



# First Friday

## News & Views



Monthly Newsletter of the First Friday Breakfast Club, Inc.

February 2023 / Volume 28 / Issue 2

### Next Meeting

**February 3**  
**7:00 a.m.**



### Location

**Hoyt Sherman Place**  
**15<sup>th</sup> & Woodland**  
**Des Moines**



### Speaker

**Rick**  
**Wagaman**



### Website

**ffbc Iowa.org**



## Meet the Board Members

by Byron Huff, Board President

When I wrote my newsletter article last month, I was excited as we had just amended our bylaws to include "allies." I was doubly excited when we nominated Deb Madison-Levi to the board, making her the first woman to serve in our 26-year history!

I felt we should devote some space to introduce the rest of our board members to all of you who read our newsletters and follow FFBC. **I plan to include additional board members in future issues.**



### David Wilfahrt



**David Wilfahrt** serves as our Treasurer and has been on the board approximately six years. David has just begun his second three-year term as Treasurer. While all board members are vital to our ongoing operation, the treasurer position is particularly important with many tasks that truly keep us going in an efficient manner. You can see in the following bio that David has the skills and demeanor to handle the treasurer position. He is organized and detailed-oriented. David excels at managing FFBC's books, databases, and fundraising efforts.

Originally from Fairmont, a small town in southern Minnesota, about an hour northeast of Lake Okoboji, David earned his undergraduate degree from the University of Minnesota-Minneapolis and later a master's degree from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

He first came to Des Moines in 1984 and worked as a Sales Account Executive at KIOA Radio. In 1986 he joined KDSM-TV in a similar role, eventually becoming Local Sales Manager. It's here, in the late 80s and early 90s, where he "came out" and discovered the marvelous gay world of The Brass Garden. In 1992, life, and a man, took him to Minneapolis where he worked at KMSP-TV, also in sales.

In 1996 he started a 15-year marketing career with a Michigan-based national print promotion company focused on consumer package goods, holding job assignments in Ann Arbor, Chicago, and Seattle. In 2011 he joined a small Silicon Valley tech startup and moved to San Francisco where he lived until 2016 when he retired.

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## ["Meet the Board Members" continued from page 1]

Upon retiring, David took a five-month cross-country road trip and published a photo-intensive travel blog documenting his adventures. He spent his first two years of retirement in Seattle, but eventually felt the pull of family and friends in Minnesota, Michigan, and Iowa, and decided to return to the Midwest. He selected Des Moines as his new home where he's now been for four years.

David loves a good road trip, particularly to any national park with a great vista and good hiking. He also enjoys his fitness regimen, entertaining in his home, and has a solid reputation for hosting gay-friendly cocktail parties. **Proudest Moment:** Raising \$20,500 in 2007 for AIDS/LifeCycle, via 174 small donors, and completing its weeklong, 545-mile bicycle ride from San Francisco to Los Angeles. David is single and 62 years young.

## Jim Flansburg

The next bio will feature another new board member that just joined along with Deb. **Jim Flansburg** has started to assist efforts to create a "share your stories" series where we record short interviews with people about LGBTQ issues and history.

Jim is in public relations at the Iowa Department of Education, where he manages the department's brand, oversees best-practice stories from across the state, and works with the media. Prior to that, Jim was the Director of Communications for Governor Culver and held the same title for Planned Parenthood of the Heartland. Jim's earlier career was in newspapers, in which his last gig in that industry was running a chain of newspapers in Texas. He has a bachelor's degree in journalism and American Studies, as well as a Master's of Business Administration. Jim is a moderator of the online international LGBTQ Grief Loss Support group and a member of Soaring Spirits International. He lives in Clive with cats Carrie (Chapman) Catt and Stevie Gonzalez.



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## Briefs & Shorts



Thanks to **Deb Madison-Levi** for introducing **Matt Sinovic**, our January speaker. Thanks to **David Cotton** for managing our website and to **Nicholas Williams** for managing all of our Microsoft IT infrastructure. Thanks to **Wade Petersen** for his work as our newsletter editor. *Thank you to all our contributors to the FFBC newsletter!*

The **deadline** for the **March 2023 newsletter** will be **February 20**. If you have something on your mind to share, type it up and email it to Wade ([wadecpetersen@gmail.com](mailto:wadecpetersen@gmail.com)) by the copy deadline.

**Fundraising efforts** are ongoing to fund our scholarship program. To date we have raised over **\$475,000** for scholarships that are awarded 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.



FFBC  
First Friday Breakfast Club

Scholarship  
Program

# Amazon Smile Program To Be Phased Out

In the past, Amazon shoppers could designate FFBC as the beneficiary when shopping **smile.amazon.com**, which meant that a small contribution to FFBC was made with every purchase. Amazon is ending its Amazon Smile charity program effective **2/20/2023**. Amazon purchases made after this date won't have an Amazon Smile donation option.

According to an Amazon email, "In 2013, we launched AmazonSmile to make it easier for customers to support their favorite charities. We were excited about the potential for the program and the impact it could have for many charitable organizations. We want to thank you for your partnership during all these years. After almost a decade of running AmazonSmile, we learned that with so many eligible organizations—more than 1 million globally—our ability to have an impact was often spread too thin."





## Brad Holland

**Brad Holland** (pictured here with Deb Madison-Levi) has been an FFBC board member for 14 years. During that time he has always stepped up to help with mailings, the Scholarship Committee, and manning events such as Capital City Pride. Most recently he has taken on the role of hand writing thank you letters to donors.



Brad is a financial advisor and owner with Ascendant Wealth Management Group, a private wealth advisory practice of Ameriprise Financial Services, LLC. Brad provides retirement planning and investment services in their West Des Moines office but has clients from coast to coast. Ascendant is the largest franchise for Ameriprise in the state of Iowa with approximately \$1.3 billion in assets under management. Brad has officed in West Des Moines since 2005, and worked for Ameriprise at their corporate headquarters in Minneapolis from 1991 until moving home to Iowa in 2002. Brad continued in telecommuting roles for Ameriprise until becoming a financial advisor in 2005.

Brad is a native Iowan, and grew up in the small town of Pomeroy, north and west of Fort Dodge. As a high school graduate seeking freedom, Brad was very anxious to leave Iowa. After 9-11, Brad sought an end to his busy business travel schedule and moved from Minneapolis to Des Moines with then partner, Tom.

Brad met fellow FFBC member, Joe Raetz at a breakfast meeting in 2002 and began dating in 2012; they were married September 26, 2015. Brad has served on the FFBC Scholarship Committee and delivered awards in several communities across Iowa. In addition to FFBC, Brad has served on the board for StageWest (now Iowa Stage Theater) and the Des Moines Gay Men's Chorus (DMGMC). With StageWest, Brad played various leadership roles including two terms as President, though Brad indicated the most fulfilling work was the creation of the Producers Circle donor recognition program. Likewise with DMGMC, Brad was instrumental in the launch of their annual fundraiser Eat. Drink. Sing. Brad believes service to a non-profit includes giving your time, talent, and treasure (money) and has always led by example.

Brad and Joe enjoy socializing with friends, biking, exploring local arts and artists, and watching movies. They look forward to traveling more in the future.

**"Never love anyone  
who treats you like  
you're ordinary."**

(Oscar Wilde)



**HAPPY  
VALENTINE'S  
GAY**

# The Plight of Rural Iowa

by Jonathan Wilson

I grew to adulthood in southern Iowa. As a teenager, I worked for several farmers in Davis County. Lawrence Klodt had me castrating hogs; Donald Hendricks had me tending to horses; Bill Erhardt, Laddy Archer, and a few others had me helping put up hay. Putting up hay was sweaty work, and I had the best abs of my life thanks to handling bales of 60 +/- pounds. Things have changed.

I have a little Davis County farm located on a gravel road and a dirt road and miles away from any town or grocery store – the epitome of rural Iowa. Across the gravel road from my little farm is a hay field (usually) of perhaps as much as 40 acres. The owner is an overweight man who appears to be in his 80s. He shows up with his surround sound, air-conditioned tractor and mower, and mows the hay. In a day or two, he's back with his tractor to rake the hay. Then he shows up, still all by himself, with his tractor and baler, and bales the entire field into huge round bales. Finally, he shows up, still all by himself, and stacks the round bales near the road using fork lifts mounted to his tractor. The entire operation was fascinating to watch, remarkably efficient, and downright impressive, given my teenage experience with haying.

Back in “my day,” haying would have typically involved three tractors: one to pull the baler and hay wagon, one to bring to the field a replacement hay wagon and take the loaded hay wagon to the barn, and the third tractor would have been at the barn running the elevator leading to the haymow. Three tractors operating simultaneously requires one driver for each tractor; so, three people. Taking the bales as they were ejected from the baler and stacking them on the hay wagon, involved two young men. At the barn, two more young people would offload the bales onto the elevator. There would have been two more people in the haymow taking bales from the elevator and stacking them. If memory serves, the haymow was the worst assignment on a hot summer day in Iowa; there was no breeze, and you were breathing air laden with dust and dirt. It was a miserable experience for sure. We rotated in and out of the haymow; it was the only humane thing to do. Everyone was paid at the same rate; \$1.00 per hour (thirty years earlier, my father was paid 10 CENTS per hour).

Let's do the math. Back in “my day,” haying would, as often as not, involve nine people. Nine people, many of whom would have had a wife or girlfriend and often they, in turn, would be involved bringing fresh drinking water to



the field and preparing a huge mid-day meal for the workers – many of the ingredients were purchased from a local grocery store. The meals were scrumptious, as I recall, made so partly thanks to having worked exhaustively before the meal and being very hungry. Lesson learned: if you want to be considered a great cook, serve people who are really hungry.

Things have definitely changed the population arithmetic in Davis County, replicated by countless farming operations throughout the state of Iowa. Just to harvest hay, we've gone from maybe a dozen people to one overweight octogenarian and his plump wife who welcomes him home at the end of a day spent mostly in an air-conditioned tractor. Fewer people buying groceries. Fewer people eating in local restaurants. Fewer people shopping at a local department or hardware store. Fewer people building/buying houses in the community. Fewer people attending local churches, theaters, and athletic events. Fewer people. Less economic activity. Rural decline. No surprise. It's not a mystery; it didn't happen overnight, but, it's been happening, predictably, for decades.

Survivors are those who saw this unmistakable trendline and took steps to establish a niche – a brand for their community – to offset the impacts of population decline. Examples might include Walnut, Iowa, that established itself as the antique capital of the Midwest; Cantril, Iowa, with its Dutchman hardgoods and hardware stores; Amana Colonies as in *Amana Colonies*. Establishing a niche attracts traffic of people who do not live in the local community. Few Iowa communities have had the benefit of foresightful, effective, local leadership.

Several county-seat communities have circled the wagons and, effectively, decided to make that county-seat status their “niche.” Iowa has 99 counties and 100 county seats. That “niche” is a very expensive option for taxpayers, and a poor substitute for finding a sustainable, economic

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## February Speaker

# Rick Wagaman



### Chief CBD Guru



When the family decided to embark on this journey in the summer of 2020 during the middle of the COVID Pandemic, Rick was all in! Understanding the issue was in its infancy, he was immediately compelled to become a highly educated professional on the subject. Rick's passion for helping people became his driving force as he completed the Institute of Certified CBD Consultants education program. His 25-year professional sales and marketing career uniquely prepared him for this new and exciting role. Rick has a BA in Business Administration and a minor in marketing from the University of Northern Iowa. Besides serving as Chief Husband and Dad, he is a licensed foster parent, former volunteer fire fighter, Chamber of Commerce representative, and lives to volunteer for a variety of organizations. He is a dedicated Denver Bronco's fan. If you can't find him at the store, there is a good chance you will find him on the bike trail. Currently, Rick is enrolled in Master's Degree Program from the University of Maryland, Baltimore-Pharmacy School. **NOTE:** Rick is Iowa's FIRST student to be enrolled in this program and will graduate with a MS degree in Medical Cannabis Science and Therapeutics in 2024.

### ["The Plight of Rural Iowa" continued from page 4]

development "niche." County-seat status was created when it was determined that the county courthouse needed to be within a two-way, one-day trip with a horse and buggy. By that standard, today we actually need maybe 5-6 counties to govern ourselves across the entire state. Just five or six county boards of supervisors and other county officials. Relying on that inordinate taxpayer expense will actually contribute to rural Iowa decline by making it unnecessarily expensive to live in a rural county.

The solution will be elusive and require remarkable political courage. Most easily, the solution would require county mergers using an Iowa Code Chapter 28E Agreement, with the savings paid into a designated fund to use for economic development initiatives in counties that participate.





# Matt Sinovic Starts 2023 for FFBC

by Gary Moore



For the first meeting of 2023, the First Friday Breakfast Club (FFBC) had as their speaker **Matt Sinovic**, the **Executive Director of Progress Iowa**, a multi-issue progressive advocacy organization. Matt heads up a small staff of four that hopes to leave a big mark by helping connect progressives through an infrastructure that serves as a communications hub. The organization attempts to help progressives get their message across by helping them engage and inspire their base, convince the persuadable, and reveal and deflate their opposition.

Progress Iowa is a communications hub and a leading voice for the progressive community in Iowa. They advocate for shared values, creating winning messages and resources for partners and concerned citizens. By building relationships at a grassroots level and with a statewide reach, they activate the progressive community to share a winning message with Iowans.

Progress Iowa is part of the national organization **ProgressNow**, a developing network of 26 states which act as a marketing tool for progressive ideas. ProgressNow tries to promote progressive ideas and causes year-round via creative earned media strategies, targeted email campaigns, and cutting-edge new media.

Progress Iowa encourages citizens to tell their stories and tries to provide citizens with how to tell their stories in ways that will motivate others to take action. They want to help progressives amplify and lift up their voices. This can be done through social media, editorials, and lifting up voices so they can be heard and be more effective.

Although they are not a lobbying organization, they hope to give progressives the tools to be more effective in their efforts.



January  
Speaker

January Speaker

**Matt Sinovic**



**Board Member Deb Madison-Levi and Matt Sinovic**

Matt feels Progress Iowa can help progressive citizens share what the impact of policy is or can be and not just the action. Too often we share the "recipe" but don't talk about how that impacts a life.

Increasing the minimum wage means you won't have to work two jobs to survive or that you may have more time with your family. You can advocate for raising the minimum wage from \$7.25 (the recipe for successful outcomes) but that does not convey what the outcome will be--more time with family and not working two jobs.

This is but one lesson Progress Iowa shares with its partners and Matt hopes Iowa progressives will use Progress Iowa to sharpen their skills in communication in calling for progressive change.



# January Meeting Photo Gallery



Photos by Gary Moore  
& Wade Petersen

**Phil Williams & Ken Hanson**



# Iowa LGBTQ+ Resource Organizations



## First Friday Breakfast Club

**Website:** [www.ffbc-iowa.org](http://www.ffbc-iowa.org)  
**Email:** [info@ffbc-iowa.org](mailto:info@ffbc-iowa.org)

First Friday Breakfast Club is an educational group for gay, bisexual, trans men, and their allies who gather monthly on the first Friday in Des Moines for breakfast, fellowship, and a speaker. FFBC has the largest scholarship program in Iowa that awards \$3000 scholarships to high school seniors.



## One Iowa

**Website:** [www.oneiowa.org](http://www.oneiowa.org)  
**Email:** [info@oneiowa.org](mailto:info@oneiowa.org)

One Iowa advances, empowers, and improves the lives of LGBTQ+ Iowans statewide. One Iowa seeks to improve the lives of LGBTQ+ Iowans by protecting and advancing equality and inclusiveness through education, improving workplace culture, and increasing access to quality healthcare across our state.



## Capital City Pride

**Website:** [www.capitalcitypride.org](http://www.capitalcitypride.org)  
**Email:** [communications@capitalcitypride.org](mailto:communications@capitalcitypride.org)

Best known for the annual Pride Fest weekend celebration, Capital City Pride has expanded its programs and events throughout the year. Capital City Pride does philanthropic work by producing events that inspire, educate, commemorate, and celebrate our diverse community and culture with and for the greater Des Moines Metro.



## Iowa Safe Schools

**Website:** [www.iowasafeschools.org](http://www.iowasafeschools.org)  
**Email:** [info@oneiowa.org](mailto:info@oneiowa.org)

The mission of Iowa Safe Schools is to provide safe, supportive, and nurturing learning environments and communities for LGBTQ and allied youth through education, outreach, advocacy, and direct services. Iowa Safe Schools also organizes the annual Governor's Conference on LGBTQ Youth.



## Des Moines Gay Men's Chorus

**Website:** [www.dmgmc.org](http://www.dmgmc.org)  
**Email:** [info@dmgmc.org](mailto:info@dmgmc.org)

The Des Moines Gay Men's Chorus is a community champion singing to promote harmony, ignite hearts, and move minds. The DMGMC is open to anyone who sings in the tenor and bass ranges, regardless of gender identity, gender expression, or sexual orientation. DMGMC has a standard three-concert season.



## Des Moines Pride Center

**Website:** [www.desmoinespridecenter.org](http://www.desmoinespridecenter.org)  
**Email:** available through website

Des Moines Pride Center is a nonprofit all-volunteer community organization that serves, supports, and celebrates LGBTQIA+ individuals and their allies in Central Iowa. The DSMPC provides a safe space for people to be connected, protected, and respected. Resources include a library of over 3000 books for check-out.



## Pride Sports League

**Website:** [www.pridesportsleague.org](http://www.pridesportsleague.org)  
**Email:** [pridesportsleaguedm@gmail.com](mailto:pridesportsleaguedm@gmail.com)

The Pride Sports League of Central Iowa provides recreational and networking opportunities through sports to the LGBTQ+ community in Central Iowa. Various sports leagues and one-time events are offered throughout the year including indoor volleyball, softball, and dodgeball. At times, they also have groups for cycling and running.



## Prime Timers of Central Iowa

**Private Facebook Group:**  
Prime Timers of Central Iowa

Prime Timers of Central Iowa brings together mature gay and bisexual men for friendship, activities, support, and personal growth. Activities include group breakfasts and dinners at local restaurants, a monthly potluck social, movie nights, and cocktails.



## The Project

**Website:** [phctheproject.org](http://phctheproject.org)  
**Location:** 1200 University Avenue, #120

The Project provides confidential, free or low cost services to help people living with HIV move through the stages of HIV medical care. Staff help patients connect to care, access resources that will help them achieve the best possible health outcomes, and overcome obstacles that may stand in their way to a long and happy life.



## Transformations Iowa

**Facebook Group:** Transformations Iowa

Transformations Iowa is a support group whose mission is to create an open and safe space where members of the transgender and non-binary community and their allies and loved ones can connect, find support, and empowerment. At meetings, members discuss everything from challenges and issues, to movies and TV shows. Transformations Iowa also does educational outreach to the general public.



## Imperial Court of Iowa

**Website:** [www.imperialcourtofiowa.org](http://www.imperialcourtofiowa.org)  
**Email:** [webmaster@imperialcourtofiowa.org](mailto:webmaster@imperialcourtofiowa.org)

The mission of the Imperial Court of Iowa is to make a difference to the people of Iowa through fundraising, social consciousness and education, one dollar at a time. Most of their fundraising is done "one dollar at a time," with the public tipping performers at shows of various types in venues throughout the state.



## Capital Bears

**Website:** [www.capitalbears.org](http://www.capitalbears.org)  
**Email:** [bearsdsm@gmail.com](mailto:bearsdsm@gmail.com)

Capital Bears is an inclusive group which focuses on providing the LGBTQIA+ community a safe and accepting social network. They strive to offer a good space to share ideas and meet individuals. Their purpose is to create an atmosphere of social acceptance among individuals who identify as bear, otter, cub, admirer, or supporter.

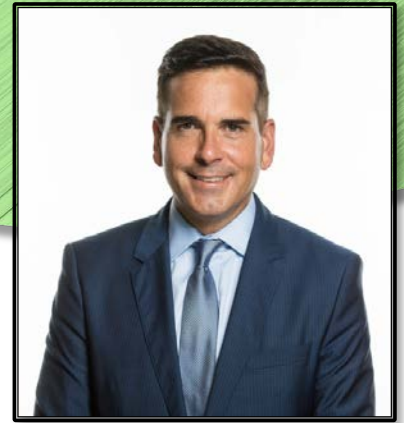


# The Beginning of the End of Public Schools

by Supervisor Matt McCoy  
Polk County, 5<sup>th</sup> District

As we write this article, SF94 or HF86 are planned to be debated today (Monday, January 23) in both chambers. These bills establish a new standing unlimited general fund appropriation for so-called Educational Savings Accounts (vouchers). These accounts would divert state funds from public to private schools to the tune of **\$7,598** per student which would follow the student in private schools. While public schools would get a kickback of \$1,200 per student enrolled in private schools, it will still have a detrimental effect. This plan is estimated, over the next four years, to cost close to \$1 billion in new money. For comparison purposes, over the past ten years, the state has invested a little less than \$1 billion in new money to serve 485,000 students who attend public schools. This \$1 billion anticipated expense will serve roughly 37,000 students over the next four years. No new money beyond the 2.5% allowable growth is expected to go into public schools over the next four years.

Iowa is currently ranked 40<sup>th</sup> of all states in public school funding. On the flipside, Iowa ranks 9<sup>th</sup> in school choice. This voucher bill will only exacerbate the rankings. It is clear that the division between the haves



and have-nots will continue to grow and provide a tangible example of how quickly Iowa has slid down the ranks of being a top educational state. The impact of how this program will be implemented is still unknown; the legislative service bureau took a conservative sample of those who will take advantage of this voucher program that, I believe, is far below what will actually happen based upon current enrollment of existing private schools. In short, I think they missed the mark. If this passes, we'll know for sure in a few years.

Based upon my experience in the Iowa Legislature, I have never seen such a sweeping, broadly drafted piece of legislation proposed that is so fiscally reckless. For years, we have listened to Republicans talk about how much they value education and fiscal discipline. This piece of legislation disrespects public education and fiscal discipline. It has no fiscal guardrails and literally invites private, for-profit institutions into our state that can openly discriminate based upon real or perceived academic requirements, disabilities, sexual orientation, gender identity, or race. All on the taxpayer dime.



**“At the touch of  
love, everyone  
becomes a poet.”**

**(Plato)**





# Thank You Note from 2022 FFBC Scholarship Winner Taylor Mayhue

12/29/22

Dear First Friday Breakfast Club,

As the end of the year approaches, I just wanted to take the time to thank you once again for your support through my first year at Iowa State. **College would not even be a possibility without the support from the FFBC!**



My first semester at Iowa State was nothing short of amazing! I had incredible educators who supported my learning. I met so many new people, joined many clubs, competed at National FFA Convention, and attended the Agriculture Future of America Conference. My professors were supportive and genuinely cared about my learning! Iowa State also has so many opportunities to get involved. I joined the Food Science Club, Agriculture Education Club, Horticulture Club, and Dairy Product Evaluation Club! All of which I love! I even applied to be a Resident Assistant next year because I love my dorm and the community I am a part of. At National FFA Convention, my partner and I were able to compete with our food science project and earned 4<sup>th</sup> place and a gold ranking! On my own, I competed with my proficiency award for agriscience research and earned a high silver ranking! I also was able to



attend the Agriculture Future of America Conference on a full ride scholarship! At the conference, I had the opportunity to interact with professionals in the agriculture industry, learn skills related to job interviews, social media presence, and overall making an impact on the industry.

I overall had an amazing semester at Iowa State, and I am grateful to all of those who made it possible. I am grateful for your generosity and belief in me! Happy Holidays! I hope the New Year treats the FFBC very well! **Thanks a million!**

## FFBC Membership

FFBC membership is open to men who self-identify as gay, bisexual, or transgender, 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

There is no charge to attend  
via Zoom.

### Payment Options

Cash or check at the meeting

Credit card prior to the  
meeting at [www.ffbc-iowa.org](http://www.ffbc-iowa.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





# LGBTQ Day On The Hill 2023

RALLY AT THE CAPITOL. TALK TO YOUR  
LEGISLATORS. FIGHT FOR LGBTQ IOWANS.

Wednesday, February 1, 2023  
9:30 A.M. - 2:00 P.M.



**9:30- 11:30 A.M.:**

"Talking to Your Legislator" Training (The  
Conservatory - 315 E 5th St Suite 2, Des  
Moines, IA 50309)

**11:30 A.M.:** Lunch (Must register by 1/27 to be  
guaranteed a lunch)

**12:00 P.M.:** March to Capitol

**12:30 P.M. - 2 P.M.:** Rally in the Capitol  
Rotunda

**2:00 P.M.:** Meet with legislators

**Register at:**

<https://oneiowa.org/event/doth23/>



# Future Speakers

**March 3:**

**Mark Stringer**

Executive Director of ACLU

**April 7:**

**Kevin Schneider**

Polk County Sheriff

**May 5:**

**Kathy Obradovich**

Iowa Capital Dispatch

**June 2:**

**Zach Wahls**

Iowa Senate Democratic Leader

**July:**

**FFBC Donor Recognition  
& Member Party**

John Schmacker's House & Gardens

**August 4:**

**Kendra Weston**

Exec. Director Lavender Legal Center

**September 1:**

**Darwin Goodspeed**

Director of VA Central Iowa Health Care

# M3GAN

A Movie Review by Mark Turnage

How does a surface-level B-movie about a killer children's toy become not only a surprise hit, but birth a new queer icon? Gerard Johnstone's *M3GAN* is self-aware of its own camp horror potential, but also reboots the evil doll formula by processing grief, loss, and parenting thoughtfully through the eyes of its well-developed characters.

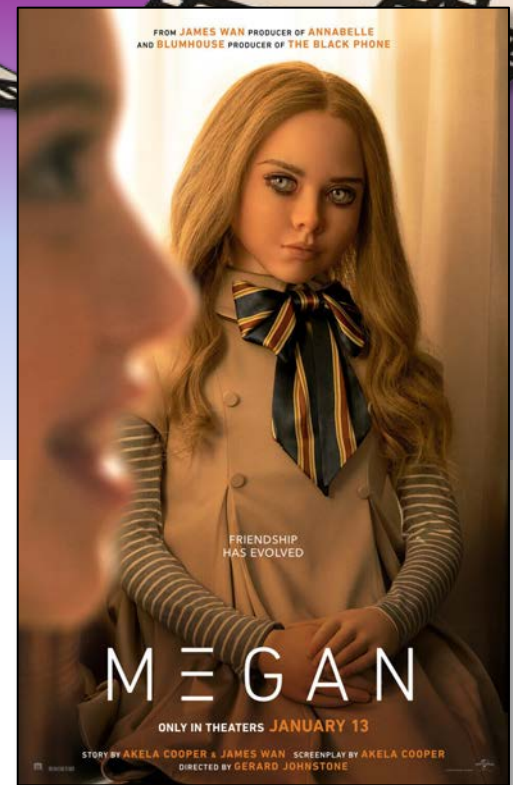
Allison Williams plays Gemma, a headstrong but aloof toy developer and robotics engineer whose young niece Cady (Violet McGraw) comes to live with her after being orphaned in a car accident.

Gemma is under pressure from her perpetually unhappy boss David (Ronny Chieng) to develop the next big toy and at home being guardian to Cady amid her grief. When the two bond over Gemma's previous creations, it inspires her to finish her dream project: M3GAN (Model 3 Generative ANDroid), a doll equipped with advanced artificial intelligence and Bluetooth accessibility. Williams is skilled at making Gemma's role more than mad scientist: she unleashes her creation as a therapeutic tool to help her niece, yet she's too headstrong to consider the implications of giving that creation unrestricted power. Enter M3GAN, who catapults Gemma's career, but starts to drive Cady and Gemma apart—and people who threaten Cady end up dead. Gemma's friends and coworkers take note of this and warn her convincingly. *M3GAN*'s writer, Akela Cooper, takes her minor characters seriously and gives them narratively memorable moments.

M3GAN herself avoids comparisons to other bad dolls through her 60s high-fashion wardrobe, shady backhanded compliments, bizarrely hilarious dance moves, and a crunchy brunette wig that would make any drag mother cringe. Motion captured by Amie Donald and voiced by Jenna Davis, her portrayal is possessive and unnerving but tongue-in-cheek funny, and often her appearances and dialogue elicit laughs rather than spooks—but this is by design. The film is littered with satirical ads for the faux toy company Funki, and the choice to open with one of these laugh-out-loud commercials sets the tone for *M3GAN* and keeps it there. But the dark humor is right alongside the camp, especially when M3GAN claims her victims (often in the most ridiculous way possible).

Is *M3GAN* predictable? Sure, but it's also entertaining in its silliness, and its themes exploring grief, loss, and tech-outsourced parenting are thoughtful. Cady's growing emotional dependence and attachment to M3GAN is the direct result of the doll's willingness to listen when Gemma is too busy with work. Gemma's avoidance of her own grief by burying herself with work blinds her to M3GAN's maliciousness. McGraw's tantrums as Cady late in the film are especially harrowing for their realism. The evolution of Gemma and Cady's relationship is the backbone of the film, and is rightfully where its much-needed depth lies.

For those looking for a spooky, smart, and campy movie with more laughs than scares, *M3GAN* is the toy story for you.





## Board of Directors

David Cotton	Gene Larson
Jim Flansburg	Deb Madison-Levi
Ken Hanson	Wade Petersen
Brad Holland	Joe Raetz
Byron Huff	David Wilfahrt
Scott Kuknyo	Phil Williams

Jonathan Wilson (Emeritus)

Contact Us At: [info@ffbciowa.org](mailto:info@ffbciowa.org)

## Officers

**Byron Huff**  
President

**David Cotton**  
Vice President

**Joe Raetz**  
Secretary

**David Wilfahrt**  
Treasurer



## Newsletter Editor

**WP** Wade Petersen

## Webmaster

**David Cotton**



## Publication

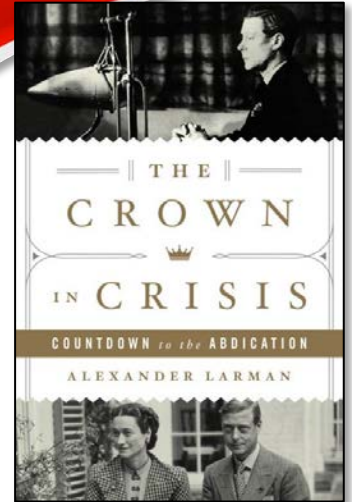


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FFBC Board  
of Directors

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

## The Crown in Crisis: Countdown to the Abdication by Alexander Larman

A Book  
Review by  
Steve Person



Alexander Larman's coverage of the abdication of King Edward VIII in 1936 has become the essential read for those who wish to know all that can be found currently about this dangerous period in British history. Until the appearance of this book—first printed in the United States in 2020—readers had to rely on Philip Ziegler's 1990 official biography, *Edward VIII*, if they wanted to get as much information as possible regarding the abdication. Since Ziegler's publication, many more official documents held by the government, the Royal Archives at Windsor, and private diaries of those who lived through this period have been made public, many of which were not available to Ziegler.

Edward VIII—later known as the Duke of Windsor after the abdication—never had much desire to be the King of the United Kingdom and its dominions beyond the seas. One of the most poignant passages in this book can be found on pages 252-53 near the end of Larman's research: "Lalla Bill, Edward's nurse as a child, wrote to Queen Mary (*Edward's mother—my parentheses*) that day (*the eve of the abdication—my parentheses*) to share her memories of her charge, asking, 'Do you remember, Your Majesty, when he was quite young how he didn't wish to live, and he never wanted to become King—he is a rover by nature then too...He is brilliant and he might have felt he was too hemmed in by convention to give scope to his abilities...His restless nature wouldn't allow him to settle down quietly...I hope the poor boy will be happy now, for no doubt he has led a very unhappy life for years.'"

Shortly before the abdication on December 10, 1936, Edward sent his intended wife, Wallis Simpson, out of the country for fear that harm may come to her if she stayed in England. She headed to the south of France accompanied by Lord Brownlow as her "travelling companion." Trusted by Edward, Brownlow, Wallis soon discovered, "was one of a group of 'friendly conspirators'...who wished her to abandon Edward and thus allow him to remain on the throne."

Among those who supposedly supported Edward in their zeal to keep him on as King, was the newspaper magnate, Lord Beaverbrook. Beaverbrook, as it turned out, was one of those "friendly conspirators" who wished to keep Edward on the Throne at all costs. Human nature being what it is, many, such as Beaverbrook, hoped to become an integral member of Edward's reign as King Emperor to burnish their own images. At least Beaverbrook remained on board for as long as possible. Other hangers-on in Edward's orbit, including Emerald Cunard and Edward's cousin Lord Louis Mountbatten, swiftly dropped him after the abdication and were rightly lambasted by Osbert Sitwell in his poem "Rat Week" as "that jolly crew/So new and brave, and free and easy/...that jolly crew Who must make even Judas queasy."

When a king decides voluntarily to abandon his birthright, myriad factors and details enter into such a grave decision. Larman's studious research sheds new light on this rare and fascinating decision and the man behind it. It was more than Wallis Simpson who made him do this. It was a life-long desire that just got more complicated as the years went on until 1936.