



MercyOne heart pump program extends and improves patients' lives



STORY ON PAGE 14

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

MARCH 16
Nominations Open: Coolest Thing Made in Iowa

MARCH 20
Legislative Update (Members Only)
VIRTUAL
Continues every other Friday during session.

APRIL 6
Nominees Announced: Coolest Thing Made in Iowa

JUNE 2-4
Taking Care of Business Conference
CORALVILLE & IOWA CITY

JUNE 2
Leadership Iowa Graduation
IOWA CITY

JUNE 3
Coolest Thing Made in Iowa Announcement
CORALVILLE

JULY 19-23
Business Horizons
DES MOINES

AUGUST 2-6
Leadership Iowa University
DES MOINES

Visit www.iowaabi.org and click the "Events" tab for details on upcoming events.

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FROM THE CHAIR:

Innovation that Improves Lives

Across Iowa's business community, innovation shows up in many ways. Sometimes it's a new product, a more efficient process, or a smarter way to serve customers. Other times, it's the kind of advancement that can truly change lives.

This month's Business Monthly cover story highlights the work taking place in Iowa's health care sector to improve outcomes for patients facing serious heart conditions. It's a powerful reminder that innovation isn't limited to any one industry — it happens wherever people are working to solve problems and improve the lives of others.

In the food and consumer products sector, where I spend much of my professional time, innovation often centers on improving the quality, safety, and nutrition of the products families rely on every day. That same mindset of continuous improvement can be found across Iowa's industries — from health care and manufacturing to agriculture, technology, and beyond.

What unites Iowa's business community is a shared commitment to progress. ABI members are constantly exploring new ideas, investing in better solutions, and strengthening the communities

where we live and work.

Opportunities to learn from one another and share ideas are part of what makes ABI so valuable. One of the best examples is the Taking Care of Business Conference, which will take place June 2–4 in Coralville and Iowa City. Registration is now open, and I encourage you to make plans to join us for three days of conversations, insights, and connections with fellow business leaders from across the state.

I hope you enjoy this issue of Business Monthly and the perspectives it brings from across Iowa's business community. **ABI**



Kellan Longenecker
ABI Chair
General Mills

CAPITOL BUSINESS:

Another Successful Business Day in Des Moines

ABI staff strongly encourages our members to be engaged in our public policy process as that participation allows us to better represent the interests of business and industry before lawmakers. There are numerous ways to do this whether that's by being on one of our public policy committees, contacting legislators about a key ABI issue during the legislative session or hosting an elected official at your facility to demonstrate to them the impact your company has in Iowa. Another way you can do this is by attending one of our many events throughout the year.

Earlier this month, an audience of 200+ business leaders attended ABI's annual Business Day in Des Moines, where they heard Governor Kim Reynolds and legislative leaders of both parties talk about the state of their priorities. Policymakers spoke about critical issues like property tax reform, making life

more affordable for Iowans and more. Attendees also heard from Ginger Chambless, the Head of Market Insights for J.P. Morgan Commercial Banking. She provided insightful commentary on the state of the economy.

Once the Legislature adjourns for the year, likely near the end of April or early May, the ABI policy team will be traveling across the state to hold regional meetings where you will learn about the results of the 2026 legislative session and also have an opportunity to ask questions and provide feedback on what we should be focused on moving ahead. Stay tuned for more information in the next several weeks.

ABI appreciates everyone who attended this year's Business Day in Des Moines. If you joined us and have any feedback to share, please send that to Brad Hartkopf (bhartkopf@iowaabi.org). **ABI**



Brad Hartkopf
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Q&A: Your Complete Guide to the Coolest Thing Made in Iowa Competition

Q: What is the Coolest Thing Made in Iowa competition, and how did it come about?

A: The Coolest Thing Made in Iowa competition was established as a fun and engaging way to showcase the diverse range of products manufactured in Iowa while promoting careers in manufacturing. ABI is excited to kick off year three on March 16 when nominations open. Nearly 20 other states host a version of this competition!



Kelsey O'Connor
ABI
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Q: How does the competition align with ABI's mission?

A: For more than 120 years, the Iowa Association of Business and Industry (ABI) has championed the manufacturing industry through legislative advocacy, relationship-building, educational programming, and cost savings.

This competition serves as another avenue for ABI to highlight Iowa makers and their innovative products along with the state's manufacturing prowess — an industry that employs hundreds of thousands of people and contributes billions to the state's economy.

Q: What products qualify?

A: To be eligible, a product must meet certain criteria:

- It must be manufactured in Iowa.
- The company headquarters do not necessarily have to be in Iowa, but the product must be produced in an Iowa-based facility.
- The product must be made using a manufacturing process. This excludes certain services like restaurants that prepare food to order but includes food items produced through mass manufacturing processes.

Other detailed eligibility rules and requirements can be found on the official contest site.

Q: How can the public participate, and what is the voting process?

A: Nominations for the Coolest Thing Made in Iowa are open to the public. Once products are nominated, they enter a popular vote phase, setting the stage for a tournament-style bracket. Each device is allowed one vote per day during the voting period. The Top 16 Iowa-made products then engage in head-to-head matchups to vie for the ultimate title.

Q: Do you have to be a member of an organization to be considered for this award?

A: No. The number of votes received determines the winner.

Q: How will a company know I nominated something it makes?

A: Companies with products nominated for Coolest Thing Made in Iowa will be notified by ABI.

Q: Can a company have multiple products in the competition?

A: Yes, but only one product per company can make it into the Top 16.

Q: When and where is the winner announced?

A: The winner of the Coolest Thing Made in Iowa is unveiled annually during the Taking Care of Business Conference, an event that gathers hundreds of industry leaders from across the state.

In 2024, the first-ever winner was a Vermeer ZR5-1200 self-propelled baler manufactured by Vermeer Corporation of Pella. In 2025, the title went to the John Deere CP770 cotton picker, manufactured by John Deere in Ankeny.

Both winners were celebrated for their innovation, craftsmanship, and reflection of Iowa's manufacturing strengths.

Q: What products have won in other states?

A: Nominated products from various states have been as diverse as motorcycles, military vehicles, cheese products, boats, generators, chocolates, food carts, iron castings, beer, all-terrain vehicles, snowblowers, and more — showing the breadth of American manufacturing creativity.

Q: When can I nominate a product?

A: In 2026, nominations were scheduled to open March 16 and run through March 27, with subsequent rounds of voting and bracket competition following.

Check www.coolestthingia.com for the latest nomination dates, contest rules, and voting timelines. ABI



LEADERS in engineering and innovation

Through IMEG's scholarship program, 30 engineering scholarships were awarded to students across the U.S. in the 2025-2026 academic year.

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COVER STORY FROM PAGE 11

MercyOne Heart Pump Program Extends and Improves Patients' Lives

BY CHELSEA KEENAN PRIEST

When Michael Griffin lived with severe heart failure, everyday activities like walking across a room or climbing a few steps were exhausting. He was constantly sick, incredibly fatigued and had trouble breathing.

But a heart procedure at MercyOne Des Moines Medical Center in 2020 changed his life. Left Ventricular Assist Device (LVAD) has emerged as a powerful option to help patients whose hearts can no longer pump enough blood on their own.

"Now I'm so happy," Mr. Griffin said. "I don't smoke or drink. I got close to God. I try to stay healthy. Once I learned to accept the lifestyle change, everything just got better."

An LVAD is a mechanical pump that helps the heart's left ventricle – or its main pumping chamber – circulate blood throughout the body, experts explained. The device, which is surgically implanted, works alongside the patient's own heart. They are typically used when a patient is in advanced heart failure and medications or other therapies are no longer effective, said Jennifer Goerbig-Campbell, MD, a cardiologist for MercyOne Iowa Heart Center.

The wait for a heart transplant is long, she said, and getting an LVAD can help keep patients healthy while they wait for a transplant. It's also an option for someone who may not be eligible for a transplant due to age or other health issues.

"It can potentially extend someone's life for years longer and alleviate symptoms," Dr. Goerbig-Campbell said.

MercyOne has offered the procedure since 2014, and on average completes 10 LVAD implants each year. Its LVAD team — consisting of cardiothoracic surgeons, cardiologists, nurse coordinators and rehabilitation specialists — works with very high-risk patients. MercyOne is the only health system in central Iowa to offer LVAD.

Symptoms of severe heart failure include shortness of breath, fatigue, swelling of the legs, belly, hands or face, repeated hospitalizations, and signs of poor blood flow to other organs such as kidneys, Dr. Goerbig-Campbell said.



MercyOne Paramedic Jeffrey Spencer uses a doppler probe to check Michael Griffin's blood pressure in his home. Mr. Griffin, 55, has a Left Ventricular Assist Device to help pump blood throughout his body due to advanced congestive heart failure.

"When people get to late-stage heart failure at those late stages, at that point, the medications aren't working anymore," she said.

The LVAD pump continuously moves blood from the weakened left ventricle into the aorta, helping maintain circulation and improve oxygen delivery to organs. Dr. Goerbig-Campbell said post LVAD procedure patients have similar outcomes to those who receive a heart transplant, including quality of life and long-term survival rates.

The newest generation of pumps has fewer complications and malfunctions as well, with a lower risk of clotting and strokes and less bleeding complications, she added.

Implanting an LVAD is a major surgical procedure, which not only requires a multiple-day hospital stay and rehabilitation, but also lifestyle changes and a strong support system, said Suzi Littler, RN, and MercyOne Iowa Heart Center's LVAD coordinator.

In the immediate aftermath, patients will need to spend several weeks in the

hospital and need help driving and managing medications. Full recovery can take up to six months, the team said, and include physical and occupational therapy as well as home health support.

"We want them to lead a better quality of life," Ms. Littler said. "It can be overwhelming for them."

Heart failure affects millions of people worldwide, and the demand for donor hearts remains far greater than supply. In Iowa, more than 176 per 100,000 people die each year from heart disease, according to the most recent data available from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

As a result, LVADs are increasingly used as long-term therapy, not just as a bridge to transplant. But for patients facing advanced heart failure like Mr. Griffin, the LVAD has become a second chance at life.

"That's when my life changed," he said. "I had to make a choice — I could live and make some serious changes or I could continue the path I was on, but it would be a short one." ABI

WHAT'S TRENDING:

Health care costs and the unintended impact of the No Surprises Act

Health care affordability is a top priority for Iowans and a critical issue for business leaders. Rising costs affect what employers pay and what employees see in paycheck deductions for their insurance coverage. One factor driving these costs is the federal No Surprises Act (NSA).

The NSA protects patients from surprise bills when they see an out-of-network doctor in situations where they cannot choose an in-network doctor, such as emergency care or hospital-based services like anesthesia and radiology (CMS, n.d.). This part of the law seems to be working. At the same time, other parts of the NSA have had unintended negative consequences — including driving up health care costs.

The primary driver of increased costs is the Independent Dispute Resolution (IDR) Process created by the NSA. The IDR process was intended to determine how much out-of-network providers should be paid when they cannot agree with a health plan on a reimbursement amount. Instead, this process has been exploited by certain providers, many of them investor-owned, to achieve exorbitant payments for routine and sometimes elective health care services.

Both the number of IDR cases and the financial exploitation of them have surged far beyond early estimates, driving payment outcomes that significantly exceed typical in-network rates. (CMS, 2024) (KFF, 2024). Despite the law's intent to curb inflated charges, providers win nearly 80 percent of disputes, routinely securing award payments averaging 445 percent of the median in-network rate. Some outliers, like HaloMD, have received payments exceeding 930 percent — costs that ultimately strain the affordability of health care (HealthAffairs, 2025). In the case of self-funded health plans, these dramatic cost increases are paid directly by employers.

Some providers are leaning hard on IDR and driving up costs in the process. One provider reported IDR rulings fueled \$105 million of its quarterly revenue increase (Blue Cross of Idaho, 2025).

The pattern becomes even clearer when looking at specific procedures.

- In Connecticut, a single practice performing breast-reduction surgeries has routinely secured award payments exceeding \$100,000 for a procedure Medicare reimburses at roughly \$1,145 (Modern Healthcare, 2025).
- And in Idaho, a facility sought IDR payments topping 1,000 percent of Medicare, including a \$2,872 bill to treat a runny nose — a service that typically bills for \$376.

These extreme cases show how arbitration can turbo-charge prices and push avoidable costs back onto health plans, driving up premiums and employers' costs. For self-funded employers, the impact is even more direct: a few high-dollar IDR cases can significantly increase



Melanie Teske

Vice President - Provider Relations and Engagement, Wellmark Blue Cross and Blue Shield

claims costs.

Wellmark Blue Cross and Blue Shield is working to keep premiums stable and ensure members have dependable, high-quality health care by:

- Adjusting provider reimbursement rates so payments reflect real market conditions
- Working to assure fair standards are applied in IDR proceedings
- Ensuring hospitals maintain in-network access for hospital-based services
- Expanding programs that reward high-quality, efficient health care

Businesses can help shape health care costs too: stay informed about IDR trends and engage in advocacy that supports fair, sustainable reimbursement. Together, we can simplify the health care experience and keep coverage affordable.

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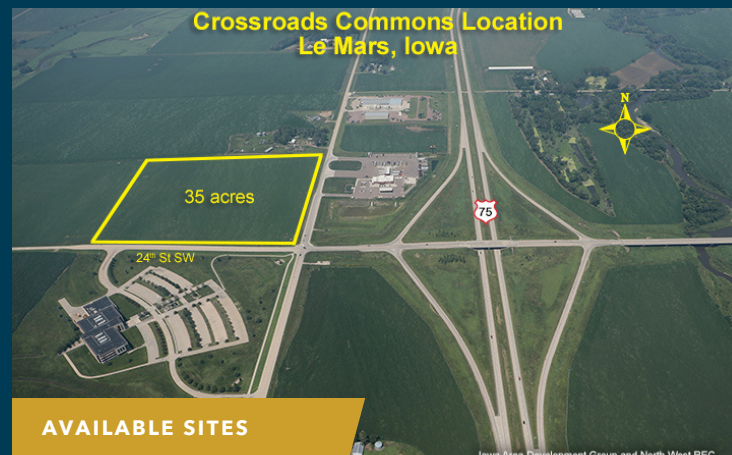
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ABI FOUNDATION:

Leadership Iowa: Expand Your Perspective. Strengthen Your Leadership.

Over nine months, the Leadership Iowa class learns, experiences and forms bonds that turn an already exceptional program into something truly life changing. For two members of the 2024-25 class, the journey didn't stop there. They've stepped into co-chair roles this year mentoring, leading and helping shape a transformational experience for the next class.



Sarah Hruska, Prestage Foods, Leadership Iowa 2024-25 Class, Co-Chair 2025-26

1. Before you started the program, what did you think Leadership Iowa would be, and how did the experience compare?

To be completely honest, I applied for Leadership Iowa because I had heard so many wonderful things about it — both as someone who completed Leadership Fort Dodge and from others who participated in Leadership Iowa. I already had a solid understanding of what the program was and what would be expected.

But no matter how prepared you think you are, the actual experience is always shaped by the people, the economy, the political climate, the communities you visit, and countless other factors. What I didn't anticipate was meeting some of the very best humans. I never expected to ride with the same person each month and build a lifelong bond, or to walk away with connections that mean so much.

Our group created a running club and a walking club so that whenever we met, we had time for some physical activity and fellowship — usually ending with a quick stop at a local coffee shop. A few of us made it our mission to track down the local thrift stores and even hosted a fun "thrift-for-each-other" dinner. These people became friends I could confide in, especially regarding my child's silent disabilities, and they served

as a sounding board when I needed help. They truly became an extended family.

When I first started Leadership Iowa, I was looking outward — exploring potential roles in neighboring southern states. By the end of the program, I realized how many incredible communities, initiatives, and people Iowa has to offer. It showed me how one program can genuinely change the course of your life. That's why my next step was clear: to take on a co-chair position and give back to the experience that gave me so much.

2. What surprised you most about parts of the state or industries you were exposed to?

As a Human Resources Director who has worked in manufacturing for over 15 years, I wouldn't say anything truly surprised me. What I came to realize, though, is how many communities have incredible things to showcase — yet we often stay within our own small circles and miss out on the exposure we could or should have. When you push yourself to step into the public sphere, especially through a statewide program like this, you start to see the hidden corners and unique strengths that usually go unnoticed.

You learn about the rich history of each community and meet the people who keep those communities running so effectively. At the same time, you also encounter places and perspectives you may not agree with — whether politically, personally, or ethically. But through that exposure, you gain understanding and a genuine respect for what each community has to offer.

3. From your point of view as a co-chair, what do you see participants gaining most from the experience?

Serving as a Co-Chair offers an entirely different perspective. You begin to understand not only the thoughts of the individuals you naturally connect with, but also the broader viewpoints across the whole group. This cohort has truly come together like a family — often ending their evenings by gathering to unwind, reflect on the day, and talk through challenges.

What I see from this group is genuine engagement. Their conversations focus on how to strengthen the program — whether that means adding time to decompress after heavy topics, allowing more space for questions, or identifying other areas where improvements could be made.

On a personal note, I believe this group will gain a deep understanding of one another. They'll learn about the personal challenges each person is navigating — challenges that may not directly affect them, but will

ultimately broaden their empathy and increase their tolerance. They have the potential to grow together in meaningful, lasting ways.



Jon Sukup, Sukup Manufacturing Co., Leadership Iowa 2024-25 Class, Co-Chair 2025-26

1. What originally motivated you to say "yes" to Leadership Iowa?

I grew up in Iowa and had heard positive things about the program for years. I spent part of my career out of state, and, when I moved back, people recommended that it would be a great way to reconnect with the state. I didn't fully appreciate how the program would take us communities I had only heard about, teach us about critical issues in our state, and connect us to others across the state.

2. What's one perspective you gained that changed how you lead, whether in your community or in your organization?

The biggest perspective shift was hearing the individual stories of others in the class. I often have this idea of what an overachieving leader should be and feel intimidated as a result. Everyone has a different path to success and embracing that lets you to put your best foot forward.

3. What would you say to someone who is hesitant to apply or doesn't think they're "ready"?

I would say take the chance and go for it. There is so much to gain from the program that you can carry forward in your career and leadership journey, and the worst case is, "not this year." ABI

Nominate candidates for next year's Leadership Iowa program by April 1 online at www.Leadershiplowa.com



EXPERT ADVICE:

Why Trust in Health Care Matters Now More Than Ever

As both parents and physicians, we remember the anxiety of navigating health decisions for our young children. Conflicting studies left us wondering if we were making the right choices for our respective families. Thankfully, we each trusted our children's pediatricians. Even though we are medical professionals, we still asked questions, listened and worked closely with the experts to find an approach that guided each of our young families

That trust is a lifeline.

Today, health advice seems to change constantly, and it comes at us — sometimes unsolicited — from all directions. One day we hear, "do this," and the next day it's "don't." When clarity disappears — especially around preventive measures like vaccines — conflicting information fills the gap, and trust erodes.

As health system leaders, we've seen what happens when distrust takes root. Patients delay screenings, skip preventive care or avoid treatment altogether. These delays can turn manageable conditions into life-threatening emergencies, straining families, finances, communities, and the entire health system.

Health care is deeply personal, and at its core is a foundation of trust between patients and providers. When that trust weakens, people hesitate or turn to potentially unreliable sources.

When patients trust their doctors, they are more likely to share key health information, follow treatment advice and be more diligent about their own health care. Trust is the bedrock of open dialogue, respect, and empathy, leading to higher patient satisfaction and better health outcomes.

"Continuity of care — such as seeing the same provider over time or coordinating treatments across different specialties — helps patients perceive their care as seamless and dependable. This consistency encourages them to trust that their health concerns are being attentively managed and that their provider truly understands their health journey."

Involving patients actively in decisions about their treatment options further boosts trust. When patients are empowered to participate, they are more likely to feel confident in their care plans and to view the healthcare system as transparent and respectful," Raveco Medical.

So how do we restore trust?

For patients, your voice matters. Ask questions, share your concerns, and talk about what matters most to you. Your primary care doctor knows your history and can help you find the best options for your



Hijinio Carreon
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family's health. These conversations aren't just helpful — they are essential.

Trust between patients and providers declined during COVID-19, but the data indicate trust is on the rise. According to PatientPoint.com, trust increased by 33 percent from 2023 to 2024. Reasons for the increase include:

- Feeling heard and respected by the doctor
- Overall experience with the doctor
- Doctor taking the patient's background into consideration

62% of patients received the majority of their health information from their healthcare provider. That's more than any other source, including search engines, social media and family members.

For providers, trust starts with transparency. Staying current with evidence-based research and involving patients in the conversation. Clear, honest communication builds confidence that you have your patients' goals and best interests at heart.

The good news, according to PatientPoint.com, is that fewer patients are scared to ask their primary care physician about their health condition or symptoms. In 2023, 46 percent were scared. That number decreased significantly in 2024 to 25 percent.

Let's work together to make restoring trust a shared priority, because in the end, it isn't just a value. Trust is a prescription for health. **ABI**



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