

# The News Gazette

Official County, City and School Newspaper

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 4, 2025    NUMBER FORTY-NINE    USPS 045-820    BAYARD, IOWA 50029    VOLUME 142

## Dancing, Bingo and Giving Back: Winter Wonderland Coming to Bayard

By Taylor Teays

A full evening of family-friendly activities is planned at the Bayard Community Building on Friday, Dec. 6 as organizers prepare a “Winter Wonderland” fundraiser.

The fundraiser, designed to both bring the community together while also raising money for the Kids Summer Meal Program and pop-up pantry. The two programs help ensure local children and families have reliable access to food.

The Winter Wonderland will include music for dancing, snacks, hands-on crafts for kids, and a Christmas tree

contest open to all ages.

Bingo will be called from 4:30 to 6 p.m., giving families a chance to play and support the cause all at once.

Shelby Richards has been paramount in her role helping to plan and organize the event. She says the goal of the event is to create a fun and welcoming atmosphere while highlighting the needs these programs meet throughout the year.

“This event is so important because it will help guarantee meals for children in our community,” Richards said. “The summer Meal Program supports kids all

summer long by getting meal bags into their hands when school isn’t in session. The pop-up pantry makes sure families in our surrounding area have access to food whenever they need it.”

The Summer Meal Program and pop-up pantry rely heavily on donations to stay in operation. Organizers hope the fundraiser will help bolster supplies ahead of the winter months and the next summer season. Richards emphasized that every contribution - big or small - makes an impact.

For those unable to attend the event but still wish-

ing to help, donations can be made by check to the Summer Meal Program. Venmo donations are also accepted by contacting Richards at 712-210-6664 or Bob Rogers with the Bayard Church of Christ.

In addition to financial support, organizers are seeking small toy donations, food items for the pantry, and volunteers willing to lend a hand.

“We’re grateful for any support people can give - whether it’s a donation or simply coming out to enjoy the evening and show encouragement,” Richards said.

Richards added that the heart of the event is family and community. “This is a family event, and the cause is a very important one to our town and the surrounding communities,” she said. “We want everyone to feel welcome and to know they’re helping make a real difference for local kids.”

The public is invited, and encouraged, to attend, participate and enjoy an evening of holiday fun - all for a cause benefitting families close to home.

## Step Inside Panora’s Holiday Spirit: Annual Home Tour Returns

By Taylor Teays

The Women for Panora’s Future (WFPF) will once again open the doors to some of the community’s most festive homes during the annual Holiday Home Tour, set for Sunday, Dec. 7 from 1 to 4:30 p.m.

This long-running event carries more than a 40-year history, being one of the organization’s major fundraisers.

Sue Nagel (with WFPF) shared details about the event’s significance, noting that it’s grown over the years.

“In 2024, over 200 people

attended the event.

Host homes are community members who have volunteered to host and support the event. “The hosts are essential and appreciated,” Nagel said.

Visitors can expect to see “many creative holiday season/winter decorating displays, themes and traditions,” Nagel said. She added that the event has become a favorite for many in the community: “People on the tour have mentioned that it has become a holiday season tradition.”

Funds raised during the

tour support several local causes.

“The WFPF Holiday Home Tour is one of the organization’s major fundraisers, Nagel said. “It supports various community causes including funding for several scholarships for Panorama Community School seniors, donating funds to support the local fire department and EMS, Panora Library, Guthrie Youth Foundation, New Opportunities, and additional community groups.

“This is an enjoyable outing for people that brings a smile and puts folks in a holi-

day spirit,” Nagel added.

Tickets for the event are \$10 in advance and \$15 on the day of the tour. They can be purchased at the Panora Public Library or from WFPF members. Tickets will also be available at the community center beginning at 1 p.m. on Dec. 7.

The tour is self-paced, and participants may visit homes in any order.

“The event tickets will have the addresses for the tour printed on them. People can visit the homes in any order they choose,” Nagel said.

Nagel emphasized the community aspect of the tour: “The main thing we want everyone to know is this is a family event and this cause is a very important one for our town and surrounding communities.”

Complimentary refreshments will be available at the Panora Community Center, and raffle tickets will be sold for \$1 each. Various holiday-themed items will be on display and raffled off, and a door prize is available by turning in your event ticket at the last location visited that day.

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## Longtime Live Nativity Tradition Returns to Its Roots

By Taylor Teays

The First Christian Church in Guthrie Center will host its Live Nativity program on Sunday, Dec. 7, at 5:30 p.m., bringing the long-running tradition back to its roots after several years of drive-through displays.

The church first held its Live Nativity in 1978 at the Guthrie Center Sale Barn. The event was free to the public, with visitors encouraged to bring canned goods for the food pantry. Community members filled the roles of Mary, Joseph, baby Jesus, the Wisemen, shepherds and angels.

Between 1978 to 2019, a total of 129 people took turns portraying Mary, Joseph and baby Jesus.

During the COVID pandemic, the church shifted to a drive-through version of the nativity, held in city park, with scenes showing the angel’s visit to Mary, the manger scene, shepherds with sheep, and the Wisemen.

This year, the church is returning to a full in-person program, with live characters acting out scenes from the Advent season.

There will be a light lunch following the program in the Fellowship Hall, and a hot chocolate bar will be available beforehand.

Attendees are asked to bring canned goods for the food pantry.

## Connected To Coon Rapids: New TextMyGov Program Rolls Out For Residents

By Dustin Teays

Residents of Coon Rapids now have a new way to be connected to what’s happening in their community.

Community partners, including the City of Coon Rapids, Coon Rapids Municipal Utilities, and Main Street Coon Rapids, recently announced a new program called TextMyGov. This will allow for more timely notifications to residents, as traditional methods such as newspapers, online calendars, and social media may not reach their entire audience.

“We’ve received a lot of comments from the community that they don’t know where to get community information,” Main Street Coon Rapids Director Katie Mason said. “Today, people rely heavily on their phones for real-time information, and this system gives us a fast, efficient way to reach the community with accurate updates.”

The system is highly user-

friendly. All you need to do is simply text COONRAPIDS (general notifications), CREVENTS (event notifications), CRMAINST (main street notifications), CRMU (utilities notifications), or CRREC (parks and recreation notifications) to 91896 to start receiving notifications. Mason says once this is done, the user will receive a prompt to text back the word “Yes” to confirm their signup. There are no apps to download, and no cost to the user.

“Residents will receive updates about a wide range of topics, including community events, youth sport registration deadlines, road closures, water or utility notices, weather-related announcements, and public safety information. Our goal is to share timely, need-to-know messages that help people stay informed,” Mason added.

There is also a great opportunity this weekend for people to have someone walk them through the sign-up process.

At the Christmas in a Small-town Celebration on Saturday, there will be a TextMyGov Sign-Up event running from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Main Street Coon Rapids Office.

“Anyone can stop by for one-on-one assistance getting signed up. We’ll help people text the keyword, walk through the confirmation process, answer questions, and make sure they’re subscribed to the specific alert groups they want. It’s especially helpful for residents who may not be as comfortable with their phones or who just want someone to walk them through it,” Mason said.

It’s also important to note the collaboration that went into this from the three groups involved, which made it a priority to keep their citizens informed.

“One thing we want people to know is that TextMyGov is truly a community partnership. The City of Coon Rapids, Coon Rapids Municipal Utilities, and Main Street Coon

Rapids worked together to bring this service to the community and to cost-share the expense of the program. It’s a tool designed to make communication easier for everyone. We encourage everyone to sign up so they’re not missing important updates throughout the year,” Mason concluded.

Also, be sure to stop by the Christmas in a Small Town Celebration on Saturday, as there will be plenty of fun to be had.

There will be a ribbon-cutting for Keith’s Workshop at 10:30 a.m., a ribbon-cutting for Chuck’s Bar and Grill at 2 p.m., followed by an open house. There will be a pet fashion show at 4th Avenue Coffee and Bites at 1 p.m. There will be games and prizes at Tony’s Corner Body and Paint from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., writing letters to Santa at Coon Rapids Municipal Utilities from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., and so much more to enjoy.

## 10 Squared Men, Women of Guthrie County Come Together To Support New Opportunities



New Opportunities was the recent recipient of donations from both 10 Squared Men and 10 Squared Women of Guthrie County.

- Photo Credits 10 Squared Men of Guthrie County

By Dustin Teays

Recently, two organizations in Guthrie County both donated money to the same cause.

Both the 10 Squared Men of Guthrie County and the 10 Squared Women of Guthrie County recently met to announce their fourth-quarter donations. There were three presentations from Guthrie

County Sports, New Opportunities, and Guthrie County FFA and 4-H Stable Barns.

Both groups selected New Opportunities as their fourth-quarter recipient. This included \$21,000 from 10 Squared Men of Guthrie County and \$15,300 from 10 Squared Women of Guthrie County for a total of \$36,300.

The two gifts were combined and given to New Opportunities Director Rhonda Huggins.

In total, the 10 Squared Men of Guthrie County have committed \$59,900 in 2025, and has committed a total of \$479,650 since the group began.

Check back for an extended version of this story.

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