



# A SHARED IDENTITY

Eastern Iowa unites to create Creative Corridor

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Iowa Association of Business and Industry. "The Voice of Iowa Business since 1903" is the largest business network in the state (serving as Iowa's state chamber) with a long legacy of advocating for a competitive business climate in Iowa. ABI offers its nearly 1,500 member companies and their employees opportunities to network, learn best practices in lean processes, workforce, workers' compensation, controlling health care costs, employee drug testing, environmental issues and leadership. ABI works "to foster a favorable business, economic, governmental and social climate within the State of Iowa so that our citizens have the opportunity to enjoy the highest possible quality of life."

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**The Creative Corridor is an economic engine for Iowa**

This edition of Business Record Iowa has a cover story focused on one of our state's important assets. That asset is Iowa's Creative Corridor, the region encompassing Cedar Rapids, Iowa City and nearby counties.

The Creative Corridor is an economic engine for Iowa, and it is a part of the state that features a large number of ABI member companies. I hope you enjoy learning more about this exciting region in this month's newsmagazine.

On other fronts, I would note that February marks the eighth month of ABI's fiscal year. Thanks to your support and leadership, our association is enjoying one of its strongest years ever.

Public policy achievements, Foundation programs, and ABI member meetings and events are all surpassing metrics of past years. Last month's ABI Legislative Reception was the biggest and best yet, with more

A VIEW FROM THE TOP

ABI members than ever before. In addition, the governor and lieutenant governor, other state officials, and more legislators of both parties and both chambers attended than ever before. On behalf of the board of directors, thank you for your participation.

Another key metric involves ABI holding a terrific annual conference. I assure you the 2018 conference will be the best one ever — and it is only four months away!

Make plans now to join your ABI colleagues in Greater Iowa City on June 5-7 for the ABI Taking Care of Business Conference. Fantastic venues, terrific nationally known speakers and the very best business networking anywhere will all be a part of ABI's 115th annual meeting. You do not want to miss it!

Thank you once more for your support.

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**Conference Registration  
Opens Feb. 22**

**Iowa's premier business conference may be four months away, but registration opens later this month — and there are plenty of reasons to register early:**

1. Receive the early bird discount. Those who sign up during the first few weeks of registration receive a deep discount on the price. Saving money on rich programming and valuable networking? That's a no-brainer.
2. Ensure your spot at our alternate activities. Each year, ABI offers unique opportunities to participate in behind-the-scenes tours of local companies, golf at world-class courses and find a variety of other fun activities. However, spots fill up quickly. Sign up early to ensure you're able to attend the activities of your choice.
3. Select your top workshops. The 2018 Taking Care of Business Conference will have 19 workshops offering expert advice on everything from cybersecurity to workplace well-being. These workshops are filled on a first-come, first-served basis.



Once you've registered, or even before, make sure to book your hotel room. Space is filling up fast. Two of the conference hotels, the Coralville Marriott and Homewood Suites, are sold out. But don't worry; there are plenty of great rooms at the other conference hotel, Radisson Coralville. Visit [ABITakingCareOfBusiness.com](http://ABITakingCareOfBusiness.com) to learn more.





◀ EVENT REWIND



## ABI Legislative Briefing and Reception

January 10 | Iowa Taproom | Des Moines

More than 550 people—including ABI members, Gov. Reynolds and Lt. Gov. Gregg, and state legislators and officials—gathered to network and discuss policies affecting Iowa employers. The annual reception is one of the best-attended events of the legislative session and ABI's second-largest annual event.



## ELEVATE IOWA

# Reinforcing a Strong Pipeline for Iowa's Future



**Alex Monaghan**

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Coming out of the “Great Recession” in 2012, the Iowa Association of Business and Industry (ABI) and the 15 community colleges of Iowa collaborated in an unprecedented way. The partnership is currently reaping benefits for all Iowans, given the unemployment rate is just 2.9 percent, and has created a solid foundation for new efforts to ensure Iowa’s workforce is ready for the future. Together, these organizations created Elevate Advanced Manufacturing to promote career pathways in advanced manufacturing throughout the state.

ABI continues to lead this effort with the help of the community colleges. All 15 community colleges contribute \$10,000 annually (\$150,000 total from the Iowa Skilled

Worker and Job Creation Fund), which is matched by ABI business members to sustain continued outreach to students through curriculum distribution, regional specific programming and other creative approaches to teaching students about careers in Iowa. As a result of these efforts, enrollments and training in key manufacturing career pathways have increased an average of 14 percent and helped fill strategic positions with Iowa’s manufacturers.

Recently, the ABI board reconfirmed its successful partnership with the Iowa community colleges when it voted in favor of the Work-based Opportunity Regional Referral Consortium (WORRC) at its Jan. 10 board meeting. Building on the system that

the partnership has created with Elevate Advanced Manufacturing, together the organizations will work to introduce work-based learning opportunities to students and future employees to careers in high-demand areas, reduce student debt, accelerate learning and reinforce the pipeline of talent for Iowa’s employers.

This initiative strives to work in collaboration with Gov. Kim Reynolds’ “Future Ready Iowa” recommendations and support work-based learning opportunities. A council of ABI members and college representatives will be created to ensure collaboration and coordination, as well as the development of additional initiatives to support Iowa’s future.

For more information or to get involved in Elevate Advanced Manufacturing, email Alex Monaghan at [amonaghan@measuredintentions.com](mailto:amonaghan@measuredintentions.com) or Michele Farrell at [mfarrell@measuredintentions.com](mailto:mfarrell@measuredintentions.com).

◀ EVENT REWIND



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# A SHARED IDENTITY

## Eastern Iowa unites to create Creative Corridor

After a devastating flood in 2008 forced communities to look inward to rebuild, business leaders in Cedar Rapids, Iowa City and surrounding areas banded together to help create a unified brand for the region. Here is their story.

The Creative Corridor means something a little different to the people who live and work there.

Some describe the seven-county region in eastern Iowa, including Cedar Rapids and Iowa City, as a bed of manufacturing and technological jobs, others say what defines the region is a focus on creativity and entrepreneurship. But that's why the Creative Corridor has earned the name — it's a combination of both and a little bit more.

"It's not really easy [to say what the Creative Corridor means]," said Cindy Dietz, director of business communications for Cedar Rapids-based Rockwell Collins. "I think of it as an expression of the people, the business, the whole aura of the whole Cedar Rapids/Iowa City area."

The Creative Corridor is made up of Linn, Johnson, Benton, Jones, Iowa, Cedar and Washington counties and has a combined population of more than 450,000 people. It draws workforce from surrounding areas as well, including the Quad Cities and western Illinois, which amounts to a labor footprint of more than 640,000 people.

Within the Corridor comes some diversity of thought as well. Cedar Rapids and Iowa City bring something slightly different to the table when it comes to local economies and values. Cedar Rapids is a hub of manufacturing and brings big brands like General Mills, Rockwell Collins and Alliant Energy. Iowa City has a strong entrepreneurial and creative culture revolving around the University of

Iowa. But put the two together, in addition to the surrounding areas, and that creates a large, diverse workforce, as well as an already tested infrastructure.

"All of a sudden, that gets the attention of a lot more companies as they ask why they want to locate in eastern Iowa," said David Bywater, the fifth-generation owner of Tru Art Color Graphics, which has an office in Iowa City. "They can perceive a diverse labor force with good amenities in the community, and so forth. It's a big selling point to any business."

Before the Creative Corridor was the official brand of the region, the area still had those amenities — the manufacturing, educated workforce and creative culture. In fact, there was an informal name, the Technology Corridor.

But it was hard for businesses and communities to market the area when recruiting people and businesses. There just wasn't a shared identity to display.

It took a flood and a group of local business leaders to change that and help the entire region become recognizable and thrive.

### THE CREATION OF THE CORRIDOR

The creation of a regional brand was in discussion long before it became official in 2012. The Cedar Rapids and Iowa City communities knew there was a huge advantage to having a regional identity. But after the devastating 2008 flood sent businesses in the region, particularly in Cedar Rapids, reeling, both communities took an internal approach to rebuilding. The discussions halted.



“Everyone was just trying to keep the lights on and trying to just survive at that time,” said John Lohman, the owner and president of the Corridor Business Journal. “A lot of communities just kind of re-trenched after 2008, and they weren’t focused on the region.”

Lohman, Chuck Peters, then the president of the parent company of the Cedar Rapids Gazette, and Dee Baird, the former CEO of the Cedar Rapids Metro Economic Alliance, sat down and discussed. They shared a similar vision — that the region could be recognizable across the country and the globe.

They set up a meeting with local business leaders in spring 2009 and enlisted the help of a regional branding expert, Michael Langley, who gave the team and the rest of the community ideas to go forward.

While the cleanup from the flood was still happening in 2009, local businesses like Alliant Energy, Kirkwood Community College, the University of Iowa and more helped fund an effort, called the Corridor Business Alliance, to re-envision the region’s brand.

The goal wasn’t to steer the region to a place it wanted to be, but to merely define what it represented. The alliance also didn’t want to take the individuality of the communities away, just find a way to help them by branding the entire area as a desired destination.

Lohman was selected to lead the charge. He and his team hired an outside firm called North Star Destination Strategies out of Nashville, Tenn., to help in the branding effort. The firm did quantitative and qualitative research with more than 1,500 people in eastern Iowa. It found what the local business leaders knew: The mix of local manufacturing, entrepreneurship, an able and innovative workforce, and creativity were the defining traits of this region.

“You added all those things together and Iowa’s Creative Corridor made a lot of sense,” Lohman said. “So that’s ultimately what we decided to hang our hat on.”

The name was made official in 2012 but had been informally kicked around since 2010.

Lohman called the creation of the brand the first phase. The second phase was getting local businesses engaged from a grass-roots level, and the third phase was Kirkwood Community College taking stewardship the brand.

Now, Lohman said, the area has reached the fourth phase. It started with the creation of the Joint Venture, an organization created jointly by the Iowa City Area Development Group and the Cedar Rapids Metro Economic Alliance, in 2016.

### A BRIGHT FUTURE AHEAD

Jennifer Daly is out to change perceptions.

Just brought into the fold in the Creative Corridor in July, Daly, the new director of the Cedar Rapids Iowa City Corridor, previously the Joint Venture, is continuing to build the brand for the region.

Daly, who graduated from the University of Iowa and attended high school in the area, has a strong background in building regional economic growth and marketing from the ground up. As the CEO of the Greater Peoria Economic Development Council before coming to the Corridor, Daly led a newly restructured, five-county regional development council.

In that role, Daly told her colleagues and friends about growing up in the Corridor, but they didn’t exactly understand the area. They thought of it with the typical Iowan stereotype — the small towns, farming and not a whole lot to do.

In this new role, Daly wants to change that.

One of the first things Daly did when arriving in late July was meet with community and business leaders. Her organization was tasked with three areas of development: continuing to shape and build a regional brand, business attraction and workforce develop-



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ment. She wanted to get input from leaders to see how she could lead this new organization.

Then it was time to get to work on a plan.

She created a group of creative people in the area — graphic designers, storytellers, communicators — to get input about the Creative Corridor brand and a new marketing plan. What she found out made her alter the path of the region, including a new name for the area in the near future.

“There was one clear thing [that was a problem], and that was the brand,” Daly said. “There was some concern that it wasn’t connecting with people.”

Daly and her team have also put together plans to build the area’s workforce and attract businesses.

The workforce strategy was split into two parts: talent pipeline and immediate workforce. Daly already has things in swing with K-12 education to help the talent pipeline, and the University of Iowa and Kirkwood Community College have continued to produce quality, well-trained graduates.

The immediate workforce area is still a work in progress. Daly said the team is figuring out how many jobs local companies will add in the near future, then her team will tailor a plan to help service those needs.

As for the business attraction end, Daly has identified six industry clusters that the Corridor suits well. She’s been talking to local CEOs within those clusters and will attend trade shows all over the nation to recruit businesses in those areas to come to the Corridor.

“We’ve got an aggressive sales and marketing plan for this year and also the business intelligence councils to help inform us, which is very, very important,” Daly said.

Local businesses, as always, have continued to step up and be leaders in the region and invest in its future.

Rockwell Collins, which has 30,000 employees worldwide and just under 9,000 in Iowa, was started in Cedar Rapids in 1933. The company has donated about \$5 million per year for the last five years to local nonprofits and organizations working toward the betterment of the region and the development of the workforce.

“We want to build Iowa’s workforce, and those are often the children of our employees in most cases, so we want to continue to help Iowa grow,” Dietz said. “So it’s a little bit self-serving in the way that we want to make Iowa the best so we can recruit, retain and attract recruits and employees, but also feel it’s very important to be a good citizen and help support our communities and our state.”

Alliant Energy, a Cedar Rapids-based energy company with a service area that stretches across the Corridor and beyond, has a host of programs geared toward development in the region as well. Just last year, the company created a potential mega site called the Big Cedar Industrial Site. It’s a massive, 1,391-acre site in Cedar Rapids that aims to bring companies into the area. It’s located next to a railway and major roadways.

Through its internship program, Alliant has converted more than 100 full-time employees. And the company sees a lot more growth in the future.

“I think because of our current success in our economic development efforts, those are going to continue in a very robust way,” said Jeanine Penticoff, Alliant Energy’s vice president. “That’s something that we’ll continue to offer as being a big part of this Creative Corridor — not only you think of the office in Cedar Rapids, but we have offices across our service area within that seven-county region, so we have a broad base of employees we have here.”

Van Meter Inc., an electrical and automation supply company based in Cedar Rapids, has built a reputation around the area for its workforce development programs. The employee-owned company has more than 400 workers. The organization earned a spot on Training Magazine’s “Training Top 125” list in 2016 for its exceptional development programs.

Every year, the company’s leaders come together for a two-day conference and identify a core curriculum and expectations for current and future leaders. It helps set the groundwork for leaders to become the best they can be.

“We really believe that if you can put your emphasis on developing your leaders, you can help create a great workforce,” said Jenn Bleil, Van Meter Inc.’s learning and development manager. “We spend a lot of time and energy on developing existing and future leaders... There’s an old saying that as the leader goes, the team goes. We know that’s true.”

Van Meter Inc. also has a robust internship program. Along with the interns learning and doing similar jobs as the full-time employees, the program has seen a strong retention rate. In the last three years, Bleil said the company has hired five interns.

It’s become part of our succession planning,” Bleil said. “It’s really just building that pipeline.”

That doesn’t even include the programs headed by other

big companies in the area, like General Mills, Quaker Oats and many more big brands. There are other exciting developments beyond the private sector as well, like the NewBo City Market and the MERGE Incubator, an area for researchers to start businesses in the private space.

Daly is out to capture all of these exciting developments and turn them into a marketable plan, and she hopes the vision that community leaders had more than a decade ago can come to fruition sooner rather than later.

“I really don’t believe there’s any place better than Iowa City/Cedar Rapids. It is just an incredible place, and I think a lot of times, certainly it’s a place that a lot of people don’t know about,” Daly said. “I want to share it more widely. There’s so many exciting things happening here.”

“

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”

Jenn Bleil, *learning and development manager, Van Meter Inc.*





**Nicole Crain**

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## Promote important issues at Iowa Business Day on the Hill

The 2018 legislative session is a little over one month old, and already many proposals have come forward that could affect Iowa businesses — both positive and negative. Iowa legislators need to hear from business leaders as they weigh these pieces of legislation.

Iowa Business Day on the Hill offers a perfect opportunity to communicate with your legislators at the Statehouse next month.

This year, ABI is partnering with other business organizations, including the National Federation of Independent Business of Iowa (NFIB), the National Association of Women Business Owners (NAWBO) and the Iowa Chamber Alliance, to host this event to provide both business leaders and lawmakers with even greater awareness of the issues affecting Iowa businesses.

Those who attended last year's event heard from legislative leaders about significant reforms that were being debated. Attendees also had the opportunity to advocate to their legislators about workers' compensation reform, which ultimately passed the Iowa House and Senate and was signed by the governor a few weeks later.

In addition to advocating for policies that promote more jobs and economic growth in Iowa, the day is an opportunity to celebrate and share the important role Iowa businesses play in their communities and the state.

## IOWA BUSINESS DAY ON THE HILL

**When:** March 13, 2018

**Where:** ABI Office, 400 E. Court Ave., Des Moines

**Register:** Visit [www.iowaabi.org/events](http://www.iowaabi.org/events)

On Tuesday, March 13, participants will receive an update on activity at the Legislature before heading to the Capitol to meet with lawmakers.

Legislators need to hear firsthand from employers and employees in their districts about how decisions being made at the Statehouse are affecting everyday Iowans. Join us March 13 to help educate Iowa's elected officials on the issues important to Iowa businesses.



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Research shows only approximately 30 percent of all family-owned businesses survive into the second generation, and only 12 percent will survive into the third generation. Surprisingly, only 3 percent of all family businesses operate at the fourth generation and beyond. Of the 70 percent of businesses that fail to transition successfully, 60 percent fail due to problems with communication and trust. Twenty-five percent fail due to a lack of preparation from the next generation. Fifteen percent fail from all other issues (e.g., poor tax or financial planning, legal advice, etc.).

We often hear owners say they want to transfer their businesses to third-party buyers when they first encounter the concept of succession planning in order to maximize their return. However, we've observed that in many circumstances, owners actually choose to transfer their businesses to employees or family members. Reasons for this decision include employees knowing the culture and values of the business, a desire to keep the business with people the owner knows and trusts, and employees' inherent desire and commitment to grow the business.

If a third-party sale is the strategy that'll allow you to accomplish all of your established goals, you'll need to prepare yourself and your company well in advance of the sale. If keeping the business in the family or with key employees is most important to you, prepare yourself, your company and your team for an insider transfer. You may want to investigate creative methods to finance a sale, make sure your chosen successor can run the business without you and avoid conflicts among business-active and non-business-active children.

Planning for your exit maximizes value, minimizes risk and keeps you in control until you've achieved financial security. Starting with a trusted team of advisers can go a long way toward helping meet your goals, answer questions and prepare your company for a successful transition that will preserve your legacy.



**Brian Crotty**

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# There is Always More to the Story

It is commonly believed that millennials hook up for the purpose of sex more frequently than preceding generations. This perception may come from the growing number of dating apps available and the large number of social media posts by millennials chronicling their sexual exploits.

The facts tell a very different story. Things are not always as they appear to be. Gen Xers born in the late 1960s were more than twice as likely to have been sexually active as millennials born in the 1990s. Millennials who are sexually active have fewer partners than both Xers and boomers. The only generation comparable to millennials was born in the 1920s.

When presented with only part of the story, why do we jump to conclusions? Why do we assume facts that are not in evidence? Why don't we engage in conversations to learn more?

Rarely do we have the entire story. We form our impressions and judgments of situations most often with incomplete information. To do this we rely on shortcuts. We take in the sensory data available, look for patterns, interpret what we see and add missing information for what we don't. When faced with conflicting data and the inevitable incomplete story, we trust mostly what we see. Consider the following true story.

A single mother was devoted to her only child, David. One day when David was a baby, his mother left him sleeping to go out and work in the garden. While she was in the garden, the house caught fire. Unconcerned with her own life and safety, she ran inside to save her son while witnesses to the event tried to hold her back.

Amazingly, she found David untouched and rescued him. During the rescue, her hair caught fire and burned her face, leaving horrific permanent scars.

Despite growing up to become successful, David was always embarrassed by his mother's appearance and would occasionally comment to others on her ugliness. When his mother heard this, she was saddened. She decided to confront him and tell him where the scars had come from.

She was killed in a bus crash on her way to see David to tell him the truth.

When searching through his mother's belongings, he found her journal. It included the following entries:

- September 5, 1980. I won the Miss Toronto Beauty Contest.
- January 14, 1982. My husband, Tonny Gateson, passed away in a road accident while I was six months pregnant.
- July 2, 1983. My face was scarred and I lost my hair saving my son, David, from a house fire.

Should David be blamed for forming the impressions he held? Because he was short of complete information, he did what we all do. He pieced together the rest of the story and made a judgment. A decision he no doubt regrets.

The tendency to jump to premature conclusions is part of human nature. When you remind yourself of this natural inclination, you can make different behavioral choices. Seek out the whole story and make a more informed decision.



**Rowena Crosbie**

is president of Tero International, co-author of "Your Invisible Toolbox: The Technological Ups and Interpersonal Downs of the Millennial Generation" and co-host of the show "Your Invisible Toolbox." Since 1993, Tero has earned a distinguished reputation as a premier research and corporate training company. Tero has been voted among the Best Training and Development Companies by readers of the Des Moines Business Record every year since the category was introduced in 2007.



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AHEAD OF THE CURVE

# HELP MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN THE LIVES OF IOWANS – VOLUNTEER WITH THE ABI FOUNDATION

“Life’s most persistent and urgent question is: What are you doing for others?” — Martin Luther King Jr.

Here in Iowa we have many outstanding organizations that serve the diverse needs of those in our communities and across the state. For many, if not all, of these organizations, volunteers play a profound role in the success of their efforts and are relied upon to help drive their missions forward. It can be difficult, however, for volunteers to select just one or two organizations to which to devote their limited “extra” hours in the day — hours that are not

already filled with the daily obligations of work and life.

At the ABI Foundation, we are truly fortunate to work with an army of dedicated volunteers who make all the difference in the experiences and programs we offer year after year. Volunteering with the ABI Foundation not only benefits our participants from across the state and all walks of life, but it also enriches the lives of those who choose to donate their time and talents to developing the future leaders of our state.



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## Here are **FIVE** ways you can benefit from a volunteer experience with the ABI Foundation:

**1.** Become a mentor. ABI Foundation program participants span a wide variety of geographic, socio-economic, educational and personal backgrounds and attend our programs for a variety of reasons. Students may attend with hopes of gaining career experience, increasing their self-confidence, finding their strengths or simply stepping outside their comfort zone. No matter their background or reason for attending, all participants benefit greatly from role models who genuinely care about their future. Oftentimes the mentorships formed last far beyond the program.

**2.** Broaden your perspective. The young people entering the workforce in the next few years are vastly different from those who entered five years ago. They will bring new knowledge and skills, as well as a unique mindset, to the workplace. Reach beyond the secondhand information and stereotypes and truly learn about our future workforce and all they can offer through firsthand interaction.

**3.** Represent your company. As a volunteer, you’re not only representing the professionals in our state, but you’re also representing your company — one of the many in Iowa that care and invest in the future of our young people. It’s no question a positive experience with a business at a young age can result in a student looking first to that same business when seeking an internship or job. Our participants are taking the time to proactively better themselves and prepare for a successful future. You would be hard-pressed to find a better prospective candidate pool.

**4.** Connect with like-minded Iowa leaders. ABI Foundation volunteers are a connected team of professionals, young and veteran, who want to see our state grow by helping others succeed here in Iowa. While their job titles and backgrounds may be vastly different, our volunteers form long-lasting friendships and expand their networks of trusted individuals who they can call upon for expertise in the future.

**5.** The opportunities are endless. It doesn’t take a certain job title or a large amount of time or funds to be involved in ABI Foundation programs. Our volunteers and supporters are entrepreneurs, engineers, financial advisers, educators and more. Volunteer opportunities range from an hour or two to multiple days or months. Sometimes all it takes is one conversation, one action or one individual willing to devote a few minutes to inspire greatness.

One of the most valuable ways you can contribute to the ABI Foundation is by spreading the word to others about our programs. Please invite high school students, college students and adult professionals you know to learn more and take advantage of these unique opportunities available to Iowans.

If you’re feeling inspired to give back to others, your community and the state, consider volunteering with the ABI Foundation or learning more about our programs. If you’re already an ABI Foundation volunteer — thank you. We are incredibly grateful for your support each year. We owe the success and impact of our programs to you.

To learn more about our programs or volunteer opportunities, please visit [www.IowaABIFoundation.org](http://www.IowaABIFoundation.org) and contact us.

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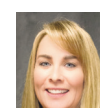
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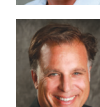
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