

ALTOONA

JULY 2022

Living

MAGAZINE

Getting TOGETHER

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through gatherings

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WELCOME

GATHER around

Getting to know your neighbors isn't always an easy task. Some people simply want privacy and don't care to mingle much. That's certainly fine, as not everyone is a social butterfly. Others aggressively seek out new friends, especially those with whom they have things in common, which often deals with children being the same age.

Each time we moved, Jolene would seek out homes with playsets in the backyards and go up to the door and introduce herself and our toddler kids. A plate of chocolate chip cookies usually helped, too. It worked for her, and that bit of reaching out created lifelong friendships for us.

Admittedly, this is easier to do in the summer months. During the cold Midwest winters, most people tend to stay indoors where it's warm. But when the warm months arrive, residents start to come alive, much like a butterfly in a cocoon.

In generations past, homes had front porches where friends and family would gather. As the years passed, homeowners sought more privacy and preferred gathering on decks in their backyards. In recent years, as you may have noticed, the trend seems to be moving back to the front yards — or at least the driveways.

We found that one of the better ways to get to know our neighbors was circling the bag chairs around a fire pit in our driveway with a cold drink in our hands. And the s'mores helped, too. While the kids played hide and seek, we adults solved the world's problems — or at least the ones in our neighborhood. From there, we found reasons to gather for potluck dinners, football games and, more often than not, just impromptu get-togethers. The fire pit may not be legal in your community, but the conversation certainly is, and that's what's most important.

So if are not already doing so, invite the neighbors over to your driveway and host a little get-together. If you need some ideas on how to do this or get involved in other gatherings, check out our feature story this month.

Thanks for reading. ■



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Getting TOGETHER

Residents share how
they build community
through gatherings

By Lindsey Giardino

The recent COVID-19 pandemic has had an interesting effect on our social ties. The word “neighbor” has taken on a new meaning as we recognize the importance of authentic social interaction with those who are closest and most accessible to us. Engaging with those neighbors (from a safe distance) was a way to continue to have interaction with those outside our family during the stressful time of a global pandemic. Driveways became gathering places, with lawn chairs six feet apart; people’s news and conversations became precious when the walls of our homes began to close in. As a result, the resurgence of the front porch, driveway or lawn as a “place to meet and greet” is back in the fabric of American life.

Spring Creek Ridge neighbors include fun activities and games in their get-togethers.



FEATURE

BEARS brings neighborhood together

While it took some convincing for Heather Williamson's husband to get her to move from Des Moines to the suburbs, it's a move she doesn't regret.

The Williamsons moved into their Altoona home in Brookhaven Estates in 2019 and immediately met a neighboring family they quickly became good friends with. Over time, they've become close with even more neighbors.

"My husband and I love sitting with the neighbors, having a drink and just talking about the day," Williamson says. "You'll never meet a stranger in our neck of the woods. I think we have the oldest kids on our street, so it's always fun watching the littles ask for my daughter. They want her to give them piggyback rides or color on the sidewalk with chalk, and they really love the selfie game."

Last year, a new couple expecting a child moved into the neighborhood. When some of the neighbors found out the couple didn't have family nearby, they got together to host a baby shower for them.

"I mean, how kind are our neighbors?" Williamson says. "You can't beat it."

She adds that another couple moved in during the heart of COVID. A few weeks back, the wife went around the neighborhood organizing a neighborhood social hour on Friday nights. It's called BEARS — Brookhaven Estates Area Residents Socializing — and brings together neighbors to have a drink and a snack and get to know one another.

Williamson shares that the neighborhood also has an annual Fourth of July fireworks show.

"Each year, it gets bigger and bigger," she says. "This year, we had five houses on our block that hosted parties, and backyards were full of neighbors, family and friends watching the fireworks. It was like the world came together, and everyone forgot about what is going on in the world today."

Friends become family in Spring Creek Ridge

In June 2020, one of the families in Spring Creek Ridge hosted a socially distanced movie in their driveway for the neighborhood kids. As the adults began chatting, coolers started appearing.

"We decided this needed to be a weekly gathering," neighborhood resident Michelle Cole says. "We put out a sign-up sheet for every



The families in Spring Creek Ridge plan weekly Friday Drinks in the Driveway during the summer.

Friday starting in May through September for Driveway Drinks."

"It was exactly what was needed to spark the socialization amongst the neighborhood," says Annette Behle, another neighbor in the area.

Since then, the residents of Spring Creek Ridge have gotten together frequently for things like painting nights, Bloody Mary breakfasts, football tailgates, chili cook-offs, Easter egg hunts, book clubs and more. They also put on a progressive driveway putt-putt golf event and have a motorized scooter crew.

In addition, the neighbors adopt a family at Christmastime. Julie Marlow, who helps organize it with her husband, Troy, says they get in touch with Clay Elementary every year to find a local family or families in need. The first year, the neighborhood raised \$500. Last year they raised \$900.

For the remainder of 2022, the families of Spring Creek Ridge have many other get-togethers planned, including an Iowa versus Iowa State football tailgate, traveling game night and progressive dinners.

"Our neighborhood is like a hidden secret within itself," Behle says. "We haven't only become friends, we've become family."

Close-knit cul-de-sac

On Plumwood Court, a quiet cul-de-sac in the Venbury neighborhood, you'll find the people who live there are extremely close.

"We all get along, enjoy each other's company, everyone is friendly and looks out for each other's kids and property and would



The Williamsons moved into their Altoona home in Brookhaven Estates and set about getting to know neighbors. The neighborhood now has get-togethers with activities for the whole family.

pretty much do anything for each other," Nikki Thomas says. "We make time to just chat with each other when we're outside."

Thomas explains that the cul-de-sac gets together for several things throughout the year. There are the monthly Sunday night gatherings, where the neighbors meet up at one person's house and enjoy a meal and drink together, as well as a yearly Fourth of July party, Halloween party and holiday party. You'll also find the neighbors getting together for impromptu



The Cul De Sac Crew of Plumwood Court had T-shirts made to identify themselves as neighbors.

driveway chats and bonfires.

Oh, and they have matching T-shirts, too. “From the minute we moved in, everyone was welcoming and friendly. Everyone gets along and is always included,” Thomas says. “When our neighbor Ann passed away suddenly, we all gathered in her driveway for a fire pit, wearing our matching cul-de-sac shirts, to share memories of her and laugh despite our heartache.”

Dooley Court friends

On a different cul-de-sac in the Venbury neighborhood, Dooley Court, resides another group of close-knit neighbors.

“We do driveway hangouts on the summer weekends and an annual block party every summer as well,” Carly Anderson says. “The kids on our block play daily. They run around in a pack, and it’s never a dull moment. You will always see the Power Wheels and bikes going around and around the cul-de-sac and kids running from house to house — pure summer bliss!”

One of Anderson’s favorite things about her street is when her neighbors Lisa and Bruce Freeseemann decorate as the Gingerbread House during the holidays. They’ve even taken first place in the Altoona Dazzle lighting competition for their efforts.

“Every year, Lisa and Bruce add something new, and it’s always a blast to have the lighting ceremony every year after watching them work their tails off getting everything set up,” Anderson says.

Another of her favorite memories is bittersweet.

“Our family suffered tremendous loss this spring in May when my mother-in-law passed away from cancer, and then we lost our dog shortly after,” Anderson shares. “Our neighbors completely rallied for us. They brought meals, gifts, cards, and just stopped by and visited. We never felt alone. They were there lifting our spirits during a terrible time.”

For Anderson, what takes the cake about her neighborhood is the simple fact of it being easy to live there. No animosity, just love, she says.

“We all support, help and care for one another — and truly enjoy one another’s company,” she adds.

Bands, donuts and more

Although the Eagle Ridge neighborhood has had a few iterations of neighborhood gatherings over the years since Marla Carr has lived there — since the early 1990s, in fact — they started in earnest during the pandemic. That’s when she and a few others in the area realized they wanted to create a more neighborly atmosphere.

One of those first gatherings hosted in Eagle Ridge was a Christmas cookie exchange. There were also Driveway Drinks, Donuts in the Driveway, an end-of-the-summer snow cone



Dooley Court neighbors have started a Flock the Block tradition. Neighbors enjoy gathering and helping each other.

party aptly called “Come and Get to Snow Your Neighbor,” and more.

One day in 2020, a band came to the neighborhood and set up in one of the driveways — which Carr says was a special moment as her husband passed away in 2019 and was a big live music fan.

At one of the gatherings, a table was set up where people in the neighborhood could take a survey about what types of activities they enjoy. The Band Block Party stood out the most, so a similar event was held this July.

Carr notes many neighbors come together to make these get-togethers come to life: Brenda Havick Baird, MaryAnn Duncan, JoAnn Fife, Susan Frye, Julie Hall, Linda Jennings, Kiley Konop and Chris Wilson.

“It really has made our neighborhood a lot more cohesive,” Carr says. “I really enjoy living here.” ■

DON'T go to church. Be the church.

Whether you are part of a church or not, most likely you have experienced the subtle message that a “person of faith” is defined by how much you are participating in “church-y” activities (worship, small groups, teaching Sunday School, etc). Some people can actually get a little proud of all they’re doing “for the church.” Others get discouraged by how their schedule never seems to cooperate with the rhythms of congregational life. Still others simply don’t see the importance of attending religious events.

It’s interesting, reading through the Bible, that the main point of Jesus’ message is never a demand for more religious activity. Rather, Jesus again and again called people to see all of life as God’s and to experience Him in every moment — experiencing a practical faith that makes a difference in everyday life.

Jesus invited everyone to live life with Him, to play a vital role in what He’s doing, and to do that with other people following Jesus. This is how Jesus defined the church. Church is not somewhere you go. Church is who you are every moment of every day when you follow Jesus. When we define church as a place or an event, we divide our lives into sacred and secular. We have our “church life” and then our “real life.” And church becomes a checkbox on our to-do list. But we only have one life. You are who you are. If you follow Jesus, then you represent Him when you gather with other Christians for worship, but you also bear His name when you go to school or work, when you play sports, and when you hang out with friends. If you follow Jesus, you are always the church.


So, whether you are part of a church or not, don’t go to church. Don’t settle for a series of religious activities. Rather, listen to Jesus calling you to follow Him every day. He’ll call you to get to know Him personally, to use your gifts for the sake of others, and to do that together with other Christians. And to answer that call, it will probably include a weekly gathering with other Christians, but it is so much more. It’s life — all of it. Don’t go to church. Be the church. ■

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




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HOME HEALTH

By Ward Phillips

MYTHS and truths about hospice care

Considering end-of-life care for a family member who is ill can be overwhelming. Assistance from a qualified hospice provider can make the idea less daunting, help you initiate the conversation with other loved ones, and perhaps even reassure you that hospice care can benefit your whole family.

If your loved one's doctor has suggested hospice care and you're hesitating about making the call, the information below, compiled with assistance from the American Hospice Foundation, might help you better understand the benefits of hospice services.



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

Truth: The hospice conversation should begin before a person is in his or her last days; ideally, it should take place when individuals are still healthy. Virtually anyone with a life-limiting illness can qualify for hospice care, enabling a person to live life in comfort for the days, weeks, months, or longer that remain in his or her life. It's not unheard of for an individual's condition to improve and for him or her to "graduate" from hospice care. A philosophy of the hospice model is that life can and should be lived fully, no matter how much time remains.

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

Truth: On the contrary, hospice care can benefit family members nearly as much as it can benefit clients. One of the gifts of hospice is its capacity to help families realize how much can be shared at the end of life through personal and spiritual connections. As part of a family-centered concept of care, hospice focuses almost as much on supporting a client's family members as on caring for the client. It's not unusual for family members to look back upon the hospice experience with gratitude.

Myth No. 3: Hospice is a place.

Truth: Some hospice providers care for patients in a dedicated hospice building; others care for clients wherever the need exists, usually in the client's home. You can seek and receive the care that feels right to your loved one and family.

Myth No. 4: Hospice is only for patients with cancer.

Truth: More than half of hospice clients nationwide have diagnoses other than cancer. Hospice commonly serves people who are living with chronic diseases such as emphysema, Alzheimer's disease, or cardiovascular and neuromuscular illnesses.

Myth No. 5: Hospice care is expensive.

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

Ward Phillips is Senior Director of Sales for WesleyLife, which offers a broad network of health- and well-being-focused communities and services, including home hospice care, for older adults. Celebrating its 75th anniversary this year and its 15th as a hospice provider, WesleyLife is a Level 4 partner of We Honor Veterans, a national program that empowers hospice providers to meet the unique needs of military veterans and their families at the end of life. Call Ward at 515-669-2205 to learn more.



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“We fought the doctor about our dad needing hospice care because we were afraid, but we actually ended up wishing we had called WesleyLife sooner. We really feel the care Dad received from the hospice team allowed him to live longer.”

– Terry L., Des Moines

WesleyLife Hospice helps people spend their days the way they want to, continuing to make memories with those closest to them in the environment that they find most comfortable. We offer care anywhere, and virtually anyone with a life-limiting illness can qualify. What's more, as everyone processes end-of-life issues differently, **we offer support for the whole family.**



If you'd like to know more about hospice services for someone you love, visit wesleylife.org/hospice or call **(515) 978-2777**. We'd be honored to help your family.

RECIPE

MEDITERRANEAN-inspired dinner parties made easy

(Family Features) Over the past two years, home chefs have had time to explore new recipes, ingredients and cooking techniques, which is why it is no surprise dinner parties are, at long last, a way to celebrate together in 2022. Now is the perfect time to share your newfound skills with family and friends.

It can be easy to get caught up in hosting duties, but few hosts want to spend all their time in the kitchen when they could be enjoying a great meal. Gail Simmons, food expert and TV personality, has tips and tricks you can bookmark to help turn your dinner party from good to great.

To host a fun and fresh Mediterranean-themed party this summer, decorate your table with blue and white patterned plates, delicate olive oil and vinegar bottles, cutting boards and fresh ingredients such as lemons and greenery instead of traditional centerpieces. When paired with a flavorful seafood recipe, like this tuna romesco salad board, your guests will feel like they're enjoying the Mediterranean all summer long.

For more dinner party inspiration, visit GenovaSeafood.com. ■

Tuna romesco salad board

Recipe courtesy of Gail Simmons on behalf of Genova Tuna
Servings: 4-6

ROMESCO:

- 3 large Roma tomatoes
- 1 roasted red pepper, skin removed and seeded (or from jar), coarsely chopped
- 1/3 cup roasted salted almonds
- 1 garlic clove, chopped
- 2 tablespoons sherry vinegar
- 1/4 teaspoon sweet smoked paprika
- 1/4 teaspoon red pepper flakes (optional)
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1/4 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 1/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil

TUNA BOARD:

- 2 cans Genova Yellowfin Tuna in Olive Oil
- 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil, divided
- 1 bunch scallions
- kosher salt, divided
- freshly ground black pepper, divided
- 1 zucchini, sliced 1/2-inch thick on bias
- 1 red bell pepper, sliced lengthwise into 1-inch pieces
- 1/2 cup roasted salted almonds
- 1/2 cup marinated artichokes, drained,

- patted dry and halved
- 1 bunch radishes, halved
- 1/2 cup green olives
- 1/2 cup black olives
- 4 ounces manchego cheese, sliced into triangles
- 2 tablespoons flat leaf parsley, chopped

- To make romesco: Preheat broiler. Cover sheet pan with parchment paper or foil. Place tomatoes on sheet pan and broil until well charred on both sides, 2-4 minutes per side. Transfer tomatoes to bowl; cool slightly then remove skin, core, seed and coarsely chop.
- In blender, combine tomatoes; roasted red pepper; almonds; garlic; vinegar; paprika; red pepper flakes, if using; salt; and pepper until chunky paste forms. With blender on high speed, slowly drizzle in oil, scraping down sides of blender as needed until mixture creates rustic texture. Transfer romesco to bowl and taste for seasoning. Let romesco sit covered at room temperature 1 hour.
- To prepare board: In bowl, drain tuna; set aside. Set grill on medium-high heat and brush scallions with 1 teaspoon olive oil. Grill scallions until charred and tender, about 4 minutes per side. Remove to large plate and



season with salt and pepper. Toss zucchini and red pepper in olive oil then season with salt and pepper. Grill until charred and tender, about 3 minutes per side. Remove to same plate to cool slightly.

- To assemble: With large spoon, scoop generous amount of romesco into center of board. Using back of spoon, spread romesco into circle with well in center. Gently pile tuna into well. Arrange zucchini, pepper, roasted almonds, artichokes, radishes, olives and cheese around romesco and tuna. Sprinkle tuna with chopped parsley before serving.

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ASSET protection and Medicaid eligibility

Every day in the United States, more than 10,000 people turn 65 years old. More than 7 million people over the age of 64 receive Medicaid services and nearly 2.5 million receive Social Security Income (SSI) benefits.

Those are both means-tested programs, which means that the recipient must have less than a certain level of income and assets. When it comes to asset protection, there are options for a disabled individual over the age of 65.

Medical Assistance Income Trusts

Medicaid has eligibility limits for monthly income. If a Medicaid applicant is over-income, the problem can almost always be solved with a Medical Assistance Income Trust (a MAIT or a "Miller Trust"). This irrevocable trust receives the assignment of income like Social Security benefits or pensions. It is a specialized type



of trust and must be drafted very carefully to comply with state and federal laws. There is no age restriction on a Miller Trust.

Spend down assets

If a disabled person has too many assets — through inheritance, a personal injury settlement, or a retroactive Social Security award — managing those resources is crucial. To qualify for Medicaid, an individual must have less than \$2,000 in countable resources. One good option is to spend the cash in the month received on necessary items. There are many permissible spend-down items, so long as the money isn't simply gifted away.

Special needs trust

Federal law allows for a first-party, self-settled special needs trust. A special needs trust is a discretionary spendthrift trust designed to preserve government benefits for a disabled beneficiary. If properly drafted, assets won't be counted as a resource. Importantly, this trust

has to be established before the person with a disability turns 65.

ABLE Accounts

Another potential solution is an ABLE Account. This is a tax-advantaged savings account similar to a 529 College Savings Plan. ABLE accounts are intended to be beneficiary-directed, giving the disabled individual some measure of control over the use of the funds. However, in order to qualify for such an account, the individual's disability must have begun prior to age 26.

There are options which offer distinct advantages in managing the income and resources of an individual with a disability. Contact an attorney who specializes in these areas for information on protecting Medicaid eligibility for people over 65. ■

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

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MUSIC under the stars

Altoona's Brandt Payne a member of long-running concert series

Brandt Payne of Altoona is a school teacher who returned to Iowa last year after spending 16 years teaching in higher education as a university band director.

One of the first things Payne did upon his return was to re-involve himself in Music Under the Stars, one of the longest-running summer band concert series in Iowa. The 2022 concerts were held on Sundays from June 12 to July 10 at the Iowa Capitol grounds. The ensemble featured the Metro Concert Band and Jazz Big Band. Many of the members are Des Moines Symphony musicians as well as some of the Midwest's finest professionals. Payne was initially a part of the group in 2003.

"I knew of the group growing up and attended performances," he says. "Also, my high school private teacher performed with the group and still does. It is a fun outlet to play and enjoy being with fellow musicians."

Payne says he sees Music Under the Stars as a way for people to come together on Sunday evenings to enjoy band music at the

Capitol with downtown as the backdrop.

"Music brings us together in different ways, and I see Music Under the Stars serving a useful community purpose in bringing musicians and community members together," he says. "School bands and community bands have long been an important cultural aspect of our state and towns, so it seems fitting a group is featured during summer months at the Capitol for all to enjoy."

The enjoyment of playing music for family and friends alike, against the backdrop of downtown Des Moines and the Capitol, are two of the biggest draws to Payne. He appreciates the opportunity to participate and hopes future generations will have that same shot, too.

"It's important that our municipalities continue to invest in groups such as this, plus other creative projects in communities," he says. "Bottom lines are examined more and more closely each day and year. Make room for music and creative and performing arts." ■



Brandt Payne of Altoona is a member of the group of musicians who perform during Music Under the Stars.

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MEET Christy Bartels

Teaching to every student in her first-grade class

Originally from Iowa City, Christy Bartels graduated from City High School before pursuing a career in education. Today, she teaches first grade at Runnells Elementary School. One of the things she likes best about teaching in the Southeast Polk Community School District is the community. Bartels says it is supportive of both the district and students and is truly a community that leads.

"The Outstanding Citizen of the Year award, recently presented by the

Altoona Area Chamber, is just another example of how awesome the Southeast Polk community is," Bartels says. "From the parents, to the PTAs, even up to the school board, we know you have students' best interest in mind. I cannot thank the community enough for supporting us."

Bartels says she has many reasons to enjoy teaching students at the first-grade level. She says her students have kind hearts and work hard every day in her classroom, which gives her a constant feeling of pride. Bartels also says her students are true role models for her and how she should live her life.

"My biggest reward I gain as an educator is when the year comes to an end, and I reflect on each child's academic growth. I take pride in teaching to every student in my classroom, and I see the growth in every child. I know I have made a difference in each of their lives. My job is complete, and I did my best to prepare them for their future — or at least second grade," Bartels says.

Bartels enjoys taking mini field trips with her students, including walking to the Runnells Post Office and Fire Station. She also likes to take them to the Environmental Learning Center. Now that field trip restrictions have been lifted, she hopes to be able to take her students to these locations again soon.

In her free time, she enjoys spending time with family and friends and watching her children perform at local events.

"My husband and I watching our own children perform in their hobbies gives me the greatest joy of all. So, next time you attend a Southeast Polk event and see Emmett or Elyse, be sure to help me cheer them on then come say 'hi' to me when you see me there," Bartels says. ■



Christy Bartels takes pride in seeing the growth her students make over the course of the school year.

PLAN ahead, pay ahead

A phrase I often hear is, "It is expensive to die!" Unfortunately, I must agree.

Some of the expenses the family must face at the time of death include: funeral home services; burial plot, mausoleum or niche; vault; casket; opening/closing of burial space; transportation of body; house of worship and clergy; flowers; and memorial/headstone.

Most funeral homes and cemeteries offer pre-planning programs which will allow you to pay for your funeral/burial needs in advance, often locking in current prices for future needs. Specially trained advanced planning specialists will guide you through the process.

It is never fun or easy to think about death; however, it is much more difficult for the family when forced to make these difficult decisions — both emotional and financial — in the midst of grief. It is so much easier to discuss these topics in advance and make sure your wishes are carried out.

People are often skeptical, if not fearful, as they enter my office to make their pre-arrangements, but most leave saying, "That wasn't so bad" or "You made this easy!" Please consider completing your arrangements before they are needed — your family will appreciate it.

Give your family a gift of love and care for your future end-of-life needs now. ■

Information provided by Jan Shawver, Family Services Representative, Highland Memory Gardens Cemetery, 1 N.E. 60th Ave., Des Moines, 515-289-2230.



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SENIOR

By Stephanie Proper

TAKE precautions in the summer heat

It has been scorching hot. I enjoy the heat, not the humidity, but dry summer heat is something I look forward to experiencing every year. Unfortunately, heat can be very dangerous for people of all ages. Heatstroke occurs due to your body struggling to regulate its core temperature. Heatstroke or heat exhaustion can cause severe dehydration and damage your heart, muscles and brain. It can even lead to death. Possible symptoms are dizziness, weakness, nausea, muscle cramps and headaches. If you start experiencing these symptoms, stop what you are doing and rest, sit inside in the air conditioning, and drink a nice glass of water. If your symptoms persist for more than an hour, seek medical attention.



While it is important to enjoy the blissfulness of summer, it is vital to operate with caution and plan ahead to prevent any adverse events. It should be a high priority to stay active, but we also must have a plan for keeping cool. If you go on a walk, wear light-colored clothing and bring a bottle of water. If you are away from your home, there are cooling centers all over the metro and surrounding areas. A cooling center is a place where the general public can go to sit indoors with the air conditioning to cool down. You can often find these cooling areas in libraries or in community and senior centers, where you can sit and enjoy the air and drink some water.

Avoid working or exercising outside between 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. This is when the sun is the most intense. You should also stay hydrated... have I mentioned drinking water? Staying hydrated is important for everyone all of the time, but it is imperative to stay hydrated in the hot summer months as we age. As we get older, our body loses fluids faster, causing us to dehydrate faster. Our aging bodies do not communicate with us like they used to. Our body's messages telling us that we are thirsty and to drink can decrease over time. Your body could need water, and you may not feel like it due to your body not signaling thirst like it once did. Remind yourself to drink water by marking the bottle with a permanent marker with time goals on the water bottle itself.

Always be aware of those who may struggle to stay hydrated and cool. This could be a parent, neighbor, beloved pet, or even a stranger in a parking lot.

"Always have a willing hand to help someone; you might be the only one that does." —Roy Bennett ■

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

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NEW FIBER IN TOWN! AND NOT THE KIND FOR YOUR DAILY NUTRITION

New Fiber Provider Coming to Altoona:

Throughout the summer, construction will be underway within the City of Altoona. This construction will be occurring in PUEs (Public Utility Easements) throughout the neighborhoods, enabling the capabilities for citizens to receive a fiber optic connection to their home. For questions, visit: <https://construction.metronetinc.com/1/AltoonaIA> or call their customer service line: #1-877-386-3876.



GRASS CLIPPINGS

Please do not blow grass clippings into the street. Not only does the City have an ordinance against such action, grass clogs the storm sewer system and creeks, causing flooding and back up problems during heavy rains. Try mulching your grass on your yard. This will cut down on your need for fertilizers.



DRIVEWAY PARKING

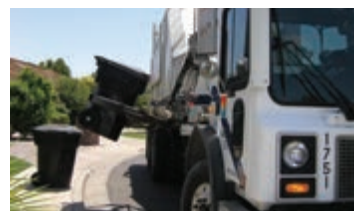
Please remember to avoid parking where the sidewalk crosses your driveway. It becomes difficult and dangerous to maneuver around vehicles, especially if you are a small child on a bike or a person who has mobility limitations.



LET'S TRASH TALK

Garbage Collection Update:

You may be noticing some new trucks in town. Altoona garbage and yard waste will now be picked up by Ankeny Sanitation. All existing toters and curb-its will remain the same, however you may see possible changes in routes + timing of pick-up. Make sure your toters are out by 6AM – 8PM on your respective day.



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HEALTH By Ashley Powell

UNDERSTANDING the endocannabinoid system

Studying how the human body works is infinitely fascinating, and, for as much as we have already learned, it seems there is still more to discover. It's well known that our bodies have several transmitting systems — a popular one being the sympathetic nervous system, which provides us our fight-or-flight response. Another important system within us is the endocannabinoid system (ECS), which regulates most aspects of our day-to-day functioning. It is in charge of our ability to learn and create memories; our emotional, pain and immune responses; our sleep cycles; and more. The most important function of this entire system is to help our bodies maintain homeostasis, or overall internal stability. The ECS is active in our bodies even if we do not use cannabis. People are especially inclined to ingest if they have heavy pain or anxiety. The ECS also exists in animals. Creating awareness of this system has undoubtedly contributed to cannabis' rise in popularity. ■



Information provided by Ashley Powell, CBD American Shaman, 800 S. 50th, #106, West Des Moines, 515-380-5251 and 3418 Eighth St. S.W., #3, Altoona, 515-967-4036. References: <https://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/the-endocannabinoid-system-essential-and-mysterious-202108112569#app>. <https://www.healthline.com/health/endocannabinoid-system#deficiency>.

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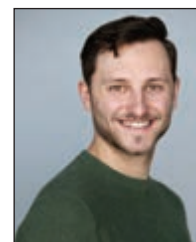
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HEALTH By Elijah Evans

PROVIDING support

Many people struggle with how to best provide support for their loved ones dealing with negative emotions. There are two major kinds of interpersonal support: instrumental support and emotional support. Instrumental support is helping people by doing something tangible for them, such as providing information or completing tasks on their behalf. Emotional support, on the other hand, is validating the emotions the person is going through — letting them know their reactions make sense to you given the circumstances — without trying to change the way they feel. It is very common for people to offer instrumental support as soon as they learn the people they care about are unhappy, especially since it feels like they are doing something concrete to be of assistance. This approach often backfires because trying to solve the problems causing negative emotions tends to imply the message that a person's negative emotions are unwelcome. If you find loved ones get upset with you when you're only trying to help, I suggest starting with providing emotional support and proceeding to instrumental support only if it is specifically requested. My guess is you'll find that, most of the time, people just want to feel heard and understood rather than have their problems solved. ■



Information provided by Elijah Evans, T-LMHC, SS Therapy and Consulting, Ltd., 4725 Merle Hay Road, Suite 205, Des Moines, 515-528-8135, evans@sstherapyandconsulting.com, www.sstherapyandconsulting.com.

HEALTH

By Nikki Morgan

SLOW the signs of aging with a balanced diet

Skincare products and treatments are a great investment when used properly, but natural remedies at home may also slow the signs of aging and take years off your face.

There are many steps you can take that may help you reach and maintain your skincare goals. One of these steps is to eat a balanced diet rich with antioxidants and Omega-3s. After stocking up on the skincare products you love, stock your grocery cart with plenty of fruits and vegetables. The more color the better. Vitamins C, E and A may sound familiar to you, as they are oftentimes found in the products used in your daily skincare regimen. All three antioxidants prevent damage caused by free radicals. Vitamin C is specifically known to support collagen production and improve the appearance of fine lines and wrinkles.

Citrus fruits such as grapefruits, kumquats and oranges provide the nutrients previously listed that are necessary to fight off molecules harmful to skin cells and that cause signs of aging. While an antioxidant-rich diet helps curb the damage caused by free radicals, Omega-3s prevent harmful pollutants from seeping in altogether. Add salmon, fortified eggs and walnuts to your grocery list. These foods keep the outer-most layer of your skin strong enough to keep external toxins out. ■

Information provided by Nikki Morgan, owner and nurse practitioner, SkinFusion FX, 410 Eighth St. S.W., Altoona, 515-967-0587.





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HEALTH

By Dr. Kari Swain


CHIROPRACTIC care for children and teens

Parents often ask why they should bring their child to see a chiropractor. Here are a few of the top reasons why children and teens should have a thorough examination by a Board-Certified Pediatric chiropractor.


- **Wellness:** Chiropractic adjustments reduce nervous system stress and allow the body to function in a greater state of health.
- **Forward head posture:** With the use of electronic devices, their spines are in frequent forward flexion. Children and teens spend an average of eight hours on their phones, and children 8-12 years old spend an average of five hours. All of that time looking down at their phones causes damage to their spine.
- **Active play and sports:** All children experience falls, bumps, accidents and injuries while growing and playing. Often, minor spinal injuries go unnoticed until adulthood, and thus it takes longer to make corrections. Children and adolescents who play sports are even more susceptible to injury as the body is still growing and developing. Injuries to children's spines are not unique to contact sports but are also seen in non-contact sports like cheerleading and gymnastics. When the nervous system is healthy, and the spine is aligned, the brain and body are able to communicate optimally, providing the following benefits: improved reaction time, coordination, range of motion, balance and proprioception as well as sufficient oxygenation, more energy and stamina, and decreased risk of injury. ■

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


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4 WAYS men can protect their heart

Heart disease impacts men differently than women, with males more likely to develop heart disease earlier, leading to a greater risk of heart attacks earlier in life.

Heart disease is the leading cause of death for men in the United States, causing about one in four male deaths. Here are four ways for men to protect and heal their hearts.

1. Know your risk factors

While there are certain things we can't control about our health, like the genetics we are born with, understanding our risk factors is the key to preventing heart disease. In general, men live not only shorter, but sicker, lives than women. They're more likely to have high blood pressure and diabetes, two conditions that are directly linked to cardiovascular disease and increase your risk for a heart attack or stroke.

Men also do not have the natural estrogen



levels that help protect women in younger years. Other risk factors include: age, family history, smoking, cholesterol, obesity, diabetes and sedentary lifestyle.

2. Make sustainable lifestyle changes

One of the main risk factors for heart disease is smoking. Smoking contributes to plaque formation in the arteries, which may lead to a heart attack or stroke. Men are far more likely than women to be smokers, and this impacts their likelihood for developing heart disease. Small lifestyle changes that can be made today include:

- Cutting down on red and processed meat
- Drinking less alcohol
- Engaging in aerobic/cardio exercises
- Scheduling your annual checkup

3. Reduce and manage stress

Stress sends your body, specifically your autonomic nervous system, into a state of "fight or flight." It is one of the most underrated heart risk factors. Continuous stress releases an excess

of hormones like adrenaline and cortisol, which can damage the body over time and, in extreme cases, cause sudden cardiac death. Set aside small periods of time throughout the day and week for rest and relaxation.

Reducing and managing stress also improves your mental health and sleep.

4. Don't ignore ED

Erectile dysfunction (ED) is a symptom of an underlying disorder and can be a warning sign of current or future heart problems. Inform your health care provider if you have symptoms of erectile dysfunction so you can be screened for the presence of heart disease.

The bottom line: Ignoring ED is dangerous and can put your health and well-being at risk. ■

Information provided by Eric Martin, MD, board-certified cardiologist specializing in prevention and wellness at MercyOne Iowa Heart Center, 5880 University Ave., West Des Moines, 515-633-3600, IowaHeart.com

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6 FAQs when buying your first home

Buying a home is an exciting milestone in your life. If you're going through the process for the first time, you may be hearing many unfamiliar terms and contemplating which of your many options best fits your situation. If this sounds like you, you're in the right place. Here are the most common questions we receive from clients.



Do I need a Realtor® to buy a home?

While you're not required to have a Realtor to buy a home, they can be extremely helpful throughout the process. There are many factors to consider when choosing a home, and evaluating a whole market on your own can be overwhelming. Realtors have the expertise to guide you.

What's the difference between a 15-year and 30-year fixed mortgage? Two of the most common mortgage options are 15-year and

30-year fixed mortgages. As the names suggest, the number of years it takes to pay off these mortgages differs. Another major difference is that shorter-term mortgages often have lower interest rates but require a higher payment each month compared to longer-term mortgages.

What's the difference between a fixed-rate and an adjustable-rate mortgage? A fixed-rate mortgage maintains the same interest rate throughout the entire life of a loan, while an adjustable rate mortgage begins to change — which can go up or down — based on the credit market. Both options have advantages and disadvantages, but, especially during a low-rate environment or a volatile market, fixed rates are much more favorable to buyers.

What is an escrow account and escrow analysis? An escrow account is used by homeowners and mortgage lenders to ensure adequate payments are made on homeowners' insurance and real estate taxes. An escrow analysis is an annual review of your account to ensure you are not paying too much or too

little, as property tax and home insurance rates can change over time.

What is a homestead credit and do I qualify for one? Homestead credit is a tax credit for homeowners designed to lessen the amount of property tax they pay. While eligibility varies greatly by state, in some states, such as Iowa, the qualifications needed to be granted a homestead credit are minimal.

If I can't find my dream home, can I build it instead? In today's low-inventory real estate market, many homebuyers are considering building instead of buying an existing home. Building a house can be a great way to get exactly what you desire for your dream home, especially when the market doesn't include the style or size of home you're looking for. ■

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



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Inaugural Tony Mapu Memorial Foundation Golf Tournament and Luau

Saturday, Oct. 8

Copper Creek Golf Course, 4825 Copper Creek Drive, Pleasant Hill

Registration is online only at www.tonymapu.org. Check in is at 9:30 a.m. with shotgun start at 11 a.m. Awards are presented at 5 p.m., with the luau dinner at 5:30 p.m. followed by entertainment at 6:30 p.m. and the closing Fire Dance at 8 p.m. Cost is \$85 for golf and \$65 for luau (\$15 if also golfing). Tony Mapu attended Southeast Polk intermittently from 1977 to 1980. He and his family traveled the country with the entertainment group known as Chief Maps and The Sounds of Polynesia. Tony died in a car accident on Oct. 25, 1980. The Foundation will raise funds for scholarships.



Music at Haines Park

Sunday, Aug. 28, 6 p.m.

Haines Park Outdoor Stage, 700 block of Third Ave. S.E., Altoona

Altoona Parks and Recreation Board is hosting Music at Haines Park, featuring free entertainment. Pop and popcorn are sold to support CAP Children's Theatre.

Olde Town Altoona Farmers Market

Thursdays, 4-7 p.m.

Olde Town Altoona

Enjoy the Farmers Market and all it has to offer Thursdays during the summer. Enjoy a leisurely stroll among vendors in the charming Olde Town Altoona setting.



Altoona National Night Out

Aug. 2, 6-8 p.m.

Sam Wise Youth Complex

Join members of the Altoona fire and police departments for National Night Out. Admission is free to the event, which includes kids activities and community fun.

Rendezvous on Riverview

Friday, July 29 at 5:30 p.m.

Riverview Park, 710 Corning Ave., Des Moines

This concert series with free entertainment at the historic Riverview Park, which now includes Des Moines' first accessible playground, wraps up with a concert by Flying Solos with Brian Congdon. Food trucks at the event will be Ruby B's Kitchen & Catering, Dudley's Carnival and El Salvador del Mundo. More information is online at riverviewevents.org.



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FINDING time

This time of year has us all looking for more time to do what we enjoy, whether that is relaxing on the beach or heading out for summer vacation. However, few of us can find it due to the many commitments we maintain from work to sports schedules to civic engagements. It is easy to become so busy doing things that we feel out of balance and out of time. If this seems familiar, these three simple criteria can help us become more intentional about what we choose to add to our calendars.



1. Does the opportunity align with your goals?

Know what your priorities are, and you can better identify what activities support them. It will seem like many opportunities deserve your attention, but understanding your own goals, personally and professionally, will help you select the best and most relevant opportunities.

2. What is the return on investment (of your time)?

Start thinking about time in terms of investment. We often hear the phrases “spending time” or worse, “killing time.” However, thinking about “investing time” helps capture the intentionality (or lack thereof) of what we choose to be involved in which, in turn, helps us to prioritize. For instance, if I invest time going fishing with my son, that distinction puts the activity on par with or even above other activities that may seem more important on the surface and protects the opportunity to build my relationship with my son.

3. Could someone else do it?

Believe it or not, none of us are irreplaceable. If the opportunity is one that someone else could do, maybe you should pass it up and let them do it in order to refocus your efforts elsewhere or even just build some margin into your life. Even if the opportunity is one that someone else could eventually grow into, it might be better to allow them the chance to do so instead of getting involved just because you have the ability.

It is said that the best people are always the busiest people. However, busyness is not a virtue, and we are all well-served to be selective in what we invest our time in. Doing so allows us to invest in the things that are most important and give 100% to the things we choose to be a part of. Maybe then we can find a little more time for the truly important things... like the beach. ■

Information provided by Josh Dunwoody,
2022 Altoona Area Chamber of Commerce President



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FUN in Fieldstone Estates

Neighborhood parties bring people together.

After living in her and her husband's Altoona home for a year and not knowing anyone other than their next-door neighbors, Therese Augustin decided "life was short, and I was going to make an attempt to get to know more of my neighbors," she says.

That day, Augustin noticed one of those neighbors sitting outside. So, she walked over and introduced herself.

"We had a great visit and decided that we would start a neighborhood get-together," Augustin recalls. "We came up with the idea FUN Friday."

FUN is an acronym for Fieldstone Unites Neighbors. Augustin explains that her neighborhood, Fieldstone Estates, was developed in three different plats, her home being in the third one.

"Not knowing how many people would show up, we initially started out by inviting the residents from plat three," she says. "We printed flyers and walked around to each home in that plat and hand delivered the flyers. If the residents were home, we introduced ourselves and explained a little about what we were planning. Otherwise, we left the flier in their door."

The first FUN Friday was held on June 11, 2021, and more than 30 people attended. For the next event, everyone in the development was invited.

"By doing so," Augustin says, "it also enabled us to communicate with everyone using our Facebook page."

The goal is to have a FUN Friday each week from June through August. Folks in the neighborhood can sign up to host an event, put a sign in their yard to let neighbors know, and then others show up with their own lawn chairs and beverages. Augustin says the events typically last from 7 to 10 p.m., although many times the get-togethers have extended beyond then. She also has a feeling FUN Fridays will continue



Not knowing many of her neighbors, Therese Augustin decided to take action. The end result was FUN Fridays.

into the fall months this year.

"It's fun to watch everyone pulling their wagons down the sidewalks, hauling their chairs and coolers," Augustin says. "Last year, one neighbor hosted the event and provided snacks, cotton candy, s'mores, a dunk tank and inflatables. It was a hit for all the kids in the neighborhood."

She adds, "It's just a fun gathering to catch up on what is happening in the neighborhood and around town."

In addition to the lively Friday evening gatherings, one of Augustin's favorite parts of her neighborhood is how everyone looks out for and helps each other out.

She and her husband had only lived in their home for three months and were working out of town when the August 2020 derecho went through.

"I was at work worrying about what was happening at our house when I received a call from my neighbor who happened to be working from home that day," Augustin says. "She told me that things had blown around in our yard, but that we did not have any damage to our home. When we got home that day, we were expecting to have to pick up everything in the yard, but they had already been over and put everything back in place. We have the best neighbors." ■

OUT & ABOUT



A ribbon cutting was held for Justified Beauty Permanent Cosmetics at 700 First Ave. S. on June 24.



Emily Brown and Tonia Johnson at the ribbon cutting for Iowa Family Chiropractic on July 12.



A ribbon cutting was held for Iowa Family Chiropractic at 160 Adventureland Drive on July 12.



Don Timmins, Brittany Zeller, Brad Skinner and Kari Swain at the ribbon cutting for Iowa Family Chiropractic on July 12.



Rick Kroeger and Marsha Lynch at the ribbon cutting for Iowa Family Chiropractic on July 12.



Kellie Hoover and Abbie Chase at the ribbon cutting for Iowa Family Chiropractic on July 12.



Abby Muhlenbruch and Jeremy Arnold at the ribbon cutting for Iowa Family Chiropractic on July 12.



Bill Gustoff for Iowa at the Altoona Fourth of July Parade on July 4.



Rams Swim Club at the Altoona Fourth of July Parade on July 4.



Miss Polk County Brooklynn Nelson at the Altoona Fourth of July Parade on July 4.

4th OF JULY Parade

Altoona celebrated the Fourth of July with a parade.



Pet Supplies Plus



The Altoona Historical Society



Altoona City Council members



American Legion Post #682



Altoona Palooza



SEP Rhythmettes Dance Team



Prairie Meadows



Becky Nalevanko's Dance & Tumbling Studio



Honors Float



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