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Pictured on cover: the midwife team at Gundersen Health System. Pictured above, top left: Carleen Poellinger, CNM, Gundersen Health System; Allyce Kozlowski; and baby Mason. Photos by Jordana Snyder Photography.

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It's fair to say we all could use some support these days. From working mothers to stay-at-home students, from the recently unemployed to small local business owners, from family members separated by social distancing to health care workers of every kind, women all over the region are feeling the strain of an unprecedented year. Women are so frequently looked to as the providers of the support workplaces, families and schools need to function that it begs the question: who is supporting us?

It's easy to feel you have no safety net in times like these—like the weight of the world is on your shoulders. But I have learned to pay attention to all the people who, in ways big and small, are threads weaving together the fabric that keeps me aloft. There's my husband and his calm presence. There are my kids, who are inspiring even as they forget to upload their homework and have the volume turned up way too high in their Zoom classrooms. There are my co-workers, who keep us moving forward through all the challenges, and there are friends near and far, with whom I solve the world's problems on morning runs or FaceTime chats.

When we start examining our support systems, and the precious people in them, it's impossible not to also feel gratitude. Stress turns to thankfulness, brittleness begins to soften and, despite it all, we are able to recognize the blessings around us.

We at *Coulee Region Women* are immensely grateful for all the people, businesses and organizations that give us so much support. Our team is composed of talented and dedicated women who—with their skills in writing, editing, graphic design, photography and, very importantly, sales—combine their talents to produce each issue. And we are grateful for our readers, who pick up each issue, read it, comment on it and send us ideas.

Finally, and firmly, we could not create each issue of *Coulee Region Women* without our advertisers. Some are big, some are small; some have been with us from the very beginning, and some are new. We appreciate every single one and the support they have given us over the years—especially now. Take time this issue to look through their ads and lend them your support as well. Our team, our advertisers, our readers—all of you are part of the intricate and important support system that lets us share the stories of women in our region.

And what great stories they are. In this issue, dedicated to "Support Systems," we celebrate stories of women supporting women, beginning with the many women who have served as midwives at Gundersen Health System over the past 45 years. We meet young professionals who serve in their careers and their communities. We highlight organizations that have helped families navigate online learning during school closures, and we show you ways to support your favorite arts organizations in a time when you can't just purchase a ticket. If you're in need of support yourself, we turn you to resources such as Great Rivers 2-1-1 and the advice of local medical professionals. And if you need an escape from your daily cares, we happily support you in doing so by offering you a tour of a beautiful local home, inspiring ideas for supporting your wardrobe as well as local shops, and a little "supportive" humor.

Especially now, as 2020 closes with the holiday season and hope for a better new year, please do what you can to seek support for yourself and to support those around you—your families, your colleagues and the local businesses and organizations you love. It's that support that will see us through this and ensure our community stays strong.

Betty

coulee region women

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We've all had to put off many things lately — but taking care of your health can't be one of them. That's why we're taking extra steps right now to make sure you can get the care that's so important to you — like offering in-person and video appointments according to level of comfort and medical need. Your health has always been our top priority — and that will never change. Because you should never have to worry about access to great care. To make an appointment, visit olmstedmedicalcenter.org or call us at 507.288.3443.



Author Kao Kalia Yang

STORIES OF GRIT- AND GRACE-FILLED WOMEN

Celebrate resilient women at Overcoming Challenges with Grit and Grace, a Zoom videoconference hosted by the Franciscan Spirituality Center on Saturday, January 16, 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. Rescheduled from its original date in March 2020 and reformatted for a virtual audience, this second-annual event features Kao Kalia Yang, a Hmong-American writer, teacher and public speaker based in Minneapolis, as the keynote speaker. Yang will be reflecting on her spiritual journey into writing and address questions such as “What does it mean to reclaim something that is no more, in an entirely new language, in a new land?” and “How does your own journey help situate yourself in the pains and sorrows of others, and speak to their fears and faith?” Local women will also be speaking and sharing powerful stories, including Lisa McCormick of Tomah, Carolyn Bostrack of the La Crosse area and Sarah Johnson of Winona. The entry fee is \$50 per person, and participants who registered for the original event will have their registration transfer over to this new event. The event is sponsored by Gundersen Health System and Rotary Works Foundation. Register by January 14 at www.fscenter.org.



GRIEF REIMAGINED

In the midst of an incredibly difficult year that has been marked by loss for so many around the world, a new book from La Crosse authors Christine Kortbein and Catherine Tyink seeks to provide nontraditional strategies for coping with and processing loss. *Grief Reimagined: 50 Creative Strategies to Build Resilience* weaves together dozens of true stories of personal loss with creative methods of healing, ultimately achieving a heartfelt and colorful narrative on the complex topic of grief.

Kortbein, an art therapist, and Tyink, a counselor, have worked for many years in a variety of settings, helping others navigate the often confusing and turbulent emotions that frequently accompany grief. *Grief Reimagined* was born from their shared understanding that everyone processes loss differently and there isn't one remedy for healing.

Grief Reimagined: 50 Creative Strategies to Build Resilience is available locally at Pearl Street Books and Birdy's Bookstore, and also at christinekortbein.com.

DOWNTOWN ART Market

A NEW MARKET FOR LOCAL ART

Just in time for the holidays, the new Downtown Art Market has opened at 321 Main Street in La Crosse. This curated cooperative art market features more than 20 established and emerging local and regional artists whose works include fine art, paintings, photography, pottery, metalwork, jewelry, sculpture, glass, fiber arts and mixed media. The Art Market will be open through December 2020, Wednesday through Friday 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Saturday 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Private appointments can also be scheduled. The Downtown Art Market is committed to providing a safe shopping environment by following Covid-19 recommendations.

The Downtown Art Market is being developed by Robin Moses of Creative La Crosse, Mike and Phyllis Martino of the La Crosse Arts Initiative and Tarl Kaio of Grass Root Creatives. The group strives to build a model that can be adapted to a full-time art gallery that they hope to open in 2021. For more information on the Downtown Art Market or becoming an exhibitor contact robinmosescreative@gmail.com, martinosculpture@gmail.com or phyllismartino@gmail.com.

SHOP LOCAL, SUPPORT YOUR NEIGHBORS

Your local holiday shopping will be the difference of food on the table and presents under the tree for some of our friends and neighbors, according to the new Get on Living Safely campaign, an effort started by about 20 local businesses—such as Root Down Yoga, Misty's Dance Unlimited, Pearl Street Brewery and more—in an effort to increase support of locally owned retail, service, restaurant and other businesses as they weather the deep impact of Covid-19 to their bottom lines.

Nick Roush, co-chair of the campaign and owner of Root Down Yoga and Roush Rental, points out that losses to local businesses in La Crosse County now exceed \$100 million, and that they stem from a shift to online, rather than local, shopping. “Our friends and neighbors need help. We must keep jobs, families and dreams,” he says.

The campaign started out of the North La Crosse Business Association and is welcoming support from community members and business owners. You can learn more about Get on Living Safely and how to support it at www.getonlivingsafely.com.





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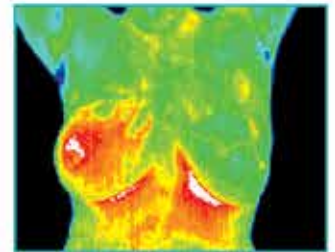
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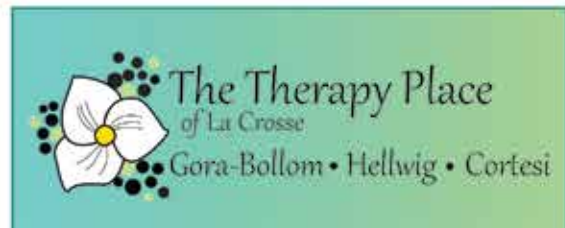
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A Labor of Love

Gundersen Health System midwives celebrate 45 years of supporting La Crosse's mothers.

BY SHARI HEGLAND | PHOTOS BY JORDANA SNYDER PHOTOGRAPHY



The certified nurse midwife team at Gundersen Health System celebrates 45 years of births. From left: Jennifer McGeorge, Jessica Hamilton, Lindsay Gardner, Amy Belling-Dunn, Angela Connely, Hilary Conn, Carleen Poellinger, Ashley Woychik and Alacia Pierce. Not pictured: Christine Fishel, Gundersen Winona Campus.

When Allyce Kozlowski's ultrasound 20 weeks into her second pregnancy was troubling, her husband, Kelly, couldn't be with her. The nation was on lockdown due to the coronavirus pandemic. Her support, both during appointments and through follow-up calls after meetings with specialists, came from the woman who had guided her through her first pregnancy: certified nurse midwife Carleen Poellinger.

Poellinger is one of 15 midwives in the Gundersen Health System, a practice that is celebrating its 45th anniversary this year as the oldest continuing midwifery practice in the state. Certified nurse midwives (CNMs) deliver half of all babies born in the Gundersen system.

CHOOSING A MIDWIFE

Kozlowski already knew Poellinger from her first pregnancy with her daughter, Jordyn, now 3. "Being my first pregnancy, I had a lot of questions," she says. "I had been told the midwives spend more time and find what makes you comfortable."

Gundersen's providers say that the extra time, education and a focus on helping women have the birth experience they want truly are at the heart of the midwifery practice.

"The true passion of the midwives is to focus on health and wellness, and really educate women on their bodies, pregnancy, health and birth, and support them in the choice they make," says Angie Connely, a certified nurse midwife at Gundersen's Onalaska clinic. "We help them trust in their bodies and the experience itself."

Both the midwives and Mary Kuffel, MD, a board-certified obstetrician-gynecologist and medical vice president with Gundersen Health System, say that while certain medical conditions may increase

risk and require the involvement of a physician, for women with no problems in their medical history and a desire for a low-intervention delivery, a CNM may be the best choice.

"Those who choose midwives may lean more toward nonintervention and want more time to spend with the practitioner," Dr. Kuffel says. "We all will try to give our patients the most optimal birth experience, but the midwives will provide a little bit of a different style."

WORKING TOGETHER FOR THE PATIENT

While patients choose an ob-gyn, a family medicine physician or a CNM for their care, the practitioners see themselves as a single team working together.

"I'm really proud of the collegial relationship we have with the ob-gyn staff here at Gundersen," Poellinger says. "Knowing that I have another person I can talk with or run things by or having another set of hands during a delivery is reassuring, and being able to help (the physicians) if they are in a procedure and have someone who is close to delivery, it is nice to be able to reciprocate that as well."

By working closely together, Gundersen's providers say they can all focus on the needs of the patient, even if that means switching a patient from one level of care to the next.

For Kozlowski, that switch came when the worrisome ultrasound triggered appointments with a high-risk practitioner, additional ultrasounds and heart scans for her baby, all in the midst of a global pandemic. "Emotions were running a little high," she says, but even as she was meeting with specialists, Poellinger and the midwife practice were touching base with her on a regular basis. "She got me through



some hard appointments, and everything turned out good, just the way she said,” Kozlowski says. “She was my support person when I couldn’t have a support person there.”

Poellinger was still there for her when Kozlowski got the all-clear and was released from the specialists’ care back to the midwife practice. It was the midwives who delivered Mason on September 25, 2020.

BIRTH WANTS AND NEEDS

While many women, including Kozlowski, choose midwifery because they want to avoid interventions during delivery as much as possible, Poellinger says that there are myths that midwives can’t order epidurals or inductions. Those options are available, but if a woman prefers, the midwives first move through a wide range of methods to make mothers as comfortable as possible during labor.

Kozlowski said that in both of her labors, the midwives offered soaking in a bath (water births are also an option), bouncing on a stability ball and other nonmedical ways of managing the discomfort. “And, on the second day of labor for both, when I said I needed an epidural, they did that right away for me, too,” she says.

Dr. Kuffel says that the approach taken by the midwives of educating patients and working through nonmedical approaches to labor first has an impact on the health system’s rate of cesarean section births—only 6.4 percent within the midwifery practice, which has received recognition from national organizations, and 11 percent for Gundersen’s overall system—half the national average of 22 percent.

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

Through all of it, the CNMs say that what they enjoy the most

about their role is the relationships they create and the ones they see born right in front of them.

Connely decided to become a CNM more than 13 years ago while working as a postpartum labor and delivery nurse. “The first birth I ever witnessed was attended by a midwife. It was beautiful to watch a woman advance through the stages of labor,” she says.

While choosing a single, most-impactful experience is nearly impossible, Connely says she has a heart for adolescents and other young mothers who may not have a strong support system. “We need to give these young girls the credit they deserve,” she says. “They can be amazing moms and role models, and it’s a beautiful thing.”

Poellinger’s introduction to midwifery came as a nurse in the military, where she worked for a time with a group of midwives. “I liked their approach to care and the relationships they had with their patients,” she says.

In her more than 20 years as a midwife, Poellinger has seen families bond closely over the birth experience—even attending the deliveries of two sisters on the same day. The first to give birth then came to her sister’s bedside to provide extra support. “It was such a fun experience and a fond memory,” she says, noting that she has also strengthened bonds within her own family, delivering her own niece and great-nephew.

For every patient in their practice, the CNMs say they want the same thing: “We want it to be an experience that is powerful and positive, but also that we are giving the best care possible to this mom and baby,” Connely says. **CRW**

Shari Hegland is a writer, editor, runner and mother based in Holmen.



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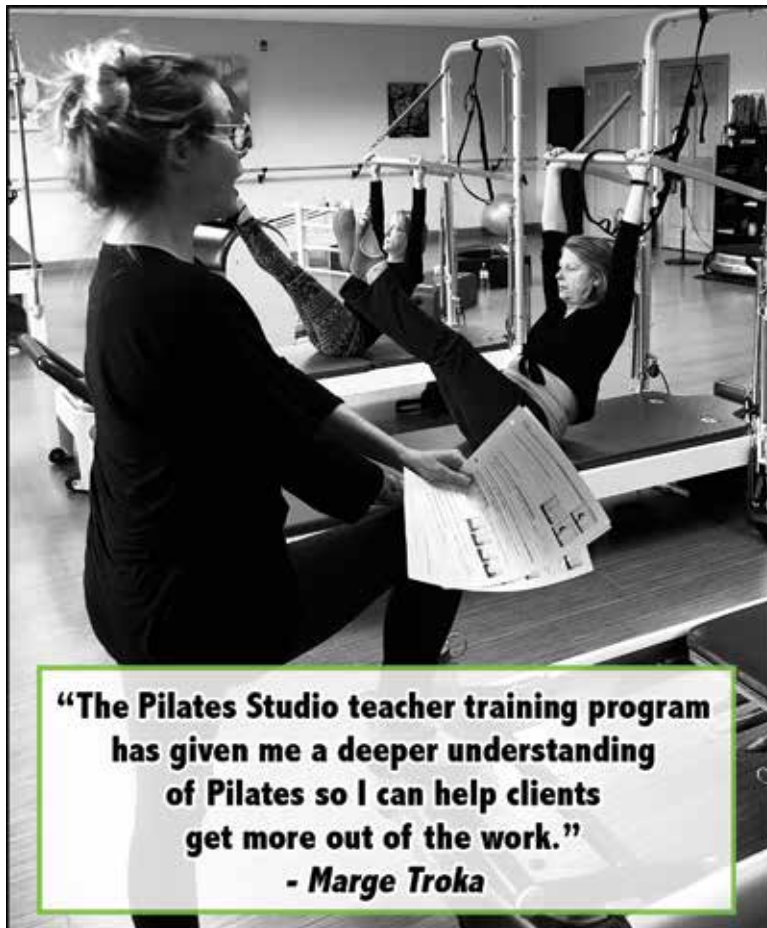


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Through Rotary After Hours, Marissa Dickinson supports her community in hands-on ways as much as she supports it through her strategic consulting career.

For the Health of the Community

Strategic consultant Marissa Dickinson is working toward a healthier tomorrow, one project at a time.

BY JESSICA ZEN | CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

Giving back to the community is no small feat, especially during a pandemic. It's so easy to get caught up in your day-to-day life without even realizing that you aren't taking any time to support your neighbors and fellow community members. La Crosse native Marissa Dickinson, a strategic consultant for Mayo Clinic Health System, hasn't missed a beat, though, in supporting her community through her career and in her spare time as the current president of the Rotary Club of La Crosse—After Hours.



Marissa Dickinson, strategic consultant for Mayo Clinic Health System

THE FUTURE OF HEALTH CARE

Dickinson spends most of her time on the job as a strategic consultant, supporting the planning, execution and monitoring of the transformation of Mayo Clinic Health System through efficient, high-quality, standardized planning functions for customers in the health system. One of the main focuses for her right now is determining what health care will look like in 10 years and beyond in order to keep Mayo current and relevant. She works with third-party vendors to gather information and create future business plans.

As with many professionals right now, Dickinson's job has been impacted by Covid-19. "The focus has shifted to the impacts Covid is having on different consumer segments of the health care industry, such as how consumers feel about domestic and international travel, how employees feel about teleworking and how it will look in the next few years, and the rise in telemedicine," she says.

For Dickinson herself, telework has its ups and downs. "The emotional impact is hard. I enjoy working from home because I have a better work-life balance, but at the same time, I miss that human connection," she says. "Being behind the screen all day, every day, takes its toll."

KEEPING IT POSITIVE

Dickinson keeps a positive mentality about life's ups and downs by getting support from co-workers, friends, family and her dogs. "My respite is getting outside and taking the dogs for a walk. The dogs have won in this pandemic!" she says. She also gets support from her boss, whom she says is wonderful at empowering her employees.

For Dickinson, the current adversity is creating opportunities, and it's all about how you manage that adversity. "Does (adversity) stifle you or do you turn it into something great?" she asks.

GIVING BACK

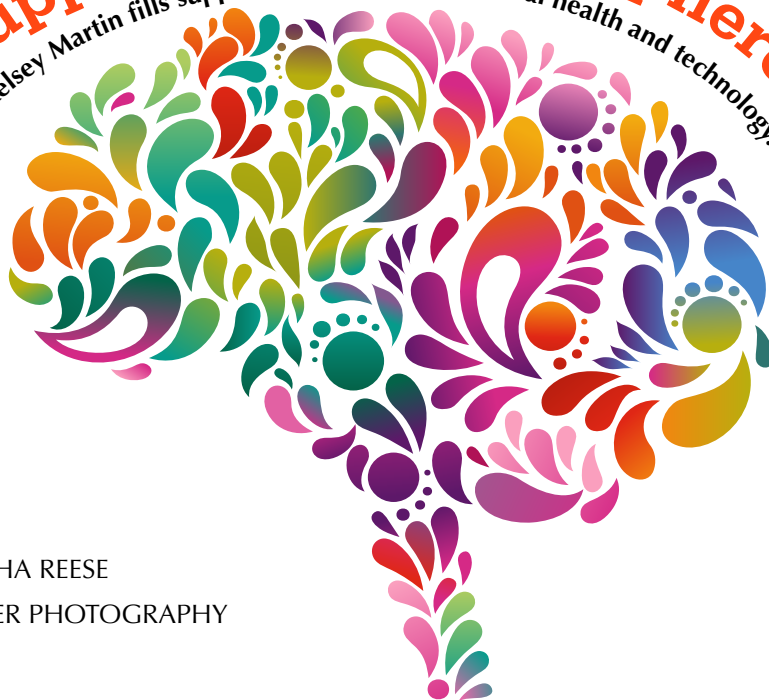
When Dickinson isn't focusing on work, she stays busy helping the community. "Rotary is really rich in the Coulee Region, which is a uniqueness of this area. We have a very serving and giving community," she says. There are several Rotary clubs in the area, but Dickinson is part of the After Hours club, which focuses on projects that aid with maternal and child health, clean water, peace and conflict, environment, disease eradication and more. For example, the club sponsors the Ugly Sweater 5K fundraiser in December. Funds raised go back into the community for projects like trail maintenance in Upper Hixon Park.

Whether it's working toward keeping Mayo current or raising funds for Rotary, Dickinson is at the forefront of supporting her community both professionally and personally. **CRW**

Jessica Zen is a freelance writer who recently moved to the La Crosse area. She hopes to one day be as involved in the local community as Marissa and make an equally positive impact.

Support in Different Spheres

Kelsey Martin fills support roles in areas of mental health and technology.



BY TALLITHA REESE

PHOTO BY FRONTIER PHOTOGRAPHY

Supporting others doesn't always mean the same thing, as Kelsey Martin knows. An outpatient therapist with Stein Counseling & Consulting Services in Onalaska, she provides an entirely different type of support through a side gig at her father's web design business. By combining the two, Martin also demonstrates a skill ever more important in a work world impacted by Covid-19: career flexibility.

A CAREER OF SUPPORTING MENTAL HEALTH

Martin grew up in West Salem, went to college in Oshkosh and returned to the Coulee Region in 2018 to be closer to her family. Shortly after her move back to the area, she began working at Stein Counseling.

Martin is a licensed clinical social worker (LCSW), a clinical substance abuse counselor (CSAC) and an independent clinical supervisor (ICS). She currently provides outpatient and in-home counseling through Stein Counseling for a variety of clientele. She also works with the Onalaska and Holmen school districts, providing counseling services to students and supervising peer support specialists.

"Clients may be seeking assistance with anything from anxiety, depression, grief, marriage counseling, substance abuse, trauma, custody concerns, etc." explains Martin. "We have definitely seen an increase in the last few months with Covid-19 and people struggling with the isolation, in addition to election and racial tensions in the U.S."

Martin's position at Stein allows her to do a little bit of everything with the large variety of programs offered by the company—from traditional counseling to other community programs—which she enjoys.

"Day to day is a mix, which I truly like," she says. "I am able to do a mix of things from seeing clients (between six and nine per day) and other projects, which include collateral contacts, case management, documentation and therapy."

TECHNOLOGICAL SUPPORT

Martin has also been supporting her father's web design business, Mader Web Design, Inc., since she was in high school.

"Currently, I maintain regular updates for five to seven websites and recently updated a website (making it more modern) almost completely on my own," says Martin. "I still need to ask my dad for certain things, but I've gone from no knowledge to being able to read and edit HTML code in my sleep."

This technological skill set came in handy for Martin at her day job when Covid-19 hit, as some of Stein's clientele decreased, so she spent the extra time revamping and editing the business website and creating online paperwork so clients could connect remotely.

"I was able to take some of the to-do list off of our management team during a time when they were overwhelmed trying to keep up with things that were changing minute-to-minute," says Martin.

Martin has also taken over other aspects of Stein's digital marketing, including social media.

IMPORTANCE OF FINDING YOUR OWN SUPPORT

When it comes to personal support, Martin finds hers in her gym family at Zen & Pow Studio in Onalaska, where she regularly worked out pre-Covid and has since maintained a virtual connection of support and accountability. Martin is also a big believer in the importance of self-care and enjoys "watching trashy television shows" and spending time with family and friends to balance life and leisure.

"Being able to check out and watch television shows or read books or work out or honestly, do some beautification on someone's website, can be a great mental break," says Martin. **CRW**

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



Kelsey Martin, counselor at Stein Counseling

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GOOD BONES

Don't wait for a fracture to focus on bone health.

BY LEAH CALL | CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS



A solid foundation is vital to the strength of a building. Similarly, our bones are the foundation for a strong, healthy body. Bones protect our organs and allow us to move and enjoy life. As we age, it is important to maintain bone health to prevent osteoporosis, a disease that weakens bones and increases the danger of fracture. While one in three women is at risk for fracture due to osteoporosis, it is preventable and treatable.

“We know that as women age, fracture can be more serious ... it can decrease longevity and increase morbidity,” says Deborah Prior, MD, general practitioner at Hirsch Clinic at Vernon Memorial Healthcare in Viroqua. Her focus on women’s health involves osteoporosis treatment, prevention and investigation with bone densitometry.

Maintaining healthy bones is a lifelong commitment—especially for women, who have less bone mass than men and lose bone at a faster rate after menopause. Preventing osteoporosis begins at birth.

“When we are young, that is when we lay down the most bone—up until about age 30,” explains Dr. Prior.

After 30, women begin losing bone density. Risk factors, such as smoking, inadequate amounts of calcium and vitamin D, and some medications, such as steroids, decrease bone density even further. Menopause itself is a major factor in bone loss because of the drop in estrogen, a hormone that protects bones. Gastrointestinal diseases, such as Crohn’s disease, affect the absorption of vitamin D, putting women suffering those diseases at greater risk.

DIET AND EXERCISE

When Mom told you to drink your milk because it’s good for your bones, she was right. Calcium and vitamin D are the two must-haves when it comes to bone health. One cup of milk contains about 300 milligrams of calcium. Adult women need between 1,200 and 1,800 milligrams of calcium per day. Other dairy foods, including yogurt and cheeses, contain calcium, as do some leafy greens and broccoli.

“A lot of people are not getting enough calcium in their diet, and they are not getting enough vitamin D, especially in Wisconsin in the winter,” says Dr. Prior,

who recommends a calcium supplement containing vitamin D.

Coffee and soda interfere with calcium absorption, another reason to cut soda out of your diet. If you have to have that morning cup of coffee, take the supplement with your evening meal. "Calcium is better absorbed when you take it with food," notes Dr. Prior. "You don't want to take your calcium on an empty stomach first thing in the morning and then drink your coffee."

Women should gauge their natural calcium intake and supplement to ensure they are getting the recommended daily amount. Most supplements provide 600 milligrams of calcium and 800 international units (IU) of vitamin D.

Exercise is equally important in the defense against osteoporosis. Dr. Prior suggests weight-bearing exercise, such as jogging, walking, tennis, aerobics and climbing stairs.

"We think of bones as static, but they are not. They are constantly remodeling. When you get weight-bearing exercise, that improves your bone strength, because you have muscle pulling on your bones."

TESTING AND TREATMENT

The U.S. Preventive Task Force recommends bone density testing for women beginning at age 65. Non-milk drinkers, smokers, inactive women and those who have already suffered a fracture should do bone densitometry earlier.

Women on aromatase inhibitors for cancer are also tested earlier. "We usually do a baseline bone densitometry at some point in their treatment to make sure they are not losing bone, because aromatase inhibitors can cause that," Dr. Prior explains.



Deborah Prior, MD, of Vernon Memorial Healthcare

If testing reveals osteopenia or osteoporosis, repeat testing will be done every two years.

Those with osteopenia—less severe bone loss than osteoporosis—follow treatment similar to prevention recommendations: calcium, vitamin D and weight-bearing exercise. But it is essential not to skip the exercise. "They can get calcium and vitamin D, but if they are not stressing their bones, they will not improve their bone density," warns Dr. Prior.

Those at high risk of fracture may be prescribed bisphosphonates, which slow bone loss, though some women are frightened by the drug's possible side effects. Prior notes injuries from fracture can be extremely debilitating. Hip fractures are most common, but some women suffer vertebral fractures in their back, which can be very painful and lead to other complications.

"Women always worry about the side effects, but if they have a fracture, they can really be harmed by that. It's always a balance."

The best solution is to pay attention to your bones now before they break down. **CRW**

Westby-based freelance writer Leah Call ran to the store to get a calcium supplement after writing this article. Thanks to Dr. Prior for sharing your expertise.



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HANDS-ON HELP FOR VIRTUAL LEARNING

Community organizations provide places for students to go when there is no in-person school.

BY JAN WELLIK | CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS



Third Option Learning Hub (left, bottom right), the La Crosse Family YMCA (top right) and the Boys and Girls Clubs of Greater La Crosse have been helping parents manage distance learning.

Parents everywhere have been faced with new challenges this school year. After a spring of sudden school closings and a summer with few group activities, many students started the school year virtually, leaving parents to juggle work, child care and education. Several La Crosse area organizations have jumped in to provide needed support for school-age children and their families until in-person classes resume.



Shane Drey, senior school age care director at the La Crosse Family YMCA

LA CROSSE FAMILY YMCA

"We've been responding to our community's child care needs as quickly as possible," says Shane Drey, senior school age care director at the La Crosse Area Family YMCA.

The YMCA offers schoolday support for virtual learners at 10 elementary schools in La Crosse, Onalaska and Holmen this fall from 6:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Friday, serving 20 to 55 elementary students per site.

YMCA staff facilitate each child's daily virtual schedule, which varies based on the teacher, school and grade level. "Every elementary school follows a different schedule—that has been our biggest challenge," Drey says.

The virtual learning support is set up in small groups of eight to 10 kids, grouped by grade levels, as students use school-provided electronic devices. Their online work time ranges from three to six hours per day, depending on grade level and school district.

Breakfast and lunch are provided on-site by the school district. After students complete their virtual learning, YMCA staff supplement with additional games, activities and outside time.

Families do not need to be YMCA members to participate. "As a community organization, we stress to families that we don't want an inability to pay to be a barrier, so scholarships are available," says Drey.

BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS OF GREATER LA CROSSE

Also offering virtual learning support is the Boys & Girls Club of Greater La Crosse, with three sites in La Crosse and one new site in Holmen, all serving grades K-12. The weekday academic support centers are available from 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. with about 170 total students among all four buildings.

"We've designed our programming rooms to be like classroom settings," says Andy Kiel, director of operations. The gyms and playgrounds are used for games and activities led by Boys & Girls Club staff.



Misty Lown, owner of Misty's Dance Unlimited

"We are there to support kids to get logged in and engaged with their teachers," Kiel says. "We help with monitoring work, technology problems and participation. We rely on the teachers to be the professional educators."

The Boys & Girls Club targets the most vulnerable students, who might have multiple parents working or come from trauma-impacted households that aren't able to support academic learning. "We are able to offer a free program due to community support," Kiel says.

Similar to the YMCA program, the school districts provide breakfast and lunch to the students.

MISTY'S DANCE UNLIMITED

A third virtual learning support center in the area is appropriately named Third Option Learning Hub. Created at Misty's Dance Unlimited to offer a space for virtual learners inside the Onalaska dance center, the program is flexible for families needing two-, three-, or five-day care; half-day is also available.

Third Option Learning Hub opened to offer child care for both students of the Coulee Region Virtual Academy and those who had a virtual start to the year through their regular school district, ages 7-18. The building has eight instructional rooms, a lunch area (with breakfast and lunch provided by the school districts) and outdoor space. Class sizes are limited to 10 and are based on grade levels.

"We wanted to capture the traditional elements of school, to transition them back to school," says Misty Lown, owner of Misty's Dance Unlimited. Rooms are arranged to look like classrooms, complete with decorations and desks. Students have a morning message, silent reading time and afterschool surround care, if needed. Extracurricular activities include art, music, foreign language, yoga, dance, nature hikes, crafts, obstacle courses and science experiments.

Originally intended as a space for both CRVA students and temporary virtual learners, the majority of the 20 or so students attending Third Option are students who would go back to school when school reopens. However, Lown says that the space and staff will be "on standby" if situations change and schools close again.

While none of these options are the same as being in school the way Coulee Region children and families knew it before March 2020, Drey, who was an elementary educator before joining the YMCA, says they do offer a "predictable, structured space" for kids to learn and play. **CRW**

Jan Wellik is a writer and environmental educator based in La Crosse who knows all about the stress of virtual learning from home with a third-grader.

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A grand kitchen with elegant lighting, a six-burner stove and spectacular views is the heart of the Breidenbach home.

The Home of Their Dreams

A local chiropractic duo has made their perfect house a reality.

BY HEIDI OVERSON | PHOTOS BY HAZEL MEDIA LLC

Doctors Ben and Amy Breidenbach knew what kind of house they wanted to build, and they knew right where they wanted to build it—directly across the highway from the home they’d lived in for years. But there was one problem: Someone else owned the coveted parcel.

The Breidenbachs and their four children had been waiting patiently in a house they had outgrown when their realtor, Michael Peterson, called them with the news.

“The owner was undecided about whether he wanted to sell or not,” says Amy. “When he came to the decision to move forward, boy, did we jump!” The couple teamed up with longtime friend and builder Tim Adamson from Adamson Construction in Mindoro and Deb Kees from Kees Architecture in La Crosse to design a beautiful 6,000-square-foot home with pretty much every imaginable feature—including a gymnasium. The family started moving in on New Year’s Eve 2019.

In their home located between Onalaska and Holmen, just off Wisconsin Highway 35, the Breidenbachs enjoy the beauty of nature, the convenience of highway access and prairie views with jaw-dropping sunsets from the west-facing windows.

FULL OF FEATURES AND FAMILY

Featured in the 2020 La Crosse Area Builders Association’s Parade of Homes, the home is very large, but all that space was filled in quickly with everything cozy—from welcoming furnishings and wall décor to a Hot Spring sauna, hot tub and swim spa. Add four active children, two dogs, four cats, fish and a turtle, and it’s a full house.

“We’ve never felt like it is too big,” says Amy. “We think it’s absolutely perfect. The kids are always entertaining friends here, and we love having the room and seeing them enjoy the amenities.”

Two of the home’s biggest attractions are its weight room and gymnasium, which measures three-quarters of a high school basketball court and is attached to one side of the house.



The Breidenbach family home makes the most of the prairie it overlooks with spectacular views from rooms such as the master bedroom. Custom features such as a grand piano and a basketball court cater to the musical and athletic interests of the family.



“Those rooms were on Ben’s wish list,” says Amy. “But they really weren’t built just for him. With Covid-19’s effects of schools closing and a lot of people being uncomfortable going to gyms, we’ve opened the rooms up to our daughters’ high school friends for training and practices.”

WELCOMING FOR ALL

The Breidenbachs’ hospitality reflects throughout the entire house. The main floor includes the heart of the home—the great room. There, Amy can cook in her favorite room and serve good food at the table she just had to have.

“I knew exactly what I wanted,” she explains. “The table had to be big—big enough to fit the whole family around for the holidays and for card games. What we had made was just that, plus more; we can fit an entire basketball team around it!”

Jeff Elliott from West Salem crafted the table for the family—the third largest he had ever made. Wooden with a distressed look, very heavy and easy to clean, it is perfect for a large family. The dining area’s lighting adds to the cozy aura with a plethora of soft-glowing bulbs hung from a barn board above the table.

Just steps away is the living room with a fireplace from La Crosse Fireplace Co. and floor-to-ceiling windows overlooking the prairie. If guests or family members tire of the view, they’re welcome to relieve Amy from her culinary duties—but good luck getting her out of the kitchen.

“I love my kitchen and especially my six-burner gas stove,” chuckles Amy. A gorgeous kitchen with more than enough room for cooking or baking for a hungry troop of kids, the space is elegant yet completely functional for a family of six. Midwest TV & Appliance supplied appliances, and Elegant Stone Products in Viroqua worked their magic with the countertops. Audio Video Pros in Onalaska provided the unique lantern-type lights above the counters with cabinets from West Salem Planing & Molding.

ROOM FOR EVERYONE

The main floor holds much more, including a large mudroom and laundry area, a washroom, a full bathroom, a spacious pantry, a library with an aquarium, a den and an open music room. A baby grand piano from Leithold Music in La Crosse takes center stage; it’s an instrument that is well used since everyone in the family other than Ben plays.



The home has four bedrooms, with the master bedroom on the main level. Large windows supply the famous prairie view, and another fireplace provides ambience and warmth. A walk-in closet and hallway lead to a second laundry space by the master bathroom entry. In the bathroom, the couple never has to wait for a turn, as there are double sinks, a tub and a walk-in shower.

The other three bedrooms and three bathrooms are located in the lower level and the attic loft area, and the children have made them all comfortable in their own ways. A family room provides another space for hanging out, and another laundry area, sauna, weight room and gymnasium are steps away.

A large deck holding the hot tub spans the back of the house, with access to the stone-paved patio and fire pit from the lower level. Ziegler's Landscape by Design in Onalaska did a superior job, the Breidenbachs say.

FINISHING TOUCHES

Used Anew in Sparta added special touches with reclaimed wood to the lower-level family room, the den and the master bedroom.

Three authentic sliding barn doors were refinished and add a rustic feel to the pantry and main laundry room. The home's flooring from Randy Hicks with Builders Flooring in Onalaska makes the whole house flow easily from room to room and level to level.

"We worked with many great subcontractors," says Amy. "They were all just amazing. The electricians, the plumbers and all the rest went above and beyond their duties and were so nice."

FOREVER HOME

The house is truly a dream home for a couple who have worked hard and are held in high esteem by patients and community members alike. "We look into the future and know we'll never leave," says Amy. "It's the home of our dreams, and I couldn't imagine living in any other house. This is our forever home." **CRW**

Heidi Overson was touched by the Breidenbachs' kindness while interviewing them for this story. She's especially grateful they are helping high school sports teams during this difficult time.

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Maintaining a Healthy Immune System

How to eat for health during the seasonal flu and Covid-19.

BY SAM STROOZAS | CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS



Jamie Pronschinske, Mayo Clinic Health System

During any normal winter season, it would be important to make sure you are taking care of your body so you do not fall victim to the seasonal flu, but this winter it is even more vital to take care of your immune system, not only because of the flu, but also the continuing presence of Covid-19.

Anyone is susceptible to Covid-19, but there are small steps you can take to make sure you are living a healthy lifestyle even during a public health crisis.

GOING BEYOND YOUR DIET

Jamie Pronschinske, registered dietitian at Mayo Clinic Health System in La Crosse, emphasizes that it is important to understand that our immune systems are complex and influenced by a variety of factors, not solely our diet.

“Other lifestyle factors like sleep, exercise and stress level impact our body’s ability to fight infection and disease,” Pronschinske says.

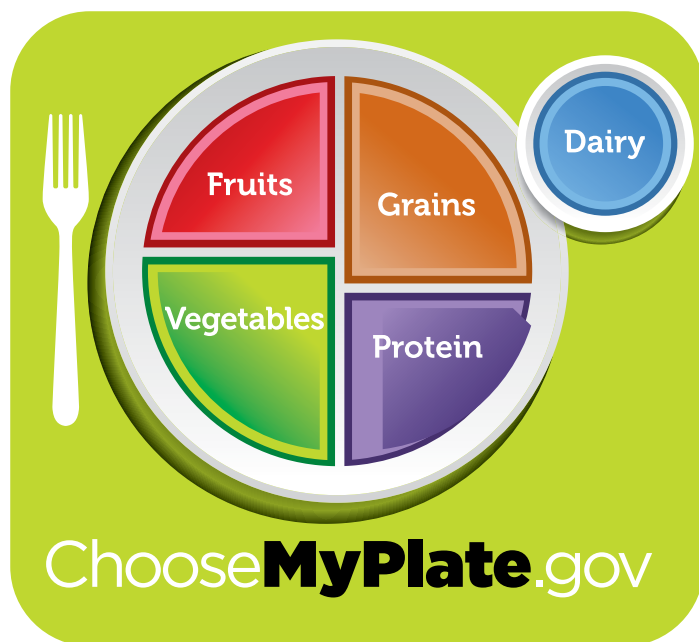
With all of these different elements involved, it may be difficult to decide what to focus on, but Pronschinske says that good nutrition is always essential. Her suggestion is to use the MyPlate method to teach people about healthy living. This is done by filling your plate with multiple fruits and vegetables, lean sources of proteins, whole grains and low-fat dairy products.

She says it is better to obtain nutrients from foods rather than supplements, but for those who are part of a population with increased nutrient needs, vitamin and mineral supplements may help fill the gaps.

“A general multivitamin or mineral supplement providing no more than 100 percent of your RDA can be used and is generally safe for many people,” Pronschinske says. “Avoid ‘mega doses,’ as these often



Kayla Roland, Winona Health



Good nutrition is always essential to building a strong immune system. Dietitian Jamie Pronschinske recommends the MyPlate model for balancing food groups.

do not offer any additional benefit and in some cases may be harmful. Remember that supplements are not a substitute for a healthy diet as they do not contain all of the benefits that we get from food."

PILE UP A COLORFUL PLATE

One way of getting those nutrients, says Kayla Roland, is by simply adding more color to your plate and incorporating fruits and vegetables that you enjoy.

Roland, an outpatient registered dietitian in the diabetes and nutritional department at Winona Health, explains that eating right—including a variety of foods—plays an essential role in supporting our immune system.

"What most people do not know is that each color of fruit or vegetable contains different vitamins or minerals," Roland says. "Each vitamin and mineral has an important part in keeping our entire body in working order. This means that there is not one particular food item or nutrient that will protect you, but rather a balance of micronutrients."

A few micronutrients that she recommends including are zinc, vitamin D, vitamin E, iron, protein and selenium. These nutrients are found in foods such as brown rice, nuts and seeds, legumes, fish, skinless chicken breast and an assortment of fruits and vegetables.

Roland encourages everyone to get enough sleep, get a flu shot, minimize stress levels and exercise regularly to stay healthy this winter. She also suggests making an appointment to talk to a dietitian about your diet. Winona Health offers one-on-one visits and weight management group classes that are all conducted virtually.



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Whatever wine you choose and whomever you spend your time with, remember:

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Poached Pears

Mayo Clinic Staff
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- 1 cup orange juice
- ¼ cup apple juice
- 1 tsp. ground cinnamon
- ½ tsp. ground nutmeg
- 4 whole pears
- ½ cup fresh raspberries
- 2 T orange zest

In a small bowl, combine the juices, cinnamon and nutmeg. Stir to mix evenly. Peel the pears and leave the stems. Remove the core from the bottom of the pear. Place in a shallow pan. Add the juice mixture to the pan and set over medium heat. Simmer about 20-30 minutes, turning pears frequently. Don't boil. Transfer the pears to individual serving plates. Garnish with raspberries and orange zest and serve immediately.

Per serving (1 pear): 140 calories, 0 g fat, 0 g saturated fat, 9 mg sodium, 34 g carbohydrates, 2 g fiber, 1 g protein.

Gingerly Chicken Noodle Soup

Mayo Clinic Staff
Serves 8

- 3 oz. dried soba noodles
- 1 T olive oil
- 1 large yellow onion, chopped (1 cup)
- 1 T peeled and minced fresh ginger
- 1 carrot, peeled and finely chopped
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 4 cups unsalted chicken stock or broth
- 2 T reduced-sodium soy sauce
- 1 lb. skinless, boneless chicken breasts, chopped
- 1 cup shelled edamame
- 1 cup plain soy milk
- ¼ cup chopped fresh cilantro

Bring a saucepan $\frac{3}{4}$ full of water to a boil; add the noodles and cook until just tender, about 5 minutes. Drain and set aside until needed.

In a large saucepan, heat the olive oil over medium heat. Add the onion and sauté until soft and translucent, about 4 minutes. Add the ginger and carrot and sauté for 1 minute. Add the garlic and sauté for 30 seconds; don't let the garlic brown. Add the stock and soy sauce and bring to a boil. Add the chicken and edamame and return to a boil.

Reduce the heat to medium-low and simmer until the chicken is cooked and the edamame are tender, about 4 minutes. Add the soba noodles and soy milk and cook until heated through; don't let it boil. Remove the pan from the heat and stir in the cilantro. Ladle soup into warmed individual bowls and serve immediately.

Per serving (1¼ cups): 185 calories, 5 g fat, 1 g saturated fat, 16 g carbohydrates, 2 g fiber, 19 g protein, 223 mg sodium.

Brown Rice with Sizzling Chicken and Vegetables

MyPlate.gov
Serves 4

- 3 cups hot cooked brown rice
- 3 T low-sodium soy sauce
- ¼ cup water
- 1 T honey
- 1 T cornstarch
- 1½ T canola or corn oil
- 16 oz. boneless chicken breast, cut into 1-in. cubes
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 small white onion, cut into small wedges (1/8 in. thick)
- 3 medium carrots, peeled and thinly sliced (1 cup total)
- 1½ cups small broccoli florets
- 1 medium red bell pepper, cut into 1-in. pieces

Prepare rice according to package instructions. Mix soy sauce, water, honey and cornstarch in a small bowl; set aside.

Heat oil in a wok or large skillet. Add minced garlic; sauté about 1 minute until garlic is golden. Add chicken; cook about 5-6 minutes, then push chicken to the side. Add onions to center of skillet; cook until slightly tender and push to the side. Continue with carrots, broccoli, and peppers separately, placing each in center of pan, cooking until slightly tender and pushing to the side.

Pour soy sauce mixture into center of skillet. Leaving other ingredients at the sides of the pan, stir sauce until it thickens. Mix in with vegetables and chicken. Serve immediately over cooked brown rice.

Per serving: 410 calories, 10 g fat, 2 g saturated fat, 580 mg sodium, 49 g carbohydrates, 30 g protein. **CRW**

Sam Stroozas encourages everyone to stay safe and healthy this winter by wearing masks and social distancing.





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Answering the Call

Great Rivers 2-1-1 offers around-the-clock access to information about community services.

BY JANIS JOLLY | CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

Sometimes we need help but don't know where to get it. Anyone faced with this dilemma can get the help they need simply by dialing 2-1-1. These three digits connect them to Great Rivers 2-1-1 information and referral. Here, help is confidential, free and accessible 24/7.

Director Mary Mundt Reckase and her colleagues have spent 40-plus years developing a way for anyone in 21 counties in southeastern Minnesota, southwestern Wisconsin and northeastern Iowa to get the help they need, when they need it. Great Rivers 2-1-1 is a service of Gundersen Health System and the United Way with county and state funding as well.



Mary Mundt Reckase, director of Great Rivers 2-1-1

24/7 ACCESS TO INFORMATION

"I have always felt that 2-1-1 is a great concept. It's available to anyone 24 hours a day; it's a free, confidential, nonjudgmental source of reliable information. The challenge is that people don't know the service exists or know what we offer," says Mundt Reckase. "It's simple to reach out and dial the number, chat, text or email, and the community resource specialists on the other end of the line will listen carefully and provide referrals matched to the caller's needs. Our staff access a database of 1,800 agencies."

The 2-1-1 team consists of nine community resource specialists who answer the phones, three database curators who maintain the database and three support and administrative staff. The specialists

don't provide counseling directly; they listen carefully, then link callers to a program or service that can help.

Mundt Reckase says that in the past, most of the 22,000 calls Great Rivers 2-1-1 receives each year have been from people who need help with addiction, mental illness and basic living needs; life transitions and domestic violence are also common problems. In its role as a crisis line, Great Rivers 2-1-1 also assesses, supports and links people in need of immediate assistance to needed emergency services.

Covid-19 brought about an increase in both the number and types of calls they receive. Call volume is up 40 percent, and now more people are looking for help with basics such as food, eviction prevention and transportation. Calls about mental health problems, abuse situations and increased isolation have also grown.

HOW TO ACCESS GREAT RIVERS 2-1-1

Dial 211 or 800-362-8255

Visit greatrivers211.org.

Text your zip code to 898211

Chat (online, Monday-Friday 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.)

Email gr211@gundersenhealth.org

WHAT HAPPENS ON A CALL?

The following examples illustrate the types of calls Great Rivers 2-1-1 receives. Great Rivers 2-1-1 protects the confidentiality of its callers; thus, these are composites, not actual calls.

- A woman contacted Great Rivers 2-1-1 concerned about her adult son, who struggles with depression and recently started drinking again after being sober for many years. The son would call his mother when intoxicated, making suicidal statements. The community resource specialist listened supportively to the mother's concerns, validated her feelings and told her of options when the son appears to be in crisis. She also gave the mother some options for help for herself such as NAMI and Al-Anon. The specialist asked the mother about the son's willingness to seek treatment. She also invited her to reach out to 2-1-1 anytime if she needed additional referrals or support.
- A call came in from an individual concerned about paying his rent. His employer lost revenue as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, and he was laid off. His landlord was understanding at first but then said he would need some rent money or he would have to start the eviction process. The caller was overwhelmed by his overdue bills and afraid of ending up homeless. The specialist immediately began looking for resources to help avoid eviction, identifying a program to help people directly impacted by the pandemic. The specialist also offered resources for food and help with electric bills. The caller was eager to get started contacting the programs that were shared with him and stated that having some options gave him a sense of relief.

PULLING IT ALL TOGETHER

The database is vital to keeping the specialists current on changes in available services. The database is "the backbone of the work we do. It is a reliable set of referral information and the public has access to it," says Mundt Reckase.

The community resource specialists need a bachelor's degree in a human service area, such as social work or community health. They must complete three weeks of training and pass an exam. A national organization of 2-1-1 professionals called the Alliance of Information and Referral Systems grants certification and 2-1-1 center accreditation.

Mundt Reckase earned her bachelor's degree in English literature at Knox College in Illinois, then moved to La Crosse and earned a master's degree in community health education at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse. She found her way to this work by answering an ad for "someone to develop a resource directory." That was more than 40 years ago. The resource directory evolved into a 24/7 community help line in the 1980s that today is Great Rivers 2-1-1. **CRW**

Janis Jolly is a freelance writer in La Crosse. She is thankful that services such as Great Rivers 2-1-1 exist.



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OVER THE TOP

Winter outerwear puts the “fun” in functional.

BY JESSICA ZEN

PHOTOS BY DIANE RAAUM PHOTOGRAPHY

Winter is in full swing in the Coulee Region, and it's time to bundle up. Whether you wander out in a stylish cap and hand warmers, a beautiful coat or a metallic vest, be sure to kick your fashion decisions up a notch when the temperature goes down. From colors that pop to neutrals that match everything, **Mainstream Boutique**, **Urban Shoetique** and **Touch of Class** have everything you need to keep warm and toasty, as well as chic, this season.

When the weather isn't too chilly, step out in this beautiful cream fleece coat and spice it up a bit with black booties from **Mainstream Boutique**. Add a pop of color and you're ready for work or appetizers and drinks with friends.

Liverpool jeans, \$98; print blouse, \$59; self-tie fleece coat, \$59; studded cutout boot, \$98; gold drop earrings, \$24.

Modeled by Toni West.

If you're ready for a wild day downtown, **Urban Shoetique** has the perfect outfit for you! Step out in leopard print booties and a trendy metallic vest that is sure to draw attention. Pair it with a bright over-the-shoulder handbag, and you're ready to conquer the day.

Uno de 50 bracelet, \$275; Bed Stu handbag, \$198; Liverpool "Glider" jeans, \$119; iltm mock turtleneck, \$48; Anorak long vest, \$148; Fly London boots, \$225.

Modeled by Jessica Zen.





For outdoor winter adventures, stay extra warm with some key pieces from **Touch of Class**. You'll look amazing from head to toe with a pom-pom hat, bold pink coat and sleek fleece-lined boots. Complete the ensemble with matching hand warmers, and you're all set.

Ilse Jacobsen coat, French Knot hat and hand warmers, Mephisto boots, DL 1961 jeans, Repeat turtleneck.

Modeled by Jessica Zen.



Abbie Leithold-Gerzema,
La Crosse Concert Band



The La Crosse Chamber Chorale

THE SHOW WILL GO ON

Here are four^o ways you can keep local arts organizations going until live events return.

BY HEIDI GRIMINGER BLANKE | CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

The stage lights are down and the music venues are silent, but the arts in the Coulee Region still need your support. Abbie Leithold-Gerzema, development director of the La Crosse Concert Band, reminds us that keeping the arts and arts organizations alive for the future is dependent on what we do now. Mindy Stetzer, executive director of the United Fund for the Arts and Humanities, breaks it down into four categories: donating, volunteering, advocating and attending.



Mindy Stetzer, executive
director of UFAH

DONATING

Less than a year ago, many organizations gained income by ticket sales and items sold in conjunction with an event. With that revenue stream diminished, monetary donations are vital. “We didn’t feel comfortable asking businesses and patrons to give to a season that didn’t happen when their financial situation may have changed during the pandemic, but we want our endowment to grow,” Leithold-Gerzema points out. Consider donating to an arts organization for a special occasion like a birthday or anniversary. Gifts-in-kind are important, too. “If you know an organization is going to have an auction, donate items of value,” Stetzer says.

VOLUNTEERING

While many organizations have limited volunteer opportunities for the time being, Stetzer says, there is typically a demand for specific skills including gardening, window cleaning, painting walls, videography, graphic design and, in particular, social media promotion through outlets like Facebook, YouTube and Instagram. Contact your favorite arts organization to see where your abilities might fit in.

ADVOCATING

Talking about organizations you endorse helps them out by increasing awareness and, ultimately, other methods of support, Stetzer says. “Advocating on behalf of the organization, talking to friends and family about how the organization has helped you and sharing and liking social media posts ... anything that spreads the word” is helpful. It’s simple to follow an arts organization on Facebook and other social media channels.

ATTENDING

Real-life events may be minimal, but virtual ones are easily accessible. Purchase tickets to those events, bid on auction items or purchase other items sold by an organization. The La Crosse Girlchoir’s website, for example, sells its very own cookbook for \$12. Check out the La Crosse County Historical Society website for items commemorating various aspects of area history. “The La Crosse Chamber Chorale has been producing Facebook videos to get to know the singers and business sponsors,” Leithold-Gerzema says.

THE SHOW WILL GO ON

Leithold-Gerzema sums it up: “When we are able to gather again in ensembles, it will be a sweet reconciliation. In the meantime, we can still make music in our homes, if not in groups. Be supportive of your friends and family and your neighbors,” she says. “If someone you know plays an instrument or likes to sing, ask to hear what song they are currently working on. You can listen by phone, Zoom or Facebook.”

The world is anxious to see the curtain go up and the stage lights come on. Until then, think about how you can help ensure that when that time comes, our arts organizations will be front and center. **CRW**

Heidi Griminger Blanke, Ph.D., is an avid arts patron and donor, forever and always.

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ACCOMPLISHMENTS



The Pilates Studio Is 10 Years Strong

Heather Happel and Heather Froh, owners of The Pilates Studio in Onalaska, are celebrating the studio's 10th anniversary this year. Since opening in 2010, the studio has provided weekly Pilates classes and personal Pilates sessions to an ever-growing body of students and has added online Pilates classes and Pilates teacher training to their offerings in the past year. The "Heathers" thank their clients for their inspiration and support over the years and look forward to helping them improve health, strength and balance in the years to come. For more information on classes and teacher training opportunities, contact The Pilates Studio at 608-781-2656.



YWCA La Crosse Celebrates Outstanding Womxn

The annual YWCA La Crosse Tribute to Outstanding Womxn, held virtually on November 12, announced a slate of honorees dedicated to upholding their mission of eliminating racism and empowering womxn. These nominees 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.

The honorees named at the Tribute are Chaya Davis, Diariana Herron, Mia Davis and Brianna Washington—Community Project of the Year: Celebrating Youth Voices for Justice; Michelle Richgels—Emily "Sis" Hutson Volunteer of the Year Award; Dr. Xiong—Linda Riddle Community Advocate of the Year Award; Heidi and Scott Blanke—Olga Schleiter Memorial Philanthropic Award; Dr. Caroline Wilker—Sustaining Leader of Today; Shantae Sheard—Young Womxn of Tomorrow; Claudia Delgado—Young Womxn of Tomorrow.

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 folk.

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Author Johanna Neuman

THE POWER TO VOTE

High-society suffragists provided celebrity support in securing women the right to vote.

BY BETTY CHRISTIANSEN | CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

2020 is the 100-year anniversary of an event that changed the lives of women and has altered the course of elections since: ratification of the 19th Amendment granting women the right to vote.

Journalist Johanna Neuman, author of the book *Gilded Suffragists*, has deeply studied the history of the suffrage movement in the United States. She was also the featured speaker at the virtual Fall Event Day of the Women's Fund of Greater La Crosse. Here, she enlightens us on some of that history.

***Gilded Suffragists* focuses on the wealthy socialite women of New York and their impact on the suffrage movement. How did they help women win the right to vote?**

These women were trendsetters, the media celebrities of their day. They were covered by a voracious newspaper press for every excess of fashion, décor and travel. When they leveraged that social cachet for political power, they moved the issue of women's suffrage—which had been in the doldrums—from the women's pages to the front pages. Like Oprah Winfrey embracing causes today, their involvement shined a spotlight on the issue and created the buzz necessary to attract a whole new generation to the campaign. They offered the first celebrity endorsement of the 20th century, speeding progress toward the finish line.

Why did these privileged women stand up for suffrage—not just for their own right to vote, but for all women's right? What was in it for them?

Power. I think on some level the gilded suffragists were aggrieved that while they

had moral authority and social standing, they were not the equal of their fathers and husbands when it came to political power. Some were drawn to seek women's suffrage to help working-class women; others thought it would assist their own efforts to reform corrupt governments; still others wanted to cement their own rights as citizens. But all of them resonated to the calls of modernity then swirling through society. Far from being flighty social figures, these women were executives, accustomed to running huge estates, properties and mansions. They were bred to lead, and suffrage gave them an opening to show their talents.

In your book, we see women use their privilege in very different ways to promote the suffragist cause. Alva Belmont used her high standing in society, political savvy and brute force to influence others. Katherine Mackay wooed converts through elegance, fashion and feminine qualities. Which tactic was more effective?

The contrasts between Katherine Duer Mackay and Alva Vanderbilt Belmont are so instructive. Mackay, the first society suffragist in the 20th century, thought she could win by defusing fears held by many men that in gaining the vote, women would sink into the muck of political corruption, and their activism would destabilize the family. She wore her fashion to her suffrage events to demonstrate that women could be both feminine and substantive. Belmont, who had divorced a Vanderbilt over his public philandering, had enough money and anger to embrace bruising tactics. Where Mackay cooed, Belmont bellowed. I would argue that

in any movement for social change, both approaches are needed: the inside player, who can negotiate with the establishment, and the cantankerous rebel, who can protest from outside the gates of power.

One image from your book that strikes me is the 1912 suffrage parade in New York City, boasting 20,000 women and 1,000 brave men. What impact did men have in the suffrage movement?

The Men's League for Women Suffrage was an unexpected asset to the modern movement. From the campaign's first moments, progressive men had always stood with women. None was more stalwart than Frederick Douglass, who signed the Declaration of Rights & Sentiments at Seneca Falls, New York, in 1848. Later in life he observed, "When I ran away from slavery, it was for myself; when I advocated emancipation, it was for my people; but when I stood up for the rights of woman, self was out of the question, and I found a little nobility in the act." Later generations of male suffragists—many progressives who thought a female electorate would double their impact in winning reforms, many husbands who wanted to support their wives' political aspirations—were instrumental in swinging public opinion. Making noontime soapbox speeches, writing editorials, marching in parades—they gave cover to men who were on the fence about the issue, assuring them that life would go on. **CRW**

Betty Christiansen is publisher of Coulee Region Women.

LET'S SHOW SOME SUPPORT

BY JESS WITKINS



May I come in?" I asked, politely knocking on the fitting-room door. I was 23 years old, a year out of college and climbing the retail ladder in my first management position at our local Macy's. I wore pinstripe pants and a suit jacket with a patent leather belt because this epitomized "making it" and showed off my leadership at the time, since I was nothing if not professional.

"Yes," replied the waiting customer. I opened the door to find her topless. A broad-backed woman, approximately in her 70s, with permed short hair and breasts that were each bigger than my head. This was my first bra fitting. I don't remember her name, but I remember those boobs.

As a new sales manager, one of my departments was intimate apparel, which covers all your underwear and underwire needs along with pajamas and robes. One of the services we offered in our department was bra fittings. Statistics say that 80 percent of women wear the wrong bra size for their body. Having been a retail worker for six years, I can attest this is true. So many women have bands riding up their backs, straps falling down their shoulders and that extra side boob spilling over their bra cups. If the extra skin that falls over our pants is called a "muffin top," wouldn't it be appropriate to call side boobs "cupcakes"?

The intimate apparel department was my favorite to work in because when you give a woman the right bra, it changes her world. I would often see women stand differently and be more confident once

they found the right fit for them. Fortunately, I trained with the best. Our store had two full-time employees that worked in the department and were renowned for their, shall we say, support. Between the two of them they had over 50 years of experience. One was so good at finding women the right bra size, she could do it just by eyeballing them. Like a carnival trick!

Learning how to bra fit is somewhat awkward, as you practice on mannequins. But no living woman's breasts look like the breasts on a mannequin. Our skin gets compared to baked goods, remember? Mannequin boobs are made of plastic. Plus, they're slippery, so sometimes their arms fall off while you're using the measuring tape, and that's disconcerting when you're still learning.

So that brings us back to me in the fitting room with my bosom buddy whose name I cannot recall. My two experts were off for the day, and I answered the call when a customer needed help. The good news is I found her a bra that fit and, even better, her arms didn't fall off. Like I said, true professional.

Everyone has a bra story. This is just one of mine. Whatever your story, and whatever your name is, I hope you always get the support you need. **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.



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A woman and a young child are jumping joyfully in a deep snowdrift. The woman is wearing a black vest over a red long-sleeved shirt and red pants. The child is wearing a blue snowsuit and a pink hat. They are both smiling and have their arms outstretched.

**FROM SNOW DAYS
TO WORK FROM HOME DAYS**

A woman with curly hair is sitting at a wooden desk, smiling as she helps a young child with their homework. The child is focused on writing in a notebook with a pencil. The background shows a kitchen with white cabinets and a sink.

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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.

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

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

La Crosse 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.

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.

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

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

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

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

Please contact each group for meeting status at this time.

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

CALENDAR EVENTS

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. 2-9, *It's a Wonderful Life: A Live Radio Play*, streaming performance, Center for the Arts, UW-La Crosse, www.uwlax.edu/theatre-arts/performances--box-office/season-listing/.

Dec. 3, Meditation for Emotional Health (via Zoom), 6:30 p.m., preregistration required, www.fscenter.org.

Dec. 5, Winter Market, 9 a.m.-1 p.m., Radisson Event Center, 2nd and Jay Streets, La Crosse, www.cameronparkmarket.org.

Dec. 5, Old Fashioned Christmas, 10 a.m.-3 p.m., Norskedalen Nature & Heritage Center, Coon Valley, www.norskedalen.org.

Dec. 8, Conversations That Matter (via Zoom), 7 p.m., preregistration required, www.fscenter.org.

Dec. 8, League of Women Voters December Virtual Lunch & Learn, Status of Census and Fair Representation, 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m., register at www.lwvlacrosse.org.

Dec. 10, Bizarre History of Wisconsin (online), 7 p.m., La Crosse Public Library, <https://www.lacrosselibrary.org/bizarre-history-wisconsin-0>.

Dec. 12, Winter Market, 9 a.m.-1 p.m., Radisson Event Center, 2nd and Jay, La Crosse, www.cameronparkmarket.org.

Dec. 12-19, Jingle Bell Walk/Run and Rudolph's Dash: Frozen at Home Edition, YMCA-North, Onalaska, register at www.laxymca.org.

Dec. 14, Kat Perkins: North Country Christmas, 7:30 p.m., The Heider Center, www.heidercenter.org.

Dec. 18, I'll Be Home for Christmas: A Virtual Event featuring Tonic Sol-Fa, 8:30 p.m., tickets available at www.webercenterarts.org.

Dec. 18-19, Holiday Gems Chamber Concert, 7:30 p.m., La Crosse Symphony, www.lacrossesymphony.org.

Dec. 19, Home for the Holidays virtual concert, La Crosse Chamber Chorale, 7 p.m., www.youtube.com/lacrossechamberchorale.

Dec. 19, Winter Market, 9 a.m.-1 p.m., Radisson Event Center, 2nd and Jay, La Crosse, www.cameronparkmarket.org.

Dec. 22, Conversations That Matter (via Zoom), 7 p.m., preregistration required, www.fscenter.org.

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

Dec. 31, Expert-Led Owl Prowl, 4 p.m., International Owl Center, Houston, Minnesota, www.internationalowlcenter.org.

JANUARY

Jan. 12, League of Women Voters January Virtual Lunch & Learn, Sara Eschrich, Democracy Foundation, 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m., register at www.lwvlacrosse.org.

Jan. 15-17, Father Son Retreat, Living Waters Bible Camp, Westby, preregistration required, www.lwbc.org.



Jan. 16, *Overcoming Challenges with Grit & Grace* featuring Kao Kalia Yang (via Zoom), 8:30 a.m.-3 p.m., preregistration required, www.fscenter.org.

Jan. 17, Snow Days 1, Living Waters Bible Camp, Westby, preregistration required, www.lwbc.org.

Jan. 20, Expert-Led Owl Prowl, 4:30 p.m., International Owl Center, Houston, Minnesota, www.internationalowlcenter.org.



Jan. 21, *The Looney Lutherans Comedy*, 7:30 p.m., The Heider Center, www.heidercenter.org.

Jan. 21, Night Fever: The Bee Gees Tribute, 7:30 p.m., Viterbo Fine Arts Center Main Theatre, www.viterbo.edu.

Jan. 23, Tonglen: Developing Compassion During Difficult Times (via Zoom), 9 a.m. to 12 p.m., preregistration required, www.fscenter.org.

Jan. 31, La Crosse Center Artwork, 7 p.m., La Crosse Center, www.lacrossecenter.com.

Please note that some events in this listing are live and some are virtual-only. Live events during this time may be canceled on short notice. Please utilize the contact information provided for each event to double-check its status before attending.



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