



First Friday News & Views



Iowa's LGBTQ+ Newsletter of the First Friday Breakfast Club

April 2024 | Volume 29 | Issue 4

Next Meeting
Friday,
April 5
7:00 a.m.



Location
Hoyt Sherman
15th & Woodland
Des Moines



Speaker
Melissa O'Neil

Central Iowa
Shelter and
Services



Website
ffbc Iowa.org



Misinformation and Conspiracy Theories

by Byron Huff, Board President

Misinformation and conspiracy theories have been around for centuries, but they have become increasingly prevalent in recent years thanks to the rise of social media and the 24-hour news cycle.

In the sixteenth century, the printing press made it possible for misinformation to spread more widely. One of the most famous examples of misinformation from this period is the "Protocols of the Elders of Zion," a forged document that claimed to be a plan by Jewish leaders to take over the world. The "Protocols" were used by the Nazis to justify the Holocaust.

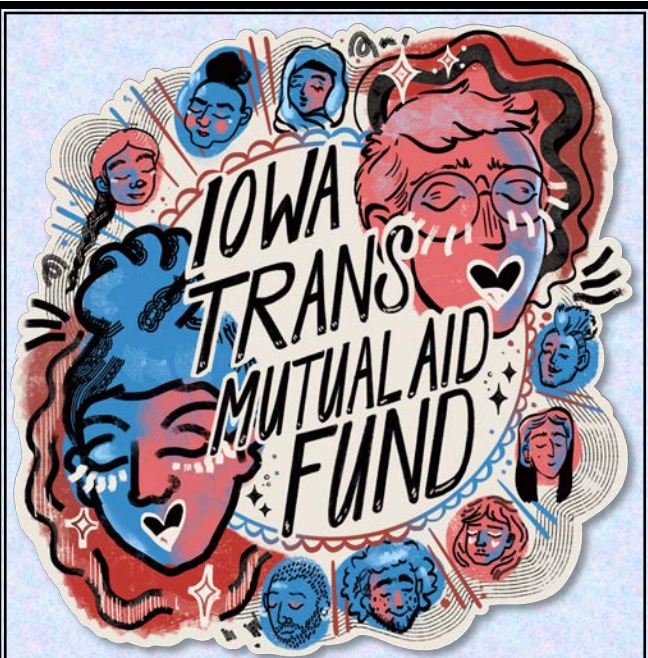
In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, misinformation was often spread through newspapers, magazines, and radio broadcasts. One of the most famous examples of misinformation from this period is the "yellow journalism" of the late nineteenth century. Yellow journalism was a style of newspaper reporting that emphasized sensationalism over facts. During its heyday in the late nineteenth century, it was one of many factors that helped push the United States and Spain into war in Cuba and the Philippines, leading to the acquisition of overseas territory by the United States.

In the twentieth century, misinformation continued to be used by governments to justify wars and other political actions. The U.S. justified its military intervention in Vietnam by the domino theory, which stated that if one country fell under the influence of communism, the surrounding countries would inevitably follow. The aim was to prevent communist domination of Southeast Asia. The justifications for the Vietnam War were seriously flawed. The Central Intelligence Agency had repeatedly informed the Johnson administration that most Southeast Asian countries were not in danger of falling like dominos to communism even if North Vietnam won.

Broadcast networks were once held to a higher standard, but that was thwarted by the F.C.C. in 1987. The Fairness Doctrine mandated broadcast networks devote time to contrasting views on issues of public importance. The F.C.C. panel, under new chairman Dennis Patrick, repealed the Fairness Doctrine altogether with a 4-0 vote. That same year Congress attempted to preempt the F.C.C. decision and to codify the Fairness Doctrine. The bill passed, but the legislation was vetoed by President Ronald Reagan; Congress was unable to overturn the President's veto.



[continued on page 2]



Support Needed for the Iowa Trans Mutual Aid Fund

The Iowa Trans Mutual Aid Fund was founded in 2021. The organization was founded on the belief that every Trans, Nonbinary, and Gender Diverse Iowan should have access to gender-affirming care. ITMAF provides small grants to Iowans seeking this care throughout the state. This can include:

- transition-specific clothing (binders/tucking garments), make-up and wigs
- hormone replacement therapy
- therapy co-pays
- doctor visits for gender-affirming care (HRT, top and bottom surgery referrals)
- top and bottom surgeries, FFS
- name change fees
- laser hair removal
- travel expenses related to accessing gender-affirming care out of state

Currently, ITMAF dispenses **\$12,000** of aid for gender-affirming care every month.

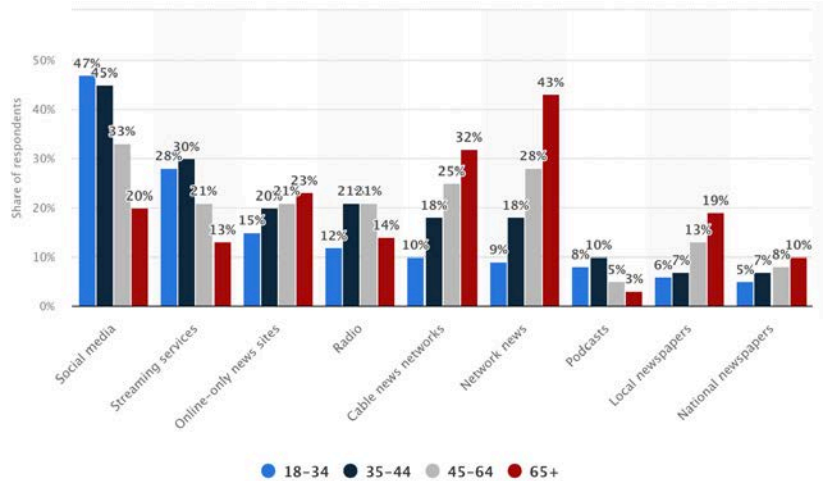


Donate at:

www.iowatransmutualaidfund.org

The Iowa Trans Mutual Aid Fund is a nonprofit organization and fiscal sponsee of Des Moines Mutual Aid, which is a Des Moines-based mutual aid organization with 501c3 status.

The rise of social media in the early twenty-first century has made it easier than ever for misinformation to spread. Social media platforms such as Facebook and X (Twitter) allow users to share information with their friends and followers, regardless of whether or not the information is accurate. Social media was by far the most popular news platform among 18 to 34 year olds in the United States, with 47% of respondents to a survey held in August 2022 saying that they used social networks for news on a daily basis. This has led to a proliferation of misinformation and conspiracy theories, which can have a number of negative consequences including bad decisions about their health, finances, and political beliefs.



The internet revolutionized the dissemination of information. This has given rise to algorithms leading individuals to gravitate towards information that confirms their beliefs. Social media platforms have become breeding grounds for viral misinformation and conspiracy theories, amplified by algorithms designed to maximize engagement.

In the twenty-first century, we find ourselves in a post-truth era, where objective facts are overshadowed by subjective opinions and alternative realities. Misinformation campaigns, fueled by political agendas and profit motives, sow seeds of doubt and division. Conspiracy theories, once relegated to the fringes of society, now permeate mainstream discourse, challenging our understanding of reality.

The history of misinformation and conspiracy theories is a testament to the enduring power of human imagination and the fragility of truth in the face of deception. As we navigate the maze of misinformation in the digital age, critical thinking and media literacy emerge as essential tools for deciphering fact from fiction.

It is difficult to say what the future of misinformation holds. However, it is clear that it is a serious problem that is likely to continue to grow in the years to come. We need to educate people on how to recognize misleading information and to be critical and verify the information they consume and share.





Iowa LGBTQ Chamber of Commerce is working together to advance the common business interests, economic growth, and equality in the workplace for Iowa's LGBTQ+ business community and its allies.

iowalgbtqchamber.org



A special thanks to C.J. Petersen for introducing our March speaker, Rob Sand, Iowa State Auditor. Thanks to David Cotton for managing our website, to Nicholas Williams for managing our Microsoft IT infrastructure, and to David Wilfahrt for managing FFBC's finances. Thanks to Wade Petersen for his work as our newsletter editor. *Thank you to all our newsletter contributors!*

The deadline for the 2024 May newsletter will be April 22. If you have something on your mind to share, type it up and email it to Wade (wadecpetersen@gmail.com) by the deadline.



Fundraising efforts are ongoing to fund our scholarship program. To date we have awarded over \$450,000 for scholarships to Iowa high school seniors who have done remarkable, courageous things to reduce homophobia and teach about LGBTQ issues in their schools and communities. Please consider a tax-deductible contribution online or by sending a check.



A special thank-you to those FFBC members and friends who have chosen to designate FFBC through the Donor Direct program of United Way. Contributions through United Way are tax deductible. Those who have chosen this means of supporting FFBC have gone to the trouble of completing their United Way campaign worksheet by designating FFBC as the beneficiary of their generosity. FFBC is an eligible recipient of such funding designations.



BENEFITING **oneiowa** ACTION

Then & Now

15 YEARS OF MARRIAGE EQUALITY IN IOWA

APRIL 3, 2024

GET TICKETS NOW!

Wednesday, April 3, 2024, at 6:00 PM
Willow on Grand, 6011 Grand Ave, DSM
Tickets: <https://onecau.se/oneiowa15>

With over 40 anti-LGBTQ bills introduced in Iowa this year alone, it's clear that our work is far from over. We've seen the harm that anti-LGBTQ+ legislators have caused our community, and they don't intend on stopping anytime soon. That's why we must stop them and elect pro-LGBTQ+ candidates.

If you've been outraged by what's been going on, this is the perfect opportunity to take action and power our fight for LGBTQ equality in Iowa. Let's ensure that the progress we've made over the past fifteen years is protected and advanced.



Coming of Age

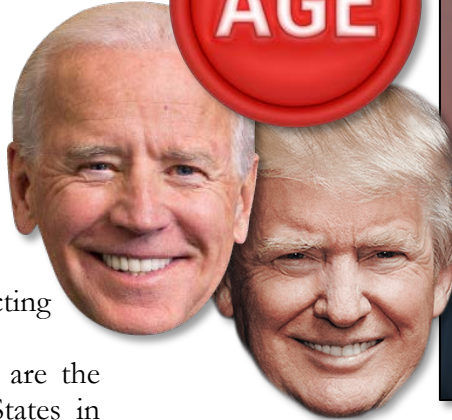
by Jonathan Wilson

Two things -- at least -- can be expected to come with aging, one not-so-good (frustratingly) and one very good. Neither one has to do with physical woes that vary considerably from one individual to another. Physical challenges can be difficult for sure, or terminal, and there's no predicting which it will be. On that, it will be what it will be.

President Joe Biden and Donald Trump are the oldest candidates for president of the United States in history. I can recall when Ronald Reagan's age was made an issue in his run for president. He was younger than both Biden and Trump. Reagan successfully made a joke of it, was elected, and ended his second term carefully, lovingly "handled" to disguise his dementia. As far as I know, the United States was not compromised in any way and didn't miss a beat.

The two things that can -- should -- be expected to come with age are loss of memory and greater wisdom, born of experience. I'm 79 years old, and, without difficulty, I can't tell you what I had for breakfast the day before yesterday. Without effort, I can't tell you what or whether I had breakfast this morning! It is what it is, and it will be for everyone -- including Biden and Trump. Read here: Biden's occasional gaffs, and Trump's occasional gaffes, such as his claim, for example, that Nikki Haley failed in her (nonexistent) responsibility for Capitol security on January 6. I comfort myself by saying to myself that when I was younger I had less to remember than I do now.

So, let's say that you're the president of the United States. No matter who you are (or, how old you are, for that matter) there will be memory issues. Think: "No, Mr. President, the current president of (pick a country -- Picklebekistan -- I don't care) is so-and-so." Presidents are surrounded by capable fact checkers, by people who are tuned into the nitty-gritty, by people perfectly capable of



correcting any lapse of the president's memory, of whatever age. That's what they're supposed to do. It's their job.

Given the **FACT** that both Biden and Trump are dealing with compromised memory, and given the **FACT** that both will be having memory losses, whether they're elected or not, the memory loss is a given.

Of the consequences of aging, wisdom (or its potential) becomes the more important inquiry.

That, in turn, leaves us with sorting out what level of **wisdom** that Biden and Trump have demonstrated thus far.

Nikki Haley is right about this: chaos follows Trump around like a shadow -- he is NOT a wise man. He is a sick man. He has a readily diagnosable mental health condition: narcissistic personality disorder. A layperson can easily make the diagnosis, just visit the Mayo Clinic website and do a search. It will not only give you the list of diagnostic symptoms (you or I may have one or two); Trump checks off every one of them. It goes on to tell how such people behave, and that describes Trump as well.

What I can tell you is that BOTH Biden and Trump are having, and will continue to have, memory loss. That can be offset by attentive staff members. What the staff can't provide is wisdom and, there, Biden excels by comparison.

“What lies behind you and what lies in front of you, pales in comparison to what lies inside of you.”

- Ralph Waldo Emerson



CAPITAL CITY PRIDE



INTERGENERATIONAL PANEL DISCUSSION

April 4, 2024, 6 p.m. | Temple Theater

Everyone has their own story, but what is the experience of being gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender or queer across different generations?

Join us for a panel discussion from members of each generation to discuss the issues of how the generation gap can separate us but also bring us together.

Sponsored by **wellabe**

Why
LGBTQ AFFIRMING
CHRISTIANITY
is not an oxymoron

AN EVENING WITH Colby Martin
AUTHOR OF *UNCLOBBER AND THE SHIFT*

SUNDAY APRIL 7
6:30PM - LANG HALL, UNI CAMPUS

IF YOU'VE EVER ASKED:

- What does it mean to be “affirming?”
- How does **faith** fit with discussions on gender and sexuality?
- Do my **questions** and **doubts** make me a bad Christian?
- What does the **Bible** actually say about LGBTQ people?

THREEHOUSE
Collaborative Campus Ministries

Tyler Greene Legacy
Do Justice Love Mercy Walk Humbly

Then this night is for you!

FFBC Membership

FFBC membership is open to all members of the LGBTQ+ community and their allies. We welcome all guests, regardless of sexual orientation or gender. Meetings are held the first Friday of every month from 7:00 A.M. - 8:15 A.M. at Hoyt Sherman Place in Des Moines. The following membership and guest rates help us cover our food and facility costs.

In-Person Meeting Rates (Members & Guests)

Annual Rate: \$180
(12 consecutive meetings)

Quarterly Rate: \$48
(3 consecutive meetings)

Month-by-Month: \$18

First Time or One-Time Attendee: \$15

Full-time Student: \$8

No charge to attend via Zoom


Payment Options

Cash or check at the meeting

Credit card prior to the meeting at www.ffbciaowa.org; visit the “Membership” tab

Meeting Schedule

6:30 a.m. - Doors open
6:45 a.m. - Breakfast service begins
7:00 a.m. - Meeting begins



SPOTLIGHT ON:



RESPECTED CONNECTED PROTECTED

Des Moines Pride Center is a 501(c)3 nonprofit all-volunteer community organization that serves, supports, and celebrates LGBTQIA+ individuals and their allies. **The Des Moines Pride Center provides a safe space for people to be respected, connected, and protected.**

Of the 30+ LGBTQIA+ organizations in the Des Moines area, the **Des Moines Pride Center** was one of the original community resources. It was called the Gay and Lesbian Affiliates of Iowa before morphing into: the Des Moines Gay Coalition; the Gay and Lesbian Resource Center; Outreach of Central Iowa; The Center; and currently, the Des Moines Pride Center. Over the years, the location has also changed.

These community centers became **incubators** for many of the cultural organizations for our community: Stage West, the Des Moines Gay Men's Chorus (originally the Des Moines Men's Chorus), the Diversity Chorus, and the Iowa Pride Sports League.

The Pride Center's motto is "**Respected-Connected-Protected.**" Each day the Board works to make this their goal. The Board is made up of gay, lesbian, transgender, non-binary, and polyamorous members. Board meetings are held evenings on the first and third Tuesdays of the month.



The current Des Moines Pride Center is located in Suite 244 of the **Mickle Center (1620 Pleasant Street)** in Sherman Hill, just northwest of Hoyt Sherman Place (only one block away from FFBC meetings).



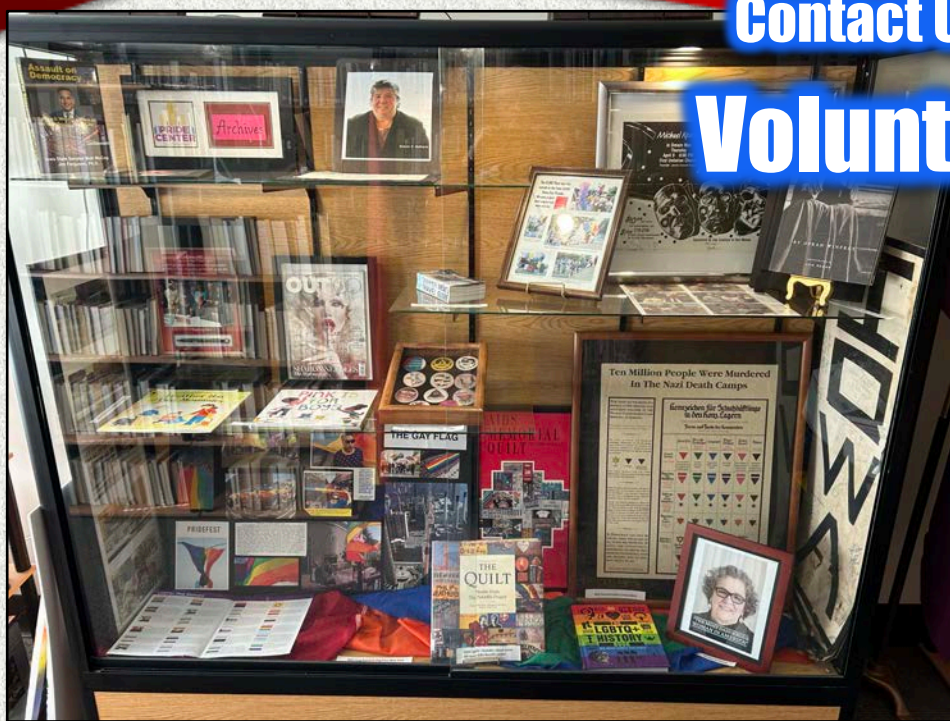
The Pride Center is open to the public on **Sunday afternoons from 2-4 p.m.** and **Wednesday evenings from 6-8 p.m.** Since it is a secure location, visitors will need to call **(515) 612-6604** for the host to let you enter. Library books may be donated through the drop box in the main vestibule and returned books may be left there also. **Come visit the Des Moines Pride Center!**



The current main focus of the Pride Center is to provide a **library** of LGBTQIA+ books and resource materials to check out. Active **archive displays** also chronicle the history of the LGBTQ+ movement in central Iowa and beyond. A resource section also contains pamphlets and information from several organizations in the Des Moines metro area.

SPOTLIGHT ON:

Contact Us To Volunteer!



Along with its historical displays, the Pride Center provides space for other LGBTQIA+ organizations to meet. Conference rooms and the Community Room are open for reservations. There are also three kinds of bathrooms, a kitchen, and a patio which are all part of the accommodations.

Rick Miller has long been a part of various incarnations of the Pride Center and currently serves on its Board of Directors. Rick was awarded Person of the Year by Capital City Pride for his work curating "Evolution of the Revolution: 50 Years Since Stonewall" exhibit at the Polk County Heritage Gallery in 2019.

Rick Miller

will have a retrospective of his artwork on display at the **Heritage Gallery** from **April 30 to June 21**. Museum hours are 11 – 4:30 weekdays. Entrance is on the SW corner of the building which is located just south of the World Food Prize building. Special **Open House** events will be **May 2** and **June 6** from 6:00 – 8:00 PM

Along with his career as an art teacher in Newton, Rick has participated in numerous other historical, cultural, and informational LGBTQ+ activities throughout the years.



Pride Center Annual Awards & Recognition Event

May 18 | 6:00 – 8:00 PM Mickle Center

www.desmoinespridecenter.org



Governor's Conference Reception

6 PM | Thursday, April 4
Big Grove Des Moines Taproom

This reception is for adults and community members to come together and raise money towards scholarships for students to attend. No student has ever been turned away for their inability to pay for the conference. This is only made possible because of sponsorships and community members at this reception! Please join us in supporting student scholarships by donating or bidding on a silent auction item.

Register at:

one.bidpal.net/govconreception2024/welcome

Future Speakers

May 3:

One Iowa

Courtney Reyes & Max Mowitz

June 7:

Sarah Brown-Wessling

2010 National Teacher of the Year

Saturday, July 13:

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

Donor-Member Summer Party

Home of John Schmacker

LGBTQ+ FREE LEGAL CLINIC

Saturday, April 20

10a.m.- 2 p.m.

Drake Legal Clinic

2400 University Avenue, Des Moines

Get FREE legal help with:
Iowa legal name change
Sex designation change on Iowa birth certificate
Limited funds available to assist with filing fees.

For a guaranteed spot, register at
<http://bit.ly/3lurLfw> or scan the QRcode.
Walk-ins welcome based on availability.



DENTONS DAVIS BROWN

Drake Law School



WEDNESDAY NIGHTS

SOFTBALL LEAGUE



Weds | 4/17-6/5 | 6-10pm

CAMPBELL RECREATION AREA

Teams and Free Agents Welcome.
Beginner - Intermediate/Advanced

pridesportsleague.org





April Speaker

Melissa O'Neil



Melissa O'Neil has been the Chief Executive Officer of Central Iowa Shelter & Services (CISS) since February, 2016. Prior to her position with CISS, Melissa worked at I-JAG as Vice President. She has consistently served in leadership roles including Assistant Women's Basketball Coach at Indiana University of Pennsylvania and Graduate Assistant Women's Basketball Coach for two years. Melissa has volunteered her time and talent with Christ the King girls basketball team, Indianola Tribe Soccer, and United Way of Central Iowa. She received her Bachelors in Communication from Clarion University of Pennsylvania in 2001 and her Masters in Advertising from Syracuse University in 2003. Melissa resides in Indianola with her husband, Jeremy; daughter, Katie; and son, Patrick.



Speaker Series



[Tickets are free, but you must register online]

April 11 / 6:00 P.M. / Temple Theater

Alicia Roth Weigel

Alicia is a *Forbes* and *New York Times* published change agent, working to improve the landscape for marginalized populations in the South and around the world. By day, she serves as the Pride Fund's lead partner in Texas, raising and investing venture capital into LGBTQIA-led businesses nationwide. By night, she advocates for the rights of intersex people like her through her consulting firm Intrepida Strategy and nonprofit Intrepida Foundation. Alicia's leadership in the intersex movement will be featured in a film directed by Julie Cohen (of the RBG documentary) and a book published by Harper Collins.



"That nothing here is promised, not one day. And love is love is love is love is love is love is love cannot be killed or swept aside. Now fill the world with music, love and pride."



Lin-Manuel Miranda



Rob Sand, State Auditor, Addresses FFBC

by Gary Moore

First Friday Breakfast Club was privileged this morning to have **Rob Sand**, Iowa's State Auditor, as our guest speaker. His off-the-cuff remarks were a reaction to the Iowa State Legislature's recent passing of the Religious Freedom Restoration Act. I have chosen these quotes from the Honorable Auditor's talk to summarize the thoughts he shared with the almost 60 or so persons who attended the breakfast meeting this first Friday of March.

"Show me where in the Bible Jesus turned anyone away." "I believe that it can't mean turning someone away, that it can't mean making someone feel unwelcome, that it can't mean saying to someone, 'No, this is not for you.'"

"I'm sick of this. I've been sick of it since I was in high school. Sick of people taking the faith that is supposed to be the warmest, most welcoming love that any human can ever know, and turning it into twisting it into a way to reject someone because of your own fear of them, because of your own discomfort."

"I don't know how we move past this divide without having these conversations with every kind of group of people that we can. A conversation about being welcoming, making sure that people who hold themselves out as being Christian are welcoming to people in the gay community is not just one to be said to the gay community, but it's one to be said to people who are in that conservative Christian community as well."

"Do not be daunted by the enormity of the world's grief. It is not yours to complete the work, but neither are you free to abandon it. That, to me, is a recipe for a life well lived. We can't expect ourselves to win every battle. We can't expect ourselves to make the world perfect."

"We just have to keep doing the work that we know is the right work to do and know that we've done our part."



Rob Sand, Iowa State Auditor



During the question and answer period, Rob provided reasons why Iowa can be hopeful about the future. Despite the fact the legislature of both houses and top state offices are held by one party, Rob noted just how close many of the top state and national elections were. He also noted that, "Why do we allow ourselves to be antagonized and goaded and poked into thinking that everyone over there is evil? Right. It's destructive for all of us. For every one of us. It doesn't enable free thinking."

Rob started his talk by having the podium removed. "I feel like I'm hiding and I want to talk to you. I don't want to hide from you."

Rob Sand is Iowa's 33rd State Auditor. He was elected in 2018 after serving seven years as Iowa's chief public corruption prosecutor in the Iowa Attorney General's Office. Rob has uncovered more misspent money than any other state auditor in their first term, creating the Public Innovations and Efficiency program called P.I.E. program is so successful at saving tax dollars that the Republican state auditor of Mississippi copied it. Auditor Hand was born and raised in Decorah, Iowa, and lives in Des Moines with his wife, Christine, and two sons.



March Meeting Photo Gallery

Photos By
Gary Moore, Ken Hanson,
& Wade Petersen



FFBC
President,
Byron Huff

C.J.
Petersen
Introduces
Rob Sand



Polk County's Climate Action Plan



by Supervisor Matt McCoy
Polk County, 1st District

In September 2021, the Polk County Board of Supervisors approved a resolution acknowledging the global climate crisis and embarked upon a stretch goal to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from Polk County operations. The plan establishes a reduction goal of reducing greenhouse gasses by 40% by 2030 with the ultimate goal by 90% by 2040 when comparing it to 2020 levels as a baseline. Our plan, fully implemented, will result in annual savings as much as \$600,000 annually by 2030 and \$1.5 million by 2040 in 2023 dollars. These estimates include energy efficiency upgrades and solar installation finance costs. We anticipate energy efficiency upgrades of a return on investment of at least 12%.

The predictions for climate change are severe. We estimate by the year 2100 that our annual average temperature will increase by 6-11 degrees Fahrenheit. We anticipate a 30% increase in heavy precipitation events. We anticipate an additional 55 days per year where our average temperature will exceed 95 degrees Fahrenheit and our annual precipitation will increase up to 15%.

Along with these extreme weather events will come higher risk for tornadoes, strong wind, hail, flooding, drought, ice storms, and other extreme weather events. Polk County is pleased to do our part in reducing greenhouse gasses to reduce the extreme risk of climate change.



Common Love: Queer & Clothed

Follow us on Instagram or Facebook
[@commonlovedsm](#)

- Shop our next pop-up on **April 6, 2024**, from 1-3 p.m. at **Park Fair Mall, Suite #107**

Keynote Speakers:

Mercury Stardust (The Trans Handy Ma'am)
and Iowa Rep. Zooney Zephyr!

**THE LARGEST LGBTQ YOUTH
CONFERENCE IN THE COUNTRY!**

iowa
safe
schools

April 5th
2024

The 19th Annual Governor's Conference

ON LGBTQ YOUTH

iagovcon.org

Prairie Meadows
Events Center

First Friday Breakfast
Club will be an Exhibitor!



Killers of the Flower Moon

An Encore Movie Review by Mark Turnage

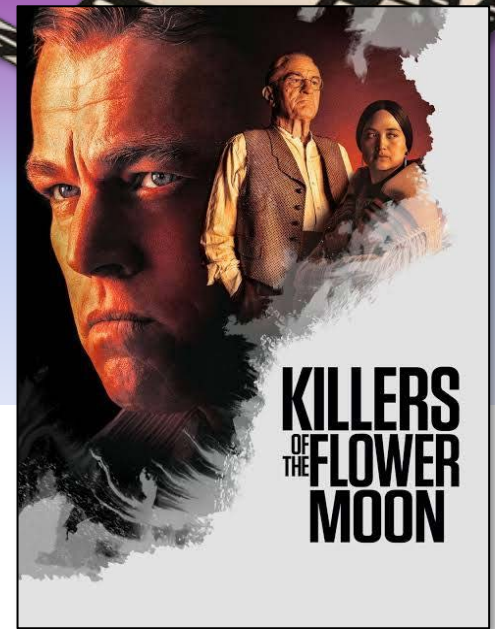
Part horror film, part Western, and part true-crime procedural, Martin Scorsese's *Killers of the Flower Moon* is a bloody, bleak 3.5-hour examination of institutionalized racism and its destruction of Native American lives for greed. It's being hailed as a cinematic masterpiece due to its historical scale, Scorsese's impressive body of work, and its unflinching look at one of the darkest times in Native American history. Yet despite its screenplay's more personal shift in narrative from its source material, *Killers* needs more Native American/ Osage triumphs to balance its grim, relentless focus on the perpetrators of their tragedies.

1919: Fairfax, Oklahoma. The Osage Nation, displaced from Missouri by the U.S. government to Oklahoma, discovers oil on their land. With the Osage newly prosperous (and with the legal caveat of white financial guardians), the town grows and attracts white residents looking to make it rich, and unsolved murders of Osage women begin to rise. Perpetually sour-faced WWI vet Ernest Burkhart (Leonardo DiCaprio), returns to Fairfax to seek work from his uncle, folksy influential rancher baron William "King" Hale (Robert De Niro), who between praising the virtues of the Osage urges Ernest to get closer to Mollie Brown (a fantastic Lily Gladstone), a no-nonsense Osage oil heiress part of a large, wealthy Native American family. At the same time,

Ernest becomes involved in criminal activity, staging masked robberies of wealthy Osage citizens with a small crew.

The pull between Ernest's romance with Mollie and his criminal involvement begin to wear away at him steadily as more of Mollie's family is targeted, and even when the true culprits are steadily revealed early on, apathy, betrayal, and racism meet the victims far sooner and longer than justice ever does. Aside from her mother and one of her sisters, we don't really get much character development for Mollie's family members—but we do see how senseless (and stupid) the circumstances surrounding their murders are, and there are many. It's a hard watch thanks to its true-crime and historical roots, but also because of its skillful depiction of a culturally-accepted white echo chamber that controls nearly every aspect of Mollie's life, down to the KKK being amicably greeted by a character in the town parade. When a seriously ill Mollie travels to Washington D.C. to beg the president for help, President Coolidge grants the Osage an audience for show—then ignores her. The film is loaded with the most vicious examples of performative allyship and contradictory behavior, and *Killers* shines brightest in its commentary of a historically two-faced America.

Scorsese's screenplay shifts the focus from the investigation of the murders to the romance and relation-



ship of Ernest and Mollie, choosing to expose its culprits and central mystery at the conclusion of the first act. This shift frames the narrative a step closer to its native Osage characters but is told overwhelmingly from the perspective of the white perpetrators of their misery, and it's what stops me from calling this movie a "masterpiece." In such a merciless film with cultural erasure as one of its main themes, the Osage beyond Mollie need more personal triumphs of their own that give them more dimension than just murder victims. *Killers* is ultimately a marriage story, but also a tale about community complicity in killing and stealing from minorities.

At one point, Ernest reads an Osage children's book that asks, "Do you see the wolves in this picture?" In *Killers*, the wolves are in plain sight and attack without compunction. They may even be us. This is a film about complicity, and Scorsese makes his audience a part of it through his narrative choices. But the drumbeat of the Osage's perseverance needs to be loudest for this film to be masterful.



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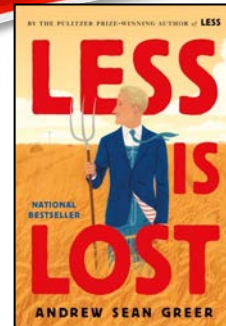
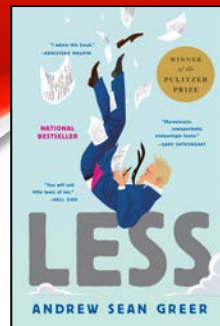
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FFBC Board
of Directors

First Friday Breakfast Club
P.O. Box 41611
Des Moines, IA 50311
(515) 954-2996

Less / Less is Lost

By Andrew Sean Greer

Book Reviews
by Steve Person



Former Iowa First Lady, Christie Vilsack, invited me to attend the Twenty-fifth Annual Iowa Author Award Dinner on October 20, 2023, at the Embassy Suites Hotel. If you're going to attend an affair like this, I'd like to tell you it's best to go with a VIP, and that's what Christie is. She was an award honoree in 2003 for her tireless efforts to promote literacy. Upon our arrival to the hotel, we checked in at the reception table and were given not only VIP nametags (I was listed as "And Guest") but received VIP passes to the cocktail room, VIP table assignments for the dinner, and a copy of *Less Is Lost* by the featured speaker, Andrew Sean Greer. While the dinner was typical hotel banquet fare, seated to my left were Fred and Charlotte Hubbell and to my right were Christie and one of the four Iowa writers honored that evening. At the cocktail reception, I was introduced to Mr. Greer who makes his home in San Francisco. He signed my copy of his latest book and was quite complimentary when Christie told him I headed up her libraries and literacy program, Iowa Stories 2000, from 2001-2005. Mr. Greer's only Iowa connection was that he attended the Iowa Writers' Workshop at the University of Iowa. He is a gifted writer who has published seven books of fiction and in 2018 was awarded The Pulitzer Prize for Fiction.

Less: Arthur Less is a middle-aged gay man who purports to be a major writer and has had some success with his publishing career. His main claim to "fame" involves his live-in relationship with a much older published—and popular—poet, Robert Brownburn. The relationship lasted fifteen years. Eventually, Less moves on and takes an extended trip around the world. He always gets himself in impossible situations yet manages to live through them. A minor prize committee in Italy gave him an award. The award keeps eating at Less's thoughts that...is he? or isn't he?...a good writer. Eventually, Arthur Less moves in with a much younger man, Freddy Pelu, who teaches at various colleges and universities. Freddie is 25 years younger than Less, and that fact gnaws forever at Arthur's sense of self and well-being. The book is filled with humorous incidents.

Less Is Lost: The second book featuring Arthur Less begins with the funeral of Robert Brownburn. Less continues to live in the San Francisco house of Brownburn's. Eventually, the house in San Francisco is tagged for lack of payment of property taxes, and Less is forced—while promising Freddy who goes to Maine to study literature—that he will raise the needed money to pay the offending bills before the house is foreclosed on. Thus begins many funny and sad incidents from the desert Southwest—where Less manages to flood a local village after an evening of eating what he thinks are blueberries that turn out to be drugs. His agent has him accompany an aging author who is supposed to give lectures at various institutions. The aging man has no sense of propriety and gets Less into further troubles. From there, he drives himself across the South to Georgia where a local theater company has asked to put one of Arthur Less's stories on the stage. Less is pleased when it turns out to be a musical! Alas, by the book's end, Arthur Less meets an African-American man from Canada whose name just happens to be—Arthur Less! All the kudos given to Less over time were actually meant for the Canadian Arthur Less. Poor guy.

Greer's prose keeps the reader on his toes, and I have to admit to having to go to the Internet to find the meanings of many words in his syntax. Both books, however, are delightful.

