

Living

Special DELIVERY

Residents share their thoughts on the 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. ■



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Special DELIVERY

Residents share their thoughts on the tradition of sending Christmas cards

By Jackie Wilson

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.

Kelly and Jason Smith, along with Corrine, 5, and Nora, 7, send out about 150 photo cards each Christmas.
Photo by Jackie Wilson



Handmade cards

When it's time for Debbie DeCamp to send out Christmas cards, she doesn't just set out a box of store-bought cards, a favorite pen and a roll of postage stamps. Instead, she spends two months of planning, cutting and assembling her handmade Christmas cards.

DeCamp's cards resemble works of elaborate art and require a multi-step process to make. She doesn't make just a dozen or so for her favorite people. She's made 120 cards by hand this year alone.

DeCamp has been creating her intricate cards since 2005. As a self-professed "crafty person," she and her sister made ornaments and other holiday items together. Her cousin worked at Archivers, a store for scrapbooking, card making and other paper creations. She found a lot of inspiration from the various supplies offered. She entered a Christmas card contest, and though she didn't win, she has made cards each



Debbie DeCamp displays her handmade Christmas cards in frames on her crafting room wall. Photo by Jackie Wilson

year since.

The first year, DeCamp made 40 cards. Since then, she has kept adding friends and former co-workers' names to her list. Family members' kids grow up and move out of the

house, then they want to get their own card.

"Each year the list gets bigger," DeCamp says.

In early October, she'll browse the Memory Bound store aisles in Ankeny — Archivers has

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closed — for inspiration and to check out new paper products.

She also searches social media blogs and videos for ideas from Tim Holtz, who is popular in the crafting industry. Holtz offers a variety of unique scrapbooking and crafting supplies.

After gathering ideas, DeCamp chooses a different Christmas or holiday theme each year. She's created different Santas, stockings, reindeer, wreaths, poinsettia plants and more. Creating 3-D images, she often adds glitter, ribbons, string or cutouts.

"I tied strings on the one with ice skates, which was really hard to do," she recalls.

Each card is displayed by year and framed in her craft room in the basement of her Waukee home. As she points to the framed cards, each has a story of how or why she came up with the idea and how difficult it was to craft the card.

This year's card is a pinecone — textured to look real — with a red bow. DeCamp cites several steps to creating her masterpiece.

She buys embossing paper and a variety of colored papers, stampers, paint and wax. She

has an embossing machine and uses gilding wax to make raised images. As it's a detailed process, she uses sandpaper to smooth images, then adds another layer. She proceeds to cut and fold the embossed paper and stamps or paints on the inside of the card, allowing it to dry. To finish it off, she paints the bow, hand stamps messages or cuts out a greeting and applies it all by hand. And that's just one card.

When DeCamp first comes up with an idea, she'll experiment with different color card stock and arrangements of the elements.

"Some of the cards are experiments. No two cards are exactly the same," she explains.

Once she has all the elements in place, she arranges an assembly line of the materials — in about 10 different steps for each card. She works evenings and weekends to get the task completed with the goal of sending the cards in mid-December.

DeCamp has become proficient at card sizing. Finding envelopes is a challenge, so she takes her design into consideration.

"One time I got one done, and it didn't fit in the envelope. I tried to cut back part of the card so it would fit," she says.



The finished product of Debbie DeCamp's 2023 Christmas card. Photo by Jackie Wilson

Often the cards need to be hand stamped, so a trip to the post office ensures the creation makes it through the mailing process. Postage costs extra.

"I had one card returned in August the following year, so I feel bad if people don't get their card," DeCamp says.

Once the card arrives in the mail, her



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recipients say they are overjoyed.

"I've had people say, 'Now I have a new favorite,'" she says.

Her friends often make DeCamp's card into an ornament or display it on their mantle as a decorative piece. One friend called to tell her she had moved, giving her the new address to make sure she received her card.

"I had another friend ask if she could stay on my Christmas card list even though she didn't send out cards," DeCamp says.

Some family members and her husband have helped out a few times. Yet, her husband has mentioned that she spends too much time on the cards.

She knows there are other options than doing everything by hand.

"My friend asked if I use a Cricut (a die-cutting machine). I told them no. If I hit a button, to me it means I'm not designing it. I don't mind the cutting," she explains. "I like the creative outlet with a blank piece of paper. It's something unique."

In addition to the card, she'll also send out a newsletter with some pictures or information about her kids and family.

"I don't do other holiday or birthday cards. It takes a lot of time, but I look forward to it every year."

She says she is happy to continue sending her exclusive cards to her friends and family.

"I like to bring a little joy to others. It's my favorite holiday."

Cards bring memories

As Kelly Smith addresses her Christmas cards by hand, she recalls specific memories of the recipients and those who have been a part of her family's life throughout the years. She ponders how they're doing and wants them to know that, if they are receiving the family Christmas card she sent, then they are in her thoughts.

Kelly, along with her husband, Jason, moved to Waukee in 2014. Previously, the pair had lived in South Carolina. They began exchanging cards and letters as a way to stay in touch with out-of-town family and friends.

Once they had kids, they began sending out photo cards. Nora, who is now 7, graced their first photo card. Two years later, Corrine, now 5, was included. The family takes professional family photos. They also add pictures of places

they've visited, which includes local Des Moines spots, so distant friends and family can get an idea of where they are living. Recent cards have included photos in the Pappajohn Sculpture Park, Jester Park and Waterworks Park.

She orders photo cards either online or at Walgreens, whichever has the best deals. She buys stamps in advance, before they go up in cost. Cost is not an issue, though, because she says it is worth it. In previous years, she has sent 100 to 150 cards.

"It's not less than 100," Kelly says.

Her and Jason's friends live in different parts of the United States.

"We both have jobs in hospitality, and our friends move a lot. This is a personal way to keep in touch. It's a lot more personal than social media," she says.

She has noticed trends in sending and receiving Christmas cards. She gets a lot of photo cards from people her age. Older relatives tend to send regular cards or type out letters.

"We love to see all kinds of cards. Before we had kids, we sent out regular cards," she recalls.

She doesn't receive as many cards as she sends out, but she doesn't generally cut people



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off the list if they don't send a card in return.

Kelly displays her received cards on her bookshelf. Her mom used to hang up cards when she was little. Once the season is over, she tosses them.

"I feel bad throwing them away," she reflects. "But I'm thinking of all these people and the memories of them over the years. I know that some of my relatives often frame our cards because of the photo and change them out each year."

Kelly says she will continue to send out cards.

"I love receiving them. In the mailbox, it's full of bills and political ads," she says. "This time of the year, I look forward to the mailbox," she says. ■



Kelly Smith enjoys the tradition of sending and receiving Christmas photo cards to stay in touch with friends and family. Photo by Jackie Wilson

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RECIPE

MAKE 'eggstra' special holiday memories

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

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

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

Popovers with cranberry butter

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

Prep time: 10 minutes
Cook time: 45-50 minutes
Yield: 6 popovers

POPOVERS:

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

CRANBERRY BUTTER:

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



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

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NORTH/WEST SIDE HIGHLIGHTS

Link & Learn Daycare Opens with Funding Assistance from Polk County

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



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

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



New Community Center Coming to Polk City

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



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

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



IMPACT Gala

Benefits Waukee schools

Spending an evening with friends and the community for dinner, music and an auction is an entertaining way to break up the winter doldrums. What's even better? This upcoming night also raises money for Waukee schools.

The Waukee Community Schools Foundation (WCSF) is hosting its annual Impact Gala on Feb. 17.

The WCSF was established 28 years ago and was originally a Dollars for Scholars program. It recently shifted its focus to also include grants and professional development funds for both district staff and students.

Adrienne Towe, executive director of WCSF, says the shift provides funds to everyone in the district.

"Any employee who has an idea to change the school or workplace has access to grants," she explains. "For students, we put our money where our mouth is and invest in their ideas."

The WCSF assists with critical needs of students.

"Public funding can't be used for individual students. For example, if one person needs a cap and gown for graduation, they have to do it for every student," she explains. "We provide the things that the public funding doesn't, such as for sports or extracurricular activities."

To obtain funds, a Waukee district staff first identifies needs of the kids or families. Then the staff member presents those requests to the WCSF.

"I always work with the staff, counselors, teachers and administrators. They have relationships with the kids and know what they need."

After the staff completes an application, it comes to Towe, the Impact committee or the board for review. If it's a financial hardship request for a student, it's reviewed within 48 hours. To receive the funds, it must include three different criteria. Requests must demonstrate innovation, wellness or a sense of belonging.

"We make sure there's equity of distribution of funds across the district. We make their (staff) ideas come to life."

A new offering will be featured at this year's event: The Impact Awards. Honors will be presented to a volunteer, a board member and a teacher.

The gala tickets often sell out as the community, parents and local businesses gather together to support Waukee schools.

Towe says the work and support of the WCSF matters.

"As a nonprofit arm, we get to play a role the district can't. We support the whole child aspect of the district. It is very meaningful work."

Ticket prices vary: \$50 for Waukee District staff and \$95 for the public, which includes dinner and two drink tickets, if purchased before Feb. 5. To purchase tickets, visit www.waukeeschoolsfoundation.org. ■



Attendees at last year's WCSF Impact Gala bid during the live auction.





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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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TAKE stock and plan for the future

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



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

Make a list of key contacts

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

Review the title to your home

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

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

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

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

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

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.

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DECEMBER 2023

DATES TO KNOW

- **City Offices Closed**

Dec. 25-26

Jan. 1

Trash delayed one day
those weeks

- **Waukee Public Library
Closed**

Dec. 24-26

Jan. 1 & 2

- **Curbside Christmas Tree
Collection Days**

Jan. 2 & 8

Live trees only; no artificial
trees

- **Regular City Council
Meetings**

Jan. 2 & 15 at 5:30 p.m.

Waukee City Hall and Zoom

- **FamilyFest**

Sat., Jan. 20, 9 a.m. to noon
*Lutheran Church of Hope –
Waukee*



Parking Bans

When snow accumulation is forecast for Waukee, the Public Works Department will declare a Snow Emergency Parking Ban. Parking is not allowed on public streets when the ban is in effect. Vehicles remaining on City streets are subject to \$25 fines and/or towing.

At Your Home

Property owners are responsible for clearing snow and ice from all sidewalks adjacent to private property within 24 hours after a snowfall. It is unlawful to place, throw or push snow onto City streets from private property.

If snow covers a fire hydrant, please dig out at least one foot around the hydrant down to the ground and out to the street to keep it accessible to emergency personnel.

Place garbage and recycling bins in your driveway, not in the street.

How to Stay Informed

Sign up for emergency alerts via Nixle.com or by texting '50263' to 888777. Follow the City of Waukee on Facebook and/or Nextdoor to stay updated on snow emergency parking bans and other important notices.

Heat Your Home Safely

If you smell gas (rotten egg odor), call the Public Works emergency number at 515-249-1212. If the smell is overpowering, leave the house and call 911. Early stages of CO poisoning can include dizziness, flu-like symptoms, fatigue and severe headache. If you suspect CO poisoning or a detector alarm sounds, leave the house immediately. Seek medical attention if ill.

Installing carbon monoxide (CO) detectors in your home can help provide early warning of a leak.

Scan the
code to read
more about
City services.



Waukee
THE KEY TO GOOD LIVING



Holiday City Offices Closures & Trash Pick-up

All City of Waukee offices will be closed on Dec. 25-26 as well as Jan. 1. The Waukee Public Library will be closed Dec. 23-26 and Jan. 1-2. Because the Christmas and New Year holidays fall on a weekday, trash collection for City/ASI customers will be delayed by one day those weeks.

Christmas tree collection days for City of Waukee/ASI garbage customers are Jan. 2 and 8, 2024. Only real Christmas trees should be placed on curbs by 7 a.m. Artificial trees are not included in this pick-up. Clear off all decorations – lights, tinsel, ornaments, etc. – before putting the tree on the curb. Do not put your tree in a bag.

Recycling Do's & Don'ts for the Holidays

Putting the wrong items in your recycling bin can cause the entire bin to be discarded or cause damage in the recycling center. Not all items with a recycle symbol on them are able to be recycled here, so follow the Recycling Guide at MWAtoday.com. Here are a few tips for the holidays:

Put in the recycle bin:

- Plain cardboard boxes (flattened)
- Plain paper gift wrap, cards and envelopes (no foil, glitter, etc.)
- Glass jars and aluminum/tin cans (clean)
- Heavier plastic containers, such as juice containers or yogurt cups (clean)

Put in the trash:

- Disposable plates, cups, straws and silverware (paper, plastic or bamboo)
- Aluminum foil or pans
- Any food containers that have food residue on them (pizza boxes, catering containers, etc.)
- Plastic berry/fruit containers
- Coffee cups - even the paper ones
- Styrofoam packaging or containers
- Plastic wrap or packaging material that isn't plain paper
- Tissue paper and fancy wrapping paper or cards (foil, glitter, etc.)

Reminders

- Take all the packaging out of your box, including Styrofoam that comes in electronic or appliance boxes.
- Never put plastic bags in your recycling bin. They can clog machinery at the recycling center. Instead, recycle clean plastic bags in designated bins at grocery or big box stores.
- Before throwing out a battery, holiday lights or electronics, check the Recycling Guide at MWAtoday.com.



Save the Date for Waukee FamilyFest!

Waukee Parks & Recreation will hold the annual FamilyFest celebration on Saturday, Jan. 20 from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. (noon) at Lutheran Church of Hope - Waukee (305 NE Dartmoor Drive). This FREE, family event features inflatables, snacks and games supplied by local Waukee businesses and organizations. Find information on exhibiting or attending at Waukee.org/FamilyFest.



Sled & Skate in Waukee

Waukee has two fun outdoor amenities to explore this winter. When snow falls, head to the Warrior Park Sledding Hill (1050 4th Street, near the water tower) which was specially engineered just for sledding. Waukee's Outdoor Skating Rink will be constructed, filled and frozen at Grant Park (605 SE Driftwood Lane) when temperatures allow. Follow Waukee.org and City of Waukee social media pages for ice rink updates.



2024 Pet Licenses & Dog Park Passes Available

It's time to get Waukee pets licensed for 2024. To renew or apply for a new pet license, go to PetData.com. Dog and cat licenses are required per City ordinance. Trailside Dog Park passes for 2024 are available at Waukee.MyBarkPass.com. Registering for a day or annual pass will come with a code that enables you to access the dog park.



Spring & Summer Seasonal Job Openings

Check out summer job opportunities with the Census Bureau to work on the special census for Waukee at www.USAJobs.gov/job/752213900. The City of Waukee will have more than 100 job openings for seasonal roles with Sugar Creek Golf Course, Triumph Park, Parks & Recreation and Public Works. Create an account and set your alerts now at Waukee.org/Jobs to get notified when these roles open in January.



WAUKEE.ORG

230 W. Hickman Rd., Waukee, IA 50263 • 515-978-7900

Be sure to check for cancellations.

West Side Legislative Breakfast

Friday, Jan. 5, 7:30-9 a.m.
R&R Realty Group, 1080
Jordan Creek Parkway,
West Des Moines

The West Des Moines Chamber of Commerce, along with Clive, Waukee and Windsor Heights area chambers, invites the public to attend a breakfast offering an opportunity to meet your legislators, ask questions and get answers. Legislators in attendance will be announced at a later date. Cost to attend is \$30. Registration closes at 10 a.m. on Jan. 3. A registration link is available at <https://members.wdmchamber.org/events/details/west-side-legislative-breakfast-01-05-2024-3527?calendarMonth=2024-01-01>.



Tuesday Night Trivia

Tuesdays, 7-9 p.m.
Central Standard Burgers, 1222
S.E. University Ave., Waukee

Come one, come all, and test out your thinking skills while having a great time. Trivia night is every Tuesday, with featured themed trivia nights once a month. Hosted by Think and Drink Entertainment.



CITYVIEW's Fire and Ice

Jan. 20
Historic Valley Junction, 137 Fifth St.,
West Des Moines
fire-and-ice.dmcityview.com

Fire and Ice is a hockey-themed liquor sampling event that will be sure to warm up your winter blues. With your event ticket, you will receive 10 individual drink tickets to sample some of the best winter cocktails from establishments in the Valley Junction area.



Waukee Family Fest

Saturday, Jan. 20, 9 a.m. to noon
Lutheran Church of Hope - Waukee

This free, family-friendly event will help kids burn off some cabin fever energy. Check out Waukee area businesses, enjoy games and prizes and jump on inflatables. To become a vendor, visit waukee.org/familyfest.

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EVENTS IN THE AREA

Be sure to check for cancellations.

The public is invited

Glen Meadows Retirement Community
850 S. 60th St., West Des Moines

• **Jan. 4, 4-5 p.m.: National Trivia Day** – Do you have a wealth of miscellaneous knowledge and facts? Come test your mental merit over a few rounds of trivia and compete to be crowned king or queen of trivia. RSVP by Jan. 1, 515-422-5998.

• **Jan. 14, 1 p.m.: Bingo Blowout** – Join your friends and neighbors in our lounge for a Bingo Blowout with a chance to win prizes. \$1 per card – two card limit. RSVP by Jan. 10, 515-422-5998.

• **Jan. 18, 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.: Lunch & Learn** – Enjoy a delicious chef-prepared lunch, door-prize fun, tours and a brief presentation on our all-inclusive amenities. RSVP by Jan. 15, 515-422-5998.

• **Jan. 19, 4 p.m.: National Popcorn Day** – Join us on National Popcorn Day as we enjoy live entertainment by Fred Leonard and popcorn in a variety of flavors. RSVP by Jan. 15, 515-422-5998.

• **Jan. 31, 3-5 p.m.: National Hot Cocoa Day** – Join pastors and clergy for a wholesome time with our friendly residents. RSVP by Jan. 26, 515-422-5998.



Iowa State Fair Flea Market

Jan. 6-7

3000 E. Grand Ave., Des Moines

www.iowastatefairgrounds.org/event-calendar

Find all sorts of goods from antiques, home decor, jewelry and everything in between. This flea market is held each month from January to June and September to December at the Varied Industries Building.

Square Dance Lessons

Sunday nights starting Jan. 4, 6:30 p.m.
Douglas Avenue Presbyterian Church,
4601 Douglas Ave., Des Moines
www.ankenysquares.com

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.



The Winter Wonderpalace

Jan. 6

Raccoon River Nature Lodge, 2202 Park Drive, West Des Moines

The ninth installment of The Winter Wonderpalace allows you to take your little one on a magic winter adventure, where they get the chance to meet four storybook characters inside the Raccoon River Nature Lodge.

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EVENTS IN THE AREA

Be sure to check for cancellations.

Miracle on 86th Street

Through Jan. 8

Charles Gabus Memorial Tree Park, 3600 86th St., Urbandale

Bundle up this winter and stroll through the Charles Gabus Memorial Tree Park. The park features a large custom-built train, larger-than-life ornamental displays, an ice-skating rink, and holiday-themed events. 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.



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 Street, West Des Moines, www.valleyjunction.com
- **Lights in the Heights**, Franklin Avenue, Marylynn Drive, 72nd Street, and other streets in Windsor Heights, www.windsorheightsfoundation.org ■

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Member FDIC

POND hockey raises funds for mental health

Wiesley hosts events and donates part of company proceeds.

Over the years, Martin Wiesley of Waukee has hosted events and raised more than \$20,000 for mental health organizations.

In addition, his company, Strong Mind Apparel, a clothing store with positive slogans and images, gives 15 percent of its sales to Mindspring Mental Health.

One of Wiesley's signature fundraisers is a popular pond hockey tournament. He chose the event because, as a youth, he was an avid ice hockey player. This is the fourth tournament held at his home, which overlooks a private pond. Attendance has doubled over the years, and the 2024 tourney already has 16 teams signed up.

The hockey tournament benefits the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) with local funds to the Mindspring Mental Health Alliance. The tourney includes raffles, fundraising baskets and more. In addition, all proceeds from any purchases from Strong Mind Apparel at the event will go to Mindspring.

Wiesley has had a lifelong interest in mental health and helping people. As a veteran, many of his friends, who were service members, have experienced depression, despair and suicide.

"I want to do everything I can to prevent suicide. It happens too often. There's too much depression and suicide that can be prevented with conversations," he says.

He says he inherited his "giving gene" from his father, a minister who was always helping others.

"I picked it up from my father. I want to keep the torch rolling. I learned from him."

When supporting Mindspring, all the money raised stays in the community and provides resources for professional help.

"If you need help, talk to someone. You don't need to go into details," he suggests. "Bringing it up is the first step. You can't get help if you don't bring it up."

A crisis line, 988, is staffed 24/7, and he encourages people to call.

"Even if it is seasonal blues or full-blown depression, they can help handle it and provide resources."

In addition to the hockey tournament, Wiesley also organizes other free activities, such as golf, basketball and pickleball.

"All activities are positive," he says. "We want to help spread cheer and joy and reach people who might need help."

He encourages anyone to attend events, regardless of if they donate or not.

"We want to do everything we can to help out and create a calm, happy environment to talk about mental issues."



Travis Gaule, right, presents the Neighbor Spotlight certificate to Martin Wiesley.

For more information about the pond hockey tournament, visit www.strongmindapparel.com. For local mental health resources, visit <https://www.mindspringhealth.org/resources/local-resources>. ■

edwardjones.com | Member SIPC

Season's Greetings

Wishing you and yours peace, joy and hope this holiday.

Travis Gaule
Financial Advisor
14225 University Ave Ste 240
Waukee, IA 50263
515-270-5375

MKT-9811D-A AECSPAD 12/2023

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ENROLL TODAY!

SENIOR

By Brooke Baker

CAREGIVING

Caregiving can be a demanding and challenging job, and it is important for caregivers to take time for themselves and recharge their batteries. This is especially true during the holiday season, which can be stressful and overwhelming for everyone.

One of the biggest challenges that caregivers face during the holidays is finding time for themselves. It can be difficult to carve out a few moments to relax and unwind. Some great ways to prioritize self-care during the holidays can be: taking a long bath, going for a walk, or simply taking a few minutes to meditate.

It is also important for caregivers to set realistic expectations and communicate their limitations to their loved ones. This can be a difficult conversation to have, but it is essential for avoiding burnout and staying healthy.

Finally, it is important for caregivers to remember the holidays are a time for joy and celebration. Spending time with loved ones, enjoying holiday traditions, or simply taking a moment to appreciate the beauty of the season will help to refocus the importance of this time of year.

In conclusion, have a plan for yourself by setting realistic expectations, prioritizing self-care, and focusing on the positive aspects of the holidays. Remember you are not alone, there are many options for you to explore to provide needed help along this journey. Contact a local adult day care, home care agency or church. There are wonderful support groups and those ready to help lighten the burden of caregiving. ■

Information provided by Brooke Baker, Grace Estates, 801 N.E. Venture Drive, Waukee, 516-518-0977, www.graceestatesadc.com.



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HEALTH

By Jacob Dickey

MANAGING holiday emotions

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

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

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

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

It's important to remember there is no perfect Christmas or Kwanzaa. 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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HEALTH

By Dr. Jason Brown

BENEFITS of implants

Are you missing a tooth and looking for the best replacement option? Implants provide many important benefits to patients missing one or more teeth. Once a tooth has been lost, the bone within the jaw shrinks and loses both height and thickness over a period of time. This can in turn affect a person's appearance and likely the ability to place an implant, or other means of replacement, further down the road. Implants prevent bone from being lost in the area and allow full chewing capability as well as the ability to floss around it like a natural tooth.

Most of today's implants are made out of titanium, which is a very strong, bio-compatible material, which allows them to be placed in human bone without rejection. It is a process in which the dentist evaluates the area where the patient has a single missing or multiple missing teeth to determine how much bone is available to place it effectively. If a person is a good candidate to have an implant placed, it takes on average about three to six months to have an implant heal. Once full healing has taken place, the dentist can then have a crown made to look like a natural tooth and help to regain normal function with chewing as well as a nice smile. ■

Information provided by Dr. Jason Brown DDS, Timberline Family Dental, 515-644-2264, 2153 S.E. LA Grant Parkway, Waukee. Information gathered from mouthhealthy.org by ADA.



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THE HOUSE with 15 Christmas trees

Victorian tree is Trinrud's showstopper.

Stepping into the home of Marcia and Dan Trinrud reveals a scene familiar to viewers of the Hallmark Channel at Christmastime. The warm and welcoming glow of Christmas lights greets you at the door and continues into each room. Garland lines door frames and windows and Santa decorations are intermixed with family photos. Whether or not there is snow on the ground outside, the red, green and white inside remind you of the season. After taking a look around, you might realize there is not one, not two, but 15 Christmas trees inside — all with unique themes, styles and colors.

“They’re not all full-size,” Marcia says. “Some are 4 feet; some are tiny little ones.”

Despite the size, each tree is given an immense amount of thought and planning. Among them are a buffalo plaid tree, a rustic tree, a sports tree adorned with Wisconsin Badger merchandise, a Santa tree, and, providing even more reason to celebrate the holidays, two small liquor trees in the kitchen.

But the showstopper is the main tree, otherwise known as the Victorian tree. A blend of golds, silvers and pinks come together to create a memorable tree unique to the Trinruds.

The trees themselves are decorated with items from a variety of places. Over the years, Marcia has added to her collection of ornaments and décor after trips to various department stores. Each year, she tries to add something new. This year, it was a second liquor tree.

“When I was a little girl, my mom went all out for Christmas, and I guess I just got it from her.”

Growing up in a large Italian family, Marcia has fond memories of Christmas. Going all out for decorating brings her back to some of her most cherished. Incorporated into each tree is a cardinal, a symbol of her grandparents. In the front room, her blue and silver tree reminds her of the tree her grandparents had that cut her fingers every time she touched it.

Decorating begins before Thanksgiving. It starts with Dan begrudgingly dragging the Christmas trees and boxes up from the basement. It usually takes Marcia about a week to get each ornament and decoration in place. The arrangements stay up until mid-January. By that time, Marcia is ready to take them down, but not before her annual Christmas party.



Marcia Trinrud likes to decorate for Christmas, so much so that she puts up 15 themed trees.



Marcia likes to impress her closest friends and family each year. She invites about 60 people to show off her lights and skills in the kitchen. Her father, a chef, has taught her a thing or two about hors d'oeuvres.

"I feel proud of myself," Marcia says. "I like to try and spread the Christmas joy." ■

GREAT programs ahead in 2024

The Waukee Public Library is kicking off the New Year by offering a variety of new and exciting programs and events for all ages. Stop by the library or visit the website to see a full list of upcoming events.

• **Sunday Fun Days.** Drop in for a different creative activity each month for students in grades K-12. Participants will make cereal bird feeders, Super Bowl crafts, and more this spring. Registration not required.

• **Sunday Teen Programs.** On the weekends when you're not enjoying Sunday Fun Days, students in grades 6-12 can come to the library one Sunday per month for tween- and teen-only programs. January is bingo and hot chocolate. Registration required.

• **Senior Technology Series.** Starting in February, come to the library at 10 a.m. on the second Thursday of each month for a new senior technology series. From accessibility settings to digital decluttering, these classes will help you feel comfortable with your smartphones. No registration required for the series.

• **Roaming Readers Book Club.** Meander over to The Brenton Arboretum for a new book club starting in March. Participants will meet inside the Vista Room for a book discussion, and, afterward, everyone can choose to walk one of the trails with the group, weather permitting. No registration required.

To find out more about the Waukee Public Library, go to waukeepubliclibrary.org or contact the library at askme@waukee or 515-978-7944.

JANUARY ACTIVITIES

• **Art Gallery Exhibit: "Sunflower Fine Art Studio Children's Art Show,"** January through February

• **Kids: Early Out CultureALL Journey, Wednesday, Jan. 10, 2:30 p.m.** Take a family-friendly global journey from the comfort of the library with a CultureALL Ambassador. This month's ambassador is Miki Takayama, sharing about Japanese culture and toys. There will be a related activity after the ambassador's presentation. For youth in grades K-5 and caregivers. Registration required.

• **Teens: Bingo & Hot Chocolate, Sunday, Jan. 21, 2 p.m.** Enjoy hot chocolate while playing bingo for snacks, free books and other small prizes. For students in grades 6-12. Registration required.

• **Adults: Crystals 101, Saturday, Jan. 20, 11 a.m.** Learn the basics of crystals from Heather Ann Parker Roe, owner of KIN, a modern mystical shop located in the East Village. Heather will discuss how crystals work, the various types, and even go over the best crystals for your zodiac sign. The class will close with a guided meditation, and all attendees will get to take home a beautiful clear quartz point. Registration required.

• **Multi-age: Cereal Bird Feeders, Sunday, Jan. 7, 2 p.m.** Come to the library and drop in for a creative activity. This month, students in grades K-12 will get to make cereal bird feeders. Registration not required. ■

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CHAMBER announces new president and CEO

The Waukeez Area Chamber of Commerce announced that Jessica Taylor-Fink has been selected for the role of president and CEO effective Dec. 1.

A native of central Iowa, Taylor-Fink has more than 10 years in leadership roles in the nonprofit sector, focusing on marketing, fundraising, volunteer administration and community development. She holds two undergraduate degrees from Iowa State University and a master's of public administration (MPA) from Drake University. She also serves as a board member of Young Variety.



Jessica Taylor-Fink

"Waukeez is a booming area with a global community, and I'm honored to be stepping into a role that champions all of the businesses that call Waukeez home. This is an exciting time for the chamber as Waukeez continues to be one of the fastest-growing communities in the country," says Taylor-Fink.

From small businesses to enterprise organizations, members of the Waukeez Area Chamber of Commerce gain opportunities to make vital connections that propel them forward, recruit and retain top talent, and see the benefits of getting involved through attending events, volunteering on committees and becoming a sponsor.

Community members and businesses can learn more about the Waukeez Area Chamber of Commerce at waukeezchamber.com. ■

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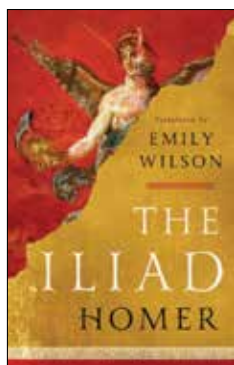
Every house deserves Neu Blinds.

'The Iliad'

If you are shuddering from echoes of long, boring classes back in school, stick with me for a few minutes. I promise, there is more to the classics than difficult-to-pronounce names and indecipherable writing. In fact, this is a deeply complex, layered tale with themes as fresh today as they were 3,000 years ago. War, sex and grief — all played out on the grandest of scales. It's a movie franchise just waiting to happen.

I think everyone knows the bones of the story. Paris, prince of Troy, runs off with the most beautiful woman in the world, Helen. She just so happens to be married, and her husband launches a war to get her back. The gods — the true instigators of this mess — are right there with their human toys, back-stabbing and conniving along the way.

Gory, funny, sharp and sad. This is a truly modern interpretation that loses nothing of the beauty of the original text. It's a masterpiece. "So the immortals spun our lives that we wretched men live on to bear such torments." If picturing Brad Pitt as the bitter and brilliant Achilles helps, who am I to stop you? ■ — *Review by Julie Goodrich*



By Homer, Emily Wilson,
translator
9/26/23
848 pages
\$39.95
W.W. Norton & Company

'The Lost Library'

What do a ghost, a cat and a young boy nervous about the future have in common? Books, naturally. There's something special about a free little library. Maybe that's why there are so many sprinkled throughout our town. It's a sense of community and kindness free for the taking. It's a gift, a wish, a little box of hope.

Evan and Rafe are a pair of soon-to-be middle schoolers concerned they might not be ready for the changes that are coming quickly. In the midst of this personal confusion, they stumble across a new free little library in their town and are soon swept up in a mystery. All of the books seem connected somehow, but no one will help them get to the bottom of it.

With the tumultuous assistance of a vain cat and a ghostly librarian, this story unfolds into a beautiful tale of love, acceptance and growth. It is the perfect gift for children and adults alike — especially bookish sorts who may be going through a life change. This is, to me, the best kind of story — one that entertains, teaches and helps the reader feel a little less alone. ■ — *Review by Julie Goodrich*



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and Wendy Mass
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WINTER Fest

WinterFest Celebration
was held at Waukee's
Downtown Triangle Dec. 1.



John Parcel and Officer Nick Gilcrest



Mary Woodward and Beverly Gorman



Reggie Bell and Michael Thilges



Bri Jones and Stephanie Jimmerson



Nolan and Megan McCarthy



Emily Kammerer, Danae Edwards, Jacob Perkins, Laura Stanish and
Erin Crone



Eamonn, Kellen, Ronan and Sorren



Avery and Jennifer Marr



Brenda Truong, Ariel and Riley Jetty



Elyse Carlson, Nick Lenters and Liam Lenters

HOLIDAY Party

Edward Jones in Clive held a holiday customer party Dec. 1.



Daniel Timmons and Scott Victor



Donna Simmer and Kenny Patton



Bea Roskam, Dwayne Nydam and Barb Green



Jerry and Ginny Nelson and Patti Lewis



Sandy Holland, Daniel Timmons and Mike Holland



Scott Victor and Paul Greenwalt



Dee Dee and Bob Wright



Amy Hill and Carly Yoder



Waukee Area Chamber of Commerce hosted the ribbon cutting for Iowa Trust on Dec. 7.



Terry Snyder and Steve Rogers at the Waukee Area Chamber of Commerce ribbon cutting for Iowa Trust on Dec. 7.



Dawn Jorgensen and Kaylee Wiskus at the Waukee Area Chamber of Commerce ribbon cutting for Iowa Trust on Dec. 7.



Emily Schultz and Terry Snyder at the Waukee Area Chamber of Commerce ribbon cutting for Iowa Trust on Dec. 7.



Don Frazer, Rob Grove and Erma Morain at the Waukee Area Chamber of Commerce ribbon cutting for Iowa Trust on Dec. 7.



Jessica Taylor-Fink, Kelly Troxel, Megan Rush and Jori Nieman at the Waukee Area Chamber of Commerce ribbon cutting for Iowa Trust on Dec. 7.



Marcy Maher and Heather Simons at the WinterFest Celebration held at Waukee's Downtown Triangle on Dec. 1.



Megan, Joel, Elyse and Eyla Pinkerton at the WinterFest Celebration held at Waukee's Downtown Triangle on Dec. 1.



Geoff and Anne Warmouth at the WinterFest Celebration held at Waukee's Downtown Triangle on Dec. 1.

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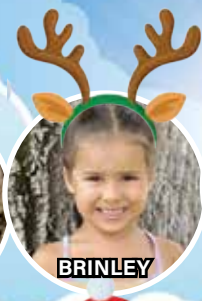
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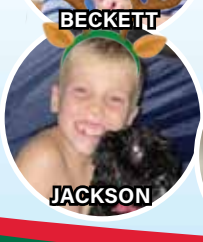
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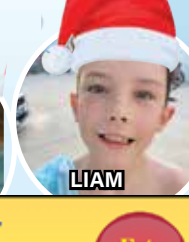
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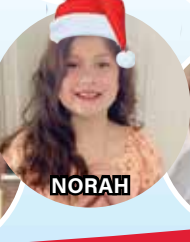
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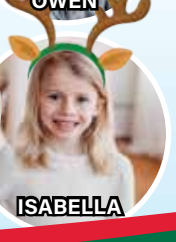
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