

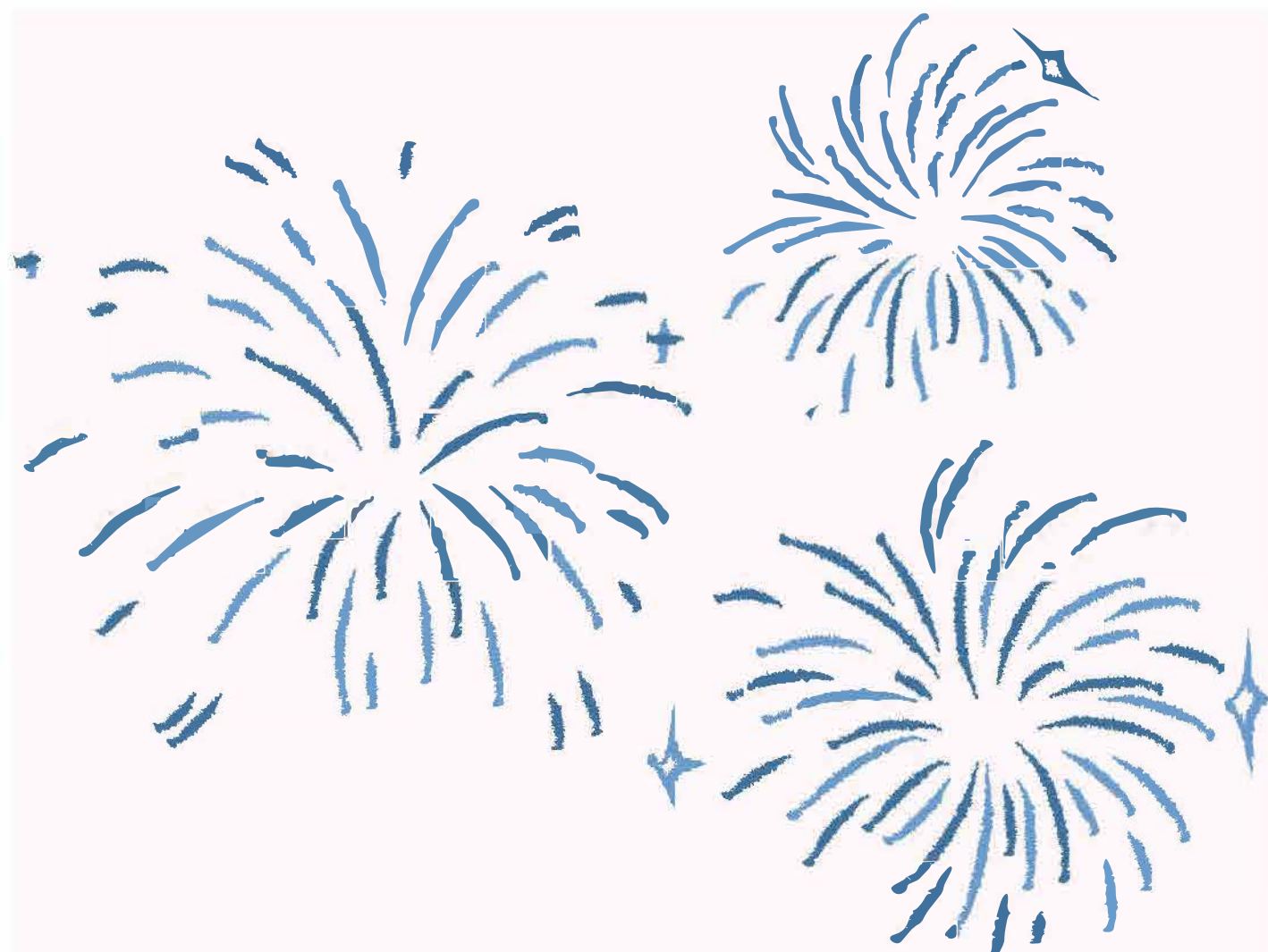
WINTER NEWSLETTER

JANUARY 2026



WELCOME SHELBEE!

"I am excited to be joining River Hills Community Health Center as a Case Manager. Originally from Nebraska, I came to Iowa on a scholarship to attend William Penn University, where I earned my bachelor's degree in Psychology and Human Services. I began my career as a Sexual Assault Advocate, working with individuals from many different backgrounds and life stages. That experience allowed me to develop a wide range of skills and deepen my passion for advocacy. I am grateful for the opportunity to bring that experience to River Hills and continue advocating for others. Outside of work, I enjoy fishing and hiking with my partner and our dog. I am also actively involved in my community as a youth soccer coach." - Shelbee Clow



NEW TELEHEALTH CLINIC

We are excited to announce the availability of local appointments for patients in Linn County! Clinic slots are available at the UIHC Cedar Rapids location (411 10th Street Suite 150). Patients will see a nurse or medical assistant for check-in, then see ARNP Cassidy Chalupa via telehealth in a clinic room. Lab services are also available at this location. Patients must be established with UIHC virology clinic (no new patients at this location), have a good attendance record (no frequent no-shows) and be virally suppressed (VL <200). Patients using this local option will still be asked to follow with their primary virology provider at the UIHC main campus one time per year.

If you're interested in being scheduled in this clinic, please contact Ashley Brennan at 319-335-7520 to be screened.



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WELLNESS SUMMIT

Please save-the-date for PITCH's 2026 Annual Wellness Summit! This year's Summit will be extra special as we celebrate 20 years serving Iowans Living with HIV. Those living with or impacted by HIV are encouraged to apply once the application opens.

The Annual Wellness Summit provides our community with opportunities to connect and learn from each other in a safe, affirming environment where all life experiences are welcome. Attendees will feel encouraged through presentations and activities to build camaraderie and understanding with one another, thereby creating a system of support that continues when the Summit ends. The application will be available soon on our website at www.pitchiowa.com



JOURNALING EXERCISES TO BEGIN THE YEAR WITH INTENTION

1. Needs vs. Wants

Draw two columns and list your needs on one side and your wants on the other. This simple exercise brings clarity to what truly deserves your energy and what may be draining it.

2. Begin with some very simple questions: What do I want to feel, create or embody in this season of my life?

2. A Letter to Your Future Self

Write a letter to yourself twelve months from now. Describe what you hope to have learned, how you wish to feel, and what kind of person you're becoming. Seal it in an envelope, or tuck it into your journal to revisit next year. Over time, these letters become powerful reminders of how far you've come.

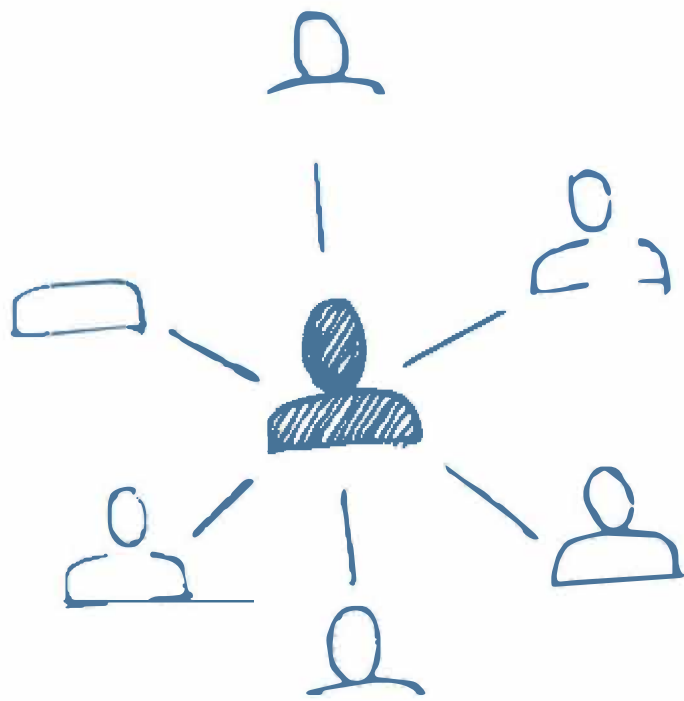
3. A Gratitude Walk

Go on a gratitude walk - with your family, with some friends, by yourself. Each step is a reflection of the year we are leaving behind, and an opportunity to count our blessings. . When you are finished walking, find a quiet corner, and do a free writing piece on what your five senses experienced, what you are grateful for and a wish for the year ahead. You can even begin with the prompt "What I wish for," and write between 5-10 minutes nonstop. You can be as creative with this prompt as you want. Doodle, use markers, crayons, make lists and let yourself be free for that time of writing.

source: Using Journaling for Setting Intentions: Rituals of Reflection - Impact CE

SOCIAL CONNECTION AND HEALTHY AGING

Social connection isn't just emotionally uplifting, it's an important part of staying healthy as we age. Research shows that older adults who stay socially engaged through regular activities, friendships, and supportive groups report better well-being, lower depression, and a higher quality of life than those who are isolated. Being part of a community can help keep the mind active, provide emotional support, and encourage healthier habits, all of which contribute to physical and mental health in later life.



For people aging with HIV, these benefits can be especially important. Studies have found that strong social networks and support from peers, family, and community groups help reduce stress, anxiety, and depression, and support resilience in the face of stigma and health challenges. In contrast, loneliness and social isolation are linked with poor health behaviors and outcomes, including difficulties with medication adherence and overall self-care. Being connected to others, whether through social groups, shared activities, or peer support, can therefore play a key role in sustaining health and well-being as people grow older with HIV.

Sources:

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/35327031/>

<https://www.rutgers.edu/news/social-networks-provide-crucial-support-older-adults-living-hiv-rutgers-health-study-finds>

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Queer Elders Iowa City Senior Center 28 S. Linn St. Iowa City, IA
319-356-5220 | Wednesdays, 2–3 pm | Room 308

Queer Elders is a welcoming social group for LGBTQ+ older adults to connect, share stories, and build community. The group meets every Wednesday from 2–3 pm in Room 308. On the 1st and 3rd Wednesdays, we focus on social time and occasionally host guest speakers. On the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays, we watch a movie or documentary about LGBTQ+ topics and have a group discussion afterward.

We also plan social events outside of our regular meetings and do community outreach by sharing our experiences with other local groups, especially to foster intergenerational dialogue.

Queer Elders takes place at the Iowa City Senior Center, a community hub offering programs, services, and activities that support social connection, wellness, and lifelong learning for adults 50 +.

Learn more about the Senior Center here: <https://www.icgov.org/government/departments-and-divisions/senior-center>

For regular updates on our activities, join our Facebook page “Queer Elders of Iowa City.”

Questions? Email qeic.icsc@gmail.com.

WHAT ARE EOBs AND WHY DID I GET ONE?

Explanations of Benefits (EOB) are documents that insurance companies send out to covered clients that show the health plan paid for a doctor visit or medical care that you received – they are meant to be informational and do not require any immediate action on your part. All EOBs will be clearly marked as such and will also say “This is not a bill.” EOBs might show an amount labeled as “You pay” or “Patient responsibility”; however, an actual bill for services would come from the service provider, not the insurance company. Receiving an EOB is a good indication that you will receive a medical bill from your medical provider once they are done processing claims through insurance.

MEDICARE ADVANTAGE OPEN ENROLLMENT PERIOD JANUARY 1 THROUGH MARCH 31

During this time, anyone who is already enrolled in a Medicare Advantage Plan can make ONE change by either switching to a different Medicare Advantage plan or returning to Original Medicare by enrolling in a Part D plan. Any changes made during this time will go into effect at the start of following month.

QUESTIONS ABOUT INSURANCE?
CONTACT THE FIELD BENEFITS SPECIALIST.

Mike Lawler

319-335-7449 MICHAEL-J- LAWLER@UIOWA.EDU

SUPPORT GROUP for people living with HIV

Are you a person living with HIV? Consider joining UIHC's monthly Support Group Zoom meetings! In this online meeting we focus on connecting with others who may share similar experiences, discovering helpful resources, developing coping strategies and more!



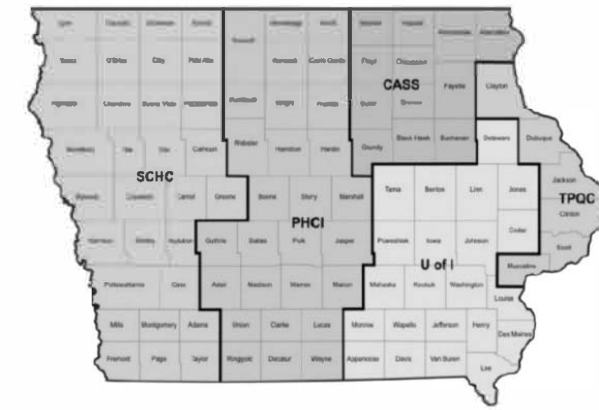
Who: Kari Vrban, LMSW (host)
When: First Wednesday of the month from 4-5:30pm (Zoom)
How: Scan the QR code with your phone or visit:
<https://forms.office.com/r/f8eYjN4L6A>

This will bring you to a form that you must fill out. After filling out the form, Kari will email you a Zoom link the day before each meeting. If you need assistance, please contact Kari at 319-467-5655 or at kari-vrban@uiowa.edu.



HOPWA

Are you in need of financial assistance to get or maintain housing? You may be eligible for services provided by HOPWA such as Long-Term Rental Assistance, Short-Term Rent, Mortgage and Utility Assistance, or Permanent Housing Placement. Eligibility is based on your income (limits vary by county) and emergency status. Clients who are case managed by a Ryan White agency may talk to their case manager to complete a referral form that will be forwarded to the HOPWA coordinator Viri Estudillo Areguin. Clients who are not case managed may contact HOPWA coordinator directly to be assessed.



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