



The  
Outlook

# Former area resident writes book on growing up in Driftless area

**By DESTINY KAPLER**  
*Outlook Newspaper*

A woman who grew up near the Monona area wrote a book about her experiences growing up in northeast Iowa and is promoting it at two local libraries.

Karen Gregory, who currently lives in Tucson, Arizona, wrote a book called “Journeys from the Driftless: Growing Up on an Iowa Farm.” The book details her experience growing up on a farm perched on top of a bluff overlooking the Yellow River, 20 minutes from Monona, near the Waterville and Rossville area.

Gregory said the book had an unusual start.

“I started this book pretty much by accident,” she said.

Gregory said a friend asked her to tell her a story about Gregory’s mom, and when Gregory got to the end of the story, her friend said, “Write it.”

“I never thought about writing about my mom or my life or anything like that. I am a copywrit-

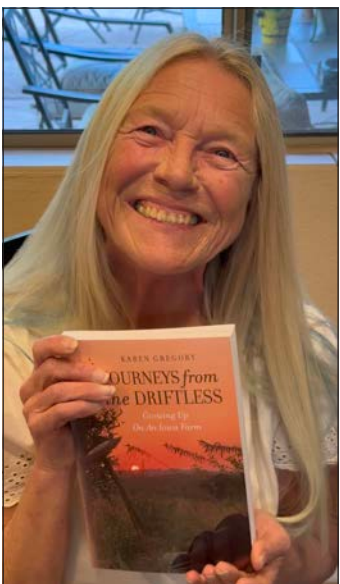
er by profession, I’ve been in the advertising industry for 35-plus years, and so I’ve written for other people for years and years but I never thought about writing my story or my mom’s story,” Gregory said.

Gregory then started by submitting a short story (what would later be one of the chapters in her book) to the Tucson Literary Book Awards, where she was a finalist.

Gregory did a lot of moving for her advertising career, having moved from Iowa to Florida, Florida to Colorado, Colorado to Arizona, Arizona to Texas, and then back to Arizona, where she resides today.

“There was a lot of moving with advertising; I went where the jobs were,” she said.

She did advertising for international and national accounts,



**Karen Gregory holds her book, “Journeys from the Driftless: Growing up on an Iowa Farm” that she wrote about her experience growing up in northeast Iowa. (Submitted photos)**



**Karen Gregory’s book features many pictures of the area and farm she grew up on, like this photo of her parents’ farmhouse.**

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## Monona City Council picks new council member



**Mayor Grant Langhus administered the oath of office to new council member, Kevin Brainard, at the Monona City Council meeting on Monday, June 16. Brainard will fill the vacancy from the resignation of a former Council member. (Destiny Kapler/The Outlook photo)**

**By DESTINY KAPLER**  
*Outlook Newspaper*

The Monona City Council picked a new council member to fill a vacancy and approved fixing the fire station roof and a new police vehicle upfit package at their meeting on June 16.

Three different individuals—Josh Ludwig, Kevin Brainard, and Bill Benda—had all submitted letters of interest to fill the vacancy of former council member John Elledge, who resigned due to his work hours conflicting with City Council meetings.

Ludwig, Brainard, and Benda were all present at the meeting to talk to the Council.

Mayor Grant Langhus started the discussion to fill the vacancy by briefly explaining what he knew about all three candidates. He then stated that each candidate had two minutes to introduce themselves, say more about themselves if they would like, or add things that would not have been on their application to become a council member.

Josh Ludwig, who was the recent organizer of Monona Hay Days, opened the discussion.

“I want to be involved in the community, that’s why I did Hay Days, to meet people and get involved in the community,” he said.

“But at the end of the day, I want the best person in the position, right? So, if you guys feel I’m not ready, because I’ve only lived here two years, I respect that decision,” Ludwig said.

“I would like to be more involved and learn more and more about Monona. But like I said, it’s for the community’s best interest, not mine,” he said.

Ludwig then added that if the council thought he was not ready, maybe he could be on the council at a later time. Council member Timothy Wright then added that there will probably be another spot available in November, as he intends to retire from being a council member.

Bill Benda addressed the council second. He began by stating that he has lived near Monona for

around 40 years, and worked for the City for 33 or 34 years.

“I think I could be helpful in making decisions for the City,” he said.

He added that he has his own business.

“Like he (Ludwig) said, whatever decision you make, you make. It’ll be no hard feelings in my heart,” Benda said.

Kevin Brainard was the final candidate to speak to the council.

“Maybe some will know me more than I know you, but I’ve lived in the community since I was 18–48 years ago,” he said.

“I’ve worked at Norplex—or did work at Norplex—for 47 and a half years. I retired two years ago from there,” he said.

He then discussed all the different things he did at Norplex, including working on the floor for 19 years, followed by a position as shift supervisor, and then, for 23 years, a position as manager. He said that Norplex is a global

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## Hay Days President gives event overview

**By DESTINY KAPLER**  
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Monona Hay Days President, Josh Ludwig, recently gave a recap of how this year’s Hay Days community celebration went.

“I think it went really really well. My wife (Kayla Ludwig) is kind of co-president, so she and I really teamed up to run it this year,” Ludwig said.

Ludwig discussed some highlights that he especially liked.

“I thought the talent show went amazing, I thought we had a good selection of games and I thought the food options were really good as well. I think we had most types of food covered,” he said.

Ludwig reported that there were seven food trucks and two tents, plus the Luana Fire Department was serving food, so he estimated that there were about 10 or 11 food options.

Ludwig said he also liked the parade and the selection of games, but is looking into doing a survey on the Monona Hay Days Facebook page, to find out what the community would like to see.

“At the end of the day, it’s not for myself and the (Hay Days) committee, it’s for the town and the surrounding area, right? So once I get the survey up I really want to get feedback and I want to make sure that next year we add whatever people want and try to get as much of a turnout as we can,” he said.

Ludwig would have liked to have seen a bigger turnout for the dog costume show (new this year) and the Little Mr. and Miss Buckaroo contest (new last year). He hopes to promote these events more next year, but was happy with this year’s band, the Palomino band, and said that the bags tournament had a positive turnout.

Ludwig said bags, the hay bale toss, and the tractor pull are some of the classic games that they will always have at Hay Days, unless for some reason people stop attending them. He doesn’t expect that to happen, however.

“We always have a good turnout for those events,” he said.



**Josh Ludwig (right) was this year’s organizer of Monona’s Hay Days event, with the help of his wife, Kayla Ludwig (left). (Photo courtesy of Josh Ludwig)**

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### DEADLINES