

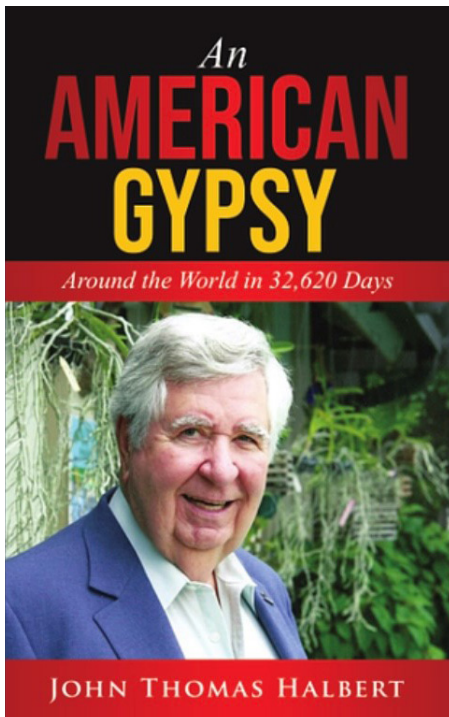


# RED OAK ALUMNI NEWSLETTER

THE *Heart* OF SOUTHWEST IOWA

By the Red Oak Heritage Foundation

Volume 1 | Issue 2 | July 2022



## ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

Written by: John Thomas Halbert  
Class of 1950

The biography of my life was released by Amazon April 11. The book details my life from my South Dakota birth and my luck to be adopted by a rural Iowa family whose grandparents were pioneers in Montgomery County; my adventures growing up in

Red Oak, graduating from Drake University, my journalism career interrupted by the Korea War; followed by a 27-year Air Force career. My civilian career followed as media and public affairs advisor to four Secretary's of the Air Force in Washington and on trips throughout the US and overseas, and then culminating as the Executive Manager of Armed Forces Radio & Television Europe for eight years.

Now retired in Sarasota, Florida where I became immersed in community involvement serving as President of the Broadcasters Club of Florida, President of Sarasota Sister Cities, member of the George Allen Media Round Table plus time as National President and Chairman of the Board of the Air Force Public Affairs Alumni Association.

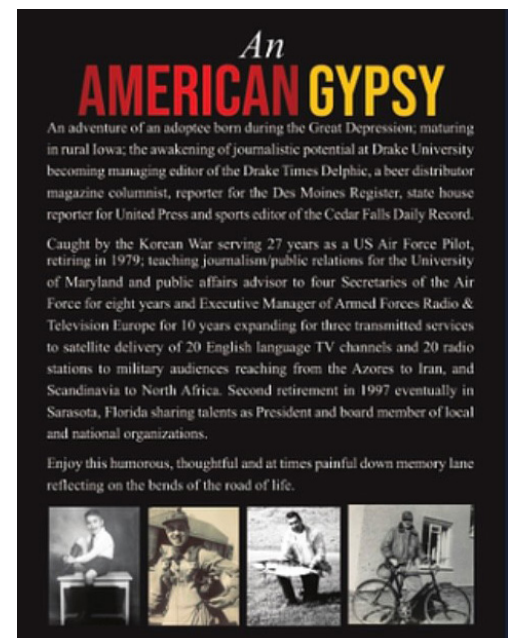
I used my time as a Covid recluse to complete my biography to leave a historical record where none has existed before, with multiple Red Oak family connections (Halbert, Pilkington, Dillon, Jeffers, Thomas, Gregg, Replogle and Westerlund)

An American Gypsy was published by Amazon Kindle on April 11. On

April 18 I got the first book sale ranking reporting indicating that on the best seller list my book was ranked 751,929 in book sales, 1,546 in journalism biographies, and 3,722 in military leaders biographies.

Today the rankings indicated to me that my writing is resonating with my intended audiences as this morning as I learned my ranking in book sales has reached 123,412 place, and 300 for journalism biographies and 1,596 in military leader biographies.

Thank you for your support and I hope my memories will resonate with you & your family and friends.



RED OAK ALUMNI  
"DID YOU KNOW"

John Norris (Class of '77) and his wife, Jackie's, twin sons graduated from Des Moines' Roosevelt High School this spring. Both boys were accepted into the military academy. Hunter is at West Point and Cole is attending the Air Force Academy in Colorado.

Multi award winning Composer Steve Horner (Class of '81) writes and produces exceptional music in a diverse array of forms and genres. He recently created the score for the 2019 Oscar Nominated Animated Short "One Small Step" which completed an impressive, award winning festival run including two for Best Original Score.

# RED OAK PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Written by: Mark Erickson, Activities Director



Red Oak Jr-Sr. High Class of 2022 Graduates where it all began . . . Inman Elementary

## SPRING / SUMMER 2022

The Red Oak School District Activities Department is proud to highlight our students, participants, and athletes from our spring and summer 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.

## VOCAL AND BAND

The Red Oak High School band and choir each gave outstanding performances at the graduation ceremony. The ceremony was highly attended by teaching staff who were recognized by our school board president.

On April 2nd, ROHS hosted class 2A Solo/Ensemble District Music Contests. There were nine 2A schools from the region represented. The ROHS Vocal Department had 34 students participate in 16 separate events. The ROHS Vocal Music Department received 10- (1-Superior Ratings), 4- (2-Excellent Ratings), and 2- (3-Good Ratings). The mixed Octet received a perfect score as well as the Outstanding Performance Award for their performance center and performed at the Outstanding Performance Award Showcase at Iowa State University on Tuesday, May 17th. The ROHS Band Department had 20 students participate in 10 separate events. The ROHS

Band received 5- (1-Super Ratings), 3- (Excellent Ratings), 1- (3-Good Ratings), and 1- (4- Fair Ratings).

On May 7th, the Red Oak Varsity Choir and Concert Band performed at Abraham Lincoln High School in Council Bluffs at the Iowa High School Music Association's Large Group Festival. This festival is the culmination of months of hard work put in by our students and directors to showcase their musicality as an ensemble. The Red Oak Varsity Choir earned a Superior, Division 1 rating. The Red Oak Concert Band earned a Superior, Division 1 rating.



Vocal Department - Mixed Octet



## STATE TRACK

We had one representative from the girls team who qualified for state track in the long jump and 400 M Dash. The boys team was represented at state track in the 1600 M Run, 3200 M Run, 400 M Dash, and Distance Medley Relay.

## STATE TENNIS

We were represented by one girls tennis double team at the State Doubles Tournament.

## BASEBALL

The 2022 baseball team garnered the most regular season wins dating back at least fifteen years with twelve wins. Four members of the team received all district and/or all conference honors.

## GEORGE MAHER DAY OF SERVICE

Text taken from @Red Oak Jr.-Sr. High School Facebook Page

On May 20th 2022 our school district had the opportunity to honor an amazing, service oriented man, George Maher, by taking part in George Maher Day of Service. Students and staff in our school district planned and completed community service projects that were aimed at bettering our community and showing kindness towards others. George Maher would have been so proud of our kids' efforts today!



Red Oak Jr & Sr Highschool Students Volunteering around the Community for George Maher Day of Service.





# RED OAK CHAMBER

Written by: Elaine Carlson  
Director of Membership & Finance at the  
Red Oak Chamber & Industry Association

As I am writing this article, we are in preparation as well as everyone else who has any responsibilities or connections to the Montgomery County Fair. As per history, the temps are forecasted to be upper 90's and humid. We'll stay hydrated and enjoy all that the Montgomery County Fair Board, ISU Extension, and 4H families have worked so hard to bring to us this year!

## JUNCTION DAYS 2022

Junction Days 2022 is in the rear-view mirror, and we are already working on Junction Days 2023! It was a well-attended weekend and enjoyed by all who participated in any and all activities. If you were a part of the celebration or perhaps you were not able to attend, we have posted a number of photos of the four-day event on @RedOakJunctionDays and on our website for your enjoyment. Are you planning a class reunion in 2023? Reach out to our office and share your plans so we can help promote your reunion. It's never too early to start spreading the word!

## RED OAK UPDATES

Since the last edition of the Alumni Newsletter, we have welcomed a couple of new businesses. Family Dollar/Dollar Tree opened at 1205 N Broadway Street, formally the location of the Carbon Plant. Val's Sugar Shack Bakery opened at 601 N 3rd Street in the former Faunce's building in June. Besides offering a variety of sweet treats, they offer a breakfast and lunch menu with daily specials. DAC Creamery that opened



Junction Days 2022 Downtown Kids Fun Activities

in the same space has expanded and moved to the formally beloved Dairy Queen location on Broadway. Having the ability to serve even more customers through a drive-up window has been a great advantage to grow their business this season. Be sure to check out our business directory on our website to learn more about all of our Chamber business investors.

Same location, same faces, new logo. Great Western Bank was purchased this year by First Interstate Bank and has now transitioned over to the new name and logo. A few things have changed with the new ownership however their community involvement and support have always been and will continue to be apart of who they are in Red Oak and surrounding area. Another business that has changed ownership is the



bed and breakfast located west on highway 34 just outside of town, Heritage Lodge. They have made some changes putting their own fingerprint on their new investment and are ambitiously marketing everything they have to offer.

Fres-co Systems, USA has announced of an expansion they are excited about for Red Oak. They manufacture flexible packaging for coffee, dairy, beverage, foods, ingredients, and chemicals. More than likely, you have a package in your pantry or refrigerator that was made right here in Red Oak. It will not only include the facility's footprint growing, they will also be adding twenty more positions when the expansion is complete. That is another win for Red Oak!

The City of Red Oak and the Park &



Junction Days 2022 Grand Parade Marshall  
- Sharon Bradley



Junction Days 2022 Fun Run



Tree Board are moving forward with the renovation and expansion of the Richard Simpson Memorial Stage project. Because of the rising costs of materials and labor, the project is going to be completed in phases. Currently there is not a timeline for the completion of the project. We are looking forward to using the stage again for Junction Days 2023 with the new look!

## RED OAK CHAMBER - APARTMENT PROJECT

The Red Oak Chamber & Industry Association Board of Directors voted in April of 2021 to move forward with renovating the two apartments above the Chamber Office. Lots of volunteer time has been spent on demo, cleaning, painting, etc. along with all of the contractors who helped bring this project along. After delays in supplies and busy schedules, we are planning an August open house to recognize our Chamber Members who were apart of this great undertaking. The apartments will be available to rent by September of this year offering another housing option in our community.

Our Chamber is the only entity that markets Red Oak. We strive to market not only our member businesses and organizations but our community as a whole. We promote our own events and programs but also promote community events as well. If you haven't done so yet, please check out our website [www.redoakiowa.com](http://www.redoakiowa.com), 'like' our @RedOakChamber and @RedOakJunctionDays Facebook Pages, and follow us on Instagram to keep up on the latest news and information!

Until next time! - Elaine Carlson

# Red Oak

Chamber and Industry Association



Junction Days 2022 ROAR (Red Oak All-Class Reunion) & Shady Tree BBQ Contest

## RED OAK, IOWA *Living*

# Welcoming You Back Home

### AMENITIES

- Montgomery County Family YMCA
- Montgomery County History Center
- Montgomery County Memorial Hospital
- Red Oak Country Club
- Red Oak Child Development Center
- Red Oak City Pool
- Red Oak Grand Theatre

- Red Oak Municipal Airport
- Red Oak Public Library
- Red Oak Public Parks
- Red Oak Trails
- Restored Burlington N. Depot & WWII Memorial Museum
- State of the Art Schools
- Wilson Performing Arts Center

Red Oak Chamber & Industry Assoc.  
307 E. Reed St.  
Red Oak, Iowa 51566  
712-623-4821

## Red Oak

Chamber and Industry Association

[www.redoakiowa.com](http://www.redoakiowa.com)  
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Facebook & Instagram  
@RedOakChamber



# MONTGOMERY COUNTY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

## RURAL HOUSING READINESS ASSESSMENT

Written By: Joey Norris

I am honored to write on behalf of the Montgomery County Development Corporation (MCDC) for this quarter's Alumni Newsletter. It is MCDC's mission to grow Montgomery County in every way and, as the Housing Committee Chair, my focus has been on Red Oak's housing. Red Oak is about midway through a process known as the Rural Housing Readiness Assessment (RHRA), initiated by MCDC's Executive Director Steve Adams. The RHRA is conducted through Iowa State University and the Iowa Economic Development Authority. Our goal is to identify the key ways to improve access, quality, and affordability of housing in Red Oak. We seek to develop a coherent, realistic, and well-reasoned housing strategy for our community.

Our "Housing Steering Committee" is made up of exceptional members of our beautiful little town. Some of our members include architect Daric O'Neal; councilmember Tim Fridolph; YMCA Director Carrie Shalters; and Building Crafts VP Jeff Soe. The unique contributions of our whole committee will ensure the success of our project.

As we fulfill our mission we will consider a wide range of information on housing access, characteristics, affordability, and demographics. We will evaluate whether residents are able to find housing easily enough and whether the available units match the existing demand.



Example Photo of Existing Home in Red Oak, Iowa

The US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) set a standard for what is considered affordable housing. No more than 30% of household income should be spent on housing costs. This includes mortgage or rent, insurance, utilities, maintenance, taxes, etc. A household spending more than 30% is considered cost-burdened. Currently, approximately only 15% of Red Oak households fall into this cost-burdened category; meaning ~76% of households spend less than 30% of their income on housing. While there are many factors at play, this statistic could indicate that Red Oak's affordability is an asset!

Our committee is also considering the quality of housing stock in town. We will evaluate the physical settings of residential buildings and their surrounding lots, and qualify both cosmetic and structural conditions. This is where the building and contractor members of our committee will play a crucial role.

With an average home sales price of ~\$142,000, we will look into renovation and rehab incentive programs. Our existing housing stock is aging, though much of it is entwined in our rich local history. We will explore ways to help keep familiar landmarks in place. Keeping our



Spec House in Red Oak, Iowa



existing neighborhoods strong and healthy will require resources and planning.

Our Housing Steering Committee will also look at new construction. With the aging of our housing stock, open lots, called “infill lots”, have left missing teeth in neighborhoods. Do city ordinances or building codes need changed in order to build new homes in these once-occupied parcels? Can unique dwelling visions such as pocket neighborhoods or 3d-printed houses fill the space? These questions and more will be explored on our mission to develop a coherent, realistic, and well-reasoned housing strategy for Red Oak.

A key portion of this RHRA process is collecting community input via our online survey. Whether you are a current, former, or aspiring resident of Red Oak, please share your input with us. Use the QR code in this article to go directly to our survey, or follow [THIS LINK](#) in the digital publication. Much of our committee’s success relies on sufficient saturation of this survey. Your participation is crucial and very much appreciated.



QR Code to scan to take Housing Survey



I welcome any input from Red Oak’s vast alumni network. Incentive programs, code improvements, building plans, innovative ideas, any and all constructive feedback from you is invaluable. Once you have generously taken the time to submit your survey, please feel free to call/text/email me with your expertise. In the world of sought-after progress, words of encouragement are always welcome, too.

-Joey Norris  
Housing Steering Committee Chair  
712-621-5639

Joey is a class of 2008 Red Oak Alumni. He owns and operates a small engineering firm in Red Oak called Dream Forge, specializing in prototyping and product development.



Example of Existing Homes in Red Oak, Iowa





# WILSON PERFORMING ARTS CENTER

Written By: Val Zane, Executive Director  
The Wilson Performing Arts Center



Exterior Photo of the Wilson Performing Arts Center

The Wilson Performing Arts Center (WPAC) is a premier performing arts facility that serves all of Southwest Iowa.

Located in Red Oak, Iowa, WPAC is a nonprofit organization that collaborates with area schools and organizations to provide a safe, affordable place for children and adults alike to participate in and enjoy theatre and the performing arts. WPAC offers professional and community theatre productions and entertainment for the whole family throughout the year as well as youth camps, workshops, and classes for all ages in voice, piano, dance, acting, costume design, and writing.

We just finished up a highly successful 4-day sold-out run of Disney's renowned classic *Beauty and the Beast*. A powerhouse cast of 45 members along with a dedicated crew of professionals and volunteers from local communities worked hard to bring this magical tale to life.



Beauty and the Beast Cast - Photo by Renander Photos

Broadway Advantage Camp—featuring Broadway star Kelli James and legendary music composer Steven Applegate—takes place July 22-30th, with a concert on July 30. The camp gives local youth a real theatre experience, as well as an opportunity to learn from dedicated professionals and perform onstage alongside their peers before a live audience. It takes place annually and is in its 7th year. Scholarships are provided through the Tanner Foss Foundation.

This August marks the 14th year that WPAC has been in operation. Upcoming shows include Tom Worth in September, *Jekyll and Hyde* in October, and *One Night in Memphis* in November.

WPAC is open to the public. If you stop by during the day, you can tour the building and view the beautiful artwork on display in our lobby or check out our outdoor music garden and make some music of your own. We also have space available to rent for parties, events, and meetings.

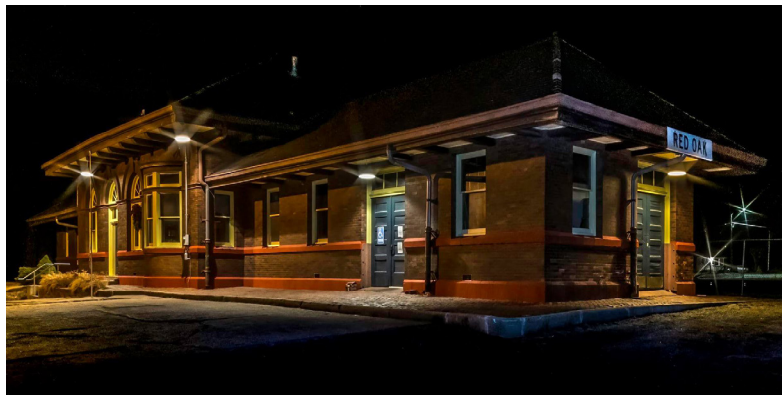
Please support community theatre and the Arts.





# THE RESTORED BNSF DEPOT/WWII MUSEUM

Written by: Jolene Crawford



Restored BNSF Depot/WWII Museum

The Depot is alive and well. Many wonderful things have been happening and several projects are in the works. We have hosted numerous parties so far in 2022 with the last being hosts to the Class of 1962 and the Class of 1972! Both were here Junction Days and had a great time. Saturday, July 9, we will be hosting a Pop-Up Restaurant and are anxious to see how that goes.

A wonderful project just nearing completion is the recreation of the garden on the east side of the building. Many years ago it was established as a memorial rose garden for Glenn Nelson – father of Phyllis Nelson Moore. It had been neglected for many, many years. Bud Barnett tilled it many times over the last couple of years. This spring with the help of Sasha Henton, Randall Wilson and Pete Crawford the soil was prepared. Echternach Construction poured a beautiful new sidewalk. Amanda Bak (grower for RO Greenhouse) and her mother, Mary, brought and planted ALL the flowers and then mulched it. It is so beautiful. We have added a couple of birdhouses, a bee house and a feeder.

We are prepared to begin the new

parking lot which will be to the north of the BNSF right of way. Only thing stopping that is BNSF stakeholders who have to give us permission to move some of their dirt. This has been in the process for 2-3 months but you don't move the railroad very fast!! It will be a much needed addition.

A most important project is the upcoming ADA compliant entry to the Depot from the south side which will include a concrete parking pad for 2 vehicles, concrete on the back side past the door, a ramp, platform, new door and electric opener. Jolene is busy raising money. As soon as we get the word that concrete is ready – the project moves!! Goal is to be completed by September 1 to be ready for the Coburg Historical Society annual get together!

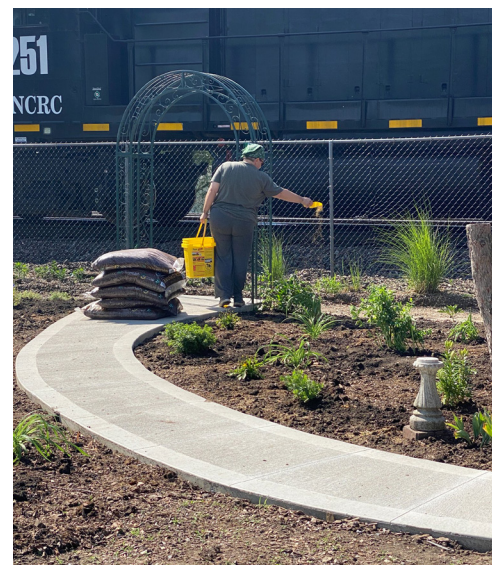
Beyond that – the chimney needs to be repaired and we have grants for



that. The attics need to be foamed and we have half of the money for that in a grant.

Inside, we had the office floor refinished in February which makes the theater room the only floor not redone. Just before Junction Days Pete installed 14 cellular blinds (H/M grant) to help defuse some of the harsh light. After the Class of 72 was there we discovered an added bonus – no echoing and better to be able to hear! The H/M grant also allowed us to add 4 tables and more folding chairs so we can now set up 12 tables seating 72. Class of 72 needed all of them!!

As you can see – work at the Depot is always moving. We are in the process of planning some of next year's improvements.

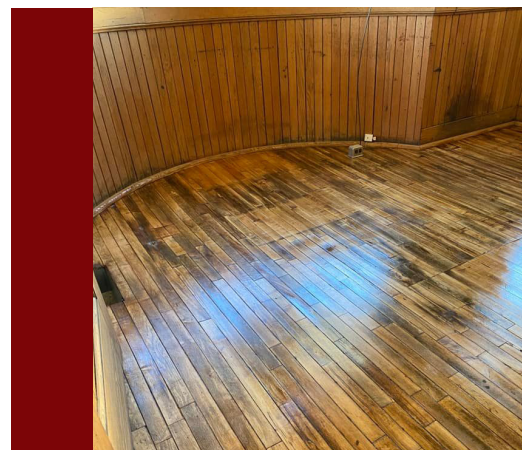


Amanda Bak and her mother Mary volunteering at the Depot



There is one thing we really need – VOLUNTEERS. Numerous places – helping with cleaning would be a number one. It is a big building for one person to maintain and be ready for so many parties. In addition – just having some volunteers who could help keep it open 2-3 afternoons a week from 2-4 would be wonderful. If visitors come, you give a tour (information provided) and if no one comes you enjoy reading history in the library!!! How easy is that???

Check us out on our FB page – The Restored BNSF Depot or on our new website – [redoakdepotmuseum.com](http://redoakdepotmuseum.com).



Re-finished Office Floor at the Depot

## THE RED OAK GRAND THEATRE

Written by: Jeanice Lester

The Red Oak Grand Theatre is a non-profit, 501c3, completely run by volunteers. Our list of volunteers encompass all walks of life and includes many in the surrounding communities. Our mission is to serve the citizens of the greater Montgomery County and beyond. Tickets cost just \$2.00 to ensure our movie goers can come and enjoy a movie with us at a very responsible price. Our concession items are also priced affordable to make your movie going experience all that you would hope for. In addition to our weekly showings Friday, Saturday and Sunday at 7 p.m. with a Sunday matinee at 2 p.m. our theater is used outside of those hours. We open our doors for area schools, daycares,

businesses and churches during the week as well.

In 2013 the Red Oak Grand Theatre Board of Directors purchased the building next door as the building was in need of repair. This building shared a wall with the current theatre. Until 2018 the board discussed different ideas on what to do with the acquired building and the answer surfaced as “Expand the Grand.” A core group from the board gathered a plan and began the process of raising \$975,000.00 to repair the building and create a second screen. Today our two screen theatre is a delight to the area with a fabulous theatre room, remodeled lobby, new restrooms and updating the original theatre room

with new heating and air, a new fire alarm system and other behind the scene improvements.

The “Expand the Grand” project was a project the community embraced and helped us accomplish. We could not have completed the project without countless grants, donations and pledges. It is amazing what happened in a small town in Southwest Iowa.

Please feel free to visit us and if you are interested – join our volunteer team. Many hands make light work of providing movies on the weekend. Please visit our Facebook page: @RedOakGrand or visit [www.redoakgrandtheatre.com](http://www.redoakgrandtheatre.com) for additional information.





If you would like to forward this email on so others can sign up have them follow the link below to join the Red Oak Alumni Network and receive the Red Oak Alumni Newsletter quarterly!

<https://www.redoakiowa.com/alumni/>

## WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

If you have a submission for someone you think should be next issue's Alumni Spotlight send us an email to [redoakiowa.alumni.newsletter@gmail.com](mailto:redoakiowa.alumni.newsletter@gmail.com)

If you know a graduate of Red Oak Schools that has passed and would like to be included in next issues obituary section please send their name, year of graduation, and year of passing to [redoakiowa.alumni.newsletter@gmail.com](mailto:redoakiowa.alumni.newsletter@gmail.com)



### SIGN UP FOR THE WEEKLY COMMUNICATOR.

Weekly e-mail of community events and promotions. Delivered to your inbox on Wednesday mornings at 9:00 AM.

The Communicator is put out by the Red Oak Chamber

### RED OAK ALUMNI "DID YOU KNOW"

If you would like to submit any Red Oak Graduates for our Red Oak Alumni "Did You Know" Section click this link to enter their information!

[Red Oak Alumni "Did You Know"](#)

If you would like to join the Red Oak Iowa Alumni Facebook Group just follow the below link and request to join! It is a private Red Oak Alumni group where people can ask questions, post about upcoming events, etc.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/redoakalumni>

## THE RED OAK ALUMNI NETWORK

Have a wonderful week, and be on the lookout for the next issue of the Red Oak Alumni Newsletter coming out the first week of August 2022.



## RED OAK ALUMNI NEWSLETTER SPONSORED BY THE RED OAK HERITAGE FOUNDATION

The 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](http://www.redoakheritagefoundation.org)