

# THE I-W JOURNAL

A monthly publication of the Irene-Wakonda High School Journalism Club

November 2024  
Edition

## Vlasman donates a kidney, urges others to consider donation

By Khloe Sprang

Alannah Vlasman, the guidance counselor at Irene-Wakonda School, is in a special category of people. She is among less than 10 percent of living people who have given a piece of themselves to someone else.

Last summer, Vlasman donated one of her kidneys to benefit her husband's friend, Chase, who has glomerulonephritis, a disease that negatively impacts his body's kidneys..

Becoming a donor was a four-year adventure with three different attempts to become a donor, says Vlasman.

Vlasman's first attempt to become a donor amounted to her inquiring about the process. Her second attempt was much more specific when a friend's wife needed a kidney and Vlasman stepped up to help out (however, it turned out the friend was a match for his wife, so Vlasman wasn't needed).



Irene-Wakonda Guidance Counselor Alannah Vlasman, seen here at the hospital for her kidney donation surgery, donated a kidney last summer to benefit a friend. She urges others to consider living organ donation (photo/provided).

Vlasman's third and successful try to give a kidney to someone in need allowed Vlasman to be able to provide a kidney on behalf of her husband's friend Chase..

Vlasman has always felt called to give.

"Some people just know they're meant to do something," she said. "This is what I was called to do!"

The process of giving a kidney starts with a questionnaire, which is a 30-40 minute survey.

Then, Vlasman went to Minnesota to have labs drawn

and a physical performed.

When asked what the process felt like to donate a kidney, Vlasman said, "It felt like [I] was a house being put onto a listing at times!"

Vlasman's desire to be a donor surfaced when she was in youth ministry as a teenager. She always dreamed of donating for someone, and she was very happy to be able to

donate on behalf of Chase.

"[Chase] would do anything for anyone. He would bend over backwards to help people," she said. "How could I not give to him?"

Even though Vlasman had surgery and gave her kidney away in July, Chase hasn't received a kidney yet. Vlasman's donation gave him a "certificate" that he will "redeem" when his health gets to the point where he has to have the new kidney.

There are several ways to donate organs. Vlasman urges everyone to consider becoming a living donor. Her donation has not adversely affected her life. Her health is good, and she has no restrictions, she says.

"Most of the time, I forget I ever did it," she said.

Meanwhile, organs are

needed. Currently, there are an estimated 90,000 people in the United States waiting for a kidney. For more information about how to become a donor, visit The Kidney Foundation at [www.kidney.org](http://www.kidney.org).



**Happy  
Veteran's  
Day!**

## I-W's John Fontes shares his perspective as a veteran

By Duncan Sharples-Schmidt

I-W School bus driver John Fontes is a veteran who served in the Coast Guard for five years.

Fontes joined the Coast Guard in 1984.

**Please tell us about your time in the Coast Guard.**

I spent ten months on the USCGC Storis in Kodiak, Alaska. From there, we patrolled the Bearing Sea for a month at a time inspecting fishing ships in those waters. On one occasion, I was on a ship when they were emptying their nets and it was 90,000 pounds of fish in just that one catch! We boarded a Russian fishing trawler during the cold war; that was a tense boarding. After that, I went to the Coast Guard Aviation Technical Training Center in North Carolina to learn to be a helicopter mechanic.

**How long did you do that?**

After the training was completed, I went to my next duty station in San Francisco. I spent the rest of my enlistment at that air station. While I was assigned there, I repaired helicopters and was also an Air Crew Flight Mechanic. I was the hoist operator and was responsible for using the basket to pull people out of the water or off a ship. I was fortunate to be part of the crews who were able help save lives.

**Why is Veterans Day important?**

Veterans Day in its modern form was first celebrated on November 11, 1978. I think Veterans Day is important for our country to honor all veterans who have served their country, especially those who have fought for our freedoms. Unfortunately for the Vietnam veterans, when they came home they were treated very badly for their sacrifice and were not shown the respect they deserved. Even though I started my service after Vietnam, I remember people looking down on my decision to enlist. In my opinion, it wasn't until after the Gulf War and the attacks of 9/11 when people started to give veterans the respect they deserved.

**What was life after service like?**

After leaving the Coast Guard, I took a job working for United Airlines as an Aircraft Maintenance Technician working on commercial airplanes. Like a lot of veterans, the transition to civilian life was a letdown and I missed being on the helicopter crew helping save lives.

**Please tell us about your life today.**

Now I am retired, but I do drive a school bus for Irene-Wakonda. Recently, my wife of over 36 years, Carol, who drives school bus for Viborg-Hurley, was diagnosed with Pancreatic cancer that has spread to the liver and lymph nodes. We will see what God has instore for us in this chapter of our lives.



## I-W FCCLA members volunteer at Ronald McDonald House

By Duncan Sharples-Schmidt

On Friday, Nov. 8, 12 members of I-W's FCCLA chapter traveled to Sioux Falls to volunteer at the Ronald McDonald house. There, members cleaned, made beds, and did some cooking.

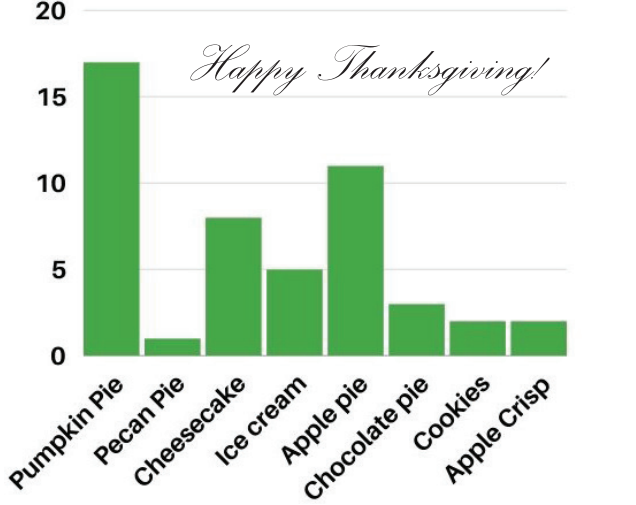
Participating in the event were (left to right, above): Lara Spurrell, Josie Llewelyn, Duncan Sharples-Schmidt, Maryn Lyngstad, Lanie Van Beek, Molly Ganschow, Natalie Girard, Rylee Palu, Paige O'Daniel, Emma Logue, Addison Brockmuel, and Gracie Sees.

**The I-W Journal November Staff**  
LaTika Blakey, 11th grade    Asher Johnston, 8th grade  
Duncan Sharples-Schmidt, 10th    Khloe Sprang, 9th grade  
ADVISOR: Riva Sharples

## I-W's Favorite Thanksgiving Dessert

By Asher Johnston

We asked approximately 60 students at Irene-Wakonda High School to choose their favorite dessert to eat at Thanksgiving, and these are the results. Four people answered "Other" and their responses included banana cream pie, fruit salad, Grandma's special dessert, and cookies and cream pie. Those answers aren't charted here.



## Eagles answer questions ...

By Asher Johnston

We asked three classes of students the following questions and this is how they responded:

**Will you watch the football game on Thanksgiving?**  
No - 46%    Yes - 54%

**Do you decorate for Christmas during Thanksgiving break?**  
No - 47%    Yes - 53%

**Will you go Black Friday shopping?**  
No - 55%    Yes - 45%

## IRENE-WAKONDA SCHOOL PAGE IS BROUGHT TO YOU BY THESE COMMUNITY-MINDED SPONSORS:

**OPEN AT 4 PM TUES-SAT**

**PIZZA - WINGS - BURGERS**

**FRIDAY/SATURDAY NIGHTS ONLY**  
TRY OUR CHARBROILED STEAKS AND SALAD BAR!

**The PIT**  
Wakonda, SD

101 Ohio St.,  
(605) 267-2551  
Like us on Facebook

**STUDENTS covering LOCAL SCHOOL NEWS from IRENE-WAKONDA.**

**COMPLETE EXCAVATION**  
605.661.7980  
IRENE, SD

**LOCAL NEWS**

By Students  
For Students

**Wakonda Heritage Manor**

605.267.2081

**SUPPORTING IRENE-WAKONDA STUDENTS AND THE COMMUNITY**

**EAGLE STOP**  
Food, Fuel and More  
605-267-8600

**Serving You In Wakonda**

115 Ohio Street  
Wakonda  
605-267-2665

9 a.m.-3:30 p.m. M-Th  
9 a.m.-5:30 p.m. Fri

**First PREMIER Bank**  
Member FDIC  
firstpremier.com

**GAYVILLE MUSIC HALL**  
Special Events

**SUNDAY, NOV. 17, 2 P.M.**  
"A Celebration of Gospel & Thanksgiving" music show

**SUNDAY, DEC. 1, 2 P.M.**  
Flower & Flame presents "A Christmas Carol"  
music and storytelling bring the famous Dickens Christmas story to life! Don't miss this unique family experience!

**Gayville Music Hall**  
502 Washington Street, Gayville, SD  
Call 605-267-2859 for information or reservations