

TRACTION

A MAGAZINE FROM THE AMES REGIONAL ECONOMIC ALLIANCE

Spring 2025
Issue 10



ENTREPRENEURIAL

>>OUND



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

**LEADERSHIP
ENGAGEMENT
ADVOCACY**



Dan Culhane
President & CEO
Ames Regional Economic Alliance

In this edition of Traction magazine, we celebrate the individuals and businesses recently recognized at our annual awards event. Since 1987, our organization has proudly honored those who contribute to the economic vitality of our region. These awards are more than just a recognition—they are a testament to the dedication, vision, and leadership that drive growth and innovation in our community.

Each recipient represents a unique story of success, from businesses demonstrating exceptional growth to individuals pioneering groundbreaking ideas. We celebrate housing initiatives, entrepreneurs, impactful community projects, and emerging young professionals. Their achievements not only reflect personal and organizational success but also serve as an inspiration for others, reinforcing the importance of collaboration in shaping a stronger regional economy.

These awards also provide an opportunity to reflect on the potential that lies ahead. As we progress into this new year, the stories of our honorees remind us of the power of perseverance and creativity. Their work contributes to the region's overall prosperity, making it a more vibrant and dynamic place to live and work.

Presenting these awards is both a privilege and an affirmation of our commitment to fostering a thriving business environment and promoting economic development. As we continue this tradition, we remain steadfast in our mission to support and spotlight those shaping the future of our region. Our hope is that these stories of achievement inspire others, creating a ripple effect of innovation and collaboration. By celebrating excellence, we strengthen our community and encourage even greater possibilities for the future.

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.

TRAC TI • N CONTENTS

04 **Entrepreneurial Bound: Revolutionizing High School Activities**

07 - Community Cash

08 - Heartland Roofing, Siding & Solar

12 **Octagon Center for the Arts: Heather Johnson**

14 - AREA YP 4 Under 40

16 - Local Initiative for Transformation

17 - Economic Impact Awards

18 **The Fiery Passion of Art Ciccotti: A Journey in Glassblowing**

20 - Generation Service & Repair

22 - Traction News

DAN CULHANE
President & CEO

BRENDA DRYER
Senior Vice President

AMY HOWARD
Vice President,
Finance & Administration

ERIC SMIDT
Vice President,
Marketing & Communications

TRAVIS TOLIVER
Vice President,
Downtown Development

JAN WILLIAMS
Vice President,
Investor Relations & Programming

ELIZABETH BERG
Coordinator, Economic
Development

BRIAN HORN
Director, Economic Development

SARAH HURLEY
Director, Events

DYLAN KLINE
Director, Business Development

STEVEN LAWRENCE
Director, Marketing

OTTIE MAXEY
Director, Economic Development

KATLYN MOCK
Coordinator, Client Services

RONNIE OLSON
Coordinator, Investor Relations

GREG PIKLAPP
Director, Economic Development
Outreach & Government Relations

LOJEAN PETERSEN
Manager, Ames Main Street
Farmers' Market

SHANNON THIELE
Director, Workforce Development

MIKE UPAH
Director, Ames Seed Capital



On the Cover

The entrepreneurial team behind Bound is revolutionizing high school activities from Ames. Through their innovative approach, Bound has connected coaches, athletes, and fans through their all-in-one software platform in a way that wasn't possible before. 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

TRAC TI • N INVESTORS

10FOLD
ARCHITECTURE + ENGINEERING

BankersTrust
Member FDIC

STORY
CONSTRUCTION

AgCertain

IOWA STATE

AMES Ford
LINCOLN

SALTECH
SYSTEMS

Mary Greeley
MEDICAL CENTER

HUNZIKER
& ASSOCIATES
REALTORS®

DMACCO BEARS

HEARTLAND
ROOFING • SIDING • SOLAR

sigler

Chevron

Renewable Energy Group

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.

ENTREPRENEURIAL BOUND

In the heart of Ames, Iowa, a group of entrepreneurs are reshaping the way communities engage with high school sports. Meet the founders of Bound, a company that's become the go-to resource for tracking high school athletics in the state of Iowa and beyond. Through their innovative approach, Bound has connected coaches, athletes, and fans in a way that wasn't possible before.

The Beginnings of Varsity Bound

Varsity Bound, as it was originally known, was founded in 2018 by Rob Lynch, Tom Lynch, Sam Schill, Brian Capesius, Nathan Haila, and Todd Lawler. This founding team was the same group responsible for creating Tourney Machine, which was acquired by Sports Illustrated (Time, Inc.) in 2016.

Tourney Machine offered a web-based way for youth sports organizers to run and manage tournaments. The founders said they started the company after dealing with their own frustrations and obstacles, such as a lack of communication, when taking their kids to tournaments. They saw first-hand the challenges coaches and parents faced in tracking schedules, scores, and stats for local high school sports teams. Sports Illustrated (SI) had a similar product at the time, but the acquisition helped SI offer tournament-specific tools to its customers.

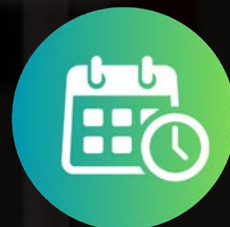
Before founding Bound, the Lynch brothers established QuikStats Iowa in 2010, a platform that has served sports communities across Iowa. This experience, combined with the success of Tourney Machine, laid a solid foundation for their next venture.

Bound provides a vertical software solution designed to assist schools, school districts, state associations, sports clubs, and tournament organizers in managing all aspects of their events and activities. The platform also connects parents, athletes, and fans, streamlining the overall process of event organization.

"We wanted to create something that connected everyone involved in high school sports, from coaches and players to parents and fans," says Sam Schill, CEO of Bound. "At the time, there wasn't a comprehensive resource for tracking sports information across the state, so we decided to build one."

How Bound Works

Bound allows high schools to easily manage their athletic programs by inputting team schedules, player stats, and scores, making it simple for fans and families to stay up to date on their favorite teams. Coaches and athletic directors are able to input game results and follow athletes' progress, while parents can get real-time updates on their children's games. The platform also offers a website for each high school sports program, allowing schools to promote their teams and improve engagement with their communities.



Scheduling



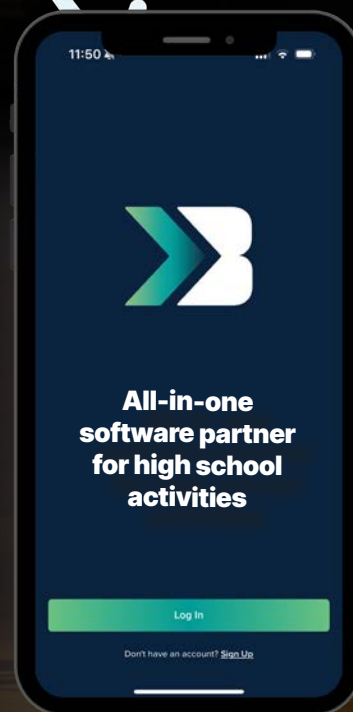
Workers

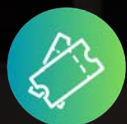


Transportation

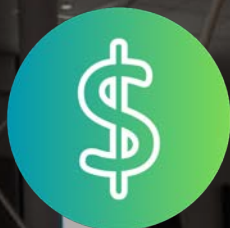


Direction





Tickets



Sponsorship



Officials



Promotion



Stats

Nathan Haila

Co-Founder and Head of Product, Bound

Sam Schill

Co-Founder and CEO, Bound



But Bound is not just for those who are directly involved in sports. It is also a treasure trove for fans and alumni. With team schedules, scores, and stats at their fingertips, users can easily follow teams throughout the season and relive memorable moments from the games.

In 2021, Bound partnered with the Iowa High School Athletic Association, extending their relationship that began with QuikStats Iowa. In a press release at the time, Schill said, "We are excited to be deepening our partnership with IHSAA, building software that helps bring our communities and state together around high school sports."

A Focus on Innovation

What sets Bound apart is its constant drive to innovate. The founding team has always been committed to ensuring the platform is easy to use while staying ahead of the curve in technology. They're consistently listening to feedback from users and making adjustments to improve the platform.

In 2020, Varsity Bound launched a mobile app that allows users to access all the information they need on the go. This move was a response to the increasing reliance on smartphones for daily activities and a clear step toward making the platform even more accessible.

"We knew people were increasingly relying on their phones, and we wanted to make it easy for anyone to access our platform anytime, anywhere," says Nathan Haila, Head of Product for Bound. "The app is just one example of how we've continued to evolve."

A Growing Impact

What started as a small venture in Ames has grown into a statewide tool that benefits thousands of coaches, athletes, and fans. Bound now supports over 300 high schools across Iowa and has expanded its reach to include schools in 14 different states. As a result, it has fostered a closer connection between communities and their high school athletic programs, enhancing the fan experience and elevating the role of high school sports in the local culture.

As Bound continues to grow, the founding team remains focused on their mission to provide value to the communities they serve. They are working on developing new features that will help schools connect with potential recruits, streamline the coaching process, and expand their reach to even more states.

"We're excited for what's next," says Schill. "Our goal has always been to create a lasting impact on high school sports and make it easier for everyone to be a part of that experience."

With their commitment to innovation, community engagement, and improving the experience of high school sports, the entrepreneurs behind Bound have built something truly special here in Ames. Their journey proves that with passion, dedication, and a focus on solving real problems, anything is possible. And in the world of high school sports, Bound has undoubtedly changed the game.



Learn more about Bound online at:

www.gobound.com

AMES REGIONAL ECONOMIC ALLIANCE

COMMUNITY
cash

SHOP THE AREA SHOP LOCAL SHOP WITH PURPOSE

The Ames Regional Economic Alliance is excited to reintroduce Community Cash, a local gift designed to make shopping easier while supporting businesses right here in the Ames region. Accepted at over 30 participating businesses, Community Cash offers the perfect solution for those hard-to-shop-for friends, family members, or colleagues. Instead of guessing the right gift, you're giving the freedom to choose where and how to spend it—all while ensuring that dollars stay in our community and fuel local economic growth.

By using Community Cash, you're not just giving a convenient and flexible gift; you're making an investment in the local businesses that make Ames a vibrant place to live and work. Whether it's a favorite restaurant, boutique, or service provider, every purchase with Community Cash strengthens the local economy and supports the entrepreneurs who help shape our community. Join us in keeping our money where it matters most—right here at home—by choosing Community Cash for your next gift.



**Community Cash can be purchased
by scanning the QR code or by visiting
the Ames Alliance website:**



<https://amesalliance.com/community-cash>

Gift Community Cash and Spend it at any of the participating businesses

- [Ames British Foods](#)
- [b.e. good](#)
- [Bricktown Bakery](#)
- [Bricktown Popcorn](#)
- [Cafe Diem](#)
- [Chocolaterie Stam](#)
- [Cook's Emporium](#)
- [Della Viti](#)
- [Dog-Eared Books](#)
- [Dogtown University](#)
- [Emerhoff's Footwear](#)
- [Fitness Sports](#)
- [Gateway Hotel and Conference Center](#)
- [Great Harvest Bakery & Cafe](#)
- [Hickory Park](#)
- [Homegrown](#)
- [Jethro's BBQ](#)
- [Life Distilled](#)
- [Little Woods: Herbs & Teas](#)
- [Modern Dress](#)
- [Moorman Clothiers](#)
- [No Escape Iowa](#)
- [North Grand Cinema](#)
- [Oak Lane Candle Co. / We The Dreamerz](#)
- [Overflow Thrift Store](#)
- [PhotoSynthesis](#)
- [Piece & Freedom Bakery](#)
- [Sweet Caroline's](#)
- [The Funky Zebra](#)
- [The IowaStater Restaurant](#)
- [The Mucky Duck Pub](#)
- [The Shops at Clark & Main](#)
- [The Spice Thai Cuisine](#)
- [Treats On A Leash](#)
- [Welch Ave. Station](#)
- [Wheatsfield Co-Op Grocery](#)



I ► BUSINESS OF THE YEAR

HEARTLAND ROOFING, SIDING AND SOLAR

Heartland Roofing, Siding and Solar's values include integrity, family, and continued improvement in the communities they serve. All of those could be seen in 2024 across Ames through their continual investment in the community. In addition to setting up a location in Campustown, Heartland Roofing, Siding and Solar could be found at 515 Days in Downtown Ames, walking the Fourth of July parade, and utilizing their name and red brand to promote Downtown as the "Heart of Ames."

They are more than just a roofing company. Heartland is intentional to use their investment to build stronger communities and make long-lasting impact. One of the clearest examples of this is through the Heartland Red Foundation and their "roof giveaway program" where they identify and support families who are experiencing financial hardships.

Learn more about Heartland Roofing, Siding and Solar and their Red Foundation online at:

www.heartlandroofingandsiding.com

Adam Olson

Owner, Heartland Roofing, Siding and Solar





I ► CULTURE CURATOR OF THE YEAR

KEVIN BOURKE, DISCOVER AMES

As President & CEO of Discover Ames, Kevin Bourke has instilled an unwavering passion and commitment to the Ames community and his team. His enthusiasm is infectious, inspiring those around him to engage deeply and collaboratively.

Through innovative events and initiatives, Kevin fosters a sense of belonging and appreciation, and continues to promote Ames nationally. His leadership not only cultivates a positive team environment but also strengthens community ties, making Ames a more vibrant place. Thanks to his leadership, the Discover Ames team is everywhere. Kevin's dedication and vision make him a true catalyst for positive change, embodying the spirit of the award.

I ► DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION AWARD

BI AYERS, PRO NAILS

Bi Ayers, owner of Pro Nails in Ames, is a trailblazing advocate for diversity and inclusion in both his community and the beauty industry. As the author of the book *Polished*, Bi shares his personal journey as a Vietnamese immigrant navigating the challenges of building a successful business while championing representation and equity.

Through Pro Nails, Bi fosters a welcoming environment that celebrates his Vietnamese heritage, creating meaningful connections among staff and clients. His leadership extends beyond his business, as he actively mentors young entrepreneurs, including other nail salons, and advocates for minority-owned businesses in Ames.



I ► AMBASSADOR OF THE YEAR

MORGAN DALBECK, SALTECH SYSTEMS

A remarkable brand ambassador is someone who embodies a brand's values, passionately shares its mission, and authentically connects with others to amplify its impact. If you've attended an Alliance event this year, chances are you've met Morgan Dalbeck. Morgan is a tireless advocate for the Ames Regional Economic Alliance and its affiliate organizations, serving as a vital extension of our core team.

Morgan is a recent graduate of the Leadership Ames program, an active member of the AREA Young Professionals Advisory Council, and a steadfast participant in 1 Million Cups, where she shows up every single week to support and connect with our community. She deeply understands the mission of the Alliance and goes above and beyond to advance it.

I ► ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR

NATE NEREM, BOONE COUNTY ECONOMIC GROWTH CORPORATION

The Ames Regional Economic Alliance first responded to "Project Kernel," the project codename that brought Daisy Brand to the region, in 2022. As more and more details on this economic development opportunity became available, the real estate needs grew from 50 acres to more than a 100 acre. Serving in a volunteer role as a Boone County Economic Growth Corporation Executive Board member, Nate Nerem masterfully maneuvered additional land option discussions with limited project information.

After the initial land options were secured, a plethora of other land related issues needed to be handled from contract extensions, lease buy outs, soil testing, and even weed control. Throughout the 18-month process, Nate willingly gave of his time and talent to support the attraction of Daisy Brand to the Boone community.





I ► ENTREPRENEUR OF THE YEAR

ADAM SCHONERT, SCHONERT'S CORPORATE CATERING

Upon graduating from Iowa State University, Adam didn't expect to become an entrepreneur. However, with support from Iowa State's resources and innovative culture, he turned his baking experience into Schonert's Corporate Catering. We first encountered Adam at 1 Million Cups and various Alliance events when his pies, scones, and cookies started appearing. Adam's growth, determination, and ability to leverage local connections have elevated his brand. This year, he expanded into a larger space, offering full-service catering including breakfast, lunch, desserts, hors d'oeuvres, and more.

I ► HOUSING IMPACT AWARDS

CAPSTONE / NEVADA FLATS

It is not unusual when public buildings are vacated that there can be concerns over what happens next. Before the Story County Medical Center Senior Care facility was vacated, The Capstone Group proposed the rehabilitation of this campus of buildings located just south of Nevada Downtown into 60 units of market rate housing.

The Capstone Group applied and received both historic preservation and workforce housing tax credits from the State of Iowa for the proposed project.

CITY OF COLO

The City of Colo has met the challenge of rural economic development in a big way. As a community of just under 900 residents, they recognized that they are located in a prime growth region along Highway 30, a close distance to Ames, Nevada, and Marshalltown.

Focused on the future, the City of Colo purchased over 35 acres of prime land for the first new housing development in 25 years. It is located along the Highway 30 corridor and adjacent to the proposed new high school stadium project. Working with Strand Associates, the mayor, city council, and city staff have taken the initiative to not only purchase the land but create concepts that showcase the possibilities of over 90 lots to potential housing developers. The lots include single-family homes and affordable townhomes, along with amenities such as walking trails, water features, and new community green space opportunities.

STORY COUNTY SUPERVISORS

The Story County Supervisors have been instrumental in supporting numerous economic initiatives, particularly those addressing housing needs through the Homes for Iowa program. This state program, a public-private partnership established by the State of Iowa, leverages funding from the American Rescue Plan to address multiple priorities.

Quality housing is essential for fostering strong, vibrant communities and driving economic development. Demonstrating leadership and commitment, the Story County Board of Supervisors provided crucial guidance and local funding to bring the first two Homes for Iowa to McCallsburg and Nevada.

Annual Luncheon

DATE: December 9, 2024

New York Times bestselling author John O'Leary, provided the keynote address at the 2024 Ames Regional Economic Alliance Annual Luncheon. This year, the event was open to the public and over 600 attendees were able to listen to his message of gratitude. He challenged us to ask what more we can do and welcomed us to live inspired. We know this mindset can move the needle in business and across our communities, and we hope John's message influenced those in attendance as we move into 2025.

John O'Leary

New York Times Bestselling Author



ONLINE MEMBER DIRECTORY



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://www.AmesAlliance.com)

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

New Members

- [Titan Roofing, Solar, and Exteriors](#)
- [DLR Group](#)
- [On Track Construction](#)
- [Labyrinth Coffee](#)
- [West Street Deli](#)
- [Bluestem Boulders](#)
- [Freddy's Frozen Custard & Steakburgers](#)
- [Community State Bank](#)
- [Ames National Corporation](#)
- [Foundations Learning Center](#)
- [Cultivating Hope Farms](#)
- [Bean Caffeinated](#)
- [Savor on Main](#)
- [Della Viti](#)
- [Anchored Hope House](#)
- [Ames Pet Resort](#)
- [Sisters in Cheese](#)
- [Piece & Freedom Bakery](#)
- [b.e. good](#)
- [JSG Inc.](#)
- [Iowa Lock Doc](#)
- [Purple Cow Junk Removal & Home Services](#)
- [Sweet & Savory](#)
- [That 1 Painter](#)



OCTAGON

CENTER FOR THE ARTS

A Legacy of Creativity: Heather Johnson and the Octagon Center for the Arts

For nearly 23 years, Heather Johnson has been a driving force behind the Octagon Center for the Arts, shaping its growth and impact on Ames. Since joining the Octagon, she has played a pivotal role in organizing the Octagon Art Festival since 2002 and has led as Executive Director since 2009. Her leadership has fostered a vibrant arts culture that continues to flourish in Downtown Ames.

The Heart of Ames' Arts Scene

Since its founding in 1966, the Octagon Center has been a cultural cornerstone, serving over 30,000 people annually through art classes, outreach initiatives, exhibits, and its popular retail gallery shop. One of the most anticipated events each year is the Octagon Art Festival, which will celebrate its 54th year on September 28, 2025, drawing an estimated 10,000 visitors to Downtown Ames.

The Octagon Shop supports local and regional artists, featuring handcrafted works by nearly 175 artists, primarily from Iowa. Its galleries showcase about 380 artists across 12 annual exhibitions, spanning all ages and disciplines.

Education remains central to the Octagon's mission, offering diverse classes, workshops, and outreach programs. A major initiative is the 7th Business of Art Conference in March 2025, in partnership with the Ames Community Arts Council, aimed at equipping artists with entrepreneurial skills.

Expanding Opportunities for Artists

A key milestone was the 2024 third-floor renovation, transforming unused space into a creative hub. Funded by local donors and the City of Ames' Arts Capital Grant Program, this project provides essential studio space. In collaboration with Iowa State University's College of Design, six MFA students utilize a shared co-working space, while five private studios support local artists.

The Arts as a Catalyst for Growth

Johnson envisions Ames as a hub for creative placemaking, where arts and culture enhance community life and economic growth. She notes that for every \$1 invested in the arts, there is a \$7 return. Public art is thriving, with Johnson helping assist with the Ames Murals Project, a collaboration with The Ames Foundation to turn downtown into an open-air art gallery.

A Vision for the Future

Committed to artistic accessibility and education, Johnson continues to build partnerships that expand opportunities for artists and the community.

"I'm passionate about the Octagon's mission to inspire creativity, innovation, and problem-solving," she says. "This is a place that nurtures what could be possible." As the Octagon evolves, it remains a beacon of creativity and collaboration in Ames, shaping its cultural future for generations to come.



Heather Johnson
Executive Director,
Octagon Center for the Arts

Learn more about the Octagon Center for the Arts on their website:

www.octagonarts.org



AMES MAIN STREET FARMERS' MARKET BUSINESS OF THE YEAR

FIRST NATIONAL BANK

For more than 120 years, First National Bank has been committed to the communities in which they live, work and play. It is no surprise that they were awarded this year's Ames Main Street Farmers' Market Business of the Year! They have faithfully supported the Ames Main Street Farmers' Market through volunteerism and financial gifts to help keep the amazing market thriving. Their investment has helped the community have access to locally grown food and products, bringing smiles to thousands of patrons visiting the market weekly.

First National Bank has a legacy of giving back and we are grateful they have chosen our organization to partner with. The future is bright with partners like First National Bank who help us thrive in Ames as we work hand-in-hand to grow and support where our community gathers on Saturday morning, the Ames Main Street Farmers' Market.



THE AMES FOUNDATION INFLUENCE AWARD

LYNNE CAREY AND SHEILA LUNDT

The Ames Foundation honored Lynne Carey and Sheila Lundt with the Influence Award for their vision and unbounded volunteer effort that supported The Miracle League Field and Harrison Barnes Inclusive Family Playground.

This award is long overdue as Lynne and Sheila were integral through the entire project: from an idea voiced in 2015 by Arc of Story County and Friendship Ark Homes, to the city council's approval for construction and groundbreaking in 2019, to being ready for use in 2020. Even though they led the fundraising for the \$2.3 million project, Lynne and Sheila gave credit to the community, describing the project as "truly a community effort" and "a herculean effort."

AREA YP

4 UNDER 40



► COMMUNITY IMPACT PROJECT OF THE YEAR

HEARTLAND OF STORY COUNTY / 60FORWARD CENTER

As a partnership between Heartland of Story County, Ames Parks & Recreation, and Mary Greeley Medical Center, Sixty Forward connects those 60+ in Ames and throughout Story County to shared facilities and a wide range of programming that supports a physically active, socially vibrant, and healthy life. The 60Forward Center, a new 15,000 square foot facility, opened in 2024 and now serves as the hub for programming. The Center has a bright and airy atrium for gathering, state-of-the-art strength and cardio equipment, duckpin bowling, multi-purpose rooms, and an incredible bistro full of delicious food.

An identified need in the community is now fulfilled thanks to the collaboration and leadership of Heartland of Story County. The 60Forward project has created a new vision for aging while maintaining its core purpose and connecting people, lives, services and partnerships.



RACHEL JUNCK

Rachel Junck is a fierce advocate for Ames and is in her fifth year and second term representing constituents on the Ames City Council. During her time, she has focused on several issues important to young professionals, including housing and adding community amenities to Ames such as expanding bike and pedestrian infrastructure, while also planning for the future of our community with the implementation of the climate action plan.

Rachel is a project engineer at Chevron Renewable Energy Group, helping manage capital projects that are implemented at biodiesel manufacturing plants across the Midwest. She is active in several employee resource groups and serves as a co-lead for one of the Women's Resource Group teams. She finds time to regularly volunteer at Food at First in Ames and is an AREA YP member. Rachel has demonstrated outstanding leadership, professionalism, and community impact to Ames.



February 2024



March 2023



September 2023



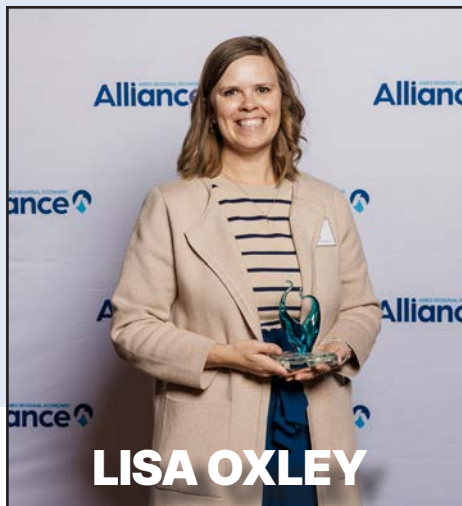
December 2024



NATE KUHN

Nate Kuhn is a Loan Portfolio Manager with Northwest Bank, but his impact extends far beyond his professional role. A true advocate for his community, Nate has actively immersed himself in a wide range of extra-curricular commitments that reflect his deep passion for service and leadership.

He was part of the Leadership Ames Class 36, and in 2024, was honored with the Ambassador of the Year award. He currently serves on the ChildServe Advisory Council, and as the membership lead for the 2025 AREA Young Professionals Advisory Council, where he helps build networks and opportunities for emerging leaders. He's was an active member of the Boys & Girls Clubs of Story County Gala Committee. He was a driving force behind the successful placemaking project in Campustown, a project that has brought vibrancy and character to this area in Ames. Nate's leadership was instrumental in collaborating with the City to secure public art for the brick pillar at the corner of Chamberlain and Welch.



LISA OXLEY

Lisa Oxley is a powerhouse of dedication and service when it comes to her community. As an active and engaged board member of Main Street Nevada, The Nevada Foundation, and The Nevada Jaycees, Lisa is at the heart of the community's growth and vibrancy.

Her leadership extends beyond these roles, as she is also a proud Rotarian—consistently giving back and finding ways to improve the lives of those around her. Perhaps most notably, Lisa served as the Chairperson for Lincoln Highway Days for several years, a role that she not only embraced but transformed with her vision and energy. Under her guidance, the event flourished, becoming a highlight of the community's calendar. What truly sets Lisa apart is her relentless passion for creating positive change. She's always thinking ahead, dreaming big, and then rolling up her sleeves to make those dreams a reality. Whether she's spearheading new initiatives or bringing fresh ideas to the table, her unwavering focus on bettering her community is nothing short of inspiring.



NATE WELTY

Nate Welty has been extraordinary in helping Ames become the best it can be. In 2024, he led the rehabilitation project of the Cranford building at 103 Stanton. Nothing was impossible, nothing was overlooked. This property was built in 1922 and extremely dated, and he coordinated this project to bring the historic building back to life. This included the improvements to commercial tenant spaces such as Jeff's Pizza and improved housing for 32 units in the Campustown area. He is also restoring two brick buildings in the 200 block of Welch, in what will become shining examples of what older brick structures on a college campus should look like.

In addition to his passion for renovation, Nate also manages Rent Ames, a property management company that serves both residential and commercial clients. Whether overseeing properties or tackling major restoration projects, Nate's approach is always the same: thoughtful, thorough, and determined to make each space something special.



► ECONOMIC IMPACT AWARD

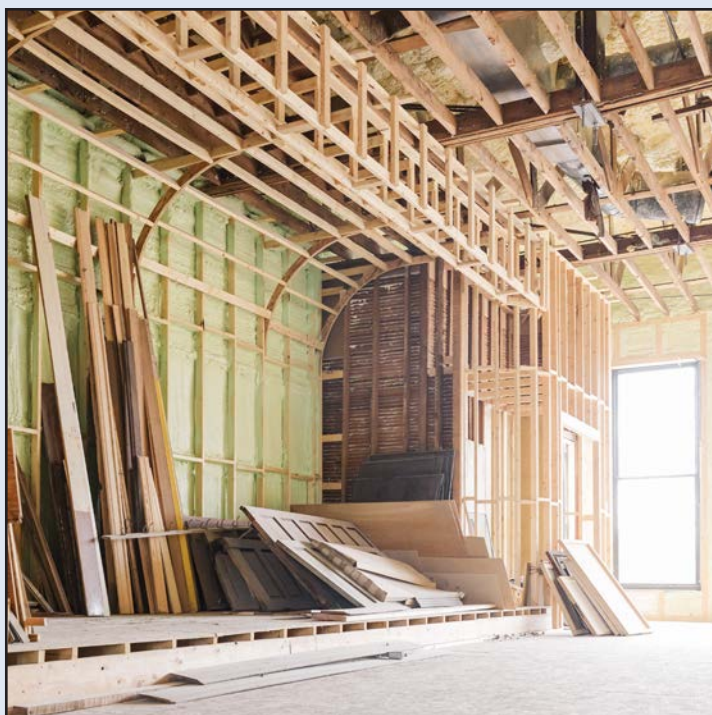
ALLIANT ENERGY AGRICULTURE INNOVATION LAB

It is impossible to recognize just one of the three partners that came together to bring the Alliant Energy Agriculture Innovation Laboratory, located at the Iowa State University Research Park, to a reality. The need for this type of facility has been discussed for several years. In December 2024, we celebrated the opening of this 86,000 square foot unique facility, located within the Iowa State University Research Park.

The collaboration between the Iowa State University Research Park, Dr. Matt Darr, and Alliant Energy is one to celebrate. The highly lauded Iowa State Digital Ag Innovation Lab research team will leverage this new space to grow its footprint with corporate partners and continue leading the way in ag tech innovation. This collaborative new building creates an epicenter of agricultural innovation in the Midwest.



January 2025



LIFT WC

**Local Initiative for
Transformation in Webster City
A \$3M Renovation Project**

LIFT WC, which stands for Local Initiative for Transformation in Webster City, is a non-profit organization dedicated to revitalizing the community. The organization is in the final stages of a \$3 million renovation of the historic Elks Building in downtown Webster City, a project that serves as a catalyst for downtown revitalization.

"This project is really bigger than the building, as it will give back to build the Webster City community," said LIFT WC President Darcy Swon. LIFT WC took over the project in 2019, benefiting from support from the City of Webster City's community development block grant program.

Originally built in 1906, the Elks Building had been underutilized for years, primarily serving as a storage facility. When LIFT WC acquired the building, they immediately cleared it out, donating many of the useful items throughout the community.

"This project is so important for the community," said Swon. She highlights the building's aesthetic appeal and prime downtown location as key factors in the decision to restore it. "It was important that we maintain the history of the building while also

making it a place where our community wants to come together." Preserving the stained glass is just one example of that commitment.

It was recently announced that Wildcat Distilling Co. will be the anchor tenant on the main level, while the second level will provide much-needed event space for the community. The venue will not only serve as a gathering place but will also generate revenue to support future redevelopment projects. "The venue will draw people downtown and create a spillover effect for current businesses," Swon added.

Beyond the Elks Building restoration, proceeds from the event space will be reinvested into the community through grants, microloans, programming, and the revitalization of other historic buildings. LIFT WC envisions this project as just the beginning of a broader effort to breathe new life into Webster City's downtown area. By fostering economic growth and preserving historic charm, the organization hopes to create a lasting impact for generations to come.

Learn more about LIFT WC on their website:

www.liftwc.org

ECONOMIC IMPACT AWARDS



DENTISTRY AT SOMERSET

Since 2002, Dr. Jason and Marcie Niegsch have built Dentistry At Somerset on care, innovation, and excellence. In 2024, they expanded to a 10,000-square-foot facility with 19 treatment rooms, doubling patient capacity. Committed to giving back, they've contributed over \$400,000 in donations and volunteer service, hosting free dental care days for veterans and supporting local organizations. Their continued investment in Ames reflects their dedication to exceptional care and making a lasting community impact.



ABC SUPPLY CO.

ABC Supply Co., Inc., North America's largest wholesale distributor of roofing and building products, operates over 950 locations across the U.S. and Canada. The company's new 35,000-square-foot facility in Ames supports local contractors with expert service and diverse products. Led by Branch Manager Jack Huberty, this expansion underscores ABC Supply's commitment to excellence and innovation while recognizing Central Iowa's growth. The company continues to be a trusted partner for contractors nationwide.



HUXLEY SPLASH PAD

Huxley, one of the fastest-growing communities in Story County, has a large population of young residents. The Huxley Parks & Recreation Department, with the Friends of Huxley organization, led the effort to create a splash pad. In 2024, funding from the City of Huxley, Story County, the Story County Foundation, the State of Iowa, and local contributions made the project possible. Expected to be completed by summer 2025, the splash pad will provide a valuable attraction and amenity for Huxley and surrounding areas.



CUTTING EDGE PAINTING

Founded in March 2008, Cutting Edge Painting has been providing painting services across the State of Iowa and seen consistent growth, now employing a team of 36. When facility expansion was an opportunity for Cutting Edge, they decided to reinvest in Nevada rather than move to a larger existing facility in another community. In the spring of 2024, the ribbon was cut on a new warehouse, shop, and office building in Nevada's West Industrial area. Supported with land incentives from the Nevada Economic Development Council and property tax incentives from the City of Nevada, this beautiful new facility is home to this homegrown company.



COLORBIOTICS

Headquartered in Ames, Colorbiotics has led the landscape and concrete colorant industry for 30 years, serving 12 countries. In 2024, the company expanded with a 25,000-square-foot warehouse, boosting production to 1 million pounds daily. Since 2017, Colorbiotics has grown by over 70%, prioritizing sustainability by recycling 400,000+ pounds of plastic annually and treating water. Through innovation and environmental stewardship, Colorbiotics continues to make a lasting global impact.



Mg BIOLOGICS

Founded in 1999 in Ames, Mg Biologics is a leader in animal health, known for its USDA-approved Rattler Antivenom for companion animals. In 2024, the company launched a two-year, \$5 million expansion to increase product reach beyond North America into Western Europe. This includes a 6,000-square-foot Hospital Barn and a 20,000-square-foot facility for manufacturing, research, and office space, adding high-quality jobs to the region.



SCHLENKER CONSTRUCTION

Since 2015, Tim Schlenker built five new homes in Ogden, two renovations, and property developments in Boone and Madrid. He recently received the Iowa Workforce Housing Tax Credit for six units in Ogden, with two set for completion this winter. Schlenker's work is enhancing local housing and driving economic growth in Ogden and Boone County. His commitment to quality craftsmanship and community development continues to shape the region's future.



Art Ciccotti
Owner, Ciccotti Art Glass

The Fiery Passion of Art Ciccotti: A Journey in Glassblowing



Art Ciccotti's journey into the world of glassblowing began with a passion ignited during his time at Iowa State University. Originally from Southern California, Ciccotti relocated to Ames, Iowa, where he pursued a degree in Art and Design with an emphasis in Art Education. It was at Iowa State that he discovered his love for glassblowing through "The Gaffers' Guild." After graduating in 1987, Ciccotti built his first studio, setting the foundation for what would become a lifelong pursuit of artistic excellence. Over the years, he expanded his knowledge by attending workshops across the U.S., refining his skills and pushing the boundaries of his craft.

Although he began with formal instruction, Ciccotti considers himself largely self-taught, developing a distinct style rooted in Venetian glassworking techniques. "My current designs have roots in Venetian glass working techniques," he explains. "The use of a roll up of glass (tocar pierre) allows

me to put together designs that can vary from the random composition of a Garden Walk Platter to a very controlled design using cane and murrine." His love for bright colors and curvilinear forms is evident in his work, as he continuously experiments with new color combinations, shapes, and functionalities. Each piece he creates is a testament to his evolving expertise and deep appreciation for the medium.

For Ciccotti, glassblowing is not just an art but an exhilarating process that fuels his creativity. "I blow glass because of the rush of seeing an object take shape from a white-hot mass to a finished piece," he says. "After weeks of planning, sometimes months, the design comes together in a piece within a short period of time. It is intense!" His approach to glassblowing is both meticulous and intuitive, balancing careful planning with the spontaneity required to manipulate molten glass at temperatures exceeding 2,100°F. The result is a unique piece that provides both visual and tactile pleasure.

Much of Ciccotti's work draws inspiration from the natural world, evoking elements of flowers, weather, and animals without attempting to replicate them exactly. "My intent is not to recreate these things exactly, but to make visual reference to them. These things have a natural beauty to which we can connect." Influenced by artists such as Henry Moore and Gauguin, as well as master glassblowers like Lino Tagliapietra and William Morris, Ciccotti has developed a distinctive style that merges abstract forms with the elegance of Venetian techniques. His use of vibrant colors and organic



www.ciccottiartglass.com



shapes reflects his admiration for these artistic pioneers while remaining uniquely his own.

Today, Ciccotti's studio, Ciccotti Art Glass, is a renowned establishment in the Midwest, celebrated for its innovation and craftsmanship. Each piece he creates begins with careful planning—deciding on size, colors, and form—before being brought to life through a physically demanding and mesmerizing process. "I enjoy the process and physical challenge of working with a material that is drawn out of the furnace with a pipe at 2100°," he shares. "Within an amazingly short time, this molten material is blown and shaped into a form that can be held the next day." Through his dedication and artistry, Ciccotti continues to inspire, ensuring that his work brings joy to others for generations to come.



GENERATION SERVICE & REPAIR

MAKING AN ECONOMIC IMPACT IN STORY CITY

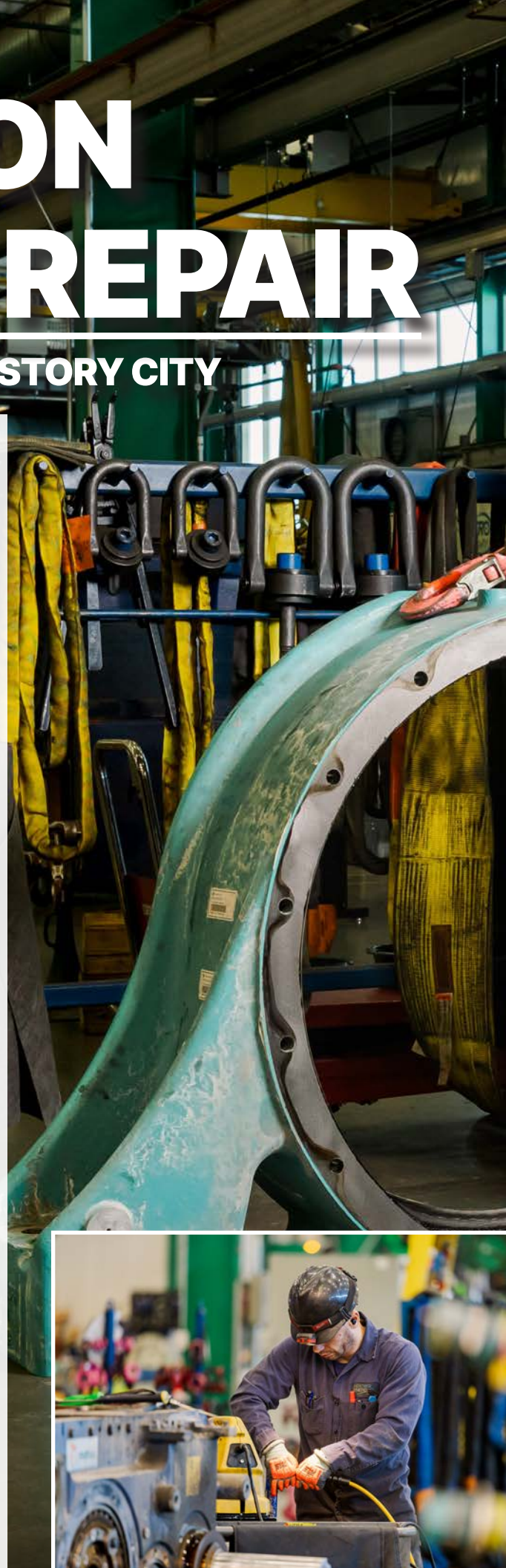
In the heart of Story City, Iowa, a quiet yet powerful force is driving the future of renewable energy. Generation Repair and Service (GRS), a NextEra Energy Resources facility, which is a subsidiary of NextEra Energy, has been a cornerstone of the clean energy sector since its establishment in 2009. Specializing in the repair and maintenance of wind turbine gearboxes, main shafts, electrical components, and tooling, GRS plays a crucial role in sustaining and advancing the nation's green energy infrastructure.

GRS operates within a 90,000-square-foot facility that has served as a key hub for maintaining wind turbine components across the country. As part of NextEra Energy, the world's largest generator of renewable energy from wind and solar power, GRS is an integral component of the company's mission to drive sustainable energy production. The facility provides critical support for wind farms in 29 states and Canada, ensuring the longevity and efficiency of wind power assets, some of which are more than two decades old.

To keep pace with the surging demand for wind energy infrastructure maintenance, GRS is embarking on a significant expansion project. The facility will add 67,500 square feet, representing a \$17 million investment that will enhance repair capacity, increase safety, and support additional product lines. The Iowa Economic Development Authority has recognized the importance of this project, approving \$481,500 in tax benefits to support GRS's growth. With this expansion, GRS aims to streamline its operations, cutting lead times for vital equipment repairs and positioning itself as an even stronger player in the renewable energy sector.

A key driver of GRS's success is its workforce—a team of 65 highly skilled technicians and engineers. With expertise spanning more than 50 makes and models of wind turbine gearboxes, the team's ability to diagnose, repair, and rebuild essential components in a matter of weeks—compared to the nearly year-long wait for new parts—has made GRS an indispensable asset to the renewable energy industry. The expansion is expected to create even more opportunities for skilled workers in the region, reinforcing GRS's dedication to both economic and environmental sustainability.

As renewable energy continues to power the future, GRS is making strategic moves to ensure it remains at the forefront of the industry. With its state-of-the-art facility, cutting-edge repair capabilities, and commitment to innovation, the company is poised to meet the evolving needs of the wind energy sector. By investing in both infrastructure and people, GRS is not only securing its place in the renewable energy landscape but also strengthening the economic fabric of Story City and beyond. In an era where sustainability and efficiency are paramount, Generation Repair and Service stands as a beacon of progress, proving that the future of clean energy is in capable hands.





Sean Monahan
Central Maintenance Manager
Generation Repair and Services

Lindsey Shilling
General Manager
Generation Repair and Services



Gross-Wen Technologies Co-Founder Featured in Forbes Magazine

(December 31, 2024)

Max Gangestad, co-founder and CEO of Gross-Wen Technologies in Slater, Iowa, was named to Forbes 30 under 30 in the Energy & Green Tech category. While a student at Iowa State University, he helped devise a method to utilize algae to absorb and recover nitrogen and phosphorus from wastewater and prevent it from getting into streams and rivers. Gangestad's technique uses vertical conveyor belts that grow algae on their surfaces and can be readily harvested for other ag applications. The startup expected to finish 2024 with \$17 million in revenue.



Danfoss Power Solutions Receives Additional Grant Funding for Childcare Facility

(January 6, 2025)

Governor Kim Reynolds announced new grant awards for businesses across Iowa who are committed to expanding child care projects for their employees. Danfoss Power Solutions in Ames will receive an additional \$1.6 million in grant funding to support the construction of a new childcare facility. The new funding for the project expands the scope from an 80-child care project to 164-child care project.



Cy-Town Master Services Agreement Approved

(January 15, 2025)

The Iowa Board of Regents approved a 30-year development agreement at its January 15 meeting that allows Iowa State University, Goldenrod Companies and the Iowa State University Research Park to move forward with the CyTown multi-use district. Goldenrod will arrange financing for building construction and common area infrastructure. The development is anticipated to include eight buildings with space for retail, food and beverage, office space, an outdoor music venue, concierge suites and a 215-key conference center hotel. The estimated cost for construction of the facilities is \$175-225 million.



▶ TRACTI • N Contributions

Final Comments from the Editor:



Eric Smidt
Vice President,
Marketing & Communications
eric@amesalliance.com

Story Photography

KandE Productions

Printing:

Sigler Companies

Additional Contributions

Nathan Haila

Sam Schill

Adam Olson

Kenny Carey

Heather Johnson

Gabrielle Robertson

Mitch Anderson

Darcy Swon

Mike Wiezorek

Art Ciccotti

Lindsey Shilling

Sean Monahan

Katie Shively

... and the entire Ames
Regional Economic
Alliance team

Storytelling is one of the most powerful tools we have in economic and community development. Facts and figures matter, but it's the real stories of businesses thriving, partnerships forming, and communities growing that truly inspire action. When we share these stories, we don't just market a region; we connect with people on an emotional level, showing them the impact of our work in a way that resonates and sticks.

As one who leads the storytelling for our organization, I see storytelling as the key to building engagement and trust. Whether through social media, podcasts, video, or this publication, personal stories cut through the noise and keep people invested in our mission. By consistently sharing authentic, impactful stories, we not only showcase our region's momentum but also inspire others to be part of its future.

TRACTI • N INVESTORS



STORY CONSTRUCTION

Story Construction is a 100% employee-owned commercial construction firm celebrating 90 years in business in 2024. Story Construction's legacy can be seen through landmark buildings all over Ames and central Iowa, and the company prides itself as a reliable and predictable building partner living its core values.

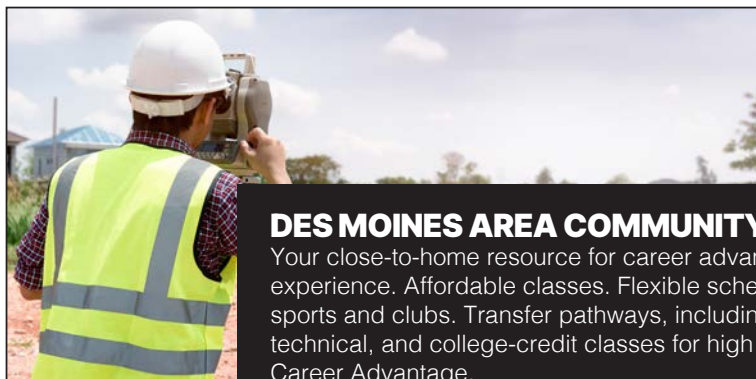
www.storycon.com

sigler

SIGLER COMPANIES

Sigler is where marketing takes shape. Commercial printing. Graphic design. Signage and display graphics. Custom packaging. Online ordering. Branded apparel. We work with you, to make it all work together. They are also the official printer of TRACTION magazine. See what Sigler can do for you.

www.sigler.com



DES MOINES AREA COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Your close-to-home resource for career advancement and the college experience. Affordable classes. Flexible scheduling. Competitive sports and clubs. Transfer pathways, including to Iowa State. Career, technical, and college-credit classes for high school students through Career Advantage.

www.dmacc.edu

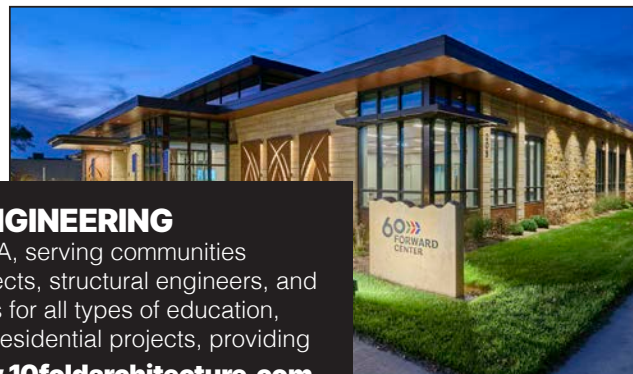
10FOLD™

ARCHITECTURE + ENGINEERING

10FOLD ARCHITECTURE + ENGINEERING

10Fold is a holistic design firm in Ames, IA, serving communities statewide since 1986. Our team of architects, structural engineers, and interior designers create inspiring spaces for all types of education, recreation, healthcare, commercial, and residential projects, providing innovative, tailored solutions.

www.10foldarchitecture.com





**304 Main St.
Ames, Iowa 50010**

*Follow the Ames Regional Economic
Alliance on social media*

