

Coulee Region Woman

AREA HOME AND HEALTH

CREATURE COMFORTS THE DOC IS IN

*Jean Heyt Coulee Region's
1ST Woman Vet*

**Women Caring
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A GOOD HOME
Profiles in
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The
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OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 2010

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my daughter is smiling again

Julie writes...

"My daughter is 9 yrs old and started experiencing headaches about 6 months ago. At first I would treat her with motrin but as time went on the headaches were getting progressively worse.... I took her to a chiropractor...for 2 weeks with no results. The next step was to take her to the pediatrician who diagnosed her as having migraines & prescribed medication....she was still in pain every day and was beginning to miss school.One day I had received a phone call from her school " mom, I don't think I can make it "..... She was seen in urgent care & this doctor diagnosed her as having migraine symptoms & prescribed a shot of Imitrex....

....There were many days that she would lay under a desk at school in excruciating pain and trying to avoid light. The next step was taking her to the eye doctor. Her prescription was good so I bought her new glasses with transition lenses and anti glare coating....it did not seem to make any difference with the headaches.....My next appointment for her was at the neurologist...everything came back negative and he was unsure what could be triggering the headaches but ordered an MRI which also came back negative.....

....Her headaches continued and she starting experiencing vertigo...so I started researching on my own to find some answers. While doing my research I came across some articles on TMJ and headache pain relief thru neuromuscular dentistry. After reading as much as I could, I knew the TMJ symptoms where what my daughter was experiencing.... I did a search for a neuromuscular dentist in our area and found Dr. Jon Feisthis office was the first place I had gone that actually understood exactly what we had been experiencing....

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CONTENTS

OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 2010

PROFILE

- 11 HELPING PETS, HELPING PEOPLE**
The Coulee Region's first woman vet reflects on a career born of a love of animals.
by **LINDSAY BONNAR**

CAREERS

- 15 PET PROFESSIONALS**
When it comes to serving your pet, these businesses have gone to the dogs.
by **FRAN RYBARIK**

PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL

- 18 NATURE IS THEIR CALLING**
Three women in the Coulee Region, work to save the wildlife they love
by **MARTHA KEEFFE**

NONPROFIT

- 21 HORSES WHO HEAL**
Horse-based therapy programs open doors for mental and physical growth.
by **SHARI HEGLAND**

WOMEN IN THE REGION

- 24 HAVE YOU ANY WOOL?**
Meet the fuzzy faces behind locally grown luxury fibers.
by **HEIDI OVERSON**

FAMILY

- 27 TIME TO SAY GOODBYE**
Here's how to help your family through the loss of a pet.
by **MICHELLE BYOM**

HOME

- 29 IN HARMONY WITH NATURE**
A local couple lives with animals inside and out.
by **JULIE NELSON**

HEALTHY LIVING

- 33 PET THERAPY**
Having a pet is good for your soul—and so much more.
by **KIM BRASEL**

IN EVERY ISSUE:

FROM THE EDITOR **7** | IN THE KNOW **9** | ACCOMPLISHMENTS **46**
ADVERTISER INDEX **54** | COMMUNITY CALENDAR **54**



CREATURE COMFORTS

11

FAMILY

- 36 IN SEARCH OF A GOOD HOME**
A commitment to animals fuels the work of local animal adoption organizations.
by **HEIDI GRIMINGER BLANKE**

FOOD

- 39 ANIMAL, VEGETABLE, HEALTHFUL**
Here's a simple primer on how to eat—for health and happiness.
by **BETTY CHRISTIANSEN**

RETAIL THERAPY

- 42 FALL INTO FAUX**
Let your inner animal pounce on these fall fashions.
by **MELISSA HANSON**

ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT

- 47 A YEAR OF POULTRY, PIGS AND PARENTING**
Michael Perry's Coop gives a glimpse into farming life—and love.
by **BILL LEONARD**

MOTHER EARTH

- 49 WHO'S EATING YOUR GARBAGE?**
Red worms turn household waste into super-compost. And you don't have to walk them.
by **MAURA HENN**

TRAVEL

- 51 WHERE THE WILD THINGS ARE**
From alligators to zebras, animals can make—or break—your next vacation.
by **CHARISH BADZINSKI**

PICTURED ON THE COVER AND ABOVE:

Jean Heyt, co-owner of Thompson Animal Medical Center
Photos on cover, above and on page 11 by Janet Mootz Photography
Hair by Bellissimo-Jane Olson, makeup by Mary Kay-Trudy Swenson



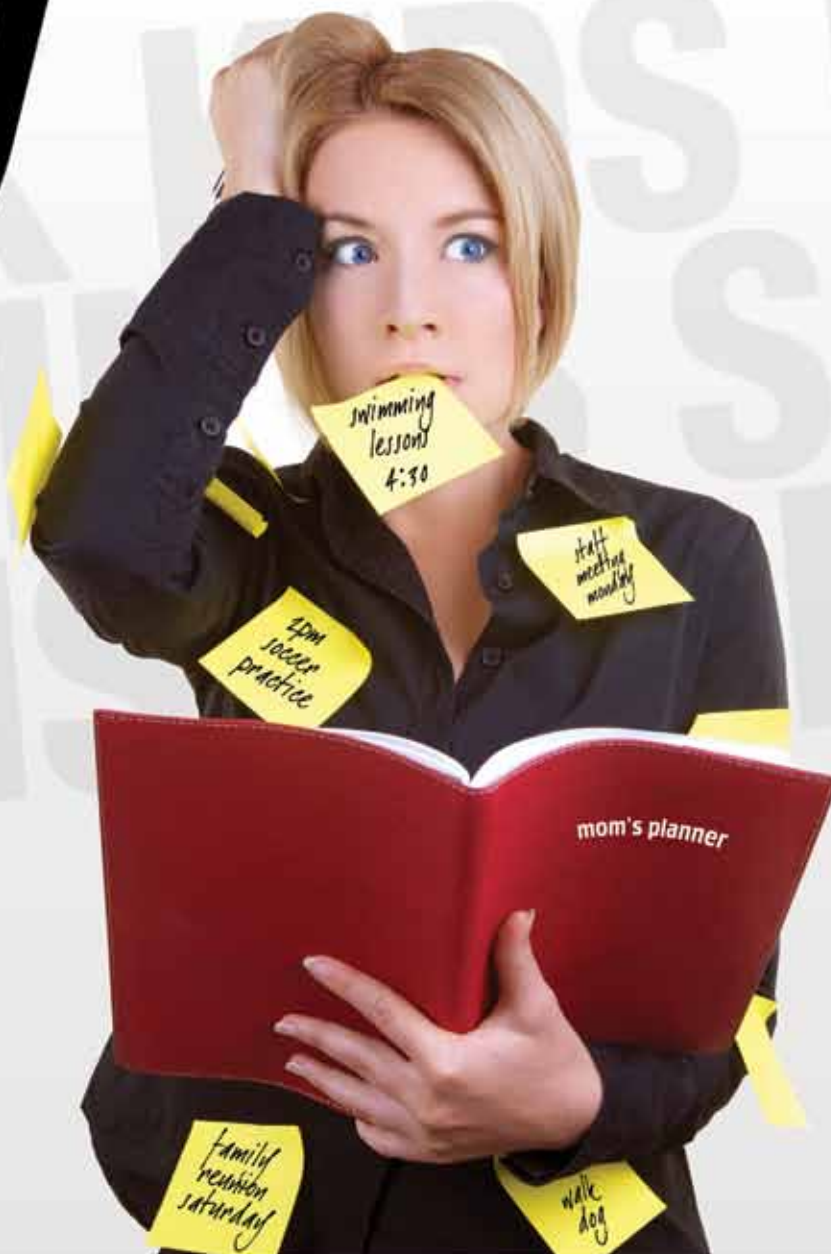
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First, there was Winkie. She was a mostly rat terrier mutt, a stout little barrel of a dog who was apt to get so excited at seeing “her family” that she’d run several laps around the house when our car entered the yard. She was the first pet I ever had, a friendly companion to the four little girls in her charge.

Then, there was Snuffy. He was a mostly border collie mutt, arriving at our house as a puppy when I was about 9. Snuffy was a digger and a chewer, and we quickly learned not to leave our Barbies on the lawn. He was particularly attached to my mother and a tabby barn cat named Ralph, and I witnessed his growing up as he did mine. I was sitting at my desk at my first job out of college the day my sister called to tell me he’d succumbed to his old age.

Sam was my dad’s dog, a feisty, super-protective Australian something, who looked like a dingo. She was the only family dog to breach the threshold and enjoy evenings *inside* the house. Taken up with cats by that point in my adulthood—I had two, Max and Maggie, who are immortalized in their own set of stories—she was my vicarious dog.

My parents have no dogs these days, and neither do I. We’ve filled the void with two children, three cats, an aquarium of fish and our latest acquisition, a Betta named Wally brought to our doorstep late one night by a college student who was moving out and had to abandon him. We also have (though not at our house) 40 head of beef cattle, distinctly not pets, but we name them all, anyway.

Animals make up an enormous part of our lives. Whether they’re dear pets, the birds outside our window, the rabbits we chase from our gardens or the exotics we admire from afar, they enrich, color and warm our lives. They’re the purring stretch that greets us at the end of the day or the soulful eyes that soothe our saddest moments. In honor of them all, we’ve focused this issue of *Coulee Region Women* on “Creature Comforts.” Here, you’ll meet women who dedicate their lives to the care and well-being of animals of all stripes, and animals—from house pets to horses—who do the same for humans. We’ll walk on the wild side with owls and foxes, elephants and alpacas, and take inspiration from them in home and fashion. You’ll see how an animal can transform a career, a family, a life.

Not that you need to be told. Whether feathered or furry, scaly or stabled, a ball of fire or a fond memory, the animals in your life are no doubt legends of their own.

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FASHION, FOOD AND FUN

Check out the latest trends at the Fashion Cornucopia Style Show on Saturday, Oct. 30, at Our Savior's Lutheran Church. Fashion Cornucopia is a fund-raiser for the Women's Clothes Closet housed at Our Savior's, providing gently used clothing to low-income women, especially those who are entering the workforce.

Two shows that day will feature fashions from local merchants including Chic Boutique, City Wear, Kick, Lillians, Lark, JoBa Flat, Scott Joseph Menswear, Three Rivers Outdoors and Touch of Class. Doors open at 11 a.m. for the first show and 5 p.m. for the second show. Tickets are \$25 and include a gourmet meal, live music and tours of the Women's Clothes Closet. Tickets are only sold in advance and can be obtained by calling 608-782-3468 or visiting www.oursaviorslutheranchurch.net. All proceeds will benefit the Women's Clothes Closet.

TINY TIM GALA— NOW WITH JINGLE BELL BRUNCH!



The 24th annual Tiny Tim Gala and Festival of Trees, held Nov. 12-14, now features new sponsorship opportunities, a new venue and an elegant Jingle Bell Brunch.

The Festival of Trees viewing will be held Friday, Nov. 12, 4-8 p.m., and Saturday, Nov. 13, 10 a.m.-2 p.m. A free will offering is requested at the door. Get a jump on your holiday shopping at the Dickens Shoppe, open both days. The Tiny Tim Gala Benefit is held Saturday at 6 p.m., with an elegant dinner, entertainment and silent and live auctions. Reservations are required. Cost is \$75.00 per person.

A new event, the Jingle Bell Brunch, is planned for Sunday, Nov. 14 with seatings at 9:30 a.m. and 11:30 a.m. Children can participate in a coloring contest and photos with Santa. All Tiny Tim events will be held in the Cargill Room at the Waterfront Center in downtown La Crosse. Watch for updates on www.tinytimgala.org.

This annual event of the Franciscan Skemp Auxiliary benefits St. Clare Health Mission, the YWCA A-PRO program, the Salvation Army Psychiatric Care Program and Gerard Hall at Franciscan Skemp.



DOWNSIZE AT THE NEW U

If you recently changed your size and need new clothes, stop by the New U, located at 125 S. Sixth St. in downtown La Crosse. The store was founded to help women who have recently undergone a weight-reduction surgery and need new clothes because of their rapidly changing size. Women can exchange their old clothes for new ones, as often as they need to. The clothing is free for weight-loss surgery patients, but the store is also open to the general public—who are asked to make a donation in exchange for clothing. The store is open Tuesdays and Thursdays from 5:30 to 8 p.m. and the first and third Saturdays of each month from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.



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WOMEN'S EXPO

Susan Vass,
speaker at Gundersen Lutheran's Women's Expo

Learn about healthy lifestyles at the eighth annual Gundersen Lutheran Women's Expo, held 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Saturday, Oct. 23, at the Onalaska Omni Center. The event will feature keynote speaker Susan Vass, who will address "What's So Funny about Being a Female." A professional comedian for nearly three decades, Vass has opened for acts such as Joan Rivers, the Smothers Brothers and Jay Leno, and has appeared several times on Garrison Keillor's *A Prairie Home Companion*.

In addition, the Women's Expo offers breakout sessions, demonstrations, screenings, local business and organization exhibits and a fashion show. For more information, call 608-775-6861 or visit gundluth.org/womensexpo.



HOLIDAY SPIRIT HITS THE STREETS

Get your holiday shopping started early and have fun at it during downtown La Crosse's Holiday Open House, scheduled for Friday, Nov. 12 from 5-10 p.m. More than 50 stores participate in this festive event, complete with carolers, food and shopping opportunities galore. For more information, visit www.lacrossedowntown.com.



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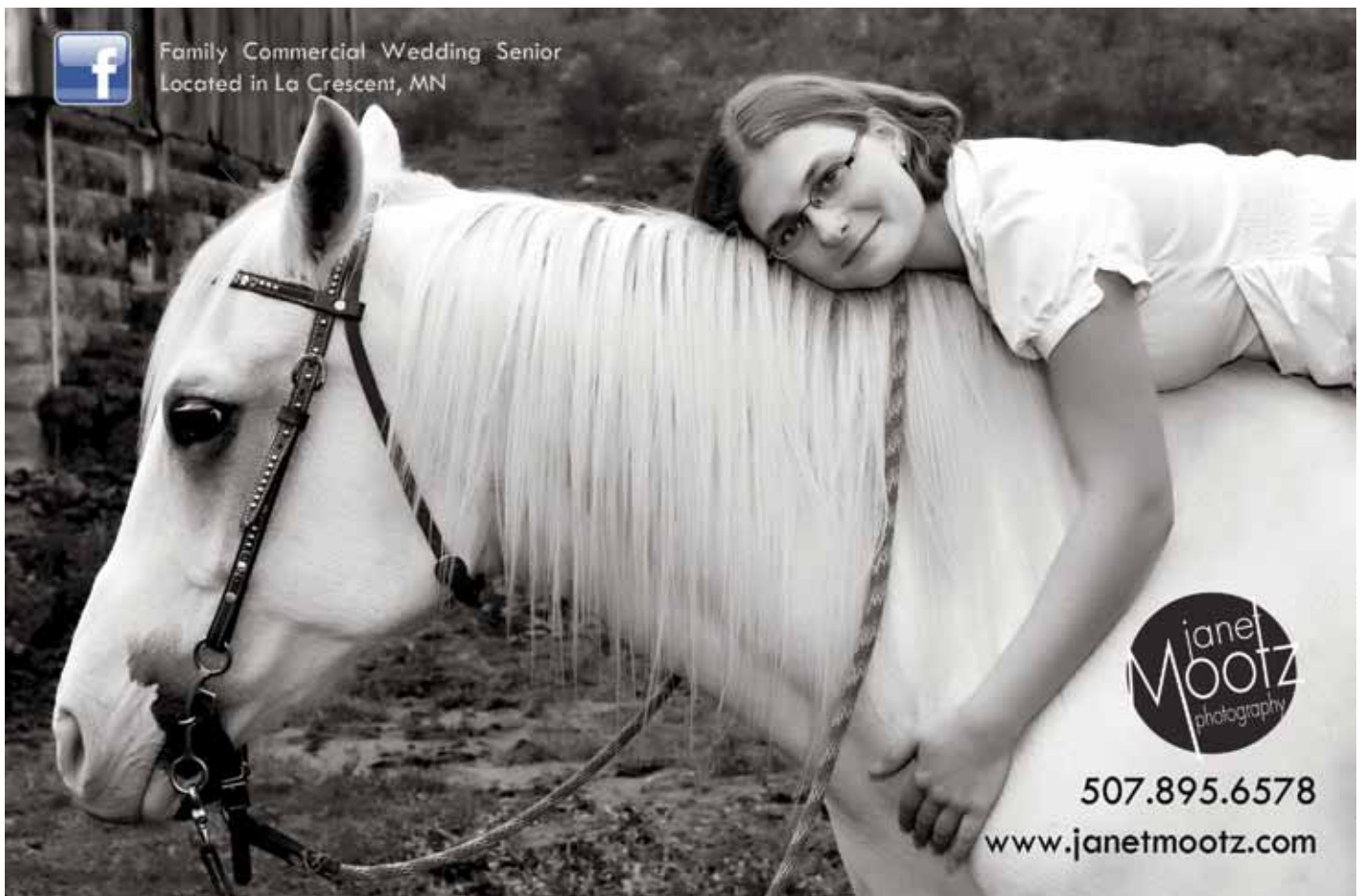
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HEALING PETS, HELPING PEOPLE

The Coulee Region's first woman vet reflects on a career born of a love of animals.

by **LINDSAY BONNAR**

CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

From a young age, Dr. Jean Heyt knew what she wanted to be when she grew up. Having spent most of her childhood in Sparta, Mich., shadowing her veterinarian father, Gerard Heyt, it's no surprise that she became one, too—and now runs Thompson Animal Medical Center of La Crosse with her husband, Dr. Tom Thompson.

"I guess I was indoctrinated pretty early on," Heyt says. Her joy at watching her father at work lasted all through high school. She knew what she wanted to be, and college and veterinary school were the next steps on her journey there.

When it came time to start applying for college, however, she met with a few obstacles. "I went to school back in the '70s, when women were still having to fight their way a little bit," Heyt explains. When she told her high school adviser that she wanted to attend Michigan State University, he would not give her the application, telling her that there was "no way she should be doing that."

"It made me so angry!" Heyt says.

She got an application on her own, and when she was accepted, she informed the adviser that she wanted to be a veterinarian. Incredibly, he told her that she would never make it. In 1976, Heyt graduated from Michigan State University School of Veterinary Medicine and proudly notes that she is the only doctor of any kind from her high school graduating class of 250.

A hands-on education

Heyt fondly recalls her veterinary education—from background biochemistry classes to hands-on labs to learning by her father's side.

"The first time you think of a treatment and it actually works, the little light comes on. You start to think, 'This is really great!'" Heyt says. She enjoyed surgery and being able to "fix things that needed fixing." When she visited home during school breaks, her father let her do surgeries with him, and she showed him new techniques she'd learned.

"It was a big bonding thing for me and my father," Heyt says. "We were able to be colleagues."

Dr. Heyt's rescued cat Turbo is a clinic mascot.



A large-animal veterinarian, Heyt's father had little interest in cats and dogs. "He was always really annoyed with me when we'd go to farms, and I would play with the cats and talk to the dogs while he'd be out with the cows," she says.

Her father never let her own a cat because he didn't want one in the house. But one day a litter of kittens came in to her veterinary school to be put to sleep, and Heyt kept one. Her dad fell in love. "I took him home for Dad to declaw, and he never gave him back to me," Heyt says. He later told her that he understood his clients better because of the cat, who lived to be 21 years old.

A vet clinic love story

During college, Heyt also met her husband and business partner, Dr. Tom Thompson. The couple came to La Crosse in 1978 and opened their own clinic, making Heyt the first woman vet in the area. Heyt fondly recalls those early years. "You do everything yourself; you're a two-man show," she says.

Despite the hard work and expenses, Heyt says, the struggle was worth it. She credits their success to the fact that she and Thompson made a good team—he handled the public relations while she took care of the hands-on work.

"We worked well that way," she says. "He would go out into the public, and I would stay at the business and keep up caretaking and boarding." Heyt believes that community involvement of the sort Thompson fostered is invaluable for helping a business grow.

Healing people, too

She also believes that while being a veterinarian is about taking care of the pets, it is actually more about taking care of people.

"The job is a mix, and it's not always patient care. I think that you really can't treat (an animal) correctly unless you know where they fit in the family. You need to know both sides."

Heyt recalls in particular a Labrador named Misty and her family. Misty was diagnosed with lymphoma right about the time that lymphoma was found to be treatable and sometimes curable in dogs. "She was just the toughest dog," Heyt says.



Doing surgeries is one of Jean Heyt's favorite aspects of being a veterinarian. She enjoys being able to "fix things that need fixing."

"She'd come roaring in here. You would have to lie on her to give her the chemo, and then she'd go roaring back out!"

Misty made it through chemotherapy and ended up living a full life. When she was 16, her joints became so bad that she couldn't walk, and Heyt went to the family's house to put her to sleep.

"I love the emotional part of it," Heyt says. She finds that she can become "in tune" with both the animals and their owners, learning their needs as well as their feelings. She loves being able to help them work through tough decisions.

"You're almost like a counselor at this point," Heyt says.

An ambassador for animals

Thompson Animal Medical Center also works with the Coulee Region Humane Society, performing spays and neuters, and taking rotating shifts for emergencies with other area clinics. She works to keep from having to end the lives of many animals, even if it means taking them in.

"We've had four cats, and they were all Humane Society specials," she says, with one exception: One evening, a 12-week-old kitten was brought to her house. He

had been struck by a car and "was hanging on, but wasn't looking too good."

"Don't you dare put him to sleep!" her daughter, Chiyo, said.

Heyt found that the kitten had a broken back. But she saw that he had some control and "was purring like crazy!" She treated him with steroids, antibiotics and water therapy, and six years later, Turbo the cat is still at the clinic.

"He has a little cart that he drags himself around on," Heyt says. "Really, we don't even think of him as different from any other cats. He even tried to climb a tree once, with the cart hanging on!" Thompson takes Turbo to area schools, where he speaks about Turbo's "altered abilities," and in doing so teaches kids that obstacles can be overcome.

Heyt often spends her free time with her two dogs, Holly and Truman. "You hate to think that your outside-of-work thing is playing with the dogs, but it is. That's our relaxation!" she says. Clearly, Heyt's love of animals carries over into nearly every aspect of her life. ♣

Lindsay Bonnar spends much of her free time with her two English setters, Digger and Gwynnie.

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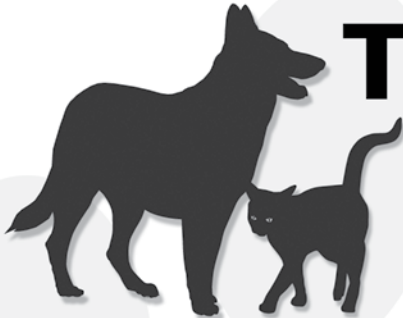


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In the early years of marriage, women are the relationship caretakers. They carefully monitor their relationships to make sure there is enough closeness and connection. If not, women will do what they can to try to fix things. If their husbands aren't responsive, women become extremely unhappy and start complaining about everything under the sun...things that need to get done around the house, responsibilities pertaining to the children, how free time is spent, and so on. Unfortunately, when women complain, men generally retreat and the marriage deteriorates even more.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

For additional support, give us a call right away at 608.785.7000 x21 for an appointment with a Licensed Professional Counselor or Marriage & Family Therapist.

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PET PROFESSIONALS

When it comes to serving your pet, these businesses have gone to the dogs.

by **FRAN RYBARIK**
CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

Getting a new pet involves more than picking it up at the pound or pet store and taking it to the vet. Just like humans, creatures need food, water, love, attention and an occasional treat. They may need baths or haircuts. Some need licenses, shots and regular checkups. Many need exercise and training and someone to watch over them when their people aren't around.

According to a 2009/2010 national survey by the American Pet Products Association, 62 percent of U.S. households include a pet. Cats and dogs are the most common, as evidenced by the amount of retail space their toys, treats, food and supplies take up in pet chain stores and pet departments of big box stores. In the Coulee Region, a variety of businesses—large and small—provide services and products to help keep our favorite animals safe and happy.

Puppy pointers

Whether you adopt an older dog or get a puppy with papers, training can make the difference in how a dog fits into a family. Will Fido be a faithful companion, a shoe eater or a pest?

"Relationship is key," states Laurie Haake, owner of the Family Dog Center in La Crosse. "The owner needs to put their

feet in their dog's paws to see the dog's perspective. Dogs need to keep busy, have a job and know who is in charge. Training helps the human and the canine understand each other and develop their relationship."

Haake teaches individual and group classes like puppy preschool, therapy dog classes and competitive training; she hosts competitive local and national events in agility, obedience and fly ball racing; and she is opening a state-of-the-art boarding facility that will be staffed 24/7. Haake also installs underground fences.

The Family Dog Center carries toys and supplies as well as distinctive gift ideas for dogs and their guardians. Healthy foods, treats and supplements for dogs with skin, joint, digestive and geriatric needs round out the retail area.

"My work is fun," Haake shares. "I feel good that I have helped a lot of people keep a dog in their life through training."

Doggie day care

Right next door to the Family Dog Center is Diggity Dog Care, where people can drop their dogs off on the way to work or play and pick them up on the way home (no overnight boarding is available). Indoor and outdoor play areas can accommodate



Karla Toppen's Doggie Business specializes in yard waste removal, as well as invisible fence installation, boarding and pet sitting.

more than 40 dogs. The average is around 30, according to Mika Remlinger.

"Some dogs come once a week, some three times," Remlinger says. "People want their dogs to get used to being with other dogs, as well as to be able to play and run." Diggity Dog Care also sponsors Bark in the Park and the Diggity Dog Dip at the Onalaska swimming pool each summer.

About the yard

And then there's yard cleanup. Many pet businesses sell pooper scoopers that range from basic shovels to electric vacuums that suck waste into a plastic bag for disposal.

But when the stuff piles up, Doggie Business LLC can help. They clean your yard and remove the waste when it is convenient for you. You can hire them to come for a onetime cleaning or on a regular basis. Or you can rent a bucket from them, scoop your own yard and have it hauled away to be composted.

Karla Toppen's business utilizes her

customer service skills and her love of animals. It all started with a business plan she wrote for a school project that became a reality when her professor hired her to clean his yard.

Besides yard waste removal, Doggie Business installs invisible fencing and offers daycare and boarding, pet sitting, dog walking and pet transportation services. Their service area ranges from Sparta to Winona.

"It's a continual learning process," Toppen asserts. "Sometimes our growth comes from a customer's request. That's how we got into pet sitting."

Besides researching sanitation laws and networking with other "scoopers," Toppen carefully chooses and cross-trains employees so customers never need to worry that their pets aren't cared for or their yard isn't

cleaned as scheduled. "We are all trained in pet first aid," she says. "And we can even pick up your mail and turn on some lights if we are pet sitting for you."

Looking good

Many dogs and some cats need baths, haircuts and nail trimming on a regular basis. Elite Kibble grooms cats and dogs by appointment. Sheila Panke and her son, Kevin, started the business in 2005. As their name implies, they stock high-quality pet food with no grains or by-products, and special foods and supplements for animals with health problems. "Our focus is always on the health of the pet," Panke points out.

The inventory in their new Village Shopping Center location includes toys, healthy treats, supplies and other equipment. Besides grooming, their services include dog training, microchip insertion, shot clinics and day care. Recognizing the unique and devoted nature of cat owners, they have a special section of

the store labeled "Feline Friends"—but it doesn't include training classes.

Spiders and snakes and chinchillas—oh my!

Not into cats or dogs? Check out Marineland Pet Center in Onalaska. They specialize in freshwater and saltwater fish and everything you need for your own aquarium. They also have small pets, reptiles and birds—like spiders, lizards, snakes, tortoises, parakeets, cockatiels, and even hedgehogs and chinchillas.

Stephen Sacia of Marineland says, "Each pet comes with an equipment list and guidance on its care. It's not hard to take care of any of these animals. It just needs to be done on a regular basis."

Some folks say that their pets are their best companions in life. These businesses can help people return the favor. You can teach young and old dogs new tricks, get special food for a fussy cat or even find a brand-new kind of family pet.

For a list of pet businesses in the area, please visit www.crwmagazine.com. ❀

Fran Rybarik writes from her home in La Crescent. Researching this article stirred up fond memories of her dog companions, Sandy, Frito and Farley.

RESOURCES

Family Dog Center

2930 Airport Rd., La Crosse
608-779-3647
www.familydogcenter.com

Diggity Dog Care

2926 Airport Rd., La Crosse
608-779-9997
www.diggitydogdaycare.com

Doggie Business LLC

319 North Star Rd., Holmen
608-399-1266
www.doggiebusinessllc.net

Elite Kibble

Village Shopping Center, La Crosse
608-781-4550
www.elitekibble.biz

Marineland Pet Centers

412 Oak Forest Dr., Onalaska
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For a more comprehensive list of Coulee Region pet businesses, visit www.crwmagazine.com.

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NATURE IS THEIR CALLING

Three women in the Coulee Region,
work to save the wildlife they love.

by **MARTHA KEEFFE**
CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS



Alice the Owl and her handler, Karla Kinstler of the Houston Nature Center, have put owls and the small community of Houston, Minn., in the international spotlight.

We love our pets. They live in our houses, ride in our cars and sleep in our beds. But what about the squirrels, birds and the deer that frequent our yards, eat from the garden and roam freely in the woods? Who's looking out for them?

Meet three women who, through their knowledge, commitment and dedication, have given our wild friends a place of respect, refuge and understanding.

Education is key

Nestled between the forested bluffs to the east, the Mississippi to the west and the ever-changing landscape of the marshland throughout, the La Crosse area literally rubs shoulders with nature.

"And we at the EcoPark are right in the middle of it all," says Stephanie Hanna, Education and Conservation Manager of the Myrick Hixon EcoPark. "We are so close to nature, which gives us plenty of opportunities to get out there and enjoy it. (The EcoPark) provides the perfect avenue for education."

With a degree in education and biology, Hanna is well equipped to educate the public about wildlife, nature and how people can best interact with it. "Education is my primary focus," says Hanna. "By encouraging people to learn about wildlife and its habitat, I try to teach people to respect animals in the wild without being afraid."

Through programming, Hanna helps increase people's awareness of their surroundings. Hands-on sensory and exploratory classes help foster a personal connection between

young children and their environment, additional knowledge and application inspire interest in environmental issues in older children, and continuing education classes, such as making a rain garden and nature walks, keep adults rooted to the outdoors.

"I want the public to hear different perspectives on the issues and challenges that face our communities and nature," says Hanna. "That way, they can take what they've learned and make up their own minds about it."

If nothing else, Hanna hopes to eliminate some of misgivings that come with living so close to nature and its inhabitants. "Use common sense and don't freak out," she advises. "Just observe, then walk away. Animals are more afraid of us than we are of them and will not do anything unless provoked."

Proper care and handling

Suzanne Broten, who began working as a wildlife rehabilitator in 1986, concurs, especially when a well-meaning person encounters a seemingly orphaned or injured animal. People instinctively want to help and have difficulty believing a baby animal would be left unattended or that they should not administer help if it is injured.

"When people call about animals and birds they have found, we first try to make sure it is a true orphan," says Broten, who works as a licensed rehabilitator with Coulee Wildlife Rehabilitation Center, Inc. "Many times these animals can be put back into the nest they came from, artificial nests can sometimes be made or (they can be) simply left alone, as the parent is probably nearby." Should it be determined that the



Left: Wildlife rehabilitator Suzanne Broten works with a rescued otter. Animals “can leave footprints on your heart,” she says.

Right: Naturalist Stephanie Hanna educates the public on living with and respecting wildlife in her work at the Myrick Hixon EcoPark.

animal is truly orphaned or in need of medical assistance, the next step is to have it carefully transported to a licensed rehabilitation center.

But, stresses Broten, people should never attempt to raise wild animals. Wild creatures require quality diets to meet specific nutritional needs, they can carry parasites that can infect small pets and children, and as they mature they become aggressive. “Wild animals do not make good pets,” says Broten. “And rehabilitating without the proper license is illegal, and one can be fined.”

Plus, the energy and time commitment needed to rehabilitate wildlife rivals that of running a day care. “Our busiest time of year is between April and October, when the babies start arriving. A typical day runs from 6 a.m. to sometimes past midnight for any critical care animals,” says Broten. “Most babies need to be fed every four hours throughout the daylight hours, and time away from home can only be between feedings.” This downtime is used to clean cages and catch up on household responsibilities before the whole routine begins again. But the reward of releasing an animal back into the wild is well worth it.

“The animals and birds can teach us so much if we only take the time to

observe,” adds Broten. “They can leave footprints on your heart and cause us to be more caring to nature and the world around us.”

The wonderful things they do

Karla Kinstler, naturalist and director of the Houston Nature Center in Houston, Minn., agrees. Following a lifelong passion to learn and understand everything about raptors, Kinstler has taken that interest and focused it primarily on owls. Known as “the owl lady,” Kinstler has been guardian to Alice, an injured Great Horned Owl, who came to her in 1998. After falling from her nest, Alice, who suffered a permanent injury to her wing, recuperated with a wildlife rehabilitator before being released into the care of Kinstler, who employs the owl as a wildlife educator for schools and the public.

“Since the ultimate goal in rehabilitating an animal is to release it back into the wild, injured wildlife that will not fully recover have to ‘get a job’ or be euthanized,” says Kinstler. For example, because of her injury, Alice would not have survived in the wild. But because she displayed an easy demeanor with humans, she made a perfect candidate for wildlife programming. And

whether she is seen watching the action from her perch in the nature center or turning heads in public while hitching a ride on Kinstler’s arm, Alice is certainly drawing attention—enough attention, in fact, for the International Owl Festival to take place and the idea of a North American Owl Center and breeding and release program to take flight.

What began as a local party to recognize Alice’s hatching day has grown into an internationally recognized owl festival. “Attendance has climbed from about 300 people to nearly 12,000,” says Kinstler. “It was from that success that the idea of the owl center came forward.”

And when you have one good idea, you run with it. “It all started out with the idea I had to breed Great Horned Owls as part of a vocal study,” says Kinstler, referring to the breeding and release cages being built to accommodate this endeavor. With the completion of a perfect environment to study owls, their behaviors and vocalizations 24/7, Kinstler hopes to broaden the understanding of the beloved owl. “I just know in my heart that it will happen,” she says. ♣

Martha Keffe, who has two cats, one dog and two fish, finds that living with pets keeps life interesting, if not a bit hairy.



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HORSES WHO HEAL

Horse-based therapy programs open doors for mental and physical growth.

by **SHARI HEGLAND**

CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

As 13-year-old Austin Clark leads two mares around cones and over a jump, he tunes in to their body language and interaction, pointing out signs of dominance or cooperation. In the nine months he has been coming to Flying Horse Stable in La Crosse, he claims, he has learned the difference between being a leader and being a boss. “Before I came here, I thought the whole world revolved around me,” he says.

He unsnaps the lead ropes from the mares’ halters, acknowledging that they could choose to take advantage of their new freedom—something he himself has done to family members in the past.

“They could easily trample us right now, but they don’t because of the relationship,” he says. “(Working with horses) is all a big compromise. You don’t always get what you want, but I feel safe out here.”

Those are big statements from a young man battling anxiety disorder, says Dawn Johns Swenson, who was a school psychologist for 35 years before she and her sister,

Jewel Johns Root, and friend Lisa Carmichael founded the counseling program based on interaction with horses.

Flying Horse Stable is a mental health program using horses as partners in helping people facing depression, substance abuse, post-traumatic stress disorder, and anxiety and eating disorders. It also helps youth with Asperger syndrome learn effective communication and responsibility that transfers to school performance and family relationships.

*“The outside of a horse
is good for the inside
of a man.”*



Why horses?

"Horses are intuitive," Root says. "These horses seem to literally understand their words." They are compassionate and give honest, immediate feedback that fosters mutual respect. Horses mirror many of the same mannerisms and emotions as people, providing opportunities for participants to work on partnership, mindfulness and confidence.

Kachina Leotie, 51, of La Crosse, credits Flying Horse Stable with drawing her out of a prison of depression and fear. Originally afraid of the horses, she now feels confident and safe around them. "The horses are teaching me that even though they are bigger, I can hold my own," she says, a skill that carries over into her everyday life. "I'm able to conquer my fear of people. I was afraid to go out. Now, I'll catch the city bus."

Swenson says the program strives to help individuals like Leotie gain independence and life skills to become positive community members. Flying Horse Stable provides individual, group or workshop sessions year-round.

So much fun, they forget it's work

While 9-year-old Erik O'Brien is playing games on a horse, dropping balls into buckets or identifying letters, he thinks only about how much fun it is. But his mom, Marlis, knows what is really happening at HorseSense for Special Riders.

"He thinks it's hilarious that he's doing different things on the horse," she says, "but he's actually working different muscles," having to twist and reach across his body to put the ball in a bucket or hold the reins into the air. What seem like games to Erik are actually carefully planned activities that address the challenges he faces, including poor core strength, difficulties twisting and bending, and trouble tracking both eyes together.



Austin Clark, 13, learns about mutual respect and leadership at Flying Horse Stable.



Andrea Clark of Holmen grooms her horse after a riding session at HorseSense for Special Riders.



Erik O'Brien, 9, has improved his balance, core strength and vocabulary through therapy sessions at HorseSense for Special Riders.

Learn More

Flying Horse Stables
608-317-1448
www.flyinghorsestable.net

HorseSense for Special Riders
608-791-4868
www.hssrweb.org

Marlis says the horses and therapists in the La Crosse-based program for individuals with disabilities have also helped Erik increase his vocabulary by leaps and bounds.

"Normally, he would add a couple of words a month to his vocabulary," she says. Knowing that, the therapists incorporate speech therapy into the riding session, having Erik say a word or color before the horse will move. "At times, he was adding more than 10 words a week that he would at least try to enunciate."

The beauty of HorseSense, says Maggie McDonald, executive director, is that the participants are focused on the horses, rather than the therapeutic aspect of the session. "It's not in a hospital, it's not in a clinic, it's not in a PT room—it's outside on the back of a horse," she says. "They don't even think about the fact that they are working these muscles."

Andrea Clark, a Holmen High School junior who has been participating in HorseSense for nine years, appreciates the physical benefits—"They give me a really good stretch in my legs, because I don't get out of my wheelchair that often"—but her voice sparkles with laughter when she talks about fun games and her relationship with the horse she rides.

"I always like seeing him, and it brings a smile to my face," she says. "I know how to control him. I groom him, clean out his hooves and put all his tack on him."

McDonald says those activities are just as important as riding to the 80 or more individuals who participate in HorseSense each year.

"It seems to foster the bond between the horse and the rider, even more so," she said. "These horses become a part of them." ♣

Holmen freelance writer Shari Hegland has been turning to her own horse/therapist for more than 25 years and understands fully what a relationship with an animal can add to your life.

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HAVE YOU ANY WOOL?

Meet the fuzzy faces behind locally grown luxury fibers.

by **HEIDI OVERSON**
CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

Originally from Turkey, these adorable Angora goats are now common in the United States—and can even be found in the Coulee Region. They are responsible for super-warm and light mohair fiber.

When someone says “fiber animal,” a sheep is usually the first animal that comes to mind. But there are so many varieties of fiber animals, and many are here in our midst. Here, you’ll meet three types—Angora goats, alpacas and llamas—and women who raise them.

A love affair with mohair

Eight years ago, my husband, Randy, and I decided to raise Angora goats. Originally from Turkey (named after its capital, Ankara), Angora goats are uncommon in this area; they are mass-raised in Texas for their fleece, which is called mohair. When we first visited an Angora goat farm, we were smitten with their beauty: the mohair locks that cascaded down their sides, the beautiful color of each animal and their dainty demeanors.

We went from 6 animals to 22 in two years. Our pastures and barn were bursting with curly little critters. And we had mohair—black, white, apricot, gray and tan. Mohair is often called “angel fiber” or “diamond fiber” due to its luster and shine. Stronger and warmer than sheep’s wool, it is popular with spinners, weavers and knitters. It is often blended with wool, and together, the two fibers

make beautiful yarn. White mohair dyes wonderfully, and mohair is very popular with the clothing and textile industries.

My husband and I love to share our Angoras with the fascinated people who find their way to our farm. Our Angoras, particularly a little male named Holmes, have their own fan club, and it is easy to see why: The nature of this breed is inquisitive and friendly, sometimes silly and always full of surprises. It’s a joy to see a child’s face light up when an Angora comes to be petted or nuzzles their hand. Animals can have a huge, positive impact on the people who raise them and the people the animals—and their fiber—are shared with. Herdswomen Nadine Beezley and Leah Call also attest to the wonderful world of fiber and fiber animals.

Alpaca dreams

Nadine Beezley smiles as she shields her eyes from the sun and gazes around her 80-acre farm paradise, complete with picturesque hilltops, trees, blue skies, horses and her pride and joy—her alpacas. “This is what I’ve wanted all of my life,” says Beezley, “to be a farmer.”

Beezley was raised near Neillsville, Wis., and as a 5-year-old, she stubbornly decided that she would farm someday. Her dream



Llamas and alpacas are both from the camelid family and originated from the Andes region of South America. Closer to home, llamas can be found at Leah Call's farm in Westby (**left**), while alpacas have the run of Nadine Beezley's Hickory Wind Farm in Bangor (**right**).

materialized 10 years ago, when she and her husband, Steve, bought their Hickory Wind Farm in rural Bangor. In 2004, they started raising alpacas—creatures related to llamas that hail from the Andes Mountains. Beezley took an early retirement from her job as International Admissions Coordinator in UW-La Crosse's Office of International Education and assumed her role as farmer.

"I didn't plan on retiring to raise alpacas," Beezley explains. "I fell in love with alpacas after learning about them and their fiber at a Midwest Horse Expo in Madison. I saw a booth displaying the most beautiful shawls, and I was amazed to find out they were made from alpaca."

Beezley collected information, visited farms and, in 2004, invested in her first huacaya alpaca, a pregnant female named Husa. Six years later, Beezley's herd consists of 18 alpacas—with three to be born soon. Her alpacas are registered and have won awards in the show ring. Their fiber has won awards for its quality, beauty, color and softness.

"Alpaca fiber is the most prized fiber of all right now," says Beezley. "The fiber is warmer and lighter weight than sheep's wool due to its hollow fiber shaft, and it has great wicking properties. We shear in the spring, skirt the fleeces (remove the undesirable parts) and sell some raw or to a fiber mill, where it's made into beautiful roving (unspun fiber suited for hand-spinning) or yarn."

The fiber is very soft and durable. Unlike sheep's wool, alpaca fleece contains no lanolin, so it is easily processed. Beezley weaves, knits and crochets her alpacas'

yarn, and her mother, Bette Marshall, helps produce stunning handmade items sold in Beezley's Hickory Wind Farm Shoppe, where customers can also buy yarn and other items made from alpaca fiber. While shopping, visitors can watch Beezley's herd graze in nearby pastures. The alpacas are naturally curious yet shy, and they are fun to watch.

"It's very peaceful to look at them," notes Beezley. "They've given me so much joy."

More information on alpacas (including information on purchasing them), their fiber and the shop can be found on Beezley's website, www.hickorywindfarm.com.

Llama kisses

When local writer and editor Leah Call moved back home to rural Westby in 2002, she had 13 acres of land to fill with something, and she knew it would be llamas. "I first encountered llamas at the Expo Center in Madison, and I fell in love with them," says Call. "I knew once I had land, I would be raising them."

She soon bought three llamas from Cram's Llama Farm in Tomah, Wis. Thanks to wonderful mentors and support from the llama community, Call has been raising, breeding and selling high-quality llamas and their wool for eight years. She currently has nine llamas, ranging from 8 months to 10 years old. "I've bred my llamas for high-quality fiber," says Call. "Wool from the llamas with the best-quality fiber is used for mittens, scarves, socks and sweaters," naturally colored in white, gray, tan, brown, reddish brown and black.

The llamas graze in the lush summertime pastures, and it's not uncommon to find one of Call's four children leading one around the driveway and outbuildings. "How many children can do that?" asks Call. In the winter, the llamas camp in their shelter, or "llama palace," where they wait for their slices of hay bale and buckets of grain. They've blessed Call and her family with companionship, and they've given them beautiful fiber.

"I love llama wool," says Call. "It's very soft, lightweight, lanolin-free and luxurious. My husband, Ryan, shears our herd in the spring, and I will skirt, wash, card and spin the wool into yarn." Call also sells the wool to spinners throughout the region. "I think one of the coolest things is seeing the wool go from the animal to yarn, to a pair of mittens or a scarf," says Call. "All of my llamas have names and unique personalities. I always remember which llama gave me the beautiful yarn that keeps my hands warm or makes the perfect gift for a friend who knits."

And there are other returns, too. "Their big eyes and long lashes can really melt your heart," says Call. "And of course, there are the llama kisses, when they nuzzle their soft noses into your cheek."

Leah Call welcomes inquiries. Please contact her at lcalle@mw.net. ❖

Writer and mohair-boarder Heidi Overson loved talking fiber and animals with Leah and Nadine. Overson's Angoras and farm news can be seen on Facebook. Search for Skjonsbergdalen Farm.

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TIME TO SAY GOODBYE

Here's how to help your family through the loss of a pet.

by **MICHELLE BYOM**
CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

We buried Herbie on a beautiful summer evening. Each member of our family drew a picture on the box that held him inside. We lit candles and shared memories of our sturdy little dog with the big, curly tail. I like to think Herbie continues to keep watch over the kids playing and the dogs trotting past our house.

I admit our bichon frise had faults. Herbie was high strung, his bark loud and shrill. He chased people who passed by our house. He loved tipping garbage cans to get to the goods inside.

But suddenly, those habits are brushed aside, and we remember Herbie for the affectionate, gentle-hearted dog that he was. The stains on the carpet? Not noticeable. The new couch I'd always planned for? Not important. Instead, I ache inside when the ringing doorbell is answered by silence. Even with two young boys in it, our house is now too quiet. My heart hurts when our 3-year-old asks for him to "Come out now."

A family loss

Sure, I was sad when the family dog I had as a kid died. But Herbie was a part of the family *we* created. He was the first to meet our children when they came home as newborns. Until the end, he waited near the boys' beds for them to wake. He greeted us with love and affection every time we walked into the house.

"Pets are definitely members of their family," says Sue Peterson, owner of Rivers Edge Pet Crematorium, located in De Soto, Wis. Peterson's business works with area veterinary clinics, humane societies and individual pet owners to provide respectful and compassionate care for pets who have passed away, offering families options like cremation, urns, caskets and memorial markers.

"The trend today is private cremation," Peterson explains, although her business also offers group cremation services, in which pets are cremated together and ashes scattered in a peaceful setting at Rivers Edge. But for many families, burying a pet in a special place is important. Having Herbie in a specific place in our yard gives me a sense of peace, a place where I can "talk" to him. Peterson says many pet owners prefer to cremate so they can keep a part of their pet with them forever.

When is it time to go?

We knew Herbie was slowing down. Some days he couldn't make it up to the couch. His eyes grew cloudy and he slept more soundly. Still, he was alert and playful many days. We didn't like to think about him dying, and we didn't expect him to die suddenly while we were on vacation.

Dr. Diane Thein of Best Friends Pet Clinic in Galesville, Wis., agrees that we don't like to talk about our pets dying, but it's

important to do so as they begin to decline. "Plan ahead and talk with your family so you know what you would like to do with your pet when it's his time," Dr. Thein suggests. She also believes pet owners should look at the big picture when they think the end is approaching and it's time to consider euthanization. "Does your pet have a quality of life? Can he eat and drink, get up to greet you, and is he free from messing his bedding or home?" If the answers are no, your pet may be telling you, in his own way, that it's time to go.

Dr. Thein also says it is important to know you can grieve the loss of your pet. "Especially the elderly—where their dog or cat is often their lifeline and means everything to them—should find someone to talk to who understands their grief."

Even though we miss him, I'm comforted knowing Herbie no longer hurts inside. Our own hurt is slowly starting to subside as we fill our hearts with memories and push the grief aside. The other day I noticed a stubborn pet stain had resurfaced on our recently cleaned carpet. I smiled. ♣

Pet Loss Resources

Rivers Edge Pet Crematorium
55795 Willenberg Rd., De Soto
888-604-4774
riversedgepetcrematorium.com

Griefhealing.com
By Marty Tousley, a well-known
registered nurse specializing in
grief counseling.

Aplb.org
(The Association for
Pet Loss and Bereavement)

Pet-loss.net
10 tips on coping with pet loss
by Moira Anderson Allen, M.Ed.

Pet Loss Books for Children

The Tenth Good Thing About Barney
by Judith Viorst

I'll Always Love You by Hans Wilhelm

Goodbye Mousie by Robie H. Harris

Cat Heaven/Dog Heaven
by Cynthia Rylant

*When Your Pet Dies: A Healing
Handbook for Kids* by
Victoria Ryan and R.W. Alley

Michelle Byom dedicates this article to Herbie and the years of joy they shared. Although he will never be completely replaced, she and her family like to think about the next furry friend they might add to their family when the time is right.



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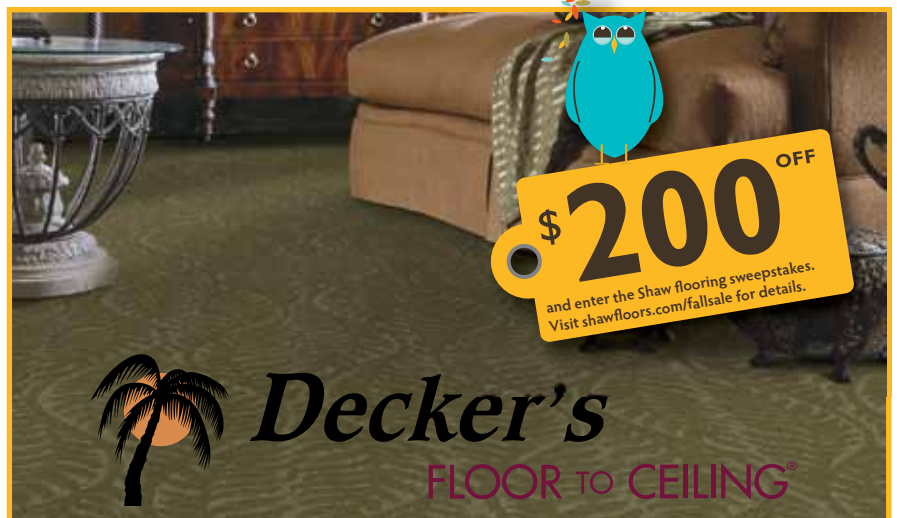
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IN HARMONY WITH NATURE

A local couple lives with animals inside and out.

by **JULIE NELSON**

PHOTOS BY JANET MOOTZ PHOTOGRAPHY



Large windows and a wooded backyard help Deb and Todd Delagrave fully enjoy the wildlife that makes a home near their house, including wild turkeys, foxes and the ubiquitous deer.

Whenever Deb and Todd Delagrave look out any of their 6-foot-tall windows in the back of their Onalaska home, they see a solid wall of trees. No city streets, no construction, no neighboring houses—just trees. And they love it that way. The view from the front of their house used to be similar, but that was 15 years ago, when the area past Coulee Golf Course was still filled with fields and farms. Now the view out the front, while not unpleasant by any means, would just be a bit better for the Delagraves if they added a couple more trees.

So for three years, Todd tried. He purchased some crab apple trees, planted them, watered them and watched. He and Deb watched all winter long, year after year, as deer would come and eat the bark off their young trees. Finally, they gave up. After this loss, are they considering measures to keep the deer away? Not at all. “It’s well worth it,” says Todd of the missed trees. It seems the deer are practically part of the family at the Delagrave house.

Animals are welcome here

“One day I looked out and saw 11 deer in the backyard,” says Deb, adding that the deer will often come up to the windows and

look in, as though they are trying to see what’s on television. The house makes it easy for the critters to see in and the people (and family dog) to see out. The living room—which connects to the window-filled kitchen and dining area—is a wide-open space with four 18-foot-tall windows stretching from floor to ceiling. Allie, the family dog, has a favorite perch in front of those windows and is quick to bark out an announcement of the parade of animals passing by. “We have a family of foxes living in the retaining wall by the driveway, bald eagles have stopped to rest in our trees and last week I saw some wild turkeys strutting through the yard. I try to sneak out and take pictures when I can,” says Deb.

Likewise, the animals have gotten used to the movements of the Delagrave family. Just outside the kitchen is a large brick patio. While it has hosted more than one family cookout, it’s also a relaxing place to sit and read a book . . . and watch the animals. Even Allie can get as close as 15 feet to the deer, as though they were old friends. The foxes tend to dine on rabbits, rodents, vegetables and other small game (which may explain why there are few squirrels in the yard) and, luckily for Allie, are not much interested in a white Maltese. The only time Deb and Todd worry about their dog’s safety is when a hawk is circling nearby.

Surrounded by wildlife

Outside and in, the Delagraves like being surrounded by wildlife. Deb's love of zebra and leopard print shows up in their bedroom, their recreation room and even on their boat. Two years ago, Todd took on a major remodeling project downstairs, turning several closed-off areas into one big open space with a TV lounge on one side and a pub on the other. The pub side has concrete flooring, which Todd and his son carefully etched and then dyed to create the look of the cracks of an old New York street. A clear coating keeps it from getting real scuffs. The two built the wooden bar (including their first venture into Formica tops), painted the walls, put up mirrors behind the bar and ordered a couple of slot machines online. Now the pub is an ideal space for hosting fans on a football Sunday, and has become a traditional Christmas Eve gathering spot for friends with no other relatives in town. On the TV side, guests pad across leopard-print carpet and enjoy zebra-themed decorations.

The couple get their fill of animals beyond the house, too. Every Thursday through Sunday, Deb and Todd head to Dubuque, Iowa, where they jump aboard their boat. As they talk about their weekends on the river, it's easy to see that enjoyment of animals and wildlife is part of who they are. They talk of the ducks, the turtles and the cranes they see and speculate on the animal they spotted last week that looked similar to a beaver, but wasn't. One of their favorite restaurants on the marina is a place where Allie is welcome to come in and sit next to their table.

A sense of privacy

Where does this love of animals come from? If anything, it's an extension of their appreciation for the peace and serenity they find in being surrounded by trees and nature. "We just love the sense of privacy we have here," says Deb. When out in the backyard, it seems as though they are on the edge of the woods, even though they are within a 10-minute drive of their church, the mall and Todd's business, Del's Auto Repair. They are friends with their nearest neighbors, which mean that when they hosted a graduation party in their lawn,



Top: A spacious, light-filled kitchen invites family and friends to gather at the Delagrave home. **Left:** Deb Delagrave's love of animal prints is evident in the TV lounge. **Right:** Soaring windows throughout the house lend themselves to wildlife viewing.

no one minded that the music continued beyond a typical quiet time.

The Delagraves will soon be empty-nesters, as their 18-year-old twins—Dylan and Olivia, the last of their four children—move on. And despite the benefits of living in this tranquil house on the edge of nature, they plan to downsize. The Delagraves aren't sure where they'll move next. It will be hard to find something that is both surrounded by trees and close to the auto repair shop, but if they have to make a choice, they say

they'd rather drive from French Island than be surrounded by concrete at a house in the city. Wherever they go, though, you can be sure the décor will feature lots of leopard, zebra and pictures of their dog, Allie. ♣

Julie Nelson is the Public Relations and Development Director for The Salvation Army. With a yard overrun by rabbits, she's wondered if she could borrow those foxes for a day or two ...

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PET THERAPY

Having a pet is good for your soul—and so much more.

by **KIM BRASEL**
CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

Sally, the feline caregiver at Bethany Riverside nursing home, delights residents and offers a reassuring presence. Animals are experts at lifting the spirits, in ways that can improve health and healing in humans.

Trudging up the front steps at the end of a long day, you open the door to the sound of footsteps bounding across the house. You're greeted by a pair of smiling, happy-to-see-you eyes and a wagging tail, and that bad day melts away.

Whatever your animal companion may be, studies have shown there is a healing quality that comes from owning a pet or interacting with animals, and women in the region are discovering that this healing can help the community in many ways.

Pets with a purpose

After her husband passed away in 2008, Joan Price struggled with her loss, and the addition of a puppy to her home helped her cope. Price says with a laugh that she didn't really agree to get a dog; she was talked into it by her daughter and granddaughter, who thought it would be good for her.

Weighing in at a mere seven pounds, Price's toy terrier, Lilly, is full of mischief and energy, and Price says the dog has pretty much taken over her life, in a good way. "The companionship and affection Lilly provides are what I enjoy about owning a dog," she says.

Companionship and alleviation of loneliness are two of the many benefits interacting with animals can have, and scientists have long known that animals have healing powers. Petting a cat or dog causes a surge of healing hormones and chemicals that produce feelings of peace and serenity. Taking a dog out for daily walks increases exercise, which is beneficial for stress management and overall health. Less tangible benefits include giving someone a sense of purpose—a reason to get up in the morning. Pets also help people stick to routines that can help them eat and sleep regularly.

Animal assistance

Seeing how residents at a nursing home reacted to a visit by her cat, Noah, Shelley Ellingson of Hokah, Minn., was inspired to start Touching Moments Animal Assisted Activities, a nonprofit group dedicated to bringing the healing power of animals to people in need. "It's interacting, making a connection that creates a therapeutic atmosphere," she says.

Animal-Assisted Activities (AAA) differs from Animal-Assisted Therapy (AAT) in that the purpose of AAA is to provide opportunities for recreational, emotional, motivational or social benefits, without specific goals in mind. AAT is a goal-directed intervention, designed to promote improvement in human physical, social, emotional or cognitive functioning.

Ellingson is just getting started, with four cats that are used for visits and one dog that has completed certification training, and she hopes to add other types of animals to her program. She has taken her animals on visits to facilities in La Crescent, Spring Grove and Harmony, Minn. "It's great for those residents who may not interact very much with others," she says. "When you bring an animal in, they show interest, and it can lead to them getting more involved."

The power of love

Other pet therapy programs in the area include the Coulee Region Humane Society's pet therapy dogs. Gundersen Lutheran's East Building is one of their many stops, and Renee Knutson, director of the pet therapy program, says she's often approached by people who say they were helped tremendously by having the dogs visit while they were in the hospital.



Toy terrier Lilly has provided companionship and happiness to Joan Price after the loss of her husband. "She helps me not to feel as lonely," she says.

Knutson says the dogs can help patients pass the time while they are waiting for treatment and serve as a good distraction. "The dogs go in and will find the person that needs them the most," she says. "They can sense that a person has a need, even if we don't. Patients talk with us and the dogs and build connections."

Kim Pretasky, owner of Touch of Class in downtown La Crosse, saw firsthand the benefits of the pet therapy program while at the hospital with her mom, who was receiving chemotherapy. "It made her so happy," Pretasky says. "I've always believed in the power of the love our animals have for us."

Pretasky was already selling "Love Dogs" jewelry charms to benefit the pet therapy endowment at the Coulee Region Humane Society. She says her mom's reaction to the therapy dogs made her proud to be associated with a program that brings a smile to people's faces.

Cat companions

The therapeutic benefits of animals are not limited to programs such as Touching Moments and the Coulee Region Humane Society's pet therapy. The Bethany Riverside nursing home in La Crosse has two live-in furry-footed friends.

Sally and Kitty, both cats, came to live at Bethany Riverside after Jai Johnson, Environmental Services Director, adopted them from the Humane Society. Both have distinct personalities and serve their assigned units well, according to Deb Geib, RN and coordinator of the Lighthouse unit at Bethany Riverside. Sally, a tortoiseshell domestic shorthair, lives in the Lighthouse unit. Geib says she'll see a smile start to spread across a resident's face, and their voice softens as they excitedly say, "Oh, here comes the kitty!"

A social cat, Sally will trot down the hallway, tail up, eyes alert, looking side to side as if she's taking everything in and



Kitty makes rounds at Bethany Riverside along with her colleague Sally.

making sure "her" floor is running smoothly.

She enjoys interacting with residents, staff and visiting family members. Mary Groeschner of La Crosse came to know Sally when her mother moved to Bethany Riverside. "When I was bringing my mother's things in to set up her room, Sally came in to see what I was doing," she says. "It almost seemed as if she wanted to supervise. I scratched her ears and petted her, and that was all the encouragement she needed to stay until I was done."

Groeschner took such a liking to Sally that she brings in fresh catnip and makes toys for Sally. "She's a very well-cared-for kitty."

Taking care of each other

Joan Price enjoys taking care of Lilly, and in a sense Lilly has taken care of her by filling a void with her high-energy antics. "She helps me not to feel as lonely," says Price. "I don't have as much time to think about what I don't have."

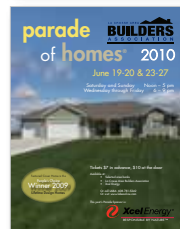
A bad day at work is soon forgotten when Lilly greets Price at the door with her tail wagging, waiting to play ball. "No matter what, she always makes me laugh. She does silly things or she'll give me kisses, and I think she's keeping me young by not letting me sit still."

Price says Lilly's stubborn, curious, funny, loving, playful and sometimes naughty nature makes her a fun companion. "Lilly is always happy to see me and is always there with unconditional love." ❖

Kim Brasel and her family just adopted Abby, a two-year-old black lab, from La Crescent Animal Rescue. She's hoping Abby's mellow demeanor will have a calming effect on her three small boys.

Coulee Region

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IN SEARCH OF A GOOD HOME

A commitment to animals fuels the work of local animal adoption organizations.

by **HEIDI GRIMINGER BLANKE**
CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

Heather Schmid, executive director of Coulee Region Humane Society, and Helen.

The women who run local animal adoption agencies are the first to admit the job is not for everyone. “You experience miracles along with heartbreak,” says Marie Glover, director of Tabby Town USA, a cat rescue shelter in Westby, Wis., adding that it can take some getting used to. Nevertheless, the women who head these organizations are enthusiastic about what they do, whether for pay or on a volunteer basis.

Many shelters, one hope

Adoption and rescue agencies differ in the way they accept and house animals. For example, the Coulee Region Humane Society of La Crosse County takes in any animal brought to them, including wildlife, and the shelter does not turn animals away. This agency not only cares for and seeks adoption for animals, but also offers a variety of educational and training programs. The Vernon County Humane Society serves specific municipalities and can refer animals to other agencies if their kennels are full. The organization strives for 100 percent adoption rates, but still ensures a good animal-human pairing. La Crescent Animal Rescue, started in 2003, resulted from a desire to help that city’s police department with animal control. Though the agency recently moved into its own building, most dogs are fostered in private homes. Tabby Town, located in director Marie Glover’s home, currently houses about 60 adoptable cats, but has rescued almost 1,400 cats in the last seven years. All four shelters, though, can trace their beginnings to a single individual with a love for animals and a longing to improve animals’ lives.

A passion for animals

Bethany Heins, executive director of the Vernon County Humane Society, has been involved with animals nearly all her life. She volunteered at animal shelters throughout school, including college, and accepted her current position right after graduation. “I’ve learned a lot in one-and-a-half years,” she says, and is happiest when she can find “good placements for the animals.”

Glover quit her full-time job to run Tabby Town, though as a volunteer. While she loves being surrounded by cats, at times the care can be overwhelming—physically, emotionally and financially. Because the shelter is often “bursting at the seams,” Glover must turn cats away. “My heart goes out to the cats that we can’t help,” she says. However, no matter how difficult the day, she looks forward “to snuggling with them when the day is done.”

Heather Schmid, executive director at the Coulee Region Humane Society since 2004, says her favorite part of the job is knowing she has helped “change the lives of living beings,” both animal and human. She recalls adopting her dog, Teki, from a shelter and was “overwhelmed by how much the people worked” and how much the organization needed, leading to her volunteer there. Like Glover, Schmid knows those involved in animal rescue must be prepared for “as many heartaches as there are successes,” and that it is important to “keep successes near and dear to you.”

Karla Ronnenberg focuses on dogs at La Crescent Animal Rescue, while a second director deals with cats. Though Ronnenberg has a full-time job, she manages to devote 15 to 20 volunteer hours each week to the rescued dogs. Her duties range from supervising volunteers to visiting foster homes. She jokes that the best advice

for someone in her position is to “quit your full-time job.”

A good match

All four directors emphasize the importance of matching individuals with the right pet. Most applications involve paperwork, fees and personal interviews, though adoption times and processes vary. Schmidt suggests potential adopters do their homework. “Research the type of pet you want,” she says, and “be honest with yourself.” If you are a couch potato, for example, avoid falling for an energetic dog. Her agency, along with all others, helps potential owners choose the right pet and works hard to ensure a good pairing.

Heins notes the importance of trying to keep a pet in its current home by supplying owner education, but realizes some animals are better off “re-homed.” She especially enjoys seeing senior or medically challenged pets adopted, as they “typically aren’t placed quickly.”

In nearly every instance, adoptable animals are current on shots, and some agencies spay or neuter animals before sending them to their “forever homes.” Applicants are educated on continuing care and may even receive help with training and socializing.

Tremendous advocates

It is no surprise that the heads of these agencies are devoted to animals. Schmid points out that many people say they would love to have her job, but they do not realize the never-ending work women like her face each day. It takes dedication, a willingness to learn and the ability to cope with heartache as well as happiness. Animals in the Coulee Region are fortunate to have these tremendous advocates. ♣

Heidi Griminger Blanke, Ph.D., is the executive director at WAFER food pantry. She adores the dogs she adopted from animal shelters and advises everyone to spay and neuter.

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ANIMAL, VEGETABLE, HEALTHFUL

Here's a simple primer on how to eat—for health and happiness.

by **BETTY CHRISTIANSEN**

RECIPES ANALYZED BY GUNDERSEN LUTHERAN REGISTERED DIETITIANS

It doesn't take much these days to become discouraged about eating. We want to feed our families with nourishing and tasty food, but every day it seems we hear of a new food concern. The popular film *Food Inc.* delivers a frightening look behind the scenes at factory farms and major meat processors. Obesity is a serious and growing concern, particularly among youth. One day fat is the enemy, the next it's carbohydrates, and then high-fructose corn syrup. And the addition of preservatives to produce and hormones to dairy products keep mindful shoppers on their toes.

What on earth are we supposed to eat?

The secrets to eating wisely, safely and with a minimal impact on our planet are actually surprisingly simple. Meet Michael Pollan, an investigative journalist whose topic matter is food, particularly how to eat responsibly. Author of respected books such as *The Omnivore's Dilemma* and *In Defense of Food*, Pollan has also written a slim volume called *Food Rules*, which delivers a delightful and simple guide for eating well.

Pollan's 64 commonsense rules can be summarized in just seven words: Eat food. Not too much. Mostly plants.

Eat food

At first glance, this directive is so basic it's laughable. But consider that there's a distinction between "food"—meaning whole, real food that fits easily into a category on the food pyramid—and what Pollan calls "edible foodlike substances," highly processed foods with ingredient lists difficult to pronounce. How do you tell the difference? Begin with this rule: "Don't eat anything your great-grandmother wouldn't recognize as food."

"That's what dietitians now are teaching," concurs Jennifer

Wood, a registered dietitian at Gundersen Lutheran. "Eat whole food as much as you can."

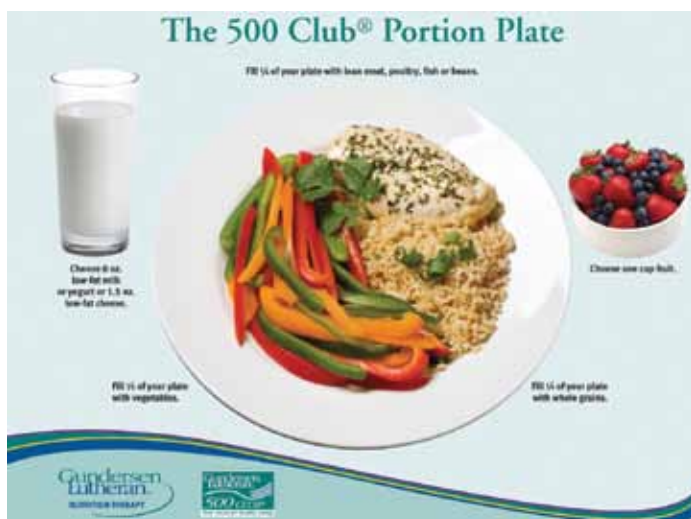
What constitutes "whole food"? Let's go back to great-grandma. The foods she'd pick out at the local market would likely be the easily recognizable ones found on the perimeter of the store—produce, dairy, meat. As it happens, they're the healthiest. "When you shop the perimeter," Wood adds, "you find foods with more nutrients and more fiber. The processed foods in the center contain a lot more salt and additives." A big problem with American diets these days, she contends, is not necessarily their salt content, but rather that people aren't getting enough nutrients in the rest of their diet to balance out their salt intake.

And eaters get much more bang for their calorie buck with nutrient-dense foods, like produce, than calorie-dense foods, like processed snacks. Wood likes to make this point with a display that illustrates what constitutes a "100-calorie snack." Four or five tomatoes equal about 100 calories. So do four or five Hershey's Kisses.

Not too much

They say French women don't get fat. That's interesting, considering what's cherished in a French diet—rich, fatty, flavorful foods and plenty of red wine. The difference comes down to eating habits, and this is where Americans are at a disadvantage.

Consider our fast-food, grab-and-go eating culture. There's not much nutritional value in foods eaten on the run; on the contrary, you're more likely to encounter bad fats, lots of salt, and too much sugar—a combination that fast-food restaurants have perfected to create foods people crave on a primal level. In fact, one of Pollan's memorable rules in this area is "Don't get your fuel at the same



place your car does.”

His advice here reveals the French secret, and ranges from the obvious to the romantic: “Eat slowly.” “Do all your eating at a table.” “Spend as much time enjoying the meal as you took to prepare it.” Simplest of all, he says, “Cook.”

“You would never use as much fat in home cooking as is used at a restaurant,” Wood says. Consider also the size of a typical American restaurant serving. You may leave that restaurant sated, and feeling like you got a good deal for your money, but your health will suffer if this becomes a habit.

Wood offers her own “rules” for eating habits. “Slow down,” she says. “It takes 20 minutes for your brain to realize your stomach is full.” She also notes that people often eat when they’re bored, or mistake thirst for hunger.

Mostly plants

The leafy ones, the colorful ones, the wild ones and the whole grains—the fact is that a diet composed mostly of these items is healthy one, full of fiber and nutrients and naturally low in calories. It’s also true that vegetarians are generally healthier than carnivores.

But don’t be too quick to rule out meat—it’s a very nourishing food, and it’s also possible to be a mindful omnivore. The secret is balance and quality. “Treat meat as a flavoring or special occasion food,” Pollan suggests. Instead of eating it at two or three meals a day, try scaling back to one meal per day, or even just a few meals a week. Proportion is important, too. Wood points to an illustration with a plate half covered with vegetables; the other half shares equal (and smaller) portions each of meat or other protein and whole grains.

We’ve all heard the debate on red versus white meat, and while it’s true that a diet high in red meat can contribute to heart disease, an important consideration is where this meat came from. Hence Pollan’s advice: “Eat animals that have themselves eaten well.”

Cows, for example, are natural grazers, and were never meant

to be penned up and stuffed with corn, even though that mass-produces the flavorful, richly marbled steaks Americans have become accustomed to. Wild game and pasture-raised animals—from cows to pigs to chickens—not only produce meat lower in fat and higher in omega-3 fatty acids, antioxidants and other cancer-fighting compounds, they themselves lead healthier, happier lives. And unlike animals raised in overcrowded factory farms, whose meat is prone to contamination by the animals’ waste, the meat from grass-fed animals is naturally resistant to *E. coli*.

“You are what you eat,” says Wood. “Everything an animal eats affects its cells. In turn, what you eat affects yours.”

Following are three family-friendly recipes that will please kids and also nourish them with healthy, real foods. Take them one step further and challenge yourself to cook with locally raised ingredients. (Hint: Most farmers’ markets are open through October.)

FRENCH DIP SANDWICHES

Makes 8 servings.

These fix-them-and-forget-them sandwiches offer meat and whole grain in one serving. This is an ideal use for lean, pasture-raised beef, which is best when slow-cooked.

- 1 grass-fed beef chuck roast (about 3 lb.), trimmed
- 1 3/4 cup water
- 1/4 cup sherry (optional)
- 1/2 cup low-sodium soy sauce
- 1 tsp dried rosemary
- 1 tsp dried thyme
- 1 tsp garlic powder
- 1 bay leaf
- 3-4 whole peppercorns
- 8 whole-grain rolls

Place all ingredients in a slow cooker. Cover and cook on high for 5-6 hours or until beef is tender. Remove meat from broth; shred with forks and keep warm. Strain broth; skim off fat. Pour broth into small cups for dipping. Serve beef on whole-grain rolls.

610 calories, 34g fat, 55g protein, 16g carbohydrate, 2g fiber, 700mg sodium.

ROASTED ROOT VEGETABLES

Makes 6 servings.

This colorful, tasty fall vegetable dish is very simple to make, and there’s enough variety among the vegetables to please the pickiest little palates at your dining-room table.

Dressing

- 4 tsp olive oil
- 1/4 cup fresh lemon juice
- 6 garlic cloves, minced
- 3 T fresh rosemary, minced (or 2-3 tsp dried)
- 1 T fresh oregano, minced (or 1 tsp dried)
- 1 tsp salt

Vegetables

- 2 potatoes, cut into 1-inch chunks
- 2 sweet potatoes, peeled and cut into 1-inch chunks
- 2 carrots, peeled and cut into 1-inch chunks
- 2 parsnips, peeled and cut into 1-inch chunks
- 1 large onion, cut into wedges
- 2 bell peppers (in different colors), cut into 1-inch chunks

Preheat oven to 425°F. Whisk dressing ingredients in a bowl and set aside. Parboil potatoes, sweet potatoes, carrots and parsnips for 2 minutes, then toss all vegetables with dressing. Roast in shallow baking pan, tossing every 15 minutes, for a total of 45 minutes.

150 calories, 3g fat, 3g protein, 30g carbohydrate, 5g fiber, 440mg sodium.

HOMEMADE ICE CREAM

Makes 4 quarts.

Even Michael Pollan knows when to have a little fun. The secret to eating desserts in a wholesome way is twofold: Save high-calorie treats for special occasions, and keep the ingredients as whole as possible. Commercially made ice cream lists countless chemicals and stabilizers among its ingredients. This version contains just six ingredients, all simple foods. For an extra bonus, toss some fresh fruit on top.

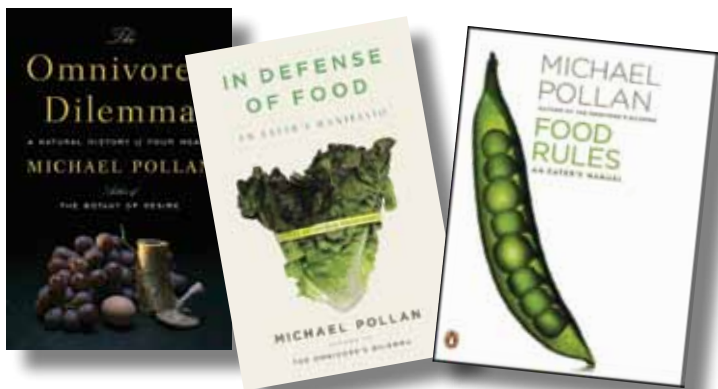
- 4 eggs
- 2¼ cups sugar
- 4 cups heavy whipping cream
- 4½ tsp vanilla
- ½ tsp salt
- 5 cups 1% milk (approximately)

In a large mixing bowl, beat eggs until foamy. Gradually add sugar; beat until thickened. Add cream, vanilla and salt and mix thoroughly. Pour into can of a 4-quart ice-cream maker. Add milk to fill can as directed for your ice-cream maker (it may not require all 5 cups) and stir well. Freeze as directed.

Per ¾ cup serving:

350 calories, 23g fat, 5g protein, 32g carbohydrate, 0g fiber, 140mg sodium♣

Betty Christiansen will indulge her family in macaroni and cheese and Cheerios, but she's pleased to report that she generally stays away from the center of the supermarket. The dairy section, however...



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FALL INTO FAUX

Let your inner animal pounce on these fall fashions.

by **MELISSA HANSON**

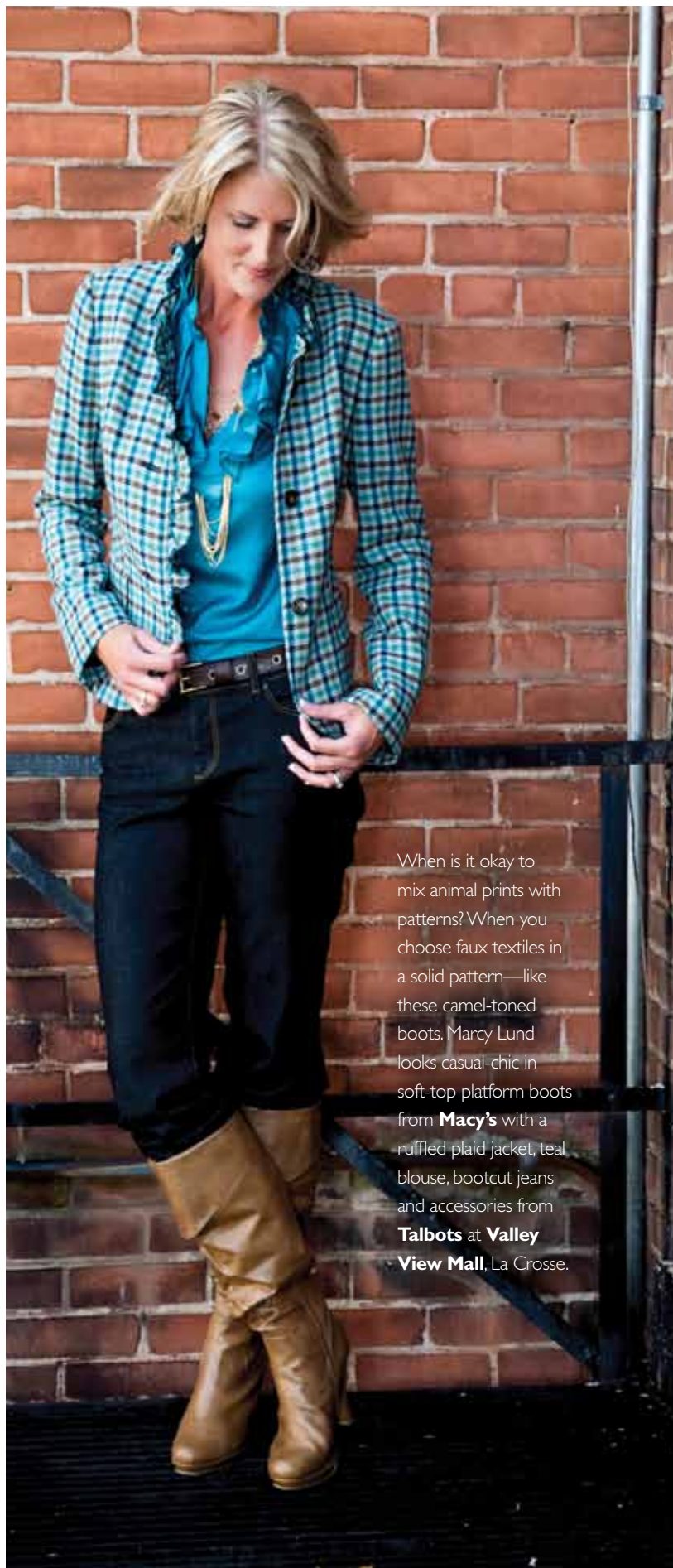
PHOTOS BY JANET MOOTZ PHOTOGRAPHY

HAIR AND MAKEUP BY THE ULTIMATE SALON & SPA



Kiya, a 1-year-old Great Dane, is outfitted with a leopard-print collar and faux-leather leash from **PetSmart**, Highway 16 Onalaska.

If you're in the mood to flaunt your animal instincts, complement bold prints with solid neutrals. Nikki Leach has the option to tame or liberate her wild side with a reversible jacket, black leggings, a boatneck blouse, patent leather and cork slides and accessories from **Touch of Class**, downtown La Crosse.



When is it okay to mix animal prints with patterns? When you choose faux textiles in a solid pattern—like these camel-toned boots. Marcy Lund looks casual-chic in soft-top platform boots from **Macy's** with a ruffled plaid jacket, teal blouse, bootcut jeans and accessories from **Talbots** at **Valley View Mall**, La Crosse.



This leopard-print pendant necklace and carved-wood bracelet blur the line between glamour and safari. **Chic Boutique** at **Valley View Mall**, La Crosse.



Square-toe flats in a giraffe print will have you walking tall. **Macy's** at **Valley View Mall**, La Crosse.



You'll be eager to get your paws on this leopard-print barrel satchel by Guess. **Macy's** at **Valley View Mall**, La Crosse.

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Kathleen Reilly wearing Lillians.

Downtown La Crosse Fall Fashion Show photos by Kelly Ottesen Photography, www.kellyottesen.com

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Thanks to the involvement of DMI members such as Deb and Todd Ondell of Grounded Coffee (center), and Allison Krzych (left) and Andrea Poukey (right) of Kick, the Fashion Show was a smashing success.



Tricia Davis wearing Touch of Class.



Kathleen Graham wearing LARK.

UPCOMING EVENTS

- | | |
|---------------------|---|
| 10/9 | Historic Downtown La Crosse Day |
| 10/23-24 & 10/30-31 | Myrick Hixon Ecopark Enchanted Forest |
| 10/29-11/14 | La Crosse Community Theatre, <i>On Golden Pond</i> |
| 10/29 | Children Museum's BOO-seum |
| 10/30 | Trick or Treat Downtown La Crosse |
| 11/12 | Downtown La Crosse Holiday Open House |
| 11/12-11/14 | Tiny Tim Gala, Festival of Trees and Jingle Bell Brunch |
| 11/18-21 | Holiday Fair |
| 11/26-12/31 | Rotary Lights |
| 12/10-19 | La Crosse Community Theatre, <i>It's A Wonderful Life</i> |



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GUNDERSEN LUTHERAN PEDIATRIC SPECIALIST NOW BOARD CERTIFIED

Gundersen Lutheran pediatric specialist Jennifer McVean, M.D., was board certified in pediatric endocrinology by the American Board of Pediatrics earlier this year. Medical specialty certification is a voluntary process and demonstrates Dr. McVean's commitment to the highest level of professionalism in pediatric endocrinology.

Dr. McVean started seeing patients at Gundersen Lutheran's Onalaska Clinic in September 2008 and is the first pediatric endocrinologist on staff at Gundersen Lutheran. She brings expertise and a family-centered approach to caring for children with diabetes and other endocrinologic problems.

Prior to joining Gundersen Lutheran, Dr. McVean completed a pediatric endocrinology fellowship at UW-Hospital and Clinics.



2010 MRS. OKTOBERFEST IS KARLA STANEK

Karla Stanek has been named the 2010 Mrs. Oktoberfest. The title honors a La Crosse-area woman who has impacted the community in her profession and as a volunteer. Stanek, director of UW-L Career Services and the Academic Advising Center, was humbled and honored when asked to serve as Mrs. Oktoberfest for the celebration's Golden Year. "It's an honor to be able to represent this area that has had such a positive impact on my personal and professional life," she says. Stanek and her husband, John, live in La Crosse and have two grown daughters, Kasey and Kelly. "Take Time to Give Back" is her theme for her yearlong reign.

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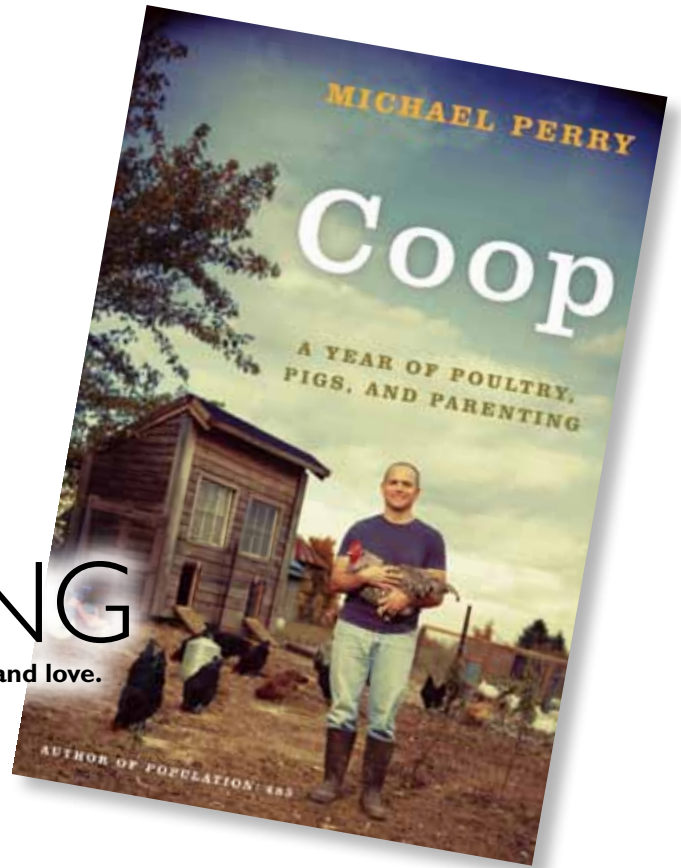
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A YEAR OF POULTRY, PIGS AND PARENTING

Michael Perry's book *Coop* gives a glimpse into farming life—and love.

by **BILL LEONARD**
CONTRIBUTED PHOTO



Coop is a love story. Simply. Purely. It is about husband and wife, a young daughter brought to their marriage and another daughter begot of it. The narrator of this memoir is Michael Perry, a writer from our region, and it is the story of his love not only for his immediate family, but also for his parents and siblings and friends, and for the land.

Perry will evoke deep feelings of regret in most of his readers: regret for not having had greater sensitivity to and appreciation for the wonderment, and the pain, of the birth process. (I cowered in the waiting room in a whole different era; he got his hands bloody in a planned home birth.) Regret that a son or daughter did not find a partner capable of the love and steadfastness of Michael and his wife Anneliese. Regret that one has spent too much time and energy acquiring and too little nurturing. Regret that we have become too narrow and judgmental of others, especially in terms of their beliefs.

Perry details his upbringing in an offbeat fundamentalist home as well as his falling away, but he still reveres his parents and observes that the people he worshiped with were a humble and tolerant bunch. Perry's response to his young daughter's question "Who is God?" is something that all parents should at least consider.

Cultivating life and love

Perry the writer, the troubadour, the 39-year-old bachelor meets Anneliese, the single mom and university teacher, and together they build a self-sufficient life on what passes for a farm. They grow

much of their food. They raise a few pigs—and chickens. Building their coop is symbolic of the Perrys building their life. It takes a while. It's not easy. Things don't always work.

Perry flashes back to his own childhood on the farm, which gives him an outlet for his facility with words, his ability to describe sounds and smells: "When I pushed back through the milk house door and into the light, the warmth—a thick sachet of alfalfa and manure—rolled around me with such fullness I felt I could tug it to my shoulders like a quilt," he writes in one example.

There is poignancy and sadness and heartbreak here. Be prepared for the drowning of a young nephew and for the butchering of pigs and chickens that have taken on personalities. But countering all of that is a faith and a value system and an appreciation for beauty. As Perry puts it, "Life has not been one long gauzy shot." There is something here for most all of us to aspire to and something that will warm hearts. The author writes of renewing wedding vows each year, vows they wrote, one of which is "I will treat you with reverence."

Coop is a powerful memoir, beautifully written. Most of us will care about the relationships described and be inspired to deepen ours. We should have the good friends the author has. We should be the friend he is. And we should enjoy those unexpected moments with our partners, as Michael and Anneliese do, when we show each other tenderness and reverence, no chemicals needed. ♣

Bill Leonard is a Managing Partner in PeopleFirst HR Solutions. He could never have butchered those pigs and chickens.

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Ellen Severson's red worms make delectable compost out of food waste.

WHO'S EATING YOUR GARBAGE?

Red worms turn household waste into super-compost. And you don't have to walk them.

by **MAURA HENN**

PHOTO BY MAURA HENN

Ellen Severson's backyard garden is full of vibrant perennials. The summer day is clear and fresh with just a hint of fall in the air. A squirrel sneaks down the oak tree and quizzically peers at Severson sitting at the picnic table underneath, immersed to her elbows in her task. What is that lady doing? She's sorting nutrient-rich compost made from her vermicomposting bins. This compost is what helps her garden bloom every year.

Vermi-what?

Vermicomposting is the use of red worms to naturally dispose of food waste. With this method, worms create a delicate ecosystem within a enclosed space, usually a plastic bin, allowing organic matter to be broken down into compost perfect for gardening. Some red worm outfitters sell specifically made worm bins, but the most simplistic ones can be created at home with a plastic tote, a drill to make ventilation holes and some fall leaves or newspaper for bedding. Add some red worms and vegetable scraps, and you have a waste-free garbage disposal. The basics are really that simple, and several online sources can help you start your worm composting bin and keep it healthy.

Severson was given her first Worm-a-way composting kit as a birthday gift from her family in 1995. "My husband was in graduate school in Chicago at the time, so we had the worm bin going in our apartment," she says. "People either loved it or thought it was the most disgusting thing." It may seem like an odd gift, but for someone who worked for years as a newspaper reporter and began to see the impact of a disposable culture, this sensible gift was the gateway to a more responsible life.

Taking up the worming way

Doesn't it smell bad? "If you can smell something, then something is seriously wrong," advises Severson. Don't the worms give you the creeps? Interacting with them may be intimidating for the first-time worm wrangler, but once you realize they would rather burrow into the compost than be handled, it becomes a

little less odd, and the benefits are really worth the creep-out factor.

Severson and her husband save fruit and vegetable trimmings, coffee grounds, eggshells, newspapers, even compostable grocery containers and feed them to her worms. The result is a greatly reduced amount of waste and a clearer conscience come garbage day. According to the EPA, the average American produces more than 1,600 pounds of garbage a year, a startling number. "Now that (La Crosse) is recycling plastics, we only have one bag of garbage a week for two people," says Severson. Convinced you should get some red worms of your own? They can be bought via the Internet and shipped to your door.

When Severson isn't working with her compost bin, she teaches at Winona State University and participates in the Coulee Region Herpetological Society, where she gives talks about reptiles and snakes. "I'm used to being the spokesperson for creatures that aren't fuzzy and cute," jokes Severson, but it is that open-mindedness that has allowed Severson to delve into the world of worm composting. "Don't be afraid of the mess," advises Severson. "Life is messy, but that doesn't necessarily mean dirty. There is a big difference." ❖

Maura Henn is manager of the Cameron Park Farmers Market. She sees on a weekly basis the benefits of composting and knows heirloom tomatoes wouldn't be possible without it.

For more information on vermicomposting, visit these websites:

Uncle Jim's Worm Farm
www.unclejim.com

WormWoman
www.wormwoman.com

Red Worm Composting
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WHERE THE WILD THINGS ARE

From alligators to zebras, animals can make—or break—your next vacation.

by **CHARISH BADZINSKI**
CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

For Bob and Mary Pluntz, animals are an essential component of the travel experience, from witnessing the wildebeest migration in Kenya, to fishing for piranhas and spying pink dolphins in the Amazon River. Then there was the time they were walking along the shoreline in Glacier Bay, Alaska. “We came across a mother bear with three cubs eating by the water. So we waited for the rest of the group because I figured I could run faster than at least one of them,” Mary jokes. “One guy in our group was waving his arms and trying to shoo the bears. The mother bear stood on her hind legs, and he shut right up.”

“The lion was even closer,” chimes Bob, referencing their monthlong trip to Africa, during which they got within 20 feet of the giant feline.

In situations like this, safety is key. Mary had looked on warily from the inside of the vehicle. “The lion was eating and the cubs got on the other side of the vehicle, and she looked up at me and growled. I moved over in my seat,” she explains. “The driver said, ‘Are you nervous?’ and I said, ‘A little bit.’”

For the retired Stoddard couple, who have walked the Great Wall of China, touched the pyramids in Egypt and have seen more of the world than most of us can hope to visit, the birds and beasts of the countries they visit often give as much of a thrill as man-made wonders. If you’re lucky enough to meet them, they’ll gladly tell you about the camel ride in Alice Springs, Australia, the oxcart ride in Cambodia or the llamas at the foot of the Andes Mountains in Peru. But the journey they appear to love reliving the most is Africa. From the elephant ride in Zimbabwe to being charged by a rhinoceros (while in a vehicle), to watching the migration of thousands of wildebeest, it’s their favorite trip. And should this sound like the type of vacation you’d like to take, the Pluntzes have a tip for you.

“Go with a good tour company,” Bob says. “Don’t cut corners, because if you cut corners, you might get to the animals, but they might leave you there.”

“In this country, you can know where things are, but when you go to other countries, you have to find a guide or a group that will



From zebras and wildebeest in Kenya to llamas in the Andes Mountains and lions on the African plains, there isn't much wildlife the Pluntzes haven't seen.



take you to the animals you want to see,” explains Mary.

These days, Bob and Mary talk of scaling back their trips, but there’s no apparent end in sight. This year, Ireland and Scotland are on the list. “We just have all of these places we wanted to go, and there’s always more,” Mary says.

Travel on the wild side

For those among us who want to get in touch with our wild side, the travel specialists at Travel Leaders, Owned and Operated by Goli’s Avenues of Travel of La Crosse, offer these ideas for world-class wildlife experiences:

Charlene Holler, who loved her trip to the Galapagos Islands, says, “For nature lovers, there can be no more unique destination than the Galapagos Islands. Declared a World Heritage site by UNESCO, these islands are a living laboratory, containing flora and fauna not seen anywhere else in the world. Very restrictive government oversight allows one to view and admire animals and birds that are seemingly oblivious to all the attention they get. Many describe this unique archipelago as ‘lost in time.’”

Diane Nickelatti, whose passion is Disney, advises this: “If you have a desire to go on a safari, yet traveling to Africa is not an option, Disney’s Animal Kingdom Theme Park could be your answer. Jump aboard an open-sided safari vehicle and travel across the 100-acre savannah for an exciting expedition. Zebras, black rhinos, giraffes and wildebeest are only a few of the animals to see in this wildlife preserve. You

never know what amazing animals you will see on your Animal Kingdom safari.”

Jo Ann Buening, Alaska destination specialist, has this to say: “When traveling to Alaska, make sure to include an adventure to Denali Park. While there, take a Tundra Wilderness tour, which travels deep into the park. Wildlife sightings are part of the experience, including Dall sheep, moose, caribou, bear, wolf and other types of ‘critters.’ Remember, they are in their natural habitat, so you may see them at a distance, or they may even be walking along on the road like they own the place—because, really, they do!”

Shel Hansen, premier Aussie specialist, recommends the land Down Under, “Stretching 1,200 miles along the tropical waters of Australia’s Coral Sea, the Great Barrier Reef is one of the world’s great natural wonders. Here one can view abundant marine life by snorkeling, by diving, in an underwater observatory or without getting wet, in a semi-submersible viewer. And, don’t forget about Kangaroo Island, a short 30-minute flight south of Adelaide and home to Australia’s most abundant wildlife, including sea lions, fur seals, wild kangaroos—and of course, koalas!” ❀

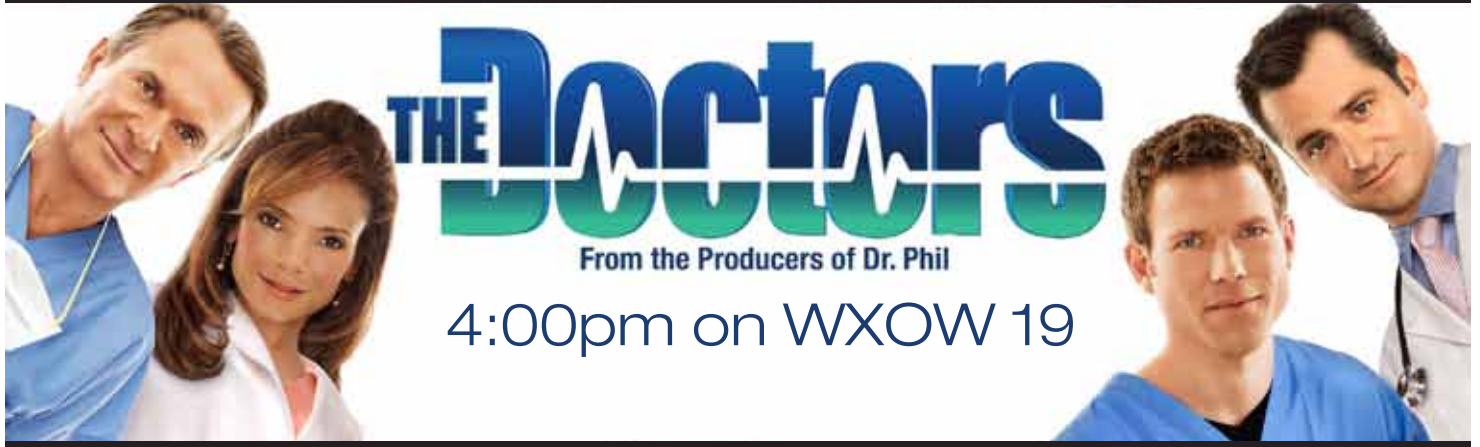
Whether riding elephants in Thailand, petting amphibians in Australia, feeding monkeys in Cambodia, snorkeling the Great Barrier Reef or being chased by street dogs in Greece, Charish Badzinski has always felt that wildlife not only adds richness to her experience of the world, but often lead to the most compelling stories to share with friends.



“Go with a good tour company,” the Pluntzes suggest. Whether your aim is to ride a camel in Australia, spy a giant Panda in China or frolic with the penguins in South America, you want to make sure you get to the best places for wildlife viewing—but also that you get back home safely.



3:00pm on WXOW 19



4:00pm on WXOW 19



Live at Five

5:00pm on WXOW 19



5:30pm on WXOW 19



ADVERTISER INDEX

Altra Federal Credit Union.....	56
Awakened Spa.....	26
Bauer's.....	28
Beautiful Reflections.....	17
Bethany Lutheran Homes.....	35
Cedar Valley Kennels.....	23
Charter Communications.....	20
Coulee Carpet Center.....	32
Coulee Region Communications LLC.....	35
Decker's Floor to Ceiling.....	28
D.M. Harris Law, LLC.....	17
Dregne's Scandinavian Gifts.....	37
Drugan's Castle Mound.....	41
Feils Knapp Chiropractic & Wellness Center.....	20
Feist Dental.....	2
Finnottes.....	44
Flooring Interiors.....	31
Flying Horse Stable.....	23
Forever Young.....	10, 48
Franciscan Skemp Healthcare.....	8
Gerhards/First Supply.....	32
Girls Scouts of WI Badgerland Council.....	38
Globe University.....	13
Grounded Specialty Coffee.....	45
Gundersen Lutheran.....	450
Hanson Insurance.....	37
Heim & Grimsdli Orthodontics.....	46
Hidden Valley Designs LLC.....	28
Janet Mootz Photography.....	10
Jo Ba Flat.....	14
La Crosse Community Theatre.....	45
La Crosse Radio.....	35
LARK.....	44
Law Office of Heidi Eglash.....	37
Leithold Music.....	44
M&I Wealth Management.....	17
Minnesota State College Southeast Technical.....	20
Mutual of Omaha.....	35
Natural Beauty.....	38
Overhead Door of the 7 Rivers Region.....	31
Painted Porch.....	44
People's Food Coop.....	46
PKC Consulting, LLC.....	20
Real Deals.....	26
Rehome a Dog, Inc.....	23
Satori Arts.....	44
Schumacher Kish Funeral Homes Inc.....	50
Scrappin' on the Ranch.....	32
Stein Counseling and Consulting Services.....	14
The Salon Professional Academy.....	38
Take II LLC, Staging & Redesign.....	28
Take 5 Productions.....	14
The Board Store.....	32
The Brownderosa Llamas.....	26
The Salon.....	44
The Wedding Party.....	48
Thompson Animal Medical Center.....	13
Tiny Tim Gala.....	13
Touch of Class.....	17
Travel Leaders.....	50
Ultimate Insultation.....	31
Valley View Mall.....	3
Waterloo Heights Dental.....	55
Westby House.....	37
West Salem Veterinary Clinic.....	23
Wisconsin Building Supply.....	31
WKBT Newschannel 8.....	6
WXOW News 19.....	53

Accomplishments

Flooring Interiors.....	46
Franke and Turnbull, CPAs.....	46
Gundersen Lutheran.....	46
Oktoberfest.....	46

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

ONGOING EVENTS

American Association of University Women (AAUW) 2nd Sat. of each month (Sept.-May), 9:30 a.m., 608-788-7439, www.aauw-wi.org.

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

Children's Museum of La Crosse weekly programming: **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 1-4 with parent, every Wed., 10:30 a.m. **Little Learners** for ages 1-4 with parent, every Thurs., 10:30 a.m.

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

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

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

La Crosse Noon Wisconsin Women's Alliance meets the 2nd Thurs. of each month, Radisson, noon. Mary Evers, 608-406-1315 or mary.evers@gmail.com.

MOPS (Mothers of Preschoolers) meets the 1st Monday of each month, Olivet Lutheran Church, 6:15 p.m. Holly Zeeb, wxyzeeb@centurytel.net, or Jessica Teff, craigteff@hotmail.com. www.mops.org.

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

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

Cameron Park Farmers' Market, Fridays through October, 4-8 p.m., La Crosse. www.cameronparkmarket.org

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

CALENDAR EVENTS

Oct. 1, First Fridays Art Reception, 6-8 p.m., Gallery La Crosse, 320 Main St.

Oct. 2, Katherine Eberle, 7:30 p.m., Performing Arts Center, Winona State University.

Oct. 8, *The Servant of Two Masters*, 7:30 p.m., Fine Arts Center, Viterbo University.

Oct. 8, Village Shopping Center Farmers Market, www.thevillagelacrosse.com.

Oct. 9, Historic Downtown La Crosse Day.

Oct. 9, Paddle for Life, 10 a.m.-2 p.m., Lake Winona.

Oct. 9-10, Hmong New Year Celebration, Veterans Memorial Park Hwy. 16, West Salem, 608-781-5744.

Oct. 9-10, Voices from the Past Cemetery Walk, noon-3 p.m., Woodlawn Cemetery, Winona, 507-454-2723, ext. 0.

Oct. 13, *Oklahoma*, 7:30 p.m., Main Theatre, Viterbo University.

Oct. 14, Community Lasagna Dinner, 6 p.m., Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, La Crescent. Featured speaker is Dr. Susan Boon Murray. For reservations, contact Bluff Country Family Resources, 507-894-2676.

Oct. 15, Village Shopping Center Farmers Market, www.thevillagelacrosse.com.

Oct. 16, Logan Craft Show, 9 a.m.-4 p.m., Logan High School, La Crosse.

Oct. 16-17, Sports Card Show, Valley View Mall, www.myvalleyview.com.

Oct. 16-25, *Escape from Happiness*, 7:30 p.m. Thurs.-Sat., 2 p.m. Sun., Toland Theatre, Center for the Arts, UW-La Crosse.

Oct. 17, Mississippi Valley Mayhem roller derby bout, 7 p.m., High Roller Skating Center; www.mississippivalleymayhem.com.

Oct. 23, Women's Expo, 9 a.m.-2 p.m., Onalaska Omni Center; www.gundluth.org/womensexpo.

Oct. 23-24, 30-31, Enchanted Forest trick-or-treating event, 10 a.m.-2 p.m., Myrick Hixon EcoPark, 608-784-0303 or www.mhecopark.org.

Oct. 24, Winona Symphony Orchestra, 4:30 p.m., Performing Arts Center, Winona State University.

Oct. 29, Children's Museum Boo-seum Non-Scary Halloween Party, 5:30-8 p.m., preregistration required, www.funmuseum.org.

Oct. 29-30, Halloween Spooktacular; Viterbo's Platinum Edition Show Choir; Fine Arts Center Main Theater; Viterbo University.

Oct. 29-Nov. 14, *On Golden Pond*, 7:30 p.m. Thurs.-Sat., 2 p.m. Sun., La Crosse Community Theatre, www.lacrossecommunitytheatre.org.

Oct. 30, West Salem Holiday Craft Show and Pancake Breakfast, 8 a.m.-2 p.m., West Salem Elementary School.

Oct. 30, Fashion Cornucopia, 11 a.m. and 5 p.m., Our Savior's Lutheran Church, La Crosse. www.oursaviorslutheranchurch.net.

Oct. 31, Trick or Treat, Valley View Mall, www.myvalleyview.com.

Nov. 4, Houston Ballet II, 7:30 p.m., Page Theatre, Saint Mary's University, Winona.

Nov. 4-Dec. 23, "In Shades of Gray" exhibit, Pump House, La Crosse, www.thepumphouse.org.

Nov. 5, First Fridays Art Reception, 6-8 p.m., Gallery La Crosse, 320 Main St.

Nov. 11-14, *Frozen*, 7:30 p.m. Thurs.-Sat., 2 p.m. Sun, Frederick Theatre, Morris Hall, UW-La Crosse.

Nov. 12-14, Tiny Tim Gala Benefit, Festival of Trees and Jingle Bell Brunch benefiting area nonprofit organizations. www.tinytimgala.org

Nov. 12-21, *Spelling Bee*, 7:30 p.m. Thurs.-Sat., 2 p.m. Sun., La Croix Black Box Theatre, Viterbo University.

Nov. 13, Gordon Goodwin's Big Phat Band, 7:30 p.m., Somsen Auditorium, Winona State University.

Nov. 13, Santa's Arrival, Valley View Mall Center Court, www.myvalleyview.com.

Nov. 17-21, Sylvia, Performing Arts Center, Winona State University.

Nov. 18-21, Holiday Fair, La Crosse Center; www.lacrossecenter.com.

Nov. 20, Laughs with Santa featuring comedian Kenny Ahern, 10 a.m., Valley View Mall Center Court, www.myvalleyview.com.

Nov. 20, La Crosse Symphony Orchestra, Fine Arts Center, Viterbo University, www.lacrossesymphony.org.

Nov. 26-Dec. 31, Rotary Holiday Lights, 5-10 p.m., Riverside Park, La Crosse, www.rotarylights.org.

Nov. 26, Disney Live, La Crosse Center, 1 and 4 p.m., www.lacrossecenter.com.

Nov. 27-28, Hixon House Christmas Tour, 429 North 7th St. La Crosse, www.lchsweb.org.

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