



# First Friday



# News & Views

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

February 2025 | Volume 30 | Issue 2

Next Meeting  
**Friday,**  
**February 7**  
**7:00 a.m.**



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



Speakers  
**Mike & Sally**  
**Merritt**

**Fraud**  
**Fighters**



Website  
**ffbc Iowa.org**



## Protecting Seniors from Scams: Staying Vigilant in a Digital World

by Byron Huff, Board President

I hope you can join us in person or via Zoom to hear our speakers Mike and Sally Merritt, volunteers of the AmeriCorps Seniors program at The United Way of Central Iowa who specialize in the topic of Fraud Fighting.

Scams targeting seniors are a growing concern in today's digital age. Fraudsters often see older adults as vulnerable targets due to their perceived lack of technological familiarity, trusting nature, or financial stability. Understanding common scams and adopting preventive measures is essential to safeguard this valued segment of the population.



### Common Scams Targeting Seniors

#### 1. Tech Support Scams

Fraudsters pose as tech support agents, claiming the victim's computer is infected. They request remote access or payment to "fix" nonexistent issues, stealing sensitive data or money in the process.

#### 2. Medicare/Health Insurance Scams

Scammers pretend to be from Medicare, asking for personal information under the guise of updating records or offering fake services.

#### 3. Grandparent Scams

Fraudsters call pretending to be a distressed grandchild, claiming they are in trouble and urgently need money. This often plays on the grandparent's emotions.

#### 4. Sweepstakes and Lottery Scams

Victims are told they've won a large prize but must pay fees or taxes upfront to claim it. No legitimate sweepstakes requires advance payment.

#### 5. Phishing Emails and Texts

These scams involve fraudulent messages disguised as legitimate communications from banks or companies, tricking victims to share passwords or financial details.

#### 6. Investment and Pension Scams

Scammers lure victims with promises of high returns on investments, often disappearing with retirement savings.



[continued on page 2]



## ["Protecting Seniors from Scams" continued from page 1]

### 7. Romance Scams

Fraudsters exploit dating apps or social media, developing fake romantic relationships to manipulate victims into sending money.



### How Scammers Operate

Scammers are skilled manipulators, using fear, urgency, and emotion to pressure victims. They often employ technology like spoofed phone numbers, convincing emails, or even fake websites to gain trust. Their tactics are continually evolving, making it crucial to stay informed.

### Tips for Staying Vigilant

#### Be Skeptical of Unsolicited Contact

Never share personal or financial information with unverified individuals, whether through calls, emails, or texts.

#### Verify Identities

If someone claims to be a family member or official, ask questions only the real person would know or verify their identity independently.

#### Resist Pressure Tactics

Scammers often create a sense of urgency. Take time to verify the legitimacy of the request before acting.

#### Use Caller ID and Hang Up

Screen calls and let unknown numbers go to voicemail. Avoid engaging with aggressive or suspicious callers.

#### Avoid Clicking on Links

Don't click on links in unsolicited emails or texts. Instead, visit the official website or call a trusted number.

#### Secure Personal Information

Shred documents containing sensitive data, use strong passwords, and enable two-factor authentication where possible.

#### Educate Yourself and Others

Learn about the latest scams and share this information with family and friends. Awareness is a powerful tool.

#### Report Suspicious Activity

If you suspect a scam, report it to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), local law enforcement, or the AARP Fraud Watch Network.

Scams targeting seniors and the elderly are a serious issue, but knowledge and vigilance can serve as powerful defenses. By staying informed, asking questions, and fostering open conversations about financial safety, families can help protect their loved ones from falling victim to fraud. Remember: when in doubt, err on the side of caution.

### Resources for Support

- **Federal Trade Commission (FTC):** Provides information and tools for recognizing and reporting scams. Website: [www.ftc.gov](http://www.ftc.gov)
- **AARP Fraud Watch Network:** Offers free resources to help older adults spot and avoid scams. Website: [www.aarp.org](http://www.aarp.org)
- **Better Business Bureau (BBB):** Tracks scams and provides alerts on fraudulent activities. Website: [www.bbb.org](http://www.bbb.org)

## Briefs & Shorts

Thanks to board President, **Byron Huff**, for introducing our January meeting speaker: **Jason Clayworth** of **Axios**, Des Moines. 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 the contributors to our newsletter!*

The **deadline** for the **March newsletter** will be **February 24**. If you have something that you would like to share, type it up and email it to Wade ([wadecpetersen@gmail.com](mailto:wadecpetersen@gmail.com)) by the deadline.

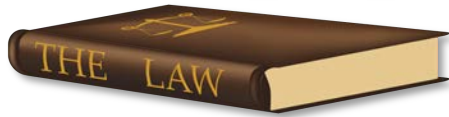
**Fundraising efforts** are ongoing to fund our scholarship program. To date we have awarded over **\$495,000** for **203** scholarships to Iowa high school seniors who have done remarkable, courageous things to reduce homophobia and teach about LGBTQ issues in their schools and communities. Please consider 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.



## DOD

by Jonathan Wilson



First Friday Breakfast Club  
Founder **Jonathan Wilson**

Let's start with this. I've been admitted to practice law for over 50 years. I have clerked for the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit. I have taught law in two law schools. I am admitted to practice before the United States Supreme Court.

There are those who say that our law-abiding, law-enforcing institutions survived the first term of #45/Republicans, and add, hopefully, that those institutions will therefore survive another. The problem is that they're wrong on the premise that those institutions survived the first term. They did not. The Judicial branch, FBI, CIA, Department of Justice, Intelligence agencies, you name it. And their demise continued unabated during the ensuing four years.

The next four years is destined to accelerate that demise, thanks to the SCOTUS decision that makes a president immune from prosecution for crimes committed in the name of official duties. The majority of "Justices" apparently forgot the four words engraved in stone above the entrance to the Supreme Court building: **EQUAL JUSTICE UNDER LAW**. The betrayal of those four words creates an exception wide enough to drive a twelve-bottom plow through, or a thoroughly corrupt presidency.

In the **FIRST WEEK** of the new Republican administration, a flagrantly unconstitutional Executive Order purported to revoke "birth-right" citizenship guaranteed by the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the U.S. Constitution since 1868. This from someone who swore hours earlier to

protect and defend the Constitution. Also, in that **FIRST WEEK**, 14 Inspectors General were *unlawfully* terminated. Inspectors General are professionally expected to be nonpartisan watchdogs to prevent criminal misconduct in government agencies. They can't be *lawfully* fired without at least 30 days notice to Congress.

Neither of these actions by #47/Republicans is, per se, criminal, but you would have to be blind not to see where things are headed. Think about it. A president who is immune from criminal prosecution for acts done in his official duties, and the power to immunize those who follow his criminally illegal orders.

There will be 207 more weeks to come.

Many will read the title of this article "**DOD**" and think Department of Defense, whose unqualified and characterless leader was recently Senate-confirmed (thanks to V.P. JD Vance).

No, it stands for the **Death of Democracy**. And we are, sadly, becoming witnesses to it.

oneiowa

### oneiowa 2025 Event Schedule

March 11	LGBTQ+ Day on the Hill
June 20	One Iowa Gala
Sept 29	LGBTQ+ Health and Wellness Conference

Find all events at [oneiowa.org/events](https://oneiowa.org/events) →

### LGBTQ Workplace Culture Summit 2025

April 3	Varnum Anniversary: LGBTQ+ Advocacy in the Workplace
June 4	Pride Month: Advancing LGBTQ Workplace Inclusivity
Oct. 6	Lessons from History: LGBTQ Workplace Discrimination
Nov. 13	Building Transgender Inclusive Workplaces

**RECLAIM &  
RISE**  
SPRING CONCERT

DES MOINES  
GAY MEN'S  
CHORUS

**SATURDAY,  
MARCH 22**  
URBANDALE HIGH SCHOOL  
PERFORMING ARTS CENTER

Kirkendall Library, 1250 SW District Drive, Ankeny

**MUSIC  
BINGO**  
Ankeny  
PRIDE

Saturday, February 22 7-9:30pm

\$10/person

www.ankenypride.org

**We are so glad you could join us!  
We hope to see you again at  
more of our events in 2025.  
Learn more at AnkenyPride.org.**

LO Love

**Happy  
Valentine's  
Day**

**Just wanted  
to remind you...  
You are  
LOVED!**

## FFBC Membership

FFBC membership is open to all members of the LGBTQ+ community and their allies.

We welcome EVERYONE, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or expression.

Meetings are held the first Friday of every month at Hoyt Sherman Place in Des Moines.

### Membership Rates

The following rates help us to cover food and facility costs:

**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

We accept cash, checks, or **credit cards** at the meeting.



### Meeting Schedule

6:30 a.m. - Doors open

6:45 a.m. - Breakfast service  
begins

7:00 a.m. - Meeting  
begins



# First Friday Breakfast Club 2024 Scholar Updates

## Elliot Martin

So far my college experience at Hamline University has been amazing! I've made new friends, gone to new places, and learned a lot in my classes. I've also joined many clubs such as the Animé and Manga club, ASL club, and our school's GSA (Spectrum), where I am on the board as the first-year representative. **The FFBC scholarship has relieved a lot of stress from me and my family, and I am able to pursue my dreams without worrying too much about the cost of college. I'd like to thank those at the First Friday Breakfast Club for helping me make my dreams a reality, and I hope you all have a happy holiday season!**



## Luke Mueggenberg

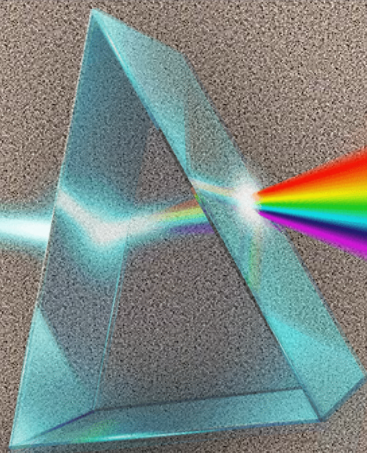
As for how I'm doing, I'd say I'm doing pretty well. I've adjusted to college life pretty quickly, and I'm feeling more or less prepared for my two finals this week. I only took 15 credits this first semester to ease myself into college life, but next semester I'm taking 19. I've been lucky enough to receive a lot of special opportunities, like helping a professor with research, and I'll have my first internship this summer, and I'm really thankful. **It will be challenging to balance it all, but I think I'm up for the task. It certainly helps that the First Friday Breakfast Club has helped me feel more secure financially.**



## Tyler Pittman

I've been doing great in college! I joined the **All In Living Learning Community** at the University of Iowa (a queer dorm floor). I have met so many wonderful people. I was also elected secretary of the UIowa Trans Alliance, and I can't wait to help make a difference. My studies as a pre-law student are going well and I'm learning a lot about the paths I have available in my future. **I really appreciate the support FFBC has given me, especially since my family is going through some health struggles right now; the financial support for my education is very much needed. I'm grateful I get to keep learning and reaching my potential even though times are a bit tough. So from the bottom of my heart, thank you all so much.**





Capital City Pride is thrilled to invite you to the 2025 **Pride Gala and Awards**, an unforgettable evening of celebration, community, and connection. This year's theme, "**Reflections of Pride**," honors the beauty of diversity, unity, and the light we reflect in one another—like a radiant prism creating endless possibilities.

**Date:** Saturday, March 8, 2025

**Time:** VIP Reception 5:30 p.m. / Main Doors 6 p.m. / Event 7 p.m.

Join us as we recognize inspiring leaders and changemakers and celebrate milestones of progress and perseverance. Enjoy the most fabulous gala of the year! The evening will feature a stunning program with dinner, live entertainment, and the presentation of the Pride Awards, all set in a dazzling atmosphere inspired by prisms that symbolize the way we amplify each other's light. **Dress Code: Formal attire with a flair of your pride!**

### NEW This Year!

\* **VIP Pre-Event:** For a small additional fee, join us for a special VIP Cocktail Hour from 5:30-6:30 p.m. featuring live entertainment, an open bar, some of the coolest cats in town (that's you!), and the best table locations during the main Gala event!

\* **Stay the Night:** Want to have a great time and then just walk upstairs to your own room at the end of the night? Our partners at Prairie Meadows have you covered with a special CCP rate of just **\$139**. Book your room using the information below:

<https://book.rguest.com/wbe/group/1609/PrairieMeadowsRacetrackandCasino/delegate>

Group Code: CCP0325 Password: 863015737



**PRIDE SPORTS LEAGUE OF CENTRAL IOWA**

# BALL IS LIFE.

new signup process  
swipe for more info!

GET READY TO DRIBBLE, SHOOT, SCORE WITH OUR

## 3v3 BASKETBALL LEAGUE

WEDNESDAYS 6:30-9 PM \$25

@ CAPITOL VIEW ELEMENTARY SCHOOL [ FEB 19 - MAR 26 ]  
[ FREE AGENTS AND TEAMS WELCOME ] to register

# I STAND WITH LGBTQ+ IOWANS

**oneiowa**  
ACTION

## Travels with Ken & Wade

by Wade Petersen

*Ken Hanson and Wade Petersen spent 2 ½ weeks in Europe, making stops in several countries, to celebrate their 15<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary (22 years together) and Wade's 60<sup>th</sup> birthday. Articles in the coming months' newsletters will feature their experiences.*



### Fourth Stop: Salzburg, Austria



Our next stop only took 90 minutes by train to get from Munich to **Salzburg, Austria**. Those of you who have visited Switzerland and Austria know the idyllic beauty of these Alps where every view could be a postcard.

Our hotel was close to the Old Town part of the city. We first sought out Mozart's *Geburtshaus*. This is the house where Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart was born and is one of the most visited museums in the world. Except for its yellow façade, the museum seems like any other building on the street. Ken especially appreciated all the instruments, miniature dioramas, and music displayed.

At night in Salzburg, we got dressed up for a three-course meal at a **Mozart dinner concert**. Set in the Baroque Hall of St. Peter Stiftskulinarium, this venue is one of the oldest restaurants in Europe. Our menu was inspired by 18<sup>th</sup>-century cuisine. Between courses, a talented chamber ensemble and opera singers (in authentic costumes) made this a magical night!



Our next day was the "tour" day. In the morning, we rode by bus to the breathtaking village of **Hallstadt**. The lake and mountains were magnificent. This is the part of Austria that I really wanted to experience. There is a skywalk that we could have gone to that overlooks the village, but we didn't want to spend all our time standing in a line. We did find a small cathedral where we visited its **chapel house** (the vault where bones and painted skulls from hundreds of years are stored). Sometimes just wandering through a town, sitting down at a small café, and experiencing beauty is enough.



We then meandered until we reached **Mozartplatz**, the main city square in Salzburg. You will find lots of little cafés (and of course, tourist shops) along the way. Even above the historical buildings, the soaring mountains rise to make their eternal presence known.

In planning our trip, I knew that I wanted to seek out some special experiences for Ken and me. Our first



The second tour of the day was the epic **Sound of Music tour**. It's a bit cheesy but worth every moment! We were brought to many of the locations where filming took place. On the way, our tour leader had us singing along to songs from the movie. At the end of the tour, a lady in front of us turned to Ken and said, "Excuse me, but you have an amazing voice!" That's my husband! Highlights included the glass gazebo ("16 Going on 17") and the Basilica of Minor St. Michael where the wedding scene takes place.



Many scenes were shot using backdrops of more than one location. Hollywood magic! We strongly encourage everyone to visit Salzburg and "Climb Every Mountain"!



**Our travel stories and photos will continue in the coming months with visits to: Venice, Florence, and Rome Italy.**





# Speaker Series

February 13 / 6:00 P.M. / Temple Theater  
[Tickets are free, but you must register online.]



## Tee Franklin

Tee Franklin is a DC Comics writer of the GLAAD nominated *Harley Quinn* series that are a massive #1 hit on Amazon. She is the first Black woman to write Harley Quinn and Poison Ivy, and she is also the first Black woman writer with multiple series by *Image*

*Comics*. She hopes to pave the way for more marginalized comic creators. Tee is a Black, Queer, mom of adult children, who is also a disabled, autistic, wheelchair-user just bursting with personality!

Franklin's goals are to change the ugly and harmful narrative the media has created about disabled people. She wants to show that you can create works of art without offending disabled people. Franklin has proven if given accommodations and accessibility, disabled people can accomplish anything.

Franklin has created trending and viral hashtags throughout her time on social media, from #BlackComicsMonth, #TeensThatLookLikeTeens, #NoRampNoPanel, #MakeAbleistsUncomfortable, and several more. While Franklin does not consider herself an activist or an advocate for disabled people, she uses her platform to discuss topics that affects her daily life as a Black, queer, disabled woman, speaking up for those who don't have a large platform.



# Future Speakers



March 7:

**Susan Woody**

Director, Des Moines Public Library

April 4:

**Greg Edwards**

Catch Des Moines

May 2:

**Ryan Crane**

Executive Direction of NAMI/Iowa  
National Alliance On Mental Illness

June 6:

**Ian Roberts**

Superintendent  
Des Moines Public Schools

July 12:

**Member/Donor  
Summer Party**

August 1:

**Brent Johnson**

President, Iowa Farm Bureau





## February Speakers

# Mike and Sally Merritt



**Mike and Sally Merritt** graduated from Drake University and then left Iowa to pursue federal careers. Now they are both retired federal employees and educators. Mike retired from the Department of Defense and then taught political science and philosophy at the College of Lake County in Illinois. Sally retired from the Department of the Navy and then worked as a consultant training the next generation of employees in her specialty, federal procurement. Now both are fully retired, and they are working as volunteers with **AmeriCorps Seniors United 55** programs to benefit the people of Iowa.

**iowa**  
**safe**  
**schools**

+++ Feb. 21, 2025  
**ASPIRE TO INSPIRE**  
ERG CONFERENCE

ADULT REGISTRATION

PRESENTED BY SCHABEL SOLUTIONS AND DRAKE UNIVERSITY

FEB 21, 2025 | 8AM - 5PM  
DRAKE OLMSTED CENTER | DES MOINES

Iowa Safe Schools is proud to host the **Aspire to Inspire ERG (Employee Resource Group) Conference** as part of their mission to support LGBTQ youth across Iowa. Many of our students frequently ask how they can find supportive and affirming employers here in Iowa. At the same time, private employers often seek guidance on how to meaningfully support Iowa's LGBTQ youth, and position themselves as potential next-steps for them.

Through this conference, Iowa Safe Schools aims to help Iowa's companies reach their fullest potential by integrating equitable workplace practices into their foundation, empowering ERGs to wield collective power through shared goals, and guiding employers to be forward-thinking in their approach to DEI. *Together, we can create a more inclusive and supportive environment for LGBTQ individuals in Iowa and beyond.*

**Location:** Drake University, Olmsted Center  
2875 University Ave, Des Moines, IA 50311

**When:** 8 a.m.-5 p.m., Friday February 21, 2025

**Parking:** Drake University, Olmsted lot

Breakfast, snacks, lunch, and parking passes will be provided

**Adult Registration:** \$150 (access to all conference workshops,

# Axios: A New Way To Get Local News

by Gary Moore

Thirty-five or so braved the cold January morning starting out 2025 to listen to **Jason Clayworth** of Axios. Jason spent 22 years as a reporter for the *Des Moines Register* and for the last four years as a reporter for **Axios**, an online report on city, county, state, and local news. He graduated from Drake University with a degree in journalism. He has been an admirer of FFBC since its early days and an interview with FFBC founder Jonathan Wilson during his college days when Jonathan was a Des Moines School Board member and candidate. Jason and his husband of 22 years live in the Sherman Hill area. Jason was the first guy to compete in the husband calling contest at the Iowa State Fair, placing sixth.

Des Moines was one of four cities selected by a group of political journalists based in Arlington, Virginia, to start this online news provider. It was founded in 2016 and launched the following year by former *Politico* journalists Jim VandeHei, Mike Allen, and Roy Schwartz. The site's name is based on the Greek: ἄξιος (áxios), meaning "worthy of."

Axios's content is designed for digital platforms, such as Facebook and Snapchat, as well as its own website. Its articles are typically less than 300 words long. In addition to its website, Axios' content is distributed via newsletters covering politics, technology, healthcare, and other subjects.

Jason noted he wants everyone to have a voice. In Des Moines, Axios has 75,000 subscribers who regularly open and read their newsletter. It is intended for you to get your local news within three minutes, and it is a format that is on your phone. It is for today's readers, because many of us aren't reading long-form journalism anymore. Although Axios started with four cities, it has expanded rapidly and now includes reporters covering local news in many cities and hoping to expand to 200-300 cities. How Des Moines, Iowa, and America get their news has changed, and Axios is trying to help fill the gaps in public knowledge of local government and agencies.

Many of Axios' stories end up online, but not all of them. The newsletter, again, is intended to be this conversation. And there are stories that are part of the newsletter that don't go online, and that's intentional. "We think that this format works, which again, part of this conversation among readers, but you can read most of the main stories online." Jason encouraged members to email comments and questions, and start a conversation.

There are a lot fewer journalists. So there are some bad sides to this. We've lost a considerable number of journalists in our community. That's a big deal. But we also can cover a little bit more ground thanks to technology. With Axios's format, we cover a lot more ground online.



Jason Clayworth





Elizabeth Barrett Browning  
Sonnet 43

How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.  
 I love thee to the depth and breadth and height  
 My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight  
 For the ends of being and ideal grace.  
 I love thee to the level of every day's  
 Most quiet need, by sun and candle-light.  
 I love thee freely, as men strive for right.  
 I love thee purely, as they turn from praise.  
 I love thee with the passion put to use  
 In my old griefs, and with my childhood's faith.  
 I love thee with a love I seemed to lose  
 With my lost saints. I love thee with the breath,  
 Smiles, tears, of all my life; and, if God choose,  
 I shall but love thee better after death.

**Central Iowa  
Trans Lives Festival  
CALL FOR PARTICIPANT SUBMISSIONS**

**Who can participate?** ALL TRANSGENDER, GENDERQUEER, & NON-BINARY

*Artists	*Writers	*Performers	And
*Craftpersons	*Musicians	*Singers	Other
*Poets	*Dancers	*Food Vendors	Creators

**Submit your request to:** [tag@ucdsm.org](mailto:tag@ucdsm.org)

Include your name, contact info, and type of work, along with a sample of your work, if possible (photos, docs, links, etc.). We will contact you with more info. *No registration fee required.*

*Participants may offer their works for sale - all sales and proceeds belong to participants.*

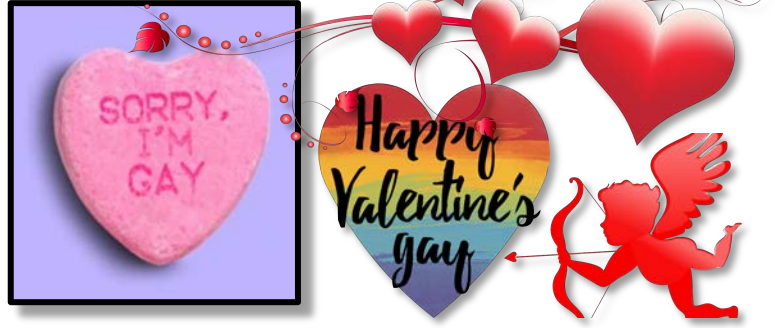
Spaces filled as applications come in, until full.

**Submission Deadline: March 1, 2025**

**When and Where?** **Saturday, March 29, 2025, 10am - 5pm**  
(set up 8am-10am)  
**First Unitarian Church, 1800 Bell Avenue, Des Moines, IA**  
ADA Accessible  
Security provided so everyone can enjoy a safe & fun event

**What is the Trans Lives Fest?** In honor of the International Transgender Day of Visibility, the Central Iowa Trans Lives Festival will provide a safe space for trans adults and youth to celebrate & present their creative work to the LGBTQIA community and other allied members of the public. Sponsored by the Queer and Transgender Action Group of First Unitarian Church of Des Moines, an LGBTQIA Welcoming Congregation & member of the Unitarian Universalist Association.

(More info at [ucdsm.org](http://ucdsm.org) & [uua.org](http://uua.org))



IMPERIAL COURT OF IOWA PRESENTS...

**80'S  
REWIND  
SHOW**

PROCEEDS BENEFITING:  
 CAAP  
 COMMUNITY AIDS ASSISTANCE PROJECT

**HITS AND DUETS FROM THE 80'S!**

**FRIDAY  
FEBRUARY 21**

525 EAST GRAND AVE  
DES MOINES, IA

**EVENT AT 8 P.M.  
FREE ADMISSION!**

HOSTED BY:  
**EVIE BLANK & IDA SLAPTER BACK**

FOR MORE INFORMATION  
[WWW.IMPERIALCOURTOFIOWA.ORG](http://WWW.IMPERIALCOURTOFIOWA.ORG)



# Nosferatu

A Movie Review by Mark Turnage

Director Robert Eggers is no stranger to blending period-specific films with horror elements (“The Witch,” “The Lighthouse,” even “The Northman”). Yet Eggers’ remake of one of the first-ever scary movies is his most ambitious: gay director F.W. Murnau’s 1922 silent film “Nosferatu: A Symphony of Horror.” Though its adherence to its familiar spooky source material and classic gothic horror conventions make its plot pacing hypnotic and slow-burn, the film’s fantastic cinematography, forensic attention to detail, and thematic blending of past and present-day horrors help “Nosferatu” cast its own distinct thrall.

If you’re familiar with Bram Stoker’s “Dracula,” you’re mostly informed of the major plot points—“Nosferatu” is a remake of the 1922 film, which is itself a bootleg production of Stoker’s novel. In 1830s Germany, young Ellen (Lily Rose-Depp) begs the universe for something—*anything*—to ease her loneliness. Her ecstasy at being found is quickly replaced by horror at what found her. Years later, Ellen’s husband Thomas (Nicholas Hoult) prepares to earn a large commission for selling a local abandoned estate. The catch, of course, is a chilly trek through Transylvania for the client, Count Orlok (Bill Skarsgard), to sign the estate papers in-person. While Thomas wilts under the menacing, dreamlike presence of Orlok in his castle, Ellen’s sleepwalking and visions intensify to the horror of her devout friend Anna (Emma Corrin) and her traditionally-minded husband Friederich (Aaron Taylor-Johnson), who summon Doctors Sievers

(Ralph Ineson) and Von Franz (Willem Dafoe) to aid her. Yet Ellen has already realized that her monster and Orlok are one and the same.

In conveying the threat of Orlok onscreen, both Eggers and Skarsgard take pains to distinguish his character from traditional cinematic depictions of vampires. Eggers blends elements of vampire, demon, and even zombie lore to build Orlok into his own monster; costume elements like bulky traditional 16<sup>th</sup> century Hungarian attire and a bushy, often gross-out bloody moustache further separate him from the neat, epicurean image of the Lugosi Dracula. Skarsgard’s tolling, plodding voice is a little “Nandor” from “What We Do In The Shadows” at points, yet the actor throws enough richly rolled ‘r’s’ and thunderous vocal jump-scars to be a more intimidating on-screen presence.

“Nosferatu” is also unique in that its vampire tale is intertwined with a pandemic. Eggers makes subtle directorial choices in depicting his Gothic Horror plague that eerily echo the COVID-19 pandemic: the conflict between isolation and lockdown, science denial despite forensic evidence, the recurring depiction of “feeling suffocated” with energy “drained away,” and perhaps most telling: Orlok’s persistent, rasping wheeze behind his voice. As beautiful as the cinematography is in its first and third acts, “Nosferatu’s” most repulsive imagery is with Orlok and its plague—and use of nearly 5,000 trained rats.

Where the film excels is in its cinematography honoring its German



Expressionist and Gothic Horror aesthetics: in addition to the detailed period costume and set design of 1800s folk Europe, Transylvania becomes a surreal midnight dreamscape, shadows become stories, and the film approximates a “black and white” color palette into a “black/pale blue” one to evoke both night and the ethereal pacing of dreams—many scenes are filmed exclusively with candlelight as a light source. This slow, dreamlike pacing is intentional to the film’s thematic parallels of sleepwalking and shadows, but is not for everyone—with the combination of sweeping winter nighttime scenery, a minimalist choral soundtrack, and blustering wind, the first third of the movie can feel very “ASMR” for some. Gothic horror prefers creating intricate atmospheres of creeping dread over adrenaline-pumping jump scares, but Eggers rightfully includes a few to get the blood flowing.

See “Nosferatu” if you prefer a slow-burn horror film built on creeping dread and an enthralling cinematic atmosphere.

## Board of Directors

David Cotton      Gene Larson  
Jim Flansburg    Deb Madison-Levi  
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# Improving Transparency at Polk County



by Supervisor Matt McCoy  
Polk County, 1<sup>st</sup> District



When I first ran for the Polk County Board of Supervisors in 2018, I ran on greater transparency, accountability, and accessibility to the residents of Polk County. I continued that promise when I was elected Chair of the Board of Supervisors for 2025.

Days after becoming Chair, staff implemented a one-stop shop on the Polk County Board of Supervisors' website for easy access to all department budget agendas, presentations, and livestream links where residents and media can follow along or watch past recordings. **Here's a link to the county's 2025 budget hub:**

<https://www.polkcountyiowa.gov/board-of-supervisors/2025-budget-information/>



Additionally, for the first time, Polk County will host an evening public forum at the conclusion of all department budget presentations but prior to any formal board actions. This is designed to provide the public with an additional opportunity to share their feedback and raise any questions they have about spending priorities.

In addition, I implemented a new requirement that all documents be made available online for the public and media to review ahead of board meetings. In the past, Polk County would publish a slimmed down version of the agenda which only included resolutions and accompanying memo (for background purposes). Nearly all contracts, agreements, and other supporting documents would be on file at the County Auditor's Office. This created an extra hurdle and impediment that I believed was unnecessary. Staff worked quickly to ensure that when the board agendas are posted online, it includes all supporting documents. **Here's a link to the county's board agendas:**

<https://www.polkcountyiowa.gov/board-of-supervisors/meeting-agendas-and-minutes/>



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