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APRIL 2023

Living

MAGAZINE



OVERCOMING the FEAR

Residents share how they faced their fears and doubts to reach their goals

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WELCOME

ARE YOU chicken?

Whenever my childhood friends and I wanted to talk our buddy Tommy into doing something, we would simply call him chicken. He would yell back, "I'm not chicken!" and would then proceed to do whatever it was we were trying to talk him into. I wish managing adults was that simple.

Meanwhile, we are all seemingly chicken, at least to some degree.

Musician Jim Stafford sang "I don't like spiders and snakes" in 1974. Who does?

Green Day vocalist and guitarist Billie Joe Armstrong said he wrote the song "Basket Case" in 1994 to cope with his feelings of anxiety and panic.

And heavy metal rockers Metallica made us fear falling asleep with their 1991 hit, "Enter Sandman."

But phobias aren't just fodder for songs. Most all of us, if we are being honest, have something that makes us shiver in our boots.

As a child, I didn't like going into old, unfinished basements by myself. I was especially fearful of my grandparents' "root cellar." There was no way I was going down there alone, at least not until my brother discovered this fear and pushed me down the steps.

My aunt and uncle had a painting of a clown in their house that gave me the creeps. This was long before the movie "It" ever hit the screen. I still don't like clowns, other than Bozo. He is all right.

I don't mind spiders and snakes, but I could do without mice. The phrase "shivering in your boots" reminds me of working on farms as a teenager and having mice run up my legs when I would put my rubber boots on.

Like many of you, I would get the jitters before a sporting competition. "Butterflies in your stomach," they were often called. The more I competed, the less those butterflies fluttered, but they were always there. Still are.

To this day, I don't especially like heights. It is not so much a fear as it is a stomach ache. Either way, it's not pleasant. I love roller coasters, but a Ferris wheel ride makes me nauseous. I don't get it.

In this issue of your Living magazine, we share the stories of local residents, their fears and how they are dealing with them. Some may seem far-fetched while others might strike a chord with you.

Give it a read... unless you are chicken.

Thanks for reading. ■

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OVERCOMING the FEAR

Residents share how they faced their fears and doubts to reach their goals

By Chantel Boyd

Reaching a goal often requires planning, hard work and determination. Sometimes it also requires courage. When faced with a daunting task, we may find that fear and doubts crop up. For some, those can be difficult — even impossible — to overcome. Others face them head on and meet the challenge. Residents who have accomplished what they thought they couldn't share their stories of perseverance.

Mary Helen Biller, who was born with spina bifida, lacked confidence and was afraid of failing when she entered adulthood. Now, she is confident and outgoing thanks to her involvement with the Spina Bifida Association of Iowa.

A fear of failure

Lisa Hollis has struggled with the fear of rejection and the fear of failure. These fears culminated when she needed to give a speech in public and discovered she was afraid to do so.

"I always felt like I was never saying the right things or didn't say it right," she says.

Low self-esteem might have been to blame for Lisa's fears at times in her past, resulting in additional thoughts of "feeling like being judged harshly or negatively."

When Lisa became a mortgage lender, she was forced to face her fears of failure, rejection and, ultimately, public speaking. For Lisa's chosen career path, public speaking is essential to "get out there and meet new people and join professional groups."

Lisa says she has never liked being told she could not do something — even if it was herself giving her that message.

"I always push myself and work harder and find ways to do it despite barriers and prove people wrong when they say I cannot do something."

When she needed to work on her public speaking, Lisa remembered working in the

mall as a teen and seeing a Toastmasters Group meeting there. That memory was the nudge she needed to join the local group. After a year of weekly meetings, Lisa gained the "confidence to be more fearless."

Lisa sometimes still struggles with the fear of failure or rejection that comes with public speaking. Still, she finds that fearlessness she gained from Toastmasters within herself.

"Within mortgage lending, the new trend is social media videos for marketing services, so I have to do it to be more competitive."

When Lisa began making the videos, she did not want to worry about how she looked and sounded, so she researched other online content creators and remembered all the Zoom calls she had over the last few years.

Recently, she started on Tik Tok where video creators can make their presence more lighthearted and funny with filters and voices.

"It's been rewarding to see my hard work of challenging myself to get out of my comfort zone pay off with my follower count growing and positive comments."

Lisa is a member of a social media group for mortgage brokers as well. They cheer each



Lisa Hollis has struggled with the fear of rejection and the fear of failure. These fears culminated when she needed to give a speech in public and discovered she was afraid to do so.

other on as they create and share videos and give helpful feedback to each other. She also has joined chamber of commerce groups and attended those events.

Lisa suggests practicing often if you are nervous about creating online videos for work. She says she often practices in front of her cat. Lisa also suggests leaning on your support network often.

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FEATURE

"A good support network offers encouragement when you try to achieve your goals and comfort, even if your efforts are unsuccessful. Knowing these people have your back, no matter what happens, can make your fears much less scary," she says.

Ultimately, facing her fears has made her more sociable and outgoing, she says, adding she is much more confident — in person and online.

Fear of speaking to strangers

John Johnson feared speaking growing up until he joined some of our nation's most common leadership organizations — Boy Scouts, 4-H and the military.

John was afraid of being in front of strangers to give a speech in public.

"I could speak to a group of 20 or 30 friends and family members without fear, but, if it was strangers, it was difficult."

John is unsure why speaking to strangers became so tricky because he grew up singing and being in front of strangers. But, as he grew and developed a public persona, he became more conscious of his image.

He had to face his fear in high school when he attended the United States Marine Corps Boot Camp and other military schools.

Before long, in military school, John had met many new people. Within a year, he had to pass tests on his knowledge, turn around, and give classes on basic knowledge. This was an essential part of his role, and he could not avoid doing it.

To overcome his fears, John learned how to picture himself only speaking to friends and family as he gives speeches to strangers,

"I then use that confidence and pretend that everyone I don't know in the room is a friend or family member."

This tactic boosts John's confidence that the crowd will give him slack if he stammers or loses his place in his thoughts. This method has allowed him to address larger groups — as many as 150 — than the military classes of 12.

"Now I can look at an audience and convince myself that they could all become friends of mine."

John thinks there may always be a bit of fear about public speaking. Still, he knows how to overcome it and is assured the "confidence built



John Johnson, pictured with his wife, Keely, overcame his fear of speaking in front of strangers by imagining them all as friends and family.

over time should be enough to get through it."

Every month when John addresses crowds in his professional roles, he is relieved he can do it without fear.

John suggests having a passion for whatever you are speaking about and then trying to pretend that everyone you do not know is someone you do know.

"Public speaking should be like sitting around the table and telling your family and friends about your summer trip."



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FEATURE

Living without fear

Mary Helen Biller of Urbandale was born with spina bifida, a severe birth defect of the spine, that left her spinal cord exposed and needing repaired at birth. Due to the spina bifida, she also had hydrocephalus — excess fluid around her brain, which required a shunt be placed to drain off excess fluid. Mary's parents were warned that many children like Mary rarely lived past age 2, and, if they did, they would never engage in normal developmental activities.

Mary and her parents decided to not let this dismal prognosis stop her from growing and learning, despite barriers. However, Mary was not always confident in her abilities in school.

"Special needs of students were not always dealt with sensitively," she says.

Socializing was difficult for Mary, so she avoided it.

"I began to fear that I would never be able to enjoy the joys life had to offer, like maintaining friendships, sports and getting involved in my community."

Mary has been loved and supported by her family but says she sometimes felt overprotected.

"We all feared I may have a shorter life span,

combined with my limited mobility and lack of social confidence, so I avoided getting involved."

As an adult, Mary continued to struggle with new situations she faced — until she found the support she had needed.

Mary joined the Spina Bifida Association of Iowa (SBAI).

"I got involved as a participating member. This affiliation changed my life," she says.

SBAI was the catalyst for Mary to become confident and involved. She is now in a leadership role, helping others do the same. She serves as the association's spokesperson, telling her story to many community and religious organizations.

Mary has recently accepted a new role on the board of directors as community outreach chairperson. As an advocate for the SBAI, Mary encourages others.

"I share that, though it's debilitating, we can still become independent, intelligent individuals who are worthy."

Today, Mary tries to be careful not to let fear stop her.

"I try to stay ahead of my limitations. With the SBAI and their partnership with Adaptive



Mary Helen Biller now enjoys activities such as skiing with the help of Adaptive Sports Iowa.

Sports Iowa (ASI), I have hiked the Grand Canyon, snow skied, kayaked, played tennis, snowmobiled and went zip-lining."

She even works out regularly with a trainer to maintain her stamina.

Now, she feels confident in her abilities.

"I can make decisions for myself. My life has blossomed, and I feel more like a part of society than ever. I love my life." ■

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EDUCATION

By T.K. West

MEET Julie Cusack

Helping students think deeply and critically

A Midwesterner through and through, Julie Cusack grew up on the south side of Chicago before relocating with her family to the Denver area when she was in high school. She received her undergraduate degree in Missouri and accepted her first teaching job in Omaha, where she also earned a master's degree. Today, she teaches English for the Urbandale Community School District. Although this is her first year at the Urbandale High School, it is her 17th year as an educator.



Julie Cusack enjoys teaching students at the high school level and seeing their progress from year to year.

"I love the students here. They are incredibly hard-working, respectful and genuinely appreciative of their teachers. I love Urbandale's small-town, community feel. I am used to teaching in much larger districts, and here, it feels like everyone knows each other," Cusack says.

Cusack's students have participated in some fun activities throughout the school year. For example, students in her Experiences in Writing course visited the Sculpture Park and explored how artists and writers can express abstract and complex ideas using tangible objects. Her students also wrote narratives and then had the opportunity to present their writing to a wider audience such as the pre-K students at Rolling Green Elementary School and the senior center.

"I love seeing students think deeply and critically, and I love watching that development over the course of time. Teaching high school students is especially rewarding when you have them for multiple years. They grow so much," Cusack says.

This school year, Cusack is looking forward to her first Urbandale High School graduation, which she says is a proud moment for an educator.

Being a mother to a 5-year-old and a 19-month-old, Cusack does not have a lot of free time outside of work but enjoys watching television shows with her husband and children when she gets the chance. In addition, Cusack and her husband are expecting their third baby, their first boy, in July. Until then, she is hoping to have enough time to get organized and ready for the new addition to their family. ■

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HOW 5 TYPES of retirement income are taxed

Not all retirement income is taxed the same by the federal government. Understanding retirement taxes can help you decide where to take income from first (or last) to maximize your retirement savings.

Traditional IRAs and 401(k)s are tax-deferred accounts, meaning you've never paid taxes on the money. When you start taking withdrawals from these accounts, you will pay federal income tax at ordinary income tax rates. There's a 10% penalty for payouts before age 59 ½, but you can't delay withdrawals forever. The IRS sets the required minimum distribution age (RMD) and tells you how much you must take (based on life expectancy). Currently, RMDs kick in at age 73. Unfortunately, distributions can come with a big tax bill.

A powerful, tax-free option is the Roth IRA and Roth 401(k). Qualified distributions are tax-free. You must have held the Roth IRA account for at least five years and be 59 ½ or older to withdraw gains without a 10% penalty. These tax-free withdrawals apply to money deposited into a Roth IRA or money converted from a traditional IRA to a Roth IRA. Roth 401(k) withdrawals are tax-free as long as five years have passed since your first contribution. Currently, RMDs do apply to the Roth 401(k). New legislation eliminates RMDs on Roth 401(k)s



starting in 2024.

If you sell stocks, bonds, or mutual funds you've held for over a year, the proceeds are taxed at a long-term capital gains rate of 0%, 15%, or 20%. The higher your income, the more capital gains taxes you pay. For 2023, you may qualify for the 0% long-term capital gains rate with a taxable income of \$44,625 or less (\$89,250 for those married filing jointly). The 20% rate applies to single filers with a taxable income of \$492,301 or more (\$553,850 married filing jointly).

Provisional income determines how much tax you pay on your Social Security benefit. Some Social Security beneficiaries will pay nothing, while others may have to pay federal income tax on up to 85% of their benefit. Provisional income is determined by adding your adjusted gross income plus 50% of your Social Security benefit plus any tax-exempt income you received for the year.

Tax laws and retirement rules are constantly changing. It's important to work with a trusted CPA who can help you play by the rules and a retirement planner who can help you develop a long-term tax plan that lowers your tax bill so you can spend more money on all the fun things in retirement. ■

Information provided by Loren Merkle CFP®, RICP®, Certified Financial Fiduciary®, Merkle Retirement Planning, 1860 S.E. Princeton Drive, Grimes, 515-278-1006.

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BENEFITS of a special needs trust

Social benefit programs designed to help people with disabilities typically have restrictions on how much money the beneficiary can have. Caps on monthly income and total assets owned are a major restriction on parents trying to complete an estate plan.



Leaving money directly to a child with disabilities will jeopardize the ability to receive any help from means-tested government programs like Social Security's Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Medicaid (Title XIX). A special needs trust can be the answer for parents.

A special needs trust (SNT) can hold money given to or inherited by a disabled individual. Because the SNT owns the assets, the assets are excluded from asset limit tests for

SSI or Medicaid. The trust can fund quality-of-life improvements for the beneficiary not covered by Medicaid. The SNT is also a way to ensure that other family members — like the siblings of the individual with a disability — aren't left with the responsibility and cost of lifelong care.

The SNT must be drafted so that a beneficiary cannot direct distributions from the trust; the distributions must be purely discretionary. There are restrictions on how the money in the trust can be used. There are also reporting requirements to the State. The existence of a trust of any kind must be disclosed for eligibility purposes, but a properly-drafted SNT will keep assets excluded from resource calculations.

Most importantly, the SNT must be drafted so that it avoids any Medicaid payback through Estate Recovery when the beneficiary dies. Standard language that is found in other trusts (like a typical minor child trust or a revocable

living trust) risks making the entire balance of the SNT subject to repayment for Medicaid costs.

Choosing a trustee who can not only manage funds but also predict the needs and challenges of the beneficiary can be tricky. The trustee needs to understand the specific guidelines under which the SNT can operate.

Because every state has its own system for administering disability benefits, the SNT must be tailored to match those state-specific rules. The SNT is a highly-specialized legal document that requires knowledge of local Medicaid rules and Federal Social Security law. If you have questions, contact an attorney who specializes in estate planning and planning for clients with special needs. ■

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

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BEFORE YOU GO

By Jan Shawver

PREPARE for the inevitable

Benjamin Franklin said, "But in this world nothing can be said to be certain, except death and taxes."

You have already (or should have) cared for the "taxes" part of that statement. Have you cared for the "death" part?

I cannot express more emphatically the importance of pre-arranging for your future funeral/burial needs. You might be thinking, "I have plenty of time to think about that." Scan the obituaries listed on any of the local funeral homes' websites, and you will be surprised at how many "young 'uns" there are — age 50 and younger. Death is no respecter of affluence, prominence or age. It may call anyone when least expected.

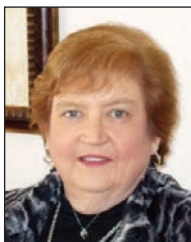
Just like planning for a "rainy day" or your retirement, pre-arranging for your funeral/burial needs is a good financial decision. Funeral/burial costs are rising every year. It is to your advantage to make pre-arrangements for your future needs now, which will lock in today's rates for tomorrow's needs.

Where do you begin? Contact the funeral home and/or cemetery of your choice to discuss your many options.

Wondering what to do with this year's tax refund? Consider caring for the other "certainty" of which Ben spoke.

Give your family a gift of love and care for your future end-of-life needs now. ■

Information provided by Jan Shawver, family services representative, Highland Memory Gardens Cemetery, 1 N.E. 60th Ave., Des Moines, 515-289-2230.



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HEALTH

By Sheryl Frye

GROUNDING techniques

Sometimes in our busy lives, we have trouble being present in the moment. We are thinking about things we need to get done, remembering the past or just experiencing anxious thoughts. Grounding techniques can help us create some distance from our distressing thoughts to help us become more present in the moment. These techniques use our five senses to help us regain our perspective. Grounding techniques — such as breathing deeply or listening to your surroundings — are often simple and can be utilized in any situation. Other physical grounding techniques include taking a walk, holding a piece of ice or savoring a scent like tea. Grounding techniques can also include mental tasks to help us with distraction. Thinking about silly jokes, reciting a poem or song and counting backward from 100 are examples of grounding mental techniques. Sometimes, soothing techniques can help in times of high distress. We can use our imagination to ground us by picturing someone we love or visualizing our favorite places. Playing with our pets and engaging in favorite activities like crafts can also help us create feelings of wellbeing during periods of high stress. Identifying techniques to stop us from getting lost in our distressing thoughts can give us the tools to create more joy in our daily lives. ■



Reference: www.healthline.com. Information provided by Sheryl Frye, LISW, SS Therapy and Consulting, Ltd, 2675 N. Ankeny Blvd., Suite 105, Ankeny, frye@sstherapyandconsulting.com, www.sstherapyandconsulting.com.

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BRUSHING secrets revealed

1. Before bed is best.

Hopefully, you have heard that it is recommended to brush your teeth twice daily. However, just because it's recommended doesn't necessarily mean it is happening. If you or your child are struggling to brush twice a day, I have some great news to share. If you are only able to brush one time a day, the most important time is right before bedtime. While we are sleeping, our body decreases saliva production and tongue movement significantly. This means the food or plaque left on our teeth will stay there all night long, potentially damaging the teeth.

2. Brushing is team work. Children are not born with the dexterity it takes to properly brush their teeth. It is recommended that parents brush their child's teeth until they can



sign their name in cursive. If they do not have the hand skills to effectively use a pencil, they probably won't do well with a toothbrush either. Forming good habits is an important part of brushing. Having your child attempt to brush their teeth before you "inspect" or add an "extra polish" can help improve their dexterity and add a fun team work element to daily brushing. It really depends on the child; however, you may need to help your child brush up through age 8 or later.

3. Toothpaste — less is more. Almost everyone uses too much toothpaste. Toothpaste commercials have trained us to cover the entire brush head with paste, and this is just way too much. Adults are recommended to only use a "pea size" amount of paste while children should use half that amount. A child must be capable of spitting excess paste out instead of swallowing it while brushing or should just use a wet toothbrush without paste. Bonus

secret: How you brush is much more important than what paste you brush with. By following these guidelines, you won't have to purchase toothpaste as often, and you won't have to worry about your child accidentally swallowing too much paste.

4. Don't brush after you barf. Sorry, that wasn't the most eloquent way to discuss the next secret, but it does hit the point perfectly. Whether it's morning sickness or the good old stomach flu, most of us feel the need to brush right after vomiting. Vomit by nature is very acidic, which can be damaging to the teeth. By brushing right away after, especially when adding toothpaste to the brush, you actually will spread the acid across all surfaces of your teeth and can wear them away. ■

Information provided by Dr. James Stork, DDS, MS, Stork Orthodontics, 4090 Westown Parkway, West Des Moines, 515-705-0644.

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HEARING loss impacts wellbeing

When we hear our best, there's nothing stopping us from enjoying the sounds of laughter, music, nature or conversations with family and friends. Hearing these sounds helps fuel us and undeniably makes moments more memorable and life more enjoyable. When hearing is impaired, those sounds we've taken for granted fade — leading to a cascade of changes that could impact us emotionally. When getting treatment for hearing loss, you improve your ability to enjoy life's greatest moments. You do not have to miss out on hearing life.



Hearing loss might cause embarrassment; missing favorite sounds may lead to sadness; and missing critical information could create anxiety, feelings of being left out, depression and social isolation. It can also put people in possible danger. Not hearing sounds around you could create an unawareness to danger. Studies have linked untreated hearing loss to avoidance or withdrawal from social situations, reduced alertness and increased risk to personal safety; and impaired memory and ability to learn new tasks.

Hearing loss plays a significant role in our physical and mental

wellbeing — with a growing body of research linking hearing loss to dementia and cognitive decline. When we hear our best, it's easy to stay engaged, alert and active. When hearing is impaired, our sense of space shrinks, warning cues get missed, and we withdraw from social activities or situations. This leaves our physical and mental health vulnerable. Staying socially active is just as important as being physically active. Untreated loss can leave you isolated. Isolation can lead to continued decline in hearing, mental health and physical health.

Adults with hearing loss are up to five times more likely to develop dementia. Hearing loss is linked to a three-fold risk of falling. Accidental injuries are up to 50 percent more likely for people with hearing loss.

It is crucial to get treatment for hearing loss as soon as possible. Those who wait risk cognitive decline including speech understanding, balance, memory, etc.

The first step in your hearing health is a hearing exam. This exam can increase your understanding of your own hearing as well as understanding others who may have a hearing loss. ■

Information provided by Kalyn Town, HIS, Woodard Hearing Center, 2328 Rocklyn Drive, Urbandale, 515-276-6122, woodardhearing.com.

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SHOP for outdoor furniture

When it comes to outdoor furniture shopping, there are endless choices, so it's good to ponder a few things before making that purchase.

- **Fabric** – The sun, wind and rain can test the durability of your patio furniture so consider the fabric and look for water-resistant and fade-resistant fabrics. If you're placing it near a fire pit, avoid fabrics and plastics. Don't be afraid to choose fun patterns, but selection is important considering you will have to stare at that pattern for a few years.

- **Material** – Wood is beautiful but requires upkeep to prevent warping. For less maintenance, choose weather-resistant woods such as redwood, cedar and teak. Plastic and aluminum are great choices because they can withstand most weather and are rustproof. Wicker and rattan are long-lasting and require little maintenance with resin wicker being the ideal choice to last the longest.

- **Purpose** – Comfort and relaxation are obvious, but don't forget the days when you will be entertaining guests. Look for flexibility, like accordion or drop-leaf tables. Bar and display carts allow for use outdoors with easy transitioning to indoors when the rain starts.

The choices are endless so shop wisely to reap the rewards of long-lasting furniture. ■

Information provided by Wanda Williams, Design Consign, 2715 86th St., Urbandale, 515-901-9294.



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ICONIC dance teacher reflects on life well-lived

Currie founded a long-time studio in Urbandale.

Jody Currie, founder of Currie Dance & Tumbling Studio in Urbandale, remembers being “the only one at the city meetings in a skirt” when she opened her business more than a half-century ago. But being one of Urbandale’s few female entrepreneurs of that time didn’t hold her back a bit.

“I was not raised to think that there were things I couldn’t do because I was female, so I just did them,” Currie says. “I was always encouraged by my parents to use my talents, and Urbandale was a place where I felt welcome. The community supported us, and we grew.”

Currie, 88, was still in her teens when she first earned money teaching dance. One of two daughters of a theatrical-agent father and forward-thinking mother, Currie, a talented multi-sport athlete, was also a standout student of famed Des Moines dance teacher Rose Lorenz. Currie was given the opportunity to dance on TV’s Ted Mack Amateur Hour; that experience resulted in an invitation to tour in the United States. She also danced professionally in Canada as part of her father’s touring company.

But it didn’t take Currie long to realize the road was not for her.

“I just didn’t like living out of a suitcase,” she said. “I hadn’t considered teaching, but when I came home, the parents of a neighbor girl asked me if I could take her as a student. Suddenly, every child in the neighborhood wanted to learn to dance.”

Currie rented studio spaces in Des Moines to accommodate a growing interest in her dance curriculum. She also had married and had a son and a daughter; soon, however, she found herself a single mother with a burgeoning business needing to find an even larger space. She found it at 3840 70th St., where the studio remains today under the ownership and direction of Currie’s daughter, Jani Currie Ruggieri.

During her 70-plus-year career, Currie taught thousands of young dancers, some of whom turned professional and some who were simply grateful for the experience.

“I love to hear from former students who tell me I helped make them feel strong and confident,” Currie says. “The attitude of our studio has always been, support each other and have fun — and sparkle! I was strict about certain things, but there was no pressure.”

Currie, who is receiving hospice care in a Des Moines senior-living community, looks back over the highlights of her life — earning a pilot’s license, walking on her hands down Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington D.C., cartwheeling across the lawn at Versailles — and said that although she has had a “great run,” her bucket list isn’t yet complete.

“Those tubes that launch you from the water — that’s something I’ve always wanted to do,” she said. “I don’t think I will, but who knows? The best way to get me to do something has always been to tell me I couldn’t.” ■



After touring as a dancer, Jody Currie decided that “living out of a suitcase” wasn’t for her. She then founded Currie Dance & Tumbling Studio.

QUILT exhibit highlights mental health

Display in Delirium Gallery spreads awareness.

May is the official Mental Health Awareness Month.

To help increase mental health awareness and wellbeing in the community, Cora Ritter, a mental health therapist with Urbandale-based Real Connections Counseling, has partnered with The Delirium Gallery in Winterset, where she'll display her art quilts that incorporate mental health themes and diagnoses.

Cora's therapeutic art quilt exhibit is titled "Outside, Looking In." The exhibit kicks off with an open house at the gallery from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Saturday, April 29, and runs through Saturday, June 3, during this year's Quilt Festival held by the Iowa Quilt Museum.

The idea for the exhibit formed during Cora's discussion with Easton Anderson and Jess Anderson at Delirium about creativity and wellness practices.

In addition to her work as a therapist since 2013, Cora is an artist and quilter. Recently, she noticed her therapy work thoughts started reflecting in her quilting process. For Cora, this meant recognizing that she spends a lot of time thinking about her mental health clients even while quilting. So, she thought, why not put these quilts to use as educational pieces?

She connected with a few other artists about kick-starting the project, and an exhibition idea was born. Each art quilt relates to a different diagnosis, like anxiety, depression and schizophrenia. Attendees will receive a handout that goes along with the exhibit sharing where they can learn more about each quilt and the diagnosis it highlights.

An additional component of Cora's work combines her own creative and therapy practices into a project called Creator's Wellbeing. Through her website and Instagram pages, she provides an open space for makers to share their stories and supports creators' mental health and wellness.

"Hopefully, that will be something that sticks with them. Maybe they can learn something about themselves if they're going through something similar, or learn something helpful about a family member," Cora says.

She also hopes her quilts give people permission to create and play, because her creations aren't perfect.

"A creative practice really can support mental wellbeing," Cora says. "It's the way that we process and learn."

More about Cora's creative practice can be found at www.creatorswellbeing.com and on Instagram @sewinthemoment365 and @creatorswellbeing.

If you're seeking support for a mental health crisis, dial 988 or go to your closest emergency room. Also, to learn more about mental health diagnoses, check out the National Mental Health Institute at www.nimh.nih.gov. ■



Therapist Cora Ritter is also a quilter. She uses her art to raise awareness about mental health.



EATING right is possible with a few tips

Spring is a good time to be thinking about eating healthy. It's probably fair to say that most of us have shrugged off the concept of good nutrition as unimportant and, frankly, boring. However, many of us cannot afford to turn a blind eye to the consequences that poor eating habits can lead to, especially as we age. However, by using a few simple tips, eating right is possible, and it can be easier and less restrictive than we might have imagined. Great tips to eating right:

- **Load up on fruits and vegetables.** While variety is great, the best benefit comes from eating those vegetables that are dark green, red and orange in color. Beans and peas are always great selections as well. Frozen, fresh and canned options are fine choices; just remember to always read the labels and avoid added sodium.

Fruits can add appeal and dimension to any meal. Besides fresh options, fruits can be dried, frozen and even canned. Remember to read the label when selecting canned and frozen fruits and avoid added sugary syrups which, when included, deplete the benefit of all fruits.

- **Use whole grains.** Many foods, such as rice, pasta and cereals, can provide added fiber when the origin is whole grain.

- **Say "no" to whole milk and similar dairy products.** Even though our bones benefit from additional servings of dairy products as we age, we can still make wise selections with offerings of fat-free and low-fat milks, yogurts and cheeses.

- **Read labels. Discover what you are really eating and drinking by becoming more label conscious.** Compare options and become an expert in your selections from all departments of your local grocery. Many grocers offer the help of a dietician. Ask.

- **Add spices and herbs** to ease the pain of reducing salt and sugar from food that you have become accustomed to. Remember, you don't have to cut out salt and sugar entirely. Take your time, use other fun ingredients, and gradually make healthy, positive changes to the foods that you eat.

- **Be active and eat less.** On paper, this written suggestion seems simple enough, doesn't it? However, for many of us, simply finding the time for activity leads us to make excuses. Old habits are hard to break, and change is usually not easy. Take one day at a time. The little steps taken really do add up to leaps and bounds toward a better you, inside and out.

Have a great month. ■



Information provided by Nathan Deutmeyer, Community Relations Coordinator, Edencrest at Timberline, 14001 Douglas Parkway, Urbandale, 515-422-8096, welcometl@edencrestliving.com.

EVENTS IN THE AREA

Check for cancellations

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

Urbandale Historical Society programs

Urbandale Historical Society, 4010 70th St.

- Saturday, May 6, 9-11 a.m.
Pancake Breakfast by Urbandale Lions with a vendor fair from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. and coffee and baked goods available on the porch from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

- Sunday, May 7, 2-4 p.m., open house with tours available.

- Sunday, May 21, 2-4 p.m. Program, "Glen McDole, Urbandale WWII hero." McDole was a POW and received 13 medals. This program will be held in the Urbandale Public Library, 3520 86th St., Urbandale.

- Sunday, June 4, 2-4 p.m., open house with tours available.

- Sunday, June 11, 2-4 p.m., "Iowa State Fair" through the years, by Mindy Williamson.



Ice Cream Social

Sunday, June 25, 2-4 p.m.
Urbandale Historical Society,
4010 70th St.

Enjoy an old-fashioned ice cream social with homemade ice cream served with pie or cake and a beverage. Enjoy visiting with friends and other activities at the Olmsted Urban House. All for a donation to the Historical Society.

Weekly Storytime

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Urbandale preschool and kindergarten pre-registration

Urbandale Community School District preschool and kindergarten pre-registration for the 2023-2024 school year has begun. Visit urbandaleschools.com/learn or call 515-457-5011 for more information.



Food drive

Saturday, May 20, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
The American Legion Building, 6805
Douglas Ave, Urbandale

The food drive will be curbside drop off of food and monetary support (cash or check made out to Urbandale Food Pantry). Food items needed include meals in a can, canned fruit, peanut butter, tuna and canned meats, cereal, canned vegetables and pasta sauce. Personal hygiene items needed are toilet paper, shampoo, laundry detergent, body wash and soap, toothpaste, deodorant, diapers and wipes. There has been a high demand recently for personal hygiene products. Keep this in mind with your donation as these are the items that they run out of the most. ■

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HOME HEALTH

By Ward Phillips

HOSPICE services — the earlier, the better

Because Matt had just been diagnosed with cancer, he and his wife, Caryn, were stunned when Matt's oncologist began talking about the benefits of hospice services.



"We knew Matt's cancer was stage 4 and the outlook wasn't good, but the medical team agreed that we were looking at several months, maybe a year, even, and we thought hospice care was for people about to die," Caryn recalls. "But the doctor explained that Matt could benefit from hospice earlier, so we decided to look into it."

The result of their research was a relationship that spanned not just the nine remaining months of Matt's life, but beyond; Caryn and her children are part of a bereavement group that's operated by the hospice provider, and Caryn has made friends with other widows who are also adjusting to being alone.

"Not only did being part of hospice bring Matt tremendous comfort, but the hospice team helped — and continues to help — everyone who loved Matt," Caryn says. "I tell anyone who will listen: If someone you care about is sick and is not going to get better, don't wait to contact hospice."

Ideally, hospice services can and should be initiated when a person is still healthy. Virtually anyone with a life-limiting illness can qualify for services, enabling an individual to live life in comfort for the days, weeks or months that remain in their life. And the earlier hospice services are started, the more they can — as in Matt's case — benefit the person who is ill as well as the whole family.

"As the weeks went on and Matt began to feel weaker, we were pleased to learn that, because he was on hospice, we would get a hospital bed brought to the house, and that he would receive pet therapy and all kinds of things he really enjoyed," Caryn says. "It's ironic to think about this now, but Matt was probably happier during those early weeks and months of hospice than he had been for a long time."

"And, as the end was near, the hospice team made sure he wasn't in pain. We were able to be with him and hold his hand and tell stories. Even in his last couple of days, he would smile when the kids and I would share memories. It was a very relaxing time — not at all like I had envisioned when we first found out he was so sick."

If you and your family are faced with the need to make a decision around hospice care, know that making that first call to a hospice provider can be difficult — but once you've taken that first step, having care in place can make your loved one's last weeks and months more relaxed and meaningful for all. ■

Ward Phillips is vice president of market strategy and business development for WesleyLife, which offers a broad network of health- and well-being-focused communities and services, including home hospice services, for older adults. Call Ward at 515-669-2205 to learn more.

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RECIPE

PRODUCE shopping on a budget

5 strategies to save on fresh fruits and veggies

(Family Features) Cooking meals that bring your loved ones joy is often objective No. 1, but creating those flavorful favorites on an appropriate budget is an important aspect of well-rounded, family-friendly recipes. A few simple steps, like developing good grocery shopping habits, can put smiles on hungry faces without leaving a dent in your finances.

Consider these tips from the experts at Healthy Family Project along with its produce partners, which are on their 2023 Mission for Nutrition to improve access to fresh produce that's essential in alleviating many public health and personal wellness challenges. This year's partners are striving to be part of the improvement efforts by donating funds to increase the accessibility to fruits and vegetables in schools through the Foundation for Fresh Produce.

Make a list (and stick to it): When buying fresh produce, remember some items have a shorter shelf life. Limiting purchases to items on your list can help lower grocery

spending while alleviating food waste.

Buy local: Transportation cost is one of the biggest factors in the price of produce, meaning buying local, when possible, can help reduce your total at checkout.

Stock up on seasonal produce: Although you can generally find any produce item at any time of year, this isn't always an affordable practice. Knowing when your favorite fruits and veggies are in-season can save you money and allow you to use the freshest ingredients in family breakfasts like protein-packed sausage breakfast muffins and savory english muffins.

Know your produce department: The front or feature table of the produce department often offers the best deals. Don't forget to look at the end caps on each produce aisle, which sometimes display seasonal items.

Find more grocery savings strategies and family-friendly recipes at HealthyFamilyProject.com. ■

Savory English muffins

Recipe courtesy of Healthy Family Project



- English muffins
- guacamole
- cherry tomatoes
- 1 tablespoon cilantro, finely chopped
- 1 tablespoon light cream cheese
- 1 tablespoon crumbled turkey sausage, sauteed
- 1 egg
- 1 tablespoon basil, finely chopped
- 1 tablespoon balsamic glaze
- Toast English muffins and top with desired combinations of toppings, such as: guacamole, tomatoes and cilantro; cream cheese, tomatoes and turkey sausage; or egg, tomatoes, basil and balsamic glaze.

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CONSIDERATIONS when replacing equipment

The transitions between seasons can be the ideal time to replace your equipment that struggled the previous season. With that being said, the process can be a bit overwhelming. Which brand should I buy? Which model do I choose? These are just a few things to think about, but let's discuss the most common questions about the process.



• **Choosing a company:** Choosing the right company is the single most important factor as they are not only supplying the equipment but installing it. All of your faith goes into this company and trusting they provide the correct options for your family's home comfort and budget. A good contractor will be licensed, have referrals and evaluate your current system and, most importantly, listen to your needs.

• **Choosing the equipment size:** If you have an older home, it more than likely does not have the correct sized equipment — often it is oversized. Oversized equipment can cause numerous problems like cycling too frequently and causing uneven heating and cooling. On the other hand, undersized equipment has issues as well, such as running constantly, increased utility bills and also uneven temperatures. It's critical to have the correct sized equipment, and an HVAC professional will be able to calculate this for you.

• **Choosing high efficiency:** Your HVAC system is the most power-sucking equipment in your entire home. This is reason enough to pay attention to investing in high-efficiency equipment when reducing your utility bills is important. A high-efficient system runs on less energy, provides better air quality, is less noisy and has fewer repair costs because it's running more efficiently and has less wear and tear on the equipment. It's a no-brainer.

• **Choosing a maintenance plan:** Do I really need a maintenance plan on a brand-new HVAC system? Yes! All manufacturers require that the equipment is properly maintained, which in turn provides the longest life, reliability and efficiency. Want a simple comparison? If you purchase a brand new car, do you stop buying windshield wipers, inflating the tires and getting oil changes?

You may be in a situation where only your furnace or air conditioner is failing, and you don't necessarily need the entire system to be replaced. If this is the case, don't count out replacing the entire system just based on current failures. With the current rebates being offered on upgrading to more energy-efficient equipment, it could possibly be a better investment to take action on the full system now. ■

Information provided by Scott Bontrager, 72 Degrees Comfort Company, 811 S.W. Ordinance Road, Ankeny, 515-200-2728.

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FAITH By Mike Johnson

DOORWAYS

Ralph Waldo Emerson mused, “Life is not measured by its length, but by its depth.” Still, death eventually knocks, and our standing before God determines how we answer.



The Doorway of Death

“No tabloid will ever print the startling news that the mummified body of Jesus of Nazareth has been discovered in old Jerusalem. Christians have no carefully embalmed body enclosed in a glass case to worship. Thank God, we have an empty tomb. The glorified fact that the empty tomb proclaims to us is that life for us does not stop when death comes. Death is not a wall, but a door.”

The Doorway of the Tomb

The above words of the late chaplain of the U.S. Senate Peter Marshall are particularly relevant having just celebrated Easter and the empty tomb. A large stone sealed the tomb’s opening, but it did not seal the deal for death. Christ arose, that door was opened, the threshold was crossed from the inside out, and death lost. How can we lose the fear of death and gain the same victory the empty tomb represents?

The Doorway that is Jesus

“Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep...” Jesus said in John 10:9. He, our living Redeemer and Lord, is the only way to salvation. Through repentance and faith in the finished work of God’s Son on the cross, we can have forgiveness, grace and eternal life. Life for the Christian is much more about the destination than the journey as we look forward to the face of God and living forever in His presence. Meanwhile, what do we do?

The Doorway that is Us

Both my parents are in heaven, which will be a reunion hall for many because my mom, too, was a door. Through her trusting Christ in 1976 and her faithful witness, my dad followed. That seed took root in me, my siblings, their children, and will prayerfully continue in the next generation. Mom was a doorway through which truth entered from the outside in. Something eternal and life-giving came into our family, and Mom continued to open up the gospel for many others until a stroke took her Home at 91. Her legacy will join her as a throng one day.

Inevitably, death’s door opens for us, but Jesus’ resurrection means those who trust in Him will have their own resurrection and can enter without fear. Until then, God calls every Christian to a legacy of opening doors for others. ■

Information provided by Mike Johnson, Creekside Church, 2743 82nd Place, Urbandale, 515-279-3919.

OUT & ABOUT

RIBBON Cutting

A ribbon cutting was held for 5 Borough Bagels, 11101 Plum Drive, on March 10.



Ben Chambers, Lindsey Ellis, Bre Neel and Cinnamon Rost



Mark Courter, Tami Biggerstaff and Roger Staheim



Jay Mathes and Gina Chandler



Emily Boehnke and Shonna Zuber



Nicole Berger and Holly Adams



Faith Baker and Christel Branness



Alex Vlach and Kristi Edwards



Bridget Carberry Montgomery and Stella Montgomery



Tom Triplett and Kristy Schmidt



Roger Staheim and Lisa Hanrahan



Emily McLain and Troy Colvard

OUT & ABOUT



Lum Naw, Mtee Paw and Kansa Theohavong at the Shayi Beauty Bar one-year anniversary celebration and ribbon cutting on March 16.



Shayi Beauty Bar, 4545 86th St., Urbandale, held a one-year anniversary celebration and ribbon cutting on March 16.



Lum Naw and Lulu McNish at the Shayi Beauty Bar one-year anniversary celebration and ribbon cutting on March 16.



Margo Kromminga and Millie Stevens at the Shayi Beauty Bar one-year anniversary celebration and ribbon cutting on March 16.



Kyle Younker and Carson Odle at the AM Exchange hosted by Merkle Retirement Planning on March 28.



Shane Hoffman and Adam Matson at the AM Exchange hosted by Merkle Retirement Planning on March 28.



Morgan Hurd and Gina Chandler at the AM Exchange hosted by Merkle Retirement Planning on March 28.



Karen Seidl and Linda Franker at the AM Exchange hosted by Merkle Retirement Planning on March 28.



Amanda Mulcahy, Richelle Smith and Anna Stork at the AM Exchange hosted by Merkle Retirement Planning on March 28.



Emily Wallace and Chawn HonKomp at the AM Exchange hosted by Merkle Retirement Planning on March 28.



Brian Packard and Kim Walker at the AM Exchange hosted by Merkle Retirement Planning on March 28.



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