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women

AREA HOME AND HEALTHY LIVING MAGAZINE

OVERCOME



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INSIDE: Coulee Region Living: Parade of Homes

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OVERCOME

11 PROFILE

Overcoming the Stigma of Mental Health

Local therapists share how to approach depression and suicide with empathy and hope.

15 PERSONAL & PROFESSIONAL

Take Life & Live It

Amanda Mish focuses on faith in the future to move past personal tragedy.

17 CAREERS

Motivation Matters

Esther Tierney encourages women and girls to set their sights on STEM careers.

18 FAMILY

Movement Builds More Than Muscles

Briana Harris and KIDSPACE help children overcome sensory and developmental challenges.

21 HOME

A Home Worth the Wait

With patient planning, the Lassen family creates a dream home worthy of the 2021 Parade of Homes People's Choice Award.

24 FOOD

Top Tips for Tomatoes

How to make the most of the abundance in your garden and local markets.

27 COMMUNITY

Harnessing the Power of Workers

Trailblazer Jana Kirch is the eyes, ears and voice for her union members.

28 EDUCATION

Helping Kids Overcome Stress & Anxiety

Holmen Middle School counselor Jen Dienger Hanson offers students unconditional positive regard.

31 NONPROFIT

A Place for Recovery

Women find freedom from addiction at Adult & Teen Challenge of Western Wisconsin.

37 RETAIL THERAPY

The New Business Casual

Here's what to wear back to the office.

Pictured on the cover: From left: Mary Cortesi, Melissa Hellwig and Sheryl Gora-Bollom of The Therapy Place of La Crosse. Photo by Diane Raaum Photo.

In every issue: From the Editor 6 | Women in the Know 8 | Accomplishments 35 | Community Calendar 38



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When our team at *Coulee Region Women* planned out themes a year ago for each issue of 2022, we knew that there would be many different approaches we could take to portray "Overcome." Our community is filled with individuals who have conquered challenges big and small.

But what we may not have anticipated was how our entire community and world would still be looking for a road map to overcoming the continued fallout of the Covid-19 pandemic, divisive political environments and economic challenges on top of the standard array of stressors faced in our health, our relationships and our jobs.

We've learned in the last year that our nation's young people are struggling. Data released by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in March spelled out the situation in stark numbers. According to the data, in 2021, more than a third (37 percent) of high school students reported they experienced poor mental health during the pandemic, and 44 percent reported they persistently felt sad or hopeless during the past year.

Those young people aren't alone in their struggles. The same stressors that increased for adolescents during the pandemic impact

adults as well: isolation, anxiety, economic uncertainty, illness and other health problems. We've also seen both high-profile celebrities like Naomi Judd and loved local figures succumb to mental illness and suicide.

Our response, in this issue, is to provide our readers with two different things:

- Real, concrete steps you can take to help others, or yourself, address mental illness, depression or anxiety.
- Hope, in the stories of individuals who have faced personal tragedy, challenging career paths and more, and come out the other side.

Our cover women, a trio of therapists, say that their patients are brave: they recognize they are struggling and are willing to experience their feelings and be vulnerable. Those patients have taken the first step in overcoming not only their emotional challenges but also the stigma that unfortunately persists in our Midwestern culture, suggesting we should just "suck it up" because someone out there has it worse.

Instead, the women of The Therapy Place in La Crosse want members of our community to know that they can feel better, and they deserve to feel better. It takes all of us to change the societal view of mental health. You can start with the advice offered by Mary Cortesi, Melissa Hellwig and Sheryl Gora-Bollom in our cover story along with school counselor Jen Dienger Hanson's tips for helping young people overcome the challenges that accompany adolescence.

As you read on, you will learn how a yearlong treatment program is helping women overcome addiction, experience the success stories of area women who have pushed forward through personal tragedy and be inspired by women who take on typically male-dominated career paths and bring their own unique talents to the table.

We want you to close this issue not depressed or worried about the challenges we face as individuals or a society, but with a sense of hope and the information you need to keep moving forward. If you or someone you know is struggling, there is hope, and there is help.

Let's all work together to make that hope reality.

Shari

coulee region women

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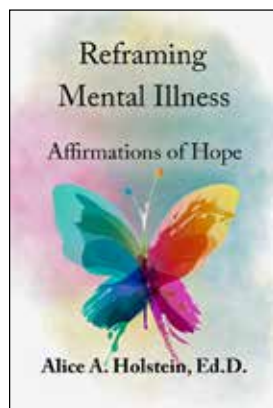
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REFRAMING MENTAL HEALTH

La Crosse's Alice Holstein, Ed. D., has recently released her third book. *Reframing Mental Illness: Affirmations of Hope* was written to fill a gap Holstein saw in available literature for a "coffee table" book of brief mental health content.

What she created is a volume of more than 160 vignettes about the challenges and courage required to deal positively with mental illness. Each entry contains several reflection questions to promote reader insight in how reframing mental illness allows it to be seen differently. The reader is encouraged to consider these over time, journaling or exploring other reflective methods to uncover healing insights. It is intended to bring support and life-giving wisdom to both those struggling with mental illness and those supporting them.

Holstein, a former U.S. Air Force Intelligence Officer who also developed a 25-year career as an organization development consultant, understands her subject from inside, having used her own experiences with bipolar disorder as guidance for both this book and her earlier books, *A Tough Grace: Mental Illness as a Spiritual Path* (2011) and *Beyond Turmoil: A Guide Through Deep Personal Change* (1992).

Holstein's book is available in paperback or Kindle format from Amazon.



RAISING SUICIDE AWARENESS

For more than 10 years, the La Crosse Suicide Prevention Initiative has hosted an annual awareness event and summit. This year's public event will be 6-7:30 p.m. Wednesday, Sept. 21, at Riverside Park, with the summit following the next day at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse. Learn more at www.lacrossesuicideprevention.org.

Mary Cortesi, MSW, LCSW, with The Therapy Place of La Crosse, will speak at the public event, which will also include music from her husband, Dan Sebranek. She says it is a chance for everyone to learn and seek hope.

"The realization is that we all have someone in our life who has struggled," she says. "We've all struggled."



STEPPIN' OUT IN PINK

Gundersen Medical Foundation

STEPPIN' OUT AT RIVERSIDE PARK

Steppin' Out in Pink, the community's landmark fundraising event to support breast cancer research and patient support programs, has a new location for 2022. This year's 4.5-mile walk and surrounding events will be hosted Sept. 10 at Riverside Park. The walk route will include trails on both sides of the La Crosse River, while the park will host a vendor market including a wide range of booths featuring area businesses, organizations and artisans.

Registration for the walk is \$25/person through Sept. 5 and \$30/person Sept. 6-10. Participants who raise at least \$100 in donations for the event will receive special gifts and gratitude.

The event's goal for 2022 is \$300,000. More information is available at www.steppinoutinpink.org.



SANDBAR STORIES

All ages will hear engaging stories that celebrate and preserve the power of varied cultural traditions and human experiences during the Sandbar Storytelling Festival (www.sandbarstorytellingfestival.org) Oct. 14 and 15 in Winona. The event features storytellers who share everything from tall tales to Hawaiian legends, stories of growing up in a river town and the history of American roots music. Most performances will be at Saint Mary's University in the Page Theater; others will be presented in the gazebo or other locations in Winona.

Two-day passes are \$120. Individual day passes (\$50 for Friday and \$80 for Saturday) will be available, beginning in September. Individual tickets for the storytelling sessions are \$15 and will be sold at the door prior to each event. Pay-as-you-can tickets, courtesy of WNB Financial, will be available at the door as well. A special performance for the whole family is also in the planning stages. Information about this event will be announced later in July, with tickets going on sale Aug. 1.

The WNB Financial-sponsored child care is offered Friday 2-5 p.m., Saturday 10 a.m. to noon and Saturday 1-5 p.m. Parents with passes can bring their children (ages 3 to 8) to participate in age-appropriate activities in the university's Studio Theatre.

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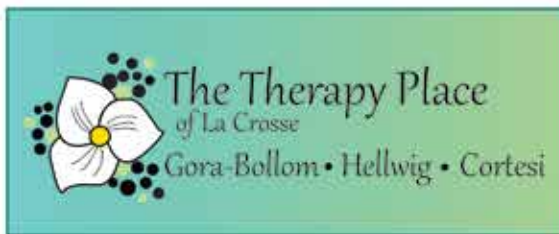
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Left-Right: Sheryl Gora-Bollom, MS, LCSW;
Melissa Hellwig, MS, LPC; Mary Cortesi, MSW, LCSW

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OVERCOMING THE STIGMA OF MENTAL HEALTH

Local therapists share how to approach depression and suicide with empathy and hope.

BY SHARI HEGLAND | PHOTOS BY DIANE RAAUM PHOTO

Every day, the counselors at The Therapy Place of La Crosse encounter individuals who are suffering, in pain, in need of care to help them navigate some aspect of their life, emotions and well-being. But it is those individuals that give Mary Cortesi, Melissa Hellwig and Sheryl Gora-Bollom hope.



Mary Cortesi, MSW, LCSW, owner & psycho-therapist at The Therapy Place of La Crosse

“People who come to see us are really brave,” Cortesi says. “Experiencing your feelings and being vulnerable is not a weakness.”

Instead, these patients have overcome the fear or stigma of seeking mental health care.

But therapists still worry about those individuals who fail to seek care in time, or for whom it fails. Our nation and La Crosse County are both experiencing an increase in suicide rates as we all—as communities and as individuals—continue to experience the fallout of the Covid-19 pandemic and its aftershocks.

BY THE NUMBERS

In 2021 alone, 25 people died by suicide in La Crosse County; in the nation, the number was 45,855 in 2020, the last year with complete results available from the Centers for Disease Control. In 2019, more than 47,500 people died by suicide in the United States, more than twice the number of homicides (19,141). Suicide is the tenth leading cause of death in the country.

RISK FACTORS

“Suicidality is multi-factorial,” Hellwig says, and can often be traced to a combination or accumulation of risk factors:

- History of mental illness, especially untreated
- Substance abuse
- Experience of trauma or violence
- Financial difficulty
- Health stressors
- Feeling like a burden to others
- Past suicide attempts

HOW TO GET HELP:

Call: 1-800-273-TALK (8255)—National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
Call: 211—Great Rivers 211 (crisis line and referral service for mental health and for other services, including food and housing assistance, financial counseling and more)
Call or text: 988—new three-digit connection to the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
Online chat: www.988lifeline.org
Online chat: www.greatrivers211.org—8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Mon-Fri

"It can be the result of the overwhelm and eventual inability to manage those stressors as they pile up," Hellwig says.

RED FLAGS (AND THEIR LIMITATIONS)

Therapists say that while there may be signs an individual is considering suicide, the typical lists of red flags have limitations.



Sheryl Gora-Bollom, MSW, LCSW, owner & psychotherapist at The Therapy Place of La Crosse

"There aren't always red flags" or opportunities to see them, says Gora-Bollom, especially among adults who may be more isolated than teens with fewer people "watching" them. And many people become skilled at masking their emotions.

ACCESSING CARE AND FINDING THE RIGHT FIT

There are many options for accessing mental health care in the Coulee Region, including both private practices and therapists within area healthcare systems, most offering both in-person and virtual appointments. Some therapists have specialties or different approaches.

Mary Cortesi says therapy isn't a quick fix—it can take time to find the right fit and to feel comfortable enough with that person to really get to the bottom of what is causing distress.

"If it wasn't the right fit with one therapist, don't just quit," she says, saying that it may help to try working with a different person. "It's important to be patient. Sometimes you won't see immediate changes—that doesn't mean it isn't helping."

She and her partners say that patients shouldn't be afraid or ashamed of wanting to address feelings that are getting in the way of life.

"Our world has experienced a great deal of change in a short time period. We all experience stress at some point, and it's OK to reach out and ask for help," she says. "We could all use some compassion, understanding and hope."



While it may be common to link suicide with young people, most completed suicides are among adult males. In La Crosse County in 2021, only two of those who died by suicide were under the age of 20; half were men over the age of 40.

"Suicide does not discriminate against

young or old, or race or gender," says Cortesi, though there are points in life that increase the risk. Post-partum women, Hellwig points out, have an 11-15 percent risk of depression and suicide; that risk is two to three times greater for Black and Hispanic



Melissa Hellwig, MS, LPC, PMH-C, owner & psychotherapist at The Therapy Place of La Crosse

women. Other populations with higher incidence of suicide include veterans and LGBTQ individuals.

Changes that could be warning signs of an impending suicide attempt include:

- Increased substance use
- Aggression, agitation or mood swings
- Withdrawal
- Impulsive behavior
- Risk taking
- Tying up loose ends or giving away possessions

RELATIONSHIPS BUILD RECOGNITION

The most important factor, therapists say, in recognizing red flags in those around us is something that has been challenged during the pandemic: having close relationships.

Knowing someone well can help you better see and understand their actions—while giving away possessions may be a red

flag for a teen, it could be a simple matter of downsizing for a recent empty-nester. Or not. Is it outside of the norm for the individual?

"One person's sign is another person's typical behavior," Gora-Bollom says.

But when you do see something that seems concerning in a friend or loved one, the therapists say it is always better to reach out and ask how they are doing.

"We don't want to err on the side of not questioning," Hellwig says. "Be willing to say, 'You don't seem like yourself lately.'"

EMPATHIZE, DON'T MINIMIZE

While it can be tempting to try get someone who is feeling down to "cheer up," that approach isn't helpful. Don't tell someone that "it isn't that bad," "tomorrow will be better" or they have no reason to be depressed.

"Platitudes can actually be harmful," Hellwig says. Think about whether what you are saying is just to make you feel better, or if it is actually helpful to the other person. "Empathy is never the wrong answer."

Validate how the other person is feeling. You can say "It must be hard to feel that way."

"You don't have to understand (why they are depressed), you just have to accept it," says Gora-Bollom. The other person may not even be able to express why they are struggling, but that doesn't make it less real.

"We sometimes get stuck in the 'why.' That can prevent you from figuring out a plan," says Hellwig.

HELP THEM FIND HOPE

Someone struggling with depression or suicidal ideation often needs help finding the right steps to move forward. This is where the idea of figuring out a plan comes in. Don't just say, "Oh, you'll be

fine.” Instead, help the person access care through their primary care physician, a counselor or a crisis support line.

Be hopeful and tell them this can be figured out. One script the therapists suggest is “This seems overwhelming to you—can I help you figure it out?”

“Acknowledge that it feels like this, but we can work to make it get better,” Cortesi says.

All three women point out that mental health treatments—both therapy and pharmaceutical—are continually evolving and improving. That means there are many options, but it can be a trial-and-error process to find what works for each individual.

If the other person isn’t ready to seek help, keep encouraging them, give them the number to call and check back in with them. “It is important to maintain that relationship,” Gora-Bollom says.

SEEING YOURSELF

Just as we should be aware of changes in those around us, it is also important to be aware of when seeking mental health care is right for ourselves. Being stressed or down on occasion is part of life, but there is a tipping point.

“Ask yourself: How much does it get in the way of how you eat, how you sleep, your work?” Cortesi says. “Is this exhausting me?” If your mental state is negatively impacting daily activities to a point of not functioning effectively, it’s time to do something.

“We have this silly idea in the Midwest that we have to persevere and suffer,” Hellwig says. Instead, tell yourself that you deserve to feel better. And just because someone else “has it worse” does not negate what you are feeling.

The other reality, particularly for caregivers, is that the time to seek help is before you cease to be able to function, especially now when accessing a therapist can require a wait of a few weeks to get an appointment.

“Giving yourself permission to take a break and get help makes you a better caregiver,” Cortesi says.

ADDRESSING COMMUNITY AND INSTITUTIONAL STIGMA

Reducing suicide and other impacts of mental illness relies not only on individuals, but also communitywide actions.

Cortesi, Hellwig and Gora-Bollom say that can mean developing plans for law enforcement and other responders to address mental health, along with encouraging referrals to or by clergy and other trusted individuals. It includes continuing growth of referral services in Employee Assistance Plans offered by workplaces, and ensuring employees understand what is available.

It can even be as seemingly simple as the screening questions local health care facilities have implemented and use in nearly all appointments now, which ask questions about patients’ current mental state.

“The more we hear (discussions of mental health), the more we see it as normal,” Gora-Bollom says.

“Depression is an illness,” she says. As with other illnesses, overcoming it starts with seeking treatment. That is where there is hope. **CRW**

Shari Hegland of Holmen is the editor of Coulee Region Women magazine.





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Amanda Mish keeps her focus on moving forward for herself and her daughter, Maria.

Take Life & Live It

Amanda Mish focuses on faith in the future to move past personal tragedy.

BY ANASTASIA PENCHI | CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

Amanda Mish has advice for anyone facing tough circumstances: Have faith.

That's what she had to focus on after her husband died by suicide in November 2019. She reminded herself to have faith as she dealt with financial challenges like being sued and being thrust into the role of a single mother.

Not to mention living through a pandemic without her husband's support.

KEEP PUSHING FORWARD

"Dan was my entire world, and it was like—now what?" she says. "You can't dwell on it—you have to keep pushing yourself forward."

Sometimes Mish told herself that her husband had seen the strength within her that she hadn't. She would repeat that message that she's a strong woman who can overcome any challenges. She'd tell herself there were always others who were worse off.

"It just made me focus more on what's important," Mish says. "You just can't let it stop you from living life."

PURSUING CREATIVITY, FINDING HERSELF

Born in the Black River Falls area, Mish, 37, grew up in various cities around the Coulee Region. She graduated from Western Technical College with an associate's degree in interior design about the time she gave birth to her daughter, who is now 16.

Inspired as a child by her mother, Elaina, who loved to rearrange furniture, as well as by television shows on HGTV, Mish found herself most attracted to fields that allowed her to be creative. She's worked full-time and part-time as a floral arranger throughout the years. She



Amanda Mish

"It's having faith in the idea that you are able to overcome this."

—Amanda Mish

also worked in the personal care and beauty product industry, helping customers match makeup to their style and personality.

Her most recent position, which she pursued after Dan's death, involves working in cabinet design and sales for Badger Corrugating Co. in La Crosse since November 2021.

"I had to find out who Amanda Mish is," she says. "I feel like for myself, I always want to learn new things."

FINDING SILVER LININGS

Believing in miracles helps, too. Before Dan died, Mish considered herself a "negative Nancy." Left with all his debt, as well as their joint debt, she found herself initially overwhelmed. But Dan's family, his employer and his connection to others around the world as a fragrance reviewer on YouTube resulted in debts paid and helped give her a debt-free start to her next phase.

Even a more recent financial loss due to a scam involving a \$500 therapy dog she wanted for her daughter won't bring her down.

Instead, she focuses on what she can give to others. She currently volunteers through First Free Church, sharing life lessons and helping others with financial planning. Take life and live it, she added, even as she notes that the day after this interview would have been her 11th wedding anniversary.

"It's having faith in the idea that you are able to overcome this," she says. "You can't dwell on it—you have to keep pushing yourself forward." **CRW**

Anastasia Penchi was left totally inspired by Amanda's strength and couldn't wait to write her story. She can be reached at callmeloislane@hotmail.com.



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Members of the Boys and Girls Clubs of La Crosse explored STEM career opportunities this summer at J.F. Brennan Company in La Crosse, a program that Esther Tierney says is a powerful way of expanding the ranks of women in the field. Photos courtesy of Austin Lysaker, J.F. Brennan Company.

MOTIVATION MATTERS

Esther Tierney encourages women and girls to set their sights on STEM careers.

BY MARTHA KEEFFE | CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

For women considering a career in the area of science, technology, engineering or mathematics (STEM), a world of opportunity is waiting. Though men populate the majority of STEM jobs, women continue to join the ranks of their male colleagues in professions like engineering, medicine and software, and as more women earn degrees in these fields, the trend doesn't show any signs of slowing down. Local women in these roles assert that, with motivation and hard work, a woman with a genuine interest in a STEM discipline can find a rewarding career almost anywhere. "Technology and STEM are especially exciting fields right now," says Esther Tierney, marketing engineer at Trane Technologies in La Crosse. "Today there are more resources than ever to help a woman be successful in these fields."



Esther Tierney,
Trane Technologies

GROWING THE RANKS

"When I arrived at Trane, I was so impressed with how many intelligent, driven and successful women were employed in such a variety of roles," says Tierney, who applauds the efforts many companies put into making their industries more attractive to young people and women. For instance, industry programs that partner with groups such as the Boys and Girls Club and the Engineering Explorer program with the Gateway Area Council of Boy Scouts of America help to promote STEM awareness to local school kids, and diversity initiatives have encouraged women to consider industries once thought closed to them.

Tierney, who does not have degrees traditionally associated with STEM, notes that employers are often willing to help advance

the careers of those who are driven to succeed. For Tierney, it was through luck that she fell into HVAC (heating, ventilation and air conditioning), took an interest in the field and, while working in the industry, gained the engineering experience that she parlayed into the job she has now. "The variety in my role is what makes it interesting," says Tierney, who mixes her knowledge of HVAC with elements of customer service and direct interaction with people. "We (my team) do a lot of computer communication via email and phone support, of course, but we also might be hosting customers from all over the world at our factory right on Losey Boulevard to watch equipment run, taking people on tours and conducting presentations for training purposes."

GAINING CONFIDENCE

Tierney acknowledges that while the HVAC industry can be very male dominated—especially on the sales side—there have been many male colleagues and mentors who have shown her support over the course of her career. "I have been the only woman in the room at times, and that could be intimidating, especially when I was young," says Tierney. "But as my knowledge of the HVAC industry grew, so did my confidence. At the end of the day, people trying to do a good job care if you know your material, if you can help them and how quickly you can get back to them—they aren't even thinking about if you are a man or a woman." **CRW**

Martha Keefe lives in La Crosse and enjoys sharing stories of successful women.

MOVEMENT BUILDS MORE THAN MUSCLES

Briana Harris and KIDSPACE help children overcome sensory and developmental challenges.

BY JULIE NELSON | CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS



Swings, a climbing wall and rope, slime and more provide a way for kids to overcome developmental challenges through therapy that feels more like play at KIDSPACE in La Crosse.

Kids are so gullible. They think swinging on swings, climbing on jungle gyms and sliding down the slides is merely fun, when what's really happening is movement that improves their emotional regulation and is critical to their development.



Briana M. Harris, OTD, OTR/L is a registered and licensed pediatric occupational therapist and owner of KIDSPACE in La Crosse.

Play and movement are exactly what Briana Harris, an occupational therapist and the owner of KIDSPACE, uses to help kids overcome behavioral challenges.

Harris grew up in the Coulee Region and, after earning degrees in Miami, Florida, and Los Angeles, returned to her roots. With the help of her parents, Harris opened KIDSPACE in downtown La Crosse in early January.

PURPOSEFUL, FUNCTIONAL PLAY

Playing, at KIDSPACE, is another word for therapy. "I try to let the child take the lead. So often

kids feel as though they have no control in their life, and allowing them to choose what toy or what activity they'd like to try helps them feel more confident." The play is "purposeful and functional," says Harris, and is designed to help regulate sensory processing issues. An example of this is the rope climb Harris constructed in the middle of the room. Climbing up the rope requires feet to sense where they are on the wall, hips to keep the body evenly balanced and hands and arms to grab and pull on the rope at the right moment. Climbing stimulates proprioception, or a sense of body awareness, and vestibular sense, which involves movement, balance and coordination.

When sensory processing is working correctly, kids are better able to deal with changing situations, busy places such as grocery stores where lots of sights and sounds are happening at once and clothes that may feel itchy, no matter how many tags have been removed. As an adult, you may find going for a walk helps you think through a situation that has left you angry or frustrated.

Most of the clients who come to KIDSPACE are on the autism spectrum or have anxiety, ADHD or another condition that causes a disruption to daily activities such as toileting, eating, sleeping and playing. Harris offers both individual therapy sessions and play groups of three or four kids that help develop social skills along with the sensory training. Parents are always encouraged to stay and learn what works so they can play with their kids in a similar fashion at home.

EVERYDAY ACTIVITIES BUILD SKILLS

Harris says kids of all abilities benefit from play, and she offers these suggestions for parents and grandparents:

- When it's safe, let your kids climb up the slide. It involves a lot of core engagement.
- Give your kids spray bottles to water the plants, wash the house or draw on the sidewalk. This involves eye-hand coordination and shoulder support.
- Use water, mud or sand to encourage scooping and pouring, which requires coordination and depth perception.

And finally, even when you're busy, set aside 15 minutes a day where you simply focus on your child and let them lead you in a bit of playtime. The one-on-one attention makes your child feel safe, loved and confident enough to play on their own later.

Who knew therapy could be so much fun? **CRW**

Julie Nelson is the Community School Coordinator at Northside Elementary. She is now wondering if they could put a climbing rope in each classroom.



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It's time for the 2022 La Crosse Area Builders Association (LABA) Parade of Homes!

Online and in-person, this annual show gives you the chance to tour the most

exclusive homes in our area and meet the LABA members—from builders and designers to subcontractors and finance experts—who are making them happen.

You'll be inspired by dream kitchens, open concepts and outdoor living. Whether you're looking to build, buy or just find inspiration, you will find just what you're looking for in this person-to-person new home experience.

If you're ready to design the home of your dreams, the Parade of Homes gives you the opportunity to speak directly with the builders and see their work and craftsmanship firsthand. These LABA members are your local experts, bringing great talent and solid reputations to this event.

We are excited for people to have the opportunity to explore our Parade of Homes in-person or with the online virtual tours. This year's Parade of Homes features seven homes in the area and one online that you can visit August 18-21. All of the homes will be featured in their own virtual gallery starting September 16 at www.labaparadeofhomes.com.

Don't forget to cast your vote for the People's Choice Award. Rate each home you visit based on your opinion of its curb appeal, kitchen and bath, interior design, landscaping and craftsmanship. The winning home will be featured on the front cover of next year's Parade of Homes edition of Coulee Region Living magazine.

I would like to give a special thank-you to the LABA Parade of Homes committee, LABA staff, participating builders and designers for all their hard work organizing this year's Parade of Homes.

We thank you for continuing to make the Parade of Homes a wonderful community event!

*Lois Becker, Midwest TV & Appliance
 2022 Parade of Homes Committee Chair*

Parade of Homes®, August 2022

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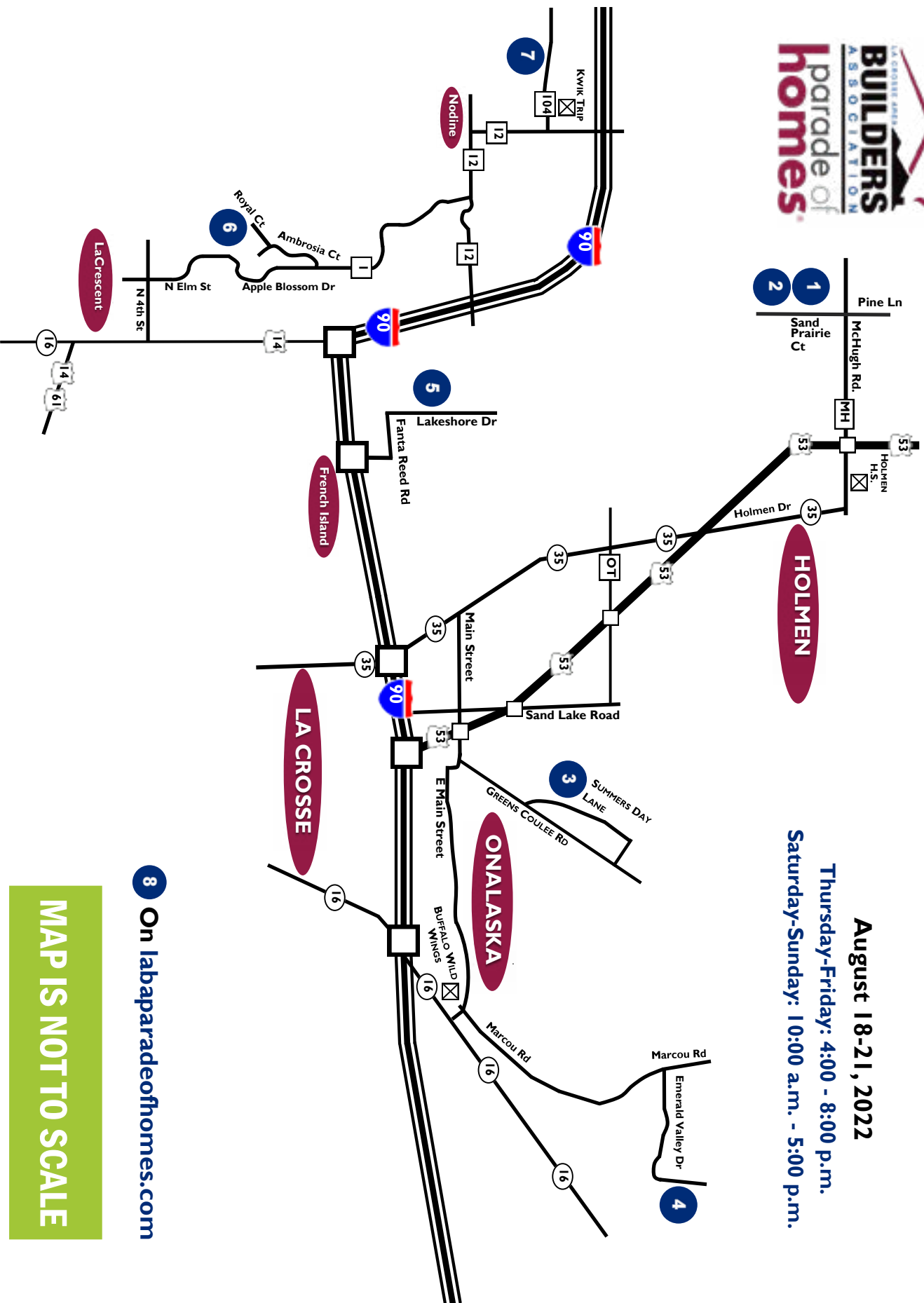
PARADE OF HOMES MAP 2022



August 18-21, 2022

Thursday-Friday: 4:00 - 8:00 p.m.

Saturday-Sunday: 10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.



8 On labaparadeofhomes.com

MAP IS NOT TO SCALE



LISTINGS 2022

#	Builder	Phone	Address	Subdivision	Beds	Baths	Sq. Ft.
1	Jon Olson Construction, Inc.	608-781-5428	N6811 Sand Prairie Ct., Holmen	Wildflower Terrace	5	3	3,190
2	Town & Country Homes LLC	608-792-2077	N6793 Sand Prairie Ct., Holmen	Wildflower Terrace	4	3.5	3,442
3	Kjell Hatlevig Construction LLC	608-385-7738	857 Summers Day Ln., Onalaska	Walnut Grove	4	3.5	3,320
4	Coleman Custom Homes	507-259-4931	3388 Emerald Valley Dr., Onalaska	Emerald Valley	4	3.5	4,301
5	Sader Construction	608-526-6372	3309 Lakeshore Dr., La Crosse	French Island	4	3.5	3,215
6	Coleman Custom Homes	507-259-4931	621 Royal Ct., La Crescent, MN	Apple Blossom Pointe	4	3	4,963
7	Lautz Lassig Custom Builders, Inc.	608-786-2535	41245 County Rd. 104, Dakota, MN		6	3.5	5,000

As you tour, please remember that families live in these Parade Homes

Virtual Tour Only (available to view online starting August 18)

A	MasterCraft Homes Inc.	608-781-7200	labaparadeofhomes.com	Forest View Estates	5	3	3,628
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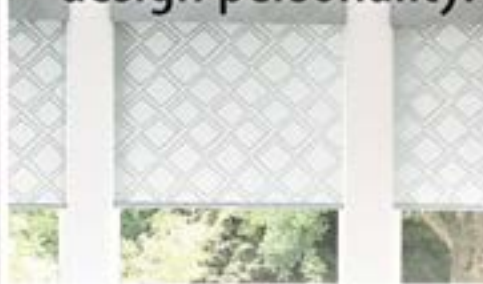
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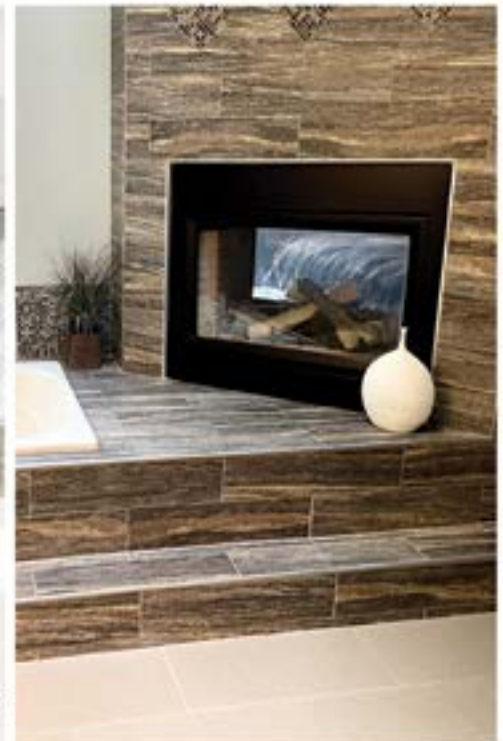
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LABA MEMBER SINCE 1990

This five-bedroom prairie-style home with a finished lower level has a beautiful covered patio with a stamped concrete floor. Highlights include LP SmartSide exterior siding, Thermo-Tech windows and poplar interior trim and doors. The home includes a large three-car insulated garage. Features in the kitchen include a walk-in pantry, large island and quartz countertops. The master suite is crowned with a tray ceiling and a tiled walk-in shower. All Jon Olson Construction homes are guaranteed energy efficient and independently tested through the Focus on Energy program.

LABA members used: Absolute Comfort Heating & A/C, LLC; Advanced Seamless, Inc.; Altra Federal Credit Union; Beaver Builders' Supply; Builders Flooring; Gerhards Kitchen & Bath Showroom; JBrooke Garage Doors; Midwest TV & Appliance; Sherwin-Williams



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LABA MEMBER SINCE 2015

This modern farmhouse-inspired home offers 3,442 square feet of comprising a main floor, split three-bedroom layout, three-and-a-half baths, a four-plus car garage and a walkout basement, all situated on a .90-acre lot in Holmen's Wildflower Terrace subdivision. The welcoming front porch with contrasting black windows and front door provides old-world farmhouse charm. Inside, double sliding barn doors open to a home office/study. The main living area of the home features south-facing windows offering natural light and an amazing view of the Mississippi River valley bluff line. A brick-tile-clad fireplace with adjacent built-in cabinets highlights the open-concept area, which also features a beautiful kitchen with quartz countertops, an 8-foot island with integrated farm sink and a dual-fuel range with a decorative range hood. A sliding barn door leads you into the brightly lit master bath with a tiled walk-in shower, a sleek soaking tub and double sink vanity.

A special thank-you to homeowners Buck and Dani, the team at Beaver Builders Supply and the developer of this subdivision, Greg Stellrecht, whom we lost last year. Greg meant a great deal to me as a former boss, friend and mentor—the person who gave me my first opportunity in the building industry, and for that I am forever grateful.

LABA members used: ACT Concrete, Inc.; Advanced Seamless, Inc.; Beaver Builders' Supply; Carpets to Go; E & B Insulation; Gerhards Kitchen & Bath Showroom; Hilltopper Refuse & Recycling; La Crosse Fireplace Company; Midwest TV & Appliance; Outdoor Services, Inc. (OSI); Overhead Door Company of the 7 Rivers Region, Inc.; Rybold Excavating & Plumbing Inc.; Sherwin-Williams



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This modern prairie-style house features wood accents and multiple LP colors. The house is built into the hillside, providing a walkout second level and offering a beautiful view through the valley. The first level features a grand entrance and an open staircase with a custom-built shoe and coat rack underneath so no space is wasted. With 10-foot ceilings throughout, the first level also has a vaulted ceiling in the living room, 9-inch-wide plank white oak flooring, a Deckton fireplace and a workout room tucked in the back. A future entertainment room is designed with 10-foot ceilings and a custom-built corner pocket door to hide it from the entrance. A screened room off the living room and master bedroom is designed for privacy and bug-free relaxation. Seven species of wood are incorporated throughout the house, and radiant heat throughout the entire basement and acid-stain concrete on the main level makes the floor feel comfortable year-round. The location is terrific—minutes away from the city and blocks away from the golf course.

LABA members used: Altra Federal Credit Union; Arcade Portables LLC; Balduzzi Lumber Co., Inc.; Carpets To Go; Gerhards Kitchen & Bath Showroom; HDAV; The Insurance Center; Karl's TV & Appliance, Inc.; Knight Barry Title United LLC; La Crosse Fireplace Company; MJG Excavating, Inc.; Outdoor Services, Inc. (OSI); Schneider Heating & Air Conditioning; Sherwin-Williams; Stetter Electric; Techno Metal Post

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LABA MEMBER SINCE 2019

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LABA members used: Balduzzi Lumber Co., Inc.; Beaver Builders' Supply, Inc.; Builders Flooring; Gerhards Kitchen & Bath Showroom; Glass Interiors of La Crosse; Karl's TV & Appliance; La Crosse Fireplace Company; Sherwin-Williams; Xcel Energy, Inc.; Wisconsin Building Supply, Inc.



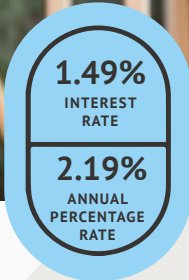
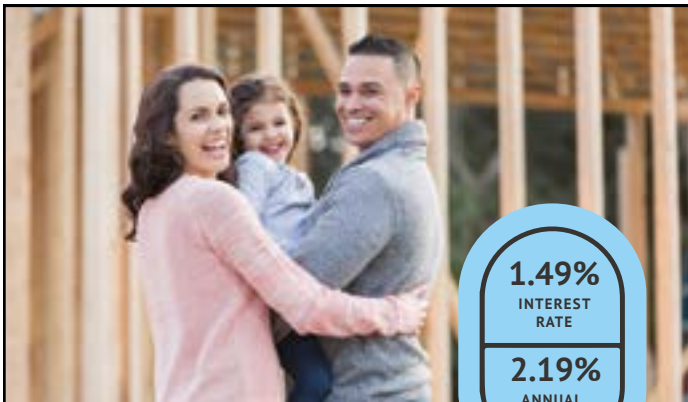
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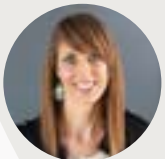


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This custom home features an open concept kitchen, dining and great room area. The kitchen features custom cabinets, a large island with quartz countertops, a large farm sink, tile backsplash and lots of lighting. The great room features a vaulted ceiling and a custom-built entertainment center with an electric fireplace and floating shelves. Just off the great room is a powder room and a flex room with potential for a home office or guest bedroom. Down the hall from the kitchen is a walk-in pantry with custom cabinets. The master suite finishes the main level with a walk-in closet and a spacious bath with two-sink vanity and tile shower.

An open stairway leads to the family room with full-size windows, a bedroom with a walk-in closet and full bath and two more bedrooms with a shared full bath. The composite deck on the back of the house leads down to a 15-foot circle concrete patio for entertaining guests around a fire pit.

Sader Construction would like to thank all our subcontractors and suppliers and extend a special thank-you to Megan and Jason for trusting us to build their dream home and share it with you.

LABA members used: Builders Flooring; Clear Choice Energy Solutions; Elegant Stone Products; Gerhards Kitchen & Bath Showroom; Impact Drywall; The Marble Shop; Overhead Door Company of the 7 Rivers Region, Inc.; Rugroden Drafting & Design; Schneider Heating & Air Conditioning; Sherwin-Williams; Stetter Electric; Wisconsin Building Supply, Inc.



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LABA MEMBER SINCE 2019



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Breathtaking views! This big four-bedroom, three-bathroom home has a zero-entry three-car garage with a one-car oversized garage. The cedar post-and-beam entry with stone is very inviting. Garage-to-basement steps give easy access to storage in the basement. The very open kitchen/dining room/living room area has a stone fireplace with cabinets and a vaulted ceiling that goes right out the 16-by-8-foot double patio doors onto the partially covered deck. It's hard not to notice the awesome views of La Crescent and the Mississippi from here. The deck has a glass railing (that you can light up at night), so the view isn't spoiled. On the main level, you will also find a study/library, a large laundry room with cabinets and easy access to a pantry with a desk area. In the large master bedroom/bathroom area there is a walk-in closet, soaker tub and steam shower. On the lower level, you will find a big family room, second kitchen/bar, office and plenty of storage.

LABA members used: Altra Federal Credit Union; Balduzzi Lumber Co., Inc.; Badger Corrugating Co.; Builder's Flooring; Gerhards Kitchen & Bath Showroom; Glass Interiors of La Crosse; Home Depot; La Crosse Fireplace Company; Menards; Overhead Door Company of the 7 Rivers Region, Inc.; Select Spray Foam; Sherwin-Williams; Wesco Home Furnishings; Xcel Energy, Inc.

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Set on 40 acres of woods and fields is this modern bent ranch home. The first floor features four bedrooms, two-and-a-half baths, a dinette with accent beams on the ceiling, a great room with tray ceilings, a large pantry, a beautiful kitchen and access to a covered deck. The master suite has its own bathroom with a free-standing tub, a walk-in shower and a large walk-in closet. The front has stone accents and columns that complement the LP SmartSide siding. The garage is large enough to hold six cars. The basement holds two additional bedrooms, a full bath, a future family room, a future rec room and a future exercise room.

LABA members used: ACT Concrete, Inc.; Altra Federal Credit Union; Bagniefski Heating & Air Conditioning; Carpet One of La Crosse; Elite Electrical Solutions LLC; First American Roofing & Siding, Inc.; Green Built Insulation LLC; Impact Drywall; Knight Barry Title United LLC; La Crosse Fireplace Company; Midwest TV & Appliance; Overhead Door Company; Pons Countertops LLC; Premier Seamless; Prime 1 Painting and More; Rugroden Drafting & Design; Rybold Excavating & Plumbing Inc.; Wisconsin Building Supply, Inc.



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LABA MEMBER SINCE 1986

This ranch-style home is located in the Forest View subdivision in Holmen. Warm gray tones and white trim and doors keep this home bright, while the pops of dark cabinetry and built-ins sprinkled throughout create a nice contrast. The open-concept living allows for plenty of space to entertain friends and family. Just off the living room is a spacious four-season sunroom with vaulted ceilings and lots of windows. The master bedroom includes a walk-in closet with custom shelving and ensuite bath. Two bedrooms, a bathroom and a laundry room complete the main level.

Downstairs feels just as open as the main level with 9-foot ceilings and big windows. A mini bar and large family room are perfect for family movie nights. Two more bedrooms, an office and a full bath complete the lower level.

LABA members used: ACT Concrete; Advanced Seamless, Inc.; Arcade Portables LLC; Bond Drywall Supply, Inc.; Decker Design; Glass Interiors of La Crosse; Hilltopper Refuse & Recycle; Karl's TV & Appliance, Inc.; Lifetime Insulation; MJG Excavating, Inc.; Outdoor Services, Inc. (OSI); Overhead Door Company of the 7 Rivers Region, Inc.; Schneider Heating & Air Conditioning; Stetter Electric; Windows by Pella, Inc.; Wisconsin Building Supply, Inc.; Xcel Energy, Inc.



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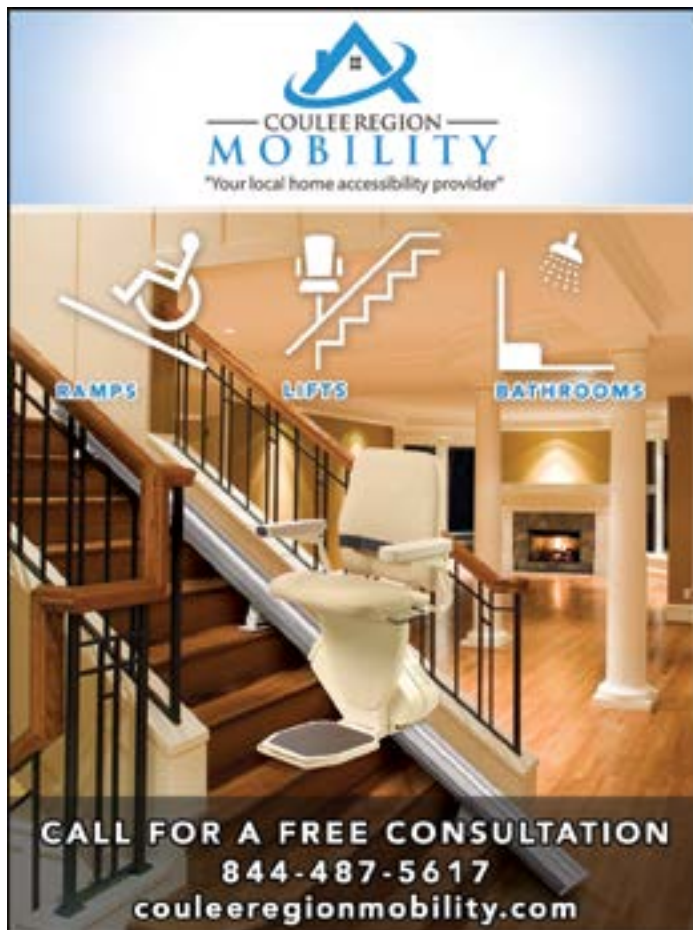
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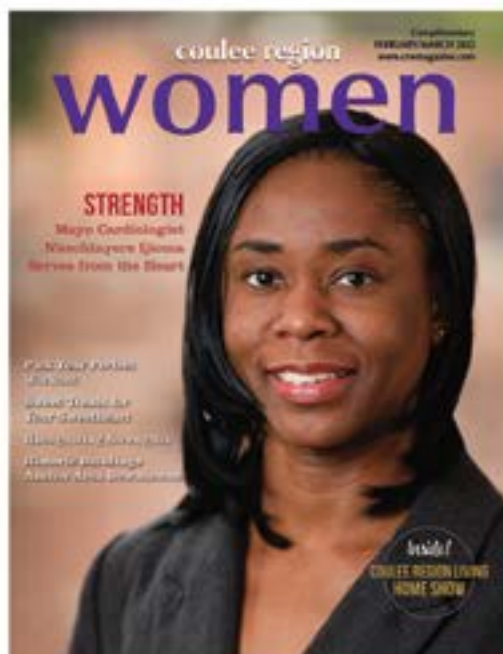


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A HOME WORTH THE WAIT

With patient planning, the Lassen family creates a dream home worthy of the 2021 Parade of Homes People's Choice Award.

BY HEIDI GRIMINGER BLANKE | PHOTOS BY HAZEL MEDIA

Jason and Gayle Lassen are the ultimate long-range planners. Their West Salem home took one year for Ed Haupt and Lifetime Design Homes to build, but 11 years to design and shape. With meticulous research, a focus on sustainability and the wherewithal to wait for the right lot, the Lassens constructed their dream home, complete with family shoe cabinets, a breathtaking backyard view and state-of-the-art technology.

LOOKING OUT OVER THE LAKE

The Lassen house sits at the curve of a U-shaped road in a neighborhood where the trees are still small, though one can imagine them as stately giants and the sidewalks busy with a second generation playing there. Even from the curb, the house generates a sense of calm. “We drove through the area, and we knew this was the kind of place we wanted to be,” Gayle explains.

The lot backs onto Lake Neshonoc. “We have a retreat in the backyard,” she says, “then the front of the house is still in a neighborhood.”

From the minute the front door is opened, the sight of the lake fills the view via the great room wall of windows. While they don't own a boat, family members enjoy swimming, kayaking and especially playing hockey, all accessible from the dock below the house. Sons Abram, 13, and Oliver, 11, are big fans of it all.

One of the priorities for the Lassens was that the house be built as sustainably as possible, including securing local materials and talent. “It would have been much easier if we had found a place online to ship us whatever it is,” says Jason. He mentioned that, at times, the cost may have been slightly more, but it was a price he and Gayle were willing to pay to support their environment and their community.

The house is dressed, inside and out, in soothing neutrals—whites, creams, grays and browns. Clutter is minimal, ceilings are high and large windows blur the boundary between inside and out. Nowhere is this more evident than the back deck. Its near-invisible screens slide up into the headers with the press of a button, perfect for bug-free days of the year.



Jason and Gayle Lassen have created their dream home through patience and persistence. It features calming colors, such as the grays and browns in the kitchen (above) as well as personalized touches. Those special elements include the customized shoe cabinets that were inspired by a magazine photo (top right) and the New Glarus on tap in the basement kitchen/bar area (bottom right).

PATIENCE PAYS OFF

Gayle repeatedly emphasizes Jason's patience; he put hours into reading, research and conversations, which he terms "mutual education," to find the perfect materials and building methods. For example, theirs is the first Tesla Solar Roof in the area, helping them reduce energy costs and dependence on fossil fuels.

However, Gayle's patience is just as evident; she made interior decorating purchases long before plans were complete.

"We bought things, and we filled up two storage units," says Jason. It allowed them to take advantage of sales and to store special finds.

Every detail was thought out, from a pantry that gives easy access to frequently used small appliances to a charging cabinet for electronic devices to how and where laundry would be done. They planned for how the house could grow with them and their sons, quite an accomplishment considering the boys were toddlers when the process began.

"There's a story behind everything. It's our dream house, and we wanted it to be meaningful," Gayle says.

As they imagined their lives in the new home, they weren't afraid to make unconventional choices.

Gayle walks around the corner from the kitchen to her pride and joy. "I'll show you my favorite part of the house. Originally in the design of the home, this was going to be the laundry room." Instead, it houses a series

of unique shoe cabinets, based on a magazine photo. Each reaches nearly to the ceiling and pulls out from the wall. Because the inspiration piece had been a custom unit, Jason says, "the company sent me some photos, and I found someone local to build it."

"The problem was that there was no room for a washer and dryer because this was meant to be the laundry room," Gayle adds. In a whimsical move, what was originally planned as a dining room became an expansive laundry room. The ceiling fixture is a chandelier Gayle spotted in a downtown La Crosse gift shop years ago, which Jason subsequently purchased as a surprise to go in the unbuilt house. "Instead of a promise ring, I got a promise chandelier," Gayle says.

LIVING ON EVERY LEVEL

The first-floor master suite bedroom is not oversized, as everything needed for getting ready is housed in the adjoining bathroom and closets. Making the most of the space, closet storage reaches for the ceiling, and a handy ladder allows for instant access to the upper shelves.

The second floor is their sons' level, complete with a loft family room and laundry facilities, eliminating the need to haul laundry up and down steps and teaching the boys a necessary life skill.

Also on the top floor is a bedroom/office. "We weren't going to have a home office," says Gayle of their pre-pandemic floor plan. Now, adds Jason, "it's the best view in the

house" as two large picture windows make it a sublime corner room.

No detail has gone unattended in this exquisite home. The lower level has everything one needs for entertainment. A windowless media room with tiered seating allows for theater-like viewing yet is far from dark and confining.

On the walk-out side of the lower level, a large sectional, partial kitchen, and counter with five stools invites leisurely socializing. New Glarus on tap, a novelty few people would think of, is integrated into the bar. An exercise room, full bathroom and third washer and dryer fill out the space; towels, swimsuits and other items can be washed and dried without being dragged through the house.

Hidden behind an unobtrusive door is a small hockey rink with plywood walls and a Glice® synthetic floor to allow for the year-round use of ice skates.

IF YOU BUILD IT, TAKE YOUR TIME

The Lassens emphasize their willingness to research, make connections and wait patiently in order to build this home. Individual touches and the thoughtfulness that went into them make this the perfect forever home. **CRW**

Heidi Griminger Blanke is a freelance writer and author who can't stop thinking about those incredible shoe cabinets.



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Top Tips for Tomatoes

How to make the most of the abundance in your garden and local markets.

BY JAN WELLIK | CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS



Tomatoes are a summer staple in Wisconsin and grow in a variety of flavors and colors. “Tomatoes are so diverse, easy to grow and save seeds from,” says Craig LeHoullier, tomato advisor for Seed Savers Exchange since the late 1980s. And with

so many kinds available—either grown in your own garden or gracing the stalls at your favorite farmers’ market—the ways of using them are as varied as the fruits themselves.

THE PERFECT TOMATO

According to Romi Londre, registered dietitian nutritionist at Mayo Clinic Health System in La Crosse, tomatoes should be firm but not hard and without blemishes. “Avoid tomatoes that have pale spots around the stem. The coloring depends on the variety of the tomato but should be consistent. At the farmer’s market you can ask if that variety is supposed to have green or yellow when it is fully ripe,” she explains.

SAVING SUMMER’S BOUNTY

Since tomatoes tend to be bountiful in late summer, you may find yourself with more than your family can eat at once.

Londre suggests freezing tomatoes whole to use later in salsas and sauces. “If you want to peel the skins, blanch them by dipping them in boiling water for about a minute until the skins split, then transfer to a bowl of ice water. Cut out the green part where the stem connects and place the whole tomatoes on a cookie sheet to freeze, then transfer to freezer bags for storage,” she suggests.

FAVORITE FRESH FLAVOR DISH

“I love fresh tomatoes with a drizzle of balsamic glaze, either by themselves, on whole grain bread or in a salad with a protein such as salmon or chickpeas, and fresh mozzarella,” says Londre.

To make the balsamic glaze, which has only 15 calories per tablespoon, she suggests adding 1 cup of balsamic vinegar to a small saucepan and bringing it to a boil. Reduce the heat and simmer, stirring often so it doesn’t burn. Continue until reduced to about half the original volume, depending on how thick you want it. It will continue to thicken as it cools. Refrigerate leftovers.

HOME GARDEN GOODNESS

While you can find tomatoes in a Coulee Region farmers’ market nearly any day of the week, growing your own can open up a world of new flavors not found in commercial grocery stores.

Tomatoes are versatile and can be grown in containers, gardens or straw bales, and it’s important to understand what affects tomatoes: humidity, temperature and length of growing season, according to LeHoullier.

For example, “really large tomatoes won’t be happy when it’s really hot,” he says.

Many varieties of tomatoes grow well in



Romi Londre, registered dietitian nutritionist, Mayo Clinic Health System in La Crosse

southwestern Wisconsin, he says: Red Brandywine, Cherokee purple/green/chocolate, Black Tula, Kellogg's Breakfast, Salzer's Ferris Wheel and Sungold cherry tomatoes.

"I think more people would have fun gardening if they think about their garden as a sandbox or playground," he says. "Don't worry about everything growing perfect—I've had many years of disasters."

PRESERVING HEIRLOOM SEEDS

When LeHoullier and his wife started their first garden, he read about Seed Savers Exchange (SSE), based near Decorah, Iowa, and started down a lifelong path of seed saving.

"Joining SSE changed my gardening life, and my life," he says. "It's one of the most important organizations in the world. We have to save the seeds now for future generations, and lots of seed savers are getting older."

Hybrid seeds became popular in the 1950s; gardeners and farmers have to buy those seeds each year because hybrid seeds cannot be saved. "We would only have a fraction of seeds to grow if SSE hadn't created the organization," says LeHoullier, who is also the author of *Epic Tomatoes* and *Growing Vegetables in Strawbales*. He has grown more than 4,000 varieties of tomatoes.

"Gardening is a place for people to come together and find common ground and be at peace," he explains. **CRW**

Jan Wellik loves growing from seed in her small garden, and every year she is surprised by volunteer tomato plants that appear!



Craig LeHoullier, tomato advisor for Seed Savers Exchange, says growing your own tomatoes is a great way for adults to play again, whether in a garden, hay bale or pot.

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Slow-Roasted Tomato Segments

Craig LeHoullier

Selection of ripe tomatoes
Olive oil
Coarse ground sea salt
Coarse ground black pepper

Preheat oven to 250°F.

Cut tomatoes into pieces about 2 inches by 2 inches and remove the seeds. (This is a great recipe to make while seed saving.)

Lay the tomato pieces on 10x15-inch jelly roll pans covered with a sheet of parchment paper, close together but not touching. Fill the pan with the tomato pieces.

Drizzle olive oil over the pieces, and grind sea salt and pepper over the tomatoes.

Slow roast at 250°F for 2½ to 3 hours, until the pieces shrink and collapse and darken in color. They should still be moist, not dry.

Let cool. Store in small freezer bags or a small container. They will last in the refrigerator for a week or so, or frozen for a year or more.

Note: The slow-roasted tomatoes can be used as pizza topping, on pasta and in frittatas or omelets. They are similar to sun-dried tomatoes but softer and juicier.

Roasted Tomato Crostata

Craig LeHoullier

For the crust:

1 cup whole-wheat flour
¾ cup all-purpose unbleached flour
¼ cup coarse yellow cornmeal
1 tsp. salt
1 tsp. sugar
½ cup olive oil
½ cup water

For the crostata assembly:

2 T feta or goat cheese, unflavored, room temperature
2 T butter, softened
2 T almonds
2 peeled medium sized garlic cloves
2 T lemon juice
20 leaves of fresh basil
Parmesan Reggiano or Grana Padano cheese
1 sheet of slow roasted tomatoes (see recipe above)

Preheat oven to 375°F.

Make the crust: Put the flour, cornmeal, salt, sugar and a few grinds of black pepper in a large bowl and whisk well to combine. Add the water and olive oil and, using a fork, mix the liquid into the solids to combine. Use your hands to make a soft ball and set aside.

Make the filling: In a small food processor fitted with the chopping blade, add the cheese, butter, almonds, garlic, lemon juice and basil leaves. Pulse to blend well, scraping down the sides a few times.

Assemble the crostata: Put a sheet of parchment onto a counter. Put the ball of dough into the center, and using a rolling pin, flatten into a circle that reaches the edges of the parchment. Put the butter mixture into the center and, using a spoon, spread it into a 6- to

8-inch circle, leaving a few inches of uncoated crust. Place the roasted tomatoes onto butter mixture to completely cover. Using a dough scraper, fold the uncovered crust up to the center; do this five or six times to make a pastry with 4-5 inches of tomatoes showing in the center. Grate Parmesan cheese over the tomatoes to cover.

Carefully pick up the parchment and slide the crostata onto a jelly roll pan. Bake for 45 minutes or until golden brown and bubbly. You can bump the temperature up to 400°F for the last 10 minutes to create good, even browning.

Incredibly Simple Tomato Bisque

Craig LeHoullier

4 T butter
¼ cup dry red wine
1 large sweet onion, peeled and chopped
1 sweet pepper (red, yellow or orange), cored, seeded and chopped
3 stalks of celery, chopped
6 lbs., approximately, of your favorite tomatoes
1 tsp. dried oregano
1 tsp. dried thyme
2 tsp. salt
15 leaves of fresh basil, torn
1 tsp. celery seed
1 tsp. celery salt
1 cup milk, at room temperature

In a large covered pot, melt the butter over medium heat. Add the onion, pepper, celery, oregano, thyme, red wine, salt, celery seed, celery salt and a few grinds of black pepper and simmer for 10 minutes, until the onions and peppers become limp. Add the tomatoes, stir well, bring to a simmer, cover and simmer for 40 minutes. Remove from heat and use an immersion blender to puree the soup. When partially done, add milk and basil. Serve with grated cheddar cheese and croutons.



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Trailblazer Jana Kirch is the eyes, ears and voice for her union members.

BY MICHELLE BYOM | CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS



Jana Kirch, right, with Steve Rasmussen, shop chairperson, Lodge 291 Chart Energy, and Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz



Jana Kirch and Wisconsin Lt. Gov. Mandela Barnes

Labor Day often signifies the last hurrah of summer, a long weekend to squeeze in family picnics and camping trips. In reality, this national holiday honors American workers who boosted the country's rapid economic growth and prosperity during the Industrial Revolution and recognizes labor unions that fought for workers' rights for fair wages and safer working conditions.

Jana Kirch grew up understanding that her grandmother's union job was a good thing. When production was slow, she was laid off but her job was protected. "Unions provide the protection and contracts for laid-off people. Good jobs and good wages mean that people and families are secure, and that creates strong communities," Kirch explains.

STANDING UP TO SUPPORT OTHERS

Born and raised in Winona, Kirch worked at Peerless Chain Company from 1993 to 2021. In each department, she had to continually prove herself capable of doing the job. "It was a man's world when I started," she says. She volunteered to fill in as recording secretary for the local lodge. That started Kirch's long relationship with the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAMAW) and its local office, District Lodge 66.

Over the years, she held different positions within the union, including steward, vice president and shop chairperson. Kirch found she wanted more. "I wanted to be the one fighting the fight and holding the integrity of the contract for wages and working conditions," she says. "There's nothing better than getting a huge win benefitting members' lives."

Kirch believes that women offer another perspective in a male-

dominant industry and find ways to compromise, making them a good fit in union roles. "We tend to think outside of the box because we've had to," she says. "We often find creative solutions."

CHANGING CAREER GEARS

In 2021, Kirch closed the book on her extensive career with Peerless Chain Company and started a new chapter as directing business representative for IAMAW District Lodge 66, with member organizations including Trane Company, Crown Cork & Seal and Fort McCoy. "It's organizing, selling, assisting with pension applications and letting our members know that we have their backs," she explains. Kirch is the voice for the union's interests, and she catches the attention of government officials who pay personal visits, including Wisconsin's Lt. Gov. Mandela Barnes and U.S. Sen. Tammy Baldwin.

GIVING BACK AND LIFTING UP

Kirch shares that unions today look vastly different from the early years. Locally, District Lodge 66 contributes to school supply drives and free monthly meals. Nationally, the IAMAW supports Guide Dogs of America, and their unique education and training center in Maryland offers courses to union members and officers from around the country. "Education is a great way to lift people up," she says.

Kirch pauses for a moment on how to best summarize her impact: "I can make change. I'm the eye of the grand lodge and the ear of the people." **CRW**

Michelle Byom enjoys interviewing inspiring people like Jana Kirch and writing their stories.

Helping Kids Overcome Stress and Anxiety

Holmen Middle School counselor Jen Dienger Hanson offers students unconditional positive regard.

BY SARAH ARENDT-BEYER | CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS



Holmen Middle School student council members learn the benefits of giving back by baking pies for the community's annual Thanksgiving dinner. Advisor Jen Dienger Hanson helps guide them in ways to find confidence during the tumultuous times of adolescence.



Jen Dienger Hanson (center) with her family. From left: Kealan Dienger Hanson, Finola Dienger Hanson, Jen Dienger Hanson, Michael Hanson and Gavin Hanson.

As children grow, so do their problems. In middle school, life's daily stressors may no longer center on arguments about playing house or restaurant, soccer or football. Now, they're bigger: Who likes whom. Bullying on social media. Evolving friendships. How young people choose to solve those problems often has real consequences.



Jen Dienger Hanson, counselor at Holmen Middle School

That's where Jen Dienger Hanson comes in. As a guidance counselor at Holmen Middle School, her mission is to equip students with the tools they need to manage stress and anxiety and overcome problems in effective ways.

What can parents and other adults do? Dienger Hanson advises trying several strategies—there's no one-size-fits-all approach.

BUILD SELF-AWARENESS

"The body has a physical response to strong emotions," Dienger Hanson shares. By helping kids recognize those physical responses, they can better understand *when* they're feeling stressed. Then, they can take steps to manage that stress. Cold hands or feet, an upset stomach, a dry mouth or tense muscles can all be clues that it's time to try something to help the body calm down and the mind focus.

- Deep breathing exercises can calm the nervous system: simply take slow breaths and focus on a very slow out-breath.
- Meditation can build mindfulness, which helps kids manage stress and develop focus. Dienger Hanson likes a free app called Smiling Mind.

COUNTER NEGATIVE THINKING

We all have a negativity bias. Evolutionarily, it's what helped keep us safe: We're hardwired to be on the lookout for harmful situations.

Today, though, we need to be careful that negative thinking doesn't take over our lives.

Positive affirmations counter negative thinking. Write notes and place them around the house to offer reminders: "I am capable. I am resourceful. I am resilient. I can do hard things. I'm doing great."

Gratitude is proven to curb anxiety. Kids can start a daily gratitude practice by writing responses to prompts like these: "Who showed you kindness today? Who did you make smile today? What do you love about yourself? Who is someone you value? What's something that brings you joy?"

CURIOSITY OVER JUDGMENT

Create a safe space for kids to talk to you—about anything—without judgment. If you consistently react calmly and supportively, they'll feel safe coming to you with the bigger stuff. Dienger Hanson acknowledges how challenging this can be, especially when we feel upset in the moment. She recommends that you "choose curiosity over judgment." Instead of shaming kids with phrases such as "Why did you say that?" or "Why do you always ...?" say, "Tell me about what's going on" or "I'm noticing ..." or "You seem to be ..."

Communicate that we all make mistakes. What's important is owning our mistakes, learning from our mistakes and repairing harm if our mistakes hurt someone.

UNCONDITIONAL POSITIVE REGARD

Finally, Dienger Hanson advocates for "unconditional positive regard." Kids need to know that you'll love them no matter what. At HMS, Dienger Hanson helps kids build feelings of self-worth by reciting the following: "My worth is NOT dependent on my actions. My value is NOT tied to my performance. I am worthy and loved for simply being me."

This is a lesson we can all benefit from learning. **CRW**

Sarah Arendt-Beyer is a writer and marketer in the Coulee Region.

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A PLACE FOR RECOVERY

Women find freedom from addiction at Adult & Teen Challenge of Western Wisconsin.

BY TALLITHA REESE | CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS



Through the residential Adult & Teen Challenge of Western Wisconsin program, women live together as they recover from addiction and address their spiritual, physical and emotional needs in a community.

Addiction can be difficult to overcome, but Adult & Teen Challenge of Western Wisconsin (ATCWW) in La Crosse works to provide support for individuals seeking to gain freedom from chemical addictions and other life-controlling issues by addressing spiritual, physical and emotional needs.

ATCWW is a 21-bed adult women's facility that opened on Nov. 11, 2019, in The Family & Children's Center on Weston Street, where ATCWW rents space. ATCWW is managed by a husband-and-wife team: Kevin (executive director) and Jess Schaler (program director).

RECOVERY THROUGH FAITH AND COMMUNITY

The facility offers 14 beds in the voluntary faith-based, yearlong program dedicated to giving clients a chance to recover from their substance abuse issues and learn a new way of life. The other seven beds are part of AfterCare, launched in June, which offers a sober living home to program graduates where they pay minimal rent, work an outside job and experience consistent accountability in their community.



Jess Schaler, program director, Adult & Teen Challenge of Western Wisconsin

"We are after far more than sobriety at ATCWW," explains Jess Schaler. "We believe that a holistic approach to recovery helps the entire person get well and is necessary for long-term success. Through a relationship with Jesus Christ, time and beautiful community, an individual can truly be free from their addiction."

SETTING UP FOR SUCCESS

While traditional treatment programs range from 21 to 90 days in duration, what sets ATCWW apart is its length.

"Studies show that the brain can heal and regenerate from chronic substance abuse over the course of a year," says Schaler. "The longer people can be removed from that toxic environment and heal in a

healthy one, the better chance they have of success after the program."

ATCWW is funded mostly through donations rather than government funding, enabling the organization to move quickly through the admissions process.

"We have admitted someone into our program in less than 24 hours after initial contact," explains Schaler. "It is oftentimes a matter of life and death when someone reaches out for help, and so we move very quickly."

Since opening its doors, ATCWW has served more than 50 women and graduated nine from the yearlong program.

"We have never turned someone away for their inability to pay for the program," notes Schaler. "Traditional rehab programs cost around \$30,000 per month. ATCWW can put a client through the entire yearlong program for that cost."

SEEING THE POTENTIAL TO SERVE

ATCWW is one of more than 225 Adult & Teen Challenge centers across the United States. The local center was put in motion by Andrew and Jamie Dahl of La Crosse.

"Addiction had plagued their family for decades, and after a spiritual awakening, Andrew found freedom and healing from his own chemical dependencies," explains Schaler. "His own mother lost her battle with addiction over 10 years ago, and so to honor her they began the journey of bringing this program to the Coulee Region."

As the pandemic seems to aggravate an already-growing addiction problem, Schaler notes that the center gets several calls daily from people in crisis.

"If you or a loved one is struggling and in need of help with their addiction issues, please call 608-351-2828 or email us at info@atcww.org," says Schaler. "Freedom from addiction starts here." **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.



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DENIM DAY SCHOLARSHIPS

New Horizons Shelter and Outreach Centers announced winners this spring of two \$500 scholarships, determined by essays about the effects and perceptions of sexual assault and victim blaming in their community.

The La Crosse County winner was Ashley Dahlke of Onalaska, whose essay focused on the need to change perception around sexual assault.

Macy Ann Grullkowski of Whitehall Memorial High School was the Trempealeau County winner with her essay focused on the importance of believing victims when they tell their story to create a safe path for other victims to come forward.



Dr. Bobbie Gostout

SAVE THE DATE: WOMEN'S FUND FALL LUNCHEON

The Women's Fund of Greater La Crosse invites you to be engaged, inspired and entertained while celebrating our collective power to lift up women and girls at the Women's Fund Fall Luncheon, held Wednesday, Oct. 18, 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., at The Bluffs at UW-La Crosse. The luncheon's guest speaker will be Bobbie Gostout, M.D., vice president emeritus of Mayo Clinic. Dr. Gostout set the strategic vision for Mayo Clinic's community medicine practice and has served as a teacher, leader and mentor to many. For more information, go to www.womensfundlacrosse.org/events/fall-luncheon.



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The New Business Casual

Here's what to wear to the office in 2022.

BY ELISE WEINBENDER

PHOTO BY JORDANA SNYDER PHOTOGRAPHY

Remember dressing for work before Zoom? Business wear has changed since then, and back-to-the-office fashion blends professional and casual looks beautifully.

Dress up jeans and a top with a boyfriend-style blazer from **Urban Shoetique**. Keep your look practical with a shoulder pouch and a shorter heel—perfect for any businesswoman on the go.

Liverpool blazer, \$119; Liverpool top, \$59; Liverpool Pull-On High-Rise jeans, \$89, All Black Nu Bow Mule shoes, \$172; All Black Shoulder Pouch, \$190; Cecelia necklace, \$30.

Modeled by Ali Hellenbrand

Tips for today's business casual:

- Make your outfits more you—self-expressive looks are popular in the office. Venture into wearing your unique pieces to work.
- Styles are less structured. Choose comfortable styles such as oversized blazers, wide-leg trousers and knitwear over tailored blazers and pencil skirts.
- After focusing solely on the top half of your outfits for Zoom meetings, return to the office with fun pant styles. Try a neutral top with colored or patterned trousers or skirts.

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.

Cameron Park Farmers Market, 4-8 p.m. Fri., 8 a.m.-1 p.m. Sat., May through October.

Coulee Region Professional Women (CRPW) 4th Tues. of each month, www.crpwomen.org.

Coulee Region Toastmasters Club 1st and 3rd Mon. of each month, noon-1 p.m., Goodwill, La Crosse.

La Crosse Area Genealogical Society 4th Tuesday of each month (Sept.-May), 6-7:30 p.m., La Crosse Public Library, lacrosseags@gmail.com.

La Crosse Area Quilters 4th Tuesday of each month, 6:30 p.m., Stoney Creek Hotel-Conference Center, Onalaska, www.lacrossequiltguild.com.

La Crosse Christian Women's Connection 2nd Tues. of each month, 12-1:45 p.m., Cedar Creek Golf Club, Onalaska.

La Crosse Rotary every Thurs. noon-1 p.m., Cargill Room, Waterfront Restaurant, 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.

NAMI Support Groups Please refer to namilacrossecounty.org/support for information on the many programs offered.

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.

Valley View Rotary, every Wed., 7:30-8:30 a.m., La Crosse Famous Dave's, www.valleyviewrotary.com.

Viroqua Farmers Market, 8 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Sat., May-October.

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, Schmidy'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.

Please contact each group to confirm meeting status and location.

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



AUGUST

July 29-Aug. 14, **Avenue Q**, 7:30 p.m. Thurs.-Sat., 2 p.m. Sun., La Crosse Community Theatre, Weber Center for Performing Arts, www.lacrossecommunitytheatre.org.

Aug. 3, Music in the Valley featuring Dublin's Daughters, 5:30-7:30 pm, Norskedalen Nature & Heritage Center, Coon Valley, www.norskedalen.org.

Aug. 4, Meditation for Emotional Health (Zoom and in-person), 6:30-7:30 p.m., Franciscan Spirituality Center, preregistration required, www.fscenter.org.

Aug. 4, Moon Tunes featuring Greg Hall & the Wrecking Ball, 5:30-8 p.m., Riverside Park Band Shell, www.moontuneslacrosse.com.

Aug. 6, Live in Viroqua Summer Music Series, 6-9 p.m., Court St., Viroqua.

Aug. 8, Introduction to Horticulture Therapy, 4:30-7:30 p.m., Sweet 16 Farm, 21215 MN-16, Houston, MN, register at www.winonaoutdoorcollaborative.com.

Aug. 10, Music in the Valley featuring Grumpy Old Men, 5:30-7:30 pm, Norskedalen Nature & Heritage Center, Coon Valley, www.norskedalen.org.

Aug. 11-13, Ashley for the Arts, Memorial Park, Arcadia, www.ashleyforthearts.com.

Aug. 11, Moon Tunes Irishfest Night, 5:30-8 p.m., Riverside Park Band Shell, www.moontuneslacrosse.com.

Aug. 12-14, Irishfest, Southside Oktoberfest Grounds, La Crosse, www.irishfestlacrosse.org.

Aug. 12, Viroqua Night Market, 6-9 p.m., Eckhart Park, Viroqua, www.viroqua-wisconsin.com.

Aug. 14, Ridge History Park Concert Series, Andy Hughes, 2-4 p.m., Ridge History Park, N1794 Korn Clements Rd., Bangor, www.ridgehistorypark.org/2022-concert-series.

Aug. 14, Family Day for Exploring Spirituality, 2-6 p.m., Franciscan Spirituality Center, register at www.fscenter.org.

Aug. 17, Strong Women, Strong Coffee, 8-9 a.m., WWBIC, 3500 State Road 16, La Crosse, www.wwbic.com.

Aug. 18, Moon Tunes featuring The Remainders, 5:30-8 p.m., Riverside Park Band Shell, www.moontuneslacrosse.com.

Aug. 18-21, LABA Parade of Homes, various locations, 4-8 p.m. Thurs.-Fri., 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Sat.-Sun., www.labaparaadeofhomes.com.

Aug. 19-20, **Avenue Q School Edition**, 7:30 p.m. Sat., 2 p.m. Sun., La Crosse Community Theatre, Weber Center for Performing Arts, www.lacrossecommunitytheatre.org.

Aug. 19-21, Coulee Con, 1-11 p.m. Fri., 8 a.m.-11 p.m. Sat., 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Sun., La Crosse Center, www.lacrossecenter.com.

Aug. 20-21, Midwest Handmade, 10 a.m.-4 p.m., La Crosse Center, www.lacrossecenter.com.

Aug. 20, **Nature Journaling with Jan Wellik**, 9 a.m.-2 p.m., Franciscan Spirituality Center, register at www.fscenter.org.

Aug. 20, Live in Viroqua Summer Music Series, 6-9 p.m., Railroad Ave., Viroqua.

Aug. 25, Moon Tunes Blues Night, 5:30-8 p.m., Riverside Park Band Shell, www.moontuneslacrosse.com.

Aug. 27-28, Celebrating Creativity: Intuitive Painting with Cold Wax and Oil, 9 a.m. Sat.-4 p.m. Sun., Franciscan Spirituality Center, register at www.fscenter.org.

Aug. 27, Great River Folk Fest, Riverside Park, La Crosse, www.greatriverfolkfest.org.



CALENDAR EVENTS

SEPTEMBER

Sept. 1, Moon Tunes featuring UW-L Screaming Eagles Marching Band, 5:30-8 p.m., Riverside Park Band Shell, www.moontuneslacrosse.com.

Sept. 3, Live in Viroqua Summer Music Series, 6-9 p.m., Court St., Viroqua.

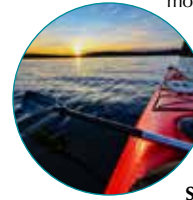
Sept. 9, Viroqua Night Market, 6-9 p.m., Eckhart Park, Viroqua, www.viroqua-wisconsin.com.

Sept. 9-11, Elvis Explosion, 7 p.m. Fri., 1 and 7 p.m. Sat., 10 a.m. and 1 p.m. Sun., La Crosse Center, www.lacrossecenter.com.

Sept. 10, Steppin' Out in Pink, Riverside Park, register at steppinoutinpink.org.

Sept. 10, Stories of the Stage Recognition Reception honoring Anne Drecktrah, 5:30 p.m., The Pump House Regional Arts Center, La Crosse, www.thepumphouse.org.

Sept. 10, Moon Tunes Saturday Season Finale, Woodstock 2022, 2-8:30 p.m., Riverside Park Band Shell, www.moontuneslacrosse.com.



Sept. 10, **Winona Outdoor Collaborative Monthly Meet Up: Night Paddling at Perrot State Park**, 6:30 p.m., Perrot State Park Nature Center, S. Park Rd., Trempealeau, register at www.winonaoutdoorcollaborative.com.

Sept. 11, Ridge History Park Annual Ridgefest featuring The Sapsuckers, 2-4 p.m., Ridge History Park, N1794 Korn Clements Rd., Bangor, www.ridgehistorypark.org/2022-concert-series.

Sept. 14, "The Song Is You," Celebrating the music of Jerome Kern with Dave Marck and Friends, 7:30 p.m., Viterbo Fine Arts Center Main Theatre, www.viterbo.edu/fine-arts-center.

Sept. 15-18, Applefest, La Crescent, www.applefestusa.com.

Sept. 16-25, **The Laramie Project-Blackbox Series: LGBTQ Voices**, 7:30 p.m. Thurs.-Sat., 2 p.m. Sun., La Crosse Community Theatre, Weber Center for Performing Arts, www.lacrossecommunitytheatre.org.

Sept. 17, Missoula Children's Theatre Presents "Hansel and Gretel," 11 a.m. and 2 p.m., Weber Center for the Performing Arts, www.viterbo.edu/fine-arts-center.

Sept. 17, Live in Viroqua Summer Music Series, 6-9 p.m., Railroad Ave., Viroqua.

Sept. 17-18, Driftless Area Art Festival, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Sat., 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Sun., Soldiers Grove, WI, www.driftlessareaartfestival.com.

Sept. 21, La Crosse Suicide Prevention Awareness Event, 6-7:30 p.m., Riverside Park, www.lacrossesuicideprevention.org.

Sept. 23, Killer Vees Present Killer Country, 7:30 p.m., Weber Center for the Performing Arts, www.viterbo.edu/fine-arts-center.

Sept. 28, Strong Women, Strong Coffee, 8-9 a.m., WWBIC, 3500 State Road 16, La Crosse, www.wwbic.com.

Sept. 29-Oct. 1, **Oktoberfest**, Southside Oktoberfest Grounds, La Crosse, www.oktoberfestusa.com.

Sept. 29, Oktoberfest Torchlight Parade, 7 p.m., North Side, La Crosse, www.oktoberfestusa.com.



OCTOBER

Oct. 1, Maple Leaf Walk/Run, 7 a.m., Riverside Park, La Crosse, www.laxymca.org.

Oct. 1, Oktoberfest Maple Leaf Parade, La Crosse, www.oktoberfestusa.com.

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