

Tama County Business • 2009 Connections

THE EDIES:

Real world innovators chat about unique opportunities in Iowa small towns.

“ALWAYS A YIELD”

Tama County Economic Development President discusses the fertility of growing in Tama soil.

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EDITORIAL



By opening Tama County Business Connections Magazine you are now linked to 1,120 family farms, a wide variety of organic producers and dozens of direct-to-market produce sales outlets leveraging Tama County, Iowa's fertile soil. Tama soil is after all the official soil of Iowa, unsurpassed in depth and fertility. You are also linked to 988 businesses in small towns adding value to the economy.

The purpose of this first edition of Tama County's Business Magazine is to celebrate these natural assets as well as highlight the human assets invested in optimizing our dozen small towns nestled amongst the rolling hills.

Tama County residents have made a name on the national stage for their contributions in agriculture. "Tama Jim" Wilson as Secretary of Agriculture serving under 3 presidents and Norma "Duffy" Lyon adored by millions as the Iowa State Fair Butter Cow Lady. Ripley's-Believe-It-Or-Not and the Guinness Book of World Records also caught glimpses of the blossoming creativity in Tama County through attractions like Pat Acton's Matchstick Marvels Museum. But often it is the domino effect of smaller movements that leads to great strides in total factor productivity.

As Tama County residents, we live the small town American dream of safety, neighborly care and nature's gifts. Centrally located, Tama County is 1 hour away from a number of Iowa's metro markets, and 1 day truck drive from Midwestern metro markets. Our rural county furthermore offers financial and natural resources not available in urban areas, as well as innovative partnerships. If you want to explore your options of new growth in Tama County you are welcome to contact the Tama County Economic Development Commission office. Tama County welcomes new investment to develop on local assets in a responsible manner as we shape the future.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Lindi Roelofse
Executive Director



Tama County Business • 2009 Connections

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Investing in Fertile Soil

Tama County Economic Development Commission's President Nick Podhajsky discusses farming in Tama County's favorable and forgiving rich soils and the global marketplace.

When I came back to the farm after college, I asked my dad what type of crop insurance coverage he had used during his 40 years of farming. He simply looked at me and said "I've always carried hail insurance. Otherwise, I have not had a reason to pay the premiums for other crop insurance. I've never seen a crop failure here, either while I farmed or as a child. We've always had a crop. Sometimes a short crop, but always a crop." Now, of course I'm not saying that there are no weather related risks to farming in Tama County and I'm certainly not recommending to farmers to eliminate their crop insurance, but my dad's response about always having a crop really stayed with me.

Tama County crop production had its share of challenges in 2008. We suffered a variety of extreme weather events that seemed to have jumped right out of the Old Testament. Yet, crop yields once again did surprisingly well. It was a little short, but there was a crop. The favorable and forgiving rich soils along with the hard work and persistent management of farmers paid dividends even though success seemed unattainable. Most farmers will look back at 2008 and find it to be a very profitable year regardless of the added frustrations.

Tama County agriculture is strong and positioned to do well in the future. Being productive is one thing, but you still need markets that want, or better yet, need your goods. That is really the bright future for this area. The world is in a large growth spurt with mammoth populations in places like China and India seeking to better their standards of living. Most of that improvement requires increased demand for food and energy at a time when there is not ample excess of either. Many of these people are now starting to afford meat, which requires far more grain per pound of meat than just human consumption of grain. They are also now driving their first car which we know beats the heck out of a long walk or bicycle on most occasions. And when a person starts to eat better, or use motorized transportation, that individual will not recede back to his former way of life easily. There are many other non essentials he will sacrifice before going back to beans and rice.



This is why I believe Tama County agriculture is positioned well. The grain and livestock we produce is valued by both our domestic economy and by large populations of foreigners. What they want, we can produce. And as their demand for petroleum and liquid fuels increase, we are capable of producing feed stocks for biofuels in this country. Our agricultural production is currently needed now more than ever and there is a finite amount of productive farmland capable meeting these needs. That creates the potential for a profitable ag sector for some time to come.

Profitability though is the key. This wave of commodity demand creates potential, but doesn't guarantee profit. Challenges will always remain. Commodity prices can be very volatile when demand grows so large. That volatility swings prices both up and down as we've experienced this year. Large profits and losses can be had in a very short amount of time. Even non farmers experienced this, watching the gasoline price rocket up and dive down. Also, the increased demand for our crops increases demand for many of our crop inputs. The cost side of both crop and livestock production has experienced the same volatility as the crop commodities. Another challenge to farmers is the added focus of the government's involvement in our industry. The green movement has slowly added regulations and costs to our production as has increasing regulatory restrictions on livestock production. Producers have no problem doing what's right for the environment so long as it's backed up by sound science.

Regardless of the challenges, Tama County farmers have always risen to the occasion and persevered to produce their goods. The current trend of global commodity demand is a very good tailwind for our producers. I believe the future to be as favorable today as any era for farmers in Tama County. Besides, in both good times and not so good times, Tama County farmers always produce a crop.

An aerial photograph of a large outdoor car salvage yard filled with rows of vehicles. The yard is surrounded by green trees and fields. A red heart logo with the text "I LUV USED" is in the upper right corner.

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Visit John Ernest Vineyard & Winery for tours and tastings



Our Kopsa family vineyard and winery is nestled in the picturesque rolling hills of Tama County, above the beautiful Iowa River Valley along the historic Lincoln Highway. John Ernest Vineyard & Winery “takes Midwest winemaking to new heights.” Our facility boasts 5 acres of vineyards and state-of-the-art cellar technology. All of our wines, ranging from light, fruity whites, to rich, complex reds, are fermented, blended and bottled on-site. Visit our winery for an exciting tour highlighting our history, the winemaking process, enjoy a complimentary wine tasting, browse our gift shop and enjoy our outdoor, summer entertainment.



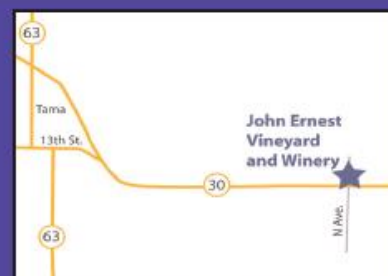
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Purchasing Wine: Wines are sold at the winery, select retailers or by phone. For a complete list of retailers, visit www.johnernestvineyard.com/Retailers.html. We ship anywhere in Iowa and to select states.



John Ernest Vineyard & Winery is located 3 miles east of Tama on Highway 30. We are located 55 miles west of Cedar Rapids, 57 miles east of Ames, 69 miles northeast of Des Moines and 46 miles south of Cedar Falls/Waterloo.



Marty Hardon, Manager
Hardon's Hardware, Tama IA

Marty moved back to Tama-Toledo after living in a major city out of state for over 10 years.

My Top 5

reasons I enjoy living and doing business in Tama-Toledo area:

- 5.** Its nice to **commute to work in minutes** rather than hours!
- 4.** Its **nice when people wave** to you on the streets and roads.
- 3.** I want to live in a place where **my family can feel safe.**
- 2.** Smaller, local stores often make up for price differences in **service and convenience.**
- 1.** In Tama-Toledo I am a part of a chamber where my ideas matter, and **I can have an impact on the future of our community.**



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Show me the Money

Funding development projects in the middle of Iowa? We chat with **Jake Jacobson** president of the South Tama Rec Trail, **Bill Skow** Executive VP of the State Bank of Toledo, and **Pat Stief** General Manager of Traer Municipal Utilities, about unique resources that are working well for them.

The year of 2008 in Tama County was defined by a number of new benchmarks in the economic development financing sector.

Propelling us into the national spotlight of strategic finance planning were events like hosting Obama's Rural Economic Development Summit and the Floods of 2008. On a state level continued partnership with the Hwy 30 Coalition successfully allowed an estimated \$110 Million to be budgeted to Hwy 30's infrastructure development over the next 5 yrs. But local growth was also cultivated with the County Foundation's endowment and funding support growth to allow nonprofits and local governments to enhance their of-

fering and/or work smarter. Tama County Economic Development also offers a dynamic database of local development financing resources. The 2009 edition is now available

online: www.tamacountyiowa.org/databases/financing

TRAER INDUSTRIAL PARK

PROJECT: Received a grant of over \$264,000 for the development of infrastructure in the Traer Industrial Park..

HOW WE DID IT: We identified the need of putting the infrastructure improvements in place at the industrial site and possible sources for financial assistance.

HOW WE GOT THE IDEA: While speaking with a USDA representative on a prior project, we mentioned the fact that we were looking to extend infrastructure to our industrial site. He suggested we consider other USDA funding options.

After the closure of a major manufacturing plant in town, it was apparent that development of the industrial site was critical for future development and employment opportunities for Traer.

OUR GREATEST CHALLENGE: Securing funding necessary to convert an undeveloped tract of land into a site ready for construction.

HOW WE OVERCAME IT: Our local utility company, Traer Municipal Utilities (TMU) requested a determination of financing eligibility from the USDA and was found to be eligible to receive a loan or grant under Rural Development's REDL&G Program. TMU oversaw the process of applying for a grant, which was awarded to be used in the form of a revolving loan fund for specific development objectives.

ADVICE TO OTHERS: Make use of the potential that exists within the various community groups and leaders and put it to use in focusing on promoting development and growth. Get the community involved.

Photos: Top left, Boy scouts building bat houses for the South Tama Rec Trail for mosquito control. Bottom Left, State Bank of Toledo, Downtown. Right, Pat Stief highlighting the new Traer Industrial Park.

STATE BANK OF TOLEDO

PROJECT: Developed "Hometown Reward Checking" with an extremely attractive bonus rate that allows a rural bank to offer services on a national level leveraging new technology.

HOW WE DID IT: We learned of the product through our Community Bankers of Iowa association.

HOW WE GOT THE IDEA:



Photo above by Mike Adams



We recognized the more versatile and liquid savings philosophy of the younger baby boomers, Xers, Yers, etc. We felt a need to address this subject in a pro-active manner.

OUR GREATEST CHALLENGE:

Solving the technical aspects of offering this account because of the specific requirements in place.

HOW WE OVERCAME IT:

Through a lot of hard work by our staff and

particularly Donna Princehouse, our Senior V.P. and Cashier.

ADVICE TO OTHERS:

Look forward to the unique needs of the next generation. Try to be one step ahead.

COMMENTS FROM OTHERS:

The Wall Street Journal featured our product which led to several articles in financial magazines as well as information passed around on various blogs.

SOUTH TAMA REC TRAIL

THE PROJECT:

Recreation Trail overcame the barrier of a 4-lane highway cutting the trail in half, and acquired lake front property for additional expansion plans.

HOW WE GOT THE IDEA:

Citizens of Tama and Toledo wanted to provide a recreation trail connecting the communities. We understood that if a rec trail had a strong volunteer base, with formalized plans and was communicated to the Iowa Department of Transportation (IDOT) before construction of the new Highway 30, then IDOT would have a responsibility to restore the route between the communities.

HOW WE DID IT:

We organized a team of volunteers roughly 10 years ago. 2.1 miles of trail are currently open. The IDOT will re-connect the trail under the US 30 right-of-way.

OUR CHALLENGE:

Sustaining an all volunteer project team while satisfying the interests of two communities, the school district, utility company, and neighborhoods.

HOW WE OVERCAME IT:

Constantly adding new members with cooperation and assistance of all entities involved.

ADVICE TO OTHERS:

Recognize that the obstacles presented by two separate communities and governments can also be a tremendous asset.

COMMENTS FROM OTHERS:

I deeply appreciate the vision and commitment it took to preserve and maintain this space for the present and future benefit of our community. Ginny Elliott

Photo by Molly Clubb

Location. Location.

Picturesque natural landscapes draw them in. We chat with **Mark Goos** from Gladbrook Investment Company, **Mayor Ardene Cross** from the City of Clutier, and **Russ Grimm** owner of the Copper Beech Building about sustaining and enhancing their real estate assets amongst the rolling hills.

Key Real Estate Development and Re-use projects for Tama County in 2009 include the establishment of a Housing Trust Fund in conjunction with Hardin, Marshall, and Poweshiek counties. A comprehensive land use plan is also in the works.

Tama County Economic Development also serves as a free informational clearing house for available industrial land and buildings. And since 2008, available commercial buildings have been added to the comprehensive database as well.



For more info, please visit: www.tamacountyiowa.org/resources
A comprehensive listing of available residential properties can be viewed at www.tamacountymls.com

GLADBROOK INVESTMENT COMPANY, INC.

PROJECT: various real estate related community betterment projects .

HOW WE DID IT: We had 31 investors put in \$5,000 each to save the bowling alley for a total of \$155,000. We have now turned that amount into \$2.5 million in improvements.

HOW WE GOT THE IDEA: Came from our desire to promote and enhance our community; to keep Gladbrook "alive and growing".

OUR GREATEST CHALLENGE: How to remove less desirable homes and replace with new affordable homes for senior citizens that would in turn free up their homes for younger families.

HOW WE OVERCAME IT: By offering quality efficient housing with minimum responsibilities to the owners. This was all made possible by a lot of donated time.

ADVICE TO OTHERS: It will make you feel good and your community better when you do positive things in your community.

COMMENTS FROM OTHERS: We have a sign at the top of a hill coming into town that says "Gladbrook, Alive and Growing". The Gladbrook Investment Corp. makes that a very true statement. This group of local guys makes it happen. Town houses, condos, lots for sale to build on, new development areas where people can build on their own house plans. This group of guys goes beyond trying to please the new owners of these complexes; they are concerned, kind, honest, and ambitious and I'm sure they will keep our community a place to be proud of. They have made places of retirement a dream come true for my husband and I. We are so fortunate and God bless them all for the work they do. — Mike & Lonna Cathcart



Above: Russ Grimm, Copper Beech Building
Photo by Pam Thiele

CITY OF CLUTIER

PROJECT: Main Street renovation

HOW WE DID IT: When Main Street was widened, we restored parking along the street to its original layout of angle parking.

HOW WE GOT THE IDEA: Visitors to our community have shown an interest

Location.



Below: Mark Goos, Gladbrook Investment Company
Photo by Wayne Chamberlain

in seeing the historic look of the town such as the jail and hotel so we wanted to incorporate the original street parking design into this project.

OUR GREATEST CHALLENGE: for a small town, it is always financing

HOW WE OVERCAME IT: several years of planning and budgeting

ADVICE TO OTHERS: Set a goal and keep working.



THE COPPER BEECH BUILDING

PROJECT: Historic Preservation and multiple tenant partnership for small town businesses

HOW WE DID IT: Linda and I purchased the building in December 2006 and reconstructed the entire building for the purpose of our small business use and for rental. My picture frame business and our art gallery are open and all rental space is filled.

HOW WE GOT THE IDEA: During a casual visit with friends from Dysart, I learned that there was one empty building on Main Street. I had wanted to move my picture framing out of our home for years and Linda and I have wanted to own a commercial building. I mentioned it to Linda and the next thing we knew we were the owners of a building. We recognized that Dysart had a vibrant and progressive business community that excited us and also fit our commercial needs.

OUR GREATEST CHALLENGE: Since Linda and I did all of the demolition and most of the construction, staying focused and energized was essential. Staying on budget and on schedule was difficult when converting a 100-year old building from what was most recently a restaurant to a flexible space for multiple renters.

HOW WE OVERCAME IT: We accepted the fact that old buildings have surprises. I believe a board game, much like Clue, could be created from these experiences. We took our time and together processed choices. We often used humor and it was the encouragement from the community that resulted in success.

ADVICE TO OTHERS: Be flexible. Be patient. Don't quit your day job.

Unique & Authentic

Product, Pricing, Place and Promotion. **Cathy Wieck** from the Dysart Blue Hat Ladies ambassador group, **Ellen Young** president of Tama County Barn Quilts, as well as **Rick Krug and Mayor Don Lyons** from the Dysart Lions Club talk about the importance of authenticity, making a lasting impact through cultural experiences.

A key part of Tama County Economic Development's mission is to create expansion opportunities for local businesses to increase awareness, customer base, or expand networks for future growth. RAGBRAI 2008 and Iowa Tourism Conference 2009 include event attraction opportunities expected to have an economic impact upwards of \$1 Million.

Smaller attraction/marketing initiatives include new and updated publications. 2008 also marked Tama County Economic Development's first out-of-state collaboration with Iowa Department of Economic Development on meeting with growing and expanding industry leaders that could benefit from locating in Iowa.

Tama
County
Eco-
nomic
Devel-

omment also offers a press database to help local businesses share their industry stories, human interest or community events. The 2009 edition is now available online: www.tamacountyiowa.org/databases/press

BLUE HAT LADIES

PROJECT: The Dysart Hospitality and Tour (H.A.T) Team welcomes groups of visitors and introduces them to commerce and attractions in Dysart

HOW WE DID IT: The Dysart H.A.T. Team, consisting of five community-spirited women, began an organized effort to welcome visitors to Dysart in June 2008. As of December 1, 2008, the team members have welcomed well over 600 visitors and shoppers and have conducted a number of city tours.

HOW WE GOT THE IDEA: It was evident that there was a need to provide information and to develop an organized plan for welcoming an increasing number of community visitors. Two women began brainstorming which lead to the H.A.T. acronym, along with the concept of using large blue hats as a logo. A committee of five "people-person" volunteers was formed. With the attractively renovated Main Street and the interesting specialty shops, the H.A.T. Team is providing a personal touch for those who come to enjoy what Dysart has to offer.

OUR GREATEST CHALLENGE: Keeping up with the schedule of visitors. It has also been a challenge to keep up with the necessary supplies of shopping brochures and business cards which the Team distributes.

HOW WE OVERCAME IT: Continual updating of the daily schedule. The ability to communicate quickly by email has been a great asset in keeping the team's activities organized.

ADVICE TO OTHERS: Develop fresh ideas to help your community prosper. Get creative thinkers together and brainstorm. Don't be afraid to be different – maybe even a little outrageous! Choose committees made up of enthusiastic, capable, energetic, positive people to carry out ideas. Ignore the naysayers and forge ahead toward your goals. Remember, the impossible just takes a little longer!

TAMA COUNTY BARN QUILTS

PROJECT: erecting colorful 8x8 ft painted quilts on significant barns and other structures in Tama County

HOW WE DID IT: We gathered several persons from around the county who were interested in quilting, history and/or tourism. We met twice monthly. We now have 11 quilts hung on buildings, 3 more are ready to hang, and several more are in the planning process.



Dysart Blue Hat Ladies
Photo by Pam Thiele



Tama County Barn Quilts
Photo by Molly Clubb

Experiences

HOW WE GOT THE IDEA: Grundy County, the first county in Iowa to take on this project, set out to recruit other counties in the region to bring even more tourists to the area. This project helps focus on Tama County's many beautiful barns and ag buildings, and also on the beauty and history of quilts.

OUR GREATEST CHALLENGE: Getting people to agree to let us display the barn quilts on their farms (most love the idea, but some do not).

HOW WE OVERCAME IT: We had to appreciate the fact that people have the right to "just say no". People have now seen the Barn Quilts displayed, and they can better appreciate the project. Most folks are enthused about financially sponsoring a quilt.

ADVICE TO OTHERS: Have an existing county group be in charge of the project, since we are just volunteers with limited time to spend on it.

DYSART LIONS CLUB

PROJECT: Road housed professional live theatre event: "Dates With A Nut" for the residents of Tama County in Dysart

HOW WE DID IT: The Dysart Lions Club, in earnest partnership with the Garrison Lions, coordinated the delivery of two performances of professional comedy theatre by the Iowa Theatre Artists Company as a Lions fundraiser.

HOW WE GOT THE IDEA: Members of the Garrison Lions Club, with direct involvement in the Old Creamery Theatre, had entertained area citizens at Amana as a Garrison fundraiser. When circumstances changed, Don Lyons suggested to the Garrison Lions that a joint fundraiser be initiated to provide theatre culture and to support the Lions motto, "We Serve". The Dysart community was chosen as the Union Community School District consented to the use of its nearly 400 seat auditorium.

OUR GREATEST CHALLENGE: The organization, planning, coordination, command, and control of the fundraiser initiative for a successful outcome for all.

HOW WE OVERCAME IT: The management and coordination of the details was recognized as critical to our focused efforts. Timely meetings were planned with fruitful discussion in a coordinated manner. Timelines were established to meet, and keep, the fundraiser performance on track in concert with the ITAC staff.

ADVICE TO OTHERS: Friends can do great things together. Networking with the Garrison Lions, talking up the idea with area citizens, approaching the public to support a live performance in Dysart, planning and coordinating with a focus on an exceptional outcome – we believed in ourselves and what was possible.



Dysart Lions Club
Photo by Pam Thiele

I ♥ my Small Town,

Today about 50% of Iowans live the small town American Dream. We chat with **Julie McLaughlin** from the Dysart Business Builders, **Mayor Susan Holubar** from city of Montour, and **Tammie Anderson**, about Garwin's Freedom Days Celebration and how these events and developments make our small town communities bloom in Iowa small towns.

Living the American dream in small town America means residents and business owners have an increased ability to impact and/or define what makes their town a special place. The ongoing 2008 Reinig Center photography exhibit celebrates the unique attractions in each of Tama County's 12 towns, and can be viewed in the lobby of the Reinig Toledo Civic Center.

From marketing growth opportunities, hosting websites and providing local access to an array of communication technology, communities can make use of Tama County Economic Development to help find resources to actualize their vision for their communities' potential.

The grand community development objective for 2009 is to provide resources to each town interested in putting a long term plan for development in place.

Tama County Economic Development website offers economic snapshots of all 12 towns for potential future business owners or residents. A fact sheet of the county is also available at: www.tamacountyiowa.org

DYSART BUSINESS BUILDERS

PROJECT: Expanded the 4th Annual Wine Tasting & Fall Festival.

HOW WE DID IT: As new and unique businesses continued to occupy our Main Street, we felt the need to showcase them. Adding the Iowa wine tasting to our fall festival was a perfect solution as the businesses host the wineries during the hours of the tasting. Attendance for this year's event reached above 400, with many coming from the Cedar Rapids and Waterloo/Cedar Falls area.

HOW WE GOT THE IDEA: We were looking for a way to increase interest and boost attendance at our annual fall festival. Other vendors sold chocolates, pumpkins & gourds, baked goods, gourmet food items, logo t-shirts, wine charms & coasters.

OUR GREATEST CHALLENGE: Finding the Iowa wineries and convincing them to participate in our event, as they are invited to do a number of tastings throughout the year.

HOW WE OVERCAME IT: A committee was formed and a list of wineries was supplied by the Iowa Wine and Beer Board. We allowed the wineries to sell their wines during the event and offered a monetary incentive to help cover mileage costs. We charged a fee for the tasting which included a tasting glass and information booklet.

ADVICE TO OTHERS: A core committee is a necessity and community involvement is paramount! Not only were the Women's clubs involved, but also the Lions Club (serving food) and many local business owners. We had set-up committees, as well as clean-up, plus designated hours for volunteers to help with the various activities. Teachers helped to decorate the light poles for the festival.



Mayor Susan Holubar,
City of Montour
Photo by Bryan Stewart



Tammie Anderson, Garwin Freedom Days Comm
Photo by Randy Aiken

CITY OF MONTOUR

PROJECT: Won Best Bloomin' Town in Iowa Award

HOW WE DID IT: We entered a community beautification contest sponsored by *Our Iowa Magazine*. Our volunteers were already involved in a playground project and they were equally supportive of our landscaping project. We were named the "Best Bloomin' Town in Iowa" receiving a \$2,000 check for landscaping.

Iowa



Committee



Julie McLaughlin, Dysart Business Builders
Photo by Pam Thiele

GARWIN FREEDOM DAYS COMMITTEE

PROJECT: Enhanced the long standing tradition of Garwin Freedom Days Celebration.

HOW WE DID IT: Five people joined forces to organize a large event and raise money from zero to have a very successful three-day event.

HOW WE GOT THE IDEA: There was always a Freedom Days Celebration, but the level of the activity had gone down and there was not an official committee, just some people who would set up random things to do and fireworks. We got ideas by seeing what was popular, what was available at low cost, and what we had right here in Garwin.

OUR GREATEST CHALLENGE: We had no money, no man power, nothing reserved, and our event was in four months.

HOW WE OVERCAME IT: We got organized fast; we posted a donation thermometer goal at the local park. We conducted community fundraisers that were basically card parties with a fee to play cards and had free will donation items. Garwin Revitalization Committee, Lions Club, City of Garwin, GMG School, and numerous other businesses and private citizens donated. The community really embraced what we were trying to accomplish and were behind us in our mission. We made money on events during Freedom Days that allowed us to carry over money.

ADVICE TO OTHERS: Use what is available in your community. The more you involve the community, the better it is received. Get volunteers early on. Stay involved year round with other community clubs, school, and city officials to keep your plan in mind. Participate in radio and newspaper interviews.

Come check out Garwin Freedom Days

HOW WE GOT THE IDEA: We read about a contest in *Our Iowa* magazine in which small towns, under 5,000 population, were eligible to win money for beautification.

OUR GREATEST CHALLENGE: We didn't really have any challenges. We just needed positive people to believe that we could compete with other towns for such an honor.

HOW WE OVERCAME IT: We were currently involved in upgrading our park so we had lots of support for landscaping the main street. A nursery in Marshalltown donated time by filling the flower pots with beautiful plantings and landscaping. Residents volunteered their time to water the plants regularly.

ADVICE TO OTHERS: "If you think you can or think you can't, you're right."
Henry Ford,

Our Creative Downt

Opening a creative business on Main Street brings personality and energy to our downtowns. Entrepreneurs **Robin Werner** from Isabelle Originals and Ivy Threads, **Mike Adams** from Adams Photography and **Suzanne Earley** from Knots & Bolts talk about innovative cultivation strategies they used when entering into the Tama County market.

Though it is easy to look to the big capital investments and large company payrolls as the economic indicators for an area, the reality is that entrepreneurs with small businesses make up and an even larger percentage in Tama County. Business Development experts forecast that over the next 5 years employment in rural areas will have a ratio where 1 of 3 people are self-employed entrepreneurs. To this end Tama County Economic Development offers entrepreneurs a resource with a dynamic packet of information on financial, tactical and strategic resources. 2009 also marks the beginning of a new expanded multi-county approach to cultivating entrepreneurs out of the existing labor force.



ISABELLE ORIGINALS AND IVY THREADS

PROJECT: Downtown partnerships & direct marketing growth strategies

HOW WE DID IT: I originally started with a mailing list of customers, which then grew into a weekly “Fabulous Friday” EMAIL & a smaller “Fabulous Friday” text messaging. Hearing excitement directly from my customers told me that the emails were working, and that they loved the added touch of my personal update on other local businesses.

HOW WE GOT THE IDEA: Advertising is essential & costly & email is FREE! I also appreciate that people do not want “junk mail”, the email recipients are given the option to “OPT OUT” whenever they choose. Another reason I feel this works is because time is of the essence, customers can “Read & React” (either by deleting and moving on to the next thing in their life or they can react by shopping in this case).

OUR GREATEST CHALLENGE: Keeping the email short & exciting, while promoting both my business & other local shops & studios.

HOW WE OVERCAME IT: I created an email that was short & sweet & to the point!

ADVICE TO OTHERS: “A business is not a business without a customer!” “Stay progressive and appreciate each customer.”

COMMENTS FROM OTHERS: Robin at Isabelle Originals and Ivy Threads has been a huge part of the success that Sassy’s Boutique has enjoyed. She is truly a team player on the street and goes above and beyond what she would actually have to do to help get the word out to her customers about other stores on Main. -- Wanda Petersen of Sassy’s Boutique-a main street business in Dysart .

ADAMS PHOTOGRAPHY

PROJECT: Downtown presence & giving back to the community

HOW WE DID IT: I started three years ago as an add-on class at school and am now, in a short time, being recognized by peers as an award winning photographer.



Suzanne Earley, Knots & Bolts
Photo by Molly Clubb



Robin Werner, Isabelle Originals
and Ivy Threads
Photo by Pam Thiele

owns

HOW WE GOT THE IDEA: I think that there are not any formally trained artists that perform portrait and fine art photography so it is perfect for Tama County to have that now.

OUR GREATEST CHALLENGE: Every day is a great challenge but without any failures you will never see any suc-

HOW WE OVERCAME IT: We focus on constant continuing education, always striving to learn more about the technical and creative aspects of our business.

ADVICE TO OTHERS: Do what you love. If you are only in it for the money, no matter how much you make you'll hate your job.

KNOTS & BOLTS

PROJECT: Downtown with innovative online presence and marketing strategies

HOW WE DID IT: Knots & Bolts is a brand-new fabric and yarn store in downtown Traer. In its first five months, sales have exceeded initial projections, thanks to local community support and a strong online following.

HOW WE GOT THE IDEA: After starting a home-based quilting business, I went online and found message boards that allowed me to interact directly with quilters from all over the world. This summer, I decided to move my home-based business to a storefront in Traer. An online storefront seemed a natural addition to this expansion. I regularly update a blog, which features new inventory, free patterns and others ideas that are interesting to our customers. I also send out a regular e-mail newsletter highlighting any special deals or products both in store and online.

OUR GREATEST CHALLENGE: Running a successful business in an economic downturn.

HOW WE OVERCAME IT: Being successful meant finding a way to sell my products not just locally but nationally as well. Opening an online storefront would allow me to open my store to as many people as possible. I have tried to concentrate on providing products that local crafters need at reasonable prices.

ADVICE TO OTHERS: Learn to navigate the world of online selling. Look for message boards of like-minded individuals to start networking and building a base of people that could frequent an online shop once you opened it. Don't just approach these people with the intention of selling to them, though. Build relationships, and you'll find yourself enriched in more ways than simply finding a market for your products.



Collection of Tama County Tourism Photographs
Photos by Adams Photography

Growing Thick and Fast

Locating a business outside a metropolitan area has some advantages and disadvantages. **Duane Petty** owner of Petty Vinyl Company, **Kendall Jordan** co-owner of Iowa Step & Tank, and **Shannon Strobusch** from Rainbow Nights/Designer Inn & Suites share some of their secrets to growing a business in Tama County.

2008 was a remarkable year in the Tama County retail and service industry. Taxable income grew as Dy-sart, Elberon, Garwin, Gladbrook and Toledo all reported double digit growth. The county's overall growth ended up at 4%.

Value added in real estate expansions followed a very similar pattern as over \$15 million dollars was invested. Again we saw double digit growth over 2007 with an increase of 11%.

Total retained businesses and new business start-ups in Tama County were also

an improvement over the previous year totaling 26. More resources on expanding and retaining businesses in Tama

County can be found

online: www.tamacountyiowa.org/resources

PETTY VINYL COMPANY

PROJECT: Growth and long-term market development.

HOW WE DID IT: In 2008 we have expanded to include aluminum fencing and railing to our offering. We also now have a new cellular PVC vinyl composite decking. With these additional offerings and the same quality vinyl products, Petty Vinyl plans on continuing to grow.

OUR GREATEST CHALLENGE: One of Petty Vinyl's greatest challenges was to keep a large enough inventory of all the different styles of fencing and railing on hand to allow for fast turn around for our customers.

HOW WE OVERCAME IT: In 2001, Petty Vinyl Company purchased a CNC Computerized Router. At that time we became not only a supplier but also a fabricator of vinyl products. This allowed us to purchase volume blank vinyl profiles and fabricate standard, as well as custom fence and railing styles. With the CNC Router and large inventory, we can fabricate vinyl products in most cases in 2-3 days. The CNC Router also allowed us to make gazebos, pergolas, arbors, and other yard accessories.

ADVICE TO OTHERS: If you want to start up your own business, it can be very rewarding working for yourself. But you are really working for all of your customers and it will take a lot of work, as every day you must be self-motivated to get as much done as possible because tomorrow will not come to those businesses that wait for tomorrow to work.

COMMENTS FROM OTHERS: The first thing my customers say is how superb the quality of vinyl is. They are surprised that we have all the different products on hand. When we install a fence/railing or deck, they can't believe how good it looks. The repeat business with customers shows that we have quality products.



Rainforest Suite at Designer Inn & Suites
Designed and built by Gary Strobusch

IOWA STEP & TANK

PROJECT: Strategic acquisitions & real estate development

HOW WE DID IT: we manufacture pre-cast septic tanks, steps, hog slats, and miscellaneous lawn ornaments and blocks. We have moved the business from its location in Marshalltown to Toledo and have been in production the entire time. We are now in the process of expanding our product line.



Lush



Duane Petty, Petty Vinyl Company
Photo by Wayne Chamberlain

HOW WE GOT THE IDEA: The previous owner wanted to sell and we felt that there would be a lack of suppliers in the area if it were to be relocated somewhere else. We bought the business and moved it to Toledo where we had the space and the workforce to make this happen.

OUR GREATEST CHALLENGE: Trying to maintain our customer base as

well as not interrupting our flow of inventory during the move and keeping up with deliveries and manufacturing during this process.

HOW WE OVERCAME IT: We worked longer hours during the day and hired some extra help. Our moving was done at nights and on the weekends.

RAINBOW NIGHTS/ DESIGNER INN & SUITES

PROJECT: Business showroom and non-franchise marketing

HOW WE DID IT: Gary Strobusch has been building fantasy suites for 28 years and decided to fulfill his dream of buying a hotel and putting fantasy suites in. We are now in our 5th year of business.

HOW WE GOT THE IDEA: Gary has designed and manufactured over 70 different theme suites and/or full room creations which have been distributed throughout the United States. For over 25 years the room components and designs had been produced in Wisconsin. The current facility is located in Tama and Toledo and is key, being just 45 minutes from Waterloo, Des Moines and Cedar Rapids. The towns of Tama-Toledo are quaint with things to do and we also are 5 minutes from Meskwaki Casino.

OUR GREATEST CHALLENGE: We are an independent hotel and have a franchise next door. We struggle with advertising because the amount of advertising a franchise is able to afford and get, we cannot do. For our suites, we rely on word-of-mouth, our website, repeat stays, newspaper ads, publicity and bridal shows.

HOW WE OVERCAME IT: We had to be creative in our marketing strategies and materials to reach our target areas and customers. In our first year or two of business, we did many free tours open to the public as well as private tours for anyone who stopped in. This helped get the word out in the beginning. We also rely heavily on our website which attracts about 1,500 new visitors a month.

ADVICE TO OTHERS: Set your goals and reach high to attain them. It takes a lot of effort in the beginning, but is worth it.

The Work Ethic of th

Merle Parks a driving force behind the Garwin Shelter House, **Carl Zofka** owner of Carl's Electric, and the **Tama County School Districts** highlight their commitment to the workforce of tomorrow.

Tama County will start 2009 with a fresh set of workforce resources. Beyond the world class tax training dollars program, and low interest loans to business expanding the workforce, Tama County Economic Development is now also working on an regional workforce innovation project. In partnership with 6 other counties in central Iowa this alliance is designed to increase resources and understanding of our area to optimize our: 1) supply chain between industry and educational institutions, 2) infrastructure and 3) resources for our citizens who choose to be self-employed. This initiative is the first in the nation.

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surround-
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The latest

edition is available online:

[www.tamacountyiowa.org/
TamaCountyLaborshed](http://www.tamacountyiowa.org/TamaCountyLaborshed)



GARWIN SHELTER HOUSE

PROJECT: : Involved High School students from GMG in updating the Garwin City Park Shelter House.

HOW WE DID IT:

The existing open shelter house in the city park was enclosed with money left to the Garwin Legion Auxiliary by Margaret Bartling. With volunteer help and financing, it was converted to year-round use with a furnace, air conditioning, kitchen, and bathroom.

HOW WE GOT THE IDEA:

When the Post Office moved in to the Legion Hall, the community lost a place to meet. We had an anonymous donation of a furnace if we would enclose the shelter house for year-round use.

OUR GREATEST CHALLENGE:

Financing

HOW WE OVERCAME IT:

When the Garwin Courts were sold, the profits were to stay in the community. Garwin's revitalization committee received part of that money to use for the shelter house. Other donations were received from the cookbook committee, Starits Plumbing & Heating, Carl's Electric, City of Garwin, and many others.

In addition, the Green Mountain Garwin high school industrial arts class framed up the building.

ADVICE TO OTHERS:

If your project is worthwhile and will benefit the community, people will volunteer and also help financially.

SCHOOL DISTRICTS

GREEN MOUNTAIN GARWIN (GMG): Voters approved a \$2.5 million bond issue as part of a \$4.3 million project. \$1.8 million will come from the state-wide penny sales tax. The money will pay for a gym and two science classrooms as well as a strength training center, a lobby, restrooms, and locker rooms at the GMG secondary school in Garwin.



ne People

GLADBROOK-REINBECK: The School District partnered with the City of Gladbrook, Covenant Health Providers, and residents to construct a fitness and wellness center in combination with the existing indoor swimming pool at the Middle School in Gladbrook. The school sees it as an asset in the education of students in physical fitness. The projected cost of the project was \$548,000.

SOUTH TAMA COUNTY: Kindergarten education was expanded to five days

a week with classrooms being housed in the new elementary school building in Tama.

NORTH TAMA COUNTY: Plans are underway for an addition to the junior high building in Traer.

UNION: Actively participating in the *green* movement by using more energy efficient light bulbs and installing two test wind towers.

CARL'S ELECTRIC

PROJECT: Apprenticeship training for young talent.

HOW WE DID IT: We partner with the local high school to recruit youth to a vocational career path of electrical. We have been successful in obtaining college bound youth who work for us as an electrical apprentice and then complete classroom training at a community college and return to Carl's Electric for full time employment.

HOW WE GOT THE IDEA: We have found that if you tap into the strength of the local community and partner with the resources here, you will have more success in getting long term quality employees and continuing to build the local economy. Educating youth early on brings us employees with new ideas, current technology, and thus furthering our services and following new advances in electricity. Working with youth is our greatest strength to continue our own business and grow locally.

OUR GREATEST CHALLENGE: We are a small rural community and drawing in youth to stay local is not always easy or to have the youth which are college bound consider a vocational career in electrical.

HOW WE OVERCAME IT: We seek local youth from GMG High School who would consider living in the Garwin area and are capable of completing college level work in electrical. We offer wages that are comparable to the rest of the state. Staying in-synch with what is happening in both employment and the electrical career field is necessary to recruit quality apprentice electricians who will continue to be a part of Carl's Electric Service in the future.

ADVICE TO OTHERS: The best way to build your business and/or your community is to do it with your local resources.

We Value Connecting

The local Tama County media, RAGBRAI 2008 leadership and Tama County Libraries agree about the value of connecting with others. We chat with RAGBRAI leaders **Carolyn Dolezal**, **Midge Horton**, **Mayor Susan Holubar**, as well as Tama County Libraries' **Rosanne Foster** about synergies gained by connecting inside and linking up outside Tama County.

A fundamental operating principle of Tama County Economic Development is to serve as a connector. To provide smart growth opportunities on the premise that with the right information, partners and resources, you can get more accomplished without necessarily increasing your budget of dollars or time, nor compromising quality.

One such example would be Tama County's Economic Development partnership with Benton, Jasper, Marshall, and Poweshiek counties. The alliance is one of the factors that helped triple Tama County's annual prospect leads. Site visits also increased proportionally as Tama County is getting increased consideration for business expansions and start ups.

Tama County Economic Development offers an extensive list of free and confidential services for growing businesses. For more information on partnership projects and benefits of being an official partner of Tama County Economic Development you can visit online:

www.tamacountyiowa.org/projects

RAGBRAI 2008

PROJECT: Hosting over 25,000 out of town visitors during the oldest, longest, biggest bicycle marathon in the world in 6 of Tama County's communities. Including overnight accommodations.

HOW WE DID IT: Tama-Toledo-Meskwaki worked together through a informal government co-leadership strategy. In Montour the key was residents volunteers and several city meetings. Vining also had a cooperative effort between the City, the Fire Department, and the CSA Lodge. As the smallest town in Tama County they furthermore relied on friends and relatives around Vining and from afar. Not only did they volunteer their time, but they also donated home baked cookies, rolls, and kolaches. They helped set up, tear down and clean up. Donations and discounts from local businesses and banks made it possible.

HOW WE GOT THE IDEA: Tama-Toledo-Meskwaki picked a theme that could highlight the features of the community and expand on what we were already known for. It was also important to them to make sure that it was fun and entertaining.

OUR GREATEST CHALLENGE: Getting enough volunteers and the weather was a challenge for Tama-Toledo-Meskwaki, while vendors thinking Montour was too close to an overnight stop was also a hurdle. Both Montour and Chelsea were furthermore impacted by the floods of 2008.

HOW WE OVERCAME IT: Over 500 people of Tama County ultimately came together to make this event possible. They identified and integrated best case practices from past RAGBRAI hosts but ultimately local residents, church groups, the youth and many more enabled Tama County to generate over \$500,000 in new dollars.

ADVICE TO OTHERS: Stay positive and open minded to any ideas and build on them. Believe in people and tell them that you do.



TAMA COUNTY MEDIA

PROJECT: Coverage of the Tama County's EDIE Recognition Awards in 2008 for innovation and leadership in economic development projects.

HOW WE DID IT: For the first 7 weeks of the year leading up to the EDIE Awards ceremony night, Tama/Grundy Publishing printed a weekly feature on the front page of the Inside Iowa section of all Tama



Tama County Libraries
Photos by Molly Clubb

TAMA COUNTY LIBRARIES

PROJECT: Collaboration in grant applications and operation

HOW WE DID IT: The Tama County Library Association is made up of the directors of the nine county libraries. Our purpose is to be a support system for each other as we share ideas, concerns, and solutions in an effort to provide the best possible library services to Tama County.

HOW WE GOT THE IDEA: There has been a growing demand for audios in each of our communities. Two of the greatest areas of need come from those who travel for work or pleasure and those who are shut-in and/or suffer from poor eyesight. Due to the cost of audios, it is difficult to meet the demand especially in our smaller libraries. The TCLA have pooled their resources and purchased an audio collection that is transferred between the libraries quarterly.

OUR GREATEST CHALLENGE: Coming up with the funding necessary to allow us to purchase enough audios to meet the growing demand.

HOW WE OVERCAME IT: Applied for and received a grant from the Tama County Community Foundation.

ADVICE TO OTHERS: Work together to come up with the solutions that work for all.

County newspapers highlighting the story of the nominated enterprises. During the same time frame Cat Campbell-Courier did a radio interview with the week's three nominees live on Tama County's KZAT 95.5FM radio station.

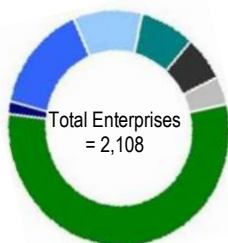
HOW WE GOT THE IDEA: It was important to look back over the year and recognize local innovation and success.

OUR GREATEST CHALLENGE: Workload involved in coordinating, featuring, and maximizing the potential for each of the nominees.

HOW WE OVERCAME IT: Keep it simple. Use the same baseline info but apply it specially for the different media vehicles. Also having it once a year allows us to leverage economies of scale.

economic development indicators

INDUSTRY SECTORS



Source: Tama County Economic Development, 2008

RETAIL & SERVICE INDUSTRY TAXABLE INCOME (\$ 000)

	2006	2007	2008	% Change
Chelsea.....	779	895	919	▲ 3
Clutier.....	527	615	573	▼ -7
Dysart.....	7,073	6,354	7,646	▲ 20
Elberon.....	483	573	651	▲ 14
Garwin.....	832	1,024	1,238	▲ 21
Gladbrook.....	7,656	8,253	11,177	▲ 35
Montour.....	na	1,268	1,273	▲ 0
Tama.....	40,215	42,365	34,528	▼ -18
Toledo.....	31,234	29,879	36,830	▲ 23
Traer.....	8,435	8,607	9,164	▲ 6
Other.....	3,846	2,410	2,120	▼ -12
Tama County.....	101,080	102,244	106,119	▲ 4
Hotel Motel Taxes	38	59	58	▼ -2

Source: Internal Revenue Service for year ending March 2008

ENTREPRENEURSHIP, SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

	2006	2007	2008	
New Business.....	18	15	21	▲
New Ownership.....	5	9	6	▼
Total.....	23	24	27	▲

Source: Tama County Economic Development, 2008

REAL ESTATE DEVELOPMENT & REUSE

# Available	Type of Real Estate	Size ranges
54	Residential Dwellings.....	
20	Commercial Buildings	680—16, 560 sq/ft
5	Industrial Buildings	2,370—155,058 sq/ft
4	Industrial Sites.....	.66—117 acres

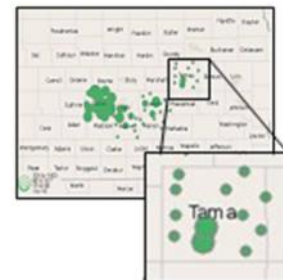
Source: Tama County Economic Development, 2008

EMPLOYMENT

Potential Labor Force (entire laborshed area).....	91,102
Est Individuals likely to accept/change employment..	16,512
% working multiple jobs.....	10.9 %
Est. underemployment	4 %
Unemployment (Dec 2008).....	7 %
Median Family income (2000).....	\$ 37,419
Per Capita Income (2000).....	\$ 17,097

Source: Iowa Department of Workforce Development, 2009

Growth trend between 2001-2006 in the 15-49 age demographic gravitates towards Des Moines Metro. Yet there is one clear exception: Tama County. Two things make this growth especially interesting: 1) other predominantly rural counties in the study did not experience the same growth, and 2) the growth is consistent across most of the 12 small towns inside Tama County.



Source: Economic Modeling Specialists Inc., 2008

PUBLIC SAFETY

	County	Iowa	US
Property.....	4.9	297	362
Violent.....	3.6	27	51
Total.....	4.9	32	412

Source: Iowa Crime Rates Comparisons Report, 2000

POPULATION GROWTH

1990	17,419
1995	17,761
2000	18,108
2005	17,890
(projected) 2010	18,158

Iowa Workforce Development, 2008

DIVERSITY

Racial/Ethnic Category	# of Residents	% of Population
One Race		
White.....	16,423	91.80
American Indian.....	1,109	6.20
African-American.....	89	0.50
Asian.....	36	0.20
Two or more races.....	233	1.30
Latino/Hispanic.....	823	4.60

Source: US Census and Applied Geographic Solutions, 2006

● EDUCATION: COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICTS

	Enrollment		Graduation		Debts
	FY07	FY08	FY07	FY08	
Benton.....	1,577	1,657 ▲	94%	99% ▲	0
Green Mountain Garwin.....	457	453 ▼	91%	92% ▲	\$ 3,000,625
Gladbrook-Reinbeck.....	745	688 ▼	97%	96% ▼	\$ 595,000
North Tama.....	536	520 ▼	98%	100% ▲	\$ 8,010,000
South Tama.....	1,751	1,637 ▼	73%	87% ▲	0
Union.....	1,237	1,259 ▲	99%	94% ▼	.\$ 340,000
Tama County Total/Average.....	6,303	6,214 ▼	92%	95% ▲	
State Total/Average.....	483,482	485,115	91%		

Source: Iowa Department of Education, 2008

▲ NEW CONSTRUCTION

	2006		2007		2008	
	# new bldgs	Value Added	# new bldgs	Value Added	# new bldgs	Value Added
Agricultural dwellings.....	8	\$...1,464,990	10.	\$ 1,493,630	15.	\$ 2,850,230 ▲
Rural Residential dwellings.....	16	\$...3,979,880	15.	\$ 2,758,430	12	\$ 3,044,000
Urban Residential dwellings.....	39	\$...6,094,050	27	\$ 6,062,670	14	\$ 3,133,380 ▼
Commercial buildings.....	10	\$...1,831,940	4	\$ 1,153,690	5.	\$ 2,023,490 ▲
Agriculture buildings.....	NA	\$...4,067,000	NA	\$ 2,846,210	NA	\$ 3,122,740 ▲
Industrial buildings.....	2	\$...96,710	0	\$ 42,750	0	\$ 1,689,000 ▲
Total New Construction.....		\$ 17,534,570		\$ 14,357,380		\$ 15,862,840 ▲
% Change.....				- 18%		11% ▲

Source: Tama County Assessor, 2008

▲ TOP 10 NATIONAL MEDIA STORIES FEATURING TAMA COUNTY, 2008

10. **Significant bird sighting** was scored last Winter when a fork-tailed flycatcher was seen close by the city of Clutier. *Drew bird watchers from Iowa, Illinois, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Missouri, South Dakota, Colorado, and Ontario, Canada.* *Des Moines Register*
9. **Designer Inn & Suites**, Toledo, brings exotic lands to one location. December 2007 *Dubuque Telegraph Herald*
8. **Matchstick Marvels**, Gladbrook, was featured as the #7 American quirky landmarks in the museum category during National Tourism Week in May 2008. <http://travel.aol.com>, Fargo ND Radio
7. **Meskwaki Art**: Joba Chamberlain described the significance of a purple beaded necklace given to him by a member of the Meskwaki Tribe of Iowa, which he wore when he started his first MLB game for the Yankees in June of 2008. *Press & Sun Bulletin, Binghamton, NY,*
6. **"A Ride Along the Lincoln Highway"** documentary about sights on the Lincoln Highway aired on PBS, October 2008. *Indiana Tribune, PBS*
5. **The Code Talkers Recognition Act** was signed by President Bush October 2008, honoring the Meskwaki Code Talkers among 18 Tribes country-wide for Native Americans who had a special role in World Wars I and II. *Associated Press*
4. **Ruth Rasmussen's salt & pepper shaker collection** in Traer was featured on the CBS Evening News with Katie Couric in November 2007. *CBS Evening News, USA Today, Associated Press*
3. **Floods of 2008**: The New York Times reported that Chelsea was "staunchly defending its right to exist exactly where it wants to" and that "residents have a can-do attitude toward inconveniences, even major ones" when describing the flooding of 2008. *New York Times, Des Moines Register*
2. **Election & Caucuses 2008**: The Chicago Tribune featured Tama County as a political microcosm of the Midwest. It discussed how similar the county breakdown was to the presidential numbers in 2000 and 2004, suggesting results can could potentially do the same in 2008. *Chicago Tribune, Associated Press*
1. **RAGBRAI 2008**: Described by many bicyclists as the absolute premier bicycle trip in the United States. The hosts, spectators, business people are so friendly, so thoughtful. Mingling freely and comfortably with lowans was viewed as the prime reason why RAGBRAI remains such an effective and touching event. *KCRG, KWWL, CBS2, WHO, KGRN, KXIA, Des Moines Register, Cedar Rapids Gazette, Waterloo Courier, Marshalltown Times-Republican, Iowa Wire, Chicago Tribune, IslandPacket.com (South Carolina), Postcresent.com (Wisconsin)*

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