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Siouxland Life

You know you gained weight during the past two years. You know you want to do something about it. You know it’s much easier to sit on the couch and say, “Someday.” Well, that someday is here. We’ve got plenty of ways to jumpstart your fitness routine and put you on the road to a longer, more fulfilling life. No need to change your shoes. Just dig into this month’s stories and you’ll get all the inspiration you need.

4 MADE TO FIT
A custom home meets all the needs a family has. It also offers beautiful views and attractive rooms.

10 TENNIS ANYONE?
The First Serve Tennis Center was named one of the best in the region. Regulars say it’s a great place to meet their fitness goals.

28 MAJOR IN FITNESS
Briar Cliff University has several ways students can help others improve their health and wellness.
There isn’t another house in Sioux City’s Whispering Creek neighborhood that looks quite like Ryan and Megan Lawrey’s farmhouse-style home on Wildbloom Court.

The 2,700-square-foot black and white single-story with a red front door was inspired by Megan Lawrey’s grandparents’ old farmhouse near Allen, Nebraska. Lawrey said her family still owns the farm the house sits on.

“That was just something that just always stuck out to us,” she said as she stood at a spacious white quartz island in her bright and airy kitchen, which is open to the living and dining rooms.

DeRocher Brothers Construction of Akron, Iowa, broke ground on the new five-bedroom custom build in July 2020. Less than a year later, the Lawreys moved in with son Brogyn, 13, and daughters Pehdyn, 17, and Falyn, 15.

A big open kitchen, which has a gray subway tile backsplash and a mix of black and white cabinetry, was a must for Megan Lawrey, who loves to cook and bake. She said she had the GE Café Series appliances, which feature gold accents, picked out before any of the other work was done inside the home. A classic farmhouse sink with exposed apron front and wine refrigerator are other highlights of the space.

“The kitchen is really our gathering place,” said Lawrey, who noted that the island was designed especially for Pehdyn, who uses a wheelchair. “The end is built specifically for her. She’s able to get in there on her own. We did the microwave in the island so that Pehdyn could access it.”
Ryan and Megan Lawrey’s home in Sioux City’s Whispering Creek neighborhood is shown. The couple had their home custom built to accommodate their 17-year-old daughter Pehdyn, who uses a wheelchair. Additionally, the couple has son Brogen, 13, daughter Falyn, 15, and three Labrador retrievers.

A big open kitchen was a must for Megan Lawrey, who loves to cook and bake.
nominate a nurse starting February 15, 2022!

Nursing professionals have faced more challenges in 2020 than ever before due to Covid-19. Celebrate a nurse by nominating one who has made an impact in the lives of others. Ten honorees will be featured in a special section in the Sioux City Journal in honor of National Nurses Week.

No purchase necessary, see website for details go.siouxcityjournal.com/Nurses2022
The cozy living room has a rustic wood mantle and an electric fireplace. It’s the place where Lawrey said the entire family “hangs out.” Light pours into the space, which is painted a shade of light-gray, through floor to ceiling windows. A wooden console table with four red bar stools behind the L-shaped couch provides additional seating.

“It is actually amazing in the summertime,” Lawrey said of the natural light. “We put tint on (the windows) because it gets so warm.”

Additional shelving around the fireplace provides a place to display framed inspirational quotes, family photos and mementos. Where a Christmas tree currently sits, Lawrey displays an old church pew bench. Vintage pieces are scattered throughout the home. A chest from Lawrey’s family’s Nebraska farm sits in the foyer, while old windows serve as decorations in the dining room. An antique phone hangs on a wall denoting separation between the dining room and kitchen.

“I bought my first house before I turned 25 and just very slowly started accumulating things,” Lawrey said.

On the west side of the home, you’ll find three of the bedrooms, one of which is being used as a craft room. Lawrey does vinyl and sublimation T-shirt printing, as well as sign making. Her husband has a shop in the garage, where he does woodworking.
Although the vast majority of the home’s interior palette is neutral, the Lawreys let the kids choose the color of one of the walls in their bedrooms.

“We kept the gray throughout, but each of the kids got to pick one wall, one color, even if I didn’t agree with it. We still let them individualize their own rooms,” Lawrey said.

The bright yellow that Falyn selected for her accent wall matches the bird-themed comforter set on her bed. Brogyn, who loves play Xbox, picked blue for his gaming-inspired bedroom. Both of the siblings’ bedrooms are connected by a Jack and Jill bathroom with double vanities, a shower, a separate commode area and ample storage. The counters, fixtures and cabinetry in the home’s bathrooms match that of the kitchen.

“I wanted to keep everything separate so that two teenagers could still be in here getting ready at the same time. If someone needed to shower, brush their teeth, use the bathroom, they could do that,” Lawrey said.

On the home’s east side, you’ll find the homeowners suite, Pehdyn’s room, a safe room, laundry area and dog watering/eating station for the family’s three Labrador retrievers, Maverick, Sergeant and Major. The home’s rustic-looking waterproof and scratch-resistant flooring makes cleaning up after the pooches much less of a hassle.

Lawrey said the couple wanted to keep Pehdyn, who has an undiagnosed neuromuscular condition, near them during the night due to her mobility limitations. They gave her her own suite with a full wheelchair accessible bathroom.

“Her biggest thing is that she can get everywhere in here with her wheelchair and she has that 5-foot turnaround everywhere,” Lawrey said. “Even in her closet, she’s able to access her clothes being hung lower. She’s got room for her own chair. She does have a hospital bed, but it doesn’t look like a hospital bed.”

Pehdyn, an East High School junior, opted for a light-blue accent wall in her room with white feather sconces.

“She loves dreamcatchers. She recently has become obsessed with Tom Holland in ‘Spider-Man,’” Lawrey said, pointing out the pillow on the bed printed with pictures of the actor. “She’s not a girly girl by any means. There’s nothing bright pink or bright colors, like her sister.”

The homeowners’ suite has a walk-in closet and large bathroom with walk-in shower. The bedroom is painted light-gray and has a tray ceiling.

Lawrey said she initially wasn’t a fan of the ceiling when it was being constructed. Now, she said she loves it. “It just makes it feel bigger,” she said.
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IF YOU BUILD IT, THEY WILL COME. And if you were build it well, your new tennis center may be selected Facility of the Year.

That is what happened to First Serve Tennis Center, which was chosen the United States Professional Tennis Association’s Missouri Valley Facility of the Year in September 2021, beating out similar tennis centers in Iowa, Nebraska, Missouri, Kansas and Oklahoma.

Which is pretty amazing since the 1500 Riverview Drive facility had only been open since January 2020.

“What impressed the USPTA was the physical design of the building, which included state-of-the-art lighting, a cushioned surface and viewing area.” Wes Michaelson, a board member with the Siouxland Tennis Association, explained.

But what really sold the decision-makers was First Serve Tennis Center’s staff, like its tennis director Danny Graves.

“First Serve won in large part due to the exceptional effort of Graves, (who makes) learning and playing tennis fun for a growing number of Siouxland kids and adults,” the USPTA said in a statement.

“This is exactly what we wanted First Serve to become,” Michaelson said. “We wanted tennis to be fun and accessible to everybody who wanted to play the sport, year-round.”

Indeed, the idea for an all-season, indoor tennis court was born at a surprise birthday party for local tennis player Roger Bohnenkamp more than five years ago.
“During the party, we got to commiserating on just how inadequate indoor tennis was in Siouxland,” Michaelson recalled. “Someone’s got to do something about it. Well, I guess it turned out to be members of the Siouxland Tennis Association.”

According to First Serve general manager Scott Bieber, Siouxland Tennis board members toured tennis facilities across the Midwest, observing their tennis programs.

“We got to see what worked and, more important, what didn’t work in other communities,” he said.

Construction on the 25,300-square-foot facility — with a $1.5 million price tag — began in May 2019.

First Serve’s climate-controlled facility has three indoor courts, each with dimensions suitable for Division I college tennis matches.

Michaelson said sports facilities have the ability to enhance the quality of life for people of all ages.

“It helps to make Siouxland a more complete, attractive community,” he said.

First Serve tennis director Danny Graves shared Michaelson’s enthusiasm.

“Not only do we provide junior and adult clinics, leagues, tournaments and private/semi-private tennis lessons, we also provide need-based scholarships and fee structures,” Graves said.

“Tennis has a reputation for being an expensive sport,” he acknowledged. “One of our aims is to make the sport available to everybody.”

And the younger a person gets into the sport, the better.

“The youngest person that I’ve taught tennis to was a 3-year-old,” Graves said. “I’ve even had students who were over the age of 80.”

“Tennis is a game that keeps you young,” Michaelson added. “There are many health benefits.”

Among those: increasing a person’s aerobic capacities, lowering blood pressure, improving metabolic functions, increasing bone density and lowering body fat.

Even better is the fact that tennis is a lot of fun.

“Tennis is a sport you can play with friends and family,” Graves said. “It doesn’t matter if you’re a beginner or if you’ve been playing tennis for a long time. We promise you will have a good time.”

**IF YOU GO**

**WHAT:** First Serve Tennis Center

**WHERE:** 1500 Riverview Drive, South Sioux City

**PHONE:** 402-412-7676

**ONLINE:** siouxlandtennis.org

---

Danny Graves, tennis director at First Serve Tennis Center, prepares to string a racquet.

Easton Lubarski plays in a doubles tennis league at First Serve Tennis Center in South Sioux City.

First Serve Tennis Center is an award-winning facility in South Sioux City.
Drs. Wagner, Kuntz and Grabouski are proud to announce the addition of Dr. Molly Kopf to their orthodontic practice. Dr. Molly and her husband Dr. Blake Kopf grew up in rural Nebraska and have fallen in love with Siouxland.

Dr. Kopf decided on her future career at the age of 12. “I had some goofy-looking teeth and was made fun of for my smile,” she said. Braces straightened her teeth and gave her a beautiful smile with greater self-confidence. She knew then that she wanted to give the same results to others that have difficulty smiling because of their crooked teeth.

Molly went to Wayne State College, where she met her husband Blake. After graduating, Dr. Kopf went to dental school with her husband at UNMC, then proceeded to the University of Minnesota for two years of orthodontic training. She opened a solo orthodontic practice in Norfolk in 2019 before joining the Wagner, Kuntz, and Grabouski practice in 2020.

At the time Molly decided to join the group practice, she had no idea that COVID-19 would lead to a 2-month shutdown of all dental related services. “It was fortunate to have new partners to bounce around ideas and lend moral support. I feel that the synergy of the partnership enhances the practice as well as shapes each orthodontist into a better clinician,” she said.

She emphasizes that the staff has been incredible with creating and implementing innovative ideas to keep our patients and themselves safe during the pandemic. The precautions at their offices exceed all COVID-19 guidelines set by the Tri-State Dental Boards, American Dental Association, American Association of Orthodontists, OSHA, and the CDC.

Dr. Kopf is trained in all the latest techniques in orthodontics including Invisalign®, clear braces, jaw surgery, temporary anchorage devices (TADs), and intraoral lasers. In her free time, she enjoys travelling, camping, hiking, and spending time on the lake with her family.

“I look forward to meeting new families and working with the dentists of Siouxland,” she said. Patients can contact the following offices to schedule a complementary new patient exam.

Hamilton Blvd: (712) 258-0501
Norfolk: (402) 371-7198
Yankton: (605) 665-5520
Vermillion: (605) 624-5407

Drs. Wagner, Kuntz and Grabouski would like to congratulate Dr. Molly Kopf on becoming partner!

Dr. Molly Kopf

Dr. Molly grew up in Lexington, Nebraska. She attended undergrad at Wayne State College and received her dental degree from the University of Nebraska. Dr. Molly pursued her orthodontic specialty degree at the University of Minnesota and has been practicing in Norfolk for the past year. Dr. Molly and her husband Blake live in Yankton South Dakota, where they enjoy lake sports, hiking, camping, traveling and her family’s competitive fantasy football league!

We are so happy to have her!!

You can call to schedule an appointment with Dr. Molly at the following locations:
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FOR PEGGY HIGMAN, a Siouxland personal trainer, wellness expert and yoga instructor, bodybuilding is a way for her to feel more fulfilled in life. It’s a way to grow stronger in her convictions. Bodybuilding helps her build trust in herself.

All of that trust and fulfillment might never have developed if not for a serious accident. “About six years ago, I broke my leg in a ski accident and I recognized how weak I was and how vulnerable I was and that’s why I started bodybuilding,” Higman said.

Between making the commitment and her first competition, which happened in Fargo in November 2017, Higman said it took her about a year to get her body to where it needed to be. “You can make a lot of changes in 12-16 weeks but it takes years to refine,” the 50-year-old said.

According to Higman, all of the day-to-day refinement can be a major difficulty but not nerve-wracking. The anxiousness can come once it’s time to take to the stage.

“You’re definitely exposing yourself for people to critique you in the physical form, so any insecurities you do have will come to the surface.”

PEGGY HIGMAN

Bodybuilder and personal trainer Peggy Higman pushes a weighted sled at Thrive Fitness in North Sioux City, South Dakota. Higman said that competitions can require years of refinement.
And because there is such a back-and-forth and up-and-down nature to the sport, Frankl said it’s crucial for there to be trust between the trainer and the person he or she is working with. “It’s a team relationship between me and her. She’s got to do her part but she’s relying on me to guide her the right way,” he said.

Erin Bailey, who works with Higman at Thrive Fitness in North Sioux City, S.D. but met her at Big Iron Gym, said she, too, is impressed with how competitive Higman can be with meeting goals she sets for herself but not at the expense of those around her.

“When she made a comment to me about my personal goals, that stood out to me because it showed she’s not just worried about herself. She was proud of the progress I’ve made,” Bailey said.

The other thing she acknowledged is that Higman does all of that while raising three children with her husband and former Nebraska Cornhuskers linebacker Jerad. Higman said her daughters have so enjoyed watching her compete that they now work out as well.

“My kids really respect watching me stick with something. It’s a good lesson for children that you have to put in hard work to achieve results. My 17-year-old daughter wants to get involved.

Both of my girls lift at Big Iron Gym in a powerlifting program,” Higman said. “For women, it really helps them to build confidence and rely on themselves and know they can overcome things.”

In 2022, Higman said she’ll likely be competing in a bodybuilding event though not until later in the year, which means she’ll have to have an extended prep time which can be even more demanding.

“It’ll probably be my hardest and my longest,” Higman said. “They all get harder…You would think that as you get better, it would get faster. But it takes longer.”

Bodybuilder and personal trainer Peggy Higman holds a 14-pound medicine ball at Thrive Fitness in North Sioux City, South Dakota.

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HOW’S THIS FOR A PHILOSOPHICAL argument: Crock-Pots are often slow cookers but not all slow cookers are Crock-Pots.

“A Crock-Pot, which is a brand name, has become synonymous for a certain type of slow cooker,” Iowa State University Extension and Outreach food, health and human scientist specialist Renee Sweers explained. “In that respect, Crock-Pot is like the ‘Kleenex’ of kitchen appliances.”

A slow cooker, which is normally a metal pot that sits on top of a heated surface, can be made by Crock-Pot, Cuisinart, KitchenAid or any number of manufacturers.

With that controversy out of the way, Sweers said there is something everybody can agree about slow cookers. “They are great for in letting you get the most out of your ingredients,” she said. “They also offer busy families a healthy, low-fat way of cooking that requires a minimum of effort.”

Here’s the kicker: “At the end of a long day at work, a person can come to a nice-smelling house with a completely cooked dinner that is ready to eat,” Sweers said. “It’s the perfect solution for one-pot meals.”

Yeah, we know you have memories of your mom’s early attempts which consisted of dried-out meals from pots that were a hassle to clean.

According to Sweers, slow cooker technology has come a long way from
the 1970s and 1980s.

While the most basic appliances have two settings (high or low), other, more advanced models come with fancy digital timers or even timers you can control from your phone.

Whether your slow cooker is basic or state-of-art, cooking in one can really cut down on prep time.

“Especially during the winter months, soups and stews are wonderful in a slow cooker,” Sweers said.

Even if you’re short on time in the morning, you can always prep all of the ingredients the night before.

“Just store everything in the fridge and bring it out the next day,” Sweers said.

Certain cuts of meat work better than others.

Fattier meats like chuck roasts, short ribs and pork shoulders become fork-tender in the moist, low heat of a slow cooker. However, leaner cuts like pork tenderloin tend to dry out. Similarly, dark meat chicken thighs and drumsticks will be juicier than white meat breasts.

While many people are fine with simply plopping in ingredients, Sweers recommended browning as a flavor enhancer for slow cooker fare.

“Take a couple of minutes to brown your meat and saute your veggies before they go into the slow cooker,” she explained. “You’ll get a better, deeper flavor.”

One thing you shouldn’t do is to add frozen ingredients into your slow cooker. “Loading a slow cooker with icy ingredients will keep food in the danger zone where bacteria can flourish,” Sweers said. “Make sure that everything is fully thawed before the cooker in on.”

Think more is better than less? This is not the case when it comes to slow cooking.

“Only fill your slow cooker so it is two-thirds full,” Sweers said. “You can still cook big roasts and whole chickens. Just make sure you’re using a big enough cooker.”

Above all else: keep the lid closed!

“I know it is a temptation to sneak a peek,” Sweers said. “But each time you raise the lid, you’re losing between 15-to-20 minutes of cooking.”

Which is a terrible waste for cooks wanting to create satisfying, slow-cooked meals with a minimum of fuss.

“There is something wonderful about walking into your home after a long day at work and smelling the aroma of a hot, ready-to-eat dinner,” Sweers said. “All you have to do is add the ingredients. Let the slow cooker do the rest of the work.”
SLOW COOKER MEXICAN CHICKEN SOUP
Renee Sweers, Iowa State University Extension and Outreach food, health and human services specialist, said homemade soups and stews are perfect for slow cooker.
A Slow Cooker Mexican Chicken Soup is a healthy, economical way to feed a family. Consisting of eight servings at an average cost of 63 cents per serving, this recipe can be a go-to weeknight meal for busy home cooks.

INGREDIENTS
Two cans (14.5 ounces) diced tomatoes
Three-quarters cup, dried black beans, rinsed
One bag (16 ounces), frozen corn, thawed
Three cups, water
One teaspoon, chili powder
One-quarter teaspoon, pepper
One pound, skinless and boneless chicken breast, thawed
Optional: baked tortilla chips, chili flakes, chopped cilantro, jalapenos, lime, sliced or chopped avocado, salsa, light sour cream or shredded cheese

INSTRUCTIONS
Add all of the ingredients to the slow cooker. Cook for four to six hours on high heat. Or eight to ten hours on low heat. Remove chicken right before serving. Shred using two forks. Stir in the shredded chicken into the soup. Serve with your choice of optional ingredients.

PRO TIP
Be sure to use Mexican diced tomatoes for an extra South-of-the-Border kick.
Source: Iowa State University Extension and Outreach

SIouxland Life

The Home Builder’s Association of Greater Siouxland is celebrating the 65th Annual Siouxland Home Show. We have been presenting this show for over SIXTY years. The Home Show will be held at the Siouxland EXPO Center, 550 Expo Center Drive, March 3-6, 2022. Our show hours on Thursday and Friday will be Noon to 8pm, Saturday 11am to 8pm, and Sunday 11am to 4pm.

The Home Builder’s Board of Directors and Home Show Committee would also like to give a big thank you to the sponsors for this year’s show. We will once again be giving away door prizes donated by HBA members and Home Show exhibitors. Our 2022 theme is SWEET SPACE SWEEPSTAKES and we will be giving away gift cards, each valued at $565! Stop down and see the beautiful Siouxland EXPO Center and visit the exhibitors, some returning and many new, and don’t forget to register for the door prizes.

We are also excited to announce the addition of a completed Tiny House that the public can tour. The Tiny House was built by a Siouxland husband and wife team, along with help from HBA members and other local contractors. Tours of the Tiny House will benefit Siouxland Partners for Patriots, who will be on site during most show hours with service dogs.

The Home Builders Association in partnership with Western Iowa Tech’s Construction Program Carpentry and Electrical classes is building another project home in the Whispering Creek area, 6800 Brookside Drive. The building process is still taking place with our completion date set for mid-late May. This home will be for sale at that time, so if you’re interested in further details, please stop at the Home Builder’s booth at the Home Show or call the HBA office at 712-255-3852.

The Home Builders Association promotes the professionalism of the building industry through education programs and activities for the membership and the communities we serve. We strive to be proactive leaders and recognized as the voice of the building industry. If interested in joining our association, applications are available on our website and at the Home Builder’s booth at the show. We have monthly membership meetings where we meet and discuss issues that affect the building industry. We have educational programs, safety training, and share ideas to promote the construction of new homes and remodeling in the Siouxland area. Our website also has a complete listing of our members and a calendar of events and meetings.

For all the latest Home Show information including sponsors, exhibitors, dates, hours, etc. visit our website at www.siouxlandhba.com/home-show. You can also search for us on Facebook at Siouxland Home Show and be sure to “like” our page for news and updates regarding the show. When posting pictures be sure to hashtag#SiouxlandHomeShow.

We hope you enjoy the Home Show and we look forward to serving the Siouxland community.

Bruce Kalin, HBA President

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A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A SCHOOL NURSE

Text & Photograph by Caitlin Yamada

DAILY MEDICINE, FEVERS, CUTS and bruises and COVID-19 tests are just a few of the things Mary Mason sees each day as a school nurse in Sioux City Community School District.

Providing care for 1,400 students in West High School as well as the students in Liberty Elementary School when needed keeps her more than busy. Mornings usually start with giving daily medications, checking in with students and parents, and recently, administering COVID-19 tests.

Mason has been a school nurse in Sioux City for 16 years. She started her career in the emergency room, worked in intensive care, post-critical and medical clinics. She had become interested in being a school nurse and saw it as a new challenge.

COVID-19 changed the way school nurses operate. The nurses attended various training sessions and started new cleaning procedures. The school district purchased rapid COVID-19 tests for school nurses to administer. Mason said the number of tests they are doing has increased as the countywide case numbers have increased.

Mason she likes having the ability to administer the tests and hopes more will utilize the opportunity.

While some kids are sent to the nurse because of various medical issues, Mason said other stop by just to have someone to talk to. She said some kids need someone who is unbiased to talk about issues in their life.

School nurses play a variety of different roles including educator, friend, counselor and more, Mason said, but they are always supported and helped by the other school staff.

The students are Mason’s favorite part of the job.

“I cry with people, I laugh with people, I get emotional,” she said.

One day a child broke his arm at Liberty toward the end of the day and Mason could tell it was a bad break. She said he did not speak much English but she stayed with him and talked while they were waiting for an ambulance.

“I just started crying,” she said.

She keeps a notebook of students she wants to follow up with to check in if they are sick or injured.

One of the challenges can be parents. She said many times parents just need someone to help work through an issue.

Overall, Mason said the career is very rewarding. She can build relationships with students, parents and staff.

“They feel comfortable enough to call me if they need something, which I like because it helps me know I’ve made a difference,” Mason said.
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Opportunities Unlimited (OU) has been serving individuals with special needs in Siouxland since the early 1990’s.

Opportunities Unlimited provides Community-Based Neurobehavioral Services and Residential Rehabilitation Services for individuals who have sustained a traumatic brain injury, a spinal cord injury, or other physical disability. The OU campus, which is located on the north side of Sioux City, consists of nine residential homes and a large Community Center that serves as the hub for therapies and activities as well as houses the administrative offices.

In addition to providing Community-Based Neurobehavioral Services and Residential Rehabilitation Services, OU also provides Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) to children and adults with special needs. Individuals eligible for waiver programs can access services for a predetermined number of hours each month, set by the individual’s caseworker. These services are offered at the Opportunities Unlimited Community Center, out in the community, and in the privacy of the person served’s home. OU also has two HCBS homes for individuals requiring assistance with skills needed to live in a more independent setting.

The Employment Services Department offers many vocational services to individuals with special needs to access meaningful employment.

For more information on programs and services available through Opportunities Unlimited, go to www.opportunitiesunlimited.com

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During the day, Cara Kern is content teaching math to a classroom of high school kids.

But in her personal time, the Sioux City native offers instruction on spinning, planking and extensive calisthenics in a health club.

“Cara is one of our most in-demand instructors,” Heath Weber, owner of Arena Fit, explained. “She’s an absolute beast when it come to HIIT.”

HIIT, or high-intensity interval training, alternates between short bursts of intense anaerobic exercise with less intense recovery time.

Can you get fit in 20-second intervals? The results may surprise you.
In a session that is typically less than 30 minutes, a participant will perform an exercise for 20 seconds, before resting for 10 seconds.

Then, the cycle begins again. 
"With HIIT, you're getting a great, all-around workout because you're using short, sharp bursts of energy," Weber said. "But once you're done, you get to go on with the rest of your day."

That makes HIIT helpful for busy, on-the-go professionals like Kern as well as for Weber, who is an associate dean for performing arts at Morningside University when he isn't running the fitness center at 4501 Southern Hills Drive.

"People love HIIT because you're not doing one exercise over and over again," Weber explained. "If you're not crazy about one exercise, wait 20 seconds and you'll be onto something new."

A longtime choir and music educator, Weber admitted he never thought he would own a business, let alone a gym.

"I was never athletic and, if truth be told, I had a weight problem when I was younger," he said. "By my mid-30s, I was tired of feeling sluggish and began running."

Initially, Weber was self-conscious about what others thought of him.

"My worries were all in my head," he allowed. "Other people weren't thinking of me at all. They wanted to feel better and be healthier."

However, the insecurities continued when Weber joined a health club.

"There's an old expression that the longest mile a person can walk is to the inside of a gym," he said. "I came to terms that I wasn't going to get the physique of a 20-year-old because I'm 47 years old."

"Now, I simply want to be the most fit 47-year-old I can be," Weber added. "I'm fine with that."

After all, fitness is a lifestyle choice as much as anything else.

"We all want the quick fix," Weber said. "But we never stop to realize we didn't gain all of that weight overnight."

This is why HIIT has been, you guessed it, a hit.

Since it uses a clock, it is an excellent way to maximize a workout limited by time constraints.

Though Weber freely admits it is quite a workout.

"You know what? It is totally worth it," he said. "When I teach a fitness class, it is as social as it is physical. People make friends doing HIIT. They enjoy each other's company because they have a similar interest in achieving their fitness goals."

Which is also true for Weber.

After doing this for a while, you keep on challenging yourself," he said. "I don't have to look like a movie star to feel good about myself. I'm happy just be the fittest person I can be."

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Cara Kern likes the variety in a high intensity interval workout class.

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STUDYING FOR HEALTH

BCU professor says demand for fitness professionals high
WANT TO BECOME A STRENGTH and conditioning coach, personal trainer, exercise physiologist or athletic trainer? Fitness-related careers, such as these, are in high demand, according to George Panzak, an associate professor at Briar Cliff University, who also chairs the Sioux City college’s kinesiology department.

“There’s a big demand now for people,” he said. “There’s a lot of research going on with physical fitness and helping with cancer and chronic disease and also with positive quality of life issues and preventing heart disease, diabetes and reducing obesity.”

Panzak said students interested in this field have a lot of options at Briar Cliff when it comes to choosing a major. He said it’s uncommon for a smaller school like Briar Cliff to have a kinesiology department. Kinesiology is the scientific study of human body movement. Kinesiology has five major disciplines — exercise physiology, biomechanics, neurophysiology, motor learning, motor control and motor development, according to Panzak.

Students interested in kinesiology could pursue a degree in human performance, previously kinesiology & human performance, or exercise physiology.

A human performance major could work in the wellness, personal training, coaching, or strength and conditioning fields, or seek a master’s degree in coaching, strength and conditioning, or health promotion. An exercise physiology major might enter BCU’s doctor of physical therapy program.

Panzak said an exercise physiology major could also pursue a career in occupational therapy, go on to get a doctorate degree in kinesiology or exercise physiology, or go to medical, osteopathic or dental school.

“If they want to do clinical work, they can do cardiac rehab, become clinical exercise physiologists,” he said. “The human performance major enables students to go into those very popular career tracks.”

Panzak said the key difference between the two majors is that human performance requires at least one semester of biology and chemistry and, perhaps, physics, while exercise physiology has two semesters each of biology, chemistry and physics. He noted that the curriculum at Briar Cliff is “adaptable” to match students’ interests and that students can spend time with a professional in their career field or choice in during an off-campus internship.

“I base our department and our career tracks and majors to try to meet any variation of students coming in,” said Panzak, who said the majority of students who pursue these majors are student-athletes. “Whatever their interests are, I try to support their interests.”

Taking mathematics classes, including algebra, as well as anatomy, physiology and biology in high school, Panzak said, will provide students with a “good foundation” for the human performance and exercise physiology majors.

Although there is no license process to become a personal trainer, a strength and conditioning coach or clinical exercise physiologist, Panzak said there are strong certifications. He said Briar Cliff is aligned with the National Strength and Conditioning Association and American College of Sports Medicine.

Philosophically, Panzak said there’s no difference between prescribing exercise and prescribing medicine. Those professionals prescribing exercise must be aware of their clients’ co-morbidities, such as diabetes and heart failure, and seek to do no harm.

“If you look into scientific literature, far and above surgery and medication, appropriately prescribed exercise, hands down, is the No. 1 treatment,” he said.

Next fall, Panzak said students will once again have the option of majoring in health and physical education. He said that major is coming back thanks to a joint effort between Briar Cliff’s education and kinesiology departments.

“I really feel they’re worth their weight in gold,” Panzak said of physical education teachers. “They work with kids at a very young age — movement, fitness. The whole idea there is to adopt physical activity as a permanent lifestyle activity.”
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WHEN DR. MICHELLE DAFFER started dermatology training roughly two decades ago, she said very few people wore sunscreen, especially men, and those in their teens and 20s frequented tanning beds and engaged in sunbathing. Those practices have fallen by the wayside, as has slathering on baby-oil and iodine in effort to get a quicker and darker tan. Today, more people are educated about the risks associated with sun exposure. In response, they’re applying sunscreen in effort to protect their skin from the sun’s rays.

“We’re seeing women now who are in their late 20s and 30s who actually have better skin than their parents did probably at that age. A lot of it has to do with the sun protection and just the quality of the sunscreens that we have now,” Daffer said. “Over the last few years, we have had improvement in the spectrum that the sunscreens cover, both UV and UVB. We’ve also really improved the application of those sunscreens. They aren’t all white and thick and smelly.”

As a child, Daffer recalls her family owning a lone bottle of sunscreen with a meager Sun Protection Factor of four. She said they didn’t use it very much. “Now, people actually go through sunscreen and buy new sunscreen and take sunscreen when they go to the pool and go to the beaches,” she said. “I think in the future we’ll start to see some improvement of just the quality of skin, just because of sun protection.”
AGING SKIN

As we age, Daffer said the skin on the backs of our hands and forearms becomes thinner. Under a microscope, she said, you can literally see the epidermis, the top layer of skin, shrink in size.

“Sometimes, we’ll start off and we’ll see a really thick layer and, as time goes on, we’ll literally see almost just one cell across there. That’s all that’s really protecting the insides,” she said. “Because of that, we start to have a lot of water loss. We just don’t have as much barrier.”

This dryness leaves our skin feeling itchier. Our skin also doesn’t snap back into place as well as it did in our younger years, due to changes in our elastic tissue and colleague, according to Daffer.

“Over time, the sun will damage our elastic tissue and it actually can break,” said Daffer, who noted that underneath a microscope aging tissue looks like curlicues on the top of a present, rather than stretchy bubble gum. “We’ll see people who bruise easier, whose skin rips easier. Part of that’s the component of the thinness of it, but then also it becomes less flexible.”

The skin’s pigment can change, too, as we grow older. Daffer said it may appear more red and/or develop sunspots, brown spots caused by sun exposure. Sun damage can also make texture and thickness issues worse, in addition to color changes.

“That is part of sun exposure, but also because of the genetics of how their cells produce pigment,” she said of sunspots. “All of these things happen naturally without even sun exposure. Once you add sun into the equation, all of this is kind of sped up and it makes it even worse.”

Intense sun exposure at a young age, especially if an individual has fair skin, can cause these changes to occur faster, sometimes as early as a person’s late 20s.

PRODUCTS ABOUND

Information about vitamins, minerals and topical proteins we can either apply to our skin or take orally is becoming more readily available.

When she got into dermatology, Daffer said there was just one cosmeceutical, a product made to regenerate and improve the texture of the skin.

“Now, when you go into Walgreens or Target, there are rows and rows,” she said. “There’s a lot information on doing topical Vitamin A and Vitamin C, different proteins and things like that. All of those do have some potential benefit of keeping our skin healthy.”

Daffer said it’s a difficult task to go to the store and try to pick out the right products to keep your skin looking young and healthy.
She said wearing sunscreen with an SPF of 30 and above daily is a must, even on a cloudy day.

“There’s always that potential for some UV damage, so just get into the habit of at least putting it on your face and neck every day,” she said. “It’s always a good idea just to start with that.”

Daffer also recommends using an antioxidant (Vitamin C is one of the most known) to help repair UV damage and other trauma to the skin.

“Antioxidants go in and basically find the damaged cells and help to get rid of them and to allow the healthy cells to continue to grow. They’re kind of like the scavengers of our skin,” she said. “Wash your face, put antioxidant on, and cover it with sunscreen. That’s a great way to start your morning.”

In the evening, Daffer said using a retinol or retinoid, Vitamin A derivatives, can be beneficial alongside a moisturizer.

“Those actually have ingredients in them that tell our skin to turnover faster and to, sometimes, repair some of that elastic tissue and collagen that has been broken,” she said. “After that, you can start adding in a whole bunch of growth factors and proteins. There are some that are plant-based. There are some that are more synthetic. There’s a whole gamut of other steps that you can do.”

Daffer said you don’t need to spend a lot of money on skin care products. She said there are a number of inexpensive over-the-counter options that are manufactured by companies that focus on dermatology.

Products that are only available through a physician are a bit stronger and work a little faster, according to Daffer. Those products also cost more. But, Daffer said that doesn’t mean that the over-the-counter products won’t work for you. She said you just need to give them some time. You won’t notice drastic improvement in your skin overnight.

“They really do take a few weeks to months to work. It’s probably about two to three months to start to notice some changes with it,” she said.
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LAST YEAR, CORA AND PHIL HAEFS had a surgery scheduled to transplant one of her kidneys to him. It was cancelled. Then they made another appointment. It also was cancelled. Then another. And another.

One of the appointments, at Nebraska Medicine in Omaha, was called off due to a fatal automobile accident — the doctors and staff were suddenly diverted to the urgent, time-sensitive task of removing organs and tissues from a donor who was killed. The others were cancelled for various reasons, including staffing difficulties and the ever-present pandemic.

But finally, on Dec. 17, it happened. Over the course of roughly 2 1/2 hours, Drs. Arika Hoffman and Alexander Maskin removed one of Cora’s kidneys and put it in the body of Phil, her father.
Almost instantaneously, like the lights in a room after a blown fuse is replaced, the healthy kidney got to work. “It started pumping fluid right out of the bladder immediately, which is perfect — you can’t get any better than that,” Phil said. “Sometimes a kidney will ‘sleep’ for a day or two before it starts (functioning.) It started working right away, it was the best you could ask for.”

Cora was able to go home after a few days, while Phil had to stay in Omaha into part of January for observation and to be in close proximity to the medical team, and for follow-up exams, educational classes and physical therapy.

Within days of the transplant, he was already looking markedly healthier; while on dialysis his skin had developed the mottled, thin, scabbed appearance typical of a far older person.

After he got back on his feet and back in Sioux City, Phil, 64, had big plans. He wants to build up his strength — dialysis left him weakened. “He was thinner than paper,” said Cora, 38.

And he intends to get back to work, liberated from the dialysis equipment that kept him a prisoner at home much of the day. Free of the fear that dialysis won’t go well today, and the near-certainty of serious illness that follows. Confident that his rehabilitated renal system is doing what it’s supposed to, on autopilot and without any complicated mechanical intervention, so that he doesn’t need to worry about it.

“I’m 64, I’m almost at the age to retire, but I’m not that kind of guy, I just don’t think I’m going to do that yet,” he said.

**LONE KIDNEY**

Phil Haefs grew up with only one working kidney. Its faulty counterpart wasn’t discovered until after he turned 18, when a physical exam revealed high blood pressure — the kidneys govern blood pressure and fluid balance — and doctors
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Barb Maxon
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found a kidney problem. A procedure the following year put things back in order, at least for the next 40 years or so, but he still had only one kidney.

He acknowledged that, for a time in his younger years — when illness and old age were still in the distant future — he wasn’t as careful with his kidney as he could’ve been, describing himself as “rambunctious” and a “construction worker, drinker, smoking guy.” Still, the kidney soldiered on and he remained in good health until time took its toll.

Around the time he turned 60, Phil’s solo kidney began to weaken. After a cardiovascular procedure that didn’t go well, the kidney shut down and he went on dialysis. The kidney recovered and he got off dialysis, but within two years the kidney failed again. It was permanent this time.

Kidney failure usually manifests itself as a noticeable fluid buildup, called edema, along with a host of other distressing symptoms. These are the result of the renal system failing to exchange fluids, eliminate waste and maintain the proper balance of water, salts, bodily chemicals and blood pressure. In the era before dialysis or transplants, when the condition was termed “Bright’s disease,” kidney failure typically resulted in death unless the patient’s kidney function made an (unlikely) comeback.

For many kidney failure sufferers, fluid builds up in the lower extremities — typically the legs and feet — giving them a very puffy appearance, a visual hallmark of the condition.

“For me, the fluid buildup is in my face, of course,” Phil Haefs said last summer, before the transplant.

He went on dialysis, but it often didn’t go well and served as a constant source of distress. Though dialysis technology has made major advances in recent decades — dialysis can be done from the comfort of home now — it remains one of the most intensely disliked and dreaded medical interventions. Even the advanced machines of today can’t always be relied on to correctly perform delicate bodily functions that healthy organs manage flawlessly.

“If a mean a lot of people just deny doing (dialysis), they don’t want to live that way,” Phil Haefs said. “And they pass away. They’d just rather pass away than do it. Not me, though.”

It took quite a while, but Cora eventually prevailed on her father to accept a transplant. Parental resistance to receiving a transplant from children is not uncommon among those who have that option, but Cora wasn’t going to take no for an answer.

“If I had a million (kidneys), they could’ve taken them all out but one. I hope other people that are on dialysis get that chance.”

CORA HAEF

“A whole year before I finally gave in. I didn’t want to do that to my daughter — I mean I’ve lived 64 years with one kidney,” he said.

The organ transplant list is notoriously long, and the wait often ends when the patient dies without having received a transplant. Prospective recipients have to be ready, always, at a moment’s notice to make a mad dash to the hospital should an organ suddenly come available — time is of the essence.

But that abrupt, get-here-now call may never come.

Testing revealed Cora to be a perfect match, and she was in good health. Phil took solace in the hope that renal treatment or replacement technology will make significant advances in the coming decades, so that even if Cora’s kidney falters one day, she won’t have to struggle the way he did.

Whatever the long-term risks, real or perceived, Cora paid them little mind. She only wanted her father to feel better.

“If I had a million (kidneys), they could’ve taken them all out but one,” Cora said. “I hope other people that are on dialysis get that chance.”

CARING FOR A NEW KIDNEY

Phil and Cora are determined to keep their shared renal systems alive and well for a long, long time — ideally for as long as they themselves are around.

“The saying that they have is, “The way to pay back a kidney transplant is to treat that kidney with respect,”’ Phil said.

“That’s a good thing to keep in mind and that’s kind of the way I’ve got to live life now.”

Transplant recipients have to go on immunosuppressant drugs for the remainder of their lives — the immune system can become spooked at encountering an unfamiliar person’s organ and attack it, killing the organ and putting the recipient back at square one. So the immune system has to be calmed down with drugs.

“It’s a lifelong commitment,” Phil said.

An immune system restrained by medication leaves Phil at increased risk of infection, so he has to be careful. Fresh fruits and vegetables — or any food item that was touched by somebody else — has to be washed thoroughly to keep foodborne pathogens at bay. Rare or undercooked meat isn’t a good idea. Vaccines are a good idea.

“I used to, I still do, like medium-rare meat, and that’s out of the question because medium-rare meat can hold bacteria,” Phil said.

Cora, on the other hand, has relatively few restrictions to her lifestyle, except for minor things like drinking generous portions of water every day and avoidance of certain over-the-counter pain relievers. Activities that could put stress on a kidney — excessive drinking, smoking — are probably better avoided. She already didn’t do those things, so that’s not a problem.
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Are there different symptoms for the different strains of coronavirus?

People infected with coronavirus can have a wide range of symptoms. These symptoms can range from mild to severe. Some symptoms include fever, chills, cough, shortness of breath, fatigue, muscle/body aches, headache, loss of taste, loss of smell, sore throat, runny nose, congestion, nausea, vomiting or diarrhea. Some people may even be asymptomatic. It is hard to know how COVID will affect you. The Delta variant was thought to cause more severe illness and spread more easily than the original coronavirus strain. We are still learning more about the Omicron variant and so far it seems to be more easily spread than prior strains.

What are the signs of a urinary tract infection? I have a friend who says she has them all the time. Could I have just overlooked when I had one?

Signs of a urinary tract infection could include pain with urination, having to use the restroom more often, having a hard time when starting to urinate or foul smelling urine. Symptoms that would be concerning for worsening infection include back pain, nausea, vomiting or fever. Generally, if you have a urinary tract infection your symptoms would worsen. If you are concerned about having a urinary tract infection you should see your physician to be evaluated.

When I was raking leaves in the fall, I got a sharp pain in my back and I fell to the ground. I had to crawl inside my house. Did I do something wrong? Can I prevent this?

I would recommend discussing this with your physician. This could be due to a variety of factors. I would recommend stretching before strenuous activities, especially those that require frequent bending and lifting. Exercises to help strengthen your core could also be useful.

At my doctor’s office, the electronic pad I check in on asks if I might be right for a bunch of drugs. But I’ve never heard of them. Should I ask about them? Or are they just an ad?

I would recommend discussing this with your doctor.

What kind of prescriptions shouldn’t be sent in the mail? I always get skittish when the insurance company asks me to make them mail orders. Can’t the weather affect them?

I would recommend having any new medications your physician prescribes sent to the pharmacy so that you can start taking them right away. This way you can let your physician know how they are working for you. Many patients choose to have their chronic medications sent in the mail as it may be more convenient than going to the pharmacy. If medications have certain temperature or handling requirements, these should be sent in a manner that keeps them at the recommended temperature. I would recommend changing the delivery date of your medications if you plan to be away from your home for an extended period of time, as extreme weather conditions could affect certain medications. You should contact your pharmacy if you have any questions or concerns about your medications.

If we’re cooped up in the house this winter, what are the best exercises we can do to stay healthy and hopefully get fit?

You can find many at home workouts online or on your phone. These could range from using free weights to yoga to even dance classes. Find something that works for you and the area of your house you choose to exercise. Try to find something you find fun and enjoyable as well.

What’s the best way of putting drops in your eyes? I must waste half the bottle just trying to get them in.

You should always wash your hands before handling eye drops or touching your eyes. Remove the cap of the eye drop medication. Tilt your head back slightly and look up. Use one hand to gently pull your lower eyelid down away from the eye. Then hold the dropper tip directly over the eyelid pocket. Squeeze the bottle gently and let the eye drop fall into the pocket. During this process, be careful not to touch your eye with the dropper tip as this could contaminate the bottle.

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What kinds of health questions do you have?

Submit your questions and they may be used in this quarterly feature. Write to Siouxland Life at 515 Pavonia St., Sioux City, Iowa 51102.
PARKINSON’S DISEASE CAN BE A lonely and difficult disease, but a class at the Norm Waitt Sr. YMCA helps those diagnosed combat both the emotional and physical impacts.

The Parkinson’s Disease Support Group offers education and community for those with Parkinson’s, and is paired with a class called “Delay the Disease,” which helps those retain physical skills that are affected.

Class instructor and group leader Dawn Welch is a health specialist at the YMCA. She said the support group addresses the mental health aspect, while the workout group helps the other physical aspects.

She said the main goal is to allow people with Parkinson’s to have quality life and do their activities of daily life. Three times a week the “Delay the Disease” group works on various movement challenges. Some areas include balance, sitting and standing, handwriting and voice volume.

The class costs $10 for 10 classes and are at 11 a.m. Monday, Wednesday and Thursday.

Studies show exercise slows the progression of Parkinson’s, Welch said. The timing of the class is specifically set at 11 a.m. because studies show it is the best time of the day for those with Parkinson’s.

On Jan 12, the class did baseline tests, to eventually show how they have progressed on skills such as balance, sitting and standing, and walking.

Deidre Engel has been attending the classes for the last four years, starting shortly after she was diagnosed.

Engel said the class not only helps

Health Specialist Dawn Welch tests Emily Dykstra’s balance at a “Delay the Disease” class, which helps those with Parkinson’s Disease retain skills impacted by the disease. Dykstra underwent a few tests to create a baseline.
retain muscles, but it is good for morale and is challenging. Her strength and balance have improved due to the class.

Once a month, the free support group meets to discuss day-to-day issues as well as give each other support and advice. The attendees discuss anything from their diagnosis stories to ways the disease impact them.

The class also has speakers who discuss various topics regarding Parkinson’s.

Welch has been leading the group for four years, and, on average, 10 people attend the meetings. Many of those individuals have attended for years. She said the group helps them cope with the disease.

On Jan. 10, the group discussed specific ways the disease impacted them, as well as how long it took for them to be diagnosed and the process of being diagnosed.

Emily Dykstra attended her first support group in January. She was diagnosed in 2018, but believes she had it for eight years prior to that. She hadn’t sought help and community until now.

Dykstra struggles with day-to-day tasks such as driving, getting out of bed and remembering family member’s names. She hopes the class will help her find the drive to exercise and help slow the progression.

“I’m losing my independence at the same time,” Dykstra said. “Coming here is going to make a difference.”

Many of those in the class agreed with Dykstra, and said the classes have helped them maintain the independence they still have.

Welch said the community members just need to take the first step. She said anyone can call her to discuss the classes and learn about how the class and support group can help.

“People think you have to be newly diagnosed or had it a long time to come. No, it can be any stages,” she said.

For more information, contact the YMCA.
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I didn’t want an indoor swimming pool for Christmas, but I almost got one.

Christmas Eve Eve night, I heard a noise in the basement and, since I rarely go down there except to wash clothes, I thought I’d ignore it. Then, I heard more noises, like Santa was coming in a back door.

Once I had roused myself from my chair, I went down and looked: Water in the basement. Apparently, it was coming from the ceiling. But where?

The noise came from an avalanche of books that had gotten wet. There, on the floor, were a puddle of paperbacks, a bath of best sellers.

Grabbing towels that were downstairs, I tried to mop up the mess but I still couldn’t figure out what was causing it. I pawed around the top of the bookshelf and just felt water. No drip. No pipe. Nothing.

Once I had installed shelf-to-shelf rugs, tossed books to the floor and found a ladder, I spotted a little tube that might be the culprit. It didn’t have a hole on it, but there wasn’t another likely suspect. While “Jaws” and “Moby Dick” (which, by the way, I never read) were swirling near the floor drain, I began the investigation. The tube led past the washer and dryer and up the wall to the kitchen. Aha!

Could it be the sink? Or the dishwasher?

No, it was too small for either of them. But what else uses water? And then it dawned on me – the ice maker in the refrigerator. Because I don’t use that ice (I needed to replace the filter and just never did) I didn’t realize that it had its own hose. But how do I get to it and, more important, how do I move a refrigerator that hasn’t budged in 10 years?

Thinking of everyone I could call (and, believe me, it’s a list you don’t want to be on), I finally got an answer that worked: Turn off the valve leading to the refrigerator. I did and, one day later, the Great Flood of 2021 was over.

Case closed? No, remember this is a holiday.

Call a plumber and you’re working at least another year beyond retirement. During that three-day weekend, I checked the shelf like it was going to magically spell out Powerball numbers. Early Monday morning, I got an appointment (for Tuesday – a lot of you were calling plumbers, too) and waited with more anticipation than I did as a 5-year-old serving up cookies for Santa.

Tuesday morning, the plumber came, checked out the situation and confirmed my suspicion – it was the refrigerator in the kitchen with Colonel Mustard!

He moved that double-door monstrosity like it was a dance partner at the American Legion. Sure enough, that tube that was no wider than a cocktail straw had a break in it. He added an upstairs valve (as if I’ll ever move the refrigerator just to check) and gave me enough time to sweep the floor and do what I should have done nine years ago.

In the mix? A dime! I don’t know how it got behind the refrigerator but I already felt like I was ahead of the game.

Meanwhile, the basement still has a liquid library, just waiting for someone to plunge in.
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