

TRACTI • N

A MAGAZINE FROM THE AMES REGIONAL ECONOMIC ALLIANCE

Winter 2024-2025
Issue 09



RV THERE YET?

**The Discovery Channel Visits
the Ames Region**



**THE THREE PILLARS
THAT WILL LEAD OUR
WORK WILL BE:**

**LEADERSHIP
ENGAGEMENT
ADVOCACY**



Dan Culhane
President & CEO
Ames Regional Economic Alliance

This fall, the hosts of the Discovery Channel's show, "RV There Yet?" visited our region to record an episode for season four of their popular show. It's a project that we had been working on for months, and it was an exciting week for our team when they were in town.

When we were presented with this opportunity earlier in the year, we quickly knew that the amenities of Boone County were essential based on the premise of the show. From Ledges State Park to the High Trestle Trail, and the truly unique Rail Explorers experience, the show's schedule was feeling like a home run before production even began. When we added a top tourist location in Reiman Gardens, shopping in Downtown Ames, and the Cyclone tailgate experience at Jack Trice Stadium, even the hosts commented that it is one of their more unique shows.

Working with the show's team was an absolute delight. I encourage you to watch previous episodes of the show that are available on YouTube in preparation for our episode that will air next spring. The hosts are as genuine as they appear in the show, and it was a joy to welcome them to our region.

Over the past several years, we have placed an emphasis on being a regional organization. Without that emphasis, this show does not take place and highlight our region on national television. Nor does this show happen without partner organizational support from Discover Ames and Visit Boone County. They both played an active role in helping organize this show and they utilized their connections across the region to help make compelling television.

I am incredibly excited for the episode to air next spring. The production value of a show on the Discovery Channel is top notch, and I know that our area will play well on television.



What is Traction?

The **Ames Regional Economic Alliance** and affiliate organizations help create traction in our community. We drive business and community vitality in the Ames region by being connectors. We lead, engage, and advocate for the betterment of our communities. We help get projects off the ground or help move them forward, and we are undeterred in our purpose, cause, and passion. A great idea often needs a little bit of progress and momentum, and we help provide that **traction** to move it forward.

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On the Cover

RV There Yet? The hosts of the Discovery Channel's popular show visited the Ames area to record an episode that will feature local sights in Boone and Story County. It's a unique opportunity to showcase the amenities of the region to a national audience. Read more in this feature article of Traction magazine.

AMES REGIONAL ECONOMIC
Alliance

**304 Main St.
Ames, Iowa 50010
Phone: (515) 232-2310**

Centrally and conveniently located in the heart of the Midwest and Iowa, Ames is known for its healthy, stable economy, flourishing cultural environment, and the world-renowned Iowa State University.

AmesAlliance.com

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With over 750 members, the Ames Regional Economic Alliance strives to make the Ames region a better place to live, work, and do business by strengthening the economic vitality and the quality of life in the area.

TRACITION PROFILE





RV THERE YET?

The hosts of the Discovery Channel's popular show visited the Ames area in an episode that will feature local sights in Boone and Story County.

The hosts of the Discovery Channel's popular show, *RV There Yet?* visited the Ames area in early October to record an episode of their reality travel series that is recording its fourth season this fall. The show is hosted by "Producerman Kevin" McCabe and his wife, Patrice, as they hike, camp and eat their way across the United States. They make new friends, learn local history, create memories, and inspire viewers to plan their own RV adventures.

Conversations about the episode began in April 2024 after Patrice was drawn to images on the Ames Regional Economic Alliance social media accounts highlighting Downtown Ames. "I started looking in on the posts and seeing all that Ames had going on. The destination checked all the boxes for us and how we RV." After initial conversations, pre-production on the show began. The show was organized locally through a collaboration between the Ames Regional Economic Alliance, Discover Ames, and Visit Boone County.

As a camping show, the episode was based at Ledges State Park that is celebrating its 100-year anniversary this year. A sunset bike ride across the High Trestle Trail and the Rail Explorers experience on the Boone Scenic Valley Railroad will provide incredible panoramic views of the region. From there, the camper was moved to RV Village at Jack Trice Stadium in preparation for the Cyclone tailgate experience. The hosts visited Reiman Gardens and went shopping in Downtown Ames

before learning how Cornbred barbecue creates its award-winning food.

"We love RVing in the Fall and when you add in RVing in the Midwest, we get super excited," said Patrice. "When we started researching the location, Ames had it all. Camping in a State Park (Ledges), adventure we've never done before (Rail Explorers), a quaint, local downtown shopping district with unique businesses, and a college football team!"

Kevin McCabe was raised in Cocoa Beach, Florida, and majored in mass communications at the University of South Florida when he decided that television production was the career for him. Patrice McCabe grew up in Nebraska, and together they worked on a successful fishing show called *Addictive Fishing*, which aired on the Discovery Channel and Bally Sports Sun, for more than 20 years. In 2020, they moved from behind the camera at *Addictive Fishing* to hosts of *RV There Yet?*.

"Patrice and I love college football, and this is the first time we get to tailgate for an episode," said Kevin McCabe. "Everyone in Ames, from the community organizations to the local businesses, have been incredibly hospitable and kind. We're excited to start editing the show and share it with the entire country next spring." The new season will air on the Discovery Channel beginning in April 2025.

► REIMAN GARDENS

As one of the top tourist attractions in Ames, Reiman Gardens is a 17-acre botanical garden that is open to the public year-round. From the tropical plant conservatory, events, and seasonal themes, there is always something to explore. While on location, the *RV There Yet?* crew spoke with Director Christine Prescott about the space, toured the butterfly wing that is home to approximately 800 live butterflies representing up to 80 different species, and of course, met Elwood, the World's Largest Concrete Garden Gnome.

► HIGH TRESTLE TRAIL

Considered one of the highlights of Iowa's trail system, the High Trestle Trail runs through four counties, including Boone and Story County. The iconic half mile, 13-story bridge across the Des Moines River Valley, includes six overlooks for spectacular views of the region. The 41 steel frames over the bridge creates a must-see destination for cyclists and tourists to the region.

► DOWNTOWN AMES

Visitors to the Ames area most certainly spend time and money at some of the many businesses in Downtown Ames. For the show, Kevin and Patrice walked the beautiful Main Street and popped into a variety of stores along the way. From tasty treats at Chocolaterie Stam, to one of the premier independent bookstores at Dog Eared Books, or tailgating essentials at Cooks' Emporium, Downtown is full of opportunity. For the show, the shopping adventures in Downtown concluded at Cornbred to set up the next segment of Cyclone tailgating on Saturday.

► THE RAIL EXPLORERS

A rail explorer is a pedal powered vehicle that rides on railroad tracks, and the experience in Boone is one of the most unique, outdoor opportunities in the region. They have 4 steel wheels, hydraulic disc brakes, pedals for each seat, and are comfortable, fun, and easy to ride. The Scenic Valley Trail Tour is 12.5 miles round trip and crosses the Des Moines River for an incredible panoramic view.





Ryan Newstrom
Owner, Cornbred Barbecue

Ryan Newstrom, owner of Cornbred Barbecue, was the personal tailgate chef when the *RV There Yet?* Discovery Channel show recorded a segment of their episode in the RV Village at Jack Trice Stadium.

"Cooking and serving delicious food is my favorite thing in the world," said Newstrom. "I appreciate the opportunity to not only serve food, but to be highlighted on the show. It brought me back to my competition barbecue days." For the tailgate experience, Newstrom rolled out his orange show pit and many of his award-winning, signature items.

Newstrom's formal education is in music, education, and urban planning, but he grew up cooking with his dad. "All of the men in my family are cooks," said Newstrom.

He started competing with his team, Big T's Q Cru in 2008, where they saw a lot of success early on, earning over 250 awards and 35 grand championships. They have been named four-time Iowa BBQ Team of the Year, three-time Iowa BBQ Reserve Champion, and National Brisket Champion among 6,500 teams.

"What many people don't know is that these competitions are judged blindly," said Newstrom, meaning they do not know who prepared the food. "I found myself taking a scientific approach to the competition, spending time on where we sourced the meat and determining the best cooking time down to the minute." The proof is in the awards.

They have also won the American Royal World Series of Barbecue Open Brisket Champion in 2012 and the American Royal World Series of Barbecue Invitational Ribs Champion in 2013. They were selected among the top 25 teams in the country for the annual King of the Smoker Invitational four times, and they took the title of Winner King of the Smoker in 2014.

After hundreds of awards, Newstrom and his team pivoted to opening a food truck in 2017. "The food truck was a way for us to build our brand and get a taste of our food into people's mouths, but we were always still searching for the right spot to open an actual restaurant." In 2018, they found the perfect location in the old train depot building.

"When we saw that space, we knew it was for us," said Newstrom. They combined two spaces into one and opened the vertical space and added a second floor. "My vision was to repurpose that beautiful historic building." Cornbred officially opened in 2019 and has been a staple in Downtown Ames ever since.

If you like barbecue, you'll love Cornbred and their grillosophy: *At Cornbred, we have a love affair with all things barbecue. It floats our boat. It butters our bread. It's what gets us out of bed in the morning and keeps us up late at night. Our commitment is to share our love of barbecue with our customers every day.*

www.cornbredbbq.com



AMES HISTORY MUSEUM

In October, the Ames History Museum (AHM) held a grand reopening event celebrating their new expansion project and permanent installation. The weekend event saw nearly 1,000 guests visit the Museum, officially launching a new era for the organization.

Founded in 1980, the Ames History Museum provides unique opportunities to learn about Ames history through exhibits, programs, research assistance, and stewardship of artifact and archival collections. They are active on social media, documenting and sharing moments in Ames history with a robust collection of photographs and stories.

Located in Downtown Ames, the museum purchased the adjacent Pantorium building in August 2021 and subsequently launched their fundraising campaign.

"We were excited to see the community come together and support this project," said Executive Director Casie Vance, acknowledging that much of the fundraising has come from business and private support. AHM was also awarded a \$400,000 Community Attraction and Tourism (CAT) grant from the Iowa Economic Development Authority that helped finalize their expansion plans.

The \$4.5 million construction project began in September 2023, closing the museum for over a year as the project combined the two buildings into one facility.

The preservation and restoration of the Ames Pantorium building was included as part of the expansion

project, including its iconic exterior sign. The original 1926 Pantorium building was home to a dry-cleaning business. The building is architecturally and historically significant as a contributing building to the Ames Main Street National Register Historic District.

When the museum reopened, it included a permanent installation called "Ames: From Prairie to Present." The exhibit provides an overview of Ames history including several timelines, with emphasis on transportation, signage, theaters, schools, the Tribune, and more.

Exhibits and programs in the expanded museum will bring visitors to Downtown Ames, foster community pride, and provide opportunities for meaningful engagement with the past.



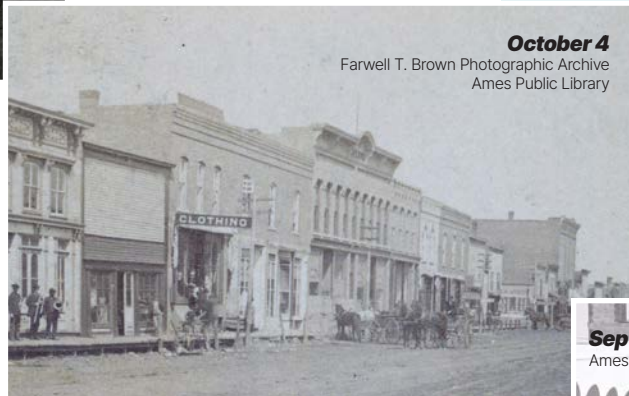
This day in history...

October 16
Ames Tribune Photo



The Cyclone mascot has been a staple in the community, turning 70 this year. Shown here with designer George Grooms, the mascot debut was at Homecoming on October 16, 1954. Cy was created in Downtown Ames at Collegiate Manufacturing Company.

A major fire destroyed the Opera Hall and three other buildings on the north side of the 100 block of Onondaga (Main) Street on October 4, 1887. This was the third devastating fire on Onondaga in the past two years. Many of the buildings were rebuilt using brick instead of wood. This photo shows the north side of the 100 and 200 blocks of Onondaga in 1885.



October 4

Farwell T. Brown Photographic Archive
Ames Public Library



October 6

Ames Tribune Photo

The first shovelful of dirt was turned for the construction of the Scheman Building by Iowa State University President W. Robert Parks on October 6, 1973. Scheman was the final building of the Iowa State Center complex and was named for Carl H. Scheman, 1910 Iowa State graduate and \$1 million donor to the project. About 100 people attended the groundbreaking ceremony, protected from the rainy day by the overhead walkways which connected the Iowa State Center buildings.

September 12

Ames Tribune Photo



September 24

Photo courtesy Hank Zaletel



Mary Greeley Hospital was dedicated on September 24, 1916. At the dedication, which was attended by more than 2,000 people, Greeley eulogized his wife by saying, "It affords me great pleasure, more than words can express, that I contribute something towards the welfare of not only those now in need, but also for those who will be here long after we have passed away."

The Ames Centennial celebration was held September 10-13, 1964. The four-day celebration of Ames's 100th birthday included a style show, square dance, beard contest, fireworks, historical pageant, and two-mile-long parade.

Former U. S. President Theodore Roosevelt made a stop at the Ames depot on August 26, 1910 during a whistle-stop tour of the nation. In this photo, Roosevelt is being introduced to a crowd of 5,000 by arm-waving Parley Sheldon, Ames' mayor.



August 26

Farwell T. Brown Photographic Archive
Ames Public Library



August 18

Collegiate Presbyterian Church

On August 18, 1928, concrete Lincoln Highway road markers arrived in Ames. A few weeks later, Boy Scouts installed nearly 2,500 markers along the road from New York to Los Angeles. The Ames scouts placed 29 markers between Nevada and Boone. This photo shows the Ames Boy Scouts standing around one of the markers.

Images and information for this page was produced in collaboration with the Ames History Museum. Learn more on their website.

www.ameshistory.org



Ames Regional Economic Alliance

INTER-CITY VISIT

Fargo, North Dakota
September 11-13, 2024

The Ames Regional Economic Alliance hosted the 2024 Inter-City Visit from September 11-13, where city and community leaders from Boone, Hamilton, and Story County toured Fargo, North Dakota, and met with their community leaders.

"The goal of the 2024 Inter-City Visit is straightforward," said Dan Culhane, President & CEO of the Ames Regional Economic Alliance. "To learn from leaders in Fargo / Moorhead about what has been successful in their community and determine new opportunities in our market." The Greater Fargo Moorhead region was chosen, in part, because of its comparable size to our region and the fact that it is home to North Dakota State University (NDSU), a public land-grant research university.

On the opening day of the trip, the delegation toured the Fargo Jet Center, a 340,000 square foot facility and recognized leader in aviation services. Fargo Jet Center specializes in aircraft modifications and is home to four United States Air Force drones. From there, a driving tour of the region highlighted the entrepreneurial ecosystem and notable companies that continue to drive economic activity in their region. Along the way, the delegation visited the Bluestem Amphitheater, a 3,000-capacity venue that draws national acts from May to October.

The delegation had a chance to tour the Fargo Parks Sports Center, a new 390,000 square foot amenity to the region that recently opened. Phase I of the project includes a turf field, hardwood courts, an indoor walking track, and more. It is open to the public and a great \$126 million example of the benefits of public and private partnerships.

The next day, Brewhalla, a food, entertainment, and hotel hub by Drekker Brewing, hosted presentations on topics that included workforce recruitment, entrepreneurial ecosystem, regionalism, downtown development, and placemaking.

Before leaving, NDSU President David Cook and members of his leadership team talked about town and gown relationships, research, and some of their marketing initiatives. President Cook is an Ames native and graduate of Ames High and continues to have strong ties and an understanding of the Ames region. A driving tour of campus concluded the visit.

This was the seventh Inter-City visit that the Ames Regional Economic Alliance has hosted. Previously visited communities include Manhattan, Kansas; Columbia, Missouri; Bloomington, Indiana; Fort Collins, Colorado; and Iowa communities of Marion, Cedar Falls, and Dubuque. Last year's delegation visited the Lafayette / West Lafayette, Indiana region, home of Purdue University.



This year's delegation included representation from the City of Ames, City of Boone, City of Nevada, City of Webster City, Story County, Iowa State University, and many private business partners across Boone, Hamilton, and Story County.

Manufacturing Breakfast

DATE: October 11, 2024

Jason Andringa, President and CEO of Vermeer Corporation, was the keynote speaker at the Ames Regional Economic Alliance Manufacturing Breakfast. Vermeer Corporation is one of Iowa's largest global legacy companies. Andringa offered a brief history of the company and provided valuable insights into the state of manufacturing, providing a unique perspective from a company deeply rooted in Iowa's industrial landscape.

Jason Andringa

President & CEO, Vermeer Corporation



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- [Lott Music Studio](#)
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Looking for a local business? Consider one of our over 750 Ames Regional Economic Alliance members through our online directory. Visit our website at:

[AmesAlliance.com](https://amesalliance.com)

Scan the QR code to access our online directory to search for some of the businesses gaining traction.



MID-STATES COMPANIES

Mid-States Companies, located and headquartered in Nevada, Iowa, is in the final stages of their most recent expansion effort: a 9,000 square foot administrative office building intended to bring together their range of businesses and services under one roof. The expansion is the latest in a long line of reinvestment projects for the company.

Kevin Vier, President and Chief Executive Officer of Mid-States Companies is a Nevada native and grew up in a family-owned construction business with his father. Through V&H Construction, he had his first opportunity to sell a grain bin dryer. "At the time, I wanted the opportunity to work on larger projects," said Vier, thinking back to the origins of Mid-States.

In 2001, he founded Mid-States Millwrights & Builders (MMB) after working for and eventually purchasing Lint Millwright in Nevada. Over the next two decades, Mid-States expanded from five employees and a 50x70 shop, to a company that now employs over 100 people and includes millwright services, structural steel fabrication, material handling equipment, cranes and trucking services, as well as engineering and design services. Today, both of his sons Austin and Riley are helping to lead the company. Austin as Chief Operating Officer and Riley as Vice President of Marketing & Development.

"Our business has been fortunate to scale in steps," said Riley, acknowledging the history of the company that he grew up in. Since 2001, Mid-States Companies has grown in scope and now occupies over 139,000 square feet of manufacturing space in Nevada.

In the mid-2000s, the supply chain of procuring equipment slowed with the ethanol boom. "Since we couldn't get equipment in a timely manner," Vier said, "we realized that we might as well start manufacturing our own equipment. This was when we first started making our own catwalk, towers, platforms, structural steel and soon after, our lines of material handling equipment."

In 2010, they built a 14,000-square-foot manufacturing facility and officially launched Mid-States Material Handling and Fabrication. The company supported the millwright division by providing structures and material handling equipment.

In the years that followed, the expansions continued to keep up with the demand. A 34,000 square-foot addition was announced in 2017, followed by a 40,000-square-foot addition to the facility as new product lines were developed and additional demand grew. By 2021, the company had built up a fleet of cranes and trucks that were used for MMB projects and launched Mid-States Crane and Trucking to provide those services to external customers. Finally, in May of this year, Mid-States started Mid-States Design & Engineering and brought professional engineering services in-house and created a space for all their existing drafting and design staff to be under one roof.

"We are now vertically integrated from design and engineering, to manufacturing, to millwright services, to crane and trucking," said Vier. "We are a one-stop shop for our clients, which is notable as we have more control over the services and products we provide."

Mid-States Companies is an economic development success story that reinforces the importance of supporting local expansion projects and how that can positively impact a community. They operate nationwide across 34 states from California to New York. In addition to their own employees, they manage the same number across project sites.

"At Mid-States Companies, it's all about the people," said Vier. "We have been blessed with not only family, but also great leaders and dedicated employees across our various operations. It's great to be able to grow this company in Nevada where I and the rest of my family grew up."

**Learn more about Mid-States Companies
on their website:**

www.midstatescompanies.com



**MID-STATES
MATERIAL HANDLING
AND FABRICATION**





Riley Vier, Kevin Vier, and Austin Vier
Mid-States Companies

AREAYP



New Brand
Launched in 2024

FUEL Story County, the young professionals organization and an affiliate organization of the Ames Regional Economic Alliance, officially rebranded as AREA Young Professionals in September 2024.

"Our young professionals organization has seen a lot of growth in recent years, and this rebrand is another exciting step in our efforts to build young, transformative leaders in our community," said Dan Culhane, President and CEO of the Ames Regional Economic Alliance. "If you have young professionals in your organization, I strongly encourage them to get signed up as an AREA YP member and use this as a terrific opportunity for professional development."

AREA Young Professionals (AREA YP), formerly FUEL Story County, was founded in 2002 as an affiliate organization of the Ames Regional Economic Alliance. Their mission is to be transformative leaders enhancing quality of life through a community focused on leadership, growth, philanthropy, and social engagement.

The rebrand aligns with the recent rebrand of the Ames Regional Economic Alliance and is now more inclusive of the region.

AREA YP provides a forum for networking, professional development, and community partnerships. The organization seeks to promote the businesses, attractions, and events that showcases the Ames region as a great place to live, work, and play. AREA YP is committed to creating an environment that attracts and retains young professionals in our area.

Alongside the new name and logo, AREA YP is excited to unveil a new website that highlights the organization.

Why Join AREA YP?



Meet New People and Build Your Professional Network

The young professionals organization is the heartbeat of the community. They are the next generation that will impact our communities. Network today and be the leaders of tomorrow.



Give Back to the Community and Educate Yourself

Each opportunity through AREA YP allows you to be more and more engaged in our communities. Through community service projects and networking opportunities, you will engage deeper and learn about how our community leads.



Make your Mark

As a young professional, it is likely that you will have multiple career advancement opportunities in your future. Many of those opportunities will result in the quality of work that you do and the connections that you make.



Have Fun!

AREA YP is an opportunity to build professional friendships that may last through your entire career. Begin that journey now by joining AREA YP, the young professionals organization of Boone, Hamilton, and Story County.

New Website
Launched in 2024

www.areayoungprofessionals.com



AREAYP



I ► KADING PROPERTIES

As we invest more resources into supporting housing across the region, it's always fun to celebrate a groundbreaking event. In October, the Alliance was in Boone as Kading Properties officially broke ground on Kate's Landing, a 128 unit development that is projected to be a \$15 million investment in Boone. The first tenants are expected to take occupancy by July 1, 2025.



I ► STEPPING STONES CHILDCARE DEVELOPMENT CENTER

A new \$1.2 million childcare facility project is underway in Slater, Iowa, with funding support provided by the City of Slater, Story County Board of Supervisors, Consumers Energy, and the private facility owner. Stepping Stones held a groundbreaking event in October with a target opening date of May 2025. The facility will expand services across the region and increase number of childcare slots.



I ► STORY MEDICAL SENIOR CARE FACILITY IN NEVADA

Story Medical held a ribbon cutting and open house event in November, marking the opening for the new Senior Care facility in Nevada. The new 59,000 square foot facility is designed to enhance independence, comfort and security, while meeting individual needs. The project launched in spring 2023 and now includes 60 spacious rooms, memory care support, family gathering spaces, a therapy room, and porch entries for residents.

I ► FAREWAY OPENS STORE IN STORY CITY

Fareway Stores, Inc. officially opened a new location in Story City after only six months of construction. The new 10,800 square foot store is located at the southwest corner of Broad Street and Factory Outlet Drive in Story City. "This is a significant win for Story City," said Story City Economic Development Corporation President Tyler Frederiksen when the project was announced. "This happened while working with amazing partners, which include the Story City Mayor and Council and the Ames Economic Development Commission."





Amanda Thompson
Owner, Studio A Designs

Photography by Ashley Brooke Collective



A solo brand and website design agency in Ames, Studio A Designs focuses on connecting Iowa small business owners with their dream buyers. Founder and rural Iowa native Amanda Thompson helps businesses uncover their standout qualities, unique personality traits, visual differentiators, and more to develop brands that locals love!

"My favorite part of my job is revealing the strategy and design concepts to my clients after going through a discovery process," said Thompson. "They light up when they can envision themselves being able to confidently put words and visuals to the business they have poured their heart and soul into. Brand and website strategy is not just about communicating to customers. It's resonating with them on a deeper level through heartfelt messaging, personality and visuals to make them raving fans."

To date, Thompson has worked with consultants, authors, law firms, sports organizations, realtors, trade industries, clothing boutiques, gift shops and other retail stores. With over 75 brands and 45 websites launched from startups to community veterans. "It sounds cliché, but growing as an entrepreneur is the best experience. It's stretched and challenged me, keeping me on my toes. I'm honored to do this job, which I still love after 16+ years." Thompson said.

Amanda offers various brand packages from "starter" to "deluxe" to fit the needs of any entrepreneurial journey. Her website services are in a "done-for-you" style, with copywriting, search engine optimization, and user experience design. VIP Design Days are also growing in popularity where small businesses can book a day to fast-track a list of design items needed to get things done.

www.studioa-designs.com

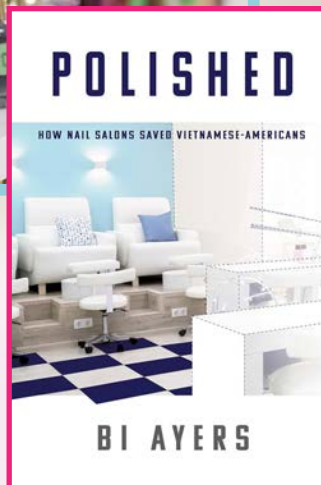


Bi Ayers
Owner, Pro Nails Spa



In *Polished*, Bi Ayers writes of his journey as a Vietnamese immigrant in search of success.

Part memoir, part business book, *Polished* shares deep insight into the history of the Vietnamese-owned nail salon, told straight from the heart.



“Who would have thought that the art of nails could save lives?” This is the question that Bi Ayers, owner of Pro Nails in Ames, asks in *Polished*, his 2023 book that is part memoir and part business book. “The idea of writing a book was not to tell the world about me or the success of our business,” said Ayers. “I wanted to help other salon owners learn from my experience and raise their standard of practice in hope that if all of us do well will help elevate the industry as a whole.”

Ayers was born and raised in Hue, Vietnam, which is located 60 miles south of the demilitarized zone. He grew up in an entrepreneurial family with multiple generations under one roof, as is customary in Vietnam. Hue became home after his grandparents defected to the south to avoid communist government controlled north.

The Democratic Republic of Vietnam, south of the thirty-ninth parallel, allowed for his grandparent’s entrepreneurial ambitions to thrive. During the Vietnam War, they owned land and collected copper from ammunition casings and bomb shells, selling them to the highest bidder which was usually the United States or Japan. But the “Fall of South Vietnam” ended all of that in 1975. “My family lost everything,” said Ayers. “It was illegal to have any wealth of your own, so your lives and daily activities were being monitored until they believe, beyond any reasonable doubt, that you no longer held any valuables.”

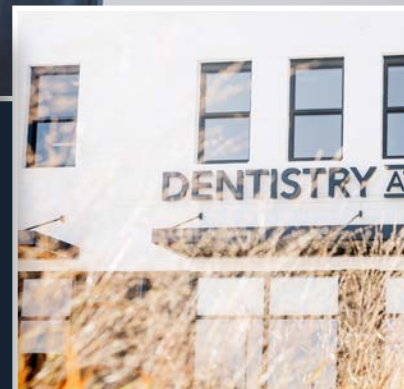
This was the Vietnam he grew up in. “I learned this and accepted it,” said Ayers. His life changed when Doug Ayers, an American soldier, proposed to his mother, prompting a move to the United States and a goodbye to the way of life he had always known. At the age of fifteen, Ayers admits that he did not want to move, but his grandmother saw the opportunity ahead. Reflecting, Ayers said, “America allowed me to dream of a bigger and better life than I could have had back in Vietnam.”

The new Ayers family arrived in Colo, Iowa, where everyone spoke English. He was the only Vietnamese student in school and spent much of his time learning the language and culture. He attended Iowa State University, where he earned a degree in Marketing. After a stint in Houston, Texas, working for an engineering company, he and his wife Anh, found themselves back in Ames as the proud owner of Pro Nails.

“We found a niche in a saturated market,” said Ayers, who has focused on building their client base, systems, processes, training for staff, and ensuring a quality experience. In *Polished*, Ayers dives into how the Vietnamese culture intertwines with the history of the nail salon boom in the United States. As a successful business owner, he feels that it is incumbent on him to continue that tradition. “Vietnamese who want to come to America now have a much easier way to transition,” says Ayers.



Dr. Jason and Marcie Niegsch
Owners, Dentistry At Somerset





DENTISTRY AT SOMERSET

Dr. Jason Niegsch (pronounced "Nicks") and his wife, Marcie, have called Dentistry At Somerset their dental clinic location since 2002. Last year, after practicing at this location for over 22 years, they made a significant investment in the community to more than double their patient capacity. In July 2024, the new and improved, nearly 10,000 square foot expansion opened with 19 treatment rooms, including surgical suites for more in-depth procedures and extra rooms for team spaces.

"The new building is beautiful, comfortable and offers the latest technology, but it's only the shell for the rest," said Dr. Niegsch. "Our team is our greatest asset."

Dentistry At Somerset was founded by Dr. Paul Readhead who had been practicing in Ames since 1972. He and his wife, Marsha, purchased the Somerset land in 1998, built the existing structure, and moved his practice in 2000 when the Somerset development was mostly a cornfield. Dr. Readhead renamed his practice Dentistry At Somerset for its new up-and-coming neighborhood, just as it lives on today nearly 25 years later.

Following dental school and a tenure with the United States Navy, Dr. Niegsch made his home in Ames and began working with Dr. Readhead in 2002. The two worked together for eight years until Dr. Readhead's retirement in 2009. Dr. Niegsch continued practicing on his own with just 6 team members until 2015.

Around that same time, Marcie pivoted away from her publishing career with Meredith Corporation to join the practice. "Earlier in my career, it was something that I never considered," said Marcie. "But it certainly provided a growth opportunity for me and more balance for our family."

The Niegschs admitted that starting the new journey of working together was not easy, but it allowed them to step back and establish a new vision and mission for the practice. "We set goals for the future and became intentional about the legacy we wanted to create with our dental clinic," said Marcie.

www.dentistryatsomerset.com



Year after year, Dr. Niegsch and Marcie put their vision and mission into practice. They designed how they wanted the patient experience to look and feel and what personal touches should be included in addition to the high-level of clinical skills and patient care.

Throughout the past ten years they invested significant time and energy into finding the right team members to provide the level of care they wanted patients to have. They trained the team regularly and worked through how to make the patient experience even better. Their continual refinements in culture, systems and processes led to the need for their expansion project.

"As the practice grew, the walls of the existing clinic were quickly getting too small," notes Marcie. "We knew we would need more space and the existing building was land locked." The Niegschs explored options for growth that included a second location or expanding their current building. "The thought of moving out of Somerset was not appealing to us," said Marcie. "Fortunately, we were able to purchase the adjacent building and undertake the large renovation project." In 2023, construction began to connect the two buildings, design, and build the new space. Construction was completed in July of this year.

Promoting and giving back to community organizations is a pillar for the Dentistry At Somerset team. Since 2015, they have contributed over \$400,000 through donations or volunteer service. Each year the office hosts a free dental services day for veterans. They prioritize their donations and volunteer efforts toward causes important to their team and patients, including veterans and military, the United Way of Story County, local schools, churches, and the Mary Greeley endowment fund.

In addition to typical general dentistry services like cleanings, exams, and fillings, Dentistry At Somerset provides more specialty services and technology: same-day crowns, dental implant placement and restorations for missing teeth, Invisalign clear orthodontics for teeth straightening, tongue-tie release surgery, treatment for sleep apnea, teeth grinding, and TMJ disorder.





Continental
MANUFACTURING CHEMIST

Continental Manufacturing Chemist

When driving along Interstate 35 between Ames and Ankeny, you may have wondered, “What is that big brown building next to Ditch Witch in Huxley?” For the 170 employees working there, that building represents more than just a structure: it’s the home base for Continental Manufacturing Chemist (CMC), a leading producer of oral care and animal care products for major brands across the United States.

CMC has a deep-rooted history in Central Iowa, having first established its original facility in Madrid, Iowa in 1961. The Huxley facility was expanded to in 2018, marking a significant milestone in the company’s growth. Over the past six decades, CMC has diversified its product offerings, ranging from cleaning tools and hotel amenities to its current focus on oral care products, including mouthwash and toothpaste. Meanwhile, its Madrid facility employs nearly 30 additional team members who specialize in manufacturing various animal care products, such as shampoos, conditioners, and pest repellents for livestock.

What truly sets CMC apart, however, goes beyond its advanced equipment and diverse product lines. The heart of the organization lies in its commitment to its team members. With the workforce expanding from under 60 full-time employees in 2023 to over 170 today, CMC has fostered an environment where growth is nurtured from within. Two integral figures in this journey have been Jessie Bollie (Operations Manager, Madrid) and Stormie Petersen (Packaging Manager, Huxley), who have both played pivotal roles in making CMC a standout employer in Story and Boone County.

Jessie joined CMC as a temporary staff member in 2018 with modest intentions of securing a job. However, her remarkable people skills and adaptability quickly propelled her through the ranks. From packaging technician to Line Leader to Production Supervisor, she became the Madrid Site Operations Leader in


August 2023. Jessie shares a personal connection with her role and the community, expressing that leading her team feels like living a dream in her hometown.

As discussions of Jessie’s transition to Madrid arose, the organization was already considering how to fill the significant gap she would leave in Huxley. Fortunately, Jessie had proactively mentored Stormie Petersen, who advanced from a line technician to Packaging Supervisor. This seamless transition underscores the collaborative spirit at CMC, where team members support one another’s growth in a fast-paced, quality-driven environment.

As CMC has adapted and expanded, particularly pivoting during the COVID-19 pandemic to produce hand sanitizer, it has emerged with renewed confidence and a vision for continued growth. With the recent addition of new leadership, including President Cory Jensen, who joined in September 2023, CMC remains committed to building on its success. Both Cory Jensen and Human Resources Director Uriah Hansen highlight the crucial roles that Jessie and Stormie have played in shaping the workplace culture, emphasizing that CMC’s success hinges on its people-centric approach.

In an era where many organizations face challenges in recruiting and retaining talent, CMC has managed to grow significantly, adding over 100 new full-time employees in just a few months. This accomplishment is a testament to the strong foundation laid by leaders like Jessie, Stormie, and the dedicated team members who have been with the company throughout its evolution. CMC stands proud as a source of community pride, and its commitment to excellence in both product and people ensures a bright future ahead.

www.continentalmfgchemist.com



Jessie Bollie
Operations Manager

Stormie Petersen
Packaging Manager

Iowa State University Announces Enrollment Growth

(September 12, 2024)

Iowa State University released fall enrollment numbers in September, highlighting growth in first-year, undergraduate students. Total enrollment included 30,432 students on campus this fall and a class of 5,906 first-year students, which has increased by 16% over the past five years. The enrollment numbers reflect growing interest in Iowa State's STEM programs and degrees of the future. Of the 5,906 first-year students on campus this fall, nearly 21% are first-generation students and nearly 23% are eligible for Pell grants.



Iowa DOT Awards Funding to Support Boone Roadway Projects

(October 14, 2024)

The Iowa Department of Transportation Commission took action to approve Revitalize Iowa Sound Economy (RISE) funding to support improvements to an existing roadway and for the construction of a new road to support the Daisy Brand and other growth in the community of Boone. The City of Boone will receive a RISE grant in the amount of \$3,025,530, the maximum award amount per job based on the 255 new jobs to be created because of the Daisy Brand project. Final engineering will begin on the project and it is anticipated that it will take two to three years before the roadway projects are completed.



Pivot Bio Named One of TIME Magazine's 200 Best Inventions

(October 31, 2024)

TIME magazine recognized Pivot Bio's N-OVATOR® program for pioneering a new way to financially reward farmers for the environmental benefits they deliver. Chairman of the Board Roger Underwood noted that more than \$13 million has been paid to farmers since the program's launch in 2022, with some participants receiving payments that lower their fertilizer costs by 50%. Pivot Bio prides itself on putting the farmer at the center of what they do and this program rewards them for using the company's products to elevate nitrogen performance.



▶ TRACTI • N Contributions

Final Comments from the Editor:



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Story Photography

KandE Productions

Printing:

Sigler Companies

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Carole Gieseke	Bi Ayers
Kris Blocker	Marcie Niegsch
Ryan Newstrom	Jason Niegsch
Ryan McGuire	Uriah Hansen
Alex Fejfar	
Andrew Pistorius	... and the entire Ames
Kevin Vier	Regional Economic
Riley Vier	Alliance team

Earlier this year in April, I received a message from Patrice McCabe via LinkedIn who commented about photos I had posted of Downtown Ames. She said, "I would love to connect with you and your team about featuring the many beautiful places, businesses, and people of Ames on an episode in Season 4." A message turned into a meeting that led to the crew of *RV There Yet?* spending four days recording an episode on our region.

You never know when a unique opportunity will present itself, but when it does, be ready. Within our organization, we have developed a culture of saying yes to things and embracing innovative ideas. Without that mentality in place, this project may not have ever happened. The experience of having the television crew in town for a week was incredible and I look forward to next spring when the show airs nationally and showcases what Ames and Boone have to offer.

TRACTI • N INVESTORS

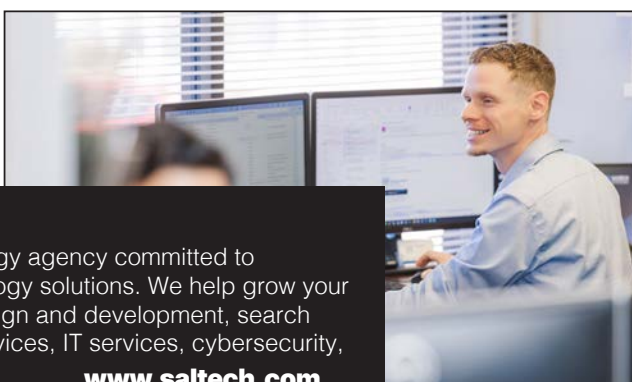


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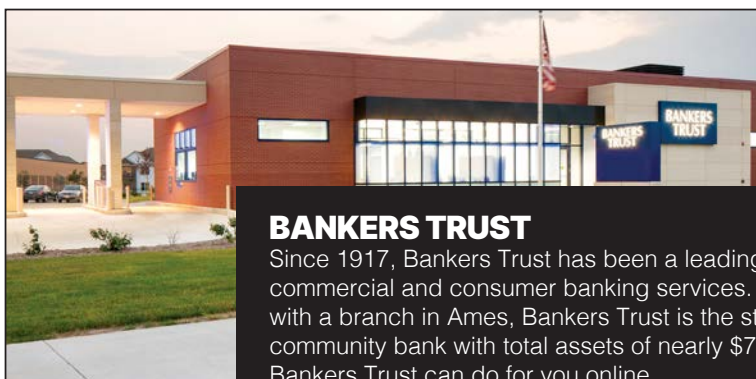
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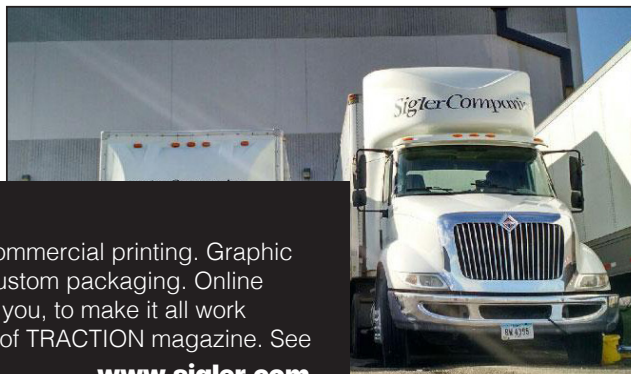
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