

JOHNSTON

DECEMBER 2023

Living

MAGAZINE

Special DELIVERY

Residents share their thoughts on the
tradition of sending Christmas cards

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CHRISTMAS card communication

Time for a family photo. Time to update your address lists. Time to summarize anything and everything that's changed in your lives this year. Yes, you guessed it; it's time to send out holiday greeting cards.

I remember when Jolene and I were first married, and we couldn't wait to send out Christmas cards with an update letter. The same was true after each of our three children were born. But after nearly three decades of doing this, it became a chore. As such, I began to wonder if it had become tedious for others as well. Is this holiday practice as popular as it once was? Are people still typing up letters and hand-writing cards?

I used to look forward to this time-honored tradition, especially reading about what was new in the lives of friends or family members whom we don't touch base with regularly. But, if I am being honest, I don't think I looked through all the cards and letters in recent years. And if the letter took multiple pages, well, forget it.

Then, something changed. In the past few years, we haven't received as many. In conversations with others, I learned that a growing number of folks are relying on social media sites for the purpose of Christmas communication. Or they gave up in general. Or, maybe, they just took me off their list.

Truth be told, we skipped the entire Christmas card tradition a few years back. We had a hectic few months leading up to the holidays, and we just didn't get it done. Even so, life went on as normal. But, as you might guess, we returned to the task the following year.

So, here we are, just weeks from Christmas, and the pressure is on. We will gather a photo from a recent family get-together. We will update our list of addresses. And we will mail out the cards. Also this year, I will relax in my easy chair with my slippers on my feet and a cup of cocoa in my hand and read all the cards and letters. At least that's the plan.

Be sure to check out this month's cover story to learn how other residents are handling their Christmas communication this year.

Thanks for reading. ■

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Special DELIVERY

Residents share their thoughts on the tradition of sending Christmas cards

By Ashley Rullestad

Those who remember the days before social media, when long-distance phone calls cost money and letter-writing was commonplace, likely remember lining fireplace mantels and shelves with Christmas cards they received. Often containing a thoughtful note or special message, the cards were a cherished piece of communication with family and friends. But, as with many other traditions, the practice of mailing Christmas cards has been usurped by modern technology. Many now depend on email messages, texting or a one-message-for-all post online. When it comes to Christmas cards, the population has fallen into two camps: those who still value giving and receiving them and those who consider the effort — and postage — not worth it.

Lynne Schoop is dedicated to her tradition of sending out Christmas cards each year.



Cards through the years

Lynne Schoop has been sending photo Christmas cards for more than 40 years. She sends approximately 75-90 each year, and the biggest change is the ease of photography today.

"In the past, I would have to take the pictures with a camera and get the film developed," she says. "It would take at least 24 hours to develop. I would hope out of those 12 to 24 pictures that one was good enough to be sent as our Christmas greeting. With three young children, it was not easy to get a perfect picture."

Now, with a camera on one's phone and the ability to see and send pictures immediately, technology has made the picture card a breeze. Before Schoop had a social media account, Christmas cards and photos were the primary way she kept in touch with family and friends she didn't see often. Her mother sent cards out, and it has been a tradition that Schoop has wanted to keep alive. She's even passed the tradition on to the next generation. Now, her grown daughters also send Christmas cards with their family pictures.

"It's always fun to check the mailbox in



Lynne Schoop has been sending photo Christmas cards for more than 40 years.

December and see family's and friends' holiday greetings," says Schoop.

Brooke Whiting has also been sending cards

for years — 21 to be exact — starting the year she and her husband married.

"I always loved reading the letters and cards



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Karen Scott and her family have lived in five different states over the last 20 years. When they moved to Iowa, they decided to display their Christmas cards on their door so they could enjoy them throughout the season.

that were mailed to my parents growing up, and I wanted to do that, too. It was a great way to stay connected with friends and family and fun to show how we went from being just us, to us plus dogs, and now kids.”

She admits it makes her sad to see the tradition falling by the wayside for many people, but it won’t for Whiting anytime soon. Her “Whiting Whimsical” greeting will live on.

“I feel like I’ve done it this long, I can’t quit,” she says.

Saving memories

Karen Scott and her family have lived in five different states over the last 20 years. When they moved to Iowa, they decided to display their Christmas cards on their door so they could enjoy them throughout the season.

“We don’t have any family close by, and since we have lived in so many different places, this means we have lots of people that we are friends with who are spread out all over,” she says. “By putting the cards up to enjoy, it lets



Adrienne Randall sends about 125 Christmas cards to family and friends every year.

us see how friends and family grow up over the years.”

The Scotts receive many comments from those who see the display.

“The cards are one of my favorite things about the Christmas season. It brings friends and family close that are truly very far away,” she says.

Adrienne Randall sends about 125 Christmas cards to family and friends every year.

“I actually use our wedding invite list as the

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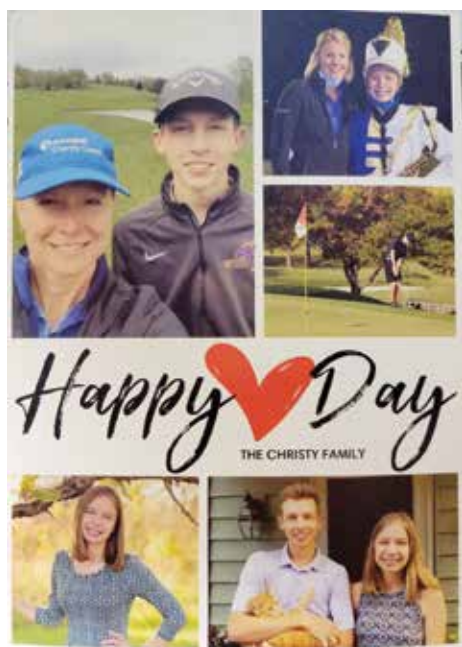
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After missing sending out her Christmas cards, Jen Christy decided to send her family photo card out for Valentine's Day, and a new tradition was born.

base for my Christmas mailing list," she says. "I think it's special to send the Christmas cards to all the people who were at our wedding and saw our family begin so they can see our family grow and change year to year, especially for people out of state that we can't see as often as we would like."

Randall's family didn't send Christmas cards when she was growing up. Some years they actually ordered them but never sent them. Once she got older and was on the receiving end of Christmas cards, they became a part of Christmas that she looks forward to.

"I think it's a simple gesture that shows a lot of love and thoughtfulness to the people who receive them," she says.

She also displays the cards that she receives by hanging them on the fridge, sometimes for a couple months, sometimes until the next November.

"I enjoy seeing pictures of our loved ones displayed, Randall says. "I do eventually throw away cards we get to make room for next year's, but I always make sure to save a copy of ours every year in a memory book so we can look back on how our family has grown."

Getting creative

Jen Christy sent Christmas cards for years. Then, one year, she was too busy and never got around to it.



Jessica Bunnell uses her skills as a printmaker to create unique Christmas cards.

"As Valentine's Day approached, I thought, 'People might appreciate a card during this time, so why not send a little love now?'"

A new tradition was born, and she's sent cards in February for three years now. On the back of the card is a brief update on each family member, even Ember the cat. Of course, she enjoys receiving cards and updates from others — at Christmas time or any time.

"It makes my day. I usually leave the cards on the middle of the kitchen table to continue enjoying them throughout the season. I do think that the number of physical cards that I receive has gone down as more send greetings through social media, but I love those, too."

Jessica Bunnell has also gotten creative with her cards. She makes homemade cards.

"I carve my own stamps out of a linoleum block and print them with a brayer and colored ink," she says. "I have a degree in art education with an emphasis in printmaking, so it's



something that I enjoy doing."

Now that the kids are getting older, they have also enjoyed the process. The Bunnells typically send about 80 cards each Christmas. She continues the tradition because it's important to her on many different levels.

"I love spreading Christmas cheer and the excitement of Christ's birth," Bunnell says. "I get to spend time doing what I love with my kids, and I always loved seeing my family's cards hanging up all Christmas season when I was little. Now, I get to recreate that for my own kids." ■

J CHAMP



FAST FACTS

1. 3 of the State Champion runners were a part of the winning Drake Relays 4 x 800 quartet
2. Senior leader Olivia Verde has committed to run at Iowa State University
3. Following the State Meet, The Dragons transformed into Dragoons to compete in the 7 state Nike Heartland Regional in Sioux Falls, SD; bringing home a 3rd place trophy.

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YOUR 2023 4A GIRLS' CROSS COUNTRY

CHAMPIONS!

Senior Olivia Verde lead the Johnston Dragons to another championship with 107 points, 15 points over runner-up Valley High School on October 27. This is their sixth championship under head coach Pat Hennes.

Verde finished as individual runner-up, crossing the finish line in 17:50.7. Verde is no stranger to the championship stage. This is her second year finishing second place in her four-year career. Verde caps off her historic career placing sixth on the all-time best performances at the state championship.

Out of the 130 athletes, all Dragon individuals finished in the top 51. With Verde's second place, freshmen Grace Beasley (20th), Ele Wharton (27th), Payton Crabb (32nd) and sophomore Alyx Woodley (34th) rounded off the winning championship team within 21 seconds of each other. Not far behind were sophomore Audrey Dummermuth and junior Marissa Pewe.

FINAL RESULTS

INDIVIDUAL

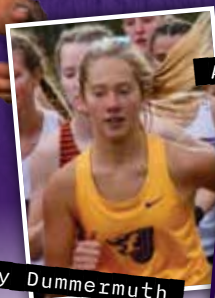
2 nd	Olivia Verde	17:50.7	SR
20 th	Grace Beasley	18:50.1	FR
27 th	Ele Wharton	18:59.1	FR
32 nd	Payton Crabb	19:08.2	FR
34 th	Alyx Woodley	19:10.7	SO
47 th	Audrey Dummermuth	19:22.4	SO
51 st	Marissa Pewe	19:25.8	JR

TEAM

1 st	Johnston Dragons	107 points
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Olivia Verde



Audrey Dummermuth



Alyx Woodley



Grace Beasley



Payton Crabb



Marissa Pewe



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ARE YOU prepared for the rising tide of taxation?

Imagine this: You're on the cusp of your long-awaited retirement when suddenly someone in Washington determines you belong in a different tax bracket. If you've been investing your money in a 401(k) or traditional IRA, that scenario could mean you end up with significantly less money to fund your retirement than you had anticipated.



Tax rates are already set to go up in 2026. If Congress takes no action, taxes will revert to pre-2018 levels on Jan. 1, 2026. This could mean anywhere from a 1% to 5% increase in marginal tax rates. And with the national debt-to-GDP ratio ballooning to its highest point in seven decades, we could be nearing a point where our leaders are forced to finally address the issue. The government can either reduce the deficit by a combination of increased tax revenue and decreased spending, or it can default on any number of its obligations. A default could be disastrous and result in higher interest rates, higher prices on consumer goods and inflation.

Are tax rate hikes imminent? Many believe that, because the national debt has reached such enormous levels — \$33.6 trillion (as of October 2023) — tax rate increases are likely since the debt needs to

be paid off with tax revenue.

You can't necessarily count on tax rates to stay the same as they are currently in retirement, but you don't have to sit back and watch. There are strategies you can implement now that could lower your taxable income in the future.

One potential strategy is to invest in currently taxed assets to avoid future tax liability. Or you may want to look into potentially tax-free income options such as life insurance, a Roth IRA or municipal bonds.

Tax decisions, like any retirement strategy, should be made with a clear understanding of the rules, the impact on your tax situation, and how the strategy fits into your overall retirement vision. Your retirement planner and trusted tax preparer should work to help you get it right.

Every Dec. 31 that goes by that you don't have a long-term tax plan is a missed opportunity. It's time to get ahead of taxes and the potential seismic shift in taxation. ■

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

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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Submitted by April Brown Graham, a carrier for 17 years

BE MINDFUL of delivery personnel

It's that time of year again when your friendly local mail carrier will be working long days every day including Sundays and deep into the night. We gladly deliver holiday cheer directly to your mailbox during "our season." Help us deliver our appointed rounds and then return to our families safely. Keep your porch light on so we can see the steps and you can see us. If there is snow, make sure we have a path for delivery. Please don't block the mailbox with your car or any other obstacles. Remember to remove snow from the area around your mailbox so we can drive in, service your mailbox, and pull away safely. If you can, make sure your house address is visible so we can deliver correctly. Thanks for keeping us safe while we deliver!

We would like to add to please be mindful when passing us on the streets as we are focused on the delivery. When passing, move all the way over and make sure to do it safely. We have near head-on collisions daily in Johnston on my route and another route in our office.

PS. It's not just us who will be out delivering in the dark. UPS, FedEx, DHL and Amazon are out there, too. ■

NEWS BRIEF

MAYOR announces 10th Annual Run for Food

Mayor Paula Dierenfeld is once again lacing up her running shoes for an extraordinary cause in the 10th Annual Food Run. This year, she's challenging the Johnston community to support her in covering an impressive 2,000 miles, all in the name of giving back.

"This initiative goes beyond the miles; it's about making a real difference," said Mayor Paula Dierenfeld. "Throughout the past nine years, our community has generously supported the Johnston Partnership, especially during the heightened need of the holiday season. Your donations play a crucial role in ensuring that Johnston families and those across the metro have food on their tables during this festive season."

Now through Dec. 31, Mayor Dierenfeld is calling on the community to contribute to this effort. For every \$10 donation or each bag of food, Mayor Dierenfeld pledges to run one mile. Donations can be made at Johnston City Hall or the Johnston Partnership.

Send or drop off your monetary or food donation to the Johnston Partnership, Attn: Mayor's Run for Food, 5870 Merle Hay Road, Suite C, Johnston, IA 50131, or donate through the Partnership's website at <https://johnstonpartnership.org/donate>. ■

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MERRY literary events from JPL

We're feeling festive here at JPL and ready to celebrate the holiday season with great events for all ages. The JPL Book Tree is up, holiday displays with books, movies and music are curated, and librarians are wearing flashing lightbulb necklaces and reindeer sweaters. As your own festivities gear up this season, make sure to save the date for these library happenings in December.

Kids

Bring the whole family to the library on Saturday, Dec. 9 from 10 a.m. to noon for **Quick Crafts**. This month we'll be making colorful ornaments. This is a drop-in program for kids, so no registration is necessary. Available while supplies last. Finally, ring in 2024 with **Escape the New Year Escape Room** on Wednesday, Dec. 27. Can you follow the clues to escape the room before time runs out? Kids will work together to solve the puzzles and find hidden objects. For kids in kindergarten through fifth grade. Register online for one of the three sessions.

Teens

Join us on Tuesday, Dec. 12 at 6:30 p.m. for **Teen Paint Night**. Enjoy a fun evening of art-making, creativity and friends. This chill series will feature a different guided painting project each month. Teens can follow along with the project or use the paints provided to create their own unique masterpiece. Registration is required. Sixth grade and up.

Adults

Know someone in your life who is learning English? JPL offers two free classes per week for English speakers of other languages. **Let's Talk** meets every Monday from 6:30-7:45 p.m. and is a casual program designed for non-native English speakers to practice their English conversation skills with a native English speaker. Discussions focus on current news, events and American culture. Everyday English



meets every Thursday evening from 6:30-7:45 p.m. Lessons focus on functional English — learning basic phrases and expressions useful in everyday conversation. Both classes are available in person or via Zoom. No registration is necessary for either class but for Zoom sign-in information, email us at esol@johnstonlibrary.org.

More information about all library programs is available at www.johnstonlibrary.com or by calling the Johnston Public Library at 515-278-5233. ■

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HOLIDAY visits to older family members may reveal problems

The holidays are a time to gather with family, whether with those you see every day or those you seldom see. These are joyous times, filled with happy traditions and reminiscing.



When visiting elderly family members, you might notice they have slipped and are frailer. Parents or grandparents could have joint pain that prevents them from standing to prepare meals or do laundry. They may have become isolated or can't get out in an emergency. Sometimes, elderly loved ones become unsteady on their feet and are a fall risk. You might notice that the elderly caregiver can no longer provide home health care without suffering from stress and illness. Cognitive challenges can be harder to recognize but are also risky.

Per the Alzheimer's Association, there are 10 warning signs of dementia:

1. Memory loss that disrupts daily life — different than forgetting names or appointments but remembering them later.
2. Challenges in planning, solving problems or concentrating.
3. Difficulty completing familiar tasks, such as driving to a familiar location, household chores, managing a budget or remembering rules of a favorite game.
4. Confusion with time or place.
5. Trouble understanding visual images and spatial relationships.
6. Problems speaking or writing, such as following a conversation.
7. Misplacing things and putting them in an illogical place.
8. Poor judgment, especially with personal hygiene or dealing with money.
9. Withdrawal from work or social activities, ceasing to do hobbies.
10. Changes in mood and personality, such as becoming confused, suspicious, depressed, fearful or anxious.

When your family member experiences several of these conditions, it may be time to consider moving your loved one into senior care. This might be the right time to have an honest discussion with other family members about your senior family member's health and his or her ability to remain safe and fulfilled. This is also a great time, when all the family is together, to visit one or more assisted living communities and identify one or two that can best serve the needs of your loved ones. Not all assisted living communities provide memory care for residents with dementia. Not all provide all meals or housekeeping. All do provide assistance and support for older people needing that extra support. Even if your loved ones are stable at this point, looking at other living options provides helpful information. ■

Information provided by Jay Mathes, Community Relations Coordinator, Edencrest at Green Meadows, Edencrest at Timberline, 6750 Corporate Drive, Johnston, 515-207-1984, WelcomeGM@EdencrestLiving.com.

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2023 Johnston Rotary service projects

In keeping with Rotary International's motto "Service Above Self," Johnston Rotary Club engages in numerous initiatives through our quarterly service projects. Our recent collaboration with the Urban Bicycle Food Ministry (UBFM) stands as a testament to this commitment.

UBFM's primary mission is to provide "Radical hospitality one burrito at a time," to those who are homeless or facing food insecurity issues. UBFM operates every Thursday from the Capitol Hill Lutheran Church throughout the year, regardless of weather conditions and on all major holidays. The ministry typically operates via bicycles but switches to cars during adverse weather and in the winter. More than just providing sustenance, UBFM emphasizes the importance of acknowledging and uplifting the homeless community, often marginalized and unseen by society. This approach is vital for their dignity and self-esteem.

On Nov. 2, Johnston Rotary participated in UBFM's weekly food preparation and distribution mission. Approximately 20 members and volunteers from the club participated, starting with food preparation at 4:45 p.m. and then moving to deliver food and supplies at 6 p.m. It was a humbling and uplifting evening for all.

Our next quarterly service project in January will be with Meals from the Heartland, a non-profit organization committed to alleviating hunger and food insecurity both locally and around the world. Through a collaborative effort of volunteers, this organization packages and delivers nutritious, life-saving meals to communities in need. In January, members and volunteers from Johnston Rotary will gather to assemble meals that will be distributed to those facing hunger crises, whether due to poverty, natural disasters, or other adversities.

The best part of these volunteer opportunities (aside from actively helping those in need) is that they are done as a group with fellow Rotarians.

Are you interested in getting involved in your community and contributing to the greater good? Then join us for a meeting. Johnston Rotary Club meets every Tuesday at 7 a.m. at the Hyperion Field Club, located at 7390 N.W. Beaver Drive in Johnston. Our regular meetings generally have special guests from a range of subject areas, and the breakfast food is first rate. Over the past year, our speakers have included the director of the USO at Camp Dodge, the mayor of Peja, Kosovo, the CEO of the Urban Bicycle Food Ministry, the CEO of Life Service of Iowa, ISU's athletic director, various authors of fiction and non-fiction works, and many different local business owners and executives — to name just a few.

We encourage those interested in making a difference to attend an upcoming meeting and discover the enriching experiences the Johnston Rotary Club offers. Engage with us and be part of a community that not only serves but also inspires. ■

More information about the Johnston Rotary Club can be found at <https://portal.clubrunner.ca/1649> or contact Neil Hyde, 515-210-2649, hyde_neil@yahoo.com.

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Johnston Rotary Club UPCOMING EVENTS

Tuesday, Dec. 12: Justin Glisan, State Climatologist - Department of Agriculture

Tuesday, Dec. 19: Megan Sockness, Johnston Public Library - Youth Services

Tuesday, Dec. 26: No meeting

Tuesday, Jan. 2: No meeting



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TAKE stock and plan for the future

2023 is coming to a close. The end of the year is a good time to take stock of your personal situation and proactively plan for the future.



attorney, you give another person the ability to make financial decisions for you should you become incapacitated. If you're too ill to speak for yourself, you can express your wishes and have your voice heard through a living will. This advance directive lets you detail your preferences for your medical care.

Make a list of key contacts

When you update your estate planning documents, you should also make a master list of important information. If you die or become incapacitated, your family will spend time figuring out what you own and whom they should contact. List your investment advisor, insurance agent, tax professional, banker and attorney. Make sure you have the correct contact information for each professional listed.

Review the title to your home

You should review how you hold title to your home. When you purchased your house, the

seller executed a deed. The deed contained important vesting information — the names on the title and the legal relationship between those titleholders.

If you are married, you probably want to ensure that both spouses are on title to the house. This may not be the case if the parties were married after one bought the house or if it is a second marriage. You also probably want to ensure that, if one titleholder were to die, the house would pass to the survivor. A simple review of who holds title and how title is held can prevent expensive problems later.

These are three simple yet very effective steps that can save time and expense in the future. Contact an experienced attorney to help you get 2024 off to a good start. ■

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

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RECIPE

MAKE 'eggstra' special holiday memories

(Family Features) Creating memorable moments and special meals with friends and family during the holiday season doesn't have to be overwhelming. While these festivities are often a favorite moment each year, the planning and preparation can be a bear for hosts. To help take some stress out of hosting duties, start with what you likely already have on hand, like eggs.

Whether it's served as an appetizer or light dessert, this savory-with-a-touch-of-sweet recipe can become part of your family's most cherished traditions, made possible by eggs. Remember, all it takes is the egg carton already in the refrigerator to be the "host or hostess with the most-est" and make memories with those who matter most.

Discover more benefits and recipes that go beyond egg expectations at IncredibleEgg.org/invaluableegg. ■

Popovers with cranberry butter

Recipe courtesy of Shereen Pavlides (@CookingwithShereen) on behalf of the American Egg Board

Prep time: 10 minutes

Cook time: 45-50 minutes

Yield: 6 popovers

POPOVERS:

- 1 1/3 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1 1/3 cups whole milk
- 4 large eggs
- 2 tablespoons avocado or vegetable oil
- nonstick cooking spray

CRANBERRY BUTTER:

- 1/2 cup unsalted butter, softened
- 2 tablespoons cranberry sauce
- 1 pinch salt
- **To make popovers:** In large bowl, whisk flour, salt, milk and eggs until silky smooth. Add oil and whisk to combine. Transfer to pourable pitcher, cover and refrigerate at least six hours, or overnight.
- Heat oven to 375 F.
- Place 6-cup popover pan in oven 10 minutes.



- Remove pan and spray with nonstick cooking spray. Stir batter, divide and pour into cups, filling each 3/4 full.
- Bake until puffed high and cooked through, 45-50 minutes.
- **To make cranberry butter:** In medium bowl, mix butter, cranberry sauce and salt until well combined.
- Remove popovers from oven and serve with cranberry butter.



Sat, Dec 16

5 PM & 7 PM
Service & Carols

6 PM Santa Pictures

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& Christmas Cookies

2023
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at the Barn**

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HOW MUCH money is left in your FSA?

Flexible Spending Accounts (FSAs) offer a valuable opportunity for individuals to manage their healthcare expenses efficiently, especially as the year comes to an end. These accounts are designed to help employees save money on eligible medical and dependent care expenses through pre-tax contributions from their paychecks. As the calendar year concludes, it's crucial for participants to understand and maximize the benefits of their flexible spending accounts.

One of the key advantages of FSAs is the tax savings they provide. Contributions made to these accounts are deducted from an employee's gross income before taxes are calculated. As a result, individuals can lower their taxable income, leading to a reduction in overall tax liability. With the year-end approaching, employees should review their FSA contributions and assess whether they have utilized the full allocated amount. Unused funds typically do not roll over into the next year, making it essential to spend the remaining balance before it expires.

Medical expenses that qualify for FSA reimbursement include a wide range of items such as doctor visits, prescription medications and certain over-the-counter products. As the year-end approaches, participants should take stock of any pending medical needs and consider scheduling appointments or purchasing eligible items to fully utilize their FSA funds. Some eligible expenses, like prescription refills, may also be eligible for early renewal, allowing individuals to stock up on necessary medications and supplies.

In addition to healthcare FSAs, individuals may have dependent care FSAs that cover eligible child or elder care expenses. As the year concludes, families should ensure they have exhausted their allocated funds for dependent care, taking advantage of any remaining budget for services like daycare, after-school programs or summer camps. This proactive approach not only maximizes the financial benefits of the FSA but also ensures that families receive the support they need for caregiving responsibilities.

Employers often provide information and guidelines to help employees navigate the year-end process for their FSAs. Individuals should review these resources, check their account balances, and plan accordingly to make the most of their FSA contributions. Additionally, some employers may offer a grace period or allow a limited amount of funds to roll over into the next year, so it's essential to be aware of any specific rules that apply to their FSA plan.

In conclusion, the year-end is a critical time for individuals with Flexible Spending Accounts to optimize their tax savings and utilize remaining funds. By being proactive, reviewing eligible expenses, and understanding their FSA plan details, participants can make informed decisions to maximize the benefits of these accounts and support their overall financial wellbeing. ■

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



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Christmas Eve: Sunday, December 24th
4 PM **Children's Mass** (Church) | 4:15 PM **Mass** (Parish Center) | 7 PM **Mass** (Church)
10 PM **Candlelight Mass** (Church)

Christmas Day: Saturday, December 25
9AM **Mass** (Church)

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PaulaSDierenfeld@gmail.com

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FAX: (515) 727-8092

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6300 Pioneer Parkway
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FAX: (515) 727-8092

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(515) 251-3707

COFFEE WITH A COP AND BREAKFAST WITH SANTA ON DECEMBER 9

Join the Johnston Police Department on Saturday, December 9, from 8:00 to 10:00 a.m. at Johnston Hy-Vee for an engaging event: Coffee with a Cop + Breakfast with Santa. This is a unique opportunity for the community to connect with Johnston police officers in a casual and friendly setting. And the kids can meet Santa, share their holiday wishes, and enjoy a delightful breakfast.



The aim of Coffee with a Cop is to foster meaningful connections between residents and law enforcement. It's a chance for you to become familiar with our dedicated officers and for them to better understand the needs and aspirations of the community.

CITY OFFICES CLOSED FOR THE HOLIDAYS

City Hall will be closed on December 25, 26 and January 1 for the Christmas and New Year Holidays. Trash and recycling pickup days are delayed by one day during these holidays

HOLIDAY TREE AND YARD WASTE COLLECTION

For a limited two-week period, from January 2 to 9, 2024, enjoy the convenience of curbside pickup for your holiday tree and extra yard waste. Simply attach a Compost It! sticker, and we'll take care of the rest.



Remember, your Compost It! sticker is the only ornament your tree should wear. Please remove all decorations, lights, and wires. Wreaths and garland won't be collected. Place your tree or yard waste at the curb by 6:00 a.m. on your regular collection day, ensuring a minimum of three feet of space between carts and yard waste. Let's make your post-holiday cleanup hassle-free and eco-friendly!



CITY NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 2023

CELEBRATE THE BOND BETWEEN GENERATIONS THIS HOLIDAY

Mark your calendars for a heartwarming afternoon at the Crown Point Community Center, 6300 Pioneer Parkway, on Sunday, December 17, from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m., as we come together to celebrate the special connection between grandparents and grandchildren. This delightful event, generously sponsored by the Senior Advisory Board, promises to be an unforgettable experience for families of all ages. Best of all, admission is free, ensuring that everyone in the community can join in on the festive fun.



MAYOR'S TENTH ANNUAL RUN FOR FOOD

Mayor Paula Dierenfeld is once again lacing up her running shoes for an extraordinary cause in the 10th Annual Food Run. This year, she's challenging the Johnston community to support her in covering an impressive 2,000 miles, all in the name of giving back.

Beginning December 1st through December 30th, Mayor Dierenfeld is calling on the community to contribute to this effort. For every \$10 donation or each bag of food, Mayor Dierenfeld pledges to run one mile. Donations can be made at Johnston City Hall or the Johnston Partnership.

How You Can Contribute:

- **Traditional Giving:** Send or drop off your monetary or food donation to the Johnston Partnership, Attn: Mayor's Run for Food, 5870 Merle Hay Road, Suite C, Johnston, IA 50131
- **Online Contribution:** Embrace the convenience of online giving by donating through the Partnership's website at <https://johnstonpartnership.org/donate>.



ICE RINK AT THE JOHNSTON TOWN CENTER

The ice rink at the Johnston Town Center offers skate rental from Friday to Sunday. If you own your own skates, you can skate for free seven days a week. Rental is \$5 during the designated hours.

Skate rental hours (times/days shown below are weather-dependent):

- **Fridays:** 5:00 to 9:00 p.m.
- **Saturdays:** 12:00 to 9:00 p.m.
- **Sundays:** 12:00 to 6:00

Enjoy the rink during the holidays from December 26 through 29, from 12:00 to 6:00 p.m. The skate rental and concession stand for the season are managed by Backpack Pin & Pixel.



For more information about the city, please call 515.278.2344



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Merry Christmas

During this holiday season, we wish you all the best.

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2024 RESOLUTION

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INVESTMENT By Tim Hanstad

KNOW the key benefits of a Roth IRA



As you save for retirement, you'll want to take full advantage of the investment vehicles available to you — and one of the best is a Roth IRA. But what sets it apart from other accounts?

Three key factors distinguish the Roth IRA:

- **Tax-free earnings** — When you invest in a Roth IRA, your earnings can grow tax free, provided you don't begin taking withdrawals until you're 59½ and you've had your account at least five years. If you don't meet these criteria, withdrawals of earnings will be subject to taxes and a possible 10% penalty.

- **No penalties on withdrawals of contributions** — You fund a Roth IRA with after-tax dollars, which means you can withdraw your contributions — not the earnings — at any time for any reason, without facing taxes or penalties. So, you could use some of your Roth IRA money for non-retirement purposes, such as helping pay for a child's college education.

- **No required withdrawals at age 73** — With a traditional IRA or a 401(k), you must start taking withdrawals — called required minimum distributions, or RMDs — once you reach 73. But this rule doesn't apply to a Roth IRA — you can keep it intact as long as you like. You may need to tap into it for some of your retirement income, but if you don't use it all, the remainder could benefit your beneficiaries.

A Roth IRA does share one similarity to a traditional IRA: It can be funded with virtually any type of investment, including stocks, bonds, mutual funds, certificates of deposit (CDs) and so on.

However, unlike a traditional IRA, a Roth IRA does have income limits.

For the 2023 tax year, if your modified adjusted gross income was less than \$138,000 (for a single filer) or \$218,000 (married filing jointly), you can put in the full amount of \$6,500 and an additional \$1,000 catch-up contribution if you're 50 or older. The amounts you can contribute will gradually decline at higher income levels and are phased out entirely at \$153,000 for single filers and \$228,000 if you're married and file jointly. These income ranges will likely change for the 2024 tax year, so you'll want to consult with your tax advisor for details.

Still, even if you've contributed to a traditional IRA or a 401(k) for many years, you may have a chance to eventually "convert" some, or all, of these funds to a Roth IRA and gain its benefits. It's not hard to do this conversion — it involves minimal paperwork from your traditional IRA or 401(k) provider — but it does come with tax issues. Any money that's converted from a traditional IRA or 401(k) to a Roth IRA will be treated as ordinary taxable income. This can trigger a large tax bill, so, unless you have the money available from other accounts to pay the taxes, the conversion may or may not make sense for you. But you don't have to convert all the funds at once. By spreading the conversion over several years, you could reduce the effect of a large tax hit in any single year. You may want to consult with your tax advisor before converting any funds to a Roth IRA.

If you can find a way to contribute to a Roth IRA, either directly or through a conversion, consider it carefully — you'll find a lot of upsides to this investment account. ■

This article was written by Edward Jones for use by Tim Hanstad, your local Edward Jones Financial Advisor. Edward Jones. Member SIPC.

CARTER'S experience dispels hospice myths

It's estimated that, in the past year in the United States, 1.72 million individuals have received hospice care. As many of us are aware, that number includes former President Jimmy Carter and his wife, Rosalynn. Sadly, the former first lady passed away just before Thanksgiving, but President Carter, age 99, continues to be served by hospice in his home in Plains, Georgia.



be that "hospice" is often a word people dread because of the "death sentence" connotation. In reality, hospice is not about giving up hope. It's about maximizing quality of life based on the individual's choices.

For those unfamiliar, hospice is defined as medical care for people with an anticipated life expectancy of six months or less — when cure is not an option, and the focus shifts to symptom management and quality of life. Contrary to myths that continue to circulate, hospice care is not care that hastens death.

President Carter and those close to him clearly understood this. In a statement from the Carter Center back in February, a spokesperson shared that President Carter made the decision to seek hospice services after a series of hospital stays. "He wishes to spend his remaining time at home with his family and receive hospice care instead of medical intervention," the statement read. "He has the full support of his family and the medical team."

That understanding — and the fact that the former president's hospice journey is unfolding

exactly as we would want it to — was illustrated earlier this fall, when the Carters were shown on the national news smiling and waving as they took a ride through a peanut festival in their hometown. Back in February, many likely assumed President Carter would not live much longer. Instead, he obviously has spent the better part of a year truly living, in ways that matter to him.

Whether President Carter lives many more days or many more months, his hospice experience suits a life well lived. We wish him a continued enhancement in his quality of life, and we hope those on the fence about hospice services will follow his lead. No matter how close to the end stages of life a person happens to be, hospice services can make things better. ■

Aaron Wheeler is vice president of Home and Community-Based Services for WesleyLife, which offers health and well-being services in Iowa and Illinois through communities and an array of at-home services. To learn more, please visit wesleylife.org.



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To learn more, contact Maria at Brio at (515) 252-5380 or mjordan@wesleylife.org. We'd love to welcome you!



JOHNSTON

WINTER 2023-24

DR

VARSITY BOYS BASKETBALL

DATE	TIME	OPPONENT	LOCATION
Nov 28, 2023	7:45PM	Waukee Northwest	Waukee Northwest
Dec 1, 2023	7:45PM	Ankeny	Johnston
Dec 2, 2023	2:30PM	Prairie	Cedar Rapids Prairie
Dec 5, 2023	7:45PM	Dowling Catholic	Johnston
Dec 8, 2023	7:45PM	Urbandale	Urbandale
Dec 12, 2023	7:45PM	Ankeny Centennial	Johnston
Dec 14, 2023	7:45PM	WDM Valley	Valley
Dec 19, 2023	7:45PM	Dallas Center-Grimes	Johnston
Dec 21, 2023	7:45PM	Waukee	Waukee
Jan 2, 2024	7:45PM	Southeast Polk	Johnston
Jan 6, 2024	1:30PM	Indianola	Johnston
Jan 9, 2024	7:45PM	Ankeny	Ankeny
Jan 12, 2024	7:45PM	Waukee Northwest	Johnston
Jan 13, 2024	1:30PM	Des Moines Hoover	Des Moines Hoover
Jan 16, 2024	7:45PM	Urbandale	Johnston
Jan 19, 2024	7:45PM	Dowling Catholic	Dowling Catholic
Jan 23, 2024	7:45PM	WDM Valley	Johnston
Jan 27, 2024	10:00AM	Multiple Schools	Waukee
Feb 2, 2024	7:45PM	Waukee	Johnston
Feb 9, 2024	7:45PM	Southeast Polk	Southeast Polk
Feb 15, 2024	6:30PM	Ankeny Centennial	Ankeny Centennial

VARSITY GIRLS BASKETBALL

DATE	TIME	OPPONENT	LOCATION
Nov 27, 2023	6:30PM	Prairie	Cedar Rapids Prairie
Nov 28, 2023	6:15PM	Waukee Northwest	Waukee Northwest
Dec 1, 2023	6:15PM	Ankeny	Johnston
Dec 5, 2023	6:15PM	Dowling Catholic	Johnston
Dec 8, 2023	6:15PM	Urbandale	Urbandale
Dec 12, 2023	6:15PM	Ankeny Centennial	Johnston
Dec 14, 2023	6:15PM	WDM Valley	Valley
Dec 16, 2023	TBD	Multiple Schools	Johnston
Dec 19, 2023	6:15PM	Dallas Center-Grimes	Johnston
Dec 21, 2023	6:15PM	Waukee	Waukee
Jan 2, 2024	6:15PM	Southeast Polk	Johnston
Jan 6, 2024	12:00PM	Indianola	Johnston
Jan 9, 2024	6:15PM	Ankeny	Ankeny
Jan 12, 2024	6:15PM	Waukee Northwest	Johnston
Jan 16, 2024	6:15PM	Urbandale	Johnston
Jan 19, 2024	6:15PM	Dowling Catholic	Dowling Catholic
Jan 20, 2024	TBD	Millard West	Creighton Uni.
Jan 23, 2024	6:15PM	WDM Valley	Johnston
Jan 26, 2024	6:30PM	Ankeny Centennial	Ankeny Centennial
Feb 2, 2024	6:15PM	Waukee	Johnston
Feb 9, 2024	6:15PM	Southeast Polk	Southeast Polk



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AGONS

VARSITY BOYS WRESTLING

DATE	TIME	OPPONENT	LOCATION
Nov 30, 2023	7:30PM	WDM Valley	Valley
Dec 2, 2023	10:00AM	Multiple Schools	DCG-Meadows Gym
Dec 7, 2023	7:30PM	Waukee Northwest	Waukee Northwest
Dec 9, 2023	10:00AM	Multiple Schools	Johnston
Dec 14, 2023	7:30PM	Ankeny	Johnston
Dec 16, 2023	10:00AM	Multiple Schools	Waukee Northwest
Dec 21, 2023	7:30PM	Urbandale	Urbandale
Jan 4, 2024	5:30PM	Ankeny Centennial	Johnston
	7:30PM	Dowling Catholic	Johnston
Jan 6, 2024	10:00AM	Multiple Schools	Marshalltown
Jan 11, 2024	7:30PM	Waukee	Johnston
Jan 12, 2024	4:00PM	Multiple Schools	Bettendorf
Jan 13, 2024	9:00AM	Multiple Schools	Bettendorf
Jan 20, 2024	9:00AM	Multiple Schools	Urbandale
Jan 25, 2024	7:30PM	Southeast Polk	Southeast Polk

VARSITY GIRLS WRESTLING

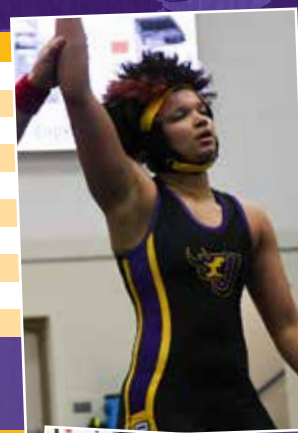
DATE	TIME	OPPONENT	LOCATION
Nov 18, 2023	10:00PM	Multiple Schools	Nevada
Nov 28, 2023	6:00PM	Multiple Schools	Johnston
Dec 9, 2023	10:00AM	Multiple Schools	Vinton-Shellsburg
Dec 11, 2023	4:00PM	Saydel Community	Saydel High School
Dec 16, 2023	10:00AM	Multiple Schools	A-D-M, Adel
Dec 19, 2023	6:00PM	Multiple Schools	Valley High School
Jan 5, 2024	4:30PM	Multiple Schools	Benton Community
Jan 6, 2024	10:00AM	Multiple Schools	Marshalltown
Jan 9, 2024	6:00PM	Multiple Schools	Johnston
Jan 13, 2024	9:30AM	vs. Multiple Schools	Pella

VARSITY BOWLING

DATE	TIME	OPPONENT	LOCATION
Nov 30, 2023	3:45PM	Ankeny Bowling	Great Escape
Dec 5, 2023	3:00PM	Ames	Game Day Lanes
Dec 7, 2023	3:45PM	Southeast Polk	Johnston
Dec 14, 2023	3:45PM	Dowling Catholic	Game Day Lanes
Dec 19, 2023	3:45PM	Waukee/NW Bowling	Johnston
Dec 21, 2023	3:00PM	Ankeny Bowling	Game Day Lanes
Jan 4, 2024	3:30PM	WDM Valley	Warrior Lanes
Jan 18, 2024	3:45PM	Urbandale	Johnston
Jan 22, 2024	2:00PM	Clarke	Game Day Lanes
Jan 25, 2024	2:00PM	Des Moines East	Game Day Lanes

VARSITY BOYS SWIMMING

DATE	TIME	OPPONENT	LOCATION
Nov 30, 2023	5:30PM	Southeast Polk	Southeast Polk
Dec 7, 2023	5:30PM	WDM Valley	Summit MS
Dec 14, 2023	5:30PM	Waukee/NW Swimming	Summit MS
Dec 16, 2023	TBD	Ames	Ames
Jan 4, 2024	5:30PM	Ankeny Swimming	DMACC
Jan 6, 2024	11:00AM	Multiple Schools	Sumit MS
Jan 11, 2024	5:30PM	Dowling Catholic	Dowling Catholic
Jan 13, 2024	9:00AM	CR Washington	Cedar Rapids Washington



FOR ALL DRAGONS SCHEDULES
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Photos by Johnston High School Yearbook Staff

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HEALTH

By Jacob Dickey

MANAGING holiday emotions

Like clockwork, we once again find ourselves in the thick of the holiday season. It's no secret that this time of year is meant to be filled with joy and thankfulness, but often left unsaid is the anxiety and fog that arrives with expectation and uncertainty.



We are currently in a loneliness epidemic. Knowing what those around us are working through is hard unless we reach out. While it can be stressful, don't be afraid to call someone or seek a connection.

Here are some useful tools to remember when interacting with stressors (people) this year:

- **Breathing** – Collect your thoughts, control your reactions.
- **Distancing** – Seek out another room, go for a walk.
- **Communication** – Speak up when in need.
- **Exit strategy** – Come with a plan for a quick exit.

It's important to remember there is no perfect Christmas or Kwanza. There is no perfect Hanukkah, Winter Solstice, Thanksgiving, or New Year Celebration. All we can do is make the best of our situations and laugh off the rest as we work towards tomorrow. ■

Information provided by Jacob Dickey, intern, SS Therapy and Consulting, Ltd, 4725 Merle Hay Road, Suite 205, Des Moines, 515-528-8135, dickey@sstherapyandconsulting.com, www.sstherapyandconsulting.com.

Merry Christmas!

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BEFORE YOU GO

By Tosha Edmundson

GRIEF during the holidays

The holidays are in full swing, and, for many, this is a season of joyful gathering with friends and family. As many are enjoying the togetherness of the holidays, just as many find the holidays to be filled with stress, pain and loss. If you are in the second category, please know you are not alone. You don't need to pretend to love this season, and it is OK to feel sadness and longing for a different circumstance when the world is loud with celebration. If you are grieving the loss of someone you love this season, here are a few things that may help.



- **Let go of expectations.** Allow yourself to do what brings comfort and nourishes you, which might not necessarily be what has always been done — or what you think has to be done.
- **Seek a balance between times of quiet and times with others** — solitude is good and healthy; isolation is not.
- **Allow yourself to connect with others who are hurting.** Sharing your sorrow with others who understand can bring comfort and peace.
- **Choose generosity and serving others.** Helping others heals both the giver and the receiver.

May healing, hope and peace be yours through this holiday season.

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.

BEST nutritional insights from 2023

Looking back at 2023, much has been learned through grocery shopping, cooking, reading, etc. Here are 20 of our best nutritional insights.

1. Wild blueberries have more antioxidants thanks to more skin area on smaller berries.
2. Mushrooms are the only significant source of vitamin D in the produce department.
3. You can freeze Fareway meat wrapped in its paper.
4. If the temperature is above 90 degrees F, your food can safely be left out for one hour.
5. When grilling, soak wooden skewers for 20 minutes before cooking. Metal skewers heat food from the inside, so it cooks faster than on wooden skewers.
6. One pound of boneless beef, pork or chicken equals four 4-ounce servings.
7. Pair orange juice (or any food with vitamin C) with iron-fortified cereal to best absorb iron.
8. Chocolate milk has the perfect ratio of carbohydrates to protein for exercise recovery.
9. If pineapple isn't quite ripe, remove the top and store it upside down overnight before cutting. This allows the natural sugars and juice to flow throughout the pineapple.
10. Peaches are described in terms of their pits: freestone and cling.
11. Pork tenderloin is leaner than a boneless skinless chicken breast.
12. Red bell peppers are the sweetest of all bell peppers, followed by yellow and orange, with green being the least sweet.
13. Store fresh basil at room temperature. Store cilantro, parsley, celery, green onions and asparagus in the refrigerator.
14. Slice beef, pork and poultry across the muscle fiber grain for maximum tenderness. Let meat rest for 5 to 10 minutes before slicing so juices can redistribute.
15. Follow minimum internal temperature guidelines: beef and pork (145 degrees F), poultry (165 degrees F), ground beef and pork (160 degrees F).
16. Because dried herbs and spices have a concentrated flavor, you can use a third less than that of their fresh counterpart.
17. Canned peaches have higher vitamin C than fresh peaches due to the canning process.
18. 85/15 is a "universal" ground beef, meaning it works well pretty much anywhere since it has a mid-range lean-to-fat ratio. Use it for anything from burgers to tacos to chili. 80/20 ground beef is typically very juicy. It works best for dishes where the ground beef is the star of the show — think burgers, meatballs and meatloaf.
19. 93/7 ground beef meets guidelines for "lean," making it an excellent choice for health-minded shoppers. It works best crumbled in dishes that use extra moisture: chili, casseroles or meat sauce.
20. Fareway's Own fresh ground beef is typically around 85% lean, but it can vary since it's ground fresh daily from the trimmings of roasts and steaks we cut in house — you may even catch a meat expert grinding a fresh batch if you shop early. ■



Information provided by Caitlyn Ferin, LD, RD, corporate dietitian, Fareway, 6005 Merle Hay Road, Johnston, 515-252-9962.

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MEET Stephanie Toot

Keeping kindergarten students engaged

Originally from Forest City, Stephanie Toot graduated from Iowa State University in 1996 with degrees in early childhood and elementary education. After college, she relocated to Cedar Falls where she was a substitute teacher for one year and worked in a preschool for two years. She and her family moved to the Des Moines area after her oldest daughter was born and her husband became a guidance counselor in Johnston.

In 2005, Stephanie's husband became the principal at Beaver Creek Elementary school, and the couple wanted their daughters to attend the Johnston Community School District, so they moved to the Johnston School District. After staying home with her children for a few years, Stephanie decided to pursue a teaching position and joined the preschool staff. Now, she teaches kindergarten at Lawson Elementary School and has recently entered her 19th year working with the district.

"My favorite part about working in Johnston is that the community takes such pride in the schools and values education. I also love that I have built positive relationships with families through the years. I am very glad we chose to send our daughters to the Johnston schools, and they both had great experiences," she says.

Stephanie's students participate in a lot of different activities every day. She says moving and changing activities frequently helps keep her students engaged throughout the day. Because of this, she incorporates many songs, movement activities, interactive games and hands-on activities to help her students learn.

"The best part about working with kindergarten students is that they come into my classroom at the beginning of the year needing to learn pretty much everything about school and how to be a part of a classroom and school community. I get to see them grow and learn so much during their kindergarten year, and they leave my class as readers and writers. It truly is amazing to see the growth kindergarten students make in a year," Stephanie says.

When not teaching, Stephanie enjoys spending time with her family attending concerts, eating at local restaurants, and participating in Iowa State University football tailgating. She also likes yoga, biking, running and hiking.

"Honestly, my biggest reward as an educator is watching my former kindergarten students grow up and become good people. I am honored to be a small part of their educational path," she says. ■



Stephanie Toot says her favorite part about working in Johnston is that the community takes such pride in the schools and values education.

Happy Holidays

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DO I need to wait to buy a house?

The housing market in 2023 has been challenging. Higher interest rates, lower inventory and an increased amount of uncertainty in the economy have kept would-be homebuyers on the sidelines. Here are 10 common reasons for waiting and my thoughts about each:



1. "I can't afford a down payment." Contrary to popular opinion, you don't actually need to put 20% down to purchase a home. Talk to your agent or lender about options. There are many.
2. "Home prices are too high." Maybe so. But they aren't getting any cheaper. Experts predict further appreciation in 2024, so you may as well jump in now to capitalize on those gains.
3. "I can't get approved because of credit issues." Many lenders have programs in place to identify the problem and create a solution. You just have to ask.
4. "I need a better job." Everyone likes the idea of a better-paying job. However, a steady employment history at a lower wage often looks better to lenders than a short-term higher-paying job. You might be surprised what you already qualify for.
5. "I'm not ready to settle down." Consider your home an investment and find a property with future rental or resale potential. Even if you move to another city, you can hire a property management company to handle your investment.
6. "There's too much competition in the market." The market is always changing. 2023 has seen lower inventory and less competition. As we enter the holiday season, there are fewer buyers and more motivated sellers.
7. "I can't afford a big enough home." Start small, build equity and move up. Real estate is historically one of the safest ways to invest.
8. "I need to pay off my student loans first." You have to live somewhere. You can pay your own mortgage or let your rent pay someone else's. Just stay current on your payments.
9. "I want to wait until I get married." Referring to previous points, invest sooner and capitalize on appreciation. Jump start your life together.
10. "I don't have time to go searching for homes." A reliable real estate agent will do the legwork and make the process feel as quick and easy as possible.

As we look toward 2024, there is hope on the horizon. We have seen a drop in interest rates already, and that trend is predicted to continue. There will come a time when inventory and competition ramp back up, and that will present a whole new set of challenges. If you think you're ready, now might actually be the perfect time. ■

Information by Jake Belay, Realtor, RE/MAX Precision, 8705 Chambery Blvd., Johnston, 319-930-7336, www.jakebelayrealestate.com.

No reason to wait, find that perfect home for the holidays!



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NORTH/WEST SIDE HIGHLIGHTS

Link & Learn Daycare Opens with Funding Assistance from Polk County

Link Associates, a nonprofit that serves Iowans with intellectual disabilities, celebrated their 70th anniversary with the opening of a new on-site daycare at their West Des Moines facility. This unique daycare center was created to help attract and retain staff at Link Associates. Funding provided by Polk County for this new facility is an example of our commitment to economic well-being in our community. By having an on-site daycare, Link Associates employees can focus on their mission of assisting those with disabilities while having access to reduced daycare services.



Polk County Development Grant helps Fund New Hoyt Sherman Place Outdoor Entertainment Venue

Expect more outdoor entertainment options next summer at Historic Hoyt Sherman Place in Des Moines. To mark the end of the centennial season, Polk County helped fund the new EMC Outdoor Plaza on the south lawn of the iconic venue. The circular stage area and enhanced landscaping will host outdoor music performances, movie nights and provide a gathering spot for community events such as the Sherman Hill 'Halloween on the Hill'.



New Community Center Coming to Polk City

A new community center is under construction in Polk City due in part to funding from a Polk County Community Development Grant. The new 2 story, 12,000 square foot facility will be used as a community center with seating for 200 people. It will be used as programming space for the Library and Parks & Recreation Department, training space, and will be rentable for public use.



Development Grant Assists with Expansion of Renovated Children's Cancer Connection in Johnston

Children's Cancer Connection purchased a new facility in 2001 in Johnston to meet the needs of the many families they serve. However, the new location was also in need of ADA accessibility upgrades. Funding from Polk County helped to make necessary upgrades and build a new ADA accessible outdoor playground. The new playground features a merry-go-all, a multi-user swing, an overhead climber, slides and more.



EVENTS IN THE AREA

Be sure to check for cancelations

Christmas Carnival

Sunday, Dec. 10, 4-6 p.m.
The Bridge, 10025 N.W. 62nd Ave., Johnston

The public is invited to experience the reason for the season at the Christmas Carnival at The Bridge. Enjoy carnival food, cookie decorating, crafts, games and the telling of the Christmas story to highlight the real meaning of Christmas. This is a free come-and-go event for the community, and no registration is needed.

Historical Society holiday open house

Saturday, Dec. 9,
10 a.m. to noon
6161 Northglenn Drive
Johnston

Johnston Station Historical Society is hosting its annual holiday open house in conjunction with the Johnston Public Library's Holiday Ornament Craft event.



Breakfast With Santa

Saturday, Dec. 9, 9 a.m. to noon
Lions Club, 6501 Merle Hay Road, Johnston

Johnston American Legion Auxiliary, Unit 728, and the Johnston Lions Club are holding Breakfast With Santa. The event features a pancake breakfast, games and activities, and Santa's reading of "The Night Before Christmas." This is a freewill donation event.

Breakfast with Santa and Mrs. Claus

Sunday, Dec. 10, 8 a.m. to noon
West Des Moines Elks Lodge, 2060 N.W. 94th St., Clive

Special guests, Santa Claus and Mrs. Claus, will be giving out goody bags, talking with the children and providing photo opportunities at the monthly Elks breakfast. The breakfast buffet includes biscuits and gravy, French toast, scrambled eggs, bacon, sausage patties, cheesy potatoes and all-you-can-eat pancakes (including blueberry and chocolate chip), orange juice, milk and coffee. There will also be a Christmas bake sale. Enjoy a bloody Mary or mimosa for \$3.50.

Cost is \$10 for adults and \$5 for children 10 and younger. Breakfasts are held the second Sunday of the month. Proceeds support the Elks' Hoop Shoot Program, other youth activities and community charities.



Living Well Classes: Overcoming Anxiety or Depression

Orientation: Thursday, Jan. 18, 7 p.m.
Ankeny First United Methodist Church Christian Life Center, 710 N.E. 36th St., Ankeny

Two separate Living Well Classes: Overcoming Anxiety or Depression will be held for eight weeks, Thursdays, Jan. 25 through March 14, from 7-8:30 p.m. Classes are confidential and supportive. For information, call Jim White at 515-313-3701 or email jcjlwhite@live.com. ■

WHERE WE LIVE

By Lindsey Giardino

FINDING beauty in trees

Nature, outdoors draw for Delzell



Rachel and Heath Delzell built their Johnston home in a family-friendly location near the outdoor amenities they enjoy.

Rachel Delzell and her husband, Heath, built their home in Johnston eight years ago.

"We were looking for a large lot with easy access to the lake and bike trails, so we wanted to be in this area," she explains.

They found just the spot on a lot near Saylorville Lake and Big Creek State Park, where they can enjoy the water, the playground and much more.

"I love the privacy of our backyard, our friendly neighbors and the beautiful timber view from our front porch," Delzell says. "I love that it is heavily treed, and we have a great bike trail that connects us to the entire metro."

She jokes, "Do you see a theme?"

Delzell also appreciates that Johnston is small enough that it still has a tight-knit community feel, but it's big enough to offer great community events to attend, like Johnston Green Days, and amenities that make life more convenient.

"My family really loves all the great parks and the splash pad," she says.

Delzell shares her love for nature and is involved with the city of Johnston's Tree Board, which plans and recommends the placement of trees throughout town. As part of her duties, she helps establish guidelines for tree care, provides recommendations on landscape plantings in public places and acts as a volunteer for tree-related activities, including the residential tree sale and invasive species clean-up.

Ultimately, what makes Johnston so great for the Delzells is a number of things, but, most importantly, "It is a perfect place to raise a family," she says. ■

LIONS Legacy Grant



The Johnston Lions Club made the final installment of its \$50,000 Legacy Grant for the shelter at Johnston Commons at the City Council meeting on Monday, Nov. 20. ■

ROORDA named superintendent

The Johnston Board of Education has named Dr. Nikki Roorda district superintendent. Dr. Roorda was serving as the interim superintendent of the Johnston Community School District. She assumed her role as superintendent of the Johnston Community School District on Wednesday, Nov. 1.

She has served the district since August 2019, previously in the roles of associate superintendent and executive director of teaching and learning. She was the regional director for Heartland AEA for 12 years and previously worked as a K-12 literacy coordinator in Ankeny and as a classroom teacher in Highlands Ranch, Colorado; West Des Moines; Ankeny and Montezuma.

"I am deeply honored by the district's selection of me as the permanent superintendent of the Johnston Community School District," Dr. Roorda said. "As many of you know, it has been a longtime goal and dream of mine to be a superintendent. I am so proud of the work we've done here together these past four years, and we've only just begun. Johnston is a great place, and I am so excited to continue leading us to be even better. Thank you so much for this opportunity."

Dr. Roorda holds a doctorate in education from Walden University in Minneapolis and a superintendent certification. She is an active member of several professional organizations including The School Superintendents Association (AASA), Learning Forward, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD), School Administrators of Iowa (SAI) and Iowa Association of School Boards (IASB).

"We have appreciated Dr. Roorda's leadership as interim superintendent these past few months, and are excited to welcome her as the long-term leader of our district," said Dr. Alicia Clevenger, president of the Johnston Board of Education. "We are confident that her expertise and dedication will propel the district to new heights in both educational excellence, as well as in developing a culture here where everyone feels welcome, valued and heard." ■

HELP the Blue Dragon Program brighten the holidays

As we enter the holiday season, the Blue Dragon Program announces a magical shopping event. The Johnston Police Department is inviting the community to help create unforgettable memories for less fortunate children or those who have experienced tragic incidents. This heartwarming annual initiative pairs Johnston police officers with children, and, together, they go on a special shopping spree for gifts at the Grimes Walmart. By participating, you can play a crucial role in making this experience an unforgettable one for the children involved.

Monetary contributions can be sent to the Police Department or made online. You can send or drop off your monetary donation to the Johnston Police Department, Attn: Blue Dragon Program, 6373 Merle Hay Road, Johnston, IA 50131. Make checks payable to the Johnston Police Officers Association. To donate online, visit the Donor Box at <https://donorbox.org/blue-dragon>. For more information, contact Sgt. Grandon at 515-278-2345. Your generosity ensures that, together, we create cherished moments and kindle the warmth of the holiday spirit for those who need it most. ■

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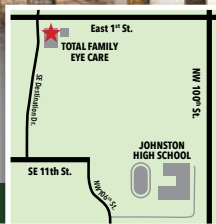


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CHAMBER

By Allan Graham

WHERE DID it go?

It is so hard to believe we are wrapping up 2023.

With most of us being fully experienced in Iowa winters, hopefully, we are prepared for another round. I hope this year has been good for all of you and you can look back at many successes during 2023. For the Chamber, this past year has been a year of reflection, planning and change. As Samantha Winebrenner continues to grow into her executive director role, she also has brought many new ideas. The board members have also been involved in planning for some exciting changes in the year to come. Also, working with the city of Johnston as well as JEDCO throughout the year, it is exciting to continue to hear about all of the new developments continuing to take place in our community. We should all take pride in the community we work and/or live in. We also need to recognize it is our job to continue to expand and grow the vision of our community. The foundation is strong, but we need to keep moving forward. I would encourage you to get involved in the community, whether through the Chamber, another service organization or through our local government.



It was a busy 2023 for the Johnston Chamber. We welcomed 36 new members, which I hope you have an opportunity to visit and support. We also hosted the following events in the community:

- 13 ribbon cuttings
 - 11 Breakfast Before Business events plus Women's Regional Event
 - 12 Business After Hours events plus two YP events
 - 5 Monthly Chamber Luncheons
 - Annual Dinner, Educator Appreciation event, Green Days, Jammin' in Johnston Business Expo and Annual Golf Outing
- We also attended four groundbreaking events.

Each year, we build off the success from the previous year, and, every year, we look at ways we can improve for the next year. In 2024, we have a new website and logo rollout to improve your interaction with the chamber. We will have new programming and new methods of communication — all to drive greater benefits for our members. Join or renew with the chamber today. Do not miss the opportunity for your business to benefit from all the chamber has to offer. Give your business the gift of growth this holiday season and make 2024 your best business year yet.

I would like to say thank you to all the hardworking and supportive members of the Johnston Chamber and a special thanks to the Chamber Executive Committee, Board of Directors and Ambassadors, who have spent significant time helping forward the mission of the chamber. Happy holidays to you and your family. For more information, visit www.johnstonchamber.com or contact the Chamber at 515-276-9064. ■

Information provided by Allan Graham, WineStyles Johnston, 2022/23 Chamber President.

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OUT & ABOUT



John Denny and Jeff Olson at the Johnston Chamber Breakfast Before Business held at Thrivent on Oct. 19.



Faye Gordan and AJ Gordan at the Johnston Chamber Breakfast Before Business held at Thrivent on Oct. 19.



Allan Graham and Derek Trobaugh at the Johnston Chamber Breakfast Before Business held at Thrivent on Oct. 19.



Ryan Gerardy and Erik Aanonson at the Johnston Chamber Breakfast Before Business held at Thrivent on Oct. 19.



Samantha Winebrenner and Glenn Waterhouse at the Johnston Chamber After Hours held at Lashier Graphics & Signs, Grimes, on Nov. 2.



Brenda Ballard and Thomas Lashier at the Johnston Chamber After Hours held at Lashier Graphics & Signs, Grimes, on Nov. 2.



Raising Cane's Grand Opening and Ribbon Cutting with the Johnston Chamber were held Nov. 7 at the new store at 8550 Birchwood Court.



Tara Rethman and Jay Mathes at the Johnston Chamber After Hours held at Lashier Graphics & Signs, Grimes, on Nov. 2.



A groundbreaking ceremony was held for Woof Pack, Johnston, Oct. 19. From left: Ed Predl, Nate Lesley, Wayne Lesley, Rachel Lesley, Heather Lesley, Ajla Kavazovic, Jane Angstman and Ethan Brown. Photo by Keely Sandquist



Dillan Sprecher and Austin Jensen at the Johnston Chamber After Hours held at Lashier Graphics & Signs, Grimes, on Nov. 2.



John Scarpino and Mary Ann Laurence at the veterans program at Brio in Johnston on Nov. 9.



Henry Ammann, Mary Ann Liggett and Dwight Liggett at the veterans program at Brio in Johnston on Nov. 9.



Jerry Jordan, Jodie Huston and Eldon Huston at the veterans program at Brio in Johnston on Nov. 9.



Rob Ruisch, Tyler Herrmann and Andy Vis at the trick or treating with first responders event Oct. 25.



Ryle Henry, Zoe Officer, Abigail Owen, Kelli Bosch, Abby Hitchcock, Tammy Gregory, Tempe Borey and Hailey Boicourt at the trick or treating with first responders event Oct. 25.



Alena Wagner, front, and, in back: Amelia, Amy and Aaron Wagner at the trick or treating with first responders event Oct. 25.



Johnston Ace Hardware was runner-up for Favorite Retail Store, Favorite Home Improvement Store, and Favorite Place to Purchase a Gift for a Man in the Residents' Choice poll. Accepting the certificates are Zach Frey, Aurora Abramowicz, Todd Pierce, Charlie Norelius and Jack Wicker.



Backpocket Pin & Pixel was runner-up for favorite dad/child date spot in the Residents' Choice Poll. Accepting the certificate are Jason Meredith, Amanda Messerschmidt, Connor Dalldorf and Shantavia Smith.



Iowa Orthodontic Solutions was voted runner-up for Favorite Orthodontist Office in the Residents' Choice poll. Accepting the award are Leah Nelson, Tami McMahon, Nicole Moore-Agan, Hillary Gardner and Lisa Connor.



Terra Park was winner for Favorite Park and Dewy Park was runner-up for Favorite Park in the Residents' Choice poll. Mandy Willey accepts the certificates.



Blake Bach and Lally Morales of Kohles and Bach accept their certificate for Residents' Choice runner-up for favorite heating and cooling business.

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