



March 2026 Newsletter



*Photo Credit: "Driftless Falls," Zane Raza, West Des Moines
Inaugural Youth Winner in the
[16th Annual Keep Iowa Beautiful Photography Contest](#)*

Spring is in the Air!

Spring brings a renewed sense of energy to communities across Iowa.

As local leaders and volunteers begin preparing for upcoming projects, cleanups, and community celebrations, this is an important time of planning and coordination. In this issue, we're sharing updates on Pick-Up Iowa, encouraging communities to declare April as Keep Iowa Beautiful Month, highlighting the impact of longtime Hometown Pride coach Jennifer Walker, and connecting you with partners like the Iowa Rural Development Council.

We're excited to see the momentum building across the state as communities prepare for the months ahead.

With gratitude,

The Keep Iowa Beautiful Team



Pick-Up Iowa: Gather Your Team & Sign Up Today!

Pick-Up Iowa returns this spring, inviting Iowans across the state to take action and show up for their communities.

This statewide cleanup initiative encourages volunteer led events to remove litter from roadsides, parks, neighborhoods, school grounds, and public spaces.



In 2026, in honor of America's 250th anniversary, we are setting a goal to have **2,500 volunteers** collecting **2,500 bags of litter** between April and June.

Pick-Up Iowa is designed to be flexible and accessible. Any group can participate by choosing a date, location, and cleanup that works for you.

Registration is open now. Start thinking about how your organization, school, or community group will Show Up for Iowa this spring.

[Register Your Pick-Up Iowa Event NOW!](#)

PS - Know a high school student? This would make a great project for National Honor Society and is a fun way to earn Silver Cord hours!

Thank You Aureon!

**Keep Iowa Beautiful Receives
Aureon Grant**

Keep Iowa Beautiful is proud to receive a \$1,500 Community Development Grant from Aureon! These funds will support our Pick-Up Iowa program, which empowers residents and businesses alike to take an active role in litter prevention and beautification across the state.



Partnerships like this allow us to scale our impact and ensure Iowa remains a beautiful place to live and work.

Thank you, Aureon, for your dedication to local community projects!

Congratulations Jennifer!



Hometown Pride Coach Retires

The staff and board of Keep Iowa Beautiful want to take the opportunity to say thank you to retiring Hometown Pride coach Jennifer Walker.

Jennifer worked for East Central Intergovernmental Association for 17 years and served as a Hometown Pride coach during her last five years there. As a Hometown Pride coach, she served Cedar and Delaware counties.

Please join us in thanking her for her dedication to Iowa communities and in wishing her the best of luck in her retirement.



#HometownPride Highlights



Walker Bandshell

Walker Hometown Pride has raised more than \$28,400 toward its fundraising goal of \$51,175, marking the halfway point for a new Bandshell Project that will be located in the Walker City Park.



The project, which is being led by the Walker Hometown Pride Committee, will create a permanent community bandshell that will serve as a gathering space for concerts, celebrations and community events. Walker Hometown Pride is targeting Spring of 2026 to break ground on the project and plans to complete construction by the Fall of 2026.



Going Above and Beyond

Hometown Pride Coach Marla Quinn shared her expertise at a recent grant writing workshop in Edgewood. The training was free and geared toward beginning and intermediate grant writers to help them learn more about



identifying grant opportunities and how to write a successful application. Over twenty people attended the workshop representing several communities in the area.

Marla is the Grants and Municipal Coordinator at the East Central Intergovernmental Association and has been with the agency for 24 years. She has served as a Hometown Pride Coach for Cedar and Delaware counties for 5 years. She has extensive experience in grant writing, and we love that she is willing to share that knowledge with local communities to help them achieve their goals! This is just one example of how the Hometown Pride Coaches go the extra mile for the communities they serve and beyond!



Summer Plans in Swing

Many of our Hometown Pride communities have already started looking ahead to summer and the projects run the gamut, but one thing is the same throughout: they are ready for a great summer!




For those with a green thumb, Alta and Springville are both planning for their community gardens. Music lovers in both Shellsburg and Springville can rejoice as their Hometown Pride Committees have planned community concerts (Shellsburg, May 17th, Springville, June 12). Active folks, Luxemburg will be holding a ribbon cutting ceremony for a local trail while Fonda Hometown Pride is working on grant application to provide lighting for the new pickleball courts in town!

[Learn more about Hometown Pride Communities](#)



**Declare April as Keep Iowa Beautiful
Month in your Community !**



Each year, Governor Kim Reynolds proclaims April as Keep Iowa Beautiful Month, reinforcing the state's commitment to vibrant, thriving communities. We believe that Iowans have the power to create meaningful change within their own communities. That's why we encourage city and community leaders to officially declare April as Keep Iowa Beautiful Month in their town or city.

We encourage you to reach out to your mayor or city council members and ask them to sign a proclamation in support of your town's commitment to a more beautiful Iowa.

Why make a proclamation?

- **Inspire Action:** The declaration encourages residents and civic groups to take action by connecting them to a city-wide and state-wide cause.
- **Spotlight your Efforts:** Raise up the great work you're already doing to beautify your community – use this as a way to get publicity for your efforts in local media and on social media.
- **Improve Collaboration:** Civic organizations can partner with local governments to make the declaration, showing their commitment to working together!

- **Strengthen your Community:** The appearance of a community says a lot about the people, pride, and businesses within them. Commit to taking action that will strengthen your community for years to come!

Through this personalized proclamation, leaders and residents commit to collective efforts that will enhance their community, contributing to the overall beauty of Iowa.

[Visit our website](#) to customize an editable proclamation to take to your civic and community leaders to sign the commitment into action!



Lieutenant Governor Chris Cournoyer reads a proclamation signed by Governor Kim Reynolds last spring declaring April 2025 as Keep Iowa Beautiful month.

Iowa Rural Development Council
RISE: Iowa Rural Summit



Join rural leaders at [RISE: Iowa Rural Summit 2026](#).

Hosted by the Iowa Rural Development Council, the 10th Annual Iowa Rural Summit takes place in Dubuque on April 9 & 10. This event features two days of learning, networking and sharing on topics like rural philanthropy, arts and culture, funding resources, rural tourism and more! Keep Iowa Beautiful staff Andy Frantz and Lorin Ditzler will be there to collaborate and celebrate individuals making a difference. Don't miss this chance to connect and learn!

Learn more and register now at <https://iowardc.org/summit/>



Your Support Matters!



From painting the state beautiful to instilling civic pride in our communities, the programs we provide are thanks to donations from supporters like you!

Consider giving to Keep Iowa Beautiful to help us continue our work improving Iowa communities!

[Donate to Support Iowa Communities](#)



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