



**UnityPoint Clinic**

Join us in welcoming Dr. Charles LaTendresse and see our new expansion at the UnityPoint Clinic Family Medicine - Grundy Center - Open House!

**OPEN HOUSE**  
Saturday, January 6 • 7 - 11 a.m.

Unity Point Clinic - Grundy Center  
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# The Grundy Register

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## A star in the making



Mike Kruse, a Beaman native and 2008 BCLUW High School graduate, recently appeared in the Lifetime original short film "The Ugly Christmas Sweater." Since moving to Los Angeles in 2012, he has acted in a host of movies, TV shows and commercials. (Photos courtesy of Mike Kruse)

### Beaman native Kruse appears in Lifetime Christmas movie

By **ROBERT MAHARRY**  
*The Grundy Register*  
LOS ANGELES- Mike Kruse doesn't consider himself a connoisseur of Christmas cinema by any means, but there's

one exception that holds a special place in his heart. "I'm a big fan of 'A Christmas Story,'" the 2008 BCLUW High School graduate said of the 1983 ode to Ralphie Parker

and his Red Ryder BB gun. "It's a classic that I appreciate more and more every year." While it's unlikely that "The Ugly Christmas Sweater," a short film that Lifetime origi-

nally aired on December 2, will achieve the mythical status of the aforementioned production, "Christmas Vacation," "It's a Wonderful Life," "The Grinch

Who Stole Christmas," or "Elf," Kruse has submitted his own entry into the canon playing the role of Aiden in the new movie. And to be returning home a professional, working actor, it all

still feels a bit surreal to a small town kid who holds his roots so dearly. "I think it's true when people say, 'It's a marathon, not a sprint.'" **See MOVIE page 3**



Ralph and Marlene Neher showcase their impressive display of over 300 nativity scenes from around the world each year during the holidays. This year, they will hold an Open House on Christmas Eve, though they are inviting walk-in visits throughout the week. (Michaela Kendall/The Grundy Register photo)

## Crazy about crèches

Local couple showcases display of hundreds of nativity scenes from around the world

By **MICHAELA KENDALL**  
*The Grundy Register*

GRUNDY CENTER - For Ralph and Marlene Neher, Christmas truly is the most wonderful time of the year.

But you won't find any Santa figurines, or red-nosed reindeers, or Elves on the Shelves at the Neher residence in rural Grundy Center. Instead, you'll find an impressive display of over 300 nativity scenes from around the world.

"I've got 360 sets, as well as other memorabilia like books and wall hangings, from over 100 countries and six continents," says Marlene Neher, the chief nativity collector of the family.

Marlene, who has been collecting seriously for about 20 years, says her crèche collec-

tion started when she received her family's old nativity scene, which she always had a fondness for. After that, she received a set when she and Ralph were married. From there, her collection has grown - and continues to grow - each year.

"Some of them were given to me as gifts, some of them I've bought on eBay, and some of them we've gathered from our travels to different countries," she said. "I really enjoy collecting handmade ones, and any nativity scene that's different or unusual."

Marlene's collection boasts more nativity scenes than one can imagine; from A to Z - Australia to Zimbabwe - and everything in between. They fill every room of her house during the holidays - even the bathroom.

She has nativity scenes made out of cocoa pods, palm nuts, shells, thimbles, old soda cans, corn husks and even volcanic ash. She has tiny nativities, with the Holy Family painted on grains of rice, and flashy nativities made of painted tin. She has nativity scenes in quail eggs, chicken eggs, and even a tiny strawberry.

Her collection spans the globe, with pieces from Italy, Germany, Vietnam, Japan, Austria, Venezuela, Uganda, Sierra Leone, Puerto Rico and even one carved of Olivewood, from Bethlehem itself.

She has a nativity scene hand-crafted from dried orange peels in Colombia, a miniature one in a matchbox made in Peru, and one made of bees wax made **See NATIVITY page 3**



Western Home Communities' Creekside Cottages development is nearly complete on the outside, and the hope is that the new facility is finished by spring. (Michaela Kendall/The Grundy Register photo)

## Creekside Cottages set for spring completion

By **MICHAELA KENDALL**  
*The Grundy Register*  
GRUNDY CENTER - Just over a year ago, Western Home Communities of Cedar Falls broke ground on a new senior living development - Creekside Cottages - located south of Ti-

tan Machinery on the east edge of town. Now, construction is nearly finished on the exterior of the cottages, and those involved are hopeful for a spring completion date. Once completed, the cottages

will become a new home for all 55 residents that currently live in the Grundy County Memorial Hospital's Long Term Care unit, thanks to a partnership between Western Home Communities

**See CREEKSIDE page 3**

## Wellsburg Public Library earns special designation

By **ROBERT MAHARRY**  
*The Grundy Register*

WELLSBURG- In an era dominated by video streaming, smartphones, e-reading and Amazon, public libraries (along with newspapers) can often feel like an anachronism of sorts. But that doesn't mean great things aren't still happening there, and for the second straight year, the Wellsburg Public Library has received a national "star library" designation from Library Journal.

Of the over 7,000 member libraries, Wellsburg was one of just 259 chosen for the recognition this year, and while taking a look around, it's not hard to understand why. It's massive, modern and technologically



Wellsburg Public Library Director Karen Mennenga (pictured) poses for a photo at her desk after receiving a "Star Library" designation for the second consecutive year. (Robert Maharry/The Grundy Register photo)

advanced, with thousands of editions available in print and online. Seven from Iowa were chosen, including Hubbard and Alden locally. **See LIBRARY page 3**