



**SkillsUSA winners from Iowa Lakes Community College. From left: Lucas Dreyer, Landon Sogard, Blake Thom, Caden Allison, Jenny Mitchel, Levi Carrigan, Lewis Vulk, Nolan Waters, Brice Rooney, Antonia Capece, Devon Turner, Jacob Grau-West, Owen Ludovissy, and Olin Nelson. Missing from photo: Jaxen Mettler.**

## Iowa Lakes Community College Students Earn Top Honors at 2026 Iowa SkillsUSA Competition

Iowa Lakes Community College students once again demonstrated exceptional skill and career readiness at the 2026 Iowa SkillsUSA competition, held March 4-6 in Des Moines, Iowa.

Representing programs in Powersports and Power Equipment Technology, Boat & Watercraft Technology, Welding, and Construction, Iowa Lakes students earned multiple top finishes against the best career and technical education students in the state.

Among the top achievements: Motorcycle Service Technology (Powersports):

- Brice Rooney – 1st Place
- Nolan Waters – 2nd Place
- Devon Turner – 3rd Place

Power Equipment Technology:

- Antonia Capece – 1st Place
- Jaxen Mettler – 2nd Place
- Jacob Grau-West – 3rd Place

Marine Service Technology (Boat & Watercraft):

- Owen Ludovissy – 1st Place (Gold)
- Olin Nelson – 2nd Place (Silver)

Welding Fabrication (Team):

- Jenny Mitchel
- Lewis Vulk
- Levi Carrigan (Gold Medal Team)

Construction Teamworks (Team):

- Landon Sogard
- Caden Allison
- Blake Thom
- Lucas Dreyer (Gold Medal Team)

“The results from this year’s SkillsUSA competition reflect the strength of our programs and the dedication of our students and faculty,” said Kyle Norris, Vice President of Academic Affairs. “These students are gaining real-world, hands-on experience that prepares them to step directly into high-demand careers.”

SkillsUSA provides students with the opportunity to showcase their technical skills while building leadership, teamwork, and professionalism. Competitions are aligned with industry standards and evaluated by experts in each field.

Gold medalists will advance to represent Iowa Lakes at the 2026 National SkillsUSA Championships,

held in Atlanta, Georgia, June 1 – 5, 2026.

About SkillsUSA  
SkillsUSA is a national workforce development organization driven by employer demand. It empowers students to become skilled professionals, career-ready leaders, and responsible community members through the development of technical, workplace, and interpersonal skills. With members nationwide spanning more than 130 trade, technical, and skilled service occupations, SkillsUSA is recognized by the U.S. Departments of Education and Labor as an essential component of career and technical education. Since 1965, SkillsUSA has served more than 14.6 million members.



Q&A: Wake-Up Call to Save Social Security

With U.S. Senator Chuck Grassley

Q: What should Iowans know about the solvency of Social Security?

A: The Senate Budget Committee recently held a hearing to examine the facts facing Social Security that every American needs to know. According to the recent projections from the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office (CBO), the Old-Age and Survivors Insurance (OASI) Trust Fund is on the brink of insolvency. In just six years, the fund’s reserves will be depleted. Without changes in law, revenue collected from payroll taxes will be sufficient to pay only 72% of scheduled benefits.

Enacted 90 years ago in 1935, the Social Security Act has been amended over the years to include benefits for dependents, survivors and disability insurance. Since then, the ratio of covered workers to beneficiaries has shifted significantly. In 1940, the ratio between workers paying into the system and Americans receiving benefits was nearly 160 to 1. Today, the ratio is 2.7 to 1 and declining. Simple math explains why this demographic shift is straining the financial solvency of the program.

This fiscal cliff is a wake-up call for federal policymakers, candidates for federal office and grassroots leaders. At the Senate Budget Committee hearing, lawmakers and the panel of witnesses unanimously agreed the imminent financial shortfall needs to be addressed sooner, rather than later. Social Security is part of the social fabric of America. More than 70 million Americans depend on the program for monthly benefits. That’s roughly 1 in 5 Americans. On top of that, more than 164 million Americans have earnings withheld from their paychecks through the 12.4% payroll tax that fund current benefits. Although ideological differences divide Americans on how to shore up Social Security, it’s important to know that if no changes

## Iowa Lakes to Host Blood Drive in Memory of Carter “Tater” Johnson

Iowa Lakes Community College will host a community blood drive in partnership with the American Red Cross on Friday, May 1, and Saturday, May 2, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. in the Christensen Building on the Estherville campus.

This special blood drive is being held in memory of Carter “Tater” Johnson while helping address the ongoing need for blood donations in our region. The event provides an opportunity for the Iowa Lakes family and the surrounding community to honor Carter’s memory in a meaningful way by giving the gift of life.

Individuals who would like to schedule an appointment to donate should call 1-800-RED-CROS, search “ForTater” at RedCrossBlood.org or at this direct link. They may also contact Jody Condon at 712-362-7990 or jcondon@iowalakes.edu.

“This blood drive gives our campus

## Statewide Hands-Free Traffic Enforcement Project

April is Distracted Driving Awareness Month, and it’s time to turn awareness into action. The Governor’s Traffic Safety Bureau (GTSB) is partnering with the Central Iowa Traffic Safety Task Force (CITSTF), and law enforcement across the state April 6-10 to enforce Iowa’s Hands-Free Driving Law. The goal of this project is to educate drivers about the importance of driving distraction-free and to help drivers comply with the law going forward.

Iowa’s Hands-Free Driving Law went into effect with a warning period on July 1, 2025, and citations began being issued by law enforcement on January 1, 2026. Since January 1, 2026, over 2,400 citations and over 1,900 warnings have been issued. The law prohibits the use of electronic devices beyond a single touch while driving unless they are used in a hands-free mode. The passing of this law is a key factor that contributed to the historic low number of traffic fatalities recorded in 2025.

With so many ways to go hands-free, there’s a solution for every device and every vehicle. Some of the options to go hands-free include using voice commands, speaker phone, AUX cords, Bluetooth, or phone mounts.

Now a moving violation in Iowa, penalties for violating this law (Iowa Code 321.276) include a fine of \$170. By enforcing this law and bringing awareness to the dangers of distracted driving, we hope to save lives and increase safety on Iowa roads. If you would like further information or to inquire about media requests, please contact Nicole Hassenstab with GTSB at hassenstab@dps.state.ia.us, or 515-321-7267.

to current law are made, recipients could see a 28% reduction in monthly benefits from 2033 to 2036, according to the latest CBO estimates. That fact alone ought to inform the urgency of the situation. Kicking the can down the road will make policy choices even more difficult.

Q: What needs to happen to shore up Social Security?

A: History shows we can meet the moment. More than 40 years ago, President Ronald Reagan and House Speaker Tip O’Neill did just that. Facing a six-month window until insolvency impacted scheduled benefits, they set partisan politics aside and rolled up their sleeves to preserve Social Security. The 15-member National Commission on Social Security Reform issued a report in 1982 projecting the OASI trust fund would become insolvent within six months. The so-called Greenspan Commission made recommendations to Congress to secure solvency of Social Security for generations to come. Reagan and O’Neill threw their political weight behind the key principle that taxpayers and recipients would have skin in the solution. The bipartisan endorsement by the White House and the Speaker of the House helped pave the path for enactment of the 1983 Social Security Amendments. As the only currently serving lawmaker who was in the U.S. Senate during the historic Reagan-O’Neill agreement, I’ve urged political and grassroots leaders to take a page from history and stop kicking the can down the road. Critics who say Social Security is a Ponzi scheme are wrong. It’s a social contract administered by the federal government that forges a generational commitment between workers and retirees. That promise also means structural reforms to ensure solvency for future generations shouldn’t negatively impact current recipients or those nearing retirement.

## Champions of Pork Production: Iowa’s 2025 Master Pork Honorees

West Bend Couple honored



EJ Wolter, 2025 Master Pork Producer, was honored at the 2026 Iowa Pork Congress banquet.

Watch EJ Wolter’s story.

Reprinted from the Iowa Pork Producer Magazine

Fifteen individuals and families were honored with Master Pork Awards during the Iowa Pork Congress banquet in January. The Iowa Pork Producers Association recognized the 2025 class of Master Pork Producers, Honorary Master Pork Producers, Master Pork Partners, Master Seedstock Producer, Iowa Environmental Steward Award winner, and Pork All American.

The Master Pork Producer award signifies excellence in pork production, measured by production performance, commitment to the We Care® principles, and meaningful contributions to local communities. The We Care principles reflect a pig farmer’s responsibility to uphold high standards in animal care, food safety, environmental stewardship, public health, and community engagement. The Master Pork Producers program is co-sponsored by the Iowa Pork Producers Association and Iowa State University Extension and Outreach.

Now in its 84th year, the program continues a proud tradition of recognizing Iowa’s most accomplished pork producers. For more than eight decades, the award has celebrated excellence, innovation, integrity, and leadership within the pork industry. Through this recognition, IPPA and Iowa State University honor the character,

dedication, and impact of Iowa pig farmers and their essential role in agriculture and their communities.

“The Master Pork awards showcase the best of pork production. Those driven by passion and committed to producing safe, high-quality protein,” said IPPA Producer Outreach Director Brielle Smeby. “Beyond this, these producers are deeply rooted in their communities and committed to their families and to carrying their legacy forward.”

“The Master Pork awards showcase the best of pork production. Those driven by passion and committed to producing safe, high-quality protein.” This year’s recipients represent the diversity of Iowa pig farms and the allied partners who strengthen the industry. Nominated by peers and neighbors, they reflect the collaboration, innovation, and resilience that define Iowa pork production.

Nominations for the 2026 Master Pork Program awards will open this spring. From Kossuth County being recognized was Ernest “EJ” Wolter Jr. and his wife, Katelyn of West Bend.

For Ernest “EJ” Wolter Jr. and his wife, Katelyn, agriculture is both a calling and a commitment they have built from the ground up. EJ grew up as a farm kid, helping his parents with livestock and crops and developing an early passion for caring for animals. Hogs, in particular, captured

his interest. He showed livestock throughout his youth and found himself drawn to raising pigs.

EJ attended college for electrical training and lived in Omaha for a period, but he felt a constant pull back to Iowa. When the opportunity to return home arose, he did, taking a job locally while keeping an eye on ways to enter back into agriculture. A chance to purchase a hog site provided the turning point, and that leap marked the beginning of the operation they run today on the farm where Katelyn grew up.

Over the past 11 years, EJ has built his operation into a successful one with four wean-to-finish barns. EJ owns and manages the sites and oversees all production. They also farm corn and soybeans, utilizing manure nutrients from the hog barns to enhance soil fertility and crop performance. Katelyn transitioned from her nursing career in 2019 to support the growing workload at home and help with the farm.

A big part of why they work so hard is their hope that their kids will grow up involved in agriculture and connected to the farm. Emmett, age 10, is in his first year of 4-H and has fully embraced caring for his show pigs. Leo, 8, has become more active and helps his older brother with chores, and six-year-old Bo, who loves animals, is constantly in the barns.

As a contract grower for Smithfield, EJ works closely with his production team. He values the strong, hands-on partnership he has with his production advisor, noting the mutual trust and teamwork that go into it. Being involved in Smithfield’s Regional Advisory Council keeps him informed about industry trends and performance benchmarks, helping him stay proactive in making management decisions.

The Wolters take pride in being good neighbors. EJ keeps his facilities clean and well-maintained, and continues to invest in biosecurity advancements such as attached hallways, covered load chutes, and walk-through showers. Community involvement is essential to their family. They are active members of Trinity Lutheran Church in Algona, where Katelyn volunteers with Vacation Bible School.



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## Bancroft Days Gone By

5 Years Ago

April 7, 2021

The Greenwood 4-H Club helped hide plastic Easter Eggs during the Bancroft Chamber of Commerce annual Easter Egg Hunt in the city park. Helping the Easter Bunny were 4-H members Emily Meyer, Kaylee Meyer, McKayla Burt, Abby Deitering, Aslynn Sobolik, and Gavin Goche. The eggs were filled with candy, money and tickets with special prizes... Harper Struecker was so excited to see the Easter Bunny. She couldn’t wait to wrap her arms around the bunny for a big hug during the Bancroft Chamber of Commerce Easter Egg Hunt...Just over a year ago, the North Union and North Kossuth School Boards were trying to figure out how to proceed with the closing schools due to Covid. One year later, boards are pleased to make plans for the upcoming school year for 2021-22. Due to the districts instituting virtual and on-line days, snow make up days will be eliminated.

10 Years Ago

March 30, 2016

Jenica Steinkuhler is all smiles as she poses with the Easter Bunny in the Bancroft City Park. Jenica dressed warmly as the eggs were hidden in the snow...Dave Fritzier needed a little help getting his pick up unstuck on March 24 morning. Helping him out was Ken Laubenthal who scooped away snow from the tires and then used his truck to pull him out of the wet snow. It was reported that the area received up to 11 inches of wet snow...The Little Warrior Wrestlers had 65 wrestlers in grades preschool to eighth grade. They also held a tournament in Swea City which was successful. They had give state qualifiers with Kaden Miller bringing home a first place win.

25 Years Ago

March 28, 2001

Jan and Dick Deitering of Deitering Bros. opened a time capsule which was sealed in 1978 during their open house on March 21. The time capsule contained a letter written to Deiterings Bros. from Joe Fangman. The letter reported the prices of hogs and cattle, corn which was \$2.50/bu and soybeans which was \$6.50/bu. Deitering Bros. are busy preparing the next time capsule...Patty Bernhard receives a check from Teresa Kennedy, treasurer of Bancroft Community Foundation, Inc. and Phil Jaren, Bancroft Community Foundation, Inc. to be used towards the Bancroft Health Club... The Bancroft Pharmacy held an open house March 21. During the day, people were able to enjoy cookies, coffee and to register to win Timberwolves tickets. Linda Droessler drew for the name and the lucky winners were Irma Brandenburg of bancroft and David Hurlburt of Lone Rock who each received two Timberwolves tickets...

Katelyn Besch, daughter of Tom and Donna Besch of Bancroft, won \$50 savings bond and a trophy for her first place finish at the Seton Grade School Science. She will now advance to the State Science Fair in Ames.

50 Years Ago

April 7, 1976

Jim Coady of Burt was the lucky North Kossuth Golf Club member who had his family membership check drawn from the hat...Bill McGuire of Silver City, New Mexico, was named by the President and Board of Regents of Western New Mexico University, as the new chairman of the mathematics department, effective May 1st. Dr. McGuire, son of Mrs. Charlotte McGuire and the late Charles McGuire, received a Bachelors Degree from St. Thomas College, a Master Degree in combined sciences from the University of Mississippi and a Doctorate from the University of Northern Colorado. He is presently assistant professor of mathematics at Western New Mexico University...Mr. and Mrs. Glenn Collins, owners of Collins Steak Lounge in Bancroft, honored the Saint John boys and girls basketball team, Coach and Mrs. Clay Shaffer and Coach Russ Ubben at an appreciation hamburger fry at the Steak Lounge, following the basketball season...George (Sonny) Wolf of Bancroft left Monday morning with Paul Northrup of LuVerne and Joe Lynch of Fenton in a covered wagon with a six-mule team to join the Bicentennial “Wagon Train” leaving Des Moines on Wednesday. The group plans to arrive at Decorah on April 15, where they will be met by the Minnesota wagon train riders to continue on to Pennsylvania which they plan to reach around July 4th. The local group will return home from Decorah.

70 Years Ago

March 29, 1956

The Bancroft Lions, independent basketball team, won the consolation trophy and third place in the Garner Independent Basketball tournament. Members of the squad are Jack Hatten, Phil Vaske, Kenny Goche, Bill Fox, Gerald Rahe, Bill Doyle, James Johnson, Lamont Jansen, Walter Renger and Don Schiltz...The Ramsey Senior boys won the Kossuth county 4-H basketball championship defeating Grant Twp. 48-37 in the finals played in the St. John’s gymnasium. This is the second consecutive county championship with the same team, except Donald Schiltz who played last year and was not a member of the team this season. Members of the Ramsey senior team were David Schiltz, Anthony Schiltz, James Vaske, James Goche, Melvin DeGeeter, Gene Nurre, Duane Vaske, Duane Grandgenett, Pat Vaske, Tom Nurre, Donald Diers, Richard Schiltz, Donald Cogley, Duane Diers and Walter Schiltz.

## Your Right To Know ••• Proceedings of the North Kossuth School Board

Regular Board Meeting	Vendor, Description	Amount	Reimb Feb mileage	Amount
Conference Room	Aflac, Aflac	\$592.60	Prairie Lakes AEA	\$99.18
Swea City, Iowa	Fidelity Security Life	\$601.51	AEA flowthrough	\$8,361.40
7: 40 AM	North Kossuth	\$276.95	Travis Schueller,	
March 24, 2026	Other employee deduc	\$1,716.65	Mar cell phone	\$60.00
(All votes are unanimous unless	North Kossuth Flex	\$1,716.65	Ranae Sipma, DDSDP work	\$206.00
otherwise noted)	North Kossuth Insurance	\$45,094.78	General	\$134,353.04
The North Kossuth School Board	Medical ins	\$260.00	**FUND TOTAL**	\$134,353.04
met in regular session on Tuesday,	North Union	\$301.00	Student Activity	Amount
March 24, 2026, in the Conference	Other employee deduc	\$260.00	Vendor, Description	Amount
Room, Swea City, Iowa at 7: 40 AM.	TX Child Support	\$301.00	North Kossuth Genl	
Meeting was called to order by Board	Other employee deduc	\$2,846.74	Heinen B BK	\$305.92
Vice President Justin Deim. Roll Call	Dental ins	\$2,846.74	Dollar General, Conc supplies	\$52.50
was answered by Deim, Heetland,	Mutual of Omaha, Life ins	\$794.51	Martin Bros, Vending	\$450.31
Vaske, and Goraczowski. Absent	Central Iowa Distributin	\$1,035.00	JMV Graphix, State wr shirts	\$824.00
Hardt, Albers, and Morpheus. Also	Custodial	\$8,535.25	Algona CSD, (3) Quiz bowl	\$75.00
present was Supt. Travis Schueller,	Clayton Ridge CSD	\$137.51	Kokboji MS, (3) Quiz bowl	\$75.00
SBO Erin Rogers, Board Secretary	FY26 open enrollment	\$425.00	Cardmember Services	\$560.41
Jennie Larsen, and member of media.	Armstrong Building Supply	\$117.60	Probabse, Aerowing,Hitt	\$560.41
Motion by Goraczowski, seconded by	Maint supplies	\$425.00	Student Activity	\$2,343.14
Heetland was made to approve the	Office of Auditor of State	\$2,114.72	**FUND TOTAL**	\$2,343.14
Board Agenda. Motion carried.	FY25 Audit filling	\$2,114.72	Nutrition	Amount
Opened the Public Hearing on the	BW Gas	\$1,008.62	Vendor, Description	Amount
2026-27 School Calendar: after no	Gasohol, diesel, DEF	\$1,008.62	North Kossuth Genl	
public comments or questions Public	DHS Cashier	\$120.00	Feb nutr, Jan nutr, Jan	\$6,867.36
Hearing was closed. Motion by	Iowa Communication Network	\$120.00	Kemps, Milk	\$1,592.93
Goraczowski, seconded by Heetland	Internet	\$24.00	Dollar General, Nutrition	\$671.50
was made to approve the 2026-27	Martin Bros, Preschool	\$117.60	Hager Foods, Bread/buns	\$11.50
school calendar as presented. Motion	Relayhub	\$101.74	Martin Bros,	\$9,753.92
carried.	Feb medicaid fees	\$167.62	Food & supplies	\$9,753.92
Announcements & Communications:	Ringtel, Phone/internet	\$5,000.00	North Kossuth Genl	\$7,074.58
None	Trustpoint, FY25 Audit	\$545.89	Mar nutr, Feb nutr, Jan	\$7,074.58
Reports: Erin Rogers presented the	Bancroft Car-Go, Diesel	\$239.25	Nutrition	\$25,974.29
audit.	Publications	\$120.00	**FUND TOTAL**	\$25,974.29
Consent Agenda: Approval of	Hassebrook Refrigeration	\$39.04	PSF Insurance	Amount
Minutes, Approval of Financial	Repair	\$30.00	Vendor, Description	Amount
Reports, Approval of Bills & Claims,	Isolved HCM Services,	\$145.05	Wellmark, Mar ins	\$41,547.36
and Open Enrollments. Motion by	Flex fees	\$488.00	PSF Insurance	\$41,547.36
Goraczowski, seconded by Heetland	Secretary of State,	\$30.00	**FUND TOTAL**	\$41,547.36
was made to approve the consent	Larsen notary	\$145.05	SAVE	Amount
agenda. Motion carried.	Swea City Herald	\$488.00	Vendor, Description	Amount
Action Items: Motion by	Central Iowa Distributin	\$131.60	Next Generation Technologies	Amount
Goraczowski, seconded by Heetland	Custodial	\$1,345.49	Mar tech	\$3,144.00
was made to accept the audit as	Johnson Plmbg & Heating	\$592.60	Schumacher Well Drilling	\$507.00
present. Motion carried.	Maint supplies	\$1,345.49	Repair	\$507.00
Motion by Goraczowski, seconded by	Swea City, City of	\$600.12	Cardmember Services	\$698.88
Heetland was made to approve the	Water/sewer/garbage	\$287.25	Amazon	\$698.88
DDSDP as presented. Motion carried.	Aflac, Aflac	\$1,716.65	**FUND TOTAL**	\$4,349.88
Motion by Goraczowski, seconded by	Fidelity Security Life	\$42,876.01	PPEL	Amount
Heetland was made to approve Cory	North Kossuth	\$265.00	Vendor, Description	Amount
Rezac as the high school head baseball	Other employee deduc	\$631.72	Marco, Copier lease	\$1,518.66
coach for the 2025-26 school year.	North Kossuth Flex	\$301.00	City of Bancroft	\$3,000.00
Motion carried.	Flex w/held	\$42,876.01	Base field lease	\$1,587.50
Next meeting is tentatively set for	North Kossuth Insurance	\$265.00	JT Excavation, Repair	\$1,587.50
April 21st at 7:30 AM.	Medical ins	\$301.00	Vista Software	\$1,725.00
Adjournment: Motion by	North Union	\$301.00	4th quar acctg	\$7,831.16
Goraczowski, seconded by Heetland	Other employee deduc	\$301.00	PPEL **FUND TOTAL**	\$7,831.16
was made to adjourn the meeting at	Polk County Sheriff	\$301.00	MANAGEMENT	Amount
8:00 AM. Motion carried.	Other employee deduc	\$301.00	Vendor, Description	Amount
Justin Deim, Board Vice President	TX Child Support	\$301.00	SU Insurance, Breakfix	\$6,408.75
Jennie Larsen, Board Secretary	Other employee deduc	\$127.60	MANAGEMENT	\$222,807.62
North Kossuth Community School	Reimb Feb mileage	\$3,992.39	**FUND TOTAL**	\$6,408.75
District General	Cardmember Services		**DISTRICT TOTAL**	\$222,807.62
Mar-26	Alliant, Schunrise		(Published April 1, 2026)	
	Mondragon, Courtney			