

Living

Special DELIVERY

Residents share their thoughts on the tradition of sending Christmas cards

State mock trial semifinalists

EDUCATION

Popovers with cranberry butter

RECIPE

Volunteering is a priority for Gafford

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WELCOME

CHRISTMAS card communication

Well, it's that time of year again. Many of us have taken the family photo, updated our address lists, summarized anything and everything that's changed in your lives this year, and, you guessed it, sent out our 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, and another Christmas season has arrived. We gathered a photo from a recent family get-together and, at least for another year, carried on the tradition of mailing out cards. Also this year, I am relaxing in my easy chair with my slippers on my feet and a cup of cocoa in my hand and reading the cards and letters — at least the first page or so.

Be sure to check out this month's cover story to learn how other residents handled 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.

Anne and Jane Matthews help get the family's photo Christmas cards ready to mail.



Amy McIntosh makes her own Christmas cards.



Jamie Flatland sends holiday greeting photo cards.

Holiday cheer

Terra Matthews enjoys Christmas cards and the tradition of sending holiday wishes to friends and family. When she and her husband married, they started a tradition of displaying their cards.

“When we got married, my husband was still finishing school, and we had very little extra money, so we used our Christmas cards to decorate one wall in our little apartment each Christmas,” she says. “I would put a hook on the wall and run a string to another hook. We either clip the cards to the string or just open and hang them. The longer we’ve been married, we have had to make the string longer or add more strings, but we still have this tradition and put them up each year.”

For the last few years, Matthews has sent out a year-in-review photo collage.

“I just feel like it helps family and friends really see into our lives or what our kids are doing more than just a posed picture would,” she says.

The family sends about 30 to 40 cards, adding more each year because they have moved a lot and don’t live near family. The Christmas cards are a nice way to keep in touch, says Matthews.

“I love Christmas cards because there is something so special about receiving cards each year,” she says. “I love that someone thought of me and wanted to send me a card. I also love looking at my wall of cards each year and seeing

all the people that we may not talk to or see much but that care about our family and think of us.”

Matthews says she hopes her cards make people smile as well. The cards also serve as a nice way to show family how the kids have grown and what the family has been up to during the year. She involves the kids — Anne, Jane and Everett — who stuff the envelopes.

“If they are doing a sport, we include a picture of that, if they are playing in the band, we try to have a picture of that — whatever they are involved in. We also include pictures from family trips, just stuff like that. I hope people enjoy it,” she says.

Creative Christmas

Amy McIntosh began making her own cards about 19 years ago. Prior to that, she bought cards to send. Now, she makes them with her parents using different techniques, including embossing and stamping. McIntosh sends approximately 100 cards, and her parents do, too, so they make close to 200 each year.

“We make two different styles since we send to many of the same people. I would say our style is pretty simple and classic. But I would say our style has also gone from complex to simple over the years,” she says.

For McIntosh, it’s about the love of crafting and creativity and letting family and friends know she’s thinking of them.

“It is definitely not cheaper than just

buying them, but I enjoy doing them with my parents and spending time with them,” she says. “Everyone loves our cards and always look forward to them each year. Many people have kept them from all the years.”

Festive and funny

Carrie Hoffman and her husband, Tim, got out of the habit of sending cards years ago, and she realized as time has gone on that a lot of people have stopped doing traditions they all once enjoyed.

“Each year I receive less and less cards from people, and then I realized that I was doing the same,” she says. “About six years ago, I noticed that Hallmark would put out a group of funny cards through their Shoebox line, and they always made me laugh. They stood out to me more so than the Happy Holidays or Merry Christmas, so I decided to start sending those.”

Hoffman likes that the Shoebox cards are funny and lighthearted, and people can enjoy them. Each year she buys the new pack and sends out about 20 to family, coworkers and friends.

“It’s a fun way to stay connected and keep the card-sending tradition alive,” she says.

She also purchases holiday stamps from the post office. She saves and displays the cards she gets on a table in the kitchen until after the new year.

“I feel like it’s mainly a part of keeping tradition alive, putting a smile on the face



Carrie and Tim Hoffman had gotten out of the habit of sending Christmas cards until they found a line of humorous ones. They have been sending those ever since.

of my loved ones, and helping a struggling institution that needs our help.”

Every year Jamie Fatland sends cards that she makes with family pictures. Now, online vendors make it easy to upload photos and design your own greetings.

“My mom always sent cards but not photo cards like I do today. I’ve been sending cards since college and using photo cards since getting married in 2012, and I feel like my list of people I send cards to each year continues to grow,” she says.

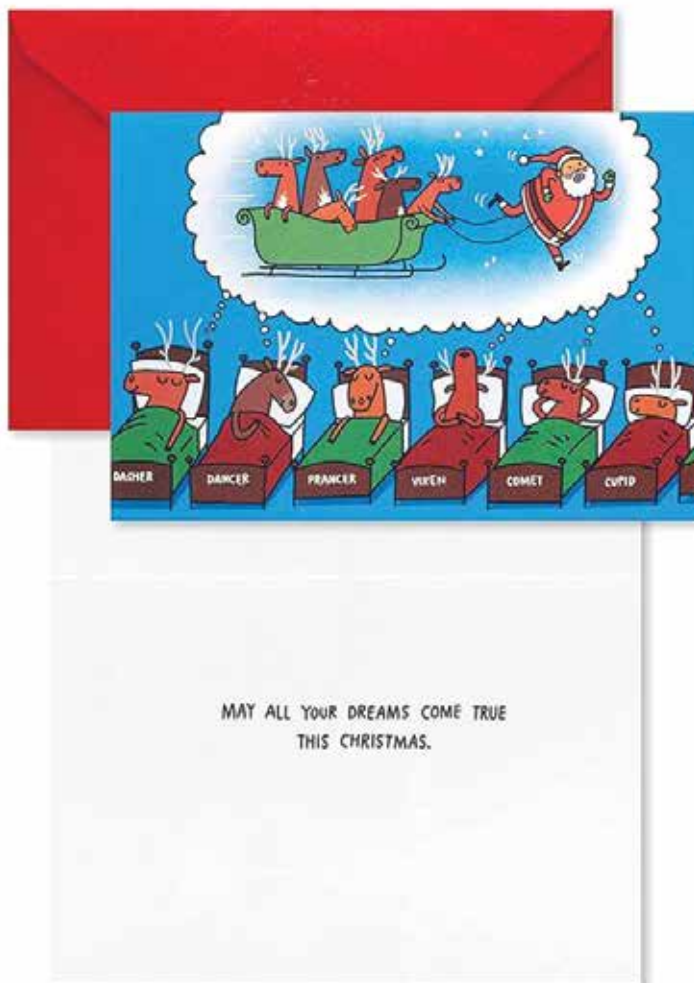
Fatland is a card-sender throughout the year, too, and says she is trying to keep the tradition of mailing greetings from dying out. She also sends a family update along with her photos now that her kids are older and involved in a lot of activities.

She also enjoys receiving cards and displays them throughout the season. She has a metal display rod she hangs them on for visitors and her family to enjoy.

“I think it’s important to send cards, because I think it lets others know you are thinking of them. I do think it’s possible that someday social media will eliminate the habit of people mailing cards when they can just do it electronically, which I do for coworkers, but I still love the tradition.” ■



Carrie Hoffman sends funny greetings for the holidays.



COMMUNITY member keeps busy

Volunteering is a priority for Gafford.

To list all of Lu Anne Gafford's volunteer engagements would be a feat in and of itself.

The Grimes community member, who has lived in town with her husband, Bradley, since 1984, has made volunteer work the center of her attention.

When Gafford's three children were younger, she volunteered with activities they were involved in. This included serving as Popcorn Kernel for the local Cub Scouts pack, as co-leader for her daughter's Girl Scout troop, as a volunteer for the Grimes Volunteer Fire Department, and as long-time treasurer for Grimes Funtastic Days, now known as Governors Days.

Now that Gafford's children are grown and have kids of their own, the organizations she volunteers with have changed.

Today, she's president of the American Business Women Association's board of directors, volunteers for Life 107.1 radio station, teaches Sunday School at New Hope Church in Urbandale and serves as an ambassador for Grimes Chamber and Economic Development. This only begins to cover all her work and activities, though.

One organization Gafford is especially passionate about is the Grimes Storehouse. She currently serves on its board of directors as secretary and volunteers when she can in the pantry itself or at food drives.

For Gafford, no matter what she's doing, it's all about the chance to serve and help make a difference in someone else's life.

"From young kids to adults, we all are traveling a road that you never know what someone is going through," she says. "I just want others to know they are loved and valued. If serving a group or committee will help someone to know this, I want to be a part of it."

While she has many memories from her years of service, Gafford's favorite memories are from the times she has worked alongside her husband. These include helping to start the Grimes United Methodist



Lu Anne Gafford's (center) list of volunteer activities covers a range of interests. But, they all boil down to making others feel cared about.

Church, leading scouting events, working at the Grimes Volunteer Fire Department and more.

"As for things I do without him, I would have to say volunteering and serving with Royal Family Kids, the Grimes Storehouse and Clive Community Services are top of the list," Gafford says.

Gafford encourages others who are interested in volunteering to get started just by doing something.

"I'm not saying you have to get onto a board or a committee right away, but do a couple of hours or a one-day thing to see if you like it and if you want to dive deeper into the organization or maybe find something else to help with," she says. "There are so many great nonprofits in the Grimes area and even in the Des Moines metro that are always looking for volunteers."

She adds, "Find someone to join you and have fun with it. Help to make a difference in someone else's life." ■

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EVENTS IN THE AREA

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Grimes Chamber Annual Dinner

Thursday, Jan. 11, 5 p.m. cocktail hour,
6 p.m. dinner and awards ceremony
Hilton Garden Inn Ballroom,
8600 Northpark Drive, Johnston

This annual event celebrates recent accomplishments and sets the stage for the goals of the coming year. Awards will be presented to Business of the Year, Citizen of the Year, Educator of the Year and the Ambassador of the Year. Recognitions include the incoming Board of Directors and outgoing directors. This event also recognizes new members from the previous year. This event includes a silent auction, food, beverages, networking and an opportunity to celebrate Grimes. Seating is limited. Cost is \$500 for a table of eight and \$70 for an individual. Email halsey@grimesiowa.com to register.

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.

Square Dance Lessons

Sunday nights starting Jan. 4,
6:30 p.m.

Douglas Avenue Presbyterian
Church, 4601 Douglas Ave.,
Des Moines

Ankeny Square
Dance Club is
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Dance Lessons. Cost
is \$20 per person for
the entire session,
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lesson. Attend with
or without a dance
partner. You'll learn
the calls, one call at a
time, taught by a caller (instructor) and
volunteers. For more information, call
Sandy Townsend, 515-291-2624, or visit
www.ankenysquares.com.



HOLIDAY LIGHTS

- **Jolly Holiday Lights**, Adventureland Park, 3300 Adventureland Drive, Altoona, www.jollyholidaylights.org
- **Gingerbread Lane**, S.E. Richland Court, Ankeny, Facebook: Gingerbread Lane Ankeny, IA
- **Prairie Ridge Church**, 825 N.W. 36th St., Ankeny, www.ridgelife.org
- **Winter Wonderlights**, Uptown Ankeny, 715 W. First St., Ankeny, www.uptownankeny.org
- **Winter Wonderscape**, Reiman Gardens, 1407 University Blvd., Ames, www.reimangardens.com
- **Beaverdale**, Ashby and Wallace Avenues near Beaver Avenue, Des Moines, www.beaverdale.org
- **Dogtown Lights**, University Avenue between 23rd and 25th streets in Des Moines' Drake neighborhood, Facebook @ Dogtown Business and Entertainment District
- **First Church of the Open Bible**, 2200 Beaver Ave., Des Moines, www.firstchurch.org
- **Miracle on 86th Street**, 3600 86th St., Urbandale, www.urbandale.org
- **Santa's Rock N Lights**, Living History Farms, 11121 Hickman Road, Urbandale, www.santasrocknlights.com
- **Historic Valley Junction**, Fifth St., West Des Moines, www.valleyjunction.com
- **Lights in the Heights**, Franklin Ave., Marylynn Drive, 72nd St., and other streets in Windsor Heights, www.windsorheightsfoundation.org

NEWS BRIEF

VETERINARY clinic opens

St. Francis Veterinary Care has opened at 101 N.E. Circle Drive in Grimes. The animal hospital is owned by Dr. Allison O'Grady, a graduate of Iowa State University, who has been in practice for 10 years. The business offers pet exams, X-rays, ultrasounds, vaccines, prescription diets, spays, neuters, surgery and dentals. It will also have an online store to order food or medications. For more information, visit stfranciscvetcare.com. ■

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The Iowa Wild are the affiliate
program of the Minnesota Wild.
Home games through December
are:

- Dec. 22 at 7 p.m. vs. Manitoba (Winnipeg Jets)
- Dec. 23 at 6 p.m. vs. Manitoba
- Dec. 28 at 6 p.m. vs. Colorado (Colorado Avalanche)
- Dec. 30 at 6 p.m. vs. Colorado



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iowa.gleague.nba.com

Formerly known as the
Iowa Energy, the Des
Moines based affiliate
for the Minnesota
Timberwolves continues
to foster NBA talent right
here in Iowa. Home games
in December:

- Dec. 29 at 7 p.m. vs. College Park Skyhawks (Atlanta Hawks) | Black Out / Pack Out Night
- Dec. 31 at 2 p.m. vs. College Park Skyhawks | Sustainability Day ■



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POLK COUNTY

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



**LEGAL**

By Cynthia P. Letsch, J.D.

5 TIPS to avoid legal liability for serving alcohol at Christmas and New Years

It is party season, which means that many of you will be serving alcohol to guests. The question arises: What liability do you have if someone drinks alcohol at your party and then gets into a car accident? This is commonly referred to as “social host” law. A “social host” is someone who does not (and is not required to) have a permit to sell or serve alcohol. Social hosts are not automatically liable if a party guest has a subsequent accident causing an injury. That is not to say that you would be totally immune. There are still circumstances that could cause you to end up on the wrong side of a lawsuit — or even behind jail bars. And, trust me, the cost to defend yourself is massive, even if you win. So, the better advice is to act responsibly.



Here are some tips to help you, and your party guests, avoid the very unpleasant consequences that result from drinking and driving:

1. Do not host drinking games or contests that encourage excess alcohol consumption.
2. Keep tabs on how much your guests are drinking and intervene if a guest is overdoing it. Enlist the help of other guests if you need to. Arrange for alternative transportation for guests who obviously should not be driving.
3. If a guest arrives at your party in an already-intoxicated state, it is not a good idea to add to the intoxicated state. Knowingly doing so could be considered gross negligence, especially if the accident results in a death. Trust me, there is a lawyer out there who will help the injured party, or the injured party's family, to try to hold you responsible.
4. Serving alcohol to minors is the most common way to create liability under the social host law. If you serve alcohol to a minor, and the minor is subsequently involved in a car accident, you can be both criminally and civilly liable for the injuries, even if the minor was not fully intoxicated. However, in and of itself, it is not illegal for a minor to drink alcohol, in private residences, in small quantities, if at least one of the minor's parents is present and consents.
5. Provide alternative festive beverages that will allow guests to feel as though they are still part of the party even if they are not drinking alcohol. ■

Information provided by Cynthia P. Letsch, J.D., Letsch Law Firm, 112 N.E. Ewing St., Suite D, Grimes, 515-986-2810, www.LetschLawFirm.com.



Merry Christmas from
your friends at
Letsch Law Firm, PC

Cynthia, Bethany, Jovie
Sandra, CJ, Kristen
(Not pictured) Wendy & Austin

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112 NE Ewing St., Suite D, Grimes, Iowa

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.

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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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Q: Is it normal to gain weight after your workout?

A: Yes, it is normal. The thing to remember as you are embarking or going through your fitness journey is that nothing is linear. In a perfect world, every weigh-in would show progress, but, unfortunately, that is not the case. Progress is going to fluctuate, and that is completely OK. There are multiple reasons as to why your weight might have gone up instead of down. First off, when you start lifting weights or start lifting heavier, your muscle fibers have to break down to grow back stronger. In doing so, your body must take on more water to help with the healing process. The same thing happens with inflammation. The stress that your body goes through in your workout causes inflammation, and your body must once again take on water to help with the healing process.

Now, let's talk about muscle mass. It takes a couple of months for your composition to start changing regarding your muscle going up and fat going down. While yes, your fat mass is going down, you might not see it on the scale quite yet. This is because muscle is denser than fat, so it weighs more, but it takes up less space. Your clothes will start fitting better even when the scale might not be moving as fast as you wanted. The biggest thing I would tell you is not to get discouraged. Progress is happening behind the scenes when you first start out. Keep going, take it day by day. Just imagine taking this next year for yourself and where you will be this time next year. ■

Information provided by Haley Powers-Risdal, certified personal trainer/head coach at Anytime Fitness 255 S.W. Brookside Drive, 515-300-9262, GrimesIA@anytimefitness.com.



REASONS to utilize a trust

Last month we outlined the basics of a trust as part of the estate planning process. With that in mind, we will explore examples of why trusts are often utilized in an estate plan.

Avoidance of probate: The most common reason trusts are utilized for estate planning is to avoid probate (the process of settling an estate for someone who passes away). The state of Iowa has a series of laws which govern how probate estates are handled. While the laws of probate in Iowa are detailed and efficient, utilizing the probate court also comes with costs to the estate. For example, the estate will pay costs to the court for going through the probate process. Additionally, Iowa law sets rules and guidelines for fees for estate attorneys and fiduciaries (those who handle the administration of the estate). While attorney and fiduciary fees are still necessary in utilizing a trust, the costs of the administration (court costs, attorney fees and fiduciary fees) are often significantly reduced.

Beneficiaries who lack financial expertise: Trusts are often utilized in estate plans in situations where there may be a concern that a beneficiary (perhaps a spouse or child) may not have the financial savvy or experience to handle assets they stand to inherit. Rather than your beneficiaries inheriting all of your assets at once, a trust can allow you to distribute funds in smaller, consistent increments. This can provide a steady income stream to beneficiaries while also preventing them from spending the money all at once on an unwise financial transaction.

Assistance in managing financial affairs: You may reach a point in your life where you would benefit from assistance in managing your financial affairs. Establishing a trust can allow your trustee to manage your investment portfolio, collect and disburse money on your behalf, pay your bills, and make distributions to you and your beneficiaries. The trustee, who can be another person or corporate fiduciary such as a bank trust department, will be directed by the provisions of the trust in which you've already outlined your directives/wishes. This shifts the burden of handling your financial affairs away from you. Additionally, if you choose a trustee with investment knowledge and expertise, your investment portfolio may benefit as well.

Keep these points in mind when considering a trust and remember that trusts are versatile and can be tailored to meet individual needs and objectives. ■

For more information, please contact Wade Lawrence or Bryce Block with City State Bank Trust & Investments at 515-986-2265. Not FDIC insured. Not deposits or other obligations of the bank and are not guaranteed by the bank. Are subject to investment risk, including possible loss of principal. City State Bank does not provide tax or legal advice. Each taxpayer should seek independent advice from a tax professional. These materials are based upon publicly available information that may change at any time without notice.



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TIPS for talking with parents about senior living

Are you worried about your mom or dad — or another loved one — living alone? If you want to ask if they would consider moving to a senior living community, chances are you'll encounter resistance. How can you make it easier to discuss transitions with those you love?



Experts agree that the first step to any conversation involving a transition as significant as a move to a senior living community is to ask your loved one what they want — and then listen carefully. Any decisions about change should be driven by the people who will be most affected by them. Older adults who reject the idea of moving to independent or assisted living, memory care or long-term care often say they are worried about high costs, leaving their homes, losing space or giving up their belongings and giving up their independence,

as well. Your best chance of helping loved ones with their concerns is by listening to what they want.

Plan for more than one conversation

Nothing will be decided or solved in one conversation. Think of your conversations with loved ones about moving to a care community as a marathon, not a sprint. You don't want to sound like you are telling them what to do. Instead, ask questions such as, "What do you want that would make you happy? Is there something you always wanted to accomplish but never had time for?" You may discover that a parent has spent years cooking meals for your family and wanted to create art instead. You may find a parent wants to travel, in which case maintaining a home would be a hindrance.

Discuss how senior living can support future needs and plans

As you talk through different scenarios, it's OK to ask loved ones what needs to happen to

make their lives easier or what the plan is if they fall or become injured or ill. Each answer will inform what comes next. Another way to create a smooth transition is to help your loved ones experience a sense of control, which helps them maintain a stronger sense of self in the midst of change. Therefore, you might ask if he or she has spoken with friends who moved to a senior living community. Peers are more likely to influence each other than a loved one's adult children.

Be positive

The main thing to remember during a transitional period in a loved one's life is that he or she needs to move toward something positive, rather than leaving everyone and everything behind. Focusing on positive reasons to move opens the door to more thoughtful decisions. That's a goal that's worth waiting for. ■

This content provided by Chris Ruzicka, Director of Sales, Meadowview of Clive, Chris.Ruzicka@CassiaLife.org, 515-644-8740, 3300 Berkshire Parkway, Clive.



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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.



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LAWN CARE

By Kevin Johnson

HO, HO, HO! Happy holidays

Last month I touched upon what many of our clients have done to extend the beauty of their residence beyond a beautiful lawn and landscape.

Permanent holiday lighting and/or traditional Christmas lighting is a great way to enjoy the upcoming holiday season. Office parties, family gatherings, and spreading Christmas cheer are all valid reasons for investing in a beautiful lighting display that showcases the uniqueness of your home.

Professional lighting contractors can provide you with many options that best fit your individual needs and desires. Many consumers appreciate the no hassle approach that leads to a spectacular and stunning lighting display for their home. Roof lights, wreaths, garland, ground lighting and window lighting are all possibilities with traditional Christmas lighting. Permanent lighting provides a permanent installation that allows various color choices, patterns and flexibility not afforded by the traditional lighting packages. Of course, as a homeowner, you always have the option of lighting your home yourself, as many new products have become available that makes a quality installation easier.

I personally enjoy driving through my neighborhood looking at my community's light displays. It always brings joy to my family as well. Whether you hire a professional or do it yourself, consider holiday lighting and spreading a little Christmas cheer. Enjoy the holidays! ■

Information provided by Kevin Johnson, All American Turf Beauty, 311 DeSoto Road, Van Meter, 515-996-2261.



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CUB Scouts serve the community

Learning leadership and citizenship



Cub Scout Pack 171 in Grimes completes a variety of community service projects. They have helped plant trees, sang Christmas carols at Kennybrook Village and more.

The 22 boys who make up Cub Scout Pack 171 in Grimes are doing great things.

This group of boys, from kindergarten through fifth grade, are learning how to be leaders and a positive influence in their community.

Amanda Marah, the pack's cub master, shares that Cub Scout Pack 171 likes to be involved in service projects that help the community of Grimes. This includes everything from cleaning up trails by Heritage Elementary to hosting a food drive for the Grimes Storehouse, which they plan to do again in April. The group recently sang Christmas carols at Kennybrook Village and helped plant trees with the Grimes Tree Board this past spring.

While the boys in the pack do all the work, they're supported by parents who care.

"We also have nine adults who volunteer their time as leadership of the pack to help make sure the boys enjoy their adventures each year and help make our pack successful," says Marah.

What she enjoys most about leading Cub Scout Pack 171 is seeing each boy grow into their own person and seeing what each one has to offer the group and each other.

"Each kiddo has such a different personality, and they really learn to work together and use each others' strengths to be successful," Marah says. "It makes me very excited to see the leaders they will become."

"With how Scouting works, it really is something that will be more of a long-term impact because the Scouting program is all about learning how to be a leader that makes a positive impact on the community they live in."

Marah hopes that each boy involved in Cub Scout Pack 171 learns how to help those who need it and that there are many ways to support the community and be a good citizen.

"Scouting is such a great program to teach youngsters how to be a positive influence on their community and be a leader," Marah says. "If you are looking for something to help teach that and still be involved as a parent, there are three great options for kiddos. Girls or boys grades kindergarten through fifth can join Pack 171 and Pack 172. For the older kids 11 and up, Troop 171 here in Grimes will be glad to have some new members. You can join all three at any time."

For information about joining, visit iascouts.org or reach out to the units directly by emailing Pack 171 (boys grades K-5) at pack171@grimesbsa.com; Pack 172 (girls and boys grades K-5) at grimespack172@gmail.com; and Troop 171 (boys ages 11-18) at grimestroop171@gmail.com. ■



COMMUNITY

DCG EDUCATION

Foundation raises \$82,000

Record-setting amount raised during annual RED Dinner and Auction.

More than 200 members of the Dallas Center and Grimes communities attended the Dallas Center-Grimes Education Foundation's (DCGEF) sixth annual RED Dinner and Auction held on Nov. 11 at Three Sisters Barn in Dallas Center. The RED event, which is



Executive Board members are Ryan Caddell, Lori Thomas, Tiffany Hamil and Mary Tjeerdsma.

an abbreviation for "Raising Education Dollars," raised more than \$82,000, a record-setting amount for their scholarship programs.

During the RED Dinner and Auction, attendees were treated to a meal, live auction, silent auction, program and entertainment. In-person attendees could bid on live auction items, while the silent auction was held online for the fourth year and open to any community members without a ticket who wanted to participate.

"We are extremely grateful to our local community for their support of DCG students," said Tiffany Hamil, DCGEF board president. "From donors and sponsors to attendees and our amazing volunteers, DCGEF is making an impact. DCG students are the future difference makers, drivers of innovation, social change-makers, and economic impactors, and we want to give them all the best support possible to be successful."

DCGEF is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization, volunteer-run, and operated separately from the Dallas Center-Grimes school district. Its mission is to support DCG students in their pursuit of higher education through financial scholarships generated in partnership with community philanthropic and fundraising initiatives.

During the program, former DCG student Tristan Bocook presented his experiences at Simpson College where he is a senior studying computer science and expressed his gratitude to the audience for their generosity in supporting the dreams of students like him.

"I was a hard-working kid, working to save money for school," said Tristan. "When I received news that I had been awarded the RED scholarship, it was one of the best moments of my life. It made my financial worry a little less. I am so grateful to the DCG community for their support."

Last year, DCGEF awarded 124 scholarships totaling \$181,250 to the DCG class of 2023. These scholarships were a combination of DCGEF-fundraised and investment dollars and locally sponsored scholarships. Scholarships are awarded each May to the DCG graduating class.

Visit www.dcgeducationfoundation.org to view a list of RED event sponsors. ■

Happy Holidays

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EDUCATION

By Ashley Rullestad

STATE mock trial semifinalists

Eighth-grade team improves over three years of participating.



The eighth-grade mock trial team includes, front row: Sharla Benning, Gable Bond and Elana Hamp; and, back row: Silas Miller, Fisher Krob, Evie Dahm, Coach Garrett Bond, Coach Jill Altringer, Noah Townsend and Roxanne Gao.

Eighth-grade students at Dallas Center Grimes recently competed at the state mock trial competition, finishing as semifinalists.

The students started in mock trial together as sixth graders, when they placed 20th. As seventh graders, they placed ninth. This year, they became the first DCG middle school team to make it to the final four. They are three-time regional champions.

Mock Trial is in its 40th year in Iowa. It is held and supported by the Iowa Bar Association and the Young Lawyers Trial division. Teams from across the state prepare two sides of a trial based on the case material provided. Four “attorneys” and three “witnesses” compete on each side in a head-to-head competition, representing the prosecution and defense.

The DCG team is coached by Jill Altringer and Garrett Bond, with supporting coaches Ann Stauffer Haugland and Jeremy Hamp. Altringer became involved with the program when her oldest son joined the program in 2016.

“It is so rewarding to watch the students develop confidence both in speaking and thinking on their feet. After high school, most kids won’t step foot on the football field or the wrestling mat again, but every adult should feel comfortable talking in front of a group of people. And that is my goal, so that every kid I coach can tell their teacher that their strength is public speaking,” she says.

All-State Honors are awarded for Outstanding Attorneys and Outstanding Witnesses.

This year, 11 attorneys and 19 witnesses were recognized, and the Grimes team had one attorney and two witnesses honored. Additionally, the Critelli Award is presented to one team that is voted upon by the peer teams for exemplifying sportsmanship, civility and courtroom decorum. The DCG team won the Critelli award in 2022 and 2023.

Coach Hamp says he is proud of the strides the students have made. As a former mock trial participant himself, he knows the effort they put in to be successful. He enjoys seeing the relationships the students develop, too.

“Watching my daughter and her teammates grow so much over the past three years has been so rewarding — not only in their skill set and mock trial prowess, but their friendships. They truly care for one another, and their passion goes well beyond the season. These kids are involved in sports, music, cheerleading and academics together. They cheer one another on and support each other throughout the year.” ■

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A LITTLE good news

I'll let you in on a little secret. Living in Grimes either keeps you young or makes you feel old. Last year, I had the distinct honor of passing the half-century mark, which I choose to view as a blessing. My father's generation has reminded me for years, "Getting old beats the alternative." I agree with this sentiment. However, aging in Grimes is a different experience than it is in most surrounding communities.



According to the 2020 Decennial Census, the median age in Grimes is 35.6 years of age. That is young. For context, look at a couple of our neighbors. A few examples include Johnston (39.1), Clive (38.4), Urbandale (38.9) and Windsor Heights (43.5). The median age of the U.S. is 38.1, which aligns closely with Iowa (38.3). We attribute the youthfulness of Grimes to the ongoing influx of young families, especially young families with young children.

In 2010, our median age was 31.1. Why the upswing? Although young families continue to move to town, the children from over a decade ago have aged, like everyone else that has stayed in the community. Also, more grandparents are coming to the community to be near their families, and we become older and wiser.

This entire demographic review is in defense of my age and to set the stage for what I am about to share. What's my secret? I like Anne Murray. For those of you who may be unaware, Anne Murray is a Canadian singer of pop, country and adult contemporary music, plus she was a scratch golfer. She was most popular in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Now 78, I suspect she's not a scratch golfer any longer. My Aunt Linda was kind to take me to one of her concerts when I was young, and I've been a fan ever since... a fact that, for the most part, I've held in close confidence for fear of being judged by those around me.

One of her most popular songs remains very relevant today. The name of the song is "A Little Good News," which was released in 1983. It was her seventh No. 1 hit. The lyrics essentially share a desire to wake up, turn on the news and learn there was only good news being shared. No war in the Middle East, nobody overdosing on drugs, no hostages, no assassinations, no one being shot, and everyone loving everyone else. Wouldn't that be beautiful? Alas, 40 years later, the headlines are much the same as they were in 1983. The last lyric of the song is, "We sure could us a little good news today." I agree.

But while we live in a world where bad things happen, we would be remiss if we didn't recognize that, here in Grimes, where the median age is 35.6 years, by and large, we have it pretty good. Sometimes understanding that the problems we have are not new can relieve a bit of stress. While we all deal with personal situations, which can often be difficult, as a community, we are blessed. As you live in this community, do business in this community, engage with this community, and share your opinions of this community, keep this in mind. Then, look left and right, and see what you can do to have a positive impact on those around you.

On behalf of the 324-plus members of Grimes Chamber & Economic Development, thank you for helping to make this community wonderful. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year! #lovegrimes ■

Information provided by Brian Buethe, president | CEO, Grimes Chamber & Economic Development, GrimesIowa.com, brianb@grimesiowa.com.

HAPPY HOLIDAYS GRIMES!

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OUT & ABOUT



Emerge Academy received five Residents Choice awards, including Favorite Gymnastics Studio and Favorite Tumbling Studio in Northwest Polk County. Ellie Day, Allie Day, Spencer Johnson and Katie Johnson accept the certificates.



Kleckner & Viers Chiropractic Clinic received a Residents Choice Award for Favorite Chiropractic Office in Northwest Polk County. Dr. Ethan Kleckner and Dr. Joseph Viers accept the certificate.



The Grimes Chamber of Commerce organized a ribbon cutting for Hotworx in Grimes on Oct. 6.



The Grimes Chamber of Commerce organized a ribbon cutting for S&J Family Insurance on Oct. 5.



Grimes Chamber of Commerce volunteers Halsey Scales and Jenna Taylor filled gift bags for the Grimes Holiday Celebration on Nov. 30.



Grimes Chamber of Commerce volunteers Dini Anderlik and Madison Taiber filled gift bags for the Grimes Holiday Celebration on Nov. 30.



Grimes Chamber of Commerce volunteers Jamie Stoltenberg and Julie Quandt filled gift bags for the Grimes Holiday Celebration on Nov. 30.



Grimes Chamber of Commerce volunteers Stacey Vander Schoor, Sharon Christiansen and Tekyn Tackett filled gift bags for the Grimes Holiday Celebration on Nov. 30.



Grimes Chamber of Commerce volunteers Lu Anne Gafford and Justin Stoltenberg filled gift bags for the Grimes Holiday Celebration on Nov. 30.



Grimes Chamber of Commerce volunteers Andrew and Barb Rothfus and Gloria Perry filled gift bags for the Grimes Holiday Celebration on Nov. 30.

OUT & ABOUT

RIBBON cutting

The Grimes Chamber of Commerce held a ribbon cutting for St. Francis Veterinary Clinic on Dec. 6.



The Grimes Chamber of Commerce held a ribbon cutting for St. Francis Veterinary Clinic on Dec. 6.



Dr. Allison O'Grady and Brian Buethe



John O'Grady and Dr. Allison O'Grady



Lu Anne Gafford and Brad Freeman



Sophie Meekma and Dini Anderlik



Laura Sullivan, Sophie Meekma, Dr. Allison O'Grady and Gretchen Altman



John Palmer, Glenn Waterhouse and Chad Fye

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