

JOHNSTON

JULY 2024

Living

MAGAZINE

Yards

WITH PERSONALITY

Residents share how their landscaping choices reflect their style.

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10. The Iowa Children's Museum

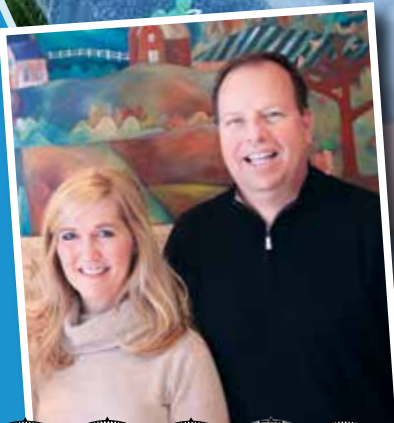


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WELCOME

DIRT under the fingernails

My dad worked in the “dirt business” much of his life. He and my uncle owned a gravel and excavation company in a small town in northern Iowa. They dug basements, built pads, cleared out groves, hauled gravel and did most anything else that involved heavy equipment and moving dirt. Dad’s hands were stained from years of exposure to dirt and oil and grease, a symbol of his many years of manual work and service to his customers.



My hands may be stained with ink from time to time, but I don’t work in the dirt like Dad did. The exceptions are when I am motivated to tackle a landscaping project or two, and those seem to be annual events. Tearing shrubbery out. Putting new bushes in. Wheelbarrowing dirt. Setting stones. Planting flowers. And watering, watering, watering. It’s all part of the landscaping process. I am certainly not an expert, and I need to call in the pros from time to time, but I don’t hesitate to dig in the dirt when I get a chance to do so.

Landscaping is something my wife and I can do together and not disagree much about. She has a good eye for landscaping design, and I still have a reasonably strong back — at least I think so until the day after proves otherwise.

We have done our share of landscaping in each home we have lived in, and we would like to think that each place looked better when we were done. Of course, the new owners likely tore out what we did and replaced it with something more their style, but that’s OK. Landscaping is art, and beauty is in the eye of the beholder in lawns, too.

This month, we share examples of landscaping projects local residents have embarked on. We hope these stories inspire you to break out the shovels and get some dirt under your fingernails, too.

Thanks for reading. ■

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Yards WITH PERSONALITY

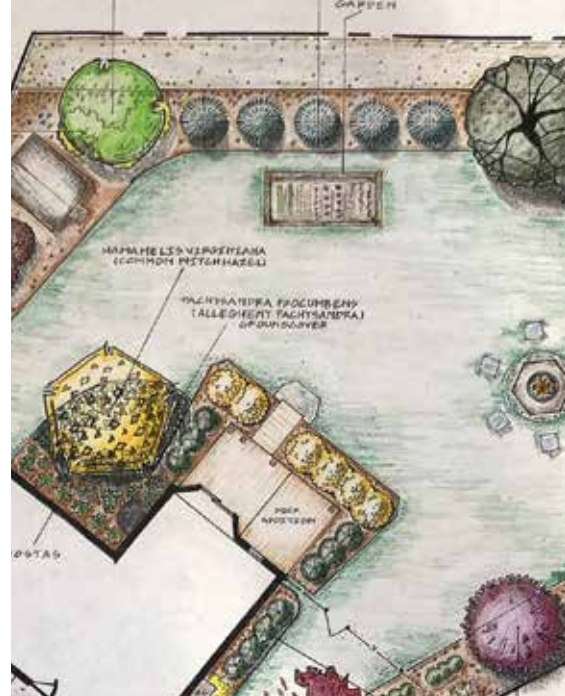
Residents share how their landscaping choices reflect their style.

By Ashley Rullestad

A plethora of pots. A hillside of hostas. Wildflowers willy nilly. Manicured hedges and straight edges. From wild and unruly to precise and planned, the landscaping around a home often reflects the owner's own unique style. While some prefer lush, thick foliage, others enjoy succulents among a garden of rocks. From a tropical vibe to the charm of a country cottage. From mad about mulch to mad for magnolias. Whatever their preferences, homeowners with a green thumb and plenty of imagination enjoy creating landscaping masterpieces with pizzazz.

Elyse and Max Scott have incorporated Elyse's late mother's landscape design at their home.

FEATURE



The Scotts have included black-eyed Susans, grey owl junipers, ninebark, Karl Forester grasses, and a dwarf white redbud tree in their landscaping.

A landscape memorial

When the Scott family moved into their house in 2017, there was no landscaping aside from one tree in the front yard.

“I knew I wanted to bring my late mother’s landscape design to life,” Elyse Scott says. “She

loved plants and gardening and had the most beautiful gardens at our family home, full of flowers that took turns blooming at different times of the year. I fondly remember her drawing and designing her final project for her landscape design class, and I wanted to honor her memory by trying to incorporate as much

as I could in our landscaping at our home.”

Scott showed the design plans to landscapers at DeVries Outdoors, and they worked together to incorporate some of the plants Scott’s late mom had in her design as well as some materials that Scott loved as well.

They haven’t gotten a chance to do the



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backyard yet, but the Scotts are happy with how the front yard turned out. Some favorite plants and trees include black-eyed Susans, grey owl junipers, ninebark, Karl Forester grasses, and a dwarf white redbud tree.

“She passed in 2015, and we did the landscaping in 2021. We love seeing it grow and remembering her,” Scott says.

Blank canvas

Bryan and Anna Edwards moved to Johnston from Seattle in 2020.

“When we moved in, there wasn’t anything except grass, which was great but also a bit overwhelming, as the yard is large,” says Anna Edwards. “As a family, outdoor living is extremely important to us. I grew up gardening with my parents, and it’s something I wanted to pass to my kids.”

The kids, Olivia, 8; Audrey, 6; and Stella, 3, enjoy being outside. Edwards was already a gardener, so she knew a large garden would be important, but she also wanted one that is fairly low maintenance and has a lot of things for the children to explore.

They also knew they wanted to use landscaping to create privacy since the house is on a busy road.

“We wanted the feeling of being tucked and cozy. I generally prefer unstructured, natural gardens versus a lot of hard lines or rigid planting,” Edwards says. “When we started the plan of our yard, we started with the living space, the hardscape.”

Then Edwards added plants that softened the edges and flowed well together. She tries to bring in color year-round for each season. She also added touches for the kids, like a blueberry patch, raspberries and patio containers with food and herbs.

They created a path through the trees that winds through the garden and comes out at the edge of a rock river that rainwater flows through.

“This may be my favorite spot,” Edwards says. “However, we also have a garden that is three apple trees and two pear trees surrounded by raspberries, blackberries and our kids’ playhouse. My other favorite spot is my above-ground garden for all my veggies.”

The kids like helping and eating the things they grow.

Edwards’ advice for new landscapers is to let it be ever evolving.

“Don’t feel like, if you do one thing, you can’t change it. I’m always adding, moving or



The Edwards family enjoys the outdoors, so it was important to them to have a yard they could enjoy. Photo by Kayla Pointer

modifying,” she says. “I do this as I learn what works well in certain areas or if I end up not liking something. Most of all, just enjoy the evolution of your space. Through it, you will discover what you love.”

Water style

The Briles family built their Johnston house in 2006. The yard was just sod when they moved in, so the first thing they did was plant trees. The rest of the landscape came a little at a time.

“I’m not sure what style we have. We just like to add color with flowers and have it look nice for us and our neighbors,” Jennifer Briles says. “My husband, Chris, owns a lawn care company, so he is always in the know with new styles and things to do.”

Jennifer’s favorite spot is the koi pond. Chris was able to do the hardscape for it and researched how to take care of the fish. Though the pond freezes in the winter, the fish stay there year-round. They have a heater and a bubbler to provide oxygen. The koi hibernate, and there are caves for them to hide in.

“The water lilies are my favorite when they bloom,” Jennifer says. “Landscaping doesn’t have to be complicated or hard. Take your time. It doesn’t have to be done all at once.”

Growth over time

The Noelcks’ home had some rudimentary landscaping, but James and Nicole decided to remove most of it and start fresh.

“We knew when we purchased our home



18 years ago it needed work inside and out, but we loved the floorplan, and I was not going to get 10 acres in the county so we could live with an odd-shaped lot in a wonderful neighborhood,” James Noelck says.

They have a large oak that is the center piece to the yard, and they identified that early in the process. The Noelcks like that the yard backs up to the greenbelt behind the home with mature trees that give a wonderful backdrop to the property.

“Our landscape has changed, evolved and grown with our lives over time since that beginning,” Noelck says. “We have added and expanded to fit our needs as our family evolved. We started with strollers and ride-on toys, to burleys and bikes, and, before long, we had three kids with cars. I have always enjoyed being outside and enjoy working in the yard. It has never been work, just a rewarding way to spend some free time and create spaces our family could enjoy.”

They added an evergreen screen to separate the yard from the street and sidewalk. They also added more hardscaping, including driveway extensions, a pond, walkways, grilling and smoking areas, patios and a fire pit.

The family has incorporated more than 17 different tree varieties in the yard, with more

FEATURE



The Briles children, Logan, Ellie and Lexie, enjoy hanging out by the koi pond.

than 4,500 square feet of perennial and shrub beds.

As a landscape architect, Noelck believes everyone experiences and learns about what they like in a landscape every time they visit a unique place or get an opportunity to explore and experience. It doesn't matter if it's a backyard or a national park — the world is a wonderful place not to be taken for granted,

Noelcks says.

"Get out and experience it, but always carve out a place for you, your family and friends to have a fire, play some yard games and enjoy the beverage of choice," he says. "I like the rewarding work landscaping provides, and we get to create our own space to enjoy and spend time. Life is busy enough, so carving out your own space to relax is very important." ■



James Noelck has created a backyard oasis.

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DEADLINE TO REGISTER: JULY 23

COOL events at JPL in July

The thermometer is climbing, but it's plenty cool at Johnston Public Library. Stop by JPL this month and check out some of the fun programs happening for kids, teens and adults.

Programs for kids

Do you have a little person in your life with a favorite stuffed animal friend? Drop off a favorite stuffie for Critter Camp anytime between 9 a.m. and 8 p.m. on Monday, July 15. Your animal will enjoy a fun-filled week at camp. Pick up your stuffed animal on Friday, July 19, and discover what the critters did while they were away at camp. Then, save the date for the Minion Mischief Escape Room on Tuesday, July 16; Wednesday, July 17; or Thursday, July 18. Bring the whole family to see if you can follow the clues and thwart the minions' evil plans. Each group must have an adult present to participate. This event is great for kids in grades K-5 (maximum eight per session). Register at www.johnstonlibrary.com. Finally, we're taking JPL on the road. Visit us at various parks throughout Johnston this summer, weather permitting. On Tuesday, July 23, we'll be at Dewey Park from 10-11 a.m. Sign up for a library card, choose a free book, create a fun craft and participate in our Summer Library Program and earn prizes.

Programs for teens

Get ready for Teen Tuesday: Catapult Combat Challenge Marshmallow Edition on Tuesday, July 16 at 4:30 p.m. This program has it all. Medieval weapons, engineering, marshmallows and a giant battle. Construct your own desktop catapult and then test its launching capabilities using marshmallows as ammunition against plastic cup castles. Registration is required. This program is for teens entering grades 6-12. Next, save the date for the Five Star Scale Teen Summer Book Club. We'll discuss "The Anthropocene Reviewed," a collection of essays by John Green that explores the ordinary and extraordinary facets of life, rated on a five-star scale. We'll save time at every meeting to talk about the great books you're reading (and rate them on a five-star scale) this summer. Share your favorites, discover new gems, and connect with fellow book lovers. Pick up your copy of "The Anthropocene Reviewed" at JPL. This book club is for teens entering grades 8-12.

Programs for adults

Join CultureALL Ambassador Sonal Mistry to explore the ancient art of Mehendi on Saturday, July 20 at 10:30 a.m. The art form of applying henna (known as mehndi) has been a part of many cultures for thousands of years. This practice has spanned several cultures and traditions and varies from region to region. Indian designs are made of a delicate blending of fine lines, creating a striking pattern that covers a large area of the skin, such as the hands and feet. Participants in this event will learn the history and significance of mehndi and create their own intricate designs and patterns on note cards and/or hands. Adults, leave the kids at home for this one; this event is just for you. Registration is required for this free event.

If you consider yourself a foodie in the Des Moines metro, you probably know of Wini Moranville. Wini was the longtime restaurant reviewer for The Des Moines Register and has written for Better Homes and Gardens, dsm Magazine, and is the author of three cookbooks. She has a new book out called "Love Is My Favorite Flavor: A Midwestern Dining Critic Tells All." Join Wini Moranville for The Pleasures and Pitfalls of Reviewing Restaurants in Des Moines on Saturday, July 20 at 10:30 a.m. Wini will read an excerpt from her newest book and recount some great (and not-so-great) moments during her 15-year tenure as The Des Moines Register's restaurant reviewer. She will also discuss her extensive experience waiting tables in some iconic Des Moines restaurants — and how those experiences shaped her later work as a food critic. Registration is appreciated for this free event. Registration and more event information can be found online at johnstonlibrary.com or by calling the library at 515-278-5233. ■

ALL aces

Johnston resident has tennis courts named after him.



Johnston resident and longtime Spencer High School tennis coach Dennis Price had new tennis courts named after him.

When Dennis Price and his family moved from Denison to Fort Dodge when he was but a wide-eyed fourth grader, he had the usual early struggle of being the new kid on the block. He knew no one, and no one knew him.

Time would solve that problem, and his mother knew it. But, for the time being, she knew Dennis would need to be kept busy while the seeds of those new relationships were being planted.

So, one day, out of the blue, she announced to her young son, "We're going to go play tennis."

"We went down to Osco Drug, got a couple of rackets, and then, every morning, she and I would go out and play tennis," Dennis remembers fondly. "She was amazing."

Little did Mrs. Price know, but that innocent trip to the drug store that day literally changed her son's life.

Price did indeed begin to know others his age, some of whom he came to know while playing that wonderful game his mother introduced him to. His love continued as the years passed, so much so that he became the coach of the boys and girls teams at Spencer High School when the school began its tennis programs in 1985.

He coached both teams for another five years, then went on to coach the boys team from 1991-2003 before retiring.

Price is 82 and lives in Johnston now, but he's far from forgotten in that northwest Iowa town where it all began. His numbers were impossible to ignore. During his tenure in Spencer, Price had 33 state qualifiers, 60 all-conference players, and compiled a 210-61 overall record.

On June 8, Price was honored for those achievements and more when a naming ceremony was held at the new tennis courts at Spencer Middle School. There, in large, bold blue letters on a sign in front of the courts, it reads: Dennis Price Courts.

Naturally, Price was tickled by the honor. A large crowd of more than 100 people turned out to honor the man who helped pour the foundation for a program that still flourishes nearly 40 years later.

"We had wonderful support there from the school and parents," Price says. "I just feel really, really fortunate. I'm beyond the thankful stage."

Price and his wife, Kaye, have been married 58 years now. The support she has given over the years, he says, has been the key to it all.

"Not once did she ever say, 'Don't play tennis,'" he says. "She would jokingly ask, 'Don't you have a tennis meet?' to get me out of the house. She was always extremely supportive and still is." ■

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See rules and vote at www.iowalivingmagazines.com/residentpoll. One vote per resident, please.

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- Restaurant for Lunch
- Restaurant for Dinner
- Restaurant for Dessert
- Place for Ice Cream
- Pizza Establishment
- Bar
- Coffee Shop
- Catering Company
- Server/Bartender

AUTOMOTIVE

- Auto Service
- Auto Body Shop
- Car Dealership
- Auto Parts Store

COMMUNITY

- Preschool/Daycare
- Non Profit
- School (name of building)
- Park
- Community Festival or Event
- Church
- Pastor
- Chamber of Commerce

SHOPPING

- Grocery Store
- Boutique
- Retail Store
- Thrift Store
- Home Improvement Retail Store
- Liquor Store
- Nursery or Garden Center
- Place to Purchase a Gift for a Man
- Place to Purchase a Gift for a Woman

ENTERTAINMENT

- Dad/Child Date Spot
- Mom/Child Date Spot
- Place to Take Your Mom and Dad
- Place to Take Your Kids or Grandkids
- Place for Children's Birthday Parties
- Golf Course

HEALTH/BEAUTY

- Hair Salon
- Health Clinic
- Dental Office
- Orthodontist Office
- Mental Health Services
- Chiropractic Office
- Vision Care
- Health Club or Gym
- Pharmacy

HEALTH/BEAUTY

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- Physical Therapy
- Dance Studio
- Gymnastics Studio
- Tumbling Studio

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MAXIMIZING Social Security

John and Sue's journey to an extra \$93,000

As retirement nears, many face the critical question of how to optimize their resources, ensuring they can live the lifestyle they want and have the money to pay for it. One of the most significant components of this journey is the Social Security decision. The Social Security decision made by John and Sue, the stars of our online Journey to Retirement Workshop, is a shining example of how thoroughly analyzing your options can maximize your Social Security benefit. John and Sue, aged 62, are at the crossroads of making their Social Security election. Their goal is clear: maximize their benefits while considering their income and lifestyle needs. Through our workshop, we illustrated three different Social Security scenarios to help them make an informed decision.



to take Social Security at the earliest possible age of 62. We use some assumptions about their benefit and an assumed life expectancy of 81 for John and 84 for Sue. In scenario No. 1, cumulatively, over their lifetimes, they would collect \$941,000.

In the second scenario, only Sue starts her benefits at 62, while John waits until full retirement age (FRA), which for him is 67. This strategic delay allowed John to receive his full Social Security benefit of \$3,000 monthly, yielding \$998,000 in total lifetime benefits.

The third scenario involves further delaying benefits. John waits until age 70, letting his benefit grow 8% yearly from age 67 to 70, while Sue begins taking her Social Security benefit at 65. Ultimately, this strategy brought their total Social Security benefits to \$1,034,000—a staggering \$93,000 more than the first scenario.

Why does this matter? Beyond the obvious financial gain, this additional income provides John and Sue with the flexibility to adapt their plans as needed. Whether it's dealing

with unforeseen health expenses, adjusting for inflation, or simply enjoying a few extra vacations, the additional \$93,000 adds a significant cushion to their retirement portfolio.

This type of Social Security analysis works best when the final decision on when to elect Social Security is made in connection with a broader retirement strategy that includes retirement lifestyle goals, other sources of income, investable assets, health status, market conditions and more.

Integrating these choices into a broader retirement strategy can unlock substantial benefits, offering financial security and the freedom to fully enjoy the retirement years. For those nearing retirement, I encourage you to take the time to explore your Social Security options thoroughly. Your future self will thank you. ■

Information provided by Loren Merkle CFP®, RICP®, Certified Financial Fiduciary®, Merkle Retirement Planning, 1860 S.E. Princeton Drive, Grimes, 515-278-1006.



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LEGALITIES of buying a home on contract

If you're ready to be a homeowner, but face barriers preventing you from obtaining a traditional mortgage, you may have considered buying a home on contract. Or perhaps you're already renting a home you love, and your landlord wants to sell it to you. As a contract buyer, you take on different risks and gain different benefits from a buyer who borrows money from a bank. Before signing a contract, you should speak to an experienced attorney who can make sure your rights are protected now and in the future.

A real estate installment contract sale is seller-financed. Rather than paying a bank or mortgage company each month, you will



pay the seller. As a contract buyer, you share ownership with the seller. You are both listed on title. Only when you pay off the contract in full will the seller deed the property to you.

Because you share ownership, any judgments, lawsuits or tax debts that either of you owe can attach as a lien against the property and must be paid off before selling the home again. Before you agree to purchase a house on contract, you should know about any debts of the seller. If the seller has a mortgage, you want to be sure you know how it will be paid.

Before buying, you should carefully review the real estate contract to understand your obligations. The contract must clearly state the amount of down payment, the monthly installment payments, and how many payments before you can satisfy the contract and own the house outright. Another essential term is what

happens if either you or your seller violate any terms and the contract is forfeited.

Make sure you know what happens if you can't make the contract payments. Unlike renting, moving out isn't enough to terminate the contract. The seller can forfeit the contract or could sue you to make you pay the balance. You may lose your down payment and monthly payments you made while living at the home.

Buying your home on contract can be a great opportunity. But you need a solid written contract in order to protect your interests and the rights to your home. Call an attorney before signing any real estate contract, no matter how great the deal looks. ■

Information provided by Charlotte Sucik, Abendroth Russell Barnett Law Firm, 2560 73rd St., Urbandale, 515-278-0623, www.ARPCLaw.com.

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BRING joy to mealtimes by dining together

(Family Features) The renowned Mediterranean Diet, celebrated for its myriad benefits, has been rated as a top diet in the world for years.

Recognizing the benefits of the foods included in the Mediterranean Diet, it's important to broaden the understanding beyond its ingredients to embrace the elements of the Mediterranean lifestyle, which also contribute to these benefits. Essentially, it's not just about what you eat; it's also about how you enjoy it and with whom you share the experience.

Nutrition, physical activity, sleep and togetherness comprise this balanced way of living, with preparing, eating and enjoying food together being key elements of the Mediterranean lifestyle. You can immerse yourself in the vibrant spirit of the Mediterranean lifestyle simply by inviting friends or family to gather around the table for a meal — like a family favorite pasta dish.

“Eating together is a joyful and important practice of the Mediterranean lifestyle that truly contributes to overall well-being,” said Michele Lefebvre, registered dietitian nutritionist and manager of nutrition and well-being at Barilla America. “As a traditional yet versatile food, pasta brings a sense of nostalgia to meals as people gather together around the table and connect in an impactful way.”

Visit barilla.com/recipes to discover more dishes that can help you follow the Mediterranean lifestyle. ■

Cellentani Caprese pasta salad

Prep time: 10 minutes

Cook time: 15 minutes

Servings: 7

- 1 box Barilla Protein+ Cellentani pasta
- 4 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, divided
- 2 pints grape tomatoes, mixed color, halved
- 4 tablespoons lemon juice
- 8 basil leaves, julienned
- 2 cups small mozzarella cheese balls, halved
- salt, to taste
- black pepper, to taste



DIRECTIONS

- Bring large pot of water to boil. Cook pasta according to package directions and drain. Drizzle pasta with 1 tablespoon olive oil and place on sheet tray to cool. Set aside.
- In large bowl, combine tomatoes, lemon juice, basil, remaining olive oil and cheese. Season with salt and pepper, to taste. Add pasta and stir.



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ABOUT the new buyer agency agreement

Today, we're talking about the new buyer agency agreement that went into effect in Iowa on July 1.

This is a big deal for homebuyers because it means they can now sign an exclusive buyer agency agreement with a real estate agent, which gives them a lot of benefits.

First, when you sign an exclusive buyer agency agreement, you're essentially hiring an agent to work exclusively for you. That means they are legally obligated to put your interests first and help you find the best home for your needs. This can save you a lot of time and hassle because you don't have to worry about competing with other buyers or dealing with pushy agents who are more interested in making a sale than helping you find the right home.

Another benefit of signing an exclusive buyer agency agreement is that it can actually save you money. When you work with a buyer's agent, they can negotiate on your behalf to get the best possible price for the home you want. They can also help you avoid costly mistakes like buying a home with hidden defects or paying too much for a property that's not worth it.

But what about sellers? Why should they care about this new agreement? Well, it turns out that providing a buyer's commission is actually in their best interest if they want to sell their home quickly and for the highest possible price. When sellers offer a commission to the buyer's agent, it incentivizes them to bring more buyers to the table. This can create a bidding war that drives up the price of the home and helps the seller get the most money possible.

I want to talk about the cons of a seller not paying a buyer's agent commission. First off, it's important to understand that the seller typically pays the commission for both their own agent and the buyer's agent.

For starters, it can limit the pool of buyers interested in the property. Many buyers rely on their agents to find and show them properties, so if the seller isn't willing to pay their commission, those buyers may not even consider the property.

Secondly, it can create tension between the buyer and their agent. If the buyer wants to move forward with a property that doesn't offer a commission, their agent may feel like they're not being compensated fairly for their time and effort.

If you're thinking about buying or selling a home in Iowa, make sure you understand how the new buyer's agency agreement works and how it can benefit you. And remember, when it comes to real estate, it always pays to have an expert on your side. ■



Information provided by Scott Wendl, ABR CRS GRI ePro, ReMax,
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HOMETOWN girl finds house that fulfills wish list

Johnston is meaningful for VanGundy.

Elizabeth VanGundy knows the Johnston community practically inside and out.

She's lived in town since 1992, when she moved with her family while an elementary student. She graduated from Johnston High School and chose to move back after she spent some time out of state.

"I realized I missed living close to my family and friends, and once I got married (to another Johnston graduate), we both worked at John Deere Financial. It just seemed natural for us to choose to continue living in Johnston to raise our family," VanGundy says.

They liked their first home and neighborhood on the east side of town, but once they had their twins, the couple decided they wanted a bit more space. They opened up their search to the entire Johnston area and ultimately selected based on the home meeting several of their wish list items.

"This home had everything we wanted plus more," VanGundy says. "Open floor plan, bedrooms with a jack and jill bathroom for our twins, finished basement, large and lovely yard, walkable to school, close to work and near bike trails."

An added bonus they found after moving in was their neighbors.

"We love the people we live near," VanGundy says. "Such a welcoming and warm group of people that have really given us our ideal home for our family. We also love the proximity to bike trails and the high school so we can quickly bike over to watch events."

The VanGundy family especially takes advantage of the Johnston Town Center, attending many of the events held there and enjoying the splash pad and ice rink.

"Being a long-time resident, it can be hard to accept the change that I see when certain staples of the community go away or look different," VanGundy shares. "Despite that, I really appreciate and enjoy all the changes that have occurred over the past several years. Our city has done a great job keeping the same community feel that I have loved since childhood, while allowing us to grow and stay up to date."

One of VanGundy's favorite things the city has done is maintain small nuggets of her childhood.

"The gazebo from the Men's Garden Club, which is now near Casey's on Merle Hay, is a subtle reminder to me of our past and brings back



Elizabeth and Jason VanGundy found a home that fits the needs of their family, including having an open floor plan and being near schools and trails.

lovely memories," she says. "I really appreciate that."

VanGundy keeps active in the community as a member of the Johnston Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors, as well as the Johnston Economic Development Corporation.

"Both of these organizations are really vital to the strength of our community," she says. "We are fortunate to have a strong entrepreneurial community as well as longstanding corporations. Working together, along with the city, we can really help usher in the next version of our community, which really excites me."

In addition, VanGundy serves as a youth soccer coach for her girls and volunteers at Festival for Iowa PBS.

For VanGundy, being involved in the community, even in small ways, is important.

"As community members, I believe we are called to help make our home a place of belonging and make it what we wish for ourselves and our kids," she says. "No one is going to do it for us. We have many caring and involved people who really give a lot for the greater good. I feel very fortunate to be in this community and in a position to help give back." ■



MEET Jeremy Schwanebeck

Creating an authentic art studio experience for students

After growing up in Knoxville, Jeremy Schwanebeck studied art and education at the University of Northern Iowa. His first four years as a teacher were in Davenport before returning to central Iowa to be closer to family. Schwanebeck says he applied to teach at Johnston because he was impressed by the district's commitment to excellence. He has been with the district since the fall of 1999 and has taught at Horizon Elementary School since 2001.



Jeremy Schwanebeck has taught at Horizon Elementary School since 2001. Photo by Tammy Schmitz

"I love the people that I work with," he says. "My art colleagues are creative teachers and artists and their passion for the work we do challenges me to constantly improve my practice. My related arts team has become an extended family. We've been through so many personal and professional moments together that their support makes Horizon a truly special place to work."

Schwanebeck says he likes working with students at the elementary school level because they have an energy and enthusiasm that can be infectious. His students are excited to enter the studio and explore, making it seem like anything is possible. Not only are his students willing to try anything, but, when the first idea doesn't work out, they adapt it into something else.

"The most rewarding thing is hearing a student talk excitedly about the studio or the art they are making," Schwanebeck says.

While in the Horizon Art Studio, Schwanebeck's students learn how to come up with their own ideas, to experiment with materials, and to reflect on what is and isn't working. Some of the lessons are designed to introduce a material or technique for everyone while others are tailored to small groups or individuals. Schwanebeck says he tries to create an authentic studio for students to behave like real artists.

"Creative thinking can only happen in a safe space, so I listen to kids talk about their art, ask how it's going and if there's anything I can do to support them. It's very challenging to find the right amount of pressure that moves a child forward while still honoring their idea," Schwanebeck says.

In his free time, Schwanebeck continues to learn, whether from books, classes or online. He usually balances his summer with projects around the house, working on his curriculum and exploring hobbies. Schwanebeck also enjoys spending time with family and friends. ■



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SIGN UP FOR THE MAYOR'S RUN FOR THE TRAILS BEFORE THE PRICE INCREASES

The Mayor's Run for the Trails 5K + Kids Fun Run will be held on Saturday, August 10 at Terra Park, 6400 Pioneer Parkway. You can register at www.cityofjohnston.com/Mayors5KRun. Please note that registration prices will increase after July 6, and shirts will no longer be guaranteed.

The event will include 100-meter and 0.62-mile kids fun runs, as well as a 5K walk, starting at 8:00 a.m. The 5K run will begin at 8:15 a.m. Starting the walkers at 8:00 a.m. will allow the committee to proceed with the awards ceremony after the runners have finished the race.



REJUVENATE WITH YOGA BY THE LAKE

Join us for free yoga sessions at the Terra Lake amphitheater every Saturday morning from 8:00 to 9:00 a.m. Connect with nature as you stretch and rejuvenate your body and mind. Don't miss this opportunity to find balance and tranquility in the great outdoors!

For more information, visit www.cityofjohnston.com/yogabythelake.



SUNDAE IN THE PARK IS AUGUST 4

Join community members and City Department Directors as they welcome the students back to the upcoming 2024/2025 school year. The department directors will be serving free ice cream for everyone to enjoy.

The event will be held at Johnston Commons Park, 6050 Morningside Dr., from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. We hope to see you there!



For more information about the city, please visit www.cityofjohnston.com



CITY NEWSLETTER

JULY 2024

RATE ADJUSTMENTS BEGINNING JULY 1

The City of Johnston is increasing its sewer, stormwater, garbage, and recycling rates. As a resident, you will notice this increase starting with your August bill. The rate changes are in line with those of neighboring communities. The additional revenue generated from the increases will be used to support the ongoing operational needs within our city. For more information on the rates, please visit www.cityofjohnston.com/utilityrates.

	Old Rate	Rate Beginning July 1
Sewer Rates (Per thousand gallons)	\$7.09	\$7.72
Sewer service availability fee	\$7.67	\$8.36
Inside City Sewer Only Rate	\$40.50	\$44.15
Outside City Sewer Only Rate	\$60.75	\$66.23
Stormwater Utility Fee	\$7.05	\$7.55
96-gallon Garbag	\$11.13	\$11.54
48-gallon Garbage	\$10.49	\$10.91
Recycling fee	\$4.54	\$4.58



MOVIES AND MUSIC IN THE YARD

Join us in the Yard for live music or an outdoor movie. The Tunes at Twilight begin at 7:30 p.m. and Sounds of Summer at 7:00 p.m. The movies start at dusk. We kindly request you bring your chairs or blankets to ensure your comfort throughout the evening. This will allow you to relax and fully enjoy the entertainment provided in the Yard.

Sounds of Summer (7:00 – 10:00 p.m.)

- **Saturday, August 24**, Mixtape is a Nashville-based 80s rock band
- **Saturday, September 28**, The Pork Tornadoes is Des Moines #1 summer party band

Tunes at Twilight (7:30 – 9:00 p.m.)

- **Thursday, July 18**, Snacks is a unique duo playing hits across many generations and styles
- **Thursday, August 8**, June Bugs is an all-female quartet covering a variety of iconic female musicians
- **Thursday, September 12**, The Sons of Gladys Kravitz is a killer, local classic rock cover band

Movies (at dusk)

- **Thursday, August 15**, Guardians of the Galaxy, Vol. 3
- **Thursday, September 19**, Wonka



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INVESTMENT

By Daniel Rundahl

TIME to take stock

In July of 1996, I attended a movie in the theater. This would be the only movie that I have ever seen more than once in theater seats — “Independence Day.” A great flick, culminated by a fantastic and moving speech given by Bill Pullman. “...Today we celebrate our Independence Day.”

July also brings us to a mid-point in the year. This is a good time to take stock on the first half and do any planning for the second half. Let me get you started. How about starting with a list?

A few years ago, I had the crazy and headache-resulting idea that I would like to know where all of our accounts were at. I think back to when I was a teenager and only had a checking and savings account. Initially, I didn't think this process would be too difficult. I made a list that would help me jog my memory. It included checking, savings, old and current 401Ks, investments, insurance policies and even the places that we have debt or credit accounts. I then compared this list to what is listed on my credit report to find out that there were more accounts open than I even realized. By the time the spreadsheet was completed, I had more than 200 accounts listed for my wife and I — a long way from the teenager Dan Rundahl simplicity. I wanted to start a list, not draft my memoirs. This exhausting project morphed into the alternative nature of why I performed this practice. As the primary finance person in our house, I take for granted that what is in my head of knowledge doesn't exist in a simple-to-understand form for those who may need to “take the baton” if I were gone.

There is an old saying, “Don't put all your eggs in one basket.” I get the philosophy of the statement, but I never thought that I would personally find a way to create more than 200 easter baskets to accounts that we have. As we work with our clients, we always aim to simplify their retirement plans and end-of-life estate planning needs. Although this forced headache took us more than 25 years to create — and a few weeks to track down — the end result has a purpose. This Fourth of July, as you are meeting with family and friends, catching a BBQ and relaxing with a cold drink in hand, there are many things you will do... and not do. Having the end-of-life discussion with your kids and grandkids is likely not one of them. I urge you to take stock in your halfway point of this year and get some of your “life's accounts” in order. The headache will ultimately be worth it. ■

Information provided by Daniel Rundahl, Financial Advisor, Rundahl Financial Consultants, 6165 N.W. 86th St., Johnston, drundahl@rundahlfinancial.com, 515-727-1701, www.rundahlfinancialconsultants.com.



Edward Jones

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Happy Fourth of July

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WANT TO stay in your home as you age?

Preparation is key

Continuing to live in your home as you age — “aging in place” — is not always within the grasp of every person who desires to do so. If you end up needing a little assistance to remain in the place you love, chronic health challenges can make living independently ill-advised, and full-time care at home can cost nearly as much as community living (sometimes even more, if you need 24/7 care, for example).

You might be asking yourself, then: “If I am not able to live at home, and I don’t want to move into a community, what can I do?” Great news: Some organizations that serve older adults have designed Continuing Care at Home (CC@H) membership 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, here are some questions to help you make sure the program’s premises, amenities, and outcomes will be the best ones for you.

- Do you fully understand the program and what it offers? The primary advantages of a good CC@H program are twofold: Not only will it offer services and amenities to enhance your well-being 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 on. 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 and solid outcomes behind it.

If you’re considering becoming part of a CC@H program, make sure it fits your current and future needs. Your health, your wellbeing, and your 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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THE IMPORTANCE of friendship among seniors

As we journey through life, the value of friendships becomes increasingly evident, especially in our senior years. These relationships not only enrich our daily lives but also contribute significantly to our overall wellbeing and quality of life.



For many seniors, friendship plays a crucial role in combating feelings of loneliness and isolation that can sometimes accompany aging. Retirement, loss of loved ones and physical limitations can lead to a shrinking social circle. However, cultivating new friendships and nurturing existing ones can provide a sense of belonging and emotional support, creating a robust social network that helps seniors navigate life's challenges with greater resilience.

Friendships among seniors offer opportunities for shared experiences and meaningful connections. Whether it's reminiscing about the past, discussing current

events, or simply enjoying each other's company, these interactions foster a sense of camaraderie and mutual understanding. The bonds formed through these friendships often transcend age differences, creating a supportive environment where individuals feel valued and respected.

Moreover, friendships can have a profound impact on mental and physical health. Studies have consistently shown that seniors with strong social networks tend to have lower rates of depression and anxiety. Socializing can also help keep the mind sharp and reduce the risk of cognitive decline, as engaging conversations and activities stimulate mental agility and creativity.

Friendships among seniors are often built on a foundation of trust, empathy and shared experiences. These qualities create a supportive environment where individuals feel comfortable expressing themselves and seeking advice. As seniors navigate the challenges of aging, having friends who understand and empathize can provide reassurance and encouragement,

promoting a sense of emotional wellbeing and self-worth.

Additionally, friendships can lead to new interests and opportunities for personal growth. Seniors often discover shared hobbies or pursue lifelong passions together, whether it's gardening, book clubs or volunteering. These shared activities not only bring joy and fulfillment but also strengthen the bonds of friendship, creating lasting memories and a sense of purpose in later life.

In essence, the importance of friendship among seniors cannot be overstated. Beyond the practical benefits, such as reducing loneliness and enhancing mental wellbeing, friendships contribute to a sense of purpose and vitality in later life. They remind us that regardless of age, meaningful connections with others remain essential to leading a fulfilling and happy life. ■

Information provided by Antoinette Deleon, Community Relations Director, Edencrest at Green Meadows, 6750 Corporate Drive, Johnston, 515-420-0899, Antoinette.Deleon@edencrestliving.com



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CHARITY golf event a success



The third annual Johnston Rotary charity golf event featured 108 golfers, with many generous sponsors, esteemed charitable organization guests, and a beautiful day for golf — though it was a warm one. Played at Hyperion Field Club on Monday, June 3, Rotarians expect net proceeds to exceed \$25,000, with funds being used to support our 2024 primary beneficiaries: Tori's Angels, The Johnston Partnership and the USO.

The day kicked off with a pre-golf mixer to allow for some networking time while golfers signed in and picked up registration gift bags from our sponsors, including raffle tickets for the after-tournament giveaway/drawing. Special thanks to the Johnston boys golf team (so you think you're better than a high schooler?), Denton Homes (can you out-drive the cannon?), and Dental Associates (best hitter in your foursome?) for adding extra spice to an already tasty course.

Following a beautiful afternoon of golf, the scorecards were tallied as golfers claimed nearly 100 raffle prizes and enjoyed Hyperion pizza and cold beer in the clubhouse. Results of the golf tournament were as follows:

First place: Eric Smith, Tyler Lind, Will Eilert and Justin May – 57

Second place: Eddie Avdic, Brandon Blanchard and Clark Smith – 61 (won tiebreak hole three)

Third place: Ty Weis, Joe Ferin, Justin Loutsch and Brad Lowe – 61

Longest putt hole 5 – “Willie”

Longest putt hole 12 – Russ Gibson

Longest putt hole 18 – Neal Thuente

Closest to the pin hole 14 – Jordon Bouslog

Closest second shot hole 2 – Selleck Davis

Closest second shot hole 16 – Rob Jaeger

The Johnston Rotary Club meets at 7 a.m. Tuesday mornings at Hyperion Field Club and welcomes new members who enjoy fellowship, learning and service. Visit www.johnstonrotary.com for more information.

The Rotary Club International motto is “Service Above Self,” and we are delighted to serve our community with such a rewarding event. Mark your calendars now for the fourth annual Rotary J-Town Golf Championship June, 2025. ■

More information about the Johnston Rotary Club can be found at <https://portal.clubrunner.ca/1649> or contact Neil Hyde, 515-210-2649, hyde_neil@yahoo.com.



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Johnston Rotary Club UPCOMING EVENTS

July 9: President Denson - Des Moines Area Community College

July 16: Alec Wilcox - Ronald McDonald House of Central IA

July 23: No Meeting - Touring the Johnston Goodwill facility

July 30: No Meeting - Service Project

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WELLNESS

By Caitlyn Ferin, LD, RD

DOS and don'ts of grilling

Summer is the best time of year to gather with family and friends, get outside to fire up the grill and enjoy delicious food. Whether you are someone who leans toward traditional recipes or are an individual seeking a grilling adventure, there are some dos and don'ts that apply to almost all grilled items.



Do: Prep and season

Whether you're making kabobs, grilling veggies or searing a nice, marbled steak, start by preparing your ingredients so they are ready to go on the grill when things start to heat up. Letting your meat come to room temperature will help keep the proteins from seizing up when hitting a hot grill, keeping everything tender and juicy while ensuring even cooking. Take items out of the fridge about 30 minutes prior to grilling. Whether that's burgers, ribs, chicken or vegetables, seasoning really helps to bring the flavors out. If your recipe calls for a marinade, leave it as long as the recipe suggests. The chicken will need less time than the ribs, so plan ahead. Leave some marinade to add only a couple of minutes before cooking is complete. This is especially important for sugary marinades, which can flare up when cooked too soon.

Don't: Flip too often

Resist the urge to flip your meat too often. Flipping once or twice is usually enough to ensure even cooking. If you try to lift the meat before it is ready, it will stick to the grates. Let the meat develop a crust before you try to move it. The only caveat to this is, if you notice that one area of your grill is hotter than another, move your food around to ensure even cooking.

Do: Keep the lid closed

Keeping the lid closed while grilling helps to trap heat and smoke, which adds flavor and helps to cook the food more evenly. Only open the lid when you need to flip or move your food.

Don't: Guess when meat is done

Don't keep stabbing at it with a fork or prongs. This causes the juices to escape, leaving you with a less flavorful and juicy piece of meat. The best way to know when your food is done is by using a meat thermometer. Different meats and cuts require different internal temperatures, so make sure you know the right temperature for your food.

Do: Prep your grill

Preheat the grill. Be sure to give your grill plenty of time to pre-heat. This will help cook the meat evenly. Clean your grill grates once you've pre-heated it unless you've cleaned it after your last grilling session. Once you've brushed it down, wipe some oil over the grate using tongs and a piece of kitchen towel dipped in oil. You can also try rubbing a cut potato over the grates to lightly clean, and this will help keep meat from sticking also. ■

Information provided by Caitlyn Ferin, LD, RD, corporate dietitian, Fareway, 6005 Merle Hay Road, Johnston, 515-252-9962.

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JULY is Vision Month

Have you had your eyes checked?

July, often dubbed “Vision Month,” serves as an important time to focus on eye health and raise awareness about the significance of maintaining good vision. This month-long observance is dedicated to educating the public about eye care, promoting regular eye exams, and highlighting various eye conditions and diseases that can impair vision.



One of the primary goals of Vision Month is to encourage individuals to prioritize their eye health. Regular eye examinations are crucial, as they can detect potential problems early, allowing for timely treatment and management. Eye exams are not just for correcting vision issues with glasses or contact lenses; they also play a pivotal role in identifying conditions such as glaucoma, cataracts, macular degeneration and diabetic retinopathy. Early detection of these conditions can prevent or minimize vision loss, significantly impacting an individual's quality of life.

During Vision Month, many eye care professionals and organizations offer free or discounted eye exams to make them more accessible to the public. This initiative is particularly important for underserved communities, where access to eye care services might be limited. By providing affordable eye exams, these efforts help bridge the gap and ensure more people can benefit from early detection and treatment of eye conditions.

Education is another key component of Vision Month. Eye care organizations and professionals work diligently to disseminate information about the importance of eye health. This includes advice on maintaining a healthy lifestyle to support vision, such as eating a balanced diet rich in fruits and vegetables, protecting the eyes from harmful UV rays by wearing sunglasses, and avoiding smoking, which is a risk factor for many eye diseases.

Vision Month also emphasizes the importance of protecting our eyes in various environments. For instance, individuals who work in jobs that expose them to potential eye hazards, such as construction or laboratory work, are reminded to wear appropriate eye protection. Additionally, with the increasing use of digital devices, there is a growing need to educate people about digital eye strain. Taking regular breaks, practicing the 20-20-20 rule (every 20 minutes, look at something 20 feet away for at least 20 seconds), and ensuring proper screen ergonomics are all part of maintaining good eye health in the digital age.

Furthermore, Vision Month serves as a platform to address common myths and misconceptions about eye health. It aims to debunk false beliefs, such as the idea that reading in dim light can cause permanent eye damage or that sitting too close to the television is harmful to the eyes. By providing accurate information, Vision Month helps individuals make informed decisions about their eye care.

Vision insurance is often offered by employers. However, coverage is available on an individual basis. Contact a trusted insurance advisor to assist you with coverage for eye exams and hardware. ■

Information provided by Janis Van Ahn, Health Insurance Advisor LLC, 5870 Merle Hay Road, Suite A, Johnston, 515-225-9994, jvanahn@health-insadvisor.com.



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Aug. 20th | 6-7pm

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ALL EVENTS AT 5870 MERLE HAY RD, JOHNSTON

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Scan for more information!



J BACK



THE JOHNSTON DRAGONS DEFENDED THEIR CHAMPIONSHIP TITLE! The Johnston Dragons successfully defended their boys state soccer championship title Saturday, June 1 with a runaway victory, scoring 3-0 against the Dowling Catholic Maroons.

Offense and defense worked together to make the back-to-back victory possible. Junior Kyron Pope kicked off Johnston's scoring spree in the first half followed by Junior Isaiah LaMark's goal minutes later. Sophomore Markos Pelayo Pintor finished the Dragons' shutout win with just over a minute left in the game. Senior Carlos Martinez assisted each player to connect the ball to the back of the net. Senior Cole Hanson completed three saves to keep the Maroons scoreless.

The Dragons ended their season 20-2.

FIRST TEAM ALL STATE: Carlos Martinez, Isaiah LaMark **ALL TOURNAMENT TEAM:** Cole Hanson, Kyron Pope, Isaiah LaMark, Carlos Martinez

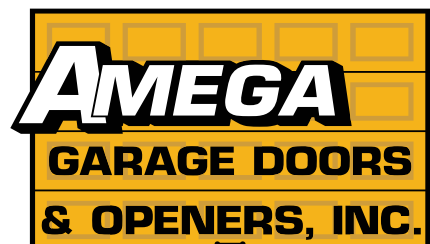
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EVENTS IN THE AREA

Be sure to check for cancelations

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

Soft Trail Stroll: Sycamore Trails

Tuesday, July 23, 10 a.m.

Sycamore Trails, 4640 N.W. 66th Ave., Johnston

Come walk the singletrack (dirt trails) of Sycamore. This event is part of a free series for people looking for a simple way to become more active. Meet in the gravel parking lot on the south side of 66th Avenue, just east of the soccer fields and west of the Des Moines River. The group will walk slowly, think “stroll,” and no one will be left behind. The walk distance will be about 1.6 miles. If the dirt is muddy, the group will walk on the paved trails instead. More information and updates are available online at www.roccasecca.fitness/stroll.

Merle Hay Road Canoe/Kayak Launch open house

Thursday, July 11, 5-6:30 p.m.

Johnston City Hall, 6221 Merle Hay Road

An open house will be held to unveil the preliminary design plan for the new Merle Hay Road Canoe/Kayak Launch. This is an excellent opportunity for community members to review the design and provide valuable input. Your feedback is crucial to the development process, and city officials encourage everyone to participate. The project is expected to be under construction by fall and continue into the winter.



Sign up for the Mayor's Run for the Trails

Saturday, Aug. 10

The Mayor's Annual Run for the Trails 5K + Kids Fun Run will take place on Saturday, Aug. 10. The registration fee includes a short-sleeve dri-fit T-shirt. However, if you register after July 7, your shirt size cannot be guaranteed. The Kids Fun Runs and 5K walk will start at 8 a.m., followed by the 5K Run at 8:15 a.m. Register at <https://runsignup.com/Race/Info/IA/Johnston/MayorsRunfortheTrails2022KidsFunRun>.



Farmers Market

Tuesdays through Sept. 24, 4-7 p.m.

Johnston Town Center just north of City Hall, 6245 Merle Hay Road

Johnston Farmers Market will be held on Tuesdays. Shop for fresh produce and homemade products while being entertained by live music. www.cityofjohnston.com/farmersmarket.



Tunes of Twilight Series at The Yard

Thursdays, July 18, Aug. 8, Sept. 21, 7:30-9:30 p.m.

The Yard, 6245 Merle Hay Road

Enjoy live music on Thursdays, July 18 (featuring the duo Snacks), Aug. 8 (featuring the all-female quartet June Bugs) and Sept. 12 (featuring The Sons of Gladys Kravits). More information is available by visiting www.cityofjohnston.com/1439/Tunes-at-Twilight-Series.

Johnston Basketball Club 2024 tryouts

Sunday, Aug. 11

Johnston High School Gym, 6500 N.W. 100th St.

The Johnston Basketball Club (JBC) girls and boys tryouts are scheduled on Sunday, Aug. 11, at Johnston High School Gym, 6500 N.W. 100th St. Grades eligible for tryouts are first through eighth (grade they will be attending in the fall of 2024).

Check the JBC website (johnstonbasketballclub.com) to register for tryouts in July. Specific times for tryouts per grade will be on the website in August.



2024 Movies in the Yard

Various dates

Johnston Town Center, 6245 Merle Hay Road.

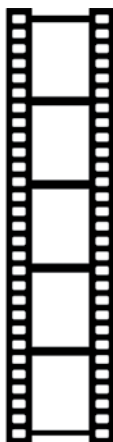
• **Thursday, Aug. 15:**

“Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 3”

• **Thursday, Sept. 19:**

“Wonka.”

All screenings begin at dusk. Bring your blankets, lawn chairs and loved ones for an evening of free entertainment.



Sounds of Summer at The Yard

The music will begin at 7 p.m. on the stage just west of Johnston City Hall. Bring your lawn chair and blanket and enjoy the free music. More information is available by visiting www.cityofjohnston.com/1438/Sounds-of-Summer.

• **Saturday, Aug. 24** – Mixtape, a Nashville-based 1980s rock band

• **Saturday, Sept. 28** – The Pork Tornadoes, Des Moines' No. 1 summer party band



SPORTS programs suffer damage, seek donations

The Johnston Little League and Johnston Girls Softball programs were dealt setbacks recently when vandals broke into storage sheds, damaged equipment and wreaked havoc on back-to-back nights.

Mark Avaux, facilities director for Johnston Little League, says that, on Monday, June 10, officials discovered that one of their buildings had been broken into, and the league's \$12,000 Gator was nowhere to be found. The Johnston Police Department was called to investigate the incident, and, just hours later, on the morning of Tuesday, June 11, the league's second garage was discovered to have been broken into as well. There, a large utility tractor stored inside had been driven through the shed's garage door, and four golf carts stored inside had been stolen.

Needless to say, Avaux and other league officials were stunned.

Three golf carts were later located, abandoned and damaged. The Urbandale Police Department contacted officials on Wednesday to inform them that the Gator had been found at an undisclosed location in Urbandale with little to no damage.

No individuals had been charged at press time.

The damage was significant, Avaux says.

"We're out about \$5,000," he says. "That's coming out of our pockets, and that's a shame because that money could have been used for the facility, equipment or capital improvements."

The league has insurance, but there will be deductibles to pay for, Avaux says. A GoFundMe page has been started to help offset the costs as well.

"We're very blessed to have people contribute the way they are," he says. "I think that's also a sign of the Johnson community trying to support our organizations and their graciousness in donating like they are. It tells me we have their support."

Avaux, who has been on the Little League board for nearly 40 years, says this isn't the first time sheds have been broken into.

"Kids will be kids, but when things are intentionally damaged like they were this time, it kind of puts a different spin on it," he says. "It makes me want to hold the perpetrators financially and legally accountable for their actions."

Avaux says Johnston community members have expressed their frustration and disappointment, particularly because it was done to a community-based volunteer organization trying to build a fun and family environment for boys and girls to play baseball and softball.

"This was just blatant abuse and destruction of personal property, and that kind of behavior has got to be fixed," he says.

Despite the setback, the organization will move forward. New doors, locks and likely a new security camera will be added to the buildings in the future, as well as repairing the damaged items.

"I don't like to have to spend this kind of money on things like this, but it's just the environment we live in these days," Avaux says. "As much as I don't like it, it's just the sign of the times that we live in." ■



The Johnston Little League program suffered thousands of dollars in damage recently following back-to-back nights of vandalism.

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CHAMBER **By Samantha Winebrenner**

SPOTLIGHT: Cajun Belle

Each month, we shine the spotlight on a Johnston Chamber member business, highlighting what they love about our local business community. Cajun Belle is a southeast Texas cuisine restaurant located at 5460 Merle Hay Road (Suite A). Cajun Belle offers a unique menu available for drive-thru at their location, as well as catering and onsite event menu options. We recently spoke with Owner and Head Chef, Zack Hollier, who has been cooking this cuisine his entire life.



- 1. What is your favorite part of being in the Johnston Chamber?**
 "My favorite part about being a chamber member is easily the networking ability. I feel like I'm part of a big team of folks, and we're all working towards the same goal."
- 2. What are your favorite benefits of being a chamber member?**
 "I've seen many benefits, including that you now have access to endless resources in areas you didn't even think of before."
- 3. Why did you choose to locate your business in Johnston?** "I chose Johnston for my Cajun Belle restaurant location because of how fast the community is growing."
- 4. What have you noticed about the Johnston community so far?**
 "I love that the Johnston community wants small businesses like mine to thrive, and they show that with real support."
- 5. What else would you like to highlight?** "We have the only Filé Gumbo in Iowa, which is 100% authentic by a true, born and raised Cajun from the swamp. ■"

Information provided by Samantha Winebrenner, Johnston Chamber executive director, samantha@johnstonchamber.com, 515-276-9064.

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PLAN AHEAD **By Scott Eriksen**

THE ROLE of funeral staff

"We don't need to worry about it; the church will take care of everything."

I have recently experienced the planning that goes into a family member's funeral service. When you want a celebration that truly reflects and honors the loved one who has died, you learn first-hand about the many details which need to come together. You also appreciate the job of the funeral director and support staff, who make sure all of these details come together seamlessly.



So, when a family says that they do not need the funeral home involved with services... we cringe.

We cringe because we know that churches don't typically have staff ready to take care of the many details that need to be attended to: creating memorial folders, memorial DVDs and other service items; checking in flowers and arranging them for the service; setting up displays of personal items for the service; and providing ushers just to name a few.

Individually, these may not seem like big things; however, these details can quickly become overwhelming. That is why I urge you to take my personal experience to heart and let the funeral home do what they are here to do for the family. Let the funeral director "direct" and guide the family through these many details and decisions. And remember... planning in advance will make this a smoother and less stressful process for everyone. ■

Information provided by Scott Eriksen, Director of Hamilton's Advanced Planning, Hamilton's Funeral Home, 605 Lyon St., Des Moines, 515-697-3670, www.HamiltonsFuneralHome.com.

GREEN Days

The 2024 Johnston Chamber Green Days Jammin' in Johnston was June 13.



King of Green Sharm Sisler and Queen of Green Amy O'Brien were crowned on Friday night of Green Days, June 14.



Samantha Winebrenner, Victoria Tran (overall winner of the Johnston Green Days Student Art Contest, representing Horizon, fifth grade) and Pam Kucera



Barb and Steve Roese enjoying live music by Mike Aceto



Shane Goodman, Paula Bierle, Sharon Vickery and Jolene Goodman



Nicole Moore Agan and Leah Nelson



Meg Wilson and Halle Phillips



Molly Howard and Shana Howard



Mike Pogge-Weaver and Jane Pogge-Weaver



Heather Lesley, Maya and Rachel Lesley



Catherine Goranson and Stacey Schuurmann



Mayor Paula Dierenfeld and Dave Roederer



Andrea Hodapp, Paula Bierle and Brenda Ballard



Jenni King at the Edencrest at Green Meadows Farmers Market June 11.



Antoinette Deleon, Alex McGregor and Juan Hakeem at the Edencrest at Green Meadows Farmers Market June 11.



Cole Slattery and Cade Slattery at the Edencrest at Green Meadows Farmers Market June 11.

The Johnston Chamber was challenged to a game of Bean Bag Baseball with McAuley Terrace Independent Living residents. It was a tight game with the McAuley team winning by one run. Bob Spier, Rick Henely, Andrea Hodapp, Sue Duvall, Jim Thomas, Shirley Kelley and Brenda Ballard.



Jim Thomas at the Bean Bag Baseball contest at McAuley Terrace Independent Living, Bishop Drumm, May 30.



Bob Spier at the Bean Bag Baseball contest at McAuley Terrace Independent Living, Bishop Drumm, May 30.



Shirley Kelley at the Bean Bag Baseball contest at McAuley Terrace Independent Living, Bishop Drumm, May 30.



Maria Pimentel, Sharon Vickery and Michele Forbes at the Johnston Chamber JumpStart May 16 at Meadowview of Johnston.



Kevin McGuire and Ryan Rohlf at the Johnston Chamber JumpStart May 16 at Meadowview of Johnston.



Jenni Buchanan and Brenda Ballard at the Johnston Chamber JumpStart May 16 at Meadowview of Johnston.



Kelli Vorrath and Courtney Buhrow at the Johnston Chamber JumpStart May 16 at Meadowview of Johnston.

GOLF Outing

The annual Johnston Rotary Golf Outing was held at Hyperion Field Club on June 3.



Meredith Smeltzer and Stephanie Denton



Lu Ann White and Greg Baker



Ted Reeve, Bruce Young, Bob Wiley and Parker Ellingboe



Tim Monson, Gene Nelsen, Dave Hove and Neal Thuent



Rick Radcliff, Doug Clement, Tim Johnston and Mike Chambers



Brandon Blanchard, Clark Smith, Eddie Avdic and Evan Summa



Jason Tjarks, Julie Tjarks, Gail McGaughy and Shayne McGaughy



Steve Grasso and Andrew Schon



Randy Clarkson and Brook Skram

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