

# AROUND THE AREA

## Martina McBride to headline 2026 CCF

A Clay County Fair favorite is coming home.

The Clay County Fair, powered by SMU, announced country music icon Martina McBride as a grandstand headliner for 2026 as part of the SMG Concert Series. Performing on Tuesday, Sept. 15, McBride will make her fourth appearance at the Clay County Fair, bringing her legendary vocals, timeless hits and lasting connection with fairgoers back to the grandstand stage for another unforgettable night of music.

Tickets go on sale today, Friday, Jan. 30, at 10 a.m. Tickets will be available online at [www.midwestix.com](http://www.midwestix.com), by phone at 515-244-2771, or in person at the Events Center Box Office. All tickets, regardless of purchase location, are also subject to a \$6 ticketing fee, which is not included in the advertised price.

A multiple Grammy nominee, McBride has sold over 23 million albums, including 20 top-10 singles and six No. 1 hits.

McBride has earned more than



15 major music awards, including four wins for Female Vocalist of the Year from the Country Music Association, and won three Academy of Country Music Awards for Top Female Vocalist.

She has been awarded 14 gold records, nine platinum honors, three double platinum records and two triple platinum awards. She was awarded the Covenant House Beacon of Hope Award and the Music Business Association's prestigious 2015 Harry Chapin Memorial Humanitarian Award for her philanthropic efforts on behalf of domestic violence.

In 2019, McBride received the Cliffie Stone Icon Award at the

ACM Honors event for her impactful contributions to Country Music. She was honored during the 46th Annual Common Wealth Awards of Distinguished Service for her philanthropic work and contributions to society. In 2021, she unveiled her first exhibit in the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum, titled "The Power of Her Voice."

McBride has released two cookbooks. The first was "Around the Table," a full-color, illustrated collection of her favorite recipes, hosting tips, practical menu-planning advice and themed decor inspiration. She released her second book, "Martina's Kitchen Mix: My Recipe Playlist for Real Life," in October 2018. Most recently, she launched her own wine label, Luna & Finn, named after her beloved pets.

McBride resides in Nashville with her husband, John, and their three daughters. You can keep up with her on Facebook, as well as Twitter and Instagram. For tour dates, visit her website.

## CORRIDOR AWARDS

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— gathered to review 2025 accomplishments and look ahead to 2026. The event highlighted major initiatives in business retention and expansion, entrepreneurship, workforce, housing, child care, and legislative advocacy.

Board member and Spencer Hospital CEO Brenda Tiefenthaler formally called the annual meeting to order, noting that the Corridor completed 117 business retention and expansion visits in 2025, representing 13% of all such visits in Iowa. The organization also launched its Corridor Conversations podcast and led multiple data initiatives, including a regional wage-and-benefits survey and an update to labor force data.

A key achievement was the completion of a 30,000-square-foot spec building in Spencer, developed through a broad partnership including the City of Spencer, Clay County, Corn Belt Power Cooperative, Iowa Lakes Electric Cooperative and Spencer Municipal Utilities. The building is one

of two industrial spec facilities currently available in Iowa and is intended to attract new industry to the region.

The meeting also showcased the Corridor's Homegrown Talent Initiative, which offers grants to young professionals returning to live and work in the region. The first two recipients, Callan Townsend and Taylor Craiger, shared how the support is helping them manage their student loan debt and build lives in northwest Iowa. Strong fundraising through the Corridor's annual golf tournament will allow four grants to be awarded in 2026, Strouth said.

The Corridor also recognized its 2026 Business Recognition award winners during the meeting. Recipients representing six categories received their awards before an audience of more than 330 community representatives and leaders.

Nominations for the annual Business Recognition awards in the categories of Young Professional, Entrepreneur, Small Business

and Large Business are made by area business leaders and community members. These nominations are then reviewed by a volunteer committee drawn from across the region, and are evaluated based on commitment, impact and growth in Corridor communities.

Toby Shine, who died in 2025, was recognized for his contributions to the region, including his role as a co-founder of the Iowa Lakes Corridor Development Corporation. The Corridor Lifetime Impact Award was given to Toby Shine's family in his memory. JD's Creations of Spencer created a unique metal sculpture for this one-time award.

"It was an honor to celebrate these amazing businesses and individuals from across the region," Strouth said. "From small business owners to regional developers, and large businesses to Toby's legacy, each and every awardee was very deserving of this recognition, and we are glad to be able to recognize them today."


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**SPENCER SCHOOLS STAFF SPOTLIGHT**



**Preschool Teachers who were recognized at last night's board meeting: (Left to Right) Ashley Roberts, Christy Piercy, Shanna Kissinger-Erdman, Principal Brook Schueller, and Brandy Kirschbaum**

Spencer Community School's staff highlight this month is our Johnson Preschool Team, Brandy Kirschbaum, Shanna Kissinger-Erdman, Ashley Roberts and Christy Piercy. We are currently in the midst of a planning phase as we prepare to transition to a Monday through Friday, extended-day model for the upcoming school year.

This shift is a direct response to our community's needs, and while the change is logistical, the heart of this transition is professional. For years, we've utilized Wednesday afternoons for staff development. However, as we looked toward the future, our team recognized a greater priority: maximizing the time our students spend in the presence of these highly skilled, well-educated experts.

As we prepare for our Open House on February 23rd from 6:00 to 7:00 PM, I want to publicly recognize the 'out-of-

- the-box' thinking this team has demonstrated during this planning period:
- **RESPONSIVE PLANNING:** Transitioning to a five-day student schedule requires a complete reimagining of how we maintain our high standards. These teachers are currently innovating ways to ensure that our play-based curriculum remains intentional and high-quality, even as they shift their planning and prep work to be more integrated into the school day.
  - **A CULTURE OF 'YES':** Change can be difficult, but this team has been remarkably flexible. They have been creative and responsive thinkers, always asking, 'How does this best serve our children and families?'
  - **WHOLE-SCHOOL DEDICATION:** I also want to recognize our preschool's part of the work at Johnson to work beyond your own classroom. Teachers have been intentionally sharing knowledge with the whole building. Their impact is felt in the hallways, in each other's classrooms, and in the collaborative spirit. Our team at Johnson is invested in the success of every child at Johnson.

The first experience a family has with our district happens with us. Because of these teachers, that experience is one of excellence. They are preparing our students for years of future learning by giving them the best possible foundation today. We meet the needs of all students from support to enrichment. We invite you all to join us on February 23rd for our Preschool, KinderKids and Kindergarten Open House. We truly believe that when the Journey starts at Johnson—it is an amazing start, and that is entirely due to the dedication of this team.

Submitted by the Spencer Community Schools Administration.

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