

Arlington/Lamont News

Tax Season Is Here — New Arlington Business Offers Local Expertise



Jessica Frazier, Freedom Tax Services

As tax season gets underway, many area residents are gathering documents, crunching numbers, and preparing to file. For those feeling overwhelmed or unsure, a new business in Arlington is offering help close to home.

Freedom Tax Services, owned and operated by Jessica Frazier, recently opened to provide professional tax preparation and consulting services to individuals and businesses throughout the area. Frazier said she started the business to offer a more personal approach to tax preparation. "I wanted customers to feel heard, supported and confident in the process," she said. "I saw a need for a reliable local option and wanted to serve my community with services that are both convenient and trustworthy."

Frazier said she enjoys helping clients navigate the ever-changing tax laws and simplifying what can often feel like a complicated process.

In addition to standard tax preparation, Freedom Tax

taxpayers not to wait until the last minute and to seek help if they have questions. Some of her top tips for tax season include:

- Wait to file until all tax documents have been received
- Take advantage of year-end tax planning services in November and December for the next tax year, especially for business and farm operations, to help reduce tax liability

- Keep thorough records of major financial changes, including buying or selling property, assets and tracking expenses
- Ask questions throughout the year rather than waiting until filing season

For Arlington residents and those in surrounding communities, the new business offers a convenient, local resource during one of the busiest financial seasons of the year.

Freedom Tax Services is currently accepting new clients and prides itself on offering a personalized, one-on-one experience. To learn more or get started, visit www.freedomtax-services.com or contact Jessica Frazier at 563-608-2449.

Services offers assistance with business taxes, tax planning, and resolving tax-related issues — services that can be especially valuable for small business owners, farmers, and self-employed individuals in rural communities. She also offers notary services and business entity (LLC) creation services.

With Arlington and surrounding communities often requiring residents to travel for professional services, Frazier said having a local option is important.

As the filing deadline approaches, Frazier encourages

Article 2: How the Iowa Legislature equalizes funding cost per student for equal access to quality education

By: Rob Busch, Superintendent, Starmont CSD

"Iowa School Finance: How the Iowa Legislature equalizes per student funding statewide, and every student has access to quality education."

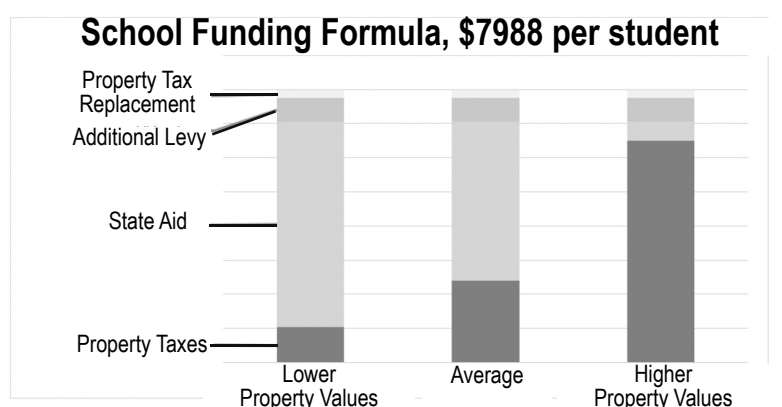
How does Iowa spend the \$6.1 billion earmarked for the state's public education system? A few weeks ago, the Press Journal ran the first in a series of articles dedicated to helping taxpayers understand how those dollars are being spent to educate about 496,000 Iowa students in preschool through grade 12. Today, we'll discuss how those dollars are used.

The state legislature tries to ensure that all children receive a quality education by allocating roughly the same amount of funding per pupil across the state. Iowa's school finance formula relies on a combination of state aid and property taxes to fund education. The amount of state aid each district receives depends on how much it brings in through local property taxes. If the state relied solely on property taxes to fund schools, some districts would be able to raise a lot of money with a very low property tax rate, while others would raise a smaller amount with a much higher property tax rate, depending on the property values and mix of property in their local communities.

This was exactly the situation Iowa found itself in during the early 1970s, when school districts relied primarily on property taxes for school funding. Due to the wide range of property tax rates across districts and concern over the disparity in funding per child, lawmakers instituted a formula to address both issues, setting a maximum and an "equal" cost per student. Now, all districts are required to levy a Uniform Levy of \$5.40 per \$1,000 of net assessed property value on all property in the district, and then the state funds an additional amount up to a certain level (called the Foundation Level). Beyond that foundation level, local property taxes are levied to fund a fixed amount per student, with state aid providing additional support for the remainder.

The School Finance Director at Iowa School Finance Information Services (ISFIS), Kenneth Sturgis, explained that school funding per student has several layers for the 2025-26 school year. "The first is your uniform levy of \$5.40 per \$1,000 of net assessed property value. Then you have state aid, which funds the per student cost up to 88.4%. On top of that, you have an additional levy of \$685 per student, which is all property tax. Finally, there are Property Tax Replacement Payments, which are paid out of state funding that covers the last \$242 per student."

The following chart compares a district with below-average, average, and above-average per-pupil property tax valuations. For the Starmont School District, our "property valuation per pupil" is near the state average, meaning our Uniform Levy of \$5.40 generates about the dollars and we get average state aid. However, our Additional Property Tax Levy rate is lower than the state average because our additional levy rate must be lower to generate the same dollars as other districts.



While the state partially equalizes tax rates through the school finance formula, deviations still affect how much each district receives from the state. For the 2025-26 school year, the lowest combined tax rate for a school district is \$7.43 in the current fiscal year, and the highest is \$19.08, making the difference \$11.65 per thousand.

Regardless of the local school district's financial situation, a large portion of the district's tax rate is already set. While school board members or administrators have some control, most of the property tax rates are set by the school finance formula and the Legislature.

We'll discuss the concept of "supplemental state aid (formerly called allowable growth)" in the third article of our series on school finance.

NOTICE: A criminal charge is merely an accusation and the defendant is presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty.



Buchanan County Sheriff's Office

Media Releases for week of March 22-28, 2026

On Sunday, March 22, 2026 at approximately 3:20 am, Buchanan County Sheriff's Deputies arrested Timothy Jon Hamann, 60, of Independence. Hamann was charged with Driving While License Suspended (simple misdemeanor).

On Monday, March 23, 2026 at approximately 1:20 am, Buchanan County Sheriff's Deputies arrested Judy Ann Tyson Mehmen, 56, of Waterloo. Mehmen was charged with first offense Possession of Controlled Substance - Methamphetamine (serious misdemeanor), first offense Possession of Controlled Substance - Marijuana (serious misdemeanor), first offense Possession of Controlled Substance - Tramadol (serious misdemeanor), three counts of Unlawful Possession of Prescription Pills (serious misdemeanor), Possession of Drug Paraphernalia (simple misdemeanor) and Driving While

License Suspended (simple misdemeanor). This arrest was made after a Deputy stopped to check on a suspicious vehicle in the 300 blk First Street East in Independence. The Buchanan County Sheriff's K9 Unit and Independence Police Department assisted in this arrest.

On Monday, March 23, 2026 at approximately 1:00 pm, Buchanan County Sheriff's Deputies arrested Anthony Wayne Pirtle, 53, of Lamont. Pirtle was arrested on an active arrest warrant out of Buchanan County for original charges of Possession of Controlled Substance (class D felony), Drug Tax Stamp Violation (class D felony) and Possession of Drug Paraphernalia (simple misdemeanor), and held on bond at the Buchanan County Jail.

On Monday, March 23, 2026 at approximately 11:25 pm, Buchanan County Sheriff's Deputies arrested Haillee Carol Lynn Van Note, 24, of Independence and Trenton Joseph Wentworth, 26, of LaPorte City. Van Note was charged with Violation of Protection Order (simple misdemeanor). Wentworth was charged with Violation of Protection Order (simple misdemeanor) and Driving While License Suspended (simple misdemeanor). These arrests were made following a

suspicious vehicle in the 2000 blk Wapsie Access Blvd.

On Wednesday, March 25, 2026 at approximately 1:05 am, Buchanan County Sheriff's Deputies arrested Bruce Wayne Krum, 56, of Waterloo. Krum was arrested on an active arrest warrant out of Buchanan County for an original charge of Possession of Drug Paraphernalia (simple misdemeanor) and taken into custody from the Black Hawk County Sheriff's Office.

On Thursday, March 26, 2026 at approximately 3:00 pm, Buchanan County Sheriff's Deputies arrested Elora Rose Petersen, 28, of Postville. Petersen was arrested on an active arrest warrant out of Buchanan County for Probation Violation and held on bond at the Buchanan County Jail.

On Saturday, March 28, 2026 at approximately 5:40 pm, Buchanan County Sheriff's Deputies arrested Teressa Lynn Snyder, 70, of Quasqueton. Snyder was arrested on an active arrest warrant out of Linn County for Failure to Appear. This arrest was made in the 300 blk Third Street South in Quasqueton.

On Saturday, March 28, 2026 at approximately 9:00 pm, Buchanan County Sheriff's Deputies arrested Gary Lee Keating, 79, of Winthrop. Keating was arrested on an active arrest warrant out of Delaware County for an original charge of third degree Criminal Mischief (aggravated misdemeanor). This arrest was made in the 600 blk Jefferson Street West in Winthrop.

Adventure Awaits Right in Our Own Backyard

By: Lynn Hettinger

Love 'em or hate 'em, snakes are a vital part of our ecosystem. Underserving of their bad reputation of being scary, creepy and the things nightmares are made of, snakes play an important role in the world of nature.



Iowa is home to 28 species of snakes of which five are venomous. Every species of snake is protected by law with the exception of garter, the ribbon snake and in some cases the timber rattlesnake. This means it is illegal to kill or collect them without a proper license.

Surviving the winter by hibernating underground for months in groups to share body heat, snakes start "waking up" once the temperature reaches 50°. They exit their burrows slow and stiff. One of the first things on their agenda is mating. Forming what is referred to as either a "snake ball or mating ball" several (possibly dozens) males surround the female to mate.

Not all snakes lay eggs. Approximately 70% of snake species are oviparous (egg laying) with the remaining 30% being viviparous or ovoviviparous, meaning they give birth to live young. Most egg laying snakes lay between 6-30 eggs per clutch. This depends significantly on the specie, age and environmental conditions. The length of incubation varies on such factors as temperature and humidity. Generally snake eggs require 40-70 days. Most snakes abandon the eggs once laid. Once hatched, the young snakes are on their own to survive.

The common garter snake is an exception. Rather than laying eggs she will give birth to between 10-70 live young. Found throughout North America in forests, marshes and yes our backyard and gardens, the garter snake is semi-aquatic and are diurnal (active during the day.) When threatened they will release a foul smelling musk odor. They can live up to 3 years in the wild and 10 years in captivity.

The garter snake, like all snakes are carnivorous, with their diet including slugs, earthworms, leeches, tadpoles, frog eggs, minnows and small rodents. They often adapt to eating what they find when food is either scarce or in abundance.

It was long believed that the garter snake was nonvenomous. It was discovered in the early 2000's that they do produce a neurotoxic venom, but it is not strong enough to injure or kill a human but can cause bruising

and swelling. Once they catch a meal they use their quick reflexes to bite it. For small prey, their saliva can be toxic enough to immobilize it, making for a much easier meal. Like most snakes they swallow their prey whole. Many can swallow food as large as their head. That would be like us swallowing a watermelon!

Garter snakes have three stripes down their backs which is said to look like the garters gentlemen once wore to hold up their socks. This is how they got their name. These stripes vary in color from yellow, white, brown, green or blue. Snakes slither for the obvious reason of having no legs. The scales on the snake's underside overlap and create friction when in contact with the ground. This allows it to move forward. When in motion the body is not flat on the ground, instead they redistribute their weight as they move. Placing more weight where their body can create the most friction helps these fellows maneuver across our yards.

All snakes shed their skin in a process known as ecdysis to accommodate growth, remove parasites or damaged skin. They shed their skin in one entire piece including the specialized scales covering their eyes. This shedding occurs 4-12 times per year with younger shedding more frequent due to growth. Before shedding their eyes appear milky or blue in color and their skin becomes dull as a layer of lubricating fluid forms between the new and old skin. It will start the process by rubbing its snout on a rough surface to tear an opening on the outer layer and peeling the skin off inside-out. Often found in one piece, you may find just fragments as it dries out and is easily tattered by the wind or creatures. The entire shedding process can take from days to a couple of weeks, depending on size, health and environment.

If you've ever had a stare down with a snake you probably lost when it came to blinking first. Snakes have a permanently attached transparent

eyelid. This helps protect his eyes from debris and dirt. So his eyes are always open! When a snake flicks his tongue out he's not trying to intimidate you, instead he is checking the environment. The tongue collects particles which are placed on the Jacobson's organ located on the roof of its mouth. This organ helps identify the particles, alerting to nearby food, mates or danger.

Often as the weather warms, you may notice snakes stretched out on a rock, ledge, sidewalk or roadway. I'd want to stretch out and catch some rays too if I'd spent the winter in the cold and dark! Please just give the fellow a few minutes in the sun and then he will move on. Please, please please do not run over them with your car!

Snakes don't have external ears like humans but hear by using an internal ear bone to detect ground vibrations. They are most sensitive to sounds between 50-100 Hertz. Humans hear between 20-20,000 Hertz.

Many Native American tribes associate snakes with violence and revenge. However the Pueblos consider snakes sacred, associating them with rebirth, divinity and looked upon with both fear and in awe. People have always had a fear and fascination with the rattlesnake. Their rattles are prized for their mythical and magical properties. It is thought the rattle cured many ailments. A common cure for tuberculosis was to cut off the snakes head and place it in a bottle of rum, drinking atleast 2-3 times per day. My guess is it would make you forget what ailed you! In Texas it was believed the rattlesnake could forecast weather when a dead snake was tossed into the air. If it landed bellyside down-rain would come and if belly side up-dry weather. It was believed if you were haunted by witches sewing pieces of snakeskin to your clothing would drive them away. Many Appalachian fiddlers believe it to be good luck to put rattles in their fiddle. The fiddle has long been referred to as being the "Devils Instrument" and this kept the devil out of their music.

The fear of snakes is called ophidiophobia or sometimes referred to as herpetophobia which means fear of reptiles. It is one of humans greatest fears. As for me, I love 'em. But bats...now that's a whole different story!

A snake knows more about what is happening around them than any other creature, because it has no ears to listen to gossip-only direct perception. Adventure Awaits!

Revivals Furniture Co. Owner Shares Health Update, Shifts Focus to Custom Work

Morgan Adams, owner of Revivals Furniture Co. in Strawberry Point, shares a heartfelt update with customers while focusing on health and custom projects.



Dear Revivals friends — As spring starts showing up (finally), I've been getting one question more and more:

"When are you going to be open!?"

You've probably seen us sharing some really fun projects lately—and doing something pretty rare for us—taking on custom work! But I know a lot of you have been wondering about the retail side of the shop, and I haven't given a proper update in a while.

So here it is.

As many of you know, I've been battling Graves' Disease over the past year. It's been a long road trying to manage symptoms and figure out what "normal" looks like again—and honestly, it's been the most challenging thing in my entire life.

I love this store. Revivals isn't going anywhere. But reopening the shop on a regular schedule takes a lot physically, and right now I have to be realistic about what my body can handle. For the time being,

focusing on individual pieces and custom projects allows me to keep creating (and bringing you really cool furniture) while also giving myself the flexibility to slow down when I need to—and to keep working with my doctors on getting everything under control.

I can't tell you how much I appreciate the support, patience, and kindness you've shown during this in-between season. It means more than you know.

This isn't forever. As soon as things are more manageable, I'll be back to Revivals as you know it—full force. That's a promise.

Until then...I've got a lot of good pieces coming your way.

WILDER MEMORIAL MUSEUM
 123 West Mission Street
 Strawberry Point, IA 52076
 Museum: 563.933.4615
 Cell: 563.419.5329
 www.WilderMuseum.org
 Director.WilderMuseum@gmail.com
Kristine L. Morarend
 Director - Curator

The Wilder Memorial Museum could have an additional title of Strawberry Point Museum of Science and Arts. Not many people know us for science and arts. However, we have three lighted, cases of preserved examples, including a small alligator, starfish, seahorses, fossils, rocks that have been identified, including geodes, Iowa's state rock.

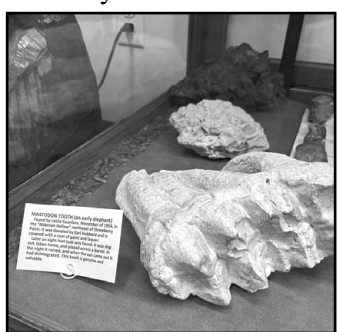
School Science teachers could point out and elaborate on interesting prehistoric facts for at least 9 weeks of study and projects. "Do I hear, let's do field trips to the Museum?" Field trips are worthwhile, attention getting, and could be the start of interests in paleontology and geology which has enabled scientists to reconstruct earth's history, date rock layers and understand the evolution of life.

The photo (right) is a Mastodon Tooth which was

found by Leslie Coonfere in November of 1954 at "Alderson Hollow" northeast of Strawberry Point. It was donated by Earl Hubbard.

Later, an 8-foot tusk was found and dug out. It was taken home and put on a barrel rather than taken inside. It rained during the night and when the sun came out it had disintegrated.

We have remarkable examples of rocks and fossils of all kinds from many people including the sisters, Blanche Baldrige, and Gladys Kenneally.



Local Journalism Helps Protect Our Community.
 Your Support Helps Protect Local Journalism.
 SUBSCRIBE NOW!
 NEWS