



coulee region

women

AREA HOME AND HEALTHY LIVING MAGAZINE

The New You

Fran Rybarik's
Path to
Reinvention

Career Changes

Gift of a Fresh Start

7 Steps to Clutter Control

The New New Orleans

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Kristen

How can my teeth cause pain in my jaw joint?

Each jaw joint is like a ball and socket. When this joint functions properly, a thin cartilage disc moves smoothly between the ball and socket. This thin disc acts like a cushion allowing the TMJ joint to move smoothly. Each disc is held in place and guided by a muscle. If your bite is not right, the joint is actually pulled out of alignment and usually the disc is pulled forward. Since the disc is no longer acting like a cushion, the joint itself now rubs against the bony socket. Mild displacement causes popping/clicking noises in the joint and more severe displacement causes pain and eventual permanent damage to the joint.

So an unstable bite can cause jaw joint displacement, muscle strain and pain. When the jaw joint is displaced for an extended time, the body begins to compensate and adapt by involving the muscles of the neck, back, and often the arms, pelvis, and legs.

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The New You

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Pictured on the cover and above:

On the cover: Fran Rybarik

Hair and makeup by Sue Kolve's Salon & Day Spa—Heather Von Arx

Above: Mary Kay Wolf

Hair and makeup by Beautiful Reflections.

Photos by Janet Mootz Photography

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–Heather Young, three fertility successes

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In the fall of 1999, I moved to New York City to begin graduate school. The move was one of several major changes that took place in just a year, which included getting married and becoming self-employed. In the upheaval of that year and those dizzying changes, each one forcing a redefinition of myself, I remember so clearly that plane ride to New York. Above the clouds, the chaos of life far below me, I opened my journal and began to sketch out who I'd be in this new life. I imagined I'd dress differently, walk differently, speak differently—I'd be a completely new me.

What I ended up with was a confused and depressed old me. My writing program was exhausting, my classmates critical, my clothing never hip enough. And, there were roaches. Still, I was keenly aware that there was no going back. I'd invested far too much of myself—and asked too much of my husband—to give up and go home, and already I felt I would no longer fit with my old friends and old ways.

So I pressed forward, and if I didn't metamorphose into the sophisticated woman I envisioned on the plane, I did accomplish a lot. I earned my degree and made important connections. I met some of my best friends, and I bonded with my new husband in a way I may never have if we'd been immersed in our familiar old life, surrounded by friends and family. At the end of it all, we moved back to the Midwest—and the process began all over again.

We women are no strangers to reinvention. We reinvent ourselves with every new responsibility we take and every relationship we enter—or end. We become “new selves” when we marry, have children, leave careers or pick them back up. Our relationships as partners, wives, mothers, sisters, daughters and friends have us ever-shifting, subtly or not.

This issue of *Coulee Region Women* is all about “The New You,” honoring the changes women face and the ways we “reinvent” ourselves through them. The stories here celebrate the creativity and resilience of women as they maneuver through career changes, deep losses, fresh starts and new looks. You'll also meet women who midwife others through these changes, helping them find the strength in themselves to seize new opportunities and overcome hardships. To top it all off, we've given the magazine itself a makeover—we hope you're pleased with our own new look.

What prompts reinvention—and what sees us through that challenging process—is hope. Purely and simply, we recreate ourselves, in good times and bad, with the promise that when our plane lands and we set off on that new path, we'll be all the better for it in the end.

Betty

coulee region women

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LA CROSSE TO BE HEALTHIEST COUNTY BY 2015



The La Crosse Medical Health Science Consortium has undertaken the challenging task of making La Crosse County the healthiest county in Wisconsin by 2015. Currently, La Crosse County is the 22nd healthiest county in Wisconsin, so the goal is lofty but possible. The consortium also hopes to develop a model in order to help other counties become healthier.

The plan has joined more than 30 health- and safety-related organizations from throughout the county to work toward this goal together. According to Catherine Kolkmeier, director of the La Crosse Medical Health Science Consortium, the project has been successful so far because of the collaboration of the organizations. These organizations have shared resources and learned from each other in the areas of chronic disease, mental health, injury and violence, and infectious disease.

"The secret to reaching this goal has been in the collaboration across organizations, agencies and businesses," Kolkmeier says. "By working together, we are naturally more efficient, we reduce duplication and we make better use of limited resources."

The county is already promoting healthy lifestyles by providing healthier snacks in vending machines, putting bike racks in front of office buildings and ensuring children can walk to school safely.



FAMILY RESOURCES BLUE RIBBON BALL

Family Resources is celebrating its 20th anniversary, and you're invited to join in the fun. Mark your calendar for the Blue Ribbon Ball, a semi-formal event held March 26 at the Radisson in La Crosse featuring dinner, live entertainment and dancing. Limited tickets are available at \$50 each; reserve yours now by calling Deb at 608-784-8125, ext. 231.

COME ON DOWN!

Test your skills and have some fun while supporting a local charity at Classics for a Cause, a fun-filled benefit for Causeway Interfaith Volunteer Caregivers held March 26 and emceed by Green Bay Packer Santana Dotson. Raffles and game show events including "Are You Smarter Than a Packer?" and "Supermarket Sweep" give participants a chance to win great prizes while supporting the work of Causeway Caregivers, which provides volunteer and community services to the elderly and adults with disabilities, allowing them to maintain independence and dignity. Classics for a Cause will be held 6 to 9 p.m. at the City Brewery Hospitality Center in La Crosse. call 608-775-9999 or visit www.causewaycaregivers.org.



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THE QUIET WORKINGS OF REINVENTION

Fran Rybarik navigates the waters of change.

BY KIM BRASEL

Photo above by Janet Mootz Photography

Going in circles usually means you are going nowhere and accomplishing nothing. But for Fran Rybarik of La Crescent, Minn., circles have been her path to personal and professional reinvention.

Taking a new path in life doesn't have to occur with a seismic shock; it can be subtle and unassuming, much like Rybarik herself, and it doesn't have to mean creating something completely new out of nothing. In fact, *reinvention* is defined as recasting what is familiar or old into a different form—retooling the past into something new.

Laying the groundwork

When Rybarik looks back now, she can see a pattern of subtle change throughout her life. "It seems like every 10 years or so, I make a change, with the groundwork being laid long before the decision is actually made. I think you are already starting to move in the direction you want to go before you make that call."

After graduating from Alverno College in Milwaukee and marrying her husband, David, Rybarik moved 10 times in 12 years

due to his job. During that time, she went from working as a public health nurse to holding clerical jobs and then staying at home with her two sons, Scott and Brian. “I had to apply for a nursing license every time we moved, and by the time I would get it, we would have moved again,” she explains.

After moving to La Crosse in 1980, when David was hired at Dairyland Power Cooperative, Rybarik went back into nursing, and over the next 20 years she worked for an insurance company, for Franciscan Skemp’s Center for Women’s Health and then for Gundersen Lutheran as the director of Bereavement Services. Along the way, she earned a master’s degree in public health nursing from UW-La Crosse.

Change in the wind

In 2003, Rybarik found herself feeling tired and needing a change. She knew it was time to move in a new direction, but she didn’t know what. “It was unusual for me to not know what I was going to do next,” she says.

At a professional conference she attended before leaving Gundersen Lutheran, she came across a man creating a labyrinth on the floor with masking tape. “He told me he uses labyrinth for grief therapy, and it hit me, that’s what I need to do,” Rybarik says.

She had first learned about labyrinths in 1999 at a labyrinth walk held on New Year’s Eve at Franciscan Skemp. The labyrinth was painted on a large, square piece of canvas, and a hostess explained how the twists and turns are used as a metaphor for life and a means of reflection. Rybarik says she walked through it wondering what path her life would take, and after several tries, she didn’t quite make it to the center of the labyrinth that night.

Going in circles

In April 2004, she started building a small labyrinth in the front woods of her property, and it took all summer to bring her labor of love to fruition. It was while walking her labyrinth that she realized what she had a passion for—writing. Going from nursing to writing wasn’t as big of a stretch as it might seem; in fact, it was simply recasting something old into something new. Over the years, she had written newsletters and educational materials for patients, and she’d had her



New hobbies offer Rybarik new ways to reinvent herself, and nature helps her heal. Here, she explores new waters via kayak.

master’s thesis published in journal articles. “I had teachers and professors early on say to me I should write, but I never thought of it as a viable career option,” she says.

Over the next year, she took writing courses at Western Technical College, joined a writing group and created her own business to help others who might be working through transitions in their life. “I named my new company Life Turns; I was thinking I would be creating written pieces for people going through transitions, because I had managed that transition from work life to nonwork life so beautifully,” she says, tongue in cheek.

But before she could help others, she found herself in a position that put all of her skills to the test.

The toughest transition

In June 2005, while working in her front yard with her husband, David, he unexpectedly collapsed, and efforts to revive him were unsuccessful. “He told me once that he was really glad I had made that decision to leave work, because our life was so much calmer for that year,” Rybarik says with a soft smile.

After years of helping others deal with loss, Rybarik was now on the other side, and she realized explaining how to deal with loss and living it are two different things. “You can teach people how to look for support and use coping skills, but you can’t read a book and figure this out,” Rybarik says. “It’s cliché to say, ‘You do what you have to do and work with what you’ve got,’ but it’s true.”

Rybarik says that from the outside it

may appear she has done well with the transition, but she doesn’t always feel that way. “You don’t get up and say, ‘Today I am going to be superwoman.’ Some days you are just surviving.”

But life goes on—seasons change, grandchildren are born—and when she feels it isn’t fair David can’t be a part of the new memories, she remembers that you can’t stop living because you think life isn’t fair.

There is a pattern

Rybarik feels that being open to change is important and has taken up hobbies that she hadn’t tried before, such as kayaking and birding. “The connection with nature has been an important part of the healing process for me,” says Rybarik. “Just getting out there and breathing the fresh air, seeing the eagles fly, the seasons change, and realizing even though everything is changing, there is a pattern.”

She sees the cycles, ebbs and flows of life all as signs that there is something more than us. “It makes my heart sing,” she says. “This is a whole new part of me that is blooming.”

Time has marched on. New memories have been made, new hobbies discovered, new talents unearthed. With a mind open to what is possible, Rybarik sees tomorrow as another opportunity for her to recast what is familiar or old into a different form, retooling the past into something new. **(crw)**

Kim Brasel writes from her home in La Crescent. She was inspired and moved by Fran’s story and hopes others are too.

You Complete the Circle of Friends



The YWCA of the Coulee Region is pleased to host our 8th annual Circle of Friends event. This is an opportunity to learn about programs and services of the YWCA and network with philanthropic women and men from the Seven Rivers Region.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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CAREERS and CHANGE

Women roll with career transitions at all ages and stages.

BY MARY MALAHY, LEAH CALL AND SUSAN HESSEL

Photos by Janet Mootz Photography

When it comes to work, one thing is inevitable: change. Whether you bounce from job to job or remain in one position for years, chances are you'll face a major transition at some point, even if you're never "downsized" or laid off. Here, we'll meet three women who are all facing such transitions—of their own choosing—as they enter the workforce for the first time, return after a long absence and leave it for good (respectively).

A great first job—Abbey Dickert

Recent college graduates are facing grueling job searches that make some wish they could go back to the days of pulling all-nighters and cramming for exams.

"The hardest aspect of job searching, for anyone, is the economy," says Sara Docan-Morgan, who teaches an interviewing class that prepares students for their job searches at the UW-La Crosse. "There

are a lot of qualified job candidates vying for a very limited number of jobs.”

But there are positions available; young people just don’t know where to look sometimes, Docan-Morgan says. Many colleges provide career services that can help with this, she adds.

Abbey Dickert graduated from UW-La Crosse last spring with a degree in marketing. Due to a successful job search, she works as a marketing and executive assistant for Providence Academy in La Crosse.

Dickert believes she was successful because she was confident during her interviews and answered the questions honestly. It is important to be honest, says Docan-Morgan, but you can tailor your experiences to match what your potential employer is looking for.

“Think about what makes you unique as a job candidate,” she says. “Be prepared to sell your unique experiences and perspectives to prospective employers.”

Dickert’s job is to promote the school and attract new students through billboards, brochures and the school’s website. She says she is happy she found a job in her field immediately after graduating. Besides marketing, her job also gives her experience with customer service and accounting.

While she enjoys her job, she does wish she had asked for a more definite job description during her interview. She says she has some responsibilities that she didn’t expect to be part of her job and often works long hours.

“I don’t mind working late because I like to do a good job and finish everything I have to before I go home for the night,” Dickert says. “I think if I work hard now, it will pay off later in my career.”

The experience Dickert is gaining will serve her well in future jobs as well, whatever they may be. “It’s definitely a great starter job for me,” Dickert says.

Through her job, Dickert has learned how important networking is, and she appreciates the connections she’s made at work. Because networking is so important, Dickert advises young people to be careful with what they say because negative comments can spread quickly.

Be persistent if you are struggling to find employment, Docan-Morgan says. She suggests writing a unique cover letter for each position you apply to instead of using a generic



Abbey Dieckert found the resources necessary to land her first job out of college in a tight job market.

one. Writing a cover letter specifically for each job you’re applying for will ensure that you highlight your experience and qualifications that pertain to that particular job.

“Finding the right job may take time and will probably take longer than one would hope,” she says. — M. M.

Mom turns career woman— Lisa Paulson

When life circumstances forced 37-year-old Lisa Paulson of Holmen to return to work full time, she discovered not only a need for more current, marketable skills, but also a change in her own career vision.

As a stay-at-home mom to two daughters, ages 7 and 12, Paulson’s days were filled with play dates, lessons and volunteering at the parent-teacher organization, Girl Scouts and Sunday school. But life changed when she separated from her husband about a year ago. Though she worked part-time after her daughters started school, Paulson was forced to find a full-time job to support herself and her children.

“Since I had been a stay-at-home mom for so long, I wasn’t getting the jobs, because

there was so much competition for the positions,” says Paulson, who currently holds an associate’s degree. “I was leaning toward business, but I hadn’t had any formal training or even job-related experience. My experience was all volunteer.”

To get the education she needed, Paulson enrolled at Globe University and today is one year away from earning a bachelor’s degree in business management with an emphasis in human resources. Globe University and other area campuses offer flexible schedules and online classes to accommodate adult nontraditional students making career transitions.

While time management is critical for anyone earning a college degree, it poses a significant challenge for a single parent working part time and raising two children.

“Sometimes it is a struggle, but I have a lot of family and friends who are very supportive,” says Paulson. “I didn’t want my kids’ activities to change. I have a lot of friends who help with rides, and Grandma takes them to lessons.”



Lisa Paulson is gaining the education she needs for a satisfying career—and is inspiring her daughters, as well.



Jan Gallagher is still testing the waters of retirement, but her days are filling with travel, her interests and the people she loves.

“Have **faith** that what you are doing will **lead** to something **more**.”

Having a good support system is something Paulson advises for anyone making a similar transition. “The support that I’ve had at Globe is huge, too. They have a lot of resources that people may not know are there.”

One resource she was pleased to discover was the number of scholarships available for nontraditional students. Paulson received a \$2,000 scholarship offered through Globe University itself for community service, so she even saw some return for the years of volunteer work she did as a stay-at-home mom.

Though still 100 percent devoted to the well-being of her children, Paulson has a new sense of personal fulfillment. “I was really scared when I first started going back to school. Now I have found a lot of strength that I didn’t know I had. Before, I didn’t see myself as having a career. Now I do want that career, and I want to show my girls that they can have that, too.”

— L.C.

Looking back on a career— Jan Gallagher

When Jan Gallagher retired as director of the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) at UW-La Crosse, her colleagues gave her a spinning game to help her decide what to do in retirement.

The spun arrow might land on visiting her husband, son or daughter; or going for a walk or to lunch; or observing birds, flowers or cloud formations.

“I always thought I wouldn’t retire until I knew what I wanted to do,” she says. “I never figured it out. But I gave myself a year.”

The months since her March 2010 retirement have been “very restorative personally. I am still not committed to a tight schedule. It’s been a time of self-reflection and personal development, a spiritual time.”

When considering how she has reinvented herself at different stages in her career, Gallagher realized she has been through all three of the stages discussed here. Recently, at SBDC, she helped women—and men—

make significant changes in their own lives. The center offers personal counseling for small business owners and entrepreneurs, and a variety of business education programs.

Gallagher worked in a variety of part-time positions while her children were young. She decided in her late 30s to get a master’s degree that would lead to her managing a nonprofit. Such a program was not available at UW-La Crosse, so she instead earned a master’s degree in business administration.

She experienced a disappointing 18-month-long “stretch” between her MBA and getting a full-time position. “I was so eager to work; I was prepared to work, but I didn’t get the jobs I wanted.”

She became self-employed, working on a variety of projects on contract. Those experiences and previous work in career counseling with women at UW-La Crosse led to and helped her in the SBDC position. “That really made a difference long term and better prepared me for the job that really engaged me happily for 17 years.

“It is sometimes easy to lose faith,” she continues, offering advice as valid in retirement as it is in a working life. “Having faith in yourself is a part of it, as is following your instincts. You have to have faith in yourself that what you are doing will lead to something more.”

As for her own retirement, Gallagher says, “I don’t feel any pressure to get going or to be busy. I am interested in staying connected with the community and my family and to continuing to be inspired by them.” **CTW**

— S.H.

Mary Malahy recently graduated from UW-La Crosse. She is grateful that she has found work as a writer in this tough economy.

Freelance writer Leah Call enjoys the transition she made 10 years ago from the corporate world to writing full time from her home in Westby.

Susan T. Hessel is a personal historian and writer.

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THE GIFT OF A FRESH START

Amy Sullivan offers women hope through the Self-Sufficiency Program.

BY JESSIE FOSS

Photos by Sue Lee

Some women show up while enduring a life filled with domestic violence. Some come while dealing with substance abuse. Many who come have no place to live. And most have children they are caring for on their own. The one thing they all have in common is the desire for a fresh start, a chance to reinvent themselves by earning a college degree.

Amy Sullivan has been running the Self-Sufficiency Program

(SSP), operated through UW-La Crosse, since fall 2002. It's her job to help these people begin anew.

"If you're determined to go to college, we can help you get there," Sullivan says. She was honored in November at the YWCA Tribute to Outstanding Women, which is presented each year by the YWCA of the Coulee Region to honor women who have made contributions to the La Crosse area.

SSP is run through UW-La Crosse as an outreach program of the Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies Department and is designed to help low-income parents access the higher educational system by helping them prepare for college. The program is free, is one semester long and meets one to two evenings a week in La Crosse. While the program is open to both males and females, both with and without children, Sullivan says 90 percent of those served through the program are single moms.

SSP has three focuses, Sullivan says. One is to provide participants information on college, such as the admissions processes, financial aid options and scholarship opportunities. The second focus is to help participants practice for college-level coursework through critical thinking, writing, reading and math exercises. Third, SSP is a place for participants to find emotional support.

A community supporting change

For many SSP participants, making a big change can be painful and isolating, Sullivan says. Many don't have the support of their family or friends, and that's where other SSP members come in.

"Our classroom is a safe place where our students have a chance to reimagine their futures by planning, questioning, exploring and discovering what they are capable of achieving," Sullivan says. "We are realistic and optimistic, but the underlying emotional support gives students a chance to consider their full potential."

Sullivan has a strong interest in women's and girl's issues, especially those related to education, and is a history Ph.D. candidate at the University of Illinois at Chicago.

She describes her job as amazing and says, "I'm the luckiest person in the world. I get to help women blossom."

The job isn't always easy, though. Keeping her heart in the job, but not taking the problems home, is something Sullivan says she struggled with at first. But it is the people she helps each day who keep her going.

Grabbing the chance

One such woman is Audreyona. Audreyona came to SSP after living a life of abuse at the hands of foster parents; she has a son with autism and has worked selling

cars, bartending and waitressing. She came with the memories of being born in Mexico, moving to the United States and living in one orphanage and 10 foster homes while growing up.

Audreyona entered SSP with the dream of becoming a veterinarian. She finished the SSP program and later graduated with honors from UW-La Crosse with a Microbiology/Biomedical concentration and Pre-Professional Veterinary Medicine double major. She now attends veterinary school in Colorado.

Michelle's first night at SSP started off with her then-husband pouring hot coffee on her lap as she got out of the car. Years later, while earning her degree in social work, she was nearly killed by the same man. He now sits in prison while Michelle has her degree.

Christina is studying at Viterbo to be a math teacher. There have been times throughout her college years that she and her family of five have been homeless. Jen earned a degree in social work while caring for her family, and Roseanne now attends UW-La Crosse after receiving an associate's degree from Viterbo. She also is the full-time director of the LGBT Resource Center for the Seven Rivers Region.

Other SSP graduates have gone on to become doctors, nurses, teachers, nonprofit workers, lawyers and everything in between.

A path to a better life

"They've taught me just as much as I've taught them," Sullivan says of the women she works with. She adds that these women have also given her a new way of looking at people and situations.

"It is so easy to judge people and make assumptions about what they are capable of achieving based on superficial knowledge of their past," Sullivan says. "What is more valuable, and decidedly more challenging, is to hold off on such judgments and give people a chance to reach their full potential, without assumptions and stereotypes. This is what SSP offers many of its students, a chance to dream without criticism and limitations."

Most SSP graduates attend UW-La Crosse, Viterbo University or Western Technical College, and most carry a B or better grade point average. SSP graduates are also eligible for the Locally Grown Scholarship, a scholarship

Sullivan developed that is available to those who are in their first four semesters of college and who remain in strong academic standing.

Those interested in applying to SSP need to have either a high school diploma, GED or HSED. They can have some college credits as long as they haven't completed a bachelor's degree. Applicants also must be self-designated as low income, and one qualifies if an associate's or bachelor's degree would increase their current salary. More information can be found at www.uwlax.edu/ssp/index.htm or by contacting Sullivan at sullivan.amy@uwlax.edu or 608-785-8733.

Some women leave on their way to becoming professionals. Most walk out with college degrees. All exit possessing a new sense of self and on the path to a better life. **(crw)**

Jessie Foss lives in Onalaska, where she moved seven months ago for a fresh start.



Honored at a recent event, these SSP graduates are enrolled at local colleges.

From top: Kennesha Winslow (UW-La Crosse), Amanda Christianson (Western), Angie Slater (UW-La Crosse) and Katrina Lorenz (Viterbo).



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FINDING FINANCIAL FREEDOM

Budgeting can set you on the path out of debt.

BY MARTHA KEEFFE

Photos by Janet Mootz Photography



Money doesn't just disappear. The truth is, you spend it. But with honest effort and sacrifice, you can regain your fiscal footing and clear your path toward financial independence. The formulas are there. Are you willing to follow?

Know where it goes

The first step toward gaining control of your finances is to create a budget. Begin by writing down your monthly fixed expenses—mortgage, insurance, phone—advises Becky Nommensen, Field Sales Consultant for Mutual of Omaha Insurance Company in La Crosse. Then keep an accurate one- to three-month account of all your discretionary spending. This includes the \$2 coffee you buy on your way to work, the magazine you grab in the checkout line or the new hoodie your kid just has to have. Determine where you spend your money, figure in any outstanding debt and then adjust your expenditures to fit within your budget. “Be honest about your spending habits,” says Nommensen. “Examine those patterns and solve what is feeding your debt.”

“Budgeting is obvious but not easy,” she adds. “Human nature tells us we want more than we need, and the truth is, you can't spend more than you make. In fact, most loans are taken out for items that weren't budgeted for.”

Amy Stodola, a financial adviser with Edward Jones in La Crosse, agrees. “I continually have clients asking, ‘How come I'm living paycheck to paycheck?’ It's imperative that you know where your spending outflow is compared to your income and learn to live within your means.”

Curb spending enthusiasm

Once you've resolved your budget, formulate a written plan for managing it. Stick to this plan, especially if you are trying to pay off debt.

“At this point, you basically have two choices,” says Nommensen. “Either you make more money or find ways of cutting back.”

Stodola concurs and suggests that in addition to eating out less and curtailing nonessentials like cell phone upgrades, you look beyond the apparent. “For example, right now is a prime time for refinancing your house,” she says. “Or take a look at your insurance policies, shop

around and don't be afraid to say, ‘Here's what I'm paying right now on my auto insurance; what can you do for me?’”

Save money by negotiating cash payments versus monthly installments, scrutinize bills for unnecessary charges, and sell items that you can't afford to finance. Go old school and allocate specific spending to a specific honest-to-goodness envelope. Be frank about your wants versus your needs when making a purchase. “Do you really need new clothes, or could you use that money to pay off debt or create an emergency fund?” asks Stodola. “Do you want to strap yourself that close by overspending, or do you want funds available for when a tire blows or your washer and dryer break down unexpectedly?”

Commit to change

Like any resolution, managing your finances takes time, commitment and patience. Therefore, the rate of your success is contingent upon on the strength of your focus, explains Stodola.

“View financial security as a journey, and don't be discouraged by the ups and downs,” says Nommensen. “Take it one day at a time and continue the process.” **(CRW)**

Martha Keefe lives and writes in La Crosse. She enjoys sharing information on a variety of topics, especially those that help simplify your life.



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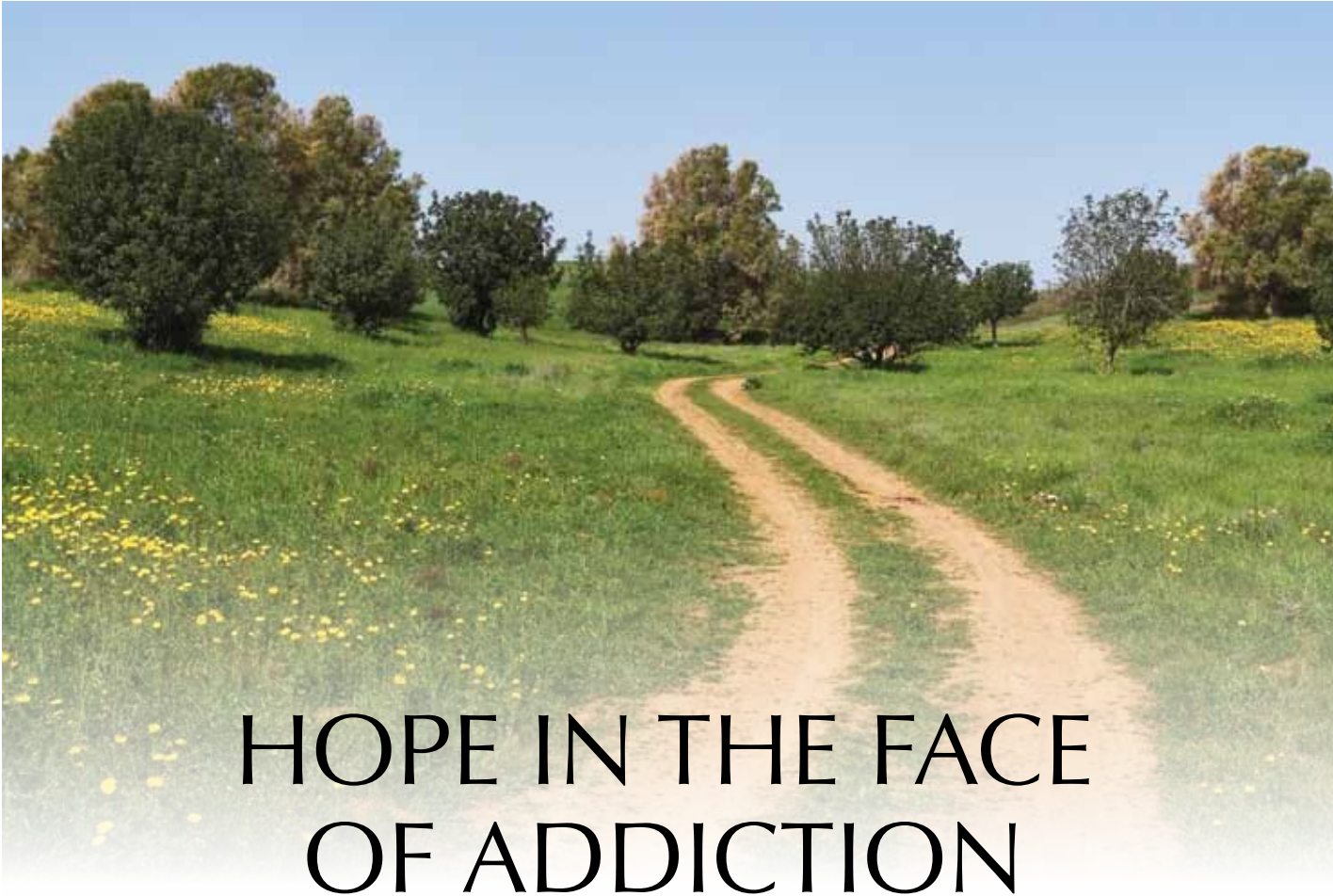
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HOPE IN THE FACE OF ADDICTION

Coulee Council on Addictions paves the road to recovery.

BY HEIDI GRIMINGER BLANKE

Contributed photo

“I think I have an issue,” said a grandmother in her early 60s. The woman consumed alcohol while watching her grandchildren and knew the situation could not continue that way. She is now sober.

Pat Ruda, Executive Director at Coulee Council on Addictions (CCA) since 2005, relates the woman’s story with pride and admiration. It is “so important,” says Ruda, to be able to offer a sense of hope to anyone dealing with addiction.

Coulee Council on Addictions is located in a small, unassuming building near the corner of West Avenue and Jackson Street, in La Crosse. Yet inside, people who need help are finding it. For more than 30 years, since its beginnings as the West Central Council on Alcoholism, the agency has assisted thousands of people. About 75 percent of its clients are male; however, Ruda suggests more women may be suffering from addiction, but are able to “hide it better.” In addition, women tend to take care of others before themselves, until their own conditions reach a crisis level.

Seeing hope

At times, those suffering from an addiction simply “walk through the door” at CCA; others are referred by family members, friends

or agencies. People suffering from an addiction are often bankrupt, financially, emotionally or both. Young fathers, in particular, come to CCA saying “my addictions cost me everything.” All are seeking help in taking the next step.

“You don’t know who is going to make it,” Ruda states, but in many instances, there is a glint of hope. She relates the instance of a woman who had a house, a 25-year job history and two daughters, but who suffered from alcoholism. After visiting CCA, she sought outpatient treatment and, with help, attained sobriety. She has since returned to the job market and even volunteers.

One of the main focuses of CCA is prevention, particularly in the area of education. Ruda and her staff give presentations and attend health fairs and conferences. The staff not only present information on avoiding addiction, but also on helping friends and family avoid it. “We try to reach out in the community. A lot of it is planting seeds,” Ruda explains.

Giving hope

Coulee Council on Addictions, while not specifically geared toward those under age 18, works nonetheless to change the prevalent



Pat Ruda, Executive Director at Coulee Council on Addictions.

drinking culture. Education is particularly important, so information is incorporated into many high school classes. "People think it only happens to those guys lying in the street," Ruda cautions.

CCA holds a variety of programs for people who are weathering an addiction or are in the process of recovery. The center runs open mic nights, craft classes, movie nights

and game nights, and serves some weekly meals. One client, who relishes craft classes, was homeless and living in the park when she first came to CCA. Because of her addiction, she had lost her job and her apartment. "Her life was awful," Ruda remembers. Over time, though, the woman regained her life and, says Ruda, now finds it "very therapeutic to make things."

Keeping hope

Coulee Council on Addictions also serves as a clearinghouse for a variety of sources, says Ruda, and the agency acts as a support group for many clients, including some who might not otherwise have a safety net to catch them.

In a workday filled with helping so many through the pain of addiction, Ruda keeps herself strong by doing "those things that are important to me to keep healthy," including maintaining her faith and being a self-described "church lady." Witnessing the "success of so many people with hardship" keeps Ruda dedicated to her job. Sadly,

not everyone remains sober or clean. "I am amazed at the strength of the people who do overcome," Ruda says.

"Working with young people gives me hope," she continues, particularly those who volunteer to learn more about addiction. She is excited about "young people who care and want to make a difference" and relates how one local high school "adopted us (CCA) for a year."

Ruda, in her job at CCA, has come "full circle." Although she received a degree in social work, she spent more than 20 years with a cable company, honing her skills in many areas of business. Now, though, she knows that for most people, life interruptions like addiction are not a matter of "if," but "when," and Coulee Council on Addictions will be there to light the way with a beacon of hope. ^(crw)

Heidi Griminger Blanke is the Executive Director at WAFER Food Pantry. She has the greatest admiration for those who seek help for addictions.

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FROM GRANDPARENTS TO PARENTS

A Holmen couple takes on the challenge of raising their grandchildren.

BY SHARI HEGLAND

Contributed photo

Judy Berg was 54 when she found herself in a situation she thought she had left behind: parenting teenagers. In June 2004, her oldest son, Brad, died in an accident, leaving behind his wife and four children. Six months later, when the children's mother received a DWI conviction, Judy and her husband, Dick, became guardians of their grandchildren. Following is a conversation with Berg on her transition back to parenthood.

Q: How did life change when the children came to live with you?

A: The biggest was the change from grandparent to parent. Dick and I had not had children at home for nearly 14 years. We had just come and gone and done whatever we wished. You have to rethink your priorities.

Their mom was a stay-at-home mom. When they came to our house, it was vastly different. I remember the piles of laundry and wondering what we would do. We had a family meeting about taking initiative. Our grandson Shelden came home from school and said, "Nana, I'm the only kid in seventh grade who knows how to spell *initiative* and what it means."

Q: How did you change?

A: It was only 6 months and 10 days after we lost Brad; we were still grieving. The day the children came to live with us was the last day I could cry like I had been, because now I had someone to take care of.

After years of not having to worry about anyone else, suddenly you have four lives to lead, nurture and guide. Yet they keep me connected to the real world and generational things, including the challenges of being a teenager in 2011.

Q: What people or resources have helped you?

A: A tremendous amount of help came from the Blair-Taylor school and community. Those people just reached out and put their arms around those kids and us and did amazing things for us.

Our two other sons and their wives have stepped in to give us tremendous support. They are also the fun people who go snowmobiling with the kids, and at the lake, they drive the boat.

Q: Do you parent differently?

A: Teenagers don't change much. The world is very different, but the rooms are still dirty, laundry piles up. Learning to be tolerant of that has been a journey for me.

We are incredibly strict. They weren't allowed to go to anybody's house unless I called the parent. We were very young with our firstborns. Now we know that we have to hold on to all the strings.

We raised sons and we'd never raised girls, so we had a learning curve there as well. I have learned to love to shop!

Today, Brittany, 20, is a student at UW-Eau Claire. Cameren, 19, attends Southeast Technical College in Winona, and McKenzie, 17, and Shelden, 15, are both students at Blair-Taylor High School. The Bergs see another transition not far ahead: the change back to empty-nesters, for the second time. **CRW**

Shari Hegland is a Holmen freelance writer and stay-at-home mom to a 4-year-old son.



Pictured, left to right, are the four Berg grandchildren: Brittany, Cameren, McKenzie and Shelden. They—and their grandparents—are models of resilience.

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A KITCHEN WORTH WAITING FOR

A kitchen remodel yields a dream space both stunning and functional.

BY MELISSA HANSON
Photos by Kim Spangler

When Paul and Lisa Deml moved into their Smith Valley home 23 years ago, a complete kitchen remodel was already on their wish list. The galley-style kitchen, original to the 1968 ranch-style home, seemed dated and cramped. A bank of cabinets dissected the area and cut the kitchen off from the rest of the home. But as a young couple just starting out, a complete rehab just wasn't in the budget.

Instead, over time, the Demls made small changes to update the kitchen. They replaced dated flooring and countertops, but needed to make the most of the layout and the old blond cabinets that dominated it. Then, when sons Josh and Cody started college, that kitchen remodel became more and more feasible. And necessary. "The kids were getting older, and we were entertaining more," Lisa explains. "It felt like the right time."

The couple set out with two goals in mind. The first was to create a welcoming space where friends and family could congregate and share a beer or glass of wine, and the second was to create a comfortable

and practical space for everyday use. "This is the main room we come in," Paul explains. "It's the last room we're in when we leave in the morning and the first room we come in when we get home."

For starters

From experience with previous kitchen upgrades, the Demls knew cabinetry was the feature they would live with the longest, so they decided to build their new kitchen design around custom-built, solid wood Alder cabinetry with the rich and timeless look of cherry.

Simply by reconfiguring the floor plan, the Demls more than doubled their usable kitchen space and made their kitchen the hub of their daily lives. In the process, they so significantly increased their storage space that Lisa now has more room for treasured cookware (like the cast-iron Dutch oven handed down from her mother) and still has room to grow. Her favorite part of the kitchen, though, is a bank of cabinetry designed as a hutch. For added elegance, textured



Left: The Demls' first step in their kitchen remodel was working with a cabinet builder who could turn their wish list into a realistic plan. **Right:** New appliances, practical but attractive laminate countertops, and a rich-looking contemporary vinyl floor ensure easy care in a working kitchen, but also good looks and an inviting space.

From dream kitchen to reality

Corry Van Aelstyn of Cindy Gerke & Associates says, "People often want to go all out and do a high-end expensive redo, when in reality, a midrange redo will get you the highest return on your investment." You can expect to recoup 73 percent of costs at resale for a kitchen remodel of about \$22,000.

Mike Coon at Beyer Cabinets, Ltd., recommends that your first step be to create a quality team of professionals. "Go local," he adds, for more personalized attention, greater options and contractors that stand behind their products.

Steve Ray from Midwest TV & Appliance suggests it's worth spending a little extra for quiet appliances. "We live in our kitchens," he says, "and the last thing you want when you're entertaining is to talk over a noisy dishwasher or refrigerator."

Monte Gilbertson of Lighting Design by Wettsteins advises more rather than less when it comes to lighting. Simply install a dimmer to control the light, prolong bulb life and conserve energy.

glass panels were inlaid, providing a glimpse of the stemware contained within.

Form meets function

The Demls realized that trends change, and regardless of what finishes they chose (such as flooring and countertops), they would want to update them down the road. So, when it came to selecting those materials, they made calculated decisions on where to spend their money. But don't think that means they made concessions. "We didn't want to cut corners," Lisa explains, "but we didn't need top of the line, either."

So, while their first thought was of current trends like granite countertops and a tile floor, they ultimately went with more practical choices—not just economically speaking, but also from a daily use standpoint. "It's a working kitchen," Lisa explains, "and we didn't want anything that needs work." The vinyl flooring and laminate countertops they chose will take a beating from drops, spills and the family dog, Duke, and when the time comes to replace them, it won't break hearts or the budget. When you put it all together, the look is as rich and elegant as if they had used natural stone, but the surfaces are warmer and softer to the touch. Best of all, it won't require sealing and maintenance.

A word to the wise

Six months after completion of their newly renovated and restyled kitchen, the Demls are still enjoying the fruits of their labor. Lisa is rediscovering her love of cooking and baking (she makes a mean chicken chili and a cheesecake that is to die for), and the whole family is enjoying hanging out in the new space and entertaining friends.

The nearly four months of planning, construction and chaos have taught the couple a thing or two about home renovation. For those of us who are examining our own kitchens and finding they don't measure up, the Demls offer a few words of advice. First, Paul suggests patience will be your saving grace in the face of pandemonium; realize that schedules don't go as scheduled and organization will be less than organized.

Second, all the hard work and inconvenience will pay off in the end. "If anything," Lisa thoughtfully explains, "I would have done it sooner rather than later because it's such an important part of our home." **(crw)**

Melissa Hanson is a freelance writer who is thankful for good food, cold beer and great friends to share it with—even if their kitchen does put hers to shame.



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Fisher has always designed with women in mind. “My customer is my inspiration, so LARK is the perfect place to meet, create and design what women want.” Congratulations LARK, we look forward to an inspired 2011!

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7 STEPS TO CLUTTER CONTROL

Reducing clutter can revitalize your home and life.

BY KIM SEIDEL

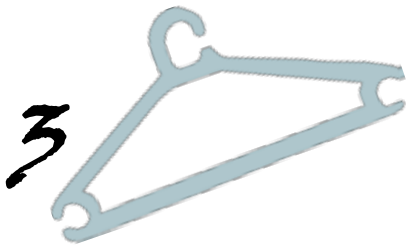
I've learned the hard way that clutter in my home brings me stress from the distraction and chaos it can cause. You know—the panic when you cannot find your car keys or an important paper.

I've read dozens of books on organization. I've tried and failed hundreds of times to totally declutter my life. I've since determined that living completely clutter-free is impossible, but striving for it can be a satisfying and productive journey. Here are my "tried and true" tips for anyone who wants to live more simply with less clutter:

1 Define clutter. My clutter may be someone else's treasure. Everyone defines clutter—and the amount they can deal with—differently. A guideline: If you never use it, and you don't even like it, it's probably clutter.



2 Work with the seasons. Spring is an ideal time to revitalize your home. As you put away your winter decorations and heavy wardrobe, consider whether to store it or get rid of items. Most likely, your children have outgrown many items, including clothing and games. Repeat this process before school starts, and before and after Christmas.



Create space for Goodwill boxes. There's a place in our basement where I regularly put items that we no longer need. About every other month, my husband brings them to Goodwill or the Salvation Army. Your old stuff will be useful to another, and you can deduct the donation from your taxes.

Enlist help. Have a friend with you when you declutter. She can provide the encouragement and motivation to give up some of your many goods. Go through toys, tools, books and other belongings with your family. Their "prized possessions"—such as artwork and childhood toys—may mean more to you than they do to them. You can keep memories without all of the stuff.



5 Touch papers once. Many experts suggest handling papers—bills, junk mail, letters from school—just one time, either to file or discard. I allow papers to pile up for too long before I determine what to do with them. I'm working on creating a practical filing system. Remember I said this was a journey?



Have a place for everything. Eliminate those monster piles by having a spot for everything. A simple rule for family members is that whatever they use, they must put back immediately when done with it. Although it requires some practice, this basic routine will help to declutter your home on a daily basis.

7 One step at a time. Honestly, it's too overwhelming to declutter your entire home in one day or even one week or one month. Choose a room, a closet or even a single drawer, and work on it step by step. Eventually, you will find yourself living in less clutter and enjoying more space and peace. **crw**

Kim Seidel is a writer, a wife and mother of two children. She's trying to teach her daughters the value of living without so much stuff.

SURVIVOR INSTINCTS

Sonya Mix lives out loud after a bout with cancer.

BY CLAIRE RISTOW-SEIB

Contributed photos



*Sonya Mix lives a rich and active life with her family. **From left:** husband Tom, daughter Alex and Sonya Mix.*

Mix's pride and joy is her silver BMW motorcycle, on which she rides with Women on Wheels.

You don't have to be in the army to live out the slogan "Be all that you can be." According to Sonya Mix, you don't even have to have a cancer diagnosis to decide to "live your life out loud," but it helps.

A Holmen high school graduate, Mix is a graphic artist for ATK in Onalaska. After work, she's involved in everything from art to motorcycle riding, most of it enjoyed with her husband, Tom, and 12-year-old daughter, Alex. But it may have been the cancer diagnosis at age 26 that most challenged her to live life to the fullest.

"It happens to other people"

In 1995, Mix was diagnosed with adenocarcinoma in situ—cervical cancer. She had had a couple of abnormal PAP tests, which led to a few diagnostic procedures. When the doctor called Mix with the diagnosis, she was stunned. "Cancer is something that happens to other people who are older," she thought. "He explained that my cells and glands were mutating. He gave me facts and figures, including the risk of death, which was very low, but still a concern."

It was quite a while before the cancer diagnosis sunk in. Mix tried to figure out what she had done, eaten or put on her body that could have caused it. Was it stress-related or caused by poor nutrition? She became more cautious about eating healthy and staying away from chemicals.

A hysterectomy was recommended to remove all traces of the abnormal tissue, but Mix's doctor knew that she wanted to have children. She underwent a LEEP procedure to excise the diseased

tissue and went on to give birth to her daughter in 1998. Mix started having abnormal PAPs again several months after her daughter was born, and underwent a hysterectomy at that point.

Living out loud

Back for good from her cancer scare, Mix takes nothing in life for granted and seeks to live it to the fullest. A silver BMW motorcycle is her pride and joy. She dons a pink and silver helmet for road trips with Women on Wheels, an international organization of women cycle enthusiasts. Mix is also certified to shoot fireworks with the La Crosse Skyrockers and has been behind the scenes at nearly every Fourth of July, New Year's, Oktoberfest and Rotary Lights celebration in the past 20 years.

Since Mix's cancer scare 15 years ago, her entire family is much more diligent about eating healthy. "We are just more conscious about what goes in and on our bodies by cooking healthy, low-fat, low-sodium foods." Petite and youthful even at 41, Mix keeps in shape with walks and Wii Fit, and she keeps busy with sewing, beading, painting and tending her indoor herb garden.

You can also find Mix at her church, where she sings with the choir and teaches the girls' seventh-grade confirmation class. "Going through the cancer strengthened my faith," she states. "I believe in the power of prayer." **(crw)**

Claire Ristow-Seib is unable to brag about talents in arts and crafts, motorcycles or fireworks, but she does sing in her church choir.



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This event benefits the Women's Fund of Greater La Crosse which exists to enrich the lives of women and girls so they can do the same for others.

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**Mary Kay Wolf glows
in a fresh new style.**

Photos by Janet Mootz Photography



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February 24-26, MOSES Organic Farming Conference, La Crosse Center.

March 3-5, Downtown Cares

March 11-12, NCAA Division III National Wrestling Tournament

March 11-27 Community Theatre play **Doubt.**

March 12, St. Patrick's Day Parade: through downtown La Crosse.

March 18-19, Girls' Weekend: Featuring packages that will be all-inclusive of attractions and activities. Ladies will have menus of activities to choose from. (Coordinated by the LACVB.)

April 8, 4pm-9pm, Spring Fling: Participating downtown businesses will have specials and discounts.

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DUJA'S KITCHEN

In Bosnia, a visitor learns about history, culture and hope with fork in hand.

BY CHARISH BADZINSKI

Photos by Charish Badzinski

From the moment I entered Duja's kitchen, I knew I was standing at the hearth of Bosnia. Quince ripened on the shelf; tomatoes bursting with summer and deep purple eggplants sunned themselves on the balcony overlooking concrete high-rises and an abandoned building in the city of Banja Luka. In the corner sat a small wooden stove, which, fed with pinecones and broken crates, was often the family's lone source of heat and cooking during the Bosnian War in the early 1990s. It is here that arguably all national healing begins: with wholesome nourishment for the family, and women serving in the role of healer.

Duja's kitchen itself is small and simple; the food that emerges from it impossibly fresh and local. It was set before me: *orahovac*, homemade walnut liqueur; *burek*, stuffed with freshly ground veal; savory home-canned vegetable chutneys, such as *pindjur* (made of roasted red peppers, garlic and tomatoes) and *ajvar* (red peppers, eggplant and garlic); and homemade cheese called *kajmak*. The setting, the food and its preparation offer a sensory-level understanding of the country's culture, its enduring wounds and its future. It was, in fact, a far deeper understanding than I'd ever gathered from school or



Draping the burek dough over a long wooden dowel can assist in stretching.

network news during the nation's war. It is one thing to learn about a country through its restaurants; it is quite another to taste history, prepared from scratch, in someone's home.

At the stove was the gifted cook Dušanka Dojčinović (Duja to her friends—pronounced “Doo-ya”), mother of Sanja Dojčinović of La Crosse. When she cans the vegetables and fruits she harvests from her own garden, she's preserving a tradition she has known since childhood, one handed down through the generations. My first night in Banja Luka, she cooked a chicken from her sister's farm—one she had killed and cleaned herself. And while in modern Bosnia it's possible to buy the dough to make burek, Duja makes it by hand, rolling the dough so thin it's transparent.

“I always loved watching others cook,” Duja explains through Sanja, who interprets. She got serious about cooking when she married at 19, and since then she's learned many lessons, among them, “Everything has to be balanced perfectly. Nothing should be overpowering.” To accomplish this, she always tastes dishes as she cooks. “The majority of foods are not going to be the same from year to year. Even tomatoes and peppers will have different water content and flavor, so you must taste and adjust as you go.”

Her recipes, therefore, are guidelines, and the most successful cook will taste as she prepares the dishes. In a culture where it is difficult to get foods out of season, preserving and freezing are vital to enjoying the winter season, and the burak and chutney recipes here are still staples for the family.

Duja stresses the importance of buying local or growing your own produce. “I'm retired now, but even when I was working full time I had a garden and orchard, and was always trying to preserve the food for when we didn't have fresh ingredients.”

Whether trying her hand at recipes in those first tender years of marriage, cooking over pinecones on a woodstove in a time of war or navigating her sweet kitchen today, Duja's overriding philosophy of cooking is as simple as her kitchen. “The most important thing is that everyone enjoys themselves, enjoys the food and that there's good socializing,” says Duja with a meaningful smile and glance in my direction. “And that we do it again.” *crw*

BUREK—SAVORY VEAL PASTRY

Serves 10.

Dough

- 12 T all-purpose flour, heaping
- 1 cup water
- 3 T sunflower oil, plus more for drizzling
- ½ tsp. kosher salt

Filling

- 1½ lb. ground veal (or equal parts ground pork and beef)
- 1 medium onion, minced (salt the onion after mincing and mash to soften)
- 2 tsp. kosher salt
- ½ tsp. freshly ground black pepper
- 1–2 T sunflower oil
- A bit of water (to help bind the mixture together)



Finished burek, golden and savory.

Grease a 9x13-inch pan with sunflower oil or butter. Preheat oven to 450°F. Mix flour, water, oil and salt until it comes together. Place onto a well-floured surface, separate into two balls and knead each until smooth and pliable (about 10 minutes each). Add flour as needed to prevent the dough from sticking to the work surface. Lightly oil the dough balls and let them rest for 30–60 minutes. In a separate bowl, mix all of the filling ingredients and let sit.

Spread a clean cotton tablecloth over a table. Flour it well and start rolling out the dough, then stretch it by pulling on it gently from all sides and rolling it as you go (you can drape dough over a long, thick wooden dowel to assist in stretching). Place the filling onto the dough in small droplets, leaving a 3-inch strip in the middle of the dough free of filling. Drizzle lightly with sunflower oil, then roll the dough onto itself (use the tablecloth to help) from one side into the area free of filling; repeat with the other side. Cut and place into greased baking pan. Repeat with the other ball.

Bake for 20–25 minutes, or until golden in color. Reduce heat to 350°F and bake 20 more minutes, watching it closely. Pull the burek out of the oven, and, while still hot, sprinkle ½ cup of warm water all over it using a pastry brush. Let it rest for about 30 minutes. Serve warm or at room temperature with plain yogurt on the side.

200 calories, 12g fat, 14g protein, 8g carbohydrate, 1g fiber, 540mg sodium.

PINDJUR—CHUTNEY

Serving size: ¼ cup.

- 13.2 lb. sweet red peppers
- 13.2 lb. tomatoes
- 2–3 T kosher salt
- 2–3 T sugar
- 10–20 cloves garlic, pressed or finely minced
- 2 T 80 percent vinegar (vinegar essence)
- 2–4 hot peppers, minced
- 3½ cups sunflower oil

Wash, blanch, peel and dice tomatoes. Cook them for 1½ hours on medium-high heat. Roast the peppers, remove the skin and seeds and cut into strips. Add the peppers to the tomatoes and cook for 2½ more hours, adding the sunflower oil gradually, stirring occasionally and adjusting heat so vegetables do not burn and oil does not separate.

About 1 hour before the end of cooking time, add salt and sugar. Half an hour later, stir in the hot peppers, garlic and vinegar. Toward the end, taste and adjust the seasonings. Pour into warm, clean jars and seal tightly. Store in a dark, cool place.

40 calories, 3g fat, 11g protein, 3g carbohydrate, 1g fiber, 65mg sodium.

AJVAR—CHUTNEY

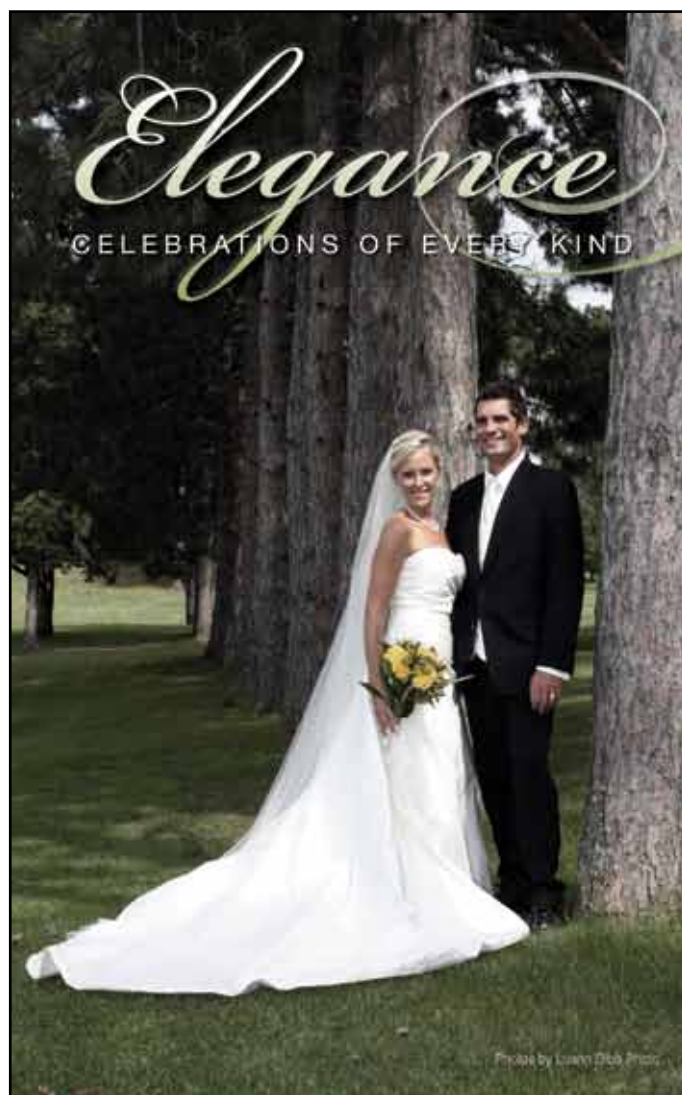
Serving size: ¼ cup.

- 22 lb. sweet red peppers
- 6.6 lb. eggplant
- 4¼ cups sunflower oil, divided in half
- 1–2 T kosher salt
- 2 T sugar
- 2 T 80 percent vinegar (vinegar essence)
- 2–4 hot peppers, minced
- 10–20 garlic cloves, pressed or finely minced

Roast peppers and eggplant. Steam them to loosen skins. Peel, then grind them using a food processor. Heat half the oil in a large wide pot, pour in the vegetables and cook on medium heat, stirring often. When it starts to boil, add salt, sugar and vinegar. Add the remaining sunflower oil in intervals of 30 minutes. Cook 4–6 hours, until it has a creamy texture and glistening color. Toward the end of the cooking time, add the hot peppers and garlic and adjust the seasonings. Pour into jars and seal tightly. Store in a dark, cool place.

50 calories, 4g fat, 1g protein, 3g carbohydrate, 1g fiber, 35mg sodium

Charish Badzinski is humbled by the hospitality she experienced from Duja's family in Bosnia. She can't wait to return for more time with them and more pindjur.



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(Time Magazine)

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BACK IN THE BIG EASY

New Orleans reinvents itself—and invites
you to enjoy its hospitality.

BY KRISTY WALZ
Contributed photos

Five years after Katrina, it's hard to comprehend the devastation that drove the people of New Orleans from their homes and businesses. In the infamous French Quarter, the only signs of a hurricane are on posters plastering the windows of the Bourbon Street bars, selling the city's signature cocktail. The Garden District smells of prosperity from its tangled trees dusted with vibrant moss and the stately old mansions that make you feel like you should sit up straight and polish your manners.

Even at just 80 percent of the pre-Katrina population, New Orleans exudes a feeling of rebirth. Not a bright and shiny rebirth, but rebirth in a crumbly, unkempt sort of way that feels natural for this historic city. Gas lamps illuminate the streets of New Orleans again, but the light that guides the city's revival streams from the residents that came back and those who rebuilt after Katrina.

"We back"

"I've been doing this since I was finally able to move back about nine months ago," Marcus tells us. "I love driving the airport shuttle. I get to meet all sorts of people. Most people expect to see lots of damage in New Orleans, but you don't really see that unless you go back into my old neighborhood."



The Timphonys offer optimism and authentic local food at Hobnobber's.

Marcus was a resident of the Lower Ninth Ward, the area of New Orleans most damaged by Hurricane Katrina. He found refuge with relatives in Colorado and lived there until he saved up enough money to return.

"Some of my old neighbors ain't comin' back," he continues. "Can't blame 'em. I ain't even been back into my old house since I came back to New Orleans. It was easier just to buy new things and start over. Now I live in one of those new high-rise apartment buildings. A few people from my old neighborhood live there, too. Sometimes we get together and watch the Saints. The Saints helped heal this city when they won the Superbowl," Marcus reflects. "Gave us all a sense of pride, like we were through the hard stuff and we were back. Yup—we back."

Taking care of each other

In a city famous for food, it's not surprising that the only industry that's grown since Katrina is the restaurant industry. You might guess that the growth comes from famous names like Paul Prudhomme, Ralph Brennan and Emeril Lagasse. While those famous chefs have helped increase the number of restaurants in New Orleans, it's people like Paul and Cheryl Timphony that should be

credited with revival.

"It was weeks after Katrina before we could get back in to town," Paul recalls with a humbly victorious expression. "We had four feet of water that sat in the restaurant for three weeks. All of my equipment was rusted out. We lost everything." Paul and his wife, Cheryl, own and operate Hobnobber's Variety Bar and Restaurant, a place described by one New Orleans resident as "a locals joint that's ducked off with really good food."

"We never thought about not reopening," says Paul. "This is what we do. But once they let you back into the city, you couldn't get a contractor—all the big businesses had them booked up. We went down to the homeless shelter and hired seven guys. They worked here, they ate here, they slept here. They put this place back together."

And they put it back together thoughtfully. Corrugated steel covers Hobnobbers' walls like a coat of armor, protecting against another potential lashing from Mother Nature.

"When we reopened, we were the first place down here to serve food that wasn't pizza or fast food. We had lines out the door," Paul remembers. "We took care of the people who rebuilt the city."

Now the people take care of them. Locals stream in and out of Paul and Cheryl's restaurant seeming more like friends than customers, sharing what's happened since they were last in, asking Paul, "How busy are you today?" They smile when he tells them about the catering orders and how he ran out of his homemade biscuits twice this morning.

Don't count calories

"Y'all don't get real N'awlins gumbo up North, do ya?" Paul asks us with a grin. After our compliments on his belly-busting breakfast, he insists no trip to Hobnobber's would be complete without the gumbo, and brings us a bowl with a six-inch blue crab floating on top. His chef follows behind proudly with an order of freshly baked bread pudding for us to try.

There's a quote that reads, "When you come to New Orleans, don't count calories. Instead, count how many times you find yourself saying, 'I couldn't take one more bite.' And then you do." New Orleans is a city of excess. For many residents, that excess

equals hospitality and love. For a visitor, the excess is warming and overwhelming at once. **(crw)**

Kristy Walz recommends the Hobnobber's Breakfast Biscuit.

48 Hours in the BIG EASY

DAY 1

Eat breakfast at **Hobnobber's** in the French Quarter

Window shop on **Royall Street**

Get in the lunch line early for a Muffaletta at the **Central Grocery Company** on Decatur

Cross the street to America's oldest operating public market—the **French Market**

Hit the **French Market Restaurant** for an oyster shooter

Enjoy dinner at **Emeril Lagasse's NOLA**

Check out the street performers on **Bourbon Street**

Join the crowd on **Canal and Bourbon** and bop to the horns and drums

DAY 2

Catch the streetcar for a morning tour of the **Garden District**

Hop off at the riverfront stop and enjoy lunch at **Mother's**

Try your luck at **Harrah's Casino** or tour the **Audubon Aquarium**

Have your palm read or buy some local art at **Jackson Square**

Take a historical carriage tour of the city

Snag a quick bite to eat from a **Lucky Dog** cart

Enjoy a nightcap at a jazz bar on **Frenchmen Street**

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COMMUNITY CALENDAR

ONGOING EVENTS

American Association of University Women (AAUW)

2nd Sat. of each month (Sept.-May), 9:30 a.m., 608-788-7439, www.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, www.lacrossechamber.com.

Children's Museum of La Crosse weekly programming:

Creation Station for all ages, every Sat. 10:30-11:30 a.m. and 2-3 p.m.; every Sun. 1-3 p.m.

Save-On-Sundays \$1.00 off admission every Sun., noon to 5 p.m.

Book Swap: On the first Sun. of each month, bring a gently used, clean, children's book from home and swap it for a different book from the museum's collection.

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

Wee Move for ages 1-4 with parent, every Wed., 10:30 a.m.

Little Learners for ages 1-4 with parent, every Thurs., 10:30 a.m.

Coulee Region Autism Society for family members, friends and professionals who care for someone on the autism spectrum. 3rd Wed. of each month, Chileda Habilitation Institute, 1825 Victory St., La Crosse. 6:30-8:30 p.m. Child care available, call 608-519-0883. lax-autismgroup@centurytel.net or autismfyi-lacrosse@yahoo.com.

Coulee Region Professional Women (CRPW) meets the 4th Tues. of each month, Nell's City Grill, 1111 3rd St. S., La Crosse, 5:30 p.m. Madalene Buelow, 608-791-5282.

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

La Crosse Noon Wisconsin Women's Alliance meets the 2nd Thurs. of each month, noon. Dawn Harris, 608-782-4133, dawn@dmharrislaw.com.

MOPS (Mothers of Preschoolers) meets the 1st Monday of each month, Olivet Lutheran Church, 6:15 p.m. Holly Zeeb, wxyzeeb@centurytel.net, www.olivetlutheran.org/small-groups/mops.

Valley View Kiddie Crew meets the 1st and 3rd Tuesday of each month, Valley View Mall Food Court, 10:30-11:30 a.m., with fun and education experiences for children and parents. www.myvalleyview.com.

Women in Networking and Support (WINS) meets the 2nd Wed. of each month, Piggy's, noon-1 p.m. Kay Buck, 608-791-9253, kay.v.buck@wellsfargo.com.

WAFER Food Pantry, Mon.-Fri. 10 a.m.-12:45 p.m., Mon., Tues., Thurs. 4-8 p.m. 608-782-6003. www.waferlacrosse.org.

CALENDAR EVENTS

Jan. 28-Feb. 13, Almost, Maine, 7:30 p.m. Thurs.-Sat. and 2 p.m. Sun., La Crosse Community Theatre, www.lacrossecommunitytheatre.org.

Feb. 5, Prom Dress Palooza Fashion Show, 10 a.m.-2 p.m., La Crescent High School.

Feb. 5, La Crosse Symphony Orchestra, 7:30 p.m., Main Theater, Viterbo University Fine Arts Center, La Crosse.

Feb. 6, Preservation Alliance of La Crosse Winter Party, 1-4 p.m., Muse Theatre, 1353 Avon, La Crosse, 608-784-1976 or preservationalliance@gmail.com.

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

Feb. 9-March 2, Artmuse, Paul Watkins Gallery, Winona State University.

Feb. 10-12, Dancescape 2011, 7:30 p.m., Performing Arts Center, Winona State University.

Feb. 10, Pilobolus, 7:30 p.m., Viterbo University, La Crosse.

Feb. 12, Museum Open House, 12-4 p.m., Winona County History Center.

Feb. 19-20, Sports Card Show, Valley View Mall, www.myvalleyview.com.

Feb. 19, Big Band Cabaret, 7:30 p.m., Valhalla, Cartwright Center, UW-La Crosse.

Feb. 19, Raise the Roof Dance Party, Habitat for Humanity, La Crosse Center, 6:30-11:30 p.m., tickets \$8 in advance and \$10 at the door.

Feb. 20, Yes, Holmen! 11 a.m.-3 p.m., Holmen High School, live entertainment, food court, area business exhibits, free admission.

Feb. 25-27, Arts & Crafts Fair, Valley View Mall, www.myvalleyview.com.

Feb. 25-27, The Marriage of Figaro, 7:30 p.m.

Fri.-Sat., 2 p.m. Sun., Viterbo University, La Crosse.

Feb. 25-27, March 3-5, Dirty Rotten Scoundrels, 7:30 p.m. Fri.-Sat., 2 p.m. Sun., Toland Theatre, UW-La Crosse.

Feb. 27, Family Fest, 10 a.m.-3 p.m., La Crosse Center.

March 2, The Long and Winding Road, 7:30 p.m., Viterbo University, La Crosse.

March 3, Pushcart Players Let Freedom Ring: America at the Beginning, 6:30 p.m., Page Theatre, St. Mary's University, Winona.

March 3, WSU Lyceum Seriest: Krista Tippet, 7:30 p.m., Somsen Auditorium, Winona State University.

March 5, Polar Plunge for Special Olympics, registration 9 a.m., plunging at noon, Pettibone Beach.

March 5, MVAC Artifact Show, Center Court, Valley View Mall, www.myvalleyview.com.

March 11, Children's Museum Night (Out) At the Museum, 207 5th Ave. S., 5:30-8 p.m., ages 3-11, preregistration required.

March 11-27, Doubt: A Parable, 7:30 p.m. Thurs.-Sat. and 2 p.m. Sun., La Crosse Community Theatre, www.lacrossecommunitytheatre.org.

March 12, La Crosse Symphony Orchestra, 7:30 p.m., Fine Arts Center, Viterbo University, La Crosse.

March 18, Po' Girl, 7:30 p.m., Pump House, La Crosse, www.thepumphouse.org.

March 18-19, The White Whore and the Bit Player, Performing Arts Center, Winona State University.

March 19-20, Model Railroad Show, 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Sat., 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Sun., La Crosse Center.

March 19 & 20 Spring Fiber Fiesta! Open House & Spring Sale at The HW Farm Shoppe. Hickory Wind Farm-Alpacas & Fiber, 11 am-4 pm, Bangor WI 608-486-4868; www.hickorywindfarm.com

March 22, Craicmore, 7:30 p.m., Viterbo University, La Crosse.

March 23, Darrah Carr Dance, 7:30 p.m., Page Theatre, St. Mary's University, Winona.

March 24-25, Kinesis Dance Theatre Company, 7:30 p.m., Toland Theatre, UW-La Crosse.

March 24-26, Company: A Musical Comedy, 7:30 p.m., Pump House, La Crosse, www.thepumphouse.org.

March 25-27, La Crosse Area Home & Builders Show, 5-9 p.m. Fri., 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Sat., noon-5 p.m. Sun., La Crosse Center.

March 26, Bixby's Rainforest Rescue, 7:30 p.m., Viterbo University, La Crosse.

March 26, La Crosse Grandmas Gone Wild Celebration of Success, 4-11 p.m., La Crosse Varsity Club. Proceeds benefit New Horizons Shelter and Women's Center.

March 26, Classics for a Cause fund-raiser for Causeway Interfaith Volunteer Caregivers, 6-9 p.m., City Brewery Hospitality Center, La Crosse.

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I am writing today to express my extreme gratitude to Dr. Ladesic and his assistant Tracey. I have suffered with chronic headaches since I was a child. They got worse as I got older and the last few years had been almost unbearable. I work in healthcare and like most healthcare people I thought of headaches as a "medical" problem, not a "dental" problem. It didn't help that my neurologist thought dental treatment for headaches was absurd. A year and a half ago I was at my breaking point and decided to see what neuromuscular dentistry had to offer. I had tried everything else. At my first consultation with Dr. Ladesic I was embarrassed by all the "yes" answers I had to his questions. Do you have plugged ears? Do you wake with headaches? Do you have sleep apnea? Do you sit with your head forward? I now have an appliance that helps open my jaw. I have been stable now for at least six months. I can't explain the difference this has made in my life. I feel like a new person, literally. I would urge anyone contemplating treatment by a neuromuscular dentist to stop waiting and make the appointment today.

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Roxanne

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