



The Wright County MONITOR



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Wright County at Work

"Wright County at Work" is a bimonthly series highlighting the businesses and people who keep our communities running.

From Clarion to towns across the county, the goal is to showcase the services and stories that make Wright County strong.

Local Student to Serve as State Page

Amanda Rink,

Editor

For a small-town senior with a growing interest in public service, a special opportunity has opened up at the Iowa State Capitol.

Caden Hauenstein of Clarion, 17, a senior at Eagle Grove High School, has been selected to serve as a page for the Iowa State Senate during the Spring legislative session.

The Iowa Legislative Page Program employs high school juniors and seniors of high academic standing to serve during the session, which typically runs from mid-January through mid-April. Pages work Monday through Thursday, generally from early morning into the afternoon, with occasional late evenings depending on legislative activity. Pages are paid employees and are expected to maintain a professional demeanor, exercise discretion, and follow strict ethical and conduct standards while

working in the Capitol.

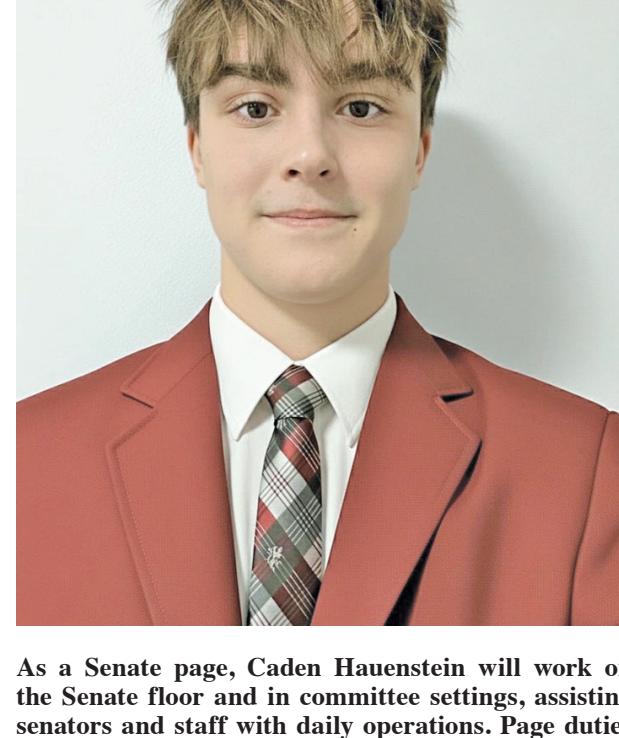
The competitive program brings high-achieving Iowa high school students to Des Moines each year to work full-time inside the Legislature. They're offered a firsthand look at how state government operates.

Encouraged by his parents, Kyle and Norah Hauenstein, he applied after they pointed out how naturally his interests aligned with the program.

"They always told me I would enjoy politics and debate," he said. "At the time, I was literally praying for a door to open, and God put this opportunity in front of me. When it came up, it felt like the perfect fit."

Hauenstein said the news that he was selected came as a complete surprise. "I was shocked," he said. "I fully did not expect to be selected. It felt like a long shot, which really adds to the excitement now that I am here."

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As a Senate page, Caden Hauenstein will work on the Senate floor and in committee settings, assisting senators and staff with daily operations. Page duties include delivering messages between lawmakers, helping administer meetings, running technology for live-streamed hearings, and responding to requests from senators throughout the day. (Photo provided)

County Fair Shows Its Impact Goes Beyond Fair Week

Amanda Rink,

Editor

On the morning of Friday, January 2, Wright County Fair Manager Tricia Rosendahl and Fair Board member Lillian McCart sat before the Wright County Board of Supervisors with more than an annual funding request from the Fair.

What they summarized was a picture of a fair that functions year-round as a hub for youth development, community connection, and always county pride.

As the county begins work and consideration for the upcoming fiscal year, Rosendahl shared a full year-in-review of the Wright County Fair. She

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"The Blue Ribbon Fair Award is presented to fairs that demonstrate excellence in programming, community involvement, youth opportunities, agricultural education, and overall fair operations. The Wright County Fair was recognized for its strong commitment to celebrating agriculture, supporting youth exhibitors, and providing high-quality entertainment and educational experiences for fair-goers," read the press release from the Wright County Fair. Members of the Fair Board, along with helpful spouses, were presented with the award on December 12, 2025. This photograph was included in the press release.

Iowa Specialty Hospital Sees Record 711 Births as New Funding Aims to Expand Maternal Care

Amanda Rink,

Editor

Iowa Specialty Hospital's Clarion location recorded a record-breaking 711 births in 2025. The numbers show the growing demand for rural maternity care and the need for expanded services across Iowa.

The total includes 368 boys, 343 girls, and 10 sets of twins, according to a hospital press release. Families traveled from communities across Iowa, including the Des Moines, Fort Dodge and Mason City area, to deliver their babies in Clarion. Location stats are backed up by birth records published in

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The Wright County high birth numbers reflect the level of care provided and the increasing pressure on the remaining rural maternity units. Photographed above are members of the Clarion Obstetrics team. (Photo: Iowa Specialty Hospital)

Bosch Leads First Meeting as Supervisors Review County Business

Amanda Rink,
Editor

The Wright County Board of Supervisors met for its regular meeting with newly appointed Chairperson Ashley Bosch presiding for the first time. Bosch was selected as chair at the previous meeting with Rick Rasmussen serving as pro tem chair. She opened the meeting at 9:00 A.M.

During the open forum portion of the meeting, County Engineer Adam Clemons provided an update on winter road conditions and the county's response to recent snowstorms. Clemons explained that snow removal follows a structured process that begins with opening main routes before moving on to widening and cleanup.

On the first day of a storm, like what hit Wright County in late December, crews focus on opening routes and then try to make roads passable in both directions. Clemons said about half of the county routes were opened quickly during the most recent storm, helped by wind conditions that limited drifting. Although the department was short one employee, trucks and pickup vehicles were still sent out to check routes and ensure access.

Clemons said the second day is typically spent widening roads and pushing snow from shoulder to shoulder, while the third day is used to address intersections, bridges, and known trouble spots. If another round of snow falls overnight, the process begins again at day one. During the latest storm response, 12 trucks logged more than 1,200 hours on the roads.

Clemons also told the board that seismic testing will start again on January 19, though specific road locations have not yet been identified. He asked residents to watch for seismic plugs that may still be planted on the shoulder of roads and to return them to the county. The devices are expensive and contain sensitive equipment.

Following the open forum, the board took action on several routine New Year items. Supervisors voted to keep the reimbursable mileage rate for 2026 at 70 cents per mile and left the drainage warrant interest rate unchanged at 6 percent. Petty cash funds were also approved for county offices, with no office holding more than 200 dollars. The county also designated its official newspapers, with Wright County Monitor being one of three to publish their meeting minutes and other filings in.

The meeting then turned to discussion of the county employee holiday schedule for 2026, with a focus on trading Presidents' Day off with Christmas Eve. County Recorder Denise Baker spoke about the long stretch without a holiday and said it can be difficult for employees to use vacation days instead of having the courthouse closed. She also mentioned the holiday closures at the end of the year put her office in a unique situation, as there are often people who wait last minute for their filings.

Supervisor Betty Ellis said discussing the schedule now gives employees time to plan, and Supervisor Rick Rasmussen supported the change. After questions from Lynn Loux, who suggested tabling the talk until feedback from department heads was gathered, Auditor Amanda Meyer agreed that the gap without a break, which would be caused by not having Presidents' Day off, is challenging for staff, but having Christmas Eve off would benefit her department.

Supervisor Dean Kluss said vacation time is intended

continued on page 4

Area Headlines

Belmond

Chandler Bachman was appointed as the Belmond Fire Chief.

Eagle Grove

The Eagle Grove Eagle, a sister publication, has officially closed their office front in Eagle Grove. Staff will be working from home just as the Wright County Monitor has for the last two and a half years.

Goldfield

Veterans Ride is hosting a pasta bar fundraiser on Sunday, January 11, at the St. Joseph Parish Hall.

Hampton

The Franklin County Historical Society received a \$5,000 donation from Long Term Medical Supply. The donation will be used for updates to the Admiral Leahy exhibit at the Franklin County Historical Museum.

Rowan

The library is looking for new members for book club! Stop in the library for more information.

Check out  Sports on page 9



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9

Local Student continued from page 1

As a Senate page, Hauenstein will work on the Senate floor and in committee settings, assisting senators and staff with daily operations. Page duties include delivering messages between lawmakers, helping administer meetings, running technology for live-streamed hearings, and responding to requests from senators throughout the day.

He expects no two days to be the same. "I think each day will bring something different," he said. "I'll be constantly running bills and interacting with many different people, from lobbyists to the press. Even though I'm in a support role, I still feel there will be curve-balls."

While taking on full-time responsibilities at the Capitol, Hauenstein will also continue competing in high school wrestling during the early part of the session, until the state tournament concludes in February. The page program allows students to participate in official school activities whenever possible, with coordination between families and schools.

His government interest began in debate, where he first discovered how ideas and arguments shape public opinion. "Debate is such a massive part of government," Hauenstein shared with The Wright County Monitor. "It's how you persuade people and get a point across. That's what really sparked my interest."

That interest deepened as he began studying public policy and the role government plays in everyday life.

"When I looked deeper into issues that often feel out of my control, I realized this was a way I could eventually make a real impact on people," he said. "This job gives me insight into how government actually functions and helps me make connections for a future career in politics."

During the session, Hauenstein will stay in Des Moines with his aunt and uncle, who live near the Capitol. "They've been incredibly supportive, and I'm very grateful for their help with this opportunity," he said.

Beyond the responsibilities, Hauenstein is most excited to observe the human side of government.

"We see the big debates on TV, almost like a reality show," he said. "I'm really interested in seeing how senators interact in person and how smaller bills move through the process. Those are things you don't usually hear about, but they matter."

Participation in the page program also carries academic benefits. Under Iowa law, students receive high school credit for their service, including social studies credit, while working with their schools to maintain coursework and graduation requirements.

Hauenstein will turn 18 this August, making the experience an important lead-up to his first opportunity to vote and possibly a future in public service.

Caden Hauenstein's selection as a page shows that meaningful work can begin close to home, even in a small town, and that is why he was chosen as the latest Wright County at Work highlight.

ISH Record Births continued from page 1

The Wright County Monitor, which show where parents originate from.

Hospital officials say the surge shows the importance of investing in rural healthcare infrastructure. This is a goal that could soon receive a boost through new federal funding.

According to reporting from the Gray Media Iowa Capitol Bureau, Iowa is set to receive \$209 million in federal healthcare funding through the One Big Beautiful Bill Act. This is part of a \$50 billion national initiative aimed at strengthening healthcare access. In Iowa, the funding could support the Healthy Hometowns program, introduced by Governor Kim Reynolds.

The program is designed to address gaps in care in rural communities, particularly for maternity services, cancer treatment, and access to medical specialists. State data shows Iowans living outside urban areas travel an average of 30 minutes to reach a hospital and 24 minutes to see a primary care provider.

Iowa Specialty Hospitals and Clinics plans to apply for the funding, with leaders hoping to expand maternal care services, including the center already operating in Clarion. CEO Steve Simonin told Gray Media that many expectant mothers are traveling long distances to give birth, a trend he said poses safety concerns and highlights the need for stronger local prenatal and maternal support systems.

Specialty Services Officer Ashley Recknor also told Gray Media the funding could help hospitals respond to rising patient demand among the growing shortage of healthcare providers. She noted to Gray Media that fewer providers are entering the workforce while patient needs continue to increase, making coordinated care models more critical for rural communities.

State lawmakers who approved the program say the federal funding should also be used to help hospitals offset potential financial losses tied to Medicaid cuts enacted during the Trump administration. Funds will be distributed annually over the next five years, though grant amounts could vary.

Locally, the Wright County birth numbers reflect the level of care provided and the increasing pressure on the remaining rural maternity units.

In an online statement that announced the birth numbers from the clinic, Iowa Specialty Hospital stated: "Thank you also to our providers and staff in our OB and Maternity departments, as well as our entire ISH staff across many departments, for giving such wonderful care to these families and their babies."

To keep up with local births from the hospital, please visit iowaspecialtyhospital.com/newborns, or follow their social media pages. The birth records, along with birth announcements from parents, are published in the newspaper, as they are considered public records.

8 Day Weather Outlook

Wed. January 7



Partly Cloudy

47°/30°

Thursday, January 8



PM Showers

43°/32°

Friday, January 9



Rain/Snow

36°/27°

Saturday, January 10

AM Snow Showers

30°/16°

Sunday, January 11



Partly Cloudy

23°/21°

Monday, January 12



Partly Cloudy

38°/28°

Tuesday, January 13

Partly Cloudy

30°/24°

Wednesday, January 14



Cloudy

29°/21°

Winter Wonderland Workshop Brings Creativity, Skills, and Friendship to Wright County Youth



The Wright County Extension Office was filled with creativity, laughter, and winter cheer on December 30th as 34 youth in grades K-6 gathered for the Winter Wonderland Workshop. The hands-on event welcomed Clover Kids and 4-H members for an afternoon of winter-themed projects designed to build skills, spark creativity, and strengthen friendships.

During the workshop, youth decorated and designed their own picture frames while learning the basics of photography. Participants captured photos from the event to display in their frames, turning a fun experience into a lasting keepsake. Many Clover Kids chose to take photos together, celebrating the friendships they've built through the Clover Kids program—friendships that often last well beyond the school years.

"Seeing Clover Kids take photos together and interact with other Clovers from different schools was truly wonderful," said Paige Roberts, K-12 Program Coordinator. "Workshops and day camps hosted by Wright County Extension

give youth the opportunity to reconnect with friends they've met through previous Clover Kid experiences. Clover Kids is a safe, welcoming place for young people to try new things, build confidence, and form friendships that last."

Participants also created custom pencil boxes using Mod Podge and stickers, transforming simple supplies into mosaic-style masterpieces. Through this project, youth practiced fine motor skills, creative design, and following step-by-step instructions while expressing their individual styles. Both projects introduced skills that extend beyond the workshop, including creativity, problem-solving, artistic design, and confidence in trying new techniques. Youth were also excited to learn that both the picture frame and pencil box projects are eligible to be exhibited at the Wright County Fair in July, giving them an opportunity to showcase their work to the community.

The Winter Wonderland Workshop highlighted the core values of the Clover Kids program—learning by doing, building friendships,

and creating positive youth development experiences in a fun and welcoming environment. Events like this continue to help young participants grow skills, confidence, and connections that will benefit them for years to come.

Clover Kids fosters positive relationships and builds valuable life skills through a variety of

County Fair continued from page 1

highlighted how the event and the fairgrounds themselves serve the county well beyond the week the fair is held, that the fair isn't only about entertainment but about education, agriculture, youth development, and bringing the county together.

That message was shown early in the round-up with photos from the most recent fair, including one new initiative that captured attention: youth photographers. In partnership with Wright County Extension, local youth were trained to serve as official fair photographers, capturing the fair through their own lenses.

According to Resendahl, the program not only built skills but also gave the kids a sense of ownership and involvement in the fair.

Youth involvement remained a central theme. In 2025, the fair hosted 160 4-H and FFA livestock exhibitors and 71 non-livestock exhibitors, totaling more than 1,000 entries. Growth continued at the youngest levels as well, with Clover Kids, kindergarten through third grade, bringing more than 200 projects and activities to the

fair. The program helps to spark interest in agriculture and the arts long before students reach the traditional 4-H age.

Despite facing a significant challenge, including flooding for the second year, Rosendahl said the fair board and volunteers quickly came together to keep the fair going. Livestock was moved, vendors relocated, and entertainment shifted when the grandstand became unusable.

"We're proud to say the fair still happened," she said. "But we'd be lying if we said we wouldn't appreciate a normal year." The way the fair board overcame the flooding garnered statewide attention for the second year in a row. It is almost unheard of to have state media involved at a county-level fair.

Behind the scenes, the fair's economic and community impact stayed strong. The fair's sponsorship program, which the Wright County Monitor participates in, is now in its 22nd year. The program raised over \$100,000 in 2025, bringing the lifetime total over a million dollars.

An additional \$14,000

from local businesses and even private donations was distributed directly back to livestock exhibitors.

Beyond fair week, the Wright County Fairgrounds continue to host events and partnerships year-round, including the yearly county-wide third-grade Safety Day Camp, National Night Out, youth livestock practices, poultry testing, community giveaways, and daily use by Eagle Grove schools. These activities, Rosendahl said, reinforce the fairgrounds as a gathering place for the entire county...and that ongoing commitment recently earned statewide recognition.

In December, the Wright County Fair was named the North Central District Blue Ribbon Fair Award winner at the Association of Iowa Fairs Convention in Des Moines. The award recognizes fairs that excel in programming, safety, organization, youth opportunities, agricultural education, and positive community impact.

Thomas Barnes, Executive Director of the Association of Iowa Fairs, praised the Wright County Fair for fulfilling the mission of

the award, noting its strong service to the community and dedication to the fair industry in Iowa. Rosendahl shared in a press release that the award is a testament to the dedication of our fair board members, volunteers, sponsors, exhibitors, and community supporters.

Looking ahead to the next fair, which the fair board seems to be constantly planning, the fair board is preparing for a major milestone. The 2026 Wright County Fair will mark 100 years at its current location in Eagle Grove, with the theme "A Century of Celebrations." The fair is scheduled for July 7-12, 2026.

As she wrapped up her remarks, Rosendahl shared a story from a leadership seminar that resonated with her, a reminder that fairs help shape the next generation.

"Do we want TikTok raising our kids," she asked, "or do we want the fair doing that?"

She asked county leaders to see the fair not just as an event, but as an investment in keeping young people connected to Wright County, encouraging them to stay or return, and contribute.

YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT
YOU DON'T KNOW...

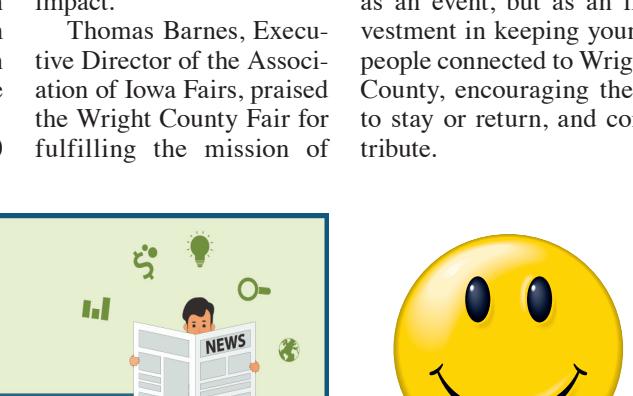
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reading between the lines

with Amanda Rink

Office Space and Other Things

Amanda Rink,
Editor

Recent coverage in The Eagle Grove Eagle about the closure of the office in Eagle Grove has understandably raised questions for some of my readers. I want to reassure Wright County Monitor readers right away: this change does not affect the Monitor, or my coverage, or my commitment to my community.

I have been working from home for The Wright County Monitor since I began with Mid America Publishing in 2023. During my tenure, the Monitor has not had a public-facing office to invite readers into. Before I took over as editor, the Monitor's office was moved into the same building as our sister publication, The Eagle Grove Eagle. That move occurred during a period when the Monitor did not have a dedicated editor.

As a result, staffing responsibilities were shared between the Eagle and the Monitor, with me continuing to work from home, as I live in Clarion. I have said before, and continue to believe, that a reporter should live in the community they record history for. Presence, accountability, and accessibility matter far more than the location of a desk. I fully believe this.

Subscriptions are built through trust and content that readers want. When engagement slows, it is the responsibility of the newsroom to listen, adjust, and meet readers where they are.

The decision to close the Eagle Grove office has no connection to subscriptions or advertising for the Wright County Monitor. It does not reflect a change in how the Monitor operates. It doesn't affect our staffing or coverage. Instead, it reflects long-standing realities that have allowed me to continue doing my work effectively... from home.

Working from home supports me in doing both of my jobs, as a news writer and as a mother, to the best of my ability. It has not hurt my reporting, my responsiveness, or my connection to the community I serve. Sometimes I feel like it improves it, actually. I'm not only seen behind a desk. I'm seen in my community every day.

I am grateful to work for a publisher, Mid America Publishing, that values its employees and supports working conditions that allow them to succeed. That support has allowed the Monitor to remain consistent and focused on serving its readers. We don't have to close during a snowstorm; we're able to pick up and work if something comes up on a weekend (even if my husband isn't always a fan of that), and we function well like this. It isn't necessarily negative for any other publication to operate this way.

The Wright County Monitor will continue to operate as it has throughout my time as editor, regardless of how our sister publications operate.

And moving on to subscriptions, while it would be wonderful for every resident in the communities we serve to subscribe or advertise, I am well aware that this is not always how things work.

That is the reality of local journalism today, which is why we also ensure our content is available in other places, such as the local library.

But most of the work that goes into the publication you hold in your hands, or read on your screen, is done by

four dedicated staff members: myself; our designer, Sarah, who is based in the eastern part of the county; Taylor, who covers sports and who would occasionally work out of the Eagle Grove office; and our sales team, which is based in southern Iowa, several hours away. This structure has been in place, and it works.

As always, I want to direct readers to where their questions can be answered. If you prefer an in-person experience, you are welcome to visit our mother publication, The Hampton Chronicle, located in Hampton. That building also houses our corporate staff, who are available to help and to hear feedback. It is also where I have consistently directed mail, ensuring I am included in conversations and reader feedback.

Ultimately, we write for our readers. Every newsroom must understand what its audience values, and for the most part, I believe the Monitor does that well. The decision to close the Eagle

Grove office was not one I was involved in, as neither I or my staff operated out of that space.

While there may be discussions in the future about opening an office in Clarion, that is not something that will happen immediately. This has nothing to do with subscriptions or advertising for the Monitor. It has everything to do with logistics and ensuring I can continue to serve this community effectively while I still have small children at home.

Working from home has not limited my ability to do this job. I am thankful for the positive feedback I receive from readers, and I also try to take criticism seriously, using it as an opportunity to grow. My role, just like any other small town newspaper writer's, is to serve the town I write for.

Being the mostly sole writer for the Monitor can be hard sometimes, but it is also so, so rewarding. You, our readers, among a few other things, make it worth it.

So, to say this clearly and simply: the closure of the Eagle Grove office

1. does not affect the Wright County Monitor, and

2. is not a negative development for this newspaper.

If you've read this far, thank you. Please always feel free to reach out to me directly with questions or concerns (news@wrightcountymonitor.com). That is the best way.

If I cannot help you, I will make sure to find someone who can.

Amanda Rink is the *Editor of The Wright County Monitor and a children's book author. Her (mostly) weekly column is published in The Wright County Monitor and The Hampton Chronicle. She writes about everyday life in rural Iowa through a unique lens filtered through motherhood and other life experiences. When she isn't caring for her family, writing for the newspaper, or avoiding laundry, she can be found hiding in the woods with a cup of coffee and a romance novel.*

Commentary

Anyone can find themselves in need of food assistance. It happened to me.

Connie Taylor,
The Life and Times of a Midwestern Girl

Whatever the unfortunate topic, people think, "Oh, that will never happen to me." Maybe they believe it, or maybe they are just putting it out into the universe hoping the proclamation will protect them. Either way, I am here to tell you that it absolutely can happen to you — just like it did to me.

First off, let me say that this story is not typical of what I write. However, it is about life in the Midwest, or anywhere for that matter. I also want to say that I struggled a lot with deciding to put it out here. Vulnerability is a hard thing. You leave yourself open to criticism, judgment, pity, bullying, and all kinds of things we don't want to deal with. Telling the story is hard enough, who wants to deal with that kind of backlash on top of it? BUT — I decided this story is important, and now is the time to tell it. And please know: If you find yourself anywhere in this story, you are not alone.

So I am going to tell you how I found myself in need of food assistance. Did I EVER think that would happen to me? Certainly not. I was raised in a middle-class family that really never wanted for anything. We weren't rich by any means, but we did OK. As life went on, I attended a good high school, went to business school, got a job, and found myself in a very short "practice" marriage.

After having practiced long enough to figure out that was not the real deal, I later had another marriage that I imagined would be the last one. But, not so fast. After 12 years, I knew it was time to make a change. That I needed to make a change.

So with two small daughters, I found myself on my own. And I was more on my own than I ever imagined. Once the exceedingly long divorce ordeal finally ended, I found myself with nothing.

Nothing. Somehow everything I had owned and all my money — every bit of it — had mysteriously been signed over to someone in my ex-husband's family.

"Devastated" does not even begin to explain how I felt. "Panicked" might be the word I want. What was I going to do?

Well, I had a pretty good job, but I knew I needed more, so I quickly found two others: Working part-time at the local Barnes and Noble bookstore and baking cookies for a coffee kiosk in the downtown skywalks. All the while trying to spend time with the girls. A trick for sure.

But then it got even trickier, as my ex-husband managed to take over half of my income. With my house in foreclosure, and my hard-earned money going to someone else, I had to do something. I am telling you the truth when I say that some days, I did not have one dime to my name. Literally.

Through my bank, I was connected to an amazing person employed by the federal government who could help me with the

house issue. She managed to get a low-interest second mortgage for me (that didn't have to be paid back until I sold the house) that would take me out of foreclosure and allow me to get back to making regular house payments. That was a huge load off my mind — and checkbook — but I still had NO money.

Most of the time, I had to choose between driving somewhere and using precious gas, paying for a school activity, or buying food. Every single month I had to go down to the Waterworks office to pay my late bill in cash in order to keep the water on. Trying to be helpful, the woman who assisted me with the mortgage encouraged me to file for food stamps. But I just did not want to do that. What self-respecting member of society does that? Not me. That doesn't happen to me.

Well, it did happen to me. Finally, armed with all my paperwork, including paystubs and tax documents that showed how much of my income did NOT come into my home, I gathered up all I had within myself and headed downtown to get food assistance. But — joke on me — at that time your eligibility was determined by your gross income. Not the net that you actually brought home. I'm not sure what the requirements are now, but according to the Iowa Department of Health and Human Services website, one must now meet both gross and net requirements.

So it turned out that, of course, between my three jobs, I made "too much money" to be considered for food stamps. I could not believe that no one considered how many dollars actually came through one's door. The actual money available.

Having been courageous enough to even try to get food assistance, the woman helping me saw how disappointed I was with the news I had received.

So she said, "Well, you can always get food from a food pantry." And, truth here, I laughed out loud and replied, "No matter how much I don't have, I always put something in the food pantry barrel at my grocery store." And I left to go home to try to figure it all out. Again.

And somehow, I managed without ever visiting a food pantry. I'm not sure how, but I did. I just couldn't make myself go even though I knew

there was no shame in that. None. But I feel that people seem to think it's an admission of failure, when really, it's just accepting needed help. And we all need help now and again. In the end, what kept me from going was that I knew it would add one more notch to the I'm-going-to-take-her-down belt of my ex-husband.

But going down was not an option for me and I did make it. I kept the house until I was ready to sell it and — literally — move on. The girls graduated from high school and attended college, and I eventually had all my money coming home with me again. I had finally reached that seemingly elusive point where I could look back and say, "That was horrible."

Fast-forward to today. Now. As I sit here remembering that time in my life, I am lucky enough to not have to worry about food. At least not right now. But who knows? So for many years I have made it a point to send an automatic monthly monetary donation to DMARC. As their website states "The DMARC Food Pantry Network consists of 14 individual partner pantries, multiple mobile food pantry sites, and a home delivery service. DMARC provides a guaranteed supply of food to our partner pantries, free of charge, and operates a centralized intake database." I also deliver a box of food I've purchased to the West Des Moines Human Services folks every couple of weeks.

Food insecurity is a crisis in our country, and even more so right now. But for any one individual it might be a crisis on any given day. I know. I've been there. So of course I'm donating right now, but I've made those two donations mentioned above for many years and will continue to do so for as long as I am able.

Because you never know when, through no fault of your own, it might happen to you.

Connie grew up in Iowa and writes the Substack columns "The Life and Times of a Midwestern Girl" and "Grandma's Recipe Box." She is an avid gardener, baker, reader, and Iowa State Fair fan, where she is also a food contest judge. Connie lives in West Des Moines with her husband and two cats.

Connie Taylor's column on Substack is republished here via the Iowa Writers' Collaborative.



Dows Legion

The next Bingo night at the Dows Legion is Friday, January 16, 2026 from 6:00 to 9:00 p.m.

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Supervisors continued from page 1

ed for this purpose, while Chairperson Bosch noted that careful management would be needed to ensure staffing remains balanced during the gap of not having Presidents' Day off could cause. The board moved to approve the swap.

Supervisors also addressed a number of annual appointments to boards, committees, and township positions. Aaron Budweg was appointed to represent the county on Mid-Iowa Growth, MIDAS, and the Heart of Iowa Regional Housing Trust Fund, while the remainder of the appointments remained mostly unchanged. Some openings on the Eminent Domain Compensation Commission will remain vacant for now so required paperwork can move forward. It was also noted that removing elections for Woolstock, Iowa, and Wall Lake Township Trustees and moving to an appointment selection process will be on the November ballot.

For a detailed list of appointments, please see the official meeting minutes,

The Wright County Courthouse will be closed for the following holidays in 2026:

Memorial Day on May 25
Independence Day observed July 3
Labor Day on September 7
Veterans Day on November 11
Thanksgiving Day and the following Friday on November 26 and 27
Christmas Eve on December 24
Christmas Day on December 25
New Year's Day on January 1, 2027

which are published in The Wright County Monitor.

The board also approved the annual noxious weed control resolution, which outlines landowner responsibilities to control invasive plants such as Canadian thistle, leafy spurge, poison hemlock, and others. The resolution sets control deadlines ranging from July 1 to July 15, depending on the species, and allows the county weed commissioner to take action if landowners do not comply, with costs assessed to the property if necessary.

In addition, the county noted it has reduced its spot spraying program along secondary roads. Adjacent landowners are encouraged to notify the secondary roads department if they observe noxious weeds along road rights-of-way.

The board will meet again on Monday, January 12, at the Wright County Courthouse. This meeting, along with past ones, can be viewed online at <https://www.youtube.com/@WrightCountyIowaOfficial8312>.

Landowners ask court to reconsider decision to pause pipeline permit lawsuit

Cami Koons
Iowa Capital Dispatch

Landowners opposed to a carbon sequestration project in Iowa have asked a state court to reconsider its decision to pause a lawsuit over the permit for the pipeline until state officials rule on a filed amendment.

Landowners argue the Polk County District Court's decision to send the permit back to Iowa Utilities Commission "relied heavily" on the existence of a South Dakota law prohibiting the use of eminent domain for carbon sequestration pipelines.

Landowners, counties and the Sierra Club Iowa Chapter filed a suit in 2024 against the Iowa Utilities Commission decision to grant a permit to Summit Carbon Solutions for the first phase of its proposed carbon sequestration pipeline. The permit stated the Iowa-based company could not begin construction on the pipeline to connect to biorefineries and transport carbon dioxide to underground storage in North Dakota, until it had secured permits from the Dakotas.

In the spring of 2025, however, South Dakota enacted a law that prohibited the use of eminent domain for carbon sequestration pipelines. Eminent domain is used to force unwilling landowners to allow the use of their property for projects considered in the public interest, at a price set by a county commission. South Dakota's law meant Summit would have to obtain 100% of necessary land easements through voluntary contracts.

Summit filed for an amendment to its permit in September with the IUC to replace the Dakotas-specific language and instead require that the company receive permits for adequate sequestration and storage sites, not in a specific location.

The company then requested the court pause pro-

ceedings on the case against the permit until the IUC ruled on the proposed amendments. After oral arguments on the request in October, the Iowa District Court for Polk County remanded the permit to the IUC and paused judicial proceedings until the commission decided on the proposed amendments.

The changes in South Dakota, which occurred after the IUC issued the initial permit, were influential to the court's decision.

Polk County District Court Judge Scott Beattie referred the law as the "S.D. CO2 Pipeline Ban" in the decision and said it "render the IUC's Final Order void" and would require Summit to find a route outside of South Dakota to get to its planned underground storage site in North Dakota.

Landowners requesting the reconsideration of the case said the South Dakota law is "not a ban" on carbon dioxide pipelines in the state and that the law should not be a "relevant or material factor" in the case as Summit could still pass through South Dakota under the law.

"(The South Dakota law) is not a ban on Summit's project in South Dakota and is not a ban on the citing and construction of carbon dioxide pipelines in, through, or across South Dakota, that change in law is not material to the IUC's South Dakota condition," the motion for reconsideration said.

The motion from landowners argues that because Summit has not stated that it no longer plans to route the pipeline through South Dakota, the remand to the IUC gives the company a "second bite at the apple" and a "business flexibility" which leaves affected landowners "in the lurch."

"Summit wants the South Dakota condition removed while still maintaining the right to send Iowa carbon di-

oxide through South Dakota," the motion said. "... unless Summit presented evidence to this court renouncing any South Dakota route through which Iowa generated CO2 would travel via its pipeline, the logic for the IUC condition remains and remand is not necessary because Summit can and may go through South Dakota."

Representation for Summit argued before the court that it made "little sense" to proceed with the case if the permit were to be amended at the IUC level.

Judge Beattie also noted that staying the case until the IUC decided on the permit amendment would also prevent the case from potentially being litigated a second time.

Beattie wrote in the decision that "adjudicating the merits of a permit that is actively being amended serves no useful purpose."

Summit Carbon Solutions

did not respond to a request for comment.

The landowners, represented by Brian Jorde of Domina Law Group, asked the court to reverse its finding that the South Dakota law renders the IUC order void and to reverse its remand to instead set a briefing schedule for the appeal.

If the court does not reverse its decision, the motion asks the court to "specifically identify" and direct the IUC to "rescind route approval and eminent domain approval for all portions of the Iowa route from the South Dakota border back to the nearest connecting Iowa ethanol plant" in order to avoid "pipelines to nowhere."

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Property taxes, eminent domain debate to return in 2026

Robin Opsahl
Iowa Capital Dispatch

Iowa lawmakers are heading into the 2026 legislative session with several new leaders — but many of the issues expected to take top priority are subjects left unresolved in 2025, namely eminent domain and property taxes.

Lawmakers presented legislation on both of these issues during the 2025 legislative session, but neither became state law. Republican leaders had brought up property taxes as one of their top concerns heading into the last session, but a measure failed to reach the governor's desk.

Rep. Bobby Kaufmann, who is now House majority leader, and Sen. Dan Dawson, R-Council Bluffs, introduced legislation in 2025 to eliminate the state's "rollback" system for calculating property taxes, calling for a move to a "revenue-restricted" system limiting levy rate growth alongside other changes. This proposal went through multiple iterations, but failed to come to a floor vote.

While the push for action on property taxes was led by legislative leaders last year, Gov. Kim Reynolds has said she plans to introduce a proposal to lower property taxes in 2026. Over the past few months, she and other Republican leaders have held meetings with local government and community leaders across the state to discuss how to approach the subject.

The governor has warned that reducing property taxes could mean a reduction in local government services, saying in May that Iowans should not expect "level of government that we have and expect the property taxes to go lower." However, she said there are areas where services can be consolidated or streamlined in an effort to more efficiently use taxpayer dollars.

Reynolds has also said she is considering a property tax freeze for seniors as another strategy to ease Iowans' economic burden.

"We have to see what the numbers look like," Reynolds told reporters in November. "We can't shift it to the state, that's not property tax relief ... it has to be sustainable."

House Speaker Pat Grassley said House Republicans are also focused on tackling property taxes — saying the 2025 discussions on the issue were a "good lesson" in how to best craft legislation moving forward. He said

"there's going to be pieces of ... the bills from last year that are probably not going to be included" in this year's legislation. He said the caucus wants to present a plan that favors the taxpayer over the taxing entity, and one that is simplified from previous discussions.

"It needs to give certainty to the taxpayer, and at the same time, we need to make sure it's something that's understandable," Grassley said. "Because every property tax conversation we've had for 20 years is very difficult, very in the weeds, very hard to understand. I think that's why we've been unable to really get an overall reform of the system itself."

Senate Minority Leader Janice Weiner said Democrats are willing to work across the aisle to address high property tax costs, and echoed the state's property tax system needs to be simplified and more transparent.

However, she said Senate Democrats want to ensure tax relief is reaching the people in the most need, and that local communities can weather the reduced income.

"It's really essential that local communities be at the table, because we can't risk putting public safety and other really important things for local communities at risk — and they're the ones who have to pay the bills, they're the ones who are now facing the results of previous mandates," Weiner said. "... And from what I've heard sort of across the state, they're really frustrated. (Those) are the people who are doing the work in every city, in every county and every township, and they deserve to have a seat at the table."

Senate Majority Leader Mike Klimesh says he expects to see bills on property taxes from the governor, House and Senate in 2026, and that the session will be spent discussing areas where all parties agree.

"At the end of the day, the conversation will be, 'How deep in the weeds do we go?'" Klimesh said. "We have a 40-year-old system — do we slap Band-Aids on, right? My perspective is sometimes it's going to take it down to the chassis and rebuild it from there. But at the end of the day, we'll have to sit on a table and build a consensus."

House Minority Leader Brian Meyer said House Democrats plan to roll out a property tax proposal in January, led by Rep. Dave Jacoby, D-Coralville, ranking member of the House Ways

and Means Committee. The legislative proposal will focus on lowering residential property taxes while "protecting schools, protecting first responders," he said.

Another issue carrying over from 2025 is how to address the use of eminent domain in carbon capture pipeline projects.

Legislation related to pipelines was approved by the Legislature in 2025. Sending the bill to Reynolds' desk was a contentious journey. The measure only made it to floor debate in the Senate after 12 GOP senators signed a letter saying they would not vote on spending bills and allow the session to end until a measure on eminent domain was debated.

The Senate passed the bill in a 27-22 vote, but Reynolds vetoed the measure, saying the legislation combined "valid concerns with vague legal standards and sweeping mandates that reach far beyond their intended targets."

There is still a strong push from Republicans calling for state lawmakers to address the subject, specifically to address some landowners' issues with the Summit Carbon Solutions project. But some of the same concerns from Republicans, including the governor and Senate leaders, who opposed last year's legislation, remain in play — meaning a consensus on how to tackle the property rights issue has yet to be reached.

Klimesh said he plans to introduce legislation within the first week of session that would allow companies to seek voluntary easements within a 10-mile radius of the corridor approved by the Iowa Utilities Commission in the permit process.

This proposal, Klimesh said, would allow carbon sequestration pipeline projects to move forward without having to use eminent domain to build a pipeline against a property owner's wishes.

"I think, at the end of the day, that allows me to exercise my property rights, by denying access to my property, it allows my neighbor to exercise their property rights by entering into a voluntary easement," he told Republicans at the Westside Conservative Club.

This proposal was one of the suggestions offered in an amendment to the 2025 legislation by Sen. Mike Bouselot, R-Ankeny, which was not adopted during Senate debate.

This approach may differ from how Iowa House Republicans plan to tackle the subject. Grassley said House Republicans plan to introduce legislation next year focused specifically on the use of eminent domain. Under current law, property owners can be forced to allow easements on their land for projects considered in the public's interest at a price set by a county compensation commission. Part of the dispute over carbon pipelines is whether the projects are in the public interest.

"Where I think we end up this session, whatever comes from the House, is going to be a little bit more tailored to eminent domain," Grassley said. "I know the bill was a little bit broader than we passed over to the Senate last year, that the governor then vetoed. ... The caucus, in the meantime, has recognized that that's been where we've had our focus for the last several years — it's been around eminent domain."

The use of eminent domain in pipeline projects is not a party-line issue — the measures passed with both bipartisan support and opposition in both chambers in 2025.

Meyer said he does not

see the proposal brought up by Klimesh on expanding the pipeline corridor as a way to put the issue to rest, saying he believes House Republicans will aim for more substantive action on eminent domain.

Meyer said he believes most Democrats understand there are competing interests in how to address the issue, as carbon capture pipelines are "an important part of the future of agriculture moving forward," but that there are real questions on "how do we protect property rights" brought up by the projects.

Meyer said he believes there is a path forward to address this issue — but Republicans, who have held a trifecta of control at the Capitol for several years, will have to collaborate with Democrats to reach the finish line.

"We're going to have to see where it goes," Meyer said. "There's a solution here. It's just that they're so used to not having to work with Democrats or anybody else."

Legislative leaders also said they predict to field more discussions on issues related to Iowans' health in 2026. As the state has the second-highest cancer incidence rate in the country, officials have said they plan to investigate why Iowa's cancer rates are growing while national rates lower.

Some advocates say environmental factors — and problems caused by agricultural products — are behind some of these numbers. Klimesh was questioned by a voter at the Westside Conservative Club about why lawmakers have advanced legislation in several previous sessions to shield pesticide companies from certain lawsuits — specifically, in response to numerous lawsuits launched against Bayer, the manufacturer of Round-Up, which claim the product gave plaintiffs cancer.

Klimesh said the previous versions of the legislation did not stop people from suing companies like Bayer over claims like negligence or fraud, but over specific "failure to warn" claims related to pesticide labels issued by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

"At the end of the day, they did not take away your rights to sue that company for cause in any way, shape or form," Klimesh said. "All it simply said was you can't sue them for not meeting a requirement the federal government won't let them meet. At the end of the day, what concerns me is, if we allow that to continue, glyphosate will come in from China. What's the recourse then? There's no way you're going to sue a Chinese company, right? That's an impossible hurdle."

Grassley said he believes there are "merits to wanting to make sure that these types of products are made here in this country — but not just this country, in our state." He said while there was not enough support to move the bill forward last year, the 2026 session could be different.

"Not knowing what the future ... looks like, if that's something the caucus wants

to move forward with, I think we'll be open to that conversation," Grassley said.

Another environmental issue that may be impacting Iowans' health is water quality. Concerns about nitrate levels in Iowa's waterways have heightened over the past year, as nitrate concentrations reached near record highs in Iowa rivers in 2025. Experts say data shows nitrate concentrations have increased in Iowa over the past decades.

Meyer said Iowa House Democrats plan to bring forward a legislative proposal to address high nitrate levels and increase water quality monitoring throughout the state.

While environmental advocates point to agricultural runoff as a contributor to Iowa's growing cancer rates, some legislators have said other factors may be contributing. In November, Sen. Ken Rozenboom, R-Pella, said other states, like Illinois, would also be seeing similarly high cancer rates if agricultural pollution was the driving force behind the state's cancer rates.

"Once we have apparent solutions or answers, then we can start changing policy or making policy," Rozenboom said. "But I think most of us more have more questions than answers yet."

Klimesh said lawmakers are also planning to continue to partner with institutions like the University of Iowa Health system, "to make sure that they're doing research, point us in the right direction where we can be helpful with that."

Weiner said as research is ongoing, the Legislature should focus on finding ways to "deal with some low-hanging fruit" and take steps to mitigate new instances of cancer.

"The cancer rates we're seeing are result from exposures 20, 30 years ago, we can't change that now," Weiner said. "(But) we know we have high radon levels in the state. There are unregulated tanning beds there, you know, too many Iowans are probably using one form of tobacco or other. Again, we'll be having conversations with our Republican colleagues, but I think everybody realizes this is an issue we have to deal with."

Three of the top legislative leadership positions are held by people elected by their peers this year to lead their caucus for the first time — Klimesh leading Iowa Senate Republicans, Meyer leading Iowa House Democrats and Kaufmann as the new House majority leader.

These changes come amid a shake-up heading into next year's elections — former House Majority Leader Matt Windschitl is running for Iowa's 4th Congressional District and former Minority Leader Jennifer Konfrst is running in Iowa's 3rd District. The former Senate Ma-

jority Leader Jack Whitver announced he will not seek reelection as he continues treatment following a brain tumor diagnosis.

The session will also be Reynolds' last term as governor, as she is not seeking reelection in 2026.

Grassley, who was elected House speaker in 2020, said he does not foresee major changes coming from the new leadership.

"I don't want to say business as usual in a bad way, but I think you're going to see the House, the Senate, the governor, continue to be able to work together to be able to find resolution to difficult issues," Grassley said. "We've displayed that for the last several years, taking on tough issues, and so I don't think any of that necessarily just changes because there's different individuals in some of the certain areas."

A number of special elections in 2025 have also changed the makeup of the Iowa Legislature. Iowa Senate Democrats gained two seats in special elections in the past year — Sen. Catelin Drey in Senate District 1 and Sen. Mike Zimmer in District 35, breaking Republicans' supermajority control of the chamber.

There's one more special election in the Iowa Senate left this year, scheduled for Dec. 30 to fill the seat left by Sen. Claire Celsi, who died in October after a battle with an undisclosed illness.

While Republicans still hold a majority in the Senate, breaking the supermajority means Democrats could exert more control in the process of appointing gubernatorial nominees, which require two-thirds majority approval. Weiner said while "there may not be a ton of appointments, there definitely will be some," pointing to the new appointments to the Iowa Board of Regents.

She also said while two of the Senate special elections were called because of tragic circumstances — the deaths of two senators — the special election campaigns have allowed Senate Democrats to hear directly from voters about what they want from the Legislature.

"We've had the opportunity since the beginning of January through the end of December to talk to voters all over the state, or more specifically, to listen to voters all over the state and hear what their concerns are," Weiner said. "... It's great to see new faces, and it's also been a year of loss."

The legislative session is set to begin Jan. 12, 2026.

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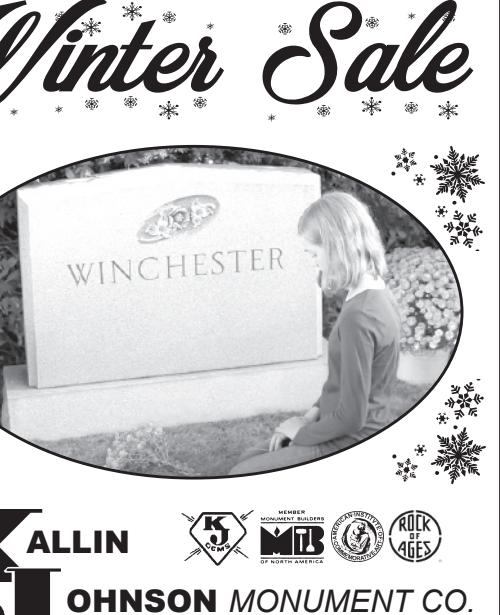
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The Thompson Times

REPRESENTATIVE MARK THOMPSON

HOUSE DISTRICT 56

Representative

Mark Thompson,

House District 56

The state legislature goes

back into session on

January 12th until the end of

April. This writing is

an opportunity to discuss

what goes on during this

"off" time while out of

session. Besides the visible

events such as parades,

pancake breakfasts and

meals, and county fairs,

many constituents and

groups reach out with

concerns. Some are topics

I can address and act on

while others are out of my

purview. In those instances,

I try to direct them to the

correct entity for resolution.

I am fortunate to have a

strong and open relationship

with all six of the district

school superintendents

and have met with and

communicated with each

of them. I continue to meet

with county supervisors,

law enforcement, hospital

administrators, local busi-

nesses, farm and agriculture

groups, banking representa-

tives, power company lead-

ers, along with individual

constituents to address their

concerns. Last Spring part

of the district was hit with

tornado-like winds. After a

quick connection to the Governor,

the area was declared a

disaster area enabling the

community to bring in

Church news

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CLARION FIRST

METHODIST CHURCH

201 3rd Ave. NE, Clarion, IA

50525

Pastor Craig Luttrell

515-532-2845

website: www.clarion.church

Church Office

Hours: Monday - Thursday 8:00 a.m. - Noon

6:00 p.m. Christmas Eve

Service

• Sunday, January 11

9:00 a.m. Sunday School for all ages

10:00 a.m. Worship Service

• Sunday, January 18

9:00 a.m. Sunday School for all ages

10:00 a.m. Worship Service

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• 9:00 a.m. Sunday Worship

Services

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OF CHRIST,

CONGREGATIONAL

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• Sunday, January 11

9:00 a.m. Worship

10:00 a.m. Fellowship

CHURCH OF CHRIST

420 North Main, Clarion

Pastor Warren Curry

515-532-3273

<http://clarionchurchofchrist.weebly.com>

Facebook Clarion Church of Christ

9:00 a.m. Sunday School

10:00 a.m. Worship, also live

each Sunday on Facebook

6:00 a.m. Tuesday Iron Man,

Fellowship Hall, Church Building

10:00 a.m. Wednesday, Weekly

Prayer Time Fellowship Hall,

Church Building

Ongoing Bible Studies - times

and locations vary; check for

more information at the church

office week.

ST. JOHN CATHOLIC

608 2nd Ave. N.E., Clarion

Father Jerry W. Blake, Pastor

515-532-3586

• Thursday, January 8

8:00 a.m. Sewing at St. John,

Clarion

11:40 a.m. Rosary at St. John,

Clarion

12:00 p.m. Mass at St. John,

Clarion

• Friday, January 9

7:40 a.m. Rosary at St. John,

Clarion

8:00 a.m. Mass at St. John,

Clarion

• Saturday, January 10

Baptism of the Lord

Baby Needs

2:00 p.m. Baptisms at St. John,

Clarion

3:40 p.m. Rosary at St. John,

Clarion

4:00 p.m. Mass at St. John,

Clarion

8:00 p.m. Mass in Spanish at St.

John, Clarion

• Sunday, January 11

Baptism of the Lord

Baby Needs

7:40 a.m. Rosary at St. Francis

Xavier, Belmond

8:00 a.m. Confirmation Class at

St. Francis Xavier, Belmond

10:10 a.m. Rosary at Sacred

Heart, Eagle Grove

10:30 a.m. Mass at Sacred

Heart, Eagle Grove

• Monday January 12

8:15 a.m. Rosary at St. Francis

Xavier, Belmond

1:30 p.m. Mass at The

Meadows, Clarion

7:30 p.m. Baptism Preparation

in Spanish at St. John's Ed

Building in Clarion

• Tuesday, January 13

10:00 a.m. Staff Meeting,

Offices Closed

11:00 a.m. Fatima Rosary at

Sacred Heart, Eagle Grove

2:00 p.m. Mass at the Care

Center, Clarion

2:00 p.m. OCIA at St. Francis

Xavier, Belmond

• Wednesday, January 14

7:40 a.m. Rosary at St. Francis

Xavier, Belmond

8:00 a.m. Mass at St. Francis

Xavier, Belmond

6:30 p.m. YFF Classes at all

Parishes

6:30 p.m. Adoration at St. John,

Clarion and St. Francis Xavier,

Belmond

6:30 p.m. Altar Server Training

at Sacred Heart, Eagle Grove

6:30 p.m. OCIA at St. John,

Clarion

• Thursday, January 15

9:00 a.m. Guild Meeting at

Sacred Heart, Eagle Grove

9:00 a.m. January 25th Bulletin

Deadline

11:40 a.m. Rosary at Sacred

Heart, Eagle Grove

12:00 p.m. Mass at Sacred

Heart, Eagle Grove

2:00 p.m. Mass at Rotary Senior

Living, Eagle Grove

6:30 p.m. Cluster Faith

Formation Council Meeting at St.

John, Clarion

UNITED PRESBYTERIAN

CHURCH

219 First Street N.W. Clarion

515-232-2709

• Sunday, January 11 Jay Grogan

will be leading the service

• Sunday 9:00 a.m.

• Sunday 10:30 a.m. Adult

Sunday School Class

• Wednesdays 6:00 a.m. Men's

Bible Study

• Saturdays 8:00 a.m. Men's

Group

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FREE Dinner will be on the first

Sunday of the month.

• Sunday

9:30 a.m. Coffee Time

9:45 a.m. Sunday School

10:45 a.m. Worship

• Tuesday

11:00 a.m. Prayer Time

• Iglesia del Nazareno

6:00 p.m. Sabado

6:00 p.m. Domingo

Lay Minister Mynor

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Bienvenidos

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50542

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goldfield.upc@gmail.com

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Office M-F 7:30 - 11:30 a.m.

• Sunday Worship 10:30 a.m.

LAKE LUTHERAN CHURCH

Goldfield

Pastor Ron Rasmussen

• Sunday, January 11

10:00 a.m. Worship Service

and Fellowship Coffee in the

Fellowship Room.

No Sunday School

GOLDFIELD UNITED

METHODIST CHURCH

P.O. Box 214

515-825-3754

Pastor: Ann Trimble Ray. Each

bring a new perspective to our

church and God!

• Wednesday, January 14

7:40 a.m. Rosary at St. Francis

Words of Wisdom

Last week's trivia questions:
What major world city, known for its spectacular fireworks display on New Year's Eve, is one of the first cities to ring in the New Year? Answer: Sydney, Australia.



What Pacific Ocean island, which is an American territory, is the last place to celebrate on New Year's Eve? Answer: American Samoa.

What U.S. city, inspired by the Times Square Ball Drop in New York, instead drops a giant chocolate kiss on New Year's Eve? Answer: Hershey, Pennsylvania.

This week's trivia questions:
The Golden Globe Awards for movies and television will be held this Sunday, Jan. 11.

What movie actress holds the record for winning the most Golden Globe awards?

Who holds the record for winning the most Golden Globe awards by a male movie actor?

Match the college football bowl game with its location

1. Citrus Bowl A) Atlanta, Georgia
2. Cotton Bowl B) Dallas, Texas
3. Fiesta Bowl C) El Paso, Texas
4. Gator Bowl D) Glendale, Arizona
5. Liberty Bowl E) Jacksonville, Florida
6. Orange Bowl F) Memphis, Tennessee
7. Peach Bowl G) Miami, Florida
8. Rose Bowl H) New Orleans, Louisiana
9. Sugar Bowl I) Orlando, Florida
10. Sun Bowl J) Pasadena, California

January is Get Organized Month, International Creativity Month, Learn to Ski and Snowboard Month, National Blood Donor Month, National Candy Month, National Egg Month, National Hobby Month, National Meat Month, National Mentoring Month, National Polka Music Month, National Skating Month, National Slow Cooking Month, National Soup Month, Oatmeal Month, Eye Care Month, and Bath Safety Month.

Jan. 7 is Old Rock Day; Jan. 8 is National English Toffee Day, and Earth's Rotation Day; Jan. 9 is National Law Enforcement Appreciation Day; Jan. 10 is Save the Eagles Day; Jan. 11 is National Milk Day, and National Human Trafficking Awareness Day; Jan.

12 is National Pharmacists Day, and National Youth Day; Jan. 13 is National Sticker Day, and Public Radio Broadcasting Day.

Funny signs seen in public:

IN CASE OF FIRE: Please leave the building before posting it on social media.

Bread is like the sun - It rises in the yeast and sets in the waist.

Please neuter your pets (and any weird friends or relatives).

NOW ENTERING WISCONSIN - Ask yourself what poor decisions led to this.

If this was another country, we'd have to warn you that this coffee may be hot. Good thing this is Canada!

In light of recent events, hedgehogs will no longer be allowed in Room 146.

Unattended children will be given an energy drink and taught to swear.

FROG PARKING ONLY - ALL OTHERS WILL BE TOAD!



Baby Girl

Vanessa Hernandez and Artemio Gonzalez of Clarion, IA would like to announce the birth of their daughter Azalea Maieni. She was born Sunday, December 28, 2025 at the Iowa Specialty Hospital in Clarion, IA. She weighed 7 pounds 15 ounces. She joins her sibling: Azaire (2). Proud Grandparents are: Sonia Alvarado and Mariano Gonzalez of Clarion, IA and Juentina Matul and Osman Hernandez of Clarion, IA.

Baby Girl

Charles and Alyssa

Hamilton - Morris of Dows, IA would like to announce the birth of their daughter Annalien Lucille. She was born Friday, January 2, 2026 at the Iowa Specialty Hospital in Clarion, IA. She weighed 4 pounds 11 ounces. She joins her siblings: Austin (12) and Ariella (2). Proud Grandparents are: Clint and Justina Hamilton of Coulter, IA and Kris Quam of Northwood, IA.

Proud Great Grandparents are: Kenny Quam of Northwood, IA and Darwin and Laura Hamilton of Iowa Falls, IA.

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Obituaries

Jane Lee Rink 1933 - 2026

Jane Lee Rink, 92, died Thursday, January 1, 2026, at the Western Home Communities-Thuesen Cottage in Cedar Falls.

She was born December 13, 1933, in Clarion, Iowa, the daughter of Kenneth and Hazel (Summers) Tillman. Jane graduated from Clarion High School.

On February 7, 1954, she was united in marriage to Virgil Rink. He died March 25, 2021. She worked as a teacher's aide at Price Laboratory School and as seasonal help at Black's Department Store at Black Hawk Village in Cedar Falls. Jane was active with the Cedar Falls AMVETS Post #49 Auxiliary where she has served as President.

She is survived by: daughter, Joni Sadler of Cedar Falls; two sons, Steven of Aurora, Colorado and Tony (Sue) in Cedar Falls; grandchildren, Shawna (Ryan) Woiwod, Peter Sadler, Chris Sadler, Michael (Crystal) Rink, Kyle Rink, and Ryan Rink; great grandchildren, Lennon and Jett Rink, Ryker Woiwod, Claire Sadler,



Braylin Rink, and Jason Rink; and sister, Kathy (Denny) Loux of Hiawatha. She was preceded in death by: her son, Edward Rink; grandson, Chad Rink; and brother, Jerry Tillman.

Mass of Christian Burial was held at 10:00 a.m. Tuesday, January 6, 2026, at St. Patrick Catholic Church, with inurnment in the Greenwood Cemetery, both in Cedar Falls. Family received friends one hour prior to the services at the church.

Memorial contributions may be directed to: St. Patrick Catholic Church or Cedar Valley Hospice. Online condolences at www.richardsonfuneralservice.com.

Apply for a 2026 Wright County Charitable Foundation Grant January 1 - February 15, 2026

Wright County Charitable Foundation is calling on area non-profit organizations to submit grant applications for funding to help complete projects and programs that benefit the people of Wright County, Iowa. The Wright County Charitable Foundation 2026 Granting Cycle opens on January 1, 2026, with applications being accepted through February 15, 2026. Late applications will not be considered.

Each grant applicant is required to match 20 percent (20%) of the funds necessary to complete the project.

Volunteer labor hours can be considered as match, along with the funds needed to complete each project.

If possible, applicants should submit their applications before the deadline to allow the grant committee time to conduct a preliminary review of all the applications to ensure all information needed is included.

Early submissions allow more time should revisions or more information be requested.

The links to the Application and Guidelines for the 2026 Granting Cycle can be found on the Wright County Charitable Foundation section of the

Wright County Economic Development web page at: https://www.wrightcounty.iowa.gov/departments/economic_development/charitable_foundation.php

For more information, contact Wright County Economic Development at (515) 532-6422 or send an email to wced@wrightco.iowa.gov

Wright County Charitable Foundation is an affiliate of the Community Foundation of Greater Des Moines.

About Wright County Economic Development: Wright County Economic Development is an official department of Wright County, Iowa. Created in 1987, the department addresses the need for business, housing, and workforce growth, retention, and expansion.

The links to the Application and Guidelines for the 2026 Granting Cycle can be found on the Wright County Charitable Foundation section of the



Wright County Charitable Foundation

Wright County Economic Development web page at: https://www.wrightcounty.iowa.gov/departments/economic_development/charitable_foundation.php

For more information, contact Wright County Economic Development at (515) 532-6422 or send an email to wced@wrightco.iowa.gov

Wright County Charitable Foundation is an affiliate of the Community Foundation of Greater Des Moines.

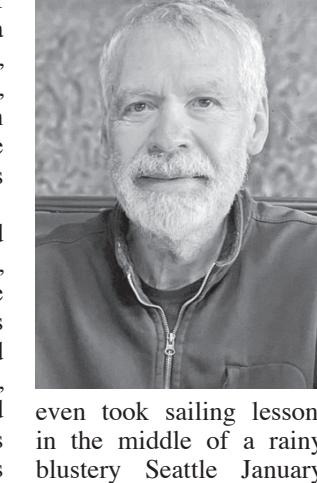
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The links to the Application and Guidelines for the 2026 Granting Cycle can be found on the Wright County Charitable Foundation section of the

Obituaries

Brent Clemsen 1954 - 2025

With deep sorrow, we announce the passing of Brent Arthur Clemsen, a beloved husband, father, grandfather, brother, uncle, and friend. Brent died on December 24, 2025, at the age of 71 from the effects of Alzheimer's disease.



Brent was born and raised in Clarion, Iowa, the middle child of Lyle and Jane Clemsen. His childhood was filled with boy scouts, hunting, motorcycles, football, and all things outdoors. It was during these early years that his lifelong love of animals began. As a boy, he even had a pet skunk named Tulip—an unforgettable favorite at elementary school show-and-tell.

Brent attended the University of Northern Iowa, graduating in 1977 with a Bachelor of Arts degree.

It was there that he met Jan, his devoted wife of 47 years. They married in 1979 in Sac City, Iowa, and two days later packed up their Toyota Celica and drove to Santa Clara, California, to begin their life together.

They cherished their time in California, exploring beaches, mountains, and cities before moving to

Maple Valley, Washington, in 1981, where they fell

in love with the beauty of the region. It is where they raised their family and where Brent lived for the rest of his life.

Brent began his career in 1978 and served as a District and Regional Manager with Viking Pump Corporation of Cedar Falls, Iowa, remaining with the company until his retirement in 2020.

A service to honor

Brent's life will be held in 2026. In his memory,

Brent would be delighted if you enjoy some chocolate,

ice cream, or a couple of cookies. For those wishing

to make a donation, the family suggests

contributions to the Seattle Humane Society or the

Alzheimer's Association.

Monitor Memories

FROM THE ARCHIVES OF THE WRIGHT COUNTY MONITOR

1984 - 1949

77 Years ago

January 13, 1949

Members of the Iowa Master Plumbers' association representing the North Central zone, met a Dugan's Cellar in Clarion Tuesday night. Carl Anderson, manager of the Leighton Supply Co., of Fort Dodge was the principal speaker. His topic was "Outlook For 1949." He predicted that materials during the coming year would be more available.

The newest addition to Saylor's, the downstairs store, has been completed and full stocked and will be opened to the public Friday morning. Formerly a basement, the room has been rebuilt and decorated.

With this addition to the store Saylor's will offer a greater display, larger stocks of merchandise and finer values. The store will be opened Friday morning with special prizes.

The Cowboy grapplers traveled to Humboldt last Friday night and tangled with the Gilmore City matsters coming home with a 33 to 8 score in the bag. This makes the fifth straight dual meeting the groaners and grunters have won this season and places the Clarionites in the forefront of wrestling teams in this neck of the woods.

Clarion Community Schools and CMH, in cooperation with ICCC in Fort Dodge are offering a number of Adult Education Courses that will be starting in the coming week. Coin collecting, Spanish, private pilot ground school and emergency medical technician training are just some of the courses that will be held in the area.

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Everyday moments can be learning moments with your kids. For more tips, visit bornlearning.org

Ad Council

United Way

Classifieds

NOTICES

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The Wright County MONITOR

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DEADLINE:

Legal Notices Noon Friday

Classifieds 1:00 a.m. Friday

Display Ads 1:00 a.m. Friday

Submitted News Noon Friday

Obituaries Noon Monday

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SPORTS

Thompson Takes 4th in Osage

Taylor Smith,
Sports Editor

After a two-week rest from competition, the combined Clarion-Goldfield-Dows and Eagle Grove girls wrestling teams finally returned to the mat at a gigantic tournament in Osage.

The ladies were missing a few key starters last Friday, but they still compiled 21 team points for 19th place overall. Cedar Falls (251), Osage (229), and New Hampton (204.5) all placed in the Top-3.

Clear Lake finished 5th

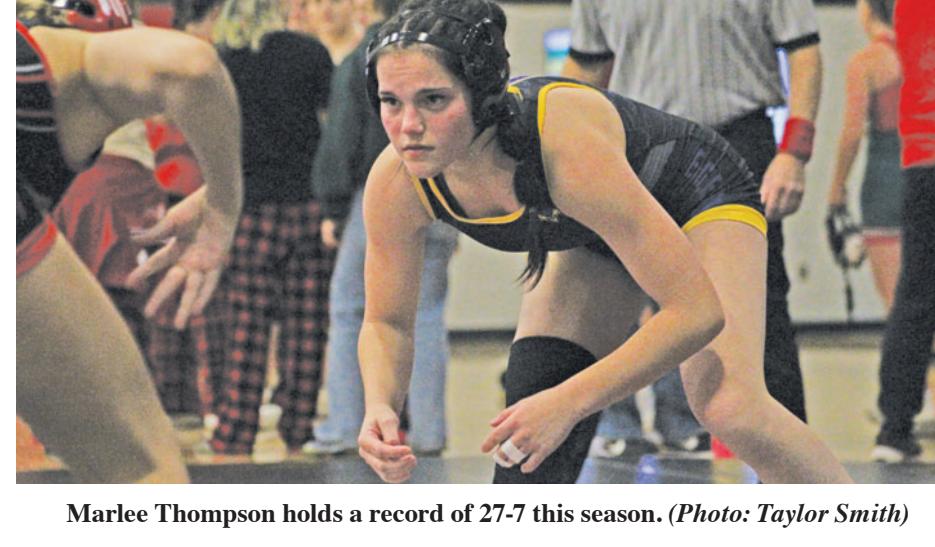
with 111 points.

Sophomore 110-pounder Marlee Thompson earned 4th place and added another three pins to her résumé.

She would win by decision over Addison Buseman of Janesville before falling to Clear Lake's Saphira Olsen in the 2nd period of their 3rd place match.

Junior Keylyee Collins went 1-2 on the day at 125-pounds. Freshman Mya Gilbert competed at 120, and Catherine Orozco suited up at 100.

Junior varsity 115-pounder Morgan Keller



Marlee Thompson holds a record of 27-7 this season. (Photo: Taylor Smith)



Middle School/High School Sports Calendar

Thursday, January 8

Esports vs. Dike-New Hartford, 4:00 p.m.

JV/Varsity Boys Wrestling NCC Triangular

@ CGDHS, 6:00 p.m.

Friday, January 9

JV Boys Wrestling @ Ogden, 4:30 p.m.

JV/Varsity Boys/Girls Basketball

@ Webster City, 4:30 p.m.

Saturday, January 10

Varsity Boys Wrestling @ Glen Brand Duals

(CGDHS), 10:00 a.m.

Monday, January 12

Varsity Girls Wrestling

@ Webster City, 6:00 p.m.

Tuesday, January 13

JV/Varsity Boys/Girls Basketball

@ Pocahontas, 4:00 p.m.

Karl King Band Preparing For Indoor Season:

The Karl L. King Municipal Band of Fort Dodge, IA is getting set to begin their 2026 indoor concert season. Three dates have been scheduled, and will be Sunday, February 15th; Sunday, March 22nd; and Sunday, April 26th. These concerts begin at 3:30 p.m., and are held in the Fort Dodge Middle School Auditorium, located at 800 North 32nd St. in Fort Dodge. There is no admission charge, with these concerts being provided by the City of Fort Dodge.

This nationally-known group can trace their origins back to the 1870's, when military veterans and local citizens formed their first band. Two competing groups existed for several years until they organized into the Fort Dodge Municipal Band around 1901. This group is currently under the direction of Conductor Dan Cassady. The band annually performs a series of at least 12 concerts each year locally, and has also been featured through the years at state, national, and international conventions.

The February 15th concert will be the Band's annual tribute to former Conductor Karl L. King. A special afternoon of band music is being planned to include several of King's best-known and most popular compositions, including his most famous one, "Barnum and Bailey's Favorite March", and King's dedication to his wife Ruth with "Lovers Lane". On the popular side will be a medley of well-known Frank Sinatra favorites and Hoagy Carmichael's "Stardust".

Karl King was born on February 21, 1891 in Paintersville, Ohio. After his childhood in Ohio, he left at the age of 19 and traveled for 9 years with several different circuses, playing in or conducting several of their bands, and

reached the pinnacle of success as conductor of the famous Barnum and Bailey Circus Band during the 1917 and 1918 seasons.

King came to Fort Dodge in the fall of 1920 to conduct the local Municipal Band, a position he held for more than 50 years until his death in March of 1971. He published nearly 300 compositions for Band, with nearly 200 of those being marches. He was truly America's March King! He is Fort Dodge's most famous citizen, with a highway bridge (one of only three in the United States named after a bandmaster), a city park which contains his statue, and a band shell all named in his honor.

The March 22nd concert is the Band's annual Irish Concert to celebrate St. Patrick's Day. This concert dates back to the early days of the Band under Karl King's direction. Conductor Cassady has planned a wide variety of Irish music, and will include an audience sing-along of "When Irish Eyes Are Smiling" and "My Wild Irish Rose", led by Roger Netz, along with everyone's favorite Irish tune, "MacNamara's Band", all arranged by one of the band's previous conductors, Reginald R. Schive.

The April 26th concert will be the Band's annual Scholarship Concert, where talented high school seniors and college freshmen can audition for three scholarships that the Band annually awards. Watch for more details regarding this concert in future issues of Twist and Shout.

For additional information and pictures about Karl King or the Municipal Band, or for any weather-related cancellations, visit the band's web site at www.karlking.us, or the band's Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/karlkingband/>.

In a celebration of hard work and dedication, all 4-H members who completed and submitted their 2025 record books were treated to an unforgettable day in Ames. The event not only honored their achievements but also fostered community spirit and pride among the participants.

The day began with a delicious lunch at Hickory Park, generously sponsored by Wagner Drug. The kids enjoyed a hearty meal that set the tone for an exciting afternoon ahead.

Following lunch, the group headed to the Iowa

State women's basketball game, where they were thrilled to sit incredibly close to the action, thanks to the winter break schedule that allowed for us to sit in the student sections normally filled with college students. Ticket sponsorship from the Wright County Endowment made this thrilling experience possible.

Kate Goudy, a supporter of our 4-H members, added an extra touch of excitement by gifting each child red and gold beads, a pom pom, and a face sticker,

letting them proudly display their Iowa State pride throughout the game.

The match up was nail-biting, with the game coming down to the last two seconds. Although the team ultimately fell short by just two points, the event was filled with unforgettable moments.

Our 4-H members had plenty of Clone-Cones and popcorn to make the game even more fun!

Several parents reached out to the 4-H program after the game, sharing how much fun their youth had during the experience. One

parent expressed, "Because of this experience, my child will never forget 4-H!" Another parent added, "Thank you for today, she had a great time."

The day was a resounding success, showcasing the dedication of our youth and the support of our local sponsors.

For more information about 4-H programs and upcoming events, please visit our website <https://www.extension.iastate.edu/wright/join-4-h> or email Paige Stewart at pstewart@iastate.edu.

WCCT launches "Over the Speed Limit Players"

Webster City Community Theatre is excited to launch the "Over the Speed Limit Players." The troupe is designed for performers who are 55 years of age and over. Veteran actors and anyone who has ever wanted to be part of theatre, is welcome to check it out. Senior theatre allows players the option of memorizing lines and lyrics and a shorter rehearsal period.

The troupe's first venture is to perform the senior version of "Fiddler on the Roof." Readers Theatre on Sunday, January 11, will introduce participants to the script, characters, and music of this popular musical. Discover the adjustments that have been made to the script and music to reduce the play to about an hour run time. Curious? Join us at 3:00 pm. Optional, bring a snack to share and your own beverage.

Music Theatre International (MTI) introduced Broadway Junior musicals several years ago for casts of kids 18 years of age and under. WCCT has brought the following junior shows to the stage: Newsies, Beauty and the Beast, Shrek, Annie, Mary Poppins, Honk,

and Alice in Wonderland. The program has proven to be very popular at introducing children to theatre and Broadway shows.

Recently MTI introduced the senior genre for older adults. Its first offerings include Fiddler on the Roof, Guys and Dolls, Singing in the Rain, Music Man, and Into the Woods. There are more titles in development. WCCT will introduce this new concept to members of the Iowa Community Theatre Association when they host its state convention March 27-28.

According to Loween

Getter, the "Over the Speed Limit Players" will learn theatre basics, read scripts, perform short skits, one act and full plays, and radio plays for their own enjoyment or to entertain on the theatre's stage and at other local venues. Performances will range from readers theatre to staged readings or full shows. Sets, props, and costumes will be simplified. There are opportunities to learn about backstage and front-of-house duties as well as acting on stage.

For more information,

text Getter at 515-297-0846.

Webster City Community Theatre's
Over the Speed Limit Players

NOTICE

Please kindly note that the main staff of The Wright County Monitor works remotely and does not operate an office in Clarion.

For direct communication, please contact

Newspaper Editor and Writer

Amanda Rink by phone/text at

515.364.2344 or by email at

news@wrightcountymonitor.com



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Weathering the Storm

For Iowa Wildlife Winter Weather is no Picnic

Lowell Washburn

Winds gusting in excess of forty miles per hour. Horizontal snowfall. Visibility limited to 100 yards or less. Sub zero temps. Life threatening wind chills.

Those were the exact conditions when a good old-fashioned prairie blizzard roared through Iowa last weekend. Arriving in the state early Sunday morning [December 28] the storm delivered whiteout blizzard conditions that continued through the night and into the late morning hours of December 29. The storm stranded scores of motorists, shut down local roadways and closed more than 200 miles of I-35 [both directions] from Ames through southern Minnesota.

Looking through the glass of my cozy dining room window, I wondered how anything could survive out there. It's the same thing I always wonder whenever whiteout conditions grip the Iowa landscape. When the storm finally ends, I also never fail to marvel at how backyard birds suddenly reemerge to resume business as usual. How did they manage to weather the storm?

For Iowa wildlife, winter weather is no picnic; and survival tactics are nearly as varied and interesting as the birds themselves. Their first weather-beating trick is simple. In order to survive subzero cold, most birds consume all the food they can get their little beaks on. There's no calorie counting with this crowd. Fat and carbs are a wintering bird's best friends. As long as

chickadees, nuthatches, and cardinals can locate and combine high energy food sources with secure roosting cover, they can easily withstand the coldest temperatures. Backyard feeders are never more beneficial to feathered visitors than when extreme weather puts daily survival on the line.

Birds further beat the cold by maintaining extreme, 105-degree or higher body temperatures. For large birds such as wild turkeys, swans or pheasants, maintaining those temperatures presents less of a challenge than it does for dinky, bundle of fluff birds weighing less than an ounce. Most large birds gain an early advantage over future cold by slabbing on layers of fat during fall. Once the winter weather gets tough, they can go for days without eating.

But while the biggest birds can afford to dig in and wait for conditions to moderate, little birds cannot. At the approach of winter storm systems, they kick it into overdrive. With comparatively lower fat reserves and extreme energy demands, species like chickadees, juncos and finches go on all out feeding rampage, swarming backyard feeders and voraciously consuming every bite they can get.

But there's more to winter survival than just going to bed with a full stomach. Secure habitat is an equally crucial component. At day's end, birds head for the warmest, safest cover they can find. Ring-necked pheasants sail into cattail marshes, cardinals and juncos



With a ring of frost formed from heat escaping from its eyeballs, a black-capped chickadee fluffs its feathers for maximum protection from subzero winter temperatures



Sunflower Feeder – A red-bellied woodpecker dines on energy rich black oil sunflowers. Backyard feeders are never more beneficial to feathered visitors than when extreme weather puts survival on the line.



Male Cardinal – As long as resident birds can find adequate food and secure cover, they can easily withstand the coldest winter temperatures



Rooster Pheasant – Although winter pickings may be slim, pheasants have found a way to beat the cold. Slabbing on fat during fall, wintering pheasants can survive for days without food. (Photos: LW)

snuggle into spruce boughs, woodpeckers disappear into the dark recesses of excavated tree cavities. As nighttime temperatures dip even lower, many of the smallest birds employ a final survival tactic. Slowing

their normally hyper metabolism, they go into a torpor; a deep, comalike sleep where energy demands decline as internal temperatures temporarily drop. With the appearance of daylight, their engines quickly return to full

throttle.

There is no denying that winter is a stressful, dangerous time of attrition for all wildlife. During years of extreme weather events, mortality runs high.

But given adequate food

sources and substantial cover, enough birds will survive to replace winter losses during spring nesting.

Enjoy more wildlife tales online at Washburn's Outdoor Journal at iawildlife.org/blog

One Iowan's quest for darker skies might benefit rural Iowa

How light pollution can be tackled without turning off the lights

Cami Koons,
Iowa Capital Dispatch

James Bruton grew up in rural Texas where the night skies were full of constellations.

As he moved to larger cities, before ultimately settling in Des Moines, evening star gazing faded away for Bruton and could only be found with intentional trips away from the light-polluted metropolitans.

Bruton hopes rural Iowa can keep that sense of wilderness, lower its electricity costs, help out local wildlife and even benefit from the growing astrotourism market, by enacting "dark sky" ordinances that limit light pollution.

While the effort in Iowa is just getting off the ground, across the globe, nearly 200,000 square kilometers, or more than 77,000 square miles, are recognized as dark sky places by the international, volunteer organization, Dark Sky International.

The open spaces of the west and national parks are the spots most people think of for prime stargazing, but Bruton said Iowa can develop its own dark sky areas

and give people that same sense of wonder, but without a 10-hour drive.

"Most of our days are spent looking at screens ... being able to step away from that and truly just take in something as magnificent as a clear, dark night sky and everything that it beholds, it just creates (a) perspective that we don't get when we live in so much light pollution," Bruton said.

Dark sky doesn't mean lack of visibility

"It's not about turning off the lights," Bruton said.

"It's just about using light wisely so that communities can thrive."

A 2023 published study, analyzing citizen science observations, found that on average the night sky got brighter by 9.6% annually, from 2011 to 2022.

According to the National Park Service the light pollution increase "exceed(s) the population growth rate" and has been caused by more light emitted per capita and more "uplight" or light that is directed or reflected upwards, emitted from fixtures.

Dark Sky International

recommends communities be more intentional with their outdoor lighting, in terms of brightness, direction, purpose and warmth.

The organization has

five principles for "responsible" lighting, which Bruton said would inform dark sky ordinances in a community.

Dark Sky calls for lights that have a "clear purpose" and are only used when needed.

It says light should also be "targeted" so that it doesn't spill beyond where it is needed. Targeted lights could be something like street or parking lot lights that have a cover over the top to direct light down on the street and not up into the sky.

The third principle is that lights should be "no brighter than necessary" with the idea that when something is excessively lit, it causes glare on surrounding surfaces and can be less effective than a dimmer light.

An ordinance could specify, for example, that outdoor light fixtures not exceed 25% of guidelines set by the Illuminating En-

gineering Society, a technical and educational authority on lighting.

The fourth principle asks for controlled lights, those on a motion censor, timer or dimmer so that light is only used when it's needed.

These principles help to reduce energy costs by eliminating unnecessary lights.

The final principle calls for warm colored lights – below 3000 Kelvin – because they are less disruptive to wildlife and don't travel as far into the sky, according to Dark Sky International.

A city could add an ordinance with guidelines on where cool colored lights are allowed, like in a public safety setting or a sports arena, to adhere to this principle.

"An ordinance – it's about protecting what we have," Bruton said.

He said dark sky ordinances shouldn't be prohibitive to new businesses or economic development and can actually make a community appear "more forward thinking."

Potential benefits of dark sky initiatives

Rural areas have fewer lights to manage, but they aren't the only targets for dark sky initiatives. In fact, Flagstaff, Arizona, was the first city recognized as an "International Dark Sky Place" by the organization. In the past two decades, other urban areas like

Breckenridge, Colorado, Moab, Utah and several suburbs of Chicago have earned dark sky designations of their own.

Recently, Thousand

Hills State Park in Kirksville, Missouri, was named an Urban Night Sky Place, one of just 12 in the world.

Listen for more about Thousand Hills' journey to dark skies:

Bruton believes a dark sky designation could be a "boon" for rural Iowa towns.

Modeling in a 2019

published study found that dark skies would generate additional \$5.8 billion from non-local tourists that visited the Colorado plateau over a 10 year span.

"We're not Colorado, we

don't have the landscape,

that they may have ... but

it's still really beautiful here in Iowa," Bruton said.

"There aren't (many) protected dark night skies in the Midwest, and I believe that we have the potential here in Iowa to help preserve our dark skies."

Astrotourism, or the

cross of astronomy and

tourism, relies on dark sky

places. Bruton said this

could make a small rural

town a destination during

an astrological event like

an aurora borealis, meteor

shower or eclipse.

It is estimated that mil-

lions of people traveled

to the path of totality in

2024 to view the total so-

lar eclipse. AirBnB's in the

path were booked solid and

an entire festival cropped up for the astronomical event. While the eclipse was historic, Bruton said it seems like astrotourism is growing.

Beyond a potential cam-

era and telescope-wielding

tourist market, Bruton said a dark sky can help to pro-

teet the "rural heritage" of a community and sense of

community pride.

While some states and

communities create their

own Dark Sky nonprofits

to advocate for reducing

light pollution, Bruton said he hopes to partner with an existing wildlife or conservation nonprofit that is interested in the cause.

"There's no downside,

there's truly just a lack of

awareness right now," Bruton said. "I think that as

people become more aware of this and recognize how

easy it is and how simple

it can be, that we can get

people on board."

Learn more about Bruton's initiative at the Dark Sky Iowa page on Facebook.

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