

VOLUME 6 | ISSUE 1 | SUMMER 2025

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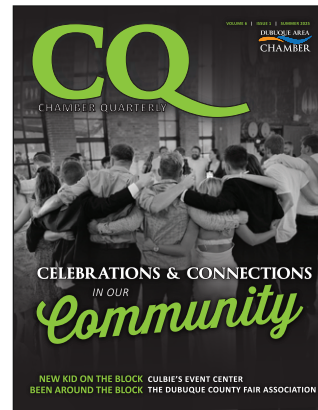
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On the cover

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CHAMBER

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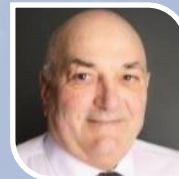
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WELCOME

FROM THE CHAMBER PRESIDENT /CEO



O h, how we love to spend our summers gathering, celebrating and connecting with one another here at the Dubuque Area Chamber of Commerce.

In this summer issue, we wanted to highlight members of the community that have created spaces for just that. We know that one space can mean something completely different to one person than the next, whether it be a memory, a feeling or a new experience. From magical places to see the beauty of nature and from planting flowers to food, learning a new dance, celebrating milestones with your family, connecting with your community about topics that are important to you, and collecting memories of the smells and thrills of your childhood at the fair, these members have brought our community closer in so many different ways.

We at the Dubuque Area Chamber of Commerce want to remind you to connect, celebrate and enjoy your community and the people around you as we do our part to advocate, connect and educate.

Sincerely,

Molly Grover CCE, IOM
President & CEO



Welcome New Members



1/21/2025



1/21/2025



1/22/2025



1/27/2025



2/3/2025



2/3/2025

Welcome New Members



2/10/2025



3/7/2025



3/12/2025



2/11/2025



3/3/2025



3/20/2025

Welcome New Members



3/13/2025



3/24/2025

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Welcome New Members



3/24/2025



3/26/2025



4/1/2025



4/2/2025



4/7/2025



4/14/2025



Children take part in a dance as part of the Dubuque Carnegie-Stout Public Library's Summer Reading Program at the Dubuque Arboretum & Botanical Gardens.

CELEBRATIONS AND CONNECTIONS IN OUR COMMUNITY

BY DUSTIN KASS

On a recent pleasant May day, the sun was shining, a light breeze blew, and the Dubuque Arboretum & Botanical Gardens was a popular destination.

A vibrant gem of the Dubuque area, the arboretum long has been a favorite spot for area residents as well as visitors from across the country and beyond.

Just that morning, tourists from Kentucky had stopped by and signed the guestbook, noted arboretum Executive Director Jenna Hirtz.

"We bring in people from all over the world," she said, citing that the site draws 90,000 visitors annually. "We strive to be a garden for everyone."

That commitment to being a community gathering space is a driver of the efforts of the arboretum. That same desire to bring together and serve all aspects of the community shapes the work at Convivium Urban Farmstead, Steeple Square and 7 Hills Ballroom & Event Center.



DUBUQUE ARBORETUM & BOTANICAL GARDENS

A defining element of Dubuque Arboretum & Botanical Gardens, 3800 Arboretum Drive, is there is no cost to visit. That removes any financial barriers that might prevent community members from enjoying this slice of nature in the city limits.

Hirtz is quick to note that the dedication of hundreds of volunteers enables the arboretum to offer its free admission.

"It's really special when you get to meet volunteers," she said. "They share how they got connected to you. You hear everybody's stories."

Since Hirtz's arrival in the fall of 2021, the arboretum has ramped up its efforts to offer a wider array of events and programming to attract a broader range of people.

Arboretum officials also recently completed a master planning process that looked at goals for the next 20 years. The effort included discussions about additional gardens that could be added, improvements for accessibility, the possibility of more event buildings on the grounds and much more.

The plan helps give arboretum leaders a game plan as the site celebrates its 45th anniversary this year.



Volunteers work in the flower gardens at the Dubuque Arboretum & Botanical Gardens.

CONVIVIAM URBAN FARMSTEAD

Convivium Urban Farmstead, 2811 Jackson St., has evolved in many ways since it opened in 2017, noted cofounder Leslie Shalabi.

For example, at that time, it would have been tough to envision the launching of a free community casserole time during a pandemic and its enduring

We're really touching people lives with food ... but it's not really about food. It's about that connection.

**Convivium Urban Farmstead cofounder
Leslie Shalabi**



Convivium server Jo Wisner (left) shares a laugh with customer.



Stacey Tittle prepares tuna noodle casseroles at Convivium Urban Farmstead.

impact five years later. More than 40,000 casseroles have been distributed free of charge.

"We're really touching people lives with food ... but it's not really about food," Shalabi said. "It's about that connection."

That connection can be seen in the teams of volunteers who make the casseroles and in the friendships that have formed among those who receive them.

The casserole program is just one aspect of Convivium's work, which also includes its coffee house and restaurant, as well as classes, demonstrations and experiences related to the production of food, the preparation and preservation of food, and the sharing and enjoyment of food. Three hundred volunteers provide crucial service to the entire mission.

The array of offerings is unique to the area, and when Shalabi thinks to the future, she wonders if Convivium can develop "some kind of toolkit or workshop or online course that quantifies what we've done here and how we've done it."

"That way, we could share the lessons learned," she said.

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STEEPLE SQUARE

Terry Friedman recently uncovered notes from 2015 about proposed uses and goals for the former St. Mary's Catholic Church campus in Dubuque.

"We sought to be a beacon in that area," he said of the ideas.

Ten years later, the property is now well-known as Steeple Square, and many of those goals have been achieved, according to Friedman, president of the nonprofit's

board of directors.

The former school became Francis Apartments. They are now owned by Dubuque nonprofit Opening Doors and provide affordable housing for graduates of the Maria House and Theresa Shelter, which serve women and children facing homelessness. Maria House, which offers transitional housing, also is located on the Steeple Square campus.

The Marita Theisen Childcare Center



Exterior views of Steeple Square in Dubuque.



Attendees listen to a panel presentation during an event hosted by Dubuque Women's Leadership Network at Steeple Square.

in the former rectory offers more than 60 child care slots and is operated by HACAP (Hawkeye Area Community Action Program).

The picturesque Steeple Square Community Event Center is located in the former church and hosts a range of events, including weddings, job fairs and fundraisers. The building also houses a culinary kitchen and programming and meeting space.

Friedman reflected on how important it was to supporters to preserve the “iconic building” and transform the campus into something that could be part of efforts to revitalize the city’s North End.

But their work is not done. Friedman came across those old notes just before Steeple Square leaders were about to embark on another master planning session to discuss future plans.

“We still have a lot of opportunity to grow,” Friedman said.

7 HILLS BALLROOM & EVENT CENTER

When it comes to community gathering spaces in Dubuque’s Millwork District, there is a good chance that 7 Hills Brewing Co. is involved.



7 Hills Brewing Co. in Dubuque.

In addition to its flagship brewery and restaurant at 1085 Washington St., the company operates 7 Hills Event Center, 1098 Jackson St., and 7 Hills Ballroom, which is the former Millwork Ballroom in

the Novelty Iron Works building at 333 E. 10th St.

7 Hills has operated the event center since 2019. At 3,500 square feet, it is ready to accommodate as many as 150



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The bar at 7 Hills Brewing Co.

attendees. It commonly hosts events such as graduation parties, bridal and baby showers, family reunions, wedding rehearsal dinners, holiday parties and celebration-of-life events.

The ballroom came under 7 Hills' management more recently: at the beginning of 2024. At 7,200 square feet, it can handle up to 480 guests and is a popular venue for wedding receptions and large fundraising events.

"That space has so much character," said 7 Hills Director of Events Kelly Hall in talking about what sets apart the ballroom. "Its very industrial feeling. It has the feel of the Millwork District."

In addition to its Dubuque locations, the company operates 7 Hills West in Dyersville, Iowa.

Meanwhile, in Platteville, Wis., it runs 7 Hills North brewpub, Beastro Se7en bistro-style eatery, and 7 Hills on the Course in-house bar and restaurant at Platteville Golf and Country Club.

When asked about possible future plans for 7 Hills, Hall said there is a need for event space in southwest Wisconsin and suggested that the company might pursue that.

"Growth is part of our daily operation," she said.

"That space has so much character. Its very industrial feeling. It has the feel of the Millwork District."

7 Hills Director of Events Kelly Hall

NEW KID ON THE BLOCK

CULBIE'S EVENT CENTER



Culbie's Event Center is located at 90 Sinsinawa Ave. in East Dubuque, Ill.

BY DUSTIN KASS

EAST DUBUQUE, Ill. — A new event center in East Dubuque already is attracting widespread interest — and its doors aren't even open yet.

Work on Culbie's Event Center at 90 Sinsinawa Ave. continues, with the facility slated to open in July.

The newly constructed, 9,000-square-foot center will be capable of accommodating up to 800 guests.

Its features include a 6,000-square-foot ballroom and a 3,500-square-foot covered patio with a beer garden. Those options already are being booked for weddings and other events.



The building also will house a bar and gaming parlor that will be open daily.

"We have quite a few events already booked," said Stacy Raap, Culbie's vice president of event planning, during an interview in mid-May. "People have been really receptive, and feedback has been really positive."

CHANGE OF PLANS FOR SITE

The lot at 90 Sinsinawa Ave. once housed a building that was, at various times, home to the Circle bar as well as a strip club. That structure was demolished in 2016.

The City of East Dubuque bought the parcel in 2022, with plans for it to be the site of a new fire station. However, facing financial difficulties, City Council members voted in February 2024 to sell it to Mike Meyer.

Meyer, the owner of the neighboring The OtherSide bar and restaurant, is one of three prominent businessmen who partnered on a new vision for the site – to bring Culbie's to fruition.

Meyer is joined by long-time friends Toby Culbertson, whose family founded and runs T&T Iron & Metals, Inc., and Todd Colin, who co-founded Rockfarm Supply Chain Solutions and who became the chief integration officer of Redwood Logistics when that company acquired Rockfarm in 2023.

On the Culbie's website, all three men talked about their desire to create an event center that would boost the community and serve as a



Though it hasn't opened its doors yet, Culbie's already is seeing interest in booking its space.



We have quite a few events already booked. People have been really receptive, and feedback has been really positive.

Stacy Raap, Culbie's vice president of event planning





Culbie's is a project brought to life by three prominent local businessmen.

gathering space.

"In carrying the torch for local entertainment and culture while serving as the lifeblood of the downtown community, it only made sense that they would come together to create a venue that would bring families, entertainment seekers and communities together for generations yet to come, while giving back to this community that has shaped their own lives," it states. "They welcome you and your family, in whatever form that family takes, to this place that embodies the fruits of their lifelong labors and passions."

THE FACILITY

Culbie's design will allow it to host a wide range of events, with renters having the ability to select the space or spaces needed to accommodate their attendees.

The early results show the

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Culbie's facilities will allow it to host a variety of types of events.

demand. For example, Raap noted that the initial demand for wedding-related space is so strong that the event center is booked on multiple weekends in August.

In addition to weddings, officials cited uses such as corporate events, nonprofit fundraisers, galas, graduation and retirement parties, bridal and baby showers, booster club events, conferences and conventions.

Raap also mentioned plans to have live music in the event space, to host dinners and shows monthly, to host

line dancing, and much more.

She believes the outdoor space also will be heavily used, both in conjunction with events and at other times.

Culbie's aims to be an integral part of the East Dubuque experience.

"We hope it brings more people back to East Dubuque, brings people across the bridge, and supports the economic growth and trajectory of East Dubuque and really the whole tri-state area," Raap said.



We hope it brings more people back to East Dubuque, brings people across the bridge, and supports the economic growth and trajectory of East Dubuque and really the whole tri-state area.

**Stacy Raap, Culbie's
vice president of event
planning**

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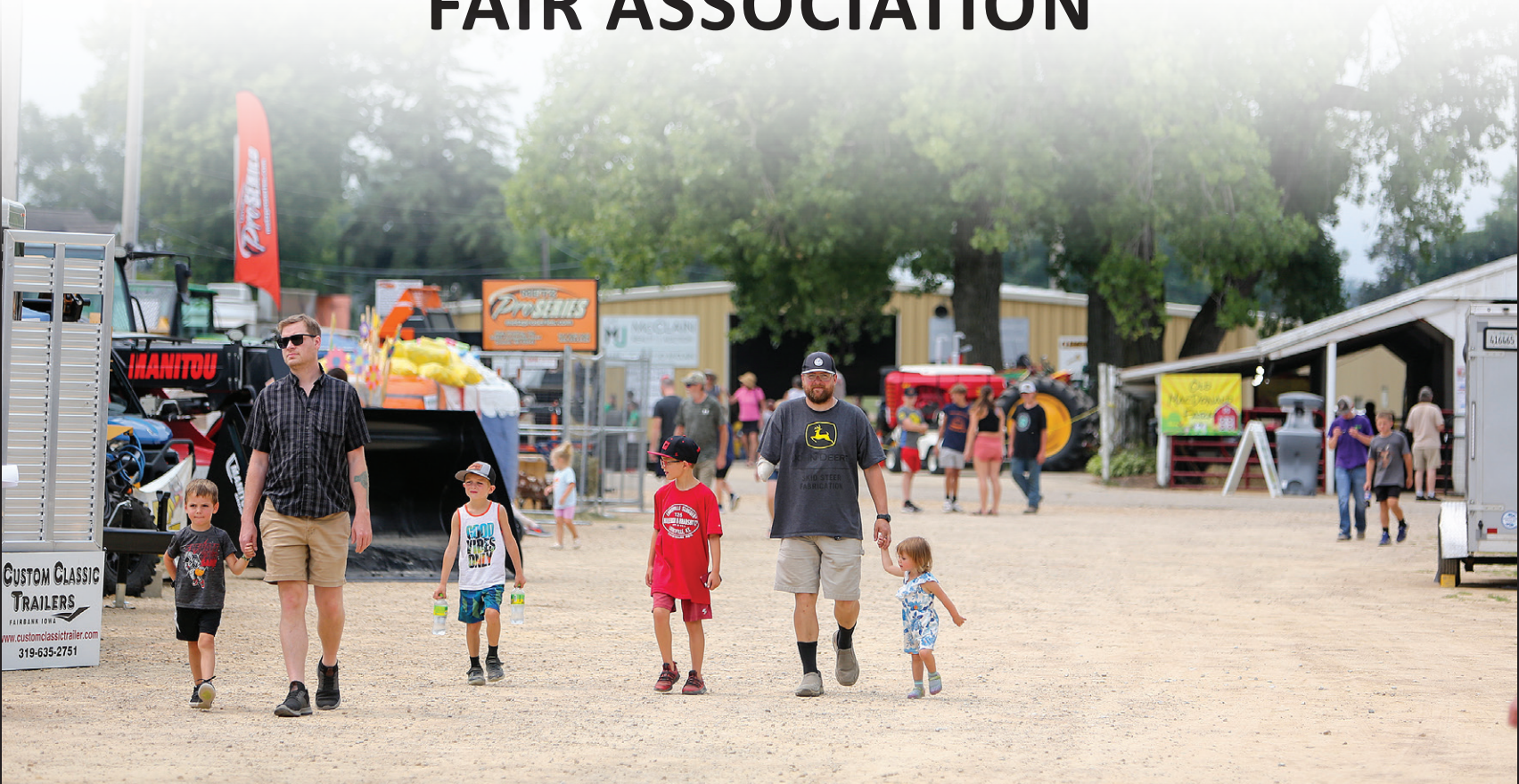
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BEEN AROUND THE BLOCK

THE DUBUQUE COUNTY FAIR ASSOCIATION



People walk through the Dubuque County Fair.

BY DUSTIN KASS

The Dubuque County Fair serves as a centerpiece for many people's summers.

A Dubuque native, John Bries knew that well when he became the Dubuque County Fair Association's general manager last fall. The fair draws tens of thousands of people to enjoy the animals, rides, games, food, grandstand entertainment and action on the racetrack.

What Bries did not fully grasp is just how busy the fairgrounds remains throughout the "offseason," if you can even use that term.

From wedding receptions to country line dancing to auctions, the fairgrounds bustles with activity throughout the year.



“Before I took this job, I always knew there were other events out here, but I had no idea that it was every day all year long, with the phones ringing and people stopping in,” he said.

A common thread: Both the annual fair and the array of other events draw a wide scope of attendees, with folks from different walks of life enjoying themselves side by side.

“It’s great being able to come out here and see all the ages -- everybody comes out here,” Bries said. “Everybody is welcome. Everybody treats each other with respect.”

FAIR WEEK

This year’s Dubuque County Fair will be held from July 22 to 27.

Preparations for the 2025 iteration of the annual event started not long after the 2024 event wrapped up – and before Bries was hired.

He jumped right into those efforts when he joined the fair association. It’s the behind-the-scenes work that few see but that ensure the 96-acre site is Dubuque County’s foremost attraction in late July.

Bries remembers attending the fair as a kid. He was wowed by all of the rides, the races, the big crowds.

As a young adult, he remembers coming out for concerts and other entertainment.

Fair officials focus on landing an array of family-friendly offerings and providing a place where the community can come together.

“We want to be where families can come and enjoy themselves together,” he said.

THE ‘OFFSEASON’

The fairgrounds remains a hub of activity outside of fair week.

Attendees of wedding receptions, auctions and fundraisers pack the parking lots. There are car cruise-ins, baptism celebrations and



A couple enjoys a cup of shaved ice at the Dubuque County Fair.

truck shows held at the site.

The recent installment of the annual Vintage Torque Fest drew an estimated 10,000 people per day, according to Bries. And Hospice of Dubuque’s popular Best-Fest moved to the fairgrounds this year.

The Wild West Wednesday weekly line dances continue to be a big draw, Bries noted.

“It’s packed every week,” he said. “There’s all different types of age groups, all different types of people.”

WHAT LIES AHEAD

Bries sees a bright future for the fairgrounds, but challenges remain.

Like nearly all nonprofit organizations, funding always is a concern. Bries noted that while the fair “brings in a ton of people and involves a ton of work, we haven’t really been making a ton of money.” He said the association views holding the annual fair as more of a community service effort.

The association focuses on making money by hosting the wide array of events outside of fair season. Bries said his



The Dubuque County Fair Association’s annual Blue Ribbon Breakfast event drew an estimated 1,000 attendees this year.

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goal is to be creative when it comes to these and to bring in some new offerings if possible.

The grounds also could use some physical upgrades. Bries talked about some “cosmetic” work that could be done to the Grand Ballroom to give it an updated feel. Fair officials also are looking for funding to address the medical shed used by members of the sheriff’s and fire departments during events like stockcar races.

The fair association continues to enjoy strong support from the community, Bries noted. He said they receive help from 50 to 75 volunteers for some of the larger events.

That community connection was part of the appeal when Bries sought the general manager position.

“When I took the job, it was because the fair is a non-profit and a big part of the community,” he said.



Car enthusiasts walk through Vintage Torque Fest at the Dubuque County Fairgrounds.



Attendees dance during Wild West Wednesday at Dubuque County Fairgrounds.

THROUGH THE CAMERA LENS



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A crawler dozer assembly line at John Deere Dubuque Works during Manufacturing Appreciation Tours 2025.

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A crawler dozer chassis being filled with subassembly parts during Manufacturing Appreciation Tours 2025 on May 13.



The Dubuque Area Chamber of Commerce tour enters John Deere Works facility on May 13.

RIBBON CUTTINGS



The Iowa Power
Ribbon cutting date: 4/8/2025



Butt's Florist
Ribbon cutting date: 3/31/2025
3220 Dodge St., No. 106



Gateway Appliance,
Ribbon cutting date: 4/10/2025
2600 Dodge St., suite B1-B3

RIBBON CUTTINGS



Wildflower Kids Dentistry
Ribbon cutting date: 4/10/2025
3455 Stoneman Road, No. 2B



Roses & Berries Cafe
Ribbon cutting date: 4/28/2025
4340 Asbury Road, suite 2

RIBBON CUTTINGS



1-800-Tshirts

Ribbon cutting date: 4/28/2025
7010 Chavenelle Road



Equity Real Estate Group

Ribbon cutting date: 4/23/2025
3415 Stoneman Road, suite 5

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