

RAGBRAI in ESTHERVILLE

CONTINUED

Sweet sanitation

BY AMY H. PETERSON
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Jessica Garrison Chung of West Hartford, Connecticut is on her ninth RAGBRAI driving the support RV for her dad, Les Garrison, 71, retired U.S. Marine Corps, of Arlington, Virginia. Les is a Sioux City native who enjoys returning

to Iowa each summer. Les rides a Street Strider, which has him standing upright while moving handlebars and elliptical foot pedals to move forward. His team of one is called SemperStride, and he raises awareness and funds for SemperFi & America's Fund, a nonprofit that provides lifetime support for critically wounded, ill and injured service members, veterans and military families. Les said the headwinds from Milford to Estherville were tough as his upright position makes



him somewhat of a giant sail against the wind. Jessica wanted to share a few things that made the Estherville stop great. She said there are many factors people don't always consider for support vehicle drivers, and in nine years of RAGBRAI, she particularly found Estherville's dumping and pumping station terrific.

"It was open on our way into town, not just out – this helps with lines and congestion. You

had two sites, not just one. It was clearly marked on the town support map we all got/in the RAGBRAI app. No tricky driving or backing up needed. Dump and water refill –not just dump, and super friendly guys running the stations. I hopped out with my gloves and boots on, but they had already hooked us up to their hose and we were underway. I didn't touch a thing!" Jessica said.

ABOVE: Les Garrison, right, of Arlington, Virginia, serendipitously bumped into his family member Amy H. Peterson, left, of Estherville, on North 7th Street Monday.

RIGHT: Les Garrison, right, takes a moment on RAGBRAI with his granddaughters, Charlotte, left, and Camille Chung and his Street Strider on which he rides across Iowa each year.

LEFT: Les Garrison, 71, rides a Street Strider on his ninth RAGBRAI

Photos by Jessica Garrison Chung, special to the Estherville News

I hopped out with my gloves and boots on, but they had already hooked us up – I didn't touch a thing!
-JESSICA GARRISON CHUNG



CANCER, Continued from Page 1A

incidence in the nation, behind only Kentucky.

The sobering local reality

Against this backdrop of no distinct pattern statewide, Emmet County's specific struggles with colorectal cancer stand out. The county sees approximately 74 new cancer cases annually, with an age-adjusted colorectal cancer rate of 57.2 cases per 100,000 residents – substantially higher than both the state average of 39.9 per 100,000 and the national rate of 36.4 per 100,000.

"This is something that maybe could be an area to dig into," Dr. Sarah Nash, Assistant Professor in the University of Iowa's Dept. of Epidemiology and researcher with the Iowa Cancer Registry, said. "We're happy to collaborate with you on trying to understand why Emmet County has high rates of both colorectal cancer and cancer deaths," Dr. Nash added.

Especially concerning are the county's survival statistics. While 54% of Iowa residents with late-stage colorectal cancer remain alive five years after diagnosis, Emmet County's survival rate falls substantially below that benchmark at 35% – a disparity that has caught researchers' attention across multiple health outcomes.

The environmental question mark

Iowa's agricultural landscape inevitably draws scrutiny as researchers search for explanations. The state leads the nation in corn production, pork, eggs and ethanol, while ranking among the top users of agricultural chemicals. Recent scientific findings have added layers of complexity to these concerns.

A March 2024 study by Dr. Peter S. Thorne of the University of Iowa's Department of Occupational and Environmental Health

analyzed data from 2,029 participants over 13 years, and found significant associations between drinking water nitrate levels and increased cancer death risk. (Reporter's note: I attended a class on environmental reporting with Dr. Thorne at Grinnell in 2018).

Laura Beane Freeman, a senior investigator for the National Cancer Institute, confirmed at the Oct. 2024 Iowa Cancer Summit that "nitrate has been linked to colorectal cancer and researchers have observed several associations between nitrate and ovarian, thyroid, and kidney cancers."

The evidence on glyphosate, however, presents a more complex picture. The most comprehensive study – the Agricultural Health Study that tracked over 54,000 Iowa and North Carolina pesticide applicators – found no statistically significant associations between glyphosate use and cancer at any site, despite the International Agency for Research on Cancer classifying it as "probably carcinogenic to humans."

The AHS study is somewhat aged, and a more recent study of the common weed killer from University of Washington states that it raises the cancer risk of those exposed to it by 41%, but with a clear correlation mostly with non-Hodgkin Lymphoma (NHL), a cancer of the immune system, which is not one of Emmet County's top five cancer types. Bayer, the parent company of what was Monsanto, insists that glyphosate is a "safe and efficient weed control tool." Monsanto has paid out damages to people with NHL. Researchers in this decade call the continued debate over the safety of glyphosate "important," due to its widespread use in agriculture, with a British bioscience professor calling the number of robust studies on glyphosate "pathetically small."

The limits of current understanding

When community members have raised concerns about geographic clusters of rare pediatric cancers, researchers acknowledge the challenges.

"We have a hard time looking at geographic patterns of those. Sometimes the only county we can really kind of break it down to look at kinds of cancer is Polk County. Otherwise you have to collect so many years of data. Iowa Cancer Consortium researchers said they will look at a suspected cluster or trend for any Iowan who contacts them with the area observed and other information.

The Iowa Cancer Registry has tracked cancer rates for over 50 years. However, pinpointing why Iowa residents have so much cancer and what can be done about it remains elusive.

Multiple theories, no clear answers

The transformation of Iowa agriculture since the 1990s provides temporal context that researchers find compelling yet insufficient to explain cancer patterns. Two major changes occurred: the growth of CAFOs (Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations) from 789 to 3,936 operations at last count, and the exponential growth in the use of herbicides, particularly glyphosate, following the 1996 introduction of Roundup-resistant, genetically modified crops, according to Iowa Food & Water Watch.

Today, almost 90% of corn, cotton and soybean seeds planted are modified to tolerate glyphosate, with Roundup use rising more than tenfold in the last 30 years. Iowa now generates livestock manure equal to the waste produced by 168 million people, or half the U.S. population.

Yet even these dramatic changes fail to explain why different cancer types cluster in different regions, nor why Emmet County specifically

struggles with colorectal cancer while neighboring counties face different challenges.

Focus on what we can control

Amid the uncertainty, health officials emphasize actionable prevention strategies for Emmet County residents. Colorectal cancer remains largely preventable through lifestyle changes and frequent screening. Key strategies include avoiding tobacco, limiting alcohol, maintaining a healthy weight, staying physically active, and getting regular screening beginning at age 45.

Only 68% of eligible Emmet County residents have been screened for colorectal cancer. Researchers get it. There's not a pleasant or pretty way to screen for it, though as an alternative to a colonoscopy, it's now possible to send a stool sample in a specific container to a lab and receive the results privately. There is room for improvement that could directly impact the troubling death statistics in the county. The recent change in screening recommendations to begin at age 45 instead of 50 reflects a national increase in early-onset colorectal cancer among younger adults.

Community resources and future research

Iowa Cancer Registry and Iowa Cancer Consortium researchers are not slowing down despite uncertainty in the continuation of its funding. A combination of federal and state dollars administered by the Iowa Dept. of Health and Human Services (Iowa HHS) supplies up to 70% of the Iowa Cancer Consortium's budget.

After a delay of months, the Consortium recently found out that for the 2026 fiscal year anyway, funding is coming. For the upcoming budget, which would affect 2027 funding, the National Center For Chronic Disease Prevention and Health

Promotion, which houses the Comprehensive Cancer Control Program, the Breast and Cervical Early Detection Program and Colorectal Screening Program, is set for elimination.

The Consortium has reserves to cover reduced expenses for at least a year. However, the delay in funding impacts the ability for state and local organizations to implement the Iowa Cancer Plan. The position of the Communications and Outreach specialist will be eliminated after the contract ends next month, all according to the Consortium's executive director Kelly Wells Sittig.

One program impacted is the Iowa Get Screened (IGS) program, which provides free colorectal cancer screening for low-income Iowan's and local health department services offering various prevention programs.

The University of Iowa Cancer Center is bringing together an expert panel to further discuss and investigate Iowa's high cancer rates. While the Harkin Institute at Drake, founded by former U.S. Senator Tom Harkin, the Iowa Environmental Council have partnered to conduct listening sessions around cancer environmental risks.

Whitney Zahnd, Assistant Professor at the University of Iowa College of Public Health, emphasized that addressing cancer requires actions at multiple levels.

"We never want to overlook that behind every number and data point are people who experience cancer and their family members," Zahnd said.

What can community members do?

"There are things we can each do as individuals, but there are also things that can be done in communities and state levels to help reduce risk.

Continuing the search

As agricultural expert Charles

Benbrook noted to Iowa audiences earlier in 2025, "It's really important to get some epidemiology going in Iowa, to try to figure out (if it's) nitrates, the nitrates plus the pesticides, what's going on here?"

For Emmet County residents, the immediate focus remains on proven prevention strategies while researchers continue investigating the broader questions that have made Iowa an unfortunate outlier in cancer trends. The complexity of the patterns suggests that simple explanations – whether agricultural, environmental, or behavioral – may be insufficient to address a challenge that appears as multifaceted as the state's agricultural landscape itself.

Community members with questions about the data or interest in cancer prevention programs can contact the Iowa Cancer Registry at www.canceriowa.org.

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Estherville Golf Course sold

Minnesota investor, radio personality purchases golf course, bowling alley, home from owner Iverson

BY AMY H. PETERSON
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Dale Creed Francis, who goes by Creed, is a familiar name and voice to upper Midwestern investors. As former co-host of his long time radio show, Financial Fortitude, the founding partner of the Vincent Companies and the Creed Companies, based in Edina, Minnesota, and joined by partner Jacob De St Hubert (call him Jake), arrived at Estherville Golf Course in a Bentley convertible a couple of weeks ago to negotiate a deal with Lesli Iverson, golf course owner.

That was the only sign that they were big city folks, however. Lesli's brother in law, Jay Iverson, took the partners on a tour of the golf course and home property, and when they returned to the golf club to rejoin Lesli, the four (including Clair Iverson) were laughing and talking as if they were old friends.

Creed is a public figure describing himself as an American businessman, radio personality, philanthropist, investor and author. Creed authored the book Preventative Wealth Care, an Amazon best-seller. His book aims to help investors "Prevent problems rather than treat them." Creed said he hopes to grow and preserve wealth through creative and innovative yet durable approaches.

Jake is founder of D'Saint Companies, an acquisition company in Minnesota. Jake was born in South Korea and adopted at nine months old, growing up in New Prague, Minnesota. His background is in automotive science and diesel science and technology, eventually becoming a top BMW technician. The Creed Companies and D'Saint Companies are collaborating on investments, including the Estherville Golf Course. Jake is married to Jen and raising three boys, Evan, Rylan, and Easton.

Here's what has happened: Vincent Companies has purchased the golf course. Vincent Companies is the largest multi-family apartment developer in the state of Minnesota.

The company will take over

operations of the golf course on Aug. 31, the bowling alley on Sept. 1. Because when the partners found out Iverson also owned the bowling alley, they, with Iverson and realtor Tammy Frederickson, purchased the entire package: bowling alley, home, and golf course.

Here's what's happening: a golf tournament on Aug. 29 in honor of Trace Iverson, who with wife Lesli co-owned and operated the business until his death from cancer of the esophagus on Oct. 11, 2024. Lesli said the partners are dedicated to honoring the memory of Trace and keeping the current employees if they still want to work in the business. They plan to bring in a golf pro to give lessons and open a pro shop, operating the clubhouse restaurant and bar year round. Membership prices will likely stay the same, at least for a while. The Estherville Lincoln Central cross country and golf teams will still have use of the course as they have to this point.

Lesli said, "I think Trace dropped these people in my lap."

Expanding on their plans on their first visit to Woody's Pizza, Creed and Jake said they wanted to invest in children and youth in the community by offering golf lessons from a pro who's committed to education and mentoring of youth as well as having a deep knowledge of and skill at golf. The two also had high compliments on Estherville's bowling leagues and high school program, and seek to expand on it.

Creed is originally from the Pocahontas area. He told Lesli he hopes the community will accept him.

"We're not some big city guys coming in from the Twin Cities to just take over. I'm from a small town. Jake grew up around farming. We want to invest in and grow with Estherville," Creed said.

Vincent Companies has invested in a variety of ventures recently, including a data center in Marshfield, Wisconsin, and in May, 2025 held a grand opening of its indoor shooting range, virtual reality studio, training institute, and store in New Prague.

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Canteen open for dinner

Wednesday, July 30:
Auxiliary Ladies Serving
2 pc Chicken\$9.25 or \$8.75
Pulled Pork\$8.75
Served with Fresh Baked Bread, Vegetable & Dessert

Thursday, July 31:
6 oz Top Sirloin or 6 Fan Tail Shrimp\$10.95
Served with Potato, Salad and Roll

Friday, August 1:
Fish Dinner (Swai)\$10.95
Served with Potato, Salad and Roll

Saturday, August 2: Off the menu

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