

NORTH POLK

SEPTEMBER 2023

Living

MAGAZINE

Making a house *a home*

Residents share their home
improvement experiences

Mac and cheese with pecan breadcrumbs

RECIPE

First impression leads to Olson home purchase

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WELCOME

BACK TO the project list

Days are getting shorter. Nights are getting cooler. And the home improvement project list keeps getting longer.

Sound familiar?

Well, the "I-will-get-to-it-after-summer" excuse won't work much longer, as the fall season approaches. The real trick is to start and finish these projects before the holiday season arrives. Unfortunately, we all only have 24 hours in a day, and other tasks and responsibilities often take priority. As such, we need to turn to local professionals to do the jobs right. You are in luck, as we once again are offering ideas and solutions from businesses and contractors that may help push your projects along.

We are here to help with another issue featuring the home improvement stories packed with examples of what area residents have done to spruce up their properties.

If you are one of the fortunate ones who have your projects completed and would like to be featured in an upcoming issue, please send me a note. We would enjoy sharing your successes, too.

Thanks for reading, and good luck on those fall projects. ■



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Making a house *a home*

Residents share their home
improvement experiences

By Jackie Wilson

Ever think how much nicer it would be to sit in your comfy chair in the evening if only your living room weren't drab — and you didn't have orange shag carpet? Or imagine stepping into a roomy shower instead of that tiny pink bathtub like the one in Grandma's house? Or dream of a laundry room on the main floor instead of in the musty basement? Or maybe turning that basement into a family room and entertainment hub? Residents with similar dreams decided it was time to make some changes, and they share their home improvement experiences to inspire others.

Before renovation, Michael Tapper's home had orange carpet and paneled walls, much as one would expect in an older bungalow. Today, it is bright and airy. Photo by Jackie Wilson





Entire house remodel

People frequently pack up their belongings and move from one house to another, but it's not often the entire house is picked up and moved to a new location. But that's what Michael Tapper discovered had happened to his home before he bought it.

Tapper purchased his house in 2016 in Polk City. He discovered the small bungalow home used to be located near Saylorville Lake and was moved into Polk City in 1967.

When he bought the home, not many



Michael Tapper's one-bedroom bungalow was moved from Saylorville to Polk City in 1967. Photo by Jackie Wilson

updates had occurred in the nearly 50 years since the house was relocated. The tiny one-bedroom home needed lots of work, a little TLC and more living space.

Tapper, who owns Tapper Builders, knew

he could easily renovate his home. However, as his landscaping and construction business was a full-time endeavor, his priority was helping other homeowners with their projects.

"It's tough to work on others' houses all day

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FEATURE

and then come home and work on mine,” he says.

Yet, Tapper had a plan. He knew it would take time, but it was worth it. The ranch layout on a 1-acre lot was ideal. He had room to put his landscape and construction business equipment tucked away in a large shed. The roomy lot also meant there was space to store his boat. To top it off, the property was an affordable find for a Polk City location.

The first thing he did was tear out the orange carpets. He proceeded to gut the rest of the home, tearing out walls and the dated wood paneling. As it was a tight, small area, he tore out the wall that led to the family room area.

With the wall down, Tapper could extend his living room, plus have room for a sofa, easy chairs and a large-screen television set. His main focus was to finally have room to entertain guests.

He learned additional skills with the remodel, although it was a challenge.

“It was a good way to take my skill set and remodel this house. I could take the time to work on it and figure out the best way to do



AFTER

Michael Tapper of Polk City took several years to remodel his home, which was formerly located near Saylorville Lake. Photo by Jackie Wilson

various things.”

After the whole house was gutted, he installed new drywall and redid the electrical and plumbing. He updated the kitchen cabinets and added new stainless steel appliances. He

added a built-in closet in the front room. He replaced all the windows, including adding an extra window to bring in more light.

Tapper put in dark flooring, which was one of his only regrets.

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"I'd probably do it differently, with lighter floors," he reflects.

The bathroom was remodeled, but he kept the old-fashioned bathtub. Structural work was the most challenging. He wanted to remove the stairs but ran into issues since they supported two walls. Although the house was affordable, he has made many costly updates.

"I'd hate to know exactly how much money I've put into it," he says.

After the inside was finished, he redid the outside with paint, shutters and a large patio. He poured concrete to create another patio area to expand the outdoor space. Now, he can grill out and entertain guests during warm evenings.

"It's really enjoyable to see a transformation of a space," he reflects on the process.

Tapper suggests to homeowners that small changes can make a difference.

"It's amazing how much carpet or flooring can transform a home," he says. "Painting or refreshing a space with color is a great, inexpensive way to make a change."

He suggests that, if people want to remodel their home, they make sure the company is

insured and ask for references. By asking other homeowners how the process flowed with the remodeling company, they can better know what to expect for future work.

"The biggest thing is to talk through, from day one, the different steps and phases. Be prepared to ask how it progresses, as you work with contractors, plumbers, electricians and more. There's a certain flow to get all the work done."

Tapper says he likes his new place and what he's done to transform the former tiny bungalow.

"It's on a big lot, a quiet street and I've got good neighbors," he says. "I finally have space to entertain."

An updated kitchen

When Jen and Don Finn moved from Winter Park, Colorado, to Polk City, it was to live closer to their families.

They found a home in Polk City in an established neighborhood. The biggest drawback was that the kitchen was small and a 1990s-type build with dark cabinets and



Jen and Don Finn of Polk City remodeled their kitchen with the help of Hansen Home Renovations and Swan Creek Cabinetry.

trim.

"It was a one-butt kitchen," Jen Finn laughs. "We didn't have much room to move around in."

To save on costs, she and her husband did most of the demolition of the kitchen themselves. However, once that was complete, they enlisted the help of Hansen Home Renovations. Aaron Hansen, owner, came to their home and offered suggestions as to what to do with the space.

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FEATURE



AFTER



AFTER

Jen and Don Finn's kitchen went from outdated to modern in their renovation. After photos by Jackie Wilson

"He guided us through many possibilities to open up the space with what we already had. He's great at looking at things and coming up with solutions," Finn says.

The wall between the kitchen and the dining room was the first to be torn out. The stove was moved to allow for a semi-open

floor concept. Hansen rerouted the plumbing, electrical and water heater flue that had been located in the removed wall.

The soffits above the cabinets were removed so the cabinets and molding could extend to the ceiling, allowing more cabinet space.

The Finns also worked with Swan Creek



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FEATURE



AFTER

The space by the garage door in the Finns' home was mostly wasted, but cabinets were added to provide more storage and function.

Cabinetry in Boone to install hickory cabinets. The tile floor was replaced with luxury vinyl plank, which meant for easier clean up — especially with their large dog, Mavis. Carpet in the family room was torn out and the LVP extended into the family room for a clean, sleek look throughout the place.

A cabinet next to the garage door provided hidden storage. The bright florescent lighting and dome lights were replaced with more strategically placed can lights. They added under-cabinet lights for more illumination while working in the kitchen. They overlook white quartz countertops along with stainless steel appliances.

Finn likes how the whole kitchen opened up.

"We've got so much more storage space now. It's not a completely open concept, but we like how much more room there is," she says. "We modernized the whole main floor."

The Finns also added a laundry closet upstairs, so no more trips to the basement to do their laundry. They plan on several more updates on the second level of their home. For now, it's a work in progress.

"We really like what Aaron did, along with the cabinets from Swan Creek. We all worked together to make this look put together," she reflects. ■



BEFORE



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POLK CITY Community Library news

Announcements: The library will be closed from 11:45 a.m. to 1:15 p.m. on Friday, Oct. 6.

• **Story Time Mondays and Tuesdays, 10 a.m.** Oct. 2 and 3, we will have the Polk City Fire Department here. Join Ms. Allyson at the library for stories, songs and an activity or craft. Choose the day that works best for you. Register online at our website for one of the programs each week. Every story can be logged in our 1,000 Books Before Kindergarten program, too.

• **Chair Yoga, Mondays, 9 a.m.** Join Rachel via Zoom. We will be broadcasting the class on the big screen in the library, or you can join us from home. Yoga is for everyone and every body. Yoga is not for flexible people but for people who want to become more flexible. This chair yoga practice will include breathwork, mindfulness and simple, easy movements to release tension, reduce pain and restore your body to optimum movement. Props needed are an armless chair, like a kitchen chair, and a small hand towel or kitchen dish

towel. Join the Zoom meeting on our website at polkcitylibrary.org.

• **Geri-Fit® Strength Training Workouts, Tuesdays, 9 a.m.** Strength training workouts that work for all ages and fitness levels. Geri-Fit is challenging, effective, and safe to do. The Geri-Fit® program requires a set of light dumbbell weights, a sturdy chair and water to drink during the workout. Ages 50 and older. Stretch bands and a Zoom link are available upon request.

• **Ladies' Wednesday Coffee, Wednesdays, 10 a.m. to noon.** Ladies, join us for coffee and conversation.

• **Sit N Stitch, Thursdays, 6-8 p.m.** Bring your current project and join us for stitching and conversation.

• **Men's Friday Coffee, Fridays, 10 a.m. to noon.** Gentlemen, drop in for coffee and conversation. Enjoy spending time and having a few laughs or interesting discussions with other men from around the area.

• **Teen/Pre-teen DIY Zombie Dolls,**

Monday, Oct. 2, 4 p.m. Grades 5-12. Boo! Creep yourself out by creating your own zombie-like monster by reusing old dolls. All materials provided. Registration opens Sept. 18.

• **Wednesday Book Club, Oct. 4, 7 p.m., "The Book Woman's Daughter" by Kim Michele Richardson.** Join us as we discuss this historical novel following Honey Lovett, daughter of the famed blue-skinned Troublesome Creek packhorse librarian. If Honey wants to bring the freedom that books provide to the families who need it most, she's going to have to fight for her place and, along the way, learn that the extraordinary women who run the hills and hollers can make all the difference in the world.

• **October Comets Kids Club for K-fifth graders, Monday, Oct. 9, 4 p.m.** Join us for a "spooky" themed snack and craft. Register online.

• **Crafternoon, Tuesday, Oct. 10, 2 p.m.** Join us for a fun afternoon of crafting. We'll be making candy corn button art. All supplies will



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be provided. Ages 17 and older. Register online at polkcitylibrary.org.

• **Coloring Night at Fenders Brewing, Wednesday, Oct. 11, 4-9 p.m.** Come for a night of relaxation and fun with friends at Fenders Brewing.

• **Babble & Brew, Thursday, Oct. 12, 10 a.m.** Playtime for them, coffee and conversation for you. Longing for grown-up conversation? We will have coffee for you and exciting, age-appropriate toys for the kiddos.

• **Youth Eclipse Program, Saturday, Oct. 14, 10:30 a.m.** Join Ms. Allyson for some exciting eclipse activities and grab a special pair of glasses to check out the solar eclipse.

• **Monday Book Club, Monday, Oct. 16, 2 p.m., "Mary Jane" by Jessica Anya Blau.** Join us to discuss this novel about a 14-year-old girl's coming of age in 1970s Baltimore, caught between her straight-laced family and the progressive family she nannies for — who happen to be secretly hiding a famous rock star and his movie star wife for the summer.

• **Book Club (K-second grade), Tuesday, Oct. 17, 4 p.m., "Baker and Taylor and the Mystery of the Library Cats."** Pick up your copy of the book starting Tuesday, Sept. 19, while supplies last. Read, then join us for some fun discussion, games and/or a craft.

• **Adult Coloring, Tuesday, Oct. 17, 5-7 p.m.** Join us for a relaxing evening of coloring. Colored pencils and gel pens will be provided. You are also welcome to bring your own. Ages 17 and older.

• **Music and Movement (toddlers and preschoolers). Held on the second Thursday of each month at 10 a.m., Thursday, Oct. 19, 10 a.m.** Come shimmy and shake with your child. Dance and sing while building pre-reading skills with rhythm and rhyme.

• **Reading and Writing About What You Know with Jolene Philo and Anne Fleck, Thursday, Oct. 19, 6 p.m.** Jolene Philo, author of several non-fiction books, is now writing the fourth book in The West River Mystery Series. In this program, she will explain how an idea grows into a manuscript and proposal to present to a publishing house. Her editor, Anne Fleck of Midwestern Books, will describe how their company comes alongside authors and why they accepted Jolene's proposals. Anne will round out the evening by using one of Jolene's books to demonstrate how they help authors create a plot outline before beginning a first draft. There will be time for questions and answers, and Jolene's books will be available for purchase.

• **Book Club (third-fifth grade), Tuesday, Oct. 24, 4 p.m. "When You Trap a Tiger" by Tae Keller.** Pick up your copy of the book starting Tuesday, Sept. 26, while supplies last. Read, then join us for some fun discussion, games and/or crafts.

• **Welcome to Medicare Seminar with SHIIP, Wednesday, Oct. 25, 6 p.m.** A free seminar offered by the State of Iowa's Senior Health Insurance Information Program (SHIIP) and the Polk City Community Library. "Welcome to Medicare" will cover: Medicare Parts A & B benefits, Prescription Drug Benefits (Part D), Medicare Advantage Plans, Medicare Supplement Insurance, and Identifying Medicare Fraud, Errors and Abuse. Registration required and opens Sept. 15.

• **Messy Munchkins (toddlers and preschoolers), held on the third Thursday of each month at 10 a.m., Thursday, Oct. 26, 10 a.m.** Does your toddler or preschooler always make a mess? It is actually a great way for them to learn! Visit us and let your child explore sensory tables we will put out. Have your child wear clothes that you don't mind getting dirty.

• **No School Cinema, Friday, Oct. 27, 1 p.m.** Join us Friday afternoon for some popcorn and a movie. We will be watching "Hotel Transylvania Transformania." ■

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Andrei Murphy
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FIRST impression leads to Olson home purchase

Active neighborhood appealed to couple.

Although Abi Olson and her family are still fairly new to Polk City, Abi says they feel like the community has always been part of their lives.

The Olsons moved to Polk City in May 2021 after closing on their first home — a home they stumbled on by accident.

“We arrived early to the viewing and made sure to drive around the neighborhood first and scope it out,” she explains. “We turned the corner and instantly were thrilled with what we saw. Almost every other house had families outside playing with their kids or kids running around with friends. People were actively using the trail, and it was so close to where we would be potentially living.

“We knew before even seeing the inside of the house that Polk City is where we wanted to call home.”

At the time of the closing, Olson was five months pregnant, and her future husband, Brian, had home improvement and remodeling projects he wanted to have completed prior to everyone moving in.

“We officially became full-time residents as of mid-June after he completely repainted the house top to bottom and remodeled our kitchen and dining area,” Olson explains. “We actually settled on moving to Polk City after searching through the entire metro area solely for a place we could call our forever home and raise our newly blended family. He had two kids, I had two kids, and with one on the way, we needed a lot more space to call our own.”

Their home today has an open concept, unique woodwork, large custom windows from floor to ceiling, wood floors and a huge yard.

What Olson says she really likes is the location of the neighborhood and the people within it.

“Everyone treats you like family and is always there to lend a helping hand,” she says. “I have come home from long work shifts to neighbors helping with my kids or letting them over to play, scooping and salting our driveway, bringing cookies and meals, throwing events, tracking



Abi Olson says the activity in their neighborhood lead her and husband, Brian Rehm, to want to raise their blended family there.



down my lost mail or my child that fell asleep on the bus, supporting the kids and all their driveway ‘sales,’ and so much more.”

Olson says there is genuinely nothing her family doesn’t like about the community they chose to plant themselves in. She says people in the community have shown her family respect, kindness and even assistance.

“We love Polk City,” she says. “It’s summertime fun, laughter and endless events. It’s late-night whispers around the fire, open starry skies, days out on the lake, and nature all around you. It’s spending winter creating snow angels, snowball fights and forts with the neighbors, or sledding down their huge hill with all the kids and screaming your lungs out. It’s walking out the door to a friendly smile. It’s going to the park and running into a friend. It’s happiness, comfort and belonging. It’s a helping hand and an open door. It’s our forever home.” ■



THE COMETS CORNER

NEWS FROM NORTH POLK CSD

SEPTEMBER 2023

BOND REFERENDUM 2023: "THE NEXT STEP IN BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE"

While the common theme of construction has been resounding for the last several years, this persistent pattern will remain a cornerstone in the times to come to support our increasing enrollment and to offer additional opportunities for our students.

In line with our strategic plan of a shared commitment to proactive financial and facility planning, as well as providing a safe and healthy learning environment, the North Polk Board of Education is calling on voters whether the district should take out a bond referendum during the regular election on November 7th to give the authorization to the North Polk Community School District to issue general obligation bonds of up to \$17 million. If passed, the district must use the funds toward projects that are listed on the ballot.

The proposed projects for the bond referendum include:

1. Career Tech/Industrial Arts/Agricultural Addition: This project involves the construction, furnishing, and equipping of an addition to the High School building. In embracing these trades fields, we are not just offering academic pathways, but also helping to foster vital workforce development and career readiness skills. This initiative emphasizes our commitment to preparing students for the ever-evolving demands of the professional world.
2. Additional Baseball/Softball Athletic Complex: The proposal includes the creation of a modern and flexible use baseball/softball athletic complex, accompanied by necessary site improvements. This complex is aimed at providing students with an upgraded sports facility that fosters teamwork, skill development, and a sense of community.
3. Renovation of Existing Classroom Spaces: The final aspect of this project includes portions of existing building space at West and Central Elementary buildings that are slated for renovation, remodeling, repair, improvement, furnishing, and/or equipping. This effort contributes to creating safe and conducive learning environments for our youngest learners.



Career Tech Addition



Additional Sport Complex



Renovating Classrooms

Taxes:

The construction of these projects will not result in higher taxes; instead, the district is pursuing the continuation of the existing debt service tax to fund these endeavors. The district's current debt service levy is already maxed out at \$4.05 per thousand dollars of assessed valuation. Revenues from the Debt Service Levy are deposited in the Debt Service Fund to be used to retire the principal and interest on the bonds.

Election:

The North Polk Board of Education is suggesting a ballot proposition during the regular election on November 7th to give the authorization to issue general obligation bonds of up to \$17 million. A "YES" vote of 60.1% is required for the measure to pass.

We will be holding community meet and greets throughout October to inform the community about this process and to answer any questions our stakeholders may have.

NPHS Teacher Named Health Educator of the Year

Teaching is one of the most noble professions one can hold. In early September, Mrs. Anne Sloan, a teacher at North Polk High School, received the prestigious title of 2023-24 SHAPE Iowa Health Educator of the Year in recognition of her exceptional dedication and contributions to education.

SHAPE Iowa, the Society of Health and Physical Educators, was founded in 1921 by a group of school leaders and its mission is to provide leadership and support for the enhancement of movement, leisure, and health-related programs central to healthy, active lifestyles and lifelong learning.

"Mrs. Sloan is very deserving of this award! Each day, she brings an incredible amount of energy, passion, and care for her students. NPHS is very fortunate to have Mrs. Sloan as a part of our Comet staff and family," said North Polk High School Principal Seth Poldberg.

Mrs. Anne Sloan's recognition as the 2023-24 SHAPE Iowa Health Educator of the Year is a testament to her unwavering commitment to education and her students. Her dedication to shaping the future of our youth through health education is truly commendable. This prestigious award not only celebrates her outstanding contributions but also highlights the vital role educators like her play within our district and the broader community.

Congratulations to Mrs. Sloan for this well-deserved honor!



TURTLES, sharks, a beetle, dogs and more

Another slow month in the theaters as the summer wanes and the actors'/writers' strike continues. Many of the big movies of the fall have moved a few months or more...including "Dune 2." Aaarrgggh! But "Barbie" and "Oppenheimer" are still plugging away.

Here's what I've got for you this month...



"Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Mutant Mayhem" (in theaters)

My two boys were raised in the sweet spot of TMNT craziness. Did I think we would still

be seeing these guys? I did not, but this one manages to put together a fresh version of these creatures. The animation is edgy and fun, and the voice work is better than expected. The box office for this one has been strong, so we've probably not seen the last of these green guys.

Grade: B+



"Meg 2: The Trench" (in theaters, but not for long)

Why was I seeing a movie called "Meg 2"? Let's just say it's been a rough patch for new

movies. I will assume that Jason Statham was paid well to come back for this joke of a movie. I'm now completely convinced that there are prehistoric sharks in the ocean, and they have other prehistoric friends who, from time to time, terrorize anyone and everyone in their path. **Grade: C+**



"Gran Turismo" (in theaters)

This movie claims to be based on a true story,

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*(APY) Annual Percentage Yield. Rates accurate as of September 11, 2023. Rates and terms may change without notice. Early withdrawal penalties may apply. Fees may reduce earnings.

FILM REVIEWS

which is difficult to believe. A video game company creates a competition for their auto racing game. The grand prize for the winner of that competition is actually allowed to race a car in a real race event. Seems like there would have been more attorneys involved than we see. Amazingly, the movie is really good and is a fun time in the theater. It is currently playing in the Waukeez IMAX. Wow. **Grade: B+**



“Blue Beetle” (in theaters)

I’m not familiar with this comic-based character, but I found the movie kind of fun... for a while. A young man graduates from college and comes back to his small town to help his family, which is having severe money issues. He applies for a job at a company (run by Susan Sarandon) that developed military-style weapons. He is accidentally attacked and then attached to a blue scarab that grants him great powers. The movie has a fresh look and feel until it ultimately ends with the now requisite 30-minute special effects mess of an ending. Still, it was fun for a while. **Grade: B+**

“Strays” (in theaters, but not for long)

This is a movie about talking dogs. Very profane talking dogs. Really profane, and also inane, talking dogs. This felt like something



two sophomores in high school would have written as a joke. A really bad joke. Somehow, Will Ferrell and Jamie Foxx got involved in this horrible mistake of a movie, and the rest of us just have to suffer through it. **Grade: D**



“Retribution” (in theaters)

Liam Neeson, an accomplished actor, makes one (sometimes two) of these type of movies a year. A man is put in a horrible situation, but he has “a particular set of skills” that no one knows about, and he always manages to save the day. This is the latest (and far from the greatest) where a man driving his children to school finds there’s a bomb in the car and if he stops, or the kids get out, the whole car will be blown to smithereens. Yawn. There’s not a believable moment in this movie. Or any reason to see it, for that matter. **Grade: D**



“The Hill” (in theaters)

Based on a true story (aren’t they all?) about a young man who loves baseball but was born with some serious health issues. He refuses to give up and perseveres to get his shot at professional baseball. It’s a worthy effort and has some wonderful moments, but Dennis Quaid as his father was a mistake in the casting office. It’s not a great movie, but there was a smattering of applause at the screening I attended. **Grade: C+**

That’s all I’ve got this month. It’s not the best month of the year for movies, but there are a few movies worth watching. Here’s to a better group next month. Until then, pass the popcorn. ■

Michael C. Woody has been reviewing movies on radio and television since 1986 and can be heard talking movies every Wednesday afternoon at 2:30 p.m. on KXn0 106.3

with Keith Murphy and Andy Fales. You can also follow him on Twitter @MrMovieDSM.



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BOOK REVIEWS

Courtesy of Beaverdale Books

'The Mimicking of Known Successes'

I make an effort each month to review books with wide appeal, stories most people could read and enjoy. That said, this one is a little niche, but I can't help myself. I loved it! I've read it twice and feel compelled to share.

It is a mix of steampunk and science fiction, a murder mystery, and the exploration of the divisions inherent in humanity all brilliantly woven in a neat package. When a man dies on a human colony set on Jupiter, a Sherlockian investigator is sent to discover why. Mossa isn't thrilled with her new case at first, and she doesn't think there's much to it until her investigations take her to her old university and right into the orbit of her old girlfriend, Pleiti.

The two dance around their feelings with all the awkwardness of reconnecting lovers while trying to uncover a conspiracy before more death intrudes on their dates. The mystery is intriguing, but the characters are even more magnetic, and the world-building is nearly perfect.

I'm so glad novellas are "in" again in the publishing world. A stripped-down story with just the good parts is exactly what I need sometimes. I can't wait for more adventures with these two characters. ■

— Review by Julie Goodrich



By Malka Ann Older

3/7/23

178 pages

\$19.99

Tor Books

'Starling House'

I have a penchant for folk tales and local myths. Appalachia is a wellspring of such tales, with its tangled knot of cultural influences. Legacies of indigenous peoples, African slaves and the European colonizers intertwine and make for some beautifully sad storytelling. I keenly remember sultry summers in the Smoky Mountains, listening to fabulous stories told in a lazy southern drawl. Alix Harrow channels that vibrant and contradictory world perfectly in her newest book, a rich story full of mystery and unexpected monsters.

Opal knows a lot about generational curses, even if she wouldn't call it that. She's a dreamer with nothing but nightmares to sustain her as she cares for her brother in a dying mining town in Kentucky. Poverty stains every aspect of her life until the enigmatic Starling House changes everything. A twisted version of Alice in Wonderland unfolds for Opal as her curiosity and desperation to find her brother a better life collides with a local legend rooted in horror, obligation and chains.

Facing demons both personal and communal is a common theme in a Southern gothic tale. It's a genre of paradox, drowsy and vibrant at the same time. When done well, the stories linger long after they're finished, like a ghost. I think this one will haunt me for a while. ■

— Review by Julie Goodrich



By Alix Harrow

10/3/23

400 pages

\$28.99

Tor Books



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POWER weeknight family meals with pecans

(Family Features) Back-to-school season means many families are busier than ever, leaving less time to plan weeknight meals. While a new school year brings plenty of exciting moments, it also adds up to early mornings, long days and late evenings, making it tough to keep nutrition top-of-mind.

With new routines and jam-packed calendars, quick and easy recipes can be the solutions you need. Swapping out complicated dishes for simple dinners and make-ahead snacks allows you to make your loved ones' health a priority while also managing hectic schedules.

To help make those simple yet tasty menu additions a reality, look to a flavor favorite and nutrition powerhouse like pecans. They're the ideal nut to keep on hand to incorporate into favorite meals and after-school snacks.

Taste is just the beginning when it comes to pecans. Their nutritious punch provides a unique mix of health-promoting nutrients. Plus, they're a versatile ingredient that can shine in a wide range of flavor profiles from sweet or spicy to salty, smoky and savory.

For more back-to-school recipe inspiration, visit EatPecans.com. ■

Mac and cheese with pecan breadcrumbs

Cook time: 50 minutes

Servings: 6

- 8 ounces cavatappi pasta
- 1 teaspoon salt, plus additional for salting pasta water, to taste
- 1 tablespoon butter
- 1 block (8 ounces) cheddar cheese
- 1/2 cup raw pecan pieces
- 15 ounces part-skim ricotta cheese
- 4 tablespoons sour cream
- 1/4 teaspoon ground pepper
- 1 large egg, lightly beaten



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RECIPE

DIRECTIONS

- Preheat oven to 375 F.
- Cook cavatappi in salted boiling water. Drain, reserving 1/2 cup pasta cooking water. Return pasta to pot and stir in butter.
- Using box grater, shred cheddar cheese.
- Using food processor, combine 1/4 cup shredded cheddar cheese with pecans. Process to coarse breadcrumb consistency.
- Add remaining cheddar cheese, ricotta, sour cream, 1 teaspoon salt and pepper to warm pasta. Stir until thoroughly combined. Add egg; stir. Add 2-4 tablespoons reserved pasta water to loosen mixture; stir until smooth.
- Pour into buttered 9-inch square or round casserole dish and top evenly with pecan topping.
- Bake 30 minutes.

Substitutions: Use pre-shredded cheese in place of cheddar cheese block. Use pasta of choice in place of cavatappi.

Superfood Pecan Energy Bars

Cook time: 40 minutes

Servings: 14

- 15 Medjool dates (9 ounces)
- 1 cup pecan pieces
- 1/2 cup gluten-free oats
- 1 tablespoon chia seeds
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1/4 teaspoon kosher salt

DIRECTIONS

- Preheat oven to 200 F.
- In food processor, process or pulse dates until chopped and rough texture forms. Add pecan pieces, oats, chia seeds, vanilla extract, cinnamon and kosher salt; process about 1 minute until crumbly dough forms.
- Line baking sheet or jelly roll pan with parchment paper. Dump dough into center of parchment paper and use rolling pin to roll into 6-by-10 1/2-inch rectangle. Cut dough into 14 bars about 1 1/2-by-3 inches or into desired shapes.
- Bake bars 30 minutes. Cool bars to room temperature then refrigerate in sealed container between sheets of wax paper.
- To package for on-the-go snacking, cut 4-by-6-inch rectangles of wax paper, wrap around bars and secure with tape.



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HEALTH

By Dr. Jesse Kahnk, OD

ABOUT the eye pressure test

I usually choose what I'm going to write about for these articles based on recent conversations that I have had with my patients. Since we have been seeing a lot of back-to-school exams recently, I've had a lot of questions from curious young patients along the lines of "What is that thing?" "What does that do?" and "Why do you need to do that?" Often that's related to the tonometer, or eye pressure, test.



Inside of your eyes is a fluid called aqueous. It is constantly being produced and released into an area called the anterior chamber. There is a drainage angle in the anterior chamber from which aqueous is being removed from your eye. So, there is a balance of this aqueous production and drainage, and we measure that as your eye pressure. If there is excess production or insufficient drainage, then that can cause your eye pressure to increase. There is a disease called glaucoma that we manage by reducing the pressure in your eyes, either with drops or with surgery.

So the job of the tonometer is to tell me what the pressure of the eye is. If you've gone to the eye doctor before, you have experienced this as getting a green dye placed in your eye and looking at a blue light or the dreaded air puff machine. At our office, we use a handheld tool that doesn't require air or drops. ■

Information provided by Dr. Jesse Kahnk, OD, Prairie View Eyecare, 1345 S.W. Park Square Drive, Suite 106, Ankeny. 515-305-2922.

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HEALTH

By Monica Meier

WAYS to help your kids open up more

School is starting, and kids' schedules are about to get more hectic. So, now is the time to talk with your kids and check in with them about how their days are going. This can be as simple as using open-ended questions about their day to get the information you are looking for. Instead of asking, "How was your day?" and getting the blah answer of, "Fine," ask questions that require more thought. For example, "What was the best part of science today?" "Who did you sit at lunch with today?" "What was the funniest thing you heard today?" This way, the answers are more than one word and give you something to continue the conversation. When they answer who they sat with, add on to that conversation with, "Who had the best lunch? What was in it?" or "Where was ____ today?" This way, the conversation is continuing with your child without the child being pressured with the same questions every day.



Another line of questioning that can wrap around the child is asking, "What would you have changed about today if you could change anything?" Depending on the answer, it opens up a lot of different conversations with your child that have more than a standard "Fine" answer. ■

Information provided by Monica Meier, PhD(Abd), tLMHC of SS Therapy and Consulting, Ltd, 4725 Merle Hay Road, Suite 205, Des Moines, IA 50322, 515-528-8135, meier@sstherapyandconsulting.com, www.sstherapyandconsulting.com.

BEFORE YOU GO

By Tosha Edmundson

A SEASON of grief

As fall draws near, we expect change. Inevitable change. The vibrant greens of leaves turn to hues of orange and brown. Bright cheerful colors of summer flowers wilt into clumps of brown, and even the stems seem to lay down to rest eventually. Fall is a season of transition. It's unavoidable, but it is not without purpose. On the other side of fall is winter. Both are necessary to achieve their purpose, which is life anew in the spring.



Grief is much like fall. We will all experience seasons of loss in our lives. Losing a person we love due to death brings about unavoidable change — a shift that chauffeurs us into our next season. Like the leaves that fall in their own time from the branches, over time, we let go of the initial shock of the loss and the waves of pain and loneliness as we try to adjust to the absence of their presence as well as the parts of our identity that we feel left with them. Sometimes there are a couple of leaves that we cling to through the bitterness of winter until spring proves that new life is coming, and we find our purpose again.

If you're grieving this season, give yourself grace. In time, the pain of loss will bring about healing and new purpose.

Give your family the gift of love, and care for your future end-of-life needs in advance. ■

Information provided by Tosha Edmundson, Family Services Representative, Highland Memory Gardens Cemetery, 1 N.E. 60th Ave., Des Moines, 515-289-2230.

WELLNESS

By Alex Townsend, BSN, RN

THE POWER of hydration

Embarking on a weight-loss journey is a commendable endeavor, but it's important to remember that successful and sustainable weight loss involves more than just diet and exercise. One often overlooked yet essential aspect of a healthy weight-loss journey is proper hydration. Water is the elixir of life, and it plays a vital role in helping you shed those extra pounds.



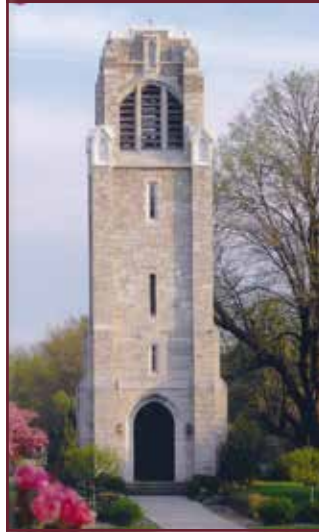
Dehydration can slow down your metabolism. When you're not adequately hydrated, your body's metabolic rate can decrease, making it more challenging to burn calories efficiently. Drinking enough water helps maintain a healthy metabolism, which, in turn, aids in weight loss.

By maintaining proper hydration, you optimize your body's fat-burning capabilities, aiding in weight-loss efforts. Exercise is a cornerstone of any weight-loss plan, and hydration is essential for optimal physical performance. Dehydration can lead to fatigue, muscle cramps and decreased endurance during workouts. By drinking water before, during and after exercise, you can maintain energy levels, perform better and burn more calories.

Hydration is an often overlooked but incredibly valuable tool in your weight-loss arsenal. So, remember to drink up, and you'll be well on your way to achieving your weight-loss goals while feeling better and more energized throughout your journey. ■

Information provided by Alex Townsend, BSN, RN, assistant clinic director, IV Nutrition, 2405 S.W. White Birch Drive, Suite 105, Ankeny, 515-686-8400. www.ivnutrition.com

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McCANN bikes for kids

Great Cycle Challenge raises funds for cancer research.



Tim McCann shows his bikes and Challenge jerseys.

Finding an enjoyable pastime that's also healthy, meaningful in your life, and a way to help others doesn't happen often, but it sums up Tim McCann's involvement in the Great Cycle Challenge. The challenge raises funds for the Children's Cancer Research Fund (CCRF).

McCann became involved in the challenge in 2016.

"I actually had a buddy of mine from high school whose son, Sam LeMar, passed away from cancer in 2015. After his son passed away, I decided that I wanted to do something to raise some money in his memory. I found out about this Great Cycle Challenge, which was in its second year of existence. And I've always been a bike rider."

McCann joined the cause and raised about \$1,500 that first year.

Ever since then, he has continued to participate in the annual month-long event. Throughout the month of September, which is also Childhood Cancer Awareness Month, McCann will work toward his goals of riding 250 miles and raising \$4,500.

"Over seven years, I've raised a little over \$20,500," he says. "I'm hoping to raise around \$4,500 this year so I can hit that \$25,000

mark."

Since 2015, the Great Cycle Challenge USA has seen more than 470,000 riders from 50 states ride a combined 29.8 million miles, raising more than \$63 million. The CCRF notes that more than 15,000 American children are diagnosed with cancer every year, and, on average, 38 die each week.

"Kids should be enjoying life instead of fighting for their life," McCann says.

McCann is an experienced bicyclist, having completed RAGBRAI for nine straight years. For this fundraiser, he combines miles ridden on his road bike with miles ridden on his fat tire bike. Although he sometimes rides with others, he says most of his miles happen alone. He has dedicated his September quest in memory of Sam LeMar and Jennifer Lynn, who also died from cancer.

"People can pledge per mile, but most people just do a simple amount," he says of the money he raises. He encourages anyone interested to go to the Great Cycle Challenge website, where information is available on how to donate or how to join the cause as a rider. McCann says he's one of nearly 700 riders participating in Iowa this year.

McCann said he's ridden a total of 1,626 miles in previous years of the Great Cycle Challenge, and, although he's set a goal of 250 miles in September, other riders can set their own goals.

"There are no minimums at all," McCann said. "The main thing is you're raising awareness and money."

McCann noted that 100% of the funds raised in the Challenge goes directly to research.

Because McCann has been involved in the Challenge almost from its inception, he is among a group of riders who have been given special jerseys to denote their milestones of fundraising and participation. McCann pointed out that all of the jerseys and other swag are donated by corporate sponsors, so no fundraising dollars are diverted from research.

Besides this challenge, McCann rides in a few other fundraising events as time allows.

"If I can get out on my bike and ride around and help a charity, I always like doing that."

And he says he has no plans of stopping.

"As long as I can pedal a bike and not fall over, I'm going to keep doing it."

The event website is <https://greatcyclechallenge.com>. ■

This Medicare step could save you money

Whether this is your first year on Medicare or you've been on it for several years, you should look at your plan each year.

Revisiting your coverage and supplements could save you money and prevent surprises when you visit the doctor or pick up a prescription.



The Medicare Annual Enrollment Period runs from Oct. 15 to Dec. 7. That's when you can join, drop or switch to another supplement plan or add or drop drug coverage.

I know what you might think: "I like my current coverage; no change needed." That may be true. But each insurance carrier frequently renegotiates provider contracts, which can ultimately change the terms of your supplement plans — impacting premiums, copays, deductibles and covered services plus the ancillary benefits like x-rays, prosthetic devices and physical therapy. Carriers can add and drop benefits like gym memberships, chiropractic visits, and meal deliveries to and from plans. That's why it's a good idea to review your providers, your prescriptions and your pharmacy each year to ensure your preferences are still covered.

Some of the most heartbreaking stories I've heard are when someone

goes to the pharmacy to pick up medication and finds out it's no longer covered or has changed. That's when out-of-pocket costs can skyrocket, and the medicine can cost hundreds more than the last time they went to the pharmacy.

During the annual enrollment period last year, I ran the numbers for one of the individuals we work with and found that Meloxicam, an arthritis medicine, costs \$12 for a 90-day refill at their in-network pharmacy and \$1,117.80 at one that was not in-network. That is not the kind of surprise you want to get when you go to pick up your medicine and the reason I run the numbers for them before making any changes.

You can switch to an Advantage Plan from a traditional Medigap supplement (like Plan F or Plan G) during annual enrollment. You can also move from one Advantage Plan to another or from one prescription drug plan to another.

There is a lot of information out there about Medicare, and the choices can feel overwhelming. A professional can help people make sense of it all, while helping them coordinate their Medicare decisions with the other aspects of their retirement plan, so every decision is made with their retirement vision in mind.

Information provided by AnnaMarie Morrow, Director of Medicare, Merkle Retirement Planning, 1860 S.E. Princeton Drive, Grimes, 515-278-1006

7 FACTORS

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UMBAUGH inducted into Volunteer Hall of Fame

Honored for his support for feeding the hungry

Alleman resident Glen Umbaugh was inducted into the Iowa Volunteer Hall of Fame earlier this year for his tireless commitment to feeding the hungry in Central Iowa.

The honor, hosted by the IMPACT Community Action Partnership, recognized Umbaugh, along with four other statewide volunteers.

He was chosen because of the volunteer work he's completed in the past five years, including:

- Provided more than 1,480 hours of volunteer service in three years to IMPACT Iowa, providing critical assistance to families needing emergency food. Each week, he works three shifts, stocking and organizing food.
- Completed 43 rescues, recovering more than 1,400 pounds of food, and volunteered a total of 648.5 hours for food insecurity. He picks up rescued food and brings it back to sites in Ankeny and the Drake neighborhood.
- Since 2020, volunteered more than 300 hours at Reiman Gardens in Ames as a docent and sorting fresh donation produce.
- Volunteered with the City of Alleman for funding and grants through community involvement. His pop can drive generated revenue for the Betterment Committee.
- During the COVID pandemic, he delivered food packages to households and families that needed food assistance.

Umbaugh began volunteering his time after he retired from his job at Pioneer. As he was an avid fisherman, he knew he didn't want to just fish during retirement. So, with extra time on his hands, he planted his vegetable garden. He connected with the Plant A Row For The Hungry — a program that encourages gardeners to plant extra food and give the produce to food pantries.

While donating his produce, he noticed other organizations needed help feeding people. He volunteers for the Mid-Iowa Community Action (MICA) and Reiman Gardens in Ames, along with Eat Greater Des Moines and in his hometown of Alleman.

He's passionate about serving the hungry or any place connected with the food pantry.

"I like that I'm helping children who might be nutritionally deprived," he says. "Having food is a critical element in life and success. In Iowa, it shouldn't be an issue — especially with children."

Umbaugh says it was a great honor to be recognized for his efforts.

"It's very humbling. I thank the IMPACT organization for the recognition. I'm glad I can give back," he says.

Umbaugh's name is engraved on the Volunteer Hall of Fame plaque, located in the Iowa State Historical Museum. Since the award's inception in 1989, more than 175 Iowans have been honored. To learn more about volunteering or the award, visit www.volunteeriowa.org/hof/. ■



Lt. Gov. Adam Gregg presents the Iowa Volunteer Hall of Fame award to Glen Umbaugh.

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SO... they say things will cost more?

When it comes to inflation, I can say that it affects everyone a little differently. When I was a teenager in the 1990s, this was not a term I understood. However, as this version of inflation was happening in circa 1995, we were seeing a different world than the early 1990s and 1980s. I remember 85-cent gasoline, I remember that Kwik Star's donuts still cost a dollar. Inflation didn't concern me when I was a kid.



So, why is inflation relevant? Let's look at some figures.

Core CPI, which excludes volatile food and energy prices, rose just 0.16 percent for the month, the lowest reading in more than two years and a significant downside break. There are a number of reasons why it was such a big deal, including:

- It was a downside surprise compared to the consensus estimate of 0.30%.
- On a year-over-year basis, 0.16% translates to 1.92% inflation on an annual basis. Whoa!
- It may give the Fed some flexibility with interest rates in the second half of 2023. This is not good news for you homebuyers; great news for you stock market investors.
- June's Producer Price Index, released the day after the June CPI report, rose less than expected, building on the optimism about inflation. (Greek. Basically, the FED is trying to speed up the train to get us to where our station is faster.)

I don't put too much stock on individual reports, so, at this point, I'm looking for more information before drawing any conclusions about the economy, inflation, and interest rates. Generally speaking, let me take you into my time machine back to the mid-90s. We historically have seen an inflationary market followed by a recessionary turn. Now, don't get nervous. If you have read previous blogs that I have written, you will notice that I was witness to the moments of inflation/recession transition. And, let me build some confidence; we will all be fine. The job market will improve, the price at the pump should reduce, and I will get a 2x4 for less than \$4. Fear generally drives change. And the move from an inflationary market to any other type of environment is not less scary for people.

Allow me to duplicate my daily joy and leave you with some positivity. This economic transition is a good thing. We should wish for it. The stabilization that will come from this economic cyclical turn will help everyone. We will look around and see that the grass is greener, the flowers smell better, and stuff will cost less. How do we ask for better. "Strawberry fields forever" ... thank you, John Lennon. Hang in there. The best is yet to come. Reach out to a financial planner if you have questions and concerns. ■

Information provided by Daniel Rundahl, Financial Advisor, Rundahl Financial Consultants, 6165 N.W. 86th St., Johnston, drundahl@rundahlfinancial.com, 515-727-1701, www.rundahlfinancialconsultants.com.

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REAL ESTATE

By Bonnie Christensen

3 MUST vs. lust tips to avoid overspending

When you embark on the home-buying process, your heart is filled with all the dreams in the world. It's really easy to get caught up in the "I have to have _____, so I'll cut back somewhere else" game, even when you don't actually know where that somewhere else is or if you can realistically cut back there.



1. Make a list of wants: Start by making a list of everything you want in your house. If you love it, jot it down. Have your spouse or partner do the same thing in a separate document.

Once you and your partner have everything down, start sorting your wants by order of importance. What's your No. 1? Do you need large windows? How about a sunroom? Double sinks in the master? You get the idea.

Come up with your top 10, then compare your list to your partner's top 10. What things appear on both lists? Those items should carry more weight because you both want them in your home.

2. Highlight the important stuff: Next, look at your list and consider:

- The things that can't be changed without a massive investment. I'm talking things like square footage, window size and number of bedrooms. This is your heavyweight list. These things should take priority in your home-buying decision.

- Features that are purely cosmetic, especially things that can be DIYed. These items should be moved way down the list or taken off entirely. Backsplash tile, paint color and lighting can all be changed inexpensively after you're living in your house.

At this point, you should have a combined list of 10 or so items.

3. Prioritize: My last tip is to figure out the priority of each one of the items. Ask yourself, would you be willing to give up item No. 4, say, to have item No. 5? This is the hardest question to answer, but it'll put your must-haves in the right order.

Bring your list when you look at a home

As you're out looking at houses, keep your list handy. Maybe you're not willing to give up hardwood floors for a jetted tub, but would you be willing to compromise for a jetted tub and extra square footage? Refer back to your must-haves list often. It's easy to get distracted.

Here's a quick checklist I use when searching for a home. If you answer "yes" to all of these, a "want" may be worth the splurge — that is, if you can be sure you'll be able to afford the feature (in terms of your monthly mortgage payments and living expenses).

- Is it on both of your lists?
 - Is it something that'll be extremely expensive and difficult to change or add?
 - Would you be willing to sacrifice something else to have it?
 - Would you feel like your house would be incomplete without it?
- Happy house hunting. ■

Article by Mandi Gubler, HouseLogic. Information provided by Bonnie Christensen, broker, ReMax Precision. 225 N.W. 18th St., Suite 103, Ankeny. 515-971-9973.

Start with a list!

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RED FLAGS of fraud schemes

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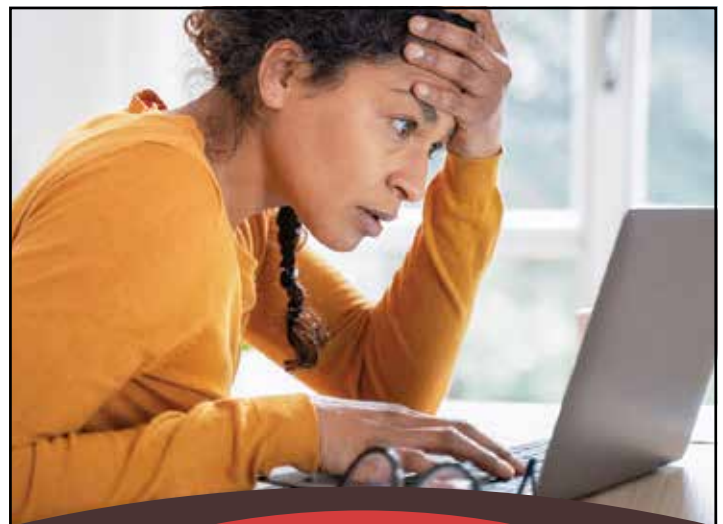


The first step for almost all scams is to establish rapport with you. This is often done by purporting to be an employee of a real organization like the IRS or Amazon or even your local bank. It is not uncommon for fraudsters to spoof phone numbers, email addresses, or provide other “evidence” to prove they are official. When faced with these calls, your best course of action is to call the organization back at a phone number you know is safe.

After the fraudster has hooked you in conversation, they create either a prize or a problem that needs solved. Common examples of this include telling you that you have won the Publishers Clearing House sweepstakes or that you are in trouble with the government, but once the stage is set, the fraudsters move on to step three. At this point, the fraudsters need you to act fast and will begin pressuring you to send money. They may tell you that a warrant will be sent for your arrest or you will lose your chance to receive your prize money if you do not immediately send them money. Oftentimes, they will be very specific on how that money needs to be transferred, which may include wire transfers or sending pictures of gift cards. After funds are transferred these ways, the chances of recovery after the fact are very slim.

Many of us think that we would never fall for any of these schemes, but, in the moment, many people forget to look at the red flags either out of fear or excitement. It is important to step back and examine the situation before making major decisions that have real financial consequences. Your community bank has an experienced team of bankers who can help you identify and respond to fraud. Contact them any time you need assistance. ■

Information provided by Evan Sinclair, compliance and audit manager, Raccoon Valley Bank, Adel, Dallas Center, Grimes and Perry, 515-465-3521.



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EVENTS IN THE AREA

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

Be sure to check for cancellations.

Fall Fest

Saturday, Sept. 30, 3-7 p.m.
Polk City Square

Join Polk City Parks and Rec and Go Polk City to celebrate all things fall at the annual Fall Fest. Kids activities will include pumpkin painting, face painting, inflatables, train rides, character appearances and more. Seasonal vendors will be selling their best fall treats and some delicious eating options as well.

Spooky Tales at the Museum on the Square

The public is invited to Spooky Tales Oct. 21 at 7 p.m. at the Polk City Museum on the Square. Stories are appropriate for teens and adults but not younger children. Admission is \$10 at the door for this fundraiser by Big Creek Historical Society. The mood will be set in this old building with cobwebs, pumpkins, organ music and more fun.

BiketoberFEST supports parks

Saturday, Sept. 30, noon to 3 p.m.

Join Polk City Friends of the Parks' second annual bike ride before attending Polk City Fall Fest. Check in any time during the event. Your support helps enhance, grow and maintain the Polk City parks, trails and green spaces. Funds from this event go toward bike trail connections, bike racks and fix-it stations throughout town.

Registered bike riders will receive \$2 off drinks at each stop (Fenders, Fleetwood at the MARINA, Firetrucker and Nite Hawk) during the event's hours. Registration in advance is \$20 per individual biker, 21 and older, and free for 20 and younger. Registration day of the event is \$25. Tickets are non-refundable. Three suggested routes are included but riders can ride wherever they are comfortable. After the ride, enjoy Polk City's annual Fall Fest starting at 3 p.m. and Fenders' annual Fendersfest, noon to 10 p.m., with live music and activities for children.

For information and to register, visit <https://www.polkcityfriendsoftheparks.com/biketoberfest>.

Fall Festival

Saturday, Oct. 14, 9 a.m. to noon
Sheldahl United Methodist Church, 6th and Hubbell, Sheldahl

Enjoy a bazaar and bake sale featuring frozen quarts and pints and homemade chicken and noodles, large inventory of denim rugs, nuts, cards, baked goods and craft items, held by the Sheldahl United Women in Faith.

Fall Craft Fair/Vendor Show

Saturday, Sept. 30, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.
Elkhart Christian Church, 252 N.W. Washington Ave., Elkhart

Besides a craft fair and vendor show, a baked goods sale will also be held with a concession stand available with a take-out option.



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EVENTS IN THE AREA

Be sure to check for cancellations.

Drive-by Cavatelli Dinner

Saturday, Oct. 14,
11 a.m. to 1 p.m.
Elkhart Christian Church, 252
N.W. Washington Ave., Elkhart

The Elkhart Christian Church's Annual Drive-by Cavatelli Dinner menu is cavatelli, bread and pie for a freewill donation. You pull up, place your order, and it is brought right to your car.

Oktoberfest

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Oktoberfest returns for the 18th year with all your favorite authentic celebrations including a huge selection of German and craft beers, delicious German food, beer puppeteer, live music, bier maiden and stein holding competitions, a silent disco featuring 11 DJs over three days, and much more. www.oktoberfestdsm.com.

Log Cabin Day

Saturday, Sept. 23, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Warren County Historical Society, 1400
W. Second Ave., Indianola

Warren County Historical Society's Log Cabin Day will be celebrating 50 years. The event will include a farmers market from 9 a.m. to noon, parade at 10 a.m., chicken noodle lunch from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. (\$12 cost), tours of the log cabin renovation, displaying of the signature quilt, games, silent auction from 11:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., vendors, scarecrow making at 11 a.m. (\$5 cost), face painting, cow chip throwing, tours of the Heritage Village and more. Highlighting is a Civil War re-enactment by Army of the Southwest from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., including a cannon demonstration at 11:30 a.m., infantry drill demonstration at 12:30 p.m., rifle demonstration at 1:30 p.m., and a skirmish at 2:30 p.m., followed by dress-up, cannon, musket shooting and medical demonstrations. ■



Quilt Show

Sept. 21-23
4-H Building, Iowa State Fairgrounds

The "Quilting in the Key of Life" Quilt Show by the Des Moines Area Quilters Guild will be held at the Iowa State Fairgrounds. Hours for Thursday and Friday, Sept. 21-22, are 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Hours on Saturday, Sept. 23, are 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Admission is \$10. More than 500 quilts will be on display, with dozens of vendors, a colorful raffle quilt and several special exhibits. For more information, visit dmaqg.org, and follow Des Moines Area Quilters Guild on Facebook.

HONOR OUR VETERANS

Iowa Living magazines will be saluting veterans in November issues. If you are a veteran who would like to be included, please send a photo (military or current) and the following information:

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REGULATING humidity as temperatures cool down

The crisp autumn air is not too far away, and our focus will shift from battling the sweltering heat to embracing the cozy warmth of indoor spaces. While temperature control is crucial, one aspect that often goes overlooked is humidity regulation. As the thermometer drops, the air becomes drier, and finding the right balance of moisture indoors becomes paramount for both comfort and wellbeing.



Understanding the correlation between temperature and humidity is essential to creating a comfortable indoor environment. As temperatures lower, the air's ability to hold moisture diminishes, leading to decreased relative humidity levels. This drop in humidity can have various effects on your home and health.

During colder months, low humidity levels can lead to discomfort, causing skin to become dry and itchy and exacerbating respiratory issues. By introducing a humidification system, you can maintain an optimal humidity level of around 30-50%, promoting a healthier indoor environment. This not only prevents skin problems and respiratory irritation but also helps to preserve the integrity of wooden furniture and musical instruments, which can crack or warp in overly dry conditions.

Regulating humidity isn't just about comfort — it also impacts energy efficiency. Moist air feels warmer than dry air at the same temperature, allowing you to lower your thermostat a few degrees without sacrificing comfort. This small adjustment can lead to significant energy savings over time, reducing your heating bills and your carbon footprint.

While it's essential to keep humidity levels in check, excessive moisture can also be problematic. When warm, moist indoor air comes into contact with cold surfaces like windows, condensation forms. This moisture can lead to mold growth, structural damage, and even health issues. To combat this, proper insulation and ventilation are key. An HVAC professional can assess your home's unique needs and recommend solutions to prevent condensation-related problems.

When it comes to choosing a humidification system, it's essential to consider factors such as the size of your home, lifestyle and budget. There are several options available, from portable humidifiers to whole-house systems that integrate with your HVAC setup. Consulting with a heating and cooling expert can help you determine the most suitable system for your needs.

By understanding the relationship between temperature and humidity, choosing the right humidification system, and practicing proper maintenance, you can create an environment that's both inviting and conducive to wellbeing throughout the autumn and winter months. ■

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

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DANCE Team

The Comets Dance Team performed during the North Polk varsity football game vs. Carlisle on Sept. 1.



Savannah McKnight



Anna Patterson



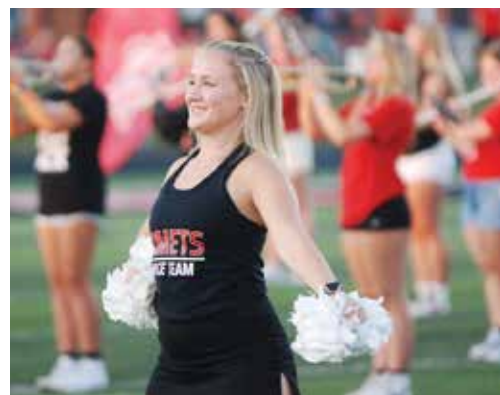
Brooke Moxley



Lexi Rediske



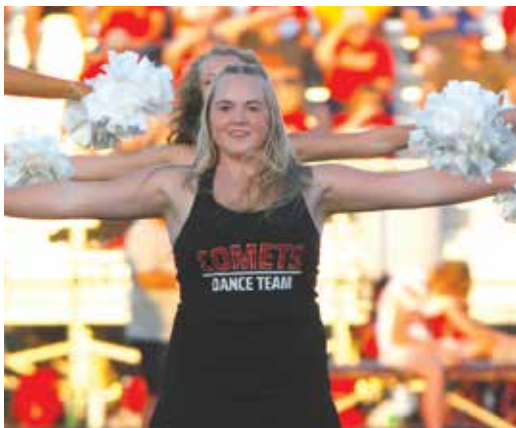
Ava Harrell



Annie Gubbins



Lily Heppler



Lauren Croft



Lauren Knights

MARCHING Band

The Comets Marching Band performed during the North Polk varsity football game vs. Carlisle on Sept. 1.



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Emerson Sander



Alyson Burdine



Katellynn Whitted



Stockton Huether



Katelyn Phillips and Rebecca Houser



Alyson Burdine and Aidan Trier



Olivia Naragon, Brooke Sprague and Everett Eaton



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