

Binford House looks for ways to grow, continues Passport dinners and Jessie Binford award

By SARA JORDAN-HEINTZ
TIMES-REPUBLICAN

Nominations are being accepted now through Dec. 23 for the second annual Jessie Binford Advocate for Youth Award. Open to those who serve Marshall County, it honors the legacy of the noted social reformer. To be considered for the award, the individual should make a difference through volunteer efforts or professional life, which could range from social work, education, religious leader, and more.

Dylan Does, who is overseeing the application process, said people can send nominations to: binfordhouse@gmail.com or mailed to: Binford House, PO Box 273, Marshalltown. Provide a few paragraphs of information about why the person deserves to win.

“We just want to make this an annual award, not only to honor Jessie, but really to take those principles and both recognize them here and encourage them for the future,” Does said.

The award is a collaborative effort among the Marshalltown Federation of Women’s Clubs (who owns the Binford House), Marshalltown Area Chamber of Commerce and the Historical Society of Marshall County. The award banquet will take place January 20, and Does pointed out the winner will be notified of the win two weeks in advance.

Heidi Williams, Woodbury Elementary School counselor, was the award’s first recipient. Does may be contacted for additional questions at: ddoes@marshalltown.org or by calling him at the Chamber: 641-753-6645.

The Binford House will offer its Passport dining program again in 2026. Participants can enjoy a five-course meal 10 months a year (February through November), at a cost of \$1,000. Half of that



T-R FILE PHOTO

Marshalltown’s iconic Binford House.

can be listed as a tax-deductible gift. There is also a six-month Passport available for \$650 (no tax credit). You may also pay and reserve one meal at a time, for \$150. The dinners are prepared and curated by Binford caterer Missy Sharer-Pieters.

“This will be the third year for the Passports. We started it two seasons ago because that was when we were celebrating Binford’s 150th anniversary,” Sharer-Pieters said. “It was so popular we brought it back.”

A total of 18 passports were sold in 2024, followed by 28 in 2025.

“Not only did everybody renew from the initial offering, but we added some new members,” she noted. “One thing that we learned over the last couple of years is people are always really curious about the recipes. So as a perk, we are going to put together a Binford Passport cookbook, which will have the recipes that we are serving for this year. Obviously, it won’t be available until basically the end of 2026.”

Passports bought before Jan. 1 will automatically receive the cookbook, with it being available later on for purchase. She said the meals have turned into almost a social club.

“It’s a way for people to meet and make friendships that I know would have never happened had they not been dining together at the Binford House,” she said. “You can do the one-time meal, and sometimes Passport holders want to bring an extra guest.”

The first meal — Feb. 7 — will be Mardi Gras in theme.

“Our menu tries to reflect the season, or maybe what a holiday is, and then try to pick out a regional thing as well, so that you feel like you are experiencing different kinds of foods and cultures,” she explained. “They are my recipes, and my husband’s. We really don’t know the menu month to month, just ideas. So much of how we cook is seasonal and what we can get our hands on locally.”

The dinners are restricted to 38 attendees. Reserve your Passport by calling 641-753-5450. Sharer-Pieters posts the menu in advance. Beer and wine can be brought in. Live music is provided.

Board Co-President Peggy Kelly said 2024 and 2025 saw repairs, renovations, paint jobs and more. The fence was repainted and trim redone; partial repair and painting done on the second floor; walls and

ceilings plastered; HVAC replaced on the main floor, with the rest of the work to happen next month; remediation for bat control; remodeled downstairs bathroom; mulch in the yard; in the process of updating its brochure, thanks to funding from donors.

“We’re not sitting on the money that we are raising; we’re putting it back into the house,” Kelly said.

In addition to these efforts, the board is working to attract more clubs to use the house as meeting space. Membership dues are the same as they were back in 1930: \$5 per member per year.

“After her mother’s death, Jessie chose to continue her mother’s support of Marshalltown area women’s service by donating the family house to the Federation in 1930,” Kelly said. “When Jessie donated the house, there were 16 member clubs using Binford House as their meeting place, and at one point it had grown to 33,” she said. “Now there’s only one, the Hawthorne Club.”

The Binford House is also available to rent for parties and other gatherings. It may be reached at: 641-753-5450 and binfordhouse@gmail.com.

deaths & obituaries

Get complete daily obituaries at timesrepublican.com

Paul Tomlinson, 78

Paul Edward Tomlinson, 78, of Marshalltown, passed away on Saturday, December 6, 2025 at his home.

Cremation rites have been accorded and services are currently

not scheduled. For more information or to send a condolence, please visit www.mitchellfh.com or call 641-844-1234. Mitchell Family Funeral Home is caring for Paul and his family.

Dr. Mark Macke, 77

Dr. Mark Macke, 77, of Marshalltown, IA passed away Thursday, December 11, 2025, at UnityPoint Health - Iowa Methodist Medical Center in Des Moines, IA. Mass of Christian Burial will be 10:30 a.m., Wednesday, December 17, 2025, at St. Francis of Assisi - St. Henry’s Catholic Church in Marshalltown. Visitation

will be 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m., Tuesday, December 16, 2025, at Anderson Funeral Homes in Marshalltown. A Vigil Service will follow the visitation beginning 7:00 p.m. at the funeral home. Further arrangements are pending with Anderson Funeral Homes. Online condolences may be sent to www.andersonfh.com.

Marcus Dittmer, 102

Marcus W. Dittmer, 102, of Marshalltown, formerly of Newton, passed away Thursday, December 11, 2025, at Glenwood Place in Marshalltown.

Per the wishes of Marcus and his family, cremation rites have been accorded. Mass of Christian Burial will take place on Wednesday, December 31 (note date) at 10:30 A.M. at St. Francis of Assisi Parish: St. Henry Catholic Church, where he was a faithful member. A visitation will be held prior to the service, beginning at 9:00 A.M. He will be laid to rest at Sacred Heart Cemetery in Newton, where he will receive full military honors provided by the

American Legion Post 111 of Newton. Mitchell Family Funeral Home has been entrusted with the care of Marcus and his family. For full obituary or condolences, please visit www.mitchellfh.com or call 641-844-1234.

Those left to cherish his memory are his five children: Judy (Jerry) Weller, of Ottumwa, Richard (Sue) Dittmer, of Kellogg, Kathleen Goldsberry, of Texas, Dennis (Lynn) Dittmer, of Newton, and Marvin Dittmer, of Newton, and stepdaughter Janet (Randy) Pree; numerous grandchildren and great grandchildren; brother-in-law: Harry Jensen and sister-in-law Joyce Dittmer.

DailyRecord

Times-Republican

Marshall County Courthouse Court

Dec. 12

• Daesha Samone Underhill made an initial appearance on a contempt of court/violation of a no-contact order charge. The contempt hearing will be scheduled by the District Associate Court. A no-contact order has been issued for the protected party.

• Dacoda Lee Lawrence made an initial appearance on a failure to appear for a pre-trial conference before a jury trial charge. The pretrial conference will be rescheduled by the District Associate Court. Lawrence is being held without bond.

• Emilio Antonio Hernandez made an initial appearance on a contempt of court/violation of a no-contact order charge and a violation of probation charge, an operating while under the influence-first offense charge and a failure to maintain control charge. The contempt hearing will be scheduled by the District Associate Court. A no-contact order has been issued for the protected party. The probation revocation hearing is set for 11:45 a.m. on Jan. 9, 2026. Hernandez is being held without bond. The public defender’s office is appointed as counsel on the operating while under the influence. The prelimi-

nary hearing for that charge and the failure to maintain control is set for 9:30 a.m. on Dec. 22. A substance abuse evaluation is ordered with the results submitted to the court. Bond is set at \$1,000 cash or surety.

• Joseph Jeffrey Chapman made an initial appearance on a forgery charge, a theft-fourth degree charge and a controlled substance violation charge. The public defender’s office is appointed as counsel. The preliminary hearing is set for 9:30 a.m. on Dec. 22. Bond is set at \$30,000 cash. A substance abuse evaluation is ordered with the results submitted to the court.

• Angel Castillo made an initial appearance on an assault causing bodily injury or mental illness charge and a criminal mischief-fourth degree charge. The public defender’s office is appointed as counsel. The preliminary hearing is set for 9:30 a.m. on Dec. 22. Bond is set at \$2,000 cash or surety.

• Adam Russell Moore made an initial appearance on an unlawful passing of a school bus-first offense charge. Moore pleaded guilty and the fine is \$345 with a \$51.75 surcharge and \$60 in court costs for a total of \$456.75.

• Benjamin Joseph Soy made an initial appearance on a failure to yield upon left turn charge. A pre-trial conference is set for 9:30 a.m. on Jan. 14, 2026, in Magistrate Court.

VFW Auxiliary Post 839 hosts December meeting

TIMES-REPUBLICAN

The December 2025 General Membership meeting of the VFW Auxiliary Post 839 was held at the post home on Dec. 5. President Theresa Shep-

herd called the meeting to order at 5 p.m., followed by the Opening Ceremonies, as per the Ritual. There were twelve members present.

The Opening Prayer was recited, led by Chap-

lain Donna Mitchem. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited, led by Patriotic Instructor Kay Bell.

All business was tabled until January’s meeting due to the Post’s Christmas Party.

Mitchem recited the Closing Prayer.

Shepherd closed the meeting as per the Ritual. The next meeting will be held at 6 p.m. on Jan. 20, 2026.

ASK AUGUSTINE

by Paul A. Tambrino, Ed.D., Ph.D.

Dec. 13 is Santa Lucia Day. Who was Lucia, was she an actual person, what is the legend concerning her and how is her day celebrated?

Being of Italian and Swedish heritage, I have always been fascinated by the story of Santa Lucia. Personally it intrigued me how an Roman Catholic Italian saint became so venerated throughout Protestant Scandinavian countries.

Lucia was a real person. Her current popularity extends beyond the Neapolitan song Santa Lucia. In the Inferno she appears as Dante’s angel. She is only one of only eight women (along with the Virgin Mary) commemorated by name in the Canon of the Mass.

The Feast of Santa Lucia is always celebrated throughout Scandinavia on Dec. 13, and in various Scandinavian communities within the USA. Lucia lived from 283 to 304 in Syracuse, on the island of Sicily.

She is venerated in Roman Catholic, Anglican, Lutheran and Orthodox churches. Yet, no one knows for sure why a 4th. Century Sicilian saint came to be so revered in Scandinavia.

Her legend, which can be traced to Italy, honors a young wealthy Christian bride-to-be who gave away her dowry

to the poor; an act which angered her prospective groom and caused him to report her Christian religion to the Roman authorities. She was condemned to death by fire.

Sometime in the 15th century a number of legends said that just before she died an intense inner light transformed Lucia and everyone present fell prostrate. Thus, Lucia a sign of light and hope to the poor, died (illuminated by a heavenly glow) on Dec. 13 in A.D. 304.

In actuality, Lucia was probably a victim of the wave of persecution of Christians that occurred late in the reign of the Roman emperor Diocletian. References to her are found in early Roman sacramentaries and at Syracuse in an inscription dating from AD 400.

The Lucia legend spread to Sweden at a time of great famine. In the province of Vanern, a large vessel appeared on Vanern Lake (Sweden’s largest lake and the third largest lake in all of Europe). At the vessels’ helm stood a maiden dressed in a gleaming white robe. Believed to be Santa Lucia, she guided the ship along the lakeshore, distributing food to the poor and hungry. The ship disappeared as soon as its mission was completed.

Santa Lucia festivities, with pagentry and good food, mark the first

day of the Scandinavian Christmas season that begins on Dec. 13, and lasts one month until Jan. 13. Santa Lucia day begins very early in the morning on Dec. 13. The oldest daughter of the house, usually dresses in a long white gown, dons a crown of evergreens and lighted candles on her head, sings the song “Santa Lucia,” and serves special Lucia cakes and warm drinks to the rest of the family.

One of my fondest memories I have of my years as president and CEO of the Iowa Community College District occurred on one Dec. 13 evening. It was a year in which we had a number of exchange students from Sweden and Norway. Their faculty advisor Connie Adair (a Professor of English who knew of my Italian and Swedish heritage) gathered those Scandinavian students and made a surprise visit to our home. They appeared at our door against a background of falling snow — with candles in their hair, singing Santa Lucia and carrying plates filled with all kinds of Scandinavian goodies.

Therefore, Santa Lucia Day is also great way to include another celebration during Advent — it can remind us of the impending Birthday of the One who is the “Light who came into the World,” Emmanuel, “God is with us.”

Gift Subscriptions

Support your local newspaper with the holiday gift that keeps on giving!



Times-Republican

YOUR LOCAL CONNECTION MARSHALLTOWN, IOWA

641-753-6611 | www.timesrepublican.com

