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AREA HOME AND HEALTHY LIVING MAGAZINE

*Embrace
Winter!*

IT'S ALL DOWNHILL

Cindy Patza
Celebrates
Ski Team
Successes

Take It Outside!

10 Ways to Stay Healthy
This Winter

7 Ways to Give Back

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Pictured on cover and above: Cindy Patza, ski coach and ambassador, photographed at Mt. La Crosse. Descente "Charlotte" ski jacket and Leki "Griffin" ski gloves available from the Ski Shop at Mt. La Crosse. Photos by Jordana Snyder Photography.



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I've never been much for winter. I'm the type of person who is always cold, needs sunshine and luxuriates in warm climates. In winter, I'm hunched tight in my coat, squinting against snow and running late because I forgot to allow extra time to scrape a windshield, find a mitten or stuff a child into snow pants. I'd much rather be under a fleece throw with a good book or knitting—but life doesn't pause for winter. How is it that I've spent my entire life in northern states, I've often wondered, when I am so much better suited for, say, the Mediterranean?

I've never been much for winter—or so I thought until we started planning this issue of *Coulee Region Women*. Challenged by this theme to “Embrace Winter,” I had to look past the cozy confines of my fleece throw and see winter with fresh eyes. What I discovered, to my surprise, is that I have embraced winter all along.

When I recall winter as a child growing up in northern Wisconsin, the daughter of a schoolteacher and a snowplow driver, very specific memories come to mind, and few took place indoors. I remember digging tunnels through the towering snow piles my dad pushed up with his plow when clearing our driveway. I remember the stiff

crust that would form on top of the snow, and how my sisters and I—stuffed into our own snowsuits—would fashion them into dinner plates or slates we would “write” on with sticks. I remember sailing down hills in a neighboring cornfield on sleds with my cousins. We fashioned ramps and jumps and soared through the brittle air from the time we got off the school bus till it was dark, and supper was waiting in a toasty kitchen.

I remember one particular night when I was in seventh or eighth grade, tasked with shoveling snow in sub-zero twilight, when I paused to watch the bright pink fingers of a deep-winter sunset stretch across the navy blue sky, bare trees in black relief against them. The air was absolutely still, and as the sharp air seared my nostrils and my lungs, it felt as if the planet too stood still and I was alone on it. I stood that way for several minutes, relishing the colors and the silence and the cold, feeling so awake and so alive.

We're hoping to awaken something in you, too, with an entire issue devoted to winter in the Coulee Region and all it has to offer. We aim to lure you outside (dress properly) and show you the magic embedded in snow and sharp air, short days and long nights, in the company of your family and friends. Follow ski instructor Cindy Patza's advice to give downhill skiing a try, or pick up snowshoeing with locally made snowshoes on our region's numerous trails. Warm your body with Winter Rec Fest activities and warm your soul with volunteer opportunities; warm your kitchen with freshly baked bread and warm your spirit with exquisite winter cocktails. Celebrate the season, your family and your friends—in doing so, you'll also embrace the Norwegian idea of *koselig* (see page 49), a communal coziness that's experienced best in winter.

It's true winter brings challenges, and there are times when it's hard to embrace it. But the first snowfall brings fresh magic when viewed through my children's eyes, and sledding for them is the same thrill I remember, complete with rosy cheeks and hot cocoa and a warm supper waiting. And some nights, when the air is cold and so still, even in town, I'll look up at the stars in sharp relief against a navy blue sky, and it feels as if the planet stands still.

Betty

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FEED YOUR SPIRIT

If the hustle and bustle of the holiday season leaves you worn out and stressed, two events in January may offer just the antidote you need. On January 4, the Franciscan Spirituality Center is hosting Women's Christmas: An Epiphany Celebration for Wise Women. You're invited to enjoy the company of other women while taking a break from other responsibilities. The evening begins at 5:30 p.m. with a simple meal and includes reflections on the Celtic Prayer of Deep Peace and on St. Francis' Canticle. All will leave feeling blessed and gifted. The cost is \$25; the registration deadline is December 21.

Then, return to the center for Tea and Poetry, another spirit-filled event offered by the FSC. On January 21, Marci Madary will lead an enchanting afternoon of high tea, poetry and companionship. The cost is \$40, and the deadline to register is January 13. More information about both events can be found at www.fsccenter.org.



WALK DOWN THE AISLE IN STYLE

If a wedding is in your future, be sure to put January 15 on your calendar. The Wedding Tree is producing the 14th annual La Crosse Bridal Expo at the La Crosse Center. Come as a couple, with your friends and/or with your mom. Walk around gathering wedding ideas and talking with the wide variety of wedding experts who are on hand. From photographers to caterers to florists and more, you'll find ideas, information and experts to help make your day special. The expo runs from 10 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. at the La Crosse Center, 300 Harborview Plaza. One of the most popular events, the style show, takes place at 1:30 p.m. Tickets are free; to get yours, go to www.lacrossebridalexpo.com.

HOLD ON TO THE DREAM

Viterbo University is hosting this year's annual Martin Luther King Jr. community celebration in the Fine Arts Center Main Theater on 929 Jackson Street in La Crosse.



The featured speaker will be Nucleus Johnson, a 22-year-old orator who brings King to life. Johnson has electrified audiences across the country with his historical personification of Dr. King's speeches since he was in first grade. Judge Ramona Gonzalez will serve as the evening's master of ceremonies, and the La Crosse community's annual MLK leadership award recipient will also be recognized. The event, which takes place Monday, January 16, at 7 p.m., is free and open to the public. For more information, visit www.viterbo.edu/ethics.

EMBRACE WINTER!

Sometimes the best way to survive a cold, snowy day is to get out and make the most of it! The La Crosse Parks, Recreation and Forestry department is giving you and your family every opportunity to do just that January 13-30. Whether you



already participate in winter activities, would like to try something new or just enjoy watching, the events at this year's Winter Rec Fest are sure to put a smile on your face. The festivities begin January 13 with the Snowflake Medallion Hunt. The rest happens over the course of three weekends and multiple locations: curling; figure skating; kickball, broomball and one-pitch softball tournaments; a torchlight hike; snowshoeing; a lighted sled hill; a fireworks display and more.

Still refuse to go out in the snow? A euchre tournament, a sheephead tournament and a youth basketball scrimmage all take place indoors. Some events require advance registration. Get all the info you need at www.laxwinterrecfest.com.

LOVE YOUR KITCHEN, LOVE YOUR HEART



The kitchen is the heart of the house, and you can celebrate yours as well as your own hearth health through the annual Love Your Kitchen, Love Your Heart event sponsored by Go Red for Women and Gerhard's Kitchen & Bath Stores. Held on February 2 from 5 to 7 p.m. at Gerhard's Kitchen & Bath Store at 106 Cameron Ave., La Crosse, this event will feature an evening of wine tastings and pairings, heart-healthy cooking demonstrations by a private chef and more.

Gerhard's Kitchen & Bath is a proud sponsor of Go Red for Women in Wisconsin; this event is one of nine the company is hosting statewide. Please RSVP to renee.mdavis@heart.org or 715-829-2841, call Gerhard's Kitchen & Bath manager Dan Sinz at 608-791-3680 for more information, and don't forget to wear red for women's heart health on February 3, National Wear Red Day.



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IT'S ALL DOWNHILL

Cindy Patza has put La Crosse on the map as a ski hub.

BY HEIDI GRIMINGER BLANKE

Photos by Jordana Snyder Photography

Cindy Patza loves skiing,

whether or not there's snow on the ground or even a nip in the air. After all, she's been hitting the slopes for more than 55 years, either on her own skis or as a ski coach. Her conversation is peppered with ski terminology, a vernacular so familiar it's matter-of-fact. She even got married at Mt. La Crosse, on an exceptionally hot June day.

An early start

Patza donned her first pair of skis as a child when her mother signed her up for free ski lessons at Mt. La Crosse. That's all it took. "By the time I was in sixth grade," Patza says, "I saved up my own money for my first season pass."

It was a natural fit for Patza and her four siblings. "My mom worked out there for 20 years, so it kind of became a second home for all of us kids," she says. At the time, Mt. La Crosse had only one hill and no chair lifts. A series of ropes pulled skiers to the top. "If you were little, you'd be up in the air, and you'd have to leap off and grab the second rope. It was so fast, it burned right through my gloves." Despite the rope burn, Patza fondly remembers those days.

Competing in local racing programs sparked her appetite for something more. "I started racing casually because I enjoyed hanging around with the kids who liked to go fast," Patza remembers. Those early racing experiences led to the logical next step: her recruitment onto the UW-La Crosse collegiate team, where she quickly moved up to a varsity slot and a successful career.



Cindy Patza has long ruled the slopes as a racer and ski coach. She started the first local USSA traveling team in the 1970s and has been an active leader in it since.

Promoting the slopes

By the time Patza was in graduate school, she wanted to ensure that aspiring junior racers had a stronger pipeline to fulfilling their dreams. Some La Crosse families had participated in U.S. Ski and Snowboard Association (USSA) racing years before, but a truly organized USSA traveling team had never existed. "I realized we hadn't had USSA racing for many years, and never an organized team, so I started one in the late '70s," she says. Her passion for skiing helped convince the slope's owner that this was indeed a good idea.

The team started out small—"I had maybe two or three kids the first year"—but Patza's dedication kept the team going. At its peak, it boasted 35 kids of all ages, some as young as 6 or 7.

In a time before cell phones, Patza devoted hours to communicating with team parents. Despite her full-time job as a West Salem teacher, she spent countless winter evenings arranging rides to races. "When I got married, my husband was shocked. He'd say, 'I come home,

and you're on the phone with team parents all the time.'" Patza decided to step back just a little. Ironically, years later, it would be her husband, Bill, who would catch the ski-coaching bug.

Patza recalls working hard to put Mt. La Crosse on the ski-racing

circuit. In the 1970s, she says, “We raced with USSA Region One, which is largely Minneapolis based. I kept begging (the organizers) to have a race at Mt. La Crosse. Finally, one year I was at the regional board meeting, and a couple of the La Crosse parents were with me, and we pressured them.”

As a result, Mt. La Crosse now hosts the Wisconsin High School Ski & Snowboard Championships, as well as one of the premier USSA races in the Midwest. “Mt. La Crosse has become legendary for being a very challenging race hill and a place that produces really good racers,” Patza says proudly.

Creating a legacy

To say that Patza helped put Mt. La Crosse on the map is an understatement. It’s one of three places (Vail and Aspen are the others) that qualified high school age racers for U19 championships, whose top finishers head to the U.S. Ski Team’s Development Team.

Today, Patza coaches the Aquinas-Onalaska co-op team and is a voting member of the Wisconsin Interscholastic Alpine Racing Association. She’s no longer on the slopes as much as in the past because she administers the whole conference. “In some regards, it’s kind of a year-round job,” she says.

Despite years of coaching, Patza recalls many team members by name, citing their state championships and their dedication to the sport. “Lots of my former racers are coaches themselves. The oldest kids that I coached are in their 50s now.” And every year, Patza organizes and leads a 24-hour bus trip to the Eastern High School Championships, a top event for high school racers taking place on the East Coast.

While Patza hasn’t raced in a decade, she still skis regularly. Skiing is one of those sports, she explains, that stays with you for a lifetime. You’ll still find her at Mt. La Crosse on practice nights, “but I may be inside doing paperwork, making sure people have paid their dues, handing out bibs.”

“It’s the least I can do,” says Patza. “Through ski racing, I found myself part of an extended family that I want to give back to, and I believe the same is true for every kid who has come through our



Through her passion for skiing and teaching youth, Patza has become an ambassador for the sport, the region and Mt. La Crosse.

programs. Few made the U.S. Team or made a career out of skiing, but they share my love and keep in touch and give back to our skiing community.”

Her best role model in this regard may be her mother, Lois Storlie, who joins Patza at the hill most evenings. “Here’s my mother, who’s never been a downhill skier, but she’s been helping out with races since she was in her 30s. She’s 88 now, and she still comes out almost every night, helps with the kids and gets to know each and every one of them.”

Up North

When the ski hill closes, Patza heads out of town. “We have a place in northern Wisconsin, so we pretty much live there,” she says. “In summer, I get to kick back a little bit” with boating, hiking, swimming and off-road biking.

When Patza says she’s been going up there all her life, she’s not kidding. She and her mother were invited to a friend’s cabin when Patza was 4 weeks old. One week turned into one month, and eventually her parents bought property. Shortly after Patza

married, she and Bill bought land adjacent to that.

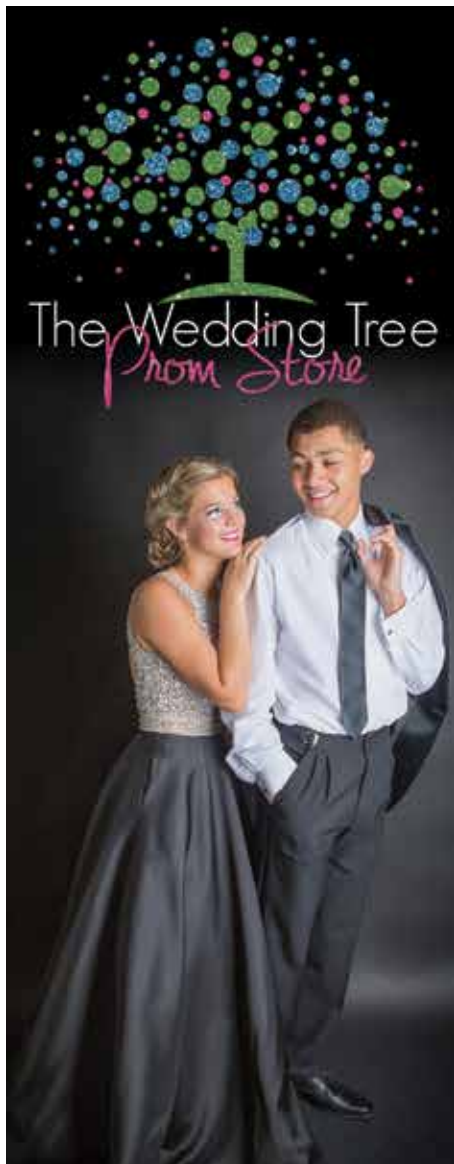
Come winter, they head back to the Coulee Region. “When other people say they are going south for the winter, they mean Florida. We mean La Crosse.”

Embrace winter

For Patza, it’s hard to imagine living in the upper Midwest without getting outside. She encourages anyone who has never skied downhill to give it a try. “Definitely, take a lesson,” she advises. “Don’t go with a bunch of friends who get you on the chair lift and say, ‘Here you go.’” Mt. La Crosse ski instructors “know how to teach so you’re safe and secure. It would be a pity not to try it.”

So, when the snow flies and the temperatures drop, follow Patza’s advice and get outside. Pull on your parka, slide into your hand and boot warmers and enjoy the sparkling winter season. (crw)

Heidi Griminger Blanke, Ph.D., is the author of the romance novel Redesigning Love, as well as numerous essays and stories. Though she resists being bundled up, she’s delighted once she’s outside and moving.



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Heather Quackenboss' family takes advantage of the area's great snowshoeing opportunities.

TAKE IT OUTSIDE

The best of winter is outdoors.

BY SHARI HEGLAND
Contributed photos

What is your winter personality? Pray for it to be over as soon as possible, or embrace the possibilities?

While there's nothing wrong with curling up for an evening with a good book and cup of hot cocoa, many Wisconsinites know that winter is best experienced outdoors.

Heather Quackenboss and her family may put away the kayaks and camping equipment when the weather turns cold, but they don't hibernate the winter months away.

"Our whole family just knows that we all feel better with fresh air," she says. "Whether it is 80 degrees or 20—or even 'minus stupid' cold!"

Quackenboss and her husband, Marshall, make outdoor activities a family endeavor with their three children: Sam, 14; Ryan, 12; and Lily, 10. That might mean sledding at one of several locations around the region or snowshoeing the trails in Hixon Forest, Mathy Quarry and other land maintained by the Mississippi Valley Conservancy for outdoor recreation, something they have done since the kids were small enough to be in baby carriers.

"You can take your kids anywhere at any age. The trick is to dress for the weather," Quackenboss says, "and to take a thermos of tea or hot cocoa."

Hit the trails

Along with snowshoeing, the Coulee Region has many trails maintained for cross-country skiing, including those in Hixon Forest/Forest Hills Golf Course, Goose Island Park, the Great River Trail and Perrot State Park.

For those who just want to walk, there are quiet places to enjoy the beauty of winter, like the Seven Bridges Recreation Area trail north of Holmen or the La Crosse River marsh trails.

"We have so many options for getting out there, even in the winter," says Tyler Malay, special events coordinator for the La Crosse Parks and Recreation Department.

If you don't have your own equipment, the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse Outdoor Connection rents snowshoes, skis, ice skates and more at low daily rates. Snowshoe rentals are also available from River Trail Cycles in Onalaska.

While solo and family time on the trails may be a great winter activity for some, Malay and his colleagues have a long list of opportunities for those looking for group activities, or activities that are in a slightly more sheltered environment.

Winter Rec Fest

The biggest event of the winter is La Crosse's Winter Rec Fest, scheduled for the last two weekends in January, which kicks off with the Snowflake Medallion Hunt—an outdoor opportunity to put your puzzle-solving skills to work.

Among the biggest draws for the Winter Rec Fest are

Youth and adult curling: No experience necessary! "It's a pretty wide range of people who do that," Malay says, with an instructional session offered for those new to the sport. Other participants are veterans, having been a part of a league hosted through the winter at the Green Island Ice Arena.

Figure skating: Winter Rec Fest serves as the backdrop for the La Crosse youth skating program's biggest show of the year.



From hiking to skiing to simply enjoying nature's beauty, there are countless opportunities to get your family outside during a Coulee Region winter.

Frosty Fest Kickball Tournament: "It's kickball, so anyone can play," Malay says. While there are some teams who carry over from fall kickball leagues in the area, he says the winter tournament is open to all experience levels.

Broomball: This tournament is a little more competitive, Malay says, but watching is as much of an adventure as the game itself, with fires for warmth around the Copeland Park ice rink adding to the atmosphere.

Family Fun Night: Forest Hills Golf Course is the location for the biggest family event of the fest, featuring guided snowshoe hikes, a lighted sledding hill, a torchlight hike and a fireworks display to end the evening.

Snow volleyball tournaments: Two separate tournaments, at Alpine Inn in La Crosse and Nutbush City Limits in Onalaska, put a unique spin on sand volleyball.

Coulee Region Recreation Opportunities

La Crosse Parks & Recreation:

www.cityoflacrosse.org/parks

Onalaska Parks & Recreation:

www.cityofonalaska.com

Holmen Parks & Recreation:

www.holmenwi.com/parksrecreation

West Salem Parks & Recreation:

www.westsalemwi.com/parkandrec.htm

UW-L Outdoor Connection:

www.uwlax.edu/recsports/facilities/rent-gear/#tab-winter-gear

Winter Fishing Derby: With easy-to-access options on the lagoon in Pettibone Park, Malay says the fishing derby is a great introduction for kids to the region's ice fishing heritage.

Fat bike races: New this year, Malay says plans are still being finalized to put the Upper Hixon trails to use with a possible race and casual ride for fat tire bikes.

Other winter opportunities

Of course, there is more to winter in Wisconsin and Minnesota than two weekends in January. Opportunities to get out and move throughout the winter include

Ice skating: Open skating hours and skate rentals are available throughout the winter at Green Island Ice Arena and at the Onalaska OmniCenter. Outdoor skating is also available at Copeland Park and in Holmen's Deerwood Park.

Sledding: Forest Hills has a sledding hill that is popular with La Crosse residents. Onalaska's sledding hill, in Van Riper Park near the aquatic center, has a warming house with evening and weekend hours where families can warm up and purchase a cup of hot cocoa. Holmen's Deerwood Park also has a sledding hill with lights for those shorter days and long nights.

Downhill skiing/snowboarding: Mt. La Crosse offers a variety of hills for all levels, as well as lessons. Whitetail Ridge Ski area between Sparta and Tomah includes both ski hills and snow tubing.

Snowmobiling: A list of area trails open for snowmobiles can be found at www.laxsnowmobile.org.

Come in from the cold

Not everyone is ready to get outside in the icy air, but that doesn't mean you need to stay stuck at home. Here are a few winter opportunities for those more content to curl up inside:

Winter Rec Fest Euchre and Sheephead tournaments: Malay says these card tournaments draw players from outside the La Crosse area, along with locals.

Recreation leagues: Indoor sports leagues range from basketball and volleyball to Ultimate Frisbee. Check the websites for your community's parks and recreation department for details. (See sidebar for website addresses.)

Adult programs: Do you like to cook? Listen to music? Play mahjong, buncu or bridge? Check the recreation offerings in your community. You may find knitting groups, art classes and even out-of-town excursions.

When you find the activity that keeps you interested and active, there's no reason not to embrace winter. **(crw)**

Holmen writer and editor Shari Hegland has found a group of friends who enable her to continue her outdoor running routine year-round, regardless of the weather.



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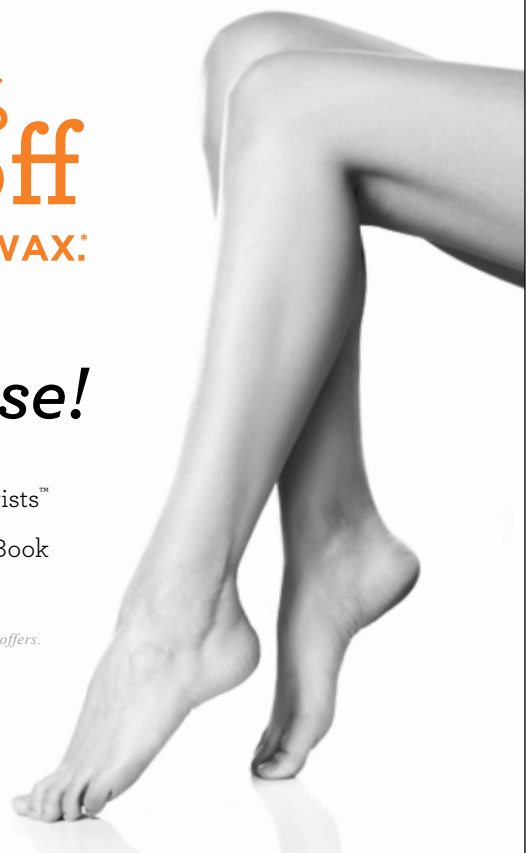
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PUT THE “WIN” IN WINTER

Follow these 10 tips to stay healthy and happy this winter.

BY MARTHA KEEFFE
Contributed photos



When you live in Wisconsin, there is just no escaping winter. Before let the cold temperatures, shorter days and piles of snow get you down, consider employing the following strategies to help you not just weather the winter, but actually embrace the cooler side of the Midwest.

1. Keep moving

When the days get shorter, our psyche tries to trick us into being sedentary. Granted, it's hard to get motivated when darkness greets you both morning and night, but fight the urge to sit down on the couch and do nothing. Dust off your at-home fitness equipment,



Heidi Kuennen, Wellness Director at the Dahl Family YMCA in La Crosse

walk in the mall or hit the gym. Studies show that exercise boosts the feel-good endorphins that help keep you feeling happy.

2. Go outside

Heidi Kuennen, Wellness Director at the Dahl Family YMCA in La Crosse, admits that finding enjoyment in being outside in the winter can pose a challenge; however, taking in fresh winter air can have an immediate and positive effect on your mood. “I encourage people to try something new and to give it at least three chances,” says Kuennen, adding that snowshoeing,

cross-country skiing, ice skating and hiking are just a few of the options available right in our own backyard. Not sure where to start? Check out the 7 Rivers Outdoor Recreation Alliance website at www.naturesplacetoplay.com

for information on where to venture out in the Coulee Region.

3. Dress for winter success

When you do venture outside, dress for the weather. “Once you start moving, you will warm up, so keep this in mind when getting dressed,” says Kuennen. “Wear layers!” Start with a base layer made of merino wool or synthetic fabrics that will wick moisture away from your skin, then layer that with a warm mid layer of fleece, wool or goose down. Finally, protect yourself from the wind, sleet and snow with a waterproof/breathable shell. Consider the intensity of your activity and add or subtract layers as needed. Top off your ensemble with a hat, gloves or mittens, boots and socks geared for your winter activity. “And wear sunglasses and sunscreen,” says Kuennen, “since snow reflects UV light.”

4. Make a list

As the seasons change, so do our dispositions, but even in the deep of winter there are ways to elevate your mood. “Make sure you are changing your activities to flow with the seasons,” says Emily Jarrett, counselor at Transformations Today in La Crosse. “Create a list of winter activities that you enjoy and have it ready when you need it to give your mood a boost.” Choose a simple and fun activity like building a snowman, sipping a cup



Emily Jarrett, counselor at Transformations Today in La Crosse



of hot chocolate or snuggling up with a buddy to watch a funny movie—anything that generates a smile.

5. Stay connected

During the winter, people feel the urge to hibernate and isolate themselves from social interaction. But no matter how engaging the characters on your Netflix binge series are, they're not a good substitute for actual human contact. "Women tend to rely on personal relationships for satisfaction," says Jarrett. "For this reason, it is important to find ways to connect with family and friends during the winter."

6. Look to the light

Less exposure to sunlight can be a bummer. Take advantage of natural sunlight by opening your blinds, sitting closer to bright windows or, better yet, taking a few minutes to step outside. You can still reap the benefits of sunlight even when it's cloudy. However, if the shorter days are really getting you down, you could be experiencing seasonal affective disorder (SAD). To help combat its symptoms, Jarrett suggests investing in a light box, which mimics natural light. Just be sure to purchase a lamp made specifically to treat SAD.



Rebecca Cripe, registered dietitian at Gundersen Health System in La Crosse

7. Portion control

Holiday parties and an increased sedentary lifestyle—which often leads to mindless snacking—can destroy any good intentions you had to eat wisely during the winter months. To battle the onslaught of excess treats and adult beverages, it's essential to have a plan. "What does contribute to weight gain is eating more often or eating more at a sitting, and portion control can get out of hand," says Rebecca Cripe, registered dietitian at

Gundersen Health System in La Crosse. When at a holiday gathering, Cripe suggests that you prepare a plate of food and take the time to actually enjoy it. Other strategies include having healthy snacks on hand such as fruit, cheese sticks, nuts or a granola bar (with at least 7 grams of protein) to help stave off hunger before lining up for the next holiday buffet.

8. Eat your dinner!

"The primary reason we eat is to fuel our bodies," says Cripe. "If we skip a meal, our body is running low on energy." When you're too hungry, the tendency to eat quickly—and without discretion—skyrockets. Therefore, eat balanced meals that include fiber and proteins that will fill you up and make you feel satisfied for longer periods of time. If you can regulate your hunger, it'll be easier to turn down a second helping of pie when your stomach says there isn't any place to put it.

9. Stay hydrated

Not only does staying hydrated help keep your immune system healthy, it helps keep off unwanted winter weight. "If you're dehydrated, you're more apt to feel hungry by midafternoon or into the evening," says Cripe. Some good methods for increasing your H₂O intake include carrying a water bottle, adding fruit to your water to make it more interesting or using a hydration app on your phone to remind you to enjoy a drink every hour.

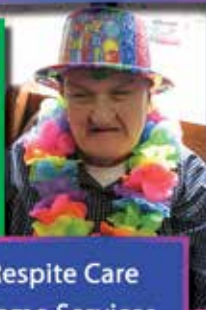
10. Catch some Zs

You've probably experienced this phenomenon yourself: The more tired you are, the more you want to eat. Perhaps this is due to lowered inhibitions that come with sleep deprivation, but whatever the reason, a lack of quality sleep—especially during the holiday rush—increases your desire for fatty and high-calorie foods. So if you want enough energy to fend off cravings for pizza and french fries, aim to get 6½ to 8 hours of sleep per night. Your mind—and your health—will thank you. 

Martha Keefe lives and writes in La Crosse, and she actually looks forward to the onset of winter.

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A scene from La Crosse Community Theatre's *Peter and the Starcatcher*.

A JEWEL IN OUR CROWN

The La Crosse Community Theatre offers new experiences, perspectives and connections.

BY LISA HEISE

Photos by Theresa Smerud

Audition night at La Crosse Community Theatre's home, the Weber Center, is charged with a special kind of energy. Volunteers collect information forms and take photos of each potential cast member. Then, everyone is directed into the Black Box theater, and auditions begin as the sun goes down on the Mississippi River just outside the back doors of the still-shiny new theater building. People of all ages and backgrounds have come together to share their talents tonight—and that is what makes community theater a treasure to be cherished.

Of the community, by the community

April Brown, a director at LCT, is in charge of this particular production, an adaptation of Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* presented as a radio production, complete with kitschy 1940s radio ads (adapted by Joe Landry and Kevin Connors). A graduate of Arkansas State University with a degree in Theatre/Directing, Brown is directing her fourth production at LCT. While running auditions, the speed with which she processes information is mind-

boggling. First, everyone tells a story "out of character," revealing their vocal cadences and comfort levels on stage. Based on those observations, she hands out script pages, and the reading portion of the audition begins.

"Try a British accent," she requests of her hopefuls, "but if you don't have it right away, no worries. We'll have six weeks to work on dialect." The younger actors go for it, some sounding a little more Irish, most coming up with a respectable Harry Potter-ish inflection. One older actor tries, and succeeds only in speaking with a thicker Midwestern tongue. One woman mentions that this is her first audition—she's in her 60s—and asks why the directors don't hand out alcohol before auditions. Everyone laughs.

Brown takes it all in stride, sometimes writing furiously, sometimes watching, sometimes laughing at the humor of her would-be performers. Whether they earn a role or not, tonight they have an attentive and appreciative audience in Brown. In two days, roles will be cast; the list is posted on the theater door and announced on the morning news as well as on La Crosse Community Theatre's Facebook page.



Grace Riness in *Peter and the Starcatcher*.



A scene from *The Little Mermaid*.

Always new talent

With every production, says Brown, “We’re always seeing new talent.” Because community theater has a different mission than professional or college theater, directors can cast actors with strong talent but little experience. That doesn’t mean, however, that audiences are in for a sub-par production at LCT. Brown advises theater lovers who haven’t seen a LCT production: “If you are holding off because you think community theater is lower quality, you need to give our theater a shot. Some of our productions are equal or better [in quality] than professional theater productions.”

David Kilpatrick, Executive Director at LCT, agrees with Brown’s assessment. “We’re not doing bad theater,” he laughs, noting that the term *community theater* is not always associated with excellence. In the case of LCT, however, notes Kilpatrick: “We get to surprise [audiences] every time they come.” He points out the May 2016 production of *Billy Elliot*, which LCT produced as a national premiere at the community theater level. “We had the talent pool, the confidence and the support from the community,” says Kilpatrick, and the production was a huge success.

Making magic together

The Weber Center itself is a shining example of that commitment, observes Kilpatrick. Having completed his doctoral degree in theater with an emphasis in architecture, Kilpatrick joined LCT at an ideal moment in the organization’s history, as a brand-new facility was in the works. “We had a strong group of community members ready to see something happen,” says Kilpatrick, calling his arrival at LCT in 2010 a “perfect marriage of interests ... everything was ready, and they needed one more pair of hands. I filled that need.” While it had filled the need as a performance venue for a number of decades, the old facility, says Kilpatrick, was “moldy, dusty, tired ... audiences might see it and imagine the show would be the same.” Kilpatrick calls the Weber Center a “jewel in the crown of La Crosse ... when you come here, you have greater expectations, and we still exceed your expectations.”

Grace Riness, a local college student who has performed in four productions during the past year, is one actor who has exceeded even her own expectations on the LCT stage. With little theater experience beyond a small high school drama club, Riness first auditioned for 2015’s *The Little Mermaid* and was cast as one of Ariel’s sisters. That role led to another, then another and then to a lead role, playing a character that she feels is an extension of her own personality. Riness’ most recent role as Molly in Rick Elice’s *Peter and the Starcatcher* was unique because Riness was the only female in an otherwise all-male cast. She loves the camaraderie of theater, noting that she has made connections with many people that she would never have met had she not taken the risk of auditioning. “This cast has a farmer, a construction worker, an opera singer, a football coach ... community theater brings together so many different people. Then the audience shows up, and we all make magic together.”

Become part of the show

The actor, the director and the big boss all agree that the beauty of community theater lies in the connections made, and there are a thousand ways to become part of a show. First, attend as a patron; www.lacrossecommunitytheatre.org tells you how to purchase single show or season tickets. Another option is to tap your inner thespian and audition for a show. “Like” La Crosse Community Theatre on Facebook to receive notifications about opportunities. If being onstage is not your cup of tea, LCT welcomes community volunteers to assist with everything from backstage production to ushering audiences. “What happens on stage is only a fraction of what goes into a performance,” says Kilpatrick. He also notes the cost of running productions as a nonprofit organization. Ticket revenue does not cover the cost of each production, and community donations are crucial to keeping the LCT vision alive. To learn more about making a tax-deductible gift to a La Crosse treasure, click on “Support LCT” at www.lacrossecommunitytheatre.org. (crw)

Lisa Heise is a local freelance writer with a love for live theater. She appreciates all great performances at the Weber Center, which can be discovered by visiting www.webercenterfortheperformingarts.org.

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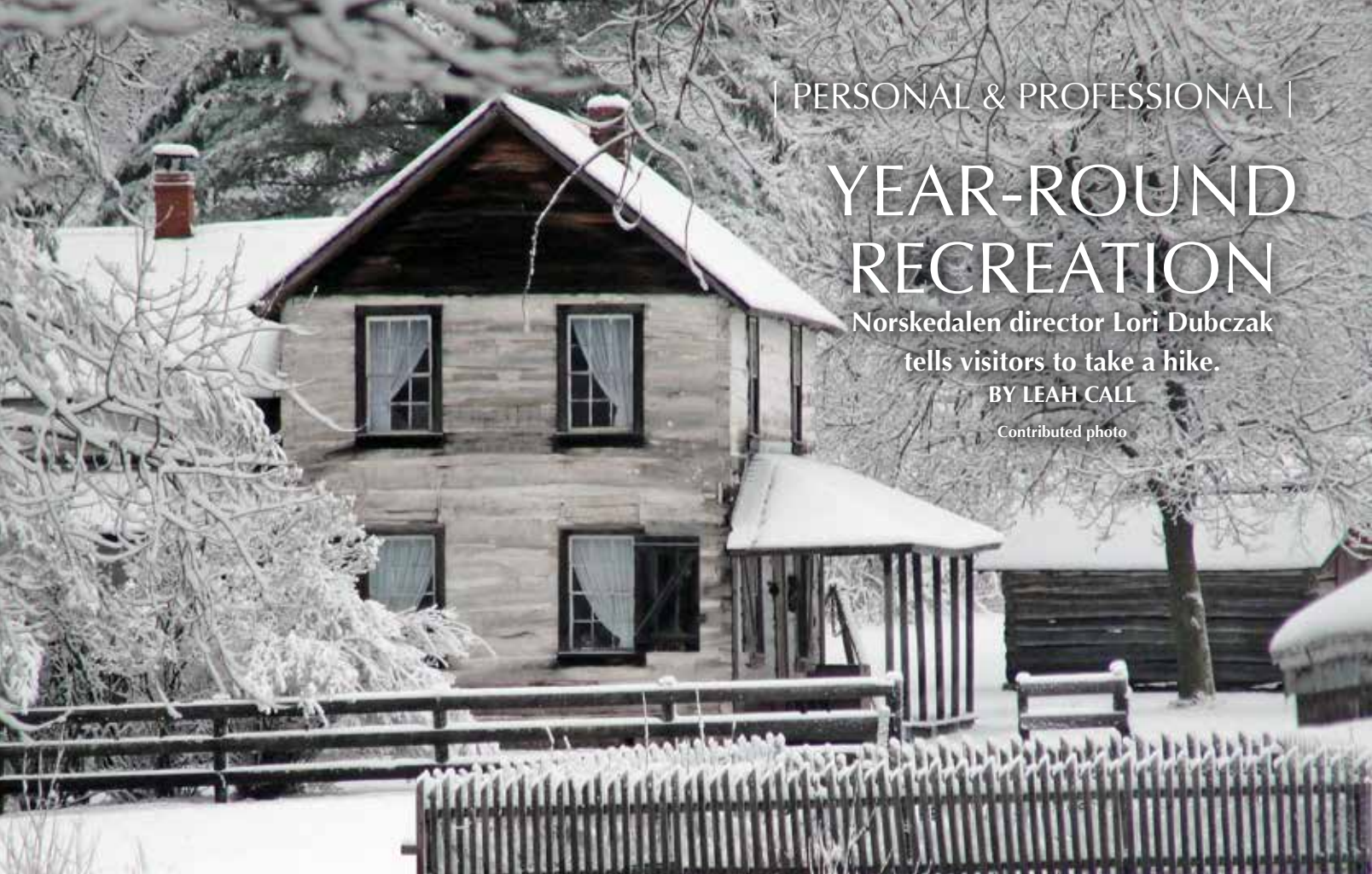
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YEAR-ROUND RECREATION

Norskedalen director Lori Dubczak
tells visitors to take a hike.

BY LEAH CALL

Contributed photo

Norskedalen Nature and Heritage Center in Coon Valley, just 20 miles south of La Crosse, offers an opportunity to step back in time and step out in nature. While the wooded hills and lush prairies at this 400-acre scenic haven are a perfect escape in warm weather, Norskedalen offers equal opportunity for outdoor—and indoor—adventure in the winter months.

Executive Director Lori Dubczak feels fortunate to be among the staff and volunteers at Norskedalen who bring year-round recreational and educational opportunities to some 25,000 visitors annually.

A Coulee Region resident for 30 years, Dubczak took over as executive director in May 2016. “I’ve worked for a variety of industries in the area, both nonprofit and for-profit. When this position became available, it was an incredible fit. It is truly a blessing to be here.”

Dubczak encourages people to get out of the house and hit the trails this winter. “This is absolutely a beautiful spot all times of the year. You can cross-country ski. You can snowshoe. You can hike on the trails.”

The annual Old Fashioned Christmas, December 3-4, is a perfect way to discover

Norskedalen’s wintry charm. “We have horse-drawn wagon rides, tours of the homestead, musicians and Norwegian baked goods,” Dubczak says. “There are demonstrations, including spinning and cooking on a woodstove. It is a cool way to see how our ancestors lived. We also have a dinner and a special visitor from the North Pole.”

Stopping by woods

The snow-covered grounds at Norskedalen are indeed lovely and a perfect way to enjoy the beauty and solitude of winter. With nearly 9 miles of trails, it’s ideal for cross-country skiing or snowshoeing alone or with others. “Snowshoeing is a great family activity,” notes Dubczak. “We’re open on Sundays in winter. So when you are tired of being indoors, just stop by the visitors’ center and ask to use a pair of snowshoes.”

Norskedalen has numerous pairs of snowshoes onsite thanks to a grant from the La Crosse Community Foundation for Healthy Living. Snowshoe enthusiasts and cross-country skiers won’t want to miss the Candlelight Snowshoe Hike on February 12. It’s an evening hike or ski along a candlelit trail culminating with cocoa and smores by the fire.

Programming galore

In addition to outdoor recreation, Norskedalen offers numerous science and heritage-focused educational programming for schools, tour groups and individuals. Participants can spend a day in a one-room school house, discover flora and wildlife or learn what life was like for the pioneers.

New this year is a corporate retreat option, patterned after the CBS show *Amazing Race*. This team-building program includes specially designed challenges. “The challenges all have to do with heritage or nature or history of our area,” explains Dubczak.

Visitors have trail and building access for a daily entry fee of \$6 for adults and \$3 for children. Members enjoy free entry year-round. A yearly membership is just \$25 for students, \$35 for individuals or \$50 for a family. Dubczak boasts, “The members and volunteers at Norskedalen are the most amazing people in the universe.” 

Westby-based writer Leah Call remembers many happy days with her four kids on the trails at Norskedalen.



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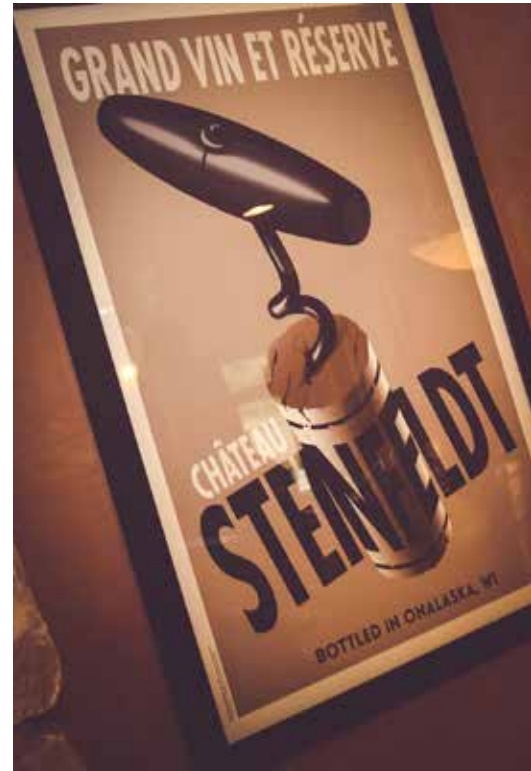


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Rich, warm woodwork, a surprisingly effective use of black in the kitchen, hand-finished fixtures and whimsical personal touches make the Steinfeldt remodel a success.

A HANDS-ON REMODEL

A kitchen rejuvenation results in a whole new view for an Onalaska home.

BY ANASTASIA PENCHI

Photos by Megan McCluskey, Atypik Studio

The picturesque view from the front of Travis and Angie Steinfeldt's home, set into the side of a bluff overlooking a spot near Coulee Golf Bowl in Onalaska, is incredible. That is part of the reason Angie didn't want to move, even though she wanted a larger, updated kitchen. She knew she didn't want a house any larger than her 4,000-square-foot home. And she didn't want anything smaller, either. The size and location of the home, built in 1995, was already just right for her family.

That left remodeling.

Tearing it down

Remodeling is not a project to be undertaken by those who can't commit. To coordinate it, Angie took a temporary leave from her work doing inventory and invoicing for her husband, Travis, at his company, Composite Technologies, Inc., in Trempealeau.

She hired Dewey Brincks of Brincks Construction & Cabinet Co. of Lawler, Iowa, as the general contractor and started explaining her vision. She selected granite tiles and a granite slab for the new kitchen island. She started hand-staining all the golden oak trim around the windows, around the doors and on part of the ceiling while standing

on scaffolding. Soon the scaffolding was more like furniture itself.

The area was tarped off, and the wall between the existing kitchen and dining room was removed. A new support beam was added. Popcorn ceilings were eliminated. The entryway was lined with Chestnut Boulder veneer stone sourced from a local quarry. Stones were set up and along the 18-foot wall, while a curved, welcoming staircase was constructed. The staircase's handrail is made of wrought iron and wood, and it had to be pieced together and clamped in stages in order to achieve the finished product.

Angie made countless trips to try to match pieces of her new countertop to the existing one she had in the part of the kitchen that she did not want to change. She refinished the pendant light fixtures she ordered, as they were too gold when they arrived. She did her own wall plaster stucco paint treatment. She frequently visited Hobby Lobby to add to her new décor, which she describes as modern and eclectic.

A new sign declares "Chateau Steinfeldt" in Onalaska is ready for business. "I get a vision, and I don't go off anything," Angie says. "I like this and I like that, and I slowly put things together."



Building it back up

Angie is brave in her decorating decisions, using a lot of black (her favorite color). Black granite tiles were installed on the backsplash throughout, and a black braided twist along the top of the wall cabinets ties the existing cabinets to the new ones. Her wine chiller is completely done in black—both the cabinets and pillars, which are also functional cupboards that offer storage for wineglasses and other accoutrements.

“I wanted some black pieces because it just looks like furniture,” she says. “It gives it a unique, custom look.”

New hardwood flooring was installed to match existing flooring wherever carpet was removed. The entire floor was sanded and stained again. The Steinfeldts’ 7-year-old son, Cameron, slept with them downstairs for a few days while the staircase was being finished.

The ultimate prize is at the center of the new kitchen: A 14½-foot island with caramel-colored splashes and black speckles—called “Golden Crystal”—ties the entire kitchen together.

Now the front-yard view, which previously could only be seen from the smaller dining room that was rarely used, is framed for everyone who gathers in the new kitchen. This room has replaced the lower-level bar as the favorite gathering spot for friends and family to imbibe.

Angie is very happy with the custom-made cabinet panels that hide the refrigerator. The mixer cleverly pulls up from its base cabinet home so it can be used on the island. The built-in cappuccino maker along the wall, which makes the morning drink she takes with honey and cinnamon, is another one of the gadgets her husband ordered for the project. And she is amazed at how quickly the new induction cooktop boils water.

Angie and Travis joke that the UPS truck “tipped over” with all their Amazon purchases. Their steep driveway adds to the story.

Taking the next step

The Steinfeldts married in 2004 and bought their home the year before they moved from Winona. They have been gradually redecorating the original Southwestern and golden oak motif.

While Angie’s two daughters, Ashley, 27, and Miranda, 23, don’t live at home anymore, she still needs space for them when they visit. Ashley married last year, and a family picture taken at the wedding, showing the five of them laughing, hangs on the wall.

“I don’t have a ton of wall space, so I just go up with it,” she says.

Angie is also finalizing Cameron’s new décor, which is being transformed from a pirate theme into a “little man cave.” Her “little man” comes into the kitchen and wants a snack. He gets some frozen blueberries, and plans are made to visit a nearby apple orchard and take 11-year-old pug Quincy to the vet.

“We thought about moving, but we really like the location,” Angie adds. “Now that we opened up the wall, we have a whole new view.”

And even though the project interrupted their lives for almost 10 months, she says they are very happy with the results because it “came together like new construction.” Work is ongoing in the home, as Angie continues to use gel stain to turn what is left of the existing trim into a darker, mixed mahogany color.

Besides, she has already talked Travis into letting her do the master bedroom and bathroom next. *(crw)*

Anastasia Penchi loves the idea of using a gel stain to update existing trim, but there are already too many jobs on her to-do list. Therefore, she will just live vicariously through the Steinfeldts’ project.

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RISING TO THE OCCASION

No matter how you make it,
freshly baked bread warms up winter.

JULIE NELSON
Contributed photos

The cold, dark morning is tempting us to stay in bed just a while longer. But wait, what's that aroma? We—or, more accurately, my husband—set up the bread machine last night, and now the smell of freshly baked bread is wafting upstairs. We pop out of bed.

The bread machine is without a doubt one of the most appreciated appliances in our house. In about 10 minutes, we can put all the ingredients into the bread pan, push the buttons and let the machine take it from there. We can tell it to get started right away or program the machine to finish about the time we are waking up. While I tend to make only basic loaves of bread, my husband makes pizza dough, breads with fruits and nuts in them and even sourdough. We love our bread machine.

The secret to making bread from the machine is to follow the recipe carefully. Since there is no “feel” to the dough, as there is when you knead the dough yourself, you must make sure the proportions of your ingredients are spot-on. Also, make sure the yeast is still active. If it's been sitting in your refrigerator since Mother's Day, get something fresh.

Bread from the machine is massively

convenient, and the taste is good. But in all honesty, bread machine bread is not as wonderful as the stuff you make by hand.

By hand, with love

Handmade bread has a better texture and better flavor than machine bread, and it stays fresher longer. It also freezes well, which is helpful if you want to make two loaves at one time, or cut one in half right away and freeze the other half for later. Plus, there is something to be said for the process of making your own bread and the sense of accomplishment that comes with it. It's been a while—like before kids—since I kneaded my own bread, so I turned to the experts at the People's Food Co-op for some tips.

Raina Abrahamson has been baking since she was a child. She discovered she has a passion for bread baking when she began working in the Co-op's bakery four years ago. Now she'll make dozens and dozens of loaves each day at work and go home and make more bread in her time off. “I don't get sick of it,” she says. “Like a good book, it's therapeutic, an escape. It brings out my creativity and my artistic side. I'm always looking to try new recipes.”

The essence of bread baking is this:

Combine your ingredients and start kneading. Add more flour or water as you go, depending on how dry or sticky your dough is. You'll know you're done kneading when the dough feels right: not too moist, not too dry and with a nice elastic feel to it. Then you put the dough in a warm place, cover it with plastic or a moist towel and let it rise for a couple hours. Next you punch it down, form it into a loaf and put it in the pan. Put the pan in a warm place and let it rise again, for half the amount of time as the first rise. Then put the pan in a preheated oven and wait for the magic to begin.

“Don't be intimidated,” advises Abrahamson. She says while it does take some practice to get the feel of good dough, it's also a good opportunity to add your own flair. “Make it how you like it. Add some new ingredients; try a new recipe. Have fun.”

Making bread yourself isn't difficult and it isn't even time-consuming. The tricky part is that it can be hard to leave the house and make sure you're back in time for the next step. So if spending a cold afternoon binge-watching Netflix sounds like your kind of day, the moments in between shows could be the perfect opportunity to make your own freshly baked bread.



Raina Abrahamson, baker at People's Food Co-op in La Crosse



NO-KNEAD BREAD

Raina Abrahamson

Note: Allow 14-20 hours for rising and another 2½ hours for additional rising and baking.

- 3 cups all-purpose flour or bread flour (can also substitute whole-wheat flour for 1 or 1½ cups)
- ¼ tsp. instant yeast
- 1¼ tsp. salt
- 1⅝ cups warm water
- Cornmeal or wheat bran as needed (substitute sesame seeds, poppy seeds and/or pumpkin seeds)

In a large bowl, combine the yeast and salt. Add the lukewarm water and stir until blended. Stir in the flour; dough will be sticky. Cover the bowl with plastic wrap. Let the dough rest for at least 12 hours, preferably about 18, at warm room temperature, about 70°F.

Use a spatula to loosen the dough from the sides of the mixing bowl; it will be very sticky, stringy and spongy. Tilt the bowl to one side, causing the dough to roll/slide to that side. In the space beneath the dough and on the surface of the dough, sprinkle on whole-wheat flour plus (if you like) sesame seeds, poppy seeds, cornmeal, etc. Then roll the dough over and sprinkle on more of the same on the other side and top of the dough. The whole ball should be covered. This will prevent it from sticking to the bowl. Let it rise for about 2 hours. When it is ready, it will be more than double in size and rather sticky.

About a half-hour before the dough is ready, preheat the oven to 450°F. Put a 6- to 8-quart heavy covered pot (cast iron, enamel or Pyrex) in the oven as it heats. When the dough is ready, carefully remove the pot from the oven. Gently turn the dough out of the bowl and into the cooking pot. Shake the pot once or twice if the dough is unevenly distributed; it will straighten out as it bakes. Cover with a lid and bake 30 minutes, then remove the lid and bake another 10-20 minutes, until the loaf is nicely brown.

Adapted from Jim Lahey, Sullivan Street Bakery, NYC

ENGLISH GRANARY BREAD FOR THE BREAD MACHINE

This is a good go-to bread. It has few ingredients and no dairy—which means it's a good one to program for a later time—and some healthful whole-wheat flour. English Golden Syrup adds a nice flavor to the bread; you can buy it at Woodman's. This recipe also works with 3 cups of white bread flour and 1 cup of whole wheat.

- 1½ cups water
- 3 T English Golden Syrup or a mild-flavored honey
- 2 T butter
- 2 tsp. salt
- 2 cups whole-wheat flour
- 2 cups bread flour
- 2 tsp. rapid-rising or active dry yeast

Put the first six items in the bread machine pan in the order listed. Make a small well in the flour and add the yeast. Program the bread machine as desired. Makes one large loaf.

Recipe from Whole Grain Breads by Machine or Hand by Beatrice Ojakangas. Copyright ©2003 by Beatrice Ojakangas. Used by permission of Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company. All rights reserved.

MARBLED RYE BREAD

Light Dough:

- 1¾ cups all-purpose flour
- ¾ cup rye flour
- 3 T unsalted butter
- 1 T honey
- 1½ tsp. kosher salt
- 1 tsp. active dry yeast
- 1 cup water, room temperature

Dark Dough:

- 1¾ cups all-purpose flour
- ¾ cup rye flour
- 3 T unsalted butter
- 3 T unsweetened cocoa powder
- 1 T molasses
- 1½ tsp. kosher salt
- 1 tsp. active dry yeast
- 1 cup water, room temperature

Topping:

- 1 egg
- 1 T water
- 1 T caraway seeds
- 1 tsp. flax seeds

For light dough: In a large bowl, combine all-purpose flour, rye flour, butter, honey, salt and yeast. Gradually add 1 cup water until a

soft dough forms. Turn out dough onto a lightly floured surface and knead dough until smooth and elastic, about 10 minutes.

For dark dough: In a separate bowl, combine all-purpose flour, rye flour, butter, cocoa powder, molasses, salt and yeast. Gradually add 1 cup water until a soft dough forms. Turn out dough onto a lightly floured surface, and knead dough until smooth and elastic, about 10 minutes.

Shape each mass of dough into a ball. Spray two large bowls with cooking spray. Place dough in bowls, turning to grease tops. Cover and let stand in a warm, draft-free place (75°F) until doubled in size, about 1 hour.

Turn out dough onto a lightly floured surface and deflate it to remove excess air. Divide each ball in half. Roll each dough quarter into a 9x6-inch rectangle. Layer rectangles on top of one another, alternating light and dark. Starting at one long side, roll dough into a log. Spray a 9x5-inch loaf pan with cooking spray. Place loaf seam side down in pan. Cover and let rise in a warm, draft-free place (75°F) until doubled in size, about 1 hour. Preheat oven to 375°F.

For topping: In a small bowl, whisk together egg and 1 T water. Brush egg wash over loaf. Using a sharp knife, make four deep slashes across top of loaf. Sprinkle with caraway seeds and flax seeds. Bake until golden brown and an instant-read thermometer inserted registers 190°F, 35-40 minutes. Let cool in pan for 20 minutes. Remove from pan and let cool completely on a wire rack. (crw)

Julie Nelson and her husband, Ross Seymour, both love butter and jam on their freshly baked bread.



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Wine Pairings for the Holidays

It's time to entertain! Here are some holiday hints for celebrating with a great wine pairing:

Think red! Whether it's the bright red of a fresh cranberry wine or the dark red of an aged red or Cassis, a glass of beautifully colored wine can be the highlight of a holiday table setting.

Wine and food pairings are easy for holiday dinners. Turkey, dressing and desserts all go with a chilled rosé or cranberry wine, and of course countless red and white wines pair well with holiday meals. An Internet search of "turkey dinner wine pairings" will give you ideas for any taste.

Desserts are the grand finale of a tremendous culinary event! Ports or port-style fortified wines are often paired with rich desserts.

Take your toast up a notch by creating your own Kirr Royale. With one part Crème de Cassis and nine parts Champagne or sparkling wine, a Kirr Royale is a holiday in itself. If your friends prefer a spritzer, substitute a lemon-lime soda for the Champagne.

Around the living room, outside on a chilly afternoon or in the kitchen, a mulled or spiced wine can create a warming experience. Try the many options available and create your own recipes.

Happy holidays from our homes to yours!

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Casey Nicewander is the artist behind the cocktails at La Cave. He'll even mix you a custom cocktail upon request.

A Wintry Mix

Enjoy the art of the cocktail in downtown La Crosse.

BY BETTY CHRISTIANSEN

Photos by Jordana Snyder Photography

Warm up this winter from the inside out with the companionship of friends and the artistry of mixologists across downtown La Crosse.

A Wisconsin supper club staple is taken to new heights at **La Cave**, located in the basement of Le Chateau on Cass Street. Bartender Casey Nicewander's **Fumé Old Fashioned** is a signature smoked cocktail flavored with bourbon-soaked hickory wood chip smoke, homemade bitters and more than a dash of dramatic presentation.

Traipse over to **The Charmant** for **The Golden Era**, a feature on the hotel's new winter menu. Built with a homemade cocoa nib liqueur, Pierre Ferrand cognac, demerara sugar simple syrup and fresh-squeezed lemon, this cocktail is bright and unexpected. Complement the cocktail with a sampling from Indulgence Chocolatiers of Milwaukee.

At **4 Sisters**, enjoy the transition to winter with prime views of the Rotary Lights and a refreshing **Apple Cider Sangria**, concocted from locally made Pepin apple cider with a Pinot Grigio base.

Top off the evening with a digestif at **The Freighthouse**. Warmed **Courvoisier cognac** ends a city cocktail hop on a classy note. [\(crw\)](#)

Betty Christiansen is editor of Coulee Region Women.



WALKING IN A WINTER WONDERLAND

Float on snow with snowshoe know-how.

BY KATHLEEN WALLACE

Photos courtesy of Redfeather Snowshoes

There is an old saying that only two things in life are certain: death and taxes. In Wisconsin, we could add a third: winter. According to the National Climatic Data Center, the Coulee Region receives 43 inches of snow, with 30 days of snowfall, in an average winter season. And for those with a spirit of adventure, snowshoeing turns that fallen snow into a playground. Some say that winter seems harder the more you try to avoid it; finding ways to enjoy it transforms the meaning of the season when snow is no longer just something to shovel or plow.

Floating over snow

Snowshoeing is one way to embrace our winter season. Imagine walking on a fresh mantle of newly fallen snow over your favorite hiking trail; the green, busy beauty of summer having given way to quiet tranquility. With snowshoes, you can walk over even the deepest snow to the least traveled of paths.

The activity, which archeologists date back to 4000 BC, was once an essential form of transportation, allowing persons to travel over

snowy terrain of the Northern Hemisphere. The use of snowshoes was introduced to newly arrived Europeans by Indians who are credited with the development and use of snowshoes in North America.

Snowshoes allow you to walk on snow by distributing body weight over a greater area than boots. No longer available only as the older wooden shoes, modern snowshoes are made with lightweight metals. A good binding comfortably holds your foot onto the snowshoe with little lateral movement or slippage. The frame/deck distributes your weight and allows you to “float” over the snow. The hinge lifts the tail of the snowshoe, and the traction or crampon determine what type of snow the shoe is best suited to. Experts advise trying out snowshoes before buying whenever possible.

Local service, local snowshoes

That philosophy is shared by Emily Vance, owner of River Trail Cycles in Onalaska. Her store has a rental fleet of snowshoes available in sizes to fit all members of the family. A one-day \$15 rental offers a low-cost way to try out the activity. And if a snowshoe purchase is

made later, the \$15 is subtracted from the price. Rentals are also available by the weekend or week.

Vance is happy to give insider tips on good locations for snowshoeing. There is not a structured schedule of classes at this time, but experienced staff at the store will offer instruction to customers when requested.

Prices for adult snowshoes at the store can range from \$100 to \$250; Vance states that an investment in well-crafted shoes comes with a lifetime warranty, local repair and replacement of parts. The store offers a trade-in/trade-up program of providing store credit. Vance says that because of the quality of the snowshoes, this is rarely used.

Redfeather Snowshoes, the brand available at River Trail Cycles, does its manufacturing in La Crosse and is well known for innovation. Their major "firsts" in the business include development of snowshoes just for women and just for kids, snowshoes for running and the use of aircraft aluminum in frame technology. Redfeather also has a commitment to engage children in snowshoeing and a program to introduce snowshoeing in schools.

Snowshoeing for all

And if supporting local business and experiencing the winter beauty of the Coulee Region hasn't persuaded you to try snowshoeing, here are some other benefits you might find appealing:

- Snowshoeing is an activity enjoyed by persons of all ages and most abilities. If you can walk, you can snowshoe, and no special skill is required.



Emily Vance, owner of River Trail Cycles in Onalaska

- The equipment is a worthwhile investment. Well-made snowshoes are maintenance free.

- Snowshoeing is a low-cost activity. Once you have the equipment, there is little ongoing cost, as many trails and parks have minimal or no fees.

- Snowshoeing is a low-impact physical activity and is easy on the joints.

- Snowshoeing works all major muscle groups, building strength and cardiovascular endurance. You can burn 420 to 1,000 calories per hour depending on terrain, your weight and your speed.

Don't take our word for it ...

River Trail Cycles and Redfeather Snowshoes have teamed up the last two years to provide a Snowshoe Demo at the store. It's a day full of fun with refreshments, prizes and the opportunity to try out a variety of snowshoes. Vance plans to do this again in early 2017. She advises anyone who is interested in this or snowshoe instruction to check the store's website: www.rivertrailcycles.com. It's a great way to get family members outside to enjoy a winter adventure together.

For more information on snowshoeing trails, see page 15. And don't forget your trail etiquette: Vance advises snowshoers to stay off trails used by cross-country skiers and to be aware of areas used by snowmobilers. [\(crw\)](#)

Kathleen Wallace is a lifelong resident of the Midwest and finds winter more enjoyable by "getting out" more. She plans to snowshoe this winter.

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Cozy Up to Winter

**Dash through the snow
in this season's warmest trends.**

BY PAIGE FORDE

Photos by Jen Towner Photography

When brisk temperatures roll around, don't choose between style and comfort. Look to these chic winter must-haves to help you kick the cold-weather blues.

The SnowStopper

Give a classy, sophisticated look with a waist-cinching walker coat that effortlessly combines contrasting tones and textures. Add a touch of pattern with an abstract, high-neck top; slip-on leather booties complete this timeless look.

From **Macy's**: Via Spiga caramel faux-fur coat; Bandolino brown leather booties; Alfani high-neck printed top; INC tiklo wash skinny jeans.



Layer It on Me

On the chilliest of days, bundle up with toasty accessories to take on the cold. Soft grays and whites give a fresh, light base to help highlight warm tan tones. When it comes to accessories, don't be afraid to mix patterns for a fun, unexpected look.

From **Macy's**: Calvin Klein gray hooded coat; Khombu Melanie lace-up faux-fur boots; Michael Kors infinity scarf; Alfani turtleneck poncho; Calvin Klein cream wool blend hat; Calvin Klein flip top gloves; Hue white jeggings.

Purple Reign

Step out in style with a bold, eye-catching indigo coat. Keep it casual by adding dark boots and playful plaid mittens with a pop of green to perfectly balance out this look.

From **Touch of Class**: Nic + Zoe indigo coat; Steller wool plaid mittens; Mephisto Linda Boots; Barefoot Dreams chic lite beanie; Repeat cashmere easy knit sweater; BeiJa Flor Audry ankle jean.

Home for the Holidays

Make any monochrome outfit stand out with festive red accents laid out in a modern, asymmetrical pattern. Further winterize this ensemble with a dazzling necklace and silver-buckled booties.

From **Mainstream Boutique**: Aris A red and gray jacket; Madeline Girl pewter buckled booties; Éclat necklace and earrings set; CC cable knit beanie; Last Tango red rouché tank; M. Rena black leggings.



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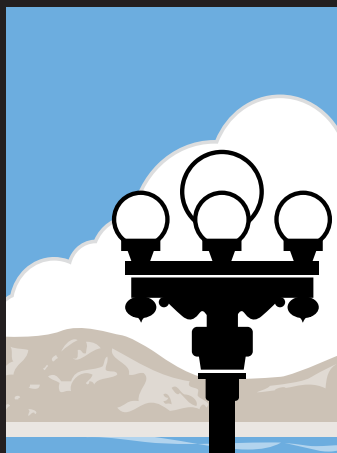
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YAMAHA PIANOS



MAKE IT A HEARTWARMING WINTER

When it comes to volunteering, a little bit makes a big difference.

BY MICHELLE BYOM

Contributed photos



When it comes to giving back in the winter season, the Red Kettle Campaign is just one of many options.

“It’s not how much we give but how much love we put into giving.”

—Mother Teresa

Shut your eyes and listen for the familiar sounds: cheerful, jingling bells, the exchange of holiday greetings and coins plunking into the tin kettle. Reach into your pocket and be assured that your donation makes an important difference, right here in our community. Donated canned goods, coats, books and quality time spent with a child in turmoil do, too.

Many agencies thrive with the help of volunteers all year long, but special winter events and a seasonal demand for services often require extra hands and extra-warm hearts.

Plan ahead

Some of the region’s most popular events begin early. Programs such as the La Crosse Jaycees’ Toys for Tots campaign kick off each November with donation barrels placed in businesses and organizations. Barrels are collected, and toys are sorted and picked up before Christmas. Area winter coat drives strive to beat the cold weather, and the La Crosse County Health and Human Services Department program—the Holiday for Goodness Sake/Adopt a Family—matches needy families with sponsors in November.

Here are some ways to share your time and talent this winter:

The Salvation Army of La Crosse & the Red Kettle Campaign

The Red Kettle Campaign, which has enjoyed a steady presence in La Crosse since 1921, runs through December and raises funds that touch every program the local Salvation Army provides, including food, housing and personal crises. This year’s \$1 million goal is the largest ever. Bell-ringing shifts last typically 2 hours, with 1-hour shifts during their new family day to accommodate those with young children. Try the new online sign-up service at www.salvationarmylacrosse.org or www.salacrosse.org.

Rotary Lights

If you hope to be part of the volunteer crew for the extravaganza that transforms Riverside Park into a magical place dazzling thousands of guests, then plan early—they open their online application system in August. Groups and individuals make it tradition to set up, work at the park during the display or assist on the tear-down crew. Visitors make monetary donations or bring canned goods to help the Rotary Lights’ mission of stomping out hunger in the Coulee Region. Visit www.rotarylights.org.

Barnes and Noble Children's Book Drive

Customers purchase children's books—hopefully some of their favorites growing up—and designate the organization their book goes to. This year's receiving organizations are Pediatrics at Mayo Health System, Gundersen Health System's Pediatric Oncology Department, the La Crosse School District, La Crosse County Foster Care, I Am Education, CESA 4 and the Family and Children's Center. Call 608-785-1330 or stop in the bookstore at the Valley View Mall.

WAFER

WAFER is the La Crosse area's largest food pantry. Your donations of food, money or time make a huge impact on families in our communities. Volunteers help distribute food at the food fairs, work in the warehouse, maintain the facility, assist in stocking shelves or repackage bulk foods. *Flexible* is the key word. WAFER wants interested volunteers to know they can come as they are able; they do not need regular volunteer hours. WAFER is located at 403 Causeway Blvd., La Crosse; contact them at 608-782-6003, info@waferlacrosse.org or www.waferlacrosse.org.

La Crosse Warming Center

Each night November 1 through April 30, with intake starting at 6:30 p.m., the Warming Center at 413 S. Third St. in La Crosse hosts up to 40 overnight guests who may otherwise not have a bed, meal or shower. They seek volunteers willing to work overnight shifts, especially, but welcome those who can volunteer other times and are flexible to meet volunteers' availability. Volunteers must be 18 and will be trained. Product donations are also appreciated, including new razors, deodorant and gently used or new socks and undergarments. Nonperishable food items, such as individually wrapped snack bars,

are also a guest favorite. Contact Mark Schimpf, 608-519-8020, www.cclse.org/la-crosse-warming-center.

Coulee Region Humane Society

If furry friends are some of your favorites, then the Coulee Region Humane Society at 911 Critter Court, Onalaska, is your place. Snuggle, feed, bathe or clean the animals or help maintain their facility. Wash dishes, help with laundry or assist with shoveling snow. Visit their website, www.couleehumane.com, to learn more and complete their online volunteer application. Their wish list includes a wide variety of items from towels to kitty litter, canned and dry food, soft dog treats and cleaning products for their facility.

YWCA La Crosse

The YWCA's CASA for Kids program (CASA stands for Court Appointed Special Advocate) benefits youth with open cases of abuse or neglect. The YWCA needs volunteers, whom they train to establish positive relationships with a child and keep his or her best interests and wishes in consideration when working with social workers, courts and families. In addition, donations of journals, pens, coloring books and other craft supplies bring smiles to kids in the program. Water bottles, nail polish, lip balm and fast food or movie gift cards are also suggestions. Volunteers for the CASA program must be 21 or older. Contact volunteer coordinator Molly Hilligoss at 781-2783, ext. 228, to learn more about this and other YWCA programs. Then, complete a YWCA volunteer application on their website, www.ywca.org. 

Michelle Byom enjoys learning new things about our communities when she researches and writes. She is happy to give back through volunteering, and this article has provided her new ways to do that.



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A good winter is usually the one that brings the sun, but is waiting for Christmas to bring the snow. In Luster, it's easy to get to high mountain peaks. Here is Norberg's family at Hovden, a peak that provides a good view of the beautiful landscape.

NOTES FROM A NATIVE NORWEGIAN

To truly embrace winter, head to the source.

BY DIANE RAAUM

Contributed photos

In the depths of winter, *travel* for most means seeking out a tropical paradise. But braver souls—particularly those with hardy Scandinavian roots—might consider heading in the opposite direction.

Anette Stegjerdet Norberg first visited the Coulee Region as an exchange student from Luster, a municipality in Sogn og Fjordane county in western Norway. Today, she's an attorney, wife and mother of a young daughter who loves everything her wintry home has to offer. Here, she shares with *Coulee Region Women* readers how she embraces the long, dark winters of Norway. Whether or not you are tempted to explore this beautiful country from which many Coulee Region ancestors have come, you'll find here ideas for making our own dark Wisconsin days cozy and enjoyable.

***Koselig* is the Norwegian word for coziness. How do you and your family celebrate *koselig* and use that mindset to embrace winter?**

Most of the ladies here are keen to light the candles, light up the fireplace (which most people here have), make themselves comfortable on the sofa and enjoy knitting, books or a good series on Netflix. But the people of Sogn are one active nation. We like to enjoy ourselves, but preferably after going for a walk in one of the many hills here or having a hard workout in the local gym. Personally, I prefer to do

my workouts indoors when the thermometer is approaching the blue ranks. But most people live here because they want to enjoy nature, even in winter. They say, "There's not bad weather, only bad clothing."

For my own part, born on Christmas Eve and turning 30 this year, it helps a lot that I love Christmas and all that jazz. I start to enjoy myself with *julebrus* (red soda) and gingerbread when they arrive at the store in late October. And I force my husband to help me put up the Christmas tree as soon as possible after December 1. So when Christmas is approaching, we embrace the snow and cold with both arms, and let the Christmas spirit descend.

What are the average temperatures during the winter months in your area of Norway?

It varies, but usually the temperature is around 0° Celsius (32°F) and down to -20°C (-4°F). In Norway, we are fortunate to have 49 to 56 weeks of paid parental leave, so last winter, I had plenty of time to enjoy nature walks with my daughter in the stroller. However, there was a long period of -10°C (14°F) and lower. Then it is not recommended to take a baby on long walks outside. So we prefer that it is a few degrees below freezing with snow and sunshine. Then we sense what we here call the Easter mood, and it is impossible to put up anything other than a smiling face.



What are the average daylight hours during winter months in your area of Norway?

At the darkest time in the year, we only see the daylight between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. For those of us who have a job, it's a little sad that it's dark when you arrive at work and dark when you go, but so it is. It is not odd that more and more Norwegians are tested for vitamin D deficiency. Our mothers are trying to teach us to eat tran (fish oil with large amounts of vitamin D) in winter.

What are major industries in Luster?

Luster is an industrial community. We have three companies that specialize in heat-transfer labels, producing labels on clothes that are sent worldwide. One example is the labels for the jerseys of the Barcelona Football Club, produced in the municipal center, Gaupne. We also have two major companies producing labels for food packaging and parts for prefab houses. Because of the large amount of hydropower (called *vasskraft*) produced here, we also have the administrative office of Statkraft in our community. And we have a large business that produces installations for oil production on the Norwegian shelf. Some also work in tourism and other entrepreneurial activities. The municipal board for decades has supported local entrepreneurs with funds.

What attractions and activities are available in winter?

Luster is a rich municipality, mainly because we have had good income from our hydropower. In 2008 we were voted the best municipality to live in. We enjoy the easy life in the heart of the Norwegian fjords, in the innermost part of the Sognefjord. Most of the attractions here are natural and available even in winter. You just have to dress up well. Many come to see the Nigardsbreen glacier, which is one of the most accessible glacier arms of Jostedalsbreen. Several

Top left: Anette and her daughter, Olina (11 months), on Olina's first mountain peak over 1,000 meters. "This is one of the favorite mountain peaks for the natives, with easy access from Gaupne. This trip was much like the trips we usually have, where she sang and I carried her in a child carrier as fast as my feet would carry us both." Right: Norberg's Christmas tree decorated with lights in her family's living room. "I have strategically placed it in front of the large windows to spread the most Christmas spirit in the neighborhood." Bottom left: The 1,000-year-old church in Luster is prized by residents and tourists alike.

companies will offer you guided ski tours, including accommodation in tents on the snow and cooking on a campfire. But it is not for wimps, and you have to carry your luggage yourself. We live in an area with most mountain peaks above 2,000 meters (6,562 feet), so there are plenty of hiking destinations. The municipality has built a large swimming and wellness facility popular with residents and tourists, and we are also very proud to have a church that is more than 1,000 years old and is on the UNESCO World Heritage List.

What foods and beverages do you enjoy during the winter?

A classic autumn and winter meal would contain meat from deer, elk or reindeer, with potatoes, vegetables, a good sauce and a suitable wine on the side. For Christmas, we enjoy *pinnekjøtt* (rack of lamb) with rutabaga stew and potatoes. This is all washed down with aquavit, a traditional Norwegian spirit. The food contains far more fat than is contained in my usual menu, and I always end up with a stomachache after eating too much. My mom always said that the aquavit is important to aid digestion, and I have tried to listen to her. But it also contributes to that sense of *koselig*. (crw)

Diane Raam is publisher of Coulee Region Women and a proud Norwegian. She met Anette when she was an exchange student at her home and hopes to visit her in Norway one day.

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Toyota of La Crosse Cares

Toyota of La Crosse is kicking its partnership with YWCA La Crosse into overdrive by launching the new Toyota of La Crosse Cares initiative for the holiday season, an effort expected to generate at least \$12,000 for the local organization. From November 1 through December 31, Toyota of La Crosse will donate \$100 for every new vehicle sold. In honor of YWCA's 110th anniversary, the public can also donate via YWCA La Crosse's text feature; simply text "110" to 41444 and follow the prompt. Donate on #GivingTuesday, November 29, and receive \$10 off your service bill at Toyota of La Crosse that day.

| ACCOMPLISHMENTS |



Touch of Class Celebrates 40 Years of Fashion

Touch of Class, an upscale women's apparel and home-décor boutique, is celebrating 40 years by refreshing the store's interior and rebranding to meet the needs of its customers.

For owner Kim Pretasky, style comes naturally. Linda Goodwin and Betsy Goodnough, Pretasky's mother and aunt, opened Touch of Class in 1976 with the original location on Seventh Street. In 1983, Touch of Class relocated to Powell Place. Pretasky purchased the business in 2000, and in 2003 she purchased the first of two buildings that now house Touch of Class, adding more apparel lines and fine jewelry. The second building was acquired in 2007, and shoes and home goods were added.

Touch of Class is located at 312 Main St. in La Crosse. Call 877-784-2630 or visit www.touchofclasslacrosse.com.

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at the Onalaska Omni Center
labahomeshow.com



Top left: Jerilyn Dinsmoor. Top right: The Girlfriends gathered around Dinsmoor's urn.

A GIRLFRIEND REMEMBERED

Jerilyn Dinsmoor made an impact as a community leader and a friend.

BY SUSAN C. SCHUYLER
Contributed photos

The coat I wore to Jerilyn Dinsmoor's funeral is among her textile masterpieces. Although the impeccably constructed garment is black, I call it my "technicolor dream coat" because of its orange-red piping, neon topstitching and colorful, quilted patches.

As I sat with my friends for the service, the coat fell open, exposing a label at the hem. It says simply, "jerilyn," lowercase and handwritten. I wept as I realized The Girlfriends—my girlfriends—were gathered to mourn the first death in our decades-long sisterhood.

A community servant

Our communities lost a leader September 4, when Jerilyn, 56, died suddenly. I use the plural—*communities*—intentionally because she was vital to so many. Local media have aptly chronicled Jerilyn's accomplishments, marking the loss to the Coulee Region's professional community: fabric artist, executive director of the Pump House, meeting planner for Western Wisconsin Education Conference and youth educator at First Presbyterian Church and First Congregational UCC.

Most recently, Jerilyn was executive

director of La Crosse Promise, where Brad Dinsmoor, her husband of 26 years, says "she was at the top of her game professionally."

The loss was most profound for the close-knit community of Jerilyn's family. In the funeral program, her adult sons wrote heart-wrenching letters to their mom. Brad says he is physically and emotionally exhausted as he adjusts to life without Jerilyn, who often referred to him as her best friend.

A circle of friends

Jerilyn may have been all of that, but to The Girlfriends, she was so much more. Hers is too big a life to put into just a few words, but when I asked our friends for some, they didn't let me down. Here, in no particular order, is what some of them had to say, and as you read through them, reflect on your own girlfriends and the impact we women make in each others' lives. Then, give them a call and get together for a glass of wine, a cup of coffee, some good laughter and the kind of support only a girlfriend can give. **(crw)**

Susan C. Schuyler is a freelance writer who is grateful for her girlfriends: past, present and future.

Alice Benson: "I can see her sitting down next to someone she hadn't met before, engaging them in conversation. She was never afraid to meet people, and she loved learning about them."

Kathy Fitchuk: "I will always picture her dancing—on nights out, at the Pump House Soirees, at Leo & Leonas, at Blind Baby concerts and in her living room when she was alone with the music turned up. We both admitted doing this, since it felt so freeing."

Joan Miksis: "Jerilyn was always unpredictable and went with her gut. She defined the word *spontaneity*."

Sherri Diamon: "Some of the best times took place yakking and giggling on the telephone, when we were both self-employed, stay-at-home artists. I liked how Jerilyn brought her friends together so they could love and appreciate each other."

Laura Siitari: "As I got to know Jerilyn better, I found out she struggled with self-doubts and life direction just like most of us, and I'll miss her lively, questioning mind."

Jean Donohoe: "We have spent many years sharing all the events that make up our lives. I have beautiful handmade gifts that Jerilyn crafted, and these are more precious than ever."

Maria Mason: "Jerilyn called one day to ask if I wanted to meet. When I asked her why, she said, 'My hair looks really good, and I hate to waste a really good hair day.'"

AHHH...SNOW DAYS.



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COMMUNITY CALENDAR

ONGOING EVENTS

American Association of University Women (AAUW) 2nd Sat. of each month (Sept.-May), 9:30 a.m., aauwlacrosse@hotmail.com, aauw-wi.org.

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

Children's Museum of La Crosse weekly programming: **Save-On-Sundays** \$1 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. Linda O'Connell, linda@take5productions.net.

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.

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, Shenanigans, noon. Debbie Lee, 608-317-5023, deb@ais-cw.com

Women's Alliance of La Crosse (WAL) 2nd Thurs. of each month, noon, The Waterfront Restaurant, Kasey Heikel 608-519-8080 kasey.heichel.dc@gmail.com OR Amy Stodola 608-788-2668 amy.stodola@edwardjones.com

CALENDAR EVENTS

Nov. 10-Dec. 26, Santa Visits & Photos, Valley View Mall, www.myvalleyview.com.

Nov. 25-Jan. 1, Rotary Holiday Lights, open daily 5-10 p.m., Riverside Park, La Crosse, www.rotarylights.org.

Dec. 1-4, *The Nutcracker*, 6:30 p.m. Thurs.-Sat., 3 p.m. Sun., Dance Repertory Company, Page Theatre, St. Mary's University, Winona.

Dec. 1-17, *The Great American Trailer Park Christmas Show* 2016, 7:30 p.m. Thurs.-Sat., The Muse Theatre, 1353 Avon St., La Crosse, 608-397-3752.

Dec. 2-11, *Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike*, 7:30 p.m. Thurs.-Sat., 2 p.m. Sun., Toland Theatre, Center for the Arts, UW-La Crosse.

Dec. 3, Jingle Bell Walk/Run and Rudolf Dash, 8 a.m., YMCA-North, Onalaska, www.laxymca.org.

Dec. 3, Family & Children's Center Building Bricks of Hope Lego Contest, 9 a.m.-4 p.m., Valley View Mall, www.myvalleyview.com.

Dec. 3, Crucifixion Christmas Gift and Craft Showcase 9 a.m.-3 p.m., Crucifixion School Auditorium, La Crescent.

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

Dec. 3-4, *Handel's Messiah*, 7:30 p.m. Sat., 2 p.m. Sun., Viterbo Fine Arts Center Main Theatre.

Dec. 3-23, Santa and Mrs. Claus Visit, 2-7 p.m.

Thurs.-Sat., 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Sun., Doerflinger Building, downtown La Crosse.

Dec. 4, Holmen Community Christmas Benefit, 3 p.m., Trygve Mathison Performing Arts Center, Holmen High School, \$10; proceeds go to the Holmen Area Community Center. Sue Schultz, 781-1662.

Dec. 7, Canadian Pacific Holiday Train Arrival, 8:45 p.m., Amtrak Depot, La Crosse.

Dec. 8-10, *Christmas Radio Show*, 6:30 p.m.

Thurs.-Fri., 2 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. Sat., Theatre du Mississippi, Winona Arts Center, 228 E. Fifth St., www.theatredumiss.org.

Dec. 8-18, *A Christmas Carol: A Live Radio Play*, 7:30 p.m. Thurs.-Sat., 2:00 p.m. Sat. & Sun., La Crosse Community Theatre, www.lacrossecommunitytheatre.org.

Dec. 9-10, La Crosse Dance Centre's *Nutcracker Ballet*, 7:30 p.m. Fri., 2 p.m. Sat., Viterbo Fine Arts Center Main Theatre.

Dec. 9-11, Holiday Open House Sale, River Trail Cycles, www.rivertrailcycles.com.

Dec. 14-15, String Ties "Holiday Bluegrass," 7:30 p.m., The Pump House, www.thepumphouse.org.

Dec. 17, Old School Variety Show, 7:30 p.m., The Pump House, www.thepumphouse.org.

Dec. 23, Lorie Line: A Merry Little Christmas, 7:30 p.m., Lyche Theatre, The Heider Center, www.heidercenter.org.

Dec. 30, Red Cross Blood Drive, Valley View Mall, www.myvalleyview.com.

Dec. 31, Happy NOON Year! Countdown to Noon, 10 a.m., The Children's Museum, La Crosse, www.funmuseum.org.

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

Jan. 4, Women's Christmas, 5:30-8 p.m., Franciscan Spirituality Center, www.fscenter.org.

Jan. 7, New Year's Resolution Walk/Run, 8 a.m., YMCA-North, Onalaska, www.laxymca.org.

Jan. 13-14, Johnsmith Irish Folk Concert, 7:30 p.m., The Pump House, www.thepumphouse.org.

Jan. 15, La Crosse Bridal Expo, 10 a.m.-2:30 p.m., La Crosse Center, www.lacrossebridalexpo.com.

Jan. 21, Tea & Poetry, with guest presenter Marci Madary, 2-4 p.m., Franciscan Spirituality Center, www.fscenter.org.

Jan. 21, Old School Variety Show, 7:30 p.m., The Pump House, www.thepumphouse.org.

Jan. 21, *The Second City*, 7:30 p.m., Page Theatre, St. Mary's University, Winona.

Jan. 26, Lawn and Disorder, 7:30 p.m., The Heider Center, www.heidercenter.org.

Jan. 26-Feb. 12, *The Misanthrope*, 7:30 p.m. Thurs.-Sat., 2:00 p.m. Sun., La Crosse Community Theatre, www.lacrossecommunitytheatre.org.

Jan. 28, Great Tri-State Rail Sale, 9 a.m.-3 p.m., La Crosse Center, 608-781-9383.

Jan. 29, A Year with Frog and Toad, 3 p.m., Viterbo Fine Arts Center Main Theatre.

Feb. 3-4, Snowflake Ski Jump Tournament, Westby, www.snowflakeskiclub.com.

Feb. 9, Purses with Purpose, Women's Fund of Greater La Crosse, www.womensfundlacrosse.org.



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