Complex
June 6	9:00AM	Des Moines Roosevelt	George Davis Softball Park	July 1	Ames	7:00PM	Ames High Baseball & Softball
June 6	1:00PM	Johnston	George Davis Softball Park	July 3	11:00AM	Coach Schlafke Classic	Burnett Complex DCG HS Softball Field
June 8	7:15PM	Indianola	Norwalk Middle School Baseball/Softball Complex	July 6	5:00PM	Wahlert Catholic	The University of Iowa
June 10	5:30PM	Dallas Center-Grimes	DCG HS BB/SB Field	July 6	6:30PM	Wahlert Catholic	The University of Iowa
June 10	7:30PM	Dallas Center-Grimes	DCG HS BB/SB Field	July 8	7:30PM	Waukee Northwest	Norwalk Middle School Baseball/Softball Complex
June 12	7:15PM	Newton	Norwalk Middle School Baseball/Softball Complex				

FOR ALL WARRIORS SCHEDULES

Schedules are subject to change. Scan for most up-to-date schedules.



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NORWALK WARRIORS

VARSITY BASEBALL

DATE	TIME	OPPONENT	LOCATION	DATE	TIME	OPPONENT	LOCATION
May 12	5:30PM	Carlisle	Norwalk Middle School	June 12	7:00PM	Newton	Norwalk High School
May 18	5:00PM	Urbandale	Urbandale High School Barton Field	June 15	5:00PM	Bondurant-Farrar	Norwalk Middle School
May 18	7:00PM	Urbandale	Urbandale High School Barton Field	June 15	7:00PM	Bondurant-Farrar	Norwalk Middle School Baseball/Softball Complex
May 21	7:00PM	Boone	Boone Memorial Park	June 17	7:00PM	Pella Christian	Pella Christian High School
May 23	10:00AM	Waukee	Waukee Baseball/Softball Complex	June 18	7:00PM	Winterset	Norwalk Middle School Baseball/Softball Complex
May 23	12:00PM	Lewis Central	Waukee Softball/Baseball Complex	June 19	5:00PM	Pella	Norwalk Middle School Baseball/Softball Complex
May 27	5:00PM	Newton	H.A. Lynn Baseball Field	June 19	7:00PM	Pella	Norwalk Middle School Baseball/Softball Complex
May 27	7:00PM	Newton	H.A. Lynn Baseball Field	June 22	7:00PM	Oskaloosa	Oskaloosa High School
May 28	7:00PM	North Polk	North Polk High School High School Baseball Field	June 24	5:00PM	Indianola	Indianola High School Baseball Field
May 29	7:00PM	Gilbert	Gilbert High School Baseball Field	June 24	7:00PM	Indianola	Indianola High School Baseball Field
June 1	5:00PM	Pella Christian	Norwalk Middle School	June 26	5:00PM	Dallas Center-Grimes	Norwalk Middle School
June 1	7:00PM	Pella Christian	Norwalk Middle School	June 30	5:00PM	Des Moines Roosevelt	Norwalk Middle School Baseball/Softball Complex
June 2	7:00PM	Grinnell	Grinnell High School Fowler Field	June 30	7:00PM	Des Moines Roosevelt	Norwalk Middle School Baseball/Softball Complex
June 3	7:00PM	Pella	Pella High School Baseball Field	July 2	5:00PM	Ballard	Norwalk Middle School
June 5	5:00PM	Oskaloosa	Norwalk Middle School Baseball/Softball Complex	July 2	7:00PM	Ballard	Norwalk Middle School
June 8	7:00PM	Indianola	Norwalk Middle School	July 8	7:00PM	Carlisle	Norwalk Middle School Baseball/Softball Complex
June 10	5:00PM	Dallas Center-Grimes	DCG HS BB/SB Field				
June 10	7:00PM	Dallas Center-Grimes	DCG HS BB/SB Field				

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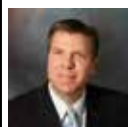
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STAYING the course during market volatility



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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MEET Julie Kernes

Norwalk alum fosters creativity, critical thinking and a love of reading.

As a student in the Norwalk Community School District, Julie Kernes was highly involved in athletics, participating in both cross country and soccer.

She graduated in 2003 and attended Drake University, where she played on the women's soccer team and majored in English. After earning a master's degree in secondary education, she returned to her alma mater to teach English. At the end of this school year, she will complete her sixth year teaching at the high school.

"I appreciate the community. Even though the city has grown exponentially, there is still a small-town feel to Norwalk. My parents live in Norwalk, which makes teaching here even more special. I feel connected to the school because I once walked the same hallways and had some of Norwalk's veteran teachers as my own. I feel honored to be part of a growing community that values leadership while maintaining small-town values," Kernes says.

She adds, the best classroom projects give her students the ability to connect their learning to their own lives. For example, her 11th-grade students take nature walks during their exploration of the American literary movement of transcendentalism. She says many students come to understand the value of self-reliance and the importance of nature not only through reading, but also through firsthand experience.

Kernes' ninth-grade students study Ray Bradbury's novel "Fahrenheit 451." During the unit, students become the "Book People" from the novel, deciding which literature and media they would preserve if it were at risk of being destroyed. Kernes says students enjoy considering which books, TV shows and movies best represent the kind of society they want to live in.

"High school students are in a special place in their education. They are closer to their goals and ambitions than other age groups, which I get to be a part of through inspiring their belief in their talents and fostering gifts they haven't yet realized they possess. I love seeing how my freshman students evolve as community members by the time they reach their senior year," Kernes says.

As the school year comes to an end, Kernes is focused on finishing strong with her current units. She is also looking forward to traveling to the United Kingdom this summer as a reward for earning her master's degree in English literature this fall. During the trip, she plans to visit historic literary landmarks, including Poets' Corner in London and William Shakespeare's birthplace. ■



Julie Kernes feels a special connection to teaching at Norwalk High School since she attended the school.

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5 THINGS you can do to control insurance costs

1. Investigate coverage and product options with your independent insurance agent.

One of the advantages of using an independent agent is that s/he represents a number of insurers with different products and can assist customers in fitting the right product at the right price for the unique exposures you present. Keep in mind that a lower price often means inferior service and lesser coverage, possibly lesser to a greater degree than the premium decrease. Also, note that this tip deliberately avoids advising you to “shop around” because that implies price comparisons should drive the decision.



make it less likely that a coverage gap will show up when more than one insurance company is involved in a claim. Likewise, in business insurance, having general liability and auto coverage with the same insurer using “ISO-standard” or superior forms is often critical.

3. Ask for credits. Too often, consumers are entitled to credits for alarms, extinguishers, good student driving discounts, etc., but the agent is not aware of them. Ask your agent for a list of everything that could reasonably reduce your premium and see if you can meet those standards. A good example is how your auto is rated for use. If you are laid off from work or you’ve found a job closer to home, you might very well be entitled to a lower premium. Unless you tell your agent about these kinds of changing circumstances, you won’t reap the benefits of reduced risk.

4. Question any advice you get, even the advice in this article. It may not be right for you. Before you make decisions to reduce or eliminate insurance coverages, assess your

risks of loss. What are your exposures? What can you lose? What exposures represent losses you cannot afford? What exposures can you retain? The quality of your decisions may be the difference between economic survival and bankruptcy.

5. If you are going to drop coverages, consider dropping noncritical coverages.

Examples include towing and rental reimbursement, credit insurance, etc. Your independent agent can assist you in making these decisions. Consider discontinuing high-risk activities such as using ATVs, jet skis, etc. Catastrophic injuries are common with vehicles of these types. ■

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KEEPING it local

Pork Producers give to food pantry.

Chris Bellcock wanted to make a difference locally as a Norwalk resident and as a member of the board of directors for the Iowa Pork Producers Association, where he serves as director for District 6.

One way he found to give back is through Pork in the Pantry, now in its third year. The program runs from the last week of January through the end of March and provides funding to county organizations or producers for pork donations to local food pantries — up to \$1,000 worth of pork products. Each year, the program continues to grow, helping more county food banks across the state.

Bellcock notes that Warren County does not have a large amount of pork production and, because of this, does not have a very active county-level group, aside from the dedicated volunteers who grill and run the pork stand at the Warren County Fair.

“Last year, I donated to a food pantry in Indianola, and they were great to work with,” he says. “This year, I heard from several people about the number of people facing food insecurity here in Norwalk, which made me want to search out ways to keep the donation local and help people in our town.”

After hearing positive feedback about the work being done by the NAMA Food Pantry in Norwalk, Bellcock reached out to Karen



Chris Bellcock delivers pork products to the NAMA Food Pantry in Norwalk.



Chapman to see if they had a need for — and the capacity to handle — that amount of pork product.

“Pork is a great source of protein that can help fuel a person for a full day, making it a great product for families in need,” Bellcock says. “It’s also extremely versatile in the ways you can prepare it.”

The donation was met with strong appreciation. Chapman and others involved with the pantry expressed gratitude for the support and the impact it would have on local families.

“More importantly, I hoped it helped serve the families in Norwalk who are in need,” Bellcock says. “That’s the most important part of this donation.”

He notes that, last year, 50 county pork producer organizations donated more than 18,000 pounds of pork, delivering more than 75,000 servings of valuable protein to people in need.

“We are still compiling the numbers from this year’s donations, but we know that food pantries all over the state are benefiting, and Iowa pork producers are stepping up in new areas,” Bellcock says.

Ultimately, he wants to stress the importance of local food banks across Iowa.

“Each year, they need to help more and more families in need,” Bellcock says. “This requires more donations or money to help provide for those people. Each Tuesday can be a giving Tuesday.” ■



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THE HIGH-OCTANE heartbreak

A guide to import fuel usage

If you drive a high-performance import (like a BMW, Audi, a supercharged Jaguar or a turbocharged Honda), your car has the palate of a Michelin-star critic. You can't just use "regular" gas; doing so treats a legendary engine like a disposal unit, leading to a "carbon catastrophe."



Here is how to navigate fuel grades, maintenance and the unique options available to Iowa drivers.

Premium gas (91+ octane) is not optional

High-performance imports use turbocharged or high-compression engines that squeeze air and fuel into a high-pressure environment.

The problem: Lower-grade fuel (87 octane) cannot handle that pressure and explodes too early. This is called "knocking." **The warning:**

It sounds like a frantic squirrel with a hammer inside your engine. **The result:** To prevent a total meltdown, your car's computer will "pull timing," making your 300-horsepower beast feel like a tired moped.

The E85 "corn juice" conundrum

In Iowa, we are in the heart of ethanol country. As of 2026, wholesale E85 prices often save you per gallon, making it a tempting "forbidden nectar." **The pro:** With an octane rating over 100, E85 allows for massive power. **The danger:** Ethanol is corrosive. Unless your car is specifically modified (or a "flex fuel" model), it will eat through rubber seals and fuel pumps. You also lose about 30% of your fuel economy, meaning more frequent stops at the pump.

The secret to longevity: maintenance

Modern imports, especially those with gasoline direct injection (GDI), are prone to carbon buildup. To keep your engine healthy, follow these two professional steps:

- **Air/fuel induction service:** Every 30,000 miles, a professional induction service cleans the "breathing" side of your engine. It removes baked-on carbon from intake valves, restoring fuel economy and smoothing out your idle.

- **BG 44K fuel treatment:** Adding a bottle of BG 44K Platinum to your tank every 15,000 miles provides a deep clean of the injectors and combustion chambers. It is the gold standard for removing stubborn deposits that cause engine hesitation and power loss.

The Golden Rule

If your gas cap says "premium fuel only," it is a requirement, not a suggestion. Treating your import to high-quality fuel and regular BG maintenance is the "membership fee" for owning a car that actually makes you look back at it when you walk away in the parking lot. ■

Information provided by Chris Werner, owner and lead technician, Werner's Elite Auto, 506 1/2 E. Euclid Ave., Indianola, 515-259-0122, www.wernerseeliteauto.com.



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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.



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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WELLNESS By Jen Penisten-Clark

BOOSTING collagen production

Collagen is the structural protein that gives skin its firmness, elasticity and youthful appearance. Beginning in our mid-20s, natural collagen production declines, leading to fine lines, laxity and dullness. Environmental factors like sun exposure, stress and lifestyle habits can accelerate this process, making collagen support a key focus in modern medical aesthetics.



Medical spa treatments offer effective, non-surgical ways to stimulate collagen production and restore skin vitality. One of the most popular options is microneedling, which creates controlled micro-injuries in the skin to trigger the body's natural healing response and boost collagen synthesis. When combined with radiofrequency (RF), this treatment reaches deeper layers, enhancing tightening and firming results.

Injectable biostimulators such as Sculptra work differently from traditional fillers by gradually stimulating the body to rebuild its own collagen over time, resulting in subtle, long-lasting volume and improved skin texture. Treatments like platelet-rich plasma (PRP), and platelet-derived growth factors (PDGF), use the body's own growth factors to rejuvenate and support collagen production from within.

Laser and light-based therapies also help stimulate collagen remodeling and chemical peels and medical-grade skincare also play a supporting role.

A customized combination of these treatments can significantly enhance collagen production and maintain healthy, radiant skin over time. ■

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



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HEALTH By Dr. Michael O'Meara

Q: How can diabetes affect your vision and what happens during a diabetic eye exam?

A: Diabetes affects your vision by causing damage to blood vessels in the eyes. This damage can lead to the development of areas of swelling and bleeding within the eyes, resulting in reduced vision. When this occurs in the back of the eyes, it is called diabetic retinopathy.



During a diabetic eye exam, the patient is first asked about his or her current vision status. Other questions would include how long one has been diabetic, if Type 1 or 2, what are the medications used, what was the last hemoglobin A1c reading, if using a continuous glucose monitor, and the name of their primary care physician and/or endocrinologist.

Next, checking of visual acuities, pupil responses, and other pretests are done. A refraction is then performed to determine the latest prescription and best corrected visual acuities. The final part of the exam focuses on ocular health, which includes a dilated pupil exam to get an enhanced view inside the eyes. If diabetic retinopathy is found, it is classified by the level of severity. Mild cases can often be monitored every six to 12 months, but moderate or severe cases are usually referred to a retinal specialist for treatment.

The key to maintaining eye health is to achieve good control of blood glucose levels. All diabetic patients should have an eye exam at least once a year. ■

Information provided by Michael O'Meara, O.D. of Optometric Associates of Warren County, P.C., 1228 Sunset Drive, Norwalk, 515-981-0224.

WHAT IS bruxism?

Bruxism, commonly known as teeth grinding or clenching, is a condition that affects a significant portion of the population. It can occur during sleep (sleep bruxism) or while awake, often unconsciously. Studies estimate that around 8-15% of adults experience chronic bruxism, with higher rates seen in children and adolescents at certain stages of development.



The causes of bruxism are multifactorial. Stress and anxiety are among the most common triggers, particularly for awake bruxism. Sleep bruxism is often linked to sleep disturbances, lifestyle factors such as caffeine or alcohol use, and certain medications. Because it frequently occurs without awareness, many individuals do not realize they are grinding their teeth until symptoms develop.

The excessive force placed on teeth can wear down enamel, increasing sensitivity and the risk of cavities. It may also cause cracks or fractures in teeth, damage dental restorations and contribute to gum recession. In more severe cases, patients can develop jaw pain, headaches or temporomandibular joint (TMJ) disorders.

Treatment focuses on protecting the teeth and addressing underlying causes. Custom-fitted night guards are one of the most effective ways to prevent damage during sleep. Stress management techniques, improving sleep habits and reducing stimulants like caffeine can also help. In some cases, dentists may recommend muscle relaxation strategies, physical therapy, Botox, medication or referral to a specialist for further evaluation. ■

Information provided by Dr. Donna Grant, Norwalk Family Dentistry, 1101 Chatham Ave., Suite A, Norwalk, 515-256-9000, www.norwalkfamilydentistry.com.

RELIEVE disc pain from spring activities and hard work

Spring has arrived — and with it comes yard work, gardening marathons, weekend warrior projects and long construction shifts. All that bending, lifting, twisting and repetitive strain can compress spinal discs, leading to herniated discs, sciatica, low back pain and numbness that keeps you sidelined.



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"After throwing my back out digging up my garden, the pain and sciatica were unbearable. Thanks to my spinal decompression sessions, I'm back outside every weekend with zero pain. It gave me my life back!" — Mark R., Norwalk weekend warrior and avid gardener. ■

Information provided by Dr. Jesse Stumbaugh, Norwalk Chiropractic, 1300 Sunset Drive, 515-981-9208, www.norwalk-chiropractic.com. Norwalk Chiropractic is a provider with most major insurance companies.

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Understand insurance and costs — Original Medicare generally does not cover hearing aids, though Part B covers diagnostic exams if ordered by a doctor. Some Medicare Advantage plans include hearing benefits, so check your

policy. Paying out of pocket offers flexibility, and you can seek reimbursement later. Ask if pricing is bundled (device plus services) or unbundled, and clarify what is included — fittings, follow-ups, adjustments. Inquire about extra fees and financing options to avoid surprises.

Choose hearing aids wisely — Experts recommend an in-person exam before buying any aids, including one to rule out issues like earwax and more serious underlying medical conditions. For any device, review return policies and trial periods (which are, at minimum, 30 days). Share your priorities, such as battery life, Bluetooth or ease of use, so that providers can match devices to your lifestyle. The best hearing aid is one you will use consistently, not necessarily the priciest.

Advocate for yourself — Prepare questions: “What does the price include?” “What’s the warranty?” “How long is the return period?”

Bring a friend for support and note-taking.

Know your rights — Under HIPAA, you can access your audiogram and hearing-aid programming history, which are helpful if you need a second opinion.² Speak up about comfort or performance issues; providers can adjust settings or suggest alternatives. Your feedback should guide care decisions.

In a complex system, informed patients get the best results, so advocate for your hearing health. ■

Information provided by Dr. Kelly Cook, Audiologist, Iowa Hearing Center, 1228 Sunset Drive, Suite B, Norwalk, 515-416-5990, www.IowaHearingCenter.com. 1. National Council on Aging. (2025). Hearing aid buyers guide: how to choose the right one. <https://www.ncoa.org/article/hearing-aid-buyers-guide/>. 2. National Academies. (2016). Hearing health care for adults: Priorities for improving access and affordability. <https://www.nationalacademies.org/read/23446/chapter/2>

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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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2. Cut back on "extras"
3. Fallen behind on essentials
4. Nothing, the prices haven't affected me.

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RESULTS FROM APRIL POLL: April is National Hope Month. Which do you hope for most?



Better health..... 53%
 A surprise windfall of cash..... 30%
 A vacation 10%
 Someone to do all your chores... 7%
 Better relationships..... 0%



LOOKING BACK

The May 2011 Norwalk Living magazine featured the story, "Growing Norwalk: Future continues to look bright for Norwalk's economic development." The cover photo featured Norwalk Public Works Director Tim Hoskins standing in front of the city's new public works facility that was being built in conjunction with Norwalk Community Schools. Among those interviewed were Chris Nosbisch, the city's director of development services; Steve Rowe of Rowe Electronics; Tom Adair and his wife, Judy, of Salon & Spa in Norwalk; and Brendan Comito of Capital City Fruit. ■



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OUT & ABOUT
HAPPY
 spring!

“Happy spring!” from businesses in Norwalk.



Heather Brown, Ashley Kluver, Deb Rice, Carol Lima and Maddie Johnson at Dimples Family Dentistry



Brendan Brown at Pizza Ranch



Randy Casner at Christian Brothers



Pastor Abraham LaVoie at Crossroads Church



Marcey Farrell at Athletico



Jamie Quick at Family Pet Vet Center



Brooklyn White at Supercuts

OUT & ABOUT



Gregg Young Chevrolet of Norwalk helped lifelong Corvette enthusiast Alan Givant realize his dream of owning a 2026 Corvette ZR1 on March 27. Pictured are Natalie Zimmerman, Alan Givant, Vivian Givant and Gary Burton.



Brenan Baker and Dave Allison at Gregg Young Chevrolet of Norwalk on March 27.



Mark Adams and Brian Benson at Gregg Young Chevrolet of Norwalk on March 27.



Trista Hageman at Gregg Young Chevrolet of Norwalk on March 27.



Vivian Givant and Natalie Zimmerman at Gregg Young Chevrolet of Norwalk on March 27.



Jami Schnoebelen and Vivian Givant at Gregg Young Chevrolet of Norwalk on March 27.



Jeremy Chancellor and Jennifer Andreasen at Gregg Young Chevrolet of Norwalk on March 27.



"Happy spring!" from Dani McManus at Anytime Fitness



"Happy spring!" from Terri Magazinovic at Tru by Hilton



"Happy spring!" from Cody Bingham at Fairfield by Marriott Inn & Suites



"Happy spring!" from Becca Sharpe at Nutri Smoothie & Cafe



"Happy spring!" from Raquel Sanchez at Abelardos restaurant

THANK YOU TEACHERS & STAFF

Thank you to our teachers and staff for your **support** and **care** for Norwalk students. You make a **lasting difference**, and we **truly appreciate** all that you do.



NATIONAL SCHOOL BOARD APPRECIATION MONTH | MAY 2026

NORWALK SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS



Justin Fletcher



Brian Rausch



Michelle Kelly



Nathaniel Tagtow



Daniel Doerfler



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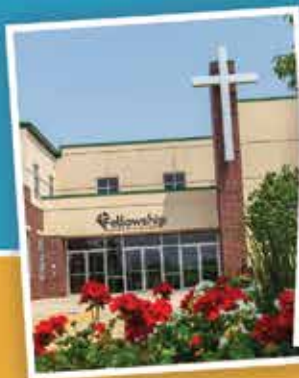
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CONGRATULATIONS, CLASS OF 2026!

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely on your own understanding; in all your ways know him, and he will make your paths straight."

Proverbs 3:5-6



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