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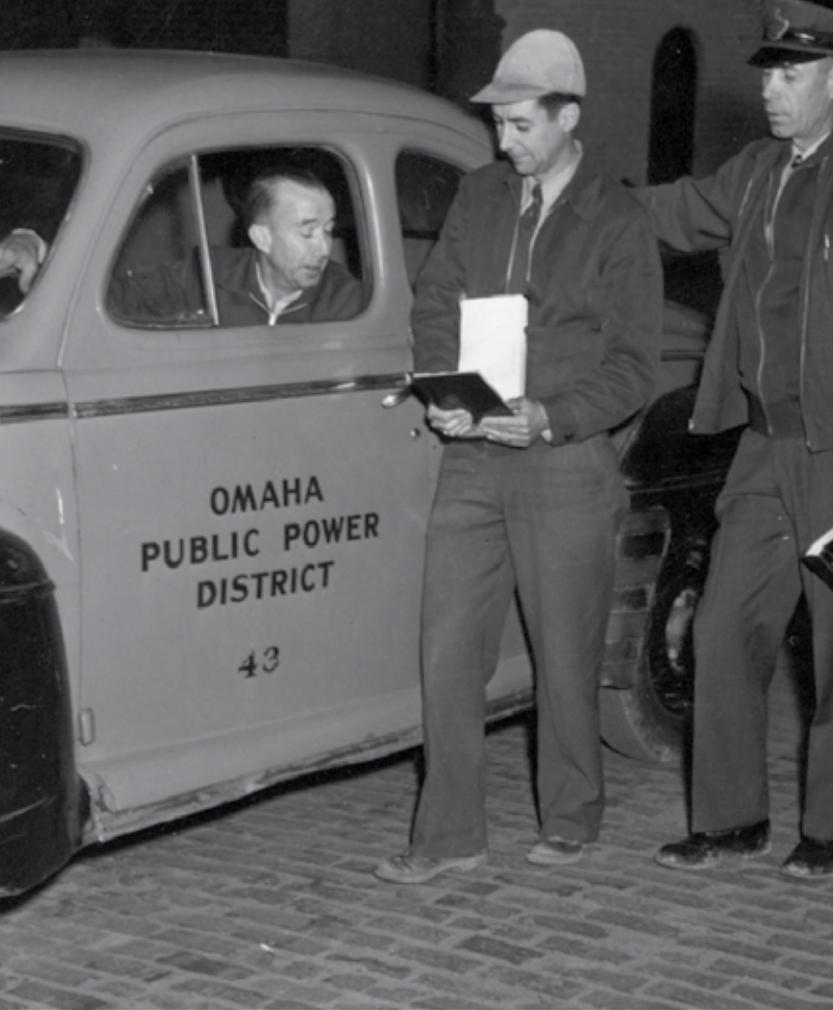
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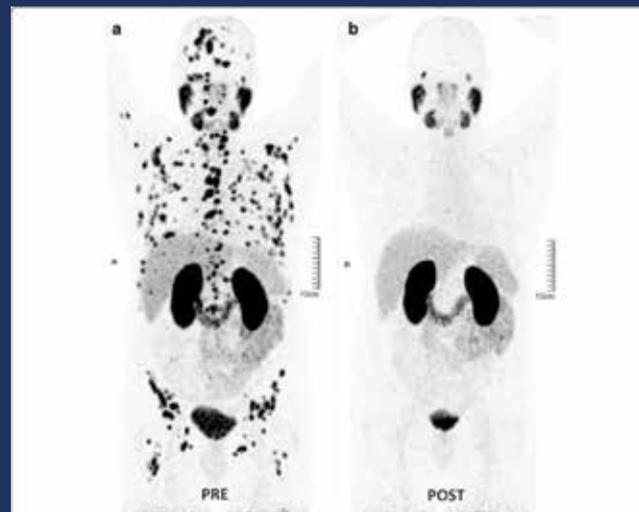


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WE WELCOME.

Omaha is about community. Neighbors helping neighbors. Here, we celebrate the good things and the good times. When you are in Omaha, you are as good as home.



THE FUTURE IS OMAHA

IN THE WAKE OF THE PANDEMIC, our region stood up and stood out. We took care of each other physically, mentally and economically. And while things aren't exactly back to normal, we're adapting and setting an example for what a post-pandemic metro area looks like. For the region, it's all about celebration and acceleration. We cheer on our wins. We empower our future success.

In 2021, Omaha reclaimed its place in the national spotlight. We are, undoubtedly the home of amateur athletics, hosting the US Olympic Swim and Curling Trials, the NCAA Volleyball Championship and the College World Series. The Maha Festival brought music lovers back together for a full-day party featuring local musicians and national stars. Summer streets were given back over to farmer's markets, and the world-class zoo was once again a top attraction. We all got back to the things we love.

Omaha also set the standard for what post-pandemic prosperity might look like. We didn't just recover; we set the stage to accelerate our economic outlook as we all emerge from the shadow of COVID-19. Our unemployment rate is one of the lowest in the nation, coupled with workforce participation approaching pre-pandemic levels. Development continues across the region, with more sky cranes on the horizon than anyone can remember ever seeing.

Most importantly, and as always, Omaha is looking forward. As a community and a region, our eyes are firmly on the future, building toward 2040 goals that will make us exceptional. Our focus is on the people, the places and the prosperity that will elevate the metro, the surrounding communities and the region as a whole. From education and infrastructure to amenities and entertainment, we're on the move. Forward, as always. Toward greater.

New Year's Eve fireworks. LILY SMITH



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ON THE COVER

Cranes work on the Heartwood Preserve development, one of many large economic development projects taking place in Omaha. Photo by Chris Machian

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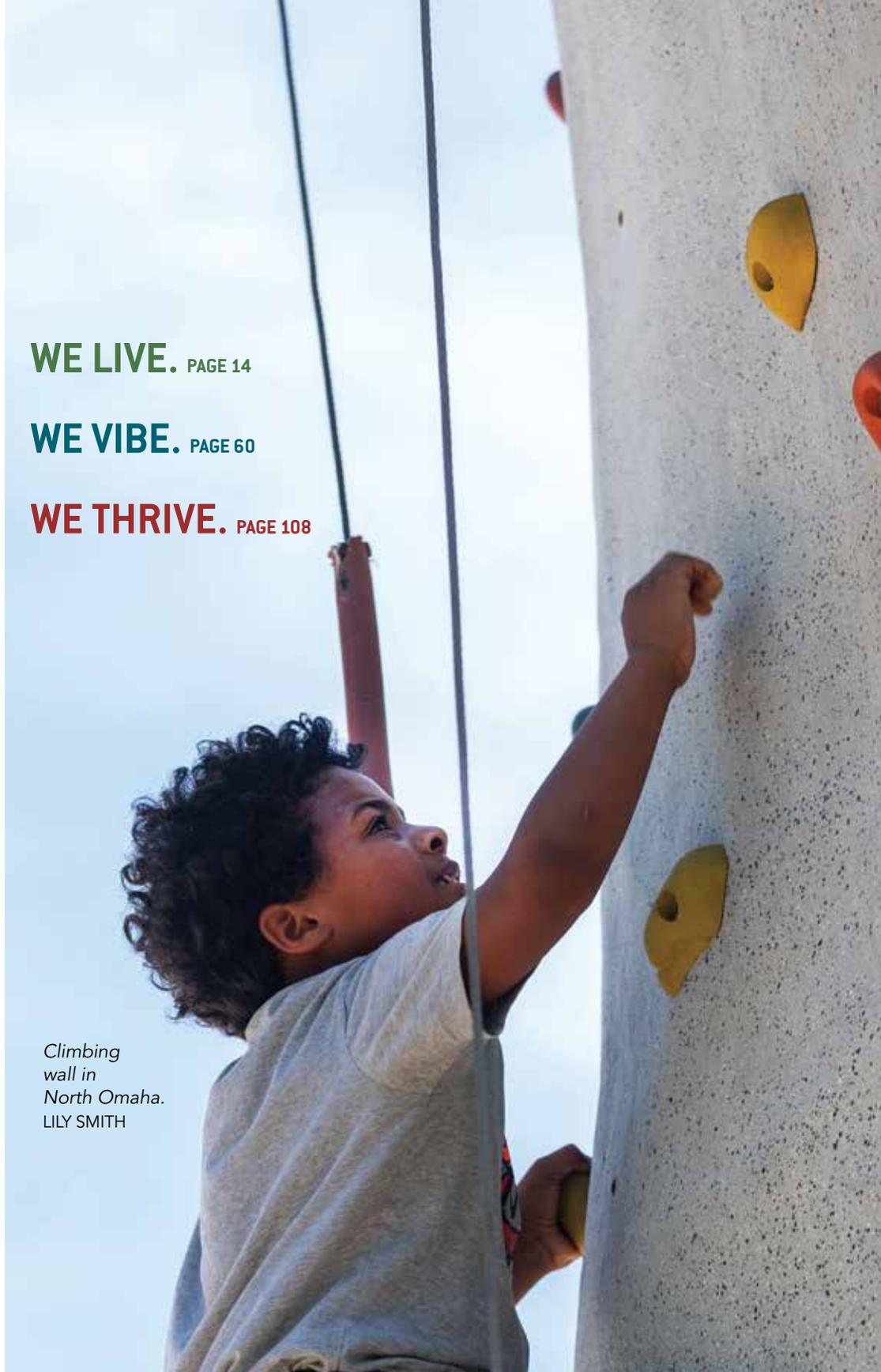
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WE THRIVE. PAGE 108

Climbing wall in North Omaha.
LILY SMITH



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At Koley Jessen, coasting isn't an option. Not even a little. Rather, we listen, we engage and we work tirelessly to drive results for our clients. Providing efficient and effective solutions is what we do best, from our office in Omaha to the coasts and beyond.

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Growing to Serve More Children & Families

“To improve the life of every child.”

At Children’s Hospital & Medical Center, this is our mission — and it’s the heart of everything we do. As the region’s pediatric health care leader, we’re dedicated to exceptional clinical care, advocacy, research and education. Whether we’re providing care for critically ill children or championing child-centered legislation, we strive to improve the lives of children, families and entire communities.

This commitment to mission is the very reason Children’s is in a season of exciting growth. The most visible sign of this growth is the new clinical facility on Children’s main campus at 84th and Dodge Streets, which opened in August 2021. The nine-story, state-of-the-art Hubbard Center for Children nearly doubles Children’s physical capacity, creating space for expanded programs and enhanced services to improve pediatric health care and benefit countless children and families in Omaha and throughout the region. It is home to Children’s Neonatal Intensive Care Unit, Pediatric Intensive Care Unit, Fetal Care Center, Cardiac Care Unit and Hematology/Oncology Unit. It offers enhanced surgical space, expanded Radiology and Emergency Departments and a new rooftop helipad.

“The Hubbard Center for Children offers our team the space, equipment and innovation they need to continue to be excellent and deliver the best outcomes and experiences for patients and families,” says Chanda Chacón, Children’s President & CEO. “With its opening, more children will have access to the care they need, closer to home, for generations to come. This is a historic milestone on our journey to fulfill our mission: to improve the life of every child.”





In addition to elevating Children's ability to deliver clinical care, the Hubbard Center for Children supports the mission-critical aims of research and education, allowing the organization to further advance as a pediatric academic medical center enterprise. Reflecting the latest in technology and design, the new facility is also an impressive draw for recruiting top talent, as Children's looks to hire more pediatric specialists, sub-specialists, nurses and support staff.

As Children's physical footprint continues to grow, so does its national reputation. *U.S. News & World*

Report ranked Children's in four pediatric specialties in its 2021-22 Best Children's Hospitals rankings: Cardiology & Heart Surgery, Gastroenterology & GI Surgery, Pulmonology & Lung Surgery and Urology. Children's is the only health care system in the region to receive this honor for quality pediatric specialty care.

We don't coast. We care. We innovate. We grow... *to improve the life of every child.* To learn more, visit [ChildrensOmaha.org](https://www.ChildrensOmaha.org), or follow @ChildrensOmaha on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube.

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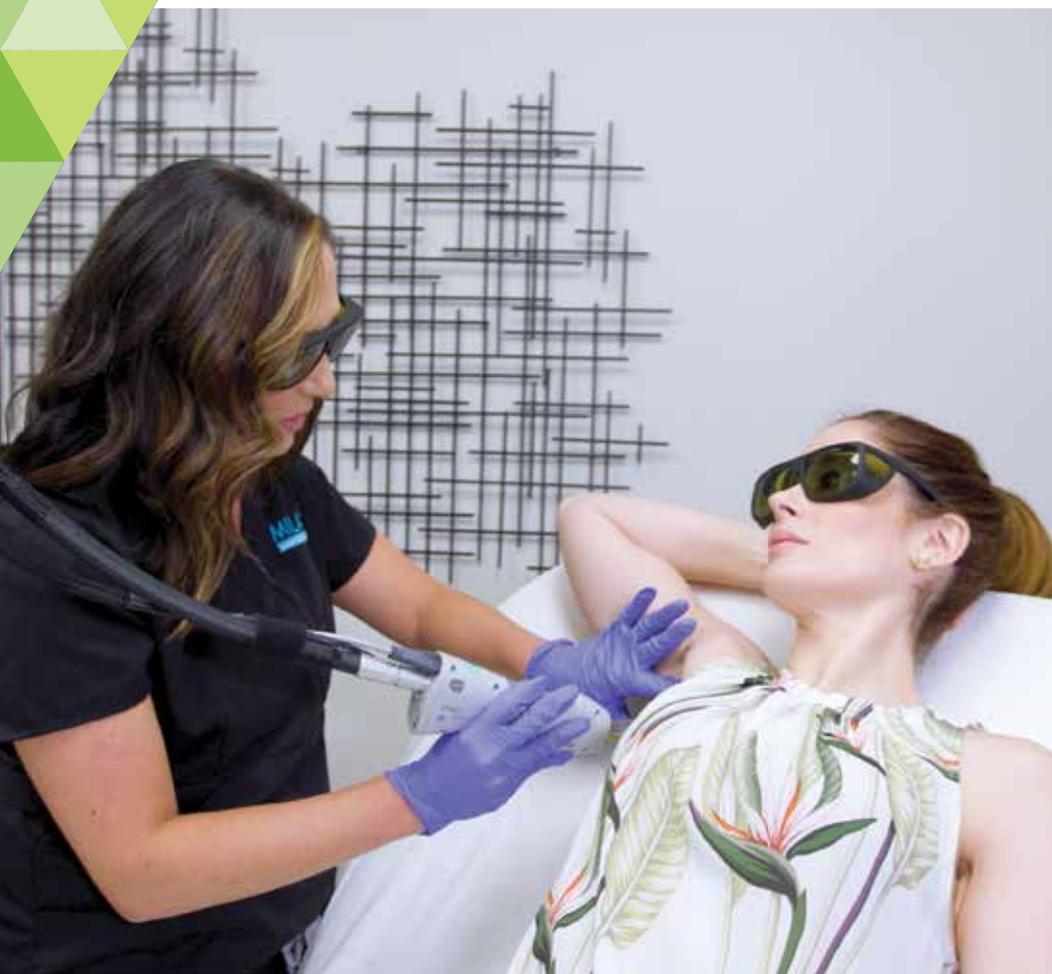
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Giving the aesthetics industry a makeover

Milan Laser Hair Removal's rise to national acclaim began right here.

It all started with one location in Papillion, NE. Two high school friends from Omaha, now both doctors, took a chance on a place called Milan Laser Aesthetics. The company was for sale and offered over 10 different medspa treatments such as laser hair removal, botox, fillers, and lipo laser — they even sold makeup. The friends, doctors Shikhar Saxena and Abe Schumacher, look back on their early endeavors and laugh.

“Why were we trying to sell makeup?” joked Dr. Shikhar Saxena, co-founder and CEO of Milan Laser Hair Removal.

But they did tap into a frustration felt by consumers who were tired of the subpar laser hair removal results that were common in the industry. The unfortunate status quo at the time was treatment packages that wouldn't deliver the results people wanted with one purchase—they were putting people into a cycle of purchasing extra treatment sessions or paying endless touch-up fees.

Schumacher and Saxena recognized this common frustration among new clients as an opportunity to set themselves apart, so they set out to become leaders in the accelerating laser hair removal arena by delivering exceptional results and transparent pricing.

"Most laser hair removal companies make you pay for each session and only give you a certain amount of treatments, so the results just aren't there," explained Dr. Abe Schumacher, co-founder and Co-executive Chairman at Milan Laser. "Milan changed the game by offering unlimited treatments at one affordable price, so clients don't have to worry about running out of treatments before achieving their hair-free goals. One price gives them all of the treatments they'll ever need, and their results are guaranteed for life."

Eventually, Milan Laser Aesthetics became Milan Laser Hair Removal, specializing in laser hair removal.

"We wanted to deliver a personalized, world-class experience in laser hair removal," explained Saxena. "It was what performed best for us, so we simplified the process and became the best at it."

The duo used their medical backgrounds and experience in the field to create their proprietary treatment protocol—which is still in place today and continuously refined with new data—to deliver the results people wanted as quickly and safely as possible. They did this all while working almost every job in the original clinic, including sales manager and front desk receptionist.

Fast forward 9 years: Milan Laser Hair Removal is on track to have 150 clinics open around the country. But even with locations in big cities like Chicago, Atlanta, Salt Lake City, Houston, and Nashville, the company is staying true to its Nebraska roots by having the corporate headquarters in Omaha.



Throughout the years, Milan has moved from a humble clinic with a team of three to a premier laser hair removal provider with more than 900 employees nationally.

Their corporate headquarters, in west Omaha, house teams ranging from IT and Marketing to the Client Coordinator team responsible for answering questions, educating people about laser hair removal, and booking consultations for clients at clinics around the country. As part of the company's massive growth, an operations officer was hired to oversee the clinics. Colleen Papek, native South Omahan and former Vice President and Director of Stores at Youngkers, joined the Milan team as Chief Operations Officer in 2018.

"I was captivated by Abe and Shikhar's vision," Papek recalls. "I remember asking myself, 'Is this too good to be true?' But it wasn't—I knew I had to be part of this. Every day I'm so grateful to be on a team with highly motivated individuals who live out our core values."

"We've grown a lot over the last few years, but our mission remains the same—and it's at the heart of everything we do at Milan," emphasized Papek. "Our goal is to deliver the best results in the industry while providing an exceptional customer experience for every client no matter which location they visit for treatments, and that means having a team of experts leading the way at the clinics as well as at our corporate headquarters."

Milan has always had a strong medical foundation, being founded by two medical doctors, and that continues today with large-scale medical oversight in the clinics and at headquarters.

“Our clients can always rest easy knowing they’re getting treated by experts,” said Saxena. “Not only are they getting the most effective treatments, but they’re also getting them done safely.”

As Milan’s footprint continues to expand, so does its reputation. The company emphasizes the importance of client feedback and believes the clients’ results speak for themselves.

“We know we have the best people working for Milan, and our online reviews reiterate that,” Schumacher said. “From the clinic cleanliness and professionalism to the results and



relationships our clinic teams build with their clients, it’s incredible.”

And speaking of online, if you search “laser hair removal,” Milan is at the top of the pack. The conversation around laser hair removal has evolved over the last few years, and that’s in large part due to Milan’s marketing team led by Phillip Koenig. Koenig is originally

from Gretna but spent nearly 20 years helping grow successful start-ups in Minneapolis. In 2016, he was asked to return to Omaha to help Milan take the next step in changing the laser hair removal industry.

“There’s a lot of misinformation and myths out there about laser hair removal, which has led a lot of people to think laser hair removal isn’t an option for them, but we’ve changed that perception,” said Phillip Koenig, Chief Marketing Officer at Milan Laser. “We have content that highlights the benefits of laser hair removal for bodybuilders, the transgender community, people with various medical conditions like PCOS, and people with darker skin tones—many people of color have been told that laser hair removal doesn’t work for them. Milan is proactively changing the conversation about laser hair removal throughout the nation.”

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We lead health care from the middle.

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Our health network covers the Omaha metropolitan area and extends across the region, providing you access to more than 1,000 doctors and nearly 40 specialty and primary care health centers. Whether you are starting with a wellness checkup or seeking breakthrough advances in cancer care, organ transplantation and more, you'll have access to the latest innovations and expertise. We are part of one of the fastest growing research centers in the country, thanks to our partnership with the University of Nebraska Medical Center (UNMC.)

The middle is anything but mediocre.

We are proud to tell others we work for Nebraska Medicine. In fact, Forbes magazine named Nebraska Medicine one of the best employers in the state for the third year in a row, based on our own employee surveys. CEO James Linder, MD, would like to change this award title slightly, though.

"I would change the wording to the Best-in-State Employees," he says. "It is what our employees do that make Nebraska Medicine the great place that it is and a tremendous resource for the state of Nebraska. We're thankful for their tireless dedication to providing Serious Medicine. Extraordinary Care. Every day."

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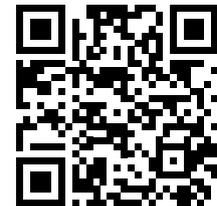
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TO THE FULLEST

Family. Friends. Neighbors. Coworkers. Community. The challenges of the pandemic brought us all together in a variety of ways. We stepped up to meet those challenges head on.

We supported small businesses by ordering takeout and buying locally. The job market was tight, but stayed intact and recovered faster than most other parts of the country. Regional businesses did what they could to keep people employed.

Those who could, worked remotely. At the same time, we are grateful for the essential workers who couldn't hunker down in the safety of their own homes. Instead, they have carried on in the world, providing us with the services and products we needed to maintain and stay healthy.

Some of them make up the city's world-renowned healthcare workforce, who have cared for some of the earliest COVID-19 patients while keeping other necessary medical services operating at optimal levels. They persevered, even when it wasn't easy.

Industries across Omaha helped keep the world running, from the truck drivers who support and advance the global supply chain to the farmers who continued to feed families coast-to-coast.

We did what we could to keep our kids focused, educated and fulfilled, as well as safe and sound. Juggling schoolwork and our own work wasn't easy, but we made the best of it as our kids returned to class and campus.

During all this, some funny things happened. Our neighborhoods thrived. Folks from Council Bluffs to Elkhorn walked their dogs as a way to get out, get some exercise and socialize. We hit the metro's amazing trail system on our bikes and on foot. As restrictions eased and optimism grew, we could again do things like play disc golf at Seymour Smith Park, honor our military heritage at the Strategic Air Command & Aerospace Museum or visit the world-class Henry Doorly Zoo & Aquarium.

Summer brought the return of the College World Series. We breathed a sigh of relief just hearing the crack of the bat and the cheers of the crowd from the first pitch to the last home run.

Now, as we continue to embrace the new normal, new challenges and ongoing recovery from the pandemic, we can take a minute and realize: We're going to be OK. No. We're going to be great.

If the last year taught us anything, it was to remind us of who we are and why We Don't Coast. No matter what.

On a walk in Vacation in the Village at Aksarben. Z LONG



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EDUCATION

One of the first questions people ask about any location is “how are the schools?” The Omaha region has a pretty good answer. There are hundreds of award-winning, nationally recognized schools all across our seven-county area. Students of all ages, interests and abilities study arts, language, STEM and more.

There are strong public school systems in and around the metro, including the Sarpy County suburbs of Bellevue, Papillion-La Vista, Ralston and Gretna. As you move out from the city streets, you’ll find educational commitment from county to county, including Fremont, Council Bluffs, and Nebraska City. Once our high schoolers graduate, which they do at an impressive 90-plus percent rate, they have lots of nearby options for continuing their education. Whether they are looking for a liberal arts, technical or faith-based experience, Omaha has a world-class selection of public and private institutions.

First day of school at Omaha South High. LILY SMITH



Omaha Public Schools

With a roster of more than 53,000 students per year, Omaha Public Schools is shaping the way young people learn, think for themselves and inspire those around them. The district is made up of 63 elementary schools, 12 middle schools, seven high schools, a K-12 virtual school and 11 alternative programs. OPS is building five new schools, including two high schools, two elementary schools and one middle school.

There's a lot going on at OPS. OPS students come from a kaleidoscope of ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds. They speak 108 different languages. The majority of graduates go on to college or technical schools. Students are doing great things.

And so is the district itself. OPS has launched a Green Schools Initiative in an effort to reduce the consumption of natural resources and reduce the district's carbon footprint. Moreover, the effort aims to encourage environmental responsibility among students, parents and staff. Students at every school in the district collect recycling, pick up litter, plant trees, participate in related community events, serve as energy manager and more.

Millard Public Schools

Omaha's Millard Public Schools is nationally recognized. Why? Consistent quality of education and achievement of their students. Thirty-five schools serve 24,000 families with different needs, interests and goals.

Technology is critical to Millard leaders. The district gives students round-the-

clock access to technology, including laptops for middle and high school students. Third through fifth graders can take home iPads, while younger students use them in the classroom. Last year, Millard launched blended learning — in-person and online — courses in U.S. government and college-level algebra for seniors at Millard North. Google Classrooms, where students can retrieve information from and submit work to their teachers online, was a game changer when it launched a few years ago and is now the norm. It proved especially helpful during the height of the pandemic, when homeschooling became the rule, not the exception.

The Archdiocese of Omaha Catholic Schools

For the Omaha Archdiocese, academic achievement is about more than

good grades. A complete education includes guiding students through the Catholic faith. Seventy Catholic schools make up the archdiocese, focusing on developing each student's mind, body and spirit. Nearly 20,000 students attend 53 elementary schools and 17 high schools. They live in one of 23 counties in northeast Nebraska.

"The Catholic identity and faith formation students encounter daily in our schools is the foundation upon which academic excellence is delivered," The Rev. George J. Lucas, archbishop of Omaha, writes on the archdiocese website. Catholic social teaching is a big part of the curriculum as well as lifelong learning and formation of values. The Omaha archdiocese welcomes students of all faiths, backgrounds and walks of life. Many go on to higher education at Creighton University or another private Catholic university or college.



Lunchtime at Oakdale Elementary. CHRIS MACHIAN

With over 810,000 followers, Omaha teacher uses TikTok to help others

Omahan Josh Monroe never expected to be famous. He never thought he'd have nearly a million followers on TikTok for something he does every day — teach fifth-grade students at Bryan Elementary School in the Millard Public Schools system.

There he posts videos about being a teacher and how he interacts with students to his more than 810,000 followers. In total, his videos have received more than 20 million likes.

His content, while helpful to parents, is geared more toward teachers. Monroe says he wanted a way to show fellow teachers how to be proactive instead of reactive to situations that come up in the classroom.

"In a time when teachers are criticized for nearly everything that we do, I think it's important we put out the awesome things we do and ways we help students as a whole," he says. "Not in the academic sense and just focusing on test scores, but how we help students be ready to inherit society."

The married father of three began to go viral on TikTok when he posted a response to a video of a teacher showing how they rudely wake up a tired student in their class.

"I watched it and it just kind of rubbed me the wrong way," says Monroe, who has been teaching for 10 years. "So I created the same video but (showed) the way that I would react."

In the video, shot from the point of view of the student, Monroe asks the student how they're doing and why they're tired. After learning that the student's parents were up fighting, Monroe lets the student sleep for a half-hour on the classroom couch with 7-year-old therapy dog, Nala, who is a West Highland terrier. Monroe tells the camera that after the nap, it will be time to get back to work.

The video has nearly 10 million views and more than 56,000 comments, most of which are positive, Monroe says. However, he did get some backlash with people saying things like, "How can you let kids sleep in school? You're enabling tired students."

Later, he posted another similar video, but this time the student was tired because they stayed up all night playing video games. In that video, he didn't let the student rest, but they did have a conversation about how to avoid a similar situation in the future and why sleep is important.

"People have to see two different ways to react based on the student's situation at home," he says.

Monroe says he's received requests from people to create videos about specific other situations. His other videos include ways teachers can help students deal with first-day jitters, get focused and manage things like emotions, anxiety, panic attacks and more.

His videos are taken in his empty classroom, at his home or around Omaha. While they never feature any actual students, wife Lauren and their kids, Jaxon, 5, Aspen, 3, and Colton, 4 months, often make appearances. And so does Nala, who is in her fifth year accompanying Monroe to school as a therapy dog.

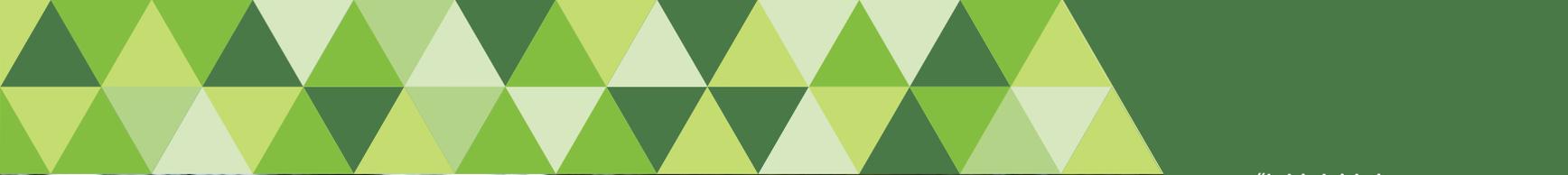
"She's my dog, but she's there for the kids. She's there for emotional support for kids who are having a rough time or a rough day," he says.

Many students who visit Nala aren't even in Monroe's class but come to see her anyway.

When "the world shut down" at the start of the pandemic in March 2020, many of his students stopped showing up for class via Zoom. Monroe decided to get creative and started a TikTok account in April 2020 and started making funny videos with Nala as a way to get students to show up.

At the end of the day, Monroe hopes his videos help teachers find the good in kids and love them for who they are.

"I'm not going to try and make them think math is the most important thing. If they love dirt bikes, I'm going to try and take math and dirt bikes and put them together," he says. "That's how I try to approach a new class at the beginning of the year. I'm going to love this kid for who they are. I'm not trying to make them who I want them to be."



“I think it’s important we put out the awesome things we do and ways we help students.”

- Josh Monroe



Josh Monroe, a fifth grade teacher at Bryan Elementary, uses TikTok to help families navigate school life. Photographed with his dog, Nala, who often makes appearances in his videos, outside his Omaha home. ANNA REED



Automotive Training Center at Metropolitan Community College. LILY SMITH

HIGHER EDUCATION

The Omaha talent pool is crushing it. From nationally ranked colleges and universities, two internationally recognized medical schools — University of Nebraska Medical Center and Creighton University Medical Center — as well as community colleges and private schools that students and alumni brag about, Omaha gets stronger, smarter and more interesting every year. Students here study medicine, law, the arts, sciences and more with a passion for hard work — and all that Omaha has to offer.

Bellevue University

Clarkson College

College of Saint Mary

Creighton University

Creighton University Medical Center

Iowa Western Community College

Metropolitan Community College

Midland University

Nebraska Christian College

Nebraska Methodist College
of Nursing & Allied Health

Nebraska Wesleyan University

University of Nebraska at Omaha

University of Nebraska

Medical Center

Metropolitan Community College

With multiple campuses across Omaha, Metropolitan Community College (MCC) offers more than 100 one-year and two-year programs of study for students. By offering affordable, accessible education to students of all backgrounds and career interests, MCC has grown into the largest community college system in Nebraska, with enrollment nearing 50,000. Programs include business administration, technology, construction, nursing and allied health, social sciences, and more. The Institute for Culinary Arts, located on MCC's Fort Omaha campus, is one of the leading and most affordable culinary schools in the country. MCC is an important connector in the community, with academic transfer programs available for students to continue their education after MCC.

Bellevue University

At Bellevue University, where 80% of students are over the age of 25, higher education isn't just for students right out of high school. With robust online course offerings in addition to on-campus options, the private, accredited university in Bellevue is popular among working professionals, who are either seeking an undergraduate degree for the first time, or expanding their studies at the graduate level.

College of Saint Mary

As Omaha's only Catholic university for women, College of Saint Mary (CSM) has 11 accomplished and award-winning sports teams and an enrollment of more than 1,100. Health sciences is a popular field at CSM, with many

students studying to become physician assistants, nurses and occupational therapists. Education, business and legal studies also are popular. The college, located in the heart of midtown Omaha, was founded in 1923.

University of Nebraska at Omaha

The University of Nebraska at Omaha (UNO) provides unmatched opportunities for students with a campus that stretches across the Omaha metro. UNO is Nebraska's urban university with a midtown location close to everything — culture, arts, sports, nightlife, jobs and more. Even more importantly, UNO is one of the most affordable four-year universities in the region, with apartment-style housing

on campus and academic learning communities that give students real-life experience; more than 80% of graduates report having at least one internship or job as a student at UNO.

Nebraska Wesleyan University

Nebraska Wesleyan University is a private Methodist-affiliated college in Lincoln with a campus in West Omaha. Adult undergraduate degree programs like business administration, nursing and teaching certification are popular among the city's working professionals. Focusing primarily on a liberal arts education, a Nebraska Wesleyan education encourages students to question meaning and value alongside the pursuit of learning and understanding.



UNO hockey. CHRIS MACHIAN

Creighton University

Creighton University is a longtime staple in the Omaha community. It's known as a top-ranked private university, built on Jesuit principles and a strong commitment to social justice. Driven by this outstanding campus culture, Creighton students volunteer for thousands of hours of community service every year. The campus is located in downtown Omaha, just a short walk away from the cultural and entertainment core of the metro. And of course, nothing compares to a Creighton home basketball game at CHI Health Center Omaha.

Creighton men's soccer. ANNA REED

University of Nebraska Medical Center

Nationally recognized and globally impactful, the University of Nebraska Medical Center (UNMC) has educated many of the best physicians in Omaha and across the country. At the same time, researchers at UNMC are working on cutting-edge solutions, including work toward the elimination of HIV. Training here is more than medical education, it's a chance to be part of a team that changes the way healthcare is understood and applied. For example, it was scientists at UNMC who discovered coronavirus spreads through airborne transmission.

Midland University

This is modern liberal arts education at its best. Midland University offers students more than 30 academic areas of study, four graduate programs and a substantial number of diverse professional studies programs at both its main campus in Fremont and Omaha satellite campus. Founded in 1883, Midland University welcomes students of all types, including many who qualify for financial aid. This welcoming admissions policy propelled Midland University to become the ninth-fastest growing private, nonprofit baccalaureate higher education institution in the U.S. Midland also allows many local athletes to continue their careers, including unexpected opportunities like esports, powerlifting and women's wrestling.



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Methodist Hospital. BRENDAN SULLIVAN

MEDICINE

Healthcare doesn't get better than here in Omaha. We're not only saving lives, but shaping the future of global pandemic response. And we've been doing it for a while.

The metro area boasts some of the top healthcare facilities in the world, including CHI Health, Methodist Health, Children's Hospital and Nebraska Medicine. From COVID-19 to cancer or the common cold, there is no need to travel to find the most innovative and sought-after doctors, nurses, and treatment plans around. It's all right here, in our own backyard.

The Omaha metro area, including its neighborhoods and suburbs, offer our community an organized, robust and caring healthcare system that ensures timely access to the highest quality, most attainable standard of care — and that includes help during the pandemic, when entire hospital wings were transformed into COVID units to treat and save the lives of affected patients.

Omaha is on the cutting edge of research, treatments and cures, with two of the country's top medical schools nestled a few miles from one another. We've got the best and the brightest here to help.

Methodist Health System

Nearly all of the Omaha-area hospitals within the Methodist Health System have secured national awards and/or accreditations for their level of care. The Methodist Estabrook Cancer Center, for example, is a National Pancreas Foundation-approved cancer center and has earned a Lung Cancer Care Continuum Center of Excellence designation by the GO2 Foundation for Lung Cancer. Methodist Fremont has earned an International Board of Lactation Consultant Examiners Award for its birthing center.

In Omaha, Methodist Hospital has earned a National Safety Council Award of Merit and was named one of the "Top 100 Great Heart Programs Nationally" by Becker's Hospital Review. Then there's Methodist Jennie Edmundson Hospital in Council Bluffs, which has earned an outstanding achievement award from the Commission on Cancer as well as a PRC Excellence and Healthcare Award for Emergency Services.

There's no doubt that the Methodist Health System is one of the best in Omaha. As it turns out, we aren't the only ones who think so. No matter where in the region you live, there is a Methodist Health System hospital or clinic near you, from the Bluffs to Fremont to midtown Omaha. If you need quality health care, the Methodist Health System is right in your neighborhood.

CHI Health

With 14 hospitals and 136 clinics throughout Nebraska and western Iowa, CHI Health cares for more than 1 million patients per year. The faith-based hospital system — which includes CHI Immanuel and CHI Lakeside in Omaha and CHI Mercy Hospital in Council Bluffs — is one of Omaha's largest employers, with more than 11,000 employees. CHI Health's vision is: "A healthier future for all — inspired by faith, driven by innovation, and powered by our humanity."

Founded in 1996, the entire CHI Health acute hospital care network also includes Creighton University Medical Center-Bergan Mercy and Creighton University Medical Center-University Campus. Medical services include trauma services, heart and vascular care, emergency services, surgery, maternity, cancer care, diagnostic imaging and more. CHI Health also offers virtual quick-care appointments 24 hours a day, seven days per week. The healthcare system employs more than 400 doctors across all specialties and disciplines.

Children's Hospital & Medical Center

Children's Hospital & Medical Center is regionally recognized for its excellence in pediatric patient care, advocacy, research and education, from emergency room care to influencing a change on a legislative level. The staff at Children's in midtown Omaha have dedicated their careers — and their lives — to improving the quality of life for every child and family that walks through the door. It's the only full-service pediatric healthcare center in the state. Children's Hospital & Medical Center offers more than 50 pediatric specialty services to children of all ages, including a regional heart center that consists of experts in pediatric heart transplantation, Nebraska's only Level IV Newborn Intensive Care Unit, the state's only Level II Pediatric Trauma Center, among other healthcare services. Children's Hospital & Medical Center has been recognized as a "Best Children's Hospital" by U.S. News & World Report in cardiology and heart surgery, pulmonology, gastroenterology and GI surgery, and urology.

*Biocontainment unit,
Nebraska Medical
Center.*
BRENDAN SULLIVAN



Nebraska Medicine

Almost everyone in Omaha knows someone whose life has been touched by the state's largest hospital, Nebraska Medicine. From offering leading safety protocols and caring for COVID-19 patients, to life-saving organ transplants and cancer treatment, Nebraska Medicine is one of the fastest-growing research hospitals in the country. That means patients have access every single day to the latest research and innovations that can keep them healthy — and in some cases save their lives. Nebraska Medicine includes more than 1,000 doctors and 40 specialty clinics. Two hospitals alone — Nebraska Medical Center and Bellevue Medical Center — have more than 800 beds combined. By partnering with the University

of Nebraska Medical Center, the hospital system is educating the best and the brightest — and putting those doctors on the floor, equipped with the most cutting-edge research and extraordinary patient care available. People travel from around the world to seek care of Nebraska Medicine staff, a trend that goes back to 1869 when it was founded as the city's first hospital.

Nebraska Medicine has an international reputation for life-saving cancer care, organ transplants and infectious disease treatment and prevention. Nebraska Medicine is one of those Omaha institutions we are proud of and is consistently awarded the "best in the state" by U.S. News & World Report. It is frequently listed as one of the "100 Greatest Hospitals in America" by Becker's Hospital Review. Forbes considers Nebraska Medicine to be one of the best employers in Nebraska.

Nebraska Medicine Durham Outpatient Center. BRENDAN SULLIVAN



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Children's Hospital's \$410 million Hubbard Center helps more families

Children's Hospital & Medical Center's new Hubbard Center for Children now has more space and more state-of-the-art equipment and amenities to care for more of the region's children and their families.

"This is a major milestone for us to improve children's health and be the best place to serve the children of our region," says Chanda Chacón, Children's president and CEO.

The Hubbard Center is named in honor of the late Dr. Theodore F. and Claire M. Hubbard, longtime Omaha residents and philanthropists.

The nine-story Hubbard Center nearly doubled Children's physical capacity, creating space not only for more beds but also for new and expanded programs and services. The \$410-million project also included the renovation of some existing space.

The hospital at 82nd Street and West Dodge Road has a capacity of 225 licensed beds, up from 145. The facility also features a new hematology/oncology unit.

Dr. Christopher Maloney, Children's chief medical officer, says the capacity to care for more kids is his favorite feature. In 2017, the hospital sent about 120 children it couldn't care for onto other hospitals — some in other states.

Chacón says the hospital has recruited more than 40 new physicians per year over the past two years. The hospital has rebuilt its neurosurgery and neurology

programs. Maloney says Children's also has added pediatric experts in dermatology, gynecology and oncology.

Among the Hubbard Center's physical features is a new neonatal intensive care unit. For the past 21 years, the NICU has been located across the street in Methodist Hospital's north tower and connected by an overhead walkway.

"We kind of feel like we're coming back within the family," says Donnetta Perkins, director of the NICU and the fetal care center. A registered nurse who has worked at the hospital for 41 years, Perkins says she couldn't retire until the NICU got into its new space.

The NICU, which includes two rooms for twins, has its own operating room. On the same floor is a fetal care center for mothers carrying high-risk babies.

Dr. Nicole Birge, the NICU's medical director, says doctors can do scheduled cesarean sections if necessary and take newborns directly to an operating room.

The center's second floor is home to a new cardiac care unit where young heart patients can stay during the entire course of their care rather than being relocated to different units before and after surgery. The floor includes a gym where kids can start cardiac rehabilitation early in their care and still be close to nurses in case of problems.

"If they need the newborn ICU," Maloney says, "we bring the experts to the patient."

Because reducing transitions in care can improve outcomes, he says, he

anticipates reduced lengths of stay for kids in that unit as well as lower costs.

The center includes seven new operating rooms, adding to seven existing operating suites. Barb Schwarz, an operating room nurse who has been at Children's for 43 years, says the area includes an intraoperative MRI that allows staff to do scans to make sure, for instance, that they have removed all of a brain tumor during an operation, rather than later.

Additions also include a new helipad and a new cafeteria, which fronts West Dodge Road. With four times the kitchen space and twice the dining room, officials says, the new cafeteria is meant to care for families and staff alike. A new and expanded pediatric intensive care unit, expanded emergency department, a pharmacy and an information kiosk where families can stop for educational materials are also among the new additions.

Children's main lobby will remain the main access point to the hospital, says Beth Greiner, executive director of Children's Hospital & Medical Center Foundation. But it will be under construction for the next year.

The hospital also has suites that family members can check into to rest. The suites will include a kitchen, TV room and laundry, and a solarium with an event space for up to 250 people, offering space for a healing arts program. It connects to an outdoor garden with a water feature.



“This is a major milestone for us to improve children’s health and be the best place to serve the children of our region.”

- Chanda Chacón,
Children’s president
and CEO

Barbara Schwarz talks about some of the lighting options in a new operating room at the Hubbard Center. CHRIS MACHIAN

DAY IN THE LIFE

Some people like the hustle and bustle of the city; listening to the cheers of a crowd at the College World Series or people-watching in the Old Market on a warm summer afternoon. Other folks like a slower pace, life in the country, such as the Loess Hills in Pottawattamie County or the agriculture-dotted expanse of Washington or Dodge Counties.

The great thing about life in Omaha is that you get the best of all worlds in an easy, accessible and affordable area of the country. You can zip down Dodge in your car, bike on the city's robust trail system or even take a horse and buggy to see a different view of downtown. The counties that make up the Omaha-metro area have something for everyone. It's one of the great things about where we live. You can make a home in an urban apartment or on a multi-acre property.

Douglas County

It is the engine of Nebraska, both in population and culture. You have everything you need in Douglas County. First of all, it's home to Omaha, where people from all over the world visit because of its music, hospitals, sports and attractions. You get wide stretches of land where you can stretch your legs and a hefty mix of urban vibe and country peace.

Sarpy County

Located south of metro Omaha, Sarpy County features a number of rapidly growing suburban communities. Gretna, Papillion and La Vista are burgeoning communities with great schools and family-focused neighborhoods. Bellevue is home to Offutt Air Force Base, and welcomes military service members and their families to put down roots during and after their tours. If you want to get a little farther away from the hustle and bustle, Springfield offers a small-town experience just a stone's throw from the Platte River and the great outdoors. From building a home to building a life, Sarpy County is one of the most peaceful and rewarding places to live in Nebraska.

Katelman Water Park in Council Bluffs, Iowa. JOE SHEARER





Cass County

With a compelling and colorful pioneer history, Cass County offers a chance to live where you can see all the stars in the sky at night. From Plattsmouth and Louisville to Weeping Water and Elmwood, there is plenty of small-town charm across one of the largest counties in Nebraska. You can find a house on a lake or a home with plenty of land to roam. It just makes sense that Cass County is home to Eugene T. Mahoney State Park, a scenic and popular getaway that celebrates Nebraska's outdoor lifestyle.

Washington County

Washington County is a perfect place to live for those who want it all. Why? You don't have to choose between country peace and metropolitan action. Located just north of Omaha and nestled along the mighty Missouri River, Washington County offers multiple communities to call home. From Blair to Arlington, you can find the quiet place for that acreage you've always wanted, with good neighbors, a local watering hole and abundant opportunities for all the outdoorsy stuff you love. So settle down in Washington County and then hunt and fish, birdwatch, hike and bike to your heart's content.

Dodge County

Dodge County is like the popular kid in high school: both charming and cool. For one thing it is home to historic Fremont and Midland University. For another thing, residents work in established, well-paying industries at respected hometown companies like Omaha Steaks, Christensen Lumber and Hormel. On a Saturday afternoon, folks drive down the Avenue of Flags, head to Fremont State Lakes or attend the Fremont Balloon Glow depending on the time of year. And, if Fremont isn't your style, there are other communities in Dodge County to check out, including Scribner, Hooper, Nickerson, North Bend, Uehling and Winslow.

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Otoe County

Even though it's tucked away just south of Douglas, Sarpy and surrounding eastern Nebraska counties, don't overlook Otoe County. Anchored by Nebraska City, home of Arbor Day, Otoe County is quintessential country life for those who live there. Many residents farm in and around their respective towns while others work in local trade industries or at companies headquartered in Omaha. It truly is a historic place, situated right along the route Lewis and Clark took on their epic journey. Otoe County embodies the rural heritage of Nebraska, and provides plenty of opportunity to experience the modern meaning of The Good Life.

Pottawattamie County

A great way to experience the beauty and joy of living in Pottawattamie is to bike down the Wabash Trace Nature Trail, starting at Lewis Central in Council Bluffs and heading south, until you hit Page County, Iowa. That ride will fill your soul with the wonderful urban-to-rural transition available to residents on a daily basis. Council Bluffs provides a strong across-the-river complement to Omaha, with the two cities working together to create a vibrant lifestyle on either side of the Missouri — connected by the instantly recognizable Bob Kerrey Pedestrian Bridge. Pottawattamie County stands out on its own among the Loess Hills, a great place to call home.



Hitchcock Nature Center. JOE SHEARER

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COMMUNITIES

Greater Omaha is a great place to live. If you're looking to settle down, then we have some growing communities for you. Think great schools, bikes in the driveway and friendly dogs chasing frisbees. Throw in a fast commute nearly anywhere you work and incredible access to arts, entertainment and sports, and now you know why our quality of life is so darn good.

La Vista

La Vista is tucked between Omaha, Ralston and Papillion on the north side of Sarpy County. It's a rapidly growing city that balances the benefits of living in a small town and a big city. When you make a home in La Vista, you have access to everything Greater Omaha has to offer, with the city center nearby, and the great wide open just a few minutes south.

Papillion

Papillion is a terrific place to raise a young, growing family. There's a lot to do in Papillion, from shopping, coffee shops, the 70-acre Halleck Park and other attractions not far from nearly every resident's doorstep. It's a safe city, with a bustling town center, affordable housing and lots of recreation. Among other things, you can catch an Omaha Storm Chasers minor-league baseball game at Werner Park. Commute time to downtown Omaha is under 15 minutes — even during rush hour. There are a lot of reasons to love Papillion and even more to live there.

Storm Chasers game at Werner Park in Papillion. BRENDAN SULLIVAN



Bellevue

Long known as the home of Offutt Air Force Base, Bellevue is a dynamic and historic Nebraska city with a robust civilian workforce. Starting off in 1822 as a trading post with local Omaha, Otoe, Missouri and Pawnee tribes, Bellevue's Olde Towne is a charming throwback to Main Street. The city is the site of Fontenelle Forest, which consists of 1,400 acres of land and 19 miles of hiking trails, with breathtaking views of the Missouri River and the surrounding area. A favorite getaway for locals who love to birdwatch and lose themselves in nature.



TreeRush Adventures at Fontenelle Forest. MEGAN MCGILL



Nebraska Balloon and Wine Festival near downtown Elkhorn. JOE DEJKA

Gretna

Like a lot of cities in the area, Gretna has railroad roots. The city was founded after the Burlington Railroad built a short line between Omaha and Ashland in 1886. Gretna is still a small town in many ways, with a population under 5,000, but it is still one of the state's fastest-growing cities. Gretna is situated conveniently between Nebraska's largest cities, prime location for anyone who commutes to either Omaha or Lincoln.

Ralston

Known as "Independence City," Ralston is the proud home of the Ralston Arena, where fans catch the Omaha Beef indoor football team and the Omaha Lancers hockey team, along with a wide range of music and live events throughout the year. Ralston is investing a lot into their city center,

creating a vibrant new hub of arts and entertainment for residents of this small town within the big city. With all the activity happening in Ralston, it's exciting to see one of the region's most historic cities making moves toward the cutting edge.

Elkhorn

From its roots as a railroad outpost to its heyday as a thriving suburb, Elkhorn has a long history both intertwined with and proudly distinct from that of its big-city neighbor. Elkhorn boasts some of the best neighborhoods in the Omaha metro, including Fire Ridge, Skyline Ranches and The Prairies. The rapidly growing school district has added two new high schools in the last decade to keep pace with the booming population.



NEIGHBORHOODS

Where, oh where, should you live? Now that's a big question for those looking to move to Omaha. With affordable and beautiful choices like Dundee, Benson, Aksarben, South Omaha, Blackstone, Old Market, Midtown, Highlander and more, Omahans from young professionals to growing families to retirees are left wondering what neighborhood is the best for them. It's about the vibe, what fits best — and each neighborhood in the Big O offers something different for everyone. Prefer to live where you can shop locally? Check out Benson. Close proximity to work and nights on the town? Old Market. Whether you rent or buy, Omaha neighborhoods are an opportunity to find a home in an area that fits — and helps inspire — your life.

North Downtown Makerhood

Just one more up-and-comer. Downtown Omaha north of TD Ameritrade Park was once an industrial area for the railroad and manufacturing companies. In 2019, Peter Kiewit Foundation launched a \$300-million revitalization project and the result is New North Makerhood, now home to the Fashion Institute Midwest, the Omaha Land Bank, Bench and Reclaimed Enterprises, a custom woodworking and design business. In August, HutchFEST held its third annual Midwest makers' fair in the Makerhood area that included 250 vendors, as well as local food, drinks and live music.

South Omaha

South Omaha, once nicknamed "The Magic City," is a culturally diverse community, with portions of the population from Czech, Irish, Latino, Italian, Polish, Lithuanian, Hispanic and Sudanese backgrounds. This diversity is reflected in the area businesses, schools, churches and community organizations. Amid the neighborhoods of South Omaha, visitors can find several points of interest and local landmarks, including Little Italy, the Livestock Exchange Building, the South Omaha Main Street Historic District and Edgar Zabriskie Residence.

A family enjoys the South Omaha Mural Project.
MEGAN MCGILL



Benson

Foodies, artists and musicians love to live and work in Benson. The neighborhood has a colorful mix of coffee shops, vintage boutiques, tattoo parlors, art studios, bars, restaurants and more. Like video games? Of course you do. If you also like beer, swing by Benson's Beercade for Pac Man and brews.

Dundee

It seems like everyone in Omaha has either lived in Dundee, wanted to live in Dundee or pretended to live in Dundee (at least for an afternoon or evening). It's easy to see why. It's one of the city's oldest and most beautiful neighborhoods, with historic houses, mature trees, large parks and incredible food, spirits and shopping.

Old Market

There is nothing — really nothing — like walking the brick streets of Omaha's Old Market. That's why it's the most iconic destination in Omaha. Old Market residents and visitors alike enjoy all of the action, from downtown businesses and corporations, to one-of-a-kind shops. Farmer's markets, bars, entertainment venues, art galleries, restaurants, and more. If you want entertainment, dining and culture, the Old Market is where you want to be.

Sidewalk dining in the Old Market. ANNA REED





Corporate Cup in Aksarben Village. KAYLA WOLFE

Aksarben Village

Once a horseracing hub, Aksarben Village is now a self-contained community with nearly everything someone would want in one convenient neighborhood. But better. Askarben is where people flock to watch the Maha Festival and UNO hockey at Baxter Arena. Afterward, they grab dinner and drinks in a lively food and beverage district. Students, families and empty nesters live here, and they all love it.

Highlander

The vision of Seventy Five North is clear: To facilitate the revitalization of a healthy, sustainable, mixed-income community in the historic Highlander neighborhood. The effort has been a success by convening community members, educational partners, and the philanthropic community to empower a growing neighborhood.

Blackstone District

It seems like just yesterday the Blackstone District was a forgotten part of midtown Omaha with little, if any, identity of its own. But times have changed in a big way. The Blackstone District near 36th and Farnam has transformed to become one of Omaha's most exciting destinations for food, family, nightlife and fun.

Omaha's North 24th Street blends arts, community, business and 'Culxr'

A scant few minutes from downtown Omaha, hip-hop artist Marcey Yates leads a space called the Culxr House that sells vintage vinyl records, local Black artists' artwork, its own exclusive clothing collection and vintage and new streetwear.

The Culxr House, 3014 N. 24th St., also provides a space for people from the community to perform, create visual art, gather and grow businesses, part of an energetic blend of arts, culture, entrepreneurship and community-building that's taking root on Omaha's North 24th Street.

North Omaha — and North 24th Street in particular — is an ever-progressing community in motion. For example, Yates and Culxr House hosted a bike ride from TD Ameritrade Park to Culxr House in connection with Juneteenth 2021. About 40 people participated, and it went well, Yates says.

North 24th Street is a good place to start for people looking to get off downtown Omaha's beaten path, experience local culture they might not know existed and support local Black-owned businesses and artists. There are unique local restaurants nearby on North 30th Street, such as Big Mama's at the new Highlander development and Time Out Foods, as well as a handful of retail shops near historic 24th and Lake Streets, the Great Plains Black History Museum, the Malcolm X Memorial Foundation and The Union for Contemporary Art.



Racks of clothing wait for potential buyers at Culxr House. LILY SMITH

It's an easy drive, about 2 miles, from TD Ameritrade Park to Culxr House. Go to Creighton University, turn north on 24th Street and cruise through the historic heart of Omaha's Black community. It's also easy to get there by bicycle or scooter. There's a Heartland Bicycle e-bike station right outside Culxr House's door.

"It's a 10-minute bike ride from downtown to here," Yates says. "You can ride your scooter here."

At Culxr House, Yates thumbed through racks of R&B, jazz and soul records on display between racks of clothing and a performance area.

"Diggers come down here, and they find gems," he says.

Beyond the racks is a music studio where he pre-recorded some of the music for a new record he has coming out, "Freedom Summer." In back is a large, industrial-looking event and exhibition space, with a new mural on the wall and exhibits of visual art from local Black artists.

The Great Plains Black History Museum at 2221 N. 24th St. currently has exhibits on Negro league baseball, Black citizenship in the age of Jim Crow and the North Omaha history book "24th and Glory."

The new Ital Vital Living smoothie and juice drive-thru is nearby, as are the Still Poppin Gourmet Popcorn Shop, Rooted Synergy Art Gallery, Haberdash Men's Store and Fair Deal Grocery at Fair Deal Village MarketPlace. Other nearby stores include independent, Black-owned clothing retailers Evolutions of Style and LeFlore's Fashions.

The Malcolm X Memorial Foundation is not far away, at 3448 Evans St. People can get guided tours of Malcolm X's birth site and the visitors center. Foundation President Leo Louis says the site receives quite a few visitors.

Preston Love Jr., a North Omaha activist and historian, says it's a good time for people unfamiliar with North 24th Street to make a visit. "We have a rich history and a rich culture," Love says. "This community has gone through what a lot of other communities have gone through, but we're on the up."



“It’s a 10-minute bike ride from downtown to here. You can ride your scooter here.”
- Marcey Yates, hip-hop artist

A motorcyclist rides by Culxr House in North Omaha. LILY SMITH

TRANSIT

Transit is as important to a thriving community as the people who live there. If residents can't get from here to there, then they can't connect with each other. Omaha has a growing mobile transit program that provides more inclusive transportation options for all citizens. The hope is to, among other things, reduce the need for cars, which leads to a lower carbon footprint and cleaner air. It also frees up parking and encourages better public health.

ORBT

In 2020, Metro Transit launched Omaha Rapid Bus Transit (ORBT). It was the most significant and important mass transit investment the region had seen in years. By using smart technology, enhanced workstations, spacious vehicles and streamlined travel, ORBT has given the city faster, more frequent and reliable transportation. Currently, the program serves an 8-mile route from downtown to Westroads Mall.

Scooters

Omahans can rent scooters for a fun, eco-friendly and affordable way to zip around. The program aims to reduce traffic and help free up parking, as well as reduce the city's carbon footprint. Last year, findings from the pilot program found that people used scooters for 36,283 trips covering 50,613 miles. The average distance traveled was 1.46 miles and took place downtown as well as in Midtown, Askarben and Benson.

Bike Sharing

In Omaha, bike sharing through the Heartland B-Cycle program has become a green, popular way to get around. It's freed up street parking, and reduced congestion. A B-Cycle is ready to ride anywhere and everywhere — at least from one of 70 stations throughout the city. It's fun, affordable and good for the planet. Let's ride!



METROPOLITAN
Community College

Metropolitan Community College has always been responsive to industry and community needs. Two industries—automotive and manufacturing—need more skilled workers to fill the jobs of today and tomorrow.

MCC has answered this need with new facilities and expanded programming at its South Omaha Campus.



CENTER FOR ADVANCED MANUFACTURING

The College's efforts started with a renovation to the existing Industrial Training Center, creating the Center for Advanced Manufacturing. The new facilities include new space for current manufacturing programs and additional ones such as industrial robotics.

AUTOMOTIVE TRAINING CENTER

Automotive Technology, Auto Collision Technology and the Toyota T-Ten program are among the College's robust trade programs, providing skilled technicians to Omaha-area businesses for decades. The Automotive Training Center brings these programs under one roof.

VETERANS

Recognizing the opportunity to match strong students with high-demand career fields, MCC incorporated renovated space within the Center for Advanced Manufacturing to serve as a center for active military and veteran students.

Visit mccneb.edu to learn more.

MILITARY

From Fort Crook to Offutt Air Force Base and the Strategic Air Command, the U.S. military is an important piece of Omaha's past and present. Omaha wouldn't be what it is today without its military families and veterans who returned home after battle. Today, Omaha has a special relationship with Offutt, one of the state's largest employers.

Offutt Air Force Base/StratCom

In 1948, the U.S. Air Force and Navy reached a joint agreement that made Offutt Air Force Base the host and headquarters of the Strategic Air Command. Today, Offutt Air Force Base supports a military and civilian workforce of approximately 10,000 people. The military's impact on the economy averages almost \$2 billion annually. On a more personal level, Bellevue and the entire region have given a home to our military families, embracing them whether they grew up here or are stationed here temporarily. Because of that, many military families return to the region after their tours of duty are complete and live a happy civilian life.

VA of Nebraska-Western Iowa

The Veterans Health Administration is America's largest integrated healthcare system, providing care at 1,293 healthcare facilities, including a state-of-the-art veterans healthcare facility in Omaha. The city's \$86 million, 160,000-square-foot VA Ambulatory Care Center opened in 2020. Built as part of the VA's campus near 42nd and Woolworth Streets, the ambulatory care hub is equipped to handle 400 patients a day and links to the main 12-story VA hospital. The facility, which has eight primary care clinics, an outpatient surgery suite and other specialty services to the campus, is the country's first private-public funded healthcare facility built under the Communities Helping Invest through Property and Improvements Needed for Vets Act. From COVID-19 testing and treatment to suicide prevention and mental health services, the VA works to improve the lives of all area veterans.

**EVERY DROP.
EVERY DAY.
EVERY TIME.**

If your water comes from the Metropolitan Utilities District, you'll be happy to know all the ways we work to deliver safe and reliable drinking water.

See the stats, facts and figures behind what we do in our latest Water Quality Report!



mudomaha.com



**METROPOLITAN
UTILITIES DISTRICT**

PARKS & RECREATION

The state parks in eastern Nebraska and western Iowa have so much to offer folks who live here, whether they are in Ashland, Council Bluffs, or somewhere in between. They are less expensive than a private campground and have awesome features, such as hiking, swimming, trails, bike paths and beaches. Like roughing it? We've got you covered. Or, do you prefer staying in style? Nailed it. And history? Too much to mention in one little book. There is something for everyone at our local state park system.

Eugene T. Mahoney State Park

Eugene T. Mahoney State Park in Cass County is one of the most popular recreational areas in Nebraska, as well as the most scenic. The park includes a climbing wall, hiking and biking trails, volleyball courts, swimming, pony rides and more, along with camping and boating.

Louisville State Park

It's one of those best-kept Nebraska secrets that isn't so secret anymore, and that's OK. Louisville State Park in Cass County encompasses 192 acres, five sandpit lakes and 50 surface acres of water. You can have a picnic, go canoeing, catch a few fish, take your kids to a floating playground and more.

Kimberly Creek Retreat

Ashland's Kimberly Creek Retreat offers "glamping," which is a hilarious way of saying that it appeals to those who want to camp in style. No roughing it here! Located between Omaha and Lincoln, the park's guests say staying there is like being in a luxury hotel that happens to be in the middle of the woods.

Fremont Lakes State Recreation Area

Fremont Lakes State Recreation Area is one of the most popular in the state, with 40 acres of land and nearly 300 acres of water in 20 sandpit lakes.

Platte River State Park

Archery, biking, cabins, camping, hiking and more. Platte River State Park has everything you want in a park and then some. It's also smack in the middle of Omaha and Lincoln, so campers from either city can enjoy all of its amenities and state-of-the-art facilities.

Carter Lake

Carter Lake is unique in that it stretches across both Nebraska and Iowa. It's smaller than other metro lakes, at 32 acres, but it's great location and natural beauty make it a hot spot for boaters and swimmers on both sides of the Missouri River.

Lake Manawa State Park

At 1,529 acres, Lake Manawa State Park in Council Bluffs encompasses a lake that stretches across 752 acres. Lake Manawa was formed during an 1881 flood, so it offers visitors a history lesson as well.

Two Rivers State Recreation Area

Two Rivers State Recreation Area is one of Nebraska's most visited recreation areas. Among other very cool things, this park boasts 10 Union Pacific train cabooses that have been — wait for it — refurbished into cabins that sleep up to six people.

Falconwood Park

In Sarpy County, Falconwood Park offers visitors a place to hang, camp, see a concert, watch a drive-in movie and more. It's an all-encompassing arts and entertainment venue and home of the Hullabaloo Music Festival.

Sunrise over Mahoney State Park. ANNA REED



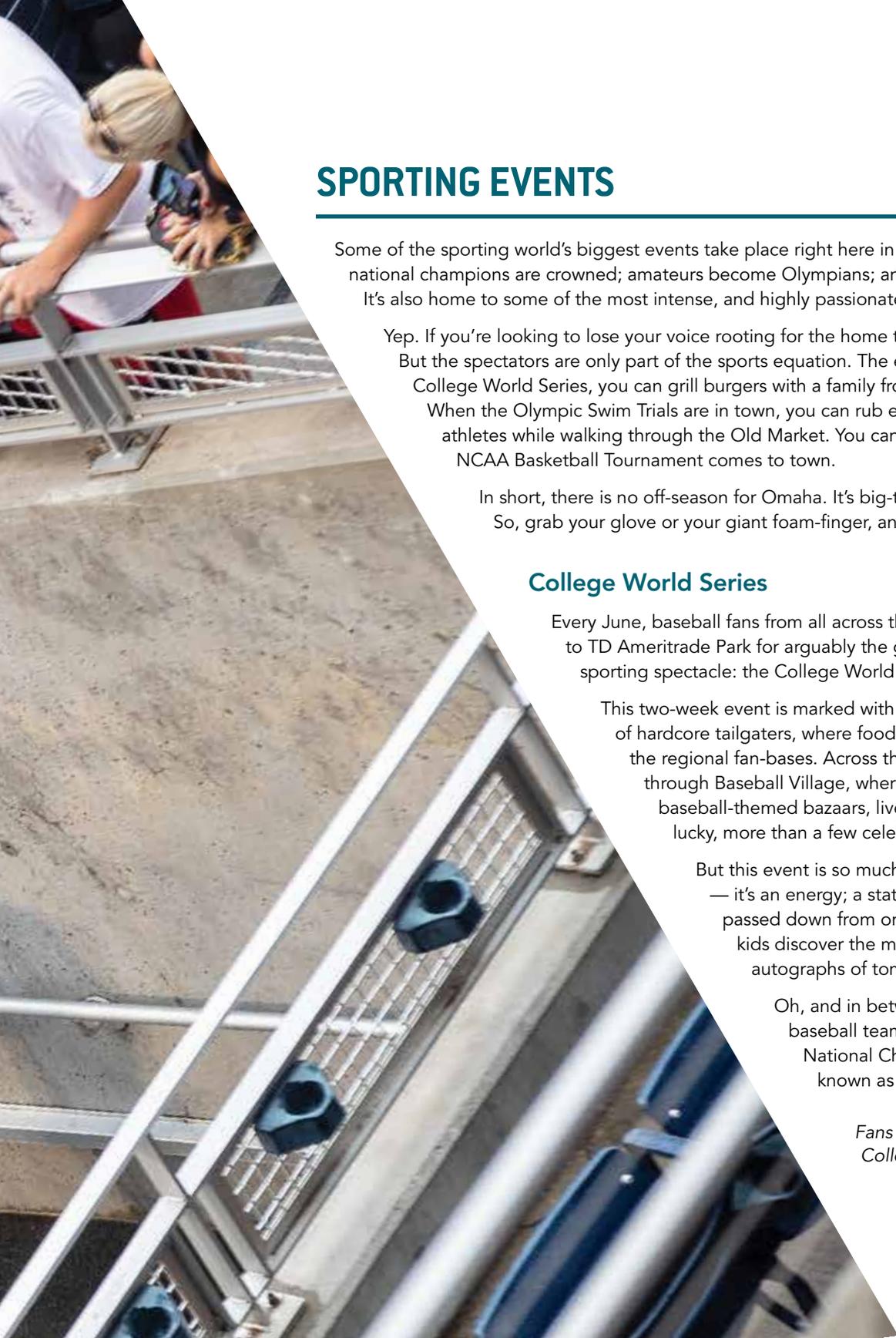


WE VIBE.

The Omaha area offers something for everyone. When it comes to living your best life, Omaha is the city of dreams for sports fans, art enthusiasts, theater-goers, history buffs, foodies and more. No matter what your taste, you can find entertainment everywhere in Omaha.







SPORTING EVENTS

Some of the sporting world's biggest events take place right here in Omaha. It's where college baseball national champions are crowned; amateurs become Olympians; and future PGA stars make the cut. It's also home to some of the most intense, and highly passionate fan bases for soccer and hockey.

Yep. If you're looking to lose your voice rooting for the home team, Omaha is the place to do it. But the spectators are only part of the sports equation. The event itself is the real draw. At the College World Series, you can grill burgers with a family from the other side of the country. When the Olympic Swim Trials are in town, you can rub elbows with the world's greatest athletes while walking through the Old Market. You can cheer with the crowd when the NCAA Basketball Tournament comes to town.

In short, there is no off-season for Omaha. It's big-time sports all year-round. So, grab your glove or your giant foam-finger, and get ready to cheer on your team!

College World Series

Every June, baseball fans from all across the country make their annual pilgrimage to TD Ameritrade Park for arguably the grandest and most electric collegiate sporting spectacle: the College World Series.

This two-week event is marked with the plumes of smoke rising off the grills of hardcore tailgaters, where food and stories are freely shared among the regional fan-bases. Across the street from the ballpark, you can stroll through Baseball Village, where you'll find an eclectic collection of baseball-themed bazaars, live music, a beer garden, and if you're lucky, more than a few celebrities in town for the festivities.

But this event is so much more than just a baseball tournament — it's an energy; a state of mind; a rite of passage that is passed down from one generation to the next. It's where kids discover the magic of the game as they hustle for autographs of tomorrow's major leaguers.

Oh, and in between all that, the eight best college baseball teams compete for the coveted title of National Champion. It's no wonder this event is known as "The Greatest Show on Dirt."

Fans get autographs at the College World Series. CHRIS MACHIAN

CWS friends keep the good times rolling for 20 years and counting

Randy Workman was backing his red pickup with personalized Husker plates into a prime tailgating spot outside Rosenblatt Stadium when a Louisiana truck rolled up carrying four guys.

The Southern gents stopped on the street on that College World Series morning in 2002. Could they park there, they asked the Nebraska guy?

Sure, just go around the corner and pay your \$10 at the parking lot entrance, Workman replied.

"I just flagged them in," he says. "They parked beside us. And the rest is history."

Thus began a 20-year-and-counting friendship. The Louisianans, mostly LSU fans, come to Nebraska for the College World Series whether or not their teams make it to Omaha. They pull a trailer stuffed with viands from bayou country. They cook their regional specialties for anyone who cares to partake.

Theirs is the kind of history that happens in Omaha off the field, and makes the relationship between the community and the College World Series so memorable. "It's more the friendship and the cooking and enjoying this," Doug Guidry of Lafayette, Louisiana, says while stirring a steaming pot of crawfish. "Going to the games, we're big college baseball fans, you know. And we keep in touch all through the year."

English with a Cajun flavor has long been a lingua franca of bon vivants in Omaha for the College World Series.

The bayou boys and girls of summer have engendered generations of goodwill by serving up generous plates of jambalaya and crawfish etouffee, with ample portions of Southern hospitality and easy conversation on the side.

That tradition goes back at least to the 1990s. This particular crew has its roots in 2002. Guidry had made his first trip to Omaha with LSU in 2000. He returned two years later, despite the LSU team's absence, with a fanatic four that included Stan Evans, Jeff Hyde and Timmy Daigle.

They hit it off right away with Workman and an Omaha buddy of his, Larry Berray. They had a good time in the parking lot and at the games. When that 2002 series was over and they said their farewells, the Louisianans said they'd be back. Workman wasn't sure they'd ever see each other again. "But, by golly, they came back and they came back and they came back," he says.

Led by Evans, the people from the South began bringing enough food to feed the masses. Guidry figures they fed upward of 150 people a day in those Rosenblatt days. "The friendship crew grew," he says.

"It's almost like family," says Earl Leger of Lafayette, Louisiana.

There are a thousand stories about the myriad connections. Like how retired Omaha firefighter P.J. Driscoll and his son Pat Driscoll got into the crew. Evans and company had given P.J. a great plate

of jambalaya outside Rosenblatt. He sent Pat over on his bike the next day to get the recipe, but they got to talking and they're still tailgating and talking.

The group even has a pastor. The Rev. Bill Moorhead, Workman's former pastor at Pacific Hills Lutheran Church, attends the opening day tailgate on Saturday and says a blessing for good food, good baseball and good friendship.

Over the years, the CWS friends put together a golf tournament in Omaha. They've hunted and fished together. Workman and his wife, Joan, have visited the Louisiana friends several times, attending LSU football and baseball games in Baton Rouge.

But the CWS is the main event. Workman takes off two weeks from his drywalling business for it, "the best two weeks of the year."

They survived the CWS's move to downtown Omaha, although their tailgate, now headquartered at Creighton's soccer stadium, has gotten smaller and doesn't feed the masses so much anymore.

They've seen kids in their crew grow up and bring their own kids now. The friendship also has survived two recessions, Louisiana hurricanes, a pandemic and American political polarization (they don't talk about the latter). How long will it last?

"It never ends. Dot, dot, dot," Guidry says, just before banging a pot lid to call people up for etouffee.



“I just flagged them in.
They parked beside us.
And the rest is history.”

- Randy Workman



Doug Guidry and Earl Leger perfect pots of lima beans and stew at Morrison Stadium. LILY SMITH



Jim Furyk at the U.S. Senior Open at Omaha Country Club. Z LONG

U.S. Senior Open

Big names, big drivers, and sharp irons were front and center when the best senior golfers in the world descended upon the Omaha Country Club to compete for the Francis D. Ouimet Trophy.

The stunning course, designed in 1925 on 190 acres of farmland and forested countryside, is known for its thick rough and fast greens. Those conditions are a result of the rolling hills, which present distinct challenges to even the most seasoned golfers. The Omaha Country Club is just the seventh course to host the U.S. Senior Open twice, and has established itself as a strong contender for future tournaments.



USA Swimming Olympic Team Trials. SAVANNAH HAMM

USA Swimming Olympic Team Trials

In swimming, swimmers are periodically breathless as they make their way back and forth down the length of the pool. But when the USA Swimming Olympic Team Trials came to Omaha, attendees are the ones left truly breathless. After all, only Omaha can make a highly competitive swim meet feel more like a red-carpet Hollywood blockbuster premier!

In the past, this eight-day televised event from the CHI Health Center Omaha featured live hosts who performed interviews with the athletes, entertained the crowd and helped add another layer of fast-paced excitement. There were also guest appearances from former Olympians, lifetime achievement awards and a big, dazzling light show. The top two finishers in the individual events, and the top six in the relays, qualified for the Olympics.

When the swimmers weren't competing, you could find them milling around the cobblestone streets of downtown, signing autographs, taking photos with fans and enjoying all that Omaha has to offer.

NCAA Men's Basketball Tournament

Omaha is about to slip into a state of total madness — March Madness, that is. The CHI Health Center Omaha will host the first and second rounds of the NCAA tournament in 2024. Frenzied excitement will surely be in store, as the opening rounds are typically when brackets get busted, Cinderellas start their run, and national powerhouses assert their dominance.

The finality of post season play adds another layer of excitement as the winners will move on to the Sweet 16 and get closer to the ultimate goal of cutting down the net and hoisting the national championship trophy.

Creighton Basketball. CHRIS MACHIAN





Nebraska vs. UNO volleyball. CHRIS MACHIAN

NCAA Volleyball

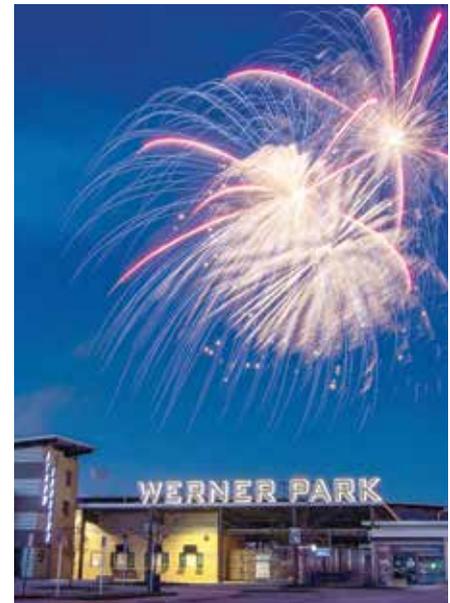
As a host site, Omaha is nothing short of an ace. So it's no wonder the NCAA Women's Volleyball Tournament is slated to return in 2022. In 2006, 2008, and 2015, the championship matches all set records for the largest single-match attendance in NCAA women's volleyball history. In 2021, Omaha hosted the entire tournament. Overall, five of the 10 largest crowds in NCAA history have been either NCAA Semifinal or Finals matches played in Omaha.

Coincidentally, the University of Nebraska has reached the NCAA semifinals every time the event has been held in Omaha. Fingers crossed the pattern continues in 2022!

Omaha Storm Chasers

If you're looking for fun, family-friendly entertainment, then catching a Storm Chasers game at Werner Park is nothing short of a home run! The Omaha Storm Chasers are a minor league baseball team of the Triple-A East and Triple-A affiliate of the Kansas City Royals.

Not only can you catch a glimpse (and possibly a foul ball) of tomorrow's big leaguers, your kiddos can run wild in the Kids Play Zone, where they'll find a few bounce houses, a playground, a carousel, and a ball-pitching inflatable. Just make sure to arrive hungry because you have access to some of the tastiest ballpark food this side of Coney Island.



Fireworks at Werner Park. CHRIS MACHIAN

Pinnacle Bank Championship

It's only fitting that the final stop on the Korn Ferry Tour comes to Omaha, where golf's rising stars come to shine. The Pinnacle Bank Championship at Indian Creek Golf Course is four days of intense, pressure-packed golf as amateur golfers try to win their PGA Tour Card. But the tournament isn't all business — there's plenty of fun events for families and casual fans alike with a Pro-Am, Youth Day, charity events, and so much more. In the end, more than 100 golfers will compete, but only 25 will earn the right to call themselves "PGA Pros."

Union Omaha Soccer Club

Get down to the "pitch" at Werner Park and experience "the beautiful game" by screaming and chanting your head off for 90 minutes while surrounded by thousands of other soccer fanatics. Union Omaha Soccer Club is the only professional team in Nebraska and part of the United Soccer League's League One (USL League One). Two cool facts: the name, Union Omaha, is a nod to the Union Pacific Railroad; while the great horned owl, a species of owl native to Nebraska, is the focal point of the team logo.

So grab those scarves and get ready for soccer as only Omaha can do it!

Omaha Lancers

Technically, they're an amateur hockey team. But step your skates inside the Ralston Arena on game night and you'll be treated to an NHL-style experience with thousands of hardcore hockey fans cheering on their beloved Omaha Lancers! The Lancers have built a strong tradition of excellence, winning a total of 14 championships in their 35 years of existence — the most of any United States Hockey League (USHL) franchise.

This family-friendly venue is a perfect way to spend an evening cheering until your voice goes hoarse, pounding on the glass, and high-fiving total strangers as the Lancers score goal after goal.



Union Omaha. CHRIS MACHIAN

FESTIVALS

At its core, a festival is a celebration of people. It's a place where people arrive as strangers, and, with luck and a dose of Nebraska Nice, go home having made a handful of new friends. It's a place where people can sample great food, listen to great music, dance, party, and socialize.

And Omaha offers some of the best festivals in the region.

From culinary adventures to cultural pride and more, Omaha's local festivals will provide you with a shared experience that will last a lifetime — along with the memories that you'll surely make.

So cancel your other weekend plans because these Omaha festivals have so much to offer: Community, connection, and an experience like no other.

Omaha Summer Arts Festival

A true masterpiece in every sense of the word, the Omaha Summer Arts Festival (OSAF) is a celebration of art in all its many forms. Voted one of Omaha's favorite annual festivals and regarded across the country as a top art festival by outlets like Smithsonian.com, OSAF is an eclectic and vibrant showcase of local and national artists.

A staple of the Omaha community for nearly 50 years, the OSAF typically takes place during the first week of June and is visited by 80,000 people annually. The festival features an Artists' Market, Young Artist Exhibition, an interactive children's area with an exclusive kids-only art-buying experience, a variety of stage performances, and film fest.

Should you choose to go (and we strongly recommend you do), we suggest you show up hungry — both for the culture AND the food.

You'll find a variety of food vendors including Mexican, BBQ, Greek, and traditional festival favorites.

Heartland Pride Parade & Festival

All the colors of the rainbow take center stage during this annual celebration of the LGBTQ+ community. The festival begins with a parade in downtown Omaha and features festive floats, dancers and flag twirlers. There are also plenty of fun outdoor activities that promote inclusion, diversity, and the history of this proud community. The event concludes with a concert at the Baxter Arena.

Mural cube by artist Brittney Thompson for the Summer Arts Festival. Z LONG



Maha Music Festival

Stinson Park in late summer is ground zero for an experience so unique and so vibrant that it truly defies the label of "music festival." Yes, the Maha Music Festival is loaded with bands and performers from all across the country, but it's also a multi-faceted and multi-cultural community event that reveals Omaha's more eclectic side.

Walk through Omaha's largest outdoor music festival and you'll not only catch local and Grammy-award winning acts, but also art installations, film screenings, fashion shows, and even a Ferris wheel. Adding to the festivities are DJ music, comedy groups, and slam poets. And

when you find yourself hankering for a bite to eat, just groove on over to the rows of Omaha-based food trucks and booths. If you're over 21, you can grab a variety of adult beverages including craft beers from local breweries. Tickets generally sell out fast, so grab yours the first chance you get.

Memorial Park Concert

An annual outdoor summer concert that features chart-topping performers, local artists, and end-of-the-night fireworks that always delivers plenty of oohs and aahs. In recent years, the fireworks show has been expanded and is now one of the largest in the region. The event is free and very family friendly.

John C. Fremont Days

A three-day, family-friendly festival that celebrates one of Nebraska's most iconic forebearers. Held in the town that bears his name (Fremont), more than 140 historical, educational, and fun events take place throughout the city. History-based attractions include a number of re-enactments.

Other attractions include a display of John C. Fremont artifacts, a Wild West show, street dances, and a U.S. Air Force Heartland of America Band concert.



Hanging out at Maha Festival in Stinson Park. SAVANNAH HAMM



Taste of Omaha in Elmwood Park. CHRIS MACHIAN

Taste of Omaha

Whether you're a seasoned chef, famous foodie, or just a hungry family looking for something to do, this annual summer festival has all the ingredients for an amazing time!

Located in Elmwood Park in the Aksarben neighborhood, this three-day culinary extravaganza is open to the public and free to attend. It's a fun and relaxing way to enjoy a selection of cuisines that include Mexican, Italian, Greek, Asian, Mediterranean, American, and more. For those over 21, you can pair a local craft beer or wine with your food samplings.

And no food festival would be complete without something for your sweet tooth, and Taste of Omaha doesn't disappoint. Dive into decadent slices of heaven, or should we say, cheesecake, or opt for a fresh scoop of ice cream. However, if you're anything like us, you do both.

But before you head home, make sure to check out the Nebraska Lottery stage where you can rock out to live music from the hottest local bands, enjoy cultural dance performances, and even get face painting done for the kids.

Juneteenth

The Omaha Freedom Festival is a celebration of the Juneteenth holiday which honors the emancipation of those enslaved in the United States. The festival's mission is to: Educate, Empower and Entertain the Omaha community about North Omaha culture. The event takes place at the Malcolm X Memorial Foundation's outdoor amphitheater. There are plenty of family-friendly activities, local artists, musicians, food and beverage vendors, and so much more.



MUSEUMS & ATTRACTIONS

Some of the best museums in the Midwest can be found right here in Omaha. These must-visit stops will help you fill out your weekends and create recurring appointments on your to-do list:

Durham Museum	Joslyn Museum
El Museo Latino	Lauritzen Gardens
Great Plains Black History Museum	Love's Jazz and Arts Center
Henry Doorly Zoo & Aquarium	Omaha Children's Museum

Whether you're entertaining family from out of town or looking to broaden your cultural horizons, all of these museums are worth exploring.

Omaha Children's Museum

It's not uncommon to walk through the Omaha Children's Museum (OCM) and feel as if you've been transported into the pages of a Dr. Seuss book. Bright, daring colors splash the walls, staircases, floors, and ceilings; rooms are affixed with crooked map lines of pipes and tubes that shuttle bouncy balls to and fro; and there's even an occasional rainstorm in the Imagination Playground. All that's missing is that lanky cat with his red-and-white striped top hat!

Yes, it's reasons such as this that OCM is the most visited museum in Nebraska. It's an interactive museum that provides an ever-changing series of traveling and permanent exhibits, science shows, and special events. Let your kiddos run wild in the Imagination Playground, the Arts Smart Center, Zooland and more.

If the weather is warm and sunny, your kids can put on their bathing suits and head outside to Sandy's Splash Garden and play in the jets and sprays of the water feature.

Bubble blowing at the Omaha Children's Museum tent during a Juneteenth celebration. LILY SMITH

Henry Doorly Zoo & Aquarium

Each year, more than one million people walk through the gates of Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo & Aquarium, a nationally recognized attraction with a strong focus on conservation. Among its many draws, the zoo is consistently updating its attractions, displays and exhibits to give the animals that reside there the best living experience possible, while at the same time providing visitors of all ages with an entertaining and unique learning experience.

In 2021, the zoo's \$7-million Hubbard Gorilla Valley renovation project opened to the delight of residents and visitors alike. The gorillas have new climbing structures and tree limbs in both the indoor and outdoor spaces. Officials also raised the elevation in the outdoor exhibit space, bringing the gorillas up to window height.

In addition, the zoo features a newly renovated aviary, the new Owen Sea Lion Pavilion, the Asian Highlands, the Harper Event Center, and the \$73-million African Grasslands project which features African elephants and giraffes.

Some of the zoo's indoor exhibits include the recently remodeled Scott Aquarium, the Desert Dome featuring the Kingdoms of the Night display, the Lied Jungle and the education pavilion.

Henry Doorly Zoo & Aquarium's Lied Jungle. SARAH HOFFMAN

Lauritzen Gardens

Omaha's one-of-a-kind botanical center, Lauritzen Gardens, is nestled in the hills off of Interstate 80 near the Henry Doorly Zoo & Aquarium. Spread out over 100 acres, Lauritzen Gardens is considered a multi-sensory experience for all ages. The gardens include an arboretum and bird sanctuary, spaces for children and conservation education, a model railroad garden, a spring flower walk, woodland trail and waterfall, exquisite rose garden and more. Group tours and tram rides are available.

Durham Museum

Inside Omaha's historic Union Station, you'll find one of the most gorgeous and well-regarded museums in the country. The Durham Museum blends radiant architecture, vibrantly personified by ornate Art Deco lines, embellishments, and patterns, with the stories and experiences of the United States' western region.

Trace the lineage of Omaha's history, and the exciting stories of how it came to be. You'll also find a fascinating collection of permanent exhibits, including Native American huts and artifacts, some of the world's rarest coins and documents, and restored train cars from the 1940s and 1950s. The Durham also attracts traveling exhibits through its affiliation with the Smithsonian and close ties with the Library of Congress.

There's also an interactive STEAM-based (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Mathematics) space where kids can touch, feel, build, and explore fun activities.

Before you leave, pop on over to the authentic soda fountain for a classic phosphate, ice cream malt, and other tasty treats from the American doo-wop era.

Joslyn Museum



Since its inception in 1931, the Joslyn Museum has become a premier repository for the visual and cultural arts. On any given day, you can immerse yourself in the experiential nature of art installations that can be traced from ancient to modern times.

Head outside and stroll through the garden gallery for alfresco views of artworks that dot the greenery like the brush tips of a Seurat masterpiece. Your kids will love the exhibitions of original art by children's book illustrators in the Mind's Eye Gallery as well as the interactive, hands-on space of ART WORK.

The Abrahams Library is the largest art research library in Nebraska. The Hitchcock Museum Shop provides a wide range of art-related products, including books, videos, prints, gift items, jewelry, and cards.

There's also an impressive collection of temporary exhibitions, along with concerts, lectures, events, classes, mobile and guided tours, and more.

Great Plains Black History Museum

From its earliest days, the central mission of the Great Plains Black History Museum (GPBHM) has been the preservation and enhancement of knowledge about the history and culture of African Americans in the Great Plains. It boasts one of the largest repositories of historical materials and resources on the African American experience in the United States.

You can also browse exhibits on African

American homesteaders and a section commemorating African American political leaders in the region.

El Museo Latino

In a city defined by history and trailblazing cultural landmarks, El Museo Latino stands atop them all. When it first opened its doors on May 5, 1993, it became the first Latino art and history museum in Nebraska and the Midwest.

Today, it is committed to strengthening the artistic and creative culture of the Greater Omaha area through the presentation of Latino arts, and increasing the visibility of Latino art forms. It also develops educational programs that include lectures, slide presentations, films, art classes, workshops, demonstrations, art history classes, gallery talks, guided visits, and dance classes.

Love's Jazz & Arts Center

Named after legendary Omaha jazz musician Preston Love, Love's Jazz and Arts Center is located in the heart of historic North Omaha. Over the years, Love's has become a cultural landmark by highlighting the contributions of African American artists from the Omaha area and across the country. The state-of-the-art facility houses a performing arts center, exhibition space, gift shop, and classrooms.

SAC Museum

The Strategic Air Command and Aerospace Museum near Ashland offers an up-close-and-personal look at historic aircraft, exhibits and simulations from America's rich and honorable military history. The museum and a team of volunteers work to help restore historic aircraft to its original glory.



Negro Baseball League exhibit at Great Plains Black History Museum. CHRIS MACHIAN



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Conagra Brands is proud to have its largest workforce in Omaha for over 100 years. Our energized, inclusive team is passionate about making modern food, building strong communities and nourishing diversity, openness, acceptance and individual authenticity.

Learn more about Conagra Brands and explore career opportunities by visiting careers.conagrabrands.com



PERFORMING ARTS

When it comes to the performing arts, Omaha stands proudly in the spotlight. You'd be hard pressed to find another city with such an accomplished, talented, and ambitious collection of dancers, playwrights, directors, actors, and singers. This place is thriving, it's energetic, and it's limitless in originality.

But every great performer needs an equally great stage upon which to perform. These producers and presenters offer spectacular entertainment to the region:

American Midwest Ballet
Bellevue Little Theatre
BLUEBARN Theatre
Nebraska Shakespeare
Omaha Community Playhouse
Omaha Performing Arts
Omaha Symphony

Opera Omaha
PACE
Ralston Community Theater
The Rose Theater
Sokol Auditorium
SumTur Amphitheater

Each one offers unique opportunities to see exhilarating performances in both traditional and non-traditional settings. We encourage you to not only find the shows that are close to your heart, but allow yourself to branch out and take in a performance that's outside your comfort zone or leads you down a path less traveled. But no matter your taste, you're guaranteed to experience a performance worthy of a standing ovation.

Nebraska Shakespeare

Nebraska Shakespeare creates entertaining, challenging productions as well as immersive educational experiences that connect our diverse community to Shakespeare's exploration of what it means to be human. In other words, you'll enjoy experiences that are true to the text and intent of Shakespeare while creatively and dynamically relevant to contemporary life. Bring the family to Shakespeare on the Green or catch a stage performance at a variety of locations.

The Rose Theater

The Rose Theater is more than just a few hours of entertainment for children and families — it's an evening of pure magic that provides memories that will last a lifetime. An Omaha institution for more than 70 years, The Rose is the only resident, touring, professional theater company in Omaha and one of the largest in the country.

Their mission is to inspire young people and their families to discover the magic of theater, to find their voices, and enrich their communities.

The Rose is accessible to all children. No child is ever turned away for economic reasons. "Pay-what-you-can" evenings are offered for most productions, and thousands of tickets are given to area youth-serving charities year after year.

But more than anything, The Rose is a community of inspired and passionate fans of the performing arts who are eager and excited to pass down that love of stage to their children and grandchildren.

Opera Omaha

Opera Omaha, the only professional opera company in Nebraska, produces a season of original mainstage productions, presented at the historic Orpheum Theater. They also put on smaller productions and musical events throughout the community.

Opera Omaha is internationally known for its productions of eight world premieres and four American premieres of classical masterpieces and is highly regarded regionally for an extensive education and outreach program that annually reaches thousands from elementary school through adulthood.

Located in downtown Omaha, Opera Omaha strives to make everyone feel comfortable. There is no dress code — simply come as you are and be prepared to have the night of your life.

Omaha Performing Arts

When it comes to curating a well-rounded and well-regarded performing arts season Omaha Performing Arts has earned a standing ovation complete with the tossing of red roses upon the stage. As the largest arts institution in Nebraska, Omaha Performing Arts is dedicated to bringing the best touring artists and productions in jazz, dance, Broadway, blues, speakers, family and popular performers to the Orpheum Theater and Holland Performing Arts Center.

The Orpheum Theater located in downtown Omaha is a former vaudeville house and serves as the home for some of the finest in local and national performing arts. Cross the threshold into the lobby and you'll see original furniture, metal grillwork, draperies, marble, and plaster sculptures that date back to 1927.

While the Orpheum channels an elegant, old Hollywood glam-vibe, the Holland Performing Arts Center is all about sleek modern urbanism inside and out. With bold design and finely engineered acoustics, this performing arts center offers spectacular views of downtown Omaha, an intimate atmosphere for patrons, and a home for world-class artistry.

*"Hamilton" at
The Orpheum.*
RYAN SODERLIN



“You have to inspire people to play their best, like a football coach.”

- Ankush Kumar Bahl,
Music Director,
Omaha Symphony



Omaha Symphony Music Director Ankush Kumar Bahl. CHRIS MACHIAN

Omaha Symphony conductor wants to make classics accessible

When Ankush Kumar Bahl was a toddler, he started tapping in rhythm to the tunes he heard in movie musicals.

Bahl, the music director at the Omaha Symphony, is the son of first-generation immigrants from India. He had a modest upbringing in the San Francisco Bay area, though he lived in other U.S. locales as well.

"There was not a lot of money," he says, so he relied on school instruments or loaners as he studied music.

In the conducting class, he had a nearly instant rapport with the baton. He took to conducting naturally. He felt fortunate that he was finding his niche.

He tested the waters conducting wind ensembles, orchestras and summer festivals. He thought about what a conducting career would require: a love of languages (composers write directions in many dialects), travel, an affinity for other humans.

"And the leadership aspect," he says. "You have to inspire people to play their best, like a football coach."

"Eventually, the scale tipped to 'I have no other choice,'" he says. The goal was "to love what I do."

He earned a master's degree in conducting from the Manhattan School of Music.

At concerts, he says, he tries to create an instant familiarity with the music for the audience to enhance the listening experience.

"I do that by talking about it constantly," he says. "I try to give the context of why we are playing a piece from that particular person who died 150 years ago. Why is it a seminal work and what do I love about it?"

"I'm never going to program something I don't already love. I can't get you to love it if I don't love it already."

He says one of his goals in his tenure here will be to nurture home grown talent. To that end, he has invited only American guest artists and conductors to perform with the Omaha Symphony this year. Many of them are his personal friends. All of the living composers featured this season also are Americans.

His job, he says, is to find the next Yo-Yo Ma.

Only five of the top-tier orchestras in the country have American-born conductors, he says.

"The opportunity to develop talent (in the symphony world) has not always been given to Americans," he says. "There is a ton of talent emerging from American conservatories and I will do my best to help them get exposure and opportunities."

Omaha Symphony bassist. ANNA REED



PACE

An artistic renaissance has taken shape in Council Bluffs with the emergence of Pottawattamie Arts, Culture, and Entertainment (PACE). Housed inside the Hoff Family Arts & Culture Center, you can soak up vibrant performances ranging from symphony, to theater, to ballet, and more.

You'll also find a wide array of artistic outlets like rehearsal areas, a gallery, artist studios, classrooms and a teaching kitchen.

Steelhouse Omaha

A planned \$103-million concert venue is coming to downtown Omaha. Steelhouse Omaha will hold 1,500 to 3,000 people when it opens in 2023, and is already under construction at the former parking lot between Dodge Street and Capitol Avenue, east of 12th Street.

Steelhouse Omaha will offer a midrange concert venue, larger than the Orpheum Theater and smaller than the CHI Health Center Omaha. It is across Dodge Street from the Holland Performing Arts Center.

Non-fixed seating at Steelhouse Omaha should help attract in-demand musical artists who otherwise might not consider the city for their concert tour schedules. The venue's name will be in reference to its exterior siding. New York City architect Stephen Chu said the building's siding will be aluminum coated with a steel finish. According to Chu, aluminum weighs less than steel and won't corrode, giving the look of the facility an industrial feel.



Omaha artist Barber at PACE. JOE SHEARER

Officials said the venue's flexibility will provide local artists and organizations opportunities to offer programs in nontraditional formats.

A University of Nebraska-Lincoln study projected Steelhouse Omaha will draw 155,000 more people downtown and add \$13 million in annual economic impact.

BLUEBARN Theatre

When it comes to curb appeal, few venues have more of it than the eclectic, industrial, and flat-out awesome-looking BLUEBARN Theatre. But the most

important aesthetic is what you'll find inside, on the stage. Fearless stories that challenge both theater artists and patrons alike, lived out in passion-fueled performances that you'll find yourself talking about and musing over well after you've gone home.

Since 1989, the BLUEBARN has been bringing professionally produced plays to Omaha with a focus on original content — content that's meant to provoke thought, emotion, action, and change. If you love the performing arts, then you need to find time to catch a performance at the BLUEBARN.

omaha
performing
arts



inspire

engage



Our venues, the Orpheum Theater and Holland Performing Arts Center, are Nebraska's destinations for extraordinary experiences that engage, inspire and connect.

We bring the best of:
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Live Music
Comedy
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And more!

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connect



American Midwest Ballet

Dazzling. Spellbinding. Inspiring. A performance from the American Midwest Ballet is all those superlatives and more. So much more. As the resident professional dance company, their dancers hail from around the nation and even abroad. The company plays a key role in the cultural vitality of our region, inspiring people through its expressive performing artists, acclaimed choreographers, skilled teachers and stunning productions. Catch a performance at the Hoff Family Arts and Culture Center, Orpheum Theater, and the Joslyn Art Museum.

Omaha Community Playhouse

For nearly a century (92 years and counting), the Omaha Community Playhouse has helped nurture a better appreciation and understanding for the performing arts in the region. As the nation's largest community theatre, they bring about a full season of shows produced by artistic professionals with the talents of local volunteer artists. The Playhouse features two state-of-the-art performance spaces — the 558-seat Howard and Rhonda Hawks Mainstage Theatre and the intimate Howard Drew Theatre.

The Omaha Playhouse also offers a variety of classes for adults and children, plus workshops, residencies, study materials, tours, and special events. Their Education & Outreach Department is constantly working to develop new ways to engage the community in education through the fine arts.



American Midwest Ballet. JOE SHEARER

Sokol Auditorium

Sokol Auditorium is an iconic music venue in the heart of Omaha's Little Bohemia. Built in 1926, the venue is a reflection of Midwest sensibilities — unassuming, humble, modest and proud. With a maximum capacity of about 1,400, this is THE place to catch an indie rock show.

Bellevue Little Theatre

The Bellevue Little Theatre strives to bring quality family-oriented theatre to the community. The season runs from September through May with five productions per season, each production is shown Friday through Sunday for three weekends. Tickets are general admission only with seating on a first-come, first-served basis.

Ralston Community Theatre

Ralston Community Theatre (RCT) is routinely recognized as one of the premier summer performing arts organizations in Omaha. With its new home in the Ralston Performing Arts Centre, RCT's mission is to further the Ralston and Greater Omaha community's involvement in theatre and to provide an extension of the Ralston Public Schools performing arts program.

SumTur Amphitheater

SumTur Amphitheater is considered the premier outdoor performance venue in the Omaha metro area. Hosting more than 100 events during its May through October season, this 2,500-person-capacity outdoor amphitheater provides endless opportunities for live family entertainment.

GALLERIES

Omaha art fans rejoice: there's no shortage of amazing galleries in the city. In fact, dynamic art galleries can be found all over Omaha where local and internationally recognized artists display their talents and creativity. Some of the best venues in the Midwest can be found right here:

Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts
Gallery 1516

Hot Shops Art Center
KANEKO

These pioneering venues have made Omaha a destination for both artists and art-lovers to come together and appreciate the ever-changing boundaries of art. From traditional paintings to cutting-edge sculptures to pottery, bronze-casting, and more, Omaha has something for everyone — even kids!

These galleries, while visually stunning, are also family-friendly places that can ignite a love for art within kids of all ages. In many instances, you can find classes and workshops that promote a hands-on learning experience.

Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts

Located inside Omaha's historic Old Market district, the Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts needs to be added to your bucket list of art destinations. Bemis is a non profit that facilitates the creation, presentation, and understanding of contemporary art through an international residency program, exhibitions, and educational programs. The Bemis Center offers artists private studios to live and work, financial support, technical and administrative assistance, and opportunities for intellectual discourse about contemporary art through free public programs. This includes panel discussions, lectures, and knowledge-sharing workshops. And lest we forget, the building itself is pretty impressive.

Hot Shops Art Center

For a cool experience, head down to the Hot Shops Art Center where you can find working artists in glass blowing, pottery, bronze casting, and blacksmithing. Plus, explore 50 individual studios and several galleries to not only view and appreciate local art, but also see how it's created. Admission is free.

Gallery 1516

Gallery 1516 works with museums, and educational, professional, and performing arts institutions to provide a space for traveling exhibitions, lectures, music, and more. A truly one-of-a-kind venue for the best artists from the region, Gallery 1516 provides a broad range of fund-raising activities and community engagement, without charging artists commission fees.



Large ceramic art pieces by Jun Kaneko.
REECE RISTAU

KANEKO

On the corner of 11th and Jones Streets stands three turn-of-the-century warehouses that are anything but antiquated. Refurbished by internationally renowned sculptor Jun Kaneko and his wife, Rae, KANEKO is part art museum, part studio, part classroom, and part inspiration for creative artists using any and all media. Its vision is to celebrate creativity, and it is committed to fostering it as the overriding mission with four major programming themes: Design, Ideas, Performance, and Innovation. Admission is free and open to the public. If you're lucky, you might just stumble upon Jun Kaneko working on a sculpture.

MUSIC SCENE

The Omaha music scene is absolutely blistering right now thanks to the air-guitaring, head-bobbing, and roof-raising music-philes that pack our local venues on any given night. Sure, A-list entertainers like Justin Timberlake will always draw sold-out, standing-room-only crowds, but drill down a little deeper and you'll discover that Omaha is home to a diverse and fanatical community of music lovers who are just as eager to listen to the local artists.

You'll find great performances at any of these venues:

Baxter Arena

Stir Concert Cove

CHI Health Center Omaha

Turner Park at Midtown

Ralston Arena

The Waiting Room

The Slowdown

Best part is that each of these places has its own distinct vibe that it imprints on the show — almost as if the venue itself is a music lover. Let yourself get lost in a tidal wave of screaming fans at CHI or disappear into melodies steeped with emotion at Stir Concert Cove. The point is, no matter how you choose to groove, rock, vibe, or dance, Omaha has just the place to let you do it.

CHI Health Center Omaha

A world-class venue in every sense of the word, the CHI Health Center Omaha is Omaha's largest arena and convention center and the hottest spot for live entertainment. You'll see a never-ending roster of A-list entertainers like Eric Church, Billie Eilish and The Weeknd. Located in downtown Omaha, CHI is a short walk from some of the best bars and restaurants in Omaha.

Stir Concert Cove

Located in the Harrah's Casino across the bridge in Council Bluffs, Stir Cove is one of the best outdoor venues in the Midwest. During the summer, the weekends are packed with concerts by some of the most beloved bands and singers known for their crossover appeal. No matter your musical preference, you're guaranteed to find a concert you'll love.

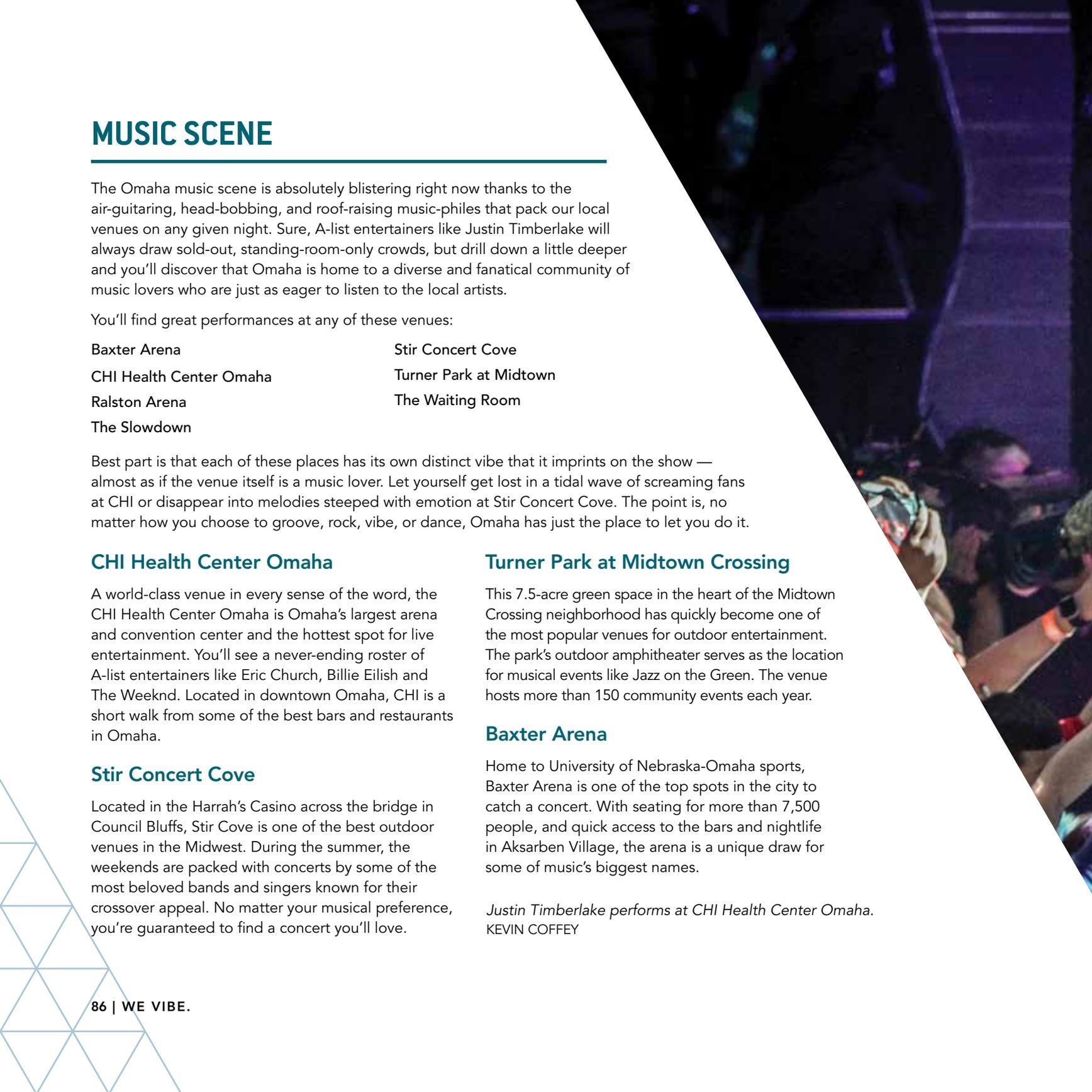
Turner Park at Midtown Crossing

This 7.5-acre green space in the heart of the Midtown Crossing neighborhood has quickly become one of the most popular venues for outdoor entertainment. The park's outdoor amphitheater serves as the location for musical events like Jazz on the Green. The venue hosts more than 150 community events each year.

Baxter Arena

Home to University of Nebraska-Omaha sports, Baxter Arena is one of the top spots in the city to catch a concert. With seating for more than 7,500 people, and quick access to the bars and nightlife in Aksarben Village, the arena is a unique draw for some of music's biggest names.

Justin Timberlake performs at CHI Health Center Omaha.
KEVIN COFFEY









BARS & RESTAURANTS

Come one, come all, and come hungry! Omaha has rightfully earned its reputation as a foodie city. While there are any number of great places to grab a bite, these eateries and watering holes have established themselves as local legends, complete with delicious folklore and ravenous fan bases.

These incredible executive chefs (many of whom are self-made), restaurateurs, and culinary entrepreneurs have all succeeded in delivering big flavor, big portions, and a big bang for your buck. And let's be honest — there's just something inherently cool about frequenting that neighborhood gem or local haunt that might be off the beaten path. Those are the places where real memories are made, around food that is lovingly crafted, and graciously presented in a warm, inviting atmosphere.

Whether you're in the mood for some down-home soul food, quick service burgers, or pub grub that will leave you happy and full, you'll find all of it, right here, in Omaha.

So, read on and get acquainted with your new favorite restaurants. You can thank us later.

Blatt Beer & Table

Blatt Beer & Table is a pub food restaurant and craft beer bar with a warm and inviting atmosphere rooted in local history. Walk through the doors and you're greeted by friendly staff and some of the coolest Omaha-inspired décor around. The menu is packed with unique, upscale entrees like 100% Angus beef burgers, Chicken & Waffles, Bavarian Pretzel Bites, and so much more. You'll enjoy Blatt Beer & Table as a destination to catch the game, or a gathering place for family and acquaintances.

Blatt Beer & Table. BRENDAN SULLIVAN

Big Mama's Kitchen & Catering

With a name like Big Mama's, you know you're about to enjoy a down-home, rib-sticking meal that nourishes both the body and the soul. Big Mama's Kitchen & Catering is a family-owned and -operated business specializing in soul food and traditional American cuisine. They offer a unique variety of delicious home-cooked appetizers, entrées, and desserts. However, their famous oven-fried chicken and decadent sweet potato pie ice cream is nothing short of legendary. Their food is so good and so crave-worthy, that Big Mama's has been featured on Food Network, the Travel Channel and the Sundance Channel, and was even the subject of its own reality show.

Bronco's

Welcome to Omaha's original "fast food" restaurant that is still locally owned and operated. At Bronco's you'll find an inexpensive menu that delivers an enriching dining experience, featuring fresh (not frozen) ground beef burgers. They also make their own French fries, cut and bread their pork tenderloins and prepare their own chicken. This is how they've been doing things for the last 50 years, and will continue to do so for the next 50.

Don & Millie's

This is straight-up, great tasting food you'll crave again and again. No gimmicks. No games. No clowns. But we suggest you come hungry — and thirsty. Not only can you get belt-busting burgers, perfectly crispy fries, loaded baked potatoes and other American favorites, but you can also get super thick milkshakes and even margaritas!

Holiday Lounge

A classic cocktail lounge located in the center of the city, Holiday Lounge has been serving Omaha since 1965. Exuding dapper, mid-century vibes with an ultra-cool sunken bar, this is the place to soak up some after-work suds or sip on an Old Fashioned that would make Don Draper proud.

La Casa Pizzeria

Arguably the best pizza joint in Omaha (or Nebraska for that matter), La Casa's 'za has reached almost mythical status with its flaky, golden-crust square slices. Known as Neapolitan pizza, La Casa has been keeping Omaha patrons



M's Pub. BRENDAN SULLIVAN

stuffed and happy since 1953. You can also enjoy beer and wine tastings in the lounge, and the fried ravioli and eggplant parmesan is simply chef's kiss!

M's Pub

Walk those cobblestone streets in the Old Market and you're bound to find yourself on the doorstep of M's Pub, which has been a mainstay for thirsty patrons since 1972. You'll find an eclectic assortment of entrees that range from classic chicken tenderloin to something a tad more avant garde, like the warm duck salad. The wine list is thoughtfully selected. The beer choices are food-driven. The seasonal cocktail menu is lively. Add it up, and you get an unforgettable night out.

Runza

The name is both a sandwich and a restaurant. A true Nebraska original,

Runza restaurants have been serving their Runza sandwiches since 1949. Runza's feature freshly baked bread stuffed with ground beef, onions and cabbage. The burgers are homemade and made to order, the fries are crinkly, crispy, and crazy good. And the onion rings are the stuff of dreams: thickly cut, double-dipped in homemade breading, and then fried to a golden brown.

Vic's Corn Popper

This is the kind of popcorn that's so good, you find yourself eating it by the handful. From the sweetness of their special hybrid popcorn to their exacting quantities of ingredients and heat, they're able to produce the precise taste, texture and flavor that's simply unrivaled. That's also why no preservatives are used in the preparation of any of Vic's gourmet popcorns. Instead, they're popped the day you order — each time, every time.

DATE NIGHT

J. Coco

If you're looking to wow that special someone, you'd be hard-pressed to find a better experience than J. Coco. Owned by award-winning chef Jennifer Coco, you'll dine on a strictly seasonal menu of American cuisine that will dazzle your taste buds like never before. Each entrée is carefully crafted with the finest ingredients and prepared as simply as possible to let those vibrant flavors shine. And don't forget to enjoy a Nebraska craft beer, wine, or specialty cocktail.

Railcar Modern American Kitchen

When you walk into Railcar Modern American Kitchen, don't be surprised if you feel like you've stepped into the dining car of a steam locomotive. That's the point. Executive Chef and owner Jared Clarke created Railcar to deliver a classic American dining experience inspired by the rail dining cars of yesteryear. You'll enjoy food that blends flavors from different cultures, from all corners of the melting pot that is the United States. Food that warms your soul as it fills your stomach.

Plank Seafood Provisions

Whoever says you can't get ocean-fresh favorites in the heartland of America has never had the pleasure of dining at Plank. A coastally inspired oyster bar and seafood grill in the Old Market, Plank offers attentive service, notable flavors, and a laid-back environment perfect for connecting with that loved



J. Coco. COREY PERRINE

one in your life. The menu is faithful to the tradition of fresh seafood, high-quality ingredients and a made-from-scratch mentality.

Twisted Fork

If John Wayne lived in Omaha, this would (probably) be his restaurant of choice. The "Fork" as it is affectionately known is a grill and saloon in Omaha's

historic Old Market District that serves American comfort food with a cowboy twist. Enjoy unique creations like Chicken Fried Bacon, Orange Saffron Salmon, a S'more Brownie, and so much more. And not that you'd need a reminder, but make sure to grab a pint of your favorite Nebraska craft beer, a glass of that perfect wine or a house specialty cocktail that's Instagram-worthy.

STEAKHOUSES

J. Gilbert's

J. Gilbert's Wood-Fired Steaks & Seafood in the Capitol District is known for its quality cuts of beef, exceptional seafood, intimate bar scene and warm dining atmosphere. Located in downtown Omaha, within walking distance of CHI Health Center Omaha, TD Ameritrade Park and the Old Market district, J. Gilbert's features a wide variety of steaks and chops, including filet combination dinners that also offer a choice of Atlantic Salmon, a Jumbo Lump Crab Cake or Bourbon Maple Shrimp.

Gorat's Steakhouse

An Omaha tradition for more than 70 years, Gorat's is a traditional-style Italian steakhouse that serves pasta dishes, seafood, and chicken, as well as steak. Oh, and it also happens to be billionaire investor Warren Buffett's favorite steakhouse. So, sit back and enjoy the wonderful service from a knowledgeable staff, great cocktails made in the old-school fashion, and an ambiance that truly is one of a kind.

Jerico's Restaurant

If you're hungry for the best prime rib in Omaha, then a trip to Jerico's should be in your future! It's where old-school manners and classic décor intersect with the finest steaks and prime rib in Omaha. In fact, the prime rib is so good that it's consistently voted Omaha's best prime rib. The choice steaks are cut by hand, the seafood is deliciously fresh, and you'll enjoy specialties that you won't find anywhere else.



J. Gilbert's. KENT SIEVERS

Omaha Prime

Located in the Old Market, Omaha Prime is a premium steakhouse that exudes old-school steak mastery at every turn. One of the few restaurants in the nation to serve only the finest USDA Prime steaks and chops, every steak is hand-selected for quality, marbling, and flavor. These are steaks for steak aficionados. Omaha Prime also offers an impressive selection of classic cocktails, craft beers, and an expansive wine list that includes some of the rarest wines, sparkling wines, and champagnes from around the world.

Anthony's Steakhouse & Ozone Lounge

Generous portions. Giant steaks. Friendly service. And a massive steer standing on the roof of the building. Anthony's Steakhouse is an old-school throwback to the days of the Rat Pack. Famous for their in-house, hand-cut, dry-aged beef, Anthony's also serves up flavorful seafood, decadent desserts, and classic cocktails.

And if you're looking for some entertainment to cap off your meal, the Ozone Lounge inside Anthony's is

just the spot. One of Omaha's premier places to enjoy live music, Ozone offers ample seating, a fun dance floor, and comfortably dimmed lighting.

Mahogany Prime Steakhouse

Considered by many to be Omaha's top steakhouse, Mahogany's is a dining experience where the steak is the star. From super tender filet mignons to prime New York strips, ocean-fresh seafood, and so much more, Mahogany's is every bit a special-occasion restaurant. Their steaks are crafted from the finest custom-aged U.S. Prime Midwestern beef, known for its excellence in marbling, texture, and flavor. You'll also love the old-school sides and classic cocktails to keep you satiated and happy all night long.



Mahogany Prime Steakhouse. JULIA NAGY

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ETHNIC FARE

Blue Sushi Sake Grill

It's not that you'll love Blue Sushi Sake Grill just for the exceptional sushi, but rather for the unique and exciting sushi experience that envelopes you the moment you pass through the doors. No matter which location you choose, your first impression is likely to be visceral — intense décor; clean lines; and glowing hues of blues surround you. Meanwhile, the menu echoes the design aesthetic: diverse yet traditional, with a creative bent towards the maki, sashimi, and nigiri. If vegan maki is your thing, Blue's interpretation of it has reached legendary status. The drink menu joins the sushi shindig with an impressive list of premium cold sake, signature cocktails and martinis, beer, and hot teas.

El Rancho Grande

A South Omaha institution for years, El Rancho Grande has perfected the art of serving fresh and authentic Mexican food in a homestyle setting. In fact, don't be surprised if you get the feeling you're eating a well-cooked meal in someone's home. There are no strangers at El Rancho — only family. So, you best come hungry because the portions are generous, the tacos excellent, and the beer cold.

Maria Bonita Mexican Cuisine

It's no coincidence that the colors on the truck match the flavors of the food: bright, vibrant, richly distinctive. On the surface, Maria Bonita Mexican Cuisine is a family-owned catering and food truck business that provides a new approach to traditional Mexican cuisine. But on

a deeper level, they're offering you a taste of their culture and family legacy with every bite.

Shahi India Grill

The daily goal of Shahi is to create, serve, and enjoy fine food that's in season and distinct. Every morning before opening the Shahi kitchen, they stock the shelves with market-fresh ingredients, so that the food served is as fresh and flavorful as can be. With its use of so many different spices, you're guaranteed to experience taste combinations unlike anything found around the globe. So, head on over to the Old Market and make sure you bring your appetite!

Yoshitomo Sushi

Fact: Yoshitomo in Benson is unlike any conventional sushi restaurant you've been to before. As you look over the menu, you won't see the traditional faves like California rolls or Philadelphia rolls. Instead, you'll see exotic fish paired with unique and ultra-fresh ingredients that, admittedly, may sound foreign. The result is a master class of flavor that gets better with every bite.

Small tables dot the long and skinny restaurant, so the chefs can watch the diners and see when the next dish needs to be prepared and delivered. Orders arrive independent of each other, so you can fully experience the flavor of each individual dish.

Maria Bonita Mexican Cuisine.
BRENDAN SULLIVAN





Okra African Grill.
ANNA REED

Okra African Grill

Executive Chef and owner Nina Sodji first immigrated to America in 1994 with a business visa, hailing from Togo, a west African nation. Okra African Grill is a fast-casual, build-your-own-meal-style restaurant in the vein of Chipotle. The ingredients and methods of preparation are an homage to all African cultures and the transcontinental history that have influenced Togolese foods. Sodji's delicious, slow-cooked foods include the freshest African ingredients, traditional proteins like steak, chicken, and fish, along with a wide variety of vegetables.

Pokeworks

First things first: it's not "poke." It's pronounced "POH-keh." And it's taken Omaha by storm. Poke means "to slice or cut" in Hawaiian and refers to chunks of raw, marinated fish — usually tuna — which is then tossed over rice and topped with vegetables and umami-packed sauces.

Pokeworks is a fast-casual poke restaurant located in the One Pacific Place shopping center that offers a build-your-own style poke menu that lets you customize your meal with fresh and healthy ingredients. You can create your own poke bowl, poke burrito, or poke salad with a wide variety of proteins, sauces, and toppings to choose from.

Pokeworks.
CHRIS MACHIAN



Businesses provide late-night food options all over the Omaha area

Gary Todd likes to stay up late. And during the wee hours, he began to see an unfilled niche in Omaha.

That was the genesis of Muncheese 402 Eatery, a new takeout place that serves — and delivers — overnight on Thursdays, Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays.

With his brother and chef Tyree, Gary created a menu and launched his new business about a month and a half ago, working out of the Kitchen Council incubator at the Hoff Family Arts & Culture Center in Council Bluffs. He's gotten some good reviews.

"A kid told me the other day that we're his new favorite wing spot," he said.

Gary joins a number of other late-night food purveyors in the Omaha area, and the ranks appear to be growing in spite of the ongoing pandemic.

For example, each location of the Mexican fast-food outlet Abelardo's, with a drive-thru, operates at least until 11 p.m. on weekdays. On weekends, many are still going in the middle of the night, some into the early hours of the morning.

Other fairly recent entries on the late-night scene include Fizzy's Fountain & Liquors in Little Bohemia; Goodly Cookies, which launched earlier this year at Village Pointe near 168th Street and West Dodge Road; and Baked After Dark, a bakery in Benson.

But with delivery in the dead of night, Muncheese has something that so far is unique in the area.



Gary says most of its deliveries have been through DoorDash, but he has also shown up on several doorsteps with food. His menu includes gourmet burgers, fried cheese curds, Philly cheesesteak and pizza egg rolls and wings with flavors such as buffalo ranch and lemon pepper garlic parmesan.

He even offers one dessert: a cheesecake egg roll with what he and Tyree call "blurpleberry sauce," made with a combination of blackberries, purple grapes and blueberries.

Gary credits his brother for refining the menu. Tyree has several years of food industry experience, with stints at Olive Garden, Stroud's and other restaurants.

Many of Gary's ideas are, of course, cooked up in his own kitchen late at night. The brothers were born in Chicago and moved to Omaha when they were young. Both graduated from Central High School.

Late hours are also a family thing for Baked After Dark owner Stacey

Johnson. Both of her daughters work with her at the shop.

"Our motto is 'We aren't morning people. We're late-night people,'" Johnson said.

She started the bakery because she wanted to pass on the legacy of her Aunt Bev's chocolate chip cookies to her daughters — and the world.

Bev would change the recipe for family reunion cookbooks so the cookies wouldn't turn out for other people, but she gave the correct formula to Johnson.

She has a day job as a computer programmer, so she decided to operate her bakery at night. A supportive community has kept her going during the COVID-19 outbreak. She usually sells out each day and has made — and sold — about 7,000 cinnamon rolls so far this year.

Noah Mock, of Fizzy's, said people are also ending their nights earlier at his other restaurant, Nite Owl in Blackstone. Although Nite Owl is open until 2 a.m., he said, the crowd now thins out a couple of hours before closing.

Mock and his wife, Katie, opened Nite Owl in 2015. And like Todd, they had an approach that set Nite Owl apart from the fast-food drive-thrus that are popular with the post-bar crowd. It features sit-down service with innovative food and specialty cocktails.

"When you are at our place late, you are getting an experience," Mock said.



“A kid told me the other day that we’re his new favorite wing spot.”

- Gary Todd



Gary Todd and Tyree Todd of Munchese 402 Eatery put the finishing touches on a burger. Z LONG



BREWERIES & WINERIES

Bärchen Beer Garden

Bärchen (pronounced "BEAR-SHIN") is a fusion of sorts: It's equal parts beer garden, American gastropub, and German restaurant. Located in the Benson neighborhood, it offers a large outdoor patio that's shaded by a canopy of umbrellas. As for the menu, you'll find German, Belgian, and American craft beers on tap, a wide variety of cocktails, massive burgers, chicken sandwiches, fine sausages, soft pretzels, brats, and more.

*Rathskeller
Bier Haus.*
RYAN SODERLIN

Brickway Brewery & Distillery

Located in the heart of the Old Market District, this is a joint that would be a regular haunt for the likes of Al Capone and Machine Gun Kelly. Brickway Brewery and Distillery is Omaha's first combination brewery/distillery since pre-Prohibition days. Every brew and every spirit are produced fresh right on the premises according to strict standards and recipes that have stood the test of time. For something with a bit more kick, we recommend the Brickway Single Malt Whiskey, which has won three international gold medals, a silver, and a bronze.

Patriarch Distillers Inc. / Soldier Valley Distributors

At Soldier Valley Spirits, pride of country and respect for our military men and women who have given the ultimate sacrifice runs deep. In fact, a portion of every bottle sold of their small batch vodka, bourbon, and whiskies goes toward raising money for worthy veterans' charities. They also offer a tasting room, event rentals, private tours, and live music.

Rathskeller Bier Haus

Smack dab in the middle of Blackstone and Dundee, Rathskeller Bier Haus considers itself the missing puzzle piece that connects Omaha's entertainment districts. Rathskeller is a Bavarian brew pub that not only offers a long and impressive beer list (obviously), but also rib-sticking "Germerican" food like bratwurst, pretzels, sandwiches and sides with a German twist. If the weather is right, head outside to the largest patio in Midtown, and enjoy the live music, bar access, and the freedom to lounge with your furry four-legged friends.

Scriptown Brewing Company

Scriptown's mission is to brew and serve classic examples of traditional beer styles, mostly session-strength beers. All beers are brewed on premises, with 14-16 tap choices at any given time. You'll also find a wide selection of liquor and wine, plus a house-made ginger beer that makes for the perfect Moscow Mule. As an added bonus, the beers, howlers, growlers and kegs are available to go.

The Casual Pint

At the Casual Pint in Countryside Village, you're not a customer — you're a neighbor. And that's the kind of vibe you'll notice right away. It's a relaxed, family-friendly atmosphere much like a coffee shop, but instead of baristas, the Casual Pint has "Beer-tenders." Choose from 30 craft beers from the tap wall, or you can grab your beer to go with Growler Fills, Mix-A-Six Packs, or packaged beer off the dry shelves. Kegs are also available for those special occasions.

Upstream Brewing Company

Stroll around Omaha's historic Old Market and you're bound to run into a two-story, 110-year-old renovated firehouse. Housed inside is Upstream Brewing Company, a renowned brewery and restaurant that has been an Omaha favorite since 1996. Enjoy an extensive menu of new American pub fare, including appetizers and thin-crust pizzas, superb steaks featuring hand-cut "Omaha Steaks®" beef, fresh fish specials, pasta dishes, main course salads, hearty sandwiches and a great



Soaring Wings Vineyard & Brewing. MATT MILLER

children's menu. And while you nosh, wash it all down with a pint of their 12 fresh-brewed hand-crafted beers or house-made root beer on tap.

Corkscrew Wine & Cheese

If you're looking for a comprehensive but approachable wine shop experience, then Corkscrew Wine & Cheese is the place for you. With over 700 choices for wine (yes, 700!), you can find a bottle that fits any budget. From lunch to close, they serve 20 wines by the glass, beer and spirits, along with a menu of snacks and desserts that are perfect for enjoying on the outdoor patio.

Soaring Wings Vineyard & Brewing

Sitting on 30 acres of land just south of Omaha on a high hill that overlooks the tranquil Platte River Valley, Soaring Wings Vineyard is a must try for both wine and craft beer aficionados. Their wines have won over 200 medals in international wine competitions, and the beers are equally impressive. You can also catch live acoustic music every Friday, Saturday, and Sunday.



Artemis Tea. BRENDAN SULLIVAN

COFFEE & TEA

Green Beans Coffee

Green Beans Coffee Omaha is the first independently owned, free-standing Green Beans Coffee café in the country. Inside, you'll find a comfortable lounge area with a fireplace that's perfect for a snow-laced winter day. Outside, there's a patio that includes an enclosed area for children, complete with books, toys, and a TV. The room is surrounded by bar seating for parents to watch their little tykes. This area gives children the chance to entertain themselves while the adults enjoy their beverage or food. Green Beans Coffee Omaha is a family-friendly establishment — all are welcome!

Artemis Tea

For those who love a daily cuppa, Artemis Tea & Botanical in the Blackstone District has just what you need. Artemis Teas are hand-crafted, small-batch artisan tea blends created with mindful precision to support vibrant well-being. Shop a wide variety of loose-leaf tea types, teaware, and specially curated tea collections.

Hardy Coffee Co.

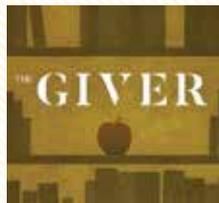
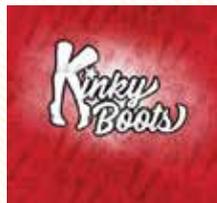
Hardy Coffee Co. is a specialty coffee roaster and bakery with three Omaha locations: Highlander, Benson, and downtown. Hardy serves made-from-scratch baked goods, house-made chai, and specialty coffee that is roasted and served with local customers in mind.



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Howard Drew Theatre

The Color Purple

March 4 – 27, 2022
Hawks Mainstage Theatre

The Giver

April 15 – May 8, 2022
Hawks Mainstage Theatre

Stick Fly

May 6 – June 5, 2022
Howard Drew Theatre

Kinky Boots

May 27 – June 26, 2022
Hawks Mainstage Theatre

R.E.S.P.E.C.T.

June 10 – 26, 2022
Howard Drew Theatre

TICKET  OMAHA

Dundee Double Shot

The Dundee Double Shot is one of those places you can't wait to get to in the morning. Inviting, charming, and downright comfortable, it's been a staple in the Dundee community for years. It boasts more than 32 of its own roasts and an atmosphere that welcomes friends, neighbors, newcomers and visitors alike. Every guest is sure to find their favorite drink and roast while enjoying great company among new friends.

Scooter's Coffee

Scooter's isn't in the coffee business — they're in the people business. And they've been a Nebraska institution since 1998. From perfectly brewed coffee, to espresso-based drinks, smoothies, pastries, and more, Scooter's is sure to have your next can't-live-without-drink ready in minutes. But above all, you'll get outstanding service from friendly, knowledgeable baristas who take pride in giving you your morning boost or late afternoon pick-me-up.

The Tea Smith

If you're in search of the perfect cup of tea, or at least how to try and make the perfect cup, the Tea Smith should be ground zero for your exploration. The Tea Smith is dedicated to providing customers with artisan-quality, loose-leaf teas and accessories, with knowledgeable staff that can expertly answer all your questions. In addition to the finest estate teas, you can also enjoy bubble and fruit tea smoothies.



Zen Coffee Co. ANNA REED

Stories Coffee Company

People. Love. Coffee. That's not just one of life's basic truths, it's also the driving force behind Stories Coffee. Their mission is to invest in the stories of their customers, vendors, partners, and anyone else in need in the community. With three locations throughout Omaha, Stories offer a variety of coffee, espresso, muffins, donuts, breakfast sandwiches, plus light lunch and dinner options. They also serve locally roasted specialty coffee in small batches. Plus, a portion of their profits goes directly to supporting organizations doing good in Omaha.

Zen Coffee Company

How many times can you blurt out "OMG!" while looking over a menu? If you're at Zen Coffee Company, the answer is a lot. Where to start? How about the Double Cup, which is two drinks poured into a special heart-shaped divider cup. Next, try the Belgian Waffle Latte, which is a pure maple latte topped with whip and a mini-Belgian waffle! You can also sample hot or cold lattes with a coffee flight and pair it with a toast flight. Experience next-level coffee at their two locations in downtown and West Omaha.



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BAKERIES & DESSERTS

Rotella's Italian Bakery

Located in La Vista, Rotella's Italian Bakery produces high-quality baked goods with the finest ingredients. From a variety of classic breads to buns, rolls, and more, Rotella's has everything you need to supply your family with the very best. Gluten issues? No worries, because Rotella's has a gluten-free line that is one of the best in the country.

Square Donut

As the classic '80s pop song goes, it's hip to be square! And that's especially true when it comes to donuts! Square Donut in West Omaha is a locally owned and operated artisan donut bakery. They make fresh, from-scratch donuts every day. This process is labor-intensive, taking several hours to make, proof, fry, and then decorate the donuts. One bite and you'll be hooked. If you're looking to try Square Donut, we highly recommend you get there early because they sell out quickly.

Ted & Wally's

I scream, you scream, we all scream for ultra-premium 20% butterfat ice cream! Why does that percentage matter? Because butterfat gives ice cream its richness, density, and luscious mouthfeel. And at Ted & Wally's, every glorious spoonful is an OMG-inducing experience like no other. The ice cream is made from scratch using all-natural ingredients, and slow-churned the old-



Rotella's Bakery. KENT SIEVERS

fashioned way with rock salt and ice in antique White Mountain freezers. They offer cones, floats, sundaes, mix-ins, old-school phosphates, and so much more.

Paradise Bakery & Café

With three Omaha locations, Paradise Bakery & Café offers freshly prepared baked goods made from scratch every morning from the finest ingredients available. From pies and cakes, to brownies, cookies, and the ever-popular "chippers," Paradise is the perfect spot to grab a sweet treat.

Orsi's Italian Bakery & Pizzeria

You know you're in for an authentic, old-school Italian treat when the façade of the restaurant looks like it belongs in the opening credits of the Sopranos. Orsi's Italian Bakery & Pizzeria was founded in 1919 and has been a thriving and iconic staple of Omaha's Little Italy ever since. Enjoy a variety of

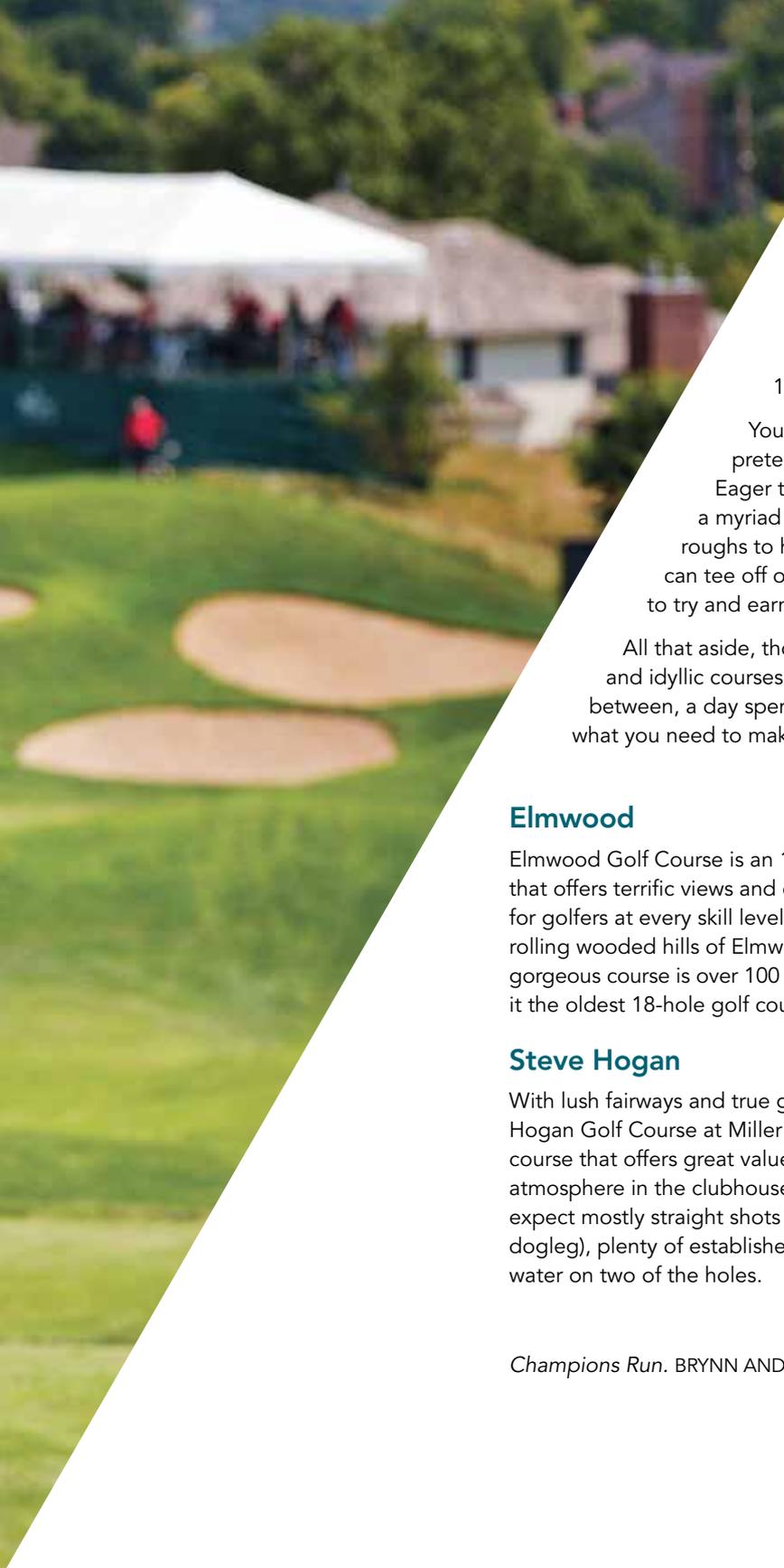
biscotti, cookies, and arguably the best-tasting cannoli's this side of Brooklyn. Choose either vanilla or chocolate — or do like most, and get both!

eCreamery Ice Cream & Gelato, featuring Carson's Cookie Fix

You'll be all smiles after just one visit to eCreamery Ice Cream & Gelato in the Dundee neighborhood. Savor 16 ever-rotating, daily flavors of specialty ice cream, gelato and dairy free sorbet, or create your own custom flavors with over 50 base flavors and 40 mix-in options available.

Carson's Cookie Fix is located inside the eCreamery parlor. Carson's specializes in custom hand-decorated cookies for special occasions. From birthday, wedding and new baby packages to corporate-branded logo cookies and everything in between, Carson's Cookie Fix has it all — including a Cookie Fix Food Truck.





GOLF COURSES

If you're looking to satisfy your golf fix, you're in luck because Omaha has established itself as the region's reigning lord of the links! From rolling wooded hills to tree-lined greens with expansive, picturesque views, Omaha has plenty of championship 18-hole courses and executive par 3's to challenge all skill levels.

You'll find the Omaha courses to be extremely welcoming and without pretentiousness. Got kids? Great! Just learning the game? No worries. Eager to play a PGA-level course? You can do that, too. Omaha offers a myriad of fun, family-friendly courses with wide fairways and forgiving roughs to help your kiddo learn the game. For the more skilled golfers, you can tee off on the same course where amateurs from all over the globe come to try and earn their PGA pro card.

All that aside, though, Omaha courses are hands down some of the most scenic and idyllic courses in the Midwest. Good round, bad round or somewhere in between, a day spent on these Omaha golf courses with friends and family is just what you need to make lasting memories.

Elmwood

Elmwood Golf Course is an 18-hole course that offers terrific views and challenging play for golfers at every skill level. Located in the rolling wooded hills of Elmwood Park, this gorgeous course is over 100 years old, making it the oldest 18-hole golf course in Omaha.

Steve Hogan

With lush fairways and true greens, Steve Hogan Golf Course at Miller Park is a 9-hole course that offers great value and a relaxed atmosphere in the clubhouse. Golfers can expect mostly straight shots (there is one dogleg), plenty of established trees, and water on two of the holes.

Champions Run. BRYNN ANDERSON

Champions Run

Champions Run is a challenging 18-hole course that offers excitement for every class of golfer. One meandering creek and two lakes keep you on your toes on nine of the 18 holes. The first and 10th holes have a creek right in front of the green and, depending on your drive, a second shot is necessary. Strategically placed grassy knolls create some interesting stances, should you land in one.

Johnny Goodman

With broad fairways and large greens, Johnny Goodman is a fun and fairly challenging course with a decent number of hills. On each par 3, a pond lies between you and the green, adding to the scenery and your anxiety. Matching the difficulty of the par 3's are four par 5's that are long and demanding.

Benson Park

Benson Park Golf Course is one of Omaha's most scenic city courses. The hilltop clubhouse overlooks the rolling wooded hills of northwest Omaha. The course has several large fairway and green-side bunkers that will make you think twice about your club selection. A creek and a variety of full-grown trees make for a gorgeous canvas on the back nine.

Spring Lake

This 9-hole executive course has some interesting features. While traditional hazards like sand and water are absent, you'll find blind approach shots and even a street in their stead. Thanks to the elevated greens and tees with low-lying fairways, many approach shots are akin to hitting a ball onto a table top.

Warren Swigart

Warren Swigart is another scenic par-3 course owned and managed by the City of Omaha. The course is flat and straightforward, with smooth, well-kept greens that are lined with linden trees. This is an excellent course for beginners as well as for teaching kids how to play.

Miracle Hill Golf & Tennis

Miracle Hill Golf & Tennis offers a championship 18-hole golf course, with a year-round indoor driving range powered by Toptracer. During the warmer months, you can take advantage of the outdoor grass range, two putting greens, and a practice sand bunker. The course has broad, tree-lined bluegrass fairways and large greens that are fairly tame.



Indian Creek. BRENDAN SULLIVAN

Milt's Golf Center

Milt's Golf Center is a straightforward par-3 course with expansive flat greens and a single pond that comes into play on two holes. It's another great course for kids, beginners, or anyone who wants to work on their short game. The adjacent practice facility has 75 stations, encompasses 16 acres, and has recently added a practice green.

Knolls

The Knolls Golf Course is located in West Omaha, with grassy mounds and trees that border most of the fairways. The back nine is more open than the front and tracks up and down a mild grade, providing many up-and-downhill lies. Water comes into play on several holes and requires some sort of evasive shot to get over the drink.

Westwood Heights

Westwood Heights Golf Course can be found in West Omaha. The course is mostly flat and has few hazards except for the aptly named Hell Creek. The creek traverses the length of the course and comes into play on three holes for wild slicers, and one hole for hookers. A sure-fire fun place to play and a good course for juniors and beginners looking to work on their game.

Eagle Run

Eagle Run Golf Course offers two 9-hole courses: a straightforward par 3 for beginners and a more challenging 9-hole executive course for more seasoned golfers. The newly renovated clubhouse and menu are designed to provide a fun, relaxing atmosphere for golfers before and after their rounds.

Stone Creek

This 27-hole championship course features five sets of tees, 93 bunkers, seven ponds, and a winding creek that snakes through several key holes. It's also the largest natural grass golf range in Nebraska. During the colder months, book some time with the golf simulator to play a round of golf or practice.

Indian Creek

Home to the Indian Creek Invitational and the Pinnacle Bank Championship, Indian Creek Golf Course offers three distinct and challenging 9-hole courses. With 37 acres of fairway, 80+ well-placed bunkers and 15 holes with the threat of water, Indian Creek is sure to become your new favorite golf course in Omaha.

Elkhorn Ridge

A fun, walkable par-3 course that doesn't have sand traps or water hazards. That doesn't mean it isn't challenging — golfers need to be prepared for the change in elevation which can cause more than a few headaches.

Pacific Springs

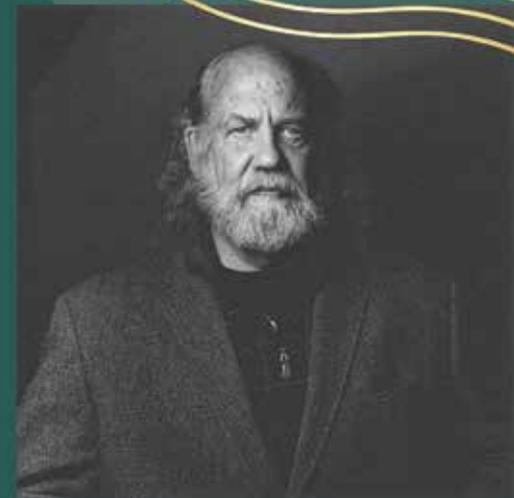
It's a public course with the impeccable course conditions of a private country club. Pacific Springs Golf Course is an 18-hole championship course that provides an enjoyable yet challenging round for golfers of all skill levels. Lakes, creeks, wetland, and mature trees cover the course and emphasize the need for accuracy off the tee.

Topgolf

Along I-680 just north of West Dodge Road is a sprawling complex with netting that looks as if it stretches up into the heavens. That's Topgolf, and it's the newest (and hottest) Omaha entertainment attraction. Topgolf is a multi-level driving range with a bar and a kitchen. Players take aim at several enormous targets scattered around the range. The more accurate your shot, and the farther away the target, the more points you get. A solid hour of fun for beginners, intermediates, and experts alike.

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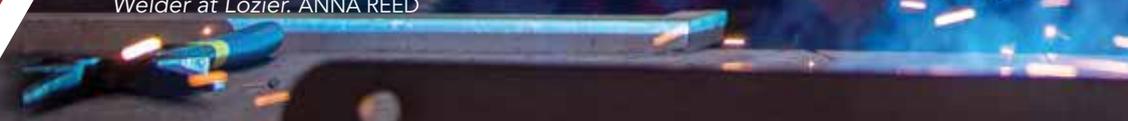
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'We are where you live'

*Office furniture, supplies and more:
For Nebraska-based Eakes,
'local means local'*

By Kevin Warneke

A company relocates to Nebraska and looks to equip its satellite offices situated throughout the state. It needs office furniture — desks, chairs. It needs office supplies — pens, paper. It needs copiers, printers — and someone to service them.

"These are the items you come to Eakes for," says Scott Lilleskov, a managing partner for Eakes in Omaha. Not to mention janitorial supplies and promotional items — anything that can sport a company's logo, he adds.

"Eakes Office Solutions is passionate about helping our customers — those new to us and those who have history with us — by allowing them to focus on their core business," he said. "We make it easy for customers to do business with us because we are flexible to their changing needs."

Meaning Eakes is nimble, Lilleskov said. It can react quickly to customer needs, especially when they come with a request for a quick turnaround.

Julie Caples-Wright, corporate controller for Nissan of Omaha, said she appreciates Eakes' focus on service. "Awesome experience in every facet of their business — from office supplies, to equipment, to furniture."

Eakes Office Solutions, founded in 1945 in Grand Island by Howard Eakes, features 14 locations that stretch across Nebraska and into western Iowa. Eakes locations are based on where its customers live, Lilleskov said. "For Eakes, local means local. We are where you live."

For Eakes, local has another definition, something its competitors — the big-box stores and online retailers — can't touch, said Vicki Tautenhan, managing partner — East Region. "Local means we live in Nebraska, we work in Nebraska and we support our state and our neighbor states."



Local also means support for Nebraska's economy and the many organizations that serve the state's citizens, Tautenhan said. "We support your local sports teams, churches, booster clubs and United Ways. We support the Rotary Clubs, the homeless shelters and food pantries," she said. "What's important to you is important to us — because we're your neighbors. Our 265 employees are right there with you — working to improve their communities."

Back to that company relocating in Nebraska. Eakes specialists work with customers to determine their needs and the best way to fill them, Tautenhan said. Service begins with a showroom visit with an Eakes specialist, who provides personal, one-on-one consultation. Eakes specialists will evaluate all your needs and research product lines for the best fit, all with an eye on cost-savings.

"If you're ready to take the next step, we're here — where we've always been, in your community or nearby — and we're ready to help," she said.





**Council Bluffs Interstate System Improvement Program,
Council Bluffs, Iowa**

This \$1.5 billion Iowa Department of Transportation freeway reconstruction program modernizes and improves over 14 miles of interstate highways 29, 80 and 480; accommodates planned development along the corridors; reduces traffic congestion; and improves mobility and safety for all travelers. HDR is serving as the program manager and general engineering consultant.

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We have an unmatched ability to pull together the top minds and resources to design innovative solutions for every project as we aim to help solve our clients' greatest challenges. We bring transit to underserved neighborhoods, power to homes and businesses, education to people of all ages — and especially in 2021 — safe healthcare solutions to our communities.

With our global headquarters located in Aksarben, we're excited to watch the area — and all the projects we design — achieve their potential as we continue to work with our clients to change the world for the better.



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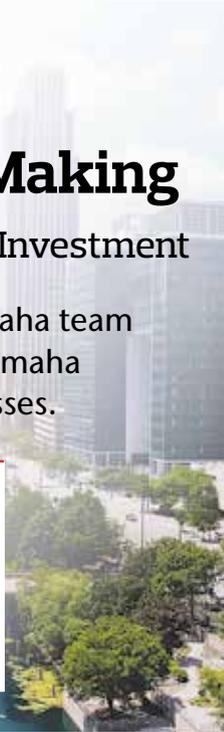
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FUTURE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The Omaha area is constantly evolving and, with it, the potential for business and residential opportunities continue to grow and expand.

Omaha has put significant public and private investment into redeveloping downtown and midtown and, in the last decade, stepped up urban housing.

Omaha reasserted its strength during the last decade as the metro area's central city, as census figures showed solid population growth that reversed some past slippage to the suburbs.

New 2020 Census numbers showed the city of Omaha with an official population of 486,051 — a higher figure than officials had estimated. That's a decade-long increase of 77,093 people, or 19% growth.

Sarpy County continues its strong growth, as well. The county grew by 31,764 people over the last decade — a Nebraska-leading 20% increase since 2010, according to figures from University of Nebraska at Omaha's Center for Public Affairs Research.

Within Sarpy County, Bellevue grew 28% to 64,176 people, and Papillion was just behind at 27.9%, adding 5,265 people, the city's population of 24,159 is right in line with expectations. Projections have estimated that Sarpy County could double its population in the coming decades.

An increase in the population means an increase in business and employment opportunities. With the metro area on track for 1 million people by 2024, according to information from the UNO research office, the potential for future economic development remains positive.

Revitalization of Gene Leahy Mall in downtown Omaha. ANNA REED







Nebraska companies get creative in filling jobs, keep unemployment rates low

Andrew Tazier has always wanted to be a welder. For years, the 36-year-old couldn't find the time or the money to get the training required for the occupation.

That all changed in July, when Tazier got a career-making break. The Lozier Corporation in Omaha hired him and seven others with no previous welding experience, giving them free training and hiring bonuses.

Not only that, but Tazier wound up making \$22 per hour at Lozier, up from the \$18 per hour he was earning at another manufacturing plant.

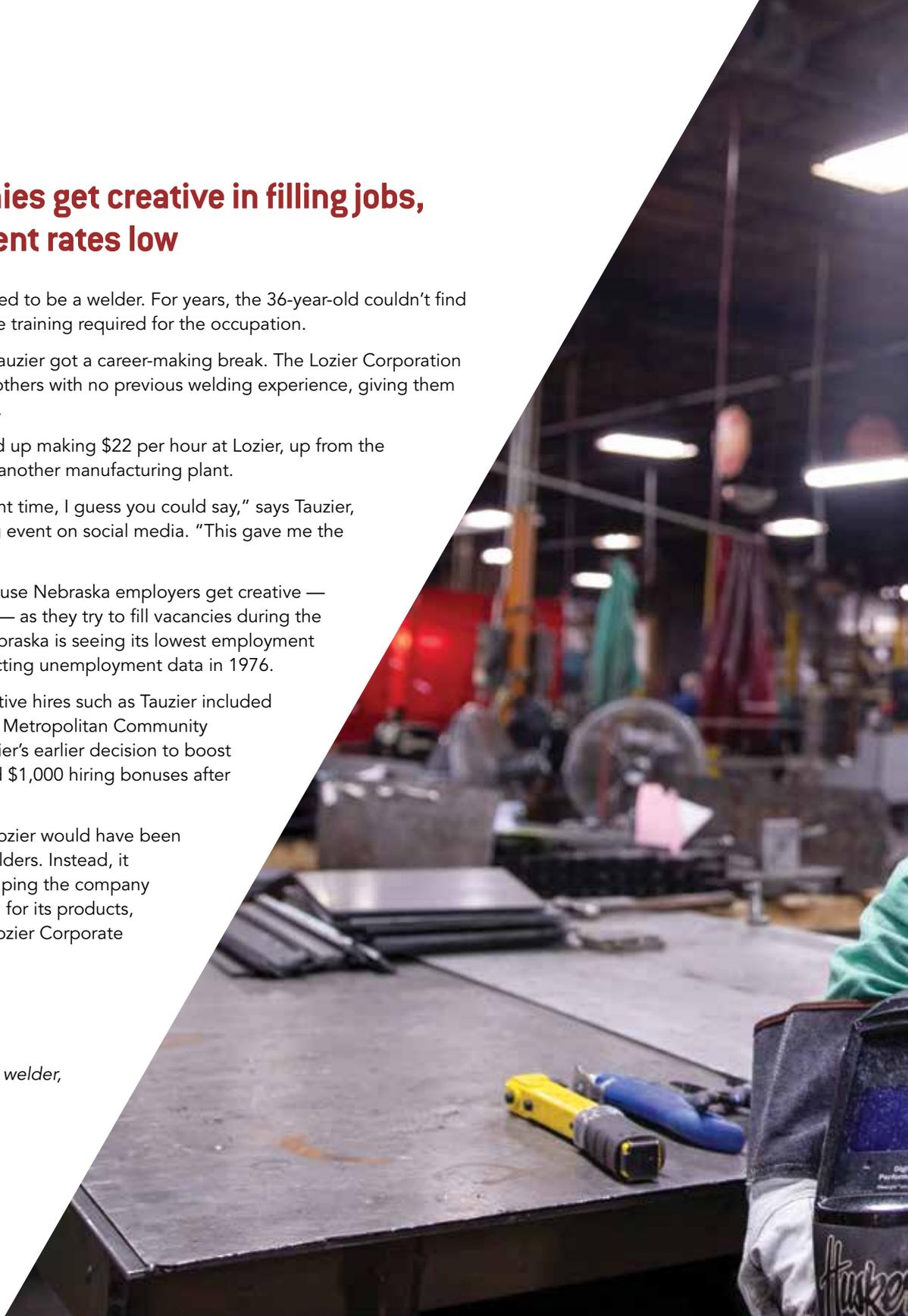
"It was the right place at the right time, I guess you could say," says Tazier, who saw an ad for Lozier's hiring event on social media. "This gave me the perfect opportunity."

Tazier's opportunity came because Nebraska employers get creative — and sometimes more generous — as they try to fill vacancies during the state's acute labor shortage. Nebraska is seeing its lowest employment rate since the state began collecting unemployment data in 1976.

The company's pitch to prospective hires such as Tazier included training in a two-week course at Metropolitan Community College. That was on top of Lozier's earlier decision to boost its hourly wages by \$1 to \$3 and \$1,000 hiring bonuses after 90 days of employment.

Without the training program, Lozier would have been able to hire just five certified welders. Instead, it wound up with 13 new hires, helping the company keep up with a surge in demand for its products, says Hannah Bolte, who is the Lozier Corporate Communications Manager.

Andrew Tazier was trained as a welder, paid for by Lozier. ANNA REED





“It was the
right place at
the right time.
This gave me the
perfect opportunity.”

- Andrew Tautzier, welder

Project NExT

Keeping Omaha on the forefront of healthcare is a priority for city leaders. Along those lines, the City of Omaha is contributing \$93 million during the next decade to support an all-hazards response center at the University of Nebraska Medical Center and an expansion of the medical campus.

About \$45 million will be earmarked for Project NExT, a multibillion-dollar proposal by UNMC and its clinical partner, Nebraska Medicine. The project would combine a state-of-the-art teaching hospital and federally funded wings designed to enhance the nation's ability to respond to hazards — including natural disasters, environmental accidents and highly contagious diseases.

Project NExT leaders say it would create 8,700 high-paying, permanent jobs and 41,000 temporary construction jobs; generate \$38 million in annual state tax revenue; and have a projected total annual economic impact of \$1.3 billion after it opens. The complex could serve local patients but be quickly repurposed to care for victims of pandemics or natural disasters.



Healthcare training with protective gear. NEBRASKA MEDICINE

Amazon

Amazon has two warehouse projects in the Omaha-Council Bluffs region that, between them, will bring as many as 1,500 new jobs to the metro area.

Amazon expects to create about 500 jobs when its 270,000-square-foot sortation center opens at South 24th Street and Veterans Memorial Highway in Council Bluffs. In October 2020, Amazon announced it would open a robotic fulfillment center in Papillion. Once fully operational, the facility could bring 1,000 full-time jobs to the area with wages starting at \$15 to \$16 per hour.

Sortation facilities are a central part of Amazon's distribution system. The Council Bluffs center will receive customer orders from around the country and route them to destinations in Iowa.

The Council Bluffs facility will be Amazon's seventh in Iowa. In Papillion, construction of a 700,000-square-foot Amazon distribution center is underway on 94 acres. Employees will work alongside robots at that state-of-the-art facility.



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Cranes work on the Heartwood Preserve development. CHRIS MACHIAN

Heartwood Preserve

Imagine 80 acres of open space, filled with trees, trails, water basins and land art. You'll find that vision in Heartwood Preserve in West Omaha.

Rising on what used to be farmland near 144th Street and West Dodge Road, Heartwood Preserve is a 500-acre project that will feature a combination of natural preservation and modern amenities. Included in the development is a 16-acre park with an amphitheater, ice rink and band shell; a business district, retail-focused town center and residential living.

With the preserve, Heartwood Park and the related Heartwood Greenway — a collection of rainwater detention basins that incorporate art — are being created by California-based Meyer Studio Land Architects. Along the winding Greenway water basin path will be various opportunities to, for example, play sand volleyball or socialize around a fire pit.

The burgeoning development is already home to Valmont and Carson Wealth headquarters, and will also house the headquarters of Applied Underwriters, a national workers' compensation insurer that owns Heartwood Preserve.

Crossroads

New shops, offices, restaurants, apartments and entertainment venues are planned to come to life at the former Crossroads Mall site at 72nd and Dodge Streets as early as late 2024. KJ Crossroads Venture LLC, made up of Omaha-based Lockwood and Century development companies, plans to include public plazas, artwork and about 4,000 parking spots.

The 40-acre campus will include about 2½ acres of public plaza space and more than 2 miles of sidewalks. The plan also reconfigures the street layout on the site to match Omaha's grid system.

The redevelopment team, in conjunction with the city and transportation advocates, has kept different modes of transit in mind as they've designed the Crossroads overhaul. Most of the sidewalks on the property will be 10-feet wide, including the one that will run along Dodge.

The plans also call for various bicycle parking options as well as a Heartland B-Cycle dock expected to sit near an existing ORBT bus line station on the corner of 72nd and Dodge — allowing cyclists and bus riders easier access to the development. There's also talk of the Keystone Trail one day connecting with the property.

About one-third of the campus will contain retailers, restaurants, hotel space and entertainment and fitness options; another third will go toward office space; and the final third will be for multi-family and senior living.



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ENTREPRENEURS & START-UPS

Silicon Prairie News

Omaha isn't just about Fortune 500 companies. Several smaller firms are looking to expand and the Omaha area provides the perfect opportunities for that.

To get the word out about some of those opportunities, Silicon Prairie News has a mission of growing, connecting and inspiring technology innovation in communities throughout the Midwest, with a primary focus in the Omaha-Kansas City-Des Moines "triangle."

As part of that mission, Silicon Prairie News raises awareness about entrepreneurs and start-ups through its media publications and website, siliconprairienews.com.

In 2015, AIM — a nonprofit community organization that promotes technology within communities — acquired Silicon Prairie News.

The Mastercraft & Millwork Commons

The Mastercraft is a place rich with history that now helps local entrepreneurs prepare a better future in Omaha. It has office and community space for more than 50 start-ups, nonprofits, creatives and entrepreneurial businesses. The Mastercraft building is located in the heart of the Millwork Commons in Omaha's bustling downtown area.

Launched about three years ago, Millwork Commons is trying to create a 45-acre collaborative and residential community that will provide a live-work-play campus for tech and other creative businesses. Investors are directing up to \$300 million for the effort.

An anchor of Millwork Commons is the recently renovated Ashton warehouse, built in the 1880s, which covers nearly 200,000 square feet. The Ashton features a spacious lobby called The Dock, where people can watch movies on a giant screen and socialize over a latte from Archetype Coffee or house-made beer from the Kros Strain taproom.

Patreon employee working at The Mastercraft building.
BRENDAN SULLIVAN



The Omaha area has a strong support system for local entrepreneurs. Z LONG

The Startup Collaborative

The Startup Collaborative (TSC, a program of the Omaha Chamber) has the playbook on how to start and sustain a business in the Omaha area.

TSC's company-building methodology helps founders start-up, quickly find a product-market fit and tackle the early challenges of scale in a way that it bias towards actions, closeness to its customers and buys down all potential risk associated with starting up.

One major TSC initiative is the creation of a First Customer Network, connecting entrepreneurs with established businesses who might use their services. These all-important first customers can provide feedback, market innovation and, of course, early cash flow. Just one more brick in the foundation of a thriving start-up ecosystem.

Watts Accelerator & Watts Coworking

The Watts Accelerator is a curriculum that provides aspiring entrepreneurs with the education, mentorship and funding to build their ideas into a successful business. Watts Coworking is a space where entrepreneurs, start-up leaders and independent professionals can work together to cultivate and grow their business goals and ideas.

Among the goals Watts promotes are: create a community of outliers, utilize innovation technology to increase work productivity, and to educate members on how to improve their businesses.

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COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS

The Riverfront

A \$300-million project is underway to renovate the Gene Leahy Mall, Heartland of America Park and Lewis & Clark Landing so each is tied together — to create a new jewel in Omaha's crown: The Riverfront.

Lewis & Clark Landing's overhaul, scheduled to reopen in 2023, calls for four sand volleyball courts with green space and shade structures, a scenic boardwalk, an urban beach that will include fire pits and a "destination playground" for kids to expend energy.

Heartland of America Park, located near the Conagra campus, closed to the public in November. Renovations at that park will expand green space and allow people to walk from the leveled-off Gene Leahy Mall all the way to the Missouri River.

Heartland, scheduled to reopen in fall 2023, will have an area to host food trucks, a seasonal market, a tiered botanical garden and a skating ribbon that shifts from smooth concrete in the summer to ice in the winter.

The Gene Leahy Mall will be the first park to reopen, scheduled for the summer of 2022. The park will host daily, weekly and monthly events such as yoga and kickboxing classes, storytelling times for children, book clubs, nature walks and art demonstrations. Food trucks are expected to be on-site daily.

It will also offer seasonal and specialty programs, including movie nights, concert series, holiday events and festivals and markets. Many areas of the revamped park will be available to rent for events like family reunions, private parties and weddings.

Gene Leahy Mall renovation. CHRIS MACHIAN





The Bob Kerrey Pedestrian Bridge connects Council Bluffs to Omaha's riverfront. CHRIS MACHIAN

'Baby Bob'

Downtown Omaha's iconic 3,000-foot pedestrian bridge will get a little bit longer with an expansion meant to increase access between North Downtown and the riverfront.

The North Downtown Riverfront Connector Bridge project is planned to span Riverfront Drive and the Union Pacific Railroad tracks, connecting the 12-year-old Bob Kerrey Pedestrian Bridge to a point near the intersection of 10th and Mike Fahey Streets.

The "Baby Bob" Pedestrian Connector Bridge would connect major destinations in North Downtown, including TD Ameritrade Park, the CHI Health Center Omaha and Creighton

University, according to plans outlined by the City of Omaha.

With the completion of "Baby Bob," pedestrians would be able to walk onto the connector bridge just north of the event center and east of the baseball stadium. It's now about a 20-minute walk to reach the Missouri River bridge from that location, if pedestrians go south around the CHI Health Center Omaha. The bridge extension would make it a 10-minute walk.

The project is estimated to cost \$6.4 million and is expected to be completed in 2023. The renovation of Omaha's three downtown riverfront parks is currently underway.



Creighton Health Sciences Center

Creighton University's new \$75-million CL Werner Center for Health Sciences Education will be a five-story, 130,000-square-foot facility. It will serve as the new home of Creighton's School of Medicine and as a hub for all of the university's health sciences schools and colleges. It will feature a simulation center, classrooms, study areas, labs and administrative areas. About 5,900 students, faculty and staff will use the center each year.

The university seeks to bring together health care students from different disciplines to prepare them to work collaboratively in the field.

Situated near the Interstate 480 and U.S. Highway 75

interchange at Cuming Street, the new building also will provide a new "front door" for the west side of Creighton's campus.

A skywalk will connect the new center with the Criss Complex to the south near North 27th Plaza and Burt Street. The complex currently houses many of Creighton's health sciences and medical programs. The complex will get its own \$10 million renovation, bringing the total cost of the project to \$85 million.

The construction of the new center, scheduled to open in fall 2023, is expected to create 1,070 jobs during construction, according to an estimate provided by the university. It will have an overall impact of \$3.2 billion on the local economy during the first 10 years.



Creighton University CL Werner Center rendering. RDG PLANNING & DESIGN

Nonprofit Assistance

In a typical year, Food Bank for the Heartland might spend an average of about \$225,000 a month on food. That's as a supplement to donations from the public and food received from the U.S. Department of Agriculture and other entities. But because of increased need in the community due to the coronavirus pandemic, the food bank is spending about \$1.5 million a month on food.

Thanks to community support and donations, the food bank's finances have remained stable throughout the pandemic. The local nonprofit sector is reporting that finances are starting to level out, according to the latest survey results from the Nonprofit Association of the Midlands. But many organizations are still reeling from the financial hits taken during the pandemic.

The Nonprofit Association of the Midlands collected information from 159 nonprofits in Nebraska and southwest Iowa for the survey, which was done in April. Surveys also were conducted in mid-March, April and October 2020. The most recent data shows that most nonprofits anticipate being financially stable again in the next one to two years.

Nebraska nonprofits surveyed said they anticipate losing a combined \$15.5 million in 2021 because of the effects of COVID-19.

On the positive side, some nonprofits have been able to implement virtual programming and training during the pandemic. That has led to new ways to reach clients and expanded services.

Many nonprofits canceled fundraisers, programs and events last year that led to a loss in revenue. Nonprofits also saw increased demand for services, particularly nonprofits serving families with food or housing assistance.

Several nonprofits received funding assistance from federal COVID-19 relief programs and local or community foundations. Amplify Arts, a small nonprofit that assists artists through grants and other projects, didn't take much of a hit during the pandemic. The organization shuffled around existing money and did smaller-scale fundraising. That allowed the group to double the monetary amount of grants issued in 2020.

While the Food Bank for the Heartland hasn't struggled financially, people the organization serves are still struggling. Rising gas and food prices, along with

kids being home for the summer, may have offset some financial progress folks have made.

The organization had to shift to a mobile pantry program. Instead of families being able to choose their food, food is boxed up and loaded into their vehicles. The food bank also cut the number of volunteers in half for each shift to be able to practice social distancing.

In the last year, Food Bank for the Heartland has distributed more than 38 million meals — an 89% increase over the average of the previous four years. Officials at the Omaha-based nonprofit weren't expecting to see numbers like that until 2028, according to projected metrics that factor in population growth. But the coronavirus pandemic accelerated the need in the Omaha metro area.



Volunteers pack boxes of food at Food Bank for the Heartland. LILY SMITH

Omaha Luminarium draws first CEO from San Francisco science center

Silva Raker, the first CEO of Omaha's Kiewit Luminarium, brings an impressive amount of experience to her job. As the former senior development director for San Francisco's Exploratorium, which the Luminarium is modeled after, Raker led a team that helped plan, design and develop exhibits for the Omaha center.

The more Raker thought about it, she ultimately decided the Luminarium was something she wanted to help lead into the future. "I fell in love with Omaha and this project," she says.

Construction is already underway on Kiewit Luminarium, set to open at Lewis & Clark Landing in spring 2023. The privately funded center will feature hands-on, interactive exhibits intended to unlock curiosity and make science

accessible for both children and adults.



"I can't think of a better place to do it. The opportunity to create something really unique and be a model for the rest of the country was huge."

- Silva Raker, first CEO of Omaha's Kiewit Luminarium

Backers behind the Luminarium hope it will not only fill a gap on the Omaha cultural landscape, but also help inspire children's interest in science, math, engineering and technology, helping Omaha develop the diverse STEM workforce needed for the city's future.

All money for the center is being raised by Heritage Services, the influential philanthropy organization that has been behind numerous major civic projects in Omaha over the past three decades.

When Heritage officials first started exploring building a science center in Omaha, they visited the Exploratorium, on San Francisco's waterfront. They learned the Exploratorium had a division that works with other science museums around the world to develop exhibits.

The founding leader of that global collaborations division: Raker.

Wanting to make the Omaha center world-class, Heritage officials decided to hire the Exploratorium to assist with the Luminarium's entire development, from feasibility to final design.

Raker began making regular trips to Omaha as the lead of the Exploratorium development team. The last trip she took before the COVID-19 pandemic, and the first during it, were both to Omaha. From the moment she started working on the Omaha project, Raker said she was impressed by the commitment in the city to create a science center that would be first-class, cutting-edge, engaging and accessible to everyone.

Considering all the assets in Omaha, including a committed philanthropic sector and strong corporate sector, she began to think Omaha could lead the nation in embracing those challenges.

"I can't think of a better place to do it," she said. "The opportunity to create something really unique and be a model for the rest of the country was huge."

Before joining the Exploratorium in 2010, the University of California, Berkeley zoology graduate had worked as a field biologist, spent 10 years developing products and programs for specialty retailer The Nature Company, and served as chief operating officer and strategist for an experience travel company.

Raker said in many ways it's appropriate that she's now moving to Nebraska. One of the most formative experiences of her youth happened in Nebraska more than four decades ago. At age 15, she had the chance to attend a six-week summer program at Nebraska Wesleyan University in Lincoln sponsored by the National Science Foundation.

Not only did the first airplane trip of her life and chance to explore the ecology of the Platte River expand her horizons, the experience helped inspire her to pursue a career in science.

Now Raker said she's looking forward to making the Luminarium the kind of place that will similarly instill in children a love of science and learning.

"To be part of creating a place that will do that is just wonderful," she said. "The meaning of that for me is really profound."



Renderings of The Luminary. HDR

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AROUND THE REGION

Keeping up with demand in Nebraska City

Areas of the region that offer a rural lifestyle continue to grow. To keep up with demand in Nebraska City, a public/private partnership helped establish more housing for an expanding population. From one of Nebraska's best golf courses to the historic Arbor Day Farm, there's plenty to do in this pristine piece of Americana.

StudioOne townhomes nestle into an

established area of Nebraska City, one of the lovely towns that dot the Greater Omaha region. Located just a few minutes from the charming downtown, this new housing development lets people choose a small-town lifestyle.

Papillion is in good shape

Papillion residents with goals to hit the gym more often now have a \$51-million source of motivation to get in shape. Welcome to Papillion Landing, the city's new community recreation center. Take a stroll around the 120,000-square-foot facility, and it becomes clear: This isn't your drab, musty recreation center of the past.

Papillion Landing features an indoor water park, an indoor playground and a large gym. It has a yoga studio, a cycling room and an area with free weights and weight machines. Another portion of the building includes a digital library, classrooms, a ballroom for weddings and other events, and an outdoor courtyard.

Designers used many natural elements in the recreation center. Large windows allow a lot of natural light into the pool and cardio areas. Earth-tone colors and wood were incorporated in many of the design elements.



Papillion Landing recreation center. CHRIS MACHIAN

Shop Class Shapes Student's Future



AS A SENIOR AT OMAHA

North, Angely Rivera-Reyes planned to study psychology in college; she just had to finish her high school credits first. Among the remaining requirements for graduation was a shop class. She enrolled in the only open course, Precision Machining, not knowing those three credit hours would rewrite her future.

"I really enjoyed my shop class and wasn't expecting to," Rivera said. "I liked working with my hands."

Rivera's instructor encouraged the entire class to apply for Lozier's Sponsorship for the Trades Program, which provides high school seniors with full-ride scholarships to earn degrees from Metropolitan Community College's Industrial and Commercial Trades Program. In conjunction with attending class, recipients gain hands-on experience working at Lozier, and are

offered a full-time position at the company upon graduation from the two-year program.

Rivera applied and received the sponsorship.

"I have learned a lot more at Lozier than I did in a classroom," she said. "You have to work, physically work, and learn at the same time and it's very beneficial."

Now a recent college graduate, Rivera is a full-time apprentice in Lozier's Tool & Die shop. She says applying for – and accepting the sponsorship has changed her life and given her a direction for her future.

"Having a full-time, well-paying job with no college debt allowed me to move out, get my own health insurance and do everything on my own. I'm very grateful," she said.

"Because of this sponsorship, I actually know what I want to do with my career, my life."

“ Because of this sponsorship, I actually know what I want to do with my career, my life.”

—ANGELY

Lozier is the leading manufacturer of store fixtures. Retailers around the world have relied on Lozier's quality products and service for 65 years, and counting.

Lozier is currently accepting applications through **February 15, 2022** for its Sponsorship for the Trades Program.

Recipients will be announced April 1. Applications are available online: www.lozier.com/careers/sponsorship-for-the-trades.

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Fremont continues to build

As more businesses have moved their facilities to Fremont, the city has seen an increased housing demand. It's an issue that has been acknowledged by former Mayor Scott Getzschman and other leaders in the city.

But several ongoing housing developments are looking to alleviate this crisis, whether it's through new construction of houses, a new apartment complex or the revitalization of an old building for apartments.

Up-and-coming developments include Morningside Crossing, Ritz Lake, Gallery 23 East, Fountain Springs Estates, SunRidge Place, Morningside Pointe and the Lofts @ 505.

DPA Auctions expands in Fremont

The staff at DPA Auctions have outgrown their current building, COO Brandon Peterson said. With its plans to expand its staff, Peterson said its new building will be perfect. "We've got almost 40 people on staff now," Peterson said, "and we're looking to put about 100 people into that building."

DPA Auctions, currently located at 419 W. Judy Drive, has been in Fremont since 1972. They specialize in auctions for the farming, construction and transportation industries.

Recently, Peterson said the company has been rapidly expanding. "Just this month alone, we hired six more people, and our hiring rounds keep going," he said. "And that's everybody from auction specialists to people in the administrative department, marketing specialists."

During the last decade, DPA has moved its business to the digital era, offering its services online. The online shift brought more expansion to the company. Last year, the business launched DPA Impact, a blue-collar marketing agency to help local businesses get their names out in a storytelling approach.



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INCLUSIVITY & EMPOWERMENT

Heartland Pride

Committed to creating an inclusive environment, inspiring equality, celebrating diversity and acknowledging the contributions of the LGBTQ+ community, Heartland Pride produces a series of community events throughout the year, including the annual Heartland Pride parade, an annual Pride Pageant, and Pride Festival, as well as various fundraising events.

Heartland Pride also manages and maintains an LGBT Community and Business Directory that includes a listing and links to gay-friendly businesses and organizations — including social groups, pride vendors and health care options — in the Omaha and Council Bluffs area.

LeadDiversity & Inclusive Communities

Diversity and inclusion are much talked about these days in the business world, so much so that they're now often referred to simply as "D & I." Business leaders are increasingly concluding that if Omaha and Nebraska are going to compete and thrive amid a worldwide shortage of skilled workers, they need to embrace everyone, no matter their race, gender, sexual orientation or economic status.

But while the concept is new to many businesses, Inclusive Communities has made inclusiveness its mission for decades. Formerly known as the Omaha chapter of the National Conference for Christians and Jews, the organization has its roots in 1938, when Omaha businessman Otto Swanson learned of a secret boycott of Jewish businesses and rallied the community to stop it.

LeadDiversity is Inclusive Communities' latest initiative to spark conversation in Omaha about bridging differences. The ultimate goal of LeadDiversity is to not only help workplaces become more inclusive, but also train a network of advocates who can help lead a broader community drive for equity.

A giant flag is carried along the route during the Heartland Pride parade. Z LONG



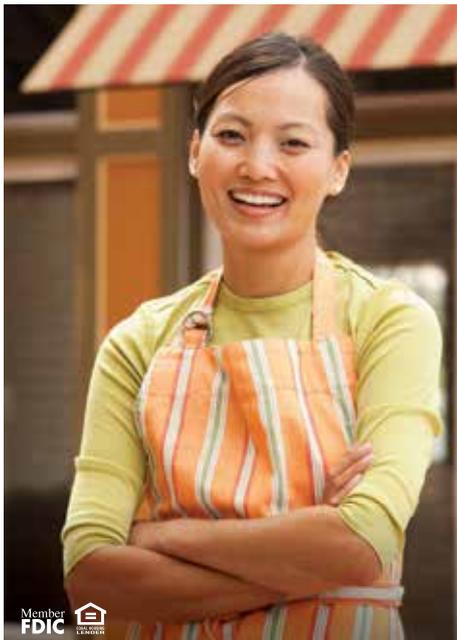
Erik Servellon, second from right, leads a table discussion for LeadDIVERSITY at El Museo Latino. CHRIS MACHIAN

Latino Center of the Midlands

Nonprofit groups in the Omaha area carry out important tasks that make our community stronger. A notable example is the Latino Center of the Midlands. Over the last 50 years, the center has worked to build a stronger, more engaged Latino community in Omaha.

The center is strengthening programs and guiding how it allocates its resources through well-chosen strategic priorities. The center's staff and volunteers are working with community partners to tackle key needs. Among the center's work, in coordination with its partner organizations, are focuses on youth education, adult job training, health care and behavioral health.

The center's Pathways to Success program, for example, is an evidence-based initiative that helps high school students develop positive school habits and set key personal goals. Other programming promotes parental engagement and positive dynamics within families, social integration and a community support system and more.



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Empowerment Network

Empowerment Network, whose goal is transforming the lives and economic conditions for Omaha's African-American community, has become a voice for growth in Omaha — not just growth in North Omaha and the Black community.

Developed and launched by African-Americans and members of the North Omaha community, the Empowerment Network Collaboration now includes people of all races. Nationally recognized, more than 500 organizations and thousands of individuals have participated in the Network's programming.

Since its inception, the Empowerment Network has also hosted youth summits and small group meetings with teens, successful students, gang members, former offenders, single parents, parents and grandparents in order to gain resident input on the issues, solutions and priorities that affect them.

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