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Pictured on the cover: Paige Buisman of Fastenal. Photo on cover and above left by Apropos Photography.

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You can move up. Move on.
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Or maybe you've found the passion that moves you.

I think one of our writers, however, summed up in her personal bio why we do what we do here at *Coulee Region Women*. She said she strives to write stories that move our readers.

Our mission, in part, is to help our readers “grow personally and professionally and connect with each other and the community. The goal is to develop stronger, healthier and happier women, families and community.” We want to move you: emotionally, physically, in your careers and in your personal life.

As I look back over a nearly 30-year career in writing, some of the most memorable stories are those that were emotionally moving, both for me and for the readers. When I was just a year or so out of college, and working for a daily newspaper in Nebraska, I had learned about a young girl in my community fighting a brain tumor and the tremendous efforts her teachers and school community had gone to in order to keep her connected as she fought against the cancer. Early in the morning of what was to be an evening interview with her family, I learned that she had passed away the night before.

My story approach changed. I still wanted to write about this courageous young girl and the amazing community who had supported her, so I interviewed her teachers, her principal and a member of her care team. We published her story, with advice on how families could help their children work through the loss of a classmate.

A few days later, I received a two-sentence note on a small sheet of paper that simply said, “You captured her spirit beautifully. Thank you.”

That note, written by one of the girl's teachers, is still in my desk drawer, 25 years and three moves later. Knowing that my writing had the power to move and comfort those who loved her is one of the greatest compliments I could have ever received. And it is part of why I keep writing stories—even hard, heartbreaking ones like hers.

While this issue features more positive topics than challenging ones, we believe you will find inspiration in the pages to move you forward in 2024.

Paige Buisman's story of being willing to step outside her comfort zone to take on challenges in new companies and roles shows what can develop when you trust yourself to take that leap. She jumped into the complex supply chain industry at a time during the Covid-19 pandemic that was especially challenging, but she found the mentors to help her move into her new position with confidence.

From career moves to literal moves—across the country and around the world, over and over and over again—Kitty Norton has made them all. A globe-trotting entertainer who has found a home in Winona, Norton offers her advice for moving successfully and shares that it is as much about your mindset as it is your “stuff.”

Other women in our February/March 2024 issue have traveled roads to places seldom seen by Coulee Region residents or have racked up thousands of miles on the same roads for a lifetime. Jess Witkins' adventurous spirit took her to the opposite side of the world in the Mongolian mountains, while Bonnie Norton knows every inch of the West Salem School District route she has driven for the last 49 years (with a total of 50 years behind the wheel of a bus).

What moves will you make in 2024? Do you have your eye on a promotion? A new challenge? Visiting a bucket list destination? Or just moving a little more every day (maybe on the pickleball court)? Pick a goal and a destination! We challenge you—just don't sit still.

Shari

coulee region women

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SET FREE YOUR INNER WRITER

Anyone who enjoys writing and wants to meet with others in an atmosphere of respect and acceptance is invited to a new Open Writing Circle hosted by the Franciscan Spirituality Center.

This free gathering meets at the Franciscan Spirituality Center, 920 Market Street, La Crosse, from 6 to 8 p.m. on the first Monday of each month, unless there is a holiday or inclement weather.

Based on author Natalie Goldberg's basic principles of writing practice, the group will write and listen without critique or judgment. Sharing is optional. This is not a class, and it is not about learning "how to write." The goal is to set free the writer within.

No experience is necessary. All levels of writers are welcome. Bring an open mind, a fast-writing pen and a plain spiral notebook. Participants also may wish to bring snacks and/or a beverage.

Registration is not necessary. Attend any or all sessions as your schedule permits. For more information, call 608-791-5295 or visit www.fscenter.org.

The Franciscan Spirituality Center is open to people of all faith backgrounds and traditions (or none).



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS CELEBRATES 100 YEARS

2024 will be a big year for the League of Women Voters of the La Crosse Area (LWVLA). In addition to preparing voters for three important elections, the LWVLA will celebrate its centennial year. One hundred years ago, Alice Hixon convened the first meeting of the La Crosse League at her King Street home, acclaiming it "the duty of every woman to vote and to keep herself informed on public affairs."

One hundred years later, the LWVLA continues to honor her charge, operating as a nonpartisan organization for women and men to empower voters and defend democracy by advocating for informed and active participation in government. Our volunteers

- host programs and a monthly book club related to current issues
- provide local election information, candidate forums and the Vote411.org voter guide
- support voter education and registration
- assist local election officials

Upcoming LWV La Crosse 2024 programs for the public are

- **February 13, 6:30-8 p.m. via Zoom**
Achieving Environmental Justice in Wisconsin
 - Speakers Julie Majerus, WI DNR and Meleesa Johnson, WI Greenfire
 - Principles and challenges of community-based environmental justice
- **March 5, 4:30 p.m.**
International Women's Day
 - Co-hosted with AAUW-La Crosse at University of Wisconsin-La Crosse
- **April 10, 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m.**
Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge
 - Speaker Holly Schulz
 - Celebrating 100 years of the Refuge's wildlife preservation on the Mississippi and the League's advocacy for environmental protection

Register for all events at www.lwvlacrosse.org. The LWVLA encourages that "Everyone Vote" in the upcoming April 2 election.



FIND ROMANCE WITH COCKTAILS AND CABERET

Looking for a romantic night out with that special someone? Tickets are now available for Cocktails and Cabaret. The musical revue, produced and directed by Nancy Allen, revolves around life, love and relationships. See it February 14-17, with performances at 7:30 p.m. each night, at the Pump House Regional Arts Center at 119 King Street in downtown La Crosse.

An all-star cast performs favorite melodies spanning 70 years, including the voices of Abby Ryan, Anna Benthin, Brad Seebach, Brandon Harris, Carter Semb, Doug Mahlum, Janet Weinkes, Joan Waniger, Kari Bersagel Braley, Katie Berkedal, Maureen Breuer, Paul Lansing, Rick Waniger and Vernon Shaw with Allen herself accompanying on the piano.

Tickets can be purchased online at www.thepumphouse.org, by calling 608-785-1434, or by visiting the Pump House Box office, open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday and noon to 4 p.m. Saturdays. Hours extend to 7 p.m. Tuesdays. Tickets are also available at the door. Doors open 30 minutes before the performances start.



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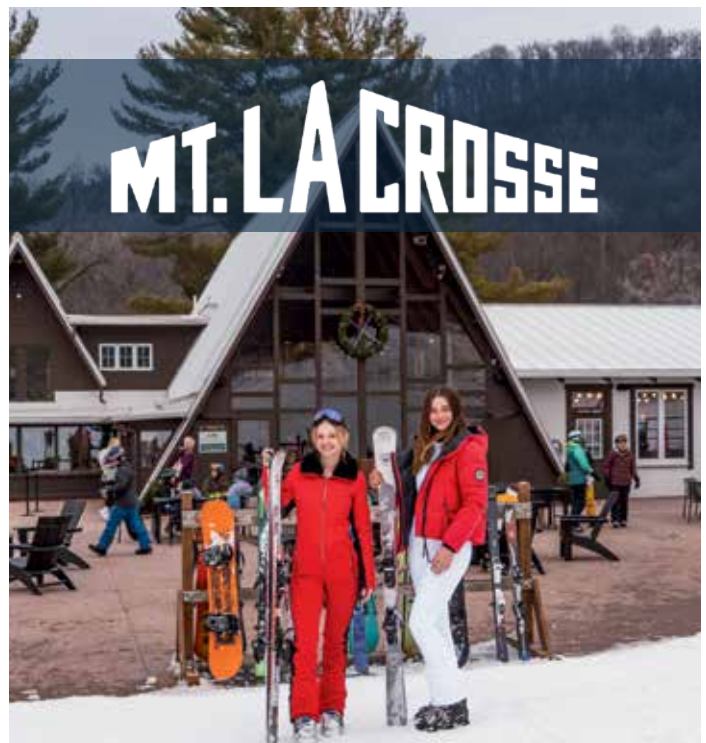
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MOVING PRODUCT, MOVING PEOPLE

Paige Buisman embodies forward momentum in a career connecting suppliers to customers.

BY SARAH ARENDT-BEYER | PHOTOS BY APROPOS PHOTOGRAPHY

Paige Buisman is no stranger to moving fast. Whether it's out for a run with her husband or in her role as the Global Supplier Compliance Manager at Fastenal in Winona, she's constantly finding ways to connect Point A to Point B.

Fastenal is a global supply chain partner for companies in various industries. They connect customers with the materials they need, everything from fasteners like screws (hence the name Fastenal) to safety products, janitorial products, hydraulics/pneumatics, power tools, electrical, plumbing and more. Buisman has a big job there—her team is responsible for onboarding new suppliers and keeping current suppliers' information up to date in Fastenal's systems. Last year, they added around 1,900 suppliers.

When Buisman stepped into this USA-based corporate role, she inherited a global responsibility with geographic teams in Canada, Mexico, Brazil, Europe and Asia.

Previously, Buisman was a supplier development manager, “so I was actually working with the suppliers that I'm now onboarding,” she says. That experience gave her a valuable perspective for her current role. Now, she gets involved in a variety of projects. “Every day is different!” she says. She spends her time collaborating with other departments, developing processes to help the business continue to scale and supporting her team.

BE OPEN TO NEW OPPORTUNITIES

But Buisman hasn't always worked in

wholesale distribution. She followed in her father's footsteps when she earned a marketing degree from the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse. During college and for about two years after, she worked at Kwik Trip, where she had a lead role managing a kitchen. Following that, she joined the Foundation team at Gundersen Health System.

During the pandemic, Buisman used the lull in special events to re-evaluate her career. Then, she took the leap and applied for a position as a pricing analyst with Fastenal. “During the interview with the VP,” Buisman recalls, “he said, ‘That doesn't seem like a good fit for you. You're a more personable person. I feel like you want to talk to people. So why don't you apply for this one instead?’ And that's how I got where I am.”



Paige Buisman made the jump from marketing to supply chain management at the height of the Covid-19 pandemic and is now Fastenal's Global Supplier Compliance Manager, connecting suppliers with customers around the world.

After about two and a half years, Buisman's current position became available, and coworkers encouraged her to apply. It was a new challenge—one that Buisman eagerly accepted.

MENTORSHIP

Luckily, Buisman had a mentor to help her transition into her new role. "My previous VP had started this mentor program to help us develop in our careers. And so I got connected with our VP of marketing—she is a very smart person! She's been with the company for a while, and she has really good ideas and is very connected to our community and within Fastenal. She helps if I have questions—either as a manager or just personally."

Her mentor advised on situations Buisman might encounter as a first-time manager: for example, the importance of connecting with her team members as people first. She said that the key is building relationships and working with people, not just managing them.

PAYING IT FORWARD

Buisman took that advice to heart and today works to empower her team members as well. When a member of her team shared his desire to grow as a leader, she encouraged

him. She gave him projects to lead and let him take point on training a new team in Asia via online meetings through Teams. "He loved it," she says, "and I think he did great. They have a good connection with him now, where they still go to him for questions. I think that was a good step."

CONNECTION + COMMUNITY

Mentorship is just one component of the winning culture at Fastenal. "We're very connected, Buisman says. "We like to say we all bleed blue!" She describes Fastenal as a very Midwest company. Teammates work together to get things done. "It's a community. You come into work, and you are able to talk to your friends, and you're close with them, and not just at a work level—on a friendship level as well."

That strong sense of community extends beyond the office walls, too. "We have what we call the BK5K because our founder's initials are BK. We have 5k races at our different hub locations, and they take all of that profit and give it to communities to help with school supplies, food, anything like that—giving back to the community."

DIVERSITY

Supplier diversity is also important to Fastenal and to Buisman personally.

"A lot of customers that we're working with have different goals," she says, such as wanting to buy 5 percent from small businesses or 10 percent from women-owned businesses. "They'll set goals, either because that's a goal for that company or that's what their stakeholders are requesting," she says.

In turn, Buisman's department helps connect those customers with the right suppliers to meet those goals—whether it's a women-owned, veteran-owned, minority-owned, Indigenous people-owned, LGBTQ-owned or a HUB-owned business. She appreciates her role in helping these small businesses get started by helping them connect with solid repeat customers.

A WORD OF ADVICE

Buisman has this advice for students and other young professionals: "When I was in college, I never really knew exactly what I wanted to do ... but I'm always open to trying new things."

So first: "Be open to different opportunities," she says. "Work a job that you thought, 'Hey, maybe I'm not qualified for,' and see what happens anyway."

Second, "Find a good, strong mentor," whether it's through a formal mentorship program or just someone you can connect with who can help you grow. "It helps so much," Buisman says. "Some things you can't just learn in school. A mentor—they're living in it or have lived it, and they can give you that advice on the experience that they had."

So dream big. Take chances. And don't be afraid to move on and try something new—you just might find something you love. **CRW**

Sarah Arendt-Beyer is a writer living in La Crosse.

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CAN'T SLOW DOWN

Shelley Lynne shifts from aviation to transportation and protection in her “retirement.”

BY RHONDA SIEBECKER | CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

Shelley Lynne has a passion for moving people and creating businesses. She is the founder of Talon Protection Agency and Thin Line Outfitters.

Talon Protection Agency started in Holmen serving one sheriff's department and one hospital in 2017.

“Transportation and logistics are in my blood,” Lynne says. “I was getting ready to retire from my dynamic aviation career (as a corporate pilot) and wanted to move back to La Crosse.” The company she had flown with for a decade had been located in Nevada.

She quickly realized retirement was not for her. “When I wanted to retire, which is comical to me now, I figured out rather quickly that my personality needs to be moving,” Lynne says. “I was not ready for that.”

SEEING A NEED

Lynne says she had always looked for opportunities and new ventures and had realized that in La Crosse and surrounding counties, the hospitals, courts, sheriff's offices and police departments were in need of local, secure, professional transport services.

“There wasn't a local company that provided this service,” Lynne says. “And definitely not one that was able to transport 24 hours a day, seven days a week.”



Talon Protection Agency provides security for events in the Coulee Region.

She took a year to do all the research, credentialing and training, then purchased two vehicles and filed for a private detective agency license with the state.

Her original company provided only secure transport; three years ago, it expanded into providing event security and static security for music festivals, parades and apple orchards and private security for corporate and college events.

Talon started out with two employees and has now grown to 62. Lynne says the company still employs the first employee who had been hired for a part-time position. “He is still with Talon today,” she says. “That is what success looks like to me.”

Her other company, Thin Line Outfitters, was formed in June 2022. “It just made sense,” Lynne says, explaining that her second company outfits fire trucks, law enforcement vehicles, ambulances and coroners' vehicles with lights, cages, sirens, brush guards and more. The Talon vehicles needed those elements, too, she says.

MOVING BACK TO GIVE BACK

Lynne says the most important factor in creating these businesses was giving back to the community.

“I always wanted to give back to the one place in this world that made me feel welcomed and like family,” she says. “La Crosse became that for me in 2006. The best way I knew how to do that was to provide what was missing locally, which was the safest, most compassionate secure transport for Wisconsin residents and families. It has been an amazing journey with all of the wonderful, dedicated management team, employees and guards, past and present, that have all been a part of Talon's humble beginnings and have created what Talon is today.” **CRW**

Rhonda Siebecker is a freelance writer and photographer from southwest Wisconsin who loves writing stories that move readers in some way.



Samantha Keck has built a career in real estate in La Crosse and recently opened her own office with RE/MAX teammate Brandon Haugen.

ALWAYS MOVING

Samantha Keck finds a career in helping others find homes and a passion in serving with CASA for Kids.

BY HEIDI GRIMINGER BLANKE | CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

Samantha Keck has been helping people move in and out of houses, as well as supporting her community in moving forward, for most of her adult life. Assisting others has always been her focus. As a teen in New Mexico, her career goal was to be a police officer, but a short stint at a real estate agency turned into a lifelong passion.

ALWAYS LEARNING

While real estate wasn't Keck's intended career, it sent her in a perfect direction. "I was never content doing what I was supposed to do," she says. "I always wanted to learn and do more. Real estate offered me that." The process of coordinating a home sale may be the same, she states, but every transaction is different. Her bubbly personality and relaxed laugh could put anyone at ease.

More than simply selling houses, she and longtime RE/MAX teammate Brandon Haugen assist buyers and sellers in navigating the sales system, always with the client's best interest in mind. "We educate," Keck says. "It's not just about the end deal and closing. There have been times when we've had to tell clients it's not a good move, and that's hard, especially when they're excited."

ALWAYS HELPING

Keck began volunteering in high school.

After graduating college, she was selected for Chileda's Women's Board and hasn't slowed down since, advancing the multiple organizations of which she's been a part. This includes CASA for Kids, the area's Court Appointed Special Advocates program. CASA volunteers are judge-appointed advocates for abused and/or neglected children. The volunteers coordinate with professionals and educators in order to provide the judge with accurate information to make the best decision for the child.

Keck is modest about the awards that have come her way for her dedication and volunteer work. "It was quite an honor to receive them, but it's not something I focus on," she says.

ALWAYS PASSIONATE

Keck was nominated as sitting president for CASA, which transitioned into its own 501(c)(3) status so that funds raised go directly into its programming. She's excited to be part of the first board of directors helping move the organization forward as the number of children needing assistance far outweighs the number of volunteers.

"I take my involvement in CASA to a high degree," Keck says. "I've traveled for conferences and have taken courses in certification for trauma and brain

development. There's so much need out there, and there's not enough resources in our community. It's heartbreaking but important that we share the need and CASA's critical mission to advocate for children," she says.

While children benefit from CASA, Keck says she benefits as well. "Being a CASA volunteer is one of the most rewarding experiences of my life. It's an honor to be a voice for a child who is going through a difficult time," she says. "I know that I'm making a difference in their life, and that's what matters most to me. And I will continue to do everything within my means to continue to bridge the gap of our children's needs versus resources available to them."

ALWAYS GRATEFUL

"A favorite quote I read is: 'Gratitude makes sense of our past, brings peace for today and creates a vision for tomorrow,' and that's why I do my best to always be grateful—small or big," she says. "You get what you put into it." Whether that's business or volunteering, Keck gives it her all. **CRW**

Heidi Griminger Blanke is a La Crosse area writer who encourages readers to learn more about CASA.

Nominate an amazing woman you know for 2024 Mrs. Oktoberfest!

La Crosse Festivals Inc./Oktoberfest is now accepting nominations for Mrs. Oktoberfest

Nominate an amazing woman who is ...

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- >> Able to devote her time to numerous Oktoberfest activities throughout the upcoming year
- >> Living within 20 miles of La Crosse
- >> Married (or has been married)
- >> At least 50 years old
- >> A La Crosse and Oktoberfest enthusiast!



VISIT www.oktoberfestusa.com for the complete nomination information

Nominations will remain active for three years of the original nomination.

All nominations must be received by the Mrs. Oktoberfest Selection Committee no later than **NOON, APRIL 1.**



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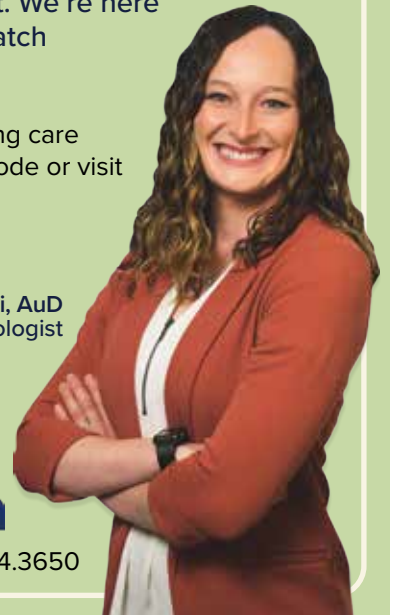
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PICKLEBALL'S POPULARITY PICKS UP

Is the trendiest sport out there the right way for you to get moving this year?

BY LISSA CARLSON | CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS



From left, Eileen Karpfinger, Amanda Mullally, Diane Klos and Corina Turriff celebrate a pickup game of pickleball, quickly becoming one of the most popular social sports in the Coulee Region.

Say it with me, y'all: pickleball! Just as amusing as the name of the game, one of the key shots used in pickleball is known as the "dink," and if you want to volley the ball, you best get out of the "kitchen."

As the whimsical name implies, this is a sport known for its fun-loving and welcoming nature. America's fastest growing sport is also one of its newest, founded in 1965. A combination of tennis, badminton and Ping Pong, it attracts a rapidly growing group seeking a social outlet with health benefits. Pickleball is America's sweetheart sport, serving up more than a 150 percent increase in players since 2020.

Corina Turriff of Onalaska takes a lead role in that increase, having played for the first time in 2020 and advancing to coach status three years later. Turriff is currently the region's only actively practicing Pickleball Coaching International (PCI) coach, certified since June 2022.

When asked why she thinks pickleball enjoys such intense attraction, Turriff says, "It's easy to learn, it's very social and for all ages and abilities, and you can play to a very high level of competition."

WHO'S PLAYING?

Trivia question: Who's playing pickleball? Everyone, it seems? Those who are retirement age and older?

While some may be tempted to relegate pickleball to the senior set, a Washington Post-University of Maryland poll in August 2023 found people 18 to 29 make up the largest group of new players in the last two years.

Case in point, during our interview at Features Fieldhouse in West Salem, a teen volleyball player finishing practice spots Turriff's equipment and asks, "Do you play pickleball?"

"I do," Turriff tells her. "Do you?"

"I do!" she excitedly answers.

Turriff says the camaraderie of pickleball crosses all ages and abilities, making it a great game for families.

PICKLEBALL SPOILSPORTS

Even the criticism of pickleball is apt to prove a little laughable. Attackers of the game say that it's too easy to play (advocates say that's the point), the paddles are too loud (yes, you read correctly), people get injured while playing and the folks who play just can't stop talking about it (How do you know if someone plays pickleball? They keep telling you).

Diane Klos, a physical therapist at Dynamic Performance & Therapy, says pickleball is as much of a workout as you choose to make it. She loves that it's reactive and players exercise their hand/eye coordination, which deteriorates as we age.

Like all sports, pickleball carries the risk of injury. Klos bristles when critics discourage



Diane Klos, left, of Dynamic Performance & Therapy, and certified pickleball coach Corina Turriff are just two of the hundreds of pickleball enthusiasts in the Coulee Region.

playing the game for this reason. “The risk of not moving and not exercising poses more liability than an acute injury,” Klos says. “We should be encouraging movement.”

Just as Klos says pickleball is an individualized workout, Turriff says players decide just how competitively to play. While pickleball is easy to pick up, it’s difficult to master. Turriff has competed in multiple tournaments and continually advances her skills as a player. She suggests new players consider a “ladder” league, which matches players of similar ability and can be helpful in determining where you stand as a player.

PICKLEBALL GOES PRO

As pickleball grows in popularity, outlets grow to accommodate the interest. Features Fieldhouse in West Salem offers indoor pickleball courts and hosted one of the area’s largest tournaments in late January. Indoor courts are also located in Holmen, Onalaska and Winona, with the Blue Zone Pickleball facility expected to open 17 courts in February in Bridgeview Plaza on La Crosse’s North Side.

For those new to pickleball, you can learn all things local about pickleball at www.lacrossepickleball.com, a comprehensive website explaining the rules, where to play and how to find classes, clinics and leagues.

Already a pickleball player looking to improve your game? Turriff advises players to

- practice, practice, practice
- consider camps, including PCI camps offered nationwide
- ask upper-level players for input

In addition, Turriff offers classes and clinics. Learn more on her Facebook page, Dink With Me.

By the end of our interview, a pair of women have also spied the pickleball gear from their place in the bleachers. They introduce themselves to Turriff and Klos, itching to start a game. It’s unsolicited proof of both the social quality of pickleball and its fierce draw for players.

“It’s truly an addictive sport,” Turriff says. “Pickleball is good for the soul.” **CRW**

La Crosse-based writer Lissa Carlson teaches high school English and looks forward to trying the game with the silly name soon.

DON'T GET IN A PICKLE: ADVICE FOR AVOIDING INJURY

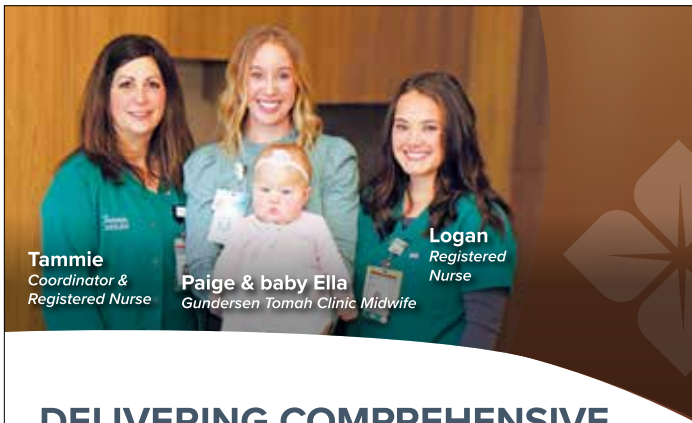
Pickleball places demands on the knees and hips in particular, according to Diane Klos of Dynamic Performance & Therapy. Common injuries for those older than 40 include overuse injuries such as Achilles tendonitis.

Consider these basics from Klos and PCI coach Corina Turriff to avoid injury on the pickleball court:

- Be able to get into a competitive stance so your knees are bent.
- Be able to move side to side and forward and backward safely.
- Work on arm coordination and strength.
- Consider your personal risks (a knee replacement, for instance) and make accommodations.
- Assess the court before you begin playing. Is it wet from rain, for instance?
- Wear a good pickleball court shoe (or indoor volleyball court shoe) and protective eyewear.
- Warm up before playing: jog in place, do lunges/squats and arm circles.

Some physical therapists, including Dynamic Performance & Therapy, offer pre-evaluations for pickleball and other sports and can tell you how to best prepare and protect yourself while playing.





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WELCOME TO BLOOM BEAUTY STUDIO

Amy Richardson welcomes you to Bloom Beauty Studio in Onalaska, located next to Style Encore. After 25 years in the corporate world, Richardson followed her passion and became a licensed aesthetician, opening her studio in August 2023. She is certified in chemical peels, dermaplaning, nano-needling, microcurrent treatments and eyelash extensions. She customizes her facial treatments with all-natural and holistic anti-aging skincare treatments and products, creating plans for everyone’s skin and budget. She also offers facial waxing, eyelash lifts/tints and eyebrow laminations/tints. Richardson would love to see you in her private, modern studio to discuss your skincare goals. Book your first treatment online at <https://vagar.com/bloombeautystudio> and enjoy a 25% discount.



KARA SCHUSTER NAMED WWBIC REGIONAL DIRECTOR

The Wisconsin Women’s Business Initiative Corporation (WWBIC) has announced the hiring of Kara Schuster as the new Southwest Regional Director covering La Crosse and the surrounding area in Wisconsin.

Prior to joining WWBIC, Schuster spearheaded the development of the La Crosse Wellness Center and spent 16 years owning and operating seven Snap Fitness locations. She is also the co-founder of the La Crosse Autism Foundation. She studied sales, marketing and management at Northwest Technical College and Moorhead State University.

Schuster will oversee WWBIC’s business training and financial wellness programs in Crawford, Grant, Iowa, Juneau, La Crosse, Lafayette, Monroe, Richland and Vernon counties.



EMPOWERING WOMEN, HEALING HEARTS

Marcia Newquist, founder of Creative Jewelry by Marcia, embodies the motto “By Women, For Women, Supporting Women,” reflecting her dedication to empowering women through her jewelry designs since 2010. Grateful for her creative pursuit, she gives back annually, donating \$1,000 to New Horizons, an organization aiding domestic violence survivors. In a heartfelt tribute, Newquist crafted the healing heart pendant necklace in their honor. The cut down the middle signifies women’s journey from scars to healing. Each pendant is unique, as are the survivors’ stories. Newquist hand-cuts each healing heart. Her art becomes a powerful expression of support and resilience.



GALIOTO TO LEAD DAIRYLAND’S LEGAL TEAM

Kathleen Galioto has been promoted to Vice President and Deputy General Counsel at Dairyland Power Cooperative, leading Dairyland’s legal and records teams.

Galioto joined Dairyland as Deputy Director of Legal Services in February 2022, with more than 21 years of public and private sector legal experience. She was promoted to Deputy General Counsel in July 2022.

Galioto previously served as Assistant General Counsel and Legal Services Manager for Energy Northwest (Richland, Washington) providing legal counsel in litigation support and management, municipal law, nuclear regulatory compliance, exploration of new nuclear and other business opportunities, facility security/access authorization, environmental regulation, management of public records requests and contract reviews/negotiations.



DAIRYLAND NAMES PEPPIN EVP AND GENERAL COUNSEL

Joyce Peppin has been promoted to Executive Vice President and General Counsel at Dairyland Power Cooperative. She will lead the Office of the General Counsel, a new division that centralizes legislative, communications and economic development; legal and records; and regulatory affairs to support Dairyland’s strategic goals.

Peppin joined Dairyland as Director, Government Relations and Legal Services in August 2021, bringing extensive government affairs, legislative, general and utility counsel experience. She was named Dairyland’s General Counsel in June 2022 and promoted to Vice President and General Counsel in July 2023.

Peppin was previously Director of Government Affairs and General Counsel for the Minnesota Rural Electric Association (MREA).



CHILDREN’S MUSEUM DIRECTOR ANNE SNOW RETIRES

Anne Snow, founder and 27-year executive director of the Gertrude Salzer Gordon Children’s Museum of La Crosse, is retiring as the museum celebrates 25 years of being open to the public in February 2024. Snow guided the museum to a current membership of more than 2,000 families and nearly 80,000 visits annually.

Snow and her family moved to La Crosse in 1996, and soon after she started the museum project. “It was never a job or a career; the museum has been my life,” Snow says. “I’m blessed to have been in a position to meet and work with hundreds of wonderful people.”

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WELCOME

DOUGLAS BILLINGS

Home Show Committee Chair
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On behalf of the La Crosse Area Builders Association, it is with great pleasure that I extend a warm welcome to each and every one of you attending the La Crosse Area Builders Association Home Show! We are thrilled to have you join us for this exciting event dedicated to all things home and lifestyle.

Get ready to immerse yourself in a world of inspiration and innovation as we showcase the latest trends, products and services in home improvement, interior design, landscaping and more. Whether you're a seasoned homeowner, a first-time buyer or simply passionate about creating a space that reflects your style and personality, this show has something special for everyone.

You can expect to explore a diverse range of exhibitor booths featuring top-notch products and services to enhance your home, as well as experience hands-on demonstrations and interactive displays that will spark your creativity. And of course, you can connect with fellow homeowners, professionals and enthusiasts who share your passion for creating beautiful living spaces.

Check out our schedule of events to make the most of your time at the show:

Friday, March 22, 4-8 p.m.: Date Night
Saturday, March 23, 10 a.m.-4 p.m.: Community Day
Sunday, March 24, 10 a.m.-3 p.m.: Family Day

We want to ensure that your experience at the Home Show is nothing short of fantastic. If you have any questions or need assistance during the event, our friendly staff and volunteers will be readily available to help.

Thank you for choosing to be a part of this incredible event. We look forward to seeing you at the LABA Home Show and hope you leave with inspiration and ideas to transform your living spaces.

Welcome home to the world of possibilities!

Douglas Billings
Home Show Committee Chair



ALEX GOODMAN

LABA President
Wisconsin Building Supply, Inc.

Welcome to the 2024 Home Show! Your host is the La Crosse Area Builders Association (LABA). We are a group of dedicated professionals banding together to promote professionalism within the building industry, which we do through community projects like Parade of Homes, Build My

Future, Tools for Schools and our annual Home Show. This event in particular gives us the opportunity to meet and talk with you, our local homeowners, and share with you what we know best: our expertise in building, remodeling, landscaping and every trade involved in those, from plumbing to HVAC, foundations to finishing details.

Each spring, the Omni Center provides us with a premier two-arena location to host the Coulee Region's only Home Show, offering you an opportunity like no other to connect with the building experts in our area. Over the years, the internet has really become a source for product education, but it can't replace the face-to-face opportunity our Home Show provides. Today's consumer can combine their online research with actual conversations with and testimonials from the people who represent and install that product. With all these professionals gathered in one place, it's easy to connect with a quality professional who can serve you on your next project.

Thank you so much for your attendance at this year's LABA Home Show. We can't wait to see you out and about in our beautiful community.

Alex Goodman
LABA President

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The La Crosse Area Builders Association is a professional organization that unites and represents people in the building industry. We promote safe, attainable, quality housing through education and interaction.

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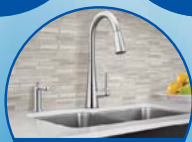
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Best Bets for Happy Pets

Pet amenities top the list for homeowners with four-legged family members.

There are several ways you can show your pet how much they mean to you by incorporating pet-centered design elements into your home. Many features will not only cater to your pet's lifestyle, but they also can enhance your home's appearance and add to its value. Whether you're looking to buy a new home, remodel your existing home or just need some inspiration for how to use your current space, here are a few ideas to get started.

Pet-friendly features

The National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) surveyed new and prospective home buyers about various home features and preferences, including pet-related ones. The survey found that pet-friendly communities and neighborhood amenities (like dog parks and proximity to vet services or pet-friendly businesses) can influence home-buying decisions. Many pet owners also prioritize homes with fenced yards, providing a safe space for their pets to roam freely. Owners also seek pet-friendly landscaping, such as a well-maintained lawn or a garden.

Improving comfort and convenience

Designing areas within your home where your pet can eat, sleep and bathe tells them that they are just as much a member of the family as everyone else. And having these dedicated locations can also help reduce the amount of time you spend cleaning up after your pet.

- **Built-in eating areas** are among the most popular designs concepts for homeowners with pets. Beneath the kitchen counter, under an island or within a pull-out drawer are all great options to help save space and minimize spills.
- **Custom nooks** provide your pet with a quiet retreat to nap or play. Look for opportunities to incorporate these nooks beneath bay windows, or convert a cluttered crawl space beneath stairs into your pet's private refuge.

- **Pet-washing stations** in laundry/mud rooms can significantly improve the cleanliness of your home. An enclosed tiled area with an extended faucet can be used to give your pet a full bath or simply to clean paws after a romp in the outdoors.

Selecting the right flooring

With the appropriate flooring, both you and your pet can live amicably without pointing fingers (or paws) at one another whenever a new scratch or a spill is discovered. Flooring options today are seemingly endless, and each type comes with varying levels of durability, so you'll want to do your research as well as consult with a professional before making the investment.

- **Bamboo** flooring is becoming increasingly popular, especially among pet owners, for its hardness and resistance to stains. And for those who are trying to be green, both bamboo and cork flooring are also good for the environment.
- **Hardwood** floors have long been among the most desirable options, though many different types of wood and finishes are highly prone to showing wear over time.
- **Laminate, stone and tile** floors might not be your best option if your pet's comfort is a top priority. While they are much more durable and typically resist scratches better than other flooring, some pets will find them to be uncomfortably hard and exceedingly slippery.

To find a home builder, remodeler or designer that can help you make the best home design choices for your pets, attend the Home Show, contact LABA at 608-781-5242 or info@labaonline.com, or visit LABA on the web at www.labaonline.com.



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About La Crosse Area Builders Association (LABA)

The La Crosse Area Builders Association is a non-profit trade organization in Western Wisconsin.

Our goal is to educate our members and advocate for attainable housing and responsible government.




What can LABA do for you?

- Help you find the right person to complete your home project.
- Host popular events throughout the year (Home Show, Parade of Homes, Build My Future, Cabin Fever and more).
- Watch out for industry changes that can affect home building and remodeling.

LABA members are committed to providing consumers with exceptional services, quality products and materials available.

To find builders, electricians, plumbers, roofers and more, visit our Online Member Directory for free at the website below.

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Spring into Spring Cleaning

Follow these tips to get your house ready for warm weather.

Ah, spring! It's the time of year we long for a refresh, which also means a good spring cleaning. Tackle your house from top to bottom with these tips.

There are several home maintenance activities you can tackle to prep for the season. Inspecting and cleaning your home during the transitional months makes any household's future repair easier to manage. And by dedicating just a few days to completing these simple tasks, you will keep your home running smoothly and protect your investment at the same time. To get started, here are five ideas to help you spruce up your home for spring.

1. Refresh your windows

As the weather gets warmer, it's vital to ensure your windows are in good working condition. First, inspect all windows for proper operation and a tight fit. To start, clean the window tracks. If you have window screens, gently wash them with soapy water. Next, check that the weather stripping hasn't cracked or torn. You can help reduce your energy bills by preventing unwanted outside air from leaking into your home.

2. Schedule an air conditioning tune-up

Have your air conditioning system inspected and cleaned. If your system has a filter, replace it. A good rule of thumb is to have your air filter replaced every three months to keep your unit working efficiently. If your air conditioner is in good shape, consider other

ways to keep your home cool as the weather turns warmer, like adding curtains, shades or blinds to windows.

3. Prepare for unwanted pests

Warmer weather also means that pests—including ants, roaches, mice and termites—will be looking to join your household. Keep them out by sealing cracks and openings along baseboards, behind sinks and around pipes and windows. And repair holes in door and window screens to prevent outside pests from entering your home.

4. Inspect your roof

Severe weather can take a toll on your roof. Experts recommend checking your roof for any signs of winter damage from heavy snowfall or debris. Remember to take special care when using a ladder to inspect your roof (more on that later). Read and follow directions carefully.

5. Clean your gutters

Long winters bring a mix of storms and heavy winds that can carry a lot of debris to your gutters. Debris, leaves and other twigs clog up your gutters and downspouts. Your home is susceptible to interior or exterior water damage without a regular cleanup.

For more information on home maintenance, visit nahb.org/forconsumers.

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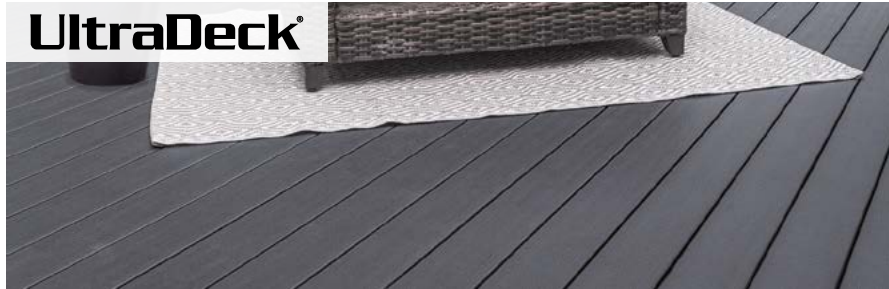
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GOOD LOOKING?



As time passes, a person's focus often changes. Hopefully for the better. There was a time when the phrase "good looking" brought to mind personal appearance. Do the gals think I'm handsome (or do the guys think I'm beautiful)? As a kid, I remember my dad "singing" to my mom "hey good lookin', what ya got cookin'?"

While I guess I still hope folks have a flattering impression of my aging exterior, "good looking" has taken on a different meaning. It's more about the view of the things around me than my view of myself. You can probably identify. Watching my twin (identical) grandsons...that's "good looking." Sitting on the dock watching the loon floating in the reflected landscape on the still water, gazing at the sunlight reflected from the blazing fall colors on a Wisconsin hillside, a cardinal in sparkly new fallen snow, that serene face of a sleeping newborn...that is good looking. Seeing the face of my quietly resting love as I slip from bed in the early hours of morning—so sweet to see—to look at. (And yes, she's still as "good looking" to me as when we met.)

This does bring me to a commercial message and how "good looking" relates to new windows for your home. New windows will make your home good looking in the sense that the exterior of your home is much more attractive—beautiful even. They also offer you "good looking," as you look out at the world. A clear view. If the windows get dirty, as windows often do in time, you can clean them so quickly and easily it hardly seems like work. Zippity, zap—clean glass is back. Replacement windows are great to look at and to look out.

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YOUR HOME REMODEL PLANNING GUIDE

Top 10 tips to create a space you will enjoy for years to come.

BY MICHELLE BYOM | CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

Considering a home remodel? Look no further. Here, four kitchen and bath designers at The Board Store Home Improvements share their top tips to help homeowners navigate important decisions and details to make their newly designed and remodeled spaces stylish, functional and coordinated with the home's original style.

RESEARCH FIRST

1 Set a budget. The Board Store designers suggest homeowners talk with contractors and designers to get a handle on the full scope of their project, including labor. Budget can be impacted by aspects of the home that are literally hidden, such as asbestos that needs removing from the subfloors of older homes. "Think about how you will pay for your project and whether you need financing," Anna Krause suggests.

When talking budget, the home's value should be considered. Ashlynn Senn says, "A rule of thumb is that homeowners can expect to spend a percentage of their home's value." Designer Kami Evans adds that do-it-yourself television shows have a tendency to make the process look easy. "They have their own work crews," she says. "In reality, a homeowner can realistically plan for labor to be a significant part of the total cost of the project."

2 Consider the contractor's experience.

Work that is unfinished or not done well can result in costly frustrations for homeowners. Ask questions even if the contractor comes recommended and is known for their integrity and quality. "It is still important to ask questions," Krause says. "Find out whether the contractor is insured. Make sure you feel you can trust them, that your contractor has your best interest in mind and that they are listening and building a relationship."

3 Understand the end goal.

Consider how the space is currently used and how its use might change after the remodel. This can impact the layout, design, features, materials, finishes and accessories one chooses.

4 Determine if this is a forever home.

"How long will you live in your home?" Krause asks. "If your answer is more than

two years, and you plan on aging in place here, then don't try to guess what the next buyer wants. Do what you love," she emphasizes.

Brandy Nohrenberg, a designer with 10 years' experience at The Board Store, echoes the importance of a homeowner remodeling to fit their needs and wants. "One common question we receive is whether a bathtub can be replaced with a shower," she says. "People tend to ask what a future homeowner might prefer. They really should do what they want to do."

DIG INTO THE DETAILS

5 Examine what permits are needed.

"We recommend that a homeowner research to understand what permits are needed and how that affects the scope of the job," Evans says. For example, if plumbing will be moved, a specific permit is required. If additional electrical outlets are added, the entire electrical panel might need an update as well. "Homeowners should ask whether their contractor is pulling the permits," she explains.



According to designers with The Board Store in La Crosse, current trends in remodeling include adding deep drawers in kitchens and open storage in bathroom vanities.

6 Look into licenses. “Do the people who are doing the electrical, plumbing or heating and cooling have a contractor’s license?” Nohrenberg asks. “Are they insured? A license ensures the work is guaranteed and up to code.”

PRIORITIZE YOUR WISHES

7 Think about needs versus wishes. The designers agree that homeowners should ask themselves what they need from the renovated space and what they wish for. This is helpful when it comes to the budget and making decisions based on priorities and the features within the project.

8 Find inspiration before starting. Senn finds that the remodel process goes more smoothly for her clients when they find their inspiration before meeting with contractors. “For some people, the planning and dreaming process is fun, but for others, not so much,” she says. She suggests homeowners talk with friends, create vision boards on Pinterest and attend home shows to create a general idea of what they want. Evans elaborates: “There

are often many more decisions to make than what one thinks, from everything like light switch covers to grout colors.”

9 Think timeless instead of trends. “Keep in mind the age and style of your home, rather than what’s most popular right now, so that the new blends in well,” Senn says.

“Make your home more timeless instead of on-trend,” Nohrenberg advises.

10 Work with the features that are staying in the space, not against them. All of The Board Store designers agree that homeowners can easily overlook the features that are staying in the space or those that are difficult to change due to the flow throughout the space. For instance, window trim can be hard to change. “Rather than winding up changing it throughout the entire house, choose flooring or a counter that ties it all together,” Krause says. “A white counter with a ribbon of gold or brown is one example.” **CRW**

Michelle Byom lives in Holmen and dreams of creating her dream kitchen.

TAKING NOTE OF TODAY’S STYLES AND TRENDS

Gather in the Kitchen

- Deep drawers and rollout trays to help with organizing and accessing kitchenware easily
- Accessories like spice cabinets and stand mixer lifts
- Workstation sinks equipped with a strainer, cutting board and drainer board
- Cabinets extended to the ceiling that provide additional storage and are easier to dust
- Trash and recycling cabinets with a section for composting

Peek Inside Our Bathrooms

- Furniture cabinets and vanities with legs
- Open storage
- Taller toilets
- Attractive grab bars compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act
- Walk-in showers
- Freestanding tubs
- Technology features including bluetooth exhaust fans, shower heads and mirrors

Coulee Region Favorites

- Warm colors and trim
- Flooring that is warm and withstands kid and pet traffic
- Luxury vinyl plank (LVP) or luxury vinyl tile (LVT) instead of carpet
- Wood accents and natural textures
- Earth tones for paint



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-Rachel Jepson Wolf

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THE SWEET TASTE OF SUCCESS

With Valley Fudge and Candy, Linda Schulte proves that life is like a box of chocolate—and 70+ other flavors.

BY DIANE BREESER | CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS



Linda and Steve Schulte returned to the Coulee Region looking to slow down and catch up. Steve’s job with Whole Foods kept them moving every few years, but in 2016 the couple settled in Coon Valley, prepared for a change of pace.

“I was ready to retire from corporate life, and that’s what I did—until I wanted to participate in a local craft show,” Linda recalls. “I had one problem, however. I am not very craft-able!”

Luckily, “Steve suggested we make some fudge to sell, and, reluctantly, I decided to give it a try,” she says.

Using a recipe “from what I remember my grandma bringing to our family Christmas celebrations when I was a little girl,” Linda’s fudge was a hit at the craft show and sold extremely well. The calls for more fudge were loud and clear. That got the self-described serial entrepreneur thinking—again.

MOVING AND IMPROVING

While Steve’s career had the Schultes living in major cities like Atlanta and Pittsburgh, Linda discovered that finding work in her field wasn’t easy. Initially trained in medical records, she learned to reinvent herself in corporate housing, real estate, boutique retail and a cleaning business.

But in Coon Valley, Linda embraced a new opportunity with the unexpected triumph of her craft show fudge. A local restaurant shared their kitchen space until Linda found her own commercial kitchen. The fudge industry was hot!

Retirement was in the rearview mirror by now. Linda obtained a 1,000-square-foot manufacturing facility at 219 Central Avenue. Valley Fudge and Candy had a storefront, a growing production line, loyal customers and a website. It was early 2020; what could go wrong?

FROM STICKY TO SWEET

Covid-19 spread over the world, along with the fear of an unknown future. “I remember being more than a little concerned that a big expansion right at the start of the pandemic might not be a smart thing to do,” Linda says. “But just the opposite: everyone turned to online shopping.”

People ordered basics like toilet paper on the internet, but they also turned to comfort foods. Online sales were so strong that spring that the Valley Fudge and Candy website crashed, and a larger server was installed.



THINKING OUTSIDE THE (CHOCOLATE) BOX

Valley Fudge and Candy makes more than 70 flavors of fudge. Best sellers include Peanut Butter Chocolate and Dark Chocolate Caramel Sea Salt. Lemon Lavender, Caramel Turtle Cheesecake and Door County Cherry are among non-chocolate favorites; seasonal choices include White Chocolate Cranberry, Key Lime and Caramel Apple.

Some new flavors work and others don't. "We tried to make Orange Fig, but we just couldn't get it to look good enough to sell," Linda admits, then laughs over a surprise success. "A store in Milwaukee asked us to create a Dill Pickle fudge for them," which is quite popular here, too.

Linda, who is originally from Viroqua, uses local and regional sources when possible: cherries

from Door County, maple syrup and honey from Vernon County, lavender from Washington Island, nuts roasted in Milwaukee, boxes made in Fort Atkinson and recyclable plastic containers fabricated in Lancaster.

The butter is exclusively from the Westby Cooperative Creamery. Linda drives her car up to the dock, parking next to the semi trucks to pick up the weekly load.

MORE TO LOVE

With a strong community presence, 20 employees and increasing mail-order sales, Linda is preparing for another move: one block down the street. The new space, three times the size of their current one, will contain a larger retail store, coffee shop and ice cream soda fountain. Linda foresees hiring more staff, too.

Linda credits her employees who helped get Valley Fudge and Candy through it all. "We are so fortunate to have an amazing group of people on our team. If there is anything left to do, they are determined to finish it before

they quit for the day," she says. Hence their motto: "No Fudge Left Behind!"

Still, she recognizes that the product speaks for itself. "We love making people happy, and it's pretty easy to do that with chocolate!"

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“Being able to support our community and help Coon Valley grow is one of the best perks of owning a business,” she says.

Linda is quick to praise everything from delivery drivers to packaging improvements for Valley Fudge and Candy’s success.

But the partnership of its owners is at the heart of it all.

“The person who encourages me and truly pushes the envelope is my husband, Steve,” declares Linda. “This guy has endless energy and is full of crazy ideas! We have so much fun at the store, it really doesn’t feel like work.” **CRW**

Diane Breeser is a local writer and actor who enjoys fudge. Lots of research went into this article because she is all about dedication—and willing to do fudge commercials. Contact her at dbreesr@gmail.com.

ADDITIONAL INFO FOR WINTRY WARM-UPS

from Linda Schulte, CFO
(Certified Fudge-Ologist) at
Valley Fudge and Candy

- Valley Fudge and Candy’s most popular Valentine’s Day flavor is Dark Chocolate Raspberry Truffle.
- Several area wineries buy Dark Chocolate Fudge for sale and desserts.
- Seasonally, the company makes a Strawberry Champagne fudge that pairs well with white wines.
- Fudge makes a great coffee creamer, too!

FILMS & FUDGE: A GUIDE TO ROMANTIC PAIRINGS



1. CASABLANCA (1942): CHOCOLATE

“A longtime favorite and a smooth, classic creation.” Whether you choose to go with nuts or not, it’s the start of a beautiful friendship.



2. GONE WITH THE WIND (1939): DARK CHOCOLATE RASPBERRY TRUFFLE

“Tangy and sweet raspberry fudge covered with decadent Dark Chocolate.” Scarlett + Rhett = drama/romance!



3. PRIDE AND PREJUDICE (1940): MINT CHOCOLATE SWIRL

“A match made in heaven! This marvelous minty masterpiece is ready to leave you dazzled.” Dark and dashing finds an equal in bold and beautiful.



4. SENSE AND SENSIBILITY (1995): LEMON LAVENDER

“Tangy lemon with the perfect hint of lavender; flavorful in taste but beautiful in sight. What’s not to love about this signature creation?” Down to earth, with a daring twist.



5. SLEEPLESS IN SEATTLE (1993): MUDSLIDE

“Coffee, Irish Cream and incredibly creamy fudge blended together.” When these flavors meet, you’ll cry with joy.



6. WHEN HARRY MET SALLY (1989): ROCKY ROAD

“One road you will want to travel down again & again: creamy chocolate, fluffy marshmallow and walnuts.” Everyone will want to have what you’re having.



7. TITANIC (1997): DARK CHOCOLATE CARAMEL SEA SALT

“This show-stopper is a decadent, dark chocolate laced with sweet caramel and sprinkled with the perfect touch of sea salt. Divine.” Your heart will go on once you sink your taste buds into this creation.



8. MOONSTRUCK (1987): PISTACHIO NUT

“Sweet and creamy vanilla fudge loaded with pistachios. Sure to satisfy your craving for sweet AND salty!” You’ll fall in love, and there’s no snapping out of it.



9. DIRTY DANCING (1987): CHERRY LEMONADE (SEASONAL)

“Like sipping on summertime; a combination of sweet and sour, sure to make you smile.” No one puts this baby in a corner!



10. BEAUTY AND THE BEAST (1991): FOREST BERRY (SEASONAL)

“Bilberries, black currants and raspberries create an enchanting confection. This exquisite treat is a harmonious symphony.” Magical.



11. PILLOW TALK (1959): COOKIES AND CREAM

“The ultimate dream team! Creamy vanilla fudge with real Oreo cookies creates this customer favorite.” The attraction is unmistakable in this major hit.



12. A STAR IS BORN (1937, 1954, 1976, 2018): DILL PICKLE

“Pickle lovers go crazy for this extra-fun fudge! Made to perfection.” This original puts a fresh spin on an old taste. A new and popular favorite.



13. BRIDESMAIDS (2011): STRAWBERRY CHAMPAGNE (SEASONAL)

“Let’s toast this special sweetness! Strawberry fudge with a champagne-inspired flavor topped with a dusting of sparkling sugar.” Ready to paaarr-ty!



14. THE PRINCESS BRIDE (1987): COCONUT CREAM

“Prepare your taste buds: Dark chocolate with a creamy coconut top layer forms perfect goodness. Sure to bring you joy!” Just as you wish.

AROUND THE WORLD AND BACK

International performers Jack and Kitty Norton settle in Winona following years of adventures.

BY JULIE NELSON | CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS



Fueled by a love of adventure and careers as musicians, current Winona residents Jack and Kitty Norton are constantly on the move. They've lived throughout Minnesota and in places such as Las Vegas, Los Angeles, Nashville, New York and Paris. They claim to have visited every town in Minnesota, have performed in every state except Alaska and Maine and have traveled to 35 different countries. When Charlie Berens says “Keep ‘er movin’,” they do.

BORN TO PERFORM

Interesting backstory: Kitty spent her childhood going from Minneapolis to Jamaica, where she picked up some musical influence from her uncle Bunny Wailer, a member of reggae legend Bob Marley's group.

Jack also grew up with superstar musicians in his life, including his babysitter, Tiny Tim, and his guitar teacher, Leon Redbone.

Kitty and Jack met at an arts high school in Golden Valley, Minnesota, and quickly recognized their connection went far



Veteran entertainers—and movers—Kitty and Jack Norton have chosen Winona as a home base for their next adventure: creating a travel blog and podcast.

beyond music. They married shortly after graduating and have been looking forward ever since.

They spent about five years traveling the Midwest as a folksy-bluegrass-reggae duo. Their careers took a big turn when they moved to Nashville and created and starred in a preschool television show for PBS Kids. The show won an Emmy and was aired on more than 100 PBS stations nationwide and in 195 countries around the world. They ran five sets of global touring companies (akin to Sesame Street Live), and Jack became an expert at finding hotel deals and coordinating logistics for

the cast and crew. It was this expertise that led them to their current career as travel bloggers and podcasters.

Perhaps as no surprise to all who love the Coulee Region, Jack and Kitty found that after traveling the country and the world, their hearts lie in Minnesota. They love their home in Winona and base many of their podcasts on places that will make you want to cross the river to shop, explore and visit.

THEY KNOW HOW TO MOVE

When it comes to picking up stakes and moving, the two have become experts on that, as well. We asked Kitty for her tips on making the process as successful and practical as possible.

When researching to determine where in the new city to live, “I try to find a central hub, meaning a place that has a lot of accessibility to the essentials: public transportation, shops, grocery stores, pharmacies, etc. Then I pick between the central hubs based on the neighborhoods.” She looks for coffee shops, green spaces and relative safety.

When packing, Kitty operates under the maxim that less is more. “When moving abroad, Jack and I focus on minimalism. We once traveled across Europe for two months with just a backpack and a laptop each! We choose furnished short-term rentals and pack light—a few pairs of pants, shirts, a jacket, comfy shoes and versatile accessories like a scarf.”

Pro tip: Keep digital copies of important documents in the cloud for easy access (and less luggage).

When moving domestically, Kitty categorizes her plan into four parts:

1. **My Junk:** What can you ditch that’s no longer needed? If it hasn’t been used in six months, it’s time to let it go.
2. **My Possessions:** These are the essentials I’ll pack into the moving truck. Beds, mattresses and a couch fall into this category. Labeling boxes clearly with their destined room makes the move efficient, whether you’re doing it alone or with movers.
3. **My Services:** Set up wi-fi, electricity and other essential services before you move. And in case internet setup doesn’t happen as planned, keep a document handy with contact info for all your new service providers.
4. **My Person:** Prepare for the unexpected by keeping personal essentials within reach: a few extra days of clothing, phone charger, medications and a list of important contacts.

Kitty says the relocation process and exploring the city is only part of the adventure. “Making friends is essential, whether you’re in a city for a week or a decade! You know that old quote, “There are no strangers here; only friends you haven’t yet met”? I live by this idea,” she says.

Her final piece of advice: Approach every adventure with a sense of humor. “Remember, anything that goes wrong becomes a funny story to share with friends at future dinner parties.” **CRW**

Julie Nelson is a regular contributor to Coulee Region Women. Though moving as much as the Nortons has sounds like a bit much to Julie, she would love to hear the stories at a dinner party!

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50 YEARS BEHIND THE WHEEL

Bonnie Kortbein moves generations of West Salem students and creates a lasting impression.

BY JOAN KENT | CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS



A young girl climbed the steps of West Salem School Bus 16 and handed driver Bonnie Kortbein a paper titled “My Friendly Letter.”

“You are the best bus driver ever,” it read. “You keep us safe. I like you as a bus driver. When people are not following the rules, I try to tell them to follow the rules.”

Kortbein, who has been driving bus for West Salem schools for 50 years, really likes the kids, and many of the students who’ve ridden with her like and respect her. She’s sweet. But she commands respect from students and colleagues alike.

SOMETIMES ROCKY ROADS

When Kortbein started driving school bus, she and a neighbor were the only female drivers for about five years. When asked if the guys gave her trouble, she replies, “Of course. But I gave it right back to them. On a trip to a boys’ team sporting event some years ago, a coach remarked he believed a woman’s place is in the home. I said, ‘Anytime you don’t want to ride with me, I’ll open the door and you can get out.’ It was very cold that day, and he didn’t say any more.”

Growing up on a farm, Kortbein had driven horses and tractors with big loads of hay, so driving bus wasn’t a problem, though it was harder when buses had stick shift transmissions, drivers had to shut the door manually and there were no two-way radios or cell phones.

If a bus breaks down, the district often sends another bus to pick up the students. Kortbein recalls one time when she had to

walk to a farmhouse to report a breakdown. “They put the kids on another bus, but I had to stay with the bus. A Vernon County cop took me to that county line, and then a Monroe County cop took me to the La Crosse County line. That cop told me to put my seat belt on because if he got a call we’d be moving. I thought, ‘Oh, dear, just let me get home.’ It was about 2:30 a.m. when I did.”

FULL DAYS, FULL HEART

Now she drives a 4K route in addition to her regular K-12 route, starting at 6:30 a.m. and returning at 4:30 p.m.

Kortbein knows how to handle rowdy riders. “You always get some who will test you,” she says, recalling two such. “I said, ‘If you want to wrestle, go outside, and if you want to wrestle someone your size, wrestle with me. But guess what, I bet I’ll win.’ They got the biggest kick out of that.”

One of Kortbein’s prized possessions is a letter from a student she drove about 30 years ago. “I have often thought about you over the years,” it reads. “I want to say thank you from the bottom of my heart. You were one of the only adults that stood up for me when I was bullied at school on a daily basis. I never will forget how you stopped the bus to address my bully. Your actions that day have had a lasting impact on my life.” **CRW**

Joan Kent is a retired journalist who lives in La Farge with her husband and two cats and walks in the Kickapoo Valley Reserve.

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FRONTIER PHOTOGRAPHY



MOVE IN *Style*

**From activewear to athleisure,
there's a look to match your moves.**

BY ELISE WEINBENDER
PHOTOS BY FRONTIER PHOTOGRAPHY

This spring, get inspired for movement with an outfit that makes you look and feel your best. Discover activewear pieces designed for comfort and confidence at local boutiques.

BRING YOUR A-GAME

Add a fun twist to preppy-sporty style with a brightly colored skort and matching ruffled tank from Mainstream Boutique. Complete the look with sparkly bracelets, earrings and sneakers, and you'll be ready to swing in style for your next pickleball game.

Lulu-B top, \$64; Lulu-B skort, \$76; Corkys Sneaker, \$72; bracelets, \$28; necklace, \$39; earrings, \$22.

Modeled by Caylee Beyer.



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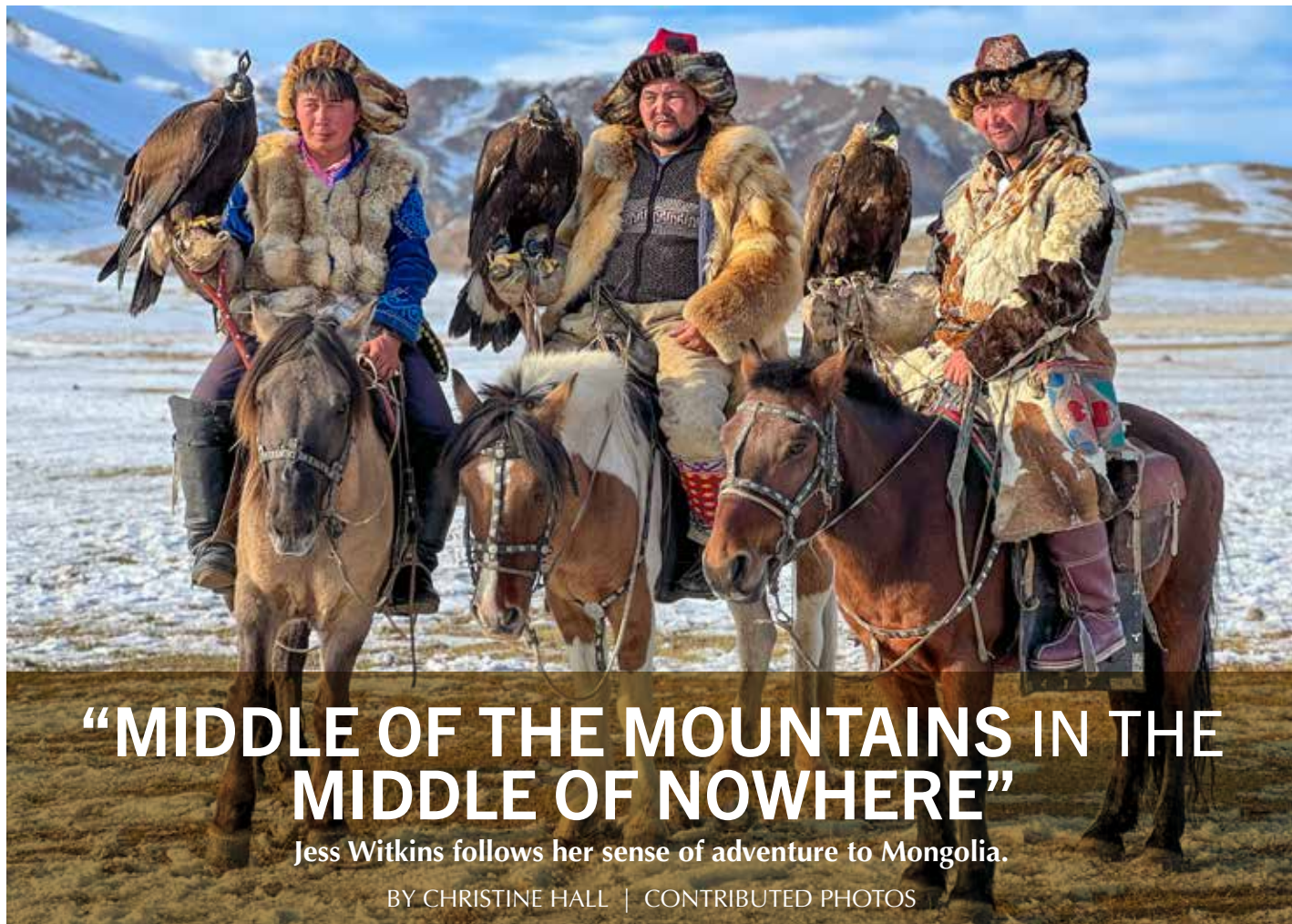
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“MIDDLE OF THE MOUNTAINS IN THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE”

Jess Witkins follows her sense of adventure to Mongolia.

BY CHRISTINE HALL | CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

Jess Witkins' trip to Mongolia in 2023 was centered around the Golden Eagle Festival, which included competition among hunters using traditional methods of hunting game on horseback with eagles.

There are travelers who want “just a vacation”—a cruise, a beach, a resort where everything caters to you. And then there are travelers who want an experience that takes you somewhere the average person doesn't go and connects you with the local culture. Jess Witkins is one of these travelers, visiting Mongolia in 2023 to experience the Golden Eagle Festival, held in the Bayan-Ulgii Province in the western part of the country. As she puts it, “It was in the middle of the mountains in the middle of nowhere.”

Witkins had traveled previously with a group called the Solo Female Traveler Network to Egypt and Lebanon, but when she saw that this group was hosting its first-ever trip to Mongolia for the two-day festival, she jumped at the chance and ventured to Ulaanbatar, the capital of Mongolia, to meet up with the other solo female travelers.

CELEBRATING THE GOLDEN EAGLE

This area of Mongolia is in the western part of the country, sandwiched between Russia to the north and China to the south. The province is about 800 miles from the capital city in the Altai Mountains, which rise up where Mongolia, Russia, Kazakhstan and China converge. It is home to the Kazakhs, a population of about 100,000 people.

The Golden Eagle Festival marks the start of the eagle hunting season in Mongolia. The season was adopted hundreds of years ago because the prey that is being hunted has the best fur in the winter months. The festival, a somewhat recent development of the sport, kicks the hunting season off in late September or early October. Eagle hunting by the Kazakhs, the nomadic tribal people of western Mongolia, is an ancient sport that dates back as far as 6,000 years ago. It was outlawed by the Chinese for a time until the democratization in Mongolia two decades ago.

Witkins first heard about the Golden Eagle Festival from *The Eagle Huntress*, a documentary

produced in 2016 about the remarkable tradition and the winner of the 2014 festival, a young teenage girl named Aisholpan Nurgaiv. This gained international attention and made the Altai Kazakh culture available to the masses. It is estimated that over a thousand international guests observed the festival last year.

IMMERSIVE EXPERIENCE

Adjacent to the festival was a ger camp (a ger is similar to a yurt) where attendees and competitors could shop locally made items and order food. Mutton was the most common, served with sea buckthorn tea, or vodka if you needed help warming up in the mountains. At the festival, the group would hike out to the arena, where 145 competitors, all of them men except for one 13-year-old girl, competed in rounds of games for eagle calling and hunting, horseback riding, archery and tug-of-war.

The eagle hunters were judged on how quickly their bird responded to their call, as well as how fast it caught a moving target,



Jess Witkins (in the blue coat next to the horse) and her fellow adventurers with the Solo Female Traveler Network had the opportunity to see 13-year-old Ay Moldir Daiynbeck win the competition at the Golden Eagle Festival in Mongolia. The entire trip allowed Witkins and her group to immerse themselves in the local culture and make global and personal connections.

such as a piece of meat, while the eagle hunters rode around the arena on horseback. During the competition, the eagles were with another friend or family member high up on the mountain, so the capability of the competitor depended on how strong their voice was and how in tune they were with their eagle and horse.

Toward the end of the eagle hunting competition, only 20 made it into the final round. This year's thrilling win was by that 13-year-old girl: Ay Moldir Daiynbek.

The eagles used are the golden eagle (*Aquila Chrysaetos*) species found wild in this area of Mongolia. Eagle and hunter train for years, even staying together in the same living quarters. Female eagles, which are larger and stronger, are almost always used in the hunt. They have a lifespan of 20 to 30 years. Once the eagle has grown to around 15 pounds, the hunter takes it out on horseback into the mountains where it learns to find prey—usually a rabbit or fox. The truly great eagle hunters can take down a wolf.

The horse must be highly trained also. Mongolian horses are supposedly a breed that is largely unchanged since the time of Genghis Khan, the first ruler of the Mongol Empire from 1206 to 1227. The horses are small but sturdy and have stamina with the ability to perform in extreme conditions. The eagle, the horse and the hunter must execute and rely upon each other for a perfect hunt. To see the competitors perform is to see an ancient tradition come to life.

TRAVEL FOR THE ADVENTUROUS AND OPEN-MINDED

After the festival, Witkins and her group continued to tour Mongolia, staying both in hotels and in a ger camp in Terelj National Park. They attended family dinners with both a Kazakh family and a Mongolian family, listened to international throat singers, watched Mongolian wrestling live and toured the Genghis Khan equestrian statue and historical site, which is considered to be the largest horse-riding statue in the world.



What does a person need to go on an adventure like this? For starters, flexibility to adjust expectations to fit with the activity or the custom. "A person needs to have a sense of adventure and should also want to observe

a culture in their traditional world, not having them adapt to you," Witkins says.

She says that visiting the Kazakhs in their homes and receiving such a warm welcome was a great reminder of what community is. "It's not hyper-sanitized" like some expect on a vacation, she notes. "This was so striking, in particular coming through Covid. It stood out and felt like a reminder of how things used to be when we gathered freely and held community with one another."



Witkins says that Kazakh culture is becoming more westernized with the introduction of this festival 20 years ago. Activities like sponsorships are making the games more competitive, while the introduction of drones to the festival distracted the horses and the eagles.

Witkins said the Solo Female Traveler Network plans to repeat this tour next year since it was so well received. Authentic experiences like this are found all over the world, waiting for you to encounter. When you are warmly welcomed into another culture, it makes the world a smaller, better place. It's just what we all need right now. **CRW**

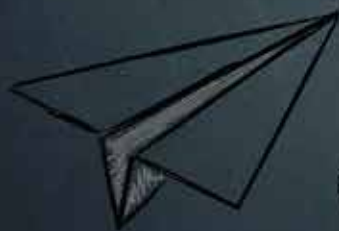
Christine Hall loves travel that gets her involved with the local culture, and she is seriously considering joining the group for next year's Golden Eagle Festival.

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ONGOING EVENTS

American Association of University Women

(AAUW) 2nd Sat. (Sept.-May), 9:30 a.m.,
aauwlacrosse@hotmail.com, aauw-wi.org.

CheezLand Uke Band, Wed., 6-8 p.m., Moose Lodge, 1932 Ward Ave., cheezland.info@gmail.com, www.cheezlandukeband.com.

Coulee Country Embroiderers Chapter of EGA 2nd Mon. (Sept.-June), 9:30 a.m. and 6:30 p.m., Our Redeemer Parish Hall, La Crosse, <https://tinyurl.com/egacc>.

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

Holmen Area Rotary Club, Wed., 7 a.m., Holmen Community Center, holmenrotary@outlook.com.

La Crosse Area Genealogical Society 4th Tues. (Sept.-May), 6-7:30 p.m., La Crosse Public Library, lacsroseags@gmail.com.

La Crosse Area Quilters 4th Tues., 6:30 p.m., Stoney Creek Hotel-Conference Center, Onalaska, www.lacsroseareaquilters.org.

La Crosse-Bantry Friendship Association 4th Wed., 5:30 p.m., La Crosse Eagles Club, www.lacsrosebantry.org

La Crosse Christian Women's Connection 2nd Tues., 12-1:45 p.m., Cedar Creek Golf Club, Onalaska.

La Crosse Lions, 2nd and 4th Wed., 6:30 p.m., Lunda Center, Western Technical College; www.lacsroselions.org.

La Crosse Rotary Thurs., noon-1 p.m., Cargill Room, Waterfront Restaurant, www.rotarycluboflacrosse.org.

La Crosse Rotary East Mon., noon-1 p.m., Schmidy's Bar & Restaurant, La Crosse, www.lacsroserotaryeast.org.

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

League of Women Voters Lunch and Learn, 2nd Wed., 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m., Waterfront Restaurant, www.lwvlacrosse.org.

NAMI Support Groups

See namilacsrosecounty.org/support for programs, times and locations.

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

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

Rotary After Hours, 2nd and 4th Tues., 6 p.m., The Main Event Center, La Crosse, www.rotaryafterhours.org.

Valley View Rotary, Wed., 7:30-8:30 a.m., La Crosse Family YMCA-Houser Branch, Onalaska, www.valleyviewrotary.com.

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

Women with Purpose, 2nd Wed., 11:45 a.m.-1 p.m., Stoney Creek Hotel and Conference Center, cr.wppwi.org.

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. 2-3, 2024 Snowflake Ski Jumping Tournament, Westby.

Feb. 2-4, *Tar Beach*, 7:30 p.m. Fri.-Sat., 2 p.m. Sun., Viterbo University Fine Arts Center, La Croix Black Box Theatre, www.viterbo.edu/fine-arts-center.

Feb. 3, Matt Vee & The Killer Vees Celebrate the Music of Neil Diamond, 7:30 p.m., Viterbo University Fine Arts Center Main Theatre, www.viterbo.edu/fine-arts-center.

Feb. 3, Alash, Tuvan throat singers, 8 p.m., The Temple Theatre, Viroqua, www.historictempletheatre.com.

Feb. 4-11, Frozen River Film Festival, various venues, Winona, www.frff.org.

Feb. 8-11, La Crosse Sports Show, La Crosse Center.

Feb. 9-12, 16-18, *The Last Five Years*, 7:30 p.m. Thurs.-Sat., 2 p.m. Sun., La Crosse Community Theatre, Veterans Studio Theater, www.lacsrosecommunitytheatre.org.

Feb. 10, Wilderness Weekends with Emily, 9:30-11:30 a.m., Holzinger Lodge, Winona, www.winonaoutdoorcollaborative.com.

Feb. 10, La Crosse Winter Roots Festival, 1 p.m., Riverside Ballroom, La Crosse Center.

Feb. 10, The Magic of Isaiah Family Matinee Series, 2 p.m., Pump House Regional Arts Center, www.thepumphouse.org.



◀ **Feb. 10, 34th Annual Valentine Ball: An Evening at Versailles**, 6-11:30 p.m., The Cargill Room at The Waterfront, www.lacsrossesymphony.org.

Feb. 10, Four Guys in Dinner Jackets: Call Us Old Fashioned, The Supper Club Tour, 7:30 p.m., Heider Center, www.heidercenter.org.

Feb. 10, Heart by Heart featuring Steve Fossen and Michael Derosier, 7:30 p.m., Lyche Theatre, Weber Center, www.viterbo.edu/fine-arts-center.

Feb. 10, Alterations of Reality, An Evening of Magic and Mystery, 7:30 p.m., Pump House Regional Arts Center, www.thepumphouse.org.

Feb. 12, Beer by Bike Brigade Bingo, 6-9 p.m., La Crosse Center.

Feb. 13 & 20, Clay Class: Ceramic Heart Dish, 5:30-7 p.m., Pump House Regional Arts Center, www.thepumphouse.org.

Feb. 14, Dallas String Quartet: A Bridgerton-Inspired Show, 7:30 p.m., Viterbo University Fine Arts Center Main Theatre, www.viterbo.edu/fine-arts-center.

Feb. 14-17, Cocktails and Cabaret, 7:30 p.m., Pump House Regional Arts Center, www.thepumphouse.org.

Feb. 15, Don Felder, 7 p.m., Riverside Ballroom, La Crosse Center.

Feb. 16-17, Japanese Art of Kintsugi: Embracing Our Imperfections with Grace and Courage, 7 p.m. Fri.-4 p.m. Sat., Franciscan Spirituality Center, www.fscenter.org.

Feb. 16-28, Art in Motion: A Concert of Dance, 7:30 p.m. Fri.-Sat., 2 p.m. Sun., Toland Theatre, Lowe Center for the Arts, University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, www.uwlax.edu/theatre-and-dance.

Feb. 17, Indoor Winona Farmers' Market, 9 a.m.-noon, Winona Friendship Center.

Feb. 17, An Evening with Dave Simonett, 8 p.m., The Temple Theatre, Viroqua, www.historictempletheatre.com.

Feb. 22-23, A Visit from Will Dilg & Scenes from Our Mighty Mississippi, 1:30 p.m. Feb. 22, 7:30 p.m. Feb. 23, Pump House Regional Arts Center, www.thepumphouse.org.

Feb. 23-25, Silent Directed Retreat Weekend, 3 p.m. Fri.-2 p.m. Sun, Franciscan Spirituality Center, www.fscenter.org.

Feb. 23-24, VOCARE: Listening to Your Longing, 6 p.m. Fri.-4 p.m. Sat., Franciscan Spirituality Center, www.fscenter.org.

Feb. 24, Steely Dane, 7:30 p.m. Viterbo University Fine Arts Center, Lyche Theatre, www.viterbo.edu/fine-arts-center.

Feb. 26, Beer by Bike Brigade Bingo, 6-9 p.m., La Crosse Center.

MARCH

March 1-2, *Come Back*, 7:30 p.m., La Crosse Community Theatre, Veterans Studio Theater, www.lacsrosecommunitytheatre.org.

March 1-3, *Bat Boy: The Musical*, 7:30 p.m. Fri.-Sat., 2 p.m. Sat.-Sun., Viterbo University Fine Arts Center LaCroix Black Box Theatre, www.viterbo.edu/fine-arts-center.



◀ **March 2, The Magic of Isaiah Family Matinee Series**,

2 p.m., Pump House Regional Arts Center, www.thepumphouse.org.

March 2, Amara Rose Foundation's Second Annual Chili Challenge, 1-4 p.m., Viroqua Eagles Club, 216 South

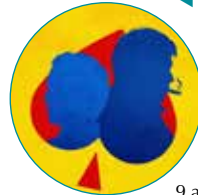
Rock Ave., Viroqua, amararosefoundation.org.

March 2, La Crosse Symphony Orchestra: Mozart and Rising Stars, 7:30 p.m., Viterbo University Fine Arts Center Main Theatre.

March 8, How Sweet It Is—Music of James Taylor, 7:30 p.m., Heider Center, www.heidercenter.org.

March 13, Natalie MacMaster & Donnell Leahy, 7:30 p.m., Viterbo University Fine Arts Center Main Theatre, www.viterbo.edu/fine-arts-center.

March 14, Tab Benoit, 8 p.m., The Temple Theatre, Viroqua, www.historictempletheatre.com.



◀ **March 15, The Odd Couple**,

7:30 p.m., La Crosse Community Theatre, Lyche Theatre, www.lacsrosecommunitytheatre.org.

March 15, Skerryvore, 8 p.m., The Temple Theatre, Viroqua, www.historictempletheatre.com.

March 16, Logan Craft Show, 9 a.m.-3 p.m., Logan High School.

1500 Ranger Dr., La Crosse.

March 16, Celtic Stories & Songs 2024, 7 p.m., Pump House Regional Arts Center, www.thepumphouse.org.

March 16, The Little Mermen-Ultimate Disney Cover Band, 7:30 p.m., Heider Center, www.heidercenter.org.

March 18, Beer by Bike Brigade Bingo, 3-6 p.m., La Crosse Center.

March 21, Franciscan Spirituality Center Art Dash: Ready, Set, Gogh!, The Cargill Room, The Waterfront Restaurant, www.fscenter.org/content/art-dash.

March 22, Malevo, 7:30 p.m., Viterbo University Fine Arts Center Main Theatre, www.viterbo.edu/fine-arts-center.

March 22-24, La Crosse Area Builders Association Home Show, 4-8 p.m. Fri., 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Sat., 10 a.m.-3 p.m. Sun., www.labaonline.com/home-show/.

March 23, Coulee Hoolie Ceili Fundraiser for La Crosse-Bantry Friendship Association, 6-10 p.m., La Crosse American Legion Hall, 711 6th St. South, www.lacsrosebantry.org.

March 26, Paint & Pour Desert Sunset, 6 p.m., Pump House Regional Arts Center, www.thepumphouse.org.

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