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coulee region

# women

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Pictured on cover: Connie Peter, owner of The Ultimate Salon & Spa. Photos on cover and above by Jen Towner Photography.

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Jen Towner Photography

**Reimagine:** The word is a deep breath on a cold day, fresh and invigorating and bracing. At the turn of the new year, it beckons optimism and hope, the promise of a clean start, lofty goals and the possibility a new year might bring.

Until February, that is, by which time those feelings of optimism and possibility have largely faded. Our good intentions and high hopes fall prey to our day-to-day responsibilities and well-trod routines, and even the simplest and best-intentioned resolutions seem impossible to achieve. On my merry-go-round of work, meal preparation, child-chauffeuring and laundry, for example, it's hard to call my mother more often or keep the house picked up, let alone embark on something as ambitious as writing a book, a constant on my list of resolutions.

But recently, I've started changing my approach to "reimagining" my life, and it seems to be working. After years of dreaming up goals so lofty they quickly overwhelmed me, I've instead focused on starting new habits—*small* new habits that, once firmly established, just might lead to something more. There's nothing more daunting, for example, than sitting down to your computer with the command to start a book. But let's

look at that goal from a different angle. I don't have to write that book today. I don't even have to start it. Today, it might be enough to simply start a writing habit. If I take that hour or two right after the kids leave for school and, before I can talk myself out of it, sit down to write whatever comes to mind, I'll eventually have something. Not a book perhaps, but the idea of a story, or a collection of memories—maybe even a rough draft of an essay. Done day after day, this little habit might add up to something big.

All of the women in our "Reimagine" issue of *Coulee Region Women* have done just that. By big leaps or baby steps, they have created their own habits that led to a successful reimagining of their career, their life or even society. Connie Peter has made a habit of always looking forward, with her clients' best interests in mind. Angela Bartow has created a successful store by methodically following a well-thought-out business plan. At Hamilton Elementary, staff members who ingrained habits of truly listening to each other and to parents led to groundbreaking educational change. And perhaps no one personifies this more than Tasha Schuh, who, after suffering a paralyzing accident, has reimagined a life better than the one she'd envisioned before.

We also honor women in our community like Crystal Sedevie, Jill Billings and Sister Marlene Weisenbeck, who, with a shared commitment to keep children safe, are taking an important stand against human trafficking locally.

Reimagining takes a fun twist in this issue, too, with fresh new approaches to your kitchen, your wardrobe, your diet and more. We'll even teach you four very simple yet scientifically proven habits that can make you happier.

What's your goal for 2016? If it's to lose so many pounds, maybe start a little habit of walking over your lunch hour. If it's making healthier meals, try picking up the tiny habit of buying fresh salad greens every time you shop. The key is to think small, with the goal of eventually not thinking at all—just doing. That is what forms a habit. Build up enough positive habits, and you might just change your life.

*Betty*

# coulee region women

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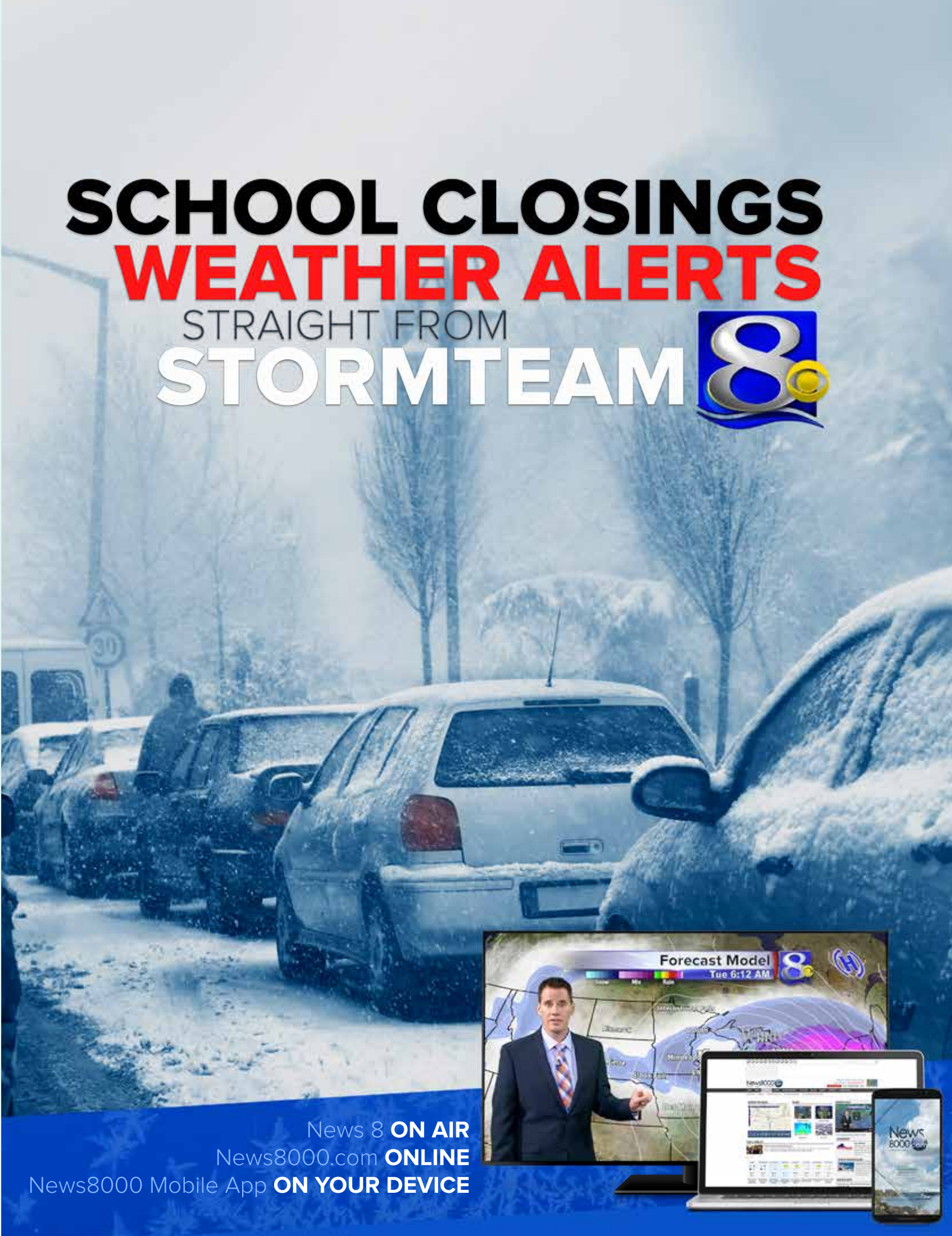
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For more information visit [www.festivalofowls.com](http://www.festivalofowls.com) or contact the International Owl Center at 507-896-6957. Plan now to attend, as some events require pre-registration and have limited space. Be sure to bring your kids or grandkids with you for a fun family outing!

## ONE BILLION RISING

**Celebrate VDay** and take a stand to end violence against women and girls on February 14 at Valley View Mall. Join New Horizons Shelter and Outreach Centers, Essential Health Clinic, the YWCA, The Center: 7 Rivers LGBTQ Connection and other nonprofits in the largest VDay yet occurring in the La Crosse region. A resource fair will take place at Valley View Mall in the lobby outside Macy's from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. A short program featuring poetry, music and dance will begin at noon.

VDay was established in 1998 by activist *The Vagina Monologues* and playwright Eve Ensler in response to hearing women's stories of violence. On Valentine's Day 2012, VDay launched an additional campaign called One Billion Rising to increase its efforts. The name of the campaign comes from the startling fact that one in three women on the planet will be raped or beaten in her lifetime. Globally, that's one billion women. Locally, it's a number we can work to change.

## COOK WINTER AWAY AT PFC

**Celebrate the changing seasons** with family, food and fun by sampling one of the many upcoming cooking classes at People's Food Co-op in La Crosse. Learn how to make homemade truffles just in time for Valentine's Day, then enjoy a cheese and wine pairing on February 9. Roll up your sleeves and make cupcakes and vegetable superheroes with your kids under the guidance of Ana Skemp, cofounder of Grow La Crosse, on February 13. Then, on February 23, tap into spring by learning how to tap maple trees and boil the sap down to make your own rich, homemade syrup. Top it all off with a free book discussion on Scott and Helen Nearing's *The Good Life* on March 2.

Class prices vary, but they range from \$10 to \$25 depending on the class and participants' membership status. For class times, locations and information on upcoming classes throughout the year, visit [www.pfc.org](http://www.pfc.org). *Bon appétit!*



## LISTEN TO YOUR MOTHER

**Everyone has a mother story!**  
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Joining the ranks of 41 cities across America, La Crosse will be debuting its production of *Listen to Your Mother*, a live stage show about your mother, being a mother or not being a mother. The production consists of original work by people like you. All topics on motherhood by all voices are welcomed.

So start writing your story! Share your original work—funny, sad, poignant—about the beauty, the beast and the barely rested that is motherhood. Then, come to audition your piece. If your piece is selected, you'll join other local writers in reading it at a performance April 30 at the Weber Center for Performing Arts.

Ready to get started? Here's what you need to do:

- Craft an original three- to five-minute story about some aspect of mothers or motherhood.
- Schedule an audition time by emailing Jess Witkins at [ltymlacrosse@gmail.com](mailto:ltymlacrosse@gmail.com) with the word AUDITION in the subject line. Audition times are February 20 (9 a.m.-12 p.m.), February 22 (5:30-8:30 p.m.) and February 24 (5:30-8:30 p.m.) in the Rose Room at the Franciscan Spirituality Center. Audition pieces should not exceed five minutes.
- Have questions? Email [ltymlacrosse@gmail.com](mailto:ltymlacrosse@gmail.com). (Please do not email your audition piece. Stories will not be read in advance in order to protect the integrity of the casting process.)
- Be sure to like Listen to Your Mother on Facebook and follow on Twitter, @LTYMshow.
- Last but not least, listen to your mother!

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## REJUVENATION

Connie Peter offers guests hometown service in contemporary style at The Ultimate Salon & Spa.

BY MARTHA KEEFFE

Photos by Jen Towner Photography

**In an atmosphere** that exudes calm, Connie Peter, owner of The Ultimate Salon & Spa and Urban Shoetique in Onalaska, radiates energy. Confident, approachable and ever in motion, Peter escorts me to an overstuffed sofa in a cozy, quiet nook. While I get comfortable, she dashes off to the front of the salon to check in with an employee, fetches us two cups of fresh coffee and returns cheerful and eager to talk—all before I have a chance to thumb through the daily affirmation book that calls to me from the end table. “I don’t sleep,” she says before I can ask her how she expanded her business into 8,000 square feet of space devoted to pampering clients. “I love what I do. I’m constantly looking for ways to tweak and enhance what I have. I always ask myself how I can move forward.”

### The beauty business environment

Peter’s drive to excel began as soon as she graduated from Bangor High School in 1981 and enrolled in the cosmetology program at The La Crosse School of Beauty. Though life circumstances moved her to Arizona, she completed her degree; then, after close to two years of assisting chairside—or what Peter refers to as “doing grunt work”—she returned to the Midwest. For approximately 10 years, Peter lived and worked in Minneapolis, where she honed her skills as a stylist and started using Aveda products.

As Peter took notice of industry trends taking hold in the Twin Cities, she began to create a vision for opening her own salon, where she could put into practice what she had learned on the job. By

networking with other professionals in the business, she was able to keep her thumb on the pulse of Aveda’s rising popularity. “Working with Aveda is great,” says Peter of the company known for developing innovative organic, nontoxic health and beauty products. “Its focus on customer care really challenged how I would approach doing business in the future.”

Aveda’s business model of promoting environmentally responsible lifestyles was one she embraced and continues to adhere to as owner of an Aveda concept salon. Armed with a fresh outlook on hair and beauty practices, she followed her instincts, moved back to La Crosse and “with what took some guts” purchased a local hairstyling business called Norma’s Styling Center.

“Norma’s was already well established and had a loyal client base that was used to doing business as usual,” explains Peter, who admits that her new methods and enthusiasm weren’t initially well received. “For the longest time I was referred to as ‘she’; as someone who didn’t know her place. I quickly learned that if I wanted to reinvent this business, I needed to slow it down.”

### A business restyle

Despite early skepticism from the locals, Peter was determined to find a way to integrate the “fashion-forward thinking” of Minneapolis with the sensible attitudes akin to La Crosse. “The first thing I had to remember is that the reason I moved back to La Crosse was to escape the 24/7 pace of the Cities,” says Peter. “The slower pace was

*Make each day...  
Your Masterpiece*



*Inspiring words dot the walls of The Ultimate Salon & Spa, while shoes, whimsical socks, jewelry and even the original cash register from Norma's Styling Center set the tone at Urban Shoetique.*

what my new clients were used to. Second, I learned the importance of connection and loyalty to people. In order to succeed, this salon would be about my clients first."

Since many of her clients were unaccustomed to spa or salon environments, Peter took time to understand their preferences as well as their comfort level with new techniques. In doing so, she was able to familiarize them with emerging concepts in customer care, such as offering stress-relieving hand and neck massages. She also increased customer confidence in her abilities by offering consistent, quality customer service—a trait that has become a hallmark of her business. "When a guest—we prefer to call them that over *customer*—comes in for an appointment, I want them to receive the same attention and professionalism regardless of who their stylist or technician is," says Peter about the high expectations she has for herself and for her employees. "This is something our guests rely on. And when we see how happy they are—how much they trust us—I'm excited to find ways to improve."

### **More than a haircut**

Over the years, Peter has continued to improve and expand her business, which, in addition to a full-service hair-care salon, now includes manicure and pedicure services, makeup consultations, massage therapy, spa treatments, waxing, Aveda retail and bridal services. As a way to reach guests with underserved beauty concerns, Peter offers wig and hair extension consultations and products in a

fully private, confidential setting. "What we have here is 'Hair-PA,' which is the same as the hospitals' HIPAA laws," laughs Peter. "I want my guests to know they can come here, relax and leave all their stuff behind. No member of my team will ever say, 'Hey, guess which guest just had a Brazilian wax?'"

However, there is one unique addition to her spa and salon that Peter doesn't mind being broadcast—shoes. Unabashed about her passion for footwear, Peter jumps up from the sofa and motions for me to follow. "I am that crazy shoe lady," she says proudly. As we make our way to the boutique, Peter opens the doors to each room that makes up her spa, revealing a space that is warm, inviting and infused with the intoxicating, lush aroma of Aveda. It's a sensation that begs you to curl up and stay awhile. But there isn't time to even contemplate a nap, as Peter is eager to show off the culmination of her latest effort: Urban Shoetique. Designer shoes of all kinds—some with European styling, others with enough sparkle to brighten up the holidays—and funky jewelry along with whimsical clothing are displayed tastefully throughout the store. "If you don't need your hair done, we can cover your feet," says Peter, satisfied that she continues to surprise customers with something unexpected. "I like thinking I can make a difference. It makes what I do awesome."

*Martha Keffe lives and writes in La Crosse, but after visiting The Ultimate Salon, she is considering trading her home office for the Relaxation Room at the spa.*



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# A Career Carousel

Park Bank's Jennifer Westlie describes a career of reimagination.

BY LEAH CALL  
Contributed photo

**Jennifer Westlie is a hard worker** with a keen financial sense. Those attributes have played a role throughout her life. And while she has found herself rethinking her career at various points, she has ultimately landed just where she was meant to be, as assistant vice president for Park Bank in Holmen.



Jennifer Westlie, assistant vice president, Park Bank in Holmen

"The real pleasure in my banking career is not in seeing the number of digits on my paycheck but in the difference I feel I'm making in the lives of people who thought they would never be a homeowner or would never be able to afford to start a business," says Westlie, who finds satisfaction in taking care of her customers. "I get more excited about reducing their rate than I do about closing the sale or getting my commission," she says.

## Looking out for herself

From humble beginnings, Westlie realized early on that she had to work for the things she wanted in life. She delivered papers at 14 and waitressed at a pizza restaurant at 15. "I haven't been without a job since," she says.

Working part-time as a teller at Park Bank while attending Winona State University, Westlie decided to pursue a degree in finance. She later changed her major to education and finally to recreation and tourism. Bitten by the travel bug, she spent three months backpacking

in New Zealand and Australia in 2004, and then she spent two months in Southeast Asia in 2005.

"With a bachelor of science degree in recreation and tourism, I imagined my life would be about leading small groups around the world or being a rafting guide on the Colorado River," recalls Westlie.

Then life got in the way. Westlie graduated and met her future husband, Paul Westlie, owner of Hartland Construction in Holmen. "Months later, I married the man that kept me from being a tour guide in a national park somewhere," she says.

## Career comes full circle

Once again, the finance industry called to Westlie, who obtained her insurance license along with Series 7 and Series 66 securities licenses and became an investment advisor.

"It didn't take long for me to learn that being an investment advisor, a mother and a loving wife was a difficult balance," says Westlie. "I longed for a career that would allow me to go home in the evening with a clear mind and a great sense of confidence that my work wasn't at the mercy of the stock market's volatility."

She found that in 2012 when she returned to Park Bank. With two kids, 5 and 7, Westlie appreciates the flexibility, the family-friendly atmosphere and the camaraderie she has with her Park Bank coworkers.

Though her children are still too young to imagine their own future careers, Westlie says, "I don't want to push them into any certain career. I just want them to enjoy what they are doing and know that their work is worth something." 

*Westby-based freelance writer Leah Call can't imagine a career that didn't involve writing.*

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# Preserving Legacies

A local entrepreneur re-creates memories.

BY LISA HEISE  
Contributed photos

**Linda O'Connell is no stranger** to transitions; she spends her days making them. Owner of Take 5 Productions in Onalaska,



Linda O'Connell, Take 5 Productions

O'Connell is an expert at reimagining memories and family histories. Clients from around the Coulee Region and beyond bring her their old photo albums, cassette tapes, VHS tapes and reels of film. O'Connell transitions the old into the new, converting the images and videos to digital files and saving them on CDs or flash drives. A customer favorite is a DVD featuring images or old film set to music that O'Connell selects.

She takes fragile, finite depictions of family connections—of birthdays,

dances, weddings, sometimes entire lifetimes—and she renews them so they can be enjoyed for many more generations.

## A career built on rebuilding

Restoring legacies wasn't always O'Connell's profession. She began her career as an inside sales manager for a local construction-supply company. When the industry struggled in 2009, O'Connell was laid off. "Every Friday they would call a new group in, and those people would come out and pack up their offices. One Friday, they called my name," says O'Connell. She had been doing small video conversion and photo restoration projects for a couple of years by then, and she decided to try it full time.

Reimagining her career path has been rewarding. She doesn't miss

working in a cubicle, says O'Connell, glancing out her home office window at the Brice Prairie countryside. Her daughter, Melissa, was a freshman in high school when O'Connell made the transition to a home office. Melissa often popped in to the office after school to talk about her day, and O'Connell treasured those moments.

## Memories and memorials

She has also treasured opportunities to help preserve important memories, and she has a story to go with every client. "One guy came in and dumped a huge box of photos on my desk and asked me to put together something nice for his wife's birthday," she laughs. The challenge was that the photos weren't in any kind of order and very few had notes on them. O'Connell looked for themes in the photos and turned them into a DVD for the family to cherish.

Sometimes, however, the stories are more somber. She has created memorial DVDs for children who have passed away, and she even made one for an entire family who was killed in a tragic accident. Many times, loved ones struggle with the process of going through old photos and videos after a loss, and O'Connell is a vital aid for them during a time of heartbreak.

Sometimes, people don't even know what they have. "One lady had reel that wasn't marked," says O'Connell. "I sent her a picture of a frame from the reel, and she called me in tears. This was a film of her grandfather, who passed away in 1982. She had never seen the film."

Her job is rewarding, shares O'Connell, because it touches people on an emotional level. "If I don't make you laugh and cry, then I haven't done my job," she says. (crw)

*Lisa Heise is a local freelance writer who lives and teaches in La Crosse.*

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# Hot on the Trail of Human Trafficking

Awareness can keep Coulee Region children safe—including your own.

BY JUDITH MUNSON

Contributed photos

**An FBI human-trafficking sting** netted a local arrest recently. Human trafficking? Here in the Coulee Region?

Unfortunately, the potential exists for law enforcement to stage these stings quite often.



*Crystal Sedevie, Investigator, Holmen Police Department*

Crystal Sedevie, an investigator with the Holmen Police Department, assisted with two stings that resulted in arrests of men seeking underage sex last fall—one at the French Island Days Inn in La Crosse, resulting in the arrest of a 43-year-old Onalaska man, and a similar sting in which another male adult was arrested. “We could do these stings every day if we had the time and resources,” says Sedevie. “La Crosse is located on a major route used by traffickers, from Chicago to Minneapolis.”

The tragic truth behind these cases is that if law enforcement were not posing as the bait, children would be the victims—and no one with badges would come crashing through the door in time to save them.

## Too close for comfort

People across the region are working to raise awareness that human trafficking—considered a modern form of slavery and among the fastest-growing crimes internationally—is not something that only happens “somewhere else,” like developing countries or large cities.

According to the FBI’s summary of Operation Cross Country—a coordinated effort with local law enforcement across the nation to arrest those involved with human trafficking—nine underage victims were rescued last year in Wisconsin during a weeklong nationwide sting. The state tied for third for most children recovered during that sting, which locally resulted in the arrest at Days Inn.

In that local sting, Sedevie’s department posted an ad online, which is how much of today’s trafficking takes place. “We told the man who communicated with law enforcement that he would be meeting a 13-year-old,” says Sedevie. “In the national sting, children as young as 12 were rescued.”

## Offering safe harbor

Wisconsin’s troubling ranking is one reason State Representative

Jill Billings, 95th Assembly District, is co-sponsoring Safe Harbor legislation. "In Wisconsin, children are arrested and treated as criminals instead being treated as victims" because prostitution is illegal, says Billings. Safe Harbor laws ensure the child rescued is not taken to jail but instead placed under the care of the state's human services department.



Wisconsin State Representative Jill Billings

"In Minnesota, once Safe Harbor became law in 2011, kids were more likely to come forward and give up whomever is selling them," explains Billings. "In fact, reporting increased 800 percent."

Investigator Sedevie cautions that this type of law, while written with only the best intentions, needs to ensure the victims receive help and are not returned to the streets. "The state will need counselors in place, trained in how to help abducted kids," she says. "We will need housing for them. They cannot be placed with a regular foster family because it places the family in danger when the child's captors try to get them back, which they will."

Sedevie explains that these children often begin to consider life with their captors as normal, and many will run from foster care. "If we can put them in a juvenile facility, while not ideal, at least we know they're safe," she says.

Rep. Billings assures that she has spoken with multiple human services officials across the state and that a system will develop to house these victims, protect them and teach them how to return to normal life. "Otherwise, they have a prostitution arrest on their record for the rest of their life," says Billings. "This only discourages child victims of trafficking from turning in their captors."

## How human trafficking happens

Sister Marlene Weisenbeck, of the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration, understands how a minor becomes trapped in this horrific life. In 2012 and 2013, she studied the issue while serving on the White House's Advisory Council for Faith-Based and Neighbor Partnerships, which studied modern slavery and reported its findings to the president.



Sister Marlene Weisenbeck, FSPA

"Although trafficking is often done for the purpose of sexual exploitation, it also involves other labor trafficking—in agriculture, nail salons, domestic servitude," she says. "Research shows us most people trafficked have a history of abuse from family; many are runaways. One out of seven homeless children will be picked up by a slave owner accomplice."

It almost always starts with a promise: "I will take care of you; I will love you." Children are given nice clothes, jewelry, a place to stay and a hot meal. After a while, they have to earn their keep, trapped in a life of what the experts call "debt bondage." The child is told he or she has to pay for the food, clothes and rent or face beatings, harm to friends and family, or both. Victims are often branded, like cattle. If they escape, other pimps will return the children.

"People want to think it doesn't happen here," says Weisenbeck. "But the arrest at the Days Inn tells us there is a market for it."

Weisenbeck is one of the founding members of the La Crosse Task Force to Eradicate Modern Slavery, about 25 members strong. With an estimated 38 million slaves worldwide, 80 percent of them women and children, the primary goal of this local task force is to raise awareness of the issue.

Along with a local billboard campaign, the task force has run public service announcements on local media, presented to community groups and sponsored training seminars for law enforcement, judges, emergency room nurses, first responders, educators and social workers. The task force is currently studying how to build a response system in the Coulee Region. "We've had three incidents where victims needed help, and we were scrambling," says Weisenbeck. "Thankfully we had people on the task force representing resources that could help."

## Be on the alert

Awareness is key, particularly with a crime that is so under the radar. Hotel staff, like those at the Days Inn, are trained to look for young children in sole custody of much older adult, who are wandering hallways and loitering outside a room at late hours.

Parents and educators—these kids do attend school at times—can pay attention to kids who talk of being with a large number of young kids in a cramped space; kids who don't talk much or are prevented from speaking by their "guardian"; kids who give scripted answers; kids who have no identification papers; kids who appear fearful, anxious or paranoid; and school attendance that is sporadic.

## Virtual space, real danger

With so much exploitation of today's youth taking place online, Sedevie advises parents to take a stand in regard to keeping their kids safe.

"Parents need to understand sexting happens as modern-day flirting," says Sedevie, referring to the sending of sexually explicit photos and messages by cell phone. "But kids don't realize the moment they hit 'send' they are committing a felony. Parents, don't be scared of being blunt. You need to say, 'Show me what you're doing online.' Also, install monitoring software, but don't tell them."

Sedevie acknowledges many parents do not feel comfortable getting into their kids' virtual space but emphasizes they have to. "We're the mature ones; they are not. Kids don't understand the consequences of sending one picture. They become a child pornography victim every time it's seen by a stranger."

Concerns about the Internet making a child predator's job easier are all the more compounded knowing children are being enslaved, even branded, as if they aren't even human anymore. Living in an era of "see something, say something" regarding terrorism, the public's vigilance is once again being called upon to help save lives.

To learn more about the La Crosse Task Force to Eradicate Modern Slavery, go to [www.fspa.org/modernslavery](http://www.fspa.org/modernslavery). The national hotline to report suspected cases is 888-373-7888. 

*Judith Munson is a freelance journalist and memoir writer living in western Wisconsin.*

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# A CRASH COURSE IN KITCHENS

What's new in Coulee Region kitchens?  
New colors, countertops and much more.

BY JESSIE FOSS  
Contributed photos

**A home's kitchen:** It's more than a place to cook or eat. It's the heart of the home, and homeowners across the country, including the Coulee Region, are demanding more and more from the space.

From trending colors to the most popular types of kitchen sinks, local builders and kitchen specialists have their fingers on the pulse of all things kitchen in the Coulee Region. The bottom line, says Don Gautsch of Design Cabinetry, Inc., is that homeowners want unique designs and finishes that actually fit their kitchen needs. What can homeowners with an eye on refreshing their kitchen look forward to in 2016? Here's what the specialists have to say:

## Cabinets

"Homeowners want custom, timeless, quality cabinets that function well and wow them," says Gautsch. Here's how modern twists on kitchens can do just that.

According to Lyndsey Kampen, a Kitchen and Design Specialist at Wisconsin Building Supply in Onalaska, ceiling-high white cabinets are currently on trend. The high cabinets make rooms feel larger, as they draw the eye upward, she says. One reason white cabinets remain popular is their versatility. White cabinets can be used in kitchens ranging from contemporary to traditional to country chic. The white also allows for an open color palette. Mike Coon, who brings 35 years of experience to Beyer Cabinets, adds that all shades of white are popular—off white, creamy white and more.

Storage is almost always a problem in kitchens, especially in smaller kitchens. Cabinets are combating this problem and bringing storage to a new level by maximizing every inch of kitchen space. Two-tier cutlery trays allow for two drawers' worth of storage in just one drawer. Kampen says nearly anything is possible when it comes to

storage options. From spice racks to deluxe drawer organizers to knife blocks and cutting boards, there is a storage solution for every need.

A base recycling cabinet is what Kampen calls a must-have. This cabinet is designed to fit two garbage cans, one for garbage and another for recyclable products.

Lighting incorporated into cabinetry is also a trend homeowners are embracing. Under-cabinet lighting is everywhere, Kampen says, including under wall cabinets and under base cabinets. Lighting in cabinets can make looking for items much more convenient, and custom lighting can even be set to come on when a door, drawer or lazy Susan is opened.

## Appliances

Stainless steel remains the most popular finish for appliances, especially for range hoods, Kampen says. Yet she adds that a new slate finish is gaining in popularity. Slate appliances are inspired by stone, and their matte appearance is designed to hide fingerprints, smudges and dirt. Refrigerators with French doors are also favorites.

## Color combinations

Grays, including gray paints, stains, cabinets and backsplashes are very popular, and Kampen recommends mixing the color with true browns. She describes the combination as "gorgeous."

Mixing cabinet colors is another trend that is starting to gain steam. This look can even mean using highly contrasting colors, such as black and white. Coon says this can extend to cabinet wood choices, too. "It used to be that people would choose all one wood type, like oak, but we're seeing more mixing and matching in cabinets."

Another popular trend is contrasting the kitchen color with the



*High, white cabinets draw the eye upward and make a kitchen appear larger. Quartz is a new favorite for countertops.*

color of the island. This is achieved by painting the perimeter of the kitchen white with a stained or painted island or vice versa.

## Technology

While kitchen technology continues to develop—appliances can now be controlled through smartphones—there are other smaller ways people can begin to introduce more technology into their kitchens. One relatively simple way is by adding a touchless faucet. Motion-activating water dispensing makes it easier for a cook with messy, sticky hands to wash up without dirtying the faucet.

## Flooring

Flooring trends really depend on the amount of money homeowners are willing to spend, Kampen says. Floors in high-end homes tend to feature wood and ceramic tile. Owners of mid-range homes are using luxury vinyl tile and luxury vinyl plank. Kampen says these options are popular because they are waterproof, versatile and available in a wide variety of styles and colors. Installation is also versatile, as the flooring can either be locked together or glued down.

## Other options

Integral sinks—those made out of the same materials as countertops—are rising in popularity. These sinks are seamless and make cleanup a breeze, Kampen says. Colored sinks are also a new trend and provide a great way to add a pop of color in the kitchen. A colored sink can also become a focal point of the kitchen when the sink is the same color as the backsplash.

As far as countertops go, quartz is the most sought-after material that Kampen sells. Quartz's popularity is due much to the fact that the material is nonporous and resistant to heat, spills and scratches. New colors of quartz are being introduced to provide even more



options. Granite countertops remain popular, too, says Coon.

The use of rustic wood or barn board is also trendy. Some homeowners have every cabinet covered in rustic wood or barn board. Dura Supreme Cabinetry also offers a weathered wood finish in response to the popularity of rustic wood/barn board. Others prefer using the wood as an accent on certain pieces. Kampen uses it in a variety of ways in kitchens—on islands, on vanities and as floating shelves.

No matter what look and feel homeowners decide to incorporate into their kitchen, it's important to remember the kitchen is much more than a place to eat and cook. Kampen says the room is more about entertaining, and items, such as islands, can be added to achieve an entertaining atmosphere. (crw)

*Jessie Foss is a freelance writer living in La Crosse. She spent much of last winter painting her kitchen cabinets white. While it was a lot of work, she loves how the color changed the look of her kitchen.*

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# IMAGINE A SAVVY HOME

A solid business plan brought a dream to reality for Angela Bartow's home décor store.

BY KIM SEIDEL  
Contributed photos

**In 2012, Angela Bartow, 37,** founded Savvy Home Consignments, an upscale resale home goods and furniture boutique in Onalaska. To create a solid foundation under her dreams of owning a successful small business, Bartow painstakingly researched and wrote “a very elaborate business plan,” she says. “That was the



Angela Bartow, owner, Savvy Home Consignments

key to starting, spending a full year on my plan before opening.” Finding a niche market and having a plan in place obviously worked. The store immediately earned a popular place in the community when its doors unlocked at 1215 Oak Forest Drive in February 2013.

“We started with 1,300 square feet of the building we were renting and quickly grew to the whole 5,000 square feet building after one year,” Bartow recounts. “We

purchased the building after two years, and, at two-and-a-half years, we opened a second location, Savvy 2,” at 925 13th Avenue South.

Together, the two boutiques offer 8,000 square feet of resale home goods: lamps, rugs, décor, furniture, art, kitchen goods, linens and much more. “We have become a destination stop,” Bartow says. “We keep a guest book, and it’s signed by people coming not only from Wisconsin but also Iowa and Minnesota.”

## Surprisingly successful

Bartow's detailed plan didn't account for such quick growth, “but it was a good glitch to have,” she says. Jumping ahead a few years in her business plan, Bartow went from tracking consignments with a paper system to using computer software to more efficiently handle the ever-increasing number of consigners, which is currently 3,500, and countless dedicated customers. In addition, while she planned initially to run operations solo, she hired sooner than expected. Today, she has 11 employees, including two managers.

The business continues to blossom. Fortunately, in her business plan, Bartow was realistic about working long hours. “I knew that

being a business owner doesn't really mean you always pick your own schedule," she says. "I planned to work 50 to 60 hours a week; stats show small business owners on average work 52 hours per week."

## Décor exchange for all tastes

Savvy attracts customers from throughout the tri-state area and beyond for its variety of resale home goods, local art and salvaged items. "We like to say that we have something for everyone; we see more wives and husbands shopping together," Bartow says. From modern to vintage, wall art ranks as a top seller.

The popular wall art reflects the stores' appeal to those with diverse tastes. "Great wall art is hard to find, and Savvy offers very affordable prices," she says. Furniture provides another big draw for people. The boutique recently began carrying the Chalk Paint® line for customers who enjoy repurposing pieces.

Savvy showcases Bartow's skills and talents in both art and business; she beautifully blends the two worlds. "I've always had a passion for resale and good deals," she says. Growing up in Trempealeau, she attended interior design school in California and then held a high-producing career in real estate in Manitowoc, Wisconsin. She and her husband, Shane, decided to return to the Coulee Region to live closer to family after they had their son, Rayner, now 4.

## Goods selected with expertise

With passion and expertise, Bartow enjoys hand-selecting most of the products that come into Savvy. "I believe there is a value that can

be found in most anything," says Bartow, who takes pride in offering an easy consignment process. Consigners make an income selling items they no longer need or want, while customers feel good about shopping locally and finding excellent buys on top-quality items.

Along with benefits for customers and consigners, Savvy's "upscale resale" also means good news for the environment, an important value for Bartow. The décor exchange decreases waste and reduces one's carbon footprint.

So many treasures await those who shop at Savvy. No cookie-cutter appearance goes for any area of the store, dedicated to highlighting a splendid array of themes, including wine/bar, cabin, golf, baby, kitchen, dining, bath and bedroom. There's even a place for wedding items. Regular customers come into an ever-changing shop, but it's always attractive and arranged in an inspiring way.

"We spend most of our payroll for employees on having them keep the store neat and organized," Bartow says. "It's a tremendous task but very well worth it."

In addition to implementing a smart business plan and maintaining an ever-evolving mind-set, Bartow credits her faith and family, her mission of excellent customer service, an outstanding staff and a supportive community and husband for her success. For more information, visit [www.savvyhome.net](http://www.savvyhome.net) or [www.facebook.com/SavvyHomeConsignments](http://www.facebook.com/SavvyHomeConsignments). 

*Kim Seidel is a writer and editor; she and her two teenage daughters enjoy finding great deals at local consignment stores.*



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# Happy Brain, Happy Life

Discover four simple ways to boost your mood.

BY ASHLEY REYNOLDS

Contributed photos

**In the hustle and bustle** of daily life, it's easy to get weighed down by stress. Even when seem to have a handle on it all, we let little things impact our happiness. In fact, it can almost feel like our brains don't want us to be happy—but what can we do about it?

Recently, science blogger Eric Barker, in his post “New Neuroscience Reveals 4 Rituals That Will Make You Happy” at [www.bakadesuyo.com](http://www.bakadesuyo.com), expanded on ideas presented in the book *The Upward Spiral* by neuroscientist Alex Korb to explain how making habits of four simple things can lead to a happier brain and, in turn, a happier life. Here, La Crosse family therapist Cindy Ericksen of HeartJourney and behavioral health therapist Jennifer Mueller of Gundersen Health System weigh in on how these practices can improve your peace of mind.

## 1. Ask yourself, “What am I grateful for?”

This seems like a no-brainer, but neuroscientists have found that acknowledging what's good in your life boosts dopamine and serotonin in your brain—in other words, it ups those happy chemicals.

“Gratitude can help a person to become kinder, more trusting, more social and more appreciative,” says Mueller. And there are easy ways to incorporate it into your life.

“I encourage my clients to keep a gratitude journal,” says Ericksen. “Keep a tablet or journal next to your bed. Each night before you go to bed, write down three things you are grateful for. When we keep a journal like this, we tend to be more fully present throughout the day because we are looking for those wonderful little moments.”

## 2. Label negative feelings

Every day, we feel a wide array of emotions. And from a brain chemistry standpoint, naming those feelings—anxiety, stress, fear—can help reduce their effect. “Giving voice to one's emotions and expressing those feelings aloud is an important and healthy way for people to cope. This can help to reduce the stress of trying to forget or ignoring them, which doesn't work in the long run,” says Mueller.

“Once we understand what is bothering us, we have the opportunity

to do something about it or show ourselves compassion for the pain we are feeling,” says Ericksen. Avoiding your emotions may seem like a good strategy, but give this a try just once—giving your emotions the attention they need is the best way to cope with them.



Cindy Ericksen, family therapist, HeartJourney

### 3. Make that decision

Ever feel relieved when you finally make a decision on something big? There’s a reason for it! “Brain science shows that making decisions reduces worry and anxiety,” says Barker. But that doesn’t mean you have to live with the panic beforehand. When you’re worried about decision-making, says Ericksen, “the best thing to do is just pick the one that feels right to you and move on. When you are facing a really big decision, try this: Sit quietly in a comfortable place, close your eyes and think about the decision that needs to be made. Is your stomach feeling fluttery or your chest getting tight? Breathe through that uncomfortable sensation. Keep up with this, and eventually the right decision will come to you.”

We spend a lot of time and energy worrying about a decision, which really only makes the process worse. “Once a person starts taking action and starts actually doing, that energy and momentum can help them continue to achieve their goals and complete tasks on their to-do list,” says Mueller. Big decision? Piece of cake!

### 4. Touch people

Sounds weird, right? But giving a simple hug can really help our hearts and our brains feel happy. “Research suggests that touch is fundamental to human communication, bonding and health,” says Mueller. “Basic warm touch may help to calm cardiovascular and neurological stress.” And who doesn’t want less of that?



Jennifer Mueller, behavioral health therapist, Gundersen Health System

“Touch is very important for our sense of well-being, but we often get busy and don’t take the time for our daily dose,” adds Ericksen. “Make this part of your daily ritual at home. Hug your spouse and children when you part in the morning and again when you reunite in the evening.” You’ll be surprised just how far a hug can go!

The brain is a complicated thing, and its chemistry affects all of our daily emotions. We may wish to leave the reasoning behind it all to the neuroscientists, but we can take control of our own happiness. Take the advice of these local healthy-living experts, and you may enjoy a happier and healthier life. 

*Former CRW intern Ashley Reynolds is a marketing copywriter based in Madison who is passionate about leading a healthy and happy lifestyle.*

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# EAT THE RAINBOW

Return to health with a whole-foods, plant-based diet.

BY DEBORAH NERUD

Contributed photos

**A new year can bring** about a lot of change, especially for those who want to realign their physical health and well-being. Approaching food as a way of life, rather than a quantity of calories or cheap fuel, is becoming more common as consumers learn more about food networks in their communities. In the Coulee Region, where an abundance of local farmers produce a sizable quantity of sustainable, organic foods that can be found at a multitude of stores and farmers' markets, it's becoming easier to eat for life and health, following a whole-foods, plant-based diet.

Adopting a plant-based diet doesn't necessarily mean going vegetarian. Rather, it means filling your plate with less meat and a higher proportion of fruits, vegetables, beans, whole grains, nuts and seeds. Doing so can help lower your risk for a number of health problems: heart disease, high cholesterol, high blood pressure and type 2 diabetes, according to dietitians at WebMD.

## Groundbreaking discoveries

The film *Forks Over Knives*—featuring the discoveries of two pioneering researchers in plant-based diet health, Dr. T. Colin Campbell, a nutritional scientist at Cornell University, and Dr. Caldwell Esselstyn, a surgeon and cancer researcher at Cleveland Clinic—explores this idea in-depth. In work with children in developing countries, Dr. Campbell discovered that wealthier children, who ate mainly animal-based foods, were more likely to get heart disease and certain cancers. Dr. Esselstyn discovered that many of the common diseases he treated were almost nonexistent in parts

of the world that consumed plant-based diets. The film explores their research and their conclusions—which are also the subject of several books and guides to healthy eating—and underscores the concept that a whole-foods, plant-based diet can vastly improve health and reduce disease.

## Use nature as your guide

Patti Bartsch, MA, PhD, owner and operator of Naturally



Patti Bartsch, owner, Naturally Unbridled Wellness

Unbridled Wellness, LLC, is a traditional naturopath and bio-energetic practitioner as well as an expert in natural health and wellness for both humans and animals. She sees clients for a wide variety of issues, and assisting individuals to create healthy nutritional choices is all part of the job. "If you have a human body, I can help you," Bartsch states. "I'm not a medical professional; I'm a wellness professional—a sort of tour guide on your journey to wellness."

Bartsch, who was raised on processed foods and pharmaceuticals, found her own path to whole foods and a predominantly plant-based diet after two significant life events: a personal health crisis and reading



*The China Study* by Dr. Campbell, which details research featured in the aforementioned *Forks Over Knives* documentary. Bartsch received her Certificate in Plant-Based Nutrition from Cornell in 2010 and has continued to maintain and uphold the merits of a fully balanced, nutritionally dense whole-foods diet. “Humans need to nourish their body through the rainbow of food,” Bartsch asserts. “When you use nature as a guide to eating, your body will thrive. If you support the human body and what it wants to do to survive, you can help your body return to balance.”

## Eat food

To capture the best micro- and macronutrients and sustain the body—in the words of author Michael Pollan—“Eat food, not too much, mostly plants.” Bartsch echoes this, stating that “when people eat nutrient-dense food, they eat less. Their body is satisfied because it’s getting the best fuel.” The best fuel, Bartsch emphasizes, is clean fuel. She recommends choosing organic, local and sustainable food that is untouched by chemical fertilizers, hormones and pesticides, and which is not genetically modified. She also recommends getting as much nutrient bang for your buck, understanding that while it might cost a bit more to choose clean food (especially meat), you get a massive return for your investment.

To learn more about how your food rates, head to EWG.org, the website for the Environmental Working Group, a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization whose mission is “to empower people to live healthier lives in a healthier environment. With breakthrough research and education, we drive consumer choice and civic action.” The website provides helpful “clean” and “dirty” lists and guides for thousands of consumer products. (crw)

## ALPHA OMEGA SALAD

From People’s Food Co-op, La Crosse

- 1 cup raw Kamut (a brand of organic khorasan wheat)
- 3 cups water

### Dressing:

- 3 T red wine vinegar
- 3 T lemon juice
- 2 T sunflower/canola/grapeseed oil
- 2 T olive oil
- 2 garlic cloves, pressed

### Salad:

- 1½ cups carrots, shredded
- 1½ cups green pepper, chopped
- 1½ cups red bell pepper, chopped
- 1 cup red onion, diced
- 2 T fresh parsley, chopped
- 2 T fresh chives, chopped
- ¼ cup peas (fresh or frozen)
- ¼ cup cranberries (dried)
- ¼ cup sunflower seeds (roasted)

Salt and pepper to taste

Cook the Kamut in salted boiling water. Drain and let cool. For the dressing, whisk together the liquids and garlic. In a large bowl, combine the cooled Kamut with the remaining ingredients. Pour the dressing over the salad and mix to combine. Season to taste.



# ROASTED CARNIVAL SQUASH WITH JASMINE RICE AND COCONUT CURRY

From Anthony Swartwout, Executive Chef, The Mint

2 carnival squash (a variety of acorn squash)

Jasmine rice:

2¾ cups water, plus more if necessary

1½ cups jasmine rice

¾ tsp. salt

Coconut curry:

19 oz. coconut cream

2½ cups vegetable stock

1 medium sweet potato, roasted and pureed

1½ T turmeric

1 T ground cardamom

2 tsp. ground ginger

1 T ground coriander

1 pinch cayenne

2 Honeycrisp apples, cut into ½-in. dice

½ cup dried Door County cherries, roughly chopped

10 oz. spinach

Salt and pepper to taste

Preheat the oven to 375°F. Slice the squash in half from stem to root and scoop out the seeds. Transfer the squash to a baking dish. Place the squash halves cut-side down in a baking dish and pour in enough hot water to fill the pan by about ¼ inch. Cover the dish loosely with foil and place the dish in the oven. Roast the squash until very soft and tender when poked with a fork or paring knife, 40 minutes or so. Exact roasting time will depend on the size of the squash.

For rice, bring the water to a boil in a medium saucepan. Stir in the rice; cover and reduce the heat to low. Simmer for 16 minutes, until all of the water is absorbed. Remove from heat and let the rice rest for 10 minutes before serving.

For the curry, add the first eight ingredients together in a saucepan and simmer till the curry starts to thicken. When the curry is thick enough to coat the back of a spoon, add the apples, cherries and spinach and let simmer for another 2 to 3 minutes. Turn off the heat and place a lid on the curry to keep warm.

To assemble the complete dish, place the squash on a plate cut side up and press down slightly (this creates a flat spot on the bottom of the squash so it won't tip over). Spoon as much rice as you like into your squash bowl and then ladle in the curry over the top of the rice. Garnish with toasted pecans, cashews or almonds if desired.

*Deborah Nerud is a freelance writer and passionate advocate for local, sustainable and organic whole foods. She lives and writes in La Crosse with her two children.*

## Screw Cap Means Cheap Wine?

Everyone loves the sound of a cork popping at a party! But many wines in today's wine world have screw-cap closures. There's an assumption that screw caps are only used for cheap wines. But in reality, sometimes the screw cap is superior to the cork. When a winemaker wants a traditional type of closure that will increase oxygen contact as the wine ages, she or he chooses a cork. Sometimes the cork is the choice if only to increase the romance of opening the bottle! However, if you want a wine to age better without any oxidation, the screw cap is the answer. For example, if you have a choice between closing a jelly jar with wax or a vacuum, total-seal lid, the answer seems simple: the vacuum lid. Recent studies have shown that the "Saranex" liner in the screw caps protects fruity flavors in wine for a longer duration than cork does, so sweet, fruity wines age better with a screw cap. Some screw-cap makers are even designing the oxygen exchange rate of the liner to mimic cork. So, in the future, the screw cap "twist" might be the sound of "join me for a glass of wine"!

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# Changing the Calendar, Rejuvenating a School

**Hamilton Elementary's year-round schedule benefits students, teachers and parents.**

BY ELIZABETH D. LIPPMAN

Contributed photos

**On his first day as principal** of Hamilton Elementary, Steve Michaels did what he had learned to do so well through



*Steve Michaels, principal,  
Hamilton Elementary, La  
Crosse*

more than a decade of service to the School District of La Crosse. Whether as a band director, representative for teacher rights or teacher coordinator for summer school and fine arts, he listened. In the first of many conversations, Michaels invited staff members to help shape a five-year vision for the school. Rooted in the daily reality of student-teacher interaction, their ideas soon coalesced in a plan that would transform Hamilton Elementary and galvanize an entire community: year-round schooling.

"During that staff meeting, we had our talk about what kind of school we wanted to be in five years," Michaels says. "After the discussion about, obviously, high rates of learning for all (and) capitalizing on all the resources that are available to us, on at least half a dozen pieces of paper that people wrote on individually were responses like, 'We need to examine our schedule. We need to take a look at a different calendar.' Literally, the genesis for making the change to a year-round school came from our staff at that staff vision meeting."

More than five years have passed since then, and for the first time the school has had to turn away potential students. Academic regression, or "summer slide," has largely been eliminated, with most students consistently staying at or above grade level. Instead of reviewing the prior year's curriculum for weeks, teachers are often able to present new information on the second or third day of school. Office referrals have dropped by half. And many parents hope the school's recent expansion from a K-2 academic program to K-5 will continue even further.

## Restructuring school

Year-round programs can be tailored to the preferences of particular schools, and Hamilton uses a 45-15-day calendar approach. Students attend school the same number of days as those in the rest of the district, Michaels explains, but breaks are placed between quarters. Holidays and early release days are consistent with the other schools, and the 15-day breaks, or intercessions, are linked with existing breaks when possible.

Michaels credits three years of careful planning and communication for the program's success. "We went to our stakeholders in the community—to our parents, to our neighbors, to our colleagues in the districts—and we just fleshed out every possible question we could," he says. "Some of the suggestions from our stakeholders really helped shape who we are now, and that's something I'm very proud of."



Left: Kathy Haverland, Hamilton PTO member and mother of Hamilton student Kyle Trautmann. Photo by Jackie Keller-Seidel, 509 Photography. Right: Traci Schneider, kindergarten teacher, Hamilton Elementary.

## Parent perspective

"Parent input was key to figuring out all the details," shares Kathy Haverland, Hamilton PTO member and the mother of fourth-grader Kyle Trautmann. Like many others, Haverland says the issue of child care was crucial to determining whether or not the year-round schedule would work for her.

"I am a single parent who works full time. I don't have family to help out with child care, so I needed to have something in place for my child to make this work," she says.

Hamilton's combination of intercession programs and enrichment programs, as well as on-site child care offerings in the afternoons,

makes the program ideal for many families. "Children are not required to attend intercession," Haverland says. "But this gives children a place to go for additional remediation and support and gives parents peace of mind for child care."

## Re-energizing educators

Hamilton kindergarten teacher Traci Schneider taught at a 45-15 school, Longfellow Elementary in Rochester, Minnesota, before coming to La Crosse and used her experience to help lead the way through the transition.

"This process took a lot of creative thinking, forward thinking and support. Many of our staff attended the school board meeting when the school board was looking to approve the calendar change. Tears were shed as all of our hard work was paying off."

The staff, Schneider says, has not only seen a positive impact in students, but also in their own lives. "The breaks not only give us a chance to service our students, but to rejuvenate ourselves as educators. This is a demanding profession, and the breaks are just what we need to re-energize, plan and come back in full force."

Michaels expects to see an increase in year-round schooling in the district and throughout the state. Students and teachers alike, he says, enjoy the routine and rhythm of Hamilton's year, and parents have found the change rejuvenating as well. "We have people attending parent-teacher association meetings again. We have parents running fundraisers. I think part of it is because our parents had a voice and contributed and knew that they were being heard." *(crw)*

Elizabeth Lippman is a freelance writer and editor in Winona, Minnesota.

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# A LIFE REIMAGINED

**A paralyzing accident didn't stop Tasha Schuh from realizing her dreams—or making new ones.**

BY BETTY CHRISTIANSEN  
Contributed photo



**Inspirational speaker Tasha Schuh is proof** that, in an instant, the life you thought you'd have can vanish. But she's also proof that you can get that life back, and while it may be different than you'd planned, it can in many ways be even better.

At 16, a high school junior in Ellsworth, Wisconsin, Schuh loved theater and envisioned a career in that field. But while on stage rehearsing for a school musical, she took one fateful step backward through an open trap door and fell 16 feet, landing on her head. "I literally heard my neck break," she says. "I knew it was not good."

The accident left Schuh paralyzed from the chest down and facing a life full of dreams she feared would never come true. But Schuh, now 35, has achieved those dreams—driving a car, going to college, having a career, getting married—and much, much more. Here, in the spirit of reimagination, Schuh shares her inspiring words.

**You say that today your life is better than it was before your accident. In what ways is that true?**

I look at pictures of myself before the accident, and I looked happy, but I didn't believe in myself. This accident forced me to find out not only all I had inside me but all I could do and accomplish within a situation that I thought would steal my life and steal my dreams. I thought my wheelchair would prevent me from going to college, having a career and having a family.

I had to believe in myself—love myself—and all of that grew from sitting in this wheelchair. All I ever wanted to do was help people, and I had no idea what that meant or what it looked like. Today I do that by sharing my story. I wrote a book, I get to travel—things I never dreamt I'd do, I get to do because of this wheelchair.

**In your talks, you discuss mental paralysis, and how fear holds us back from living our lives fully. How did you let go of your fears?**

The physical paralysis was not my greatest battle—the biggest battle is the one between our ears. What we think is so powerful. I wanted to go to college, I wanted to drive, I wanted to get married—but I was scared. Many people have that same struggle: "What if I fail?" When I speak about this, I speak of fear of the future, fear of failure and fear of what other people think.

I would be lying if I said I wasn't scared, too. I almost cancelled my first date with my husband—what would have happened if I had given in to that fear? But every time I pressed through those fears—thinking "I am going to try"—I was so grateful I did not let them hold me back.

**An important point of your message is "little is huge," and how the smallest things in life can make the biggest difference. Can you give an example?**

My favorite example is my wrist movement. I'm a quadriplegic, and when people see me, they see this big black wheelchair, someone paralyzed from the chest down, no finger movement—those things seem huge.

But a year after the accident, my doctors at Mayo reminded me of the movement in my wrists. We were so overwhelmed with what I couldn't do that this tiny movement made the doctors ecstatic. Today, almost everything I do independently requires that little movement—eating, typing, driving, putting on makeup.

The three greatest things I've learned on my journey are purpose, attitude and hope. I *had* to believe I was here for a purpose, or I would totally succumb to my wheelchair. I started shifting my attitude to believe there was a reason this happened, that good things were going to come.

We're so bombarded with messages that we need the biggest house, the newest car, the best job—but those aren't the things that satisfy us. It's our positive attitude.

It's so easy to lose focus—I too have days when I want those things that aren't going to make me happy. But I am making a difference in peoples lives, and for that I am grateful. I believe the best things are yet to come.

**What is one little thing we all could do to make a big difference?**

One of the things I speak a lot about is writing a gratitude list. I believe life is 100 percent perspective—I *am* this happy! I'm not faking it or just saying these things to sound inspirational. Once we realize how much we have to be grateful for, it changes everything in life. **(crw)**

*Betty Christiansen is editor of Coulee Region Women.*



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# DIVA IN THE DETAILS

Refresh your style with sumptuous spring accessories.

Photos by Jordana Snyder Photography

## REIMAGINE YOUR STYLE FOR SPRING

in a quick, easy and very fun way by updating your accessories. The merchants at three local boutiques—no strangers to reimagination—are eager to introduce you to their freshest accoutrements in the designs, colors and styles you've been longing for.

Satisfy your shoe craving and so much more with wonderfully detailed shoes, handbags and jewelry from **Urban Shoetique** in Onalaska, a new venture of The Ultimate Salon & Spa's Connie Peter.



Freebird "Stair" boot in taupe, \$195; Amy Louise Rustic Couture "Brinsley" necklace (left), \$75, "Annabelle" necklace (right), \$65, and "Camilla" bracelet, \$45.



All Black "Drip & Tie" shoe in yellow, \$145; Anna Nova Liberty Cascade handbag, \$115, and wallet, \$55.



Vera Bradley Satchel in plum, \$128, Preppy Poly Wristlet in black, \$48, Accordion Wallet in teal, \$58, Zip-Around Wristlet in plum, \$48, Soft Fringe Scarf in Concerto, \$38.

The new owners of **Treehouse Gift & Home** in Onalaska, Jill and Chip Weisbrod, mix traditional favorites like the Vera Bradley brand with all things new, fun and fresh for body and home. Find Treehouse Gift & Home on Facebook for details on a grand reopening this spring!

Stephanie Andresen serves up beauty inside and out with the boutique collection at **Brilliant Bodywork**, an inspiring complement to her massage therapy and skin care services.



glo•minerals Dual Essence Clutch, Classic Elements Collection, \$78.



Clockwise from lower left: Pashmina scarf, \$14.50; turquoise and tassel necklace and earring duo, \$14.50; stone and crystal necklace and earring duo, \$12.50; Pure tassel drop earrings, \$9.50; turquoise crystal bracelet, \$12.50; coral and gold bracelet, \$12; True bangle bracelet, \$7.50.

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Clockwise from top left: Soko cofounder Ella Peinovich-Griffith; horn, a byproduct of the slaughter industry, is a common material; designs such as the Fringe on Chain necklace are based on tribal jewelry.

# BUSINESS AND BEAUTY

Technology meets traditional arts with the locally grown self-help project Soko.

BY ANASTASIA PENCHI

Contributed photos

**Shopping for handmade jewelry** online could directly improve the lives of the poor in Nairobi, Kenya, thanks to a Wisconsin woman's connections and her talent at creating partnerships.

Ella Peinovich-Griffith grew up in rural Arkansaw, Wisconsin, just north of the Coulee Region in Pepin County. She developed a love for community service while volunteering for Habitat for Humanity as a student at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, where she received her bachelor's degree.

But it was while she was an architecture student at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and working on her thesis project in the Kibera slum of Nairobi that she began buying items at the markets and bringing them back to Wisconsin to sell at Accola Gallery, owned by her mother, Jean Accola, in Durand, Wisconsin.

## Artisans in Africa

The overseas trips allowed her to get to know the artisans, and those relationships grew as she explored ways to evolve her business model so the artists could receive a bigger percentage of the profits. Ultimately, Peinovich-Griffith partnered with two other women, Gwendolyn Floyd and Catherine Mahugu, to create Soko, a business that connects the buyers of handmade jewelry with the artists who make the items themselves in Kenya. The business was developed in such a way that artisans need only a mobile phone to upload pictures and sell their handmade jewelry all over the world.

"It was really an interesting journey," Peinovich-Griffith said during a recent conversation via Skype from her home in Nairobi, where she lives with her husband and 2-year-old son.

She says the business model requires that she live in Kenya for the

next few years to further establish relationships, but she holds trunk shows at her mother's gallery when she is in the United States visiting family. She admits her parents may have been confused by the 12 years she spent studying architecture, but she is certain this is meant to be her path.

"To me it made perfect sense," she adds.

## Each piece a story

Each piece of jewelry has a story, which appeals to many buyers.

One artist, named Veronica, comes from Africa's largest slum, but she collects bones and horn from her local butcher and files, sands and shapes them into unique beads. Those beads are then featured in her work.

Another artist, Gabriel, is rooted deeply in tradition. He designed a fringe necklace that was inspired by a Kikuyu tribal necklace. Kikuyu women wear different forms of jewelry to signify different chapters of life, and the Kikuyu tribal necklace, originally made from rope and bamboo, was presented upon betrothal by the woman's father-in-law.

Soko, which means *marketplace* in Swahili, has featured about 1,000 artisans, who use natural and "upcycled" materials, Peinovich-Griffith says. The business has helped the artists earn more than \$650,000 in the past year. Jewelry from Soko is sold at Nordstrom's and Anthropologie, in addition to being sold online to customers in 35 countries.

More artist pictures and stories, in addition to their jewelry, can be found at [www.shopsoko.com](http://www.shopsoko.com). 

*Coulee Region writer Anastasia Penchi loves giving and receiving homemade gifts.*

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## COMMUNITY CALENDAR

### ONGOING EVENTS

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

**Children's Museum of La Crosse** weekly programming: **Save-On-Sundays** \$1 off admission every Sun., noon to 5 p.m.

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

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

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

**Coulee Region Professional Women (CRPW)** 4th Tues. of each month, Pogreba Restaurant, 5:30 p.m. Linda O'Connell, [linda@take5productions.net](mailto: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](http://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](mailto: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](http://oaba.info).

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

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

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

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

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

**Women of Worth (WOW)** last Wed. of each month, Shenanigans, noon. Debbie Lee, 608-317-5023, [deb@ais-cw.com](mailto:deb@ais-cw.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](mailto:nu@naturallyunbridled.com).

### CALENDAR EVENTS

**Jan. 30-Feb. 6**, *Crow and Weasel*, 3 p.m. Sat. & Sun., 7 p.m. Fri., Weber Center for the Performing Arts, [www.viterbo.edu/fac](http://www.viterbo.edu/fac).

**Feb. 3-7**, SPLASH, Wed.-Sat. 7:30 p.m., Sun. 3 p.m., Studio Theatre, St. Mary's University, Winona, [www.pagetheatre.org](http://www.pagetheatre.org).

**Feb. 5-6**, Snowflake Ski Jump Tournament, Westby, [www.snowflakeskiclub.com](http://www.snowflakeskiclub.com).

**Feb. 5-7**, Winter Gift & Craft Show, Valley View Mall, [www.myvalleyview.com](http://www.myvalleyview.com).

**Feb. 11-13**, Coulee Region Unscripted: "Mythed Connections," 7:30 p.m., The Pump House, [www.thepumphouse.org](http://www.thepumphouse.org).

**Feb. 11-28**, *Wit*, 7:30 p.m. Wed.-Sat., 2 p.m. Sat.-Sun., La Crosse Community Theatre, [www.lacrossecommunitytheatre.org](http://www.lacrossecommunitytheatre.org).

**Feb. 13**, Valentine's Heart Throb 5K or 5-Mile Run, 8 a.m., YMCA-North, Onalaska, [www.laxymca.org](http://www.laxymca.org).

**Feb. 13**, Sweet Dreams & Honky Tonks: The Music and Lives of Hank Williams, Loretta Lynn, Patsy

Cline and Johnny Cash, 7:30 p.m., Weber Center, La Crosse, [www.webercenterfortheperformingarts.org](http://www.webercenterfortheperformingarts.org).

**Feb. 14**, VDay One Billion Rising, 10 a.m.-2 p.m., Valley View Mall.

**Feb. 15**, *Harriet Tubman and the Underground Railroad*, 10 a.m. & 12:45 p.m., Heider Center for the Arts, West Salem, [www.heidercenter.org](http://www.heidercenter.org).

**Feb. 16**, The Peking Acrobats, 7:30 p.m., Viterbo Fine Arts Center, [www.viterbo.edu/fac](http://www.viterbo.edu/fac).

**Feb. 16**, *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*, 6:30 p.m., Page Theatre, St. Mary's University, Winona, [www.pagetheatre.org](http://www.pagetheatre.org).

**Feb. 18**, The Manhattan Dolls "Rockin' with the Dolls: A '50s/'60s Revue," 7:30 p.m., Heider Center for the Arts, West Salem, [www.heidercenter.org](http://www.heidercenter.org).

**Feb. 18-20**, DanceScape 2016, 7:30 p.m., Performing Arts Center, Winona State University, [www.wsuartsickets.com](http://www.wsuartsickets.com).

**Feb. 20**, Old School Variety Show, 7:30 p.m., The Pump House, La Crosse, [www.thepumphouse.org](http://www.thepumphouse.org).

**Feb. 23**, Voces8, 7:30 p.m., Viterbo Fine Arts Center, [www.viterbo.edu/fac](http://www.viterbo.edu/fac).

**Feb. 24-28**, Frozen River Film Festival, Winona, [www.frff.org](http://www.frff.org).

**Feb. 26-Mar. 6**, *Singin' in the Rain*, 7:30 p.m. Fri.-Sat., 2 p.m. Sun., Toland Theatre, UW-La Crosse.

**Feb. 26-28**, Wedding and Prom Expo, Valley View Mall, [www.myvalleyview.com](http://www.myvalleyview.com).

**Feb. 27**, *Aladdin*, Missoula Children's Theatre, 1 & 4 p.m., Heider Center for the Arts, West Salem, [www.heidercenter.org](http://www.heidercenter.org).

**Feb. 27**, Lynn Biddick, 7:30 p.m., The Pump House, La Crosse, [www.thepumphouse.org](http://www.thepumphouse.org).

**Feb. 28**, ZooZoo, Imago Theatre, 7:30 p.m., Viterbo Fine Arts Center, [www.viterbo.edu/fac](http://www.viterbo.edu/fac).

**Feb. 29-Mar. 7**, South Asian Film Festival, 6 p.m., 1309 Centennial Hall, UW-La Crosse, [www.uwlax.edu/south-asian-filmfest](http://www.uwlax.edu/south-asian-filmfest).

**Mar. 2**, *All My Sons*, Montana Repertory Theatre, 7:30 p.m., Viterbo Fine Arts Center, [www.viterbo.edu/fac](http://www.viterbo.edu/fac).

**Mar. 4-6**, International Festival of Owls, Houston, MN, [www.festivalofowls.com](http://www.festivalofowls.com) or 507-896-6957

**Mar. 5**, La Crosse Polar Plunge, 8 a.m.-3 p.m., Pettibone Beach, La Crosse, [www.polarplungewi.org](http://www.polarplungewi.org).

**Mar. 10-13**, *The Drowsy Chaperone*, Thurs.-Sat. 7:30 p.m., Sun. 3 p.m., Page Theatre, St. Mary's University, Winona, [www.pagetheatre.org](http://www.pagetheatre.org).

**Mar. 11-20**, *Boeing Boeing*, 7:30 p.m. Thurs.-Sat., 2 p.m. Sun., La Crosse Community Theatre, [www.lacrossecommunitytheatre.org](http://www.lacrossecommunitytheatre.org).

**Mar. 17**, Billy McGuigan "Yesterday and Today," 7:30 p.m., Heider Center for the Arts, West Salem, [www.heidercenter.org](http://www.heidercenter.org).

**Mar. 18**, Aspen Santa Fe Ballet, 7:30 p.m., Viterbo Fine Arts Center, [www.viterbo.edu/fac](http://www.viterbo.edu/fac).

**Mar. 18-19**, Coulee Region Unscripted, 7:30 p.m., The Pump House, La Crosse, [www.thepumphouse.org](http://www.thepumphouse.org).

**Mar. 18-19**, *Cat in the Hat* Traveling Tour, Fri. 7:30 p.m., Sat. 2 p.m., Black Box Theatre, Winona State University, [www.wsuartsickets.com](http://www.wsuartsickets.com).

**Mar. 20**, *Are You My Mother?*, 7:30 p.m., Viterbo Fine Arts Center, [www.viterbo.edu/fac](http://www.viterbo.edu/fac).

**Mar. 21**, *Henry and Mudge*, 10 a.m. & 12:45 p.m., Heider Center for the Arts, West Salem, [www.heidercenter.org](http://www.heidercenter.org).

**Mar. 24**, Masterworks6, 7:30 p.m., Heider Center for the Arts, West Salem, [www.heidercenter.org](http://www.heidercenter.org).

**Apr. 2**, Ellis Paul, 7:30 p.m., The Pump House, La Crosse, [www.thepumphouse.org](http://www.thepumphouse.org).



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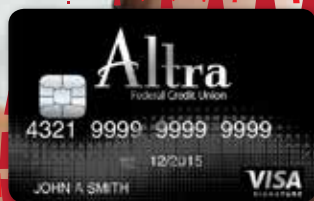
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