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DECEMBER 2022

Living

MAGAZINE

The GIFT of TIME

Volunteers spread joy
for the holidays

Meet Jen Stapleton

EDUCATION

Classic beef Wellington

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Chamber holds ribbon cuttings

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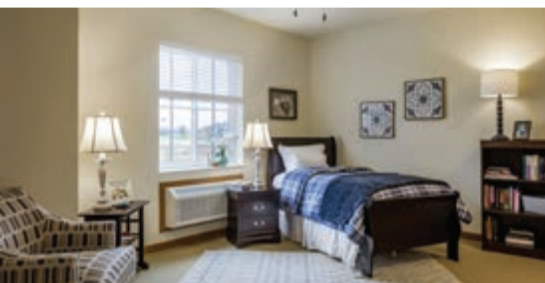
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WELCOME

IT'S BETTER to give than to receive

Do you remember hearing that phrase as a child and wondering who in the world could possibly agree with that?

I do, and I definitely enjoyed receiving gifts more than giving them. As a youngster, it is a challenge to think of many things in life more enjoyable than opening gifts. Just look at any kid's eyes when he or she has a wrapped present at arm's length.

As an adult, that seems to change — at least it has for me. When my kids or wife ask me what I want as a gift now, I usually come up with something exciting like undershirts, underwear or socks. Those are things I want and could certainly use. My family members don't seem to share my enthusiasm for these items, so I often receive other gifts. I appreciate them, but I really don't need them. In fact, for most of us adults, there are very few things in life that we now truly need.

My mother used to tell me this when I would ask the same thing to her prior to her birthdays and the holidays. What she really wanted was to get together in person, play games and share stories. The most important gift to her, and now to me, is time. It is our most precious commodity, and many of us are learning to treat it like gold. As we age, we learn to say no to the many requests of our time that don't fit with our personal priorities. And, hopefully, we commit more of our time to the things that do.

Meanwhile, few things in life — including opening presents as a child — can bring as much inner joy as volunteering our time to help others. Most all of us think we are too busy to make time for volunteer efforts, and that is understandable. Even so, I am amazed by the many people who do volunteer and make such an impact on the lives of others including the elderly, the lonely and the many who are truly in need.

You may have thought about volunteering your time but were not sure where to start. In this month's cover story, we share the accounts of local residents who felt the same way and then made the important step to actually do it. They don't regret it, and you won't either.

Look inside for examples of volunteer opportunities during this holiday season and throughout the year that will help you learn how good it can feel to give rather than to receive.

Thanks for reading. ■



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The GIFT of TIME

Volunteers spread joy for the holidays

By Ashley Rullestad

Whether it is the family gatherings, longtime traditions, religious ceremonies, gift giving, glowing candles or a blanket of glistening snow, there is something about the holidays that warms our hearts and sparks our spirit of generosity. We give goodies, cards, gifts and more to our friends and family. And, donations flow to charities.

For those who want to do more than open their wallets, another precious gift waits to be given: time. Volunteers help to spread holiday cheer, and they find themselves rewarded in return by the joy of giving.



FEATURE

Clothing the community

TAKE (The Ankeny Clothing Exchange) has been a part of the Ankeny community for many years. TAKE collects donations from the community, primarily of clothing but also of other household items like small appliances and housewares such as sheets, towels, bedding and décor, and offers a spot for people to come shop free of charge. This time of year, TAKE also operates the Christmas Room, a place where people can shop for new and like-new gifts, holiday décor and stocking stuffers.

LuAnn Barnes has been a part of TAKE for 12 years. TAKE was located in the Neveln Center for a long time but moved to its new location at 718 N.E. Grant St. in March 2021. TAKE has been 100% volunteer run since its inception.

"There were a number of community members who felt there was a need for something like a helping hand in the community, and so they started out in a church and were open once a month in the beginning. We want a place people can come and shop in dignity. We want them to have quality items."

Barnes says the Christmas Room is a special

part of TAKE that opens around the holiday season. Each week, TAKE posts the week's needs on their social media sites. They take those items until the cutoff, which is typically mid-December. To make it even easier to donate, local businesses have put in drop boxes for specific donations, like toiletries or personal need items, for stockings.

Some businesses, like consignment shops in town, donate the items that don't sell to TAKE. You can even take furniture to Stuff, Etc. and use the TAKE charitable account. TAKE will then receive the proceeds from the sale. Donations like this help TAKE pay their rent.

Barnes got involved with TAKE after her friend Bette Honeck (known as Grandma Bette) invited her to help out.

"She's been a friend of mine for a long time, and I watched her get involved and saw her be the head matriarch of the group. It was such a compelling thing to do. It's just been very rewarding to me personally. I'm now retired, and I have some more time to spend with it."

Now Barnes spends a lot of her time volunteering, and Dana Robinett and Jocelyn Sutherland, along with other volunteers, help

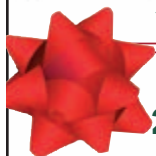


Bette Honeck and LuAnn Barnes have volunteered with TAKE for years.

her organize and run the Christmas Room. The Christmas Room is a huge undertaking all on its own. Shoppers spend a short amount of time in the room choosing gifts and holiday items, and, once they leave, the room is quickly restocked before the next group comes in. Shoppers can visit the Christmas Room once a week, and it's a constant frenzy of sorting, stocking and shopping throughout the holiday season.

"We want people to come shop and get things that they might not be able to afford in

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FEATURE

the real world and get those items that don't necessarily fit into the budget. We have had a pretty big increase in volume of customers since we moved, and it has been noticeable the need level has risen. We have been having more and more immigrant families who have connected with us, and it's always nice to help them get started and get integrated into the community."

Coffee and learning

DeAnna Page was interested in volunteering with the school district, as her sons both played soccer there, and it was a good way to be involved and get to know their friends, teachers coaches and other staff. She started working at the Ankeny High School Perky Hawk coffee shop in 2013 and then at Ankeny Centennial's Java Jaguar when it opened the following year.

"I got involved so I could help students learn on-the-job training," she says. "I have a human resources background and really enjoyed staffing and job training, and I also really felt the need to stay involved in my sons' schools so that I felt like I was helping in our community schools."

Jessica Dager is one of the shops'



DeAnna Page volunteers with Sara Jorgensen, whose daughter Sydney (far right) stops by for cookies on her way to class.

co-sponsors and a special education teacher at AHS. According to Dager, the Perky Hawk started in January of 2006 in what is now Northview (then AHS) in an old concession stand overlooking the gym. It initially was a partnership with home economics, whose students baked muffins and cookies to sell, and it was staffed by students with disabilities

and associates to teach job skills. The start-up supplies, support and advice came from Bill Malone of Cafe Diem.

When the new high schools were designed, Dager and others were involved in both the layout and location for the new coffee shops. Since they opened, both coffee shops have been staffed primarily with adult volunteers from the

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community.

"We have had stay-at-home moms, youth pastors, people on their day off, and retired individuals looking for something to be helpful," Dagel says.

Page volunteers every week on Tuesdays, and she fills in when other volunteers can't make it. She enjoys helping students learn new skills and working with them. Student Madilyn Nelson works at Java Jaguar.

"I like working at the Java Jag because it is a warm and welcoming environment. I get to put smiles on fellow classmates' faces, which makes me have a smile on my face. I get to meet others who I have not met before. I also like that adult volunteers have a chance to work there. Meeting them, as well as working with them, makes it 10 times better."

Since opening in 2006, the shops have donated about \$150,000 to fund things that will improve the education of Ankeny students. Grants can be requested by teachers twice a year and are reviewed by administration and coffee shop staff.

Student workers include students with disabilities who specifically need vocational



Centennial student Madilyn Nelson helps a customer at Java Jaguar.

education and training but also can include students who want silver cord hours or work experience.

As an extension of the coffee shops, there is a fall and spring bulk coffee sale when school staff and community members order bulk coffee beans, and students in special education classes weigh and package them. The flavored

beans are custom roasted by Cafe Diem and include Hazelnut Hawk and Jamaican Me Jaguar.

Page likes spending time with the students.

"I really feel like the Java Jaguar and the Perky Hawk help all students get some on-the-job training, which, in turn, helps students go out and get jobs in our Ankeny community."

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Holiday assistance

The Ankeny Service Center coordinates services and referrals for residents of Ankeny and northern Polk County. It exists to serve the underserved in the community by meeting immediate needs, as well as providing a path to success. ASC offers services such as lawn care and snow removal, household repairs, transportation, medical equipment rental, a food pantry and emergency assistance.

Gay Appelhans has been a volunteer with the Ankeny Service Center for two years. She began donating items in 2020 and appreciated the organization so much that she decided to volunteer.

"When I met the staff and board and saw their commitment to serving the community, I decided I wanted to be a part of it. Everyone there genuinely cares about the people they are serving. I knew that was the place for me."

Appelhans now volunteers in the Ankeny Service Center's food pantry each week, assists with administrative duties, and fills the Helping Hand boxes with food items. The boxes are located around town and can be a quick source of food for anyone needing a quick meal. They operate on the "leave what you can, take what you need" philosophy.

But Appelhans' favorite volunteer activity is delivering gifts to families through the Holiday Assistance Program. The program, which offers gifts and meal cards to families in need, has been in existence for almost a decade.

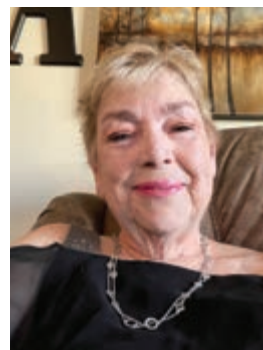


Volunteers sort the multitude of gifts collected for families in need through the ASC and A Helping Hand in Ankeny.

In 2021, the Ankeny Service Center and A Helping Hand in Ankeny combined holiday programs in order to assist more families. Thanks to generous individuals and businesses, approximately \$150,000 in gifts are received each year. Last year, 400 families received assistance and 1,600 children in the community received gifts.

If you'd like to adopt a family for the holiday, visit ankenyservicecenter.org. Volunteers are also welcome year-round. Volunteer opportunities and donation information are available on the website or the ASC Facebook page.

"Sharing some holiday spirit with the vulnerable in our community blesses those who receive the gifts, but it also brings me so much happiness," Appelhans says. ■



Gay Appelhans has been volunteering at the Ankeny Service Center for two years.

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A DOSE of optimism

We all understand the importance of being optimistic, but sometimes it's difficult when the headlines are full of doom and gloom. The stock market slump, persistent inflation and rising interest rates dominate economic news.

In the spirit of the holidays, I want to offer a dose of optimism to help you wash down the eggnog.

Retirement income taxes are going away next year in Iowa. If you are 55 or older, you will not pay state income taxes on pension income and distributions from IRAs, annuities and employer-sponsored plans like 401(k)s. The same goes for distributions from deferred compensation plans and plans maintained or contributed to by a self-employed person. This applies even if you are still working.

Medicare premiums are going down, and Social Security is going up. The standard Part B premium will be \$164.90, \$5.20 lower than in 2022 (I didn't forget about the big jump in 2022; I'm being optimistic here, remember). Social Security is getting its biggest bump in 40 years, an 8.7% cost-of-living adjustment or COLA. The



average benefit will increase by \$146 monthly from \$1,681 to \$1,827.

Those are a couple of small wins. The big wins come when you have a customized, written retirement plan. We've been talking with the individuals and families we work with about taking advantage of the economic conditions. We know that, on average, recessions happen every five to six years, so when we helped them put together their retirement plans, we had that in mind. Then when the recession hits, we look at action steps like Roth conversions or Dollar-Cost-Averaging and decide if it's time to execute.

You may have been watching your 401(k) take a hit and think it's too late to act. Or you've been told to sit back and wait it out. I disagree. Now is the time to take control. You don't have to be a victim of market conditions. There are likely things you can do right now to help you get through this economic storm and put yourself in a better position for the next one. Then you can worry less about the stock market swings and focus more on the joy — something we all want to experience during the holiday season.

Take the first step to building a recession-resistant retirement plan. Check out our online Journey to Retirement workshop. Details are below.

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

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REAL ESTATE

By Bonnie Christensen

AFFORDABLE home upgrades for big impact

Home improvement pros and DIYers tout a fresh coat of paint as a favorite among low-cost home upgrades that can make a huge impact. But what else can you do to accessorize and decorate? Sometimes the little things can make a bigger difference than you'd think.



For the bathroom

1. Frame it. Estimated cost: starting around \$100. That edgeless, builder-grade mirror hanging above the bathroom vanity may be prime for an update.
2. Infuse some green. Estimated cost: \$5 and up. Simply adding greenery can liven up bathroom spaces and soften harsh lines from all the heavy fixtures, designers say. Try a statement plant on the floor.
3. Modernize hardware. Estimated cost: hardware starting at about \$2 apiece, faucets for \$200 or less. Just swapping out the faucets and drawer pulls is a small home upgrade can refresh an outdated bathroom.
4. Soften the lights. Estimated cost: about \$100 or less apiece (\$40 to \$120 per fixture for installation by an electrician). Wall sconces can warm up the bathroom lighting.

For the bedroom

5. Add molding to the walls. Estimated cost: about \$200, including a designer's input. Installing molding on the walls behind the bed is an impressive home upgrade.
6. Decorate with mirrors. Estimated cost: \$150 to \$250. Try a mirror in an unusual shape, like a diamond, hexagon or square silhouette.

For the living room

7. Texturize and accessorize. Estimated cost: \$50 to \$150 to update a few accessories. Designers may add texture by incorporating dressers with fluted designs, chunky knit throws, velvet ottomans, or leather accent chairs.
8. Wallpaper the shelves. Estimated cost: about \$50 for a small roll. For homeowners who may be too timid to jump on the wallpaper comeback trend, try it in small doses and with less commitment (especially when using a removable peel-and-stick type).

For the kitchen

9. Bring in some bling. Estimated cost: starting at \$2 apiece for cabinet hardware, \$60 to \$150 for pendant lighting (extra \$40 to \$120 per fixture for installation by an electrician). Even just changing out one main fixture or series of pendants above a kitchen island can change the whole look of a room instantly without having to renovate the entire kitchen.
10. Dress up the pantry. Estimated cost: starting at \$1 each for baskets and glass jars. Pantries have emerged as a kitchen favorite, so they're a good choice for a home upgrade. "Invest in a label maker and go to town organizing your pantry so everything matches and looks almost decorative or too pretty to take snacks from," Bell says. ■

Article by HouseLogic. Information provided by Bonnie Christensen, broker, RE/MAX Precision, 225 N.W. 18th St., Suite 103, Ankeny, 515-971-9973.

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IT'S COLD outside! Virtual library programs

We have already seen temperatures dip down to the teens, our breath is visible on most days, and we've already had our first snowfall. It's officially winter in Iowa. And, with all the charm that can come with winter,



it certainly encourages one to stay inside, away from the wind and the need to wear a dozen layers. We know it can be daunting, and sometimes even dangerous, to go outside during this time of year. We also know the reluctance to leave your home includes venturing outdoors to the library. With that in mind, the Ankeny Kirkendall Public Library is continuing to offer virtual programs that you can attend anywhere with an Internet connection and, preferably, heat.

If you head over to the library's Facebook page at facebook.com/ankenylibrary, you will see our featured virtual program " 'Twas the Night Before Christmas: American Christmas Traditions" presented by Martina Mathisen. This program, which will be available on-demand throughout the month of December, explores the fascinating real-life story of "The Night Before Christmas" along with the stories of other American Christmas traditions. For instance, why do we kiss under mistletoe, and why are poinsettias so popular this time of year?

On Monday, Jan. 9 at 6 p.m., we will be hosting registered dietician Jill Patterson as she presents her virtual program "Eat This, Not That!" to help us all get back on track with our health after the holiday season. Jill is an award-winning registered dietician nutritionist specializing in employee wellness, school nutrition, childhood nutrition, marketing and communications. We have hosted Jill before, and she is an engaging presenter who uses her in-depth knowledge to provide an engrossing and educational program. You can register for this program on the library's online events calendar.

Additionally, each month, we have a series of virtual author talks, typically with three per month. The works of these authors are a diverse array of genres and topics. For instance, earlier this month, we hosted talks by Fredrik Backman, author of the bestselling novel "A Man Called Ove," in addition to two Pulitzer Prize-winning authors, Geraldine Brooks and Nicole Eustice. On Jan. 12, the featured author will be Namina Forna, New York Times bestselling author of "The Gilded Ones" series who will discuss her second installment in the series, "The Merciless Ones." Dana K. White, creator of popular podcast and blog, "A Slob Comes Clean," will impart tips from her books "Organizing for the Rest of Us" and "Decluttering at the Speed of Life" on Jan. 17. Creator of the immensely popular XKCD Webcomic, Randall Munroe will be discussing the sequel to his book "What If?: Serious Scientific Answers to Absurd Hypothetical Questions." You can also register for our author talks on our online events calendar. ■

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EVENTS IN THE AREA

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Check for cancellations

Ankeny Art Center Events

• **K-12 Art Exhibitions start in January.** The Ankeny Art Center's annual K-12 art exhibits have been part of an extended outreach program for more than two decades. With the goal of introducing students to the gallery setting, the Center aims to bring about individual self-worth within the community, increase community involvement, and promote culture and diversity. Through seeing their art on a gallery wall, organizers hope to bring excitement to the students about becoming an exhibiting artist in the future. Exhibits will be featuring art made by students at Bondurant-Farrar, North Polk and Ankeny Community school districts.

• **Winter Class Sessions begin on Jan. 9.** Adult classes include: Drawing, Fibers and Weaving, Watercolor and Pottery. K-8 Classes include Art Exploration, Pottery Sculpture and Pottery Wheel. Register online, www.ankenyardcenter.org.

• **Silent Auction Fundraiser, Feb. 10, 5-9 p.m.** at Firetrucker Brewery, 716 S.W. Third St., Ankeny. The Ankeny Art Center announces its Valentine's Silent Auction, hosted this year by Firetrucker Brewery. This fundraiser will help with revenue support for the Ankeny Art Center's Summer Camp Program. There will be auction items to bid on and local craft beer for purchase.



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HOLIDAY FAVORITES & FUN

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Dec. 9-18

Stoner Theater, 221 Walnut St., Des Moines
This classic is presented by Iowa Stage Theatre Company. dmpa.org

• 'A Very Merry Tallgrass Holiday'

Dec. 16-18

Tallgrass Theatre Company, 2019 Grand Ave., Suite 100, West Des Moines

This collaboration with Seedlings Children's Theatre features scripts from Drama Notebook's collection of scripts for kids and teens.
tallgrasstheatre.org

• 'Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer: The Musical'

Thursday, Dec. 22, 2 p.m. and 7 p.m.

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Come see all of your favorite characters including Santa and Mrs. Claus, Hermey the Elf, the Abominable Snow Monster, Clarice, Yukon Cornelius and, of course, Rudolph. dmpa.org

• Mannheim Steamroller Christmas

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Des Moines Civic Center, 221 Walnut St., Des Moines

A holiday favorite returns. dmpa.org

• New Year's Eve Pops: Frank & The Great Ladies of Song

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dmsymphony.org

• Holiday Hullabaloo

Through Dec. 31, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. general admission and 7-11 p.m. adults only
Horizon Events Center, 2100 N.W. 100th St., Clive

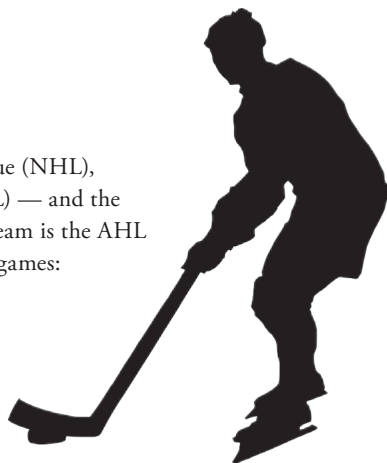
The 2022 Holiday Hullabaloo, a benefit for Dorothy's House, is an immersive, family-friendly holiday experience that will surprise and delight guests this holiday season. Enjoy a variety of activities, entertainment and festivities that will allow you to create some fun holiday hullabaloo and memories. Evenings are adults only and will feature live music in the Ice Bar. Dec. 31 will be the Silver Bell Soiree New Years Eve Party with live music by the Dirty Rotten Scoundrels. Ticket are available at <https://holidayhullabaloo.eventbrite.com>.

Iowa Wild

Wells Fargo Arena
233 Center St., Des Moines
iowawild.com

Just one step below the National Hockey League (NHL), you'll find the American Hockey League (AHL) — and the Iowa Wild professional ice hockey team. The team is the AHL affiliate of the NHL's Minnesota Wild. Home games:

- Dec. 16 at 7 p.m. vs. Texas Stars
- Dec. 17 at 6 p.m. vs. Texas Stars
- Dec. 21 at 7 p.m. vs. Manitoba Moose
- Dec. 23 at 7 p.m. vs. Manitoba Moose
- Dec. 28 at 6 p.m. vs. Colorado Eagles
- Dec. 30 at 6 p.m. vs. Colorado Eagles



EVENTS IN THE AREA

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

Check for cancellations



Des Moines Buccaneers

Buccaneer Arena

7201 Hickman Road, Urbandale

bucshockey.com

The Bucs are a member of the United States Hockey League (USHL), the only Tier 1 Junior Hockey League in the country. Home games:

- Dec. 16 at 7 p.m. vs. Waterloo Black Hawks
- Dec. 17 at 6 p.m. vs. Sioux City Musketeers



Iowa Wolves

Wells Fargo Arena

233 Center St., Des Moines

iowa.gleague.nba.com

Des Moines' pro basketball team plays in the Western Conference of the NBA G League. They were known as the Iowa Energy until their purchase by the Minnesota Timberwolves in 2017. Home games:

- Dec. 29 at 7 p.m. vs. Raptors 905
- Dec. 31 at 2 p.m. vs. Raptors 905
- Jan. 1 at 2 p.m. vs. Texas Legends



Drake basketball

Knapp Center, 2601 Forest Ave., Des Moines

godrakebulldogs.com

The Drake University Bulldogs compete in NCAA Division-1 basketball in the Missouri Valley Conference.

Women's home games:

- Dec. 18 vs. Southwest Baptist

Men's home games:

- Dec. 22 vs. St. Ambrose ■



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WHAT'S in a name?

Turns out, everything

Where did your name come from? As a parent, one of the most wonderful and stressful moments of my life was helping to name our children. With regard to my own name, during different seasons of my life, I've gone by my "given" name, nicknames or other abbreviations of my name. But all of my different names identified me... as me.



We are right in the middle of a season known by many names. I call this season by the label often associated with Dec. 25 — Christmas. When I say Christmas, I am not only looking forward to chestnuts roasting, two turtle doves, decorated homes and trees, and gatherings of family and friends. As a part of my faith traditions and religious expression, I celebrate the birth of Jesus at Christmas.

Jesus' name was no accident — and His name carried with it all kinds of "nicknames" and clues to the kind of person He would be. Prior to the birth of Jesus, prophets may have spoken about Him with words like these: "And He will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace..." The Bible offers accounts that angels visited the earthly parents of Jesus to let them know their child's name should be (what we translate to) Jesus and that, "He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High" and "He will save His people from their sins."

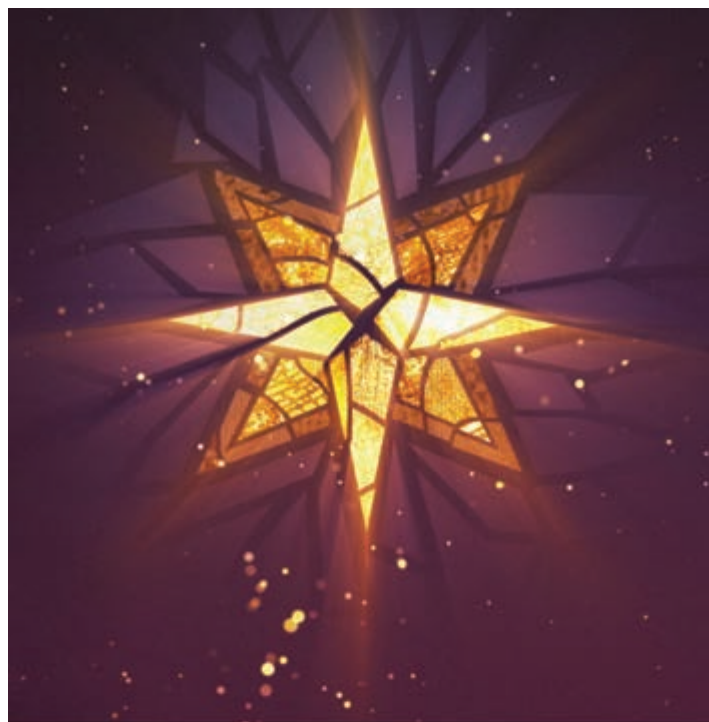
Imagine starting life with a "nickname" like "Prince of Peace," "Savior" or "God with us." Jesus' name is so much more than a combination of letters on a name-tag. It "means" wonderful. It means Savior. It means Almighty. It means God with us.

I do not take lightly the opportunity I have with this article. This magazine, full of great advertisements and advice, offers me a "platform" for which I am so grateful. I can think of no better way to end this article than restating scriptures as if I get to be the herald of this season — of Jesus' name.

"Residents of Ankeny — do not be afraid. For behold I bring you good news of great joy for ALL people. In just a few days you have the chance to celebrate the birth of JESUS. He was born so that you could know that nothing can separate you from God's love. He is a Wonderful Counselor. He is a Mighty Savior. He is more than just a Christmas story. Jesus is a divine light that shines from the very beginning to the very end. Jesus' name means love — for you and for me. His NAME can be salvation — for us all."

Merry Christmas! ■

Information provided by John Wagner, campus pastor, Christian Life Center, Ankeny First United Methodist Church.



@first

Ankeny First United Methodist Church

**CHRISTMAS EVE
SERVICES**

UPTOWN - 5PM, 7PM
CLC - 5PM, 7PM
FAITH CHAPEL - 3PM



MORE INFO

For more information about our
multi-campus church, visit us at
www.ankenyfirst.org

AFUE: Why it should matter to you

The terminology for HVAC (heating, venting and air conditioning) can be confusing, and most people have no desire to understand them. But there are a few that you should learn and pay attention to, such as AFUE.

AFUE (annual fuel utilization efficiency) is an efficiency rating that's required by the Federal Trade Commission to be labeled on forced air furnaces.

Furnaces are used to blow the air throughout our home's duct work regardless of whether the thermostat is set to "Heat" or "Cool" or "Fan," but the AFUE rating only applies to the furnace's heating ability.

So why is this important to you? It's important because the higher the AFUE rating, the lower your fuel costs. For example, if your AFUE rating reads 98%, your system uses 98% of its fuel for heat, while 2% gets lost. An older furnace with an AFUE rating of 80 will turn 80% of its fuel into usable heat, which, in turn, means that 20% of its fuel is lost.

The average life expectancy of a heating and cooling system is about 15-20 years. With so many advancements in efficiency, even a 10-year-old system could be due for an upgrade. Each year, your system's AFUE rating can decline about 5% if it is not properly maintained. With scheduled routine annual maintenance for your system, you will have better chances of extending the life of your HVAC system and protecting your investment.

Do you know what the AFUE for your current furnace is? You can find your furnace's AFUE rating on the bright yellow EnergyGuide label that was placed on your furnace by the manufacturer. If you have an older furnace with an AFUE of 70%, then upgrading to an AFUE of 90% could save you around \$20 for every \$100 that you would normally spend.

High-efficiency furnaces are more of an investment when compared to mid-efficiency systems, but, when we factor in that 15-year life span, the money saved on energy costs will be worth it in the long run — especially because Iowa winters can be brutally cold.

Hopefully, you now have a good understanding of what AFUE is and why it's important, especially when considering upgrading your HVAC system. If you still have questions or are ready to learn more about which high-efficiency furnaces are available for your home, contact your local trusted heating and cooling company. ■

Information provided by Scott Bontrager, 72 Degrees Comfort Company, 811 S.W. Ordinance Road, Ankeny, 515-200-2728.



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HOME HEALTH

By Ward Phillips

HOSPICE care around the holidays may be a gift

Knowing a loved one has a life-limiting illness can make the holidays bittersweet. But as Tim B. of Des Moines learned last year, assistance from an in-home hospice provider can place a little more focus on the “sweet” and allow families to make treasured memories.



“WesleyLife started caring for my wife just before the holidays last year,” Tim says. “They enabled her to have some really good days, and she felt well enough to celebrate with our family on Christmas Eve. It seems strange to say, but she lived really well during those final months.”

If you’re considering hospice services for a family member, it may seem counterintuitive to think about “living” in conjunction with services offered at the end of a person’s life. But even during hospice care, a person is living — and it’s important to understand that hospice services can actually help ensure quality of life.

Options for hospice services are nearly as varied as the individuals who seek them. They range from home care to services in a freestanding hospice center to in-between, hybrid models, and the type of care you and your loved one select is truly an individual choice.

But no matter the type of services you’re considering, you should always ask any provider on your list: “How can you help me or my loved one continue to LIVE through this stage of life?”

Ideally, hospice services should be initiated when a person is still healthy. Virtually anyone with a life-limiting illness can qualify for hospice services, enabling a patient to live life in comfort for the days, weeks, months or longer that remain in his or her life.

So, as we all prepare for the holidays, give some thought to the ways you and your family want to spend time together. For some families, it’s comforting to have hospice providers care for the person who is ill in their home so family members can gather around and simply enjoy being loved ones.

Making that first call to a hospice provider can be difficult — but having care in place for the holidays can actually help make these special occasions more relaxed and meaningful for your loved one as well as the whole family.

“No one wanted to admit we needed to call hospice, but once we met with them and set up a plan, we breathed a sigh of relief knowing my wife would be comfortable at home, and we could focus on making Christmas as special as possible with her favorite traditions,” Tim says. “Now, looking back, we are so grateful for those memories and will treasure them.” ■

Ward Phillips is a senior leader with WesleyLife, which offers a broad network of health- and well-being-focused communities and services, including home health care, for older adults. Call Ward at 515-669-2205 to learn more.



We're all about *living.*

“WesleyLife started caring for my wife just before the holidays last year. They enabled her to have some really good days, and she felt well enough to celebrate with our family on Christmas Eve. We will always treasure those memories, and WesleyLife Hospice helped make them possible.”

– Tim B., 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.

NEW DENTAL office opens in Ankeny

Jeremy Pins, DDS is now offering dental services at his new office, Highpointe Dental Care. The new, full-service, state-of-the-art family dental practice opened on Wednesday, Nov. 16.

Highpointe Dental Care is fully equipped with the latest products and equipment available in the dental industry, offering Dr. Pins and his dental team the opportunity to provide the most up-to-date procedures and services to their patients. From routine cleanings and simple fillings to more in-depth restorative and cosmetic services, patients can expect individualized care to help them keep their teeth for a lifetime.

"We are excited to be joining the Ankeny community to offer high-quality dental services to families and individuals of all ages," said Dr. Pins. "Our mission is to provide exceptional experiences to each patient who walks through our doors."

"Dental health is vital to overall health, so we want to help our patients make the best decisions for their care," said Dr. Pins. "We plan to educate patients on the importance of dental care and encourage them to adopt an ongoing preventative care routine."

Highpointe Dental Care is located at 1075 S.W. Oralabor Road in Ankeny. ■

22 OF 2022 honors foundation president

For the fourth year, CITYVIEW's Business Journal recognized the contributions of outstanding business leaders who have made a difference in their communities with the 22 of 2022 honors, presented at a reception on Thursday, Nov. 3, at Sherwood Forest Events Center. Awards were presented by Shane Goodman, publisher of CITYVIEW and president of Big Green Umbrella Media, Inc., which also publishes the Ankeny Living magazine, and Jolene Goodman, vice president.



Barb Wiedenman

Among those honored was Barb Wiedenman, owner, broker associate, Barb Wiedenman & Associates, Brokered by Spire Real Estate, and president of Wiedenman Family Foundation.

"The Wiedenman Family Foundation was established in 2021," said Wiedenman of her biggest accomplishment. "The Foundation was formed to undertake projects that will enhance the lives of children and families in Ankeny and our surrounding communities. By bringing together resources and vision, we hope to create long-lasting changes that will have a positive impact on the people who call Ankeny home. Our mission is to help families through fundraising, special events and community engagement. From this mission, the first annual Champagne and Dreams event was held in April 2022. This event raises funds to grant a dream to a local child. Thanks to donations from our generous community, we were able to do that our very first year."

Of her best business decision, Wiedenman said, "Being in the real estate business for 20 years, I feel the best business decision I made is to engage and be very active in my community. Clients come to you because of who you are, and establishing relationships, networking and taking care of the client is essential. Find your passion in your kids' activities, your church, a networking group, etc. Real estate is a relationship business, and I have worked very hard to establish great relationships while giving back to my community. No matter how you feel — get up, dress up, show up and never give up."

Her advice to others: "Give back, smile and always be positive. Helping one person at a time makes dreams come true. Helping people buy and sell homes allows me to help in one way; now with the Wiedenman Family Foundation, we are able to help more people in other ways." ■



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Suggest a teacher

for an *Iowa Living* education column!

Send an email to tammy@iowalivingmagazines.com



DMACC CLUB holds Annual Poinsettia Sale

The DMACC Horticulture Club's Annual Poinsettia Sale, held Dec. 1-2, featured poinsettias grown exclusively by students in this fall's Greenhouse Production I class on the DMACC Ankeny Campus. Students began growing the plants in late August.

Proceeds from the sale help fund DMACC Horticulture Program student field trips and other student initiatives.

To learn more about the DMACC Horticulture Program, visit <https://horticulture.dmac.edu>. ■



Second-year DMACC Horticulture student Shayla Vanderveld of Des Moines staffs the DMACC Horticulture Club's Annual Poinsettia Sale table on Nov. 30 on the DMACC Ankeny Campus. Photo by Lisa Schmitz for DMACC



Second-year DMACC Horticulture students Jen Smith (left) of Monroe and Orion Balfe (right) of Des Moines pose for a photo during the DMACC Horticulture Club's Annual Poinsettia Sale on Nov. 30 on the Ankeny Campus. Approximately 20 students helped raise poinsettias for this year's sale as part of their Greenhouse Production I class. Photo by Lisa Schmitz for DMACC

RECIPE

BEEF up the holiday menu

(Family Features) At this year's holiday gatherings, you can put together a show-stopping menu from the beginning of the party to the final bite with mouthwatering recipes that bring guests back for more. Incorporate beef, a versatile, beloved ingredient that can be used in appetizers, sides and main courses alike.

Consider a holiday favorite from Beef Loving Texans such as a must-have main course like classic beef Wellington. Perfect for a family get-together, this traditional dish combines tender chateaubriand roast with a homemade glaze of earthy mushrooms, red wine and Dijon mustard wrapped in a golden-brown puff pastry. Find more beef-inspired holiday dishes at BeefLovingTexans.com. ■

Classic beef Wellington

Recipe courtesy of Beef Loving Texans

Total time: 1 hour, 30 minutes

Servings: 4

- 1 teaspoon olive oil, divided
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon pepper, divided
- 1 chateaubriand tenderloin roast
- 8 ounces mushrooms
- 1 large shallot
- 2 tablespoons dry red wine
- 2 tablespoons Dijon mustard
- 1/2 teaspoon dried thyme leaves
- flour
- 1 sheet puff pastry

DIRECTIONS

- In large nonstick skillet over medium-high heat, heat 1/2 teaspoon oil until hot. Combine salt and 1/4 teaspoon pepper. Press evenly onto all surfaces of roast. Place roast in skillet; brown evenly. Remove roast from skillet.
- Heat oven to 425 F.

- In food processor, pulse mushrooms and shallot about 10 times until finely chopped. Do not overprocess.
- Place same skillet used for roast over medium-high heat and heat remaining oil until hot. Add mushrooms and shallot; cook 4-6 minutes until tender and all liquid is evaporated, stirring often. Add wine; cook 2-3 minutes until all liquid is evaporated. Stir in mustard, thyme and remaining pepper. Cook 2-3 minutes. Remove from skillet to medium bowl; cool.
- Line rimmed baking sheet with aluminum foil and place in oven. On lightly floured cutting board, unfold pastry dough. Roll pastry out to 12-by-9-inch rectangle; lay dough with shortest edge toward you. Spread mushroom mixture onto pastry dough, leaving 1/2-inch border around edges. Place roast in center of mushrooms. Fold



pastry dough neatly around roast, stretching dough if necessary. Cut off excess pastry dough; press to seal overlapping edges.

- Remove baking sheet from oven and dust lightly with flour. Place pastry-wrapped roast, seam-side down, on baking sheet. Cut four 2-inch vents in top of pastry.
- Bake 35-50 minutes, or until golden brown and instant-read thermometer inserted into center of roast registers 135 F for medium-rare or 150 F for medium. Transfer roast to carving board. Let stand 10 minutes. Temperature will rise about 10 F to reach 145 F for medium-rare or 160 F for medium.
- Carve into slices and serve.

Headed home for the
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MEET Jen Stapleton

Sharing the joy of preschool with her students

Jen Stapleton has nearly 25 years' experience teaching preschoolers. She taught 4- and 5-year-olds at Small Discoveries Holy Trinity Lutheran Preschool for 20 years before it closed and she moved to Bright Beginnings Preschool at Ankeny First United Methodist.



Jen Stapleton has been teaching preschoolers for nearly 25 years and enjoys nurturing their learning.

This is her fourth year there teaching the 3-year-old two-day and three-day programs.

"I chose to teach preschool because I love getting to be a part of a young child's first educational experience and to help nurture and create a love of learning. Young children are so curious and excited about almost everything. There is nothing more rewarding than connecting with and helping children discover how much they are capable of doing. They are so proud when they try different things and realize they are able to do it by themselves."

Stapleton says she has enjoyed the change to Bright Beginnings Preschool because she's able to teach her own class, where children learn through play. She enjoys choosing activities and materials that will help each student become a more confident and well-rounded child.

"I work with amazing people who are kind, creative and supportive."

Of course, teaching little learners comes with some challenges, too. One big challenge is creating learning experiences to meet the needs of all of the children in the classroom. Young children develop skills at different times, and creating individualized instruction can be difficult. Her goal, though, is for all of the children to feel comfortable, loved and successful based on where they are developmentally when she's with them.

One of the biggest rewards is hearing from parents that their child loves preschool and can't wait to come back, she says, adding that she enjoys watching how much they grow and change in the short time she has them and knowing she is a small part of it.

Little kids are brutally honest, too — and funny. A big part of preschool is learning how to share and take turns, and it's not always easy.

"I had a student who was playing in the dramatic play area. She walked away and started playing at the art center. Another child started playing in the dramatic play area. She had an unhappy look on her face so I asked her what was wrong. She had me lean down so she could whisper to me, 'I don't like to share.'"

When she's not at school, you'll find Stapleton with her two sons — a college student in band and a high schooler in band. She and her husband keep busy attending their performances. Stapleton also likes to go to the movies, read, take her dog (Ray) for walks, and spend time with friends. ■

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Edward Jones
MAKING SENSE OF INVESTING

INVESTMENT

By Patrick Domann

BUILD your 'cash' account before retiring



If you're going to retire in the next few years, you'll want to start thinking about making some changes to your investment portfolio. And one area you may want to look at is whatever type of cash account you might have because, when you're retired, the amount of cash you have readily available may be even more important than when you were working.

Your cash management account could pay a slightly higher rate than a typical savings account, as well as serving as a holding place for funds that may eventually be transferred to other investments. Furthermore, it can provide you with these benefits:

- **You can pay for emergency expenses.** You might be retired, but life goes on — and life is full of unexpected expenses, such as a new furnace or a costly auto repair. It's a good idea for retirees to keep at least three months' of living expenses in a separate cash account, which can help pay for emergencies without forcing you to dip into your longer-term investments.

- **You can save for a short-term goal.** You may have several short-term goals, such as a long vacation or a kitchen remodeling project. If you are trying to reach this type of goal within a year or two, you may want to start moving funds into your cash management account. For goals with longer time frames, you may want to consider using other types of investments appropriate for the specific goal and your risk tolerance.

- **You can protect some money from market volatility.** When you're a long way from retirement, you may not be particularly bothered when the financial markets drop, leading to a decline in the value of your investment portfolio. However, once you're retired, those downturns might not be quite so tolerable. As a retiree, you may want to maintain one year of expenses (adjusted for outside income sources such as Social Security) in a cash management account for spending purposes. Knowing you have this cash set aside may help you feel more comfortable when markets are volatile. Nevertheless, holding too much cash has risks of its own. Retirement can last for more than 30 years, so you'll want to be invested in enough equities and fixed-income vehicles to provide your portfolio with the balance and growth potential necessary to help you avoid outliving your money.

As you can see, building your cash management account can be helpful in several ways. So, in the years preceding your retirement, look for opportunities to add to this account. For example, you could use some of the money from a tax refund or a bonus at work. And, if you haven't already done so, you might direct your bank to move a certain amount each month from your checking or savings account into your cash management account. When you're retired, do what you can to replenish your cash account as much as possible.

Your cash management account is important at every point in your life, but it may take on even greater meaning when you're retired — so do whatever you can to keep it in good shape. ■

This article was written by Edward Jones for use by your local Edward Jones Financial Advisor. Edward Jones. Member SIPC. Information provided by Patrick Domann, 1690 SE Delaware Ave., Suite 103, Ankeny, 515-964-1471.

TIME to take stock and plan for the future

2022 has been a year of change for many of us. The end of the year is a good time to take stock of your personal situation and proactively plan for the future.

Update your estate plan

Putting your legal affairs in order is important. It reduces the burdens on loved ones in the event of your poor health or death. It can save time and expense. And it allows you to have control over how your assets pass. Every person should have three basic estate planning documents: a Last Will and Testament, a Durable Financial Power of Attorney, and a Living Will / Health Care Power of Attorney.

A will directs the distribution of your assets upon your death. Through the power of attorney, you give another person the ability to make financial decisions for you should you become incapacitated. If you're too ill to speak

for yourself, you can express your wishes and have your voice heard through a living will. This advance directive lets you detail your preferences for your medical care.

Make a list of key contacts

When you update your estate planning documents, you should also make a master list of important information. If you die or become incapacitated, your family will spend time figuring out what you own and whom they should contact. List your investment advisor, insurance agent, tax professional, banker and attorney. Make sure you have the correct contact information for each professional listed.

Review the title to your home

You should review how you hold title to your home. When you purchased your house, the seller executed a deed. The deed contained

important vesting information — the names on the title and the legal relationship between those titleholders.

If you are married, you probably want to ensure that both spouses are on title to the house. This may not be the case if the parties were married after one bought the house, or if it is a second marriage. You also probably want to ensure that, if one titleholder were to die, the house would pass to the survivor. A simple review of who holds title and how title is held can prevent expensive problems later.

These are three simple yet very effective steps that can save time and expense in the future. Contact an experienced attorney to help you get 2023 off to a good start. ■

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

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HEALTH

By Dr. Jesse Kahnk, OD

A NEW hope for AMD

If you are familiar with age-related macular degeneration (AMD), then you may know there are two forms: wet and dry. However, there is a form of dry AMD called geographic atrophy that causes large blind spots in a person's central vision with often significant day-to-day impacts like not being able to see faces, drive a car or read easily.



For these patients, we've never had great options. Vitamins based on the AREDS (1 and 2) studies have shown some ability to slow down the rate of vision loss in some patients, but we have been otherwise fairly limited. This often means finding ways to maximize what vision we have left (an optometry specialty called Low Vision) rather than bringing back what was lost. However, there is a new class of drugs on the possible horizon. These medications target a part of our immune system called the complement system. There is early evidence these drugs can reduce the size of geographic atrophy in patients.

Nothing is approved yet (the studies are in Priority Review), but I'm excited to see some progress toward giving these patients hope we can make their vision better in the future. ■

Information provided by Dr. Jesse Kahnk, OD, Prairie View Eyecare, 1345 S.W. Park Square Drive, Suite 106, Ankeny. 515-305-2922.

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HEALTH

By Andrea Gustafson

NAVIGATING family and the holidays

The holidays can bring a lot of joy but can also come with a lot of stress. Schedules get busy, to-do lists get long, and family gatherings are inevitable. Despite, often, loving our families, spending more time with them than normal can be challenging. Rather than suffering through and being stressed, here are some tips on navigating the holidays with family.



- **Communicate** – Talk to the people you are spending time with about your concerns/expectations for the get-together and what you are willing to do and not do. Be direct and clear.

- **Set boundaries** – “No” is a complete sentence. We all have limits to how much we can fit into the schedule, and, when it's full, it's full. Set boundaries around what you are physically and mentally able to commit to and don't go past that.

- **Self care** – There is no getting around this time of year being more stressful than normal. Make sure you are taking time to do the things needed for yourself. This can be as simple as making sure you are eating and getting enough sleep. But it's important keep it up this time of year. ■

Information provided by Andrea Gustafson, LISW, JMG Therapy and Counseling Services, associated with SS Therapy and Consulting, Ltd, 4725 Merle Hay Road, Suite 205, Des Moines, andrea@jmgtherapy.com, 515-777-1209.

STAY healthy with hydration

Winter is here, and with it comes challenges to staying healthy during the cold and flu season, as well as simply resisting the negative effects of the cold and being inside all day.

Two of the biggest challenges to individual health are proper hydration and sufficient levels of vitamins and minerals in our diets. There are thousands of supplements available, but no matter which you take, they are limited in their efficiency by how the body absorbs them when taken the traditional way.

IV therapy is an alternative method to get the most out of supplemental vitamins and nutrients that we take. Getting germ-fighting vitamins such as Vitamin C and the seasonally needed Vitamin D are easier than ever with an IV drip. Staying healthy with immune boosting therapy is one of the primary advantages of IV drip therapy.

Along with vitamins and nutrients, direct hydration is a benefit of IV therapy. The majority of people exist in a perpetual state of minor dehydration by not getting the recommended amount of water daily. IV hydration helps with that by replacing missing fluids directly into the body at one time.

IV therapy is the next generation of personal health for both proper hydration and ensuring that you are getting all of the vitamins and nutrients that a healthy body needs. ■

Information provided by Sue Hudson, owner, IV Nutrition Ankeny, 2405 S.W. White Birch Drive, Ankeny, 515-686-8400. www.ivnutritionnow.com.



THIN skin?

Have you been noticing easy bruising and frequent skin tears? If so, you may have sun-induced skin fragility called actinic purpura. Actinic refers to sun exposure. Purpura is the medical term for bruise.

With advancing age and chronic sun damage, the skin becomes thin, and blood vessels become fragile. This results in tearing and bruising with minor bumps and scrapes. Some medications, like steroids, can make this worse.

Actinic purpura usually affects people over the age of 60. It is mostly seen on the tops of the hands and forearms, but may appear on the face or lower legs. Dark purple or red bruises appear with minimal trauma. Most people do not even recall the preceding bump or injury. The bruises gradually resolve over several weeks but may leave a slightly brown discoloration on the skin.

Treatment is aimed at preventing further sun damage. You should apply a broad-spectrum SPF 50+ sunscreen to exposed skin and wear long-sleeved shirts. The long sleeves protect the skin from sun but also buffer minor bumps or scrapes. Some topical creams with ammonium lactate, retinol or alpha hydroxy acid may gradually strengthen the skin. For further tips on management, see a board-certified dermatologist. ■

Information provided by Dr. Katrina Smith, MD FAAD, co-owner, Iowa Dermatology Consultants, 2675 N. Ankeny Blvd., Suites 101/103, Ankeny, 515-348-4097.



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WELLNESS

By Christopher M. Renze, D.C.

WHAT IS a herniated disc?

Many patients with back pain, leg pain or weakness of the lower extremity muscles are diagnosed with a herniated disc. When a disc herniation occurs, the cushion that sits between the spinal vertebrae is pushed outside its normal position.

What is the spinal disc?

The spinal disc is a soft cushion that sits between each vertebrae of the spine. In a young individual, the disc is soft and elastic. However, the disc gradually loses its elasticity and is more vulnerable to injury with aging.

What happens when a disc herniates?

As the spinal disc becomes less elastic, it can rupture. When the disc ruptures, a portion of it pushes outside its normal boundary. This is called a herniated disc. When a herniated disc bulges out from between the vertebrae, the spinal nerves and spinal cord can become pinched. There is normally a little extra space around the spinal cord and spinal nerves. However, if enough of the herniated disc is pushed out of place, these structures may be compressed.

What causes a herniated disc?

A herniated disc may occur suddenly in an event such as a fall or an accident, or may occur gradually with repetitive straining of the spine. Often people who experience a herniated disc already have spinal stenosis, a problem that causes narrowing of the space around the spinal cord and spinal nerves.

What are the symptoms of a herniated disc?

When the spinal cord or spinal nerves become compressed, they don't work properly. This means that abnormal signals may get passed from the compressed nerves or that signals may not get passed at all. Common symptoms of a herniated disc include:

- Electrical-shock-like pain: Pressure on the nerves can cause pain to travel down the arms or legs, depending on the location of the herniated disc. This pain feels like an electrical shock.
- Tingling and numbness: Patients often have abnormal sensations such as tingling, numbness, or "pins and needles." These symptoms may be experienced in the same region as painful electric-shock sensations.
- Muscle weakness: Because of the nerve irritation, signals from the brain may be interrupted, causing muscle weakness. Nerve irritation can also be tested by examining reflexes.
- Bowel or bladder problems: Bowel and bladder problems are important because they may be signs of a more serious condition that should be evaluated immediately.

If you or someone you know is suffering from a herniated disc and have not found the relief for which you are looking, contact your chiropractor. ■

Information provided by Christopher M. Renze, D.C., D.I.B.C.N., of Renze Chiropractic Clinic, P.C. For more information, visit www.renzechiro.com or call the office at 515-965-3844.

'THE MOST Wonderful Time of the Year'

As I anticipate Christmas, Andy William's song "It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year" keeps reverberating through my head.

For many, if not most, that song rings true. We anticipate fun, laughter, time spent with family, rejoicing in the Babe in the manger, etc. throughout this Christmas season.

But for others — especially those who have said "good-bye" to a loved one this past year, this Christmas may seem anything but wonderful. Thoughts of an empty place at the table, one less stocking hanging from the mantle, or one less candle being lit at the Christmas Eve service are overwhelming to them.

For those who are facing their first Christmas without a loved one, remember, each person deals with grief in their own way and whatever manner your grief manifests itself, it is OK. Don't try to hide your feelings from others; they are often hurting, too.

Whether this Christmas brings laughter and fun or tears and bittersweet memories, know that others care about you — including those of us here at Highland Memory Gardens.

Regardless of your circumstances, may this Christmas become "The Most Wonderful Time of the Year" for you and your family. ■

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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This year, start a new holiday tradition of donating blood. **Your generous donation could be the lifesaving gift that allows families another holiday together.**

lifeserve.info/tradition



CHRISTMAS beauty

Ladd decorates her home simply, gorgeously for the season

Nikki Ladd and her husband, Kevin, moved to Ankeny in 2016. In the years since, they've moved a couple times and currently reside on Beechwood Street.

Their story-and-a-half home offers the perfect floor plan for the family, with all the kids' bedrooms on the same floor. Ladd especially likes how open the whole home is.

The house sits on a good-sized lot, which offers a big backyard. Ladd also enjoys the park recently built down the street, where she can send the kids to burn off some energy.

The Ladds tend to spend a lot of time in their recently finished basement. They watch movies together, and the kids can spread out and play.

"That's been our hangout spot," Ladd says.

On Saturday, Dec. 3, the family opened their home to the public as part of the Holiday Ho Ho Home Tour. A few years ago, Ladd helped decorate some homes for the event through her interior decorating business, Simply Nikki.

This year, though, she had the pleasure of showing off her own home and putting her own Christmas stamp on it. Being part of the tour gave her the excuse to go all out decorating for the holidays — a welcomed relief from last year. They had moved in November 2021 so only had time to put up a Christmas tree last year.

Ladd describes her style as simple, clean and cozy. She gravitates toward soft neutrals, which shows through her Christmas décor as well.

Opening their home to the community for the Ho Ho Home Tour illustrates the Ladds' attachment to Ankeny in general. Ladd says what she enjoys most about living in Ankeny is that the city is just the right size.

"It's not as big as you think," she says. "You start seeing the same people and making friendships. It's just a small world." ■



Nikki and Kevin Ladd enjoy their spacious home, with a lower level perfect for the kids to spread out and play. The couple opened their home to the public for the Ho Ho Ho Home Tour, and Nikki went all out with decorations that reflect her fondness of soft neutrals, both in her home decor and decorations.



MANAGING your pet's weight

3 tips to keep dogs and cats healthy

(Family Features) Much like humans, dogs and cats can struggle with aging — and weight-related health issues. In fact, three out of five cats and dogs are overweight or obese, according to Packaged Facts' U.S. Pet Market Outlook.

Pet obesity can lead to several health issues and problems, including diabetes, cancer and osteoarthritis, according to research published in "Veterinary Medicine." While leading a sedentary lifestyle and overfeeding are common factors that can lead to pets becoming overweight or obese, these simple tips from the pet food experts at Go! Solutions can help you manage your dog's or cat's weight to ensure he or she lives a happy and healthy life.

1. Exercise and play regularly

Just as important as your pet's diet is ensuring he or she is active. For dogs, regular walks and hikes are a simple way to provide mental stimulation, improve muscle tone, increase metabolism and help reduce boredom while also getting necessary exercise. For high-energy dogs who need more stimulation, games like fetch, hide-and-seek and tug can help them burn off extra energy and tire more quickly on days when you don't have time to spend hours outside with them. For cats, consider scratching posts, flirt poles, obstacle courses, setting platforms at multiple levels and simple toys like



balls and fake mice to keep them active and engaged. Some cats can even be leash trained to go for walks.

2. Address dietary needs

Diet is a major factor in weight management for dogs and cats. The ideal diet for your pet provides the right balance of macro- and micronutrients, including protein, fat, carbohydrates, fiber, vitamins and minerals as well as the proper portion size to help

prevent obesity. Formulated by Petcurean's expert nutrition team, Go! Solutions Weight Management + Joint Care Grain-Free Chicken recipe provides complete and balanced nutrition featuring premium quality, functional ingredients with zero by-product meals and artificial preservatives. To support a healthy weight and mobile joints in adult and senior dogs and cats, the formula includes L-carnitine to help burn fat into energy and fiber-rich psyllium husk to help keep pets feeling full. Glucosamine and chondroitin in the recipe for dogs and chondroitin from chicken cartilage in the recipe for cats helps support healthy joints and good mobility.

3. Keep treats in check

An important part of weight loss and management is limiting the additional calories you're providing your pet outside of his or her normal day-to-day diet. A little extra can go a long way, so keep packaged treats to a minimum and be mindful of things like slipping your pet table scraps or letting him or her lick out the almost-empty peanut butter jar. Keeping those additional calories in check can help keep your pet's diet — and overall health — on the right track.

Find more ideas for providing your dog or cat complete and balanced nutrition at go-solutions.com. ■



5 TIPS to help families manage holiday stress



Photo courtesy of Getty Images

(Family Features) 'Tis the season for holiday parties, travel, hosting and more. While it is a joyous time of year, the never-ending to-do lists and school being out of session can make everyone feel a little overwhelmed, children included.

Consider these five practical tips from the experts at KinderCare to help families proactively manage holiday stressors.

1. Manage expectations. The commotion that often comes with the holiday season can be stressful for young children, but you can help alleviate worries by familiarizing them with what's to come. Talk to them about upcoming travel arrangements, who they'll see at events and what to expect throughout the season. If they are cautious in their current developmental stage, let loved ones know beforehand to give them a little extra space at festivities. Parents can also begin familiarizing little ones with relatives through photos and phone calls.

2. Empower children. It's important for

children to understand they have a choice — and family members are willing to respect that choice. Parents should acknowledge their children's body language and empower them to say "no" in uncomfortable situations. Parents can help by proactively asking questions such as, "Do you want a hug?" and if they say "no," support them in their decision. This also helps establish healthy long-term social skills.

3. Maintain your schedule. Children thrive on consistency, and during the holidays it's important to at least try maintaining as much of what they're used to as possible, such as naps, meals and playtime. Changes in schedule can result in more tantrums, so be sure to allow space for them to safely work through their emotions.

It's also important to note that children feed off their parents' energy, so make sure you're in tune with your own emotions. When overwhelmed, openly discuss how you're feeling and involve your children when taking breaks. For example, "It's loud in here, would you like

to go sit outside with me?"

4. Have fun. Make time to spread joy and integrate activities to bond as a family, such as reading holiday-themed books, crafting, playing games, singing or baking. Whether old traditions or new, these are moments your child can cherish for years to come.

5. Keep others in mind. While it's important to set children up for success ahead of the holidays, parents should also teach children the holiday season can look different for others. Putting a focus on experiences rather than the gifts can help them have more to discuss with their peers when returning to school. It's also a good time to consider donating toys to make room for new ones or volunteering at a local charity to show children joy can be experienced through more than just gifts.

To find more tips to help manage holiday stress, or to access additional resources around social development, setting boundaries and routines, visit KinderCare.com. ■

VOLUNTEERS make Chamber a success

Volunteering is “contribution of time, effort and talent to a need, cause or mission without financial gain.”

Volunteering is all about your being able to contribute some of your own time to help your community.

The Ankeny Area Chamber of Commerce couldn't exist without its volunteers. Our Board of Directors is made up of volunteers. This group meets monthly to continue the work of its members. They make sure the organization is fiscally healthy and ensure all work done by the chamber follows our mission of being dedicated to the promotion and development of our members within the community. They are also some of the biggest cheerleaders in our chamber. We don't thank them enough, and a big thank you goes out to our fearless “Queen Bee” Julie Mangels with julsdesign and QB Studios. She has led our board through a year of change.



Have you ever been to a ribbon cutting for one of our members? If so, you would have met the group of volunteers that are the “welcoming arm” of the Ankeny Chamber — the Ambassadors. This group is active in recruiting new members, and members are welcoming faces when they arrive at an event for the first time. We host on average 75-plus ribbon cuttings in a year, and you will see five or more Ambassadors at each one. They are there to welcome the new member and mentor them on what their membership can provide their company. Our ambassadors are some of the best in the Metro, and we appreciate everything they do.

Did you know that all the fundraising for the events the chamber hosts is done by volunteers? We hold a TRC (Total Resource Campaign) each year, and a group of around 20 volunteers reaches out to our members to sell sponsorships and educate them on what is happening the following year. Each volunteer makes contacts with chamber members and shows them what is available to assist them in promoting their company. We have around 200 companies that sponsor our events and each one has a volunteer that works with them to find the right fit within our sponsorship packet. Hundreds of hours go into securing all the sponsorships needed. We couldn't do anything without this group of volunteers. P.S.: If you are interested in being a TRC volunteer, reach out to Jamie Anderson at janderson@ankeny.org.

Ankeny Chamber SummerFest relies heavily on volunteers. We have a volunteer committee made of chamber members, city staff, Ankeny Fire Department, Ankeny Police Department, community members and other nonprofit organizations that are involved in this event. Not only do volunteers help to plan and coordinate the event, they are also a big part of working at the event. Hundreds of volunteers are needed to staff the front gates, headquarters, first-aid tent and the entertainment garden. Without this amazing group of people, we couldn't host a three-day festival for 65,000 people.

I want to thank all our volunteers — from the groups I mentioned above, to those who help us with set up and tear down of our events and those who assist in the planning of our events. It is you who truly makes the chamber successful. I am finishing up my first year here with the Ankeny Area Chamber of Commerce, and I couldn't be prouder of the members and the community. I have met so many amazing people and now call some of them friends. I want to wish everyone a Happy Holiday and a Healthy New Year and, as always, remember to SHOP LOCAL FIRST! Support the small businesses in your community because they will in turn support you. ■

Information provided by Melisa Cox, president/CEO, Ankeny Area Chamber of Commerce.

Shop Small

this holiday season to support local businesses.

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OUT & ABOUT



A ribbon cutting was held for Can Cleaners, LLC at the Ankeny Area Chamber of Commerce office on Nov. 14.



A ribbon cutting was held for Costco Wholesale at 4000 N.E. Spectrum Drive on Nov. 17.



A ribbon cutting was held for IV Nutrition, 2405 S.W. Birch Drive Suite 105/106, Ankeny, on Nov. 28.



Jessie Orton, Carissa Caldwell, Angela Roman and Linda Ender at the ribbon cutting for IV Nutrition on Nov. 28.



Lauren Pearson, Sue Hudson and Kyle Murtaugh at the ribbon cutting for IV Nutrition on Nov. 28.



Jamie Anderson and Diane Weber at the ribbon cutting for IV Nutrition on Nov. 28.



Tiffany Tope and Sems Didic at the ribbon cutting for IV Nutrition on Nov. 28.



Fonda and Matt Davis at the ribbon cutting for IV Nutrition on Nov. 28.



Chad Teeter, Kris Baerewald and Skyler Fenley at the ribbon cutting for IV Nutrition on Nov. 28.



Aaron Anderson, Marty Berg and Randy Ruisch at the ribbon cutting for IV Nutrition on Nov. 28.

OUT & ABOUT

LATTES & Leads

Lattes & Leads was held at Bob Brown Buick GMC on Nov. 22.



Ilyssa Conlon, Reyna Immerfall and Ashely Thayer



Robert Hughes, Blake McClure and Colin Newell



Megan Mohon and Sara Triplett



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