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coulee region

women

AREA HOME AND HEALTHY LIVING MAGAZINE

Home

Rebecca Brown:
A Style All Her Own



Deb Kees Creates Inspired Spaces
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We bought our house 10 years ago, on a main thoroughfare near downtown La Crosse. A hundred years old, our stately American foursquare had been a college rental, complete with fist marks in walls, a beer-sticky living-room floor and a broad front porch, enclosed and converted to bedrooms. We saw past all that, though, to the beautiful oak trim, the grand staircase and one coquettishly curved wall. With plenty in savings and no kids, we sunk our time and energy into the house. We believed we could bring it—and even our piece of the neighborhood—back to grandeur.

Our first task was to do something about the cracks in the walls. We called in a plasterer, who said he couldn't assess the damage until we pulled down the wallpaper. So we did, and *the walls came right down with it*. The next six months were spent taking down and labeling every piece of the trim, gutting most rooms to the lath and putting the walls back up. We refinished the floors and the painted-over

radiators. When we were done, our savings were spent, and we hadn't made a dent toward updating the kitchen or finishing the attic. We moved in at the end of that year, and our first child was born the next. Eight years passed before we got the trim back up.

Over those years—during the times when a baby gate served as a stair railing, everyone's clothes were in one closet and the front porch was reopened—our endless project somehow became something more. We still don't have a new kitchen, and our refinished floors show signs of heavy traffic. But our kids now swing on our grand front porch and play Barbies on the staircase, and the living-room floor, once coated with beer, is carpeted with Legos instead. We see the history and the projects left undone; they only know it as home. And for all that's left to do, we still have managed to make it our own.

Homemaking—that longtime realm of women—takes on a new dimension when viewed through the stories of the women in this issue of *Coulee Region Women*. In our profile story, Rebecca Brown demonstrates how to imbue every inch of your home with your own style, and to do so with confidence and flair. Professionals such as Mary and Jenny Pretasky “make homes” by matching homeowner to house, or by creating a meaningful space from scratch, as architect Deb Kees can do, or even by managing a building business, in the case of Holly Wieser. In-home health care specialists show why home may be the best place for elderly people and what resources are in place to help them stay there. You'll find lighting ideas, decorating ideas, high-tech trends and reclaimed fixtures—all offered in the spirit of making your house a home.

Whether *homemaking*, to you, means managing a household and cozying a nest or tearing down walls and putting up trim (or all of the above), we hope you'll find inspiration in the stories, photos and women presented in this issue of *Coulee Region Women*.

Betty

coulee region women

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THIS MORNING - NOON - 5PM - 6PM - 10PM - WEEKEND





COME ON IN, THE WATER'S FINE

If you're looking for a new way to fight cabin fever this winter, why not come out and take a dip in some freezing water? After all, nothing will wake you up from your winter hibernation like jumping into the icy rivers of Wisconsin! This year's Polar Plunge will take place on March 7 at Pettibone Beach in La Crosse and will consist of multiple events to raise money for Special Olympics Wisconsin. You can plunge solo or with a group of your friends for \$75 per person, your child can do the Pee Wee Plunge for only \$50 or you and your co-workers can raise \$1,500 to toss your boss. If you're not too keen on diving into frigid waters, you can register as Too Chicken to Plunge for \$75. To learn more about this event and to register, visit www.cityoflacrosse.org. Take advantage of the cold and plunge for a good cause!



HISTORY ON THE STREET

We all know history to be about important dates and people, but have you ever wondered about the average people who lived and worked in the past? What about their stories? University of Wisconsin-La Crosse historians are calling for stories featuring the past and present of downtown La Crosse in a program they call Hear, Here. Professor Ariel Beaujot says, "People represented in history texts were famous or political and military leaders. With this partnership between UW-La Crosse and Downtown Mainstreet, Inc., we take history to the street level." This will be an ongoing event beginning April 2015, but these local historians are looking for stories now! To share your story and contribute to this unique look into the past of our great city, contact the Hear, Here team at stories@hearherelacrosse.org, or visit their website at www.hearherelacrosse.org. Help them make history!



GOT GEMÜTLICHKEIT?

It's never too early to be thinking of Oktoberfest, and you can get a jumpstart on 2015 festivities while supporting a good cause Thursday, March 12, 6 to 9 p.m., at the second annual Forks and Corks event at the Weber Center for Performing Arts. A benefit for the Gemütlichkeit Foundation Education Scholarship Program, which provides scholarships for local students, Forks and Corks promises an evening of fun complete with food catered by Pogreba and local wines provided by 7 Hawks Vineyards, Danzinger Vineyards, Maiden Rock Winery and Villa Bellezza. You'll also be among the first to see the 2015 Oktoberfest button. Raise a glass to tomorrow's young leaders—100 percent of your \$35 entrance fee will be donated to local scholarships—and enjoy food, wine and conversation at Forks and Corks. Tickets are available at the Oktoberfest office at La Crosse and Second streets, or call 608-784-3378.



GO FOR A FLING

Celebrate spring and help area women bloom by attending the Women's Fund of Greater La Crosse's annual Spring Fling on Saturday, April 11. The event will take place in the Cargill Room at the Waterfront in downtown La Crosse from 10:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. Come out to enjoy the thawing of winter and new springtime season with your friends and enjoy some beautiful themed tables, a luncheon, fashion show, a silent auction and some great door prizes. The cost is only \$30 per ticket, or you can reserve a table for eight for \$250. Seating is limited so visit www.womensfundlacrosse.org to reserve your spot today!



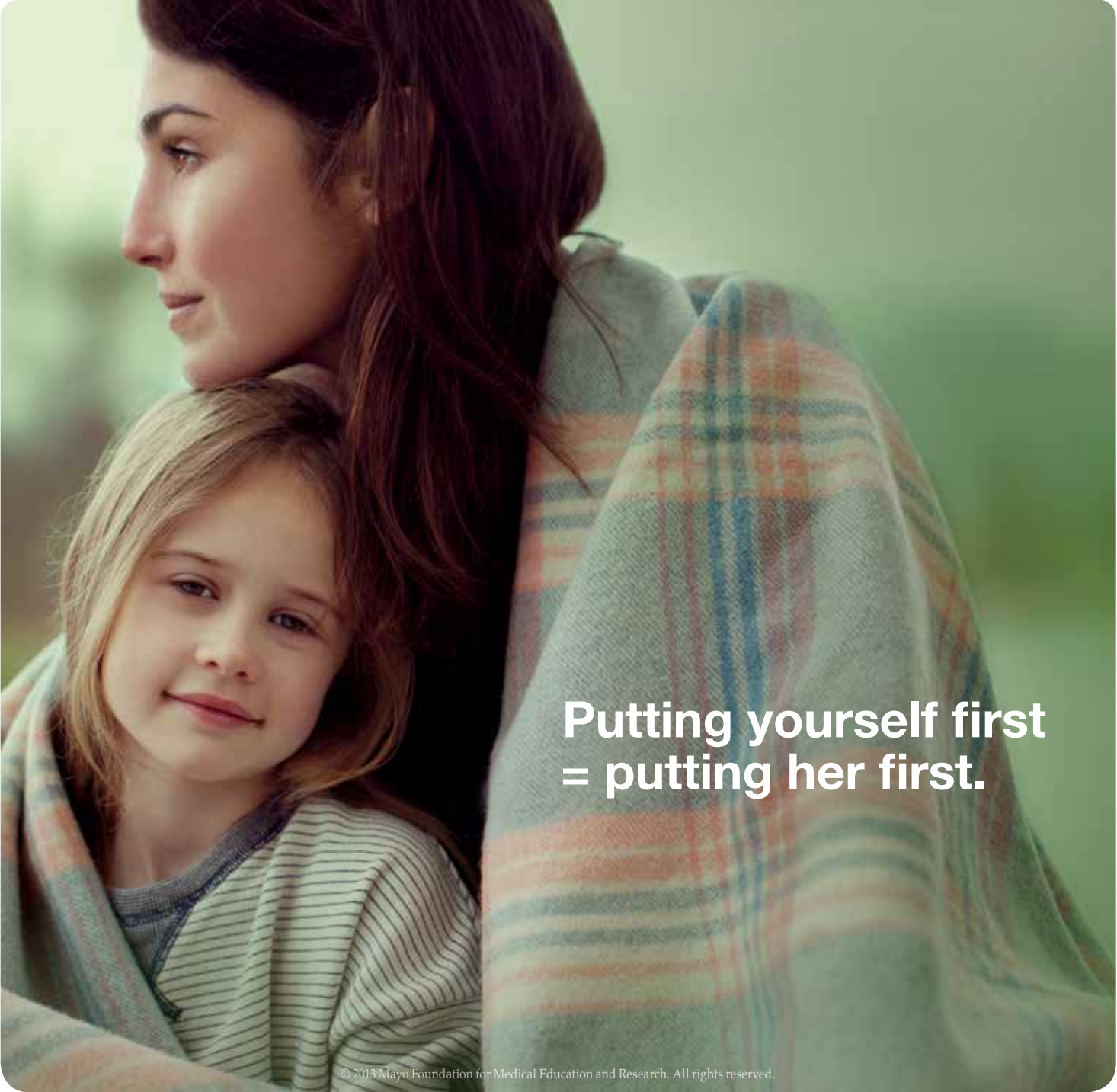
HOME INSPIRATION

If you are remodeling your home or looking to build a new one, plan to attend this year's La Crosse Area Builders Association Home Show. Find many area companies showcasing all the latest building products and services—all in one place! Stop by the Omni Center in Onalaska March 6-8 to get a jumpstart on all your home projects. There is no better place to get the information that will help you better your home. Visit www.labahomeshow.com for more information and to register for tickets.



ROCK OUT HUNGER!

On Saturday, March 14, come out to Stoney Creek Inn to party with The Hunger Task Force of La Crosse. This year's Rockin' Out Hunger event will include entertainment from The Remainders and The Executives, a silent auction, raffle prizes and food. Come to the party of the year to help the Hunger Task Force raise money for hungry families in the area. Tickets are only \$10 before the event and \$15 at the door. For tickets and more information, or to learn about the different sponsor packages for this event, call 608-793-1002.

A photograph of a woman and a young girl wrapped in a plaid blanket, looking out a window. The woman is in the background, looking out the window, and the girl is in the foreground, looking towards the camera. The blanket is a mix of green, orange, and blue plaid. The background is a soft, out-of-focus green.

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Everything old is new again in Rebecca Brown's vintage-inspired home.

A Little *Retro* and a Lot of *Sass*

Rebecca Brown lives her style, head-to-toe and in her home.

BY KRISTY WALZ

Photos by Jen Towner Photography

“We weren’t even looking for a house when we found it,” Rebecca Brown says of her West Salem home, with a smile. Serendipity seems to rule her world. Life has given Brown happy surprises that have allowed her to define her style and live it wholly. In her dress and in her home, she combines a lot of vintage with a little modern to create a look that is all her own—and immensely fun.

Color reigns

“We bought this house in 2007,” says Brown, who grew up in Melrose and has lived in the Coulee Region her whole life. “I don’t even know how I ended up finding the listing, but I remember driving by this house when I was a kid and thinking it would be a cool place to live.

“The first time through the house, I knew I had to have it,” she continues. “I walked in the door, and I just fell in love with it. I was home.” The house, filled with décor from the 1950s, possesses many quirks that Brown found charming. “We haven’t done much to the house besides decorating. The kitchen was turquoise when we bought it. That’s my favorite color.”

Color reigns in this house. The turquoise

kitchen is outfitted with vintage white metal cupboards—which the original owners had removed, and which Brown reinstalled—and pops of red décor. Just around the corner is another vintage surprise: a bathroom outfitted in pink fixtures. “We weren’t planning on having a pink bathroom,” Brown says. “We found the sink at a vintage store in Minneapolis and we both fell in love with it. We just put in a pink toilet, and now we’re in search of a pink tub.

“I decorate by color,” Brown adds. “Everything builds off one color. I’m unapologetically matchy-matchy when I dress, and that has transcended to my home. I don’t feel put together unless I match from head to toe.”

The look of love

Brown shares her home with her husband, Randall, whom she lovingly calls “Mister.” And like everything in the Browns’ house, he complements her style perfectly. “We met when I was working at the mall. He was my UPS driver. It was like speed dating at the back door of the store—three minutes at a time,” she laughs.

“I wasn’t dressing vintage yet, and he wasn’t either, but we had a Rat Pack-themed wedding—it was all ’50s and ’60s. The guys wore white sport coats and fedoras. They had pinky rings. We turned the La Crosse Ballroom into the Sands Hotel and Casino. We had big searchlights and a red carpet and set up an actual casino for the reception. Frank (Sinatra) and Dean (Martin) were playing—projected onto a big wall.”



Daisy the boxer adds her own personality to the Brown home.



Brown, a blogger by trade, mixes technology and modern fixtures effortlessly in her retro decor.

"I think that's why I like vintage. I like to think about the story, the woman who came before me."



"It's your home; make it what you want."

The wedding was a hint at things to come. "In 2009, Mister was deployed and I was self-employed. There were no outside influences to tell me how I should dress or what I should be wearing," Brown explains. She found a website that sold vintage clothes and jewelry, which inspired her own style. "I finally stopped dressing for other people and started dressing for myself. I never looked back." Today, she writes a blog touting vintage style and sustainable living (www.midnightmaniac.com) and organizes Mississippi Mayhem, an annual vintage car show and pinup contest.

Brown's unique personal style gets attention. "People are curious about what I'm wearing. I'll get stopped half a dozen times at the grocery store. They want to touch my clothes or my hair. I guess I've gotten used to it," she laughs.

People often tell Brown that they wish they could dress like she does. Her answer to them is, "You can!" It's not hard to dress your style, she says. "The biggest part is getting over worrying about what other people think. I just wear what makes me happy, and in turn, that makes other people happy."

She has similar advice when it comes to the home. "Decorate for the current occupants, not the future ones," she says. "It's your home; make it what you want."

Fabulous finds

Brown loves her turquoise kitchen and pink bathroom, but her favorite room in the house is the solarium, an opinion shared by her rescued boxer, Daisy. "Daisy and I will sit by the fire on the couch that I got for a dollar at an auction in Onalaska and watch birds through the solarium window."

Brown bought some hats that that auction, too. "Mrs. Radcliffe's hats," she shares thoughtfully. "I think that's why I like vintage. I like to think about the story, the woman who came before me ... what she was doing, what her life was like. I do my best to give things a loving home and a second life."

Many of Brown's finds come from auctions, swap meets and family. They all have a story. The Philco radio in the solarium belonged to her husband's uncle. He got it when he was a Marine. The credenza in the parlor came from Illinois. "We thought it would fit in the back of the car but it didn't, so we strapped it to the roof and drove it home," Brown remembers. She also collects furnishings through antique and vintage shops, websites like eBay or Craigslist and from what she calls "the vintage fairies."

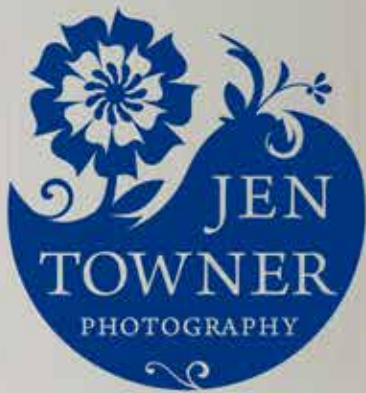
"Stuff shows up at our door. It's weird. People drop things off, or people I don't know will call me and tell me about someone in their family who has passed. They'll say, we have these things and we think that you would like them and that you should have them."

By being known for her style, Brown has been the happy recipient of clothes, coats, hats, jewelry, purses and books. "I just say, thank you!" she says.

Brown says she doesn't often actively look for vintage pieces. Mostly the pieces find her. When she does look, she frequently finds just what she's looking for. The sofa in the living room is a new addition. "I went into the Antique Center (in La Crosse) looking for a sofa, and it was the only one they had." Brown's new sofa is the perfect size, the perfect shape, and the perfect color—her favorite, turquoise.

Calling herself "a little bit retro, a little bit enviro and a lot of sass," Rebecca Brown is a role model for what it means to personalize your style. (crw)

Kristy Walz is the CEO of Confluence Consulting. She lives with her family in Holmen.



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PLACES WITH HEART

Deb Kees uses architectural details to create inspired spaces.

BY KATHLEEN WALLACE

Contributed photos

Some of Deb Kees' favorite childhood memories are of visiting building sites with her father, a builder and carpenter. She remembers an awareness of different feelings evoked by different spaces, and now, as an architect herself, she brings this sensitivity into the design and creation of buildings to which clients have an emotional connection. She specializes in "inspired spaces," whether they are homes, historical renovations or eco-friendly structures.

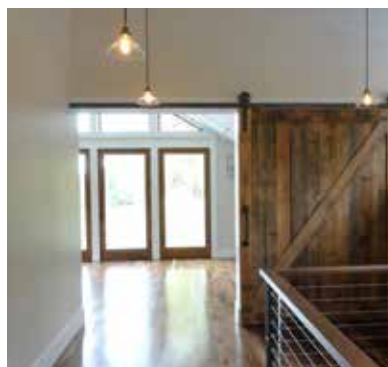
Kees describes architecture as a service profession and considers herself an advocate for her clients. Although the majority of architects are men, she has never felt that being a woman was a barrier to her effectiveness or enjoyment of her training and work. With her formative experiences on building sites, Kees developed a natural understanding and appreciation for the physical work of construction.

She enjoys building relationships and working with the teams that bring her designs into being.

Creating an inspired space

When Kees starts work with prospective homeowners, she finds they usually focus on aspects of function and the amenities and rooms that are most important to them. She invites them instead to write a narrative about spaces in their childhood home or in nature that felt or feel special to them. With this insight, she is able to incorporate the details that bring unique style and warmth of connection to the home. It is not only the functionality and quality of buildings that help them endure; it is our emotional connection to them.

Two of Kees' unique projects illustrate this point while showcasing



Deb Kees specializes in designing homes and buildings to which people have an emotional attachment. She taps homeowners' memories and values for design inspiration.

her creativity. One is an artist studio built to accommodate a pair of artists whose projects range from small canvas paintings to large-scale welding. Another was a family retreat that included a girls' fort, a space to inspire favorite memories with its connection to nature.

Kees has been a member of the American Institute of Architects since 2006, and she is registered in Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa and Illinois. She completed her Master of Architecture in 2001 from the School of Architecture and Urban Planning, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. She worked for SALA Architects of Minneapolis from 2001 to 2010, when she moved to the Coulee Region, and now has her own company, Kees Architecture, LLC.



Architect Deb Kees

Embracing the environment

The Coulee Region "feels like home" to Kees, and she sees opportunity for creating buildings that respond to its unique geography. Her well-trained eye finds inspiration for designs in the natural geometry of the hills, trees and water features. She also embraces the trend toward more sustainable building.

Kees recently designed a family's dream home on a Minnesota farm. The farmstead is now graced by a true-to-setting home that looks like a traditional farmhouse. But the home is state of the art in every way and is a "net zero" home, producing more energy than it uses. The home is being built for a couple who plan to retire to the area but who also see this as a "generational home," providing gathering space for the family and being passed down through the generations with the land.

An architectural advocate

Kees believes that an architect's skill can benefit even small projects. Her perspective can help with problem solving, provide greater value from a project and create a home that "feels" the way a homeowner intends. Two local projects bear witness to this.

The "porch project" grew from a builder's referral to create an open porch addition to a family's home. The end result was a change in the way the house "greeted the street," a more open and neighborly feel and requests for Kees to create porches for the neighbors next door and down the road. The project demonstrates her philosophy that the way people feel about buildings impacts the way they feel about their

neighborhoods and the community. Even a small improvement to a home can inspire neighbors to make changes that enhance the feel of a neighborhood and bring families together.

Her work has a natural flow with her own family life. With two sons under 5, she appreciates the opportunity to work from home and have a work pattern flexible enough to fit with her family's schedule. When her older son comes home, he runs to her office, picks up her ruler and calculator and pretends he is talking on the phone, probably much like Kees did with her father's tools. Architecture is more than a career for Kees. Her personal goal is that her sons will be proud of her work and that "they will someday think that what I have been doing is something cool." *(CRW)*

Having begun her first adventure in house holding a year and a half ago, Kathleen Wallace appreciates the importance of a warm hearth and home.



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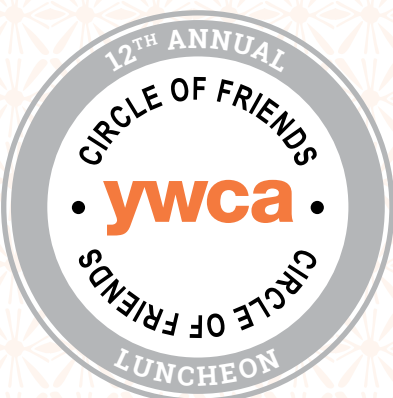
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BY MARTHA KEEFFE
Contributed photos

If you ask Holly Wieser if she ever imagined becoming a project manager of a construction company and a septic and excavating company, she's quick to respond, "No, not at all." Nor did she ever imagine becoming an integral part of the Wieser family ambitions—a unique business conglomeration that includes general contracting, sound and light production and seemingly everything in between. "In fact, all through high school I always thought that I was going to go to school to become a nurse," she laughs, settling herself into a comfortable office chair that she pulls up to a large oak desk. "But after I got married, I never went back."

Paving a new path

Born, raised and home-schooled on a dairy farm in northeast Iowa, Wieser considered going to college, but instead decided to find a career that would keep her connected to horses, which she admits were not only her childhood passion, but her unwitting path to a career in construction. "I was always crazy about horses but wasn't

sure what to do with that interest once I graduated," she says, so when an opportunity to learn how to make homemade saddles became available, she took it. It was during a home show in Spring Grove, Minnesota, where she was working for that venue, that she first met her future husband, Jake Wieser; the second time was at a rodeo. "We married in 2000, and when (the Wiesers) were looking for a new secretary to assist with the general contraction business, I stepped in," she explains. "And other than my dad teaching me some basic carpentry skills, this was all new to me."

With very little knowledge about general contracting, Wieser confesses that the majority of her training was on the job—most of which she acquired while visiting worksites with her husband. "It's all been a learning curve for me, but as the years went by and I began to take on more responsibility in the office, things just followed a natural progression," she says. Before long, not only was Wieser accompanying her husband to worksites, she had climbed the ladder to project manager of the septic and excavating branch of Jake Wieser

Construction—a position that she takes in stride. “I basically go with Jake to look at a job, create a list of what needs to be done and put together prices,” explains Wieser, as she continues with a short list of what she does in the office. “Then once I have that information compiled, I can make an estimate. From there I compile all the paperwork, pull permits and, before the guys go on a job, I call Diggers Hotline to find out where lines are buried.”

Working together

By becoming fluent in the language of building, digging, building demolition, water lines and sewers, Wieser has made herself comfortable in a job that is typically occupied by men. “I would have to say that most men are open-minded, especially when they realize I know what I’m talking about,” says Wieser, noting that the men she works with recognize and respect her position. With an ability to talk dump trucks, dozers and backhoes or explain the differences between trench, at-grade, mound and seepage-bed septic systems, Wieser has proven that she understands and appreciates the work that these men do. “I really have developed a passion for construction, especially the excavation part of it,” she says. “I think it’s really rewarding to see the final product of all that time and effort.”

And all that time, effort and entrepreneurial spirit has definitely paid off for the Wiesers, resulting in the ownership of four other businesses. “Jake’s family has been doing construction and septic since 1964,” says Wieser. “Now in addition to that, they own Wieser Building Supply, Outback Entertainment and Outback Ranch.” Considering that all of these endeavors are family owned, Wieser has a hand in keeping them well maintained and running smoothly.

“Though we’re open year-round, during the summertime we’re especially busy,” says Wieser of the entertainment enterprise, which offers everything from DJ services to sound and light productions (they even have an indoor venue equipped for live bands and have



hosted well-known regional and national shows), and the ranch, which is located on their property. Designed to cater to the needs of equestrians, the ranch has a number of options to accommodate horses, 32 miles of groomed riding trails and three lodging facilities (as well as electric and primitive campsites) to keep guests of the ranch comfortable. “I usually clean the cabins and keep the schedule, but we have employees that are very well-rounded and help out a lot,” says Wieser, who points to a large whiteboard calendar that hangs on the wall behind her desk. “I have a big planner and write everything down,” she says. “The whiteboard is used so everybody knows when and where to go.”

Bringing it home

And though their names don’t appear on the calendar, Wieser manages to find the time to be mom to her six children: two stepdaughters, 24 and 21, and four younger children, 13, 11, 3 and 1. “I keep pretty normal hours,” says Wieser. “I’m typically up by 6 a.m., in the office from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., and in bed by 10:30 or 11 p.m. During those off times, I just shut out business and be mom. Then if I have stuff that needs to get done, I come back to the office and get back to work.” Plus, everyone who can finds a way to chip in. “My 13-year-old especially likes to help out. He gets to go with his dad and run the bulldozer and Bobcat.”

Whether the hours she keeps are typical or not doesn’t appear to faze Wieser. “We literally have no time off,” she says casually, referring to their busy schedule—one that rarely allows them the luxury of a vacation. “Our weeks are filled with the construction and excavation businesses, and on the weekends we run the ranch or handle entertainment bookings. But,” she says with a smile, “no matter how much we like the challenge, sometimes after all the craziness, it’s nice to have some peace and quiet.” **(crw)**

Martha Keffe lives and writes in La Crosse. After visiting with the very busy, very organized and very competent Holly Wieser, Martha has reconciled to the fact that she’ll just remain busy.



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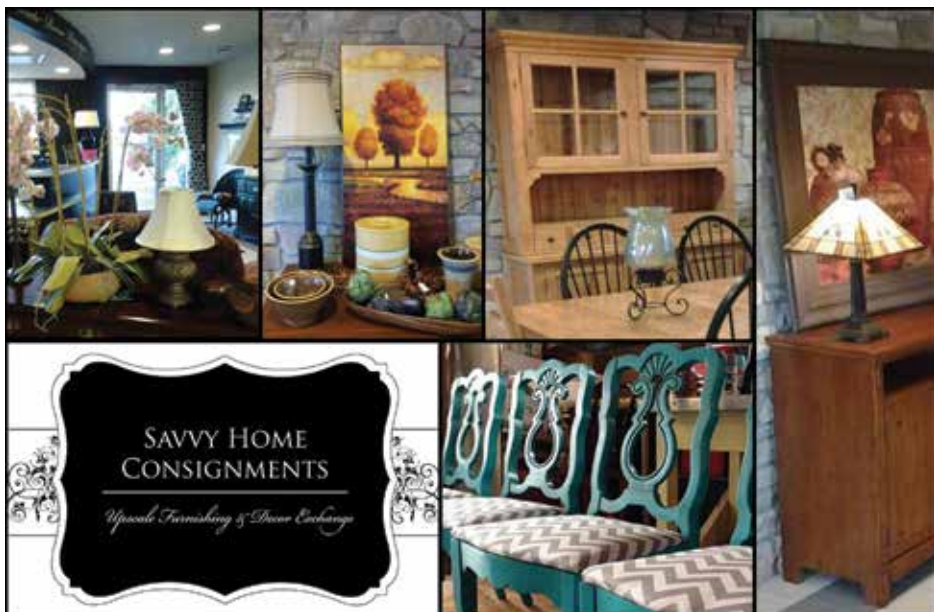
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THE POWER OF TWO

Jenny and Mary Pretasky team up to pair buyers with the perfect home.

BY SARA WALTERS
Photo by Janet Mootz Photography

As a young girl, Jenny Pretasky never dreamed she'd be a real estate agent like her mother, Mary. "I always said I'd never be a REALTOR® because of the long hours and weekends," says Jenny. Little did she know, a career in real estate, with its flexible schedule, was just what she needed to raise her own daughter, Haley. Soon she was not only following in her mother's footsteps, but standing right beside her.

The Pretaskys, with more than 40 years of experience between them, have made a very successful career out of their mother-daughter real estate team. Sharing an office at Gerrard-Hoeschler Realtors is the norm for them, and so is sharing clients, comparing research and teaching each other the tricks of the trade.

Twice as busy

At first, Jenny's presence came out of necessity. In 1985, Mary joined the Gerrard Realty team and grew her business with referrals and word of mouth. Soon she found herself overwhelmingly busy and in need of help. Jenny planned to become her assistant, but when she got her own license in 2004, she was out in the market just as much as her mother. "She jumped right in and got just as busy. We've been twice as busy ever since!" laughs Mary. Haley has even gotten a dose of the business, pointing out Gerrard-Hoeschler signs and calling out "mama."

Now Jenny wouldn't trade her job for anything in the world. "We love working with people; it's very rewarding—demanding, but very rewarding." And in terms of working with her mom every day, the partnership has always been positive. "We've never had a problem at all. We're a team; whoever can do it, does it. We pride ourselves on being able to do that," she shares.

In the early days, Mary sometimes found herself taking over. "I had to learn to let go and let (Jenny) do more," she says. But Jenny was grateful for the leadership. "Real estate isn't easy," she says. "I had a good mentor. She really paved the way for me."

Twice as successful

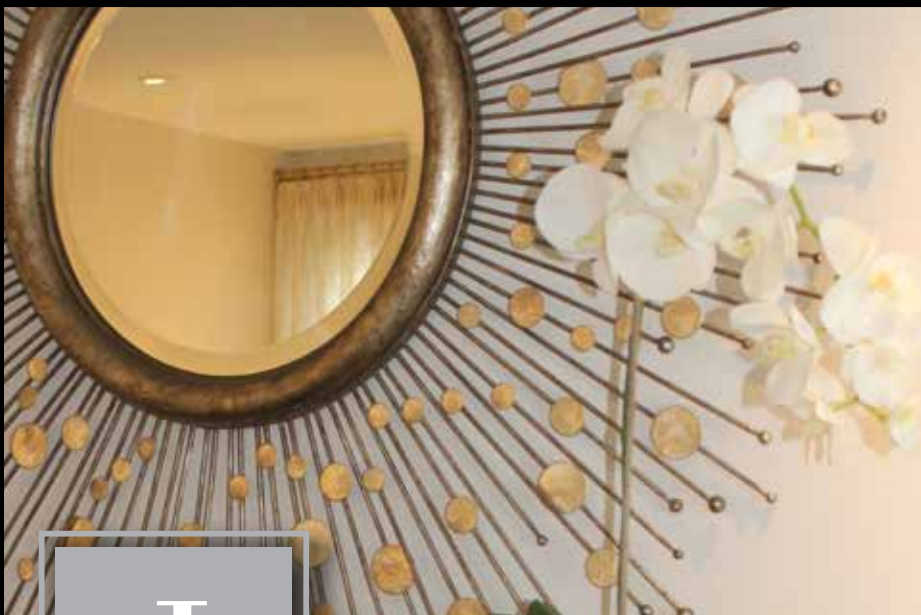
Mary still shows Jenny a thing or two, often opting to do things in a more traditional manner. Jenny helps her mom stay up-to-date on technology. Together their experience and skill sets open them up to all types of buyers and sellers.

Helping these customers is a passion that Jenny and Mary share. "We're both really good at reading people," says Mary. "It's about finding the house that's perfect for that person." Both women stress that making sure everyone is happy at closing is best for the customer and for their careers. The more years they spend in the business, the more important this has become. "We have had a ton of repeat business, so we must be doing something right!" says Jenny.

This year marks 30 years as a real estate agent for Mary, but she has yet to slow down. She credits her career's longevity to her broker, whom she has stuck by since the beginning. "Hands down, I feel this is the best company to be with. I've never had one reason to not want to be at Gerrard-Hoeschler," says Mary.

And, as she almost always does, Jenny agrees. She plans to keep the Pretasky family business right where it is, striving to match her mother's success. "I've got big shoes to fill," she says. **(crw)**

La Crescent freelance writer Sara Walters hopes that she and her 9-month-old daughter, Caroline, will someday be as close as Mary and Jenny Pretasky.



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Welcome



Ed Haupt

LABA President
Lifetime Design Homes



Justin Snyder

Home Show Committee Chair
The Audio Video Pros, Inc.

On behalf of the La Crosse Area Builders Association, I would like to welcome you to the 2015 Home Show!

We are very excited to bring you this year's show, and I encourage you to take this opportunity to talk with the extensive mix of vendors that are exhibiting their products and services. They are well-informed experts, and they are eager to assist you in any way that they can with your projects. You can also see what's new and innovative in the building and remodeling industry, find fresh new ideas and see how to incorporate them into your home. Be sure to check out the free educational seminars that the show has to offer. They are extremely informative and, best of all, free.

Using the La Crosse Area Builders Association as a resource is free—we do the homework for you. We are proud of our members and their commitment to quality and craftsmanship. Check us out at www.labaonline.com.

Thank you for attending this year's show. We hope that you have an enjoyable and educational experience. Please stop by the La Crosse Area Builders Association booth to give us your feedback. Your comments will go a long way to help us make the show better in years to come.

See you at the show,
Ed Haupt
LABA President

With winter coming to a close, we are excited for the 2015 La Crosse Area Builders Association's Home Show. The Home Show is a great place to get ideas, concepts and leads for upcoming projects you may be planning. We showcase professionals from the local area and beyond who have the expertise in getting your project going and completed, no matter what its scale.

This year's show will feature builders, interior designers, cabinetmakers, landscapers, technology solutions, electricians, plumbers and representatives from just about every other industry relating to your home. During the show, we will hold seminars on topics from landscaping for the region to future-proofing your home for the next generation of technology. Stop by the new center court lounge to rest your legs or get something to drink.

Thank you to all of the Home Show committee members and the La Crosse Area Builders Association for your dedication and hard work over the months to make this show come together. We look forward to seeing you at the show!

Justin Snyder
Home Show Committee Chair

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Leave It to the Experts

When it comes to building and remodeling, hiring a general contractor can save you money, time and pain.

by Betty Christiansen



Being a do-it-yourself type is admirable and gratifying, but when it comes to home building and remodeling, it pays—quite literally—to hire an expert to oversee your project. Many homeowners, especially those with some construction knowhow or desire to put in “sweat equity” on their dream home, see hiring a general contractor as an unnecessary expense in a project they feel they can accomplish themselves.

What many don’t realize is that the hidden costs of these construction projects—financially, emotionally and even legally—can be immense. Hiring a general contractor—who brings considerable experience in managing building budgets, ordering materials and hiring and managing a crew of subcontractors—brings assurance that proper permits will be secured, problems will be taken care of, subs will be paid and the entire project will be done correctly, and on time.

Money matters

Hiring a general contractor to oversee a major building project is so important that it affects your project at its very inception, which usually begins with financing. Having a general contractor is often a requirement of loan approval, says Brenda Fisher, a real estate loan originator at Altra Federal Credit Union. “We will rarely approve a loan for someone acting as their own contractor,” she says.

The assurance of funding can affect a do-it-yourselfer in other ways as well. Fisher points out that when a subcontractor is hired by a reputable general contractor, that sub knows he or she will be paid for work done. As a result, says Sue Weidemann, executive officer of the La Crosse Area Builders Association, when prioritizing jobs on any given day, subcontractors may give preference to those headed by a contractor over yours, resulting in delays on your project. “Their loyalty is often with the builders who give them steady work,” she says.

The hidden costs

The costs of acting as your own contractor can go far beyond financial. Before you decide to oversee a major project, Weidemann says, ask yourself these questions:

- **Do I really have the time to undertake this project?**

A general time estimate for building a 1,500-sq.-ft. home is 35 hours per week for at least five to six months. Considering the time required for your job, your family and other responsibilities, can you realistically allow this? If you’re trying to fit construction into a specific time frame, what will happen when emergencies, obligations and other delays interfere with your deadline?

- **How stressful will it be on my family?** If your family will be temporarily displaced during this project, what happens if it’s not completed on time? Can you handle long-term disruption of family schedules? Will you be able to uphold family responsibilities while working on a major project?

- **Do I really have the skills to build a home properly?**

These go beyond the ability to use power tools. Do you know how to analyze a cost breakdown, or order and account for all needed materials? Do you have the technical expertise to oversee the work of subcontractors? Be realistic about your level of skill and the amount of time you can spend on the worksite. Can you ensure that your completed home will meet codes and last a lifetime?

- **Do I have the tools I need?** If not, how much money will you spend on those tools, and how likely is it that you will ever use them again? Are you informed enough to understand the codes, regulations and permits required?



How to choose a contractor

A good first step in finding a reliable contractor to oversee your homebuilding project is contacting the La Crosse Area Builders Association (608-781-5242 or www.labaonline.com) for a referral. With more than 200 members, including numerous general contractors, LABA experts offer free recommendations of builders who meet high professional and ethical criteria. Then, learn all you can about potential contractors to find the best fit for your project.

- Ask for references—including the names of people they are working with now. Call them for their feedback. Inspect work where possible.
- Ask others in the building industry what they know about this contractor.
- Check court records for convictions of contractor fraud, open tax warrants and lawsuits.
- Rely on your instincts. If you don't feel 100 percent comfortable with a builder and don't believe they understand your vision, keep looking.
- Get multiple bids. Make sure that, when comparing bids, allowances and materials are the same. And remember that the right contractor for you is not always the one with the lowest bid.

Serious consideration of these questions can help you evaluate whether taking on an immense project—and a major investment—is something you can realistically do. Turning a project over to a contractor who has expertise in all facets of building may be well worth it in terms of health and happiness as well as financial matters.

Legal pitfalls

Finally, what many individuals fail to take into consideration when planning to build their own home are the legal factors. As a self-contractor, you are responsible for any third-party injuries that occur on your property. Without the proper general liability protection—which general contractors carry, along with builders' risk and workman's compensation insurance—you will be held responsible if anyone gets injured on the project. You can also be held responsible for the missteps of your subcontractors—if any fail to pay their own suppliers or laborers, those people can place a lien against your property, even if you paid the subcontractors.

Additionally, as the general contractor of your own home, you can be held responsible for subcontractors who do not follow the construction site OSHA requirements. If your job site becomes the target of an OSHA inspection, penalties for infractions can be very costly.

Finally, if you sell your home down the road, you may be responsible for any defects that are discovered within a 10-year time. As the builder, you will be responsible for claims brought by future owners of the home.

Add to this the fact that, for every subcontractor who earns \$600 per year or more from you, you must prepare and send a 1099 tax form, and you may see there's much more to self-contracting than meets the eye. Perhaps, in your case, it's a task best left to an expert.

Betty Christiansen is editor of Coulee Region Women.

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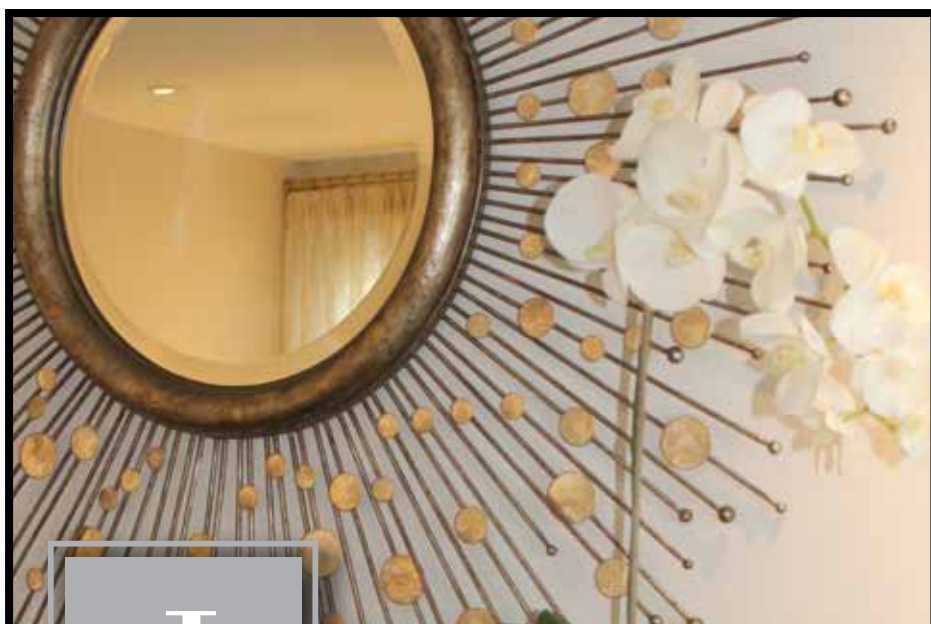


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Buying a Dream

Buying, building or remodeling? Loan experts share tips on financing your dream home.

by Julie Nelson

If the LABA Home Show has you imagining yourself in new surroundings—whether you're planning to build, buy or take out a loan for remodeling—chances are your quest will begin with a bank or other financial institution.

Casual conversation vs. ready to buy

The first step in the home-buying process is to figure out how much you can afford to spend, or more precisely, how much of a monthly payment you can make, including taxes. Jennifer Westlie, an assistant vice president at Park Bank, says even if you are just thinking about a new home, start by meeting with a lender to discern your price range. When you're ready to buy, you'll need to come prepared with documentation and proof of income. You want to convince the bank that you can and will pay back what they loan you. "Gather your recent pay stubs, last two years of tax returns and bank statements, as well as documentation of investment income, including 401(k)s and IRAs," Westlie advises. "If you are divorced and paying or receiving alimony or child support, bring your court order."

Now shop around

Once you are approved for a loan, you will most likely be paying it back for a very long time. That's why Westlie advises finding a financial institution where you feel comfortable. For example, you'll want to find out if your lender plans to resell your loan. This could become critically important if—as happened to many in the last recession—your income drops and you need to negotiate a different payment plan. If you can't reach the people who bought your loan, you can't negotiate. Your lender is required to give you a servicing disclosure that tells you if your loan will remain unsold, may be sold or is going to be sold.

Also, be wary of bargain shopping. "Don't get too hung up on

the interest rate or the closing costs," says Westlie. "With interest rates at 4 percent, that's already like getting free money. Another half point isn't going to make a critical difference. Have a good relationship with your banker. This is your biggest asset."

Building vs. buying

A construction loan works a little bit differently than a home loan, but one thing remains the same: Your first conversation should be with your banker. "As with a home loan, you'll need to know how much you'll qualify for," says Brenda Fisher, a real estate loan originator with Altra Federal Credit Union. This amount includes the cost of the lot and the construction. When plans for your home are drawn up, you'll need to include blueprints with the paperwork you bring to your lender for the final loan. Generally, says Fisher, 10 percent of the total cost must be paid at the closing, and the loan is not paid out all at once. Rather, the money is dispersed through the title company as it is needed to pay construction costs in what is known as a draw.

For remodeling projects that are fairly limited in scope—say, under \$10,000—Fisher says taking out a home equity line of credit is best. Much larger projects will require a construction loan, with the plans and process described above.

30 days or less

While each customer and each home loan is unique, Westlie says the loan can happen fast when the time arrives. Whether you're just dreaming or serious about buying, it pays to find an institution you're comfortable with, get preapproved for your loan and then be ready to make your dreams come true.

Julie Nelson, who works at The Salvation Army, tries to remember that the ability to pay every house payment is a blessing.



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WHAT LABA IS

The La Crosse Area Builders Association is a nonprofit trade organization uniting 210 building-related companies in western Wisconsin. We educate our members on the latest in the building industry, are advocates of the building industry, provide networking opportunities and run the Parade of Homes and Home Show.

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The La Crosse Area Builders Association works to better the building industry; we are watchdogs for changes that can affect home building and remodeling. We offer a membership of trained, qualified and insured builders and tradespeople to the consumer. We do the homework so consumers can build, remodel or repair their homes with confidence in our members. From builders to electricians, plumbers, concrete, roofers, landscapers, fireplaces, stone work, heating and air, they and so many more affect the work on your most expensive purchase ... your home.

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Lighting is the jewelry of the home. Dress yours up with trends such as (from left) an ornate pendant instead of a bedside lamp, a vintage chandelier and crystals blended with industrial chic.

LIGHT CONVERSATION

What's new in lighting? Local experts share their picks.

BY HEIDI GRIMINGER BLANKE

Contributed photos

Let there be light, and lots of it, say local lighting experts. Whether you're planning new construction or simply want to give a tired room a lift, the right lighting can make your space shine. Lighting is an essential part of any decorating scheme, indoors or out. Experiment with the trends in lighting described here to transform your living space.

Make a statement

"A fixture really makes a statement when you enter a room. Lighting is functional, but it can also be part of the room's design," advises Maggie Peters-Voss, manager at Lighting Design by Wettstein's in downtown La Crosse. The best part, she says, is there's no limit to what kind of fixture to use or where to place it.

"For example," she says, "people are using lights that are actually made for outdoor lighting and bringing them indoors."

The industrial look is in vogue, as are fixtures featuring a mix of metals. "Drum pendants have been popular and are still strong," Peters-Voss says. "People like to do mini-pendants over their island, but you can also mix sizes." Generally, the larger the light fixture, the more light you'll get.

"We love it when people come in here and want to do something different and fun and unique that really makes their house their home," she adds. "Lighting is functional, but it's the jewelry of the home."

Turning lighting inside out

One of the newest light fixtures is a lamp fitted with the "bones" of its shade, says Peggy Rodriguez, owner of Painted Porch in downtown La Crosse. "The inside of some of these old lampshades are like artwork; they are beautiful." Fitted out with lace or trim, the lamp

takes on an ethereal quality.

Chandeliers are a constant, though in evolving forms. "They add sophistication to any room," Rodriguez says, but adds that they are morphing lines, with some featuring rusty, hammered metal, for example. "It's like an industrial shop light with crystals hanging on it."

"Lighting is probably more important than wall color, the pictures you put on the walls and the furniture that you pick out," she says. "It changes the mood, the feel and the energy of a room."

LED leads the way

In the world of lightbulbs, LED is where it's at. Anne Frank, electrical manager at Menard's in Onalaska, says LED bulbs offer bright light, are more energy efficient and come in a variety of shapes and sizes. "Recessed (lighting) is popular because it's more aesthetically pleasing," she says. "Even the trim is LED, so you're getting a really good light." Recessed LED fixtures can be retrofit to traditional can lights.

Frank recommends rope lights and strip lights as an easy way to add sparkle to cabinets. Rope lights come in colors that are brilliant and bright, and strip lights are affixed to a piece of tape that is simply plugged in. How easy is that?

Other popular sellers are bedroom ceiling fans incorporated with a light fixture, floor lamps with built-in shelves and multiple-armed lamps that aim light in several directions.

Though we're looking at frozen ground now, Frank reminds us to think of solar lamps for summer. They're shaped like everything from bugs to boxes and are simple to install. **(crw)**

Heidi Griminger Blanke, Ph.D., is a freelance writer with Oran Communications. She's looking at lamps in a whole new light.

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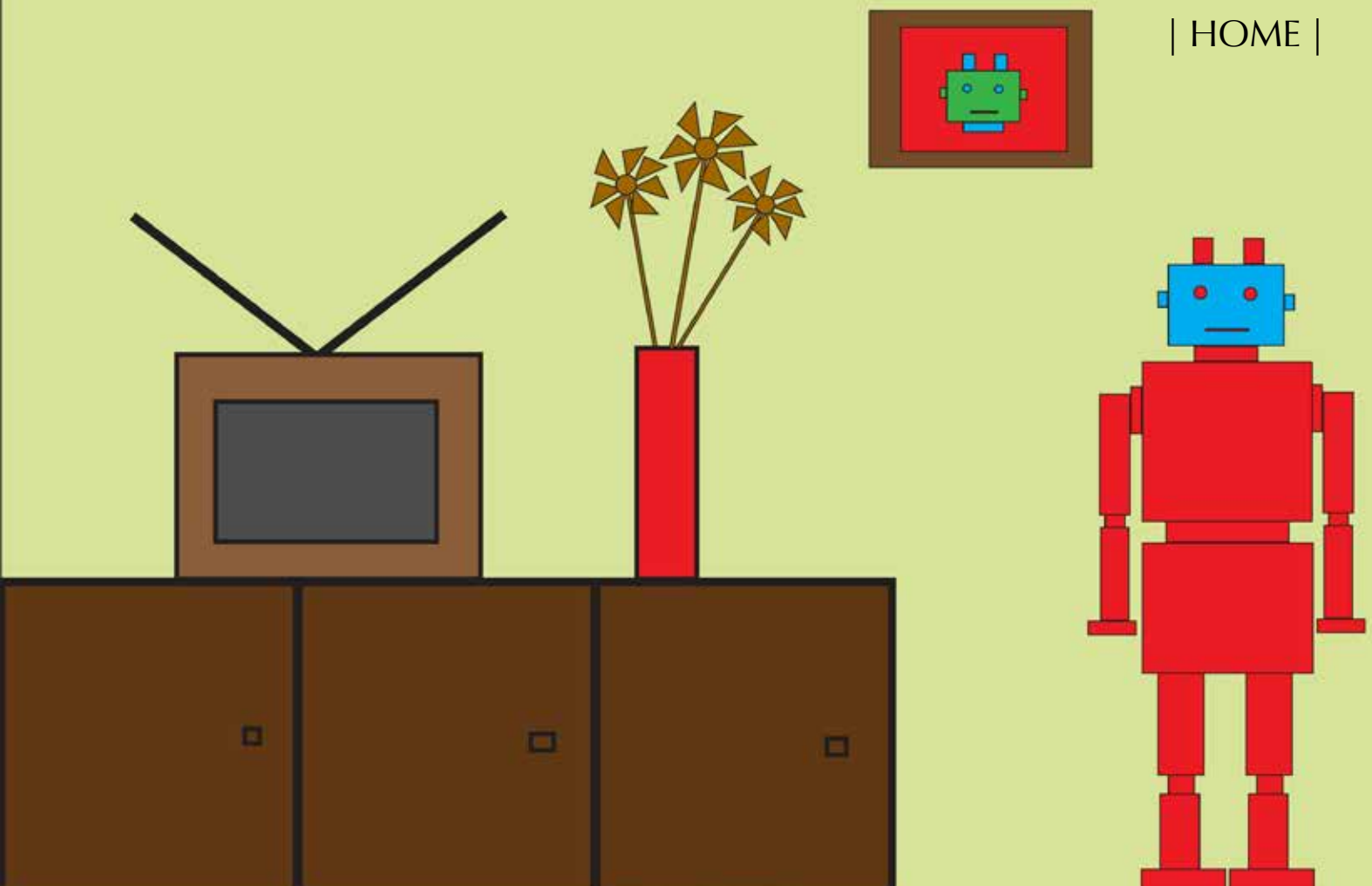
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THE HOUSE OF TOMORROW

Thanks to innovative technologies, the home of the future is already here.

BY JESSIE FOSS
Contributed photos

It's 6 a.m. Your bedroom lights slowly begin to turn on, brightening just in time for you to get out of bed. As you walk into the bathroom to start your morning routine, the lights there are already on. Once downstairs, you enter the kitchen, where your favorite music is playing. You turn to your refrigerator, which dispenses hot water for your morning coffee, and turn on your induction cooktop, which quickly cooks your eggs.

Or perhaps you're running errands after work and decide to grab a take-and-bake pizza for dinner. You pull out your smartphone and, with a few swipes, you've set your oven to preheat so it is ready to cook the pizza as soon as you arrive home.

These scenarios offer just a snippet of how innovation is changing homes and making life easier and more efficient for its inhabitants. Not only that, these ultra-modern features use much less energy, save time and blend beautifully into even the most traditional home.

Faster, smarter appliances

Today's appliances aren't your mother's appliances. Gone are the avocado-colored boxes that cook and wash slowly and use watts upon watts of energy. They've been replaced with sleek designs that are both energy- and time-efficient.

Sue Francis of Midwest TV and Appliance says that, today, people are looking for appliances that make their lives easier and fit in with their home. She says convection and induction ovens and ranges are really catching on and are more popular than ever. Convection ovens use a fan to circulate air around the cooking food. The airflow allows for faster and more even cooking. When using induction technology, only the cooktop surface that is touching the cookware is hot. This means the rest of the cooktop is cool to the touch. Induction technology also cooks faster and more evenly than gas and electric cooktops.



Home-automation systems, like those that can be programmed to automatically adjust window shades to control light and temperature, are more popular—and more affordable—than ever.

Steam ovens are another type of oven that Francis has seen gain in popularity. “These ovens use steam technology and speed,” she says. “If you’re reheating something, it keeps it moister. A lot of chefs use steam in their cooking.”

Size matters when it comes to refrigerators. Francis says refrigerators are bigger than ever, and the most popular versions feature two French doors with a lower pullout freezer. However, some refrigerators have as many as three or four French doors.

After a trend that saw many people buying high-efficiency front-loading washers and dryers, Francis says many are now going back to top-loading washers and dryers that are high efficiency. Francis says there are probably two main reasons for this switch. Top-loading washers and dryers tend to need fewer repairs than front-loaders, and they are typically easier to load and unload.

Taking appliance technology even further is General Electric, Francis says. The company just came out with a new technology called Brillion, which allows people to be connected to their home appliances through a smartphone app, no matter where they are. Wall ovens and ranges are now available with this technology; with a smartphone, oven and range times can be set, cooking statuses checked and preheating started.

Other appliances that can be controlled through Brillion will be released throughout 2015 and include refrigerators, dishwashers and a laundry pair.

Home control at your fingertips

Lights that turn on when you enter a room and turn off when you leave a room, blinds that open and close to control a home’s temperature and audio that can be programmed to play different music at various volume levels in different areas of a home—thanks to home-automation systems, all these options are available now.

Home automation has seen a jump in popularity over the past three years, says Heath DiBernardi of The Audio Video Pros. He says

the biggest reason for this increase is due to the decrease in price. He says that, not long ago, a home-automation system cost around \$20,000. Today, a core home-automation system that can be built upon costs around \$1,500.

Home automation was designed to mimic daily life and activities while making your home do things automatically for you. DiBernardi says systems are designed to know when one wakes up, so bedroom lights begin to turn on, or what radio station someone prefers, so that it automatically plays when they’re spending time on the patio.

Home safety is a large part of home automation, DiBernardi says, and is especially attractive to those who work long hours away from home. The system can be programmed so lights come on when the homeowners are about to return. DiBernardi says it is appealing to “never have your family come home to a dark house.”

Parents also love the option of knowing when their kids arrive home, DiBernardi says. Systems can be programmed to send a text or email alert to parents to let them know when each of their children has entered the home by using their unique entry code.

Home-automation systems can be managed from multiple places. There is a main wall mounted control panel in the home, but technology has now allowed for control outside of the home. Systems can be controlled from anything that has an Internet connection, including a smartphone, tablet or computer.

DiBernardi says having a single point to control an entire home is what makes a home-automation system attractive. He says there are plenty of smartphone apps that allow for control of a home, but a home-automation system saves time.

“It could take minutes upon minutes to open and control each system through an app,” DiBernardi says. “A home-automation system takes all those systems and makes them seamlessly work together.” *(crw)*

Jessie Foss is a freelance writer who lives in La Crosse. Working on this article made her realize even more how much she wants to buy new appliances for her house.



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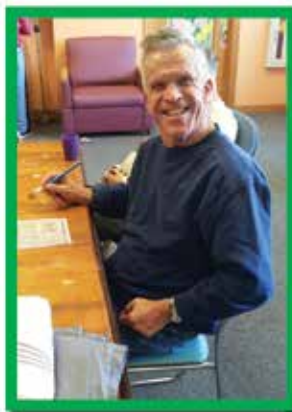
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RESTORING THE COMMUNITY

The Habitat for Humanity ReStore supports communities environmentally, socially and purposefully.

BY EMILY ALLEN
Contributed photos



Good finds for refurbishing abound at the ReStore (left), which also involves many opportunities for community service, as demonstrated by volunteers Emmie Rosson (center) and Susan Schmidt (right).

Emmie Rosson felt overwhelmed by the estimated price of \$1,000 for a new kitchen countertop. She walked into the La Crosse ReStore more than eight years ago to find a better price and left with a perfect-fit countertop for one-tenth of what she would have paid for a new one. The next day, Rosson returned to the store to enlist as a volunteer, because she wanted to encourage others in their resourceful endeavors. Rosson proudly admits that she has now served in the community by logging more than 4,000 hours of volunteer work in the ReStore.

There are more than 800 Habitat for Humanity ReStores in the nation; each one is unique and intended to support its surrounding community. The shelves are filled with donated new and used home supplies, such as appliances, furniture, hardware, building materials and windows. These items are sold at competitive prices, and the proceeds go directly back into the community through Habitat for Humanity's efforts to help those in need through local building projects.

Saved from the landfill

Recently, the La Crosse-based ReStore moved to Onalaska off Highway 16 and has three times the space of its previous locale in downtown La Crosse. The new location, which is across the street from the La Crosse County landfill, brings to light part of the ReStore's mission—to divert as much material from the landfill as possible. The close proximity of the two allows for a beneficial relationship—the landfill encourages its customers to donate usable items to the ReStore that they would have otherwise dumped at the landfill. For people who cannot drop off their donations, the ReStore offers free local donation pick-ups.

Valued volunteers

The store is equipped with valued volunteers working the cash registers, organizing floor displays, assisting with office work and repairing donations. Susan Schmidt is a respected volunteer who has logged more than 1,500 hours in the store. Through her volunteer experience, she has honed the skill of working with power tools and has taken on numerous household building projects. She feels at home while working at the ReStore. "The people who shop here are my kind of people," she says.

Amanda Fehr, the ReStore's volunteer coordinator, encourages others to be a part of building a better community by volunteering. There are countless opportunities to volunteer and skill sets to learn. Whether it be volunteering for a onetime event or regularly working in the store, she will find a way for the public to participate.

Fehr says there are countless benefits to volunteering. "For some people," she says, "volunteering is their social outlet. It keeps them busy and gets them actively involved in the growth of their community." She notes that many of the volunteers become involved with other organizations after learning about opportunities from other volunteers and customers. Ultimately, she notes, "It is up to volunteers what they get out of it. The opportunities are waiting and ready to be developed."

Jeni Mitchell, a volunteer who works in the office, puts it simply when she says, "The ReStore wouldn't survive if it weren't for our volunteers." Anyone can contribute by donating their usable items, shopping at the ReStore or volunteering their time. Community members who are interested in volunteering can contact Amanda Fehr at 608-785-2373 or fill out a volunteer application at www.habitatlacrosse.org. 

When Emily Allen isn't in her home on French Island, she can often be found in clearance aisles and discount shops looking for a good deal.



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IN THE COMFORT OF HOME

In-home care services help seniors remain in their homes.

BY SHARI HEGLAND
Contributed photos



“Ask any seniors, and what they tell you is, ‘I want to live in my own home as long as possible,’” says Noreen Holmes, director of the La Crosse County Aging Unit.



Noreen Holmes, director of the La Crosse County Aging Unit, and Va Thao, who supports family caregivers and Hmong elders through the Aging Unit

It seems obvious, but the reality of what that requires is something few people have thought about. A number of changes in society and populations are now bringing the challenges of meeting that need to the forefront.

America has an aging population, with its citizens living longer and the Baby Boomer generation about to reach senior status: 10,000 Baby

Boomers will turn 65 every day for the next 20 years in the so-called Age Wave. Couple that with greater mobility and more dual-income families, and the likelihood of an adult child living nearby with the ability to provide home care for an aging or handicapped parent is increasingly unlikely. Already, nearly 15 percent of Wisconsin's population is 65 or older.

That is a primary reason the Bureau of Labor Statistics has pegged home health aides as one of the fastest-growing job markets in the next 10 years.

While family members remain the primary caretakers for adults living in their own homes, a growing number of services are available to aid families and individuals in achieving that goal of living at home as long as possible.

Types of care

Assistance designed to help older or handicapped individuals to live in their own homes as long as possible is offered at several different levels, says Mark Stowers, owner of Comfort Keepers in La Crosse.

The most basic level is **supportive care**, which could include the

activities of maintaining the home itself—such as housekeeping, laundry and meal preparation—if the individual is unable to do them. This could also include transportation for appointments or grocery shopping and errands.



Mark Stowers, owner of Comfort Keepers in La Crosse

Personal care is assistance with the activities of daily living: feeding, dressing, toilet care, bathing, walking or transferring to and from a wheelchair. This hands-on care for individuals can also include assistance with taking medication or managing medical accessories such as oxygen or tube feeding systems.

Home health care services are provided by certified nursing assistants, under the supervision of registered nurses and in coordination with an individual's doctor. This includes monitoring conditions such as blood pressure and blood sugar, administering medication and caring for wounds. When those services are brought to people in their homes, they don't have to make as many visits to clinics or doctor's offices. Home health care can also include the provision of physical therapy and occupational therapy in a person's home, particularly if they are recovering from an injury or surgery. Therapists can also identify ways to make the home safer and more convenient, such as adding grab bars in the bathroom, removing rugs that may be tripping hazards or changing doorknobs to handles that are easier to use.

Why stay at home?

"Studies have found that people who go back home (after injury or surgery) recover faster, feel safer and are more comfortable," Stowers says. He notes that it is especially important to people who are in the current generation of "super-seniors"—those 80 or older who lived through the Depression, are fiercely independent and are likely to leave their home only if forced to by a crisis situation. Having assistance in the home can help prevent a crisis that might force them into a hospital or nursing home.



JoAnne Damaschke, RN-BSN, home health services supervisor for Mayo Clinic Health System-Franciscan Healthcare

JoAnne Damaschke, RN-BSN, home health services supervisor for Mayo Clinic Health System-Franciscan Healthcare, says that providing health services to individuals in their homes

also reduces the likelihood of readmission to the hospital. It provides a close connection between health care providers and patients. "You are in their world, meeting their needs right where they are," she says.

"If we can help them live independently in their own home longer, it's a win-win," says Holmes.

Why hire in-home care?

Most individuals who remain in their homes are cared for by family members. According to the National Alliance for Caregiving and AARP, nearly 30 percent of U.S. adults are currently providing care to someone who is ill, disabled or aging. While those family caregivers are unpaid, the care isn't without cost. According to a 2012 AARP study, 69 percent of working caregivers report having to rearrange work schedules, decrease hours or take unpaid leave in order to meet caregiving responsibilities.

With a growing population of elderly who may need care, there is a growing need for services such as those provided by Comfort Keepers, Bright Star, Mayo Clinic Health System and others.

Some families may turn to a home care provider because there are no family members living nearby to provide assistance. These families receive peace of mind knowing that someone is checking in on a loved one and ensuring that basic needs are met.

For others, the family caregiver simply cannot provide the level of care needed, for example, when the person receiving care has medical needs such as bandage changes or more complex monitoring that requires trained nursing staff, or when a spouse cannot physically assist the other person with activities of daily living such as dressing and bathing.

Still other services, such as those provided by drop-in care centers, give family caregivers a place to bring their loved one during the day. "This gives families the flexibility to work, do errands and keep appointments while knowing their loved one is being well taken care of," says Amy Kepler, owner and operator of Coulee Region Adult Day Center.

Stowers says sometimes it is simply a matter of family members wanting to be able to spend quality time with a parent rather than using that time cleaning their home and preparing meals. He recommends talking with family members about in-home care options before a crisis occurs to help ease transitions from being an independent adult to needing assistance and care. It is one more transition in the circle of life. (crw)

Freelance writer Shari Hegland has seen in her own family how in-home care can help families give their loved ones the best lives possible in challenging situations.

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The comforts of home can be found in a bowl of soup.

BY DEBORAH NERUD

Photos by Deborah Nerud

Recipes analyzed by Gundersen Health System registered dietitians

Soup is a comfort food that brings families together. It's a simple, sustaining and ageless building block with the capacity to feed a small group or gather the masses, drawing together diverse backgrounds and culinary perspectives. A good meal—or a good bowl of soup—can change your life. Before becoming a world-renowned chef, author and TV star, Julia Child was an intelligence officer for the Office of Strategic Services, where she met her husband, Paul. While taking a brief vacation to Rouen, France, Child sampled foods that she described to the *New York Times* as “an opening up of the soul and spirit for me,” which led to her culinary destiny—at 40. Soup has done the same for the women featured here.

Reinventing soup, and self

While Colleen Wolner, co-owner, manager and chef at the Blue Heron Coffeehouse in Winona, humbly balks at any comparison to the world-famous Child, she will acknowledge the similarities that come with discovering her path to a career in food.

Coming from a family of eight siblings, she says, “Soup was our main dinner, five nights out of seven. Mom was a great soup maker and made her own stock.” Growing up in Winona and Elk River, Minnesota, Wolner spent time in various restaurants as a server, but it wasn't until, at 38, she served as a barista and then manager for the Northern Cup that her goals started to take shape. She and her husband, Larry, decided to start a business in Winona. “We wanted to carve out a life for ourselves and be surrounded by like-minded people with similar endeavors. We wanted to open a business that supported what we believed in—great food from local, sustainable producers.”

As soon as the space was available for lease at the restaurant's original Huff Street location, pieces of the puzzle began to slide into place. Among their first suppliers, including Renaissance Bakery (Galesville, Wisconsin) and Featherstone Farms (Rushford, Minnesota), Alakef Coffee out of Duluth, Minnesota, continues to supply the Blue Heron with their fresh-roasted beans. Wolner also incorporates seasonal

ingredients throughout the menu. “With soups, you can always make something in season, using whatever you have at hand,” she says. “If you're new to cooking, it's important to follow a recipe. Once you've got that, it's easy to expand, and it's a real confidence booster.” The Wolners and two of their sons prepare the two daily soups, always using stock made from scratch. “Soup is a great place to find success as a new cook,” Wolner says. All you need is a good stock pot, fresh, local ingredients, an immersion blender and a good knife.”

Soup and a career from scratch

New in her career as a cook, Lindsey Henslin, 25, says that anyone can make a great soup. “All you gotta do is look in your fridge. It's all right there.” At Café D'Vine, where Henslin serves as a cook, her daily soups are made from scratch, from fresh, regional ingredients. While chopping kale for a chicken vegetable soup, Henslin discusses her love for fresh ingredients: “I love working with veggies. They're light, they're colorful, they're good for you and they have so much flavor. You can do anything with them.” Henslin's interest in cooking started early, before she was allowed to use the stove alone; from her humble beginnings with boxed brownie mix, she went on to earn her associate's degree in culinary management from Western Technical College.

After seven years as a barista at the Blue Cup in her hometown of Holmen, Henslin moved to the kitchen at Café D'Vine, which opened March 2013 in Onalaska. “I like the feedback I get from the customers,” she says. “If I fill their bellies, they'll come back for more.” Eventually, she'd like to open her own café or work in a school, where she would “love to make school lunches healthier for kids.” For now, Henslin is happy to make a memory for someone who enjoys her cooking. “I don't know anyone who doesn't have a favorite soup—from the past or from their own kitchen. Soup really is like a hug for your belly.” (crw)



Lindsey Henslin, cook at
Cafe D'Vine in Onalaska



Colleen Wolner, co-owner, manager and chef at
Blue Heron Coffeehouse in Winona

ROOT NOTE CHILI

Contributed by Corrie Brekke, The Root Note

Serves 6

Spice Mix:

- 2 tsp. cumin
- 2 tsp. dried basil
- 2 tsp. oregano
- ¼ tsp. cocoa powder
- 1 T sugar
- 1 T chili powder
- ¼ tsp. cayenne
- ½ T black pepper

Chili:

- 2 T olive oil
- 2 T red wine
- 1 T lemon or lime juice
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 25-oz. can Muir Glen tomatoes, diced or crushed
- 1 25-oz. can Westbrae Natural Organic Black Beans, rinsed and drained
- ¾ cup diced red onion
- ¾ cup diced red pepper
- ½ cup sliced carrots

Mix all the spice mix ingredients together in a small bowl. On medium heat, warm soup pot for about 1 minute. Add olive oil to the hot pan, heat another minute, add onions and carrots and cook for 3 minutes, stirring a few times a minute.

Add red peppers and garlic and cook for another 3-5 minutes or until carrots are crisp-tender. Add the spice mix to the pot and stir continuously for 1 more minute. Add red wine and lemon or lime juice and cook for an additional 2 minutes. Add the beans and tomatoes and bring to a simmer; let cook for a couple more minutes.

Serve with your favorite toppings, such as grated cheddar cheese, sour cream and green onions.

190 calories, 3g fat, 8g protein, 34g carbohydrate, 8g fiber, 190mg sodium



CHICKEN WILD RICE SOUP

Contributed by Lindsey Henslin, Café D'Vine

Serves 10

- 1 cup wild rice
- 3 T oil (more if necessary)
- 1 red onion, chopped
- 2 medium carrots, peeled and chopped
- 3 large celery stalks, chopped
- 8 cups vegetable stock
- 2-3 cups shredded chicken
- 8 oz. mushrooms, sliced (whatever kind you like)
- 1 cup half-and-half or milk
- 1 stick butter
- 1 tsp. each salt and pepper (adjust for taste)
- Craisins (optional)

Cook wild rice in 4 cups of vegetable stock until fluffy (approximately 45 minutes). Drain remaining liquid and set aside.

In large stockpot, add oil; sauté onion, carrot and celery until soft. Pour in remaining vegetable stock and bring to a boil. Add mushrooms.

In a separate saucepan, melt butter until it's golden brown. Add flour, whisking constantly, and slowly add the half-and-half or milk. Once mixture is smooth, add it to the sautéed vegetable mix. Let soup simmer, partially covered, until heated through. You may need to add a little water or stock if it gets too thick. Serve hot, and top the bowl with a small handful of craisins.

320 calories, 20g fat, 17g protein, 19g carbohydrate, 2g fiber, 1150mg sodium

CREAMY POTATO HERB SOUP

Contributed by Colleen Wolner, Blue Heron Coffeehouse

Serves 8

- 3 cups onion (chopped)
- 3 cups celery (chopped)
- ½ tsp. salt
- 4 T butter
- 6 cups potatoes (cubed)
- 6 cups vegetable stock
- 2 T fresh dill (chopped)
- 1 tsp. oregano
- Fresh basil or parsley to taste (optional)
- 1 cup milk
- ½ lb. cream cheese (cubed)

Sautee onion and celery in butter (add salt while sautéing) in large stockpot. Add potatoes, vegetable stock and herbs; simmer until potatoes are soft, about 10 minutes.

Blend cream cheese and milk with some of the hot broth in a small bowl; add back to pot. Briefly blend entire soup with immersion blender (or in a food processor or blender). Add salt and pepper to taste.

310 calories, 17g fat, 6g protein, 35g carbohydrate, 4g fiber, 1040mg sodium

A lover of soups, stews and chilis, Deborah Nerud makes her own veggie and chicken stock and believes in the power of homemade chicken and rice soup. She lives and writes in La Crosse.



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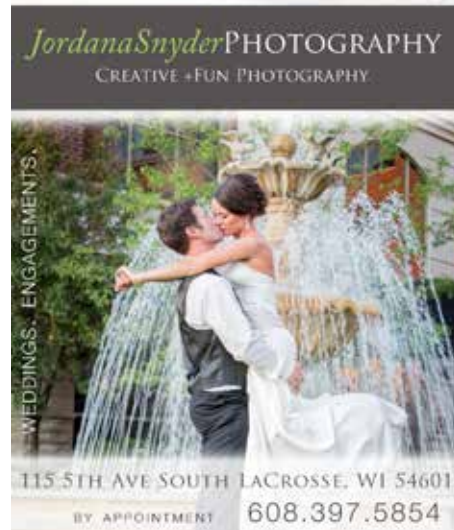
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THE LOOK BOOK

Add color and comfort to your home
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Photos by Jordana Snyder Photography



Spice up neutral upholstery—whether rich leather or warm shades of cream—with interesting patterns and bold pops of color. Check out **The Board Store** in La Crosse, pictured here, for inspiration and wise pieces of decorating advice.



Color is everywhere at J Company in La Crosse. Use a vibrant splash of orange, emerald or ruby against white for instant color impact. Mix metals and patterns, or repeat them with custom-matched fabrics in pillows, frames and more.



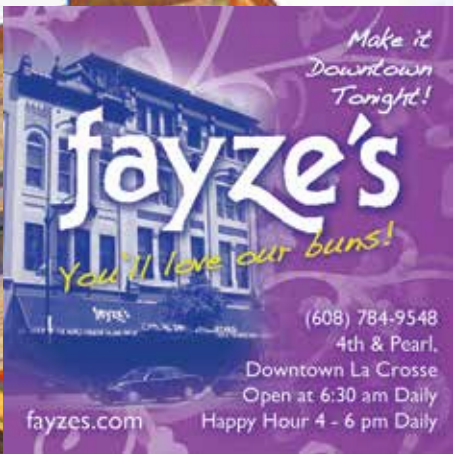
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HOME GROWN

Excitement is sprouting at Winona Feed & Seed.



Meet the women who make Winona Feed & Seed bloom: (from left) co-owner Peggy Whalen, Katie Lange, co-owner Jody Thiele and Danielle Lange. Mother to Katie and Danielle, Jody supervises a tightly knit all-family staff. The result is a place to work that is, above all, fun. "At other jobs I'm told what to do," says Danielle. "Here I know what to do and choose what to do."

Toss together good friends, a business for sale and a bottle of wine, and you may just plant a seed that sprouts into something wonderful. **Jody Thiele** and **Peggy Whalen**, co-owners of **Winona Feed & Seed**, are proof. Offering lawn and garden supplies, birdseed, animal feed, bulk seed and charming gifts, these women are carrying on the mission of Winona's longstanding Kupitz Feed & Seed, but with their own twist and a new name.

Owners since January 2014 and friends since high school, Thiele runs the store and Whalen does the marketing. From an idea sketched on a napkin at Elmaro Vineyard, they have kept a historic business humming, moved it to a new location on Grand Street and created a store that's as fun as it is practical. "We hope to have an obedience trainer on board in the near future," says Thiele. "And we'll have events and classes," adds Whalen, like the fairy garden workshop and pajama party they'll hold in February.

Even on a gray winter afternoon, Winona Feed & Seed is bustling with gardeners, pet owners, hobby farmers and bird watchers. Spring will bring organic seed potatoes, onion sets and live baby chicks. Business is blossoming, as are the women who nurture it. [\(crw\)](#)



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COMMUNITY CALENDAR

ONGOING EVENTS

American Association of University Women (AAUW) 2nd Sat. of each month (Sept.-May), 9:30 a.m., 608-519-0548, aauwlacrosse@hotmail.com, aauw-wi.org.

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

Children's Museum of La Crosse weekly programming: **Save-On-Sundays** \$1.00 off admission every Sun., noon to 5 p.m.

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

Wee Move for ages 1-7 with adult, every Fri., 10:30 a.m.

Little Learners for ages 1-7 with adult, every Thurs., 10:30 a.m.

Coulee Region Professional Women (CRPW) 4th Tues. of each month, Pogreba Restaurant, 5:30 p.m. Linda O'Connell, linda@take5productions.net.

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

La Crosse Toastmasters Club 2nd and 4th Tuesday of each month, 7 p.m., Gundersen Health System Urgent Care Bldg., Basement, 1830 S. Ave., La Crosse.

League of Women Voters 2nd Tues. of each month, noon, Radisson Hotel, Nancy Hill, 608-782-1753, nfhill@centurytel.net.

NAMI Family Support Group 2nd Mon. of each month, 6:30 p.m., South Side Neighborhood Center, 1300 S. 6th St., La Crosse.

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

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

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

Onalaska Toastmasters Club 1st and 3rd Mon. of each month, noon-1 p.m., Globe University, Onalaska.

Valley View Kiddie Crew 1st and 3rd Tues. of each month, Valley View Mall Food Court, 10:30-11:30 a.m., myvalleyview.com.

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

Women in Networking and Support (WINS) 2nd Wed. of each month, Fayze's, noon-1 p.m., Shari Hopkins, 608-784-3904, shopkins@couleebank.net.

Women of Worth (WOW) last Wed. of each month, Boot Hill Pub, noon. Debbie Lee, 608-526-2127, dlee@coverainsurance.com.

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

CALENDAR EVENTS

Feb. 6-8, West Side Story in Concert, 7:30 p.m. Fri.-Sat., 2 p.m. Sun., Lyche Theatre, Viterbo University.

Feb. 6-8, Winona Winter Carnival, Winona, www.cityofwinona.com.

Feb. 7-8, Women's Wellness Fair, Valley View Mall, www.myvalleyview.com.

Feb. 8, Time Capsule III: Chamber Music Series, 3 p.m., Viterbo Fine Arts Center.

Feb. 11, My Funny Valentine, 7:30 p.m., Weber Center for the Performing Arts, www.webercenterfortheperformingarts.org.

Feb. 12-Mar. 1, Twelve Angry Men, 7:30 p.m. Thurs.-Sat., 2 p.m. Sat.-Sun., La Crosse Community Theatre, www.lacrossecommunitytheatre.org.

Feb. 13, Candlelight Snowshoe Hike, 5:30-8:30 p.m., Norskedalen Nature and Heritage Center, Coon

Valley, www.norskedalen.org.

Feb. 13 & 27, Night Out at the Museum, 5:30-8 p.m., Children's Museum of La Crosse, www.funmuseum.org.

Feb. 14, Big Band Cabaret, 7:30 p.m., Valhalla Hall, UW-La Crosse.

Feb. 14, La Crosse Symphony Orchestra Valentine's Day Ball, 5:30 p.m., Waterfront Cargill Room, La Crosse, www.lacrossesympphony.org.

Feb. 15, Chamber Orchestra Concert, 3 p.m., Page Theatre, St. Mary's University, Winona.

Feb. 16, Pearl Street Brewery 16th Annual Winter Ball, 2-10 p.m., Pearl Street Brewery, La Crosse.

Feb. 21, Old School Variety Show, 8-10 p.m., The Pump House, www.thepumphouse.org.

Feb. 21, Lee Brice and Chris Young concert, 7:30 p.m., La Crosse Center, lacrossecenter.com.

Feb. 21-22, The Mikado, 7:30 p.m. Sat., 2 p.m. Sun., Viterbo Fine Arts Center.

Feb. 22, Norman Lee, 7:30 p.m., Page Theatre, St. Mary's University, Winona.

Feb. 27, The Ugly Duckling and the Tortoise and the Hare, 7 p.m., Viterbo Fine Arts Center.

Feb. 27-Mar. 8, Catch Me if You Can, 7:30 p.m. Fri.-Sat., 2 p.m. Sun., Toland Theatre, UW-La Crosse, 608-785-8522.

Feb. 28, Happy "Sweet 16" Birthday to the Children's Museum, open 8 a.m.-midnight, www.funmuseum.org.

Mar. 3, Cladh Nua in concert, 7:30 p.m., Viterbo Fine Arts Center.

Mar. 6-8, LABA Home Show, 5-9 p.m. Fri., 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Sat., 11 a.m.-4 p.m. Sun., La Crosse, www.labahomeshow.com.

Mar. 6 & 20, Night Out at the Museum, 5:30-8 p.m., Children's Museum of La Crosse, www.funmuseum.org.

Mar. 7, Polar Plunge, 10 a.m., Pettibone Park, La Crosse, www.specialolympicswisconsin.org.

Mar. 7, UW-La Crosse Orchestra Concert, 2 p.m., Viterbo Fine Arts Center.

Mar. 8, UW-La Crosse Wind Ensemble Concert, 2 p.m., Viterbo Fine Arts Center.

Mar. 11, Percy Jackson's Lightning Thief, 10 a.m. & 12:45 p.m., Heider Center, West Salem, www.heidercenter.org.

Mar. 12, Forks and Corks, 6-9 p.m., Weber Center for the Performing Arts, 608-784-3378.

Mar. 12, UW-La Crosse Symphonic Band Concert, 7:30 p.m., Annett Recital Hall, UW-La Crosse.

Mar. 14, Rockin' Out Hunger benefit for the Hunger Task Force of La Crosse, Stoney Creek Inn, 608-793-1002.

Mar. 15, Michel Lauziere: Master of the Unusual, 3 p.m., Viterbo Fine Arts Center.

Mar. 18, Brit Floyd concert, 7:30 p.m., La Crosse Center, www.lacrossecenter.com.

Mar. 20, Steve Marking Concert, 7:30 p.m., Heider Center, West Salem, www.heidercenter.org.

Mar. 20-29, First Baptist of Ivy Gap, 7:30 p.m. Fri.-Sat., 2 p.m. Sun., La Crosse Community Theatre, www.lacrossecommunitytheatre.org.

Mar. 21, Norskedalen's Benefit Rummage Sale, Bake Sale and Lunch, Coon Valley Village Hall, Coon Valley, www.norskedalen.org.

Mar. 22, Concert Band Concert, 3 p.m., Page Theatre, St. Mary's University, Winona.

Mar. 22, The Great Gatsby, 7:30 p.m., Viterbo Fine Arts Center.

Mar. 28, Mike Toomey's TV & Me, 7:30 p.m., Viterbo Fine Arts Center.

Mar. 31, ZZ Top, 7:30 p.m., La Crosse Center, www.lacrossecenter.com.



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