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## Building team chemistry

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## Vaccine

U.S. authorized updated COVID boosters for children. **NATION A6**

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# Bomgaars expands its footprint

Sioux City-based retailer buys 73 Orscheln stores

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SIOUX CITY — Bomgaars is purchasing 73 Orscheln Farm and Home stores, striking a what it called a “mega-deal” that makes the Sioux City-based retailer the nation’s second-largest farm and ranch retailer, behind only Tractor Supply Co.

The complex transaction, announced Tuesday, involved

Brentwood, Tennessee-based Tractor Supply, which had been seeking to acquire rival Orscheln for more than a year but had run afoul of federal anti-trust laws. The Federal Trade Commission on Tuesday approved the sale of 166 Orscheln stores to Tractor Supply for about \$320 million on the condition that it immediately divested 85 of the stores to two third-party buyers — Bomgaars and Buchheit Enterprises.

Buchheit, a farm retailer operating in Missouri and Illinois, acquired 12 stores as part of

Please see **BOMGAARS**, Page A4

**READ:** Through the most-recent stories about Bomgaars, point your smartphone camera at the QR Code and tap the link. **NEWSVU**

Bomgaars’ distribution center in Sioux City is shown in this 2021 Journal file photo. Bomgaars, the Sioux City-based retail chain, is acquiring 73 locations from the Orscheln Farm and Home retail chain, making it the second-largest farm and ranch retailer in the U.S.

**JESSE BROTHERS,**  
SIOUX CITY JOURNAL, FILE



**TIM HYNDS,** SIOUX CITY JOURNAL

Aaron Gallagher 3, carries a pumpkin as he and sister, Kaida, 4, and parents Michael and Maria Gallagher pick pumpkins Tuesday at Holly View Acres north of Holly Springs, Iowa. The Gallaghers opened Holly View Acres this fall, featuring a 9-acre corn maze and pumpkins for sale. It’s open on Fridays and Saturdays.

## Pumpkins fuel Holly Springs fun

**H**OLLY SPRINGS, Iowa — Few reminders of Holly Springs remain along Old Highway 141, and many younger motorists who pass by probably don’t even realize there once was a small town here.

Michael and Maria Gallagher aren’t ready for all memories of Holly Springs to fade away just yet.

On a hilltop less than a mile away, the couple launched Holly View Acres, a pumpkin patch and corn maze providing families with fall fun.

“We said we wanted to put Holly Springs back on the map,” Michael said with a laugh. “I don’t know if a pumpkin patch and corn maze will do that.”

As word of mouth and social media spread news of the area’s



**MICHAEL GALLAGHER,** HOLLY VIEW ACRES

The farm scene Michael Gallagher planted into a 9-acre corn maze at Holly View Acres stands out in a drone photo Michael took in July. Visitors can explore the maze on Fridays and Saturdays at Holly View Acres near Holly Springs, Iowa.

largest corn maze, visitors are pulling up maps, or consulting Holly View Acres’ website or Facebook page, to find their

way to the farm, located just north of the intersection of Old Highway 141 (Woodbury County Road D25) and Wood-

bury County Road K64, known to many as the Moville Blacktop. It’s here the Gallaghers share with visitors their love of farm life, autumn — and corn mazes.

“We love fall. It’s our favorite,” Maria said.

A Sioux Center, Iowa, native, Maria grew up going to corn mazes with friends and family at Pumpkinland in Orange City and another in Harrisburg, South Dakota. She met Michael while the two attended Dordt College (now Dordt University) and hooked him on finding his way through the tall corn, especially after dark by the glow

Please see **HYTREK**, Page A4

**WATCH:** A clip about the new corn maze and pumpkin patch, point your smartphone camera at the QR Code and tap the link. **NEWSVU**

## Farmland sells for record

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REMSEN, Iowa — A plot of rich farmland in Plymouth County this week sold for what is believed to be a state record of \$26,250 per acre.

The land, between Remsen and Marcus, Iowa, went up for auction Monday. Bidding took 15 or 20 minutes, auctioneer Bruce R. Brock said. Three bidders pushed the price to \$25,000, then two bidders jockeying for the land pushed the price up to \$26,250 in a matter of one or two minutes before the hammer fell.

“It was really rapid-paced bidding,” Brock said in an interview.

The grand total for the 55.56 acres was over \$1.458 million, Brock said. The per-acre price is believed to be a record in Iowa. The buyer is a farmer in the area.

The seller was John Fiscus, who lives near Coeur d’Alene, Idaho, Brock said. The somewhat non-standard number of acres in the sale (farmland is often sold in quarter-sections, 160 acres, or half-quarter sections, 80 acres) was the result of the farmland having been parceled out among members of a family over time.

“So that’s why it was an odd-shaped piece, it was just divided up between some family members,” Brock said.

The price was all the more remarkable due to the fact that the land has no other use except agriculture. There are no revenue-generating wind turbines on the land, and the property is too far away from any town or city to be readily used for residential or commercial development.

“Just pure farm-ground,” is how Brock put it. (Brock’s website described the land as

Please see **FARMLAND**, Page A4

**THE MINI:** With its purchase Tuesday of 73 Orscheln Farm and Home stores, Sioux City-based Bomgaars became the nation’s second-largest farm and ranch retailer. It’s exciting to see a homegrown, family business achieve that lofty status. We’re proud of the Bomgaars family and their over 3,300 employees as the company continues to grow and prosper. — **Journal editorial board**

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# \$96M to help Iowa start-ups

State program, using federal funds, will provide capital

**ERIN MURPHY**  
Journal Des Moines Bureau

DES MOINES — Up to \$96 million in business capital, including loans, will be made available to Iowa start-ups and small and veteran-owned businesses under a state plan approved this week by the federal treasury department.

The funding is being made available through the federal State Small Business Credit Initiative, a program that was created in 2010 and renewed and expanded in the latest federal pandemic relief package, the American Rescue Plan.

“This is an historic investment in entrepreneurship, small business growth, and innovation through the American Rescue Plan that will help reduce barriers to capital access for traditionally

underserved communities,” U.S. Treasury Secretary Janet L. Yellen said in a statement. “I’m excited to see how these SSBCI funds will promote equitable economic growth across the country.”

Iowa’s plan was submitted by the state’s economic development department. According to the department, the plan calls for:

- \$31 million to a venture capital co-investment fund “to process and hold equity investments in private companies and ensure investments are qualified.”

- \$28 million for a manufacturing loan program “to help Iowa manufacturers invest in the new technologies that are transforming the industry.”

- \$22 million for a venture capital innovation fund “to increase funding opportunities across the state’s assistance programs for entrepreneurs.”

- \$15 million for a small business collateral support program “to help small businesses offset

collateral shortfalls as they secure loans through commercial lenders.”

“Small businesses and entrepreneurs dream big, drive Iowa’s economy and make our communities better places to live,” Gov. Kim Reynolds said in a statement. Reynolds at the time of its passage opposed the federal pandemic relief package.

“Iowa had the fastest economic recovery through the pandemic in large part because of the creativity and resilience of our small businesses,” Reynolds said in her statement. “This funding will build on the momentum by investing in our small businesses and entrepreneurs just as they have chosen to invest in Iowa.”

The White House said the programs are designed to help Iowa retain high-potential startup businesses that might otherwise relocate to areas with greater access to capital, and could have an impact on rural manufacturers.

“Iowa’s small busi-

nesses have faced some of the biggest economic challenges of the last few years, but they also have some of the greatest success stories and we’ve seen a record-breaking surge in new businesses for two years in a row,” Debi Durham, executive director of the Iowa Economic Development Agency and the Iowa Finance Authority, said in a statement. “Our team looks forward to working with our small business and innovation partners to bring these new efforts to life.”

The state said a process for applying for the business capital and loans still is underway and more information would be provided at iowaeda.com/ssbci.

In 2021, Americans applied to start 5.4 million new businesses, which was 20 percent more than any other year on record; and small businesses with fewer than 50 workers created 2.8 million jobs, the highest number recorded in a single year, according to the White House.



JESSE BROTHERS, SIOUX CITY JOURNAL

The Bomgaars distribution center in Sioux City is shown in an April 6, 2021 photo. Bomgaars has purchased 73 Orscheln Farm and Home Stores, making the Sioux City-based business the nation’s second largest farm and ranch retailer.

## Bomgaars

From A1

the transaction, and Bomgaars bought 73 stores. The remaining 81 Orscheln stores will be converted to Tractor Supply locations.

Proceeds from the divestitures totaled about \$72 million, according to Tractor Supply. The publicly-traded company also agreed to sell Orscheln’s corporate headquarters and distribution center in Moberly, Missouri, to Bomgaars for about \$10 million within 15 months after the deal closes.

The sale, which required 1 1/2 years of “very complex, multi-party negotiations,” will allow Bomgaars to “experience an unprecedented level of growth for our customers, our community, and our company,” CEO Torrey Wingert said in a statement.

“While the federal approval process was at times equally exhausting and frustrating, our team and the Bomgaars family remained steadfast in their determination to complete this acquisition, and this collective commitment to do so was a big part in ensuring this deal was successfully concluded,” Wingert said.

The deal will see Bomgaars expand into seven new stores — Missouri, Oklahoma, Texas, Arkansas, Kentucky, Indiana and Ohio — nearly doubling the retailer’s sprawling territory to 15 states.

After the 73 Orscheln stores are rebranded over the next year, the number of Bomgaars locations will swell to 180 locations. The rapidly growing retailer hit a milestone 100th store opening just last year.

Bomgaars will add 1,400 workers to its payroll, with a total employee count of about 3,300.

The Orscheln deal is far larger than Bomgaars’ acquisition of a dozen former ALCO-Duckwall stores more than seven years ago as the

latter was winding down its operations.

In Sioux City, Bomgaars’ corporate offices and central warehouse and distribution center are located at 1805 Zenith Drive. In 2015, Bomgaars completed a \$17 million expansion of the distribution center, adding 150,000 square feet to nearly double its size of the facility near the intersection of Hamilton Boulevard and Interstate 29.

Orscheln’s distribution center in Moberly has about 330,000 square feet of space.

Orscheln was founded in 1960 in by W.C. “Colonel” Orscheln, who opened his first store in Sedalia, Missouri, according to the retailer’s website. The Orscheln chain grew more quickly than Bomgaars, reaching 85 locations by 2003.

Bomgaars traces its roots to William H. “Bill” Bomgaars, a Northwest Iowa merchant who struggled to find success in various retail ventures in the opening decades of the 20th century before hitting upon a winning formula of selling farm supplies.

The fourth-generation family business is owned by Roger and Jane Bomgaars, who each spring “road trip” across the country to visit their stores.

The couple are looking forward to visiting the 73 new locations as part of their upcoming travel plans.

“I am grateful to our executive team for their persistence in seeing this deal through to its ultimate and successful conclusion,” Roger Bomgaars said in a statement. “Our family is proud of our organization, each of our approximately 3,300 current employees, and the difference we make for our farm and ranch clients and customers every single day.”

Tractor Supply, which said it is on track to achieve annual revenue in excess of \$14 billion, has over 2,100 locations and more than 50,000 employees.



TIM HYNDY, SIOUX CITY JOURNAL

Michael and Maria Gallagher show off pumpkins and gourds at Holly View Acres, a family attraction that includes a pumpkin patch and 9-acre corn maze just north of Holly Springs, Iowa. The Gallaghers opened the business this fall, sharing their love of fall, farm life and corn mazes with visitors.

## Hytrek

From A1

of their flashlights.

Not that Michael needed much of a push to appreciate it. A graduate of Westwood High School in Sloan, he grew up on a farm about a mile down the road from Holly Springs. After spending five years as a banker in Sioux Center, he returned to his roots in 2018, joining his father, Dennis, in farming 2,500 acres of corn and soybeans.

With farmland at their fingertips, Michael and Maria indulged their love of corn mazes, growing a test maze on 2 acres a couple years ago. Once they moved to their new acreage last September, their plans for a bigger corn maze were seeded, aiming to add another outdoor family attraction in the area.

“I thought a corn maze

to this extent was something that was missing,” Michael said. “There’s a lot of people who have never here who have never done a corn maze before.”

With his corn planter’s technology enabling him to start and stop the flow of seed into the soil from his tractor seat, Michael planted the farm-scene pattern into the 9-acre field this spring. Once the corn was knee-high, he used a skid loader with a tiller attachment to straighten and smooth the paths inside the maze.

Neither he nor Maria had ever grown pumpkins before, but that didn’t stop them from hand-planting an acre of pumpkins and gourds, fed by an irrigation system Michael set up this summer as rain continually refused to fall on the area. Though conditions remained dry much of the growing season, the

rich river-bottom soil retained enough moisture to ensure visitors wouldn’t be able to peek over corn tassels to navigate their way through the maze.

“I’m just glad the corn got as tall as it did,” Michael said.

Prior to opening on Sept. 16, the Gallaghers added a corn kernel beach (think of a large sandbox filled with corn instead of sand), corn-hole game boards and a farmland playground with straw bales, antique tractors and tractor tires for children to climb on. Visitors can buy pumpkins and pay admission to walk through the maze.

The maze isn’t for everyone, but Michael said it’s been fun to watch children run around, enjoying the open spaces. Some families seem to prefer just enjoying a sunset while eating at one of the picnic tables.

“If that’s all we’ve done is give people a space to enjoy themselves, that’s great,” Michael said.

Open 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. on Fridays and Saturdays through Oct. 29, the hours coincide with harvest time, when Michael spends hours a day in a combine. With the help of friends and a couple friendly farm cats, Maria tackles much of the task of greeting visitors and answering questions, all while keeping track of the couple’s three children, who are all under age 5.

They’re not letting the challenge of starting a new business while raising a young family slow plans for next year.

“We’ve got lots of ideas for things we’d like to add,” Maria said. “We’ve got plenty of room to grow.”

A bumper crop of ideas to attract people to farmland fun.



BROCK AUCTION CO.

This aerial photo from the Brock Auction Company shows a parcel of Plymouth County land that was sold at auction Monday for a record-breaking \$26,250 per acre.

## Farmland

From A1

“productive and powerful.” Land of this quality has in recent times averaged about \$20,000 to \$22,500 per acre, Brock said.

This isn’t the first time this year Plymouth County farmland has set a record at the auction block. In May, 96.33 acres of farmland, which included a 3.67-acre farmstead southeast of Le Mars, sold for over \$2.6 million.

Later in the summer, a Sioux County farm was sold at auction for \$26,000 an acre.

Many farmers in Northwest Iowa are relatively cash-rich, said Jim Rothermich, vice president at Iowa Appraisal, a commercial and agricultural property appraiser in Des Moines. Because of this, they can afford to pay higher prices for farmland even as interest rates rise.

“There’s so many people in strong cash positions, espe-

cially up there in Northwest Iowa,” Rothermich said by phone. “Very strong equity positions with people up there.”

Farmland in Plymouth, O’Brien and Sioux counties, are rich and productive and offers close access to ethanol plants and livestock and poultry operations, has long been among the most valuable in the state of Iowa.

The top 10 highest prices paid for farmland in Iowa, according to data compiled by Rothermich, were all in Plymouth, Sioux or O’Brien and all were sold within the last two years — eight of the records were set this year alone.

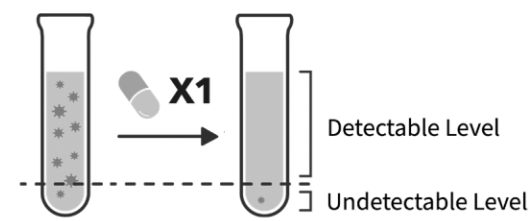
Agriculture land in that three-county area has ballooned in value in recent years. Between 2020 and 2021, the average acre of farmland in Plymouth County appreciated by 31.4 percent — to \$12,416 per acre — according to data from Iowa State University Extension and Outreach.

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