



First Friday News & Views

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



August 2026 | Volume 31 | Issue 8

Next Meeting

**Friday,
August 7
7:00 AM**



Location

**Hoyt Sherman
15th & Woodland
Des Moines**



Speaker

**Julia Franklin
Exec. Director
Mainframe
Studios**



Website

ffbc Iowa.org



Mainframe Studios

The Creative Heart of Des Moines

by Byron Huff, Board President

I hope that you can join us Friday, August 7, to hear Julia Franklin, Executive Director of Mainframe Studios. She is an accomplished artist, leader, professor, and founder of multiple community arts programs, and Julia has more than two decades of experience in creative sector advocacy, nonprofit management, and community program and funding development.

In the heart of downtown Des Moines stands a building that has become much more than a collection of artist workspaces. [Mainframe Studios](#) has emerged as one of the city's most influential cultural institutions, providing artists with affordable studios while creating opportunities for residents and visitors to experience art in an approachable, engaging way.

Housed in a renovated industrial building on Keosauqua Way, Mainframe Studios is recognized as the nation's largest nonprofit creative workspace. Home to more than 220 artists working across approximately 30 creative disciplines including painting, sculpture, ceramics, glassblowing, photography, fashion design, woodworking, printmaking, jewelry, writing, music production, and digital media, it represents a remarkable cross-section of Iowa's creative talent. Nearly 180 studio spaces maintain close to full occupancy, reflecting the strong demand for an affordable and collaborative environment where artists can develop their craft.

What makes Mainframe Studios especially valuable to Des Moines is its commitment to accessibility. Rather than functioning as a traditional gallery where visitors simply observe finished works, Mainframe invites the public into the creative process. Monthly **First Friday** events transform the five-story building into a vibrant community gathering, allowing guests to meet artists, tour working studios, purchase original artwork, enjoy live music, and participate in demonstrations, all at no cost. These events have become one of the city's signature cultural experiences, attracting thousands of visitors throughout the year.

Beyond showcasing art, Mainframe strengthens the local creative economy. Affordable studio space allows emerging and established artists to build sustainable careers without the financial barriers often found in larger metropolitan areas. Educational workshops, professional development programs, exhibition opportunities, and collaborative events help artists refine both their creative practice and their business skills. The result is an ecosystem where artists can thrive while contributing to the broader economic vitality of central Iowa.



[continued on page 2]



Mainframe also serves as an important community connector. By hosting exhibitions that celebrate diverse voices and underrepresented perspectives, partnering with schools and nonprofits, and commissioning public art installations, the organization expands access to the arts for audiences of all ages and backgrounds. Its emphasis on inclusion reflects a broader vision: that **creativity should be cultivated, protected, and shared with the entire community.**

The influence of Mainframe Studios extends beyond its walls. It has helped establish downtown Des Moines as a destination for creativity, complementing institutions such as the Des Moines Art Center, the Pappajohn Sculpture Park, local galleries, and neighborhood arts districts. Businesses, restaurants, and nearby creative enterprises all benefit from the steady stream of visitors drawn to Mainframe's exhibitions and events, contributing to the continued revitalization of the city's urban core.

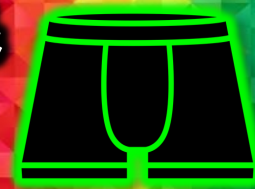


Perhaps Mainframe's greatest achievement is its ability to make art feel personal. Visitors don't simply view paintings on a wall; they meet the people who create them, learn about their techniques, hear their stories, and witness works in progress. This direct connection between artist and audience fosters appreciation for the creative process while encouraging new generations of artists to pursue their passions.

As Des Moines continues to grow as a regional cultural destination, Mainframe Studios remains one of its defining assets. By providing affordable creative space, supporting artistic entrepreneurship, and welcoming the public into an active community of makers, it has transformed not only a historic building but also the city's artistic identity. In doing so, Mainframe Studios demonstrates that a thriving arts community is not merely an amenity, it is an essential part of a vibrant, innovative, and connected city.



Briefs & Shorts



We want to express our sincere appreciation for the incredible generosity and talents of **Stuart Alexander** and his team for providing the beautiful space in Recital Hall at the **Temple for the Performing Arts** for our July "Red Party." This was a wonderful new venue that allowed FFBC members, guests, and 2026 scholarship donors to come together for an evening of celebration of First Friday Breakfast Club's 30th anniversary. Cake and a champagne toast topped off the night!

For FFBC's normal business, we thank **John Schmacker** for managing all of our finances, to **Nicholas Williams** for managing our Microsoft IT infrastructure, and to **Wade Petersen** for his work as our newsletter and website editor.

The **deadline** for the **September newsletter** will be **August 24**.



If you have something that you would like to share, type it up and email to Wade (wadecpetersen@gmail.com) by the deadline.

Fundraising efforts are ongoing to fund our scholarship program. Since 1997, we have now awarded over **\$618,000** for **244** 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. *Next year's scholars await!*

A **special thank-you** to FFBC members and donors who have generously chosen to designate First Friday Breakfast Club as a beneficiary through the **Donor Direct** program of **United Way**. Contributions made through the United Way are tax deductible since FFBC is an eligible 501(c)(3) nonprofit recipient of such funding designations.

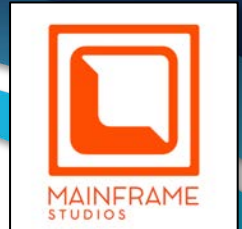


United Way



August Speaker

Julia Franklin



Julia Franklin is the Executive Director of Mainframe Studios in downtown Des Moines, Iowa. She is an accomplished artist, leader, professor, and founder of multiple community arts programs, and Julia has more than two decades of experience in creative sector advocacy, nonprofit management, and community program and funding development.

Franklin was recently named “Cultural Leader Newcomer of the Year” by the Business Record. Franklin’s recognition speaks to her dedication to nurturing the creative economy and her ability to engage with and inspire the community.

Franklin completed her transition from Community Investment Specialist at Bravo Greater Des Moines to director of Mainframe Studios in December 2023. She is now leading the largest nonprofit art studio building in the country, which opened in 2017 on the north side of downtown Des Moines. At Bravo, Franklin managed a \$4.5 million annual operating grant program for more than 85 arts and culture nonprofits in Central Iowa. Previously, she was a Professor of Art at Graceland University in Lamon, Iowa, where she helped guide the construction and operations at the Helene Center for the Visual Arts. In 2018, she was named an Iowa Artist Fellow and continues to make and exhibit art.

LGBTQ COMMUNITY DINNER



FEED DES MOINES



4TH THURSDAY OF EACH MONTH 5-8PM

POTLUCK COMMUNITY GAMES

St Johns Lutheran Church
600 6th Ave, Des Moines, IA, 50309

For more information contact:
Email: feeddesmoines@gmail.com

Joy Chose You

Joy does not arrive with a fanfare
on a red carpet strewn
with the flowers of a perfect life

joy sneaks in
as you pour a cup of coffee
watching the sunlight
hit your favourite tree,
just right

and you usher joy away
because you are not ready for her
your house is not as it should be
for such a distinguished guest

but joy, you see,
cares nothing for your messy home
or your bank-balance
or your waistline

joy is supposed to slip through
the cracks of your imperfect life
that's how joy works

you cannot truly invite her
you can only be ready when she appears
and hug her with meaning
because in this very moment
joy chose you.

Donna Ashworth





oneiowa gala 2026 award winners

Donna Redwing Advocate of the Year

Jane Robinette

We're proud to recognize Jane Robinette for their exceptional advocacy and leadership. As a dedicated One Iowa Action volunteer and longtime supporter of LGBTQ+ rights, Jane exemplifies the power of grassroots activism and meaningful change that one person can inspire.



Community Partnership Award

The Rook Room



As a queer-owned business, they've created a welcoming space where people can connect and feel at home in the Des Moines metro. Their PRISM Tabletop Club, Des Moines' first monthly queer-focused game night, brings people together in a fun, affirming environment that strengthens community and belonging when it's needed now more than ever.

Courageous Six Change Maker Award

The Pride Center



This year's recipient, The Pride Center, embodies that spirit. Through their mission to serve, support, and celebrate the LGBTQIA+ community and its allies, they've created a safe, inclusive space for learning, connection, and growth. Their work fosters curiosity, deepens understanding of LGBTQIA+ history, and strengthens community bonds in Des Moines.

Sharon Malheiro Award

BTown Pride



Named in honor of One Iowa's late founder, this award recognizes an organization that uses its voice and influence to uplift LGBTQ+ rights. We're excited to honor BTown Pride for their unwavering dedication to creating a stronger, more affirming community in the Burlington area.

Future Speakers



September 4:

Jackie Blount

Iowa Schools:
Sexuality & Gender

October 2:

Mazie Stillwell

Exec. Director Progress Iowa

November 6:

Deidre DeJear

President/CEO Oakridge
Neighborhood

December 4:

Nate Nims

Pastor, Walnut Hills
United Methodist Church

**“Do your little bit of
good where you are; it's
those little bits of good
put together that
overwhelm the world.”**

*** Desmond Tutu**



The Greatest Love

by Jonathan Wilson

Jon Klaus is a pulpit supply preacher who is regularly a columnist published in the *Bloomfield (Iowa) Democrat*; I read his columns religiously. I can't stop myself; my father was clergy, as is my sister. His columns often read a little like sermonettes, and are generally well written.

In a recent column entitled "Jesus loves me, this I know," he referred to John 15:12-13 quoting Jesus saying, "Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends."

That is simply not true. Not true.

There are literally hundreds of Biblical translations into English. I have several; I suspect I'm somewhat of an exception. The same sentiment is expressed in all of the translations that I have.

Don't get me wrong; laying down my life for someone else, or even for some worthy cause, shows a great deal of love and/or commitment. I can think of multiple people for whom I'd be willing to lay down my life. I can even think of some worthy causes for which I think I'd be willing to lay down my life. No question, that's a lot of love.

But here's the point; I'm the father of two begotten children and the grandfather of five. Bottom line is this: I



First Friday Breakfast Club
Founder **Jonathan Wilson**

would not voluntarily lay down the life of any of my children or grandchildren on behalf of anyone or anything. Period. Drop mic.

Everyone who is a parent knows this truth. Even those who aren't parents, have parents, and can recognize this truth.

The statement is attributed to Jesus after all. But, Jesus was never a parent. Still unsure? Consider then John 3:16. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son..." The greatest love.

This brings to mind the opera *Porgy and Bess*, and the lyrics, "What you're liable to read in the Bible; it ain't necessarily so." Reading the Bible is a good thing, even recommended. But it needs to be read critically, or you're likely to miss the capital T truth.

oneiowa

+ LGBTQ HEALTH AND WELLNESS CONFERENCE

Saturday, September 26

Des Moines University Campus

9:00 AM – 4:30 PM

One Iowa hosts an annual **LGBTQ Health & Wellness Conference** to bring healthcare providers and LGBTQ community members together to connect and learn.



Healthcare providers gain valuable knowledge about best practices for serving LGBTQ folks and have the chance to meet and build trust with LGBTQ individuals. LGBTQ community members can learn more about LGBTQ-inclusive healthcare resources in their area, gain system navigation knowledge, and develop relationships with healthcare providers.

This conference is a **welcome space** for those who are engaged in LGBTQ+ health, including healthcare, mental health, and healthcare support. Physicians, therapists, social workers, dentists, physical therapists, community health workers, medical students, etc., are invited to join.



2026 Pride Booth Registration Winners

FFBC held a drawing during Pride for 15 sets of two tickets (30 total) for a FREE FFBC breakfast. This allowed FFBC to sign up 200+ new people as potential new members!

* Ryker F.	* Laura D.	* CJ J.
* Liam S.	* Denis S.	* Red S.
* Kathleen B.	* Mandy H.	* Steve S.
* Patty T.	* Michael L.	* Shiloh W.
* Samuel T.	* Connor L.	* Nick K.



Congratulations!

BACK-TO-SCHOOL ICE CREAM SOCIAL

AUG. 29, 2026 • 1 - 4 P.M.
WITMER PARK, DES MOINES

SPONSORED BY:
CENTRAL IOWA RAINBOW FAMILIES
QUEER & TRANS ACTION GROUP OF FIRST UNITARIAN CHURCH



National LGBTQ+ Calendar

- **August:** Transgender History Month
- **August 9:** Gay Uncles Day
- **August 20:** Southern HIV/AIDS Awareness
- **August 24:** Marsha P. Johnson Day

glaad



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 gender 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)

Individual Meeting: \$18

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

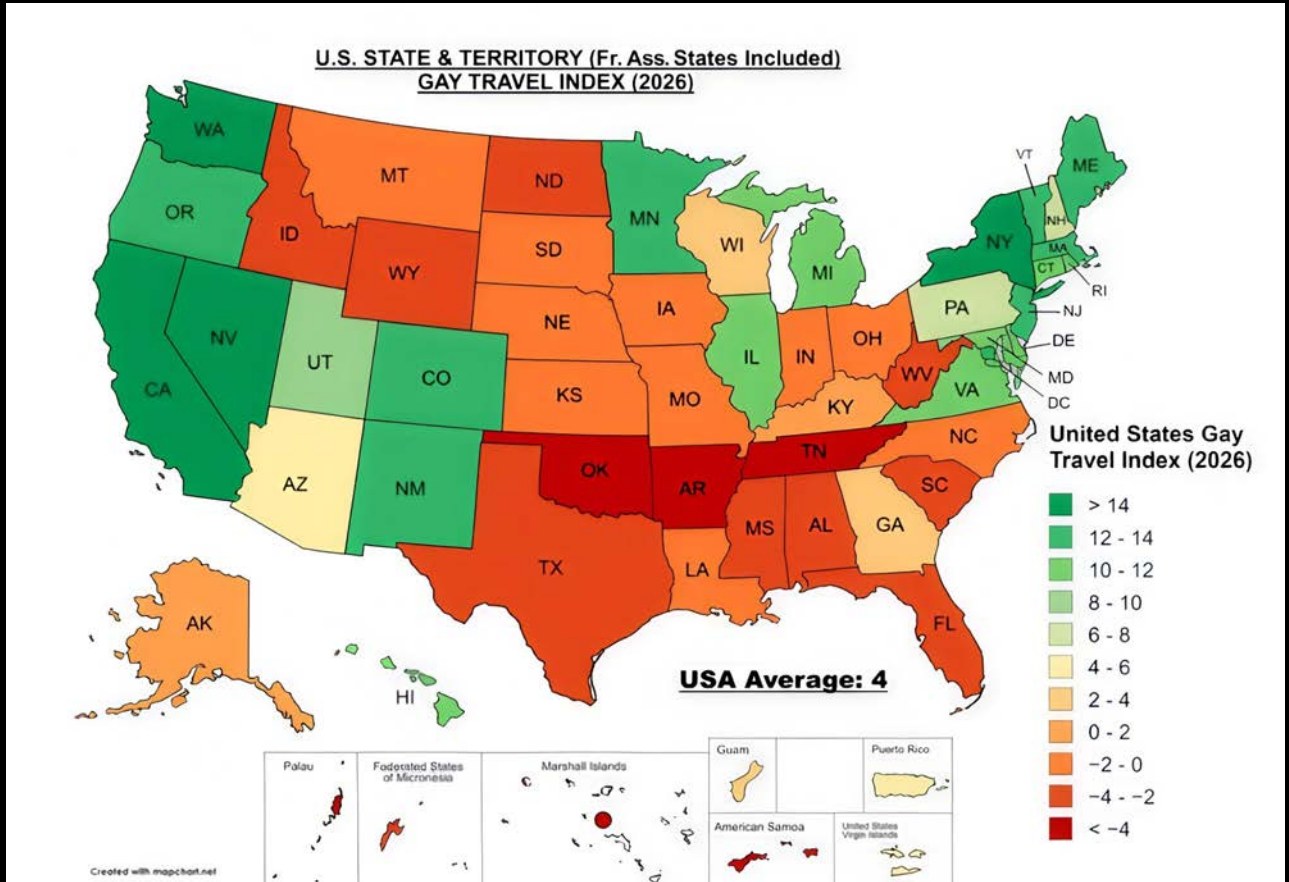


LGBTQ+

LGBTQ+ Friendly Index 2026

Source: spartacus.gayguide.travel/gaytravelindex.pdf

Vital Statistics



Families of Transgender Youth in IOWA

Get support navigating the state's anti-transgender healthcare ban - including information on the ban, out-of-state providers, and travel grants.

TRANS YOUTH EMERGENCY PROJECT

Support in IA provided by:

SOUTHERN EQUALITY **oneiowa**

www.transyouthemergencyproject.org/ia

IOWA TRANS MUTUAL AID FUND

donate

The Iowa Trans Mutual Aid Fund financially supports Trans, Nonbinary, and Gender Diverse lowans as they access gender-affirming care.

iowatransmutualaidfund.org

ICLA Est. 1992

July & August Events

Gender Blender: A Celebration of Trans Excellence July 17th • 8:00 PM	DISCO VS COUNTRY August 2nd • 5:00 PM
Play Something Country Show August 21st • 8:00 PM	Monarch & BOD Candidate Presentation Show August 22nd • 5:00 PM

All at Garden Restaurant & Show Lounge



30th Anniversary



Red Party

FFBC Celebrates Scholarship Donors

On Saturday night, July 11, First Friday Breakfast Club enjoyed Recital Hall in the **Temple for Performing Arts** in downtown Des Moines to thank members and donors to the FFBC Scholarship Fund. Wonderful drinks and food added to the celebration. It was great to celebrate another record-breaking year that allowed FFBC to recognize **21 scholars** from across the state of Iowa with **\$3,000 each** (*that's \$63,000!*).

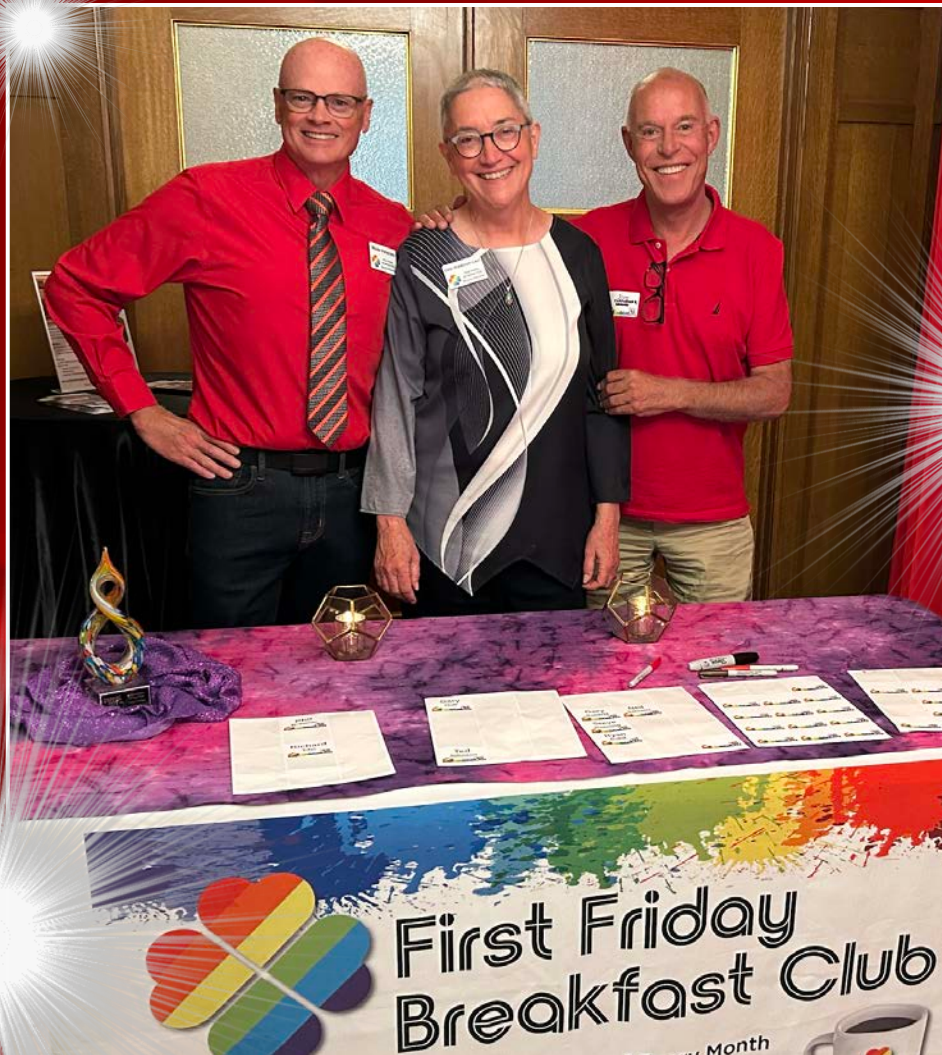


FFBC Board of Directors





Celebrating 30 Years of First Friday Breakfast Club





Thank you





A Champagne Toast



THANK YOU!


**First Friday
Breakfast Club**


2026 Scholarship Donors

Underwriter (\$3000+)

- Phil Branner & Ted Johnson
- Bruce Carr & Robert Thelen
- John Christensen & Scott Nelson
- John Charles & Mike Koch
- Tom Crippen & David Nelson
- Michael & Barbara Gortner
- Dore & Trudy Holman Hand
- Brad Holland & Joe Reitz
- Gary Thors
- Park County Board of Supervisors, Community Betterment Grant
- Jim Sierke
- Walnut Hills United Methodist Church Scholarship in honor of Mike Spence

Host (\$1000 - \$2999)

- Jim Anderson & Byron Huff
- Mark Bimhoff & Troy Zwart
- Ken Hansen & Wade Peterson
- Matt Hutt & Paul Postinger
- Chadwick Lindsey
- Phyllis Bright Eyes Tour
- Christopher Russell
- Larry & Storm Lee
- Jerry Vroegh

Advocate (\$500 - \$999)

- Mark Anderson & Ben Vroegh
- Ameykema
- Margie Altman Blumenthal
- James Banda & Louis Van Derheide
- Kevin Chornick
- Neilson Coleman & Keith Wertz
- Christopher Conroy
- Paul E. Clark, Jr.
- Mal Doherty
- Jim Flammberg
- Michael & Debbie Hubbell
- Larry & Sharon Huff
- Dorinda Macfarlane
- Misty Todd Team at Better Homes & Gardens Real Estate Innovations
- Michael & Jennifera Pogge Weaver
- Gary Reddick
- Jarvis Talbot & Dan Vreker
- David Willard

Supporter (\$250 - \$499)

- Peg Armstrong-Gallafan
- Larry Barnett & Bill Jackson
- Chris Bess
- Roger Bishop & David Lauritzen
- Jack Claussen & Alan Wells
- David & Alicia Claypool
- Kurtis Davidson & Robert Warren
- Ron Hendrix & James Pugh
- Jeff Jensen & Tim Lomax
- Randall Kramer
- John L'Estrange
- William Moody
- Eric Nemmers
- Matthew Paul
- Patricia Pierce
- George W. & Mary A. Richardson
- Tina Schrock
- Beverly Smith
- David & Denise Swartz
- Carl & Susan Voss
- Ivan & Anne Webber

Honors (\$100 - \$249)

- Michael D. Bostwick
- Vernice Stults-Petro
- Kelly Baum
- Jackie Blum
- Andrew Browner
- Tim Burgess & Ryan Nodde
- Frank & Marilyn Carroll
- Tom Chap & Don Palmer
- Bryan Crowder
- CVS Health
- David Feiberg
- Diane Ford & Chris Binner
- Jeff Hartman
- Harold Harkness
- Steve Kurl & Dr. Lynn Baskin
- Pind Lewis
- Gregory Lin
- John & Carl Ann Mandelbaum
- Matt McCoy
- Brian & Susan McLeod
- Harold Nevin
- Progressive Insurance
- David Romand
- Steve Sande
- John Salk
- Chap Webster
- David Vardin & Elaine Lundstrom

Donors (Up to \$99)

- John Brenhoff
- Margaret Chase
- Christopher Conroy
- Michael Egol
- Lynn Davis
- Kevin Gilchrist
- Rachel Guck
- John & Terri Hale
- Chuck Jordan
- Mark & Mary Kacere
- Robin Kline & William Summers
- Hannah Mitchell
- Zachary Ray
- David Richard Ross
- Cody Smith
- Drew Stomand
- Steve Thury
- Tom Villack
- Jim Young

In-Kind Services

- PC Print Center
- John Schrecker
- Nicholas Williams

Bequests Funding

- Charles Carries
- Brad Holland & Joe Reitz
- Alfred Miller
- CHP Paulson



**Fundraising
Period:
May 2025
to April 2026**



30 Years of Parties

Summer Picnics & PROS Parties

First FFBC Picnic: July 7, 1996



July Picnic... Don't Miss It!

2 We will meet to enjoy our picnic on **Friday afternoon, July 7**, at Rockville Lake. A map accompanies this newsletter. We will meet at 1:00 and go until around 4:00 or whenever. It will be a great time and the cost is covered by membership dues. Guests are welcome at \$10.00 per person. You need to RSVP **no later than July 1**. Call Jonathan Wilson at 301-484-4800 or Mr. 208-550-0000 and let him know or leave a message. The menu will include hamburgers, grilled chicken breast, salads, grilled vegetables, dessert and ice machines. You'll need to bring your own preferred beverages. There will be limited cooler space for your own. Recreation "stuff" is placed, so you really don't need to bring anything but the expectation to have good time with fellow FFBC members and guests.

RSVP Either Way by July 1

1997

Plan to Attend the
JULY PICNIC
Sunday, July 6

Oak Grove Recreation Area at Rockville Reservoir
Be there by 12:30 p.m. • Lunch served at 1:00 p.m.
Food, soft drinks, and fun available
Bring pictures, request only, interactive only, etc.
See map sheet for directions

Photo Credits:
Gary Moore



1999

PICNIC UPDATE

Mark your calendars for the July 25 FFBC picnic at the shelter house in Walnut Woods State Park. Festivities will begin at 11:30 a.m. The picnic is potluck, so bring a dish to share, and you will need to bring your own table settings. The breakfast club will provide soft drinks and iced tea. Any other beverages will need to be provided by you.

2000

PICNIC SET FOR JULY 16

Plan to attend the FFBC Picnic July 16 from noon to 3 p.m. at the Blank Park Zoo. The cost is \$10.00 per person. Soft drinks will be provided along with the food. See accompanying insert.



Red Party Fundraisers



Donor/Member Summer Garden Parties



Queer Writing Workshop
Sunday, August 30
 2:00 - 4:00 pm

Connect with fellow writers of all genres

Draft work from provided prompts (or come with your own!)

Edit drafts in an inclusive and collaborative environment

 **All are welcome. Come as you are.**

Interested in sharing work?
 Email us a copy at desmoinespridecenter.board@gmail.com by July 25th


PRIDE CENTER
 Des Moines

Did you know we are
OPEN every Sunday?

Check out books, view archival materials of our community's history, and enjoy a welcoming, inclusive space for the LGBTQIA+ community

Every Sunday
 from 2:00-5:00PM!

find us at 1620 Pleasant ST
 Des Moines, IA 50314

 
PRIDE CENTER
 Des Moines

The Des Moines Pride Center houses the Rick Miller LGBTQ Library. The Pride Center is fighting to maintain a vibrant Queer future by connecting people to LGBTQ+ literature, information, and creativity.

 **COMMON LOVE** **FREE SHOPPING POP-UPS**

UPCOMING EVENTS

DATE	TIME
AUG 8	12:00 PM - 2:00 PM
SEPT 12	12:00 PM - 2:00 PM
OCT 10	12:00 PM - 2:00 PM
NOV 14	12:00 PM - 2:00 PM
DEC 12	12:00 PM - 2:00 PM

WHAT YOU'LL FIND

Clothing including:

- Dresses
- Skirts
- Pants
- Leggings
- Shirts
- Shoes
- Undergarments
- Binders
- Pajamas
- Accessories
- Purses/bags
- and more!

Miscellaneous items:

- Cleaning supplies
- Hygiene products
- Non-perishable foods
- Sexual health products

Community & Support:
 (every month is unique!)

- Crafts + conversation
- Alterations
- Voice coaching
- Transition Doula
- Gender affirming products
- Dressing rooms
- Fun vibes

@commonlovedsm
 Everyone deserves clothes that make them feel good.

Park Fair Mall
 100 E Euclid Ave, DSM

Book of the Month

Pageboy

by Elliot Page

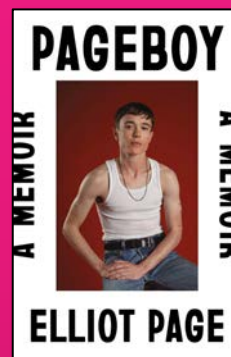
Pageboy traces Elliot Page's path from a childhood in Nova Scotia feeling miscast in his own skin, through Hollywood roles that amplified that discomfort, to the relief of living openly as himself. Moving between moments of career triumph and private reckoning, it is a candid story of reclaiming identity.

Publication date: June 6, 2023

1620 Pleasant Street, Des Moines
(515) 518-0530

www.desmoinespridecenter.org

Full Searchable Catalog:
www.librarycat.org/lib/DSMPC



"One way or another, we all have to find what best fosters the flowering of our humanity in this contemporary life and dedicate ourselves to that."

Joseph Campbell



The Rick Miller LGBTQ Library is constantly changing, if you would like to donate material or provide support, they are always looking for community connections and support.



The Odyssey

A Movie Review by Mark Turnage

With “The Odyssey,” director Christopher Nolan’s follow-up to “Oppenheimer” ups the ante in scope and star power—but do its themes stand the test of time like its source material? While “The Odyssey”’s ultimate commentary on cruelty and civility may be simplistic compared to its grand cinematic scale, by streamlining Homer’s epic and reframing its major characters to reinforce its themes, Nolan makes an ancient story feel new, relevant, and emotionally resonant.

The story of “The Odyssey” has existed for centuries—but where it becomes Nolan’s is through his choices in characterization and themes. In “a time of apparent magic,” Odysseus (Matt Damon), King of Ithaca, Greece, has been missing in action with his army for 20 years since the fall of Troy, using the trickery of the Trojan Horse to attain a brilliant but brutal victory, yet never returning home.

In Ithaca, the situation is grim: beholden to cultural customs and “Zeus’s Law”—demanding kindness to guests lest they be gods in disguise—Queen Penelope (an enrapturingly embittered Anne Hathaway) reluctantly hosts dozens of rowdy and rude suitors seeking control of Ithaca like Antinous (a sniveling, scheming Robert Pattinson) in her castle. Though Penelope and her servant Eumaeus (John Leguizamo) believe Odysseus is alive, they are beginning to lose hope amidst disturbing stories of foreign attacks by the “Sea People,” implied to be barbarians “who do not respect

Zeus’ Law.” Penelope’s son, Telemachus (Tom Holland), undertakes a risky mission to leave home and find answers about his father in Sparta, while Antinous conspires to kill Telemachus on the journey and take the throne. Meanwhile, an alive but bewildered Odysseus struggles to remember what happened to him and his soldiers since Troy, but the more his memory returns, the more he fears there is no home for him to return to.

Nolan’s “Odyssey” weighs the horrors of war and civility lost over one man’s glory or drawn-out clashes with fantastic gods and monsters; its characters are constantly beset by battles imminently threatening their own mortality, where things like food, rest, and trust are all luxuries. It’s the foggy, paranoid, hearsay-filled landscape where this “Odyssey” lies, but it’s also one where the gods’ disguises are indeed people or other agents of nature as personal reckoning. This atmosphere reflects back to its main theme of civility (or lack thereof) to guests, consequences included. Yet its conclusion, while inspiring in tone, leaves something to be desired thematically regarding how civility can be found (and fought for) again.

Elliot Page’s performance as the soldier Sinon is especially effective as an original crux to the plot, propelling its most weighty moments. Robert Pattinson turns in another stellar role as the loathable lothario Antinous. The climactic final confrontation still reads as chaotic on-



screen, even in IMAX: a Nolan truism is that fight scenes are notoriously hard to follow. But his insistence on practical effects makes Odysseus’ more horrific encounters that much more memorable—and visceral.

The most immediate character in “The Odyssey” that dwarfs all others is its dreamlike cinematography by Hoyte van Hoytema: Iceland’s black salt beaches and distant volcanoes become Hades; the Mediterranean Sea becomes an intense, stunning marine teal whose beauty is deliberately misleading; Agamemnon becomes a physically intimidating shadow. Calypso’s beach is shot from above and afar to emphasize an eerie, surreal wasteland as an echo of Odysseus’ broken mind. There are many gasp-worthy shots in “The Odyssey” backed by its haunting Bronze Age-instrumentation by Ludwig Goransson (“Black Panther,” “Tenet”): how the film reads audio-visually is its best language. Yet if one is insistent on being a purist about “70mm IMAX format,” don’t bother: tickets were sold out for months in multiple major cities hours away. See it on the biggest screen and sound system you can to get the most out of it.



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Rachel Gulick Wade Petersen
Ken Hanson Joe Raetz
Brad Holland Beverly Smith
Byron Huff Phil Williams
Scott Kuknyo

Jonathan Wilson (Emeritus)

Contact Us: info@ffbciaowa.org

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Publication



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of Directors**

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

Across the Board

News & Views from FFBC Board Members



Education on Life Support

by Jim Flansburg

I felt like a rat leaving a sinking ship. I had turned in my resignation on December 1, and it was rejected. Twice. Finally, I said, "Accept my resignation or not, but as of February 1, I am not coming back."

That was two years ago. After toiling in public relations at the Iowa Department of Education for 13 years, I had decided to part ways -- two years before I had planned on retiring. The reason? The direction of the department which, during my tenure, included some excellent years under excellent directors. Until the director who was appointed in 2023.

Her lack of hands-on experience in education didn't bother the governor whatsoever. To the contrary, she was a Trump booster who was hired to basically dismantle public education as we know it in Iowa.

After years of putting public education on life support -- funding it below cost-of-living standards -- Iowans watched as our public education system went from being the first in the country to now in the bottom half.

If starving public education wasn't enough, Republicans enacted the **Students First Education Savings Accounts (ESAs)**, which became law on January 24, 2023. The Republicans call it the Education Savings Accounts act, but many of us call it private school vouchers, which has an uglier and truer ring to it. Essentially, what the program does is take public money away from public schools and gives it to private schools, many of which have no accountability to the state whatsoever. Private schools can admit who they want and, more importantly, exclude others such as those with disabilities and special needs.

Republicans sold the project to Iowans as giving parents school choice, especially to those who could not afford private schools. That was, of course, a ruse. When it started two years ago, the program was aimed at low-income families making at or below 300 percent of the federal poverty rate. The ruse was lifted this past school year when the cap on qualifying for the vouchers was lifted: the richest families can now qualify for them.

The state now spends over \$300 million a year to send students to private schools. And that's expected to grow. Meanwhile, public schools got an anemic two percent increase in funds from the Republican legislature during a time of four percent inflation.

The voucher costs are not sustainable, especially since the Republicans have squandered the state's surplus and is leaving a deficit.

Today, 9,000 more students attend private schools than two years ago -- a 27 percent increase. One way to look at it is the voucher program is costing the state over \$300 million to send 9,000 students to private schools, or \$33,333 for each of those new students. Another way of looking at it is that it's a boondoggle for wealthy families already sending their children to private schools.

Folks, this is public money.

Before I resigned, when I was asked where I worked, I was met with a grimace when I told them I worked at the Iowa Department of Education. I would then say, "It gets worse. I work in the public relations department." That would elicit a groan.

The voucher program has to go. And a commitment to public education has to take center stage in the upcoming elections. Our future literally depends upon it.

