

IOWA RESTAURANT ASSOCIATION'S PREMIER PUBLICATION FOR THE RESTAURANT AND BAR INDUSTRY

WINTER 2023 | ISSUE 57

Food & Beverage Iowa Business

Celebrating Iowa's Hospitality Industry

***Inside: 90th Anniversary of Iowa Restaurant Association |
30th Year of State Award Winners | 5th Class of 40 Women to Watch***

Heartland



Restaurant

Powerful. Scalable.
Feature-rich point of sale.



One integrated suite to streamline your entire operations from online to prep line.

- Cloud-based Point of Sale
- Self Order Kiosk
- Mobile Ordering
- Guest Application
- Gift Cards and Loyalty

 Turn Tables Faster

 Skip the Line

 Sync Servers and Kitchen in Real Time

 Manage Orders From Tableside to Online to Delivery

 Access Menus, Inventory and Sales from Any Device

John Stepanek
john.stepanek@e-hps.com
(314) 5604650

Food & Beverage Iowa Business

6. **Cover Story: Honorees Exemplify Innovation, Vision & Savviness**
7. **Restaurateurs: Dave & Jean Thompson**
8. **Chef: Chef Monkut Sayasit**
11. **Emerging Leader: Sammy Mila**
12. **Rural Operator: Chelsea Johnsen**
15. **Employee: Andy Hoffman**
16. **Purveyor: Scott Ites**
18. **Faces of Diversity: Brenda Tran**
19. **American Dream: Taufeeq Shah**
21. **Philanthropist: Willie Ray Fairley Jr.**
22. **Educator: Chef Rolando Molina**
23. **Mentor: Chef Andy Walsh**
24. **Champion: Joe McConville**
26. **Sustainability: Big Grove Brewery**
29. **Legislator: Representative Dave Deyoe**
34. **Cover Story: 2023 40 Women to Watch**
35. **40 Women to Watch Bios**

STAY CONNECTED!



/iowarestaurantassociation



@iowarestaurant



/company/iowa-restaurant-association



@iowarestaurant



PROTECT PROMOTE EDUCATE ADVOCATE

Since 1933, Iowa's Professional Association of the Restaurant and Retail Beverage Industries

Food & Beverage Iowa Business Quarterly

1501 42nd St., Ste 294
West Des Moines, IA 50266
Phone: 515-276-1454
Fax: 515-276-3660
Email: info@restaurantiowa.com
www.restaurantiowa.com

Officers

CHAIR
Amy Walsh
Mickey's Irish Pub
Waukee, IA

CHAIR-ELECT
Alexis Lundgren
Trackside Bar & Grill
Peosta, IA

IMMEDIATE PAST CHAIR
Joe McConville
Gusto Pizza
Des Moines, IA

Directors

Jeanine Buckingham
Orchestrate Hospitality
Des Moines, IA

Heidi Baratta
Baratta's Restaurant
Council Bluffs, IA

Steve Casteel
Payteva
Des Moines, IA

Kyle Dehmow
Whiskey Road Tavern
Cedar Falls, IA

Ross Groeneweg
Pizza Ranch Inc
Orange City, IA

Marty Hayes
7G Distributing
Cedar Rapids, IA

Matt Johnson
Barley's Bar & Grill
Council Bluffs, IA

Paul Kay
Parkside Brewing Company
Burlington, IA

Jake Kendall
Culver's Restaurant
Cedar Rapids, IA

Chef Zeph Leaton
Riverside Casino
Riverside, IA

Robyn McSheehy
Trostell's Greenbriar
Johnston, IA

Bret Petersen
Martin Bros. Distributing Co., Inc.
Cedar Falls, Iowa

Jeremy Thompson
Sazerac Co.
Des Moines, IA

Russell Vannorsdel
Fridley Theatres
Des Moines, IA

Food & Beverage Iowa Business

Publisher/Editorial Director

Jessica Dunker, President/CEO
Iowa Restaurant Association
jdunker@restaurantiowa.com

Managing Editor

Emilee Zimmerman, Public Relations Specialist
Iowa Restaurant Association
ezimmerman@restaurantiowa.com

Advertising

Stacy Kluesner, Vice President
Iowa Restaurant Association
skluesner@restaurantiowa.com

Please support the advertisers herein; they have made this publication possible. For information on advertising opportunities and a media kit, please contact Stacy Kluesner at skluesner@restaurantiowa.com.

IRA Membership

To learn more about membership in the Iowa Restaurant Association, please contact Stacy Kluesner at 515-276-1454 or skluesner@restaurantiowa.com.

News

News releases and editorial queries are accepted at ezimmerman@restaurantiowa.com or call at 515-276-1454

Food & Beverage Iowa Business Quarterly is the official publication of the Iowa Restaurant Association. It is produced four times a year and is distributed to licensed restaurant and retail beverage establishments in Iowa. Editorial features cover business, legislative, and other trends impacting Iowa members & proprietors.

The Iowa Restaurant Association is the state affiliate of the National Restaurant Association.

Iowa Restaurant Association and Food & Beverage Iowa Business Quarterly are trademarks of the Iowa Restaurant Association. All other trademarks and registered trademarks are those of respective companies.

*Disclaimer: all artwork is NOT available for reuse.





Letter from the Editor

On September 6, 1933, in the wake of Prohibition's repeal, a group of Iowa restaurateurs gathered in Des Moines to create a statewide association. More than just a professional trade association focused on food and drinks; the group hoped to foster unity, influence legislative decisions, and ensure the "just enforcement of laws" governing the state's hospitality endeavors.

Fast forward to today, and that sentiment is still at the heart of the Iowa Restaurant Association's mission to Protect, Promote, Educate, and Advocate on behalf of the state's hospitality industry.

Iowa was one of the first states to affiliate with the National Restaurant Association. When attending state and national events, Iowa hospitality operators were easy to spot in their matching red

blazers they sported, earning them the nickname the "IRA Red Coats." The Association's alliance with the NRA has stood the test of time, ensuring Iowa's members have national representation and access to industry education.

In 1935, the Association held its inaugural convention. By 1937, it was marketed as the "greatest exposition of its kind west of the Mississippi." It was even the stage for the annual crowning of "Miss Iowa Restaurant." The 1990s saw a strategic shift away from conventions, as the Association turned its focus toward supporting the annual events of its purveyor partners.

I am the ninth person to have the honor of serving in the role of Chief Executive Officer and am proud to serve alongside the latest group of volunteer industry professionals, hundreds of whom have served on the Association's board of directors and shaped our legislative agendas over the years.

Our communication tools have also changed. The Association's first publication, "The Appetizer," was created by E.L. Beck, the group's first executive secretary. The publication has evolved over the years and is now the glossy color magazine you see today.

In 1995, the state's tavern owners became members, folding their State Association of Beverage Retail Establishments (SABRE) into the restaurant association. Our mission has remained steadfast— representing the collective legislative interests of our industry in Des Moines and Washington, D.C.

Because of the foresight and vision of those early restaurateurs, the Iowa Restaurant Association (IRA) proudly remains the organization that unites, protects, and champions Iowa's vibrant hospitality industry.

Cheers to another 90 years!

Jessica Dunker
President & CEO
Iowa Restaurant Association



Sourcing with Purpose

Over 1.3 million acres are devoted to Sysco Brand agricultural products worldwide.

By choosing Sysco Brand canned and frozen fruits & vegetables, Sysco customers aren't only serving great meals today – they're serving a commitment to a more sustainable future.



Visit www.syscofoodie.com/sustainable-agriculture to learn more about Sysco's commitment to sustainable agriculture.

Delivering a Better Tomorrow®

A collage of four images is at the bottom of the page. On the left is a close-up of several ripe red tomatoes on a vine. In the center is a close-up of green bell peppers on a plant. At the bottom center is a close-up of a bee on a yellow flower. On the right is a close-up of several green avocados hanging from a branch. Overlaid on the tomato and pepper images is a dark blue circular badge with a white serrated edge. Inside the badge, the text 'Congratulations TO THIS YEAR'S IRA HONOREES' is written in a white, stylized font.

Congratulations
TO
**THIS YEAR'S
IRA HONOREES**

Hospitality Honorees Exemplify Innovation, Vision, & Savviness

As we mark the 90th anniversary of the Iowa Restaurant Association, we celebrate more than the longevity of a professional trade organization. We're also taking a moment to recognize the committed operators, dedicated employees, and unwavering champions that make Iowa's hospitality industry truly exceptional. Nominated by restaurant and bar owners, employees, and customers, and then reviewed and selected by the Association's leadership, fourteen honorees are being celebrated for their professionalism, excellence, creativity, and commitment to customer experience.

Three of the award winners—American Dream, Faces of Diversity, and Restaurant Neighbor Philanthropist— will also be elevated as Iowa's nominees for national award consideration.

"Iowa's hospitality industry is the state's second largest private sector employer, underlying the significant role it plays in both Iowa's economy and communities," said Jessica Dunker, president and CEO of the Iowa Restaurant Association. "Narrowing the choice down to a single winner in each category is a nearly impossible task, but each recipient has more than earned his or her spot on an illustrious list of previous honorees."

Each awardee also has a compelling story of how he or she has made the industry their life's passion and career. Each is featured in the following pages, as well as in videos available on the Iowa Restaurant Association's YouTube Channel.

Restaurateurs | Dave & Jean Thompson

District 36, Urban Grill, Urban Cellar, Urban on the Square | Greater Des Moines



Dave and Jean Thompson's hospitality journey is filled with family and friends that feel like family. The couple got their start when Dave, who ran a construction company, helped his longtime friend Alvin "Skip" Bachman develop a series of Des Moines area favorites—Skip's, Francie's, Nick's Bar and Grill, and Urban Grill. Dave often spent evenings volunteering at Skip's. "I loved the rush of a busy restaurant," shares Dave. "After 23 years in the construction industry I knew I belonged somewhere else."

He closed his construction company and went to work for Skip – eventually becoming a business partner. He took full ownership of Urban Grill in 2013. Wife Jean, who worked in finance, joined the operation shortly after and the couple has spent the past decade methodically building a successful restaurant group of their own.

Together they opened District 36 Wine Bar, Urban Cellar, and most recently Urban on the Square in Winterset. Technically the couple is in the process of retiring. They have turned over day-to-day management and ownership of their various concepts to family and/or longtime employees. However, their definition of retirement is not typical. "We've got a couple of projects in the works," laughs Dave, who despite making the switch to hospitality, never stopped chasing the thrill of building something new. Jean says the new projects are still "on brand" for the

couple who strive to make everything they touch family-focused and family-friendly. They want young people to see the potential and quality of careers available in the restaurant industry.

"We ask our team, where do you want to be in two years, five years, ten years, and if we're in a position to help them achieve those dreams—we try to open doors."

While they may not be as operationally involved as they once were, both Dave and Jean can still be found greeting patrons at Urban Grill and Urban Cellar. "Interacting with customers will always be my favorite," says Dave.

Empowering team members, creating partnership models, and giving that first break to people who want to be in the business is the legacy Dave and Jean Thompson hope to leave behind. They are lessons learned from Skip and they plan to pass them on.

That innovation, mentorship and leadership in the restaurant industry, is why Dave and Jean Thompson are the 2023 Iowa Restaurant Association's Restaurateurs of the Year.

Chef | Chef Monkut Sayasit

Black Sheep Social Club | Cedar Rapids

Chef Monkut Sayasit has been an integral part of elevating the Cedar Rapids culinary scene for more than 25 years. He started in the industry as a teen working as a dishwasher at Bishop's Buffet alongside his mother, who worked as a baker.

The now Executive Chef honed his culinary skills in professional kitchens across the city, working with a variety of cuisine types and service models. He advanced through the ranks at restaurants such as VINO's Ristorante, Daniel Arthur's, Betas and the Cedar Rapids Country Club. He joined the Black Sheep Social Club in 2018 and his influence on both the menu and kitchen operation was immediately evident.

From its opening, the Black Sheep Social Club has featured "Midwest favorites with inspired new twists and international influence." This provided the ideal culinary platform for Chef Mon, a voracious reader of global cookbooks. His family immigrated from Laos, and while he likes nearly everything, his favorite flavors are still rooted in the Asian fare he grew up eating at home.

His innovative fusion dishes have received accolades from across the state. Chef Mon has won the Iowa Pork Producers Taste of Elegance Competition four times, as well as received top placements in the Iowa ACF competition and the Iowa Restaurant Association's Culinary Competition.

He believes if you look good, you cook well. He teaches his team to "clean as they cook" and subscribes to the principle that "kitchens should be a lively brotherhood." But the most important advice he gives to aspiring chefs is not about kitchens or culinary trends.

"Cooking is the easy part. Success is about management, numbers, and math. You can't escape math."

As a chef who found his training in local restaurants, Chef Mon takes seriously his role to help foster the growth of up-



and-coming talent. He is quick to consider menu suggestions from his line cooks and credits them as the inspiration for some of the restaurant's most popular seasonal offerings. He beams when he speaks of former employees who have gone on to be executive chefs in other restaurants.

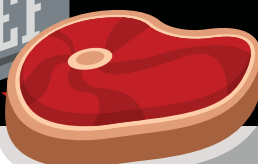
For both his culinary innovation and his ability to recruit, retain and manage an award-winning team, Chef Monkut Sayasit is the 2023 Iowa Restaurant Association Chef of the Year.

The MVP

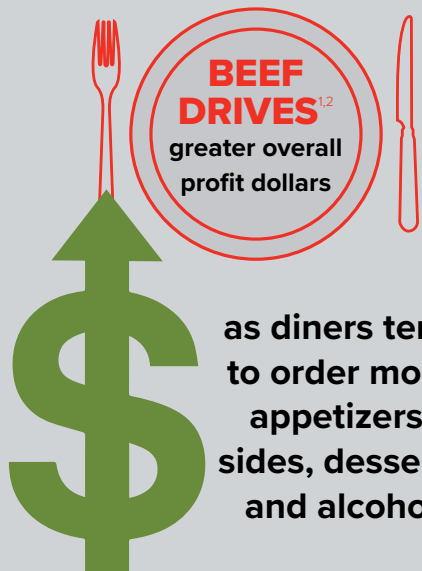
[Most Valuable *Protein* in Foodservice]



BEEF.
IT'S WHAT'S FOR DINNER.®



Sales:

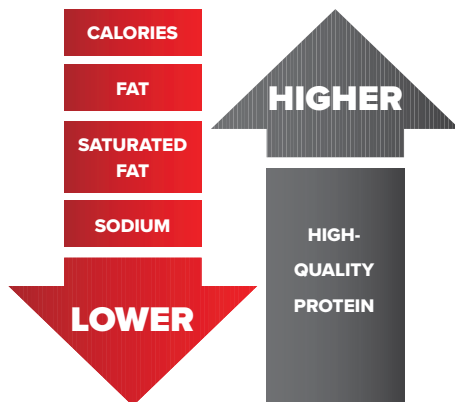


as diners tend to order more appetizers, sides, desserts and alcohol

Sustenance:

93%

Lean Ground Beef



Than Meat Substitutes

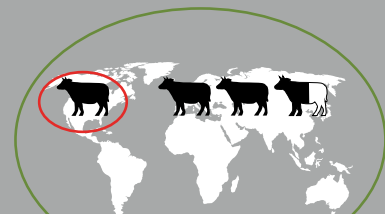


Funded by Beef Farmers and Ranchers

Sustainability:

Beef is more sustainable than ever

The U.S. has had the **LOWEST** beef emissions intensity in the world since 1996.³



Globally, it takes 2.66 cattle to produce the same amount of beef that comes from **JUST ONE ANIMAL IN THE U.S.**⁴

70%

of operators say steak on the menu increases traffic²



39%

of operators say increased demand for the product is why they've increased ground beef volume²

	Calories (kcal)	Total Fat (g)	Saturated Fat (g)	Cholesterol (mg)	Sodium (mg)	Total Carb (g)	Protein (g)
Ground Beef 80% Lean, 4 oz, raw ⁵	290	23	9	80	75	0	19
Ground Beef 93% Lean, 4 oz, raw ⁶	170	8	3.5	70	75	0	24
Ground Beef 96% Lean, 4 oz, raw ⁷	150	4.5	2	70	75	0	25
Soy-Based Burger, 4 oz, raw ⁸	240	14	8	0	370	9	19
Pea-Based Burger, 4 oz, raw ⁹	250	18	6	0	390	3	20

2021 © Cattlemen's Beef Board and National Cattlemen's Beef Association #032221-22

1. 2016 Chef and Beef Value Study (Datassential)
2. 2019 Technomic Volumetric Study

3. Climate Watch Data. Agriculture. Found on <https://www.climatewatchdata.org/sectors/agriculture?emissionType=136&emissionsCountry=EUU&filter=#drivers-of-emissions>; FAO-STAT. Emissions intensities. Found on <http://www.fao.org/faostat/en/#data/EI>

4. U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization. FAOSTAT Database – Food and agricultural data. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/faostat/en/#home> accessed December 6, 2019

5. USDA National Nutrient Database for Standard Reference for beef. NDB# 23572 <https://ndb.nal.usda.gov/ndb/search/list>
6. USDA National Nutrient Database for Standard Reference for beef. NDB# 23472 <https://ndb.nal.usda.gov/ndb/search/list>

7. USDA Ground Beef Calculator: <https://ndb.nal.usda.gov/ndb/beef/show>
8. www.impossiblefoods.com/burger/
9. <https://fdc.nal.usda.gov/fdc-app.html#/food-details/797991/nutrients>



grinnellmutual.com

Trust in Tomorrow.®



SUCCESS SERVED WITH A SIDE OF TALENT

Congratulations to the 40 Women to Watch and to all of the industry Award Winners!

We love to support and protect those who know all the right ingredients for winning.

Trust in Tomorrow.® Learn more today.

PERSONAL | BUSINESS | REINSURANCE

"Trust in Tomorrow." and the "Grinnell Mutual" are registered trademarks of Grinnell Mutual Reinsurance Company. © Grinnell Mutual Reinsurance Company, 2023.

Emerging Leader | Sammy Mila

Crème | Des Moines



Sammy Mila knows that being a 33-year-old female restaurant owner makes her a bit of an anomaly. Add to that the fact she's a first generation Asian-American who took over a well-known traditional bakery, and there are some additional challenges and perceptions to overcome. "You don't want to think that you will struggle more to find financing or have trouble being seen and respected," says Sammy. "But it can be difficult."

However, Sammy is overcoming. In fact, she's thriving. As the new owner of Crème in Des Moines, she has blended the best parts of the one-time dessert & cocktail lounge with her vision of a family friendly safe space offering sweet and savory treats. Traditional and nontraditional baked goods complement late night comfort foods such as noodle bowls.

"I want this to be an environment every age can enjoy and offer menu items that are just a little bit different whether that be sweet, savory, or both. It should be hard to say no to us."

A floor to ceiling wall display showcases Sammy's artful side with whimsical favorites like designer toys and food

offerings from other local artisans and producers. Her bakery case also features the expected and unexpected side-by-side. Cheezit cookies share shelf space with traditional buttercream frosting cupcakes.

As a young business owner, Sammy knows she has to be extra mindful about maintaining her balance—on the menu, with her expectations, and in her personal life. "I went into this wanting to explore some especially funky treats, like fried chicken cupcakes. I did have to tame that down a bit," laughs Sammy.

But on the more serious side she recognizes that she often experiences "separation anxiety" from the bakery when she's away. "I received the best piece of advice from my husband," says Sammy. "He said, 'Sammy, you have a great team, let them be great.'"

Concludes Sammy, "I am learning how to let them be great knowing they are the brand and they showcase it really well."

For taking a risk, following her passion, and chasing the dream of a creating a traditional bakery with a bit of a twist and a hint of Asian influence, Sammy Mila has earned the Iowa Restaurant Association's Emerging Leader Award.

Rural Restaurant Operator | Chelsea Johnsen

Sisters in Cheese | Madrid



Chelsea Johnsen, owner of Sisters in Cheese in Madrid, began her journey in hospitality as a teenager, starting as a dishwasher at a summer camp. She later worked as a server, bartender, and restaurant manager. Chelsea loved the industry but wasn't convinced it could be a long-term career.

After college, she took a corporate job but soon realized it didn't "fill her heart." So, she started a small catering business on the side. Her specialty? Beautifully presented, personalized grazing boards with an emphasis on Iowa products. Her boards demonstrate that charcuterie and appetizers can be a meal in and of themselves.

By 2017, Chelsea and her sister-in-law began to dream of the potential of a grazing board business. That's when she decided to throw herself into her hospitality venture and Sisters-in-Cheese was officially born. Operating out of a community kitchen, Chelsea created custom grazing boards for pick-up and delivery.

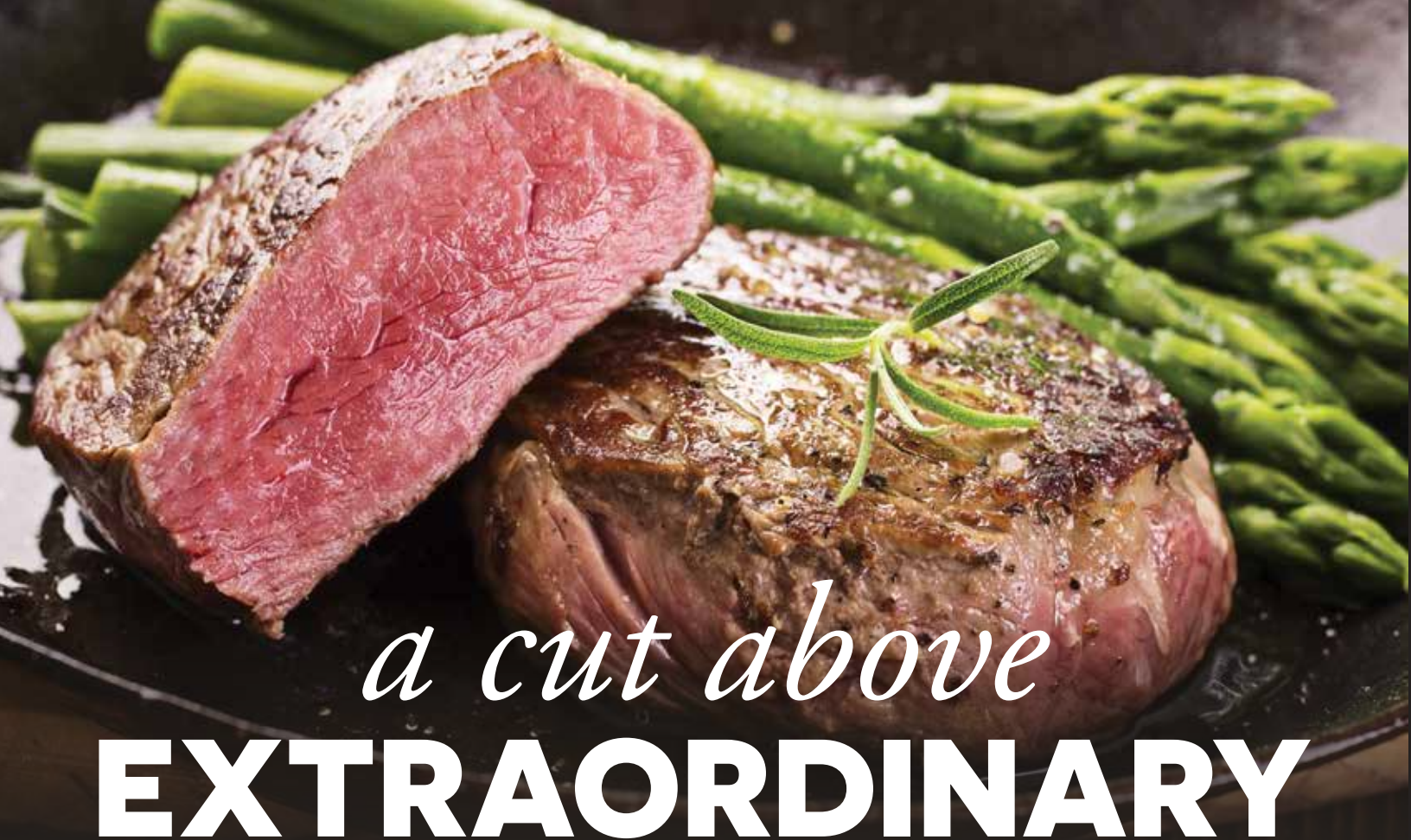
In 2019, fueled by her belief that small towns deserve more opportunities for culture and community engagement, she opened a small café and catering kitchen in downtown Madrid, population 2,800. Her café was immediately embraced by the community and continued to thrive, even through COVID.

Chelsea is a passionate advocate for rural businesses and the role of women entrepreneurs in reviving rural main streets. She is known for collaborating with small businesses and supporting their success. She encourages people to look at their communities and to see, and emphasize, that which isn't obvious. "I truly believe that if everyone could find their "weirdness" (mine is a random love of cheese) and lean into it, our world would heal just a little bit," says Chelsea.

"There's something special everywhere if you're willing to look for it."

To support neighboring communities, Chelsea organized the first High Trestle Fest, encouraging people to visit Madrid as well as neighboring Slater and Woodward. She was also an integral part of the Madrid RAGBRAI committee and contributes to everything from the animal shelter to the school. For Chelsea, hospitality is not just a career; it's a way to engage with your community, as well as a journey of personal growth, humility, and the ability to stand firm in one's values, even when facing challenges.

For her commitment to ensuring her rural community always has a place to gather and engage, Chelsea Johnsen, owner of Sisters-in-Cheese is the 2023 Rural Restaurant Operator of the Year.



PathProven® is Performance Foodservice's exclusive process of ensuring the quality of Braveheart Black Angus Beef®. Through this unique DNA TraceBack® process, we confirm that our product is a majority Black Angus—the highest percentage in the industry, and we establish a link between each animal and each cut of meat. The PathProven system also includes standards for feeding, health, and humane treatment, which are just as important as an animal's genetics in determining quality. Through PathProven, you can be absolutely confident that your Braveheart Beef will meet the same premium standard every time.

BRAVEHEART GOLD CLUB

Join the Braveheart Gold Club and start earning cash back rewards for every pound of fresh Braveheart Black Angus Beef® your operation purchases from Performance Foodservice. You must be a Performance Foodservice customer to enroll and also purchase either fresh Braveheart Black Angus boxed beef or grinds to earn monthly cash back rewards. All fresh Braveheart boxed beef and grind purchases are eligible and the more pounds you purchase, the more cash back rewards you receive.



exclusively distributed by





**HELPING YOUR BUSINESS
THRIVE WHILE PROTECTING
YOUR BOTTOM LINE**



**Congratulations to all
the 2023 40 Women to
Watch and Industry
Award Winners from
your partners at Ecolab!**

Employee | Andy Hoffman

Down Under | Clive

For Alex Banasik, owner of Down Under Bar & Grill in Clive, Andy Hoffman long ago transcended the role of employee to become a righthand man, friend, and finally official business partner in the popular bar. Their's is the type of relationship that often occurs in hospitality, but is rarely celebrated in a formal way. It is that special bond not of blood relatives, but rather of the "restaurant family."

"Andy has been with Down Under for more than 23 years," says Alex about his now business partner. "When I've needed him, he's always been there for me and the business." And Alex has needed Andy in very real ways. Andy covered both of their responsibilities when Alex was hospitalized for several health issues and again when he had to go out-of-state for an extended time to care for his dying sister. "He's never complained and never expected anything extra in return," marvels Alex. "He is a great person and irreplaceable colleague."

Dedication to his team is part of Andy's DNA. The Des Moines area native was a standout athlete at Valley High School. Upon graduation, he headed to North Iowa Area Community College (NIACC) to play football. It was then he started working part-time in the hospitality industry, but it took another five years for him to determine this was where he'd like to build a career.

"So much of what it takes to be successful in this industry was second nature for me. Whether it's helping customers or managing employees, serving people is rewarding."

That's not to say Andy didn't serve his time learning the ropes. He did everything from bartend to inventory management before buying in as a partner of Down Under. "It's frustrating when people think the hospitality industry is a placeholder or dead end," says Andy. "It can be a great career. You get out of it whatever you put in."



He adds that a successful business partnership takes many of the same skills as a successful marriage. "You have to work together, communicate, and care about one another," concludes Andy.

Andy excels at all three, which is why he was selected as the Iowa Restaurant Association 2023 Hospitality Employee of the Year.

Purveyor Partner | Scott Ites

Atlantic Coca-Cola Bottling Company | Des Moines



At 19 years-old Scott Ites married his high school sweetheart and moved to Des Moines to sell shoes. It was 1984 and the Waterloo native had just completed a two-year marketing program at Hawkeye Tech. He was ready to get his life and career started—but shoes weren't his future. He heard about an opening at Atlantic Coca-Cola Bottling Company and applied to be a route driver. "That was 39 years and seven positions ago," smiles Scott who is now Vice President of Foodservice for the company's On Premise Business.

Scott attributes his success to a strong work ethic, quick wit and perhaps most importantly his Christian faith. In fact, he has authored and self-published three books on faith in Christ. He also credits the company's owners for creating a culture which provided him, and others, with lifelong internal career paths. Scott has been part of multiple seasons of growth with the company including 2016 when they quadrupled in size, adding 7 sales centers.

Scott has chosen to stay focused on the on-premise business, in part, because he is inspired by entrepreneurs. "They are passionate about what they've built. They strive for excellence and if they don't know what to do, they figure it out," explains Scott. He is proud to share that he has been working alongside some of the state's most successful restaurateurs for nearly four decades. It is his focus on strong personal relationships that has made Scott a valued purveyor partner for thousands of Iowa restaurateurs and the Iowa Restaurant Association alike. He has been an active member of the Iowa Restaurant Association for nearly two decades, attending events and providing financial support and product donations throughout the year. He says his decision to be involved was affirmed during COVID. "I saw how our sponsorship was being used," says Scott.

"The industry needed a strong advocate and the Iowa Restaurant Association provided that, but the Iowa Restaurant Association also needed strong supporters, and we were happy to be one of those companies."

Scott's commitment to the success of the hospitality industry and the organizations that support it are why he is the Association's 2023 Purveyor Partner of the Year.

MAY ALL YOUR
HOLIDAYS BE
SPRITE®



Faces of Diversity

Brenda Tran

Vietnam Café | Des Moines



In 1986, Brenda Tran fled Vietnam as a young girl. Her family settled in Des Moines where they faced language, culture and weather barriers. She vividly recalls her trepidation when her family got off at the wrong bus stop and didn't know how to ask for help. But anyone who's met Brenda knows that apprehension didn't last for long. This fearless immigrant entrepreneur has taken risks, expanded the palates of Des Moines restaurant patrons, and made a lasting mark on the city's culinary scene.

Prior to starting her restaurant, Brenda, a mother of four, worked in healthcare as an interpreter. She also ventured into hospital foodservice. However, she always dreamed of owning a restaurant. She made the leap in 2010 opening Vietnam Café in Merle Hay Mall. Her goal was twofold: to introduce people to the flavors of her native country and to fund her children's Catholic school education. "At the time no one knew what Pho was," said Brenda. However, it didn't take long for her to develop a loyal following. Nearly every year she receives "Best of Des Moines" honors, is featured in articles and given 5 star reviews by foodies from across the golden circle.

However, none of that recognition could compete with the detrimental impact of COVID on both her restaurant and the mall itself. By August 2023 Brenda found herself teetering on the edge of closure. Between her pandemic related loans and increased costs, she turned to the only place she could—her customers.

Brenda reluctantly started a GoFundMe page and was transparent about her situation. She hoped to raise \$15,000 through donations, as well as by hosting a one-day buffet. Hundreds of Iowans came out to support Brenda and her business. She hit her goal which gave her some breathing room.

"I couldn't believe how many people came out in support of me and the restaurant," says Brenda.

While mall traffic continues to be a challenge, Brenda is encouraged by the number of people who appreciate and seek-out Vietnamese food. It is both her unwavering dedication to sustaining her business and her role in expanding local notions of what constitutes Asian cuisine, that led to Brenda Tran, owner of Vietnam Café, to be named the 2023 Iowa Restaurant Association Faces of Diversity Honoree.

American Dream | Taufeeq Shah

Lola's Fine Hot Sauce | Des Moines



Taufeeq Shah's story is one of multicultural and generational celebration. The founder of Lola's Fine Hot Sauce is the son of immigrants—a Filipino mother and a Pakistani father. Both worked their way through medical school, but nonetheless arrived in the U.S. with little.

Taufeeq's father enlisted in the military and his mother set up a medical practice in rural Northeast Iowa. Technically, Taufeeq was raised a smalltown Iowa boy—in reality, he lived a life straddled between three cultures.

That reality was most evident in the food Taufeeq enjoyed at home. It was also what inspired him. The blending of Filipino and Pakistani flavors is unusual anywhere. However, it was exactly this combination, accentuated by the peppers brought by Iowa farmers to his mother, that Taufeeq believed could be captured in a bottle.

He'd already gone to college and had a successful financial services career when he began toying with the idea of selling his family's flavors. It started small, with Taufeeq taking jars of his mother's hot sauce to office events. It was a hit, so he convinced his mother to sell the sauce in pop up locations, and then farmer's markets. Their growing

fanbase gave Taufeeq the confidence he needed to start a business. They chose the name Lola's which is both the Tagalog word for grandmother and Taufeeq's mother's given name.

Once launched, their growth was tempered only by their ability to keep up with demand. His mother oversaw the sauce recipe and Taufeeq was the investor, CEO, marketer, and delivery driver. He sold first to restaurants and then to retailers across the state, and now the country. Today they are in 14,000 locations. They've expanded their flavor offerings, but Lola remains fully in charge of each secret recipe.

"I'm beyond grateful for the business I've been able to build and the life I've been allowed to have in this country," says Taufeeq. "My family is living the American Dream. We have bottled something we love and are able to share it with others, all while taking care of our family, as well as the people we employ."

This entrepreneurial spirit and hard-earned success is why Taufeeq Shah, Founder of Lola's Fine Hot Sauce, is the 2023 Iowa Restaurant Association American Dream Honoree.



IT'S ALL IN THE DETAILS

TRIED-AND-TRUE RESTAURANT & BAR COVERAGE WITH NO SURPRISES. **SMALL DETAILS. BIG DIFFERENCE.**

Long-standing industry expertise means that nobody understands the unique challenges of protecting your hospitality business better than Society Insurance. Offering tried-and-true specialized programs, we are proud to provide comprehensive coverage for restaurants and bars.



Find an agent & request a quote at
[societyinsurance.com](https://www.societyinsurance.com)



Philanthropist | Willie Ray Fairley Jr.

Willie Ray's Q Shack | Cedar Rapids



Willie Ray Fairley Junior grew up in rural Mississippi. His father raised pigs and smoked meat. His mother gardened. And Willie watched as both gave nearly all of it away. It was a lesson and message that went unspoken but was well understood—help people, feed people.

Willie took it to heart—literally.

In July 2019, he opened Willie Ray's Q Shack in a Cedar Rapids parking lot. He offered fresh smoked meats and sides-to-go. The community embraced him and when the opportunity presented itself, he was generous back.

In August 2020, a derecho hit Cedar Rapids leaving hundreds of residents with damaged homes and no power. "It was instilled in me that if I could help, I should," says Willie. He stopped selling and started giving away his fare. Ultimately, he gave away thousands of hot meals.

Willie's business thrived and his charitable work accelerated. In fact, over the past three years he has temporarily closed shop and pulled his smokers to places that need hot meals.

He served BBQ in Texas to people impacted by an epic ice storm. He went to Louisiana to serve meals to victims of Hurricane Ian. He went to Kentucky twice—once after a deadly tornado and again after historic flooding. Most recently he went to southern Florida to serve hurricane victims. Each time he closed his business, took donations, hitched up his smokers, and headed to the heart of the hurt.

"There are a lot of things I can't do. But I can hand people the first good hot meal they've seen in days."

Willie doesn't think twice about the revenue he loses. His business has still grown. In fact, he recently opened his first sit down location and hopes to build a business that will provide for his children, nieces, and nephews well into the future.

His restaurant's tag line says: Passion + Love = Willie Ray's. It's a message and mission that he intends to pass on. That willingness to bring light to any storm, is why Willie Ray Fairley is the 2023 Iowa Restaurant Association Restaurant Neighbor Philanthropist of the year.

Educator | Chef Rolando Molina

Norwalk High School | Norwalk



Dominican Republic native Rolando Molina's culinary interest was piqued as a boy while he sat in his grandmother's kitchen. Locally known as the "cake lady," she ran a thriving pastry business. "I was fascinated by her entire process," remembers the now high school culinary educator. He attended university in his native country, earning a hospitality management degree and working in establishments in the Caribbean and across the East Coast. He met his wife Jennifer, an Iowa native, while working in Miami. He followed her to the Heartland and never looked back.

Chef Rolando's move provided him the opportunity to attend culinary school. He credits the mentorships of Chefs Robert Anderson, Lori Dowie and Karla Boetel at the Iowa Culinary Institute for further stoking his passion for culinary education. He worked in industry, but knew his heart was elsewhere. "I love teaching," explains Chef Rolando. "It's my true calling." After earning teaching credentials from the University of Northern Iowa, Chef Rolando took over the ProStart Program at Norwalk High School.

The classroom allows him to influence the next generation of industry professionals, but for this educator, ProStart is so much more.

"It isn't just about teaching students how to fry eggs; it's about instilling personal skills that extend beyond the kitchen. Food is life and cooking is an extension of yourself."

He teaches the transformative power of food as both sustenance and as a means of expression. Students are challenged to create memorable experiences, as well as great flavors.

Chef Rolando still draws from his upbringing in a country marked by poverty, emphasizing the importance of valuing food and minimizing waste. He affectionately refers to his classroom as "his sanctuary," and strives to provide a space where students can learn, grow, and overcome their "culinary quirks." A student-run cafe further provides experiential opportunities whether they are preparing nutritional meals for the football team, or special menus for paying guests.

His commitment to building the industry's future workforce, as well as well-rounded people, is why Chef Rolando Molina was named the 2023 Iowa ProStart Educator of Excellence.

Mentor | Chef Andy Walsh

Mickey's Irish Pub | Waukeez



Chef Andy Walsh is all about paying it forward. In fact, this 2023 Mentor of the Year credits the influence of mentors to some of his most pivotal decisions—including culinary school. As a high school student Andy worked at the Carroll Country Club under then Executive Chef Daryl Wickstrom. “He was really old school,” remembers Andy. “He taught me how to do things right. And exposed me to things many chefs no longer do, like ice sculpture.”

Andy knew he wanted to pursue a culinary career, but post-secondary education was not part of his plan. Diagnosed at a young age with dyslexia, Andy often struggled in traditional school settings. But Chef Wickstrom encouraged him to reconsider. “He challenged me to try for one semester,” explains Andy. “He promised that if I didn’t like it, he would pay for it.” Andy did try and went on to earn his degree from DMACC’s Iowa Culinary Institute.

After graduation he worked in Las Vegas and Iowa, often in the same locations as his high school sweetheart turned wife Amy, herself a graduate of UNLV’s hospitality management program. In 2007, the couple purchased Mickey’s Irish Pub in Waukeez. The restaurant’s elevated pub grub has been delighting patrons ever since.

Today Mickey’s team is a well-oiled machine, allowing Chef Andy to spend time investing in the next generation of hospitality talent. He serves on the Waukeez School District’s FCS Advisory Council and has been a repeat judge at the IRAEF’s state Prostart Invitational. This year he was on the other side of the judging table, serving as the chef mentor for Northwest High School’s ProStart Culinary Competition team.

“I’m amazed at the focus, knowledge and commitment of these students,” says Chef Andy, who wishes he would have had the opportunity to participate in a ProStart program. For now he’s happy to work with the industry’s future leaders.

“What’s the use of having 30 years of knowledge if you don’t share it with someone?”

That commitment to invest in future generations is why Chef Andy Walsh is the 2023 Iowa Restaurant Association Education Foundation Mentor of the Year.

Industry Champion | Joe McConville

Gusto | Breakfast Club | Anna Dolce | Juniper Moon | Greater Des Moines

From the moment Joe McConville joined the Iowa Restaurant Association, he was elbow deep into the group's advocacy efforts. "Too often laws and rules are imposed on our industry by people who've never worked in it, and don't understand it," says Joe. "I wanted to help bring our voice to the process."

It was 2018 and Joe was motivated to get involved because cities and counties across Iowa were attempting to pass their own wage, scheduling, and leave rules. Joe became a visible proponent of a state-level pre-emption law. "Operators need consistency," says Joe. "We can't have different rules for restaurants across the street from one another."

Pre-emption legislation did pass, but the now owner of The Breakfast Club, Gusto Pizza Bar, Juniper Moon, and Anna Dolce Ristorante, was just getting started. He was elected to the Iowa Restaurant Association Board of Directors and now helps determine the group's legislative agenda. He speaks on behalf of hospitality with lawmakers and the press. He often addresses topics even if they didn't directly impact his business and is always willing to make a call or drop an e-mail to a legislator.

Joe served as the Iowa Restaurant Association Board Chair during COVID and helped ensure restaurants projected a united front. He worked directly with State and Federal lawmakers from both political parties to seek solutions for restaurant operators. He continues to travel to Washington DC and today serves as the National Restaurant Association's liaison to Congressman Zach Nunn.

Joe stresses the importance of owner engagement in the legislative process. "Lobbyists have their place, but it's important for owners to show up and speak up," says Joe. He knows not everyone can dedicate the time to travel to the Capitol but does believe every voice matters.

"Read, follow, and reach out. You'll be surprised at how much impact one person can have."

This commitment to showing up and speaking up earned Joe McConville the 2023 Iowa Restaurant Association Industry Champion Award.





FRESH SOLUTIONS **FOR OLD DEEP-FRIED THINKING**

Work with the people, the equipment and the process that gives you
automated control over your cooking oil—and hoods and flues.
Boost food quality, safety, morale, profits and sustainability with
Restaurant Technologies.



***CONTROL
THE KITCHEN
CHAOS***

LEARN MORE AT WWW.RTI-INC.COM

Sustainability | Big Grove Brewery

Cedar Rapids | Iowa City | Des Moines | Solon



Over the past decade, Big Grove Brewery has become a well-known name across the state. In addition to their award-winning beer, the hospitality group is a culinary innovator with four Iowa locations—each serving as a catalyst for community revitalization. The hospitality group also has a strong commitment to environmental responsibility.

Dave Moore, Director of Operations for Big Grove, oversees all construction projects and stresses that sustainability is always a key design consideration. Each location incorporates green-building features, high-efficiency equipment installation, recycling, and kitchen composting systems. In fact, their Iowa City and Des Moines locations together compost nearly 8,000 pounds of food waste each month. Big Grove also uses a carbon recapture system dubbed “CiCi,” a closed-loop unit which helps recapture Co2 from the brewing process and reuses it downstream for draft lines and beer packaging.

Their 28,000-square-foot Iowa City Brewery & Taproom helped spur the Riverfront Crossings redevelopment project and recently reached Platinum Green Status, a point-based system awarded by the Iowa Waste Reduction Center. In addition, this year the Des Moines location was the first brewery restaurant to be recognized as the Des Moines Economic Impact Newcomer of the Year.

“The brewing community is very sustainability-focused,” explains Janelle Buxton, Director of Public and Industry Relations for the company. “Beyond our building designs, our team proactively finds ways to support causes we care about, in particular those involving trees, trails and water projects.” The Big Grove staff has always planted trees to help “green up” their properties. This fall, the team is taking those efforts to the next level. A special brew—Good Grove Fruited Ale—will commemorate a Big Grove pledge to plant 400 trees in four years across the communities where their employees live, work, and play. “We want to revive our environment for future generations,” says Janelle.

The brewery’s “Big Grove for Good” initiative also impacts the communities in which they operate. Donations from Bison Burger sales and proceeds from special events, benefit environmental and social justice causes. They’ve contributed thousands of dollars to non-profits, as well as administering a \$73,000 grant program which benefitted seven local organizations.

Big Grove’s dedication to environmental and community stewardship is the reason they were selected as the 2023 Iowa Restaurant Association Sustainability and Innovation Honoree.

Did you know

IRA members can get budget certainty and save 5% on natural gas compared to the utility?

Learn more about customizable natural gas plans at:

www.woodriverenergy.com/ira

1-888-510-9315

www.woodriverenergy.com

©2023 WoodRiver Energy, LLC · ADIRA23-1

SICK OF BROKEN GLASS?

100 Libbey & 50 Riedel glasses in stock and ready for
PICK UP OR DELIVERY

We will keep your glasses in stock so they are available when you need them!



Legislator | Representative Dave Deyoe

Iowa House District 51 | Nevada



Representative Dave Deyoe grew up on a rural Iowa farm. Starting at the age of 11, he was hired by neighbors to do various farm jobs, first walking beans, later baling hay and eventually operating farm equipment. Like many Iowa teens, he also spent part of his summer detasseling corn. He recognizes and appreciates the skills he gained from those experiences. “I have great memories about summers working with friends,” recalls the legislator. “When I worked on the farm, I knew I was making a difference for my family, and when I detasselled with a crew, I understood what it meant to have a job. I also liked earning my own money.”

Generationally, Deyoe is not unusual, in 1978 nearly 60 percent of Americans ages 16-19 held jobs. Today that number hovers around 35%. And while one in three Iowans still find their first work opportunity in the hospitality industry, the limitations in hours and duties have made it difficult for employers to offer the jobs, hours and pay many teens desire.

In 2023, Representative Dave Deyoe tackled these limitations head on. Working with a coalition of more than a dozen industries, including hospitality, he helped open the door to new training, work-study and employment opportunities for teens by floor managing SF 542. “Many

of the laws dealing with youth labor rules were put on the books in 1908,” explains Representative Deyoe. “It was time for a refresh.”

Among other things, SF 542 allowed 14 and 15-year-olds to work two more hours a day year-round without adding to the total weekly hours. It eliminated the need for a minor work permit and made it possible for 16- and 17-year-olds working in restaurants to carry alcohol to patrons.

Representative Deyoe attended Iowa State University and started farming after earning his degree. His interest in politics was stirred when he advocated at the state legislature as a member of the Farm Bureau and the Iowa Pork Producers. Representing the Nevada area, he was elected to the Iowa House in 2006. He chairs the House Labor and Workforce Committee and is a member of the House Commerce Committee where he was assigned to floor manage the 2023 Youth Work Opportunities bill.

For his willingness to take big issues head on and bring common sense solutions to the table, as well as his unwavering support of the hospitality industry, Representative Dave Deyoe is the 2023 Iowa Restaurant Association Legislator of the Year.

Education Foundation Expands Mission, Awards Scholarships

The Iowa Restaurant Association Education Foundation (IRAEF) was founded in 2001. This 501 (c) 3 is the charitable arm of the Iowa Restaurant Association. For more than two decades, the IRAEF has focused on the adoption and successful implementation of the ProStart program across the state. ProStart is a two-year high school culinary and restaurant management curriculum that includes standardized exams, 400 hours of industry work experience, and a skills test. Students who successfully complete the program can receive 12 to 19 hours of credit in five Iowa culinary schools, and dozens more across the country.

Two years ago, the Iowa Restaurant Association Board of Directors approved the formation of the Iowa Hotel & Lodging Association. Recognizing the many shared issues of the two industries, the IRA Board agreed to help underwrite the cost of the formation by sharing office space and staff resources. The IHLA is a separate association with its own Board of Directors, bank accounts, and legislative agenda.

However, the IHLA will not form an educational foundation, rather the IRAEF will broaden its focus to promote the adoption of hospitality and tourism management curriculum in Iowa high schools, as well as ProStart. This will expand hospitality education opportunities to students across the state and foster interest and develop Iowa hospitality talent. As a result, the IRAEF will be renamed the Iowa Hospitality Education Foundation.

Each year the Iowa Restaurant Association Education Foundation awards thousands of dollars in scholarships to high school and university students pursuing degrees in hospitality careers.



Congratulations to the 2023 scholarship recipients:

George & Gina Formaro Family Scholarship

Tavian Lam | Culinary Institute of America

Sethness Roquette Company Scholarship

Tiffany Howrey | Iowa State University

Martin Bros. Distributing Co. Inc. Scholarship

Lauren Kurth | Iowa Culinary Institute at DMACC

Orchestrate Hospitality Scholarship

Piper Stansbury | Iowa Culinary Institute at DMACC

Café Dodici Restaurant Scholarship

Rylee Bezoni | Iowa State University

Paul Trostel Memorial Scholarship

Joseph Flyer | Florida International University

Pete & Ida Rastrelli Memorial Scholarship

Arthur Gbadow | Iowa Culinary Institute at DMACC

Maynard & Mabel Thompson Memorial Scholarship

Sarah Nelson | Iowa State University

Iowa Restaurant Association Education Foundation Scholarship Recipients

Jaelyn Luong | Iowa State University

Daelynn Coppinger | Iowa State University

Keira Baril | College of Dupage

Congratulations



Kimberly Hartkemeyer
General Manager, The Fun Station Cedar Rapids






Congratulations Chef Andy!
We are all grateful for your mentorship.



Congratulations, Jess Robertson!
From the Oak Park Team





Congratulations, Alison!
The Palms wouldn't be what it is without your dedication and exemplary leadership. Thank you!

FRIDLEY
THEATRES



Congratulations on this recognition!
You are an amazing On Premise consultant and advocate. We are so lucky to have you as a crucial part of our team!




Thank you for your years of dedication and hard work. Congratulations, Scott!

ATLANTIC Coca-Cola BOTTLING COMPANY



JOHNSON BROTHERS CONGRATULATES

40 WOMEN TO WATCH IN HOSPITALITY — 2023 —



ALLIE ANDREWS
On-Premise Sales Consultant



MICHELLE HANSEN
Regional Director of Operations

CONGRATULATIONS AMANDA MILLER

A leader in feeding Iowa's PreK-12 students.




Congratulations Trisha Goode on a well-deserved honor!





Congratulations Andy!
We are grateful for your endless dedication & commitment.




Serve Responsibly. Minimize Risk. Train Your Staff.

Arrange A 4-Hour In-Person ServSafe Alcohol™ Class In Your Establishment

Contact Katelyn Adams
Call (515) 276-1454
kadams@restaurantiowa.com



MEET THE INSTRUCTOR

Instructor Amy Stevens is a current bar owner who brings 27 years of teaching and 15+ years of hospitality industry experience to the classroom.



AMERICA'S ORIGINAL BUTCHER
OMAHA STEAKS
SINCE 1917

LOFFREDO

FRESH FOODS

EST. 1892

From Premium Meats to
Fresh Blends & Spices,
& other Fresh Food items.

*We provide it and ensure the
best quality and service.*

Now carrying 30+
Spiceology Blends!

SPICEOLOGY



www.loffredo.com | 877-762-1117

From Prohibition to Prosperity 90 Years of Iowa Hospitality



September 6, 1933
Iowa Restaurant Association Formed

December 5, 1933
Prohibition Lifted

March 8, 1934
Iowa ABD Created

2023 marks the 90-year anniversary of the Iowa Restaurant Association. Our founders were true visionaries, anticipating the needs of the hospitality industry even before we were officially liberated. Three months before the repeal of prohibition and a full six months before the Iowa ABD was created, these forward-thinking restaurateurs met in Des Moines and formed a professional trade association and advocacy group. Their forethought laid a foundation for the organization we are today.



Cooperation, Conventions, and Coronations

The founding members sought to “promote a spirit of cooperation among members” as well as to encourage and influence legislation which could impact the industry. During the early days, an annual convention was held in various cities across the state. By 1937, the association’s convention was considered the “greatest exposition of its kind west of the Mississippi.” It continued for decades and included multiple days of gathering, entertainment and the annual crowning of Miss Iowa Restaurant.

Legislative Legacy

At the heart of the Association is its work at the state legislature, as well as cooperation with the other state restaurant associations and the National Restaurant Association promoting the interests of the industry in Washington DC to Congress. The Iowa Restaurant Association was one of the first in the country to affiliate with the National Restaurant Association. In the early days, members donned red blazers and gained the nickname the “IRA Redcoats.”

Page Four THE APPETIZER

THE I.R.A. RED COATS ARE COMING!
TO THE
27th Annual Convention



IRA Regular Ties	\$2.00
IRA Bow Ties	\$3.00
IRA 3 1/2" Button Core Emblem	\$1.00
Coat plus tax	\$23.00
Ladies Coat plus tax	\$17.50
	26¢

ORDER YOURS NOW!

**ALL THE FLAVOR.
ZERO THE
SUGAR.**



delicious.
refreshing.
pepsi.



Pepsi and the Pepsi Globe are registered trademarks of PepsiCo, Inc.

**DO
THE
DEW**



MTN DEW, the MTN DEW Logo and DO THE DEW are registered trademarks of PepsiCo, Inc.



WOMEN TO WATCH in the Hospitality Industry

The Iowa Restaurant Association's Fifth Class of 40 Women to Watch in the Hospitality Industry joins a distinguished group of honorees who continue to exemplify the critical roles women play in all facets of the industry, as well as showcases the creative ways many are charting their own entrepreneurial course.

Today, one-third of all restaurant businesses are majority-owned by women and of the remaining two-thirds, nearly half are partially owned by women. This dynamic shift reflects the growing influence of women in both Iowa's, and the nation's, hospitality industries. What is especially impressive about this year's list is the inclusion of women not just in traditional leadership roles, such as restaurant owners and managers, but also from less conventional hospitality career paths such as school nutrition and specialized cleaning.

The definition of what it means to be a hospitality industry professional is undergoing a long overdue transformation. The diverse array of professions included on the 2023 list recognizes the significance and contributions of women in every facet of hospitality.

Each honoree has an engaging and inspirational personal story that can be read in expanded form at restaurantiowa.com.



Alison Meyer |
The Palms Theatre & IMAX

As GM of a 15-screen multiplex theater, with full-service restaurant and bar, and 150 employees, Alison Meyer thrives on being part of guest's "evenings out." She also loves her role as mentor saying, "It's a privilege to be part of an industry that is so diverse, yet so inclusive, for young people."

Allie Andrews |
Johnson Brothers Wirtz

At 14, Allie began her journey at a local Maid-Rite, inspired by her hardworking mother. She's known for her infectious positivity and, after two decades in restaurants and bars, transitioned to a sales role at Johnson Brothers, boosting liquor programs. She encourages women to "get comfortable being uncomfortable" because that is where growth happens.



Alysia Bowers |
Foodie Garage Eatery

As an independent restaurant operator Alysia Bowers has performed nearly every role in her restaurant. Their fare has caught the attention of everyone from the Best Burger judges to food bloggers. However, it's the environment Alysia has created for her team and the commitment she has shown her community that those around her admire most.



Amanda Miller |
Des Moines Public Schools

Amanda Miller never envisioned herself as the "head lunch lady" feeding 30,000 students daily. Her passion for providing healthy, delicious meals runs deep, believing food connects people of all backgrounds. As Director of Food, Nutrition & Logistics for Des Moines Public Schools for the past seven years, Amanda's work has gained state and national recognition.



Amber Broeker |
Ambro's Roadhouse

Amber Broeker calls opening her own restaurant the best decision ever. She bet on herself, investing her retirement savings and car as collateral, and leaned on the help of friends to transform an old house into a thriving bar and grill. In less than a year, it outgrew its 700 square feet, so Amber expanded another 850 square feet.



Amber Gable |
Back Country Winery

Amber Gable married her high school sweetheart, and together they pursued their dream of owning a winery by building Back Country Winery in Stratford. The mother of three does everything from picking grapes to marketing their award-winning vintages daily. Among their recent awards was the Governor's Cup at the Iowa State Fair.



Amelia Nickle |
Highlander Hotel | Hotel Grinnell

Amelia Nickle was the first employee at the Hotel Grinnell and has performed nearly every function. According to the property's owner, she works tirelessly to ensure the rural luxury hotel succeeds. From technology to menu development, to staff training, Amelia manages the resources of the hotel as if it were her own.



Angela Lochmann-Guzman |
Sugarfire Smoke House

Angela Lochmann-Guzman says cooking and entertaining are her love languages. She believes her desire to work in the industry started in childhood when she insisted her friends play restaurant. Whether she's coaching staff, managing inventory, creating fresh baked goods, or stepping in as the pitmaster, those who work for, and with her, describe Angela as a "force."



Angela Davila Ramos |
Hot Tamale Catering

Angela Ramos faced significant obstacles getting her business off the ground. She started with a food stand, moved to a storefront, and is now back to a mobile unit. She says, "Women can be very determined and I am one of those women." She is also the founder of 4AllKids, a nonprofit which provides meals to school children.



Anjuleah Knutson |
KaffeGeita

Anjuleah Knutson is co-owner as well as manager and chief barista of KaffeGeita. She has been working in coffee since age 17 and has proven to be an expert in reading national trends and translating them into innovative drinks. She is described by her many fans as, "an amazing manager, mother, wife, barista, mentor, and friend."





Anna Suttie |
Maxie's Supper Club

Anna Suttie loves to honor traditions. That's why she jumped at the chance to purchase and revive an iconic supper club. Says Anna of Maxie's, "I want families to continue their traditions of gathering and celebrating, at a place they love." From the menu to the service culture, Anna has brought the supper club back to life.

Ashley Bowers |
Iowa Distilling Company

Ashley Bowers and her team spend weeks dreaming up cocktails that complement the flavors of each season. Serving customers in an 100+ year old building, which also houses the Iowa Distilling Company's production, she hopes to change the perception of small-town bars by offering unique craft cocktails and a downhome spin.



Brenda Windmuller |
Iowa Department of Education

A former college culinary instructor, Chef Brenda Windmuller is a consultant with the Iowa Department of Education Bureau of Nutrition and Health Services. Using her background in culinary arts, business, and education, she supports child nutrition programs across the state by championing scratch cooking in schools and early care centers.



Carina Cavagnaro |
La Rana Bistro

Carina Cavagnaro is chef/owner of La Rana Bistro, an intimate 34-seat restaurant located in a historic building in the heart of downtown Decorah. Her menu incorporates French, Mediterranean, and Asian flavors into local favorites. She is committed to creating a thriving community where local farmers, businesses, staff and patrons feel celebrated and enlivened.



Carrie Stier |
Riverboat Twilight

Each year, Carrie Stier co-owner of the Riverboat Twilight, tours nearly 6,000 people down the Mississippi on a riverboat with overnight stays in Davenport and Dubuque. In the past two years she has helped a dozen groups apply to receive \$100,000 of reimbursement to assist with their tour costs through the Meet in Iowa Program.



Clair Williams-Vavra |
Green Mason

"Salad Architect" Clair Williams-Vavra's company Green Mason offers ready to eat salads in mason jars. Her mission is to help people feel better and get time back by offering 10 variations of 32oz salads. Says Clair, "Everyone should be a server at some point in their life... it's humbling and you learn how to navigate people."



Courtney Yeazel |
The Royal Mile | Full Court Press

General Manager Courtney Yeazel has helped create a true "Cheers" type atmosphere for patrons of The Royal Mile. Described as a "force of goodness" she ensures everyone feels welcome in the British-style pub. Her creativity and organizational skills draw and deliver community events such as Premier League watch parties, Farmers' Market breakfasts, and whiskey celebrations.



Dorian Larson |
Le Petit Patisserie

Dorian Larson, owner of Le Petit Patisserie, always dreamt of owning her own bakery, but felt she needed to pursue something "more sensible." After starting college, she realized she could support herself with the hospitality career she wanted. Says Dorian, "Having strong, independent women in the industry will have a profound impact for generations to come."



Ellie Rastetter |
Cattlemen's Steakhouse

Every month Ellie Rastetter, bar manager for Cattlemen's Steakhouse, creates new spirit forward cocktails. She hones her craft through experimentation and professional training and was one of the category winners at the 2023 Iowa Mixology Championships. Says Ellie, "The hospitality industry pushes women to be a boss, manage situations, speak confidently and really challenge yourself."



Emily Salmonson |
The Green House

Emily Salmonson, owner of The Green House uses "local tinctures, herbs and bitters to create specialty cocktails with a botanical twist." Her plant-based drinking establishment is not a typical Iowa City bar, rather it's "an oasis of greenery," serving as a hub for business meetings, student groups, and community connections.





Fran Maus |
Me & Billy

Fran Maus is co-owner of Me & Billy Kitchen & Bar and is involved with nearly all aspects of the business. She stresses how much they love being part of the resurgence of the downtown Davenport community. She is also an Instagram influencer and “date night enthusiast” featuring fun things for couples to do across the state on @iowadatenight.

Haley Scarpino |
Valentine Kitchen

Haley Scarpino worked in the tech industry for a dozen years before enrolling in the Iowa Culinary Institute, graduating in 2021 and starting her own business, Valentine Kitchen. Specializing in hearty meals for two, her weekly menus regularly sell out. She is an advocate for LGBTQ causes and moderates for a zoom cooking class called Sundays With Julia.



Hope Hancox |
Tangleberries Café and Suites

Hope Hancox manages Tangleberries Café and Suites, a coffee/gift shop located on the Historic Centerville Square. In addition to selling specialty coffee, lunches, gifts and home décor, Hope manages three fully furnished hotel suites above the store front. Nominated by another hotelier, Hope is widely respected for her support of, and involvement in, the Centerville Community.



Jessica Robertson |
Oak Park Restaurant

Jessica Robertson, Executive Pastry Chef for Oak Park Restaurant, has worked in fine dining restaurants all over the world. The mother of three recently earned her business degree as well as her first level Sommelier. Her advice, “Focus on your craft, make connections, never stop learning and encourage others to do the same.”



Kasey Sheldahl |
Southern Glazers Wine & Spirits

After being bar manager for a popular restaurant, Kasey Sheldahl made the move to purveyor, becoming a wine consultant for on premise accounts with Southern Glazers Wine and Spirits. Her team and customers describe her as a passionate advocate for the industry—whether it’s fighting for pricing or getting unique new items into the state.



Katie Fararo |
The Urban Grill

Katie Fararo appreciates that the restaurant industry provides women flexibility and control by allowing them to make great money and still have time at home. Today she finds joy in building up the people she meets and works with at Urban Grill. “Sometimes we become the tribe that surrounds a person who is struggling,” says Katie. “There’s no judgement. We’re all in it together.”



Kimberly Dunn |
Domestic Bones

Kimberly Dunn started Domestic Bones when she saw a need for quality handheld comfort foods that were portable and “tasted good with beer.” Her unique savory hand pies include flavors such as Chicken Sausage, Vegan Samosa, and Iowa Corn. She partners with Peace Tree Brewing and others to get her pies into the marketplace.



Kimberly Hartkemeyer |
The Fun Station

Kimberly Hartkemeyer is GM for The Fun Station in Cedar Rapids. Each year, she helps welcome and entertain more than 150,000 guests. She started as a part-time supervisor and fell in love with the business, quickly rising to the ranks into her current full-time role. She is credited for much of the entertainment company’s accelerated growth.



Leah Jensen |
Maxwell’s Beach Café

Leah Jensen worked in restaurants while earning her Masters in social work. She was working at Blank Children’s Hospital when the owner of Maxwell’s Beach Café approached her and her husband about purchasing and operating Maxwell’s. They took the leap. Today, with 80 employees, primarily students, Leah still has ample opportunity to leverage her degree.



Lorena “Maria” Alvarado |
Maria’s Commercial Cleaning, Inc

Lorena Maria Alvarado knows that the first thing any customer notices in a restaurant is its cleanliness. Today, the former schoolteacher’s commercial cleaning company services some of the Des Moines area’s most popular restaurants. Those owners are some of Maria’s biggest fans as several nominated her noting that she is “a crucial part of our team.”





Mary Lewellin |
Red Dragon Herbs & Tea

Mary Lewellin truly believes that one good cup of tea could solve a lot of the world's problems. The mother of four has worked tirelessly to build her family business Red Dragon Herbs & Tea. She started with a Farmer's Market stand, then sold in local storefronts, and now has a brick and mortar location in Polk City.

May Thompson |
Parinda Cupcakes

May Thompson came to the United States as an exchange student from Thailand. She finished college and worked as a graphic designer for a dozen years before deciding to stay home with her children. In 2017, she started Parinda Cupcakes a business that allows her to blend her passions for design, cooking, baking and desire to serve others.



Megan Whyte |
The Isle Casino & Resort

Megan Whyte manages the activities in two separate convention spaces and assists in the Casino's many restaurant concepts. Says Megan, "I am grateful to the mentors who have shown me the way. My goal is to be the type of mentor and leader I have been lucky enough to have met on my journey."



Michelle Hansen |
Johnson Brothers

Michelle Hansen believes the dynamic nature of the hospitality industry empowers women to not only lead in traditional roles, but also to shape the industry's future through innovation and inclusivity. As Director of Operations for Johnson Brothers, she is a valued partner for hundreds of restaurant and bar owners across the state and Midwest.



Paula Feltner |
Bricktown Bakery

"When you say donuts, people smile," says Paula Feltner, owner of Bricktown Bakery in Nevada. Paula, who was nominated by 6 of her 14 employees, must be right as she is beloved by her customers as well. Located in a community of just 7,000 people, her bakery sells 1,500 donuts each Saturday.

Sofia Hernandez |
Gilroy's Kitchen + Pub + Patio

Sofia Hernandez has grown into her leadership role at Gilroy's in West Des Moines. A native of Mexico, she attended classes to receive her GED. She worked her way up from a DMO, to line cook, into her current role of kitchen supervisor. Her bilingual skills allow her to aide in connections between English and Spanish speaking team members.



Shana Meyer |
Toppling Goliath Brewing Co.

Shana Meyer started as a part-time server when Toppling Goliath had fewer than 30 employees and no restaurant. Today, Shana serves as general manager for their 100+ employees staffing a two-level taproom, full-service restaurant and catering operation. She is also the brewery's wellness champion and served as their spokesperson during breast cancer awareness month.



Temeshia Bomato |
Pots and Shots

Had someone told Temeshia Bomato five years ago that she would no longer be a nurse and instead own a combination plant shop and craft cocktail lounge, she would have laughed aloud. Yet many of the same attributes that made her a great healthcare worker have helped her build her popular West Des Moines business.



Teresa Lancaster |
Timbukbrü

The mantra of Teresa Lancaster, co-owner of Iowa Falls brewery Timbukbrü, is "Do Epic Sh*t." She has helped create a small-town brewery that delivers big city impact. Aside from offering locally crafted brews, cocktails and non-alcoholic options, Teresa and her husband promote their community and were recently named Iowa Valley Community College's Ambassadors of the Year.



Trisha Goode |
Early Bird Brunch

Trisha Goode is described by many as a serial entrepreneur and inspiring leader. Her Early Bird Brunch locations offer "modern takes on a classic diner." According to Trisha, there's nothing like the perfect blend of breakfast and lunch paired with brunch-centric cocktails. "Brunch is an experience best shared," says Trisha. "We're delighted to be part of people's get togethers."

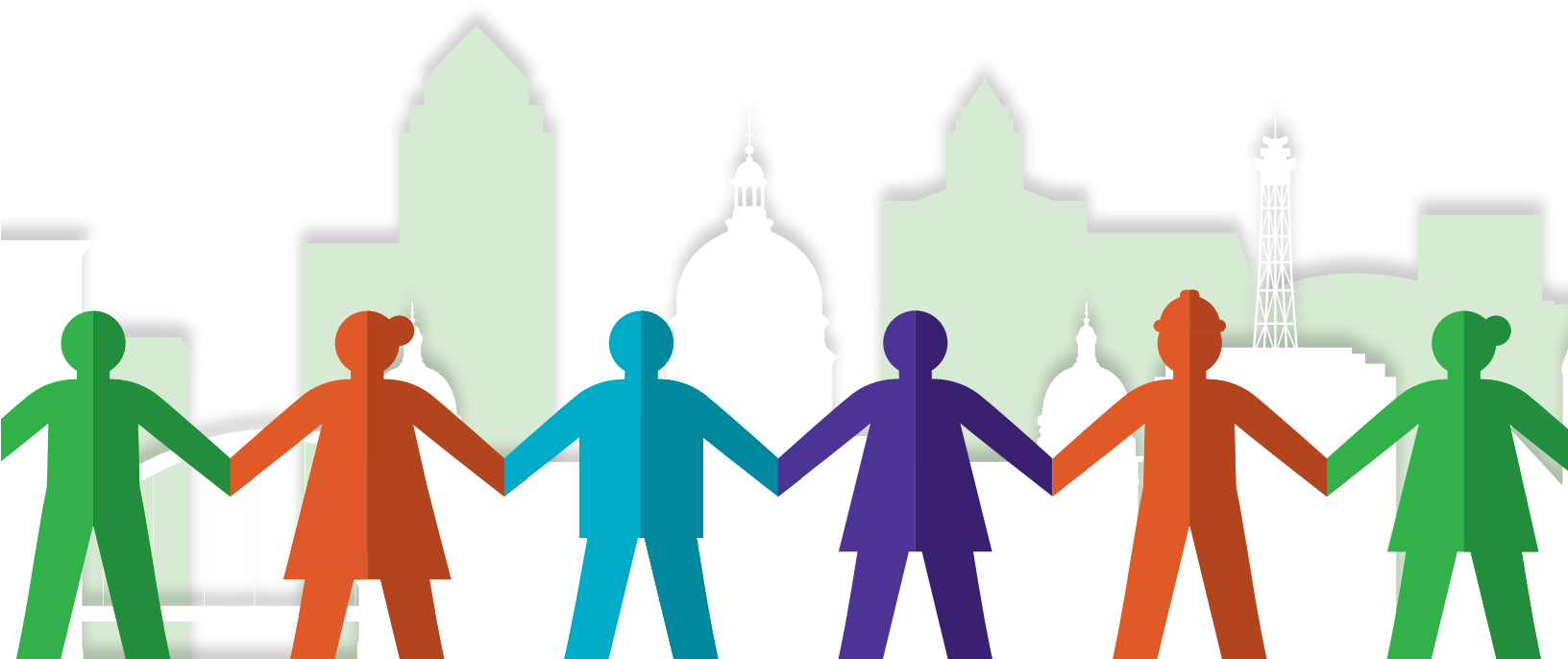


For your smile. For your health. For your community.

Your employees get more than great benefits when you choose Delta Dental of Iowa — they make a difference for others.

Choose Delta Dental for your dental, vision, legal, life and disability insurance needs.

Visit SharingHealthySmiles.com for employer plans and see how we invest in your community.



 **DELTA DENTAL®**

888-337-5160 | deltadentalia.com

Food & Beverage Iowa Business

Quarterly

Iowa Restaurant Association
1501 42nd St., Ste 294
West Des Moines, IA 50266

www.restaurantiowa.com

WE'RE MOVING BUSINESS FORWARD

Delivering Solutions and Transparency

For over 80 years we have devoted our business to helping our customers grow their operations.

In the midst of the most unique time in our history, we proudly remain a customer-centric, family and employee-owned operation with a strong mission to serve our customers with innovative solutions and superior performance by delivering the products, tools and service necessary to help you succeed.

Access new resources developed to help our operators in the midst of supply chain challenges:



Scan for a **video** detailing the broken Supply Chain.



Listen to our newest leadership **podcast** on "Leading Through Crisis."



Martin Bros.
DISTRIBUTING CO INC

martinbros.com

800-847-2404

