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JANUARY 2024

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Residents share why they
continue to expand their
horizons through learning

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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 Chantel Boyd

You learn something new every day. Sometimes it's by accident, but sometimes it's intentional. Some people 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.

April Young decided to take piano lessons — just for herself. And while many of her fellow students are youngsters, she is glad to be pursuing a new musical outlet.

From behind the scenes to patient care

Michelle Hanson of Urbandale started taking classes a few years ago, one at a time, to complete her goals at her own pace. Hanson officially declared her major and started nursing school in the spring of 2023.

"I work full-time and still have two boys at home, so extreme part-time is the only way for me," she says. "I am in the part-time nights and weekend program at DMACC. I have already taken most of the other required courses, so I only take one nursing course each semester."

Hanson has five more semesters before she graduates, and, when she finishes, she will be eligible to take her nursing exams.

The classmates who attend the nursing classes with Hanson are from various ages and backgrounds.

"Most of them work in healthcare, including myself. I am the oldest student in the program, but the ages vary from early 20s to 50s. I believe most of them are in their mid-20s to mid-30s," she says.

Hanson has worked in healthcare much of her adult life, but behind the scenes for most of it.

"I currently work in the government space, helping develop ways to improve healthcare quality and lower costs. Obtaining my RN will open additional opportunities to continue working in this space, as participating in ways of improving healthcare in the United States is a passion of mine," she says.

Hanson says her favorite part of this coursework is the opportunity to continue to help others.

"During clinical, when I can interact with patients, I love connecting with them," she says. "Since I am a student, I can spend more time with my patients than I would as a floor nurse. Caring for my patients and making them comfortable in the hospital is rewarding."

Hanson also enjoys learning despite the difficulty of balancing work and life at times.

"Though juggling working full-time, caring for my family, and going to school is challenging, I would not trade it for anything,"



Michelle Hanson is taking classes to become a nurse. With a full-time job and children at home, she is pursuing her education at a pace she is comfortable with.

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FEATURE

she says. “I feel that life-long learning keeps you alive.”

Hanson is confident her new career path will enable her to give her patients time and attention and to help them by listening to them and using her medical knowledge.

“My goal has always been to help my patients in any way I can to make them feel heard, understood and, ultimately, feel that I have helped them,” she says. “Becoming an RN will enable me to further the help I can provide patients. I plan to remain in my current role, improving healthcare quality; however, I envision myself in the clinical space as well, even if only volunteering or working extremely part-time.”

A passion for accounting

In 2023, Alyssa McNeeley decided to further her education and started by taking classes in payroll and accounting at Des Moines Area Community College.

“These credits amount to three or four credits toward the amount required for the accounting and bookkeeping diploma,” she



Alyssa McNeeley says her children, Logan and Lucas, are her inspiration for continuing her education.



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says, adding that they can also count toward another certificate or an associate of applied science degree.

While attending the accounting courses, McNeeley rubs shoulders with residents from all over Iowa, who are of all ages and in different stages in life.

"The younger students earn credits through DMACC to transfer, because it's not as expensive as at a university. Others are going for a similar program that involves accounting knowledge," she says.

McNeeley's goal for attending the courses is to improve her life and that of her children.

"I attend to further my knowledge, gain degrees and certificates, and hopefully use these to secure a better financial situation for myself and my children," she says.

Her coursework currently centers around accounting, which McNeeley says applies to a variety of business career paths.

"The focus of these courses is anything about an accounting career. However, those who go into business or entrepreneurship would benefit as well," she says. "They deal with the function of accounting, rules set by the government to follow, programs and computer efficiency, and personal communication while dealing with employees, employers or would-be customers."

McNeeley likes that she can attend DMACC and pursue her career path without disrupting her other duties in life.

"I enjoy taking things at my own pace and the capability to still be a mom while attending," she says. "Online coursework is different than in-person and is not for everyone, but as an independent means of studying and gathering information, online is a viable option."

Currently, McNeeley works full time in business, and she hopes that earning these credits and certificates will help her further her career.

"I am currently a bookkeeper for my full-time employment. These courses have helped me be more proficient in my current position and further understand items needed for the CPA and company," she says.

McNeeley says the new experiences and knowledge gained will allow her to go further or be confident in pursuing a unique position in her industry as a forensic accountant,

detecting and proving crimes as a CPA or possibly a CFE.

"I hope to gain the confidence to pursue self-employment or go even further with an original idea to go into financial crimes. I've found and seen internal theft within a company and the destruction that can cause, but also the difficulty to prove it," she says.

Adult classes

As 2023 ended, April Young reflected on her musical lessons from this past year and the years before during the pandemic.

"I took piano lessons just for myself," she says.

Young took courses from Arick Andersen.

"He has taught music and voice lessons for over 20 years and has a music degree from Luther College," she says. "Arik is such a great teacher; we always have fun."

Even when the pandemic put an end to many activities, April and Arick pressed on, leaning on technology for some help.

"During the pandemic, we switched to FaceTime lessons, which work well for me," says Young.

When she began the piano lessons, she says she felt like there were more adult learners like herself. Now, the piano and vocal students seem to be comprised mainly of school-aged students.

"Most other students are still in school, but seeing us all grow as musicians over the years has been fun," she says.

Young says she has wanted to learn to play piano since childhood but pursued other musical endeavors instead.

"I played clarinet and sang in the choir all through school, so I can read music, but I had never learned to play piano," she says.

A few years ago, Young was going back and forth thinking about taking lessons, and a friend teased her.

"You don't like to do something unless you know you'll be good at it," her friend said.

Young says the challenge from her friend was what she needed to get started.

"Learning to play has been a stretch of my skills and a bit of my ego," she admits.

During her piano lessons, Young has improved her musical knowledge.

"We review chords, notes, rhythm, and even music theory. I've relearned some musical



"To play a favorite song from childhood or the holidays just warms my heart," says April Young about learning to play the piano.

symbols and dynamics since I last played music almost 25 years ago," she says. "The bass clef will still trip me up now and then."

April and her fellow musical students perform quarterly.

"We do a recital four times a year, which gives me a chance to grow as I work with one piece for a while," she says. "I enjoy music. I love learning how music fits together and why certain songs sound the way they do because of the key signatures and chords."

Young says she finds it rewarding watching herself get better at a piece of music.

"I can be struggling on one piece and decide to put it away for the day, and the next time, I glide right through it," she says.

It is significant to learn to play a piece of music that means a lot to her.

"To play a favorite song from childhood or the holidays just warms my heart," she says.

One unexpected bonus piano lessons have provided Young as an adult is to help with a typical adult skill.

"It has given me help in public speaking or risking being embarrassed. Once you've gotten up in front of a room full of adolescents and their parents and fumbled through a piece of music, you tend to grow in humility and learn that it's not the end of the world if you make a mistake. Everyone does," she says. ■

SETTING the record straight about hospice care

Anytime is the appropriate time to start a conversation about living with — or helping a loved one live with — a life-altering illness, and about the fact that compassionate care can help ensure quality of life. If you're wondering if a loved one could benefit from hospice care, the information below, compiled with assistance from the American Hospice Foundation, might help you start a discussion with your family member's healthcare provider.



Myth No. 1: Hospice is appropriate only when a person is at death's door.

Truth: Ideally, the hospice conversation should begin when an individual is still healthy. Virtually anyone with a life-limiting illness can qualify for hospice care, enabling a person to live life in comfort for the weeks, months or longer that remain in his or her life.

Myth No. 2: Hospice is a place.

Truth: Hospice care takes place wherever the need exists, frequently in the individual's home.

Myth No. 3: Hospice is only for people

with cancer.

Truth: More than one-half of hospice patients nationwide have diagnoses other than cancer. Hospice commonly serves patients who are living with chronic diseases such as Alzheimer's disease, COPD or cardiovascular and neuromuscular illnesses.

Myth No. 4: Hospice is for people who don't need a high level of care.

Truth: Hospice programs employ experienced medical and nursing personnel with skills in symptom control. They offer palliative care, using advanced technologies to prevent or alleviate distressing symptoms.

Myth No. 5: Hospice services are expensive.

Truth: Most hospice patients age 65 or older are entitled to the Medicare Hospice Benefit, which covers virtually all hospice services and requires the person to pay little in out-of-pocket costs. This means no financial burdens are incurred by the family — a situation that can contrast sharply with major expenses that can be incurred to manage a life-limiting illness when hospice is not used.

Myth No. 6: Families are discouraged from involvement in a loved one's hospice care.

Truth: On the contrary, hospice care can benefit family members nearly as much as it can benefit patients. One of the gifts of hospice is its capacity to help families realize how much can be shared at the end of life through personal and spiritual connection. As part of a family-centered concept of care, hospice focuses almost as much on supporting a patient's family members as on caring for the patient. It's not unusual for family members to look back upon the hospice experience with gratitude.

As you search for the hospice program that's the best fit for your loved one and family, please don't hesitate to initiate honest conversations about the aspects of hospice care with which you're unfamiliar. Representatives of any qualified program should be more than ready to help ensure you are comfortable with the important decision you're making on behalf of someone who means so much to you. ■

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



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— Bob and Judy Ruch, Urbandale

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RECIPE

MORE fresh flavors for the New Year

Roasted cauliflower and potato spinach salad

Prep time: 15 minutes
Cook time: 40 minutes
Serves: 4

- 1 small head cauliflower, cut into florets
- 3 tablespoons olive oil, divided
- 2 teaspoons Italian seasoning, divided
- 1/2 teaspoon salt, divided
- 1 pound fingerling potatoes, quartered
- 1 package (8 ounces) Fresh Express French Blue Cheese Salad Kit



Directions

- Heat oven to 425 F.
- In large bowl, toss cauliflower florets with 2 tablespoons olive oil. Sprinkle with 1 teaspoon Italian seasoning and 1/4 teaspoon salt; mix well. Arrange in single layer on sheet pan.
- Bake cauliflower 30-40 minutes, tossing once halfway through, until tender and lightly charred. Cool.
- In bowl, toss potatoes with remaining olive oil. Sprinkle with remaining Italian seasoning and salt; mix well. Arrange in single layer on sheet pan.
- Bake potatoes 20 minutes until tender and lightly browned. Cool.
- Place greens from salad kit in large bowl; add roasted vegetables. Drizzle with dressing from salad kit; mix well. Top with croutons and blue cheese from salad kit.

Strawberry oatmeal smoothie



- 1/2 cup rolled oats
- 1 banana
- 14 frozen strawberries
- 1 cup soy milk
- 1 1/2 teaspoons sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract

Directions

- In blender, grind oats. Add banana, strawberries, soy milk, sugar and vanilla extract then blend until smooth. Pour into glass or to-go container and serve.

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YOUR PARENTS had it easy

This year, the U.S. population will reach Peak 65. This is the point at which an estimated 12,000 people will turn 65 each day, according to U.S. Census Bureau. That means 4.4 million Americans will turn 65 this year. By the end of 2030, all baby boomers (those born between 1946 and 1964) will be older than 65. And those baby boomers have more responsibility than their parents did when it comes to saving for retirement.

My grandfather retired from a 40-year career at Ford Motor Company in the 1980s. With my grandmother, he traveled the country in an RV, living off his pension, Social Security, and a little savings. In the 1980s, 60% of private sector workers were offered a pension plan. By 2020, that number dropped to around 4%.

With fewer pensions, many have to rely on Social Security, their own retirement savings



and make lots of decisions. A married couple can have up to 81 options when it comes to electing Social Security. The difference between electing at 62 and 70 can be tens of thousands of dollars. The benefit is designed to replace 30-40% of income in retirement, but with an influx of retirees, many are concerned about the future of this “guaranteed” retirement income. If no legislative action is taken, Social Security reserves would be depleted by 2034. Lawmakers have suggested boosting tax rates on benefits, increasing payroll taxes, and changes to the annual cost-of-living adjustments are all options to shore up the funds.

With a pension, saving for retirement was pretty hands off for my grandpa. His employer made the contributions, managed the plan, then gave him a couple of choices about how he wanted to receive the money in retirement.

Today’s employee-sponsored plans, like a 401(k) or 403(b), require more work on your part. You have to choose the investments and contribution amounts. Then retirement hits,

and you have even more choices. Choices about how and when to spend and invest the money — all while keeping in mind your retirement tax bill.

Whether you plan to retire this year or in ten years, there are things you can do to maximize the money you’ve worked so hard to save. Working with a retirement planner can help you take the burden out of the decision making and put together a customized plan that will show you how you are going to invest, spend, pay for health care, and more so you can enjoy RV trips, time with grandkids or whatever is on your retirement bucket list. ■

Information provided by Loren Merkle CFP®, RICP®, Certified Financial Fiduciary®, Merkle Retirement Planning, 1860 S.E. Princeton Drive, Grimes, 515-278-1006. Sources: O’Connor, B. (2023, August 16). Over 12,000 Americans Will Turn 65 Every Day in 2024. Are You Ready?; Ultimate Guide to Retirement: Just How Common are Defined Benefit Plans?; March 2023 Summary: Actuarial Status of the Social Security Trust Funds

What is the annual limit on a Roth conversion?

- A. \$5,500
- B. \$6,500
- C. \$20,000
- D. No Limit



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ABOUT Social Security disability benefits

Social Security disability benefits are available to an individual who has a mental or physical impairment that prevents him or her from working. If you have a medical condition that prevents you from working, you may be eligible for Social Security benefits. There are two main types of benefits:



Supplemental Security Income (SSI) is a benefit available for an individual who is disabled and has low income and few resources. Generally, a disabled individual who does not have sufficient work history to qualify for Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) will qualify for SSI. In 2024, the SSI benefit is \$943 per month. This amount is designed to help meet basic needs for food, clothing, and shelter.

Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) is similar to Social Security retirement, but is for people who have become disabled prior to retirement age. If a person has sufficient “work credits,” earned by working for a certain period of time during lifetime, the disabled individual can qualify for SSDI. The amount of monthly benefit is calculated based on work history.

Applying for disability can be a lengthy process. After filing an initial application, Social Security will request medical records. Social Security may send the individual for examinations. It can take anywhere from three to six months to get a decision depending on how quickly medical records are received and reviewed.

Following a denial, the next step is to appeal the decision with a Request for Reconsideration. At this stage, Social Security will update information, have it reviewed by

its doctors, and make a new decision. This can take an additional three to six months. It is important to file an appeal; filing a new application starts the whole process over.

Once a case is denied at reconsideration, the next step is to request a hearing in front of an administrative law judge. Most cases in Iowa are assigned to the hearing office in West Des Moines. The current wait for a hearing is currently 20 months from the date the hearing is requested, not the date of application.

At the hearing, you can be represented by an experienced attorney who can present your side of the story. You need an attorney on your side who understands the process and respects you as an individual. ■

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

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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.

PLAN AHEAD

By Scott Eriksen

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.

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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 Westown Parkway, West Des Moines, 515-705-0644.



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BRACES & ALIGNERS FOR CHILDREN AND ADULTS

WINTER safety tips for seniors

As February dawns, we look to our friend — and famous groundhog — Punxsutawney Phil to predict how long our winter will last. Phil has a nearly 40% success rate, and, living in Iowa, we thought it might be a good time to remind our Johnston readers how to stay safe this winter.



Dress for success: Staying dry and warm is a primary concern when you must go outside during the winter. Make sure you are dressing in two to three lightweight layers versus one heavy layer. Break out those thermals. Don't forget your hat, gloves and a scarf you can use to cover your mouth and nose.

Take precautions against falls: It is easy to slip and fall in the winter due to snow and ice. You should stay inside until walkways are

cleared, wear non-skid shoes and, if you walk with a cane, make sure the rubber tip is not worn smooth and gives you some grip. You can also purchase an "ice grip" attachment for your cane to give you more stability.

Make sure your vehicle is ready for winter driving: If you must drive in poor weather, make sure you tell someone where you are going and when you will be expected back. Have your car winterized. Check your tires, antifreeze and windshield wipers. Repurpose an old spice shaker with rock salt and keep it in your cup holder so that you can sprinkle the rock salt before you exit your vehicle. Stock your car with other winter safety items like blankets, flashlight, jumper cables and an ice scraper.

Prepare for power outages: Winter storms can cause a loss of power. Make sure to have flashlights, extra batteries, drinking water and plenty of warm blankets until power is restored.

Hydrate and eat a healthy diet: It is always important to drink enough water, even in the winter. Dehydration and lack of a balanced diet can be dangerous for older adults and could mean falls, depression, cognitive declines and other serious health complications.

Ask for help: Whether it is clearing snow, getting groceries, or winterizing your car, let your family, friends and neighbors know how to help. There is also the option to hire these services to be done. Some senior living communities are happy to recommend people who would be able to fulfill these needs. Wintertime can pose some challenges to older adults, but, with a little planning and following our tips, you can stay safe. Spring is just around the corner. ■

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

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Save the dates!

Register for school!

Urbandale Community School District preschool pre-registration for the 2024-25 school year begins online January 30, 2024. Registration for kindergarten-12th grade begins online March 1, 2024. We look forward to welcoming your child and family!



Preschool

Pre-Registration for the 2024-25 school year begins online at **6:00 p.m. on January 30, 2024!**

Preschool Pre-Registration will not only pre-register your student, but will play a key role in determining facility and programming needs. Once all facility and programming decisions are confirmed, you will be contacted regarding your acceptance into the UCSD Preschool Program by April 12, 2024. To be eligible for 3-year-old or 4-year-old preschool, a child must be 3 or 4 years old by September 15, 2024. For questions, please call 515-457-5855 or email roetkerd@urbandaleschools.com. Visit: urbandaleschools.com/learn



Kindergarten – 12th Grade

Registration for the 2024-25 school year begins online **March 1, 2024!** We're excited to share our new online school registration system as it will make registration more efficient and convenient. Plus, learn more about our year-round school located at Karen Acres Elementary. Any family can choose to attend Karen Acres. To be eligible for kindergarten a child must be 5 years old by September 15, 2024. For questions, please call 515-457-5011 or email registration@urbandaleschools.com. Visit: urbandaleschools.com/learn



URBANDALE
COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT



Educational Equity Statement

It is the policy of the Urbandale Community School District not to discriminate on the basis of race, creed, color, sex, religion, marital status (for program), ethnic background, national origin, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, age (for employment), or socio-economic background (for program) in its educational programs and its employment practices. There is a grievance procedure for processing complaints of discrimination. If you have questions or a grievance related to this policy, please contact the District office at 11152 Aurora Avenue, Urbandale, IA or call 515-457-5000. The District's Equity Coordinator is Stephanie Davis daviss@urbandaleschools.com.



Year-Round Elementary School

Take a few moments to discover what makes Karen Acres Elementary so special: year-round calendar, two-section grade levels, frequent breaks, caring families, and amazing educators. Any family can choose to attend Karen Acres. We would love the opportunity to share more about our year-round school and all it has to offer your child and family!



YEAR-ROUND

The year-round calendar provides a full six-week break in the summer, a two-week fall break, an extra week at spring break, and a week in May. The schedule gives everyone a chance to reset and refresh.



CHILDCARE

Intersession programming is available during breaks. This optional programming is available to all families for a small fee. Intersession provides childcare and gives kids a fun, hands-on learning experience.



PROJECT-BASED LEARNING

Project-Based Learning engages students in meaningful projects to explore and answer complex questions tied to academic standards.



URBANDALE
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Visit urbandaleschools.com/year-round or call 515-457-5700 to learn more about enrolling your child or to schedule a visit!



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LIBRARY

By Staci Stanton,
Programming & Outreach Manager

URBANDALE Public Library news

Winter Reading Challenge

The library encourages all ages to sign up for our 2024 Winter Reading Challenge, which kicks off Monday, Jan. 15, and runs through the month of February. Similar to our summer reading challenge, participants keep track of their reading on a paper log or through the Beanstack app to earn prizes. For youth, we'll have badges and book prizes when you hit each milestone, while adults will be able to earn a voucher to redeem for any item from our book sale. Visit our website for more information: www.urbandalelibrary.org.

Sensory Spaces

Join us for special hours at the library on Sunday, Jan. 28, from noon to 1 p.m. for members of the public who appreciate a sensory-friendly environment. In addition to providing ear protection and reduced light and sound, you can check out some of the special activities, including a visit from our favorite ARL Therapets. Sensory Spaces is open to all ages. Stay tuned for our next Sensory Spaces on Sunday, April 14 at 5 p.m.

Library Speakers Consortium

The library is pleased to announce a new program and resource for library users, Library Speakers Consortium. Library Speakers Consortium showcases a virtual author talk series each month spotlighting bestselling, award-winning, and highly acclaimed authors from around the world. The featured writers and thought leaders will cover a wide range of fiction and nonfiction genres. The library will host at least one live watch party each month or you can register to watch on your own. All events will also be available on demand to watch at your convenience.

Our first author event will be Tuesday, Jan. 30 at 1 p.m. featuring Dr. Robert Lusig, a pediatric neuroendocrinologist who has long been on the cutting edge of medicine and science and author of "Metaboliol: The Lure and the Lies of Processed Food, Nutrition, and Modern Medicine." To learn more about this new resource and to register for upcoming events, visit our website and click on the Programs tab. This program has been made possible by the generous support of the Library Foundation.

AARP

The library is one of five Tax-Aide locations in the Des Moines metro area. Appointments can be made between 9 a.m. and 3 p.m. Monday through Thursday, beginning Feb. 1. To make an appointment, visit the library's website and click on the Resources tab or call AARP at 515-650-1838. ■

Check for cancellations

Museum open

Urbandale Historical Society,
4010 70th St.

The Olmsted-Urban House will be open for viewing the second Sunday of each month 2-4 p.m. for viewing. The Historical Society will also hold monthly programs at the Urbandale Library the first Sunday of each month at 2 p.m. The topic for Feb. 11 is TBA. March 10, the topic is the Urbandale Fire Department presented by Jerry Holt.



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 waukeee.org/familyfest.



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.

Theater and dance

Actors, Inc. - Ames Community Theater

120 Abraham Drive, Ames
actorsinc.org

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

ANKENY COMMUNITY THEATRE

1932 S.W. Third St., Ankeny
ankenycommunitytheatre.com

• Feb. 9-18: "The Odd Couple, Female Version"

CLASS ACT PRODUCTIONS

201 First Ave. S., Altoona
captheatre.org

• Feb. 16-18, 23-25, March 1-3: "The Music Man Jr."

Des Moines Performing Arts

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

• Jan. 23-28: "Mamma Mia!"
• Jan. 27: Havana Hop

Stephens Auditorium

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

• Jan. 30: "Jesus Christ Superstar"

DES MOINES COMMUNITY PLAYHOUSE

831 42nd St., Des Moines
dmplayhouse.com

• Feb. 2-18: "Our Town"

SIMPSON COLLEGE

513 N D St., Indianola
simpson.edu/academics/departments/departments-theatre-arts
• Feb. 16-18: "The Telephone & The Medium"

STEPHENS AUDITORIUM

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

• Jan. 30: "Jesus Christ Superstar"
• Feb. 2-3: Barjché
• Feb. 8: Langston Hughes Project
• Feb. 29 through March 3: "Always Plenty of Light at the Starlight All Night Dinner"

TALLGRASS THEATRE COMPANY

2019 Grand Ave., Suite 100, West Des Moines
tallgrasstheatre.org

• Feb. 2-18: "Equus"

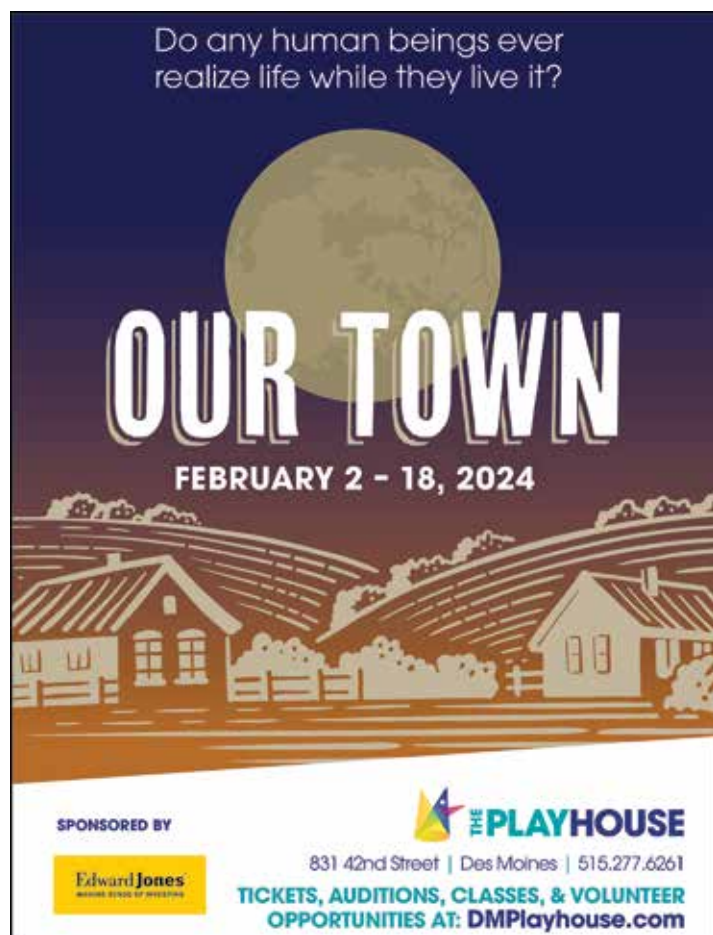
MORE JANUARY EVENTS

- **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
- **Feb. 2: Kathy Griffin: My Life on the PTSD-list.** Hoyt Sherman Place, 1501 Woodland Ave., Des Moines; hoyshtsherman.org/events
- **Feb. 3: The Snow Ball.** Science Center of Iowa, 401 W. Martin Luther King Jr. Parkway; DSM.city/SnowBall
- **Feb. 10: Winter Blues Fest 2024.** Downtown Des Moines Marriott, 700 Grand Ave., Des Moines; cibs.org
- **Feb. 10: The Fur Ride.** Put on the fake fur and ride around town. Starting at Ricochet and ending at Big Grove Brewery, 400 Locust St., Suite 105, Des Moines; aboveandbeyondcancer.org
- **Feb. 10-18: Iowa Beef Expo.** Iowa State Fairgrounds, 3000 E. Grand Ave., Des Moines; iowastatefairgrounds.org
- **Feb. 11: Chinese New Year.** Jester Park Nature Center, 12130 N.W. 128th St., Granger; jesterparknaturecenter.com
- **Feb. 14-17: 2024 IHSA State Wrestling Tournament.** Wells Fargo Arena, 223 Center St., Des Moines; iahsaa.org/wrestling
- **Feb. 17: Ari Shaffir: The Wrong Side of History Tour.** Hoyt Sherman Place, 1501 Woodland Ave., Des Moines; hoyshtsherman.org/events ■

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EDUCATION

By T.K. West

MEET Abby Cozzoni

From student teacher to first-year teacher at Webster Elementary

Abby Cozzoni grew up in Wentzville, Missouri, before attending Simpson College where she played soccer. After graduating in May 2023 with a degree in elementary education and endorsements in math and reading, Cozzoni joined the Urbandale Community School District as a fifth-grade educator. Since her entire student teaching placement took place at Webster Elementary School, Cozzoni got to know the students and staff well prior to joining the district. When an opportunity came up to teach at Webster Elementary, Cozzoni jumped at the chance because she knew she wanted to work there.



Abby Cozzoni enjoyed her student teaching experience at Webster Elementary so much that she applied for an open fifth-grade teaching position at the school.

“Being at Webster has been such a positive experience for me,” Cozzoni says. “I feel fully supported as a new teacher, and there are so many people here who are willing to help me. As a new teacher, it would be easy to write me off, but everyone at Webster listens to what I have to say and values my opinion.”

Cozzoni says she likes teaching students in the fifth grade because of the independence that comes with that grade level. She enjoys class discussions about various topics, diving deep into content areas, and being able to ask her students high-level questions. Because her students can also write about their thinking at a high level, Cozzoni enjoys reading their stories and working with them to improve their writing.

“Something that has been really rewarding is the relationships I’ve made with students. Being a new teacher in the building, I think some of them were pretty unsure of me at first. However, now, I feel like my class is in a good rhythm, and I know what their interests and hobbies are,” she says.

This year, Cozzoni has been incorporating a unit she calls “Real World Skills” into her classroom. As part of this unit, students have learned how to make and present a professional Powerpoint and how to write and respond to a professional email. Other upcoming lessons could include how to insert data into an Excel spreadsheet and how to create graphs and tables using Excel.

“I’ve incorporated these real-world skills into some of my lessons in the hope that it prepares students for life outside of school,” she says.

When not teaching, Cozzoni likes to exercise and be active and enjoys watching movies and television shows with family and friends. She also coaches two girls soccer teams. She says it has been a fun way for her to continue to be involved with soccer. ■

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CITY OF URBANDALE

URBANDALE COUNCIL RECAP



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

the current motel occupants in finding new housing before the motel is completely remodeled and converted to an apartment property.

An architectural services contract was approved to continue improvements at Lions Park in addition to the sprayground under construction.

The Council commissioned public art to complement the Walnut Creek access point at Walker Johnston Regional Park and also approved new installations for 2024 at the Art Park on the City Hall campus.

December 12, 2023 - Council Meeting

The City Council approved the Forward Urbandale Comprehensive Plan. The comprehensive plan will guide and inform the long-range future decision-making of the community, primarily for matters related to land use, growth, and development. It provides a unified future vision along with policies, goals, and recommendations necessary to achieve that vision. It is a tool for the community to help coordinate efforts and direct how a community grows over time.

Every year the City Council considers funding requests from external organizations when putting together the annual budget. The City Council heard 14 presentations from various organizations requesting funding including: Urbandale 4th of July Celebration, Living History Farms, Urbandale Little League (ULL), Des Moines Children's Museum, Johnston Urbandale Soccer Club (JUSC), J-Hawk Soccer, Waukee Community School Foundation, Urbandale Girls Recreation Association (UGRA), Greater Des Moines Partnership, Urbandale Food Pantry, Urbandale Community Action Network (UCAN), Hunger Free Dallas County, and Veterans of Foreign Wars Iowa Post 9668 (VFW).

January 2, 2024 - Council Meeting

The City Council meeting of January 2, 2024 was the first for newly-elected Councilmembers Pat Boddy and Blake Rozendaal. The Mayor began the meeting by issuing a Proclamation recognizing Martin Luther King, Jr. Day on January 15, 2024.

A public hearing was set for Tuesday, January 16, for the 2024 – 2029 Capital Improvements Plan (CIP). The CIP is a multi-year scheduling and funding plan for major community improvements from streets to parks to public buildings.

The City Council approved an agreement with Primary Health Care and the new owners of Motel Relax on Hickman Road to assist

Newsletter Sign-Up



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



Council Recap is Online

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

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

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NEW YEAR'S realizations

My great grandfather told me of three different years when adverse conditions brought about a crop failure on his farm. I shudder to think of how challenging it was for him and my great grandmother to endure those hardships and then enter the next growing season fraught with uncertainty.



For many of us, 2023 was a challenge that could make us, like my great-grandparents, a bit apprehensive as we face a new year. I offer a few spiritual New Year's realizations to help strengthen and sustain us in 2024.

- **Remember God's sovereignty.** He is in complete control in spite of all that is happening in our chaotic world. He doesn't always shield us from adversity, but He stays with and sustains His followers as we walk this bumpy road of life. A pagan king was brought to the realization that "He (God) does according to His will in the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of earth..." (Daniel 4:35). Let us embrace what we recently sang, "Though the wrong seems oft so strong, God is the ruler yet."

Request God's mercy individually when we realize that our sinful self-directed life of rebellion deserves His wrath, and claim by faith Christ's death as the payment we owe so we can experience His undeserved forgiveness and be reconciled to Him (Romans 5:1,9-10). Pray for mercy upon our leaders, those in authority, and the people of our country that God would convict them of sin, convince them to repent, and compel them to follow Him "so we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity" (1 Timothy 2:1-4).

- **Resist God's enemy in two realms.** As followers of Christ, we personally "submit to God, resist the devil..." (James 4:7) by continually bringing our conduct and conscious thoughts into alignment with God's truth, resisting the enemy's temptations and lies. Socially, at work, in classrooms, with families, among neighborhoods, and through entertainment, believers are continually pressured to consent to and celebrate what God condemns. "Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil..." (Isaiah 5:20). Confronting the evils of child sacrifice, greed, tyranny, racism, human trafficking, dishonesty, and immorality promoted by a culture at war with God is not harmful but helpful in directing sinful people to saving grace. We are to "abhor what is evil and cling to what is good" (Romans 12:9).

- **Rest in Christ's victory.** "In the world you will have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). His victory is ultimately shared in by all who believe in Him (John 3:16).

Lord help us make these realizations realities. ■

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

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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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RIBBON Cutting

A ribbon cutting was held at Tactical Fitness and Yoga on Jan. 2.



A ribbon cutting was held at Tactical Fitness and Yoga on Jan. 2.



Dan Waller and Krystal Moriset



Candy Rae Nuckolls and Melissa Stimple



Kyle Lee and Carson Odle



Shaun Knapp, Emily Dang and Erin Howland



Rhonda Mock and David Russell



Dan Waller, Krystal Moriset and Mayor Bob Andeweg



Fletcher Barry and Ashlen Sheafferr



Susan Skeries and Tiffany Menke



Gina Wright, Sidney Jacobson and Anna Mable



Krystal Moriset and Melissa Stimple

HAPPY New Year

Employees of the Hy-Vee on Douglas wish everyone a Happy New Year on Jan. 8.



Kailey Knowlton



Najda Muhamedagic and Maggie Grandquist



Kayla Collum and Andrea Linebach



Zach Hansen



Ben Barber



Tyler Coenen



Nikki Landon



David Murray



Allyson Davis and Dorene Delegge



Noah De Kruijff

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8 winter skin care rules for young children



- 1. Turn home temperature down and moisture up.** Hot dry air is hard on skin, sinuses and nasal passages. Turn the furnace down a few degrees and use a vaporizer to add moisture to the air. If using a vaporizer, clean often to prevent growth of bacteria or mold.
- 2. Moisture is not good everywhere.** Wet bums and drooly chins can cause irritation. Use barrier cream, such as diaper cream within the diaper but not on the face.
- 3. Seal the skin following a bath.** Pat, not rub, the skin. While still just a bit wet, add lotion to seal in the moisture.
- 4. Hydrate and eat right.** Drink lots of water and eat foods high in fatty acids such as beans, olive oil, walnuts and winter squash, that help their skin to stay naturally moisturized.
- 5. Teach good habits early.** Add moisturizer to their hands after washing with soap or using hand sanitizer. Encourage the use of lip balms. Have these things readily available, including in backpacks at school.
- 6. Keep baths short.** Hot water causes drying so keep the temperature lukewarm. A quick bath 3 times a week for newborns is plenty.
- 7. Get smart about soap.** Children don't need fragrant soaps. Formulations that are fragrance free are best, or try a soap-free cleanser. Body washes should not need to be scrubbed. Wash gently and pat dry.
- 8. Sunscreen is still needed in winter.** The sun can be harmful no matter what the temperature is outside. And, 85 percent of the sun's rays can be reflected by the snow. Protect young skin with a 30 to 50 SPF baby-safe sunscreen 30 minutes before heading outside.



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