On the Cover:
Like other streams in northeastern Iowa's Driftless Area, Waterloo Creek is home to a robust population of trout. See story, page 60.
Photographer: Justin Salem Meyer.

A Tribute to Home

Welcome to the seventh annual issue of our statewide magazine, *ia*. Here at Business Publications Corp. in Des Moines, we create numerous local magazines and newspapers, but *ia* is special. For me, as a native Iowan, it's personal. As you read this issue, I hope you'll sense that it is a heartfelt tribute to the beauty and character of our state and its people.

Every state has its unique qualities, of course. But I know of none that rival Iowa's understated beauty, its gentle social grace, its quiet progressivism, its warm and welcoming embrace. Indeed, it isn't the superlatives that define Iowa; it is, rather, the modesty with which the state expresses its finest qualities. It is a sustaining strength that came first from the land and that has been enriched by generations that still feed the world, but who also are now leaders in other industries. So it came as no surprise that U.S. News & World Report put Iowa atop its "best states" ranking for 2018.

To me, being an Iowan is an honor for which I am sincerely grateful. I hope that you share in the humble pride I feel for this state—and that you'll feel it expressed throughout the pages of this publication.

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HOTEL GRINNELL

WHO WE ARE

Hotel Grinnell is more than just a place to stay; it embraces and celebrates the contrast and contradictions of old and new. Erected in 1921, the building served as the city's junior high school until the late 70's and now, nearly 40 years later, it has been repurposed into an independently owned hotel, eatery, bar, and event center. When you stay at Hotel Grinnell, you'll sleep in an old classroom. The former locker rooms have been transformed into a bar, and the old scoreboard now decorates the lounge. The old gymnasium has a new life as a modern ballroom, and the auditorium is now a lively venue for performances, conferences, and weddings.

Hotel Grinnell believes there's something special about soaking in the history of this old building, and we have taken care to add thoughtful touches of the original school throughout. Come find out how Hotel Grinnell merges old-school tradition with new-school attitude.

EATERY & BAR

THE PERIODIC TABLE

The Periodic Table is an urban eatery and drink lab where guests and locals converge to savor interesting cocktails and craft beer, fair trade coffee and specialty shared plates. The patio is outfitted with gas fire pits, lounge seating, music and overhead string lighting. The patio is across the street from Central Park, home to many of the city's outdoor events and equipped with spectacular fountains, shelters and green spaces. The Periodic Table opens daily at 3 pm.

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Situated in the heart of downtown Grinnell, and just blocks away from 17 restaurants and two art galleries, Hotel Grinnell is at the center of Iowa's hottest art, music, and foodie scene. And, with one of the country's most elite private colleges just steps away, Midwestern hospitality meets sophistication and style in a dynamic cultural scene that you won't want to miss.

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Stories in this issue come from across Iowa, from the banks of the Missouri to the cliffs of the Mississippi. Here's a list of some of the places we'll take you. Enjoy the journey.

CEDAR FALLS
CLEAR LAKE
CORALVILLE
DAVENPORT
DECORAH
DES MOINES
DORCHESTER
DUBUQUE
ELKADER
GUTTENBERG
IOWA CITY
JEFFERSON
LANSING

PHOTOGRAPHER: BOB MODERSOHN

A marina on what is locally called Big Lake, a backwater of the main channel of the Mississippi River. See story, page 68.

LE MARS
MAQUOKETA
MARION
MARQUETTE
MASON CITY
McGREGOR
MISSOURI VALLEY
OELWEIN
OKOBOJI
ORANGE CITY
ORIENT
STANTON
WEST BRANCH

Coconut cake with berries at chef Matt Steigerwald's newest restaurant, Rapid Creek Cidery in Iowa City. See story, page 120.

PHOTOGRAPHER: DUANE TINKEY

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In Marion's Uptown district, sculptures and other public works of art transformed a back-alley parking area into a destination-worthy pedestrian plaza. See story, page 104.

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PHOTOGRAPHER: JOHN RETZLAFF

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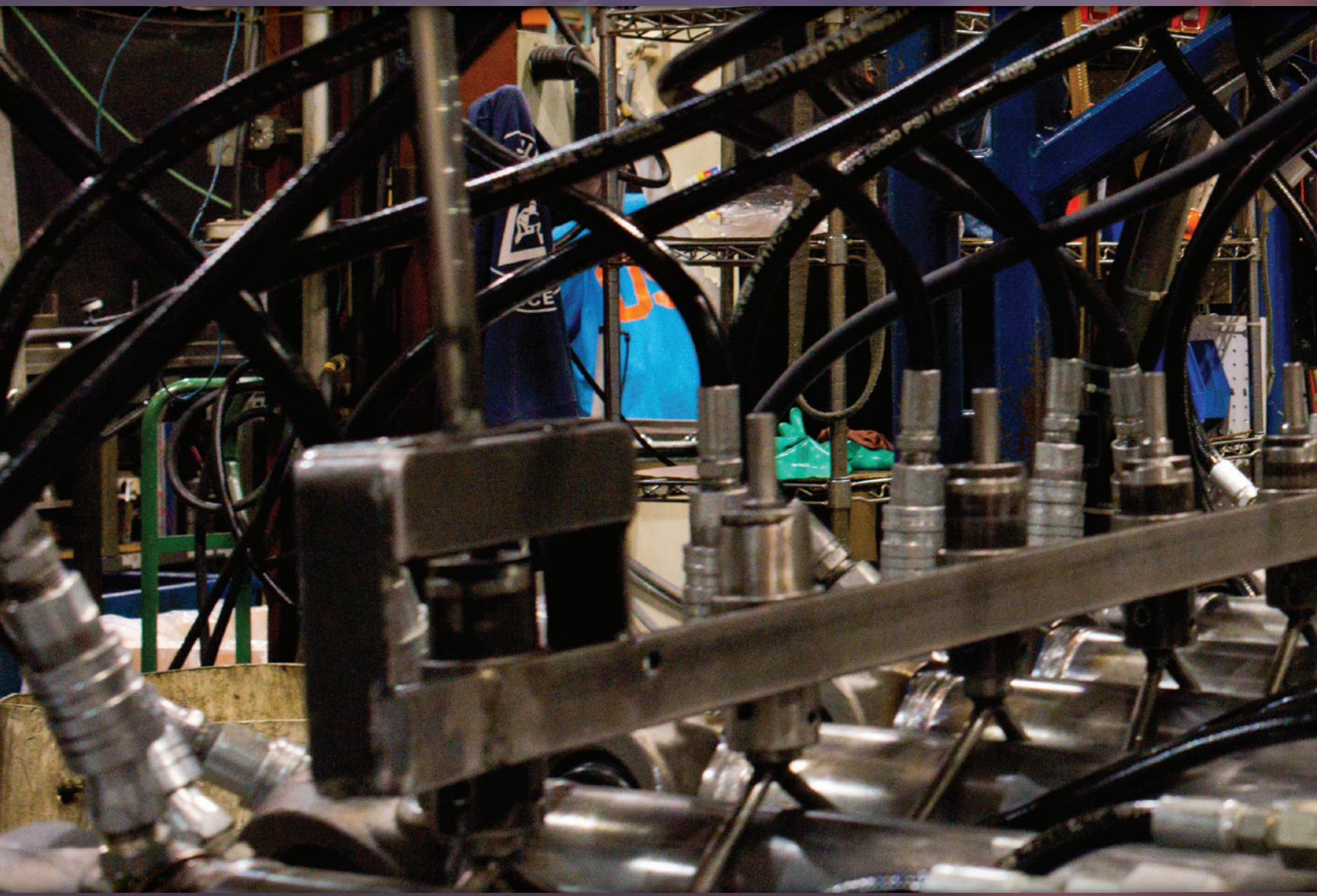

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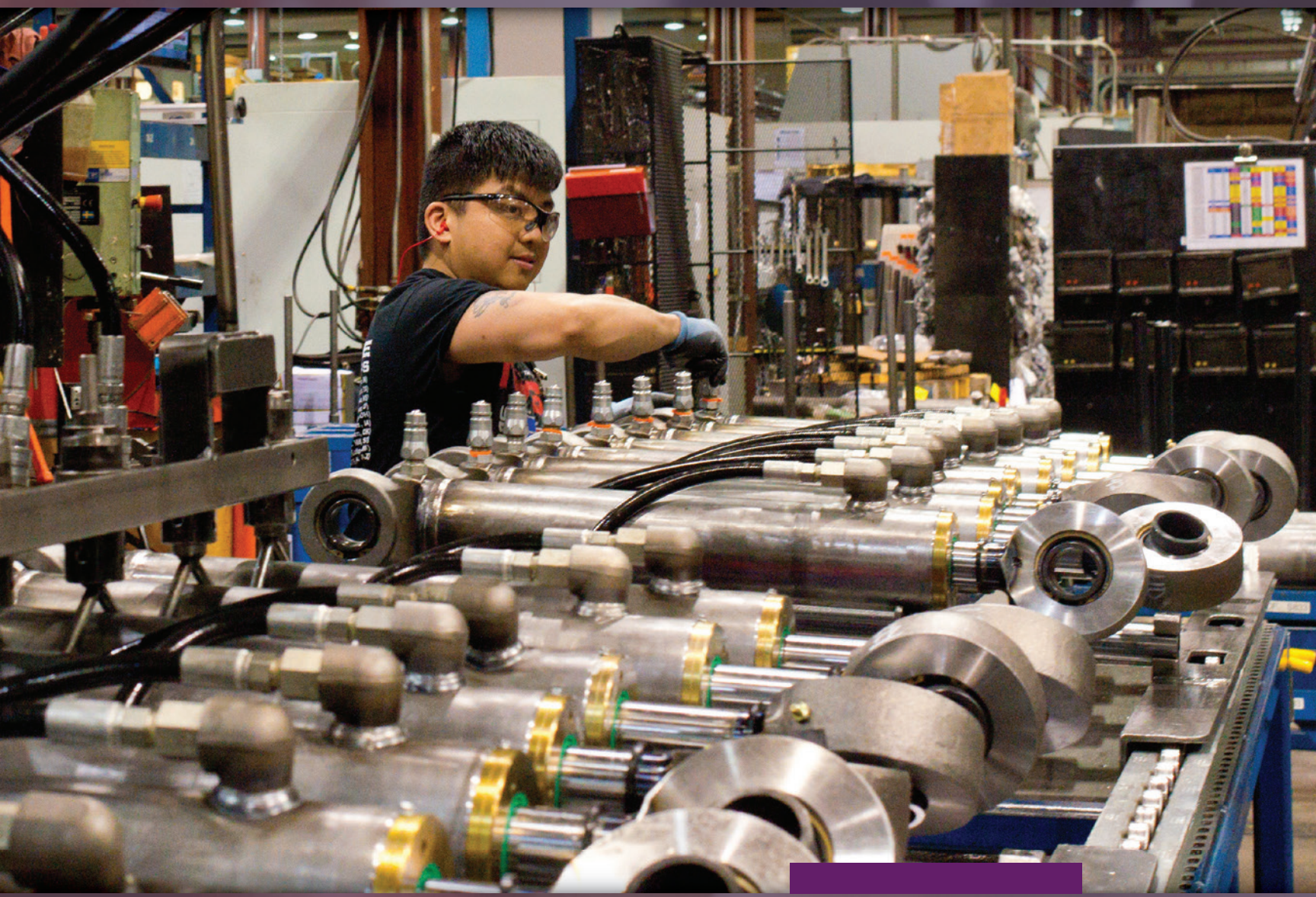

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Clear Lake

COLORING THE WINTER WIND

Writer: Michael Morain

On the third Saturday of February, a kite festival spatters like paint across the blank-canvas sky over Clear Lake. Pull off Interstate 35 and head west into town to see the flecks of color grow into discernible forms—an orange octopus, a Chinese dragon, a yellow whale longer than a pair of school buses parked end to end.

There are hundreds of kites in all, tugging at tethers in the frozen lake. And there are thousands of giddy visitors, shuffling around on the snow-plowed ice.

Organizer Larry Day and his wife, Kay, founded the annual Color the Wind festival more than 15 years ago and have watched it grow far bigger than they ever expected. The event often doubles the town's population of about 8,000.

Friends and neighbors plow the ice and drill holes for the kites' anchors. A DJ shows up to play music, and volunteers help kids craft their own kites at the Clear Lake Arts Center.

But it's the "kite people" who really make the magic. They come from all over, parking their trucks on the ice and unpacking trailers of gear. A stunt team called Fire and Ice choreographs precision kite-flying routines, somehow without getting their lines tangled. Kite surfers zip back and forth away from the crowd, as fast as the wind can pull them.

The weather can be bracing, to say the least, but few people seem to mind. A trio of pandas, a scuba diver and a school of tropical fish, a pig with wings—everywhere you look is another marvel, dancing in the sky.

"I don't care if you're 3 or 93," Larry Day says. "It's peaceful, it makes me smile—and it's fun." ●

colorthewind.org

PHOTOGRAPHER: RON MAGGARD


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Elkader

LIGHT DUTY

Writer: Annette Juergens Busbee

Suspended over a spa in the Four Seasons Hotel in Baku, Azerbaijan, is a light fixture shaped like a giant cloud, 60 feet long and 15 feet wide. In a new rec center on the Louisiana State University campus in Baton Rouge is a 100-foot-long lighting installation called "River."

Both were designed and created at Fire Farm, a custom lighting company in Elkader, a town of 1,200 people in northeast Iowa.

Products developed by Fire Farm can be found throughout North America and Asia. The company sells its custom lighting primarily to interior designers and architects working in the hospitality and other commercial markets.

Founder Adam Pollack says he tries to create lighting that is functional but also artistic and sculptural, experimenting with materials and techniques not normally associated with lighting to see how the light is affected as it passes through. Pollack and his staff discovered that introducing smoke in the powder coating process results in a striking ombré finish on metal, and he has recently started working with felt.

The company also strives to ensure its products set the appropriate tone for the spaces they are designed for. "Lighting should help people connect to the environment," Pollack says. "It should tell the story of what's going on in that space."

Like the one told as part of the expansion of a Madison, Wisconsin, church designed by Frank Lloyd Wright. Fire Farm designed wall sconces using copper strips from the original roof. The side that had been exposed to years of weather had a beautiful patina, while the unexposed side remained a bright, shiny copper.

"We wove the two sides together to symbolize the joining of the original church with the new addition," Pollack says. "It's very simple, but the design tells a meaningful story."

Massive projects that involve many large pieces of different designs can run hundreds of thousands of dollars, but much of the work in a smaller 2- to 10-foot scale is priced between $1,000 and $15,000.

Before starting Fire Farm, Pollack developed theater stage lighting and illusions with light in the San Francisco area. He established Fire Farm in 1991 in Oakland. In 2001, he moved the company to Elkader near his wife's family.

"I feel very blessed," Pollack says. "I have a talented team and this playground I get to explore in every day." ●

firefarm.com

Orange City

THE BEAUTY OF RITUAL

Writer: Jane Schorer Meisner

Artist Yun Shin of Orange City finds meaningful bits of inspiration tucked within the packages she receives from her home country of South Korea. The boxes, frequently sent by her parents, provide important links to home.

"The packages always arrive with a packing slip with one of my parents' signatures, which is very familiar for me," says Shin, a 2016 Iowa Arts Council Artist Fellow and assistant professor of art at Northwestern College. "Also, there are multiple copies of the slip, which is fascinating to me with the way the signatures are filtering all the way through the different layers."

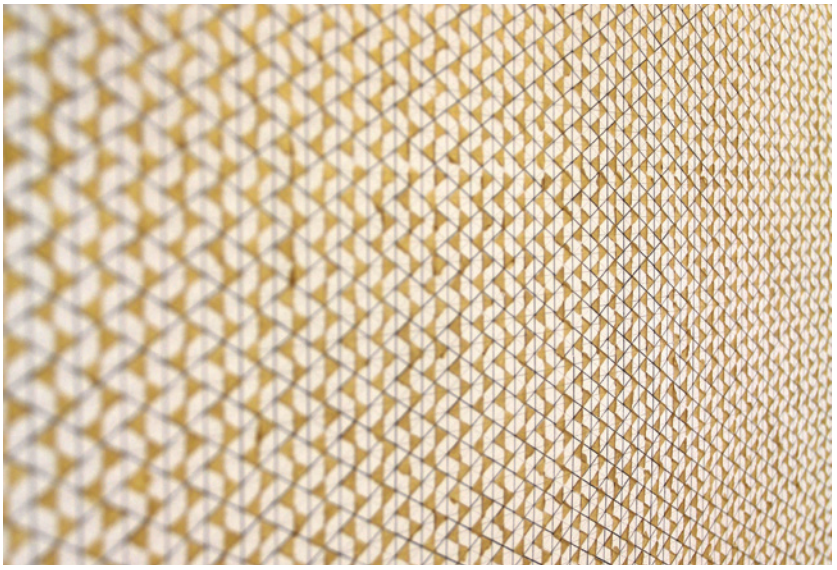
Shin, a 41-year-old who has exhibited in solo and group shows throughout the United States, uses minimal materials—sometimes as little as pencil and paper—to create two-dimensional artwork that often involves repetitive tracings of the same shapes, including her parents' signatures.

"My work is all about process," Shin says. "It involves ritual, repetition, process and a demand for contemplation. Living alone in a foreign culture, the sense of longing predisposes me to practice simple activities daily."

To create her work titled "IMG I," Shin spent six months tracing her mother's signature. "To me, it is a way of reconstructing relationship and remembering home," she says.

For "Sheet," a 90-by-66-inch work, Shin spent nearly a year recreating a pattern that her mother had crocheted to create a queen-size bed sheet.

"I drew vertical and horizontal lines on paper with graphite, evenly every one-eighth of an inch," she says. "Then I started dotting every other intersection with oil paint. Viewers see only the abstract and translucent pattern of dots, which is on the back side of the paper created by the way oil saturates through it."



Above: Detail of "Pattern Study II" by Yun Shin. In her "Pattern Study" series, Shin connects points in a grid until the sheet is filled with rows of geometric patterns.

Left: Shin is a 2016 Iowa Arts Council Arts Fellow and assistant professor of art at Northwestern College.

Shin earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from Chosun University in South Korea in 2000, then moved to the United States, where she earned a bachelor's degree from Virginia Commonwealth University and a master's from the University of Texas at Austin. Soon after, she was hired at Northwestern College, where she teaches courses in painting, drawing, sculpture and ceramics.

"I used to work three-dimensionally when I was in college and grad school," she says. "Teaching painting and drawing has influenced me to move on to a two-dimensional surface. I want my students to know that art-making requires patience and that each stage of the creation process is very important and has meaning."

People sometimes find it difficult to wrap their heads around the time Shin invests in each piece of art, says Phil Scorza, chairman of the art department at Northwestern.

"Her work is deeply personal, and hidden to most is the unrelenting focus and work ethic given to each piece, which seems to be more ritualistic or meditative than an artistic endeavor," Scorza says. "The visual result of this silent investment in her art is powerful." ●

yun-shin.com.

Super Park concept plan

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Dubuque

GROWING A COMMUNITY

Writer: Sophia S. Ahmad

Husband and wife team Mike Muench and Leslie Shalabi of Dubuque share a belief that the world needs more human connection.

"We wanted to use the idea of food as the vehicle for creating that connection," Shalabi says. "I like entertaining and that special thing that happens around the dinner table. I wanted to recreate that feeling in a large way."

After retiring from their positions as partners in an insurance company (Muench) and an international public relations firm (Shalabi), they opened Convivium Urban Farmstead—a privately funded community and campus built around food—in the city's North End neighborhood. Events and programming envelop the entire food cycle: growing, harvesting, preparing, enjoying and composting.

The couple chose an old greenhouse and nursery in the middle of a dense urban block for Convivium, a Latin word for "feast." The 13,000-square-foot property opened in March 2017 and includes a coffee shop, training kitchen, event space and learning center.

Experiences there are integrated. Local community college students chop vegetables in the training kitchen, which are then frozen and used in the soups and quiche served in the coffee shop.

The learning center hosts classes for planting seeds and creating composting bins. Past dining events included a Dinner in the Dark, during which blindfolded diners explored cuisine by heightening their nonvisual senses, and a Middle Eastern Night, which included multiple family-style small-plate courses.

Future plans include completing an aquaponics area (a symbiotic environment for raising plants and fish, mollusks and other aquatic animals), as well as an indoor permaculture orchard. As of press time, the couple planned to list on Airbnb the space above their garage adjacent to Convivium, so visitors can enjoy a weekend-long foodie experience. ●

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Loess Hills

LAVENDER FIELDS FOREVER

Writer: Jane Schorer Meisner

The inspiration for Mary and Tim Hamer's Loess Hills Lavender Farm near Missouri Valley was a fragrant 8-acre field they visited in Washington state in 2005.

Mary, then a computer programmer and lay pastor, was so taken with the lavender that she started plants at her Chariton home to see if they could survive in Iowa's climate. Soon she and Tim, a bank trust officer, purchased a 13-acre farm north of Missouri Valley, near where both grew up. Relatives and friends helped plant rows of lavender there, about 1,200 plants in all. They constructed a gift shop and assembled a kitchen for making balm and lotion.

"I first thought I would just take bouquets to farmers markets," Mary says. "That quickly changed, and the farm took on a life of its own."

Now, thousands of visitors trek to Loess Hills Lavender Farm each year to meander the paths, view (and sniff) the fragrant flowers, cut bouquets and linger in the gift shop, which sells Mary's homemade lavender products along with items from 40 local artists and vendors. The farm has become a popular wedding venue, with rows of plump purple tufts gracing a backdrop of lush rolling hills.

"People come from all over the world to see our little town because of this farm," says Annette Deakins, executive director for the Missouri Valley Chamber of Commerce. "Everyone who comes to see it raves about what a wonderful gem this hidden treasure is."

On designated days, visitors can enjoy American high teas, learn to make lavender wands or other crafts, and sample lavender cookies, lavender lemonade and lavender fudge. A festival called LavenderStock is held the third Saturday in July, during the farm's peak blooming period. ●

loesshillslavender.com

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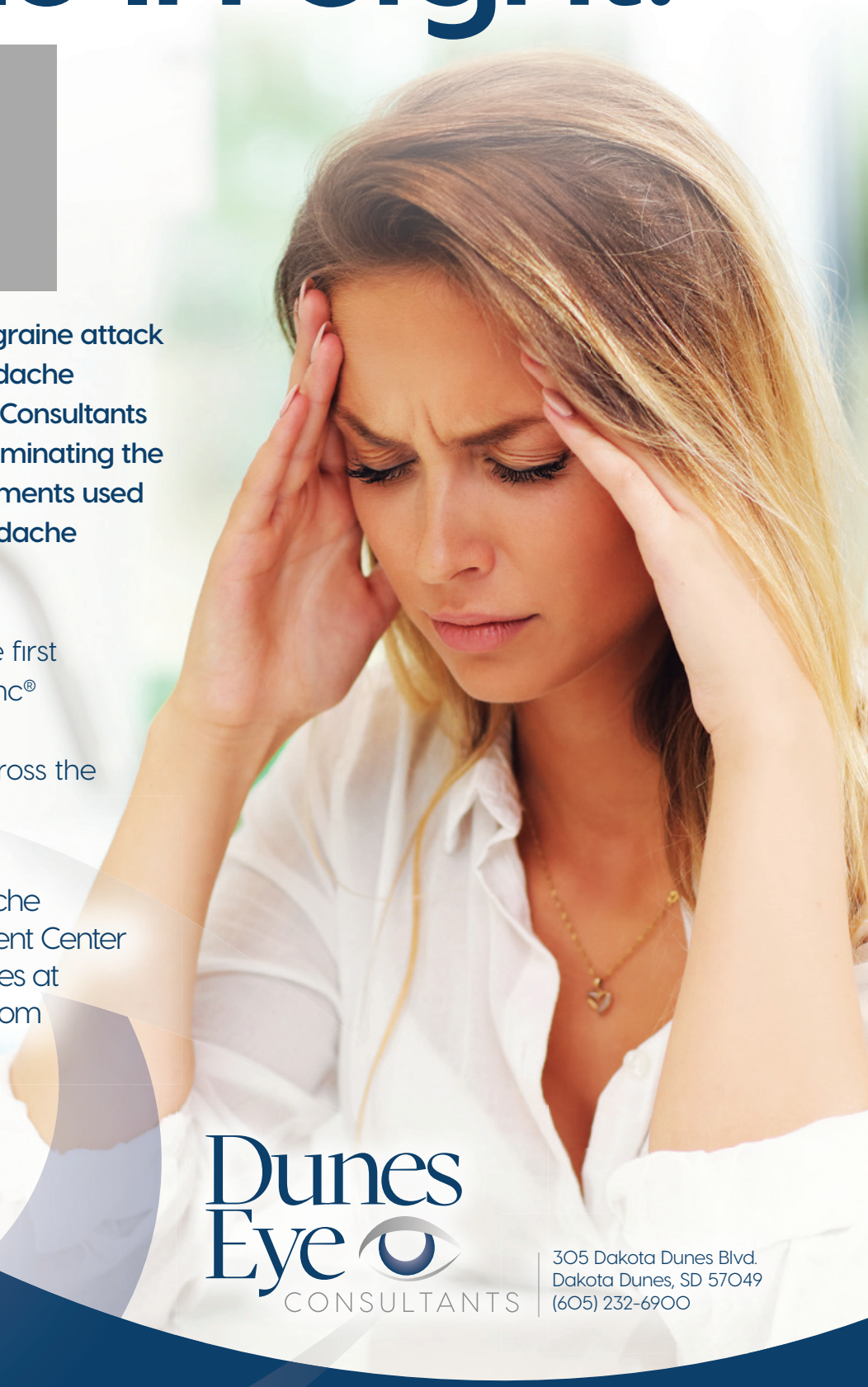

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Okoboji

A TRIP BACK IN TIME

Writer: Terri Queck-Matzie

The Ultimate Man Cave is in West Okoboji: 88,000 square feet of automotive immersion, a trip back in time to when road machines ruled.

Longtime car collector Toby Shine opened Okoboji Classic Cars in 2013 as a showroom and full-service restoration shop. Things took off from there.

Today, a 28,000-square-foot mural and indoor dioramas, painted by local artist Jack Rees, recreate how Grand Avenue in nearby Spencer and Arnold's Park amusement park looked in the mid-1960s.

This works as a backdrop for 87 classic vehicles displayed around the main museum showroom. Period furnishings and collectibles fill the storefronts of Woolworth's, Lunch Drug and of course the local Buick dealership, while guests relive the view of Lake Okoboji from the Arnold's Park midway with its iconic Ferris wheel.

The Arnold's Park Event Center provides space for special events and includes a working drive-in theater that plays era-appropriate films such as "Goldfinger" and "American Graffiti" during tours.

Cars from Shine's personal collection, ranging from a 1915 Studebaker to a 2015 Dodge Challenger Hellcat, line the street in front of the shops.

Shine built Okoboji Classic Cars as a place to store his collection under one roof. But as more people requested to see inside, he eventually opened the doors to the public.

"It's something different, a diversion that's fun," Shine says. • **okobojicc.com**

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Quad Cities

A MUSIC GOLDMINE

Writer: Chad Taylor

In 2006, Quad Cities native Sean Moeller had an idea: Record intimate studio sessions with independent musicians, giving fans a personal, unpolished look at some of their favorite artists.

A dozen years later, his idea, Daytrotter, is a nationally known indie rock institution based in the Quad Cities. Moeller left Daytrotter in 2016, but his concept has continued to grow, churning out as many as 60 songs from more than a dozen bands every week, from up-and-coming bands to Grammy winners and big names like Wilco, Glenn Campbell and Carly Simon. Daytrotter now has a mobile app—made in conjunction with Paste Music—and a 375-seat live music venue in Davenport, which opened in January 2016.

Songs are recorded analog rather than digitally, with no overdubbing or edits allowed. Once released on the website, tracks are accompanied not by a slick press photo, but by Johnnie Cluney's striking, quasi-minimalist illustrations of the artists, originally done in watercolor, now mostly drawn with pen and marker.

But even as the profile of visiting acts continues to grow, keeping that connection to bands from Iowa and the Midwest who were a part of Daytrotter's initial success is equally important to Cluney and the rest of the team.

"Sometimes we're on our conference call for the weekend and someone will ask, 'Why did this band only get a couple hundred views?'" Cluney says. "Well, if it's the type of band that we believe in, even if they only have 200 fans now, they're going to have 2,000 in a few months."

It happens. New York rock band Vampire Weekend played a Daytrotter session on its first tour in 2007, before going on to score a pair of Billboard No. 1 hits and taking home a 2014 Grammy.

"That's the beauty of [the Daytrotter sessions]," Cluney says. "There's a Grammy winner sitting right next to some band you heard in someone's basement." ●

daytrotter.com


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Des Moines and Orient

LIVING TRADITIONS

Writer: Terri Queck-Matzie

The Wallaces, considered America's first family of agriculture, built their reputation on bringing people together over food and farm. Today that proud tradition continues at the Wallace Centers of Iowa's two locations.

"Everything relates in some way back to the foundation laid for us," says Ann Taylor of the Wallace Centers. The family, including ag entrepreneur Henry A. Wallace—former vice president of the United States, secretary of agriculture and secretary of commerce—believed in strong communities, the interdependence of rural and urban areas, and the value of bringing people together in conversation to solve problems.

The Wallace House in Des Moines' Sherman Hill neighborhood is the restored 1883 Victorian home of the Wallace family. Here, Henry A. Wallace's grandparents, Henry C. and Nancy Wallace, made their home and entered the farm publishing business.

The house is now home to farm-to-table dinners, civility lunches, women's leadership lunches, and Hearts and Homes Historic Teas events. All feature programs that are designed to inspire civil dialogue about current issues while food fresh from the farm is served.

"It's neat because that's the kind of gathering and conversation that used to take place there," Taylor says. The intimate setting that can accommodate 20 to 25 people helps foster networking among the guests and with the speaker.

The 40-acre Henry A. Wallace Country Life Center near Orient marks the birthplace of Henry A. Wallace and pays homage to his lifelong dedication to agriculture and rural life.

Above: The Henry A. Wallace Country Life Center near Orient marks the birthplace of the former U.S. vice president, paying homage to his and his family's dedication to rural life.

Left: Fresh produce grown on the Orient farm is used during dinners and events at the center and also helps supply a CSA.

Today at the 40-acre farm, a Gathering Barn provides a modern space for business meetings and conferences as well as private gatherings. You'll also find 12 acres of produce gardens and orchards, along with native prairie outdoor art installations and walking paths.

On weekends through the summer, the Gathering Barn's restaurant serves a menu created with produce fresh from the garden. The gardens also supply produce for subscribers to the Wallace Center's Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program.

"Economically and culturally, we try to make a sustainable difference in our communities," says Taylor. "We're always looking for meaningful ways to connect our past with the present and the future." ●

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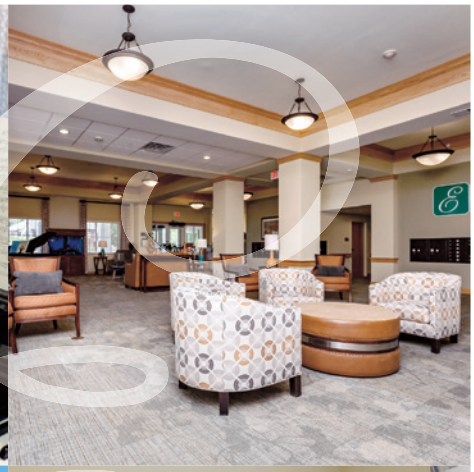

"This community has provided excellent care to my mother and I have been very pleased with her experience. She really likes the dining experience and the interaction she has with the other residents. I also like the fact that they have multiple common areas with great amenities for her to relax throughout the day and not be stuck in her bedroom."
– Resident Family Member

"The community is really awesome! The staff are accommodating and friendly and the facility is kept well maintained. Everything is going so well, and we don't really have any complaints so far!"
– Resident Family Member

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Jefferson

FORGING AHEAD IN RURAL IOWA

Writer: Kellye Crocker

When Pillar Technology opens its newest office in spring 2019, bringing high-tech jobs to downtown Jefferson, a north-central Iowa city of 4,345, there may be only a few employees. But the facility is just an early step of an ambitious attack on rural Iowa's brain drain, and the company plans to "grow" its own team.

"A tsunami of a movement starts here," says Pillar's Linc Kroeger, who has the title of "vanguard of Future Ready Iowa." (He also serves as an ambassador for Future Ready Iowa, a separate state initiative.) "I do expect there will be more [offices] in Iowa—or we wouldn't be doing this one—but we have to learn from this first."

Pillar was founded in 1996 and employs more than 300 people in its Columbus, Ohio, headquarters, plus modern, open floor-plan offices in downtown Des Moines; Ann Arbor, Michigan; and Palo Alto, California. Along with offbeat job titles such as vanguard—defined as leading the way toward new ideas—the company calls its offices "forges" and emphasizes an industry-disrupting ethos.

The technology and software firm has created software for driverless cars and for smart tractors that know the precise angle at which a seed should be planted for optimal harvest. The company also has developed a more efficient, money-saving meter-reading system for a large energy company.

Greene County voters twice rejected school bond proposals in recent years, but last April overwhelmingly approved a $21.5 million bond issue connected to the Pillar project. The bonds will build a new high school that includes a vocational academy, where high school students can take Iowa Central Community College classes, including software development courses.

Linc Kroeger appears on the tablet screen of a telepresence robot used in the Des Moines office of Pillar Technology.

After finishing the Iowa Central software program, students—and anyone with skills, not just new graduates—can then apply to the Pillar Academy at the Jefferson Forge, just off the courthouse square. During the six- to eight-month training, students will work on real-world projects for nonprofits, Kroeger says.

While similar training costs at least $30,000, Pillar students will pay nothing. After completing the training, the students will continue at the Jefferson Forge as employees, with a starting salary of $55,000 to $60,000 a year. That jumps to $75,000 after a two-year apprenticeship, he says. By comparison, Greene County's median household income was $47,264 in 2016 dollars, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

"You have to invest more in this, and that's OK. In tech, there is an extreme shortage of talent. We want to get them before they've left," says Kroeger, who himself left Iowa after graduating from Independence High School in 1986.

He returned in 2015 to open Pillar's Des Moines Forge. That office, across from the Pappajohn Sculpture Park, has 65 employees, about half from rural Iowa. That total exceeds the company's commitment to the state to create 40 high-quality jobs in exchange for $200,000 in incentives, half of which came in the form of a 60-month loan.

Pillar hopes to hire 25 to 30 people at its new Forge eventually, and Kroeger even plans to woo Jefferson middle-schoolers. That project will include hands-on activities—"not just talk," he stresses—and an extra effort to encourage girls to explore STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) careers.

"The idea is to get them engaged earlier," he says. "Show them it's fun." ●

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Obsessively, Relentlessly

At Your Service™

CORPORATE
CITIZENSHIP
REPORT

2018

MIDAMERICAN ENERGY COMPANY

Obsessively, Relentlessly **At Your Service™**

KATHRYN KUNERT
Vice President
Economic Connections and Integration
MidAmerican Energy Company

At MidAmerican Energy, we believe that corporate citizenship is integral to our role as an energy provider because vibrant, growing communities benefit everyone. Being part of a community provides an undeniable sense of pride and belonging.

Our customers and our employees share a pride in the places they call home, value their quality of life, and work hard to make those places where they live, work and play even better. They are committed to enhancing their communities – and we are pleased to have the opportunity to participate in and provide financial support for the things that matter to them. We, too, are friends and neighbors.

I'm pleased to share this Corporate Citizenship Report highlighting how we help make the areas we serve even better by investing in the things that matter to all of us:

- **ARTS AND CULTURE** – A vibrant culture that celebrates the arts and the heritage of all our customers helps make our area unique. We're proud to support organizations that foster the arts and celebrate our region's multicultural heritage.

- **COMMUNITY ENHANCEMENT** – Area residents' commitment to creating spaces where everyone can learn, grow and enjoy being together is part of what makes this region great. We've been fortunate to help enhance local museums, ball fields, recreation centers and shared public spaces to help make these communities stronger for everyone.

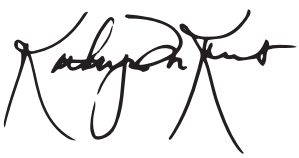
- **EDUCATION** – The future of our region's economy and prosperity lies in our students and their classrooms. We're proud to support educational efforts around STEM, financial literacy and leadership across our service area.

- **SAFETY AND WELLNESS** – A safe, healthy region is a region with a solid future. We support first responders and those who are committed to making sports and recreation accessible for people of all abilities.

- **ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY** – Our commitment to deliver clean, safe, reliable and affordable energy motivates us to help make our region's environment even cleaner and safer for everyone.

The entire MidAmerican Energy team is committed to being "obsessively, relentlessly at your service." That commitment extends beyond providing the energy services our customers depend on to partnering with organizations and individuals across our service area to strengthen the communities we share. We are proud of the communities we serve and privileged to be at your service in these efforts and many more.

Sincerely,



DAVENPORT JUNIOR THEATER

It's a hefty history to live up to: The Davenport Junior Theatre is the country's second-oldest children's theater program. For decades, staff and volunteers have helped kids of all ages turn what they learn on stage into skills that help them communicate, improve confidence, boost creativity and lead. "We cultivate well-rounded citizens and are developing the workforce of tomorrow," says Daniel Sheridan, performing arts supervisor.

And they do it on a shoestring. That's why MidAmerican Energy's support of the Theatre Renovation Campaign was so important, says Sheridan. The Mary Fluhrer-Nighswander Theatre, named after the group's founder, was sorely in need of a renovation. The city of Davenport issued a challenge: Raise $70,000 and the city would match that. The nonprofit raised over $110,000, thanks to the support of individuals and businesses including MidAmerican Energy.

DANIEL SHERIDAN, PERFORMING ARTS SUPERVISOR AT THE DAVENPORT JUNIOR THEATRE

ARTS AND CULTURE

ARTSPLASH

Visual arts have the power to engage and educate. But how do you get more people to experience that power for themselves? Events are a good way to start. In Sioux City, that equals ArtSplash, a Labor Day weekend extravaganza hosted by the Sioux City Art Center. MidAmerican Energy has been a co-sponsor of the Children's Stage for six years and a major underwriter for many years before that. "For 25 years, we've been able to expose countless people to the visual arts and engage them in a way that opens the door for them to come to the Art Center and experience exhibitions and education opportunities offered year-round," says the center's development coordinator, Erin Webber-Dreeszen.

ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY

WIND XII POSITIONS MIDAMERICAN ENERGY TO HIT 100 PERCENT RENEWABLE ENERGY GOAL

MidAmerican Energy will be the first investor-owned electric utility in the country to generate renewable energy equal to 100 percent of its customers' usage on an annual basis, upon completing its newest proposed wind energy project.

WE INVEST FOR OUR CUSTOMERS

We've always had ambitious goals, especially in exploring ways to diversify our energy production and provide lower rates for our customers.

Our customers want more renewable energy – 91 percent of those we asked say it's important to utilize renewable resources. We couldn't agree more. And we're doing it with minimal cost impact to our customers. Our rates in Iowa are the ninth lowest in the U.S. – about 34 percent below the national average.

OUR 100% RENEWABLE ENERGY VISION

In 2004, 70 percent of our generation capacity came from coal and nothing came from wind. At year-end 2017, 49 percent of our generation capacity came from wind and 30 percent came from coal.

In May 2018, we announced that upon completing our Wind XII project, we will be the first investor-owned electric utility in the country to generate renewable energy equal to 100 percent of our customers' annual usage. Those investments make Iowa a national wind energy leader.

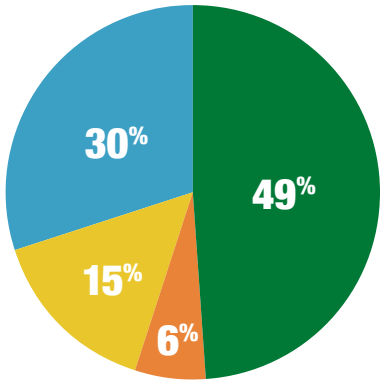
We estimate that the Wind XII project will create more than 300 full-time jobs related to construction and another 28 positions for ongoing operations and maintenance. It will provide additional Iowa property tax payments of $6.9 million per year on wind turbines; in 2017, that totaled $19.6 million.

Generating energy is only part of the solution. To support the integration of renewable energy onto the power grid, we are investing in our transmission infrastructure and working with our transmission provider to ensure it can carry the new power load.

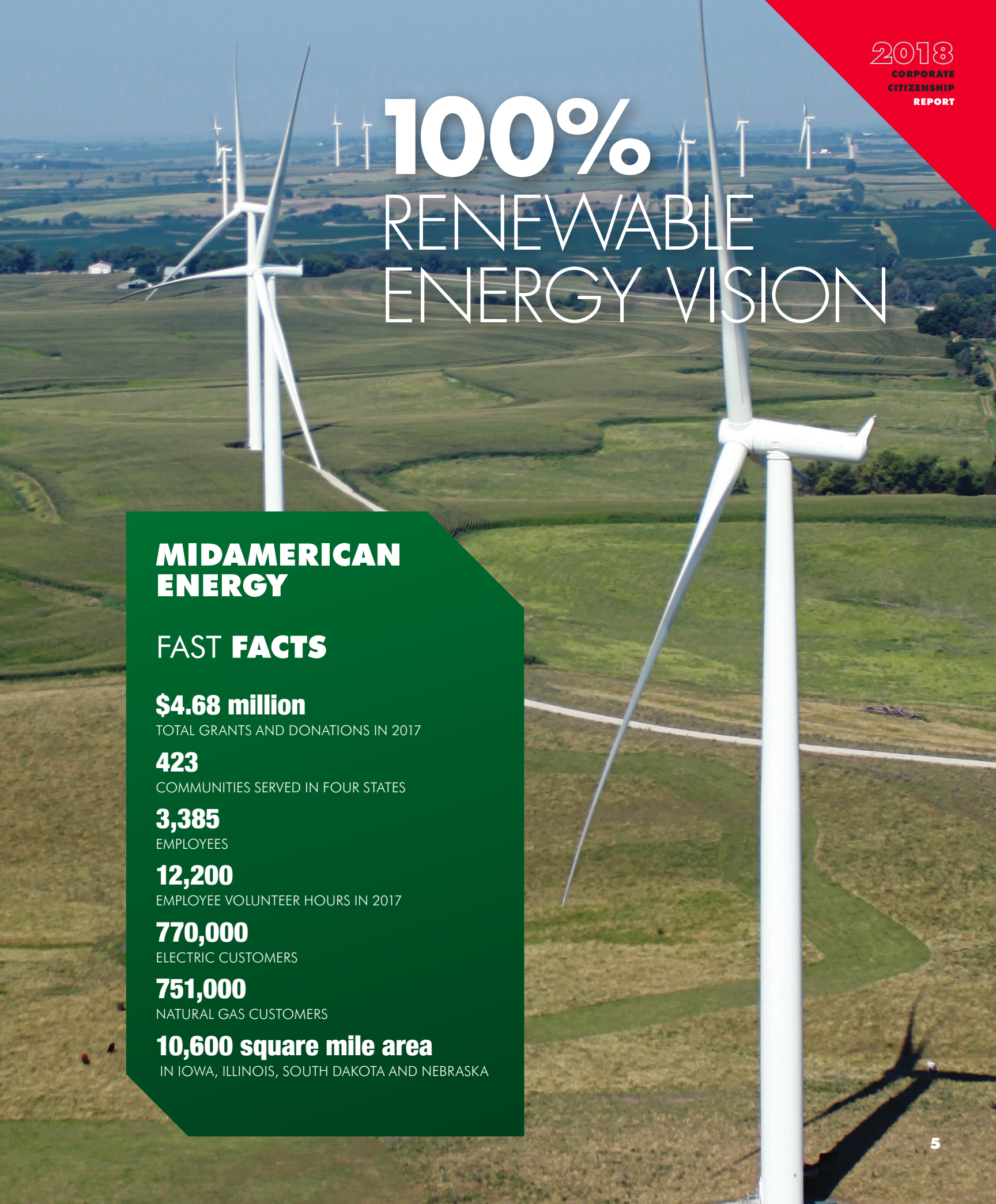
OUR PROGRESS DEPENDS ON YOU

Our progress in providing renewable energy solutions would not be possible without the tremendous support for renewable energy we receive from our customers, supplier partners and community leaders throughout our service territory, all of whom have played and continue to play an important role in our success. Together, we are making energy safe, reliable and affordable for our families. Together, we are enhancing Iowa's economy and revitalizing our communities. Together, we are creating a cleaner environment for generations to come. Achieving a 100 percent renewable energy future will help keep rates low, is great for the envrionment and is important for our economy.

GENERATION CAPACITY



100% RENEWABLE ENERGY VISION



MIDAMERICAN ENERGY

FAST **FACTS**

$4.68 million
TOTAL GRANTS AND DONATIONS IN 2017

423
COMMUNITIES SERVED IN FOUR STATES

3,385
EMPLOYEES

12,200
EMPLOYEE VOLUNTEER HOURS IN 2017

770,000
ELECTRIC CUSTOMERS

751,000
NATURAL GAS CUSTOMERS

10,600 square mile area
IN IOWA, ILLINOIS, SOUTH DAKOTA AND NEBRASKA

EDUCATION

EAST HIGH: PARTNERS FOR PROGRESS

Businesses have long known that there's value in a strong education system. Not only does a well-rounded curriculum create well-rounded future employees, involvement by businesses in schools can provide other benefits like mentoring, modeling and community support. The push to partner schools and businesses began in earnest in the 1970s; at East High School in Des Moines, it took the form of a connection with MidAmerican Energy that became a group called Partners for Progress. It's a relationship that's continued for four decades and is, says Jeffrey Hall, a teacher at East, beneficial for everyone. MidAmerican Energy offers support to a variety of groups at the school.

SAFETY AND WELLNESS

JESUP'S NEW EMERGENCY SERVICES FACILITY MEANS FASTER RESPONSE TIMES

Before the city of Jesup built its new $1.26 million Emergency Services Facility, the old facility from the 1950s was "like sardines in a can," says Mayor Larry Thompson. With the old building's design, someone had to move one emergency vehicle out of the way to access another. Space was limited, so key equipment was stored at a second facility. Not surprisingly, this led to inefficiencies and slower response times for the city's 500 fire and ambulance calls each year. MidAmerican Energy contributed to a new 8,500-square-foot facility, more than doubling the previous space.

CHEROKEE'S NEW MODERN FIRE TRUCK IS KEY TO KEEPING THE COMMUNITY SAFE

This year, the Cherokee Fire Department purchased an $870,000 ladder truck needed to fight fires in multiple-story buildings. Before buying the new truck, firefighters used a 1976 relic that was inefficient to use and expensive to maintain. When the truck failed to pass its last certification, Fire Chief Greg Eaton knew they needed a new truck. The department started a fundraising campaign, to which MidAmerican Energy contributed. "We have the only ladder truck in Cherokee County, which has about 12,000 people," Eaton says. "Without our own certified ladder truck, we'd have to wait about an hour for a truck to arrive from another community."

COMMUNITY ENHANCEMENT

FOOD BANK OF IOWA

Food Bank of Iowa provides over 1 million pounds of food each month to over 175,000 Iowans across 55 counties through more than 500 partner agencies, says Danny Akright, communications manager. “It is the foundation of a very complex system,” he says. The food bank was operating out of a facility suffering from 40 years of deferred maintenance. MidAmerican Energy provided support for the ***Fighting Hunger, Feeding Hope*** capital campaign to renovate the Des Moines distribution center. “Before renovation, our facility could not accommodate the capacity needed to meet the needs of food-insecure Iowans,” Akright says. “MidAmerican Energy’s support enabled us to move forward with this mission-critical project at a time when resources were limited.”

ELK HORN’S HISTORIC DANISH WINDMILL — A PREDECESSOR TO MODERN WIND TURBINES

More than 40 years ago, the tiny community of Elk Horn purchased a historic Danish windmill. The 1848 windmill was disassembled in Denmark and shipped to Iowa in hundreds of pieces. MidAmerican Energy donated the use of a boom truck and an employee to help 300 volunteers reconstruct the windmill. Today, the windmill is the heart of this community of 650 people and drawing almost 50,000 visitors each year. After hosting visitors for 40 years, the windmill needed significant restoration to continue functioning for the next 40 years and beyond, and MidAmerican Energy contributed to that capital fund. “We have a special appreciation for the common bond we share with MidAmerican Energy in wind energy,” says Lisa Riggs, manager of the Danish Windmill.

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WEST BRANCH

GARDEN

A spruce tree in the garden of Ed and Kelli Rinderspacher near West Branch, site of the 19th Conifer Rendezvous, an annual gathering of Iowa conifer lovers.

FOR THE LOVE OF CONIFERS

ANNUAL RENDEZVOUS FOSTERS FELLOWSHIP AMONG THE TREES.

WRITER AND PHOTOGRAPHER: KELLY NORRIS

Every summer, a cadre of gardeners assembles somewhere in Iowa to celebrate conifers together.

There are no long lines waiting to get in. Rain is rare. You don't need a passcode, although if you know the difference between a spruce and a pine, it will make conversation easier.

For the last 19 years, this grassroots gathering known as the Conifer Rendezvous has brought together diehards to celebrate their favorite cone-bearing trees and shrubs—and their connections to each other. For these Iowans, Arbor Day just isn't enough.

PROPHETS OF NEEDLES

This homegrown evangelism for conifers seems to stem from a few prophets of needles and cones, including Gary Whittenbaugh. The Oelwein resident and his brother Tom organize the Rendezvous each year, sending out invitations to a growing list of followers. They also serve as official greeters at the host garden, chatting up visitors by the vanloads, most of whom are old friends.

"We didn't want to call it a meeting," Gary Whittenbaugh says. "We wanted to get people together without the pressure of anyone getting elected for something. We decided to call it a rendezvous."

The event began as a friendly, low-cost alternative to the formal meetings organized by the American Conifer Society. "We've had 125 people before. That was 2010," interjects brother Tom, referring to the year it took place in the Whittenbaugh brothers' famed garden in northeast Iowa.

He thumbs through a three-ring binder that serves as an unofficial archive for the unofficial affair, his index finger tracing over a printed spreadsheet of years, numbers and locations. "About 40 percent come every year," he says. "Depending on where we have it, that seems to determine the rest of the group."

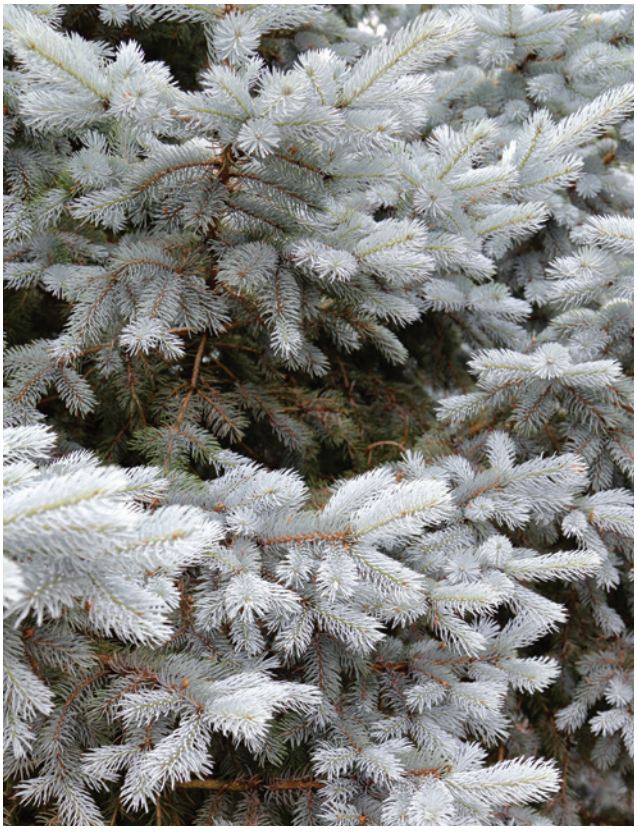
The last few years, many more nursery and landscape professionals have shown up, Gary says. "They come because they have customers with a lot of interest in conifers. Seeing the trees in gardens like this gives them ideas."

The first Rendezvous took place over the course of a weekend, but afterward, attendees voted overwhelmingly for a one-day event. It's been a Sunday confab ever since, moving around the state, although rarely west of Interstate 35. (There aren't that many conifer gardens in western Iowa.)

Both Whittenbaughs credit that itinerant strategy for expanding interest in the gathering, which hasn't needed much publicity outside of social media to fire up the conifer congregation.

"When I put a conifer on Facebook, I get more hits than anything else," says Gary, who can rattle off his top-performing posts in botanical Latin.

Continues on page 50



Clockwise from top left:
A white spruce tree in the Rinderspacher garden.
A JW Daisy white Alberta spruce tree.
Conifer Rendezvous co-founder Gary Whittenbaugh.
A Coors Colorado blue spruce tree.

Conifer Rendezvous attendees chat in the garden of Ed and Kelli Rinderspacher. The gathering of conifer lovers has met once a year at a different garden in Iowa for the past 19 years.

"WE WANTED TO GET PEOPLE TOGETHER WITHOUT THE PRESSURE OF ANYONE GETTING ELECTED FOR SOMETHING. WE DECIDED TO CALL IT A RENDEZVOUS."

GARY WHITTENBAUGH

Continued from page 46

WEST BRANCH GATHERING

This year, the Rendezvous began just north of West Branch at Ed and Kelli Rinderspacher's garden, a veritable arboretum surrounded by horizon-long lines of corn and hay. Their collection spills down a hill surrounding their farmstead, featuring handsome trees grown to masterful effect.

As hosts, the Rinderspachers served as the starting line for the day's festivities, which featured a box lunch (the only thing guests have to pay for) followed by an open house-style tour of four other gardens in the Iowa City area.

The 19th edition also earned a historic footnote: It rained.

Ed Rinderspacher, a certified arborist who owns a landscape maintenance business, is a veteran of the cloudless prior gatherings. "I've been [on this farm] 23 years. The windbreak was here. That was it," he says, pointing toward a row of aging silver maples as he describes the two-decade effort that established this landscape to a small group gathered within earshot.

"I didn't realize it when we moved in, but as we've lived here and improved it and put our heart and soul in it, it has good karma. It's just a beautiful place that we love to share."

The Rinderspachers' four-acre garden is a series of "rooms" with walls of trees, often built to replace trees before them. Each room features a particular grouping of trees or other plants, like voodoo lilies, a recent obsession. All good collections need a gallery space for proper display. "This one over here will get as big as our heads," he says, pointing to a barely emerged leaf that will bolt skyward in tropical fashion over the course of the next month.

As the group wanders from room to room, some lingering to chat or take photos, Ed keeps the ambling tour moving along. "That's the Carolina hemlock," he says, pointing toward a small tree in a border along the driveway. Carolina hemlock is a rare plant in its native range in the southeast, but a trophy in the gardens of collectors. He rattles off three other hemlocks within eyesight, all cloaked in soft, brightly colored new growth.

GOOD COMPANY

Most of the 100 or so gardeners, from all corners of the state plus Wisconsin and Illinois, agree: You come for the trees, but stay for the people. Yet the trees are the fellowship's currency—compare notes, trade insights, tell stories and yearn for the latest and greatest. Those are the rules of the rendezvous.

Chief among storytellers is Dennis Hermsen, a nurseryman from Farley who hasn't missed a Rendezvous in 19 years. By way of introduction, he likes to say he introduced the Whittenbaugh brothers to conifers, which sort of makes him a godfather of the Rendezvous.

"You can't blame it all on me," he says with a laugh.

Hermsen is the institutional memory of the gathering and a repository of vast amounts of knowledge about trees and their origins. He's explored the Rocky Mountains for trees, and he grafts unusual finds that he will sell to collectors and landscapers. But for all his encyclopedic memory, Hermsen says he comes for the gardeners he's met along the way.

"The plants in many cases I've seen, but I always find new ones, too," he says. "Mostly, I like to see my friends again." ■

Clockwise from top left:
A Diana Japanese larch tree in the Rinderspacher garden.
Kelli and Ed Rinderspacher, hosts of the 19th annual Conifer Rendezvous.
Rendezvous attendees gather in the Rinderspacher garden.

CEDAR FALLS

DESTINATIONS

PHOTOGRAPHY: CEDAR FALLS TOURISM & VISITORS BUREAU

36 HOURS IN CEDAR FALLS

AFTER THREE DECADES OF RESTORATION AND RENOVATION, THIS UNIVERSITY TOWN'S COMEBACK IS COMPLETE. HERE'S HOW TO ENJOY IT.

WRITER: WINI MORANVILLE

Popular bars and restaurants line Main Street in downtown Cedar Falls.

Cyclists stop while biking through downtown Cedar Falls. The city's core is home to more than 100 miles of hard-surface bike trails.

Until recent years, the only experience I'd had with Cedar Falls was when the Rolling Stones made a stop at the UNI-Dome late into their 1981 tour. Dressed in a flashy oversized sweater and candy-colored leggings, I made a lightning trip from one college town, Iowa City, to another. After the concert, my fellow travelers and I crashed on the floor of a friend of a friend of a friend. The next day, we headed back early enough for our driver to clock in for a morning work shift.

Had we lingered, there might not have been that much to see. Following retail's rush to the malls in the 1960s and '70s, many of the shops in the city's historic downtown had closed or decamped. According to Kim Manning, manager of the Cedar Falls Tourism and Visitors Bureau, by the mid-'80s, the wrecking ball loomed: Proposals to raze swaths of Main Street's desolate and disused Victorian and early-20th-century buildings were afoot.

Even the Blackhawk Hotel, once a sparkling jewel in Main Street's crown, slipped into decline; its lobby eventually housed a Greyhound bus station, and the hotel's rooms were, according to Manning, "partially set up for longer-term stays for those who were down on their luck."

What a difference three decades make. In 1987, a Community Main Street program stepped in to save the city's core. A significant step along the way was the restoration of the former Cotton Theatre. In 1994, the 1910 Italian Renaissance-style building was restored and renamed the Oster Regent Theatre. It now houses the Cedar Falls Community Theatre.

"Once the theater was restored, a coffee shop opened, then a restaurant, then another," Manning says. In the early 2000s, the down-and-out Blackhawk Hotel was completely restored, with modern comforts and vintage splendor, by new owners Dan and Kathy Tindall. Dan Tindall died in 2017, and the hotel is now owned by Mark Kittrell, a developer who recently upped downtown's ante with River Place, a new residential-commercial project a block from Main Street.

After 30 years of partnerships between various community organizations, Main Street's comeback is complete, and today, downtown Cedar Falls buzzes with 30-some bars and restaurants, dozens of boutiques, plus entertainment venues, a gaming arcade, tattoo shops and day spas. But don't worry, it's not too cute: A few dive bars, a thrift shop and an offbeat, packed-to-the-gills model train shop keep downtown a little funky.

Even more impressive—and of interest to the active weekend traveler—is how the lively city's core seamlessly connects to outdoor recreational opportunities, including over 100 miles of hard-surface trails. Once you get downtown, you can enjoy an entirely car-less weekend escape.

In the past few years, I've visited Cedar Falls on four occasions, with stays ranging from one night to three. **Turn the page to see my perfect 36-hour itinerary for a great weekend getaway.**

From left: A room inside the restored Blackhawk Hotel; SingleSpeed Brewing Co.; Whiskey Road Tavern and Grill.

FRIDAY

6 p.m.: Step Back in Time

Stay downtown. That way, you can park your car once and forget about it until Sunday. Fans of historic hostelries must snag a room at the **Blackhawk Hotel**. Built in the late 1870s and redesigned in 1914, the building combines Second Empire and Mission-style architecture—to me, it feels more Old West than Old World. Each room is different, but the ones I've stayed in (or stolen a peek at) meld mod cons with unfussy period style, flaunting such details as stamped tin ceilings, heavy wood furniture atop floral-patterned carpeting, and long, narrow windows, some of which look out onto Main Street. Expect armoires instead of closets; on a recent stay, ours even had an atmospherically creaky door.

6:30 p.m.: Choose Your Brew

After settling into your digs, snag a craft beer at one of the breweries on or near Main Street. Both **SingleSpeed Brewing Co.** and **Second State Brewing Co.** offer pleasant patios where you can shrug off your workweek and start to soak in the amiable vibe of this historic-yet-vibrant downtown.

7:30 p.m.: Dinner at Whiskey Road Tavern and Grill

I've found no highbrow gastronomy in Cedar Falls. However, what I found at **Whiskey Road Tavern and Grill** was something that's often even harder to chase down: truly gratifying, thoughtfully prepared casual American food. The downtown hot spot serves a crowd-pleasing array of burgers, sandwiches, steaks and down-home specialties such as fried chicken and ribs. Better yet, they do so with care: The steaks are hand-cut, the shrimp hand-breaded, and much else on the seven-page dinner menu is homemade, from the tortilla chips to the pretzel bread. I especially recommend the prime rib, served Thursday through Saturday nights.

Whiskey lovers will revel in the 11-page menu offering more than 100 options from America and overseas. Beer lovers need not feel slighted: The 10-plus taps offer craft selections, and always include a barrel-aged option.

After Dinner

Stroll up and down Main Street, lit by period-style lamps, from the 1871 Rock Island train depot (now the offices of a financial services firm) to the end of downtown, and you'll pass century-plus-old brick and stone buildings in a variety of architectural styles of the times. In 2017, a portion of Main Street, from about First to Fifth streets, was added to the National Register of Historic Places. (A number of buildings, including the Blackhawk Hotel and the Odd Fellows building, were previously added to the Register.)

From left: Cottonwood Canyon coffeehouse and café; Wilbo Burgers and Brats; Little Prairie Girl home décor and clothing shop.

SATURDAY

8:30 a.m.: Perk Up

The Blackhawk Hotel offers a simple breakfast buffet. However, if you're jonesin' for some serious coffee or something more substantial to eat, head to **Cottonwood Canyon**. Located in a cozy house a block off Main Street, this coffeehouse serves espresso drinks as well as breakfast burritos and sandwiches. P.S.: If a picnic is in your lunch plans, consider scoring a wrap or sandwich to go.

10 a.m.: Take It Outside

Bring your bike, snowshoes or cross-country skis—or rent them at area outfitters, including **Bike Tech** (for bike rentals) and **Europe Cycle and Ski** (for snowshoes and skis). The looped system within the **Cedar Valley Trails Network** allows you to start and finish a trek downtown without having to retrace your path. Many of these paved, multi-use recreational trails skirt or traverse the Cedar River, including the popular Cedar Valley Lakes Trail, part of which winds through **George Wyth State Park**. This 1,200-acre park encompasses four lakes, vast woodlands, plenty of picnic spots and six miles of soft-surface trails.

For an easy yet rewarding walking trek that will get you back in town for lunch, drive to the parking lot of **Big Woods Lake** and hike the two-mile trail that rings the lake and also takes you through woodlands and a restored prairie.

Lunch: Refuel

Outdoorsy types will probably want to stick to the trails for much of the day. If you're biking the entire 17 miles of the Cedar River Loop, stop for tacos, sliders and other casual fare at the beer garden of the Waterloo outpost of the **SingleSpeed Brewing Co.** Just a few blocks from the South Riverside Trail section of the loop, the brewery is housed in a renovated historic Wonder Bread factory.

If you're heading back to downtown Cedar Falls for the afternoon, eat heartily at **Wilbo Burgers and Brats**, a relative newcomer to Main Street. The well-crafted burgers can be topped with a variety of goodies such as smoked Gouda, crispy mac and cheese and beer cheese sauce.

Afternoon: Shop and Spa

Independent boutiques line both sides of Main Street. It's worth spending a leisurely afternoon poking in and out of the great variety of shops, offering everything from bridal wear to sportswear, with plenty of jewelry, handbags, dressy fashions, housewares and home decor in between.

Anyone who can remember the 1950s, '60s and '70s must pop into **Miss Wonderful**. Filled with well-curated and beautifully displayed collectibles, the cheerful vintage shop will feel like a museum of your early life. If modern prairie style is more your beat, check out **Little Prairie Girl** for rustic home decor and boho-chic clothing. When it's time for a snack, snag some gelato at **Chocolaterie Stam**, a cupcake at **Scratch Cupcakery** or some caramel corn at **Here's What's Poppin'**.

Hikers and bikers can gratify their weary muscles with a treatment at a


From left: Here's What's Poppin' popcorn shop; Miss Wonderful vintage shop; a view of Gateway Park downtown.

SATURDAY continued

downtown day spa. **Jiva Salon Spa** and **Kate & Co. Salon and Spa** both offer a range of massages, as well as other spa and beauty services, including facials, waxing and hair and nail care.

Toward the end of the afternoon, stop for a thoroughly civilized tea break at the **Tea Cellar** and its more than 50 loose-leaf teas. Take some home, but also be sure to enjoy a cup—alongside a locally baked sweet, if you wish—in the soothing and modern limestone-walled room. After tea, take a gander through **Basket of Daisies**, the elegant home-furnishings store upstairs.

6 p.m.: Craft Cocktails and a Song

Slide onto a seat at **Figaro Figaro's** handsome blue-lit bar for a craft cocktail and some bar bites, and you might just hear someone spontaneously break into song. The restaurant is owned by actor, performer and former "Saturday Night Live" cast member Gary Kroeger, who sources many of his talented server-singers from nearby University of Northern Iowa.

7 p.m.: Settle In for More Song … or Move Up the Street

Head to **Montage**, a multilevel restaurant with an impressive wine list housed in an old brick building. Choose a booth in the stylish bar area or a white-clothed table in the more staid dining room. Or, settle into the upstairs lounge, with both soft seating and high-top tables.

Whichever spot you select, you can enjoy a solid menu of flatbreads, pasta, steaks and a good mix of chicken and fish options. Most menu descriptions include buzzwords often found at contemporary venues. For example, Hoisin sauce glazes bacon-wrapped scallops; prosciutto and arugula top a chicken flatbread; and chipotle sauce livens up the crabcakes. On a recent visit, we enjoyed a piñon-crusted chicken breast and a simple but well-wrought margherita flatbread.

8:30: A Little Night Music

Venues on or near Main Street that offer live music most weekends include **Cup of Joe**, a popular Main Street coffeehouse; the **Brass Tap**, a casual corner bar and grill with over 300 craft beers; and Figaro Figaro, which has live jazz in an upstairs lounge. If you're willing to go farther afield, check out the live music page at cedarfallstourism.org for a monthly schedule of musical events that includes what's happening on the Hill (the business district near UNI's campus) and in nearby Waterloo.

SUNDAY

Sleep in and soak up as much of the Blackhawk's easygoing charms as long as you can—your manic modern Monday will come soon enough. After breakfast at the hotel, enjoy a quiet Sunday morning walk by the river. Before you head out of town, swing by **Cup of Joe** for the caffeine you need to get you back home. ■

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DRIFTLESS AREA

PARADISE FOUND

SEARCHING FOR TROUT IN THE RESTORED COLD-WATER STREAMS OF IOWA'S DRIFTLESS AREA.

WRITER: KEVIN HANSEN
PHOTOGRAPHER: JUSTIN SALEM MEYER

The sun rises on Waterloo Creek just outside of Dorchester.

Right: A fly fisherman shows off a brook trout caught on South Pine Creek. Decades of conservation and restoration efforts have sparked a comeback for the three species of trout in Iowa waterways, including the brook, the only one native to Iowa.

It has been said many times, repeated many times, and it's true: Trout live in beautiful places.

I was fortunate to grow up in a family that spent most weekends outdoors, fishing in ponds and lakes with spinning gear. We camped at state and county parks, and woke up early to fish for bass, crappie and catfish off a 16-foot aluminum boat. But central Iowa, where I grew up, has vast farm fields and some muddy rivers that don't bring to mind anything close to a fly fishing paradise.

It wasn't until my early 20s that I discovered the cold, clear spring creeks of northeast Iowa. I'm still a little bitter it took so long.

I owe everything about my progression as a fisherman to the trout in the Driftless Area—a pocket of Iowa with big bluffs, rocky limestone outcroppings and small creeks that remain cold year-round. Inside those creeks are colorful fish that dart away at the sight of my shadow and eat insects from clear water that washes over rocks and into runs.

My trips to northeast Iowa became more frequent. Each visit, I explored new streams with names like Bloody Run, Waterloo, Coldwater Creek and Trout River. Most of the time, I was alone with the birds, the trees and the bugs. I taught myself how to cast, assemble a rod, tie flies and master new knots. I learned how to fish all over again.

I don't golf or own an expensive road bike. I fly fish, so I can spend time outdoors, dipping my hands and feet in clear natural water, and for the challenge of catching a big fish on a small fly. I tumble upstream, turning over rocks to find insects, casting to fish I can see or to where I think fish should be.

"DON'T YOU HAVE TO GO TO THE MOUNTAINS TO FLY FISH?" I hear this all the time, and it always presents an opportunity to talk about the fishery we have here in Iowa. We don't have mountains and big waterways overflowing with large trout. What we do have are uncrowded, intimate cold-water creeks and streams in a corner of the state, with robust populations of stocked and wild fish.

The Driftless Area occupies more than 20,000 square miles of land along the Mississippi River in Iowa and surrounding states. The glaciers that pushed loose rock and gravelly soil, called drift, into the deep valleys across Iowa and the rest of the upper Midwest never reached there, so a rugged terrain of trees and spring-fed creeks that stay cool all year long—a necessity for trout—remained.

Settlers arriving in the 1800s began clearing timber from the hillsides and planting crops. This caused soil and sediment to fill the valleys and raise or bury the streambeds, degrading the native trout habitat and depleting the populations.

Decades of federal and state streambank and watershed restoration, plus work by conservation groups like Trout Unlimited, and robust stocking efforts—native brook trout, plus rainbow trout from the American West and brown trout from Europe—sparked a comeback for these waters.

In the early 1980s, only four or five streams supported natural trout spawning. Today there are 80, according to Michael Steuck, regional fisheries supervisor with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources. Some of the most productive of Iowa's 100-plus cold-water streams have trout populations now approaching 2,000 fish per mile of water—hard to believe just by looking at these slips of shallow water, many of which are only 10-15 feet across.

And it's big business. According to an Iowa DNR study, trout fishing in Iowa added $22.8 million to local economies in 2016, most in the small towns and

A cold-water stream flows through the timber in the Driftless Area. Trout swim through more than 100 streams in northeast Iowa, sometimes with populations approaching 2,000 fish per mile of water.

Left: Like in other Driftless streams, the spring-fed water in South Bear Creek rarely freezes, meaning fishing for trout continues even in winter.

Below: A fly fisher releases a healthy brown trout back into an Iowa stream. Brown trout were imported to America from Europe in the late 19th century and now establish their own natural populations in suitable streams.

communities around Driftless streams. Fishing at one trout stream near Manchester in Delaware County (population about 5,000) contributed about $1.35 million to the local economy that year.

THIS PAST MAY, I HOSTED A GROUP OF NEW FLY FISHERS at Prairie Song Farm on Waterloo Creek, just outside the town of Dorchester in Allamakee County. The house on the property is nestled in the valley about a hundred yards from the stream. Row crops covered the land until about 15 years ago, when restoration efforts began to transform this slice of the valley back to native prairie and create a habitat for trout.

Two smaller streams feed Waterloo Creek on the property. One, revived from a small spring that trickles just off a gravel lane, was once choked off by crops and weeds but now provides good spawning water. For the last year this has been my first choice to bring people new to Driftless fly fishing, to show them what this part of the state looked like before it was settled. By the end of a trip they understand places like this are worth protecting.

I can't remember having a better weekend of fishing in Iowa. When we arrived, the prairie grasses were up along the banks. The water had only a touch of color to it, close to clear. You can't see the cold water flowing out of the limestone outcroppings upstream, but you can feel it every time you release a fish.

We fished mostly small puffy flies with ant and beetle patterns. Behind the flies we attached tiny emergers. We tossed them across the stream to the opposite bank, and one after another, the fish rose to ambush the flies before diving back underwater. Once they realized they were hooked, the trout jumped, ran, or just held in the current, depending on their size. Our group caught dozens of brown trout in the 10- to 12-inch range, with a few up to 16 inches, large for this area.

WHENEVER I TRAVEL OUTSIDE THE STATE TO FISH, I catch myself talking to my guide or fishing partner about Iowa waters. How the state is home to one of the largest collections of limestone spring creeks in the world, full of beautiful trout. How every stream has its own personality. How once a season I'm able to catch a 20-inch brown trout in a foot of water. How on a Tuesday in spring I might have miles of stream all to myself, with just a short drive to the next one.

Each time I am excited to make the trip to the Driftless from Des Moines. A few hours in, the topography starts to change. I start to change. When I'm on the water, I feel like a little kid with a magic wand that can make trout appear. I hold in my hand something wild for a moment before letting it go. It never gets old. There is mystery in something you can never master. ■

Kevin Hansen is a lifelong fisherman who guides fishing tours throughout the United States. He opened Rod & Rivet, a Des Moines fly fishing shop, in 2018.

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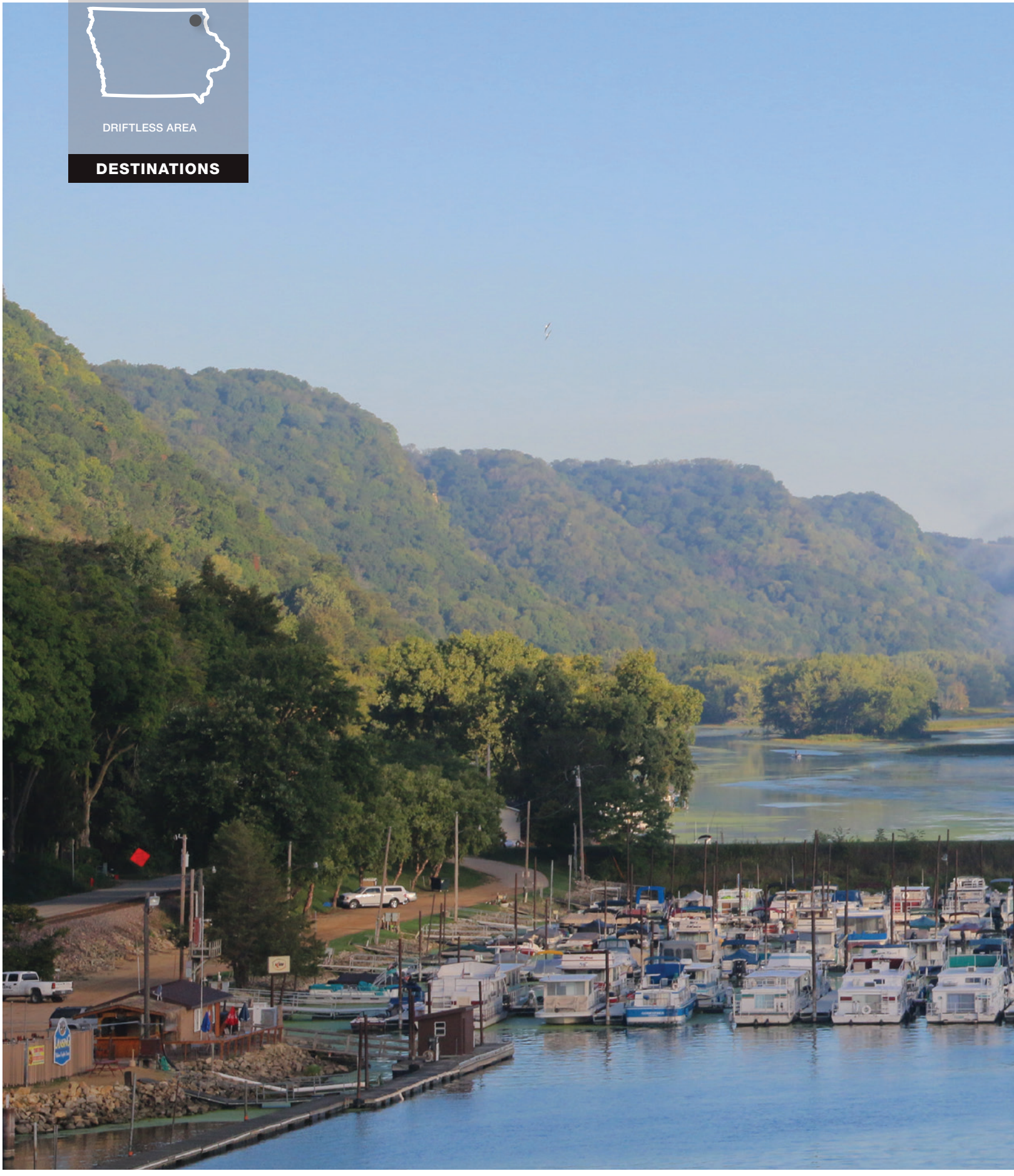
DRIFTLESS AREA

DESTINATIONS



A view looking north from the Blackhawk Bridge near Lansing shows a marina on what is locally called Big Lake but is actually a backwater of the main channel of the Mississippi River.

THE DRIFTLESS

A LAND OF LIMESTONE CLIFFS, SCENIC BYWAYS AND CAVES IS UNLIKE ANY OTHER PLACE IN IOWA. EXPLORE IT BY CAR, ON FOOT OR ON THE WATER.

WRITER: ELLEN MODERSOHN
PHOTOGRAPHER: BOB MODERSOHN

Leaning on my front deck railing last spring, watching the last of the winter ice floes drift down the Mississippi River, I saw a large bird lift off from an island straight ahead. The North American bald eagle, a common sight here in northeast Iowa, gained altitude heading my way, changed course slightly, and reflected the sun off its white head and tail feathers.

Behind the eagle, a long line of American white pelicans wound along, heading north. They flew single file, their own feathers bright against the dark bluffs on the Wisconsin side of the river, a thousand-foot kite tail in a lazy breeze.

Hundreds of bird and wildlife species live in or pass through the Mississippi Flyway, a main avian migration route that stretches the length of the United States. Inside the flyway, this section of the state is also part of the Driftless Area, a landscape unlike any other in Iowa.

Bird-watching is just one of the dozens of outdoor activities that draw people to the Driftless, which comprises parts of northeast Iowa, southeast Minnesota and southwest Wisconsin.

The land escaped the last three of the four glaciers that scrubbed most of the upper Midwest into gently rolling hills. Drift—the hodgepodge of rocks and soil that glacial ice pushed along—filled in the deep valleys across the rest of Iowa, but in the northeast corner, rugged terrain remains. This area, encompassing approximately 2,600 square miles of Iowa, received the drift of only the first glacier, and that eroded long ago—hence the term driftless.

Water had a much bigger impact on this area than ice. Over hundreds of millions of years, rivers such as the Mississippi, Upper Iowa, Turkey, Volga and Maquoketa cut down through the area's soft sandstone and limestone rock, revealing its colorful layers. Paddlers on these rivers pass towering bluffs that look like giant layer cakes.

In addition to lofty bluffs, the area is pockmarked with sinkholes and caves that form underground drainage systems. This topography makes for a varied outdoor playground. Iowa's Driftless Area can be explored from the top of its bluffs to its river valleys to the underground bottom of its caves.

THE VIEWS

Driving the **Driftless Area Scenic Byway** is a good way to take in the scope of the scenery. The byway traverses 100 miles through Allamakee County's bluff-lined river valleys and along twisting ridge-top roads. On U.S. Highway 18 east of downtown Postville, a brightly colored Iowa Byways sign points out the turn onto the Driftless route.

A gravel portion of the route follows the Yellow River past cattle farms with weathered red barns, then climbs steeply to reveal a vista of distant hills, receding in fading shades of blue-gray.

Turning north from the river, the byway takes County Road B25 through **Yellow River State Forest**, with options for camping, picnicking and hiking the heavily wooded hills. The byway first comes to the Mississippi River at Harpers Ferry. The Driftless route overlaps the Great River Road byway for about a mile and climbs a final gravel road into the bluffs north of town, zigzagging back west.

Big-sky and farmland views along Elon Road stretch for miles as drivers weave along one of the area's highest ridges into Waukon, the Allamakee County seat, home to the spacious **County Home Park**, with picnic areas, walking trails and a fishing pond. Just over a mile north of town, past the only stoplight in the county, a renovated barn houses the Green Valley Getaway bar and grill.

The byway continues northeast to Lansing along state Highway 9, traveling another scenic ridge. Farms fall away like a quilt on either side before the road rolls down to the riverside town of Lansing. The Tiki Bar at the marina on the

A turkey vulture soars over Mississippi River backwaters in the Driftless Area. These birds are humorously referred to as a “tourist eagle” by local birders as visitors commonly mistake them for the statelier American bald eagle.

north edge of town is a popular place to watch boats, and Lansing's **Mount Hosmer City Park** offers spectacular views of the river valley.

The byway heads north from Lansing on state Highway 26, with views of river backwaters and avian wildlife all along the way. Almost to the Minnesota border, the route turns west again, hugging the Upper Iowa River between wooded bluffs, ending up near Dorchester, a town renowned for its trout fishing. A short drive south on state Highway 76 puts travelers back in Waukon.

Outside of the byway, hills along the Mississippi River south of Harpers Ferry provide other impressive views. The tallest bluffs in northeast Iowa are between Guttenberg and Pikes Peak State Park (near McGregor), with Pikes Peak the tallest at 500 feet. The park is named for Zebulon Pike, sent to explore the Mississippi Valley in 1805 after the Louisiana Purchase, and overlooks the confluence of the Wisconsin and Mississippi rivers.

THE HIKES

Effigy Mounds National Monument, three miles north of Marquette on Iowa Highway 76, is the state's only national monument. The park holds 206 known effigy mounds constructed by tribal cultures for ceremonial and burial purposes.

Albert LeBeau, cultural resource program manager with the National Park Service, says the mound building period started about 2,000 years ago and lasted for about 1,500 years. Some mounds in the monument are simple conical or linear shapes, but 31 take the form of animal effigies such as bears and birds, reflecting their builders' kinship with nature. Archaeologists have not determined the

Panoramic view of the iconic Blackhawk Bridge, and the main channel and backwaters of the Mississippi River, near Lansing, taken from the lower overlook on Mount Hosmer.

IT'S CLEAR WHY MARK TWAIN CALLED THIS AREA "THE FINEST PART OF THE MISSISSIPPI."

An American bald eagle perches on a limb above the Upper Iowa River along its Chimney Rock stretch, northwest of Decorah.

purpose of the mounds that do not contain burials, but some think they mark celestial or seasonal observances.

LeBeau says human remains have been found in some of the mounds, as well as obsidian tools from the Yellowstone National Park area, flint tools and projectile points from the Knife River region of North Dakota, copper from Michigan's Upper Peninsula and shells from the Gulf Coast.

"It's unclear if the local people traveled that far or obtained the items through a trade network," LeBeau says.

Well-maintained but often steep hiking paths wind through blufftop woodlands and around the mounds, including lookouts with expansive views of the Mississippi Valley. Cross-country skiers and snowshoers use the paths in winter.

In the north unit, start at the informative visitor center and hike a two-mile loop, or continue up to seven miles round trip, stopping at scenic river overlooks along the way. The south unit offers hikes inland up to four miles long with the monument's largest grouping of bear-shaped mounds. A hidden gem, the Sny Magill Mound Group (south of McGregor off Clayton County Road X56), has more than 100 mounds.

Yellow River State Forest, consisting mostly of hardwoods, is Iowa's largest block of timber. The Paint Creek Unit offers seasonal camping, snowmobile and horse trails, canoeing, camping, and fishing (six miles of stocked trout streams), in addition to year-round hiking trails that climb bluffs and plunge into ravines and grassy bottomlands. State Forest Road leads into the park 11 1/2 miles north of Marquette, off of Iowa Highway 76.

A walk along the 2 1/2-mile dike toward **Lock and Dam No. 9** is an easy way to see the Mississippi up close without a boat. The dam is on the Wisconsin side of the river, but the dike stretches over from the Iowa banks. Varieties of ducks, geese, cormorants, tundra swans, eagles, herons, egrets and pelicans swim and feed in this area, depending on the season. Wooded bluffs and prairie bottomlands line the water on both sides. It's clear why Mark Twain called this area "the finest part of the Mississippi."

Guttenberg's two-mile river walk provides insight into the life of a historic Mississippi River town as well as great views over the water and **Lock and Dam No. 10**. The former lockmaster's house is open to visitors, and an aquarium showcases the types of fish that live in the Mississippi. Driving to Guttenberg along the Great River Road is worth the trip for the scenery alone, offering majestic views in any season.

THE WATERWAYS

The small rivers of the Driftless and Mississippi backwaters are ideal for kayaking and canoeing. One of the most popular paddles is the **Upper Iowa River Water Trail**, which meanders 136 miles from LeRoy, Minnesota, to New Albin, Iowa. There are many put-ins along the way for shorter trips. Stretches northwest of Bluffton run between

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If You Visit, Start Here

The Driftless Area Education and Visitors Center, just south of Lansing along the Great River Road, helps visitors understand the lay of the land. The center opened in 2017 to explain how the Driftless Area came to be, the types of wildlife native to the area, and how people have survived along the Mississippi River for centuries.

Exhibits include videos about the region's caves, displays of native reptiles, historic photos and maps of Allamakee County, a collection of tools used by indigenous peoples, and wooden fishing and clamming boats that were used on the Mississippi.

Two covered decks offer views north toward Lansing and its historic Blackhawk Bridge. A Canadian-Pacific freight train may rumble by on the rails below or a towboat may head downstream, pushing a tethered load of up to 15 barges. Fishing boats enter the river from the boat ramp next to the center, and in summer pleasure boats zip by, pulling skiers and inflatables. And overhead, in the flyway, soar eagles, pelicans, herons, egrets and more, feathers flashing in the sun.

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colorful bluffs and striking waterfalls. The Upper Iowa is generally a lazy float, with a few short riffles. On warm days, tubers enjoy the float too.

An excursion boat ride is an easy way to experience the big river. Maiden Voyage Tours, open Memorial Day through October, offers 90-minute rides on a 49-passenger boat leaving from the McGregor landing.

THE CAVES

Driftless geology is on display up close at **Maquoketa Caves State Park**, south of Dubuque off of U.S. Highway 61. The park's 13 caves range widely in shape and size, from Dancehall Cave—with walkways and lights—to the tiny Dugout Cave. All are linked by more than seven miles of trails and boardwalk through dense woodlands.

Interesting geological formations along the way include a 50-foot-high natural stone bridge over Raccoon Creek and a 17-ton rock balanced on another enormous boulder.

Many of the caves were formed through a "solutional process," says Scott Dykstra, the Iowa Department of Natural Resources ranger assigned to Maquoketa Caves. As rain filtered through the drift, Dykstra says, its makeup changed to a weak carbonic acid, which slowly eroded the rocks. Also, the water table in the area used to be much higher, with underground rivers and streams that eroded the limestone. Then the water table lowered and the caves opened up to where people can enter them.

There are known caves throughout the Driftless area and probably many more undiscovered because they don't have access points, he added.

Arrowheads and pottery made by early cultures have been found in some of the caves, particularly Dancehall Cave. Dykstra speculates that native peoples visited the caves seasonally, hunting certain animals or harvesting berries and camping there.

Visitors can download a map of hiking trails and caves from iowadnr.gov and should bring a flashlight to navigate the caves. The park was closed for most of 2018 to complete an upgrade to its campground electrical system and to repave the main park road, but the caves are generally open mid-April to mid-October. Closure in the winter allows the bats that live in the caves to hibernate undisturbed. Hiking trails and campgrounds are open year-round. ■

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DECORAH

DESTINATIONS

Pompeii IPA is canned in the brewing and packaging facility at Toppling Goliath Brewing Co. in Decorah.

Right: A perfect pour of Rover Truck Oatmeal Stout.

IF YOU BREW IT, THEY WILL COME

BEER FANS FROM ALL OVER THE COUNTRY ARE FLOCKING TO TOPPLING GOLIATH BREWING CO. IN DECORAH, A NEW DARLING OF THE CRAFT BEER WORLD.

WRITER: JANE BURNS
PHOTOGRAPHER: MARY WILLIE

Clockwise from top left:
Bartender Nick Cardona pours a beer at Toppling Goliath Brewing Co.

Owner Clark Lewey oversees the canning of Pompeii IPA in the brewing and packaging facility.

Toppling Goliath brewmaster Mike Saboe inspects the machinery inside the brewery's new facility.

The industrial-style taproom features two levels, with ample space to accommodate large events.

Decorah always has held the quaint draw of a college community, the dramatic landscape, the trout fishing, the Norwegian heritage, the Whippy Dip's ice cream, the popular bald eagles that nested there. Yet city and park officials knew the town of 8,000 people had even more to offer and sought out what might add to its appeal, including the years-long work to open the Trout Run Trail in 2012.

For all of that planning and effort, though, it turns out it was something much simpler, something they hadn't planned, that got people to flock to Decorah: Beer.

More precisely, beer from Toppling Goliath Brewing Co., which since launching in 2009 has rocketed from a home brewer's dream into a national phenomenon.

The unexpected tourist attraction now looms large—both metaphorically and physically—over the northeastern Iowa city with award-winning beers crafted at its new taproom and 35,000-barrel production facility in an industrial park atop a hill on the southern edge of town. "One day early on I went to Toppling Goliath, got the last parking spot and said to myself, 'I'm the only Winneshiek County car,' " says Rick Edwards, who for 19 years served as director of the Decorah Parks & Recreation Department as it worked to enhance the city's quality of life and boost its status as a destination. "Now mine might be the only car that isn't from out of state. It's great to have a bike trail, and people will come from maybe Cedar Falls to ride it; but if you make great beer, people come from both coasts."

Beer lovers travel the hilly roads in search of brews that have been celebrated by websites as some of the best in the United States—and the world. They crash computer servers trying to sign up for a lottery to win the privilege of paying $100 for two bottles of a limited-release beer, or they spend more than $1,000 a bottle on secondary market websites. They camp overnight and wait for hours for a chance to come into the brewery for special releases that might not even be available when they get through the door.

"It's worth it to be able to try," says beer fan Erika Osborn, who has driven from Kansas City, Missouri, and has waited outside for 12 hours on a wet, wind-whipped March day for a chance to buy Assassin Imperial Stout on the release day of the limited brew. "There are few beers in the country that live up to the hype, and this is one of them."

CREATING A HYPE THAT MAKES BEER GEEKS behave like tween girls screaming for their favorite boy band wasn't really what Clark Lewey had in mind when he launched Toppling Goliath. He was just tired of driving to Rochester, Minnesota, or La Crosse, Wisconsin, to find his favorite beers.

"It was absolutely dreadful," says Lewey, a 53-year-old Waukon native who now lives in Decorah. "You couldn't go out to dinner and get a nice stout or a hoppy beer, and it was already catching on everywhere else in the country."

Then in 2008, Lewey's wife, Diane, gave him a beer-making kit for Christmas. Immediately, Lewey went big and bold, taking what was supposed to be a simple amber lager recipe and making it hoppier. It didn't go well. He scorched the stove and was banned from the kitchen.

But he persisted and soon was sharing his hoppy brew with friends and people he met in the beverage industry from his time as a merchandising equipment supplier. When he developed an easy-drinking beer that pleased people

Continues on page 86


GOLDEN NUGGET
TOPPLING GOLIATH BREWING CO.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Toppling Goliath has brewed dozens of varieties of beer since it was founded in 2009. Here's a sample of some of its labels.

Toppling Goliath: Owner Clark Lewey didn't name the company because he planned to take down big brewers; It was a name he already had registered. In 2002, he founded a consulting company to help other would-be entrepreneurs overcome the goliaths that get in the way—patents, financing, regulations. He set aside the business for other endeavors but kept the name. "When I started the brewing company, I thought, 'That's a great name.' "

Dorothy's New World Lager: Though the brewing company is known for its strong, hoppy beers, its first beer was a crowd-pleasing, easy-drinking lager named for Lewey's grandmother.

PseudoSue: Brewer Mike Saboe wanted to change the recipe for the company's Tsunami pale ale, so he called it "pseudoTsu." That didn't sit well with Lewey. "People were already calling it *tuh-soo-nami* and now they'd be calling it *puh-sway-doh-tuh-soo* so I changed the name to PseudoSue." The beer sparked a partnership between Toppling Goliath and the home of that famous dinosaur named Sue, the Field Museum in Chicago. All of which pleased Lewey, who explains, "My mom's name is Sue, and I grew up loving dinosaurs."

Assassin: Lewey and Saboe were in the brewery wondering what to name the imperial stout they were making. "Someone said it was going to be a killer imperial stout," Lewey says, "so one of us just said, 'Let's call it Assassin.' "

Golden Nugget: A customer named Bryan stopped by the original taproom and dropped off some hops for the brewery to try. It was a Nugget variety, known for its bitterness. “So we called it Bryan’s Golden Nugget,” Lewey says. “We called him and said he should come try it because it was pretty good. He walked in and saw it on the board and said, ‘You even named it after me!’ and I said, ‘Yeah, but if it ever goes anywhere, we’re going to have to drop the Bryan.’ He was OK with that.” Golden Nugget, an IPA, is now one of Toppling Goliath’s signature beers.

SR-71: This barrel-aged imperial stout exists in a sort of secret world at the brewery, not unlike the high-speed stealth aircraft the U.S. Air Force developed in the 1960s. (Lewey is an Air Force veteran.)

Zeelander: It’s not easy to name a beer, Lewey says, because there are more than 6,000 breweries creating so many brands. “This one, we just made it up because the hops were from New Zealand. There wasn’t anything else with that name, so we trademarked it.”

Scorpius Morchella: A double IPA named for (but not made with) the morel mushrooms that are a passion of Lewey and others on the brewery staff. Saboe first created the beer just for the staff to drink at its annual spring day off taken to hunt for mushrooms, which includes a feast of morel dishes.

A visitor makes a purchase at the Decorah facility, where a variety of Toppling Goliath apparel, glassware, posters and related beer gear are for sale.

Continued from page 82

who weren't hopheads, he knew he had landed on a business opportunity and moved quickly to capitalize.

"I was possessed," says the personable Lewey, whose friendliness can't mask the focus, energy and enthusiasm that are the hallmarks of an entrepreneur.

Within a year his hobby became a business plan and that business plan became a 1,200-square-foot brewery and taproom that soon ran out of its own beer on a regular basis. The spot near Luther College couldn't have been more Iowan—across from a Casey's and up the street from a Pizza Ranch.

Soon after, Mike Saboe, a recent University of Iowa pharmacy graduate, wandered into the taproom to talk beer. Saboe had caught the beer-making bug as an exchange student in Germany, where teenagers regularly drank beer and where he was able to try new styles and varieties.

"When I got back I wasn't old enough to buy beer, but I was old enough to buy the ingredients to make beer," says Saboe, now 32.

He and Lewey hit it off. Lewey quickly handed over the brewing reins to Saboe and gave him the green light to create beers that fully featured the hops he would find all over the world, acquired through commodity markets like other agricultural products.

Though the brewery began with the easy-drinking, customer-friendly Dorothy's New World Lager, Lewey and Saboe knew their strong IPAs and pale ales would differentiate Toppling Goliath in the beer market.

First, there was a pale ale—lightly colored, strong-flavored—called Tsunami, then another called PseudoSue that gained attention. An IPA—stronger and sometimes bitter—called Golden Nugget picked up buzz too, thanks to word of mouth and favorable reviews throughout the online beer community.

"Those beers were doing *the* thing that everybody wanted," says Michael Agnew, a certified cicerone (beer professional) who writes and teaches about beer through his Twin Cities-based business, A Perfect Pint. "You can add in scarcity; that's always a big factor in beer. They didn't have very wide distribution, and 'can't get it' almost always translates into 'gotta have it' with beer."

WHILE TOPPLING GOLIATH'S DISTRIBUTION was limited—at first only in Iowa and Wisconsin—the brewery gained attention fast on popular beer websites such as RateBeer and BeerAdvocate.

Spreading his creative wings, Saboe began to experiment, and Toppling Goliath's limited-release beers only fed the frenzy. When BeerAdvocate named the brewery's Kentucky Brunch Brand Stout the best beer in the world in 2015, and RateBeer named Toppling Goliath the second-best brewery in the world, Decorah became a destination for emerging beer tourism.

Those who couldn't get to Decorah would search online beer forums for Toppling Goliath truck sightings, then follow them around to get their hands on whatever was being delivered.

"That part of the craft beer world is insane," says Decorah native Benji Nichols, an early Toppling Goliath customer and co-publisher of Inspire(d), a magazine that features northeast Iowa. "There are people who get it and people who don't. There are truly people who will come from all over the world to stand in line."

To keep up with demand, Toppling Goliath moved production beyond the taproom's half-barrel brewhouse into a 10-barrel facility in 2010, then built a 30-barrel operation in 2013. The company outsourced some of its

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IF YOU GO:

Toppling Goliath's new taproom opened early in 2018 at 1600 Prosperity Road in Decorah.

Tours are available.

For more information on the beer, the taproom, merchandise and more, go to tgbrews.com.

production, creating a partnership with Florida-based Brew Hub to brew its four signature beers, and using another contract brewer in Wisconsin. But still it wasn't enough.

Enter the shiny new brewery on the hill.

Brewing began at the $15 million facility in late 2017. The taproom that opened in February features an open but outdoorsy feel that tips its hat to the beyond-beer passions of its owner—the staff gets a paid holiday to go morel mushroom hunting—and a production facility that shines with stainless steel. The two-level taproom can hold 700 people, which allows for more events than the previous space could handle. Beer fans can book a tour, and ambitious plans are underway for a restaurant to match the caliber of the beers.

The facility is built for growth. It was designed to expand production to 100,000 barrels, part of Lewey's 10-year plan. Toppling Goliath is still brewing some of its beers in Wisconsin, but soon every drop will be made at the new Decorah facility.

"We are here for the long haul," Lewey says.

LEWEY'S PRIDE AND JOY is a top-of-the-line Steinecker brewhouse—the equipment to produce beer, not a building—he calls a "true Rolls-Royce." Crews from seven states and four countries worked on the German-engineered machinery.

The new facility also includes a laboratory with two technicians, and a canning line that churns out 250 cans a minute. Staff size ballooned to 49 by spring 2018, with more hires planned.

Being a regional brewery that could get some national attention was always a goal for Lewey, even when he was experimenting with small batches in the original taproom.

"I tell people this all the time: Clark told me exactly what he was going to do. I'd sit at the bar, he'd serve me a beer and tell me his dreams—and he nailed it," says Edwards, the former parks director. "The key is he's a good businessman who is good at brewing and not someone who can brew beer trying to figure out business."

Not everyone liked the growth. It's human nature. No one likes to see a thing they love suddenly belong to the world.

"When they moved up the hill there were people who said, 'Oh, it's getting too big, I'm not going to go there anymore,' " Nichols says. "And sure, there are some of us who lost our neighborhood hangout, but now what we have is a world-class taproom in our town that is drawing people from all over the country."

WHAT WINS OVER THE LOCALS is what Toppling Goliath's success has done for the community. The brewery staff asked local retailers to research local impact on a beer release weekend, and estimated the result at $1 million. That number includes brewery sales plus the 2,000 visitors to the town of 8,000 spending $150,000 in restaurants and $265,000 on lodging, as well as clearing out local grocery stores of all the craft beer.

Other new breweries are flourishing, too. Pulpit Rock, not far from the original Toppling Goliath taproom, opened in 2015. Pivo Brewery in nearby Calmar opened last year. And a new business popped up to cater to them all: a shuttle service called Bru Hop.

"There's a huge economic impact," says Stephanie Fromm, executive director of Winneshiek County Development Inc. and owner of a vacation rental that hosts Toppling Goliath fans from around the country. "They come here for the release and they shop downtown, they eat downtown, they explore the community."

Things haven't really settled down for Toppling Goliath, and probably never will. That's OK with Lewey. Distribution of Toppling Goliath beer will continue to grow, with a goal of being available in all 50 states (it's currently for sale in 12). The brewery will soon begin making sour beers, which are gaining in popularity, at a yet-to-be built site in Decorah, and Lewey wants to open a taproom on the West Coast. His plan to have a national presence seems to be coming to fruition.

"This was a hobby business for me," Lewey says. "Not anymore. Now I'm in deep." ■

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DES MOINES
CULTURE
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An embroidered eagle adorns a silk flag the Fourth Iowa National Regiment flew in the Spanish-American War. Most flags are stored flat, in big drawers, to minimize deterioration.

CARETAKERS OF HISTORY

DEEP BENEATH THE STATE HISTORICAL MUSEUM SIT TENS OF THOUSANDS OF ARTIFACTS FROM IOWA'S PAST. MEET THE PEOPLE WHO PRESERVE AND PROTECT THEM.

WRITER: CHAD TAYLOR
PHOTOGRAPHER: DUANE TINKEY

Standing in a climate-controlled basement 30 feet underground, Kay Coats is lamenting the sun.

As the collections coordinator for the State Historical Society of Iowa walks from one side of a softly lit, cavernous room to the opposite wall, the ephemera of Iowa's past crowds in: Shelves filled with radios and war banners and street signs. Containers of Tone's spices and Big Daddy's Bar-B-Q Sauce. A corner housing 100 years' worth of automobiles. An entire 60-foot aisle filled only with televisions.

She pulls open a thin sliding drawer to reveal a delicate Meskwaki tribal blouse *(pictured, right)*. Made around the turn of the 20th century, the blouse was once a brilliant, deep blue, but it weathered and faded to a dusty brown in spots.

"What you're seeing here," Coats says, "is light damage."

Modern museums are climate-controlled, LED-lit palaces devoted to keeping memories as intact as possible, but for a long time something as basic as light exposure was left unchecked. The blouse, for example, was brought into the collection, put on display, and simply left there for years.

"That was sort of the ethos in the old building," Coats says. "When you see this sort of fading, it's almost always light, and that makes the fabric even more susceptible to breakage. This shirt is made of cotton, but if it were a silk ribbon, for example, it would just break apart."

The blouse was on display in the Historical Society's previous home before moving in 1988 into its current building in Des Moines' East Village, which boasts 40,000 square feet of exhibit space. But deep beneath the museum sits a storage room the size of a city block that houses more than 150,000 artifacts from Iowa's history in a sprawling maze of climate-controlled hallways, cabinets and drawers.

And all that history rests in the dedicated hands of a few passionate caretakers, charged with identifying, preserving and showcasing the state's relics—209 million in all—that tell the stories of our lives.

PAPER CHASE

Most of those 209 million items come in the form of printed pages: Manuscripts, library collections, newspapers and letters account for 99 percent of what the Historical Society houses and preserves, most kept in the state archives and historical libraries.

Bolstered by a team of volunteers, the preservation of Iowa's physical history falls mainly on the shoulders of people like Coats, exhibitions manager Andrew Harrington and state curator Leo Landis. Each serves a vital role in identifying the important pieces of Iowa's past, maintaining the state's collections, and putting those artifacts on display for the public.

To that end, the first step in the Historical Society's mission is collection. Many are donated items, some that have—literally—been left on the Historical Society's doorstep. Iowans find things in their attics and basements, in grandparents' scrapbooks, in barns and thrift stores. And every year they bring hundreds of those items to the museum.

Most are rejected, due to redundancy in the collection or the condition of the item. The biggest reason for a donation to be turned away is one of commonality. There

Continues on page 96

Long-term exposure to light faded the collar and sleeve of this Meskwaki shirt made from blue cloth and decorative ribbons. It's now tucked safely away in storage and displayed only for short periods of time.

CONSERVATION WORK IS INTENSELY DETAILED, TIME-CONSUMING AND VITAL FOR ANY ENDANGERED TEXTILE.

Quilts and sturdier textiles are stored on rolls to save space.

Left: Delicate cotton dresses from the 1910s line a storage rack at the State Historical Museum of Iowa.

From left: Kay Coats; milk bottles stuffed with packing material in a drawer; campaign buttons from the 1890s stored in a custom-made cardboard tray.

Continued from page 92

are only so many 1920s-era toasters or 1890s spinning wheels a museum needs, and the Historical Society is stocked up on both.

But while the current collection boasts dozens of examples of war ribbons, highway signs and home appliances, there are also one-of-a-kind irreplaceable treasures, making their continued preservation all the more important.

For those items with the potential to fit in the state's collection, the next step is the collections committee. Consisting of several state archivists, along with Coats and Landis, the committee meets monthly to discuss any items that might be added to the collection, as well as any items the state might want to remove—a lengthy and formal process known as "deaccessioning."

As the collections coordinator for the state, it falls to Coats to oversee the slightly more than 30,000 square feet of storage space that sits underneath the Historical Museum and its 40,000 square feet of additional exhibit space.

Keeping tabs on 150,000 different artifacts can be daunting, even without taking into consideration the fact that the collection has never been fully inventoried and catalogued, something Coats has spent most of the past five years trying to correct. By her estimation, only 20 percent of the state's physical collection has been properly photographed, itemized and cataloged. Upstairs in the document archives, that number is closer to 10 percent.

But the state doesn't collect items simply to hoard them in a cellar. The point of preserving these items and the stories they tell is to share them with the public and help keep those moments, frozen in time, accessible today. That's where Andrew Harrington comes in.

As the exhibits manager, Harrington works closely with Landis and Coats to identify stories the museum wants to spotlight, and the items needed to tell them.

"We work hard to pinpoint what the key stories are to tell," Harrington says. "You have to find that sweet spot, where you don't have so much text on the wall that people's eyes glaze over, but [presenting] that key information that sparks people's interest. There's always that balance there."

Harrington also thinks about how the flow of each exhibit will direct a visitor's attention. Not only will the path taken through an exhibit help shape a person's impression, but something as subtle as lighting or color scheme can help set a particular tone. In the museum's Civil War exhibit, for example, the walls were painted different colors to separate the topics being covered—red walls for the

THE POINT OF PRESERVING THESE ITEMS AND THE STORIES THEY TELL IS TO SHARE THEM WITH THE PUBLIC AND HELP KEEP THOSE MOMENTS, FROZEN IN TIME, ACCESSIBLE TODAY.

battles, blue and gray for the army encampments, yellow for the home front.

When an exhibit is being put together, several factors must be taken into consideration. Paper and textile artifacts, for example, can only be displayed for short periods of time to protect them from light damage. Coats points to the state's collection of Civil War battle flags as an example of what happens when things are stored improperly.

Shortly after the conclusion of the war itself, the battle flags of the various Iowa volunteer regiments were put into the Armory building for storage. After being kept there for 30 years, they were taken up the hill to the Capitol in 1894, where they were hung upright on their poles in the rotunda until 2004.

"This is what happens to silk when you leave it in an uncontrolled environment for 100 years," Coats says, pointing to the great gaps in the tattered ends of a flag for the 3rd Iowa Veteran Volunteers.

FLAG TREATMENT

Now residing in giant pressure frames behind UV-resistant glass, the flags were treated with a special sheer polyester fabric called Stabletex, used to hold the delicate, tattered pieces in their original places.

"This is an example of what full conservation looks like," Coats says. "This kind of treatment can run you $50,000, and all has to be done by a professional textile conservator."

Conservation work is intensely detailed, time-consuming and vital for any endangered textile to extend a garment or document's life by decades. Therein lies what may be the Historical Society's greatest daily obstacle: The state of Iowa currently has no conservator.

Until 2017, that position had been held for 25 years by Pete Sixbey.

"Most [conservators] specialize by material type," says Coats, who interned under Sixbey. "You'll have one that specializes in textiles, or in paper. But Pete was a great all-around guy."

When Sixbey retired in October 2017, the void left behind was large.

"It's an important job, and one that does a lot of interesting work," Coats says. "When you look at peer organizations, when you look at Missouri, Illinois, Nebraska, Kansas, those state organizations that we're sisters to—they all have conservators on staff. They also all have more than one curator, and more than one collections supervisor. We're real lean on staff."

BUDGET SHORTFALL

Neither Coats nor Landis knows for certain when or even *if* the state budget will provide enough money to hire another conservator.

Often, that has required Coats and Landis to rely on their collected practical experience to pick up the slack. But just as often, that means that an item needs to be sent out to a private contractor for a restoration process that can take years.

"Even though we're not conservators, we know the literature to look at and we'll talk to our previous conservator and say, 'Can we handle this?'" Landis says. "We know what not to do. We're not going to take on a flag, but if something is just metal, we can probably handle that."

As with any organization whose budget is assigned by the state, money will always be tighter than the people in the trenches would like. For as long as there have been governments, there have been people told to do a dollar's worth of work on a dime's budget.

But the effort continues because for people like Coats and Landis and Harrington, there's more on the line than just a paycheck. They are the custodians of our memories.

"We have to carry on," Coats says, motioning a hand at the literal acre of storage space around her. "We have work to do." ■

MAQUOKETA
MARION
STANTON

CULTURE

ART MARKS THE SPOT

CREATIVE PLACEMAKING INITIATIVES USE ART AS INSPIRATION FOR REVITALIZING COMMUNITIES.

WRITER: BRIANNE SANCHEZ
PHOTOGRAPHER: JOHN RETZLAFF

Metallic leaves bask in the sunlight on the sculpture “Alley Blome” by Jake Balcom, one of a collection of public art pieces that have energized alleyways and a courtyard in Marion.

Marion's annual arts festival is winding down for the day, with vendors packing up their tents on the historic town square. But across Seventh Avenue on this Saturday in May, the party isn't over. Although rain clouds are rolling in, people are lingering, enjoying drinks on new bar and restaurant patios that spill out into the sculpture-filled Uptown Artway.

The towering steel "Alley Blome" stands next to a pop-art-style seating area. Lighted leaf-like sculptures create a colorful canopy across from the Giving Tree Theatre. Even the bicycle rack is sculptural. A new open-container ordinance allows patrons to sip up close to a small stage that's backed by a highly Instagrammable mural of a young girl surrounded by native birds.

The space was once a back-alley parking area dotted with dumpsters and choked with electrical cables, but civic leaders recently reimagined it, creating a pedestrian plaza that is breathing new life into Marion's Uptown district. Murals and sculptures by nine regional and national artists established the Artway as a distinct destination.

"The goal is to make the quality of life here unequal to anywhere else," Marion Mayor Nicolas Abouassaly says. Marion's population grew by more than 30 percent between 2000 and 2010—to nearly 35,000—but he knows a key to continued success is for newcomers to truly connect with the community. "We want them getting engaged, rooted, instead of just sleeping here and doing everything in Cedar Rapids," he says.

Uptown Artway is a glowing—literally, if you visit after dark—example of "creative placemaking," a revitalization process that puts community conversations at its center. The approach is personal. Leaders are asking how they can leverage advances in technology and remote-work policies to bring boomerang Iowans home and appeal to a creative class being priced out of big cities to embrace small-town living.

Across Iowa, committed residents are looking to combat towns' crumbling Main Streets and dwindling populations. They're connecting the dots between cultural assets, outdoor opportunities and the kinds of events that engage residents and build quality of life.

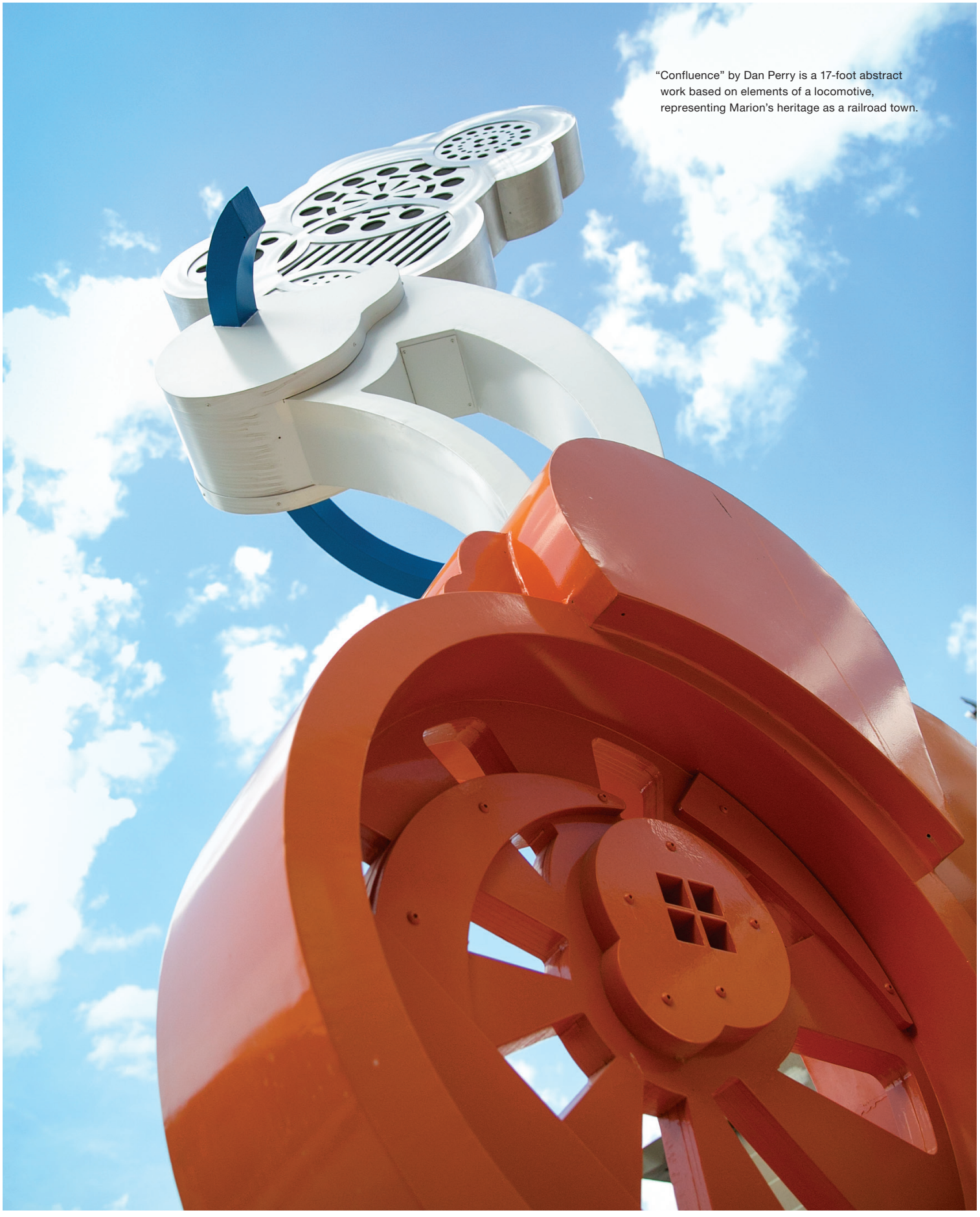
Since 1985, the Main Street Iowa program, part of the Iowa Economic Development Authority, has worked with more than 50 communities to attract and utilize more than $1.7 billion in grass-roots revitalization initiatives. And companies like McClure Engineering are also jumping into the mix, making creative visioning and placemaking part of their business plans to drive regional rural redevelopment.

CULTURE AS A CATALYST

Just an hour up the Grant Wood Scenic Byway from Marion, the town of Maquoketa, home to about 6,000 people, is also enjoying a revival, spurred by a new streetscape. Speakers attached to historic-looking lampposts pipe oldies as a spring crowd gathers for a classic car show taking place on Main Street.

That's where the Maquoketa Art Experience (MAE) transformed the former site of Osterhaus Pharmacy into a mixed-use gallery, workshop and meeting space, and home to the city's Chamber of Commerce.

Chairs are still set up from a University of Iowa percussion concert earlier in the week, which was part of a partnership between the community and the university



"Confluence" by Dan Perry is a 17-foot abstract work based on elements of a locomotive, representing Marion's heritage as a railroad town.

called “Layers of Maquoketa.” The project brings together students from different disciplines to explore the history and possible futures for the community. An annual festival and ongoing performances and lectures connect the campus and residents, including elements that highlighted Maquoketa’s significant Micronesian population.

“We had a lot of silos, but through the Art Experience, and Layers, and a different attitude at the Chamber of Commerce, there was a recognition that it’s more important to have a great place to live than to chase a factory,” says Bob Osterhaus, a retired pharmacist and former state legislator who helped drive the project.

The Art Experience, which was established in 2008, isn’t the only gallery in town. It was inspired by conversations Osterhaus had when sitting for renowned portrait artist Rose Frantzen, whose “Portrait of Maquoketa” project is part of the permanent collection of the Figge Art Museum in Davenport.

Frantzen’s family bought the historic City Hall in 1989, and she launched her career from the space. On this particular day, Frantzen is taking a break from painting to install new flooring as part of the Old City Hall Gallery’s ongoing renovation. She and her husband, Charles Morris, exhibit their work in the space and are happy to provide personal tours whenever they’re in town.

The creative couple draws inspiration from each other, but they see value in building the community into an art hub, a destination district where artists can build relationships. Morris serves on the MAE board, and Frantzen isn’t above participating in classes there herself.

“We’re trying to create a vibe, a renaissance,” Frantzen says. “With a few dedicated people, a town or a community can have another life. A second or third act.”

Sue Mayberry, a sixth-generation Maquoketa resident, is another local investor. Inspired by the downtown upgrade, her family spent 15 months transforming a storefront storage space into the charming Farmer Creek Antiques & Wine Bar. Mayberry, a retired teacher, also hosts her own painting and fiber arts classes in the rustic-chic cellar space, and they’ve started hosting live music on Saturday nights.

This congruence of timing, grant dollars and civic leadership behind Maquoketa’s rebirth—the city is also home to Codfish Hollow, a hipster music venue inside a barn in the middle of a cow pasture that has hosted music acts from Norah Jones to Nathaniel Rateliff—is vital among successful placemaking initiatives.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATION IS KEY

Likewise, in Marion, art made the Uptown district cool, but a shared commitment made it happen.

“Everybody is of the same mindset and working in the same direction,” Mayor Abouassaly says. “Someone gets an idea and everybody jumps in.”

Local leaders cite a common vision and spirit of collaboration—among the city, chamber, grantmaking organizations and residents—as the key components that transformed the space. Marion’s public art master plan dovetailed with a corridor redevelopment plan that recommended creating a more attractive backdoor entrance to businesses before the main thoroughfare was repaved. Adjoining property owners used easements to widen the alley, and a local business volunteered to build a concrete stage.

Involvement with Main Street Iowa inspired Karen Hoyt, a retired Marion art teacher championing the project, to seek and win an ArtPlace America grant, which injected $500,000 on top of the city’s $250,000 investment. Grants enabled the committee to hire local and national artists to create new works designed for the space.

The project is also driving economic development. Uptown Snug, an eclectic pub that abuts the Artway, is among the $5 million in local reinvestments in the area. The Civil War-era building was crumbling a few years ago, but is now home to a cozy bar with loft living above, and high-end condos are popping up down the street.

The Marion Chamber of Commerce estimates 85 percent of the buildings around the Artway have now changed hands or undergone renovation, making way for shops like Scout of Marion, a delightfully curated gift boutique owned by Nikki Kettelkamp, who left her career

Continues on page 108

Top to bottom:

When old alleyway plaster gives way to the crunches of traffic and time, colorful toy “bricks” offer an artistic repair.

Dramatic stainless-steel sprouts rise from the alley, thanks to Mount Vernon artist Dale Merrill. At night they glow brilliantly with integrated LED lights.

Chris Miller’s “Life Is a Ride” puts bike security in a secure hand.

A flight of imagination adds wonder to a 23-foot alley wall behind a stage area in Marion's Uptown Artway. The mural is "Midnight Wonder" by painter and sculptor Cecilia Lueza.

"THE GOAL IS TO MAKE THE QUALITY OF LIFE HERE UNEQUAL TO ANYWHERE ELSE."

MARION MAYOR NICOLAS ABOUASSALY

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CUSTOM PUBLISHING: YOU HAVE OPTIONS

BUILDING BRAND AUTHORITY

Content marketing has been all the buzz in the marketing world in recent years and for good reason. It's not salesy – it's actual information your audience can use.

Custom publications are the oldest forms of content marketing. The history of these publications goes back to the late 1890s, when John Deere, an Iowa-based company, launched The Furrow magazine, which is still in existence today.

According to a 2017 study by Readex Research for the Custom Publishing Council, 56 percent gave high ratings when asked to rate how useful they found the information in custom publications. Furthermore, 77 percent of readers said these publications gave them a more favorable impression of the company.

SO WHY INVEST IN CUSTOM PRINT PUBLICATIONS?

While it is true that many print publications driven by advertising revenue are trending downward, custom publications offer something different, which is why they are the oldest forms of the growing content marketing trend, which is expected to be a $300 billion industry by 2019.

And they aren't driven by advertising revenue – they are funded through sponsoring organizations. The sponsoring organizations provide real, desirable and enticing content through these print publications that help build expertise and inform the community in the company's area of business.

Because of this, custom print publications offer some of the best ways to engage readers and consumers. According to that same Readex Research survey, 79 percent of consumers remember receiving the product and 77 percent read through at least a quarter of it. Even more impressive, on average, readers spend 43 minutes with the publication.

INSPIRING ACTION

The end goal of any custom publication is to attract engagement from your audience, especially when it gets those readers to do business with your organization.

According to the Readex Research Survey, 74 percent of the people surveyed said they had taken at least one action in the last 12 months because of reading or looking through the publications. Of those, 23 percent made a purchase or donation to the sponsoring organization, and 18 percent recommended the sponsoring organization to others.

Custom publications do more than help your business indirectly through branding and expertise. They correlate directly to business and they truly do help you achieve your goals.

Continued from page 104

with Chanel to open the business this past April.

She peeked in the windows and was inspired by the space's beautifully patterned tile floors, and the encouragement from her longtime friend Jennifer Hansen, the late owner of Eden in Des Moines, persuaded her to pursue her entrepreneurial dreams.

SETTING UP A SOLUTION

But placemaking isn't just about putting public art where it isn't; it's about using art as part of creative solutions to local needs—like changing demographics, a deteriorating housing stock, challenges around access to healthy food, and transitioning away from a retail economy.

"Arts and cultural strategies can be powerful forces in addressing these kinds of challenges and providing new opportunities for people to participate in creating equitable, healthy and sustainable communities," says Lyz Crane, deputy director of ArtPlace America, a national initiative involving 16 foundations, eight federal agencies and six financial institutions to position arts and culture as a critical part of community planning and development. "The [Uptown Artway] team saw how valuable it can be to prototype and experiment with the public realm to figure out what people actually want and what will keep them engaged in a space and feeling like they are experiencing something special.

"Because they worked with artists on this, the results are the opposite of cookie-cutter design."

As inspirational as the Uptown Artway project is, not all initiatives need to start at that scale. Injecting value into the civic, social, economic and physical space in a community can start on a street corner.

"A bench is not placemaking. But add a table and chessboard and you're on your way," says Michael Wagler, Main Street Iowa's state coordinator. Wagler has helped dozens of communities—large and small, rural and urban—take on placemaking initiatives. Main Street emphasizes the process over the project and recognizes local ownership of ideas as key.

"Primarily what we want to do is build capacity at a local level so [communities] can revitalize themselves," Wagler says. Main Street Iowa provides long-term technical assistance as they create the space, manage it and program it.

BEYOND ROADSIDE ATTRACTIONS

Wagler sees creative placemaking as a more sophisticated iteration of "The World's Largest Ball of Twine." Hokey roadside attractions once reflected the efforts of communities to give themselves an identity and stand out from other towns along the road. But they lacked a key element central to today's placemaking: an invitation to interact.

Rural communities like Stanton in southwest Iowa—formerly of giant coffee pot and coffee cup water tower fame—are now moving toward creative placemaking in search of ways they can leverage their assets to draw young families and businesses.

Business leader Kevin Cabbage, CEO of Farmer's Mutual Telephone, coordinated a regional initiative to contract with McClure Engineering to develop a creative visioning and business plan. As the result of a public process, they're hoping to renovate a downtown Masonic lodge to include upper-story living, convert a vacant Main Street building into a sports bar and grill, and develop a refrigerated locker system for easier access to groceries. The plan also calls for public art, building out a walking trail to better connect to Viking Lake State Park, and maybe even converting a lumberyard into a makerspace with a 3D printer and other communal DIY tools.

"Now we need to start building the [leadership] bench and get as many people involved as we can and start breaking it down into smaller bites," Cabbage says. "The worst thing we can do is go through the process and end up with a plan and do nothing about it. We need the entire community's involvement."

Involvement was key for Marion, where Hoyt is helping lead the second phase of visioning. "Imagine Next" has already generated 3,000 ideas post-Artway through community engagement brainstorming.

"Your early phase has to be listening," Hoyt says. "It has to be authentic, you have to know what your assets are. Look at your people, your history, your natural elements, and build on that." ■

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DES MOINES
LE MARS
MASON CITY

DINING

PRIME TIME

IOWA STAKES ITS CLAIM TO FOOD FAME ON A SINGULAR SENSATION: BEEF. ENJOY IT AT THESE TOP STEAKHOUSES.

WRITER: TIM PALUCH
PHOTOGRAPHER: AUSTIN HYLER DAY

Archie's Waeside owner Bob Rand cuts New York strip steaks. Rand still cuts every steak by hand, on the same butcher block cutting boards he's used for decades.

Clockwise from top left:
Bob Rand prepares to cut a slab of prime-grade beef down to perfect steaks to serve at his restaurant. Behind him, beef hangs by hooks in his dry-aging room.

The wooden door leading from the kitchen into the dry-aging cooler is original to the restaurant.

Archie's Waeside's sprawling dining room is adorned all year long with Christmas house tchotchkes that are part of owner Bob Rand's mother's collection.

About 2 1/2 hours into the 2015 James Beard gala in downtown Chicago, Bob Rand walked across the Civic Opera House stage to accept the "America's Classic" award for his restaurant, Archie's Waeside in Le Mars.

Famed molecular gastronomist and chef Wylie Dufresne had been honored right before him, and a short video highlighting the dry-aged beef at Archie's just finished playing on the screen overhead.

Rand, in a black suit and gray tie flecked with white spots and wearing the palm-size James Beard medal around his neck, faced the audience of the finest chefs and restaurateurs in America and delivered a short, modest speech thanking everyone from his restaurant bartender to his family and friends.

Near the end, after stumbling a bit over his words, he looked up from his notecards and cracked a slight smile. "I didn't realize the momentum of it until about five minutes ago," he said.

That moment is still vivid in Rand's memory. "Literally the entire life and weight of Archie's tumbled down on me at one time," he says. "I never had that feeling before."

Rand returned home from Chicago with extra pressure to live up to Archie's James Beard award, only the second Iowa restaurant ever to earn one (the first was Breitbach's Country Dining in Sherrill, in 2009). By 2015, Archie's dry-aged Iowa beef, which hangs in slabs from hooks and sits on racks inside the restaurant's enormous cooler and dry-aging room, had already been featured in magazines and made national best-steakhouse lists.

The James Beard award took things to even higher levels. The restaurant appeared on foodie bucket lists and in the pages of The New York Times. There have been few, if any, slow nights since.

Iowa's culinary scene continues to evolve, with more ambitious chefs and haute cuisine menus popping up in restaurants across the state. But at Iowa's best steakhouses, those carnivorous shrines to red meat that are becoming fewer in number each decade, success comes not by innovation in the kitchen but by standing somewhat still in the past, using old traditions to perfect and highlight an ingredient long considered a gold standard of American food: Iowa beef.

'BEST BEEF IN THE WORLD'

It's not on the menu at Archie's, but diners in the know can order the "Benny Weiker," a large dry-aged cut of filet named after a well-known beef salesman in the 1950s and '60s. Weiker was great friends with Archie Jackson, Rand's grandfather and the original owner of the steakhouse, who escaped the Bolshevik Revolution and worked in stockyards across America before settling in Iowa and opening the restaurant in 1949.

Framed black-and-white photos of Weiker hang in the bar area, where diners waiting up to two hours on the weekends for a table sip glasses of the private-label wine Rand has made, specifically to go with his steaks, with a winery in the Napa Valley since 2011.

Weiker sold Iowa beef to the finest steakhouses and restaurants in America and considered it to be the best in the world.

He wasn't alone.

In the early 1800s, when European-born settlers moved into the Iowa Territory, the land was mostly marsh and prairie, full of grassy hills that looked much like the Flint Hills of eastern Kansas today.

As farming technology advanced, including the invention of a steel plow by John Deere in the late 1830s, settlers began clearing those prairies, finding extremely fertile soil. Hundreds of thousands of acres were quickly converted to corn. This was before an efficient railway system, so there was an oversupply of grain, which farmers started feeding to cattle that grazed the pastures, fattening them up before shipping them off to the stockyards in Chicago, Sioux City and Omaha. There, Iowa developed a reputation for raising high-quality, well-marbled, corn-fed beef. Guys like Benny Weiker had no problem selling the meat across America and beyond.

"And based on [Iowa beef], the American palate for grain-fed beef developed," says Daniel Loy, director of the Iowa Beef Center at Iowa State University. "Our grading system today was developed to differentiate grain-fed beef from cattle that were grass-fed or had been running wild in the southern plains for years."

Iowa cattle dominated an ag industry that was the lifeblood of the American economy. For much of the 20th century, the state led the nation in beef production, and also produced more prime-grade meat—fattier, more expensive, more luxurious beef that represents only about 2 percent of all beef sold—than anywhere else. Steakhouses opened in small towns across the state, serving as meeting places and points of pride for the local land and its bounty.

Then, our tastes changed. People reduced their consumption of beef, turning to pork and chicken—or no meat at all. According to the USDA, the average American ate 94.1 pounds of beef in 1976. Forty years later, they ate 56.5 pounds. At the same time, Americans more than doubled their consumption of chicken and turkey.

Then, farming changed. By the late 1960s and early '70s, nearly three-quarters of Iowa farms raised cattle. Small farms were diverse operations—pigs out behind the barn, cows in a nearby pasture, rows of corn—with smaller profit margins, so farmers dabbled in livestock to earn short-term cash. Today, farms are more specialized and less than a quarter of Iowa farms raise beef cattle. When it became more profitable to grow grain, farmers plowed up millions of acres of pastureland to plant subsidized row crops.

"The cost of land now demands intensive use of the land, and the most intensive use that seems to be the most profitable for the most people is corn and soybeans," says David Swenson, an Iowa State University economist.

The cattle that built Iowa's beef legacy moved south and west at roughly the same time the meatpacking industry consolidated and started shutting plants across the state. Fewer Iowa cattle now go from birth to plate, though the abundance of nutritious coproducts from the state's ethanol industry has led to a recent comeback for cattle being shipped here for finishing on feedlots before butchering.

Iowa still produces some of the highest-quality beef in the world and ranks in the top 10 in beef production, but it no longer holds its status as the center of the beef world.

FOR MUCH OF THE 20TH CENTURY, IOWA PRODUCED MORE PRIME-GRADE BEEF THAN ANYWHERE ELSE.

Rows of steaks cooking on the massive flat-top grill in the Archie's Waeside kitchen.

Owner Bob Rand still inspects every plate before it's brought out to diners.

RECESSION-PROOF IN LE MARS

The beef industry may no longer look as it did in 1975, but much of Archie's Waeside does. Prices are different, but the menu is similar. Service is straightforward and without theater, and servers still deliver food to tables on pushcarts, guiding them up and down long aisles between the multiple dining rooms covered in wood paneling and adorned with the trademark Christmas tchotchkes belonging to Rand's mother, Valerie.

Valerie took over the restaurant from her father, Archie, in 1973, and ran the place until 1994 when Bob, her youngest of five children, took over. (Valerie still lives in the house connected to the front of the long roadhouse-style restaurant.)

The steakhouse had long been acclaimed in western Iowa, but after surviving the farm crisis, its reputation—and its business—took off. Archie's added a larger dining room, a bar area and private wine rooms to keep up. Now it seats 300 and has proved to be recession-proof. On busy nights, cars with license plates from around the country park as far as three blocks away. Rand says only a third of his customers are from Le Mars, a town of about 9,000.

An hour before the doors open on a Saturday in late spring, Rand walks through the large cooler just off the kitchen, picking up brawny cuts of filet and ribeye and porterhouse to show off the impeccable marbling that comes with the highest quality of beef.

The meat comes from a plant just over the border in Dakota City, Nebraska, which gets its cattle from farms in northwest Iowa and eastern Nebraska. Beef is wet-aged—in Cryovac packaging—before it arrives, then Rand dry ages it for several weeks in his cooler, a process that allows enzymes to break down the tough connective tissue and adds a sweet, complex, often nutty flavor.

He points to the large cutting boards, stained and worn from decades of daily use. Beef comes in as short loins, and Rand still cuts every steak on the boards each morning by hand.

"I've probably cut a million and a half steaks on that one," he says, rubbing his hand along the side of a thick butcher block his grandfather once used.

When the doors open at 5 p.m., the line is already a few dozen deep along the sidewalk outside. A crowd quickly forms in the lounge. Within a half hour, the full restaurant is dancing with activity as diners dig into rich, perfectly crusted steaks, addictive hand-breaded onion rings, Gulf shrimp and mammoth relish trays.

Rand still expedites every plate, so he takes his spot in front of a table behind the massive flat-top grill to inspect each steak as it leaves the kitchen. Consistency and quality are key, he says. People travel across the country to eat here, and every steak is somebody's most important meal that day.

"I think about steps we can take to improve every day," he says.

TWO MORE IOWA STEAKHOUSES WORTH THE TRIP

Fork-Tender Filet in Mason City

About 175 miles east of Archie's, Northwestern Steakhouse on the north side of Mason City is another classic Iowa steakhouse seemingly from another time.

While Archie's cooks its steaks on a flat-top grill after being coated in salt, pepper and garlic, the aged Iowa beef steaks at Northwestern are broiled in extra virgin olive oil and Greek seasonings. The result is a plate of intensely savory beef bathed in olive oil that—assuming you ordered the filet, as is recommended by most regulars—cuts with a fork. Literally, not merely menu hyperbole here.

The restaurant, originally called Pete's Place, has been around in some form since 1920, a time when the city was producing more cement and building material than nearly any city in the world. It moved in 1954 to its current location, a small, easy-to-miss brown brick building in a middle-class neighborhood near baseball fields and a cement plant.

A decade later, Pete Maduras sold out to his co-owner Tony Papouchis, and it became Northwestern Steakhouse. Tony manned the broilers into his 90s and tended the restaurant's large vegetable and herb garden until his death.

Tony's son, Bill, and his wife, Ann, now run Northwestern. Not much has changed, including the steak recipes and the most popular side dish, a splendid, aggressively seasoned plate of spaghetti noodles topped with olive oil, Greek spices and parmesan cheese.

"Bill is a proponent of the 'don't fix it if it ain't broken' philosophy," Ann Papouchis says. "He keeps everything the same as what his dad did."

Diners don't seem to mind. A line is already formed outside when the doors open each day at 4:30 p.m. The restaurant barely seats 50, and fills up fast. There's no dress code, with jeans and windbreakers filling the dining room on a Friday night in spring.

"We have families that have been coming to the steakhouse for five generations," Ann says.

Fine Dining in Des Moines

In downtown Des Moines, 801 Chophouse models itself not on the roadhouse- and supper club-style Iowa steakhouses, but on the 1920s-era New York City steakhouses that were dens of extravagance, booze and beef.

The restaurant is handsome and masculine. Think cherry wood, marble, etched glass. White tablecloths on each table. Black-and-white photos of cattle, farmers and butchers on the walls. Award-winning wine list. The restaurant looks today as it did the day it opened in 1993, only without the ash trays for cigars or the humidor in the private wine room.

Every cut of steak on the menu is prime-grade beef from Holstein dairy cows raised in Iowa and parts of Nebraska and Illinois. Dairy cows move around less than traditional cattle, so the meat is fattier with less muscle and thus are more tender. Steaks are dry-aged in Chicago for at least 35 days before they reach the steakhouse, creating an intense but clean flavor.

"Our regulars notice. If we are off by a week or two on the aging, they'll take one bite and know," says Brian Dennis, 801's head chef.

Dennis, in a baseball cap and a stained, short-sleeved chef coat, walks through the small kitchen, showing off the special oven bought specifically to cook the prime rib, and the deck broiler that gets up to 800 degrees, putting an extreme sear on the top and bottom of a steak as it cooks.

All six of the 801 Chophouses—Des Moines, the original, plus two in Kansas City and ones in Omaha, St. Louis and Denver—have the same look, same feel and same vibe. Des Moines is the smallest market, but finished 2017 with the third-highest revenue.

The restaurant has long been considered one of the city's most revered fine-dining restaurants, a go-to spot for special occasions and important business dinners.

Each Iowa caucus season, politicians, campaign workers and media personalities fill the dining room. During the 2004 campaign, The New York Times printed a seating chart that pointed out which TV anchor and celeb had been spotted dining at which table. Dennis and others at the restaurant often joke that 801 is better known in New York than in Iowa.

Much like Archie's and Northwestern, two steakhouses that couldn't be more different in style and tone from 801, the key to success is consistency and quality, Dennis says. Good beef prepared well. It's as simple as that.

His philosophy, something repeated at all three steakhouses in different ways: Impress the hell out of someone their first time, and they'll come back. ■

CORALVILLE
IOWA CITY

DINING

FOOD WITH A FOCUS ON HAPPY

AT RAPID CREEK CIDERY, CHEF MATT STEIGERWALD'S WORLDLY AND INSPIRED COOKING IS INFINITELY INSTAGRAMMABLE. YET STOPPING TO TAKE PHOTOS WOULD BE MISSING THE POINT.

WRITER: WINI MORANVILLE
PHOTOGRAPHER: DUANE TINKEY

Chef Matt Steigerwald often imbues his well-crafted dishes with flavors from the Mediterranean region and the Middle East, such as this chickpea panisse with green chile zhoug. His culinary creations have finesse without fussiness.

Left: Perched on a hill surrounded by an apple orchard and woodlands, the Rapid Creek Cidery restaurant and event center was built with wood from two century-old barns.

The paved country road turns to gravel just past the entrance to the Rapid Creek Cidery in Iowa City. As I pulled into the narrow lane and crested a hill, I caught my first glimpse of the massive gabled-roof structure that's home to the Cidery's restaurant and event center (located about 6 1/2 miles northeast of downtown). Made from the rough-hewn wood of two century-old barns and perched on a grassy slope amid an apple orchard and woodlands, the seemingly weathered building promises …

Promises what, exactly? What kind of food should I find within the walls of this rustic yet magnificent structure that's born of Iowa's rural heritage, yet foretells a hopeful future? The building's size and stature feel dashing and confident, but there's something about a barn that will always feel humble, too.

Step inside, and the prattle of a good-natured crowd buzzes around the bar near the entrance. In the dining room, patrons make merry around spacious and long wooden tables beneath vaulted, beamed ceilings. But this isn't a rollicking beer hall. The bucolic appeal of the space invites revelry without rowdiness.

The chef is Matt Steigerwald. Well known to Iowa food lovers, this North Carolina native opened the Lincoln Cafe in Mount Vernon in 2001. During his 12 years at the cafe, Steigerwald snagged three James Beard Award nominations for Best Chef Midwest and became known for his fascinating, head-turning cuisine. To wit: roasted albacore tuna with barbecue red peas, sorghum mustard, rhubarb and crab slaw, red chili peanuts and country ham powder.

LIFE'S CELEBRATIONS

But that was then, this is now. Owner Katie Goering opened Rapid Creek Cidery in 2017 with the goal of bringing people together for life's celebrations—weddings, birthdays, retirement parties and other milestones large and small. While the handsome, multi-windowed event space downstairs can host up to 250 people, Steigerwald says it's not uncommon to see parties of 15 or 20 diners raising glasses over a meal in the restaurant's dining room upstairs.

Intricate, high-end food would feel disconnected to the relaxed and convivial vibe of the venue and its pick-your-own apple orchard setting. Indeed, when Steigerwald spoke with Goering about taking on the role of chef, he was told they did not want fussy food.

He was glad to hear it. A few years prior, he decided to close the Lincoln Cafe in part because his sensibilities were leaning toward more simple food.

"I'd been in high-end food all my life," he says. "The older I got, the more I really just wanted to host great dinner parties. The fact that the restaurant is so big and open really lends itself to a feeling of community, of people

Continues on page 128

Clockwise from top left:
Chef Matt Steigerwald squeezes lemon over roasted whole trout.

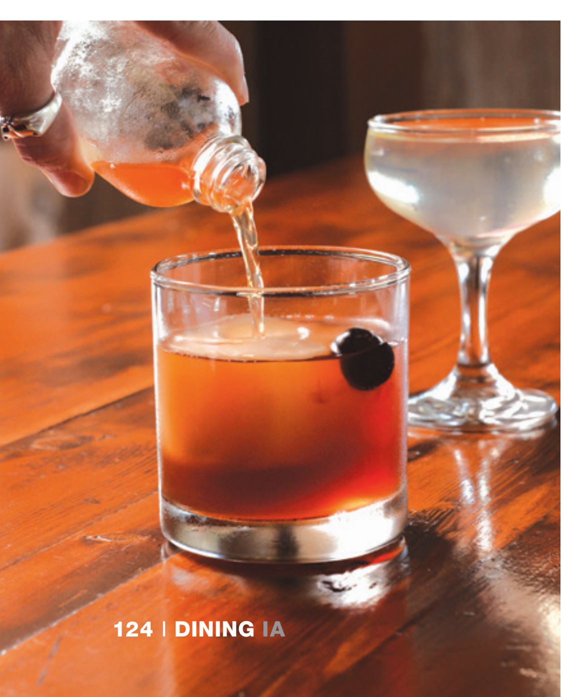
Barbecue pickled eggs are served with smoked mayo and pickled green beans.

The soaring two-story dining room and bar has an inviting feel.

Wilson's Orchard Hard Cider, crafted from estate-grown apples, is on tap.


Imperial


WILSON'S ORCHARD
WILSON'S ORCHARD
WILSON'S ORCHARD




Features
Dessert
Cocktail
Cider
Wine -
Chenin Blanc
-8.5

Coconut cake with berries. Chef Matt Steigerwald says a scratch-made cake remains a constant on the dessert menu.

Left: A selection of dishes, drinks and snapshots from the restaurant. Center: Katie Goering, owner of Rapid Creek Cidery.

Wilson's Orchard and Rapid Creek Cidery

Though Wilson's Orchard, which surrounds Rapid Creek Cidery, feels like it's been there forever, it was planted in the 1980s by Joyce and Robert "Chug" Wilson. Paul Rasch, a fourth-generation apple grower who's originally from Michigan, bought the 40-acre orchard from the Wilsons in 2009. He also cultivates 88 acres of apple trees in another location near Solon.

In 2015, Rasch began producing Wilson's Orchard Hard Cider. The cider is crafted from estate-grown apples, and comes in six varieties, from fruit-infused choices like Peach Fizz, Old Blue (with blueberries) and Cherry Crush, to more tangy styles like Goldfinch and Hoppleseed. Look for it in taprooms or retail locations throughout Iowa.

In addition to pouring Wilson's Orchard Hard Cider, the Rapid Creek Cidery also serves its own small-batch house-fermented ciders. These include experimental brews, such as the Whitney Queen Cider, made with both sweet apples and sour crab apples. The Cidery also serves a good selection of beer, wine and cocktails.

More information
4823 Dingleberry Road N.E., Iowa City
319.643.4159
rapidcreekcidery.com.

Consider Coralville

A visit to Rapid Creek Cidery is worth a drive across the state, which might require an overnight for those coming in from afar. Nearby Iowa City merits a weekend visit in itself. However, for easy access to the Cidery, consider Coralville—the ever-growing suburb of Iowa City.

Hotels: You'll find many regional and national chain hotels in Coralville, and most are located near I-80, making for an easy 12-minute drive to the Cidery. Options range from the budget (and newly renovated) Heartland Inn to the upscale Coralville Marriott.

The Iowa River Landing: This new mixed-use development offers a selection of hotels, restaurants and a neo-Main Street of stylish boutiques anchored by a swanky Von Maur department store. If you prefer nature to shopping, take a walk through the Iowa River Landing Wetland Park, where elevated walkways cross through an aquatic plant and wildlife habitat near the Iowa River.

Hiking, Biking and a Sculpture Walk: Coralville offers nearly 20 miles of recreational trails. Check out the Mormon Trek/Coralville Strip Nature Trail, which winds through wetlands and prairie, offering a close-up of what much of Iowa's landscape looked like before cities and farms took hold. Above all, don't miss the Sculpture Walk. A part of the Iowa River Landing Development, the trail skirts the Iowa River and offers 11 sculptures by Iowa artists, each inspired by a literary work written by former students and faculty of the Iowa Writers' Workshop at the University of Iowa.

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Continued from page 122

getting together to celebrate just that: being together."

For Steigerwald, when great food shows up at that table (and trust me, it will), it should be a joyful part of the evening—not the sole focus of the evening itself.

What comes from the kitchen is seasonally driven, with food as locally sourced as possible. Down a tangle of gravel roads a few miles away, Paul Rasch, owner of the apple orchard that surrounds the Cidery, raises lambs for the kitchen's popular lamb burger. By late summer, 95 percent of what Steigerwald cooks is local.

And yet local is not the headline, he says: "I think any good restaurant today is sourcing as much as they can from five to 10 miles away. Local is a given at this point."

'FOODS OF THE SUN'

Steigerwald often imbues this well-purveyed bounty with flavors from "the foods of the sun," including tastes of Morocco, Israel, Turkey and Syria, as well as from the European side of the Mediterranean. Such flavors, he says, "play really well with the foods I grew up with in the American South, as well as the Latin and Italian foods that everyone is familiar with."

Hence, while a braised pork shoulder arrives looking comforting in a stew-like way, Aleppo chili pepper, smoked paprika and preserved lemon awaken the dish from its long-simmered slumber. Quail, a Southern favorite, is stuffed with sausage and served alongside creamy grits and a mushroom gumbo. Yes, it's rich, but sunny spices—including red pepper flakes and cayenne—add brightness and levity.

Though a dish on Steigerwald's menu no longer takes one long paragraph to recount, each dish I tasted was as well-crafted as his work at the Lincoln Cafe. Expect finesse, without fussiness. When asked about his duck fat, local cabbage and white bean side dish, he told me it consisted simply of those ingredients, plus thyme, bay leaf and onions.

"That's pretty much it," he said. And yet, for all its simplicity, the results were immensely gratifying.

Having dined at the Cidery twice, once in autumn and again in spring, I can't tell you *what* to order, as the menu changes seasonally. But I might suggest *how* to order.

Sure, twosomes can have a fine old time here. However, following Steigerwald's dinner-party ethos, I suggest arriving with a jumble of your favorite people. In keeping with the communal spirit of the place, Steigerwald has designed many of his dishes to be sharable.

A selection of easily dividable toasts—such as chicken liver with pickled red onion or Israeli roasted eggplant with beets—kicks off the menu. Other appetizers are equally snackable—Sichuan peanuts, steamed mussels, and pickled eggs with dill mayo and chili salt. In general, the main dishes, veggies and sides, from the Peruvian roast half chicken to roasted Jamaican jerk carrots, could also be passed around the table.

Better yet, shake up your usual routine by ordering everything "as ready." That is, ask the kitchen to send out the food as soon as it's plated, and not necessarily batched course by course. Steigerwald loves seeing diners talking and sharing and grazing on dishes that arrive without interruption and within the natural flow of the conversation at the table. "It gives the dining room more of a potluck feel," he says.

It also taps into a sense of place: You are, after all, dining in a barn.

'CAKE IS GREAT'

For dessert, have the cake. While other confections come and go, a scratch-made layer cake, such as hummingbird, coconut, poppy seed lemon or chocolate, remains a constant on the menu.

"Somehow, over the years, we all got away from cake," Steigerwald says. "But cake is great. It's sharable, it's homey. While pie is for comfort, cakes come on your birthday. Both are necessary, but we prefer a party."

Indeed, if you get the cake, you will get what this place is all about. ■

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