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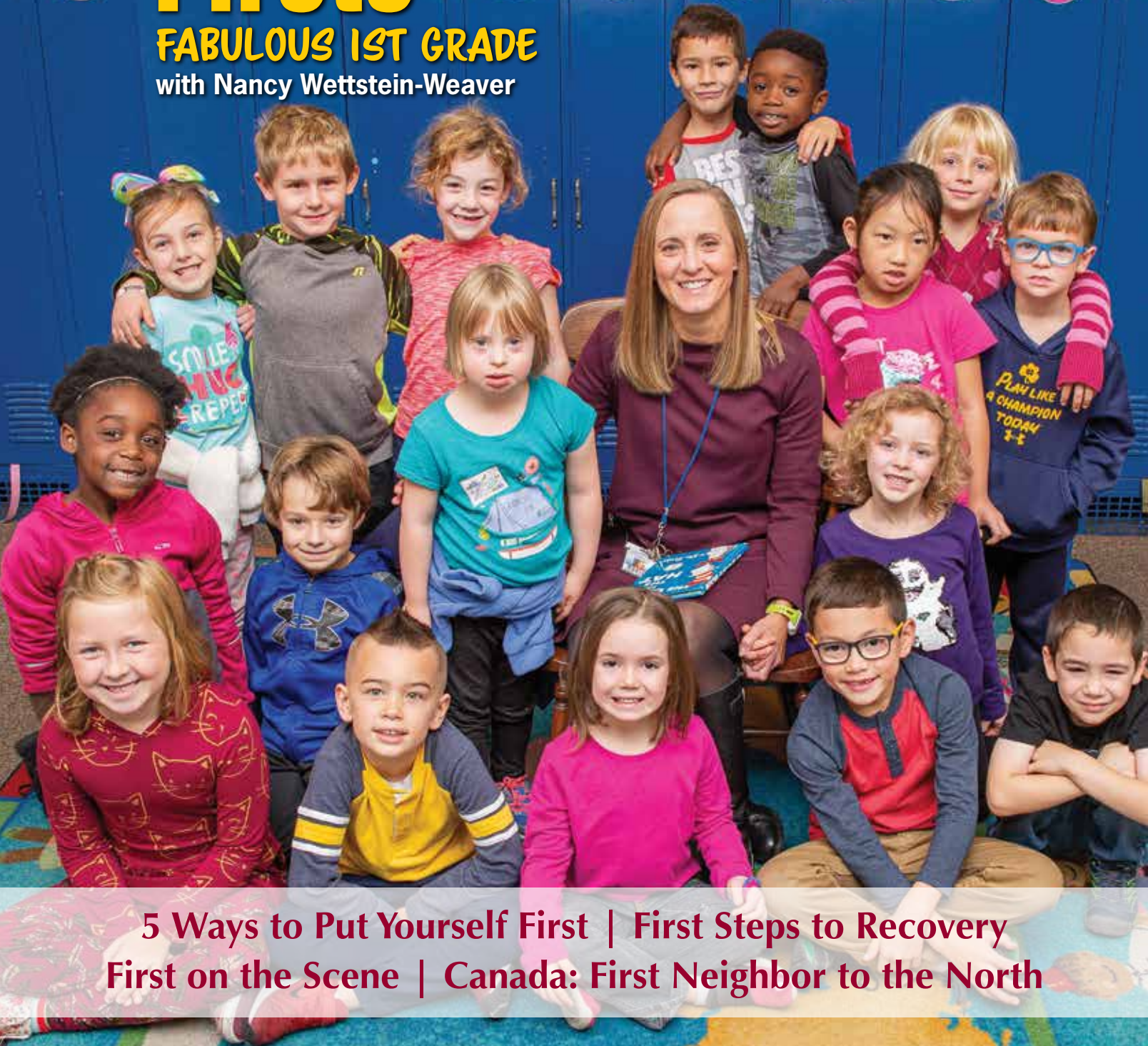
women

AREA HOME AND HEALTHY LIVING MAGAZINE

Firsts

FABULOUS 1ST GRADE

with Nancy Wettstein-Weaver



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Pictured on cover and at left: Nancy Wettstein-Weaver, first-grade teacher at Emerson Elementary in La Crosse.

A woman with dark hair tied in a bun, wearing a beige sweater, is looking down at a tablet computer she is holding in her hands. The background is a blurred kitchen setting.

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Diane Raaum Photography

When I was 3 years old, I took my first plane ride on a family trip to Arizona. That's significant for me, because that trip also produced the very first memories I can recall. I remember sitting by my mother on the plane—my father and older sister sat behind us—and coloring with crayons to while away the time. I remember my older sister stubbing her toe at our hotel pool, and I remember the tiny black-and-white TV set mounted on the wall in our room.

But what I remember most clearly is the car ride to the airport in Minneapolis. We left so early that morning it was still dark. And I remember peeking out the backseat window to catch the first glimpse of the sunrise—the pale gray and pale pink and pale yellow pooling into the dark sky.

About the same time in my life, my Grandma Christiansen would read me a book about a little girl whose family got up just as early to see the traveling circus—and her own observation of the dark sky changing to pale gray and pale pink and pale yellow as the sun rose. This was my first understanding that some things are universal, that two very different people can see something and experience it the same way. (It was also my

first brush with the concept of a recurring theme, my favorite writing device.)

Years later, as I got up earlier and earlier to allow time for my increasingly complicated morning routine before school, I would catch glimpses of the sunrise out of our kitchen window, and I would always think of that car ride and that book. Firsts, though by definition happen only once, also transcend time. With one glance, I would be for an instant that 3-year-old girl, full of wonder.

This issue of *Coulee Region Women* is devoted entirely to “firsts,” in all the ways that word can be interpreted. We open with one of the first of “first” experiences—first grade—and a woman who has devoted her career to making sure her students’ early experiences with education are positive ones. We move on to the first steps to recovery from addiction, to a firefighter who is often first on the scene, to women who serve up our first meals of the day in inspired style. We meet women in “first chairs” at the La Crosse Symphony Orchestra, introduce a program that makes a first home available to many, and pay a visit to our “first neighbor to the north.”

Thinking of all these firsts gives us the opportunity to reflect on other firsts we’ll never forget—first job, first home, first love, first child, first significant loss. We each have our own litany of firsts—some beautiful, some disappointing, some painful and some funny—and our impressions of them are what make them timeless. These are our stories, and like any good recurring themes, they are universal. Sharing them allows us to learn about each other, diffuse pain and disappointment, experience wonder and realize that, despite our differences, we have much in common.

These days, especially in the winter months, I’m easily up in time to see the sun rise. Some days it seeps into the dark sky in shades of pale gray and pale pink and pale yellow. Some days I’ll look out the kitchen window and be startled by a shock of fuchsia. “Come here and look at the sunrise!” I call to my kids, groggy over their cereal bowls. “You’ll never forget it.”

Betty

coulee region women

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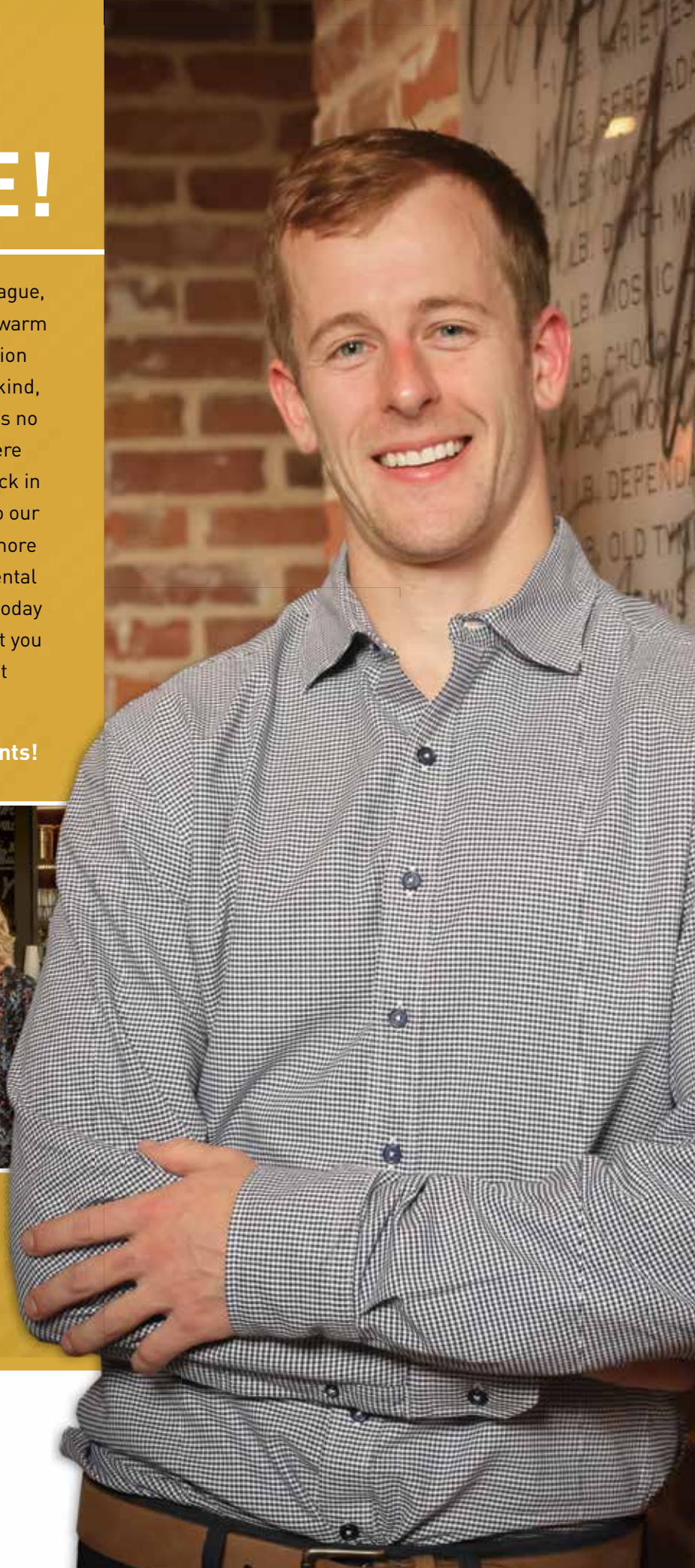
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LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS

The long, dark days can be hard to endure, and if you find yourself struggling through this winter season, you may find camaraderie, direction and peace in the Franciscan Spirituality Center's Meditation for Emotional Health group. This group, led by Sarah Hennessey, FSPA, a trained spiritual director, is open to anyone experiencing anxiety or depression and offers meditation as a coping skill. Gatherings are on the second Thursday of the month, 6:30 to 7:30 p.m., at the Franciscan Spirituality Center at 920 Market Street in La Crosse. Participants are welcome to attend any or all sessions as their schedule permits. Each evening will include a meditative practice followed by a brief discussion. This program is sponsored by the Charles F. Mathy Fund of the La Crosse Community Foundation. For more information, call 608-791-5295 or go to www.fscenter.org.



THE ART OF THE NEEDLE

The artistry of area women will be on display in West Salem December 3 to January 15, when the Heider Center hosts "The Art of the Needle," an array of needlework pieces stitched by members of the Coulee Country Chapter of the Embroiderers' Guild of America. This gallery showcases the works of local stitchers utilizing techniques such as cross-stitch, counted thread, hardanger, embroidery and more, all in colorful, elegant and sometimes whimsical works of art and craft. The gallery show is open Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 12 to 4 p.m. An opening reception will be held December 5 at 6 p.m.

Celebrating its 40th year, the Coulee Country Chapter of the EGA welcomes stitchers of all levels to attend meetings, partake in its classes and work to preserve the heritage of the needle arts. For more information, go to <https://sites.google.com/view/coulee-country-ega>.

CALLING ALL BRIDES

The 2020 La Crosse Wedding EXPO, hosted by The Wedding Tree in downtown La Crosse, will take place on January 12, 2020—and if a wedding is in your future, you won't want to miss it. Located in the South Hall of the La Crosse Center in downtown La Crosse, The Wedding EXPO hosts vendors representing venues, caterers, florists, bakers, photographers, DJs and more, all of whom service the Coulee area and beyond. Don't miss this free opportunity to meet first-class vendors face-to-face, enjoy free samples and score great local deals.

The EXPO's highlight is its "white carpet event": a fashion show produced by The Wedding Tree featuring bridal gowns and mothers' dresses by The Wedding Tree, hair and makeup artistry by Orange Pearl Salon & Spa and accessories by Ayo Uko—Hats, Truly Yours. General admission is free, but registration is encouraged and can be done at www.lacrosseweddingexpo.com/get-tickets. VIP tickets are available for \$15 each through Eventbrite at www.eventbrite.com/e/la-crosse-wedding-expo-2020-tickets-70156713619.

A WINTER'S MARKET

Despite the cold and snow, farmers market season carries on! The La Crosse Farmers Market Association is holding a Winter Market each Sunday in December at Myrick Park Center at 789 Myrick Park Drive in La Crosse from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Enjoy browsing the booths of 21 vendors offering goods from produce to meats, bakery, eggs, honey, artisan items and so much more. Local music performances, yoga classes and activities offered by the La Crosse Public Library round out the market festivities. New this year, little ones can hang out in the Littles Loft for some quiet time, coloring or just taking in the view from above. The La Crosse Farmers Market Association also will offer coffee and apple cider for sale.

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FABULOUS FIRST GRADE

Nancy Wettstein-Weaver shares the joys of teaching first grade.

BY LEAH CALL

Photos by Jordana Snyder Photography



Nancy Wettstein-Weaver of Emerson Elementary in La Crosse, like the first-grade teachers on her team and throughout the region, embrace the joys and challenges of laying an educational foundation for young children.

Few deserve more acclaim than teachers. Early-grade teachers, in particular, have the immense responsibility of presenting the educational firsts that pave the way for a positive learning experience. Nancy Wettstein-Weaver is one of those special people laying that very important foundation. Wettstein-Weaver has taught early learners for more than 20 years—including 14 years at La Crosse’s Emerson Elementary. And while she’s alternated between kindergarten and first grade, her heart belongs to first-graders.

“The kids in first grade are at an age where they are just naturally curious, so engagement is quite easy,” says Wettstein-Weaver. “They see the magic in everything, and they are so kind at this age. They float in between social circles pretty easily.”

Nurturing a love of learning

First-graders can challenge teachers with diverse learning levels and even more diverse abilities to focus and keep their energy in check.

Yet first grade is a time when children really start to advance the foundational reading skills established in preschool and kindergarten.

“First grade is when the lightbulb really goes on,” explains Wettstein-Weaver. “You watch the child read for pleasure and understand and comprehend, and that is one of the greatest joys of teaching first grade.”

To nurture that love of reading, Wettstein-Weaver sends reading home with her first-graders every night. “So children can read to their parents, they can read to the dog, they can read to their siblings—just so they are reading.”

She also sends home strategies families can use to help their children improve reading skills. Of course, math and writing skills also advance in first grade. A favorite activity for Wettstein-Weaver’s first-graders is taking home the writer’s suitcase. “It’s a little suitcase with all these writing materials in it,” she explains. “The children can create their own book and bring it back and share with the class.”

Kindness above all else

While reading, writing and arithmetic are important academic achievements, there is something equally important to Wettstein-Weaver. “I really emphasize in our first-grade family the importance of being kind above all else,” she says. “That encompasses so many things in first grade. We work every day on how we can be kind to others.”

The La Crosse School District follows a premise called Responsive Classroom, which uses the first six weeks of school to concentrate on social skills and community building. Wettstein-Weaver follows that premise in her classroom, teaching children expectations and appropriate social behavior.

“I really believe that the social curriculum is just as important as the academic curriculum,” she stresses. “These children are risking a lot just by being in a new environment, in a new classroom with new children. They need to feel emotionally, physically and socially that they are safe, so that learning can take place.”

The Responsive Classroom approach teaches cooperation, assertiveness, responsibility, empathy and self-control. Examples of social skills taught by Wettstein-Weaver and her fellow teachers at Emerson include deciding who goes first in a game, how to handle losing and how to win gracefully. And since assertion is difficult for many in first grade, Wettstein-Weaver teaches children to “stand up for their ideas and to stand up for other children.”

“We teach a lot about empathy, how to accept and celebrate difference and about self-regulation—you are in charge of your own behavior,” explains Wettstein-Weaver.

A passion for teaching

It’s not unusual to find Wettstein-Weaver in her classroom long after the children have left for the day. “I don’t always have the best balance between home life and work life,” she admits. “The children come in at such diverse levels. I have children still working on identifying letters and numbers, and I have children who are reading past a first-grade level. You can’t give one activity to everyone—you really have to differentiate.”

Wettstein-Weaver confesses that it is easier for her to put in long hours since she has no young children at home anymore. Daughter Elena, now 26, is finishing up a nursing degree at Viterbo, while Emily, 24, studies opera at the University of Kentucky in Lexington.



Reading, writing, learning social skills and more are all part of a first-grader's day.

Wettstein-Weaver first discovered teaching was the career for her as a nursing student at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire. After taking more interest in what friends who were majoring in education were learning, she switched majors, eventually earning a degree in elementary education.

Soon after, she found herself moving around the country, first to Maryland, where her husband, Todd, took a job at the National Cancer Institute; then to Minneapolis, where he earned his doctorate at the University of Minnesota. After the birth of their two daughters, the family moved again to New York, then back to Minnesota, before finally settling in La Crosse. In La Crosse, Wettstein-Weaver taught kindergarten at Congregational Preschool for 6 years before taking the job at Emerson 14 years ago.

It takes a village

Having experienced life in numerous communities, Wettstein-Weaver feels fortunate to live and teach in La Crosse. She

appreciates the tremendous support she has from the La Crosse School District and the entire community.

“I have amazing colleagues here at Emerson. They are passionate and empathetic and intelligent. We are always striving to do what is best for kids,” she says. “But I feel like we aren’t just part of a school or a district, we are part of such a supportive community. They really do support the schools here. The families are wonderful.”

Families are the children’s first teachers, and Wettstein-Weaver considers the partnership between home and school critical to the success of each child.

“Families trust us to provide their children with the knowledge and skills—both academic and social—that they need to be successful,” she says. “It’s an honor to teach these kids. It really is.” **(crw)**

Westby-based writer Leah Call appreciates the hardworking, dedicated teachers throughout the Coulee Region.

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A FAMILY PRACTICE

A family of Viroqua nurses boasts three generations of putting patients first.

BY TALLITHA REESE
Contributed photos



From left: Kari Amrhein, Olivia Amrhein and Barb Solverson represent three generations of a family of nursing professionals, all with ties to Viroqua's Vernon Memorial Healthcare.

For Kari Amrhein, a family practice nurse at Hirsch Clinic in Viroqua, being a nurse was the first and only career goal she ever had, and that started with watching her mother, Barb Solverson, go to work every day to help people.

"She had a passion for her patients that never ceased," says Amrhein. "I wanted to be a nurse just like her when I grew up and had decided this when I was 5 years old. That goal never changed for me, as I wanted to give back to people just like my mom did."

A lifetime of nursing

Solverson, who is now retired, worked at Hirsch Clinic for over 50 years and still volunteers at Vernon Memorial Healthcare and with the hospital's auxiliary.

The first of three generations of nurses, Solverson was raised by her grandparents after her mother passed away from post-partum hemorrhage after giving birth to her. "That always weighed on my mind," says Solverson, "and is the root of why I became interested in nursing."

Solverson studied in Rochester, Minnesota, and after graduating, accepted a job at Hirsch Clinic in Viroqua.

"The only thing they wanted to know before giving me the job was if I was going to stay local," she explains with a laugh. "I said I would soon be marrying a farmer from Liberty Pole, so I wouldn't probably be going too far."

During her time at Hirsch Clinic, Solverson saw many changes come through the medical industry as well as specific developments at the clinic, including two location moves.

"We have advanced to providing much more help for the doctors," she explains. "When I started, we roomed patients and gave shots and helped with procedures. Nowadays, there's much more managing of a patient's health than when I started."

Solverson also saw the transition from paper records to computer systems. "That was interesting," she says with a smile. "It was very hard for everyone to give up paper completely."

Solverson worked with two providers while at Hirsch Clinic: Dr. Robert Starr and Dr. Deborah Prior. Now, her daughter works in



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Solverson's former position with Dr. Prior, although for a time, before Solverson retired, the mother-daughter pair worked together.

"We sat on opposite sides of the nurses' station from each other, but we were able to help each other," says Amrhein. "She was a great role model and teacher for me coming to clinic nursing. I still have her notes and cheat sheets."

"I loved going to work every day and dearly loved my patients," says Solverson. "The hardest thing I have ever done was quitting this job, but I knew the time was right, and I'm so happy that Kari has the job I loved."

Continuing the family tradition

Amrhein's daughter, Olivia, a senior at Viterbo University in La Crosse, is also continuing the family tradition and is set to graduate in May 2020 with her bachelor of science in nursing.

Although she doesn't have set plans for after graduation, Olivia would like to work in a rural health care setting and says her specific goal has always been to work at Vernon Memorial Healthcare in Viroqua—the place where both her mother and grandmother worked.

"My mother and grandma had a very strong influence on my career choice," says Olivia. "They are two of the most amazing individuals I have ever met. Growing up and watching my mother and grandmother, I have had the opportunity of witnessing the joys and sorrows behind the title."

Through the years, Olivia says she has seen tears of sorrow, frustrations and the fatigue that comes with a life of nursing exemplified by her mother and grandmother, but she has also witnessed the long-lasting joy, tears of happiness and "satisfaction visibly evident at the end of about 90 percent of their workdays," and that is what ultimately finalized her own decision to become a nurse.

Though Amrhein and her husband, Pete (who is also a nurse), never pushed their kids to follow in their footsteps, two of their three children are currently studying to become nurses: Olivia and her twin brother, Christopher. In addition, their youngest daughter, Celia, 15, says she would also like to go into the health care field, but has not yet figured out what she wants to do.

For Solverson, who also had two of her three children go into the medical field, it's very exciting to see her grandchildren continue the family legacy of helping people through nursing.

"It's pretty awesome to see that. I'm very proud of them," she says. "Very proud." 

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

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Putting Yourself First

Stay balanced with 5 tips for self-care.

BY JULIE NELSON
Contributed photos

As women, we often see our main job as that of support crew and cheerleader for our friends, our coworkers, our parents, our spouse and, especially, our children. And while stoking our nurturing side is rewarding, it can also be exhausting. If you are feeling worn out and find yourself increasingly short-tempered with those around you, it may be time to put yourself first—and, the experts say, don't feel guilty about it.

While a little stress is OK, women who chronically have too many balls in the air are setting themselves up for serious health conditions, such as anxiety, depression, headaches, digestive problems, weight gain, memory issues and even autoimmune disease. Self-care is an important antidote in battling all of these conditions, and here are five tips to get you started.

1. Schedule time for yourself

“So often as women, we put ourselves last on the to-do list,” says Dr. Margaret Grenison, a physician at the Center for Women's Health at Mayo Clinic Health System. She tells women to regularly put themselves first and to feel good about doing so. She recommends scheduling regular “protected time”—put it on the calendar and use that time to do

something you enjoy, whether it is exercise, a hobby or an outing with friends.



Dr. Margaret Grenison,
Mayo Clinic Health
System

2. Ask for help

Learn to identify when you've got too much on your plate and then call in some backup, whether that is a coworker, your partner or even an older child. You may also find it worthwhile to pay for services such as housekeeping or dog walking, even if it's only on occasion.

3. Be good enough

Dr. Grenison identifies another pitfall many of us have as she encourages us to “fight perfectionism. Have realistic standards. Do your best, but recognize that good enough is, usually, good enough.”



Dr. Caroline Wilker,
Mayo Clinic Health
System

4. Get outside

Another Dr. Grenison recommendation may require you to bundle up, but you'll quickly discover it is worth it. “Get outside!” she says. “It's

probably the easiest and cheapest thing we can do to enhance our health and well-being. There is a tremendous growing body of research supporting the many health benefits of connecting with nature, including stress reduction, improved sleep, enhanced relationships and improved creativity. So get out there! Feed the birds, plant some flowers

or just sit on your porch and watch a sunset. Guaranteed, you'll feel better.”

5. Forgive yourself

As a final tip, Mayo's Dr. Caroline Wilker suggests we all need to be gentler with ourselves: “Forgive yourself and start again. We are all trying every day to be so much. We want to be good mothers, workers, significant others, friends, community members, pet owners, drivers ... the list goes on and on and on. Some days we rock it. Some days we fail. Forgive yourself on those days. Remind yourself that tomorrow is a new day and each day is a new beginning. You got this!” 

Julie Nelson is a big believer in the value of fresh air and outdoor activity. She is frequently seen riding her bicycle from place to place in the summer and bundling up for a walk downtown in the winter.

Here are some other ideas from Mayo Clinic Health System for activities that will help you keep your life in perspective:

- Journaling
- Yoga
- Meditation
- Listening to music
- Aromatherapy
- Guided imagery
- Getting enough sleep
- Taking time to breathe

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FIRST ON THE SCENE

For Erin Statz, there is no better profession than firefighting.

BY MARTHA KEEFFE

Photo by Diane Raam

Erin Statz, firefighter for the City of La Crosse

It's 7:30 in the morning, and Erin Statz, one of the two full-time female firefighters for the city of La Crosse, arrives at the station. At 8 a.m. she begins her day. For the next 24 hours, it's the job of Statz and her fellow firefighters to prepare and maintain the equipment, the building and themselves to be ready to respond to an emergency call within a minute's notice. It's also a job where, despite the physical demands (which sometimes necessitate that she carry up to 80 pounds of equipment) and a high male-to-female ratio, Statz feels at home. "My male colleagues relate to me the exact same way they relate to their male colleagues," says Statz, who says

her coworkers treat each other like family. "We ride on the same trucks, eat in the same kitchen and make our beds in the same room. There is no reason to relate to me differently because I am a woman. We're here to do the same job."

No better profession

Though firefighting is not a part of her family history, Statz was innately drawn to the physical aspects of fire service. "I grew up on a dairy farm," explains Statz. "And though I loved the farm and appreciated the hard work farming entails, taking it over wasn't

something I saw myself doing. I did see myself staying active and performing physical work with whatever profession I chose, so I thought firefighting would be a good choice.”

Trusting her instincts, Statz enrolled at MATC (Madison Area Technical College) in the fire protection program just two weeks following her high school graduation. It was here that she earned an associate’s degree, received multiple state fire certifications (such as being able to drive and operate a pump and aerial lift and learning the fundamentals of fire inspection) and obtained her EMT (emergency medical technician) basic license. All this she accomplished while attending school full time and working as a firefighter intern for the Fitchburg Fire Department. And though she found some aspects of her training rigorous and challenging, the real-world experience she gained as an intern affirmed her career choice. “I really didn’t know what to expect,” she says, noting that once she was in the program, she never doubted that she’d be able to complete her training. “Looking back, I don’t think I could have found a better profession for myself.”

Teamwork and support

For Statz, her job translates into the perfect combination of teamwork and the satisfaction that comes from having met (and continuing to meet) the same physical requirements and hiring standards of her male counterparts. It’s a job, she says, that is earned by working hard and putting in the time and training needed to keep up with your competition. “I like the feeling of going to high-risk calls and performing the skills we train hard on while working together

as a team to make situations better,” she says, adding that the whole department is supportive of everyone’s efforts. “Being on a fire scene can sometimes be a little chaotic, but overall, it’s awesome to be a part of a crew that works well alongside each other.”

And whether a crew is tasked to attack the fire or man the pump, knowing that each individual on your team is capable of performing their job (regardless of their size or gender), allows firefighters to focus on managing the situation efficiently and effectively with as little error as possible. “For example, if my crew pulls up to a house fire and gets assigned to fire attack, we need to first work on stretching a hose line to the house as quickly as possible without getting the hose tangled,” says Statz, explaining that this involves assessing the area to find the clearest path to the house while avoiding fences, trees or parked cars. “Everything needs to happen fast,” she says. “And we have to do it together.”

Knowing this, Statz offers a word of advice to women who are considering a career in firefighting. “Part of the fire service culture is joking around and making fun of each other,” she says. “These jokes are not meant to tear others down, but instill a sense of camaraderie among the crew.” And in this culture built on trust and merit, it’s good to grow a thick skin. “If you can learn to laugh at yourself and laugh off your silly mistakes, this might be the job for you. [\(crw\)](#)

Martha Keefe lives and writes in La Crosse. She thanks all firefighters for their dedication and service to their communities.



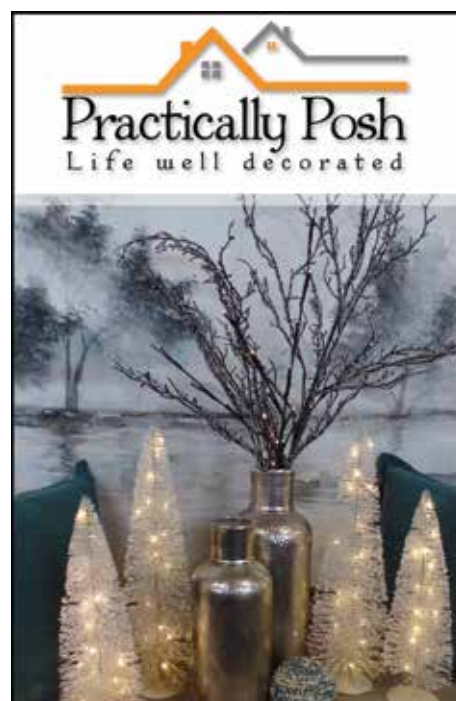
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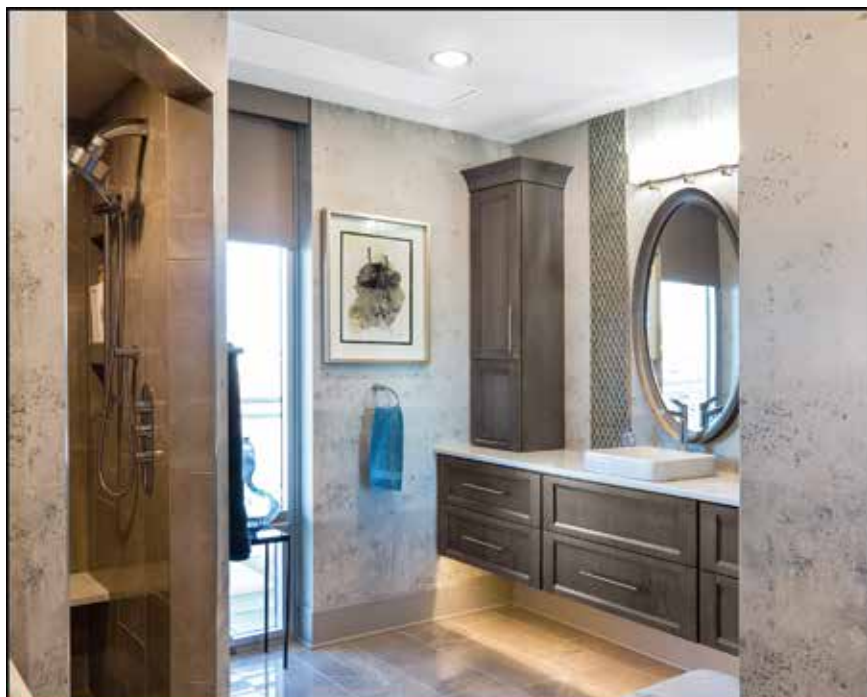


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Beyond the Surface

A couple celebrates a remodel featuring Solid Surface Specialist and solid relationships.

BY HEIDI OVERSON
Photos by Frontier Photography



There's nothing like a fresh surface (like these countertops provided by Solid Surface Specialist) to top off a newly remodeled kitchen.

Remodeling can be a long, tedious undertaking, but the results are well worth the temporary headaches. If you're in the process, hang in there, Tim and Jan Dwyer say. In early October 2019, the Dwyers finished a three-phase remodeling project of their home on Shore Acres Road in La Crescent, and they are still celebrating the outcome.

The two things that really helped with the process were having an unshakable vision and hiring fabulous contractors who listened to the couple and delivered over-the-top service and results.

"One of the contractors we hired was Solid Surface Specialist in Onalaska, recommended by Rich Storlie, our building contractor," says Jan Dwyer. "Karissa Wunsch was just wonderful to work with."

Wunsch is part owner of the custom countertop company. She conferred with the Dwyers, helping them choose the perfect countertops for their kitchen, laundry room and bathrooms.

Her suggestions and end products were the icing on the cake in establishing the aura the Dwyers were dreaming to achieve. The house was transformed from a river cottage to a beautiful, large family home.

Rebuilding a beloved home

Built in the mid-1970s by Tim's parents, Bob and Shirley Dwyer, the cottage needed quite a bit of work after they passed away 15 years ago. The siding was rotting, the windows were in poor shape and most everything else needed updating—including the orange Formica kitchen countertops. As luck would have it, the Dwyer's brother-in-law, Mike Swinghamer, is an architect, and he helped them draw a plan that suited the size of their family and needs.

Remodeling started in June 2018. First, the Dwyers had an addition built: three large bedrooms, two sophisticated bathrooms and a large walk-in closet. Wunsch began her magic and created gorgeous quartz



From left: A father-daughter team heads up Solid Surface Specialist. Karissa Wunsch will assume ownership of the company from her father, Paul Mauss, in 2021. In the Dwyers' home, bathrooms and a laundry room also benefit from new quartz and granite surfaces.

pieces for the new bathrooms' vanities.

Next, in the original house, siding was replaced, walls were taken down (Jan learned she could sure swing a sledgehammer) and carpet was ripped up. New, large windows were added throughout. They serve their purpose well, as the Mississippi River flows directly behind the home, offering attention-getting views. The Dwyers spruced up the entry by adding a new door and large closets. An old bedroom became a sitting room, and the living room was kept the same, save for a new window by the fireplace. The wood-burning fireplace holds a special place in the Dwyers' hearts, as Tim's father had it constructed with stones. One stone stands out; it is an authentic fieldstone from Ireland, hand-picked by Bob while he was visiting the country and lovingly set among the other stones. It's a great tribute to the family's Irish heritage.

Surfaces top off a home

The third phase was remodeling the laundry area and the kitchen. Knowing that the kitchen is the heart of the home, the Dwyers relied heavily on Wunsch and her staff at Solid Surface Specialist to help create an attractive culinary paradise.

"They did just that," says Jan. "As with the other rooms' countertops and vanity work, I handed the reins completely over to Karissa because I trusted her judgment."

The end result was perfect. Wunsch selected an attractive granite countertop for the laundry room. The kitchen's quartz countertops are sleek and cover large spaces on each side of the sink, with the biggest area coming out toward the living room, forming a large breakfast and work counter. The craftsmanship is so painstakingly done, it looks seamless.

"Everyone comments on these kitchen counters," says Jan. "They tie the whole room together beautifully."

"The Dwyers were a joy to help," says Wunsch, who was pleased when they came into the Solid Surface Specialist showroom after being referred by two separate contractors.

Solid relationships

Wunsch formed a great relationship with the Dwyers right away, knowing how special this remodel was to them. She knows building bonds is important, as it speaks of the kind of business her family has built over the years. Wunsch's father, Paul Mauss, started Solid Surface Specialist in 1987. He worked out of his garage, and Wunsch

was 13 when she began working with him after school and during the summers. In 1998, the business was moved to a building they rented in Onalaska. At that time, they focused on just Corian Solid Surface countertops. They kept growing, and in 2006, they built their shop and showroom at 161 Mason Street in Onalaska. This enabled them to double the shop size and offer more direct sales to the public.

In 2013, they doubled the size of their shop, adding their own stone fabrication area. They still offer seamless Corian Solid Surface, but they can now fabricate their own quartz and granite countertops. "Lately, quartz has become increasingly popular, partially thanks to HGTV," Wunsch says.

Generally, 80 percent of their current residential business is from remodeling. Overall, 60 percent is residential, and 40 percent is commercial. Wunsch works in the showroom and helps customers choose their colors, but she also enjoys the hands-on work in fabrication. "I love seeing the product go from being a slab to a finished product. I love how I can enter a digital measure and see how perfectly the tops fit in a home or business."

Family first

Solid Surface Specialist operates with the help of two Computer Numerical Control (CNC) machines and three employees, including the lead installer and stone fabricator, Scott Jostad. Wunsch and her father still work together, and in 2021, she will assume complete ownership.

"My dad has done a great job of preparing me for this," says Wunsch. "He's worked so very hard to build this business. He's a perfectionist and very particular. He's always aimed to provide the highest-quality craftsmanship and countertops. He instilled his hard-work ethic in me from the start. I am so proud to continue his legacy."

The Dwyers agree that Mauss' investment in the business and his family has paid off. "Karissa made our remodeling experience just wonderful and added to our happiness," says Jan. "Her thoughtful care, expertise and high-quality countertops make our house more of a home we love and never want to leave. We are completely happy and content." *(crw)*

Heidi Overson is a local writer who caught the "I-wish-I-could-remodel-right-now" bug while interviewing the Dwyers and Wunsch. She enjoyed this assignment and made some new friends while she was at it.

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A NEW PATH TO A FIRST HOME

Finding HOME offers a helping hand for homeownership.

BY BETTY CHRISTIANSEN
Contributed photos

The Sargents secured their home through the Finding HOME program at Marine Credit Union Foundation.

When Katye Sargent and her family—her husband and three daughters—decided it was time to buy a home, the odds were stacked against them. With a limited income and less-than-stellar credit rating, they didn't qualify for a traditional mortgage. Fortunately for them—and for other Coulee Region families in their shoes—there's a new program in the area that can not only offer a path to homeownership, but an improved credit rating, better budgeting and money-management skills, and plenty of moral support.

Finding HOME

Offered by the Marine Credit Union Foundation, the Finding HOME program seeks to serve potential homeowners who may “fall through the cracks” and not qualify for traditional mortgage products. Run by the MCU Foundation's Financial Literacy Counselor, Majel Hein, who brought a career's worth of credit counseling experience to the job, Finding HOME is about advancing lives and seeing people as more than a credit score. “We consider their character, not so much their credit score,” Hein says. “We work with clients who are trying to move forward despite their obstacles, and Finding HOME gives them an opportunity to do just that.”

Finding HOME is a financial education program that begins with an initial assessment with Hein, during which problem areas are identified—high debt, delinquency on loans, low credit ratings and more—and a plan is formed for improving these areas and establishing good financial habits.

“Participants must demonstrate a willingness to improve,” says Hein. For example, for Sargent to qualify for the program, she needed higher income than her part-time job provided. Within three weeks, Sargent acquired a full-time job—fantastic proof of her motivation.

Participants then commit to 12 to 18 months of one-on-one financial counseling with Hein, meeting three times a month to work out a spending plan, develop debt payment structures, track

money and generally take control of their finances. Participants are also required to take classes with other program participants, covering such topics as budgeting, home buying, homeownership, credit, identity theft and cybersecurity.



Majel Hein, Marine Credit Union Foundation

Dollars and cents

In addition to education, participants get hands-on experience in saving money and making mortgage payments reliably. Participants have the opportunity to open a CD-secured loan through a program called Get Credit, which allows them to build credit, set aside savings and responsibly manage monthly payments. “This allows our participants to demonstrate progress and commitment,” Hein says. “Together, we set goals, and they meet them.”

“Coming in,” says Sargent, “I didn't know anything about budgeting or buying a home. It was all new to me.” She found the program not only useful, but forgiving. “Majel would say, ‘If you fall, you can get back up—you just need to know how to do it.’”

The keys to a home

Upon completion of Finding HOME, graduates are guaranteed access to a mortgage that fits their budget. They are given continued support from Hein for three to five years after graduation. She not only offers financial counseling, but also acts as their best cheerleader.

“The wonderful thing about my job,” Hein says, “is helping participants to help themselves, achieve their goals and become self-sufficient.” It's watching participants like the Sargents—the first graduates of Finding HOME—“see what they are capable of and get in control of their world.”

For Sargent and her family, the benefits are personal. “It's a real point of pride,” she says. “It's the security of knowing it's mine.” **(crw)**

Betty Christiansen is the publisher and editor of Coulee Region Women.



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FIRST MEAL OF THE DAY

Start your day right with offerings from local restaurateurs.

BY JANIS JOLLY

Contributed photos

Whether it's an artful pastry, a hearty bowl of oatmeal or “the works,” breakfast has long been touted the most important meal of the day. And what other meal offers such variety and deliciousness that we're happy to eat it any time of day?

Luckily for us in the Coulee Region, breakfast places abound, ranging from unique to classic and offering a pastry on the go or a lingering meal. Here, three local women chefs share their favorite ways to start the day.

Uptowne Café & Bakery

La Crosse is the smallest city Adrian Lipscombe has ever lived in. One of the advantages of such a small place is that she can get to know the people who raise the food served at her Uptowne Café & Bakery. She and her husband, Chris, are passionate about using fresh, locally farmed produce and meats, and she finds that is easier to do in Wisconsin than in her native Texas. The flexible and enthusiastic

staff make serving exceptional food possible.

Lipscombe hires people who are interested in food service careers and gives them experience in all aspects of working in a restaurant as well as good work habits and attitudes. Some stay a long time, and for others, “we are a chapter in their lives.”

Lipscombe opened the restaurant at 1217 Caledonia Street in North La Crosse on March 6, 2016. The atmosphere is rustic and welcoming, and the food is “a little Southern with a Midwestern



Adrian Lipscombe, Uptowne Café & Bakery

flair”—the flair provided by such local specialties as elderberries, cranberries, varietal apples from La Crescent and vegetables grown on neighboring farms. Even the sausage links are made from Red Wattle pigs raised specially for the café by Rainbow Ridge Farms in Onalaska.

The morning meal, or brunch, starts with “table shares,” or breakfast appetizers such as beignets—“fluffy puffs of wonderfulness”—with honey and lemon curd.

The best-selling brunch item is Sweet Potato Hash, with mushrooms, peppers and two over-easy eggs. Hungry brunch eaters can also choose Shrimp and Grits, a Breakfast Grain Bowl with quinoa and farro, as well as more traditional pancakes and waffles, the latter of which can be topped with a crispy chicken breast.

All breads served in the restaurant plus scones, cookies and biscotti are baked in house.

Mary Cody's Restaurant and Maggie's Lounge

Onalaska has benefitted from Mary Cody's cooking for the past 25 years. The name conjures breakfast made from scratch from fine local ingredients, blended with care and flair.



Mary Cody, Mary Cody's Restaurant and Maggie's Lounge

On the corner of Main Street and Highway 35, Mary Cody's Restaurant and Maggie's Lounge offer a sophisticated menu at reasonable prices. The sausage gravy and homemade hollandaise sauce are house specialties. Eight different skillet breakfasts are on the menu, with names like Caprese, Denver and Bacon Bleu. Frequent specials take advantage of seasonal ingredients.

French toast, waffles, eggs, bacon and sausages are offered in creative forms, and even a modest bowl of oatmeal can be trimmed with brown sugar, raisins and pecans. The in-house bakery turns out breads, muffins, cinnamon rolls, coffee cakes and sweet breads.

Cody's first restaurant, Traditions, was in the old Onalaska State Bank building on the corner. Ten years ago, she bought the larger building next door, which made it possible to expand the menu, do the baking for the restaurant and run a catering business. She is the owner and head chef, assisted by an “awesome team” that has at times included her children, as well as folks who help with her catering business. While the restaurant is open for breakfast daily, they also serve special-occasion brunches for Easter, Mother's Day, Thanksgiving and more. A popular item at these brunches is Oven Baked French Toast (recipe on page 33).

Fayze's Restaurant & Bakery

Fayze's at Fourth and Pearl in downtown La Crosse has been a fixture in the city for many years. Kelsey Williams and her husband, Drew, have owned it for the past 12. They have a loyal coterie of regular customers from the downtown business community and can accommodate professional and private breakfast meetings. Weekends bring more families and students.



Kelsey Williams, Fayze's Restaurant & Bakery

Traditional breakfast items star in this menu. Eggs and bacon, seven different omelettes, French toast, waffles and pancakes figure prominently, all with creative touches to make them interesting. Even more interesting: The restaurant has a full

bar and can serve bloody Marys, mimosas and screwdrivers with the morning meal. Hungry Man Hashbrowns topped with three scrambled eggs, peppers, onions, diced ham and cheese sauce and the chunky Breakfast Burrito satisfy large appetites. Avocado and Toast, or Garden Delight Omelette provide lighter, tasty alternatives.

All the bread served in the restaurant is baked in-house daily, along with a tempting variety of European goodies such as kolaches and Flop Cake, with brownies, cookies and bars available in the bakery counter. The best seller in the bakery is the cinnamon rolls, followed by muffins and coffee cakes. Of course, the Talame buns are a local favorite.

INSTANT HAPPY: JUST ADD FLOP CAKE

Fayze's Restaurant & Bakery

- 1 premade Swedish Flop Cake (special-order from Fayze's the day ahead)
- 1 pint fresh berries of your choice

Cut Flop Cake into serving pieces and top with fresh berries. Fayze's Flop Cake is made up of two pastry layers with cream throughout and powdered sugar on top. It pairs well with fresh berries of any kind.



OVEN BAKED FRENCH TOAST

Mary Cody's Restaurant

Serves 12

- 4 T corn syrup
- 1 cup butter
- 2 cups brown sugar
- 1 loaf bread (thick white bread, Texas toast, croissant or raisin bread, crusts removed)
- 10 eggs
- 1¾ cups half-and-half
- 2 tsp. vanilla
- ½ tsp. salt
- Cinnamon to taste

Combine corn syrup, butter and brown sugar in a small saucepan and simmer until the sugar is completely dissolved, stirring continuously until mixture is smooth and not too thick.

Pour into a greased 9x13 baking pan. Set aside.

Layer the bread on the syrup in the pan; you will need about 12 slices of bread (6 slices per layer).

In a large bowl, beat together eggs, half-and-half, vanilla, salt and cinnamon. Pour over the bread slices. Cover and refrigerate overnight.

In the morning, remove the pan from the refrigerator while the oven is preheating to 350°F. Bake uncovered about 45 minutes or until golden brown.

QUICK CHEESY GRITS

Uptowne Café & Bakery

- 2 cups water
- 1¼ cups milk, ¼ cup extra if needed later
- 1 tsp. salt
- 1 cup quick-cooking grits
- ½ cup butter
- ¼ cup heavy cream
- ½ cup cheddar cheese
- ¼ tsp. cracked pepper

In a pot, bring water, milk and salt to a boil. Slowly stir grits into boiling mixture. Stir continuously and thoroughly until grits are well mixed. Let the pot return to a boil. Stir grits often to make sure they do not stick to the bottom of the pot. Cover the pot with a lid, lower the temperature and cook for approximately 30 minutes, stirring occasionally. If the mixture looks too thick, add the extra ¼ cup of milk or additional water if needed.

Grits are done when they have the consistency of smooth Cream of Wheat. Add butter, heavy cream, cheddar cheese and cracked pepper. (crw)

Janis Jolly lives in La Crosse, loves to cook and formerly was the food editor for the Duluth News Tribune.



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With cooler weather on the way, the creation of mulled wine, or "Gluehwein," is a great party idea. It's hot, spicy and delicious. But "how do I make it?" you might ask. It's easy! Simply start with any red wine, then add a little fruit wine, a spice bag and brown sugar to sweeten. It's your own creativity that makes this a great cold-weather drink. For serving, split an orange slice on the mug. If you're a bit uncomfortable with "winging" it, there are many recipes on the internet for mulled wine. Prost!

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RECOVERY FIRST

Area recovery centers help people combat addiction and reclaim lives.

BY HEIDI GRIMINGER BLANKE

Photo by Diane Raam

Lynsee Thompson cites local recovery services—Gundersen Health System's Unity House, Coulee Recovery Center and her new employer, CleanSlate Centers—as important resources for those, like her, who are impacted by addiction.

“It’s almost like you don’t have a soul anymore. That’s the only way to describe it. Your whole being is consumed.” Lynsee Thompson describes her years of drug and alcohol addiction with these gut-wrenching words. Now, though, she has her soul back and works at helping others get theirs back, too.

Thompson began using when she was a teenager. While some people consider marijuana a gateway drug, Thompson believes it was cigarettes that initiated her addiction. “If I hadn’t started smoking cigarettes, I wouldn’t have started smoking marijuana; I wouldn’t have ...” She lets the words trail off, using her hand to gesture the magnitude of what came next.

You can never go back

A high achiever at Central High School, Thompson’s life took a twist when she and a friend were in a car accident and cited for underage drinking. “I was a good student, involved in school and extracurriculars, so to me it didn’t feel like a big deal. I didn’t have to go to court. I was in mock trial at the time, so one of the lawyers just went on my behalf, so I was very insulated from any consequences.”

Once she got to college at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, her substance use increased. “I felt like I had worked so hard in high school to get there, I could just let loose a little bit. I started ‘playing’ harder than I worked.”

Thompson realized life wasn’t going in the direction she needed and came home to attend the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse. She thought that moving would be a “geographical fix.” Instead, she says, “I hooked up with some people I met during high school that were now using. And that was kind of it.”

Her usage continued. “It was cocaine, and then it was oxycodone. Eventually I became an IV drug user. At that point, you can never go back to just being a recreational user.”

The recovery journey

Thompson tried to stop, but she never made it past the third day, mostly, she feels, from not believing in herself. “I didn’t think that I could do it. I hated myself for doing [drugs], but I didn’t know how to stop.”

Though her parents were likely aware of her substance abuse, they

didn't know its magnitude until Thompson was hospitalized as a result of her using. "I ended up getting physically ill with sepsis and endocarditis. I was intubated, and they induced me into a coma for about six weeks on and off."

Eventually, a court order sent her into treatment at Gundersen Health System's Unity House for Women. "That was really the beginning of my recovery journey. I was on medication-assisted treatment. That really helped me with cravings and allowed me to distance myself from those people in my past."

However, six months later, Thompson relapsed. "My court commitment was over, but I was still talking to the same people. I wanted to keep tabs on their lives and live vicariously through them." This time, the substances didn't have the same effect, and she regained her sobriety. "I knew it wasn't going to be the same anymore because I knew too much about the disease of addiction and what I was doing to my body."

Know you're not alone

Thompson completed a bachelor's degree and anticipates graduating with an MBA in 2021. She worked at Unity House for four years and recently accepted a position with CleanSlate Centers, an outpatient addiction treatment medical group. Thompson says clients there "meet twice a week with a provider and make sure they're not having difficulties or doing other things besides taking the medication to help themselves recover."

She has powerful words for those suffering from addiction or who love someone who does. "The disease of addiction can be extremely isolating for both the person with the disorder and their family. Know that you're not alone." The Coulee Recovery Center, she says, "is an amazing place. They have a drop-in center and tons of support meetings. I encourage people looking for recovery activities to start there."

Thompson recalls her life on drugs. "My world was so small when I was using. I couldn't think beyond the next fix. I was always somewhere else. You'd be talking to me, but I wasn't here."

Now, she's an advocate for those seeking sobriety. "Addiction impacts so many," she says. "There's no race or socioeconomic class it doesn't affect. I had this picture in my mind of alcoholics and addicts as dirty and homeless. That's not true. Some of the most brilliant people I've ever met struggle with addiction. Just put what you think you know about it aside. Realize it's something that affects everyone."

Today, Thompson is healthy, strong, involved in the community and excited about her position at CleanSlate Centers. She knows firsthand the trials of recovery and eagerly looks forward to helping others find their souls. *(crw)*

Heidi Grimminger Blanke is a La Crosse-area writer and a member of the Mississippi Valley Writers Guild. She has the utmost respect for anyone who takes on the challenge of overcoming an addiction.

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The advertisement includes a portrait of Heidi M. Eglash, a woman with glasses and a purple top. The text is organized into sections with varying background colors (white and blue) to highlight different parts of the service.



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FIRST AMONG EQUALS

Principal players of the La Crosse Symphony Orchestra make beautiful music.

BY DOREEN PFOST
Contributed photos



The La Crosse Symphony Orchestra is a jewel in the Coulee Region's crown. Photo by Jordana Snyder Photography.

“I remember the first time I heard a symphony orchestra live,” says Carol Hester, flutist for the La Crosse Symphony Orchestra. “There’s nothing like it.” Many local music lovers agree and celebrate the La Crosse area’s bountiful and diverse opportunities to hear live music—including the LSO.

The orchestra’s musicians likewise take deep satisfaction in bringing world-class symphonic music to an appreciative audience. Watch them play, and it’s clear that they love what they do. The source of that love is perhaps different for every musician. Here, three orchestra members share their stories.

She’s got *that sound*

Hester fell for the flute even before she knew its name. As a preschooler, she listened over and over to favorite music recordings;



Tammy Fisher, principal percussionist for the La Crosse Symphony Orchestra

she didn’t know the individual instruments, but there was one sound in particular that enchanted her. Years later, before signing up for fifth-grade band, she and her classmates attended a demonstration of the instruments from which they might choose. The teacher picked up a flute, and Hester recognized *that sound*. Instantly she realized “that was not only what I wanted to play; it was what I wanted to do.”

Now a professor of flute at Luther College, Hester regularly performs in recitals and smaller ensembles in addition to the orchestra. She says it’s

good for students to hear their professor play in varied settings, but “orchestra playing is my favorite. The music is just so rich in colors and variety.”

She’s got the beat

Tammy Fisher is director of the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse Screaming Eagles Marching Band and the Percussion Studies program. Her interest in percussion sprang from a parade she saw as a child. “I thought the drums were cool ... and loud,” but not everyone encouraged her. “People said, ‘Girls don’t play drums,’” she recalls. “You always had to be twice as good.” Today she plays timpani for LSO and drums for several local jazz bands—and she loves that many of her percussion students are women.



Carol Hester, principal flutist for the La Crosse Symphony Orchestra



Mary Beth Hensel, principal oboist for the La Crosse Symphony Orchestra

She's all in

Oboist Mary Beth Hensel grew up among musicians, including a grandfather who played trombone for the Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra. "My mother pretty much decided what instrument each of us kids would play," she says. Because the Minneapolis orchestra's principal oboist at the time had full lips, that was Mom's criterion, and the child with the fullest lips got the oboe. The match proved to be a good one, and Hensel came to love the instrument. Formerly a full-time musician, she's now director of

Gundersen Health System's bereavement education program, while continuing to perform and teach year-round. "You can't play the oboe recreationally," she says. "You either have to be all in, or you have to quit." She's all in.

First ladies

Hester, Fisher and Hensel are the principal players of their respective orchestra sections. Some audience members, recalling their high school band days, might think of the principal player's role as "first chair," but as Fisher explains, that's a term used more often in bands, where "it's a competitive thing, like you're the best of that section and you oversee it." In an orchestra, conversely, "principal player" is one role among many that come together and support each other in service of the music.

As principal oboe player, Hensel strives to achieve a homogenous sound within her section while also filling a broader role in the orchestra: The principal oboe, she explains, is often regarded as a second concertmaster, responsible for maintaining pitch in the wind section and following the concertmaster's lead to mesh with the strings. "Ultimately, the music director is in charge of all these things, but we're like his assistants in this regard," she says.

"Mary Beth is like the heart of the orchestra, working to keep us centered in terms of pitch," says Hester. "I'm sitting next to her, making sure our parts are fitting together as closely as possible."

In Fisher's case, she's the principal and also sole timpani player. While her part is unique, she collaborates with the principal percussionist to ensure that she melds with the entire percussion section.

Hester notes that, while principal player is in some regards a leadership role, "it's not the kind of leadership where you're pulling others along." In the flute section, for example, the principal flutist often plays parts that are higher and thus more exposed, and she relies on other flutists, playing lower parts, to support and undergird her.

In other words, the music itself has the principal role.

"I love that we're working together for this common goal," says Hester. "It's not about individual personalities; it's about coming together to make beautiful music." **(crw)**

Doreen Pfost of rural New Lisbon is a sometime musician and part-time piano tuner who always listens to Mozart while writing.

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Who Came First?

Does birth order really explain it all?

BY JESS WITKINS
Contributed photos



Are you the oldest child in your family? The youngest? The dreaded middle? For years birth order played a vital role in psychology and education. Therapists and educators alike used common characterizations of birth order to understand how individuals viewed themselves and interacted in relationships.



Melissa Hellwig, psychotherapist at The Therapy Place in La Crosse

For example, oldest children were said to be more responsible and prone to be caretakers. Youngest children were often viewed as the baby regardless of their age and needed things to be taken care of for them. Middle children were viewed as peacemakers, often having to share with their siblings or play a judicial role in fights. Only children were thought to be lonely and best identified with other adults.

Today, birth order is better left to a BuzzFeed quiz. Melissa Hellwig, part owner and psychotherapist at The Therapy Place, says, "Birth order now is considered to be more pop psychology than actual psychology. There are too many exceptions to the stereotypical rules, so we don't rely on them to predict or explain things in families. It's risky to rely on any one theory to explain anything."

Beyond birth order

Where did it get its hype? Birth order was made prominent by psychology big wigs such as Alfred Alder, Carl Jung and Sigmund Freud, who were all interested in family relationships. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, birth order was relied upon and considered valid.

"Today we know that individual experiences are so multifaceted, even with children raised in the same family," says Hellwig. "We have to look at the whole experience and not just through one lens."

Every family is different. Every kid is different. Brain chemistry, IQ, talents, limitations, culture, religion, community, attachments like mentorships all play a vital role in personality and view of self." She points to other factors that play important roles in personality development as well. "Life is full of very impactful and very full experiences. In particular, trauma plays a much more realistic role in shaping individuals than anything else. Trauma is instantly life changing."

Common roles

There often are typical roles people play in families. These roles can also be found in the workplace. You have a thinker, an observer, even a wild card in the bunch. Much of it is centered around social and cultural norms. Our brains like to label things in order to understand them, but Hellwig reminds us we should never assume anything.

"Our brains are capable of changing and rewiring. If you use only one lens to deconstruct something, you can pigeonhole people, and there are going to be problems. We're much more interested in the entirety of a person's experiences, not just the order in which they are born."

So, if you're out with friends and the topic of birth order comes up, Hellwig suggests reshaping your questions. "It's just as useful to challenge something by asking questions than by assuming. If your friend says they were a middle child, you could ask them, 'How did that experience work in your family?'"

Birth order can be interesting to research, so long as you take it with a grain of salt. "Family is important," Hellwig says, "but it isn't the only predictor of our lives. Nothing is always true; there will always be exceptions." **(CRW)**

Jess Witkins is a writer, blogger and storyteller. Her mission: Making pathetic look cool since 1985. She can often be found wordmongering in the Coulee Region's many coffee shops.



2019 Roberta Zurn Award Winner: Linda Riddle

The Roberta Zurn Outstanding Women in Leadership Award, given by the Women's Fund of Greater La Crosse during its Fall Luncheon, recognizes a woman each year who promotes opportunities and health for women and girls. This year's award recipient, Linda Riddle, was known for her dedication to social justice and community. She was an advocate for women and children and an inspiration to all who knew her. Riddle passed away unexpectedly earlier this year. In Riddle's memory, the Women's Fund of Greater La Crosse awarded the \$1,000 Roberta Zurn grant to Bluff Country Family Resources, where Riddle worked for two decades.



Innovative Graphics Wins National Award

The La Crosse-based design company Innovative Graphics and owner/designer Renee Chrz were recently presented with Graphic Design USA's prestigious American Graphic Design Awards™ for the second year in a row. Chrz's design of the La Crosse Symphony Orchestra's 2019-20 season brochure and program booklet were selected as a winning entry.

For 56 years, New York-based GDUSA has sponsored competitions to spotlight areas of excellence and opportunity for creative professionals. GDUSA's American Graphic Design Awards™ is open to the entire creative community, honoring outstanding work across all media. Roughly 10,000 entries were submitted, with a highly selective group recognized with a winner certificate.

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From left, Mandi Olson, Nancy Brown and Sara Brandon

Winona Community Foundation Welcomes New Staff

The Board of Directors of the Winona Community Foundation is pleased to introduce three new staff to the Winona Community Foundation: Nancy Brown, CFRE, President/CEO of the Winona Community Foundation; Sara Brandon, part-time Finance Director; and Mandi Olson, part-time Marketing & Administrative Coordinator. Olson is also the part-time director of Ready Set School Winona County.

Inspired by the area's rich tradition of generosity, the Winona Community Foundation strengthens our community through philanthropy and encourages the community to do the same by giving to causes they care about or through establishing charitable funds at the Winona Community Foundation. Contact the foundation at 507-454-6511 or winonacf.org.



From left: YWCA honorees Ebony Hyter, Rebecca Mormann-Krieger, Denise Christy Moss, Ann Kappauf, Tracy Littlejohn, Taja Wright and Joella Striebel.

YWCA La Crosse Celebrates Outstanding Womxn

The annual YWCA La Crosse Tribute to Outstanding Womxn, held November 7, honored 23 nominees dedicated to upholding their mission of eliminating racism and empowering womxn. These nominees, who identify as womxn, may be leaders in their spheres of influence, have advocated for transformative social change or reinforced policies, practices, attitudes and actions intended to produce more equitable outcomes for all. They lift up and empower other womxn and girls and give back to their community through their time, talent and/or resources.

Of the nominees introduced at the Tribute, one was selected as the honoree for each of six categories. They are as follows: Taja Wright, Onalaska High School, Young Womxn of Tomorrow; Ebony Hyter, St. Clare Health Mission and B.L.A.C.K., Innovative Leader of Today; Tracy Littlejohn, Ho-Chunk Nation, Sustaining Leader of Today;

Ann Kappauf, New Horizons, Womxn of Distinction; Denise Christy Moss and Rebecca Mormann-Krieger, The Enduring Families Project, Community Project of the Year; and Joella Striebel, POM Counseling LLC, Linda Riddle Community Advocate Award.

YWCA has embraced the spelling of womxn with an "x" to be more inclusive and welcoming to anyone who feels compelled to participate in a female-centered space. We recognize the need for inclusive, intersectional language as we move forward in our mission and embrace womxn of every race, nationality and culture including women, girls, transgender, nonbinary and queer folx. YWCA La Crosse is not an exclusive organization. We strive for inclusivity, a space and community where everyone feels safe and supported, and we believe strongly that the culture of our language should reflect that as well.



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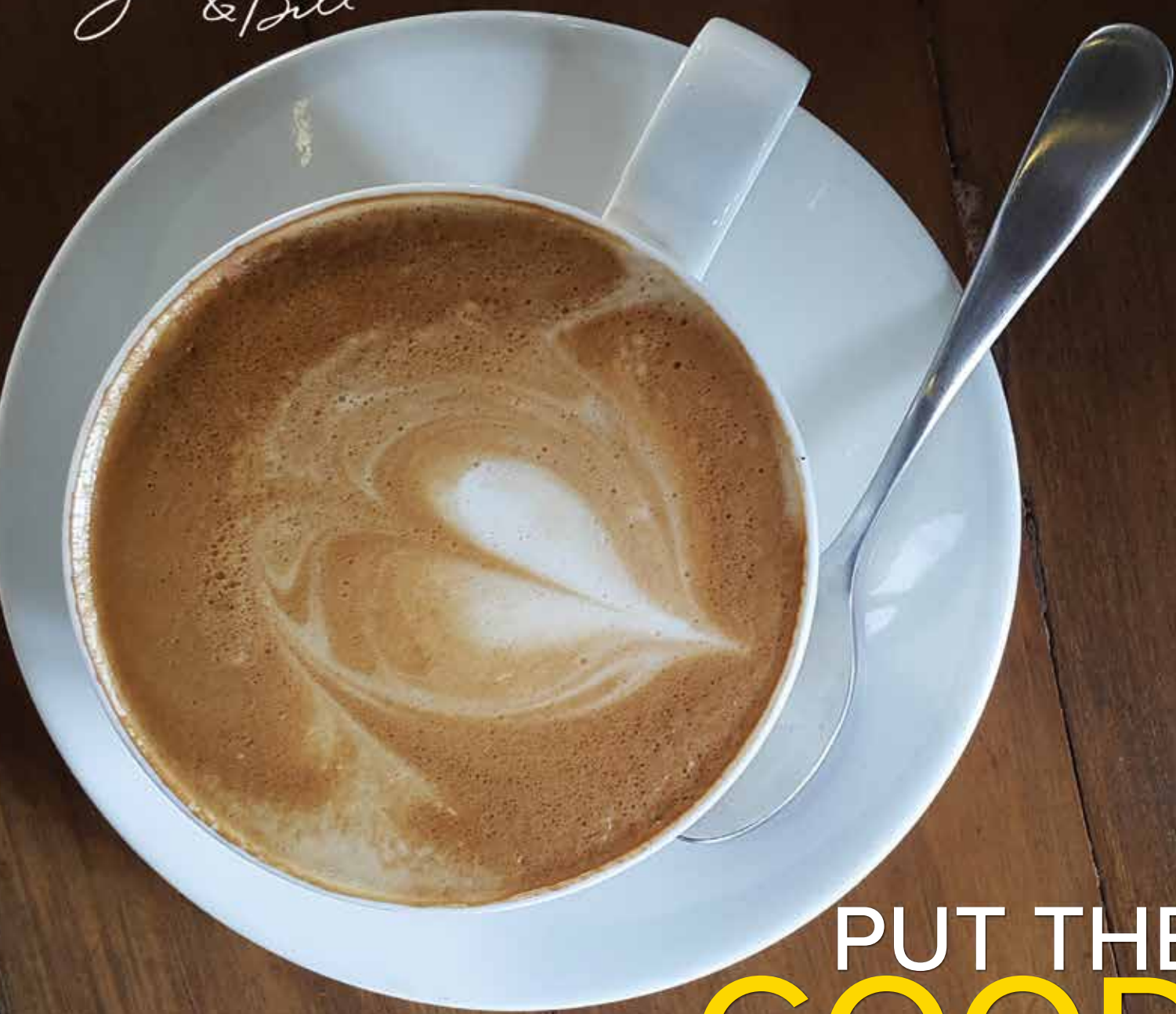
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MORNING



Top: Toronto, Ontario, is a diverse international city known as a center for business, art, culture and finance. Bottom from left: nearby Niagara Falls, the CN Tower, Ripley's Aquarium of Canada.

Toronto is a wonderfully diverse city in our neighboring country of Canada, and it will not disappoint as a vacation destination. It is also a gateway to Niagara Falls and its magnificent waterfalls. Visiting both of these Canadian vacation locations in one trip is very doable, as Niagara Falls is only about an hour-and-a-half drive from Toronto. So get your passport ready and plan your trip north to these two Canadian destinations.

Toronto the city

Toronto is an international city known as a center for business, art, culture and finance. It is viewed as one of the most cultural and cosmopolitan cities in the world with lots of urban adventure to experience. While English is the dominant language in this

Canadian city, over 150 languages are spoken there. The many small neighborhoods are filled with ethnic food and shopping, giving this city of 2.8 million a much smaller feel.

Toronto's skyscrapers and high-rise buildings offer breathtaking views. The CN Tower, completed in 1976, is located in the center of the city. It is the ninth-tallest freestanding building in the world at 1,815.5 feet tall and is open to the public. The Edge Walk located at the top of the CN Tower was added in 2011. It allows visitors the chance to walk outside the tower when the weather permits, offering a bird's-eye view of the cityscape and the water that surrounds the city.

Toronto is a city filled with historical sites, and one such area to visit is the Distillery District. It is, as the name suggests, located in the old distillery area of town. The restoration of the many old buildings



From left: Toronto's trendy Distillery District, Castle Loma, and the Hornblower Niagara Funicular at Niagara Falls.

in this area lends a very European feel, and the open brick walkways make for a relaxing shopping or dining experience. Numerous boutiques and one-of-a-kind shops feature artists' fashions, food, jewelry, art and other trendy products. It is in close proximity to the St. Lawrence Market, which was established in 1803. The market also feels very European with its many specialty vendors offering fruit, vegetables, fish, meats, cheeses, non-food products and more.

Arts

Toronto is a large player in the motion picture and television production industries. The cityscape is not unlike that of New York City, and the filming costs are lower, enticing filmmakers to this city. The arts culture is vibrant and alive as well. Broadway plays can be viewed and enjoyed in many large theaters or in smaller venues for a more intimate experience. The numerous ballets, symphonies and theaters offer world-class performances.

Museums

The Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto is a museum of art world culture and natural history attracting millions of visitors annually. It is the largest museum in Canada and one of the largest museums in the world. Whether you prefer to inspect dinosaurs and rocks from all over the world or view fine art, it is well worth the visit.

The Bata Shoe Museum located in Toronto is the only museum in North America that is dedicated entirely to footwear. You can view one-of-a-kind shoes, both historic and modern, from around the world. Their collection contains over 13,500 items and will open your eyes to how important footwear is in daily life and how it has changed throughout time.

Casa Loma is a must-see: a beautifully furnished mansion and garden located in the midst of Toronto. This full-size castle includes 98 rooms and award-winning gardens. It was completed in 1915 and, at that time, had a large number of all the telephones in Toronto—over 50. The Casa Loma switchboard operator handled more calls

than the entire city of Toronto at that time. The walk up the tower in the castle offers a scenic view of the city.

Ripley's Aquarium of Canada features a long underwater viewing tunnel with 16,000 aquatic animals and interactive opportunities. It is located in the center of Toronto and by the CN Tower.

Niagara Falls

Niagara Falls is a city that is home to the group of three waterfalls located between Canada and the United States also known as Niagara Falls. The largest is Horseshoe Falls, which is located between the two countries. The smaller two falls, American Falls and Bridal Veil Falls, are located entirely in the United States. Two boat trips can take you on a tour of the falls: the Hornblower Niagara Cruise and the Maid of the Mist. The Hornblower Niagara Cruise is docked and goes out of the Canadian side, while the Maid of the Mist is docked and goes out on the American side of the falls. Both boats take you to view all three falls and are about 20 minutes in length. Be prepared to get wet, as you will go directly under the falls; anticipating this, both tours will supply you with a rain poncho. If you are taking a camera, it is good to be prepared with waterproofing for it. The modern Hornblower Niagara Funicular—a cable car system—will transport you 185 feet down on the Great Gorge walls to the boat. The glass-enclosed cars give a panoramic view of the falls as well.

A great place to stay on the Canadian side is Niagara-on-the-Lake. This quaint historical town offers close proximity to wineries, shopping, golf, great restaurants and, in the summer, the Shaw Festival. It is also home to some of the oldest churches in Canada. If you prefer a quieter, more laid-back experience, you will not be dissatisfied here.

The friendly hospitality, city adventure and wonderful scenery of these two cities are a grand showcase of our neighboring country of Canada. Don't be the last to visit our first neighbor to the north! (crw)

Diane Raaum is the past publisher of Coulee Region Women magazine.



JP
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Community Calendar

ONGOING EVENTS

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

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

Coulee Region Professional Women (CRPW) 4th Tues. of each month, Shelli Kult, crpwomen@gmail.com.

La Crosse Area Chamber of Commerce monthly breakfast meeting, 2nd Mon. of each month, 7 a.m., Radisson. Admission is \$5 and includes breakfast, lacrossechamber.com.

La Crosse Rotary every Thurs. noon-1 p.m., Radisson Center, www.rotarycluboflacrosse.org.

La Crosse Toastmasters Club 2nd and 4th Tues. of each month, 7 p.m., La Crosse County Administrative Building, 212 6th St. N., Room 100, La Crosse, 411.toastmastersclubs.org.

NAMI Family Support Group 2nd Mon. of each month, 6:30 p.m., Family and Children's Center, 1707 Main St., La Crosse.

Onalaska Area Business Association 2nd Tues. of each month, noon-1 p.m., La Crosse Country Club, oaba.info.

Onalaska Hilltopper Rotary every Wed. noon-1 p.m., La Crosse Country Club, Onalaska.

Onalaska Rotary every Mon. at 6 p.m., lower level of Blue Moon, Onalaska.

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

Set Me Free Shop, Saturdays & Sundays, 30 minutes before & after services. First Free Church, 123 Mason St., Onalaska. Also available by appt. 608-782-6022.

Viroqua Toastmasters Club 2nd and 4th Thurs. of each month, 7-8:30 p.m., Vernon Memorial Hospital, Taylor Conf. Rm., Lower Level, Viroqua.

Winter Market, Sundays in December, 10 a.m.-1 p.m., Myrick Park Center, La Crosse.

Women Empowering Women (WEW), last Wed. of each month, Schmidt's, noon-1 p.m., Shari Hopkins, 608-784-3904, shopkins@couleebank.net.

Women's Alliance of La Crosse (WAL) 2nd Thurs. of each month, noon, The Waterfront Restaurant, Visit www.womensallianceoflacrosse.com for more information.

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

DECEMBER



Dec. 1-31, Rotary Holiday Lights, open daily 5-10 p.m., Christmas Eve and Christmas Day 5-9 p.m., Riverside Park, La Crosse.

◀ **Dec. 3-Jan. 14**, **The Art of the Needle**, Embroiderer's Guild of America exhibit, The Heider Center, www.heidercenter.org.

Dec. 5, Lefse Making Class, 5:30-7 p.m., People's Food Co-op, La Crosse, www.pfc.coop.

Dec. 6-14, **Middletown**, 7:30 p.m. Thurs.-Sat., 2 p.m. Sun, Toland Theatre, Center for the Arts, UW-La Crosse.

Dec. 7, Old Fashioned Christmas, 10 a.m.-4:30 p.m., Norskedalen Nature & Heritage Center, Coon Valley, www.norskedalen.org.

Dec. 7, La Crosse Girlchoir Winter Concert, 2:30-3:30 p.m., Logan Middle School, 1450 Avon St., La Crosse.

Dec. 7-8, Holiday Market, 10 a.m.-9 p.m. Sat., 11 a.m.-6 p.m. Sun., Valley View Mall, www.myvalleyview.com.

Dec. 7-8, A Viterbo Christmas: Savior of the Nations, Come, 7:30 p.m. Sat., 2 p.m. Sun., Viterbo Fine Arts Center Main Theatre, www.viterbo.edu/fac.

Dec. 8, Jingle Bell Brunch, 9-11 a.m., The Cargill Room, 332 Front St., La Crosse.

Dec. 10, Intro to Bubbles, 6-7:30 p.m., People's Food Co-op, La Crosse, www.pfc.coop.

Dec. 10, PAW Patrol Live! The Great Pirate Adventure, 6 p.m., La Crosse Center, www.lacrossecenter.com.



Dec. 11, Mindfulness for Self-Care, 6-7:30 p.m., People's Food Co-op, La Crosse, www.pfc.coop.

◀ **Dec. 12-22**, **Elf: The Musical**, 7:30 p.m. Thurs.-Sat., 2:00 p.m.

Sun., Lyche Theatre, www.lacrossecommunitytheatre.org.

Dec. 12, Meditation for Emotional Health, 6:30 p.m., Franciscan Spirituality Center, www.fscenter.org.

Dec. 13-15, La Crosse Dance Centre's Nutcracker Ballet, 7:30 p.m. Fri., 4 p.m. Sat., 2 p.m. Sun., Viterbo Fine Arts Center Main Theatre, www.viterbo.edu/fac.

Dec. 13-21, **The Santaland Diaries**, 7:30 p.m. Thurs.-Sat., 2:00 p.m. Sun., Veterans Studio Theatre, www.lacrossecommunitytheatre.org.

Dec. 14, Jingle Bell Walk/Run and Rudolph's Dash, 8 a.m., YMCA-North, Onalaska, www.laxymca.org.

Dec. 14, Cookie Walk & Craft Sale, 7:30 a.m.-1 p.m., Mary, Mother of the Church Parish, 2006 Weston St., La Crosse.

Dec. 18-19, String Ties Holiday Bluegrass, 7:30 p.m., The Pump House, La Crosse, www.thepumphouse.org.

Dec. 19, Chris Collins: John Denver Christmas Tribute, 7:30 p.m., The Heider Center, www.heidercenter.org.

Dec. 20-21, Holiday Romance: New Years Day in Vienna, 7:30 p.m., La Crosse Symphony Orchestra, Viterbo Fine Arts Center, www.lacrossesymphony.org.

CALENDAR EVENTS

Dec. 23, Lorie Line: The 30th Year Celebration, 3 p.m., Lyche Theatre, www.webercenterfortheperformingarts.org.

Dec. 27, Deece Productions Presents: A Tribute to Sun Records, 7:30 p.m., Lyche Theatre, www.webercenterfortheperformingarts.org.

Dec. 27-30, Winter Recharge Camp, Living Waters Bible Camp, Westby, preregistration required, www.lwbc.org.



Dec. 31, Countdown to Noon: Happy Noon Year, 10 a.m.-12 p.m., Children's Museum of La Crosse, www.funmuseum.org.

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

JANUARY

Jan. 6, Spicy Wintertime Blends and Infusions, 6-7:30 p.m., People's Food Co-op, La Crosse, www.pfc.coop.

Jan. 7, AARP Talk to Us Tuesday, 8-11 a.m., Java Vino, 2311 State Rd., La Crosse.

Jan. 8, Cake Decorating Classes: Flowers and Cake Design, 4:30-6 p.m., Halfway Creek Park, West Shelter, Holmen.

Jan. 8, Work That Matters: Your Career Journey in Context, 7:30-11 a.m., UW-La Crosse, contact the UW-L Extended Learning Office at 608-785-6500.

Jan. 9, Meditation for Emotional Health, 6:30 p.m., Franciscan Spirituality Center, www.fscenter.org.



Jan. 11, Johnsmith & Friends, 7:30-9 p.m., The Pump House, La Crosse, www.thepumphouse.org.

Jan. 11, Magic Mystery Matinee, 2-3 p.m., The Pump House, La Crosse, www.thepumphouse.org.

◀ **Jan. 12**, **La Crosse Wedding Expo**, 10 a.m.-2 p.m., La Crosse Center, www.lacrosseweddingexpo.com.

Jan. 13, Paint & Pour, 7 p.m., The Pump House, La Crosse, www.thepumphouse.org.

Jan. 14, The Sound of Bowls, 5:30-6:30 p.m., Franciscan Spirituality Center, La Crosse.

Jan. 15, Mindfulness for Self-Care, 6-7:30 p.m., People's Food Co-op, La Crosse, www.pfc.coop.

Jan. 18, Aretha: Honoring the Queen of Soul, 7:30 p.m., The Heider Center, www.heidercenter.org.

Jan. 18, Humanity Dances: Strength, 7:30 p.m., The Pump House, La Crosse, www.thepumphouse.org.

Jan. 19, Wedding World 2020, 10 a.m.-1:30 p.m., La Crosse Center, www.weddingworldlacrosse.com.

Jan. 23, Calmus, 7:30 p.m., Viterbo Fine Arts Center Main Theatre, www.viterbo.edu/fac.

Jan. 24, Moors and McCumber, 7:30 p.m., The Pump House, La Crosse, www.thepumphouse.org.

Jan. 24-Feb. 2, **Don't Dress for Dinner**, 7:30 p.m. Thurs.-Sat., 2:00 p.m. Sun., Lyche Theatre, www.lacrossecommunitytheatre.org.



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