

# Living

MAGAZINE

# The gift of a future

Residents share their stories of organ and tissue donation

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# WELCOME

## IF YOU have a heart...

Like most of you reading this, I have not had to deal with organ failure or the need for organ transplants. I am quite thankful for that.

Like many of you reading this, I agreed to be an organ donor when I renewed my driver's license several years ago. I had to pull my license out of my wallet and check it to be sure. You should do so right now, too.

I have some friends who have put great thought into this and how their organs can help others live longer lives. I have other friends who are also organ donors but have not thought about it much at all, having the attitude that they will be dead and don't really care. Regardless of how you feel, those who benefit from your organ donations will be forever grateful, as will their family members and friends.

Mothers will be able to bear children. Fathers will be able to walk their daughters down the wedding aisle. Grandparents will be able to hug their grandkids. And young children can learn to smile, knowing their lives won't likely end anytime soon.

As a regular reader of this magazine, you know we cover a variety of subjects and themes in our cover stories. In the past few months alone, we have written about the benefits of hiring senior employees, dream vacations for local families, ongoing educational opportunities, Christmas card traditions, early risers and more. Some topics have been light-hearted while others have had more serious tones.

As you have likely figured out by now, this month's cover features the stories of local residents and the positive impact of organ donations. I got choked up while reading it, and I found the stories to be incredibly touching. I think you will, too.

If you are not an organ donor, I hope these stories change your mind and have you consider becoming one. We share details on how you can do so, along with the heart-warming stories of local residents who are deeply grateful for those who already have. Be sure to read the story, but grab some tissues first.

Thanks for reading. ■



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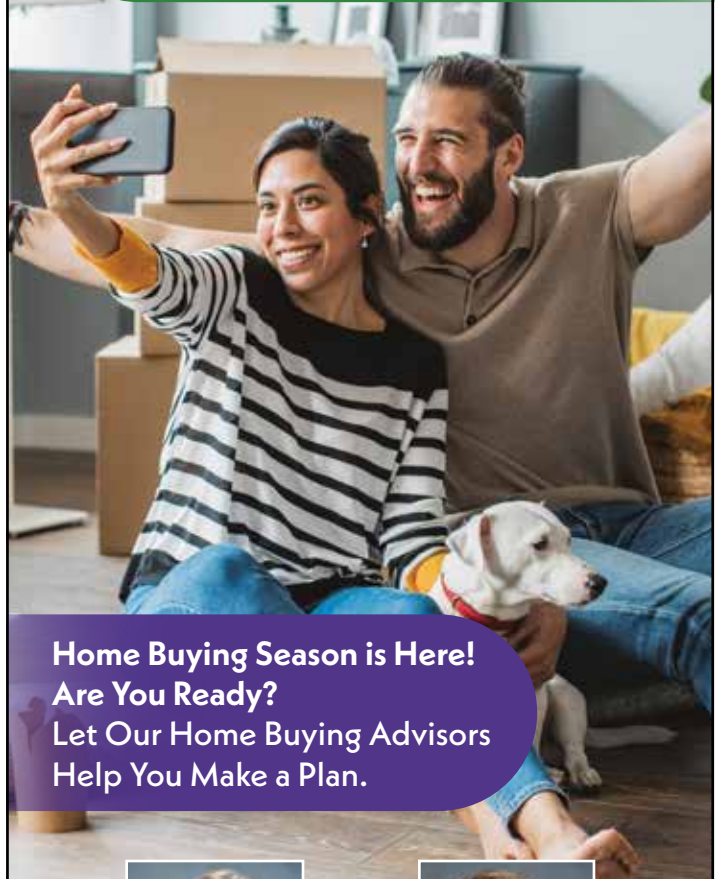


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# The gift of a future

**Residents share their stories of organ and tissue donation**

**By Chantel Boyd**

For many people with organ failure, a transplant is their one hope for a return to good health. In the U.S., more than 100,000 people are waiting for an organ donation — and, for many, the wait can be five or more years. For 17 people each day, time runs out before a match can be found ([organdonor.gov](http://organdonor.gov)). Those fortunate enough to receive a transplant are given not only a gift of health, but of hope — and a future to enjoy.

Emmett Deutmeyer required a tissue donation to repair his knee.

**Gift to a stranger**

In 2022, Jen Grimstad of Urbandale donated a kidney to a 44-year-old New Jersey woman whom she had never met.

“We had no relation, but we were matched by the National Kidney Registry and determined to be more compatible than most family members,” Jen says.

When she heard an American Ninja Warrior contestant share about donation, Jen was moved to give her kidney.

“I heard Austin Gray share his donation story and started to think it was something I could do,” Jen says.

The more research Jen did, the more confident she became that she was being called to donate. Jen did not know why the recipient needed the kidney or how it benefited her with a better quality of life. Still, she did get to hear some news after her surgery.

“My surgeon did hear from the recipient’s surgeon the day after transplant, and he said the new kidney was ‘kicking butt.’”

Another check-in a few weeks later found the recipient was doing well.

Jen has a message for the recipient of her

organ, along with everyone else.

“Donating my kidney has changed my life,” she says. “I am grateful to have had the opportunity to help someone in such a profound way.”

Jen has since become an advocate for organ donations.

“I have become passionate about kidney health and living donation, which prompted me to join the National Kidney Foundation (NKF) Advisory Board and become a peer mentor for the NKF Peers program.”

Still, Jen admits the decision to donate was not an easy one.

“The most challenging part before donating was wondering if I was making the right decision. I had a husband and four children under 12, and I didn’t want to risk something happening to me,” she says.

Jen eventually relied on her faith to make the decision.

“I listened to God and, ultimately, knew I was making the right choice. The recovery process was easy. I was uncomfortable the first week or so. After that, I was tired for a few weeks. I was back to work part-time after three



Jen Grimstad prepares to go to surgery to donate her kidney to a woman she didn’t know.

weeks.”

Jen has considered reaching out to the kidney recipient.

“I would like to tell her how thankful I am to have been able to help her,” she says. “I would like to know how receiving a kidney changed her life.”

Since Ninja Warrior Austin Gray profoundly impacted her decision to donate her kidney, Jen would like him to know his advocacy work is helping others.

“I would like to reach out to Austin Gray and thank him for sharing his story, which



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prompted me to become a living donor. I'm not sure I would have ever donated if it wasn't for hearing him speak about it season after season," she says.

**A brother's new lease on life**

Juli Aldrich of Urbandale has seen firsthand the difference a heart transplant can make, and it has led her to become a proponent of organ donation. Juli's brother, John Foster, was the recipient of a heart. He lives in Olathe, Kansas, and is preparing to celebrate his one-year anniversary of the transplant at the end of April.

Although John has reached out to the heart donor's family through the national organ transplant database, Juli says he has not yet received a response.

John had a heart attack in May 2014.

"He participated in a clinical trial program and received a cardiac parachute (a device that separates damaged heart muscle from healthy muscle) in April 2015, which worked for several years," Juli shares.

However, his heart ultimately gave out in April 2023.

"He was immediately put on a heart pump, and his information was entered into the National Database for a heart transplant. They found a match, and he received a heart transplant 15 days later," Juli says.

John's story is not typical. Often, people stay on the transplant list for years.

"The doctors measure how much blood goes in and out of your heart. It is called an ejection fraction," Juli explains. "A normal person would have an ejection fraction of 60-75%. John's ejection fraction on the day he presented at the hospital in April 2023 was 18%. After the heart transplant, John's ejection fraction is 67%."

John encourages others to advocate for organ donation.

"Please consider it," he says. "I wouldn't be here if not for a family's decision to donate their loved one's heart. I signed up to be an organ donor in 1986. I have donated three gallons of blood over the years before my transplant. When it is my time to leave this Earth, and if I have an organ that could help someone keep their loved one longer, my family knows I would be happy to donate it."

Because of the heart John received, he is



John Foster celebrates the one-year anniversary of his heart transplant this month.

able to enjoy a better quality of life and share it with his family.

"John can go to his grandkids' band concerts and choirs," Juli shares.

John and Juli are still hopeful that John will

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one day locate the family of the donor to give them a message.

“Thank you is not enough, but it is all I have to offer,” says John. “I will never do justice to your loss, but my gain is more than I could ever communicate.”

Juli shares that her brother has had an incredible year since the transplant.

“John is doing great, and we are celebrating with a one-year heart anniversary party for him on April 27. We are so grateful that John is still with us due to an anonymous organ donor,” she says.

**Five years post-transplant**

Marilyn Wilson of Urbandale has lived five years after receiving a liver transplant.

“Without it, I wouldn’t be here,” she says.

Marilyn has lived in Urbandale for almost 35 years. For the last couple of decades, she has had health issues.

“I was first diagnosed with elevated liver enzymes around 2008. A few years later, I was referred to a hepatologist, where I was diagnosed with primary biliary cirrhosis (PBC) of the liver. Then, around 2017, I was referred

**Iowa Donor Network (IDN)**

The Iowa Donor Network is a non-profit organization that serves as the primary contact for organ, tissue and eye donation services for the state of Iowa. IDN coordinates organ recovery, educates healthcare professionals and communities and provides support to donor families. IDN collaborates with healthcare partners, organizations and volunteers to honor the gift of life and inspire others to donate.

IDN is celebrating 30 years of donation support in 2024. Over the past 30 years, IDN has worked with more than 1,900 organ donors, 6,000 organ recipients, and 15,000 tissue donors, giving an average of 75 tissues for transplant, impacting healing among more than 1 million people.

**For more information on IDN, visit [www.iowadonornetwork.org](http://www.iowadonornetwork.org).**

to Mayo Clinic, where I was put on the liver transplant list in July 2018 at age 61,” she relates.

While there, the doctors ranked Marilyn on



Thanks to a liver donation, Marilyn Wilson of Urbandale has lived five years after the surgery, during which time she has been able to enjoy becoming a grandmother.

the MELD scale from 1-40, which determines the priority the person is given on the transplant list.

“At that time, I had a score of 16,” she says.



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“So, with the score being that low, they told me that I probably wouldn’t get a liver from the transplant list. It would probably need to be a living donor from a family member.”

Marilyn’s younger sister turned out to be a match.

“My sister had to go through all the tests that I had to go through, and we had my liver transplant scheduled for Feb. 8, 2019.”

However, by November 2018, Marilyn’s condition had deteriorated quickly.

“I broke a rib from coughing, and I was retaining fluid in my lungs, where it ended up having to be drained every other day,” she says.

During those months, Marilyn had blood tests each week to determine her MELD score.

“Even though I was pretty sick, my MELD score was only about a 28-30 — far from 40.”

The doctors determined that Marilyn could no longer use her sister as a living donor and would need a whole liver to survive.

“Finally, on Jan. 4, I was admitted to Mayo, waiting for a liver. Around Jan. 16, my MELD score was 40, so the radius got much bigger to find me a liver. On Jan. 18, 2019, I was finally told I would be getting a liver from a deceased donor,” she says.

Marilyn had a few complications following the surgery, but she was released to go home on Feb. 4.

“This year, I’m five years out from my transplant, and I have been blessed with two grandkids that I never would have seen if it wasn’t for the transplant,” she says.

Marilyn’s two grandkids are Kinzlee and Easton Wilson, and she has been able to spend time with them because of the transplant.

“I’ve been able to return to all the activity that I was able to do before getting sick, and I even get to babysit my grandkids three days a week, which was what I always wanted once I had grandkids,” she says.

Each year, Marilyn sends a letter to the donor’s family around the transplant anniversary, thanking them for donating their loved one’s organ. She has yet to hear back from them.

Marilyn’s message about organ donation is clear.

“If you want to be a donor, please let your family members know of your wishes and get the donor notification on your driver’s license,” she urges.

Marilyn also wants to spread the message about being a living donor.

“You can be a living donor for kidney and

liver. One interesting thing about donating a liver is that the donor’s and recipient’s livers generally regenerate to full size within six to eight weeks.”

## Benefits from tissue donation

Molly Deutmeyer of Urbandale is grateful for those who choose organ and tissue donation. Her son, Emmett, was injured playing baseball and had to have surgery this past fall. The procedure required using donated cartilage to repair his knee.

Molly lives in Urbandale with her husband, Brandon, and their children, Emmett, Asa, Nellia and Aurora, who attend Urbandale schools.

Emmett received the cartilage from a deceased donor through the donor program. Molly and her family have no information about the donor but are glad for the donation because it has dramatically enhanced Emmett’s life. He wouldn’t be walking, running or playing like he is now had he not received the tissue donation.

“Emmett was stealing home during a baseball game, slid, and was called safe. Unfortunately, his knee twisted weirdly when his foot went over the plate, causing a sprained MCL, partially torn ACL, and severe damage to the cartilage,” Molly explains. “Without the new cartilage, there was a high likelihood that my son would not be able to walk, run, or play sports in the future without a total knee replacement by age 25. Thanks to the surgery and donor cartilage, he can live unhindered by his injury.”

Molly says her family would like the donor’s family to know how grateful they are for this gift of a whole life for a boy with a lot of life ahead.

“Before my son’s injury, we had no idea that organ donation was more than just hearts, lungs, kidneys, etc.,” she says. “We are forever blessed by someone’s selfless decision to donate their body to save others.”

Emmett has made many memories since receiving the tissue donation, including some special memories he will likely never forget.

“The best memory I’ve made after having my new knee is a toss-up between being able to participate in ‘The Wave’ (performed by Hawkeye fans at Kinnick Stadium for young patients at the University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics) and being able to be off my crutches and out of my brace,” shares Emmett.

The days of restricted activity for Emmett



Molly and Brandon Deutmeyer and their children, Emmett, Asa, Nellia and Aurora. After a baseball injury, Emmett had surgery to repair his knee, which required use of donated tissue.

are now past.

“He had to pass up many birthday parties and youth group events, not to mention sports and P.E., because he was limited from these pre- and post-op,” says Molly.

Emmett is returning to his old self now, and his family couldn’t be more thrilled.

“Emmett just received clearance over spring break to play baseball and participate in P.E. again,” Molly says.

What would Emmett say to the donor’s family? A simple, “thank you.”

“We know it could not have been an easy decision, but we are so grateful,” says Molly. ■

## How to become an organ donor

Register with the DMV or register online at the Iowa Donor Network website, [www.iowadonornetwork.org](http://www.iowadonornetwork.org).

- 637 Iowans are waiting for an organ transplant.
- 103,388 people are on the National Organ Waiting List.
- 16 Iowans are waiting for a heart
- 559 Iowans are waiting for a kidney
- 347 organs were transplanted in Iowa in 2022.



# COMMUNITY and schools good fit for family

McConnells say Urbandale was a good choice.

Lance McConnell and his wife, Sarah, are longtime residents of Urbandale. For the past 20 years, the couple has enjoyed all the community has to offer.

“One of the main things that drew us to Urbandale was the small-town feel,” McConnell says. “Both my wife and I grew up in small towns, and when we looked at our first house, the neighborhood had that feeling that we grew up with.”

Over the years, what’s kept the McConnells in town is the desire to raise their family in Urbandale.

“We have three girls who are all in the Urbandale school district, and I work in the school system as well,” he says. “It was important that we kept our daughters in Urbandale and find a place that we could call home for a long time.”

The McConnells bought their current home eight years ago and have added their personality to it over the years.

“We love the space and how we have

made it our own,” McConnell says. “It was also important to have a space for my wife’s photography business to be able to continue.”

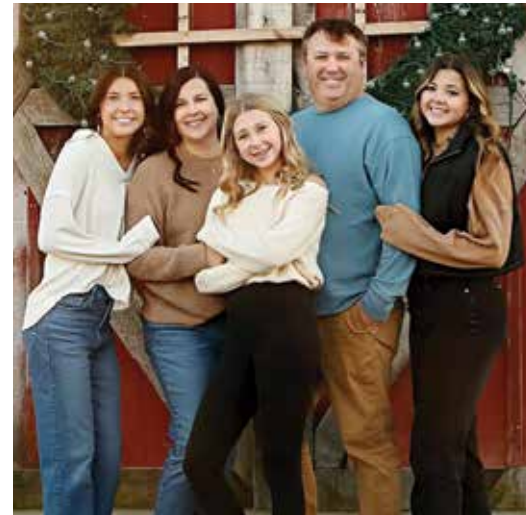
The family appreciates their neighbors, too. “It was one thing we were looking for when we moved,” McConnell says. “We wanted to find neighbors that had kids around their ages for familiarity and getting together. That has been an amazing part of our current house and neighborhood. We have lots of driveway nights and get-togethers.”

McConnell adds that he and his wife enjoy what the school and community have to offer.

“We attend many of the events Urbandale and Urbandale schools hold, and we always love to support both,” he says.

Ultimately, McConnell firmly believes there’s no better place than Urbandale for him and his family.

“Two houses and two different neighborhoods, along with building a family, we have found Urbandale is our place,” he says. “You can find everything you need in a



Lance and Sarah McConnell and their children enjoy what the community and schools have to offer.

short drive, and there are so many small local businesses that we support and will continue to support.” ■

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# COULD tax hikes crack your nest egg?

Our national debt problem became unprecedented long ago, now it's ballooned to \$34 trillion. You are not alone if you think the country's debt could become a headache for you in retirement. Many agree that one way to tackle the debt is to raise taxes.



for 2024 is 37%.

The headache comes when you are on the cusp of retirement and lawmakers in Washington pass legislation that changes your tax bracket. If you've been investing in a traditional 401(k) or IRA, this scenario could mean you end up with less money to fund your retirement than you anticipated. That's because these accounts have never been taxed. When you take distributions in retirement, the money is subject to federal income tax rates. That's when that nest egg can crack, and you could send more of your retirement savings to the IRS than you have to, leaving you with less to spend in retirement.

Fortunately, there are steps you can take now to help protect your retirement from the uncertainty of tomorrow. All else being equal, tax-free money is the best type of retirement income. There are three main types of investments that produce tax-free income: life insurance, a Roth IRA or municipal bonds.

So how do you keep the nest egg together?

One way is to reduce taxable income — but don't wait until you are retired. Small changes now can pay off big in retirement, including converting pre-tax money into a Roth account. Qualified distributions from a Roth account are tax-free in retirement. Then you can worry a lot less about what happens with tax brackets in Washington and focus on all of the fun you want to have in retirement.

Like any retirement strategy, tax decisions should be made with a clear understanding of the rules, the impact on your tax situation, and how the strategy fits into your overall retirement vision. Your retirement planner and trusted tax preparer should work together to help you get it right. ■

Information provided by Loren Merkle CFP®, RICP®, Certified Financial Fiduciary®, Merkle Retirement Planning, 1860 S.E. Princeton Drive, Grimes, 515-278-1006. Sources: Bradford Tax Institute. "History of Federal Income Tax Rates: 1913 – 2023." [https://bradfordtaxinstitute.com/free\\_resources/federal-income-tax-rates.aspx](https://bradfordtaxinstitute.com/free_resources/federal-income-tax-rates.aspx). Accessed May 1, 2023.

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# PROPERLY dressed

Whenever my grandfather went to town, he took the time to change out of his farm clothes and put on his “town” clothes.

The concept of changing attire is used by Paul in Colossians 3 to picture an appropriate change in attitude and action on the part of those who become followers of Christ.



“If then you have been raised up with Christ...” (Colossians 3:1) refers to those who are spiritually united with Christ in His physical death and resurrection through faith in His actions as the payment for their sins. Those who are in union with Christ by faith are, “raised to walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:4).

“Resurrection living” means we “seek the things above... set our minds on the things above” (Colossians 3:1,2). We are to be adorned with heavenly attitudes that translate into God-honoring actions. In the spring, homeowners are often focused on lawn care and improvement projects, but a believer’s attention is to be constantly riveted on heavenly pursuits.

Being “properly dressed” spiritually with a focus on the heavenly involves two sets of intentional ongoing choices.

First, we “put aside” sinful, worldly-focused actions like “immorality... greed... anger, wrath... slander and abusive speech” (Colossians 3:5,8). I’m not the guy who sees a spider on the floor, captures it and releases it outside. I dispose of it and any future relatives immediately. Decisive destruction of sin in our lives is what Paul’s admonition conveys. He literally says “put to death” these ungodly practices arising from worldly perspectives.

Gardeners perpetually wage war against weeds just as followers of Christ constantly battle against sin. We recognize our error by comparing our conduct to God’s character and commands. We repent of and then resolve to put our sin to death, request God’s help to continually resist, and rely upon God’s Spirit to overcome. God, who began a good work in us, will complete it (Philippians 1:6).

Secondly, we “put on the new self,” continually choosing to adorn ourselves with heavenly attitudes that result in God-honoring actions. Christ followers dress themselves in “compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience...” (Colossians 3:12). It’s a mistake to think that followers of Christ are automatically or always godly. We must constantly call upon and cooperate with the indwelling Spirit to consistently and accurately manifest Christ-likeness.

I don’t dress up to work outside, but every child of God is to be dressed up in our Heavenly apparel. Daily we choose to put off wickedness and put on righteousness by Christ’s power at work in us. ■

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

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# BENEFITS of a shield trust

Estate planning is about more than just drafting a will or trust. It's also about protecting your money from risks such as long-term care costs. A couple's assets may not last as long as they anticipated — often because one spouse is in failing health and will soon need extra assistance.

Studies show that more than half (52%) of adults will develop a disability serious enough to require long-term care services. On average, women need 2.5 years of long-term care and men require 1.5 years.

In Iowa in 2024, the median monthly cost of a room in a long-term care facility is \$7,452. That kind of expense can be devastating. There are strategies that can help shelter assets and ensure that you or a spouse can pay for long-term care.

One tool to consider is an asset-protection trust, which can help shield you and your spouse from the significant costs of long-term care. A Shield Trust is a unique, highly specialized irrevocable trust that allows you to maintain control over assets while planning for future disability.

Once you establish an irrevocable trust, you deplete your estate of disposable assets, a strategy that eventually will allow you to use



Medicaid assistance to help pay for long-term care costs. The trust can still provide you with income to improve your quality of life. For a married couple, if one spouse needs long-term care, the other spouse won't become impoverished while paying for that care.

Medicaid has a five-year "look-back" period to determine if there have been any violations of the rules regarding the spending-down or transfer of assets, so this strategy requires pre-planning. The shield trust shelters assets transferred to the trust after the 60-month exclusion period. Once you've made it past that five-year period, everything inside the trust should be protected.

The shield trust is a good option for someone who is planning for future disability — because of the 60-month period — and who has purposefully calculated the tax risks.

There are strategies that can help you meet your goals of asset preservation and protection against long-term care costs. Consult with an attorney who will help you understand the complexities of long-term care and then work with you to come up with individualized solutions to help you. ■

Information provided by Gail Barnett, Abendroth Russell Barnett Law Firm, 2560 73rd St., Urbandale, 515-278-0623, [www.ARPCLaw.com](http://www.ARPCLaw.com).

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## 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](http://www.sstherapyandconsulting.com).

## PLAN AHEAD

By Dave Cortner

### PREPAY my funeral expenses? Why?

While payment is never a requirement in order to preplan your funeral arrangements, there are several benefits to paying for your services ahead of time.

First of all, it provides the opportunity to pay for expenses based upon current prices. There are even many payment options, including paying all at once or setting up a payment plan. Prepaying expenses guarantees that prepaid service and merchandise selections will be provided at the time of need at no additional expense to your family. This helps to eliminate any financial stress for your family at a time that will already be emotional.



Second, paying in advance will protect your money from Medicaid, should you outlive your assets and need to qualify for assistance. An irrevocable funeral policy is considered a protected asset.

Third, most funeral homes utilize a funding vehicle where your assets are placed at the time of the preplan. This allows your money to be protected and portable, which means that, even if you move away from the area where you originally made your prearrangements, your prepaid policy can easily be transferred to another funeral home.

There are funding options for people at all ages and in all health situations and, as we all know, the prices for everything only go up as time goes by. So, the sooner you do this, the more opportunity you have to save.

What an incredible gift from you to your family. ■

Information provided by Dave Cortner, Hamilton's on Westown Parkway, 3601 Westown Parkway, West Des Moines, IA 50266, 515-697-3681

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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](http://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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# URBANDALE COUNCIL RECAP



Mayor Bob Andeweg recognizing Sunday, March 31, as Transgender Day of Visibility in Urbandale.

## April 2, 2024 - Council Meeting

The Mayor and City Council met twice on Tuesday, April 2, first holding a public hearing to outline the proposed property tax levy in the upcoming city budget. The City will hold another public hearing on the budget adoption on Tuesday, April 24, 2024. You can learn more about your property taxes at [www.Urbandale.org/tax](http://www.Urbandale.org/tax). The meeting was adjourned a little before 6 PM.

The Mayor and City Council reconvened at 6 PM, and Mayor Andeweg began by administering the Oath of Office to Police Officer Ryan Mincks. The Mayor also read three proclamations recognizing Sunday, March 31, as the Transgender Day of Visibility in Urbandale, recognizing April as

Fair Housing Month, and recognizing April as Arab American Heritage Month.

Toward the end of the meeting, the City Council approved a \$180,000 bid to purchase playground equipment for South Karen Acres Park.

## March 19, 2024 - Council Meeting

The Mayor and City Council met on Tuesday, March 19, and approved a \$2.4 million bid to patch locations along Meredith Drive between 121st Street and 104th Street, as well as on 121st Street. A 10-foot-wide trail is also planned to be installed along the north side of Meredith Drive between NW Urbandale Drive and 104th Street. At the end of the meeting, the Mayor and City Council met in a closed session regarding real estate.

## March 5, 2024 - Council Meeting

The Mayor and City Council met on Tuesday, March 5, and began with a proclamation for Women's History Month. March is a time to celebrate and honor the countless contributions of women, including Urbandale residents Vada Wilson, Elizabeth Williamson, lyleene Lemon, Miriam Cline, Marilyn Kollmorgen, Susann Siebke, and Mary Polson, who have served on the Urbandale City Council; as well as Bridget Carberry Montgomery, Amy Croll, and Patricia Boddy, who are currently serving on the City Council.

The Council approved a bid to patch 91 locations on various streets that are generally located north of Aurora Avenue and East of 86th Street; approved two bids for the purchase, delivery, and installation of playground equipment at North Karen Acres Park and Days Run Park for \$100,000 and \$70,000.00 respectively; and approved purchasing a Toyota Hybrid SUV for \$35,000 for use by the Police Department.

The annual Spring Cleanup event is scheduled for the week of April 15, 2024. The City hires outside contractors and rents additional equipment to help collect the approximately 800 tons of trash that will be set at the curb this year. The City Council accepted a \$29,000 quote for garbage trucks, equipment, and operators to help with Spring Cleanup.

At the end of the meeting, the Mayor and City Council discussed the Complete Streets Master Plan for Aurora Avenue and 70th Street.

# 6 MYTHS and truths about hospice care

People spend a fair amount of time talking about the importance of living well. When it comes to dying well, that's a conversation that's much less likely to be initiated. Anytime is the appropriate time to begin talking with a loved one with a life-altering illness about the fact that hospice care can help ensure quality of life.



If you're wondering if a family member could benefit from hospice care, the information below, compiled with assistance from the American Hospice Foundation, might help you start a discussion.

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

Truth: The hospice conversation should begin before a person is in his or her last days; ideally, it should take place when individuals are

still healthy. Virtually anyone with a life-limiting illness can qualify for hospice care, enabling a person to live life in comfort for the days, weeks, months or longer that remain in his or her life.

**Myth No. 2: Families are discouraged from involvement in a loved one's hospice care.**

Truth: Hospice care can benefit family members nearly as much as it can benefit persons in hospice care. One of the gifts of hospice is its capacity to help families realize how much can be shared at the end of life through personal and spiritual connection.

**Myth No. 3: Hospice is a place.**

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

**Myth No. 4: Hospice is only for persons with cancer.**

Truth: More than one-half of hospice persons nationwide have diagnoses other than cancer. Hospice commonly serves persons who are living with chronic diseases such as emphysema,

Alzheimer's disease, or cardiovascular and neuromuscular illnesses.

**Myth No. 5: Hospice is for people who don't need a high level of care.**

Truth: Hospice employs experienced medical and nursing personnel whose skills and advanced technologies can prevent or alleviate distressing symptoms.

**Myth No. 6: Hospice care is expensive.**

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

Aaron Wheeler is Vice President of Home and Community-Based Services for WesleyLife, which offers health and well-being services through communities and an array of at-home services. To learn more, please visit [wesleylife.org/at-home-services](http://wesleylife.org/at-home-services) or call 515-978-2777.

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**LIBRARY**

By Staci Stanton,  
Programming & Outreach Manager

**URBANDALE Public Library news**

**Neighborhood Finance Corporation**

Learn more about opportunities available to homeowners to complete home repairs or renovations with a \$10,000 forgivable loan through the Neighborhood Finance Corporation on Monday, April 29, at 6 p.m. In an effort to improve neighborhoods, NFC provides unique lending programs and other services to facilitate neighborhood revitalization in Polk County and Cedar Rapids through partnerships with residents, governments, community-based organizations, lending institutions and the business community. This program is made possible through partnerships with the cities of Des Moines, Cedar Rapids, West Des Moines, Windsor Heights, Urbandale, Polk County, and Des Moines and Cedar Rapids area financial institutions and neighborhood associations.



**Sustainability fair**

The Urbandale Public Library has prioritized sustainability through a number of practices, including a partnership with Metro Waste Authority to collect broken holiday lights as well as electronic devices with Eco Cell through Blank Park Zoo.

Building upon these initiatives, we invite the community to join us on Thursday, May 23 from 5:30-7:30 p.m. in the Charles Gabus Memorial Tree Park for our first Sustainability Fair in partnership with Polk County Public Works and the Rain Campaign. The fair will highlight various resources available to the community as they start or continue their sustainability journey. Whether you're planning on purchasing an electric vehicle or looking for ways to start small, there will be a number of organizations that can provide information and resources as well as activities for families with children.

Representatives include the city of Urbandale, Home Solutions of Iowa, Neighborhood Finance Corporation, MidAmerican Energy, Metro Waste Authority, Natural Grocers, Plant Grow Fly, Pocket Prairies of Des Moines, and many more. You can also get an up-close look at electric vehicles from Kia of Des Moines and Charles Gabus Ford. Bring your own water bottle to fill up at the water station provided by Des Moines Water Works and enjoy fresh fruit from Urbandale Hy-Vee. While you're checking out all of the different booths, enjoy music from Robert Deitch, a Country Americana singer and songwriter.

**Donna Kessler Seed Library**

Did you know you can check out up to six packets of seeds from the library? We have a wide variety of veggies as well as pollinator-friendly flowers. Anyone with an Urbandale library card can browse our selection of seeds. We also encourage gardeners to harvest any seeds that they'd like to donate back to the library for others to enjoy. ■

# KAREN ACRES hosts cultural fair

Projects share much about students' cultures.

For many years, students at Karen Acres Elementary School have attended CultureAll events, where ambassadors from different countries have provided assemblies and workshops. This year, school staff was looking for an engaging project in which students could explore other cultures. Their choice? Put on a Karen Acres Cultural Fair. ELL teacher Laura Beth Vander Ploeg and her colleague Tamrin Wibholm felt it would be a great way for students to share their family's culture while still working on their English language proficiency skills in reading, writing, listening and speaking.



A Karen Acres student participates in the cultural fair.

"I love being able to provide experiences where students are academically challenged but also really involved in their work. It makes learning so much easier when they have a purpose and a desire to learn the material," Vander Ploeg says.

Together, the ELL team encouraged students to answer the question, "How do I share my culture in a way that I'm proud of and the community can enjoy?" Students were also given five areas of study to choose from: traditions, music, food, dress and games. They researched their area of study, wrote a script, and chose a public product to present.

Many students chose to make a poster, a diagram, or a replica of an actual artifact. For example, one student shared a game from El Salvador called "Trompo," while another student shared the game "Lotería" from Mexico. Students talked about traditional food and clothing from various countries, and one student shared about henna designs and dress from Afghanistan.

"I think it's important to elevate the voices of students from other cultures as much as possible. It's important to those students and their families, and it's also important to their native-English speaking peers. I also believe it's important for kids, even young ones, to get to practice public speaking. It's a skill that can be scary for all of us, even adults, so when you get to research, practice and perform at a young age, it sets you up for success later on," Vander Ploeg says.

For the first year, the ELL team decided to keep the Cultural Fair small, inviting families of the presenting students and all the Karen Acres classes to attend. Countries represented included Mexico, Vietnam, Myanmar, Peru, El Salvador, Afghanistan, Malaysia, Ethiopia and more. In the end, 30 students presented, about 20 families visited, and more than 200 students in grades K-5 attended.

Vander Ploeg believes that it is a great goal to be able to make the Cultural Fair an annual event and says it would be fun to open the event to the public or have family events. She also hopes to add it to a CultureAll event in the future where students could be teaching alongside the adults.

"The great thing about being a project-based school is that we have a lot of flexibility in events like this, so I think we could definitely make it bigger and better the next time," Vander Ploeg says. ■

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# EVENTS IN THE AREA

To submit calendar items for consideration, send to [tammy@iowalivingmagazines.com](mailto:tammy@iowalivingmagazines.com)

Check for cancellations



## 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 \$5. Enjoy a bloody mary or mimosa for \$3.50. Proceeds support the Elks' Hoop Shoot Program, other youth activities and veteran activities.

## WWI Museum Charter Bus Trip (ages 55 and older)

Wednesday, May 15

The Liberty Memorial Association (LMA) was formed shortly after World War I to create a lasting monument to the men and women who had served in the war. In 1919, The LMA and citizens of Kansas City raised more than \$2.5 million in just 10 days. This is equivalent to more than \$40 million today. The bus trip will visit America's official WWI Museum and Memorial, home to the most comprehensive collection of WWI objects in the world. Included in the fee are transportation via charter bus, gratuity, a tour of the museum and lunch. There will be a stop for dinner, which is not covered in the tour price. Register by calling the Urbandale Senior Rec Center at 515-278-3907 or by visiting [urbandale.activityreg.com](http://urbandale.activityreg.com). Cost is \$109.

## Urbandale Listening Session

Tuesday, April 30, 7 p.m.

Urbandale Senior Recreation Center, 7305 Aurora Ave.

The Mayor and City Council want to hear from you. Join this brief presentation/update on major city projects by department directors followed by time for public comment. Share your ideas, questions, comments, or concerns about Urbandale.

## Mayor's Bike Ride

Saturday, May 18, 9 a.m. start with coffee and donuts at 8 a.m.

Meet at the large shelter at Walnut Creek Regional Park for the Mayor's Bike Ride. Following coffee and donuts, the ride starts at 9 a.m. This is a free event brought to you by the City of Urbandale. Although not required, pre-registration is appreciated so organizers know how many people to expect: [https://urbandale.activityreg.com/selectactivity\\_t2.wcs?leaguesid=4787](https://urbandale.activityreg.com/selectactivity_t2.wcs?leaguesid=4787)



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# EVENTS IN THE AREA

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Check for cancellations

## Urbandale Historical Society reception

June 9, 2-4 p.m.  
Olmsted-Urban House,  
4010 70th St.

The public is invited to a special reception honoring Virginia Gee and Bob Simon. They have been the heart and soul of the Urbandale Historical Society for many years. They will be celebrated and honored for all they have done for the community over the years.



## Ice Cream Social

June 30, 2-4 p.m.  
Olmsted-Urban  
House, 4010 70th St.

The public is invited to enjoy an ice cream social to begin the Fourth of July week's celebrations.

## May Market

May 4, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.  
Olmsted-Urban House lawn,  
4010 70th St., Urbandale

Shop vendors at Urbandale Historical Society's outdoor vendor fair. Accepting applications for vendors now. Contact [maymarket1904@gmail.com](mailto:maymarket1904@gmail.com).

The Olmsted-Urban House, 4010 70th St., Urbandale, is open the first Sunday of every month, 2-4 p.m. for tours.

## History programs

Second Sunday of each month, 2 p.m.  
Urbandale Public Library, 3520 86th St.

The Urbandale Historical Society and the Urbandale Public Library are working together to present monthly history programs. On May 19, the History of the Urbandale Library will be presented by Staci Stanton.

The Olmsted-Urban House, 4010 70th St., Urbandale, is open the first Sunday of every month, 2-4 p.m. for tours.

## Talk With Officials

Saturday, April 27, 10:30 a.m. to noon  
Virtual

In-person attendance is limited at the Urbandale Chamber of Commerce office, but those interested may attend virtually. For more information and registration link, visit <https://businesses.uniquelyurbandale.com/events/calendar> and click on the event link. The Talk with Officials events are open to the general public and held on the last Saturday of the month. Elected officials confirmed to attend include: Urbandale Mayor Robert Andeweg, Sen. Brad Zaun (R), Rep. John Forbes (D), Rep. Eddie Andrews (R), Polk County Supervisor Robert Brownell (R) and Urbandale School Board Jason Menke. ■

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# CLIMATE change initiatives encouraged

Urbandale Climate & Social Justice organization notes progress.

In recent years, Iowa has experienced major floods, prolonged droughts and severe storms. The 2020 derecho cost Iowans \$11 billion in damage, making it the costliest thunderstorm disaster in U.S. history. Many climatologists believe these events are the result of climate change. The city of Urbandale has been fighting back by taking advantage of local initiatives and by working with a group of concerned citizens.

In late 2019, Urbandale science teacher Betty Salmon, recently elected city councilperson Pat Boddy, and former Urbandale resident Linda Lemon began exploring ways to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in Urbandale. Their goal was to work alongside city government.

“We felt we could accomplish more working with the city than against it,” said Salmon.

Kari Carney, executive director of 1000 Friends of Iowa, an organization dedicated to promoting responsible land use and sustainability in Iowa, offered to help. The result was the Urbandale Climate & Social Justice organization.

“Cities and local organizations know they have to change how they do things if they want

to survive the impact of climate change,” says Carney.

During the COVID-19 lockdowns of 2020, UC&SJ developed a series of online webinars to explore climate change issues. The group soon found a partner in the city of Urbandale. John Konior, director of Risk Management/Support Services for Urbandale, says Urbandale has initiated programs that reduce energy costs and lower greenhouse gas emissions. This includes purchasing electric vehicles plus adding solar panels and geothermal units to government buildings

“UC&SJ has been a useful sounding board for the city, as I believe we have been for them, on climate change issues,” says Konior.

Another successful program, the Polk County Grow Solar project, was developed when UC&SJ joined with the city and other organizations to offer residents substantial discounts on the purchase of solar panels at no cost to taxpayers. Between 2022 and 2023, 13 Urbandale homes participated in the project, creating more than 124 kilowatts of new solar

power — more than any other community involved in the project.

UC&SJ also advocated for Urbandale to contract with the University of Northern Iowa for a Greenhouse Gas Emissions study. Following significant input from the city, the research discovered the greatest share of greenhouse gas emissions in Urbandale (nearly 36%) came from transportation.

Other cities have approached the problem by building walkable cities, improving public transportation, and incentivizing the purchase of electric and hybrid vehicles.

“We now know what efforts the city can make that will give us the most ‘bang for our buck,’” says Boddy.

To learn more about climate change initiatives, contact UC&SJ at [ucsj2020@gmail.com](mailto:ucsj2020@gmail.com) or follow them at [www.facebook.com/share/o2C6HzAFaRwz5wV8/?mibextid=qi2Omg](https://www.facebook.com/share/o2C6HzAFaRwz5wV8/?mibextid=qi2Omg). ■

*Wayne Bruns is an Urbandale resident and member of Urbandale Climate and Social Justice.*



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📍 1329 SW Ordance Rd. Ankeny, IA

☎ 515.964.9492

# NEWS BRIEF

## FLAG designs shared for public review

Urbandale residents are once again invited to participate in the process to adopt a new flag for Urbandale. After a thorough review and selection process, the Flag Design Committee presents the top five designs to the community for review, feedback and rating.



These five flags represent the culmination of months of collaboration and creativity from students, residents, historians and design experts. Each design embodies the rich history, values and aspirations of the Urbandale community.

An online survey for residents to review the flag designs and provide feedback is now open. The survey period will close at noon on Monday, April 22. This feedback will play a crucial role in determining the flag that will ultimately represent Urbandale for generations to come. For more information and to access the survey, visit [www.urbandale.org/flag](http://www.urbandale.org/flag).

More than 430 flag design submissions were received. The new flag will be unveiled at the Mayor's State of the City Address on Thursday, June 27. ■

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# OUT & ABOUT



Shade Tree Auto celebrates its brand new location in Ankeny. The Ankeny Chamber organized the ribbon cutting.



Mike Fierro, Paul Kennedy and Cale Driskill at the Shade Tree Auto ribbon cutting for its new location in Ankeny.



Troy Kuhn and John Frunzar at the Shade Tree Auto ribbon cutting for its new location in Ankeny.



Molly and Henry Dudley at the Shade Tree Auto ribbon cutting for its new location in Ankeny.



Kyle Lee and Keith Riden at the Shade Tree Auto ribbon cutting for its new location in Ankeny.



Urbandale Chamber held a ribbon cutting for new chamber member Walter Roofing, 8450 Hickman Road Suite 27, Clive, on March 22.



Owners Jesse and Shelease Rittenhouse and Jane Nady at the Urbandale Chamber ribbon cutting for Walter Roofing on March 22.



Kyle Lee and Dennis Lane at the Urbandale Chamber ribbon cutting for Walter Roofing on March 22.



Nick Myers, Chris Jones, Jacob Armstrong and Steven White at the Urbandale Chamber ribbon cutting for Walter Roofing on March 22.



Matt Ferriss and Quentin Zart at the Urbandale Chamber ribbon cutting for Walter Roofing on March 22.

# GRAND Opening

Dog Training Elite Des Moines celebrated the grand opening of its new location, 8801 University Ave. Suite 22-D, Clive, with the Urbandale Chamber and FuseDSM.



Dog Training Elite Des Moines celebrated the grand opening of its new location, 8801 University Ave. Suite 22-D, Clive, with the Urbandale Chamber and FuseDSM.



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Kimberly Cameron, Jane Nady and Cannady Fritzkunjer



Sarah Meyer



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