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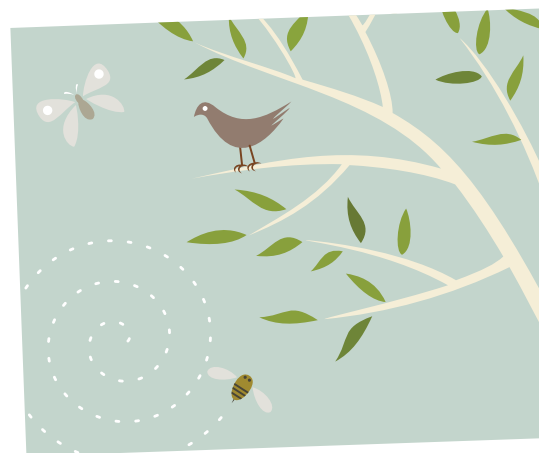
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All the trappings of beauty are present: My hair is curled, my lipstick applied, the borrowed diamond earrings firmly affixed. The sleek black dress, on loan from Dale's in downtown La Crosse, sparkles above classic black pumps. To the outward eye, this would seem to be what beauty is all about.

But here's the really beautiful part. Once all these pieces are in place, I join a long line of other women and men—volunteer models, all in their own selections from downtown merchants—and parade up to the main hall of Our Savior's Lutheran Church, where we wait our turn to step onto a platform, polished and poised, with a hand on a hip, turning this way and that, in support of a cause we all care about. In particular, it's the Women's Clothes Closet, a service that allows women entering the workforce to obtain professional clothing that they might not be able to otherwise afford. In general, it's an expression of beauty.

It's beautiful not just because of the clothes, or the makeup, or the shoes, or the hair—although that's the draw of the fashion-show fundraiser we've volunteered for, complete with a dinner made by volunteers, a hall decorated by volunteers, emceed by volunteers, in support of a cause largely run by volunteers. Rather, it illustrates the lengths people will go to act on inner beauty—and what is that, exactly? Among other things, it's strength, and compassion, and truth, and love.

When we planned this issue, "Beautiful You," that's exactly what we were striving to illustrate, and we are thrilled to share with you the stories of the beautiful women we've found. Beauty is self-discovery, as Mandy Roush shows us, and then, it's the desire to share what you've found to help others find the same. It's navigating hardship with optimism and grace, as Megan McCluskey models. It's opening your heart to others in need. It's showing others an avenue to health. It's serving the community with a job you love. It's finding your personal truth on your own unique journey. It's all that, and so much more. It's even about an outfit that makes you feel great, from the inside out.

In the words of Alexis Jones (see page 31), in the pledge she's written for her I AM THAT GIRL campaign, the quest for inner beauty is "a mission to turn my self-doubt into self-love, to use my voice, to share my truth, to love others and to leave this world better than I found it." The women featured in this issue do just that, and we are grateful to them for it. Best of all, they inspire us to find our own beauty to live out. After all, when the makeup is gone, the dress is sent back and the diamonds are safely returned, it is what remains, shining light into our lives and others'.

Betty

couleee region women

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PUBLISHER
Diane Raaum

EDITOR
Betty Christiansen

ASSOCIATE EDITOR
Leah Call

DESIGNERS
Lisa Houghton Design
Jaclyn Kronser

MARKETING ACCOUNT REPRESENTATIVES
Carol Schank, Director
Sandy Clark
Claire Ristow-Seib

WEB MASTER
Mader Web Design LLC

PHOTOGRAPHY
The Studio
Bruce Defries Photography

DISTRIBUTION
Citywide Marketing Services, L.L.C.
Joanne Mihm

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816 2nd Ave. S., Suite 300, Onalaska, WI 54650.
E-mail: editor@crwmagazine.com

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A KING STREET NEW YEAR

Kick off 2014 with an international flair at the Pump House Regional Arts Center. A King Street New Year is a New Year's Eve fundraiser that offers an opportunity to celebrate 2014 multiple times! Festivities begin at 8:00 p.m. and go until midnight with a ball dropping every hour at different strokes of midnight around the world. International appetizers and desserts will be served in theme with the featured international locations. Nonstop entertainment begins when the doors open and includes magicians, a photo booth, dancing and musical performers such as folk singer Johnsmith and Dan Lefebvre. This event is black-tie optional. There will also be a cash bar, free coffee and free champagne at midnight. Doors open at 7:30 p.m., and tickets are \$75 per person. All proceeds benefit the Pump House Regional Arts Center. More information can be found at thepumphouse.org.



WINTER WONDERFUL!

Embrace the January snow and cold and make the scenic journey to the Kickapoo Valley Reserve on January 11 for the 2014 Winter Festival. It's a wonderful family event that highlights fun winter activities, including skating, sledding, skiing, archery, snow sculpture, ice cave hikes, horse-drawn bobsled rides, snowshoe exhibit, Tristate Malamute Club Sled Dog Race and much more. Warm your insides with a bowl of chili at the annual chili and bread contest hosted by the La Farge Lions Club. View a full schedule of activities at kvr.state.wi.us/winterfest.

FROZEN RIVER FILM FESTIVAL



Everyone is sure to find a film that speaks to them at the Frozen River Film Festival (FRFF), January 22-26, 2014, at Winona State University. The festival goes beyond just screening compelling films. It brings passionate people together. This annual event draws more than 4,000 people from all walks

of life with films about the environment, world culture, extreme sports and adventure. Each documentary screened at FRFF is selected for its powerful message; the 2014 festival is centered around social justice. Festival programming also includes workshops, guest speakers, musical performances, children's programming and other educational activities. Local vendors will supply healthy snacks and meals for all participants—the festival even hosts an in-house farmers market. FRFF strives to form a community of people dedicated to educating and engaging others about today's most pertinent topics. For more information and volunteer opportunities, visit frozenriver.org

CELEBRATE AN OLD-FASHIONED CHRISTMAS

Norskedalen welcomes you to celebrate the yule season at its historic site in picturesque Poplar Coulee, north of Coon Valley, on December 7-8. This annual holiday event is a festive way to kick off the season of giving, caring and sharing with a day filled with food, fresh air and frivolity. Ready the family car for your selection of a fresh short-needed

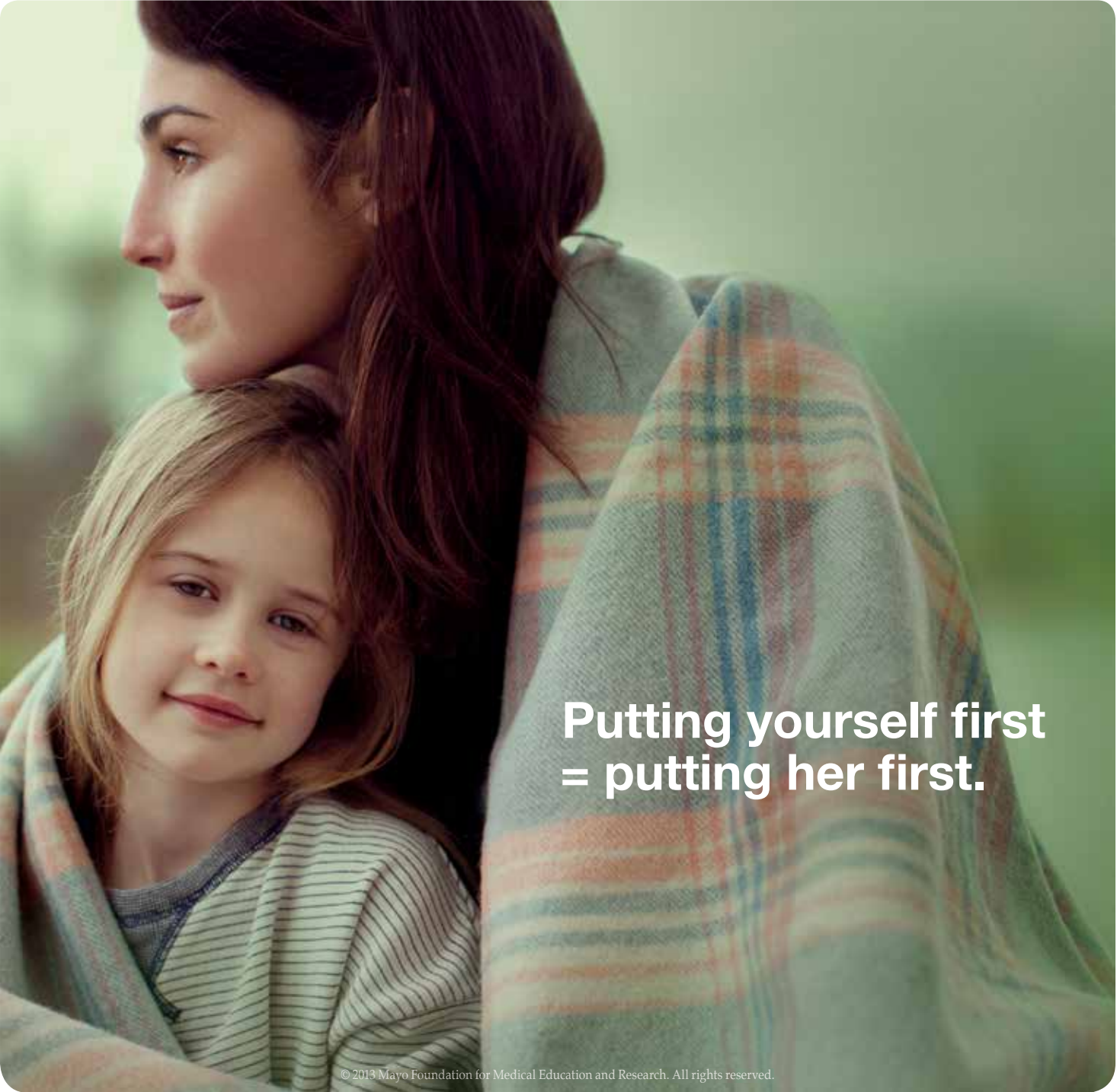


fir tree from JCK Trees of Sparta, gift selections from the gift shop or silent auction and yummy bake sale goodies. Enjoy demonstrations of weaving, spinning, knitting, wood carving, storytelling, woodstove cookery for lefse and krumkake, blacksmithing and sing-a-longs in the center's historic buildings. Visit with folks from Three Rivers Outdoors and Wild Birds Unlimited about outdoor recreation and feathered backyard visitors over a cup of warm cocoa and s'mores in the shelter house. Then work off the lunch buffet and treats on the nature trails, take part in the scavenger hunt or hop on a horse-drawn wagon ride. There's something for everyone at Norskedalen's Christmas event! For more information, visit norskedalen.org.



COULEE REGION WOMEN WINS EXCELLENCE AWARDS

Coulee Region Women was honored to receive two Excellence Awards from the Minnesota Magazine & Publishing Association at their 17th annual Minnesota Magazine Publishing Excellence Awards gala held in Minneapolis in November. A Silver award was given for the category of Regular Column (a collection of Home articles published throughout 2013), and a Bronze award was given for the category of How-To Article (Car Guide, October/November 2013) for a general interest publication with a circulation under 60,000. We wish to thank our excellent writers, photographers and staff for their contributions to the success of *Coulee Region Women*!

A photograph of a woman and a young girl wrapped in a plaid blanket, looking out a window. The woman is in the background, looking out the window, and the girl is in the foreground, looking at the camera. The blanket is a mix of green, orange, and blue plaid. The background is a soft, out-of-focus green.

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= putting her first.**

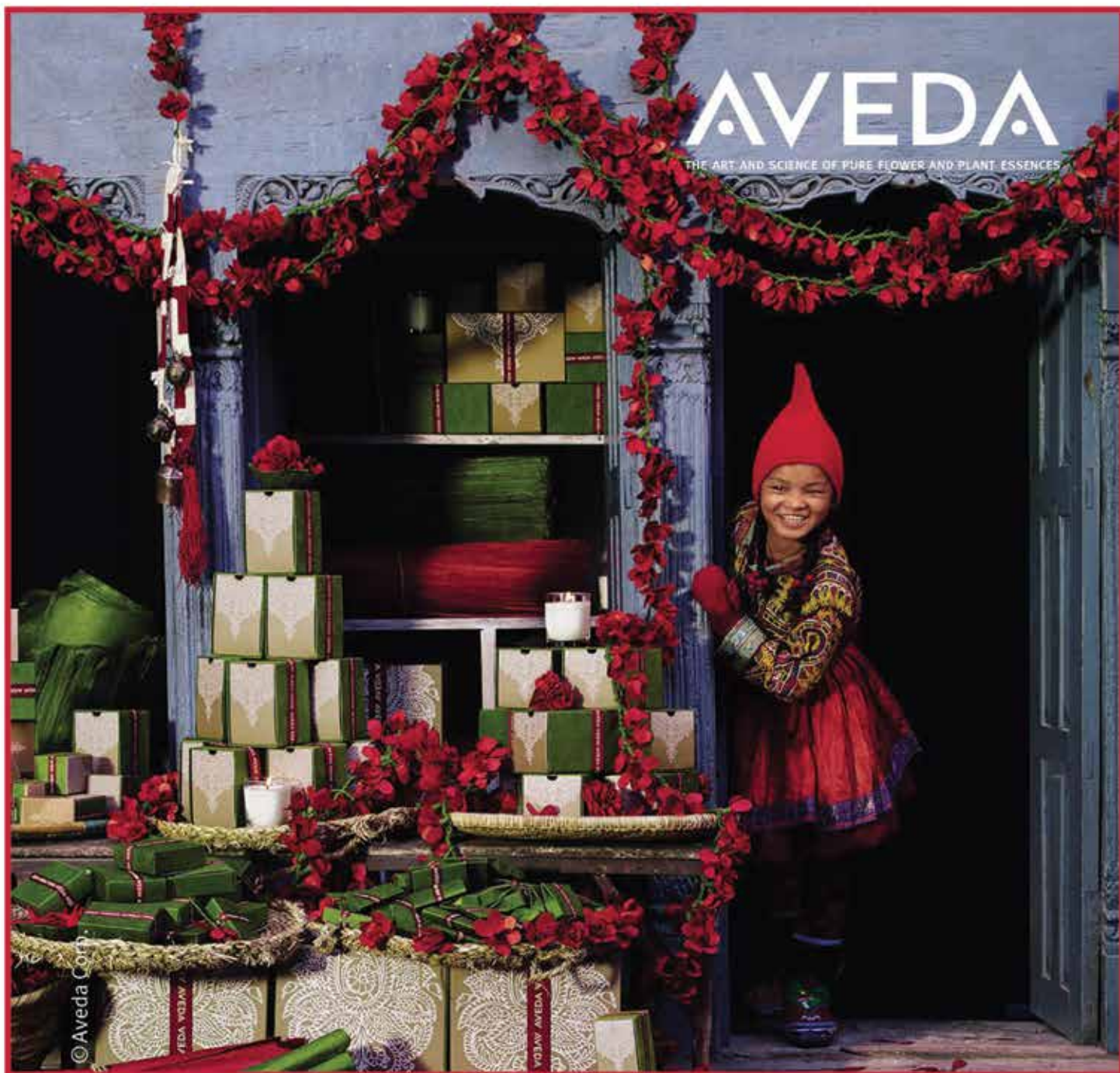
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Reaching FOR THE Sky

Health, inner beauty and self-discovery take root at Mandy Roush's yoga studio.

BY HEIDI GRIMINGER BLANKE
Photos by The Studio



The moment you mount the single flight of steps

leading to Root Down Yoga Studio on La Crosse's North Side, you know you've come to a special place. The large gathering room, decorated in muted shades of brown and green and filled with wood, wicker, antiques and plants, exudes calm.

If, 15 years ago, you'd told Mandy Roush she would someday be teaching yoga classes, she may have doubted your sanity. You might even say she was taken by surprise at her level of connection to yoga and by her accomplishments as a yoga instructor. Yet, today, this soft-spoken yet passionate woman oversees a yoga studio with a mission to help others find joy, connection and growth.

Hitting a low point

Roush is her own success story. Originally a health educator at what is now Mayo Clinic Health System-Franciscan Healthcare, Roush had, over her college years, become unhealthy. "I was always interested in helping people find health and well-being, but the irony is that I wasn't really living a healthy lifestyle. I had lost myself," she begins.

With a BMI measuring in the obesity range, she was "living a two-sided existence," she says. Professionally, she advised people on health issues. Personally, she says, "I had a lot of self-doubt. I wasn't

exercising. I was eating a lot of simple sugars and carbohydrates and not a lot of fruits and vegetables. When I was exhausted and stressed, instead of coping in a healthy way, I would reach for food."

Coming to middle ground

Then, Roush took a yoga class offered over the noon hour at work. It led to a change Roush embraced with heart and soul and led her to the kind of self-discovery some people never come to know.

Roush's yoga teacher, Beth Padesky, now a teacher at Root Down Yoga, "never made me feel that I was any different than anybody else. There were no mirrors, we were all just doing our own thing. It felt accessible to me and nonthreatening.

"I started with the physical part," Roush continues, "but what unraveled from that was really cool. I learned self-acceptance; I learned patience. I got back in touch with myself. Body awareness started to come back. I started to have some big 'ahas' that had nothing to do with what I was doing on my yoga mat." Roush began going for walks, then runs; she made meals at home. Over three years, she lost 90 pounds and ran her first marathon.

Her success, she points out, "wasn't about the number on the scale. Losing weight was a byproduct of accepting myself and loving myself again."

Climbing to new heights

During this time, though Roush moved on to a job with her husband, Nick, managing rental properties, she continued her yoga classes. Still, she “really missed helping people feel better.” Padesky approached Roush with the idea of teaching yoga, and eventually, Roush accepted. She researched different types of yoga and yoga trainings, settling on Baptiste Power Vinyasa, a yoga style created by Baron Baptiste. Roush describes it as “a fluid and dynamic practice where movement is linked with breath in a heated room.”

The 200-hour training was what many of us would consider grueling: 16-hour days filled with intensive practice, discussion and teaching. “That first week with (Baptiste) was profound. I came face to face with some old baggage that I hadn’t dealt with. It was so much more than learning how to cue poses.”

Roush discovered the qualities she wanted in herself as a teacher. “I believe that being relatable, vulnerable and completely authentic are the most important qualities you can have as a yoga teacher,” she says.

Roush returned from her training inspired and eager to share what she had learned. So, she invited her mother and sister-in-law to attend classes in a room over her garage. A few more friends joined them, and soon Roush received “random callers” wanting in. She says the group “became a community of like-minded people. It was beautiful.”

For two years, Roush held free classes in her garage and taught at other locations around the area. Eventually, Nick suggested she open her own studio. Roush initially resisted. “It took me a year and a half of fighting the fear of taking that leap. My husband had to deal with me being ambivalent for a long time. He was so supportive and awesome. I knew I needed to share this practice that had totally changed my life, but I was really scared to put myself out there and be seen. I remember him sitting down with me and holding my hand and saying, ‘You have to do this.’”

With countless hours of help from family and friends, the studio took shape. “Other studio owners helped me come up with a plan, and I was really fortunate to have such great mentors and friends who were willing to support me.” Roush’s yoga community “pulled nails and swept floors” to ready the space.

Root Down Yoga Studio unlocked its doors November 11, 2011, a date specifically selected for its numeric meaning. (Roush was born at 11:11 a.m., weighing 11 pounds, 11 ounces). She says, “There’s 11 in my life. I see it on the clock regularly, and whenever I see it, I think I must be in the right place at the right time.”

When the studio opened, Roush had “no idea what was going to happen. I was scared to death. I figured people who came to my garage would come. Before I knew it, the class was full at 70 people.”

The studio’s name not only reflects Roush’s love of trees, but also “the connection between setting a firm foundation (roots) in a pose and how that allows us to find more space and freedom (rise) in our bodies and minds.”

Leveling life

Roush is dedicated to yoga as part of a healthy life. “Some sports encourage you to move too much,” she explains. But yoga “meets us where we’re at, and asks

us to tune in to our body.”

She talks about her own experience with yoga, from the very start, as a way to “peel off layers” and learn about herself.

At Root Down Yoga Studio, words painted on interior windows read “Ready. Set. Grow.” Given Roush’s own experiences, getting ready and set can take some time, dedication and even convincing. “Yoga is different for every person,” she says. “I want to help them experience growth, in whatever form it takes.”

Roush is rooted in yoga, and her branches are reaching for an endless sky. **(crw)**

Heidi Griminger Blanke, Ph.D., is a freelance who was delighted to meet and be inspired by Mandy.



“I was just the catalyst,” Mandy Roush says of her popular yoga studio. “Root Down Yoga is a collaborative creation. It’s the students who roll out their mats and support each other there, the volunteers who give of their time and the tremendous teachers that share their love of this practice that make it what it is.”



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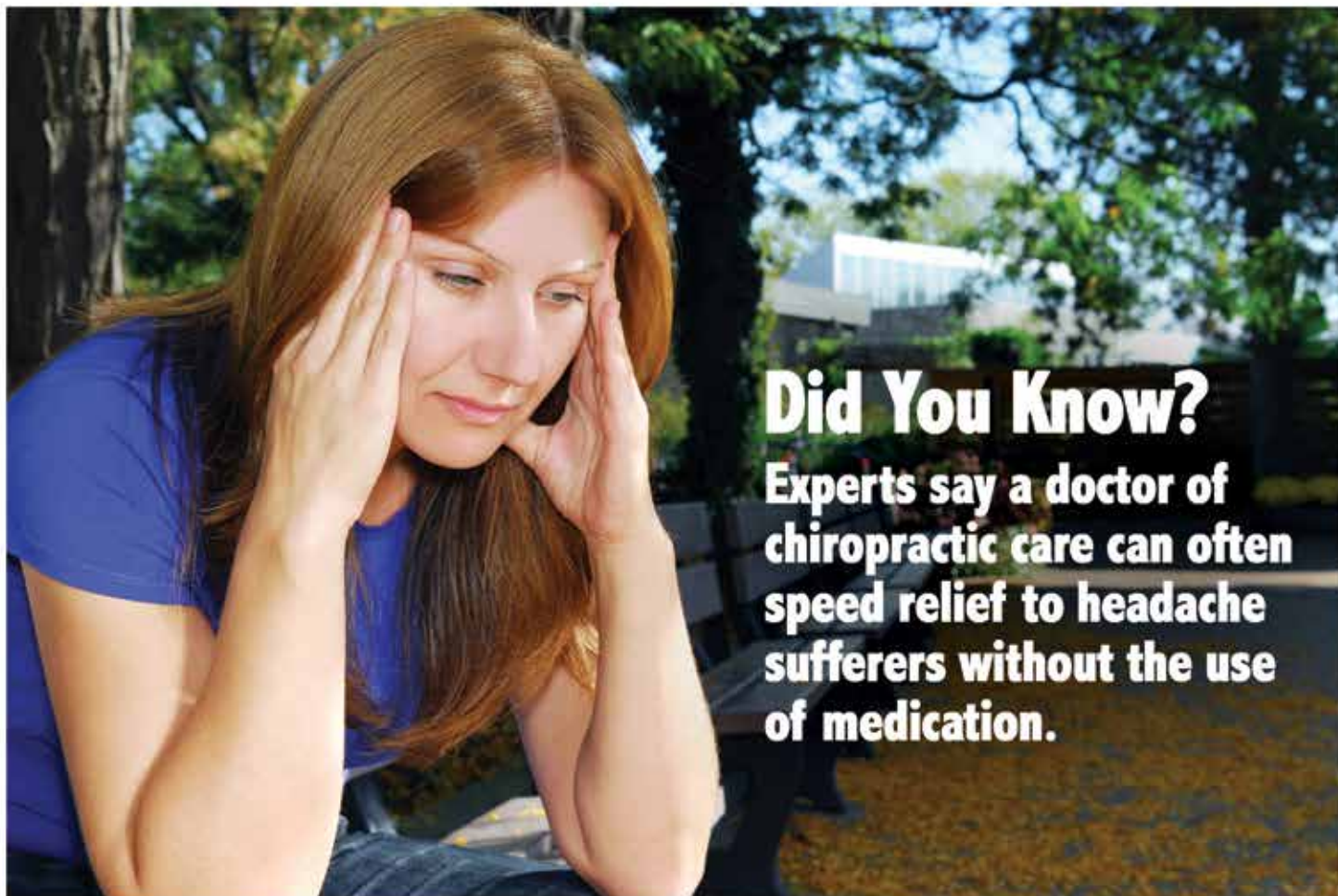
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Drug-Free Headache Relief

(NAPS) - If you have a headache, you may want to visit a doctor of chiropractic care before you head to the medicine cabinet. Doing so can speed relief and help you avoid the side effects associated with certain drugs.

A report from the Duke University Evidence-Based Practice Center in Durham, N.C., found that spinal manipulation quickly improved headaches originating in the neck, and had far fewer side effects and longer-lasting relief of tension headaches than a commonly prescribed medication.

Other studies have shown chiropractic care to be effective in the treatment of migraine headaches.

"Headaches can often be debilitating and deserve examination by a doctor," explains Gerard Clum, D.C., a spokesperson for the not-for-profit Foundation for Chiropractic Progress (FCP). "They could be a warning sign that something is wrong. That something wrong could be a structural problem with the head and neck as a result of posture or injury."

Dr. Clum advises that instead of masking their pain with medication, people should consider a visit to a doctor of chiropractic.

For more information, visit www.yes2chiropractic.com.

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to learn more about chiropractic and find a participating chiropractor near you.

The Chiropractic Collaboration Project (CCP) is an alliance of chiropractors in the greater La Crosse area that are combining efforts to increase the awareness of the health benefits associated with chiropractic care.



Remarriage and blending families with children from previous marriages can be a challenging undertaking. Do that while moving to a new home and starting a business all at the same time, and some would call it chaos. For Amy and Scott Lattos, those are the events that mark 2013, a year they will certainly remember. But this ambitious couple seems to be handling the chaos just fine.

Their children are adjusting well to their new family life, and in August the Lattoses launched Thrive Health Center, a nutritional pharmacy and skin care clinic located on Critter Court in Onalaska.

Combining skills and lives

With degrees in psychology and sociology, Amy worked in various positions and spent several years as a stay-at-home mom raising her two sons, now ages 11 and 14. Scott and Amy dated for two years before making the matrimonial leap. Scott also has children from a previous marriage, ages 9, 11, 14 and 17. "Scott and I wanted to start our new family on equal ground with a new house and wanted to be married first before blending the kids."

After a small wedding at Whistling Straights in Kohler, Wis., in May, the couple moved their newly blended family into a new home in West Salem. "We felt grateful that all the stars seemed to align for us," says Amy.

Amid making wedding plans and meeting the day-to-day needs of children, Amy also went back to school to be an aesthetician, a practitioner of skin care treatments. "As a woman in my early 40s, I'm always searching for the best skin care products to keep my own skin looking younger, more toned, brighter and with fewer wrinkles," notes Amy, who combined her interest in the medical profession with

her desire to help other women rejuvenate their skin. She now uses and carries skin care lines that address all of those issues and more.

Before starting Thrive with Amy, Scott worked as a pharmacist for 16 years. After losing 80 pounds and improving his own health, he shifted his career focus to helping others become healthier. His new professional aspiration was a perfect match with Amy's focus on anti-aging.

A business is born

Thrive offers skin care and anti-aging treatments along with stress management, weight loss and nutritional consulting services. Prevention is a big part of both Scott and Amy's services. "My father passed away from melanoma skin cancer when I was a child," says Amy. "I want to do my best to educate my clients on the dangers of this deadly disease and what we all can do to prevent it with proper skin care products."

A state-of-the-art facial scanner lets Amy and her clients see skin texture, pores, UV spots, brown spots, wrinkles and redness areas. "That is what I do before starting the services," notes Amy. "For whatever facials, products and treatments that I recommend for areas of concern, I can first scan and then measure the client's progress over time."

Amy analyzes each of her clients' needs in order to customize treatments, including facials, chemical peels, body wraps and microdermabrasion treatments. "We also offer a variety of pharmaceutical-grade products that work at the cellular level to promote collagen synthesis and target aging that ultimately will rejuvenate your skin," Amy adds.



As an aesthetician and pharmacist, respectively, Amy and Scott Lattos combine their skills to offer custom skin care solutions to their clients. The process begins with an facial scan (left), then the appropriate aesthetic treatment (top right) combined with pharmaceutical-grade products, many of which are created on-site (bottom right).

As a compound pharmacist, Scott complements Amy's services by making some of the products on site using pure pharmaceutical ingredients with none of the additional additives commonly found in commercial skin care products.

Scott also offers weight loss and nutritional consulting to help Thrive clients lose fat, boost energy levels and improve overall health. "I become a resource to educate our clients about their health," he says. "We use advanced testing to establish a plan and to measure their progress toward achieving great health. I explain the physiology behind healthy foods versus unhealthy foods."

Measuring success

While Amy's clients can see the impact their products have on their skin, Scott's clients are also able to track the improvement in their digestion and overall health. "If we are not processing food properly, it doesn't matter how much great food we eat," says Scott, stressing the importance of proper stomach functioning. "We work with probiotics and

fish oils, and then I can measure how well your digestive tract is working. We also measure body fat, water content and muscle mass."

Though many of his clients are interested in weight loss, Scott says others may be physically fit but want help in choosing foods that boost their energy level and ability to concentrate. "We work with clients weekly or biweekly to measure them, counsel them and fine-tune their nutrition. By the time they are done with Thrive, they will know what they should or shouldn't eat, and the tests will prove it for them."

Scott considers what he does preventive medicine. "As people get healthier and happier and are eating the right foods, the chance of diabetes, heart disease and stroke goes down."

Working together

The Lattoses seem to be off to a great start running a business and a family together. They continue to educate themselves on the latest technologies for skin care and overall

health as they focus on helping their clients look and feel better.

"It is very rewarding to be able to work closely with someone you dearly love," says Scott of his work/life combination. "Since our businesses complement each other, we are finding ways to give our clients the best of both their skin care and their health."

Amy agrees. "We balance each other out. Where one of us may be a bit weaker in one area, typically the other is strong."

Living and working together daily could strain some couples, but this pair is not afraid of a challenge. "Balancing work, children's schedules and other obligations is at times complicated," says Amy. "We really need to make a concerted effort not to discuss work while we are at home. We take one day at a time and remind ourselves to be the best versions of ourselves at all times. That grounds us." *(crw)*

Freelance writer Leah Call writes and lives with her family in Westby.



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MEGAN MCCLUSKEY: PAYING IT FORWARD

Courage and selflessness define this Coulee Region woman.

BY SUSAN HESSEL

Photo by Pat Mundsack

If there is any truth to the adage that bad things come in threes, then Megan McCluskey is done, thank you very much. She's weathered cancer, a seriously ill child and a fire. And she's endured it all with guts, a sense of humor and determination.

"People ask, 'How did you get through it?'" says Megan, a Galesville-based wedding and commercial photographer whom *Coulee Region Women* is proud to consider one of their own. "You just do. You can't do anything but move forward. You can't stay trapped in negativity. And we all have really good senses of humor."

A personal battle

Megan's first trial, over the past many months, was breast cancer. She had previously had cysts in her breasts that were not cancerous and went away. When she found a lump in April 2013, Megan felt it was different.

Instead of a screening mammogram at her appointment, the breast cancer team at Gundersen Health System stayed late to perform a diagnostic mammogram. The radiologist was 98 percent sure it was cancer, and a biopsy the next day along with other testing confirmed cancer in her lymph nodes.

"It was shocking, but at the same time I went in with the feeling that

something was not right," Megan said, adding that she felt worse for her husband, Dan, and their son, Aidan. "It was very, very hard on them."

She decided on chemotherapy before surgery. Not wanting to disappoint her photography clients who had scheduled wedding photos with her, she continued working while going through chemotherapy treatments. Megan was thankful to have fellow photographer Pat Mundsack with her on photo shoots. Without Pat's help and support, Megan would have had a difficult time getting through daylong sessions.

No time to celebrate

The last of Megan's eight grueling chemotherapy treatments should have been cause for celebration, despite surgery and radiation looming ahead of her. But there was no time to celebrate. That same day, she, Dan and Aidan lost their Galesville home to fire.

Megan describes the experience of seeing her home in flames as surreal. "For me, even though I had cancer, standing and watching my house burn was harder. I couldn't do anything about it."

Despite the valiant effort of firefighters, the home could not be saved. Megan made two attempts to retrieve things from the burning home. She successfully saved a laptop from her home office, but the



Family is what holds it all together: from left, Aidan, Dan and Megan McCluskey.

family albums that held Aidan's baby pictures and other photos taken before digital photography were out of reach.

When a house burns, it's often the family photos that people say they miss the most. For Megan, photos are not just personal, they're business. As a professional photographer and graphic artist, Megan's work includes weddings, commercial assignments and shoots for *Coulee Region Women* magazine. Luckily, she had digital backups at her office in La Crosse, so she did not lose photos taken through the summer. There were no disappointed couples.

After the fire, the McCluskeys returned to the charred remains of their home. In a water-soaked corner, they found the family albums unburned, but water-damaged.

A mother's nightmare

Her own health issues and the loss of material things take a backseat to the most critical trial Megan has faced—the health of her son. As a result of severely twisted intestines, Aidan, at just five weeks old, experienced a heart attack that led to kidney failure. For a week,

little Aidan was kept in a medically induced coma, and doctors prepared the McCluskeys for his potential death or brain damage if he survived.

"When he woke up, we saw the same sparkle in his eye," Megan recalls. "We could tell he didn't have brain damage even before testing."

With kidneys functioning at only 13 percent, Aidan was sent to the University of Wisconsin-Madison Clinics and Hospital, where pediatric kidney specialists improved function to 50 percent. They told the couple that Aidan would need a transplant when he was older, most likely as an adolescent.

Although both his parents were good matches, Megan was to be the donor, because Dan had borderline high blood pressure. But because of the chemotherapy treatments Megan had undergone, her kidney could no longer be used. Now, Dan will go through more testing to be the donor next summer—when Aidan is out of school.

"I wouldn't want any parents to go through this, seeing doctors trying to revive your baby," says Megan. "It was one of the hardest things we have ever gone through. But a near-death experience reminds you how important your baby is to you."

Giving back

Through all the trials, Megan took away this number-one lesson: "People are most important in your life—not things."

That enhanced appreciation for people in her life has impacted Megan's photography. At weddings she loves capturing relationships, such as a teary-eyed father-in-law watching his son's new bride walk down the aisle.

Months before her diagnosis, Megan joined friends in establishing GET Supports, an organization that helps people suffering from serious illnesses or injuries. Dan, an Onalaska police officer, started that city's "Running from the Cops" event to raise money for the Coulee Region Children's Internet Protection Task Force. He also raised money for Joplin, Mo., after that city suffered a devastating tornado in 2012.

While helping others has always been important to them, the McCluskeys never expected to be on the receiving end of such generosity. They declined several offers to hold fundraisers until they realized that they would need to save for a possible second transplant for Aidan sometime in his life.

Interviewed two days before that benefit, held in November 2013, Megan said she and Dan talked often about how they could "pay it forward," to help others going through difficult times and needing assistance. "We want to thank everyone who supports us," she said. "We want to give back to the community."

Courageously, Megan stays optimistic about her future. "I've always believed in my gut instinct," she says. "My gut told me something was wrong, and my gut tells me that I won't die from this." **(crw)**

Susan T. Hessel, a personal historian and writer living in La Crosse, relates to Megan McCluskey on many levels, particularly using humor to combat breast cancer and other challenges in life.

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In the early years of marriage, women are the relationship caretakers. They carefully monitor their relationships to make sure there is enough closeness and connection. If not, women will do what they can to try to fix things. If their husbands aren't responsive, women become extremely unhappy and start complaining about everything under the sun...things that need to get done around the house, responsibilities pertaining to the children, how free time is spent, and so on. Unfortunately, when women complain, men generally retreat and the marriage deteriorates even more.

After years of trying to successfully improve things, a woman eventually surrenders and convinces herself that change isn't possible. She ends up believing there's absolutely nothing she can do because everything she's tried has not worked. That's when she begins to carefully map out the logistics of what she considers to be the inevitable - getting a divorce.

While she is planning her escape, she no longer tries to improve her relationship or modify her partner's behavior in any way. She resigns herself to living in silent desperation until "D Day."

Unfortunately, her husband views his wife's silence as an indication that "everything is fine." After all, the "nagging" has ceased. That's why, when she finally breaks the news of the impending divorce, her shell-shocked partner replies, "I had no idea you were unhappy."

Then, even when her husband undergoes real and lasting changes, it's often too late. The same impenetrable wall that for years shielded her from pain now prevents her from truly recognizing his genuine willingness to change. The relationship is now in the danger zone.

If you are a woman who fits this description, please don't give up. I have seen so many men make amazing changes once they truly understand how unhappy their wives have been. Sometimes men are slow to catch on, but when they do, their determination to turn things around can be astounding. I have seen many couples strengthen their marriage successfully even though it seemed an impossible feat. Give your husband another chance. Let him prove to you that things can be different. Keep your family together. Divorce is not a simple answer. It causes unimaginable pain and suffering. It takes an enormous amount of energy to face each day. Why not take this energy and learn some new skills and make your marriage what you've wanted it to be for so long?

If you're a man reading this and your wife has been complaining or nagging, thank her. It means she still cares about you and your marriage. She's working hard to make your love stronger. Spend time with her. Talk to her. Compliment her. Pay attention. Take her seriously. Show her that she is the most important thing in the world to you.

Perhaps your wife is no longer open to your advances because she's a soon to be walk-away wife. If so, don't crowd her. Don't push. Be patient. If you demonstrate you can change and she still has eyes...and a heart, you might just convince her to give your marriage another try.

For additional support, give us a call right away at 608.785.7000 x221 for an appointment with a Licensed Professional Counselor or Marriage & Family Therapist.

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Nicki Veenendall has just flown back into town from a business trip. She is obviously excited as she gushes about the vendor show she has attended and the new products, accessories and information she can't wait to share with her staff and customers. But as she speaks, it's clear she isn't just excited about her job as the owner of seven Verizon stores, located in La Crosse, Black River Falls, Eau Claire, Berlin and Mauston, Wis., and Cannon Falls and Kasson, Minn. There is a passion that drives Veenendall to do everything in her life well-to get it right.

Bitten by the bug of technology

Born and raised in a small town in Minnesota, Veenendall graduated from the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse with a double major in biomedical science and psychology. She was working at Gundersen Health System as an EMT (emergency medical technician) and had decided to apply to the PA (physician assistant) program when, one day, she noticed a store closing sign on an Alltel store.

Veenendall wasn't new to the wireless phone world. Her father had been in the business for years as the owner of Pro Cellular, a provider serving Midwestern communities and selling Alltel products, and her brother was already a regional manager there when Veenendall saw opportunity in the store closing. She mentioned it to her father, and within two weeks—by November 2004, to be exact—she and her sister, also a UW-La Crosse student at the time, agreed to split a part-time position at the store.

Veenendall and her husband, whom she had met in college, had their first child shortly thereafter, in March. By that summer, another store was acquired, and Veenendall decided to forgo PA school plans and stay in the business full time. She had been “bitten by the bug” of technology, as she puts it.

Over time, Verizon acquired Alltel, Pro Cellular split its territory and decided to sell their Verizon stores. It was at this time that Veenendall decided to start her own company and purchased three of

Pro Cellular's locations. In the course of two years, she has expanded to seven Verizon locations. Through this growth, it is clear that Veenendall's passion remains with meeting the challenge of finding just the right products and services for each individual customer's needs. It's a challenge she thrives on.

Challenge and creativity

"There are so many parallels to the world of medicine in this industry: the constant change, the new technology, the need to think outside the box, the desire to work with and help people," Veenendall observes, noting that while her career focus has changed over time, the qualities that drew her to the practice of medicine are still very much engaged. She loves that each day and each customer brings a different scenario to be solved. And while her stores offer standard Verizon products and service plans, they are not "owned" by Verizon, so she and her staff have the flexibility to customize, be creative and "insert common sense" into solutions. As the owner of seven stores, there is no "off" switch in her world, just as if she had had a career in medicine.

In an industry with generally high turnover, Veenendall talks about the fun team culture in her stores and shares that her staff prides themselves on the value of personal attention and customer service.

"I'm a firm believer in the saying 'You haven't worked a day if you love what you do,'" Veenendall says. "Life is too short *not* to love your job." She admits that she's not a tech-minded person naturally, but she uses that to her advantage. "I take the perspective of the customer," she says. "Quite often, the answer to a problem is not a complex one, and my start simple approach allows me to problem-solve and come up with some very easy and creative solutions to their needs."

Knowing that all customers are different, paying close attention to their specific needs and creating solutions with options that they often don't realize exist is the cornerstone of what she does each day. "I believe that being stubborn can be an asset if you use it to find a solution instead of concentrating on the roadblock that you find ahead of you" she states. This mind-set is what makes her successful in her field. Immersing herself in a job that fulfills her is what makes her successful in life.



Nicki Veenendall, Verizon

Now as the mother of three children, ages 8, 5 and 1, Veenendall is passionate about technology as a means to simplify life: "To save time, money and sanity—there's just no price you can put on that!" Her passion for her industry is personal as well as professional: Having control of so many aspects of her life—organization of the family and business schedules, navigation, travel plans, order confirmation, grocery and school lists and the ability to stay in touch with family and friends—at her fingertips makes life so much simpler. **(crw)**

Claire Ristow-Seib has been with CRW for 12 years. She uses her smartphone all the time for scheduling, texting, checking email, looking up recipes, banking and playing Words with Friends.

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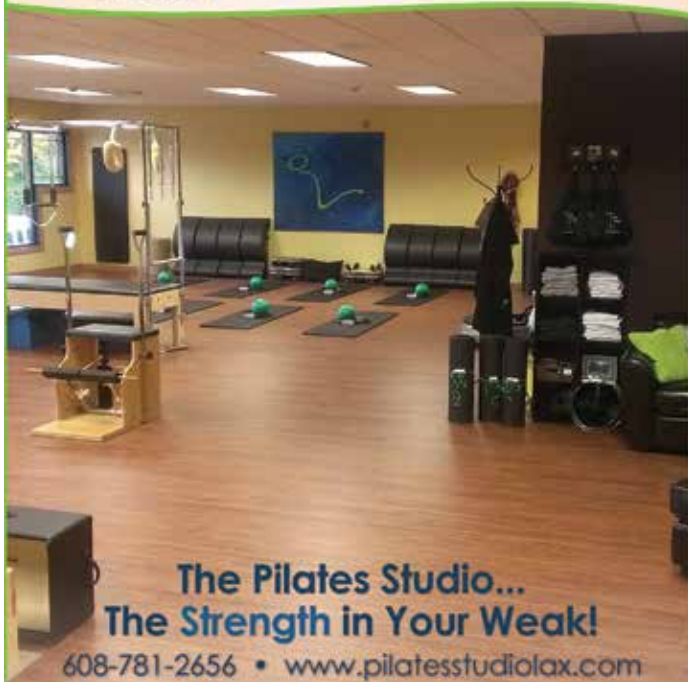
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COME IN FROM THE COLD

The Salvation Army offers warmth and hope to those seeking shelter.

BY JESSIE FOSS
Contributed photos

The Salvation Army, probably best known for its red kettles and ringing bells during the holiday season, is so much more than that.

The nonprofit organization's mission is based on the Bible verse Matthew 25:40: "I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me." It is with that verse in mind that the Salvation Army sets out to help the neediest here in the Coulee Region.

The Salvation Army took root in 1865 in London, England, and within 30 years of its inception, the Salvation Army was planted in La Crosse. The local chapter, located near downtown La Crosse, has seen many changes since its start, including periods of nonexistence.

Providing a hand up

In La Crosse, the Salvation Army not only provides a home for those who don't have a place to live, but also provides them with the help needed for a fresh start.

"Everyone who stays at the La Crosse Salvation Army is required to meet with a social worker and come up with a plan," says Julie Nelson,



Julie Nelson, Public Relations and Development Director of the Salvation Army

Public Relations and Development Director. "We really work with people. We like to think of the Salvation Army as a hand up, not a hand out."

The shelter in La Crosse was originally designed to sleep 46 people, but with some rearranging, the shelter now has an official capacity of 83 people.

"It's not always pretty," Nelson says. "But we try really hard to get people inside."

In addition to places to sleep, the La Crosse building also provides a kitchen, a nursery, chapel, a playground and an area with computers for residents' use. The La Crosse Salvation Army also has an area where Viterbo University nursing students and county nurses offer screenings and other basic health assessments to residents. A licensed psychologist is also on staff.

The Salvation Army in La Crosse serves three meals a day out of its kitchen, which is run by one staff person and several volunteers. Breakfast is reserved for those staying at the Salvation Army, but lunch and dinner are open to anyone who is hungry. No questions asked. Nelson estimates 8,000 meals are served each month in La Crosse.



Volunteers help to serve meals to residents at the Salvation Army in La Crosse. Public Relations Director Julie Nelson estimates that 8,000 meals per month are served to residents and nonresidents at the shelter.



“Things happen in life”

One person who knows exactly how the Salvation Army can offer a hand is Choya Woods. Woods has stayed at the Salvation Army a couple of times in her life. The first time was when she was very young. She and her mother had just relocated to La Crosse, her mother was recently divorced and the two had nowhere to stay.

Woods returned to the Salvation Army as a young adult with her son. “I was very determined not to be there very long,” Woods says. Her determination helped her put herself through beauty school.

“Now I work at the Orange Pearl (a downtown La Crosse hair salon) and I love my life,” she says.

Woods is very grateful for what the Salvation Army did for her and shows her appreciation by giving haircuts to those

staying at the Salvation Army.

“I am thankful. Where else would I have gone?” Woods asks. “My hope for the Salvation Army is that people stop looking at it as a bad thing. Things happen in life. The Salvation Army is a good place for people to go when they just need some extra help.”

Woods’s determination is exactly what Nelson says makes people successful in transitioning from the Salvation Army to employment and permanent housing. She says it is the Salvation Army’s goal to have people moved out of the shelter within three months.

“We respect the dignity of each person,” she says. “But we don’t want to make it so nice that people want to live their whole lives at the Salvation Army.”

The Salvation Army in La Crosse is located at 223 N. Eighth St. Check-in time is from 6 to 8 p.m. Monday through Friday and all day on Saturdays and Sundays. 

Jessie Foss is a freelance writer who lives in La Crosse. She enjoyed learning about valuable resources for those who are homeless in the Coulee Region.



The La Crosse Warming Center

When the weather turns cold in La Crosse, those without shelter have another place to turn to in the form of the La Crosse Warming Center. The warming center is operated by Catholic Charities of the Dioceses of La Crosse and offers a place to stay for 15 homeless adults from November 1 through March 31, on a first-come, first-serve basis each night.

Volunteers and donors are crucial to the center’s operation, says Mary Fitzpatrick of Catholic Charities. It takes 42 volunteers a week to staff the center and even more to fix meals. The center is always in need of volunteers and donations, especially of items such as paper products.

Last winter, the warming center averaged 47 unduplicated guests each month. The center also turned away an average of 22 guests each month. The center allows those who are suffering from mental health issues and/or addictions to enter the center as long as they are acting in a calm and respectful manner.

The La Crosse Warming Center is located in the lower level of First Baptist Church at 1209 W. Main St. in La Crosse. The center is open from 9 p.m. to 7 a.m., with intake from 9 to 10 p.m. Police, hospitals or the Salvation Army can refer clients after 10 p.m.

For more information or to learn how to volunteer at the La Crosse Warming Center, contact Fitzpatrick at 608-782-0710, extension 220.

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"I was born here—in fact, Dr. Birdsall delivered my younger sister. My intent was always to come back here to care for my community. I've seen the staff's commitment to excellence, and I'm looking forward to being part of this team."

—Melissa Richards, MD

Dr. Richards's special interests are obstetrics including high-risk pregnancies; irregular menstrual cycles; and contraceptive counseling.

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EVERY WOMAN A HEALTHY WOMAN

Options Clinic expands to meet the reproductive health needs of women in the Coulee Region.

BY SUSAN C. SCHUYLER

Contributed photos



Beth Hartung, executive director of Options Clinic



Besides a strong commitment to provide women throughout the area with reproductive health care, one constant at Options Clinic is its growth. In 1991, Options Clinic found a permanent home in a modest building on Caledonia Street in the heart of La Crosse's North Side. Four years later, it became an affiliate of Gundersen Lutheran, now the Gundersen Health System. And beginning in 2014, Options will operate seven clinics in eight counties, serving more than 5,000 square miles of Wisconsin.

Beth Hartung, executive director of Options Clinic since 2011, is especially proud of the clinic's growth, given today's tumultuous health care climate. "When you're hearing about women's health and access to family planning, it's rare to hear a good story, like that of opening a clinic and better serving the need."

That need has been at the core of Option Clinic's mission since its start as the La Crosse Family Planning Center in 1972. In fact, this year's theme for Options's annual fundraising campaign is "Be thankful for your neighborhood family-planning clinic." Although Hartung is glad local donors support national organizations like Planned Parenthood, she adds, "I would rather see that money remain locally and serve the women and men in these communities."

Health access for all

Options Clinic served 6,700 men and women last year with clinic services and provided 7,000 others with community education programs. Hartung says that number also is likely to grow; with the advent of the Affordable Care Act, Gov. Scott Walker's administration notified 92,000 Wisconsin residents that their health insurance through BadgerCare Plus will end in 2013, according to a Sept. 24 *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* article.

"There are going to be a significant number of Wisconsin residents who are going to need access to care," Hartung says. While the care Options offers is preventive—for example, the clinic doesn't see people with colds or flu—Hartung says care at the clinic is available and accessible.

Care at Options Clinic is also affordable. Client liaisons at the clinic assess clients' financial situations and place them on a sliding-fee scale, which means clients are charged for services based on Federal Poverty Guidelines and ability to pay.

Care you can count on

Despite Options Clinic's growth and the ever-changing landscape of the health care environment, there are three important things that will never change at Options that Hartung wants readers to keep in mind:

1. "If you need to see somebody, we're here for you." She says the clinic isn't at capacity yet, and appointments often are available the next day.
2. "No one will know you come here." Hartung says clients' confidentiality at Options will never change.
3. "Reproductive health is a social-justice issue," Hartung says, "If we deny women access to reproductive health, it's bad for women; it's bad for families; it's bad for communities." **(crw)**

Susan C. Schuyler is a freelance writer who served on the Options Clinic Board of Directors for more than a decade, but will be a woman who needs good reproductive health care forever.



Gundersen Therapist Honored by Domestic Abuse Task Force

Janis Elder, MS, LSW, LPC, a psychotherapist at Gundersen Health System, has been committed to helping victims of sexual violence for her entire career.

The La Crosse County Domestic Abuse Task Force recently awarded Gundersen's Sexual Abuse Counseling & Support (SACS) Program the Judge Peter Pappas Award, given annually to recognize outstanding support against domestic abuse and sexual assault, to which Pappas was strongly dedicated.

Elder has been program coordinator of SACS since its inception in October 1986. She's played a role in helping more than 10,000 victims of sexual violence through therapy, advocacy support, community outreach and education.

For more information, visit gundersenhealth.org/behavioral-health/sexual-abuse.



Darlene Binner, Always Is Forever, Receives Certification

Darlene Binner of Always Is Forever, formerly Permanently Yours, has received her training certification and is a member of the Society of Permanent Cosmetic Professionals. Binner now works exclusively with permanent makeup out of About Face Salon and Day Spa in Onalaska. She plans on expanding her business into training students in the art of permanent makeup. She is board certified with the American Academy of Micropigmentation and accepted as a Fellow. This prestigious group is dedicated to physicians, nurses, dermatotechnicians and permanent makeup practitioners. For more information, visit www.alwaysisforever.com or call her at 507-272-3179 or 651-565-3431.



Touch of Class Names New Store Manager

Kay Mazza has been named store manager for Touch of Class, located at 312 Main Street in La Crosse. Mazza has broad professional leadership experience and a 30-year employment history with such companies as Herbergers, Saks Fifth Avenue, Neiman Marcus and specialty boutiques throughout the country.

Mazza has served the community through organizations such as the La Crosse Symphony Orchestra, the YWCA, the Salvation Army and the Distinguished Lecture Series Organization at UW-La Crosse.

Touch of Class, owned and operated by Kim Pretasky, has been a destination store in the Coulee Region for quality clothes, jewelry and gifts for more than 37 years.

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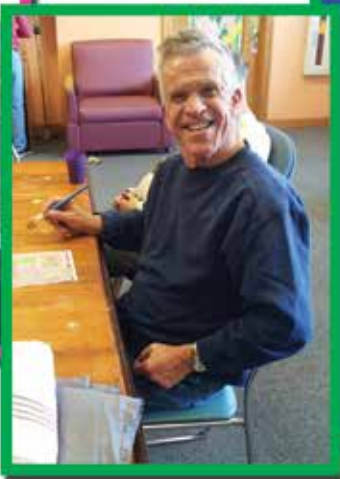


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BEING THAT GIRL

Alexis Jones redefines *beautiful*, for girls of all ages.

Photo by JerSean Golatt



Recently, national celebrity Alexis Jones visited the Coulee Region, publicizing her campaign to turn self-doubt into self-love to members of the Women's Fund of Greater La Crosse. Her message about beauty, what it truly is and how it relates to happiness, was inspiring and, to be honest, beautiful. Here, the former TV host and *Survivor* contestant fields questions from *Coulee Region Women* about that campaign and how it's changing lives nationwide.

You're running a campaign called I AM THAT GIRL. What does it mean to be "that girl"?

I AM THAT GIRL is a nonprofit that I founded with my best friend, Emily Greener. I've always believed that "That Girl" is the best

version of any girl: She's kind, compassionate, beauty-full, passion-filled. She's a work in progress, perfectly flawed and excited to leave the world better than when she found it.

What inspired you to start this campaign?

I founded I AM THAT GIRL, honestly, because I needed it! I was a sophomore in college at the University of Southern California and, like most girls, was struggling with my confidence and struggling to figure out my passion and my purpose, and in desperate need of supportive female community.

You seem to possess all the characteristics you claim aren't important for happiness—beauty, the "perfect" body, a high-profile career. What makes you a believable spokeswoman for empowering girls to rise above these ideas of "success"?

That's exactly what makes me believable! I preach on the fact that "beauty, the perfect body, dream guy and high-profile career" don't make you happy because I actually achieved them and, when I did, I had never felt so alone and insecure. I only found happiness after I started living a life of contribution, not one of mere consumption—when I founded I AM THAT GIRL and made my life an "others-centered" life instead of a "me-centered" life. Because I achieved "everything the world says matters," I get to share my insights that true happiness isn't found there.

We're so aware of the problem of bullying these days, and I AM THAT GIRL seems to me to be the opposite of bullying. To what extent is that true?

I AM THAT GIRL is all about collaboration over competition and works to

remind girls everywhere that we are, in fact, on the same team. We have a strong stance on bullying: We have ZERO tolerance for it! At the same time, we have compassion for bullies because they tend to be the girls struggling the most. We always say that people hurting the most are the ones who hurt others the most.

I AM THAT GIRL

How does I AM THAT GIRL reach girls across the country? What has your impact been so far?

I AM THAT GIRL has local chapters all over the country and has several chapters that have launched internationally. Our goal is turning self-doubt into self-love, and we do it through education, content and building community (both on- and offline). In fact, I just wrote my first book, also called *I AM THAT GIRL*, which is our organization's manifesto and a guide to being That Girl. I'm donating 10 percent of the proceeds to the organization and couldn't be more proud of this book. It was always a dream to write one! It comes out January 7, 2014, and you can learn more at iamthatgirlthebook.com.

For more information on Alexis Jones and her I AM THAT GIRL campaign, visit iamthatgirl.com. 

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BLENDED FAMILY

BLENDED HOME

A redesign consultation paves the way for compromise—and a beautiful new look.

BY MARTHA KEEFFE

Photos courtesy of Take II Staging & Redesign



Michelle and David's living room before (left) and after (right) its redesign. Paint softens everything, and the colorful drapes and accessories add a more feminine touch to a former bachelor pad.

Until now, your home has met the needs of your family. You have enough furniture, enough privacy, and plenty of room to move around. But though your home currently fits those needs, can it accommodate the extra living requirements—and belongings—of a blended family? Fortunately, for families facing that challenge, there are professionals who can help turn “his or hers” into “ours.”

Redesign to the rescue!

As Michelle Schreader of La Crosse tells it, the prospect of combining her feminine taste with the distinctively masculine décor of her partner, David, seemed impossible. “I was moving my stuff and two kids from our home into a place that had a completely different feel to it. I wasn’t sure that we’d be able to compromise on what stays and what goes,” says Schreader. “We finally decided that in order to be fair to one another, we needed to find an impartial party.”

Enter Kathy Gholson and Leslie Kroker, co-owners of Take II Staging and Redesign, LLC, in La Crosse, who refurbish living spaces

by rearranging furniture and repurposing items that their client already owns. Impressed by the “before and after” photographs posted on their website, Schreader hired them to tackle her particular problem. “Their ability to transform a room was evident,” says Schreader. “There was no way I could do what they do on my own.”

Trained as Certified Interior Redesigners (CIR) and Certified Interior Staging Specialists (CISS), both Gholson, who worked as a counselor and teacher, and Kroker, a former registered nurse, learned how to hone their existing skills of repositioning home interiors into a viable profession. “I grew up in a military family, so we were constantly moving,” says Kroker. “I became adept at making new spaces look attractive even if I had to use old or existing furniture.”

“And I’ve always enjoyed moving furniture around,” adds Gholson. “But it was what we learned through the in-depth, hands-on classroom training, like how to use color and space, that gave us the confidence to start our own business.”

It’s a business that, according to Gholson and Kroker, is not only



A dark and cluttered display case (left) is transformed to a light, colorful and tasteful stage for objet d'art (right).

fulfilling and fun, but offers families an economical way to give an uninspired room a facelift without the expense of a complete renovation. “People often lack the skills or patience to take full advantage of their living space and assume the only answer is to remodel. But if simple changes can be made to a room to make it function efficiently, it won’t be so overwhelming,” says Gholson. “That’s why bringing in someone with a new perspective can be beneficial, especially if you need to make a change fast.”

Mine plus yours plus ours

Armed with a fresh perspective and open minds, Gholson and Kroker began the process of blending two divergent tastes into one plausible motif. Considering that this was the first time they had worked with a blended family, they were mindful of tensions that might rise from choosing one family’s item over the other’s. Together they helped Schreder and her partner rid their possessions of duplicate items, put aside objects that could potentially be used in the redesign and establish those belongings that needed to stay. “They really listened to David’s opinion and helped me see how it would all finally come together,” says Schreder, who was sensitive about honoring everyone’s likes and dislikes throughout the move. “I wanted to make it as easy as possible for all of us to adapt.”

Charged with the task of redesigning the basement, great room and kitchen, Gholson and Kroker had their work cut out for them. “It was pretty much a bachelor pad,” says Kroker. “There was a lot of dark paneling and cabinetry in the great room and kitchen, as well as a large aquarium, movable bar and pool table that had to stay. How we’d make that work with Michelle’s taste was going to be a challenge.”

In addition, it was necessary to create space that would provide enough room for the growing family—which also included David’s two children. “There were lots of questions that needed to be asked and a lot of different factors that we needed to take into account,”

says Kroker. Factors like how the rooms were currently being used versus how the family envisioned them being used and whether or not the space could operate comfortably while serving two different purposes. “Plus we needed to remember that when working with a blended family, the kids might lose some of their personal space,” says Gholson. “In this case, because the kids ranged in age from 4 to 11, we made a conscientious effort to create areas of separation.”

Schreder agreed and was thrilled when Gholson and Kroker were able to make that happen. For example, by pairing Schreder’s couch with items that were found within the house, they turned a lackluster basement into a colorful playroom perfectly suited to the needs of the younger children. And in order to accommodate the entire family, furniture was repositioned to divide the great room into two distinctive “zones”—a cozy place to lounge around the fireplace and watch TV, and an attractive entertainment area equipped with the bar and pool table. To complete the project, funds from a small operating budget allowed them to purchase drapes that softened the atmosphere, and suggestions were given on how to brighten the great room and kitchen with paint. “Once we painted, the rooms just opened up, which is something I never thought would be possible,” says Schreder. “The end result really helped me deal emotionally with this new beginning.”

Living in style

With the move complete and the families settled in, Schreder is happy to report that everyone is pleased with the redesign. In fact, she’s still amazed at what compromise—and a change in perspective—can accomplish. “David and I both needed a fresh start; a new beginning,” she says. “Kathy and Leslie didn’t just redecorate, they transformed this space into a new life. We couldn’t be happier.” **(crw)**

Martha Keffe lives, writes and dreams about redesign in La Crosse.

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BEANS

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Kickapoo Coffee crafts coffee for the city that never sleeps.

BY DEBORAH NERUD

Contributed photos



Kickapoo Coffee co-owners Caleb Nicholes, Denise Semanchin and T. J. Semanchin

At Kickapoo Coffee, it can be said without any doubt that when it comes to making the perfect cup of coffee, there is a relentless and unyielding amount of attention paid to every part of the process. From the updated vintage German Probat roaster that resides in their new custom-built, climate-controlled space (which now includes a loading dock, custom-built green bean storage, and heavy-duty pallet-storage shelving) in the Food Enterprise Center in Viroqua (which also houses Lusa Organics and WiscoPop), to the one-of-a-kind dust removal system (think: giant vacuum for the beans), the employees of Kickapoo Coffee continue to show their dynamism for their trade. Awarded many times over for their product and their business practices, they recently received the 2013 Good Food Award Gold Seal, an honor that distinguishes a product that is not only exceptionally delicious, but is also created with sustainability and social good in mind.

Kickapoo Coffee can now add another accomplishment to its growing list: Their coffee has recently been selected as the choice bean for the flagship coffee bar at the Fifth Avenue Urban Outfitters (an apparel and household retailer with over 400 locations) in New York City. “Connections run deep in the coffee realm,” says T. J. Semanchin, one of Kickapoo Coffee’s three co-owners, referring to the established friendship and working relationship between Kickapoo Coffee’s Director of Marketing, Neal Olson, and Urban Outfitter’s Manager of Coffee Concepts, Ben Schlieff. “This arrangement came

about very organically, but the recognitions for this deal have been huge.” In regard to the working relationship with Urban Outfitters, Semanchin adds, “They’ve been great to work with, and they were very open and welcome to our education and three-day training about how to make the perfect cup of coffee with our beans.”

Progressive coffee in a progressive community

Kickapoo Coffee considers itself a politically and socially progressive business with a commitment to fair trade and organics; with core values of social responsibility and a high-quality product, co-owners T. J., his wife, Denise Semanchin, and Caleb Nicholes are happy to talk about their passion for their business. For T. J., the seeds for his growth in sustainable agribusiness were planted after a study abroad trip to Costa Rica with the School for Field Studies and sown during his 10 years at Peace Coffee in Minneapolis. He felt that the way to connect people to their coffee was by communicating directly with the people who grow the beans—not middlemen, not coffee brokers or importers—but with the farmers and the families that produce and harvest them. T. J. knew he wanted to work for a fair-trade business that upheld the highest standards of quality for its product. At the same time, when T. J. and Denise recognized they wanted to be in Viroqua, where they could raise a family and a business in a progressive community with access to good food, they learned about Caleb’s business plans.



The Kickapoo Coffee team works its coffee-roasting magic in a custom-built space in the Food Enterprise Center in Viroqua. The results can be sampled in various cafes in the Coulee Region as well as in upscale shops in New York City—and anywhere in between.

It was the “pursuit of the flavor experience” that lured Caleb Nicholes from his Greek and Latin studies at Carleton College; as he started pursuing food culture, he knew he wanted to leave academia for something that really called to him: wine. He became a boutique wine importer for three years, traveled the world learning about *terroir*—place speaking to flavor—and, at the same time, became interested in coffee roasting, toasting his own beans with a Whirly-Pop popcorn maker. And while his pursuits included further food and wine tutelage from time spent in multiple Madison restaurants, Caleb realized he wanted to find his home closer to his son in Viroqua. Deciding the time was right to make an entrepreneurial leap that would showcase his love for coffee, he sold his wine collection for the initial roastery seed money.

“Pay attention to what feels good”

Both Caleb and T. J. maintained a vision for Kickapoo Coffee, but both co-owners heartily attest that it is Denise Semanchin’s talent for successful branding, marketing and overall attention to detail that has made Kickapoo Coffee a successful business. For Denise, who recently re-entered her role at Kickapoo, “this has been a transition year—from coming back to work after staying at home with Amara (4) and Cedar (7) to moving into the new building, there have been a lot of new changes.” With a degree in environmental education and a background in sales and marketing, Denise has worked for a museum design firm and the Minnesota Zoo (as a bird trainer) and is currently working to start a Montessori charter school in Viroqua.

When asked about returning to Kickapoo, Denise mentions that a lot of questions came to her, but being mindful of the shared and continued commitment that the co-owners have for Kickapoo Coffee really resounded. “We are all passionate about good food and education about our product, but we also agree that we need a four-day work week.” Denise adds, “You also need to know your limits, but pay attention to what feels good. If it doesn’t feel good, change it.”

With deep-seated commitment to sustainable business, fair trade, organics, flavor, brand recognition and education, the co-owners and employees of Kickapoo Coffee are creating change by crafting a product that speaks to a grateful clientele, whether they drink their brew from the Root Note in La Crosse, the Wedge Co-op in Minneapolis, Beans and Bagels in Chicago or Urban Outfitters in New York City. **(crw)**

JASON LA COURSE'S KICKAPOO COFFEE DULCE OTOÑO

La Course owns the Cavalier Lounge and Theater in La Crosse; this drink can either be made at home or purchased at the Cavalier.

Serves 1.

- 6 oz. French-pressed Guatemalan Concepción by Kickapoo Coffee
- 1 oz. Blanton's Single Barrel bourbon
- 1 oz. home-crafted Cardamom Orange Clove simple syrup

To make the simple syrup:

Combine 6 oz. freshly squeezed orange juice without pulp, ½ cup sugar, ⅛ tsp. ground cloves and 1½ tsp. cardamom seeds: cook over medium heat until mixture is hot and sugar is dissolved, but do not boil. Remove from heat, cover and let sit for 20 minutes. Strain into a bottle and refrigerate.

To make the drink:

Stir bourbon and syrup in an 8-oz. coffee mug, add hot coffee, stir and garnish with an orange twist.

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Makes about 1/2 cup of rub.

- 1 T Kosher salt
- 1 T pepper
- 1 T brown sugar
- 3 T very finely ground coffee
- ½ tsp ground cumin
- ½ tsp ground coriander
- ½ tsp dried oregano

In a small bowl, mix 1 T each salt and pepper and brown sugar, rubbing the mixture with your fingertips to break up any small lumps of sugar. Add the coffee, cumin and coriander, and stir to mix. Add oregano, rubbing it with your fingertips to crush it, and stir to mix. Use at once or store in an airtight container for up to one week.

A self-described coffee junkie and Kickapoo Coffee fan-girl, Deborah Nerud is proud of her time spent as a barista at the Blue Heron Coffeehouse in Winona.



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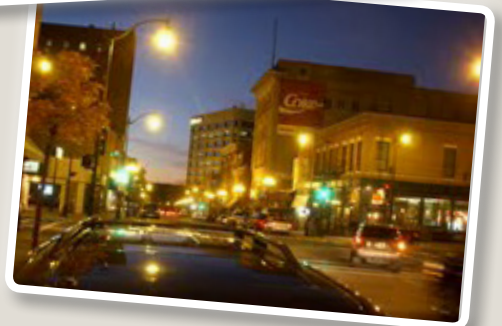
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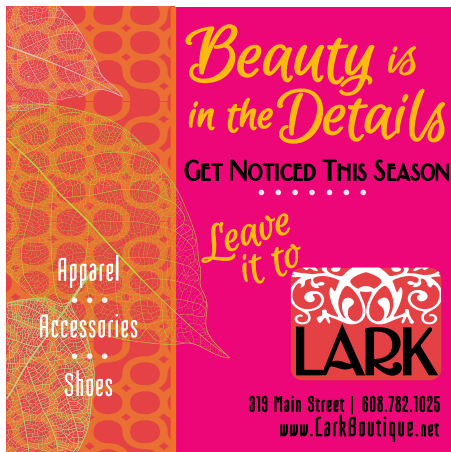
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walking the way

**From the Coulee Region to the Camino de Santiago,
Fran Rybarik embraces the call to be a pilgrim.**

BY CHARISH BADZINSKI

A woman's life journey is rarely linear. It is a one-way path with unanticipated twists, where lessons along the way can only be learned by those willing to do the walking, and the work. For Fran Rybarik of La Crescent, Minn., the journey has been a labyrinth: a path to be walked meditatively, a way of meaning and ritual, a trail that eventually led to her own center, to a place of deepest personal truth.

Rybarik never suspected her journey would include a 100-kilometer stretch of hiking on the Camino de Santiago, through Spain. Yet now she understands why she had to walk there to arrive where she is today.

Coulee Region Women readers may remember Rybarik's story. She was featured in the February/March 2011 issue, in a touching account that detailed Rybarik's love of labyrinths and how they helped her find her way through difficult life changes, including the unexpected passing of her husband and a midlife career move. In fact, it was her exploration of labyrinths that led her to answer her call to become a pilgrim.

The call to a pilgrimage

Fifteen years ago, a friend first mentioned the Camino de Santiago to Rybarik. She, like many Americans, had never heard of it. "She said you walk across northern Spain, you haul your stuff and stay in hostels and it takes a month," Rybarik says, "and I thought, there's no way I'm doing that."

But the call was persistent. Over the next several years, the idea presented itself to her again and again. Friends and strangers would

mention it. When Rybarik traveled to Europe to walk a labyrinth in Chartres, France, she met a guide who took her to the front of the cathedral. "She said, 'I want to show you this because you are here to see the labyrinth and you are a pilgrim. And from here you can walk to the Camino de Santiago.'" She then gave Rybarik a scallop seashell, the symbol embraced by Camino de Santiago pilgrims.

Just one month later, when Rybarik was at a David Whyte poetry reading stateside, she finally surrendered to the call. "He started reading his first poem and it was about the Camino," she remembers. "And I knew."

What she didn't know was why.

The Camino de Santiago

Pilgrims have walked the Camino de Santiago for more than a thousand years. Also known as "The Way of Saint James," it is a pilgrimage that leads along numerous routes to the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela in northwestern Spain, where legend has it the remains of Saint James the Great are at rest. Pilgrims gather credentials as they journey, some walking for weeks or months. The shortest route, which Rybarik and her group traveled, stretches 100 kilometers beginning in Sarria, Spain, and is part of the route known as "The French Way" or "Camino Frances."

Rybarik made the trip in August with three other Coulee Region women: Kathy Swanson of West Salem, Pam Venneman of Onalaska and Gretchen Werner of Onalaska. Beforehand, they met with an exercise physiologist, who made training recommendations. "All of



Page 47: Rybarik and her companions joined other pilgrims making their way through the countryside to Santiago on many types of paths. Above left: Their goal: the Cathedral of St. James in Santiago, Spain. Above right: The women's feet at the end of the journey—121 miles, 9 days—in the plaza front of the Cathedral of St. James in Santiago, Spain. Left to right: Gretchen Werner, Kathy Swanson, Fran Rybarik, Pam Venneman.

Making the Pilgrimage

Rybarik has a number of recommendations for those considering walking the Camino de Santiago.

If you are up for the pilgrimage, but not the physical challenge of carrying your belongings with you, consider booking through a company that can arrange for the arrival of your suitcase as well as a place to stay. Fran's group booked through Camino Ways, which booked the group's accommodations and provided luggage service and walking notes. <http://www.caminoways.com/>

Choose footwear that works for you, and wear it for weeks in advance of your pilgrimage. Rybarik says her group wore everything from sandals to hiking boots, and they all wore recovery compression socks at night, which helped.

Train. Fran and her fellow pilgrims walked together prior to the journey, to make sure their bodies were up to the daily, cumulative effect of walking with backpacks equipped for a day's journey.

Learn more. Watch the movie *The Way*. Read stories of people who have made the pilgrimage, and figure out which route is best for you. Rybarik recommends *A Pilgrim's Guide to the Camino de Santiago: The Way of St. James* by John Brierley, which she says was a lifesaver.

us were in pretty good shape. But walking 15 miles a day for six days in a row is not something I do," Rybarik says. The group gathered for their long training walks once a week.

The Way, the reason

Pilgrims walk the Camino for a wide variety of reasons. Some seek faith-based forgiveness. Some want to work through life changes. The reasons are personal and often undisclosed. Rybarik thought she was called to the journey because she needed to let go of some old patterns. So, on the final leg of the group's journey, at Cape Finisterre (or "end of the earth") she held her own ritual of letting go.

A woman's soul is a sacred place, a labyrinth leading to her greatest truth. It is here where, after much searching, she discovers her center. That very day of the ritual, the group got lost on their pilgrimage, and a shorter walk of eight miles turned into a physically, emotionally and mentally demanding hike of 20 miles. Only then did Rybarik find her way to the center of her personal labyrinth. Her eyes mist. "That was the day I learned what my real purpose on the pilgrimage was." She says no more.

Personal truth is a delicate matter. Sharing it even with our closest friends is often unthinkable. And this is how it is meant to be; after all, no one can walk a labyrinth for someone else, and no one can skip to the center. So it is with life journeys. Each must be made by the individual, who is called when the time is right, and the lessons gleaned from the experience will be different

for every pilgrim. Knowing someone else's truth brings you no closer to understanding your own; you must do the work.

Rybarik says she would recommend the experience of walking the Camino to those who feel it's right for them, particularly those in transition in their lives. "I see life in circles," she says. "Each time you go around in a circle, it's a different experience, and there are new things on the horizon. Just be open to those."

Charish Badzinski has long dreamed of making a pilgrimage on the Camino de Santiago, but first intends to hike in to Machu Picchu in Peru in March. She reflects on the transformative power of travel on her blog: <http://rollerbaggoddess.wordpress.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., 608-788-7439, 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.

Children's Museum of La Crosse weekly programming: **Save-On-Sundays** \$1.00 off admission every Sun., noon to 5 p.m.

Mt. LeKid Climbing Wall open every Sat. 11 a.m.-4 p.m. and Sun. 12-4 p.m.

Wee Move for ages 1-7 with adult, every Fri., 10:30 a.m.

Little Learners for ages 1-7 with adult, every Thurs., 10:30 a.m.

Coulee Region Professional Women (CRPW) 4th Tues. of each month, Nell's City Grill, 1111 3rd St. S., La Crosse, 5:30 p.m. Courtney Kubly, 608-516-6916, kubly22@yahoo.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 Toastmasters Club 2nd and 4th Tuesday of each month, 7 p.m., Gundersen Health System Urgent Care Bldg., Basement, 1830 S. Ave., La Crosse.

League of Women Voters 2nd Tues. of each month, noon, Radisson Hotel, Nancy Hill, 608-782-1753 nfhill@centurytel.net.

NAMI Family Support Group 2nd Mon. of each month, 6:30 p.m., South Side Neighborhood Center, 1300 S. 6th St., La Crosse.

Onalaska Area Business Association 2nd Tues. of each month, noon-1 p.m. at the 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., Globe University, Onalaska.

Valley View Kiddie Crew 1st and 3rd Tues. of each month, Valley View Mall Food Court, 10:30-11:30 a.m., myvalleyview.com.

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 in Networking and Support (WINS) 2nd Wed. of each month, Howie's, noon-1 p.m., Shari Hopkins, 608-784-3904, shopkins@couleebank.net.

Women of Worth (WOW) last Wed. of each month, Boot Hill Pub, noon. Debbie Lee, 608-784-2775, debbie.lee@westlandinsurance.com.

Women's Alliance of La Crosse (WAL) 2nd Thurs. of each month, noon, The Waterfront Restaurant, Kendra Brown, kendra@dmharrislaw.com.

CALENDAR EVENTS

Nov. 29-Dec. 31, Rotary Lights, 5-10 p.m. daily, Riverside Park, downtown La Crosse, rotarylighs.org.

Dec. 6-14, A Christmas Carol, 7:30 p.m. (Dec. 6-7, 12-14), 2 p.m. (Dec. 7-8), Toland Theatre, UW-La Crosse.

Dec. 7, Family and Children Center Lego Building Contest, Valley View Mall, myvalleyview.com.

Dec. 7, Jingle Bell Walk/Run and Rudolf Dash, 8 a.m., Onalaska YMCA.

Dec. 7, Martina McBride: The Joy of Christmas, 8 p.m., La Crosse Center.

Dec. 7, La Crosse Society of Arts & Crafts art show, 10 a.m.-4 p.m., Holmen Square Mall, Holmen.

Dec. 7-8, *Amahl and the Night Visitors*, 7:30 p.m. Sat., 2 p.m. Sun., Fine Arts Center Main Theatre, Viterbo University.

Dec. 7-8, Norskedalen Old Fashioned Christmas, 10 a.m.-8 p.m., Norskedalen Nature & Heritage Center, Coon Valley, norskedalen.org.

Dec. 9, Pet Photos with Santa, Valley View Mall, 10% of photo sales benefit Coulee Region Humane Society, myvalleyview.com.

Dec. 11, Canadian Pacific Holiday Train, 5 p.m., Amtrak Station, Winona.

Dec. 13-14, La Crosse Dance Centre's 24th Annual Nutcracker Ballet, 7:30 p.m. Fri., 4 p.m. Sat., Viterbo Fine Arts Center, 608-796-3100, viterbo.edu/tickets.

Dec. 13-22, *Miracle on 34th Street*, 7:30 p.m., 2:00 p.m. Sun., La Crosse Community Theatre, lacrossecommunitytheatre.org.

Dec. 15, Arise and Shine: The Advent Hymn Sing, 7 p.m., Christ Episcopal Church, La Crosse.

Dec. 15, Winona Brass Band Concert, 7 p.m., St. Cecilia Theater, Winona.

Dec. 16, Pet Photos with Santa, Valley View Mall, 10% of photo sales benefit Coulee Region Humane Society, myvalleyview.com.

Dec. 18-19, String Ties, 7:30-9:30 p.m., The Pump House, thepumphouse.org.

Dec. 19, Simple Gifts with Billy McLaughlin, 7:30 p.m., Heider Center, West Salem, heidercenter.org.

Dec. 21, An Old World Christmas, 7:30 p.m., Viterbo Fine Arts Center, Viterbo University.

Dec. 21, Winter Solstice Snowshoe, 5-10 p.m., Eagle Bluff Environmental Learning Center, Lanesboro, MN, eagle-bluff.org.

Dec. 6-7, 13-14, 20-21, *A Don't Hug Me Christmas Carol*, 7:30 p.m., The Pump House, La Crosse, thepumphouse.org.

Dec. 31, A King Street New Year, 8 p.m., The Pump House, La Crosse, thepumphouse.org.

Dec. 31, Happy NOON Year, countdown to noon, 10 a.m. to Noon, Children's Museum of La Crosse.

Dec. 31, Skyrockers New Year's Eve Fireworks Display, 6 p.m. and midnight, atop Grandad Bluff.

Jan. 11, 24-Hour Theatre, 7:30 p.m., The Pump House, La Crosse, thepumphouse.org.

Jan. 17-18, Johnsmith, 7:30 p.m., The Pump House, La Crosse, thepumphouse.org.

Jan. 17-25, Winter Rec-Fest, La Crosse.

Jan. 18, Rising Stars Concerto Competition, 8:30 a.m.-2 p.m., Finals @ 3 p.m., Viterbo University.

Jan. 11, Winter Festival, Kickapoo Valley Reserve, starts at 8:00 a.m., WI Hwy 131, 1.5 miles north of La Farge, kvr.state.wi.us/winterfest.

Jan. 12, La Crosse Bridal Expo, 10:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m., La Crosse Center, South Hall, lacrossebridalexpo.com.

Jan. 18-19, Grand River Singers, 7:30 p.m. Sat., 2:00 p.m. Sun., Heider Center, West Salem, heidercenter.org.

Jan. 22-26, Frozen River Film Festival, Winona State University, frozenriver.org.

Jan. 24-25, Sure to Offend, 7:30 p.m. The Pump House, La Crosse, thepumphouse.org.

Jan. 25, Taste of Onalaska, Onalaska Education Foundation fundraiser, 5:30-11 p.m., Stoney Creek Inn, Onalaska.

Jan. 30-Feb. 1, Feb. 7-8, *And the Winner Is ...*, 7:30 p.m., The Pump House, La Crosse, thepumphouse.org.

Jan. 30, Justin Moore with Randy Houser, 7 p.m., La Crosse Center.

Jan. 31-Feb. 1, Snowflake Ski Jump Tournament, Westby, snowflakeskiclub.com.



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