

FFBC

First Friday News & Views

Monthly Newsletter of the *First Friday Breakfast Club, Inc.*

February 2019

Volume 24

Issue 2

The next FFBC meeting is
Friday, February 1,
2019
7:00 a.m.



FFBC Meeting Location:
Hoyt Sherman Place,
15th & Woodland,
Des Moines



R.S.V.P.

JonathanWilson@davisbrownlaw.com

or phone (515) 288-2500

or the website
by Wednesday,
January 23.



FFBC Website:
www.ffbciaowa.org



The McCaughey Septuplets: The Gay Back Story

by Jonathan Wilson

Twenty-one years ago the first surviving set of septuplets in human history was born. They've recently celebrated their 21st birthdays. Congratulations to them and their parents. Their accomplishment is remarkable. The older sister should also be acknowledged; she doubtless was a contributing "parent" in their upbringing.

There's a back story that folks might find interesting. When it was known that the septuplets were among us, I had an altruistic, developer client who decided to marshal the resources of many material suppliers, trades people, and professionals with whom he worked to build a suitable house to accommodate a family of ten — and give it to them for nothing, as in zero, for a quality, substantial home. He asked all participants to donate whatever was needed. The response was overwhelming, a testament to my client's respected leadership in the development and larger community.

Architects donated design services; a realtor, without commission, got the property purchased. Donors paid the purchase price. Contractors stepped up to dig the basement and foundation trenches without charge. Suppliers delivered the necessary materials for foundations, infrastructure, roof, siding, and finish. Cement contractors laid cement for the basement, garage, driveways, and sidewalks. No invoices were sent. Carpenters, without pay, were all over that foundation like white-on-rice. It all came together, and the house was built in record time.

It was a beautiful thing. It wasn't the same thing, of course, but it was roughly commensurate with the remarkable commitment of the McCaugheys to bring their litter of little ones into the world. It demonstrated what can be done when we, as a motivated community, collectively, put our minds and resources to a common purpose.

[continued on page two]





I was proud to be involved in my professional capacity, doing the necessary legal work to put it all together, from confirming good title to the property, protecting the property from any unintended future outcomes, and documenting the inputs of all of the participants. It was complicated, unprecedentedly so, and thoroughly exciting for me to be a part of the effort.

As a 12-year member of the Des Moines School Board, I had recently come out as a gay man, and that had created something of a stir. It would be an understatement to say merely that my status as a gay man was well known. It was certainly known to the McCaugheys.

When it did become known to them, the realtor went to my developer client and told him that, for religious reasons, they would like to have some other lawyer handle the necessary legal work — for free — to put the whole thing together.

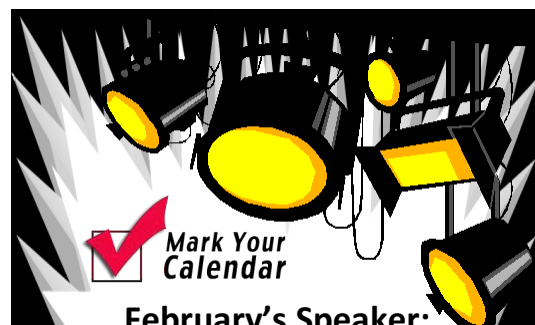
My client said to the realtor, very simply and matter-of-factly, "Go ask the McCaugheys if they want the free house or not."

That was all it took to bring enlightenment to the situation and prompt the McCaugheys to focus on what in life is actually important and what in life is nobody else's business.

I will be forever grateful to that client for his generosity, his enlightenment, and his commitment to equality. And the rest, as they say, is history.




Thanks to Byron Huff for hosting the FFBC Scholarship Fundraising mailing and feeding the volunteers pizza. Thanks to Joe Raetz, Greg Trumbo, Ryan Crane, Lewis Vandevoort, and Randy Swarts, who joined Gary Moore (taking picture) and Byron Huff in completing the solicitation mailing.



☒ **Mark Your Calendar**

February's Speaker:

Brad Anderson



Our speaker in December will be **Brad Anderson**, executive director of AARP Iowa. You won't want to miss this. You are also encouraged to invite some of your friends to attend!! Provide the name(s) of any anticipated guest(s) so we can have name tags for them at the registration desk.



A Different Rain

By Sir Wilson Matthews

As a young child you welcome the rain,
it's a toy.

You run in it, you stomp your feet, catch
drops on your tongue.

You celebrate the mud!

As you grow and begin to learn yourself,
The romance of the rain washes over
the bodies of young lovers.

The rain is passion, it's a kiss.

By middle age, the rain is a nuisance.

A cloud forms, drops fall through the
atmosphere, the mud forms again.

But this time it's for your young child, and for
you, it's the laundry.

As age advances, the rain is a reminder.

A reminder that another day is here,
Another day has gone, and there are fewer
and fewer days left.

In your heart and mind you are a young child,
But the rain is different.

Ride to FFBC Needed



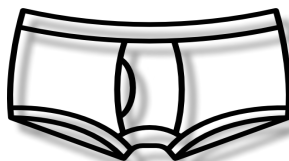
Charles Carnes is a FFBC member and long-time active member of the gay community. He is no longer able to drive. Getting out and attending FFBC meetings is more important to him now than ever.

If you live north or west of downtown, please consider providing Charles a ride to monthly meetings. He is living in the vicinity of Merle Hay Road near I-80/35. This does not necessarily mean a commitment for every month but rather to be open for a call to provide the ride when you are able.

Please contact Allen Vander Linden to indicate your willingness to be placed on a list to be called about your availability for any particular month. Allen can be reached by calling 515-971-2454 or by email at allenvanderlinden@gmail.com.

Thanks for your consideration.

Briefs & Shorts:



Thanks to **Travis Correll** for introducing our January speaker, **Randy Mayer**, the marijuana guru for the state of Iowa. Thanks also to **Jordan Duesenberg** for his work on the FFBC website. Thanks to **Wade Petersen** for his work as our newsletter production editor. Thanks to **Ryan Weidner** for his work as our technology guru. *Thanks to all our contributors to the monthly newsletter!*

A special thank-you to those FFBC members and friends who have chosen to designate FFBC through the Donor Direct program of United Way. The contributions through United Way are tax deductible. Those who have chosen this means of supporting FFBC have gone to the trouble of completing their United Way campaign worksheet by designating FFBC as the beneficiary of their generosity. FFBC is an eligible recipient of such funding designations.

The next copy deadline for the FFBC newsletter will be **February 11, 2019**. If you have something on your mind, put it on paper and get it to me by the copy deadline. It'll be interesting, good therapy, or both. Caring is sharing.

Be sure to peruse the front table for a book you might like to read. **Book donations are always welcome.** Thanks to **Scott Kuknyo** for helping coordinate the book exchange.

Consider a tax-deductible contribution to the FFBC scholarship fund, or a tax exempt testamentary gift, or both. We awarded eight scholarships this year. We've awarded more than **\$275,000** in scholarships to deserving Iowa high school students. Our annual fundraising drive is currently in progress. **We will have a donor appreciation party on February 15 from 6:30- 9:00 p.m. at the home of Jonathan Wilson and Scott Kuknyo, 2924 Druid Hill Drive, Des Moines. All are welcome.**

**Tax
Deductible
Donation Processing**



Welcome to the Board of Supervisors

By Supervisor Matt McCoy

As a newly installed Polk County Supervisor, I thought that you might enjoy hearing about my experiences during the first couple of weeks in my new role. I was officially sworn into office on January 2, 2019.

One of the first things that I participated in was our weekly board meeting. Meetings are held every Tuesday at 9:30 A.M. I was elected to serve as Vice-Chair of the Board of Supervisors. Next year, I will be Chair of the Board. Much like the legislature, the chair has the power to determine what goes on the board agenda. While there are many issues that I would like to tackle, I know I will need to wait for next year when I am chair before I can have greater control over the agenda.

The Board of Supervisors is a five-member board. The districts are divided by boundaries, and each Supervisor represents just under 100,000 residents. Currently, there are three Democrats and two Republicans serving on the board. Our terms are four years.

Our primary work has been focused on establishment of the budgets for the ten departments within Polk County government. Budgets are reviewed annually by the Board of Supervisors and then prepared for the beginning of the fiscal year on July 1. We are required to certify our budget by March. Polk County's financial situation remains strong.



Mental Health Matters

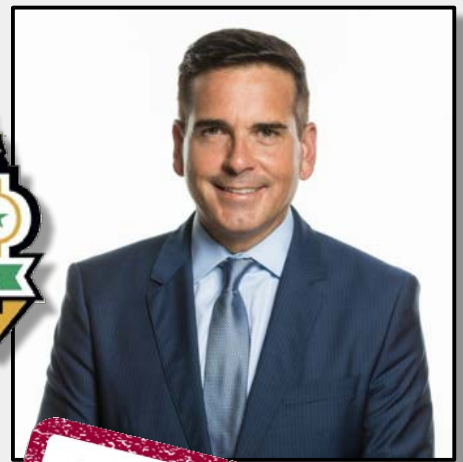
One of my biggest priorities is mental health services. Unfortunately, our need for mental health services is outpacing what we can provide. Polk County is limited to how much we can spend providing mental health services to our residents. The legislature has a cap imposed on how much we can spend and that has been frozen since 1996.

Polk County is a leader in providing mental health crisis services. We have a mobile crisis team that assists local police with mental health calls. Polk County established a Crisis Observation Center which is another location for police to take people in mental health crisis instead of jail. Polk County has also established a Crisis Stabilization Center where individuals can go for up to 90 days of intervention/support. Finally, we have helped Broadlawns open a Psychiatric Urgent Care clinic that is open 24/7.

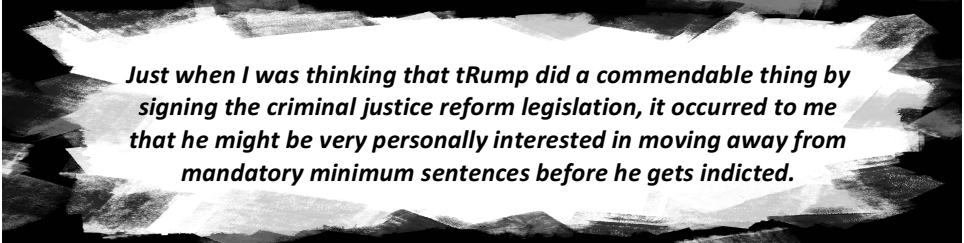
The piece of the puzzle that Polk County is missing is substance abuse intervention/treatment. Too often people who abuse drugs or alcohol end up in our jail or emergency rooms. We are currently working to establish a sober center where police can take individuals addicted to alcohol and drugs. We are exploring options right now, working with our partners in community-based substance abuse treatment.

I will be focused on improving mental health in Polk County. I look forward to working with my fellow Supervisors that have established Polk County as a leader in the field. I hope that, as you have questions or concerns about local government, you will view me as a resource to reach out to.

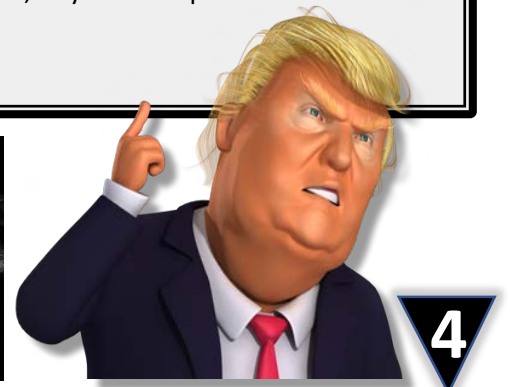
My email is matt.mccoy@polkcountyiowa.gov my cell is 515-330-5952.



✓ JOB Description



Just when I was thinking that tRump did a commendable thing by signing the criminal justice reform legislation, it occurred to me that he might be very personally interested in moving away from mandatory minimum sentences before he gets indicted.



Spider-man: Into the Spider-Verse

A Movie Review by Mark Turnage



I know what you're thinking—ANOTHER superhero movie? Yes, this reviewer is a “true believer,” in the words that longtime comics guru Stan Lee used to describe readers of his work—but to understand what makes *Into the Spider-Verse* a great film that defies genre conventions, it's better to take a look at what makes it fresh and different: *Into the Spider-Verse* isn't just a superhero story—it's a coming out story.

The first and most immediate way this film sets itself apart is its animation style—a complex but visually dynamic mix of computer animation and comic book panels. The result is like a more fluid stop-motion animation film, complete with occasional speech bubbles and Roy Lichtenstein-style onomatopoeia to emphasize key moments and sound effects. Every part of this film is bright and colorful, even psychedelic at times, an homage to the mid-'60s roots of the Spider-Man character, but also a color palette to paint its queer perspective.

That perspective comes from Miles Morales (Shameik Moore), a high-schooler and fish-out-of-water at his school, the son of an African-American police officer and a Puerto Rican nurse. His family dynamic, unlike the standard origin stories of most superheroes, is intact, loving, middle-class, and multicultural—and it's in their conversations about Spider-Man that we obtain the film's queer perspective of coming out. Miles' dad sees Spider-Man as a menace; those who dress like him, act like him, and behave like he does earn his ire. His mom is more ambivalent, but she sees Spider-Man as a necessary part of their community. During a subway graffiti outing with his cool uncle Aaron (Mahershala Ali), Miles is bitten by a spider and wakes up with powers he doesn't want and tries to hide. In a comedic sequence where he tries to hide his out-of-control superpowers at school, he encounters Gwanda, desperately tries to act normal around her, and fails horribly. He escapes school thinking everyone is staring at him as an “other,” as something worse than “uncool” in high school—abnormal. Suddenly, Miles realizes that he's a Spider-Man too, but he's too afraid of being different to accept it. Sound familiar?

Miles is confused and afraid, and escapes to the one place he feels safe—his graffiti art in the subway, where he encounters the first person who understands him and who he is: Spider-Man. The film continues its defamiliarization by setting up this Spider-Man as Miles' friend, ally, and mentor during a tense battle with supervillains trying to activate a machine that will open other dimensions—until the supervillains win, the machine is activated, and his ally is killed. It's a brutal moment that underscores how this film plays with genre expectations. With the plot device of multiple universes, Miles discovers his own community of people who are like him, understand what he's going through (to an extent), and want to help him accept who he is. The Spider-People are from other dimensions, whose worlds are equally at risk from the supervillains' machine. Are the Spider-People fully competent mentors? Not in the slightest. They have their own flaws, too -- laziness, impatience, jaded outlooks, and selfishness. But none of them ever doubts his identity as “one of them,” even if they may feel like “he isn't ready.”

By establishing Miles' family dynamic early on as loving and supportive, even if he's misunderstood, the stage is set for Miles to take on the mantle of his fallen hero, and learn something profound about himself in the process. *Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse* *is* a coming out story, even if Miles' crush is heterosexual. It's about coming out as your own kind of superhero, affirming yourself when things seem hopeless, and trusting in your community to remind you what you're capable of. It's a feel-good summer blockbuster in the middle of winter. See it, even if you could care less about superheroes.



Medical Marijuana in Iowa

by Bruce Carr



Our guest speaker on Friday morning, January 4, 2019, was Randy Mayer, director of the Office of Medical Cannabidiol in the Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH). Randy, who serves also as Chief of IDPH's Bureau of HIV, STD, and Hepatitis, introduced his newly hired colleague Program Manager Owen Parker, and together the two men showed a PowerPoint outlining Iowa's new Medical Cannabidiol Act (Iowa Code Chapter 124E, enacted in May 2017) and answered several questions related to it. He was accompanied by his deputy, Owen Parker.

Most uses of marijuana (now preferably called "cannabis" by people who use, or want to use it) violate federal law, since federal law lists it as a schedule 1 "dangerous substance which has no recognized medical use and that has a high potential for abuse." Cannabidiol (CBD) is a naturally occurring cannabinoid constituent of cannabis, which was discovered in 1940 and initially thought not to be pharmaceutically active. But there is now an enormous body of anecdotal evidence that cannabidiol can -- and has -- been used effectively for relief of a wide variety of medical conditions in a wide variety of patients. Iowa Code Chapter 124E is intended to establish the conditions and procedures under which medical cannabidiol may be used in Iowa, and it charges the IDPH to write the administrative rules for the program.

Randy Mayer noted that about 80% of the rules he wrote were based upon the State of Minnesota's program. Iowa's rules differ in capping the level of tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) at 3% -- much lower than most other states. Randy also pointed out that, because the program has been prompted to a greater extent by citizen testimony than by extensive research or scientific survey (which are not well established), the governing boards -- Medical Cannabidiol Board, Board of Medicine, and State Board of Health -- are all in learning mode, flexible and open to hearing recommendations from the public.

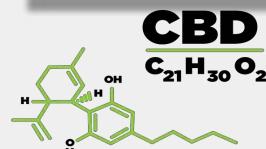
The program does not permit caregivers to prescribe CBD but, rather, to certify patients to acquire and use it. Among the nine original qualifying debilitating medical conditions for certification are cancer, MS, HIV/AIDS, Crohn's Disease, ALS, and "otherwise untreatable pain." A certifying "health care practitioner" must be a resident of Iowa or a neighboring state, and must be a doctor, not a PA or an ARNP. There are only five licensed dispensaries statewide, in Council Bluffs, Davenport, Waterloo, Windsor Heights, and Sioux City. Delivery forms are currently limited to tincture, capsule, and crème, and edible and smoked forms are specifically prohibited. Because no medical insurance now covers CBD, purchase is all out-of-pocket.

Randy Mayer summed up by saying that it is the Board's intent to "go slowly" and not get ahead of the citizenry. He also noted, rather wryly, that the growing movement to licensed hemp products is likely to fall under the Agriculture Department rather than the Board of Medicine.

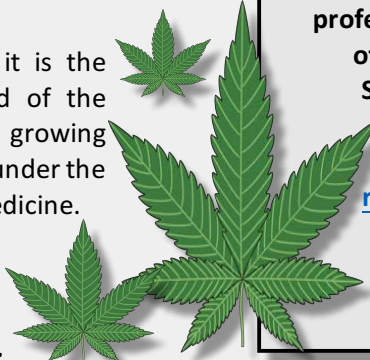
You can hear, or re-hear, a complete audio Recording of Randy Mayer and Owen Parker's talk and the Q&A following, by going to our Website, <ffbc Iowa.org>, and clicking on the "Speakers" tab.



Photos by Gary Moore



Randy Mayer lives in Ames with his husband William R. Graves, professor of horticulture and dean of the graduate college at Iowa State University. Randy can be reached professionally at 515/242-5150 and at: randall.mayer@idph.iowa.gov Owen Parker's work phone is 515/725-2076, e-mail: owen.parker@idph.iowa.gov



Controversy

Can You Really Separate the Art from the Artist?

by Jordan Duesenberg

Can you really separate an artist from the art that they create? That's the question that a lot of people have started asking themselves after watching the new Lifetime documentary series called *Surviving R. Kelly*. Just to fill anyone in that hasn't seen or heard about the show, R&B musician R. Kelly, who rose to fame in the early '90s, has been accused throughout his career for soliciting sex with minors – including marrying the late R&B artist Aaliyah when she was 15 and he was 27, actively pursuing and recruiting high school students for sex, making a sex tape with a minor (a 14 year old when he was well into his late 30s), among many other accusations. I recommend that everyone watch the show to learn about too-true horrors that R. Kelly put a large number of young girls and women through. You then put together the fact that some of R. Kelly's biggest hits, also largely happen to revolve around sex: hits like "Bump n Grind," and "Sex Me," that are written from a pedophile's point of view, which makes everything even more unsettling.

It's amazing how society has been able to look past or away from a lot of these accusations in the past, allowing R. Kelly to have a career still, if not helping him to become more and more famous over time. However, in today's day and age, where someone now missteps, we "cancel" them, which basically means we systematically end their career by pressuring society not to support an artist (a recent example is Rosanne Barr, although I don't think you can compare what Roseanne did to the crimes R. Kelly has committed). It's hard to say what the end result really will be for R. Kelly. Personally, I have a lot of mixed feelings about our "cancel" culture today, however I don't think anyone could disagree that we no longer should support R. Kelly in any way. But, does that mean we no longer are allowed to listen to songs like "I Believe I Can Fly," without feeling like we're supporting an abusive, pedophilic rapist? Also, where else do we draw the line. R. Kelly is not the only musician who's done horrible things, more specifically R. Kelly is not the only musician to have slept with minors, been abusive towards women, or been accused of rape.



My personal idol, David Bowie, has unfortunately been accused of some horrible things. During his "Thin White Duke" era in the late 70's where he was heavily abusing cocaine. He professed an interest in fascism, once claiming that Hitler was one of the first rock stars in an infamous *Playboy* interview; a claimed he would later take back and blame on his abuse of drugs. But beyond outrageous comments, Bowie also reportedly slept with the famous rock & roll groupie Lori Mattix when she was just 14 – supposedly knowingly taking her virginity. Mattix would then go on to sleep with and have a relationship with Led Zeppelin guitarist Jimmy Page. Both men knew she was underage; Jimmy Page even kept their relationship a secret so as to not get in trouble for statutory rape. This is somewhat similar to the accusations that R. Kelly is facing -- although not as widescale.

The Eagle's drummer and lead vocalist Don Henley was once arrested for sleeping with a 16-year-old girl. It ended up with the girl overdosing on Quaaludes and cocaine, and she was naked when the paramedics arrived. Henley got off with paying \$2500 in fines and going to rehab as a result – you know, not receiving any punishment whatsoever. I could continue with examples of musicians sleeping with underage girls, sexual misconduct, and outright abuse towards women, from Prince, to Elvis, to John Lennon, to Marvin Gaye, to Dr. Dre, to the Rolling Stones, to 2pac, etc. But honestly, what good will that do?

None of the above examples make any actions of any of the artists above okay. But here lies the question: will I stop listening to David Bowie because of the above examples? Of course not, if I'm being honest. I'll also still go on to worship Led Zeppelin, Marvin Gaye, Prince, Dr. Dre, etc., as musicians. So personally I can separate the art from the artist, and I know that's an unpopular opinion, and maybe I'm wrong. But I'm being honest, and I also don't want to be a hypocrite. Although, R. Kelly's case is fresh, I do think it is slightly hypocritical to "cancel" R. Kelly but not do the same for other musicians who've committed similar crimes. I think R. Kelly is a horrible person, and I'm happy that the documentary series happened to shed a light on the atrocities that he has committed, so we all can make more informed decisions when deciding who we want to support.

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The Fallen

By David Baldacci

A Book Review by Steve Person

I am not much into reading novels, but once in a while I like a good thriller. The best writer in that genre—in my humble opinion—is David Baldacci. His latest work is *The Fallen*. It is a continuation of *The Memory Man*, a.k.a. the Amos Decker series.

This 2018 installation is the darkest of all the Baldacci novels I have read. The story takes place in Baronville, Pennsylvania, where Decker and his crime-fighting partner, Alex Jamison, are on vacation while Jamison visits her sister and family who recently moved to this town.



Baronville is a town that has seen better days—or has it? By page six, Decker discovers two murders in a rundown house in a neighboring street from where he and his partner are staying in her sister's home. The circuitous plot revolves around an important current topic in this country: the opioid crisis.

As Decker and Jamison investigate the initial two murders, additional killings ensue and hit all-too-close to home.

The lone surviving member of the Baron family, after whom the town is named, is universally detested by the townspeople, and Decker is puzzled why this man stays on in such a hostile atmosphere. John Baron's ancestor grew extremely wealthy by exploiting the townspeople who were employed in his various factories during the Industrial Revolution. As progress made these factories obsolete, those employed in them lost their jobs, and the entire community universally abhorred the original Baron and all his progeny. The town became increasingly distressed and looked to be on the edge of extinction.



The crumbling Victorian mansion where John Baron lives supposedly holds a mysterious treasure that many have striven to discover for decades. John Baron doubts the treasure's existence, and, at this point in his life, is virtually broke. He is just one of the many suspects as the continuing body count progresses.

Without giving away too much, the author takes on the life insurance industry, the pharmaceutical giants, local government corruption, and elder abuse. While not my favorite Baldacci thriller, it nonetheless is worth the read.

