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AREA HOME AND HEALTHY LIVING MAGAZINE



Brave **Businesswomen** *Tackle* **Pandemic Challenges**



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Pictured on cover: (clockwise from top left) Amy Hembd of Garden of Eatin', Karen McCathie of Moxy Salon & Spa and Shiny Objects, Rachel Olson of Viroqua Public Market and Christine Molstad of Nelson Flag & Display/River Road Quilt Shop. Contributed photos.

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First of all, let's establish that all women are brave. We run households, develop careers, ferry children, help raise grandchildren and serve in our community in countless ways. When it comes to the work we do to make our families, workplaces and communities thrive, we are absolutely essential. And over the course of the past year, we have done all this in tandem with a pandemic.

But there's a special brand of bravery that goes to women who are running businesses in the face of all this. It's one thing to have the vision and gumption to begin and maintain a business—be it a restaurant, boutique or service business—it's quite another to keep it going when forces beyond your control cut into your bottom line, force you to find a new approach and threaten your business's very survival.

This issue of *Coulee Region Women* is dedicated to those Brave Businesswomen who have done just that. When it comes to being a businesswoman in a pandemic,

bravery is pulling yourself out of your comfort zone to try something new. It's "pivoting" to find a new perspective and a new approach. It's taking multitasking to a whole new level—especially if you have kids distance-learning at home. It's staying one step ahead of the restrictions and hardships that might pull your business down.

But bravery isn't just pulling out a sword and shield and facing the demons of the day. It's also knowing when to reach out for help. It's knowing when to delegate, when to take a break and how to focus on self-care. It's approaching every customer, colleague and employee with grace, understanding that life may feel as precarious and uncertain to them as it does to you. In some cases, it's even knowing when it's time to stop trying. So much emphasis is given to the heroic sense of bravery that we forget it's equally as brave to be gentle, generous and patient—especially with ourselves.

This is the message that the women in this issue of *Coulee Region Women* convey with their stories. The four women featured in our cover story emphasize the need to be safe, be flexible, keep going and embrace humanity. We feature brave new businesswomen like Chelsie Moore and Robbi Wolff, who started businesses during the pandemic. We celebrate women like Jennie Buchholtz and Alicia Place, who support the families in our area with child care and a school safety net. And we honor those who hold up their communities through caring for the elderly, supporting community centers and more.

We at *Coulee Region Women* know what it has meant to ride the waves of this pandemic, sword and shield in hand, facing those demons that loom before all brave women. We know our advertisers and readers do, too. We believe that brighter days are around the bend, and we seek to bring you inspiration, hope and heroic tales of the women in our region as those better days unfold.

Betty

coulee region women

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PUBLISHER

Betty Christiansen

EDITOR

Shari Hegland

DESIGNERS

Lisa Houghton Design
Jaclyn Berg

MARKETING ACCOUNT REPRESENTATIVES

Carol Schank, Director
Claire Ristow-Seib

PROOFREADER

Sandy Clark

WEB MASTER

Mader Web Design LLC

PHOTO EDITOR

Diane Raaum

PHOTOGRAPHY

Diane Raaum Photography
Haley Hundt Photos
Jen Towner Photography

DISTRIBUTION

Citywide Marketing Services LLC
Jennie Kolek
Joanne Mihm

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call 608-783-5395

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sheri.plantz@edwardjones.com



Jenny Akins
Financial Advisor
608.781.4333
1200 County Road PH - Suite 200
Onalaska, WI 54650
jenny.akers@edwardjones.com



Sue Kundy
Financial Advisor
608.582.2495
16864 South Davis Street
Galesville, WI 54640
sue.kundy@edwardjones.com



Margaret Severson, AAMS®
Financial Advisor
608.637.7233
520 N. Main Street - Suite A
Viroqua, WI 54655
margaret.severson@edwardjones.com



Kris Birkholz
Financial Advisor
608.519.4200
1027 Riders Club Road
Onalaska, WI 54650
kris.birkholz@edwardjones.com



Amy J Stodola, AAMS®
Financial Advisor
608.788.2668
1212 Horton St - Suite 200
La Crosse, WI 54601
amy.stodola@edwardjones.com



Heidi Lydon
Financial Advisor
608.487.9509
606 West Wisconsin Street
Sparta, WI 54656
heidi.lydon@edwardjones.com



Denise Halverson, AAMS®
Financial Advisor
608.269.9136
2101 West Wisconsin Street - Suite C
Sparta, WI 54656
denise.halverson@edwardjones.com



Shelly Leshner, professor at UW-La Crosse

LIVING A NUCLEAR LIFE

University of Wisconsin-La Crosse professor Shelly Leshner loves to talk about nuclear science. She teaches a “Navigating Global Nuclear Issues” course at UW-La Crosse. Her unique approaches led to a prestigious Yale Presidential Fellowship at Yale University in 2019-2020. And now, she’s taking her interest online in her new podcast, “My Nuclear Life.”

“My Nuclear Life” explores the intersection of nuclear science and society through interviews with historians, policy makers and others. One of her first six episodes includes interviews with Richard Nephew, former principal deputy coordinator for the sanctions policy in the U.S. State Department and lead sanctions expert for the U.S. negotiating team with Iran on the joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. In other episodes, she interviews Richard Rhodes, Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *The Making of the Atomic Bomb*.

Leshner says the podcast is geared toward those in the general public who are interested in history, science or learning something new. And “you don’t have to be a nuclear scientist to understand these episodes,” Leshner says. Topics covered are varied and approachable: “One podcast discusses the start of radium therapy to treat cancer and another the beginning of the environmental movement in the U.S.,” she notes. You can listen to “My Nuclear Life” at <https://mynuclearlife.com>.

UW-LA CROSSE GRAD GOES TO WASHINGTON



Cindy Marten, Deputy Secretary of Education

Cindy Marten, UW-La Crosse alum and superintendent of the San Diego Unified School District, has accepted the post of Deputy Secretary of Education under President Joe Biden. A native of the Chicago area, Marten earned her bachelor’s degree in elementary education from UW-La Crosse in 1988, then earned a master’s degree in Teaching and Learning from the University of California-San Diego. A classroom teacher for 17 years prior to becoming superintendent, Marten worked for 10 years at Central Elementary in City Heights, one of San Diego’s most ethnically diverse and economically challenged schools. While there, she established a successful literacy program, a school garden, arts education and after-school, preschool and day care programs.

“UW-La Crosse was delighted to see one of our alums, Cindy Marten, nominated to serve as Deputy Secretary of Education for the incoming Biden administration,” the university said in a statement. “Marten has had a remarkable career as a teacher, principal and superintendent, and we look forward to seeing how she will use her talents to serve our nation’s schools.”

WHAT’S UP WEDNESDAYS



Kim Pretasky, owner of Touch of Class

Small businesses have had to “pivot” to adapt and survive in pandemic times, and none more than retail shops. It takes a brave businesswoman to try something new to connect with customers, but that’s just what Kim Pretasky, owner of Touch of Class in downtown La Crosse, has done. Since April 2020, shortly after the Covid-19 lockdown began, she’s aired “What’s Up Wednesday” videos in which she shows off Touch of Class’s latest merchandise, teaches viewers styling tips and keeps customers engaged.

“It was a bit out of my comfort zone,” Pretasky admits, “but we were encouraged by the response. We received such positive feedback from our clients, and it became so much fun.” The videos have even reached new customers outside of the region, who then can easily shop on the store’s website, www.shoptoc.com. Videos are posted on Touch of Class’s Facebook page and other social media platforms.

Pretasky intends to keep the videos going as long as clients enjoy them. “We’re always excited to show off new merchandise,” she says, and tutorials on tying a scarf or putting together a “capsule wardrobe” are always welcome. New videos will bring a Valentine’s Day theme as well as highlighting Touch of Class’s bridal registry for couples who postponed their weddings till 2021. “I think we’re all looking forward to happy times,” she says.

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BRAVE *Businesswomen*

Small businesses and the community support each other through pandemic challenges.

BY TALLITHA REESE | CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

Life as a small business owner comes with its own unique set of challenges, but throwing in a global pandemic takes things to a whole new level. Despite a year that has been anything but business as usual, amid shutdowns, downsizing and needing to discover creative new ways to operate, several local business owners have done their best to provide a new type of “business as usual” for their clients and customers.



RACHEL OLSON: VIROQUA PUBLIC MARKET

Rachel Olson, a Viroqua native, moved back to her hometown to help with her family’s business: Viroqua Public Market. Housed inside the historic Main Street Station building, bought and entirely refurbished by Olson’s family in 2004, the market is modeled after the fabulous street markets in Paris, complete with a large fountain, streetlamps and even real birds. Today, the business showcases more than 100 vendors and thousands of products. The building also has two other storefronts that currently house VIVA Art Gallery and Rooted Spoon Kitchen Table.

“Our goal was to provide a low-cost way for anyone in the community to start their own business by offering spots to rent for very reasonable prices,” says Olson.

After the initial spring shutdown closed the business for several weeks, several safety measures were put in place at Viroqua Public

Market including requiring masks, enforcing social distancing, installing plastic barriers and increasing sanitization.

One of the biggest struggles is continually keeping the store clean and enforcing masks, according to Olson.

“It’s gotten much better, but at first there was some resistance; I think most people are accustomed to masks now though,” says Olson. “Both my dad and brother are doctors, so I feel extra pressure to make sure it’s a safe environment for everyone.”

Even with the pandemic, Olson notes that the store has been quite busy since reopening and that people seem to have a new appreciation for small businesses where they can avoid large crowds and feel safe.

Olson advises other business owners to be careful and keep masks on as much as possible.

Be safe

CHRISTINE MOLSTAD: NELSON FLAG & DISPLAY/RIVER ROAD QUILT SHOP

Christine Molstad, a lifelong resident of La Crosse, operates Nelson Flag & Display, a part of the La Crosse community since the 1950s, along with her husband, Steve, whose parents, Nancy and Merlin Molstad, bought the store from the original owners in 1966. The store is known for its offerings of U.S. flags, flag poles, Christmas trees and decorations, garden décor, gifts and accessories. River Road Quilt Shop was an addition to the business in 2007.

“We have been pleasantly surprised at how well we have weathered the storm that has been 2020,” says Molstad, explaining that after having to shut down and lay off employees in mid-March, they turned their attention to getting an e-commerce website up and running. They also installed an outdoor drop box for the quilting business and offered curbside pickup for phone orders.

When the business was able to open in mid-May, the Molstads were challenged with figuring out the safest way to allow people back into the store, which turned out to be requiring face masks (and providing masks to those without them) and having hand sanitizer available as customers enter.

For Molstad, the brightest spot of the year has been how the La Crosse community has shown support.

“We have had many customers ask us how we are doing and express that La Crosse small businesses matter to them,” says Molstad.

When it comes to advice for other business owners, Molstad says to treat employees like they make a difference, and they will. She also offers this: “Be flexible. You will most likely have to reinvent yourself if you are going to survive.”



Be flexible



AMY HEMBD: GARDEN OF EATIN'

Amy Hembd grew up in Holmen and started her first restaurant job at 18. She fell in love with the industry and found herself always coming back to it. After working in many of the area's restaurants, she accomplished the dream of opening her own small-town restaurant: The Garden of Eatin' opened in Galesville in 2012.

Hembd and her husband, Billy, poured their hearts and souls into giving their restaurant its own personality, combining loves of food and music and crafting the place into what it is now.

The Garden of Eatin' offers traditional home-style cooking, but in recent years, they have been researching, experimenting and implementing new menu items, including vegetarian and vegan options.

When the pandemic hit, plans were initially made to operate at 50 percent capacity. Then came the news that they

needed to shut down all inside dining.

"We discussed things with each of our team members individually, everyone's safety being the only thing that mattered, and made the heart-wrenching decision to temporarily lay off our entire team," explains Hembd. "It was just what we had to do, and each of them selflessly understood and agreed."

Immediately, The Garden of Eatin' pivoted to curbside pickup only and has been doing that since March 18.

"Things were (and still are) extremely difficult; every day is a new challenge as the days are completely unpredictable," says Hembd. "There have been tears, there have been extreme sacrifices, there have been days when the phone barely rings at all. But we know we are not alone."

Hembd stresses the importance of continuing despite the difficulties: "Keep going, keep giving and keep loving."

Keep going

KAREN MCCATHIE: MOXY SALON & SPA AND SHINY OBJECTS

After earning degrees in marketing and retailing from Western Technical College, Karen McCathie worked in merchandising and sales management. She decided to get her manicuring license just for fun, which led to her opening the first nail salon in the La Crosse area, Metropolitan Nails, in 1996, then Metropolitan Salon and Day Spa in downtown La Crosse in 1999. In 2017 she started a new venture: Moxy Salon & Spa and Shiny Objects Boutique in Holmen.

Moxy Salon & Spa is a full-service salon and spa offering cuts and colors, manis, pedis, massage, facials and advanced skincare, while Shiny Objects is an apparel store and gift shop.

When the pandemic hit, McCathie and her staff faced uncertainty and worry but decided to shut down until they could further educate themselves on the situation. They were closed for nine weeks.

"During that time, I really learned a lot about myself, my staff and our community," says McCathie. "We had a huge outpouring of support from Holmen and our surrounding communities."

Customers bought gift cards and personal care products and sent uplifting messages of support and promises to return.

The business reopened at the end of May with additional sanitation, more personal protective equipment, monitoring of temperatures and health of staff, new barriers, and more mindfulness among staff about their own personal contacts.

McCathie notes that though the pandemic has been challenging for small business, she's witnessed people really embracing the "shop local" mentality.

"As the world maneuvers through this pandemic and all the grief associated with it, it's very heartening to embrace humanity and how important contact with our fellow human beings really is," says McCathie. **CRW**

Tallitha Reese is a freelance writer and content manager based in Cashton. She owns Words By Reese, and you can find out more about her and her work at www.wordsbyreese.com.



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Bringing Relaxation to Stressful Times

Chelsie Moore takes the chance to open a new spa during pandemic slowdown.

BY JANIS JOLLY | CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS



A tranquil, soothing space, ReSoul Day Spa offers respite and professional spa services to its guests.

I think I'll start a new business in the middle of a global pandemic," said no one, ever.

Yet that's what Chelsie Moore of Onalaska did when she opened ReSoul Day Spa, and against all odds, she says it's been a positive experience.

Her kids were home learning virtually, with fewer outside activities, giving her more time to devote to planning and developing the new business. "If I'd done it before Covid-19 hit, there would have been more obstacles," she says.

For the past 15 years Moore had worked for The Ultimate Salon & Spa, owned by her mother, Connie Peter. When Peter decided to move her salon to La Crosse, Moore desired to stay in Onalaska, where she resides and has built a loyal clientele.

ReSoul Day Spa opened November 1, 2020, with a full menu of relaxation services. As an alternative to the rapid pace of a salon, "the atmosphere is solely spa; you can feel the energy the second you enter our doors. It's a place to go to be relaxed and renewed," Moore says.

INTIMATE SPACES, PERSONAL SERVICE

The spa provides professional services with responsibly sourced ingredients, using Aveda products whenever possible. Face, skin and body treatments, light therapy, waxing, microblading, lash extensions, nails and makeup services are tailored to each client's needs and preferences.

ReSoul Day Spa is in the Midwest Prairie Building in Onalaska, near Manny's Cocina and Cowgill Dental. The space has been completely remodeled with attention to every detail. Guests are welcomed into a



Chelsie Moore, owner of ReSoul Day Spa

full-line Aveda retail experience center. They then pass through an archway into the ReSoul spa complete with a relaxation room and seven treatment rooms themed after the seven chakras. Moore plans to keep the business size intimate, putting a great deal of thought into each new addition.

The staff currently consists of a spa manager/lead director of first impressions and one other aesthetician, along with Moore. "I'm very intentional about keeping it small. I'm in it for the long run. I will only add employees when we are ready," Moore says.

She is also intentional about staying safe and protecting guests and the staff during the pandemic. "Obviously guests can't wear masks when they are getting a facial. When they take off the mask, we put on a shield. The cosmetic industry has long had strict sanitation standards, so that concept is not new to us," Moore says.

Connecting with people, developing relationships, and inviting guests into a space to relax and escape the pressures of daily life is the best part of the spa business for Moore. "Unlike many businesses today, we are grateful to be able to incorporate touch into all of our services," she says. "The environment is safe. Humans need touch, and they can get it in a spa setting—something that is important for us all now more than ever.

"Through the opening of ReSoul, it has been an honor to connect with many other small business owners in the Coulee Region," Moore says. "The passion within this community inspires me on a daily basis. We will all get through this together by supporting one another—unity is more important now than ever before!" **CRW**

Janis Jolly is a freelance writer in La Crosse.

A close-up portrait of Stephanie Andresen-Stevens, a woman with blonde hair styled in an updo, wearing a gold sequined top and a diamond earring. She is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile.

Brilliant Woman, Brilliant Bodywork

Award-winning aesthetician, industry expert, philanthropist, healer—Stephanie Andresen-Stevens brings all of these roles to her business, Brilliant Bodywork, where she and her team offer skin and body care services to clients throughout the Coulee Region.

"I got into it just by luck," says Stephanie of her career as an aesthetician. "After I had my first massage and facial, I wanted to make people feel that good myself. There was nothing like being touched out of love, and I saw how it could help people heal from emotional pain and physical trauma." Since 2008, Stephanie has operated Brilliant Bodywork with the goal of helping people feel their best, find inner beauty and build self-confidence.

Clients come to Brilliant Bodywork seeking healing on some level—whether to relax with a massage, to heal acne or another skin disorder, or to remove a tattoo that represents emotional as well as physical scars. Stephanie and her staff approach each client with kindness, care and world-renowned expertise.

World-class service

It's this expertise that Stephanie's husband and business partner, Adam Stevens, points to as the most impressive thing that Brilliant Bodywork brings to this community. "Stephanie is literally known around the world for her expertise," he says. Nowhere is this more evident than in her success in the international competition The Skin Games, in which she has won multiple awards since 2017, including the title of Esthetician of the Year in 2020. Here, competitors from around the world present and are judged on well-documented case studies of actual skin care clients, including diagnosis, treatment and results.

But "winning an award is just the icing on the cake," says Stephanie. The real reward is in building international friendships and a network

of experts with whom to share information and seek advice. What Stephanie brings to her clients is not only her own award-winning practice, but also the knowledge and consultation of this vast network.

Local love

Expertise and healing skills are not all Stephanie and Adam bring to the region, which also benefits from their compassion and deep belief in supporting a community that has given them so much. Both serve as Oktoberfest Grenadiers, visit kids at Shriner's Hospital, play ball with kids at Miracle Field and participate in the Beer By Bike Brigade. When 2020 brought a quarantine, Stephanie helped women in the community lift each others' spirits by beginning the Wine Down Sisterhood.

Through their own nonprofit, Restorative Ink, the couple leverages Brilliant Bodywork's tattoo-removing services to help heal people scarred by tattoos that harm their self-esteem—whether human trafficking branding, gang tattoos or other tattoos that simply don't represent the person they wish to be. By offering this service, says Stephanie, "we are teaching them that they make a difference. We are building them up." Also near to their heart is the local nonprofit P.S. I Love You, which captures in photography last memories with loved ones. The monetary awards Stephanie has received through The Skin Games—about \$16,000—have been earmarked to support their industry and their community in this way.

"Every single day," says Stephanie, "we hear people's stories as we offer our services. We hear the nitty-gritty of what they are going through, sharing moments of bravery and courage." Their response is to nurture that community with love, compassion and care.

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Powering Through the Pandemic

The Pilates Studio partners adapt, focus on training new instructors.

BY JESSICA ZEN | CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS



Heather Froh, left, and Heather Happel, right, are celebrating the 10th anniversary of opening The Pilates Studio as they continue to adapt to the changes required during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Studio owners and master trainers Heather Happel and Heather Froh are working to give the community a healthier future by promoting a balance of strength, flexibility, coordination and body awareness through their Pilates studio.

It's no secret that life has been tough lately. The global pandemic has taken its toll on relationships, businesses, mental and physical health and just about everything in between; however, some business owners are still thriving through the chaos. The Pilates Studio in Onalaska is just one example of a business run by a dynamic duo of brave women who are helping the community in these uncertain times.

OVER 10 YEARS OF DEDICATION

It all started in 2010 when Heather Happel and Heather Froh teamed up to help clients with both physical and mental conditioning. Happel was looking for a partner to grow with and found the perfect match in Froh, who was operating her own Pilates studio out of her home. For the past seven years the pair has been working out of their current studio, slowly growing their clientele and adding more reformers (Pilates-specific equipment) to their inventory, but 2020 brought on changes that no one could have anticipated.

ROLLING WITH THE PUNCHES

Despite the studio itself being closed down for three months, business still flourished. The Pilates Studio adapted and started offering livestream mat and barre classes. Once allowed to return to the studio, Froh and Happel staggered class times so that the studio was never crowded and only 10 people were allowed in the room. Everyone wears masks, the studio is double-cleaned after each

session and the air return is kept running with a filter. "It worked because we're diligent and our clients are diligent. Then they feel safe," says Froh.

SHARING THEIR KNOWLEDGE

In the fall of 2019, Froh and Happel had their first group of trainees. It takes 16 weeks of classes, 450 hours and about a year to get your certification to be a trainer, but it's worth it. Froh and Happel say this program is a great opportunity for working moms, college students and retirees, as the schedule is flexible, the income is decent and you can take the skills anywhere.

To see if Pilates is right for you, Happel and Froh offer consultations where you can work one on one with a trainer and get acquainted with the equipment. The consultation helps the trainer know your strengths and weaknesses so that you can get started on your Pilates journey and integrate it into your life long term. Pilates is different, says Happel, because "it's not super-high reps. It's about efficiency of movement, not the amount of times you do it."

Their incredible reputation, word of mouth and some well-placed advertising bring in enough clients to keep this business booming. Happel and Froh note that there is almost always a waiting list. "It's fabulous. We're very lucky, especially during Covid," says Froh. In November 2020, The Pilates Studio celebrated 10 years in business and is hoping for many more successful years of serving their community. **CRW**

Jessica Zen is a freelance writer and total newbie when it comes to Pilates, but she hopes to learn more about this incredible workout program.

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Dallas Werner

Home Show Committee Chair
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2020 was not the year we had anticipated. Because of Covid-19, people lost jobs, businesses suffered, schools were closed and our daily activities were indefinitely changed. Yet the year wasn't all bad. With most activities canceled, we returned to family dinners and quality time with our children and spouses. We were reminded of how much we take for granted every day and saw our community come together to support each other and our local businesses.

You probably spent a lot more time at home this past year, and if you are like me, you noticed things that you wanted to update. The walls that could use a new coat of paint suddenly became a "must-do" because you were surrounded by them while working at home. The kitchen that worked fine for years suddenly shrank as you cooked more meals and used the kitchen table as office space. You spent much more time in your own yard this past summer and decided to spruce it up with a new deck or landscaping. Perhaps you decided to build a new house altogether!

If you weren't able to complete those projects last year, we are here for you! We are happy to announce that we will be hosting the 2021 La Crosse Area Builders Association Home Show April 30-May 2 at the Onalaska Omni Center. Bring your ideas and meet local vendors in person to see the products and services they offer or let them show you new trends. Your safety is a priority, and we will require masks inside the Omni Center, social distancing, a one-way traffic pattern for visiting booths and sanitizing throughout. We will be following the current state guidelines for capacity. Please follow the La Crosse Area Builders Association on Facebook and check www.labahomeshow.com for updates and more information.

Now, more than ever, our community needs your support. We hope you will be able to stop and meet with our local vendors for your home improvement/building needs!

Dallas Werner
Home Show Committee Chair



Duane Schulze

LABA President
Marlin Homes LLC

Welcome to the La Crosse Area Builders Association 2021 Home Show. The Home Show has been moved to the end of April—we hope the later date will open opportunities for guests and vendors to utilize outdoor space,

enjoy spring weather, breathe fresh air and view products and displays in natural light. The indoor area will also be open with booths and displays, following guidelines that our public officials have put in place to protect our health.

We all are looking at spring with the hope of change so we can get back to planning our lives. This show will feature new products and displays that show different ways of using products as well as new building concepts. These new ideas and the opportunity to see things in a different environment may open fresh ideas as you plan for your home's future. You will be able to talk to vendors and builders who can help you with your home plans, whether it's maintaining your home, remodeling, landscaping or building the home of your dreams. Meeting these knowledgeable trade professionals face to face will make it easier to select a builder or product that you have confidence in.

The La Crosse Area Builders Association—along with the help of members, vendors and the public supporting our Home Shows and other events through the years—has been able to build a successful Tools for Schools program that has provided tools to schools in La Crosse, Vernon, Trempealeau, Monroe and Jackson counties. Thanks to years of planning, dedication to the Tools for Schools project and the support and commitment of all of you through donations and event attendance, we are proud to announce that in 2020 we were still able to give close to \$8,000 to our local schools.

Thank you for making this Home Show—and all of our LABA programs—a success over the past 50 years. We look forward to providing our services to you and the community for years to come.

Duane Schulze
LABA President

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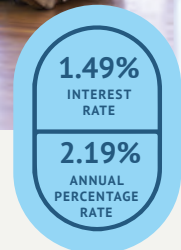
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Top Color Trends for 2021

New palettes turn us to the bright side.

The Covid-19 pandemic of 2020 has brought new meaning and purpose to the concept of home, as it is now not only a place to live, but a place to work and learn. In looking ahead toward 2021, color can play an important role in helping to create a rejuvenating environment that improves our mood and outlook. “We are all craving color, and we are all actually looking for an increase in our joy and happiness quotient,” says Doris Pearlman, founder of Possibilities for Design and chair of NAHB’s Design Committee.

Ultimate Gray and Illuminating

This year’s color trends are likely to provide that much-needed boost. Pearlman forecasted 12 key color palettes and materials—ranging from mixed metals to earthy clay tones to classic blues

and aquatic teals—which are mirrored in the colors of the year selections by major companies and paint manufacturers.

Pantone’s 2021 Colors of the Year, for example, comprise a dynamic duo of Ultimate Gray, a solid, dependable shade, and Illuminating, a bright lemon yellow.

“The union of enduring Ultimate Gray with the vibrant yellow Illuminating

expresses a message of positivity supported by fortitude,” notes Leatrice Eiseman, executive director of the Pantone Color Institute. “Practical and rock solid, but at the same time warming and optimistic, this is a color combination that gives us resilience and hope.”

Earth tones and tranquil blues

Sherwin Williams also opted for a more resilient tone with its strong neutral Urbane Bronze. Rooted in nature, the hue mixes well with other biophilic elements to help bring the outdoors in and create a sense of relaxation and serenity.

“The home is now the ultimate retreat from the world, and color is an easy and effective way to create a personal haven,” says Sue Wadden, director of color marketing at Sherwin-Williams. “Urbane Bronze encourages you to create a sanctuary space for mindful reflection and renewal.”

Reflection and renewal played a role in Benjamin Moore’s selection as well. The calming blue-green of Aegean Teal provides a sense of stability and tranquility to combat the chaos of the past year.

“Aegean Teal and the corresponding Color Trends 2021 palette



Photo credit: www.SherwinWilliams.com

express a welcoming, lived-in quality that celebrates the connections and real moments that take place within the home,” notes Andrea Magno, the director of color marketing and development at Benjamin Moore.

PPG combines both of these trends—earth tones and tranquil blues—with its 2021 “Be Well” color palette comprising Transcend, Misty Aqua and Big Cypress.

“With the world sheltering in place for the better half of the year, we have begun to crave human connection and embrace simple activities, including walking, hiking, baking and gardening,” said Dee Schlotter, PPG senior color marketing manager, architectural and industrial coatings. “This organic and hopeful palette represents what we have been longing for after decades of overstimulation and overconsumption—simplicity and restfulness.”

Adapted from National Association of Home Building, NAHBNow blog, www.nahbnow.com.



Photo credit: www.BenjaminMoore.com


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About La Crosse Area Builders Association (LABA)

The La Crosse Area Builders Association is a nonprofit trade organization uniting more than 180 building-related companies in western Wisconsin.

In 2021, we will celebrate our 50th year as a respected and successful association.

We are proud to

- Educate our members and consumers about the latest trends and innovations in the building industry.
- Advocate for affordable housing at local, state and national levels through responsible, active engagement.
- Provide meaningful and lasting networking opportunities for our members so they can build successful relationships within the industry, which is so beneficial to the consumer.
- Host the annual Parade of Homes and Home Show, as well as other special events throughout the year.

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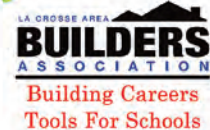
- Doing business with LABA members ensures you will receive quality service and materials in the communities we serve in La Crosse, Jackson, Monroe, Vernon and Trempealeau Counties in Wisconsin.
- Behind each of our members is a state and national association providing the latest and most relevant industry information.

We work to better the building industry.

- We are watchdogs for changes that can affect home building and remodeling.
- We offer a membership of trained, qualified and insured builders and tradespeople to the consumer.
- We believe in the future of the industry and fund and support workforce and career development efforts like Tools for Schools (putting tools into the hands of high school students), scholarships, Building Careers Day and Building Futures for Kids Program at area Boys & Girls Clubs.

Our members provide the best experience for you!

- Working with LABA members can open doors to a better experience with home projects, whether big or small.
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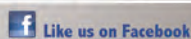
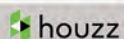


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- Masks will be required inside the Omni Center
- Social distancing is recommended
- A one-way traffic pattern has been established through the exhibit area
- Frequent cleaning and sanitizing throughout
- Current guidelines for capacity will be followed

The Home Show Committee is working to put together a safe and fun show. Please follow us, the La Crosse Area Builders Association, on Facebook and Instagram and check www.labahomeshow.com for updates and more information.

Help us keep the LABA Home Show safe and successful!

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As a new feature of *Coulee Region Living: Home Show* this year, we are happy to present the 2021 LABA Business Showcase, featuring a closer look at participating LABA members. After the social distancing requirements of 2020, a year in which opportunities to meet face-to-face were limited or nonexistent, these LABA members are pleased to make your acquaintance by telling their stories in an advertorial format. To learn more about each member business featured here and the services they provide, give them a call, reach out via email or visit their websites—all provided in each advertorial.

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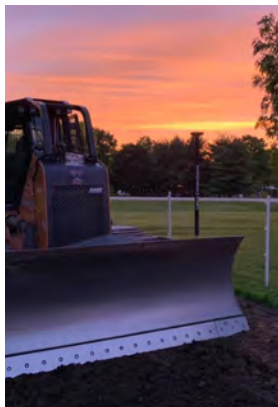
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Deb Kees is the owner of **Kees Architecture LLC**, founded in 2010. Previously she was an associate with SALA Architects. Her work focuses on custom residential projects of all scales. She believes a project's success hinges on positive collaboration between the owner and architect. As your architect, Deb becomes your advocate from the point of defining your program, to settling into your new space. She is a trained problem solver,

recognizing that even small interventions and the honest use of materials can create a dramatic impact. Her work promotes the sustainability of spaces by recognizing the importance of context, building orientation and site placement, landscape preservation and materials that complement each project and the people they serve.

Deb collaborated with Michaela Mahady to create *Cottage Living's* 2006 Idea Home in Evanston, Illinois. More examples of her work appear in Mahady's book, *Welcoming Home*.



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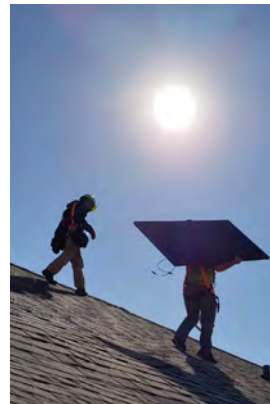
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Creating the Perfect Home Office

Design a home office that serves the needs of all family members.

If we've learned anything in 2020, it's the importance of having a functional, comfortable home office that serves a number of family members' needs. With kids learning at home in virtual classrooms and professionals working from home on a permanent or part-time basis—a trend that may not go away as employees and employers realize the benefits and savings of “working remotely”—creating the perfect home office has become key.

While the dining-room table or living-room couch are commonly used as workspaces, they are typically not the best areas to foster productivity or ergonomic health. Ideally, your home should have a dedicated room that serves as a home office. But simply adding a desk and a lamp to a spare room and calling it the “office” is not a guaranteed way to stay organized and do your best work.

With work environments changing all over the country, now is the best time to assess your home office needs. The following are some critical design elements of your home office space to consider as you create your custom workspace.

Comfort

Let's start with the obvious: seating. Don't purchase just any office chair based on price or appearance alone. Quality, design and features vary significantly, so if you end up with a chair that is uncomfortable, even if it looks attractive or is very affordable,

you might end up subconsciously avoiding the office altogether—or paying with bad posture or even pain. Take the time to try out as many chairs as possible to find the one that suits you best.

For the desk, ensure it's large enough to accommodate your supplies and electronics while allowing sufficient space to work. The last thing you want to do is constantly move papers, printers and other items to clear a workspace. Also, for those who spend most of their day in front of a computer, consider adding a height-adjustable desk, which can help improve posture and reduce back pain. Standing desks are very popular and reduce the harm that can come from sitting too much for long stretches of time.



Lighting

While some people prefer to work in dark and secluded spaces, most would like an office that is bright and inviting. Lighting should enhance the various roles of the room, so consider using a combination of ambient and task lighting.

Ambient lights establish the overall level of lighting in the room. This can be achieved with ceiling-mounted fixtures, but recessed lights typically have the best effect. For task lighting, choose desk and floor lamps that fit your style and serve a distinct purpose, such as working at a computer, writing or reading. The most important thing is that the light sources are balanced with similar color temperatures.

Multi-use

For those who need to share office space with kids, it is possible to build an office space that everyone can use effectively. But depending upon the ages of those who will use the office, design considerations may need to be made to create a space that is equally inviting to both younger and older family members. Choose a color palette that is bright and cheery, but not distracting. Determine a furniture layout that is functional and that creates designated workspaces and enough seating for at least three or four people. Corner desks can be a good use of space, as well as T-shaped desks that provide extra seating in the middle of the room.

To maximize space even further, be strategic with shelving. While corner shelves and floor-to-ceiling shelves might work for some, they can also consume valuable space that could otherwise be used for desk space. Consider installing shelves above the 4-foot line to allow for more seating options along the room's perimeter.

Benefits for everyone

Creating the perfect home office can take a lot of time and planning. But if done right, it will not only will benefit you and your family, it will also help enhance the value of your home. To find a professional who can help you identify the best options for designing your home office, contact the La Crosse Area Builders Association at 608-781-5242 or visit the LABA Home Show April 30–May 2 at the Omni Center in Onalaska.

Adapted from National Association of Home Building, www.nahb.org.



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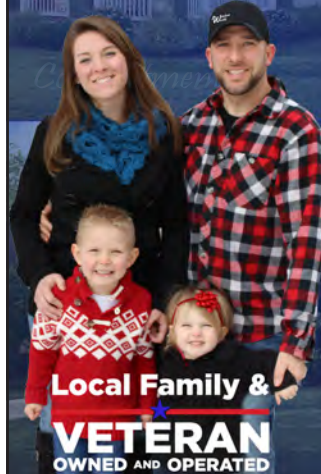
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7 Top Trends in Coulee Region Kitchens

More home cooking calls for organization, timeless design.

BY SHARI HEGLAND | CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS



Current trends in kitchen designs popular in the Coulee Region include cabinets that are either painted a light color such as gray or white, or stained with a shade of gray that allows the wood grain to show through. Contrasting accent colors on islands add an extra dimension to the look.

Many of us have spent more time in our kitchens in the last year, and that has kept area home improvement businesses busy.

“People are always remodeling anyway, because we’ve got houses from 100 years up in our area, but there has been a lot of walk-in traffic from people wanting to update something as they are sitting at home looking around,” says Amanda Beckman, interior designer with Decker Design Inc.

Beckman and other area designers say that as homeowners remodel their kitchens or plan new construction, they are choosing design options that are simple, timeless, low maintenance and focused on organization.

Today’s kitchen designs in the Coulee Region likely include these seven features:

1 PAINTED CABINETS IN LIGHT COLORS

“We’re seeing a lot of painted cabinets, either in white or gray,” says Kelly Kostner, kitchen and bath designer with Beyer Cabinets in West Salem. “A lot of times, customers accent the island with a different color.”

Beckman agrees, noting that the accent is typically in a dark gray or navy, or may retain the wood grain, but with a stain that has that same gray tone.

2 LIGHT STAINS THAT LET THE WOOD GRAIN SHINE THROUGH

If cabinets aren’t painted, the designers say, the second most popular finish is a gray-toned stain that lets the grain of the wood show through. “When we stain the wood, I’ve been seeing a lot of maple or hickory,” Kostner says. “Hickory has a lot of grain and

variation or character in the wood. Customers are drawn toward the natural woods with a light warm tone or gray tone where you can see the wood grain.”

Regardless of the color or wood choice, “simple door styles have come back,” Beckman says.

3 SIMPLE TILE PATTERNS IN A SINGLE COLOR

While tile backsplashes are still the norm, they have shifted away from complex designs. Brandy Nohrenberg, kitchen and bath designer at The Board Store in La Crosse, says that using a simple white or solid color tile is popular, but with a herringbone pattern or other geometric shape to add interest.

“They can stay simple but still beautiful and classic so that anyone would like it, and it will still look current 10 years from now,” she says.

4 BLACK HARDWARE AND PLUMBING FIXTURES

All of the designers agree that the go-to options now for cabinet hardware are simple shapes in a black matte finish, often matching the plumbing features to give the entire kitchen a pulled-together classic look. “Everything is streamlined and simple,” Beckman says.

“Oil-rubbed bronze is phasing out and even stainless is phasing out,” says Nohrenberg, noting though that there is a stainless option in black that looks similar to pewter that is gaining popularity not only in hardware and plumbing fixtures, but also in appliances.

One popular plumbing feature now is a pot-filler over the range, saving steps while carrying heavy pots. Another is a farmhouse- or apron-style sink, along with an additional prep or bar sink for additional workspace.



Simple tile backgrounds like the one on the left, along with matte black finishes for hardware and plumbing fixtures bring a timeless look to today's kitchens, where simplicity like the white cabinets in the center reigns. Apron-style sinks and lower-level drawers as shown on the right are also popular in today's Coulee Region kitchens.

5 QUARTZ COUNTERTOPS

Durability, low maintenance and a price point that has been dropping have made quartz the dominant material for countertops. The designers all say that most homeowners are choosing quartz and sticking with simple white shades, possibly with subtle veining or speckles, for their countertops. Kostner says that warmer colors for the veining are available from manufacturers now, in addition to the cool gray tones.

"Quartz is just as hard and durable as granite, but with less maintenance," says Beckman. "We do see some high-definition laminate, but quartz prices are making it just as affordable."

6 VINYL PLANK FLOORING

Again, an option that is low maintenance with a simple, warm look is the key to current flooring trends, which lean heavily on luxury vinyl planks—providing the look of wood but with extra touches and lower maintenance and installation costs.

"It is durable and waterproof for busy families," Beckman says, with newer offerings available without transition moldings, making them suitable for very large spaces. Vinyl planks are also thin and easy to install as a floating floor, making it possible to install over the top of existing ceramic tile without tearing out the tile first.

Vinyl plank flooring also provides additional color and texture options that may not be possible with real hardwood. "You can get a bit of color into the vinyl or a stain appearance in the wood grain," Nohrenberg notes, while Beckman points out that many kitchen remodeling projects may mix the popular gray tones with a warm color to bridge the gap between an older home's existing honey oak or brown woodwork and the grays used on kitchen cabinets.

Nohrenberg says that vinyl tile is also popular for those who don't want the wood look. It offers the appearance of ceramic, but it is not hard or cold.

7 ORGANIZATION AND EASE

Fewer restaurant meals and more cooking at home has inspired many homeowners to make their kitchens more efficient, with cabinets designed to keep everything organized and easy to access. From spice racks to tray dividers and pop-up shelves for stand mixers, the designers say each homeowner chooses cabinet inserts and organizers that work best for their cooking style.

One constant, though, is deep drawers rather than lower cabinets for pots and pans. "No matter their age, no one likes to crawl down and pull that stuff out," Nohrenberg says.

Beckman notes that microwaves are also moving to the lower level with microwave drawers that open to the top, making stirring things simple without having to remove the dish from the microwave.

Some homeowners are also installing "charging zones" inside cabinets, equipped with charging strips where a family's-worth of electronic devices can be plugged in while keeping countertops clear and clutter hidden.

In a year that has been anything but simple, Coulee Region kitchen designers say their customers are seeking clean, classic looks and useful organization details to help them make the most of extra time in the kitchen. "A lot of people staying home are thinking about different projects they want to get done," Kostner says. **CRW**

Shari Hegland is a writer and editor in Holmen, who has now added to her "someday" kitchen wish list.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS



HouseWarmings Celebrates 7 Years

HouseWarmings, located at 1522 Commercial Street in Bangor, is celebrating its seven-year anniversary. Co-owners Kim Herman and Patti Evans started the business in its current building, which was originally built as a hotel in 1902. HouseWarmings features gifts galore including quality toys, cards, wedding and seasonal holiday décor. They also feature antiques, vintage décor, crafted and new items in a charming atmosphere. Offering a little bit of everything, a trip to HouseWarmings is well worth the drive! Open Wednesday to Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.





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WORK-FROM-HOME MEETS HOMEWORK

Professional mothers balance competing obligations in the new workspace.

BY MARTHA KEEFFE | CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS



Karen Neeb, right, was already working from home before Covid-19, but like many women, had to adjust the family's home and routine to adapt as her children, Jack and Hannah Bockenbauer, shifted to school-from-home as well.

With two children ages 9 and 12 attending school online for the first half of the school year, and a husband who, due to the unpredictability of his work schedule, is continually coming and going throughout the day, life during Covid-19 left little time for Karen Neeb to regroup.

"What I miss most is having the house to myself during the day," says Neeb, a technical writer who leads a team of global writers at SAP (a business software company) in La Crosse and was already working from home prior to the pandemic. "I'm an extreme introvert, and never having any alone time makes it difficult to recharge my batteries."

ADJUSTING SPACES AND ROUTINES

"It's been tough; not for me, but for the kids," she adds, when asked how she handled the challenges that came with having everyone working and studying at home. To help alleviate the stresses of shared space, the family remodeled two rooms to create private space for learning, and the kids received a daily lunch provided by the Holmen School District. "I'm not much of a cook," says Neeb, "so I'm relieved that I don't have to interrupt my work day to think about lunch."

But even with lunch covered, Neeb and her family had to adjust to a new normal, made up of a school day that ended between noon and 1 p.m. "The biggest challenge has been finding ways to keep the kids occupied after their school day is done," she says, explaining that while reading, doing crafts, completing chores and playing outside with the dogs and a few select friends are encouraged, "we can't supervise every minute."

THANKFUL FOR SUPPORT

But despite an increase in the number of times Neeb is interrupted throughout the day, those small inconveniences are balanced out by the support and accommodations received from her work and from the school.

"I've been impressed with how well the school district and the teachers have helped make this strange learning style work as best as they can," she says, adding that SAP has handled the pandemic beautifully and works diligently to keep its employees (who are required to work from home) well connected, while being understanding of the "divided attention" that their employees face as they attend to the needs of their family, work and home. And whether that "divided attention" manifests as a quick pop-in from the kids to say "Hi" to their mom, Neeb's husband reporting that he found their son asleep in a beanbag chair during class—or Neeb participating in a company-sponsored oil painting session—everyone from employers to spouses to kids was coming together to make it work.

"I know they (her children) would rather be at school with their friends," says Neeb of this new arrangement. "But, they like that the dogs and cats can come into their rooms and be in their Zoom meetings."

As for Neeb, she's grateful to have already been working from home and can continue without it affecting her work too much. "I am so lucky." **CRW**

Martha Keefe lives, writes, and shares an at-home office space with her husband.

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Finding Opportunities in Unexpected Places

A home chef and a Greek restaurateur both see bright futures in feeding La Crosse.

BY JULIE NELSON | CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS



While some live by a set of goals, or perhaps even a life plan, Ashlee Page operates more on an open-door policy. When opportunity knocks, she is ready to answer. That's how she came to be the owner of her own personal chef company, a job she would never even have known to consider five years ago.

Ashlee's Home Chef Services began in 2016 when Page was working as a lab assistant in the culinary management program at Western Technical College. The program received a call requesting a home cook, and Page was asked if she wanted to give it a try. With a gulp and a brave step into the unknown, she said yes.

FROM 'SIDE GIG' TO BUSINESS

She cooked for a while with this client, then took on another client, and another, until she realized she had developed more than just a side gig. Sometimes her clients have health issues that prevent them from cooking; sometimes they are working parents wanting more time to spend with their children; sometimes the client is a person hosting a dinner party; and sometimes it's just someone who wants a break from cooking.

Most commonly, Page learns the food preferences of her client, comes up with a menu and either she or the client does the grocery shopping. On cooking day, Page spends two to four hours in the client's home, depending on whether she's making one meal for the evening or multiple entrees with 10 servings for the week ahead. "I am usually asked to do homestyle cooking," she says, "but I'm always open to new experiences."



Ashlee Page, owner of Ashlee's Home Chef Services

Cooking has always been a part of Page's home life, so when her family moved to La Crosse from Chicago, and she was the 15-year-old new kid at Logan High School looking for a part-time job, she sought out a restaurant. She started as a server at The Waterfront Restaurant and Tavern, then asked to learn the ropes as a cook. As her interest in the culinary field and restaurant management grew, she enrolled in the course at Western Technical College. After graduation, Page was hired as a lab assistant in the program. And that is where the fateful phone call took her life in a new direction.

Home Chef Services is a staff of one, making home chef services preferable to catering, where she would have to carry chafing dishes and other serving supplies by herself. With a 14-year-old daughter at home, Page is cautious about growing her business too fast too soon. Family is a priority for her, and "I need to make sure I have time to be a mom."

The biggest benefit of cooking in people's homes is that Page does not need a commercial kitchen, but it's a style of cooking that many a chef would find unbearably frustrating. Page comes with her own knives and perhaps a specialty gadget, but for the most part, she is at the mercy of whatever pots, pans and counter space the client has available.

The open-door policy is so far working well for Page, perhaps because she lives with a positive attitude. "I always look at things from a positive light. I'm grateful for what I have and I know things will get better. Me being where I am right now, I never would have believed it several years ago, but now I feel the possibilities are limitless."

CREATING OPPORTUNITIES

Robbi Wolff is another part of the La Crosse culinary scene whose career path is being shaped by opportunity. Wolff, however, is more likely to be the one doing the knocking, as is the case with Soula's Cuisina, the new Greek restaurant she owns with her partner, Greg Saliaras, on Main Street in La Crosse.

Like Page, Wolff moved to the area from Chicago, but from there their paths diverged. In the summer of 2000, Wolff took a job in Winona in banking. As time went on, she grew to hate banking, but now had experience in business and finance and saw an opportunity. She opened That Foreign Place on Fourth Street in La Crosse with an eclectic stock of imported wine, "cute gifts and fun stuff." While chatting with customers, Wolff noticed that as the women shopped, many of the men headed across the street to the Bodega Brew Pub. Then Wolff saw another opportunity: If her retail store were connected to a tavern, she could appeal to more customers.

Three years ago, Wolff moved That Foreign Place to Third Street, rebranded it as Eudora: Fine Wine and Gifts and opened the adjoining Cristos Taverna. It proved to be a perfect combination for couples, for a girls' day of shopping and sipping and for people who were intrigued by the wine for sale in Eudora and wanted to try a glass of it before committing to the entire bottle.

Another year or so later, she and Saliaras felt La Crosse was hungry

for a good, simple Greek restaurant. When the property of the former Fat Sam's became available, they jumped, naming their restaurant after a nickname for Saliaras' grandmother, Soula. They found suppliers for the gyro meat, Greek olives and more in New Jersey and developed

a menu with entrees such as moussaka, Greek salad and kebabs that were both authentic and familiar to American audiences. The freezers were stocked, the menus were printed and the doors were ready to open on March 17, 2020, the same day Covid-19 shut down the entire community. With no other choice, Wolff and Saliaras delayed the opening of their new restaurant and revamped to be more Covid-friendly. They offered curbside pickup and created an outdoor garden where diners could eat safely in the fresh air.

With the vaccine now gaining more traction, Wolff and Saliaras are looking forward to the day they can host a Greek Family Night at Soula's Cuisina. "Once a month, from 7 to 10 p.m., we'll have endless wine, serve the food family style and Greg will go around with

Ouzo," says Wolff. "We'll make dishes that aren't normally on the menu and make it a fun and special occasion."

With this kind of vision, who knows what opportunities await these two in the future? "I saw a need, something that was missing in La Crosse and went forward with it," Wolff says of each of her businesses. "It's just something to try. We're not brave, just crazy," she says with a smile.



Greg Saliaras and Robbi Wolff, owners of Soula's Cuisina



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Ashlee's Homestyle Lasagna

Serves 12

- 9-12 lasagna noodles
- 1 bag mozzarella, shredded
- 8 oz. Parmesan cheese, 1/3 cup reserved for white sauce
- 1 lb. Italian sausage
- 1 T olive oil
- 1/2 large yellow onion, chopped
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 red bell pepper, chopped
- 1 1/2 cups fresh spinach
- 1 container fresh basil, chopped
- 2 cans crushed tomatoes
- 2 cans tomato sauce
- 4 T butter
- 1/4 cup flour
- 2 cups heavy cream
- 2 tsp. Italian seasoning
- 1 T garlic powder, divided in half
- 1 tsp. adobo seasoning
- Salt, to taste
- Pepper, to taste

Brown Italian sausage over medium-high heat in large skillet, breaking meat apart until cooked through; drain grease and set meat to the side.

Add olive oil to skillet and sauté onion, red pepper and garlic for about 2 minutes.

Add the crushed tomatoes, tomato sauce, Italian seasoning, half of the garlic powder, adobo seasoning and salt and pepper to taste.

Cover and simmer on low heat for 20 to 30 minutes.

Return meat to pan, add spinach and basil and cook another 10 minutes while lasagna noodles are boiling. Cook lasagna according to box instructions, reducing cook time by half, in salted water.

Next drain lasagna noodles in colander under cold water and add a small amount of olive oil to keep them from sticking to each other.

Make garlic parmesan bechamel sauce in another skillet. Start by heating butter on medium heat until melted, add flour and cook for 3 minutes, stirring constantly, making a light roux.

Gradually add in heavy cream and whisk until mixture is smooth; add 1/3 cup Parmesan cheese, 1 1/2 tsp. garlic powder and salt and pepper to taste.

To assemble lasagna, preheat oven to 350°F. Lightly grease a 9x13 inch baking pan with cooking spray.

Split sauces and noodles into thirds because there will be 3 layers of lasagna.

Put some of the red sauce at the bottom of the pan to prevent the noodles from sticking to the bottom, just enough to cover the area. Start by placing 3 noodles across the pan. Next, spread about 3 scoops of red sauce, then white sauce, 1/3 of the remaining parmesan cheese, 1/3 of the mozzarella. Repeat these steps another 2 times until pan is full.

Bake 30 minutes. Allow lasagna to sit for 15-20 minutes before serving. Enjoy with a toasted bread and salad or a nice roasted vegetable.



Easy Greek Shrimp Saganaki with Feta Cheese

Marilena Leavitt / marilenaskitchen.com/Instagram @

marilenaLeavitt

Serves 6

- 4 T olive oil
- 1/2 medium onion, finely chopped
- 3 medium cloves of garlic, minced
- 3 medium very ripe, fresh tomatoes, seeded & chopped
- 3/4 tsp. sea salt
- 1/4 tsp. freshly ground pepper (or more)
- 1/4 cup dry white wine
- 2 T tomato paste
- 3 T flat leaf parsley, finely chopped
- 1 lb. large raw shrimp, tails on, shelled & deveined (about 30 shrimp/lb.)
- 3-4 oz. Greek feta cheese, crumbled (this comes to about 3/4 of a cup)

Preheat oven to 400°F.

Heat an ovenproof skillet (cast iron pan would work great here) over medium heat. Add the olive oil and then stir in the onion. Cook for about 4 minutes and then add the garlic and cook for another minute or so, until the garlic is soft. Next, stir in the tomatoes, season with salt and pepper and cook for another 5 minutes, crushing them with the back of a wooden spoon. Stir in the wine and tomato paste (if using—see note) and cook for 5 minutes more, until sauce is reduced and the alcohol has evaporated. Add the shrimp and the parsley and continue to cook, stirring from time to time, until the shrimp just begins to turn pink, about 2 to 3 minutes.

If you do not use an ovenproof skillet, transfer the mixture to a casserole dish and crumble the feta cheese over the top. Place in the hot oven on the medium rack. Bake until the cheese has melted and the sauce has thickened, about 10 minutes.

Serve with plenty of crusty bread to sop up the sauce!

Note: If tomatoes are not in season, or if they are not ripe enough, substitute the fresh tomatoes and the tomato paste with 1 cup of canned, crushed Italian plum tomatoes. **CRW**

Julie Nelson is the Community Engagement Coordinator for Great Rivers United Way, and she thinks the Greek Family Night sounds like great fun.





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FACING CHANGES WITH COMPASSION

Marissa Jahnke couples communication, caring to lead nursing facility.

BY HEIDI BLANKE | CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

Marissa Jahnke, Onalaska Care Center administrator, has wisdom and expertise far beyond her 29 years. An area native (Logan High School class of 2009), University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire graduate, and mother of two young children, she is leading the center through the Covid-19 crisis with empathy, skill and an “amazing staff.”

COVID PAST

After a full-time, hands-on internship in health care administration and several years of administrative experience, Janke moved into her current position. While many new graduates might shy away from



Marissa Jahnke, Onalaska Care Center administrator

this level of responsibility, she has always been willing to jump into challenges head on. “I don’t like being comfortable,” she says. That philosophy has taken on new meaning in the last year.

Prior to Covid-19’s arrival, Jahnke’s job centered on the operations side, she says. She viewed it as a business centered around people and providing the very best care. She and the staff “knew what the rules were and how to follow them,” Jahnke says.

COVID PRESENT

The Covid-19 pandemic changed those rules, forcing Jahnke to shift her focus to constantly evolving regulations and procedures. “(I concentrate on) managing all the changes and being able to correctly implement them quickly and accurately,” she says. The pressure on her and her staff is intense, and the key to having a handle on it, she states, is communication.

In the past, staff meetings were typically departmental. With Covid-19, Jahnke instituted weekly all-staff meetings. “Communication is the only way people feel they have any control,” she says. While she’s always had an open-door policy, she emphasizes its importance in current times and credits her staff for sharing what challenges they’re currently feeling.

Some departments, like recreational therapy, have pivoted even more than nursing staff, Jahnke says. “I’m proud of the amount of compassion the staff has day after day.”

Regulatory changes include those regarding visitors to the facility. While outdoor visits were possible in summer, Jahnke, much to her chagrin, had to disallow visitors beginning in early October because of exponential virus spread. “I feel such strong empathy for our residents



Marissa Jahnke, administrator at Onalaska Care Center, shares a trip to the La Crosse Interstate Fair with her grandmother, Elizabeth Stastny, who was a resident of the care center at the time.

and families. Some family members used to visit daily, and now they have seen their loved ones a handful of times.”

Nevertheless, “families have been surprisingly understanding,” Jahnke says. She emails families at least weekly to let them know what’s going on. “I am very frank with them; there’s nothing to hide.”

As a result of limited visitors, staff and residents have become like family to each other.

COVID FUTURE

Along with the hope that Covid-19 will fade away soon and life will return to normal, Jahnke will take away some lessons from the experience. She’s even more committed to the importance of communication with anyone connected to Onalaska Care Center, and she’s grateful for the community support.

While Jahnke considers herself the “leader of the building,” she cannot say enough about her staff. “They give of themselves and do what needs to be done,” performing selfless acts, she says.

Though the times are challenging, and change is a constant, compassion is the bedrock on which Jahnke and her staff stand. “Nothing is the same, other than we love our residents,” she says. **CRW**

Heidi Griminger Blanke is a La Crosse freelance writer who thanks and honors all front-line workers.

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STAYING POSITIVE IN UNKNOWN TIMES

Child care centers adjust to fluctuating numbers and new routines.

BY JAN WELLIK | CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS



Children and staff at the Red Balloon Early Learning Centers are adapting to new procedures due to Covid-19, but still rely on outside time to beat cabin fever.

Child care is an essential element for many working families. “We play an important role in the community,” Jennie Buchholtz says. “Without child care, parents can’t go to work. Without child care, businesses can’t stay open.”

Buchholtz, executive director of Red Balloon Early Learning Centers, joined Red Balloon as a preschool teacher in 1997, then became program director. She has been the executive director since 2015.

“When schools are closed, we offer a place for children to go,” says Buchholtz. “Parents have always felt comfortable leaving their children with us.”

FALLING NUMBERS IN FACE OF PANDEMIC

With centers in Onalaska and on the north side of La Crosse, Red Balloon has a total of 30 staff including kitchen, management and teaching staff.

Due to the Covid-19 virus pandemic, however, enrollment has dropped to about half.

In March 2020, both centers were almost at full capacity—with 90 kids in La Crosse and 61 in Onalaska. As of December 2020, there were about 55 kids in La Crosse and 35 in Onalaska, according to Buchholtz.

“We’ve had quite a drop,” she says. “Most kids are staying home with families and three staff didn’t return.”

A NEW KIND OF LEARNING

Since the start of the fall 2020 school year, Red Balloon has offered classrooms for their kids who are doing K-3 virtual learning. This is one of the biggest changes to their daily curriculum.

“Our teachers help them get set up at the right time,” says Buchholtz. “Teachers in the virtual learning are doing a great job getting everyone set up. The kids have a nice routine, and they are adapting.”

The center still offers the traditional early learning curriculum as part of their day care services.



Jennie Buchholtz, executive director of Red Balloon Early Learning Centers

FACING UNCERTAINTY AND MAKING ADJUSTMENTS

“Each day, we don’t know if someone is going to be (Covid-19 virus) positive and what our classroom numbers will be,” Buchholtz says, requiring all staff to be flexible as they adjust to changes in routines brought on by the pandemic.

Instead of family-style meal times, teachers pre-plate the breakfast, lunch and afternoon snack that are made by a cook on site. Teachers and kids age 5 and up are required to wear masks, and they are not setting up as many sensory table activities as usual, according to Buchholtz.

Consistent hand washing is not new, she says, as hand washing has always been a priority in the child care centers. In addition, “we’ve had some professional deep cleaning over the weekends,” she says.

“Our main priority is to help keep kids safe,” says Buchholtz. “We try to keep things consistent as much as we can. I make sure everyone feels as comfortable as possible with the safety and well-being of everyone here.”

Despite the unknowns of families’ work and school lives, the centers are open consistently Monday through Friday from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m., with most children there from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

KEEPING SPIRITS UP

During this unknown time, Buchholtz says she is “trying to be more patient and open (as a leader).”

“There is so much uncertainty right now. We are trying to keep morale up as much as possible,” she says. That can be a challenge this time of year.

During the winter months, children spend more time inside. “Cabin fever tends to hit in February and March, and it will be important to keep spirits up during that time,” she says. “I like to keep fun things going to keep everyone going.” **CRW**

Jan Wellik is a writer and educator in the La Crosse area.

Overcoming Challenges to Realize a Dream

Holmen Community Center leaders look forward to bringing generations together.

BY JAN WELLIK
CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS



The idea of the Holmen Community Center was born in 2006. The dream was realized in the midst of the pandemic.

“We lost a couple of students due to poor decisions,” says Laurie Kessler, who was a school counselor at Holmen High School for 36 years. A community needs assessment found that “for such a growing community (in Holmen), there is no place for kids to go after school.”



Laurie Kessler, secretary, Holmen Community Center board of directors. Photo courtesy of Viterbo University.

“Laurie is the one who heard the students and stuck with this over the years and helped it morph. The history behind it is Laurie. The change agent behind it is Laurie,” says Mary Lin Wershofen, now president of the organization’s Board of Directors.

EVOLVING MISSION

The original idea for an after-school center evolved over the years into a community center serving all ages, says Kessler, who continues to serve as secretary of the Holmen Community Center Board of Directors.

The center has a partnership with the Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater La Crosse to provide youth services, and the Holmen School District offers alternative education in the building.

“We use these partners to collaborate on offerings,” says Kessler. “We don’t want to compete with other programming availability.”

Meanwhile, a community survey received more than 500 responses regarding adult programming, and many respondents were interested in wellness, arts and food, according to Kessler. “We are trying to respond to what people told us they wanted,” she says.

PANDEMIC PUTS SOME PROGRAMS ON HOLD

The center opened September 1, 2020, on Holmen Drive—during the Covid-19 pandemic, after raising \$3.5 million.

“We dreamed of throwing the doors open and welcoming people, but we can’t do that right now,” says Wershofen. “That will come, but what we can provide right now is virtual programming.

“One thing the community wanted was a place to walk in the winter,” adds Wershofen. “Opening the gym back up is a priority.”



Mary Lin Wershofen, president, Holmen Community Center board of directors

Currently, the Boys & Girls Clubs is offering virtual learning support for area youth in the building.

Wershofen has a key interest in the intergenerational vision of the center. She joined the board in 2012, after she retired as elementary principal at Southern Bluffs in the La Crosse School District, where she helped start a “seniors in our schools” program. She witnessed “beautiful interactions between kids and seniors,” she says.

The intergenerational component, however, is on hold for now, though the center is connected to the Senior Learning Network for virtual learning, and local musicians such as Dan Sebranek offer virtual performances.

LOOKING AHEAD TO COMPLETE OPENING

Kessler looks forward to when the gym and walking track can be reopened; the center will follow La Crosse County guidelines for reopening.

When members can come into the building again, there will be support for dementia and brain games. Organizers plan to start a book club and offer programs for young moms. “We are always looking for ideas for what families need,” says Kessler.

There is a low-cost annual membership fee to join the Holmen Community Center, and donations are still being accepted at www.holmencc.org. At the end of 2020, the center had about 160 members.

The pandemic is one of many barriers the Holmen Community Center has faced over the years in creating their vision.

“The hits we took could have caused us to give up,” says Wershofen. “We did take a lot of hits. But the community has stuck with us.” **CRW**

Jan Wellik is a writer and educator in the La Crosse area.

TOTE-ALLY LOCAL

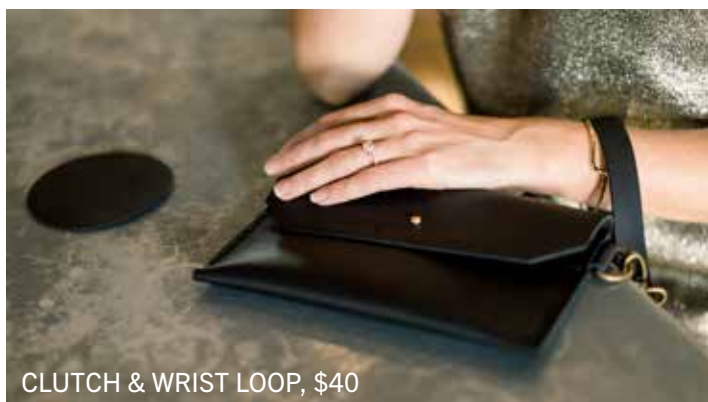
Lovely leather bags build business for Ruud Ware Co.

PHOTOS BY HALEY HUNDT PHOTOS

A deep connection to community, craft, love and loss fuels the beauty and craftsmanship behind Ruud Ware Co., a line of leather products by Pete and Emily Ruud of Viroqua. Pete is the creator of the high-quality, handmade leather wares, which include a line of elegant and practical handbags as well as clutches, bracelets and coffee cuffs in cognac, black and Ruthie Red.

The handbags are named for beloved family members—the Betty Lou tote for Pete's grandmother, the Georgia backpack for a small daughter and, most poignantly, the Eleanor tote for the Ruud's first child, whom they lost as an infant. Finding craft to be an outlet for grief, the Ruuds credit Eleanor as their creative inspiration.

Ruud Ware products are available at www.ruudwareco.com, The Drifting Boutique in Viroqua and Coulee Boutique in Galesville. **CRW**



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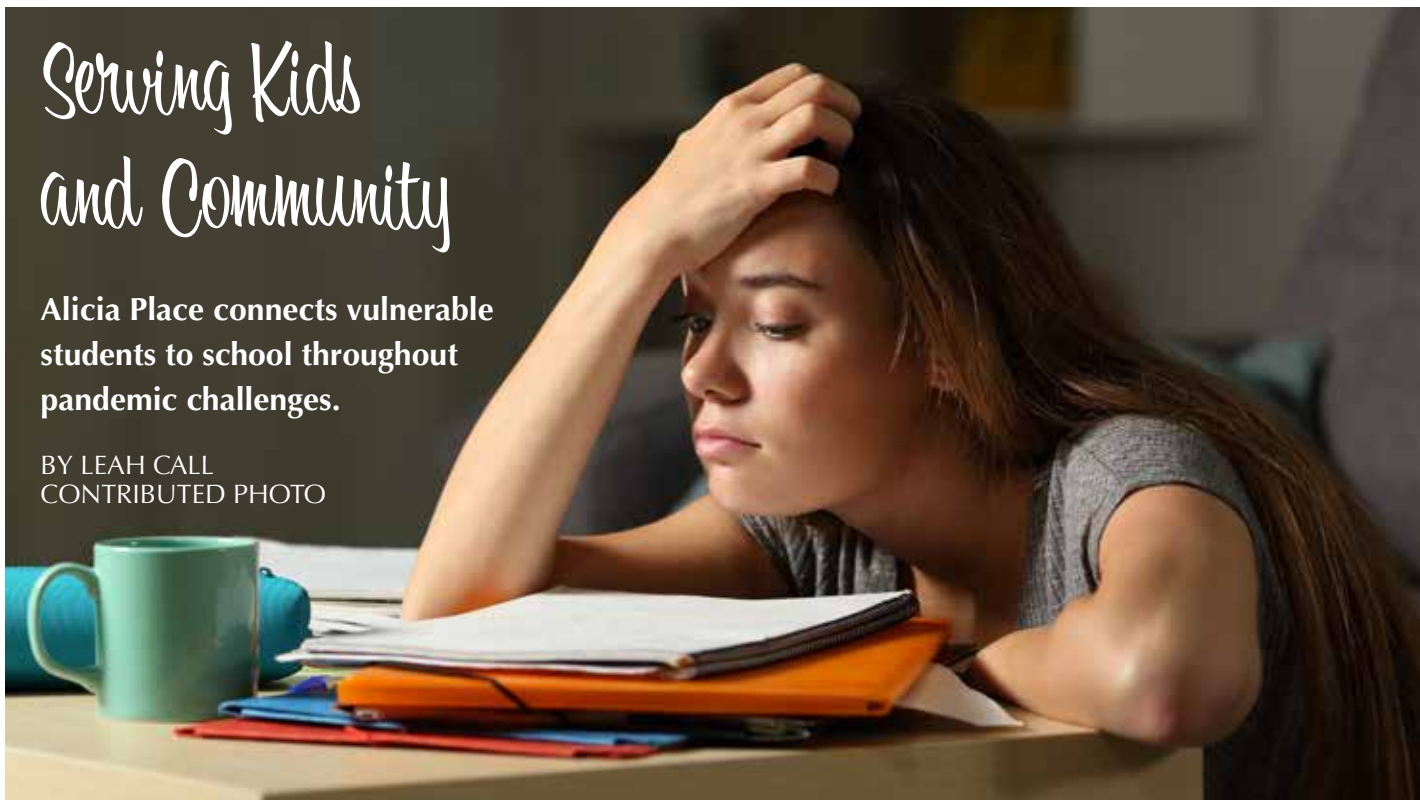


CROSSBODY, \$85

Serving Kids and Community

Alicia Place connects vulnerable students to school throughout pandemic challenges.

BY LEAH CALL
CONTRIBUTED PHOTO



Supporting kids and families is the charge of La Crosse School District Community Services Coordinator Alicia Place. Providing that support during a pandemic demonstrates the breadth of this Coulee Region woman's commitment to those most vulnerable within our community.

When the country went on lockdown in March, schools throughout the region had to adjust to a new way of teaching. Place, too, adjusted to prevent children from falling through the cracks in the world of virtual education.

"We recognize this is not ideal for students to be home," says Place. "So it is figuring out how to support families now while they are in this place, but also thinking to the future—what are the needs going to be and what supports and resources do we need to have in place for those kids and for staff to help support those students."

Place has supported students within the La Crosse School District for 16 years, 13 years as a social worker at the elementary level. When she took the district's community services coordinator position three years ago, she felt it was the right move.

"This role is involved in systems-level work, and I was really hopeful that by doing that we could impact more families and more kids and make more positive changes for the entire community."

IDENTIFYING NEED

Place meets regularly with community youth-supporting agencies, such as the Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater La Crosse, La Crosse Family YMCA, The Good Fight Community Center and La Crosse County. Covid-19 changed the focus of those meetings.

"Our conversations shifted to how do we support immediate needs of students and families in this current situation. The work shifted to let's identify needs; let's figure out who these kiddos are that have needs and how are we going to reach them," Place says.

Making sure students are learning from home is challenging, especially if those students are homeless. Place works closely with each school's designated liaison for the homeless. "I think that is one of the biggest things to ensure students aren't falling through the cracks. We have really amazing people at the building level doing really amazing things."

Identifying homelessness is the first step to helping. Place educates the public and district staff about what homelessness looks like and the benefits of reporting it.

KEEPING KIDS CONNECTED

Though the economic hardship of the pandemic prompted some families to move out of the district, federal legislation allows students to stay in their district of origin.

"So a silver lining of this virtual world is that a lot of kids who moved to neighboring districts or communities were able to stay connected, because we were virtual," she says.

The La Crosse School District provides students access to laptops, tablets and hotspots. "And we're helping pay for Wi-Fi," notes Place. "Even if you are not homeless, if that is a financial barrier for the family, we are helping with that."

Place praises the support of her team within the district as well as the many community partners.

"The district can't do this alone," she says. "Even pre-Covid, our work with kiddos and families is truly a community effort. I'm proud to be part of a team that is engaging the entire community about what is really important—helping families, keeping kids healthy, talking about trauma and interrupting trauma as soon as we can." **CRW**

Freelance writer Leah Call lives and writes with her family in Westby.



Alicia Place, community services coordinator, School District of La Crosse. Photo by Ying Vang of Mint Chiffon Studio.



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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.

Coulee Region Professional Women (CRPW) 4th Tues. of each month, www.crpwomen.org.

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

La Crosse Rotary every Thurs. noon-1 p.m., Radisson Center, www.rotarycluboflacrosse.org.

La Crosse Toastmasters Club 2nd and 4th Tues. of each month, 7 p.m., La Crosse County Administrative Building, 212 6th St. N., Room 100, La Crosse, 411.toastmastersclubs.org.

NAMI Support Groups Please refer to namilacrossecounty.org/support for information on the many programs offered.

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.

Set Me Free Shop, Saturdays & Sundays, 30 minutes before & after services. First Free Church, 123 Mason St., Onalaska. Also available by appt. 608-782-6022.

Valley View Rotary, every Wed., 7:30-8:30 a.m., La Crosse Famous Dave's, www.valleyviewrotary.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 Empowering Women (WEW), last Wed. of each month, Schmidy'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, Visit www.womensalliancelacrosse.com for more information.

Please contact each group for meeting status at this time.

If your organization would like to be included in our Community Calendar, please contact us at editor@crwmagazine.com or call 608-783-5395.

CALENDAR EVENTS

FEBRUARY

Feb. 6, Prayer and Yoga: Finding Balance (via Zoom), 9-10:30 a.m., Franciscan Spirituality Center, preregistration required, www.fscenter.org.

Feb. 6, Kids Clay Class, 1-2 p.m., preregistration required, www.thepumphouse.org.

Feb. 9, Adult Clay Class, 5:30-7 p.m., preregistration required, www.thepumphouse.org.

Feb. 10, Cultivating Compassion online event, 6:30-7:30 p.m., La Crosse Public Library, register at www.lacrosselibrary.org.

Feb. 10-14, Frozen River Film Festival on-demand streaming event, www.frff.org.

Feb. 11, Sip and Paint: Family/Friend Tree (via Zoom), 5:30-7:30 p.m., Franciscan Spirituality Center, preregistration required, www.fscenter.org.

Feb. 13, Kids Clay Class, 1-2 p.m., preregistration required, www.thepumphouse.org.

Feb. 15, Art as Prayer (via Zoom), 6-7:30 p.m., Franciscan Spirituality Center, preregistration required, www.fscenter.org.

Feb. 16, Adult Clay Class, 5:30-7 p.m., preregistration required, www.thepumphouse.org.

Feb. 17, Healing Foods: Lacto-Fermentation 101, 6:30-7:30 p.m., La Crosse Public Library, register at www.lacrosselibrary.org.

Feb. 20, Navigating Together: A Virtual Grief Retreat (via Zoom), 9 a.m.-12 p.m., Franciscan Spirituality Center, preregistration required, www.fscenter.org.

Feb. 25, Virtual Poetry Café (via Zoom), 6:30 p.m.-8 p.m., Franciscan Spirituality Center, preregistration required, www.fscenter.org.

Feb. 26-28 & Mar. 4-7, *She Kills Monsters*, 7:30 p.m. Thurs.-Sat., 2 p.m. Sun, Toland Theatre, Center for the Arts, UW-La Crosse, www.uwlax.edu/theatre-arts.

Feb. 27, Marriage at Midlife: Taking Time to Dream Again (via Zoom), 9 a.m.-2 p.m., Franciscan Spirituality Center, preregistration required, www.fscenter.org.

Feb. 27, Winona Outdoors Collaborative Monthly Meet Up: Backwaters Hiking, 10-11:30 a.m., www.winonaoutdoorcollaborative.com/meet-ups.

MARCH

Mar. 4, Meditation for Emotional Health (via Zoom), 6:30-7:30 p.m., Franciscan Spirituality Center, preregistration required, www.fscenter.org.

Mar. 5-7, International Festival of Owls, Houston, MN, www.festivalofowls.com.

Mar. 6, Staying Put: Taming Our Insistence to Solve and Control (via Zoom), 9 a.m.-12 p.m., Franciscan Spirituality Center, preregistration required, www.fscenter.org.

Mar. 6, Monumental Sibelius, and More Rising Stars! 7:30-9 p.m., La Crosse Symphony Orchestra, www.lacrossesymphony.org.

Mar. 7, Wedding World, 9 a.m., La Crosse Center, register at www.weddingworldlacrosse.com.

Mar. 9, Winona Outdoors Collaborative Monthly Meet Up: Cross Country Skiing, 6-8 p.m., www.winonaoutdoorcollaborative.com/meet-ups.

Mar. 11, An Evening of Reflection on the Pandemic (via Zoom), 6-7 p.m., Franciscan Spirituality Center, preregistration required, www.fscenter.org.

Mar. 13, Untying Knots (via Zoom), 9 a.m.-12 p.m., Franciscan Spirituality Center, preregistration required, www.fscenter.org.

Mar. 13, Zentangle: Meditation Through Art (via Zoom), 6-8 p.m., Franciscan Spirituality Center, preregistration required, www.fscenter.org.

Mar. 15, Art as Prayer (via Zoom), 6-7:30 p.m., Franciscan Spirituality Center, preregistration required, www.fscenter.org.

Mar. 20, Acceptance and Transformation (via Zoom), 9 a.m.-12 p.m., Franciscan Spirituality Center, preregistration required, www.fscenter.org.

Mar. 20, Collage-Making Retreat (via Zoom), 9 a.m.-2 p.m., Franciscan Spirituality Center, preregistration required, www.fscenter.org.

Mar. 25, BYOB: Bring Your Own Book Club online book discussion, 7-8 p.m., La Crosse Public Library, register at www.lacrosselibrary.org.

Mar. 25, Art Dash virtual fundraiser, 6:30-8 p.m., Franciscan Spirituality Center, register by March 24 at www.fscenter.org.

Mar. 27, Eliminating Stigma/Barriers to Quality Mental Health (via Zoom), 9 a.m.-12 p.m., Franciscan Spirituality Center, preregistration required, www.fscenter.org.

Mar. 27, Winter Camping Workshop, Winona Outdoors Collaborative, 12-3 p.m., www.winonaoutdoorcollaborative.com/workshops.

APRIL

Apr. 8, Meditation for Emotional Health (via Zoom), 6:30-7:30 p.m., Franciscan Spirituality Center, preregistration required, www.fscenter.org.

Apr. 10, Compassion of Power and Love (via Zoom), 9 a.m.-12 p.m., Franciscan Spirituality Center, preregistration required, www.fscenter.org.

Apr. 21, YWCA Circle of Friends virtual celebration, 5:30-7 p.m., register at www.ywcalax.org.

Apr. 22, BYOB: Bring Your Own Book Club online book discussion, 7-8 p.m., La Crosse Public Library, register at www.lacrosselibrary.org.

Apr. 24, Carve In 4 & 5 at the Bekkum, 10 a.m.-4 p.m., Bekkum Library, 206 N. Main St., Westby.

Apr. 30-May 2, La Crosse Area Builders Association Home Show, Onalaska Omni Center, www.labaonline.com.

Please note that some events in this listing are live and some are virtual-only. Live events during this time may be canceled on short notice. Please utilize the contact information provided for each event to double-check its status before attending.



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