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women

AREA HOME AND BUSINESS MAGAZINE

TRANSITIONS

Alana Havenstrite
Begins with an Ending

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to a Healthier You

Divorce
Dos & Don'ts

5 Secrets for
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When you're nostalgic about New Year's, which I tend to be, you spend a lot of time looking back on your past. I actually make it a ritual to sit down and write about the year gone by: What went well, and what didn't? What did I love, and where can I do better? Naturally, this reflection leads to a list of resolutions, which usually gets lost in the shuffle on my desk and thrown out in a fit of housecleaning in April—a stab at the pledge to “be more organized” and “declutter.”

Every once in a while, a list lingers and resurfaces years later. A few I have saved intentionally. These lists offer a snapshot of the woman I once was, and they often mark a year of transition. There's the famous list my good friend Katie and I made together the year we were 26, celebrating New Year's Eve at a nightclub in Minneapolis. There were silly resolutions and very serious ones, but the best are the ones that came true. That year—a year of transition if ever there was one—I made good on “travel more” by taking a month off work and backpacking in Europe. “Make more money” led to a substantial promotion

and the acquisitions editor title I'd coveted at my publishing job. “Date better men” was fulfilled when I met my husband.

I love that list and read it every time it reappears on my cluttered desk or emerges from the junk drawer. It reminds me that, however much you think you need to change, change comes, and often in ways you'd never expect. I didn't consciously cross an item off a list the night a sweet, quiet man walked through the door at a friend's party. But I did tell Katie as we left that party that I had the feeling my life had just changed.

Writer Fran Rybarik, in a footnote to our profile story, says she believes most women live in transition. I agree and would add that transition is not an event, but a state of being. We are ever-changing as our interests evolve, priorities emerge and mindsets shift. We are constantly transitioning out of who we were, just moments ago, and into who we will be now and in years to come.

Transitions are the bridges between endings and beginnings, however subtle or jarring they may be. In this issue of *Coulee Region Women*, we'll take in the view from those bridges and see how even the most abrupt life shifts can lead to positive change. Alana Havenstrite is living proof that a devastating loss can lead to personal growth. Dr. Dorothy Duran's gradual transition from a GED to a college presidency paves a path for other women inspired to lead, and attorney Dawn Harris explains how being a mother has intensified her devotion to her career. We'll coach you through keeping a family intact amid divorce, open the doors to a beautifully restored Cass Street residence and, we hope, inspire you to take steps to better health, following the lead of our own *Coulee Region Women* staff.

When you sit down to write your own resolutions this year—however silly or serious—remember that on the path to fulfillment, change is inevitable. But growth and grace can happen anywhere along that path, and those are the true gifts of transition.

Betty

coulee region women

AREA HOME AND HEALTHY LIVING MAGAZINE

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© **Bundle up** and put on your running shoes! The YMCA is partnering with Subway to bring you their Winter Walk Run series this season. The first of the series will be the Jingle Bell Walk Run on Saturday, December 6, at 8 a.m., followed by Rudolph's Dash for Kids at 10:30 a.m. This series also includes the New Year's Resolution Walk Run on Saturday, January 10, at 8 a.m. and the Valentine's Heart Throb Walk Run on Saturday, February 14, at 8 a.m. as well. You can choose to participate in a 5-mile or 5K for all three of the series—a great way to

stay active through those cold winter months.

All three events run the same course and start at the Onalaska YMCA. You may register for all three at one time or individually. Registration includes a long-sleeved T-shirt, snacks, a goodie bag and more. For more information and to register, stop by your nearest YMCA or go to www.laxymca.org.

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Another beloved Christmas tradition comes to life at the Weber Center for the

Performing Arts this December. Include the La Crosse Community



Theatre's performance of *A Charlie Brown Christmas* as part of your holiday celebration this year. Classic Peanuts characters bring your family the joys of Christmas when Lucy invites Charlie Brown to direct their annual Christmas show, and you can bet there are a few laughs to be had! Come out and experience *A Charlie Brown Christmas* like never before with various performances December 11 through the 21. Tickets are available starting November 24. For more information, visit

www.lacrossecommunitytheatre.org.



THE NUTCRACKER BALLET

The La Crosse Dance Centre will present its 25th annual Nutcracker Ballet on Friday, December 12, at 7:30 p.m. and Saturday, December 13, at 4 p.m. at Viterbo University's Fine Arts Center. This holiday classic full of color and spectacle showcases dancers of all ages from the Coulee Region. Enjoy all the hard work put in by La Crosse Dance Centre for \$18 per ticket for adults and \$14 for children. For more information and to purchase tickets, call Viterbo University's box office at 608-796-3100, email boxoffice@viterbo.edu or visit www.viterbo.edu/tickets.



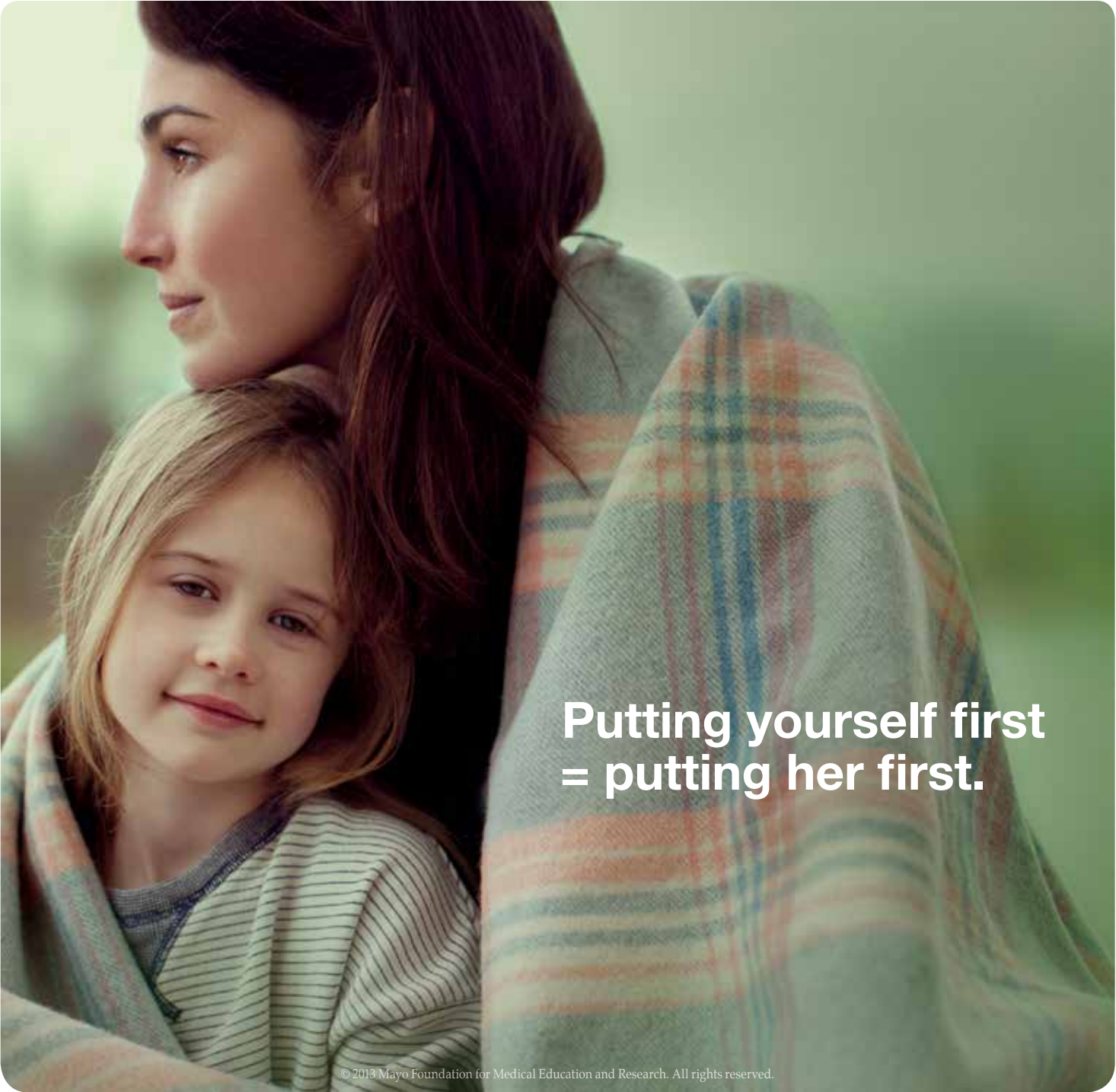
INTO THE SNOW

Looking for something fun and unique to do with your family? River Trail Cycles in Onalaska is holding a free event to teach you and your family to snowshoe! The event will take place on Saturday, January 17, 1-4 p.m. at River Trail Cycles. Their staff will be taking groups of all ages out into the snow and teaching them all the necessary skills to become a snowshoer. Redfeather Snowshoes experts will also be on hand to help educate participants about different kinds of snowshoes and help you find which style is best for you. Not only will you get to learn a fun winter sport, but there will be free hot cocoa and cookies as well as drawings to win prizes. For more information, call 608-519-5757 or visit www.rivertrailcycles.com.

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Getting married or know someone who is? Don't miss the La Crosse Bridal Expo! Come to the South Hall of the La Crosse Center on Sunday, January 11, from 10:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. and preview many wonderful products and services from more than 60 premier wedding-related businesses. No Bridal Expo is complete without a fashion show, which will be happening at 1:30 on the day of the event. All registered brides will be eligible to win wedding-related prizes. Go to the La Crosse Bridal Expo's website at www.lacrossebridalexpo.com to register for complimentary tickets, or pick up your tickets at the door the day of the expo for only \$5. Get out and fight that cabin fever this winter with a fun way to begin planning your big day!



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Beginning with an Ending

Alana Havenstrite
discovers what is possible
after the unimaginable.

BY FRAN RYBARIK
Photos by Jordana Snyder Photography

Alana Havenstrite and her daughters, Ellie (left) and Natalie (right), are forming a strong family of three.

In 2011, Alana and Jon Havenstrite of Onalaska decided that their family was ready to experience a vacation in a rustic, remote cabin on Canada's Rainy Lake. At 13 and 11, daughters Ellie and Natalie were old enough to help pack in the supplies they would need for their adventure, and while Alana and the girls had never seen the place, it held many dear memories for Jon.

That August, the Havenstrites parked their car at a boat landing across the lake from the very remote cabin, packed their gear into a boat and headed across the water to begin a fun escape from cell phones, computers and convenience stores. They didn't know their lives would completely change that week.

Late Friday of that week, as they prepared the boat for their last sunset fishing trip, Jon was stung by a bee. The next few minutes are burned in Alana's brain. Knowing he was in trouble, Jon managed to get into the cabin and turn the generator on so Alana could call 911 from the cabin's bag phone—a transportable phone that works in areas where most cell phones can't get a signal. Then he collapsed in anaphylactic shock in front of his family. The ambulance couldn't get to the cabin, which was accessible only by water. Alana and Ellie couldn't move Jon. Finally, a fisherman heard Alana's calls for help, and he and his wife helped carry Jon to the boat for a 10-minute ride across Rainy Lake to the waiting ambulance. Jon never regained consciousness. The following Friday, Alana, Ellie and Natalie sat in the front pew at First Lutheran Church in Onalaska at his funeral.

Alana had never planned a funeral, much less one complicated by a death outside of the country. The cabin was roped off like a crime scene, and an autopsy had to be done before Jon's body could be transported from Ontario to Wisconsin. Getting a death certificate took months.

What is lost

William Bridges, who wrote *Transitions: Making Sense of Life's Changes*, says that all transitions begin with an ending. In *Finding My Way*, clinical psychologist John Schneider describes loss and grief as a transformative process that confronts the bereaved with three fundamental questions: What is lost? What remains? What is possible? Alana has spent the three years since Jon died answering those questions.

"Initially, I felt mired in details," she says. "I had no idea what else might change. Where would we live? What else might happen? The questions and the changes came fast and furious. I wished I had been more involved with our finances. I didn't have time to grieve; I had to figure things out for my family.

"Now I understand how important it is to have insurance, to plan your estate and to know your financial status," she continues. "Having some money available to solve some of the problems and having a relationship with (a financial) advisor before a tragedy strikes can create a sense of security as you wade through all those decisions."



Beloved husband and father Jon Havenstrite is still a part of his family's life—in memories, as a guidepost and in his daughters' smiles.

What remains

Hope plays a big role in Alana's life, as do the friends who have supported her through this difficult time. Her attorney and financial planner helped her make some big decisions, like moving to a new, smaller house while staying in the same school district for Ellie and Natalie. "With each decision, I ask myself, 'What would Jon want me to do?'" she says. "He still holds me accountable." Her fear that life would change completely without Jon has somewhat diminished as she and her daughters adapt to new ways of living. "Yes, it is unfair that Jon died young. He was only 38. I can't change that. But I'm not giving up," she declares.

"We are learning to become a family of three," Alana explains. "Our girls are good kids. I often tell them how much they remind me of their dad. Jon will always be part of our lives."

What is possible

Alana credits her ability to move past her initial fears to her amazing friends, her parents, Jon's parents, dental associates of Jon (who had his own dental practice in Onalaska), her colleagues from the Onalaska Board of Education, her neighbors, her church and everyone in the community who offered support. "I am so grateful that we live here," Alana states. "These people helped me survive."

Friends and neighbors helped her get back into the work world after years as a stay-at-home mom. Becky Nommensen, a financial advisor with Mutual of Omaha, encouraged Alana to share her story at lunch seminars for women in the Coulee Region. These presentations increased Alana's self-confidence.

"I talk to women's groups about being ready, owning their future, paying attention, being comfortable with their financial planner," she

says. She knows she is not alone in her need to be informed. "Two of my classmates also lost their husbands suddenly, one before me and one just two months ago." Understanding a family's financial situation is important for both spouses.

Steffany Mohan, Alana's friend since second grade, who is also a dentist and a business owner in Iowa, connected Alana with insurance groups and dental organizations across the country. Fidelity Investments came to Onalaska to make a video of Alana's story to use at training sessions for their advisors.

"When the audience is financial professionals, my message is that life insurance allows for healthier grieving," Alana states. She stresses the importance of developing relationships with clients before one of them is in an emotional upheaval.

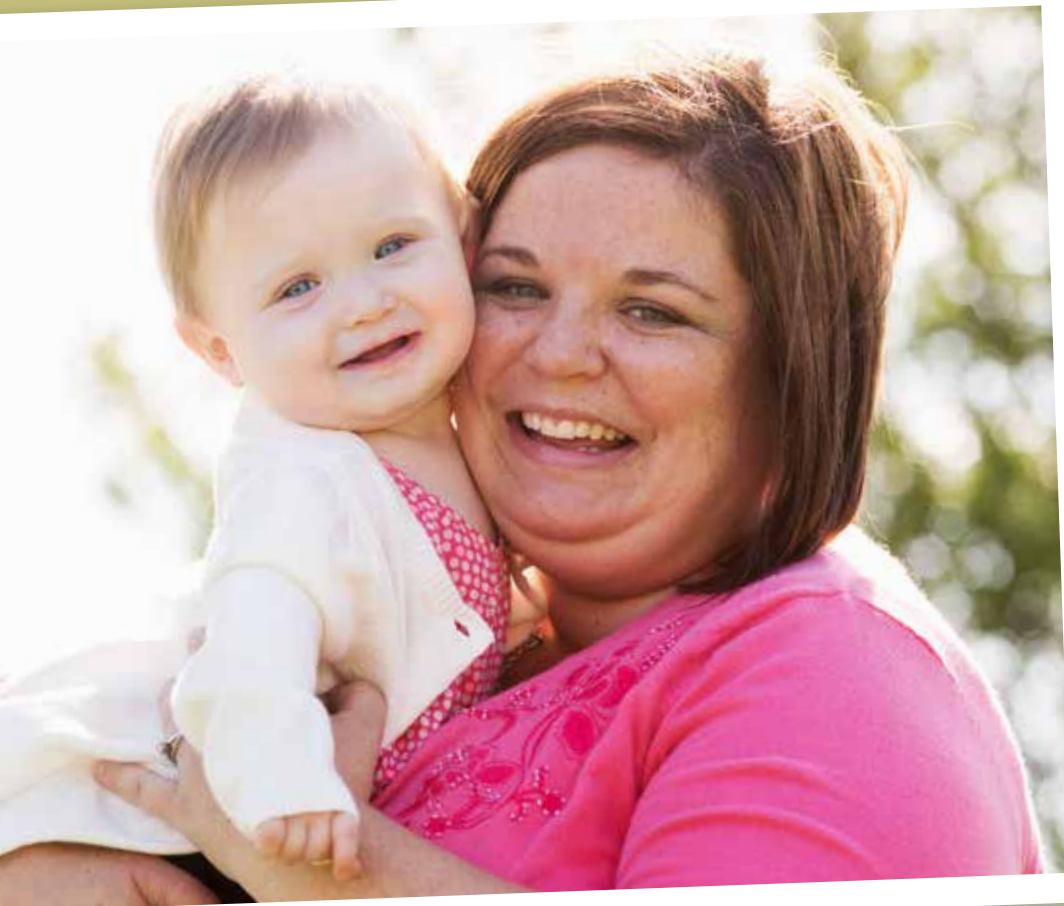
New beginnings

Alana keeps a busy pace. In addition to parenting, part-time jobs, presentations and being treasurer of the Board of Education, she took a Dale Carnegie course to enhance her speaking skills. Last January, she enrolled in Viterbo University's Center for Adult Learning.

"I'm learning as I go. Who knows where these opportunities might take me?" Alana asks. "I like to help people. Perhaps I will end up in the insurance industry. My top priorities are to make sure my girls are doing well and that I have a good focus. That is hard to do with too much going on."

William Bridges also wrote that transitions end with a beginning. "I feel like I am always in transition," Alana says with a smile. (crw)

Fran Rybarik believes that most women live in transition. She writes from her home in La Crescent.



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LIFE, FAMILY AND LAW

Dawn Harris melds all three in a successful practice.

Photo by The Studio

The woman behind D.M. Harris Law, LLC—a well-respected La Crosse law office—is a champion for her clients, her family and her community. With more than 20 years of experience, which includes a \$1.3 million jury verdict and success in both state and federal cases, Dawn Harris runs her practice with compassion and devotion for her clients and employees alike. Here, Harris shares with us her thoughts on profession, family and how the two intertwine.

What areas of law are your focus?

I represent both employers and employees in employment/labor law. This encompasses employment discrimination, wage issues, unemployment compensation, non-compete agreements and other employment contracts, drafting employee handbooks, arbitrations and federal and state litigation. I also practice family law and civil litigation. Family law and employment law involve similar emotions, as most of us spend more time with our coworkers than at home; a termination is a divorce.

I have argued before the Wisconsin Supreme Court, which taught me that politics can change years of precedent on a whim. I like the diversity my practice brings; I am never bored and always learning something new.

What's the best thing about being in business for yourself?

Branching off on my own six years ago, after working within two firms for 15 years, allowed me to focus on my clients without a firm's politics and management. My ability to balance my family, community involvement and personal interests (knitting) improved greatly when unnecessary management distractions were removed.

I have been able to increase my community involvement, which includes being vice president of the YWCA and Scholarship Committee member for the Women's Alliance of La Crosse. I entered into an office share with attorney Jim Koby in June 2014, as two independent law firms who provide backup and share expenses. This provides my staff and me more flexibility while not compromising autonomy.



Attorney Dawn Harris, D.M. Harris Law, LLC

With this arrangement, we have grown our business despite life's obstacles: my father's death, my breast cancer diagnosis and recovery and my elder son's recent ski accident. My work ethic tethers me via smartphone to my practice and my clients. For me, the practice of law is not a job; it is a way of life that involves client service. The trick is balance.

How has being a parent influenced your work, and vice versa?

My husband of 18 years (Brian) and sons Alexander (Logan High junior) and Tyler (Lincoln Middle eighth grader) greatly impact the person I have become. As a soccer, basketball and ski team mom of two highly academic teenagers, I have to multitask with focused organization while applying communication and negotiation skills—which my children would probably label as cross-examination. You have to have self-confidence because teenagers are not going to supply that for you; you would have better luck with a jury. You are molding productive citizens with the goal that they will serve their communities, and so your practice does the same.

Since becoming a mother, I cannot represent parents who harm children in any

way. It is also evident that children benefit from parental figures who work together, whether in separate households or by way of an extended village, in a united manner to set boundaries and teach respect for others. My experience as a parent has led me to believe that family law practice should be about putting the children first. Employment decisions need to factor in the individual or family's financial situation and personal quality of life. Life, family and law must be considered together to truly represent the individual.

When you are a parent, you tend to look at the big picture within limited time (life), and I apply that to my practice. A proactive practice looks at the current situation with empathy (not enablement), historical facts and ultimately long-term quality of life. Cases that lack any merit are filtered out completely and clients are given a realistic analysis, both positive and negative, as to their legal concerns and expectations. Similarly, children require boundaries and consistent follow-through.

What advice would you give women about finding life balance with a demanding career?

Women should believe in themselves and the unique skill set that they bring to the workplace. Businesses can be run profitably with empathy. The choice to have children needs to be an educated and planned one if you are truly committed to your profession. I needed to evaluate how long I needed to fully immerse myself into my profession before I could also commit a large chunk of myself to molding a human being. I needed a partner who would work with me as to parenting and household tasks because I cannot do it all, despite great effort.

My motto at home is "solve the problem." The need to delegate tasks, including housecleaning and parenting, is vital. I cannot measure my home's success on being a showcase, because if I set that expectation, I will not be an active participant in my children's nonstop lives. There are some days where work will get 150 percent and family will be shortchanged, but there are also definitive times when family trumps all and the cell phone needs to be put away. **(crw)**



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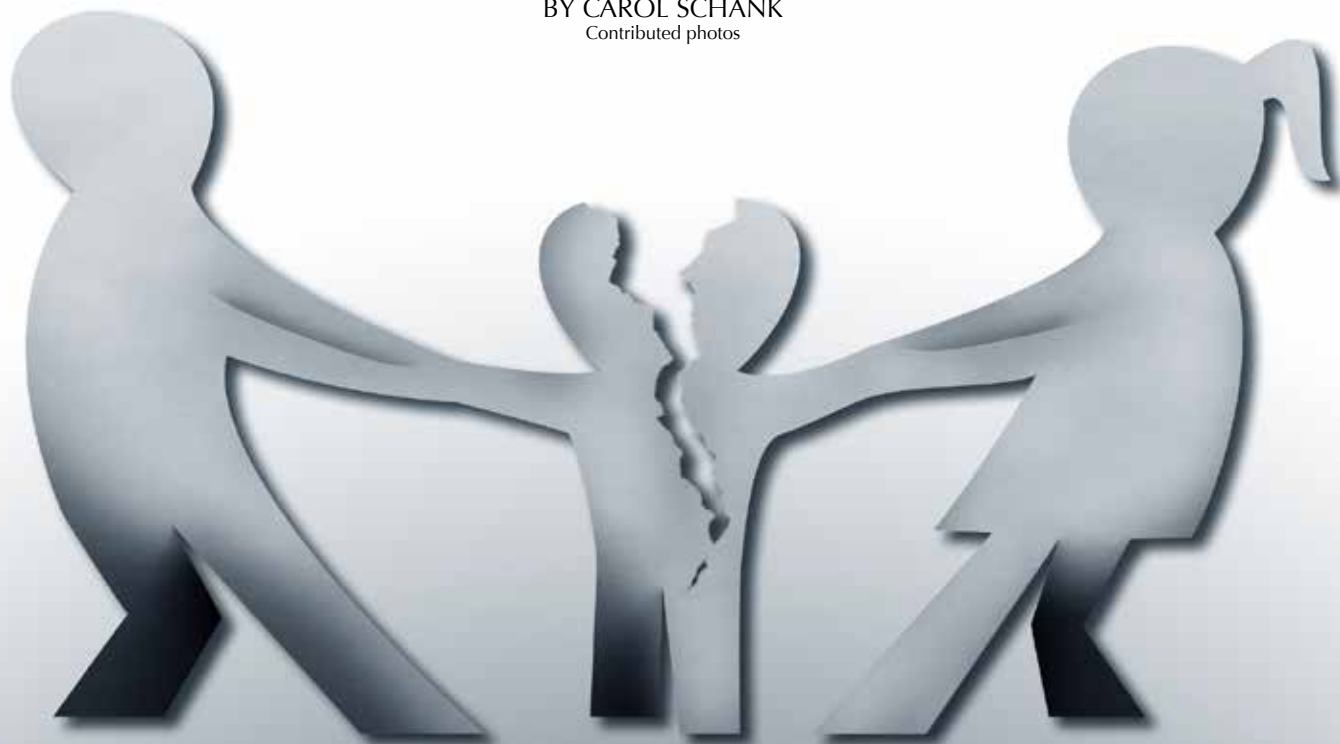
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DOS & DON'TS OF DIVORCE

Here's how to ease the transition of divorce for your children—and yourself.

BY CAROL SCHANK
Contributed photos



Your marriage is over, leaving hurt, anger and disappointment in its wake. It doesn't matter who was at fault—it's painful for everyone involved. But for your own sake, as well as your children's—whether preschoolers or adults—it's time to move on.

Regardless of your differences, you and your ex love your children and want the best for them. You want to teach your children to work things out peacefully. How you proceed after your divorce will set a strong example for them of how to do this.

The following list of dos and don'ts—compiled with the help of Greg Head, therapist at Gundersen Health System, and Cindy Ericksen, therapist at HeartJourney—offers advice that can make this transition easier on your kids and yourself.

Do have both parents meet with the children to inform them that both parents have made the decision to divorce. Reassure them that you will both continue to co-parent. Stress that the divorce is not the fault of the children in any way. Be very clear that the decision is final. Let them know that you are OK and that things are going to be OK, for all of you.

Don't provide detailed explanations about the divorce or let guilt and remorse drive your thoughts and actions.

Do listen fully and respectfully to your children's concerns and fears. Respond to them in a simple, loving and age-appropriate manner. Be as tactful as possible when giving any information about their other parent. If they ask a direct question about the other parent, it is OK to suggest that they talk to that parent about it. Be prepared to provide explanations to the same questions for a period of months. You may feel guilty, sad or inadequate when you hear some questions, but in the moment you need to be the loving, reliable adult they count on.

Don't share information with children unless they can do something constructive with it. This is especially true about your new relationships, finances and support payments.

Do inform them that both of you have come to an agreement about the living arrangements and visitation. Explain this is best “for now.” Ensure that there is, at a minimum, a private space where a visiting child can keep his or her things. Strive to have enough of the child's belongings on hand so that he or she doesn't need to “live out of a suitcase.”



Greg Head, therapist, Gundersen Health System



Cindy Ericksen, therapist, HeartJourney

Don't allow younger children to choose where they will reside. It is unfair because it forces them to pick between their parents.

Do work to develop a set of rules and responsibilities that will work for each house. Maintain this structure until revisions are required and negotiated. Structure and familiarity will help your children feel safe. Make it clear that each house may have different rules, but your children are expected to follow those rules at each house. Be respectful of each other's household rules.

Don't try to control how the other parent interacts with the children. Don't try to be the master of two households. Don't expect the other parent to follow through with your punishment.

Do arrange regular one-on-one time for each child with each parent. Use this time to focus on your relationship with the child and your common interests. Be fully present, rather than distracted by everything else in your life. If you need to do cleaning or other chores while they are with you, make it a team effort and be positive. Reward yourselves with a fun activity afterward.

Don't inflate a child's status. For example, don't say: "Now you are the man/woman of the house." It places them under expectations that they can't meet and often creates little tyrants.

Do be reliable and punctual when shuttling children from one home to the other. Be aware that a transition time may be necessary to allow them to adjust to the different "cultures" of the different households. Strive to keep the children connected with both sides of their extended family.

Don't ask children to "spy" on the other parent, and don't try to pry information out of them.

Do anticipate that birthdays, holidays, vacations and special occasions are going to present difficulties. Plan and figure out beforehand how parents can attend activities and events (e.g., parent-teacher meetings) without making it awkward or stressful for the child. Start a new tradition rather than trying to make old ones work.

Don't force or expect children to take sides. Kids always love both of their parents—even if they are angry with one or both of them.

Do be predictable. Do what you say you will do. Keep your moods as even as possible while the children are around. Your children are only likely to do about as well as you do yourself, so take care of yourself. They need you now more than ever.

Don't miss the beauty in your children's laughter.

Do speak respectfully of the other parent. Any jabs or snide comments will likely make your children feel they have to defend the other parent. It damages the children's self-esteem and puts you in a bad light. It also makes your children feel less safe sharing their thoughts and concerns with you.

Don't communicate with the other parent through the children. Do it directly (face-to-face, telephone, voice mail, email, etc.) or have a neutral third party do it.

Do lean on your support network during the tough times. Let yourself have fun. These things will help you to continue to be the parent your children need during this difficult time. Do tell your children you love them.

Don't take your frustrations and anger out on your children. When you start dating again, don't introduce the children to this individual until you are committed to the relationship.

"Getting divorced is very difficult," says Ericksen. "Be kind to yourself, keep breathing and enjoy the simple joys of every day. These things will build your resilience and help you be the best parent you can be during this challenging time." **(crw)**

Carol Schank and her ex, along with their families, are proof that cooperation is possible with understanding and effort. They regularly celebrate holidays and celebrations together as a wonderful extended family.

Resources

provided by Greg Head, therapist, Gundersen Health System

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www.secondchapter.org

DivorceCare

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608-781-2466 (Bethany Evangelical Free Church, La Crosse)

www.divorcecare.org

Franciscan Spirituality Center Divorce Recovery

608-791-5296

www.fscenter.org

Books for Children

Dinosaurs Divorce by Laurene Krasny Brown and Marc Brown

I Don't Want to Talk About It by Jeanie Franz Ransom

It's Not Your Fault, Koko Bear by Vicki Lansky

Mama and Daddy Bear's Divorce by Cornelia Maude Spelman

My Parents Are Divorced Too: A Book for Kids by Kids by Melanie, Annie, and Steven Ford

Books for Parents

Dear Mom and Dad: What Kids of Divorce Really Want to Say to Their Parents by Gillian Rothchild

Helping Your Kids Cope with Divorce the Sandcastles Way by M. Gary Neuman

Mom's House, Dad's House by Isolina Ricci, Ph.D.

Vicki Lansky's Divorce Book for Parents by Vicki Lansky

What to Tell the Kids About Your Divorce by Darlene Weyburne

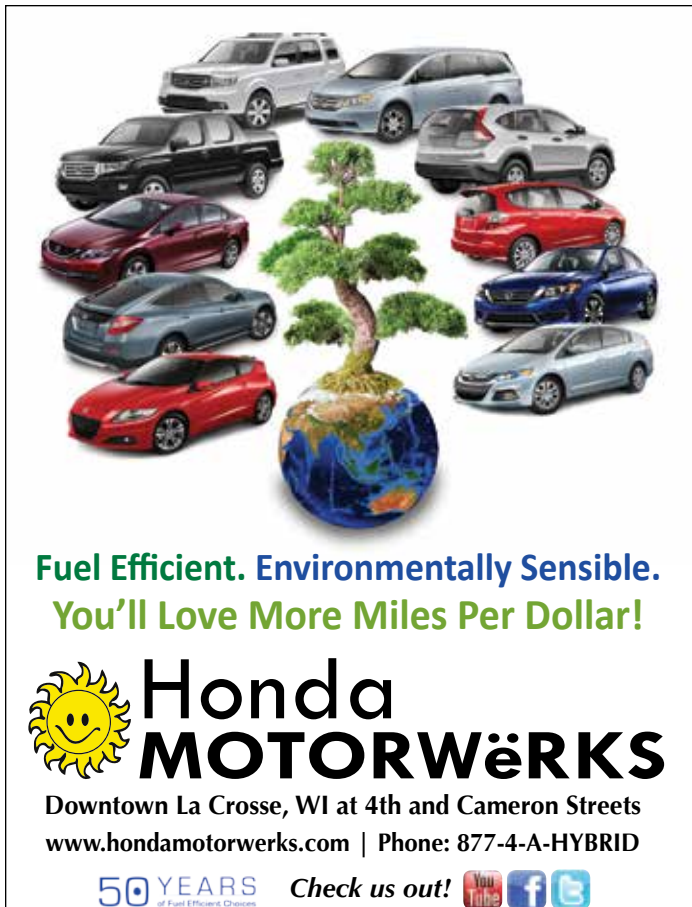


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MAKING CHANGE WORK

Job transitions can be maneuvered with grace and ease.

BY JESSIE FOSS

The change or loss of a job is considered one of the top triggers for stress and anxiety, and it's something that Americans are doing quite often.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, women born between 1957 and 1964 held, on average, 10.7 jobs between the ages of 18 and 44.

Several transitions come with these job changes, says Kelly Norsten, Workforce Investment Act Programs Manager at Workforce Connections, Inc. "Making the transition from one job to the next can be a stressful time," she says. "But keeping a few things in mind is bound to make the transition easier and help curb some of the stress."

Norsten offers these top five tips to help ease the transition from one job to another.

1. Learn the new culture

"Every workplace has its own culture," Norsten says. "If everyone considers being 'on time' being at the office five minutes early, you don't want to be the one coming in right on time."

She also suggests learning the little nuances of the job, getting to know your co-workers—but avoiding workplace drama and gossip—and learning the job's boundaries.

"There's a fine line between getting to know your co-workers and being perceived as a Chatty Cathy," Norsten says.

2. Be gentle with yourself

"It takes time to learn a new job," Norsten says. "Keep going. There are going to be good days and bad days, but always remember, out of all the people that could have been selected for the job, they chose you. It was you and your talents that got you the job."

This can also include setting realistic expectations, and setting expectations for now and later. You don't want to set expectations too low or too high to begin with.

3. Don't be afraid to ask questions and ask for help

"Ask for clarification," Norsten says. "You need to make sure you understand what is being asked of you." She also says to be prepared to put in time learning the job when you're off the clock. Learning a new job can take a lot of time and doesn't always fit into your scheduled workday. She compares this to a basketball player showing up for practice, but also shooting baskets outside of practice.

4. Plan for the unexpected

Things don't always go the way you thought or expected they would. Keeping that in mind can help ease emotions when the unexpected does occur, Norsten says.

Examples of planning for the unexpected include taking a trial run of your new route to work and having a plan in place for times when things do go wrong.

5. Practice a can-do attitude

Be flexible. Be a problem solver and don't complain. Employers appreciate employees who are willing to help out by doing what needs to get done and doing it with an upbeat attitude. **(crw)**

Jessie Foss is a freelance writer who lives in La Crosse. Transitions are definitely not one of her favorite activities in life.



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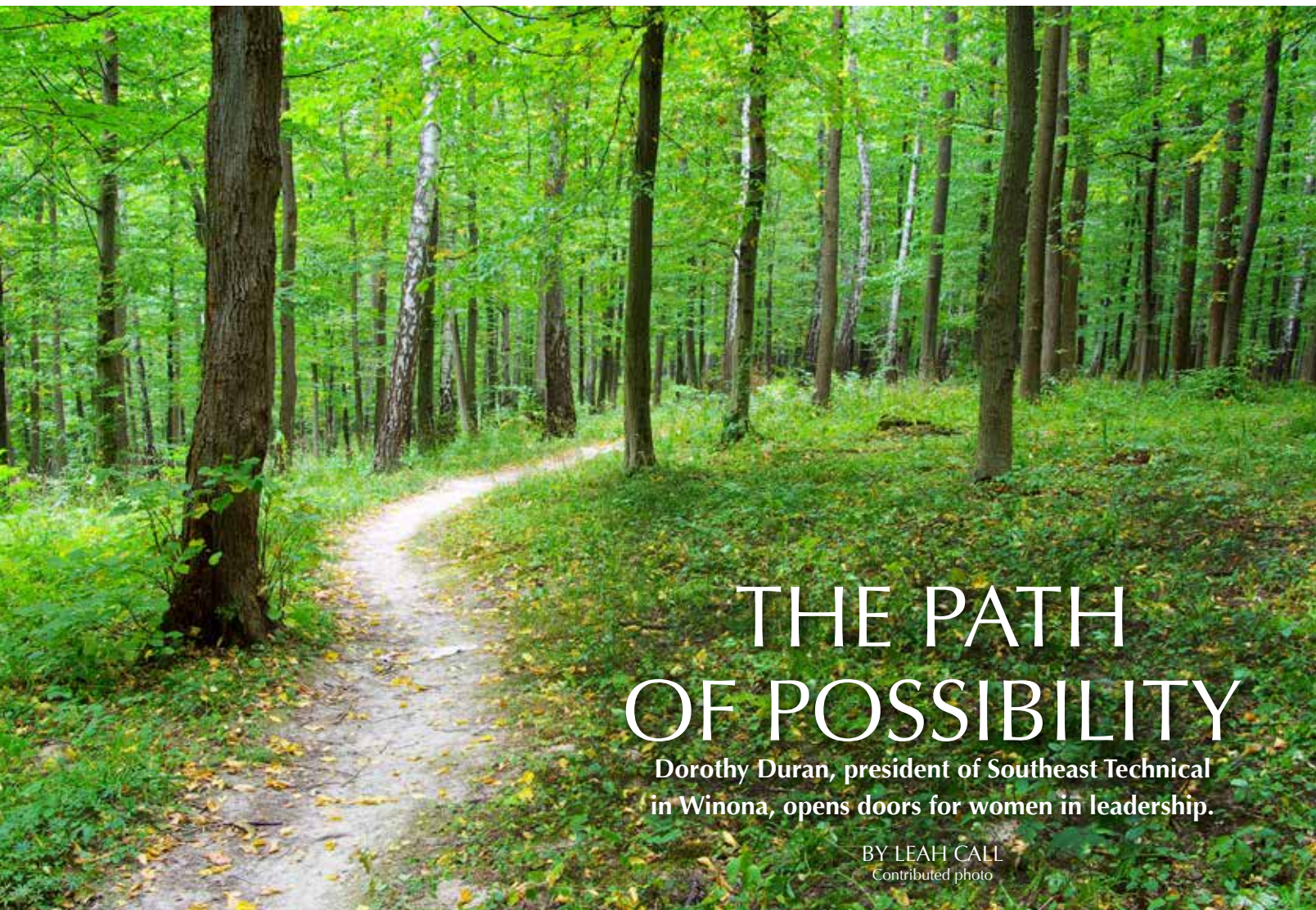


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THE PATH OF POSSIBILITY

Dorothy Duran, president of Southeast Technical
in Winona, opens doors for women in leadership.

BY LEAH CALL
Contributed photo



Dr. Dorothy Duran, president, Southeast Technical, Winona

In July 2014, Dr. Dorothy Duran took over as president of Minnesota State College–Southeast Technical in Winona. As the first woman to hold this position at Southeast Technical, Duran says she feels both humbled and excited. “I hope I can be an example for others as far as opening those doors for women in leadership positions,” she says.

As people get to know this soft-spoken leader, they will be both inspired and moved by her commitment to changing

lives through education and by what she refers to as her GED-to-Ph.D. story.

Opening doors of opportunity

Duran, the youngest of seven siblings, grew up in poverty in Albuquerque, New Mexico. She was raised by her grandmother, who spoke only Spanish, while her mother worked two jobs as a dishwasher and housekeeper. Duran remembers her mother, who had only an eighth-grade education, stressing the importance of graduating from high school. When a sports injury prevented Duran from graduating with her high school class, she felt like she let her mother down.

Though she later received her GED, college felt like it was for other people, not her. When she accompanied a friend to register for college classes, she waited outside. “I felt so unworthy to even enter that building,” recalls Duran. She eventually did go inside and even registered herself. “I learned my first week of classes that I just loved learning,” says Duran.

She struggled that first semester and almost quit, but her love of learning and her determination pushed her to continue. “Quitting would have been so easy,” says Duran. Instead, she compared her life as a cashier with a limited future to the opportunities she had in

college. “When I was in college and learning, these doors of possibility just kept opening.”

She chose the path of possibility, quit her job and enrolled in 17 credits. “I was almost like an angry spirit, determined to do this,” says Duran.

Decisions that open doors

Duran earned a bachelor’s and later a master’s degree. She then took a part-time job as a clerk in the financial aid office at Albuquerque Technical Vocational Institute (now called Central New Mexico Community College). For Duran, that experience was life changing. “(I saw) people come in looking at the college as an opportunity, a place of hope to change their lives. And the financial aid office played such a huge part in these people obtaining their goals.”

Duran saw herself in those students, and she learned everything she could to assist every person that walked through the door. She quickly moved from part-time clerk to director, becoming an advocate for the students she worked with.

“It occurred to me that I would like to be in a position where I can make those decisions that could open doors, make college more accessible and really streamline so many things for students. It was that clarity that inspired me to continue my degree.”

Duran went on to earn a doctorate from the University of Texas at Austin, and she served as the dean of a small college in New Mexico. She later assumed the position of Vice President of Academic Affairs for Iowa Western Community College. There,

she was encouraged by the man who hired her to one day become a college president herself.

From Ph.D. to president

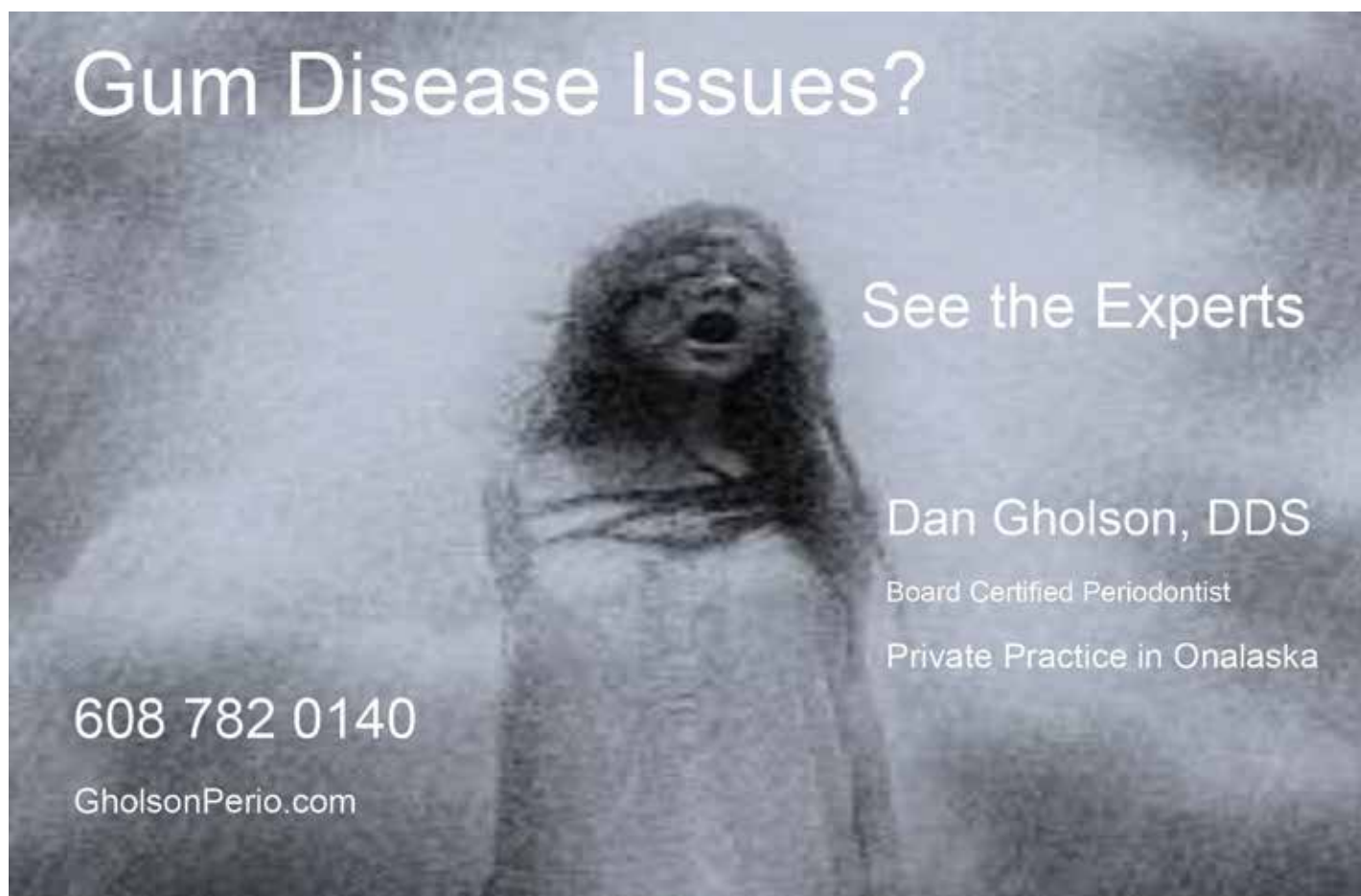
Duran calls Southeast Technical a good fit. “(Former president) Jim Johnson really created a culture of valuing people, and I value people. We have a lot of great things happening, lots of opportunities for growth.”

Remembering where she came from, Duran is already reaching out to underserved populations, including area Native American, Hispanic and Hmong populations. She also works to ensure that the college is meeting the community’s needs.

Students remain her number one priority. That’s something she repeatedly stresses to faculty and staff. “When students speak, we have to listen, because we need to be here to respond to their needs, to meet them where they are and to help them be successful.”

To those who want to better their lives through education, Duran offers this advice: “Think about what you value and the road that will get you there. Direct yourself to meet that goal. There will be challenges. You will have to work harder, maybe sacrifice, maybe move to another state. There will be some significant change, and that is daunting. But think about where you are, what you have ahead of you if you stay where you are. It is better to take that risk than years later have regrets.” *(crw)*

Freelance writer Leah Call was impressed and inspired by Dorothy Duran’s accomplishments.



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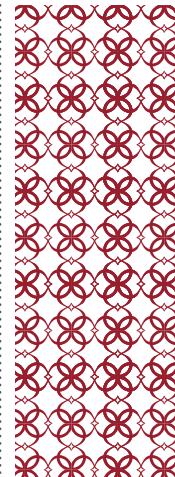


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From its communal areas to private quarters, Mark and Sue Halter's home on Cass Street in La Crosse possesses a clean, comfortable beauty.

CASS STREET CATHARSIS

As they transition through life, Mark and Sue Halter leave a trail of beautifully renovated homes behind.

BY HEIDI GRIMINGER BLANKE

Photos courtesy of WKBT-TV, News 8

Imagine a home where the décor of one room transitions smoothly to the next, where greens and neutrals are punctuated by occasional bursts of color, a house that perfectly reflects the people living there.

Mark and Sue Halter's Cass Street residence, a place they've called home for less than one year, was not only a change in address, it was also a change in career and lifestyle. For 30 years, the couple lived on a farm where Mark raised beef; Sue commuted to La Crosse and Decorah, Iowa, for her medical practice. Their transition not only involved a switch from rural to urban, but also from farming to design. They left nearly everything behind, a change Mark describes as "invigorating."

Mark explains the impetus for the change. "When you farm, there's not much to do in the winters, so I started remodeling houses, and the more I remodeled houses, the more I got into architecture, design and art. As I got older, my interests kind of consolidated around those three things." Unexpectedly, the Halters found themselves co-owners, with Janelle Byus, of a design firm, J Company Interior Design Studio.

It began, as many changes do, out of the blue. As part of a project one winter, Mark ran into Jennifer Nordeen, then owner of Nordeen Design Gallery, at Lighting Design by Wettstein's. They chatted for a while, with Nordeen explaining her readiness to move on from her business. "I said I could understand, and she went up and paid her bill," says Mark. "All of a sudden, she came running back through the whole length of the store and said, 'I've got an idea. Why don't you and Sue buy the design firm?'"

A fresh start

The Halters are experts at transitioning from one home to the next. Their current home is a complete renovation, from walls to floors to furniture to draperies. Where many people might find parting with years of accumulated belongings traumatic, the Halters find it cathartic.

"If you select some things that are really meaningful to you, and you're kind of judicious of how you pick and choose, you can keep some of those things around," explains Sue. For example, a portrait of Sue's mother as a young woman, complete with a bright yellow hat, hangs prominently in the living room.



Light, color and decorative details soften the modern edges of this top-to-bottom redesign.

According to Mark, this two-bedroom, English-cottage-style home “was just a total rehab. It was all 1980s.” Some of the wood floors are original, as are the kitchen cabinets, though they’ve been painted and supplied with new hardware. Walls took on fresh color, carpet was replaced and new light fixtures were hung; even the fireplace surround is new, coming from a model of an authentic English one. “Somewhere in England, there’s a fireplace that looks like this,” says Mark.

Despite its 85 years, the house is filled with contemporary touches, including the Halters’ art collection. Throughout the home, straight, modern lines are softened, as if their edges have been airbrushed.

The Halters worked with interior designer Byus. She explains that “the whole design aesthetic was completely different than anything they’d done before,” as the Halters relocated from a farmhouse with French provincial furniture to a home whose interior has a more contemporary feel.

As the decorating process started, Mark worked on identifying an inspiration style. “Our design is Barbara Barry-inspired: calming, somewhat tonal, transitional, featuring a minimal number of furniture pieces but high quality.”

Mark and Sue both emphasize beginning any decorating project with a plan. “That’s where a good designer comes in. You start doing it yourself, and you get overwhelmed within a couple of weeks,” offers Mark. Byus helped the Halters narrow the choices, guiding them in keeping the look authentically theirs. “Janelle started with the fabric of the draperies as an inspiration,” Sue says. “We liked the colors, so everything came from that.”

Those colors speak to the sea-glass green walls and the white woodwork, with furniture and accents in gray and linen. Sue points to two large, scalloped light fixtures hanging from the kitchen ceiling. “I don’t think Mark and I would have selected something like this ourselves, but Janelle talks you through why this might be kind of neat here. And I love it.”

Understanding the big picture was important to Sue, Byus

explains. “Sue would ask, ‘Why did you do that?’ or ‘Why did you pick that fabric for me?’ and I would give her a design solution or concept of why I chose it. She would say, ‘OK, now I understand; let’s go forward.’”

The next transition

Sue’s favorite room is the enclosed porch, a way of connecting with the outdoors, the one aspect of the farmhouse she misses. But just as the Halters settled into the idea of their current house as their forever home, they bought one more house, a place set back from the street on a wooded lot, yet still in La Crosse. “The more I thought about it, the more I realized what I missed from the farm was the sense of some space and some privacy, hearing birds right outside your kitchen window, a space for the dog to run around in,” says Sue.

Their next home is showing its age, having been in the same family for 91 years and still displaying some of its 1950s décor. The Halters are busy with the renovation, but the changes are in keeping with the home’s character. “The owners,” explains Mark, “were interested in selling to someone that would want to preserve the home. Their big concern was someone just coming in and knocking down that house to put up some condos or a couple of new big houses or something like that.

“We’ve always been old-house people,” he continues. This is the fourth house we’ve ripped up together. We did one on 13th and King. Then we totally redid the farmhouse back in the early 2000s. We’ve totally redone this (Cass Street) house.”

Not many people find completely redecorating a home as energizing as the Halters do. With a plan and the assistance of an interior designer, this new house is bound to be a perfect reflection of the Halters themselves, selectively filled with the perfect belongings. **(crw)**

Writer Heidi Griminger Blanke, Ph.D., owns Orah Communications. After visiting the Halters, she’s getting up the courage to declutter her own home.



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5 STEPS TO BETTER HEALTH

Join *Coulee Region Women* in making the transition to a healthier you.

BY MARTHA KEEFFE

How would you like to improve your overall well-being?

Is your goal to be thinner, happier or healthier? By making simple, manageable changes to your lifestyle, you can achieve those goals. “The clear winner to long-term results is taking small steps and then building on each step,” says Scott Lattos, Nutritional Research and Development Director at Thrive Health Center in Onalaska. “It allows people time to change their perception of health and gives their bodies time to make the changes.” Bearing that in mind, Lattos, along with Patti Bartsch, founder of Naturally Unbridled Wellness LLC Holistic Health Solutions in Onalaska, offers the following tips.

1. Drink water

To cut down on calories and avoid consuming anti-nutrients such as artificial colors, sweeteners, flavors and preservatives that add toxins to your body, reach for a glass of water instead of a soda or diet cola. “These toxins actually cause your body to expend good nutrients,” explains Bartsch. And more often than not, afternoon slumps are a result of mild dehydration, not a lack of caffeine or sugar.

2. Improve your diet

If thoughts of replacing potato chips with brussels sprouts make you cringe, don't despair. Making improvements to your eating habits doesn't mean depriving yourself of the foods you love but rather finding ways to moderate their intake while introducing healthy foods and habits into your lifestyle. “Start making some behavioral changes,” suggests Lattos. “For example, eat breakfast and try to keep healthy snacks available.” Beef up an iceberg lettuce salad with dark, leafy greens, opt for mustard instead of mayonnaise or prepare your oatmeal with 1 percent milk instead of water. And whenever possible, read nutrition labels to find foods prepared with natural ingredients, adds Bartsch.

3. Get moving

We all know that exercise is critical for weight loss, heart health and maintaining mobility, but it doesn't take hours at the gym or running a marathon to get results. Enroll in a yoga class, park farther away from your destination and walk the extra distance or buy a pedometer and challenge yourself to increase the number of steps you take throughout the day. And buddy up. “We do much better when we work with others to get and stay healthy,” says Lattos.

4. Be social

In her book *7 Steps to a Naturally Unbridled Life*, Bartsch shares how the simple act of engaging yourself with others can help buoy your spirits and keep you connected to a greater community. “Start by paying compliments to the people around you,” says Bartsch. “It makes them feel better, and you'll be surprised how many compliments you'll start receiving, too.” In addition, Lattos suggests maintaining friendships and becoming actively involved with a charity that you feel passionate about. And for a daily boost, give someone you love a hug—the release of the feel-good hormone oxytocin is certain to raise your self-esteem.

5. Catch some ZZZs

Nothing refreshes—and improves your overall health—like a good night's sleep. From lowering stress to improving memory, curbing depression and even aiding with weight loss, studies overwhelmingly support its health benefits. In order to get the most of your shut-eye, Bartsch recommends that you avoid sleep saboteurs like bright lights and electronics, which can wind you up and cause distractions before bedtime. “They don't call it beauty sleep for nothing,” she says. “This is the time your body needs to restore, rebuild and repair.” *(crw)*

Martha Keefe lives and writes in La Crosse. In an attempt to improve her well-being, she'll get around to adding “quit procrastinating” to the list.

The Coulee Region Women staff encourage you to take a simple step toward better health. You don't know where it might take you!

I started running this spring, and it's helped me get in much better shape.
—Ashley Reynolds

Music has inspired me to get moving!
—Sandy Clark

I am choosing more organic and healthier foods and smaller portions. I also love doing Pilates.
—Carol Schank

Scheduling my exercise into my busy schedule ensures I don't miss any Jazzercise classes!
—Claire Ristow-Seib

I'm trying to replace diet soda with water.
—Jennie Kolek



This year I took up biking and participated in the Leukemia Lymphoma Scenic Shore 150-Mile Bike Tour fundraiser. I biked a total of 1,000 miles this summer!
—Diane Raam

Joining the Couch to 5K group at YMCA-La Crosse helped me restart my running habit, make new friends and run my first 5K.
—Betty Christiansen

I ran the Twin Cities Marathon this year and completed it in under 4½ hours—my best time!
—Joanne Mihm

I enjoy walking regularly to help stay in shape.
—Lisa Houghton

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Beyond the Veggie Platter

Party foods can be both festive and healthful.

BY JULIE NELSON

Contributed photos

Recipes analyzed by Gundersen Health System dietitians

Oktoberfest, Irishfest and Applefest: the celebrations we know and love are part of living in the Coulee Region. And, for many of us, the two-month stretch filled with Christmas parties, New Year's Eve gatherings and Super Bowl soirees could easily be called "Caloriefest," a celebration that is fun, but clearly has its downside. The good news is, it doesn't have to be that way.



Marisa Pruitt, registered dietitian,
Gundersen Health System

Marisa Pruitt, a registered dietitian at Gundersen Health System, assures us it is possible to host a festive party without turning it into a recruitment tool for Weight Watchers. She says the secret is to

think of appetizers in terms of food, not snacks.

Filling, not fattening

"Look for foods that fill people up," says Pruitt, and offer a variety of choices. Yes, the standard veggie and fruit trays are good, but so are meats, cheeses and whole-grain bread rounds or crackers. Think of a thinly sliced baguette with a dab of low-fat cream cheese, a sun-dried tomato and a sprig of basil or slice of avocado on top. Then consider smoked salmon on a whole-grain cracker, oven-baked chicken wings or drumsticks and even bacon-wrapped water chestnuts or asparagus. Now you're talking foods that will satisfy your guests and help them avoid mindlessly chomping on nutrition-less snack food.

If you're going to talk party in Wisconsin, you might as well talk cheese. The dairy product is a pleasure to our palates, and it offers the nutritional benefits of protein and calcium. In general, the "fresh" cheeses are the lowest in calories (cottage cheese, feta, cream cheese, ricotta and mozzarella), while cheddar and Swiss are at the higher end of the calorie spectrum.

If foods such as cheese and bacon seem like selections that should be

banished to the unhealthy list, Pruitt offers this perspective: “No one food is going to make us fat or thin.” She says as long as we consume these foods in moderation, we can eat them, enjoy them and not feel guilty.

Everything in moderation

Moderation is also a key when it comes to beverages, especially the alcoholic kind. Pruitt says a good party tip is to alternate: Follow one cocktail (or glass of punch, or eggnog, or sugary soda) with a glass of water. Drinking water offers a couple of benefits. It allows you to continue to have a drink in your hand, it keeps you from consuming too much alcohol too quickly and it helps you process the extra sodium that often comes with party foods. As a host, you may want to have a pitcher of ice water with lemon slices handy or perhaps set out small containers of bottled water or cans of sparkling water.

Of course, no party is complete without a dessert or other sweet. Pruitt says, again, the best option is to offer something satisfying; just watch the portion size. Better to satisfy a chocolate craving with a single piece of rich, dark chocolate than to offer a low-fat, low-sugar dessert that leaves your guests wanting more.

Other food thoughts to keep in mind when hosting a party are to offer a gluten-free option and, if you offer nuts or any food with nuts in them, make sure they are clearly identified and perhaps separated from the other foods. By all means, encourage your guests with special food requirements to bring a favorite dish to share.

Slow down and enjoy

When it comes time for the big night, Pruitt has a couple of tips to help you watch your own waistline. She suggests entering the party hungry, but not ravenous. Make a meal out of the food, not a feast. Then she advocates for the value of mindfulness. Eat with intent and pleasure. Notice when you are full and stop eating.

With just a few healthful choices, your party will be a fun, satisfying fest with no regrets. (crw)

Julie Nelson doesn't host a lot of parties, but she always appreciates going to one with tasty, healthful food. She is the public relations director at The Salvation Army.



EDAMAME DIP

Serves 8.

- 12-16 oz. shelled edamame (fresh or frozen)
- ½ cup packed, roughly chopped fresh cilantro
- ½ cup plain yogurt
- 1 avocado, peeled, pitted, chopped
- ½ cup water
- ¼ cup lime juice
- Salt to taste
- Sesame oil to taste

Bring 2 quarts of water to boil. Add edamame and reduce heat to simmer. Cook for 5 minutes or until tender. Drain and rinse under cold water. Place edamame in food processor; pulse several times. Add cilantro and pulse several times. Add remaining ingredients and pulse until well combined. Add more or less liquid depending on your desired consistency. Season with salt and sesame oil to taste. Chill before serving. Serve with pita chips, veggies or black bean chips.

Adapted from Simply Recipes, www.simplyrecipes.com/recipes/edamame_dip

90 calories, 5g fat, 6g protein, 8g carbohydrate, 3g fiber, 10mg sodium



SPINACH-PARMESAN DIP

Serves 8.

- 1 tsp olive oil
- 3 garlic cloves, chopped
- ¼ tsp salt
- 1 10-oz. package fresh spinach
- ½ cup basil leaves, loosely packed
- ⅓ cup (about 3 oz.) ⅓-less-fat cream cheese, softened
- ⅛ tsp black pepper
- ⅓ cup plain fat-free yogurt
- ¼ cup (1 oz.) grated fresh Parmesan cheese

Heat olive oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add garlic; sauté 1 minute. Add salt and spinach; sauté 3 minutes or until the spinach wilts. Place spinach mixture in a colander, pressing until mixture is barely moist.

Place spinach mixture, basil, cream cheese and pepper in a food processor; process until smooth. Spoon spinach mixture into a medium bowl. Add yogurt and Parmesan; stir to combine. Chill.

Submitted by Marisa Pruitt.

60 calories, 3.5g fat, 4g protein, 4g carbohydrate, 1g fiber, 210mg sodium



KALE CHIPS

Serves 4.

2 bunches kale

1 T olive oil

Salt and pepper to taste (or other seasoning of your choice)

Preheat oven to 350°F. Wash and dry kale leaves. Cut out the thick center stem. Tear leaves into medium-size pieces. Toss with the olive oil, salt and pepper (or other seasoning). Spread the pieces in a single layer on a baking sheet. Bake 10-15 minutes or until crispy.

40 calories, 3.5g fat, 1g protein, 2g carbohydrate, 1g fiber, 20mg sodium

ENERGY BITES

Serves 12.

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup rolled oats

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup peanut butter

$\frac{1}{3}$ cup honey

$\frac{1}{3}$ cup cocoa powder

$\frac{1}{3}$ cup shredded coconut

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup wheat germ

2 tsp. vanilla extract

1 pinch ground cinnamon

Mix all ingredients together in a bowl. Roll mixture into ping-pong-size balls. Refrigerate until ready to serve.

Recipe from allrecipes.com, submitted by Tamsz.

140 calories, 8g fat, 5g protein, 16g carbohydrate, 3g fiber, 50mg sodium

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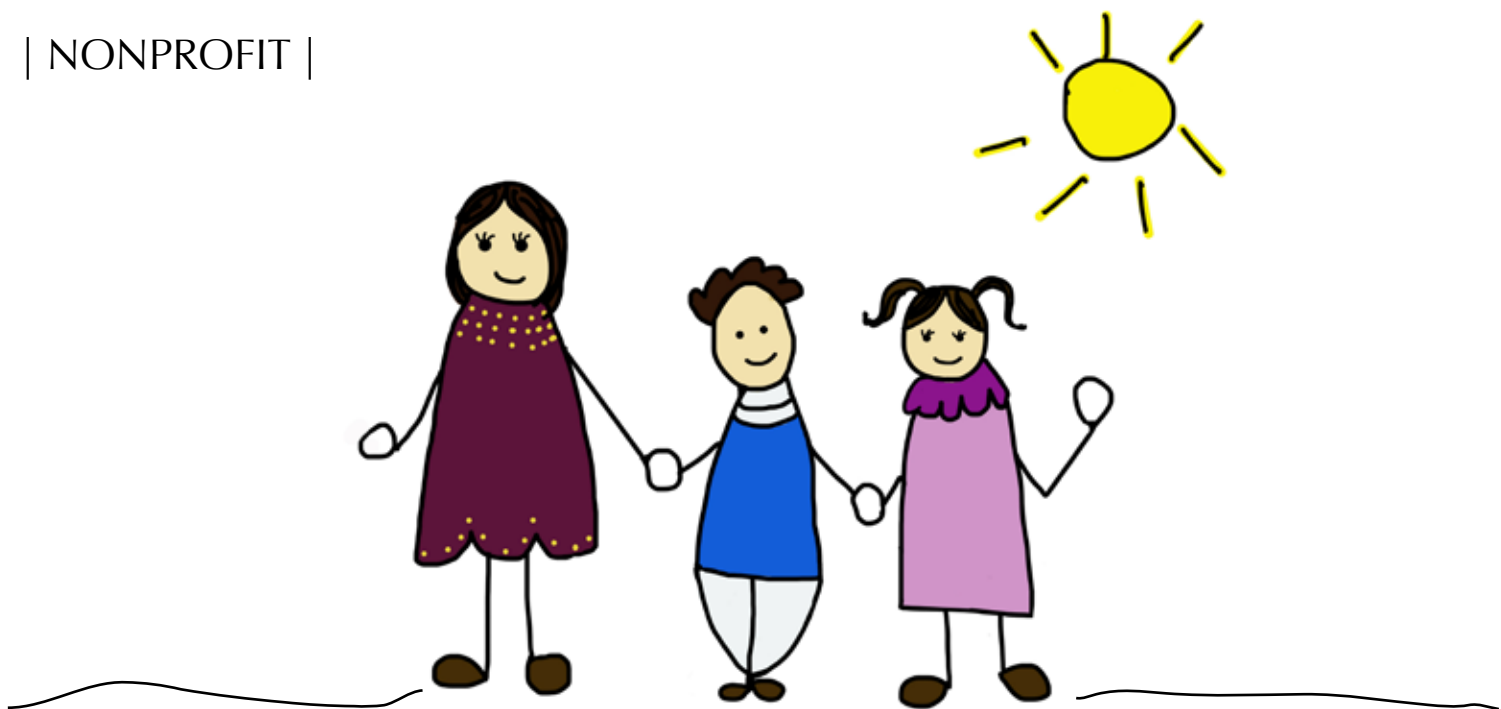
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WOMEN IN TRANSITION

The YWCA's Transitional Housing Program focuses on women's strengths to move them and their children out of homelessness.

BY SHARI HEGLAND

There are many faces to homelessness in the Coulee Region, and unfortunately, many of these faces are those of women and children. While shelters provide a temporary place to stay, one local program is uniquely focused on helping mothers and their children transition from homelessness to permanent housing.

With six apartments located in La Crosse and Onalaska, the YWCA of the Coulee Region served 10 mothers and 16 children in 2013 through its Transitional Housing Program, funded primarily through grants from the Department of Housing and Urban Development with assistance from the United Way, local foundations and other donors.

The program is open only to single mothers with children under 18 who meet the federal definition of homelessness, which does not include "couch surfing"—living with family or friends. Many are referred to the YWCA from the Salvation Army shelter or the New Horizons domestic violence emergency shelter.

YWCA housing director Meredith McCoy says that the program's goal is to build on each woman's strengths and help her move toward self-sufficiency and permanent housing.

Who are the homeless?

Most women served in the program are between 25 and 35. Many are fleeing domestic violence, McCoy says, or they may have become pregnant at a young age with no support system or safe home structure in place. "They've definitely experienced a lot of setbacks, heartaches and struggles," she says.

Through weekly meetings with a case manager, the women set goals that will help move them toward self-sufficiency, such as finding employment or increasing their existing income, budgeting, consumer counseling and parenting skills. YWCA case managers

help them connect with resources in the community such as The Parenting Place, Consumer Credit Counseling Services of La Crosse or counseling for mental health or addiction.

Encouraging individual success

McCoy says success in the program, which has a 24-month time limit, is defined by each woman's individual situation, and she admits that not all are able to follow through with the program. Some who enter the program are already employed and need just a couple of months to regroup and find housing. Others need to spend many months developing job skills or repairing a history of evictions in order to qualify for subsidized housing. Some must overcome challenges such as finding child care if working late or weekend shifts or finding transportation if they do not have a car.

In addition to meeting with case managers, McCoy says getting the women in the program together as group often provides a healthy support network that was missing in their lives before, and it may continue to provide support after they leave the program.

While the challenges and the need are great—McCoy says there is always a waiting list for the program—the YWCA takes a positive and hopeful approach toward helping the women in transitional housing improve the situation for themselves and their children.

"Most of them do have goals, and we want to help them reach those," she says. "This is about new starts and making positive change." *crw*

Holmen writer and editor Shari Hegland appreciates learning the ways organizations in our community work to improve the lives of those who are most vulnerable.

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THERE'S A CHILL ABOUT HER

Michelle Bryant brings junior hockey (and two teams) to town.

BY JOEL BADZINSKI
Contributed photo



Michelle Bryant figured her first sales pitch for the Coulee Region Chill would be an easy one.

Bryant and her husband, Kevin, were considering buying the junior hockey franchise in 2012. So they sat down with their four sons, all youth hockey players, to break the news.

"They were excited," Bryant says of her sons' reaction. "They thought it was great."

Over the past two years, Michelle Bryant has worked hard to maintain that excitement and grow junior hockey in the La Crosse area. Bryant is the lead owner of both the Chill and the La Crosse Freeze hockey teams and has taken over management of Green Island Ice Arena, which is owned by the City of La Crosse.

"It's been fun," Bryant says. "We have done and accomplished so much in 24 months. It's been busy, but now that we have both teams in place, I can sit back and enjoy watching the games and allow all that hard work to come to fruition."

Commitment and change

The Coulee Region Chill began playing at the OmniCenter in Onalaska in 2010. The Bryants, who had been involved with the Chill as a player host family, purchased the team in 2012, operated at the OmniCenter for two more years, then made the move to Green Island Ice Arena in La Crosse this past summer. Michelle Bryant also decided to bring in another team, buying a Flint, Michigan-based franchise and renaming it the La Crosse Freeze.

Bryant is one of two female lead owners in the 24-team North American Hockey League and is proud of the inroads she's made. "(Junior hockey is) definitely a man's world," she says. "But I think I've gained a lot of respect from the other owners as far as the commitment I've shown and the positive changes we've made here."

The mission of junior hockey teams, in addition to providing entertainment, is to develop amateur players who are between high school and college. Most Chill and Freeze players are 17 to 21 and working to earn college scholarships.

It can be a tough road: The Chill, who are affiliated with the North American Hockey League (Junior A, Tier II), play 60 regular-season games from September through March; the Freeze, an NA3HL team (Junior A, Tier III), play 48 games. The teams practice every weekday, and some of the players take high school or college classes and work part-time jobs.

A hockey mom at heart

That's where Bryant's instincts as a mom kick in. Most first-year junior hockey players are away from home for the first time, living with a new family, and she takes seriously her responsibility to give them a positive experience.

"You take the kids under your wing, and you want to help them grow as players and young men," Bryant says. "You get to know them and care about them. Most host parents treat the players as their own family but also want to give them the independence they need to grow away from home. It's an extended family."

The Bryants hosted two players over the years. Their boys, Kevin, 15, Will, 13, Matthew, 11, and Thomas, 9, loved the experience, and Michelle and Kevin still receive weekly calls or text messages from their players, one who is in college and one who is with another junior team.

"What makes it all worth it is seeing these guys move on and their dreams come true," Bryant says. "Being a part of it, that's pretty special." 

Joel Badzinski is a freelance writer who lives in La Crosse. He was born and raised in hockey-crazy Minnesota and still plays several times a week in area recreational leagues.

Schedules and ticket information

Green Island Ice Arena is located at 2312 Seventh St. S., behind the Gundersen Lutheran campus in La Crosse.

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Dr. Mary Bassing Creates Geriatric Assessment Clinic

Gundersen Health System welcomes Mary Bassing, MD, to its Internal Medicine department. Dr. Bassing, of Tower, Minnesota, conducted her residency at Gundersen and is happy to return to the organization.

Dr. Bassing is building a geriatric practice and has created the Geriatric Assessment Clinic. This clinic will collaborate in the care of older adults who may be at risk of losing independence due to health status and functional and/or cognitive impairments. The clinic's goal is to help patients and their families find their best quality of life, maintain independence and plan for the future.

For appointment information, contact Gundersen Internal Medicine at 608-775-8388.



Mayo Clinic Health System Welcomes Obstetrician- Gynecologist

The Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology at Mayo Clinic Health System—Franciscan Healthcare is pleased to welcome Rebecca Scarseth, D.O.

Dr. Scarseth completed her Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine through Des Moines University in Des Moines, Iowa, and her obstetrics and gynecology residency through Doctor's Hospital in Columbus, Ohio. Dr. Scarseth is a member of the American College of Osteopathic Obstetrics and Gynecologists, the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology, the American Osteopathic Association and the American Medical Association.

Dr. Scarseth practices in La Crosse and Holmen. To make an appointment, call 608-392-9866.



Coulee Region Women Wins Excellence Award

Coulee Region Women was honored to receive a Gold Excellence Award from the Minnesota Magazine & Publishing Association at their 18th annual Excellence Awards gala held in Minneapolis in November. The Gold award was given for the category of Regular Column for a general interest publication with a circulation under 60,000, and the winning entry was a collection of Food stories that appeared in the October/November 2013, December/January 2013 and April/May 2014 issues, all written by Deborah Nerud. We wish to thank all of our excellent writers, photographers and staff for their contributions to the success of *Coulee Region Women*!



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Enjoy the Minneapolis skyline from the Stone Arch Bridge (top left) or Brit's Pub on Nicollet Mall (top right). Minneapolis icons old and new include the Mall of America, Mary Tyler Moore's statue on Nicollet Mall and the METRO.

NEIGHBOR TO THE NORTH

Explore Minneapolis like never before.

BY BETTY CHRISTIANSEN

Photos courtesy of Meet Minneapolis

Once, I lived in Minneapolis. I went to college there, and I loved it for its big-city feel (yet close proximity to my rural Wisconsin home), its energy, its art, its adventurous dining and the fact that a college student with little money and no car could get everywhere she needed—even to an internship in St. Paul—with basic knowledge of the bus system.

Much has changed in those 20-some years, for me and for Minneapolis. The opportunities for art, shopping and dining are still amazing—and multiplying all the time. New neighborhoods are being established, world-renowned chefs are setting up shop and the ease with which the METRO light rail line allows residents and visitors alike to navigate the city is in itself a draw. Best of all, it's in close proximity to our Wisconsin homes.

Whether you're familiar with the city and all it has to offer, or your experience is limited to an occasional trip to the Mall of America, Minneapolis no doubt holds some surprises for you. While detailed itineraries and thousands of seasonal and year-round attractions are offered at www.minneapolis.org, the highlights here will easily fill a weekend getaway.

Settle in

If you're planning a weekend in Minneapolis, your choice of lodging can help shape your itinerary. Traveling with kids? Choose the Depot Renaissance Minneapolis Hotel downtown. With an indoor water park and an outdoor ice rink, this historic train depot offers plenty to engage children and adults alike.

If your weekend is geared toward a romantic getaway or girlfriend gathering, consider the many lovely, historic options the city contains. Hotel Ivy, Grand Hotel Minneapolis and The Foshay all offer luxury accommodations in the heart of downtown. Whatever option you choose, be sure to visit go.minneapolis.org first for deals on hotels.

Explore downtown

No matter how well you think you know Minneapolis, you're bound to learn something new at Mill City Museum. Here, the history of Minneapolis is summed up in one word: flour. Kids and adults will have a blast (literally) learning about the history of Minneapolis and how milling fueled its growth. Built into the ruins of the city's largest flour mill, this 12,000-sq. ft. museum offers the film *Minneapolis in 19 Minutes Flat!*,



Holi-dazzling

If you're visiting downtown Minneapolis pre-Christmas, add these to your list of holiday festivities:

Holidazzle Village

Minneapolis lights up the town with a new tradition—a German-style Christmas market located at Peavey Plaza on Nicollet Mall. From now through Christmas Eve, enjoy German food, holiday drink, unique shopping and entertainment in a magical setting. Visit www.minneapolisholidaymarket.com to learn more.

A Christmas Carol

After browsing the holiday market, warm your toes and your heart at the Guthrie Theatre's annual production of *A Christmas Carol*, which runs through December 28. Allow time before the show to take in some of the best views of Minneapolis from the Guthrie's Endless Bridge. If you're traveling with kids, you might opt for *How the Grinch Stole Christmas* at the Children's Theatre Company instead.

Macy's Santaland

If you're spending a family weekend in town, don't miss "A Day in the Life," the Christmas display in the 8th Floor Auditorium of Macy's on Nicollet Mall. Enjoy photo ops with elves at work, Christmas shopping, treats and more.



The Guthrie Theatre offers world-class performances just steps from the mills that put Minneapolis on the map.

narrated by Minneapolis theater veteran Kevin Kling, and tours of the Flour Tower on an eight-story elevator ride. Kids can learn the science behind the mill's historic explosions, then roll up their sleeves in the Baking Lab.

Also close by is the Stone Arch Bridge, built as a railroad bridge spanning the Mississippi River, now restored for bike and foot traffic. Enjoy breathtaking views of St. Anthony Falls and, in fair weather, explore the bridge and the surrounding area on an informative and fun Segway tour.

Of course, downtown Minneapolis is famous for shopping. Here, you can find Macy's, Target's flagship store, Saks Off Fifth and countless unique shops in City Center, in Gaviidae Common and on Nicollet Mall. All are contained in just a few city blocks and—best of all during the Minnesota winter—connected by skyways. Venture north of Hennepin Avenue to discover the shops in the North Loop or across the river to sample the boutiques and restaurants of Northeast. If you find yourself in "Nordeast" for a nightcap, have it at the longstanding Nye's Polonaise Room. Put in your request at the piano bar, and don't be surprised if you get caught up in a polka.

Linger over dinner

In Minneapolis, the dining options—fine or family—are mind-boggling. If you're traveling with kids, you can't go wrong with Buca di Beppo, where hearty and tasty Italian dishes are served family-style in a downtown location. Other local favorites include Brit's Pub, Ling & Louie's and Crave on Nicollet Mall, and true foodies will seek out the award-winning Solera on Hennepin Avenue and Merchant in the North Loop, newly opened by New York chef Gavin Kaysen, who left his position at Café Boulud to

return home to Minneapolis. New North Loop hotspots include Borough and Freehouse.

For the more exotic palates, plan a stroll down Eat Street, 17 blocks of more than 50 authentic ethnic restaurants along Nicollet Avenue, a quick drive south of downtown. Make a day of the destination by first stopping at the nearby Minneapolis Institute of Arts, American Swedish Institute or Museum of Russian Art. Then, enjoy the cuisines of the world—Thai, Vietnamese, Ethiopian, Caribbean, Tibetan and so much more.

Take the train

Park your car at your hotel and leave it there—you can avoid city traffic and enjoy an adventure all its own on the METRO light rail line. It couldn't be easier or more affordable. For just \$1.75 per ride (on the weekend), hop on the Blue Line in downtown Minneapolis to shop to your heart's content at Mall of America, or plan a day of family fun at MOA's Nickelodeon Universe amusement park, Sea Life aquarium and Lego Store.

The brand-new Green Line whisks you down University Avenue to Union Depot in downtown St. Paul, where more history, dining and family fun await. Tour the Minnesota State Capitol and Cathedral of St. Paul, or get on that Segway again for tours of Summit Avenue, Cathedral Hill and St. Paul's infamous gangster hideouts. Kids will love the Minnesota Children's Museum and the Science Museum of Minnesota. And you won't have to wonder where you parked your car. **(crw)**

Betty Christiansen is editor of Coulee Region Women. She thanks her old college friend, Kristen Hirsch Montag, media communication manager at Meet Minneapolis, for her input.

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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., 608-519-0548, aauwlacrosse@hotmail.com, aauw-wi.org.

Business Over Breakfast La Crosse Area Chamber of Commerce, 4th Wed. every month, 7:30-8:45 a.m. Preregister 608-784-4807, lacrossechamber.com.

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, Pogreba Restaurant, 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., 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, Fayze'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, 608-526-2127, dlee@coverainsurance.com.

Women's Alliance of La Crosse (WAL) 2nd Thurs. of each month, noon, The Waterfront Restaurant, Patti Bartsch, 608-799-8326, nu@naturallyunbridled.com.

CALENDAR EVENTS

Nov. 15-Dec. 24, Visits & photos with Santa, Valley View Mall, www.myvalleyview.com.

Nov. 28-Dec. 31, Rotary Lights, 5-10 p.m. daily, Riverside Park, downtown La Crosse, www.rotarylights.org.

Dec. 1-31, Coulee Region Humane Society Tree of Hope, Valley View Mall, www.myvalleyview.com.

Dec. 5-7, 11-13, *Rumors*, 7:30 p.m. (Dec. 5-6, 11-13), 2 p.m. (Dec. 6-7), Toland Theatre, UW-La Crosse.

Dec. 6, Jingle Bell Walk/Run and Rudolf Dash, 8 a.m., Onalaska YMCA, www.laxymca.org.

Dec. 6, Santa Breakfast, Coulee Region Adult Day Center, 9 a.m.-noon, La Crosse American Legion, 711 6th St. S, La Crosse, www.couleeregonadultdaycenter.com.

Dec. 6, Musical Family Yoga Workshops, Little Sprouts 9-10 a.m., Saplings 1-2 p.m., Root Down Yoga, La Crosse. Register at www.rootdownyogastudio.com.

Dec. 6, Christmas Art Show, La Crosse Society of Arts and Crafts, 10 a.m.-4 p.m., Holmen American Legion, 419 1st Ave. W., Holmen, 608-526-2255.

Dec. 6, Family & Children's Center Building Bricks of Hope Lego Contest, Herberger Court, Valley View Mall, www.myvalleyview.com.

Dec. 6, Swinging Yuletide Concert, 7:30 p.m., Valhalla Hall, UW-La Crosse.

Dec. 6-7, Norskedalen Old Fashioned Christmas, 10 a.m.-4 p.m. (Dec. 6), 11 a.m.-3 p.m. (Dec. 7), Norskedalen Nature & Heritage Center, Coon Valley, www.norskedalen.org.

Dec. 6-7, Handel's Messiah, 7:30 p.m. (Dec. 6), 2 p.m. (Dec. 7), Viterbo Fine Arts Center.

Dec. 7, Festival of Carols, 7:30 p.m., English Lutheran Church, La Crosse.

Dec. 11 & 14, Mistletoe & Mayhem: A Holiday Cabaret, 7:30 p.m. (Dec. 11), 2 p.m. (Dec. 14), The Pump House, www.thepumphouse.org.

Dec. 11-21, *A Charlie Brown Christmas*, 7:30 p.m. (Dec. 11-13, 17-20), 2 p.m. (Dec. 13-14, 20-21), La Crosse Community Theatre, www.lacrossecommunitytheatre.org.

Dec. 12, La Crosse Dance Centre's Nutcracker Ballet, 10 a.m., Viterbo Fine Arts Center, 608-796-3100, boxoffice@viterbo.edu.

Dec. 14, Jim Witter's Christmas Memories, 2 p.m., Viterbo Fine Arts Center.

Dec. 18, String Ties "Holiday Bluegrass," 7:30 p.m., The Pump House, www.thepumphouse.org.

Dec. 20, Old School Variety Show, 8 p.m., The Pump House, www.thepumphouse.org.

Dec. 22, *It's a Wonderful Life*, 7:30 p.m., Live from WWL Radio, Heider Center, West Salem, heiderceneter.org.

Dec. 28, Guided Meditation, 5:30 p.m., Root Down Yoga, La Crosse. Register at www.rootdownyogastudio.com.

Dec. 31, Happy NOON Year! Countdown to Noon, The Children's Museum, La Crosse, funmuseum.org.

Dec. 31, Red Cross Blood Drive, Valley View Mall, www.myvalleyview.com.

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

Jan. 2, Blood Center of Wisconsin Blood Drive, Valley View Mall, www.myvalleyview.com.

Jan. 2-4, Unique Shows New Year's Gift Show, Valley View Mall, www.myvalleyview.com.

Jan. 10, New Year's Resolution Walk/Run, 8 a.m., Onalaska YMCA, www.laxymca.org.

Jan. 11, La Crosse Bridal Expo, 10:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m., La Crosse Center, www.lacrossebridalexpo.com.

Jan. 15-19, Winter Clearance Sidewalk Sale, Valley View Mall, www.myvalleyview.com.

Jan. 15-25, Winter Rec-Fest, La Crosse.

Jan. 17, Rockin' for HorseSense for Special Riders, 7 p.m., Radisson Hotel Ballroom, \$10 in advance, \$15 at door, 608-317-0714, www.hssr.org.

Jan. 17, Rave On! The Buddy Holiday Experience, 7:30 p.m., Viterbo Fine Arts Center.

Jan. 20, Anything Goes, 7:30 p.m., Viterbo Fine Arts Center.

Jan. 22, Vocal Jazz Fest, 9 a.m., Annett Recital Hall, UW-La Crosse.

Jan. 24-25, Home Party Showcase, Valley View Mall, www.myvalleyview.com.

Jan. 28-31, Aquinas Education Expo, Valley View Mall, www.myvalleyview.com.

Jan. 30-31, Snowflake Ski Jump Tournament, Westby, www.snowflakeskiclub.com.

Jan. 31, Great Tri-State Rail Sale, 9 a.m.-3 p.m., La Crosse Center.

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