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## MERKLE RETIREMENT PLANNING

# Do You Need \$1 Million to Retire?

By: Loren Merkle, CFP®

There was a time when having \$1 million in retirement savings was the gold standard. If you achieved that magic mark, you were thought to be set for retirement. Today's retirees are asking, is \$1 million enough? I've even seen articles explaining how '3 Million is the New \$1 Million' when it comes to retirement savings. The reality is that a magic number alone won't bring you security in retirement. It's just not that simple.

No matter the amount, your retirement plan has to maximize the money you've worked so hard to save. Take a 60-year-old with a \$300,000 portfolio. That may not sound like enough for retirement, but you have to consider the other sources of income available to you. For example, if you also have an employer pension, that \$300,000 could last a lot longer than you might think, especially when you add in Social Security. A married couple can have up to 81 options when making this important election. If you can maximize the benefit, for some, that alone can add close to \$1 million to your portfolio over the course of your lifetime. That's another boost to any retirement income.

Now let's think about a 60-year-old with a \$3 million portfolio. If the bulk of that money is in a tax deferred account, like a 401(k), this person will be subject to a common wealth eroding factor for retirees, taxes.

The taxes this retiree will have to pay could make that income run out faster than anticipated in retirement. \$3 million doesn't seem so magical when a big portion of it goes to the federal government because in the end it's about what you get to keep and spend in retirement.

Everyone should not be shooting for the same magic number because everyone is not going to be living the same lifestyle in retirement. In fact, when we sit down with families, the first conversation we have has nothing to do with numbers. We want to hear about their retirement goals including where they want to go and what they want to do. It's about their vision, not their accounts. That vision drives all the other decisions we make together about maximizing their resources.

If you're worried about not quite reaching whatever your magic retirement number is, I hope you can gain confidence through the creation of a customized retirement plan instead. A successful retirement is more than a magic number. It's several components working together in a strategic way to accomplish your lifelong goals and dreams.

---

Sign-up for one of our upcoming retirement online workshops at [MerklePlan.com](http://MerklePlan.com).



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Horticulture expert Kelly Norris shares his all-natural Des Moines garden.

### ON THE COVER

Located near Rathbun Lake in south central Iowa, this private chapel has won a top architectural award. Turn to page 98 to learn more. Photographer: Cameron Campbell.

### THIS PAGE

Horticulturalist Kelly Norris of Des Moines embraces the wilder side of gardening. See story, page 62.





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OYSTER PERPETUAL 41

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**STATE OF CHEESE**

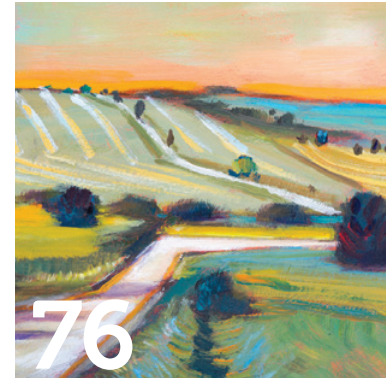
Savor some of the state's best cheeses and learn how to make your own Instagram-worthy charcuterie board.



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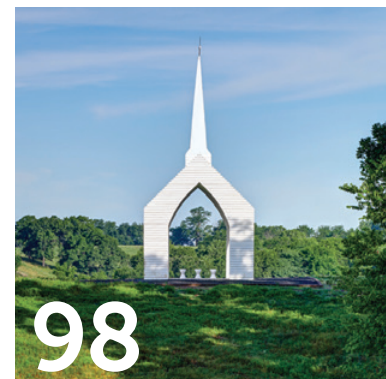
Book a fall weekend in the Iowa Great Lakes region for biking, dining, lodging and entertainment.



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**BACK PAGE**  
**DIVINE DESTINATION**

A new modern chapel in south central Iowa speaks volumes through its simplicity.





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ADEL GREENFIELD GRINNELL GUTHRIE CENTER INDIANOLA KNOXVILLE PERRY WINTERSSET



Painted by Australian artist Guido van Helton, this 110-foot tall mural cluster in Fort Dodge enlivens utilitarian grain silos. Find other examples of mural art in the 2020 issue of *ia* at [iapublication.com](http://iapublication.com).

### LOG ON

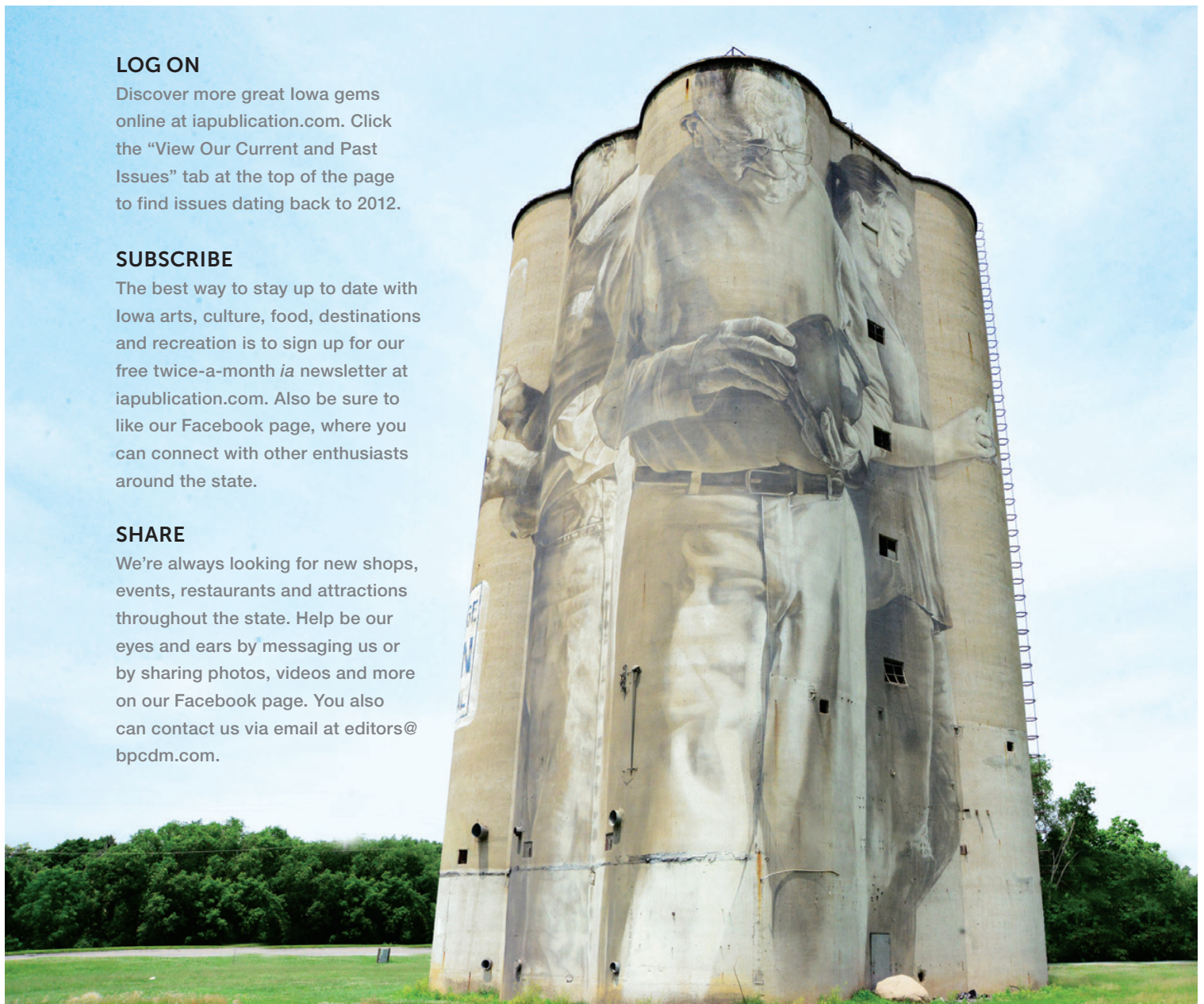
Discover more great Iowa gems online at [iapublication.com](http://iapublication.com). Click the “View Our Current and Past Issues” tab at the top of the page to find issues dating back to 2012.

### SUBSCRIBE

The best way to stay up to date with Iowa arts, culture, food, destinations and recreation is to sign up for our free twice-a-month *ia* newsletter at [iapublication.com](http://iapublication.com). Also be sure to like our Facebook page, where you can connect with other enthusiasts around the state.

### SHARE

We're always looking for new shops, events, restaurants and attractions throughout the state. Help be our eyes and ears by messaging us or by sharing photos, videos and more on our Facebook page. You also can contact us via email at [editors@bpcdm.com](mailto:editors@bpcdm.com).



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# ROOTED IN PURPOSE

When John Deere first arrived in Illinois as a young blacksmith, the farming practices of the upper New England states were vastly different from that in the Midwest. He witnessed the challenges farmers experienced in the performance of their cast-iron plows caught in the sticky soils, prompting him to test steel from a broken sawblade, ultimately impacting the course of agriculture forever.

His ingenuity has been forged in us all and continues his legacy today. Because when we work together, we turn problems into cleaner, greener, and smarter solutions, preserving the land for the next generation.

We run so life can leap forward.



**JOHN DEERE**



---

## EDITOR'S NOTE

# “If you build it.”

**That famous movie line from “Field of Dreams” has never seemed more appropriate—or timely.** While that Dyersville cornfield turned baseball stadium captured the nation’s attention this summer, other stories of progress, opportunity and resilience throughout the state are just as inspiring and worth celebrating, without the need for celebrities or major league sluggers.

This issue of *ia* magazine is all about the “building it” culture in the state and the progress that has occurred even during the pandemic.

Take the story “Urban Evolution” on page 90. We highlight three communities—Davenport, Dubuque and Waterloo—that have undergone significant downtown revitalizations and investment thanks to the efforts of city leaders, entrepreneurs and committed citizens. Brimming with independent restaurants, shops,



hotels and more, each of these eastern Iowa cities offers a distinct experience that’s worthy of a weekend getaway.

“5 New Restaurants Worth the Drive,” page 72, covers a few of our favorite new dining spots. This mix of eateries—which all opened over the past year—features some diverse flavors, including those with Jewish and soul roots. And for those looking for the perfect party spread for fall entertaining, check out “State of Cheese,” on

page 66. The story highlights some of the premier fromage created here and how to assemble it into a showstopping charcuterie board to wow your guests.

And perhaps the most iconic new image on the scene is the chapel dotting the rural landscape in the south-central part of the state (cover and “Divine Destination,” page 98). Through a simple form, the space inspires reflection, wonder and beauty and does make you think about that “Is this heaven?” quote.

While *ia* is published once a year, we’re producing exclusive content on travel, dining, art and culture, events, and more for our biweekly newsletter. Subscribe at [iapublication.com](http://iapublication.com) to be in the know about all things Iowa. And if you’ve got stories about your community, feel free to share on Facebook or by emailing [editors@bpcdm.com](mailto:editors@bpcdm.com).

—Beth Eslinger





# PRAIRIE NATURAL MEATS & SEAFOOD

*Ale Vidal Soler | President-Owner*

**Q: HOW DID YOU GET STARTED IN YOUR CAREER?**

A: I grew up in Argentina. My family worked in agribusiness for many generations. While in the industry myself, Argentina opened the border to bring natural beef—grass fed and hormone free—to the United States. I moved to Miami, without knowing English, and started from scratch, introducing this product. There were lots of rejections and frustrations, but I kept going. I started bringing air shipments from Argentina—3,000 pounds at the time. Now we are selling over 1 million pounds per week, including out of a small retail store in Des Moines to offer the community products from all over the world at wholesale prices.

**Q: WHAT SETS YOU APART FROM YOUR PEERS?**

A: I started my company from the ground up, doing and learning every position myself. I never once gave up when

it was difficult or doors were shut in my face. I did not waver from my dream.

**Q: WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE PART OF MENTORING FUTURE LEADERS?**

A: I believe I can transmit the passion I have for the business and industry to inspire anyone if they have interest in learning, challenging themselves and working hard.

**Q: WHAT ADVICE DO YOU HAVE FOR YOUNG WOMEN JUST ENTERING THE WORKFORCE?**

A: Work very hard, invest lots of hours and never give up. Practice communication instead of frustration. Ask for help and listen to other opinions. But always follow your gut—that way you won't regret it.



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**2020**

**CORPORATE  
CITIZENSHIP** REPORT





# 2020 | CORPORATE CITIZENSHIP REPORT



**KATHRYN KUNERT**  
VICE PRESIDENT  
ECONOMIC CONNECTIONS AND INTEGRATION  
MIDAMERICAN ENERGY

2020 was a year that allowed us to live up to our commitment to partner with the communities we serve and be a true neighbor. Helping our customers navigate the pandemic, social unrest and even a storm for the ages is what we are all about at MidAmerican and is why our CARES program is so important.

In a year like none other, CARES activated our employees to raise money, deliver supplies and volunteer to help out those who needed it the most. Investing our time, talents and resources to help in any way we can is exactly what CARES means to us. We were honored to salute frontline workers, help meet basic needs and join forces with communities, assistance agencies and other volunteer groups to be obsessively, relentlessly at service to our customers in ways beyond just delivering energy.

By partnering with agencies and groups across the territory, MidAmerican can multiply our impact and align ourselves with what matters the most to our customers while meeting them where they are, with what they need, in a very real way. We look forward to continuing to expand these programs and help you where it matters the most – right in your own backyard!

Sincerely,



The CARES program is designed to focus on supporting five key areas of work:

## COMMUNITY ENHANCEMENT

Our communities want and need spaces to gather, play, celebrate and have fun. That's why CARES partners with them to create new parks, restore community buildings, enhance trails and build for the community good. When communities succeed, so do we!

## ARTS AND CULTURE

Arts and culture are important to every community. When we celebrate diverse cultures, artistic projects and communities' heritage, we enhance livability and community pride. We're happy to support organizations that foster the arts and celebrate our region's multicultural heritage.

## ENVIRONMENTAL RESPECT

Our commitment to deliver clean, safe, reliable and affordable energy motivates us to help make our region's environment even cleaner and more sustainable for everyone.

## EDUCATION/STEM

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 territory.

## SAFETY

Safety is core to our work. Our dedication to safety extends from our employees to the towns we serve and ultimately to our entire territory. We use our resources to support first responders, local safety projects and education. Safety impacts all of our lives, and it is always our top priority.



OBSESSIVELY, RELENTLESSLY AT YOUR SERVICE IS MORE THAN JUST A TAGLINE AT MIDAMERICAN ENERGY – IT IS WHO WE ARE. WE EXTEND THE SAME DEDICATION WE HAVE IN SERVING OUR CUSTOMERS TO GIVING BACK TO THE COMMUNITIES WE ARE HONORED TO SERVE.

Our collective success is directly tied to the strength of the communities we serve. Through the CARES program, we are able to connect our employees with our customers to support and invest in the things that matter to us all. Our commitment will always be to go above and beyond – whether it's providing top-quality energy services, investing in community projects or helping clean up after a once-in-a-lifetime storm, we are working to make our communities stronger. We take pride in standing side by side, partnering together in creating a vibrant and sustainable tomorrow.



**6,500**  
employee volunteer  
hours



**774,000**  
natural gas customers



**3,500**  
employees



**795,000**  
electric customers



**\$7.1**  
million grants and  
donations



**423**  
communities  
served across  
four states



**10,600** square mile area served in Iowa, Illinois, South Dakota and Nebraska





# COMMUNITY ENHANCEMENT

## Friends of Rock Valley

On a hot summer day, there's nothing better than cooling off at your local swimming pool. Rock Valley, a town of about 3,800 people in the northwest corner of Iowa, operates a pool that has served the community well since its last major renovation more than 40 years ago.

But the current pool has seen better days, and fixing it wasn't financially feasible or possible. So, the Friends of Rock Valley, a local fundraising group, created the Community Pool Project to raise money for a new pool. Through the generosity of MidAmerican and other donors, the fund has raised its first million and the community is well on its way to enjoying a cool dip.

The new pool will be significantly larger and will include a lap-swimming area, two slides, zero-depth entry, diving boards, a basketball hoop, volleyball net, ADA-approved accessibility and a current channel.

"For a community our size, I think getting to the \$1 million mark in our fundraising is fantastic. It shows the support of our community and our partners like MidAmerican," says Tina Vande Kamp, Rock Valley city clerk. "Recreational amenities like the pool help draw families to lay down roots in Rock Valley and keep our economic development strong."







## ARTS AND CULTURE

### Friends of Iowa PBS Foundation

When the pandemic took hold, Iowa PBS looked for ways to continue to bring the arts to the state. By partnering with MidAmerican and Ballet Des Moines, Iowa PBS lived up to the saying, “the show must go on!”

COVID-19 forced the ballet to innovate, leading to a partnership with Iowa PBS to create a virtual 2020-21 season. And thanks in part to funding from MidAmerican, the product was not only possible, but top notch.

The season included three programs, branded under the series name “Acts of Resilience.” The organization filmed their performances on the Iowa PBS stage, and the beautiful, inspiring ballet season was made available to viewers both online and via broadcast.

“During a year where the arts were essentially on hold, Iowa PBS was able to give Iowans a front row seat to performances they otherwise wouldn’t have been able to see,” says Shellee Bailey, Iowa PBS vice president of leadership giving. “MidAmerican was a key partner in making the partnership between Iowa PBS and Ballet Des Moines possible. MidAmerican made the ballet come to life!”

As Bailey puts it, having a season was crucial during the pandemic. “Viewers let us know how valuable this project was to them and thanked us and our partners for coming together to support the arts.”



# **ENVIRONMENTAL RESPECT**

## **Loess Hills Missouri River Region – Parks to People**

The Loess Hills and Missouri River are breathtaking geographical features in Harrison, Pottawattamie and Mills counties in western Iowa. The Loess Hills Missouri River Region Parks to People program is a joint initiative of the three counties to make the most of this beautiful area.

One of its key initiatives is connecting its rural areas to the Council Bluffs riverfront development and urban trail system. A contribution from MidAmerican helped to maximize other donations and made the project an overwhelming success.

“As we fostered collaboration and shared our vision toward the effort, the group quickly realized that together, fundraising was not only possible but wildly successful,” says Michelle Wodtke Franks, executive director of Golden Hills Resource Conservation and Development, which manages the LHMRR program. “The grant provided by MidAmerican was truly a catalyst for this project’s success.”

The challenge helped raise funding for new trails, signage for bike routes, land acquisition for public use and prairie restoration, public hunting habitat, park pavilions, playgrounds, public art, construction of new cabins and nature center improvements. But most important, the projects have increased multistate use and traffic exponentially and connected three counties and a major metropolitan area, exposing a population of more than one million people to this natural treasure.







## EDUCATION/STEM

### Hawkeye Community College Foundation

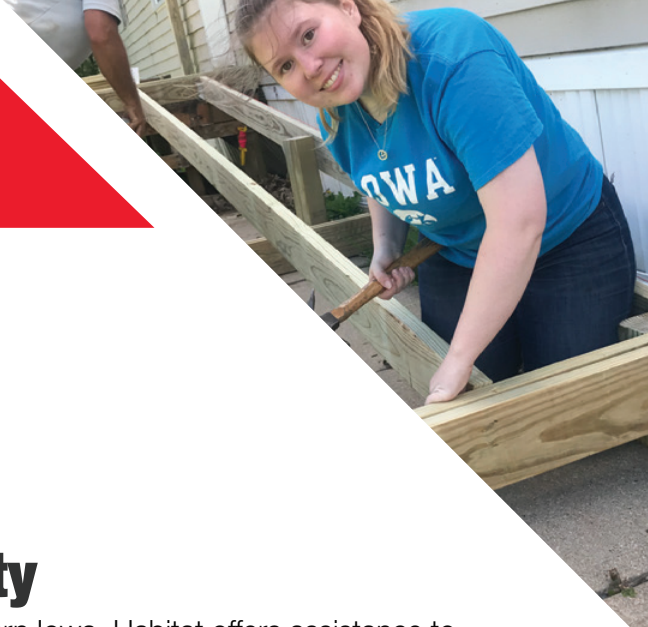
Careers in the trades have exploded in recent years, and Hawkeye Community College in Waterloo has provided opportunities for any student to get the training they need to succeed. The WE Build Waterloo Building Trades Quality Pre-Apprenticeship program introduces participants to 13 construction trades, while they learn hands-on technical skills in construction, gain life skills such as team building and decision-making, and have access to employers through a 12-week housing rehabilitation program.

A donation from MidAmerican provided the program with funding for building materials and necessary tools to help young people find interest in the trades.

“The program helps our community by providing a skilled workforce to fill job openings,” says Constance Grimm, director of grants and resource development at Hawkeye Community College. “It also allows for increased wages and increased spending power by members of the community. MidAmerican’s help was key to the success of this program.”







## **SAFETY**

### **Iowa Valley Habitat for Humanity**

Habitat for Humanity is much more than building homes. In eastern Iowa, Habitat offers assistance to homeowners and families who need financial help to keep their homes safe and comfortable.

Thanks to a contribution from MidAmerican, Iowa Valley Habitat for Humanity, an Iowa City nonprofit organization that builds and improves homes for those in need, was able to launch its Helping Hands program. Helping Hands is designed to step-in when things break down. Some examples in the past year include making electrical repairs and replacing a water heater and a furnace.

“Projects like these are critical to keep homes safe and livable for the families,” says Scott Hawes, associate executive director of Iowa Valley Habitat for Humanity. “Put another way, the funds helped make a home warm during the bitter cold, a kitchen became a place where the family could gather for a home-cooked meal and the water heater replacement prevented further damage from a leak.”

The cost of housing is rising faster than wages nationwide, Hawes says. The disparity results in a shortage of safe, affordable housing in eastern Iowa and across the country.

“We simply wouldn’t be able to serve our community in the same way without excellent partners like MidAmerican,” Hawes says.

### **Food Insecurity Donations - DMARC**


During the depths of the pandemic, MidAmerican donated a half-million dollars to support local food insecurity relief and other COVID-19-related response efforts throughout the company’s service area.

The \$500,000 provided to more than 30 organizations funded local food banks, community foundations and United Way agencies to address hunger and other urgent community needs. One of the recipients was the DMARC Food Pantry Network, consisting of 14 separate partnering food pantry sites, a mobile food pantry, two food warehouses and numerous community supporters. The DMARC Food Pantry Network is health-based and is the largest food pantry network in Iowa.

“DMARC is grateful to MidAmerican for all their support, both this past year during the COVID-19 pandemic and over many years prior to the pandemic,” says CEO Matt Unger. “With MidAmerican’s help, we were able to assist 58,707 unique individuals who faced food insecurity this past year. Their support of the DMARC Food Pantry Network helped to make meeting that need possible under extraordinary circumstances. While the words are hardly adequate to describe our gratitude, THANK YOU.”







Soar above the fall foliage on a ride through an Indianola-based outfitter. See story, page 34.

# AROUND IOWA

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AROUND IOWA

DOG-EARED BOOKS



Z.W. MERCANTILE



Z.W. MERCANTILE



NOOK & NEST

PHOTOGRAPHER: DUANE TINKEY



Ames

## A TREASURE TROVE OF INDIE SHOPS

Writer: Carole Gieseke

Historic downtown Ames is known for some of its quintessential indie shops—Cook’s Emporium, the Octagon Center for the Arts, Wheatsfield Grocery—but there’s a new crop of local stores worth exploring.

Anchoring the 300 block is Nook & Nest, a carefully curated collection of home decor, tableware, bedding, stationery and other home and lifestyle products. Owner Mindy Bergstrom opened the store in 2019 with a goal of providing a cozy, welcoming shopping experience.

Take a quick glance around the main space and you’ll find modern furniture, comfy pillows, colorful vases, thoughtfully chosen kitchen textiles and dishes, floral pottery, handcrafted jewelry, clothing items, and gifts for baby. In the next room—a recent expansion—there’s a generous selection of whimsical greeting cards, journals, printed writing paper and notebooks from brands such as Kate Spade, plus tote bags, mugs, pens, games and more.

In the same block, Bergstrom also owns Z.W. Mercantile, a sustainable,



eco-friendly general store promoting zero-waste products. The idea is to eliminate single-use items, she says, with a bulk “filling station” and reusable replacements for disposable cleaning and beauty products.

In the next block, a highly anticipated independent bookshop, Dog-Eared Books, opened in March. Owners Amanda Lepper and Ellyn

Grimm operate with the philosophy that “books are meant to be loved”—and dog-eared books show they have been loved a *lot*.

With its ever-present shop dog, Lovie (a golden retriever), the bookshop has already become a gathering place for Ames residents and Iowa State University students, with nooks for reading, a doghouse-themed hidey-hole for kids, vintage seating from an old elementary school—and, of course, books. Add a selection of coffee, pastries, beer and wine, and you have an inviting space in which to share the love of reading and community.

“It’s our happy place,” Grimm says.

Rounding out your trip to downtown Ames are Little Wood Herbal for specialty teas and herbs, Chocolaterie Stam for chocolate and gelato, a knitting shop, coffee shops and roasters, and other assorted shopping and dining.

“All the business owners are super welcoming and collaborative,” Lepper says. “Downtown Ames is truly a destination.”



Sioux City

## ARTFUL SIOUX CITY

Walk up to the Sioux City Art Center from one of the nearby hotels and be instantly consumed by the creativity and color on the modern campus.

Outside, 14 sculptures, many with organic shapes, greet visitors as they walk to the glass-enclosed structure, which opened in 1997.

With more than 1000 works by artists from the upper Midwest, including many with Sioux City ties, there's plenty to see and experience. Enter the building and walk the geometric floor labyrinth based on a Greek design, while light pours in through the 46-foot atrium.

Several permanent galleries opened in September 2019, including the Margaret Ann Martin Everist Permanent Collection Gallery. Inside the space, see landscapes and nature scenes: "Bluejay Ojibwe" by Billy Hassell is particularly striking with its vibrant hues, as are stacked porcelain forms created by Iowa State University professor Ingrid Lilligren, and "Trio" by Iowa-born artist Tracy Miller. Her paintings (this one is of colorful desserts) "quirt and move and hop," she says.



The other galleries address art elements such as line, form, shape and color. The writeups explain why the artworks are perfect examples of the theory—great for budding critics.

Upstairs on the third floor, view the muted, honey-hue Corn Room mural painted in 1927 by Grant Wood. It once decked the Martin Hotel downtown. Sit and study the walls and learn about the technique. Wood's assistant would apply the paint, "and Wood would then

wipe away from that to create the corn stalks, buildings and other imagery," according to the signage.

While at the museum, also explore Chihuly glass, works by local students, and rotating exhibits.

After the visit, take a walking tour of Sculpt Siouxland downtown, where you can snap photos of "El Toro-Angry Bull," a giant mushroom and more. Find keyed maps downtown.





Created by Terrance Karpowicz, "Let's Go" cheerfully welcomes visitors to the Sioux City Art Center, located downtown.





La Motte, Winterset, Muscatine

## INCA ANIMALS IN IOWA

First imported in the mid-1980s, alpacas are cherished for their soft wool, considered some of the finest natural material on the planet. Their coats come in 22 colors and produce a cashmere-like fleece, which is warmer, lighter and stronger than wool. Inca royals once draped themselves in the material, and the domesticated animals were also used for food and fuel in their home environs of Peru, Bolivia, Ecuador and northern Chile. Today you can see them in rural settings throughout the state. Some even have shops stocked with the soft stuff.

### **Irish Meadows Alpaca Farm, La Motte**

Located in far eastern Iowa south of Dubuque, this picturesque 1850s farm is all the sweeter with alpacas. With about 140 of the fluffy animals and several old brick-red barns, it's easy to snag Instagram photos. Shop for socks, hats, scarves, blankets and yarn on-site or online at [irishmeadowsalpaca.com](http://irishmeadowsalpaca.com).

### **Rusty Stars Alpaca Farm, Winterset**

Open Saturdays to visitors, this Madison County farm also has a shop featuring stuffed alpacas, plus socks, yarn, shirts and candles. But the real fun is entering the alpaca enclosure, feeling how super-soft their coats are, and seeing their natural reactions (they're not huge fans of dogs, so leave the pooch at home). Like their relatives the llamas, they will spit as a defense mechanism.

### **J&J Alpacas, Muscatine**

Available by appointment only, this farm southwest of Davenport offers tours for a nominal fee. If you're lucky, you'll see crias (the babies) and learn their names from owner Jody Ehler. Raw fibers are also available for sale in up to 12 colors.





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Dubuque, Brooklyn,  
Des Moines, Indianola

## AIRY ADVENTURES

These active pursuits in the sky show off the best of Iowa's fall scenery.

### **Skydive Iowa, Brooklyn**

If skydiving has been on your bucket list, stop waiting and book a trip this fall. You can soar through the air with the help of a trained pro (they run the gear so there's no worries—just fun).

The tandem dive starts at 14,000 feet and is a 60-second freefall. There's also training for high-octane types who want to jump alone. The outfitter documents the trip on video and film so you'll have lifetime proof of the experience.

### **FlyKDSM, Des Moines**

Ever want to fly your own plane? Make it a reality through this flight school, which also has aircraft rental. Book a discovery flight and take the controls with help from a certified flight instructor, or go for a full private license complete with 40 hours of air time.

### **Serenity Ballooning, Indianola**

The home to the National Balloon Classic, Indianola has several outfitters that offer sky rides, especially lovely when the fields and trees are dressed in their golden glow. Through Serenity Ballooning, you can enjoy a champagne ride with up to three of your best friends and a pilot, or make it a special anniversary or birthday gift. Find other operators in the Indianola area, including FlyinKOAT.

### **Sky Tours, Dubuque**

Strap on a harness and zip through the scenic Mississippi River bluffs at YMCA Union Park Camp northwest of town. The park features nine zip lines that stretch up to 1,000 feet. The course starts out easy for first-timers—with zips called "bunny" and "rabbit run." A highlight is "The Duel," billed as the first double-layered line in the Midwest. Expect lots of thrills during the two-hour guided tours. Bonus: October is peak fall color, especially scenic from the 360-degree lookout tower.





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Waterloo

## SHARING THE BLACK EXPERIENCE THROUGH BOOKS

Writer: Linh Ta

The summer of 2020 was one of many reckonings for Amber Collins of Waterloo.

The nonprofit she worked for closed due to the pandemic.

Outside her home, Black Lives Matter activists were protesting the murder of George Floyd.

As things were coming to a boil, Collins, who is Black, says she felt moved to make a change in her life and “help the community heal.”

So she dug into her childhood passion—books.

“I felt that books could bring us together and also could create more awareness that African Americans have contributed so much in history,” Collins says. “They have been poets and historians and scientists and biologists, and books were out there that could reflect that.”

Collins started Soul Book Nook as a way to not only share her love of books, but also to celebrate the Black American experience. She operated as a traveling bookstore out of her van after looking through her own literary collection at home.

Amber Collins opened Soul Book Nook with the belief that “books could bring us together.”



But what she truly desired was a storefront. While behemoths like Amazon and Target dominate book sales, she felt Waterloo still needed a physical space that encouraged literacy and was representative of the community, which is 16% Black, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

After dreaming of finding the perfect space, Collins says a spot opened up in Waterloo’s historic downtown district.

Soul Book Nook became official in October 2020, and today Collins is a bustling one-woman show.

You can find her helping customers discover their next great read or

packing books up for her online store. The shop has a little of everything, including examinations of slavery and historical romance novels.

Some of her favorite works by Black authors are “Dreamland Burning” by Jennifer Latham, “Caste” by Isabel Wilkerson and “Don’t Touch my Hair!”—a children’s book by Sharee Miller.

“I did not know I was walking into such an empty space that was very vital for a community,” Collins says. “They needed a local store that would provide this type of material to the community.”





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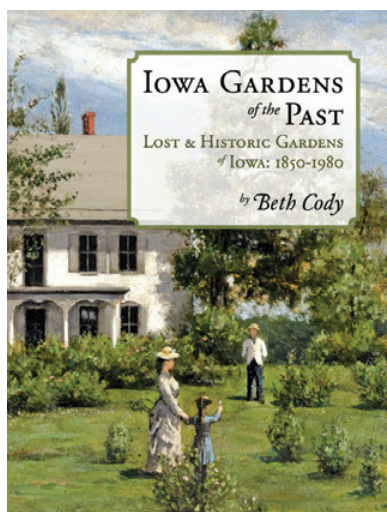
## GARDENS THROUGH IOWA HISTORY

Writer: Veronica Lorson Fowler

Take an Iowa garden tour through time, stopping along the way at a modest 1873 vegetable plot outside a log cabin in Council Bluffs, the fanciful grounds surrounding the Hubinger Mansion in Keokuk in the 1890s, and a charming cottage garden in Mason City in 1931.

You'll visit all of these and more in "Iowa Gardens of the Past: Lost and Historic Gardens of Iowa" (\$35, Iowa Garden Press). Kalona resident Beth Cody has pulled together 250 historic images, woven together with informative and inspirational text, that show us how Iowa's first rustic gardens bloomed into ambitious landscapes reflective of the development of the state.

The book is a charmer not just for the illustrations and photos of actual



gardens, but also for the delightfully reproduced images of seed packets, retail plant lists, nursery and garden tool advertisements, botanical illustrations, newspaper clippings, and magazine and catalog covers that help you envision the gardens of each era.

Before Iowa was a state, newcomers planted gardens around their rough, freshly built homes. You'll see in detail the resourcefulness of gardeners as they secured seeds and plants in a land new to them.

By the turn of the century, as Iowans had more wealth and free time, their landscapes evolved to more ambitious plantings that attracted visitors from miles around.

From the turn of the century until World War II, gardens expanded. Victory Gardens gave horticulture a new importance and urgency. Enthusiasm for home gardening also created horticulture empires like those founded by Earl May, George Wallace, and the Meredith family, founders of Better Homes and Gardens.

The book continues on to the prosperity and newfound leisure time of the 1950s onward through the 1980s, the final era covered in the book.

Find the title on Amazon.





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Iowa City

## TELLING THE STORY OF THE IOWA WRITERS' WORKSHOP

Writer: Michael Morain  
Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs

The Iowa Writers' Workshop is famous for producing stories. In 2020, a new story began about the workshop itself.

A team of Iowa City filmmakers is producing a documentary about the University of Iowa's legendary writing program, focusing their lens on a dozen students who arrived this fall. The cameras will follow their daily lives until they graduate in 2022.

"I hope [audiences] see there's something very special happening here, and they see the challenges of living a creative life," says workshop director Lan Samantha Chang.

Filmmaker Andrew Sherburne hopes to feature these discoveries, too. With help from a recent Produce Iowa Greenlight Grant, he launched the project because he was drawn to the workshop's insular mystery. Even as a local, he knew little about what actually happens there.

"That's part of its charm, its allure," he says. "The people who have passed through the doors of this building and through this program in its many locations have been incredibly influential in the world of literature."

He and his co-director, Tommy Haines, previously worked together on "Saving Brinton," the 2017 documentary



about a Washington man who discovered a stash of rare film reels from the early 20th century. That film made the rounds of international festivals and was short-listed for an Oscar in 2019.

That was proof, Sherburne says, "that Midwest storytellers can bring Midwest stories to the big screen."

The filmmakers may stage some scenes from the workshop participants' own fiction and poetry, but most of the film will rely on observational footage of the writers' routines in Iowa City. The best bits will be distilled into a few connecting storylines.

"We shoot people doing research, running, cooking, at the store because these are the things, actually, that make the writers. The workshop is a place where we get to see the writer's mind, within the work, but the mind has to be developed outside of the place," says

Matthew B. Kelley, a recent workshop alumnus who was hired to help with the project. (The Atlanta native recalled his first visit to the workshop, during a snowy April: "This is the Hogwarts that I've always wanted in my life!")

Sherburne, the producer, received a \$50,000 Greenlight Grant this summer from Produce Iowa, the state office of film and media production. The funds helped him hire a crew to produce a proof-of-concept package to attract larger investors. His ultimate goal is a feature film.

Chang, the workshop director, hopes the film shows what makes the place unique.

"People in Iowa are very supportive of writers," she says. "People in Iowa understand the need for people to live sort of quiet lives, and, really, writers are people who live quiet lives. It's possible to do that here."



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Osceola

## GETTING INTO THE SPIRITS

Writer: Christina Fernández-Morrow

When Rob and Christi Taylor graduated from Louisville's Moonshine University in 2016, they were about 60% sure they would open a distillery in Iowa. The couple started thinking about it in 2012 after attending the Kentucky Bourbon Festival and meeting the world's most renowned distillers. It became a passion that took the Taylors all over the world visiting distilleries, meeting award-winning makers, and learning more about the process of creating high-quality spirits.

When a property came up for sale in Osceola, they knew it would be the

perfect location to make their vision, Revelton Distilling Co., a reality. The problem was, the Taylors weren't quite ready to take the plunge.

They spent the next four years continuing their research, writing a business plan, designing the space into a distillery, and making connections within the industry. They interviewed bartenders across the globe to learn what shape and size bottle provided easier pours while collecting vendor resources and investors. After four years, 60 shareholders, millions of dollars' worth of top-grade equipment, and hundreds of hours of additional Moonshine University continuing education courses, they opened their doors last December with seven signature spirits, a beautiful lounge and

bar where patrons can enjoy uniquely fashioned drinks, and a shop featuring merchandise with their logo and liquors.

The lounge is spacious, with deep blues, bright white accents and touches of gold throughout to complement the labels on their bottles. Large windows offer a glimpse into the distillery below where the spirits are made. The vibe is elegance, comfort and good times. Revelton is a sophisticated take on the word "revel," referring to enjoying oneself with drinking and dancing. Adding to the appeal of the lounge, there's live music Saturday evenings.

"Local beers can be some of the best beers in the world. We want people to know that local craft spirits can also be some of the best," Christi says.

Learn more at [reveltondistillery.com](http://reveltondistillery.com).

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## IOWA **STOPS** HUNGER

### LITTLE BOXES

On the campus at Drake University, a bright blue box sided with shake shingles greets visitors and gardeners at the Sprout: The Des Moines Urban Youth Learning Garden. Open the little box, roughly 2-feet square, and find pastas, canned goods and more. All are free and ready to grab for a meal for anyone in need.

Known as little free pantries, these boxes are popping up across the country and right here in Iowa. Started in 2016 in Fayetteville, Arkansas, the concept relies on community members to stock the pantries with food, paper products, personal care items and more.

The designs are bright and varied. Some appear at churches, others at community gardens. “We nourish our neighbors” and “take what you need, leave what you can” are both guiding principles. Sometimes corporate donors help with the initiative.

For the Drake University project (the area is classified as a food desert), the Wellmark Foundation granted \$10,000 to the initiative in 2016 (the pantry at Sprout was reinstalled this past spring). Three were built on campus. Students participating in the project worked with Drake neighborhood groups to host additional pantries throughout the area.

Other Iowa cities and towns with little free pantries include Decorah, Fairfield, Mason City, Sioux City and more.



Little free pantries in Greater Des Moines can be found (clockwise from top) at 720 Grand Ave. in West Des Moines, 4301 College Ave., 3111 Hickman Road, and on the Drake University campus.



The pantries are easy to access. For an interactive map and more information about the initiative, visit [littlefreepantry.org](http://littlefreepantry.org). ■

*Iowa Stops Hunger is a Business Publications Corporation initiative to raise awareness of hunger in Iowa and inspire action to combat it.*



**HyVee**

PRESENTS

# IOWA STOPS HUNGER

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- Creating ongoing awareness of hunger/food insecurity in Iowa.
- Educating Iowans about hunger/food insecurity and related organizations and resources.
- Inspiring and equipping businesses and individuals to take action to stop hunger in Iowa.

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# INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES

A guide to the organizations and communities embracing a variety of backgrounds to make Iowa a wonderful place to live, work and play





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“Both an individual and a company can commit to being more inclusive by dedicating time to listen and learn from others’ experience.”

# WELLS FARGO

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We have a unique opportunity in the Central Iowa Market to lead through and support diversity, equity and inclusion in the community. When you think of diverse communities, let's face it—Central Iowa is not the first location that comes to mind. However, we have an opportunity to embrace where we are and lead by example to encourage inclusivity of the current demographic. We can also embrace growth to become more diverse and inclusive in our viewpoints by listening to the community and becoming more informed on what we need to do as a company to meet as many people as possible wherever they are in their financial journey.

Both an individual and a company can commit to being more inclusive by dedicating time to listen and learn from others' experience, be visible in their respective community to show support for diversity and inclusivity, and finally by being intentional with their follow-on actions. These actions may include general financial education, mentorship of diverse talent, supporting local organizations, investments in small businesses, and encouraging new entrepreneurship opportunities. A small investment into a person or group of people can produce mutually beneficial outcomes for your company by opening up a broader base of customers. It can also benefit the community with the products and services you offer. Ultimately, we have a choice to be more inclusive and we should do it because it is the right thing to do, but we also need to recognize that failure to be more inclusive may have the reverse effect by missed revenue opportunity for a growing customer base and leading to a less inclusive culture and society.







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## EMC INSURANCE COMPANIES

**Q: WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO YOUR BUSINESS THAT YOU INCLUDE DIVERSE VOICES AND STAFF?**

A: We're a great company because of our people. We're stronger because of the different experiences, backgrounds and talents we each bring to our roles. Research supports this and indicates diverse teams are more innovative. Additionally, diversity directly correlates with stronger financial performance. When we elevate the importance of diversity in our workplace, we create an inclusive and empowering environment that drives success.

**Q: HOW CAN A COMPANY COMMIT ITSELF TO BECOMING MORE INCLUSIVE?**

A: As a company, we've committed to diversity, equity and inclusion and are proud sponsors of events such as Women Lead Change and Capital City Pride. Last year, our president and CEO signed the CEO Action Pledge for Diversity & Inclusion, cementing our commitment to fostering a workplace where diverse perspectives are welcome and respected. We are also launching an Inclusion Council and several Resource Groups to embed diversity and inclusion in all we do at EMC.



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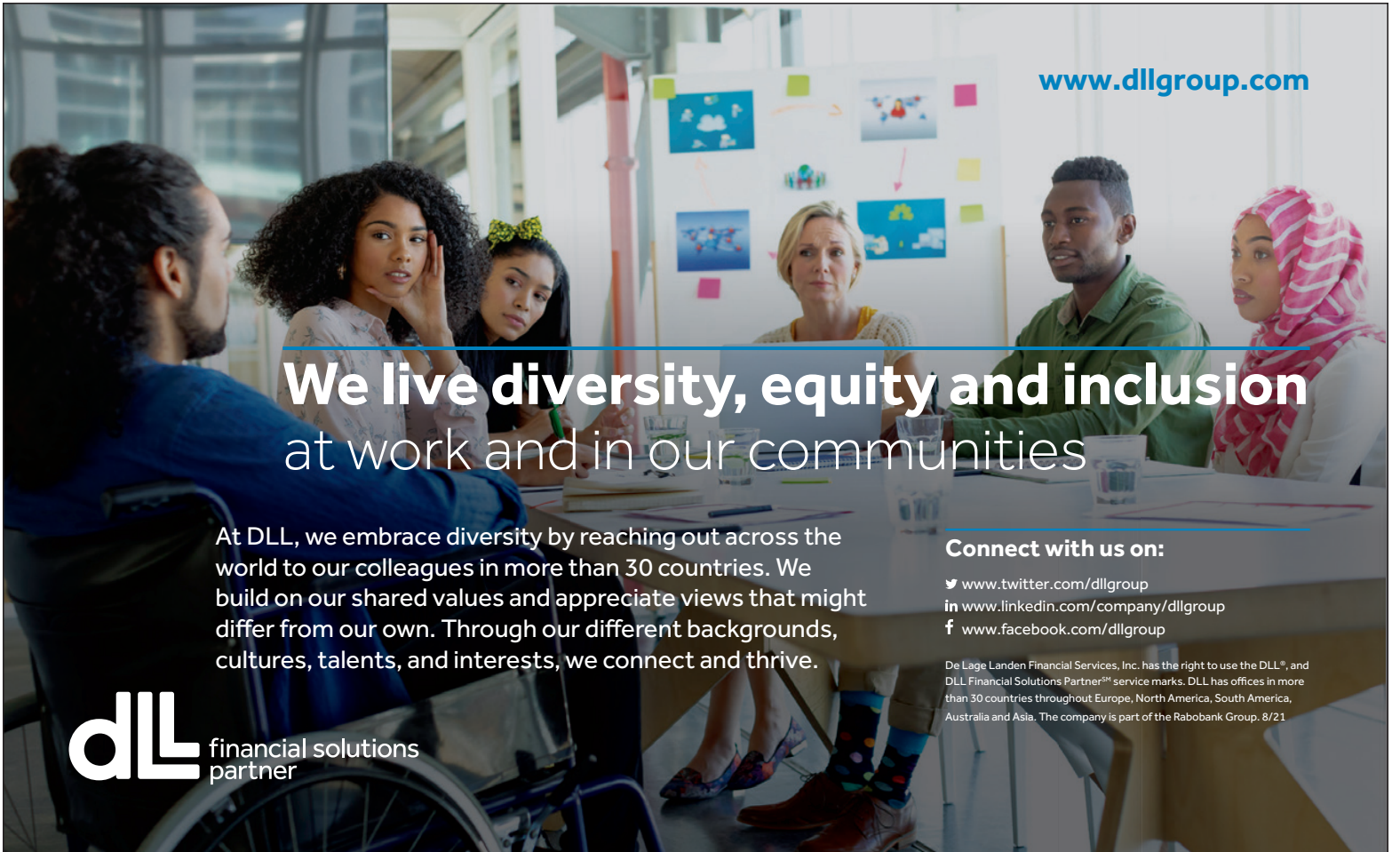
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OKOBOJI

**HOME & GARDEN**

# LINKING THE LAND AND LAKE

AN OKOBOJI LAKE HOME EMBRACES FAMILY  
WHILE ENHANCING THE LANDSCAPE.

WRITER: MISSY KEENAN

PHOTOGRAPHER: COREY GAFFER











**W**hen Bob and Jane Sturgeon built their home on West Okoboji Lake, they had three goals in mind—provide plenty of room to host their multigenerational family; preserve and enhance the natural landscape; and connect the house, landscape and lake.

Their architects from Des Moines' Substance Architecture carefully sited the 7,800-square-foot contemporary home to avoid removing any of the lot's mature bur oak trees. Genus Landscape Architects, also based in Des Moines, solved the steep bank's erosion issues with granite-veneered retaining walls and native

perennials. And large expanses of glass at both the front and back of the central great room tie the home to the landscape, providing views of the lake from the street and from throughout the home.

A single sloped roofline unifies the front and back terraces. Visitors enter the house through the great room, where they're greeted with the view of the terrace, two massive oaks and the lake beyond. Inside the space, two sitting areas face a low-slung fireplace, enhanced by an ever-changing shadow play from the home's architecture and natural surroundings.

At the lowest point of the roofline behind a hidden door, the private primary suite provides a lake view and terrace access. To the right, the roofline slopes up to its two-story peak with the kitchen, 16-seat dining area and garage access, and an entertaining space and three guest suites





**Left page:** There's no need for artwork on the walls with the open views of Lake Okoboji and two large bur oaks outside. Thanks to large banks of windows, there's ever-changing shadow play from the home's architecture and natural surroundings.

**Above:** Visible from the home's large great room are the kitchen and dining areas, an upstairs entertaining space, the backyard terraces and the lake beyond—making this home perfect for entertaining large groups of friends and family.



# “THERE ARE SPACES FOR EVERYONE TO BE TOGETHER AND SPACES FOR EVERYONE TO RETREAT TO AT THE END OF THE DAY.”

JESSICA TERRILL, ONE OF THE PROJECT ARCHITECTS

above. A TV room with an expansive sectional and two more guest suites are in the basement, bringing the home's bedroom count to six, each with a bathroom en suite.

“It's a big house but it still feels modest and intimate,” says Jessica Terrill, one of the architects. “There are spaces for everyone to be together and spaces for everyone to retreat to at the end of the day.”

The Sturgeons make the trip from their primary home in Urbandale to Okoboji on and off all year, staying for longer periods in spring and summer. Most summer weekends they're joined by friends and family—the couple has five kids, 11 grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.

“When our family's here in the summer, we'll pick up doughnuts in the morning for the kids or make a big breakfast,” Jane says. “Then all afternoon we're outside. We get the kids lathered up with sunscreen, load up the beach bags and head down to the dock. We'll jump in the lake and swim with the kids, then maybe go for a bike ride or a hike or take the boat out. In the last year we've taken up pickleball, and there's a new pickleball court a block from our house.

“It's beautiful here in the summer, and it's really relaxing,” she adds. “We love being here with our family.”

With family and sustainability both in mind, the home was built with a focus on longevity and durability. The roof, for example, is made of zinc and should last 100 years.

“We were very mindful of the materials and construction methods we chose,” Terrill says. “Bob and Jane want this home to be here for generations.” ■

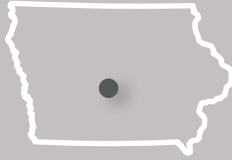
**Right page, top:** From the kitchen island, the cooks can keep an eye on the action in the great room, dining area, and even outside to the terraces, yard and Lake Okoboji. Like the rest of the home, visual distractions are kept to a minimum to focus on the natural beauty outside.

**Right page, bottom:** Architects from Substance Architecture carefully sited the 7,800-square-foot contemporary home to avoid removing any of the mature bur oak trees. Genus Landscape Architects solved the steep bank's erosion issues with granite-veneered retaining walls lined with vegetation.









DES MOINES


**HOME & GARDEN**

# RECONSIDERING THE IOWA GARDEN

**HORTICULTURIST KELLY NORRIS TAKES THE  
LONG VIEW OF WHAT A GARDEN IS AND  
CAN BE IN THE MIDDLE OF CORN COUNTRY.**

WRITER AND PHOTOGRAPHER: KELLY NORRIS





Late May in the front yard meadow prominently features *Penstemon digitalis* "Pocahantas," a pink-flowered form of the Midwest native beard tongue, along with dozens of other perennials.



1. *Dodecatheon meadia* (shooting star).
2. A vignette from the front yard meadow.
3. *Allium atropurpureum* (ornamental onion) floating through *Geum macrophyllum* (big leaf avens).

In 2017, I crossed the important life threshold of homeownership, purchasing a 1941 Colonial Revival home on Des Moines' north side. In reality, I bought a garden and a place to sleep. The garden wasn't much more than a foundation planting and a half-acre of turf, but I saw the potential to stitch my artistic intentions with ecological conscience. In the last four years, I've begun a series of interventions with place. My garden is a laboratory for curiosity and a studio for expression. This patch atop a hill over the Des Moines River isn't merely an aesthetic endeavor, but rather an odyssey with place.

I call the garden Three Oaks in homage to three stately trees that define the canopy: two bur oaks, affectionately nicknamed Big Bur and Little Bur, and a black oak that marks the curb where the driveway meets the street. Big Bur and the black oak date to the time the house was finished. Little Bur was purportedly planted in the 1980s.

As a gardener who practices in ecological art, I'm planting for life over the long haul. Garden habitats are complex, regardless of the creatures they comfort, and ecological processes inherently involve time, a cadence of change over years. Yet, in a relatively short period, the transition from this lot into something more than turf has been dramatic. In the fall of 2020, I observed 12 species of

warblers migrating through the property, alighting the hackberry trees to devour the oily blackberries.

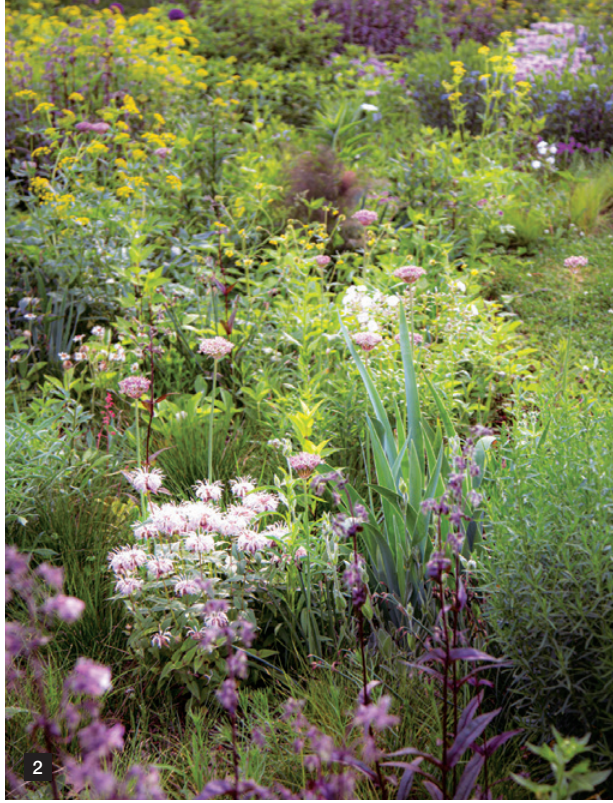
With house renovation still in progress, I set about planting my front yard meadow on Labor Day weekend in 2017. Trained in horticulture and design, I wanted the garden to feel well-situated in my neighborhood and in relation to my home. Blessed with the canopy of oaks to frame the street view, I conceived a loose and unselfconscious meadow abounding from the former rectangle of lawn sandwiched between the house and street.

The notion of a front yard meadow has been variously characterized as brave and defiant. It shakes the traditional, Jeffersonian norm of the front yard as a conformative tableau. Yet I wasn't striving for heroism as much as I was making a statement about who I am and how I welcome others to my home. The front yard is a doormat to my domain. Why settle for the sterility of turf and hedge when you could offer your neighborhood something beautiful?

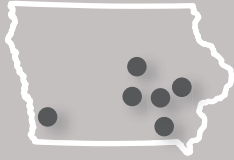
Four years later, the garden offers new alchemy daily. Vignettes blur in and out of focus with the changing seasons. The restless gardener-artist redrafts the canvas a little each year as interests wax and wane. Neighbors stop to talk, curious about what's in bloom and a little more of the story. The story, of course, is always unfurling, a botanical tale of wonderment and awe. ■

THE NOTION OF A FRONT  
YARD MEADOW HAS BEEN  
VARIOUSLY CHARACTERIZED  
AS BRAVE AND DEFIANT.









COUNCIL BLUFFS  
STORY CITY  
NEWTON  
LEIGHTON  
MILTON  
ELY

**FOOD & DINING**

## STATE OF CHEESE

SAMPLE THE SAVORY CREATIONS  
MADE BY IOWA'S BEST CHEESEMAKERS.

WRITER: KARLA WALSH

PHOTOGRAPHER: DERA BURRESON STYLIST: SAMMY MILA





**W**isconsin probably pops to mind as destination No. 1 when you think cheese. But did you know Iowa produced 3.3 million pounds of cheese in 2019, more than a pound a person? And each ounce is among the most delicious you'll find across the country.

"The dark, rich soils of Iowa help us produce lush forages and cheeses that can't be replicated anywhere else in the world. What you taste in a cheese goes all the way back to the beginning," says Ranae Dietzel, co-owner and master cheese-ager of Lost Lake Farms in Jewell.

That's because the cows or goats producing the milk used in Iowa cheeses feast on nutrient-rich fare, resulting in top-notch fromage. C.J. Bienert, owner of the Cheese Shop and Cheese Bar in Des Moines, echoes Dietzel and gives you permission to declare a cheese board "dinner."

"We're farming on compost from centuries of prairie and we grow the best of anything we try to make," Bienert says. "Cheese is a complete food minus fiber and vitamin C. Add an apple and you have a pretty terrific meal." (See page 71 for his cheese-pairing ideas, including with Iowa meats.)

On the following pages, discover more about the most prolific cheesemakers in the state.



### **MILTON CREAMERY**

If you've heard of the name Prairie Breeze, then you've heard of this company's product. Founded in 2006 in Milton (southeast of Ottumwa), the family-owned creamery sources all the milk used to make their award-winning cheddars and quark (a smooth, tangy and spreadable German-style cheese) from small, local farms within 30 miles of their headquarters.

"Prairie Breeze is our most decorated and beloved cheese," says Angie DiMeo, the company's marketing manager. "It's a twist on a well-aged white cheddar-style cheese and is aged for a minimum of nine months. Because of the cultures we add, it develops a ton of flavor with a delicious sweetness, is crumbly yet creamy, and has a little crunch from the aging process. It's addicting in the best possible way."

Find it online at [miltoncreamery.com/collections/all](http://miltoncreamery.com/collections/all).

### **FRISIAN FARMS CHEESE**

This Leighton family-operated creamery (located between Pella and Oskaloosa on Iowa Highway 163) is pulling its weight in terms of our state's dairy industry. "We produce 40,000 pounds of traditional Dutch Gouda each year. We currently offer four different ages and eight different flavors," says co-owner Mike Bandstra.

Aged two months to 1,000 days and offered in smoky, herby, bacony, peppery flavors and beyond, Bandstra and his brother/co-owner, Jason, use the classic Gouda techniques first created in Holland to make this semi-hard cheese. For those unacquainted with Frisian Farms, Bandstra recommends that you "start with our fresh curds and work your way up to our young (two months), aged (one year) and sneek (three years) ... to see how the flavor intensifies just simply with time."

Their cheese house is open Monday through Friday 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.; you can also purchase online at [frisianfarms.com](http://frisianfarms.com).

### **MAYTAG**

One of the oldest and most established cheesemakers in the Midwest churns out some of the country's best funky blue. Founded 80 years ago by Frederick Maytag II in Newton, Maytag changed the blue cheese game by using cow's milk (from his own farm) instead of the traditional European base of sheep's milk. Aging also makes all the difference for the ultimate mild, creamy, tangy and buttery results.

Today, Maytag is still created from fresh local Iowa Holstein milk, and each wheel of the artisan product is personally "graded" to ensure quality, says Jennifer Seeley, vice president of sales and marketing. While they offer white cheddar and cheese spread, too, you can't go wrong with the traditional Maytag Blue. "It's buttery with a slightly salty tang and a clean finish," Seeley says. "And it pairs with practically anything."

Maytag is expanding to complementary products, partnering with other nearby producers to make popcorn from local grains and honey from bees on the Maytag Farms. "We're not just a dairy company—we're an Iowa farm company," Seeley says.

Retail hours are Monday through Friday 8 a.m. -5 p.m.; visit [maytagdairyfarms.com](http://maytagdairyfarms.com) for tour updates.

### **LOST LAKE FARMS**

"Turning luscious grass into delicious cheese" is the specialty of this family-owned Jewell farm north of Story City. Ranae Dietzel, co-owner and affineur (cheese-ager), and Kevin Dietzel, co-owner and cheesemaker, put a lot of care into managing the soil on their farm so it grows the best plants for the cows to eat. Their cheeses vary based on the season, but the Iowa Alpine is their top seller. It's a "flavorful, nutty cheese and such a crowd-pleaser," Ranae says. "But cheese selection should be a function of purpose. We have a variety of cheeses to suit crackers and beautiful cheese boards, sandwiches, salads, baking and grilling," including feta, blue, cheddar, Camembert and





HONEY CREEK  
CREAMERY  
LEMON VERBENA  
AND HONEY  
CHEVRE

DAN AND  
DEBBIE'S  
CREAMERY  
WHITE CHEDDAR  
CHEESE CURDS

LOST LAKE  
FARMS  
IOWA ALPINE

MAYTAG  
BLUE CHEESE

LA QUERCIA  
PROSCIUTTO

FRISIAN FARMS  
CHEESE  
DUTCH GOUDA

MILTON CREAMERY  
PRAIRIE BREEZE







### The Supporting Cast

When it comes to charcuterie to pair with your cheeses, C.J. Bienert with Des Moines' Cheese Shop says there's really only one answer: La Quercia Cured Meats. The Norwalk-based brand is world-renowned (and he's not just saying that because he lives in the state) for their 'nduja, salami, pepperoni, pancetta and especially prosciutto. Otherwise, most Iowa butchers and meat producers focus on blends for sausages, franks or grillable cuts of meats, and a handful of restaurants across the state excel at homemade pâtés and rillettes.

To round out the spread, Bienert suggests honey (try Runnels-based Bell Farm), jam, mustard, apple slices, grapes, something pickled such as corbichons, olives, nuts and, of course, plenty of bread and crackers. Fill in any gaps with fresh herbs and you'll have a totally Instagrammable snack dinner.

### Get On Board

Because a typical platter or cutting board won't quite cut it to really drive home the Iowa-made theme, we suggest an Iowa-made or Iowa-inspired serving board. A few of our favorites:

Iowa Cutting Board  
(\$39.95, amanashops.com)

Cheese Board With Iowa Inlay  
(\$35, damonlaynewoodworking.com)

Wood Lazy Susans  
(\$60 to \$92, jkcreativewood.com)

Des Moines Mercantile handmade cutting boards (price, styles and sizes vary; check [desmoinesmercantile.com](http://desmoinesmercantile.com) or call 515.423.0608 for availability)

a unique burnt oak wheel that's not to be missed.

Up next: The Dietzels are testing out new aging strategies for their cheddars to keep adding more options to their expansive lineup. Buy online at [lostlakefarmllc.com/online-store.html](http://lostlakefarmllc.com/online-store.html).

### DAN AND DEBBIE'S CREAMERY

Set on a family farm in Ely (about 15 minutes southeast of Cedar Rapids), this 24-year-old dairy has grown to include 150 Holstein cows (the best cow breed for milking). The team is made up of Dan and Debbie Takes, plus three sons and a daughter. Their own farm's milk is the only kind used to make their signature white cheddar curds, or "squeaky cheeses," as well as their milk and ice cream.

The enzymes yield that special curd-like texture and cheddar flavor, and once the foundation is set, the cheesemakers add fresh herbs and spices for varieties such as onion and chive, dill, tomato basil and spicy chipotle. If curds aren't your top choice, the Takeses also offer six flavors of aged cheddar that work well on cheese boards, as part of mac and cheese, stuffed inside grilled cheese sandwiches, as stand-alone snacks, or on a cheese board.

Find shop locations at [dananddebbies.com/where-to-buy](http://dananddebbies.com/where-to-buy). You can also take a creamery tour and enjoy an ice cream treat.

### HONEY CREEK CREAMERY INC.

Calling all dairy-intolerant: Goat cheese might be your solution, according to Sharon Oamek, owner of the aptly named Honey Creek-based creamery, located north of Council Bluffs. That's because goat milk is the closest to human milk, so it's easier to digest. Milk from her farm's three breeds of goats (Nubians, Saanens and Alpines) is all that's used to craft fresh chevre.

Available in basil garlic, cranberry horseradish, smoky aleppo pepper, lemon verbena and honey, and simply pure cheese, this semi-soft cheese is mild, spreadable and remarkably versatile. (Try leftover cheese board fixings slathered on crostini with figs, crumbled over risotto, or as an unexpected pizza topping.) While you're snagging some cheese, be sure to grab a pint or two of their super-silky goat milk gelato.

Buy online at [honeycreekcreamery.com/shop.html](http://honeycreekcreamery.com/shop.html). Pencil in a visit next summer when you can try goat yoga. ■





SIOUX CITY  
WINTERSET  
DES MOINES  
FAIRFIELD  
CEDAR RAPIDS


## FOOD & DINING

# 5 NEW RESTAURANTS WORTH THE DRIVE

Have appetite, will travel.

WRITER: KARLA WALSH

Opening a restaurant is no small feat *any* time. Opening a restaurant during a pandemic adds a whole host of new challenges. But these new Iowa restaurants—all of which have opened since March 2020—beat the odds and are now slinging some of the most creative cuisine in the state. Take a food tour to cure every craving at these recently opened hot spots.



Located in downtown Winterset, the Drift pours craft beers, cocktails and wines (including some local) to complement their lunch and dinner menu. Also try Sunday brunch, which offers tot poutine, avocado toast and pecan rolls.






PHOTOGRAPHER: DUANE TINKEY

**THE DRIFT  
WINTERSET**

Unless you're one of the 5,000 or so residents of Winterset, you probably think of the town as the birthplace of John Wayne rather than a dining destination. But the Drift, which opened last December, just might change your mind. The taproom serves an enticing mix of food for dinner Wednesday through Friday and lunch and dinner Saturday. Expect classics with a slightly upscale twist. Case in point: farm-fresh deviled eggs topped with pico de gallo; a grown-up grilled cheese with avocado, tomato and homemade garlic aioli (pictured); and a walnut brownie served a la mode and made with spent grain from their branded beer ([thedriftia.com](http://thedriftia.com)).





**RC'S DINER**  
**DES MOINES**

Co-owners Joe Tripp and Simon Goheen—two of Des Moines' most well-known hospitality pros—opened their new Windsor Heights hot spot in July. The name RC's is a clear sign of the restaurant's familial vibe: It's a tribute to Simon's daughter Rori and Joe's son Clayton.

The menu at the all-day modern diner nods to Tripp's Jewish roots. Start with a latke flight, consisting of five well-seasoned and balanced potato pancakes, including one served with spiced applesauce and horseradish sour cream (pictured). Main entrees, such as an herb-rubbed hanger steak and pork tenderloin with a matzo meal crust, are generously portioned without being overwhelming. Save room for a homemade dessert or pastry, such as a giant cookie, slice of pie or cake, or milkshake ([rcsdinerdsm.com](http://rcsdinerdsm.com)).



**SOUL GOOD SOUTHERN DINER  
CEDAR RAPIDS**

No need to hop on a plane to cozy up to a plate of scratch-made Southern comfort food. Since January 2021, Cedar Rapids is the place to be when you're in the mood for fried chicken, fish, cornbread and collard greens, or if you time it right, meatloaf or ribs (both daily specials). For a flavor buffet, make a meal of the sides. Options include silky sweet potatoes, creamy mac and cheese, and holiday-worthy cornbread dressing. Be sure to save room for a cup of peach cobbler for dessert ([soulgoodcr.com](http://soulgoodcr.com)).

**WOODBURY'S STEAKHOUSE  
SIOUX CITY**

September 2020 marked the opening of this splurge-worthy restaurant that's tucked inside the renovated Warrior Hotel. With an impressive and expansive wine list to pair with the quintessential steakhouse menu, this is the perfect venue for a special night out. Start with the duck confit flatbread and a bowl of French onion soup, then dive into the lobster mac and cheese or the 16-ounce bone-in rib-eye. Warm molten chocolate lava cake (with vanilla ice cream) is a must to cap things off. ([facebook.com/WoodburysAtTheWarriorHotel](https://facebook.com/WoodburysAtTheWarriorHotel)).



**LUNCHBOX FAIRFIELD**

Starting with takeout lunches and catering in October 2020 and expanding to dine-in service in 2021, Lunchbox is a realized dream for two high school best friends and their now husbands. Together, the team behind this French-American bistro have more than 40 years of hospitality experience. Taste the finesse in their succulent braised short rib sandwich with lemon crème fraîche, the fully loaded, jammy egg-topped Cobb salad, and the next-level creative chicken sandwich (pictured) that's garnished with red wine mushroom ragout ([lunchbox641.com](http://lunchbox641.com)). ■





CORNING  
DES MOINES  
KEOSAUQUA  
AMANA  
SOLON  
WASHINGTON  
DUBUQUE

**ARTS & CULTURE**



Des Moines-based artist Jimmy Navarro likes to jam out to painting landscapes in their current state. Here he's capturing a scene at Badger Creek State Park near Van Meter.





# PAINING THE GREAT OUTDOORS

IOWA ARTISTS EXPRESS  
THE STATE'S LANDSCAPE IN REAL  
TIME—RAIN OR SHINE.

WRITER: MICHAEL MORAIN, IOWA DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS

PHOTOGRAPHER: DUANE TINKEY



If you're painting outside and the temperature dips below freezing, mix some vodka into your paints to keep them loose. If it's hot out, take a battery-powered fan. If you're in a kayak, secure your easel with a few bungee cords.

Oh—and always take bug spray.

These are the sorts of tips you can learn the hard way, from personal experience, or from the growing swarm of outdoor painters who will happily share their stories from the coldest/hottest/windiest/buggiest day they ever spent trying to capture a moment on canvas.

Nobody knows exactly how many Iowans paint outdoors—or *en plein air*, to borrow the French term—but more than 600 follow a Facebook group called Iowa Plein Air Painters (pronounced plen as in pen). A half dozen Iowa towns host annual competitions, including Dubuque and Keosauqua, plus there's the Iowa State Fair's annual competition.

There are workshops. There are magazines. There are catalogs of gear.

"It's the new golf," says Des Moines artist Jimmy Navarro, 49, quoting a line he heard from a plein air podcast he enjoys while he's working on a painting—or "jamming one out," as he puts it.

Like golf, plein air painting offers a good excuse to get outdoors. It can be a rewarding challenge, a skill that is easy to learn but impossible to perfect.

It's portable, too. Many enthusiasts take their brushes and paints on vacations or business trips, in case a scene catches their eye. The art form requires the painters to really look at a place, to appreciate it in a way that snapping a photo does not.

### SCENIC SPOTS

Navarro, an avid runner, was part of the support crew for a friend who once ran across Iowa from Muscatine to Council Bluffs. While the artist waited, he set up his easel and jammed out a painting at each checkpoint along Highway 92, which runs south of Interstate 80.

"Over every hill there were so many great spots to see, so many things I couldn't believe," he says. "I probably took 2,000 photos."

He paints all over the country—the West Coast, the Four Corners, the Minnesota woods—but the northern Wisconsin native never tires of painting downtown Des Moines, where he moved in 1993. Last February, when temperatures plunged to 20-some degrees below zero, he trekked to Gray's Lake and worked until his oil paints turned, as he puts it, "from toothpaste to chalk."

He often meets up with other painters, including Jeff Allen of Solon near Iowa City, whom Navarro describes as a "beer snob" and "super cool hippie" who loves jam bands.

"He's the classic 'Lebowski' of plein air painting," Navarro says. "He's, like, everything you want to be."

Painter Jimmy Navarro captures scenes of the outdoors in his works.

**1.** A color study of a curved road off Highway 92 (2020). Navarro spent a week on one road, when he was like "Van Gogh in a van, documenting and painting everything I [saw] interesting about Iowa, one mile at a time." **2.** "Coming Home" (2020-2021). "This is the view I see every day on my way back to my studio apartment," Navarro says. "Des Moines was covered in this pink red defused light from the wildfires out West." **3.** Rain shaft on the Raccoon River (2021). Navarro says he did this "quick sketch" from walking the river, "documenting how low the water levels are with a visible sandbar and a late summer storm providing rain relief."









## PLEIN AIR PAINTING AROUND IOWA

**Bluff Strokes** in Dubuque offers year-round workshops and an annual “Paint Out” competition in October ([bluffstrokes.org](http://bluffstrokes.org)).

**Corning En Plein Air**, hosted by the Corning Center for the Fine Arts, is part of an annual festival called Lazy Days at the end of July ([facebook.com/corningcenterforthefinearts](https://facebook.com/corningcenterforthefinearts)).

**En Plein Air Washington** is hosted in June by the Art Domestique Gallery in Washington ([artdomestiquegallery.com](http://artdomestiquegallery.com)).

**Fresh Paint Amana** is organized each September by Catiri’s Art Oasis in Amana ([freshpaintiowa.com](http://freshpaintiowa.com)).

**Paint Van Buren County** takes place in and around Keosauqua at the end of May ([villagesofvanburen.com](http://villagesofvanburen.com)).

**Plein Air at the Fair** happens every August during the Iowa State Fair in Des Moines ([iowastatefair.org](http://iowastatefair.org)).

Allen, 63, founded the Iowa Plein Air Painters group on Facebook in 2009, after he took a plein air painting class at the Palette and Chisel, an art school in Chicago. The group gathers most Sunday afternoons at a different location each week, mostly in eastern Iowa.

### PARTICULAR IMPRESSIONS

They’re following in the footsteps of earlier Iowa artists, like the naturalists Ding Darling and Althea Sherman, and, before them, the famous gang of Impressionists who left their studios to get some fresh air and fresh ideas in the 19th century. Claude Monet, Berthe Morisot, Camille Pissaro: They all immortalized their impressions of a particular place and time.

“Plein air painting taught me how to put down something quickly, how to put down the correct values and the correct color temperatures all at once,” Allen says. He learned how to fill in the most important elements first without “chasing the light,” which can change dramatically in just 10 or 15 minutes.

He also learned how to focus. Plein air painters tend to notice details other people don’t.

“Sometimes the artists will focus on something the rest of us will walk by every day and never notice,” says Linda Shearer, who organizes an annual plein air event in Corning in southwest Iowa (fun fact—it’s Johnny Carson’s birthplace).

One of the events during Corning’s painting weekend requires artists to polish off a canvas in just an hour and stay downtown, Shearer says, “so folks can stand back and watch them paint and ask questions.”

Often, the experience helps locals see their town in a new way.

“Artists have so much to offer,” says David Schmitz, administrator of the Iowa Arts Council. “Communities that invite artists to lead and participate in authentic cultural experiences—festivals, concerts, you name it—benefit in all kinds of tangible and intangible ways. Local art boosts local pride and creates a real sense of place.”

And really, a sense of place is what plein air painting is all about. That’s what keeps pulling Navarro outdoors, rain or shine.

“I love urban landscapes. I love rural landscapes. I just love Iowa,” he says. “I can’t get enough of it.” ■



DES  
MOINES  
ART  
CENTER



a gathering place



a museum



a school

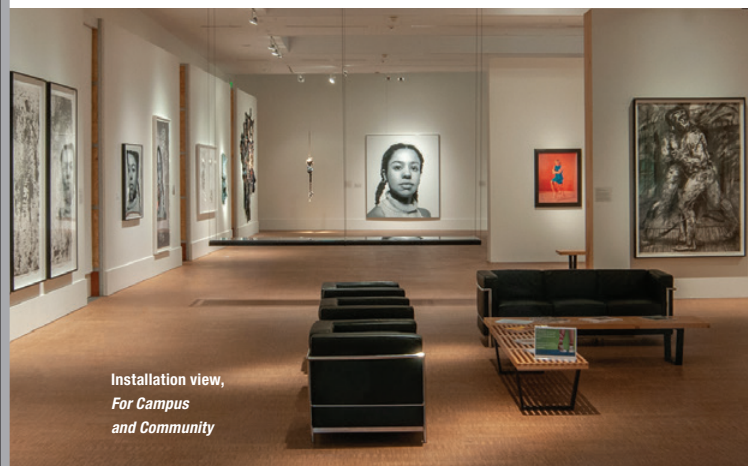


a sculpture park

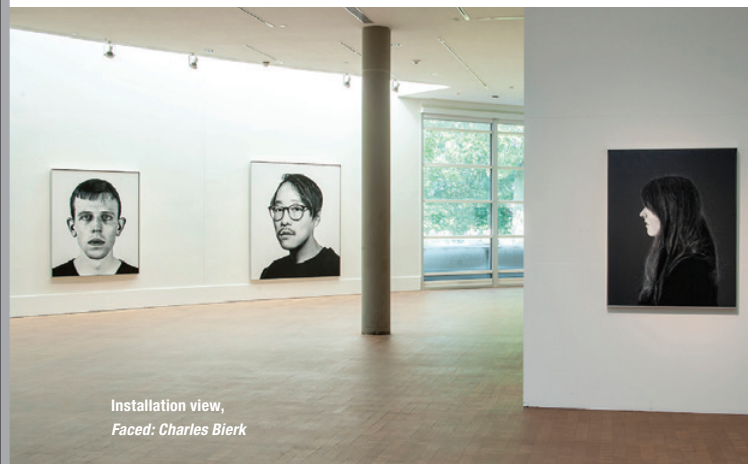
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# Grinnell College Museum of Art



Installation view,  
*For Campus  
and Community*



Installation view,  
*Faced: Charles Bierk*

Grinnell College Museum of Art offers an open door to powerful and thought-provoking art exhibitions and programs.

Free to everyone.  
[grinnell.edu/museum](http://grinnell.edu/museum)





OKOBOJI

**DESTINATIONS**

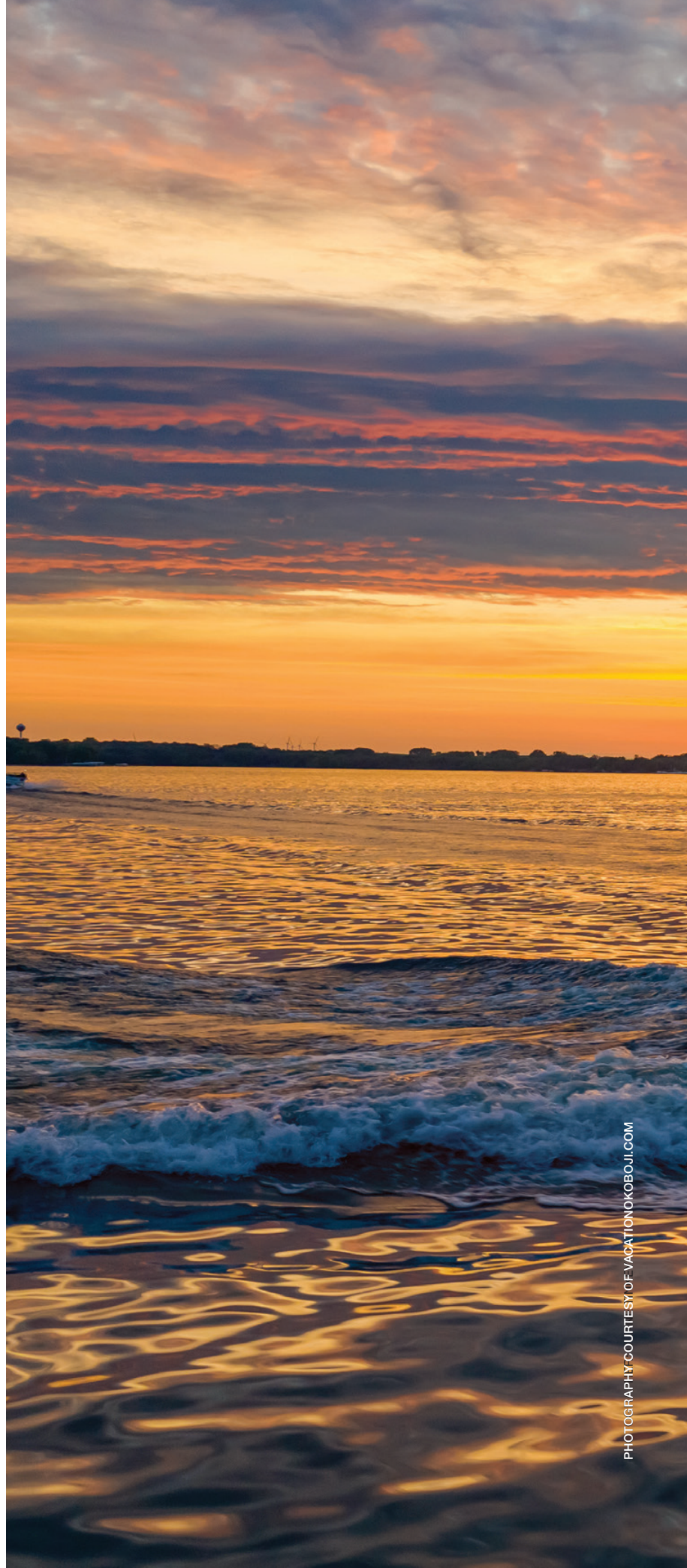
## 36 HOURS IN OKOBOJI

**With smaller crowds and sweeter sunsets, fall might be the best time to visit Iowa's great lakes.**

WRITER: LISA HOLDERNESS BROWN

If summer's the life of the party in Okoboji, then fall is the candlelight dinner—serene, relaxing and intimate. The full-throttle bustle is gone, the daylight's more fleeting, and the chain of five interconnected, glacier-carved lakes reflects the glowing autumnal colors in the lulled waters. Locals admit these days are a best-kept secret. The playing is far from over and the sunsets are some of the year's most dramatic.

While some of the shops, restaurants and attractions close after the summer season, including Arnolds Park Amusement Park, there's still plenty of shopping, dining and outdoor adventures to discover. Now's the time to put a getaway on the calendar. We've done the planning for you, with a Boji-bests fall weekend itinerary that will appeal to both families and adults-only travelers.



PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF VACATIONOKOBOJI.COM





Get out on the water even when the temps start to dip. You'll need to bring your own boat after Labor Day.



## Friday

### **Classic Cars and Vintage Murals**

Plan to arrive by 3 p.m. Stretch your legs and step back in time during a tour of one of Okoboji's most inspired hidden gems. **Okoboji Classic Cars** restores and sells mostly vintage autos, but it's the showroom and museum that's a must-see for all ages. Owner and avid car collector Toby Shine hired local artist Jack Rees to paint a 28,000-square-foot mural of downtown Spencer and Arnolds Park set in his nostalgic 1960s childhood years, creating a streetscape backdrop for the period cars. Plan on an hour visit. Guided tours only—reserve spots since the last tour starts before 4 p.m. Phone: 712.332.8029.

### **Check Into Your Hotel**

**Option One:** New in 2019, the **Inn Hotel** in Arnolds Park romances an iconic 1920s Okoboji lake vibe, with its art deco style and Beach Club Lounge. The hotel and lounge take their names from a prior inn that served the area for over 120 years. The Inn Hotel is conveniently located steps from West Okoboji Lake. Plan on walking to restaurants, bars, museums and the lake. Once you settle in, head to the lounge by the lobby for a Hook + Ladder cocktail or a Picante Margarita.

**Option Two:** Originally part of an 80-acre homestead in rural Dickinson County, the **Oakwood Inn** in Spirit Lake is centrally located a mile from both East Okoboji and West Okoboji lakes on Nature Center Road. This adults-only Victorian-style bed and breakfast is

known for its 11 luxurious rooms, many with whirlpool tubs, fireplaces and verandas or patios. Set aside time to wander the two-acre grounds that boast plentiful gardens and an oak savannah, and to shoot pool or play cards in the lower-level den.

### **Dinner: Two Spots to Love**

Whether you're in the mood for a steak by the lake or a cozy Italian dinner, restaurateurs Juliana and Tom Domoras have the perfect spots. The couple left Chicago to settle in Okoboji and recently opened two of the newest restaurants in the area, **Prime Boji** and **Ciao Boji**.

Located lakeside in the Emporium in Arnolds Park, Prime Boji is a quintessential steakhouse, with a mesmerizing view of Smith's Bay from every table. The steak cuts are as classic as the cocktails, but the menu also includes the creative chef's collection of seafood, chicken and vegetarian options. For dessert, the Baked Alaska's calling your name.

Ciao Boji is their intimate, less pricey Mediterranean restaurant and wine bar, also in Arnolds Park. The immediate success of this spot convinced the couple to open their steakhouse. Look to the chalkboard behind the wine bar for the daily wine and food specials. For a light meal at the bar, consider the steamed mussels or Mediterranean salad and a glass of Italian wine, or settle in with a hearty dish of pasta, such as the ribbon-style Papardella Bolognese.

## Saturday

### **Breakfast**

**The Inn Hotel:** Grab coffee and homemade pastries on-site or drive to the Coffee Shop and Cafe in downtown Milford for a Grande (breakfast) burrito and a cup of house brew or a latte.

**Oakwood Inn:** Head to the sunny and spacious dining room for a sizable homemade breakfast that's included in your stay. The owners serve some of their family's favorite recipes, such as Grandma's raisin bread and homemade quiche.

### **Morning Through Afternoon: Happy Trails**

With boating season winding down, turn to the **Iowa Great Lakes Trail** to stir up some fall leaves. It winds through several communities and is a family-friendly place to bike, walk and run. The "spine" is a 14-mile, 10-foot-wide hard-surface trail that connects a variety of other trails, creating 60-plus miles of dedicated paths to experience the lakes, parks and surrounding areas.

We suggest renting bikes or bringing your own to experience the **Classic Lake Loop** around West Okoboji Lake. It's about 18 1/2 relatively flat miles of nature, parks, neighborhoods and playful stops with most of the route now on paved trails. Ride the whole loop or choose a portion. If you're not into the trails, drive to all the spots listed along the way. To prep for the day, download a Dickinson County Recreational Trails map at [dickinsoncountytrails.com](http://dickinsoncountytrails.com). The actual bike route is marked with periodic signs





1. Relax in the soothing art deco ambience at The Inn Hotel. 2. Also at The Inn, the Beach Club Lounge exudes a hip vibe complete with relaxed bar-side and booth dining. 3. Okoboji Classic Cars' showroom and museum is a must-see for all ages.





and painted arrows on the pavement, but this up-to-date map offers a helpful overview. For a detailed route description of the Classic Lake Loop, also check out [vacationokoboji.com/classic-west-lake-loop/](http://vacationokoboji.com/classic-west-lake-loop/).

### ***Gear Up in Milford***

The Okoboji Cyclist opened its spacious new store on Okoboji Avenue this past summer. Their crew will outfit you with rental bikes for the day or weekend, including road bikes, hybrids, electric-assist bikes, and a Burley trailer or pull-behind bikes for the kids. Pick up a paper trail map, biking gear, clothing and energy bars as well. Set up your rental reservations in advance at [theokobojicyclist.com](http://theokobojicyclist.com).

### ***Find the Trail***

If biking from Milford, start at the parking lot on 13th Street and County Road A34 in Milford (P on the map) and take the paved trail north to 202nd Street. Head east and follow the trail over bridges between Lower Gar, Minnewashta and Upper Gar. This short and scenic stretch takes you by three additional lakes before picking up the Classic Loop Trail at Bascom Street and U.S. Highway 71. At the end of the day, you will have cycled by all five interconnected lakes.

If you brought bikes, start right from your hotel—just ask at the hotel staff where to hop on the trail or check the map. Since it's a big loop, you can pick it up at any point on the trail.

Pick your ultimate fall ride. Our choice is the 18 1/2-mile Classic Lake Loop, which offers plenty of stops along the way.



The Iowa Rock 'n Roll Hall of Fame at Arnolds Park showcases memorabilia including playbills, player contracts, signed guitars and more.



### Top Stops

The spots below are listed in order, starting in the town of Arnolds Park at the amusement park, and going counterclockwise around West Okoboji Lake (from the east side of the lake and heading north) on the Classic Lake Loop trails.

**1. Arnolds Park:** Stop into the Iowa Rock 'n Roll Hall of Fame and wander through the exhibits and artifacts from the musicians and personalities that shaped Iowa's music history. Next, walk down to the lake and for a few pre-ride stretches on the State Pier (look for the three stainless steel sail sculptures set over a reflecting pool). It's named after the late Berkley Bedell, a local entrepreneur, state senator and conservationist. Turn away from the lake for a view of the famous wooden roller coaster peeking out from Arnolds Park Amusement Park.

**2. Tunnel Mural:** Just past the Ritz Restaurant and before the bridge that goes between West and East lakes, look left to find the colorful Connector Tunnel under Highway 71. In 2020, Iowa City artist Thomas Agran painted playful murals on both sides with iconic Okoboji images, including everyone's summer park favorite, the Nutty Bar.

**3. The Minnie Queen:** Another 2020 addition on the trail is East Lake Park, which is right before the boat dock and Sanborn Avenue. Look for kids climbing all over a large boat play structure, which is a replica of the Queen II, the beloved excursion boat that tours West Okoboji Lake.

**4. Bike Art:** Cross Highway 71 at 175th Street and pick up the trail going north to the Pearson Art Center. Search for the 20 outdoor sculptures that surround the art center and bike trail leading to

the Dickinson County Nature Center. Can you spy the big metal bike? Clue—look up!

**5. Break for Nature:** Take a trail break at the Dickinson County Nature Center. Head inside to learn about the Okoboji ospreys and play your way through the hands-on Pollinator Paradise. Pick up a flying disc in the gift shop if you want to try your skill at the Okoboji Gold Disc Golf Course. The 18-hole course has both professional and amateur levels. Also, near the nature center and on the trail are the Nature Playscape, which encourages climbing and fort-making, and the old Westport Schoolhouse. This whitewashed building was Dickinson County's last remaining country school and was moved to Kenue Park in 1996 from Westport Township. While it's only open in the summer months, it's worth biking by.

**6. Lunch:** Bike around the north end of the lake past Pike's Point State Park to the Okoboji View Golf Course on the west side of Highway 71. Ride up to the Pub19 Grille for a lunch overlooking the course. The pizzas and flatbreads are go-to choices for the locals, but there's a variety of lunch options to fortify your group for the rest of the ride.

**7. Outdoor Science:** The trail on this side of the lake hugs Iowa Highway 86 and is easy riding. Keep a lookout for Iowa Lakeside Laboratory, which was founded in 1909 by Thomas Macbride for the "study of nature in nature." Use the Wahpeton Water Tower as a guide,



since it's across the highway from the stone entrance gates. This 147-acre property is owned by the state and used as a field station for Iowa's state universities and offers community outreach programs. Pick up an Iowa Lakeside Self-Guided Tour brochure at the kiosk near the gates. It includes 16 interactive learning stops around the property. Also look for the five stone lab buildings on the southern side of the property that were built in the 1930s and named after famous Iowa scientists.

**8. Get Krafty:** Every summer returning tourists and summer-home residents search Okoboji for what's new to the area. Krafty's Meat Market is one of 2021's most exciting additions. It's next door to the new Okoboji Gas Company convenience store. Stop in for a homemade cookie and peruse the meat cases. Stop back tomorrow with a cooler on the way out of town. Owners Nathan and Tina Kraft will happily show you around. Ask about their homemade brat selections (especially the West O beer-infused varieties) and freshly baked buns.

**9. End Around the Bend:** The next stretch of trail borders the Garlock Slough and is one of the prettiest. The paved trail ends at 213th Street by the First Lutheran Church. Turn left and bike on local roads past Terrace Park Beach on Brown's Bay. To catch the bike trail back to Milford, cross Highway 71 at 202nd Street and it will be on

Known for seafood, Yesterdays also dishes steaks such as New York strip and filet mignon.



the right. Or head back to the Inn following the bike trail signs to the amusement park.

**10. Plan B Means Beer:** Bike to the nearby and nationally renowned West O Brewery and Taproom to grab an après-bike Smoked Red Ale or Coco Chocolate Stout and a cup of peanuts. Beer enthusiasts won't want to skip this stop, either now or later by car.

**Optional Shopping: Spirit Lake**

If you're off the trails early or can't say no to a shopping trip, here's a fun trio of stops in nearby Spirit Lake.

**Timeless Consignments** on Hill Avenue brims with unique and interesting items, including art and furniture, and just might be one of the coolest consignment stores you've ever visited.

**Allure & Co.** across the street on Hill Avenue curates a thoughtful mix of brand-name home furnishings and clothing for men, women, kids and

babies. Cafe Esteam coffee shop is also right inside the door.

**Mary's Home Decor & Gift Shoppe** is tucked behind Goodies Candies on Aurora Avenue. The room full of kitchen gadgets is a big draw but so are the many gifts and seasonal decor items.

**Dinner: Lake or Legend**

After a busy day of exploring, you've earned a leisurely dinner. Both spots listed here are casual and have a full bar, wine list and kids' menu.

**Lake:** It's hard to get enough of a lakeside view, and the Waterfront American Grille in the Bridges Bay Resort brings East Okoboji Lake to your table. The menu's breadth suits all ages and preferences. Consider the Crepe Shoppe options or the perennial favorite Parmesan-crusting walleye.

**Legend:** Walk to Yesterdays in minutes from the Inn. With reasonably priced and well-executed house specialties, plus sandwiches and salads, it's easy to see why this dining spot has been a locals' favorite for over 35 years. The Cedar Plank Salmon is always a winner.

**Night Cap:** Walk a few doors down for a cocktail at Captain's Getaway and possibly live music. The rooftop lounge is open seasonally. Check out their event schedule online.



## SUNDAY

It's almost time to wrap up your revitalizing fall weekend away, but before you head home, take time for one last outdoor experience, a satisfying breakfast and a few shopping stops.

### **Morning:**

**Oakwood Inn:** Wander around the well-maintained property or sit on the veranda with a cup of custom-blend coffee before enjoying another of the noteworthy breakfasts.

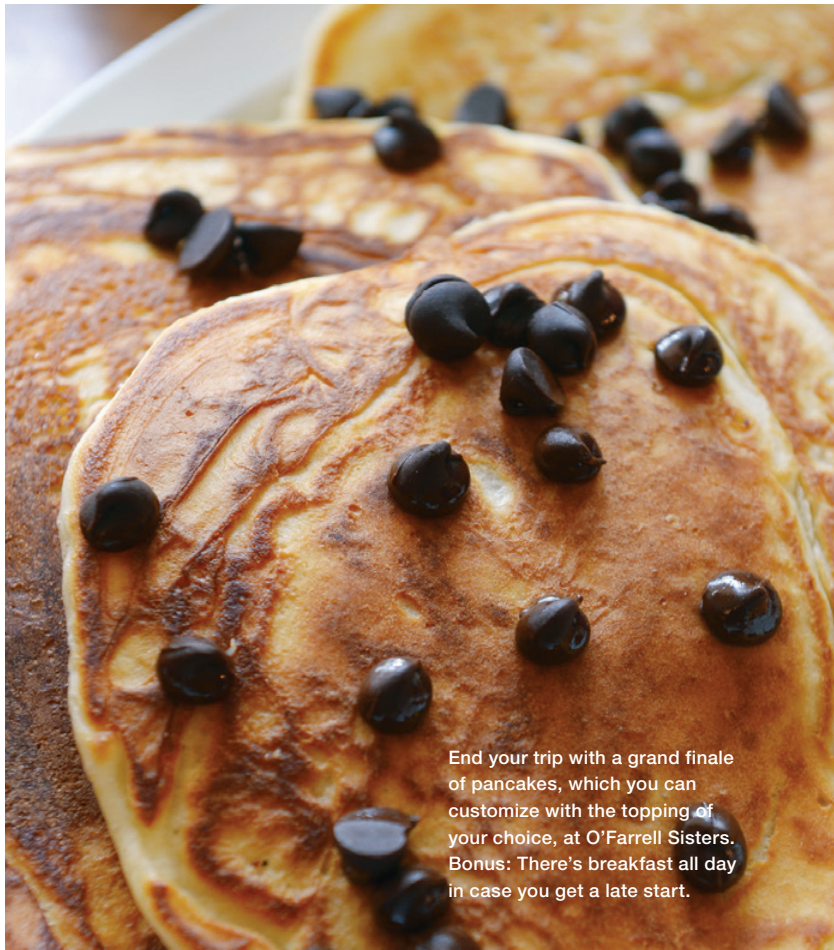
**The Inn Hotel:** Walk through the nine arches of the Promenade walking trail that leads to the lake and amusement park. This trail runs adjacent to the Preservation Plaza green space. Choose one of the 10 benches to enjoy a to-go coffee from the hotel and the lake breeze before heading to breakfast.

**Breakfast and a Bloody Mary:** O'Farrell Sisters is open for breakfast and lunch seven days a week all year. This lakes-area tradition started in 1949 when Edna Mae and Arlene O'Farrell opened their cafe. It's especially known for plate-size pancakes and homemade pies (pre-order a whole one 24 hours in advance), but the breakfast and lunch options are plentiful.

### **Before You Go**

Make the rounds to gather a few Boji specialties to take home with you:

**The Barn Swallow Gift Shop** can "swallow" you up for an hour or more. Wander through room after room of



End your trip with a grand finale of pancakes, which you can customize with the topping of your choice, at O'Farrell Sisters. Bonus: There's breakfast all day in case you get a late start.

home goods, gifts, books, Okoboji gear, jewelry and curios.

**Goodies Candies:** "Who's going with me on the Goodies run?" It's a regular question in Okoboji households. This family-run business makes candies and cookies you will always remember

and crave. Say yes to the dark chocolate almond bark, Caramel Crispie Clusters and peanut butter bars.

**Krafty's Meat Market:** If you stopped by on your bike ride yesterday, you'll already know to bring a cooler this time and fill it up. ■





WATERLOO  
DUBUQUE  
DAVENPORT

## DESTINATIONS

Stroll through Dubuque's Millwork historic district to find coffee shops, breweries and dining options (anyone say Top Chef caliber?).



# INDUSTRIAL EVOLUTION

These three eastern Iowa cities offer great weekend getaways in their historic downtowns. You may be surprised by all the recent updates.

WRITER: KARLA WALSH

With more millennial and Gen Z Iowans craving city life, urban neighborhoods once reserved for warehouses, factories, shipping hubs and department stores are being converted into chic, convenient and thoroughly modern housing and entertainment options.

We revisited some eastern Iowa cities that were sometimes perceived as drive-through towns and discovered some great tourist-worthy yet hometown-favorite haunts. With something old and something new, we've designed a perfect day or weekend in each destination.

Just steps from the Mississippi River in Davenport, the Figge Art Museum highlights rotating art, including exhibits on modern printmaking. Must-see permanent collections include Haitian art.

FIGGE  
ART MUSEUM





1. Black Hawk Hotel in downtown Cedar Falls. 2. Newton's Paradise Cafe in downtown Waterloo.

## BEST FOR A WELL-ROUNDED WEEKEND: WATERLOO

**STAY:** Located in nearby Cedar Falls, the Black Hawk Hotel ([theblackhawkhotel.com](http://theblackhawkhotel.com)) exudes a vintage vibe. In fact, it's the second-longest continuously operating hotel in the country. Originally built as a stagecoach hotel and utilized as housing during the Civil War, the building was rebuilt after a fire in the 1860s and stands strong—and full of charming touches like intricate woodwork and exposed brick. But it also has plenty of modern amenities like a fitness center, a speakeasy, complimentary breakfast, and local coffee and tea. The Black Hawk has just 43 rooms, so be sure to book early.

**EAT:** Waterloo's historic downtown has undergone significant updates and investment over the past few years. And there's no better way to start a day than diner-style at Newton's Paradise Cafe in the art deco Newton's Jewelry building.

The cafe's menu features four types of pancakes, biscuits and gravy, and breakfast pizza, but we recommend the Iowa Toast. It's their luscious riff on French toast and comes with bacon, ham or homemade sausage. For lunch, snag a sandwich or wood-fired Neapolitan pie from Basal Pizza ([basalpizza.com](http://basalpizza.com)), also downtown.

Come dinnertime, relax over local beers and upscale bar food including the Iowa Taco (yes, it's topped with corn, bacon and ranch) at Singlespeed Brewing. Once home to a 1927 Wonder Bread factory, the chic spot offers tasty bites, beer flights, patio dining and areas for the kids to play or for you to store your bike. And for old-school Italian in the lobby of a former historic hotel, the Russell Lamson Building, check out the Brown Bottle. It's been a downtown institution since 1974 and serves classics like lasagna (the seafood variety is super tasty).

**DO:** Make the most of your sightseeing time by renting wheels at Waterloo Bicycle Works, located in the 1912 Kistner Building (originally a funeral home). Tool around both Waterloo and Cedar Falls on trails edging the Cedar River on a regular bicycle or an e-bike; there are over 80 miles of trails in the sister cities.

When you return to Bicycle Works after your ride, stock up on local souvenirs—the shop offers Iowa books, stickers, stationery and more.

After all that activity, rest your feet and chill out with a kombucha flight or cocktail at Verve Kombucha. The trendy fermented, effervescent, slightly boozy tea makes a lovely base for mixed drinks like gimlets, mojitos and the must-try “Destination Wedding,” made with blended scotch, yellow chartreuse, fresh lime, pineapple and passion fruit-pear-cayenne kombucha.





1. Quad City Symphony Orchestra. 2. Baked Beer and Bread Co. burrata burger and bloody marys. 3. Half Nelson.

## BEST FOR MUSIC FIENDS: DAVENPORT

**STAY:** Designed to “embody the riverfront renaissance,” the Current resides on the site of the 1910 Putnam, the last building designed by Daniel Burnham, a pioneer of the modern skyscraper. The Current is in the heart of walkable downtown Davenport, and each room is uniquely appointed as its own “Midwestern art collection.” From an impressive indoor pool and whirlpool spa to the rooftop Up Skybar, you might never want to leave the premises. But you’ll be rewarded by what you discover.

**EAT:** The promise of fun yet familiar comfort food drew us in first, but what really sold us on Baked Beer and Bread Co. were their brand values: “Your family is our family. And we love carbs.” If you, too, love all things flour-based after the 2-mile walk from the Current, you can’t do much better than a brunch of a dulce de leche-drizzled churro waffle or the “Miss Cheezious,” a grilled

cheese eggs Benedict.

Midday, stroll down toward the Mississippi River to land near the Freight House (a year-round indoor farmers market) for lunch at Taste of Ethiopia, a new African restaurant run by a team who were all born and raised in Ethiopia. New to the cuisine? Try the Ye’Doro Kay Wot, chicken thighs simmered in a warmly spiced sauce with fresh herbs, a boiled egg, and plenty of injera flatbread.

For dinner, make a reservation at the Half Nelson, a classy, Instagrammable lounge that serves solid steak frites, salmon and soba bowls. It’s housed in a 1922 building that once produced heating and plumbing equipment.

**DO:** Experiencing a show in a historic venue is a must-do activity while in the city of about 100,000. Check out offerings at the art deco Adler Theatre,

the River Music Experience in the Redstone Building, or the Quad City Symphony Orchestra (they’ve been playing since 1916 at venues throughout the Quad Cities). And pay homage to Davenport’s most famous musician, Bix Beiderbecke, at the Bix Bistro, a restaurant and lounge with live tunes that’s located in the Hotel Blackhawk, another historic downtown hotel.

Art lovers should visit the Figge Art Museum, which showcases regional, national and international works from the 15th century on, including one of world’s largest collections of Haitian art.

For happy hour, try a cocktail crawl at these spots within one block: Cavort QC has a lineup of fun, tropical tiki drinks, and Raw (rawdavenport.com) is all about fresh produce and flavors (blackberry old fashioned and grapefruit caipirinhas).





Our picks in Dubuque's Millwork historic district: 1. Brazen. 2. 7 Hills Brewng Co. 3. Dubuque Star Brewing Co.

## BEST FOR BEVERAGE LOVERS: DUBUQUE

**STAY:** Discover your home away from home in Dubuque, Iowa's oldest town, at the top of one of the city's highest hills. The Queen Ann-style Hancock House Bed and Breakfast ([thehancockhouse.com](http://thehancockhouse.com)) was built in the 1890s by Charles Hancock, the third son of John Hancock, one of the most successful Midwest grocers of his time. After acting as home for Charles and his family, it was later converted into its current iteration as a bed and breakfast.

Guests can now book stays in a guest room that's named after the family member who slept there or the purpose of the space, such as the library. Most come with fireplaces, showers and whirlpools, and you can witness history in everything from the wallpaper to the tea party tableware collection.

**EAT:** Since you'll be climbing Dubuque's substantial and pervasive hills all day, you'll need lots of energy.

Wake up with a latte and breakfast panini or hashbrown-egg burrito at Charlotte's Coffee House. Grab it to go to stroll around downtown, working your way to 1st and Main for lunch. With a menu of "gourmet fare with local flavor," the space is as spectacular as the cuisine. As you dig into a cheese curd-garnished Wisconsin Burger or a Mac'enator (a pulled pork sandwich with mac and cheese and root beer-bourbon sauce), you can enjoy the colorful light as it streams through Frank Lloyd Wright Luxfer Prisms and the historic exposed-brick space that's part of a row of 19th-century commercial architecture.

Be sure to save room for a dinner feast at Brazen. This innovative Millwork historic district bistro is surprisingly warm and approachable for being run by such an all-star culinary pro. Chef Kevin Scharpf attended the Le Cordon Bleu College of Culinary Arts

in Minneapolis before competing on "Top Chef," and now whips up seasonal dishes like duck confit tacos and scallops and asparagus with bacon broth over Parmesan polenta.

**DO:** Dubuque has a surprisingly lengthy hops history (Google "Dubuque Star Brewing Co." if you haven't heard that story), so consider a brew or cider tour. Jubeck New World Brewing ([jubeckbrewing.com](http://jubeckbrewing.com)), 7 Hills Brewing Co. ([7hillsbrew.com](http://7hillsbrew.com)), and Dimensional Brewing ([dimensionalbrewing.com](http://dimensionalbrewing.com)) are all within walking distance and offer substantial snacks if you get peckish.

Nearly 40 murals have been added to Dubuque's downtown streets in the past five years, so as you explore and walk from brewery to brewery, you can try to find them all—including the colorful, floral tribute to Iowa botanist, educator and preservationist Ada Hayden by renowned artist Gaia. ■



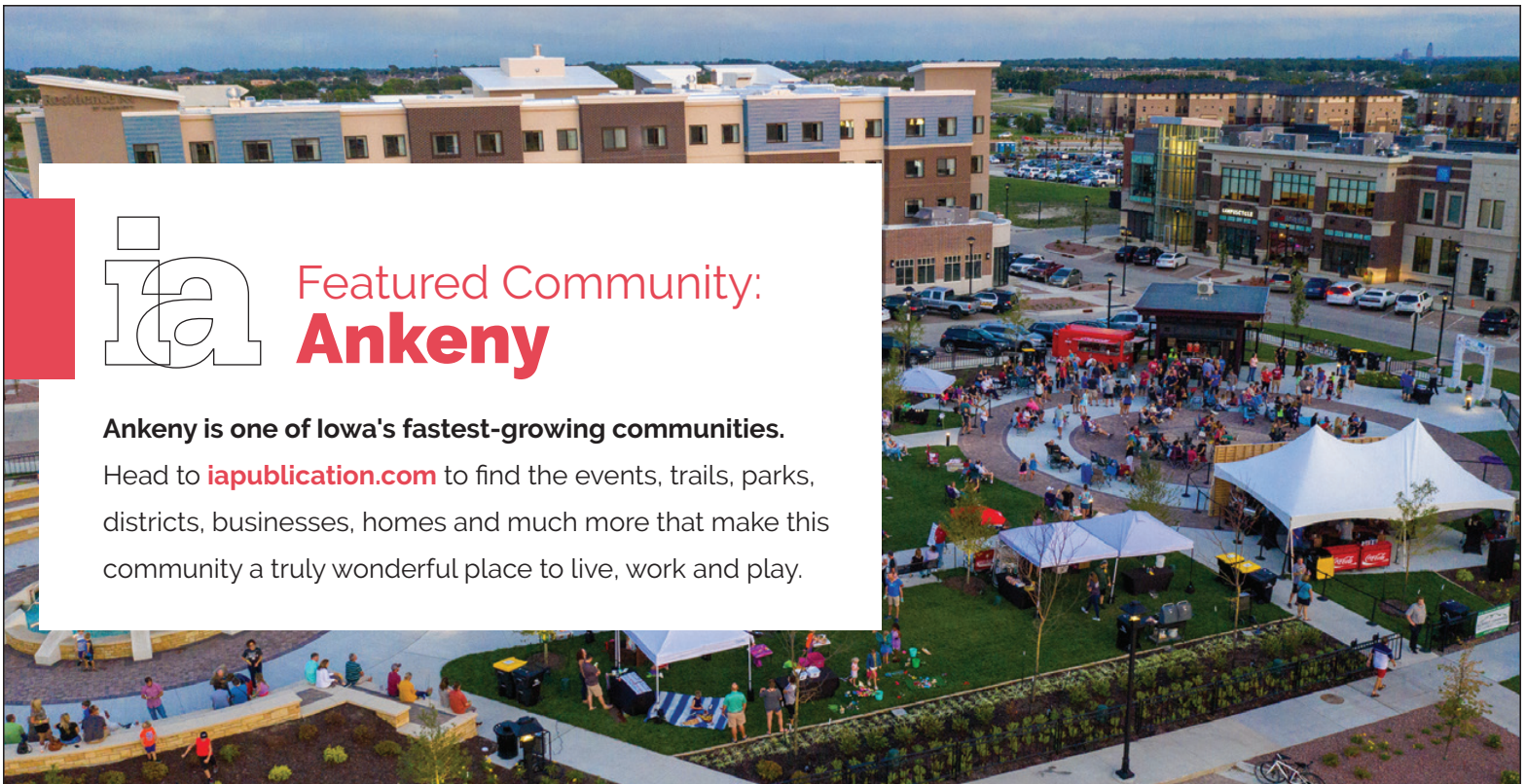


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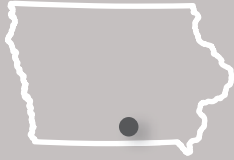
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ICONIUM

**BACK PAGE**



“It is a crib.  
It is a chapel.  
It is not to be readily understood.  
Spirituality is complex.  
It is a considered place to consider.”

These are the underlying principles architect Brent Schipper of Des Moines-based ASK Studio used in creating the design of the Ullem Chapel. The award-winning structure, which is located near Iconium, just north of Rathbun Lake, is a private space for the family that lives on the land.

“The design of Ullem Chapel is a painstakingly simple solution, which any architect knows is anything but simple to achieve,” says Jeff Budgell, president of the Association of Licensed Architects, which awarded the chapel its top honor, the Don Erickson Presidential Award. ■

PHOTOGRAPHER: CAMERON CAMPBELL





# GOOD TIMES & great spirits



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## MASON CITY

**Visit a Northern Neighbor** Mason City is a major stop for architecture buffs and Frank Lloyd Wright fans who'll love to **tour beautiful buildings** like the **Stockman House**. But if living in luxury is more your style, book a stay at the iconic designer's only remaining hotel—the **Historic Park Inn**.

## DECORAH

**Add Another Stop Up North** See Decorah by bike when you circle the city on the 11-mile **Trout Run Trail**. Or focus your outdoor excursion at **Dunning's Spring Park** and bask in the beauty of its waterfall. Of course, if you prefer your water with grain, hops and yeast, you can take a tour and try a sample (or two) at **Toppling Goliath** or **Pulpit Rock Brewing**.

## LE CLAIRE

**Enjoy a Riverside Retreat** Tucked in the Quad Cities, on the coast of the **Mississippi River**, there's a small town with big character. Historic LeClaire hit the national stage thanks to the stars of **"American Pickers"** who still call it home base. Stop by their store then celebrate your find with a craft cocktail featuring **Mississippi River Distilling Company's** best spirits. Or leave land behind with a signature cruise of the Mississippi aboard the **Riverboat Twilight**.

## WINTERSET

**See the Southern Sites** Howdy, pilgrim! When you hail from the same state as an American icon like John Wayne, his **birthplace museum** is worth a trip. Then stroll through **Winterset City Park** and stop at the **cidery, winery, or breweries** around town. And after all you've heard of the **covered bridges of Madison County**, it's about time for a tour.

## BOONE

**A Central Escape** If you're in search of some peace and quiet, head to Boone to take in the towering sandstone sides of the gorge that runs through **Ledges State Park** and relax with a pint in **Boone Valley Brewing Co.'s** cozy tap room. Enjoy an old-fashioned excursion on the **Boone & Scenic Valley Railway**, or step up the intensity of your vacation with activities for any season at **Seven Oaks Recreation**.

## COUNCIL BLUFFS

**West is best** Head west. Then head further west until you hit a town called Council Bluffs. It's a gem of a town that sparkles with attractions like Bayless and Big Lake Parks, **Welch's Pumpkin Patch**, the Union Pacific Railroad Museum, the **Kanesville Tabernacle**, and the **August Beresheim House**.



**COUNCIL  
BLUFFS**





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