

Living

MAGAZINE

RESIDENTS' CHOICE AWARDS



Ankeny/Northern Polk County residents share their favorites

Mexican cactus pork stew

RECIPE

Moorman using horses to help veterans

COMMUNITY

North Polk schools honored with STEM BEST award

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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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If you enjoy reading this monthly magazine, you may also enjoy our weekly Polk City newsletter, delivered via email. Subscribe by visiting www.iowalivingmagazines.com.



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RESIDENTS' CHOICE AWARDS



Ankeny/Northern Polk County residents share their favorites

Another year has rolled around, and it is once again time to check in with local residents about their favorite professionals, businesses, local attractions and more.

The results of the Ankeny/Northern Polk County Residents' Choice Poll have been tallied, and congratulations are in order. Many of last year's favorites return to the top three, but some new ones have also emerged. Regardless, all can truly be proud, for they have earned the respect and loyalty of those who matter most — customers. From favorite restaurant, to hair salon, bank, veterinarian, health club, park and more, the people who know — because they live here — have shared their opinions.

This year we give special recognition to the business that received the most votes overall. Call it the Favorite of Favorites, The Supreme Favorite, Sweepstakes winner, or The Ultimate Favorite. Whatever the title, this business dominated in several categories and racked up more nods from residents than any other. Congratulations Rising Sun Café. You're The Tops.

Enjoy reading this year's list of favorites. Whether you agree or not, these are the views of your friends and neighbors. If you didn't cast your votes, be sure to do so next year. To the top three, great job dazzling your customers. To those striving to be in next year's winner's circle, get in gear now. The competition is fierce.

Joe and Ashley Fandel,
The Creamery

FEATURE

Ankeny/Northern Polk County Residents' Choice for favorite...

(Runners-up in alphabetical order.)

Restaurant

Rising Sun Café

Runners up: Main Street Café & Bakery; Papa's Pizzeria

Restaurant for breakfast

Rising Sun Café

Runners up: The Ankeny Diner; Early Bird

Restaurant for lunch

Main Street Café & Bakery

Runners up: Papa's Pizzeria; Rising Sun Café

Restaurant for dinner

Papa's Pizzeria

Runners up: Portofino's Italian Restaurant & Pizza; Sports Page Grill

Restaurant for dessert

Rising Sun Café

Runners up: The Creamery; Main Street Café & Bakery

Place for ice cream

The Creamery

Runners up: The Outside Scoop; Rising Sun Café

Pizza establishment

Papa's Pizzeria

Runners up: Leaning Tower of Pizza; Wig and Pen Pizza Pub

Bar

Fender's Brewing

Runners up: Polk City Pub; Yankee Clipper

Coffee shop

Rising Sun Café

Runners up: Café Diem; Porch Light Coffeehouse

Server/bartender

Alex Fahey - Rising Sun Café

Runners up: Lance Beving – Fenders Brewing; Noelle Hoffman – Papa's Pizzeria

Auto service

Christian Brothers Automotive

Runners up: Karl Chevrolet, Inc.; Nelson Automotive

Auto Body Shop

Karl Chevrolet, Inc.

Runners up: Caliber Collision; Christian Brothers Automotive

Car dealership

Karl Chevrolet, Inc.

Runners up: Bob Brown Buick GMC; Dewey Ford

Preschool/Daycare

Our Lady's Little Learners

Runners up: Lakes Early Learning Center; The Treehouse Growing & Learning Center



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FEATURE

Nonprofit

The Ankeny Clothing Exchange (TAKE)

Runners up: NP Comet Cupboard; On With Life

School

St. Luke the Evangelist Catholic School

Runners up: Ankeny Christian Academy; North Polk High School

Park

Ankeny Miracle Park

Runners up: Big Creek State Park; Jester Park

Community festival or event

Ankeny SummerFest

Runners up: Ankeny Farmer's Market; Polk City Four Seasons Festival

Church

St. Luke the Evangelist Catholic Church

Runners up: Lutheran Church of Hope; Polk City United Methodist Church

Pastor

Scott Rains

Runners up: Fr. Kenneth Halbur; Mike Van Rees

Chamber of commerce

Ankeny Area Chamber of Commerce

Runner up: Go Polk City Chamber & Economic Development

Library

Ankeny Kirkendall Public Library

Runner up: Polk City Community Library

Camping spot

Jester Park

Runners up: Cherry Glen Campground; Prairie Flower Campground

Coach

Tim TeBrink, North Polk Football

Runners up: Rick Dillinger, North Polk Softball; Aaron Dose, North Polk Boys Basketball

Teacher

Angie Jacobs, North Polk Central Elementary

Runners up: Katie Jones, North Polk West Elementary; Molly Sheldahl, North Polk Central Elementary



Addi Tigges, Dr. Chris Tigges and office dog, Nala, at Polk City Chiropractic

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Favorite Restaurant (General)
Favorite Restaurant for Dessert
Favorite Restaurant for Breakfast
Favorite Coffee Shop
Favorite Server - Alex Fahey
Favorite Place to Take Your Kids or Grandkids
Favorite Place to Take Your Mom and Dad
Favorite Mom / Child Date Spot
Favorite Dad / Child Date Spot



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FEATURE

Grocery store

Fareway Meat & Grocery
Runners up: Aldi; Hy-Vee

Boutique

Real Deals
Runners up: The Funky Zebras Boutique; Meraki Mamas & Co.

Retail Store

Target
Runners up: Real Deals; T.J. Maxx

Thrift store

Stuff Etc.
Runners up: The Attic, Inc.; Goodwill

Home improvement retail store

Menards
Runners up: Ace Hardware; The Home Depot

Nursery or garden center

Earl May Garden Center
Runners up: Canoyer Garden Center; Goode Greenhouses

Place to purchase a gift for a man

Fleet Farm
Runners up: Home Depot; Sportsman's Warehouse

Place to purchase a gift for a woman

Real Deals
Runners up: T.J. Maxx.; Tweedle Dee's

Florist

Carmen's Flowers
Runners up: Flowerama; Hy-Vee Floral

Dad/child date spot

Rising Sun Café
Runners up: B&B Theatres Ankeny 12 & B-Roll Bowling; Papa's Pizzeria

Mom/child date spot

Rising Sun Café
Runners up: B&B Theatres Ankeny 12 & B-Roll Bowling; Papa's Pizzeria

Place to take your mom and dad

Rising Sun Café
Runners up: B&B Theatres Ankeny 12 & B-Roll Bowling; Papa's Pizzeria



Beth Knuth, owner, and Emma Husak at Cutting Edge Salon

Place to take your kids or grandkids

Rising Sun Café
Runners up: Imagination Street; Urban Air Adventure Park

Children's birthday party spot

Let's Slumber It
Runners up: Imagination Street; Urban Air Adventure Park

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- Restaurant for Dinner
- Pizza

Runner-up FAVORITE

- Restaurant (General)
- Dad/Child Date Spot
- Mom/Child Date Spot



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FEATURE

Golf course

Otter Creek Golf Course

Runners up: Jester Park Golf Course; Tournament Club of Iowa

Hair salon

The Cutting Edge Salon

Runners up: Anani Salon & Spa; Salon PC

Physicians clinic

North Polk Family Medicine

Runners up: The Iowa Clinic - Ankeny Campus; MercyOne Ankeny Family Medicine

Dental office

Advanced Family Dentistry

Runners up: Ankeny Dental Arts; Summit Family Dental

Orthodontist office

Ankeny Orthodontics

Runner up: Central Iowa Orthodontics

Chiropractic office

Polk City Chiropractic

Runners up: Designed 2 Move Spine & Sport; Iowa Chiropractic Clinic & Sports Injuries



The team at Cupp Insurance

Vision care

Ankeny Family Vision Center

Runners up: Eyecare of Ankeny; Polk City EyeCare

Health club or gym

Trail Point Aquatics & Wellness

Runners up: Albaugh Family Senior Community Center; Legacy Fitness

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FEATURE

Pharmacy

Hy-Vee Pharmacy

Runners up: CVS Pharmacy; Walgreens

Cosmetic services

Sephora at Kohl's

Runners up: RenuYou Aesthetics & MedSpa; Walgreens

Physical therapy

Rock Valley Physical Therapy

Runners up: DMOS Orthopaedic Centers; Luke Carlson Physical Therapy & Sports Medicine

Dance studio

Michelle's School of Dance

Runners up: Ashlee's Creative Arts Academy; Encore Dance Academy

Gymnastics and/or tumbling studio

Triad Gymnastics

Runners up: Encore Dance Academy; Michelle's School of Dance

Audiologist/hearing clinic

Hearing Doctors of Iowa

Runners up: The Iowa Clinic; Iowa ENT Center

CBD Store

515 CBD

Runners up: Smoke & Vape; Sunmed Your CBD Store

Financial planner

Brian Herbel

Runners up: Brandt R. Hockman; Kyle Matzen

Law firm

Lamberti, Murphy & Strong

Runners up: Letsch Law Firm; Mark Gray Law

Accounting firm

RW Tax Advisors

Runners up: Jason D. Ihle CPA; Lincicum & Albertson

Veterinarian

Ankeny Animal & Avian Clinic

Runners up: Creature Comforts Veterinary Hospital; Polk City Veterinary Hospital

Lawn care business

Total Quality Inc.

Runners up: Latitude 41 Lawn and Landscape Services of Iowa; Nolte and Sons Lawn and Irrigation

Landscaping company

TNT Landscaping & Nursery

Runners up: Kroeger Lawn and Landscape; Perennial Gardens

Heating and cooling business

72 Degrees Comfort Company

Runners up: Obsidian Heating and Cooling; Polk County Heating and Cooling

Thank You

for voting for **St. Luke!**



St. Luke the Evangelist Catholic Church

Winner: Favorite Church

Runner-up: Favorite Pastor - Fr. Kenneth Halbur

St. Luke the Evangelist Catholic School

Winner: Favorite School



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FEATURE

Electrical business

Kline Electric

Runners up: Gurnsey Electric; Whitlatch Electric

Plumbing company

Todd's Plumbing, Heating & Cooling

Runners up: Polk County Heating and Cooling; Premier Plumbing

Senior living establishment

Mill Pond

Runners up: The Bridges at Ankeny; Rock Creek Senior Living

Insurance Agency

Cupp Insurance

Runners up: Adamson Insurance & Associates; Cullen & Associates

Realtor

Susie Sheldahl

Runners up: Amy Wiederin; Jacquelyn Duke

Bank/credit union

Veridian Credit Union

Runners up: Grinnell State Bank; Luana Savings Bank

Photographer

Sandeen Photography

Runners up: Nicole Sage Photography; Picture Perfect Photography by Marcy Donelson

Place for guests to stay

Qube Hotel

Runners up: Courtyard by Marriott; Homewood Suites by Hilton

Home builder/remodeling contractor

Renomads

Runners up: Amazed Construction Services, Inc.; Black Birch Homes and Design

Pest control company

Pest Pro

Runners up: Fenix Pest Control; Greenix Pest Control



Cleaning company

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Runners up: Molly Maid; Sanela's Cleaning Co.

Painting company

Painting By Jen

Runners up: Five Star Painting; Nick's Painting Plus LLC ■

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PUT a traditional spin on Cinco de Mayo

(Family Features) Whether Cinco de Mayo means an opportunity to celebrate your family's heritage or it's simply an excuse to gather with the ones you love, every holiday truly is about the same thing: special moments together.

Take this year's festivities the traditional route with recipes that combine familiar favorites with ingredients you normally may not use otherwise, such as cactus. This Mexican Cactus Pork Stew makes Cinco de Mayo a cinch with the use of a Dutch oven.

Visit Culinary.net to find more family-friendly recipes perfect for celebrating holidays throughout the year. ■

Mexican cactus pork stew

- 1 pound pork shoulder (leftover or fresh)
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 1 jalapeno pepper, chopped
- 3 cups beef broth
- 1 can (28 ounces) diced tomatoes
- 2 cans (15 ounces each) mild chili beans
- 1 cup chopped cactus (nopales)
- 1 tablespoon garlic powder
- 2 tablespoons smoked paprika
- 1 teaspoon cayenne pepper
- salt, to taste
- pepper, to taste
- 4 green onions, chopped, for garnish
- 1/4 cup chopped cilantro, for garnish



- If using fresh pork, in Dutch oven, cube and brown it with onion and jalapeno pepper. If using leftover pork, reheat in Dutch oven with onion and jalapeno pepper.
- Add beef broth, diced tomatoes, chili beans, cactus, garlic powder, smoked paprika, cayenne pepper and salt and pepper, to taste.
- Simmer 25 minutes then garnish with green onions and cilantro.



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GOOD for the soul

Moorman using horses to help veterans.

Given the opportunity, horses can connect with your soul and heart, says Eric Moorman, the veteran equine specialist at Jester Park Equestrian Center.

“They are proven to lower anxiety and depression levels by just being with them,” says Moorman, 59, a United States Marine Corps combat veteran who served in the U.S. Marine Military Police from 1986-1992.

Helping humans is what Moorman has done for decades. But now it’s more important than ever.

“Today, there are 22 suicides a day by combat veterans of Vietnam, Gulf War, Iraq and Afghanistan,” he says. “We have more combat veterans today than we’ve had in many years. The Veterans Administration is overwhelmed.”

Moorman, with his lifelong experience in horses and service to his country, thinks he can help. And has.

Moorman grew up in a family business breeding, training and showing quarter horses at national and world shows. His father was a horse farrier/blacksmith, horse trainer and quarter horse breeder, and raised about 15-20 foals a year to sell or show.

Moorman has continued showing and training quarter horses for customers for the last 20 years, and with that came World and National Collegiate Championships. He still helps his mother and sister organize and operate the Iowa State Fair Cowgirl Queen Show and two-day All Breed Horse Show the first weekend of the Iowa State Fair.

In 2016, Horses Helping Heroes began when the VA asked the Jester Park Equestrian Center to create a horse program in an attempt to help veterans suffering from PTSD, anxiety, depression or substance abuse.

A few short years later, in 2022, Moorman became aware of this effort and wanted to put his military and equine background together for a good cause.

“I became aware of this great program and called and asked if I could volunteer,” he says. “The leader of the program welcomed me, and soon the veterans in the group asked if I could lead the sessions.”

He did. To date, Horses Helping Heroes has served 300 veterans. In 2024, the then-program director resigned and moved away. Moorman was quick to apply for the position. Once again, it was his.

Moorman now spends his weeks coordinating and leading sessions aimed to help his fellow veterans, all through the spirit of riding a horse. Moorman welcomes any and all veterans in need to seek him, or the program, out. Moorman says he will be adding a First Responder Horse Program to his itinerary soon, and even more programs will follow.

“The more veterans that come out and go through our horse programs, they will be amazed how much they learn from the horse,” Moorman says.

For more information, visit www.polkcountyiowa.gov/conservation/jester-park-equestrian-center/horses-helping-heroes/. ■



Eric Moorman is the veteran equine specialist at Jester Park Equestrian Center.

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LIBRARY

POLK CITY Community Library news

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- The library will be closed May 27 in observance of Memorial Day.
- The Board of Trustees will meet May 6 at 6:30 p.m. in the library meeting room.
- There are no youth activities in May as we prepare for summer reading.

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EVENTS

- **Wednesday Book Club**, Wednesday, May 1, 7 p.m. “In Order to Live” by Yeonmi Park. Yeonmi Park shines a light not just into the darkest corners of life in North Korea, describing the deprivation and deception she endured and which millions of North Korean people continue to endure to this day, but also onto her own most painful and difficult memories. Park’s testimony is heartbreaking and unimaginable but never without hope. This is the human spirit at its most indomitable.
- **Coloring Night at Fenders Brewing**, Wednesday, May 8, 4 p.m. Come for a night of relaxation and fun with friends at Fenders Brewing.
- **Alzheimer’s 101 with Iowa Health & Human Services**, Thursday, May 9, 6 p.m. According to the Alzheimer’s Association, more than six million Americans are living with Alzheimer’s, and more than 11 million Americans provide unpaid care for them. If that includes you or someone you care for, find information on the disease, risk factors, prevention and local resources at this free program presented by the Iowa Department of Health & Human Services. There will be time for questions and answers.
- **Card Crafting with Jane and Kim**, Monday, May 13, 6 p.m. Join Jane and Kim in making handmade cards that are fun to create and are treasured by the recipients. There will be a \$5 material fee payable that night. Beginners are welcome. Feel free to bring scissors and adhesive if you have them, and prepare to have a good time. Ages 17 and older. Register online at polkcitlibrary.org one month in advance.
- **Monday Book Club**, Monday, May 20, 2 p.m., “Orphan Train” by Christina Baker Kline. As she helps Vivian sort through her possessions and memories, Molly learns that she and Vivian aren’t as different as they seem to be. A young Irish immigrant orphaned in New York City, Vivian was put on a train to the Midwest with hundreds of other children whose destinies would be determined by luck and chance. Molly discovers that she has the power to help Vivian find answers to mysteries that have haunted her for her entire life — answers that will ultimately free them both.
- **Adult Coloring**, Tuesday, May 21, 5 p.m. Join us for a relaxing evening of coloring. Colored pencils and gel pens will be provided. You are also welcome to bring your own. Ages 17 and older.
- **Summer Reading Registration at the Farmer’s Market**, Thursday, May 30, 4-8 p.m. Get signed up for our 2024 Summer Reading Program and have fun as a family. Registration will begin at the library on Friday, May 31.
- **Read, Renew, Repeat: Summer Reading Programs** for all ages, June 1-July 31. Watch our website and Facebook for all the details. ■

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Saturday, April 27th - 6 p.m.

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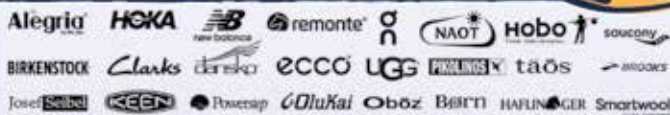
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HEALTH

By Shelly Stewart-Sandusky, MS, LMFT

LIVING with an anxiety disorder



Anxiety is a common emotion everyone experiences at some point, generally when there is a situation or stressor that warrants an anxious response, after which, unhealthy levels of anxiety will go away as the situation is resolved. Problematic anxiety doesn't go away. People who suffer from anxiety disorders often experience anxiety in a chronic way, resulting in thought patterns and physical symptoms that are a constant part of their life. For instance, racing thoughts that can't seem to be stopped or deflected, constant worry or fear of something bad happening, and physical symptoms such as fatigue, muscle tension or nausea, among others. For a person with an anxiety disorder, it can be hard to imagine not having to constantly battle your own mind to be functional throughout the day or to always be worried about something even when there doesn't seem to be a reason to worry. But there are different things you can do to help.

- Therapy can be a helpful way to process through anxiety and learn about coping strategies to better manage it and to learn about triggers and patterns associated with your anxiety.
- Medication management with a psychiatrist or psychiatric nurse practitioner can be helpful for some people.
- Meditation can help calm the central nervous system and help give your mind a reset that helps alleviate some anxiety. ■

Information provided by Shelly Stewart-Sandusky, MS, LMFT, SS Therapy and Consulting, Ltd, 4725 Merle Hay Road, Suite 205, Des Moines, 515-528-8135, www.sstherapyandconsulting.com.

HEALTH

By Dr. Todd Pietig

SLOWING down nearsightedness



Myopia, also known as being nearsighted, is on the rise and has become a worldwide epidemic. Today, around 40% of people in the U.S. are nearsighted compared to 20% only 30 years ago. One reason nearsightedness is on the rise is the increase in the amount of time people spend looking up close. Kids are especially affected, as they are now spending less time outdoors and more time indoors and on devices. Digital devices have become common among children for education and entertainment at a young age. On a positive note, studies have shown that outdoor time has some protective benefits in preventing myopia, and getting at least two hours of outdoor time daily is recommended. Other beneficial lifestyle modifications include taking a break after 30 minutes of near work and increasing the distance between you and your screen. Clinically, there are three options that can slow down nearsightedness by around 50%, and they are ortho k contact lenses, atropine eye drops, and MiSight soft contact lenses. Ortho-k is a hard contact lens you wear while you sleep. This option has the added benefit of allowing you to see clearly without glasses or contacts during the day because it flattens the cornea. Atropine drops are low dose eye drops that are put in every evening before bed and can be combined with the other options. The third option, MiSight contact lenses, are similar to the soft contacts many people currently wear, but with the benefit of slowing down nearsightedness due to their multifocal design. ■

Information provided by Dr. Todd Pietig, Ankeny Family Vision Center, 311 N. Ankeny Blvd., Ankeny, 515-964-1671.

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THE COMETS CORNER

NEWS FROM NORTH POLK CSD

APRIL 2024

NORTH POLK RECEIVES STEM BEST® PROGRAM AWARD

The Iowa Governor's STEM Advisory Council announced North Polk CSD as one of the 21 school districts receiving the STEM BEST® (Businesses Engaging Students and Teachers) Program award. The STEM BEST Program brings schools and businesses together to provide students with real workplace experiences. The program helps introduce students to businesses and career opportunities in Iowa, while also gaining future-focused skills.

The STEM BEST Program encourages teachers and industry professionals to work side-by-side to develop a work-based learning model that incorporates STEM subjects like mathematics and science with experiential learning opportunities to emphasize high-demand skills. The Council's investment in professional and financial support can be used for curriculum development and coordination, educator training and development in workplace classroom integration, and preparing work-based learning environments.

The North Polk Community School District is dedicated to improving STEM education by enhancing computer systems and software for engineering and design classes at the High School. The district plans to upgrade computers with the STEM BEST Grant, aligning student programs with engineering and architecture industry standards. This enhancement will equip students with relevant software skills and opportunities for career-oriented learning experiences.



EXISTING STUDENT REGISTRATION FOR THE 2024-2025 SCHOOL YEAR

The calendar is quickly turning and our staff is already diligently preparing for the 2024-2025 school year! Help us get ahead by registering your current students (KG-11) on our website starting on April 15! The registration process can be done completely online.

All families with current students returning to North Polk CSD must register. The process includes new permissions for student photos, surveys administered, 7-12 Activity Code of Conduct, and more. Visit our website to begin the process: northpolk.org/families/school-registration or scan the QR code.



Regarding transportation requests, as was our practice last school year, we will no longer automatically carry over student bus transportation information as we have done in the past. If your child requires transportation more than two days per week, you will need to request it during the registration process. The transportation request form can be found in the registration portal in Infinite Campus. To guarantee that routing for your student is done before the first day of school, the deadline for filling out this form is July 15th. This will allow our transportation department ample time to plan routes accordingly. Requests made after this date will be placed on a waiting list, and transportation cannot be guaranteed until after September 1st.

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NP SCHOOLS honored with STEM BEST award

Program provides students with hands-on learning.

North Polk Community School District was recently awarded a STEM BEST (Businesses Engaging Students and Teachers) Program award.



A student participates in a current CTE program. Photo courtesy of NPCSD

NPCSD was one of 21 school districts in Iowa to receive the \$40,000 award from the Iowa Governor's STEM Advisory Council.

The STEM BEST program helps to provide students with real workplace experiences, introducing

them to business and career opportunities. The program encourages teachers to develop learning by incorporating STEM subjects (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) with enhanced computer systems and software.

The district plans to use the grant to upgrade computers, which helps equip students with relevant software skills and opportunities for career-oriented learning experiences. The updated technology and software aim to adequately prepare students for STEM careers in engineering, architecture and interior design.

"Our students will be equipped with the education needed to develop skills for successful learning and training beyond high school," says Hunter Flesher, NPCSD director of communications.

The majority of the funding will be used to acquire additional computers capable of running Computer Aided Design (CAD) software. Hunter says the district's current Chromebooks lack the capacity to support the software.

"The CAD software is incompatible with Chromebooks and necessitates the use of our outdated desktop computers," he says. "To adequately equip our students, it is crucial to update both the computers and software, which will be fulfilled through this funding."

Hunter says the enhancements will empower students to acquire the necessary skills, knowledge and confidence to pursue further STEM education and careers. This award will specifically benefit NPHS's CTE (career and technical education) program, specifically for construction and agriculture.

It offers students more opportunities for hands-on, practical and career-focused learning experiences that align with industry standards.

"This presents a fantastic opportunity to bolster our support for the newly passed bond referendum, which includes a new, nearly \$9 million Career Tech addition to the high school, opening for the 2025-2026 school year," says Hunter.

The STEM award will equip students with essential software skills and offer valuable opportunities for career-focused learning opportunities.

"We are thrilled to further develop this kind of programming at North Polk," says Hunter. "Our mission at the district is 'Learning for All by Learning from All.' Each day, we work towards meeting the changing needs of our students, offering opportunities and skills that extend beyond our walls. Through fostering an innovative culture, our goal is to inspire our students to excel and realize their full capabilities." ■

"It's been through the addition of MAPLE that we have been able to get the kids to talk."



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SLOW and steady: A smart way to invest

You've probably heard stories about fortunate investors who "get in the ground floor" of a new, hot company and quickly make a fortune. But, while these things may happen, they are exceedingly rare and often depend on hard-to-duplicate circumstances — and they really don't represent a viable way of investing for one's goals. A far more tried-and-true approach is the "slow-and-steady" method.



To follow this strategy, consider these suggestions:

- **Start small — and add more when you can.** When you're first starting out in the working world, you may not have a lot of extra money with which to invest, especially if you're carrying student loan debt. But one of the key advantages of the slow-and-steady method is that it does not require large investment sums to get going. If you can afford to put away even \$50 or \$100 a month into individual stocks or mutual funds, month after month, you may be surprised and pleased at how your account can grow. And when your salary goes up, you can put away more money each month.

- **Take advantage of an employer's retirement plan.** If your employer offers a 401(k) or similar tax-advantaged retirement plan, try to take full advantage of it. Again, if you're just beginning your career, you may not be able to put away much in this type of plan, but even a small amount is better than nothing. And, as soon as you can possibly afford it, try to put in enough to earn your employer's matching contribution if one is offered. These types of plans can offer some key benefits — and perhaps the biggest one is that investing is automatic, in that the money is moved directly from your paycheck into the investments you've chosen within your 401(k) or other plan.

- **Be prepared for downturns.** The financial markets will always experience ups and downs. So, you need to be prepared for those times when your investment statements may show negative results. By understanding that these downturns are a normal part of the investment environment, you can avoid overreactions, such as selling quality investments with good fundamentals just because their price has temporarily dropped.

- **Chart your progress regularly.** A key element of a slow-and-steady investment approach is knowing how well it's working. But it's important to measure your progress in a way that makes sense for you. So, for example, instead of measuring your portfolio's performance against that of an external stock market index, such as the S&P 500, you may want to assess where you are today versus one year ago, or whether the overall progress you're making is sufficient to help you meet the financial goals you've set for yourself well into the future. Another reason not to use a market index as a measuring tool is that the index only looks at a certain pool of investments, which, in the case of the S&P 500, is simply the largest companies listed on U.S. stock exchanges. But long-term investors try to own a range of assets — U.S. and foreign stocks, bonds, government securities, certificates of deposit, and so on.

"Slow and steady" may not sound like an exciting approach to investing. But it's often the case that a little less excitement, and a lot more diligence, can prove to be quite effective. ■

This article was written by Edward Jones for use by your local Edward Jones Financial Advisor. Edward Jones. Member SIPC. Information was provided by Kyle Matzen, AAMS, 407 W Bridge Rd. Suite 7, Polk City, 515-984-6073.

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POLK CITY Kiwanis Seniors of the Month

The Kiwanis Club of Polk City has named Rylie Renee Connolly, Elena Fowle and Abby Kathleen Bell its seniors of the month.

Rylie Renee Connolly

“My name is Rylie Connolly. I’ve participated in band, speech and tennis for the past four years. I have made it to All-State for Group Speech twice, once for improv and once for Choral Reading. I also participate in Individual Speech. I am in Storytelling and Original Oratory. For the past two years, I’ve worked as a dietary aide at Mill Pond Senior Living, and my time there has greatly influenced my decisions in what I want to do in the future. I hope to major in psychology and help come up with treatments for dementia and Alzheimer’s. I have been on the Gold Honor Roll for all four years of high school, I am a part of National Honor Society, National Spanish Honor Society, and I am on the DMACC President’s List. I have really enjoyed Spanish, Art, DMACC Lit, and Ancient Civ.”

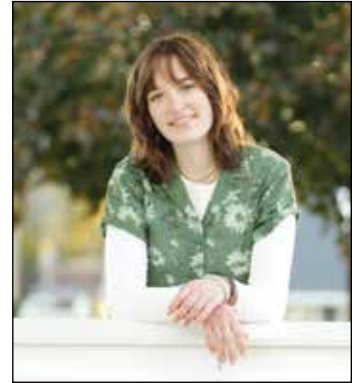
Rylie’s parents are Renne and Tom Connolly. In addition to the



information above, she has participated specifically in marching band and concert band and received a leadership award for speech. She plans to attend the University of Iowa.

Elena Fowle

“Hi! My name is Elena Fowle, and I’m a senior at North Polk this year. I live in Polk City with my mom, Colleen; my dad, Mike; my younger brother, Evan; and my yellow lab, Blaze. Throughout my time in high school, I have been very involved in a variety of fine arts activities such as band, choir, speech and drama. I was even chosen as the drum major for the marching band this past fall, which was a special way to spend my senior season. In Speech, my group and I were nominated to perform at the Large Group All-State Festival in group improvisation my sophomore year, and I was the student director for last year’s Choral Reading group, which was also an All-State nominee. I also play on the tennis team and



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am a board member of the Environmental Club. Outside of school, I attend my church's youth group and work at the Polk City Library. I am a part of National Honor Society and Spanish Honor Society. I've been on the Gold Honor Roll and the DMACC President's List for my high GPA both at North Polk and in my online DMACC classes. I highly recommend getting involved in the arts because it has shaped my life in so many positive ways. I've been able to grow in my friendships, musical ability, and public speaking skills. I am planning on majoring in cinema arts with an emphasis in film production at a four-year college or university."

In addition to the information above, Elena was specifically in marching band, concert band, jazz band, concert choir and show choir. She was English Department Student of the Year, received the College Board's Rural and Small Town Recognition Award, was a participant in the Vanderbilt Programs for Talented Youth Mentor Immersion Program, and received the Junior Anthropological Award. She has participated in the church worship technology team, Band Buddies, Polk City Community Library page and babysitting.

Abby Kathleen Bell

"My name is Abby Bell, and I am a senior at North Polk High School. I am the daughter of Greg and Audrey Bell of Polk City, and I have two sisters named Eden and Brooke. Throughout my high school experience, I have enjoyed the opportunity to participate in soccer for four years, cross country for three years, and basketball for one year. I have been honored to be in the National Honor Society and on the Gold

Honor Roll all four years and on the DMACC Dean's List this year. My favorite memories are qualifying for State in cross country in ninth and 10th grade and in soccer in ninth, 10th and 11th grade so far."

In addition to the information above, Abby's favorite school subject is DMACC Developmental Psychology. She has also participated in club soccer at VSA Rush. Honors in cross country include Second Team All-Conference, First Team All-Conference and Academic All-Conference, as well as letter winner. In soccer, honors include First Team All-Conference twice (unanimous in 11th grade), First Team All-District, First Team Class 2A All-State (IHSSA and IGCA), Academic All Conference, and varsity letter winner. She is co-founder and co-director of Future Comets Elite Soccer Camp, a North Polk United Soccer Kickoff volunteer, Iowa Rush Soccer Camp volunteer, North Polk High School Soccer Camp volunteer, and a full-time nanny in the summer.

After graduation, she plans to attend the University of Northern Iowa to play soccer and major in elementary education and minor in psychology. ■



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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.

Founder's Day Celebration

May 30, 6:30 p.m.

Museum on the Square, Polk City

Meet at the Museum on the Square for a half-mile walking tour of Beebe Town for the Founder's Day Celebration. Learn about Polk City's early businesses and the fires that destroyed many of them and visit the Beebe family cemetery. This event is hosted by the Big Creek Historical Society.

Museum hours begin

Thursdays starting May 30, 4:30-6:30 p.m.

Museum on the Square, Polk City

The Polk City Museum on the west side of the Square will be open during Farmers Market.

Vacation Bible School

June 9-13, 6-8:30 p.m.

Lakeside Fellowship

Lakeside Fellowship will hold its annual Vacation Bible School for kids entering kindergarten through sixth grade. Activities include crafts, games, snacks, Bible lessons and skits. As

always, organizers plan to end the week with a Polk City fire truck showering the crowd with a water cannon in the parking lot. Families can register kids at <https://lakesidefellowship.com/events/vacation-bible-school-2/>.



Earth Day Family 5K Run/Walk and Pickleball Tournament

Saturday, April 20

Polk City Square

Funds raised at the Polk City Friends of the Parks' annual Earth Day Family 5K Run/Walk and the Pickleball Tournament being held in conjunction with it will go toward costs of resurfacing the tennis and pickleball courts at Miller Park. For information about the events, visit www.polkcityfriendsoftheparks.com/earth-day-5k.

Big Creek Volunteer Day

Saturday, April 27, 8 a.m. to noon

Big Creek State Park, 8550 N.W. 142nd Ave., Polk City

Friends of Big Creek State Park are hosting a volunteer day to help spruce up the playground at the park. For more information about Friends of Big Creek or joining the board, email friendsofbigcreek@gmail.com.

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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.

City dates to note:

- **April 22: Polk City Cleanup.** Have items to the curb by 7 a.m.
- **May 18: Cops & Bobbers**



Photo courtesy of Blank Park Zoo

Wild Lights Festival

Through May 27,
7:30-10:30 p.m.
Blank Park Zoo, 7401 S.W.
Ninth St., Des Moines
blankparkzoo.com

The Blank Park Zoo's Wild Lights Festival returns. Visitors can view more than 50 hand-crafted creations that light up the zoo. The illuminated Asian mythical creatures create plenty of photo opportunities for families.



Drake Relays

April 24-27
Drake Stadium, 2719 Forest Ave., Des Moines
godrakebulldogs.com

The Drake Relays draw premier track and field athletes from around the country and some of the best in-state high school track athletes to Des Moines.

Earth Day Trash Bash

April 20-27
Earthday.dsm.city

Earth Day Trash Bash, is a collaboration between the cities and citizens of Clive, Des Moines, Johnston, Norwalk, Pleasant Hill, West Des Moines, Boone County Conservation, Polk County Conservation, Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, Trees Forever, and Des Moines Water Works. Register at the above website.

Poetry Palooza

April 19-20
Grand View University,
1200 Grandview Ave., Des Moines
poetryamp.org/poetry-palooza

Poetry slams, panels, workshops and book launches create a palooza of poetry. This festival celebrates esteemed poets, cultivates students and emerging talent, and demonstrates the positive power of poetry.

Spring Gallery Night

April 19
Historic Valley Junction,
137 Fifth St., West Des Moines
valleyjunction.com

Spring Gallery Night in Historic Valley Junction showcases artwork by regional, national and international artists during the annual Spring Gallery Night. From original artwork, to custom jewelry, ceramics, glass, furniture, folk art, fine art reproductions and much more.



Gary's Ride: Beat Brain Cancer

Saturday, May 18, 10 a.m.
Waukee Raccoon River Valley Trailhead,
Hickman Road and N. 10th St., Waukee

Help support local brain cancer patients and their families by making a charitable contribution toward Gary's Ride's \$45,000 goal. Registration is now open for Gary's Ride. Adult riders registered by May 6 receive the 2024 T-shirt. Register at www.garysrideiowa.org/shop.

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EVENTS IN THE AREA

Earth Day at the Brenton Arboretum

25141 260th St., Dallas Center
April 21 from noon to 3 p.m.
thebrentonarboretum.org

Even more fun family activities have been added to this year's popular event. Come and enjoy the arboretum grounds and make an afternoon of exploring and visiting the vendors. A variety of stations will be offered throughout the event including a Kids Planting Station, Selfie Station, OMG Bees with Bee Expert Julia MCGuire, Found Object Bug Craft with Artist Jill Woodward, Experience Nature's Healing with Dennis Kelly, Hot Off The Presses Food Truck, and Erin Huiatt with Des Moines Parent talking about her new book, "100 Things To Do in Des Moines Before You Die." At 1:30 p.m., a special presentation will be made on how to plant a tree with Director Of Horticulture Andy Schmitz.



Des Moines Makers Market and Bar Hop

April 21
Exile Brewing Co., 1520 Walnut St., Des Moines,
iheartindiemarkets.com

Products will include a wide variety of handmade and vintage goods including original art, home decor, clothing, paper products, metal working, jewelry, soap, candles and more.



Dress For Success Pop-up Sale

April 24-28
Valley West Mall, 1551 Valley West Drive, West Des Moines
desmoines.dressforsuccess.org

Dress for Success collects clothing donations that are then sorted for interview or on-the-job appropriateness (those are then available for Dress for Success clients to have as they get into the workforce) and those items that aren't useful for those purposes are saved and sold at the annual Pop-up Sale. Special events are on April 24 with the purchase of a ticket; the rest of the event from April 25-28 is free.

Mother's Day breakfast buffet and bake sale

Sunday, May 12, 8 a.m. until noon
West Des Moines Elks Lodge, 2060 N.W. 94th St., Clive

Enjoy a delicious Mother's Day breakfast which includes biscuits and gravy, French toast, scrambled eggs, bacon, sausage patties, cheesy potatoes, and "all you can eat" pancakes (including blueberry and chocolate chip pancakes), orange juice, milk and coffee for \$10—children under 10 just \$5. Enjoy a bloody mary or mimosa for \$3.50. Proceeds support the Elks' Hoop Shoot Program, other youth activities and veteran activities. ■

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CHAMBER Lunch

The Go Polk City Chamber Lunch was held at Tournament Club of Iowa on March 20.



Lisa England and Seth Bonifas



Shawn Comer and Mayor Steve Karsjen



Staci Allen and Martha Sheldahl



Jason Fender and Ryan Toney



Joel Newman and Dave Heisterkamp



Jen Finn and Christine White



Kimberley Jackman and Brandon Converse



Susie Sheldahl and Katryn Halterman

PUZZLE MASTER

♥ Champions! ♥



Living on the Edge

Team Living on the Edge captured first place in 52 minutes. Members: Katie Spoelstra, Jessica Bormann, Mandy Vogel and Jenn Armstrong at the Friends of the Polk City Community Library puzzle contest on Feb. 11 at the Polk City American Legion.



Team You Wanna Piece of Me? was second in 55 minutes. Members: Jenny Schmidt, Eliza Schmidt, Missy Crowley and Sophia Crowley at the Friends of the Polk City Community Library puzzle contest on Feb. 11 at the Polk City American Legion.



Jenn Whitted, Jamie Noack, Regena Butler, Nancy Coffman and Krista Bowersox at the Tournament Club of Iowa on Jan. 14.



Team Connected Family Members finished in 1 hour 4 minutes. Members: Wendy Mosdal, Ethan Mosdal, Steve Noack, Miranda Noack and team good luck charm, Lucas, at the Friends of the Polk City Community Library puzzle contest on Feb. 11 at the Polk City American Legion.



Team Pieced Together finished in 1 hour and 7 minutes. Members: Marisa McIlravy, Ramona Tapper and Amanda Sparks at the Friends of the Polk City Community Library puzzle contest on Feb. 11 at the Polk City American Legion.



Team: Three Chicks and a Richard finished in 1 hour and 18 minutes. Members: Patricia Moody, Bob "Richard" Sweeny, Stephanie Stilson and Jeri Crowdis at the Friends of the Polk City Community Library puzzle contest on Feb. 11 at the Polk City American Legion.



Team Puzzle Patrol finished in 1 hour and 29 minutes. Members: Alexa Markley and McKayla Cooper at the Friends of the Polk City Community Library puzzle contest on Feb. 11 at the Polk City American Legion.



Team Ruby Sue finished in 1 hour and 43 minutes at the Friends of the Polk City Community Library puzzle contest on Feb. 11 at the Polk City American Legion.



Jenn Whitted, Nancy Coffman, Jamie Noack, Regena Butler and Dixie Bequeaith at the Friends of the Polk City Community Library puzzle contest on Feb. 11 at the Polk City American Legion.



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