

TRACITION

A MAGAZINE FROM THE AMES REGIONAL ECONOMIC ALLIANCE

Winter 2025-2026

Issue 13



The Heart of Barilla's American Production

1.2 million boxes produced daily

Angel Hair • Elbows • Farfalle • Fusilli • Gemelli • Lasagne • Penne • Rigatoni • Spaghetti • Ziti • Bucatini • Ditalini • Orzo • Manicotti • Fettuccine • Campanelle • Lasagne • Spaghetti • Angel Hair • Linguine • Fettuccine • Bucatini • Rigatoni • Ziti • Elbows • Rotini • Gemelli • Farfalle • Pipette • Ditalini • Orzo • Lasagne • Spaghetti • Fettuccine • Rigatoni • Ziti • Gemelli • Farfalle



THE THREE PILLARS THAT WILL LEAD OUR WORK WILL BE: **LEADERSHIP ENGAGEMENT ADVOCACY**



Dan Culhane
President & CEO
Ames Regional Economic Alliance

At the heart of every thriving region is a collection of businesses, both large and small, that anchor our economy, create opportunities, and strengthen our sense of community. Here in Central Iowa across our four-county region, supporting those businesses isn't just an economic strategy; it's part of who we are. When we invest in our local companies, we're investing in a region where we all want to Live, Work, and Play. That's a message that continues to define our identity and our collective future.

In this issue of Traction magazine, we're proud to shine a light on companies that exemplify innovation, growth, and global reach while remaining deeply rooted in our region. From Barilla's world-class operations in Ames to American Athletic's craftsmanship in Jefferson that reaches professional sports teams across the country, these businesses demonstrate how local excellence fuels national and even international impact. Their success stories serve as reminders that global influence often starts right here at home, supported by community partnerships, a skilled workforce, and a shared commitment to progress.

As we celebrate these successes, we also look ahead to the next chapter in our community's story; the newly announced Ames Event Center. This hallmark project represents more than bricks and mortar; it's an investment in quality of life, economic vitality, and the continued momentum of our region. It's a testament to what can happen when collaboration, vision, and local pride come together.

Thank you for reading Traction and for your continued engagement in the work that strengthens our communities. Together, we're building an economy, and a place, that truly reflects the best of what it means to Live, Work, and Play across our area.

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 *The Heart of Barilla's American Production*

07 - Iowa State University Announces 17th President

08 - American Athletic: Handcrafted in Jefferson

10 *You're Going to Love Living Here: Live Work Play in Ames*

12 - Ames Event Center

14 - Hawkeye Molding

16 - Harold Pike Construction Celebrates 50 Years

18 *Cyclone Nation: Shop Downtown Ames*

20 - All-Star Auto Glass

22 - Traction News



On the Cover

From Parma, Italy to Ames, Iowa, Barilla's journey is one of global excellence rooted in local pride. Producing over a million boxes of pasta daily, the Ames plant stands as the heart of Barilla's U.S. operations and a model of innovation, sustainability, workforce investment, and community partnership driving growth across Central Iowa. Read more in this feature article of Traction magazine.

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AMES REGIONAL ECONOMIC
Alliance

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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.



The Heart of Barilla's American Production

When people think of Italian cuisine, the Barilla name often comes to mind.

Founded in Parma, Italy in 1877, Barilla has spent more than four generations perfecting the craft of pasta making. But while its heart may be Italian, one of its most important homes is right here in Ames, Iowa.

The Barilla plant in Ames opened in 1998—the company's first production site in the United States—and has since become one of its largest and most advanced facilities worldwide. Situated on 125 acres, the Ames site is a unique operation: it's the only Barilla location in the U.S. that houses both a milling operation and pasta production under one roof. Today, the plant produces roughly 1.2 million boxes of pasta every single day, processing more than 700 tons of wheat in the process.

"It's incredible to think about the scale of what happens here in Ames," said Dustin Moffitt, Plant Director at Barilla America. "We're taking raw wheat grown across the Midwest and transforming it into a product that reaches dinner tables all over the country. That's something our team takes a lot of pride in."

A Local Leader with Global Vision

For Moffitt, that pride runs deep. An Iowa native, he began his Barilla journey in 2002 as a production operator on the floor. Over the years, his steady rise through the company reflects both his dedication and the company's philosophy of investing in people. From Processing Technologist to Mill Manager, then Production Manager, and now Plant Director, his career has mirrored the growth and innovation of the Ames facility itself.

"I've literally grown up with this plant," Moffitt said with a smile. "What's made Barilla special to me is the opportunity to keep learning, keep improving, and work with people who genuinely care about what they do. The team here in Ames is world-class."

Under his leadership, the plant continues to play a vital role in Barilla's North American operations. With approximately 260 employees, the facility not only sustains a strong local workforce but also contributes significantly to the regional economy. Barilla maintains a 35% market share in the United States pasta industry, and Ames is a key piece of that success.

Investing in Ames and the Future

Barilla's story in Ames is one of continual investment. In 2019, the company completed a \$65 million expansion that increased production capacity and added state-of-the-art technology. The expansion reaffirmed Barilla's commitment to



Dustin Moffitt

Plant Manager,
Barilla America | Ames Plant

1.2 million boxes produced daily



Ames as its North American production hub.

"This community has supported us since day one," Moffitt said. "We're not just operating here—we're part of Ames. Every expansion, every improvement we make, strengthens that partnership."

Barilla's close collaboration with organizations like the Ames Regional Economic Alliance exemplifies the synergy between global business and local development. The plant's ongoing initiatives align closely with the Alliance's mission to foster innovation, workforce development, and sustainable economic growth.

"Partnerships like ours with Barilla demonstrate the long-term benefits of investing in this region," said Dan Culhane, President & CEO of the Ames Regional Economic Alliance. "Their growth has ripple effects throughout the community—from agriculture to logistics to workforce training."

Beyond the Plate

Barilla's presence in Ames extends beyond manufacturing. The company emphasizes sustainability and community engagement, reflecting its global mission to be "Good for You, Good for the Planet." Locally, that commitment shows up in efforts to minimize waste, improve energy efficiency, and support local initiatives.

"Our work doesn't stop when the pasta leaves the line," Moffitt explained. "We're constantly looking ahead—how we can be more efficient, how we can give back, and how we can ensure that what we do here continues to have a positive impact on both our people and our planet."

A Global Brand, an Iowa Story

From its humble beginnings in Italy to its cutting-edge operations in Ames, Barilla represents a blend of tradition and progress. The Ames facility is not just a manufacturing site—it's a symbol of what happens when global excellence meets Midwestern values. "When you see a box of Barilla pasta on the shelf, there's a good chance it came from right here in Ames," Moffitt said. "That's something this community can be proud of."

Learn more about Barilla America online at:

www.barilla.com



David Cook *named 17th president of Iowa State University*

The Iowa Board of Regents named David Cook the 17th president of Iowa State University at a press conference on November 11, 2025.

Cook, president of North Dakota State University, succeeds Wendy Wintersteen who will retire in her ninth year as Iowa State's president. Cook, who is an alumnus of Iowa State, will take office on March 1, 2026.

Since 2022, Cook, 55, has led North Dakota State University, a land-grant university with 12,000 undergraduate and graduate students, and a \$971.5 million biennial budget. The institution has five academic colleges, seven agricultural research extension centers and 53 extension offices.

As NDSU's chief executive officer, Cook has prioritized student success, enriched research and land-grant missions while fostering collaboration to best serve the state of North Dakota. His accomplishments include the launch of a data-driven strategic plan that reversed 10 years of declining enrollment and revenues and invested in student advising and mentoring programs that increased retention of first-year students by 3% and graduation rates by 12%.

During Cook's time as president, North Dakota State's research funding and expenditures increased to historic levels. Under his leadership, an NDSU coalition secured a National Science Foundation regional innovation engines grant in agricultural technology, with a potential for \$160 million in federal investment. Additionally, Cook helped launch fundraising efforts for initiatives to build leaders in artificial intelligence and drive solutions for

modern agriculture. He is a tenured professor in NDSU's College of Health and Human Sciences.

Prior to his time at North Dakota State, Cook served as vice chancellor for public affairs and economic development at the University of Kansas. In this role, he coordinated efforts to align university priorities with federal opportunities, established the first university-wide economic development office and strategic plan and supported the KU Innovation Park. Cook also held several leadership roles at the University of Kansas Medical Center.

As a faculty researcher, Cook was a principal or co-principal investigator on grants totaling nearly \$11 million in external funding. He has published nearly 70 articles, book chapters and abstracts.

In his career he has taught more than 25 courses in subjects including: health policy and management; diffusion, adoption and implementation of innovation; business and organizational communication; and strategic marketing.

Cook earned a bachelor's degree in political science and speech communication from Iowa State University. He earned his master's degree and his Ph.D., both in organizational communication, from the University of Kansas.

Cook's appointment concluded a four-month national search for Iowa State's next leader. His 5-year contract will begin on March 1, 2026.

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY.



Kristin Russell

Human Resources Manager
American Athletic, Inc. | Spalding

Handcrafted in Jefferson, Built for the World



From the outside, American Athletic's Jefferson, Iowa, facilities look like any other advanced manufacturing hub in the Midwest. Inside, however, technicians are shaping the future of sports, handcrafting world-class gymnastics and basketball equipment trusted from high school gyms to NCAA and professional arenas and Olympic stages.

American Athletic, Inc. (AAI) and its sister brand Spalding operate under the Fruit of the Loom family, a subsidiary of Berkshire Hathaway. Together, they produce elite-level equipment that powers some of the most dynamic sports in the world. While Spalding's basketball and volleyball systems support play at the NCAA and professional levels, AAI's handcrafted gymnastics apparatus; balance beams, vaults, and uneven bars, serve athletes from youth programs to the international stage.

Founded in 1954, AAI's story began with trampolines and evolved into an international leader in gymnastics equipment. Today, the Jefferson-based company employs around 77 people across

three facilities totaling more than 240,000 square feet. Despite its small-town roots, AAI has a global reach, shipping to training centers in Australia, Japan, and across Europe. "The fact that we can do it here in Jefferson means a lot," says Kristin Russell, who has been with the company for 13 years and serves as Human Resources Manager. "It's elite-level athletic equipment, and it's all built by hand right here in Iowa."

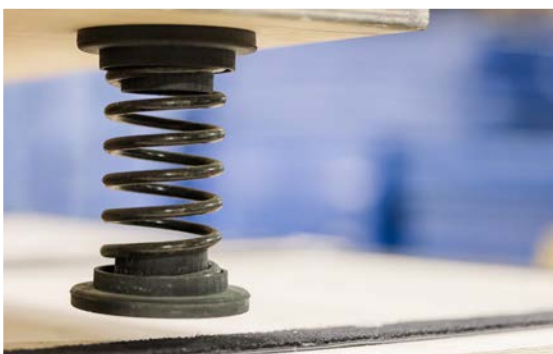
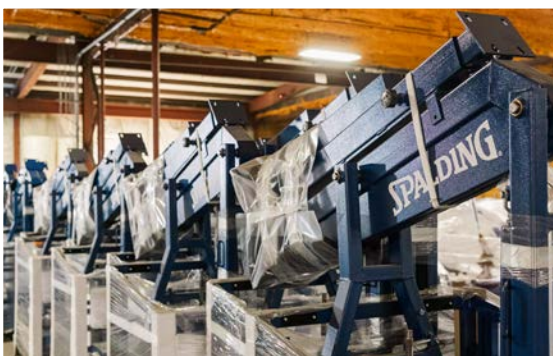
Every piece that leaves the floor, whether a set of uneven bars or an NBA-ready backboard, carries a mark of craftsmanship. "We don't do long runs," Russell explains. "Everything is designed to last." Spalding, the world's largest basketball equipment supplier, is the On-Court provider for NBA, WNBA, and the G league with every hoop, rim, and support unit crafted in Jefferson. They are also an official NCAA supplier of backstops, backboards, and goals. "People might not realize the scope," says General Manager Steve Kohl. "When our team sees the equipment they manufactured show up on ESPN during March Madness, it's a point of pride."

Kohl knows that pride firsthand. While attending Iowa State University, he joined AAI and has spent the past 27 years helping the company grow into a national powerhouse. Under his leadership, the Jefferson operation continues to expand its product line and technological capabilities, including fiber tube lasers, robotic welders, and CNC wood routers. Still, Kohl emphasizes that people remain at the heart of the operation. "Our team manufactures two major brands in Jefferson with 90% of our raw materials being sourced domestically. Their craftsmanship and dedication when doing so is what sets us apart."

Looking ahead, AAI's ambitions continue to climb. The company has their



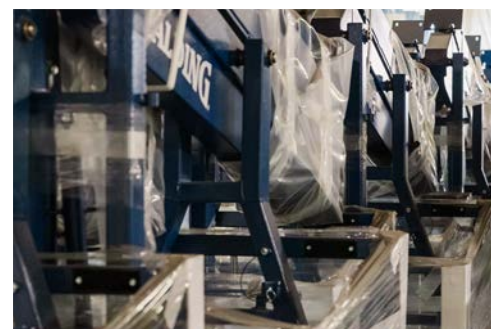
www.americanathletic.com



eyes set on the 2028 Olympics being held in Los Angeles; a natural progression for a brand already serving as the official gymnastics equipment supplier for USA Gymnastics developmental program through 2029. American Athletic supplied equipment for the Olympics in 1984 (Los Angeles) and 1996 (Atlanta). They have gold medalists from each working for them currently.

For Kohl and the Jefferson team, the motivation remains simple. "Gymnastics and basketball are two sports where the athlete interacts directly with the equipment," he says. "That connection drives us to build it better every time."

From a small Iowa town to arenas around the world, American Athletic's legacy is proof that world-class performance can be handcrafted right in Jefferson.



YOU'RE GOING TO LOVE LIVING HERE

Big Noon Kickoff on Fox Visits Ames

Ames took the national spotlight on September 7 as FOX Sports' Big Noon Kickoff broadcast live from Iowa State University ahead of the Iowa vs. Iowa State football game. The show brought national attention and Cyclone pride to campus, highlighted by Iowa State alum and NBA All-Star Tyrese Haliburton returning to make the celebrity game picks. Barstool Sports president Dave Portnoy added to the excitement with a One Bite review at The Great Plains Sauce & Dough Company, giving the local favorite a strong score. It was a weekend that perfectly captured what it means to Live, Work, and Play in Ames.

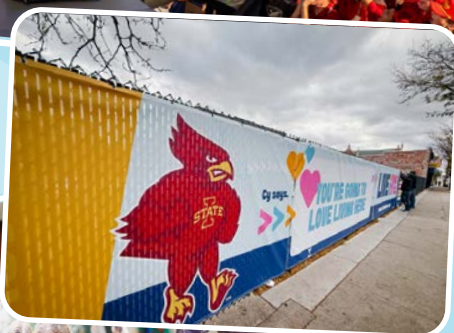
Matt Leinart @MattLeinartQB
Ames was amazing. The fans were rocking.
What a scene!



Live Work Play on Display

The Live Work Play in Ames brand has come to life across the community in fun and creative ways. A colorful design now wraps a Fareway Stores semi-truck, spreading the Ames message across Iowa highways. Downtown visitors can see the brand proudly displayed on a banner stretching across Main Street, while a massive 130-foot banner in Campustown catches the attention of Iowa State University students and visitors. Each installation celebrates the energy, pride, and connection that make Ames a standout place to live, work, and play.

FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL



John McGivern's Main Street

John McGivern's Main Streets visited Ames this fall to film an episode for its upcoming fifth season on PBS. The crew spent time exploring Downtown Ames, visiting local favorites like Della Viti, Piece & Freedom Bakery, the Ames History Museum, and Danfoss Power Solutions. Coordinated with the Ames Regional Economic Alliance and Discover Ames, the visit highlighted the community's blend of innovation, local business, and Midwestern charm. The Ames episode will air as part of Main Streets Season 5 on PBS in early 2026.



WHAT DO YOU
WANT TO DO TODAY?

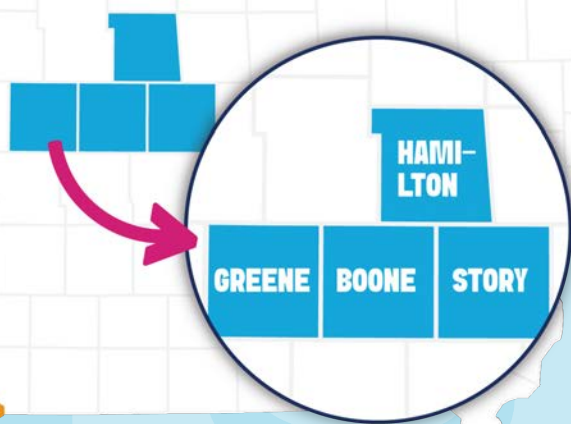


GOOD +
WATER BIG



GNOMES
TOO!

GETTING AROUND IS EASY
(FROM TOWN TO TOWN THAT IS!)



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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

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



Ames Event Center

Event Center to Anchor The LINC Development

Ames is poised for a major leap forward in its downtown evolution. A new state-of-the-art event and conference facility, named the Ames Event Center, is planned as the anchor of The LINC, a \$150 million mixed-use development that promises to transform the city's core into a hub of activity, culture, and connection.

Unveiled to the Ames City Council in mid-October, the project is being led by Discover Ames, in partnership with the Ames Regional Economic Alliance and local developers. Together, they envision a dynamic destination where people can gather for everything from national conferences and weddings to community celebrations.

The plans call for 30,000 to 40,000 square feet of flexible space, with room for 800 to 1,000 guests in a banquet setting. The facility is planned to connect directly to a 200-room, upscale full-service hotel, offering visitors convenience and comfort within walking distance of Downtown Ames.

"People love to host and attend events in vibrant areas where there is a lot to do," said Kevin Bourke, President and CEO of Discover Ames. "The LINC is a transformative development for Ames, and the Ames Event Center will be the ideal anchor that can serve all types of groups and events."

Stretching along Lincoln Way between Kellogg and Clark, The LINC is envisioned to bridge Lincoln Way with Downtown Ames via a pedestrian walkway and feature an energetic mix of restaurants, retail, businesses, hotel accommodations, apartments, and green spaces.

"What a tremendous complement this will all be to everything else being planned in our area, including Iowa State University's CyTown," Bourke added. "Think about how much more attractive Ames will be to athletic fans, visitors, students and potential students, event and conference attendees, and area residents."

The project will be financed through a combination of private investment, city and county funding, federal and state grants, and tax incentives. Once completed, it could operate as a nonprofit facility under Discover Ames, the Ames Regional Economic Alliance, the City of Ames, or Story County.

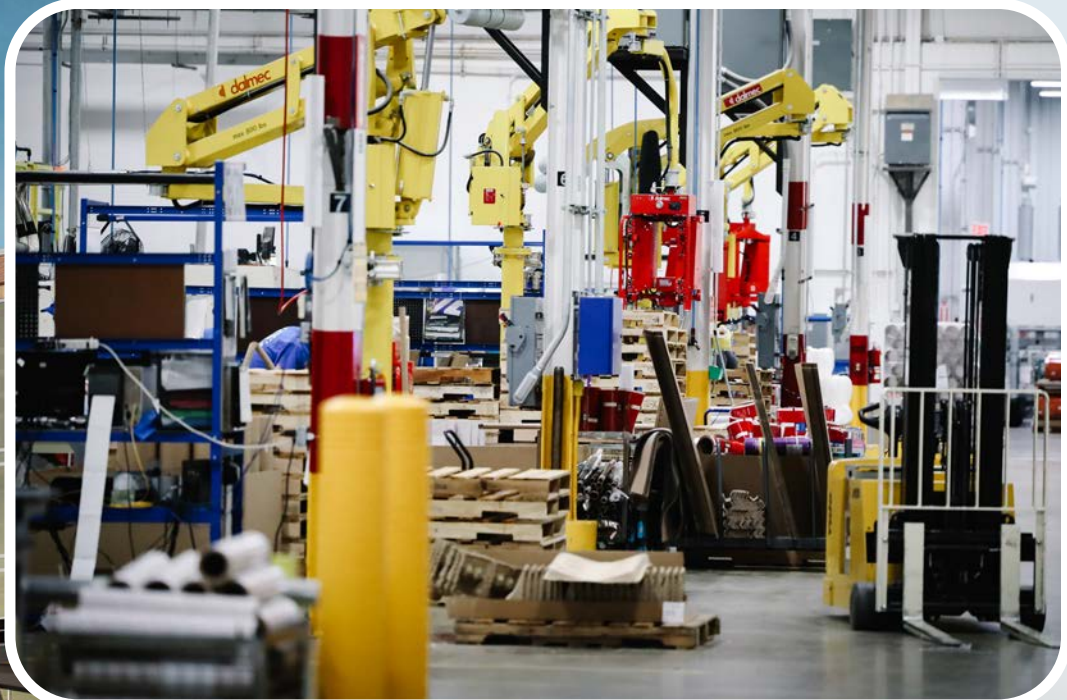
"This fantastic facility will be ours—whether it's hosting weddings, reunions, concerts, or community events," Bourke said. "We want Ames residents to have more spaces to celebrate life's milestones and traditions, and we want out-of-town guests and event planners to have a compelling reason to choose Ames."

For more information and updates, visit

www.AmesEventCenter.com



Conceptual rendering



American Packaging Corporation in Story City

American Packaging Corporation plans to invest \$7.8 million in a 20,000-square-foot expansion of its Story City facility and new equipment. The Iowa Economic Development Authority granted tax benefits through the High Quality Jobs program in October, totaling \$195,000 in credits and refunds. The project will create 25 new jobs and Story City will provide a local tax abatement. Construction began this fall and is scheduled to be completed by September 2026. Founded in 1902, American Packaging Corp. produces packaging for industries such as pet care and lawn care, and the expansion will boost its flexible pouch and bag production.

JT Logistics Breaks Ground

JT Logistics hosted a ceremonial groundbreaking in September for their new 300,000-square-foot facility east of Ames. As a family-owned, Iowa-based company, JT Logistics provides innovative warehousing, transportation, and fulfillment solutions across the Midwest. Their new facility, already under construction and set for completion in early 2026, will expand their regional footprint and create new opportunities for growth and employment in Story County.



Fitch Family Indoor Aquatic Center

The Fitch Family Indoor Aquatic Center, now under construction in Ames, will provide year-round recreational swimming opportunities in the community when it opens next year. The facility will feature a 25-yard, six-lane lap pool, a zero-depth splash pool and current channel, along with party rooms, multi-purpose spaces and a walking area. Construction of the 38,900-square-foot facility began in spring 2024, and the center is expected to substantially finish by January 2026, with a grand opening in March 2026.





Lana Leander and Ryan Gruhn
Owners, Hawkeye Molding

HAWKEYE MOLDING

Strength in Small-Town Manufacturing

For more than four decades, Hawkeye Molding has been quietly shaping the world from the heart of Iowa. What began in 1979 as a rural custom thermoplastic injection-molding shop has grown into a diversified manufacturing operation supplying components for everything from coffee makers and lighting fixtures to agricultural and industrial equipment. Today, under the ownership of Ryan Gruhn and Lana Leander, Hawkeye Molding is a model for how rural innovation and community investment can thrive side by side.

Hawkeye Molding's story starts in Albia, Iowa, where the company earned a reputation for precision and reliability in molding parts for appliance, housewares, and furniture manufacturers. After being acquired by Innovative Lighting in 2008, the business continued under its own name, building a strong presence in the regional manufacturing ecosystem. The next big chapter came in 2021, when husband-and-wife team Ryan Gruhn and Lana Leander purchased the company, determined to keep its legacy alive in Iowa. "We wanted to build something lasting in a community where people know each other and take pride in what they do," says Leander. "Rural Iowa is full of skilled, hardworking people—it just needs companies willing to invest in them."

Gruhn brought more than a decade of experience in plastics engineering and leadership in manufacturing to the helm. His early career in engineering gave him a firsthand appreciation for precision molding and process improvement. Leander, who previously owned and operated monument businesses across the Midwest, contributed her background in operations, management, and customer relationships. Together, they have steered Hawkeye Molding through a period of strategic reinvestment and growth.

The company now operates from its Roland, Iowa facility, running 24 hours a day, five days a week, and employing about 45 people. Its products reach markets nationwide; some under customers' brands and others under its own, including snow sleds and two-child toboggans that became top sellers on Amazon. "A lot of people don't realize how many everyday things start in Iowa," Gruhn said. "You might have a part in your coffee maker or your boat that was molded right here."

Hawkeye Molding's impact goes beyond the factory floor. The company has earned recognition for its contributions to rural economic vitality, including the Iowa Farm Bureau's Renew Rural Iowa Entrepreneur Award and designation by Senator Joni Ernst as the U.S. Senate Small Business of the Week. Both honors celebrate the company's ongoing commitment to local jobs and community development.

As global supply chains faced disruption in recent years, Hawkeye Molding saw opportunity in domestic production. By expanding its in-house mold-building capabilities, most recently through the 2024 acquisition of a Sully-based mold business. "We believe in doing as much as we can right here," says Gruhn. "It keeps our quality high, our lead times short, and our people working."

That people-first mindset extends to Hawkeye Molding's inclusive employment practices. The company provides meaningful jobs for individuals with special needs; a tradition started by a previous plant manager and proudly continued by Gruhn and Leander. "Everyone here has a role to play," Leander says. "When we create opportunities for all abilities, the whole team grows stronger."

From its small-town roots to its growing national reach, Hawkeye Molding demonstrates the staying power of Iowa manufacturing. For Gruhn and Leander, success isn't just measured in output, it's in the pride of keeping production local. "We're proof that world-class products can come from small-town Iowa," Gruhn says. "That's what keeps us motivated every single day."

www.hawkeyemolding.com

BANDSHELL Park

Nestled in the heart of Downtown Ames, Bandshell Park has been a cherished gathering spot and musical landmark for nearly a century. What started as a modest wooden bandstand has evolved into an enduring symbol of the city's spirit and community pride.

The site first became public land when the Iowa Railroad Land Company gifted 2.6 acres to the city with the condition that it be used as a park. In 1909, the city constructed the first concrete bandstand, which served the community for more than two decades before Ames' growing Municipal Band began to outgrow the space in the early 1930s.

In 1934, with strong community backing from local civic clubs to musicians themselves, the city approved plans for a new bandshell. Architect Grover Pratt of Iowa State designed the structure in a striking Art Deco style, and local contractor Fred Fischer oversaw construction, complete with a copper roof crafted by J. R. Jones. The project cost about \$39,000, a significant sum during the Great Depression.

On June 13, 1935, the bandshell was officially dedicated with a grand celebration that featured Karl King's Fort Dodge band and 13 local ensembles. Since then, the venue has hosted countless concerts, including regular summer performances by the Ames Municipal Band, drawing hundreds each week.

Architecturally, the shell is notable for its cast-in-place concrete, steel framing, and quarter-hemisphere design; ideal for acoustic richness. By the 1990s, however, age and weather had taken their toll, prompting a major restoration in 2005 led by The Ames Foundation.

Today, Bandshell Park remains more than just a beautiful venue. It's a living piece of Ames' cultural heritage; a place where history, community, and music come together under the open sky.



AMES HISTORY
MUSEUM

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

www.ameshistory.org

HPI, LLC



Curtis and Harold Pike
Harold Pike Construction

**MacKay Hall Auditorium,
Iowa State University**



Sweet Caroline's Kitchen & Cocktails



**Coover Hall,
Iowa State University**



AMES FITNESS CENTER

Ames Fitness Center



**Kappa Kappa
Gamma Sorority**

Sixty Forward Center



Harold Pike Construction

Celebrating 50 Years

In 2025, Harold Pike Construction (HPC) marked a remarkable milestone: fifty years of shaping Ames and communities across central Iowa. Founded in 1975 by Harold and Julie Pike, the company began with a simple but powerful mission: to meet the construction needs of homeowners, businesses, developers, and Iowa State University through honest work and dependable craftsmanship.

From the beginning, HPC built its reputation on three core values: honor, pride, and commitment. Those words, still featured on the company's website today, have guided every project and partnership over the past five decades. "Our obligation goes beyond the contract," the company notes, a principle reflected in the care and detail they bring to every job. What started in a small Ames warehouse has evolved into a full-service operation with skilled carpenters and engineers capable of managing everything from historic renovations to large-scale institutional and commercial projects.

HPC's portfolio reads like a tour through some of central Iowa's most recognizable places. Their renovation of Iowa State University's historic Morrill Hall is a standout as they transformed the 1891 building into a modern, sustainable space while preserving its architectural legacy. The company also played key roles in projects like the Ames Miracle League complex, the Gilbert High School addition and stadium complex, and the new Iowa 60Forward Center building. Beyond Ames, their footprint extends into Ankeny, Boone, Gilbert, Nevada, and Des Moines, with a range of educational, commercial, and community projects that show both versatility and staying power.

Through all this growth, Harold Pike Construction has remained deeply local. The company's leadership and employees live, work, and invest in the same communities they build for. That local connection, paired with a strong sense of accountability, has earned them a loyal client base and a steady stream of repeat business. Their relationships with Iowa State University and numerous civic partners have helped them stay both relevant and rooted, even as construction technologies and market dynamics have changed dramatically over the years.

As HPC celebrates its 50th anniversary, the milestone is as much about people as it is about projects. It's a celebration of the generations of tradespeople who have poured their skill and pride into every wall, beam, and foundation; of long-term clients who have trusted the company to bring their visions to life; and of the enduring belief that quality work and integrity never go out of style.

Looking ahead, Harold Pike Construction remains committed to the same values that built its reputation. Whether restoring a historic campus building, expanding a local school, or creating new spaces for businesses to grow, HPC continues to approach every job with the same care and craftsmanship that defined its first fifty years. In a region that continues to evolve, Harold Pike Construction stands as both a builder of structures and a builder of community; proof that doing things the right way, year after year, is the foundation for lasting success.



Gilbert High School



Cyclone Sports Complex



**Morrill Hall,
Iowa State University**

Cyclone Nation

The fall season brings out the best of our Cyclone spirit across the Ames region. Check out Iowa State apparel and gear from local businesses in Downtown Ames; perfect for showing your Cyclone pride every season! From cozy sweatshirts to game-day accessories, there's something for every Cyclone fan.



Sweet Caroline's Kitchen & Cocktails



Chocolaterie Stam



PhotoSynthesis



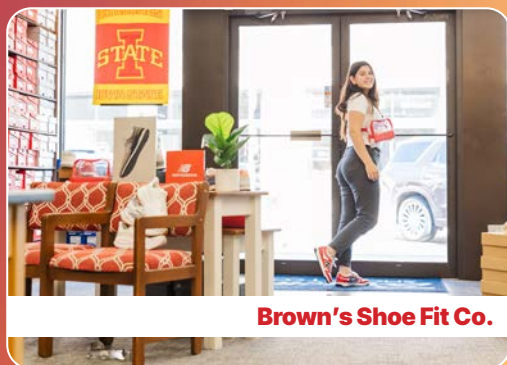
Gilger Designs Jewelry



Ames Silversmithing



The Funky Zebras Ames Boutique



Brown's Shoe Fit Co.



Della Viti



Skunk River Cycles



Tres Teal



Marmalade Moon



The Shops at Clark & Main



Homegrown

A podcast from the Ames Regional Economic Alliance

AREA POD



PERSONAL STORIES, PROFESSIONAL JOURNEYS.

Presented by



The AREA Podcast is available on major streaming platforms, including Spotify, Apple Podcasts, and Amazon. Viewers can watch a video version of each episode on the Alliance YouTube channel.

#012



**Paul Schlueter,
President, Flynn Wright**

With nearly 30 years at the agency, he shares insights on leading through change, balancing strategy with creativity, and building a culture centered on client success. Paul reflects on the evolution of Flynn Wright and the fast-paced shifts shaping today's marketing landscape. He also discusses the agency's commitment to curiosity, collaboration, and storytelling that keeps clients and their audiences one step ahead.

AREAPOD

EPISODE

#013

WITH
KEVIN DRESSER

**Kevin Dresser,
Head Coach, Iowa State
Wrestling**

He shares his journey in the sport, his approach to building culture, and what it takes to lead one of college wrestling's premier programs. From Humboldt roots to leading the Cyclones, Dresser reflects on leadership, toughness, and the impact of coaching.

Alliance

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EPISODE

#014

WITH
EMILY SCHMITT

**Emily Schmitt,
Chief Administrative Officer and General Counsel,
Sukup Manufacturing**

She shares her journey as a third-generation leader, balancing family legacy with innovation, and Sukup's growing global impact from its Iowa roots. Emily talks about how her experiences from growing up in the family business to pursuing a career in law have shaped her leadership approach. We also dive into the story behind Sukup's Safe T Home project and how it's changing lives around the world.

#015



**Dr. Wendy Wintersteen
President, Iowa State University**

She shares her journey to becoming the university's first female president, her approach to leadership and innovation, and how Iowa State drives research and economic growth across Iowa and beyond. She also reflects on the university's role in shaping the next generation of leaders and strengthening connections between campus and community.





Clear Vision, Local Focus: All-Star Auto Glass Keeps Ames Rolling

For Eric Chriswisser, owner of All Star Auto Glass in Ames, great service starts with local pride. “We wanted to build a company that people could trust; not just because of our work, but because they know we’re part of the community,” Chriswisser says. “When you call us, you’re talking to someone right here in Ames who knows the business and cares about getting it right.”

Founded 15 years ago, All Star Auto Glass was built with a single mission: to deliver fast, friendly, and high-quality auto glass repair and replacement backed by experience and integrity. Today, the company’s team brings more than 65 years of combined expertise to every job. From minor windshield chips to full replacements, they handle it all with a dedication to precision, safety, and customer satisfaction.

“Our technicians aren’t just installers. They’re certified professionals,” Chriswisser explains. “We use the most advanced materials available and follow strict safety standards, because your windshield is one of the most important safety features on your vehicle.”

That commitment to quality has earned All Star Auto Glass lasting partnerships with major clients such as the Iowa Department of Transportation and Iowa State University, ensuring state vehicles and university fleets are always road-ready. Along with these partnerships, the heart of the company remains local. “We’re not part of a national chain,” Chriswisser says. “When people support us, their money stays here. We’re helping keep jobs and dollars in the Ames community.”

Chriswisser’s personal journey reflects the same dedication. With 30 years in the auto glass industry, working across the U.S. and even in Europe, he’s built a reputation for skill and craftsmanship. In 2006, he represented Iowa at the Auto Glass Olympics in Las Vegas, placing seventh out of 50 competitors. That passion for excellence continues to drive his approach today. “You can’t fake experience,” he says. “Every vehicle, every installation, is a chance to do it right and keep someone safe.”

Beyond the shop, Chriswisser is a family man, married to his wife Megan for 26 years, with two daughters. He’s also a fan of mountain biking and Iowa State Athletics; both reminders, he says, of what makes the Ames community so special. “It’s a town that supports its own,” he reflects. “We’re proud to be one of those local businesses people can count on.”

Whether it’s repairing a single windshield or servicing an entire fleet, All Star Auto Glass stands out for its combination of technical expertise and small-town service. The result is a company that’s earned a loyal customer base and a reputation for reliability; proof that in Ames, clear vision and community focus truly go hand in hand.





Eric Chriswisher
Owner, All Star Auto Glass

Luke Combs is Coming to Jack Trice Stadium in April 2026

(October 9, 2025)

Iowa State Athletics announced that Luke Combs's My Kinda Saturday Night Tour is coming to Jack Trice Stadium on April 11, 2026. This concert follows the May 2024 event when George Strait, Chris Stapleton, and Little Big Town played in Ames, marking the first concert at the Cyclones' stadium since 1999. The return of another major country artist highlights Ames's growing role as a destination for large-scale entertainment. Thousands are expected to attend, making it another unforgettable experience for fans and the community alike.



Cyndi Gryte Named One of "40 Women to Watch in Hospitality"

(October 12, 2025)

The Iowa Restaurant Association has recognized Cyndi Gryte, owner of Juniper & Olive Co. in Jewell, as one of its 2025 "40 Women to Watch in Hospitality." After building her career in New York City, Gryte returned to Iowa to open her cozy café and bistro, known for its welcoming atmosphere, creative menu, and connection to local producers. Her recognition celebrates not only her entrepreneurial drive but also her commitment to elevating small-town dining and creating a space that brings people together through food and community.



Iowa State ranked No. 9 Nationally in Entrepreneurship Rankings

(November 12, 2025)

Iowa State University has vaulted into the top 10 of undergraduate entrepreneurship programs, ranking No. 9 in the nation in the 2026 The Princeton Review list. The jump of five spots reflects the university's deepening commitment to entrepreneurship, with expanded courses, hands-on labs, mentorship, and accelerator programs through the Pappajohn Center for Entrepreneurship. The recognition underscores Iowa State's rising status as a national leader in turning student ideas into real businesses.



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Lana Leander
Alex Fejfar
Curtis Pike
Paul Schlueter
Kevin Dresser
Emily Schmitt
Dr. Wendy Wintersteen
Eric Chriswiser

Our Live Work Play in Ames brand features a small button that says, "You're going to love living here." It's simple, but it captures the feeling that this region is full of opportunity, connection, and momentum. Every time I help tell a story through Traction or other Alliance projects, I'm reminded how true that message is.

Across the communities we serve, people are building businesses, leading with purpose, and creating spaces where others can thrive. Those stories of innovation and collaboration are what give this region its vibrancy. Producing this magazine is a chance to shine a light on that spirit, to celebrate the individuals and organizations shaping our shared future. My hope is that as you read, you feel that same sense of pride and possibility that runs through every story we tell. Because whether you live, work, or play here, one thing is certain: you're going to love being part of it.

TRAC^{TION} INVESTORS



IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY
ResearchPARK

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY RESEARCH PARK

The Iowa State University Research Park is a dynamic innovation community that connects research, business, and technology. It fosters collaboration between Iowa State University and industry partners, supporting startups and established companies in advancing science, entrepreneurship, and economic growth across Iowa.

www.isupark.org

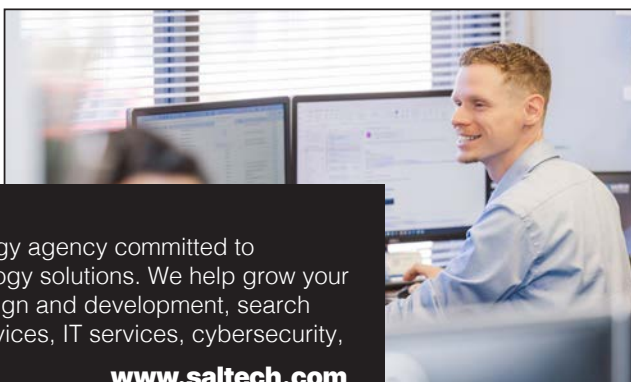


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STORY CONSTRUCTION

Story Construction is a 100% employee-owned commercial construction firm headquartered in Ames since 1934. Story'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.

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