

The Des Moines Register

Comfort food

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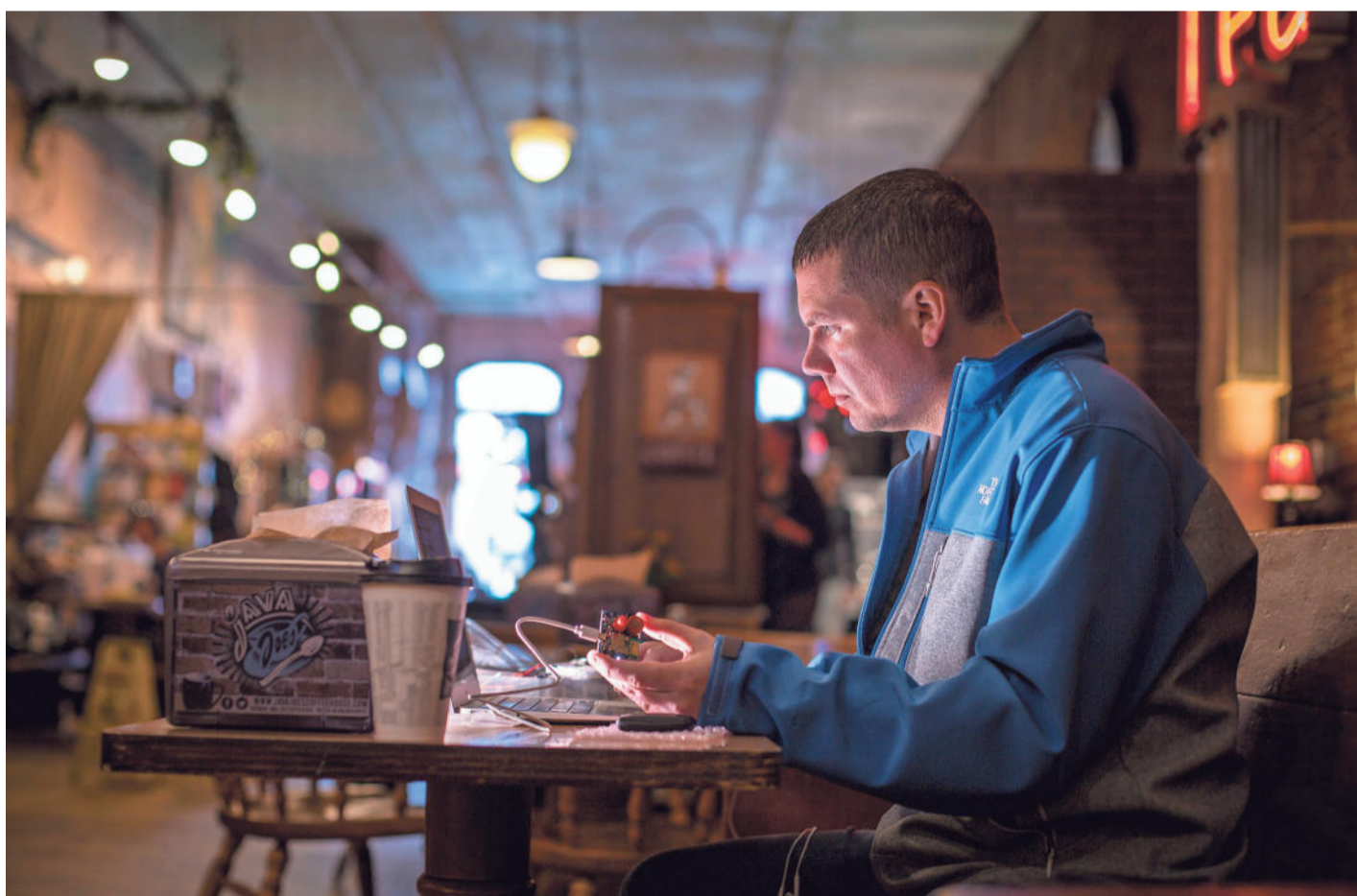
IOWA LIFE



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15 PEOPLE TO WATCH IN 2017

Left to his own device, he wants to save lives



RODNEY WHITE/REGISTER PHOTOS

Gabriel Glynn works on his wearable safety device this month in Des Moines. The latest endeavor of the serial entrepreneur — it's called MakuSafe — seeks to outfit factory workers with wearable technology, tracking working conditions to help prevent injuries and deaths.

Ankeny resident believes he can keep workers safe, though endeavor is 'scary'

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Every day around the world, more than 1,000 people die in workplace accidents, the United Nations estimates.

Gabriel Glynn, of Ankeny, believes he can help save at least some of them.

A serial entrepreneur, Glynn's latest endeavor seeks to outfit factory workers with wearable technology, tracking working conditions to help prevent injuries and deaths.

"That's 365,000 moms and dads and brothers and sisters that don't go home from work," said Glynn, 33, who is one of The Des Moines Register's People to Watch in 2017. "And we thought, 'If we create this, there's a good chance that we're going to send more of those people home.'"

After a couple of rounds of fundraising and prototypes, Glynn is finalizing the design and software while testing versions of his MakuSafe in Iowa factories. He ex-

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Glynn is finalizing the design and software while testing versions of his MakuSafe in Iowa factories. The sensors track everything from temperature to sound levels to humidity on a manufacturing floor.

"It has the opportunity to make employers more proactive around health and safety than they ever have been."

CHUCK SJOGREN
Vice president of George, Ia.-based Diversified Technologies, on Gabriel Glynn's MakuSafe wearable technology

Future of counties' minimum wage is uncertain

Dems fear loss of local power on issue in next Legislature

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The minimum wage in Johnson County will rise to \$10.10 an hour on Sunday, at a time when Democrats are concerned the incoming Iowa Legislature might take away local governments' power on the issue.

The hike is the last of three planned 95-cent increases to the county's wage, which has gone from \$7.25 to \$10.10 an hour incrementally over the last 14 months. Although the county's ordinance, which took effect in November 2015, allows for annual future wage increases based on an increased cost of living, those raises are not likely to be as dramatic.

But the November election has cast uncertainty over the future of local wage ordinances like Johnson County's. When the Iowa Legislature is sworn in on Jan. 9, both chambers, as well as the governor's office, will be controlled by Republicans who have called for a uniform mini-

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Japan PM to see WWII attack site

Just weeks after the 75th anniversary of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor that left more than 2,400 Americans dead, a Japanese leader is making a formal visit to the Hawaiian naval harbor. Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe arrived at Pearl Harbor on Monday, ahead of a visit Tuesday with President Barack Obama and a commemoration of the air attack.

In 1951, 10 years after the aerial bombardment, Japan's then-prime minister, Shigeru Yoshida, made a quick, unofficial visit to the site, meeting briefly with a U.S. military official. Though no apology is expected Tuesday, Abe has embraced continued reconciliation between the U.S. and Japan. Page 1B

High 42° Low 27°
Mostly sunny.
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15 PEOPLE TO WATCH IN 2017

Glynn

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pects to officially launch the product onto the market in 2017 or early 2018.

The sensors track everything from temperature to sound levels to humidity on a manufacturing floor. MakuSafe automatically notes when someone trips or falls.

The tool could prove especially useful in tracking near-misses, which experts believe help predict future accidents but are vastly under-reported in workplaces.

In 2015, deaths from workplace-related injuries in the United States increased to 4,836, the highest yearly total since 2008, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

In a Dec. 16 statement, U.S. Labor Secretary Thomas Perez said those figures underscored the need for employers to provide safe working conditions.

"We have a moral responsibility to make sure that workers who showed up to work today are still alive to punch the clock tomorrow," he said. "The fact is, we know how to prevent these deaths."

MakuSafe could help pay for itself by providing insurers with hard data on workplace risks, which could lower a factory's premiums as risks to employees are reduced.

"Honestly, I think it could be transformative to manufacturing," said Kathy Anderson, the vice president of member development and programs at the Iowa Association of Business and Industry.

Manufacturers have economic incentives for improving workplace safety and will readily invest in products that help



RODNEY WHITE/THE REGISTER

Gabriel Glynn works on his advanced manufacturing podcast this month in Des Moines. Glynn expects to officially launch his worker safety device, MakuSafe, onto the market in 2017 or early 2018. MakuSafe could help pay for itself by providing insurers with hard data on workplace risks, which could lower a factory's premiums as risks to employees are reduced. "Honestly, I think it could be transformative to manufacturing," said Kathy Anderson, vice president of member development and programs at the Iowa Association of Business and Industry. "A safer environment also makes it a more productive environment."

accomplish that, Anderson said.

"I think if you're not in that manufacturing world, it wouldn't be top of mind for you. But for our Iowa manufacturers, safety is a top concern," she said.

"A safer environment also makes it a more productive environment — and a more efficient environment."

'I'm kind of weird'

Glynn, a Cedar Rapids native, learned about the world of manufacturing through his father, who worked for 23 years as a machinist at a Goss printing press plant.

After that plant closed, his father went back to school and became a safety manager at the Nordstrom fulfillment center

in Cedar Rapids.

Nine years ago, Glynn was working in loss prevention at a Target store. On a camping trip, his father told him of a business idea he had dreamed up long ago: photographing and documenting the wealthy people's possessions for insurance purposes.

"I thought, that's actually a good idea," Glynn said. "So I quit my job in retail, and that was my first business."

That company eventually grew to a franchised business, which Glynn sold. Since then, he's been involved in the formation of several companies, most of which have been in software.

He's made his living by selling previous businesses, and he receives some sponsorship payments from the Advanced Manufacturing Podcast he hosts.

Over the years, he has grown accustomed to the startup lifestyle. He totes his sticker-covered laptop to various metro coffee shops (and the occasional bar) that serve as his office. Work compels him to pull the occasional all-nighter, even as he's sought to build a healthier work-life balance.

Much of Glynn's knowledge has been self-taught. He has dabbled in programming but generally serves as the visionary of his businesses, relying on skilled hands for help with technical execution.

"I'm kind of weird in that I'm passionate about the business side of things," he said. "I'm passionate about fundraising, negotiating deals, patenting and developing distribution network channels."

'Blowing it all on one shot'

Glynn said he and his wife have poured their life savings into the company. He is the majority shareholder of MakuSafe, he said, and the company has raised more than \$500,000 through several rounds of fundraising.

In 2017, he plans to raise another \$2 million as the team perfects the product.

He said he leans on his wife, who works in advertising, and his faith to get by. The family recently sold a townhouse it had been renting out and cashed in some stocks to make it through the next six months.

"There are times when it's scary," he said. "But, at 33 years old and with the people around us, we're pretty confident we'll be able to get through it."

Aside from the money, the entrepreneur said he's cashed in on many relationships he's built through serving on committees and boards throughout the region. Those contacts have become board members, advisers and investors in MakuSafe, he said.

"We're kind of just blowing it all on one shot here," Glynn said. "If this doesn't go very well, I'll find myself putting a lot of pieces back together."

The concept began as a device strapped around a worker's upper arm. One prototype looked like a small garage door opener that could be clipped to a pocket.

But the final version will resemble a Fitbit, easily worn around the wrist, like a small watch. Hopefully, workers will forget they're wearing it, Glynn said.

He said no similar products exist on the market, but the concept is out there: Many insurance companies already track some factory information, including speed and braking on fleet vehicles to help assess risk.

Those telematics products have trickled down to the general consumer market as a way for drivers to lower auto insurance premiums.

"We kind of envision that, in the next five to 10 years, it's going to be like that with workers," Glynn said.

'This project is fascinating'

Chuck Sjogren, vice president of Diversified Technologies, the George, Ia., parent company of Sueda Industries and DurA-Lift, is drawn to the wearable technology because it can help fix problems before they're noticed on the factory floor.

For example, its location-based data could pinpoint an area of the plant where employees frequently slip. The device's temperature and humidity readings might show that the falls were caused by something as simple as high humidity in warmer months causing condensation on the floor.

"Then, in turn, you adjust your airflow systems," Sjogren said.

"You, in essence, took a near miss and can solve

Gabriel Glynn**AGE:** 33**LIVES:** Ankeny**EDUCATION:** Associates degree in business administration from Des Moines Area Community College**CAREER:** Co-Founder & CEO at MakuSafe Corporation, March 2016 to present; Host of Advanced Manufacturing Podcast, May 2016 to present; Idea Catalyst at Shift Interactive, LLC, January 2015 to November 2015; Chief Marketing Officer at Slash Web Studios, September 2011 to January 2015; Owner of Asset Protection Specialists, LLC, April 2007 to March 2012; CEO of Adstringo, LLC, August 2009 to September 2011; chairperson of Ankeny Young Professionals, January 2010 to January 2011; Vice president at Greater Des Moines Business Resource Group, November 2007 to January 2009; Executive team leader at Target Corp., March 2003 to May 2007**COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT:** Ankeny Leadership Institute Graduate, Iowa Leadership Institute Class of 2013/14, Cultural Arts Board at City of Ankeny, Ankeny Young Professionals, Charter Member at Art for Ankeny, Mentor at Global Insurance Accelerator**15 People to Watch in 2017: About the series**

These are central Iowans in business, arts, nonprofits, civic activism and unselected government positions who are expected to make a difference in their fields of endeavor in 2017. Readers were invited to submit nominations. Selections were made by Des Moines Register editors and reporters. Look for profiles daily through early January.

that so that the humidity never reaches a certain level."

Especially important, he said, is the product's promised suite of analytics, designed to help interpret the thousands of data points recorded by employees' devices. With plans to get the device costs below \$45 a piece, Sjogren believes insurance firms might help or fully foot the cost of implementation.

"This project is fascinating to me," he said. "It has the opportunity to make employers more proactive around health and safety than they ever have been."

15

PEOPLE TO WATCH IN 2017

Meet the diverse group of Iowans poised to make a difference in their fields in 2017.

Revealed daily December 25 through January 8.

12/27 PERSON TO WATCH IN IOWA TECH

12/28 PERSON TO WATCH IN LEGAL FIELD

12/29 PERSON TO WATCH IN BUSINESS

12/30 PERSON TO WATCH IN NON-ELECTIVE GOVERNMENT

12/31 PERSON TO WATCH IN SPORTS

1/1 PERSON TO WATCH IN CLERGY

1/2 PERSON TO WATCH IN DINING

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*Schedule subject to change.

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