

Living

MAGAZINE



The gift of a future

Residents share their stories of organ transplants

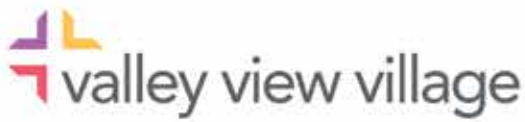
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WELCOME

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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The gift of a future

Residents share their stories of organ transplants

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). Those fortunate enough to receive a transplant are given not only a gift of health, but of hope — and a future to enjoy.

Jill Dare next to her nephew, Jesse's, Circle of Life sign at the Green 5K.

Family honors loved one's wish

Jill Dare's nephew, Jesse James Johnston, was 21 when he died from injuries sustained in an automobile accident.

"On Nov. 18, 2006, we were told that Jesse had no brain activity and would not survive," says Jill.

Jill's sister and Jesse's mom, Janeen Marchant, was asked if Jesse was a donor.

"She said she did not want his organs donated, but since he was 21, they needed to look at his driver's license," Jill says.

When authorities checked, they found Jesse had indeed indicated he wanted to be an organ donor. In fact, Jesse had made that decision just two days prior. He had just gotten a new license needed to begin trucking school.

"That evening, he was struck by a vehicle while out with friends in a hit-and-run accident," Jill says. "Our family, extended family and friends all camped out at Mercy Hospital in Des Moines, praying he could be saved."

Though Janeen was initially reluctant to donate Jesse's organs, she wanted to honor his wishes, Jill says.

"Jesse went on to save four lives that day with five of his organs," she says.

Jesse's family met two of those recipients.

"I know that Jesse's heart recipient, Terrell Jordan, Sr., was not given much time and needed a heart right away," Jill says, adding that Terrell was a 35-year-old youth minister and father of five.

Another recipient, Kelly Van Dyke, received one of his kidneys. Kelly had been on dialysis for a long time. She was given six more years of life with Jesse's kidney before her death in 2012.

"Terrell's heart is still beating as fast as it did the day he received it. It has been almost 18 years since Jesse gave Terrell his heart," says Jill, adding, "Terrell participates in the Organ Donor Olympics for Team Iowa. He has won basketball, track and long jump medals."

In 2014, on Jesse's "Angelsversary," the day that Jill's beloved nephew, she believes, became an angel, Jill gave birth to twins, Jackson and Zoey Dare.

"Every birthday, we honor Jesse somehow, whether we release balloons, light a candle, or, one year, we even had sparklers, and say a prayer."

Jill considers herself a "donor aunt" and has advocated for organ donation for many years.

"I love volunteering my time," she says.

Jill has been the team captain for the Green



Jill Dare, her sister and Jesse's mother, Janeen Marchant, and Jesse's younger sister, Tiffany Gourd, at the Iowa Donor Network 25th Anniversary Luncheon.

5K since 2010 for Team Jesse James.

"I will forever remember my nephew and continue walking in the Green 5K, volunteering and advocating for the Iowa Donor Network," she says.

Because of Jesse's example, many who knew him have signed up to be organ donors.

"I think Jesse would want others to follow his selfless act and make the life-saving choice to declare themselves organ donors. We sure miss you, buddy," Jill says. "There is no day I don't think of you."

Enjoying being a grandpa

Karl Anderson and his wife, Nancy, are grandparents of three. His first experience with organ donation was when his sister, Linda, died from a brain aneurysm in 2001. She was 46.

"They came into the room and talked to our family about donating her organs," says Karl. "It was one of the hardest decisions ever. Linda was a caring person and always willing to help anyone. So, it was decided to give the gift of life to others."

Fifteen years later, it would be Karl in need of someone's gift of life.

In 2015, Karl found himself short of breath getting in and out of the combine during harvest. In January 2016, he decided it was time to see a doctor. The first thought was that his heart was being affected.

"By June, the doctors figured out I had non-alcoholic fatty liver disease. I was told in time I would probably need a liver transplant," Karl says.

The need for a liver transplant is based on a MELD score of 0–40.

"At that time, mine was 12; a MELD score of 15 qualified a person for transplant," he says.

In January of 2017, Karl's MELD score went to 15, qualifying him for a liver transplant.

"In April 2017, we went for three days for evaluation at UNMC — the University of



Jill Dare listens to the heart her nephew donated beating in the chest of the recipient, Terrell Jordan, Sr.

How to become an organ donor

Register with the DMV or register online at the Iowa Donor Network website, 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.

Nebraska Medical Center in Omaha — to see if I qualified for transplant," he says.

Before Karl left Omaha, he was put on oxygen because his illness was affecting his lungs.

"I had to flood my lungs with oxygen so they could absorb it," he says.

When Karl returned home, he and his family prepared "go-bags" so they would be ready to head to the hospital at a moment's notice. Throughout the year, Karl's dependence on oxygen grew.

"In October, my MELD score jumped to 22," he says.

Karl made it through harvest that year by putting four tanks of oxygen in the combine in the morning and replacing them at noon with more.

“I was sleeping more than awake,” he says. “My body was starting to shut down. It got to the point that I wrote my obituary and details for my funeral on my phone.”

The day before Thanksgiving in 2017, Karl and his family received a call at 3 a.m. notifying them that a liver was available.

“My wife, Nancy, drove me to Omaha by 7 a.m.,” Karl says. “My son, Kevin; his future wife, Stef Anderson; daughter, Nora, and husband, Simon Burke, made it before I went into surgery.”

The days after the transplant were difficult.

“During my stay, there were many ups and downs,” says Karl. “I went back and forth from the ICU to the fifth floor several times.”

Nancy was by Karl’s side through it all.

“Our family made weekend visits, which were special pick-me-ups, especially seeing our grandson,” he says. “If not for the gift transplant, I probably would not have made it to Christmas in 2017. But after 90 days at UNMC, we went home on oxygen.”

In July of 2018, Karl was able to be taken off oxygen.

Writing a letter to the donor family was the



Thanks to a liver transplant, Karl Anderson has been given years to enjoy with his wife, Nancy, and their grandchildren.

hardest thing Karl says he ever had to do.

“What do you say to a donor’s family? How do you convey gratitude? How humbling it is that I am still here because someone, some family, gave the gift of life to me,” he says.

Karl wrote but never heard back from the donor’s family, which was understandable to him.

“There’s not a night I go to sleep or a day I wake I don’t think about the donor or their

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family,” he says.

In the years since Karl’s transplant, he’s seen his son get married and welcomed two new granddaughters. Nancy and Karl have enjoyed traveling.

“I’m still farming, maybe just not going as fast as I used to,” he says. “Playing with our grandkids — Maggie, 3; Lylla, 5; and Anderson, 6 — is priceless. You’re never too old — I’m 64 — to play hide-and-seek.”

Karl shares that his experience made him realize every moment with his family is precious.

“Don’t worry about the little things; take one day at a time,” he says.

Nancy and Karl try to spread the importance of organ donation.

“We are telling anyone who wants to listen of the journey of organ donation we have been on,” Karl says. “We try to give back a little by volunteering for the Iowa Donor Network.”

Karl and Nancy hand out information and bracelets at events for the Iowa Donor Network, have talked to the Lions Club about the organization, and Nancy makes blankets for donors’ families.

Gift for a friend

Almost two years ago, Toni Turck donated a kidney to Nikki Webb, a high school friend. The two graduated from Southeast Polk in 1998.

“I’m still in Altoona, and she now lives in Pennsylvania. I gladly tell our story,” says Toni.

Nikki had posted on social media about her condition and that she was on the transplant list for a kidney. She asked others to consider donating a kidney or sharing the post for others to consider.

“I immediately thought, ‘I have been lucky enough to be healthy my whole life. It would be amazing to help a friend who is also a mother,’ ” says Toni. “I could not imagine being unable to do the things with my child that she was missing out on.”

Toni says the most challenging part of donating a kidney comes before the surgery, with lots of testing.

“Finding out if I was a match and approved to donate was challenging — the pain and depending on others to help with everyday tasks,” she says. “But those were temporary.”

Toni wants others to consider donating a



When Toni Turck found out high school friend Nikki Webb needed a kidney transplant, she readily volunteered and was glad to give Nikki the chance to enjoy being a mom.

kidney if they can.

“Please consider donating. The procedure is intense, but the outcome is one of the best feelings,” she says. “And I, the donor, have had no change in my lifestyle. It’s totally worth it. And if you aren’t comfortable being a living



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donor, please consider becoming an organ donor when you pass away.”

Nikki was in end-stage renal failure after being diagnosed with IGA Nephropathy. She would not survive without dialysis or a transplant.

“I was put on dialysis and immediately started all the testing to get on the transplant list,” Nikki says. “I was sick, weak, and needed a lot of assistance. The hardest part was asking for help, accepting, and letting others do things for me.”

Nikki admits that looking for a donor was a huge physical and mental roller coaster. At one point, she went through the process to receive a kidney only to find out at the last minute that the kidney was no longer available.

“It was a long, quiet drive back home from Iowa City to Bondurant for my mom and me,” Nikki says.

Nikki’s husband, Mike, their boys and the rest of her family, friends and even strangers were praying for her. Nikki’s life drastically

changed once the prayer for a new kidney was finally answered.

“I started feeling better/different only a couple hours after waking up from the transplant surgery,” she says, adding she is grateful she does not have to miss out on any more of her life. “I was given a second chance at life. I can be the mom my boys deserve.”

Nikki and her husband, Mike, celebrated their 20th wedding anniversary a couple years later with a trip to the Dominican Republic.

“This would not have been possible without my kidney transplant,” she says. “I went back to work this year. It was hard to leave teaching for a year, but I love being back in the schools.”

Nikki is grateful for the support of her former community and her friend, Toni.

“I thank God for blessing me with a new kidney and encourage everyone to at least be an organ donor. Toni is so selfless to be willing to give me this great gift. I still can’t believe all the people willing to be tested to see if they matched me,” she says. ■

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 about IDN, visit www.iowadonornetwork.org.



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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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RESIDENTS form Strong Towns Altoona group

A local group is working to make a difference in the Altoona community.

Strong Towns Altoona is a collective initiative by Altoona residents dedicated to enhancing the city's safety, livability and attractiveness for all, with a particular focus on the wellbeing of children.

Shana Palmer, one of the founding members, says the group emerged from the desire of three community members to foster greater community involvement through the Strong Towns Local Conversations network, which is committed to making local government a key collaborative partner in community development. The founding members aim to educate the community on local governance, including zoning, budgeting and traffic engineering, connecting these policies to daily concerns like reducing screen time for kids or addressing development issues.

"Strong Towns Altoona will implement a strategic approach focused on observing community challenges, identifying immediate and actionable solutions, and executing these actions promptly," Palmer shares. "This methodology is designed to equip residents

with the necessary knowledge and tools to actively participate in civic processes, including city council meetings and urban planning. By educating the community on topics such as traffic calming measures, the group aims to broaden the conversation around neighborhood safety and development."

Community members can support and get involved with Strong Towns Altoona by attending monthly meetings at the Altoona Public Library and participating in online engagements via the group's Facebook page. The initiative will use these platforms to disseminate information, encourage dialogue about local issues and mobilize residents around actionable projects designed to improve Altoona.

The National Strong Towns Organization recommends that Local Conversations groups such as Strong Towns Altoona be managed by several leaders from all walks of life. Thus, the group is led by three individuals who collectively bring diverse expertise and a shared commitment to enhancing local governance.

Shana Palmer, a healthcare professional, has advocated for pedestrian and child safety; Wade Wagoner, a city administrator from Colfax, brings

governance experience; and Chad Ratashak, a 2023 city council candidate, is driven by a desire to increase community engagement in policy making. Their leadership underscores the importance of grassroots involvement in local government as a means to bring substantial, positive changes within the community.

"The initiative's strength lies in its adherence to the Strong Towns philosophy of practical, incremental action to foster community development and civic engagement," Palmer says. "By facilitating a broader understanding of local governance and advocating for sustainable urban policies, Strong Towns Altoona aspires to create a cohesive community of residents working together to improve their city."

While Strong Towns Altoona will not engage in political endorsements or campaigning, it stands ready to support individuals interested in pursuing local office by providing insights into the electoral and governance process. This stance reinforces the group's dedication to education and empowerment rather than political advocacy, aiming to foster a well-informed and active citizenry capable of contributing to Altoona's growth and resilience. ■

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the daily umbrella

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ALTOONA'S RESIDENTIAL TREE SALE PICKUP

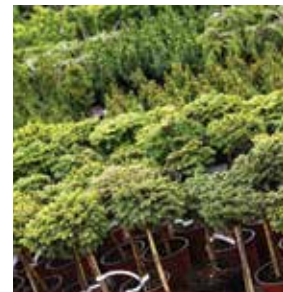
In recognition of Arbor Day, the City of Altoona is selling a limited supply of trees to residents who live within Altoona City limits, with a limit of 2 trees per household.

The remaining trees being offered include Serviceberry and Bald Cypress. The trees will be 3/4" to 1" caliper in a 7 & 10-gallon pot. The cost is \$30 per tree. (NO GUARANTEE)

Pre-sale of the trees began on March 4 at Altoona City Hall, 900 Venbury Dr. SW Suite A. Sales continue until they are fully reserved, or until the pick-up event occurs.

Trees can be picked up at the Altoona Aquatic Center parking lot at 1200 Venbury Dr. on Saturday, April 27, from 9 - 11 a.m.

This program is sponsored by the City of Altoona and Iowa Native Trees and Shrubs and Gerdes Nursery INC.



FINAL SPRING BRUSH DROP-OFF

The final resident brush drop-off event for this spring will be held on Saturday, May 4 from 8 a.m. – Noon. Following this event, two drop-off events will be held in the fall on the first Saturdays in September and October.

As always, the brush drop site is for Altoona residents only, absolutely no contractors are allowed, and we only accept branches, limbs and trunks smaller than 12" in diameter. No leaves or bushes are allowed.

To locate the brush drop-off, enter the Utilities Department service road from 8th Street SW. Continue south on the road, past the Utilities Department buildings, and continue up the hill. The brush drop-off will be on your left.



TRAFFIC SHIFTED ON 8TH ST SE

As of April 5, traffic has shifted on 8th St SE to travel on the newly paved roadway near Sam Wise Sports Complex. Because of this change to traffic, the intersections with Wren Drive and Falcon Drive will be blocked at 8th St SE until construction ends.

The intersection of 8th Ave SE and 8th St SE has reopened with the traffic switch, as have the parking lots at Sam Wise Sports Complex. Access to Dairy Queen and the Clover Ridge Apartments will be maintained and usable throughout this construction work.

For the latest on this project, please visit www.altoona-iowa.com.

SPRING CREEK ADAPTIVE BOAT LAUNCH OPEN

A new boat ramp, dock and canoe and kayak launch is ready for residents at Spring Creek Park's South Pond. The dock and canoe and kayak launch are accessible and can be used by adaptive boaters.

A special event to officially open the launch for use was held on April 16. Future events showcasing water safety are planned for the future and will be shared on the city's website and social media accounts.

Please note that recreationists are limited to using small boats with no motor, or electric motors on this waterway.



HYPER Energy Bar celebrates grand opening

Hyper Energy Bar announced the grand opening of its newest location at 640 36th Ave. S.W., Altoona, next to B-Bop's. During the grand opening, Hyper Energy Bar raised a donation of \$2,100 for the Southeast Polk Education Foundation. This contribution will support curricular enrichment, student programs, scholarships and projects beyond the traditional funding avenues of the district.

"We are proud to be a part of the vibrant Altoona community and to contribute to the educational advancement of its youth," said Chris Whalen, CEO at Hyper Energy Bar. "Our partnership with the Southeast Polk Education Foundation reflects our belief in the power of education and our commitment to making a meaningful difference in the lives of our students, many of whom are valued members of the Hyper team." ■

OBERTO announces book release

Shelba Oberto announces the release of her latest book, "On My Way Home," a 28-page children's Christian fiction that addresses the belief in an eternal home. Oberto says it was written to encourage children after the loss of a loved one. "When we have to say goodbye to a grandparent, parent, child, sibling or friend, we can find comfort in the knowledge that we may one day see them again because this is not our final home," she says.

Oberto says her life story is of a Missouri girl who met a Des Moines boy, Steve, at college in Illinois. After graduating, they taught school in Missouri for two years before moving to Iowa and continuing their teaching careers at Southeast Polk and Mingo.

"I completed my master's degree from Drake University during those years," she says. "Then, after a total of 38 years of teaching, I retired from the Colfax-Mingo School District. It was then that my dream of writing children's books became a reality."

"On My Way Home" is her third children's book.

Oberto and her husband live in Altoona near their daughter's family. She enjoys writing, reading, walking, coin collecting, working jigsaw puzzles (by the hours), traveling and attending church and family activities.

"On My Way Home" is available through Amazon. ■



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WHEN GOD doesn't answer

Have you ever asked God for something, and he said, "No"? Why is that? While I don't have the full answer, here is some perspective that may help. In Matthew 6:9, Jesus teaches us to pray, "Our Father in heaven..." Here Jesus introduces God as a good Father. Notice what he doesn't say: "Our Genie in heaven..."



Genies have captured people's imaginations for centuries. What if there was a way to get whatever you wanted? Instantly?

Think about the difference between a genie and a good father. A genie blindly gives whatever is asked for. A father uses discernment. If you ask for a million dollars, a genie automatically gives it. A good father discerns if you are ready for the responsibility. Jesus says we don't have a genie in heaven, but a good Father, who is wise and discerning.

However, God is much more than a good earthly father. He is unfathomable, beyond our comprehension. In Isaiah 55:9, God says, "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts." There's a massive gap between our brains and God. We have such limited capacity to see the big picture. Like a toddler who can't understand why he can't play with the knife and throws a fit because his dad says no... I must remember: I'm the toddler. Compared to God, I have the capacity of a toddler to understand.

That's why part of prayer is surrender, acknowledging that God knows better than we do. And yet there's real pain when God says "no." Bring the pain of the "no" to God. That's prayer, too. Tell God about your confusion and disappointment. But also listen. What is God saying?

In the early 1900s, Thomas Chisholm was a news editor, but, after becoming ill, he lost his job. He recovered enough to study and became a pastor. But his health problems returned, and he was forced to leave after only a year. Having lost two careers, he struggled to support his family. I'm sure Thomas prayed during this time, asking for healing and asking why he hadn't received it. Even in his pain, Thomas kept listening to God. One night, reflecting on who God is as a good Father, he wrote these words:

"Great is Thy faithfulness
 "Great is Thy faithfulness
 "Morning by morning new mercies I see
 "All I have needed Thy hand hath provided
 "Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me."

Thomas didn't get everything he asked for in prayer, but he did get God's faithfulness. When God says, "no," remember what you have: new mercies every morning. Great is His Faithfulness. ■

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

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COMPELLING reasons to refinance

The most popular reason homeowners refinance their mortgage is typically to reap the benefits of a lower rate. However, there are other reasons to refinance that can be beneficial and are worth looking into.



Switch your mortgage type or term:

When you initially purchased your home, you chose the length of time and kind of loan. Perhaps you chose a 15- or 30-year term and a fixed rate or adjustable-rate mortgage (ARM). Consider if your circumstances or financial goals have changed since then. Maybe you have an ARM and are anticipating a rate increase, so you would rather switch to a fixed-rate mortgage for rate stability and consistent monthly payments. Or maybe you have a fixed rate already, but the original term was set for 30 years, and you would like to switch to 15 years to pay your mortgage off faster.

Another situation could be that you now

qualify for a VA home loan, which offers benefits like no private mortgage insurance and possibly lower interest rates to veterans, service members and eligible surviving spouses. If so, it might make sense to refinance and take advantage of those benefits.

Access funds: If you have sufficient home equity, you may want to consider cash-out refinancing that allows you to refinance for more than your current mortgage balance. This is different than a home equity line of credit — although this option is still a good fit for many homeowners — in that cash-out refinancing sometimes offers a lower interest rate and replaces your existing mortgage.

Mortgage refinancing process

Step 1: Research and compare lenders:

Compare reputable lenders and their mortgage refinancing offers. Research interest rates, fees and customer reviews.

Step 2: Gather documentation: Prepare the necessary documentation, including proof of income, credit reports and details about your

current mortgage.

Step 3: Apply for refinancing: Submit a refinancing application to the lender you choose. Be prepared to provide follow-up information and respond promptly to any requests for additional documentation. The quicker you can provide all the necessary documentation, the smoother the process will go.

Step 4: Appraisal and underwriting: The lender will typically conduct an appraisal to assess the current value of your home. The underwriting process involves a detailed review of your financial information to determine loan approval.

Step 5: Closing: If your loan is approved, you'll attend a closing meeting where you sign the new loan documents. At that time, you pay any closing costs, and the new mortgage officially replaces your old one. ■

Information provided by Lori Slings, Bankers Trust, NMLS ID: 406021, 3820 Eighth St. S.W., Altoona, 515-245-5624, lslings@bankerstrust.com, BankersTrust.com/LSlings, Bankers Trust NMLS ID: 440379.

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EVENTS IN THE AREA

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

Be sure to check for cancelations.

Zagazig Shrine Chocolate and Champagne Dinner

April 27, 5:30-11 p.m.
Holiday Inn Downtown - Top Floor, 1050 Sixth Ave., Des Moines

This black tie event will feature a menu of fire grilled 8-ounce filet mignon with steak butter or fire grilled fresh Atlantic salmon topped with lemon and chef's special sauce with a side of vegetables, side of potato, rolls with butter and a salad. Enjoy a chocolate fountain with assorted dipping items, chocolates from Stam and various cupcakes. Champagne, water, lemonade and iced tea will be available and a full cash bar. Cocktail hour starts at 5:30 p.m. with dinner at 6:30 p.m. A silent auction will be held from 5:30 to 8:30 p.m., followed by a live auction and dance until 11 p.m. Tickets are \$75 per person and \$500 for table of eight. For information and tickets, visit www.simplertix.com/e/chocolate-and-champagne-gala-tickets-157130.

Brush Drop Off

May 4, 8 a.m. to noon

To locate the brush drop-off site, enter the Utilities Department service road from Eighth Street S.W. Continue south on the road, past the Utilities Department buildings, and continue up the hill. The brush drop-off will be on your left. The brush drop-off is for Altoona residents only. Please have information identifying you as a resident ready when you drop off brush. Only branches and small diameter (12 inches or less) trunks are allowed. No leaves or bushes allowed.

Alzheimer's Association program

Monday, May 13, 7-8 p.m.
Lions Park, 507 13th Ave. S.W., Altoona

The Alzheimer's Association of Iowa will hold a program at Altoona Lions Club meeting. The topic is 10 Healthy Habits for Your Brain.



We Give a Ram Kentucky Derby Party

May 4, 5-11:55 p.m.
Copper Creek Golf Course, 4825 Copper Creek Drive, Pleasant Hill

Last year, this party raised \$18,000 to help SEP students/families in need through Swerve Outreach and Altoona Kids Cafe. This is a community event with the desire to help those who could be struggling right in our own neighborhoods. Ticket link available at www.altoonachamber.org/events/we-give-a-ram-kentucky-derby-party.

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Live music events in Altoona

- May 3, 8 p.m., The Detour Band, Finish Line Show Lounge, Prairie Meadows. Must be 21 or older. Free admission.
- May 4, 7-9 p.m., Josh Sinclair, Brightside Aleworks, 480 Center Place
- May 4, 9-11:55 p.m., The Unfortunate Sons, Hawk Heaven Tavern, 805 17th Ave. S.W.
- May 7, 11 a.m., Kowboy Kix, Finish Line Show Lounge, Prairie Meadows. Must be 21 or older. Free admission.
- May 10, 10 a.m., Dan Trilk, Finish Line Show Lounge, Prairie Meadows. Must be 21 or older.
- May 11, 10 p.m., Tommy Browder & The Country River Band, Finish Line Show Lounge, Prairie Meadows. Must be 21 or older. Free admission.
- May 14, 11 a.m., Dale Menning & The Stardusters, Finish Line Show Lounge, Prairie Meadows. Must be 21 or older. Free admission.
- May 17, 10 p.m., Recoil, classic rock and pop, Finish Line Show Lounge, Prairie Meadows. Must be 21 or older.
- May 18, 6-9 p.m., Casey Peasley, Brightside Aleworks, 480 Center Place
- May 18, 10 p.m. Duke Tumatote & The Power Trio, blues band, Finish Line Show Lounge, Prairie Meadows. Must be 21 or older. Free admission.
- May 21, 11 a.m., Clarksville Station, classic country music, Finish Line Show Lounge, Prairie Meadows. Must be 21 or older. Free admission.
- May 24, 10 p.m., Royce Johns, country music, Finish Line Show Lounge, Prairie Meadows. Must be 21 or older.
- May 25, 10 p.m., Lincoln Highway, contemporary country, Finish Line Show Lounge, Prairie Meadows. Must be 21 or older.



Altoona Music in the Park

Last Sundays of the month, May through August, 6 p.m.
Haines Park Outdoor Stage, 700 Block of Third Ave. S.E.

Enjoy free concerts in the park monthly during the summer, May 26, June 30, July 28 and Aug. 25. Sponsored by Altoona Parks and Recreation Board. CAP Theatre will provide popcorn and pop for sale to support the children's theatre.

Michael Jefry Stevens and Christian Howes

Sunday, May 5, 2 p.m.
Caspé Terrace, 33158 Ute Ave., Waukee

Over the past 40 years pianist/composer Michael Jefry Stevens has been associated with some of the most important figures in modern jazz. Ranked among the top violinists in jazz, Christian Howes has demonstrated his virtuosity and creativity on numerous recordings since the early 2000s. As evidenced by their 2023 release, "Precipice," when you combine these two improvisers, you end up with pure beauty and joy in every note. Tickets for Jazz at Caspé Terrace concerts are \$30 each and can be ordered by calling 515-279-6452 or emailing abegold1951@gmail.com. You can also purchase tickets at jazzatcaspe.weebly.com. Seating is limited to 130 so reservations are encouraged. Caspé Terrace is owned and operated by the Jewish Federation of Greater Des Moines.

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.

Central Iowa Wind Ensemble presents 'Lollipops & Posies'

Sunday, May 5, 3 p.m.
Franklin Events Center, 4801 Franklin Ave., Des Moines

Step into a world of musical brilliance and artistic triumph with the Central Iowa Wind Ensemble's grand season finale concert, "Lollipops and Posies." Get ready to be mesmerized by an enchanting afternoon filled with captivating melodies, exhilarating performances, and a celebration of talent that will leave you in awe. The concert features the iconic band piece "Lincolnshire Posy" by Percy Grainger and a selection of familiar popular themes from movies and Broadway. Admission is free but tickets are required and are available at www.ciwe.org. ■

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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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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MEET Raegan Little

Helping kindergarten students make great strides

After graduating from the Bondurant-Farrar School District in 2019, Raegan Little attended DMACC and then Iowa State University where she earned a bachelor's degree in elementary education. While at Iowa State, Little was a substitute and student-teacher at the Southeast Polk Community School District. When a position opened in the spring of 2023, she applied and accepted her first teaching position as a kindergarten teacher. Now, Little works at Four Mile Elementary School and says she couldn't imagine starting her career at any other school or any other district.



Raegan Little started as a substitute teacher and student-teacher at Southeast Polk and now teaches kindergarten.

"I love how Southeast Polk is always student-first. We work each day as a community to provide the best education and experiences we can for our students. Beyond the education they receive, students are prioritized as people. I have the joy of getting to watch my kindergarteners become unique and special people," she says.

Little likes working with students at the kindergarten level because they are just starting their learning journey. At the start of the school year, her students learn about letters, how to count, and how to write their names. By the end of the school year, this evolves into reading whole books, counting higher than they ever thought, and writing multiple sentences.

"Seeing the joy on their faces as they discover how far they have come is the most rewarding part of my job. It's the first time they're discovering that they are capable of amazing things," Little says.

One activity Little started with her students is called "Star Student." Each week, a student has the opportunity to be a leader in their classroom, and the student gets to design a poster that tells the class all about them. During the week, the student also gets to lead activities that Little would normally lead. Little says this not only gives her students the opportunity to be a leader themselves, but also gives them the opportunity to see their peers as leaders.

"The biggest reward of my year has been creating relationships with my students and their families. Growing up, I knew that I wanted to be a teacher. Having a classroom full of students that I get to call mine is so special and rewarding," Little says.

When not teaching, Little enjoys spending time with her nieces and nephews, reading and going on walks. Little is excited for the summer to arrive so she can enjoy the warm weather with friends and family. ■

LIBRARY welcomes new children's librarian

Hello, Altoona!

I'm Caitlin Lombardo, the new children's librarian at Altoona Public Library.

I grew up and went to school in Iowa, so I'm very excited to be back in the area. I went to the University of Iowa (Go Hawks!) and received a BFA in photography and a BA in journalism with the dream of being a photojournalist.

I graduated in 2011, smack in the middle of the recession. I thought a lot about what I loved about journalism — the idea that everyone has the right to read and the right to access information. This is also the main tenet of librarianship. In 2015, I decided to go back to school and get my masters in library information science.

While working on my degree, I got a job at DoSpace, a technology library in Omaha. I learned a lot there about technology and maker equipment, including laser cutters and 3D printing as well as other additive manufacturing processes. I also learned a lot about teaching people of all ages how to engage with this technology.

I graduated in 2017 and got a job offer in Lincoln, Nebraska. So I packed up and headed west. During my time in Lincoln, I did a bilingual storytime, STEM programming, grew the Maker Space, worked with teens on programming and collection development, and chaired the community read program One Book One Lincoln.



When I got the job offer in Altoona, I knew I had to jump at the opportunity to move back to Iowa. I'll be spending a lot of time during the library closure working with Miss Amber to plan loads of fun events for Summer Reading. We're excited to Color Your World when we reopen. I'm looking forward to getting to know all the kiddos and families of the Altoona area. ■



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HEALTH

By Dr. Kari Swain and Dr. Elizabeth Ellrich

SMALL changes lead to wellness lifestyle

When deciding to take control of your health and start living a wellness lifestyle, sometimes starting with small changes can be easier and more manageable. There are many small choices you can make every day that, when added together, can lead to major health shifts. Here are some simple choices you can make to start your family's path to wellness.

- **Eat protein for breakfast.** Protein for breakfast provides more than energy and nutrients, it also elevates mood. It jumpstarts the metabolism and helps maintain blood sugar levels throughout the day.
- **Beat the afternoon slump.** Keep your water bottle nearby, have healthy snacks on hand, or go for a walk to get some fresh air.
- **Take a deep breath.** Breathing calms your body and reduces stress. Do a mini-meditation when you feel stress rising. Close your eyes and do three full inhale-exhale breath cycles.
- **Sleep.** Go to bed 30 minutes earlier. Work to get to eight hours each night. Sleep recharges your cells and restores energy.
- **Drink water.** Drink half your body weight in ounces of water a day. Swap out sugary and caffeinated drinks for water. Add citrus fruits, berries or cucumbers to your water for a flavor infusion.
- **Schedule a chiropractic evaluation.** Subluxations interfere with the messages between the brain and the body. Chiropractic adjustments remove subluxations and allow the body to return to a state of full health. A family wellness chiropractor will do a thorough evaluation to determine a plan of action to restore health and work closely with you to help you achieve your health and wellness goals. ■

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

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HEALTH

By Nikki Morgan

SKIN cancer and melanoma

May is National Skin Cancer & Melanoma Awareness month, promoted annually to raise awareness of the symptoms, causes, risks and treatment of skin cancer in its various forms. One in 50 Americans will develop melanoma in their lifetime, making it the deadliest type of skin cancer in the United States.

Melanoma arises from pigment-producing cells (melanocytes) when they are damaged by ultraviolet radiation and sunlight exposure. This type of skin cancer does not discriminate against age, gender or skin type. Genetic factors like fair skin, family history and eye color, can all indicate increased risk for melanoma.

The good news is, there are many ways to prevent melanoma, and everyone can take steps to reduce risk. Avoid tanning beds — ALWAYS. Seek shade whenever possible and keep covered with light, non-reflective clothing and broad-rimmed hat. Use broad-spectrum sunscreen with an SPF 30 or greater and reapply every two hours.

Melanoma is most treatable when detected early, so performing regular self-exams to look for new, changing or suspicious moles can be crucial to your health. Self-examinations should focus on all areas from head-to-toe. If you have a partner, ask for help when checking hard-to-see areas, like your back or scalp. If you notice irregular spots or other changes in the skin, such as itching or bleeding, seek out a board-certified dermatologist ASAP. A yearly professional skin exam is also recommended, particularly if you have risk factors and a personal history of any other type of skin cancer. ■

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



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HEALTH

By Ashley Powell

CBD and THC for managing chronic pain

Chronic pain is a pervasive issue affecting millions globally, challenging patients and healthcare providers alike. In recent years, hemp-derived cannabinoids like CBD (cannabidiol) and THC (tetrahydrocannabinol) have emerged as promising alternatives for managing chronic pain safely and effectively.



CBD, extracted from industrial hemp plants, interacts with the body's endocannabinoid system, influencing pain perception and inflammation. Research indicates CBD's potential in alleviating various forms of chronic pain, including neuropathic pain, arthritis and migraines. Its non-psychoactive nature makes it a desirable option for individuals seeking relief without the euphoric effects associated with THC.

Conversely, THC, derived from hemp with controlled THC levels, also plays a role in pain management. Despite its psychoactive properties, THC has shown efficacy in reducing chronic pain, particularly neuropathic pain and pain related to conditions like multiple sclerosis. When administered responsibly and under appropriate guidance, THC can offer significant relief without adverse cognitive effects or risk of dependency.

To ensure safe utilization of THC, careful titration of dosage based on individual factors such as weight, age and tolerance is essential. Additionally, opting for products with balanced THC-to-CBD ratios or incorporating CBD alongside THC can help mitigate psychoactive effects while maximizing pain-relieving benefits. ■

Information provided by Ashley Powell, CBD American Shaman, 800 S. 50th St., No. 106, West Des Moines, 515-380-5251, and 3418 Eighth St. S.W., No. 3, Altoona, 515-967-4036. Reference: Hammell, D C et al. "Transdermal Cannabidiol Reduces Inflammation and Pain-Related Behaviours in a Rat Model of Arthritis." European Journal of Pain (London, England) vol. 20,6 (2016)

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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.

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SENIOR By Stephanie Proper

OPTIONS for living with higher levels of care

Last month we briefly explained some of the differences between independent living and assisted living. This month, let's focus on higher levels of living. Here are some options for when your loved one may need more continuous supervision to remain independent, whether that's on a short-term or long-care basis.



• **Skilled care or short-term rehabilitation:**

Skilled care is often utilized after a major health event or surgery, such as a stroke or knee replacement. This is a short-term option, often no longer than a 14- to 20-day stay. During this time, nursing care and in-house therapy are provided to promote healing and improve strength to assist the patient to be more successful at home.

• **Long-term care:** Long-term care (formerly known as nursing home care) is an option for those who have serious health concerns, personal needs or disabilities that require them to have assistance with many or all activities of daily living (ADLs). ADLs are tasks such as going to the restroom, walking, personal grooming, dressing and more. Although services can still be scheduled, long-term care offers more "services on demand" instead of part-time/intermittent scheduled care, like an assisted living environment. The goal of long-term care is to help maintain normal everyday life with additional assistance. Long-term care helps provide emotional, physical and spiritual care for the remainder of your life.

• **Hospice:** Hospice care helps improve the quality of life of those with a terminal illness. Hospice has an interdisciplinary team including chaplains, music therapists, nurses and more. Taking advantage of hospice benefits does not mean that the patient will pass away tomorrow. This service supports and promotes quality of life, for not only the client, but their family. "Graduating" from hospice is possible, meaning a patient could improve to the point that they are no longer imminently terminal.

• **Respite care:** Some people are able to provide a higher level of care for their loved one in the home. However, caregiver burnout is very real. Respite care is short-term relief for the primary caregiver and short-term care for our loved ones. This can mean a stay in a nursing home for several days or weeks. There are also adult day programs that offer weekly or daily activities, which is a great option for short-term relief.

Last, but definitely not least, there are some wonderful non-medical home health options available as well. These would allow your loved ones to stay in their home longer, while still offering supportive services. Not only can this benefit your loved one, but it also means a much needed and deserved break for you. ■

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

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Van Oort

POLK COUNTY SUPERVISOR

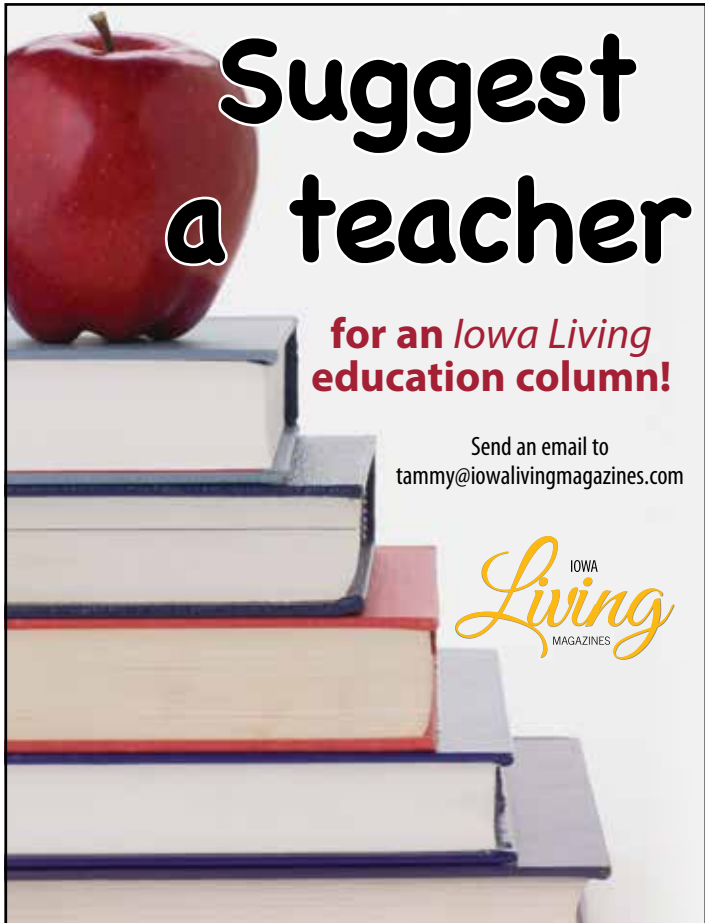
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THE APPEAL of entrepreneurship

In the whirlwind of corporate life, I stumbled upon a hidden passion — one that blossomed unexpectedly amid the chaos of boardroom meetings and endless emails. It began as a simple side hustle, a creative outlet to escape the monotony of nine-to-five life. Little did I know, it would soon evolve into a full-blown love affair — a journey of self-discovery, creativity and unwavering determination.



Making my way into the world of wedding stationery was accidental — a chance encounter with a friend in need of wedding stationery sparked the idea. With a love of design and all things creative, I eagerly took on the challenge. What started as a small project soon snowballed into a flourishing side business.

As evenings and weekends became consumed by designing, printing and paper folding, a realization dawned upon me. This wasn't just a hobby; this is what I was meant to do. The joy of bringing dreams to life through wedding stationery was unparalleled — a feeling of fulfillment that no corporate paycheck could ever match.

With each passing day, the divide between my corporate career and my newfound passion grew wider. The appeal of entrepreneurship drew me in — a life filled with purpose, creativity and the freedom to pursue my dreams on my own terms. And so, fueled by a sense of adventure and an unwavering determination, I made the leap — bidding farewell to the security of a steady paycheck to pursue my passion for wedding stationery full-time.

The transition wasn't without its challenges. There were doubts, fears and moments of uncertainty along the way. Yet, with each obstacle, I found strength in my passion, resilience in my creativity, and comfort in the unwavering support of loved ones. Armed with determination and fueled by the desire to make my own mark, I dove headfirst into the world of entrepreneurship.

Today, as I reflect upon my journey, I am filled with gratitude for the opportunities seized, the challenges overcome, and the countless lessons learned along the way. What started as a humble side hustle has blossomed into a thriving business — a testament to the transformative power of following one's passion.

As I craft personalized stationery for couples around the world, I am reminded of the incredible journey that brought me here. With each client conversation and each fold of the paper, I am living my dream — a dream ignited by entrepreneurial spirit, fueled by passion, and guided by the unwavering belief that anything is possible when you dare to chase your dreams. ■

Information provided by Alyssa Knudsen, 2024 Altoona Area Chamber of Commerce President and owner of Altar Stationery.

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ANNUAL Dinner

Altoona Chamber of Commerce Annual Awards Dinner was held on April 5 at Terrace Hills Event Center.



Maggie Crabb and Brigid Ernst



Brittani Corbin and Amy Ferguson



Carolyn Devine and Claire Strickland



Kayla and Eric Vanderploeg



Nic and Angela Jones



Brett McAllister, Natalie Brady and Nikki and Mike Morgan



Kelaia Garcia, Stephanie Caceres, Karen Yerena, Courtney Clark and Abby Brown



Nikki Barkhaus, Johanna Hayes and Azra Kolz



Tim Jones, Kylee Walker, Robin Bartalos, Allison Keyser, Heather Aguilera and Jody Jackson

OUT & ABOUT



Andrew Frana at Altoona Perk Before Work at Mend Integrative Wellness on March 5.



Tyler and Hollie Finders at Altoona Perk Before Work at Mend Integrative Wellness on March 5.



Liv Wendt and Tammy Jones Christensen at Altoona Perk Before Work at Mend Integrative Wellness on March 5.



Chad and Maggie Crabb at the Altoona Chamber of Commerce Annual Awards Dinner on April 5 at Terrace Hills Event Center.



Christine Clark and Rola Gomez at Altoona Perk Before Work at Mend Integrative Wellness on March 5.



Jake Campbell and Hollie Finders at Altoona Perk Before Work at Mend Integrative Wellness on March 5.



Tim Jones and Robin Bartalos at the Altoona Chamber of Commerce Annual Awards Dinner on April 5 at Terrace Hills Event Center.



Matt and Danette Forest at the Altoona Chamber of Commerce Annual Awards Dinner on April 5 at Terrace Hills Event Center.



Kaylie Fields and Charity Kline at the Altoona Chamber of Commerce Annual Awards Dinner on April 5 at Terrace Hills Event Center.



Howard and Christine Clark at the Altoona Chamber of Commerce Annual Awards Dinner on April 5 at Terrace Hills Event Center.



Roxann and Mike Crabb at the Altoona Chamber of Commerce Annual Awards Dinner on April 5 at Terrace Hills Event Center.



Sara and Bill Gustoff at the Altoona Chamber of Commerce Annual Awards Dinner on April 5 at Terrace Hills Event Center.

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