

Ben DeMarais, Student Life Editor
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He sat along the bar swirling a green glow stick around his drink: The Slimer – a signature of Time Out, the local arcade bar he had fallen in love with many years ago. Known by many in town as DJ Retro, he has become a familiar face to the patrons of the bar, both as a DJ and a customer himself.



"I want people to come in and play these games, see the records and say, 'Who is this DJ Retro guy?'" DJ Retro said.

A fanatic of nostalgic games such as Super Mario Brothers and Mortal Kombat, DJ Retro said he had become a frequent visitor of Time Out when it was established as a simple arcade in Nevada, Iowa. The original Time Out arcade was opened in 2016 by Chris Harding, a recently retired mother of three looking to escape the corporate world.

"So I cashed in my 401K, approached my two adult sons, called them to the house to have a little meeting and I told them what my ideas were," Harding said. "So that's what we did. The ideas just immediately went off. You know, within a couple of hours, they were designing the emblem and the logo."

Harding said the ideas started flowing. Many were rooted in the mall arcades they had loved visiting as children and sought to create a place for people to have a good time while getting to enjoy a variety of retro games and memorabilia. She initially decided on the name Time Out as she aspired for it to be a place in which patrons could take a "time out" away from all of their daily stressors.

Despite seeing success as an arcade, Harding said Time Out was slowly becoming a daycare center for parents to drop their children off during the day.

"So we squashed that idea and got our liquor license," Harding said.

After obtaining a liquor license, Harding and her sons began seeing a change in their clientele. Time Out was attracting more business than ever and had truly evolved into a full-time family business.

Harding's three sons all were contributing to the business in their own unique ways. The eldest, Lance Harding, manages and maintains the facility's arcade machines and is also responsible for bringing karaoke to the bar. Her middle child, Logan Ristau, is credited with building much of the bar including its karaoke stage and bar tables. He also manages the bar and is the mastermind behind many of Time Out's specialty drinks. The youngest of Harding's sons currently works as a barback, as all three sons now play a pivotal role in the operation.

"It really is a family business at the end of the day," Harding said. "I was a mom that was telling them to get off the video games and do their schoolwork, you know, but as I was leaving my corporate job, and thought, well, 'What can I do to be more involved with my family?'"

Approaching its sixth year of business as a bar, Harding said Time Out has earned a loyal clientele and the attention of both Ames residents and Iowa State students. The bar hosts karaoke four nights a week as well as a variety of gaming tournaments. The bar is home to dozens of retro arcade machines including titles such as "Galaga," "Frogger" and "Hydro Thunder."

Harding said she works to immerse her customers in the full retro experience at Time Out, with everything from retro gaming consoles to its specialty drinks. Some of Time Out's signature creations include drinks such as the Princess Peach, The Empire and Butterbeer—from the world of the “Harry Potter” franchise.

As it enters its sixth year of operation as a bar, Time Out continues to provide a space for patrons to escape the stressors of the real world and enter into a world of fantasy. Harding and her sons continue to carry on the family business for people of all generations to enjoy.

"I always tell people, the good news is I get to work with my sons every day. The bad news... I now work with my sons every day," Harding said.

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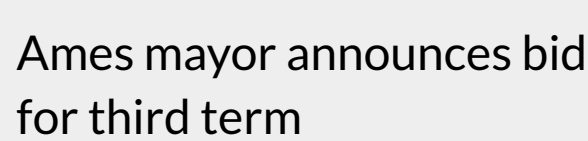
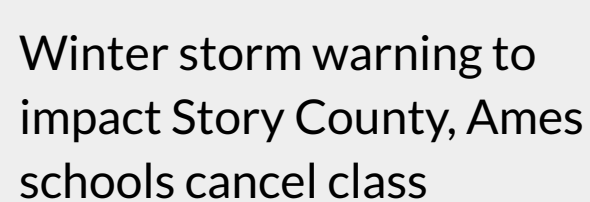
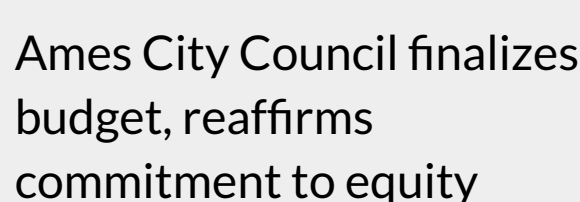
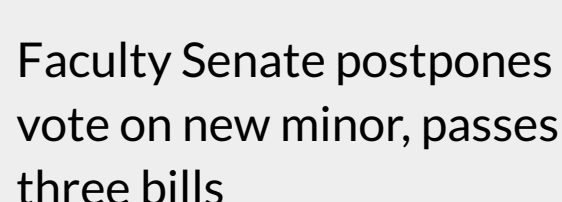
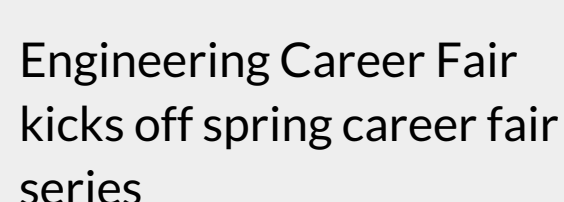
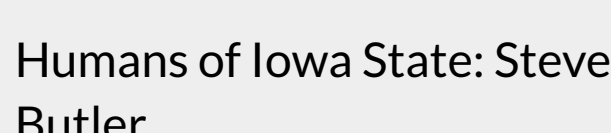
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