

For Fifty Plus CHOICES

OCTOBER 2026

How Friends of Dubuque Parks is Changing our Parks

Krista Iverson and her grandmother, Florence Zimmerman, enjoy outings at A.Y. McDonald Park.



**NAVIGATING SECONDARY LOSSES:
ADAPTING TO CHANGES BEYOND
THE PERSON
THE IMPORTANT INFLUENCE OF
SOCIAL CONTEXT**

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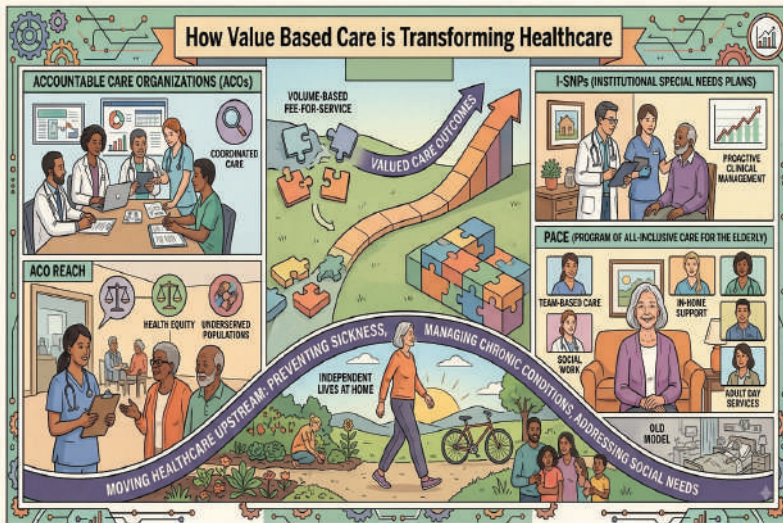
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How Friends of Dubuque Parks Are Changing our Parks



CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

FODP Chair Laura Roussell (far right) and volunteers clean up A.Y.McDonald Park after RAGBRAI in July.

by Tracey Rush

Ah, October! The dog days of summer are behind us, and everything is all pumpkin spicy. The air is crisp, and we reminisce about the good old days when we would jump into a pile of freshly raked leaves and be able to get up again, unscathed. It is a wonderful time to take a stroll or a roll through one of Dubuque's parks. Or is it?

Krista Iverson often takes her grandmother to a park for lunch after grandma's hairdresser appointments. "We like going to Eagle Point Park, but the only wheelchair-accessible tables are in the pavilions, which are often reserved. We love going to A.Y.

rks is



McDonald Park because I can wheel her down to the Point, but we can't eat lunch there because there are no accessible tables, so we just sit on the benches and eat ice cream." Iverson adds, "A lot of the Arboretum is great for wheelchairs, but none of the picnic tables are."

Colleen Lawson, Nutrition Aging Specialist of the Northeast Iowa Area Agency on Aging says there are several reasons seniors do not spend time in the parks. She points out there are "not enough benches for them to take breaks, or they are too far apart; uneven sidewalks are falling hazards; gravel or lime walking paths are a falling/tripping hazard; there are not enough shaded areas; too far between bathrooms, or bathrooms are unsatisfactory for the elderly."

As discouraging as this might be, there is good news on the horizon. In February 2026, Dubuque's City Council approved the Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Master Plan. All 694 pages of it. It is basically an "Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Dubuque Parks and How We Are Going to Fix Them" manual. There are chapters on our parks, recreation, trails and connectivity, open spaces and natural resources, community needs, and the implementation plan. A large part of the Plan is based on a survey done in 2025 called Y(OUR) STORY. Perhaps you were one of the 35,000 people who filled out a survey.

Of particular interest to senior citizens is the Master Plan's recommendation that "the City conduct a comprehensive Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance review; this effort would involve inspecting existing facilities, performing self-evaluations and updating the transition plan necessary to adhere to ADA standards and

regulations for accessible parks and facilities.... Most Dubuque's parks do not meet ADA compliance standards and requirements. Lack of paved circulation routes throughout parks, amenities on steep hillsides without stairs or easy access, and inaccessible seating were frequently noted."

Accessibility is a real issue and not just for seniors. Parents trying to push strollers around in parks, as well as people of all ages with disabilities can be affected.

Keep in mind that this Master Plan covers the next 10 years and the hundreds of improvements to be made are divided into short-term (1-3 years), mid-term (4-6 years), and long-term (7-10 years) on the timeline.

ADA improvements mostly fall in the mid-term range. However, Park & Recreation Director Matt



Vice Chair Colleen McKenna (left) and Park Division Manager Stephen Fehsal distribute thank-you notes to the park staff



Krista Iverson and her grandmother, Florence Zimmerman, enjoy outings at A.Y. McDonald Park.

Kalcevich said that although doing a full ADA assessment is not on the immediate agenda,

“as we make repairs and updates to the parks, we are making sure that these improvements are ADA compliant.”

Dubuque has over 50 parks, all of which need improvement in one way or another. So, one of the first things to get checked off the to-do list was the creation of a Friends of Dubuque Parks and Recreation group, “to assist in advocacy, volunteer coordination, and fundraising.” Dubuque City Councilman Laura Roussell has stepped up to chair Friends of Dubuque Parks (FODP). “This organization is about working with others to make a positive difference for our community. We strive to increase awareness of the many beautiful parks in our community so people can take full advantage of this great opportunity. Through volunteer engagement, we work to enhance

the capabilities of our city and the parks and recreation staff.” Adds Roussell, “I love meeting new volunteers at every event. They are always enthusiastic, hard-working people that want to make a difference. It is a great way to make new friends.”

Roussell gathered a committee of interested citizens to form a board, including marketing strategist Colleen McKenna, Founder and Head of Marketing Strategy and Content Creation

at Lock Eleven, who serves as Vice-Chair of FODP. Explains McKenna,

Activities of the Friends of Dubuque Parks so far have included cleaning up Eagle Point Park pre-July 3rd fireworks, post-RAGBRAI cleanup at A. Y. McDonald Park, and hosting information booths at National Night Out and Dubuque Farmers’ Market. They even wrote personal thank you notes to the full-time Parks and Recreation staff and distributed them during Park & Rec Appreciation month of July.

Another Eagle Point Park cleanup is scheduled for the end of August. Future projects include helping with fundraising for projects and raising awareness to get more people helping with things for which the city does not have the resources.

Now no doubt there is a Gloomy Gus reading this and wondering why we need volunteers to do this work when we all pay our taxes for others to do it for us.



Florence Zimmerman loves that the koi pond at the Dubuque Arboretum is accessible by wheelchair.

McKenna is quick to point out that Dubuque parks cover 1,200 acres with only 43 full-time employees (FTE), which equals 28 acres per staff member.

“That’s 21 football fields each. I don’t know about anyone else, but I have a hard enough time taking care of my little yard. That’s insane to expect city staff to maintain everything perfectly,” comments McKenna.

One way to be part of the solution is to join the Friends of Dubuque Parks group, attend a meeting, volunteer to help at an event. As McKenna points out, “Our ultimate goal is to help



Eagle Point Park overlook.

execute the city’s bold vision and maximize the incredible potential of Dubuque’s parks. From physical health and mental well-being to flood protection and local business growth, parks give us so much back. We want to partner with the city to speed up those positive enhancements so every neighborhood benefits.”

Now go get some fresh air and enjoy our Dubuque Parks!

Tracey Rush spent her childhood getting fresh air, playing in the dirt, and practicing her viola. She is now a Master Gardener, a music teacher, composer, conductor, and the Secretary of the Friends of Dubuque Parks. She can be reached at iowamusic@aol.com. ❖



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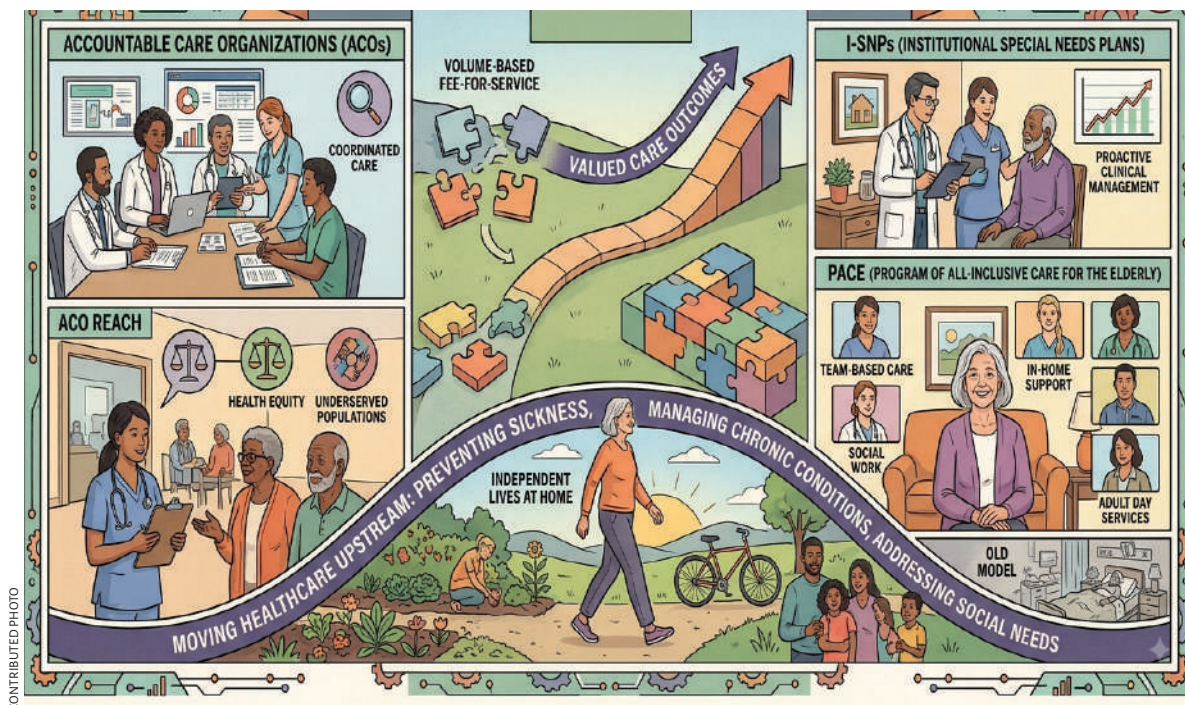
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HOW VALUE BASED CARE IS TRANSFORMING HEALTHCARE

by Elizabeth Kunde

Value-based care is transforming healthcare by shifting the focus from the volume of services delivered to the quality of outcomes achieved. Rather than rewarding healthcare providers simply for delivering more tests, procedures, or hospital visits, value-based care emphasizes keeping people healthier, improving quality of life, coordinating services, and preventing avoidable complications.

For older adults, this approach is particularly important because their healthcare needs are often complex and may involve multiple providers, medications, caregivers, and

community-based services.

Several value-based care models are designed to address these challenges. Accountable Care Organizations (ACOs) bring together physicians, hospitals, specialists, and other healthcare providers to coordinate care and improve outcomes for Medicare beneficiaries.

Under models such as the Medicare Shared Savings Program (MSSP), participating organizations are encouraged to improve quality while reducing unnecessary healthcare spending.

When organizations successfully achieve better outcomes and lower costs, they may share the savings.

ACO REACH is another Medicare value-based model that focuses on coordinated, person-centered care while placing greater emphasis on health equity and serving underserved populations. These models encourage providers to look beyond individual medical visits and consider the complete picture of an older adult's health and social needs.

For older adults with more complex needs, Institutional Special Needs Plans (I-SNPs) provide another important model. I-SNPs are designed for

individuals who require nursing-home-level care and emphasize coordinated services, proactive clinical management, and early identification of changes in condition. By having healthcare professionals closely connected to the care setting, problems can often be addressed before they require an emergency department visit or hospitalization.

The Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE) is one of the most comprehensive examples of value-based care. PACE enables eligible older adults who meet nursing-home-level care requirements to remain safely in their homes and communities whenever possible. An interdisciplinary team—including physicians, nurses, therapists, social work-



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ers, dietitians, pharmacists, and other specialists—works together to create and continually adjust an individualized care plan. PACE integrates primary and specialty medical care, rehabilitation, prescription medications, transportation, adult day services, meals, social services, and caregiver support into one coordinated program.

Other value-based approaches include bundled payment models, which provide a single payment for an episode of care and encourage providers to work together across settings, and patient-centered medical homes, which emphasize primary care, prevention, chronic disease management, and coordination among providers.



How will ACO REACH focus on Health Equity?

Across these models, the common goal is clear: move healthcare upstream. Instead of waiting for an older adult to become sick enough to require hospitalization, value-based care encourages providers and care teams to identify risks early, manage chronic conditions, support caregivers, and address social needs that can affect health. By prioritizing prevention, coordination, inde-

pendence, and person-centered care, value-based models are helping redefine senior health-care. They demonstrate that better outcomes, improved quality of life, and responsible stewardship of healthcare resources can go hand in hand—creating a healthcare system that is not only focused on treating illness, but on helping older adults live healthier, more independent lives in the places they call home.

Elizabeth Kunde is the Executive Director of Strategy and Compliance at Stonehill Communities. Elizabeth has a master's degree in health administration from the University of Iowa and has been a licensed nursing home administrator in Iowa and Wisconsin. ❖



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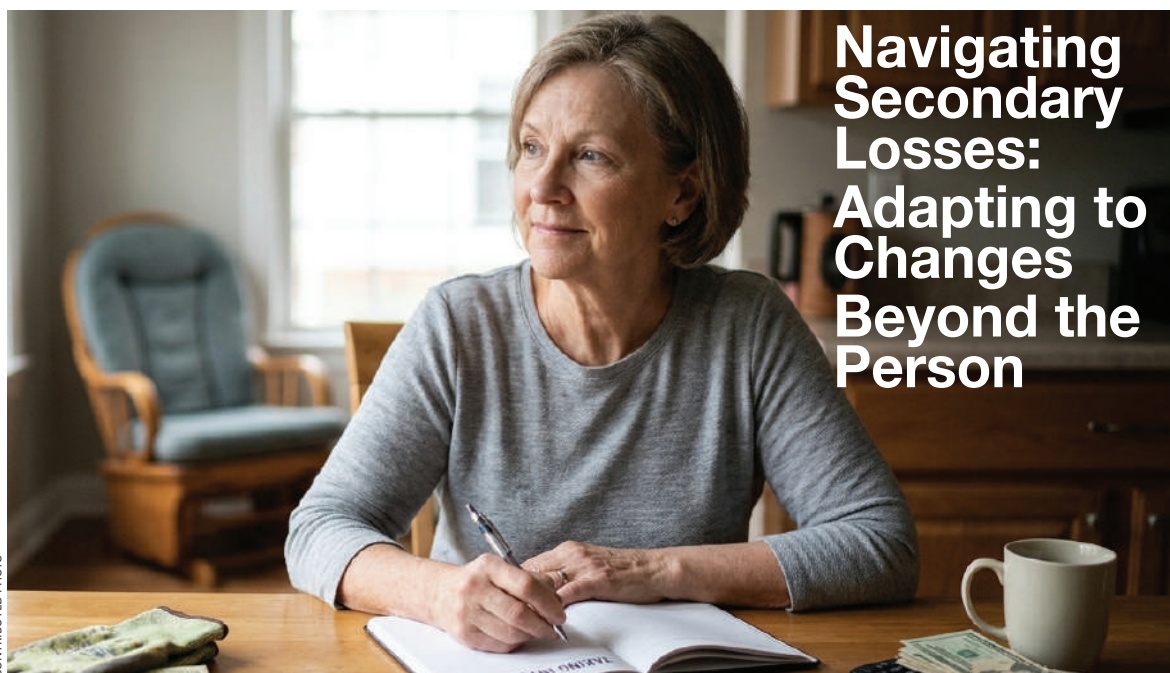
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Navigating Secondary Losses: Adapting to Changes Beyond the Person

When we talk about grief, our minds naturally center on the primary loss: the painful absence of a spouse, partner, or lifelong companion. We mourn their voice, their presence, and the shared history built over decades. Yet, as the weeks and months pass, many older adults discover that grief rarely arrives alone. It brings with it a trail of quieter, unexpected shifts—what counselors call “secondary losses.”

A secondary loss is any major life change that occurs as a direct result of the primary death. It is the sudden silence in a home that used to be full of shared conversation. It is learning to manage household finances alone after fifty years of relying on a partner’s expertise. It is navigating social gatherings where you attended as a couple or coming to terms with

downscaling from a longtime family residence.

Because society often expects grief to focus solely on emotional mourning, these secondary losses can catch us off guard. Recognizing these disruptions for what they are—real, valid losses—is the first step toward rebuilding a life that feels stable, manageable, and fulfilling.

UNDERSTANDING THE RIPPLE EFFECT

Secondary losses touch almost every corner of daily life, particularly for adults in their mature years. They typically fall into three main categories:

Role and Identity Shift

For decades, your daily rhythm may have been defined as a caregiver, a partner, or half of a team. When that role ends, it is common to feel a loss of purpose or direction.

Practical and Financial Adjustments

Managing home maintenance, vehicle upkeep, tax deadlines, and monthly budgeting single-handedly can feel overwhelming if those tasks were previously handled by your partner.

Social and Environmental Changes

Relationships with long-time friends can subtly shift. Couples’ dinner groups or group travel may suddenly feel awkward, leading to a quieter social life or feeling out of place in familiar circles.

Acknowledging that it is entirely normal to feel stressed or resentful about these logistical hurdles does not lessen your love for the person you lost. It simply means you are human, navigating a profound life transition.

Practical Strategies for Managing Secondary Changes

While you cannot prevent

these shifts from happening, you can control how you pace yourself through them. Here are practical ways to adapt to life's secondary changes without becoming overwhelmed:

Take a Gentle Inventory

Rather than trying to fix everything at once, write down the specific daily or weekly challenges that are causing you the most stress. Is it maintaining the yard? Handling the bills? Preparing meals for one? Grouping your worries onto paper takes them out of your head and turns an overwhelming cloud of anxiety into concrete, manageable tasks.

Embrace Delegation and Outsourcing

Self-reliance is a point of pride

for many, but grief depletes physical and mental energy. Now is the time to accept help. When loved ones ask, "*How can I help?*" give them specific tasks. Ask a adult child to help organize financial paperwork or invite a friend over to help sort through a garage. Consider hiring local professionals for heavy household chores, lawn care, or tax preparation. Lightening your practical burden frees up vital emotional energy.

Establish New, Simple Routines

When a long-established routine disappears, creating small, predictable anchors throughout your day can provide comfort. Start small by setting a consistent time for morning coffee on the porch or a daily walk

through the neighborhood. Create a simple weekly schedule for errands so decisions don't feel overwhelming each day. Or find new ways to enjoy dinner, such as listening to a favorite podcast or radio program during mealtimes.

Protect Your Social Wellbeing

If old social dynamics feel painful or distant, gently explore low-pressure ways to stay connected to your community. Local senior centers, community volunteer organizations, civic groups, or gentle exercise classes offer wonderful opportunities to build new connections on your own terms, without pressure or expectation.

Giving Yourself Grace

Perhaps the most important strategy in navigating secondary losses is self-compassion. Adjusting to a new lifestyle takes time, trial, and error. There will be days when managing the house or making financial decisions feels easy, and other days when picking up the mail feels like climbing a mountain.

Be patient with your learning curve. You are not just grieving a person; you are learning how to navigate the world in a completely new way. By taking small, deliberate steps, accepting support, and honoring your own pace, you can gradually rebuild a daily routine that brings security, peace, and renewed confidence.

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Nancy Conlon

HOW BLIND SPOTS CAN QUIETLY DERAIL A RETIREMENT



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

by Keith Leverentz

We hear it often from people preparing for retirement:

“I’ve worked hard and saved for decades, but I’m still not completely sure if my plan covers all the bases.”

It is a valid concern. Many pre-retirees assume that once they reach a certain savings target, the hardest part of financial planning is behind them. In reality, retirement brings a whole new set of questions that go far beyond how much money is sitting in a 401(k) or IRA. The challenge is rarely a lack of diligence during your working years; it is a lack of awareness around the quiet

risks that can put pressure on a plan after you stop working.

The most common misunderstanding is looking at financial decisions in isolation. Take Social Security and Medicare, for example. With 567 different ways for a retired couple to claim Social Security, picking the wrong option can mean leaving tens of thousands of dollars on the table. Meanwhile, as you approach age 65, the flood of promotional mail in your mailbox can make Medicare decisions feel overwhelming.

Beyond initial filing choices, many plans overlook life expectancy risks—which cut both ways. Dying too soon can

leave a surviving spouse with a dramatic income reduction if a pension drops or one Social Security check stops, often costing the household \$1,200 to \$1,500 every month. Over 10 to 20 years, that loss can mean \$180,000 to \$360,000 in missed income. On the flip side, living longer is more common than ever; a retired couple today has a 50% chance of one spouse reaching age 92 and a 14% chance of reaching age 100. Providing 30 to 35 years of inflation-adjusted income requires a very different structure than planning for 20 years.

Other subtle risks can quietly erode asset longevity if they are

not anticipated early. Tax rates are near historical lows, yet many retirees do not realize how much of their Social Security or withdrawals will be taxable. Combining tax risk with early retirement market volatility—known as sequence of returns risk—and portfolios structured like a 30-year-old's instead of a 60-year-old's can struggle to keep up with 3% average inflation. Add in potential healthcare needs—where 70% of retirees will require long-term or assisted care costing \$7,000 to \$10,000 a month—or inadequate liability limits on home and auto policies, and a single unforeseen event can jeopardize your net worth.

This is where retirement planning becomes more than an investment conversation. None of these decisions sit in a separate bucket. Social Security claiming affects your tax bracket; health and long-term care decisions dictate withdrawal strategies; and liability protections preserve your estate. When these moving parts are planned together, you stop leaving money on the table and start building true financial resilience.

Some people feel like preparing for all these risks means living in fear or sacrificing the enjoyment of retirement today. But the goal is not to worry about every worst-case scenario. It is to create clarity

and structure, so you are not left guessing. When you understand how income, taxes, investments, health expenses, and estate protections interact, you can move forward with confidence.

Retirement should give you freedom and peace of mind, not leave you wondering whether an unexpected risk could undo years of hard work.

Keith Leverentz, National Social Security Advisor®, is founder of The Life Group, guiding clients since 2003 with personalized financial planning, investment counsel, and retirement strategies. Learn more about The Life Group team at TheLifeGroupLLC.com. ♦



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The Important Influence of Social Context

by Dr. Richard Houston

Several factors shaping the healthy aging process operate undercover – outside the domain of full conscious thought. We could start with a quotation from David Eagleman, Stanford profes-

sor, prominent brain expert and successful entrepreneur:

“The conscious mind thinks that it is the captain of the ship when in fact, it is nothing more than a stowaway.”

One of these ‘undercover’ dimensions is the influence of our social network. Humans are social beings. Our species and our direct evolutionary ancestors managed survival for a couple of million years by collaborating for the hunt, for rearing the young and for common defense. Tribes who were successful at these tasks survived to breed more children and dominate control over precious resources like water sources.



Barack Obama spoke at the services celebrating the life Nelson Mandela. He focused on the South African term “ubuntu.”

He explained:

“Mandela understood the ties that bind the human spirit. Ubuntu, a word that captures Mandela’s greatest gift, refers to his recognition that we are all bound together in ways that are invisible to the eye; that there is a oneness to humanity; that we achieve ourselves by sharing ourselves with others, and caring for those around us.”

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Take note of his reference to “ways that are invisible to the eye.”

Nobel Prize winning psychologist ** Daniel Kahneman offered this insight: *“Most of us feel that we believe what we believe because we have reasons to believe it. That is, to a very large extent, an illusion. We believe what we believe mostly because we believe in what people we like and trust believe. We believe what we’re taught to believe. Reasons come later. ... The idea that we hold reasonable beliefs is an illusion.”*

**Loyalty to the tribe
became one of the
most valued character
traits. Anyone violating
that cultural norm
risked ostracism.**

This dynamic has a major impact on our social norms to this day. Contemporary politics demonstrates this reality every week.

In 1942, Walter Bradford Cannon, a Harvard professor, published an article in *The American Anthropologist* titled ‘Voodoo Death.’ The article cited numerous specific instances in which individuals who violated group norms had been ostracized and were dead shortly thereafter.

Social status and respect continue to be one of the most powerful dynamics in modern society as exemplified in the controversy surrounding social



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media websites.

(Meta / Facebook was recently subjected to a judicial order to pay a \$567 million fine in addition to an original ruling ordering it to pay a \$375 million fine for endangering child safety.)

A recent New York Times article described the suicide crisis in Wyoming. Rural states like Wyoming, Montana and Alaska have double the average suicide rate in the U.S. Cultural influences play a prominent role. *"In a state that glorifies 'tough guy' personas, admitting to a problem can feel dangerous, said a businessman who has struggled with suicidal thoughts. He feared that his friends and colleagues would think less of him if they found out about his depression. In that culture, you don't show any weakness or you're pretty much shunned,"* he said."

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brain, and, rich social networks that support the belief that you can shape the quality of your life in later life decades.

What kind of social support do you have for each of these 'pillars' of healthy aging?

**** Careful observers of the Nobel Prize experience might note that there is no prize for Behavioral Science. They would be correct. Kahneman won the Nobel Prize in Economics. He was a founding father of the now popular Behavioral Economics field. ♦**

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How to Find the Right Moving Partner in the Tri-State Area



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Moving is often cited as one of life's most stressful events, but for those of us in the Dubuque area who have spent decades building a home, it's more than just a logistical challenge, it's a major life transition. Whether you are downsizing from a multi-story home in Asbury to a more manageable condo near Eagle Point Park, or relocating closer to family in the Quad Cities, the company you choose to handle your belongings makes all the difference.

For adults over 50, a "good" moving company isn't just about the lowest bid; it's about finding a team that offers patience, specialized services, and a deep respect for a lifetime of memories. Here is what you should look for when selecting a moving partner in the Key City.

Specialized Senior Transition Services

Traditional movers are great at getting boxes from point A to point B, but senior moves often require a more nuanced approach. Look for companies that offer "Move Management." These specialists don't just lift heavy furniture; they help with the emotional and physical

work of downsizing. They can assist in deciding what will fit in with your new floor plan, help sort items for donation, and even manage estate sales.

The "White Glove" Treatment: Packing and Unpacking

As we get older, the physical toll of bending over boxes for weeks can be significant. A premier-moving company should offer comprehensive packing and, crucially, unpacking services.

Look for a team that goes beyond just dropping boxes in the middle of your new living room. The best movers will help you set up your new space, so it feels like home on day one.

This includes reassembling beds, hanging pictures, and organizing the kitchen. This “resettling” service is vital for maintaining continuity and reducing the disorientation that can sometimes follow a big move.

Local Roots and Verifiable Reputation

Dubuque is a community built on trust and word-of-mouth. While national franchises have their place, there is an advantage to hiring companies with a long history in the Tri-States. Before signing a contract, do your homework:

Check the BBB: Ensure they have a strong rating with the Better Business Bureau.

Verify Licensing: In Iowa, movers must be licensed by the Iowa Department of Transportation. If they are crossing state lines into Illinois or Wisconsin, they also need a federal USDOT number.

Read the Reviews: Specifically look for mentions of how the crew treated “fragile items” or “antiques.” If they handled a neighbor’s grandmother’s china with care, they’ll likely do the same for yours.

Transparent and In-Home Estimates

Never trust a quote given over the phone. A reputable moving company will send a

representative to your home in Dubuque, Key West, or Asbury to see exactly what needs to be moved. This is especially important if you have heavy heirlooms, pianos, or specialized equipment like hydroponic gardening setups or workshop tools.

Ask for a binding estimate, which caps the cost of the move, rather than a non-binding estimate that could balloon on moving day. Be sure to ask about hidden fees for stairs (common in our historic hilly neighborhoods) or long carries.

Compassion and the “Grandma Rule”

The most important trait to look for is one that doesn’t ap-

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The Dubuque “Local” Check

• Dubuque’s unique geography—hills, stairs, and narrow historic streets—requires local expertise.

• Have you moved clients into [Your New Neighborhood/Building] before?

• **Why it matters:** If you’re moving into a senior living community, they may already know the elevator codes and parking restrictions, saving you time and money.

• Do you charge extra for “long carries” or multiple flights of stairs?

Why it matters: In Dubuque’s hilly landscape, the distance from the front door to the truck can vary wildly. Get these fees in writing.

Do you have experience moving specialty items like heirlooms or garden equipment?

Why it matters: If you have specialized hobbies—like a delicate orchid collection or greenhouse supplies—ensure they have the proper crating and climate-control experience.

pear on a balance sheet: empathy. Some companies even publicize a “Grandma Rule,” which instructs employees to

treat every customer with the same respect they would show their own grandmother.

During your initial consulta-

tion, pay attention to the representative’s demeanor. Are they rushing you? Do they seem frustrated by your questions about sentimental items? You are hiring people to handle your life’s treasures; you deserve a crew that treats those items—and you—with dignity.

A Smooth Transition Starts Early

The key to a successful move is starting the search early, eight weeks before your target date. By choosing a partner who understands the unique needs of older adults, you can turn a stressful chore into an organized, positive step toward your next chapter. ♦

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3505 Stoneman Rd. Dubuque (behind Kennedy Mall)



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

How to Get a Jump Start on Managing Plant Pests This Winter

by Melinda Myers

Just like us, insects spend their winters in different locations. Unlike us, they spend their winters in different stages of development. Some may overwinter as adults, others in their immature stage as grubs, caterpillars, or nymphs, while others will be in the pupal stage like a chrysalis or cocoon. Understanding their lifecycle and location can help us support beneficial insects while managing problem insect pests.

Invite beneficial insects like lady beetles, parasitic wasps, and predatory mites to your landscape to help manage populations of plant-damaging pests. Add a birdbath to encourage insect-eating songbirds into your gardens. Most songbirds eat insects or feed them to their young while adding color, movement, and entertainment to your garden.

Keeping your plants healthy with proper care

is the first and an important step in any pest management strategy. Healthy plants are better able to tolerate pest attacks and are more likely to recover from the damage.

Despite your best efforts, insect pests may attack and damage your plants. Birds and predaceous insects often manage small populations but there may be times you decide to intercede. Winter is a great time to monitor and, in many cases, manage plant-damaging insects.

Scale insects can be one of these and come in a variety of colors and shapes, but all grow and reproduce under a waxy covering. This covering protects them from predators, desiccation, and pesticides. Depending on the scale species they may overwinter as an immature scale, fertilized female, or eggs under the protective covering.

Treating plant damaging scale in early spring is one way to jump-start control of this pest while having minimal or no impact on beneficial insects that will help manage this pest. Take some

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time now to check plants for problem pests like the invasive oyster shell scale. This insect is not native to North America and is a pest of more than 130 species of plants including poplars, ash, beech, maple, willows, dogwood, cotoneaster, and lilacs.

Adult scale insects form a grayish to dark brown protective covering called a test that resembles an oyster or mussel shell. In the fall the mated female lays 20 to 100 eggs inside the test, dies and the eggs remain there throughout the winter.

Removing heavily infected twigs and branches is an option when the scale population is contained in a small portion of the plant. You can also gently scrape the scale off branches

and stems with a plastic dish scrubber. Be careful not to damage thin-barked plants.

Another option is to apply organic lightweight horticulture when plants are dormant. The temperatures must be 40 degrees or higher when treating. As always, read and follow label directions for effective and safe control. Since the eggs are so well protected, a second application of the horticulture oil can increase success. Make a second application, if needed, when the eggs hatch and the immature insects known as crawlers emerge in spring after the buds have burst.

As you survey your landscape this winter, pay special attention to stressed plants and those susceptible to oyster shell scale and other insect pests common in your area. Plants exposed

to road dust and pesticides may also be more vulnerable as these conditions negatively impact predators and parasites that help manage plant pests.

Regularly monitoring plant health, working with nature, and strategically managing invasive pests like the oyster shell scale can help improve the health, vigor, and longevity of your landscape plants.

Melinda Myers has written more than 20 gardening books, including *Small Space Gardening*. She hosts the "How to Grow Anything" DVD series and the *Melinda's Garden Moment* TV & radio segments. Her website is MelindaMyers.com.

Questions and comments can be emailed to comments@julien-sjournal.com. ♦

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