

Central Region Life

FEBRUARY 2024

CELEBRATE ABCUSA SUNDAY

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As American Baptists, we believe that mission is at the heart of what we do, and this special occasion is an opportunity for us to come together in unity and purpose, celebrating our history and future together.

On ABCUSA Sunday, American Baptists are invited to learn more about what it means to be American Baptist through our history and Baptist distinctives. We will also join together in prayer – Include in your celebration prayer for our new General Secretary Rev. Dr. Gina Jacobs-Strain, pray for our many partners in mission, including our leaders, pastors, global servants, staff, regions, and churches. Give thanks for how God has blessed us with a rich history and in faith as we continue to seek God's mission. We are United in Christ, Together in Mission!

Let's join together in embracing the spirit of mission and discipleship as we celebrate ABCUSA Sunday. Your active participation and sharing in February will help spread the message of our collective mission.

All tools you need are available below.
Here are some important details for ABCUSA Sunday:
Date: February 11 or 18 (Choose the date that works best for your congregation)
Theme: **Mission is at the heart of what we do**
Timing: The Sunday before and after Valentine's Day

ABCUSA Focus Statement:
American Baptist Churches are missional congregations that nurture devoted disciples of Jesus Christ who live their lives in mission and ministry for the healing of the world through the love of God.

Below you will find links to ABCUSA Sunday Resources, videos, and the United Mission Toolkit.

United Mission Toolkit



ABCUSA Sunday Resources



United in Christ Video



Way of Discipleship Video





Pastor Clarence Newton was the recipient of the 2024 Wayne Franklin Religion Award at Living the Dream Incorporated's MLK Celebration



After many faithful years as the pastor of Lebo Baptist Church, Pastor Dick Odum delivers his last sermon before entering retirement.



Over the last few weeks, Steven Thawngmung at FBC Lawrence has led Lego Bible story builds that go along with the scripture passages!



Prairie Baptist Church intentionally include children in the life of the church where they are treasured for their presence, questions, and insights.

CAPTURED!

In the Central Region



It's SOUP-ER BOWL Time!!!
FBC Atchison, like many others are collecting non-perishable food items to donate to local pantries. They are at 366 of their 500 goal.



Rev. Dr. Ivan Greuter, pastor at West Side Baptist Church in Topeka has spent the last few weeks in Liberia, Africa. Rev. Dr. Greuter has spent time teaching at Liberia Baptist Theological Seminary, preaching and worshipping in local churches, and being in fellowship with fellow professors, students, and community members.



MINISTRY IN ACTION

ROOTED AT HOME

Rev. Dr. Gregg Hemmen, Executive Minister

One of the key theological themes of my life has revolved around the idea of home. I love being at home. I have a picture on the wall in my office of the dam in Steamboat Rock, Iowa, which is an artist's rendering of a geographical location I know very well. It's entitled, "Returning Home." I have another painting from a local Iowa artist of a place near my childhood home that was deeply formative for me. It's a tract of land that locals knew as a cow pasture. But for me, it was a holy playground. This land has a pond in the middle of a grassy meadow where I used to catch frogs and tadpoles. Later in life, it became a place where I could think more clearly about all kinds of things and God seemed especially close when I was there. The ancients would have referred to this as a "thin place" well before I had any language to describe what I was experiencing.

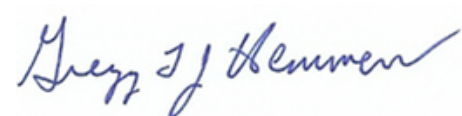
When I moved away from Iowa, there have been other variations on the idea of home. We lived in North Carolina from 1994-2007 and both of our children were born there so there's a strong sense of belonging for us in Orange County, North Carolina. We lived in South Dakota from 2007-2018 and our kids went through school with strong relational ties which still feed them and provide ballast for their lives. On the hill behind our house in South Dakota are the remains of our dog, Chumlee. He was such an integral part of our lives for twelve years and we still miss him deeply. He loved that hillside and would dawdle away time when we wanted him to hurry up so we could move on to whatever was next. Dogs always provide important reminders about life's simple things that helps us reset our pacing when life gets out of whack.

The first few years of my work in the Central Region, I had an apartment in Topeka while our kids finished high school in South Dakota. I knew it was temporary while we were in between selling our home in Rapid City and what would be our home in Topeka. There was an unsettledness to that existence that until recently, I haven't been fully able to articulate. But in recent months, I've been able to define this unsettledness more clearly as an experience of being unrooted. While in between homes, there wasn't that stronger sense of place that I've known in most of my life and apparently is important for my overall well-being. There are lots of spiritual applications that I could unpack with this self-discovery but the most important one I've been contemplating in the early months of 2024 is this question, "Where will I be rooted in 2024?" Maybe this is a question for you to wrestle with as well.

Paul writes in 2nd Corinthians 5:6-9, "So we are always confident; even though we know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord — for we walk by faith, not by sight. Yes, we do have confidence, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him." Paul writes about this longing I carry to be rooted, but this rootedness is not in an address on some street in Iowa, North Carolina, South Dakota, or Kansas. It's a rootedness in my relationship with Jesus. This kind of rootedness allows me to be nomadic in my physical presence, but deeply at home in my inner life with Jesus. I'm certainly a beginner in working out this mindset, and how to live this out practically, but just knowing where my true home is — in Jesus — has helped me navigate those days when I feel unsettled and unrooted.

So where will you be rooted in 2024 and where is the growing edge in your own sense of home?

Thank you for the privilege of serving among you.



2024 SENIOR ADULT RETREAT



The Sr. Adult Retreat is a two-day event that brings together those 50+ for relaxation, fellowship, entertainment and learning. Plan to join in the fun at the next Sr. Adult Retreat!

April 24-25, 2024



**First Baptist Church
800 N Main St.
Hutchinson, KS**

**Keynote Speaker
Rev. Dr. Gregg Hemmen**

Theme – *“Preparing Seniors Along Life’s Many Seasons”* (Psalms)

Scripture – *“That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither – whatever they do prospers.”* Psalms 1:3 (NIV)

Why should you come to the Senior Adult Retreat?

- To gather with Central Region senior adults
- To be inspired by messages from Dr. Hemmen
- To experience the learning sessions
- To have fun and fellowship with others

Don’t miss this opportunity to be inspired and informed!



Registration Deadline is April 9, 2024

You can register online by clicking the button below or you can send in a paper registration form that can be found on the next page.

REGISTER NOW

ABCCR SENIOR ADULT RETREAT

April 24-25, 2024

at

First Baptist Church, Hutchinson

800 N Main St, Hutchinson, KS 67501

Preparing Seniors Along Life's Many Seasons
(P.S.A.L.M.S. of orientation, disorientation, and reorientation)

Psalm 1:3 (NIV)

Guest Speaker, Rev. Dr. Gregg Hemmen

Registration Deadline - April 9, 2024

***** \$10 Late Fee Assessed if Postmarked After April 9, 2024**

Cancellation Policy: A full refund will be given if cancelled by April 16, 2024

\$25 non-refundable cancellation fee per individual after April 16, 2024

Name: _____ Phone: _____
(If registering as a couple, please write spouse's name below)

Spouse: _____ Email: _____

Address: _____ Home Church: _____
& City _____

City / State / Zip: _____

| | # of Guests | | Total \$\$ |
|--|-------------|-------------------------|------------|
| • Full Retreat (includes program and 3 meals) per person | _____ | @ \$95.00 per person | _____ |
| • One Day only (Wednesday or Thursday) per person | _____ | @ \$70.00 per person | _____ |
| | | Total Amount Due | _____ |

Please make checks payable to **Senior Adult Retreat** and mail payment and completed registration form to:

Senior Adult Retreat
John Williams, Registrar
C/O 5889 SW 29th Street
Topeka, KS 66614

Online registration is available at
www.abccr.org

Dietary Requirements: Sugar Free ☐ Gluten Free ☐

PLEASE NOTE: We will try but cannot assure to meet all dietary requirements.

First Time to Attend the ABCCR Senior Adult Retreat? Yes _____ No _____

Registration Begins Wednesday at 11:00 am

Retreat Begins with Lunch at 12:00 noon

(Cut here and retain this stub for your records and information.)

ABCCR Senior Adult Retreat – First Baptist Church, 800 N Main St, Hutchinson, KS 67501

Dates: April 24-25, 2024

Registration begins at 11:00 am on Wednesday the 24th. Retreat begins with lunch at 12:00 noon.

The Sr. Adult Retreat will end mid-afternoon on Thursday, the 25th.

Amount paid to Registrar: _____ Check number: _____ Date paid: _____

PLANNED GIVING

HELPING YOU TO GIVE GENEROUSLY,
REV. TIM SCHWARTZ
KBCF DIRECTOR OF PLANNED GIVING
913-424-9939 / 785-272-7622
TIMMANS39@GMAIL.COM
TIM.SCHWARTZ@ABCCR.ORG

Expressing Love

Now during this month of February, I am thinking about a big commercial holiday called Valentine's Day or as I would call it Saint Valentine's Day. Of course it is a day to express our love for husbands, wives, spouses, boyfriends, girlfriends, family, friends, classmates and even pets.

Here are some of the latest statistics on Valentine's Day spending. The National Retail Federation says that Americans spent \$25.9 billion last year on Valentine's Day, which was an increase of 8.4% over what was spent in 2022, which was \$23.9 billion! According to wallethub, in 2023, 5.5 billion was spent on jewelry and 4.4 billion was spent on going out for the evening. 2.4 billion was spent on flowers and 2.3 billion was spent on candy. Now I am not telling you to skip buying Valentine's Day gifts this year, but I am just making us aware of the amount of money that is spent to express love on one special day during the year!

A more interesting fact is that this holiday has its origins in the life of a Christian martyr. Valentine was a Catholic priest, who had also worked as a doctor and lived in the third Century AD, under the rule of the Roman emperor, Claudius II. Valentine became famous for marrying couples during this time, even though Emperor Claudius outlawed weddings because he was recruiting lots of men for his army and he thought that marriage would be an obstacle to them becoming soldiers. When Emperor Claudius found out that Valentine was conducting weddings, he sent him to jail. During that time Valentine continued to express love to others, and that love he said came from Jesus Christ. He befriended his jailer, who asked Valentine to help his blind daughter, Julia, with her lessons. She would come to visit him in jail and he would teach her then.

Meanwhile, the emperor also came to like Valentine and said he would set him free and pardon him if he would renounce his Christian faith and worship the Roman gods. Valentine refused to renounce his faith in Jesus Christ, so the emperor sentenced him to death! Before he was killed, he wrote a last note to Julia and signed it "from your Valentine." He was beaten, stoned and beheaded on February 14th, 270. Wow— I would say he expressed his love fully for Jesus Christ in that way!!

Another way for you to express your love could come through the area of planned giving. You could fund a charitable gift annuity with you and your spouse being the beneficiaries or you could fund one for another member of your family or even a friend being the beneficiary. That would provide income for the specific beneficiaries for the rest of their lives and would also give you the opportunity to express your love for mission partners. These mission partners include: schools, universities, seminaries and even specific missionaries and offerings, which would receive the residuum amount from your annuity, when the Lord calls you home. That's something to consider as you prepare for Valentine's Day this year, which is also the same day as Ash Wednesday!

If I can be of further service or help to you in funding a charitable gift annuity and expressing your love in this way, please do not hesitate to call, email or text me. I will be happy to answer any questions and assist you regarding your gift!



Mountain and Prairie Youth Conference

Register for MPYC

You can scan the QR code to access the MPYC website where you will find information about registration and access important forms. You will also be able to find information about speakers, music, and activities as it is released.



MPYC is a high school youth conference sponsored by American Baptist Churches of the Rocky Mountains, ABC of Nebraska, ABC of the Dakotas, ABC of the Central Region, and Mid-American Baptist Churches

Get ready for an unforgettable time of inspiration, connection, and adventure at MPYC 2024! Join us in hearing from dynamic speakers, engaging in powerful worship, meaningful small groups, and exciting late night events!

You can enjoy swimming, roller skating, hiking, basketball, sand volleyball, campfires, and MORE! Your group will also have time to check out other activities offered by YMCA of the Rockies.

Don't miss the chance to be part of this transformative experience! MPYC is your opportunity to grow spiritually, connect with others, and create memories that will last a lifetime.

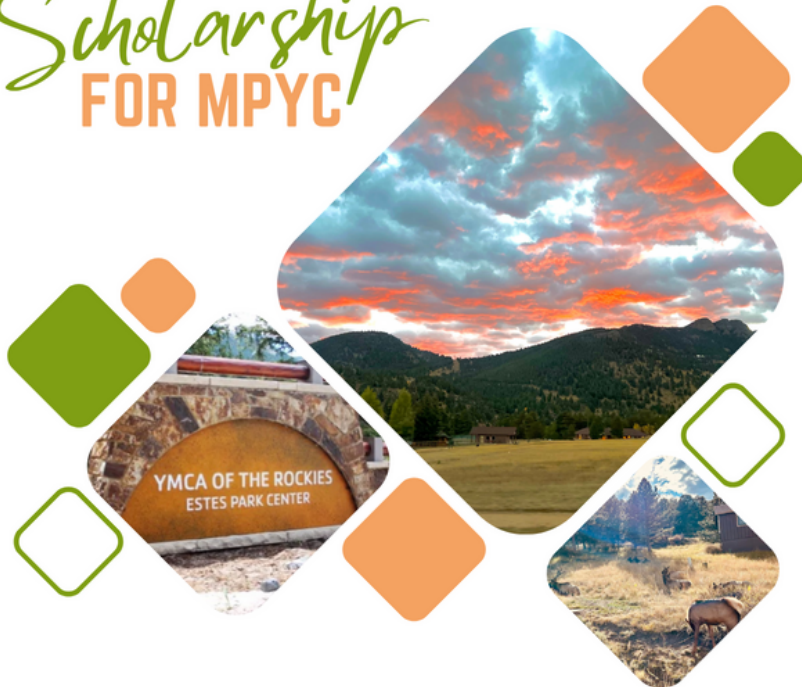


YMCA of the Rockies
Estes Park, Colorado

June 6-10 2024



CROSS WIND Scholarship FOR MPYC



The ABCCR is offering \$120 scholarships for students and sponsors for the Mountain and Prairie Youth Conference. The first 60 students and sponsors who register by **April 1, 2024** are eligible for the scholarship. The scholarship is not applied to the deposit but to the balance.

IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS PLEASE CONTACT
JENNIFER SCHNEIDER- JENNIFER.SCHNEIDER@ABCCR.ORG
MORGAN BANDY- MORGAN.BANDY@ABCCR.ORG

[MPYC Flyer](#) >

[MPYC Postcard](#) >

[Bulletin Inserts](#) >

[MPYC Video](#) >

[MPYC Website](#) >

PRAYER — EMPHASIS

Let us pray for our new general secretary of American Baptist Churches USA, who is the Rev. Dr. Gina Jacobs-Strain! She will begin her new duties during this month on February 1st. Let us ask God to give her guidance, wisdom, strength, endurance, direction and a strong faith life as she leads our national family of churches into our next chapter of ministry.

Let us also say prayers of thanksgiving for Rev. Dr. C. Jeff Woods, who has served as our general secretary for the past number of years while the search committee has been meeting, planning and interviewing candidates for the position. We are grateful for his ministry!

Might we also pray and ask the Holy Spirit to guide and help all of our national leaders in the office of the general secretary. May they all work together well for the good of our churches, our regions and our denomination of American Baptists! As the scripture says: "Teach me to do your will, for you are my God; Let your good Spirit lead me on level ground." Psalm 143:10 (NASB)

American Baptist Women's Ministries

2024 Summer Conference
June 7-8, 2024
First Baptist Church, Topeka, KS



Keynote Speaker: Mary Shannon



Plan now to attend. You will have a 'crazy' fun time and be uplifted by our keynote speaker. Begin to invite your family and friends!

ABW ZOOM MEET AND GREET

Thursday, February 15, 2024 7:00 PM CST

Please join us for a Zoom Meet and Greet with Susan Harding, Director of the Cordova Christian Community Center, Cordova, AK. The center is currently one of the recipients of the 2023-24 ABWMCR Region wide Project. Registration is required. For more information, or questions, please contact Melissa Newberry (ABWMCR Project Associate) at revnewberry@yahoo.com

REGISTER NOW



American Baptist
Women's
MINISTRIES
of the Central Region

ABCCR CAMPING 2024

ALIVE

"But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved."

Ephesians 2:4-5

Camp Christy

High School Camp: June 3-7; \$275

Middle School Camp: June 10-14; \$275

Junior Camp: June 17-21; \$275

Primary Camp: June 24-26; \$130

Day Camp: June 27-28; \$90

Camp White Memorial

High School Camp: July 15-19; \$385

Middle School Camp: July 15-19; \$385

Junior Camp: July 21-25; \$385

[Sunday- Thursday]



REGISTER NOW

Scan Here to Register

MEET THE DIRECTOR

White Memorial High School Camp



Morgan Bandy

Fun Facts:

Favorite Camp Activity:
Cow Tongue Football

Favorite Nickname:
Moses or Mama Mo

Second Favorite Movie:
Steel Magnolias

Road trip Snack:
Tropical Red Bull and cherry sours

Must Have Camp Accessory:
Wild sunglasses for every day of camp

Favorite Scripture
Matthew 28: 19-20

All About Me

Hello friends! My name is Morgan! I have been doing camp with the ABCCR for 6 years! I have directed high school, middle school, and junior camps. I really LOVE camp. I currently serve as the Communications and Finance Administrator for the ABCCR. I am the oldest of 6 siblings. I love to kayak, play volleyball, take walks with my cat, Ferguson, and bake. I love bees, butterflies, and flowers. I have a Top 10 list for everything. I am a bone cancer survivor and an above knee, left leg amputee. Finding new ways to make camp inclusive for everyone with different limitations is a fun challenge. A Come to camp and be with people who love Jesus and will love and support you.

Favorite Camp Memory

During my first year of high school camp, I was giving my testimony and I said, "I'm loud and have a big personality" and one of the campers yelled, "AMEN!" I love when my campers come back years later to be camp staff. Its' so much fun to watch as they learn to love Christ and become disciples.



PRAIRIE PASTORS

CONFERENCE

When: March 18-20, 2024

Where: Sunset Hills Baptist Church
9416 Pacific St. Omaha, NE 68114

Speakers



Rev. Dr. Gina Jacobs-Strain
General Secretary ABCUSA

Rev. Dr. Gina C. Jacobs-Strain's devotion to the Lord began in her elementary school years when she committed her life to Christ. Currently, she holds the position of Executive Director for American Baptist Women's Ministries (ABWM) and is a member of the National Executive Council for American Baptist Churches USA.

Dr. Jacobs-Strain has held various pastoral roles including Transitional Pastor at First Baptist Church of New Market in Piscataway, N.J., Interim Pastor at St. Paul Baptist Church in Atlantic Highlands, N.J., Associate Regional Pastor for Women in Ministry for American Baptist Churches of New Jersey (ABC-NJ), and serves as an Associate Minister of Christian Education at St. Paul Baptist Church in Montclair, N.J.

Rev. Dr. Jacobs-Strain earned a bachelor's degree in Psychology from Rutgers University and graduated Magna Cum Laude with a Master of Divinity degree from Drew University's Theological School. She was also honored with the Old Testament Studies Scholar Award from the Biblical Studies Department. In 2015, she received a Certificate of Excellence from Palmer Theological Seminary & ABC-NJ Academy, and in 2017, she completed the Nehemiah-Leadership Program. In May 2020, she attained a Doctor of Ministry from Duke University.

She is married to Clifton Strain, and together they have three sons. They currently reside in Morristown, N.J.



Rev. Nikita McCalister
ABCUSA Board President

Rev. Nikita G. McCalister was licensed and ordained into the Gospel ministry under the leadership of Rev. Dr. James C. Perkins, pastor of the Greater Christ Baptist Church in Detroit, Mich. She received her bachelor of science degree from Central Michigan University (Mount Pleasant, Mich.), Master of Business Administration from the University of Detroit Mercy (Detroit, Mich.), and Master of Divinity from Boston University School of Theology (Boston, Mass.).

She currently serves as the Transitional Ministries consultant for the American Baptist Churches of Michigan and Transition Pastor of Westhaven Baptist Church in Port Huron, Mich. In addition, Rev. McCalister serves on the Advisory Board for American Baptist Women in Ministry, Boston University Alumni Council (BUAC), the Boston University School of Theology Dean's Advisory Board, as president of The Metropolitan Detroit Area American Baptist Women, and as co-chair of the Metropolitan Detroit Area American Baptist Churches.

She previously served as the chairperson of the ABCUSA Transformed by the Spirit Journey Team Task Force, as associate executive minister for Administration for the American Baptist Churches of Rhode Island, and as a member of the ecumenical planning team for the 59th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women at the United Nations in New York.

She is married to Rev. Jabulani McCalister, pastor of Covenant Baptist Church (West Bloomfield, Mich.), and is the proud parent of two children, Jaden McCalister and Azriel McCalister.



Rob Loane
VantagePoint 3 President

Robert Loane serves VantagePoint3 Ministries as President, seeking to both learn and encourage a more relational way of life and ministry. VP3 partners with leaders in the church, marketplace, seminaries, and neighborhoods, who are looking for a proven, integrated process, like VP3's The Journey, to help deepen and develop adults in Jesus' name.

He is the co-author of Deep Mentoring: Guiding Others on Their Leadership Journey (IVP, 2012), a great primer on understanding VP3's hospitable, particularizing, deepening, and patient way of developing people and A Mentoring Guide: Christ. Conversation. Companionship (VP3, 2019)

Rob has served with VP3 since 2004, putting his mind and heart to the ongoing development of the VP3 Pathway of processes.

He and his wife Sarah live in Sioux Falls, SD, with their children Elliott, Rosie, and Rhys.)

Schedule

Monday March 18

2:00 pm Pre-Conference Connections

- Prayer Walk with Rev. Jackie Saxon
- Chair Exercises with Morgan Bandy
- Social Gathering at Sunset Hills

4:00 pm Registration

5:15 pm Welcome

5:30 pm Dinner – Provided by ABHMS

6:45 pm –Worship

Keynote Speaker, Rev. Dr. Gina Jacobs-Strain, General Secretary ABCUSA

8:30 pm Ice Cream Fellowship

Tuesday, March 19

8:15 am Breakfast hosted by ABWM

9:30 am –Worship

10:00 am Workshop

- Rob Loane- VantagePoint3
- Guided Prayer Time

10:50 am Break

11:00 am Workshop

- Rob Loane- VantagePoint3
- Guided Prayer Time

11:50 am Lunch – Regions gather for lunch

1:30 pm Free Time

- MMBB 1:1 conferences/speakers available for discussion
- Foundation, OGS, ABHMS, IM, and others available

2:30 pm Women in Ministry Coffee Fellowship at Sunset Hills

Dinner on your own

6:45 pm Worship

Keynote Speaker, Rev. Nikita McCalister, President ABCUSA Board

8:30 pm Group Photo

Wednesday, March 29

9:30 am Worship

Keynote Speaker, Rob Loane, VantagePoint3

Closing Worship and Communion

Lodging, Restaurants, and More

Hotels are listed from closest to farthest away from Sunset Hills Baptist Church

Omaha Marriott

10220 Regency Circle, Omaha, NE 68114
402-399-9000

Hampton Inn Omaha/West Dodge Road

11201 Davenport St., Omaha, NE 68154
402-334-4938

Staybridge Suites: Omaha 80th and Dodge

7825 Davenport Street, Omaha, NE 68114
402-933-8901

Holiday Inn Express and Suites Central Omaha, an IHG Hotel

8736 West Dodge Road, Omaha, NE 68114
402-343-1000

TownePlace Suites Omaha West

10865 West Dodge Road, Omaha, NE 68154
402-590-2800

Best Western Old Mill Inn

650 North 109th ct, Omaha, NE 68154
402-431-1246

Aloft Omaha Aksarben Village

6201 Center St. Omaha, NE 68106
402-819-2500

Hilton Garden Inn Omaha Aksarben Village

6737 Frances St., Omaha, NE 68106
402-334-4441

General Info <https://www.visitomaha.com/>

FOOD

FUN FACT! Omaha has one of the highest number of restaurants per capita of all large cities in America.

[Blackstone District](#)

[Aksarben Village food](#)

[Downtown](#)

Do you like Reubens? They were invented in Omaha! Check out [these restaurants](#) claiming to have the best one!

Places near Sunset Hills include Cheesecake Factory, PF Changs, Bonefish Grill, Wheatfields bakery, Brother Sebastian's Steakhouse, and various fast foods

ACTIVITIES

Beautiful Downtown

[Award Winning Henry Doorly Zoo and Aquarium](#)

[Bob Kerry Pedestrian Bridge](#)

[Lewis and Clark Museum](#)

[Riverfront area](#)

[Axe Throwing!](#)

[Top Golf](#)

[Multiple Mini-Golf locations](#)

[Escape Room](#)

[Archery games](#)

[Spielbound board game cafe](#)

[Joes Indoor Go Kart Track](#)

[Scorz bowling, darts, pool etc.](#)

[Hike a trail at Fontanelle Forest Conservation area](#)

SHOPPING

[Aksarben Village](#) (yes that is just Nebraska spelled backward)

[The original Nebraska Furniture Mart](#)

[Indoor Mall](#)

[Outdoor Outlet Mall](#)