



MOSER STUDENTS EXCEL PAGE 10A

# Dyersville Commercial

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## Each week, Epworth's community meal fills a need

BY ERIN LABELLE  
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Fifteen years ago, Rod Gavin was recruited to coordinate Epworth's Friday Community Meal because of his background in food service. At the time, the endeavor was described as a weekly free meal for eight to 10 older women.

Today, the jovial retiree who loves people leads a "well-run, loosely organized organization" of 30 volunteers who offer 200 meals each week. "It's a lot different than when we started. It takes a lot of time now."

The community-driven project began in the old school building, but when it was demolished, the group migrated to Epworth United Methodist Church. Eventually, a move down the street to St. Patrick's Church Hall offered more space and a permanent home.

Fridays between 11:15 a.m. and noon, Gavin and a group of mostly retired

volunteers provide meals, offering a delivery service for those who can't pick up or dine in. When social distancing was enforced during the pandemic, a drive-thru option was introduced and according to Gavin, many still pick up their lunches today.

Pianist Emil Weber has been entertaining both volunteers and guests since the beginning of the Friday Community Meal, originally called the Friday Musical Lunch. The small dine-in group and the volunteers are entertained by Weber, who enjoys having an audience. Recently, a piano was donated, making the effort easier for the nonagenarian Weber, who formerly traveled with his own keyboard.

On Wednesdays and Thursdays, volunteers assist in prepping the food and on Fridays, they package, deliver and serve. Gavin and a volunteer plan meals two months in advance, bas-

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Erin LaBelle • Staff Photo

From left, Jane Sweeney, Betty Quade and Dianne McDermott pack lunches for delivery during Epworth's Friday Community Meal.

## What I See



Dave LaBelle • Staff Photos

Though each day brings difficult memories, the Gauls are a practical, hard-working farm family still able to laugh at Austin's "goofiness, his sense of humor." Holidays were hard for the Gaul family, but surrounding themselves with friends helped.

## A time to laugh, a time to cry, a time for community

BY DAVE LABELLE  
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Most of the time, when we hear about an accident that takes a life we're able to quickly move past the news unless the death happened to a family member or someone we know.



AUSTIN GAUL

Last September, I read about a farm accident in Farley. Austin Gaul, 25, died when a 10-ton wagon of cut corn rolled over him while he, his father, brother and friends were

working a neighbor's field next to their East Dyersville Road farm at night.

I didn't know Austin or his family but having covered too many accidental deaths in my career, I imagined the shock and pain they must be experiencing. I asked the Gaul family if they would talk about their oldest son and share what happened that night. They graciously accepted my invitation.



Jean Gaul shows her favorite picture of Austin Gaul that was made by photographer Susie Williams for his senior picture.

Austin was a big man - 6-foot-4 with wide shoulders and weighing about 300 pounds, yet his father still called him "Peanut."

He drove a truck for Kluesner Construction, loved farming, trucks and

machinery. He worked long hours saving money to buy some acreage, where he could build his own farm. Mark Gaul said, "Peanut liked driving anything with

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