

Client: Centro restaurant for en Q Strategies

Project: Hospitality publicity

Results: Used as background for on-air cooking demo, copy was later adapted to other marketing materials.

George Formaro
Centro
South Union Bread Café
South Union Bread

George Formaro never forgets a face—or its sandwich. The accomplished restaurateur is the owner and creative force behind two of the metro’s more successful eateries—**South Union Bread Café** and **Centro**, both housed in the restored Temple for Performing Arts at 10th and Locust in downtown Des Moines.

Raised in an Italian family on the city’s east side, the gregarious Formaro knew the power of good food in strengthening bonds among family, friends and business associates. His education in the restaurant trade began in several of Des Moines’ well-known restaurants, such as the former City Grille, Winston’s and the Embassy Club. Formaro supplemented his hands-on experience by enrolling in Des Moines Area Community College’s well-regarded culinary arts program, graduating from DMACC in 1988.

Formaro was ready to open **South Union Bread** by 1996. The artisan bread bakery, creating handmade loaves of various Italian breads baked slowly in wood burning brick ovens, distributes bread to area restaurants and Dahl’s grocery stores. Rising at 3 a.m. most days (or shunning sleep altogether), Formaro and South Union were the first to satisfy what is now a thriving demand for high-quality, specialty breads in Des Moines.

Seeking to develop additional markets for his one-of-a-kind artisan breads, Formaro opened South Union Bread Café in the spring of 1996, now a mainstay for downtown lunch crowds. Unwittingly, South Union Bread Café began what Formaro now jokingly refers to as a “sandwich cult”—and he’s not kidding, with lines of patient diners snaking out the restaurant’s door most days.

The Café’s success prompted a move to larger quarters. Through a long-time mentor from his days at City Grille, Formaro was introduced to developer, Harry Bookey, and his vision for renovating the old Masonic Temple in downtown Des Moines. The soaring ceilings and wide spaces on the main level gave Formaro other ideas. He pitched the concept of a new sit-down restaurant to Bookey—a “city center” serving the Italian-inspired specialties Formaro remembered from his childhood—and Bookey enthusiastically agreed. Centro, which means “city center” in Italian, was born. It joins the relocated South Union Bread Café in the Temple for Performing Arts at 10th and Locust.

Though he puts in long days presiding over Centro and South Union, Formaro, 35, never seems to tire of the restaurant scene. From Centro’s open kitchen where he waves and chats with diners with an enthusiastic smile, Formaro is in his element. Pasta and sauce and dough and herbs and other good things are his canvas. Great food is more than a career to Formaro. It’s his avocation.

Client: Hotel Fort Des Moines for en Q Strategies

Project: Pitch to publicize connection to national fine dining scene

Results: Positive buzz for Forty Three, the hotel's signature restaurant.

Des Moines chef heats up

One of Des Moines' most talked-about gourmets will lead a national team of expert chefs this weekend for the prestigious Niman Ranch Dinner, which celebrates producers and growers for the Marin County, California-based organic ranch. Company leaders tapped chef **Jeremy Morrow** to coordinate preparations for the exquisite dinner to be held Saturday, September 14, at 6:30 p.m. at the Hotel Fort Des Moines.

Morrow is the creative force behind two of the city's most imaginative and delectable restaurants—**Bistro 43** and **Forty Three Restaurant and Bar**. Morrow won acclaim in *Bon Appetit* for his innovative, seasonally inspired menus at Bistro 43. The magazine described the bistro's offerings as "Iowa-grown foods with worldly touches."

All of the food for the dinner is donated. Chefs from around the United States give their time to create the fabulous feast. Tradition dictates Morrow will use all Iowa products to create the meal for 200 guests.

The four-course meal spotlights Iowa's very best produce and pork. Diners will enjoy a collection of Iowa vegetables for hors d'oeuvres—including bacon-wrapped radishes and green beans with egg and chive relish. A salad of Iowa heirloom tomatoes with goat cheese and baby greens will make up the second course. For dinner, Morrow will lead preparation of slow roasted Niman shoulders of pork with sweet corn risotto and braised celery roots. A dessert of gold and red raspberries with shortbread cookies finishes the meal.

Niman Ranch began in the mid-1970s, offering humane animal treatment without hormones or other stimulants. The company relies on Iowa suppliers for its organic pork, free of antibiotics, growth supplements or other hormones. Cuts of Niman Ranch meat win praise from chefs, restaurants and diners throughout the country.

A chef from the internationally acclaimed Chez Panisse in Berkeley, Calif., has led preparations for the last three dinners. After he unexpectedly could not attend this weekend, Niman Ranch chose Morrow to save the day and the sumptuous dinner. The feast is held annually at different Des Moines locations.

A Tennessee native, Morrow received training at the California Culinary Academy in San Francisco and has worked in restaurants in Nashville, San Francisco, Alaska and Portland—where he met his wife and business partner, Kristin. The couple decided to return to Des Moines, Kristin's hometown, six years ago to raise their two children. They opened Beaverdale's Bistro 43 five years ago. The couple opened Forty Three, which blends California cuisine with Asian and Mediterranean influences, last year in the historic Hotel Fort Des Moines.

Client: Raccoon River Brewing Company for en Q Strategies

Project: Hospitality publicity

Results: Reinforced ongoing campaign to publicize the restaurant's commitment to live music.

Big Night with David Zollo on Wednesday, December 11 at Raccoon River *Singer-songwriter night revives storytelling tradition*

As **Singer/Songwriter Night at Raccoon River Brewing Company** approaches its one-year anniversary, organizer and local musician **Ben Eaton** points with pride to an eclectic musical lineup with one common ingredient: evocative lyrics.

Wednesday nights feature songwriting at its finest, with Iowa legend and former *High and Lonesome* frontman **David Zollo** on tap to perform at the Raccoon on December 11 from 8 to 11 p.m. Ben Eaton and folk all-star Dave Moore will follow on December 18 and January 8, respectively.

"Mostly through word-of-mouth, Singer-Songwriter Night draws fans of insightful lyrics seeking relief mid-week from the 'same old, same old,'" said Eaton, an established singer/songwriter in his own right. "The Raccoon offers seasoned performers from a variety of genres an intimate venue that really allows them to connect with their audiences."

No Top 40 in sight here. Zollo, playing this Wednesday night, will perform old favorites as well as new selections from his latest disc, *The Big Night*, an intoxicating alchemy of early Stones, blues, country rock and gospel influences.

Hard-rock or folk, Eaton says the Singer-Songwriter artists all embrace an "American roots" musical tradition, a loose musical gumbo of folk, blues, gospel, Cajun, bluegrass, zydeco, tejano, and even Native American pow-wow. Most performers are Iowa or Midwestern musicians with larger followings nationwide than in the region they call home.

Background

An Iowa native, Ben Eaton, the event's organizer and an occasional performer for Singer/Songwriter Night, spent his youth kicking around the country with his music. Now settled down in Des Moines with a day job and a young family, he's staying plugged in to the music scene with local performances while booking artists for Singer-Songwriter Night.

Eaton and **Andy Fleming**, another local musician, resurrected Singer-Songwriter Night at Raccoon River Brewing Company after it was dropped by The Lift, a non-smoking bar in downtown's Court Avenue district.

"They didn't have a liquor license at the time (beer and wine only) and just didn't have the money to keep it going," Fleming said. "After it was dropped, the event took on urban legend proportions. There was a lot of buzz about starting it up again, so we approached Raccoon River, and they agreed."

Dedicated following

"We have a dedicated group of regulars. The word of mouth is drawing more people with each performance," said **Tim Wilcoxson**, a manager at Raccoon River Brewing Company. "Iowa musicians draw from a rich storytelling tradition. We're providing an important performance venue for these artists and a way for Des Moines audiences to sample the best of Iowa."

Performances are Wednesday nights from 8 to 11 p.m. at Raccoon River Brewing Company. The lineup through early January includes:

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- December 11 **David Zollo**, former *High and Lonesome* frontman, now solo and frequent collaborator with Greg Brown and Bo Ramsey
- December 18 **Ben Eaton** and mystery guest
- January 8 **Dave Moore**, now touring with Joe Price. Moore is a regular guest on *Garrison Keillor's Prairie Home Companion* and a folk all-star.

Client: Hotel Fort Des Moines for en Q Strategies

Project: Direct mail

Results: Component of effective integrated marketing campaign announcing hotel's new amenities.

Dear Colleague:

Come on back to the Hotel Fort Des Moines! This venerable anchor of the revitalized Gateway and 10th Street historic district is now connected to the skywalk—making it even more convenient for you as a professional meeting planner to accommodate your guests in downtown Des Moines for entertainment, culture, education and fun.

To celebrate this latest landmark in the hotel's richly historic tradition, please join us for **Sky Wok**, a showcase of Hotel Fort Des Moines' group amenities, fine dining and entertainment, on **Tuesday, February 25 at 11:30 a.m.**

Enjoy free food and beverage samples from our signature restaurants, the acclaimed Forty Three Restaurant and Bar and Raccoon River Brewing Company. Learning about the cultural and entertainment options for your meeting and convention guests at the nearby Temple for Performing Arts. See how the Hotel Fort Des Moines combines 21st century technology and comfort with the attentiveness and tradition of yesteryear—making it an ideal setting to host your clients, your meeting or your convention.

And, of course, **Make Connections at the Fort** with the convenience and access of our brand-new skywalk! Think of it...park in our newly expanded parking garage and walk to your meetings, meals and accommodations in the comfort of the skywalk, without ever battling the elements or street level traffic.

Stop by Sky Wok or participating downtown employers to enter our Fort Des Moines trivia contest for a chance to win a free weekend getaway for two at the Fort. One lucky winner and a guest will enjoy sumptuous dining at Forty Three, tickets to *Triple Espresso* at the nearby Temple for Performing Arts, plus luxurious overnight accommodations at the Hotel Fort Des Moines. It's a wonderful winter getaway in the heart of the Gateway district, Des Moines' newest cultural and entertainment hub.

If you haven't been to The Fort for a while, we welcome you to come see for yourself just how much we have to offer. We'll call you next week to confirm your invitation to Sky Wok and answer any questions you may have, or please feel free to call me at _____.

Best regards,

Jason Potter, Director of Sales
Hotel Fort Des Moines

Client: Iowa Realty for en Q Strategies

Project: Publicity for desmoinesads.com

Results: An off-beat focus on the oddities of classified listings generated plenty of local publicity for a new Internet listing service.

desmoinesads.com

When people buy and sell homes, they buy and sell a lot of other stuff. And that's the reason **Iowa Realty** created **desmoinesads.com**, a free classified ad site where you can buy and sell, promote a garage sale and even look for a job.

Desmoinesads.com allows web surfers to post classified ads at no cost. Following a quick registration process (also free), users can run ads under a variety of pre-set categories.

Many, many people in Des Moines want to sell you a car. In fact, almost one-third of the 1,570 ads on desmoinesads.com list used vehicles for sale, ranging from vintage to nearly new.

**1982 Pontiac Trans-Am, V-8, 350 turbo tranny. Runs, light rust, must sell.
Would make great car to restore, or use as parts car. \$1200/obo to take home.
Call and leave message to view car.**

Of course, any Iowa Realty project has ties to area real estate. Desmoinesads.com brings together landlords and potential tenants seeking anything from studios in Sherman Hill to acreages in Granger.

**Cute home for rent right off 42nd Street and north of I-235, in a sweet location.
Convenient living and great value for the price.**

Entries in the general and collectibles category can be scanned quickly using the site's high-powered search function. Or simply browse the sheer variety of offerings available.

8 audio cassette series by Joyce Meyer. An in-depth Bible study on demonology.

According to **Mike Knapp**, president and CEO of Iowa Realty, desmoinesads.com is attracting about 8,000 searches per day within 17 categories. "It's far exceeded our expectations," Knapp said. "After nearly four months of operation, we're the largest free classified site in the state, maybe even the region. We believe the site runs about half as many classifieds as *The Des Moines Register* does on any given weekday."

Why the leap to electronic classifieds? Desmoinesads.com reads like a massive tag sale before a household move, and that's no accident. "We're in the real estate business," said Knapp. "And anytime someone moves, they have stuff to sell and things they need to buy. This site provides a real service to current and potential clients that complements our core brokerage business and distinguishes us from the competition.

"We don't believe for a moment that a site such as this takes the place of newspaper advertising, but it is a natural next step in the evolution of the e-business," Knapp added.

Currently, desmoinesads.com lists merchandise in the following categories:

- Employment
- Rental properties
- Autos
- Home & garden
- Recreational vehicles
- Furniture & appliances
- Electronics

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- Garage sales
- Industrial equipment
- Sporting goods
- Agriculture & livestock
- General & collectibles
- Pets
- Announcements
- Services
- Manufactured & mobile homes

“Though we cannot track actual sales on desmoinesads.com, the positive feedback we’ve received from our clients means we’ll continue sponsoring this site and possibly expand the concept,” Knapp said.

To place an ad or simply search the merchandise available, visit www.desmoinesads.com.

Client: Iowa Realty for en Q Strategies

Project: Background information for television feature stories

Results: Increased visibility for Spring Parade of Homes event.

Top tips for selling your home

With interest rates at the lowest levels in four decades, homeowners are taking the plunge and moving up to new digs. But first, they have to sell their existing abode.

Patrick Fox, a veteran agent for **Iowa Realty**, is hard at work prepping his listings for the **Spring Parade of Homes Sale** beginning on Friday, April 11. Pat can share some time-tested secrets with area homeowners using one of his listings, a Rottlund townhome located at 7955 Vista Drive #1, West Des Moines, as a model. He'll show area homeowners how to present their homes in the best possible light—and make that sale.

- **First impressions are lasting.** View your home through the critical eyes of a homebuyer. Think “curb appeal.” The front door greets prospects; make sure it is clean and freshly painted. Keep your lawn trimmed and edged. Close garage doors and stow trash containers out of sight.
- **Paint and touch up for a quick sale.** Faded walls and scratched woodwork reduce buyer appeal. Your house will show best with a fresh coat of paint. Remember, it is difficult to anticipate the tastes of strangers. Use neutral colors and show buyers a sparkling clean home.
- **Let the sunshine in.** Windows should be clean. Open curtains and draperies and show the buyer how bright and cheerful your home is. For an evening inspection, turn on all the lights. Proper illumination of the house is a welcome sign to a potential homebuyer.
- **Minor repairs can make major differences.** Replace all burned-out light bulbs. A dripping water faucet discolors sinks and suggests faulty plumbing. Loose knobs, sticking doors and broken cabinet drawers detract from your home's value.
- **From top to bottom.** Show buyers the full value of your attic, basement and other utility areas by removing all unnecessary articles. Brighten dark, dull basements by painting walls; cure damp smells with a bag of lime-stone. Now is a good time to wash the outside of your water heater, change the furnace filter and make sure inspection access is easy.
- **Make closets look bigger.** Neat, orderly closets suggest ample storage space. Since you will be moving anyway, remove or pack items that can be stored elsewhere.
- **The kitchen is important.** Many buyers judge housekeeping by the kitchen. The oven, stove and other appliances should be spotless. Repair or replace anything that sticks, squeaks or drips. Counter space should be kept open and uncluttered; store countertop appliances. Floors and walls should be bright and clean.
- **Bathrooms help sell homes.** Rust stains and dripping faucets suggest faulty plumbing. Check and repair caulking and grouting. Tile should be free of soap film. The sink, toilet and tub should sparkle.
- **Arrange bedrooms neatly.** Unclutter your furnishings. Pay special attention to closet spaces. Use attractive bedspreads and window coverings.
- **Show off the family room and living room.** These areas, as centers of family activity, should be open and inviting. Try fresh flowers, wood in the fireplace and either air conditioning or fresh air to set the atmosphere.

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- **Clean the garage.** The ideal garage holds only cars. Sell, give or throw away unnecessary articles. Clean oily spots on cement floors and use strong overhead lighting. Keep storage areas and workbenches orderly. Remember, your garage looks best from the outside with the door down.
- **No pets underfoot.** If at all possible, keep pets out of the house.
- **Music is mellow.** But not when showing a house. Turn off the radio or television. Let the salesperson and the buyer talk, free from disturbances.
- **A word to the wise.** Let the buyer's agent discuss price, terms, possession and other factors with the buyer. Direct any questions you may have to your listing agent.
- **Details are important.** Complete a disclosure of property condition for all potential buyers to review.

As homebuyers prepare their existing properties for sale, it isn't too early to set their sights on a brand-new home. Marking the traditional start of the homebuying season, this year's Spring Parade of Homes Sale showcases a record-setting 250 homes in Des Moines and surrounding communities. The free event will be held from Friday through Sunday, April 11-13, from 4 to 7 p.m. on Friday and 1 to 5 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday. Sponsored by Iowa Realty and First Realty/GMAC, every entry features at least \$1,500 in builder discounts or free upgrades, spanning starter townhomes to luxury properties ranging from \$83,950 to \$725,000.

Thirteen communities in addition to Des Moines are represented in this year's Spring Parade of Homes Sale, including Adel, Altoona, Ankeny, Bondurant, Clive, Grimes, Indianola, Johnston, Pleasant Hill, Polk City, Urbandale, Waukee and West Des Moines.

Client: Iowa Realty for en Q Strategies

Project: Pitch for Spring Parade of Homes

Results: Broadcast coverage for annual special event.

Chances are you'll see a lot more than dandelions popping up on some of your neighbor's lawns this spring. With the average homeowner moving every seven years, according to the National Association of Realtors, that "For Sale" sign could even be planted in front of your own home.

For many, new construction beckons. But before jumping in, homebuyers must learn:

- What kinds of homes—single family and townhomes—are available across the metro? At what price points?
- How long does it take (really) to build a new home?
- What kinds of customizing features are available that were never an option for many homeowners in their current abodes?

Buyers and browsers alike can discover what to expect from today's new home construction at the annual **Spring Parade of Homes**, April 13, 14, 20 and 21 from noon to 4:30 p.m. each day. Sponsored by **Iowa Realty and First Realty/GMAC** and the **Home Builder's Association of Greater Des Moines (HBA)**, the event marks the official beginning of the "homebuying" season. It's free to one and all.

Des Moines and its surrounding communities will feature nearly 140 homes, including new developments in Altoona, Ankeny, Clive, Grimes, Indianola, Johnston, Norwalk, Pleasant Hill, Polk City, Urbandale, Waukee and West Des Moines. Nearly 40 builders are participating this season.

"There's nothing like owning a brand-new home, and the Spring Parade of Homes is a chance for builders to show us their latest and greatest," said **Mike Knapp**, president and CEO of Iowa Realty. "A diverse group of builders this spring means an appealing mix of price points for a variety of lifestyles."

Prices range from \$111,900 to \$724,000. Many homes purchased during the show qualify for a \$1,000 rebate. Individual builders are also offering attractive financing packages and special deals that either lower the list price or enhance options.

An overview of two Parade developments follows:

From Accurate Development, **Hallbrook** at 143rd and Douglas, Urbandale, features 33 lots of custom homes ranging from 3,200 to 4,800 square feet. Priced from \$350,000 to \$440,000, the development uses larger lots (most are at least 100 feet wide) and retains the mature trees and rural quality of the original land. The mix of ranches, story-and-a-halves, and two-stories all include walk-out lower levels or daylight windows. Hallbrook homes qualify for the Spring Parade of Homes \$1,000 rebate. The model featured in the show is located at 3724 144th St.

Twelve homes remain for sale in Plat I, while development in Plat II is underway. Plat II also features single-family homes priced from \$325,000 to about \$475,000. Both plats adjoin a new 21-acre park in Urbandale.

BridgeWood, a Rottlund development, is designed as a "traditional" community especially for young families. Row house facades boast compact, energy-efficient layouts with three to four bedrooms and up to 2 1/2 baths. Many lifestyle amenities are within easy walking distance, including the new Brookview elementary school in the Waukee school district; a community center for all residents; and miles of greenbelt trails with more than 60 acres of parks. The model home is located at 7842 Cottonwood Lane, West Des Moines. List price for the featured model is \$192,900 with a special \$4,000 off in closing costs or options during the Spring Parade of Homes.

Client: Iowa Realty for en Q Strategies

Project: Pitch for HomeShow Expo

Results: Broadcast coverage for annual special event.

Lavish and practical, informal and grand: the 25th anniversary **HomeShow Expo** offers a study in contrasts for the discriminating Central Iowa homebuyer. This year's Expo highlights two residential communities in Johnston and Ankeny as different interpretations of today's increasingly fast-paced, informal and technology-driven lifestyles.

The nine-day show runs July 21-29 with homes open 11 to 9 p.m. weekdays and from 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday. Tickets are \$10 for adults and \$5 for children under 12. A \$1 discount on adult tickets is available with advance purchase at any Des Moines-area Hy-Vee store starting July 7.

All of the homes offer great ideas for layout, design and decorating. The following home profiles in Johnston may be useful to you as you put together stories on the show:

House #3 at 6524 NW 94th Court in Newport Vista, by Master Craft Estate Homes, fuses the traditional with high-tech. The two-story foyer features porcelain tile, iron rails accenting the staircase and even a built-in niche to house a water fountain. In the living room, the dominant feature is a two-story hand-painted mural set within a recessed, arched wall. There's a home theatre area with programming supplied through a broadband media distribution system, and the home office is wired for high-speed Internet access and multiple telephone lines.

Upstairs, the octagonally shaped master bedroom includes a see-through fireplace opening to the master bath. The bath is tiled in black marble. It features a huge whirlpool tub and five-foot glass-enclosed shower. Other features of note:

- Custom-built natural cherry cabinets with coffee colored granite counters and stainless steel appliances.
- Family room with built-in entertainment center wired for surround sound.
- Hand-painted African mural atop walnut-stained wood paneled walls in the den.

House #5 at 6520 NW 93rd Street in Newport Vista is a singular example of luxury and comfort. With a nod to the development's natural setting, Anderson Homes has combined brick and stone on the home's exterior for terrific curb appeal. The two-story walkout is finished on two levels. The house combines maple floors, liberal custom woodwork details and built-in cabinetry, double staircases to the home's upper level and soaring ceilings in the home's entry and hearth room. Other features include:

- Four bedrooms, all on the upper level with adjoining baths, plus a half-bath downstairs.
- Gourmet kitchen with custom-built cherry cabinets and granite countertops. Stainless steel appliances include a sub-zero refrigerator, warming drawer and wine cooler.
- "Smart wiring" for high-speed Internet access, cable TV and multiple telephone lines.
- Black marble floors and impressive granite shower in master bath.

The show is sponsored by the **Home Builders Association of Greater Des Moines, Iowa Realty and First Realty/GMAC**. This Thursday, Friday or Saturday would be good days to stop by. Please give me a call and I can arrange for a spokesperson (a builder, Iowa Realty representative, or Home Builders Association executive) to meet us there.

Client: Iowa Realty for en Q Strategies

Project: Pitch for Johnston Commons housing development

Results: Feature story in *The Des Moines Register* and other regional pubs timed to coincide with grand opening.

Harkening back to simpler times, Johnston Commons showcases Craftsman style

When **Paul and Tami Stigers** began their search for a new home, they made a wish list: Johnston schools, a neighborhood with lots of children and a place near the lake. They liked the size and minimal maintenance of new houses, but wanted more character than today's suburban dwellings typically offer. The advantages of "new" with the comfort and warmth of the Craftsman era—that's what the Stigers wanted, and that's what they've found in **Johnston Commons**.

Developed by **Hubbell Homes**, Johnston Commons appeals to buyers with cozy, comfortable homes in a neighborhood setting with lots of lifestyle and recreational amenities.

Situated north of 62nd Street off Merle Hay Road in Johnston, new homeowners are only minutes from recreation and leisure, with the greenbelt trail, a city park, and the community's new public library just a short walk from their front doors. The design of Johnston Commons shelters residents from street noise and traffic, yet offers convenient access to the interstate and downtown.

The old-fashioned neighborhood feeling carries over into home designs throughout the 160-acre community. The ranch-style model home draws on Craftsman-style details such as warm oak woodwork and trim, a front porch with massive square pillars, and symmetrical window groupings to let the sun shine through. It's cozy without feeling closed in. Full basements and plenty of storage space mean that Johnston Commons homeowners will enjoy today's comforts and open home layouts while emulating this nostalgic lifestyle.

Johnston Commons homes feature:

- Ranch and two-story models ranging from 1,727 to 2,265 square feet
- Three to four bedrooms and 2-2.5 baths available (with basements pre-plumbed for an additional bath)
- Wood floors in living areas
- Three-car garages on all models
- Optional four-season rooms

"This community was created to attract a diverse group of homeowners: couples, young families, even empty-nesters," said **Janine Seibert**, listing agent for **First Realty GMAC**. "It offers convenient access to work, shopping and entertainment, yet Johnston Commons also evokes that neighborhood feeling that's often missing in modern life—and it takes just minutes to 'unplug' and hit the trails or bike to the park for some rest and relaxation."

Adjacent to Johnston's developing city commons, residents can feel connected to a vibrant town center while enjoying the peace and serenity of a planned community. Hubbell has already sold three homes within the development; the grand opening is set for Sunday, February 24. The model home will be furnished and photography-ready by Wednesday, January 30.

The Stigers and their two young children, ages 2 and 5, will be the first family to move into Johnston Commons this April.

"We knew we wanted to move to Johnston for the schools and to be closer to the lake," Tami Stigers said. "We like older architecture, and the Craftsman exteriors reminded us of vintage homes from years gone by."

The Stigers selected a lot overlooking a valley with a panoramic view of the metro area. Their five-year-old will begin kindergarten in the Johnston school district this fall.

"We wanted a neighborhood with lots of young families," Stigers continued. "Being in a well-planned community and close to the new library makes it that much better."

Client: Iowa Realty for en Q Strategies

Project: Builder recognition

Results: Publicity in the critical Des Moines-area market for one of Iowa Realty's most profitable clients.

Master builder Tom Gratias celebrates 30 years of building excellence

It's been 30 years since a young man named Tom Gratias from Nora Springs, Iowa, hit the Des Moines housing scene.

Bolstered by a newly minted business degree from Drake University, a few thousand dollars, and a box of tools, Tom built his first house in 1972 as a custom project for a friend. Gratias still remembers the home plan—a split-level two-story he drew himself. "The weather was good, and we finished that home in about 80 days," he recalls.

From that modest beginning, Gratias gradually fueled his business through word-of-mouth referrals. And after years of tenacity, good decisions, and some luck, today Tom Gratias presides over an array of residential construction companies known collectively as the Gratias Collection of Classic Homes. The Gratias name is now widely recognized for quality single-family and townhome housing in the metro area.

Gratias is a rare hybrid: a tradesman with a keen business acumen and a marketer's sense of what people want in a home. His businesses have evolved over the years under a single philosophy—We Build Dreams. Each of his four award-winning companies appeals to homebuyers at a variety of price points and life stages:

- **Country Classic Homes**, a partnership with fellow Master Builder Darrel Avitt, produces homes and townhouses geared to singles, young couples and empty-nesters from \$145,000 and up;
- **Village Classic Homes**, a joint partnership with son-in-law Alan Wille, focuses on building homes in Ankeny and northeast Des Moines from \$200,000 and up;
- **Gratias Construction, Inc.** specializes in custom single-family homes starting at \$300,000 and townhomes from \$220,000 and up; and
- **C.L.G. Homes (Custom Living by Gratias)**, owned by Tom's wife, LaDonna, and his son Craig, builds ranch-style homes exclusively at \$280,000 and up.

"I'm proud to say that many of our clients initially came to us for their first home, and they've stayed with us over the years as their housing needs changed," Gratias says. "We're known for combining quality with affordability for every budget and lifestyle."

Gratias plans to take that affordability a step further during this year's Spring Parade of Homes, co-sponsored by Iowa Realty, First Realty/GMAC and the Home Builders Association (HBA) of Greater Des Moines. With a new financing option, homebuyers can trade in their existing home when they purchase certain Gratias listings, or take advantage of 6.5 percent financing for a 30-year fixed-rate mortgage currently available through his companies.

"Two new Gratias developments in northeast Des Moines and Indianola feature tax abatement that make home ownership an even better deal," Gratias says.

Buyers are comfortable working with Gratias because of his hands-on-style, family approach and his enduring ties to the community. Gratias still designs every floor plan himself, and his wife, LaDonna, personally supervises the finish of each home from the trim stage on to ensure the right attention to detail. His son, Craig, and son-in-law, Al Wille, are partners in his building businesses. His daughter, Jenny, an Iowa Realty agent, markets Gratias projects.

"This is a people business," Gratias says. "All I really ask of anyone who works for me is to make decisions based on what they would do if it were their own home they were working on."

"This 'Golden Rule' approach to home-building results in high standards and happy customers," Gratias continues.

Tom Gratias for en Q Strategies, page 2 of 2

It's that success that compels him to give back to his community through his industry expertise. In the past few years, Gratias has donated construction services to build the Bob Feller Museum and built a house as a fundraiser for the Waukeel Family YMCA. Most recently, he donated his project management skills to help build and complete the construction of his family's church, Immanuel Lutheran, in Waukeel.

Gratias says he evaluates these charitable efforts carefully, choosing projects that would best benefit the buyers and families where he builds and works.

The mark of a quality successful builder is adapting to change in a notoriously cyclical business. Gratias began as a custom builder in the 1970s, then recognized the potential in the townhome boom in the '80s. Now, during today's swing back to custom construction, he continues to share his experience and leadership with other builders as a long-time member of the local and state HBA and the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB). He's held numerous officer and committee positions in these organizations. Gratias is also one of the few builders in Iowa to have earned the prestigious Master Builder designation from the Home Builders Institute, the educational arm of the NAHB.

"While it's a competitive businesses, Tom has always realized that builders need to talk to each other and share their experiences for the health of the whole industry," says Steve Staub, executive vice president of the HBA of Greater Des Moines. "Tom has an excellent reputation not only with his clients, but with his peers both in Iowa and nationwide. It's taken decades to cultivate and it's something he works to maintain with every contact, every project."

The annual Spring Parade of Homes will be held throughout the metro area April 13,14, 20 and 21. Gratias townhomes and single-family homes will be featured in:

- Boulder Brook in Ankeny
- Pond's Edge Townhomes in Ankeny
- Brook Run Village in Des Moines
- Parkside Townhomes in Clive
- Wood Creek in Clive
- Ashton Park in Indianola

For more information about the featured homes and the special financing available during the Spring Parade of Homes, please call on any of the Gratias agents on the next page.

Client: MED-TEC for en Q Strategies

Project: Press release announcing change in leadership

Results: Regional news coverage for this medical equipment manufacturer.

MED-TEC names Van Gorp to the post of president and chief operating officer

MED-TEC Inc., an international provider of radiation tools and technology, has named **Dave Van Gorp** president and chief operating officer of the company. Van Gorp succeeds **Clayton Korver**, who remains chief executive officer of MED-TEC. Korver, president of MED-TEC since 1996, will shift his focus from day-to-day operations to cultivating strategic partnerships and new product development.

The northwest Iowa company and its 90 employees play a quiet but essential role in cancer care and treatment worldwide. From patient positioning equipment to the tools used to deliver radiation—including IMRT and brachytherapy—MED-TEC equipment and technologies touch virtually every phase of the cancer treatment process.

“Capitalizing on our growing sales momentum, we plan to supplement MED-TEC’s European operations with new sales and manufacturing centers in Asia,” noted **Dr. Michael Richards**, a former physician in Des Moines and chairman of the board for MED-TEC.

Van Gorp brings more than 20 years of sales and marketing management experience to MED-TEC’s initiatives. An Orange City native, Van Gorp joined the company in February 2001 as national sales director. He was promoted to executive vice president and chief operating officer in April 2002. Before joining MED-TEC, Van Gorp was general manager for Sunflower Marketing, a promotional marketing company and a division of M-C Industries. He also spent 15 years at K-Products, now American Identity, and rose to the office of vice president of sales and marketing. During his tenure, the company’s sales more than doubled from approximately \$40 million to \$88 million.

“Under Dave’s leadership, MED-TEC has expanded its distribution network for tools and technologies serving the radiation oncology markets. At the same time, he’s championed innovative and effective ways to strengthen our relationships with clinicians and health-care providers,” said Korver. “The combination of reach and relationships that Dave has initiated will serve MED-TEC well under his leadership.”

Amy Schutt was also promoted from finance manager to controller, overseeing financial operations for the entire organization. “As MED-TEC anticipates several critical projects, including corporate acquisitions and setting up manufacturing and sales operations in China, Amy will be instrumental in realizing our return on investment,” added Korver.

Schutt joined the company in 1997. A native of Orange City, she is a graduate of Northwestern College.

MED-TEC, headquartered in Orange City, Iowa, serves the radiation oncology community in the U.S. and 85 countries with a comprehensive line of accessories, hardware and software and consumables for external beam and brachytherapy cancer treatments. For more information about MED-TEC and its cancer care products and services, visit www.medtec.com.

Client: Total Health Associates for en Q Strategies
Project: Healthcare publicity
Results: Laid the groundwork for future coverage.

Is your bladder controlling your life?

One of the first rehabilitation centers in Des Moines to treat female urinary incontinence now confirms what women have said privately for years: sometimes Kegels are not enough.

That is, if women admit to the problem at all. As many as 50,000 to 100,000 women in the Des Moines metro area suffer from urinary incontinence (UI). Yet only half of them will ever discuss it with their doctors and seek treatment, according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Agency for Health Care Policy and Research.

If you're female, you've had a baby—or even if you're just physically active—you probably know the feeling. It's the “leaking” that can come with a cough or a sneeze or running up the stairs. Or it may be the need to visit the bathroom with increasing frequency. Even the overwhelming urge to urinate...right now.

Despite its prevalence, UI sufferers are amazingly secretive about the condition. Young, active women that experience symptoms wonder why it's happening to them. Older sufferers mistakenly believe it's an inevitable part of aging. UI can become much more than a temporary annoyance. It can become a persistent problem that controls the sufferer's work, exercise routine and social life.

Krisanne Colby, MSPT, physical therapist for the Women's Health division of **Total Health Associates**, an outpatient rehabilitation center in West Des Moines, can sympathize. As a physical therapist with nearly a decade of experience, Colby is one of a select few therapists in the Des Moines metro area to complete specialized training to treat female urinary incontinence. The program relies on patient education, exercise and biofeedback as an alternative to medication or surgery. While the right exercises are beneficial, Colby said, she has observed patients doing Kegel exercises incorrectly, actually contributing to instability of the bladder muscles. The lack of success contributes to feelings of shame, embarrassment, and even depression that make the physical problem even harder to bear.

“Providing a private, supportive setting for treatment is key,” Colby said. “I talk with women that have stopped exercising, limit their fluids and even plan their activities around bathroom access to avoid anxiety and embarrassment. But the only shame in UI is not the problem itself, but the fact that so many women suffer needlessly.”

More prevalent than diabetes, about 15 million people in the U.S. alone suffer from UI at a cost of \$26 billion per year for diagnosis and treatment, according to the industry journal *Urology*. Females are especially vulnerable to UI because of childbearing, weight and hormone fluctuations, and experts estimate it impacts anywhere from 20 to 50 percent of women age 25 to 60.

“Women are at greater risk for urinary incontinence during two major life events: becoming a mother, and entering menopause,” said Dr. Bill Newland, MD, a Des Moines obstetrician and gynecologist. “UI is extremely common when the pelvic floor muscles have been stressed from labor and delivery. Though it's usually temporary, some new mothers continue to experience symptoms several months after delivery.

“Menopause, with lowered estrogen levels, muscle and connective tissue atrophy and medications, can lead to incontinence as women age,” Newland said.

UI's onset is often gradual. The initial leaking, called stress incontinence, is caused by a weakening of the muscles that keep urine stored in the bladder. The pelvic floor muscles fail to fight the forces that push down on the abdomen when you laugh, sneeze, run, jump or perform any other type of physical exertion, according to *Women's Waterworks: Curing Incontinence*, by Dr. Pauline Chiarelli. Left unchecked, simple stress incontinence can escalate

Bladder for en Q Strategies, page 2 of 2

to include symptoms of urgency and frequency. It may lead to other medical problems such as urinary tract infections and depression.

Experts recommend seeking an evaluation if UI symptoms continue beyond one month. Treatment options include physical therapy and biofeedback, medication or surgery. Physical therapy and biofeedback are recommended as the first line of treatment by the Agency for Health Care Policy and Research, and a benchmark study published in the 1998 *Journal of the American Medical Association* (JAMA) confirmed that more than 80 percent of its participants experienced greater control over their incontinence. Moreover, the improvement was achieved without side effects or complications.

Physical therapy programs are similar to those of Total Health Associates, which begins with a thorough physical evaluation, including a questionnaire and patient reporting through a bladder diary. A therapy plan is then created under the direction of one's physician. Total Health Associates' UI treatment program is generally completed in eight, one-hour visits and includes patient education, bladder re-training, physical therapy, postural corrections and biofeedback. The treatment is covered by health insurance in many cases.

"UI can be prevented, and physical therapy and biofeedback techniques can actually cure it. Many of our patients are seeing improvement after just one or two weeks," said Colby.

While medications may also help more than two-thirds of patients with UI, about one-third report side effects or complications from medications; patients must also take the medication indefinitely. Surgery is not a total cure and should only be considered after other treatments prove ineffective.

UI is not normal. What's more, women don't have to live with it. Sufferers should talk with their physicians if symptoms persist beyond one month, and take active control over their treatment to regain their health, their confidence, and their quality of life...free from urinary incontinence.

Client: West Bank for en Q Strategies

Project: Partnership announcement

Results: Increased visibility for private client services division.

**West Bank teams with VMF Capital to redefine and enhance
trust and investment management services**
A groundbreaking strategic alliance

West Des Moines State Bank (West Bank), one of the nation's highest performing independent banks, announced today that it is teaming with **VMF Capital, LLC**, to deliver management and advisory services to the bank's trust clients.

This strategic alliance broadens the scope of investment services that West Bank offers its individual and corporate trust clients and provides additional depth in staffing and resources. West Bank, which ranks No. 2 for efficiency among the nation's largest bank holding companies, holds approximately \$2.5 billion in trust assets.

"We're both breaking new ground with this arrangement," said **David L. Miller**, chief executive officer of West Bank. "Drawing on VMF's expertise, we're responding to the demands of our clients to provide them with personalized, professional investment management and strategic advice. For VMF, this marks the firm's first alliance with a leading independent bank."

Gary Ernst, vice president and senior trust officer at West Bank, said that VMF's specialty in managed accounts offers a disciplined investment approach to complement West Bank's other trust services. "We already have strong relationships with our customers, and we're solidifying those relationships still further by teaming with VMF," Ernst said. "Customized portfolios offer clients the hands-on attention they just can't get by investing solely in mutual funds."

As West Bank sought a local partner to add depth and breadth to its trust services, VMF Capital emerged as the natural choice.

"It's a great fit," said **Don S. Mears**, a managing partner of VMF in Des Moines. "We share the same belief in local management, and we understand the needs and expectations of bank customers. We can help West Bank reach out to clients with more investment resources and expertise, while retaining the local flavor and control so important in quality customer service."

Mears formerly served as vice president and chief investment officer for Wells Fargo (formerly Norwest Bank Iowa) Investment Management and Trust for 20 years. He and the firm's three other Des Moines-based managing partners, **Christopher S. Cook**, **Scott D. Eltjes** and **Jon K. Augustine**, bring more than 60 combined years of trust management experience to West Bank investors.

VMF specializes in creating customized portfolios of stocks, bonds and other investment options for its clients—defined as managed accounts. The professional staff includes five individuals who have earned the Chartered Financial Analyst (CFA) designation.

Drawing from his years of experience in managing trust assets, Mears says personalized service remains essential: it's just the delivery method that's changing.

"VMF's partners have made a conscious decision to concentrate on building strong personal relationships. We take the time to walk all of our clients through the strategies behind their investments," Mears added. "In addition to personalized services, VMF provides the added advantage of online account access. Internet access means our clients stay informed according to their schedules. It's a convenience West Bank clients want—and a service VMF will provide."

West Bank/VMF for en Q Strategies, page 2 of 2

Located in West Des Moines, Iowa, West Bank specializes in serving individuals and businesses in Central Iowa. With assets in excess of \$800 million, the bank has long been recognized as one of the highest performing banks in the United States.

Iowa's largest independent investment advisor, VMF Capital's origins date back to the early 1980s. The firm provides investment management services to clients in Iowa and throughout the United States. Founded in Cedar Rapids and owned by its managing partners, VMF provides custom portfolio management and counsel to individuals, corporations, foundations and endowments.

Client: West Bank for en Q Strategies

Project: Broadcast pitch to publicize managed accounts concept

Results: Broadcast coverage publicizing new alliance between West Bank and VMF Capital.

West Bank beefs up investment management and trust services

Customized investment advice isn't just for an elite few. West Bank now brings the concept of managed accounts to many Central Iowans, thanks to its new alliance with **VMF Capital, LLC**, to deliver management and advisory services to the bank's trust clients.

The West Bank/VMF alliance was announced today. It offers you an important opportunity to discuss emerging trends in money management with VMF's local experts. The West Bank team can also clarify the use of trusts, a powerful but often misunderstood tool in financial planning.

Trusts, as described in *The Wall Street Journal Guide to Understanding Personal Finance*, shelter money for one's heirs and provide for those who can't fend for themselves. Trusts are legal entities—like corporations—that earn income, pay taxes and distribute earnings. A trustee administers the trust, which includes making investment decisions. You can establish a trust for anyone you want to provide income for...your spouse, elderly parents, your children or a close friend. Trusts are also used as estate planning devices. They are certainly not just for the rich!

VMF, an Iowa-based registered investment advisor, specializes in managed accounts, a localized alternative to mutual funds. Managed accounts assemble customized portfolios of stocks, bonds and other investment options created for specific investment objectives—much as mutual funds do, but on a smaller scale.

More and more Iowans, lacking the time to manage their own investments and seeking one-on-one guidance, are opening managed accounts. As **Don Mears**, a VMF managing partner, says, "For selective investors who shy away from the concept of investing with 250,000 of their closest friends—as one does when investing in mutual funds—managed accounts offer the personalized direction our clients expect."

VMF counts more than \$700 million in assets under its management, with 26 investment professionals and administrative staff located in Des Moines and Cedar Rapids. Its alliance with West Bank will allow the bank to expand its trust area while continuing its tradition of local and personalized service. Currently, the bank holds about \$2.5 billion in trust assets—\$150 million of which are currently under the bank's management.

Located in West Des Moines, West Bank specializes in serving individuals and businesses in Central Iowa. With assets in excess of \$800 million, West Bank has long been recognized as one of the highest performing banks in the United States. West Bank's partnership with VMF will introduce the managed account concept to the bank's trust clients and brings a new level of investment expertise to its trust area.

VMF and West Bank experts are available for on-air interviews for your morning, noon or weekend broadcasts.

Client: West Bank for en Q Strategies

Project: Background information on credit scoring for client interviews on local morning news broadcasts

Results: Increased visibility for private client services division.

Someone's keeping score

Background

From mom-and-pop gas stations to exclusive department stores, seemingly everyone is hawking credit these days. Oftentimes, credit is marketed with tempting discounts to encourage you to apply. You may think you're being a smart shopper—but think again. When it comes to credit, there are people keeping score. And when it comes to credit scoring, it's a game you definitely want to win.

Credit scoring is a tool creditors use to decide whether or not they'll grant you credit. A total number of points—a credit score—helps predict if you will make timely payments and repay a loan. So a low score means more than inconvenience. It can affect the interest rates you pay, and in some cases, deny you the credit you need to purchase a home or car.

How do you play the credit scoring game? It pays to know your opponent. Your credit score is built around a credit report, a document compiled by private, for-profit companies such as Equifax, Experian, and TransUnion. These credit bureaus gather information about your credit history and sell it to banks, mortgage lenders, credit unions, credit card companies, department stores, insurance companies, landlords, and even employers.

Credit reports list the names of your creditors, as well as what you owe and how long you've owed it. They detail your bill payment history. They show if an account has been turned over to a collection agency. They also contain an amazing amount of seemingly non-credit-related data, such as previous names, past and present addresses, your Social Security number, employment history, and marriages and divorces.

This information is fed into a computer program that compares your report to the credit histories of customers with similar profiles. Points are earned for each factor that helps predict debt repayment. A long-time address and steady employment, for example, weigh in along with your bill payment history.

And credit scoring not only considers the timing of your payments, but also the number of creditors you have. That may include a plethora of long-forgotten store credit accounts, used only once, but still attached to your credit report. If you have enough of them, they may come back to haunt you when you're applying for credit elsewhere.

Questions

Why is credit scoring used?

Credit scoring is based on real data and statistics so it's more reliable and objective than other decision-making methods.

How do creditors create credit scores?

A creditor selects a random sample of its customers and statistically analyzes it for characteristics that relate to creditworthiness. Each factor is assigned a weight based on its predictability for a good credit risk.

What factors affect your credit score?

- **Payment history.** You're in the red if you've paid bills late, had an account sent to collection or declared bankruptcy. The more recent the problem, the lower the score.
- **Outstanding debt.** If the amount owed is close to your credit limit, that will negatively affect your score. A low balance on two credit cards is better than a high balance on one.
- **Length of credit history.** The longer your accounts have been open the better.
- **Recent inquiries on your report.** If you have recently applied for many new accounts, that may lower your score.
- **Types of credit.** Loans from finance companies can lower your score.

Someone's keeping score for en Q Strategies, page 2 of 2

What's a good score?

Credit scores range from 300 to 900, with the average around 750. According to the model, as your score increases, your risk of default decreases. But just as your credit history can vary among credit bureaus, so can your credit score.

Can I find out my credit score?

That's hard to do. Credit scorers are not required by law to reveal their scores to consumers. Most don't. Recently, however, one credit scorer has started to sell consumer scores online for a fee. And if you're applying for a mortgage, some states require this disclosure.

How do I improve my credit score?

Consumers can take several steps to improve their scores, including:

- Paying bills on time
- Updating old accounts (accounts reporting a balance may have been paid down to zero)
- Not maxing out credit lines
- Limiting applications for credit
- Maintaining long-term accounts
- Staying away from finance companies

Do you have contact information for these credit bureaus and credit scorers?

The top three credit bureaus are Experian, Equifax, and TransUnion. You may have to pay a fee of up to \$9 to get a copy of your credit report if you have not recently been denied credit:

Experian: 888-397-3742

Equifax: 800-685-1111

TransUnion 800-916-8800

Fair Isaac, in partnership with Equifax, has made credit scores available online to consumers for a \$12.95 fee. Here are some web addresses to get your credit score:

<http://www.myfico.com>

<http://www.equifax.com>

<http://www.scorepower.com>