

NORTH POLK

JUNE 2024

Living

MAGAZINE

FOUR SEASONS Festival

Join the fun in Polk City,
July 19 and 20

Students help clean up tornado damage

EDUCATION

Motsch family's outdoor space is what dreams are made of

WHERE WE LIVE

Shrimp, broccoli and potato skewers with lemon and thyme

RECIPE

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Thank You Polk City High School FFA Class!

A heartfelt thank you to Mr. Waddingham's FFA class at North Polk High School for their outstanding work in revitalizing the garden beds on Polk City Square. Your hard work, dedication, and passion have brought new life and beauty to our community space.

Special thanks to the talented students who made this transformation possible:



Sam Adams
Jeff Argueta
Rylie Campbell
Lucas Clefisch
Noah Cleghorn
Colton Drey
Ruby Feters
Maddi Henrichs
Lane Jensen
Nathan Larson
Nick Moeckly
Jaycie Monson
Jacob Mundt
Marissa Richardson
Lilly Smith
Blaine Speas
Tyler Thompson
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WELCOME

IT'S WHAT we do

Most of us who grew up in rural Iowa communities have a great deal in common, whether we spent any time on a farm or not. We swam in gravel pits. We knew the difference between dinner and supper. And we called our fizzy drinks pop, not soda.

We also know the strength that comes from connecting — and not via Facebook or Snapchat or Nextdoor. We do it the old fashioned way. We break out the lawn chairs, we share our favorite foods or beverages, and we talk.

Yes, some things have changed. Our front porches may have changed to backyard decks. Our neighbors may no longer be our cousins. And gravel roads and fishing ponds may be more difficult to find. But we still relish the spirit of community, and we live it, too.

This is apparent in our ongoing support of our community festivals. Most all of us smile when we think of the midway amusement rides, the demolition derbies and the tractor pulls we experienced in our youth. We can still taste the corn dogs, the cotton candy and the church stand cheeseburgers. And despite them being available seemingly every weekend somewhere in central Iowa, we still get giddy over fireworks.

The good news is that we don't have to reminisce about the good old days. They are alive and well right here, and we can experience many of those moments soon without leaving town. Turn the pages of this magazine, and you will find all the details you need to know about Polk City 4 Seasons Festival.

So give Netflix a rest. Get off Instagram. And save the pre-packaged meal for another day. It's time to get out and see your friends and neighbors in person, listen to the festival sounds, and enjoy some local food, beverage and entertainment. Just don't forget your lawn chair.

Thanks for reading. ■

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FOUR SEASONS *Festival*

Join the fun
in Polk City,
July 19 and 20



By Lindsey Giardino

It's back!

Mark your calendars for this year's 4 Seasons Festival, set to take place Friday, July 19 and Saturday, July 20.

This vibrant event, held in the heart of the city, celebrates the community spirit and unique charm of Polk City, offering a variety of activities and entertainment for all ages.

"It's really more than a celebration," says Staci Allen, executive director of Go Polk City Chamber of Commerce. "It's a chance to bring the community together," as well as a "platform" for local businesses to showcase what they are about.

This year's festival is more like events of the past.

"We're taking it back to what it used to be pre-COVID," says Allen. That means a fuller schedule that in recent years, including the return of the Bill Riley Talent Search. Mainstage entertainment will also feature a new act — a professional storyteller. With a lineup of live music and "tons of activities," Allen says 4 Seasons Festival will be a great event for all ages.

The 4 Seasons Festival's parade lineup includes local bands.

Polk City 4 Seasons FES^T 2024

July 19 & 20 2024 | Polk City Town Square

The fun begins

The festival kicks off on Friday with a golf tournament at Tournament Club of Iowa. The shotgun start begins at 9 a.m. Then plan to join for a happy hour at the golf course, starting at 2 p.m.

Events on the Square will kick off at 5 p.m., including The Peoples Band on the main stage.

Saturday is the big day.

Back this year is the 4 Seasons Festival 5K/8K race. Participants can run or walk. And for younger kids, there's also a junior 2.5K run/walk being offered. The race begins bright and early at 7:30 a.m.

The festival parade kicks off at 10 a.m. and winds through city streets — from Washington Avenue down Broadway Street to the Square — showcasing floats, marching bands and community groups. This colorful



Inflatables and a kids zone provide entertainment for families.

procession is a highlight for many and brings together residents and visitors in a shared celebration.

At 12:30 p.m., the annual 4 Seasons Festival Bill Riley Talent Show begins. This is a qualifying round for the Bill Riley Talent Search held at the Iowa State Fair.

Throughout the weekend, local bands and musicians will take the stage, providing a diverse musical experience that appeals to all tastes.

Food lovers will also enjoy a wide array of offerings available at the

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festival. Local food trucks and vendors will serve up a variety of delicious dishes, from classic festival fare like funnel cakes and corn dogs to more unique and gourmet options. There will also be a designated area for local artisans to display and sell their handmade goods, providing a perfect opportunity to support local businesses and find unique treasures.

The 4 Seasons Festival is designed to be enjoyed by attendees of all ages. Families can participate in a range of activities, including bounce houses, games and face painting. There will be a dedicated kids zone with interactive activities and entertainment to keep the little ones engaged and happy.

Community involvement

One of the key aspects of the 4 Seasons Festival is the strong sense of community involvement. Volunteers play a crucial role in the festival's success, and there are many opportunities for residents to get involved, from helping with event setup and logistics to assisting with activities and ensuring everything runs smoothly.



Festival favorites include live music and a variety of food vendors.

"We are always looking for volunteers," Allen says, and those interested are encouraged to sign up on the website.

As the date approaches, excitement continues to build for the 4 Seasons Festival 2024. This annual event not only provides a

weekend of entertainment and fun but also strengthens the bonds within the community, making it a beloved tradition for all who attend.

For more information and to get involved, visit gopolkc.com/four-seasons-festival. ■

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The parade is one of the 4 Seasons Festival highlights.

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KIWANIS Club of Polk City Seniors of the Month

Kayden Levi Steinick and Ben Bryant have been selected as the final Kiwanis Club of Polk City Seniors of the Month.

Kayden Levi Steinick

"My name is Kayden Steinick, and I am the son of Kris and Kellie Steinick of Elkhart. I have three siblings: one older brother, Konnor, and two younger brothers, Keegan and Calvin. We also have many pets. I enjoy hands-on activities, such as woodworking and carving, and spending time outdoors. I'm also an avid gamer. I have participated in Scouts and 4H, as well as archery and have been a part of the Central Iowa Scholastic Shooters, which has taught me values such as good sportsmanship, responsibility, safety and teamwork. I enjoy volunteering at school activities and have had the opportunity to job shadow at several places including the Bondurant Fire Department, Tinker Tooling, and even hands-on maintenance and flying an airplane at the Ankeny Regional Airport. I have learned many life skills through the activities and opportunities I've participated in."

Kayden's favorite school subject is science, and he plans to pursue a career in the fire science industry.



Ben Bryant

"I've been wrestling and lifting for as long as I can remember, and these have been the activities that define me ever since. I enjoy wrestling and working out and the discipline and work that this requires. Being a competitive wrestler and powerlifter has taught me a lot about myself and required me to make sacrifices with friends and family, but the lessons regarding discipline, work ethic and grit are things that I would not have learned otherwise."

Ben is the son of Kim and Steve Bryant of Polk City. He has three siblings, Taylor, Whitney and Jessie. He has been a national champ in powerlifting and state finalist in wrestling. After graduation, he plans to wrestle and study finance at Grand View University. ■



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THE COMETS CORNER

NEWS FROM NORTH POLK CSD

JUNE 2024

NPCSD ANNOUNCES NEW CENTRAL ELEMENTARY PRINCIPAL

After receiving approval from the board at the regular May meeting, we are thrilled to officially announce the next building principal at Central Elementary, Mrs. Whitney Longtin! With prior administrative experience at Ankeny Schools, Whitney will be a valuable addition to our team.

Longtin said, "I am honored to be joining the amazing staff and students at Central Elementary and the community of North Polk."

The district attracted a strong pool of candidates. Out of 37 applicants, 13 were screened, and 4 were selected as finalists for on-campus interviews with stakeholders.

Longtin has spent 16 years within the Ankeny School District and currently serves as the K-5 Assistant Principal

at Southeast Elementary in Ankeny. In addition to this role, she was a school administration manager, instructional coach, and 3rd grade and kindergarten teacher.

Throughout her years at the elementary school level, she has been committed to being a servant leader by building staff and student relationships, creating a safe learning environment, and collaboratively working toward the overall growth and direction of a building and the community.

We are looking forward to a smooth transition for Whitney over the next month as she will officially begin



duties starting on July 1, 2024.

"I am so excited to start this journey with North Polk helping to lead, empower, and support our students to reach their full potential! Go Comets!" Longtin said.

Please welcome Whitney and her family to North Polk!

NPCSD COMMUNITY SURVEY - 2024

We want to hear from you! As we reflect on the past school year and set our sights on the future, we are eager to gather your valuable feedback. Your thoughts, viewpoints, and feedback play a significant role in guiding the path of our district, schools, and community. Therefore, we are seeking your input on various topics related to academics and learning, facilities updates, culture and safety, and communication through our annual Community Survey.

With that in mind, we ask for a few moments of your time to complete a brief survey. This survey is open to everyone in the community and can be easily accessed by scanning the QR code with your phone.

To finish the school year, we would be remiss if we did not to be sure and express our immense gratitude and extend a huge thank you to our district families for their unwavering partnership and continuous support of the district and our staff, as well as for your ongoing cooperation amidst unexpected schedule changes. We hope everyone has a great summer!



SEE THE
ACTIVITIES
CALENDAR



SUMMER MEALS

We know the summer months can cause challenges to families in our district. That's why we wanted to make everyone aware of USDA Summer Meal Programs. This initiative is working to provide access to free meals to anyone 18 and under in Central Iowa. To access these meals, and find a site nearest to you, families may text "FOOD" to 304-304, put in your address, and the closest meal site will be sent to you.





POLK COUNTY | Leading the Way

Serving a diverse Central Iowa community, Polk County is among the nation's most innovative public institutions. We bring together creative leaders, collaborative organizations and key resources to empower our communities and make life better for all people in Polk County.

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POLK COUNTY
Board of Supervisors



Polk County North/East Highlights

The Polk County Board of Supervisors are responsible for approving funding for numerous projects throughout the county. Funding of projects comes from gaming revenues generated with our partnership with Prairie Meadows Racetrack and Casino. The funds support Polk County Community Betterment Grants and Community Development Grants to enhance the quality of life throughout Polk County



Polk County Opens Athene North Shore at Easter Lake Park

In May, Polk County Conservation dedicated and opened the new Athene North Shore at Easter Lake Park. The redesigned and reimagined park is the most all-inclusive park in the United States. The new park features include: ADA accessible pontoon boat, quiet, de-escalation rooms for people with sensory input disorders, large beach mats to serve as accessible walkways over sand and extra-wide concrete paths for wheelchairs and walkers.

Learn more: PolkCountyIowa.gov/Conservation



Goodrell Elementary Unveils New Sensory Mural with Funding from Polk County

Goodrell Middle School introduced a new sensory mural and wellness room created by Jill Wells Art LLC + AXA Mentorship Program in collaboration with the B. WELL Foundation. This art and wellness space is the latest addition to Goodrell's counseling and mental health offerings. It is a student-inspired and student-invested project that provides a uniquely reflective experience during the day for students to de-stress and return to the classroom feeling less anxious and emotionally refreshed for continued learning.



Snow Tubing in July? Now You Can

Imagine the thrill of tubing down a giant hill with wind flying in your face -- in the middle of July! That imagined future is now a reality in Des Moines. Polk County Conservation has reopened Sleepy Hollow Sports Park which includes the largest all-season, turf-surface tubing hill in the United States. Now that the all-season tubing hill is up and running, Polk County Conservation's focus will shift to preparing for traditional snow-based recreation. Additionally, staff will be making decisions on remodeling the lodge facility, improving access, and expanding camping operations.



Polk County Central Iowa Source Water Research Study Underway

Our two rivers, the Raccoon and Des Moines, are one of our communities greatest assets with more than 240 miles of shoreline. These rivers play a significant role in central Iowa's local economy, culture, recreation community and overall identity. The rivers are the primary source of drinking water for over one-half million people. Right now, a two year study called the Central Iowa Source Water Research Assessment (C.I.S.W.R.A.) is underway to give us a better picture of what is in our water. A team of nationally renowned scientists are working to give us a comprehensive look at the cleanliness of our rivers and streams. Once complete in 2025, CISWRA will provide a road map for community leaders to create policies and best practices to cleaning our waterways and protecting this vital resource for future generations.

SCRUMPTIOUS ways to simplify springtime meals

(Family Features) From everyday weeknight dinners to picnics in the park, warmer weather and longer days mean families want to spend more time together and less time in the kitchen. This spring, look for kitchen hacks that can make fresh and healthy weeknight seasonal recipes a cinch.

Skipping complicated prep work is the first step toward simplifying springtime meals. Rather than recipes that call for a lot of prep or cooking time, consider easy dishes that require only a handful of steps and use everyday ingredients you may already have in your pantry, fridge or freezer.

For example, these shrimp, broccoli and potato skewers with lemon and thyme can let you put a little spring in your weeknight dinners. Grilled skewers keep the whole family happy and come together in less than 30 minutes, making them perfect for quick and healthy meals without the hassle. The versatility of potatoes means you can grill them, and this version calls for a 5-minute microwave steam first to cut down on grill time.

To find more ways to savor springtime meals outdoors with your family, visit littlepotatoes.com. ■

Shrimp, broccoli and potato skewers

Prep time: 5 minutes

Cook time: 20 minutes

Servings: 4

- 1 pound bagged Little Potatoes
- 1 bunch broccoli
- 12 large shrimp, peeled and deveined
- 1 1/2 lemons, juice only
- 3 tablespoons fresh thyme, chopped
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- salt, to taste
- pepper, to taste

DIRECTIONS

- In large, microwave-safe bowl, microwave potatoes on high 5 minutes.
- Chop broccoli into large pieces.
- Add broccoli and shrimp to bowl once potatoes are steamed.
- Add lemon juice, thyme and olive oil; evenly coat potatoes, shrimp and broccoli. Season with salt and pepper, to taste.
- Build skewers and grill 10-15 minutes on medium-high heat, until shrimp is cooked through.



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DON'T WANT senior living?

That's a great choice — but plan ahead.

The results of a recent study tell us a full 93% of people want to remain at home as they age. No senior living communities for them. They fully intend to grow older in the comfort of the places they love and in which they can continue to live independently.

It's likely that, as you read that, you ask yourself: Why wouldn't that be what someone would want? Why wouldn't that be what I would want? The saying "Home is where the heart is" is widely known for a reason.

The reality, though, is that living at home indefinitely isn't always within the grasp of every person with that desire. Although an enhanced societal focus on wellbeing is assisting many people in aging more healthfully than previous generations have, chronic challenges such as diabetes and heart disease can make living independently ill-advised, and full-time care at home can be prohibitively expensive.



So, if you aren't able to live at home, and you don't want to move into a community for people 55 and older, what can you do? Great news: Some organizations that serve older adults have come up with some new options — Continuing Care at Home (CC@H) programs designed to help people proactively focus on their health at home while enabling them to financially plan for potential services and care down the road.

If you're evaluating a CC@H program, consider asking these starter questions to make sure its premises, amenities and outcomes will be the best ones for you.

• **Do you fully understand the program and what it offers you at the current time?**

The primary advantages of a good CC@H program are twofold: Not only will it offer services and amenities to enhance your wellbeing so you can remain independent longer, but it will also help fund future long-term care needs.

• **Does it provide personal support?** Studies tell us people who embark on any kind of life-altering program or activity, such as a nutrition or exercise regimen, will be exponentially more successful with encouragement from a trusted

adviser or advocate (think personal trainer, life coach, etc.). A program that provides you with a written guide but no personal interaction may not be setting you up for success.

• **What will your care options be?** A solid program will help fund your care, if it's needed, whether through home healthcare or services in a senior living community later. If the program you're considering does offer both, make sure you're comfortable with the services and care provided by the organization's home healthcare team as well as in its communities. A reputable provider will have longevity behind it.

The ability to consider a variety of options is great — but if you're thinking about becoming part of a CC@H program, make sure it fits your current and future needs. Your health, wellbeing, and checkbook will thank you for it. ■

Aaron Wheeler is Vice President of Home and Community-Based Services for WesleyLife, which provides health and well-being services, including WellAhead — A WesleyLife Well-Being Experience, a CC@H offering designed for people who never want to move to a senior living community. To learn more, visit wesleylife.org/wellahead.





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NO GREATER LOVE
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SUMMER Reading fun continues through July 31

• **Closures:** The library will close at 5 p.m. on Wednesday, July 3, and will be closed Thursday, July 4. It will close at noon on Friday, July 19, and be closed all day on Saturday, July 20 for the 4 Seasons Festival.

Polk City Community Library
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www.polkcitylibrary.org

• **Log your reading:** Kids, teens and adults: The last day to log your reading and enter your tickets for prizes is Monday, July 31. Grand-prize winners will be announced on Monday, Aug. 5. Prizes must be claimed by Aug. 31.

• **Summer Cinema, July 8, 15, 22 at 10 a.m.** Each Monday, we will show a movie in the Library's multi-purpose room that will be fun for the whole family to watch. July 8: "Disney Nature: Earth"; July 15: "Fern Gully"; July 22: "The Bee Movie."

• **Story Time Tuesdays, July 9, 16, 23 at 10 a.m. or 11 a.m.** Join us at the library for stories, songs, bubbles and a craft or activity. Weekly registration is required. Registration will open on Tuesday of the previous week.

• **Comets Kids Club (grades K-5), Wednesdays, July 10, 17, 24 at 10 a.m. or 11 a.m.** Join us at the library for fun arts and crafts activities. Weekly registration is required. Registration will open on Wednesday of the previous week.

• **Wednesday Book Club, Tuesday, July 2, 7 p.m.** Note that, due to the holiday, July's Wednesday Book Club will be on Tuesday, July 2. Join us to discuss the graphic memoir "Ducks: Two Years in the Oil Sands" by Kate Beaton. With the singular goal of paying off her student loans, Katie heads out to take advantage of Alberta's oil rush. Katie encounters the harsh reality of life in the oil sands, where trauma is an everyday occurrence yet is never discussed.

• **Monday Book Club, Monday, July 15, 2 p.m.** Join us to discuss "Dewey: The Small-Town Library Cat Who Touched the World" by Vicki Myron. On the coldest night of the year in Spencer, Iowa, at only a few weeks old, he was stuffed into the return book slot of the Spencer Public Library. For the next 19 years, he never stopped charming the people of Spencer with his enthusiasm, warmth, humility (for a cat) and, above all, his sixth sense about who needed him most.

• **Adult Crafternoon: Butterfly Puddlers - Sponsored by Polk City Women, Tuesday, July 9, 2 p.m.** Join us for a fun afternoon of crafting. We will be making decorative butterfly puddlers, which give pollinators a spot to rest and rehydrate in your garden. All supplies will be provided. Ages 17 and older, registration required.

• **Coloring Night at Fenders Brewing, Wednesday, July 10, 4-9 p.m.** Come for a night of relaxation and fun with friends at Fenders Brewing.

• **Friends of the Library Meeting, Wednesday, July 10, 6:30 p.m.** The Friends of the Polk City Community Library have four scheduled meetings per year. All meetings are open to members and the public. Anyone interested in supporting the library is welcome and encouraged to attend.

LIBRARY

• **Absolute Science Mega Foam Blaster - The Friends of the Library Thursday Summer Children's Performers Series, July 11, 10 a.m., on the Square.** Have a FOAM-tastic time with Absolute Science's Foam Blaster. Their dry stacking foam evaporates for easy cleanup. It is non-slippery, non-toxic, non-staining, non-allergenic, bio-degradable and promises to be a blast.

• **Adult Coloring, Tuesday, July 16, 5 p.m.** Ages 17 and older. Join us for a relaxing evening of coloring. Colored pencils and gel pens will be provided. You are also welcome to bring your own.

• **Twice-Loved Book Bingo, Wednesday, July 17, 6 p.m.** B-I-N-G-O! We'll be playing bingo with book-themed cards, with secondhand (twice-loved!) books as prizes. Ages 17 and older, registration recommended.

• **Absolute Science - Fantastic Foam - Sponsored by Fareway, Thursday Summer Children's Performers Series, Thursday, July 18, 10 a.m. at Luana Savings Bank.** Absolute Science is making a grand return with another FOAM-ulated experience. This show will amaze you and could even make your hair stand on end. Witness disappearing items, liquid magic, and the impressive power of a Van De Graaff generator.

• **TeenTime: Fantasy Creature Garden - Sponsored by Re/Max Torres Team, Thursday, July 18, at 2 p.m.** Gnome, Fairy or Dragon? Whatever mythical creature you adore, design a garden tailored to your whimsical fantasy creature of choice. Register online at polkcitylibrary.org

• **Local Author Visit with Robert Kerr, Thursday, July 18, 6 p.m.** Hear Polk City author Robert Kerr discuss his books and his craft. Robert writes books full of history and mystery, such as "A Tidy Little Mess: A Bree Madsen Mystery" and "Completely Restored."

• **Adult Evening DIY: Nature Centerpieces, Thursday, July 25, 6 p.m.** We will be making nature-themed centerpieces using discarded library books and faux greenery. All materials will be provided, but you're welcome to bring your own natural findings to use in your piece. Ages 17 and older, registration required.

• **ISU Insect Zoo - Sponsored by Ankeny Sanitation, Thursday Summer Children's Performers Series, July 25 at 10 a.m. at Luana Savings Bank.** You are invited to check out more than 100 species of living arthropods. Knowledgeable Insect Zoo staff will talk about why our multi-legged friends are important for a healthy Earth, how you can help them in your own outdoor spaces, and how you can "spread the bug love." Hands-on opportunities to handle millipedes, beetles, roaches and more. Bring in photos of bugs to be identified or even the bug itself.

• **TeenTime: Nailed IT - Sponsored by Re/Max Torres Team, Thursday, July 25 at 2 p.m.** Test your decorating skills. You'll be given one hour to decorate a mini-cake to match the original design cake perfectly. Let's find out who can NAIL this challenge. Register online at polkcitylibrary.org.

• **Adult DIY Card Crafting, Monday, July 29, 6 p.m.** Join Jane and Kim in making handmade cards that are fun to create and are treasured by the recipients. There will be a \$5 material fee payable that night. Beginners are welcome. Feel free to bring scissors and adhesive, if you have them, and prepare to have a good time! Ages 17 and older. Register online at polkcitylibrary.org one month in advance.

• **Ladies' Wednesday Coffee, Wednesdays, 10 a.m. to noon**

• **Sit N' Stitch, Thursdays, 6-8 p.m.** Bring your current project and join us for stitching and conversation.

• **Men's Friday Coffee, 10 a.m. to noon. ■**



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WHAT ARE cataracts?

Cataracts are a common eye condition where the lens of the eye becomes cloudy, leading to impaired vision. This condition primarily affects older adults but can occur at any age due to various factors such as genetic predisposition, eye injuries or diseases like diabetes. The lens, a transparent structure behind the iris, focuses light onto the retina, enabling clear vision. When cataracts form, the lens' clarity diminishes, causing blurred vision, difficulty seeing at night, and sensitivity to light.



The development of cataracts is usually gradual, and symptoms can vary from mild to severe. Initially, one might experience slight blurring and glare from lights, but, over time, reading, driving and recognizing faces can become challenging. Regular eye examinations are helpful for early detection and management.

Treatment for cataracts often involves surgical intervention, especially when vision impairment affects daily activities. Cataract surgery is a safe and effective procedure where the cloudy lens is replaced with an artificial lens. This outpatient surgery typically has a high success rate and can significantly improve vision and quality of life.

Preventive measures include wearing sunglasses to protect eyes from UV rays, maintaining a healthy diet rich in antioxidants, and managing underlying health conditions. By understanding cataracts and their impact, individuals can take proactive steps toward maintaining optimal eye health and seeking timely medical care. ■

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



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STUDENTS help clean up tornado damage

"Serving others" was the greatest lesson learned.



North Polk High School students helped families clean up after White Oak was hit by a tornado.

A devastating tornado ripped through the community of White Oak on May 21, and some of the families impacted were those of students attending North Polk Community Schools.

Two days later, hundreds of North Polk high school students went to the aid of the folks in White Oak, assisting with clean up.

NPHS Principal Seth Poldberg says 250 students arrived in three busloads for two different shifts of work. It was a regular school day, yet Poldberg felt the lessons learned while helping out were much greater than those learned sitting in a classroom.

"We thought this was a bigger opportunity and didn't want to miss it," he explains. "We had to take action quickly."

More students would have helped, but the seniors were already finished with classes. The middle school baseball and softball teams assisted after school as well. Nearly every high school student participated.

"All the kids volunteered. It speaks highly of our students," he says.

Poldberg says they sprang into action quickly, as current students were already at home dealing with the aftermath of the tornado.

The students went to work, picking up debris from homes and lawns and moving limbs to piles. With debris scattered in cornfields, students found pieces of buildings hundreds of yards away. They sorted items into piles of salvage, dumpster and personal belongings. Families gave direction on where to place items from their homes.

Teachers also assisted with the volunteer work. Families and businesses donated water and snacks to the volunteers. Later, the families affected received gift cards and other support.

Poldberg says it was "all hands on deck."

"We had athletes, non-athletes and students eager to help. Kids were shocked to see how bad the devastation was. We had a derecho a few years back, but this affected people's homes."

He says the biggest takeaway went beyond the actual cleanup.

"Foremost, we wanted to help families, but the greatest lesson learned was how to serve others," he says.

Poldberg is in his fifth year as principal of the high school, which has 650 students. After the cleanup, he received many emails from families, thanking the kids for assistance.

"It was extremely positive, an outpouring of appreciation," he says.

As principal, he says he is grateful for his students.

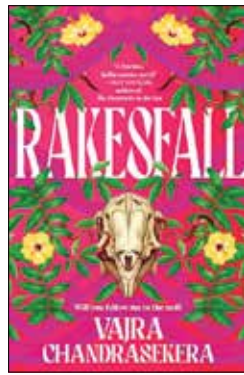
"As a leader, I was super proud of the kids. People say what makes North Polk special is the kids. It surpassed our expectations," he says. "As we grow, this helps hold on to our traditional values of honoring the community. I'm super proud to be part of North Polk." ■

'Rakesfall'

There's a school of thought that there are only a handful of stories in the world, and everything else is just a retelling or mishmash of those few tales. I'm not philosophical enough to argue the concept, but something about this dark and glorious novel makes me think this couldn't possibly be true. Something this unique must be brand new.

This is the fragmented tale of two friends, Annelid and Leveret, who become soul-bound in the midst of war. Together, they live through endless lifetimes — growing, changing, learning- and holding on to each other. This is a grand celebration of fantasy, science fiction and the strange. The story is nonlinear and doesn't always follow a clear path, but it is worth the effort. The lyrical, astounding prose and glorious imagery give way to a stunning piece of literature that changed me for the better.

I like finding beauty in the shadows. There's something grand and universally human in the urge to find a light in the darkest of times. For me, that light often comes in the form of stories — and this book blazes. ■ — *Review by Julie Goodrich*



By Vajra Chandrasekera
6/18/24
Tordotcom
\$27.99

'The Tainted Cup'

If you've read my reviews before, you know I have a penchant for the weird. So, I was both thrilled and cautious to receive a book declaring itself a mix of Sherlock Holmes and Godzilla. When I finished it the next day after a marathon of compulsive reading, I was a thoroughly delighted, sleepless zombie.

The gruesome body of a high-ranking military official with a tree growing out of it is a problem for the Empire. So, reluctantly, they assign their greatest, and most irritating, detective, Ana Dolabra, and her brand new (terrified) assistant, Din, to the case.

As the pair search for a murder in a city under siege from otherworldly beasts intent on destruction, it soon becomes clear there is a conspiracy set to undermine everything they believe in and put thousands of lives at risk.

Full of wild twists, brilliant world-building and moments of suspense so taut I actually held my breath, this book absolutely enthralled me. I love the characters, the ominous setting and the complicated but familiar politics. Try this one if you've been bored with other books lately. ■ — *Review by Julie Goodrich*



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BLAIR fascinated by geology

Collects geodes, fossils and more from around the globe

Mike Blair, who lives a few miles outside of Polk City, has been in the area for the past 30 years, after he and his wife, Sue, relocated from the metro. Blair has been a lifelong learner, and he explains the roots of his scientific studies.

“Long story short, I got my master’s degree in earth science,” he says. “My wife and I taught overseas, and we went to Honduras for four years. I also taught physics over at Roosevelt and Hoover.”

In particular, geology fascinates Blair.

“I wrote my master’s thesis on the geology of the Des Moines area 300 million years ago,” he says.

Throughout a lifetime of teaching and traveling, Blair has picked up rocks, crystals, fossils, shells and other artifacts from all over the globe. In his search for interesting finds, he’s explored beaches, caves and even lava tubes in Western Samoa. His collection includes fossils and shells of many creatures, including crabs, nautilus, crinoids and shrimp.

Some of Blair’s favorite places to visit have been tropical paradises. He fondly recalls time spent in Brazil, Mexico and Honduras. Besides the balmy weather, Blair enjoyed many hours spent finding interesting geologic and human artifacts such as arrowheads or pottery. Blair showed some Mayan artifacts that he says are around 1,500 years old.

Blair recalls finding one ancient human tool quite by accident.

“I was in a cave in Guatemala, and I couldn’t see anything. I grabbed this rock, and it felt funny,” Blair says. “When I got a chance to look at it, I realized it was a scraper.”

Blair has also found many interesting rocks and fossils in Iowa.

“I belong to the Central Iowa Mineral Society,” he says. “And I’ve found a lot of nice geodes over by Keokuk.”

One of the most striking artifacts is a large bone that looks like a prop from an episode of “The Flintstones.” But, as Blair explains, it’s actually a fossil of an animal that lived in this area 10 million of years ago.

“This is the bottom half of the femur of an ancient elephant. It’s called a gomphothere,” Blair says. “It was found in Antelope County, Nebraska.”

Blair shares that his geologic curiosity seems to be in his blood.

“I’ve always been fascinated with these things, and my grandfather had a collection, too,” he said. “My grandson already has a rock collection, and he’s 5 years old.” ■



Mike Blair shows a large quartz crystal from his collection.



Besides crystals, Mike Blair also collects fossils, geodes and minerals from near and far.



DON'T LET investments take a vacation

Summertime is almost here — and, for many people, that means it's time to hit the road. But even if you decide to take a vacation, you'll want other areas of your life to keep working — especially your investments.

So, how can you prevent your investments, and your overall financial strategy, from going on "vacation"? Here are a few suggestions:

- **Check your progress.** You want your investments to be working hard for you, so you'll need to check on their performance periodically — but be careful about how you evaluate results. Don't compare your portfolio's results against those of a market index, such as the S&P 500, which tracks the stock performance of 500 large U.S. companies listed on American stock exchanges. This comparison may not be particularly valid because your own portfolio ideally should include a range of investments, including U.S. and foreign stocks, corporate and government bonds, certificates of deposit (CDs) and other securities. So, instead of checking your progress against a market index, use benchmarks meaningful to your individual situation, such as whether your portfolio is showing enough growth potential based on a compounding rate of return to keep you moving toward a comfortable retirement and other long-term goals.

- **Invest with a purpose.** When you work intensely at something, it's usually because you have a definite result in mind. And this sense of purpose applies to investing, too. If you buy a stock here, and another one there, based on "hot" tips you might have seen on television or the internet, you may end up with a jumbled sort of portfolio that doesn't really reflect your needs. Instead, try to follow a long-term investment strategy based on your financial goals, risk tolerance, asset accumulation needs, liquidity and time horizon, always with an eye toward where you want to go in life — how long you plan to work, what sort of retirement lifestyle you envision, and so on.

- **Be strategic with your investments.** Over the years, you will likely have a variety of competing financial goals — and you'll want your investment portfolio working to help achieve all of them. That means, though, that you'll likely need to match certain investments with specific goals. For example, when you contribute to an IRA and a 401(k) or similar plan, you're putting away money for retirement. But if you want to help your children go to college or receive some other type of post-secondary education or training, you might want to save in a 529 education savings plan, which allows tax-free withdrawals for qualified education expenses. Or, if you want to save for a short-term goal, such as a wedding or a long vacation, you might choose an investment that offers significant protection of principal, so the money will be available when you need it. Ultimately, this type of goals-based investing can help ensure your portfolio is always working on your behalf, in the way you intended.

When you take a vacation, you will hopefully be more relaxed and refreshed. But if you let your investments stop working as hard as they should, the results could be stressful. So, be diligent about your investment strategy, monitor it regularly and make those moves appropriate for your situation. By doing so, you can't necessarily guarantee a long day at the beach, but you'll have a good chance of enjoying a sunny outlook. ■

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A GARDEN oasis

Motsch family's outdoor space is what dreams are made of.



Besides being a busy mom, Holly Motsch finds time to develop and care for her expansive beds of perennials that surround her and husband, Joshua's, home.

Holly Motsch has a knack for gardening — and it shows.

The Polk City resident gardens year round.

"I am always messing around with house plants, and I am outside gardening until the ground freezes and back outside as soon as the first crocus pops up in late February," she says.

She created her first garden bed in 2014 and has continued to add plants and garden elements since.

"I try to give my husband, Joshua, some grass to mow, because that's what he enjoys, but I plan on adding a few more spaces," Motsch says. "The garden has changed a lot over the years and probably will continue to change, as my taste is always changing. I have always done my own labor, from putting in a pond to filling it back up after we had kids to putting in patios, paths and trees."

The majority of Motsch's garden consists of perennials, but the space still requires a lot from her, including weeding, shaping plants, ripping out and transplanting plants, and deadheading.

Motsch has developed her gardening skills since childhood.

"When I was young, my dad and I made a rose garden together, and I showed our roses in the county fair," she says. "I won best in show with a rose called Sheila's Perfume. When I left the house, I started to become interested in house plants, and my passion grew to the

outdoors after we became homeowners in 2012."

For Motsch, gardening is an extension of her passion for art. She says it's like painting in plant form.

"My hobby turned into a career, and I started drawing landscapes until I became a full-time mom in 2020," she says. "Every year, I learn more and hope to instill a love of everything green in my children's lives."

When it comes to what she enjoys most about gardening, Motsch says it's impossible to pick just one thing.

"I love the stillness of the garden and the therapy it provides," she says. "I am always filled with awe in the beauty of God's creation. I love how the garden connects you with others, and I have gained lifelong friends through gardening. I love the hard work it takes to maintain and perfect a space; you are never finished in the garden. I love the dirt under my nails and the callus on my hands and the ache in my back after a good long weeding."

Motsch also enjoys watching the garden change throughout the growing season.

"Every week, something new is happening," she says. "You have to be OK with letting a favorite flower fade out, but it always leads to another plant's time to shine."

Her husband, Joshua, continues to be in awe of his wife's work.



"Holly has created a totally unique and beautiful mini paradise in our backyard," he says. "Aside from it being a great space to just sit and enjoy, I really love that she is so passionate about it and has something to call her own. Taking care of three children aged 4 and under is tireless work, so having something outside of the world of being a mom is so important." ■

CITYVIEW'S



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Polk City UMC VBS

June 23-26 from 6-8 p.m.

Polk City United Methodist Church,
1421 W. Broadway St.

Vacation Bible School is coming up at Polk City United Methodist Church. "Camp Firelight VBS" is based on Psalm 56:3: "Whenever I'm afraid, I put my trust in you." The week of fun includes Bible stories, games, crafts and missions. This year, organizers are planting a peace pole made by campers to mark this week in faith. Register your children ages 4 through fifth grade at <https://polkcityumc.org/vbs/>.



Homemade Ice Cream at Slater celebration

July 4

Nelson Park, Slater

Sheldahl and Slater United Methodist churches will be serving homemade ice cream and toppings at the Slater July 4 Celebration in Nelson Park. Cost is \$8 per bowl or two for \$15. The event starts after the parade and goes until 3 p.m.

Ankeny Juneteenth Festival

Sunday, June 23, 3-9 p.m.

Wagner Park Bandshell,
410 W. First St., Ankeny

Ankeny Community Network is hosting the fourth annual Juneteenth Celebration focused on highlighting the beauty and power of Black culture in Ankeny, central Iowa and around the world. This community event will be free and is open to everyone. It will feature local performances as well as vendors and artists, food trucks, music, a kids area and more. Juneteenth is a day to celebrate not just the end of slavery in the U.S. but also honor ancestors, celebrate families, honor the contributions of Black people and showcase the strength and diversity of their stories, experiences and lives as residents of Ankeny, of this state, and as Americans. There will be something for everyone — live music, activities, artists, basketball, a kids corner and more.

Museum open hours

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

Museum on the Square, Polk City

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

Polk County Conservation events

Visit www.polkcountyiowa.gov/conservation/events/ for information about upcoming programs offered by Polk County Conservation and for registration links.

• **Pond Study at Yellow Banks: June 22, 10 a.m.** Meet at the pond parking lot and come discover what creatures live in and around a pond. All sampling equipment will be provided. The event is free, for ages 3 and older, and does not require registration.

• **Epic Adventures of Recycle Rabbit Puppet Show: Sunday, June 23, 1 p.m.,** at Jester Park Nature Center. Join Recycle Rabbit as he goes on an adventure where he will help you understand how to face challenges, make the world a better place and become Champions of Conservation. This free event is for all ages and does not require registration.

• **Sunset Yoga, Monday, June 24, 8 p.m.,** Jester Park Nature Center. Take time to unwind as the sun sets on the outdoor plaza or the Great Hall of the Jester Park Nature Center. The class will begin with a short nature hike to give participants a chance de-stress and enjoy the beauty of nature. The yoga class is perfect for beginners. The focus is on creating a mind and body nature connection as the sun sets. This Rooted in Nature program is offered in sponsorship with UnityPoint. Items to bring:

yoga mat and blocks, hiking shoes, comfortable clothing, water bottle. Cost is \$15 for this event for ages 12 and older. Registration is required two days in advance.

• **Story Tellebration, Wednesday, June 26, 10 a.m., Down at the Pond; Wednesday, July 24, 10 a.m., Color, Color Everywhere; Wednesday, Aug. 28, 10 a.m. I Love Bugs.**

Join volunteer storyteller Carmen Epstein for a fun, interactive tale tailored toward children ages 2 to 6 that explores the wonders of the outdoors. During each program, participants enjoy interactive stories and an activity. No registration required for this free event.

• **Horse Whispers in the Woods. Thursdays, June 27, Aug. 8 and Sept. 12 at 6 p.m.,** at the Jester Park Equestrian Center. A women's circle of self-discovery through the intuitive and healing power of horses. This on-the-ground workshop provides a real-time experience in relationship skills and increased emotional intelligence through a partnership with the horse. Registration is required 24 hours prior to the event, which is for ages 21 and older. Cost is \$40.

• **Animal Guided Meditation. Friday, June 28, 6:30 p.m.,** Jester Park Nature Center. Registration is required by June 26 for this program for ages 12 and older. Cost

is \$15 per person. Each animal in our world offers powerful messages, healing and wisdom simply by being itself. Join Kara Simons for a guided meditation and discussion honoring our energetic and physical connections with animals as teachers and guides. Reframe your perception and explore the rich symbolism of animal characteristics and attributes, from birds to mammals to reptiles, amphibians and insects.

• **Older, Wiser, Livelier, Seniors - National Parks Bucket List. Tuesday, July 2, 11 a.m.,** Jester Park Nature Center. Join Naturalist Lindsey Page on an enriching educational journey as she highlights her adventures so far in our nation's National Parks. Participants will explore iconic National Parks such as Yellowstone and the Grand Tetons, venture into the lush forests of Olympic National Park, witness the towering Redwoods in California, and marvel at the vast biodiversity of National Parks in the beautiful state of Colorado. This program will foster a deep appreciation for nature's wonders but will also educate participants on conservation efforts and the rich cultural history embedded in these remarkable landscapes. This program is for ages 12 and older, free, and does not require registration.

EVENTS IN THE AREA

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

Be sure to check for cancellations.



Bike Nights

Fridays, June 28, July 26 and Aug. 23
462 W. Walnut, Elkhart

Enjoy Bike Night in Elkhart, sponsored by Mean Machine Cycles. Enjoy food, music, prizes, bikes and more.



Annual Ice Cream Social

Aug. 25, 2-4 p.m.
Ankeny Area Historical Society,
301 SW Third Street, Ankeny

Enjoy a free ice cream social along with homemade baked items.

REO Speedwagon with Night Ranger

June 21, 6:30 p.m.
Lauridsen Amphitheater, Des Moines Water Works
Park, 2251 George Flagg Parkway
dsmwaterworkspark.com

Cajun Fest

June 22
Cowles Commons, 221 Walnut St.,
Des Moines
www.cajunfestiowa.com

The self-proclaimed Mardi Gras of the Midwest is an all-day celebration of Cajun culture, from food to music and back to food again.

Iowa Take Steps Walk

Saturday, June 22, 9 a.m.
Iowa State Capitol Grounds

The public is invited to join the Iowa Take Steps Walk to benefit the Crohn's and Colitis Foundation. The event starts at 9 a.m. with a ribbon cutting ceremony at 10 a.m. Learn more at cctakesteps.org.



CITYVIEW's Summer Stir - Downtown

Friday, June 21, 5-9 p.m.
Court Avenue District, Des Moines

CITYVIEW's traveling cocktail party is back in downtown Des Moines. Sample many of summer's finest drinks at some of the area's best bars and restaurants. Try 10 different drinks for only \$25 with your online order (\$30 at the door). For more information and for tickets, visit <https://summerstirs.dmcityview.com>. ■

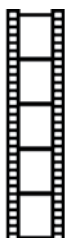
Beats and Eats

Thursdays, June 20 and 27; July 11, 18, 25, 5-7:30 p.m.
Ankeny Market & Pavilion (AMP), 715 W. First St., Ankeny

Enjoy food trucks, live music and entertainment, family activities, games, beer truck and more at Beats and Eats. Details about the participating food trucks and the planned activities can be found at www.ankenyiowa.gov/461/Beats-Eats. Musical lineup is:

- **June 20**, live music is by Jordan Beem, and entertainment includes Animal Rescue League, caricatures, basketball shootout and football toss.
- **June 27**, live music by Chad Lee with Harrison Ingham at intermission. Entertainment: Hovick Farms Petting Zoo, Airbrush Tattoo, face painting.
- **July 11**, Dustin West Band. Entertainment: Warp Speed & Mini Golf, Ankeny Art Center, Pink Stew Entertainment.
- **July 18**, Jones & Owen. Entertainment: basketball shootout, axe throw, Animal Rescue League, caricatures.
- **July 25**: Blacktop Rock Band. Entertainment: Pink Stew Entertainment, soccer darts, basketball shootout, football toss, TB Creations.

Beats & Eats is a free community program sponsored by Uptown Ankeny.



Movies Under the Stars

Fridays, June and July
Bandshell at Wagner Park, 410 W. First St., Ankeny

Bring a blanket and enjoy the show. Movies start at dusk.
June 21: "Elemental"; June 28: "Paw Patrol: The Mighty Movie"; July 19: "Trolls Band Together"; July 26: "Dr. Seuss' the Lorax"; Aug. 2: "TMNT Mutant Mayhem."



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FARMERS Market

Polk City Farmers Market
was held June 6.



Roxana Currie and Denise Franck



Courtney Davidson and Jena Wenck



Oliver Swenson, Brecken Schlichte and Abe Pederson



Sally Kilkenny



Mackenzie and Melisa Anderson



Jennifer and Zach Callahan



Betsy Huff



Sarah Maier



Samantha Dean



Robb and Margaret Nuckolls



Scott and Rene Locker

OUT & ABOUT



Cassie Kozelka



Lashanna Nickles



Susan Zeigler and Charlie Johnson



Lisa Wachuku



Desarae Duehr



Dawn Thompson



Cael Surprenant, Cynthia Gipe and Chris Brown



Brandi and Scott Nielsen



Tanya Harrington and Jessica Faue



Jamie Noack, Polk City Public Library director, along with Friends of Library members Krista Bowersox, Dixie Bequeaith, Angela Glasgow and Susan Mahannah, received a check for \$837.46 from Tony Haisman, Fareway store manager.



The North Polk girls soccer team was runner-up at the State Soccer Championship on June 1. Photo courtesy of Shelly Cory

CLASSIFIEDS

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MANUFACTURED HOMES, (2025, Vinyl/Shingled. 2Br start at \$39,999). (16x80) (3Br- 2Ba.) \$79,999. (28X64) (4Br-2Ba) \$84,999. Delivered Factory-Direct, E. Of I-35, North of I-80, to Minnesota Border. 319-239-1920. (mcn)

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Get a break on your taxes! Donate your car, truck, or SUV to assist the blind and visually impaired. Arrange a swift, no-cost vehicle pickup and secure a generous tax credit for 2025. Call Heritage for the Blind Today at 1-855-977-7030 today! (mcn)

Donate your car, truck, boat, RV and more to support our veterans! Schedule a FAST, FREE vehicle pickup and receive a top tax deduction! Call Veteran Car Donations at 1-888-429-2331 today! (mcn)

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The COVID crisis has cost us all something. Many have lost jobs and financial security. Have \$10K In Debt? Credit Cards. Medical Bills. Car Loans. Call NATIONAL DEBT RELIEF! We can help! Get a FREE debt relief quote: Call 1-866-552-0649. (mcn)

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