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women

AREA HOME AND GARDEN MAGAZINE

Leah Misch Rides On

“We’re Fine, Mom!”

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You Back?

New Hope in
the Breast Cancer
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Moving Forward

Carolyn Bostrack: Moving Forward with FIERCE



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Cover photo: Carolyn Colleen Bostrack. Photo by Tiffany Brubaker Photography. Photo on this page: Leah Misch, contributed photo.

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Photo by Jen Towner Photography

This summer, my family and I went on a number of car trips. Packed safely in our trusty SUV, classier than a minivan yet big enough for the kids to sit comfortably without crossing the invisible lines between them, we headed off first to Michigan. We stopped overnight at my sister's cabin on the Menominee River and waded at our favorite Lake Michigan beach before arriving at our destination: another sister's house just over the Mackinac Bridge. The kids knew the way and anticipated every stop: the river, the lake, the bridge, their cousin's house.

On the way home, we explored new territory: the Lake Superior side of the Upper Peninsula. Between lighthouse visits, stops at glorious new beaches and dips in the breathlessly vast expanse of cold Lake Superior, the lack of predictability started to take its toll. "Where are we going to eat?" someone would ask nervously.

"We don't know," we'd reply. "We'll see when we get to the next town."

"Where will we sleep?"

"We don't know," we'd say. "We'll see how far we get and what's available."

"Will there be a pool?"

We explained that we were exploring, that this was an adventure, that it was fun! The act of moving forward, meandering toward a destination with plenty of discovery along the way, was the whole point of our travels.

The tables were turned in August when, after stopping in the Zone of Totality to view the eclipse before camping in Wyoming,

our trusty SUV suffered catastrophic engine failure somewhere in the Nebraska sandhills. There was no predictability in the hours that followed. We waited long past dark for a tow truck and made a late-night search in the nearest small town for a motel not booked with eclipse viewers. The next day was a panic of locating a rental vehicle, receiving a very bad diagnosis, test-driving possible new cars and moving to a better hotel. My husband and I were beyond nervous. We were miserable.

But the kids were having a great time. They *loved* the brand-new pickup we got to drive for a day. Our new hotel had a pool. They played in a park with new friends while their dad and I sorted our options and, when we finally decided to drive home and come back for the SUV, they were over the moon to discover our next rental vehicle was a minivan. "This is once in a lifetime," my daughter whispered.

My life—and perhaps yours, too—has gone something like these trips. There are times when my destination is clear and I can afford to pause and play along the way, not knowing what each stop will bring but trusting it will be great and enjoying the ride. There are times when I feel utterly lost, without a destination at all, when trusting the journey seems foolish. There are also times in between, when I muddle around, wanting to move forward but just not being able to.

That's exactly the topic this issue of *Coulee Region Women* tackles: moving forward. We'll show you how by the example of local women—like cover woman Carolyn Colleen Bostrack, motorcyclist Leah Misch and others—who have moved themselves out of difficult or stagnant situations and moved on to something great. Whether leaving abusive relationships, changing careers, starting new businesses, facing a life change or moving past a stuck mindset, these women have identified and taken steps to make change and move forward—and you can, too.

I thought I was teaching my kids something about being adventuresome this summer. It turns out, they taught me even more—about finding joy in the journey, moving forward with hope and, ultimately, trusting that what comes next will be great.

Betty

coulee region women

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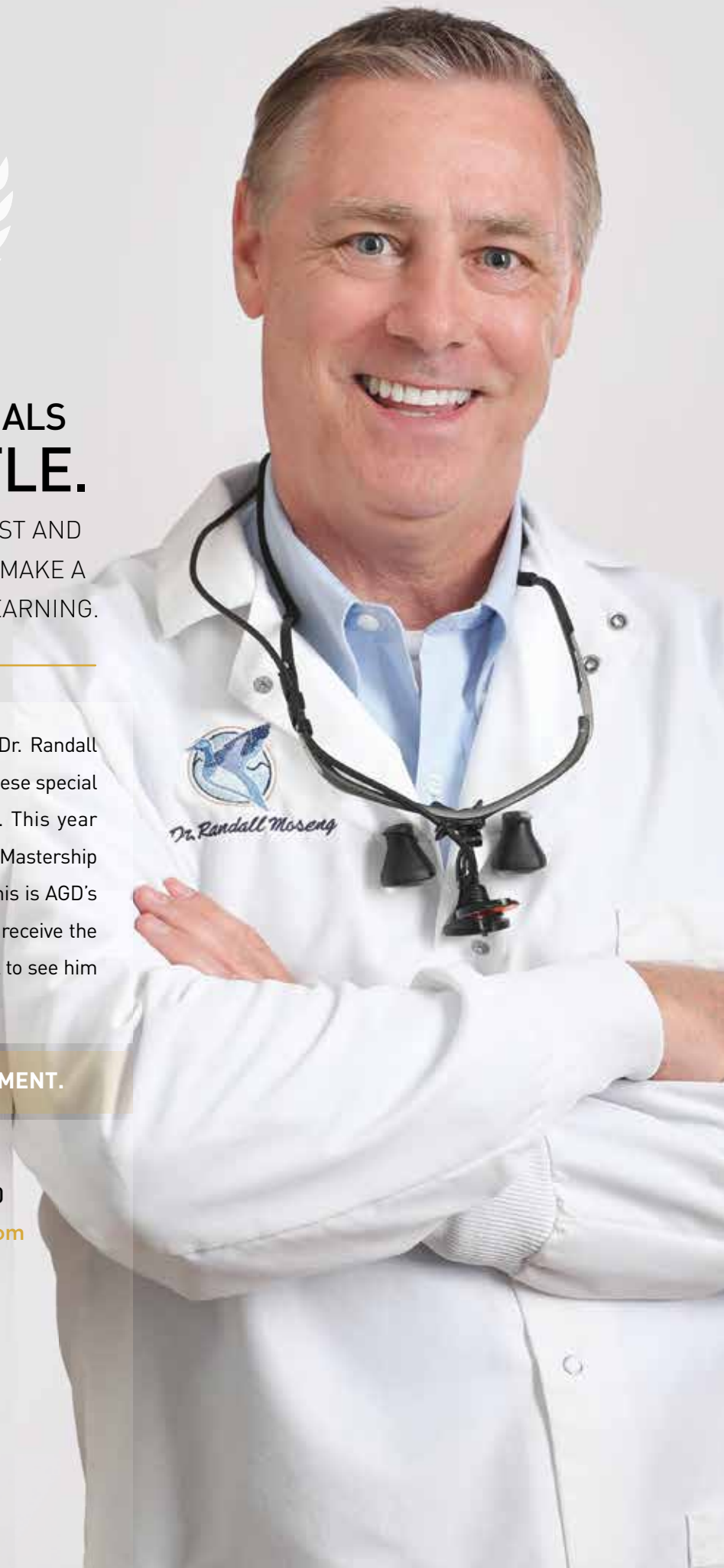
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WOMEN'S FUND INSPIRES AT FALL LUNCHEON



You're invited to join the Women's Fund at their annual Fall Luncheon and help local women on Thursday, October 26, from 10:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. in The Bluffs, University of Wisconsin-La Crosse Student Union.

The luncheon features keynote speaker Ashley Rhodes-Courter, *New York Times* bestselling author, social worker, advocate and foster parent. Having grown up in foster care, Rhodes-Courter is a tremendous inspiration; she has been able to turn her pain into

power and productivity for herself and countless others.

The Women's Fund will also be announcing the 2017 recipient of the Roberta Zurn Award for outstanding female leadership at the luncheon. Attendees are invited to bring new pillows and pillowcases to be donated to the La Crosse County Human Services Department for children entering foster care.

Tickets are \$45 per person until October 19. Table sponsorships are available for \$500. Free parking will be available in the UW-La Crosse Ramp (level 3). Register online at www.womensfundlacrosse.org or call 608-780-5710.



YWCA LA CROSSE CELEBRATES OUTSTANDING WOMEN

The annual YWCA La Crosse Tribute to Outstanding Women celebrates Coulee Region individuals who have demonstrated qualities of remarkable leadership and excellence in their professional and personal endeavors. Join the celebration at the La Crosse Center Ballroom Thursday, November 9, beginning with the social hour at 5 p.m. Dinner and the award presentations follow at 6 p.m.

The 2017 honorees and categories are as follows: Sarah Coleman, Social Justice; Colleen Dixon, Volunteer; Susan T. Hessel, Trailblazer; Betty Kruck, Activist; Marlis O'Brien, Health; Robyn R. Tanke, Nonprofit; Michelle Wanders, Business; Marcie Wycoff-Horn, Education; and Jerilyn Dinsmoor (posthumous recognition). Young Women of Tomorrow honorees are Jamie Capetillo, University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, and Emma Harlan, Onalaska High School.

To purchase tickets, call 608-781-2783, visit www.ywcalax.org or text "Outstanding" to 41444. RSVP deadline is Wednesday, November 1.



WRITE WITH GREAT RIVER WRITES

Great River Writes is an opportunity to meet accomplished authors and poets, hear their stories and pick up tips on the writing profession. Sponsored by Women Writers Ink and the La Crosse Public Library, with the Winona Regional Arts Center and the La Crosse Area Writers Group, its first session, "Setting as Character," takes place Sunday, November 5, at 1:30 p.m. at the La Crosse Public Library Auditorium.

If you have a travel story to tell or love the land you live on, you won't want to miss travel writer and memoirist Blair Braverman, author of the memoir *Welcome to the Goddamn Ice Cube*, for a free workshop on setting, in which you will learn ways to elevate the way you write about place. In her breathtaking memoir, Braverman captures the essence of the arctic as she attends dogsledding school in Norway, organizes a museum in a rural Norwegian village and leads group tours in glacial Alaska. Blending survival stories with feminism, love with doubt, and scenery that forces you to feel the cold, it's a coming-of-age story, but you've never heard it quite like this before.

For more information on this and other sessions go to www.lacrosselibrary.org.



FALL FASHION FOR A CAUSE

The Women's Clothes Closet will hold its 10th annual Fashion Cornucopia Style Show and gourmet meal on Saturday, November 4, at Our Savior's Lutheran Church at Sixth and Division Streets, La Crosse. Doors will open at 11 a.m. for the first show and at 5 p.m. for the second show. The style show will feature women's and men's fashions from local merchants, including Dale's, Touch of Class, Mainstream Boutique, Grand Bluff Running, A&S Clothing Company, Willow Boutique and The Wedding Tree.

The event includes live music and tours of the Women's Clothes Closet. Tickets are \$35 each or \$240 for a table of eight and are on sale now with reserve seating available. The event also features a quilt raffle, silent auction and table wine available for purchase. All proceeds will 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 www.oursaviorslutheranchurch.net.



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A collage of fashion-related images. The top left shows a storefront with a sign that reads "urban SHOETIQUE". Below this, on the left, is a mannequin wearing a black long-sleeved dress, multiple necklaces, and a brown crossbody bag. To the right of the mannequin is a grid of six small images showing various shoes: a pair of brown lace-up shoes, a pair of brown lace-up shoes, a pair of brown lace-up shoes, a pair of brown lace-up shoes, a pair of brown lace-up shoes, and a pair of brown lace-up shoes. On the far right is a mannequin wearing a long brown dress with a thin belt and a pair of black boots. At the bottom right is a pair of brown lace-up shoes on a red box with the "PIKOLINOS" logo.

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FIERCE:

Five Minutes at a Time

Carolyn Colleen Bostrack shares her plan for moving through hard times.

BY LISA HEISE

Photo by Tiffany Brubaker Photography

For many, the old adage “One day at a time” is too much, says Carolyn Colleen Bostrack. Just getting through five minutes at a time is a victory. As a mother of three, a published author, a community leader, a motivational speaker and a thriving professional, Bostrack knows hard work. She knows struggle. She knows defeat and victory. She knows how to survive five minutes at a time.

Her story is about obstacles, she says. “Some people start life on the beach with their feet in the sand, and they journey through the mountains seeking that home place,” says Bostrack. “Me? I started way out in the current, or maybe even in some quicksand, just trying to get to the beach.” Today, as she approaches the completion of her doctoral dissertation, Bostrack reflects on her journey and the fulfillment she finds in guiding others on theirs.

“We all experience pain and struggle,” observes Bostrack. What sets some apart, she says, is “how we cope, how we get through the day and how we impact others.”

A strategy for change

Bostrack begins her story in the middle by painting a picture of herself as a young adult holding her baby girl while standing in line at the Salvation Army, waiting for food. “I didn’t decide one day to stand in line at the Salvation Army,” she says. “The series of choices I made to that point got me there.” That series of choices, however, involved escaping an abusive marriage, breaking the cycle of poverty and setting out on her own with her daughter to create a better life.

It was there, standing in line, that Bostrack had a moment of clarity that would one day lead to the writing of her book, *F.I.E.R.C.E.: Transform Your Life in the Face of Adversity 5 Minutes at a Time*. “I had to use it as a way to push forward. One day at a time was too much. I could barely stay focused.”

Her FIERCE strategies carried Bostrack through many difficult years of managing full-time work, school and parenting, all while dealing with the demons of a past riddled with abuse. FIERCE is an acronym:

- **Focused breath:** Take a deep breath, face fear and focus.
- **Identify one goal:** Name three things required to achieve that goal.
- **Examine barriers to the goal:** Recognize the barriers you are creating through fear.
- **Reflect and visualize your truths:** Co-create your own reality.
- **Courage:** Recognize that you have the courage. That’s why you have come this far.
- **Engage:** Take action!





Carolyn Colleen Bostrack has overcome obstacles to achieve the things she wanted most: a positive life, a career she loves and a healthy family (Bronte, 18; Dylan, 7; and Elliott, 5; photo by The Studio).

Moving forward

At times, as she struggled through college and single parenthood, it seemed to Bostrack that it might be easier to return to her marriage, a relationship built on emotional control where she wasn't even allowed to use the bathroom or shower alone. The extent of the abuse went well beyond emotional control into sexual assault, and beyond that into threats to kill Bostrack and their child. Her husband had manipulated her into alienating friends and family, and when she escaped, she felt alone except for the child in her arms. Her baby girl, Bronte, showed Bostrack what love really was, and Bostrack knew she needed to raise her in a home where love involved giving instead of taking, joy instead of dread.

Redefining love

Misunderstanding the nature and definition of love was what had gotten her there in the first place. Her childhood, too, had been full of fear, beginning with an abusive mother who constantly reminded Bostrack of how much she had cost the family

as an adopted child. A teenage neighbor began molesting Bostrack when she was only four years old. The abuse lasted for two years. When Bostrack was older, her mother left the family and never returned, leaving Bostrack to raise her younger sister while their father traveled often for work. The messages sent to Bostrack about her own self-worth stayed with her, and she knows she is not alone in her experiences. A favorite passage from page 105 of her book reads:

"There is no fairytale ending for this journey, for many of these horrific memories will haunt us forever, but they do not have to define who we are. We can only ask ourselves to be better than we were the day before. The next five minutes are a new five minutes that belong to no one else but you."

Fast-forward to the present day: Bostrack's baby girl, Bronte, is 18 years old and poised to begin her freshman year of college, majoring in engineering and physics. Two younger sons—Dylan, 7, and Elliott, 5—complete Bostrack's family picture. When asked what she does for fun, she says with a warm smile, "I hang out with my kids."

A goal to serve others

Today, Bostrack works as the program manager at Gundersen Health System's Cancer Center in La Crosse. She enters the lobby of Gundersen's East Building and is immediately greeted and embraced by parents, friends and patients alike. In the pediatric treatment area, a child plays video games with his mom. Bostrack waves at them and points to a dreamlike play area, beaming. "Look what we've done here." She remembers the moment she spoke with a friend who mentioned finding real fulfillment in her career. "I was perplexed because I had been working to make money to feed my family, nothing more, nothing less. I enjoyed my work, but it did not feed my passion." As she had with every challenge up until that point, Bostrack approached her next steps fiercely. Her goal was to serve others. In her current position, she helps people in a real and tangible way, advocating for patients and supporting families dealing with the ravages of a disease that becomes more pervasive every year.

A positive impact

Carolyn Colleen Bostrack has navigated the currents, crossed the beach, climbed the mountains, dodged some major landslides and clawed her way straight through others. Her book is a raw, genuine, unapologetic exploration of her experiences and the lessons she has learned, along with some tangible strategies for anyone dealing with adversity. It can be purchased on Amazon and from Pearl Street Books in La Crosse. Proceeds from the purchase of Bostrack's book are donated to the Mental Health and Social Services fund at Gundersen Health System.

Sharing her story has not been easy, but Bostrack knew it was her next step. As she had relied on this community to help her fight toward the life she wanted for her children, she committed to giving back "to the community that believed in me. I would raise awareness and make a positive impact on a large scale. To do this, I needed to learn to be vulnerable and share the story I had kept a secret." (CRW)

Lisa Heise is a local writer and educator who has climbed a few mountains herself. She believes in the power of sharing your story.

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A HEALTH CARE COMMUNITY

Winona Health's Rachelle Schultz connects with the community.

BY ELIZABETH D. LIPPMAN
Contributed photo



For Rachelle Schultz, president and chief executive officer of Winona Health in Winona, a typical day is more about spearheading transformation than managing the routine.

"You have to be on your toes. That's everyday work," she says.



Rachelle Schultz, president and CEO, Winona Health

Schultz, who recently earned her Ed.D. in Interdisciplinary Leadership Studies from Creighton University, has served at the helm of Winona Health since 2002. Under her leadership, the organization has amassed a variety of state and national recognitions for quality, safety, information technology and community involvement results. In 2017, it was recognized as a Top 100 Rural and Community Hospital in the United States.

"I've been here for 15 years," Schultz says. "In today's world

that's a really long time. The CEO tenure is very short in health care organizations. It's typically in the three-year arena. It's never been, for me, a stepping stone."

Schultz oversees a 99-bed acute care hospital, physician clinics, a 125-bed nursing home, three assisted-living residences, a hospice program, retail pharmacies, a foundation and related health care services.

Finding meaning in connections

"There are great people here," she continues, adding that she finds much meaning in her work through the day-in and day-out, everyday connections she has developed, including the relationships she has with her team and medical staff.

This year, the Minnesota Hospital Association (MHA) chose Schultz for the Stephen Rogness Distinguished Service Award, named for MHA's former president. The honor is presented to an executive at an MHA member hospital or health system who has demonstrated a history of significant leadership beyond his or her hospital or system and whose activity has led to the improvement of health care delivery

at the state and/or national level.

"The award itself is about not just what you do in your organization, but also what you do in your community and broader community," Schultz says.

Brett Whyte, M.D., Winona Health Chief of Medical Staff, says Schultz is "an ideal CEO. She is an innovative leader with a temperament for experimentation in all areas. She encourages us to think big and is supportive of all projects that add value to our patients' experience. As a physician leader on her team, I am grateful for her insights as we navigate a complex health care landscape."

Leadership through change

Schultz has made a practice of innovation and forward thinking throughout her career, especially during her time at Winona Health. "Throughout it all, we ask, 'How do we continually improve our performance?'" she says. "The people here are very dedicated and hardworking and committed. That's what gives me great satisfaction—working with people

like that who really understand and live and breathe what the mission of the organization is."

Schultz's capacity for leadership through change has served her well as community needs have shifted through the years. "It's always about trying to build the right kinds of structures and practices. What the younger generation is looking for in health and medical services is different from what older generations looked for."

Schultz points to Winona Health's community partnerships as a critical strength in this era of health care. "There's a whole host of organizations we've networked with in a lot of ways. We believe promoting the health and well-being of people involves all of them." And she remains hopeful. "We have a lot of food insecurity, health and wellness issues, prevention initiatives, improvements to access to care. Fifteen years ago, we would all be thinking about our own operations. Now there's much more collaboration and open conversation. Population health involves all of the organizations people participate in."

"It's really about building the capacity for change in the organization and with all of the people—and for everyone to be actively involved in that continuous effort," she affirms.

"We link arms"

"This is a great community and a great organization," Schultz says. "I couldn't ask for better people. It's hard work, and it's great to work with people you respect. We link arms and just do the work. I don't think short-term about organizations. I'm invested in both the organization and the community, and I want to see both really thrive."

Her personal and professional goals continue to evolve—and often intertwine. "There is life after a doctorate. I'd like to turn the work I did for my dissertation into a book," she remarks.

Schultz advises those looking toward their future career to be willing to take risks. "You plant the seeds of things you hope will come about. But you have to be willing to step up and do the work and try out a lot of different things. I've been able to lead a lot of different kinds of operations. You learn as you go and build a portfolio of knowledge and experience and put yourself out there." 

Elizabeth Lippman is a freelance writer and editor based in Winona. She holds a master of liberal studies degree in literary nonfiction and Appalachian studies.



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BUILDING BADGER CORRUGATING

A great-great-granddaughter
brings a longtime La Crosse
company into the 21st century.

BY JESSIE FOSS
Contributed photos

The Badger Corrugating Company family: from left, Michael Sexauer, Melissa Sexauer-Mlsna, Jeff Sexauer and Brian Mlsna.

A fixture in La Crosse for more than 110 years, Badger Corrugating Company has kept its focus on family and its customers, all while adapting to the ever-changing building industry. The business has done this through five generations of the Sexauer family, and it is being led into its next generation by Melissa Sexauer-Mlsna.

The business began in a 1,600-square-foot building and focused on the fabrication of metal building products such as ventilators, stock tanks and other products for the heating and metal building trades. Today, Badger is a full-time distributor of lumber, interior and exterior millwork, cabinets, flooring, windows, garage doors, roofing, agricultural products and other products for residential and commercial projects.

Over the past 10 years, Sexauer-Mlsna has taken a larger role in carrying Badger into the next generation.

A lifelong connection

Sexauer-Mlsna was born and raised in La Crosse and spent her summers on the Mississippi River at the family cottage in Dresbach, Minnesota, and winters skiing at Mount La Crosse.

While Sexauer-Mlsna's involvement in the company has increased exponentially since 2006, she remembers having a connection to the business most of her life.

"I remember being a little girl attending our Badger Showcases at the La Crosse Center, putting together sample boards, filing at the office with Dad, making photocopies and even falling asleep in his office chair," she says.

After graduating from high school, Sexauer-Mlsna moved to Madison, where she met her husband, Brian, who now serves as the president of Badger Corrugating.

"With our love for the outdoors—hunting, boating on the Mississippi River, hiking the beautiful bluffs—moving back to the Coulee Region was a very easy decision for both of us," Sexauer-Mlsna says.

Once back in La Crosse, Sexauer-Mlsna officially began working full time in the family business in the showroom, creating kitchens and designs.

"My mother, Cathy Swartz, and her sister were in the interior

design business, so it seemed only natural for me to get into this element of the company," she says.

Expanding plans

Sexauer-Mlsna remains in cabinetry sales and designs today, but she has also taken a strong, active role in other parts of the business, such as the organization's employee stock ownership plan (employees are 40 percent owners of the company), trade shows, events, marketing and community involvement.

"Most important to me is our community involvement," Sexauer-Mlsna says. "Embracing our core values of honesty and integrity, passion and compassion, and longevity day to day is very important to me."

Badger has stayed involved in the community by supporting local nonprofits such as The Parenting Place, Habitat for Humanity, Tools for School, Steppin' Out in Pink and the Boys and Girls Clubs.

Women front and center

Also important to Sexauer-Mlsna is carrying on the tradition of women at Badger working in a primarily male-dominated industry.

Sexauer-Mlsna points back to Badger's very beginning in 1903, when her great-great-grandfather, Gustave, began the business. Right by his side was Sexauer-Mlsna's great-great-grandmother, Anna. Both were involved in the family business, a tradition Sexauer-Mlsna says continues today.

"Being active in the family business is a tradition that has continued throughout all generations of the Badger family," she says. "The wives and mothers didn't sit out on the sidelines; they have always been involved in the daily decision making, finances, sales and marketing."

Today, women work in various roles at Badger, from door manufacturing to sales and marketing, accounting and human resources.

Sexauer-Mlsna and her husband also work alongside other family members. Michael Sexauer, Sexauer-Mlsna's father, is still involved in the business as its chief executive officer, and her brother



A 1914 photo of Badger Corrugating office staff and of a 1991 ribbon cutting for the Badger Corrugating showroom illustrate how women have long played roles in the company.

is the information technology manager.

Sexauer-Mlsna says working with her dad and husband has several positive aspects. “I very much enjoy having my dad as a mentor and teacher and learning the ins and outs of the building industry from him. We get along incredibly well in the office and on the job site.

“Now, working more with my husband in the business, we’ve been learning together and from each other to be more proactive about communication and sharing the best vision and values for the company. I’ve really enjoyed seeing him grow into his new role as president.”

Family matters

While the joys may be plentiful, working with family isn’t also without its challenges. Sexauer-Mlsna says the family has learned to

overcome the emotions and tensions that come along with being a part of a family business. They have also learned to keep business at work and not bring it up at home or after work hours.

Looking to the future, carrying on the family tradition is important to Sexauer-Mlsna. She’s had the privilege of watching three generations actively operate the business—from her grandfather and grandmother to her father and now to herself, her husband and her brother.

“I want to continue building the family business for the future,” she says. “Not only for my son and daughter, but for the future of families of all our employees and members of the community.” **(crw)**

Jessie Foss is a freelance writer living in La Crosse. She appreciates Melissa Sexauer-Mlsna taking the time to give her a glimpse into a family business with a rich La Crosse tradition.

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CATCHING CANCER EARLY

**The STRIVE Study—and local women—
may help nip cancer in the bud.**

BY JUDITH MUNSON



Getting a cancer diagnosis is a devastating blow. What might soften the impact is hearing “We caught it early.” Now, women across the Coulee Region are invited to participate in a groundbreaking study that might help future generations hear those hopeful words much sooner than is possible now.

The STRIVE study is recruiting women from several Mayo Clinic Health System sites, including Onalaska, La Crosse and Rochester, to participate in one of the largest clinical cancer studies ever. The study’s goal is to determine whether a blood test can facilitate early breast cancer detection. It is seeking up to 120,000 women to participate, about one-third of which will be Mayo Clinic Health System patients.

“It’s the largest breast cancer study I’m aware of,” says Richard Ellis, M.D., of the Center for Breast Care at Mayo Clinic Health System—Franciscan Healthcare in La Crosse. “It’s never been done before. This is an extremely big study insofar as the amount of funding and number of women being recruited.”

GRAIL, Inc., a life sciences company based in Menlo Park, California, is partnering with Mayo and other health care centers to conduct the study and recruit volunteers. With investors such as Bill Gates and Amazon founder Jeff Bezos, GRAIL has dedicated a staggering \$1 billion to their mission: to detect cancer earlier—when it can be cured.

An early-detection test

A former Howard Hughes/National Institutes of Health biomedical research scholar and current fellow of the Society of Breast Imaging, Dr. Ellis is the principal site investigator for the STRIVE study at the Mayo Clinic Health System sites in La Crosse and Onalaska.

“With my biomedical research background and interest in patient care, it’s a perfect match,” says Dr. Ellis. “And what is really exciting is realizing this could transform medicine.”

Ultimately, this study will serve as a first step toward developing an early-detection blood test for all cancers. The participants in the STRIVE study will be followed for the diagnosis of any malignancy, including breast cancer.

“A few blood tests do exist to assist when there is a known malignancy, but most of them are only reliable when there is a high enough burden of disease,” says Minetta Liu, M.D., associate professor of oncology, chair of Oncology Research at Mayo Clinic and a STRIVE principal investigator. “An effective screening test requires the ability to detect the smallest amounts of DNA, RNA and/or protein in the blood. With recent technological advances and the resources available through our collaboration with GRAIL, this is now possible.”

The investigators will be looking for “tumor signals” in the blood—fragments of DNA and RNA that shed from tumors into the circulation. Possibly, the study will also determine if these signals can be detected before a visible tumor even forms.

Local women doing good

Area women scheduled for a screening mammogram at Mayo in the near future will receive a letter inviting them to participate. Then, they will complete a questionnaire and have a blood sample drawn around the time of their mammogram appointment.

“After that point, we actively follow the women through medical records and questionnaires for up to five years,” says Celine Vachon, Ph.D., professor of epidemiology at Mayo Clinic and another of STRIVE’s principal investigators. “Then we can see whether the test picks up indications for breast cancer in women who actually develop it over that time period compared to women who do not.”

Obviously, catching cancer earlier greatly improves a patient’s prognosis, but if this study finds what its investigators hope it finds, patients will also experience a more personalized approach to their care. The earlier a cancer is caught, the better the chances a patient won’t have to endure as intense a treatment plan as someone whose cancer is more advanced.

“Precision medicine is a goal of health care,” says Dr. Vachon. “It’s all about getting the right tests and the right treatments to the right patients.”

A complementary tool

If the STRIVE study is successful in developing an early-detection blood test for cancer, investigators stress it would not replace current screenings, such as mammograms, but rather complement them.

“The intention of developing this blood test is to facilitate the early detection of cancer,” says Dr. Liu. “A blood test used in conjunction with standard screening tools should allow health care providers to individualize the timing of PAP smears, colonoscopies, mammograms, etc. for their patients. The test must provide a signal for cancer in general as well as for the specific tissue of origin.”

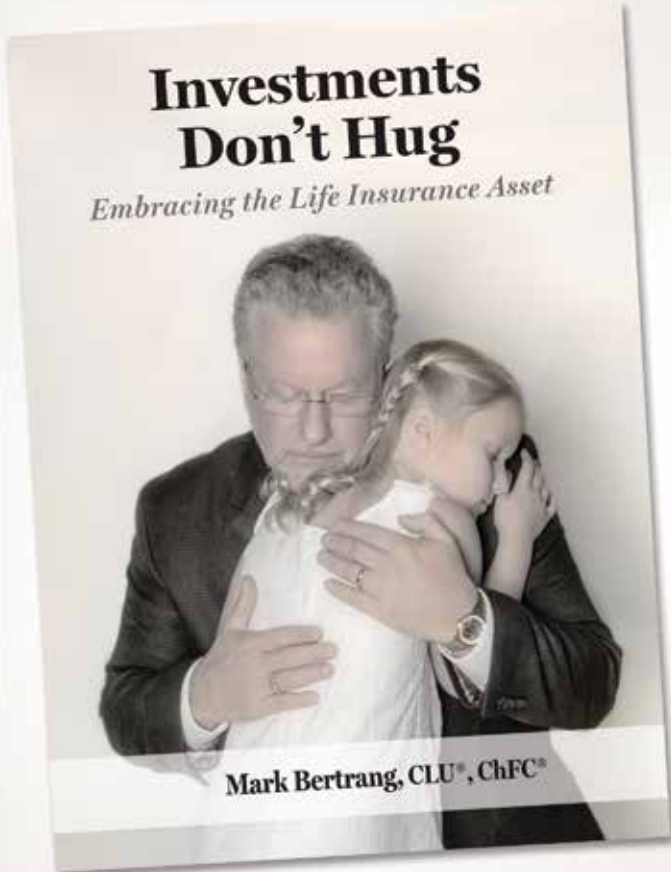
It is expected nearly 40,000 women will die of breast cancer this year alone. Hopefully, the 40,000 Mayo Clinic volunteers in this study—many of whom will hail from the La Crosse area—will help drastically reduce that number.

“Women are pretty excited about participating when they learn that this could potentially transform the detection of breast cancer,” reports Dr. Ellis.

As Dr. Vachon says, “Breast cancer is so personal; it affects our moms, our daughters, our grandmothers and our friends. I have two young daughters, and maybe this test won’t help me, but I hope it will help them.”

For more information about how to volunteer for the STRIVE study, go to www.joinstrive.com. **(crw)**

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



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Riding through life on her Indian Scout, Leah Misch models resilience, strength and independence for women.

A VEHICLE FOR MOVING FORWARD

Leah Misch has ridden out of adversity to personal freedom and adventure—and so can you.

BY MARTHA KEEFFE
Contributed photo

In a small, travel-worn leather-bound notebook, Leah Misch keeps a bucket list.

In it she has written down a set of goals—some of which she has met and others she hopes to accomplish—as a reminder that no matter your life’s circumstances, you can move forward. And as a woman who personally experienced the devastating effects of an abusive relationship, pursuing these goals has changed her life from one of confusion to one of meaning. “I looked at my life and how lost I was,” says Misch, who compared her past struggles to a flame being slowly snuffed out. “I wanted my life—that light—to shine back on.”

Motivated to restore order to her life, Misch—who contracts out her services as a nurse health coach—crafted a bucket list, cataloging goals she never thought she could achieve. Envisioning a new life full

of opportunity, Misch lost 90 lbs., ran her first 5K and volunteered around the country as a disaster relief nurse for the American Red Cross. In addition, she took up motorcycle riding as what she refers to as an “unlikely pursuit.”

“My first thought was that girls don’t ride motorcycles,” laughs Misch. “But after I got my motorcycle license, I immediately fell in love with riding.” Later that year, an accident left Misch with four broken vertebrae, a punctured lung, broken ribs and two years of rehabilitation. Undeterred by the possibility that she might not be able to run again, she eventually finished her first half marathon and, that same day, got back on her motorcycle. Since then she has finished a Half Ironman, eight marathons and numerous 5Ks.

Girls do ride

Eager and curious to experience more of what life has to offer, Misch bought a Suzuki Boulevard motorcycle and rode approximately 700 miles to attend the Sturgis Motorcycle Rally in South Dakota. Despite the fact that the bike did not have a windshield or saddlebags, she met the challenge head-on with plenty of bungee cords (to keep her gear in place) and determination.

While in Sturgis, Misch test-drove an Indian Scout motorcycle and was instantly hooked. "I remember thinking, 'I want to ride this bike home to La Crosse,'" says Misch about the impact the demo ride had on her. Unable to shake the urge to own one, Misch purchased an Indian Scout at the same time that her job was restructured, giving her the flexibility to work on the road. Shortly thereafter, an opportunity to test out her new work arrangement presented itself when she was asked to be a bridesmaid in a friend's wedding in Vail, Colorado. Without hesitation, she shipped her dress to Colorado and headed west via the Million Dollar Highway, known for its steep grades, lack of guardrails and unpredictable weather. Misch's sense of adventure was bolstered by maneuvering this legendary highway, and, following the wedding, she rode on. "Initially, I was going to return back to La Crosse, but the Grand Canyon—which is a destination on my bucket list—was so close that I just continued."

It was at that point that Misch embarked on what would become known as her 10,000-mile journey. Free from the distractions of home and captivated by the scenery, Misch logged more than 10,000 miles in 50 days, crisscrossing the West through Washington, Oregon,

California and Montana. In all, she visited 17 states while checking items off her bucket list along the way. "The convenience of traveling on a bike allowed me to stop and do things like hike, kayak and meet other bikers," says Misch, adding that traveling light has turned her into a minimalist. "I even won the Field Award for my mud-splattered bike during my brief stop at the Sturgis rally on my way home."

A gift of strength and courage

Though surprised by the attention her adventures have garnered, Misch recognizes that she has literally been given a vehicle in which to share her story of escaping domestic abuse and regaining her life. By putting her faith in God, not only has Misch been given the strength to tell her story, but she has found the courage to live her life to its fullest. "There's not much that scares me," says Misch, who has even checked skydiving off her list.

That list also includes inspiring or motivating someone to better their life. "People are often inspired by my experiences on my bike but are affected when they hear what led up to them," says Misch, who has been asked to speak at numerous organizations and conferences about domestic violence. "So when I have a chance to share my story, I'm glad to do it. I feel like there is a purpose to it."

You can learn more about Misch's journey at www.ridingwithleah.com and www.coachwithleah.com. 

Martha Keffe lives and writes in La Crosse. She is happy to share Leah's inspirational story of strength and renewal.

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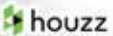
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—Tammy Z.



A farmhouse feel fills the VanDerHorsts' newly remodeled home.

A FAMILY FARMHOUSE

A ranch remodel creates the perfect place for a family on the move.

BY JULIE NELSON

Photos by Megan McCluskey, Atypik Studio

Four little boys have been running circles in the house for the past half hour. “Monsters in a bucket,” their dad teases as he scoops up the youngest, who has escaped onto the porch. The boys in the VanDerHorst family range in age from 2 to 9, and they never seem to run out of energy. This is why earlier this year, their parents, Erin and Ted, moved them from a house with a small lawn in La Crosse to a 10-acre plot of land in Onalaska.

Ranch house to family home

The transformation began when Ted and Erin followed up on a listing on Craigslist. The land came with a ranch-style house, a garage, a pole shed and a stable. They knew this was the type of place they wanted to raise their family; what they didn't know is how much renovating it was going to take to get there.

The couple had lots of ideas for their new home (Erin admits they may watch a bit too much *Fixer Upper with Chip and Joanna Gaines* on HGTV), and they worked with architect Deb Kees to translate their vision into a workable plan.

“The ranch house had been built in the '70s and was highly neglected in recent years,” says Erin. “We completely gutted it and tore everything down to the studs. The only parts of the original that remain are the natural wood ceiling in the kitchen area and a section of the basement we didn't remodel because we needed a spot to move some of our stuff when the house we had been living in sold.”

Good bones, but ...

When the work began, contractors quickly recognized the house was well built and the foundation was solid. What they didn't expect, however, was the intruders that had taken up residence in the walls. Erin says she came to the house one day to see the workers swatting at their heads. Apparently, when the crew removed a ceiling tile, they released a pile of dead mice that came tumbling down on top of them. The delight of that discovery was second only to the other inhabitants of the walls: a family of bull snakes that was happily feeding on the mice.

After seven months of work, the house wasn't finished, but it passed inspection and was ready for its new occupants. The family had been renting a small apartment while the construction was going on, so they were anxious to move in. Bit by bit, the final pieces of trim were added, and the work was complete. Now the VanDerHorsts are thrilled with their dream home, a modern farmhouse that mixes elements of an old farmhouse, such as deep sinks and barn doors, with modern-day living.

A modern farmhouse

Walk in the front door, and you'll find a mudroom for coats and jackets to the left and a guest bedroom to the right. Straight ahead is a wide-open space with wood floors, a high ceiling and, finally, the kitchen. This is Erin's playground. An avid cook, she set up the space to accommodate both the meal preparer and the meal eaters.

The “breakfast bar” is more than 12 feet long and seats six. The bar



has a microwave on the cook's side and a beverage refrigerator, with a glass door, on the end. Though they also brought with them the dining-room table they had used every day in their old house, Erin says the table now sits empty while the bar is filled with hungry diners at every meal.

A dual oven—a Wolf commercial—will make Thanksgiving dinner much easier, and the refrigerator includes a sub-zero section. When it comes to the cupboards, Erin says, “We worked with Jeff from West Salem Planing and Molding; he custom-made all the cabinets, which is kind of fun.”

She says they tried to stay as “real” as possible throughout the house, using cedar siding and solid wood in the cabinets, window frames and wherever else they could. When they pulled out the old fixtures, they gave anything still useful to the Habitat for Humanity ReStore.

An indoor-outdoor space

In addition to the kitchen, a living room with a huge couch and TV and a patio connected to both rooms (“We wanted an indoor-outdoor space,” says Erin of the patio), the first floor is where all the bedrooms are located. The master bedroom has a king-size bed with a metal frame reminiscent of an old farmhouse, and each of the bathrooms has a large sink that looks like it could have washed a garden full of produce. Barn doors take the place of regular doors in several locations. Erin says she is drawn to the motif because “a farmhouse is going to have stuff that will last forever.”

The lower level is designated for the kids. Legos cover the floor of one toy room, while another hosts a TV and couch. There is plenty of room to run around and to grow as the boys get older. Erin foresees the day when the oldest will want to move his bedroom to a room downstairs currently being used for storage.

Remodeling the inside of the old ranch house was only one aspect of the transformation. Work on the outside was just as much of a project. “There were bushes as tall as me surrounding the house,” says Erin, “and there was water coming into the basement.” In addition to clearing all the brush that was engulfing the house, the project involved digging into the hillside to build the garage, using Craigslist to sell a 10-foot fish pond (the buyer came and took it out piece by piece), cutting down nearly 20 trees and planting lots of grass.

Even with all that tree removal, there is plenty of greenery surrounding the property. With woods behind the house, woods to the north and almost no traffic on the street, Erin says their new home is incredibly quiet. “And at night, it’s so dark out here. You can see all the stars. I love it.”

Relentless optimism

The house and the yard are only the first phase of the adventure, however. Erin already has her eye on the pole shed and the stable. She says chickens, alpacas and goats are in their future. In case you’re wondering, no, the VanDerHorsts don’t consider themselves to be outdoorsy people, and no, they don’t have any experience with animals. What they do have is relentless optimism and a willingness to learn. And if it’s true that the family that plays together stays together, the VanDerHorsts will have something to keep them bonded for a long time. **(crw)**

Julie Nelson grew up in Viroqua and could swear one of those sinks came directly from her cousins’ farmhouse in La Farge.

Top: The VanDerHorsts’ practical kitchen boasts a 12-foot-long breakfast bar. Center: A very open plan lends to the airy, indoor-outdoor feel. Bottom: Even the bathrooms are farmhouse-fresh.

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WHAT'S HOLDING YOU BACK?

Here's how to move past it and move forward.

BY KIM SEIDEL
Contributed photos

At any point on a woman's journey, it's common to feel "stuck" in her personal and/or professional lives. Here, two local experts identify typical obstacles that can prevent us from moving ahead and share tips for overcoming these self-imposed limitations.

Age

Many women who have focused on family in early adulthood feel it's too late to start a career that they've put on hold or that has recently



Cindy Ericksen, HeartJourney,
La Crosse

inspired them, says Cindy Ericksen, therapist at HeartJourney in La Crosse. She recommends focusing on the possibilities for the future rather than time that's passed. For example, if you return to school at age 45 and graduate at 50, you still have a good 15 years or more of productivity in a career. "You'll find you have a new lease on life," Ericksen says. "You might even find that these are the most fulfilling and joyful years of your life."

Selfishness

Generally, women are socialized to put others first, and in the process, they get shortchanged. "We need to believe that we deserve to be happy, to follow our dreams and to feel appreciated for our contributions," Ericksen says. "Only when we truly believe this can we overcome the nagging thought that we are being selfish when we meet our own needs."

Fear

Everyone feels afraid when trying something new. "We assume that those who have done amazing things have done it without fear; that's an illusion," Ericksen says. Positive self-talk is vital to moving forward. Use a sentence that both counters negative thinking and sounds believable. If you're telling yourself, "I don't have enough time to do that," replace it with, "This is important enough to make time for."

Resources

If you think there's a lack of money or other support, don't give up without investigating, says Mary Riedel of Mary Riedel Counseling Services in La Crosse. "Expect something unexpected when you start networking and reaching out for support," Riedel says. "Connecting with as many people as possible could lead you to a path you hadn't thought of or to someone else who wants to join you in your venture."

Self-doubt

This success blocker often stems from unreasonable expectations women set about making mistakes. "Telling ourselves that there's something wrong with us if we make a mistake will increase the chances that we limit our lives and keep ourselves paralyzed, instead of moving forward and learning," Riedel says. "Ask yourself what your beliefs are about making a mistake, and then ask yourself if you would apply those same standards to someone else. Offer the same encouraging support you would give to someone else to yourself."



Mary Riedel, Mary Riedel
Counseling Services, La Crosse

What others think

"Luckily, the older we get, the less we worry about this," Ericksen says. "That's why so many women in their later years do many amazing things." Keep in mind there always will be people who are going to judge and criticize you, and those who think you're awesome. "My challenge to the young women of today is to listen to your own heart, get support from those who support you and ignore those who judge," she says. *(crw)*

Kim Seidel is a professional writer and editor who strives to overcome the trappings of perfectionism. She's learning to say, "Good enough!"



Congratulations to the La Crosse Area Builders Association 2017 Parade of Homes Award Winners!

All of the Parade Homes were divided into three different divisions based on price and size and were judged the first weekend of the Parade. The people's choice was voted by attendees who filled out their ticket and turned it in at the end of the tour. Thank you for your votes!

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Women's Fund of Greater La Crosse Awards 2017 Grants

The Women's Fund recently announced the 24 local programs receiving its 2017 grant funding. The Fund is providing \$52,800, the largest amount awarded to date.

The Women's Fund supports projects that impact attitudes and actions that benefit women and girls; promote opportunity, health and self-sufficiency for women; and encourage women and girls to develop as philanthropists.

"We are proud to support the efforts of local organizations that are making a difference in the lives of women and girls in our community," says Heidi Svec, executive director. For a complete list of recipients, visit www.womensfundlacrosse.org.



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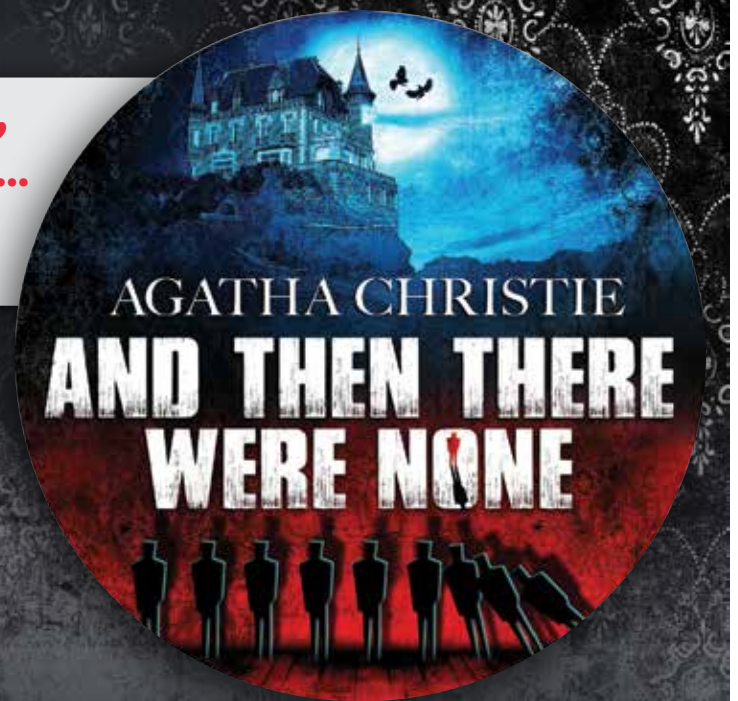
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In Pursuit of a Timeless Mission

Ruthann Schultz celebrates a career of moving the YWCA forward.

BY DOREEN PFOST
Contributed photo

It's not every century-old organization that manages to remain relevant in a changing world. YWCA La Crosse, founded in 1906, has not only achieved that but seems to steadily renew its role in the community. And another change is just around the corner. Executive director Ruthann Schultz has announced her plans to retire before the year's end.

Schultz started in 2000 as volunteer coordinator for YWCA La Crosse's fledgling CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates) for Kids program. The part-time position was just right when her children were small. As her responsibilities at home lessened, her role at YWCA grew; she served as Agency Programs Director, and four years ago became executive director.



Women front and center

The organization she has led is best summed up by its mission statement: "YWCA La Crosse is dedicated to eliminating racism, empowering women and promoting peace, justice, freedom and dignity for all." YWCA pursues this vision through "four pillars": economic empowerment, supportive housing, racial and social justice, and advocacy and mentoring.

"Women's needs and women's empowerment have always been front and center," says Schultz. "Civil rights and justice have always been a cornerstone as well." To that end, YWCA offers housing programs for women who are at transitions in their lives and operates a full-service child care center.

Along with providing these important services, YWCA, with Shultz's leadership, has expanded its role as an organization that is "speaking up, speaking for and speaking about" topics such as equity and social justice. "It's a beautiful mission," Schultz says. She emphasizes that YWCA is not a political organization, "but it *is* an entity that will speak up against injustice."

Moving forward with new programs

One of the projects that has given Schultz the greatest satisfaction was creation of Justice Circles, a program that seeks to keep youngsters out of the justice system through peer-led groups, or circles, that hold students accountable for their behavior and facilitate restorative steps they can take to repair the harm their actions have caused. "When kids enter the juvenile justice system," says Schultz, "their chance of re-arrest is much greater, and this affects students of color to an even greater degree." Selected students—who may themselves be at risk—receive training as facilitators, or Circle Keepers, thus gaining leadership skills.

Community collaboration

Another initiative in recent years was to broaden YWCA's partnership base. "We were determined to reach out and be more collaborative with other community groups," says Schultz. One outcome of that effort was Feminism on Tap, created in partnership with Essential Health Clinic and New Horizons Shelter and Outreach Center. Schultz describes the monthly programs as "half information and half social." Discussions about equity-related topics complement opportunities to mingle and build relationships and partnerships.

Schultz says that what she'll miss most in retirement is the sense of community and family that she enjoyed at work. "That's what is really special about YWCA. It's a group that's really committed to the mission; it's way more than just a job." The challenge for the future, she says, is to live up to YWCA's *whole* mission. "And so," she says, "it's time for this 60-year-old to move on and make way for a young person to lead the charge." The organization and the community, she believes, are moving in the right direction. And in the quest for equality and equity, YWCA is not alone. (crw)

Doreen Pfost is a freelance writer in Elroy, Wisconsin.



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Faith Anacker, owner of Fizeology Foods



Rachel Wolf, co-owner of LūSa Organics

SUCCESS IN A SHARED SPACE

The Food Enterprise Center of Viroqua helps entrepreneurs thrive.

BY TALLITHA REESE
Contributed photos



Bree Breckel, co-owner of B&E's Trees Bourbon Barrel Aged Maple Syrup

When National Cash Register (NCR) shut down its manufacturing plant in Viroqua in 2009, more than 80 jobs were eliminated. Losing one of its biggest employers was a catastrophe for the rural community.

It was then that Sue Noble, executive director of the Vernon Economic Development Association (VEDA), took up the challenge of turning the situation into an opportunity. Soon, plans for what would become the Food Enterprise Center (FEC) began to take shape.

Creating space for entrepreneurs

Vernon County has one of the largest concentrations of organic farms in the Midwest. Because of this, Noble felt that transforming the empty NCR building into something that could offer affordable space to entrepreneurs in the food and wellness industries would be ideal.

“We’re a very agricultural area,” explains Noble. “And we wanted to promote health in the region. We also have a lot of innovative people who might just need some help getting started.”

Before long, VEDA acquired the building and began to work with local partners to develop a location that could offer shared, affordable resources



Sue Noble, executive director of VEDA

to growing entrepreneurs. With funding from an Economic Development Administration grant, and a bond agreement with five area banks, renovations on the building were completed in 2012.

Noble works with each tenant to build out a space that is designed specifically for their needs. This was an important benefit for LüSa Organics, a natural body care company that became the second tenant in the FEC in 2011, after its home-based space was no longer feasible.

"We looked at other spaces," says co-owner Rachel Wolf, "and nothing else would have been as affordable and as custom-made for our needs. As a young, bootstrapped business, I really feel like we landed in the right place to get our feet underneath us."

Building relationships

As well as housing office space for VEDA, the FEC currently hosts a total of 22 tenants, the majority of which are women-owned or partially women-owned businesses.

"We like to think that we've created a collaborative environment," says Noble. "There's a lot of synergy and working together between businesses."

For Bree Breckel, co-owner of B&E's Trees Bourbon Barrel Aged Maple Syrup, being part of this environment as a young, growing business has been a great asset.

"We're surrounded by other entrepreneurs who we admire, both in how they've built their businesses from ideas to successful enterprises, but also in the way they've made their businesses vehicles of their values."

That opportunity to develop relationships with like-minded people is also appreciated by Faith Anacker, owner of Fizzleology Foods, which produces raw, cultured foods in order to raise health awareness.

"It's amazing to work alongside others who are working for the same things," says Anacker. "Recognizing how all things are connected and that good relationships are the basis of everything is easy to do here."

Support is readily available

In addition to providing physical space and valuable shared resources like storage and docks, Noble offers support and advice to entrepreneurs, even those not using the space for food.

"Through VEDA, I counsel businesses outside of the FEC," says Noble. "So that's something else I offer tenants." For Sole Expressions Dance Studio, a co-op of four women that moved into the FEC in 2013, this was huge. Heidi Hamilton, Lisa Vatland, Abbey Lehmann and Kris Bergdahl had previously taught dance for the Vernon Memorial Health Center youth programs, but soon outgrew the space and hoped to open their own studio.

"Dance was our passion, but building a business was new to us, says Hamilton.

Noble was a huge help to the women as they got started and figured things out.

"Sue asked us the hard questions and helped guide us," says Bergdahl.

Sole Expressions is entering its fifth season, and has seen growth every year.

"We feel fortunate to have found the space," says Lehmann. "Without the FEC, I don't think we would have been as successful."

The four owners also aim to pass on the affordability they have received to their clients.

"That's one of our major foundations," explains Vatland.

Most tenants agree that without the opportunities provided by the FEC, their businesses would certainly not be where it is today.

"I'm grateful to be a tenant at the FEC," says Ursula Thomas, owner of Artisan Deli Foods, which produces raw fermented white cabbage sauerkraut. "It would have been difficult to find space as a start-up, if we hadn't found FEC."



Ursula Thomas, owner of Artisan Deli Foods



LYDIA'S SAUERKRAUT SPREAD

From Ursula Thomas, Artisan Deli Foods

- 1 package Artisan Deli Sauerkraut (kraut can be chopped, but not necessary)
- 1 8 oz. tub whipped cream cheese
- 2 T whole caraway seeds (or to taste)

Mix sauerkraut and cream cheese. Mix in caraway seeds. Refrigerate before using. Keeps several days if refrigerated. Serve on chips or crackers. Enjoy!

MAPLE OLD FASHIONED

From Bree Breckel, B&E's Trees

- 1 part Maple Mixer (1 part B&E's Trees Bourbon Barrel Aged Maple Syrup and 1 part water)
 - 1 orange slice
 - 2 cherries
 - 2 dashes bitters
 - 2 parts brandy or bourbon
- WiscoPop! Cherry Soda (also housed at FEC)

Muddle fruit, bitters and Maple Mixer. Add brandy. Serve over ice, topped with WiscoPop! Cherry Soda.

MAPLE RUSSIAN

From Bree Breckel, B&E's Trees

- 1 oz. Maple Java (1 part B&E's Trees Bourbon Barrel Aged Maple Syrup and 1 part Kickapoo Cold Pressed Coffee also housed at FEC)
- 1 oz. cream or whole milk
- 2 oz. vodka

Shake and serve over ice.

SERVING IDEAS FOR RAW FERMENTED VEGGIES

From Faith Anacker, Fizzleology

To maximize benefits of eating raw fermented foods:

- Try to incorporate 2-4 tablespoons a few times a day.
- Add to rice, eggs, potatoes, soups, etc.
- Top off Mexican foods, sandwiches, hors d'oeuvres, salads—you name it!
- Incorporate into pierogies, spring rolls, nori rolls, veggie rolls, tortilla wraps, calzones, etc.
- Drink a tablespoon of the juice as a health tonic. (crw)

Tallitha Reese is a freelance writer and content manager based in Cashton. She owns Words By Reese, a content creation and management business, and you can find her at www.wordsbyreese.com.



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The Art and Science of Food and Wine Pairing

Wine and food pairing can be considered an art, but much of it is based on science. For example, a heavy wine like Cabernet Sauvignon would be delicious with a grilled filet mignon, where a lighter-bodied wine, such as Pinot Grigio, would be overwhelmed by the heavy flavor of the beef. A light fare of chicken noodle soup might pair well with a lightly oaked Chardonnay.

Sweetness levels of foods can hint at what wine might pair. With dessert, try matching the sweetness level of the wine. Or try contrasting the wine to the dessert: think Champagne with strawberries.

With appetizers, which can be varied in type and flavor, try a dry rosé. Rosé is a versatile wine that is a combination of red and white, or made from red grapes without much influence of the skin and seeds. Rosé wines are nice as a "go-to" as they have characteristics of both types of wines.

Trying wines with dishes is the best way to know if the food can make the wine "sing." Practice your pairings before that special dinner, if possible. After you've tried a few pairings, you will naturally feel comfortable adventuring on your own!

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Touch of Class

Sun Kim Geneva vest; SPANX leather high-waisted leggings; Eileen Fisher long-sleeve top; Echo velvet scarf; Kendra Scott Blossom gold-plated Bordeaux tiger eye earrings; Kendra Scott Arleen Bordeaux tiger eye necklace; Annabele Ingalls handbag; Louise et Cie Karas mules.

Move your fashion forward

Bring runway fashion to your closet with top trends for fall.

BY PAIGE FORDE

Photos by Jordana Snyder Photography

Modeled by Tarah Raaum

Hair and makeup by The Ultimate Salon & Spa

The season of change is here! This fall, turn over a new leaf and think outside the box when it comes to styling your everyday look. These bold, runway-inspired pieces from **Touch of Class** in downtown La Crosse will be sure to transform and spice up your autumn wardrobe.

Behold nature's palette by incorporating eye-catching burgundy tones.

Statement earrings, when paired with a harmonizing necklace, are always sure to add an elegant glow when it comes to accessorizing.

Show off your trendsetting style and reinvent any outfit with wearable leather accents for a dramatic, contemporary twist.

Velvet is making a major comeback this season; embrace this revival by throwing in a luxurious velvet textured scarf and suede mules.

Instantly look runway-ready by sporting a bright, oversize bag that is both fashionable and convenient for everyday necessities.



The Classical Revival-style Temple Theatre in Viroqua has enjoyed a full restoration and hosts local productions as well as touring shows.

THE JEWEL OF MAIN STREET

The historic Temple Theatre still sparkles in downtown Viroqua.

BY LEAH CALL

Contributed photos

Some call the Temple Theatre in Viroqua the jewel of Main Street. This renovated historic theater in the city's center is indeed a gem in the Coulee Region for those who enjoy musical and theatrical performance.

The theater, built in 1922, was renovated to its original glory thanks to a group of dedicated volunteers.

"From 1995 to 2001, the whole push for restoration happened," explains Molly Reese, who handles programming for the theater. "Fred Nelson purchased the building in the 1990s and deeded it to the Vernon County Historical Society. The historical society then formed a committee called ARTT—Associates to Restore the Temple Theatre. They did the bulk of the fundraising efforts and successfully raised \$1.6 million."

Original mouldings and architectural features of the Classical Revival-style theater were restored while also keeping some Art Deco remnants added in later years.

Nine decades of entertainment

The Temple Theatre has long played a role in the community as a place to enjoy the performing arts. "It was built as a vaudeville movie house," says Reese. "They would show movies and have a musical

production in front of the screen. It was primarily silent films when it started," she adds. "There's a huge pipe organ to the side. It is not functional—but it is still there."

That's a future renovation project for ARTT, now the Associates for the Restored Temple Theatre.

On both the state and national Registers of Historic Places, the theater got its name from its original owner, the La Belle Masonic Lodge, who had a Masonic Temple on the second floor. That group still has space above the theater.

The theater remained an entertainment hub through the 1950s. It functioned as a movie house for another decade and eventually closed in the 1970s. It reopened in the 1980s as a movie theater, despite its dilapidated state, and hosted a few plays in the 1990s before finally receiving the TLC it desperately needed.

"In 2001, restoration was fully complete, and we started having seasonal shows. They started with a season of five shows. That continued for about 15 years," says Reese. "Just this year, we have expanded to 10 shows."

An impressive lineup

"The shows that are coming are just outstanding," says Reese.



Considered the Jewel of Main Street in Viroqua, the Temple Theatre hosts theatrical productions as well as musical acts. Top right: Temple Theatre executive director Jess Reed with Molly Reese, who handles programming.

The season includes both theatrical and musical acts, including Harmonious Wail, a group out of Madison, coming to Viroqua for the first time. “We are really excited for that,” says Reese.

She’s also excited about the theatrical performance of *Population 485*, based on the book by Michael Perry, a best-selling Wisconsin author. Perry wrote the play and is part of the cast.

“We put out a survey to the community, because we really wanted to hear what the community was looking for, and theatrical performance was number one,” says Reese.

Another play this season, *Guys on Ice*, sold out last year during a snowstorm and is expected to do the same this year. Other acts include the bluegrass band The Special Consensus, and Nordic Voices, an a cappella group from Oslo, Norway.

Reese is in charge of booking the acts, but she doesn’t do it alone. “Jess Reed is the executive director. He is also my fiancé,” says Reese. “It is a team effort.”

With so many must-sees on deck, Reese expects many shows to sell out. Lots of the 522 seats have already been snatched up by season ticket holders.

“We offer two season ticket packages. One is a pick six, so people can pick whatever six shows they want and get a 15 percent discount.

Or they can purchase a full 10 package and get a 25 percent discount.”

Feel the excitement

With enthusiasm around the Temple Theatre resembling that of its early days, it’s likely to continue drawing crowds and big-name performers. The volunteers and board of directors, many involved in bringing the theater back to life, strive to keep that momentum going.

“It is a good feeling to be part of an organization where there is such support and such backing,” notes Reese. “We really work cohesively together. It is an exciting organization to be a part of.”

Reese suggests checking the theater’s website and Facebook page for upcoming shows and performances. She also invites people to come to a show and enjoy downtown Viroqua.

“The theater is a gathering place. I like to think of it as a beacon and an economic stimulator for the community. People come to see a show and eat at the Driftless Café or Dave’s Pizza. I love Viroqua. I grew up here. It is moving in some really exciting directions, and it’s fun to be a part of that.” **(crw)**

Westby-based freelance writer Leah Call has fond memories of seeing movies in the Temple Theatre as a young child.

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10 TIPS for Emptying THE NEST

Practical advice helps parents launch young adults into independence.

BY SHARI HEGLAND



Are you eyeing your college-age daughter's bedroom with plans for an exercise studio? Would your son's room be the perfect home office—if only he would move out?



Sheryl Gora-Bollom, The Therapy Place of La Crosse

Successfully navigating the transition when young people move out of their parents' home—a milestone that is occurring later now than any time in the last 75 years—comes down to three main factors, according to Sheryl Gora-Bollom. The psychotherapist from The Therapy Place of La Crosse says families need to manage communication, expectations and anxiety.

Here are her top 10 tips for launching young people into independence.

1. Start the conversations early.

Gora-Bollom says families tend to focus on getting their student through to graduation, but they don't always address what expectations each has for the days after that diploma is in hand.

"Sometimes there is an automatic assumption that (young adults) will move back home until they find a job," she says, but that should be discussed long before "Pomp and Circumstance" plays.

2. Check your anxiety.

Yes, *your* anxiety as a parent. Parents need to let go of their concerns about "what if" and recognize that young adults will face lessons, and that is OK. "They are worried that the lesson might be harsh, but that is the way life is," Gora-Bollom says. Your job is to support them through those lessons.

3. Listen more, talk less.

Give advice, but only if asked. Gora-Bollom says the "talk less" advice should really begin in high school (or sooner) as you let your child face consequences rather than talking issues into the ground.

4. Plan together what you will or can do to help.

As the anticipated "launch date" nears, talk about what expectations you each have for any help you will provide. Will your child remain on your health insurance or take an insurance package if offered through her job? Are there basic expenses he still needs help with, and if so, how long will you continue to provide assistance?

5. Let your kids live on what they make.

If your young adult seems to think that a part-time job is all she needs, let her experience the reality of what that income provides. "Let them live within their means," Gora-Bollom says, "not within your means."

6. Make them responsible for themselves before college.

As students advance through high school, set the stage for independence by doing less for them. By the time they graduate high school, your young adults should be able to handle basic tasks such as setting their own appointments and doing laundry.

7. Get ready for your new life.

Gora-Bollom says that parents of very active children, whose social lives may have revolved largely around sports and other activities, can suddenly find themselves with empty time that feeds anxiety. Now is the time to renew your own hobbies and friendships. "You want your kids to move on, and you need to move on to the next stage, too," she says.

Coming home to roost

If, like more than a third of young adults, your children boomerang back home, you can make it easier for everyone by following these rules.

8. Set clear expectations.

When your young adult does return home, talk about expectations

from the beginning. How long will they live with you? Will they work part-time while looking for their career job? Will they pay rent? Gora-Bollom suggests they pay at least something, even if you set that money aside to give back to them at a later time.

9. Remember that they are adults.

"It's really hard when you are living with your adult child not to treat them like a child," Gora-Bollom says. That means sometimes you need to let them live their lives, even if you don't like all of their decisions. "Sometimes you just have to bite your tongue."

10. Be ready to follow through.

With expectations set, even though your children are now adults, there may be a time when you have to follow through with consequences. "It will be hard if you've never followed through on expectations in the past," Gora-Bollom admits, and if it gets bad enough, you could be facing actual legal eviction proceedings to get an adult child out of the house. But, she says, with open conversations in advance and a commitment to leveraging the consequences you have available when expectations aren't met (access to a car? cell phone payment?), you can usually move them on with a moderately forceful nudge.

"Most young people want to be independent," she says, "especially when you show that you expect it and that you think they can do it." **(crw)**

Holmen writer and editor Shari Hegland is working to set the stage now for her empty-nest days—even though they are still a decade away.



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Sisters Amanda Schmidt (left) and Jackie Helgersen (right) assure their mother from Cinque Terre in Italy, from Amsterdam and from the Temple of the Reclining Buddha in Bangkok.

"We're Fine, Mom!"

Two sisters take on the world, with Mom a click away.

BY ANASTASIA PENCHI

Contributed photos

How do two young women spending six months traveling in Europe and Asia reassure their mother that everything is OK? Sisters Amanda Schmidt and Jackie Helgersen used Facebook.

The 2002 Logan High School graduate and 2010 West Salem High School graduate posted pictures during their "trip of a lifetime" while holding a homemade sign that stated, "We're fine, Mom."

Their mother, Sue Weidemann of Holmen, said the only thing that got her through the experience was social media and Skype. The self-described worrywart said she still would've liked more contact, especially since she had just seen the movie *Taken*, where a group of young women on vacation in Paris are abducted to be sold in the sex trade.

"If a day went by that they didn't post, I would worry," Weidemann says. "But I knew they had each other—it was key that they were together."

Thailand

The trip started in Bangkok in January because Amanda had always wanted to go there, and she was financing the trip. The second of six children, she sold her house in Oregon and quit her job in the financial sector because she was frustrated with her long commute, was recently single and itched to travel.

The family's youngest child, Jackie, who had lived with her sister in Oregon before moving back to West Salem several years ago, wasn't sure she believed Amanda when she offered to pay for a trip to Europe and Asia as long as she committed to a minimum of six months. Jackie waited until the very last minute to give her two-week notice.

The duo attended trade shows in Thailand to learn more about

trade and manufacturing, and Amanda gave food to stray dogs in the streets. Amanda loved her time there and also loved Asia in general. Jackie favored Europe.

"Once we made the decision to do it, everything fell into place," Amanda says. "If we didn't do it now, would we ever do it?"

Singapore and Vietnam

In Singapore, they saw the famous half-fish, half-lion statue called the Merlion. Then it was off to Vietnam, where they stayed in a rural area with a friend of the family and learned to cook Vietnamese food. But first, they hit Ho Chi Minh City (formerly Saigon).

"We tried to see city and country everywhere," Jackie says.

While walking around Ho Chi Minh City, Amanda recognized a guy she had seen in the airport earlier that day. He and his friends were sitting around a folding table on the sidewalk with a cooler of beer, eating mussels. The sisters declined an invitation to sit with them as they walked by the first time, but decided to join them on the way back to the hotel.

They ended up staying until 4 a.m.

Indonesia and Nepal

Bali was next on the agenda, as the Indonesian island was described so beautifully in the book *Eat, Pray, Love*. They rented a house, learned how to drive a moped in Asian traffic and tried to surf.

But a planned month in Bali turned into a week. Ultimately, the places where they had highest expectations were the most disappointing.

At the last minute, they decided to travel to Nepal to attend Holi. Amanda's former roommate had told her about this festival of colors



The sisters attend a blessing ceremony at the Goa Gajah Elephant Caves in Bali.



Amanda and Jackie enjoy a glass of wine with aunts in Rome.

and love that celebrates the arrival of spring and forgiveness. They are both glad they did.

While in Katmandu, Amanda decided it would be fun to go whitewater rafting in the Himalayas, so she booked a trip online. She didn't realize the "pickup" involved a guy walking them a mile to a rickety bus.

The bus drove up winding, narrow roads with no guardrails for more than four hours. They were dropped off in the middle of nowhere just in time to see organizers tying a tarp to the bottom of a giant inner tube. Amanda connected with a girl from Egypt who was terrified.

The group lived to tell the story, but Amanda, who is afraid of heights, wasn't sure she would make it back when the guide told the group that the bus taking them back was "over there." He pointed to the other side of one of those swinging footbridges you see in the movies.

Her strategy? Run as fast as you can.

Ireland and the United Kingdom

A monthlong road trip around Ireland began with St. Patrick's Day in Dublin. The sisters drove around looking at all the country's castles and churches. They went to the Titanic museum in Belfast.

"Any major site you Google in Ireland—we've seen it," says Jackie.

In Wales, they stood on the "quietest beach in the world," and they partied with the "soul/funk crowd" in London. They spent six hours at the Warner Bros. Studio in London where the Harry Potter movies were filmed.

They also stayed with a guy they had met earlier in Thailand and celebrated Easter with his family. "We really think we'll be lifelong friends," Amanda says.

Belgium, France and the Netherlands

A highlight in Belgium was buying Belgian chocolates and eating Belgian waffles in Brugge. The sisters drank real Champagne and shopped for fashions in Paris.

They spent two days in Amsterdam—enough time to walk the canals and locate the Van Gogh Museum and Anne Frank House, but lines were too long to justify the time for a tour.

Germany and Italy

In Cologne, Germany, the two sisters stayed with a woman who had stayed with their family 25 years earlier, when she was a German foreign exchange student. She showed them the pictures she still had of Amanda, who was in elementary school at the time. Their mother was pregnant with Jackie.

"It was definitely a highlight of the trip," says Jackie, who was eventually named after this German friend.

A monthlong tour of Italy included a camping trip in Tuscany and visits to Naples, Rome, Florence and more. Again, they were somewhat disappointed that the country didn't match the expectations they had from Italy in the movies.

Stories for a lifetime

Jackie came home after six months abroad to support her mom, who was Mrs. Oktoberfest that year. Amanda went back to Bali, visited Malaysia and spent one night in Saudi Arabia on her way to Egypt. She stayed with the terrified girl from the Himalayan raft trip because they had kept in contact on Facebook.

After more than seven months of travel, Amanda finally returned, too, and is now living with Jackie in her West Salem duplex.

Jackie says she looks forward to traveling alone next, and she doesn't feel the need to pay her sister back because "having her dog living at my house is enough."

The sisters agree that they didn't always get along perfectly, as there were times they fought and got on each other's nerves. They almost always shared a room—and sometimes even a bed. Still, they believe world travel is better with family because they always had each other's back and complemented each other's strengths.

"It turned out to be a lot easier to travel than I thought it would be," Jackie says. "We get to tell stories for a lifetime now." **(crw)**

Anastasia Penchi is a longtime writer who loves hearing about inspirational travel trips. You can reach her at callmeloislane@hotmail.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., aauwlacrosse@hotmail.com, aauw-wi.org.

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

Children's Museum of La Crosse weekly programming: **Silly Sundays** Special activity 12:30-1:30 and 3-4 p.m. **Spanish with Senora Jenny** every Tues., 10:30 a.m.

S.T.E.A.M. Team every Wed., 10:30 a.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, Shenanigans, 5:30 p.m. Beth Kirchner, crpwomen@gmail.com, 608-317-5703.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Onalaska Toastmasters Club 1st and 3rd Mon. of each month, noon-1 p.m., Goodwill, La Crosse.

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 Empowering Women (WEW), last Wed. of each month, Schmidt's, noon-1 p.m., Shari Hopkins, 608-784-3904, shopkins@couleebank.net.

Women's Alliance of La Crosse (WAL) 2nd Thurs. of each month, noon, The Waterfront Restaurant, Kasey Heikel 608-519-8080, drkasey@naturallyalignedchiro.com.

CALENDAR EVENTS

Sept. 28-Oct. 1, Oktoberfest, Southside Oktoberfest Grounds, La Crosse, www.oktoberfestusa.com.

Oct. 4-8, Glengarry Glen Ross, 7:30 p.m. Wed.-Sat., 3 p.m. Sat.-Sun., Studio Theatre, Saint Mary's Performance Center, Winona.

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

Oct. 6-7, CRHS Make a Friend for Life Adoption Event, 1-5 p.m., JCPenny Court, Valley View Mall, www.myvalleyview.com.

Oct. 6-8, Fresh Art Tour: Autumn 2017, 10 a.m.-5 p.m., Accola Gallery, Durand, Wis.

Oct. 7-8, *The Medium and the Telephone*, 7:30 p.m. Sat., 2 p.m. Sun., Weber Center for the Performing Arts.

Oct. 8, Pumpkin Palooza, 11 a.m.-3 p.m., Valley View Mall, www.myvalleyview.com.

Oct. 13-15, 9 to 5, 7:30 p.m. Fri.-Sat., 2 p.m. Sun., Viterbo Fine Arts Center.

Oct. 13-15, Special Occasion Shows: Home Party Showcase, Valley View Mall, www.myvalleyview.com.

Oct. 13-22, *Appropriate*, 7:30 p.m. Thurs.-Sat., 2 p.m. Sun., Toland Theatre, Center for the Arts, UW-La Crosse.

Oct. 14, Glow in the Deke 5k run/walk, Myrick Park, La Crosse, 4-6 p.m. activities, 6 p.m. youth race, 7:30 p.m. race, www.glowinthedeke.com.

Oct. 14, Historic Downtown Day, www.lacrossedowntown.com.

Oct. 15, Tour of Upper Living, www.lacrossedowntown.com.

Oct. 19-20, *And Then There Were None*, 7:30 p.m.

Thurs.-Sat., 2 p.m. Sun., La Crosse Community Theatre, www.lacrossecommunitytheatre.org.

Oct. 20, Broadway's Next Hit Musical, 7:30 p.m., Page Theatre, Saint Mary's Performance Center, Winona.

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

Oct. 21-22, Makers Market & Small Business Showcase, Valley View Mall, www.myvalleyview.com.

Oct. 21-22, Pumpkin Carving, 10 a.m.-4 p.m., Norskedalen, Coon Valley, www.norskedalen.org.

Oct. 21-22, Sports Card & Collectibles Show, Sears Court, Valley View Mall, www.myvalleyview.com.

Oct. 26, Ryan and Ryan Piano Duo, 7:30 p.m., The Heider Center, www.heidercenter.org.

Oct. 26-28, Dark La Crosse Radio Show, 7:30 p.m., The Pump House, www.thepumphouse.org.

Oct. 27-28, Boosum Halloween Party, 5:30-7 p.m., Children's Museum of La Crosse, www.funmuseum.org.

Oct. 27-28, Ghoules in the Coulee, 5-10:30 p.m., Norskedalen, Coon Valley, www.norskedalen.org.

Oct. 27-29, Special Occasion Shows: Holiday Gift Show, Valley View Mall, www.myvalleyview.com.

Oct. 28, Downtown Trick-or-Treating, 11 a.m.-3 p.m., www.lacrossedowntown.com.

Oct. 29, LAMTA Annual Halloween Recital, 1-3:30 p.m., Valley View Mall, www.myvalleyview.com.

Nov. 2-4, *She Stoops to Conquer*, 7:30 p.m. Thurs.-Sat., 3 p.m. Sun., Page Theatre, Saint Mary's Performance Center, Winona.

Nov. 2-5, *Eleemosynary*, 7:30 p.m. Thurs.-Sat., 2 p.m. Sun., Frederick Theatre, Morris Hall, UW-La Crosse.

Nov. 3-5, Dark La Crosse Radio Show, 7:30 p.m. Fri.-Sat., 2 p.m. Sun., The Pump House, www.thepumphouse.org.

Nov. 4, Aladdin, 1 and 4 p.m., Viterbo Fine Arts Center.

Nov. 4-5, Wisconsin Science Festival, 12:30-1:20 p.m.

Sat., 1-3 p.m. Sun., Children's Museum of La Crosse, www.funmuseum.org.

Nov. 4-18, *Miss Electricity*, 11 a.m. & 2 p.m.

Sat., La Crosse Community Theatre, www.lacrossecommunitytheatre.org.

Nov. 10, Holiday Open House, 4-8 p.m., www.lacrossedowntown.com.

Nov. 10, Night Out at the Museum, 5:30-8 p.m., Children's Museum of La Crosse, www.funmuseum.org.

Nov. 10-18, *How the Other Half Loves*, 7:30 p.m. Fri.-Sat., Weber Center for the Performing Arts.

Nov. 11-Dec. 24, Santa Visits & Photos, Valley View Mall, www.myvalleyview.com.

Nov. 16-18, Downtown Shopping Weekend, www.lacrossedowntown.com.

Nov. 16-19, Annual Holiday Fair, 12-9 p.m. Thurs.-Fri., 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Sat., 10 a.m.-3 p.m. Sun., La Crosse Center, www.lacrosscenter.com.

Nov. 17, Night Out at the Museum, 5:30-8 p.m., Children's Museum of La Crosse, www.funmuseum.org.

Nov. 19, Barrage 8, 7:30 p.m., The Heider Center, www.heidercenter.org.

Nov. 24, Black Friday, Valley View Mall, www.myvalleyview.com.

Nov. 24-Jan. 1, Rotary Holiday Lights, open daily 5-10 p.m., Riverside Park, La Crosse.

Nov. 25, Small Business Saturday, www.lacrossedowntown.com.

Dec. 2, Feast! Local Foods Marketplace, 10a.m.-4p.m., Mayo Civic Center, Rochester. Sip, sample, shop local food, beer and wine, www.local-feast.org.



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