

WEST DES MOINES
JORDAN CREEK

JANUARY 2024



Living

MAGAZINE

Class ACT

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they continue to
expand their horizons
through learning**

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EDUCATION**

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WELCOME

WE NEVER stop learning

My father was one of the smartest people I have ever known. He seemed to know a little bit about everything, and if he didn't know about it, he wanted to learn. All of this came from a man who only had a formal education through eighth grade.

As a teenager, Dad started working full time to help care for his family, and then he was off to serve his country in Korea. When out of the military, he married and started his own family. Life moved along quickly, but he never stopped learning.

Meanwhile, Dad continually encouraged me to focus on my education. He supported me to go to college, and he inspired me to continue to learn throughout my life. "Once you have an education," he told me, "nobody can take that away from you." How true.

Most all of us recognize that life's lessons are taught both inside and outside of classrooms, but there is something satisfying about taking a formal class, earning a certificate or completing a degree. It's about having an end goal, finishing something you started, accomplishing a dream. And it doesn't always have to be about getting some initials behind your name.

Mary wanted to learn how to play the guitar, so she signed up for classes at the local community college.

Bob sold his newspaper while in his 50s and decided to go to law school. He continues to be a practicing attorney today.

Lyle retired as the president of a successful company and signed up for culinary classes.

Denny decided to pursue his dream of teaching and took night classes to earn his education degree while continuing in his current job.

And Gladys, well into her retirement years, continued to attend industry conferences and earned her formal sales training certification.

All of these friends of mine saw the value in continuing their education. In this month's cover story, you will discover how others have sought to continue their learning opportunities. I hope their stories will inspire you to expand your knowledge as well.

Have a great month, and thanks for reading. ■

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Class ACT

Residents share why they continue to expand their horizons through learning

By Jackie Wilson

You learn something new every day. Sometimes it's by accident, but sometimes it's intentional. Some continue their education out of necessity — to maintain a license, for example — while others enroll to further their career or launch a new one. Still others simply want to learn a new hobby or expand their horizons. Whatever the case, the thirst for knowledge knows no age limit or bounds. And plenty of opportunities — in person and online — are out there to quench it.

Linda Davis of West Des Moines attends as many of the adult classes and events offered by the West Des Moines Public Library that she can. Photo by Jackie Wilson



Library full of learning experiences

Linda Davis of West Des Moines is a fan of the West Des Moines Public Library — and not just for checking out books or movies. She takes advantage of the many adult classes and events offered each month.

In fact, Linda and her son, Tom, often attend classes together. One of her favorite features is the music series. The WDM Public Library brings in musicians from different genres, such as Hungrytown, which performs at libraries throughout the U.S. The library has also hosted local musician Bob Pace.

“We always come to listen to the music,” Linda says. “No matter what or who is playing, it’s always good.”

She also regularly participates in adult craft night, where she’s learned quilling, which involves twisting and gluing strips of paper together to create a design.

Linda likes how the library is well organized.

“I have little artistic ability. The library is so kind. They have everything meticulously set up. They don’t assume you are skilled, and they explain everything,” she says. “They are caring, and nobody feels like an outsider. You feel welcome and at home.”

Linda and Tom also attend other educational classes. A “cutting the cord” class offered information about television streaming and cable options. She’s learned about different cultures and discovered facts about henna tattoos.

“It was interesting. I’d never known about henna. I got a bird tattoo, which stayed on there for almost four weeks,” she says.

Linda began attending classes at the library when she moved to West Des Moines a year ago. She previously lived in the Waterloo/Cedar Falls area. After her husband’s death in 2017, she moved to a senior community in West Des Moines so she could be closer to family.

She said she thought attending the classes might be a great way to get out of the house to meet some people. And an added bonus: Most events are free.

“It’s like a routine now. We see what is available at the library and plan our month,” she says, referring to her son, Tom.

The classes have proven to be a bonding experience, Linda says.

“Family is consistent, and you are in your safe zone. Friends often move or pass away. I’m



Danny Ready of West Des Moines plays with his School of Rock band. Photo by Eason Bragg

getting older, and I think more about the need for family,” she reflects.

Linda says she has met new friends at classes, and it’s vital for her to experience new things.

“It’s great for mental health and to see a different side than just staying at home,” she says. “I’m not a lonely person, but I think you have to work at taking advantage of the opportunities you have. You feel so much better about yourself getting out and doing things.”

She says West Des Moines has an endless supply of things to do.

“I wish more people knew about these activities. The library is so accommodating.”

School of Rock student

Danny Ready spends Monday evenings pursuing his passion by playing his drums or singing along with a dozen other students at the School of Rock in West Des Moines.

People mistakenly think he’s been playing most his life. Yet, he’s only been taking lessons for a year and a half. The band members he jams with are all newbies as well.

The School of Rock offers a variety of

instrumental, music and voice lessons for all ages from kids through adults. Their performance group is one reason he chose the School of Rock.

“You can’t quite get the band experience by just taking lessons,” Ready explains.

He wanted to take lessons for several reasons. He always liked music in high school and played trumpet in the jazz band. In high school, he discovered another love by beating the drums on a drum kit for the video game Guitar Hero Rock Band.

“That’s the closest to really drumming that I ever played,” he laughs.

In college, Ready played along on the drum kit to tracks on his headphones. When he moved to Des Moines, he wanted to do more with his drumming.

“It was fun, but it wasn’t really making music when I did it by myself,” he says.

That’s when he began drum lessons at the School of Rock. Later, his drum instructor left, and he switched to vocal lessons instead. For both ventures, he simply wants to improve.

Ready admits that starting something new as an adult is intimidating.

“It’s scary to step in and suck at it for a

Resources for adult education

WDM City/Parks & Rec:

www.wdm.iowa.gov/government/parks-recreation

WDM Public Library:

www.wdmlibrary.org

WDM Schools:

www.wdmcs.org/Page/310

School of Rock:

<https://experience.schoolofrock.com>

DMACC Adult Education/WDM

campus: www.dmac.edu/ce



WDM Library photo by Jackie Wilson

while. You have to have these trials and tribulations when starting from zero,” he says. “You have no choice but to be bad at it and get better. I have to leave my ego at the door.”

Yet, with practice, he improved.

“When learning something new, you learn so much so fast,” he says. “You improve right away. You keep chasing that continuous improvement.”

Ready says he wants to keep the skill level high. As an adult, his greatest barrier to learning something new is a lack of time.

“When you’re young, you have a ton of time and no money,” he reflects. “If I get home, and I’ve had a bad day at work, it’s easy to not do anything.”

However, by taking music lessons, he says he has learned valuable life lessons.

“I’m choosing it wholeheartedly,” he says. “If you start new with a heightened spirit, that helps. I understand it’s going to take time. I’ve gotten more out of it because of my dedication.”

Ready says taking lessons has been a great way to spend his free time.

“I’ve gotten stuck in life. Before I’d be at home and go on Netflix,” he recalls. “Now I have something to do, where I can see results. My free time creates a new fun cycle as to how I spend my time on a daily basis.”

Ready says it’s worth spending time practicing because of the joy he gets from seeing himself improve.

“There’s things that you do for fun, then there’s things for satisfaction — stuff that you want to work toward. The feeling you get when playing over and over and finally getting it is rewarding,” he says. “It helps fill my tank.”

WDM Parks & Recreation

When Dianne Moorman and her friend, Janet, were exploring things to do in West Des Moines, they found a few activities at the library and at adult education classes in Des Moines.

Later, her neighbors mentioned they had taken a day trip to Clear Lake and marveled at how much fun it was. The neighbor mentioned they found the trip through parks and recreation programs for the city.

As she looked through the classes, she found a day trip to the Mississippi River. After that, she and Janet signed up to learn archery, disc golf and birding. She says, when she retired, she searched for things to do.

“I wanted to add some fun in to my life,” she says.

Moorman had never been on the Mississippi River nor tried archery. She’s explored other classes offered by WDM Parks and Rec.

“I had a lot of new experiences,” she says.

In addition to the entertainment and learning, she enjoys the social aspect of meeting new people. She says WDM Naturalist and Parks and Rec staff member Jess Lancial is enthusiastic about her job.

“She brings in experts who really know their stuff,” says Moorman.

She adds that many classes are low cost and often free. Classes are available for all area residents, not just those in West Des Moines.

She suggests checking out the offerings.

“I’m a lifelong learner,” she says. “Some people might not be aware of what’s available. I’ve had a lot of fun so far.”



Diane Moorman attends many of the West Des Moines city-sponsored classes and events offered, such as archery and disc golf. Photo submitted

WDM School Classes

The West Des Moines Community School District is an excellent learning hub for children. It also offers adult learning classes for district residents.

Sue Otte helps to coordinate classes for after school kids and adults.

“The main focus for adults includes parenting classes. The free classes offer topics such as health and wellbeing, academics, general parenting and college planning.”

Various educators and community leaders teach the classes, typically held at the Learning Resource Center in West Des Moines or at a local school.

“We’ve got parenting classes for parents whose kids are starting kindergarten. We also offer college planning for students in ninth grade. It gives an overview for parents on how to apply and prepare for college,” she explains.

She says it’s a good resource for parents with students in WDM schools.

“We feel it’s a good chance for experts to share their knowledge with parents,” says Otte. “It’s a good resource.” ■

IS YOUR New Year's resolution better dental care?

Dental care is an important part of your overall health and wellness routine. A regular dental exam can identify early signs of diseases and chronic health conditions before they become more serious and harder to treat. It's important to take care of your daily dental needs like brushing and flossing as well as seeing your dentist twice a year for exams and cleaning.



a big chunk of money that you may not have allocated in your budget.

If you are retired or your employer does not offer dental benefits, you should consider purchasing an individual plan to get the coverage you need.

What is individual dental insurance?

The easiest way to think about individual dental insurance is as a contract between you and your benefits carrier or insurance company. Individual dental insurance helps pay for some of the out-of-pocket costs of dental services.

To find the right plan, it's important to research what's available and get a good sense for the type of plan that best fits your needs. Having individual dental insurance, you're a part of the plan's network. Visiting an in-network dentist has added benefits such as lower out-of-pocket costs because the network dentists have agreed to accept reduced fees.

Factors to consider when looking for individual dental insurance plans

Since there are so many options to choose from when it comes to individual policies, a few major factors to consider are deductibles, waiting periods, network dentists, services covered and cost to you.

If you are practicing good oral habits, like brushing twice a day and flossing once a day, look for a dental plan that covers 100 percent of preventive care.

You probably already have a dentist that you and your family are comfortable with. If you choose a dental plan with a large network of dentists, you may be able to keep your dentist with an individual policy. ■

Information provided by Lee Patton, Patton Insurance Benefits, 1112 Maple St., West Des Moines, 515-270-8178. Reference: Delta Dental of Iowa



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936 people served

Dowling provides a 'merrier' Christmas with donations.



Dowling Catholic High School students, staff and family members were a generous bunch of folks, spending \$57,706 for the 2023 Christmas Basket program. The tradition was started more than 50 years ago by the sisters of St. Joseph Academy. Items purchased were donated and given to those in need in the Des Moines area.

Jeff Ferguson teaches United States government and serves as director of student activities at Dowling. He's been in charge of the Christmas Basket program for 32 years.

He says that 103 families were served from the Des Moines area, including families from Moulton Elementary, Holy Family School and other schools.

The Dowling staff and faculty supplied 441 gifts — one for every child attending Moulton Elementary. They gave away \$6,000 in gift cards for gas and grocery stores. They purchased and donated 200 Blank Park Zoo and 200 Science Center of Iowa tickets.

In addition, they purchased hundreds of gifts. Ferguson noted the most popular toy was Barbie, followed by Legos, earbuds and

headphones. In addition, families also received tablets, televisions and household items, such as pots and pans.

Families requested clothing — mainly winter coats — and Dowling purchased 90 winter coats of all sizes. A box of food was donated including turkey, ham and vegetables and household toiletry items were also provided.

Ferguson says the Christmas Basket program received assistance from community members and local businesses, including:

- Variety – A Children's Charity donated 11 bicycles
- Capital City Produce donated fruits and vegetables
- Cards for a Cause and Outreach made 50 Moulton families a Christmas card
- Dowling Art Club made candles and donated \$300
- Two Men & A Truck donated 150 boxes
- Kum & Go offered gift cards at a discount

Although there are too many folks to list, Ferguson says he is grateful for all of the people



Dowling Catholic Senior Ava Petersen delivered 441 gifts to Moulton Elementary — one gift for every student.

who helped with the donations, shopping, deliveries, transportation, translation skills and those who served on committees.

"We served those in need all across the Des Moines community, helping them have a merrier Christmas," he says. "All told, 936 people had a merrier Christmas because of our actions."

He says, if people want to see the Dowling Catholic mission in action, visit the school during the holiday season.

"I have done this for 32 years, and I am amazed and humbled by the compassion and generosity of our students, parents, faculty, staff and greater Dowling community. I am truly blessed to work with such wonderful people." ■

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• 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.



Jordan House Museum tours

Jordan House Museum, 2001 Fuller Road, West Des Moines

Walk in the footsteps of history at the historic Jordan House Museum, the home of the Jordan family and the only Underground Railroad stop open to the public weekly. Learn about the history of West Des Moines, beginning with rocks and fossils, through the indigenous peoples, early settlers and the development of railroads and Valley Junction. For more information, visit www.wdmhs.org/visit.

WDM MLK Day Celebration

Monday, Jan. 15, 3-5 p.m.

MidAmerican Energy Company RecPlex, 6500 Grand Ave., West Des Moines

Join in honoring the legacy of Martin Luther King Jr. at the WDM MLK Day Celebration, a day filled with inspiration and community engagement. Witness the recognition of outstanding young leaders through the Youth Leadership Award and celebrate the impact of local community leaders with the Community Leadership Award. Contribute to the Meals from the Heartland Community Service Project, spreading love and support. Immerse yourself in history with free tours and book giveaways at the Jordan House Museum. Experience unity at the Greater Des Moines Partnership Multi-Cultural Reception, fostering connections across diverse backgrounds. Commemorate the vision of Dr. King and strive for a brighter, more inclusive future. Learn more at: www.wdm.iowa.gov/government/city-manager/west-des-moines-human-rights-commission/martin-luther-king-jr-day.



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EVENTS IN THE AREA

To submit calendar items for consideration, send to tammy@iowalivingmagazines.com

Check for cancellations

Theater and dance

Actors, Inc. - Ames Community Theater

120 Abraham Drive, Ames • actorsinc.org

• Jan. 25-27, Feb. 2-4: "Holmes & Watson"

Des Moines Performing Arts

Des Moines Civic Center, 221 Walnut St., Des Moines

dmpa.org

• Jan. 12-14: "STOMP"

• Jan. 23-28: "Mamma Mia!"

• Jan. 27: Havana Hop

Stephens Auditorium

1900 Center Drive, Ames • center.iastate.edu/events

• Jan. 30: "Jesus Christ Superstar"

Music

Hoyt Sherman Place

1501 Woodland Ave., Des Moines • hoyshtsherman.org

• Jan. 12: Big Head Todd and the Monsters at 7:30 p.m.

Wells Fargo Arena

Wells Fargo Arena, 223 Center St., Des Moines

iowaeventscenter.com

• Jan. 25: Disturbed - Take Back Your Life tour with Falling In Reverse and Plush

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.



Square Dance Lessons

Sunday nights starting Jan. 14, 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.

Living Well Classes: Overcoming Anxiety or Depression

Orientation: Thursday, Jan. 18, 7 p.m.

Ankeny First United Methodist Church Christian Life Center, 710 NE 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.

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. ■



MORE JANUARY EVENTS

• **Jan. 12-13: Cinch World's Toughest Rodeo** at Wells Fargo Arena, 223 Center St., Des Moines; iowaeventscenter.com

• **Jan. 13: Joe Gatto's Night of Comedy** at Hoyt Sherman Place, 1501 Woodland Ave., Des Moines; hoyshtsherman.org/events

• **Jan. 14: Local Music Showcase** at Teehee's Comedy Club, 1433 Walnut St., Des Moines; teeheescomedy.com

• **Jan. 18: Candlelight: A Tribute to Taylor Swift** at World Food Prize Hall of Laureates, 100 Locust St., Des Moines; feverup.com/m/138464

• **Jan. 20: Candlelight: A Tribute to Queen** and more at World Food Prize Hall of Laureates, 100 Locust St., Des Moines; feverup.com/m/138464

• **Jan. 27: Demetri Martin: The Joke Machine Tour** at Hoyt Sherman Place, 1501 Woodland Ave., Des Moines; hoyshtsherman.org/events

• **Jan. 30 through Feb. 1: Iowa Ag Expo** at Iowa Events Center, 730 Third St., Des Moines; iowaeventscenter.com/wells-fargo-arena



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RECIPE

SET the menu for a successful year

(Family Features) If your goals for 2024 include a healthier lifestyle and added nutrition, your mission is likely to start with a refreshed menu. Add a few newfound favorites to this year's rotation like wraps, salads and smoothies to power each day and propel yourself toward wellness success.

Planning and executing a more nutritious menu can often be thwarted by lunchtime cravings or busy weeknights that leave little time to cook at home. Rather than giving in to those takeout temptations, turn to easy recipes you can create yourself with just a few simple, on-hand ingredients.

Grab tortillas out of the pantry and a few favorites from the refrigerator to make these BLT wraps with avocado spread, which are perfect for meal-prepping weekday lunches or whipping up at a moment's notice for a family dinner. Bacon, a nearly unanimous favorite, teams up with a homemade avocado spread, lettuce and tomatoes for fresh taste without the hassle.

For a satisfying meal without leaving behind health goals, serve with a hearty salad or Spanish rice and banana peppers on the side. ■

BLT wraps with avocado spread

Servings: 4

- 8 slices bacon
- 1 avocado, peeled and pitted
- 1/4 cup sour cream
- 1 lime, juice only
- 1/2 teaspoon hot sauce
- 1/2 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 4 flour tortillas
- 4 large red leaf lettuce leaves
- 2 large tomatoes, cut into 1/4-inch slices
- Spanish rice (optional)
- banana peppers (optional)

Directions

- In large skillet, cook bacon until crispy. Drain on plate lined with paper towels. Set aside.
- In medium bowl, mash avocado, sour cream, lime juice, hot sauce, Worcestershire sauce and salt with fork until combined and smooth.
- Spread thin layer of avocado mixture over tortillas. Layer with lettuce leaves, tomatoes and bacon. Fold sides up and roll.
- Serve with Spanish rice and banana peppers, if desired.



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ET-CITY-AD-CONS (11-23)

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BLODGETT named Ambassador of the Year

The West Des Moines Chamber of Commerce has named Connie Blodgett as the 2023 Ambassador of the Year, with Charity Baird as the runner-up. Ambassadors play a crucial role in supporting the organization, contributing to member retention, and fostering community growth throughout the year. The Ambassador of the Year is determined by a point system based on engagement through events, member care calls, new member interactions, and monthly ambassador meetings.

Blodgett has 18 years of involvement and ambassadorship with the WDM Chamber. A dedicated West Des Moines resident for more than 30 years, she actively engages in community initiatives and supports the WDM Chamber.

"I am honored to receive the 2023 Ambassador of the Year Award," said Blodgett. "It's always fun to network and help people meet others to grow personally and professionally. I'm proud to be part of this vibrant chamber and to work with such an amazing team."

Baird, the deposit development specialist at BANK in West Des Moines, has been a WDM Chamber ambassador since June 2023. BANK has been a chamber member for seven years. Baird consistently participates in chamber events, regularly attending ribbon cuttings, grand openings and networking events, resulting in her being named runner-up in 2023.

"I have loved every second of being a WDM Chamber ambassador. I was initially nervous about the idea, but once I met with Anna, the WDM Chamber's senior director of membership and strategic partnership, I knew I was with the right people," said Baird. "Everyone is welcoming and fun-loving, and the amount of effort put into the local businesses and the people of West Des Moines is simply amazing." ■



Connie Blodgett



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LIBRARY

By Maggie Martin,
Library Information Coordinator

MODEL train display returns to WDM Library



Stop by the West Des Moines Library to see the DesMoiNTrak's N-scale working layout on Jan. 13 from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. or Jan. 14 from 2-4 p.m. This event is open to adults and children of all ages. Make sure to stop by the Children's Department for a fun train craft before you leave. No registration needed.

Reminder: The library will be closed for Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Jan. 15.

Other event highlights

• Celina Biniarz: Saved by Schindler's List

Sunday, Jan. 21, 2:30-3:30 p.m.

This is a program for adults.

Sandi Yoder, director of the Iowa Jewish Historical Society, will share the personal story of Celina Karp Biniarz, one of the last living survivors from Schindler's List — and the only one who graduated from North High School and Grinnell College in Iowa. No registration required.

• Family Night at the Library: Lego Club!

Monday, Jan. 22, 6:30-7:30 p.m.

Join Nate for a fun family activity. Why should kids get to have all the fun? Join us this month to take on a fun building challenge as a family using the library's Legos. Will your skills stack up or fall flat? For all ages. Please register each person attending (children and adults).

• Great Books Showcase

Wednesday, Jan. 31, 7-8:30 p.m.

This is a program for adults.

"Can you suggest a great book?" This is a question librarians get all the time. Consider this event our answer. Whether you're a mystery fan or want to find out about the hottest cooking trends, you'll find something new and fresh in our book previews. No registration required. ■



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MAKE your funeral prearrangements

Don't put it off another year. Let 2024 be the year you take care of those tasks that continue to remain on your "to-do" list.

It might be getting a will in place or updated. It might be cleaning out that closet. Or maybe it is getting your funeral prearrangements in place so that your final arrangements will not be a burden to your family and loved ones at a time that will be very emotional and stressful.

We hear it all the time... "I am so glad to have this taken care of."

Planning your final arrangements begins with a simple conversation and can be a pleasant process. Planning ahead allows you time to give the thoughtful consideration these important decisions deserve.

There are many options to think about when addressing your final arrangements, and there are even prepayment options available to those who wish to have their final financial obligations handled in advance.

An advanced planning consultant can walk you through these choices and options.

Start the year by crossing something off your "to-do" list. Reach out to your funeral home of choice and schedule a meeting to get your prearrangements in place. You will be glad you did. ■

Information provided by Scott Eriksen, Director of Hamilton's Advanced Planning, Hamilton's Funeral Home, 605 Lyon St., Des Moines, 515-697-3670, www.HamiltonsFuneralHome.com.



ESGR presents Patriot Award to school district



From left: Jim Freese, ESGR volunteer; Kim Davis, principal at Walnut Creek Alternative School; Shane Scott, curriculum director; Dr. Matt Adams, superintendent; and Wes Hall, Lt. Col. Iowa Army National Guard.

The Iowa Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR), a Department of Defense office, presented its Patriot Award to the West Des Moines Community School District at a recent school board meeting. Accepting the award were Dr. Matt Adams, superintendent; Dr. Kim Davis, principal at Walnut Creek Alternative School; and Shane Scott, curriculum director.

The award was presented to the district for going "above and beyond the call" to support employees who are also military service members. The award reflects the efforts made by an organization to support citizen warriors through a wide-range of measures including flexible schedules, time off prior to and after deployment, caring for families, and granting leaves of absence if needed. ESGR awards are issued through the Department of Defense and are presented to recipients by ESGR volunteers.

Following the presentation, Lt. Col. Wes Hall, a district employee and member of the Iowa Army National Guard, said, "My 32-year military career would not have been possible without the support of the West Des Moines Community School District leadership team. They go above and beyond the call to accommodate my military obligations."

"Supportive employers like West Des Moines Community School District are vital to the success of our mission and the defense of this nation," said Iowa ESGR Chair Becky Coady. "Our Guard and Reserve members could not perform their military duty without knowing their civilian employers support them 100%." ■

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ESSENTIAL documents in estate planning

Effective estate planning involves not only directing the distribution of your wealth after death, but also making decisions about your care while alive. Medical technology can extend life, but many clients prefer to focus on the quality of that life. Decisions about the dying process are personal and should be made individually before the opportunity is lost.

When people do not plan for medical crises, family members have to make important health decisions without guidance. If you became ill and are unable to make medical treatment decisions for yourself, or if you became incompetent to participate in those decisions, the burden falls to your family and loved ones. It is for them that you should complete advance



directive documents.

An advance directive expresses your health care choices in writing and nominates someone to carry them out. Without a written advance directive, you have no control over the decisions or choices your agent makes. If you do not have an advance directive and become incompetent, a court may appoint a guardian to make your healthcare decisions for yourself. Guardianships can be a very costly process and can be avoided with proper planning.

A durable health care power of attorney is a document through which you name another person to make health care decisions for you if you are unable to make them. The document is “durable” because it is still effective even if you become incapacitated or incompetent.

A living will is a document that expresses in writing your directions for your medical care if you are unable to express your wishes yourself. It can direct your physician to withhold or

withdraw certain life-sustaining procedures if you are in a terminal condition. However, it can be much more comprehensive, including what you want to happen in various situations.

Advance directives allow you to maintain individual control over your life by directing healthcare decisions made for you in the future.

Advance directives allow you to anticipate medical emergencies and participate in your future care. These documents make health care decisions in advance and create peace of mind for you and your family.

The most effective estate planning is accomplished before you need it. Consult with an experienced attorney who can help you create these essential documents. ■

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

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HEALTH

By Paul Guerdet

THE JOYS of novelty

We're hitting that time of year when the temperature drops and we all start to settle in for winter. It's easy this time of year to fall into routines and go on autopilot from day to day. This isn't necessarily a bad thing, but, after a while, we do have to be careful with how routine can affect our mood. After a while, having the same daily routine can dull our mood and leave us more susceptible to the winter blues. If you find yourself feeling this way, it may be time to add a bit of novelty to your life.



When I talk about ways to add novelty into your life, it's important not to overthink it, something many of us are guilty of. Adding novelty to your day-to-day life just means to try something new, something different. Novelty could be something as simple as taking a different way to or from work or going to a new restaurant or coffee shop that you've been wanting to check out. Small changes to our daily pattern can allow us to have new experiences, which our brains tend to crave and help us to stave off those winter blues. ■

Information provided by Paul Guerdet, LISW, SS Therapy and Consulting, Ltd, 4725 Merle Hay Road, Suite 205, Des Moines, 515-528-8135, www.sstherapyandconsulting.com, guerdet@sstherapyandconsulting.com.

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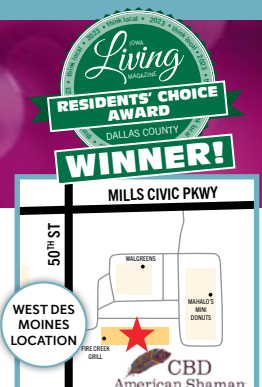


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HEALTH

By Ashley Powell

THC content and benefits of hemp

Scientifically, there's not much difference between hemp and marijuana. It's really the law that separates the two. According to the law, hemp is the strain of the cannabis sativa plant that contains .3% or less of THC by dry weight. Marijuana typically contains 5-30% THC. The cannabis industry has flourished in states where marijuana is illegal due to the 2018 Farm Bill that legalized industrial hemp. The seeds and oil from hemp are rich in protein, fiber and magnesium. They also contain high levels of Omega-3, which contribute to relief from symptoms of discomfort and improve heart and skin health. Besides its wellness effects, fibers from hemp stalk are extremely strong and have been used for clothing, construction and food supply. Hemp cultivation is more environmentally friendly versus crops such as flax and cotton. It grows more quickly and under a wider array of conditions. It can absorb carbon from the air and transform it into plant materials, and it can decontaminate soil by absorbing harmful heavy metals and turning them into harmless plant matter. Since THC is so popular, the spotlight on marijuana plants seems brighter. Fortunately, hemp can provide many of the same benefits. Ask your local cannabis retailer for more information, and you're likely to discover how going heavy on the hemp will get you the results you're looking for. ■



Information provided by Ashley Powell, CBD American Shaman, 800 S. 50th St., No. 106, West Des Moines, 515-380-5251, and 3418 Eighth St. S.W., No. 3, Altoona, 515-967-4036.

WHO needs an orthodontist?

Did you know that there are 12 recognized dental specialties? You read that right. Within the small oral cavity, beyond dentists, there are 12 career fields devoted to a focused area of the mouth, teeth or oral structures.

Just like in the medical field, you have general physicians and specialists like cardiologists, endocrinologists and others. The specialists focus on a specific topic or body part and become the experts in that area. For the best treatment, knowledge and results, seeking the help of a specialist is always recommended.

Today, we will dive into exploring one of the dental specialists: the orthodontist. An orthodontist goes to school for an additional two to three years after four years of dental school. An orthodontist focuses on the diagnosis, prevention, interception and correction of malocclusion (bad bites), as well



as neuromuscular and skeletal abnormalities of the developing or mature orofacial structures. An orthodontist provides teeth straightening by moving them through the bone structures with the use of braces or other corrective appliances.

Seven-year-olds are the first group of people who can substantially benefit from seeing an orthodontist. Around age 7, children begin to lose teeth and gain their permanent teeth. An orthodontist knows the order teeth should erupt in, how much space is needed for new teeth, when the jaw growth is happening and more. Seeing the orthodontist at age 7 can help save permanent teeth from needing extraction in the future, avoid jaw surgeries, and in general save time in treatment and added costs.

Ten- to 13-year-olds are the next group who benefit from seeing an orthodontist. Typically, around this age, the majority of permanent teeth are present, and the child's jaw is at peak growth. The orthodontist can treat crowding, spacing, jaw issues and more at this time. Once treatment is completed at this age, if a child

continues to wear their retainer, no treatment should be needed again the rest of their life.

Adults also can benefit from seeing an orthodontist. Usually there are two distinct groups of adults when it comes to seeing an orthodontist. 1. Adults who had treatment as a child and stopped wearing their retainer, which resulted in teeth moving as they aged. 2. Adults who never had treatment but always wanted a straighter smile. An orthodontist can provide more treatment options and more efficient treatment times as a specialist. Orthodontists are also equipped to handle more difficult tooth movements and jaw issues.

Regardless of age, when it comes to the alignment of your teeth, bite or jaw, an orthodontic specialist is the provider to seek. Today is the perfect day to schedule your free orthodontic consultation. ■

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

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WELLNESS

By Kristen Shelton

IMPROVED health with weight loss injections

Is it possible that weight loss injections can also provide additional benefits for your health as a whole? The answer is yes. As we begin a new year, this is the most popular time when individuals begin New Year's resolutions and other popular fads. However, have you ever found yourself falling off the bandwagon within a week or two after implementing a New Year's resolution?



What if you could eat a balanced diet, exercise daily, and use a weight loss medication that will help produce results you can see and feel? The most popular weight loss injections, Semaglutide and Tirzepatide, are sweeping the nation. Studies are showing that these injections are a safe and effective weight loss treatment. Not only can these medications help an individual lose stubborn, unwanted weight, they have also been found to lower the risk of cardiovascular events such as heart attacks and strokes, improve glucose levels, decrease blood pressure and cholesterol levels, and reduce inflammation, thereby enabling beneficial effects on heart muscle and blood vessels. ■

Information provided by Kristen Shelton, co-owner, Vivid Wellness, Aesthetics, Lifestyle, 1980 N.W. 94th St., Suite E/F Clive, 515-415-1550, www.livin-vivid.com.

SENIOR

By Brooke Baker

OPTIONS for caregiver relief

As we age, it's common to require additional support to maintain our independence and quality of life. Thankfully, there are several options available to assist us, including adult daycare, assisted living and home care. Each option provides unique benefits that cater to different needs and preferences. Adult daycare is a popular choice for seniors who desire a supportive environment that allows them to socialize and complete daily tasks. This type of care is especially helpful for caregivers who still work while taking care of their loved ones. By taking their loved ones out of the home, adult daycare provides structure to both the caregiver and the loved one. Additionally, most adult daycares offer transportation services, making it easy for seniors to get to and from the center. Engaging in mental stimulation, fun games, and community activities is a great way to keep seniors active and lively. This is where adult daycare truly shines. With various activities available, including arts and crafts, music and fitness classes, seniors will always find something to do that suits their interests. For those who require eight hours of continuous care for their loved ones, adult daycare is a safe, affordable and convenient option. These centers have nurses on staff who can provide physical, occupational and speech therapy services. Don't wait. Explore these options today and see what a blessing adult daycare can be. ■



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

MAKING an impact in 2024

This is not your typical New Year's resolution article. The concepts in those articles are good, and I work with many of my clients to help them budget, save and plan because those are fundamentally the right things to do. Many of those articles are out there, and that topic is covered extensively this time of year. With that said, I wanted to focus on a different topic and use the new year as the motivation to up our focus and set some goals around another financial idea: making an impact with your wealth.

Let us start this off by dispelling the idea that "making an impact" with your wealth is reserved only for people of a certain affluence. While increased wealth does come with more freedom to do more with your wealth, the concept of using wealth to have an impact is not limited. For this exercise, we are going to



broaden our definition of impact and define it as benefiting others. Also, let's not restrict wealth to being exclusive to money. Instead, wealth can be other things you have an abundance of, such as time or talent.

From here, we want to discuss two areas where you can use our definition of wealth to impact others. The more traditional thought processes are through causes such as charitable entities. This year could be the year when you decide to have an impact on your favorite causes. You can do this in several ways: donating money, giving time and talent, or advocating. As the money guy, I can tell you that there are several vehicles for donating money, and depending on your situation, you can use these: donor-advised funds, gifting appreciated stock, or learning more about impact funds. You can also give time and talent, which can have an even greater impact than money. An often-overlooked way to have an impact is by advocating for a cause. Think of your words and actions being a multiplier of your dollars and tell people you

know about your cause, why you support it, and why they should consider doing the same.

The next area I want to focus on for making an impact is ensuring our wealth is protected so that it can impact those we care for most. To make an impact here, remember that your income, savings and assets will impact loved ones if something were to happen to you. That impact can be positive with planning and leveraging the tools available to you or negative if you fail to plan. In my opinion, it is your advisor's job to ensure you have an appropriate estate plan in place. Make it a goal of yours in this new year to get this done. Beyond the framework for an estate plan, it is also important to ensure that all of your assets are titled correctly and that they have a beneficiary assigned. ■

Information provided by Michael Jiskoot, Valiant Wealth, 3408 Woodland Ave., Suite 204, West Des Moines, 515-223-6068. At Valiant Wealth, we ascribe to many of these principles, and I advise my clients to take a measured and proactive approach to achieving their financial goals.

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MEET Everett Mullican

WDM native joins chamber.

Growing up in West Des Moines and hopping over to Jordan Creek Mall was an entertaining pastime for Everett Mullican as a teenager.

So, when it was time to look for a job after college, West Des Moines was the place to be — not only to live, but to promote the city to visitors and prospective residents.

Mullican joined the West Des Moines Chamber of Commerce in 2023 as the marketing communications coordinator. He began his journey as an intern at the chamber in January 2023.

In his role, he coordinates the chamber's social media, promoting members, the community, events and other citywide happenings and news.

"We want to tell the story of West Des Moines," he says.

And Mullican knows the story well. He attended Crossroads Elementary, Indian Hills Junior High and graduated from Valley High School. He says he always felt at home.

"I grew up here, played sports and had a feeling of belonging. I knew I had a future here," he recalls.

He graduated from Drake University, as both his mother and sister had. In his senior year, he was presented with a prestigious award: the public relations outstanding student of the year.



Everett Mullican

"The award meant a lot to me," Mullican says. "I was the account executive on my team for a team project."

As he completed his internship at the West Des Moines Chamber, he realized the impact he could make.

"It (the chamber) made me realize I could do more than pencil on paper. My great education was put into actual practice," he says.

Mullican says the award-winning chamber has already built a legacy for West Des Moines.

"When I first became part of the chamber, I didn't know how great it was. There are outstanding team members, and each has their own unique community involvement. It's hard to find a team that can bond as we do."

Mullican realizes he's a younger member on the team, yet feels youth is on his side.

"It's nice to have connections and a new perspective. It's critical to the chamber to gain new insights."

He says he likes supporting small local businesses and is excited for the Grand Experience, a 226-acre entertainment development. He adds, "Valley Junction is my No. 1 place to go."

Mullican continues to explore and promote West Des Moines.

"I know I could grow a future in West Des Moines. The city is great — the community is great," he says. "When we say it's the best city to work and play, we mean it." ■

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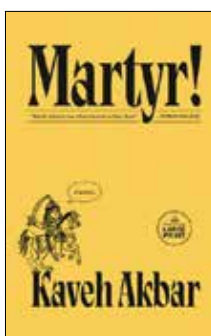
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'Martyr!'

There's something special about reading a debut novel. When that author is a beloved poet, however, I get a little worried. Poetry in long form doesn't always translate well, and sometimes substance gets lost in a whirl of words. I shouldn't have worried. Akbar has a true gift in whatever form he chooses to display his craft.

Cyrus is an Iranian immigrant to the U.S. who is struggling with that age-old question, how can I make my life matter? Different voices weave through the narrative, some real, some ghostly, some entirely fictional. Themes of the power of being present, of hope, and, of course, love, surround the disparate chapters and tie them together. Often very funny and more profound than it should be, especially when Cyrus is talking to Lisa Simpson.

At first disjointed and seemingly unconnected, this is a rich and sad and powerful story that ties so many threads together with a bow of magical realism and vibrant longing. The poetry Akbar is known for bleeds into the pages. The writing is stellar, but there's a story here that transcends itself, coalescing around the near universal feeling of being both stuck and untethered at the same. I haven't been this excited about a new author in a long time. ■ — *Review by Julie Goodrich*



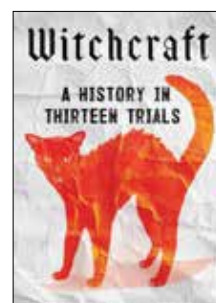
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'Witchcraft: A History in Thirteen Trials'

I was a little surprised when I picked up this book. I expected a scholarly retelling of the famous witch trials in the U.S. and the U.K. from ages long past. I had no idea there were trials in Norway, specifically to accuse and bully indigenous populations. I had some vague notion of witchcraft in historical African countries, but I had no knowledge of the lengths the colonizing British forces would go to control the populace. I should have known better and am so glad I've read this book.

Viewing the history of witchcraft and its political uses through the lens of the legal systems, scholar and expert Marion Gibson tells 13 very different tales of witches all across the globe and what their prosecution, and persecution, says about the times and places they lived. These are engaging, intriguing and often very sad tales that put a misunderstood feature of human history into sharp relief.

The span of time and the implications of "othering" take us right up to modern times and the new ways in which people are ostracized and shunned. This is an important book for scholarship, but equally applicable to our lives now, and the struggles of women and minorities everywhere. ■ — *Review by Julie Goodrich*



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West Des Moines Chamber of Commerce hosted a ribbon cutting for Paragon Commercial & Residential Cleaning on Dec. 6.



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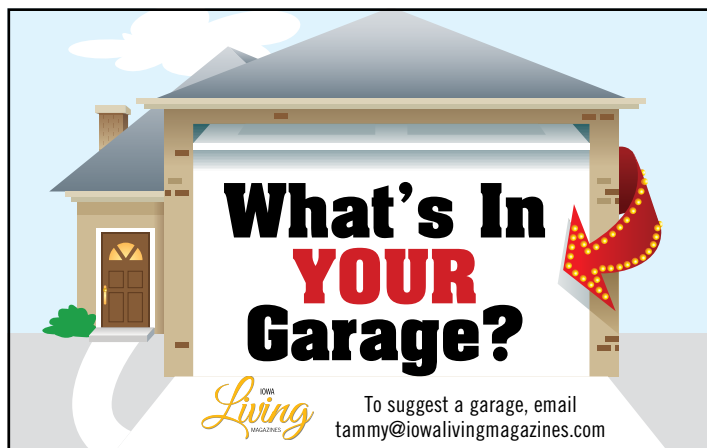
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RIBBON

Cutting

West Des Moines Chamber of Commerce hosted a ribbon cutting for Putts and Pins on Nov. 30.



The West Des Moines Chamber of Commerce hosted a ribbon cutting for Putts and Pins on Nov. 30.



Mary Yacko, Charity Baird and Rob Reinard



Patrick Onken and Mayor Russ Trimble



Frank Hanson, Reonna Snyder, Patrick Onken and Anthony Kottke



Will Gleich, Alexis Schilling and Bryon Moore



Jason Johnson and Eric Cann



Collin Snyder, Noah Slagter and Ashley Rottinghaus



Maryssa McCunn and Hope Boyd



Emma Younkin and Jordan Anderson



Mari Slaughter and Ty Satre

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