

TRACTION

A MAGAZINE FROM THE AMES REGIONAL ECONOMIC ALLIANCE

Fall 2026
Issue 16



THAI KITCHEN

Authentic Flavors of Thailand located in Campustown



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



Dan Culhane
President & CEO
Ames Regional Economic Alliance

This year, we celebrated 250 years as a country. Here in Ames, that meant continuing one of our favorite traditions, the annual Fourth of July Parade in Downtown Ames. Despite the summer heat, the streets were lined with families, friends, and neighbors celebrating together. A special thank you to Dr. David Cook, the new President of Iowa State University, and his wife, Dr. Katie Cook, for serving as this year's Grand Marshals and helping make the celebration even more memorable.

The red, white, and blue of the parade, the evening fireworks, and backyard barbecues are all uniquely American traditions. Yet one of America's greatest strengths has always been something deeper: the opportunity for people from every background and every corner of the world to build a future through hard work, determination, and entrepreneurship.

That story can be seen across the Ames region. It is found in our manufacturers, family-owned businesses, startups, and local restaurants that contribute to the economic vitality and character of our communities. Each has a unique journey, but they all share a common willingness to pursue opportunity.

Few stories capture that spirit better than Thai Kitchen in Campustown. What began with one family's dream has grown into a beloved local restaurant known not only for exceptional food, but also for hospitality and a deep commitment to the community they call home. Their story is a reminder that economic development is ultimately about people, their dreams, and the lasting impact they have on those around them.

As you read this issue of Traction, I hope you're inspired by the entrepreneurs, innovators, and community builders who continue to strengthen our region and shape its 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.

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On the Cover

From an entrepreneur in Thailand to the owner of one of Ames' most beloved restaurants, Chanya Eourdilokkul has grown Thai Kitchen by honoring its longtime legacy while expanding its reach throughout the community. Discover how she's sharing authentic Thai culture, creating local jobs, and building connections through food in this feature article from Traction magazine.

DAN CULHANE
President & CEO

BRENDA DRYER
Senior Vice President

AMY HOWARD
Vice President,
Finance & Administration

ERIC SMIDT
Vice President,
Marketing & Communications

SHANNON THIELE
Vice President,
Affiliate Programming

JAN WILLIAMS
Vice President,
Investor Relations

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Executive Director, Ames Main Street

JENAVIEVE CHRISTENSEN
Coordinator, Economic Development
& Workforce

MORGANNE DENNIS
Coordinator, Investor Relations

SIDNEY HANSEN
Digital Marketing Specialist

SARAH HURLEY
Director, Events

BAYLIE JANSSEN
Coordinator, Client Services

DYLAN KLINE
Director, Business Development

STEVEN LAWRENCE
Director, Marketing

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Director, Economic Development

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Executive Director, Webster City Area
Chamber of Commerce

OTTIE MAXEY
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GREG PIKLAPP
Director, Economic Development &
Business Advocacy

LOJEAN PETERSEN
Manager, Ames Main Street
Farmers' Market

MIKE UPAH
Director, Ames Seed Capital

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

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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.



Chanya Eourdilokkul
Owner, Thai Kitchen


THAI Kitchen

THAI KITCHEN

Authentic Flavors of Thailand located in Campustown

When Chanya Eourdilokkul purchased Thai Kitchen in 2022, she wasn't simply buying a restaurant. She was taking stewardship of a business that had already become part of the fabric of Ames.

For more than two decades, Thai Kitchen has served authentic Thai cuisine from its longtime home in Campustown. Chanya saw an opportunity to preserve that legacy while bringing fresh ideas and a new vision for growth.

"My goal was to honor Thai Kitchen's long-standing reputation while helping the business grow and evolve to meet the changing needs of our customers," she said.

That vision has translated into remarkable results.

Since taking ownership, Thai Kitchen has experienced approximately 80 percent revenue growth through expanded catering services, partnerships with delivery platforms, improved operations, and increased accessibility for customers across the Ames community.

The growth extends well beyond the restaurant's bottom line.

When Chanya acquired Thai Kitchen, the business employed six to seven people. Today, the staff has grown to 21 employees, creating new opportunities for both local residents and Iowa State University students.

"As the business has grown, we've been able to create meaningful employment opportunities while continuing to invest in our team," she said. "That growth has been one of the most rewarding parts of this journey."

From Thailand to Iowa

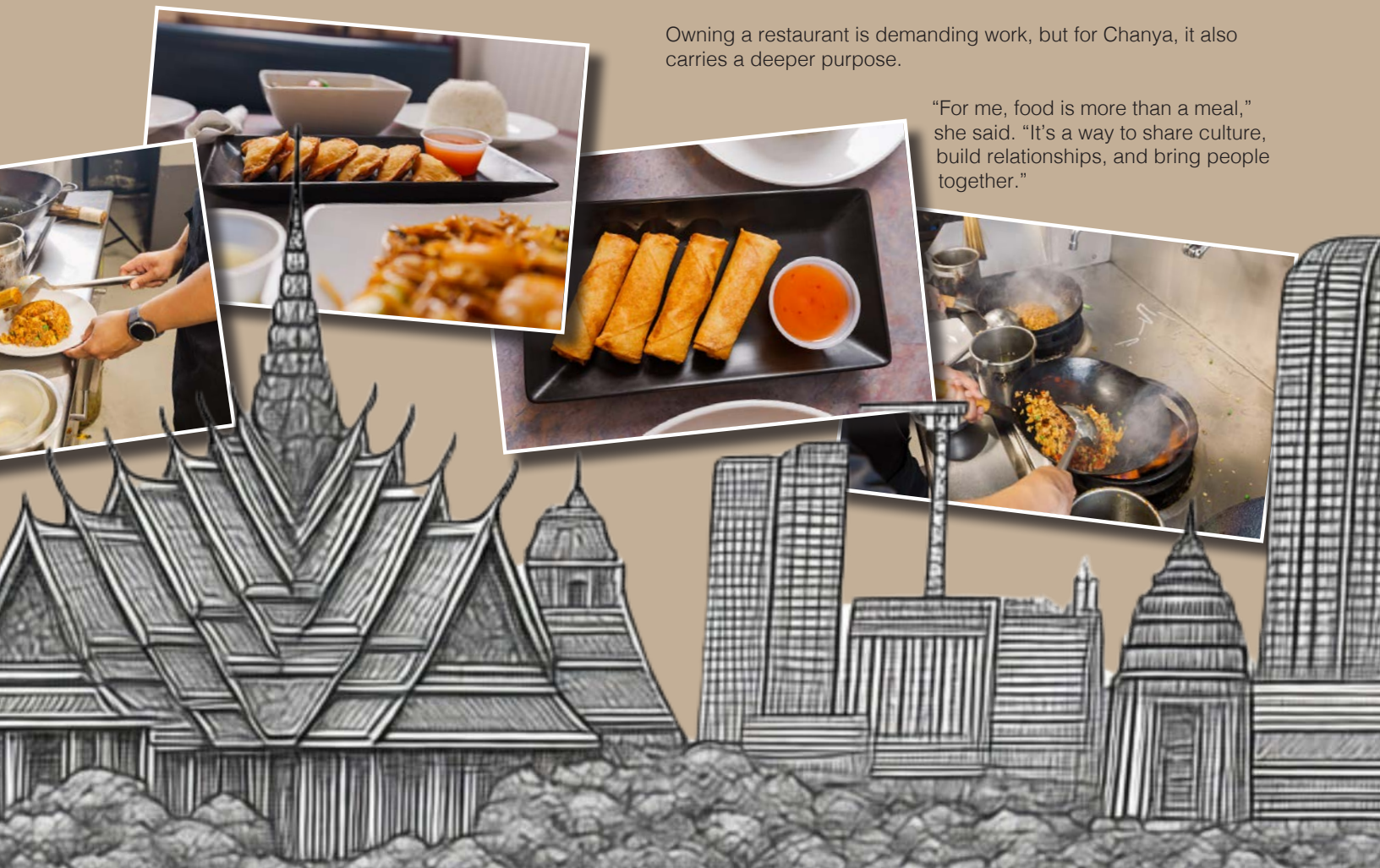
Before becoming a business owner in Iowa, Chanya built her entrepreneurial experience in Thailand, where she owned and operated multiple businesses focused on bakery, marketing, operations management, and business development. One of her bakery businesses was even featured on Thai national television.

Her family's move to the United States through the E-2 Investor Visa program eventually led them to Ames, where an opportunity emerged to continue her entrepreneurial journey.

Today, she oversees every aspect of Thai Kitchen, from financial management and strategic planning to marketing, staffing, and daily operations.

Owning a restaurant is demanding work, but for Chanya, it also carries a deeper purpose.

"For me, food is more than a meal," she said. "It's a way to share culture, build relationships, and bring people together."





Learn more about Thai Kitchen on their website.

www.ThaiKitchenAmes.com

Sharing Thai Culture One Plate at a Time

That philosophy is reflected in every meal served. Thai Kitchen has built its reputation on fresh, made-to-order dishes while remaining committed to authentic Thai recipes. Many customers are experiencing Thai cuisine for the first time, something Chanya considers both a privilege and a responsibility.

"I am especially proud of introducing Thai flavors and culture to customers in Iowa," she said. "Seeing first-time guests become regular customers and watching families return with friends to share their favorite dishes is incredibly rewarding."

Those favorite dishes have become clear over time. Pad Thai remains the restaurant's signature item, with nearly 900 orders served over a recent four-week period. Other customer favorites include Pad See Ew, Thai Fried Rice, Pad Key Mao (Drunken Noodles), and Panang Curry.

Authentic Flavors of Thailand located in Campustown



Beyond the Dining Room

While many customers know Thai Kitchen for its restaurant service, another significant area of growth has come through catering.

Since 2022, the restaurant has expanded its catering operation to serve businesses, schools, churches, weddings, private celebrations, and community organizations throughout Central Iowa. Thai Kitchen has also become an official catering vendor for Iowa State University, serving departments and events across campus.

The expanded catering business has allowed the restaurant to reach thousands of additional customers while strengthening connections throughout the community.

"We're proud to serve so many different organizations and celebrations," Chanya said. "Whether it's a university event, a wedding, a church gathering, or a local business meeting, we're honored to be part of those moments."

Community involvement remains an important priority for the restaurant. Beyond catering, Thai Kitchen regularly participates in local events and seeks opportunities to introduce Thai culture through hospitality and food.

Building Something That Lasts

Behind the scenes, Chanya is balancing the responsibilities of business ownership while raising two young children, an experience that has only strengthened her appreciation for the community that supports the restaurant.

Her story reflects a familiar thread woven throughout the Ames region: entrepreneurs who invest in their communities while creating opportunities for others.

What began as a journey from Thailand to Iowa has evolved into something much larger than restaurant ownership.

It has become a story about preserving a local institution, embracing innovation, creating jobs, and using food as a bridge between cultures.

Every plate served at Thai Kitchen represents more than authentic Thai cuisine. It reflects the entrepreneurial spirit that continues to shape the Ames community, one customer, one meal, and one connection at a time.

By the Numbers:

80% revenue growth

21 employees

20+ years in Ames

900 Pad Thai orders in a four week period

This mural on the wall of Thai Kitchen was drawn by owner Chanya Eourdilokkul.



City of Ogden Awarded Funds for Phase I of the Ogden Recreation Complex

The City of Ogden has received a \$274,000 Community Attraction & Tourism award to support the construction of Phase I of the Ogden Recreation Complex.

Funding will support the first phase of a new park development featuring two Little League baseball fields complete with dugouts, lighting, scoreboards, and spectator amenities. The project also includes accessible pathways, a new playground, parking improvements, a community garden, and stormwater infrastructure designed to enhance the overall park experience.

“We extend our congratulations to the City of Ogden. They have worked tirelessly to move this project forward for their community and this award from the State of Iowa is the last piece of funding needed to implement Phase I of this exciting project,” said Brenda Dyer, Executive Director for the Boone County Economic Growth Corporation. “We look forward to celebrating with Ogden as they break ground on this project later this Summer.”

As the first phase of a larger community recreation project, this development lays the groundwork for future additions including a third Little League baseball field, paved walking trails, pickleball courts, soccer fields, and new concession and restroom facilities.



City of Boone Recognized as a Thriving Community

Boone has been named a 2027–2028 Iowa Thriving Community by the Iowa Finance Authority and Iowa Economic Development Authority, recognizing the community's commitment to expanding housing opportunities and supporting future growth. The designation highlights Boone's collaboration among local leaders, employers, and community partners to address workforce housing needs through planning, partnerships, and strategic development efforts. As a Thriving Community, Boone will receive statewide recognition and additional scoring advantages for programs that support housing development, creating new opportunities to attract investment and expand housing options for residents and workers. The designation reflects the community's continued focus on creating a strong foundation for long-term economic growth and quality of life.



NEWEST ADDITION TO HOMETOWN PRIDE



Hamilton County Selected for Keep Iowa Beautiful Hometown Pride Program

Hamilton County has been selected to join Keep Iowa Beautiful Hometown Pride program, a volunteer-driven community development program that turns local ideas into lasting impact. The program will launch this fall in nine participating communities: Blairsburg, Ellsworth, Jewell, Kamrar, Randall, Stanhope, Stratford, Webster City, and Williams.

Each community will work with a Hometown Pride coach to launch a volunteer-driven program that strengthens community pride, develops new local leaders, and completes community improvement projects such as park and trail upgrades, public art, beautification projects, new gathering spaces, and community events.

Through Hometown Pride, more than 100 Iowa communities have completed 2,500 projects, raised over \$23 million, and engaged thousands of volunteers to lead change. Hamilton County now joins this growing network of communities who are strengthening hometown pride across Iowa!

New Housing Development Breaks Ground in Jefferson

City of Jefferson leaders and community partners celebrated the groundbreaking of a new 50-unit housing development in June. Led by KCG Companies in partnership with the Greene County Development Corporation and the City of Jefferson, the project is now under construction and is expected to welcome its first residents next summer. The development marks a significant investment in expanding local housing options and supporting Jefferson's continued growth.



Story City Named All-Star Community

Story City has been named a 2026 All-Star Community by the Iowa League of Cities for its Bertha Bartlett Public Library expansion and renovation. One of just three Iowa communities selected, Story City was recognized for transforming the library into a modern community hub. The 5,000-square-foot expansion added performance and meeting spaces, expanded children's and teen areas, study rooms, a makerspace and upgraded technology, strengthening the library's role in lifelong learning and community connection.

DOWNTOWN AMES OUTDOOR CAFÉ

Original conceptual rendering by
10Fold Architecture + Engineering

YOU'RE GOING TO
LOVE LIVING HERE

Downtown Ames Outdoor Cafés

The new sidewalk cafés in front of **Della Viti** and **Sam's Place** mark the launch of Downtown Ames' Outdoor Café Pilot Program, a collaborative placemaking initiative between the City of Ames, Downtown Ames, local businesses, and community partners. Guided by the *Downtown Ames: A Guiding Vision* document, the project transforms underutilized public space into vibrant gathering places that support local businesses, encourage foot traffic, and establish a model for future sidewalk cafés and parklets throughout the community.

Thank you to **10Fold Architecture + Engineering** for design services, **ABC Supply** for decking materials, **Munn Lumber** for framing support, the **Ames Home Builders Association** and **Iowa Home Crafters** for construction, and the **City of Ames** and the business owners who embraced the opportunity.

PLAY **IN** AMES

FOR THE DREAMERS

Post Malone at Jack Trice Stadium

Post Malone and Jelly Roll brought another blockbuster concert to Jack Trice Stadium on July 17, drawing tens of thousands of fans from across the Midwest. The show reinforced Ames' reputation as a destination for major touring artists, following recent performances by George Strait, Chris Stapleton, Little Big Town, and Luke Combs. The event generated significant economic activity for local hotels, restaurants, and businesses while showcasing the community's ability to host large-scale entertainment events.



Fourth of July Parade

Downtown Ames came alive for the annual Fourth of July Parade as thousands of residents and visitors lined the streets to celebrate Independence Day. The long-standing community tradition featured colorful floats, marching bands, local organizations, and patriotic displays, bringing together families from across the region and highlighting the vibrant spirit that makes Ames a great place to live, work, and play.



New Members

- Staples, The Office Superstore
- Everbrook Academy Daycare
- Van Hemert's Dutch Oven Bakery (Ames and Boone)
- Whistle Stop Café
- Elmswick & Oak
- Sports Bowl
- Distinctive Landscapes
- The Well
- Ames Public Library Friends Foundation
- Formative Years and Growing Learning Center
- Carbon Chiropractic & Integrative Health
- Potbelly Sandwich Shop
- Ingios Geotechnics
- Handful of Made
- CornerPost
- Bailing Out Benji
- HOTWORX
- Hy-Vee Health | Exemplar Care
- Olive Garden
- Senior Helpers of Central Iowa

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.

FREE COMICS
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Fresh Bread, Meats, Desserts, and



West Street Deli Continues a Campustown Tradition

For more than 25 years, West Street Deli has been serving toasted sandwiches, homemade soups, and scratch-made specialties in the heart of Ames' Campustown district. Since taking ownership in 2019, Matthew White has worked to preserve the deli's reputation while building on the traditions that made it a local favorite.

White was no stranger to the restaurant industry when the opportunity arose. Having previously managed kitchens at Wallaby's Bar & Grille and Dublin Bay Irish Pub & Grill, he understood the operational side of running a successful food business. The chance to take over West Street Deli was especially meaningful because of his connection to its founder, John Runner, whom White grew up with.

"I believe West Street Deli was officially established in Fall 1999 or January 2000," White said. "We are the original toasted sandwich in Ames."

Over the years, the deli has become a fixture in Campustown, serving generations of Iowa State students while also attracting local residents and workers from across the community. Its longevity is a testament to a simple formula: quality ingredients, consistency, and a loyal customer base that continues to return year after year.

That commitment to quality remains at the center of the deli's identity. Unlike many sandwich shops, West Street Deli prepares much of its menu from scratch. Homemade soups, chili, breads, and desserts are staples, while many of the meats are prepared in-house.

"We make just about everything from scratch from soup and chili to our homemade buns," White said. "We even grind, season, mix and smoke our own pepperoni and andouille sausage, as well as turkey breasts, pork loins, pork belly for specials and briskets from time to time."

The deli's menu also reflects changing customer tastes, offering a wide variety of vegetarian sandwich options alongside its smoked meats and signature toasted sandwiches. With a team of five to six employees, White focuses on maintaining consistency and quality in every order.

"I believe that quality is what matters," he said. "Even if it takes more time and may cost us a little more to make, it is worth it in the long run."

Today, West Street Deli remains a popular lunch destination for students, faculty, residents, and visitors alike. Located in Campustown, the deli is easy to access, with plenty of free parking available behind the building.



d More • Made Fresh Daily • Fresh Bread, Meats, Desserts, and More • Ma



Matthew White
Owner, West Street Deli

Learn more about West Street Deli on their website.

www.WestStreetDeliAmes.com

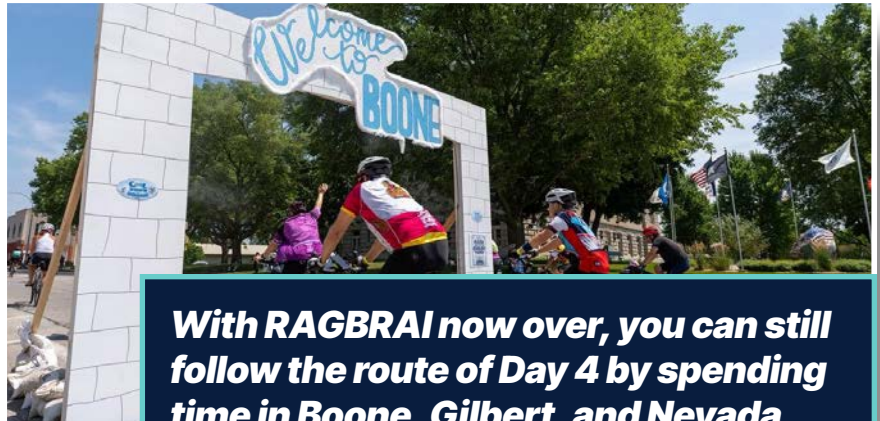


The Register's Annual Great Bicycle Ride Across Iowa took place from July 18-25, 2026.

The Register's Annual Great Bicycle Ride Across Iowa, better known as RAGBRAI, crossed the state from July 18-25, bringing thousands of cyclists and visitors through communities across the region.

Boone welcomed riders as one of this year's overnight host communities, marking RAGBRAI's return to the region just three years after Ames served as an overnight stop in 2023. Months of planning by local organizers, volunteers, businesses, and community partners culminated in a festive celebration that showcased Boone's hospitality. Riders were treated to live entertainment, with nationally recognized rock cover band Hairball headlining the evening festivities.

The following day, cyclists continued east through Gilbert and Nevada before making their way to Marshalltown, giving each community an opportunity to welcome riders and highlight the region's small-town charm. Once again, RAGBRAI demonstrated its ability to bring communities together while generating a significant economic and tourism impact across central Iowa.



With RAGBRAI now over, you can still follow the route of Day 4 by spending time in Boone, Gilbert, and Nevada.



Here's how:

Cobblestone Suite & Inn, Boone

Make Boone your home base with a stay at the Cobblestone Inn & Suites. Conveniently located near the community's attractions, the hotel offers comfortable accommodations and an easy place to settle in while exploring Boone and the surrounding area.



Boone RAGBRAI photos provided by Visit Boone County



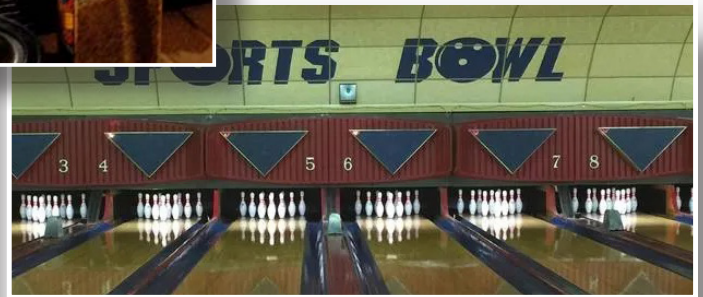


The Open Flame, Gilbert

A stop in Gilbert calls for a meal at The Open Flame Steak House & Lounge. Known for its wood-fired specialties and welcoming atmosphere, the restaurant offers a full menu of steaks, seafood and other favorites, making it a great place to slow down and enjoy a meal.



Aerial photography by Gray Beard Drones



Sports Bowl, Nevada

Finish the route in Nevada with a little friendly competition at Sports Bowl. Located on 12th Street, the bowling center offers a classic Iowa entertainment experience and a chance to unwind with friends or family after exploring the region.



JAPAN

Ames Youth Delegation Visits Koshu City, Japan

エイムズ市の青少年代表団が日本の甲州市を訪問

For 33 years, the sister-city relationship between Ames and Koshu City, Japan has created meaningful opportunities for cultural exchange, friendship, and global understanding. This summer, that tradition continued as seventeen Ames Middle School students and three chaperones traveled to Japan through the Ames International Partner Cities Association (AIPCA), experiencing firsthand the culture, history, and hospitality of Ames' sister city.

Established through the City of Ames and supported by AIPCA, the sister-city relationship has connected hundreds of residents from both communities over the past three decades. The youth delegation remains one of the partnership's signature programs, giving students an immersive experience that extends far beyond tourism.

Throughout the week, students lived with host families, visited classes at Shioyama Junior High School, toured Koshu City Hall, and met with local leaders to learn about Japanese government and civic life.

They explored historic sites such as the 700-year-old Erinji Temple, participated in a traditional tea ceremony, and experienced the region's rich agricultural heritage through visits to vineyards, orchards, and local businesses.

Perhaps the most meaningful moments came through everyday interactions. Despite language differences, students quickly formed friendships with their Japanese peers, discovering that curiosity, kindness, and shared experiences transcend cultural barriers.

The exchange concluded with a celebration recognizing the enduring partnership between Ames and Koshu. Surrounded by host families, community leaders, and fellow delegates, students reflected on a week filled with unforgettable memories and new perspectives.

Before returning home, the delegation spent two days in Tokyo, visiting landmarks including the Harajuku district, Tokyo Sky Tree, Tsukiji Market, and the historic Sensō-ji Temple.

As these young ambassadors returned home, they carried more than souvenirs. They brought back lifelong friendships, a deeper appreciation for another culture, and a renewed understanding of the value of international partnerships that continue to strengthen both communities, one generation at a time.

エイムズ市と日本の甲州市との姉妹都市関係は、33年にわたり、文化交流や友好、そして国際的な相互理解を深める有意義な機会を創出してきました。この夏もその伝統が受け継がれ、エイムズ国際姉妹都市協会 (AIPCA) のプログラムを通じて、エイムズ市の中学生17名と引率者3名が日本を訪問しました。参加者たちは、姉妹都市の文化や歴史、そして温かいおもてなしを肌で感じ、貴重な体験をしました。

エイムズ市を通じて設立され、AIPCA の支援を受けて設立されたこの姉妹都市関係は、過去 30 年にわたり、両コミュニティの数百人の住民を結びつけてきました。青少年代表団は今でもパートナーシップの代表的なプログラムの 1 つであり、学生たちに観光をはるかに超えた没入型の体験を提供します。

生徒たちは一週間を通して、ホストファミリーと暮らし、塩山中学校の授業を訪問し、甲州市役所を見学し、地元の指導者と会い、日本の政府や市民生活について学びました。

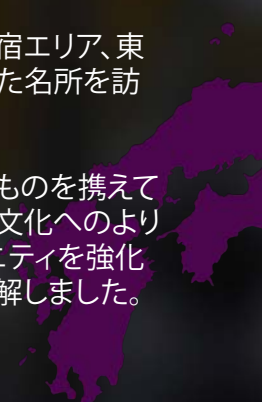
彼らは、700年の歴史を持つ恵林寺などの史跡を探索し、伝統的な茶道に参加し、ブドウ畑、果樹園、地元企業の訪問を通じてこの地域の豊かな農業遺産を体験しました。

おそらく最も有意義な瞬間は、日常の交流を通じて得られたものでしょう。言語の違いにもかかわらず、学生たちは日本人の仲間とすぐに友情を築き、好奇心、優しさ、共通の経験が文化の壁を超えていることに気づきました。

交流の締めくくりとして、エイムズ市と甲州市の長年にわたる友好関係を祝う催しが開かれました。ホストファミリーや地域社会のリーダー、そして共に参加した仲間たちに囲まれ、生徒たちは、忘れられない思い出と新たな視点に満ちた一週間を振り返りました。

帰国に先立ち、代表団は東京で2日間を過ごし、原宿エリア、東京スカイツリー、築地市場、歴史ある浅草寺といった名所を訪問しました。

これらの若い大使たちは帰国の際、お土産以上のものを携えていました。彼らは生涯にわたる友情を取り戻し、異文化へのより深い認識を持ち直し、世代を超えて両方のコミュニティを強化し続ける国際パートナーシップの価値を新たに理解しました。



Harajuku district in Tokyo

東京の原宿エリア



View from Tokyo Sky Tree

東京スカイツリーからの眺め



Buddhist Temple in Koshu City

甲州市の仏教寺院



Entire Delegation with Host Families

代表団全員とホストファミリー



Koshu City

is located in the Yamanashi Prefecture and shares a 33 year sister-city relationship with the City of Ames.

山梨県にある甲州市は、エイムズ市と33年にわたる姉妹都市関係を結んでいま

250

As part of the 250th Anniversary of our country, the Ames History Museum assembled "We the People of Ames," an exhibit highlighting local stories with national impact. Among those stories are the presidents who have visited Ames, bringing the national spotlight to our community and creating memorable moments in our local history.

Photos Courtesy of Ames History Museum



President Theodore Roosevelt (1910)

On August 18, 1910, an estimated 5,000 people gathered at the Ames depot to welcome former President Theodore Roosevelt. Introduced as "America's greatest private citizen," Roosevelt spoke for 17 minutes, honoring Civil War veterans and encouraging students and farmers to keep learning. Known for his forceful personality, he even pushed back when railroad officials told him his time was up. Ames physician Dr. T.L. Rice, a veteran of Roosevelt's Rough Riders, later accompanied him on his Iowa tour.

President William Taft (1916)

Former President William Howard Taft spent three days in Ames in March 1916 as the guest of Iowa State College President Raymond A. Pearson at The Knoll. During his visit, Taft delivered a speech on "Our World Relations" to a packed State Gymnasium, with numerous state and local dignitaries in attendance.



President Dwight D. Eisenhower (1948, 1952, 1956)

President Eisenhower visited Ames three times. His first visit came in 1919, as a 29-year-old lieutenant colonel traveling with the U.S. Army's first transcontinental military convoy along the Lincoln Highway. The grueling journey helped shape his later support for a national Interstate Highway System. Eisenhower returned to Ames during his presidential campaigns in 1952 and 1956.

President Gerald Ford (1976)



President Bill Clinton (1995)



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

A podcast from the Ames Regional Economic Alliance

AREA POD



PERSONAL STORIES, PROFESSIONAL JOURNEYS.

Presented by  **FLYNN
WRIGHT**

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.



#024



Grace Larkey
Community Affairs Advisor, Chevron

Grace shares her journey from a northwest Iowa farm to renewable energy communications, how community involvement has shaped her career, and why mentorship, relationships, and regional partnerships are important to the future of the Ames region.

AREAPOD

EPISODE

#025

WITH
KENT ROTERT



**Kent Rotert, Vice
President, Colorbiotics**

Kent shares his journey helping build the company into an industry leader, how Colorbiotics has grown through multiple ownership transitions, and why innovation, customer focus, and strategic growth continue to drive success from Ames to customers around the world.

#026



Nicole Romey,
Owner, Bold Dance by Peach

Nicole shares her journey from lifelong dancer to entrepreneur, how she built Bold Dance by Peach into a thriving studio, and why dance is about far more than performance. She also discusses building confidence, resilience, and a culture where every student feels they belong while developing life skills that extend far beyond the stage.

#027



Carson Ware, NASCAR Driver
Andrew Allen, President & CEO, YSS

They discuss Ware's journey through addiction, the consequences that followed, and the ongoing work of recovery, along with the importance of reducing stigma and encouraging people to ask for help. They also explore his partnership with YSS and the "Before It Becomes More" campaign, and how Ware is using his NASCAR platform and personal story to start conversations about substance use, prevention, recovery, and second chances. They discuss the power of sharing personal experiences to help others feel less alone and know that recovery is possible.

AREAPOD

EPISODE

#028

WITH
JAMIE POLLARD



**Jamie Pollard, Endowed
Cyclone Director of
Athletics at Iowa State**

Jamie reflects on 21 years of leadership at Iowa State, the transformation of Cyclone athletics, his decision to retire, and the vision behind CyTown and the future of Iowa State Athletics. He also shares what Iowa State and the Ames community have meant to him personally.



From Ames to the National Market

Walk through a grocery store anywhere in the country and there is a good chance you will find a product with a connection to Ames.

Amcor's Ames manufacturing facility produces millions of plastic bottles and preforms every day for some of the nation's leading beverage brands. It is a large-scale manufacturing operation with a reach that extends well beyond the community.

Leading the Ames plant is Plant Director Jeff Thede, whose own career reflects the opportunities available within manufacturing. Thede has spent approximately 30 years with the company, beginning in 1996 when the facility was operated by Ball.

At just 19 years old, Thede started as a machine operator. He later moved into maintenance before deciding he wanted to pursue management. He was promoted to supervisor, and in 2004, accepted an opportunity to move his family to Chino, California, to work at another former Ball facility.

When Ball was acquired by Amcor in 2010, Thede had an opportunity to return to Iowa. He came back to Ames as a plant engineer, eventually becoming operations manager and then plant director. He has now served as plant director for approximately four years.

His focus today goes beyond keeping production moving. Thede is heavily involved with employees on the production floor and the training they receive, with an emphasis on developing people and helping them achieve their professional goals. That people-focused leadership supports an operation that runs on an impressive scale.

Amcor is one of the largest plastics companies in the United States, with facilities around the world and operations spanning plastics, specialty containers and flexible packaging. The Ames facility is part of Amcor's plastic beverage division, which includes 13 plants. The facility produces a wide range of containers for consumable liquids, including packaging for BodyArmor and Gold Peak Tea.

Those two products alone account for approximately 1.5 million bottles produced each day at the Ames facility. The operation runs 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. The plant also produces preforms, essentially blank plastic tubes that are later transformed into finished bottles through a

two-step blow-molding process. Ames can produce more than 9 million preforms per day while consuming approximately 350,000 pounds of plastic resin every day.

The facility's customers include major companies such as Pepsi, Refresco, and Coca-Cola, along with several smaller customers. For Ames, that makes Amcor an important example of how local manufacturing can have a national impact. Products manufactured by employees in Ames ultimately make their way into supply chains serving consumers across the country.

For Thede, the story is equally local. A career that began on the production floor as a 19-year-old machine operator has evolved into plant leadership and workforce development.

From Ames, Amcor is manufacturing at a national scale, while providing local career opportunities and demonstrating the power of advanced manufacturing to connect a community to markets far beyond its borders.



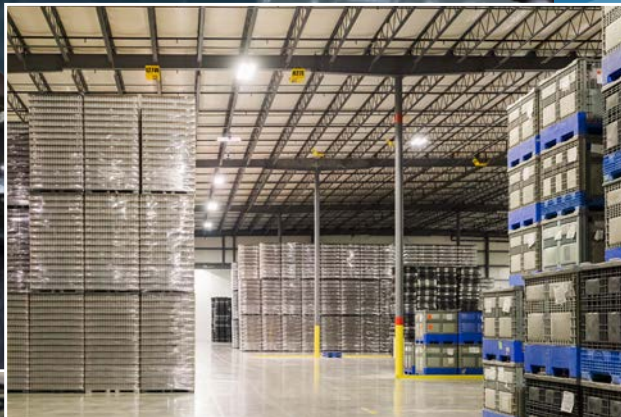
Jeff Thede
Plant Director,

Amcor Rigid Packaging Solutions North America



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Learn more about AMCOR on their website.

www.AMCOR.com

Iowa State to Offer Alcohol Sales at Football, Basketball Games

Iowa State will add alcohol sales to its concessions for football and basketball games, athletic director Jamie Pollard announced in June. Pollard said Iowa State has sought to increase revenue through ticket sales and donations, sponsorship and licensing and by adding new events such as concerts at the school's facilities. Alcohol sales will begin this fall with the added revenue supporting alcohol education, student wellness programming, and public safety enhancements, to support a safe and welcoming community.



U.S. Navy's First Female F-14 Tomcat Pilot to Speak in Ames

Join the Ames Regional Economic Alliance on December 1 for the 2026 Annual Luncheon, featuring Carey Lohrenz, the U.S. Navy's first female F-14 Tomcat pilot and a nationally recognized leadership expert.

Drawing on her experience performing in one of the world's most demanding environments, Lohrenz will share insights on leadership, decision-making, trust and performing under pressure. The luncheon offers an opportunity to celebrate the region's accomplishments, connect with business and community leaders, and gain perspective from one of the nation's most compelling voices on leadership. This event is open to the public



December 1, 2026

11:00 AM - 1:30 PM | Cornerstone Church

Scan the QR code to register for the event,
or visit the Ames Alliance website:

www.AmesAlliance.com



TRAC TI • 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

Chanya Eourdilokkul

Jamie Courtney

Matthew White

Kris Blocker

Katrina Williams

Elena Brown

Alex Fejfar

Grace Larkey

Kent Rotert

Nicole Romey

Carson Ware

Andrew Allen

Jamie Pollard

Jeff Thede

"Great stories happen to those who tell them," Ira Glass once said. I've always liked that idea because the best business stories in our region rarely begin with something extraordinary. They begin with people paying attention, taking a risk, solving a problem, building something from scratch, or simply refusing to give up. Across the communities we serve, there are great stories happening every day. The opportunity is recognizing them, asking the right questions, and giving those stories the attention they deserve. That is what Traction is all about.

On a more personal level, I'm reminded of how fortunate I am to be a storyteller. My work gives me a reason to walk through the doors of businesses and meet the people behind them. I get to see the manufacturing floors, hear the origin stories, meet the entrepreneurs, and discover the passion that often isn't visible from the outside. Every visit is a reminder that great stories aren't necessarily somewhere else. They're right here, in our own backyard. And perhaps the best part of telling them is knowing there are always more waiting to be discovered.

TRACTI • N 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

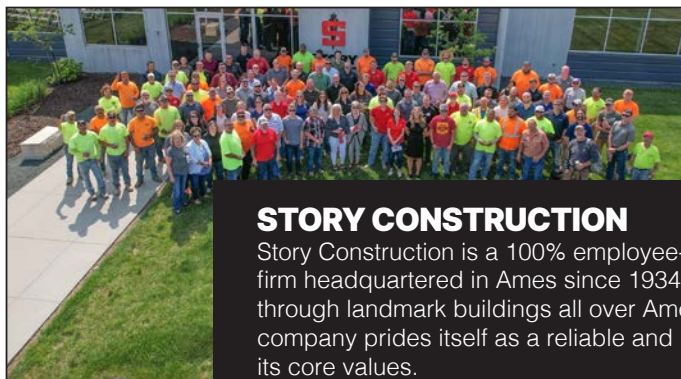
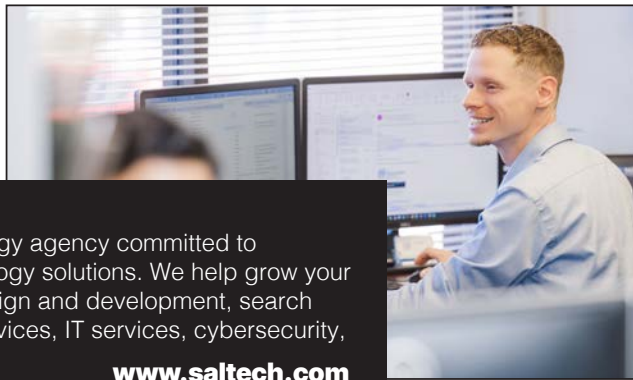


SALTECH
SYSTEMS

SALTECH SYSTEMS

Saltech Systems is a full-service technology agency committed to providing simplified and valuable technology solutions. We help grow your digital presence with custom website design and development, search engine optimization, digital marketing services, IT services, cybersecurity, cloud hosting and more.

www.saltech.com



STORY
CONSTRUCTION

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.

www.storycon.com

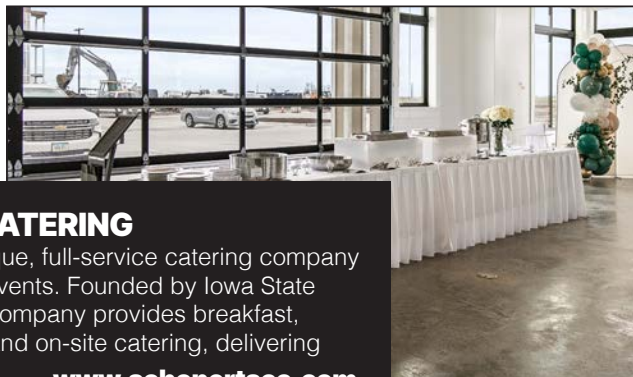


SCHONERT'S
CORPORATE CATERING

SCHONERT'S CORPORATE CATERING

Schonert's Corporate Catering is a boutique, full-service catering company specializing in corporate and university events. Founded by Iowa State University alumnus Adam Schonert, the company provides breakfast, lunch, dinner, hors d'oeuvres, desserts, and on-site catering, delivering reliable and personalized service.

www.schonertsc.com



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Alliance on social media*

