

# Fairbank ISLANDER

SERVING FAIRBANK AND THE SURROUNDING COMMUNITIES

JANUARY 7, 2026

Compiled by Fairbank Community Club - Designed by Waverly Newspapers and Printed by Oelwein Publishing Co.

VOLUME 7, NO. 1



## Fairbank American Legion's annual Casino Night held Feb. 7



Black jack, spinning wheel, dice game, left right center and more at the annual Fairbank American Legion's Casino Night on Feb. 7 starting on 6:00 p.m.

## Pack 3039 Food Drive raises 135 pounds in food



The pack 3039 holiday food drive has ended. We raised 135 pounds of food in total! Thank you to everyone who donated! The food went to His Hands Food Pantry. Food was collected from residents of Oran and Fairbank. Through this adventure, we cub scouts learned about giving back to our community. We will earn their Citizenship Adventure pin, which is required to move up to the next level. We will move up in the spring. We are anticipating the annual Pine Wood Derby which will take place in the coming months.

## Riding in a winter wonderland

### Fairbank hosts first-ever Parade of Lights event

BY TAYLOR NOHRENBERG

reporter@oelweindailyregister.com

Wednesday, Dec. 10 evening's snowfall may have raised the alarm for some folks, but for Fairbank residents, the Christmas spirit was instead enlivened.

Fairbank Community Club members decided to spread the Christmas cheer by hosting their first-ever Parade of Lights event on Dec. 10, complete with fluffy snowfall, decorated downtown lamps, walkers in their best elf apparel and cars and side-by-sides covered in lights.

"It went perfect," said Kathy Risse, a 10-year member of the Fairbank Community Club and Wednesday's Grinch themed golf cart riding elf. "I don't know of anything that went wrong. We had a really good turn out, seeing that is was the first one, so we didn't really know what to expect. It was nerve-wracking worrying about it."

Risse and other Community Club



COURTESY PHOTO

Kathy and Jim Risse decorated their golf cart in a Grinch theme for the first Parade of Lights in Fairbank.

members thought of doing such a project for years now, and this year they took hold of the reins to make it come to life.

Of course, no parade is without fire trucks, and Fairbank Fire Department's old red engine was just the sleigh for Santa to take a ride in.

"It was just really good. We hope to make it a yearly thing," Risse said. "This year we've been concentrating on coming up with new ideas."

After the parade, residents were invited to Fairbank Assisted Living for Santa, hot cocoa and cookies

See LIGHTS, A12

## Santa visits the Fairbank Library



COURTESY PHOTOS

Miss Fairbank 2025, Norah Oldfather got to be Santa's helper at the Fairbank Library on Dec. 20. Santa visited and told stories to 60 kids and 49 adults during his time at the library. See more photos on Page A12

# A NOTE FROM THE MAYOR



MAYOR JASON KAYSER

As we close out my first two-year term, I want to take a moment to reflect on where we stand as a community. Throughout the year, City Clerk Brittany Fuller and I have regularly reviewed the condition of our city and its finances. I am proud to report that the state of our city is stable and in good condition.

## Public Safety

Our police department is staffed by six highly trained and respected officers under the leadership of Chief Hunter Robinson, who joined us in June 2025 and has proven to be an excellent choice. Our fire department, led by seasoned Chief Chris West, is

supported by a dedicated team of volunteers. Calls for service in both departments continue to rise, and both departments face space challenges. The police operate from a 10-by-10-foot office in City Hall, and the squad car is stored outdoors. The fire department stores equipment across multiple locations. Both departments are working on solutions to bring before the Council.

Recruitment and retention of EMTs remain a challenge, but leadership is actively addressing this. A new ambulance has been ordered from Lifeline in Sumner, and the recent passage of the EMS essential service levy in Buchanan County will provide critical funding for fire department EMS operations.

## Public Works

The Main Street project is complete and has received glowing reviews. We also finished a sidewalk project on 4th Street North, creating a safer route to school. Nick Kuker, our Public Works Director and myself evaluate all the streets every spring. Overall, our streets are in good condition, but the 400 block of East Main Street, likely the first paved street in the city, has exceeded its lifespan. I received replacement options and cost estimates from the City Engineer and the Council will be reviewing options and funding strategies for its replacement.

## Culture and Recreation

Fairbank's parks and recreation programs are thriving. Councilperson Michael Gruetzmacher continues to lead summer youth programs, which saw over 200 participants this year. Combined with tournaments and adult leagues, an estimated 10,000-15,000 visitors came to the ballpark in 2025. Councilperson Gruetzmacher is collaborating with the school to host Jr. High baseball/softball tournaments at the city ball diamonds in 2026. Recent improvements include upgraded playing surfaces, new scoreboards, and refreshed volleyball courts; all funded through donations, volunteer labor, and grants. A grant was also secured to replace the shelter at Veteran's Memorial Park, scheduled for completion in spring 2026.

Our aquatic center had another busy season with over 200 swimming lesson participants and more than 3,000 visitors. While the facility is in good condition, it is now 22 years old, and upkeep remains a challenge. Thankfully, our generous community continues to step up when needed.

## General Government

City Hall is staffed by two dedicated professionals who keep operations running smoothly.

Your elected Council is a group of fiercely passionate people who are committed to the welfare of this city and to fiscal responsibility. Our city tax rate is among the lowest in the area. We currently have one general obligation bond with \$2.2 million borrowed for the Main Street project, which is on a 10-year repayment schedule, leaving us flexibility for future needs. However, maintaining adequate cash reserves in the general fund is an ongoing challenge.

## Utilities

Our utilities are in good condition thanks to three hardworking employees who also administer the streets and parks, and quite frankly anything else that arises in the city. We are upgrading aged electrical cut-out switches to reduce widespread power outages and recently completed a gas service installation for a new housing development near Hickory Grove Golf Course. Sewer and water systems are functioning well, though aging mains require attention. We are developing a plan for replacements in problem areas. The water tower remains in good condition.

Like the rest of the nation, we face rising utility costs. As a wholesale provider, we purchase electric, gas, and water from suppliers and resell to customers. While this gives us con-

siderably more flexibility than if we relied on large utility companies, we remain susceptible to wholesale price increases. We will continue working to keep rates fair and service reliable.

## Community Collaboration

In 2025, I initiated meetings with Wapsie Valley school administrators to strengthen collaboration, address shared concerns, and explore ways to attract more families to our community.

## Looking Ahead

Fairbank is in excellent condition, with a thriving downtown, strong community spirit, and considerable amenities that many towns of our size do not have. Our challenges continue to be affordable housing, addressing an aging infrastructure, and adapting to growth. All are real challenges but quite manageable. Fairbank has always risen to meet challenges, take bold initiatives towards community development, and together, we will continue to innovate and welcome new residents.

Thank you for your support and commitment to making Fairbank a great place to live.

# Deadline for the February publication is JAN. 23

Please contact Melaine at 319-404-7116 or email [fairbankislander@gmail.com](mailto:fairbankislander@gmail.com)



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# Nine members of the Wapsie Valley FFA Chapter attended 98th Annual National FFA Convention & Expo

BY RYKER OBERLE

Wapsie Valley FFA Chapter Co-Reporter

On October 28, 2025, nine members of the Wapsie Valley FFA Chapter departed Wapsie Valley High School early morning to join more than 70,000 FFA members from across the nation at the 98th Annual National FFA Convention and Expo. Members had the opportunity to explore agricultural careers by visiting with colleges and industry leaders at the career fair, all while participating in fun and engaging activities.

On the way to the convention, the chapter stopped at the John Deere Pavilion in Moline, Illinois, where they viewed a wide variety of historical John Deere equipment and memorabilia. After arriving in Indianapolis, the group visited Topgolf in Fishers, Indiana, for an evening of bonding and fun.

Early Wednesday morning, members traveled to Ozark Fisheries in Martinsville, Indiana, for a tour of their aquaculture facility, where they learned



about aquaponics and the retail market. They then toured RDM Shrimp in Fowler, Indiana. A fun fact shared with the students: RDM Shrimp is the first shrimp farm of its kind, founded in 2010 and the saltwater used in the facility today is the same water they began with 15 years ago.

On Thursday morning, the chapter took its first steps into Lucas Oil Stadium for the first

general session. Members also participated in pre-session activities, including line dancing, where they had a great time and made new friends. Many agreed that the Expo and FFA Shop were among the highlights of the convention. That evening, members attended the National FFA Fun Night at Malibu Jack's in Lafayette, Indiana, where they enjoyed arcade games, mini golf,

and go-karts.

On Friday morning, the group attended their final general session at Lucas Oil Stadium before departing Indianapolis.

All nine members thoroughly enjoyed their time in Indianapolis and look forward to the rest of the FFA year with excitement as they bring new ideas and inspiration back to the Wapsie Valley FFA Chapter.

BIRTHDAY



Happy Birthday  
Lucas Matthias.  
January 4

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# Our Iowa

WRITTEN BY WAPSIE VALLEY RURAL #1 STUDENTS AND THEIR TEACHER-MRS. BECK

On the evening of September 18, 2025, at the home of Adin and Mary Ann Hershberger, members of the Fairbank-Hazleton Amish community—alongside members from nearby Amish communities and their “English” friends and neighbors—came together to accomplish a task few can say they have been part of: physically relocating a large pole building to a different location on the property.

This Old Order Amish community is nestled between Fair-

bank and Hazleton. In the days leading up to the move, Adin Hershberger, his father Menno Hershberger, and his father-in-law Henry Raber spent countless hours reinforcing the building and securing the structure in preparation for the “big day.”

“I hope we did our part to ensure no one is hurt and that the move goes smoothly,” Adin Hershberger commented moments before the event was set to begin.

Promptly at 7:00 p.m., 150 men gathered what strength they had left for the day to move the approximately 18,000-pound building a distance of 350 feet.



## NE Iowa Dance Academy's Holly-Cital 2025

The Northeast Iowa Dance Academy held its 6th Annual Holly-Cital at the Williams Center for the Arts on December 12, 2025. Since 2020, the event has showcased holiday-themed dance performances by students of all ages, providing them with stage experience while celebrating the Christmas season.

The Holly-Cital was created to offer dancers an additional performance opportunity during the winter months, allowing students—especially younger and newer dancers—to build confidence, develop performance skills, and experience the joy of performing in a supportive environment. Unlike larger recitals, the Holly-Cital focuses on participation, growth, and community rather than competition.

Over the years, the event has also become a meaningful tradition for NIDA families and the surrounding communities, bringing people together through the arts during the holiday season. The Holly-Cital reflects NIDA's commitment to enhancing dancer experiences, fostering confidence, and creating positive, memorable opportunities for every student.



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Strengthen your faith by gathering with other Catholic women for the 2026 Beauty in Christ Archdiocesan Women's Conference, Grace for the Journey! on Saturday, January 31, 2026! For more information and to register: <https://www.archwomensconference.org/registration/>

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## Church Services

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904-505-5230  
**Pastor Daniel Search**  
Worship Service: 9:15 AM

**St. John Lutheran Church**  
(MISSOURI SYNOD)  
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**Pastor Grant Tapken**  
Worship Service: 10:00 AM

**Immaculate Conception Catholic Church**  
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Wednesday Mass: 8:30 AM  
1st Saturday Mass: 8:30 AM

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Worship Service: 9:00 AM

**First Baptist Church**  
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# Celebration of Life

## Robert John Byersdorfer

December 27, 1950 - December 23, 2025

Robert "Bob" Byersdorfer, age 74 of Fairbank, passed away on Tuesday, December 23, 2025 at the Cedar Valley Hospice Home in Waterloo. He was born December 27, 1950 in Oelwein the son of Richard and Lucille (Schomer) Byersdorfer. Bob grew up on the family farm south of Fairbank and attended Triumph Rural School through eighth grade before graduating from Jesup Community Schools in 1968.

After high school, Bob was drafted into the United States Army, where he spent most of his service in Alaska. Upon returning home, he worked for Gulf States Plastic in Oelwein before later retiring from John Deere after 19 years of service.

On June 9, 1979, Bob married Pam Pitlik of Mount Vernon and together they made their home south of Fairbank, raising their three sons. Bob enjoyed working and playing on the farm and spending time with his family, especially in the timber along the river. He also loved mowing the lawn and tinkering with anything outdoors. Bob was a member of the Fairbank American Legion and a longtime member of the Fairbank Knights of Columbus. He served on the Wapsie Valley Board of Education and was a lifelong member of Immaculate Conception Catholic Church, where he was an active member of the choir.

Above all, Bob was a loving husband, father and grandfather. He was extremely proud of his family and

his loss will be deeply felt by all who knew him.

Survived by: his wife; Pam, three sons; Adam (Amanda), Benjamin and Caleb (Rosanna) seven grandchildren; Evan, Braden, Jacob, Ilse, Anna Lena, Edgar and Freddie, one brother; Richard (Donna) Byersdorfer Jr. one brother-in-law; Greg (Joyce) Pitlik, one sister-in-law; Andi Covington (Wayne) along with several nieces and nephews. Preceded in death by: his parents, father and mother-in-law; Merrill and Harriet Pitlik. Visitation: 4:00-7:00 PM Monday December 29th at Woods Funeral Home with a 7:00 PM Knights of Columbus Rosary. Funeral Services: 10:30 AM Tuesday December 30th at Woods Funeral Home. Military Rites: Fairbank American Legion Fortsch-Duffy Post 552. Interment: Immaculate Conception Cemetery. Memorials: to the family for later designation. Lunch will be served at the Fairbank American Legion following the service.

Online condolences can be left at [www.woodsfuneralhome.net](http://www.woodsfuneralhome.net)



# Celebration of Life

## Linda L. Letson

December 15, 2025

Linda L. Letson, a devoted mother, grandmother, and cherished member of her family, passed away peacefully on Monday, December 15th, 2025. She was a strong and steadfast woman whose life was defined by her deep love for her family and her quiet resilience.



Those closest to Linda knew her as a woman who loved deeply and protected fiercely. She found her greatest joy in her family and treasured time spent together, whether through everyday moments or special milestones. Her presence was a constant source of comfort, guidance, and strength. She also found happiness in life's simple pleasures and especially loved spending time golfing and being at the beach.

Linda dedicated many years of her life to a long and meaningful career in the medical and healthcare field. Her work was more than a profession; it was a calling. She brought compassion, integrity, and unwavering commitment to those she served. In addition to her professional life, Linda gave generously of her time as a volunteer within her community, driven by a deep desire to give back and to support the growth and development of young adults. Through both her career and volunteer work, she touched countless lives.

Linda is survived by her loving family, including five sons, three daughters, nineteen grandchildren, and eight great-grandchildren.

She was preceded in death by her husband, Frank Letson.

In accordance with Linda's wishes, no services will be held. Her family will honor her life privately and carry forward the love, strength, and devotion she instilled in them. Linda's legacy lives on in the hearts of those who were fortunate enough to know and love her.



## With Sympathy for Your Loss



Grace Begley 4th grade student at Wapsie Valley Fairbank Elementary School.

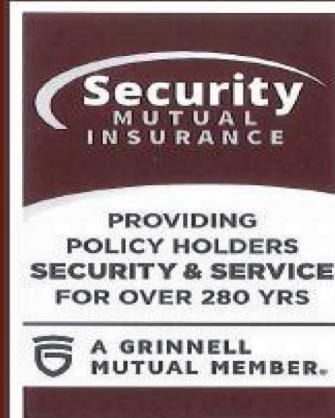
Huge thank you to our amazing community for the incredible toy donations for University of Iowa Health

Care Stead Family Children's Hospital, these gifts will be bringing so much joy and smiles to kids fighting battles. Your kindness makes a world of difference!

Grace collected over 325 items this

year!!

Thank you to Brainard Hollow, Visions Salon, Fairbank Public Library, Podiatry Specialists of Iowa, for letting Grace put boxes in your businesses.



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# 4-H ATOM BOMBERS

BY ALIVIA WEEPIE REPORTER AND JENSEN BECK PHOTOGRAPHER

On Dec. 7 the Atom Bombers 4-H club held their Christmas Party at the Vinton Skate Center. 17 members were in attendance. Everyone had a really fun time! Happy New Year!



## WAPSIE VALLEY SCHOOL CORNER



I hope everyone had a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. As we start 2026, I want to thank our families, staff, and community for the continued support of Wapsie Valley schools.

I would also like to share an update on the football field and track project. The project has officially been put out to bid. Putting it out to bid does not lock the district into moving forward, but it does allow us to see the real costs of a new 8-lane track, new home bleachers and press box, and a synthetic playing surface for the football field. Once bids are received, the Wapsie Valley Board of Education will review them and decide how to move forward. If the bids come in at a level the board is comfortable with, they may choose to proceed. If not, the board will need to consider next steps, which could include adjusting parts of the project or rethinking the plan altogether.

If the bids are favorable and the board decides to move ahead, construction would begin this spring, and the field would be ready for play by the first football game of the season. This construction will not affect other sports such as baseball or softball, and it will also have no impact on the new concession stand that was built a couple years ago.

This project is being considered because updated facilities help attract students and families to our district. This project will also provide safe and modern facilities, that our student athletes should have, where they can practice and compete with pride. This facility upgrade will also allow for multiple classes and sports to use these areas during times when the current facilities can not be used due to excess water, snow, etc... This will also give our community some outdoor facilities that can be used at their leisure as well.

We received good news from the state in December. As you were aware, Fairbank Elementary, JH/HS, and the rural buildings were given school rankings of "commendable" and Readlyn Elementary was given a ranking of "high performing". The entire district was given a ranking of "commendable". This ranking is something new from the state and is something that our entire community can be proud of!

If you have any questions or would like more information, please feel free to contact me. I am always happy to visit with you.

Chris Hoover  
Superintendent, Wapsie Valley School District

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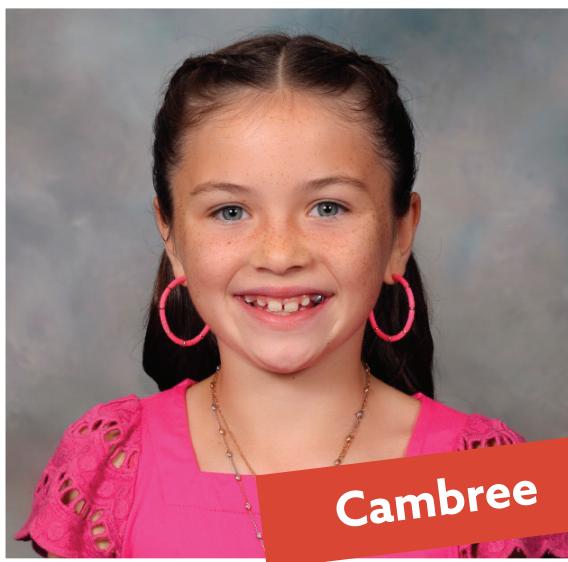
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# Fairbank Elementary Student News



## Leader in me: Habit 4

BY CAMBREE

### Habit 4 is Think Win - Win (everyone WINS)

You can show habit 4 by...

- Building your Emotional Bank Account with others.
- Balanceing courage and consideration.
- Consider other people's wins as well as your own.
- Have an Abundance Mentality.
- Create win-win Agreements
- I look for solutions to problems.
- I consider the feelings and needs of others.
- I am kind and cooperative when I work with others.



## Meet Mrs. Pleggenkuhle

BY KASEN

Mrs. Pleggenkuhle has been teaching for 18 years and finds joy in reaching young minds and helping students succeed. One important lesson she hopes her students learn is that no one has an easy life. Everyone faces daily challenges, and perseverance is key to overcoming them.

The best part of teaching at Fairbank Elementary, according to Mrs. Pleggenkuhle, is the supportive community and the amazing families who make the school such a special place.

Outside the classroom, Mrs. Pleggenkuhle is a proud mom to a 16-year-old son and a devoted dog lover. She has five dogs—a German Shorthair Pointer, a yellow lab, a toy poodle, a Maltese, and a Maltipoo—and proudly refers to them as her “fur babies.”

When she was in school, reading was her favorite activity, and her all-time favorite book is Anne of

Green Gables. In her free time, Mrs. Pleggenkuhle enjoys baking, cooking, and gardening. Her favorite snack? Anything sweet.

Mrs. Pleggenkuhle can't imagine life without teaching. In fact, her passion began at a young age when she spent much of her childhood playing school in her bedroom. One surprising fact about her is that she was once terrified of dogs. At age 25, she adopted her first dog, Petey, and finally overcame that fear—leading to the dog-filled life she enjoys today.



## Meet Mrs. Kristin Kelly

BY KASEN

Mrs. Kelly was inspired to teach by her grandma who taught in an Amish school in Jesup. She grew up hearing all about the difference that she made and knew she wanted to do the same. Her mother was also an inspiration since she did daycare out of her home. She says she has always loved helping kids. When asked what she loves most about teaching she says she enjoys giving kids fun experiences in their learning and helping them feel more confident.

She hopes her students remember how special and smart they are. She believes each student is different in their own way and that is the most special thing. She describes her teaching style as engaging and interactive. One thing that makes her classroom unique is her students. Nothing stays exactly the same because with different students we learn and grow. I love teaching reading. There is something about watching kids learn to read, even if it's just a word—that is so rewarding. I love the people and the students at Fairbank Elementary. Everyone is so welcoming and it really feels like we are a family. Everyone is passionate about being a warrior! My hometown—Jesup was that way too.

When she is not teaching, Mrs. Kelly enjoys farming, gardening, reading, shopping and cooking/baking. She has two dogs named Remi and Reba. She loves reading a good romance and enjoys watching Grey's Anatomy. Something that might surprise you about her is that she is a good baker. If she could have a superpower she wishes for energy absorption and unbearable patience. If she was not a teacher she would be a homesteader or own her own bakery.



## Meet Mrs. Tiedt: A First-Grade Teacher at Wapsie Valley Fairbank Elementary

BY KASEN

Mrs. Tiedt is a dedicated first-grade teacher at Wapsie Valley with 17 years of teaching experience, 16 of those spent right here at Wapsie. A proud graduate of UNI and a native of Denver, Iowa—she jokingly asks readers not to hold that against her—Mrs. Tiedt brings both experience and heart into her classroom every day.

The moment she enjoys most in teaching is when a concept finally “clicks” for a student and she can see that understanding light up on their face. More than anything, Mrs. Tiedt hopes her students know that she truly cares about them and wants each child to become the best version of themselves.

Her favorite part about teaching at Wapsie Valley is working alongside supportive coworkers and being part of a school community where students and families feel like one big family. Outside of school, Mrs. Tiedt stays busy with her own family. She has three children: Claire, a 19-year-old freshman at the University of Iowa; Bella, an 11-year-old sixth grader; and Jackson, who is 8 years old and in third grade. The family also includes Duke, their chocolate lab.

When Mrs. Tiedt was in school, reading was her favorite subject, and that love continues today. Currently, she enjoys watching Hallmark Christmas movies and classic films. Her hobbies include spending time with her family at their river house. Favorite snacks include Reese's Peanut Butter Cups, Mountain Dew, and Christmas Tree Cakes.

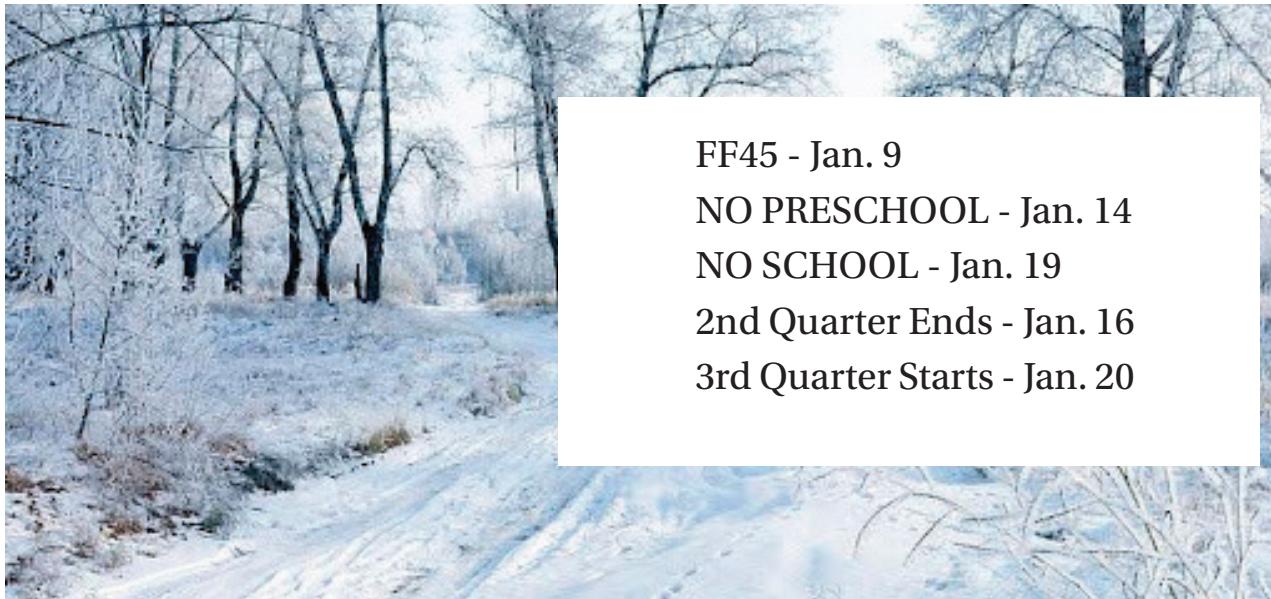
If she weren't a teacher, Mrs. Tiedt says she would love to run a daycare. One fun fact many don't know about her is that she has 25 first cousins on her mom's side of the family. To wrap it all up, Mrs. Tiedt says she and her family love living in Fairbank and are grateful to be part of the Wapsie Valley community.





# Fairbank Elementary Student News

## Important school January dates



FF45 - Jan. 9  
 NO PRESCHOOL - Jan. 14  
 NO SCHOOL - Jan. 19  
 2nd Quarter Ends - Jan. 16  
 3rd Quarter Starts - Jan. 20

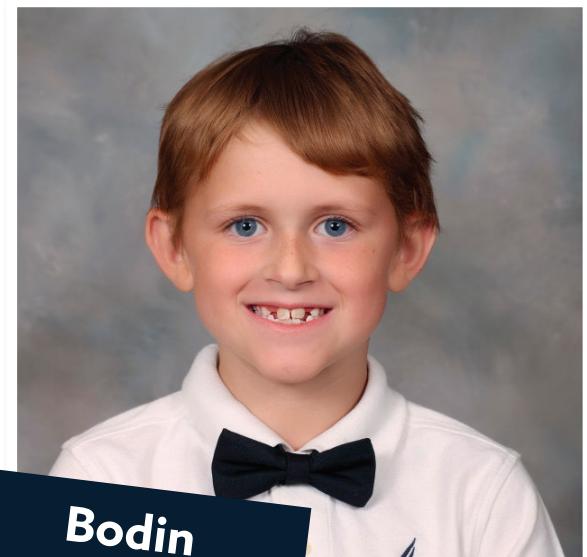


Cael

## S'Mores Bars

2 1/2 cups of flour  
 1 1/2 cup of crushed graham cracker crumbs  
 1/2 tsp baking soda  
 1/2 tsp salt  
 1 cup of butter, softened  
 1 cup of packed brown sugar  
 1/2 cup of sugar  
 2 eggs  
 2 tsp vanilla  
 1 pack of chocolate bars  
 1 big jar of marshmallow creme

Preheat the oven to 350. Butter a 9 x 13 inch pan. In a bowl mix flour, graham cracker crumbs, baking soda, and salt together. In a separate bowl, beat butter, brown sugar, sugar, eggs and vanilla. Add the dry ingredients. Divide the dough in 1/2. Put 1/2 in the pan and lay chocolate over it. Then add the marshmallow creme. Crumble the remaining dough on top. Bake for 27-30 minutes. This is a family favorite at Mrs. Buzynski's household made by her daughter in law, Carley Buzynski



Bodin

## Oran Mutual donates to Oran Fire, EMS project

BY TAYLOR NOHRENBERG  
 reporter@oelweindailyregister.com

GivingTuesday was created in 2012 as a movement inspiring community members to generously give their time, money and efforts to transforming their communities and world. Locally, communities are building one another up doing just that.

Recently, Oran Mutual Telephone Company (OMTC) partnered with Aureon, a technology solutions and service company based in the Midwest, and their Aureon Charity Grant to provide \$1,000 to Oran Fire/EMS towards their new EMS suburban.

Oran EMS Director and Fairbank EMT Janice Martins said the crew has put more money into their ambulance over the past few years for a vehicle that has been with the department for some time. She said that since Oran is not a transfer EMS, a suburban was best suited for the small town fire department's needs.

"That apparatus wasn't really sufficient. We were throwing a lot of money at just keeping it running and in good repair," she added. "It didn't have full-wheel drive, so it wasn't great in the winter. At some point we needed an upgrade."

A EMS suburban fit the needs of the department better than their ambulance in



COURTESY PHOTO

Pictured during the Aureon Charity Grant presentation from left is Matt Johnson, OMTC Plant Manager and OFD; Jason Peterson, OFD; Nathan Fink, OFD; Janice Martins, OFD; Danielle Hutchinson, Sale Representative, Aureon; and Corinne Schares, OMTC Office Manager.

two ways: a vehicle to carry the crew and haul equipment.

Martins said the department has been saving funds from local donors, fundraisers and grants and said the vehicle is almost paid for within the two year time frame of heavy fundraising.

"We had some in our account, and Oran Mutual Telephone has been always more than generous and helpful to both Oran EMS and Fire, so they've been great," she

said of the recent donation. "We got donations from local folks too and then used money that was in the EMS account, so we basically got that bought and paid for."

She explained that the suburban will be the main vehicle for Oran's first responders as they wait for a local emergency transfer vehicle to arrive from Fairbank, Denver or Sumner, saving precious time in a safer vehicle and allowing them to adequately respond to patients.

Martins said Oran EMS also upgraded a few pieces of equipment, including the grant through Fayette County for the LUCAS CPR machine, and hopes to start fundraising for upgrades on the fire side.

Corinne Schares, office manager for Oran Mutual Telephone Company, added that any non-profit in the area of telephone companies can apply for Aureon's grant if they work with them. For Fairbank, that OMTC and Little Wapsie Communications; Oelwein is OMTC, Hawkeye Telephone Company and County Line Fiber/East Buchanan Telephone Company; and Readlyn is Readlyn Telephone Company.

Non-profits apply with two letters in support, one from the company of service and one from any business or local community leader, and can be chosen to receive a grant ranging from \$500 to \$1,000. Grants are awarded quarterly to community projects for tangible items. Non-profits can apply at: <https://rippleeffectiowa.com/aureon-charity-grant/>

"I'm really happy Oran received it because, especially with Oran, we're a small town, so I think donations and supporting our fire departments and out EMS is important," Schares added. "I feel like they're all struggling and so this is a good opportunity for our non-profits to reach out."

# Riding in a winter wonderland

CONTINUED FROM A1

as well as Christmas carols by the Wapsie Valley High School choir.

Risse, on behalf of the FCC, wanted to thank the city workers, the Fire Department, volunteers and the Assisted Living for making this Parade of Lights possible.

"The Fairbank Community Club wants to send a huge thank you out to everyone that made our first annual lighted holiday parade a huge success!" the Club posted to Facebook following the event. "From the planning, to the space at the Assisted Living, to the city allowing us to block off the streets, to the members of the Community Club that donated their time, to the community who decorated their rides and just to those who showed up to watch and see Santa.... you are all amazing! From us to you, we wish you all a very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!"



COURTESY PHOTO

Above left: Caden and Lauren Matthias pose in their best elf costumes with the Fairbank Fire Department's decorated truck Wednesday at the Fairbank Parade of Lights. Above right: Miss Fairbank Norah Oldfather snags a photo with a snowman during the Parade of Lights in Fairbank Wednesday.

## Santa visits the Fairbank Library



# Fairbank Public Library



## LIBRARY STAFF

Angela Berg, Director  
 Susan Frost, Librarian  
 Therese Steggall, Librarian  
 Erin Hill, Librarian  
 Brock Berg, Custodian



MONDAY,  
 JAN 5, 2026  
 2:00 P.M.

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Email: [library@fairbank-ia.org](mailto:library@fairbank-ia.org) Website: [Fairbank-ia.org](http://Fairbank-ia.org)

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Monday 1-5 pm  
 Tuesday 1-5 pm;  
 Wednesday 9-11 am  
 1-5 pm  
 Thursday 1-6 pm  
 Friday 1-5 pm  
 Saturday 9-12



This time of year, is truly heartwarming, and we're deeply grateful for the incredible backing of the Fairbank Library and our Fundraising efforts! We've received an impressive 35 baskets this year and raised \$2,225.00! All funds raised will go to help support the library! Thanks to our wonderful Community for all of your support!

Please join us in congratulating Ms. Audrey on completing an impressive 1,000 Books Before Kindergarten.

May your love for reading continue to flourish, and may the Library remain a treasured destination for you and your family!

#fairbanklibrary  
 #1000booksbeforekindergarten



## In Loving Memory

### Patricia Ryherd

#### Like Family

..... from Sam Parkinson & Teresa Ryherd

#### My Friends

..... from Carl & Tina Dodge Family

#### The Road to Tender Hearts

..... from Justin & Lisa Wanek

#### When I Talk to God I Talk About Feelings

.... from Jared & Kim Staten Family

#### Francis "Gene" Winter

#### The Snowball Fight

..... from Glen & Deb Snyder

#### Joseph Copenhaver

#### Goodnight Butterfly

..... from Adam, Julie, Sylvia, Weston & Ophelia Costello

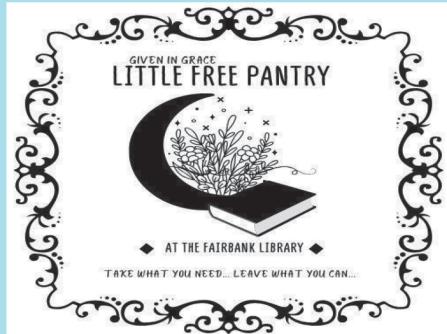
#### A River Between Us

..... from Sue Frost

#### Everything Origami

..... from Sue Frost

THANK YOU!



The library is closed, but our digital collection is always open.

## Santa Came To Town!



CHECK OUT KANOPY AND HAVE MOVIE NIGHTS ON THE LIBRARY!

Using your Fairbank Library card, you can access Kanopy. With an expertly curated collection of narrative and documentary films we think you'll enjoy, we're pleased to bring this streaming service to our community. Go to [kanopy.com](http://kanopy.com) to get started today or visit the Library!

## Library Fun!



New Series! Four reimagined fairy tales by best-selling authors together in one special box set, featuring stenciled edges and exclusive spine designs. Fall in love with your favorite fairy tales reimagined as contemporary romances, from bestselling and award-winning authors Julie Murphy, Jasmine Guillory, Zoraïda Córdova, and Christina Lauren, now in a stunningly collectable, highly giftable, four-book paperback boxed set with dreamy stained and stenciled edges.

JUST ARRIVED



**REGULAR MEETING**

The Fairbank City Council met in regular session on Monday November 24, 2025. Mayor Pro-tem R. Woods called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm. Members present: R. Woods, Erickson, and Gruetzmacher. Absent: Williams and T. Woods. Also, present at City Hall: Heather Prendergast, City Attorney; Nick Kuker, Public Works Director; Michelle Laube, Deputy Clerk; and Brittany Fuller, City Clerk.

Gruetzmacher/Erickson to approve the agenda. Motion carried.

There were no public hearings. Erickson/Gruetzmacher to approve the following consent agenda items as presented: October 27th Regular City Council Meeting Minutes. Motion carried.

There was no one present for the informal public comment section.

Craig Codner and Matt Mahoney from Butler County REC were present to provide an annual update and they reported that Basin Electric's wholesale power increases, originally projected at 20% but later reduced, will result in a pass-through rate increase adjustment for all REC customers, including the city. Rising system costs, including major generation and infrastructure projects, and increased winter reserve requirements are contributing to the rate increase. Councilman Williams arrived at 6:03 pm. Butler County REC recommended the city consider an ECA rate increase of \$0.00881 which is a 9.5% increase, with additional increases projected for January 2027. The council discussed placing a resolution on the next meeting agenda to adjust the city's ECA rate with this suggested increase. Attorney Prendergast encouraged everyone to share this information with the public ahead of the December 8th council meeting to help prepare customers for the possible upcoming rate change.

The council discussed the progress on funding for the proposed park shelter at Veterans Park. The City was awarded another grant totaling \$25,000 from the Max & Helen Guernsey Charitable Foundation, bringing total funds raised to approximately \$46,000 from the previously secured grants. A final design for the shelter which would include one unisex restroom was requested with updated quotes. Further review and discussion will occur at future meetings. The council discussed ideas that they have on what to do with the 657A property at 506 Patterson Street. The house was leveled, the process of abandoning Catherine Street and dividing it is moving along, and a utility easement is currently being recorded with the county. Attorney Prendergast advised that the council should start thinking about the next steps for the property, including whether to pursue sealed bids or list the property with a realtor and what deed restrictions if any that the council would want to require. They also discussed whether the lot could qualify as an LMI property. Maybe start by consulting with John Danos from Dorsey and Whitney LLP regarding TIF possibilities, the local INRCOG, or Lisa Kremer with Buchanan County for suggestions. The council members will continue considering options and discussions will take place at future meetings.

Williams/Gruetzmacher to have Attorney Prendergast do some more research on the resolution regarding approving a second amended and restated agreement to establish the Iowa Public Power Agency and to table for the next meeting. Ayes: Four. Nays: None.

The Mayor had been getting some complaints and requested the council have conversations regarding growing safety concerns and children riding e-scooters and e-bikes. It has been noticed that they are not following the rules of the road, and it might be necessary to address safe operations and rider expectations with the kids. Thoughts on the possibility of the police department providing training in the spring or getting some educational materials sent out to students were discussed. Also, other cities will be reviewed to see if any ordinances exist for this new situation.

During the council/mayor reports, Councilman Gruetzmacher stated that a 15 ft by 75 ft batting cage slab was completed at the north ball diamond field thanks to donations of time and materials from Jesse Hill with Midwest and Manatt's. The council thanked everyone involved for the donation of this amazing addition to the Fairbank Ball Diamond Park. Attorney Prendergast commented on how nice the Christmas lights looked as she was coming into town and Nick stated that the lights went up smoothly but that they did have to change out some of the GFTs at the top of the poles as they were not working. During the department reports, Nick explained that they had been working on some tile issues on Bucanan Street and that Rod with the Iowa Association of Municipal Utilities was in town doing some natural gas checks. The streets were swept during that rainfall that past week and the new railing installed for the Fourth Street Sidewalk Project will be removed and redone before the project is considered complete. It sustained some damage during travel and should be redone. Officer French was present and updated the council on some of the activities the department had been up to.

Williams/Gruetzmacher to adjourn the meeting at 6:53 pm. Motion carried.

Ron Woods, Mayor

Brittany Fuller, City Clerk

**REGULAR MEETING**

The Fairbank City Council met in regular session on Monday December 8, 2025. Mayor Kayser called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm with the Pledge of Allegiance. Members present: R. Woods, Williams, Erickson, T. Woods, and Gruetzmacher. Absent: None. Also, present at City Hall: Hunter Robinson, Police Chief; Nick Kuker, Public Works Director; Michelle Laube, Deputy Clerk and Brittany Fuller, City Clerk.

Erickson/Gruetzmacher to approve the agenda. Motion carried. Gruetzmacher/Erickson to approve the following consent agenda items as presented: November 24th Regular City Council Minutes, Treasurer's Report for November 2025, Approval of Liquor License for the Fairbank American Legion, Setting the 1st Budget Workshop for January 12th at 5:00 pm, and the payment of bills. The bill listing will be placed at the end of the minutes. Ayes: Five. Nays: None.

The Treasurers Report for the Month of November 2025: Revenues - General, \$15,391.54; Special Revenue, \$17,160.36; TIF, \$3,209.89; Capital Projects, \$31.01; Permanent Funds, \$16.36; Proprietary, \$156,730.87; and Transfers In, \$28,055.00. Disbursements - General, \$34,529.51; Special Revenue, \$13,294.17; Proprietary, \$159,969.35; Capital Projects, \$13,878.46; Debt Service, \$10,188.89; and Transfers Out, \$28,055.00. Balance on hand at close of business on November 30, 2025 was \$4,548,704.39.

There was no one present for the informal public comment section.

There was no public attendance for the discussion regarding a possible electric rate increase. After the previous meeting and discussions concerning the rate increase being passed on by Butler County, the council considered whether to implement a similar increase. The council stated that the increase was beyond their control. No additional comments were received in writing or by telephone.

Gruetzmacher/Erickson to approve Resolution 2025-36 - Resolution Establishing New Energy Cost Adjustment (ECA) Rate Increase. The energy cost adjustment was set at \$0.00881 per kWh and will begin with the electric usage on January 1, 2026. Ayes: Five. Nays: None.

After the last meeting, attorney Prendergast researched some information regarding the resolution approving a second amended and restated agreement establishing the Iowa Public Power Agency. She explained in an email that the Iowa Public Power Agency (IPPA) was established to jointly finance electrical transmission projects and that the City of Fairbank is an original member with a current ownership interest of approximately 1.21%. Passing the amended agreement is necessary to maintain the City's investment and future revenue, with anticipated returns beginning after project debt is retired in 2030. R. Woods/T. Woods to approve Resolution 2025-35 - Resolution Approving Second Amended and Restated Agreement to Establish the Iowa Public Power Agency. Ayes: Five. Nays: None.

The council was still working on getting information for the future shelter at Veteran's Park so there were no further discussions or decisions.

There was no new information regarding any possible uses for the 657A property at 506 Patterson Street. Councilman Gruetzmacher stated that he would like to see it be used as an opportunity for an LMI (Low-to-Moderate Income) project.

R. Woods/Williams to approve the final draft of the personnel policy suggestions and to table creating an organization flow chart until more information can be researched. Ayes: Five. Nays: None.

Amy Reckemmer with VanDaele Insurance, LLC was present to talk to the council about employee health insurance that will be renewing February 1, 2026. The renewal for the current plan option with Wellmark showed an increase of 10.75%. There was an increase in the out-of-pocket max for both single and family plans. Amy explained that the quotes from United Healthcare were even higher. T. Woods/Erickson to have Amy request a quote from Health Partners and to table any decisions until the next meeting. Motion carried.

Gruetzmacher/Erickson to approve Resolution 2025 - 37- Resolution Setting One-Time Bonus for the City of Fairbank Full-Time Employees and all Current Part-time Police Officers. The five full-time employees will receive a \$500.00 bonus paid on January 2nd and the seven part-time officers will each receive a \$100.00 bonus also paid on January 2nd. Ayes:

**Fairbank**  
**American Legion**

**February 22nd**  
**5:00-7:00**

**\$15 Adults**  
**\$7 Under 12**



**Alaskan Pollock Baked Potatoes**  
**Fries**  
**Coleslaw**  
**Baked Beans**  
**Rolls**  
**Dessert**

**109 E Main St.**

## The New Year's Eve Countdown

**10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1....**

Come New Year's Eve, it's customary to count down the last 10 seconds until the clock strikes midnight and the new year officially begins. It seems like the 10-second countdown is as old as time itself, but the tradition actually is much more modern. According to Alexis McCrossen, a history professor at Southern Methodist University, prior to the twentieth century, New Year's Day was celebrated rather than New Year's Eve. And even up until the mid-twentieth century, countdowns were not associated with New Year's Eve or even festive occasions. However, the tides turned on countdowns with the Apollo moon launch in 1961. After that, countdowns for radio hits and other fun activities began. Although some TV announcers in the 1960s began counting down to the new year, it wasn't until 1979 that the crowd at Times Square in New York City began joining in. This was despite the first New Year's Eve ball drop being held more than 70 years earlier in 1907. Publisher Adolph Ochs organized the first New Year's Eve party in Times Square in 1904, while the first-ever ball drop took place three years later when the city banned fireworks for the celebration. Yet it was not until the final year of the 1970s for it to be fashionable for a crowd to gather and participate in shouting out the 10-second countdown, a practice that is now tradition.

Four. Nays: None. Abstain: Williams.

Gruetzmacher/T. Woods to approve not having a second meeting in December due to the Holidays. That would change if something came up where a meeting is needed. Motion carried.

Williams/Gruetzmacher to approve the following appointments: Heather Prendergast, City Attorney and Brittany Fuller, City Clerk. Ayes: Five. Nays: None.

During the council/mayor comments, Councilman T. Woods said that he had a concerned citizen approach him regarding kids riding scooters in town. Councilwoman Erickson reminded everyone about the lighted parade happening on Wednesday the 10th. They thanked the public works department for their snow removal processes, especially given the amount that we got and all the mechanical issues they had run into. Mayor Kayser stated that he will be meeting with school administrators quarterly to discuss possible collaborations or to just keep informed. He will bring anything to the council that needs their attention.

During the department reports, Nick talked about some sewer main issues that they were dealing with that past couple of weeks, and they also had some water main issues that also turned into a leaking hydrant issue. He suggested starting a process to replace a couple of hydrants a year to help prevent running into any issues. Ken passed and received his water distribution certificate. Hunter stated the department has been focused on traffic enforcement and wanted to take the time to recognize one of the city's part-time officers, Mark Gudenkauf. Mark was able to save a life by pulling an individual out of a burning building while on a shift at his full-time job. He also said that Andrew Isley was wanting to attend Sex Crimes Training and the council agreed that it was a good idea. Chris West, Fire Chief, was present but didn't have any updates regarding the department but did state that he was going to investigate how the EMS Levy money would be distributed to the cities from the county. Mayor Kayser said that he was going to be retiring from the Fire Department later that month after 33 years of volunteer service.

Williams/Gruetzmacher to adjourn the meeting at 7:08 pm. Motion carried. Mayor Kayser administered the Oaths of Office to Councilman T. Woods, Councilwoman Gruetzmacher, Councilwoman Erickson, and the City Clerk Brittany Fuller.

Bills for the Month of December 2025

Amazon Capital Services, Supplies

\$76.73

Auditor of the State, Rob Sand, FY25 Exam Filing Fee

\$250.00

B & K Automotive, Services

\$30.00

Olivia Becker, Services

\$60.00

Bound Tree Medical, LLC., Ambulance Supplies

\$436.99

Sara Brandt & Jared Meeker, Utility Deposit Refund

\$200.00

Lonnie Brewer, Cell Phone Reimbursement

\$75.00

Buchanan County, City Election 11/4/25

\$931.75

Buchanan County, Dispatch Fees

\$7,831.00

Butler County Rec, Electric

\$49,804.73

Casey's General Store, Gas

\$556.41

Clayton Energy Corporation, Natural Gas

\$3,917.66

Clayton Energy Corporation, Reservation

\$13,267.83

Community Bank of Oelwein, Interest

\$989.38

Danko Emergency Equipment, Equipment

\$1,125.00

Delta Dental of Iowa, December Premium

\$1,215.96

Fairbank American Legion, Flags

\$270.00

Fairbank Community Club, FY26 Member Dues

\$30.00

Fairbank Firemen's Fund, Training Reimbursement

\$534.17

Fairbank Postmaster, Utility Bills November 2025

\$417.80

Fairbank Postmaster, Utility Bills December 2025

\$207.40

City of Fairbank, Electric & Gas

\$4,323.76

City of Fairbank, Utility Deposit Applied

\$200.00

Fayette County Auditor, City Election 2025

\$506.34

Brittany Fuller, Cell Phone Reimbursement

\$75.00

Gordon Flesch Company Inc, Copier/Printer Fees

\$114.14

Groebner & Associates, Supplies

\$581.88

IA Dept Of Natural Resources, Certification

\$80.00

IAMU, Training

\$70.00

Iowa Finance Authority, Interest

\$13,529.75

Iowa Law Enforcement Academy, Training

\$25.00

Iowa One Call, Locates

\$21.60

Iowa Prison Industries, Clothing Allowance

\$393.00

Iowa Regional Utilities Assoc., Water

\$8,316.14

Iowa Utilities Commission, Fees

\$1,589.55

Ipers, Benefits

\$5,954.12

JQ Construction LLC, Services

\$9,430.00

Marty & Robyn Kane, Utility Deposit Refund

\$200.00

Keith Oltrogge, CPA, FY25 Annual Exam

\$3,700.00

Kirkwood Community College, Training

\$72.00

Kluesner Sanitation, LLC., December Pick-up Fees

\$7,777.00

Nick Kuker, Cell Phone Reimbursement

\$75.00

Michelle Laube, Cell Phone Reimbursement

\$75.00

Little Wapsie Communications, Static IP Addresses/SW Phone

\$64.06

Janice Martins, Supplies Reimbursement

\$652.00

Microbac Laboratories, Inc., Testing

\$455.25

Modern Building Products, Supplies

\$935.48

NE Security Bank, Payroll Processing Fee 11/3/25

\$10.00

NE Security Bank, Payroll Processing Fee 11/17/25

\$8.76

NE Security Bank, Utility ACH Service Charge

\$10.00

NSB/HSA - H S A Contributions

\$520.00

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## “Financial Fitness”

WITH ASHLEA (KLEITSCH) JONES

### WE WISH YOU A MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR!

If you are taking some of your precious time to slow down and read this, I appreciate you and I hope the Holiday Season is treating you and your loved ones well!

This year has been so good to us.

At the end of 2024 and into 2025, we had a small interior bathroom renovation project that all went smoothly and turned out amazing (thanks to John at the Welsh Construction crew!). Later into the summer we started a more extensive outside project of turning our front yard into an oasis for our kiddos to live their best lives in. We dug a pond to fill their primal needs of getting muddy, sunburnt and exhausted and they fell right into the routine. All that mud might mean we will need a new washing machine or have to renovate the bathroom AGAIN sooner than later, but we are so happy to watch them be dirty, scruffy, **smiling** kids and wouldn't change a thing.



This summer, I deleted all of my social media accounts and have found myself being more present, getting SO MUCH more done, and being a better mother and wife to the people that mean the most to me. I don't hear all the gossip and I don't know all the trends but I realize how much I was wasting time and energy on things that don't have anything to do with me. This has been the greatest gift I have given myself and I hope we can all continue to come back to living in the moment and living for ourselves rather than for recognition on the internet. Without being preachy, I would highly recommend it if you need a 2026 resolution!

Cody is still working with the Iowa State Patrol and has thankfully had an uneventful year. He is surrounded by amazing, highly capable co-workers and loves what he does, which is more than most can say! Calvin, Carver, and Carissa are all doing well in school at CLS and are happy and healthy and good hearted little humans. They spend their non-school hours on a field, court, dance floor or wrestling mat... making new friends and memories along the way. Each year they become more independent than the last and we just try to chase them and be with them for as long as they'll allow. (*Sidenote: Every summer, I test whether my kids still think I am “cool” to be around by asking if they want to go off the diving board with me... so far they haven't rolled their eyes and told me “NO! Get away” so I will continue to categorize myself as COOL!! I know it will be short lived so I hang onto those YES answers very tightly!*) We went on a few roadtrip vacations together, we tried new things and met new people, and we had our share of ups and downs but are all still here to love and support each other. We are so blessed.

And my clients - the best clients in the world!

Some bring me holiday treats, some send me a card, some send a quick text or phone call... some are way too busy with their own plans to think of me at all and that is perfectly fine too! I am so stinkin' lucky to get to do what I do with people that I enjoy being around. I appreciate everyone who gives me their trust and confidence and don't take for granted how big of a responsibility that is. It is good pressure that is a blessing to live up to.

I hope everyone reading this could just as easily fill a page of blessings that have found them this year and that 2026 is even better. Life is Good!

*Merry Christmas & Happy New Year!*

Ashlea (Kleitsch) Jones

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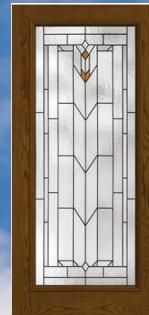


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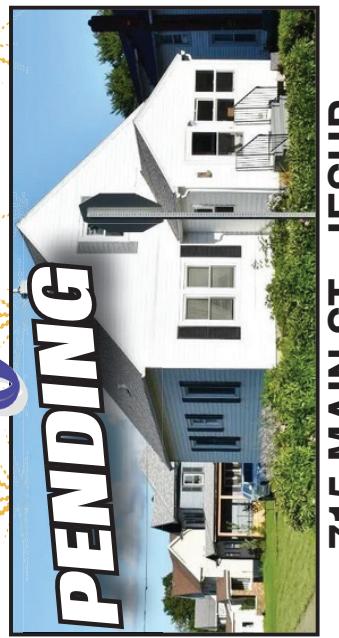
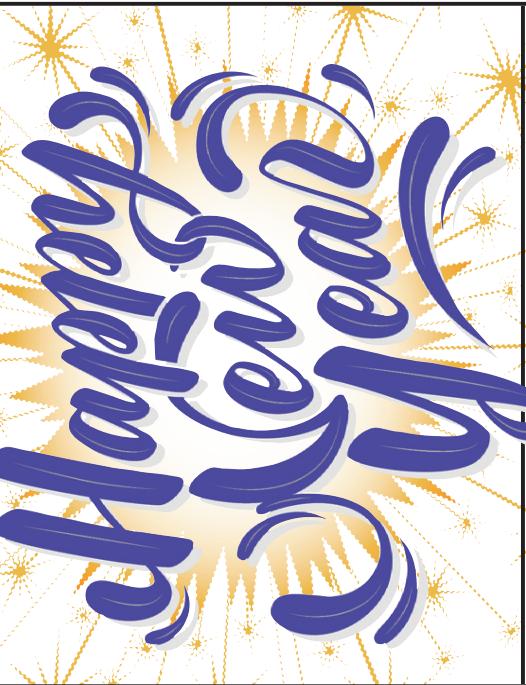
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