OAKRIDGE NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS

October 2026

President & CEO Deidre DeJear

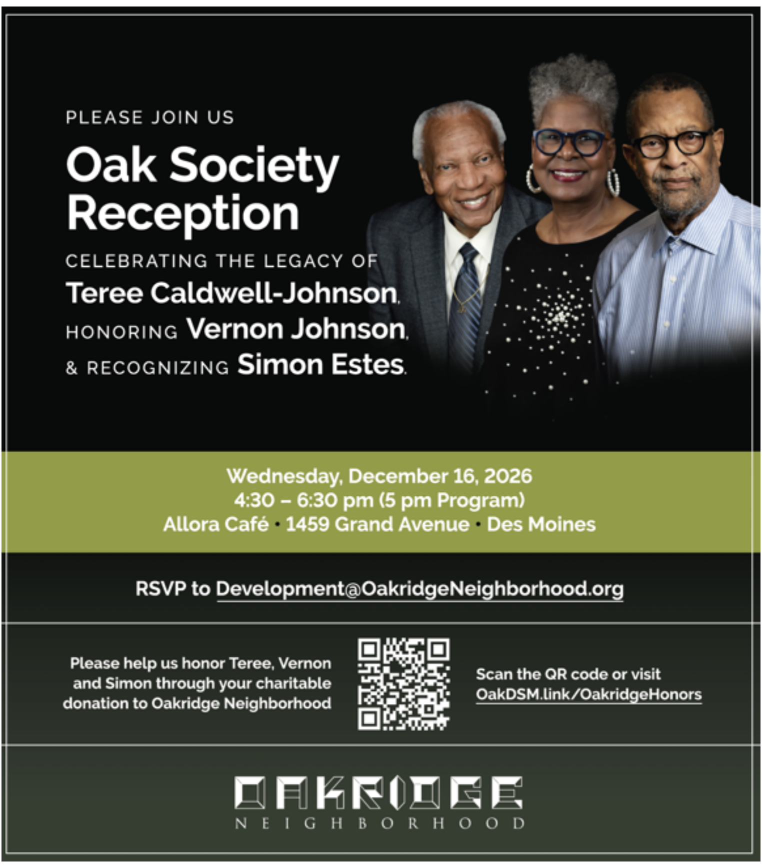
We were overwhelmed by the response to our recent Jazz, Jewels & Jeans fundraiser, presented by Smith + Co. Financial! From our many sponsors who leaned WAY in, to our friends who donated novel silent auction items, to one of the largest and most engaged groups that have ever joined us at the event, it was one for the books! Because of the generosity of our gracious supporters, we more than doubled our proceeds from 2025. We are so appreciative of your support of Oakridge Neighborhood and the services we provide to the community. It was a night to remember.

Special thanks to Invictus Media for helping us share our #OakridgeStrong story. 💜

Our Events

Please Join Us:

Honoring Teree Caldwell-Johnson, Vernon Johnson, Simon Estes



PLEASE JOIN US

Oak Society Reception

CELEBRATING THE LEGACY OF Teree Caldwell-Johnson, HONORING Vernon Johnson, & RECOGNIZING Simon Estes.

Wednesday, December 16, 2026
4:30 – 6:30 pm (5 pm Program)
Allora Café · 1459 Grand Avenue · Des Moines

RSVP to Development@OakridgeNeighborhood.org

Please help us honor Teree, Vernon and Simon through your charitable donation to Oakridge Neighborhood

Scan the QR code or visit OakDSM.link/OakridgeHonors

OAKRIDGE NEIGHBORHOOD

Please join us for this year's special Oak Society event, where we honor the legacy of three Central Iowa legends. Teree Caldwell-Johnson, the beloved President & CEO of Oakridge Neighborhood for 20 years, will be honored posthumously. Vernon Johnson was the long-time Vice President of our Youth Education & Engagement Program, inspiring hundreds of youth over his storied career. And Simon Estes is known for his significant international opera career and being a longtime supporter of youth in the arts.

Toni & Tim Urban Community Center Dedication Set

Oakridge Neighborhood will dedicate our newly refreshed youth center as the Toni & Tim Urban Community Center at a special event Friday, November 20, at 4 pm. Please join us in honor of the contribution the Urban's have made to update the facility. Special congratulations, too, to the Urbans for being recognized earlier that day as 2026 National Philanthropy Day honorees, Outstanding Individual Philanthropists, by the Association of Fundraising Professionals Central Iowa Chapter. So well deserved and we are so appreciative of their commitment to Oakridge Neighborhood for many years!

Our Stories

Jermaine Woods: Making Memories

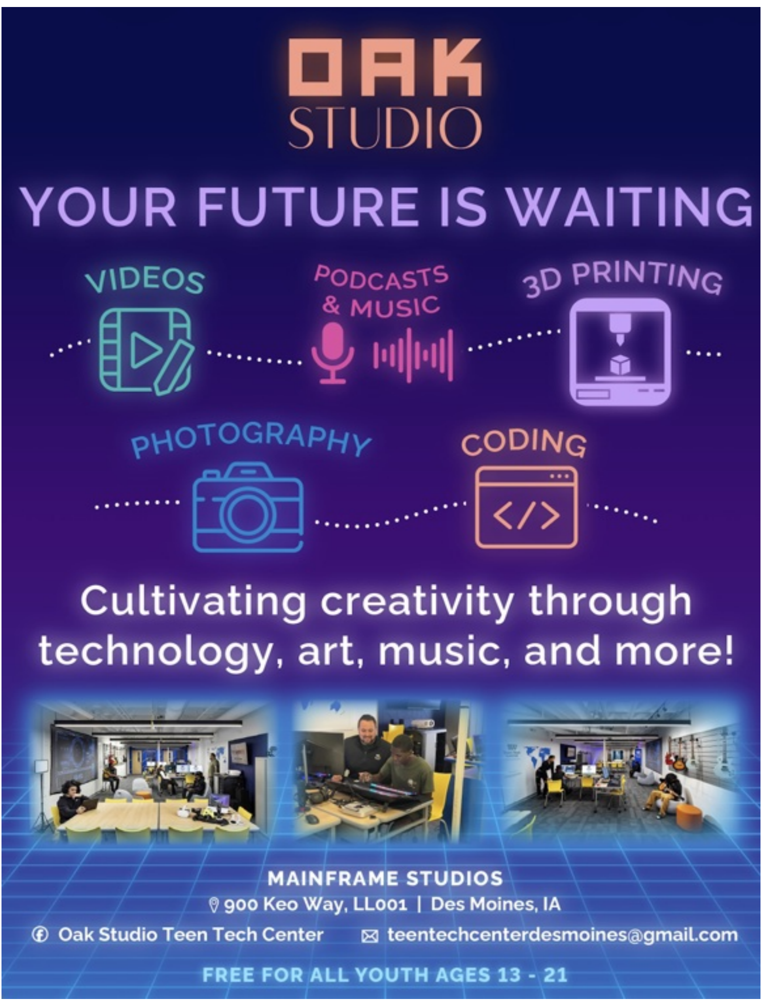
Jermaine Woods was just a baby when his family moved out of Oakridge Neighborhood, but he found his way back in an unexpected way.

Former Vice President – Youth Education & Engagement Vernon Johnson, or "Mr. Vern" as he's lovingly known, is a family friend of Jermaine's; Mr. Vern's son Baley and Jermaine grew up playing basketball together. When Jermaine was starting college and looking for work, Vernon had an opportunity for him: come work for Oakridge Neighborhood's youth programs and receive $1,000 toward college. He took the job. It's been 16 years and he hasn't looked back.

Read Jermaine's story.

Our Neighborhood News

Free and Open to All Area Youth!



OAK STUDIO

YOUR FUTURE IS WAITING

VIDEOS

PODCASTS & MUSIC

3D PRINTING

PHOTOGRAPHY

CODING

Cultivating creativity through technology, art, music, and more!

MAINFRAME STUDIOS

900 Keo Way, LL001 | Des Moines, IA

Oak Studio Teen Tech Center ✉ teentechcenterdesmoines@gmail.com

FREE FOR ALL YOUTH AGES 13 - 21

All area youth ages 13-21 are invited to check out our Oak Studio Teen Tech Center at Mainframe Studios. Try out the latest in tech with the guidance of our team!

Oak Academy Acorns Kick Off New School Year

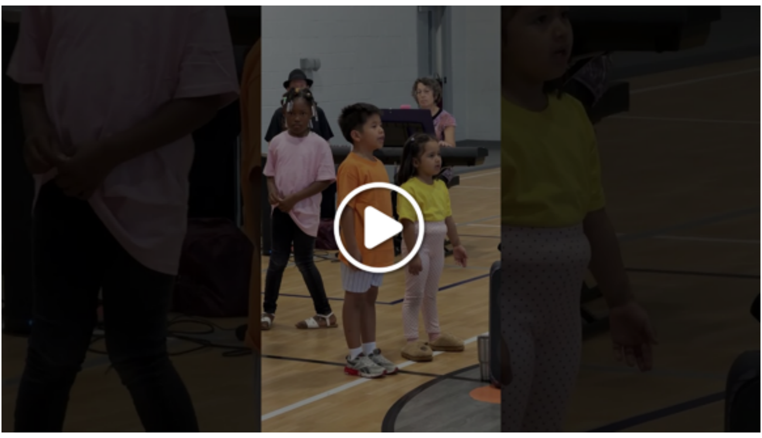
OAK ACADEMY

OAK ACADEMY

I WORK SO YOU CAN WORK

Our Oak Academy teachers pulled out all the stops to welcome our youngest students to the official start of their new academic year. Their first annual Acorn Day was full of fun, featuring new T-shirts for all, dancing, special games, and a festive morning welcome for students and parents. Last year over 180 children ages 6 weeks to Pre-K were served by our nationally accredited Oak Academy.

Oakridge Kids Rock!



What a fantastic experience for our students to get three days of learning new music skills from Broadway performer Roosevelt Andre Credit ("Roo"), all wrapping up with a concert to show off their skills! Take a listen!

🍁 Fall Fest Fun 🍁

Costumes, candy, food and fun! 🎃 We had a great time celebrating Fall Fest 2026! A huge thanks to WIC and Willkie House for joining us for Trunk or Treat, and to Drake University volunteers!

What We Do

YOUTH
FAMILY
OAK RID GE
HOUSING
EARLY CHILDHOOD

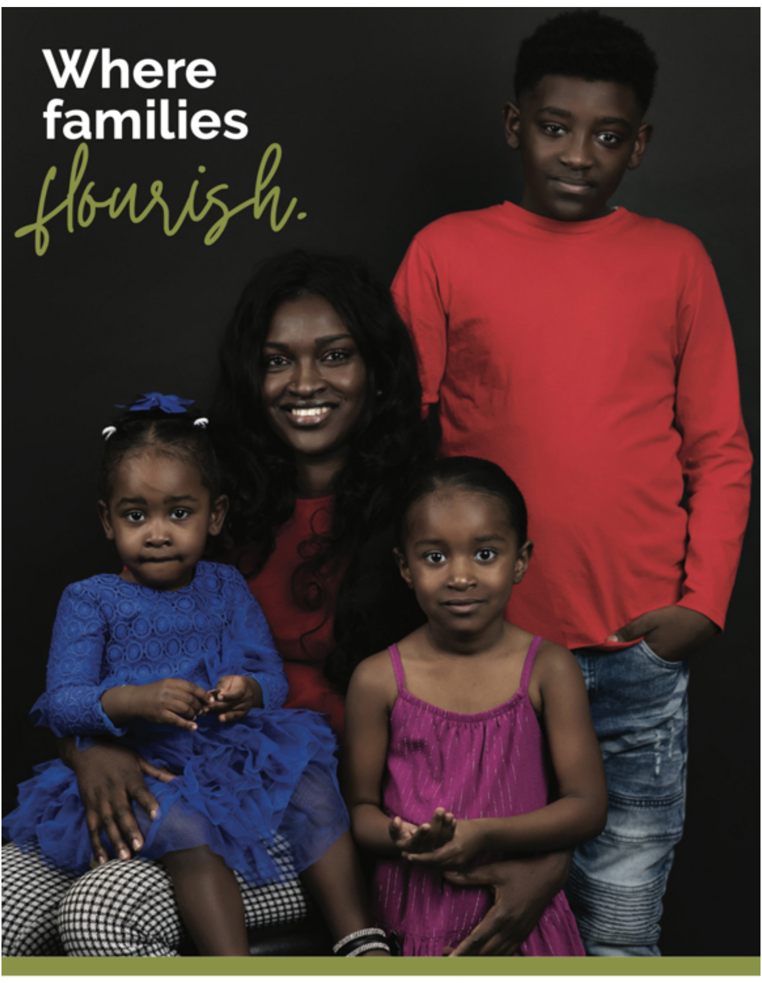
Oakridge Neighborhood is here to be more than just a home. We offer youth afterschool programs, early childhood daycare and preschool, and family and workforce programs. We are here to deliver for all Central Iowans who need our assistance. Visit us online at OakridgeNeighborhood.org to get involved, utilize our services, and learn more!

Our Team

Congratulations Employee of the Month!

Congratulations, Tanya Wells, Oak Academy Teacher! She was nominated for Employee of the Month "for the dedication, love and passion she has working with and shaping the minds of young children. She is definitely the heart of Oak Academy." ❤️ Tanya has been at Oak Academy for over 35 years!

Thank You for Your Support!

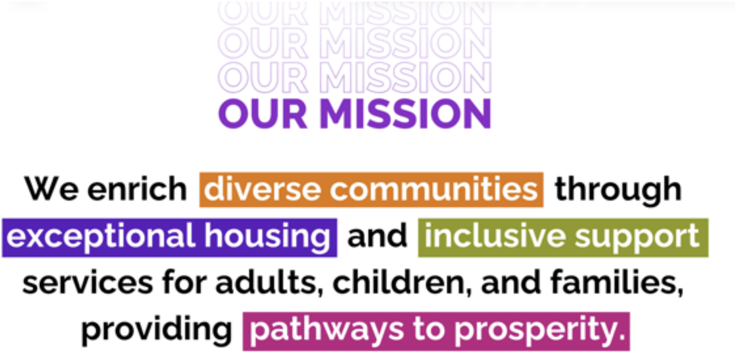

Where families flourish.

OAKRIDGE
NEIGHBORHOOD

One way to provide meaningful support: setting up a monthly contribution. Over time every ongoing contribution, no matter how small, builds to have real impact!

Contribute

Our Mission



OUR MISSION
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We enrich diverse communities through exceptional housing and inclusive support services for adults, children, and families, providing pathways to prosperity.

Please follow Oakridge Neighborhood on Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and YouTube!

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Questions or ideas? Contact Christine Irvine, Vice President - Communications

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