

URBANDALE

DECEMBER 2023

MAGAZINE

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tradition of sending Christmas cards

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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. ■



SHANE GOODMAN

President and Publisher
Big Green Umbrella Media
shane@dmcityview.com
515-953-4822, ext. 305



Tammy Pearson
Editor
515-953-4822 ext. 302
tammy@iowalivingmagazines.com

Gina Chandler
Advertising Account Executive
515-953-4822 x323
gina@iowalivingmagazines.com



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Special DELIVERY

Residents share their thoughts on the tradition of sending Christmas cards

By Chantel Boyd

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.

Lorraine Reed enjoys sending and receiving Christmas cards. For her, it's part of her holiday traditions.

Capturing family memories

The Johnsons have been sending cards since their first son was born in 1986.

"We continue even though our boys are 37 and 34. It is a wonderful way to chronicle our lives and changes and growth. A picture is better than 1,000 words," says Christy Johnston. Her husband, A.J., is Urbandale's city manager.

Christy puts together the holiday update for their family each year and has for more than 35 years.

"I send updates with important information some years, like when we've moved or have a new grandchild. But the picture is the most important part," she says.

She says family and friends look forward to the cards and enjoy them.

"It is a great way to keep in touch and show that we care. We've lived in five different cities, three states, and so we send out about 200 cards to stay connected," she says.

Some lucky recipients have their cards personally delivered by the family.

"We hand-deliver with a plate of cookies or candy. Those are the special ones," she says.

Christy admits that, over the years, the costs to keep the tradition going have increased —

including postage.

"Photo cards have gotten a little pricey but are worth it," she says. "There is some time commitment, too, but I've always loved writing letters, sending cards and buying stationary."

Christy is happy to keep the tradition alive.

"Writing letters is becoming a lost art. I hope holiday cards hang on."

Cards have been an excellent way for Christy to stay connected with friends, family and former students.

"Before retiring four years ago, I was a teacher for 40 years, with my last 10 years at Urbandale High School. I still exchange Christmas cards with many former students. Seeing them grown up and with families is rewarding when they send me a picture," she says.

Keeping the updates going with such a busy family schedule has been challenging.

"The most challenging part of our cards is the pictures," she says. "Our oldest now lives in South Carolina with his wife and our two grandsons, so sometimes it's difficult to get everyone together."

The photos taken over the years have changed.

"We've had different themes: the first day



Christy Johnson keeps the Christmas cards her family receives so she can enjoy looking back through them.

of school, Halloween costumes, all in Hawkeye gear, one year KU gear (our sons' college), wearing antlers and Santa hats, on the front porch of a new house, Alec's wedding, and several years we did beach pictures with professional photographers."

This year, the Johnsons were all in Urbandale for Thanksgiving, and they had Danielle Rowland take their family pictures at Urbandale's

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FEATURE

Charles Gabus Memorial Garden.

"The Miracle on 86th Street holiday sets were up and made for some great backdrops. Danielle got some great shots and had to work hard chasing our grandsons, Asher, 5, and Austin, 2, all around."

Christy says she looks forward to this tradition despite the cost of time and money.

"Addressing the cards and writing notes takes time, but I try not to stress. I put on some holiday music and enjoy the process."

Christy has been chronicling the memory of Christmas cards for the last two decades.

"I started 20 years ago by putting all the photo cards we received in booklet form with our card on top. I punch two holes on the top of each card and connect them with two metal rings, then tie bows on top of the rings."

She says she is glad she started this tradition so that the entire Johnson family has this memory.

"It is so fun to go back and see all my nieces and nephews and friends' children grow up each year. Many people have stopped sending holiday cards, and that's OK. It just brings me so much joy to send our cards out. I love receiving them, too — especially picture cards."

First came the dog

Jana and Dave Schwerdtfeger started sending cards to friends and family a few years into their marriage.

"We started sending the cards after we got a dog. It was just the three of us for many years," explains Jana.

As the couple began to travel, they shared their trips with their inner



Christy and AJ Johnson and their family had photos for their Christmas card taken with the Miracle on 86th Street props as backdrops. Photo by Danielle Rowland Photography

circle.

"We made Christmas cards with photos of our adventures throughout the year," she says.

In 2022, when the couple had a lot of travels throughout the year and couldn't decide which to feature on their cards, they decided to include them all in a clever, affordable way.

"I like to find ways to save money, so I did a postcard so I would only have to buy postcard stamps," says Jana. "I put a QR code on it to lead everyone to a webpage with all the photos and year recap letter."

Jana and Dave made a list of things that happened over the year and



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Jana and Dave Schwerdtfeger are extra creative with their holiday greetings. The postcard they sent last year included a QR code leading to their unique music video parody.

posted the photos that went along with them, but they couldn't choose just a few, so they picked a theme and went for it.

"Dave is a musician and is always creating songs, and he very quickly came up with the first verse at the beginning of our year along the lines of 'We Didn't Start the Fire' from Billy Joel. At first, he did it as a joke, but I loved it, and he just took it from there," says Jana.

"I gathered the photos needed for the video, and he quickly put them into a video maker. Overall, it took a few weeks to pull together, but we finished it all in time to send them a week before Christmas," she says.

The couple sent out 100 postcards with the QR code linked to the webpage with the parody video of the Billy Joel song.

"Everyone loved it," says Dave. "We need to do something at least as fun this year. Everyone loved the creativity, the humor, and the originality. It wasn't a typical three-page letter or collage of photos. It was something different and let us show off our goofy side."

The only downside of the 2022 Christmas card may just be the positive response.

"We have set the bar too high for this year and have to figure out a way to follow up," jokes Dave.

Details about this year's card are being left as a surprise for Jana and Dave's friends and family — mostly because they haven't figured it out yet.

"Last year was kind of last-minute, so maybe we will suddenly get inspired, and it will all come together again. We will for sure send another one out again," says Dave.

The couple enjoys the creative process. In 2022, when they made the postcard and video, Dave was ready to use his new creative space.

"I had just finished building a recording

studio in our house, so I figured, why not create a musical parody?" he says.

The creative process did have a downside.

"I had to listen to 'We Didn't Start the Fire' so many times last year while making this that I can't listen anymore," laughs Dave. "It is going to take a while for me to be able to listen to and like it again."

Since Dave and Jana already had the recording equipment, the most significant investment was their time.

"The lyrics didn't take too long, maybe an hour or so. I spent a couple of hours each evening recording the music. Then we spent the weekend on the video and final touches," says Dave. "I like that people will start expecting something fun from us, and I love that we share some joy with others."

A 67-year tradition

With a little help from her daughter, Deanna Walraven, Lorraine Reed is able to continue her long-time holiday tradition of sending a Christmas letter and card.

"My 95-year-old mom sends cards and makes a new Christmas letter every year," says Deanna. "Every year, I help her send her Christmas cards. I type what she writes then print 200 letters for her."

Lorraine started her tradition 67 years ago.

"The year was 1956. It started out as a yearly family picture sent out with notes. She's never missed a year since," says Deanna.

It takes both time and money to get the letters out, but it's worth it every time, she says.

"It takes two to three hours to write the letter and three to four weeks to send them all out. The response has always been positive. People like to receive updates on the family," says Deanna.



Lorraine Reed with her family, Deanna Walraven, Tammi Reed, Darin Reed, Roger Reed, Connie Cox and Doug Reed.

Lorraine spent \$105.60 on stamps this year. When she began in 1956, stamps were just 3 cents. It would only have cost \$6 to send the cards back then.

Mother and daughter's favorite part of putting the letters together is how it impacts others.

"We like people responding and keeping up with everyone," Deanna says. "About half of everyone sends a letter or note back."

Lorraine takes some of her cards to the church mailboxes but mails the rest.

"She said the mailman probably says, 'Oh, no...not again,'" Deanna says of her mom's massive letter bundles.

But Lorraine does show her appreciation for their efforts.

"She does give the mailman cookies every year," says Deanna.

Lorraine started this tradition when her kids were young.

"When my six children were all under 7 years, I wrote a Christmas letter to all my family and friends to let them know about our busy yet wonderful life," she says.

Now, 65 years later, she is still writing about her busy yet fabulous life.

"What a joy it has been all these years," she says. "I love to see the mailman deliver all my Christmas mail to me with people's responses coming, telling me how much they enjoy knowing what is going on with my family."

For Deanna, it's a pleasure to support her mom's Christmas letter.

"This age-old Christmas letter is a labor of love from my 95-year-old mom," she says. "I sigh and smile at all the love she puts into her Christmas cards and letters. She loves it... So do I." ■

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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REFUGEE helps inspire new Iowans

Shalom Community Impact Center making Urbandale more inclusive.

The Shalom Community Impact Center (SCIC) truly lives up to its name. It makes a big impact.

The Urbandale-based center was started by Pastor Eugene Kiruhura because he saw the need and challenges faced by his fellow refugees.

"I went through similar challenges and struggles," he shares. "I decided to start SCIC to inspire new Iowans to become full participants in their local and national communities."

The SCIC works to empower refugee and immigrant families by providing services and programs that assist with integration into and adaptation to their new home country to ensure upward mobility in the areas of education, employment, health and wellbeing.

The organization began by serving Congolese refugees. Today, it serves refugees from around the world, including Afghanistan, Burundi, Rwanda and Eritrea.

The SCIC has also grown from offering one program focused on academic support for kids in grades K-12 to four distinct programs that help individuals acclimate to a new culture and environment. Those programs include digital skills, preschool, English and academic support.

Over the past couple of years, the SCIC has received support from Google Fiber for its digital inclusion programs. Funds have been used to provide devices to individuals who complete the program, for curriculum support, increased staffing of a digital navigator, hotspots for participants in need of a home connection, childcare for families who need it while caregivers take classes, and adding a digital literacy summer program for K-12 learners. Google Fiber also connected SCIC with PCs for People, a nonprofit that offers refurbished devices at deeply reduced prices.

"Our staff is proud to know that Google Fiber's community impact programs are impacting real people in the community where they live and work," says Rachel Merlo, Google Fiber Head of Government and Community Affairs – Central Region. "We can't wait to see how the SCIC's digital literacy programs will continue to grow and thrive with their new participation in our national Digital Inclusion Fellowship program in 2024."

Kiruhura explains that most of the refugees the SCIC serves are Urbandale residents like he is.

"We are making Urbandale a more welcoming neighborhood and community," he says. "We get to transform lives and build community right here at home."

What Kiruhura enjoys most about helping lead the organization is seeing how many lives it is impacting within the community.

"We see someone who came in our program without speaking English and now has the skills they need," he shares. "We see someone who interacted with a computer for the first time at SCIC, and, in a few short months, they have valuable skills that will benefit them for years to



Students learn to use digital technology at the Shalom Community Impact Center.



Language skills are among those taught at the Shalom Community Impact Center.

come. I have seen a participant find a better job because her language and computer skills vastly improved and gave her more options for her in the workforce. My joy is when I see we are making impact in people's lives and building more vibrant communities."

Kiruhura adds that the organization has even provided people with transportation so they can interview and show up for job opportunities.

"That's what SCIC is all about," he says. ■

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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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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.



Update your estate plan

Putting your legal affairs in order is important. It reduces the burden on loved ones in the event of poor health or death. It can save time and expense. And, it allows you to have control over how your assets pass. Every person should have three basic estate planning documents: a Last Will and Testament, a Durable Financial Power of Attorney, and a Living Will / Health Care Power of Attorney.

A will directs the distribution of your assets upon your death. Through the power of

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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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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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.



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THE GIFT of a smile

With Christmas just around the corner, it's time to think gifts. Are you tired of the same old thing? Tired of gifts you won't use or bored with giving cash or gift cards? Why not give a gift that can positively change the person you are gifting? A smile has the power to light up a room and leave a lasting impression. A good smile can also start a relationship, land you a job or a raise, and can give you the confidence to accomplish your goals. Beyond looking good, a straight smile also plays a crucial role in your oral health and overall wellbeing.

Benefits of a straight smile

The visual effects of a straight smile are easy to see and understand. Statistically, people with



straight teeth are more likely to be perceived as happier and friendlier. Straight teeth are easier to clean and are thus less prone to gum disease, cavities, and other oral health issues. Teeth straightened by an orthodontist not only align the teeth you see, but also create a more comfortable bite. Teeth that are properly aligned have a lower risk to be broken or fractured in an accident. Straight teeth that are properly maintained can even save money by avoiding future dental issues. Smiling releases endorphins that boost your mood, decrease your blood pressure and stress, improve your immune system and more. What other gift could possibly achieve these same benefits both in the short and long term?

With all the amazing benefits of straight teeth, it's hard not to want to share with yourself and everyone you love. Seeking the care of an orthodontic professional will ensure you or your loved one will receive a healthy

smile they can share with confidence. If you want to give a truly unique gift this year that will last a lifetime and positively impact the receiver for the rest of their life, then you have to consider orthodontic treatment.

Orthodontic treatment offers a myriad of benefits that extend far beyond just the appearance of a straight smile, which alone is worth the investment. If you're considering orthodontic treatment, consulting with a qualified orthodontist can help you explore the options that best suit your needs. If you are thinking of gifting someone else a smile for a lifetime, schedule them a free consultation as well. Remember, a healthy, beautiful smile is a gift that keeps giving, enriching lives in countless ways. ■

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

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BRACES & ALIGNERS FOR CHILDREN AND ADULTS

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 Tiffany Michaud, Community Director, Edencrest at Timberline, 14001 Douglas Parkway, Urbandale, 515-422-8096, welcometl@edencrestliving.com. Information from Family Caregiver Alliance.

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Board of Supervisors



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515-286-3247

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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.



EVENTS IN THE AREA

Check for cancellations



Miracle on 86th Street

Through Jan. 8

Charles Gabus Memorial Tree Park, 3600 86th St.

Bundle up this winter and stroll through the Charles Gabus Memorial Tree Park this winter. The park features a large custom-built train, larger-than-life ornamental displays, an ice-skating rink, and holiday-themed events all season long. The park is lit with more than 50,000 holiday lights and special events will be held there all season long.

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.

Museum open

Urbandale Historical Society, 4010 70th St.

The Olmsted-Urban House will be open for viewing the first Sunday of each month 2-4 p.m. for viewing. Members of the society will be there for guiding tours and showing the collection of things that might have been in Grandma's house. The Rolling Green school quilt made by the students and the painting given in memory of Pamela Powers are now at the Olmsted Urban House. These items can be viewed during the museum's monthly open house.

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 sponsoring Square Dance Lessons. Cost is \$20 per person for the entire session, accepted at the third 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. ■



LIBRARY

By Staci Stanton,
Programming & Outreach Manager

URBANDALE Public Library news



Winter can be a great time to hibernate and catch up on your reading. If you're looking for another means of escape, we highly recommend checking out an Adventure Pass and visiting local area attractions. Step into the tropical paradise of the Greater Des Moines Botanical Garden or lace up your skates and take a few laps around the Brenton Skating Plaza. The Adventure Pass provides options for year-round enjoyment and also includes the Blank Park Zoo, Science Center of Iowa, and the Des Moines Children's Museum. The Adventure Pass is open to any Urbandale or rural Polk County resident. Passes are good for two adults and two children and can be checked out once per year at each venue. To get started, click on the "Resources" tab on our website: www.urbandalelibrary.org.

The Adventure Pass is one of the resources funded by the Urbandale Public Library Foundation. Please consider donating to the Foundation and help the library continue to provide diverse resources for lifelong learning at a central location for community activity and engagement. To learn more about the services, programs and resources supported by the Foundation, click on the "About Us" tab on our website.

With 2023 coming to a close, we invite children and their families to join us at our Noon Year's Eve Party on Saturday, Dec. 30 at 11 a.m. for dancing, bubbles, balloons, glow sticks and more. Stick around until noon as we'll count down to a ball drop from an Urbandale fire truck.

Let the library help you with setting goals for the new year. In addition to reaching your reading goals, Playaways and Libby are great hacks for reading on the go. Mango Languages and our A to Z databases can help you prepare for a trip by learning more about the language, food and culture of your intended destination. You can find these and more under the Resources tab.

For anyone who is looking to get a jump start on their physical wellbeing, the library has partnered with Aging Resources of Central Iowa for an eight-session class on fall prevention. Matter of Balance is a workshop that offers techniques to prevent falls; simple exercises for strength, flexibility and balance; and ways to increase activity. Sign up to attend classes Tuesdays and Thursdays at 1 p.m. beginning Jan. 2.

Stop in the library to start your new year off on the right foot. ■



CITY OF URBANDALE

URBANDALE COUNCIL RECAP



Mayor Robert Andeweg and Urbandale resident Anna Pollpeter

November 28, 2023 - Council Meeting

The Mayor and City Council met on Tuesday, November 28, and began the meeting with routine items such as approving bills and meeting minutes.

The City Council set Tuesday, December 12, as a public hearing to consider the Forward Urbandale Comprehensive Plan. The plan serves as a foundation for decision-making and will help guide the City over the next 20 years as it works to implement the community's vision. The City's residents, business community, elected and appointed officials, institutions, and organizations all have a strong sense of

stewardship for Urbandale's success, and all share a determination to make the City the best place it can be.

November 14, 2023 - Council Meeting

Four proclamations were read by Mayor Andeweg at the City Council meeting on Tuesday, November 14.

National Apprenticeship Week: Apprenticeships provide a vital role in creating opportunities by allowing apprentices to earn while they learn and help prepare a pathway to good, quality jobs and well-paying careers in Urbandale.

Injury Prevention Day: Injuries, whether intentional or unintentional, are preventable within the state of Iowa and the City of Urbandale is committed to increasing public awareness and education around injury prevention.

Small Business Saturday: Small businesses employ almost half of the private sector employees in the United States and nearly 25% of employees in Urbandale work in the retail industry.

Miss Iowa Preteen: Urbandale resident Anna Pollpeter will be traveling to Florida, representing her community with the goal to become the National American Miss Preteen Queen.



Help create a new City flag for Urbandale. Everyone is invited to participate in the process with their ideas and designs. You can upload a design that you've created on our website, or pick up a paper form from City Hall. The submission period is open through January 31, 2024. To submit your ideas or learn more, visit www.Urbandale.org/flag

Newsletter Sign-Up



You get plenty of e-mail already, that's why the City's official e-newsletter is delivered only once per month. It's your place to get a quick, streamlined, monthly update about all things Urbandale. www.urbandale.org/news



Council Recap is Online

Looking for a particular meeting recap? We have all the recaps online! www.urbandale.org/councilrecap

This is a custom publication from the City of Urbandale. The Council Recap is not the official minutes of the Council meeting, it's an easy-to-read and easy-to-understand digest of the Council Meetings specifically designed for residents. You can watch all the City Council meetings on YouTube and download Council agendas on the City's website.

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Edward Jones
MAKING SENSE OF INVESTING

EDUCATION

By T.K. West

MEET Clay Thielking

Helping students create a roadmap.

Born and raised in Urbandale, Clay Thielking graduated from Grand View University where he played basketball and earned a degree in accounting. He then attended Drake University where he earned a master's degree in teaching. In the summer of 2000, he relocated to Littleton, Colorado, where he resided for 20 years, spending most of that time at Columbine High School teaching business and coaching boys basketball.



As a teacher of at-risk students and head boys basketball coach, Clay Thielking says he is glad to give back to the school from which he graduated.

About three years ago, Thielking and his family returned to his hometown. He first taught business and was the assistant boys basketball coach at Urbandale High School before accepting a teaching and head coaching position at Dowling Catholic. Now, Thielking has again returned to his alma mater where he is an at-risk teacher and the head boys basketball coach.

"The people here are tremendous," he says. "I have been provided a lot of support through the New Teacher Academy and, on a daily basis, from Mr. Carver and the rest of the staff here at UHS. I feel like there is a commitment to continuous improvement and to providing the resources needed to help all of our students succeed."

Thielking says he likes working with students at the high school level because no two days are the same, and he enjoys the variety and challenges that come with it. He also enjoys the interactions with students and helping them achieve their goals.

He says one of the main goals of the At-Risk program is to provide students with the tools that will help them earn their diploma. One of their first "projects" this school year was to spend time reviewing their transcripts and coming up with a game plan to reach that goal.

"Students enjoy seeing that roadmap to their final destination of a high school diploma," he says.

After a taking break from summer workouts, Thielking says he was excited to get back into the gym with the boys basketball team this fall.

"Coaching has always been a passion of mine, and it is a gift to be able to give back to the program and school that had such a positive impact on my life," he says. "I am honored and grateful for the opportunity. I am looking forward to building relationships with my players and helping them achieve the individual and team goals that they set out to reach."

When not working, Thielking and his wife enjoy traveling, working out and spending time with extended family located in Urbandale. ■

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'JOY to the World'

"Joy to the World" is not just a familiar Christmas carol, but a much-needed message for our world grounded in God's Word.

God broke onto the historical scene with a miracle and a message of hope at a time of ruthless Roman domination in Israel. The angel declared, "I bring you good news of a great joy... for all the people" (Luke 2:10).



What was that good news? "For today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:11). Israel's promised Messiah had arrived to deliver them and "all the people." But from what?

Matthew said, "It is He (Jesus) who will save His people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). Why from sin?

Our passive indifference toward our active rebellion against God (sin) separates us from Him (Isaiah 59:2) and sentences us to His eternal punishment (Romans 6:23). Human beings are diagnosed with terminal depravity that needs to be eliminated. If I suffer from a headache caused by a sinus infection, I need an antibiotic to kill the disease — not just Tylenol to treat the symptom.

The good news is that God's Son came to earth and was placed in a cradle so He would one day die on the cross. In death, Christ satisfied God's wrath against sin, freeing all who believe in Him from its control and consequences (Romans 3:22-25).

For all who believe in Jesus, the penalty for our sin has been paid through His blood, and His righteousness has been credited to our account (2 Corinthians 5:21). This "good news of great joy" is not just "the power of God unto salvation" for the Jewish people, but "for all who believe, the Jew first and also the Gentile" (Romans 1:16).

Countries are in conflict, crime is on the rise, prices are skyrocketing, returns on investment are plummeting and corruption is rewarded. The greatest joy comes not from reversing these trends, but from knowing that we who deserve God's penalty are declared just and forgiven before God for eternity through faith in Christ.

Spending time with our adult children and our grandchildren brings my wife and me great joy. But the greatest and most lasting joy for anyone is knowing, "my sin, not in part, but the whole, has been nailed to the cross, and I bear it no more, praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul."

"Joy to the World" is offered because "the Lord has come" and is experienced by all who by faith "receive her king."

Receive Christ by faith as your Savior and King. ■

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

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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 eggsspectations 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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HOLIDAY Hullabaloo

Holiday Hullabaloo was held
Nov. 21 in Urbandale.



Santa and his helpers



Chris Baker and Claire Strickland



Mike Gonzalez, Suzy Snowflake and Kat Gonzalez



Stephanie Stark and Katie Gallo



Heidi and Paul Peglow



Ira White and Rich Harbart



Lance Knaack, Santa and Kara Knaack



Dave and Brenda Applegate



Rich Willis and Martha Munro



Lorie and Paul Williamson

HOLIDAY Soirée

A Holiday Soirée was hosted at Edencrest at Timberline in Urbandale on Nov. 29.



Sharon Peerman, Renee Ihde and Kirsten Bugge



Larry and Kathy LePera



Francis LePara and Lisa Green



Joe, Lisa and Mert Chmelka



Melea Schultz and Marsha Gourley



Rachel Homan, Michelle Williams and Brandi Smith



Mary Kelly, Laura McPike and Grace Kelly



Sue McDowell and Dan and Lori McDowell



Kim Dok, LaKesha Jones and Mike Herting



Tiffany Michaud and Jay Mathes



Erik Skuster and Carol Smith

Wishing your family a

happy & healthy

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We at Waggoner Pediatrics wish everyone a very happy holidays and a healthy New Year. We appreciate the faith you have in us to take care of the most valuable things in your life: your children. We strive every day to respond to your needs and provide the best family centered care possible.

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