

SANTA CLAUS/Continued from Page 1A

whole crew to Starbucks,” Miller says. “They knew that Santa was making good money, and you’ve got to have charity. You’ve just got to.”

“That’s why you do Santa Claus for the Sunday school classes and stuff like that,” he continues. “We attended a large church, and every Wednesday night they had a meal and then Bible classes afterwards. We went to dinner one Wednesday night, and kids and families were in the hall as we were walking out. One of the girls who took care of the kids during Bible study came to me, and she said, ‘You know so-and-so?’ And I said, ‘Yeah.’ She says, ‘She came to us and said, ‘Santa’s here incognito!’ And she says, ‘He is. He comes to church here.’”

Miller grew up in our community, launching a career in automotive repair at the age of 12 by working for his uncle in Frytown. In 1969, he moved to Oregon, where he started his own independent auto repair shop. In 1972, he started growing a beard, though back then it was black.

“I’ve always done things that are kind of different,” he says. “We moved to Oregon in ‘69 and started a business. And I went to Europe for six months and taught auto mechanics, came back, and did a radio show for six years every Saturday morning on cars. That’s the kind of crazy guy I am.”

In 2003, he and his wife returned to Iowa to be near family, settling about 30 miles south of Kalona in Olds. The couple would move back to Oregon in 2006, but not before Miller took a turn at being Kalona’s Santa, riding in a carriage in a used Santa suit. It was his first public appearance as Santa, but it sparked something in him.

“I had so much fun with it that I went down to the local mall [when we moved back to Oregon],” Miller says. “I said, ‘What do you do for Santas?’”

Shooting Star Photo needed a second Santa to sit for photos in the mall that season, and thus, Miller’s new career was born. He joined the Amalgamated Order of Real Bearded Santas, a professional fraternity for American men who perform as Santa Claus, joined a local Santa group, and spent the next 13 years watching the children of Salem grow up before his eyes.

The business of being Santa

The business of being Santa is surprisingly complex. First, you need a Sleigh-Driving License.

“I don’t know that you need it,” Miller laughs, showing the card that indicates his nine-reindeer certification and glasses restriction.

Next, you need complete Santa suits. Two of them.

“Sometimes the kids leak. You get that warm-leg syndrome,” he says.

The right boots are important.

“I bought a pair of Santa boots and wore them a couple of times. I didn’t like them,” he explains. “I finally ended up with boots made of pigskin. They’re leather, and they’re a little higher, and they’re more professional, I think.”

You need familiarity with trending toys.

“Every year I get the toy catalog and I go through it. So, I try to keep up with what’s going on,” Miller says. “It’s impossible to know everything, but I tried to [do some research] so that I was current when the kids came in.”

You must be comfortable with all ages.

“The youngest I ever held was, a lady came in, and she says, ‘I wanted to make sure you were here. I want you to hold my baby,’” Miller recounts. “I said, ‘When was the baby born?’ She said, ‘Two days ago.’”

“I had a lady come in with her mother. Her mother was frail, about 100, I would say. She came in and she said, ‘Do you mind if Mom sits on your knee?’” Miller says. “I gave her a hug. She was 102. So, Santa’s good for everybody from 2 days [old] to 102.”

Sometimes, you have to know when to call security.

“One of the problems we had with one guy was that he would come in, and he would bring a camera and set up and want me to hold his kids a certain way. He’d take a picture. He’d never buy a picture. Well, this is a business,” he says. “We had a little problem, and I finally called security and asked them to remove him.”

And finally, you may need some help with wealth management.

“Being a mall Santa pays fairly well,” Miller says. “\$40 an hour in the mall, and you’re working 8-hour days.” For corporate parties, “\$400 for an hour.” And tips: “Over the 13 years that I spent in the mall, I probably had \$3000 in tips.”

The joy and melancholy of Santa Claus

As you might imagine, Miller knows a lot about what people want for Christmas. We humans retain our youthful innocence as long as we can, but eventually we face the harder truths of life. Our requests for dump trucks and play makeup sets give way to deeper desires, some of which Santa has no power to satisfy.

“A little boy one day came

Santa’s Prayer

*The sleigh was all packed, the reindeer were fed.
But Santa still knelt by the side of his bed.
Dear Father, he prayed, be with me tonight.
There’s much work to do and my schedule is tight.
My sack will hold toys to grant all kids’ wishes.
The supply will be endless like loaves and fishes.
I can do all these things, Lord, only through You.
I just need Your blessing, then it’s easy to do.
I do this only to honor the birth of the One
That was sent to redeem us, Your most Holy Son.
So to all my friends, lest Your glory I rob,
Please, Lord, remind them who gave me this job.*

in, and he was with his dad, and he’d come in and we took a picture. We talked, and finally I said, ‘What do you want for Christmas?’ Well, he gave me a list of stuff, and he says, ‘I’d like something for my dad,’” Miller narrates. “He runs over to the gal behind the camera. She’s kind of a looker. He says, ‘Would you marry my dad, so I’ve got a mommy?’”

“And then one day I had a young guy. . . and he walked over to say, ‘Would you do me a favor?’. . . He hands me this little box,” Miller says. When the young man’s girlfriend sat on Santa’s lap, “I said to the young lady, ‘What would you like to have for Christmas?’ And she says, ‘Well, I don’t know.’ And I said, ‘Do you suppose this would do?’ And he’s on his knees.”

“It’s amazing some of the things that happen, and sometimes it’s really heartbreaking,” Miller says. “We had a lady come in one day, one of the last years I worked. We had a reputation, [people would] like to come and they would talk to me. And she says, ‘I just lost my son to suicide.’ I said, ‘Oh

my.’ And I prayed with her, because that’s the only thing you can do. I hugged her, and she said, ‘Thank you so much,’ as she left. So that was some of the stuff that I’ve done.”

Epilogue

Miller’s days as a mall Santa may be behind him, but he’s happy to take on local Santa work now that he lives in Kalona, provided it doesn’t require an overnight stay. He and his wife live in a cottage at Pleasantview, where Miller has responsibilities as a caregiver and cook, so he doesn’t like to spend too much time away.

In fact, you may have already met him: he posed for photos and listened to gift requests at Christmas in Kalona on Dec. 3.

“I started in Kalona, and I’m ending in Kalona,” he says.

“I’ve had a good run, I really have,” Miller concludes. “And it’s been a lot of fun. I’ve met a lot of wonderful, wonderful people.”

If you’re looking for a Santa for personal, corporate, or public events, contact Carl Miller at 503-428-2417.

UI Hospitals & Clinics ranked among Best Hospitals for Maternity Care

Only two hospitals in Iowa met the bar for recognition.

University of Iowa Hospitals & Clinics has been named one of the nation’s top hospitals for maternity care by U.S. News & World Report.

U.S. News evaluated nearly 650 hospitals across the country that provide labor and delivery services and submitted detailed data to the publication for analysis. Only 297 hospitals received a High Performing designation, which is the highest award a hospital can earn in maternity care.

“We are proud to be one of the best hospitals for maternity care—not only in Iowa but in the nation. We truly believe our patients are in the best hands when they choose to give birth at the University of Iowa Hospitals & Clinics,” says Kelly Ward, medical director of labor and delivery. “This designation is also a testament to how hard our team works to provide the best care for newborns and new parents.”

UI Hospitals & Clinics is one of just two hospitals in Iowa to receive this designation.

“When expectant parents are considering their options for welcoming a baby into the world, the Best Hospitals for Maternity Care is designed to help them identify hospitals that excel in delivering babies for uncomplicated pregnancies,” says Min Hee Seo, senior health data scientist at U.S. News.

This year’s methodology includes four measures not previously factored into Best Hospitals for Maternity Care, including episiotomy rates, vaginal birth after cesarean

(VBAC) rates, and whether each hospital met new federal criteria for “birthing-friendly” practices. Also new this year, the U.S. News methodology rewards hospitals that tracked and reported their outcomes for patients of different races and ethnicities.

“Identifying racial disparities in maternity care is a vital step toward achieving health equity,” says Seo. “The new measures provide expectant parents with many important data points, such as whether hospitals implemented patient

safety practices, to assist them in making a decision about where to receive maternity care.”

The U.S. News Best Hospitals for Maternity Care methodology is based entirely on objective measures of quality, such as C-section rates in lower-risk pregnancies, newborn complication rates, exclusive breast milk feeding rates and early elective delivery rates, among others.

LOCAL CHURCH SERVICES

AINSWORTH

Ainsworth Community Church: Ainsworth, Worship Sunday 10:30 a.m.; Kids Club Wed 6:30 p.m.

HILLS

St. Joseph Catholic Church: Hills, Pastor: Father Hai Dinh, 319-679-2271; Carol Kaalberg, 319-330-5324. www.StsMaryandJoseph.com. Mass schedule: Sunday 10 a.m.

IOWA CITY

Crosspoint Baptist Church: Pastor Mike Barr. Meeting at the Clarion Hotel 2525 N. Dodge Street, Iowa City; Sunday Worship 10 a.m. and 5 p.m. Wednesday 6:30 p.m. Supper and Bible Study (offsite).

KALONA

Cornerstone Community Church: 229 South 14th St.; Floyd Yutzy, 319-430-9574; cornerstonekalona@gmail.com; Sunday, 10 a.m. Nursery & kids’s classes available

East Union Mennonite Church: 5615 Gable Ave. SW, 319-656-2590; Joel Beachy, Pastor, Sunday Worship: 9:30 a.m. Sunday School: 10:45 a.m.

English River Chapel: 1370 Hwy 1, Sunday Worship: 10 a.m.; news@englishriverchapel.org.

Fairview Mennonite Church: 2605 540th St. SW; Pastors: Conrad Hertzler, 319-512-6186; Sunday Worship: 10:30 a.m. & 7 p.m. Sunday School: 9:30 a.m.

Full Gospel Revival Center: 1103 J Ave. 319-656-2298; Pastor: Jeremy Gugel; Sunday Worship: 10 a.m.; Wednesday Mid-Week Service: 7 p.m.; fgrc@kctc.net

Gospel Light Fellowship: 401 E Ave (Hwy 22) Pastor: Dwight Schrock, 319-530-4783; Sunday School: 9:30 a.m.; Message: 10:45 a.m.

Haven Conservative Mennonite Church: 5203 Cosgrove Rd. SW, 1 mile west of Hwy.1; Ministry: Nelson Beachy, 319-683-2377, James Swartzentruber, 319-683-2372; Sunday Worship: 10:30 a.m. Sunday School: 9:30 a.m.

Kalona Mennonite Church: 6th Street & J Ave., 656-

2736, kalonamennonitechurch.com; Pastor: Josh Lundberg; Sunday Worship: Worship service at 9:30 a.m.; Live-streamed on Facebook. Sunday School at 10:30 a.m. All ages.

Kalona United Methodist Church: 4th St. & C Ave. 319-656-2642, www.kalonaumc.org; Pastor: Lisa Crow; Sunday Worship: 9 a.m. Fellowship following. Sunday School: 10:30 a.m.

Lower Deer Creek Mennonite Church: 1408 540th St. SW 319-656-2076, <http://ldcmc.org>; Email: ldc@kctc.net; Pastor: Steve Nelson; Sunday Worship: 10 a.m. Sunday School: 9 a.m.

Sharon Bethel Mennonite Church: 5 miles north on Highway 1, ¼ mile east, 319-683-2672; Pastors: Delmar Bontrager, Leighton Yoder, Lavon Bontrager; Sunday Worship: 10:30 a.m. Sunday School: 9:30 a.m.

Sharon Center United Methodist Church: Rural Johnson County at corner of James Ave & 520th St. 319-683-2564; sharoncenterumc.wordpress.com; Pastor Anita Johnson; COVID-19 protocol. On the first Sunday of each month, there will be a combined worship at 9 a.m., the remaining Sunday’s will have casual worship at 8:30 a.m. and traditional at 10:30 a.m.

Sunnyside Conservative Mennonite Church: 501 14th St. 319-56-2688; Pastors: Floyd Helmut and Mary Bender; Sunday Worship: 9:30 a.m. & 7 p.m. Sunday School: 10:45 a.m.

KINROSS

Kinross Christian Church: Pastor: Luke Caster Sunday worship: 8:30 - 9:30 a.m.

LONE TREE

St. Mary’s Catholic Church: 216 W. Jayne St; Pastor: Father Hai Dinh, 319-679-2271; Carol Kaalberg, 319-330-5324. www.StsMaryandJoseph.com. Saturday Mass: 4 p.m.

United Presbyterian Church of Lone Tree: 110 W Elm St; 629-4900 www.lonetreeuiowachurch.com; Sunday: Worship: 10 a.m. Sunday School 10:15

NICHOLS

Nichols Christian Church: 607 Grant Ave; 319-723-4346; Sunday Services: Worship 9:30 a.m.; Sunday school: 10:30 a.m.

Nichols United Methodist Church: 315 Main; 319-723-4585; Pastors: Mary & Don Timmermann; Sunday Services: 9 a.m. Family Worship Service with Children’s Message

St. Mary’s Catholic Church: Short St & Grand Ave; Pastor: Father Hai Dinh, 319-679-2271; Carol Kaalberg, 319-330-5324. www.StsMaryandJoseph.com. Sunday Mass: 8 a.m.

NORTH ENGLISH

Champion Hill United Methodist Church: 3132 TT Ave., rural North English. 319-664-3829. Sunday worship: 9 a.m.

North English Christian Church: Pastor: Luke Caster Sunday worship: 10-11 a.m.

OXFORD

Windham Community Church: 1424 Black Diamond Rd. SW, 2 miles north of Frytown. Pastor: Randy Harker, 319-430-1912; Sunday Worship 10 a.m. windhamchurch.com

RICHMOND

Holy Trinity Roman Catholic Church: 319-648-2331, clusterparishes.org; Fr. Bill Roush; Mass: Sunday 8 a.m.

RIVERSIDE

The Church in Riverside: 41 E 1st St., 319-698-2185, thechurchatriverside@hotmail.com; Patrick Leonard, Evangelist; Service Times: Sunday 10 a.m.; Wednesday 7 p.m.

River City Church: Meet at Highland Elementary School, 220 Schnoebelen St.; www.rivercityia.org; Pastor Rodney Gehman; Sunday at 10 a.m.

St. Mary’s Catholic Church: 51 St. Mary’s St., 319-648-2331, clusterparishes.org; Fr. Bill Roush; Mass: Sunday, 10 a.m.; Thursday 11 a.m. at Pleasantview Home.

Trinity United Methodist Church in Riverside: 11 E

2nd St. 319-648-3092; Pastor: Marsha Gerot, Sunday Service: 9 a.m. Sunday School: 10 a.m. (Preschool - 6th).

SOUTH ENGLISH

English River Church of the Brethren: 29252 137th St. (Hwy 22 between South English & Kinross) 319-667-5235; Sunday Worship: 10 a.m. Sunday School: 9:30 a.m.

WELLMAN

Asbury United Methodist Church: 601 8th Ave. 319-646-2417; Pastor: Lisa Crow; Sunday Worship: 10:30 a.m.

First Baptist Church: 600 4th St., 319-646-2254; Pastor: Pastor Andrew Lunstrom; Sunday School for all ages 9:00 a.m. Sunday Morning Worship 10:00 a.m. Communion is held the first Sunday of each month.

Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd (Missouri Synod) 5th St. & 4th Ave, 605-651-0699; Pastor: Rev. Zachary Voss; Sunday Worship: 11 a.m.

New Life Community Church: meets at Parkside Activities Center, office located at 214 8th Ave, 319-674-9057, Office hours: 9 a.m.-1 p.m. Mon-Fri. www.newlifewellman.org; Pastor: Aaron Fleming, 646-2390; Sunday Worship: 10 a.m.

Salem Mennonite Fellowship: 1306 Keokuk Washington Rd., 7 miles west of Wellman; Ministry: Wilford Beachy 319-656-3733; Freeman Miller, 319-325-2013. Sunday Worship: 10:30 a.m. Sunday School: 9:30 a.m.

St. Joseph Catholic Church: 11th St & Maplewood, 319-648-2331, clusterparishes.org; Fr. Bill Roush; Saturday Mass: 5 p.m.

Upper Deer Creek Mennonite Church: 6 ½ miles west of Cheese Factory, 319-656-3843; Pastor: Elmer Miller; Sunday Worship: 9:30 a.m. Sunday School: 11 a.m.

Wellman Mennonite Church: 1215 8th Ave. 319-646-2532; Pastor: David Heusinkveld; Sunday Worship: 9:30 a.m. Sunday School for all ages following the service.

West Union Mennonite Church: 3253 305th St. Parnell, 319-646-6004; Pastor: John David Kenney; Sunday Worship: 9:30a.m. Sunday School: 10:45a.m.; Mennonite Women: First Wed. of every month 8:30a.m.-3p.m.

Zion Christian Fellowship: 1308 Madison Ave. Pastor: Elvin Martin. Worship: 9:30 a.m.

WEST CHESTER

West Chester United Methodist Church: 403 Franklin Street, 319-698-4665; Pastor: Don Patterson; Sunday 10:45 a.m.

WASHINGTON

New Hope Mennonite Church, 1506 N. 5th Ave.; Pastors: Gabriel Beachy, Elwyn Stutzman, Matthew Petersheim; Sunday worship 10:30 a.m. Sunday school 9:30 a.m.

Immanuel Lutheran Church (ELCA): 1226 E Washington St. 319-653-3950; Pastor: Susan Debnar; Sunday Worship & Communion Service: 9 a.m., website: luthwash.org. Current info on church phone recording, 319-653-3950

Prairie Flower Baptist Church: 1909 Larch Ave, at the corner of 190th St., rural Washington; Pastor: David Cotner. Sunday Worship: 10:15 a.m. Sunday School: 9 a.m. Prairie Time: 9:45 a.m. Wednesday: Various activities posted on our web site, prairieflowerbaptistchurch.org

St. James Parish: 602 West 2nd St., 319-653-4504, 319-458-0412 cell; Father Bernie Weir; Sat. 5:30 p.m.; Sun. 9 a.m.; Spanish 11:30 a.m. stjameswashington.org

United Methodist Church: 206 W 2nd St. 319-653-5446; Pastor: Anthony M. Devaughn; Traditional Worship 10 a.m.; Sunday School 9 a.m.; Washingtonumc.com.

Washington Reformed Presbyterian, Washington; Sabbath School 9:45 a.m.; Worship 11 a.m. and 7 p.m.

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