

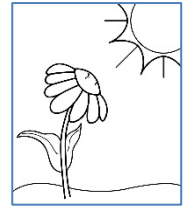


# URBANDALE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## NEWSLETTER

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## Spring 2025

### Happenings at the Olmsted-Urban House

This Winter and early Spring have been busy times for the Historical Society. The 'Heritage Room' has been under renovation thanks to the work of Scott Cierzan and his helpers. As mentioned in our Winter Newsletter, the Urbandale Historical



Society has benefitted from an ENDOW Urbandale grant with the Urbandale Alumni Association for the renovation of the Historical Society's 'Heritage Room.' The renovated room will better display the old class pictures from the Urbandale Schools and memorabilia from the City of Urbandale. The room may get a new name - possibly the Urbandale Room - and work will be completed by the Ice Cream Social in June.

Be sure to check out the improvements to the landscape at the house, including a newly installed dwarf conifer garden by the parking lot entrance. It includes upright and carpet



junipers, dwarf Alberta and blue spruce, birds-nest spruce, mugo pine and more. To the west of the parking lot, you'll find a row of columnar aspen trees, Canada Red chokecherry, weeping cherry, pear, plum and hazelnut.

The backyard at the house is getting some attention, too. Where once there were weeds and tree stumps

there now stands a burgeoning wildlife border with white pine, concolor fir, blue spruce, Black Hills spruce, red cedar, hazelnut, chestnut, hickory, persimmon, black cherry, winterberry, Goji berry, hydrangea and more. All plants and labor were donated. Because deer are frequent visitors, the plants they consider candy are being protected with fencing until old enough to stand on their own.



Speaking of gardening, we'd like to thank Kate Hester, a new member who is also a Master Gardener, for her help getting the Pollinator

Garden ready for the season ahead. The garden was planted and maintained by the Urbandale Garden Club until last year when the club folded. If you are interested in helping maintain the Pollinator Garden or the gardens around the house, please send us a note at [urbandalehistory@gmail.com](mailto:urbandalehistory@gmail.com)

The House has not been open for Tours the first Sunday in March or April due to the construction, we hope to resume in May.

### May Plant Sale

Rather than hosting a May Market Vendor Fair as last year, we are going to revive a Historical Society tradition: the May Plant Sale. This had been a mainstay for



many years when it was organized by the Urbandale Garden Club and hosted by the Historical Society. The event is planned for **Saturday, May 10 from 9 am to 1 pm** and will feature a range of plants including vegetables, herbs, flowers and trees. We will be accepting labeled donations on Friday May 9<sup>th</sup> at the Olmsted-Urban house from 12-5. The Urbandale Lions Club will be here as well, making their world-famous pancakes, 9-11 on the 10<sup>th</sup>.

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### **Ice Cream Social.**



The Annual Ice Cream Social is scheduled for **Sunday, June 29 from 2-4 pm**. You won't want to miss this year's event. In addition to the 'melt in your mouth' ice cream, we will have sumptuous pies and cakes. Entertainment is planned as well as tours of the house and barn. Special this year will be unveiling of the newly renovated 'Heritage Room' in the house. The name of the room may even be changed to better reflect the Urbandale school and city history. As well, the memorial brick landscaping celebrating the Urbandale Schools will be dedicated. This 'plaza' by the Gazebo and centered around the Urbandale Flag pole.

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### **Programs**

We have had a number of quite successful programs this past year and are looking forward to some fun ones for the remainder of the season.

Mary Polson & Ann Ulm took us on a tour of McDivitt Cemetery in February. We learned some interesting tidbits about the residents there. Still wondering just where Mr. McDivitt is. They also shared with us news of a projects starting to bring the bell from the original McDivitt Grove church back to the cemetery. More on that to come.

**Tim Carver** shared the glory day of Urbandale High School

Athletics and Activities in March. While we all are convinced the 'glory days' were the time we spent in high school,

Tim actually showed us that Urbandale Glory days were more recent with a large number of conference and state championship appearances.



Unfortunately, our April event on getting our gardens ready has been cancelled. We will have this topic next Spring for sure.

Upcoming in May (**May 18, 2-4 pm Urbandale Library**) **Stephanie Harrington**, ISU Extension, will be telling us how to get our garden ready and thriving through the summer and fall.

In June (**June 8, 2-4 pm Urbandale Library**), Dr. Rosale Daca, Urbandale School Superintendent and Dean Hatch will be sharing a history of the Urbandale Schools. They have been collecting some interesting stories of the schools.

If there are any special programs you would like to see, please send us a note ([urbandalehistory@gmail.com](mailto:urbandalehistory@gmail.com))

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### **URBANDALE ALUMNI ASSOCIATION**

The Urbandale Alumni have been quite active and have several upcoming events. First is the work renovating the 'Heritage Room' at the Olmsted-Urban House.



The Urbandale Schools and Alumni Foundation and the Urbandale Alumni Association will be hosting the 2025 U-Fest on **Saturday, June 21**. This is one of their largest fundraisers supporting student scholarships and classroom grants in the Urbandale Community School District. **U-Fest** is a fun, family-friendly event featuring food, alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages, and live music! It will be at the Walker Johnston Park Shelter House (9000 Douglas Ave, Urbandale) on Saturday, **June 21, 2025, 5-10 pm**.



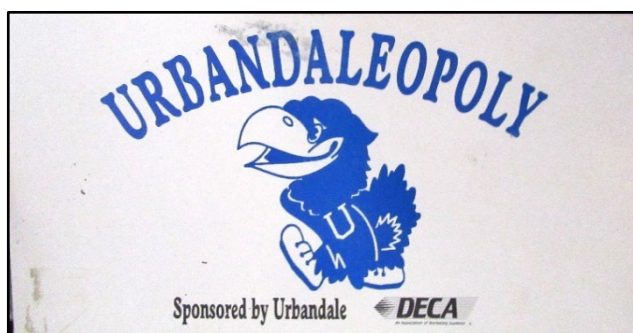
On **Monday, June 23, 2025** (11:00 am - 5:00 pm) they will be hosting their annual Golf Tournament at the Hyperion Field Club. This event is an annual fundraiser in support of student scholarships and classroom grants.

The Alumnus of the Year for 2025 is Audrey DeCarlo from the Class of 1964. **The Retired Teachers(s) of the Year for 2025** are **Wade and Sherry Winters and Denny and Jackie Frerichs**. They will be recognized during the Ice Cream Social. In addition, the Alumni Association has chosen a Host and Hostess for the event. The Hostess is **Nona Wilson Warden** from the Class of 1954 and **Kolson O'Donnell** from the Class of 2024. They represent a 70-year span for Urbandale Schools. These awards will coincide with dedication of the bricks surrounding the historic flagpole at the home, and the Urbandale Historical Society's annual **Ice Cream Social**.



For more information on these events and other activities of the Urbandale Alumni please visit their website: <https://urbsaf.org> and Facebook page.

## UrbandaleOpoly



The Des Moines Register recently reported that Des Moines may be getting a version of the popular Monopoly game. This is nice, but Urbandale had its own 'Monopoly' game in the last century. The Urbandale HS DECA program developed and sold 'Urbandaleopoly' back in the late 1990s.



## Our Urbandale Rusks

Virginia Gee is always finding interesting pieces to include in our Newsletter. She sent us some recordings of Clay Rusk hosting his Town and Country Quiz show for WHO radio. This brings home the question – who was Clay Rusk? He was a charter member of the Urbandale Lions Club and its first President. The article below was written by Mrs. Jessie Lamb in June 1956.

*"Clay Rusk is well known around Iowa. He is on radio and television every day. He has been in nearly every town in Iowa with Town and Country Quiz, and in Urbandale twice.*

*It's true, he is widely and favorably known. But there have been years behind all this which would make an interesting "This is Your Life" picture. It is mostly with those years that this brief sketch will deal.*

*Clay grew up on a farm near Lorimor, Iowa [born in 1908]. When he was fifteen his family, consisting of his parents, a brother and three sisters, moved to Newton, where he attended high school. After graduating he worked at the Maytag factory.*

*One of the diversions in small towns in those days was the Saturday night open air band concert. Prairie City, nearby, furnished such an attraction. Clay and a group of fellows occasionally attended. It was a good place for "boy meets girl." That is where Loyal Clayton Rusk met Ethel Van Bentem. She, too, had finished high school and was working for the Bell Telephone Co. She was the youngest of seven*

sisters. Clay and Ethel's friendship grew and after a few more concerts and dances following, they began making plans for the future together. They were married in 1934.

Clay continued with the Maytag Co., but strikes and hard times necessitated filling in with other sidelines. Selling and servicing Hoover vacuum cleaners in Ames one summer was one of these. He did so well with Hoover he won one as a prize, but, having no rug to clean, he sold it to help pay doctor bills. Ethel had been in very poor health for nearly a year, and little Johnny was running around by that time.

In 1937 the radio broadcasting station at Marshalltown announced a speaking contest for the purpose of attracting talented prospects. Though he had no training whatsoever as a public speaker, Clay entered the contest and won first place. A job went with the choice, but the salary was only fifteen dollars a week, plus experience which was of value.

When the going was unusually rough at Newton, he decided to accept the Marshalltown offer. After a while he applied, for work at WHO. There being no openings here, he heard of one at Davenport and accepted it. They spent one and a half years there, during which time their second son, David, was born. Their next move was to Oklahoma City, to WKY. After five months there, WHO had an opening and they moved back to Iowa to take advantage of it.

As they sought a place to live, they were attracted to the wide-open spaces out Urbandale way, and that is how we came to have them in our midst. They came in September, 1942 and bought a home at 6720 Madison. They sold it in 1946 and purchased 6809 Roseland.

From the low rung of the ladder each move brought them up a step higher, so by this time they not only had a rug, but were able to remodel the house. Clay also owned and operated the Urbandale Realty Co.

For some time, Clay had been dreaming of the idea of a Town and Country Quiz program. In 1947 he tried one out at the Indianola Fair. It met with considerable favor and he was encouraged to go on with it. He did, until he had covered Iowa and parts of Missouri and Illinois. It succeeded beyond his fondest dreams. In 1948 they built and moved into their present home at 3809 67<sup>th</sup> St.

The Rusks have always been a church-minded family. Wherever they moved, their church letters and their stewardship went with them. Ethel has taken an active part as teacher in the Community Church school here, has served as president of Women's Fellowship, and is now director of the Congregational Des Moines Association Women's Fellowship. She has also served as president and secretary of the Urbandale PTA.

John, who was graduated from our high school this year, won first division honors in a state speech contest. He had a leading role in the Senior play. David, a junior next year, is active in sports.

Clay has been deacon, elder and chairman of the church board. They came into the church at a time when it was much in need of just the boost the Rusks were able to give and they were able to give and that have been dependable workers.

We are happy that the Rusks chose Urbandale for their home. Keep on climbing that ladder! And thank you for all your inspiration to us."

After retiring from WHO in 1970, Clay moved to Allenspark, CO. He died Oct. 22, 1999 and is buried in Resthaven Cemetery in West Des Moines, IA alongside Ethel (1910-1971).

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#### MEMBERSHIP

Our Membership year runs from Jan 1 through Dec 31. For all those who have renewed for 2025, thank you. To Renew or Join, you can go online at [www.urbandalehistoricalsociety.org](http://www.urbandalehistoricalsociety.org) under the Membership tab for membership information.

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#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF SUPPORTERS





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