



# THE LAKES NEWS SHOPPER™

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TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 2026

VOL/53 NO/18

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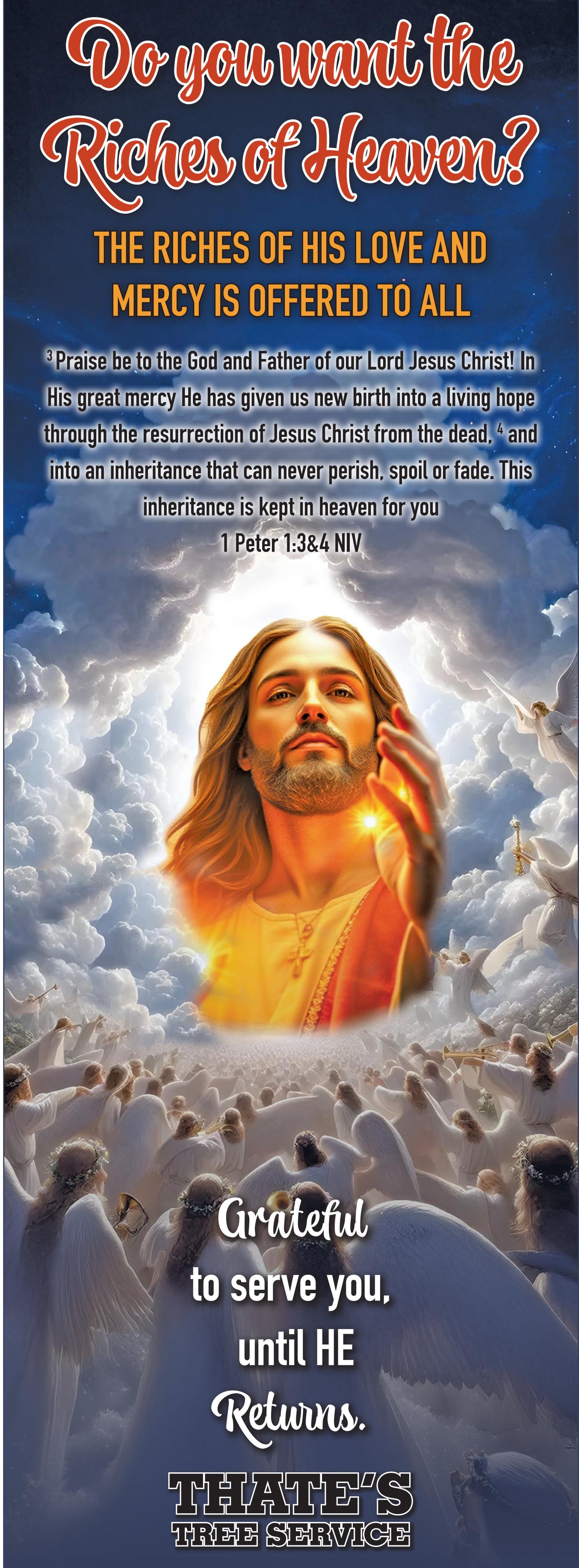
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1 Peter 1:3&4 NIV



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with  
THE LAKES NEWS SHOPPER'S



**TO MAKE YOUR PICKS:**

Enter Online at [LakesNewsShopper.com](http://LakesNewsShopper.com)

Or Enter in Person by circling your picks  
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**PICK #1** Winner of the Game: Seahawks or Patriots

**PICK #2** Winner of the Coin Toss: Seahawks or Patriots

**PICK #3** First team to score a touchdown: Seahawks or Patriots

**PICK #4** First team to score a field goal: Seahawks or Patriots

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**PICK #5** Team with the most rushing yards: Seahawks or Patriots

**PICK #6** Team with the most passing yards: Seahawks or Patriots

**PICK #7** Team with the most turnovers: Seahawks or Patriots

**PICK #8** Team with the longest touchdown: Seahawks or Patriots

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**PICK #9** Winning call of coin toss: Heads or Tails

**PICK #10** National Anthem: Over 115 seconds or Under 115 seconds

**PICK #11** First team to have a penalty: Seahawks or Patriots

**PICK #12** Sam Darnold touchdowns: 2 or over OR Under 2

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**PICK #13** Drake May touchdowns: 2 or over OR Under 2

**PICK #14** Jaxon Smith-Njiba receiving yards: 50 or over OR under 50

**PICK #15** Who'll have more passing yards: Darnold or May

**PICK #16** How many total field goals will there be? 3 or more OR under 3

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**PICK #17** Who will have more penalty yards? Seahawks or Patriots

**PICK #18** Who will have more turnovers? Seahawks or Patriots

**PICK #19** Who will have more sacks? Seahawks or Patriots

**PICK #20** Who will have more punting yards? Seahawks or Patriots

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**PICK #21** Who will win the time of possession? Seahawks or Patriots

**PICK #22** Will Snoop Dog be in a Super Bowl Commercial? Yes or No

**PICK #23** Which team will score first? Seahawks or Patriots

**PICK #24** Which team will score last? Seahawks or Patriots

**2 TIE BREAKERS:** Total Super Ball Half Time Score:

**AND:** Total Super Ball Final Score:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Town: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

One entry per person. The winner will be whoever chooses the most correct picks. For rules go to: [LakesNewsShopper.com](http://LakesNewsShopper.com)

## Birthday Announcement

Mary Ellen Inbody will celebrate her 92nd birthday on February 6, 2026. Her family would like to honor her with a card shower. Your warm wishes can reach Mary Ellen at Accura Health Care of Milford, 1600 13th Street, Room 212, Milford, Iowa 51351.

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WINNERS in the 2026 Winter Games Bridge Tournament, held Friday, January 23, at St. Joseph Catholic Church, in Milford, were, left to right, Lois Koelder, high, and Susan Reiser, low. (Photo courtesy Denise Cole)

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# LOVE LOCAL

this Valentine's Day

## Love Local Contest Details

To Enter the Drawing, LNS Readers & Online Followers Must:

1. Follow the participating businesses under the "LNS Love Local" header(s)
2. Comment on The LNS Facebook Page by Thurs., Feb 5<sup>th</sup> at 5pm with your top choice for a gift certificate from a participating business for a chance to win!
3. Tag a friend!

A random drawing will be held on Feb. 6<sup>th</sup> to determine winners of this weeks gift certificates.

Stay tuned for week two of The LNS Love Local Promotion!



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**FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 6**  
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**SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 7**  
 MAX DE BOER | 8PM

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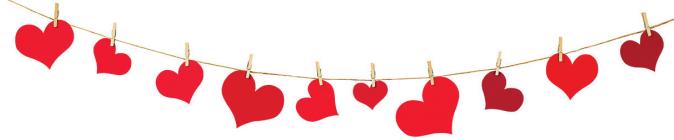
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WEALTH GROUP****Midwest Wealth Management Announces  
Rebranding to Midwest Wealth Group***Midwest Wealth Group to Elevate Client Services with Expanded  
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As 2026 gets underway, Midwest Wealth Management is excited to announce a significant evolution in its brand identity and service capabilities. Effective immediately, Midwest Wealth Management will operate as Midwest Wealth Group, reflecting the organization's expanded range of financial services and dedication to guiding clients confidently through their financial journeys.

This rebrand coincides with a strategic new partnership with Raymond James, granting Midwest Wealth Group access to advanced tools, in-depth research, and a broader array of resources designed to help clients pursue their long-term financial goals more effectively.

Alongside its new name a newly designed website, MidwestWealthGroup.com (formerly PlanWisely.com) will provide an improved digital experience and more accessible client resources. Client communications will also transition to updated email addresses ending in @midwestwealthgroup.com.

Despite these exciting changes, Midwest Wealth Group remains steadfast in its commitment to personalized service. Clients will continue working with the trusted team they know, dedicated to putting their best interests at the forefront of every financial decision.

"We are thrilled to embark on this new chapter as Midwest Wealth Group," said Brittany Koch, VP Wealth Management. "Our partnership with Raymond James and enhanced service offerings position us to serve our clients better than ever before. We look forward to supporting their financial success for years to come."

*Through comprehensive financial planning and wealth management services, Midwest Wealth Group helps individuals and families with their financial aspirations, striving to provide confidence and clarity.*

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**SUNDAY**  
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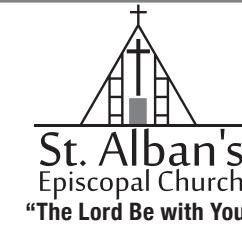
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8:30 AM &  
11:00 AM

**FELLOWSHIP**  
9:30 AM

**EDUCATION**  
9:45 AM

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**SUNDAYS • 10:00 AM**  
**TUESDAYS • 11:00 AM**

The Reverend Carolyn Tuttle, Rector

Live Stream through our Facebook Page

Feb. 17: Shrove Tuesday - 11 am service  
Pancakes 12 noon at Javis Grill, Lake St., Spirit Lake

Feb. 18: Ash Wednesday - 5 pm service

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**Dance in Brewster**

Steve Lang and Bobby will be providing music for the dance on Saturday, February 14th, at the Brewster Legion, 7-10:30. Great music and dancing so come and enjoy the evening.

Iowa State had its best start ever, winning 16 straight games and earning a #2 ranking, but on January 13th they stumbled, suffering a lopsided 84-63 defeat against Kansas at Phog Allen Field House. That game didn't raise a lot of flags as many teams struggle in Phog Allen Field House and Iowa State was facing a very desperate Kansas team who had fallen out of the rankings and was just 1-2 in the Big 12 Conference at the time (they have now won five in a row and are 6-2). The Cyclones' next game, however, caused many to question if this team was as good as their #2 ranking and if they were hitting their usual late-season slide where they look worse down from how hard they practice and play, as Iowa State lost 79-70 at Cincinnati to a very mediocre Bearcat team. The Cyclones looked listless and a step-slow in both defeats, and had their script of success, forcing turnovers and scoring points off those turnovers, flipped on them in both games as they forced just 13 total turnovers in the two losses.

Fast forward two weeks and it appears that those two losses served as a nice mid-January wake-up call for the Cyclones. Iowa State has won four games in a row by an average score of 90.8-64. Now, it certainly has helped that the schedule got a bit easier but included in those wins are probable NCAA Tournament teams UCF and Oklahoma State (on the road). Iowa State's latest win came on Sunday, when they demolished Kansas State in Bramlage Coliseum 95-61 exactly one year ago when in a similar situation of records, Kansas State came into Ames and upset Iowa State. The Cyclones were definitely not going to let that happen, as they jumped on the Wildcats early and never let up, taking a 50-21 lead into halftime. Kansas State came out with a 10-4 run to start the second half, but a TJ Ozelberger timeout squished that run as Iowa State answered with an 11-0 run to blow the game wide open again. The most impressive stat from Sunday's blowout win is that the Cyclones had 28 assists on 33 of their field goals, just an amazing number that shows how unselfish this team plays. Balance is key for this Iowa State team, and that showed again on Sunday with five players scoring in double figures: Joshua Jefferson (19), Milan Momcilovic (18), Tamin Lipsy (16), Killyan Toure (13) and Nate Heise (11). Lipsy added nine assists while Jefferson added eight rebounds and Momcilovic continued his torrid 3-point shooting, hitting 5/9. The junior from Pewaukee, WI, leads the nation in 3-point shooting at an astounding 54%, hitting 88/163.

Iowa State enters their bye week at 20-2 and 7-2 in the Big 12, and as we go to press a #8 ranking, I am guessing that jumps a spot or two later on Monday. The Big 12 is the best conference in college basketball, with the B1G not too far behind, and the schedule after next week becomes an absolute beast for Iowa State, as they will host #14 Kansas on February 14, #10 Houston on February 16th, go to #13 BYU on February 21st, host #11 Texas Tech on February 28th and then travel to #1 Arizona on March 2nd. I'm not going to put the John Jinx on this year's Iowa State team and make any predictions on how far this year's team can go, let's just say to buckle up, it's going to be one fun run, Cyclone fans!!

**View From The Bench**

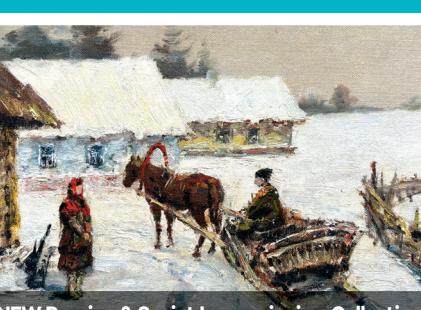
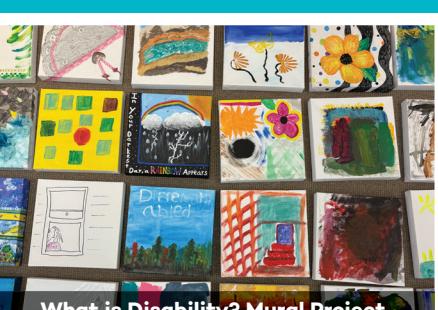
by John Adams, Jr.

**Cyclones Bounce Back from Mid-January Slide**

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**VISUAL ARTS**Pearson Lakes Art Center Biennial Exhibition  
Through 2/21What is Disability? Mural Project  
Through 2/28NEW Russian & Soviet Impressionism Collection  
Through 5/31**PERFORMING ARTS****6/9 & 6/10 | Hotel California**

A Salute to the Eagles | 7:30 PM | \$40/\$50

MEMBERS ONLY PRESALE 2/3-2/9

**6/16 & 6/17 | The Texas Tenors**

Country/Classical | 7:30 PM | \$40/\$50

MEMBERS ONLY PRESALE 2/10-2/16

**6/23 | The Papa's And Mama's**

Mamas and Papas Tribute | 7:30 PM | \$40/\$50

MEMBERS ONLY PRESALE 2/17-2/23

**EDUCATION CLASSES****STILL LIFE THURSDAYS- FLORALS**

Open Studio

Feb. 5, 19, Apr. &amp; May 21

10am-9pm, Come and Go | \$10/\$15

Each month, florist, April Junge, of Hometown Florals, will create a unique arrangement featuring distinctive blooms and unusual vases—perfect for artists of all styles. Bring your own supplies and work in any medium you choose. Drop-ins welcome. This is an open studio, self-lead class. All Levels, 16+

**CLOVERLEAF BASKET WEAVING**

With Sandie Smith

Thursday, Feb. 26 | 5:30-7pm and Saturday, Mar. 7 | 10am-3pm | \$55/\$65 | Intermediate, 18+

Join us to create a lucky handwoven treasure with this two-part intermediate basket weaving workshop. Featuring a distinctive cloverleaf design at the base, this basket is perfect for St. Patrick's Day or just because! With guidance of instructor Sandie Smith, students will work with round reeds to shape, form, and finish a unique basket that highlights both skill and creativity. Register by Feb. 18

Register online or call 712-332-7029

**CULINARY CLASSES****Date Night Cooking Class**

With Marisa Sides of Rissey's Dry Rubs and Seasonings

6pm | \$160/\$170 per Couple

Must register 3 days prior to each class.

A little flour, a little wine and a lot of love, the perfect date night with Marisa!

Friday, Feb. 13: Buttery Lobster Ravioli

Friday, Mar. 13: A Night In Naples

Friday, Apr. 24: Summer Grilled Tri-Tip with Salsa Verde

**Create & Savor Cooking Class**

With Marisa Sides of Rissey's Dry Rubs and Seasonings

Saturday | 6pm | \$80/\$90

Registration required 3 days before each class.

In this hands-on cooking class, Marisa will guide you in preparing a delicious decadent meal, glass of wine included!

Feb. 14: Buttery Lobster Ravioli

Mar. 14: A Night In Naples

**Winter Comfort Food**

With Jay Norton of The Hen House

\$100/\$110 per dinner | 6pm

Registration required 2 days before each class.

Thursday, Feb. 19: Southern Cooking

Thursday, Mar. 12: Irish Country Supper

Join Chef Jay at the kitchen counter for a small group experience of timeless favorites! A glass of wine is served with each dinner.

Register online or call 712-332-7029



Tues., Feb. 3 – 10:30 AM-3 tract land auction in Dickinson Co., IA. Auctioneers: Zomer Company Land Management. 712-470-2526. www.zomercompany.com.

Sat., Feb. 7 – 9:00 AM-Coin auction in Windom, MN. Auctioneer: Gravley. 507-822-0403. www.auctionsgo.com.

Thurs., Feb. 19 – 10:00 AM-80 acres at auction in Royal, IA. Auctioneers: Midwest Land Management. 712-262-3110. www.midwestlandmanagement.com.

Whether you're searching, returning, or simply curious, **Worship at the Rock** offers a space to connect hearts to God and to each other, encounter Christ in fresh ways, and discover a community where you truly belong.**Grand Re-Opening:**  
Sunday, February 15<sup>th</sup> at 10:30am

Spirit Lake United Methodist Church

**Come As You Are. Come Be Connected.**  
Find Your Place at the Rock.1812 Gary Ave. Spirit Lake, IA  
712-336-3115 | spiritlakeumc.org**Lakes Area Activity/Senior Center***Stop in and see what we have to offer!!!***SCHEDULED PRESENTATIONS/EVENTS:**

Tuesday, February 3, 12:30 PM — "Nature Center": Danika's theme this week will be "Animal Courtship"

Tuesday, February 10, 12:30 PM — DeNeitt — RSVP Coordinator

Tuesday, February 17, 12:30 PM — Mary Prentice — Topic: Medicare Updates

Tuesday, February 24 12:00 PM — Dickinson County Public Health will be providing free blood pressure checks

Thursdays - 11:00 AM - TaiChi

Fridays - 9:50 AM - Chair Yoga

**UPCOMING BREAKFAST FUNDRAISER**

Sunday, Feb. 15 • 8:30 AM-Noon

**SERVE AT NOON****SIGN UP FOR FEBRUARY DINNER DATE MEALS!**Reserve your meal for next week  
Low Cost: \$7-\$10 DonationA Gift Certificate for Dinner Date  
Meals is the Perfect Gift!

9 Monday

Taco Pasta  
Vegetable  
Fruit  
Bread

10 Tuesday

Shepherd's Pie  
Fruit  
Bread

11 Wednesday

Hot Beef, Gravy,  
Mashed Potatoes  
Vegetable  
Fruit & Bread

## Daryl Madison Memorial Scholarship Established at ILCC

Iowa Lakes Community College is proud to announce the establishment of the Daryl Madison Memorial Scholarship, created in honor of the late Daryl Madison through generous donations from his family and friends.

The scholarship recognizes Daryl Madison's long-standing commitment to Iowa Lakes Community College and his unwavering support of Laker athletics. For many years, Madison served as a bus driver for Iowa Lakes athletic teams, traveling countless miles with student-athletes and becoming a familiar, encouraging presence at practices and competitions. More than transportation, Daryl provided consistent support, enthusiasm, and genuine care for the students he served.

"Daryl Madison represented everything we value at Iowa Lakes," said Dan Lutat, Executive Director of Foundation and Governmental Relations. "He showed up for our students time and time again, not for recognition, but because he truly believed in them and in the role athletics plays in shaping lives."

The Daryl Madison Memorial Scholarship will provide a \$2,000 award to a student-athlete involved in Men's Basketball, Women's Basketball, or Softball at Iowa Lakes Community College. The scholarship will support students who demonstrate dedication to their sport, their education, and the values of service and commitment that Daryl exemplified throughout his life.

"Through this scholarship, Daryl's legacy will continue in a very meaningful way," Lutat added. "It ensures that future student-athletes receive the same encouragement and support that Daryl so freely gave during his many years with Iowa Lakes athletics."

Madison's impact on Iowa Lakes athletics was formally recognized in 2023 when he and his wife, Sue Madison, were inducted into the Iowa Lakes Athletics Hall of Fame for their years of dedication and support.

For additional information about the Daryl Madison Memorial Scholarship or to inquire about contributing, please contact the Iowa Lakes Community College Foundation Office.

## South Dakota State Announces Fall 2025 dean's list

Area students were recognized for their outstanding academic performance over the fall 2025 semester at South Dakota State University by being named to the dean's list.

To earn dean's list distinctions in SDSU's colleges, students must have completed a minimum of 12 credits and must have earned at least a 3.5 GPA on a 4.0 scale. Overall, 4,147 students from 40 states and 31 foreign nations are on the list. Congratulations to these distinguished scholars on earning this academic achievement.

Congratulations to the following area students:

**Arnolds Park** - Elli Hanson.

**Estherville** - Benjamin Borchers Carly Grange and Leah Williams.

**Everly** - Haley Berends.

**Harris** - Emma Graves.

**Lake Park** - Madison Gilmore and Ava Rasche of Lake Park.

**Milford** - Grace Jones.

**Ocheyedan** - Macey Hockstra and Abigail Otto.

**Spencer** - Faythe Beall, Sean Connor, Ethan Hansen, Davis Hodge, Kaylee Jedecka, Blake Kooker, Matayah Lowe, Sadie Nelson, Mallory Salton, Megan Schauer, Kale Schueler, Brogan Seier, Jacie Staedtler, Alec Stanley, Sydney Stanley, Aubrie Stell, Gavin Timmer and Ashley Vreeman.

**Spirit Lake** - Sophia La Doux, Megan Sandison, Abigail Slater and Kendyl Summers.

**Jackson** - Ashlyn Bohl, Samantha Henning, Lauren Johnson, Alexis O'Reilly, Braxton Pavelko, Bailee Pohlman, Sydney Williams, Meta Tewes, and Haley Twinnereim.

**Lakefield** - Brylee Anderson, Thomas Liepold, Timothy Salentiny, and Audien Ybarra-Kraft.

## Kiwanis Bingo Nights

Milford Kiwanis presents Bingo Nights on the second and fourth Thursdays of the month. The next Milford Kiwanis Bingo Nights will be Thursday, February 12 and 26. Card sales begin at 5:30 and Bingo is from 6:00-8:00. A meal will be provided by the VFW Auxiliary for just \$7.00. The Spirit Lake VFW is located at 914 Lake Street. Bingo profits support Milford youth needs, programs, and scholarships.



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## The importance of positive relationships

by Steve Weisman

Over the 33 years that I taught high school English and Journalism, directed plays and coached a wide range of sports, I learned the importance of building positive relationships with both colleagues, students and athletes. The more cohesive each class, group and team became, the better they performed.

Now, that didn't mean they all became straight A students or were all conference, all district or all state competitors, but the ones who bought in became better as individuals, groups and teams. I found it important both in the classroom and in athletics to celebrate successes in a positive way while continuing to execute and build with passion and a belief in what we were trying to accomplish.

An extension of this became the buy-in from the parents and then the community. Let's face it. The schools are really the hub of our communities. When all parts of the puzzle become part of the solution and celebrate the successes, it becomes a win-win. Once again, these successes don't have to result in a state championship. It can simply be doing our best as individuals. As a group with positive parental and community support, it's a win-win! Now, even though I am long past my teaching career, I still relish the opportunity to see schools and communities working together to become the best that they can be.

### It Takes a Village

Really, this theme of creating positive relationships is the base from which all success is derived. As we get into the swing of things for 2026, I'd like to take a moment to issue a challenge for all of us. We live in a wonderful area with some of the greatest natural resources. The lakes, the public lands offer us so much. However, they are in need of protection.

We need to do more to protect our land and water. Each of us can do our part where we live and recreate, but there is also a bigger picture. We need to continue to come together in our

communities through organizations that work toward these goals. Through a membership, we can provide financial support, volunteer to help accomplish tasks and encourage others to join us in our efforts.

There are so many awesome non-profit organizations that we can be a part of. Just think back to last August's Blue Water Festival, where over 30 clean water/natural resources organizations shared their story. It was a time to share our collective successes and also to realize that there is much more to do. Here, then, is my challenge to all of us!

### Becoming involved

We have so many options. Here are just a few. We have our county conservation boards, the Iowa Great Lakes Pheasants Forever, the Clay County Pheasants Forever, the Iowa Great Lakes Fishing Club, the different lake protective associations (Okoboji Protective Association, Spirit Lake Protective Association, the East Okoboji Lakes Improvement Corporation, Center Lake Improvement and Preservation and the Silver Lake Park Improvement Association) and the Friends of the Lakeside Lab, which supports water quality monitoring, environmental education and research initiatives.

Then on the state level there are organizations like the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, the Audubon Society, the Nature Conservancy of Iowa, the Iowa Environmental Council, Ducks Unlimited, just to name a few.

What I have found being part of these organizations is that, yes, there are membership dues, but it is through our volunteering that so much of the meaningful work gets completed. At the same time, there is a comradery and a joy when a plan comes together! Again, much of the success of these organizations goes back to building those positive relationships. When they do, we truly become a part of "The Village," and our lakes and natural resources benefit greatly!

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### YOUR AGENT!



MARILYN STRICKLAND  
Broker - Associate  
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## Weekly Social Gathering

You are invited to a weekly social gathering every Wednesday from 12:30 - 4:30pm at the American Legion in Milford. Come and play a game of cards. Coffee will be provided. They hope to see you there.

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## Okoboji Foundation Invites Grant Applications for 2026

Capital projects that strengthen lake quality, arts and culture, and outdoor recreation encouraged to apply

The Okoboji Foundation has opened its 2026 grant application cycle, inviting nonprofit organizations serving the Iowa Great Lakes region to apply for funding support. Through its annual grant program, the Foundation invests in capital projects that create lasting community impact across the region.

Grant funding supports capital projects that are focused on the Foundation's primary areas of interest including Lake Quality and Environment, Arts and Culture, and Outdoor Experiences and Recreation, with an emphasis on projects that are visible, broadly accessible, and sustainable.

"Each year, we are inspired by the passion and creativity of organizations working to strengthen our communities," said Mindy Gress, President of the Okoboji Foundation. "No project is ever too small to be considered. What matters most is the vision behind it and the long-term benefit it brings to the Iowa Great Lakes region."

Eligible applicants include 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations and government entities. Organizations without nonprofit status may apply through a qualified fiscal sponsor. Grant funds are designated for capital projects and may not be used for operational expenses, marketing costs, school uniforms, or short-term programming.

In 2025, the Okoboji Foundation awarded \$378,000 in Leadership Grants to support major community projects throughout the region. When combined with Youth in Philanthropy grants, total funding distributed reached \$472,462. Since its founding in 1988, the Foundation has awarded more than \$5.8 million in discretionary grants to strengthen communities across the Iowa Great Lakes area.

Grant applications must be submitted online by March 1, 2026, at 11:59 p.m. Organizations are strongly encouraged to review the grant guidelines available on the Foundation's website prior to applying. Foundation staff are available to answer questions, discuss project ideas, and help direct applicants through the application process.

Grant guidelines and application materials are available at [okobojifoundation.org/grant-application](http://okobojifoundation.org/grant-application). For additional information, contact the Okoboji Foundation at 712-332-7177 or [info@okobojifoundation.org](mailto:info@okobojifoundation.org).



Now Playing Feb. 5-12  
Kevin James

Solo Mio

SOLO MIO

THUR 1/25 7:10

FRI 1/26 4:15 & 7:15

SAT 1/27 1:30, 4:15 & 7:15

SUN 1/28 1:30, 4:15 & 6:45

MON-THUR 2/9-12 7:00

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MON-THUR 2/9-12 6:45

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## Nature Tots

The Dickinson County Nature Center invites children ages 2-5 years old and a chaperone to register for Nature Tots: Running Animals on Wednesday, February 11th. There are two identical sessions at 10:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m., offered at no cost.

The session will start off with a group activity, passing around toy animals that are either fast or slow. The group will learn about several speedy Iowa animals and whether they hop, fly, run, or swim. Activity stations will be set up to imprint tracks in playdough, make Valentine's Day cards, complete a Cheetah Letter Match, play a game of Animal Actions, and build a habitat with provided materials.

There is availability for the 1:30 p.m. session (morning session is full). Registration opens 8 weeks ahead of each event. Register for free before 5:00 p.m. on February 9th by visiting the Programs/Events tab at [www.dickinsoncountyconservation-board.com](http://www.dickinsoncountyconservation-board.com).

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UPDATES & DEALS POSTED DAILY!



## Caregivers Support Group

Lakes Area Caregivers Support Group is available for help dealing with the stress of being a caregiver to someone with Alzheimers or other dementia disorders. This community caregivers group meets at 10:00 every Wednesday morning at First Presbyterian Church in Spirit Lake. This is an opportunity to discuss with other caregivers stories and concerns in a comfortable and confidential manner.

A typical meeting might include a presentation or sharing personal methods of handling challenges faced every day by other caregivers.

For more information, call 712-336-1649 or 712-330-1270.

## Lakes Area Activity/Senior Center Wish List

- City of Spirit Lake green garbage bags
- Postage stamps
- Paper towels and Kleenex
- Toilet paper
- Coffee - regular, decaf, filters and Styrofoam coffee cups

Thank you for your donations!

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GRAND PRIZE  
DRAWING:  
MARCH 2<sup>ND</sup>

3 STAMPS=1 ENTRY  
6 STAMPS=3 ENTRIES  
9 STAMPS=5 ENTRIES  
12 STAMPS=7 ENTRIES  
ALL STAMPS=10 ENTRIES

#1 PICK UP A CARD FROM A  
PARTICIPATING BUSINESS

#2 VISIT & MAKE A PURCHASE AT  
PARTICIPATING BUSINESSES

#3 SUBMIT PRIZE ENTRIES AT  
PARTICIPATING BUSINESSES

#4 BONUS: SHARE  
TO SOCIAL MEDIA

#5 LOVE YOUR  
COMMUNITY

#6 Share your purchase  
experience on social media for  
an extra entry. Be sure to tag  
the Spirit Lake Chamber of  
Commerce AND the business.  
(Story posts DO count).

#7 Come in, We're  
OPEN

#8 Visit the businesses listed on the card and  
enjoy a meal, beverage, shopping, or other  
experience. With any purchase, have your card  
stamped for a chance to win Chamber Bucks or  
Gift Cards from participating businesses!

#9 Pick up a card at any of the listed  
locations or at the Spirit Lake Chamber.  
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#10 PRESENTING SPONSOR:  


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## Okoboji High School Concert Band Selected as 2A Honor Band at 99th Iowa Bandmasters Association Conference

Milford, IA - The Okoboji High School Concert Band has been selected to perform as the Class 2A Conference Honor Band at the 99th Iowa Bandmasters Association (IBA) Conference, one of the most prestigious honors a school concert band can receive in the state of Iowa.

The band, under the direction of James Kunz, will present a 50-minute concert on Friday, May 15, 2026, at 3:00 p.m. in the Marriott Hotel Ballroom in downtown Des Moines, as part of the statewide conference.

Each year, band directors from across Iowa submit recordings of their ensembles for consideration. These recordings are evaluated anonymously by a panel of judges, who select honor bands based on

musical excellence, balance, tone, and overall performance quality. Okoboji's selection as the 2A Honor Band marks the first time the school has received this distinction.

"This honor is often compared to winning a state title in concert band," said Kunz. "It is a reflection of the dedication and focus our students bring to rehearsals, as well as the incredible support from our school, families, and community."

The Okoboji High School Concert Band will begin preparing seven diverse musical selections, totaling approximately 35 minutes of music, representing a wide range of styles and technical demands. The performance showcases not only the musicianship of the students,

but also the collective efforts of Okoboji's staff, administration, the Okoboji Fine Arts Booster Club, and a community that consistently supports the arts.

The Iowa Bandmasters Association Conference brings together music educators and performers from across the state, making this performance a significant opportunity for Okoboji students to represent their school and community on a statewide stage.

If you would like to contribute via sponsorship to help defray costs for this trip of sending the entire band to Des Moines, please reach out via email, [okobojifinearts@gmail.com](mailto:okobojifinearts@gmail.com). More information about the performance and related events will be shared as the date approaches.

## Applicants Sought For Healthcare Scholarship & Loan Programs

Applications are now being accepted for the Bennie B. and Ernestine F. Shine Scholarship, Adam J. Anderson Scholarship, as well as the Cornwall Loan Program. All programs are designed to help area students pursue healthcare careers.

The Shine scholarship fund, administered by Spencer Hospital, annually awards funds to persons who have completed at least one semester of a nursing or allied health program, such as radiology, therapy programs (respiratory care, speech, physical or occupational), medical technology, laboratory tech, paramedic training, pharmacy, etc. These programs are not intended to fund individuals pursuing a degree in medicine, dentistry, physician assistant or veterinary science. The Adam J. Anderson scholarship fund, administered by Spencer Hospital, annually awards funds to persons pursuing education & training to become certified EMS provider (EMT through Paramedic).

Ben Shine was a long-time trustee of the Spencer Hospital Board. His wife, Ernestine Shine, was active in the hospital auxiliary and served as president of that organization. The Shines recognized the importance of quality health care for their community and were actively involved in maintaining a quality and progressive hospital. One effort toward achieving this goal was the establishment of the Shine Scholarship.

The Ruth Cornwall Loan Program was created by Wilson Cornwall in memory of his wife, Ruth, who had received quality hospital care and later home care from Spencer Hospital during an extended illness. The Cornwall family wished to help local people interested in receiving healthcare education. To accomplish this, a low-interest loan program was created.

The Adam J. Anderson Scholarship was created by Duane Anderson of Webb and Marcia Anderson Taylor of Spencer in memory of their son Adam who died in January 2001 of cancer. Adam had worked as a volunteer on the Terrell ambulance crew after graduating from Iowa Lakes Community College and later took a job as an EMT for Spencer Hospital. According to his mother, Adam's goal was to obtain his paramedic certification, and he was accepted into paramedic school in August 2000; however, his illness had progressed so much he was unable to attend. The scholarship is intended to honor Adam's memory and his spirit, and to enable others to fulfill the dream to be of service to others as EMS Providers (EMT through Paramedics).

The application deadline for both the Shine & Adam J. Anderson Scholarship and Cornwall Loan is March 31, 2026. Recipients will be notified of their award in May. Applications are available on the Spencer Hospital Website at <https://www.spencerhospital.org/about-us/professional-education/scholarships/>

For questions, please contact Danelle Stumbo, Spencer Hospital Educational Coordinator at [danelle.stumbo@spencerhospital.org](mailto:danelle.stumbo@spencerhospital.org).

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

The publisher does not necessarily share the views/opinions stated in the "Letters to the Editor" published in The Lakes News Shopper.

### To The Editor:

#### Embarrassed-Ashamed-Disgusted-Abhorrent

These adjectives define the state of America today. Daily, Trump and his administration embark on anti-constitutional capers, economic madness, ally alienation, graft, lies and lawlessness. Trump's speech at Davos was the worse ever made by an American president showing total lack of historical knowledge, disregard for treaties/allies, disdain for former American and current world leaders and outright lies on the American economy. Americans should be abhorred at such a performance! Likewise, we should be abhorred by continued assault by ICE on American cities inflicting fatalities (murder) in the Twin Cities with officials and the President claiming victims to be terrorists or falsely accused of assault. This is not the America I grew up in or envisioned for my kids and grandchildren. In fact, polls show 71% of Americans feel the country is on the wrong path! In a recent TV program, Professor Eddie Glaude opined that since the eighties Americans have been quietly building on a system of selfishness, greed and hate. This is demonstrated daily by Trump as he appears to believe that we will not acknowledge our own complacencies. We have taken our Constitutional Democracy for granted leading to the Trump catastrophe; actually envisioned by our Founders. Theodore Roosevelt once said, "Americans learn best from catastrophe, and will learn that the help they once took for granted after disasters might be harder to come by." This is exactly where we stand and have a hard road ahead! J. Michael Luttig, a former federal judge stated, "If America is to long endure, we must summon our courage, our fearlessness, our hope, our spirited sense of invulnerability to political enthrall, and, most important, our abiding faith in the divine providence of this nation. We have been given the high charge of our forebears to keep the republic they founded a quarter of a millennium ago. If we do not keep it now, we will surely lose it." How do we not lose it? By demanding through continual writing and flooding calls to our congressional representatives/senators; demanding change, ensuring fair elections and reclaiming their status as an equal branch of government. By joining peaceful demonstrations and boycotts. By joining groups communicating truth. By support/votes for new candidates who renounce authoritarianism, uphold our constitutional ideals with supporting institutions, rebuild our international relations and promote sensible legislation to benefit future generations. It's hard, but patriotism calls!

Terry B. Yarns  
Spirit Lake, Iowa



## ILUUF Welcomes Allan Saugstad - Social Justice Dialogue

The Iowa Lakes Unitarian Universalist Fellowship (ILUUF) invites the community to an engaging morning of reflection and action on Sunday, February 8, at 10:00 AM. Featuring guest speaker Allan Saugstad from All Souls Unitarian Universalist in Sioux Falls, the program will center on the vital theme of social justice. As a fellowship known for its progressive and forward-thinking values, ILUUF provides a dedicated platform for exploring how diverse belief systems can collaborate to create a more equitable world. The event will be held at the Lakes Area Activity Center, located at 2101 Zenith Avenue in Spirit Lake, Iowa, with a virtual attendance option available via Zoom links at [www.UUOkoboji.com](http://www.UUOkoboji.com).

As a "come as you are" community, the Iowa Lakes Unitarian Universalist Fellowship extends an open invitation to everyone, regardless of whether you identify as religious, secular, or are simply searching for a meaningful connection. Attendees can expect an open-hearted environment defined by inclusive fellowship and a diverse group of people from all walks of life. The morning promises a blend of soulful music designed to inspire and uplift, alongside engaging conversations that take deep dives into contemporary social issues.

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**LETTER TO THE EDITOR**

The publisher does not necessarily share the views/opinions stated in the "Letters to the Editor" published in The Lakes News Shopper.

### To The Editor:

#### Embarrassed-Ashamed-Disgusted-Abhorrent

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Terry B. Yarns  
Spirit Lake, Iowa



## Obituary

**Vernon Hammerstrom** was born on April 21, 1945, to Vernon and Nellie (Conly) Hammerstrom. He grew up in the Leeds area of Sioux City. He was a 1963 graduate of Leeds High School, which he said had the best classmates ever! He proudly served his country in the US Army in Vietnam.



Vern treasured time with his family, especially with his son, Jeff, his daughter-in-law, Kristen, and his two grandchildren, Natalie and Casey, while cruising Lake Okoboji on the pontoon or beating them all in cribbage.

Vern was preceded in death by his parents and his sister, Diane Hammerstrom.

Condolences may be sent to Meyer Brothers Funeral Home Colonial Chapel, 3230 Stone Park Blvd., Sioux City, IA 51104. Memorial gifts may be made to the Gospel Mission of Sioux City.

## Obituary

A Celebration of Life for Judy Eisenbacher was held Sunday, February 1, 2026, at the Lakes Area Senior Center in Spirit Lake, Iowa. A private family service will be held at a later date at St. John's Lutheran Cemetery in Ringsted, Iowa.

**Judith Joanne Eisenbacher**, age 85, passed away January 25, 2026, at Accura Healthcare in Spirit Lake. She was born on May 4, 1940, in Ringsted, Iowa, to Harvey and Geneva Pedersen.

Judy grew up in Ringsted and graduated from Ringsted High School in 1958. She went on to pursue her calling in nursing, earning her Bachelor's Degree in Nursing from Iowa Lutheran Hospital in May of 1961. Nursing was more than a profession for Judy; it was a lifelong commitment to caring for others. She worked as a nurse in Chicago, Armstrong, and Algona, before spending 29 years at Good Samaritan in Estherville, Iowa, where she eventually retired and moved initially to Spirit Lake and then Spencer, Iowa.

Judy was the oldest of eight children and spending time with family was her greatest joy in life. An avid traveler, she visited all 50 states, all the Great Lakes, and dreamed of ways to get rich so she could buy an island in the Bahamas. She loved her coffee and would often post funny notes about coffee and other bits of history or trivia on Facebook, much to the delight of friends. Judy also loved to challenge herself and try new things – walls were adorned by her watercolor paintings and artwork, she trained to become a Tornado Spotter, earned her green belt in Taekwondo, worked the polls during elections, gardened, was a wonderful baker, and always found ways to give back to her community and to those less fortunate.

She is survived by her two daughters, Julie (Doug) Stahly of Lake Park and Jill (John) Dannels of Spencer; five grandchildren, Lacey (Adam) Rees-Hoogterp of Lake Park, Lindsey Rees of Lake Park, Lexi (Austin Wassman) Stahly of Harris, Jared Dannels of Spencer, and Jordan Dannels of Spencer; four great-grandchildren, Justine Rees, Annistyn Hoogterp, Beckham Rees and Vienna Hoogterp. She is also survived by six siblings, Joan (Lenny) Peck of Lone Rock; Dr. Jerry (Shirley) Pedersen of Paris, Texas; Dr. Jack (Karen) Pedersen of Corpus Christi, Texas; Joel Pedersen of Spencer; Jay (Lori) Pedersen of Spirit Lake, and Dr. Jeff (Allison) Pedersen of Arlington, Texas; along with many nieces and nephews whom she dearly loved.

Judy was preceded in death by her parents, Harvey and Geneva Pedersen; brother, Jim (Nancy) Pedersen; infant sister, Karen; sister-in-law, Nancy Pedersen; son-in-law, John Dannels; and a niece and nephew.

Judy will be dearly missed by her family, friends, and all who were fortunate enough to know her.

Arrangements are under the care of Turner Jenness Funeral Home.

## Obituary

A visitation for Kirby Clark, age 79, of Spirit Lake, will be held Sunday, February 8, from 2:00-4:00 PM at Turner Jenness Funeral Home in Spirit Lake. There will be a Scripture Service at the funeral home at 4:00 PM.

**Kirby Joe Clark**, the son of Leslie and Venita (Fink) Clark, was born on April 13, 1946, in Sanborn, Iowa. He passed away peacefully on January 27, 2026, at his home in Spirit Lake, Iowa.

His family moved to Everly, Iowa, where Kirby grew up and attended school as a "Cattle-feeder". Kirby played football in his freshman year, but switched to basketball for the remainder of his high school years. He was also the girls' softball manager in his senior year, graduating in 1964. Next to his photo in the senior yearbook, Kirby's class motto was "Everybody should know how to work, although he doesn't need to let the knowledge warp his life."

Kirby proudly served his country in the United States Army, enlisting on September 30, 1965. He attained the rank of E5 and was honorably discharged on September 27, 1968.

On July 20, 1968, Kirby was united in marriage to Monica Milian in Armstrong Creek, Wisconsin. Throughout his working years, Kirby was employed as a handyman and CNC machinist, known for his skill, reliability, and strong work ethic.

Kirby enjoyed woodworking and spending time watching sports on television. He was an avid fan of the Iowa Hawkeyes, Los Angeles Dodgers, Los Angeles Lakers, and the Green Bay Packers. Kirby and Monica especially loved ballroom dancing and traveling together, as well as gathering with family and friends.

Aside from sports, Kirby's greatest love was his family; a loving and devoted wife, daughter, son and granddaughters. He felt truly blessed beyond words.

Everyone that met Kirby liked him. He had a way about him that drew people to him with his wit, good sense of humor and genuine good heart. One special person described Kirby perfectly: "A kinder man you could not find, one willing to give you all he had, willing to say he loved you and would always greet you with a smile."

Kirby is survived by his loving wife, Monica Clark; his children, Tricia (Brandon) Mansfield of Spirit Lake and Kyle (Sandra) Clark of Spirit Lake; his brother, Richard (Dreama) Clark of Cortez, Colorado; his grandchildren, Gwendolyn and Lillian; as well as many nieces, nephews, and other family members.

He was preceded in death by his parents, Leslie and Venita Clark; two sisters, Marley and Joan; and three brothers: Jack, Tom, and Gary.

Turner Jenness Funeral Home is in charge of the arrangements.

## Obituary

**Layton W. Vick**, 84, of Spirit Lake, Iowa, passed away on Saturday, January 17, 2026, at Lakes Regional Healthcare in Spirit Lake.

A memorial service will be held at a later date. Arrangements are being handled by Turner Jenness Funeral Home in Spirit Lake.

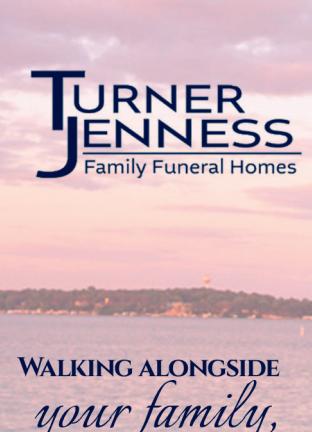
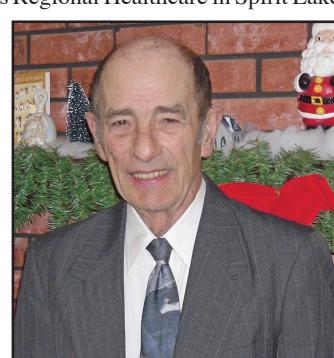
Layton was born on December 17, 1941, to Layton Clarence and Edna May Vick. He was one of five children: Beverly, Fredrick, Larry, and William. The family lived above the general store that later became known as Vick's Corner.

Layton later relocated to Des Moines, Iowa, where he worked in various trades. During this time, he met and married Janet E. Scholes. In the fall of 1964, Layton's father passed away. The following summer, Layton and Janet, along with their son, returned to Spirit Lake to live above the store and operate the family business.

Layton owned and operated Vick's Corner until his passing. Over the years, the store became a well-known local landmark, offering a wide variety of goods and attractions. Layton was one of the longest-operating U-Haul dealers in Iowa. The annual Antique Show and Flea Market grew into a major summer event held over Memorial Day, Independence Day, and Labor Day weekends.

Many will also remember renting movies and VCRs from Vick's Corner during the 1980s, the Ice Shack rentals of the late 1960s and 1970s, the CB radio era, and the CPR and First Aid classes Layton taught throughout the years.

Layton is survived by his four children, LaRonna L. Hoffer (Scott), Paul N. Vick (Shelly), Layton C. Vick II (Michelle), and Elizabeth A. Vick-Hermann (Rolf); brothers, Larry Vick, William Vick (Rachel); as well as numerous grandchildren, nieces, and nephews. Layton was preceded in death by his son, Robert; father, Layton C.; mother, Edna; brother, Fredrick; sister- and brother-in-law, Beverly and Warren Whitmer; sister-in-law, Susan.



## AA Meetings

The Jackson Java open AA meetings will resume on Tuesdays at 7:00pm, at Jackson Center for the Arts (309 2nd Street, Jackson, Minnesota).

For more information, contact Aili at 507-840-0639.

## Marriage Retreat at Okoboji Lutheran Bible Camp

Enjoy your own Valentine's Day Getaway! On February 13-15, Ingham Okoboji Lutheran Bible Camps is hosting a Marriage Retreat. Featured speakers Eric and Pam Hulstrand will offer biblical teaching during the sessions helping couples take further steps towards a healthy, happy marriage. Optional activities include a banquet meal, evening entertainment, free couples photo shoot and more. The Marriage Retreat is a great opportunity to carve out time together, without kids, without housework, without projects, and enjoy each other's company. Everyone is invited to register and learn more by visiting [www.okoboji.org/marriage-retreat](http://www.okoboji.org/marriage-retreat) or by calling 1-800-OKOBOJI.

## Myhre Named New Director At Dickinson County Museum

The Dickinson County Historical Society is pleased to announce that Jean Ann Myhre of rural Spirit Lake has been hired as the new Director of the Dickinson County Museum. She began her duties February 2nd.

"Jean Ann offers many attributes as director that we found appealing," said Jonathan Reed, president of the Dickinson County Historical Society. "She has strong organizational and administrative skills, and as a lifelong area resident, she knows Dickinson County, is a familiar face to many residents."

Jean Ann has numerous contacts as both a volunteer, and operator of her own successful event planning business, supporting events for the Okoboji Blue Water Festival, Pearson Lakes Art Center, Okoboji Yacht Club, and others.

A crucial aspect in her hiring is that Myhre was raised with a passion for local history—her mother, Charlene Smith Thomsen, was named "Queen of the Iowa Navy" in 1955. That passion has carried over to her daughter, Emma, who created the popular historical podcast series The Okoboji Project with Museum Board member Ryan Maris.

First founded in 1961, the Dickinson County Museum at 1708 Keokuk in Spirit Lake holds the distinction of being the first railroad depot in the state to be converted to a museum.

In October, the Historical Society opened an exciting interactive educational installation in the 1884 depot, telling the story of railroading and its importance to Dickinson County.

## THE LAKES NEWS Auctions

## Page 2B



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## Obituary

## Obituary

## Obituary

## Obituary

**Mary Sue Ackley** (affectionately known as Big Sue) passed away on January 2, 2026, just nine days after her triumphant 95th birthday. She celebrated her birthday, Christmas, New Year's Eve, and New Year's Day surrounded by family and all of her grandchildren—talk about going out surrounded by joy and love!



Along-time resident of Iowa, Bob and Sue moved to California to be close to their family in 1987. They lived for over 25 years in the Oak Valley neighborhood of Cupertino. They moved to The Hamilton in Palo Alto two years ago, and enjoyed meeting new friends and the wonderful staff who supported them with great kindness.

Originally from Decatur, Illinois, Sue moved to Cedar Rapids, Iowa, during her senior year of high school.

After graduating from the University of Iowa, she moved to Salinas, California, to support Bob while he served his tour of duty with the Army at Fort Ord. When Bob completed his service, they moved to Bob's hometown, Ottumwa, Iowa.

She met her husband, Bob, in college. As fate would have it, they were set up on a blind date during their sophomore year, and they tied the knot just a day after graduation in 1952. Sue was a stay-at-home mom, raising their two children while Bob worked tirelessly at the South Ottumwa Savings Bank. Once the kids were off to high school and college, Sue jumped into the real estate game, eagerly becoming an esteemed realtor and self-appointed "tour guide" for newcomers to town.

Bob introduced Sue to golf, which quickly became a shared passion. In fact, he gave her golf clubs as a wedding gift and took her to the U.S. Open on their honeymoon. Summer highlights included Thursday morning Women's Play, Friday Mixed Couples Night, and a myriad of nine- and eighteen-hole adventures together. Sue racked up a number of Ottumwa Country Club Women's Club Championships, and she and Bob were often the Couple's Club Champions. A standout moment was their visit to the Masters Golf Tournament in Augusta—a bucket list achievement that they checked off together.

Cheering for the Iowa Hawkeyes, both in football and basketball, became yet another shared passion for Sue and Bob. You should have heard their cheers for the current college teams, along with fan favorites like Caitlin Clark, George Kittle, and Iowa State alum Brock Purdy. "Go Fever" and "Go 49ers!" echoed frequently in their household!

One of Sue's greatest loves was spending time at Lake Okoboji in Northwestern Iowa, her second home, where she cultivated fantastic friendships and cherished the company of "old" friends. She loved playing bridge and attending parties at the Okoboji Yacht Club, and dining with her gang at the Outrigger on Thursday nights. The "Ottumwa/Okoboji" family nieces, Linda Bloom (deceased) (Michael), Nancy Menke (Steve), and Amy Maris (John), and many great nieces and nephews welcomed Bob and Sue back to the lakes each summer with open arms.

Sue was also actively involved in PEO, a nationwide charity dedicated to women's education and philanthropy, and was a vibrant member of the Trinity Episcopal Church in Ottumwa and St. Albans in Okoboji.

She leaves behind her beloved husband, Bob, and two children, Susan Sherwood of San Jose, CA; and Stephen Ackley, along with his wife, Mary, of Palo Alto, California. Sue was adored by her five grandchildren: Susan's two kids, Scott Sherwood (Los Angeles) and Sarah Sherwood, and fiancée, Jaya Batra (New York City), along with Stephen and Mary's trio: Kate Ackley and her husband Phil Adamson (Palo Alto), Lucie Ackley (Santa Cruz), and Charlie Ackley (Palo Alto). Sue was also predeceased by her brother, Jesse M. Birks; his wife, Mary, and their two children live in Southern California.

A celebration of life will take place this summer at Lake Okoboji. In lieu of flowers, you may wish to consider a gift to the Okoboji Community Foundation or to St. Alban's Episcopal Church.

## Obituary

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**Vernon Hammerstrom** was born on April 21, 1945, to Vernon and Nellie (Conly) Hammerstrom. He grew up in the Leeds area of Sioux City. He was a 1963 graduate of Leeds High School, which he said had the best classmates ever! He proudly served his country in the US Army in Vietnam.

Vern treasured time with his family, especially with his son, Jeff, his daughter-in-law, Kristen, and his two grandchildren, Natalie and Casey, while cruising Lake Okoboji on the pontoon or beating them all in cribbage.

Vern was preceded in death by his parents and his sister, Diane Hammerstrom.

Condolences may be sent to Meyer Brothers Funeral Home Colonial Chapel, 3230 Stone Park Blvd., Sioux City, IA 51104. Memorial gifts may be made to the Gospel Mission of Sioux City.

THE LAKES NEWS SHOPPER Tuesday, February 3, 2026 Page 13

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2. Comment on The LNS Facebook Page by Thurs., Feb. 12<sup>th</sup> at 5pm your top choice for a gift certificate from a participating business for a chance to win!
3. Tag a friend!

A random drawing will be held on Feb. 13<sup>th</sup> to determine winners of next week's gift certificates.

**Ad deadlines for Week 2 of Love Local Promotion is**  
**Friday, February 6<sup>th</sup>**

**Contact THE LAKES NEWS SHOPPER at 712.338.2232 or**

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**DICKINSON COUNTY TAXPAYERS ASSOCIATION**

# An Open Letter to Iowa's State Representatives and Senators,

I am writing as President of the Dickinson County Taxpayers Association regarding ongoing discussions about property tax reform in Iowa. The Dickinson County Taxpayers Association has served local taxpayers since 1982. Our mission is to advocate for transparent government, fiscal responsibility, and the wise use of taxpayer dollars.

Across Iowa, property taxpayers are increasingly frustrated by rising tax bills driven by continued growth in city, county, and school district spending, coupled with limited transparency and accountability. From our perspective, the core problem in the property tax system is not assessments, levy rates, or complex formulas—it is spending.

If the Iowa Legislature wishes to enact meaningful and lasting property tax reform, it must directly address the growth of local government operating expenses. While our preference is always for the State to remain out of local affairs, many local boards and committees have failed to demonstrate sufficient fiscal restraint. As a result, we reluctantly accept that the State must step in to impose reasonable and enforceable limits.

**If the Legislature proceeds, we strongly recommend the following reforms:**

- 1. Spending Limits**  
Limit the annual growth of property tax revenue to 2 percent for all local taxing entities. Allow local governments to exceed the cap only with voter approval, ensuring transparency and accountability.
- 2. Property Tax Structure Simplification**  
Simplify the system so taxpayers can clearly understand how their taxes are calculated. Any changes to the rollback system must ensure that homeowners are protected from sudden and dramatic tax increases, and that levy rates accurately reflect any changes in taxable value.
- 3. Reserve Balance Limits**  
Limit aggregate reserve balances to no more than 30% of prior-year operating expenses, excluding capital and bonded projects.
- 4. Use of Excess Reserves**  
Require excess reserves to be either: a) Returned directly to taxpayers, or b) Used to reduce levy rates.
- 5. Voter Approval for Major Projects**  
Require voter approval for any capital improvement project—or allied projects—exceeding 20% of annual operating expenses. This would ensure taxpayer consent for large-scale expenditures.
- 6. Taxpayer Voice**  
Expand voter approval requirements for major decisions, including bonds, shared-service arrangements, and emergency tax increases.
- 7. Shared Services & Efficiency**  
Allow counties under 50,000 residents to voluntarily share services between counties, cities, and school districts to reduce duplication and costs.
- 8. Independent Efficiency Audits**  
Require third-party efficiency audits to improve transparency, eliminate waste, and ensure taxpayer dollars are being spent effectively.
- 9. Property Tax Fairness Review**  
Conduct a comprehensive review of all property tax exemptions and credits—residential, commercial, industrial, and agricultural—to ensure fairness and prevent tax shifting.

We also urge the Legislature to pay close attention to definitions, as the success of any reform depends on clear and consistent language. In particular, definitions must address:

- Population growth measurements
- CPI index selection
- Exemptions and deductions (seniors, first responders, military, etc.)
- Reserves
- Capital projects and improvements
- Bonded projects
- Operating expenses
- Treatment of grants, subsidies, and outside funding

Without firm definitions, spending limits can be bypassed, and the burden will continue to fall on property taxpayers.

Thank you for your service and for your attention to this critical issue. Iowa taxpayers deserve reform that restrains spending, increases transparency, and restores accountability to local government budgets.

**Respectfully,**  
**Mark Sullivan**  
**President, Dickinson County Taxpayers Association**  
**[info@dctaxpayers.org](mailto:info@dctaxpayers.org)**  
**[dctaxpayers.org](http://dctaxpayers.org)**

## Lake Park Mobile Food Pantry

The Food Bank of Iowa Mobile Food Pantry will be open for distribution on Thursday, February 5, 2026, from 4:30-6:30 pm at the Lake Park Methodist Church located at 1471 135th Ave, Lake Park. Registration will be inside the church beginning at 3:30 pm, you must be present to register. You may pick up groceries for someone that is not able to make it. Please do not line up at the front door (southeast corner of the church) before 3:30 pm. Please bring boxes, bags or containers for your groceries. Distribution will begin at 4:30 pm. Volunteers will help bring your groceries to your vehicle. Questions? Call the Lake Park Methodist Church at 712-832-3361 or Jerilyn Marra 712-348-0475.



## Iowa Lakes Corridor Announces 2026 Business Recognition Award Winners

The Iowa Lakes Corridor Development Corporation (Corridor) once again recognized great achievements by local businesses Wednesday at the organization's 15th Annual Business Recognition Luncheon at the Clay County Regional Events Center in Spencer in front of a record-breaking audience.

Winners of this year's Business Recognition awards are:

- Young Professional of the Year – Andrew Geelan, Geelan Funeral Home, Spencer
- Entrepreneur of the Year – Laura Bjornstad & Samantha Ring, Boat House Apparel, Arnolds Park
- Small Business Excellence – VeSoCoffee, Storm Lake
- Large Business Excellence – Buena Vista Regional Medical Center, Storm Lake

Additional awards:

- Partner of the Year – First Children's Finance
- Housing Champion – Talon Development

Three individuals were honored for their years of service on the Corridor board:

- Brad Beck represented Beck Engineering, Inc., from July 2019 to December 2025, serving as Vice Chair in 2022, Chair in 2023-2024, and Past Chair in 2025.
- Keith Deitering represented Bank Midwest from July 2021 to May 2025.
- Jed Skogerboe represented Iowa Lakes Electric Cooperative from January 2023 to June 2025, serving as Vice Chair in 2024 and Treasurer in 2025.

Also recognized was Toby Shine. In honor of Shine's contributions to the region, including being one of the co-founders of the Iowa Lakes Corridor Development Corporation and the Okoboji Entrepreneurial Institute, the Corridor Lifetime Impact Award was given to Toby Shine's family in his memory. JD's Creations of Spencer created a unique metal sculpture for this one-time award.

"It was an honor to celebrate these amazing businesses and individuals from across the region," said Corridor President & CEO Curt Strouth. "From small business owners to regional developers, and large businesses to Toby's legacy, each and every awardee was very deserving of this recognition, and we are glad to be able to recognize them today."

Nominations for the annual Business Recognition awards in the categories of Young Professional, Entrepreneur, Small Business and Large Business are made by area business leaders and community members. These nominations are then reviewed by a volunteer committee drawn from across the region and are evaluated based on commitment, impact and growth in Corridor communities.

Recipients accepted their awards Wednesday in front of a large gathering of over 330 community representatives and leaders, the largest audience for this event. The Business Recognition Luncheon also featured keynote speaker Devin Henderson.



Laura Bjornstad

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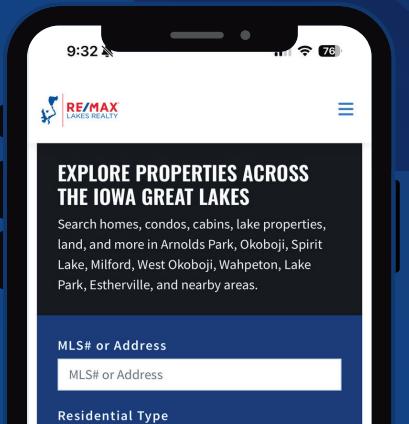
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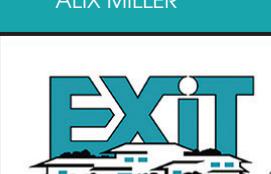


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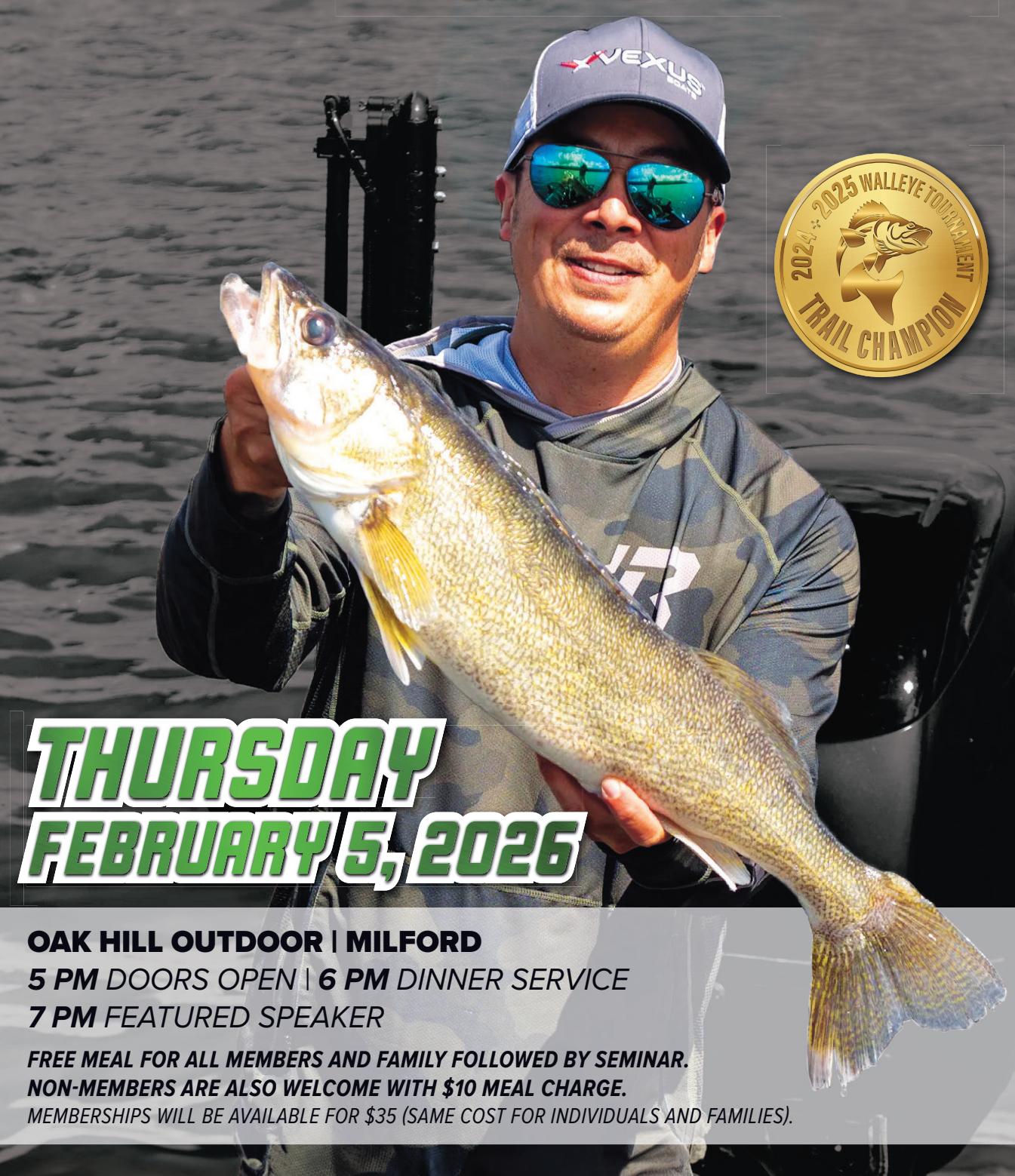
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Vehicles listed subject to prior sale.



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WEDNESDAY-TUESDAY

FEBRUARY 4-10, 2026

All specials are while supplies last.

No rain checks on ad specials.



## SUNNY DEAL!

Hearts of Romaine

3 Pack

\$2.88



## SUNNY DEAL!

Red Ripe Roma Tomatoes

Per lb.

98¢



## SUNNY DEAL!

Fresh Cilantro Bunches

Each

68¢



## SUNNY DEAL!

Mexican Hass Avocados

Each

68¢

Thursday, Friday, Saturday & Sunday  
FEBRUARY 5, 6, 7 & 8, 2026!

4-Days ONLY!

ALL SPECIALS ARE WHILE SUPPLIES LAST. NO RAIN CHECKS!



## SUNNY DEAL!

Sunkist Minneola Tangelos

3 lb. Bag

\$4.98



## SUNNY DEAL!

Sunkist Cara Cara Pink Oranges

3 lb. Bag

\$3.98



## SUNNY DEAL!

Washington Extra Fancy Grade Honeycrisp Apples

Per lb.

\$1.98



## SUNNY DEAL!

Fresh Shishito Peppers

8 oz.

\$3.98



Nabisco Oreos

Family Size 8-18.71 oz.

\$4.88



## SUNNY DEAL!

California Navel Oranges

4 lb.

\$3.98



## SUNNY DEAL!

Jumbo Size Green Seedless Grapes

Per lb.

\$2.88

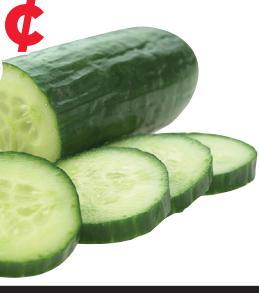


## SUNNY DEAL!

Jumbo Size Cucumbers

Each

68¢



## SUNNY DEAL!

Best Choice Cocktail Shrimp Rings with Sauce

BIG 32 oz. Party Size

\$17.99



Rotel Tomatoes

10 oz.

99¢



## SUNNY DEAL!

Smokin' Boji BBQ GAME DAY DEALS!

St. Louis Ribs Full Rack

\$14.99

Half Rack

\$7.99



## SUNNY DEAL!

Smoked Wings

10/\$10

Each

Rib Ends

\$6.99

Each

Rib Dinner with 2 Sides

\$6.99

Each

All 12" Frozen Take N' Bake Pizzas

2/\$20

Each

14" Stuffed Crust Pizza

\$14.99

Each



## SUNNY DEAL!

Whole Beef Ribeyes

USDA Choice, Boneless, Per lb.

\$13.88



## SUNNY DEAL!

Ribeyes Steaks

USDA Choice, Per lb.

\$15.88



Buffalo Wild Wings Sauce

12 oz.

\$2.99



## SUNNY DEAL!

Pork Butts Bone-In, USDA Inspected, Per lb.

\$1.99

USDA INSPECTED



## SUNNY DEAL!

Baby Back Pork Ribs

Bone-In, USDA Inspected, Per lb.

\$3.99

USDA INSPECTED



## SUNNY DEAL!

Sunshine's Own Butcher Fresh 80% Lean Ground

Beef Family Pack, Per lb.

\$4.99



## SUNNY DEAL!

Best Choice Chicken Wings

2.5 lb. Bag

\$6.99



Frank's Hot Sauce

12 oz.

\$3.49



## DIGITAL DEAL!

Velveeta Loaf 20 32 oz.

\$6.99

AD PRICE



## DIGITAL DEAL!

Yoplait Yogurt 4-6 oz.

2/\$1

Each

Must use digital app to get digital coupons.

Limit 1 coupon use per customer.



## DIGITAL DEAL!

Simply Orange Juice 46-52 oz.

\$4.49

AD PRICE

-1.00

\$3.49

Must use digital app to get digital coupons.



## DIGITAL DEAL!

Heinz Ketchup 29.5-38 oz.

\$3.99

AD PRICE

-1.00

\$2.99

Must use digital app to get digital coupons.



Best Choice Cheese Party Tray

16 oz.

\$5.99

AD PRICE

-1.50

\$4.49

Must use digital app to get digital coupons.



## DIGITAL DEAL!

Best Choice Crescent Rolls 8 oz. Var.

2/\$4

AD PRICE

-1.00

# THE LAKES NEWS SHOPPER AUCTIONS

Midwest Land Management

## Land For Sale

112.2 Acres m/l

Clay County, IA  
Sec. 30, Summit Twp.Open  
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2026!
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MANAGEMENT

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[www.midwestlandmanagement.com](http://www.midwestlandmanagement.com)

## Land Auction

February 19 • 10:00 A.M.

Royal Community Center, Royal, Iowa

80 Acres m/l

Lone Tree Twp., Sec. 28  
Clay County, IA

Avg. CSR2: 94.9!

**MIDWEST LAND**  
MANAGEMENT

For information call Ben Holleson • 712-253-5779

[www.midwestlandmanagement.com](http://www.midwestlandmanagement.com)

## LARGE COIN AUCTION •

BARC Library, 1012 5th Ave Windom, MN

Saturday, February 7, 2026

• 9:00 AM •

See [www.auctionsgo.com](http://www.auctionsgo.com) for list  
Gravley Auction Service (17-20)  
• 507-822-0403 •

## Okoboji After Prom Fundraiser

Okoboji After Prom is selling the World's Best Dishcloths as a fundraiser to support a safe and fun After Prom event for Okoboji High School students. Bundles of six dishcloths are available for \$20.

Dishcloths can be purchased online (<https://square.link/u/k5mZqDwC>) picked up at home basketball games, or by emailing [afterpromokoboji@gmail.com](mailto:afterpromokoboji@gmail.com) for more information.

Thank you for supporting Okoboji After Prom and our local students.

## Mobile Food Pantry Returns

The mobile food pantry from the Food Bank of Iowa is returning again. The free distribution will take place from 4-6 p.m. Thursday, February 5, at the Good News Estherville Church. The food will be distributed inside the church. Recipients are asked to bring bags, laundry baskets or boxes to carry the food. At the January Food Bank, 527 individuals (191 families) received 7,169 pounds of food. The Food Bank of Iowa partners with 700 agencies in 55 counties to distribute 2.5 million pounds of food each month, so that no one goes hungry in Iowa. If you have questions, call the Good News Estherville Church at 712-362-4984.



## Rotary Car Is On The Ice!

Despite the weather conditions, the car for the annual Iowa Great Lakes car drop made it on the ice today just in time for Winter Games.

The Rotary Car Drop is an annual fundraiser for the Iowa Great Lakes Rotary Club. Tickets are sold for each minute of the day with one ticket including both the a.m. and p.m. time. The winner is determined when the car, which is placed on the ice of Smith's Bay on West Lake Okoboji, falls through the ice. Once the car is retrieved, the official winning time is confirmed by a clock inside the car and the winner receives a \$1000 cash prize.

Boji Towing, along with Rotarian Erin Reed, were on hand to get the car situated on the ice in Smith's Bay around 12:30 pm on Wednesday, January 21. Boji Towing annually donates the car and their time to assist Iowa Great Lakes Rotary with this endeavor to support community projects. Funds raised by Iowa Great Lakes Rotary are used for community projects, recently including the playground upgrades at Shelby Duis Park, mental health speakers for the schools, and the building of an outdoor Pavilion at Camp Foster YMCA. A donation is also made to Arnolds Park Fire and Rescue which uses the retrieval of the car each year as a training exercise after it falls through.

For more information or to purchase a time ticket, visit [www.iowagreatlakesrotary.org](http://iowagreatlakesrotary.org) or contact a local Iowa Great Lakes Rotary member.

Midwest Land Management

## Land For Sale

132 Acres m/l

Emmet County, IA  
Sec. 9 & 16, Estherville Twp.

Cropland with development potential

Avg. CSR2: 75.3

**MIDWEST LAND**  
MANAGEMENT

Ben Holleson • 712-253-5779

[www.midwestlandmanagement.com](http://www.midwestlandmanagement.com)

Midwest Land Management

## Land For Sale

140.91 Acres

Clay County, IA

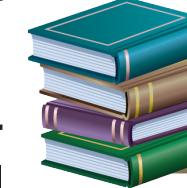
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Word Search Puzzle Key from page 9A

B	A	S	M	I	D	S	F	M	S	K	I	H	E	K	K	T	Y	U	R
L	O	R	M	F	S	N	L	N	L	P	I	E	K	V	V	D	F	G	
H	D	K	Q	M	R	K	Q	O	V	L	C	U	V	R	I	D	U	C	
I	P	S	S	T	C	L	O	I	N	U	G	R	U	I	E	T	C	N	
Y	A	E	U	Y	Y	Q	B	O	E	T	B	M	N	Y	N	S	I	L	
B	H	D	M	E	S	C	E	R	B	K	C	S	D	T	L	P	C	M	
R	P	U	Q	Y	T	E	U	I	O	E	U	M	T	T	Y	C	M	R	
O	G	I	A	Y	N	F	E	P	E	T	I	O	L	B	D	I	K	A	
C	T	D	V	R	E	F	D	M	L	O	K	D	V	L	R	G	L	A	
I	S	U	C	R	G	B	S	E	C	H	G	U	A	C	R	R	H	D	
S	L	A	C	I	D	O	I	R	E	P	A	U	A	I	O	F	A	E	
G	S	G	I	I	Y	P	T	H	S	R	I	L	A	B	O	C	C	R	
A	H	E	V	O	L	C	U	L	R	B	A	F	L	N	T	E	A	M	
S	E	Y	S	O	S	T	U	I	B	T	F	L	N	T	E	A	S	C	
S	I	L	P	T	A	R	K	V	L	I	G	R	V	O	D	K	A	O	
T	E	F	P	D	E	B	A	Q	O	H	F	B	E	R	I	C	Q	M	
I	Q	T	U	L	A	N	A	U	T	S	C	N	A	B	A	U	F	E	
F	F	U	P	C	G	U	T	N	L	Y	I	G	T	T	L	O	O	Q	
Y	R	A	R	B	I	H	A	B	M	O	S	K	O	E	T	U	A	B	
N	A	I	R	R	B	I	L	D	I	B	S	G	T	U	A	A	T	E	



## Spirit Lake Library News

### Love At The Library

by Jill Jennings

It should surprise no one that the month in which Valentine's Day falls is also known as Library Lover's month! There are so many reasons to love the library and there are so many activities going on at the library in February.

Our Story Time theme on Thursday the 12th is Valentines, of course! Come at 10:30 a.m. to see what sweet stories, fingerplays, and craft Miss Nancy has ready for your little ones.

Saturday the 14th is the big day: Valentine's Day! It is also known as Library Lover's Day and International Book Giving Day. (A book would be a GREAT Valentine's Day gift!) We will be hosting a fun craft time for the young and young at heart. Join Miss Breaanna in the Community Room from 10:00 - 11:30 a.m., where you can create your own love bugs and Valentine monsters! This is a come-and-go event.

On Tuesday, February 17th the Evening Edition Book Club will be discussing and sharing romance books and authors. This group meets at The Revelry and begins at 7:00 p.m.

All during the month of February, we will have our Wall of Love on display. Write on a heart why YOU love the library, and add it to our display.

Our scavenger hunt for the month of February will also be love-themed. Look for the Valentine animals hiding around the library, fill in the letters to answer the riddle, and pick a prize!

And last, but not least, we have many romance novels to read at your leisure.

As you can see, there is a lot of love at the library, not just in February, but always!

SLPL staff reading spotlight: Krista is reading The Shop on Hidden Lane by Jayne Ann Krentz.

### Upcoming Activities:

- Monday, February 9, 1:00-3:00 p.m., Mah-Jongg
- Monday, February 9, 5:00 p.m., Library Board Meeting
- Tuesday, February 10, 9:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m., Quilters
- Tuesday, February 10, 3:30-4:30 p.m., Children's Chess
- Tuesday, February 10, 4:30-5:30 p.m., Chess All-Play
- Wednesday, February 11, 12:30-4:00 p.m., Quilters
- Thursday, February 12, 10:30-11:15 a.m., Story Time (Theme: Valentines)
- Thursday, February 12, 1:00-3:00 p.m., Mah-Jongg
- Saturday, February 14, 10:00-11:30 a.m., Valentine Craft (come & go)



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### Annual Bull Sale

February 15th - 1:00p.m. CST  
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& Online at [www.dvauctions.com](http://www.dvauctions.com)

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## EMPLOYMENT

## EMPLOYMENT

WATER TREATMENT  
PLANT OPERATOR 3

The City of Spirit Lake is seeking to fill an open position for Water Treatment Plant Operator 3. Primary duties include operating and monitoring equipment in the water plant, water testing and readings, and involvement in all aspects of plant operations, supervision in coordination with the Water Superintendent of Water Treatment Plant Operations, involvement with water treatment plant projects and other duties as required. Must possess a State Water Plant Operator certificate and Water Distribution certificates up to and including Grade 2 at a minimum and Grade 3 Water to be obtained within one year if not already so certified. CDL preferred. Pay is dependent upon qualifications and experience. Complete job description and additional information is available at Spirit Lake City Hall, (712) 336-1871 as set forth below.

Address any communications to Gregg L. Owens, City Administrator, Spirit Lake City Hall, 1803 Hill Avenue, Spirit Lake, Iowa 51360, by noon on February 18, 2026. Application forms are available at City Hall. If emailed, email to [gregg.owens@cityofspiritlake.org](mailto:gregg.owens@cityofspiritlake.org)



The City of Spirit Lake, Iowa is an Equal Opportunity Employer. Females, minorities, veterans and members of other protected classes are encouraged to apply.

Posted 1/29/2026

The Dickinson County Sheriff's Office  
is currently looking for a  
FULL-TIME  
DISPATCHER

**POSITION:** Full-Time Dispatcher  
**DESCRIPTION:** Taking emergency & non-emergency calls, working with law enforcement agencies, fire & emergency services & other department & agencies.



**SCHEDULE:** Mid and overnight shifts.  
**PAY IS \$26.27/HR**

All applicants are subject to a complete background investigation. All applicants must obtain a valid drivers license. All applicants must complete a health physical, MMPI testing, first aid-CPR training & other required dispatch training & department training.

Applicants must be able to do the following:  
• Multi-Task • Active listening skills • Computer & typing skill  
• Handle stressful situations • Make quick decisions  
• Learn & understand Dickinson County geography,  
Plus much more that comes with the job & position  
• Flexible working days, mid-shift & night shift

Those interested please complete & submit a cover letter & resume.

You may email to [jfischer@dickinsoncountyiowa.gov](mailto:jfischer@dickinsoncountyiowa.gov), mail to Dickinson County Sheriff's Office PO Box 214, Spirit Lake Iowa, 51360 or drop it off to the Sheriff's Office at the Dickinson County Court House. Questions please call 712-336-2525

Dickinson County Sheriff's Office is EOE. Taking resumes until the position is filled.

FARMERS SAVINGS BANK  
Growing Strong Relationships

## Real Estate / Consumer Loan Officer

Farmers Savings Bank has the need for a loan officer in our new Spirit Lake location. Lending duties will include residential real estate and consumer lending. Increasing levels of responsibility and decision-making are available with this position.

## Areas of lending priority:

- Real Estate
- Consumer
- Ag / Commercial as experience allows

## Qualifications/Skills

- 5-years bank experience preferred
- Secondary Market experience preferred
- Microsoft Office computer skills required

## Benefits

- Full family medical insurance 90% of premium paid or 100% of single
- Cafeteria/Flexible Spending Plan
- Matching 401(k) program
- Life and Disability Insurance



Present resume to Brad Simington by email or in person:  
712-338-4800 or 712-262-2708  
[bsimington@fsbfostoria.com](mailto:bsimington@fsbfostoria.com)

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## EMPLOYMENT

## EMPLOYMENT

## Library Assistant

The Milford Memorial Library has an immediate opening for a Library Assistant, up to 12 hours per week. Successful applicants will be willing to learn of library trends through continuing education and involvement in library operations; process and maintain library collections and assist groups and individuals in locating and obtaining materials. Furnish information on library activities, facilities, rules and services. Explain and assist in use of reference sources including electronic resources. Provide circulation services. Assist with programming as needed.

**Minimum Qualifications:** Ability to work most Saturdays from 9:15 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., Wednesday evenings from 3:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m., and Friday evenings 12:45 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. Additional hours may be available. Ability to effectively communicate orally and in writing. Ability to provide quality customer service for library patrons of all ages. Experience with computer systems (word processing, database, spreadsheets, Internet). Ability to use a copy machine, computer and other office equipment and electronic devices.

**Physical and Environmental Characteristics:** This position requires regular physical activity including bending, reaching and prolonged periods of sitting or standing and regular lifting and carrying of objects weighing up to 50 lbs.

**Preferred Qualifications:** Experience in a library setting and familiarity with books and other informational sources.

**Benefits:** Paid time off based on hours worked and access to IPERS.

Starting hourly range is \$14.18 - \$15.58  
dependent on qualifications.

Please submit an application to Gillian Anderson,  
Library Director, Milford Memorial Library,  
1009 9th St., Milford, IA 51351.

Applications are available at

Milford Memorial Library or online at:  
<http://milfordlibrary.weebly.com/employment-opportunities.html>  
or on Indeed.

Applications accepted until the position is filled.

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View complete job description and application process at [www.iowlakes.edu/employment](http://www.iowlakes.edu/employment). Contact Lynn Miller at [lmiller@iowlakes.edu](mailto:lmiller@iowlakes.edu) or 712-362-0409.

**IOWA LAKES**  
COMMUNITY COLLEGE  
Human Resources, 19 South 7th Street, Estherville, IA 51334  
EEO/AA Employer

2-18c

## EMPLOYMENT

## EMPLOYMENT

## EMPLOYMENT

## EMPLOYMENT

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 5

3:30 - 6:00 PM

## JOB FAIR

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3-18c

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## Singing Valentines Offered by Iowa Lakes on February 13

Looking for a Valentine's Day surprise that truly stands out? Say "I love you" with a Singing Valentine from Iowa Lakes Community College.

On Friday, Feb. 13, 2026, the Iowa Lakes Men's Quartet will once again deliver Singing Valentines throughout the area, offering a fun and memorable way to share a heartfelt message with a sweetheart, family member, friend, coworker, employee or customer.

Singing Valentines can be delivered at home, at work, in a restaurant or at another location chosen by the purchaser. Wherever they appear, the quartet is sure to draw smiles, laughter and often a few happy tears.

Each \$30 Singing Valentine includes two songs performed by the quartet and a rose for the recipient, creating a personalized Valentine experience that won't soon be forgotten. Singing Valentines are popular with both men and women and make a unique gift for romantic partners, friends and workplace recognition.

To reserve a Singing Valentine for Feb. 13, contact Iowa Lakes Community College to be added to the delivery list. Quantities are limited, and early reservations are encouraged. Orders can be placed by calling 712-362-7963, email [bfulber@iowlakes.edu](mailto:bfulber@iowlakes.edu) or order online at <https://www.ticketleap.events/tickets/iowlakes/2026-singing-valentines>.



## Writers and Writing

by Michael Tidemann

### Murray's novel brims with youthful angst

Anyone who has followed recent events in Minneapolis will find startling parallels in the masterful bildungsroman, *The Empty Set*, by Tommy Murray of Shoreview, Minn. Murray, who grew up in Storm Lake, Iowa, has generations of roots in Bancroft, Iowa.

The *Empty Set* begins in Cottage Park, Iowa, the fictional town inspired by Bancroft. The first-person narrator, Michael Moriarity, is joined by his father 'Puff', his mother Mai Vang who is a Hmong refugee, and brother John.

Tragedy strikes when a tornado levels the Moriarity home, killing Mai Vang and nearly taking John's life. During John's recovery, doctors discover brain cancer with a grim diagnosis.

The family relocates to Minneapolis, mainly to be near John. However, they have little to do with Mai Vang's extended family in nearby St. Paul.

Michael finds himself attending Thomas Jefferson High School in the Minneapolis rough-and-tumble northside, a far cry from pastoral Cottage Park. There Michael meets Harden, a young African-American man who befriends him while challenging him to make the best of himself.

Michael also meets Pa Dao, a young Hmong shaman who is channeling Mai Vang's spirit. Mai Vang has essentially become "the empty set," or the unknown factor in the Moriarity family who loved her so deeply.

As Pa Dao tells Michael, "a persistent Hmong woman named Mai Vang has woken me every morning at five 'o clock for the last week. She directs me to sit with you each day and tell you her story. She says you're more likely to understand the lessons if I feed you."

Pa Dao brings Michael lunch every noon hour at the school. Not only does she feed him food, but she also nourishes him with information about Mai Vang and Michael's own Hmong heritage.

Trouble brews though between Harden and Pa Dao, trapping Michael in the middle.

"I was a born-again newborn, with Pa Dao as my mother and Harden as my father. Only they didn't trust each other. They each drew strict lines to keep me from the other, promising me the best in life and the afterlife if I didn't cross them. Yet here I was, taking my first unsteady steps, stumbling and fumbling over the line and falling on both sides."

The novel takes a stark turn that presents the greatest challenge in Michael's young life.

The *Empty Set* is a remarkable and heavily philosophical novel, a fantastic follow-up to Murray's previous novel, *Fathers, Sons, and the Holy Ghosts of Baseball*.

(Michael Tidemann writes from Estherville, Iowa. His author page is [Author Michael Tidemann](http://Author Michael Tidemann).)

## Milford Memorial Library News

Join MML for our weekly Building Bookworms Storytime on Mondays at 10:30 a.m. Take a look below for our themes. All materials and services are provided by the library free to participants. All kids and their adults are welcome to stay after storytime and mingle. For more information contact the library or check out our Facebook page.

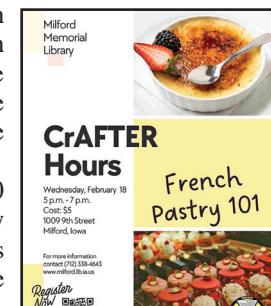
- February 9, 10:30 a.m. - Tremendous Teeth
- February 16, 10:30 a.m. - No Building Bookworms- MML closed in observance of Presidents Day
- February 23, 10:30 a.m. - Underwear

Let the Blind Dates begin! There will be no awkward or forced conversions. There will be no title just a few describing words and the genre on the wrapping. It could be your new favorite or a dud. You won't know until you check it out. A bookmark is placed in each book. Return the completed bookmark to MML to be placed into a drawing. Drawing prizes are sponsored by the Friends of the Milford Library. Blind Date books are available for all age groups until Saturday, February 28.

Come and have fun at MML on Monday, February 9. From 9:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., Young Adults (4th-12th graders) will be sewing a felt earbud case during Y.A. Maker Monday. This is a free come - and - go activity. At 10:30 a.m., MML's Building Bookworms Storytime will be all about Tremendous Teeth. Following at 11:30 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. is All-Day Play. Discover new and exciting toys while having fun with friends. This is a come - and - go playtime. All toys and supplies are provided by the library. For any questions, please contact the library by calling (712) 338-4643 or by emailing [milfordlibrary51351@milfordiowa.org](mailto:milfordlibrary51351@milfordiowa.org).

MML's After-school Adventures will be held at 3:30 p.m. on Thursday, February 12. We will be playing Valentine's Day Bingo. A small snack will be provided during this free event. Join us for MML's CrAFTER Hours on Wednesday, February 18, from 5 p.m. - 7 p.m. This month we will be having a class for French Pastry 101. You will learn how to make a few different items at this class. Make sure to preregister and the cost for the class is \$5.

On Tuesday, February 17, at 1:00 p.m., the Milford Memorial Library Book Club will be meeting to discuss Once There Were Wolves by Charlotte McConaghy. Any interested individuals are welcome to join and pick up a copy at MML.



5-18c



**The River**  
AN EXECUTIVE COACHING BLOG

TONY THELLEN

Over the years, people have often asked me for career advice. They're usually hoping for something big: a breakthrough idea, a bold move, or a dramatic pivot that changes everything overnight. This really isn't what happens in real life.

What I've learned instead is this: most careers aren't shaped by grand gestures. They're shaped by small, repeatable habits, or career "hacks," if you will, that anyone can practice, regardless of industry, or season of life.

Here are ten that have served me well, along with a few I've learned the hard way.

### 1. Never bring a problem without offering a solution

Early in my career, I learned that identifying problems is easy. Rarely can you differentiate yourself by pointing out errors. The real leaders are the ones who solve them. When you bring a solution, even an imperfect one, you signal ownership, judgment, and maturity.

*Try this:* The next time you spot an issue, ask yourself, "What would I do if this were my responsibility?" Then lead with that.

### 2. Give more value than what you are paid for

This isn't about working yourself into the ground. It's about mindset. People who consistently add value beyond their job description tend to grow beyond it as well. They are highly thought of by co-workers, they tend to get favorable performance reviews, and ultimately they are the ones who get promoted. They are also happier in life, by the way.

*Try this:* Look for one small way each week to help your team succeed that isn't technically "your job."

### 3. Initiate positive change whenever you can

Some people wait for permission. Others quietly improve things as they go. The second group almost always are the ones who make a difference in the world.

*Try this:* Fix the broken process. Simplify the meeting. Improve the document. Small changes compound. There are unlimited opportunities to demonstrate this in the workplace.

### 4. Be known for reliability, not just talent

Talent gets attention. Reliability earns trust.

The most valuable people are the ones others don't worry about. *Try this:* Treat every commitment—large or small—as a promise.

### 5. Learn how your boss is measured

If you want to advance, understand what success looks like for the person you work for. When they win, you win. Want to go even further? Learn your company's strategy inside and out, tap into what the company is trying to create, and then help accelerate progress toward the strategic objectives. It may be difficult to do, but it will be rewarding.

*Try this:* Ask your boss, "What matters most to you this year?" Then align your efforts accordingly.

### 6. Stay calm when things get tense

Pressure reveals leadership. The person who remains steady in difficult moments stands out quickly. Emotionally mature people don't run from conflict, they help resolve it. Be the person who can resolve sparkly issues in your workplace.

*Try this:* Slow down your response. Focus on facts. Keep emotion from driving decisions.

### 7. Write things down

Clear writing reflects clear thinking. People who summarize, clarify, and document often become quiet leaders. They manage expectations better when they communicate better.

*Try this:* After meetings, send a brief recap: decisions made, next steps, and owners.

### 8. Ask better questions than everyone else

You don't need to have all the answers. You need to ask thoughtful questions that move the conversation forward. One of the hardest challenges of most workplaces is identifying the issues that are not being addressed, things that are being avoided, and shining a light on things that matter.

*Try this:* Replace statements with curiosity: "What problem are we really solving?"

### 9. Build relationships before you need them

Careers are built on trust. Trust is built long before it's required. I recommend starting from a point of giving respect and trust to your colleagues until they prove otherwise. Seek deep and meaningful, trusting relationships.

*Try this:* Have occasional coffee conversations with no agenda—just genuine interest.

### 10. Invest in skills that travel

Titles change. Companies change. Core skills endure: communication, judgment, problem-solving, leadership.

*Try this:* Spend 15 minutes a day learning something that strengthens who you are, not just what you do.

Most careers don't turn on a single defining moment. They turn on dozens of small choices made consistently over time. None of these ideas require a promotion, permission, or perfect timing. They only require intention.

And as with most things worth doing, the real magic isn't in knowing these career hacks. It's in practicing them.

*Tony Thelen* is an executive coach and founder of *The River Coaching & Consulting, LLC*, based in West Okoboji, Iowa. He writes *The River*, a weekly column focused on leadership, purpose, and living a well-designed life. *Tony* is also the author of *Things We Desire*, available on Amazon and through major book retailers. For signed or personalized copies, or to learn more about coaching and speaking engagements, contact him at [tony@therivercoach.org](mailto:tony@therivercoach.org).

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## Spencer Chamber to Host Eggs & Issues Legislative Forums

Spencer, IA – The Spencer Chamber of Commerce is pleased to announce the dates for the 2026 Eggs & Issues Legislative Forums. These forums offer residents of Northwest Iowa the opportunity to connect with local legislators in a question/answer format. Each forum will be moderated by Spencer Chamber Executive Director Sherianna Jones.

The Eggs & Issues forums will be held on the following dates:

- Saturday, February 21, 2026 - Sponsored by Clay County Farm Bureau

• Saturday, March 28, 2026 - Sponsored by Northwest Bank

All sessions will take place from 9:00 to 10:30 AM in the Spencer City Hall Council Chambers located at 101 W. 5th St., Spencer, IA. Breakfast will be served at 8:30 AM. First come first served, until run out.

Invited legislators include Senator Dave Rowley, Senator Lynn Evans, Representative Megan Jones, and Representative John Wills.





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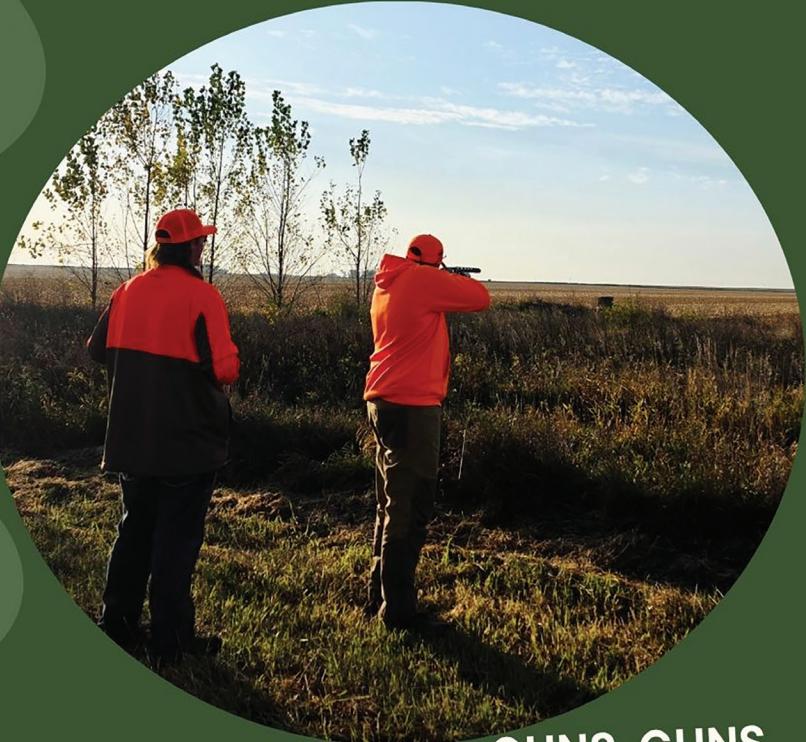
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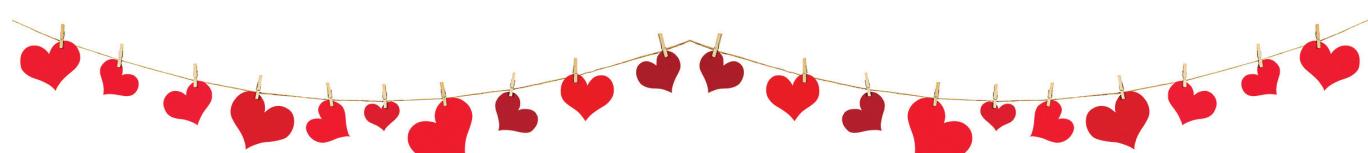


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