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IOWA

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Photo by Jonathan David Sabin

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LIVABILITY PHOTO: JONATHAN DAVID SABIN

# Right at Home

FIVE REASONS TO MAKE MARSHALLTOWN YOUR NEXT MOVE ◦ *By Rebecca Treon*

In 1851, Henry Anson, the first European settler to arrive in the area, found what he described as “the prettiest place in Iowa” and put down roots in what officially became Marshalltown.

By 1900, the town’s population was 10,000 and industries like Lennox International and Marshalltown Co., which are still thriving today, got their start.

Today, the population has nearly tripled, but with just under 30,000 residents, it retains its small-town feel. It’s home to one of JBS USA’s meat-packing plants, which has brought thousands of residents of diverse backgrounds to the region. In fact, Marshalltown is one of Iowa’s most diverse towns.

Wondering if Marshalltown might be right for you? We asked residents why they love to call it home.

**1. Marshalltown has a diverse and inclusive community.** Nearly a third of the population identifies as Hispanic or Latino, a legacy from residents who immigrated from Mexico in search of new opportunities. The city welcomed Burmese refugees in the early 2010s. Fostering cross-cultural interactions in the region, Marshalltown’s sister cities are Budyonovsk, Russia, and Minami-Alps, Japan. In its strategic plan, the city even states the importance of creating an inclusive and welcoming community.

**2. You can afford to plant roots in Marshalltown.** Iowa is one of the nation’s most affordable states, and Marshalltown is one of its most



affordable communities. The typical home value in Marshalltown is \$146,000 (Zillow, May 2023), which is significantly less than cities like Chicago (\$286,000), Denver (\$579,000), Minneapolis (\$327,000) and New York (\$711,000).

**3. The overall cost of living is lower in Marshalltown.** The total cost of food, child care, transportation, health care, taxes and other expenses over a year is estimated at \$33,613,

while the average nationwide is twice that amount. Iowa is among the 10 least expensive states.

**4. It’s the hub of regional community events.** Marshalltown is home to a number of annual events like the Central Iowa Fair, held each July; Oktoberfest, a family-friendly fall festival in September; Harvest Market, which brings together food trucks, live music, a beer garden and 25+ local vendors; and the Holiday Stroll, kicking off the Christmas season with a parade, tree lighting, shopping and choral music.

**5. Marshalltown offers easy access to other major cities.** U.S. Route 30 bypasses Marshalltown to the south, Iowa Highway 14 goes through the center of town, and an expressway, Iowa Highway 330, connects to Des Moines, which is less than an hour’s drive. Cedar Rapids is just over an hour’s drive, and Omaha is about three hours away. While a municipal airport serves the county, Des Moines International Airport is available for destinations farther afield.

# TODOS SON *Bienvenidos*

GET TO KNOW MARSHALLTOWN'S VIBRANT LATINO COMMUNITY



With a Latino population of more than 30%, Latino culture and traditions are deeply intertwined into the makeup of Marshalltown and generate a vibrant community of Latino-owned businesses. Community leaders bridge cultural gaps and make Marshalltown an even more welcoming place to live by supporting efforts like the newly revived el Festival Cultural, which celebrates the Latino community's music, dances and people.

### Bridge Builders

“You can't talk about Marshalltown without highlighting its diverse population of residents. Many of its residents were not born in the United States, and their primary language is not English,” says Alfonso Medina, local restaurateur. “The community, city government and leaders constantly strive to make sure important announcements or upcoming events are received and translated in their native language.”

From going grocery shopping to attending local community events, you hear multiple languages spoken, signaling that this community is no stranger to more than one culture or tradition, Medina says.

Through his restaurant, Medina promotes diversity and educates his neighbors about his Latino culture.

“We help the promotion of diversity in our community by being open to sponsorships for new sports clubs and educational events, and working



La Carreta Mexican Grill; Alfonso Medina, left

*“Marshalltown is very unique in how diverse we are, and I think that helps us to be a welcoming community.”*

– Maria Gonzales, match support specialist for Big Brothers Big Sisters

towards becoming a place of free speech, respect and equality, which also happens to also sell good food," Medina says. "We take advantage of the foot traffic in our business to talk to people and educate them on a one-to-one basis. We have

found that this is the most effective way to find common ground."

### Cultural Ambassadors

Maria Gonzales, a match support specialist for Big Brothers Big Sisters, has a similar mission.

Gonzales immigrated to the United States as a toddler and lived most of her life in Marshalltown. Today, through the organization Immigrant Allies of Marshalltown, Gonzales helps other newcomers successfully integrate into the community.

"Marshalltown is very unique in how diverse we are, and I think that helps us to be a welcoming community. We have people from all sorts of backgrounds that have immigrated to the town and built these really close family units," Gonzales says.

"One of the reasons I decided to work with this organization is I thought it was important for us to be able to reach out and let people know our stories, who we are, where we came from and how we could connect with the community to better serve them. I pride myself in dedicating my free time to



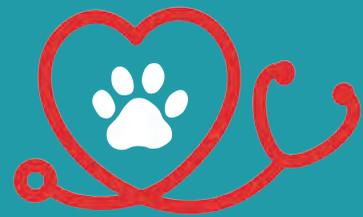
Big Brothers Big Sisters

PHOTO: BIG BROTHERS BIG SISTERS

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"Blessed to be a Blessing"

volunteering for other organizations as well as building those communication bridges between the immigrant community and those who have lived in Iowa perhaps all of their lives.”

## Diversity at Work

Medina, who also co-owns a concrete company in town, says the city’s embrace of diversity has been good for business.

“Not only does it expand the pool of potential candidates for employment, but it opens up opportunities for growth. Being a diversity supporter and endorser will keep you in the forefront of your industry and help you stay relevant as industries evolve and change.” he says. “Marshalltown can prepare young children as well as adults who have not traveled much to experience what the rest of the world looks like, sounds like and tastes like. Multiple cultures, traditions and languages are spoken in our school district, making our youth better prepared for the global marketplace.”

Jesus Rios, sales/application engineer for Emerson, is a product of Marshalltown’s diverse educational system and says the support he received as a young child helped him achieve professional success.

“When I was younger, I attended after-school programs and met different people who took interest in me and what I was trying to do as far as school and life in general. Through those networks, I ended up working with Emerson when I was 16. That really changed my mind about the possibilities of things I could do within my own career and education,” Rios says.

– Teree Caruthers

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Learn more about Marshalltown’s quality-of-life attributes at [livability.com/ia/marshalltown](http://livability.com/ia/marshalltown).

# Welcome Back

Couple returns to Marshalltown to raise a family



It took moving away from Marshalltown for Lindsay and Nick Stanton to realize what they were missing.

“You just don’t know what you have until you leave,” Lindsay says.

The Stantons moved out of the state, but as they started to raise a family, they wanted to spend more time with their kids and less time in their cars.

The road brought them back to Marshalltown, which they see as a great place to raise a family. The Stantons cherish how easy they can make connections in Marshalltown, and Lindsay says she always feels welcome in town.

“In Marshalltown, it’s a bigger town, but there’s also a sense of community,” she says.

Being a teacher, Lindsay knew the high-quality education and diversity offered at the Marshalltown Community School District.

“Our schools were a big deal to me,” she says. “And I wanted my kids to grow up with more diversity.”

Lindsay enjoys all of the

recreational activities for both her and Nick – but also their kids, Brynn, 6, and Jace, 3. Over the years, Brynn’s hobbies have included dance, softball and tumbling, and the whole family enjoys Marshalltown city parks, aquatic center, YMCA-YWCA and library.

“The kids love Mega-10 Park,” Lindsay said. “We have a love for our Y too, which has so many activities.”

They also are regular visitors to Grimes Farm and Conservation Center, with its hiking trails, nature playscape and more.

“You are just out of town, and you are right in nature,” Lindsay says of Grimes Farm. “Every time we go there, we find something new.”

She mentions there are nice boutique stores in town, and she also likes that they can make a quick grocery run and it only takes a few minutes to get there, since everything is nearby.

“We do have everything we need for daily life,” she says.

—By Andrew Potter—



Mega-10 Park

# Good CLEAN FUN

Marshalltown sports a wealth of family-friendly attractions

Why is Marshalltown so family-friendly? There's plenty for residents of all ages to enjoy – right here in town. No need to fight traffic, navigate long lines or search for a parking spot.

Here are some fun, easy ideas for your next family night.

**1. Zip to It.** Located in the center of town, Mega-10 Park has swings, a modern playground, picnic shelters and the Linn Creek Recreational Trail that runs right through it. But youth tend to gravitate to one particular attraction at the Marshalltown park – the zip line. It's a thrilling ride as you step off the ramp and into the air. "The highlight of Mega-10 Park in Marshalltown is definitely the zip line!" says Erin Huiatt, a blogger for Des Moines Parent. "The kids spent a lot of time taking turns, riding this fun and safe attraction."

**2. Go for Burgers.** The professional wrestling decor and sports highlights on the TVs are cool, but the real highlights are the burgers and specialty hot dogs at The Flying Elbow in the heart of the 13th Street District. The burger was voted Iowa's Best Burger by the Iowa Beef Council in 2022. And dessert is covered too, as just a few steps down the road on 13th Street is Lillie Mae Chocolates.

**3. Enjoy an Urban Escape.** Though Grimes Farm and Conservation Center makes you feel like you are in the country, you are just a minute or two from the heart of Marshalltown. Nestled along Linn Creek, it features both hiking and biking trails, an observation tower, a conservation center and a nature playscape. It's the perfect place to be surrounded by nature, yet not too far away from town.

**4. Root for the Home Team.** Youth sports leagues and activities are plentiful in Marshalltown. Have your pick of softball, baseball, football, soccer, gymnastics, dance, track and field, boxing, swimming, taekwondo, volleyball and tennis. While many of these sports have their own leagues, some are operated by the Marshalltown Parks and Recreation department or YMCA-YWCA. These teams are great ways for children to be active, make new friends and have some fun.

**5. Visit the Library.** The Marshalltown Public Library not only has thousands of children's books, but it also has many youth programs, events and gatherings. Story time, Pokémon League and visits from the Animal Rescue League are just a few of the many offerings throughout the year for families. Ryan Trosen, a Marshalltown parent of three, says

his family loves the interactive story time, craft opportunities and the helpful staff. "The library is a Marshalltown gem," he says.

**6. Make a Splash.** Cool off with a splash of fun at the Marshalltown Aquatic Center. A refreshing pool, lazy river and giant slides await you. It's a perfect place to spend your summer and catch some rays.

**7. Get Your Game On.** Wayward Social is not your typical bowling alley. The 20-lane alley includes an arcade, top-notch food and dozens of TVs. Plus, it's a popular place for birthday parties. "For our family, Wayward Social is more than a restaurant or a bowling alley," says Kyley Leger, mom of three. "It is a place where our family can get a big-city experience. Some nights, we carry out food. Sometimes, we stop by to use the arcade. And when we're going for the full

experience, we show up to bowl, eat and enjoy the arcade. The staff treats us like family."

**8. Discover a Need for Speed.** The Marshalltown Speedway is known as one of the most exciting dirt tracks in the country. Check out racing every Friday during the warmer months. It's a tradition that dates to 1962 and draws drivers and fans from multiple states.

– Andrew Potter



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# WHERE *Art* MEETS BUSINESS

Marshalltown leaders work to revitalize a unique downtown



The Echo sculpture by artist Bruce H. White stands in the center of the 13th Street District.

**B**usinesses in Marshalltown's 13th Street District have withstood a lot in recent years, but with the rollout of the new Marshalltown Arts & Culture Master Plan, there is much to look forward to.

Led by the Arts & Culture Alliance, the Master Plan aims to expand the impact of the arts while supporting the area's diverse businesses.

"Through creativity, we can really create a community that is vibrant and energetic, that is aesthetically pleasing and draws people in," says Amber Danielson, executive director of the Arts & Culture Alliance.

In the wake of a tornado in 2018 and a derecho in 2020, Marshalltown leaders continue to focus on revitalizing their community. The master plan encompasses several key placemaking themes, from revitalizing existing spaces to attracting visitors through art initiatives that will bring hope to a diverse and collaborative community.

"There's been so much excitement and energy in creating a vibrant community," Danielson says. "We really want to put Marshalltown on the map."

## BUILDING BRIDGES

Marshalltown is centrally located in Iowa, convenient to larger cities but retaining a uniquely small-town feel. That small-town spirit exists in the opportunity for community engagement. One of the key placemaking themes of the master plan is "building bridges," whether physical or metaphorical.

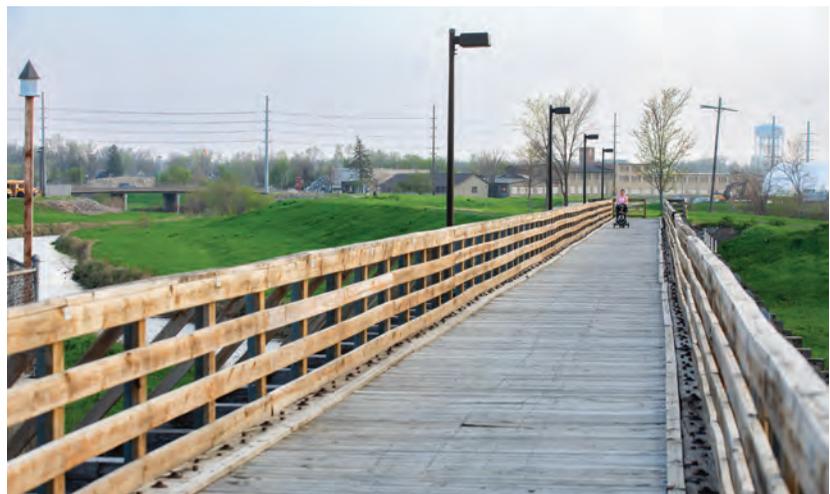
Bridges represent anything from bike paths to interactive projects that connect neighborhoods.

"When people feel engaged and connected, they're more likely to volunteer, to vote, to be a part of showing up at events," Danielson says.

Michelle Spohnheimer, director of housing and community



Expanding the impact of the arts and building bridges – physical and metaphorical – are key elements in the Arts & Culture Alliance's Master Plan.



development in Marshalltown, says an important part of the revitalization effort has been refurbishing key corners in business districts with input from the community. Through community engagement, the city hopes to learn what people want to see in their downtown area and the kind of experiences they can facilitate.

"The master plan sets the tone for how we want to redevelop our community," Spohnheimer says. "Art is an important piece in all those plans."

One part of the plan has been the recent mural initiative. In the past two years alone, 30 commissioned murals have sprung

up on the walls of local buildings. While helpful in attracting visitors, the murals also give hope to business owners.

### ENTREPRENEURIAL SPIRIT

The 13th Street District has always been a unique hub of culture in Marshalltown.



“If Marshalltown had an East Village, this is what it would be,” says Garrett Goodman, owner of The Flying Elbow on 13th Street, who is alluding to the trendy Lower Manhattan neighborhood.

The Flying Elbow won Iowa’s Best Burger Contest in 2022, and business is booming.

*“We can really create a community that is thriving in arts and culture and that will draw people to want to be here and stay here.”*

— Amber Danielson, executive director of the Arts & Culture Alliance



The Abarrotes La Salud mural by Jenna Brownlee in downtown Marshalltown

“I think there are a lot of people in Marshalltown that are willing to help up-and-coming business owners get on their feet and get started,” Goodman says.

After his restaurant was damaged in the 2018 tornado, Goodman reopened The Flying Elbow at its new location on 13th Street, which has attracted visitors from across the country.

“We’re very much an entrepreneurial type of community,” Spohnheimer says. “People love supporting small businesses.”

In addition to The Flying Elbow, the 13th Street District is home to a variety of shops, such as Lillie Mae Chocolates, and the Echo sculpture, a centerpiece for festivals and live performances.

### STAYING CONNECTED

For locals and visitors alike, there are plenty of ways to get involved in the community. TakepART Marshalltown is a campaign that connects people to arts and culture experiences in the area. An interactive online map is a convenient database of all the local attractions.

As part of the Arts & Culture Master Plan, takepART aims to highlight art attractions and businesses that will draw visitors to experience the diversity of Marshalltown for themselves. Additionally, the Marshalltown YMCA-YWCA conducts free downtown cultural business and art walking tours to showcase the area.

“We can really create a community that is thriving in arts and culture and that will draw people to want to be here and stay here,” Danielson says.

— Wesley Broome

### find more online

Learn more about the arts and business climate of Marshalltown at [livability.com/ia/marshalltown](https://livability.com/ia/marshalltown).

# Community Profile

## DEMOGRAPHICS



### AGE

■ Under 18	26.3%
■ 18-64	44.2%
■ 65 and older	17.9%

### ETHNICITY

■ White	59.5%
■ Hispanic	31%
■ Other	5.3%
■ Asian	4.6%
■ Black	1.7%

## POPULATION

<b>27,433</b>	<b>39,879</b>
Marshalltown	Marshall County

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau; Zillow, May 2023

## EDUCATION

High school grad or higher	80.4%
Bachelor's degree or higher	20.8%

## INCOME

**\$54,778**

Median household income

**\$24,920**

Per capita income

## MEAN TRAVEL TIME TO WORK



**18.3 min.**  
Marshall County



**26.3 min.**  
United States

## HOUSING

**10,098**    **2.6**

Households

Persons per household

## TYPICAL HOME VALUES

**\$146K** Marshalltown

**\$169K** Davenport

**\$190K** Cedar Rapids

**\$196K** Des Moines

**\$260K** Ames

**\$283K** Iowa City

## HOMEOWNERS / RENTERS



■ Owners	62%
■ Renters	38%

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# *Creative* **RENAISSANCE**

Marshalltown's unique art collection gains a new home

**W**ithin the walls of the Marshalltown Arts & Civic Center, centuries of art history play out before one's eyes. From works by Henri Matisse to Mary Cassatt, visitors of the Fisher Art Museum can experience an impressive array of art movements.

"This is the type of art that you would normally have to go to Chicago or New York to see," says Nancy Vellinga Burke, director of operations at the Marshalltown Arts & Civic Center.

Yet, the collection scarcely avoided damage during the derecho in 2020. By sheer chance, the entire

collection was shipped to Chicago for restoration when the derecho hit Marshalltown. While the art remained safe, the Fisher Art Museum suffered extensive damage.

"We needed a place to bring the artwork back to," Burke says.

The community rallied to begin renovations. As a result, the new Marshalltown Arts & Civic Center now houses more than just art. The multiuse facility provides conference rooms with state-of-the-art audio-visual equipment and a reception hall that has been used for everything from wedding receptions to business conventions.

"We want the whole facility to be something that everybody in Marshalltown and Marshall County can use. Not just Marshalltown, but all of Iowa," says Burke. "The sky's the limit for the different types of programming and events we can have."

## **Point of Pride**

While the uses of the facility have grown, the Marshalltown Arts & Civic Center remains a pillar for the community. Historically, the area in which it resides has been a hub of commerce, arts and culture.

Founders Bill and Dorothy Fisher developed the Fisher Art Collection

Marshalltown Arts & Civic Center



to instill a sense of pride in the citizens of Marshalltown and Marshall County.

After the community withstood both a tornado and a derecho, the arts and culture community continued to provide a sense of identity for residents.

The Center includes the Martha-Ellen Tye Playhouse, which was also damaged in the recent natural disasters.

Plans for renovating the theater include making the building more accessible and bringing it into the

*“We want the whole facility to be something that everybody in Marshalltown and Marshall County can use. Not just Marshalltown, but all of Iowa.”*

– Nancy Vellinga Burke, director of operations at the Marshalltown Arts & Civic Center

21st century, according to Burke. The arts continue to play a vital role in bringing commerce to the area. By providing a multiuse space for the local community and beyond, the center has become a hub of arts and culture in the area.

“The citizens of Marshalltown have always been proud of their community,” says Burke. “Now after the tornado and derecho I think we’ve made some great strides in bringing back the beauty to our city.”

– Wesley Broome

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# Four Seasons *Limitless Possibilities*

THERE ARE PLENTY OF OUTDOOR RECREATION OPTIONS  
IN MARSHALLTOWN ALL YEAR-ROUND



Linn Creek Bike Trail;  
Right, Glenwood Park



offers a plan for all seasons when it comes to making the most of the great outdoors in Marshalltown.

### Spring

While the Iowa River flows along the northern boundary of Marshalltown all year long, Herring says it is especially beautiful during the spring when the wildflowers are in bloom. A diverse habitat of both flora and fauna can be found within the 485-acre Iowa River Wildlife Area, which is the largest recreation area in Marshalltown. The combination of wetlands and rolling grassland provides an ideal home for deer, turkeys, hawks and otters. Within walking distance of the Iowa River is Riverside Cemetery, where residents can enjoy a leisurely stroll with views of swans, tulip trees and notable graves.

Things also get hopping during the spring at the Grimes Farm and Conservation Area, as frogs and other critters take over the forested wetlands within the 160-acre property. Herring recommends hiking or biking to Mildred's Tower, named in honor of farm benefactor Mildred Grimes. Up to 15 people can gather at one time on the tower's 30-foot-high observation deck and enjoy views of the Linn Creek Valley and surrounding pastureland.

### Summer

With the Iowa River and a few creeks meandering through town, there are plenty of places in Marshalltown to cool off during the heat of summer. The 205-acre Timmons Grove County Park has easy access to the Iowa River, with a boat ramp and entry points for kayaks and canoes.

"The Iowa River has an easy flow, so it's great for beginner paddlers," Herring says. "There's a lot of scenery and wildlife. It's just a beautiful place to paddle."

You also can beat the heat at the Marshalltown Family Aquatic

The months may change, but the fun never stops when it comes to outdoor recreation in the Marshalltown area.

There are four distinct seasons in Marshalltown, producing a wide array of outdoor recreation opportunities. From swimming and boating during the summer to

snowshoeing in the winter, and all the delightful spring and fall days in between, there are a number of parks and trails for people to enjoy.

Emily Herring served as a naturalist in the area for six years before being named director of the Marshall County Conservation Board. She

Center, which features water slides, diving boards, eight lap lanes and a lazy river. Meanwhile, back at Grimes Farm, summer is the time for free concerts, with live music and food trucks each month.

“That’s a really fun time for people to come out and enjoy the farm,” Herring says.

## Fall

Herring says one of the best ways to see the fall leaf colors is to stroll or

cycle along the Linn Creek Recreational Trail, which runs near its namesake waterway and through the center of Marshalltown from Grimes Farm to Riverview Park. The 9-mile trail connects to the city’s bike trail system, creating a total route that runs for 17 miles. Herring says plans are underway for another trail attachment that will increase the length to 30 miles.

Fall is a picturesque time at Sand Lake as well. In addition to fishing

for bass and pike on the 95-acre lake, the area is a stopover and wintering area for Canada geese and other migrating waterfowl.

A stroll around Marshalltown’s oldest park, Three Bridges, will lead to the Quarry Bridge, which was built in 1885 and is on the National Register of Historic Places. And for those who want to breathe in the crisp autumn air, camping is available at Riverview Park, which also has facilities for disc golf, pickleball, basketball and tennis.

## Winter

The activities don’t cool off just because the weather gets cold. Instead, places like Sand Lake and the Green Castle Recreation Area (located approximately 10 miles south of Marshalltown) provide opportunities for ice fishing. Meanwhile, Grimes Farm and Conservation Area has snowshoe rentals as well as lessons and group events.

“That is a really fun outdoor recreation activity,” Herring says. “We teach over 500 kids to snowshoe every year. We also do a program called Shoes and Soup, where people come out and hike with snowshoes, and then we have a soup supper. So, you can enjoy the cold, and enjoy warming up afterward.”

– Cary Estes



Clockwise, from top: Sand Lake, the Aquatic Center, and Linn Creek Bike Trail are a few of the great local amenities.



# A PLACE TO CALL HOME



Iowa Veterans Home has been a mainstay in Marshalltown since 1887



**T**he historic Iowa Veterans Home in Marshalltown has the proud and honorable distinction of being one of the largest state-run veteran homes in the country.

A beautiful 150-acre campus, the facility's roots run deep into America's history to when the doors first opened in 1887 as The Iowa Soldiers Home for displaced Civil War veterans. Today, a dedicated staff of approximately 800 serves about 400 Iowa veterans and their spouses through outstanding nursing and residential care.

"Our primary goal is to provide those who so proudly served our country the best quality of life possible by focusing on personalized services and choices," says Todd M. Jacobus, commandant, Iowa Veterans Home. "There is a sense of community here where everyone is treated with respect and dignity."

During its earliest days, veterans farmed the grounds to be self-sufficient. A lot has changed since

*"There is a sense of community here where everyone is treated with respect and dignity."*

– Todd M. Jacobus, commandant, Iowa Veterans Home

then, but the emphasis has always been the welfare of the home's residents.

In 1890, the construction of the first infirmary heralded the precedence of professionally managed health care, which continues in the 21st century with a broad spectrum of in-house services.

Each resident has their own care team including a primary nurse, social worker, recreation therapist, dietitian, pharmacist, physician and more.

Personalized and compassionate service are the heart of life at the veteran's home and, when necessary, a medical clinic and mental health services are on-site.

A variety of therapies are available, including physical, speech,

occupation, respiratory and massage. Laboratory, X-ray, electrocardiogram and oxygen needs are also offered, as well as dentures, eyeglasses and other personal necessities, all accessed without leaving the campus.

Additional services include nutrition counseling, transportation to outside medical appointments and a chaplain.

Organized recreation and other activities enrich life on the Iowa Veterans Home campus. Residents can enjoy arts and crafts, music, games, gardening, Wi-Fi, an outdoor amphitheater, field trips, a library, beauty and barber shops – and best of all, having neighbors that share similar experiences.

Learn more about Iowa Veterans Home at [dva.iowa.gov/iowa-veterans-home](http://dva.iowa.gov/iowa-veterans-home).

# BRAND-NEW GAME

A new generation of sports and sports careers arrive in Marshalltown

**W**hen it comes to the up-and-coming workforce, Marshalltown Community School District and Marshalltown Community College (MCC) offer unique, immersive

experiences that prepare the next generation for competitive, innovative technologies.

In just their first year, these programs are positioning the community to attract an

emerging industry by leaning into esports (short for electronic sports). Esports are at the heart of competitive gaming, an industry that has exploded into one of the fastest-growing sports in the world. Players engage in video game competitions that are viewed by millions of fans around the world, bringing fame and hefty rewards to the winners.

## TAKING THE LEAD

MCC is one of fewer than 200 schools across the nation that offer a designated program in the field, and it is the first college in Iowa to add Esports Program Management to its roster.

“The purpose of the academic program is to prepare students for careers in the rapidly growing esports industry in roles such as event planning and management, coaching, broadcasting, marketing and operations,” says Nathan Rodemeyer, Esports Program Management faculty and esports coach at MCC. The

program offers internship opportunities such as hosting guest speakers, helping with event operations and broadcasting, and coordinating tournaments.

Students may also do what they love the most – compete in the National Junior College Athletic Association Esports (NJCAA) against teams from other community colleges around the nation.

“All of our fall teams ended with winning seasons, and we even had a national champion athlete during our first semester of competition,” Rodemeyer says. “She competed in Mario Kart 8 DX and won the NJCAA fall championship as the only racer in the entire league to go through all of the regular season and postseason undefeated. More importantly, she has stated that being involved in the athletic esports program is the first time she has ever felt like she truly belongs in a community. Students like



Amber Lawthers won the national championship in Mario Kart 8 DX.

PHOTOS: JONATHAN DAVID SABIN



Marshalltown Community College is the first college in Iowa to add the esports management program.



MCC's esports management program

her are why we do this, and the community is taking notice.”

### NURTURING STUDENT INTEREST

Serving as the perfect feeder into this program, Marshalltown High School (MHS) created an esports team that, in its first year, has already engaged in competitions with other teams across the state. Teachers who had never heard of esports now see the value of the industry and are creating vertical curriculums that align with the MCC program.

“We had been talking about starting up a program for a few years, and students had been asking for the

# Be a Bobcat!



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opportunity,” says Dr. Theron Schutte, Marshalltown Community School District superintendent. “Approximately 60 to 80 students are participating on our competitive teams and/or in our esports club. These are students who weren’t previously engaged in school activities outside of the classroom, which is great because research shows that student involvement in extracurricular activities typically results in improved school attendance and academic achievement.”

Schutte says that the program is connected to the school’s computer science career pathway and teaches what knowledge, skills, talents and attributes are necessary to access those careers. As a new avenue for students who enjoy

gaming, it’s an opportunity not just to parlay their passion into a career, but to find a similar social group and become part of a team.

As popularity increases, the school plans to offer a junior varsity and varsity team for all three seasons, as well as a club level, with the bonus that no traveling is required – students will compete from their dedicated school lab.

Their futures may find them using their computer science savvy at local businesses that can tap into their talents in any number of ways, from communications and broadcasting to marketing and design. One thing’s for certain: The schools here truly have their finger on the pulse of business trends in the 21st century.

– Rebecca Deurlein

## NICHE MARKET

MARSHALLTOWN BUSINESS ATTRACTS GAMERS OF ALL AGES



Do you like to play Pokémon? What about Dungeons and Dragons? Owned by Marshalltown resident Scott Turner, Game Haven is a place for gamers of all ages to gather and build their fun fantasy communities.

Located inside Marshalltown Mall, the small business has become a haven for gamers throughout Marshall County, whether you enjoy video games, card-playing games, RPGs (role-playing games) or board games.

Turner schedules several tournaments throughout the year, and there are themed nights on different days of the week. For example, Mondays often feature competitions in the X-Roads Smash League, and Tuesdays are usually reserved for Pokémon card games and Love Thy Neighbor RPGs.

Most game nights begin at 6 p.m., and memberships are available for \$40. Game Haven also sells a full lineup of games, costumes, controllers, headsets, action figures and other gaming accessories. For more information, follow the company online at [facebook.com/gamehavenmtown](https://www.facebook.com/gamehavenmtown).

– Kevin Litwin



The esports program competes against other community colleges around the nation.

PHOTOS: JONATHAN DAVID SABIN

# Creating OPPORTUNITY

Marshalltown gives family-owned businesses a place to build their dreams

**L**oyal customers who prefer to shop local, along with a wealth of services and expert advice, make Marshalltown the perfect place for entrepreneurs to launch and grow a business.

Some have lived in the Marshalltown area their entire lives. Others are new to Marshalltown, where they've found a supportive and welcoming community, which they strengthen by creating jobs and supporting nonprofits and other causes.

"Marshalltown seemed like the perfect place to open our business.

It's very open and accepting," says Rhonda Braudis.

She and her wife, Lora Braudis, own Oliver Beene Designs in the Marshalltown Mall.

They moved to Marshalltown when Rhonda became E-911 communications director for the Marshalltown Police Department. Lora manages the stores while Rhonda focuses on her duties at the department.

"We're not only female-owned, we're LGBTQ. I have never felt more at home than living here," Rhonda Braudis says.

## Community Cause

She has some advice for others ready to begin their entrepreneurial journey.

"You have to love it if you're going to do it. You have to invest the time. Invest in yourself and in your community. Reach out. Network," Braudis says.

Brother and sister Rolly and Ashley Danner went into business together when the owners of Mama DiGrado's Pasta & Pizza decided to retire. The Danners purchased the restaurant with the goal of preserving a local institution and jobs.

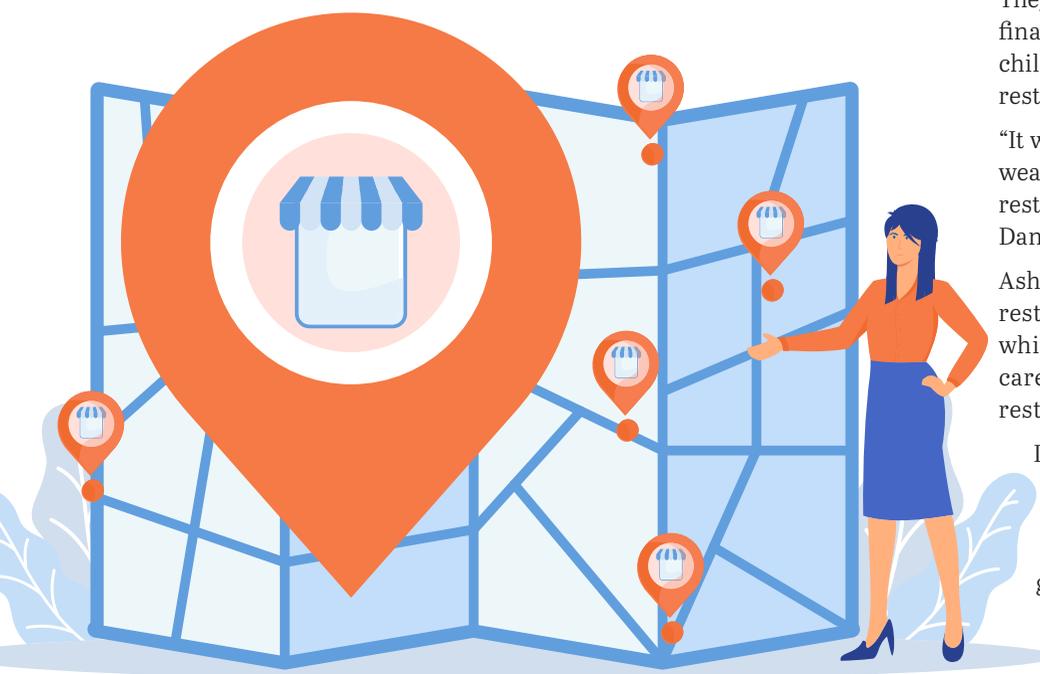
They also have the goal of creating financial security. Ashley Danner's children can take over the restaurant one day.

"It was about generational wealth and keeping a staple restaurant in Marshalltown," Rolly Danner says.

Ashley Danner manages the restaurant's day-to-day operations, while Rolly Danner continues his career as a farmer and works at the restaurant when he can.

In the future, they are considering expanding with the addition of a food truck as well as a bar that would be a gathering spot for friends.

For the new owners of Mama DiGrado's, one of the best



parts of owning a business is giving back to the community.

“We have been able to give back to so many causes – the prom or someone having cancer. Being able to help out people in a way you never could before, being able to give back to our customers, is the best thing,” Rolly Danner says.

## Coworking and Caffeine

Husband-and-wife business partners Kurt and Kristin Polley are bringing a big-city amenity to Marshalltown. The couple, who owns Five Star Real Estate Group, is opening a coworking space downtown.

The facility, named The Outlet Co-Work & Space, will provide office and meeting space and services for remote workers as well as entrepreneurs who need space daily or longer term.

The Outlet Co-Work & Space will offer memberships at different levels that include shared rooms or private offices. Amenities include high-speed internet access, quiet Zoom rooms for online meetings, private rooms for in-person meetings and conference space.

“It’s more than just space,” Kristin Polley says.

Planned services include networking events, speakers who can share their business experience, a patio and entertaining space, and a well-equipped kitchen.

The Outlet Co-Work & Space will provide one more amenity that could be vital to success in business



Rhonda Braudis (right) and wife, Lora Braudis, are the owners of Oliver Beene Designs.

– unlimited caffeine.

“The coffee is always hot in the pot,” Kristin Polley says.

The new offices of Five Star Real Estate Group will be located in the same building. The Polleys will have a short commute to their office, which is downstairs from their residence.

“We sold our house and are living in a loft above. Three kids and a dog, doing urban living,” says Kurt Polley, who believes second-story living

will become a trend that helps revitalize downtown.

“Working and living downtown means more people going into restaurants and coffee shops,” he says.

It’s part of their commitment to strengthening Marshalltown’s downtown. “This is home for us. Marshalltown is an amazing place to raise your family,” he says.

– Bill Lewis

*“Being able to help out people in a way you never could before, being able to give back to our customers, is the best thing.”*





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# Company Chronicles

Learn why Marshalltown is the perfect place to start a business ◦ *By Lindsey Hyde*

Iowa houses quite the gem. Found in the central portion of the state, Marshalltown shines bright as a city that not only offers a low cost of living and a slew of entertainment options, but also provides a sturdy foundation for those looking to start a business. Here, entrepreneurial resources and opportunities abound, giving those with an idea a leg up.

Rhett Schmitt was born and raised in Marshalltown, attended college at Iowa State University in Ames and then returned home, where she opened State Street Trading Co., a consignment shop, in 2018.

### **What made you want to open your business in Marshalltown?**

My grandpa had a bunch of businesses in Marshalltown when he was alive, and he actually built the building that I'm in now, so it was just kind of special to open a business here with his legacy of being a business owner in town.

### **How has your business grown since you opened?**

We started out with zero consignors, and now, we have over 800 consignors (in our system). I do have a couple part-time employees now who live in the area. When we started out, we just did women's clothing. Now, we also do formalwear, like prom and homecoming dresses. We do luxury consignment too, and we started doing tux rentals a few years ago when our other tuxedo shop in town closed.

### **How would you describe the business scene in Marshalltown?**

What we have that is really special is that it's more of a team rooting you on than it is people wanting to see you fail. [Other business owners]



Rhett Schmitt

are always the first to comment on some new thing I post or some accomplishment that we have and congratulate me. Actually, some of my best friends that I have now are other local business owners, which I think is pretty cool.

### **What resources are available for entrepreneurs in the area?**

I try to be involved in both the Marshalltown Area Chamber of Commerce and the Marshalltown Central Business District (MCBD). Honestly, they come to me with different opportunities and resources, like they'll send out

emails weekly with different things that business owners can apply for or look into, or trainings.

### **What is one piece of advice that you would offer entrepreneurs opening a business?**

The best thing that I can think of is get involved – join the chamber, go to the events, join the MCBD, volunteer – because our community and our community of small-business owners is a fantastic thing to be a part of, and it really helps you out on the hard days and the good days. 🙌

# Fun & Fitness

MARSHALLTOWN OFFERS RESIDENTS ACTIVITIES THAT PROMOTE A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE



Veterans Memorial Coliseum

Fun and fitness go together – like sunshine and smiles – in Marshalltown. Regardless of your age or ability, there is an activity here to enjoy while improving your health and wellness. Tie up your athletic shoes and hit the trails, wallop a pickleball, hop on a horse, make a splash in a pool, dunk a basketball, exercise with a friend, take a swing with a golf simulator – all just a sample of the many options available to help clear out the stress of the day, get your heart rate up and renew your spirit.

## Activities for All

More than 25,000 people annually take advantage of the 22 parks, 24 miles of trails, 25 to 30 programs for adults and children and hours of indoor activities offered in the Veterans Memorial Coliseum, managed by Marshalltown Parks and Recreation.

“I love parks and recreation because we can provide a wide variety of affordable programs, services, events and facilities that reach people ages 1 to 101,” says Geoff Hubbard, department director and Marshalltown native. “I enjoy seeing a young child learn to swim, a senior couple taking a walk on our trails and a group of co-workers playing in our adult sports leagues. We truly have something for everyone.”

A popular new addition to the department’s lineup is the adult and youth basketball leagues. A new launch of the adult group in 2022 created a full league of 16 teams. Partnering with high school basketball coaches, the parks and recreation staff also began youth basketball leagues for first through sixth graders, with 230 players participating.

## Horses, Healing and Health

Both the two-legged and four-legged crew at Wolfe Ranch of Quakerdale, a ministry partner of Quakerdale Family Services, strive to provide a unique and different experience for

each person who enters the gate.

At the ranch, you can take riding lessons, go on trial rides, rent their facilities – the perfect location for a horse-themed birthday party – and volunteer. It also offers many different children’s camps and the annual Christmas in the Stables event.

The facility plays an important role in the health and wellness of Marshalltown by offering in-office counseling, equine-assisted learning and equine-assisted psychotherapy to help youth and their families communicate and relate to each other in a respectful, caring way.

Including horses in their practice is an insightful and amazing experience that many times provides exactly what someone needs to be able to confront the pressure and pain in their life, says Executive Director Beth Andrew.

“Wolfe Ranch is a place to find peace and relaxation. But it’s the staff, board members, volunteers, prayer partners and donors who make the ranch what it is,” Andrew says. “The people here believe in and are dedicated to its mission: encouraging hope, faith and growth in the families and communities we serve.”

### Tools for Balanced Life

Busy mom Lauren Borchherding perfectly captures why the

Marshalltown YMCA-YWCA is an important partner that helps keep her energetic family active and healthy.

“The Marshalltown YMCA-YWCA has been a haven for my family and me. My oldest son, who participates in the Fit Kids after-school program, refers to it as our ‘second home’ because we’re here for everything: workouts, preschool, youth sports and swimming, not to mention all the extras like open swim and other events,” Borchherding says. “We love the community focus and support, plus the values the Y represents.”

In addition to the Fit Kids program for ages K-12, the Marshalltown Y offers group swim lessons; Strong Kids, a weekly program that

incorporates strength, flexibility and cardio activities; and Crossfit Kids, with access to an extensive collection of exercise equipment.

A new piece of equipment perfect for families and groups is the TruGolf Multisport Simulator. It has numerous options for golf, soccer, footgolf, hockey, baseball, zombie dodgeball and other sports.

Adults can benefit from fitness-on-demand classes delivered in a digital format, aquatic offerings, the Y’s weight-loss program and access to personal trainers. Downloadable information about nutrition, water intake and other helpful hints is also available, helping members live a balanced life.

– Patsy B. Weiler



Marshalltown YMCA-YWCA; Left: Wolfe Ranch

PHOTOS: CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: MARSHALLTOWN YMCA-YWCA (1,2); WOLFE RANCH

# Convenient Care

Multimillion-dollar projects are expanding access to care in Marshalltown

Two well-respected names in Marshalltown medical care – McFarland Clinic and UnityPoint Health – have expanded to continue meeting the health and wellness needs of the people they serve.

McFarland Clinic, a trusted friend for three decades, has opened the doors of a new 66,000-square-foot, state-of-the-art facility that provides convenience and leading-edge care.

A \$20 million complex, the McFarland Clinic Marshalltown will allow for more comfortable and efficient use of space including a new infusion center for oncology patients, advancements made to imaging equipment, more accessible physical therapy services and a NuCara Pharmacy on-site. Currently, the Marshalltown Clinic has

55 providers and 125 employees. The new facility will allow it to recruit more physicians.

The largest physician-owned multispecialty clinic in Central Iowa, the McFarland Clinic network serves residents in 11 Iowa communities. Additional locations are served by physician outreach clinics, with more than 300 providers and 55 medical specialties.

In Marshalltown, there are 15 medical specialties, including family medicine, pediatrics, general surgery, orthopedic surgery, and obstetrics and gynecology. Same-day and next-day appointments for common illnesses are available at McFarland Clinic Express Care, located inside the local Hy-Vee grocery store.

“Our facility has been designed with input from the physicians to create an



McFarland Clinic

environment that allows for easy coordination of care and provides a healing and calming environment,” said Dr. Alison Wilson, general surgeon and medical director. “I think that both patients and providers will be pleased with the result.”

## UnityPoint Health Gets a New Look

UnityPoint Health-Marshalltown has moved into its new leading-edge hospital, with the seamless transition of the emergency department and inpatient unit. The facility is a \$38.4 million expansion of the existing medical park on the south edge of the city and features a 16-bed inpatient unit and 16 beds in the emergency department, which include two trauma-specific rooms and four units for safe behavioral health care.

Additionally, it is home to an award-winning wound center, outpatient surgery, imaging, laboratory, cardiac rehabilitation, sleep center, therapy

services and a multi-specialty clinic with providers in OB-GYN, cardiology and more. Its ambulance service has its own facility covering parts of three counties.

Another exciting development includes relocating the family medicine clinic to a newly remodeled facility of its own, about a mile north of the hospital. Demand for service at the clinic increased so quickly it outgrew the space planned for the hospital.

“We’re so pleased with our new facility,” says Shari King, hospital administrator. “There was a lot of work, planning and long days prior to the move, but it’s been so worth it. Of course, it was a wonderful upgrade for our amazing team members, but we’re most pleased about how it’s helped us elevate the patient experience. That’s what this was always about — the best outcome for every patient, every time.”

– Patsy B. Weiler

PHOTO: MCFARLAND CLINIC

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# Economic Profile

## EMPLOYMENT

**795**

Total employer establishments

**1,865**

Total nonemployer establishments

**\$603.2M**

Total annual payroll

## UNEMPLOYMENT RATE

**5.9%**

May 2023

## GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT

**\$1.78B**

2021

**\$1.70B**  
2019

**\$1.69B**  
2015

**\$1.66B**  
2010

## WORKFORCE (% of nonfarm jobs)



- Manufacturing..... **27.6%**
- Health care & social assistance..... **16.7%**
- Retail trade..... **10.9%**
- Educational services..... **9.6%**
- Accommodations & food service **6.3%**
- Public administration..... **3.8%**
- Administrative & waste management..... **3.7%**
- All Other..... **21.4%**

**17,610**

Civilian labor force (2023)

## AVERAGE WEEKLY WAGE BY INDUSTRY

LOCATIONS/AVERAGE WEEKLY WAGE

Wholesale trade .....	<b>70/\$2,529</b>
Manufacturing .....	<b>44/\$1,486</b>
Finance & Insurance .....	<b>63/\$1,421</b>
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services .....	<b>75/\$1,407</b>
Construction .....	<b>100/\$1,306</b>
Public Administration.....	<b>42/\$1,126</b>
Transportation & Warehousing .....	<b>49/\$983</b>
Health Care & Social Assistance .....	<b>126/\$981</b>
Educational Services .....	<b>35/\$938</b>
Administrative & Waste Management.....	<b>51/\$778</b>
Retail Trade .....	<b>113/\$596</b>
Accommodations & Food Service.....	<b>80/\$366</b>

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