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Young Women to Watch

Mahruq Khan A Voice for Diversity

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Pictured on cover:

Mahruq Khan, professor of diversity studies, University of Wisconsin-La Crosse.
Photo by Megan McCluskey, Atypik Studio. Hair and makeup by Beautiful Reflections, La Crosse.



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When we first began planning this issue of *Coulee Region Women*, meant to celebrate the accomplishments of young women in the Coulee Region, we were very excited. All of us knew of young women who are doing groundbreaking work in the region, in various fields, and we were eager to get them into the lineup. The hard part, then, became defining that simple word *young*.

We all still think of ourselves as young in some respect, regardless of our true ages. As a woman with very small children, for example, I tend to categorize myself with women whose children are the same ages as mine—and rarely do our own ages coincide. (Let's just say I failed to fall into the definition of *young* that we finally settled on for the magazine—under 40. I'll admit it, that stung.)

Here's the funny part: While we thought we were good judges of age, we found that many of the women we assumed were "young"—slipping into that general category of "under 40"—actually exceeded it. We thought this sent a wonderful message about women in our region—first, that not only do we women age gracefully, we often appear not to age at all, and second, and most important, that you don't have to fall into a particular

age category to have the passion to make a difference. *Young*, after all, is a relative term.

That said, we found so many remarkable young women who met our more important criterion—doing good work in our community—that we were hard pressed to fit them all into one issue. And while we always strive for a positive tone in *Coulee Region Women*, this issue left me feeling extraordinarily hopeful about the future of our area, in terms of everything from the welfare of children to local politics, from healthy food to healthy pets, from raising awareness of diversity and tolerance here at home to making an impact in far-flung countries. Our young women work the land, help us heal, open our minds and act as ambassadors—in our own community as well as the wider world. We can be very, very proud of what young women have brought—and are bringing—to the Coulee Region.

Thank goodness for young women. They possess the compassion and creativity to transform the world, and the optimism and energy that's needed to do it. Women of earlier generations who have worked long, hard years to improve their community and their world can look over their shoulders and, with reassurance, see that others are continuing their efforts—or blazing their own trails to address the concerns of an ever-changing world. In this issue, we strive to honor them.

I'm grateful to see the next generation of women possessing that yearning and living it out through their own ideas, careers and acts of volunteerism. I read the stories of young women like diversity educator Mahruq Khan, farmer Kristin Blankenheim, school counselor Tabatha Veum, volunteers Michaela Ross and Karlee Mikkelsen, and political leaders Katherine Svitavsky and Karin Johnson—and so many others—and I wonder: Will my own small daughters be inspired by the efforts of these now-young role models in the decades to come? Will they look up to these young leaders and, with their stories to guide them, lead the next generation of change and compassion?

I hope so with all of my heart.

Betty

coulee region women

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PUBLISHER
Diane Raam

EDITOR
Betty Christiansen

ASSOCIATE EDITOR
Leah Call

DESIGNERS
Lisa Houghton Design
Jaclyn Kroner

MARKETING ACCOUNT REPRESENTATIVES
Carol Schank, Director
Sandy Clark
Claire Ristow-Seib

WEB MASTER
Mader Web Design LLC

PHOTOGRAPHY
Bruce Defries Photography
Megan McCluskey, Atypik Studio

DISTRIBUTION
Citywide Marketing Services, L.L.C.
Joanne Mihm

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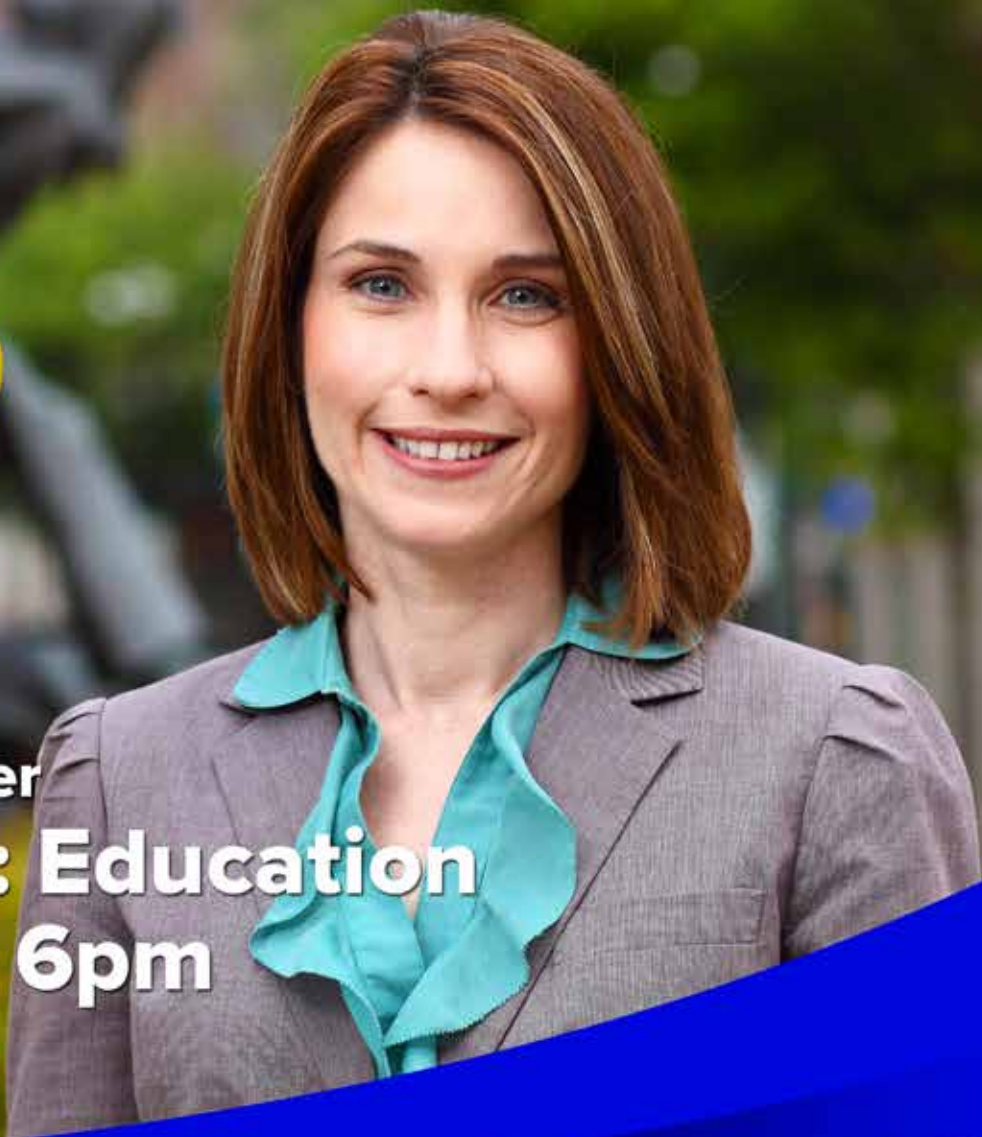
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Kick off the celebration of the season with the Holiday Harvest Wine & Food Festival on the Great River Road Wine Trail, November 9-10. Enjoy featured wines and ciders paired with holiday foods at each of the nine wineries on the trail, which runs from Marquette, Iowa, north to Cannon Falls, Minn., and includes Coulee Region wineries such as Elmaro Vineyard in Trempealeau and Garvin Heights Vineyards in Winona. Registration at the event is \$30 per person. Each ticket holder receives a Wine Trail glass and a six-bottle wine tote at the first winery visited. The ticket and wineglass entitle the holder to free wine and food tasting at each winery. Plan to enjoy the event for the entire weekend, and visit all nine wineries. Start as far away as you can, if you choose, and work your way home. A reduced ticket price is offered for designated drivers—no wine, but a lot of great food! Purchase tickets and get more information, including a trail map, at greatriverroadwinetrail.org.



FASHION CORNUCOPIA

The Women's Clothes Closet will hold its sixth annual Fashion Cornucopia Style Show and gourmet meal on Saturday, November 2, at Our Savior's Lutheran Church at 612 Division St., La Crosse. Doors open at 11:00 a.m. for the first show and at 5:00 p.m. for the second show. The style show will feature women's and men's fashions from local merchants, including Dale's, Kick, Lillians, Lark, JoBa Flat, Scott Joseph Menswear, Three Rivers Outdoors and Touch of Class. The event includes live music and tours of the Women's Clothes Closet. Tickets are \$30 each or \$200 for a table of eight and are on sale now with reserve seating available. Quilt raffle tickets and table wine are available for purchase. All proceeds benefit the Women's Clothes Closet, which provides gently used clothing to low-income women who are entering or in the workforce. For tickets, call 608-782-3468 or visit oursaviorslutheranchurch.net.

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GIVING A VOICE TO THE OTHER

For Mahruq Khan, teaching diversity is personal and professional.

BY THERESA WASHBURN

Photo by Megan McCluskey, Atypik Studio



During the charged political climate of the first Persian Gulf War, 13-year-old Mahruq Khan made a courageous but difficult choice: She would elect to wear a traditional *hijab*, or headscarf, to school every day. In the suburban American middle school she attended, where a person's value was directly related to their purchasing power, the nearly all-white student body didn't take to her new garb.

"I didn't do it because of the stereotypical reasons, like believing I needed to be modest or subservient," explains Khan, now a professor of Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, whose soft but swift dialogue only hints at her fierce drive for social justice. "I did it as a reaction to the class-based social hierarchy established by my peers." This decision shaped her understanding of group dynamics and power imbalances, and expanded her awareness of social interactions. While eighth grade can be complicated for the average teenage girl, Khan's eighth grade year became all the more challenging, due to her attire. In the small Chicago suburb where she grew up, this single act became a litmus

test for establishing friendships and associations. The experience would impact her subconsciousness, and while it would take time to form in her life, it truly paved the path for her future.

A frank proposal

Khan's parents were both Indian immigrants; her father worked in a factory while her mother taught bilingual education. Their middle-class values, coupled with a hope for a stable future for their daughter, directed Khan to a large public university in Illinois, where she dutifully selected a career path. "I wanted to pick something practical, so I started in engineering but graduated in accounting." During her undergraduate studies, she dabbled in social justice and feminist issues, but without mentorship, she did not think that her passion could translate into a job reality. For a couple of years after college, she held a steady job with a good salary at a company where her combined understanding of software and accounting landed her in management information systems. "I found the work easy, but it was a mindless routine and wasn't intellectually stimulating," says Khan.

The drudgery of an occupation that did not suit her took its toll, and Khan understood that she would need to make a change.

Newly married, Khan approached her husband with a frightening but frank proposal: She would stop the path she was on and completely switch gears, embarking on an extended graduate school career to follow her passion. His unequivocal support set Khan on a fresh course, leading to her Loyola University Chicago, where she eventually received her Ph.D. in sociology. Khan was interested in the plight of South Asian women who experienced domestic violence and found themselves quite vulnerable when their immigration status was tied to their husband's. She had witnessed domestic violence in her community early in life and observed the consequences of male impunity. As she studied, she began to understand the deep veins of patriarchy running throughout society.

"Sociology gave me an analytical framework for what I had witnessed as a child and later as an adult," explains Khan. "The coursework challenged my own worldviews and helped me target root causes for various oppressions shaped by gender, religion and race."

Khan began vigorous research and fieldwork, focusing on feminist, gay and lesbian issues within the Muslim American community. The burning question—what are the social consequences of being a double minority?—drove her research. In 2009, Khan became an Assistant Professor of Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at UW-La Crosse, teaching a variety of courses including "Gender and Human Rights," "Feminism and Faith," "Globalization,

Women, and Work" and "Introduction to LGBT Studies." She developed her research further with international travel to study gay and lesbian Muslims in Toronto, where inclusive religious Muslim spaces of worship have been successfully created.

The truth of their lives

The personal connections she has developed through the course of her research is what she treasures most from this journey. Most recently, she was inspired by the young women to whom she taught "Social Justice Theory" as part of a youth leaders of color program in New York City. "The class consisted of African American, Latina and South Asian high school girls enrolled in a two-year program to develop their leadership skills and engage in social justice activism," explains Khan. "The girls saw how the social problems we discussed were connected to their own lives; they were living the experiences." The young women were charged with developing a project around some issue that was important to them, and in turn, they developed creative, highly individualized responses to these issues.

As the class progressed, the girls began to feel empowered to share their own stories. When Khan showed a TED Talk by novelist Chimamanda Adichie entitled "The Danger of a Single Story," her students connected to the message of the Nigerian-born author who cautioned the audience to rethink the stories created by the media, urging marginalized communities to voice their own stories, struggles and victories. This shift in consciousness, along with Khan's ability to create a safe space for open

dialogue, allowed the personal stories to emerge. "It was a powerful class period," Khan says. "Some of the quieter, more reserved girls began to open up and speak about their trauma. It got very emotional, but the girls learned that their experiences were legitimate and deserved attention."

It is this type of breakthrough, the moments when she cultivates the need for her students to address the truth of their lives, that excites Khan. "My role is to mentor young people," she explains, "to nurture what is percolating inside them." In addition, she feels her research and work addresses the root causes of some of our social problems; writing and lecturing about the sources of these problems and building an environment where multiple stories flourish puts purpose to her life. "I feel I can connect academia with the grassroots work of organizations, to give students an outlet to create their own change."

A journey of action

It is truly a journey born of action that has driven Khan to the place she is now. From an act so simple as choosing to place herself further outside the norm vis-à-vis a headscarf, Khan's life was redirected. That decision opened her to a world of judgment and fear, and yet that very experience inspired her to dedicate her life to building understanding and encouraging stories that support connection and a celebration of difference. **(crw)**

Theresa Washburn is a writer, workshop presenter and communications consultant. She lives in the Coulee Region with her family and a menagerie of animals.



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A MODEL IN SERVICE

Coulee Region professional Courtney Kubly is committed to career and community.

BY MARTHA KEEFFE

Photo by Megan McCluskey, Atypik Studio

If there's one thing that Courtney Kubly, merchandise manager at T.J. Maxx, isn't afraid of, it's taking a chance. Not in the sense that she'd gamble her life away, but in the sense that she has the confidence to trust in life's opportunities. And whether that trust has resulted in a new career path or inspired her to give back to her community, Kubly has always been game. "I'm very much a believer in taking advantage of an opportunity, even if you don't know where that journey will lead."

Designs on a career

At age 16, Kubly landed her first job at Marshalls, a sister store of T.J. Maxx, in Madison. Having practiced her communication skills, Kubly remembers taking a very business-minded approach to the interview. "I showed up with a portfolio and resume," she laughs. "I was a little disappointed that they didn't look at it, but it felt good to be prepared."

Finding that she clicked easily with people, Kubly was promoted to front-end coordinator, a position that put her in charge of the registers in addition to answering customers' questions. When she left Madison to study communications and public relations at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, she took a job at American Eagle, though her intent was to leave retail. "At that time, I thought I was going to move to Chicago and become a public relations superstar," she says. "I'm originally from that area and love the big city."

But it was the La Crosse area that had designs on Kubly. "After graduation, I heard



Courtney Kubly, merchandise manager of T.J. Maxx in Onalaska

that T.J. Maxx was going to open in Onalaska," she says. "I followed up on that rumor and was hired in September 2004. I've worked for them since in various management roles."

Designs on a community

Motivated by the T.J. Maxx model of supporting neighbor organizations, Kubly became involved in a number of community efforts. "In college I did fundraising for the Special Olympics Polar Plunge, which sparked my initial interest in volunteering,"

she says. "And I was happy to find work in a professional atmosphere that encouraged employees to give back."

While volunteering with her husband, Derek, as a "big couple" through the Big Brothers Big Sisters program, Kubly signed on to the Chileda's Women's Board as a fundraiser—a commitment that she found extremely rewarding. "I was impressed by Chileda's influence throughout the country," she says, commenting on the quality programs they provide for children with special needs. During that time, Kubly accepted the position as hospitality chair for Coulee Region Professional Women (CRPW), an organization that promotes the professional, educational, cultural and social advancement of all women.

It was her contributions to her community and career that Kubly believes led her to be awarded Woman of the Year 2010 by CRPW. "I had a history of strong community involvement and was on my third year as hospitality chair," she explains. "I think they liked my perseverance."

"And now I just auctioned off a homemade French Silk pie for the YWCA Celebrity Pie Auction," she says laughing about her latest volunteer adventure. She strongly supports the YWCA mission and hopes to further her involvement with the group this year. "I love how many opportunities there are in this community to give. It's a good vibe." 

Martha Keefe lives and writes in La Crosse. She believes that with all the avenues for giving within your family, friends and community, everyone has the opportunity to become involved.



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A NEW PERSPECTIVE

Ann Wonderling makes a difference in kids' lives through vision therapy.

BY KIM SEIDEL
Contributed photo

Dr. Ann Wonderling always wanted a career that helped children. What she didn't know was that she would find it by joining her father at Family Vision Center.

Dr. Richard Foss established the practice 39 years ago and moved to various locations throughout La Crosse. He wouldn't construct a new clinic until he was certain his daughter would practice there. "By building the new office, he helped to build a future for me, which is truly remarkable to me," Wonderling says.

When she joined the practice nine years ago, she founded Vision Therapy Academy. The 37-year-old Wonderling eagerly describes vision therapy as "my passion," and her track record proves it. Under her leadership, the number of patients in vision therapy at the La Crosse clinic increased from about a half dozen to more than 70 patients. She also works about once a week at the clinic's Tomah location.

A life-changing difference

Wonderling credits her growing practice to "the happy mom referral system. These moms have seen the life-changing difference in their child, and they don't want to be quiet about it."

She's one of only four optometrists in Wisconsin who has completed a residency in vision therapy and pediatric optometry, and one of seven optometrists in the state to be a Fellow in the College of Optometrists in Vision Development. Wonderling was named Young Optometrist of the Year in 2007 by the Wisconsin Optometric Association and the American Optometric Association.

While Wonderling sees patients for routine eye care and exams, her primary aim is to help patients improve their daily living through vision therapy. She started her university studies in education but decided that vision therapy would be a unique way for her to help children.

Vision therapy is like physical therapy for the eyes and brain. Wonderling's passion for her work shines through when she explains how important healthy vision is to a child's education. Having good vision is more than having 20/20 eyesight and wearing glasses. The brain and eyes must work together properly to process information

for maximum learning potential. Vision therapy retrains the eyes to function more effectively and efficiently to treat vision-related learning problems. "It's way cool," Wonderling says with enthusiasm.

The answer to many issues

Vision therapy can be the answer to many developmental and learning issues—for both children and adults.

A mom of two young boys, Wonderling especially loves to help parents realize that their child's problems are related to their vision and it's treatable with vision therapy. About 80 percent of the time, parents bring their child to the clinic because he or she struggles with reading, writing and general learning. The problems that parents have been looking for an answer to also may include a child's focusing skills, eye-hand coordination and visual memory skills.

Vision therapy also can provide solutions for students preparing for college, working people with eye fatigue and occupational visual difficulties, athletes needing strong visual skills and those suffering from an accident or illness.

While Wonderling earned her doctorate of optometry from the University of Alabama at Birmingham School of Optometry and completed her residency work in the South, she chose to come back to the Coulee Region. It's a great place for her and her husband, Kyle, to raise their children, she says. Plus, the opportunity for her boys to enjoy their grandparents in their everyday lives is as priceless as healthy vision. **(crw)**



Ann Wonderling, Family Vision Center

Kim Seidel is a local writer specializing in parenting and health and especially enjoys interviewing people passionate about their family and work, like Dr. Wonderling.



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Walk Away Wife Syndrome

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 x221 for an appointment with a Licensed Professional Counselor or Marriage & Family Therapist.

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School social worker Tabatha Veum links students and families to resources.

BY SHARI HEGLAND

Contributed photos



Part of Tabatha Veum's role

as a school social worker at Summit Environmental Elementary School is teaching empathy through the school's guidance program. But she does much more than teach empathy: She lives it, as she connects students and families to the resources they need.

As a social worker in the school, Veum has contact with every student, through monthly guidance classes, small-group and individual counseling, or just by providing an open ear and a quiet place to eat breakfast before the school day begins.

"She does it all with kindness and grace and a willingness to give of herself," says Summit principal, Dirk Hunter. "She is an integral part of our team in developing a positive school environment. Families appreciate it, and we do as a school as well."

The school-life connection

A Chaseburg native and graduate of Westby High School, Veum, 37, received her undergraduate degree in psychology, with a minor in English, from the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse before moving to Milwaukee, where she earned a graduate degree in clinical and school social work from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

Her attraction to school social work grew from an undergraduate internship at a group

home for youth in Sparta. There she worked with young people ages 10 to 17, guiding them during summer school and helping them see the relationship between school and the rest of their lives.

"That's what hooked me," she says. Then, after working at schools in a Milwaukee suburb during graduate school, doing in-home parent education and facilitating special-needs adoptions, she knew that school social work was where she belonged: matching kids with the resources they need.

Guidance for students

Veum and her husband, Chris, returned to the La Crosse area in 2002. They have two children: Emilia, 8, and Grayson, 6, who attend State Road School.

She worked one year for the West Salem School District before joining the La Crosse School District as a social worker, initially responsible for four different elementary schools: Franklin, Roosevelt, Northwoods International and Summit Environmental. She is now in her third year under a new staffing structure that gives the social worker more roles within the school, while serving only one school.

Her varied roles include individual and small-group counseling for issues such as social skills or anger management, special education assessments and support, and

now school counselor responsibilities. Those responsibilities include classroom guidance instruction—monthly visits to each class in the school, teaching the students a consistent curriculum that is shared districtwide addressing empathy, emotion management, problem solving, skills for learning such as focus and listening, diversity and respect, and protective behaviors.

Support for families

"A huge part of my job is home-school linkage," notes Veum. "Summit is one of the more transient schools in the district," she adds, and all schools are seeing more families struggling with homelessness, poverty and other challenges. Veum says her most important roles are to be a source of information to link families to the resources they need and to be a source of support for the children. It isn't always easy, but it is always rewarding, she says.

"I've always looked at the positive side of it: that I am someone who is there for the kids," she says. "Some days you make the tiniest little baby steps that are all worth it." *(crw)*

Freelance writer Shari Hegland has no doubt after meeting Tabatha Veum that every child at Summit Environmental Elementary School has one person very firmly in his or her corner.



Not just a YOUNG PUP

Dr. Meisch is the new face of veterinary care.

BY JULIE NELSON
Contributed photos

Sparky whimpers at your ankles

as you walk into the Sand Lake Animal Clinic in Onalaska. Out comes a young woman wearing scrubs who crouches down to talk to your dog. You'll be forgiven if you do a double take when she stands to shake your hand and says, "Hello, I'm Dr. Meisch." You won't be the first to wonder how this "kid" could possibly be your veterinarian.

At age 29, Nichole Meisch-Holubar is one of the youngest, if not *the* youngest, doctors of veterinary medicine in the La Crosse/Onalaska area. "I get that a lot," she says of the first impression she makes. "People look over my shoulder wondering where the 'real' vet is." Actually, Dr. Meisch is in her third year of practice in a field becoming dominated by women. Her graduating class from the Iowa State University Veterinary College was 78 percent women, a national trend.

Meisch grew up on a dairy farm in Winona County and began her career by bottle-feeding orphaned kittens. "I'm that standard, sappy story," she says. "When I was three years old, I told my mom I wanted to be a veterinarian, and I never changed my mind. In fact, I once asked her why I had to go to regular school instead of directly to vet school."

Facing reality in a dream job

Now Meisch is living her dream. Her clients are cats and dogs who come to this general practitioner for everything from vaccines and preventive care to dental work, surgery and behavior modification. "People assume euthanasia is the hardest part of this job, but it's really not," she says, elaborating that, by the time euthanasia is even considered, all other treatment options have

been explored and the pet has been through a lot of pain. "In a way, we are helping them," she says.

She considers dealing with pet owners who can't quite bring themselves to properly take care of their pets to be the most heartbreaking part of her job. Meisch says obesity has become common in cats and dogs, and she observes a societal shift in how these animals are viewed. Most people now consider heavy animals to be normal and those at a healthy weight to be dangerously thin. The problem, she says, is that, in the owners' minds, treats equal love, and there's a tendency to offer too many treats and too much "people food" and not enough exercise. "This is especially common with senior citizens," she says. "I've seen many pets that stayed at Grandma's for a couple of weeks and came home several pounds heavier."

Because she loves it

Four years ago, Meisch married her high school sweetheart, and the couple lives in Holmen with their two fluffy cats. She keeps Dr. Meisch as her professional name, but at home it's Meisch-Holubar. She still has a lot of school debt to pay off, but says that's okay. "You don't do this job to get rich; you do it because you love it." And that she does. (crw)

Julie Nelson is the Public Relations Director for The Salvation Army. When she grew up, her family had a series of dachshunds, all of which were named Gus.



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SHE'S GOT *Heart*

Cardiac rehab nurse Angie Hammond shares her passion for healthy living.

BY LINDSAY BONNAR
Contributed photo

Fueled by a passion for exercise and wellness, Mayo Clinic Health System cardiac rehab nurse Angie Hammond began her college education more than 20 years ago. Her goal was to pass that passion to others through her career path.

"I knew I wanted something promoting passion for living well. If I can inspire others by seeing it and making them live well, too, what better job to have?" Hammond says.

During her education, Hammond discovered the cardiac rehabilitation field. She went on to graduate from the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse with a master's degree in exercise physiology/cardiac rehabilitation in 1997 and has worked for Mayo for the past 15 years. Hammond has since earned her nursing degree from Western Technical College as well, and is currently back in school earning her B.S. in nursing from Winona State University.

Healing hearts

Hammond enjoys working with her cardiac rehab patients. She has found that this, along with her work with the local Go Red for Women campaign, which promotes heart disease awareness in women, "is where exercise physiology and nursing go together."

Hammond says that staff at the cardiac rehab department at Mayo work not only with patients who have had heart conditions or surgeries, but also with patients who have lung disease, diabetes or a history of stroke. "I explain [cardiac rehab] to patients as physical therapy for your heart," says Hammond.

The 8- to 12-week program takes all patients down the same basic path. While Hammond uses exercise as the core component, cardiac rehab also teaches patients how to lead an overall healthier lifestyle. She explains that they assess all facets of the disease process, including cholesterol levels, blood pressure, depression, nutrition and more. "It's not focused in on one area; it's actually multifaceted in the sense that you are working with the nutritional aspects and the educational and the psychosocial," Hammond explains.

Hammond finds that working with these patients in an outpatient setting also allows her to develop a different kind of relationship with them.

"You feel like you're part of the family. They are fresh out of a bypass and had an overwhelming feel of being in a hospital, but now they are ... back home and they are feeling more comfortable. This is the time when you can really establish a relationship and say, 'OK, what are we going to do from now on?'" says Hammond.

"Could I be that woman?"

Hammond says she is fueled by the same passion she had a decade and a half ago, but in a different way because she is in a different part of her life. Now, Hammond is aware that she could easily become a patient.



Angie Hammond helps cardiac rehab patients, such as Phyllis Norman, stay heart-healthy after surgery.

"I have worked alongside patients who are my age and have heart disease and 90 percent blockage. One in three women have heart disease, so could I be that person? The odds are, yeah."

Hammond has expanded her commitment to wellness over the past three years in her work with the La Crosse chapter of Go Red for Women. Go Red promotes awareness that heart disease in women is prevalent—it's the number one killer of women—and through it, Hammond works to bring the message to as many people as possible.

"[We are] getting the word out there, and that's why I think it's really neat: It brings the community together," she says. **(crw)**

Lindsay Bonnar shares this passion for spreading health and wellness to others. Over the last two years, her career has expanded to include teaching fitness classes and nutrition.

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LEADING BY EXAMPLE

Karin Johnson and Katherine Svitavsky are models of service, for students and for all.

BY SUSAN T. HESSEL
Contributed photos

It's easy to worry about what this world is coming to, particularly when it comes to the next generation of government leaders. But meet La Crosse County Board Supervisor Karin Johnson and La Crosse City Council Member Katherine Svitavsky, and you'll throw out the stereotypes and relax. They've got this. And they want you to get this: We can all work to improve our world.

"Why not me?"

In Johnson's freshman year at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, a professor announced an opening on the County Board in the student-dominated fifth district. Johnson was interested right away but figured the competition would be stiff.

"I thought there was no way that I could get this," she says. But she was selected to complete the term and then ran successfully for election the following year. When the City Council seat opened a year later, Johnson urged Svitavsky to apply.

"You think, 'Why should I do this?' But really you should ask yourself, 'Why not me?'" says Svitavsky, who was appointed in her freshman year and elected the next year.



Karin Johnson, La Crosse County Board

A real-world perspective

Johnson is now a senior at UW-La Crosse with triple majors in political science, public administration and English. Svitavsky, a junior, is double majoring in political science and public administration. These two bright, motivated women attend classes together and, as public officials, share ideas and work toward common goals, such as the Dumpster Diversion Program, which encourages students to watch what they throw away at the end of the school year. It's saved literally tons of reusable items from the landfill.

Being in office means the women bring the real world into their political science and public administration class discussions. Professors frequently call on them to connect their government experiences with issues. They also get high marks from those they

work with in local government. La Crosse County Board Chair Tara Johnson describes them "two impressive young women." La Crosse Mayor Tim Kabat says they're "extremely bright, intelligent and caring young leaders. They ask the right questions and represent their constituents very well."

Johnson and Svitavsky share a passion for tough topics: Nothing pleases them more than sinking their teeth into a budget or digging through multiple-page reports about infrastructure, neighborhoods, health care reform, solid waste and property taxes.

"I am a nerd, a policy wonk," Johnson says.

"I just took a tour of the La Crosse County Landfill," Svitavsky says. "It's nice to be surrounded by fellow nerds."

Breaking a stereotype

Johnson and Svitavsky want to change the often-negative image of students and encourage more peers to be active on campus and beyond.

"I want to improve and foster that relationship between students and the community," Johnson says.



Katherine Svitavsky, La Crosse City Council

Johnson has worked on a two-year project documenting the tremendous involvement of student volunteers in the community. "We are trying to figure out the economic impact of all those voluntary hours," she says. That's important to counter what she calls the stigma of students, which marks all students as bad when one does something wrong.

Regardless of where their careers lead them, both young women are determined to improve their community. Svitavsky's friends even suggest she will be the first female president in 2048. She appreciates their confidence in her abilities, but adds, "I'd better not be the first woman president if it's 2048!" **(crw)**

Susan T. Hessel is a La Crosse personal historian and writer. When she told Karin Johnson that she wished she had their commitment to serve in public office as a college student, Johnson said, "It's never too late."

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A WELCOMING HOME

Interior designer Kristin Boettcher opens the door to her own home—and the Governor's Mansion.

BY LEAH CALL
Contributed photos



Stylish seating for outdoor dining (left) allows Kristin Boettcher's family to live outdoors as comfortably as in. Layers of textures and home-grown flowers (right) contribute to Boettcher's signature look.

Who doesn't love to catch a glimpse

inside the home of a talented interior designer? Kristin Boettcher, interior designer at Nordeen Design Gallery in La Crosse, has generously offered an exclusive look inside her own abode. Boettcher is one of the top designers of the Coulee Region, and her reputation precedes her—so much so that one of her latest projects is a renovation of the private quarters at the Governor's Executive Residence in Madison.

Boettcher brings her expertise and flair for design to every room of her La Crescent 1950s colonial. "You have to design your home around you and what makes you feel good. But I think with good design, no matter what your taste, when someone walks in the door they feel at home; they feel comfortable. They want to come in and sit down," says Boettcher. "That's what is important to me."

Boettcher achieves that homey feel through ambient lighting and textures. "Not just one type of texture, but layers of textures," she notes.

Exposed daily to the latest trends and colors, Boettcher often brings her work home with her. "My house is constantly changing to represent different designs," she says, referring to her own style as eclectic. "As designers, we have to appreciate all types of design. We can't just be locked into contemporary or traditional."

The grand tour

Boettcher fell in love with her home when she bought it four years ago with her husband, Mike, and daughter, Brynn. "I've always had



Kristin Boettcher

a love for colonial homes. They feel comfortable to me, personally."

To stay true to the colonial style, Boettcher had the kitchen's natural maple cabinets painted white to be consistent with the creamy white trim throughout the home. She also added an island and took out one wall to open the space up to the dining area. "I wanted a bigger worksurface," she explains. "And I wanted to feel part of the rest of the family, since I'm in the kitchen a lot."

Ample natural lighting illuminates the kitchen. On the island countertop, a crystal bowl holding a mix of red and orange peppers is a stark contrast to the white cabinets.

A friendly message for kitchen visitors is scrawled on a framed chalkboard repurposed from one of the home's old doorframes, which Boettcher painted with chalkboard paint.

In the dining area, Boettcher points to two floor cabinets. "These were the two upper kitchen cabinets that we took out. I kept them maple to remind me what it was, plus I like the different wood tones. I just flipped them upside down, and I use them for china storage."

Down the hallway is the powder room and the steps that lead down to the basement, which Boettcher calls "Mike's room," a comfortable place where he can get away to watch a game or read a book.

Another door takes you out to the sun porch, a relaxing spot with a sofa adorned with coral and blue pillows. "We are remodeling this area, too," says Boettcher. "I want to add built-ins and a large window seat." Since the family enjoys spending time outdoors, they created a stylish summertime hangout with outdoor dining space, a pergola and a charming playhouse for their daughter.



Left: A friendly message greets kitchen guests. Center: A classic pergola adds more character to Boettcher's home landscape. Right: Boettcher shares the design board for the master bedroom at the Governor's Executive Residence. Actual photos of the redesigned rooms have not yet been released.

Upstairs is the master bedroom, a guestroom and Brynn's room. Pretty in pink describes this lucky little girl's space. Not a thing is out of place; books and toys are stored neatly in built-in cubbies. Luckily for Mom and Dad, this 4-year-old seems to have inherited her mother's sense of style and organization. "She keeps it this way herself," says Boettcher. "She has always been that way."

Living her passion

Creativity, attention to detail and flair for design describe Boettcher's qualities. Janelle Byus, co-owner of Nordeen Design, notes, "Kristin is so good at taking anything and making it look beautiful. It's just in her."

Beautifying has been a lifelong passion of Boettcher, who obtained floral design certification in high school. From there she attended college and worked in visual merchandising for a department store chain and later for a large furniture company. In 2007 she went to work for Nordeen.

Besides her family and design work, Boettcher loves cooking and gardening. Fresh flowers displayed throughout her home were picked from her own garden.

Boettcher refers to the ongoing renovations in her home as "tweaking." And Mike knows to keep the paintbrush handy. "When Mike and I got engaged, I said, 'I want you to be prepared and know what's going to happen for the rest of our life ... I am not going to be the wife who is going to ask you to help me paint the living room one time and it will be good for 15 years.'"

"I'm constantly tweaking," she adds. "But I love that. That's why I love my job. I chose design because that's who I am. I'm one of those

people that found what they love to do and gets paid to do it."

A prestigious project

Last year, Boettcher was selected as the designer of choice to renovate the private quarters of the Wisconsin Governor's Executive Residence. "I got the job based on a client referral," she explains. "We worked closely with the client on the project. It has been so wonderful for us at Nordeen."

Over the past six months, the Nordeen team has been involved in the redesign project, which was funded completely through private funds. The last redesign of the living quarters took place more than 20 years ago.

Boettcher worked closely on the project with Tonette Walker, the wife of Governor Scott Walker, whom she describes as lovely and easy to talk to. Boettcher and the Nordeen Design team were impressed by Mrs. Walker's willingness to take recommendations and her desire to create a place that will be a comfort to future first families who reside at the Executive Residence. "Even though she might have had a look that she liked, she wanted it to be classic, to stand the test of time," notes Boettcher. "For that reason, we kept it very classic and neutral."

"We are so proud, and I'm so fortunate to be able to do the design and to have a great team to help me," says Boettcher. "It is fantastic for us as a firm here in La Crosse to have that opportunity."

For a detailed look inside the renovated living quarters, watch for a book, available in spring 2014, that will feature the renovated rooms and the work of Nordeen Design. **(crw)**

Freelance writer Leah Call wishes she had the interior design talent of Kristin Boettcher and enjoyed getting the grand tour of her home.

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Tina Wehrs gives back to an organization
that helps area youth.

BY JESSIE FOSS
Contributed photo



Tina Wehrs (pictured above, in maroon), most loves being a positive role model in her work with the Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater La Crosse.

It was scary and different, but also the move that Tina Wehrs describes as the best thing for her life. That move was becoming the Marketing and Development Director for the Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater La Crosse three years ago.

Wehrs's path to her current position with the organization is what she describes as a little unconventional. With a degree in public administration from the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, she was working for the La Crosse Area Builders Association when she decided to run for public office. Just before being elected to the La Crosse County Board, she was named to the criminal justice management council as a citizen member. There she met Mike Desmond, executive director of the Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater La Crosse.

Wehrs began chatting with Desmond about volunteering at the club. The conversation led to a job application and eventually a job offer.

The path to a positive life

The desire to volunteer with and eventually work at the Boys & Girls Clubs stems from Wehrs's desire to give back to an organization similar to one that played an important role in her own childhood. "I grew up in a single-family home in Los Angeles and went to a place like the Boys & Girls Club to play basketball," she says. "It kept me on the straight and narrow."

Being a positive role model and giving youth something to do through a variety of programs is what Wehrs loves most about her job and the Boys & Girls Clubs in general.

So much going on

Historically known for its athletics programs, the organization has become so much more, says Wehrs. Part of her job is putting out a newsletter highlighting all the activities going on at the club, something she says is difficult. "The hard part for me is trying to say everything we do," she says. "There's so much going on here."

Each year, the Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater La Crosse serve more than 8,200 youth, including 469 per day during the school year and 385 per day during the summer months.

There are seven sites in the La Crosse area that offer athletics, increase academic success for its members and develop character, leadership and healthy lifestyles through program offerings. "It is the goal of our employees and volunteers to make a connection with at least one kid every single day," Wehrs says.

The local Boys & Girls Club hosts many clubwide activities throughout the year, like holiday parties, field trips and an Olympics. The club also has special events that act as fundraisers for the club.

The variety, challenges and the constant activity Wehrs faces throughout her workdays are what keep her going. "I always wanted to find a career—not a job—and this is so much more."

More information on the Boys and Girls Clubs of Greater La Crosse can be found at bgcgl.org. [crw](http://www.crw.com)

Jessie Foss is a freelance writer who lives in La Crosse. She enjoyed learning about such a valuable organization within the greater La Crosse area.



MORE THAN Tulle & Toe Shoes

Amanda Schams of Ballet La Crosse portrays a graceful career *en pointe*.

BY HEIDI GRIMINGER BLANKE

Photos by Theresa Smerud

Amanda Schams is the quintessential ballerina. Her long hair swings from a high ponytail, her lithe body moves with grace, her expressive face could be Clara or the Sugarplum Fairy in *The Nutcracker*. It's easy to picture her dancing in a tulle skirt and toe shoes.

A child's dream

Schams started dance lessons as a child in Madison, but really wanted to be a figure skater. "I never got to the skating part," she quips. At age 10, cast as a toy soldier in a local production of *The Nutcracker*, Schams fell under the spell of an experienced ballerina. "She was just so kind. She embodied everything a ballerina should be, beautiful to watch, but kind and very good with children."

As a young teen, Schams ran a dance studio in her basement, even staging a show at her school. Concurrently, she continued taking lessons and appearing in productions. "I was part of the magic, behind the scenes, seeing older dancers I aspired to be," she explains.

"By the time I was in high school," she says, "I knew I wanted to do something with this, so I started going to summer programs," which included a six-week pre-professional program in Milwaukee.

A college student's focus

After high school, Schams headed to the University of Kansas on a dance scholarship but, after one year, the faculty advised her to try to work professionally rather than take the college avenue. "We encourage you to go further," they said. Schams took their advice and headed to training at the Nutmeg Conservatory for the Arts. "They offered a scholarship program where I could live there, further my training, get connections. In exchange, I was in charge of six high

school students." Schams was just 20 years old. Her schedule was grueling. She woke at 5:00 a.m., swam, worked at a bagel store until 2:00 p.m., danced until 10:00 p.m., then helped her students.

After that, Schams returned to Madison. "There was a semi-professional ballet company starting up. For five years, I performed with them as a guest artist," she says. She also continued schooling at the University of Wisconsin.

Finally, after a move to Iowa City with her husband, Schams completed her college degree, dancing all the while. She remained as a guest artist in Madison, rehearsing on her own for each role.

An adult's passion

Now in the Coulee Region, Schams teaches dance, Pilates and workshops at Misty's Dance Unlimited and is involved with the area's start-up ballet company, Ballet La Crosse, as co-choreographer for its full-length, original ballet. This 36-year-old mother of two young children ensures students have a positive dance experience. "That's one thing we offer here, absolute kindness and respect with our teachers."

Dance always has and always will be a part of Schams's life. "Ballet is for me," she says. "I'm naturally more of an introvert, so portraying a story, but in a more classic way, appeals to my personality. I can come out and express myself in those stories."

Amanda Schams has come full circle and is now the role model she once admired, helping other young ballerinas live their dreams. **crw**

Heidi Griminger Blanke, Ph.D., is a freelance writer specializing in feature articles, newsletters and web content. Despite six years of ballet lessons, she never wanted to be a ballerina, just wear the tutu and toe shoes.

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—Melissa Richards, MD

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| FOOD |



At Home on the Farm

**Kristin Blankenheim raises good food
at St. Brigid's Meadows.**

BY DEBORAH NERUD
Contributed photos

Kristin Blankenheim always knew she was meant to be a dairy farmer. Growing up in Edgerton, Wis., on a 100-head conventional dairy farm played a big part in her future career choice, as did her years in 4-H, but it was her time spent at the University of Wisconsin-Madison that convinced her of her path. While studying for her bachelor's degree in Dairy Science, she worked as the on-site dairy manager, living above the barn where milking heifers are

housed, and teaching other students about milk cows and the dairy industry. It was after she completed her master's degree in Dairy Nutrition that she first heard about St. Brigid's Meadows.

The good word on sustainable farming

Owned by Vince and Dawn Hundt since 1978, and certified organic since 1989, St. Brigid's Meadows is a bio-diverse beef, dairy, pork, egg and poultry farm that uses ecologically sustainable farming practices on a small scale, with two parcels of land, one for beef and poultry production, and the other for dairy and eggs. Cattle are grazed over 56 acres of land until the first snow falls (at which time they are fed a diet of organic grains grown on-site), chickens scratch for bugs and hogs are encouraged to roam and root.

Blankenheim moved onto the property in 2010, and, as co-owner of the farm, she continues to dedicate her efforts to maintaining the dairy, pork and laying-hen farm that sits atop the bucolic Poplar Coulee Ridge, a yawning swath of pasture, field and forest atop the bluffs, just minutes away from the Norskedalen Heritage Center in Coon Valley. It's a working farm, with every day bringing new challenges and possibilities, but St. Brigid's is always open for visitors. "We love having people come out to the farm—to show people where their food is coming from," Blankenheim states. "We're always happy to show this beautiful space to whoever's interested."

That desire to spread the good word on sustainable farming runs deep with Blankenheim; her father is a UW-Extension Office Educator, and she maintains that education is the key to St. Brigid's success. "Education," she says, "is so important to me. The more people learn about their food, how it is produced, where it was grown and who their farmers are, the more success small farms like St. Brigid's will have."

"Families are trying to eat healthier," Blankenheim notes. "I'm seeing a lot of young moms [at the farm]—mothers who want their

babies and young children to eat really good, really healthy food." She also states that nearly all of St. Brigid's advertising is done by word-of-mouth, and in this case, the superior products speak for themselves: Fresh eggs, milk, pork, beef and chicken are delivered to Blankenheim's customers' homes and businesses (including Signatures restaurant in Winona and the Driftless Café in Viroqua), and inevitably, many of the customers know each other because of this, creating community from a desire to eat good food.

Everything right here

As the interest in St. Brigid's products grows, the farm continues to receive regular visits from schoolchildren in Viroqua as well as from regular customers and curious sustainability buffs. The farm also hosts events on-site, including the successful Ciderfest (delicious food paired with hands-on cider making). Blankenheim states that one of the joys of being on this farm is the possibility it brings for growth and new events. Her life is dedicated to this space, helping it flourish and change with the needs of the animals, the land and the customers.

The joy the farm brings to Blankenheim, age 27, is palpable. Her smile is easy and her manner relaxed; she has always known that the most comfortable place for her, the place where she has always felt most at home, is on the farm. While she doesn't consider what she does to be unusual for someone her age, she does recognize that sometimes it's hard to maintain the social calendar of events off the farm; a wedding reception or a friend's 30th birthday party might be missed because there are cows to milk (to whom she sings the latest top 40 hits) or chores to finish. Any spare time she may have is dedicated to her church, watching the Green Bay Packers or simply having a nap. She does say that she enjoys staying close to home, and that one of the luckiest things about being a small farmer and "foodie" is that she rarely has to go to the store for groceries. "Everything I need is right here," she says. **(crw)**



BUTTERMILK PANCAKES

Serves 4 (about eight 3-inch pancakes).

- 1 cup unbleached all-purpose flour
- 2 tsp. granulated sugar
- ½ tsp. salt
- ½ tsp. baking powder
- ¼ tsp. baking soda
- ¾ cup buttermilk
- ¼ cup milk
- 1 large egg, separated
- 2 T unsalted butter

Mix dry ingredients in medium bowl. Pour buttermilk and milk into 2-cup Pyrex measuring cup. Whisk in egg white; mix yolk with melted butter, then stir into milk mixture. Dump wet ingredients into dry ingredients all at once; whisk until just mixed.

Meanwhile, heat griddle or large skillet over strong medium-high heat. Brush griddle generously with oil. When water splashed on surface confidently sizzles, pour batter, about ¼ cup at a time, onto griddle, making sure not to overcrowd. When pancake bottoms are brown and top surface starts to bubble, 2 to 3 minutes, flip cakes and cook until remaining side has browned, 1 to 2 minutes longer. Re-oil the skillet and repeat for the next batch of pancakes.

POACHED EGGS

Serves 4.

- 4 eggs (or as many as you want)
- 2 T white distilled vinegar

Select a pan that can hold 3-4 inches of water and wide enough so that all of your eggs will fit without touching. Bring water to about 160-180 degrees—it is imperative not to poach eggs in boiling water. Add vinegar to water (this will keep the egg from dissolving into egg drop soup).

Crack 1 egg into a ramekin or small bowl. Holding the edge of the ramekin, gently submerge into the hot water. Slowly release the egg into the water. Do this for all 4 eggs. Once you are done, gently slide a spatula under each egg to release it from the bottom of the pan. Take care not to puncture the yolk.

Leave eggs in pan for 2 minutes for very soft yolks, 3-4 minutes for a nice custardy center and 6 minutes for well done. Serve on toast with bacon or sausage and top with Hollandaise if desired.

HOMEMADE BUTTER

Serving size: about 1 tablespoon.

Room temperature fresh cream (preferably organic)

Sea salt to taste

Pour cream into a food processor. Blend on a medium setting for several minutes or until butter forms. Turn off processor and pour off buttermilk (you may use a fine-mesh strainer). Save the buttermilk for cooking (see pancakes, above).

Once drained, put butter back in processor and add some very cold water. Blend again. Once the water runs clear, pour it off and place the butter on a wooden cutting board. With a spatula, start squeezing and smooching the butter to remove excess water. Tilt the board to pour it off as necessary. Add a pinch of salt (or more to taste) and massage it in. Your butter is ready to eat. Refrigerate when not in use.

Deborah Nerud is a free-range ukuleleist, actor, writer, gardener, cook and mother of two. She lives in La Crosse.



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IN A GARDEN

Grow Your Brain introduces schoolchildren to healthy eating from the ground up.

BY KRISTY WALZ
Contributed photos

“I started paying more attention to what I was eating when I was pregnant with my first child,” says Anne Seehafer, a La Crosse mom and the “brain” behind Grow Your Brain, a new local nonprofit. Seehafer credits her children—two young boys—as the catalyst for living intentionally. And living intentionally has been the catalyst for Grow Your Brain.

“There are four things that my kids and I need for our well-being,” Seehafer says. “The first one is healthy food—what we put in our bodies is important. We also need movement—deliberate movement every day. We need to be in nature, and we need a sense of community.”

What started as maternal awareness and a personal pledge of intentionality grew into a passion.

“Parents lose their influence when children go to school,” says Seehafer. “If the kids sitting next to your child at lunch don’t like broccoli, then your child doesn’t like broccoli.”

“When my oldest son started school,” she adds, “along with that peer pressure, the (school) food choices were different than what we were eating at home. I was really frustrated.”

Seehafer’s frustration prompted a challenge from her husband. “He kept telling me, ‘If you have a problem, you need to do something,’” she says with a smile. So in 2012, Seehafer co-founded Grow Your Brain.

Growing kids, growing gardens

“We need to start young to foster healthy habits,” Seehafer states. “There’s a health crisis going on in this country, and schools are the single greatest way to reach all of our children. The health crisis is not going away until we become proactive. We can’t start when the kids are 16 years old and battling diabetes. Our school districts are doing what they can to offer healthy choices, but their funding restrictions are

almost insurmountable. Things are changing, but the change is slow.

“Our initial thought was to change the food in the cafeteria,” she continues. “But it’s not just about changing the food. You have to change the way kids *see* food. There’s an educational piece that goes along with it.”

The focus evolved to school gardens at State Road Elementary, where Seehafer’s oldest son is a student, and at Hamilton/SOTA I. “There have been school gardens in the past, but they have struggled because there hasn’t been paid staff,” Seehafer says. “The garden has been extra work for someone in the schools that already had a full schedule. We knew it was important for Grow Your Brain to have a paid garden coordinator position, and we knew that we needed to team up with others who shared our vision.”

Growing gardens, growing community

Building collaborative relationships with the schools and other local agencies and organizations has been an integral part of Grow Your Brain’s early success. “Hillview Urban Agriculture allows us to work under their 501(c)(3) while we go through the process to obtain our own,” Seehafer says gratefully. Deep Roots Community Farm in La Crosse recently held the nonprofit’s Fall Festival fundraiser.

With two successful school garden programs under way, Grow Your Brain hopes to continue expanding. “We’d like to bring on more business sponsors. That would allow us to work with more schools,” Seehafer says. “We feel like we’re building a model that can be used both locally and nationally.” 

Kristy Walz is the CEO of Confluence Consulting in Holmen. She is an advocate of initiatives that show kids where their food comes from.

| RETAIL THERAPY |



DRESS FOR *Success*

Fall into fall with winning styles for any age.

Photos by Bruce Defries Photography
Photographed at WXOW studio



Whether starting out in your career, switching tracks at any age or just looking for a new professional style, look to WXOW anchors Amy Dupont and Lindsey Hayes for inspiration. This season, rich fall colors and flattering silhouettes steal the show.

Facing page: On Amy (left), Nic + Zoe black dress, \$154; Nic + Zoe belted jacket, \$187; Slane wrap necklace, \$940; Gentle Souls “Groupe” booties, \$225, from **Touch of Class**, downtown La Crosse.

On Lindsey (right), Calvin Klein dress, \$128; Relativity necklace, \$25; Relativity bracelet, \$24; Bandolino “Channing” shoes, \$89, from **Herbergers**, Valley View Mall.

Above left: Not too dressed-up, not too dressed-down, Amy’s striking skirt and denim jacket make a smart casual-Friday ensemble. A bright clutch adds a pop of color.

Denim jacket, \$49; striped skirt, \$56; camisole, \$28; necklace, \$22; clutch, \$54, from **Mainstream Boutique**, Onalaska. Bandolino “Tuff Love” shoes, \$69, from **Herbergers**, Valley View Mall.

Above right: There’s no reason professional can’t be playful, as proven by Lindsey’s eye-catching print paired with snakeskin-print sandals.

Dress, \$79; necklace, \$20, from **Mainstream Boutique**, Onalaska. Fergalicious “Hex” sandals, \$59, from **Herbergers**, Valley View Mall.

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“When a person looks pretty on the outside, she feels pretty on the inside,” says Trudy Swenson, Independent Sales Director for Mary Kay. Her observation is especially true for young women beginning their careers, for whom making a confident, positive first impression is important. Here, Swenson shares some tips to ensure that young Coulee Region women—or those of any age—look and feel their best.

Step 1

Apply a **cleanser and a moisturizer**.

“Even at age 20, you need to be thinking about fine lines and wrinkles,” says Swenson.

Step 2

Using a **mineral powder foundation**, start in the center and dust outward, covering your entire face.

Step 3

1. Using a light **“highlighter shade”**—here, a light beige—apply the base color from eyelash to eyebrow.
2. Apply a **“midtone shade”**—brown in our example—above the crease of the eye.
3. Apply an **“accent shade”**—here, green—along the top lashline and blend into the outside half of the crease, making a V.
4. Go over the whole eyelid again with the **highlighter shade** to blend the colors.

Step 4

Experiment with a **colored eyeliner**. Cat-eye application is a popular look. **Colored mascara**—like this green shade—is fun yet career-appropriate.

Step 5

Sparkling Cider Cheek Color provides a fresh fall look without too much color. Begin farther back on your cheekbone and brush the color forward to the apple of the cheek.

Step 6

“Young women are all about **lip gloss**,” says Swenson.

Makeup Notes

- As your skin color changes with the seasons, so must your foundation color. Switch to your winter shade in October.
- For an evening look, follow the steps given here, but simply add a bit more color.
- When choosing colors, stay within the same color family—here, earth tones are used.

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Saturday, October 12th- All Day
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UPPER LIVING TOUR

Sunday, October 13th from 12 noon - 5 pm
Tour downtown residential units, apartments, lofts and condos. See what all the buzz is all about- living downtown next to unique stores, coffee shops, museums, restaurants and Riverside Park!

DOWNTOWN TRICK OR TREATING

Saturday, October 26th from 11 am - 3 pm
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**Kenna Christians
Is New
Mrs. Oktoberfest**

Kenna Christians, a retired professional fundraiser from La Crosse, was named Mrs. Oktoberfest during the annual Mrs. Oktoberfest reception at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse September 25. Fittingly, Christians has served as the university's Assistant Chancellor for Advancement & External Relations and president of the UW-L Foundation from 2001 until her retirement in 2007. Since then, she has helped numerous area nonprofits raise millions and has recently served as interim executive director of the YWCA.

Mrs. Oktoberfest is a designation given to a woman in the community noteworthy for her professional and community work.

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**Mayo Clinic Health
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Jennifer McElroy, D.O., has joined the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology at Mayo Clinic Health System in La Crosse.

Dr. McElroy earned her Doctor of Osteopathy from the Chicago College of Osteopathic Medicine in Downers Grove, Ill., and completed her obstetrics and gynecology residency through Rush University Medical Center in Chicago, Ill., where she served as chief resident.

Dr. McElroy is certified by the American Board of Obstetrics and Gynecology. For more information or to make an appointment with Dr. McElroy, please call 608-392-9866.

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Alexis went from being a star on 'Survivor' to co-founder of a non-profit "I AM THAT GIRL" and an author. She will inspire us to discover our passion and dream fearlessly while making a difference in the world.

Date: Thursday, Oct. 17, 2013

Time: 11:00 a.m. registration

11:30 a.m.-1:00 p.m. program/lunch

Location: UW-L Valhalla Hall

Cost: Tables of 8: \$600

Individual Tickets: \$40

Tickets and additional information:

WomensFundLaCrosse.org or 608-780-5710

Tickets are available until Friday, Oct. 11, 2013

Seating is limited, so order early!



**Mary Kessens
Named Riverfront,
Inc., President
and CEO**

The boards of the Riverfront Activity Center and the Riverfront Foundation are pleased to introduce Mary Kessens as President and CEO of Riverfront, Inc. Kessens earned a B.A. in Politics from Luther College and an MBA at Drake University.

Kessens has broad professional leadership experience as a business owner, the membership director of Wisconsin Manufacturers and Commerce, a community-based corrections officer, COO of United Cerebral Palsy of Greater Dane County and as Riverfront's Chief Operating Officer for the past three years. Under her leadership, Riverfront will continue being the source for innovative support to adults with disabilities.

THE CALL TO SERVE

| TRAVEL |

For two Coulee Region women, travel and volunteerism work together, with life-changing results.

BY CHARISH BADZINSKI

Contributed photos



Students in the high school entrepreneurship classes taught by Michaela Ross (center) created products and presented them at national business competitions.



Karlee Mikkelson plays on a rope swing with Toño, a child she volunteered with at an orphanage in El Salvador.

For some, the travel bug bites early, and hard. And with it comes a fever that compels the journeywoman to seek out more than distant lands and serene beaches. For her, travel is less about new places than it is about opportunities to serve, to help others who through circumstance and birthplace alone face a lifetime that is very different.

For two young women from the Coulee Region, the desire for service-based travel started in school. For both, classroom presentations spoke to them on a deep level, and as a result, changed the course of their lives. And what they learned was that service-based travel enabled them to see the world in a very different way, while seeing their own lives with new eyes, as well.

Peace Corps service in Nicaragua

When Michaela Ross was 12 years old, she was stunned by a teacher's presentation about serving in the Peace Corps in Africa. Years later, when working toward an undergraduate minor in Spanish, she decided to study abroad in Spain. That trip only whetted her appetite to see the world. "When I graduated from college, I knew I wanted to go into the Peace Corps," she says. After a lengthy application process, and working about 70 hours a week to save money, she accepted placement as a small-business development volunteer in Nicaragua. She was 24 years old.

During her two-year Peace Corps commitment, she provided entrepreneurship training to both students and teachers (so they could continue teaching the course) and small-business consulting, and as a passion project, she worked with the deaf youth population in Nicaragua, helping them learn basic communications skills and improve their likelihood of self-sufficiency.

Ross says that upon her arrival, she experienced culture shock almost immediately. She remembers looking into her host family's backyard as their tattered clothes hung drying and scrawny chickens ran across the dirt-packed ground. "The poverty was just so raw. In that moment I was terrified," she explains. "But then, you acclimate. In the Peace Corps, one thing you learn very quickly and that you carry with you the rest of your life is that the human body and spirit can adapt to virtually anything."

That's just one of many lessons Ross learned during her time in Nicaragua, lessons she is eager to share with others considering service-based travel. Also among them is understanding that, often, people don't need your help. "You have to realize that you are simply there to work alongside people who want to work with you. Even if you have good intentions, be open to the fact that they may actually not need what your perspective thinks they need." Ross says the most successful initiatives look at what the community wants, what volunteers can offer and what resources will allow.



In efforts to help rural, deaf youth get access to educational and vocational resources, Ross partnered with the nonprofit Manos Unidas, and learned some basic Nicaraguan sign language.



Mikkelson watches the sunrise from Devil's Door, a mountaintop lookout in El Salvador.

The other important lesson she wants to share is to be present in the moment when serving in a developing nation. “In the U.S., we often miss the opportunity to connect with people around us at a level at which people in third-world countries don’t miss. And I think it’s a beautiful thing that a lot of travelers and service volunteers would experience.”

Ross returned home in April of this year, after fracturing her back in an accident in Nicaragua. After months of physical therapy, her back brace has been removed. Yet her experience in Nicaragua continues to inspire and strengthen her. She plans to move to New York this fall, and continues to work with Manos Unidas, an organization that assists deaf children in Nicaragua receive an education to help ensure a more financially stable future.

Volunteering at an El Salvador orphanage

For Westby native Karlee Mikkelson, it was a Spanish class epiphany that changed her life. She realized she didn’t want to be one of the people who said they wished they had traveled. Instead, she wanted to go as soon as possible.

That’s how, at the age of 18, she found herself volunteering in an orphanage in El Salvador. With the support of her parents, she researched options. She knew two

things: She wanted to work with a smaller organization—so that she wouldn’t be just a number—and if she went to a third-world country, she wanted to help. She found an Ohio-based organization that placed her as a volunteer at Love and Hope Children’s Home in Los Planes de Renderos, El Salvador. The home provides safety, food and housing to children who are orphaned, abused, abandoned or neglected.

“When I first got there, all the kids ran up to me ... it was insane to see how they didn’t have anything, but they are happy with everything. It was a pretty hard realization.” Over the course of three months of helping with everything from studying to caring for special-needs children, Mikkelson forged strong bonds with the children, and they rapidly became the most important aspect of her stay. “I spent three months trying to change their lives, better them and volunteer my time to grant them a better future. And it was the complete opposite. I left and knew they didn’t need me to better them, but they had bettered me.”

She remembers her last night at the home, when one by one, the children said in rudimentary English, “I ‘doved’ you.” To this day, the kids remain an inspiration to her, one that will compel her to volunteer for the rest of her life, she says.

Upon her return home, Mikkelson spoke before the Westby Spanish language

students about her experience. “I stressed to all of them that, of course, traveling isn’t for everyone, and going out of the country isn’t for everyone. But it’s important to try to get out of your comfort zone. I think that’s the biggest thing for me, because I would have never been able to find myself if I hadn’t lost myself.”

Even though she hopes to travel to the area again, Mikkelson says the experience also solidified her love for the Coulee Region. “I learned that when I have a family, I want to raise them in this area. It’s the greatest place to grow up.” **(crw)**

Charish Badzinski feels lucky to have met the inspirational travelers featured in this story. She is a freelance writer who dreams about travel in her free time on her blog: <http://rollerbaggodess.wordpress.com/>.

To learn more about opportunities for volunteerism and philanthropy with the organizations mentioned in this story, go to:

Peace Corps:
peacecorps.gov/learn

Manos Unidas:
manos-unidas.org

Love and Hope Children’s Home:
loveandhopechildrenshome.com

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COMMUNITY CALENDAR

ONGOING EVENTS

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

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

Children's Museum of La Crosse weekly programming:

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

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

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

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

Coulee Region Professional Women (CRPW) 4th Tues. of each month, Nell's City Grill, 1111 3rd St. S., La Crosse, 5:30 p.m. Courtney Kubly, 608-516-6916, kubly22@yahoo.com.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Women of Worth (WOW) last Wed. of each month, Boot Hill Pub, noon. Debbie Lee, 608-784-2775, debbie.lee@westlandinsurance.com.

Women's Alliance of La Crosse (WAL) 2nd Thurs. of each month, noon, The Waterfront Restaurant, Kendra Brown, kendra@dmharrislaw.com.

CALENDAR EVENTS

Oct. 4-6, Dido and Aeneas, 7:30 p.m. Fri.-Sat., 2 p.m. Sun., Fine Arts Center, Viterbo University, La Crosse.

Oct. 5, Warriors Baton and Drum Corps Event, 10 a.m.-4:30 p.m., Center Court, Valley View Mall.

Oct. 5-6, Ted Vigil's Rocky Mountain High, 7:30 p.m. Fri., 2 p.m. Sat., Heider Center, West Salem, heidercenter.org.

Oct. 10-12, Peter Pan, 7 p.m. Fri.-Sun., 2 p.m. Sun., Performing Arts Center, Winona State University.

Oct. 11, Adrian Legg, 7:30 p.m., The Pump House, La Crosse, thepumphouse.org.

Oct. 11, Night Out at the Museum, 5:30-8 p.m., Children's Museum of La Crosse.

Oct. 11-13, Little Women—The Musical, 7:30 p.m. Fri.-Sat., 2 p.m. Sun., Fine Arts Center, Viterbo University, La Crosse.

Oct. 12, 18th Annual Historic Downtown Day, La Crosse.

Oct. 12-13, Fall Gift and Craft Show, 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Sat., 10 a.m.-3 p.m. Sun., Onalaska Omni Center.

Oct. 12, Murder Mystery Theatre, 6 p.m., Weber Center for Performing Arts, La Crosse, 608-788-1909.

Oct. 12, Young Eagles EAA Free Airplane Rides, 10 a.m.-noon, La Crosse Airport, youngeagles.org.

Oct. 18-27, Detroit, 7:30 p.m. Thurs.-Sat., 2 p.m. Sun., Toland Theatre Center for the Arts, UW-La Crosse.

Oct. 18-27, First Lady Suite, 7:30 p.m. Thurs.-Sat., 2 p.m. Sun., La Crosse Community Theatre.

Oct. 24-26, Ghoulies in the Coulees, 6-9 p.m., Norskedalen, Coon Valley, norskedalen.org.

Oct. 24-26 Oct. 31-Nov. 2, Mr. Marmalade, 7:30 p.m., The Pump House, La Crosse, thepumphouse.org.

Oct. 25, C. Willi Myles—America's Everyday Comedian, 7:30 p.m., La Crescent-Hokah Community Education, 507-895-5150.

Oct. 25-26, Children's Museum Boo-seum Non-Scary Halloween Party, 5:30-7:30 p.m., Children's Museum of La Crosse.

Oct. 26, Boo Bash Halloween Party, 6 p.m., Pearl Street Brewery, theboobash.com.

Oct. 26, Trick-or-Treating Downtown, 11 a.m.-4 p.m., downtown La Crosse.

Oct. 26, West Salem Holiday Craft Show, 8 a.m.-2 p.m., West Salem Elementary School.

Oct. 27, Valley View Mall's Halloween Spooktacular, 11 a.m.-4 p.m., Valley View Mall.

Nov. 7-10, Boy Gets Girl, 7:30 p.m. Thurs.-Sat., 2 p.m. Sun., Frederick Theatre, Morris Hall, UW-La Crosse.

Nov. 7, Human Trafficking in the Coulee Region, 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. and 7-8:30 p.m., Cleary Center, UW-La Crosse campus.

Nov. 8, Ellis Paul, 7:30 p.m., The Pump House, La Crosse, thepumphouse.org.

Nov. 8, Night Out at the Museum, 5:30-8 p.m., Children's Museum of La Crosse.

Nov. 8, Downtown Holiday Open House, 5-9 p.m., downtown La Crosse.

Nov. 9, Santa's Magical Arrival, 10 a.m.-12 p.m., Center Court, Valley View Mall.

Nov. 9, Tiny Tim Gala Benefit, 6-9:30 p.m., Cargill Room, The Waterfront, La Crosse, 608-392-4208.

Nov. 9, 16, 23, The Snow Queen, La Crosse Community Theatre/ Weber Center for the Performing Arts, La Crosse.

Nov. 10, Jingle Bell Brunch, 10 a.m.-noon, Cargill Room, The Waterfront, downtown La Crosse, 608-392-4208.

Nov. 15-24, On the Verge, 7:30 p.m., Fri.-Sat., 2 p.m. Sun., Viterbo University/Weber Center for the Performing Arts, La Crosse.

Nov. 16, Mavericks: Ryan & Ryan, 7:30 p.m., Heider Center, West Salem, heidercenter.org.

Nov. 16, Treasure Island, 1 and 4 p.m., Fine Arts Center, Viterbo University, La Crosse.

Nov. 19, The Wonder Bread Years, 7:30 p.m., Fine Arts Center, Viterbo University, La Crosse.

Nov. 20-24, God of Carnage, 7:30 p.m., Performing Arts Center, Winona State University.

Nov. 21-24, Holiday Fair and Craft Show, 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Sat., 10 a.m.-3 p.m. Sun., La Crosse Center.

Nov. 23, Back in '59—a 50s & 60s Musical Revue, 7:30 p.m., La Crescent-Hokah Community Education, 507-895-5150.

Nov. 29, Black Friday, Valley View Mall.

Nov. 29-Jan. 1, Rotary Holiday Lights, open daily 5-10 p.m., Riverside Park, La Crosse.

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