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OCTOBER 2023

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Super FANS

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for their favorite teams

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2. Fasten reflective tape to costumes and bags, or give children glow sticks
3. When buying Halloween makeup, make sure it is nontoxic and always test it in a small area first
4. Remove all makeup before children go to bed to prevent skin and eye irritation
5. If your older children are going alone, plan and review a route acceptable to you
6. Agree on a specific time children should return home
7. Teach your children never to enter a stranger's home or car
8. Instruct children to travel only in familiar, well-lit areas and stick with their friends
9. Tell your children not to eat any treats until they return home and an adult has checked for opened packages
10. Children and adults should put electronic devices down, keep heads up and walk, don't run, across the street



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WELCOME

MAKE way for the Super Fans!

Just admit it. We all know some. Or maybe you are one? Either way, these folks are easy to find.

I am talking about Super Fans, and they stick out like a banana in a bowl of blueberries.

Bumper stickers promoting their teams on their cars aren't enough for Super Fans. They have the personalized plates and the clever number and letter schemes that the rest of us need one of those secret decoder rings to decipher.

Of course, their closets are full of their team-themed shirts, sweatshirts, hats, pajamas, socks, slippers and underwear. You name it, and Super Fans have their team logo on it. And regardless of how worn and tattered those items have become, they never throw them away.

The pre-set stations on the car radios of Super Fans are locked in to sports talk and sports talk only. Don't even think about turning the dial.

They fork out more money on game tickets than they do on groceries, and they are just fine with that.

Super Fans spend countless hours on Twitter or X or whatever you call it just to be the first to know the latest news on trades, injuries or other breaking news about their teams.

And to top it all off, and to show their true commitment, Super Fans spend their hard-earned money having their team mascots or logos permanently tattooed on their skin. And not just one tattoo, either.

I am not a Super Fan. Far from it. I enjoyed participating in sports and coaching, and I do enjoy watching occasional games and sporting activities, but it stops there. Even so, I am greatly entertained by those who are Super Fans. I love their passion, their feistiness, their spirit. And I can look past those fading tattoos.

Does this all sound familiar to you? Well, you don't have to be a Super Fan to enjoy this month's feature story on local residents who are.

Thanks for reading. ■

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Super FANS

Residents share their passion
for their favorite teams

By Jackie Wilson

What's your favorite college team? NFL? NHL? Most of us have been asked similar questions at one time or another. Some people, however, don't need to be asked. The team shirt they are wearing, the banner hanging on their garage door, the bumper stickers on their cars, and the photos of them with their faces painted cheering at the stadium all shout out their affiliations. Those are the people who have crossed that fine line between fan and Super Fan.

As part of the requirements for being in the Vikings World Order fan club, members such as Rob Haspels must get a Vikings-related tattoo. Photo by Jackie Wilson



"Viking for Life"

Rob Haspels is a diehard Minnesota Vikings fan. He clears his schedule to cheer on his team in person at the U.S. Bank Stadium or watches games on TV. He owns team jerseys, patches, horned helmets, Vikings memorabilia — and lots of purple gear.

But his most impressive expression of dedication to his team is when he got inked with a Vikings tattoo. The tattoo on his arm signifies he is "Viking for Life."

Rob is a member of the Vikings World Order (VWO). The club was established in 1997 and consists of hundreds of members. The VWO is not just for celebrating victories or watching games; it is also a charity organization.

Becoming a VWO member is not as easy as just signing up. First, a fan must be nominated by a member who is already in the club.

After nomination, the fan spends one year as a prospective fan, proving his or her dedication to the team.

Then one must obtain enough votes from other members to be admitted to the VWO.

Finally, a new member must get a tattoo



Rob Haspels is a Vikings Super Fan, and he has the gear, tattoo and Vikings World Order nickname, SIR Rocker, to prove it.

signifying their allegiance to the Minnesota Vikings. The tattoo can be any type of symbol showcasing Vikings pride. Fans with medical reasons for not getting a tattoo can opt out; however, 90% of the VWO members get inked.

Rob's tattoo is of a sword with the Vikings helmet and logo plus "VWO" emblazoned on the side of the sword. VWO members also adopt a unique nickname. He is known as SIR Rocker. SIR stands for Service, Integrity and Respect.



Nick Otis

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He chose Rocker, as he plays in a band, Skinny Logan.

Rob was voted in as member in 2017. He was elected a leader in 2020 for the Army division. Sixty-five percent of the VWO members are veterans. Approximately 30 Iowans are VWO members.

Rob grew up in northwestern Iowa, where there were only three television stations and limited games. He watched whatever game was on TV. Typically it was the Vikings.

He served in Iraq and, while in the service, played in various football leagues.

"We challenged other countries serving whenever we had downtime," he says. "We played for fun."

Yet, what really cemented his passion for football was attending several Vikings games after returning from Iraq in 2006.

"I went to the tailgate and saw all these Super Fans," he says. "Everything purple — their costumes, outfits; fans grilling out. Everything. I wanted to get into that someday."

Once he became a VWO member, he realized it wasn't all about celebrating wins. He

discovered the VWO also helps out those less fortunate. The group has raised money for the Minneapolis Children's Hospital and Special Olympics. A man who lost his son was set up with a Go Fund Me page and \$40,000 was raised for his expenses.

One unique perk is that the VWO often tailgates with the opposing team. They'll host events at a hotel or other venues.

"They are fans against bullying. We want a safe game day experience," Rob says.

He attended a "fan of fans" tailgate with Green Bay Packers fans.

"It really changed my perspective from hating the opposing team," he recalls. "We never lose at a tailgate. It's all about the fans."

If he is not on National Guard duty, Rob makes the three-and-a-half-hour trek to the Minneapolis stadium or meets up at the Corner Bar in Minneapolis to watch the game. He doesn't have season tickets, as they are too expensive, but he usually finds a ticket from the fan club, whose members don't mark up ticket prices.

"It's a perk of the club to be able to stay at a

friend's house or buy tickets from fans directly," he says. "Section 140 is a Super Fan section."

Another benefit of the VWO is meeting former and current Vikings players and their families at various events. Vikings offensive tackle Christian Darrisaw's dad is a frequent guest at tailgate gatherings.

Rob recalls the "greatest game ever," which was in 2022. The Vikings were down 33-0.

"They came back to win. It was the biggest comeback in history. I witnessed the whole game, and it was the most incredible game to see in person," he says.

Hanging out with the opposing team is just as fun.

"Relationship building is important. We're Minnesota-nice in the stands but root for one team only. We shake hands with the opponents when the game is over, regardless of who wins."

He'll finally get to take his daughter to her first Vikings game this fall. He looks forward to each game and the ability to help others through the club.

"I enjoy helping and meeting other people," he says. "It's a great way to spend the weekend."

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FEATURE

Comets super fan family

Julianne and Mike Manock of Polk City are dedicated and passionate North Polk Comet fans. The pair estimates they've attended more than 1,000 Comet games, track meets and other sporting activities.

Their North Polk allegiance began when they moved to Polk City 15 years ago. All four of their children have been involved in multiple sports yearly since each was about 5 years old. Mom and Dad have nearly perfect attendance, rarely missing any events.

Their kids include North Polk High School students Colton, 17, and twins, Jenna and Jocelyn, 15. Their oldest son, Hunter, graduated from North Polk and attends UNI.

Julianne became involved in NP school activities when her kids attended Central Elementary. She served as PTA president, established a 5K run for Central and is the current



Hunter, Julianne, Jenna, Jocelyn, Mike and Colton Manock are proud supporters of the North Polk Comets. Photo submitted

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NP Booster Club secretary. She started an NP equipment swap, where parents clean out used athletic equipment. They sort out items, and everything can be purchased for a dollar.

Mike became involved with coaching Little League and other youth sports teams. Julianne and Mike both stress the importance of volunteering their time with their kids' activities.

"If we don't do it, who will?" asks Mike.

The Manocks admit to a hectic schedule, especially when all four were in sports. If one child is at a game or track meet, and another child is playing on a different field, the couple split up, taking turns watching each kid.

"We are gone five to six days a week to North Polk events or practices," says Mike. "It's a big part of our lives."

The couple recalls driving hundreds of miles several days this summer when their kids' teams made it to playoffs.

"We drove to Iowa City for Colton's state baseball playoffs. Then we drove to Fort

Dodge for the girls' softball game. Then we drove back home — all in one day," says Mike. "We repeated that a few times because they kept winning."

Even though Hunter is away at college, he returns to see his siblings play football or softball. Hunter also runs track at UNI, so it's another team for the family to root for.

"It's rare if one of us isn't at every event," Julianne reflects.

The pair are both educators. Julianne teaches at DMACC in Ames, while Mike is a principal at Ballard East Elementary. When Ballard plays North Polk, Mike says there's no debate as to where his allegiance lies.

"If Ballard plays North Polk, I'll always root for my own kids."

The couple knows that supporting kids and helping them stay involved is crucial to their upbringing.

"As educators, we know that the more kids are involved in school, the more successful they'll be," says Mike.

The entire family also attends other NP

athletics and extracurricular activities.

"We'll support the whole community. We see our own kids wanting to support others. We get to watch other people's kids' success and watch them grow as well," says Mike.

The family appreciates how NP has progressed over the years and is thankful for the great coaches and mentors at NP.

"We're watching North Polk grow. People — the teachers, coaches — all want to be here. It's a high quality school district, and our kids have benefitted," says Mike.

Julianne supports their kids in whatever they choose to do.

"We love it. We love watching them do what they love. We'll support them 100% in anything they choose to do."

Colton sums up his involvement and love of the NP Comets.

"There's a sense of community around you. The coach talks about you having success, but you can only do it as a team. Each of us help support others and are making memories at the same time." ■

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LIBRARY

POLK CITY Community Library news

Announcements: Happy Thanksgiving! The library will close at 5 p.m. on Wednesday, Nov. 22. The library will be closed Nov. 23-26.

• **Wednesday Book Club, Wednesday, Nov. 1, 7 p.m., “Remarkably Bright Creatures” by Shelby Van Pelt.** Join us to discuss this mystery novel from a unique perspective. Ever the detective, Marcellus the octopus deduces what happened the night aquarium cleaner Tova’s son disappeared. And now Marcellus must use every trick his old invertebrate body can muster to unearth the truth for her before it’s too late.

• **Coloring Night at Fenders Brewing, Wednesday, Nov. 8, 4-9 p.m.** Come for a night of relaxation and fun with friends at Fenders Brewing.

• **Pre-Teen/Teen D.I.Y. Pencil and/or Make-up Bag, Tuesday, Nov. 7, 4 p.m.** Teens who enjoy drawing and painting will like this program. We will be using acrylic paint pens to decorate our creations. The bags are the perfect size to hold pencils or make-up, but you can decide what you want them to hold. Registration is required and will begin two weeks ahead of the program date. Register by clicking on the calendar event on our website.

• **Babble and Brew, Thursday, Nov. 9, 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.

• **Author Ann Hanigan Kotz, Thursday, Nov. 9, 6 p.m.** Hanigan Kotz incorporates her own family history and Iowa roots into her writing. Her book, “The Journey of Karoline Olsen,” is praised for its “authenticity and reliability.” Recommended for women “who look for history-based novels that come alive with the quickening of both relationships and survival tactics.”

• **November Comets Kids Club for K-fifth graders, Monday, Nov. 13, 4 p.m.** Officer Aicher and Eudoris, his police dog, will be at our Comets Club meeting to discuss what it is like working with a police dog. Register online by clicking on the calendar event on our website. Registration opens two weeks prior to the event.

• **Crafternoon, Tuesday, Nov. 14, 2 p.m.** Join us for a fun afternoon of crafting. We’ll be making garlands themed after delicious holiday pie. All supplies will be provided. Ages 17 and older. Register online at polkcitylibrary.org.

• **Lure of the West (via Zoom), Wednesday, Nov. 15, 3 p.m.** Part geography and part mythology, the American West retains a powerful allure in popular culture. Explore depictions of the people, lifestyles and landscapes of the 19th century West to better understand this dynamic period of history. Watch from home or from the big screen in the library. Presented by Smithsonian American Art Museum.

• **Monday Book Club, Monday, Nov. 20, 2 p.m., “Lessons in Chemistry” by Bonnie Garmus.** Join us to discuss this uplifting story of a female scientist whose career is constantly derailed by the idea that a woman’s place is in the home. Copies of the book are available at the library. ■

• **Adult DIY Card Crafting, Monday, Nov. 27, 6 p.m.** Join Jane and Kim in making handmade cards that are fun to create and treasured by the recipients. Make two cards each of four different designs using numerous techniques. There will be a \$5 material fee payable that night. Beginners are welcome. Feel free to bring scissors and adhesive if you have them, and prepare to have a good time. Ages 17 and older. Register by clicking on the calendar event on our website one month in advance of the program. ■

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In the financial industry, a fiduciary must, by law, act impartially and provide advice that is in their clients' best interest. Choosing a fiduciary can help put you at ease when looking for the right retirement planner. This person should be transparent and thoroughly explain investment options and fees. If you are working with someone who doesn't have a fiduciary duty to you, you have fewer legal options should you discover that your best interests were not served. When interviewing a potential retirement planner, a few questions are, "What's your legal obligation to my investments?" and "What investment services or advice will you be providing me?" It's also a good idea to ask for regulatory documentation on how they handle conflicts of interest and what procedures they have to ensure your best interests are placed before theirs.

Check that your retirement planners are all investment advisors

registered with the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission. They will uphold the regulatory requirements needed to be financial fiduciaries. Aside from regulatory requirements, being a fiduciary is necessary to protect the families and individuals they work with.

Some retirement planners have also passed a rigorous certification and training process established by the National Association of Certified Financial Fiduciaries to obtain the Certified Financial Fiduciary designation. While the other financial designations you might see cover the legalities of a fiduciary, there is no other designation that focuses solely on understanding and being the best fiduciary one can be. This training not only puts retirement planners in a better position to help families and individuals plan for retirement, it keeps the critical word "trust" at the forefront of the entire retirement planning process. Obtaining the Certified Financial Fiduciary designation allows retirement planners to apply a wide array of knowledge to your retirement and ensure that all facets of your plan are intentional, customized and transparent.

When planning for retirement, the Latin you may want to live by is "carpe diem." This phrase means to seize the day, enjoy the moment, and worry less about tomorrow. Finding a retirement planner you trust can help you do just that.

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FILL your family's plates with cozy fall meals

(Family Features) Putting away the homework, turning off electronics and spending a little quality time together can help ease everyday stresses. Add a cozy meal packed with tastes you love and you'll have the perfect recipe for an autumn evening with your family.

Cooler days call for comforting flavors the entire family can enjoy at the dinner table like roasted veggies — from sweet potatoes to pumpkin and more — paired with hearty favorites like cheesy pierogies that provide a sense of warmth and coziness. Make this autumn one to remember by creating new meals and memories along the way.

For an extra special celebration with the ones you love in honor of the 15th anniversary of National Pierogy Day, consider a cozy, warming dish like Roasted Sweet Potatoes Brown Butter Pierogies, which is loaded with the flavors of the season. This comforting meal starts with cubed sweet potatoes — a hallmark of fall — along with pierogies tossed in a homemade brown butter sauce. Top with pecans for a nutty crunch and fresh thyme leaves for the final touch on a newfound favorite that'll bring loved ones running to the dinner table.

Find more ways to incorporate fall flavors into your family's everyday menu by visiting MrsTsPierogies.com. ■

Roasted sweet potatoes brown butter pierogies

Prep time: 10 minutes
Cook time: 30 minutes
Servings: 4-5

- 1 bag (1.6 pounds) Mrs. T's Mini Classic Cheddar Pierogies
- 2 cups sweet potato cubes (approximately 1 large or 2 medium sweet potatoes, cut into 1/2-inch cubes)
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- salt, to taste
- pepper, to taste
- 4 tablespoons salted butter
- 1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- water
- 1/2 cup pecans
- fresh thyme leaves, for serving

DIRECTIONS

- Preheat oven to 400 F.
- Toss sweet potato cubes in olive oil, salt and pepper, to taste, and spread in even layer on baking sheet. Roast 25-30 minutes, tossing about halfway through, until potatoes are fork tender.



- In medium skillet over medium heat, brown butter 5-10 minutes. Avoid smoking or burning. Remove from heat. Allow to cool about 5 minutes then whisk in balsamic vinegar and lemon juice.
- In large saucepan, bring water to boil. Cook pierogies according to package directions, about 3 minutes. Drain and toss in brown butter sauce.
- Add roasted sweet potatoes and pecans to brown butter pierogies and toss gently to coat.
- Top with fresh thyme leaves.

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3145 Howell Court, Cumming
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Iowa Orchard
9875 Meredith Drive, Urbandale
Hours: 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., through Halloween

Pierce's Pumpkin Patch
2491 IA-14, Charito
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GOING strong

Bryant wins national powerlifting title.

Ben Bryant of Polk City was somewhat of a gym rat growing up, enjoying the feeling of a good workout and the strength, flexibility and size it brought with it.

Last year, while performing a deadlift in the gym, a lightbulb turned on.

"I hit a deadlift personal record of 500 pounds with little to no actual training," Bryant says. "I had deadlifted and trained my back, but not actually tried to deadlift. This was when I realized I could take this serious."

That's when a new journey began for the 17-year-old Bryant, one that would take him into the world of powerlifting where he found success almost instantly.

He met with Kyle Keough, a two-time former world record holder in the sport, who convinced Bryant he should give powerlifting a shot. So he did.

Now he's the 2023 USA Powerlifting (USAPL) National Champion in the 90kg teen (16-17) division.

In the tournament, which took place in Memphis, Tennessee, each participant was given three attempts per lift — the squat, bench press and deadlift. Participants generally work lower to higher with weights with their third attempt featuring the most weight. The total of the successful highest attempt is deemed the winner.

Bryant just missed one attempt through the entire tournament, going 3-for-3 on both the deadlift and squats, and 2-for-3 on the bench press. Bryant had qualified for the tournament in February at the state level, which was his first official competition ever.

"I was very nervous, and I couldn't sleep the night before, as I was worried about making weights, and just competition in general," Bryant says. "I repeatedly ran through what I needed for competition day and made sure everything was in place. After my first lift, the nerves left, and after finishing the first three attempts on squat, the nerves were gone and I just had confidence and felt good."

Bryant says winning the competition put everything into perspective. "The feeling of all of the work effort and struggles paying off is better than anything," he says. "I smiled and immediately texted my coach who was coaching me from home online. The only thing I said was, 'We did it.' The months of effort, late nights alone in the gym, forcing meals down, and effort came from the pure passion to stand on top of the podium and make my family, friends and coach proud."

Keough said the USAPL is considered the toughest national-level competition in America. To win it is special.

"Ben committed 100% to powerlifting this year, which meant not only months of very hard training, but a commitment to really learn the sport," Keough says. "There is so much more nuance and strategy to putting together a three-lift total beyond just lifting some weights. He put together a near-perfect performance. This is my first-ever USAPL National title as a coach; it means a lot, and I appreciate him trusting me with the task of getting here." ■



Ben Bryant of Polk City was crowned the 2023 USA Powerlifting (USAPL) National Champion in the 90kg teen (16-17) division.

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THE COMETS CORNER

NEWS FROM NORTH POLK CSD

OCTOBER 2023

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

The North Polk Community School District is asking voters to consider whether the district can take out a \$17 million bond referendum for a career technical education addition to the high school, an additional baseball/softball complex, and renovate older elementary classrooms at West and Central Elementary. If passed, the district must use the funds toward all three proposed projects. These upgrades will create new opportunities, enhance safety measures, and meet the evolving needs of our students and will not impact your taxes. To prepare for potential future growth, the district has decided not to use the full bond capacity at this time. By reserving some funds, the district can allocate them toward projects down the line.

The project is expected to require a total investment of approximately \$17 million, with \$7.5 million designated for the baseball/softball complex and \$8 million for the Career Tech addition. The remaining funds will be allocated toward classroom updates and upgrades, as well as the acquisition of a small supply of heat pumps to support our HVAC units.

These projects will enhance opportunities, safety, and the learning environment for our students.

What's on the Ballot?:

"Shall the Board of Directors of the North Polk Community School District in the Counties of Boone, Polk, and Story, State of Iowa, be authorized to contract indebtedness and issue General Obligation Bonds in an amount not to exceed \$17,000,000 to provide funds to construct, build, furnish and equip an Industrial Arts/Agriculture FFA/Career & Technical Education (CTE) addition to the High School building, including related remodeling and site improvements; and to construct, build, furnish and equip a baseball/softball athletic complex and site improvements; renovate, remodel, repair, improve, furnish, and equip portions of existing building space at West and Central Elementary buildings?"

Where Can I Learn More?

We will host community forums throughout the district for the community to learn more about the projects on the upcoming bond and an opportunity to get your questions answered! See the dates of the proposed forums below.

- Tuesday, October 24, 2023, at 5:00 p.m. West Office Area/Lobby (Conferences)
- Tuesday, October 24, 2023, at 5:00 p.m. Central Office Area/Lobby (Conferences)
- Tuesday, October 24, 2023, at 5:00 p.m. Big Creek Office Area/Lobby (Conferences)
- Tuesday, October 24, 2023, at 5:00 p.m. Middle School Office Area/Lobby (Conferences)

It is crucial to exercise your voting rights during this upcoming election. All registered voters residing within the North Polk district boundaries have the chance to cast their ballots in the bond referendum. **Polls are open on November 7, 2023, from 7 AM - 8 PM.**



Career Tech Addition



Additional Sport Complex



Renovating Classrooms

Visit our website at northpolk.org/bond2023 for more information and resources



HOMECOMING HAPPENINGS

Over the week of September 18th - 22nd, the North Polk school district celebrated Homecoming. The week was filled with fun-filled festivities and of course, a plethora of Comet spirit! This year, we hosted our annual Homecoming Parade and Pep Rally in Alleman. We'd like to thank the Alleman city leaders and the community for their support of this event.



Homecoming King Bradyn and Queen Lola



DID YOU KNOW?

The North Polk Community School District has an online photo gallery available to the public for viewing and **download all for free.**

The gallery features over 4,500 photos from different events, activities, and happenings throughout the district be sure to check it out at **[flickr.com/northpolk](https://www.flickr.com/photos/northpolk)**



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HEALTH

By Dr. Jesse Kahnk, OD

VISION correction with orthokeratology

Every night, before I go to bed, I pop in my plastic teeth aligners. As I sleep, my teeth slowly are pulled back into alignment. I take them out in the morning, and my teeth hopefully maintain their alignment for the majority of the day before I complete the cycle again at night.

A couple of nights ago, I was struck with how similar this process is to a pretty unknown form of vision correction called orthokeratology. The goal is very similar to that of my teeth aligners. We use a hard contact lens to slowly push on the cornea (the front part the eye) in order to correct your vision. Patients wear the contact at night and then take them out during the day. This allows you to see well during the days without glasses or contacts. There's an additional benefit in that this time of vision correction in kids has been shown to slow down myopia (near-sightedness) progression.

During the first few days, the old prescription will return more quickly, but, as you continue to wear it for more nights, that good vision during the day is maintained longer and longer. Just like with my aligners, the feeling takes a little getting used to, but it starts to feel routine after a few days. ■



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 Elijah Evans

EMOTIONAL validation makes or breaks relationships

Emotional validation is a critical skill for healthy relationships. To validate someone's emotions is to communicate the understandability or reasonableness of their feelings. This is not the same as agreeing with the person's stance, and, in fact, this skill becomes all the more important when the feelings of the person you are acknowledging are different from your own. For example, I find coffee disgusting, but, for all the coffee lovers out there, I respect that, to you, it is an invigorating brew in which you find genuine satisfaction. The alternatives to validation include the assertion of one's own perspective (e.g. coffee is gross) or attempts to change a person's feelings (e.g. arguing tea is the superior hot, bitter beverage). These alternatives become problematic when responding to the emotions of others because they imply there is something wrong with the way they feel, since you are either unwilling to relate to their feelings or suggesting they should be different. Instead, practicing validation communicates empathy and respect for differences, which are crucial for navigating conflict. While the coffee example is a mundane way to demonstrate validation, one can easily imagine an emotionally charged interaction in which one person expresses an important feeling, and validation is the only thing that would make them feel seen and cared for. ■



Information provided by Elijah Evans, TLMHC, SS Therapy and Consulting, Ltd, 4725 Merle Hay Road, Suite 205, Des Moines, 515-528-8135, evans@sstherapyandconsulting.com, www.sstherapyandconsulting.com.

BEFORE YOU GO

By Tosha Edmundson

'I DON'T want to talk about that'

I have had the privilege of meeting with more than 100 families in the last few months. Many of them are pre-planning for their future burial needs. Other families have found themselves planning the burial of loved one — burials that had been paid for in advance and burials that required decisions to be made after the death occurred. I have found that families are either grateful that conversations were had about the burial preferences in advance or left wishing someone had approached the subject while they still could. So, let's talk about it.



Upon death, there are primarily two choices — a traditional casket burial or cremation. A traditional casket burial will require burial soon after death. A cremation burial can be planned for any time after the service of cremation is complete — perhaps when the weather is more pleasant, when it is easier for family to all gather, when their spouse dies in the future in order to be buried together or maybe not be buried at all. Both cremation and casket burials can be done above-ground or in-ground depending on available options at the cemetery of your choice. See? It's not so hard to start the conversation. This conversation can avoid burdens in the future when grief and loss are already heavy enough.

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

FALL in love with your fall routine

Fall provides a unique and picturesque backdrop for those aiming to shed excess weight. The cooler temperatures invite outdoor activities like brisk walks through vibrant parks and invigorating hikes. As the days gradually shorten, there's a natural inclination to savor wholesome, comforting foods. Fall harvests offer an array of nutrient-rich options, from apples and pumpkins to various squashes, promoting a diet rich in vitamins and fiber.



Moreover, fall's cozy atmosphere encourages home-cooked meals, allowing for better control over ingredients and portions. Seasonal produce can be incorporated into nourishing soups and stews, fostering a sense of satiety while keeping calorie intake in check. The transition from summer's indulgent treats to fall's more structured routines creates an opportune moment to reassess dietary habits.

The autumn season also marks a shift in fitness routines, with activities like leaf-raking and apple picking providing enjoyable alternatives to traditional workouts. The cooler weather diminishes the discomfort associated with outdoor exercise, making it easier to maintain a consistent fitness regimen. By embracing the opportunities of fall, individuals can embark on a weight loss journey that aligns with the rhythm of nature and sets the stage for healthier habits in the approaching winter months. ■

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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SLOAN named Health Teacher of the Year

Emphasizes everyone is on their own health journey.

A North Polk High School teacher was named 2023 Shape Iowa Health Teacher of the Year by the Society of Health and Physical Educators.

Anne Sloan, a 17-year NP educator, was recently notified of the award. She currently teaches PE and health and coaches volleyball.

Sloan was nominated in June. She was required to answer questions and scored on various criteria with regards to how she integrates health engagement in the school environment.

One of her elective classes is yoga mindfulness. Her students learn mindfulness and practice yoga moves to assist them in various aspects of their lives.

Sloan says she works hard to build relationships with students.

"I try to build relationships in a variety of ways. I create a space for all students, so they can feel supported and safe."

She embraces her students, who come from varied backgrounds.

"We all bring different experiences. Each gain skills and knowledge, and it's different for everyone," she explains.

Not every student is on the same health journey. She advises her own children, as well as her students, to be open.

"Be open and vulnerable. We're all imperfect human beings," she says. "We're always looking to find the best strategies that work for you."

She says health is all about balancing life.

"It's OK to make mistakes. Just understand the big picture that health and wellness is a part of life after school. It's ever changing, and I advise students to be open to whatever works for them," she says.

Sloan says she was surprised when she found out she was selected for the award.

"I was honored and humbled to be nominated. I thank everyone over the years for all the support I've received," she says. "I'm super happy to be highlighting health and wellness."

As she reflects on her own health journey, it's about more than the physical aspect. She explains, "Health encompasses everything we do."

Sloan says she has learned a lot from her students.

"I tell them that all the time. I'm not sure they believe me," she says. "I try to make class as relevant as I can to today's world."

She acknowledges everyone who's helped her in her teaching career.

"I'd like to thank my family, my husband and children. I thank my North Polk colleagues and all of those individuals who have played a role in my life. I wouldn't be where I'm at without all these relationships I've established over the years." ■



Anne Sloan has been honored by the Society of Health and Physical Educators.

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AVOID these investment mistakes

We all make mistakes in many areas of life. These mistakes are usually fairly harmless — we took a wrong turn while driving, used the wrong ingredients in a recipe and so on. But sometimes, our mistakes can be costly — especially those connected to investing. Here are some of the most common investment mistakes:



- **Too much buying and selling** — Some people find it exciting to constantly buy and sell investments in the pursuit of big gains. Yet, frequent trading can work against you in a couple of ways. First, it can be expensive — if you're always buying and selling investments, you could rack up taxes, fees and commissions. Perhaps even more important, though, excessive purchases and sales can make it difficult to follow a unified, cohesive investment strategy. Such a strategy requires, among other things, careful construction and management of an investment portfolio that's appropriate for your goals, risk tolerance and time horizon. Heavy trading can disrupt this strategy.

- **Failing to diversify** — If you only owned one type of asset, such as growth-oriented stocks, your portfolio could take a hit when the financial markets go through a downturn. But not all investments will respond the same way to the same forces — for example, stocks and bonds can move in different directions at any given time. And that's why it's usually a good idea to own a mix of investments, which can include domestic and foreign stocks, bonds, certificates of deposit (CDs) and government securities. Keep in mind, though, that while diversification can help reduce the impact of market volatility, it can't guarantee profits or protect against losses in a declining market.

- **Trying to "time" the market** — "Buy low and sell high" might be the original piece of investment advice, but it's pretty hard to follow — because no one can really predict when an investment will reach "low" or "high" points. Also, trying to "time" the market in this way can lead to bad decisions, such as selling investments whose price has dropped, even if these same investments still have good business fundamentals and strong prospects.

- **Not understanding what you're investing in** — If you don't know the nature of investments when you buy them, you could set yourself up for unpleasant surprises. For example, some companies, by the very nature of their business and the type of industry they're in, may consistently pay dividends to their investors even though their stock prices may only show relatively modest price gains over time. If you bought shares of this stock, thinking it had the potential to achieve quite substantial appreciation, you might end up disappointed.

- **Making the wrong comparisons** — You're no doubt familiar with some of the most well-known investment benchmarks — the S&P 500, Dow Jones Industrial Average and the Nasdaq Composite. But it might be counterproductive to compare your results against these indexes. If you have a diversified portfolio, you'll own an array of investments that won't fit into any single index or benchmark, so you won't get an apples-to-apples comparison. You're better off comparing your portfolio's performance against the only benchmark that really matters — the progress you need to make to help achieve your goals.

Investing will always have its challenges — but you can help make it easier on yourself by staying away from as many mistakes as possible. ■

This article was written by Edward Jones for use by your local Edward Jones Financial Advisor. Edward Jones. Member SIPC. Information was provided by Kyle Matzen, AAMS, 407 W Bridge Rd. Suite 7, Polk City, 515-984-6073.

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REAL ESTATE

By Bonnie Christensen

5 MYTHS costing you time and money

Save your cash for more important things, like, you know, your mortgage. You can't swing a tool belt without hitting a website or TV network offering tips on taking care of your digs.



Myth 1: Stone countertops are indestructible

Fact: Even rock can be damaged.

Marble, quartz, travertine, soapstone and limestone can all be stained. Regular household cleaners can dull their surfaces over time. And marble is maddeningly fragile — it's the prima donna of stone.

Marble is easy to scratch. It's easy to stain. Here's the worst part: Mildly acidic substances like soda, coffee, lemon juice, even hard water, will eat into marble, creating a cloudy, dull spot in a process known as etching.

Myth 2: Your smoke detector's test button is foolproof

Fact: The test button doesn't tell you what you really need to know.

Yes, check your smoke detector twice a year. But all that test button will tell you is whether the alarm sound is working, not if the sensor that detects smoke is working. The best way to check your device is with real smoke.

Myth 3: A trendy kitchen redo will increase my home's value

Fact: Décor trends come and go as fast as viral videos.

Instead of remodeling in the latest look, which costs an average \$45,000, according to the National Association of REALTORS® "Remodeling Impact Report," try repainting in on-trend colors, which costs \$600 to \$1,320. If you do opt for a full remodel, choose elements like Shaker cabinets, wood floors and subway tile, a timeless style you'll love 10 years from now.

Myth 4: Turning off your AC when you leave saves energy

Fact: Turning off the air conditioner when you leave could actually cost you money.

That's because, when you turn it back on, all your savings will be lost as the unit works overtime to cool your hot house. A better way to save on utilities is to turn the thermostat up or down (depending on the season) 5 to 10 degrees when you leave.

Myth 5: Permits? We don't need no stinkin' permits

Fact: You do.

Getting a permit means an inspector will check the work to make sure the contractor didn't screw up. Plus, if your house burns down in an electrical fire, and your insurance company finds out the work was done without a permit, it won't cover your loss. ■

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



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SET yourself up for financial success

Ignorance is not always bliss. If you chose to ignore financial responsibilities, it could cost you dearly. On the other hand, if you choose to make it a priority, it can make your life a little easier. There are several different ways to set yourself up for success. The key is finding the way that works for you. Below are a few simple, but significant, tips to help steer you in your right direction:



1. Track your spending

While check registries are becoming less and less common, tracking doesn't have to. Online banking is a great tool you have at your fingertips. In today's world, it's so easy to swipe and move on. Review your accounts each morning so you know what you have available before you start spending.

Most online banking applications also allow you to set alerts. Setting an alert for when your account dips below a certain threshold can help you limit spending.

2. Separate your money

Having your entire paycheck deposited into your checking account might make it more tempting to spend. On the days you get paid, set up automatic transfers into other accounts. This takes away the temptation. You can have one account for spending, one for bills, maybe one for vacations, and even one to save for that new car.

3. Automate your debt

Just about every debt you can think of can be set up for automatic payments. By doing this, you don't have to stress about forgetting.

You can even go a step further and ask if you can align your payments with your payday. If you get paid biweekly, set up partial payments to come out the days you get paid. For example, if your payment is \$100/month, set up a \$50 biweekly payment on the days you get paid. This will not only help by spreading your payments over time but can sometimes save you in interest.

4. Use the snowball method

When you are buried in debt, seeing the light at the end of the tunnel can be difficult. Putting together a solid plan and sticking to it can help. One method is to focus on paying off smaller debts first. Once those are paid, add that dollar amount to the next smallest payment. This will eventually snowball into applying more funds to your larger debts while maintaining the same budget.

These are only a few tools of many you can utilize throughout your financial journey. Again, the key is to find the tool that works best for you. ■

Information provided by Caroline Williams, retail banking officer, 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.



Spooky Tales at the Museum on the Square

Oct. 21 at 7 p.m.

Polk City Museum on the Square

The public is invited to Spooky Tales. 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.

Candidate forums

Oct. 24 and Oct. 25

Luana Savings Bank community room, 855 W. Bridge Road, Polk City

GO Polk City is hosting candidate forums for Polk City City Council and for North Polk School Board. The forum for City Council candidates is Oct. 24, 6-8 p.m. at the Luana Savings Bank community room. The school board forum is Oct. 25, 6-8 p.m. at the Luana Savings Bank community room.

Bake sale, white elephant sale and dinner

Saturday, Nov. 18, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Masonic Temple, 106 Third St., Polk City

The Polk City O.E.S. Chapter 361 is hosting a bake sale and dinner. The bake sale is 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. and features homemade mincemeat and apple butter, cashews, pecan halves, mixed nuts, honey-roasted peanuts, chocolate amaretto pecans, and chocolate-covered peanuts. There will also be a white elephant sale. Dinner is 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. and includes beef and noodles with mashed potatoes, vegetable, roll and dessert for \$10 for adults, \$5 for children 5-10 and free for children younger than 5. Carryout will be available.



Light Up Polk City

Friday, Dec. 1, 6-8 p.m.

Polk City Town Square

Light Up Polk City will be Dec. 1. Businesses are encouraged to participate in this promotional event by either holding an open house or tailgate-style event. Contact Amanda at GO Polk City, 515-984-3098, if your business plans to participate.

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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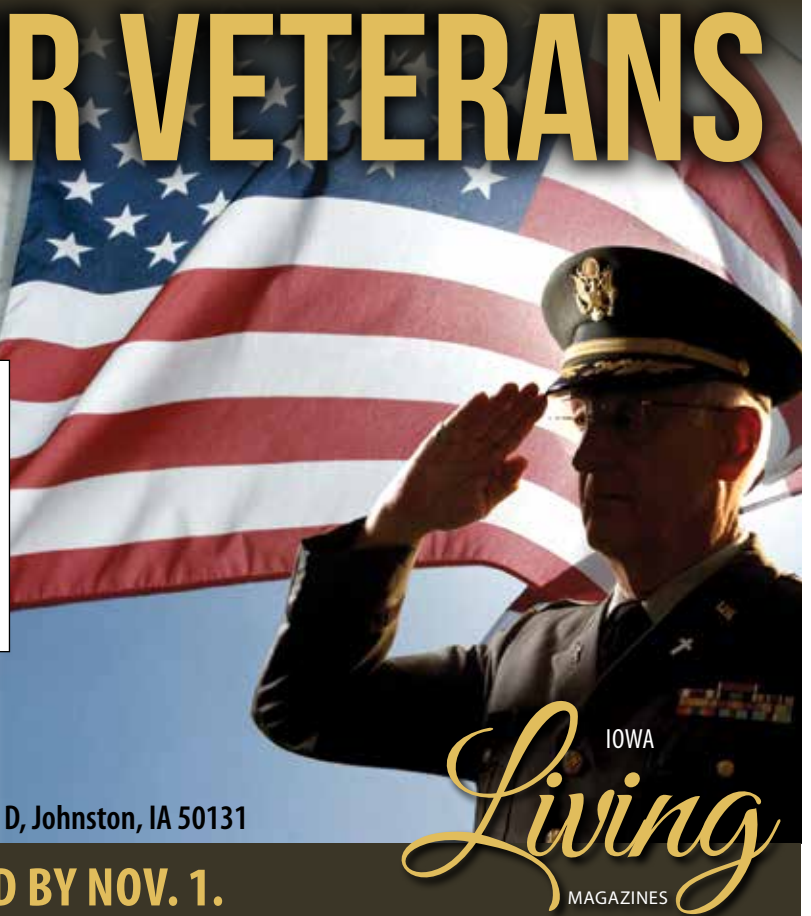
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SUBMISSIONS MUST BE RECEIVED BY NOV. 1.



MERRITTWEEN: a party with a cause

Halloween tradition bigger and better — and a fundraiser

Jason and Meri Merritt of Polk City have an October tradition in which they put on a Halloween-themed party for their friends and neighbors. They call their tradition “Merrittween.” The first year’s party was in Des Moines, but the couple then moved to Polk City and has larger yard, so they made use of more room for decorations. Each year, the event has grown. More decorations, more guests, more costumes, more food and adult beverage options, and more fun. This year, the Merritts have chosen to add “more giving.”

“We both really love Halloween. We have always done a Halloween party and go crazy decorating the front yard with a full cemetery, animatronics, and stuff like that,” says Meri. “This is our fourth year doing it, and, every year, people ask us how they can help.”

In the past, they politely thanked guests for the offer, but declined any assistance. But then Jason had an idea following last year’s event. He suggested that, if guests truly wish to pitch in, the couple could pick a charitable cause for anyone to donate toward.

Meri previously worked as the marketing and event coordinator at Ronald McDonald House of Des Moines, and she was especially close to a boy named Trevor and his family. Meri said that Trevor loved everything related to Halloween — and the scarier the better. So, it made sense to dedicate this year’s Merrittween to Trevor’s memory.

After some consideration of which charity would be best to steer donations toward, Meri and Jason decided upon the American Cancer



The Merritt yard is transformed into a spooky scene every October.

Society, and they are dedicating this year’s party and fundraising to Trevor.

Merrittween 2023 is happening beginning at 7 p.m. on Saturday, Oct. 28, at their home, 1200 Westside Drive in Polk City. Meri says this year’s decorations include an alien theme. Guests are encouraged to wear costumes, but they don’t have to follow the alien theme.

Everyone is invited.

“We turned it into a block party last year,” says Meri. “It’s for anybody. We usually have between 40 and 50 people come.”

Meri said this year’s party is also an unofficial “launch party” for Jason’s automotive mechanic shop, which is in the family’s garage. The Merritts have a Facebook page on which they post decoration and party updates. ■

“It’s been through the addition of MAPLE that we have been able to get the kids to talk.”

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SUPPORTIVE community

Kozelka family feels right at home

In spring 2018, Cassie Kozelka and her husband, Kurt, moved to Polk City because they liked the idea of small-town living being a great environment in which to raise kids.

“My husband had researched the town and, financially, buying a home in Polk City as it was just starting to become a growing community was a good investment,” Kozelka says.

They chose to purchase their home because the layout was open and bright, and it also had a nice sized backyard — “Enough for a dog but not enough to need a new lawn mower!”

Kozelka says she also enjoys the spacious deck on the back of the home.

“There’s a spot for a table and a seating area,” she says. “We put chairs and a fire pit there, and, on cool nights, it’s great to sit and enjoy each other’s company. The vaulted ceiling and big bright windows in the formal living room turned dining room is beautiful. The kitchen was upgraded with on-point cabinets and granite countertops, which are lovely.”

Kozelka keeps active in town by serving as



Cassie Kozelka says she and her husband, Kurt, found Polk City to be a great environment for raising their children.



vice president of the Polk City Women’s Group.

“It’s a great group of women who raise money for the community — from scholarships and Comet Cupboard donations to sponsoring festival events and a community compassion fund for people in the community who need a little help or a pick me up,” she explains.

One of the biggest things to stand out to the Kozelka family, though, is the support they’ve felt from the community.

“We have an autistic, non-binary child, and it’s been a huge relief that, overall, the people in town and the school district have been very helpful and supportive,” she says. ■

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CHAMBER Lunch

The Polk City Chamber of Commerce monthly lunch was held at Luana Savings Bank on Sept. 13.



Jess Hondl and Maria Nuriel



Kimberly Jackman and Corey Morrison



Alysia Olson and Olivia Tebben



Chelsea Huisman and Amanda Thompson



Jeremy Siepker and Karla Hogrefe



Claire Smith and Wendy Musgrave



Brandon Converse and John Ahlers



Brian Nelson and Shawn Comer



Logan Albaugh, Jason Madison and Ryan Toney



Clayton Harrel and Megan Burdine



Brian Nelson, Chad Johnston and Jeff Savage



BJ Tate at the North Polk varsity football game vs. Carlisle on Sept. 1.



Carter Bormann at the North Polk varsity football game vs. Carlisle on Sept. 1.



Graedan Sullivan at the North Polk varsity football game vs. Carlisle on Sept. 1.



Kale Yoakum at the North Polk varsity football game vs. Carlisle on Sept. 1.



Sam Rippentrop at the North Polk varsity football game vs. Carlisle on Sept. 1.



Autumn and Colin Chrouser at The Polk City Chamber of Commerce monthly lunch held at Luana Savings Bank on Sept. 13.



Mitch Mueller, Nan Boland and Susie Sheldahl at The Polk City Chamber of Commerce monthly lunch held at Luana Savings Bank on Sept. 13.



Derek Christy, John Ahlers, Hunter Kahler and Jady Kissner at The Polk City Chamber of Commerce monthly lunch held at Luana Savings Bank on Sept. 13.

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