



RED OAK ALUMNI NEWSLETTER

THE *Heart* OF SOUTHWEST IOWA

By the Red Oak Heritage Foundation

Volume 4 | Issue 1 | March 2025



RED OAK ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

1966 Red Oak Graduate Steve Afdahl

Written by: Marty Barnett

Steve Afdahl, class of 1966, moved with his family to Red Oak in 1960 when Steve was in 7th or 8th grade. Steve was the brother to Dan, class of 64 and sister Judy Afdahl Evans, class of '69.

Steve was named the Athlete of the Year, his senior year and was involved in football, basketball and track. That football season, the Tigers had a record of 7 – 1 and 1. The highlight of that season was ending Atlantic's 26 game winning streak by the score of 2 to 0.

After graduation, Steve enrolled at Iowa State before transferring to the University of Nebraska in Lincoln. Upon graduation, Steve was drafted into the Army and was sent to the University of Colorado to study finance. Steve married Judy O'Dell, class of '67, daughter of Red Oak's dentist, Dr. John R. O'Dell. They have 2 children: son Michael and daughter Emily.

After his time in the military, Steve went to work for the Iowa Dept of Economic Development for 5 years before moving in the direction of banking. Steve began his banking career with Hawkeye Bank Founder of the Hawkeye Banking, who was originally from Red Oak, Paul Dunlap. Steve started his career with Hawkeye at the Bank in Spencer, Iowa. One day Steve received a call from Rocky Weaver, an Iowa Falls businessman, who had purchased a failing bank, which was later named Green Belt Bank and Trust, a community bank at Iowa Falls, to become President of his bank.

Steve and his family moved to Iowa Falls. One year into the two men's relationship, Rocky Weaver and his wife Christie were killed in an automobile accident. Before he died, Rocky made a request of Steve to stay and run the bank until his two boys, then ages 3 and 13, were old enough to take on the leadership and run the company.

Moving from a corporation of banks to a small one-owned bank was quite an adjustment. At Hawkeye Bancorp, when a problem came up, Steve had been able to make a call to various banks and find his solutions. Now he was on his own. That's when he decided that he had to create some goals and meet the employees of the bank. On his first day, he called each individual staff member into his office and learned all he could about them and began creating a culture of inclusion. According to his podcast with Mind Matters*, he happened to be walking by the receptionist when he overheard a conversation on the phone mentioning that the "MEN were in a meeting". He thought to himself, "where did that leave women". He decided that every person in the bank should have an equal opportunity. Things dramatically changed and the women became significant in their duties. They all learned to work together. Things started making a turnaround from that point.

That's how he turned a bank in receivership of 38 million dollars into a bank of well over 680 million dollars, where, to this day, he remains the chairman of their board.

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ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT CONTINUED...

Steve has received many awards from various community events and in the banking industry. The bank itself has grown 5 times its original size since 1986. Green Belt Bank and Trust is still growing with their purchase of Liberty Bank branches in Eldora and Grundy Center.

Despite his retirement, Steve remains as chairman of the Green Belt Bank and Trust Board of Directors. He has moved to Temecula, California where he resides with his wife Judy. His two grown children also live and work there.

Thanks to the Iowa Falls Times Citizen and Dennis Bloom for their contribution to this article.



<https://youtu.be/VJbuDhaklb4?si=JJJE1EgU8WfRr1q>

BUILDING TRADES PROGRAM

Written by: Larry Brandstetter

For the past several years, no classes have been taught in either Webster or Bancroft Elementary Schools as Inman has been expanded to contain all of the elementary grades.

Many of you had wonderful and joyous times growing and learning at both of these schools during your formative elementary years.

For years the school board has tried to sell both buildings in hopes they could be renovated for an alternative use, but to no avail. Finally, this year a group of local leaders engaged in economic development stepped forward and purchased both buildings for the purpose of demolishing them and building homes on the lots that will enhance the neighborhoods. These homes will be built as part of the schools construction trades program with students and their teachers engaged in the work.

Both the former Bancroft and Webster properties will be turned into the type of homes that fit with the architectural appearance of each respective neighborhood and the needs of the new homeowners.

Time marches on, but memories stay with us forever.



Bancroft Elementary School
Photo by Jennifer Bruce



Bancroft Elementary School Demolition
Photo by Samantha Williams



Image by Daric O'Neal
Written by: Daric O'Neal

RED OAK BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT

ALLEY POYNER MACCHIETTO ARCHITECTURE

DARIC O'NEAL

With offices in Omaha and Red Oak, Alley Poyner Macchietto Architecture (APMA) is one of the region's largest studios of architects, interior designers, experiential designers, and construction administrators.

Since 1987, APMA has earned a reputation for award-winning design, fostering a collaborative and creative environment guided by its core values: Put People First. Advance Design. Build Community.

At APMA, great design is more than aesthetics—it's about creating beautiful, functional, and enduring spaces that inspire and strengthen the communities they serve.

APMA's commitment to Iowa is championed by Daric O'Neal, a fifth-generation Red Oak School District alumnus, and owner/partner of the firm.

In 2012, Daric established the Red Oak office on East Coolbaugh Street in Historic Downtown. Passionate about PK-12 design, housing and historic preservation,

he has championed numerous projects and initiatives that have helped shape the rural Iowa's built environment.

Beyond his work at APMA, Daric is deeply involved in the community. Serving as president of the Friends of the Red Oak Trails, a volunteer projectionist at the Red Oak Grand Theatre, and is currently an active member of the Historic Preservation Commission and the Planning and Zoning Commission.

In 2017, Daric co-founded ROOT (Red Oak's OnGoing Transformation), a development group focused on revitalizing historically significant properties. To date, ROOT has restored two historic homes and multiple downtown buildings, including APMA's office, which sits beneath a thoughtfully renovated Airbnb apartment.

Daric began his college journey at the University of Iowa, where he met his future wife, Jill. He later transferred to the University of Nebraska–Lincoln, earning a Bachelor of Science in Design and a Master of Architecture.

In 2010, Daric and Jill purchased their current home—an 1883 Greek Revival that had stood vacant since 1923. Despite all the comparisons to the movie “The Money Pit”, they embarked on a multi-year historic renovation, moving in by 2013.

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Image by Daric O'Neal

BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT CONTINUED...

Committed to giving back, Daric has remained deeply involved in the Red Oak School District, serving on the executive board of the Athletic Boosters and as president of the Red Oak Community Schools Foundation.

His oldest daughter, Lennon, graduated from the district before attending the University of Iowa, where she will graduate this May. His two younger daughters, Jocelyn and Ellie, currently attend Red Oak Jr./Sr. High School.

APMA has a passion for Iowa and its many great communities, and believe that all communities, regardless of size, deserve the same opportunities for quality, professional design, planning, and development that the larger metropolitan areas receive.

Through his work at APMA, Daric continually advocates for principles of Quality Design, Sustainability, and Livable Communities through public engagement, education and volunteer work.

Examples of Daric's work include:

- Open Door Mission's Campus - Omaha, NE
- Red Oak Community School District HEROES 2017 Bond Projects for Inman and the Jr Sr High School
- East Mills Community School District PK-12 Building – Malvern, IA
- Sidney School District CTE Facility, Elementary Addition, and Football Stadium – Sidney, IA
- Lakin Foundation Child Development Center of East Mills – Malvern, IA
- Red Oak Downtown Façade Improvements
- Red Oak Downtown National Register Nomination
- Red Oak Grand Theatre Renovation and Expansion
- 1917 Lofts – Red Oak, IA (former Red Oak Jr. High, Middle School, and High School)
- Bank Iowa – Clarinda, IA
- Lofts on Main – Plattsmouth, IA
- Clarinda Carnegie Art Museum – Clarinda, IA
- Assemblage Art Gallery – Lincoln, NE
- Vison Atlantic YMCA and Childcare Facilities – Atlantic, IA



Image by Daric O'Neal

RED OAK PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Written by: Mark Erickson, Activities Director

The Red Oak School District Activities Department is proud to highlight our students, participants, and athletes from our winter seasons! Our coaches, directors, and sponsors strive to instill positive character qualities within our programs. Our activities department would like to publicly thank our alumni, businesses, and entire community for their ongoing support! Please read the exciting news about our programs and students below.



Image by KCSI/KOAK Radio, www.facebook.com/KCSIRadio

WINTER SPORTS AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

We are proud to share awards earned by our winter participants. 11 of our senior participants earned Hawkeye Ten Conference All Academic recognition by earning a 3.5 GPA or above throughout their high school career.

HAWKEYE TEN CONFERENCE ALL ACADEMIC RECOGNITION

BASKETBALL: Ella Johnson

BOYS BASKETBALL: Landon Gigstad, Bryaden Sifford, Brett Erickson

GIRLS WRESTLING: Nicole Bond

BOYS WRESTLING: Tyler Schofield, Kyler Sandholm

CHEERLEADING: Brinkley Sallach, Lauren Dean

BOYS BOWLING: Kaydyn Riibe

GIRLS BOWLING: Elizabeth Baucom

Reese Montgomery finished the season with 301 rebounds which eclipsed the season rebounding record of Jason Abuhl set 20 years ago! In impressive fashion, Reese surpassed the previous record by 70 rebounds and outrebounded all other H-10 conference boys basketball players by 100 rebounds this season! Reese also earned 1st Team All Conference honors as a sophomore.

Brayden Sifford earned Honorable Mention All Conference honors in boys basketball.

Ellison Johnson earned Honorable Mention All Conference honors in girls basketball.

Adam Baier went 1-2 at the boys state wrestling championships in Class 2A at 165 pounds.

Nicole Bond who qualified for the Iowa Girls State Wrestling Tournament. Nicole finished in 12th place.

Brandon Cox and Devon Taylor qualified for the boys bowling state tournament.

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RED OAK PUBLIC SCHOOLS CONTINUED...

BAND

Congratulations to the Red Oak High School Jazz Band on a great performance at the SWIBA jazz competition in Atlantic. Special shout outs to Gillian Heim and Pablo Villanueva on their Outstanding Soloist awards. Also shout out for Pablo Villanueva and his performance with the SWIBA 1A/2A Honor Jazz Band.

IWCC Honor Band: Lauren Dean, Cate Horn, Rowyn Rigby, Zoie Rohrig, Catlin Britten, Leya Walker; Jr High: DJ DeCesare, Ben Pendegraft, Quincy Hodgkin, Julian Sanders

SWIBA High School Honor Band: Anna Butz, Kaz Jackson, Lily Marsden, Pablo Villanueva, Bryce Williams

UNI Northern Festival of Bands: Lauren Dean, Matthew Adams, Pablo Villanueva, Anna Butz, Rowyn Rigby, Lily Marsden, Zoie Rohrig

University of Iowa Honor Bands: Matthew Adams, Lauren Dean, Pablo Villanueva, Gavin Lindsay, Anna Butz, Lily Marsden, Rowyn Rigby, Maddison Lopez, Kendal Ruhl, Auden Coover, Bryce Williams, Seth Richards

SWIBA Honor Jazz Band: Pablo Villanueva – Trombone

VOCAL

Congratulations to Ben, Dom, Kennady, Sophia, Jenna and D.J. for being chosen to sing in the Lenox honor choir in Lenox, IA on Saturday, February 1st.

SPEECH

Large Group Speech:

Straight 1s: Radio Broadcasting - "Unscripted with Ella and Lena" - Ella Johnson and Lena Torbett; Ensemble Acting - "History of Television, Condensed" - Zoie Rohrig and Will Pollock; Musical Theatre - "Mamma Mia" - Grace Goldapp, Josie Goldapp, and Madi Parker

Individual Speech:

Straight 1s: Madi Parker - prose and solo musical theatre; Mariella Richards-Hernandez - prose; Gabby Smith - storytelling

Madi Parker (solo musical theatre) and Mariella Richards-Hernandez (prose) will perform at UNI for the Individual All-State Speech Festival.

RED OAK HIGH SCHOOL MUSICAL

The Red Oak High School vocal music department was spectacular once again when they put on Into the Woods, a challenging musical by Stephen Sondheim.

Tim Marsden directed production blends the plots of several Brothers Grimm fairy tales. The story line centers on a baker and his wife who must break a witch's curse in order to have a child.

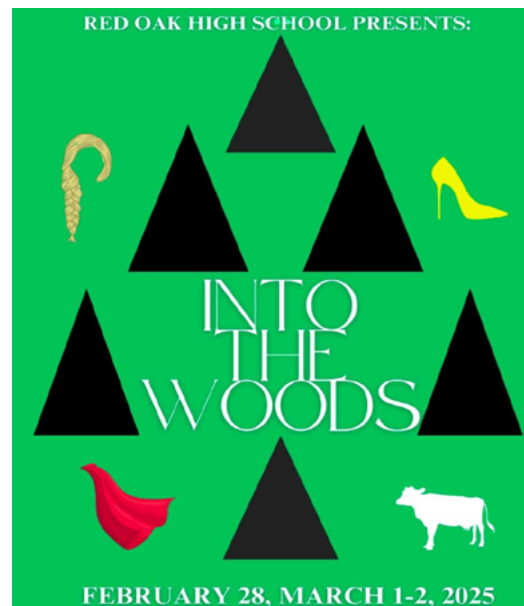
Their journey into the woods brings them to meet fairy tale characters from Cinderella, Red Riding Hood and Jack and the Beanstalk, Rapunzel and many others.

Marsden told how he selected this difficult show. "This summer when I was kind of looking at our potential cast, 'Into the Woods' just kept coming to mind," said Marsden. "It's a tough and challenging show where you have to have really strong musicians, and I just thought, 'well, this is an Into the Woods year.' So, that's how I picked it."

Grace Goldapp played the role of the Witch, Lena Torbett was

the Baker's wife with Ehan Strunk as the Baker.

The entire cast, in true Red Oak vocal department fashion, met the challenge Mr. Marsden laid out for them with flying colors.



ATHLETIC BOOSTERS, MUSIC BOOSTERS, FFA ALUMNI, AND SUPPORTERS

Our activities department is blessed with the amazing support of our Red Oak Athletic Boosters, Red Oak Music Boosters, and the FFA Alumni and Supporters. The groups help raise funds and volunteer for our activities programs. Without these amazing people, our students would not have the funds to purchase items for their programs. The work they do also go toward providing opportunities for students to be involved in ways that would not be otherwise possible.

If anyone is interested in donating time, money, and/or wants to learn more about how to support these groups, please contact Activities Director Mark Erickson at ericksonm@redoakschools.org or 712-623-6610.



RED OAK COMMUNITY HEART & SOUL

Written by: Samantha Williams, Project Coordinator

Red Oak Community Heart & Soul continues to provide a resident-driven process that is planning for the future of Red Oak.

This year we hosted the 2025 Community Connect Expo in March. Over 30 nonprofits in the Red Oak area showcased their missions, current projects, and volunteer opportunities to the community.

This year we started Phase 3 where volunteers will be reviewing Action Ideas that have been collected from the Red Oak community over the past year to prioritize and assign with local organizations.

If you would like to get involved or learn more, there are many opportunities to volunteer, donate, or help spread the word.

Please visit our website at www.roheartsoul.org or send us a message on Facebook or Instagram @roheartsoul.



Top: Red Oak Heart & Soul school themed action ideas.
Photo by Samantha Williams

Right: Cynthia Bangston and Lee Wollenhaupt at the 2025 Community Connect Expo.
Photo by Samantha Williams



MONTGOMERY COUNTY FAMILY YMCA

Montgomery County Family YMCA Press Release (Red Oak, Iowa)



The Montgomery County Family YMCA with the help of the Rotary Club of Red Oak installed a new soccer shed at Kelly Park last spring. The new shed makes it possible for soccer supplies to be more accessible for the coaches and set-up and take-down before and after the program to be simpler with storage on site. Last year the soccer program was renamed MC (Montgomery County) United Soccer. Kids from all over Montgomery County come to take part in learning the fundamentals of soccer and have fun doing so! A record turn-out of over 100 kids signed up this year for the soccer program. Inclement weather led to the first practices being held inside the Y's Carder Tennis Center.

The WIBIT, a new water feature installation in the Y's Wilson Aquatic Center, kicked off Summer in the deep end of the pool on Saturday, June 1st and Sunday, June 2nd. The FREE event for the community introduced the fun lily pad, rolling log, and climbing mountain/slide obstacle course. As kids and some adults tried



YMCA Soccer Shed

(and a few select succeeded) to cross the aquatic toy, their families cheered them on. "The Wibit has been a great addition to our attractions at the Montgomery County Family YMCA." Said Aquatics Director Macy Reeves. She went on to add, "We actually saw one of our highest records of patrons at the pool during our first Wibit, nearly 100 patrons. The kids especially love it. The lifeguards even get excited along with the kids and adults when they make it all the way across the entire obstacle course." It continues to be a favorite on the weekends it is inflated and put in the pool.

For more information about the Montgomery County Family YMCA, its programs, memberships, and volunteer/donor opportunities, call us at 712-623-2161, stop by the Y located at 101 East Cherry Street, Red Oak, Iowa, visit us on Facebook, or our website at www.mcyymca.com.



Montgomery County United Soccer Program



YMCA's Wilson Aquatic Center new WIBIT water feature

RED OAK CHAMBER & INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION



FEELS LIKE *home* TO ME

Red Oak
Chamber and Industry Association

**JUNCTION DAYS 2025
JUNE 26TH – JUNE 29TH**

RED OAK ALUMNI NEWSLETTER

Thank you for following the Red Oak Alumni Newsletter!
Be on the lookout for the next issue coming out in Summer 2025.

Follow the link and share with others to join the [Red Oak Alumni Network](#) and receive the Red Oak Alumni Newsletter quarterly!

Want to catch up on past Red Oak Alumni Newsletters?
Visit the [Red Oak Alumni Newsletter](#) webpage!

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Thank you for your continued support!

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The Red Oak Alumni Newsletter is sponsored by the Red Oak Heritage Foundation, our community foundation. If you would like to help support them or for more information on them go to www.redoakheritagefoundation.org



Illustration by Red Oak Artist Carroll Danbom