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AREA HOME AND HEALTHY LIVING MAGAZINE

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Welcome Home

Pictured on cover and above: Caroline Gregerson, Community Development Administrator for the City of La Crosse. Photo taken at a La Crosse Promise home. Photos by Jordana Snyder Photography.



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I've lived a lot of places in my lifetime. They begin with a farm in a very small town, where I lived in two houses: the original one built on the property, and the one my family built after that first one burned. I lived in countless dorm rooms in Minneapolis and three memorable apartments in St. Paul. I lived in a quirky midcentury apartment in Yonkers, New York, and a duplex in a town at the foot of the Catskill Mountains, where I felt I could have spent the rest of my life.

But I didn't. Instead, I came to the Coulee Region, first to Brownsville, Minnesota, then to La Crosse, and including another farm on a ridge in Houston County, where my family spends much of our time when we aren't in the city.

For as varied as all these places have been—rural, urban; bustling, sleepy; large, small and just right—they have one thing in common. They have been home.

What makes a dwelling more than just four walls and a place to lay your head at night? I've considered this a lot over the years. When I was young, home was my security, the only place I knew. It was where people loved me and cared for me, where I learned freedom and boundaries and where I was made to understand that, no matter what happened to me in the course of my life, I

would be welcomed back with open arms. "You will *always* have a home here," my parents said.

Later, home was a place I created for myself, surrounded by objects that were meaningful to me and décor that, though simple, reflected who I was and what I cared about. A few family heirlooms came my way, adding depth to my story, then bookshelves and more bookshelves, baskets of yarn and a couple of cats. Home was a reflection of myself, and it was a wonderful place to be, though in a different way than my childhood home.

Then people started entering my life, and the definition of *home* changed again. It became anywhere my husband and I were together, forging life adventures. It was a place to house and raise children, keeping them safe and providing a base for them to return to from their own adventures, whether down the street or into the woods. It is a place where they are loved and cared for, and from which we preach one important point: No matter what happens, you will be welcomed with open arms. You will *always* have a home here.

This issue of *Coulee Region Women* is all about that sense of home—the necessity of home and what it takes to make a home a safe and welcoming place. We begin by celebrating women like Caroline Gregerson of the City of La Crosse and local efforts like the Collaborative to End Homelessness, who work to ensure everyone in the region has a safe, affordable home, and that once-struggling neighborhoods become desirable, welcoming places. We'll introduce you to a number of women business owners in the building industry, tell you how to keep your home a safe place and give you lots of ideas for styling it. You'll get a peek inside the 2018 Parade of Homes People's Choice winner and an invitation to visit the 10 homes on the 2019 Parade of Homes roster. If a new Coulee Region home is in your future, you may just find your inspiration here.

No matter where you roam the remainder of this summer—or wherever life takes you—may you always find comfort and satisfaction in coming home. It's that sense of belonging and security that everyone deserves, that place you can return to and always feel welcomed.

Betty

coulee region women

AREA HOME AND HEALTHY LIVING MAGAZINE

ISSUE 105, VOLUME 18, NUMBER 3
AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 2019

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Coulee Region Women is published six times per year by Coulee Region Communications LLC
816 2nd Avenue S., Suite 300, Onalaska, WI 54650.
Subscriptions available for \$24.95 per year (six issues).

Send check to the address above.
All unsolicited manuscripts must be accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope.
Coulee Region Women assumes no responsibility for unsolicited materials.

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Printed at Crescent Printing Company, Onalaska, WI.
Printed in the U.S.A.

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PINK POWER

On September 7, La Crosse will turn pink for a day. For the 15th year, Gundersen Medical Foundation's Steppin' Out in Pink will bring thousands of walkers to the streets to raise awareness and funds for local breast cancer research. The five-mile trek will wind around the city, where supporters and survivors can help fight breast cancer and show off their pink apparel.

The morning of the event, registered walkers will receive an official 2019 T-shirt, walk or run the 4.5-mile or 2.5-mile path, then finish off with snacks, entertainment, kids' games and shopping booths from over 60 local vendors at the finish line.

Register as an individual and walk with a friend, or grab a group and form a team. You can also sign up as a volunteer. To register, learn more and show off your pink power, visit www.steppinoutinpink.org.



APPLE OF THE AREA

The apple capital of Minnesota—La Crescent—celebrates the harvest season September 19-22 with Applefest, a festival to celebrate the industry that has put them on the map. This year, the celebration will kick off with the queen coronation followed by a carnival, Little Miss and Little King Pageant, and musical performances by Something Familiar and Dude Fresh. On Sunday, there will be a scenic 5K run beginning at Quillins, the Applefest parade at 1 p.m. and more musical performances by the Apple Annies and Pigtown Fling.

The Applefest queen coronation is August 17 at the La Crescent Area Events Center. The remainder of the festival takes place September 19-22. The parade is free to attend, and registration for the 5K is available at <https://applefestusa.com>.



BLUFFS AND BLARNEY

The 15th annual Irishfest brings a weekend of entertainment for the whole family. Fill your kilts August 9-11 at the Oktoberfest grounds with delicious corned beef and beer, dance into the Cultural Tent, research Irish ancestors in the Genealogy Tent or compete in a game of Aran Islands Golf at the arcade. Enjoy musical entertainment from Ireland, Scotland and the United States, including We Banjo 3, Skerryvore, Screaming Orphans, Seamus Kennedy, Gaelic Storm, Seo Linn and Connla.

Tickets can be bought in advance at the La Crosse, Onalaska and Holmen Festival Foods locations for \$22 individual weekend passes or \$12 adult day passes. Tickets can also be purchased online at www.irishfestlacrosse.org.



ARTS IN ARCADIA

Arcadia, Wisconsin, hosts a humble population just under 3,000, but August 8-10, fans will fill Memorial Park for Lady Antebellum, Billy Ray Cyrus, Brothers Osborne, 3 Doors Down, 38 Special, Matt Kearney and X Ambassadors. Hosted by Ashley Furniture, Ashley for the Arts is a nonprofit initiative that provides the entire family with entertainment, art, exercise and family fun for a remarkably low cost. It is also one of Wisconsin's largest charity events, raising \$535,500 in 2018 for 51 nonprofit organizations, including participating schools, children's charities and medical research.

An admission wristband costs \$15 for the entire weekend, available at the gates at the event or in advance at select Ashley HomeStores. The wristband will not only grant access to the mainstage events, but also to local high school performances, a car show, fireworks, an art and craft fair and the 20th Century Circus. To see the full list of events, visit www.ashleyforthearts.com.



GREAT BANDS, GREAT FOLKS

Catch Charlie Parr, Old Salt Union, The Cactus Blossoms, Johnsmith, Andy Hughes and more at the 2019 Great River Folk Fest August 23-25 at Riverside Park in La Crosse. Now in its 44th year, the festival promotes traditional and contemporary folk culture through music, dance, food and more. Don't miss the arts and crafts show and sale, new this year in partnership with the Driftless Makers Exchange.

The second annual Great River Folk School will be held August 23 in conjunction with the Boys and Girls Clubs, featuring performances and workshops by Heatbox, a ukulele-playing beatboxer. The family-friendly environment offers a free kids' area featuring the Parenting Place, a circus performer, a magician and music by The Three Dads.

Tickets can be purchased at the show, \$10 for day passes and \$60 for weekend passes, and are also available in advance at www.greatriverfolkfest.org. Enjoy great bands you know and new folks you'll love!

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Caroline Gregerson helps ensure La Crosse citizens live in safe, life-enhancing neighborhoods. One way is through supporting La Crosse Promise homes, such as the Washburn neighborhood home shown here.

Improving NEIGHBORHOODS, IMPROVING Lives

Caroline Gregerson and the City of La Crosse build up neighborhoods and those who live there.

BY DOREEN PFOST

Photos by Jordana Snyder Photography

Caroline Gregerson always knew she wanted a career helping others; she also realized at an early age that she could do the greatest good by doing something she loved. The path that led her to the work she now loves was one that involved some looking around—and looking within.

As Community Development Administrator for the City of La Crosse since 2013, Gregerson oversees the administration and disbursement of some \$2-3 million for projects that promote affordable housing, economic development and vibrant neighborhoods. But in a larger sense, her role at the Community Development and Housing department is less about dollars and more about people. Gregerson spearheads partnerships that bring together the resources and best ideas of private organizations, individuals and government to address one of La Crosse's most important challenges: ensuring that its citizens live and work in surroundings that are not only safe and affordable but also life enhancing, with economic opportunity, convenience and green spaces for recreation and socializing.

What moves you?

"I believe we can change lives by changing the places where people live," Gregerson says. To her, that's the real meaning of "Community Development" in her job title.

"I always had a commitment to public service," says Gregerson, who grew up in Oshkosh. "When I was younger, I saw myself

as a teacher—maybe even in day care." That changed when, as an undergraduate at the College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University in Minnesota, she took a class in discernment: "It was about discerning what moves you and spending your time on the things you feel good about," she explains. Armed with the course's insights, "I tried student teaching and thought, 'I'm *okay* with this, but ...'"

So she changed courses and, after graduating, spent two years in Costa Rica with the Peace Corps. Her role there, as a community organizer, involved bringing people together to cooperate and work in partnership, and she realized, "This feels good. This is what I'm good at."

After the Peace Corps, Gregerson worked with an international nonprofit based in Washington, D.C., and then went to Syracuse University for graduate school, which led to a graduate fellowship in Lucknow, India. There, she managed development projects for women in some of India's poorest communities. Along the way, she came to two realizations. First, she says, "In India, I quickly discovered that nothing happens without really good partnerships." Second, she realized that the place where she could do the most good was perhaps in local government. Just about the time that she was reaching these conclusions, Gregerson learned about the job opening in La Crosse.

The promise of partnerships

"What I love about working in local government is that you can

A woman with long dark hair, wearing a pink long-sleeved shirt and tan pants, stands with her arms crossed in front of a row of modern, multi-story townhouses. The townhouses have white and orange siding and large windows. The scene is outdoors with some landscaping in the foreground.

Nearly completed, the Garden Terrace Apartments on Kane Street on La Crosse's North Side illustrate the city's collaboration with other organizations to address affordable housing needs.

live in a community and see the change you are effecting around you," she says. And living in a not-too-big city feels like the perfect fit. "It's big enough that things are happening all the time, but small enough that you still feel a sense of community." When she goes to the farmers market with her kids, she can count on bumping into people she knows. Now the mother of a toddler and infant twins, Gregerson says parenthood has shown her the value of neighbors and community as well as the importance of parks, playgrounds and high-quality day care in meeting the challenges of raising a family.

Professionally, too, Gregerson appreciates life in La Crosse. "Because we're a smaller city, I get to work with people in a lot of different areas: school districts, social workers, libraries, senior centers and people working on homelessness," she says. "I really enjoy working with other people, building collaborations." Best of all, she says, she's still helping people, although in a different way than she once imagined.

In one innovative collaboration, the city is partnering with the nonprofit organization La Crosse Promise to revitalize distressed neighborhoods. Families can receive college scholarships of up to \$50,000 when building a home on a lot where the city has removed a dilapidated structure. "This program attracts families with higher incomes and brings positive energy to lower-income neighborhoods," says Gregerson.

Another neighborhood revitalization program is a partnership with Western Technical College. After acquiring and tearing down derelict houses, the city serves as general contractor on the construction of replacement homes, with carpentry students doing the work and gaining hands-on experience.

Investing in the whole community

Home replacement and new construction are crucial, because La Crosse faces a shortage of affordable housing for people with low or

moderate incomes as well as for those who are transitioning from homelessness. As the city's liaison to groups working on homelessness, Gregerson has learned that these two problems are often closely linked. While chronic homelessness often involves an assortment of complex challenges, such as addiction, mental health issues or unemployment, Gregerson says, "lots of families are experiencing temporary homelessness because of a bill they can't pay or a short-term crisis." Thus, for most people, homelessness is a temporary situation and, at its root, an affordability issue.

A major project this year to lessen the housing shortage was construction of the 50-unit Garden Terrace Apartments on the city's North Side. Like many such projects, Garden Terrace was funded in part by a Community Development Block Grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. While CDBG funds are federal dollars, the City of La Crosse uses them as the lynchpin to attract local resources and additional partners such as—in the case of Garden Terrace—the not-for-profit developer Impact Seven, plus other nonprofit and government organizations.

Gregerson says residents sometimes ask whether the city should be spending significant resources on housing, parks and neighborhoods that affect only a limited segment of La Crosse's population. But, she argues, "Safe, affordable housing and economic opportunity can help not just that one individual, but the people around them." And it's good for the entire community, she says. We all do best when we help the person with the fewest resources.

"Government does have a role," says Gregerson, "to bring about positive change and work a bit harder to keep La Crosse the community we love—the kind of community where people take care of each other." 

Doreen Pfost lives in Juneau County, where she often writes and thinks about the significance of a place called "home."



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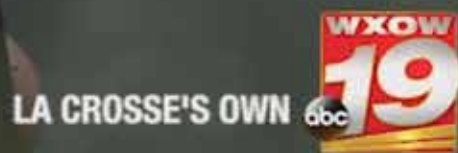


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Transforming a house with paint (left and center), building fences (right) and performing just about any maintenance or remodeling project a homeowner needs—these are the services provided by Home Maintenance Experts.

IT'S THE *Little* THINGS

Cheryl Thienes aims to help homeowners with small but necessary projects.

BY TALLITHA REESE

Contributed photos

They say that home is where the heart is, and like the vital organ, keeping a property in working order takes care and maintenance—sometimes a bit more than homeowners can manage on their own.

In those cases, Home Maintenance Experts (HoME), co-owned by Cheryl Thienes, is more than happy to provide those services.

“Our goal is to help people in the community stay in their homes longer, safer and with increased property value,” explains Thienes.

What the community needs

About five years ago, Thienes and her business partner, Bob Lee, discovered that while there was a surplus of contractors in the area for building new homes, the options for help with much smaller, more maintenance-gear jobs were limited.



Cheryl Thienes

They decided to provide that assistance through the creation of Home Maintenance Experts.

The business doesn't offer new construction services but instead focuses on remodeling and maintenance for individuals as well as commercial and rental properties within the community. Their willingness to take on smaller projects is what sets them apart from other contractors.

“No job is too small!” says Thienes. “We do everything from caulking sinks and tubs, putting in a new doorknob or grab bar, pressure washing the exterior of your home to complete kitchen and bathroom remodels.”

Home Maintenance Experts serves a variety of clients, but most of their business comes from busy families with children involved in multiple activities and parents who work outside the home, who just don't have the time, tools and/or knowledge to tackle the necessary repair and maintenance projects for their homes.

Building a business

In the beginning, Home Maintenance Experts consisted of just Thienes and Lee. They worked together on roofing and siding homes, cutting and laying tile and flooring, doing interior and exterior painting, building and staining decks and installing new windows and doors.

Then, after a year, they brought on their first employee. Now, they have five full-time employees and one part-time employee, and they are continually looking to grow.

Though Thienes started out working in a completely hands-on position within the company, their business growth has necessitated her moving into more administrative work: customer service, scheduling, invoicing, managing payroll and more.

“Having been hands-on that first year has been invaluable to me when working with scheduling and invoicing customers and working with employee concerns,” says Thienes. “I have a much better base of how the work flows and what it entails to give quality service to our customers.”

Thienes says she always had an interest in the construction industry, but that timing and past career obligations in the corporate world had never allowed something to work out—until the idea for Home Maintenance Experts came along.

“When we decided to start HoME, it instantly felt like the right thing to do,” says Thienes. “I love to gather new knowledge and work on solving problems, and I have always loved the construction industry, so owning HoME is a perfect fit. I'm appreciative for my time working in the corporate world, but being a small-business owner is everything I hoped it would be.” *(crw)*

Tallitha Reese is a freelance writer and content manager based in Cashton. She owns Words By Reese, and you can find out more about her and her work at www.wordsbyreese.com.

INSULATING INTUITION

Heather Nokken's family business warms the home and heart.

BY HEIDI OVERSON
Contributed photos

A woman's intuition is a marvelous, powerful thing—it's a whisper of encouragement, a beckoning to a better future and a pull toward a destination that is possibly a little obscure but definitely promising and worth pursuing. Heather Nokken of Onalaska is glad she followed her intuition. It led her to the position of owner and chief executive of her family's home-improvement business, Foam Home Spray Foam LLC.

Nokken runs the business alongside her husband, Ron, the director of operations. Their Foam Home team also consists of two of their children, Jesse and Sarah, and Sarah's fiancé, Kelvin.

The family has been operating the nonfranchise business since early 2018. Foam Home Spray Foam provides durable, energy-efficient spray foam insulation to people who are renovating their homes or building new construction. Nokken's team has been very busy installing foam insulation in pole barns, as well. Business has been steady since they started; they cover a 150-mile radius.

Since the Nokkens cannot install the insulation in subzero weather, they fill that lull by manning their booths at area trade shows.

"We spend quite a bit of time educating people on exactly what foam insulation is, what a long-term value it is and how it's extremely energy efficient, durable and doesn't deteriorate," says Nokken. "It's a fairly new concept for our area."

An entrepreneurial spirit

How did the Foam Home idea become reality? "I needed to trust my intuition," says Nokken. "Too often I discounted it and then realized later I should have trusted myself."

She and Ron had wanted to start their own business for quite a few years. Ron worked in construction, flipped houses and owned his own trucking company. Nokken worked various part-time positions (she's currently also a Century 21 Realtor), but her No. 1 job was raising their blended family of six children.

"We married 14 years ago," says Nokken. "We were the modern-day version of *The Brady Bunch*. He had three boys, and I had three girls." Unlike Carol Brady, however, Nokken has an entrepreneurial spirit. "After tossing around a few ideas, my intuition kept leading me back to spray foam insulation. The house we were living in had poor insulation. We investigated options, and that's how we discovered this form of insulation and the fact that there were only a handful of spray foam companies in the Coulee Region."

Starting up was not terribly difficult, but still quite a bit of work, as any new business owner knows. There was equipment to purchase,



The Foam Home family: from left, son Jesse, Heather, Ron, daughter Sarah and her fiancé, Kelvin.

"What do you think about when you're not thinking about insulation?"

—a favorite Foam Home quotation

marketing and advertising to do and licenses and certifications to obtain. Now that the business is off the ground, Nokken finds most of her time is spent educating the public and inquirers about the unsurpassed benefits of spray foam insulation. She works from her home, while Ron and the team are out in the area in production and installation.

"We are developing cautiously to ensure we are doing everything right," says Nokken. "We had UW-La Crosse's Small Business Development Center assist with our business plan, and I'm proud to say we tied for the Second Place award in the Entrepreneurial Initiative Division at the 2018 La Crosse Area Development Corporation's Industry Appreciation Event."

Intuition + work ethic = success

Nokken and her family will continue doing their best, as best as they know how. As long as people still appreciate the old-fashioned work ethics they practice, success is a certainty. "We work hard; we are people of our word, and what matters most is getting the job done right and on time," Nokken states.

For more information on Foam Home Spray Foam, see www.foamhomesprayfoam.com or find them on Facebook: [foamhomesprayfoam](https://www.facebook.com/foamhomesprayfoam). 

Heidi Overson is an area writer who enjoyed getting to know Heather and appreciated the thought and humor she put into the business name: a play on "E.T. phone home"!

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Kristin Ottesen, of Kristin Ottesen Upholstery, asserts that well-chosen furniture can hold up to years of use—even by pets and kids—and still remain solid pieces. Look for fabrics that will wear well, real leather and a well-built frame and springs.

FURNITURE BUILT TO LAST

Here's a practical guide for choosing upholstered furniture that will hold up for years.

BY BETTY CHRISTIANSEN

Contributed photos

A couch is a big investment, and it's not one you want to make every day. So when it comes time to pick out a new piece of upholstered furniture, whether a couch or chair, it makes sense to choose one that will not need replacing soon. Ideally, it should hold up so well and be one your family loves so much that you will choose to reupholster it rather than replace it.

An education in choosing furniture wisely is not often offered at furniture stores, so we turned to someone who knows upholstered furniture inside out—literally. Kristin Ottesen of Kristin Ottesen Upholstery has shared with us facts, tips and information on how to choose high-quality furniture you'll keep, recover and perhaps even hand down to the next generation.

You get what you pay for

Ottesen says when it comes to furniture, you get what you pay for. Unfortunately, even a cheap couch can cost \$1,000 or more. "I often hear people say, 'I paid a lot of money for my furniture, and it's already falling apart,'" she says. "You have to ask yourself what kind

of an investment you want to make. Do you want to pay more for something that will last, or buy something cheaper that you can't even move without having it fall apart?" A good couch, she says, can easily cost \$2,000, but you come out ahead if you don't have to replace it.

Ottesen breaks furniture down into three components: the frame, the fill and the fabric. Each has its own quality checklist.

Frame

The most important part of a piece of furniture is the frame. A well-constructed frame will support more than the weight of an "average" person and is made from solid hardwood (oak, maple, poplar, etc.) or high-quality plywood rather than particleboard. "Frames also need to be screwed and glued with plenty of joint reinforcement, not stapled," Ottesen says. "Low-quality frame construction will have issues if it undergoes any kind of movement and stress. A manufacturer of a high-quality frame will give a warranty as well."

Also hidden in the depths should be high-quality springs, she says, which give couch cushions proper support and keep you from falling

into the person sitting next to you. Anchored to the base, coil springs are the best, offering equal support no matter where you sit. Look for coils that are eight-way hand-tied with metal ties, which can last 20 years or more. Avoid zigzag or “no sag” springs, which are arched front to back and can pull you into the person next to you. “Trampoline springs are the worst,” Ottesen says. Again, inquire about spring quality with your salesperson and ask about a warranty.

While a good furniture salesperson should be able to answer questions regarding a piece’s construction methods, an easy way to gauge a well-built couch is to give it a push. Does it move easily or is it very heavy? Heavy is good: The weight represents solid wood, metal springs and metal fastenings.

Fill

“The biggest complaints I hear are about fill,” says Ottesen, especially how quickly it breaks down. Cushions may be constructed of foam, polyfill, cotton or Dacron, and each one breaks down differently. “A cheap foam breaks down significantly in the first year,” says Ottesen, “but a high-quality, high-density foam breaks down no more than 10 percent in the first year, and then little to none after that.” Polyfill and Dacron are “just fluff,” she says. “They look pretty, but break down quickly,” especially in attached pillow backs. Ottesen’s solution when she reupholsters these: She replaces the polyfill with high-density foam and then wraps that in polyfill for fluff. A little-known fact: “You can always ask for higher-density foam and more fill in pillow backs” when placing your furniture order.

In fact, she points out, you can upgrade everything when purchasing furniture: the foam, the frame, the covering. “Go with a furniture company that can do that,” she advises.

Fabric

Perhaps the most easily customized item in a furniture piece is the fabric, or covering, which may also include leather. It’s also the part of furniture that gets damaged the most. “When the fill breaks down, the fabric takes more abrasion,” says Ottesen, and advises to choose fabric based on durability, performance, cleanability, texture, UV protection and stain protection.

Considering those, she says, you can’t go wrong with synthetic fabrics. “The fibers are strong, and they’re more stain resistant,” she says. She also suggests choosing a shorter nap and tighter weave over more plush fabrics. “They’re not as cozy, but they’re much easier to clean,” she says. And consider choosing a pattern over a solid color: “They hide stains well.”

If leather is your aesthetic, choose wisely. “Be sure you’re getting 100 percent leather, and not vinyl or recycled leather,” Ottesen says. Beware the tendency of some manufacturers to go cheap with cushions and sew a leather top onto a fabric bottom: The leather is stronger and will stress stitching and fabric, causing the fabric base to tear. Recycled leather, she says, is an undesirable concoction that can have delimitation issues and may not wear well at all.

Follow these tips, and you may find yourself keeping your furniture for years. In fact, the vintage pieces clients bring to Ottesen to restore are the ones she loves best. “They’re so well made,” she says, “and they contain so much nostalgia.” **(crw)**

Betty Christiansen is publisher and editor of Coulee Region Women, and was delighted to discover that her own couch passed the high-quality test according to Ottesen’s criteria.

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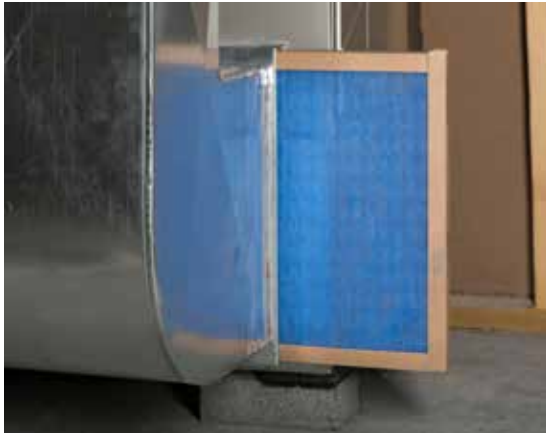
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Home Safe Home

Take steps to ensure your home is the safe haven it's meant to be.

BY JULIE NELSON
Contributed photos

With summer days of taking kids to the beach and evenings sitting at Moon Tunes coming to an end, we turn inside to our homes. While we may think of this as a cozy, cocooning time to focus on home, it's important to take measures to ensure that home is indeed a safe and cozy place.



Carol Drury, La Crosse County Health Department

Studies show we spend approximately 87 percent of our time indoors, which, according to a YouGov report, is not all good for many homeowners. The report shows an average adult breathes in almost 4,000 gallons of air every day and that indoor air can be up to five times more polluted than outdoor air. While we may have limited control over our work environments, there's plenty we can do to ensure our home sweet home is, indeed, a safe place to retreat and relax.

Carol Drury is an expert on home safety. As the Environmental Health and Lab Manager at the La Crosse County Health Department, she and her staff test the invisible

chemicals that can ruin our health, and they look out for situations that can lead to accidents and injury. She has some tips for us:

1. Dry home = happy home

Water seeping into your house damages the foundation and the structure; having the right level of moisture in the air is not only more comfortable, but it helps your heating and air conditioning run more efficiently. Also, when the humidity is too high, you and your family may become susceptible to respiratory disorders or chemical reactions.

Find and fix water leaks, check on your rain gutters and downspouts, and maintain indoor humidity below 60 percent in the summer and below 40 percent in the winter.

2. Ventilate

Because today's homes are so well sealed, indoor air quality can be significantly worse than outdoor. Dust, allergens, pet dander, household chemicals and outgassing from materials such as carpet and plastics can all build up and contaminate the air we are breathing. Circulating fresh air promotes better respiratory health. Use bath and kitchen fans frequently and remember to change air filters on heating and cooling units. For the cheapest and easiest fix, keep your windows

Other safety tips

- Reduce clutter by donating items you no longer use. This minimizes the chances of tripping or other accidents, and clutter-free areas reduce stress.
- Consider removing throw rugs and other items that could pose a tripping hazard.
- Lock up hazardous chemicals and medications, especially when you have children or pets in the house, frequent visitors or an older adult you are concerned about.
- Buy a fire extinguisher and ask everyone in the family if they know where to find it and how to use it in an emergency.

open as often as possible during these nice days and nights of fall.

3. Keep your home clean

Consider taking off shoes when you enter your home to avoid bringing in chemicals, pest droppings, dirt and pollen. Consider making the switch to “green” cleaners. A Google search of cleaning with vinegar will lead you to some inexpensive and environmentally friendly solutions.

4. Test for contaminants

Lead, radon, asbestos, tobacco, heavy metals and pesticides are all contaminants often found in homes that pose serious health risks. Radon is a gas you can't see, smell or taste, and it is in the ground naturally. It threatens your health when it leaks through cracks in the floor or walls and into your home. Contact Nicole Kragness, registered sanitarian for La Crosse County, to obtain a radon test, the first step in radon protection (nkragness@lacrossecounty.org).

A working smoke alarm will cut the chances of dying in a fire in half. If you don't have and routinely check a carbon monoxide detector and smoke detectors in your home, contact Drury at La Crosse County to find out more (cdrury@lacrossecounty.org). Another health-saving (and potentially lifesaving) measure is to

turn your home into a smoke-free zone. If you have well water, make sure it gets tested.

5. Keep pests out

Exposure to some insects and rodents can trigger asthma attacks. Pesticides can cause further problems. To keep these intruders out without the use of chemicals, use trash containers with sealable covers, and seal any cracks and crevices you find in your house with foam or copper mesh. Fix dripping faucets and keep all food in sealed containers. Wipe your kitchen counters before you go to bed at night and sweep the floor.

Whether you plan to spend your winter playing board games with the kids, curled up with some good books, or binging on Netflix, you'll feel reassured knowing your home is a retreat where you can cozy up safely. *(crw)*

Julie Nelson is the Community Engagement Coordinator for Great Rivers United Way and a regular contributor to Coulee Region Women.



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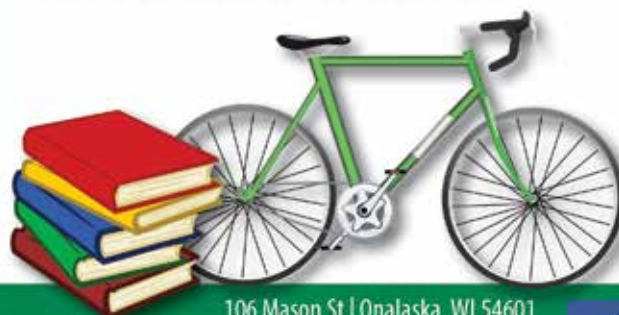
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Women's Fund Awards Grants

On July 2, the Women's Fund of Greater La Crosse awarded 26 grants totaling \$60,000 to 25 local organizations. The Women's Fund is excited to be supporting programs that have shown great commitment to helping women from all walks of life in La Crosse and surrounding areas. Grant recipient projects include those that provide basic necessities such as feminine hygiene products at WAFER, to those that educate girls in fields they've commonly been excluded from, like Grow La Crosse's Empowered Girls farm camp. To learn more about the projects the Women's Fund supported this year, visit www.womensfundlacrosse.org.



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This annual event is sure to please everyone in attendance. What better time to check out your local options in home construction, remodeling and interior/exterior design? I hope to see you there!

Dee Dee Kerska

Dee Dee Kerska, Chair
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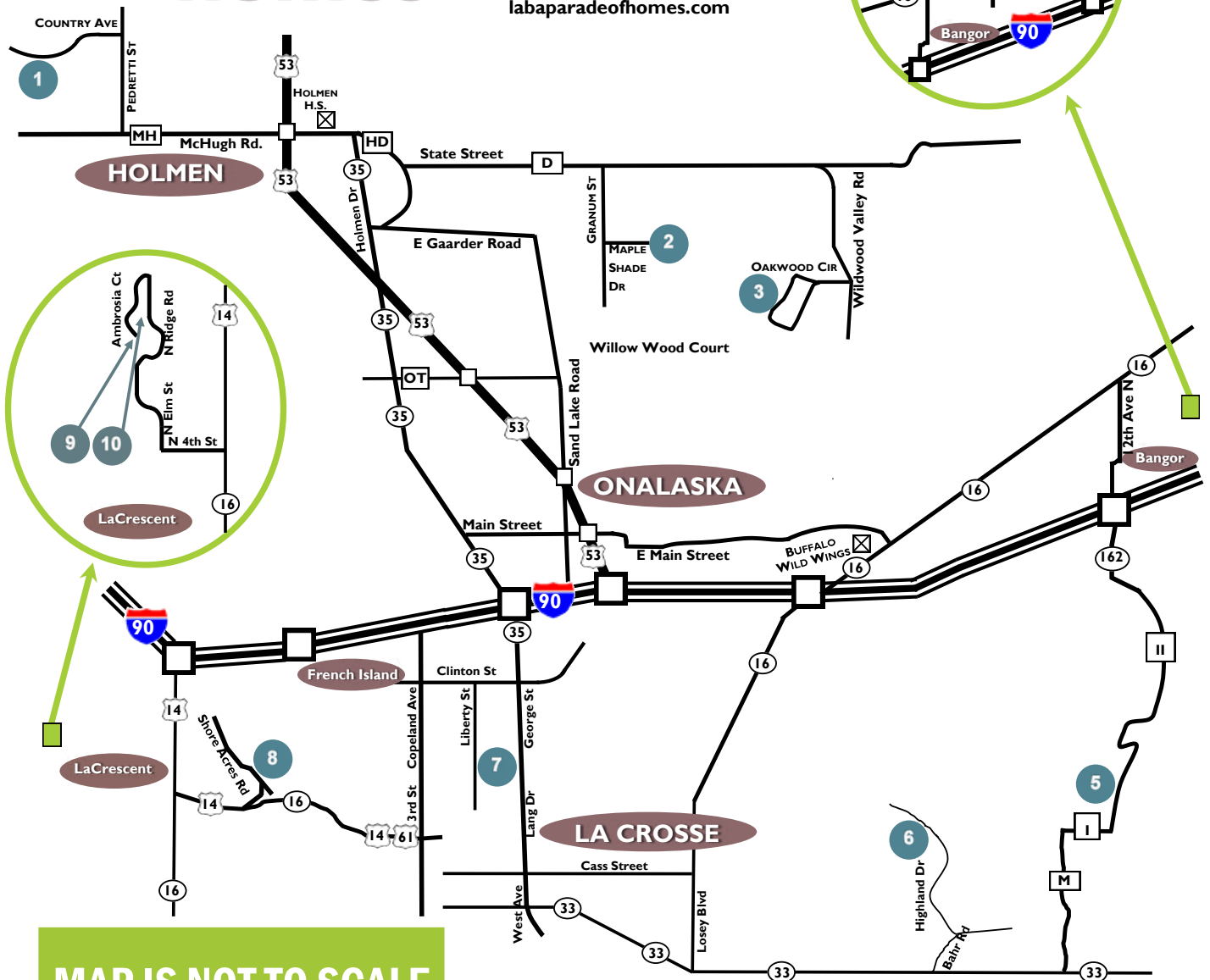
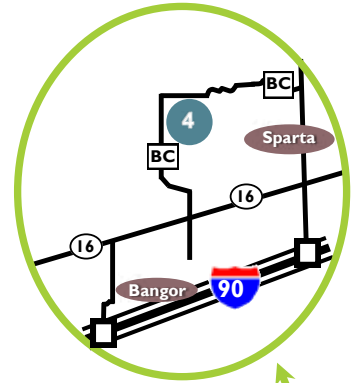
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2	MasterCraft Homes, Inc.	608-781-7200	1109 Maple Shade Ct., Holmen	Forest View Estates	3	2.5	2,530	8
3	Lifetime Design Homes	608-386-0638	W6465 Oakwood Cir., Holmen	Wildwood Valley	3	3	2,800	9
4	Used Anew	608-487-0547	4983 Garden Ave., Sparta	N/A	2	1	1,188	11
5	Marlin Homes LLC	608-779-4617	N2947 County Road II, Bangor	N/A	4	4	4,400	12
6	Hartland Construction	608-385-6641	W3827 Highland Dr., La Crosse	Ridgeview Heights	5	3.5	5,014	17
7	City of La Crosse/WTC	608-780-7592	1120 Liberty St., La Crosse	N/A	3	2	1,616	19
8	Jon Olson Construction	608-781-5428	110 Shore Acres Rd., La Crescent	Shore Acres	3	2	2,240	20
9	Lautz Lassig Custom Builders	608-786-2535	1405 Ambrosia Ct., La Crescent	Apple Blossom Pointe	4	4	2,888	23
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#1



W8078 Country Ave., Holmen - August Prairie

This custom-built Hartland Construction home is everything these empty-nesters desired. This ready-to-retire ranch features zero entry from the garage and main-level living with a master suite, office and laundry. The finished basement leaves plenty of room for children, guests and grandkids. All the small details allow this vaulted-ceiling ranch to make a lasting impact. From the solid-surface tops throughout, to the lighting inside the cabinetry, to the body sprays in the custom-tiled shower, to the coloring and stamping of the concrete patio, this home incorporates it all well. Black windows are complemented with white trim, and the master bath lighting gives the sense of being at a spa. Overlooking the park and playground on the outskirts of town, this home is everything the customers wanted.



LABA members used: Advanced Seamless, Al's Drywall, Altra Federal Credit Union, Arcade Portables, Decker Design, Floorcrafters, Glass Interiors of La Crosse, Hartland Construction, Hilltopper Refuse & Recycle, La Crosse Fireplace, Lifetime Insulation, Maxwell White, Midwest TV & Appliance, MJG Excavating, Overhead Door Company of the 7 Rivers Region, Riverland Energy Cooperative, Sherwin Williams, Stetter Electric, Town 'N' Country Title, Waldenberger Inc., Wisconsin Building Supply

HARTLAND
Construction LLC

3 Bedrooms
2.5 Baths
3,066 Ft²

Paul & Jennifer Westlie

608-385-6641

info@hartlandconstruction.net

www.hartlandconstruction.net

HOME
#2

MASTERCRAFT HOMES INC.

LABA MEMBER SINCE 1986



1109 Maple Shade Ct., Holmen - Forest View Estates

MasterCraft
Confidence Builders HOMES

3 Bedrooms
2.5 Baths
2,530 Ft²

Jason Etrheim

608-781-7200

jason@mchlax.com

www.mchlax.com

Located in the brand-new Forest View subdivision in Holmen, this beautiful, modern Prairie-style home is designed and built by MasterCraft Homes, Inc. The home is nestled back in a quiet cul-du-sac with plenty of trees in the backyard for privacy. A neutral color palette, 9-foot ceilings and plenty of natural light make for a light and airy feeling. You'll find rich wood tones mixed with matte black finishes throughout. The kitchen features quartz countertops and a black island as an accent piece. The room opens to the dining and living rooms, creating plenty of space for friends and family to gather. A screened porch off the dining room is the perfect spot to relax outside without being bothered by bugs. A mudroom, den, half bath and office make up the rest of the main floor. Upstairs are two bedrooms, a full bathroom and a laundry room along with the master suite.

LABA members used: ACT Concrete; Advanced Seamless; Al's Drywall; Arcade Portables; Associated Bank; Badger Corrugating Company; Decker Design; Seymour Electric; Glass Interiors of La Crosse; Hilltopper Refuse & Recycle; Karl's TV & Appliance; Knight Barry Title United; La Crosse Fireplace; Lifetime Insulation; Maxwell White; Midwest TV & Appliance; MJG Excavating; Outdoor Services, Inc. (OSI); Overhead Door Company of the 7 Rivers Region; Schneider Heating & A/C; Sherwin Williams; Wisconsin Building Supply



LIFETIME DESIGN HOMES

LABA MEMBER SINCE 1999

HOME
#3



W6465 Oakwood Cir., Holmen - Wildwood Valley

Whether you are downsizing or looking for the “perfect size” to fit your active lifestyle, twin home living does not mean you sacrifice amenities that give a home the “wow” factor. This home features a functional, open layout that provides light into the great room from three areas and features an elegant stone fireplace. The kitchen showcases trending cabinets, lights and flooring including quartz countertops and ceramic tile. There’s no lack of cabinets or counter space, as the three-sided island provides plenty of room for casual seating and entertaining. Two bedrooms in the upper level, with a third in the lower level, provide many options for an in-home office or guest bedrooms. This home also has a screened-in porch with a built-in sound system.

Nestled in Wildwood Valley with beautiful views of wildlife and nature, this home offers the quality and timeless appeal you have come to expect from Lifetime Design Homes.



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3 Baths
2,800 Ft²

Ed Haupt

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USED ANEW

LABA MEMBER SINCE 2017

HOME
#4



4983 Garden Ave., Sparta

A unique entry in this year's Parade of Homes, this remodeled ranch home is showcased by Used Anew LLC to demonstrate multiple uses of reclaimed materials—for flooring, wall and ceiling coverings, doors, kitchen cabinets and countertops, lighting, furniture and décor. Each room in the home features a different way to use reclaimed wood, tin and other materials regionally sourced from unwanted older homes, barns and other agricultural buildings. Larry and LuAnn Hutson started Used Anew LLC in 2013 with an objective to save and repurpose quality materials that would otherwise have been sent to the landfill, burned, buried or wasted. The company has evolved to offer multiple ready-to-install products that help make the decision to use reclaimed materials in your new home construction or remodel easier. By taking some of the work out of preparing reclaimed materials in order to install them, you'll help your builder by sourcing products from Used Anew, and you'll support a local business in its efforts to keep quality materials from being wasted.



2 Bedrooms
1 Bath
1,188 Ft²

Larry & LuAnn Hutson

608-487-0547

larry@usedanew.com

www.usedanew.com

HOME
#5

MARLIN HOMES LLC

LABA MEMBER SINCE 2004



N2947 County Road II, Bangor



4 Bedrooms
4 Baths
4,400 Ft²

Duane Schulze

608-779-4617

duane@marlinbuilt.com

www.marlinbuilt.com

This custom-built two-story concrete home uses affordable, environmentally friendly geothermal heating. The exterior wall is built of Logix ICF (insulated concrete forms) from footings to roof. Concrete stores thermal energy, greatly reduces outside sounds, offers minimal temperature change between floors and provides peace of mind in severe weather. This home was designed to simulate a traditional farmhouse with a modern touch, featuring 10-foot ceilings with an open-concept kitchen, living room and dining room as well as hardwood floors and a large wraparound deck. The second floor features a large master suite plus two bedrooms, open railing and a large sitting area overlooking the field and valley. The basement features a large family area, a paved patio, one bedroom and two bonus rooms. The utility room has a WaterFurnace that gets free energy from the field in front of the patio. If you're interested in ICF, stop by and be inspired by this beautiful home.

LABA members used: Advanced Seamless, Inc.; Altra Federal Credit Union; Badger Corrugating Co.; Best Kept Portables; Carpets to Go; Decker Design, Inc.; E & B Insulation; Flock's Heating & Air Conditioning, Inc.; Knight Barry Title United LLC; La Crosse Fireplace Company; Menards; Midwest Concrete Professionals; Midwest TV & Appliance; Overhead Door Company of the 7 Rivers Region, Inc.; Sherwin-Williams; Stetter Electric; Used Anew; Xcel Energy



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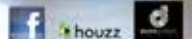
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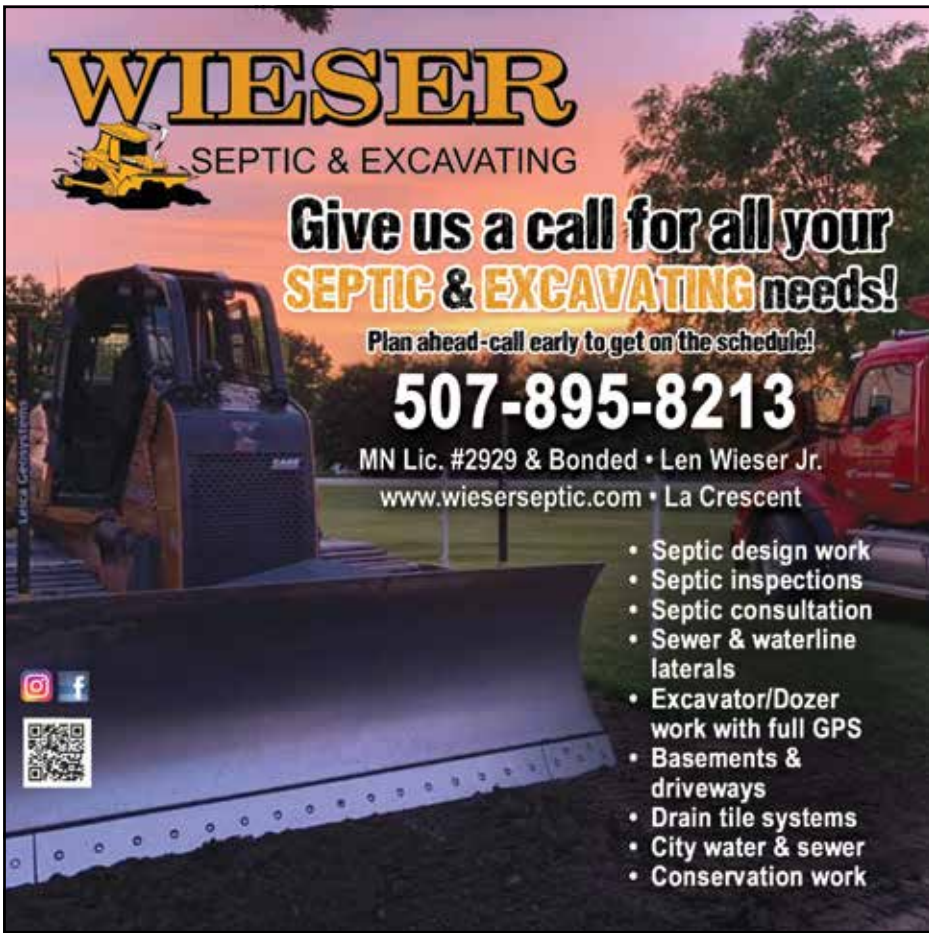
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HARTLAND CONSTRUCTION

LABA MEMBER SINCE 2013

HOME
#6



Family living at its finest is what this custom-built Hartland Construction home offers. With over 5,000 square feet of functional space, this home features an open concept layout on the main level with space for kids to play, breathtaking views from the four-season room and a deck with a spiral staircase to the backyard. The two-toned kitchen blends rustic alder and white cabinetry to create a farmhouse style. The upper level features luxury vinyl-covered steps, the master suite and three bedrooms for the kids, as well as an extra-large laundry room. The basement level offers the family a place to escape for entertainment in the theater room and an open bar area as well as a walkout to the expansive backyard. Custom-made rolling barn doors add rustic charm to this clean Craftsman-style house.

Dark exterior doors and windows contrast well with the white trim around them, as do the black fixtures.



LABA members used: Advanced Seamless, Al's Drywall, Altra Federal Credit Union, Arcade Portables, Audio Video Pros, Decker Design, Gerhards, Hallman Lindsay Quality Paints, Hartland Construction, Hidden Valley Designs, Hilltopper Refuse & Recycle, Knight Barry Title United, La Crosse Fireplace, Lifetime Insulation, Maxwell White, Midwest TV & Appliance, MJG Excavating, Overhead Door Company of the 7 Rivers Region, Schneider Heating & A/C, Stetter Electric, Used Anew, Waldenberger Inc., Wisconsin Building Supply, Xcel Energy



5 Bedrooms
3.5 Baths
5,014 Ft²

Paul & Jennifer Westlie

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For additional information and ticket outlet locations, please visit our website at www.labaparaadeofhomes.com.

CITY OF LA CROSSE/WTC

LABA MEMBER SINCE 1990

HOME
#7



1120 Liberty St., La Crosse

This charming 1,616-square-foot home on La Crosse's North Side boasts exceptional craftsmanship. The home features a large front porch, custom cabinets, engineered hardwood floors, three bedrooms, two full baths and a two-car detached garage. The basement has unfinished space ready for your personal touch, stubbed plumbing to accommodate another full bath and two egress windows. This home will be sold to an income-qualified household earning 80 percent of the County Median Income or less.

The construction of this beautiful home demonstrates how the Replacement Housing Program contributes to fill the City's mission to increase the availability of affordable homes and redevelop city neighborhoods. The unique partnership between the City and Western Technical College provides educational opportunities to Western Technical College students while supporting economic growth by contracting with local suppliers and subcontractors. The end result is a safe and affordable home to those who desire to be a homeowner in the City of La Crosse.



LABA members used: Best Kept Portables, Gerhards, Hilltopper Refuse & Recycle, Karl's TV & Appliance, Overhead Door Company of the 7 Rivers Region, Schneider Heating & A/C, Kratt Lumber, Used Anew, Midwest TV & Appliance



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1,616 Ft²

Kevin Clements

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clementsk@cityoflacrosse.org

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HOME
#8

JON OLSON CONSTRUCTION

LABA MEMBER SINCE 1990



110 Shore Acres Rd., La Crescent - Shore Acres



3 Bedrooms
2 Baths
2,240 Ft²

Jon Olson Construction, Inc.

608-781-5428

jolsonconstruction@centurytel.net

www.jonolsonconstruction.com

Relax on the river in this fine home built by Jon Olson Construction, Inc., built with the attention to detail and energy-efficient construction that we give to all our home-building projects. This home, located in La Crescent's Shore Acres development, features a beautiful three-season porch with a gas stove, a pine vaulted ceiling and a large patio overlooking the Mississippi River.

The interior features 11-foot ceilings in the great room and a stove fireplace with built-in cabinets, a large kitchen area with an island and Cambria countertops, and a master bathroom showcasing a unique tiled walk-in shower. The home also is designed with a zero-entry garage and wide hallways and doors. The flooring is almost exclusively porcelain tile, even in the master suite.

The exterior is clad with durable LP Smart siding with Thermo-Tech windows and has a stunning front entryway. Don't miss seeing this unique home!



LABA members used: Advanced Seamless, Altra Federal Credit Union, Beaver Builder Supply, Balduzzi Lumber, Builders Flooring, Gerhards, Glass Interiors of La Crosse, Graf Electric, Hess Excavating, JBrooke Garage Doors, La Crosse Fireplace, Wisconsin Building Supply



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LABA MEMBER SINCE 2011

HOME
#9



Imagine you are in a Swiss Chalet overlooking a beautiful, expansive valley below—that is the vision that inspired this homeowner's dream. From its perch in the Apple Blossom development, this house features an 18-foot patio door overlooking the city of La Crescent and the Mississippi River, plus breathtaking details such as quarter-sawn oak floors, butcher-block countertops and Italian kitchen appliances, navy blue ceilings throughout, elaborately tiled showers and European windows. Add to that the convenience and comfort of in-floor heating, a walk-through sauna and custom white wood railings. This generous four-bedroom, four-bathroom home even sports a Murphy bed. We would like to thank Charles and Laura for letting us showcase their home!



LABA members used: ACT Concrete, Altra Federal Credit Union; American Home Fireplace & Patio; Carpet One of La Crosse; County Materials; Earley Drywall; Elegant Stone Products, Inc.; Elevations by Wisconsin Building Supply; Elite Electric; First American Roofing & Siding; Gerhards; Glass Interiors of La Crosse; Green Built Insulation; Hallman Lindsay Quality Paints; Karl's TV & Appliance; La Crosse Fireplace Company; Maxwell White Plumbing; Midwest TV & Appliance; Overhead Door Company of the 7 Rivers Region; Parcher's Painting and Home Improvement; Woodwerks; Dave Rybold Excavating & Plumbing



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COLEMAN CUSTOM HOMES

LABA MEMBER SINCE 2019

HOME
#10



1420 Ambrosia Ct., La Crescent - Apple Blossom Pointe

Is overly spacious your style? Then come on in through the inviting entry of this custom-built home, featuring open and extended dining, living and kitchen areas with a huge island. The layout offers a private master suite that includes a tray ceiling and an immense bathroom with a walk-in tile shower, double vanity and makeup counter. Don't forget her walk-in closet with a center island and chandelier. The main level also has a screened room with a view, a mudroom with lockers and access to an oversize 1,500-plus-square-foot three-car heated garage with basement entry. In the walk-in basement, you will find an expansive entertaining space that includes a bar, a covered patio for grilling, room for guests, an office and a workout space. Quartz countertops all around!



LABA members used: ACT Concrete, Altra Federal Credit Union, Balduzzi Lumber, Coleman Custom Homes, Gerhards, Hallman Lindsay Quality Paints, Midwest TV & Appliance, Xcel Energy



4 Bedrooms
3.5 Baths
4,151 Ft²

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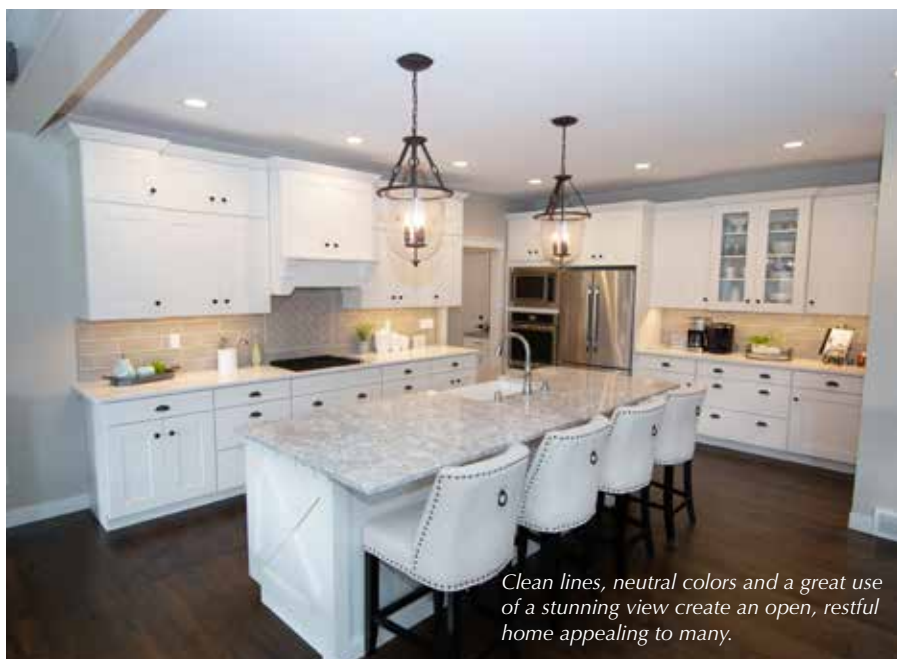



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Clean lines, neutral colors and a great use of a stunning view create an open, restful home appealing to many.

A VIEW FROM THE PORCH

Take a peek inside the La Crosse Area Builders Association Parade of Homes 2018 winner.

BY JESSIE FOSS
Photos by Frontier Photography

When it came time for Mark and Carol Ward to move from the traditional two-story home where they raised their two kids and lived for 20 years, they knew they wanted to try something different. They were ready to purge a lifetime of unnecessary belongings and move out of town to a more rural setting. The two

had always dreamed of building a one-story ranch home that would accommodate their new family that now includes a son-in-law, a daughter-in-law and grandchildren.

The Wards looked for the perfect spot for quite some time. Being close to town in an area with a community of neighbors was important



to Carol, while Mark wanted to have more space. The two finally found their perfect spot in Wildwood Valley, located just a few miles outside of Holmen. Carol describes the area as a “beautiful valley of rolling hills, wildflowers and woods with amazing views out of every window in our house.”

Working well with the team

Mark and Carol had an idea for a layout for their new home and turned to Rugroden Drafting & Design to help perfect their ideas. They then chose Lifetime Design Homes in Holmen as their builders.

Being able to work well with the designer and builder is some of the best advice Carol would offer to others starting the building process. She says the designer can help analyze and look at many facets of the design. She adds that room size is important, and time should be taken to figure out room dimensions to ensure basic room functionality and flow.

When it came to picking their builder, the Wards knew they needed to find someone they trusted. The pair toured homes featured in the Parade of Homes to get ideas and see area builders’ work.

“Meet the builder and ask lots of questions. We are so happy we chose Lifetime Designs,” Carol says. “Ed Haupt, our builder, is a great communicator and listener and always had our interests in mind. He met all our expectations.”

The People’s Choice

The Wards began designing and planning their home in April 2017, dug the basement in June and moved into their finished home on December 24, 2017. The Ward’s home was one of 10 featured in the 2018 La Crosse Area Builders Association’s Parade of Homes and was chosen for the People’s Choice Award.

The nearly 3,300-square-foot home includes main-floor living as well as a basement where half is finished and the other half is utilized for storage. The main floor includes two bedrooms and a bathroom on the east end of the house, which offers privacy when the Wards’ adult children and families visit. The master suite anchors the west end of the house and includes a large walk-in closet, walk-in shower and freestanding tub. The secluded area also has a laundry room and office area.

Between the bedrooms is a large open-concept main living area of the home. The kitchen features a walk-in pantry and large, extended island with a farmers sink. A stone fireplace is in the center of the great room and is anchored by cabinets and shelving.

The Craftsman home has wide-planked hickory wood floors throughout the main parts of the home and pops of shiplap to bring a farm style feel to the house. A screened-in porch off the dining room connects to a patio that allows for outdoor entertaining.

The lower level of the house has a large family room, a fourth bedroom and third bathroom.

A home with a view

It was important to the Wards that the house have as many windows as possible to allow for natural sunlight and views of the valley.

Carol says she has two favorite features of her home: its spacious open concept and the screened-in porch.

“The kitchen, dining and living-room space is great for entertaining, but at the same time has a warm, comfortable feel for days home alone,” Carol says. “I also have a new appreciation for wildlife and nature as we enjoy our morning coffee or wind down the day with a glass of wine on our screened porch.”

When it came to decorating her new home, Carol chose a gray/beige color throughout the home, providing a neutral palette that allows Carol to change the personality of the home with a pop of color as the seasons change.

Carol also wanted the home to feel warm, comfortable and inviting while reflecting who the Wards are. She accomplished this by filling the home with family photos, artwork and other personal items. She also gleaned inspiration from Pinterest and Home and Garden Television, specifically Joanna Gaines, whom Carol describes as one of her style inspirations.

She also encourages playing around with decorating ideas and says it’s OK to change your mind later.

“It’s a process and doesn’t happen overnight,” Carol says. “If you see something you like, buy it and try it. If it doesn’t work out, return it and try something else. Rearrange your rooms and move things around. I am still doing that.”

The Wards are so pleased with how their house came together and look forward to many years of making family memories in their new home. (crw)

Jessie Foss is a freelance writer who lives in La Crosse. She is a proud new puppy owner who, after a 13-year break, is relearning the joys and tribulations of a puppy.



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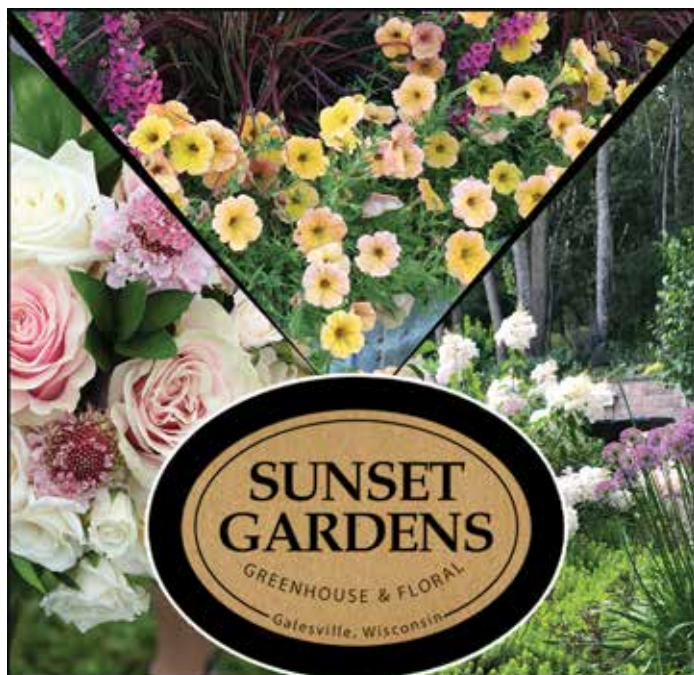
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JUDALINE CASSIDY

was born in the twin islands of Trinidad and Tobago. Judaline started her career in the field of plumbing at the John Donaldson Technical Institute of Trinidad, where she was one of the first three females selected to pursue plumbing.

She's been a proud member of Plumbers Local Union No. 1 New York City for the past 20 years.

Judaline was of the very first women accepted into Plumbers Local Union 371 Staten Island New York, and she was the first woman elected on the Examining Board of Plumbers Local Union No. 1. With her guidance, fortitude and determination she ushered in the first Women's Committee within her Union. She is currently a plumber with the New York City Housing Authority.

In June 2017 she established the nonprofit Tools & Tiaras Inc. The primary goals are to expose, inspire and mentor young girls and women about the highly lucrative field of construction. Getting young girls excited about working tools fuel her.

Judaline is extremely passionate about her craft and works assiduously to promote a positive representation of women in construction, so that the many obstacles, and resistance she encountered can be eliminated for present and future tradeswomen.

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A LIFETIME OF HOMES

As people's needs change, their homes change with them.

BY JUDITH MUNSON

Contributed photos



Buying a home is at once one of life's most exciting and nerve-racking experiences. It's also an experience that changes throughout the course of a lifetime, with needs and wants shifting as we age.

A few generations ago, more people stayed in their home their entire life. But today, the average stay in a home is nine years, according to the National Association of Realtors.

We asked area experts how a buyer's motivation changes from their first home to the one they know will be their final one—an option that is often referred to as “aging in place” in a facility that transitions from independent living to full-service care.

The first home

People searching for their first home are usually ready to put roots down for a while. These first-time home buyers are tired of the renting life, as they seek the privacy and security associated with home ownership, says Sara Conway, an agent with Gerrard-Hoeschler Realtors.



Sara Conway,
Gerrard-Hoeschler
Realtors



Nancy Gerrard,
co-owner of Gerrard-
Hoeschler Realtors

“They often want a place closer to their work, school and hobbies,” she says. “They’re financially ready to make this investment, wanting their kids to grow up in the same neighborhood.”

Conway adds the market is strong right now for first-time home buyers, with plenty of selection regarding neighborhoods and home styles. “Some want a small starter; others are getting a later start on their first home, so they’re seeking a forever home.”

No matter the age of the buyer or the style of home they are hunting for, a few features are common to all of them: a home in good condition that requires little maintenance. All women buyers, no matter their demographic—stay-at-home moms, working moms, single professionals—want the same thing, says Nancy Gerrard, co-owner of Gerrard-Hoeschler Realtors. “Convenience,” says Gerrard.

“They want to be close to shopping and kids’ activities, but they also want a convenient floorplan and a maintenance agenda that isn’t demanding.”

Being prepared

One thing that frustrates many people embarking on the home search for the first time is forgetting to get pre-approved. People are often so excited to start looking once they've made the decision to buy that they hit the online listings, schedule visits with a Realtor and find their dream home, only to be disappointed to learn they're not approved for the listed price.

"It's just one reason to call a Realtor first," says Conway. "There are so many factors to consider, especially with a first buy: whom to hire as an inspector, how to work with a lender, what location is right for them, how to negotiate the deal—you need someone knowledgeable about the market."

Communication early on is also key for couples, adds Gerrard. "It's extremely important they're on the same page before they start looking," she says. "If they aren't sure what they want, an agent can help them start the thinking process."

Financing and appraisal guidelines tightened up a bit after the Great Recession, but Gerrard says the mortgage rates are still great, and the changes haven't put a damper on the La Crosse-area housing market.

Moving up

Traditional thought behind why people leave their first home is that families have grown, requiring more living space, and that still holds true, but other reasons facilitate the move to a house beyond the first.



Tika Herritz,
Coldwell Banker
River Valley LLC

"People move in search of change," says Tika Herritz, with Coldwell Banker River Valley LLC. "These include a new job, marriage or divorce, aging and a growing family."

"Size is one factor, and having the financial ability to move up to next level with more square footage, a larger lot and possibly a more upscale subdivision, but it's not always a gradual progression," adds Gerrard. "The condo market is hot right now with older couples as well as younger professionals. And empty nesters do

not always scale down; many of them buy bigger as their income has increased, allowing them more room to accommodate visiting family."

The Coulee Region has the advantage of offering a wide variety of homes and neighborhoods, from historic districts to newer subdivisions. So what are buyers looking for in regard to style?

"Women want white cabinets and white woodwork, and gray walls are also popular," says Conway. "Ceramic tile that looks like wood is big right now, along with hardwood floors. It's a modern take on shabby chic."

The aging-in-place concept is top-of-the-mind for a growing spectrum, says Gerrard. Empty nesters are thinking about it sooner, rather than later, compared to previous generations who may have

stayed a long time in their first or second home until health issues forced a move to a care facility.

Independent living and more

Today, more buyers are proactive about their later-life needs, and places like Eagle Crest Communities (Bethany Lutheran Homes) are growing in popularity. These communities offer a continuum of care, from independent living to assisted living to memory care.

The average age of people seeking independent living in such a community is 70, says Dana Bistodeau, marketing director of Bethany Lutheran Homes, but those as young as 55 are welcome to move in.



Dana Bistodeau,
Bethany Lutheran
Homes

"We call our independent living apartments 'Independent Plus,' as this signifies additional safety features such as emergency response pendants and motion sensors that alert staff a wellness check is needed," says Bistodeau.

But for the most part, people want the community experience, she says. "Socialization is the No. 1 reason people are interested in our communities, as well as other amenities such as our restaurant, fitness center, movie theater and general store, while maintaining the privacy of apartment living."

Bistodeau says the majority of their residents are women who "are so ready for socialization" and appreciate volunteer opportunities and activities. "We have committees that help maintain our gardens, work in the library, manage the movie schedule in our theater and decorate for the holidays," she says. "That is just their joy—they love that."

Other activities available at Eagle Crest reflect include a faith and ethics roundtable group, a resident choir and more. "People are seeking travel and health/wellness opportunities," says Bistodeau. "Our state-of-the-art fitness center is available exclusively for our residents. Weekly yoga and fitness classes are very well attended, and many of our residents enjoy our walking and biking paths year-round. Soon we will have a fishing dock and kayak access to the back waters."

As needs change, a resident may move into assisted living, where more services are available, including help with mobility, housekeeping, managing medications and transportation to medical appointments. "The additional supervision and assistance we provide is a relief for our residents and their families."

Eagle Crest Communities are located in Holmen, Onalaska and La Crosse. The Eagle Crest South location in La Crosse is undergoing an expansion that will double its size by 2020.

"People are planning ahead and are intrigued by the thought of low-maintenance living in a community," says Bistodeau. 

Judith Munson is a freelance journalist and memoir writer living in western Wisconsin.



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Come Over for Dinner

Welcome friends to your home for food and fun—
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BY LEAH CALL
Contributed photos

Shawn McManus, Savory Creations

Some people shudder at the thought of throwing a dinner party. Others relish it. Welcoming people into your home for food and conversation is an act of generosity. It instills a sense of community—and it's fun. With the right amount of planning and preparation, it doesn't have to be stressful or budget busting.

Planning is indeed the key to pulling off a successful dinner party. That includes a well-thought-out guest list. When assembling the guest list, consider table size, seating and dinnerware. Most homes can easily accommodate six to eight guests. The mix of people may depend on the intent of the gathering.

When picking times and dates, dinner party pro and chef Shawn McManus, owner of Savory Creations in La Crosse, notes, "I typically peer at local community event calendars and large city function dates to avoid date conflicts and generally choose Sundays or Thursdays."

Once your list is assembled, sending out personal invitations via snail mail two weeks in advance is a nice personal touch. "When organizing larger groups, I tend to start the invitations 30-plus days in advance with reminders every week," adds McManus.

Have fun with the menu

After confirming your guest list and checking for dietary restrictions and allergies, it's time to plan the menu. "A menu is actually a design of an experience you intend on providing your guests," says McManus. "Each food course should entice the senses and provide a feeling of nourishment, fulfillment and contentment."

Themed dinners can be fun for guests and hosts alike. Be creative, whether the theme revolves around a certain ethnic food, a holiday or local seasonal fare. The possibilities are limitless.

McManus recalls a particular "Local Haute" dinner he hosted at the Savory Creations studio kitchen. The amuse bouche—the first course of a five-course meal—for that memorable affair was a pepper plant in a terra cotta pot placed in front of each guest. "The twist was that the pepper plants were merely serrano pepper plant clippings provided by farmer Todd at the Kane St. Garden secured in the pots with local river rocks," explains McManus. "The 'peppers' hanging from the limbs were actually fried shishito peppers attached by ornament hooks to appear as if they hung naturally." At the base was a smoked paprika aioli dipping sauce in a miniature terra cotta pot with micro greens from the Hillview Urban Agriculture Center Greenhouse.

"After greeting the group of diners, I welcomed them to enjoy their first course, and then I briskly walked away to peer on the group's confusion from afar," recalls McManus. "Then the reveal was announced that the pepper plant décor setting was in fact the first interactive course."

Prep and presentation

"When it comes to meal prepping, my personal motto is 'Have a tight *mise en place*,'" says McManus, referring to the practice of having everything in place before beginning to cook the meal. "This planning-ahead technique will help with efficiency, timing and organization," he adds.

Checklists with assigned duties are helpful especially with larger gatherings. It's also important to manage the flow of food to ensure everything is served hot. For McManus, "the trick is to know the accurate cooking times of each individual item and have a timeline plan with the team. Having fresh, hot, presentable, delicious food in

a timely fashion should always be the game plan.”

Every host wants their dinner party to be enjoyable and memorable for their guests. “The beauty of culinary arts is that the artist within has limitless arrays of creativity in presentation. I personally lean more on seasonal locally raised foods to speak for themselves,” says McManus. “Decorative garnishes can certainly lend a hand in notable memories. Adding things like micro edible flowers, infused oil, edible herbaceous plants and heirloom varieties of produce can really brighten up dishes.”

Bon appetit

Good food. Good friends. Good conversation. What’s better than that? Whether it’s a five-course meal or pizza and a good bottle of wine, a successful dinner party is as easy as putting pencil to paper—and maybe hiring a cleaner and some kitchen help.

“Have a well-thought-out plan and incorporate volunteers or paid staff to assist in your event planning and kitchen preparation,” suggests McManus. “Give yourself plenty of time to gather the needed materials and foods so that you are not in a rush. The great thing about most foods is that they can perhaps taste better the following day, so pre-prep items a day ahead for reheating or assembling the day of the event.”

Following are some of McManus’s recommendations for dinner-party pleasers.



ROASTED CAULIFLOWER BISQUE

Yields 1 quart

- 3 cups roasted cauliflower florets
- 1 medium shallot (peeled, roasted and chilled)
- 2 cloves garlic
- 1-2 tsp. kosher salt (to taste)
- 1 tsp. whole green peppercorns
- 3 tsp. grapeseed oil
- ½ Bartlett pear (cored and rough sliced)
- ¾ cup chicken stock
- ¼ cup heavy cream
- ¼ cup Boursin cheese
- Pea shoots for garnish

Preheat oven to 350°F. In a medium bowl, coat cauliflower, garlic and shallot with salt, peppercorns and grapeseed oil. Add to a half sheet pan and roast for about 15 minutes or until cauliflower is softened. In a medium-large stockpot, add remaining ingredients and simmer on medium heat for 25-30 minutes. Remove from heat and stick blend or puree in a blender until smooth. Garnish with pea shoots.



Butter-poached halibut filet with roasted heirloom potatoes and bacon-wilted kale/turmeric creme

BUTTER-POACHED HALIBUT FILET

Serves 2

- 2 cups German butterball or purple majesty potatoes, halved
- 1 tsp. chopped fresh thyme or chopped fresh rosemary
- 2 T grapeseed oil
- ½ lb. salted European-style butter
- 2 4-oz. fresh halibut filets
- 2 slices bacon (rough chopped)
- 2 cups chopped blue curled or curly kale
- 3 T crème fraîche
- 1 T heavy cream or whole milk
- 1 T ground turmeric
- 1 garlic clove, chopped fine
- Salt and pepper to taste

Preheat oven to 350°F. In a mixing bowl, coat potatoes with chopped herbs, salt, pepper and grapeseed oil. Bake on a half sheet pan for 35-45 minutes or until potatoes are softened.

Fish preparation

Melt butter in a medium skillet pan or large sauté pan. Simmer until 180°F. Add halibut filets. Simmer until flaky or internal temperature reaches 155°F, about 7-10 minutes. Remove with fish turner or slotted spoon.

Wilted kale preparation

Heat bacon in a medium sauté pan on medium-high heat. Render fat until browned. Add kale; toss until slightly softened. Reserve with bacon chunks. In the same pan, add the crème fraîche, milk, turmeric and garlic. Heat and stir until incorporated. Reserve for garnish.

AHI TUNA SALAD

Serves 2

- 1 oz. grapeseed oil
- 2 3-oz. Ahi tuna filets (sashimi grade)
- 1 oz. exotic dried mushrooms (shitake, oyster, morel, chanterelle) pulverized in coffee grinder
- ½ orange pepper (sliced matchstick thin and soaked in ice water)
- 2 cups frisee lettuce spring mix
- 4 leaves micro dark opal basil

Heat a steel pan or non-Teflon-coated pan to medium-high heat. Add grapeseed oil until smoke level. Reduce heat to medium. Coat tuna filet with mushroom dust and a pinch of salt. Sear tuna 3 minutes each side. Chill immediately to under 41°F and slice.

Glace

- 2 T cooked bacon (Nueske's preferred)
 - 1 T butter
 - ½ T sorghum
 - Pinch kosher salt
- Melt together and chill.

Blood orange balsamic reduction

- ½ cup fresh blood orange juice
- 1 T agave nectar
- 1 T balsamic vinegar

Heat all ingredients to simmer over medium heat until reduced 75 percent, then cool to syrup.

Assemble salad as shown in photo. 

Freelance writer Leah Call enjoys entertaining friends and family at her home in Westby.

Exotic mushroom-dusted ahi tuna salad with chilled bacon sorghum glace and blood orange balsamic reduction. Photo by Savage Rose Photography.






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NO WRONG DOOR

The Coulee Collaborative to End Homelessness helps house those who need homes the most.

BY JANIS JOLLY

Contributed photo



Julie McDermid, project manager for Coulee Collaborative to End Homelessness

“There’s no place like home,” said Dorothy in *The Wizard of Oz*. But imagine if there was no home to go to. What if you had to find shelter in a car or wrapped in a blanket in a park?

The Coulee Collaborative to End Homelessness has a goal of making homelessness a thing of the past.

The Coulee Collaborative to End Homelessness brings under one umbrella multiple public and private entities—nonprofits, philanthropic organizations, social service agencies, jail and criminal justice support staff, faith-based organizations, health care providers, veterans’ services and community volunteers—all of whom have a single goal: to end homelessness in our community.

Now, a new initiative will make the process of finding shelter more convenient for those who lack transportation, are unfamiliar with the agencies that offer help or simply don’t know their way around town.

No Wrong Door

Julie McDermid, project manager for the Coulee Collaborative to End Homelessness, says this change will make the path to a permanent home easier to follow. Presented to the homeless population as No Wrong Door, a system of coordinated entry ensures that a client will

go through the intake process only once, and the information will be shared with the other agencies in the Collaborative in a HIPAA-compliant way. From this data, the individuals are prioritized, and those with the most severe problems will receive services first.

McDermid explains that homeless individuals always have multiple needs—clothing, mental health care and physical health care as well as housing. With the coordinated entry system, a case manager in the first agency they contact will help them navigate to the assistance they need. A No Wrong Door sign at participating agencies says, “You might be eligible if your primary nighttime residence is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for people.”

Sandy Brekke, senior consultant to the Office of Population Health at Gundersen Health System, adds that traditionally, individuals were expected to deal with addictions and mental or physical illness on their own before being helped to find housing. There has been a flip in procedure, she says, based on statistics showing that people have little success solving their problems if they are in unstable housing.

Success in ending homelessness

In 2016, the Collaborative to End Homelessness met its goal to find homes for all homeless veterans in La Crosse. Kim Cable of CouleeCap says that the media exposure received for that achievement has brought in resources and staffing for this effort.

Caroline Gregerson, Community Development Block Grant administrator for the City of La Crosse, explains that the city has

Homeless?

Let Us Help!



No Wrong Door

These Coordinated Entry agencies display the No Wrong Door sign:

- Catholic Charities: 608-519-8060 or 608-782-0710
- CouleeCap: 608-782-4877
- New Horizons: 608-791-2610 or 608-791-2600
- La Crosse Collaborative: 608-519-8009
- The Salvation Army of La Crosse: 608-782-6126
- YWCA of La Crosse: 608-304-7886

been an active member of the Collaborative because it is a cost-effective way of addressing homelessness in our area. For example, a large number of homeless individuals were camping at a city-owned property called Riverside North. Policing the area wasn't working, so they asked the Collaborative for help and came up with a solution to both close the area and find permanent supportive housing for everyone staying there who needed the help. The city funded that housing through vouchers. "We not only addressed a property concern but have been able to save thousands of dollars in emergency room visits, emergency shelter stays and police calls," she says.

Recently, the allocation of grants was adjusted so that housing grants came as a block to four counties instead of smaller grants to separate counties. Now La Crosse, Monroe, Vernon and Crawford Counties can share services and resources.

Preventing homelessness

The Collaborative aims to prevent homelessness as well as housing people. One way is to keep people from being evicted. The Collaborative can give short-term rent assistance if nonpayment of rent is the issue,

but often the reason is something else, like problems with neighbors or housekeeping. Kevin Burch, director of housing services for Catholic Charities of the Diocese of La Crosse, explains that preventing eviction is a hands-on process for both the renters and the landlords. Case managers help to repair relationships, fix damages, help renters maintain their apartment and help renters manage their budget to be able to afford the apartment. They check on the renter-landlord relationship periodically and offer support to landlords who agree to rent to those who have not been previously housed. People with complex family problems can have difficulty meeting society's standards, McDermid explains, especially if their other needs, such as hunger, are not being met. The Collaborative seeks to assist in all ways to prevent homelessness.

"Together, we radically revised what's possible and committed to solving complex problems through unprecedented collaboration, innovation and a bias toward action over processing and planning," says Brekke. *(crw)*

Janis Jolly is a freelance writer living in La Crosse who ardently hopes no one will have to sleep outdoors next winter.

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Homing in on Contrast

Local merchants offer expertise on combining contrasting elements to create a cohesive space.

BY JENALEE EMMERT

Photos by Jen Towner Photography



"To create a space you love, mix styles, textures and patterns. It adds personality to your home."

—Brenda Schaeffer, Practically Posh

Dark + Light

A show-stopping dark art piece can add contrast on a plain white wall. Grab another dark charcoal piece, like a wooden ladder, to create length and cohesion. Then add soft fringe pillows and a white runner to bring light into the dark and add some chic contrast.

Practically Posh, La Crosse: In the Sun painting \$209; fringe pillows \$34.99 each; wood horse \$54.99; white runner \$44.99; table clock \$29.99; metal bucket \$8.99; faux shrubs \$10.99 each; ladder not for sale

"Add the latest trends in small doses, working them in within your existing timeless pieces."

—Kristin Boettcher, J Company Studio

Shape + Texture

Want to accentuate your awesome custom ottomans? Include more circles to round out your space. We picked a pop of color and added length with two blue frosted vases and round moss ball stems. For fun, add three textured friends to your family, minus the mess.

J Company Studio, La Crosse: mom and puppies \$370/set; large etched glass vase \$119; small etched glass vase \$99; moss ball stems \$9.98 each; ottomans \$98 each



"My greatest compliment is when guests enter my home or store and say how comfortable they feel—don't forget that simple element when decorating."

—Peggy Rodriguez, Painted Porch

French + Farmhouse

Bring together your favorite elements from your favorite styles. Start with some large, distressed farmhouse pieces like a white door frame and a parlor table. Add French accents like vintage armchairs, corbels and a sconce. Stick to a light color scheme to pull everything together.

Painted Porch, downtown La Crosse: parlor table \$155; armchairs \$169 each; toile pillow \$38.99 each; lighted sconce \$259; corbels \$69 each; stems \$ 4.99 each; pottery \$16.99; ivory stems \$6.99 each; dresser mirror \$28.99; vintage door \$65; urns \$24.99 each; wire cloche \$24.99 set



"The fun in decorating is adding personality to each room through a variety of textures, colors and materials and especially adding things that make you smile!"

—Kim Herman, HouseWarmings

Metal + Wood

Mix up your materials with eye-catching metal wallflowers and fun bookends to keep your travel photo books together. Offset the metal with colorful wood-framed art to create interest and contrast. We love this travel-themed concept for any home filled with wanderlust.

HouseWarmings, Bangor: bike bookends \$28/set; Enjoy the Journey wall hanging \$7; paint can candle \$19; Passport Dream Big wall hanging \$22.50; metal flowers, set of three \$120



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THE BEST GUEST

Here's how to be a great guest in someone else's home.

BY CHARISH BADZINSKI
Contributed photos

Being a guest in someone's home as you explore the world outside the Coulee Region is a tremendous gift. Whether staying with a friend, a relative or a complete stranger through Airbnb or another homestay community, you get the chance to hang out with locals, forge powerful connections with new friends and get a snapshot into everyday life in a country. But when someone is kind enough to open their home to travelers, it's vital that we be good houseguests.

Throughout my travels, I have frequently stayed with locals, and it has enriched my life in so many ways. I've also hosted travelers from the States and abroad, and I've seen firsthand how easy it is for travelers to take this generosity for granted. I've even met hosts who are so burned out as a result of feeling taken for granted, that they're considering never hosting again. That says a lot about how much damage we, as guests in someone's home, can cause. It doesn't have to be that way.

Being a good guest in someone else's home is easy, but it does require a little effort. Here are my top 10 tips for travelers who want to be a great guest.

1. Say thank you

Thank your host specifically for every kind thing they do. And if another traveler or guest does something kind, thank them, too. To do this requires you to take time to notice the things others do. Are they cooking for you? Are they buying groceries or household supplies that you're using? Are they cleaning up after you? Reciprocate when possible.

2. Help clean

Your host is not your housekeeper or your personal chef. Being a homeowner requires a lot of time and energy, especially when you have multiple guests cycling through. You can pitch in to help. Do simple chores around the house: wash dishes, do the laundry, sweep the floors, scrub the restroom. Leave the home better than you found it.

3. Treat your host to dinner

Think about what you would be paying for lodging. It's a lot, right? So it makes sense to give some of that back. I'd recommend 10 percent of that estimated cost or more, if you can. (If you can't, do even more cleaning and caretaking for your host.) Take your host out to a nice meal and pick up the tab. Or if that's too much for your budget, buy some groceries and cook for them.

4. Replace everything you use or break

It shouldn't be a burden for people to host travelers, and household items like soap, paper products and more don't come cheap—so replace them. Along those lines, avoid helping yourself to groceries, alcohol and household treats without permission. Resist the temptation to help yourself to other travelers' food and alcohol as well; they're probably on a budget, too, and may not have the funds to donate to your travel expenses. Perhaps most importantly, if you break something, replace it with the same item or something similar.

5. Don't bring uninvited guests to the house

Your host agreed that you could stay, not your friends. Not the guy



Left and center: While staying at a friend's gorgeous house in Uvita, Costa Rica, I showed my appreciation for my host's hospitality by cooking for her. Among the dishes I made: lentil tacos with fresh pico de gallo and tortilla espinola. Top right: My hostess in Uvita pays her power bill at the grocery store, as is the norm there. It's important to remember that your host has expenses associated with the comforts you enjoy. Pitch in, whenever possible, to be a good houseguest. Bottom right: My hostess drove us around town and to La Fortuna, a popular tourist destination. Pitching in for gas and other auto expenses can ensure your host feels appreciated. Photos by Charish Badzinski.

you met at the pub. Not the tour guide you clicked with. If you meet up with a local and want to have them as an overnight guest, get a room elsewhere. I've seen this happen so many times, and it puts the host in a really awkward position. In addition, it puts their personal items and the possessions of others at risk for theft. Just don't do it.

6. Respect your host's boundaries and needs

Maybe your host doesn't drink alcohol. If so, know their boundaries. Perhaps they go to bed early. If so, be mindful of their need for rest, and keep down the noise at night. Maybe they don't eat meat and would prefer you not cook it in the house. Have a conversation early on about expectations, and you'll ensure it's a positive experience on both sides.

7. Keep your space clean and neat

Do your best to keep your space neat and organized. Don't leave your things around the house, including dirty laundry, bathroom supplies and personal items. Keeping your space and the rest of the house clean shows that you have respect for your host.

8. Be curious and open

By staying with someone, you've been given an opportunity to learn about and understand another's way of life. So set your opinions aside and be open to a new experience. Not all people live the same way, have the same house rules, believe in the same religion, subscribe to the same politics or have the same habits. Remember: This is a

great chance to listen and observe instead of impressing your beliefs on others.

9. Bring a gift

Whether you make or buy it, a thoughtful gift is always appreciated. Bring your host something you know he or she loves, or something you love that you want to share with them. Maybe you can find some products made in your hometown or state, or perhaps you know your host loves a certain food or drink. A thoughtful gift shows you appreciate all they have done for you.

10. Pay it forward

The only way homestays can work in the long run is if the kindness is reciprocated. Inevitably, the people generous enough to host you are giving more than you are to the process. So, give back. Host others. Volunteer with exchange programs or homestay communities. Donate to the organizations that have enabled you to travel on a budget by staying in the homes of locals.

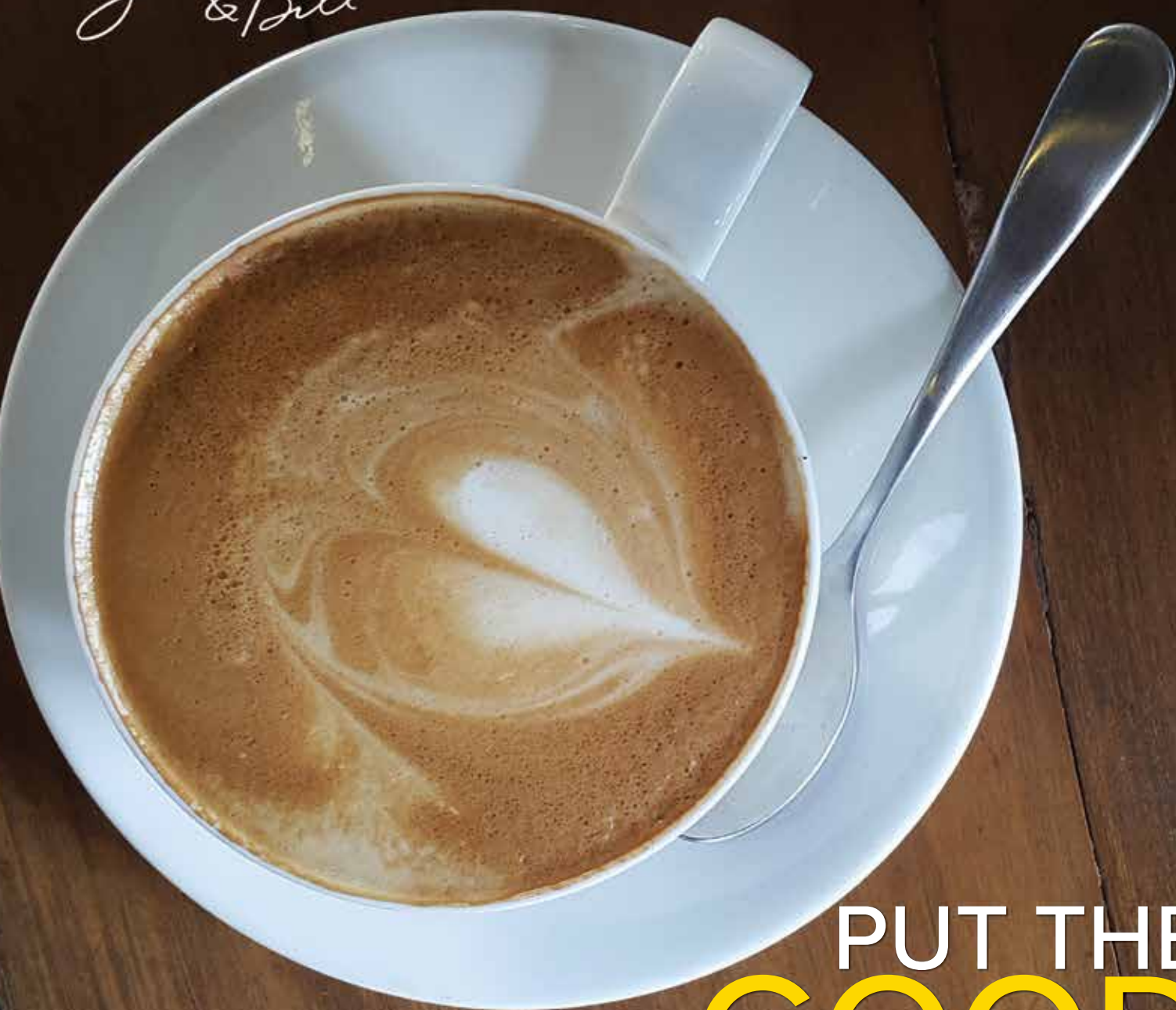
As travelers, we have a responsibility to match, or even exceed, the generosity locals show us when we're in their cities and their homes. By giving back to those who generously open their homes to us, we can ensure the kindness continues. (crw)

Charish Badzinski is an explorer and award-winning features, food and travel writer who has traveled to 40 countries. When she isn't working to build her travel blog, she applies her worldview to her small business, Rollerbag Goddess Global Communications, providing powerful storytelling to her clients. Find her at rollerbaggoddess.com.

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COMMUNITY CALENDAR

ONGOING EVENTS

American Association of University Women (AAUW) 2nd Sat. of each month (Sept.-May), 9:30 a.m., aauwlacrosse@hotmail.com, aauw-wi.org.
Business Over Breakfast La Crosse Area Chamber of Commerce, 4th Wed. every month, 7:30-8:45 a.m. Preregister 608-784-4807, lacrossechamber.com.
Coulee Region Professional Women (CRPW) 4th Tues. of each month, Shelli Kult, crpwomen@gmail.com.
La Crosse Area Chamber of Commerce monthly breakfast meeting, 2nd Mon. of each month, 7 a.m., Radisson. Admission is \$5 and includes breakfast, lacrossechamber.com.
La Crosse Rotary every Thurs. noon-1 p.m., Radisson Center, www.rotarycluboflacrosse.org.
La Crosse Toastmasters Club 2nd and 4th Tues. of each month, 7 p.m., La Crosse County Administrative Building, 212 6th St. N., Room 100, La Crosse, 411.toastmastersclubs.org.
League of Women Voters 2nd Tues. of each month, noon, Radisson Hotel, Nancy Hill, 608-782-1753, nfhill@centurytel.net.
Moon Tunes Thursdays June 6 to Sept. 5, 5:30-8 p.m., Riverside Park, La Crosse, www.moontuneslacrosse.com.
NAMI Family Support Group 2nd Mon. of each month, 6:30 p.m., Family and Children's Center, 1707 Main St., La Crosse.
Onalaska Area Business Association 2nd Tues. of each month, noon-1 p.m., La Crosse Country Club, oaba.info.
Onalaska Hilltopper Rotary every Wed. noon-1 p.m., La Crosse Country Club, Onalaska.
Onalaska Rotary every Mon. at 6 p.m., lower level of Blue Moon, Onalaska.
Onalaska Toastmasters Club 1st and 3rd Mon. of each month, noon-1 p.m., Goodwill, La Crosse.
Set Me Free Shop, Saturdays & Sundays, 30 minutes before & after services. First Free Church, 123 Mason St., Onalaska. Also available by appt. 608-782-6022.
Viroqua Toastmasters Club 2nd and 4th Thurs. of each month, 7-8:30 p.m., Vernon Memorial Hospital, Taylor Conf. Rm., Lower Level, Viroqua.
Women Empowering Women (WEW), last Wed. of each month, Schmidty's, noon-1 p.m., Shari Hopkins, 608-784-3904, shopkins@couleebank.net.
Women's Alliance of La Crosse (WAL) 2nd Thurs. of each month, noon, The Waterfront Restaurant, Visit www.womensalliancelacrosse.com for more information.

CALENDAR EVENTS

Aug. 1-4, Back to School Tax Free Weekend Celebration, Valley View Mall, www.myvalleyview.com.
Aug. 2, First Friday Extended Hours, 5-7:30 p.m., Children's Museum of La Crosse.
Aug. 3, Rock 'n the Docks, 3 p.m., Huck Finn's on the Water located on French Island.
Aug. 3, Overture's Rising Stars, 10 a.m.-4 p.m., Viterbo Fine Arts Center.
Aug. 4-Sept. 15, Village of Holmen's Sunday Concerts in the Park, 5-7 p.m. each Sun. evening, free admission, www.holmenwi.com.
Aug. 7 & 14, Music in the Valley, 5:30-7:30 p.m., Norskedalen Nature & Heritage Center, Coon Valley, www.norskedalen.org.
Aug. 8-10, Ashley for the Arts, Arcadia, Wisconsin, www.ashleyforthearts.com.
Aug. 9-11, Irishfest, Southside Oktoberfest Grounds, La Crosse, www.irishfestlacrosse.org.
Aug. 13-15, Rhythm Kids Camp, 9-11:30 a.m., Bebop & Bundles, pre registration required, www.bebopandbundles.com.
Aug. 14, Threshing Bee Dinner, 5:30-7:30 p.m., Norskedalen Nature & Heritage Center, Coon Valley, www.norskedalen.org.

Aug. 16-18, Kornfest, Holmen.
Aug. 16-30, Live on the Cleary Terrace, 6-9 p.m., Fridays, Weber Center for the Performing Arts.
Aug. 20, Coulee Parenting Connection Party in the Park, 5:30-8 p.m., Pettibone Park.
Aug. 23-25, Great River Folk Festival, Riverside Park, La Crosse, www.greatriverfolkfest.org.
Aug. 24, Coon Creek Canoe Race and Festival, 8 a.m.-10 p.m., www.cooncreekcanoerace.com, Coon Valley Veterans Memorial Park.
Aug. 24, French Island Lions Club 19th Annual 5K Run/Walk, 7 a.m. registration, 8 a.m. race, French Island Community Center, La Crosse.
Aug. 24, Viterbo Service Saturday, 10 a.m.-12 p.m., Children's Museum of La Crosse, www.funmuseum.org.
Aug. 25, 29, 31, Apollo Music Festival, 7 p.m. Sat.-Sun., 2 p.m. Thur., Cross of Christ Lutheran Church, Houston.
Sept. 4, SPARK! Cultural Programming for Memory Loss, 10:30 a.m.-12 p.m., 800 Riverview Dr., pre-register at 507-474-6626, sponsored by Winona Health.
Sept. 6, First Friday Extended Hours, 5-7:30 p.m., Children's Museum of La Crosse.
Sept. 6-7, *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*, 7:30 p.m., Toland Theatre, Center for the Arts, UW-La Crosse.
Sept. 6-7, La Crosse Declarations for Donations Blood Drive, 7:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m., La Crosse Center.
Sept. 6-8, Elvis Explosion 2019, 7 p.m. Fri.-Sat., 2:30 Sat., 1 p.m. Sun., La Crosse Center, www.lacrossecenter.com.
Sept. 6-8, Nature, 6 p.m. Fri.-Sat., 2 p.m. Sat.-Sun., Saint Yon's Field, Presented by Saint Mary's University, Winona.
Sept. 6-22, *The Secret Garden*, Thurs.-Sat., 7:30 p.m., Sun. 2 p.m., Lyche Theatre, La Crosse Community Theatre, www.lacrossecommunitytheatre.org.
Sept. 7, Steppin' Out in Pink, 9 a.m.-12:30 p.m., Gundersen Medical Center La Crosse Campus, www.steppinoutinpink.org.
Sept. 8, Twilight Tour & Farm-to-Table Dinner, 5-10:30 p.m., Norskedalen Nature & Heritage Center, Coon Valley, www.norskedalen.org.
Sept. 12, Chicken Que, 11 a.m.-6 p.m., Mary, Mother of the Church Parish, 2006 Weston Street, La Crosse, 608-518-6145 for presale tickets and deliveries.
Sept. 13-14, Vintage and Handmade Market, 11 a.m.-6 p.m. Fri., 9 a.m.-3 p.m. Sat., Coon Valley Village Hall.
Sept. 14, Pop the Trunk Rock Swap, 10 a.m.-3 p.m., Hosted by Coulee Rock Club, Stoddard Village Park.
Sept. 19-22, Applefest, La Crescent, www.applefestusa.com.
Sept. 21, Viterbo Service Saturday, 10 a.m.-12 p.m., Children's Museum of La Crosse, www.funmuseum.org.
Sept. 21-22, Driftless Area Art Festival, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Sat., 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Sun., Beauford T. Anderson Park, Soldiers Grove, www.driftlessareaartfestival.com.
Sept. 23, Paint & Pour Workshop, 7-9:30 p.m., The Pump House, La Crosse, www.thepumphouse.org.
Sept. 26-29, Oktoberfest, Southside Oktoberfest Grounds, La Crosse, www.oktoberfestusa.com.
Sept. 28, YMCA Maple Leaf Walk/Run, 7 a.m. half marathon, 7:15 a.m. 5-mile and 5K walk, Riverside Park, La Crosse, www.laxymca.org.
Sept. 30, Oktoberfest Ladies Day Luncheon, 11 a.m.-1:30 p.m., Cargill Room, The Waterfront, www.oktoberfestusa.com.
Oct. 4-6, Dregne's Anniversary Sale, Dregne's Scandinavian Gifts, Westby.
Oct. 12, Historic Downtown Day, downtown La Crosse.

If your organization would like to be included in our Community Calendar, please contact us at editor@crwmagazine.com or call 608-783-5395.



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