

# THE Dispatch

A PUBLICATION OF DISCOVERY LIVING, INC.

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**M**ost Colorful  
**S**hady Grove

**B**est Use of  
Lights  
**N**emmers



# 2020 WAGE AND BENEFIT SURVEY

The Iowa Association of Community Providers (IACP) completed an extensive survey of Iowa human service provider wages and benefits. We are pleased to report that Discovery Living direct support professional wages are considerably higher and employee turnover is substantially lower than the state average. Listed below are a few highlights from the survey of Iowa disability providers:

- Average Direct Support Professional Hourly Start Wage: \$11.98
- Average DSP Annual Turnover Rate: 36%
- Agencies that have vacant DSP positions: 99%
- Average amount of money each agency has spent on Covid related wages, personal protective equipment and supplies in 2020: \$132,445

Celebrating in the midst of the pandemic took, of course, some creativity and adaptation. The typical parties and group festivities gave way to zoom greetings & "gatherings" and even some holiday hijinks that could still incorporate bonding and ignite the imagination - separately... but together. One such event pitted the houses against one another in a friendly, festive competition to see which household could bring the most to their tree-decorating game, this season. Boy, did everyone deliver! Awards were given in several categories, and victors in each category earned their house a gift card for special member/staff activities. Check out some of these glorious entries!



**M**ost Unique  
**T**heme  
**B**arrington

**M**ost Festive  
**V**alleyview

**B**est Overall  
**O**akcrest

**M**ost Original  
& Creative  
**S**ummerwood



*Diamond's Our Girl's Best Friend!*

*At left: With a little help from LaTonya Christopher, Deb feeds Diamond, the therapy dog, a Milkbone treat.*

*Below: Jacob and Steve visit Prairiewoods and enjoy the brisk air and the beauty of the recent hoarfrost.*

**R**ANDOM REC  
**C**ENTER  
**R**OUNDUP OF  
**R**EVELRIES



*Gettin' Lost in the Frost*



# HAPPY ANNIVERSARY, DISCOVERY LIVING

Bob Hebl, Executive Director

**45** years ago, a group of families, advocates, and concerned citizens reached out to the local **Arc Chapter** and **Iowa Knights of Columbus** in an effort to address a grave shortage of housing and supports for people with disabilities in the Cedar Rapids area. Articles of Incorporation for Discovery Village were written in 1977 and, after several years of hard work and community outreach by dedicated volunteers, ongoing fundraising efforts, as well as some legal wrangling that would reach the Iowa Supreme Court - the organization we now know as Discovery Living opened its first home in 1981. Scott Siebert was our first executive director and helped educate the public, while navigating several early challenges. Board minutes from the April 8, 1981, meeting introduced John Morris, as Discovery Living's new executive director. John would lead the organization for the next 29 years, expanding and adapting our services at a steady and sometimes rapid pace, while shaping a culture that demanded the delivery of high-quality supports.



Olson joined our board of directors, where they continue to serve to this day. One of our founding board members, Larry Sharp, served on our board for over 30 years, and he and his wife Claire remain strong supporters of our organization.

We are very proud that Al Ropa, Nancy Ryan, and Charlie Cummins, three of the original members from our first home, still receive our services after 40 years!



Today Discovery Living operates 32 homes and a recreation center in the greater Cedar Rapids area. We serve 150 people and employ 250 staff members. Our services continue to evolve as we modify our supports to accommodate the changing needs of the people we

serve. We remain committed to expanding our services to help more people each year. I have been blessed to be part of this fine organization for the last eleven years and cannot wait to see what the future brings.

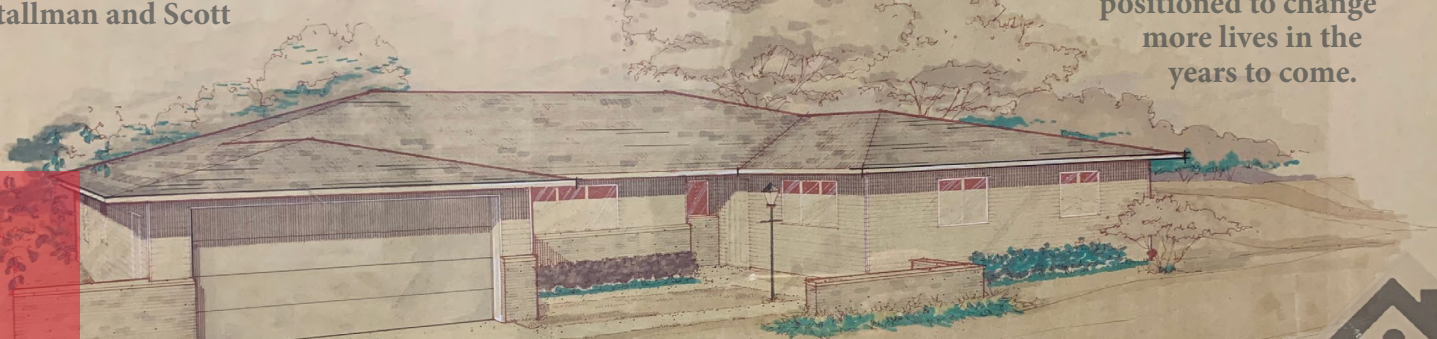
Our success has been the culmination of the dedicated service of our Direct Support Professionals and administrative staff, as well as the generous support of community supporters. Our volunteer board of directors, the Knights of Columbus, and



many others have been working behind the scenes for decades to help us fulfill our mission. Because of your steadfast efforts, we are well positioned to change more lives in the years to come.



Discovery Living Board members in 1981 were Ed Mayor, Judge Lynne Brady, Charles Davidson, Father John Gallagher, Elmer Haverly, Roy Hewitt, John Montpas, Jim Nannemman, Jim Spellman, Douglas Ryan, Kaye Fulrath, Sister Maryann Gschwind, Bing Grahek, Al Williams, and Larry Sharp. It would not be long before Mike Stallman and Scott



**Amanda Tomlinson**  
Comm Living Coordinator



**A**manda began her human services career in 2001 when she worked as a direct caregiver for the Arc of East Central Iowa. In 2005, Amanda assumed responsibility for the afterschool program which focused on community inclusion. Amanda worked for Discovery Living from 2007 – 2011, was a direct care staff at Options of Linn County, and a case manager for Linn County MHDD and United Health Care, before returning to Discovery Living in 2019.

Amanda graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in Therapeutic Recreation from the University of Northern Iowa in 2005. She continued her education and graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Human Services from Upper Iowa University in 2011.

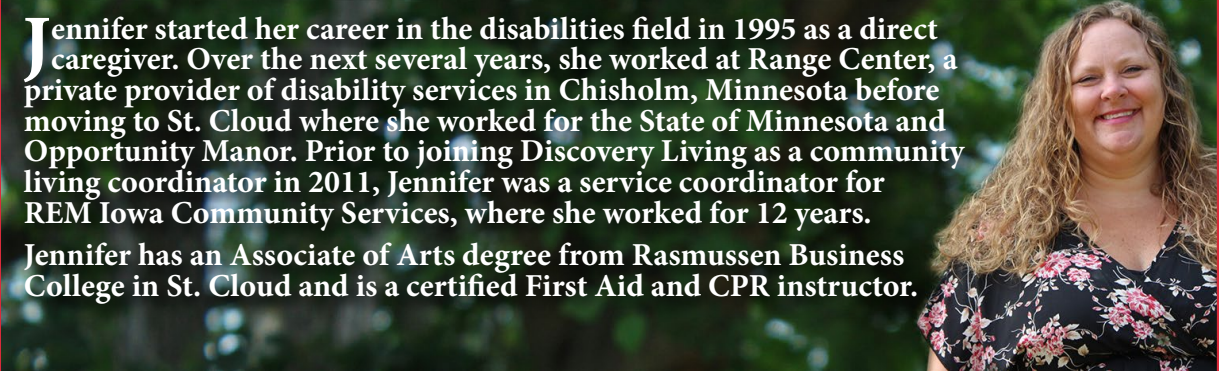
**Angela Wright**  
Comm Living Coordinator



**A**ngie started her human services career in 1998, when she began working as a Special Olympics coach for the Cedar Rapids Recreational Center (a role she still enjoys today). Her past experience includes working at REM Developmental Services, Goodwill, and as a Case Manager for Linn County MHDD and United Healthcare.

Angie first worked for Discovery Living in 1999 and rejoined our team in 2017. She has worked as a direct support professional and Associate Coordinator before assumig the role of Community Living Coordinator in 2018. Angie has a Bachelor degree in Social Work from Mt. Mercy College. She volunteers with children’s ministries at Stonebridge Church, Girls Scouts of EIWI and has fostered for Uno’s Promise Animal Rescue in Cedar Rapids. She was awarded Coach of the Year for Cedar Rapids Rec in 2002 and Iowa 2014 Coach of the Year award for East Central Region Special Olympics.

**Jennifer Johnson**  
Comm Living Coordinator



**J**ennifer started her career in the disabilities field in 1995 as a direct caregiver. Over the next several years, she worked at Range Center, a private provider of disability services in Chisholm, Minnesota before moving to St. Cloud where she worked for the State of Minnesota and Opportunity Manor. Prior to joining Discovery Living as a community living coordinator in 2011, Jennifer was a service coordinator for REM Iowa Community Services, where she worked for 12 years.

Jennifer has an Associate of Arts degree from Rasmussen Business College in St. Cloud and is a certified First Aid and CPR instructor.

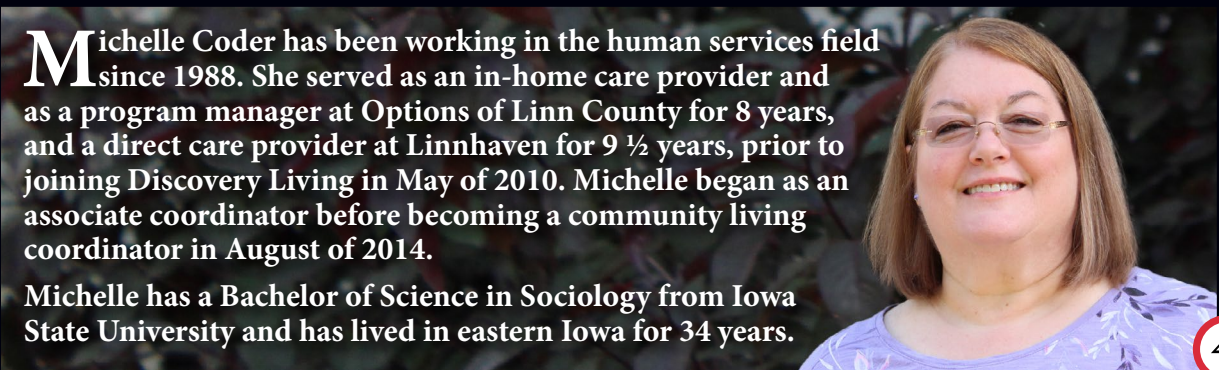
**Mary Hand**  
Comm Living Coordinator



**M**ary volunteered as a peer tutor for two years in High School prior to joining Discovery Living as a direct caregiver in 1988. She became a community living coordinator in 1992 and has remained in that position to this date. Mary has worked for Discovery Living for over 30 years.

She holds an associate degree in handicapped services from Kirkwood Community College and has provided mentoring services for an individual with disabilities since 2009.

**Michelle Coder**  
Comm Living Coordinator



**M**ichelle Coder has been working in the human services field since 1988. She served as an in-home care provider and as a program manager at Options of Linn County for 8 years, and a direct care provider at Linnhaven for 9 ½ years, prior to joining Discovery Living in May of 2010. Michelle began as an associate coordinator before becoming a community living coordinator in August of 2014.

Michelle has a Bachelor of Science in Sociology from Iowa State University and has lived in eastern Iowa for 34 years.

**MEET OUR**  
*Leadership Team*

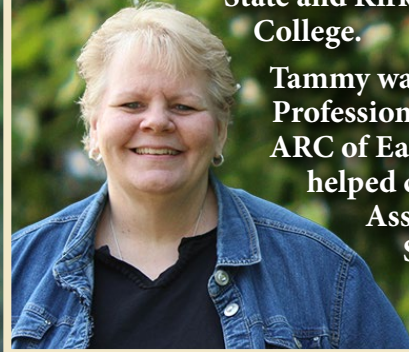
**Lauri Becker**  
Community Living Coordinator

Lauri began her human services career in 1992 when she was hired as a Resident Counselor at REM Iowa. She worked her way up in management positions and assisted in developing REM's Home and Community Based Services in eastern Iowa in 1994. Lauri joined Discovery Living in 2009 and holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Education from the University of Iowa. Lauri served as vice president of the East Central Iowa chapter of the Iowa Brain Injury Association and is a certified brain injury specialist.



**Tammy Vangen**  
Community Living Coordinator

Tammy joined Discovery Living as a live-in coordinator in 1989 and has been a Community Living Coordinator for over 30 years. Tammy took courses in special education at Northwest Missouri State and Kirkwood Community College.



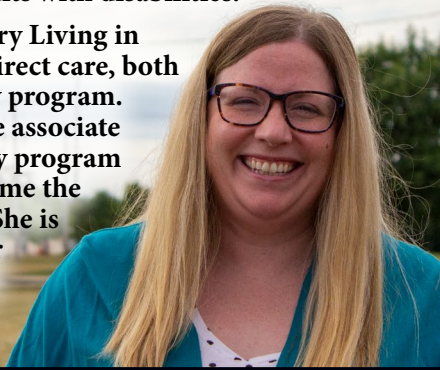
Tammy was previously named the Professional of the Year by the ARC of East Central Iowa and has helped coordinate local ADA and Assistive Technology events. She is also a certified TEACCH trainer for people with Autism.

In the second of our three-issue series introducing our leadership team, we are featuring our extraordinary community living coordinators. Each coordinator oversees the residential and recreational care of our 200+ members. Their role is critical to the success of this organization, and we value the creativity and commitment each one of them brings to the table each and every day.

**Laura Lerch**  
Community Living Coordinator

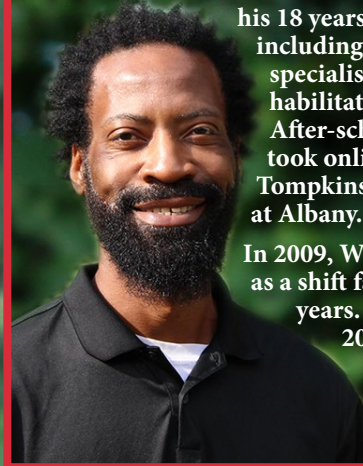
Laura began her career in human services in 2006, providing direct care at Systems Unlimited, after completing her BA degree from Coe College. She was also employed by the Drop-In program, providing day program services for adults with disabilities.

She was hired at Discovery Living in 2007 and has provided direct care, both in houses and our hourly program. She began working as the associate coordinator in the hourly program in 2014 and in 2017 became the program's coordinator. She is currently working on her master's degree in Social Work through UNI.



**Winston Jamison**  
Community Living Coordinator

Winston began his career in human services in 1992 when he worked for The Center For Disabilities. During his 18 years there, he held many positions including residential counselor, skills specialist, PT/ OT assistant, residential habilitation counselor, and tutor at the After-school Treatment Center. Winston took online Special Education courses at Tompkins Cortland College and University at Albany.



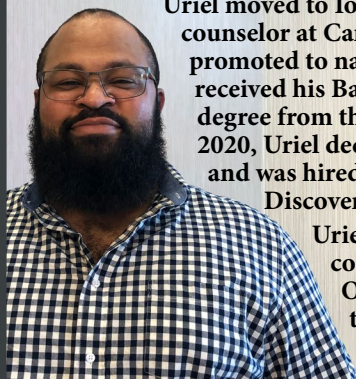
In 2009, Winston moved to Iowa and worked as a shift facilitator at New Horizons for 5 years. He joined Discovery Living in 2017 as an associate coordinator and became a Coordinator in 2019. Winston volunteers time to support the Salvation Army.

**Uriel Mooror**  
Community Living Coordinator

When Uriel was 12 his brother, Gabriel, was diagnosed with autism. Little did he know, this event would not only alter his life trajectory, but it would also fine-tune the moral lenses through which he perceived and understood the world.

Uriel moved to Iowa August 2010 to work as a counselor at Camp Courageous and was later promoted to nature director. In July 2020, Uriel received his Bachelor of Science in Psychology degree from the University of West Georgia. In late 2020, Uriel decided to embark on a new journey and was hired as the rec center coordinator for Discovery Living.

Uriel is a member of the nation's largest co-ed service fraternity, Alpha Phi Omega, and enjoys celebrating the triumphs our members experience every day.



**Susie Horn**  
Community Living Coordinator

Susie began her career in human services providing direct care at the Arc of East Central Iowa in 1997. She assumed a number of roles at the Arc, including respite coordinator and "Group and Getaway Services" lead. Most recently, she spent 12 years as a paraeducator at Jefferson High School.

She has a diploma in Disability Services from Kirkwood and a paraeducator Certification from the State of Iowa. Susie also holds a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration, with a concentration in Management, from Hamilton Business College - which is now Purdue University.

She came to Discovery Living in March 2020 as an associate coordinator.





**ANNUAL APPEAL UPDATE** We are thrilled to announce that, as of January 28, 2021, our annual appeal has generated over \$50,000 in donations from wonderful supporters like you! If you have already given, thank you for making a difference. If you have not yet given, there is still time. Each gift is critically important, as we work to safely rebuild homes and restore services in the year ahead. Supporters like you are the reason we were able to respond to critical member needs by purchasing and/or modifying over a dozen homes in 2020! These decisions were made not only based on member accessibility needs but also in response to the substantial damage several of our homes experienced during the Derecho. You are the reason all of our members were safe both during and after the storm.

“CHARITY SEES THE NEED, NOT THE CAUSE.” -- GERMAN PROVERB

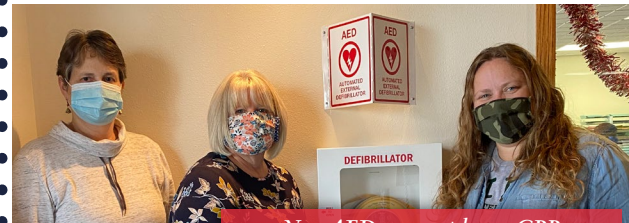
The women from Nimble Fingers with **St. Stephens Lutheran Church** in Atkins blessed several members with their handmade quilts. These beautiful, warm quilts will be enjoyed by several members in their own home as well as at our recreation and sensory center. Thank you!



**Nimble Fingers**



**Mercy Medical Center** donated a new AED (Automatic External Defibrillator), and we are truly grateful. This device, which was gifted along with a wall cabinet, and ongoing AED program support through “Think Safe,” is located at our recreation center. This AED will provide us with the security and enhanced survival rates associated with an onsite defibrillation device.



New AED poses with our CPR instructors, Melinda Collingwood, Kim Larimer, and Jennifer Johnson.



*We Are Blessed!!*



Thank you to employees from **Samsung** in Cedar Rapids who donated games, puzzles, markers, and paper to our recreation center. The individuals there will enjoy the variety of games and puzzles!

**SAMSUNG**



We ❤️ **The Mod Squad**

A huge “Thank you!” to Deb Young and the Mod Center with Rockwell Collins for the donations of Christmas gifts to several members and the recreation center!



WE'RE PARTICIPATING IN THE  
**HY-VEE REUSABLE BAG PROGRAM**



When you buy the \$2.50 red My Heart Reusable Bag this month, \$1 will be donated to our organization.

We are excited to share that Hy-Vee store leadership at **Oakland Road** and **Collins Road** has selected Discovery Living as the Hy-Vee **reusable bag program** non-profit for the months of February and March!

We will receive a \$1 donation for every Reusable Bag purchased at the Hy-Vee locations at **3235 Oakland Rd NE** (Cedar Rapids) during the month of February and at **279 Collins Rd NE** (CR) during the month of March.

# GARY ESCHEN

On December 12, 2020 Discovery Living lost a member of our family. Gary Eschen joined Discovery Living in 2013 after over 30 years at the Abbe Center. He always had a smile on his face and could make anyone laugh. Gary's greatest joy was spending time with his friends and family, of whom he loved taking pictures.

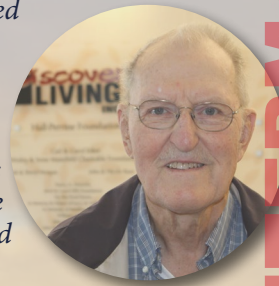
Gary had many interests and kept himself busy throughout the years. He spent more than 35 years at Options of Linn County, and most recently enjoyed crafting and time with his friends at the Discovery Living rec center. Gary enjoyed making bracelets and necklaces and giving them to his special ladies, and a few important gentlemen too! Gary also loved to watch and participate in sports and was an avid Iowa State Cyclone fan who faithfully wore the ISU colors. He participated in the Special Olympics and was proud of his many medals. A huge fan of classic slapstick comedy, Gary once raised \$100 for Special Olympics just for the privilege of putting a cream pie in the face of friend and coach, Rob Wagner.



Gary would have turned 70 this year, and in his honor, his family and staff celebrated with Hardee's and a "drive-by" birthday party!! We were all very blessed to have such a wonderful man in our lives. He touched many hearts throughout our community and will be deeply missed by all who knew and loved him.

We will always remember...

Discovery Living lost a member of the family when Tom Auterman passed away on December 25, 2020. Tom courageously battled cancer for many years and, true to his nature, kept as active as possible right up until he left this world. Tom and his wife Joan supported many charitable causes and organizations, but none more than Discovery Living. Tom served on our board of directors for over 30 years, was a past board president, the current chair of our insurance committee, member of our facility committee - and faithful supporter of our organization. In addition to devoting his time and energy, Tom and Joan generously supported our annual appeal and Birdies for Charity fundraisers. Their significant support of our endowment fund distinguishes them as members of our Legacy Society. Tom was a dear friend to many of us and, while his work on earth is finished, his legacy will endure.



TOM AUTERMAN

"It's not about what I SEE for our future, or humanity; it's about what I DO for our future and humanity." -- Steve Maraboli

## Help Is On The Way!

Kim Larimer, Health Services Coordinator

At long last, as of January 23, we are in the process of rolling out the COVID-19 vaccine for both our employees and members!

In October, a [Center for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#) survey was conducted, which emphasized the importance of receiving the vaccine in order to keep our employees and members healthy and safe. We were thrilled to learn that [Walgreens](#) would be our vaccine distribution partner. We are pleased to report that Walgreens did a fantastic job in facilitating our first clinic on January 23rd.



**Health, Wellness, and You**

Protecting our members and employees, as you know, is our top priority. We are happy to report that more than 150 members and employees have already received their first dose and are hoping that very soon COVID-19 will be nothing more than a memory for us all.



## 30 Years of Dedicated Service!

Congratulations to Tim Kirkes, Cindy Norton, and Tammy Vangen, who reached this milestone in 2020. Each of them have changed hundreds of lives during their long career with our organization. On behalf of all of us at Discovery Living, thank you for a job well done!

How did you fare? What a year. What a set of experiences like no other. We hope each of you have managed your way through the many storms of 2020 and find yourself heading into more peaceful times. As the skies clear, we, like many of you, are circling the wagons and accounting for our own - watchful of everyone's health and wellbeing. We hope, as we consider you "our own", you will consider the members needs during this period of recovery. Remember that while Medicaid accounts for much of Discovery Living's operational funding, we, especially in times of crisis, depend on regular donations to assist with the high costs of home and vehicle purchases and modifications - which add up to several hundred thousand dollars annually. That said, take care of yourselves and consider the self-healing properties of caring for others in times of need. Please check out the "Giving" tab at [www.discoveryliving.org](http://www.discoveryliving.org), or contact our office at (319) 378-7470.

Donate Today

The Dispatch is a quarterly publication of Discovery Living, Inc., © 2021. If you are interested in receiving a copy of our newsletter by email or traditional post, please contact [Leon Bohn](mailto:leonbohn@discoveryliving.org) at [leonbohn@discoveryliving.org](mailto:leonbohn@discoveryliving.org).





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*Helping adults with  
intellectual disabilities  
live successful,  
satisfying lives in the  
mainstream of the  
community.*

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*A very special  
"Thank you!"  
to our sponsors  
for making  
our mission  
of service  
possible!*



[www.campcourageous.org](http://www.campcourageous.org)  
(Paid for by Friends of Camp Courageous)



## MOLYNEAUX

*The Arc of East Central Iowa - Bob  
Mickey Collision Center - Five  
Seasons Tire - Home Appliance  
Center - House of Carpets - Mike  
Stallman - Options of Linn County -  
Toyota of Iowa City*

For details and information on how YOUR business or organization can sponsor The Dispatch, contact [Monica Ravn](#) at (319) 378-7470 and reserve your space now.

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