

ALTOONA

JANUARY 2024

Altoona Living Magazine

MAGAZINE

RESIDENTS' CHOICE AWARDS



Eastern Polk County residents share their favorites

Meet Kaylee Docherty
EDUCATION

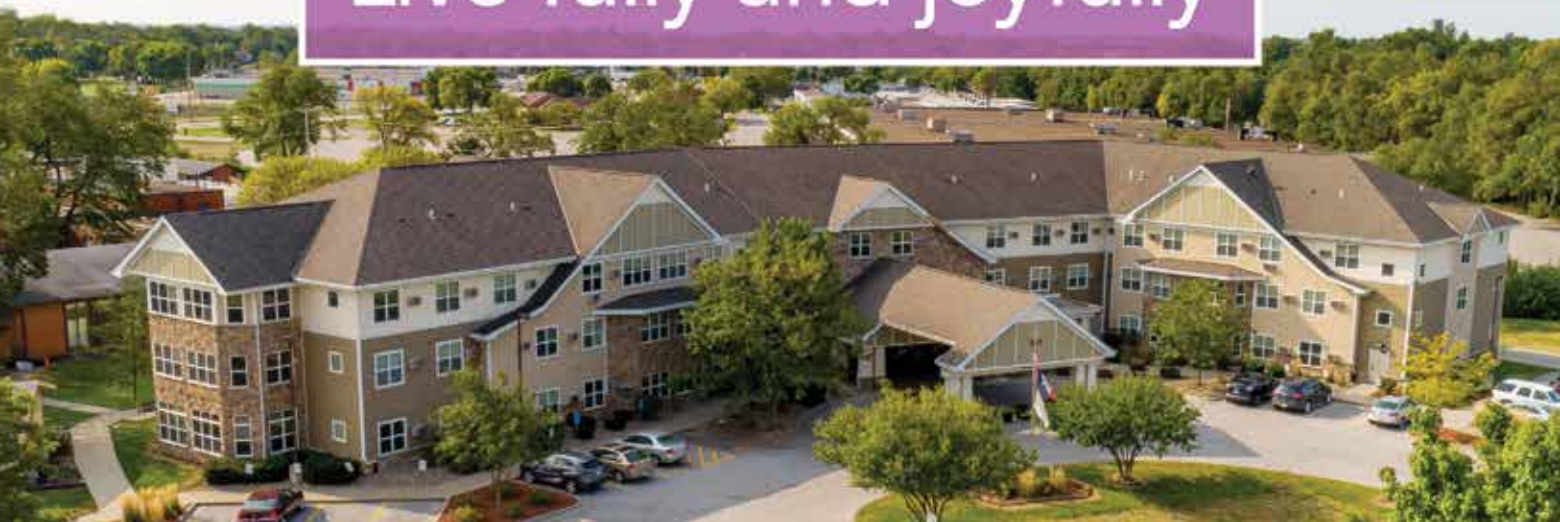
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WELCOME

SOMETHING different each issue

I used to publish an automotive photo magazine, much like the Auto Trader, Deals on Wheels or Wheeler Dealer publications of years gone by. These were quite popular 30 years ago. We sold the magazines in the check-out aisles in local stores, and we had to convince store owners or managers to carry them. Part of our pitch was that the magazine was a new product each issue with hundreds of different vehicles for sale and that consumers would return to see what was in the next issue. It wasn't just a sales pitch, though, as it proved to be true.



That was 30 years ago, but I thought about the auto magazine days when we were tabulating the data from this year's Residents' Choice poll, which we are publishing in this issue as we have done for several years. When we look at the results, we find perennial favorites that seem to win their category each year. We also see changes from year to year with some surprises rising to the top. And we see newcomers in the poll that have made an incredible impact in a short time.

Bottom line, much like the auto magazine, the results of each year's poll are different. That makes sense, as the poll is really the pulse of the community at the time. And, as we all know, that pulse can — and does — change.

If you voted, thank you. Your input makes a difference, as the category winners will tell you. If you didn't vote, please take the time to do so next year. It is an easy process.

I have talked with numerous people who represent the people, places and events that are voted as favorites in this poll, and they tell me about the positive impact it has. The poll results are a great resource for readers who are looking to purchase products and services locally. Many of you have likely used the results for that exact purpose. A plumber to hire. A new restaurant to try. A park to visit. The list, literally, goes on and on with the latest and greatest each year.

Be sure to save this issue, as it will come in handy throughout the year. I also ask that you take the time to congratulate the winners with your comments and, when appropriate, your pocketbook. They will appreciate it, and we do, too.

Thanks for reading. ■

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Tim Forbes – State Farm Insurance, is one of eastern Polk County residents' perennial favorites, having been chosen favorite insurance agent the last two years and having been in the top three prior to that.

RESIDENTS' CHOICE AWARDS

Eastern Polk County residents share their favorites



January has rolled around again, which means it is time to recognize the Residents' Choice Award winners for eastern Polk County.

As we continue to improve our poll and respond to what readers say is important to them, we have added categories. This year look for the favorites you haven't seen before such as Outdoor Lawn Equipment Store, Audiologist/Hearing Center, CBD Store, Mental Health Services, Auto Body Shop and more.

Also new this year, note the repeat winners — 25 in total — designated by an asterisk by their name. See who is merging as our "perennial favorites." These favorites are doing it right —

building loyalty in their customers.

As always, remember that these favorites were chosen by eastern Polk County residents. You are likely to agree with some choices and disagree with others, but the results were determined by your area neighbors. If you voted in this year's poll, thank you for participating. And, if you didn't, be sure to look for notices in this magazine of next year's poll opening and cast your vote. With some categories having only a few votes between the top vote-getter and the third-place vote-getter, it's important to note that all those listed are winners, and we congratulate them all.

Eastern Polk County residents share their favorites...

(Runners up in alphabetical order; *indicates repeat winner)

Restaurant

*** The Big Steer Restaurant and Lounge**

Runners up: Guadalajara Mexican Restaurant;
Now Or Later Restaurant

Restaurant for breakfast

Perkins Restaurant and Bakery

Runners up: Brick Street Market & Cafe;
Somewhere in the Middle Coffee Shop

Restaurant for lunch

Applebee's Grill + Bar

Runners up: Monterrey Mexican Restaurant;
Sugar Shack Diner

Restaurant for dinner

*** The Big Steer Restaurant and Lounge**

Runners up: Johnny's Italian Steakhouse;
Texas Roadhouse

Restaurant for dessert

*** Home Slice Handmade Pies**

Runners up: Johnny's Italian Steakhouse;
Village Inn

Place for ice cream

*** Over the Top**

Runners up: Culver's; DQ Grill & Chill

Pizza establishment

Scornovacca's Altoona

Runners up: Abbie's; Northern Lights Pizza
Company

Bar

*** Reclaimed Rails Brewing Company**

Runners up: Fireside Grille; Hawk Heaven
Tavern

Coffee shop

*** Somewhere in the Middle Coffee Shop**

Runners up: Scooter's Coffee; Starbucks Coffee
Company

Catering company

Great Caterers of Iowa

Runners up: Fireside Grille; Jethro's 'n Jakes
Smokehouse Steaks



Volunteers sort items at Caring Hands, which was residents' choice for favorite eastern Polk County nonprofit.

Server/bartender

**Aaron Clayton, Reclaimed Rails Brewing
Company**

Runners up: Madison Montgomery, Whiskey
River; Noot Watson, The Big Steer Restaurant
and Lounge

Auto service

McManus Automotive

Runners up: Kanselaar Automotive;
Williamson's Repair & Tire

Auto body shop

Bondurant Auto Body

Runners up: Pleasant Hill Auto Body; Ted's
Body Shop

Car dealership

*** A3 Auto**

Runners up: Deery Brothers Chevrolet; Dewey
Chrysler Dodge Jeep Ram

Preschool/daycare

*** The Bird's Nest**

Runners up: Adventure-Life Preschool;
Bondurant Christian Church Preschool

Nonprofit

*** Caring Hands**

Runners up: Bondurant Men's Club; Mary
Bump Memorial Foundation

School

Southeast Polk High School

Runners up: Centennial Elementary; Clay
Elementary

Park

*** Thomas Mitchell Park**

Runners up: Haines Park; Lions Park

Community festival or event

Bondurant Battle of the Bands

Runners up: Altoona Palooza; Bondurant
Summerfest

Church

Lutheran Church of the Cross

Runners up: Adventure Life Church; Ss. John
& Paul Catholic Church

FEATURE

Pastor

Nathan Anenson

Runners up: John Gaulke; Trevor Pinegar

Chamber of commerce

* Bondurant Chamber of Commerce

Runners up: Altoona Area Chamber of Commerce; Pleasant Hill Chamber of Commerce

Library

Altoona Public Library

Runners up: Bondurant Community Library; Pleasant Hill Public Library

Camping spot

* Yellow Banks Park

Runners up: Griff's Valley View RV Park & Campground; Thomas Mitchell Park

Grocery store

* Fareway Meat & Grocery

Runners up: Aldi; Hy-Vee

Boutique

Style by Desiree Salon + Boutique

Runners up: Hidden Treasures Gifts; Little House on Main

Retail store

Target

Runners up: Little House on Main; Style by Desiree Salon + Boutique

Thrift store

* Caring Hands

Runners up: DAV Thrift Store; Goodwill

Home improvement retail store

Menards

Runners up: The Home Depot; Lowe's

Nursery or garden center

* Lucille's Garden Center

Runners up: Frontline Lawn & Landscape; Lowe's

Place to purchase a gift for a man

* Bass Pro Shops

Runners up: Menards; SkinFusion FX

Place to purchase a gift for a woman

Style by Desiree Salon + Boutique

Runners up: Little House on Main; SkinFusion FX

Consignment shop

* Caring Hands

Runners up: The Attic; Stuff Etc

Dad/child date spot

Toad Valley's Field of Greens Miniature Golf

Runners up: Adventureland; Bass Pro Shops Bowling

Mom/child date spot

Adventureland

Runners up: Haines Park; Outlets of Des Moines

Thank you for voting!



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FEATURE

Place to take your mom and dad

Prairie Meadows Casino, Racetrack & Hotel

Runners up: Johnny's Italian Steakhouse; Texas Roadhouse

Place to take your kids or grandkids

Adventureland Resort

Runners up: Altoona Campus; Thomas Mitchell Park

Children's birthday party spot

BrickHouse Fitness

Runners up: Altoona Campus; Cinemark Altoona and XD

Golf course

Terrace Hills Golf Course

Runners up: Copper Creek Golf Club; Toad Valley Golf Course

Hair salon

Style by Desiree Salon + Boutique

Runners up: Hypsie Salon; Signature Salon & Day Spa

Physician's Clinic

The Iowa Clinic

Runners up: MercyOne Pleasant Hill Family Medicine; UnityPoint Clinic Family Medicine

Dental Office

Bondurant Family Dentistry

Runners up: Altoona Smiles Family & Cosmetic Dentistry; Fuller Associates Family Dentistry

Orthodontist Office

Central Iowa Orthodontics

Runner up: Bondurant Family Dentistry

Mental health services

Connected Life Counseling

Runners up: Fit Counseling; The Iowa Clinic

Chiropractic office

*** Dawson Chiropractic**

Runners up: Chiropractic Associates; Rooted Family Chiropractic

Vision care

Prairie Vision Center of Bondurant

Runners up: Metro EyeCare; Whylie Eye Care Center

Health club or gym

*** BrickHouse Fitness**

Runners up: Altoona Campus; East Coast Tae Kwon Do

Pharmacy

Walmart Pharmacy

Runners up: Medicap; Walgreens

Physical therapy

21st Century Rehab

Runners up: Anchor Physical Therapy; Bondurant Physical Therapy

Dance studio

*** Pat Barton Dance Studio**

Runners up: Becky's Dance & Tumbling Studio; Kasey Leigh Dance Studio



FEATURE

Gymnastics/tumbling studio

Altoona Campus

Runners up: Pat Barton Dance Studio; Kasey Leigh Dance Studio

Audiologist/hearing center

HearingLife

Runner up: MercyOne Pleasant Hill ENT Care

CBD store

CBD American Shaman

Runners up: Central Iowa Vapors; Fit Pharm Nutrition

Financial planner

*** Adam Kline, Edward Jones**

Runners up: Chase Netusil, Raymond James; Luke Sibley, Edward Jones

Law firm

*** Skinner Law Offices**

Runners up: Borseth Law Office; Smith Law Firm

Accounting firm

Schnurr & Company, LLP

Runners up: ATS Tax and Financial Services; Timmins, Jacobsen & Strawhacker, LLP

Veterinarian

Altoona Veterinary Hospital

Runners up: Bondurant Animal Clinic; Eastown Animal Hospital

Dog groomer

Barks & Wags

Runners up: Pampered Pooch Bakery & Salon; Petsakes Pet Supplies and Grooming

Lawn care business

Kelly George Turf & Irrigation

Runners up: Allen Lawn Care and Landscaping; Snyder Landscaping & Lawn Care

Nursery or landscaping company

Lucille's Garden Center

Runners up: Frontline Lawn & Landscape; Lowe's

Heating and cooling business

Green's Appliance, Heating & Cooling

Runners up: Todd's Plumbing, Heating & Cooling; Wyckoff Heating and Cooling



Residents say their favorite mental health services come from Connected Life Counseling. Annie Lass, MA, LMHC, NCC provides counseling services there.

Electrical business

Tesdell Electric

Runners up: Iowa Electrical Services; On-Time Professionals Electrical Service

Plumbing company

Todd's Plumbing, Heating & Cooling

Runner up: R&D Plumbing

Senior living establishment

Copper Shores Village

Runners up: Edencrest at The Tuscany; Prairie Vista Village

Insurance Agent

*** Tim Forbes - State Farm Insurance**

Runners up: Densmore Insurance Strategies, Inc.; Todd R. Adamson - State Farm Insurance

Realtor

Angela Meek

Runners up: Pennie Carroll; Sheena Cochran-Foster

Bank/credit union

GreenState Credit Union

Runners up: Community Choice Credit Union; VisionBank

Photographer

Brandi Lloyd Photography

Runners up: Be Still Photo Company; Photos by Ben

Place for guests to stay

*** Prairie Meadows Hotel**

Runners up: Adventureland Inn; Holiday Inn Express & Suites

Home builder/remodeling contractor

*** Eagle Homes**

Runners up: Lorey Construction; Parks Custom Homes

Outdoor lawn equipment store

Porter Do it Best Hardware and Rental

Runners up: Lowe's; P&P Small Engines

Pest control company

Frontline Lawn & Landscape

Runner up: Midwest Pest Control ■

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A PLACE to raise a family

Doyle likes Altoona's family-oriented vibe.

Aubrie Doyle is going on her eighth year living in Altoona. And she says she's liked every minute.

"Growing up in Newton, I always knew I wanted to raise my kids in a smaller, safe community," she shares. "Altoona has a down-to-earth community feel paired with the small-town comfort of a larger community. The kids and I have everything we need here."

Doyle's favorite feature of the family's home is the extended kitchen island.

"I love the unique color of my home and the covered back deck with a great view of the pond," she adds. "The finished basement is perfect for entertaining, dedicated to my kids and offers a safe place for their friends to hang out."

Doyle is also passionate about her neighborhood.

"There is a real sense of community that, as a Realtor, I can tell you doesn't exist everywhere," she says. "The families in my neighborhood are amazing, and I feel like we can rely on each other when needed. We're surrounded by bike trails, ponds for fishing and walking distance to the elementary school with easy access to anywhere you need to go."



Aubrie Doyle says Altoona is a family-friendly community, just the right size for providing a small-town feel but also having all the amenities her family needs.

Over the years, Doyle has found that Altoona is a safe place filled with many friendly people. She says, if anyone needs help or is looking for recommendations, there is always someone willing and ready to assist.

In fact, that lends to one of the things Doyle appreciates about Altoona the most: seeing familiar faces everywhere she goes.

"I truly enjoy being involved in the community, and this aspect of my life has become increasingly important to me as my children grow older," she says.

When she's not selling real estate, Doyle serves on the board at the Altoona Campus, is involved with Clay Elementary PTA, volunteers at Caring Hands and helps out at Lutheran Church of the Cross.

"Altoona is small enough to have the small hometown feel but also big enough to have everything that you need," Doyle says. "Our town is continuously growing, and we are adding to the community daily. The community you choose to reside in is the place that welcomes you home every day after a long day of work and provides you with the comfort and security you need."

For Doyle, that's Altoona in a nutshell. ■





JANUARY 2024

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CITY HALL

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Scott Duer 515-418-2227

Josh Dunwoody 515-720-8891

Jerry Evans 515-967-5136

Julie Stewart 515-967-5136

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515-967-5136

City Clerk

515-967-5136

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515-967-5132

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515-967-3881

Fax: 515-967-6934

Water Billing

515-967-5136

Building Department/ Code Enforcement

515-967-5138

Building Official

515-967-5138

Planning & Zoning Department

515-967-5136

Public Works Director

515-967-5136

LEAD SERVICE LINE INVENTORY

Select residents received postcards in the mail asking them to complete a short survey as the city completes an inventory of lead service lines in the community. Please note that just because you received a postcard, does not mean that there are lead service lines present in your home.

Please complete the survey this month to help city staff get an inventory of service lines. **Find the survey by following the QR code, or visiting www.altoona-iowa.com.** Residents who are unable to complete the survey can schedule a home inspection by calling 515-957-5120.



ICE RINK OPEN

The City of Altoona's Ice Rink which was donated by the Iowa Wild, in partnership with Wells Fargo, is now open (pending freezing temperatures). This donation is a continuation of their Community Rinks program.

Altoona's Ice Rink is in Ironwood Park, 2222 3rd Ave. SW. It will remain open as weather permits this winter season.



EMERGENCY ACCESS

Maintain your sidewalks and driveway of snow and ice. If you do require an emergency response, a clear approach to your door is the safest route for the emergency responders and you. Maintain your outdoor lights to illuminate your numerical house numbers. If you call "911" for an emergency response, turn on your lights to make it easier and faster for responders to find your home.

CITY TRAILS IN WINTER

The City of Altoona does clear the snow from the trails during winter. However, we do not treat the trails with salt or sand. The trails are cleared last, following the city facilities' sidewalks and parking lots. Please enjoy the trails but be cautious of the weather conditions.



WINTER TRASH & RECYCLING CART PLACEMENT

Please remember that your garbage and recycling totes must be accessible 18 inches from the curb, even after a snow fall. **Please do NOT place your carts on city streets.** City snowplows cannot clear snow properly when these are placed on streets. This is especially true in cul-de-sacs which are impossible to plow if carts are placed in the road. In times of heavy snow, your driveway approach is likely the best spot to place your carts.

FLOOD INSURANCE

Floods are the most frequent and costliest disaster in the United States, but the number of homeowners opting to have a National Flood Insurance Policy continues to decline. Learn more about these types of policies and find links to evaluate if your property is a good candidate for this type of insurance at www.altoona-iowa.com.

ALTOONA Public Library news

Adult programming – ages 18 and older

• **Arson Investigators, Wednesday, Feb. 7 from 6:30-7:30 p.m.** Join us as Fire Investigator Mike Knoll discusses the science behind arson investigations. Registration required.

• **DIY Hand Warmers, Tuesday, Feb. 20, from 6-7:30 p.m.** Warm up from the winter weather and join us in making heart-shaped hand warmers. All supplies provided. Registration required.

• **Adult Coloring at Brightside Aleworks, Thursdays, Feb. 29, March 28 and April 25 from 6:30-8:30 p.m.** Join us at Brightside Aleworks (480 Center Place in Altoona) for a fun night of coloring. We'll bring the art supplies; you bring your friends and money for drinks. No registration required.

• **Senior Set, Every Tuesday, 1-3 p.m.** If you are 60 or older, Tuesday afternoon is for you. The first Tuesday is Splat Studio (registration required), the second Tuesday is

crafts (registration required), the third Tuesday is games, and, on the fourth Tuesday, we show a matinee with fresh popcorn. We can't wait to see you.

Children's programming

• **Pipsqueak Playdate, Fridays from 10-11 a.m.** Play is an important early literacy skill. Stop by the library to enjoy free play, sensory and art activities at your own pace while socializing with other children and caregivers. Ages 5 and younger. No registration required.

• **Crafternoon, Thursday, Feb. 8, from 4-5 p.m.** Stop by the Children's Room to make a quick craft. Available while supplies last. Grades pre K-6. No registration required.

• **LEGO Club, Tuesday, Feb. 13, from 5:30-6:30 p.m. or Wednesday, Feb. 28, from 3:30-4:30 p.m.** Come to the library to build a LEGO masterpiece. We will supply the LEGOs; you bring the creativity. Grades K-6. Registration required.

Teen programming

• **Chinese New Year, Monday, Feb. 12, from 6-7 p.m.** Bring good fortune to the Year of the Dragon. Create paper fortune cookies with New Year messages to keep in a special jar. We'll also have some fortune cookies (real ones) to snack on. Grades 6-12. Registration required.

• **You Be the (Food) Judge, Thursday, Feb. 15, from 6-7 p.m.** We're answering the age-old questions: Does every Skittles color taste the same? Are all Froot Loops the same flavor? You be the judge on these and more. Grades 6-12. Registration required.

• **Leap Day, Thursday, Feb. 29, from 6-7 p.m.** Leap in to Leap Day with a frog race. Hop in to create origami froggies and then race them to see whose goes the furthest and fastest. Grades 6-12. Registration required.

To find a complete list of events and to register, visit our website at altoonalibrary.com and click on the Upcoming Events tab. ■

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TEACH me to pray

Do you pray? Does it work? What exactly is prayer? These are not new questions. In fact, 2,000 years ago, some young Jewish men asked their rabbi these same questions. They said, "Lord, teach us to pray" (Luke 11:1). And the greatest rabbi of all time taught them to pray with purpose, power and the right perspective. This rabbi was named Jesus, and he was uniquely qualified to teach because He had heard every prayer since time began.



Jesus taught that prayer is a two-way conversation with God. Its purpose is to develop closeness with the One who created you, loves you, and gives meaning to your life. We talk about how a lack of connection with others has caused a loneliness epidemic. But there is also a divine loneliness that can occur without meaningful connection with God. Prayer is that means by which we find wholeness for our souls.

We also learn from Jesus that God is not mean or stingy when it comes to answering our prayers. God is like the perfect father who longs to bless his kids with the best gifts. However, prayer is not a mechanism to get God to do what WE want, but rather a conversation in which God can guide us to do what HE wants. God is not interested in being a vending machine for our short-sighted wishes, but rather, as a perfect God, He longs to align us with His good and perfect plans. It is within these good plans that God says yes to our prayers.

Finally, as a practitioner of prayer, Jesus taught that big words and many words do not impress God. Jesus said, "And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words" (Matthew 6:7). God does not need convincing. He is not waiting for you to say special words. Just talk to God like you would a good friend or a good parent. Be honest; get it all out. God is not in a hurry to get somewhere else; rather He is on the edge of His seat, waiting to talk with you.

Prayer builds the most important relationship of your life. You can tell God what you are thankful for, what you are sorry for, and what you need. Then listen. What is God saying to you? How is He inviting you to trust Him, to surrender to Him, to be led by Him? Jesus is uniquely qualified to teach you how to pray. Start your journey with this prayer: "Lord, teach me to pray." ■

Information provided by Pastor Nathan Anenson, Lutheran Church of the Cross, 1701 Eighth St. S.W., Altoona, 515-967-4818.

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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.



Award-Winning Senior Living

Copper Shores Village was recently voted Favorite Senior Living Establishment in Eastern Polk County. Come see what makes this community so special.

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ONLINE shopping security tips

With almost all brands selling their products and services online, offering great deals and even free returns, online shopping continues to grow in popularity. However, with increases in online transactions come increases in online fraud. As you scour the web to find the best deals, keep these six online shopping security tips top of mind.



secure,” a system in place to secure and mask the personal data you share.

2. Avoid public Wi-Fi

Avoid logging into websites and making online purchases while using public Wi-Fi because network access can be intercepted, and a fraudster can steal your browsing history and personal information. Instead, use your secure home Wi-Fi or personal VPN.

3. Beware of email scams

Fraudsters take advantage of the uptick in email offers around the holidays by sending fabricated emails that contain viruses and malware. Do not click on emails and links from unknown or suspicious brands. Look for red flags like misspellings, unfamiliar sending addresses and links that look suspicious.

4. Use a strong password

If a fraudster accesses your account with an online store, they can change your shipping address. They can then steal your credit card information to make unauthorized purchases.

Avoid this by creating strong, unique passwords for each online account.

5. Avoid paying with a debit card

Debit cards typically don't come with liability protection, nor the sophisticated security system that comes with mobile payments. Additionally, you often only have a few days to report debit card fraud before you personally become liable. When possible, use credit cards and mobile payments instead.

6. Review bank statements and keep track of receipts

Review your monthly bank statements for any unauthorized transactions and compare the amounts shown on your purchase receipts to the amounts that appear on your statements.

With these security tips in mind, you're set to have a happy and safe online shopping spree. ■

Information provided by Mary Simon, VP, Altoona Branch Manager, 3820 Eighth St. S.W., Altoona, 515-245-5480, MSimon@BankersTrust.com. Bankers Trust NMLS ID: 440379.



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EVENTS IN THE AREA

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

Be sure to check for cancellations.

Ladies Night - Galentine's Painting Class

Jan. 30, 6:45-8 p.m.
Hidden Treasures & Gifts, 511
Eighth St. S.E.

CITYVIEW Chocolate Walk

Friday, Feb. 23, 5-9 p.m.
West Glen Town Center, 5465 Mills
Civic Parkway, West Des Moines

Like chocolate? Like chocolate drinks? Then you'll love this event. For a ticket price of \$25 (\$35 at the door), attendees will receive 10 drink tickets that can be redeemed for sample cocktails at participating venues. Attendees will also be provided tickets for chocolate dessert samples at participating retail stores. A shuttle bus from Majestic Limousine will be providing transportation to each location, although most are only a short walk away. For a link to purchase tickets, visit chocolatewalk.dmcityview.com.

East Polk County Wellness Expo

Feb. 3, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.
Terrace Hills Golf & Events
Pavilion, 8700 N.E. 46th Ave.,
Altoona

This free event includes demonstrations, booths and breakout sessions.

Beatlemania Now - Beatles Tribute

Feb. 17, 7-10 p.m.
Prairie Meadows Finish Line
Show Lounge

Tickets on sale in the Prairie Meadows Gift Shop, while supplies last. Beatlemania Now includes songs such as "She Loves You," "Yesterday," "I Want To Hold Your Hand," "Hey Jude" and more. Don't miss your chance to experience the powerful history of The Beatles era.



LOCAL LIVE MUSIC

Andrew Hoyt at Brightside

Jan. 27, 6-9 p.m.
Brightside Aleworks, 480 Center
Place, Altoona

Route 66 at Prairie Meadows

Jan. 27, 8-10 p.m.
Prairie Meadows Finish Line Lounge

Cody Hicks at Hawk Heaven Tavern

Jan. 27, 9-11:55 p.m.
Hawk Heaven Tavern, 805 17th Ave.
S.W., Altoona

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

THEATER & 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, Cowles Commons, Stoner Theater, Temple Theatre, 221 Walnut St., Des Moines
dmpa.org

- Jan. 23-28: "Mamma Mia!"
- Jan. 27: Havana Hop
- Feb. 6-11: "Company"
- Feb. 15: Capital City Pride Presents: Brea Baker
- Feb. 17: The Peking Acrobats

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"



MUSIC

Des Moines Civic Center

Des Moines Civic Center, 221

Walnut St., Des Moines

dmpa.org

- Feb. 23-24: Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix™ in concert

Des Moines Symphony

Des Moines Civic Center, 221

Walnut St., Des Moines

dmsymphony.org

- Feb. 3-4: Discover Groundbreaking Innovation

Wells Fargo Arena

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- Feb. 2: Winter Jam 2024 ■

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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.



MEET Kaylee Docherty

Helping kindergarten students fulfill their curiosity

Originally from Ohio, Kaylee Docherty moved around as a child before considering the Quad Cities home. In 2019, she graduated from Iowa State University and has been teaching kindergarten for the past four years. This is her first year with the Southeast Polk Community School District. She says she was drawn to the district because of its size and community, its core values, and all the academic things that are happening in the district.

"My favorite thing about working in the SEP district is the sense of community and all the welcoming people. It was a little

overwhelming to start in a new district that is so big, but everyone was so welcoming and supportive that it made the transition so easy. Everyone I have met so far is willing to lend a helping hand, listening ear, or anything else you could need to succeed," Docherty says.

As a teacher at Willowbrook Elementary School, Docherty's favorite thing about working with kindergarten students is their constant discovery of the world around them. She likes their joy for the small things and enjoys helping her students discover new things, how things work, why things happen, and answering any other questions their curiosities might come up with.

"Learning so many new things allows for so many teachable moments and giggles in the classroom. I love getting to be students' first exposure to 'real school' and helping them to develop an everlasting love of learning. There is always something to bring a smile to your face and laugh about in our classroom, even on our toughest days," Docherty says.

Her students have worked on a STEM project through Project Lead the Way. Before break, her students worked together to build a beanstalk from pipe cleaners that could hold a golden egg, a project that was inspired by Jack and the Beanstalk. Now that they have returned from break, they will also build little houses out of various materials to help protect the Three Little Pigs from the Big Bad Wolf. Docherty says that these fun science activities have given her students the chance to collaborate with one another and use their creativity and imagination.

"The biggest reward of teaching kindergarten is when everything starts to 'click' for them," Docherty says. "The amount of growth these kiddos make over the course of the year is just amazing, and it is such a big reward to know that I was able to help them build these skills that they will be using for the rest of their lives."

By this time of year, Docherty can already see how far her students have come just from August to December. She is excited to continue to watch them grow and celebrate their progress at the end of the year. When not teaching, Docherty enjoys spending time with family and friends. She likes going to the movies, reading, and visiting new places around the community. ■



Kaylee Docherty says she enjoys kindergarten students and being part of their introduction to school.

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KENKEL releases book of poetry

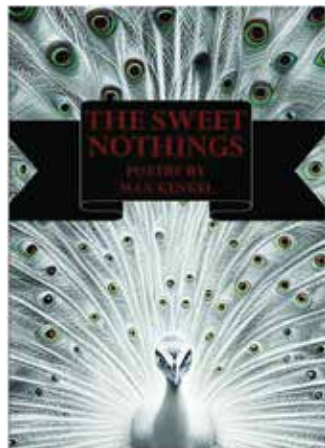
Max Kenkel of Altoona has released a book of poetry. “The Sweet Nothings,” the debut poetry collection by Kenkel, is a genre-bending exploration of life’s absurdities, anxieties, and the occasional glimmer of hope, rendered through the lens of a small-town boy who fell in love with punk rock. It is illustrated with AI-generated art.

This self-published book is his first officially published work, although he is a veteran of poetry on Instagram with his @yesterdayinpoetry account — a project where he posted a daily poem for the better part of three years. In addition to poetry, Kenkel plays bass in the punk rock band Hold For Swank, a band that’s seen some regional success with their three full length albums.

When not writing or jumping on stage, Kenkel designs customer loyalty programs. His hobbies include cooking, gardening, woodworking, visiting national parks, learning about geology and geography, studying other cultures, listening to music, and “occasionally staring into the void.”

After graduating college, Kenkel moved to Altoona where he’s lived for just more than 20 years with his wife, Kirstin.

“The Sweet Nothings” is available now in print and e-book formats on Amazon. To purchase the book in color, visit <https://tinyurl.com/Sweetnothingscolor> or, for a black and white version, visit <https://tinyurl.com/tsnblackandwhite>. ■



CARING Hands appoints Urich as CEO

Caring Hands Outreach Center, a leading non-profit organization dedicated to addressing food insecurity in eastern Polk County, has recently announced the appointment of Jodi Urich as its new CEO.

With her extensive experience in nonprofit management and passion for helping those in need, Urich is well-suited to lead the organization in its mission to mobilize compassion to those in need, say board members.

The organization aims to alleviate hunger, break the cycle of poverty, and improve the overall wellbeing of those in need by providing access to nutritious food and resources.

“With the appointment of Jodi Urich as CEO, Caring Hands is poised to make an even greater impact in the fight against food insecurity,” said Mike Hartwig, president of the Caring Hands Board of Directors. “Urich brings a wealth of experience and expertise to her new role as CEO. She has a deep understanding of the challenges faced by individuals and families experiencing food insecurity.”

“Her leadership skills, strategic vision, and commitment to providing dignified assistance to our neighbors make her an ideal candidate to lead Caring Hands Outreach Center and further our mission,” said Melissa Horton, vice-president of the Caring Hands Board of Directors. “Under Urich’s guidance, Caring Hands Outreach Center is well positioned to make a difference and bring about positive change for those facing food insecurity and cyclical poverty.” ■

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HEALTH

By Dr. Kari Swain and Dr. Elizabeth Ellrich

CHIROPRACTIC and wellness

Definitions of “wellness” include references to the quality or state of being in good health but typically take it a step further to suggest wellness is more active and process-oriented and not just a state of being.

The No. 1 reason parents report bringing their children in for chiropractic care is wellness. Parents recognize the significant role chiropractic care plays in the family wellness lifestyle. Wellness-focused chiropractors offer the physical adjustment to reduce nervous system stress and a complementary philosophy and lifestyle recommendation to support a high-functioning nervous system.

Overall health in the body is dependent on healthy nervous system function. Chiropractic adjustments reduce nervous system stress and allow the body to function in a greater state of health. When the nervous system is healthy, our bodies and minds function more efficiently. Specific chiropractic adjustments have a significant effect on our ability to affect the way we think and behave.

Doctors of chiropractic who have completed post graduate pediatric certifications are specially trained to identify nervous system patterns in babies and children and deliver safe and effective adjustments to enable their nervous system to return to a state of rest and health. When the nervous system is on overload and not functioning well, it cannot handle additional physical or emotional stress. In babies and children, this can manifest in many ways, including colic, ear infections, frequent colds, allergies, sleep issues, bed wetting, lack of attention, hyperactivity, sensory issues, and mood or emotional issues. Families under regular chiropractic care report healthier kids and parents, less school and work absences due to illness, and better sleep and behavior among many others. ■

Information provided by Dr. Kari Swain and Dr. Elizabeth Ellrich, Swain Chiropractic, 410 Center Place S.W., Altoona, 515-967-9300.

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. ■



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WINTER skin care tips

As we approach the coldest part of the winter in Iowa, you may find yourself with drier, flakier, and more sensitive skin. Our providers have some recommendations to change up your skincare routine to protect and maintain healthy winter skin.

- Limit exposure to heat, which draws water out of the skin. Cleanse with lukewarm water; avoid hot showers.
- Switch your cleanser to a creamy cleanser that contains skin-softening emollients with ingredients such as allantoin and glycerin, and avoid those with sulfate, fragrances and alcohol.
- Exfoliation is necessary to assist in sloughing away dead skin, which can build up on the surface leading to cracking and irritation.
- Upgrade your moisturizer to a richer formula that contains ceramides and lipids. Consider a hyaluronic acid serum, which acts as a humectant to draw moisture back into the skin. Apply immediately after showering.
- Always wear an SPF of 30 or higher, even on days sun exposure is limited. Damaging rays of the sun increase the risk for skin cancer and accelerate signs of aging.
- Indulge in a hydrating facial that includes moisture-restoring products and detoxification techniques. ■



Information provided by Nikki Morgan, DNP, ARNP, SkinFusion FX, 410 Eighth St. S.W., Altoona, 515-967-0587, www.skinfusionfx.com, nikki.skinfusionfx@gmail.com

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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SENIOR By Stephanie Proper

A TIME for new beginnings

Another new year and another opportunity for new beginnings. Exercising and healthy eating are the stereotypical New Year's resolutions. These are good and important resolutions, but how about a resolution of new beginnings? A new beginning is defined as the place or time when something starts. What does a new beginning mean to you? Here of a few ideas to kick start 2024's new beginnings.



Try new things.

Read a different genre of book or watch a television show or movie you wouldn't normally watch, listen to new music or a different radio station. Do you have family that has different tastes than you? Ask your children, grandchildren or parents for recommendations. This could also give you something new to discuss with them.

Pursue a new hobby each month.

It doesn't have to be exercise. Try crafting, knitting or painting. It's never too late to learn a new language. Your local community center or library often has classes available to learn new things. Step out of your comfort zone and meet new people. It will be fun and challenging.

Try new foods.

This could mean picking up something different at the grocery store, making a new recipe, or trying a new restaurant. If you don't like it, perhaps unlike childhood, you never have to eat it again.

Have a new beginning with an old friend.

Reconnect with someone you haven't seen or talked to in a long time. What are some of your old friends up to now? Send them an email or give them a call. Catching up with an old friend can always bring a smile to your face.

A few key tips for new beginnings:

It is OK to be afraid of new things and stepping out of your comfort zone, but don't let that stop you. You do not need to be perfect at everything you try. Have fun, meet new people, be you.

This year try embracing a new perspective, and no matter what you do, just have fun. Here is to 2024 and your many new beginnings. ■

Information provided by Stephanie Proper, executive director, Valley View Village, 2571 Guthrie Ave., Des Moines, 515-265-2571.

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PRIORITIZE rest and adventure

As the new year unfolds, it's filled with promises of new beginnings and opportunities. While resolutions often revolve around productivity and self-improvement, it's crucial not to overlook the importance of taking a break and embracing the spirit of adventure.

In our fast-paced world, where schedules are often packed to the brim, the idea of pausing to enjoy life might seem like a luxury. However, the importance of taking breaks cannot be overstated. Breaks provide an opportunity to recharge, both mentally and physically, allowing us to return to our responsibilities feeling refreshed and renewed.

This year, make it a point to prioritize moments of rest and seek out adventures, big or small. The key is to disconnect from the daily grind and immerse ourselves in activities that bring joy and relaxation. Whether it's a weekend getaway to a picturesque destination, a hiking trip in nature, or even a simple stroll through a nearby park, these experiences lead to a well-balanced and fulfilling life. Adventure, in whatever form, adds a layer of excitement to our routines, breaking the monotony and sparking creativity.

In the hustle and bustle of everyday life, it's easy to forget that a well-rested and rejuvenated mind is a powerhouse of productivity. So, as we begin a new year, let's make it a priority to find balance between ambition and self-care, adding moments of adventure and relaxation into our lives.

REMINDER: Submissions for the following Business & Community Awards are being accepted online now: Small Business of the Year, Corporate Star, Young Professional of the Year, IMPACT, Entrepreneurial Spirit and Citizen of the Year. Please go to www.altoonachamber.org/ChooseAltoona to nominate someone or a business that you think is amazing.

SAVE THE DATES:

- Love Local promotion starts Feb. 1 – watch your social media
 - Revive, Restore, Renew – East Polk County Wellness Expo, Saturday, Feb. 3, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Terrace Hills Golf & Events Center
 - Perk Before Work – Tuesday, Feb. 6 at Smith Law Firm, 201 Ninth S. N.E.
 - Business 101: AI & the Reshaping of Digital Marketing – Thursday, Feb. 15, noon at the Townsend Community Center. RSVP online at www.altoonachamber.org/events or by emailing melissahorton@altoonachamber.org.
 - Sylvan Learning Altoona Ribbon Cutting Ceremony – Friday, Feb. 16 at noon, 301 Center Place, Suite C-1
 - Noon Networking – Tuesday, Feb. 20 at noon at Perkins with Ted's Body Shop
 - Annual Awards Dinner, Friday, April 5 at 6 p.m. at Terrace Hills Golf & Events Center. Tickets go on sale Jan. 30. ■

Information provided by Alyssa Knudsen, 2024 Altoona Area Chamber of Commerce President and Marketing Director of Outlets of Des Moines.



Altoona's Annual Award Season

It's time to submit your nominations for
the Altoona Chamber of Commerce
Annual Awards Night!

Citizen of the Year

Young Professional of the Year

Corporate Star

Small Business of the Year

Entrepreneurial Spirit

Impact Award

Go to altoonachamber.org/choosealtoona and scroll down to Community Award Nominations tab. Choose your category and nominate away! Deadline for submissions is **FEBRUARY 16, 2024.**

HAPPY New Year

Employees at Altoona Hy-Vee wish everyone Happy New Year.



Penny Edwards



Sam Reed



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Marlon Morales



Shannon McEnany



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RESIDENTS' Choice

Eastern Polk County Residents' Choice certificates were presented to this year's choices.



The team at Altoona Veterinary Hospital



Charlotte Baptie, Ashley Friday, Steve Olsen and Kati James at 21st Century Rehab



Tony Hughes, marketing director at Prairie Meadows



Annie Lass, with Rosco, of Connected Life Counseling



Desiree Claypool, owner of Style by Desiree Salon & Boutique



Karen Yerena at GreenState Credit Union



Nikki Morgan and Alyssa McCarl at SkinFusion FX

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Midwest (mcn)

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