

JORDAN CREEK

JANUARY 2022

# Living

MAGAZINE

## Pets OF A different KIND

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and owners say about  
unusual pets

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## THAT'S NOT a rat

I don't like spiders and snakes. That's what Jim Stafford sang in his 1974 hit single, and I am with him on this one. But not everyone agrees. In fact, a surprisingly large number of people choose to have these and other unusual pets.

Throughout my life, we had the typical array of household pets: dogs, cats, fish and a handful of hamsters. Although rodents can be popular as pets, my childhood choice came about by accident.

My family was at a local park when we saw a small animal scampering across the parking lot. "Look at that rat!" my brother yelled. "Wait, that's not a rat," he added. "That's a hamster."

We slowly walked up to the rodent and discovered that it was, in fact, a hamster. What it was doing on the loose in a city park was anyone's guess. We assumed it escaped from a home and was doing its best to avoid becoming a hawk's lunch. So we did what most anyone would do and threw it in the river.

That's a joke. We took it home and made a makeshift home for it from a cardboard box, which, of course, it ate through in a matter of a few hours. We then constructed a metal box from scrap material in the garage, which this hamster was not going to gnaw through. We even built a hinged opening at the top so we could reach in and get it in and out. What we didn't envision was that this opening would eventually become an escape hatch for the little hamster — and escape it did.

Our family spent hours looking for this newfound pet, leaving food out as an attraction in hopes that it would appear. It didn't appear, but we did find it — floating in the water in the sump pump. That's certainly not a pleasant ending to this story, but we did learn a few lessons in the process, which helped immensely with the three hamsters that my daughters had years later. For the most part, we did become responsible hamster owners, except for the dog eating one of them.

On second thought, maybe spiders or snakes would have been a better choice.

Thanks for reading. ■



**SHANE GOODMAN**

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Read more of Shane Goodman's columns each weekday morning by subscribing to The Daily Umbrella email newsletter for free at [www.thedailyumbrella.com](http://www.thedailyumbrella.com).



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# *Pets* OF A *different* KIND

**What City ordinances  
and owners say about  
unusual pets**

**By Jackie Wilson**

People have a special relationship with their pets, often treating them like family members. Fido is included in the annual Christmas card, sitting on his proud owner's lap. He celebrates his birthday with a special cake and gets dropped off at a doggy daycare for a playdate with other pups. Pet sitters stop by to feed Fluffy the cat, scooping her litter and giving her meds when her owners are on vacation. Bars and restaurants welcome dogs and airports provide a pet-relief area. The most-watched cat video on YouTube has more than 9 million views. To say folks are obsessed with animals is an understatement.

Ella Porath holds her pet, Lily, a hedgehog.  
Photo by Jackie Wilson



## FEATURE

More than half of the households in the United States — approximately 67 percent — own one or more pets, according to the American Veterinary Medical Association. That's nearly 85 million families with one or more four-legged friends, with an average of 1.6 dogs and 1.8 cats each. The generation that owns the most pets are millennials (those ages 22-37).

The pet business is a big money maker. It's estimated that \$103 billion is spent on pets, including food and veterinary care, according to the American Pet Products Association.

Yet, not just cats and dogs are beloved pets. In the past 20 years, a growing number of people are owning unusual pets such as sugar gliders, bearded dragons, potbelly pigs and more. Celebrities have also been known to have unusual pets. Justin Bieber owned a monkey; Leonardo DiCaprio, a 200-pound tortoise; and Steven Tyler of Aerosmith called a raccoon his pet.

### Know the rules

The State of Iowa has specific laws about owning unusual pets. Iowans can not own dangerous wild animals, such as non-domestic cats; wolves and coyotes; apes and types of monkeys; certain reptiles; elephants; bears; and many others.

Additionally, most cities in Iowa also have their own animal and pet laws. In West Des Moines, the following exotic animals are banned from being held as pets: coyotes, apes, monkeys, black widow spiders, scorpions, venomous and poisonous snakes, all wild cats (any cat other than the domestic house cat), raccoons, opossums and skunks.

In some areas, families get chickens, not just for laying eggs, but as pets. However, in the West Des Moines city limits, chickens and farm animals are prohibited except for those who own an acre or more and live in a residential estate zone.

Some people may have been grandfathered in or acquired permission to have chickens, says Melinda Vetter, West Des Moines Animal Control officer.

Rules vary in area cities. Residents of Waukee can have up to six chickens but not any roosters. Des Moines residents are also allowed to have chickens, while Ankeny doesn't allow chickens.

"We've gotten a lot of requests for chickens in town," says Vetter. "However, the City is not considering it."



Adam Porath holds Apollo, a leopard gecko. Photo by Jackie Wilson

If the City does get a call about a banned or unusual pet, Vetter assesses the situation.

"If we find a banned animal, we will seize it and either euthanize it or take it to a rehoming place outside of the city. If people have chickens, we give them a week to find another home," she says.

### Hedgehog and gecko

Although California residents can't legally own hedgehogs, they are welcome as pets in Iowa. The Porath family has both a hedgehog and a leopard gecko.

Angie and Adam Porath and their two kids, Ella and Xander, like pets — but their bodies don't. Both kids are allergic to cats and dogs.

When they researched fur-less animals, they discovered a hedgehog might be an ideal pet. Last year, right after a family quarantine from COVID, they acquired a baby hedgehog named Lily.

Lily has a cage and an enclosed area in the family room where she has more room to run around.

"She's like a spiky hamster," says Ella.

Ella has learned to pick up Lily carefully since she has more than 5,000 quills. She'll use a blanket to lift her up. Lily sheds quills occasionally.

"They hurt if you step on them," says Ella. "It's like stepping on Legos."

Lily is sensitive to noise and unusual smells. When she feels threatened, especially around strangers or new places, she curls up into a ball, and the quills stand straight up, protecting her body. Her favorite spot is a dark place or

burrowed under a blanket.

"She loves being in my pocket," says Ella. "She likes when you hold her close to hear your heart."

Hedgehogs are typically nocturnal animals; however, Lily isn't.

"Morning is the best time for her," says Angie. "She's crazy and runs in circles and tries to climb up the cage. She likes running on her wheel."

Lily's diet consists of dry cat food, dried mealworms and occasionally tortilla chips — but no salsa.

When Lily was first brought home, the family awoke in the middle of the night to a high-pitched screeching noise. They rushed to see what the problems was.

"She sounded just like a pig squealing," says Angie. "I looked it up online, and we think it was just a bad dream."

When Ella's friends come over, the first thing they do is say hi to Lily.

"My friends really like her — they think she's so cute," she says.

Some people are afraid of Lily's quills, but, as long as you don't pet her backwards or approach when she's scared, there's no harm. The feeling can be compared to touching a hairbrush.

Ella knows that Lily likes the family.

"She huffs at us when we pick her up. Huffing is kind of how she communicates. Or she sits on our laps with us at night," she explains.

Lily isn't the only pet in the Porath home. Another cage is home to a leopard gecko named

## FEATURE

Apollo. One of Xander's friends recently had to give up the reptile, and Xander was happy to give it a home.

Angie says the kids like their unusual animals.

"We have to get creative with pets when everyone has allergies," she says, watching Lily curl up in Ella's arms.

### One-inch pets

Jasen Stoeker's pets are tiny — about an inch in size. The julii corydoras, a tiny corydora catfish, is a unique catfish native to Brazil. The fish live in a freshwater tank with live plants, and provide environmental benefits for the



Jasen Stoeker's fish in his freshwater tank include the julii corydora, a tiny catfish native to Brazil. Photo by Jackie Wilson

tank. They are bottom dwellers that will clean the tank and are best kept in groups of at least four. They have sensitive barbels they use to help root around for food at night. Though small, they have spikes that prevent larger fish from eating them. A unique feature: They can rotate their eyes, which makes it appear as if they are winking.

Jasen began collecting fish after his daughter received a tank.

"I liked hers so much I got one of my own," he says.

He didn't want his fish to die, so he read a book about caring for them. Jasen says many people buy fish at a pet store and plop them in the tank. It's important to understand the nitrogen cycle so the fish don't die. He suggests testing the water frequently for nitrate levels.

"A bare tank is sterile. You need a certain amount of bacteria in the water for fish to survive," he says.

He and his family of three kids like having the fish for pets.

"It's lower maintenance and less messy than a dog or a cat. A dog barks, sheds and you have to take it for walks. An aquarium is easy, and, once it's set up, it's fairly low maintenance," he explains. "I only have to clean it about once a month."

Jasen works from home, and the fish tank is in his office. He likes how he can obtain so many different varieties of fish, all of which have different personalities, colors, sizes and quirks.

"It's fun to watch them and their behaviors," he says. "It's peaceful and calming." ■



Jasen Stoeker of West Des Moines says having fish for pets is easier than dogs or cats. Photo by Jackie Wilson



# THE PROBATE process

Probate is the process of court-supervised administration of an estate. If you have a will, upon your death, your executor will present it to the court. It's a common misconception that merely possessing the will vests someone with the authority to act. In order for a will to be effective, it must be admitted to probate. If you die without a will, the court still has control over the assets of your estate.



Probate is necessary where there are assets which cannot be transferred. For example, real estate titled in the decedent's name cannot be sold without passing through probate. Investments with no beneficiary designation generally require probate to transfer them to heirs.

Banks and financial institutions may

require "Letters of Appointment" or "Letters Testamentary." This is an official document, issued by the clerk of court empowering the executor to act on behalf of the estate.

Court supervision of probate ensures that your executor or the court-appointed administrator handles your estate legally and according to your wishes. To ensure that the will or the rules of inheritance are followed, the personal representative must report the assets, debts and disbursements of the estate to the court. The personal representative also files tax returns on behalf of the decedent and the estate.

Iowa law requires that notice of probate be published in a local newspaper. The notice must be published for two consecutive weeks. Then, the estate must remain open for four months before it can be closed. During this time, the personal representative will sell real estate, liquidate assets, pay creditors, and make disbursements to beneficiaries. Other factors

may require a longer probate period, but, generally, the probate of an estate lasts around six months.

Attorney's fees and court costs cannot be paid until the estate closes. In Iowa, attorney's fees are statutorily controlled and are approximately 2% of the gross value of the estate. The personal representative is also entitled to fees in the same amount. By comparison, other methods of asset disposal (like a revocable trust) have no fee caps.

Probating an estate is fairly straightforward. Court-supervised administration of an estate is neither lengthy nor overly expensive and has the benefit of ensuring that all the assets of the estate have been disposed of properly and legally. ■

Information provided by Ross Barnett, attorney for Abendroth Russell Barnett Law Firm, 2560 73rd St., Urbandale, 515-278-0623, [www.ARPCLaw.com](http://www.ARPCLaw.com).

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## EVENTS IN THE AREA

Check for cancellations

To submit calendar items for consideration, send to [tammy@iowalivingmagazines.com](mailto:tammy@iowalivingmagazines.com)



### Gymnastics: Chow's Winter Classic

Jan. 13-16

Hy-Vee Hall in downtown Des Moines

The balance beam, vault, floor, uneven bars... Witness the excellence of 1,500 gymnasts from around the country this month as Chow's Gymnastics hosts the 19th Annual Chow's Winter Classic. The event features gymnasts competing in USAG Levels 3-10 and Xcel. This year, the Winter Classic will also showcase a dual meet between the Iowa State Cyclones and the Temple Owls. For more information, visit [www.ChowsGymMeets.com](http://www.ChowsGymMeets.com).



### Tedeschi Trucks Band concert

Wednesday, Jan. 19

Civic Center, downtown

Des Moines, 221 Walnut St.

This 12-member collective continues to push musical boundaries. From uplifting soulful anthems to bittersweet ballads and driving rock and roll, Tedeschi Trucks Band delivers an impactful sound and message with its genre-defying repertoire. For more information, visit [DMPA.org](http://DMPA.org).



### Samantha Fish concert

Wednesday, Jan. 19

Wooly's, in downtown Des Moines' Historic East Village

This live performance features Samantha Fish's explosive brand of blues/rock-and-roll. For more information, visit [www.woolysdm.com](http://www.woolysdm.com).



### Fire & Ice Winter Pub Crawl

Saturday, Jan. 22, 1-4 p.m.  
Valley Junction

CITYVIEW'S winter event returns. Tickets, ordered in advance, are \$20. Cost is \$30 at the door. Ticket covers 10 sample winter specialty drinks at participating establishments in Valley Junction. Tickets are available online at [fire-and-ice.dmcityview.com](http://fire-and-ice.dmcityview.com).



### Winter Jam - All Together Now Tour

Saturday, Jan. 22

Wells Fargo Arena, 233 Center St., Des Moines

Winter Jam, Christian music's biggest multi-artist tour, returns this year, and the 2022 lineup is loaded featuring Skillet, Tauren Wells, KB, Colton Dixon, I Am They, NewSong and pre-jam artists Abby Robertson and Bayside Worship along with speaker Shane Pratt. General admission is a \$10 donation at the door starting at 4 p.m. The pre-show is at 5 p.m., and the show starts at 6 p.m. For more information, visit [www.jamtour.com](http://www.jamtour.com).

### Transcending Trauma seminar

Friday, Jan. 28, check-in starts at 9 a.m.

Program 9:15 a.m. to 4:20 p.m.

Grand View University, The Student Center

Crossroads of Iowa is offering its ninth annual community seminar for "the helping professionals and survivors of trauma." Tuition, which must be prepaid, is \$100 or \$85 if postmarked by Jan. 21. Register online at [www.crossroadsofiowa.org](http://www.crossroadsofiowa.org) or mail checks to 2815 199th St., Suite 111, Urbandale, IA 50322. Walk-ins welcome if space is available with payment of cash only. Topics include Eye Movement Desensitization Reprocessing; Rounding, Grieving, Growing Steps of Recovery from Trauma; An Extensive History Validated by Research; and Healing Trauma Through Yoga.



## EVENTS IN THE AREA

### That Golden Girls Show! A Puppet Parody

Jan. 25-30

The Temple Theater,  
1011 Locust St., Des Moines

Sophia and her get-rich-quick schemes, Rose and some epic tales from St. Olaf, Blanche and an insatiable hunt for you know what, and Dorothy's daily struggle to figure out life. This new show uses puppets to parody the TV classic "Golden Girls." For more information, visit [www.desmoinesperformingarts.org](http://www.desmoinesperformingarts.org).

### Immortal Beloved by the Des Moines Symphony

Saturday, Jan. 29, 7:30 p.m. and

Sunday, Jan. 30, 2:30 p.m.

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

"Ever thine. Ever mine. Ever ours," wrote Beethoven in a July 1812 letter to his "immortal beloved," a woman whose identity has remained one of the great mysteries of classical music. Now the Des Moines Symphony's Masterworks 4 features the concert "Immortal Beloved" with Natasha Paremski playing Rachmaninoff's grand Third Piano Concerto. For more information, visit [www.dmsymphony.org](http://www.dmsymphony.org).



### Iowa Wild Hockey home games

Various January dates

Wells Fargo Arena,  
730 Third St., Des Moines

Enjoy hockey at the American Hockey League level, with players that regularly go on to play for the Minnesota Wild. For more information, visit [www.iowawild.com](http://www.iowawild.com). Home games are:

- Friday, Jan. 14 vs. Chicago Wolves, 6 p.m.
- Saturday, Jan. 15 vs. Chicago Wolves, 6 p.m.
- Monday, Jan. 17 vs. Milwaukee Admirals, 2 p.m.
- Friday, Jan. 28 vs. San Diego Gulls, 7 p.m.
- Saturday, Jan. 29 vs. San Diego Gulls, 6 p.m.

### Iowa Wolves home games

Various January dates

Wells Fargo Arena, 730 Third St., Des Moines

The Iowa Wolves basketball team is affiliated with the Minnesota Timberwolves of the NBA and plays in the NBA Gatorade League, which is the NBA's official minor league.

Home games are set for:

- Sunday, Jan. 23 vs. Texas Legends/Mavericks, 4 p.m.



### Des Moines Buccaneers home games

Various January dates

Buccaneer Arena in Urbandale,  
7201 Hickman Road

The Buccaneers, a Junior A Amateur Ice Hockey team, entertains local audiences with fast-paced action. For more information, visit [www.bucshockey.com](http://www.bucshockey.com).

Home games are:

- Friday, Jan. 14 vs. Waterloo Black Hawks, 7 p.m.
- Saturday, Jan. 15 vs. Lincoln Stars, 6 p.m.



### Iowa Quilt Museum exhibit

Through Jan. 23

68 E. Court Ave., Winterset

Iowa Quilt Museum welcomes quilters, quilt lovers, history buffs and appreciators of American art and culture. Showing is "Here Comes the Sun," an exhibit honoring the sun with a study of the color orange in both historic and contemporary quilts. For more information, visit [www.iowaquiltmuseum.org](http://www.iowaquiltmuseum.org).



### An Evening of Celtic Music

March 12, 7 p.m.

Windsor Presbyterian Church, 6301 University Ave.,  
Windsor Heights

Crossroads of Iowa presents ClearJoy Music: An Evening of Celtic Music. Admission is free. A freewill offering will be accepted to support Crossroads of Iowa programs.

ClearJoy is a musical collaboration of two sisters specializing in Celtic and Scottish music. Crossroads is a not-for-profit organization offering programs for women, including those in jail or prison, with a focus on mental wellness using a holistic approach.



# Tallgrass Theatre Company makes move

## New space in old Skate West

After 15 years of performing local theater in an elementary school auditorium, the Tallgrass Theatre Company finally has its own home.

The new location — the former Skate West building — is at 2019 Grand Ave. in West Des Moines. The TTC was established in 2004 and recently finished its 50th production. Performances had been held in the Rex Mathes Auditorium in a West Des Moines school, and they shared the space with other community groups.

When the pandemic hit in 2020, the TTC was two weeks away from opening a show. Bob Baskerville, president of the TTC board of directors, says it was a difficult decision to shut down.

“We suspended production,” says Baskerville. “When we got back into the building, all of our stuff was in storage.”

In July 2021, the TTC Board signed a lease at a new location and began construction. In October, the work was completed, and the company moved in four days later. Its first show at the new place opened Dec. 3.

The new venue includes flexible setups for risers, stage and seating; a lobby; and a front of the house. Various artists will be displaying their works in the common areas.

The new place is ideal for a small theater, says Baskerville.

“We’ve got a green room for actors. We finally have adult-sized bathroom fixtures,” he laughs.

The company can now sell beer and wine during productions and has air conditioning — benefits not available at the previous auditorium.

Baskerville stresses the theater is part of the West Des Moines community.

“It’s a shared arts venue. We’re making it available for other local groups,” he says.

Normally, the all-volunteer group puts on three stage productions a year. With the new space, they’re adding a show. They are also expanding to offer a full-stage children’s show and children’s theater education.

The new theater has been well received, says Baskerville.



Tallgrass Theatre Company held its first production in its new venue. Photo by Dylan Heuer

“It’s a true treat to see people’s faces when they see the theater for the first time. They walk in with a big smile on their face,” he says.

He says the group wants to make a difference in the community by offering local entertainment.

“We believe in paying it forward to make a difference in the community. It’s humbling to see the success we’re having after the first show,” he says.

A few finishing touches still need to be made, says Baskerville, adding those involved are excited to offer more live events.

“We built a theater in less than a year — in a pandemic — and we’re still friends,” he says.

The TTC is open to new folks joining — whether it’s in the production, helping with events or volunteering. For a schedule of upcoming plays or volunteer opportunities, visit [www.tallgrasstheatre.org](http://www.tallgrasstheatre.org). ■

## NEWS BRIEF

# TWO join LWBJ

Officials of LWBJ welcomed Tyler Gerstandt, CPA and Kyle Woiwood, CPA as the newest partners and shareholders.

Gerstandt joined LWBJ in 2009 as part of the audit team and specializes in manufacturing, real estate, technology, and communications. He leads the employee benefit plan practice. Gerstandt also leads college recruitment at LWBJ and works with accounting students across the country.

Gerstandt received his bachelor’s degree from the University of Iowa. He is a member of the AICPA and ISCPA. He received the

ISCPA’s Rising Star Award in 2018 and serves on numerous committees.

Woiwood joined LWBJ in 2015 after working at PwC Minneapolis in their financial services tax department. He specializes in tax compliance and consulting in a variety of industries including technology, bio-sciences and real estate. He has extensive experience working with start-up companies, as well as international clients with complex foreign compliance and consulting needs.

Woiwood received his bachelor’s degree from the University of Northern Iowa. He is a

member of the AICPA and ISCPA and serves as a board member for Junior Achievement Emerging Leaders and The Ames Foundation.

In making the announcement, Paul Juffer, managing partner, noted, “We’ve been fortunate to grow our business over the years, and the key to our success is our people. Tyler and Kyle both have deep experience in their respective practice areas, and their commitment to exceptional client service is unmatched. They are both natural leaders who build strong relationships with both clients and colleagues. We are pleased to welcome them to our ownership group.” ■



## RESOLUTIONS? Don't forget to add your HVAC

It's that time again... New Year's resolutions. Before making any big commitments or giving up your favorite guilty pleasure snack, we have four New Year's resolutions that aren't only easy to follow and implement now but will improve your everyday health and comfort.

Need a fresh start to your year? A great resolution is to change the filter on your HVAC on a regular basis. Forgetting to change your HVAC filter results in dust and debris build-up that makes your furnace work harder than it needs to. The same dust and debris are getting into the air you're breathing, too. This results in poor air quality, making it harder to breathe. If you suffer from allergies, asthma, or have pets, this can have a greater effect on you.

If you want to take indoor air quality to the next level, stick to a regular cleaning schedule. Vacuuming and cleaning your vents can go a long way in improving air quality. Taking the proper steps to maintain good air quality in your home will make you feel better and help your HVAC work more efficiently.

Is consistency at the top of your list this year? A smart thermostat is just what you need, and it will save you money, too. Smart thermostats have appealing features that can make quite the difference with just a simple click of a button. Are you a planner? You will fall in love with the scheduling feature that allows you to set the temperature of your house based on the time of day. Smart thermostats also allow you to see how much energy your HVAC system is using, tell you the pollen levels in your area and easily connect to your home's current virtual assistant, allowing you to command with your voice.

Are certain parts of your house cooler or warmer than others? Do you use certain rooms only once or twice a year? Zoning systems can bring that missing balance back into your home. A zoning system allows you to control the temperature of each room in your house. This is another great way to save money on heating and cooling bills.

We all think about being healthier in the new year and forget there's more to it than exercising and saying no to those leftover Christmas cookies. Just following one of the simple resolutions previously mentioned can start your year off on the right track. ■

Information provided by Kendel Richlen, Owner, 72 Degrees Comfort Company, 811 S.W. Ordinance Road, Ankeny, 515-200-2728.



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## HEALTH benefits of volunteering for older adults

What's the secret to "the good life"? Doing good for others. Giving your life away in service to others.

In retirement, avenues of volunteerism can open as never before. With a wealth of experience and a more elastic schedule, retirees are ideally situated to extend themselves in purposeful activity for the sake of others. In so doing, they just might land upon the greatest adventure yet and see a transformation in themselves made possible only when we intentionally help to transform others.

Donating time to a community project or local nonprofit might just land you upon the greatest adventure yet. Consider all the causes that stir your emotions, those whose missions resonate with your own. Did you use any services earlier in your life that you'd like to thank by giving back to now? Find volunteer opportunities in your community newspaper or newsletter, on local websites, and through community resources.

With retirement, we often experience decreased social activity and increased isolation. Volunteerism reverses this by surrounding you with people dedicating themselves to the same causes — a support network of like-hearted people. As a loyal volunteer within a particular nonprofit, you will strengthen relationships with others and meet new people as your circle widens.

Some volunteer roles are more physically active than others. If your leg muscles aren't getting much action, choose an option where light walking is involved. Serving hot meals at shelters will keep you on your feet as you float about the kitchen. Some roles allow you to sit occasionally while putting together care packages or doing face painting at a community fair.

A key component of health is exercising your mind. Get mental stimulation by reading books to children at your local library or helping organize a community event. Learn new skills when volunteering and possibly find new passions at the same time.

For 18 years, MorningStar Senior Living has been shaping its identity around impacting the world for good, building an inspiring record of what heart-centric philanthropy can accomplish. Team members are drawn to the company for this very reason.

Through the work of its Foundation, MorningStar is just as committed to giving back locally. Every community chooses a local nonprofit to support with hearts and hands.

"Volunteerism not only forges a better connection with our neighborhoods, it's another way to live out our mission," says Ken. "And serving together makes for wonderful relationship-building among team and residents."

To invite seniors into an active, engaged lifestyle is a healthy proposition. But MorningStar goes further, offering a life characterized by opportunities to give back...the truest definition of wellness. ■

This post is intended for informational purposes only. Please contact your health care provider with any questions or concerns you have regarding your health. Information provided by Paula Spidell, executive director, MorningStar at Jordan Creek, 525 S. 60th St., West Des Moines, 515-505-7155.



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# FROM the story of Princess Diana to an Oscar-worthy performance by Lady Gaga

Six movie previews to whet your film appetite for the season.

The season is upon us, and that can only mean one thing...big movies! And what we in the biz call...important movies. The pandemic has again taken its toll on our movie selection this year, but I will bring you up to speed as best I can.

## “SPENCER”

This is an “arty” look at the weekend when Princess Diana allegedly decided to divorce her husband. Director Pablo Larrain delivers a movie that is, at times, difficult to watch and even more difficult to understand. He gave us a similar look at Jackie Kennedy in the 2016 film “Jackie.” This is a movie that is best appreciated but maybe not enjoyed.

**Grade: B/B+**



## “BELFAST”

This is one of the finest movies I have seen this year but good luck finding it at a theater. Last check it was playing at the Century 20 Jordan Creek in West Des Moines on only one screen.

Writer/director Kenneth Branagh gives an emotional look at his growing up in Belfast, Northern Ireland, during the religious uprisings of the late 1960s. Shot in glorious black and white, this movie packs quite a punch on multiple levels. It is easily in the Top 5 movies of the year.

**Grade: A**



## “RED NOTICE”

Excuse me while I slip in one of those movies that you can enjoy on the streaming services at home. Netflix delivers a great cast of Dwayne Johnson, Ryan Reynolds and Gal Gadot in a movie about three people competing to steal a priceless heirloom. If you are looking for a break from using your brain for a couple of hours, you are in luck. This wannabe action film goes from dumb to dumber and never recovers. It manages, at times, to be mindless fun. Too many times for my taste.

**Grade: C**



## “GHOSTBUSTERS AFTERLIFE”

My wife and I are big fans of the 1989 original “Ghostbusters” film. It was one of our first dates. Nearly 33 years later, we are back at the movies to see “Afterlife,” and I’m happy to report that it was a blast. A young struggling family inherits a rundown shack of a home in the middle of nowhere. Without giving too much away, strange things begin to happen, and I think you can guess where we go from there. I certainly saw better movies this year, but this was the most fun I had in a theater this year.

**Grade: B+/A-**



## “THE HOUSE OF GUCCI”

Directed by one of my favorites, Ridley Scott (“Alien,” “Gladiator,” etc.), “The House of Gucci” felt like a weak attempt to make “Godfather Part II.” Trying to emulate one of the greatest films in history is admirable but fraught with issues. This is based on a true story of the famous fashion company with infighting, family issues (putting it mildly) and murder. Lady Gaga is tremendous (as in Oscar worthy) as a woman who marries into an exclusive but severely dysfunctional family. Oh, how I wish that this had been better. Scott has now disappointed me twice this fall with the earlier release, “The Last Duel.”

**Grade: B**



And finally...

## “ENCANTO”

The 60th animated full-length motion picture from who else but Disney? As you might tell from the title, this is a magical story about a house that is given (out of nowhere) to a family who suffered a great tragedy. Members of the family are also given special gifts, or abilities. All members except one. When the house starts to crumble, this young woman is blamed for not being able to hold it together because she has no magical abilities. It’s a fun story with above average voicework and is close to a perfect holiday movie for young families.

**Grade: B/B+ ■**



*Michael C. Woody has been reviewing movies on radio and television since 1986 and can be heard talking movies every Wednesday afternoon at 2:30 p.m. on KXn0 106.3 with Keith Murphy and Andy Fales. You can also follow him on Twitter at MrMovieDSM.*

# RING IN the New Year at the WDM Library



As we reflect on 2021 and celebrate ringing in 2022, we wanted to share our most popular titles that circulated at the library this past year. We also want to highlight some of the exciting events to look forward to in 2022. We hope you join us.

## Top 5 adult titles in 2021

1. "The House in the Cerulean Sea" by T.J. Klune
2. "The Midnight Library" by Matt Haig
3. "The Four Winds" by Kristin Hannah
4. "Missing and Endangered" by J.A. Jance
5. "Before She Disappeared" by Lisa Gardner

## Top 5 young adult titles in 2021

1. "You Have a Match" by Emma Lord
2. "Shadow and Bone" by Leigh Bardugo
3. "They Both Die at the End" by Adam Silvera
4. "Heartstopper" by Alice Oseman
5. "Lore" by Alexandra Bracken

## Top 5 children's titles in 2021

1. "The 130-Story Treehouse: Laser Eyes and Annoying Flies" by Andy Griffiths
2. "Mac Saves the World" by Mac Barnett
3. "Rowley Jefferson's Awesome Spooky Stories" by Jeff Kinney
4. "The Ambrose Deception" by Emily Ecton
5. "Truly Tyler" by Terri Libenson

## January 2022 event highlights

See our full event calendar at [wdmlibrary.org/events](http://wdmlibrary.org/events)

- **Doors to the Past: Sherman Hill**, Sunday, Jan. 16, 2:30-3:30 p.m. Des Moines' oldest neighborhood, Sherman Hill, was named a historic district in 1979. Original residents Hoyt Sherman and James Savery were contemporaries of the Jordan family, and the area is home to amazing architecture and a story of the journey from blight to beauty.
- **After School Adventures: Paper Airplanes (ages 5-12)**, Wednesday, Jan. 19, 3:45-4:30 p.m. Join us in the Community Room after school to embark on an adventure. This month, we'll be earning our pilot's license as we learn to fold and fly paper airplanes. Registration required.
- **Author Event: Sara Ennis**, Tuesday, Jan. 25, 6:30-8 p.m. The Friends Foundation is proud to present local author Sara Ennis. Sara is the author of two psychological thrillers: "The Dollhouse" and "The Hunted: Sins of the Father."
- **Teen After School Movie (grades 6-12)**, Wednesday, Jan. 26, 3-5 p.m. Meet in the Library Community Room and enjoy a movie with popcorn. We'll have movie options to vote on the day of the event. Great way to connect with friends and teens from other schools.
- **Ending the Silence with NAMI Iowa**, Thursday, Jan. 27, 6:30-7:30 p.m. Please join us for an engaging presentation that helps audience members learn about the warning signs of mental health conditions and what steps to take if you or a loved one are showing symptoms of a mental health condition. Presented by the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI). ■





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## IMPORTANCE of cervical health

In 2021, about 14,000 women in the United States were diagnosed with cervical cancer, and about 4,000 women died of the disease. Cervical cancer is almost always caused by the human papillomavirus (HPV), and this cancer can be largely prevented with screening and vaccination.



**Q: What is cervical cancer?**

**A:** Cervical cancer is a malignant tumor of the cervix, which is the lowest part of the uterus. Sometimes, precancerous changes to the cervix (dysplasia) are diagnosed and steps can be taken to prevent cancer from developing.

**Q: Can cervical cancer be prevented?**

**A:** Screening is a key component in the effort to eliminate cervical cancer. Pap testing involves collecting cells from the cervix for examination under a microscope to look for abnormal cells. Since most of these abnormal changes are caused by HPV, screening also includes testing for the presence of the virus. Regular Pap and HPV testing improves detection of precancerous changes to the cervix.

HPV vaccination is recommended for everyone around age 11 or 12. It can be given later if necessary, up to the age of 45. Since most cases of cervical cancer are caused by HPV, vaccines that protect against this virus can dramatically reduce the number of cases per year.

**Q: What are the signs or symptoms of cervical cancer?**

**A:** Cervical cancer in its early stages generally produces no signs or symptoms. However, with more advanced cervical cancer, a woman may experience:

- Bleeding during intercourse
- Vaginal bleeding between periods or after menopause
- Watery, bloody vaginal discharge that may be heavy and have a foul odor

Make an appointment with your health care provider if you have any signs or symptoms that worry you. If you're thought to have cervical cancer, you may be referred to a gynecologic oncologist, a doctor who specializes in treating cancers that affect the female reproductive system. ■

Information provided by Dr. Abby Gonik, gynecologic oncologist with MercyOne Des Moines Surgical Group, 411 Laurel St., Suite 2100, Des Moines, 515-247-3266, [MercyOne.org/desmoines](http://MercyOne.org/desmoines)

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## HEALTH

By Dr. Amy Petersen

### TEENS and mental health

Feeling depressed, angry, hopeless, anxious? The COVID-19 pandemic has created fear and uncertainty for many, particularly for teenagers. How is your teen coping? It is important to check in and watch for signs of mental health struggles. Your teen could benefit from extra support or a visit with the pediatrician if they have: changes in mood (irritability, feelings of hopelessness), changes in behavior, a lack of interest in activities previously enjoyed, troubles sleeping (too much or too little), changes in appetite, troubles concentrating, or thoughts about self-harm or suicide.



Communicating honestly and openly can help your teen through this difficult time. Work together to create a "new normal" and stick to a routine that fits with their school schedule. Screen time will inevitably increase but come together to develop a plan that includes offline time as well. Help your teen find ways to keep their body healthy, such as going for a walk, run or bike ride as a family.

It is important as parents to stay positive and keep the lines of communication open with your teenager. Call your pediatrician about ways to help with mental health during these uncertain times. ■

Information provided by Dr. Amy Petersen, Cornerstone Pediatrics & Family Allergy, 6800 Lake Drive, Suite 260, West Des Moines, [www.cornerstonepfa.com](http://www.cornerstonepfa.com).

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## HEALTH

By Dr. Josiah Fitzsimmons

### WHY dangerous drugs are not the answer to your neuropathy

Neuropathy can be a challenging condition. It isn't a disease. Rather, it is the result of a disease, illness or injury. Getting to a diagnosis of neuropathy can also be a challenge and oftentimes results in a prescription for pain medication.

People who suffer with neuropathy may not even know that they have neuropathy. They may go to their primary physician and tell them about their symptoms, which may include tingling or numbness in their legs, hands, or feet. Perhaps they are having balance problems or the pain in their feet is so bad that even walking is a challenge. The typical diagnostic exams and tests are not necessarily conclusive enough to determine that a patient has neuropathy. The physician may just scratch their head and send the patient home with a prescription for something to ease the pain. These drugs, while not considered opioids, can become problematic if misused, and some patients can become physically dependent on them if not taken as prescribed. A true neuropathy diagnosis requires several neurological tests to determine if nerves are damaged and, if so, to what extent.



If you suffer from neuropathy, don't just take a pill to relieve the symptoms. Seek out a healthcare professional who is board certified in neuropathy to diagnose and treat neuropathy. Today's state-of-the-art treatments are safe, non-invasive, painless and FDA-cleared. ■

Information by Dr. Josiah Fitzsimmons, Vero Chiropractic, 5525 Mills Civic Parkway #120, West Des Moines, IA 50266.



## NEW YEAR, new affirmations

With the new year come resolutions — quickly followed by guilt for breaking the resolution. Guilt and negative self-talk can go together in a vicious cycle. Maybe the best New Year's resolution is not to make one, but if you are going to, make two instead. The second being not to allow feelings of guilt or negative self-talk sneak into your mind. If it does get in your brain, then challenge those thoughts and feelings.



To challenge negative thoughts and guilty feelings, think back into your life and ask, "Have I experienced guilt or negative thoughts before about a similar experience?" For instance, when former resolutions were broken, did guilt or negative talk help or come true? Chances are the answer is no, so challenge the negative guilty thoughts with the fact they are unhelpful. Think of yourself as a prosecutor collecting all the facts and arguments against the negative guilty thought to prosecute it.

Another way to challenge negative guilty thoughts is listening to or reading affirmations. Affirmations are often the opposite of negative thoughts. Create affirmations using the opposite. Such as, "I can't do it" becomes "I might be able to do it because I have not tried." Look for affirmation apps and books. Write favorites on sticky notes to put around the house where you will see them. ■

Information provided by Janet Rieckhoff, LMHC of SS Therapy and Consulting, Ltd., 4725 Merle Hay Road, Suite 205, Des Moines, IA 50322, 515-528-8135, [www.sstherapyandconsulting.com](http://www.sstherapyandconsulting.com), [rieckhoff@sstherapyandconsulting.com](mailto:rieckhoff@sstherapyandconsulting.com).

## WHAT form of CBD is right for me?

By now, you've heard about CBD and how it helps relieve stress and pain and how it's different from marijuana in that it's not psychoactive and you don't need a prescription. You're curious, so you browse online or maybe visit a store nearby. You might immediately notice all the different forms of CBD and feel overwhelmed or confused. Depending on where you're shopping, deciding what's the best product for you might be difficult. For new users, it's always best to visit a store so you get the opportunity to talk to an expert and hopefully try a sample. The most popular forms of CBD are gummies, oil tinctures, topicals and water solubles. All of those products essentially provide the same experience. It's up to you to decide which one fits best into your daily routine and, most importantly, what your individual physiology responds to most efficiently. What strength you need is also an important factor. Most adults average between 5-50 mg daily, with some studies showing doses of up to 1,500 mg per day, but only in rare cases, such as cancer patients. Your proper dose will depend on your BMI, metabolism, and the severity of what you're treating. When starting CBD, it's a bit of an experiment. Try sampling in-store, as most people notice results in minutes, and that provides a good starting point. Certified CBD consultants like seeing the quality of life improve for new users; let them find the perfect product for you. ■



Information provided by Ashley Powell, CBD American Shaman of Greater Des Moines, 800 S. 50th St., Suite 106, West Des Moines, 515-380-5251. References: <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/327518#other-factors>

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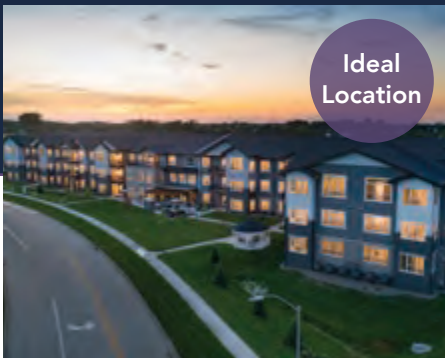


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## RECIPE

# WARM UP winter with comforting classics

*(Family Features)* Whipping up family favorites all winter long is a perfect activity to keep loved ones warm in the kitchen while avoiding the bitter chill outdoors. Delicious, heartwarming snacks offer a simple and savory way to bring everyone in from the cold while enjoying comforting flavors together.

Lean on beloved ingredients like go-to RAGÚ sauces when it's time to come together for quick bites. The possibilities are nearly endless with delicious recipes using classics like the RAGÚ Old World Style Traditional or RAGÚ Simply Traditional options.

Hearty flavors can take away the chill of winter in recipes like Baked Tomato Goat Cheese Dip. Easy to make and fun to create, this simple snack is perfect for a cold afternoon spent together in the kitchen or watching a family-movie marathon.

Find more recipes perfect for warming up this winter at [Ragu.com](http://Ragu.com). ■

## Baked tomato goat cheese dip

Recipe courtesy of Marzia Aziz of "Little Spice Jar"

Prep time: 10 minutes

Cook time: 20 minutes

Servings: 4-6

### Ingredients

- Nonstick cooking spray
- 2 cups RAGÚ Simply Traditional Sauce
- 3 cloves garlic, divided
- 1/4 cup fresh basil, chopped, divided
- 1/8-1/4 teaspoon red pepper flakes
- 1 log (10-10 1/2 ounces) goat cheese, softened at room temperature
- 2 teaspoons olive oil, plus additional for brushing, divided
- 1/4 teaspoon fresh thyme
- kosher salt, divided
- pepper
- 1 large baguette, sliced on bias
- blistered tomatoes, for serving (optional)

### Directions

- Position one rack in upper third of oven and one in lower third. Preheat oven to 375 F. Spray small, round baking dish with nonstick cooking spray; set aside.
- Add sauce to small bowl. Grate in two garlic cloves then add 1/8 cup basil and red pepper flakes. Stir to combine then pour sauce into baking dish.
- Smash goat cheese log into ball. Place ball between two sheets plastic wrap. Using hands, flatten cheese into thick, round disc about 1 inch smaller in diameter than baking dish. Remove goat cheese from plastic wrap and place in center of sauce. Drizzle cheese with 2 teaspoons olive oil. Sprinkle with fresh thyme, kosher salt and pepper. Bake on lower rack, uncovered, 20-25 minutes, or until sauce is bubbly and cheese is warmed through.
- Place baguette slices on baking sheet. Drizzle or brush with olive oil and sprinkle with kosher salt. Bake crostini on upper rack 10-12 minutes, flipping halfway through. When bread is done, remove from oven, cut last garlic clove in half and rub cut side on bread.
- Top dip with remaining basil and blistered tomatoes, if desired, and serve with crostini.



- **Note:** To make blistered tomatoes: Heat skillet over medium-high heat until almost smoking. Add 1 pint cherry tomatoes to dry skillet and let sit 1 minute. Lower heat to low, toss tomatoes with 2 teaspoons olive oil and cook 2-3 minutes, or until tomatoes are about to burst. Remove from heat; sprinkle with pinch of salt and pepper.

## Polenta bites

- 1 tube (18 ounces) polenta
- 1 1/2 teaspoons olive oil
- 1 jar (24 ounces) RAGÚ Chunky Tomato, Garlic and Onion Sauce
- 1 package (8 ounces) shredded mozzarella
- 2 sprigs, rosemary, destemmed and chopped
- 3 basil leaves, chopped
- 1 block (8 ounces) hard Parmesan cheese

### Directions

- Cut polenta into slices. In skillet, heat olive oil over medium-high heat; fry polenta slices 10-12 minutes on each side until crispy and golden brown.
- In saucepan over medium heat, warm sauce.
- Place polenta slices on tray and sprinkle with mozzarella. Place 1/2 teaspoon warm sauce on each slice then sprinkle with chopped rosemary and basil. Grate hard Parmesan onto each slice for topping.



# PINBALL wizards

STEM lab at St. Francis of Assisi offered for students K-8.



Thanks to a new STEM lab at St. Francis of Assisi school in West Des Moines, students have been able to take on new challenges, such as building pinball machines.

Kids like to play games, and games often serve as an important learning aid. Students at St. Francis of Assisi in West Des Moines have built pinball machines, thanks to a new STEM lab.

STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) is a teaching philosophy that integrates all four disciplines into one program, creating a student-centered learning environment.

Sara Hazel is in her second year of teaching STEM at the school. Previously, she taught technology for six years before tackling the new course.

Parents and the community raised funds for a STEM lab, which is used by students from kindergarten through eighth grade. STEM co-teachers include Jill Westholm and Jason Southword.

Funds for the new class were being raised two years ago, right before the pandemic hit.

“We weren’t sure if we could start the program,” Hazel says.

The classes are important for all ages, she adds.

“It’s giving all students skills to be creative, to collaborate and problem solve. It’s all the skills needed for upper education and what employers are looking for,” she explains.

Only a few Iowa schools — both public and private — offer STEM as a class available to all students. Hazel says they find their greatest inspiration at the Science Center of Iowa.



“We applied for grants through the State of Iowa. We took our training through the Science Center,” she says.

For a typical STEM project, a certain process is followed. Students first identify a task or problem. Together, they brainstorm a list of solutions. They come up with a plan and test it out. From there, students reflect and improve on the plan or revise it.

Students use a variety of materials. Not everything is high tech, as there are low-tech materials such as hot glue and cardboard creations.

One fun project the class did was create pinball machines. Hazel provided a background on pinball machines, showing students videos on how the machines work.

“We bring science into it and Newton’s law of motion. Kids got really creative with their machines,” she says.

That’s why Hazel enjoys teaching the class.

“I like the creativity and love seeing the students when a lightbulb comes on. When they’re working through a process and they finally figure it out, it’s rewarding to see that,” she says. ■



## OUT & ABOUT

# SANTA & Pets

Family Pet Veterinary Center held its annual Pet Pictures with Santa event on Dec. 11.



Fiona Macleod and Rosie



Larry Angaran, Judy Reha and Bella



Erin McNichols and Allie Brockett



Jean Stansberry and Maggie



Tootie and Santa



Leo and Santa



Dr. Jennifer Mathis, Dr. Ryan Southard and Dr. Emily Linscheid



Kourtney Chance and Santa



Pepper and Santa



Kayla Hughes and Molly Eyerly



Sarah Kuhlman and Hayley Gardner



## OUT & ABOUT

# RIBBON Cutting

A ribbon cutting was held at Nextaff, 6600 Westown Parkway, Suite 200, in West Des Moines on Dec. 2.



A ribbon cutting was held at Nextaff, 6600 Westown Parkway, Suite 200, in West Des Moines on Dec. 2.



Lu Anne Gafford and Connie Blodgett



Anna Doud and Tom Florian



Karey Brandon, Christi Snyder and Bart Davis



Heather Rice and Alex Adams



Natalie Ehrp and Jonathan Wu



Aaron McElroy and Sarah Crow



Randy Pelham and Theresa Bullock



Baillie Furst, Nicole Langmaid, Anna Doud and Kara Matheson



Cloy, Thomas, Ro, Cede, Katrina and Tom Moreland



OUT & ABOUT

# RIBBON Cutting

A ribbon cutting was held for Re/Max Revolution at Jordan Creek.



A ribbon cutting was held for Re/Max Revolution at Jordan Creek.



Mary Mills-Foley and Julie McMillin



Stacey Carpenter and Heather Clement



Dave and Coreen Avery



Alex Duffy and Amy Ganoe



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