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INSIGHT

THE BUSINESS JOURNAL OF THE QUAD-CITIES

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Is shrinkflation becoming the new inflation?



MARK GRYWACHESKI

Economy

Mark Grywacheski is an expert in financial markets and economic analysis and is an investment adviser with Quad-Cities Investment Group, Davenport.

For nearly three years, consumers have struggled against high inflation. In December, according to the Consumer Price Index, inflation was reported at 3.4%, still well above the Federal Reserve’s target rate of 2%. The last time inflation was at or below 2% was back in February 2021 (1.7%).

With inflation at 3.4%, this means that, on average, consumer prices have risen 3.4% over the past 12 months. However, since February 2021, consumer prices have risen a cumulative 17.1%. For many consumer items, the increase has been even greater. Since February 2021, food prices have risen 20.3%, prices on housekeeping supplies have increased 18.4%, the cost of shelter has risen 18.4% while energy prices have risen 26.3%. In total, the average American household is now spending about \$12,000 per year more to buy the same goods and services they bought three years ago.

Manufacturers and retailers are well aware the pressures that rising

prices have placed on consumer households. At some point, either out of financial necessity or choice, consumers will inherently reduce their spending. Rather than continually raising their prices, manufacturers and retailers have been gradually – and quietly – reducing the size, weight and quantity of their products. Known as shrinkflation, the industry practice is not new but is a trend consumers have been noticing with greater frequency.

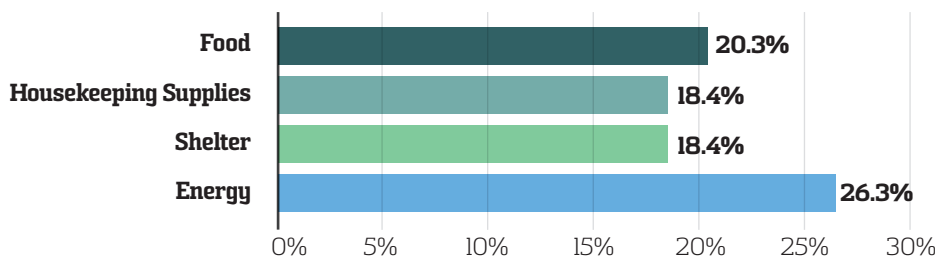
A stroll down your local grocery aisle yields some interesting examples of shrinkflation. A bottle of Gatorade, which once held 32 ounces, now holds just 28 ounces, a decline of 12.5%. A family-sized box of Nabisco Wheat Thins has shrunk from 16 ounces to 14 ounces (-12.5%). A box of Quaker Oatmeal now contains eight 1.05 ounce single-serving packets instead of 10 (-20%). A bottle of Pantene Pro-V Curl Protection conditioner has been reduced from 12 ounces to 10.4 ounces (-13.3%).

A roll of Bounty paper towels has shrunk from 165 sheets to just 147 (-10.9%). Even toilet paper – the fiends! – can’t escape the grasp of shrinkflation. The number of sheets in a roll of Charmin Ultra-Strong Mega Roll has been reduced from 264 to 242 (-8.3%). All these are just a few of the many examples where consumers are receiving less product for their money.

In a survey by Morning Pro Consult, the majority (65%) of U.S. consumers say they are either very or somewhat concerned about shrinkflation. Understandably, it has forced consumers to take measures to mitigate its impact. In the survey results, which allows for multiple selections, 49% will purchase a different name brand while 48% will purchase the generic brand. 33% will buy the product in bulk. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, 30% will simply stop purchasing the specific brand altogether.

This creates a difficult balancing act for manufacturers and retailers. On one hand, they too are impacted by the rising costs of inflation which eats into their profitability. On the other, they must maintain a level of consumer affordability and price sensitivity while not putting their brand loyalty at risk. As the survey results suggest, consumers can be quick to switch brands, and their loyalty, when offered better value-for-money.

Price increases since February 2021



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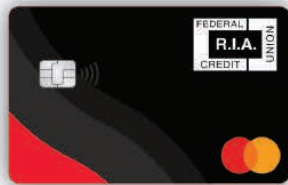
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New Style Hair Academy CEO and Director **Miguel Rosas** poses for a portrait in his barber school on Wednesday, January 3, in Moline. Rosas is also an instructor at the hair academy.

Katelyn Metzger



Old school, new style:

Barber school owner brings skills, passion to his corner of Moline

GRETCHEN TESKE
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Miguel Rosas is a man who leads with passion. And he lets it guide him into every new adventure.

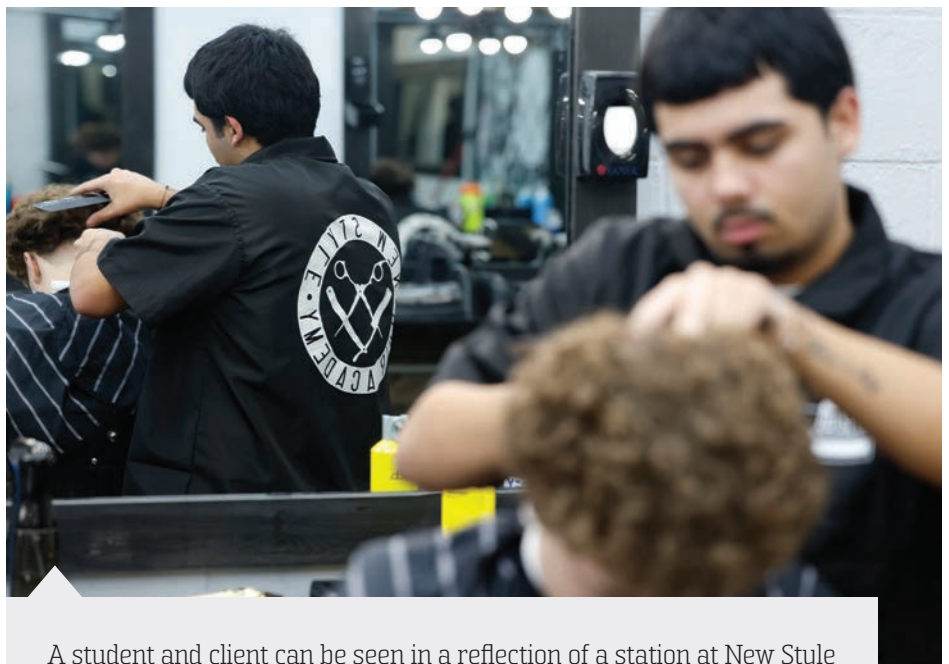
The owner of New Style Barbershop and the New Style Hair Academy, Rosas runs a successful barber college in the Quad-Cities. When he started, that wasn't his goal. But like Rosas does, he found his passion and continued to open every door to new opportunities that he could find.

"I started my first shop in 2008. I was maybe 22, and I've been cutting hair and self-employed ever since," he said.

Growing up in Rock Island, Rosas began cutting hair while he was in junior high. He was both his first customer and first barber.

"I started cutting my own hair when I was about 12 years old. We didn't always have money to go to a barber shop so my mom would cut our hair at the house, but she would destroy our haircuts," he said with a laugh. "So I started messing with my own hair and I just liked it."

That evolved into cutting hair for his friends, where Rosas discovered his calling was being able to offer a service that helped people. He kept that passion



A student and client can be seen in a reflection of a station at New Style Hair Academy. *Katelyn Metzger*

through his childhood and during his last two years at Rock Island High School, where he entered a barbering vocational program.

Everyday from noon to 3 p.m., he drove himself to a barber school on Avenue of the Cities in Moline and got to work.

"From there we would do a little bit of bookwork and then just cut people's hair as they walked in," he said.

After graduation, Rosas decided to put his barbering dreams on the back burner. Growing up, his dad performed concrete work and Rosas wanted to join the business.

The pair worked together for a while, but it wasn't long before the grueling conditions started to wear on Rosas. His dad noticed and encouraged him to go back to cutting hair, where his real passion was.



Taking his father's advice to heart, he partnered with another barber to open a shop. Rosas was only 19 and still in barber college, but his dreams of entrepreneurship were calling. The partnership eventually dissolved and Rosas switched to other odd jobs to pay the bills while he was still in school.

By the time he turned 21, he was ready to open up shop again. This time, all by himself.

"That's when I first started the New Style Barber Shop. And then when I was 22, I bought the building," he said.

The shop is located at 101 5th Avenue in Moline, on the corner of a mostly residential neighborhood. He started small, working alone, but eventually grew his business to having eight barbers.

With his life coming full circle, he decided to take things a step further and

see what he could do at competitions. By 2010 he was on the road at barber competitions traveling to Chicago, Dallas, Las Vegas and New York.

Rosas became popular for his ability to cut intricate designs into hair. In 2012, he took home second place in an Ohio competition for cutting the cartoon

character Yosemite Sam in hair. His skills improved and by 2014 he made national headlines for cutting a Colonel Sanders design on a client.

The move earned him free KFC for life.

In late 2015 he made headlines again for cutting a portrait of Chicago Cubs pitcher Jake Arietta into hair. His Instagram



Antiques and other display items sit on shelves at Miguel Rosa's barber school. *Katelyn Metzger*

post went viral, sending him to Chicago to give more Cubs haircuts and even meet the pitcher.

The spotlight stayed on Rosas that year when he was featured on Cedric's Barber Battle, a reality-competition show that featured barbers from across the country. The CW show was hosted by comedian Cedric the Entertainer and featured three barbers per episode. The trio would be given challenges to complete and were eliminated one by one until a winner was declared.

Representing Chicago in his episode, Rosas took home the glory, and \$15,000 cash. Once he made it back to Moline, he let his passion for teaching do the talking.

A few years later, he bought yet another building at 1628 15th Place in Moline, remodeled and poured his TV show winnings into expanding his business with a barber college.

"I was a barber for a long time and I was thinking that I didn't want to have to cut hair my whole life," he said. "I feel like I'm pretty good at cutting hair and figured I could make some money off teaching other people and showing them my skills."

The school opened in 2018 and has had steady enrollment. Over the past six years, Rosas estimated he has graduated about 10-12 barbers every year.

"For the Quad-Cities, it's not a huge demand but I think with certain influences more people are jumping into it because they see guys like me and other barbers that are making good money. So it's a decent demand," he said. "I probably have a list of about 25 people right now that want to, but they just can't afford to come here."

To be a barber, Rosas said, requirements include a high school diploma or GED and

being at least 16 years old. The full-time program takes eight to 10 months, but, like Rosas noted, it comes at a big cost.

Barber school at New Style is \$12,800 and there is no financial aid offered just yet. But, Rosas has been working on that for three years and has earned his accreditation. By the summer, he is hopeful everything will be lined up for students to apply for federal financial aid through FAFSA.

Then, he said, all 38 chairs in his school will be filled up in no time.

In school, students do classwork for an hour or two every day. In the classroom they watch demonstrations, study hair textures and color and even practice on mannequins. Once they're ready, they are sent out to the cutting floor to practice on one another, and any client who walks through the doors.

"We get people from all walks of life," he said. "A lot of men come in with their kids, boys. All races really."

Being a barber college, Rosas only charges \$10 per hair cut. The quality, however remains high.

Students cut hair at New Style Hair Academy in Moline. *Katelyn Metzger*

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"Just because it's a barber school and it's obviously less expensive, it doesn't even matter," he said. "We have a nice atmosphere here. It's clean, it's a cool look. It's just different and something you don't really see in the Quad-Cities."

Inside, the space is brightly lit by a honey comb light fixture on the ceiling. The grey walls are accented with posters, albums and portraits of celebrities. Clients draped in protective capes sit quietly as students narrow their focus, learning to perfect their craft. One of them is DaVontae Hicks.

The 20-year-old has been in school since July, but has already been cutting hair for a decade. His father also is a barber, and Hicks has been ready to follow in his footsteps for years.

"When I'm here I'm working toward a goal," he said. "I meet a lot of new people from different cultures, ethnicities. It's just a different environment from what I'm used to."

While growing up in Davenport, Hicks said he grew used to seeing the same people day in and day out. At New Style, everyone from CEOs to children come in for a cut. In the end, it's all the same to Hicks, who is backed by the support of his father and the inspiration he draws from Rosas.

"Once I told (my dad) I was going to take it seriously and go all the way, he was glad because he'd been telling me to. He was telling me it was long overdue," Hicks said. "Eventually I want to do what Miguel does in a way, have my own school and barber shop. Just maxing out what I can do."

Rosas said the passion the students bring into the school is what makes it work the way it does. His next big move is to continue expanding, opening up a cosmetology school on the other side of his building. Being able to add in a whole new set of students and clients will open more doors for entrepreneurship and give students a chance to build their own empires and skills, he said.

Everyone has to start somewhere and if they choose to start in Moline, Rosas said, the clients will be there to support them. It's the New Style promise.

"When they come to a school, they know they're helping a student out whose here to learn," he said. "People just like to help out."



(Top) A student tidies up a client's edges at New Style Hair Academy in Moline. *Katelyn Metzger* (Middle) Barber Instructor Miguel Rosas' station at his barber school, New Style Hair Academy. *Katelyn Metzger* (Bottom) An instructor shows a student how to cut women's hair at New Style Hair Academy in Moline. *Katelyn Metzger*



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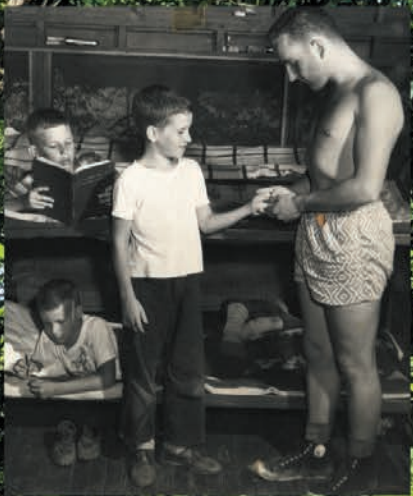
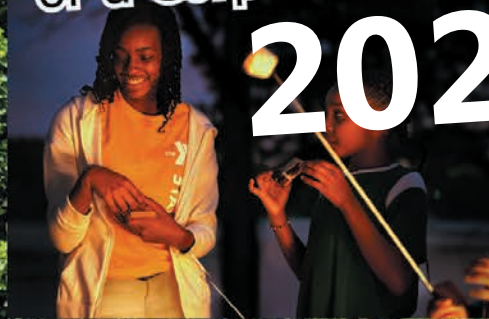
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Abby Peeters, of Snake Farm Creative, poses with one of her recent designs in her home on Thursday, January 4, in Eldridge. Peeters started seriously sewing and selling her designs in 2021.

Katelyn Metzger



'I thought I would just go for it and see what happens'

Eldridge woman's leap of faith pays off with custom western wear business

GRETCHEN TESKE
gteske@qctimes.com

The house on 4th Street in Eldridge, Iowa looks like any other home in its quiet neighborhood.

A green front porch welcomes visitors to a solid wood door where cowboy boots are lined up all the way to the staircase. Going up the carpeted stairs leads to a series of bedrooms, one painted bright orange.

At first glance the room looks like any other, but on second glance, the shelves are stacked with piles of fabric that catch the eye. A large table in the corner of the room holds cups of pens, pencils, scissors and other tools. Sewing machines are stashed under it for storage and a basket of rolled up papers sits beside it.

More cowboy boots and other clothing peek out from the open closet and a clothing rack near the door is filled with shirts, dresses and jackets all lined with fringe, rhinestones and custom appliques. The bed neatly tucked into the corner is a reminder that when the room isn't being used as a studio for custom country western wear, it's also the childhood bedroom of Abby Peeters, who says she stumbled into her new career completely by accident.

Peeters grew up with two grandmothers who sewed often and encouraged the hobby in their granddaughter. The first thing she hand-sewed with her grandmother was a teddy bear, "gingerbread man style" with cheetah print fabric. It still sits in the orange room.

In junior high, Peeters leveled up when an aunt gifted her a, "very heavy, very temperamental Singer machine from the '60s that she got at a garage sale."

"I didn't really touch that machine all that much after I first got it just because it was hard to use, but I would pull it out in college and make Halloween costumes," she said. "But I really got into sewing after the Peace Corps."

Peeters was volunteering in Mozambique, a country in southeast Africa, when she started growing frustrated with her limited clothing options due to the climate, cultural norms and seeing all



Custom-made fringed belts made by Abby Peeters are laid out.

Katelyn Metzger

the clothing waste that ends up in developing countries.

Once her 27-month long service ended in 2018 she moved on to Haiti, where she worked as a social worker through the non-profit ServeHAITI. During her time abroad, Peeters lived mostly out of a backpack and became accustomed to a minimalist lifestyle.

As the socio-political situation in Haiti heated up, she decided to move back home to Eldridge in early 2020. Seeing

the amount of clothing and items she had at home overwhelmed her and she began donating a vast majority, forgetting she'd moved back to a four-seasons climate.

As seasons changed, Peeters was in need of new clothes. Wanting to keep her carbon footprint low she began checking out resale shops.

"I was spending a lot of time at thrift stores and realized they have a lot of fabric there, too," she said. "I dug into Instagram finding independent pattern makers,

designers and pulling out that old sewing machine and seeing what I could do."

Things got off to a decent start and Peters began re-teaching herself all the skills she learned as a child. But she could not shake the feeling that something was missing. Even though she was back home in her childhood hometown and home, it didn't feel quite right.

"At the same time I was feeling frustrated with all of these things, I was feeling really frustrated with a sense of place and being back (in Eldridge) after being out (of the country) and looking for a way to make here feel like home in a way that felt authentic and good for me," she said.

That started her on a path of digging into family genealogy and their western roots. The original Peeters' family farm is a few miles away from where she lives now. As a child, she grew up riding horses with her great-uncle who always dressed his part.

"He would always wear pearl snaps with the embroidered yokes and bolo ties at family reunions and his kids rodeoed," she said. "There was just something in that I felt drawn back to, but also plenty

"At the end of the day what I don't want to do is make something just to make something. I want these clothes to be loved and for people to feel like their best selves when they wear them and not for (the garments) to just sit on a rack."

—Abby Peeters, Snake Farm Creative

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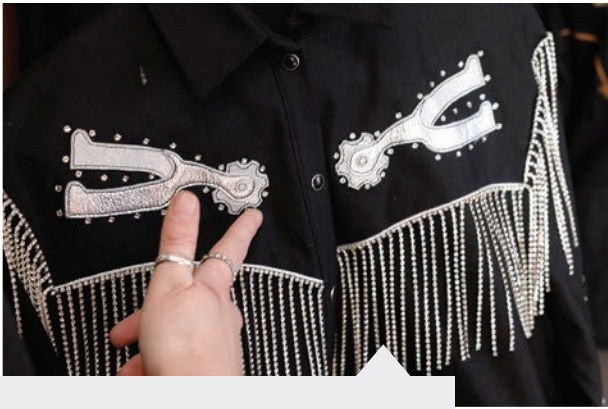
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Abby Peeters shows off a jacket adorned with handmade leather applique spurs and rhinestone fringe. *Katelyn Metzger*

of things in the western industry that I didn't feel like I aligned with."

Peeters wanted to make sure her clothing was an extension of her journey to exploring her roots and understanding her family's history. Once the clothing started to come together, she created a business business - Snake Farm Creative.

Coming up with the name was the hardest part, she said, adding the inspiration came from the Ray Wiley Hubbard song Snake Farm. In the countries she lived in and cultures she was immersed with, snakes were a big part of the landscape and the reminder felt authentic and true to her journey thus far, she said.

"Historically snakes being a symbol of the divine feminine but also constantly shedding their skin, changing, evolving. On a lot of levels there was something in it that felt right," she said.

At the same time, Peeters was still working for ServeHAITI remotely. While she was home, Peeters began digging into the more intricate details of western wear, like embroidery.

She dug into chain-stitch embroidery, which was popularized by Czech immigrants who came to the United States and observed the stitching in western wear. There was a cultural crossover, with the migrants knowing how to do the work and it surged in popularity.

"I wanted to be doing that because that is what I had been most exposed to but it turns out chain-stitch machines are very expensive," she said. "So I started looking for other avenues and tried out leather."

Accessorizing with leather appliques became popularized in the early '30s, she said. It is most commonly seen in the



A custom set made by Abby Peeters, of Snake Farm Creative, on a mannequin. *Katelyn Metzger*

Tanya Tucker and Dolly Parton top Peeters' list of dream clients.

designs stitched onto the clothing and cut into various shapes like horseshoes, spurs and hats. With her new found success, Peeters began layering the fabrics to create dimensional designs and learned a life lesson along the way.

"It's been a really good lesson for me in terms of being able to do what you can

with what you have and those limitations often lend to something really interesting and can be very unlimited if you have the right mindset around it," she said.

She created an Instagram page for her business and began sharing her creations. Friends of hers with businesses of their own began sharing her posts. One of



(Top) Abby Peeters, of Snake Farm Creative, shows off a jacket made of vintage upholstery material in her home in Eldridge. She specializes in making bold and colorful western designs. *Katelyn Metzger* (Bottom) A look into Snake Farm Creative owner's office/bedroom in Eldridge. *Katelyn Metzger*

those friends owns the company Mud Lowery which specializes in custom jewelry, and had connections in high places.

"He was doing a significant number of pieces for Miranda Lambert, a few things for Carrie Underwood and handful of other artists and working with their stylists," she said.

He would name drop Peeters to various stylists and one day, it paid off. Peeters received a message on Instagram from a

celebrity stylist who was inquiring about a custom garment. Originally, Peeters thought the clothing would be for the stylist herself.

"We get to the end of the conversation and she says, 'OK cool it's actually for Miranda Lambert for this leg of her tour so we will need it by this date,'" Peeters said.

In May, 2022, Lambert and Little Big Town kicked off the Bandwagon Tour

with Lambert wearing a custom maroon dress made by Peeters. That November Peeters made another dress for Lambert to wear at the Country Music Awards during a tribute to country-great Loretta Lynn, who had died a month before the ceremony. The dress consisted of nearly 600 hand-set, colored rhinestones and 76 individually drawn and hand-cut leather appliqué pieces.

Collaborations have continued and she has created more custom designs for Lambert as well as other country artists like Kaitlin Butts. Nearly everything Peeters creates is custom and special, considering drawing and cutting the appliques alone takes about 12 hours and construction of the garment as long as eight hours.

Sewing and creating continued to be a hobby until March 2023 when her work with ServeHAITI wrapped up. She considered looking into the social work realm again, but could not shake the feeling she was on the cusp of something great.

"I started thinking back on all the stories people have when they do something big it happens out of a moment when they don't have any other options," she said. "I thought I would just go for it and see what happens."

That attitude is what has propelled her forward into success and keeps the orders coming in. For the most part, everything is custom, but it's all designed that way, she said. Peeters operates under the philosophy that clothes should fit people and not the other way around.

"At the end of the day what I don't want to do is make something just to make something," she said. "I want these clothes to be loved and for people to feel like their best selves when they wear them and not for (the garments) to just sit on a rack."

With business booming, Peeters has outgrown the orange bedroom on 4th Street and has her sights set on a new studio space in Eldridge. Doing all the work herself can be overwhelming, she admitted. But that feeling melts away once customers feel as good as the clothes look.

"It is truly a great feeling when somebody gets a garment ... and can feel that somebody made this from top to bottom and they put it on and it fits them so well. It's really incredible and then I tend to forget every stressful thing that happened in the process," she said. "It's all fine, and then I do it again."



2024 SEASON

APRIL

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
					5 SB 6:30PM	6 SB 6:00PM
7 SB 1:00PM	8	9 WM	10 WM	11 WM	12 WM	13 WM
14 WM	15	16 PEO 6:30PM	17 PEO 6:30PM	18 PEO 6:30PM	19 PEO 6:30PM	20 PEO 6:00PM
21 PEO 1:00PM	22	23 SB	24 SB	25 SB	26 SB	27 SB
28 SB	29	30 BEL				

MAY

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
			1 BEL	2 BEL	3 BEL	4 BEL
5 BEL	6	7 WIS 6:30PM	8 WIS 6:30PM	9 WIS 6:30PM	10 WIS 6:30PM	11 WIS 6:00PM
12 WIS 1:00PM	13	14 CR	15 CR	16 CR	17 CR	18 CR
19 CR	20	21 DAY 6:30PM	22 DAY 6:30PM	23 DAY 6:30PM	24 DAY 6:30PM	25 DAY 6:00PM
26 DAY	27	28 SB 6:30PM	29 SB 6:30PM	30 SB 6:30PM	31 SB 6:30PM	

JUNE

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
						1 SB 6:00PM
2 SB 1:00PM	3	4 WIS	5 WIS	6 WIS	7 WIS	8 WIS
9 WIS	10	11 BEL 6:30PM	12 BEL 6:30PM	13 BEL 6:30PM	14 BEL 6:30PM	15 BEL 6:00PM
16 BEL 1:00PM	17	18 GL	19 GL	20 GL	21 GL	22 GL
23 GL	24	25 PEO	26 PEO	27 PEO	28 PEO	29 PEO
30 PEO						

JULY

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
	1 CR 6:30PM	2 CR 6:30PM	3 CR 6:00PM	4 CR	5 CR	6 CR
7	8	9 PEO 6:30PM	10 PEO 6:30PM	11 PEO 6:30PM	12 PEO 6:30PM	13 PEO 6:00PM
14 PEO 1:00PM	15	16	17	18	19 SB	20 SB
21 SB	22	23 CR 6:30PM	24 CR 6:30PM	25 CR 6:30PM	26 CR 6:30PM	27 CR 6:00PM
28 CR 1:00PM	29	30 PEO	31 PEO			

AUGUST

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
				1 PEO	2 PEO	3 PEO
4 PEO	5	6 WIS 6:30PM	7 WIS 6:30PM	8 WIS 6:30PM	9 WIS 6:30PM	10 WIS 6:00PM
11 WIS 1:00PM	12	13 BEL	14 BEL	15 BEL	16 BEL	17 BEL
18 BEL	19	20 LAN 6:30PM	21 LAN 6:30PM	22 LAN 6:30PM	23 LAN 6:30PM	24 LAN 6:00PM
25 LAN 1:00PM	26	27 WIS	28 WIS	29 WIS	30 WIS	31 WIS

SEPTEMBER

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
1 WIS	2	3 BEL 6:30PM	4 BEL 6:30PM	5 BEL 6:30PM	6 BEL 6:30PM	7 BEL 6:00PM
8 BEL 1:00PM						

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Rhea Vrana, chef at Cavort, shakes a Dragonfruit Daiquiri on Wednesday, January 24, in Davenport.

Katelyn Metzger

'This is what I love to do'

Chef jumps every hurdle to open a restaurant of her own in downtown Davenport

GRETCHEN TESKE

gteske@qctimes.com

Every time Rhea Vrana was confronted with a challenge she found a way to overcome it. And downtown Davenport is all the better for it.

The owner and executive chef behind Cavort, the upscale restaurant and bar at 229 Brady Street, started her career a few blocks over but originally had dreams that reached beyond the Quad-Cities.

"I was very much the person that wanted to know whatever California was," she said. "I wanted to go and travel and find a coast or beach or something

like that but I ended up starting to bartend and I quickly moved into the kitchen."

The "Davenport born and raised" chef started her career with an education from the Scott Community College culinary program. In need of student hours, she began working at the Bass Street Chop House in Moline.

"I learned a little bit quicker with being in the kitchen environment," adding she moved up from prep cook to sous chef within two years. "It was a great ride and I loved every second of it."

Her next endeavor was at the short-lived downtown Davenport restaurant Roam — owned by brothers Dylan and Griffin Stiel. The restaurant opened in December 2018 on River Drive with a concept of small plates and sharables with no TVs and a focus on the food and environment.

"The brothers very much had mad love for the Quad-Cities and wanted to bring something really cool and unique here because they're big travelers," she said. "I fell in love with that idea because the Quad-City people deserve something cool. We shouldn't always have to go to Des Moines or Chicago. We can build it right here and never have to leave."

When that portion of downtown Davenport severely flooded the following spring, a multitude of businesses were forced to close. Roam ended up being one of them.

"I was in love with that place. I had a lot of work to do but the flood took us out and every move from there I made out of survival, just trying to stay in the industry," she said.

One of her first moves was to team up with fellow chefs to offer a pop-up kitchen at a local brewery with proceeds going to flood relief. It was a massive success and soon Vrana became the owner of Fat Sacks, a late-night fast-food alternative.

"It was not your boxed, microwaved or deep-fried stuff. It was really fun takes on fatty items," she said. "We had a walk-up window and it was an indoor food truck concept."

The concept kitchen was located inside another downtown Davenport bar and was wildly successful for a while. Then, COVID-19 came into the picture.

"We closed down for a couple of weeks to make sure everyone was healthy and safe but we needed a plan because things were so crazy at that time," she said. "Finally it got to the point where we were like, 'Here we are again. A disaster has taken us out, so we have to make a move.'"

Take-out foods skyrocketed in popularity and Vrana took full advantage. The walk-up window stayed busy and attention to the new concept was great for sales, but came with another downside: Not enough room.

Vrana said she quickly outgrew the space and once again had to look for another option. That led her to the doors of the Union Arcade building on the corner of Brady and Third Streets.

Once inside the lobby, elevators take residents upstairs to the 68 apartments that overlook the downtown landscape. On the main floor and just inside the entrance, Vrana turned a former coffee shop and bakery space into an upscale lounge and eatery she named Cavort.

"We called it Cavort because we didn't want to be backed into one concept or idea, but (for the word) to mean jumping and dancing excitedly, that's what we do," she said.

"We called it Cavort because we didn't want to be backed into one concept or idea, but (for the word) to mean jumping and dancing excitedly, that's what we do."

—Rhea Vrana, Chef at Cavort



Rhea Vrana cuts a kiwi for a signature drink at Cavort on Wednesday, January 24, in Davenport. Cavort dries their fruits in house to top cocktails. *Katelyn Metzger*



A colorful Dragonfruit Daquiri sits on a Cavort menu. *Katelyn Metzger*

Vrana originally opened the restaurant with a former coworker but has since become the sole owner. The inside of the restaurant is dressed with bold wallpaper and neon signs that add a layer of fun to the sophisticated landscape.

Dark lighting and jewel-toned furniture and curtains accent the room and create

spaces comfortable for both business and casual dinners. Vrana calls her style "no-coast tiki," accented by the pineapple and tiki glassware and Caribbean undertones in the drinks.

On the food menu, Vrana made sure her concept hit home with duck wontons and hot crab dip on the bites menu

balanced with salmon, burger and chicken options on the plates side. One of her favorite menu options is Yucatan pulled pork nachos which combines bright colors with sweet, salty, crunchy and creamy flavors.

No matter what customers order, Vrana said there is no feeling like watching her food go out the door. After picking herself up time and time again, she's finally found the place where it all comes together she said. That alone is worth jumping and dancing excitedly for.

"It's the highest honor," she said. "It is really truly rewarding. This is the hardest thing I have ever done but I love every second of it and that's why I continue to do it. This is more than making money or seizing an opportunity. This is what I love to do."

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Genesis led the state in robotic-assisted surgeries for 2023

GRETCHEN TESKE

gteske@qctimes.com

The term "minimally invasive" has crept its way into the vernacular of medical terminology, but most people only know it by name.

At its core, minimally invasive surgery is done using a robotic device that assist surgeons in a variety of ways. At Genesis Health System in Davenport, surgeons adapted the technology early on and hit the ground running.

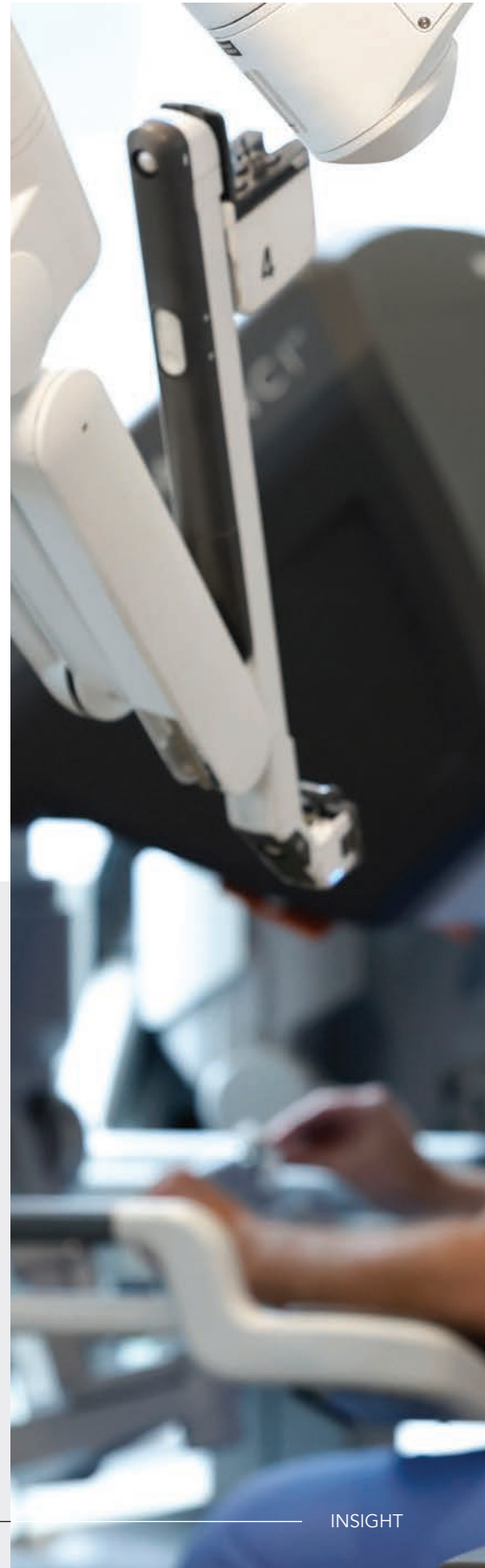
At the end of January, Genesis surgeons reached a milestone of completing their 7,000th robotic assisted surgery since 2009. The hospital has 21 surgeons trained in the robotic assist sector and

led the state in the number of robotic assisted surgeries completed in 2023.

Working as a general trauma surgeon, Dr. Allyson Winter has been full-time at Genesis since September. Prior to her employment, Winter was a medical student at Genesis where the opportunity to work with robotics peaked her interest.

"It is here at Genesis where I fell in love with surgery and when I started to apply to residency programs it was very important to me that I selected programs that would train me to be a competent general surgeon as well as give me the training I needed in robotic surgery," she said.

During medical school in Des Moines, robotic-assisted surgeries were talked about, but the physical opportunity to try was not available.





Dr. Robert Harson demonstrates how to use the da Vinci Xi robot at Genesis Medical Center on Friday, December 1, in Davenport.

Katelyn Metzger

"It wasn't really until I became a surgeon and did hands-on training with the platform that I realized all the other advantages to the robotic system."

—**Dr. Allyson Winter**, general trauma surgeon at Genesis

"It wasn't until I really lived through my surgery rotation here at Genesis that I was introduced to it," she said. "It's actually not a new concept, which is the wild thing. It's been around for over 20 years, but as with most technologies and innovation, it has evolved substantially over the last 20 years."

After graduation Winter enrolled in a five-year residence program in Columbus, Ohio. By the end of the program, she was certified for both open surgery and robotic-assisted surgery.

For surgeons who have completed medical school and residency but would like to become trained on the robotic assists can learn through a program offered by Genesis. Director of Surgical Services Sue Jennings said the hospital contracts with Intuitive Medical, the company that manufactures the robots, to enroll surgeons in training sessions.

The training involves observations to watch other programs and both on-site and off-site sessions before a proctor comes in to monitor and evaluate the

surgeon during a procedure. Staff assisting the surgeon during the surgery must also complete training within the robotics program, Jennings said.

Dr. Andrew Lightfoot has worked with Urological Associates since 2014, an independent group that has an affiliation with Genesis. When he graduated from medical school in 2007, robotics were not widely talked about, he said.

But it was offered at some places, and the more he observed and saw how much easier the procedure was for the surgeon, the more he was interested in becoming certified.

"(Robotics) was the driving force to get me into the world of urology," he said.

After medical school Lightfoot went on to complete a fellowship in robotic surgeries, much like Winter. When he first came to Davenport, Genesis had one robot to utilize and Lightfoot jumped at the chance to begin using it.

Winter said the established robotics program at Genesis was a key-factor in her desire to work for the Davenport-based hospital. Genesis currently has four machines,

Heidi Hoopes, of Intuitive, demonstrates how to use the Intuitive Ion, the newest robot by Intuitive at Genesis Medical Center on Friday, December 2, in Davenport. *Katelyn Metzger*





#1
Genesis led the state
in the number of robotic
assisted surgeries
completed in 2023.

Dr. Allyson Winter and **Dr. Andrew Lightfoot**,
both surgeons with Genesis Health System,
pose alongside one of the robotic surgery
devices at Genesis.

Todd Mizener

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Cancer survivor **Lois Nichols** chats with **Dr. Robert Harson** at Genesis Medical Center on Friday, December 1, in Davenport. *Katelyn Metzger*

each of which can be used interchangeably for every procedure offered.

"Being able to perform robotic surgery is one thing but having access to the robotic platform is another and I think that is key," she said.

Patients who opt to take the minimally invasive route are usually enticed by the idea of a small incision. Winter said patients who undergo this type of procedure also benefit from shorter recovery periods, fewer complications and less pain at the incision site. And, they are not the only ones who benefit.

"It wasn't really until I became a surgeon and did hands-on training with the platform that I realized all the other advantages to the robotic system," she said. "Ergonomically it's friendly to the surgeon but most importantly the robotic instruments provide the seven degrees of freedom (of movement) the instruments can mimic what the hands can do; and the high-definition camera system provides great visualization.

Lightfoot pointed out that although it is referred to as robotic surgery, the robot is only the device used to facilitate the surgery.

"When you're talking about a robot what it really is, is computer-assisted laparoscopy," Lightfoot said.

Trained surgeons are completing the surgery but using the robot as an assist mechanism. In traditional laparoscopic surgery, surgeons look at a 2D monitor that shows the inside of the body cavity.

By using the robotic system, surgeons get a 3D look at what is happening, have the ability to reach further into the body and make precise movements. The machine is over the patient while the surgeon is to the side, looking through a monitor and moving controls to operate the device.

"Visualization is second to none," Winter said. "I have better mobilization and articulation of my instruments for the (surgery) but that visualization is key."

Urology has kicked open the door to the robotic-assisted surgeries, Jennings said, adding Genesis exclusively performs prostate procedures using minimally invasive techniques. That has been the standard for years, with Lightfoot adding the last time he did an open surgery was 2016.

"This is the standard and in my mind you're not going to go back," Lightfoot



Genesis typically schedules about

35 **minimally-invasive procedures per week**

between general surgery, urology and gynecology.

said. "You're going to grow off what is present."

In the general surgery sector Winter traditionally performs minimally invasive gallbladder and hernia surgeries, for example, and in the acute care setting small bowel obstruction or perforated ulcer disease. Other colleagues do specialized cases such as bariatric or reflux operations on the stomach.

Genesis offers hundreds of minimally-invasive procedures, Jennings said, adding the hospital typically schedules about 35 per week between general surgery, urology and gynecology. Winter said the number is slowly rising because of the benefits of the surgeries and patients slowly becoming more comfortable with the robotic assist.



Heidi Hoopes, of Intuitive, demonstrates how to use the Intuitive Ion, the newest robot by Intuitive at Genesis Medical Center on Friday, December 2, in Davenport. *Katelyn Metzger*

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At the end of January,
Genesis surgeons
completed their
7,000th
robotic assisted surgery
since 2009.

Genesis has
21
surgeons
trained in the
robotic assist sector.

The general surgery service line alone has seen a 26% increase in robotic-assisted surgeries – the largest percentage of the three service lines offered at Genesis.

"When I'm talking to patients and their families in the preoperative setting, it's not often that I'm offering a laparoscopic or robotic or open surgery," Winter said. "We sort of talk about minimally invasive

surgery versus a traditional open approach and it's a shared decision using my best medical judgement to educate them on which might be best."

By now most people have heard of the procedures, Winter said. The questions revolved around the details of the procedure but few are put-off by the term "robotics."

"Almost everyone has a friend or family member who has had a robotic surgery by now," she said. "It makes it easier to discuss the pros and cons."

Lightfoot echoed that sentiment, saying he rarely brings the topic up.

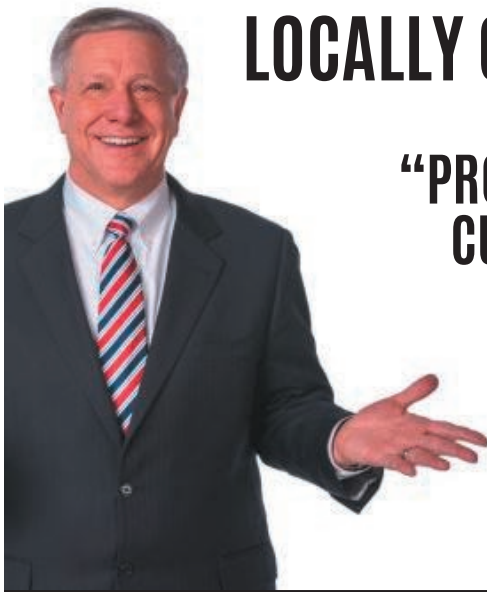
"It's not even a discussion. They are almost coming to us," he said. "They are pushing it because they have heard about it, they understand it and have had a neighbor or a friend who has had it done and they see how well they do and want to have it done the same way."

But not everyone is seeking them out. Some land on the decision by necessity and find out the life-changing benefits on their own.

Patricia Gilbreath picked up her first cigarette at age 15. And she picked up her last one at age 59, after being diagnosed with lung cancer.

After losing both parents to lung cancer and being a decades-long smoker, Gilbreath had been coming in yearly for a CT scan.

Those CT scans were normal, and they had always come back normal for Gilbreath — until fall 2023 when her

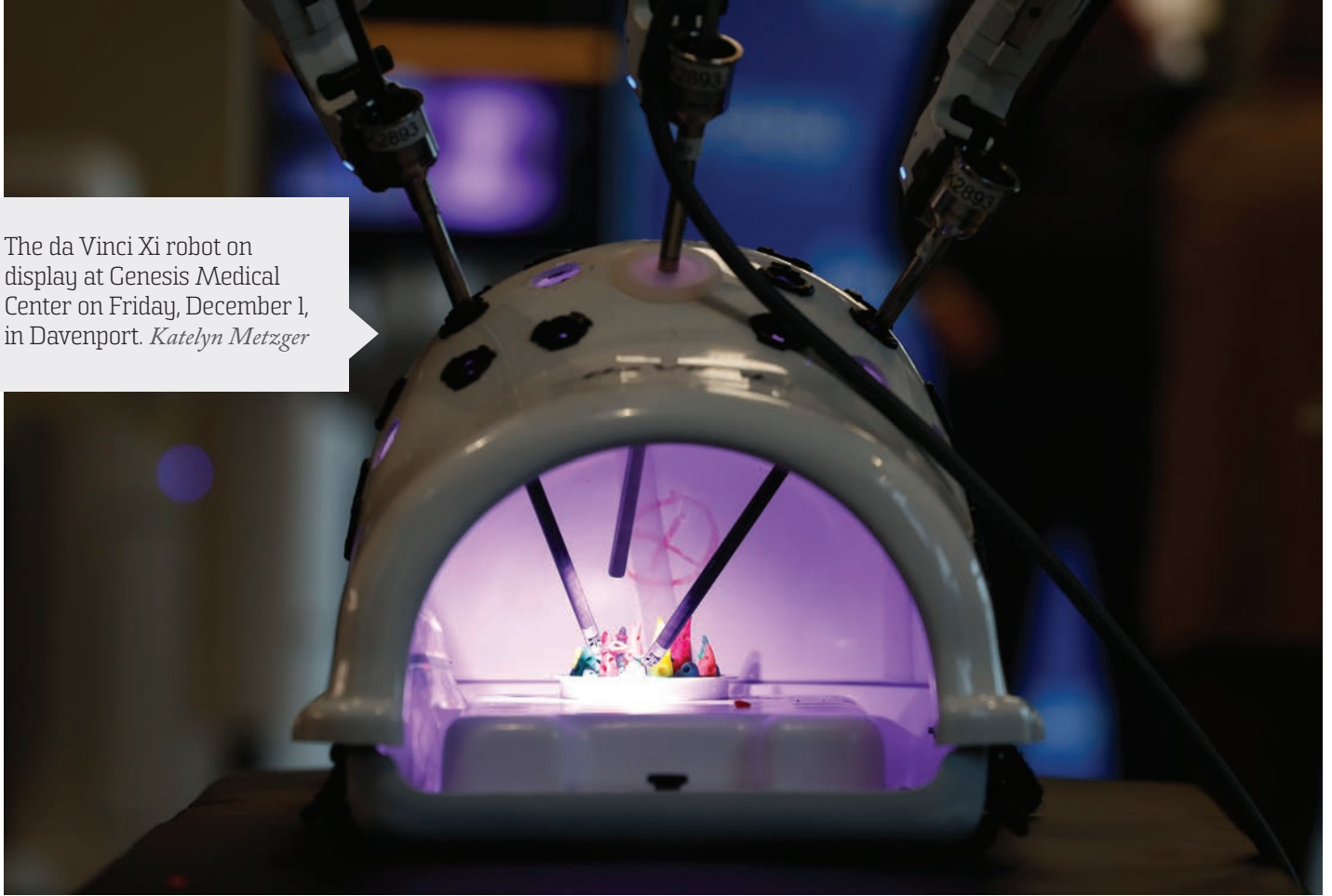


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The da Vinci Xi robot on display at Genesis Medical Center on Friday, December 1, in Davenport. *Katelyn Metzger*



biopsy came back cancerous. It was found at Stage 1.

That year her pulmonologist at Genesis used the minimally invasive robot to search deeper into her lungs than previously was possible.

Diagnosing lung cancer requires a biopsy of the lung nodules in the outer third of the lung, which is nearly impossible to reach with a traditional bronchoscope. The robot uses an ultra-thin needle to get into the tightest areas of the lungs and retrieve a biopsy.

The procedure took about 45 minutes and had a complication rate of 1-3%. A few days after her procedure, the results came back, and she learned she had cancer.

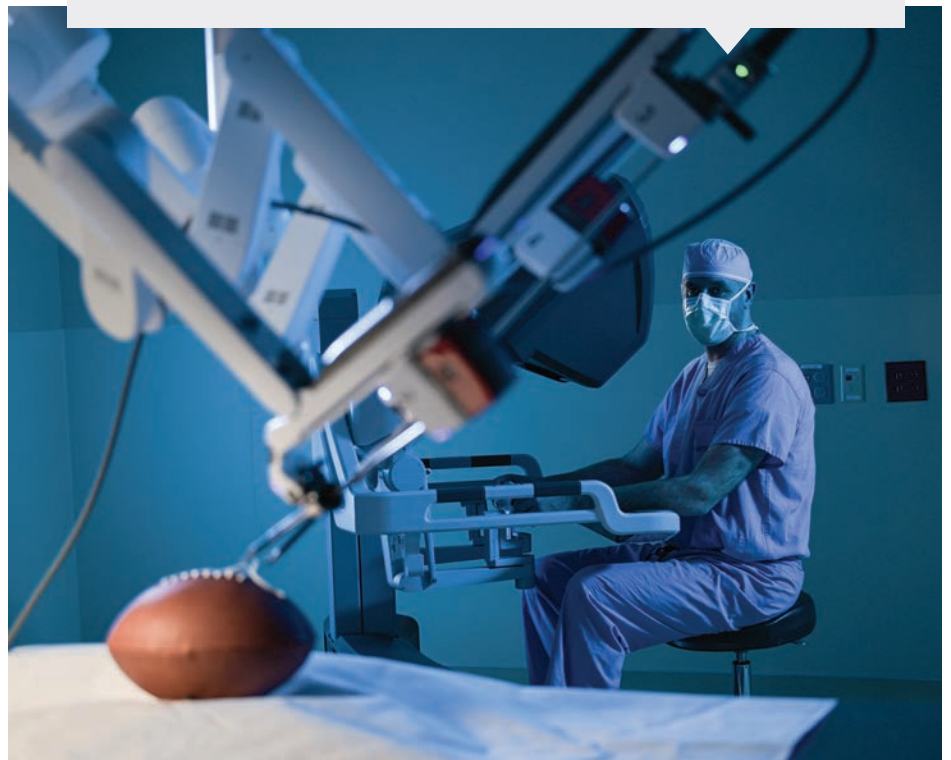
"It's devastating. Your life is put on hold, and you think you're done for," she said.

Lung cancer accounts for one in four cancer-related deaths. One in 16 U.S. citizens will experience a lung cancer diagnosis, with a five-year survival rate of 23%. But, if found at Stage 1, the survival rate increases significantly.

For Gilbreath, the procedure saved her life. As soon as she was diagnosed, she quit smoking, was treated and shortly after was cancer-free.

"This is a second chance," she said. "I feel like I have my life back again."

The da Vinci Surgical System at Genesis Medical Center had a starring role in the hospital's 2023 Super Bowl commercial. In the football-themed commercial, Genesis surgeon **Andrew J. Lightfoot, MD**, demonstrated how nimble the robotic system is by tying the laces of a football. *Todd Mizener*





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Kathryn Langford poses in the distilling room at the Mississippi River Distilling Company on Thursday, January 18, in LeClaire. Langford is the head distiller. *Katelyn Metzger*

Ace of spirits

Kathryn Langford bottles her passion at the Mississippi River Distilling Company

GRETCHEN TESKE
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Saying 'yes' comes easily for Kathryn Langford and it's made all the difference in discovering new passions.

The Arizona native landed in the Quad-Cities in 2008. It was a spur-of-the-moment decision, but one that started her on a path to success and becoming the lead distiller at the Mississippi River Distilling Company in LeClaire.

Before she ended up in the alcohol industry, she started her journey in a completely different practice: the medical field.

"My little sister, who's my best friend, lived here while her husband was going to Palmer (College of Chiropractic)," she

said. "She called me one day and said, 'I'm really bored, do you want to move to Iowa?' And I said, 'Iowa, huh? OK.'"

Langford made the move the first week of November and immediately noticed the difference in the weather. Where she was used to the sun and warm air, it had been replaced with wind and nearly 15 inches of snow.

"I thought, 'I have made a huge mistake,'" she said with a laugh. "But I'm still here so it must not have been that bad."

Once in Iowa, Langford enrolled in the Chiropractic Technology (CT) program at Palmer but quickly learned it was not for her. Sitting alone at a desk did not interest her nearly as much as working with people.

While she was contemplating her next move, she took breaks to visit Redband

Coffee Company in downtown Davenport. Langford visited so often, the owner began to notice and offered her a job working the coffee shop's booth at the farmer's market.

She said yes, and served coffee every Saturday at Freight House Farmer's Market in Davenport until she was done with her program. Following its conclusion, she said yes to staying on full-time and worked at Redband for a few more years.

During her tenure, the Redband crew teamed up with local brewery Great River Brewing in Davenport to brew a coffee stout. When the Great River team stopped by for coffee, they would strike up conversations with Langford.

When she was asked to bartend a few nights a week, she said yes and that quickly turned into learning more about



the business. Before long Langford found herself moving from behind the bar to the back of the house where she learned to brew beer.

"They started me with filling kegs, cleaning kegs and slowly I got into canning and cleaning the fermenters," she said.

About six months into her new job, she started learning the brewing process. It was hard at first, but she quickly got the hang of it. Having studied chemistry in college, Langford was always interested in science and was long looking for a job that would keep her active.

That desire is what led her into both of her jobs, she said. It had nothing to do with the product, at first.

"I didn't drink beer or coffee until I moved here," she said with a laugh. "My parents asked what happened and I said I went off the deep end. Iowa did it to me."

Through her career at Great River, she learned about a new distillery opening in LeClaire. Mississippi River Distilling Company opened at 303 N. Cody Road in late 2010 and began sending their used barrels down to the brewery, where Langford used them to brew barrel-aged beers.

With her new connection made, she said yes once again when the distillery owners offered her a job. She started small by packaging bottles for gift boxes until she was offered the opportunity to learn how to distill spirits.

With her knowledge of craft beer in her back pocket, Langford jumped in and learned yet another trade. This one, she said, was not nearly as hard as the last.

"It's way easier than making beer," she said. "It's a lot cleaner because all of the

(Above) Mississippi River Distilling Company products sit behind the bar in the showroom. The distillery produces 22 different products, along with seasonal products. *Katelyn Metzger* (Below) Barrels stamped with the Mississippi River Distilling Company logo sit on display. *Katelyn Metzger*



yeast and grain stay together instead of having to clean things so often."

Of the 22 products the distillery offers, Langford is the woman making all of them. Distribution is mainly in the Quad-Cities, she said, but the distillery's signature line of Cody Road products can be purchased in Illinois, Iowa, Indiana, Wisconsin, Minnesota and Wyoming.

Products range from gin and vodka to a ready-to-pour old fashioned and Iowish, the distillery's take on an Irish cream whiskey.

Before the products end up in the bottle, Langford has to coordinate the ingredients getting into the distillery. Corn, wheat, rye and barley are grown at local

farms and delivered. Depending on the spirit she is making, Langford adds 2,600 pounds of grain to a massive galvanized tank called a mash tank, where the grain is cooked at a high heat to convert the starch into sugar. Next, a filter system pours in 800-1,100 gallons of water.

"I spend my morning heating it up and my afternoon trying to get it to cool down," she said.

Once it cools, she hydrates yeast with warm water, similar to how a baker would prepare bread yeast. After 30 minutes, the mash is ready to be poured into a fermenter where the yeast, which will turn the sugar into alcohol, joins it.



Kathryn Langford talks about the fermenting portion of the distilling process at Mississippi River Distilling Company. Langford, an Arizona native, moved to the Quad Cities in 2008.
Katelyn Metzger

Agitators inside the fermenter keep the grain moving for seven to nine days, she said. Each fermenter holds 1,500 gallons of mash at a time which eventually gets split into four distillations — enough to fill 1,000 bottles.

When the fermenting period ends, the alcohol then moves into the still where it

goes through the distilling process four times. This helps purify and enhance the flavor of the spirit.

"I usually do two to three mashes a week and two or three distillations a day," she said. "It takes about three to four hours per distillation."

The remaining alcohol then moves into

canisters and then a blending tank where it is proofed down. The proof represents the amount of alcohol in the spirit. Langford said right out of the still, the liquid can be as high as 180 proof and needs to be dropped down to anywhere from 10-110, depending on the spirit. A drink at 180 proof would be 90% alcohol by volume—strong for the average consumer.

With the blending process done, the spirit is transferred to storage tanks and barrels where it is shipped to the distillery's downtown Davenport location where everything is bottled. On average, 3,600 bottles a week are filled all thanks to Langford.

"It keeps me busy, which I like. I don't sit still very well," she said.

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Tim Wren, Director of Museum Services for Edwards Creative is pictured in their lobby on Monday, January 29, 2024, in Milan.

Roy Dabner

'We're a storytelling business'

Edwards Creative brings ideas, concepts to life in museums across the Midwest

GRETCHEN TESKE

gteske@qctimes.com

Millions of people visit museums every year enjoying exhibits across a multitude of topics. For museums in the Midwest, the folks at Edwards Creative in Milan are responsible for many of the displays.

The company was launched in 2005 by Cathy and Steve Edwards, the latter of which came from a graphic design background.

"He worked at two other places prior to starting this, in companies very similar, but we just knew there was a better way," said Cathy Edwards, now the CEO of the company. "He decided to open up the company and start building from there."

When the doors first opened in Milan, Edwards Creative had two employees: Cathy and Steve Edwards. Fast forward 19 years and the company is well on its way to 40 employees and doing everything from graphic design and project management to construction and fabrication.

It all happens under one roof at 435 1st Street East in Milan. Edwards Creative has three main divisions: corporate environment settings, trade-show booths and museum services.

When the company first opened it was mostly focused on the first two services. It was not until five years ago that the Edwardses



A large display rises to the ceiling of Edwards Creative in Milan on Monday, January 29, 2024. Roy Dabner



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Tim Wren, Director of Museum Services for Edwards Creative shows one of their many displays on Monday, January 29, 2024, in Milan. *Roy Dabner*

decided to hone in on the museum services and bring it on as a mainline offering.

"That was something we decided to engage in several years ago because it's exciting work that team members want to be engaged in," Edwards said. "It's creative, it's inspirational, it's educational and it stretches our creative muscle a little bit. It's a different way to design and look at spaces."

From start to finish, the team helps clients take their idea and turn it into a tangible design. Edwards Creative then builds, paints and perfects it all in house. They even have a fleet of vehicles to deliver the products across the Midwest.

In the Quad-Cities, Edwards Creative has done a number of projects including the signage for the John Deere Classic, a leg of the PGA Tour held annually in Silvis. Community involvement is a big foundation of the company, Edwards said.

"We have been incredibly engaged in the community and supported a number of organizations, served on many different committees," she said. "Steve and I always felt it was our corporate responsibility to pay it forward in the community so we get involved, and through that we have met so many terrific people throughout the years and they become clients of ours."

Referrals are another big part of the business. Director of Museum Services Tim Wren said the company has a partnership with the Iowa Museum Association, which has pushed Edwards Creative into being one of the most desired companies when it comes to designing exhibits.

Wren said once a museum comes to them with an idea, there is a three-step process to getting to the finish line: conceptual design and planning; final design; and production and installation. The conceptual part consists of working with a client through a series of worksheets, meetings, site visits and going through the history of the exhibit to discover the storylines and themes the museum wants to showcase. This process alone can take five or six months, he said.



A peek inside one of the newly finished offices at Edwards Creative in Milan. *Roy Dabner*

Edwards said this step is crucial and is where the collaboration between the team at Edwards Creative and the museum shines.

"We're a storytelling business," she said. "Whether it's a company with their brand or it's at a museum. Even if it's at a tradeshow and you have five seconds to get somebody's attention, there has to be something that evokes some emotion or interest in your story."

Wren agreed, saying there are a variety of factors that go into the concept. At the start, the focus is on which medium— wall graphics, a custom build or a digital display, to name a few — to tell the story with.

"Everything gets paired down until you have your idea and then you have to figure out how to bring it to life," he said.

Once the design is ready, the Edwards Creative team gets together to discuss the fine details: measurements, lighting, access to spaces, ADA compliance, timeline — and the list goes on, Edwards said.

Currently in the Edwards Creative studio is a project for the Ames Historical Museum that will be installed on the second floor of its building in downtown Ames.

The city is home to Iowa State University, which opened as the Iowa Agricultural College and Model Farm in 1869 according to the university's website. To transport students from campus back to Ames, the Ames Street Railway Company, also known as the College Railway, developed a local line.

The Motor Line, as it was named, was more commonly known as the Dinkey, according to the Ames History Museum.

That train made its first pass between downtown Ames and the campus on July 4, 1891.

In order to tell the story of the train and its cultural significance, the Edwards Creative team decided to build an exact replica for the museum. Following historic measurements and ensuring the parts and pieces would fit the space was one thing.

Making sure it could be delivered successfully was another.

The exhibit will be on the second floor of the building, meaning the construction team at Edwards Creative had to pay particular attention that all 10 pieces of the train would fit in the elevator in order to be transported to their new home.

Wren credited his team for thinking of every step along the way, including measurements and accessibility. That creative muscle has to be flexed when it comes to choosing materials as well.

Sustainability has become a major conversation in the museum world, with special attention to materials the mediums exhibits are made of. Additionally, special attention has to be given to the items on display.

For example, Wren said, artifact cases cannot be painted because the off-gassing from the paint could have a harmful effect on the artifacts inside. Edwards echoed that, saying certain pieces need to be out of direct sunlight in order to protect them, and that is taken into account during the design phase.

"There's also conversations now in the museum world about what stories to tell and what artifacts to show," Edwards said. "There's cultural sensitivities we have to consider along with the curator at the museum. As times change and conversations change, we have to consider what's appropriate."



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A replica of a trolley car takes form at Edwards Creative on Monday, January 29, 2024.

Roy Dabner

Wren said while creative exhibits the team has to become "mini-experts" on the subject matter in order to work with the museum curator to create the best possible outcome. Because every project is different, every day is different. That is a major selling point for new hires, Edwards said.

"We have a lot of creatives who want to work here because they'll never do the same thing twice," she said. "You have to have a great sense of humor and be fun, engaging. You have to want the challenge of learning all about an artifact and what is the best way to (display) it for storytelling."

The challenge and variety in the work is what keeps Wren coming in the doors everyday, he said. From a sports museum to a nature conservatory, the work is the same but the details and challenges always differ.

Edwards said another key factor in what makes her job fun is the people she meets along the way. Those who have a deep understanding and love for their work are open to sharing and makes the collaboration piece easier.

"Museum curators are people who have dedicated their lives to telling the story of their museum," she said. "They are

passionate and they are invested passionate clients and that also creates an amazing experience for us."

At any given time the team is taking on a few hundred projects at once. But, Wren said, they are not all massive undertakings like museum exhibits.

About 75% of the projects have a life-cycle of two to four months, Edwards said. Those are smaller projects such as logos, branding and displays. The other 25% have a life-cycle of two years, which are the larger projects like exhibits.

"Our workload is full, so that means whoever comes to Edwards embraces the challenge of balancing a number of different project with vastly different content," she said. "You have to want to work here and have a variety of projects that may have very little to do with each other."

Every person on the team, from the creatives to the industrial designers to the fabricators all work together to complete the final project.



The printing area in Edwards Creative in Milan. *Roy Dabner*

"When a creative wants to see how it's being built they can walk in the back and see what was in their mind's eye a month ago," she said. "That's what's so cool about it. It was in their mind a month ago and now it's completely built and they get to see it through the entire process."

All of that translates into immense pride in work, Wren said. Going to ribbon cuttings or site visits after an installation is a great feeling, but watching people enjoy it heightens the feeling.

"Knowing you're going to have an impact on people through the stuff that you're creating is pretty wild," he said. "I've had my kids go with me a few times to ribbon cuttings and there's self-pride there being able to say 'Dad did that.'"

Shortly after more focus and resources were poured into the museum side of the company, the COVID-19 pandemic hit. But it didn't slow down the Edwards Creative team one bit.

"We were in the process of working on a number of museum projects so there was a great deal of conceptual work going on during COVID," Edwards said. "Even though we couldn't have all our employees in and working on-site, they were able to do a lot of creative and conceptual design for these projects at home."

As soon as it was safe to return, the work came pouring in.

"When we came back from COVID, the doors blew off and we went 100 miles per hour since we got back in our seats from that," Wren said.

Edwards said she was not surprised by the amount of work but welcomed it because it sparked a new appreciation for culture and the arts.

"COVID reminded communities across the country how much they appreciate and benefit from the cultural amenities in their town," she said.

While cooped up at home, people remembered the fun and enrichment museums provide. This also afforded museum curators the time to re-think their exhibits and dream up what could be accomplished next.

"When he said the doors blew off it's because these museums were getting infused with donations and grants and the directors had been sitting and working through conceptual ideas for their galleries, so it was a perfect scenario for the museum industry to thrive post-COVID," she said.

Edwards Creative thrived, too, opening an office in Dyersville in July, 2023. With a plethora of accomplishments under its belt, Edwards Creative is also Woman-Owned Business certified by the Women's Business Enterprise National Council, which has opened doors to projects the company otherwise would not reach, Edwards said.

But it's inside the doors where the magic happens and that is why those at Edwards Creative say not just the work but the people make every day better than the last.

"This is the best boss I have ever worked for," Wren said. "There's nobody I would rather work for than Cathy."

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