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FORWARD

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at Pearl Street Brewery

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Pictured on cover: Mary Larson, co-owner of Full Circle Supply. Photo by Jordana Snyder Photography. Hair by Chantel Turk, Orange Pearl Salon & Spa; makeup by Kiersten Leon, Orange Pearl Salon & Spa. Pictured above: Paige Forde. Outfit by Mainstream Boutique. Photo by Jen Towner Photography.

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Photo by Jen Towner Photography

The first interview suit I ever bought was purchased in 1991. The jacket was magenta with a navy blue plaid, worn atop a navy pencil skirt with navy pumps. I felt so smart in it, so professional, and the feeling of confidence it gave me played no small part in landing my first job out of college.

Well into my second job, when I needed to expand my wardrobe to accommodate trade shows in Chicago and agent meetings in New York, I sprang for my next suit. I ordered it by phone from the Tweeds catalog in those pre-internet days, and it was so expensive to me at the time that I had to have a glass of wine before I made the call. It was chocolate brown wool, very tailored, with a round collar, covered buttons and little slits in the hem of the skirt. I had never in my life owned a piece of clothing that fit me so well. I loved wearing that suit and felt proud every time I stepped forward for a handshake and an introduction.

The last suit I remember well was long and black. The suit jacket had a beautiful chartreuse lining and was cut so long it felt like wearing tuxedo tails. The pants were wide-legged and drapery, and I needed to buy

a pair of extra-high heels to pull off the look. It gave me a stature I wasn't used to as a petite woman, but I learned to carry it off.

Right now, I don't have a single suit I can wear. The magenta suit is long gone; the brown suit is not as tailored to me as it used to be; and recently, when occasion for a pantsuit arose, I pulled out the black one only to discover it, too, no longer fit.

The suits are gone, but not the impression they left. They gave a young woman stepping up to greater challenges the confidence, poise and professionalism to meet them. Putting them on was like putting on my best self, a self that did not go away when the suits went to Goodwill.

That's how I like to think of the women featured in this issue of *Coulee Region Women*, who wear their best selves all the time. Every day, just doing what they do, they put their "best foot forward" to step up for our community and the women in it.

Here, we celebrate quiet leaders like Mary Larson, whose vow to "live gently" is borne out in community and environmental endeavors. Under Tami Plourde, a brewery famous for its local beer is becoming equally famous for its community-building. And Amy Penchi ensures La Crosse makes a fine first impression with her hospitality skills.

We prove you're never too young to put your best foot forward—as in the case of CMNH spokesperson Lindsay Schmidt—nor too old, as hiker and activist Kay Rutherford demonstrates.

We'll show how you can step up to a challenge with the Festival Foods Grandad Half Marathon and ensure a lifetime of healthy steps by becoming educated on joint replacement. We'll also show you how to put your best foot forward by adopting simple but effective actions that foster kindness.

In the void left by the suits in my closet, I've added a new piece of clothing: a jacket sporting our *Coulee Region Women* logo. Its length and elegance remind me of my last black suit, and when I wear it out in the community, I find I stand a little taller and act a little kinder. Putting it on is like putting on my best self.

Betty

coulee region women

AREA HOME AND HEALTHY LIVING MAGAZINE

ISSUE 97, VOLUME 17, NUMBER 1

APRIL/MAY 2018

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DISTRIBUTION

Citywide Marketing Services, L.L.C.

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Coulee Region Women is published six times per year by Coulee Region Communications, L.L.C. 816 2nd Avenue S., Suite 300, Onalaska, WI 54650. Subscriptions available for \$24.95 per year (six issues).

Send check to the address above.

All unsolicited manuscripts must be accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

Coulee Region Women assumes no responsibility for unsolicited materials.

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Printed at Crescent Printing Company, Onalaska, WI. Printed in the U.S.A.

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Dr. Gregory Cochrane

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Dive in to a smorgasbord of music discovery at the Mid West Music Fest, celebrating its ninth year with nonstop music in La Crosse April 13-14 and Winona April 27-28. The multi-venue, multi-genre festival hosts more than 130 acts with everything from local standouts to regional favorites and nationally touring bands. Highlights include the return of Nashville's The Blackfoot Gypsies; the New Paltz, New York, female trio Upstate Rubdown; Milwaukee's synth-rock band GGOOLLDD; and Detroit's Flint Eastwood. Regional powerhouses include acts out of Minneapolis, Duluth, Madison and Chicago, including stalwarts Charlie Parr and The Black-Eyed Snakes. MWMF is an opportunity for locals to see bands before they become big. Find the full lineup at www.midwestmusicfest.org.

Mid West Music Fest seeks to promote music and art activism in the region, creating opportunities for artists, stimulating downtown economic development and providing educational resources for artists, community members and children. Tickets are available online at www.midwestmusicfest.org.



GET YOUR GREEN ON

While Earth Day occurs on April 22, numerous environmentally friendly community events ensure you can celebrate the Earth—and sustainability—throughout the month of April:

- Learn how to care for yourself and the planet on Thursday, April 20, at a CommUNITY hour starting at 5 p.m. at Palm + Pine yoga studio in La Crosse's Jackson Plaza.

- Join C.S. Cherin, author of *Recipe for a Green Life*, at Full Circle Supply in downtown La Crosse on Monday, April 23, at 6 p.m. to explore helpful tips for living a more conscious and sustainable lifestyle.

- Wrap up the week by celebrating "Ten Years Green in 2018" at La Crosse's annual Earth Fair, held 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Sunday, April 29 at the Myrick Center and Myrick Park. The Earth Fair features family activities, informational booths, vendors and a puppet parade. Related events also include a community cleanup Saturday, April 28, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. and a recycling fair Sunday from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at nearby Emerson Elementary. For details on the Earth Fair, visit www.earthfairlacrosse.com.



WOMEN'S FUND SPRING FLING

Celebrate the power of possibility at the Women's Fund of Greater La Crosse's annual Spring Fling, held this year on Saturday, April 21, from 10:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. at Celebrations on the River on French Island. Get a group of gals together to assemble a themed table, or simply come to be energized by other community women as you enjoy a lunch program, cash bar, vendor booths and silent auction. Tickets are \$35 each or a table of 10 for \$370. For more information and to register, go to www.womensfundlacrosse.org.



HEART OF LA CROSSE REUNION

It's a class reunion at the Pump House as the Heart of La Crosse theater group rolls out its spring improv show, which runs April 12-14 at 7:30 p.m. In the spirit of reminiscing about the "good old days"—or not—Heart of La Crosse invites the audience to create the roles, characters and adventures for the cast. The act takes off from there, and no one—not even the actors—knows exactly where it will end up. Come prepared with your own suggestions and stories to see what the cast creates with your help. Better yet, come dressed in your favorite fashions from high school to immerse yourself in this madcap adventure. For tickets, go to www.thepumphouse.org.

SECRETS OF THE UNIVERSE

Long before Stephen Hawking, even before women could vote, Henrietta Leavitt and her coworkers at Harvard University were making ground-breaking discoveries about the universe—and as a woman, she wasn't even allowed to touch a telescope. The play *Silent Sky*, which runs April 5 through June 23 at the Commonwealth Theatre in Lanesboro, Minnesota, tells the story of Leavitt (played by Megan K. Pence) and her discovery of the Period-Luminosity Relationship, which made it possible to calculate the distance between stars—that is, to measure space. In a manner as delightful and inspirational as Leavitt herself, playwright Lauren Gunderson tells the story of this "human computer" who, like the heroines of *Hidden Figures*, changed the course of scientific thought. To learn more and to reserve tickets, visit www.commonwealththeatre.org or call 800-657-7025.



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LIVING GENTLY

Mary Larson of Full Circle Supply steps up for the community and the environment.

BY LISA HEISE

Photos by Jordana Snyder Photography

On the sidewalk in front of Full Circle Supply at 531 Main Street in La Crosse stands a small clothing rack bedecked with several coats: a brown wool dress coat, a purple parka and a green ski jacket among them. Next to the coats sits a bin of colorful hand-knit stocking caps and scarves. A sign in the window reads, “Cold? Take one! Want to help? Leave one.”

Step inside this charming shop, and you’ll know you’re in a special place. Mary Larson, who owns the shop with her husband, Josh, welcomes every customer with a warm smile and a greeting adapted for each individual. Some are new to the place: “Hi, how are you?” Others are close acquaintances: “Hey, girl!” Some customers carry empty jars and bottles. When they leave, their containers are full.

In this serene shop, folk music plays in the background. Brightly

lit shelves host row after row of gallon-size bottles. Other shelves display baby products, self-care merchandise and home-cleaning goods in assorted genres. The store smells clean, invigorating—“That’s probably our local soaps,” says Larson. “We buy them in ... what do we buy them in?”

“Loaves,” calls Josh from the cash register.

“Yes, loaves,” she laughs. “Loaves of soap.”

Stepping gently on the earth

Five years into her endeavor with Full Circle Supply, Larson says she’s living her dream. Having spent a number of years working for local corporations, she always knew she wanted to run her own business. Her guiding philosophy in life is to “live gently,” and the



Full Circle Supply's shelves are filled with products that allow customers to live gently: locally made soaps, safe and environmentally friendly products, and refillable products that cut down container waste.

idea of being able to marry that philosophy to a business model was swimming in the back of her mind.

When Larson met Josh, she found a kindred spirit with the same priorities, and together they found ways to magnify their resolve to be gentle with themselves and with the world. "He lived a wonderfully simple lifestyle," says Larson, and as they grew closer, her own appreciation for simplicity grew.

The concept of refilling commercial containers intrigued them both. They questioned why large companies aren't refilling their own containers instead of continuing to produce them at a lightning pace. "Consumers can only be expected to make so many changes when industry is driving you in a certain direction," observes Larson. With her help, Josh began exploring the concept of a store that offers a bring-your-own container refill option.

They found one business, a store in California, that was operating on a level similar to their vision. A couple of phone calls later, the Larsons had a plan. They began conversations with the La Crosse Small Business Development Center, which was a huge asset as they built their strategy. A small-business loan got them a tiny retail space in La Crosse, and they set out to see whether the community would buy in to this philosophy of reusing.

Products with integrity

Mary and Josh spent time researching products that they felt good about using in their own home, with their own family. "We choose products that don't leave a huge impact on our environment. Everything in this store is useful and personal to us," adds Larson.

The average woman uses about 26 different personal care products every morning, says Larson. Those products can be made up of 500 different chemicals, according to the Huffington Post, some of which have been banned in other countries for carcinogenic properties. Not only did Larson want to address the container issue; she wanted to make sure the environmental and sustainable integrity of the products was intact.

The greater La Crosse community responded well to the concepts of sustainable and safe shopping, notes Larson: "People bring in every kind of container you can imagine—even clean ketchup bottles." In 2015, Full Circle Supply moved to their current Main Street location and expanded their offerings. Larson was pregnant at the time, and she added baby products to their inventory. "We sell products that we have felt good about using, that are safe for our kids. We wanted others to have access to these products, too." Now, Full Circle Supply carries

most of the essentials for feeding, clothing and diapering babies.

Larson feels deeply connected to the community, especially to downtown La Crosse. She remembers when the downtown area lost its vitality to larger businesses in the area, and she enjoys seeing the return of a thriving and dynamic downtown community. She finds ways to partner with other downtown businesses—"When one of us succeeds, we all succeed"—and she sees the downtown area filling the same needs for a consumer as any shopping mall.

A legacy of promoting community wellness

The subject of the free coats outside makes Larson smile. That idea came about as she and Josh were cleaning out their closets and decided to put some coats out front. They were gone almost immediately, so she let some friends and family know, and the coat rack filled up. Then, a group of local women picked up on the theme and staged a "knit-in" at the public library to create scores of cozy hats and scarves. Larson says that the aspect of helping people stay warm brings joy every day.

Larson is honored to represent another generation of women in her family who have impacted their communities by promoting wellness. As a single mom, Larson's mother, Teresa Pulvermacher, went to nursing school and ultimately became a nurse practitioner. Today, "she advocates mental and physical health within the community and has developed an innovative employee wellness program at work," says Larson. "It's never been about her—it's always about others." Larson's paternal grandmother, Kay Larson, "was a pioneer in educating the community about nutrition and healthy habits," she says, and developed the 500 Club with local health care leader Eric Gundersen. "My business may not be in the medical field," Larson observes, "but the core of my entrepreneurship circles around health and wellness."

Larson's goals for the future are many and varied: she plans to create a meeting space below their store for community members, to increase partnerships downtown, to continue to advocate for environmental ethics, to get some chickens, to expand her garden. Her life philosophy is one to be adopted by all women: "I strive to be gentle with myself, gentle to those around me and gentle to the earth. Some days are harder; some days I show up more, some days less, but every day I aim to do what makes me feel good and at peace." 

Lisa Heise lives gently, teaches happily and writes furiously in La Crosse.



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Left-Right: Sheryl Gora-Bollom, MS, LCSW;
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At Pearl Street Brewery, Tami Plourde lives out her dream of supporting the community that has supported PSB so much.

BREWING SUCCESS

Tami Plourde and Pearl Street Brewery concoct craft beer and community.

BY TALLITHA REESE
Contributed photos

Tami Plourde's love of community is evident through her work as part owner of Pearl Street Brewery—the local beermaker known for Pearl St. Pale Ale, D.T.B. Brown Ale and other favorites on tap at establishments around the region. While attending the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse in the 1990s, Tami Plourde fell in love with the La Crosse area, and that love for this community has made Pearl Street Brewery part of the legacy of this beer town.

Building a brewery

When Plourde first settled in La Crosse, having returned to Minnesota for a time after graduation, she wasn't quite sure what she wanted to do and continued working her college jobs in the hospitality industry. Eventually, she started working at the area Enterprise Rent-A-Car, and before too long a promotion moved her away from La Crosse again.

It was around then that Plourde realized she didn't love what she was doing and came up with an idea to start a restaurant and street snack-vending business back in La Crosse with a friend. "We were closed within two years," says Plourde. "It was my first foray into business and my first really huge failure in life, but ultimately it was

the best thing that ever happened to me."

That failure would lead Plourde to Pearl Street Brewery. She had met the brewery's founder, Joe Katchever, years before when he was getting started and she was bartending at the Bodega Brew Pub. When Plourde found herself jobless with lots of time on her hands, Katchever, who had been running his business alone, was really starting to contemplate the future.

It made sense for the two to combine forces, so Plourde started pitching in a bit and helped Katchever move to a distribution center on Second Street while they figured out where to go from there.

"We looked at a lot of buildings and ultimately chose the footwear building," says Plourde of the brewery's current location in the former LaCrosse Footwear factory on St. Andrews Street. "At that point, I kind of took over the marketing, sales and distribution, and I got to work on building the brewery in this facility with him."

Developing a legacy

As Pearl Street Brewery approaches its 20th year, Plourde and Katchever have worked out how to successfully manage the brewery together—as business owners and life partners. Plourde, as director



Tami Plourde (center, red hair) and the staff at Pearl Street Brewery have become part of La Crosse's brew town legacy.

of sales and marketing, handles the front end of the business, while Katchever takes care of production and what happens at the back end of the house. In 2015, they also started a second business: On Three Printing and Design.

"It can be complicated when you work with your partner in life," says Plourde. "You have to learn how to juggle those roles, but we figure it out."

In 2009, the couple had a daughter, and soon after that, Plourde began developing the Sprout for Kids Foundation, a nonprofit that raises money and goods to be donated directly to families, schools and organizations in the greater La Crosse area.

"After she was born, our priorities changed a little bit, and at that point I was thinking of the legacy of what Joe and I do," says Plourde. She explains that people and organizations often asked for donations, and as a small business, the brewery didn't always have extra funds, so they often donated beer or T-shirts—whatever they could afford.

"My dream was always to really support this community that has supported us so much," says Plourde. "This last year, I think we donated \$47,000-plus in cash in addition to all the in-kind donations, space and time. That's one of the bigger accomplishments I'm most proud of."

Contributing to the community

Pearl Street Brewery also partners with many other community organizations for events and fundraisers. Examples include handling the beer sales at Moon Tunes (the proceeds of which are donated to community organizations), providing venue space to Habitat for Humanity's Raise the Roof concerts and sponsoring projects and hosting rides with the Beer By Bike Brigade. Lately, the brewery has also been working with several local elementary schools by hosting fundraisers and contributing to different projects.

In addition to giving back to the community through donations, the brewery also helps promote tourism in the area. The Tour de Pearl event is one example of this. The brewery started this promotional event several years ago to help drive customers into local bars and restaurants and support the business community.

"We can't really do what we do without the support of everyone who drinks our beer, and every year we get more and more people who support us," says Plourde. "It's always been about coming full circle and giving that back." 

Tallitha Reese is a freelance writer and content manager based in Cashton. She owns Words By Reese (www.wordsbyreese.com), and though she's not much of a beer drinker, she makes an exception for Pearl Street Brewery's D.T.B. Brown Ale.



Plourde mingles at the PSB-sponsored Tour de Pearl.

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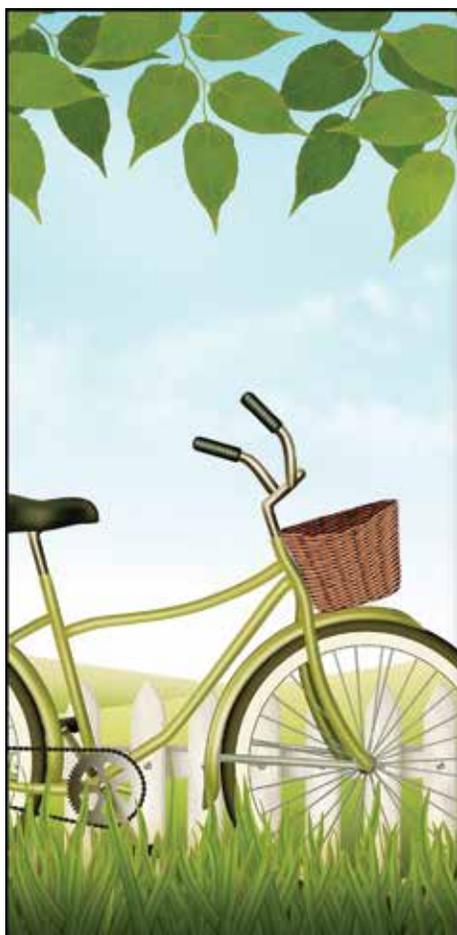
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Lindsay Schmidt and her mother, Marcy Lund, have turned their gratitude into support of Children's Miracle Network Hospitals.



In 2012, Lindsay (center) was asked to be a CNMH Hero.

PAYING IT FORWARD

A mother-daughter team puts the “miracle” in Children's Miracle Network Hospitals—and helps others do the same.

BY MARTHA KEEFFE
Contributed photos

In 2002, Lindsay Schmidt of La Crosse entered the world 13½ weeks early. “She was in the hospital for 77 days and weighed 2 pounds 12 ounces,” says her mom, Marcy Lund, who remembers those days as the longest of her life. Fraught with complications and amid concerns over what doctors said she “could have, may have or should have,” Lindsay continued to beat the odds. “It was a long journey of roller-coaster rides,” says Lund of the experience. “It makes you realize that life is too short, and you should cherish each day.”

Unable to breathe on her own, Lindsay relied on a ventilator to supply oxygen to her developing lungs. “I can't remember how many times I watched her stop breathing and turn blue,” says Lund. “Everything was so uncertain. Would she ever be able to breathe on her own? Would she ever be able to come home?”

Support and small victories

Despite numerous setbacks, Lindsay proved to be a miracle. Eventually weaned off oxygen and welcomed home, Lindsay had an apnea machine to monitor her heartbeat and breathing, medications to aid in the development of her lungs and yearly shots to guard against respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), which can cause pneumonia

in at-risk children. In addition, she underwent eye surgery when she was 4 to correct vision problems associated with prolonged oxygen use. “Lindsay's eye doctor doesn't anticipate further surgeries,” says Lund. “And amazingly, she's now able to wear contacts, which doctors were not sure she could ever do.”

For Lund, these small victories remind her how each day is a gift, especially when surrounded by people who understand your situation and freely offer support. “This experience changed me personally forever,” says Lund. “You always hear about other people having preemies and don't realize how hard it is, but then all of a sudden, in an instant, you are right there with them.” Crediting the Children's Miracle Network Hospitals (CMNH) for giving her the needed encouragement, Lund formed a NICU support group when Lindsay was young to help other families navigate the challenges of caring for children in similar situations. And while Lund continued to gain confidence in her new life with Lindsay, CMNH provided countless meals, accommodations, medications and medical equipment to ease the transition. “I am very passionate about CMNH and would do anything for them,” says Lund. “And as Lindsay began to get older and learned more about her past—and just how lucky she is to be



here—she found herself wanting to help other kids in need.”

Helping others in return

In 2012, Lindsay, along with four other area children, was asked to be a 2012/2013 CMNH Hero to create awareness and raise funds for CMNH programs. At just 10, Lindsay appeared at Rotary meetings, schools, La Crosse Loggers baseball games, CMNH Treat Days at Dairy Queen and the Elvis Explosion at the La Crosse Center to share her story of how she and her family benefited from the efforts of CMNH. In the process, she learned how to speak in front of an audience, met wonderful people and had a blast goofing off during a photo shoot with her mom. She sold coupon booklets, sold Team Lindsay awareness bracelets and received donations to her web page, all of which resulted in her raising more than \$5,000 to support a mission she continues to believe in today.

“Every year I help at the annual R. Scott Bjorge Memorial Golf Classic that is held by Crescent Printing Company, where my mom works and raises funds for CMNH,”

says Lindsay, a sophomore at Central High School in La Crosse who is considering a career in health care. “I enjoy helping others, and I want to pay it forward for all of the help that I received from CMNH.”

Not only has Lindsay’s giving nature touched those associated with CMNH, it has been felt throughout the greater community. Over the past five years, she has volunteered at the Eagle Crest North senior living community in Onalaska, assisting residents in everyday living and memory care, has volunteered with the Women’s Fund of Greater La Crosse and won the Students Making a Difference award from WKBT, for which CMNH received \$100 on Lindsay’s behalf.

“Lindsay loves to help others. Period,” says Lund of her daughter’s boundless sense of gratitude. “She is so caring and generous and is there for anyone, anytime. There’s not a day that goes by that I don’t thank God for how far we’ve come.” **(crw)**

Martha Keffe lives and writes in La Crosse. She enjoys having the opportunity to share remarkable stories from inspiring people.

Turning 16 in May, Lindsay continues to be a spokesperson for CMNH, giving back to the organization that helped her family.

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ENJOY YOUR STAY

Amy Penchi is on the front lines of putting the city's best foot forward.

BY ANASTASIA PENCHI

Contributed photo

She's often that person to whom visitors will turn for advice on finding "the best place to eat" or "what to do around here." As general manager at the Hampton Inn & Suites La Crosse Downtown, a 126-room hotel located at the corner of Third and La Crosse Streets, Amy Penchi is an ambassador of sorts for the city of La Crosse.

Penchi has spent about 25 years working in La Crosse's hospitality business, and she did it the old-fashioned way: working her way up the ladder, beginning at age 18, when she got her first industry job as a hotel housekeeper.

"I've done it," she tells her staff as she cleans rooms or checks in guests when they are short-staffed or filled to capacity. "It makes me a better boss."

A hospitable background

Raised on a farm in Viroqua, Penchi is the sixth of seven children. She graduated from Viroqua High School in 1989 but wasn't sure what to do next. She worked in fast food, in retail and at a hotel, but it wasn't until she saw a flyer for a Florida-based hotel and travel school that she started thinking about a career in hospitality. After completing the program, she came back to Wisconsin and applied at every local hotel and travel agency in the area.

Hired to work the front desk of the Holiday Inn that formerly stood on the east end of the pike between La Crosse and La Crescent, she remained there for five years and learned many lessons, including how to stay cool as customers heat up.

"It's not me they are yelling at," she teaches employees. "Don't ever let someone have that kind of power over you. You don't know what is going on in their life."

Her next gigs were at the Days Inn and Hampton Inn (now Settle Inn). Her boss at the latter recommended she apply for the general manager position at the Courtyard by Marriott after more than a year as assistant manager. At the Courtyard for 15 years, she oversaw three hotel renovations even as she and her husband, Pat, built a house and had two boys.

Guest care begins with self-care

In June 2015, Penchi applied at the Hampton Inn & Suites La Crosse Downtown, which she says is one of the top 5 percent performing Hamptons in the nation and which earned 99.9 percent on its most recent Quality Assurance review. It's also ranked No. 1 for La Crosse hotels on Trip Advisor.

Evolving the hotel and having a great team are the keys to success, Penchi says. Twenty-five-foot phone cords were once the rage, but nowadays, hotel phones are rarely used. Instead guests demand "lightning-fast" internet and friendly, informed staff.

Prioritizing self-care ensures Penchi always puts her best foot forward, even during the most stressful days. Her sister, Mary, taught her to commit to a monthly regimen of pampering, whether it's a massage, manicure, facial or new hairdo. It's a lesson she teaches others.

"Buy the shoes," Penchi says. "You're no good for anyone else if you don't take care of yourself." 

Anastasia Penchi, a Coulee Region freelance writer, is committed to monthly pampering thanks to her hotel manager sister-in-law. She can be reached at callmeloislane@hotmail.com.

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A well-designed kitchen ensures cooking is a couples event for Michael Sigman and Kelly Krieg-Sigman.

AN ACCOMMODATING HOME

An adapted home embraces a couple of mixed mobility.

BY JULIE NELSON

Photos by Megan McCluskey, Atypik Studio

Couples with differences make accommodations in their living spaces all the time: Packer memorabilia on the west wall, Viking on the east. But Kelly Krieg-Sigman and Michael Sigman have had to go well beyond his-and-hers décor. Kelly stands up straight and walks at a brisk pace. Michael uses a wheelchair. Both are fierce in their desire for independence.

Michael, who has multiple sclerosis, hasn't always used a wheelchair, but when the Sigmans went house hunting 15 years ago, they knew one could be a possibility. So they planned accordingly. Their search for a home where all the living space could be on one level—including the washer and dryer (a must for Kelly, who did not want to be the only one doing the laundry)—led them to one on Brickyard Lane on La Crosse's south end.

An adaptive home

Attracted by rooms with lots of open spaces and angled corners, the Sigmans bought the home and began working with the contractor, who was just finishing the project. "The first thing we did was rip up the carpeting in the bedroom," says Kelly. "Carpeting can be an obstacle for someone who is unsteady. Michael was using a cane at that point, and we needed to make his navigation as easy as possible."

Next came the master bathroom. Out went the plans for a tub and shower, and in went a no-threshold shower with a bench, grab bars and Michael's favorite piece: a double-hinged door that swings both in and out. The toilet is 2 inches higher than normal—making it easier to get up and down or do a wheelchair transfer—and is surrounded

by several grab bars. "It's amazing how an able-bodied person of a certain age starts to use those grab bars, too," quips Kelly.

Modifications for mobility

About eight years ago, Michael's physical strength began to deteriorate. He quickly went to a walker and then a wheelchair. With the change in Michael's mobility came more modifications to the house, this time in the kitchen. Contractors installed an extended counter with a small sink, a workspace and enough space below to pull up a chair of any sort. The contents of the kitchen cupboards are on wheeled drawers that pull out easily, and all the essential elements in the kitchen are stowed in cupboards below the counter.

"I can reach everything I need," says Michael. "Sure, there are some of the fancier bowls I can't get, but how often do I need those?" When Michael could no longer reach the microwave that had been installed at standing eye level, the Sigmans picked up a second one for use on the extended counter space.

The living room has minimal furniture on the perimeter, and any wall with a corner has a guard to protect the paint from the inevitable bumps of a wheelchair, small things that make the living a little easier for both Kelly and Michael.

A bathroom built for ease

In the past year, Michael's strength has deteriorated even more, and he can no longer get in and out of bed by himself. The Sigmans found a lift chair for Michael to sleep in and started eyeing the east end of



Clockwise from top left: High ceilings and open spaces are the first things you notice in the Sigmans' home. A bathroom counter with storage underneath still allows space for Michael to wheel up. A second bedroom was adapted to Michael's mobility needs. The Board Store made the Sigmans' bathroom fully accessible.

the house as his new domain.

The second bathroom, the one now closer to Michael's room, was not built to accommodate a wheelchair, so the Sigmans called The Board Store. "They made this easy," says Michael. "They talked with me about my needs, took measurements and made suggestions we didn't even know to ask for."

"And," Kelly adds, "they were extremely responsive about returning phone calls and keeping us in the loop on the project."

Now the "wet space," as The Board Store calls it, has a shower with a chair Michael can easily transfer into, a variety of places to hang the hand-held shower and lots of grab bars, including two fold-up bars the Sigmans declined at first. "But then I got to using the shower, and I realized how helpful that extra bar would be, so we called The Board Store back." The wet space also has a sink, with storage space underneath, that Michael can roll up to. And the main door to the room swings both in and out, so no matter which direction Michael is headed, he can kick it open with his feet.

Michael's office is also on the east end of the house. The bright lighting, wheelchair-height desk and a little modern technology allow him to work part time, keep up with his volunteer activities and attend meetings without leaving home. Fatigue is the enemy of people living with MS, and using Skype allows Michael to both stay in the loop and conserve his energy.

Preparing the space

One of Michael's volunteer activities involves working with occupational and physical therapy students at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse. The students use Michael as their test pilot and have him try out different spaces to see how they work for someone

who actually uses a wheelchair. The experience also paid off for Kelly in her role as the executive director of the La Crosse Public Library. When a remodel was in the works, she had Michael come with his chair and test the distance planned between the shelves. "It's amazing what a difference 2 inches will make," says Michael.

The OT/PT expertise is something the Sigmans recommend to anyone looking at how to age at home. The students came to the Sigmans' home and spent time with Michael, assessing his abilities and his limitations. Their suggestions have contributed greatly to his independence.

Home together

While the Sigmans' home allows a person in a wheelchair to move with ease, that's not the first feature you notice when you walk in the door. The living room has high, open ceilings, and the hardwood flooring throughout matches the rest of the wood in the décor. Kelly especially likes the natural light that floods the room and the southern exposure. She spends much of her free time on the back deck and in the yard below, working on the landscaping.

At age 59, Kelly knows her mobility will likely change in the years ahead, and she acknowledges that the modifications they are making to the house now are also paving the way for her future; she and Michael intend to live in the house as long as possible. And that, says Kelly, is her favorite thing about the house: that she and Michael can live there—together. **(crw)**

Julie Nelson recalls when her mother broke a hip and had to use a wheelchair. She appreciates the little things in the Sigmans' house that can make a big difference.



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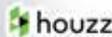


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A WOMAN'S GUIDE TO JOINT REPLACEMENT

| HEALTHY LIVING |

Maintaining hip and knee health can ensure years of putting your best foot forward.

BY JUDITH MUNSON
Contributed photos



It's estimated about 500,000 knee replacements and more than 175,000 hip replacements are performed every year, with women far outnumbering men as patients. Considering this, how can women best prepare for and recover from these procedures, and what measures can they take to avoid them?

Why so many women?

More women are candidates for knee and hip replacements because they're more predisposed to arthritis than men, and women's bodies carry more fat, increasing joint stress. Studies have shown that every pound is actually 6 pounds of force on the hips and knees with movement due to the transfer of weight.

"This means if a person lost just 5 pounds, her knees and hips would feel like she lost 30," says Dr. Mark Topolski, orthopedic surgeon with Gundersen Health System in La Crosse. He notes that weight loss is critical for women with a BMI of more than 40 prior to surgery.

Why consider joint replacement?

Nobody's a big fan of undergoing surgery, so some women talk themselves out of joint replacement, thinking artificial joints only last so long. But "it comes down to quality of life," says Dr. Topolski. "I tell patients I will help them manage pain as long as possible, but there comes a point where it might prevent them from living as full a life as they could."

He explains that replacements are lasting much longer, with data indicating that only about 5 percent of patients getting a new knee after the age of 62 require a replacement. The likelihood increases if replacement happens when the patient is in her 40s or 50s.

Up until about 10 to 15 years ago, manufacturers of joint replacements did not make components specific to women's anatomy. Today, they are available in a much narrower fit, better suited for most women.



Dr. Mark Topolski, orthopedic surgeon with Gundersen Health System, La Crosse



Katherine Hansen, physician assistant in the orthopedics department of Mayo Clinic Health System, La Crosse

How can I avoid surgery?

Genetics, obesity or a major injury are the usual suspects behind bad joints, but healthy, active adults also need to take steps to avoid oversteering one joint, says Katherine Hansen, physician assistant in the orthopedics department for Mayo Clinic Health System in La Crosse.

“Just being an avid hiker or runner does not put someone at more risk for replacement,” says Hansen. “But it’s better to cross-train if exercising five or more days a week.” She also advises adding strength training to cardio workouts and building both the hamstring and quadriceps to keep the knee joint strong.

Nonsurgical treatments for joint pain include pain and anti-inflammatory medication, wraps, braces, assisted ambulation devices, physical therapy, cortisone injections and gel injections—but sometimes, these only work for so long.

What happens after surgery?

Knee replacements tend to get a bad rap, as people set unrealistic expectations about life post-surgery. “You will have less pain and more mobility,” says Dr. Topolski, “but you won’t have the knee of an 18-year-old. Although some patients experience zero pain after replacement, most will see a reduction from, say, a 9 down to a 2 (on a pain scale). The reason for this is although metal and plastic have replaced the arthritic joint surface, there are still muscles and nerves that have been stimulated for years that we cannot address.”

Full recovery takes up to a year, says Hansen. “At three months, patients have 25 percent of normal strength and endurance; at six

months, it’s 50 percent. Most patients will need to use an ambulatory aide, such as a walker or a cane, for about two months post-operatively.”

The majority of the recovery occurs in the first six to eight weeks, adds Dr. Topolski. “The surgery itself takes about an hour, and most patients are working with a physical therapist to get up and walking within five hours.”

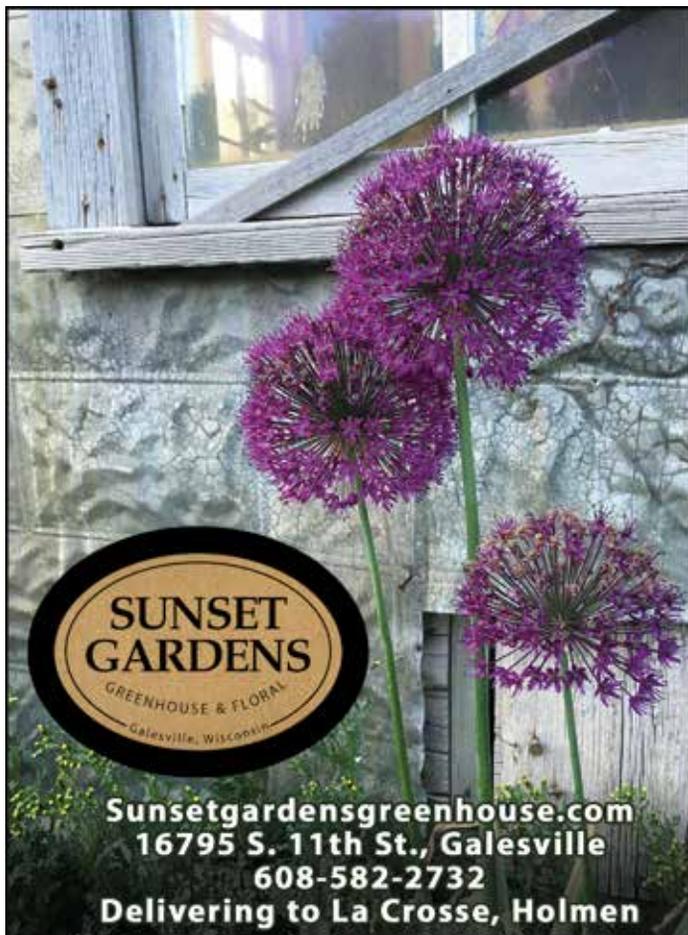
If a replacement does not take well, it is most likely due to the patient not following instructions to rest for at least six weeks. This can be particularly challenging for women at home with children. Have a support system in place prior to surgery that allows you to rest.

When can I get back in the garden?

People can return to most, but not all, of their daily activities when recovery is complete, says Hansen. “A lot of women ask about kneeling: When can they get back into the garden? Although it might feel odd at first, they can kneel but should use a pad. Extremely rigorous stress, such as running, is not advised after surgery.”

Until the day arrives, as Dr. Topolski says, when cartilage can be magically injected into joints, people will still need these replacements, and some studies indicate they will increase by more than 150 percent in coming years. Thankfully, with better pain management and artificial components geared toward women, more women are moving again with less pain for a much longer period of time than in years past. 

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



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SEEING LA CROSSE ON FOOT

Runners take to the streets from bluff top to river's edge.

BY SHARI HEGLAND
Contributed photos



Smiles of relief, accomplishment and joy can be found among the participants in the Festival Foods Grandad Half Marathon.

If the ground seems to shake a bit in La Crosse the morning of May 5, it may just be the cumulative effect of more than 4,000 feet running at the same time, as about 1,500 runners descend Bliss Road en route to Riverside Park, with another 600 or so making a loop through downtown.

The events of the Festival Foods Grandad Half Marathon feature something for everyone, says race director Tyler Heinz, with a focus on making the weekend one that gets the entire community involved in healthy outdoor recreation.

"It is the only running event that incorporates the entire community," he says, showing runners many parts of town and benefiting organizations for children, outdoor recreation and health care.

More than a half marathon

While the name of the event includes "half marathon"—a race of 13.1 miles—Heinz says the weekend's activities are much more than the namesake race.

It kicks off Friday, May 4, with a Health & Fitness Expo hosted

noon to 8 p.m. at the Dahl Family YMCA in La Crosse, which is open to the public. The expo will include product booths focused on running and fitness, as well as representation from the weekend's sponsors. Packet pickup for all of the running events will be at the expo as well.

That evening, attention shifts to the base of Bliss Road, where runners and cyclists alike will gather for the Bluff Time Trial, testing their strength against the uphill climb to the Alpine Inn.

On Saturday, runners will go the other direction, starting on top of Grandad Bluff for the half marathon and half marathon relay, which circle around the South Side and finish in Riverside Park. The park serves as the main location for the rest of the weekend's running events, including the Three Rivers 5k, which starts and finishes there Saturday morning, kids' races hosted at 12:05 p.m. and the after-race party, to which Heinz says everyone is invited.

"It is not just about the race," he says, with the free after-party open to the public so that everyone can enjoy live music, concessions, inflatables and a beer tent in the park.

How to Put Your Best Foot Forward

As a busy podiatry student, Dr. Maggie Fournier discovered an easy way to work out: lace up running shoes and hit the road. Today, her racing résumé includes 15 Ironman-distance triathlons (140.6 miles total: 2.4 miles swimming, 112 miles biking, and 26.2 miles running), including qualifying five times for the Ironman World Championships in Kona, Hawaii.

The Quebec native is well known to La Crosse's athletic community as a podiatrist with Gundersen Health System and a volunteer in the medical tent for the Granddad Half Marathon events. It is one way she gives back to the area she has called home for 10 years, since completing her residency at Gundersen.

Fournier says her own history as an athlete gives her an inside look at what the runners and triathletes she treats are experiencing. "I understand the mind-set and the anxiety an injury creates," she says, which means she understands the need to keep her patients active in some way, even as they allow injuries to recover.

Here are some tips from the doctor:

- Listen to your body. Don't ignore aches and pains. Many athletes come to Fournier when it is too late for an easy recovery.
- Rest is just as important a part of training as the training itself.
- Have a sound training program to follow, even if you are just maintaining fitness.
- Good-quality equipment is important to prevent injuries.



Dr. Maggie Fournier, podiatrist at Gundersen Health System



Runners celebrate a finish at the Festival Foods Granddad Half Marathon.

Community contributions

Heinz said that there are many ways nonrunners can get into the spirit: as volunteers in the park area, as course marshals during the race or as spectators in cheer zones along the route, where friendly faces are needed to boost the spirits of runners. "It's a long course, and it helps to have people out there," he says. "We'd like to situate cheer zones around the area and spread people out."

A little friendly competition is also underway through the Corporate Challenge, which counts participation by running or volunteering toward a company's standing, with winners to be declared in three size categories based on the percentage of employees participating in either way.

Four nonprofit organizations benefit from the races, each one honoring the history and mission of the event: St. Clare Health Mission, Outdoor Recreation Alliance, Youth Enrichment Association (YEA) and Special Recreation of La Crosse. St. Clare Health Mission has a long history with the weekend's races, having originally hosted its own races the first weekend in May on the Great River Trail in Onalaska before the event was moved into La Crosse as the La Crosse Fitness Festival. It was under that umbrella, when the event was coordinated by the city, that YEA and Special Recreation of

La Crosse joined as benefactors. Outdoor Recreation Alliance (ORA) hosts the accompanying Cycling Omnium the same weekend as the Festival Foods Granddad Half Marathon, with Friday night time trials on Bliss Road, a Saturday road race across the river in Minnesota and a Sunday racing criterion downtown. ORA advocates for outdoor recreation as a boost to tourism and personal and community health through events, education and hands-on work such as trail building.

Heinz, in his second year as race director for the event through his company, Grand Bluff Race Management, says he is looking forward to involving more people each year in a weekend focused on all aspects of healthy living. "We really want to give the community something to be excited about," he says.

Find more information on the races, volunteering and the weekend schedule at www.granddadhalfmarathon.com. Learn more about the La Crosse Cycling Omnium events at www.lacrosseomnium.com. 

Holmen runner and writer Shari Hegland credits the St. Clare Health Mission races—predecessors of the Festival Foods Granddad Half Marathon—with kicking off a love affair with the sport more than 10 years ago.

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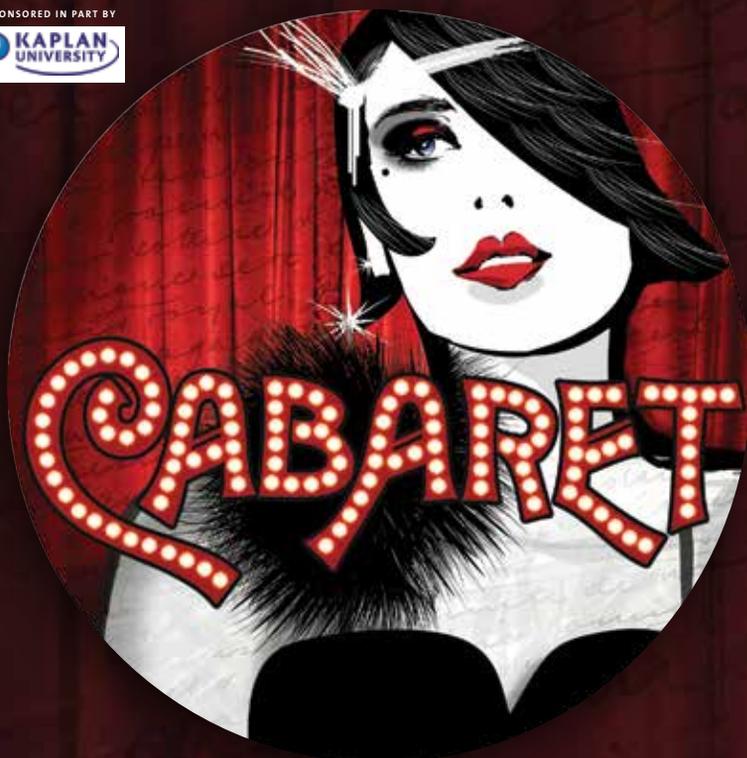
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Wood-fired pizzas and good conversation light up the night on the The Charmant Hotel rooftop terrace.

THE CHARMED LIFE

A balance of elegance and ease makes for distinctive dining at The Charmant.

BY JESSIE FOSS

Photos courtesy of The Charmant Hotel

Located in downtown La Crosse in a renovated candy factory, The Charmant Hotel is quickly becoming a go-to destination for locals and out-of-towners alike since opening less than three years ago.

The luxury boutique hotel features 67 rooms, a restaurant, parlor, lobby bar and lounge, rooftop terrace and sweets bar. The variety of dining options is a highlight of The Charmant, and creating a dining experience unlike any other in La Crosse is the goal of staff.

“A personalized experience” is how Charmant food and beverage director Michel Gabbud describes how dining should be at The Charmant. Communication is key, he says. Charmant staff want to know diners’ names, dietary restrictions, preferences and whether they’re celebrating a special occasion before they even enter the building.

The Charmant team also aims to keep a laid-back, unpretentious atmosphere.

“There might be a bit of a perception that (The Charmant) is fancy and only for special occasions,” says executive chef Kevin Micheli.

“This is a destination for a variety of occasions, including grabbing a burger and listening to bands on the weekend.”

Individualized atmosphere

Providing multiple dining and drink options in one location allows for several atmospheres. The parlor operates as a coffee bar during the day and a wine and spirits bar during the night. The lobby bar and lounge offers regional craft and domestic beers, wines, spirits and cocktails. It also features a modified menu from the restaurant. The sweets bar has Indulgence Chocolatiers specialty chocolates available 24 hours a day.

The Charmant’s cocktail menu allows for each bartender to have the opportunity to showcase his or her creativity and skills. Cocktails change with each season, and with the change, bartenders have the opportunity to create their own cocktails. The favorites make it to the menu for patrons to enjoy. Each cocktail includes The Charmant’s homemade syrups and juices.



Top left: The Charmant lounge offers cocktails and a modified menu. Top right: The parlor operates as a coffee bar by day and a wine and spirits bar by night. Bottom left: The sweets bar offers specialty chocolates 24 hours a day. Bottom right: The French 75 and Wisco Old Fashioned, two signature drinks from The Charmant, are shared in recipes on the next page.

Allowing for employee input is something else Micheli says sets The Charmant apart from other establishments. He says many of the employees have been at The Charmant from the beginning and are always looking to “put their own stamp on it.”

French inspired, locally sourced

The restaurant serves breakfast, lunch and dinner and features rustic French-inspired dishes that are made from as many fresh and local ingredients as possible. Local suppliers include area Amish and organic farmers. Micheli says he loves being able to showcase the wide variety of local foods, which keeps expanding every year.

“You can taste and feel the difference,” says Gabbud of the food. He applauds Micheli’s efforts to bring in fresh ingredients. “It’s part of what makes this place so special. Everything is made from scratch. No shortcuts are taken.”

Micheli, who has been at The Charmant since it opened, says he

played around with food and the menu quite a bit in the beginning. While the menu still changes—it now includes an expanded pasta selection—some offerings have become standards. A favorite appetizer is goat cheese and honey; the honey is supplied by a local Amish man. The French onion soup has also become a menu staple, as well as the ribeye.

The roasted chicken with Lyonnaise potatoes is Micheli’s food recommendation. He says the meal doesn’t have many frills, and its simplicity is what makes it such a good dish. Gabbud recommends diners try the wood-fired pizzas, which are served on the rooftop terrace during warmer months. The terrace is set to open for the 2018 season on April 16 at 3 p.m.

The Charmant’s drink and dining options vary by where patrons choose to drink and dine. A complete listing of hours of operations and menus can be found at www.thecharmanthotel.com.

WISCO OLD FASHIONED

- 2 oz. brandy
- ¼ oz. demerara syrup*
- 2 drops bitters of choice
- 1 cherry (preferably Luxardo)
- 1 half orange wheel

Glass: rocks glass

Garnish: maraschino cherry on toothpick

Muddle orange and cherry in the rocks glass. Fill glass with ice. Add brandy, demerara syrup and bitters. Stir and taste. Garnish with a cherry on a toothpick

*Demerara syrup: Combine equal parts by weight of water and demerara sugar (can be purchased at specialty foods stores) in a saucepan. Heat until all sugar is dissolved. Allow to cool; bottle and refrigerate.

FRENCH 75

- ½ oz. lemon juice
- ½ oz. simple syrup*
- 1 oz. gin
- 1 drop Bittercube cherry bark vanilla bitters or bitters of choice
- 2.5 oz. sparkling wine

Glass: champagne flute

Garnish: lemon twist

Combine all ingredients, except for the sparkling wine, with six ice cubes in a cocktail shaker. Shake for approximately 15 to 20 seconds. Add sparkling wine. Strain into a champagne flute and garnish with a lemon twist.

*Simple syrup: Combine equal parts by weight of water and granulated sugar in a saucepan. Heat until all sugar is dissolved. Allow to cool; bottle and refrigerate.

GOAT CHEESE CACHET OR GOAT CHEESE AND HONEY

- 1 tub chevre (goat cheese)
- Zest from 1 lemon
- ½ cup heavy cream
- ½ T Pernod
- ½ clove garlic, microplaned
- ½ cup fine herbs (tarragon, chervil, chive and parsley), chopped
- 1 tsp. salt

In a large bowl, add all ingredients together. Season with salt to taste. Spread can be served with crusty bread, honey or jam. 

Jessie Foss is a La Crosse-based writer.

Everyone loves the sound of a cork popping at a party! But many wines in today's wine world have screw-cap closures. There's an assumption that screw caps are only used for cheap wines. But in reality, sometimes the screw cap is superior to the cork. When a winemaker wants a traditional type of closure that will increase oxygen contact as the wine ages, she or he chooses a cork. Sometimes the cork is the choice if only to increase the romance of opening the bottle! However, if you want a wine to age better without any oxidation, the screw cap is the answer. For example, if you have a choice between closing a jelly jar with wax or a vacuum, total-seal lid, the answer seems simple: the vacuum lid. Recent studies have shown that the "Saranex" liner in the screw caps protects fruity flavors in wine for a longer duration than cork does, so sweet, fruity wines age better with a screw cap. Some screw-cap makers are even designing the oxygen exchange rate of the liner to mimic cork. So, in the future, the screw cap "twist" might be the sound of "join me for a glass of wine"!

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11 Ways to Shine

Being your best self can make a difference in an anxious world.

You can help make the world be a better place—just one small step at a time. Small changes—like the ones given here—can make a big difference in your life and the lives of others, and they’re not that hard to do. Try out these small actions as you go through your day, and soon they will become routine. You never know when one of them will have a profound effect, so give them a try!

Have you ever experienced **ROAD RAGE**? If someone frustrates you with slow driving, cuts you off or drives irresponsibly, what is your response? Instead of getting angry, consider: That driver may be confused, lost, in an emergency or simply having a difficult time driving. **STAY CALM AND GRACIOUS**, and you might avoid an accident instead of being in one.

While driving, do you find it difficult to merge when a lane is narrowing? Remember the “zipper technique” and let the waiting driver **merge ahead** of you. You’ll still get to your destination on time, and that driver will appreciate your kindness. Give them a friendly wave while you’re at it. And if another driver lets you merge, offer a **wave of gratitude**, too.

GOLDEN RULES

- Treat people like you want to be treated
- Seek to turn every negative into a positive
- Look at yourself—you can change what you don’t like
- Smiles are free and can transform someone’s day
- Kindness is never forgotten
- Ask yourself, “What can I do to get the best outcome for all?”
- Yelling solves nothing

.....

“We’re here for a reason. I believe a bit of the reason is to throw little torches out to lead people through the dark.”

—Whoopi Goldberg

SMILE when you meet others in any situation. What do you do when someone smiles and greets you? You smile in response. And the moment you smile, you not only brighten someone else’s day, but you have shifted your attitude and **MADE YOUR OWN DAY BETTER**, too. This works even when you are on the phone!

You know **THAT MOM**: She’s the one struggling at Target with crying kids, an overfull cart and visibly frayed nerves. She might be snapping at her children or on the verge of tears. **REMEMBER THOSE DAYS?** Tell her you do. Acknowledge that this is hard, and assure her that it will get easier. Simply letting her know she is not alone, and that you don’t judge her, will ease her burden.

“How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single minute before starting to improve the world.”

—Anne Frank

Pay for someone's coffee in the drive-thru. That surprise will make someone's day and—who knows?—it may inspire that someone to do a kind deed for someone else.

Do you **LOVE TO SHOP**? Why not add supplies like underwear, socks and personal hygiene products to your list and donate them to homeless resource centers in town? Places like New Horizons Shelter & Outreach Centers and area schools have lists of items **WOMEN AND GIRLS** need.

Give a **KIND WORD**. Whether a compliment, a thank-you, a reassurance or an acknowledgment of a bad day, nothing **LIGHTENS THE HEART** like a word of kindness. What would happen if we did this to each person we encounter in a day?

*A selfie stick only goes so far. Be the **human accessory** who offers to take pictures of someone—whether a family at a restaurant or a group of tourists. You'll be an **ambassador for your community**, and you'll meet the most interesting people!*

Remember that **ALL PEOPLE MAKE MISTAKES**. Instead of getting upset and even yelling, try to stay calm and find a remedy for the mistake. Take that “mad time” and use it to come up with a solution—**YOU BECOME A PROBLEM-SOLVER** instead of a mistake-finder. This also encourages the person who made the mistake to positively reflect on problem-solving and mistake prevention.

Be the person who **OPENS** the door for someone struggling with children, carrying groceries or using an assistance device for a disability. For that matter, hold the door open for anyone. Chivalry is not dead, and it's **NOT JUST FOR MEN**.

“Every time you smile at someone, it is an action of love, a gift to that person, a beautiful thing.”

—Mother Teresa

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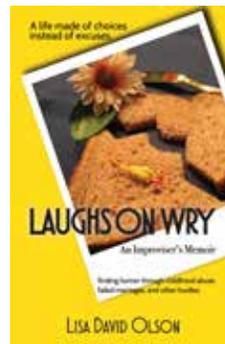
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Susan Breyer, a financial advisor at Altra Federal Credit Union, has been named to the Senior Advisor Leadership Team with broker-dealer CUNA Brokerage Services, Inc. (CBSI). This distinction is awarded to a limited number of financial advisors registered with CBSI who demonstrate exceptional sales productivity, demonstrate leadership within their credit union and among their peers, and have seniority at the broker-dealer. Breyer has more than 31 years' experience in the financial industry and has been with Altra since 2013. She was named a Woman of Distinction in 2016 and 2017 by CUNA Brokerage Service Inc. She and her husband, Dave, live in La Crescent and have four children.



**Altra Federal Credit Union
Receives Diamond Award**

Altra Federal Credit Union was recently honored with a Diamond Award recognizing outstanding marketing and business development achievements in the credit union industry. The award was presented by the Credit Union National Association (CUNA) Marketing & Business Development Council, a national network composed of more than 1,300 credit union marketing and business development professionals. Altra won the video category for its entry "Altra Birthday Video." It was created by Altra's digital media specialist, Emily Goetzing. Award winners were recognized at the council's 25th annual conference held March 11-14 in San Francisco. For more information about Altra Federal Credit Union, please visit www.altra.org.



**Humorist Lisa
Olson Serves Up
*Laughs on Wry***

Local author, speaker and comic Lisa David Olson has just released her first book. *Laughs on Wry: An Improviser's Memoir* is a humor-sprinkled read about growing up in an alcoholic home, using humor as a survival tool at a young age and creating a business in comedy: the Heart of La Crosse. Olson's stories feature her love of pranks, personal tales and a local photo project.

A portion of the book's proceeds will go to Healthy Families at the La Crosse Family and Children's Center. *Laughs on Wry* can be ordered from www.lisadavidolson.com; don't miss the book's release on April 18, 6-8 p.m., at Pearl Street Books in La Crosse.

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TAKING ROOT AND BRANCHING OUT

A new model of thrift store benefits donors and the organizations they value.

BY DOREEN PFOST
Contributed photo



Mary Jo Wilbur displays the organizations benefiting from RootinCrown proceeds.

A new thrift store on La Crosse's South Side makes it easy—and fun—to support local nonprofit organizations. “It’s a win-win for everybody,” says owner Mary Jo Wilbur, “because we all love to shop at thrift store prices and we all have *stuff* to give away.”

Here’s how it works: Suppose you have a rocking chair that you no longer use. You can take it to RootinCrown and donate it—not to RootinCrown, but to one of the dozens of local nonprofits listed on a board inside the store. The organization you choose becomes owner of the rocking chair, and thus the consignor. A tag on the chair tells shoppers which group will benefit from its sale, and when it’s sold, half of the proceeds go to the designated organization. A list on RootinCrown’s website, www.rootincrown.com, details the types of items they accept.

And how do organizations get their name on that board? The process is simple, says Wilbur. Send a message through the website, and RootinCrown’s administrator will respond with a short agreement form outlining the terms of the consignment relationship. That’s it.

Registered organizations can increase their participation by sending volunteers to help in the store. Any group that provides at least 20 volunteer hours in a month receives an additional 10 percent on sales of their consigned items.

A celebration of community

Proceeds are distributed quarterly at an event with the feel of a celebratory party. “I was going to just send out checks,” says Wilbur. “But this is all about networking and supporting each other.” So quarterly distribution events begin at 5 p.m. with a half-hour

shopping spree, where prices are discounted 25 percent storewide. That’s followed at 5:30 by a meet-and-greet that is open to the public.

Details about the next distribution day, on April 11, can be found on the RootinCrown Facebook page.

RootinCrown’s name refers to a community’s reliance on its foundation—its roots—consisting of its organizations. “And when the roots are big and solid, the crown of the tree grows strong,” Wilbur says. She explains that the unusual spelling comes from her 12-year-old granddaughter Lena’s observation that they are “rootin’ for organizations.” The words “Willow Branch” in the logo refer to this first store, which is named for Wilbur’s favorite tree.

Growing and giving

Looking to the future, Wilbur envisions opening additional stores in the region and eventually franchising her unique concept. In the short term, a second RootinCrown store is scheduled to open in Onalaska this spring. Young Lena has already been at work to find a name for the new location. It will be the Seven Sisters store, named for a venerable tree in Louisiana, the largest certified specimen of southern live oak, a particularly vigorous and resilient species.

Like the trees for which the stores are named, “we just want to grow,” Wilbur says. “The donors are happy; the shoppers are happy, because they see where their money is going; and the organizations are delighted. That’s why this is such a happy place.” 

Eloy-based writer Doreen Pfost is a member of Women Writers Ink and a devotee of thrift shops.



CONQUERING THE FEAR FACTOR

Kay Rutherford proves we can all step up to a challenge, regardless of age.

BY JANIS JOLLY
Contributed photo

Kay Rutherford of La Crosse rests and soaks her feet in a stream along the Appalachian Trail. She hiked 1,500 miles on the legendary pathway this past year.

Kay Rutherford, retired psychotherapist and professor, has embarked on some really big adventures, many of them at an age when others are reaching for their slippers and rocking chairs. She has hiked the famed El Camino trail across northern Spain, a 500-mile journey that took her 29 days. She has hiked the Superior Hiking Trail along the North Shore of Lake Superior—224 miles of it, carrying her gear on her back. That took 19 days.

Her most recent feat was the Appalachian Trail, which she hiked from February through August 2017, covering 1,500 miles of the total 2,100. Four-and-a-half months on the trail resulted in amazing sights and experiences—and sore feet.

Rutherford typically hikes alone, not that she wants to, but she finds it difficult to find people to go with her. For one thing, she prefers backpacking, and many people don't like to sleep on the ground. Also, it's a big time commitment.

When she invites people to go with her, she gets lots of reasons why not to, from "too many mosquitos" or fear of snakes to family and work obligations. Instead, she makes friends along the trail, stopping to rest and chat, meeting up with them again at campsites.

Choosing action

Where does Rutherford get the drive and gumption to take these hikes? One initiative she has for accomplishing her goals is to overcome self-perceived limits. We all have them.

She explains that fear causes us to limit ourselves. We are afraid of new things: If I go skiing, I might fall and get hurt. If I embark on a new relationship, I might get hurt.

If these limits dominate our behavior, we'll be stuck.

If you turn it around, if you take action, you could find out that

you can ski, and even if you fall, you can get up and ski again. If you brave a new relationship, you might make a good friend or find the love of your life.

Rutherford says we think that by limiting ourselves, we will gain security. But there is no guaranteed security, and it's better to choose action. She has learned to meditate on her own fears to understand and deal directly with them.

"No perceived limits"

She says that older women face an aging body coupled with loss of social status, often becoming "invisible" in society. Aging is inevitable, but it can be mitigated with healthy living. And while we can't alter the attitudes of others, we shouldn't accept being ignored. Nothing will change if we don't speak up. Aging need not be as limiting and frustrating as we think it will be. Focus on what you can do, she says, not on what you can't.

For Rutherford, adventure goals are about nature. "I can't imagine going on vacation in a city. You can't enjoy the natural world if you never go there. If you can travel now, do it. No perceived limits."

Friends and family fear for her safety, but she scoffs at the idea of carrying a weapon, relying on sensible safety precautions: good equipment, never camping next to a road, camping near other hikers and making lots of noise in bear country.

What is coming up in the future? She's thinking about the Pacific Crest Trail, which is wider and easier than the Appalachian Trail but has bigger bears! [\(crw\)](#)

Janis Jolly lives in La Crosse and thinks 10 miles is a long hike.

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BY PAIGE FORDE

Photos by Jen Towner Photography

Spring is in the air! Chase the winter blues away with runway-inspired hues that are dominating this season's biggest fashion shows. When it comes to refreshing your spring wardrobe by incorporating these essential color trends, three local fashion-forward shops—Mainstream Boutique, Urban Shoetique and Touch of Class—have got you covered.



Urban Shoetique: Yanak T-shirt dress, \$110; Amy Louise Boho Couture Keely necklace, \$85; Myra Flow bracelet, \$40; Miz Mooz sandals, \$160; makeup by **Ultimate Salon & Spa**. Modeled by Kaylee Kriesel.



Mainstream Boutique: MontanaCo embroidered denim jacket, \$139; M. Rena lace camisole, \$32; Staccato pants, \$46; New Prospects purse, \$62; Madeline Girl taupe sandals, \$59; Bi Jou earrings, \$16; Bi Jou necklace, \$36. Modeled by Paige Forde.



Touch of Class: Lilla P button-down top; Eileen Fisher cropped jeans; Rebecca Minkoff purse; Cordani Evan carbon wedges; Deborah Grivas hoop earrings; Kendra Scott silver fern necklace; Heather B Moore "Love Always" necklace; Annabeck ring and cuff. Modeled by Karissa Dierickx.

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Kristen Schwanke (left) and Gerryanne Schwanke arrive at the Grammy Awards ceremony in New York City.



Celebrity sighting: Scott Hoying from Pentatonix.

| Q&A |

A TRIP TO THE RED CARPET

A Coulee Region woman steps into the limelight at the Grammys.

BY BETTY CHRISTIANSEN

Contributed photos

When Kristen Schwanke and her sister-in-law, Gerryanne Schwanke, won tickets to *The Ellen DeGeneres Show* in Los Angeles, they couldn't have imagined it would lead to another once-in-a-lifetime experience. In a surprise twist of events, Kristen, an Onalaska Middle School English teacher, found herself onstage guessing a song muffledly sung by Gerryanne, and when she got the right answer—"Milkshake"—the two were on their way to New York City for the Grammy Awards. This led to a community outpouring of support and an unforgettable adventure.

How did you win the Grammy trip?

As we were waiting to go into the studio, scouts came around asking groups of people why they were there. They told us that when they called people to the back of the waiting area, our group should join them. They told us they picked the "fun people" out of the crowd. I think what helped was I couldn't sit still. I was just so excited—I was going to be able to give Ellen a hug!

When I heard about the trip to the Grammys, I was very excited. I love music of all kinds! Of any awards show, this would be my pick. When it came time to play the game, I just knew what I had to do and did it. Apparently singing along to songs in the car really helped!

How did you prepare for your trip?

We flew back from Los Angeles late on a Tuesday and were flying to New York early that Saturday. That gave me three days to get ready. *The Ellen Show* took care of flights, transportation and hotel, but we had to arrange everything else. I was very stressed about finding a formal dress that would be appropriate for the event. My sister-in-law and I decided to go all-out and have our hair and makeup done as well. We used an app called beGlammed. The makeup artist and hair stylist came right to our hotel. I also decided to get my nails done right in New York. That was a treat also!

Let's get to the good stuff: What did you wear?

As soon as we won the tickets, I called my husband and said, "I can't go; I don't have anything to wear." He contacted our good friend Courtney Kubly, hoping she knew where I could find a dress. Immediately she said, "I'm getting a glam squad together for you."

She contacted The Wedding Tree, and they immediately offered to sponsor a dress for me. I wanted a classy black floor-length dress that made me feel beautiful. They listened to my preferences and helped me find the perfect dress for my body. They even gave me a bracelet as an accent piece.

Then I sent out an all-call on social media to find a clutch that matched my dress. Courtney's friend Janelle from FUNK sponsored a beautiful clutch and gorgeous chandelier earrings to pull the look together. My shoes were classic black heels I had in my closet. I don't pull them out very often, but this was an occasion that needed them.

Did you spot any celebrities on the famed "red carpet"?

We didn't get to the red carpet, as our pre-party sponsored by Mastercard went right up to the last minute, and we had to get to the show right away. However, we did brush shoulders with Scott Hoying from Pentatonix. He was standing near our seats, and we snagged a picture with him.

How exciting was it to be there?

The experience was unbelievable. I felt like I was in a dream. The talent was unreal. It was the best concert anyone could ever see!

I am grateful and thankful for everyone who helped make that a day that I'll remember for the rest of my life. Someday I'll be able to tell my grandchildren about the time I won a game on *The Ellen Show* and got to go to the Grammys! [\(crw\)](#)

Betty Christiansen is editor of Coulee Region Women and fondly remembers the night she got to be a seat-filler at the Tonys.

Jordana Snyder PHOTOGRAPHY 
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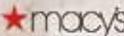
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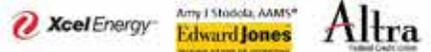
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COMMUNITY CALENDAR

ONGOING EVENTS

American Association of University Women (AAUW) 2nd Sat. of each month (Sept.-May), 9:30 a.m., aauwlacrosse@hotmail.com, aauw-wi.org.

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

Coulee Region Professional Women (CRPW) 4th Tues. of each month, Shelli Kult, crpwomen@gmail.com.

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

La Crosse 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., Gundersen Health System Urgent Care Bldg., Basement, 1830 S. Ave., La Crosse.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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.

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

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

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

CALENDAR EVENTS

Apr. 5, Letters Aloud: "Fame," 7:30 p.m., Heider Center for the Arts, www.heidercenter.org.

Apr. 5-Jun. 23, *Silent Sky*, 7:30 p.m. Thurs.-Sat., 1:30 p.m. Sun, Commonweal Theatre, Lanesboro, MN, www.commonwealtheatre.org.

Apr. 6, Lou & Peter Berryman, 7:30 p.m., The Pump House, www.thepumphouse.org.

Apr. 7, *Charlotte's Web*, 11 a.m. & 1 p.m., Frederick Theatre, Morris Hall, UW-La Crosse.

Apr. 7, Platinum Edition: Celebration 2018, 7:30 p.m., Viterbo Fine Arts Center.

Apr. 7, UW-L SOTA Project Funway Runway Fashion Show, Valley View Mall, www.myvalleyview.com.

Apr. 8, Divine Mercy Sunday Devotions, 12-3:15 p.m., Mary Mother of the Church, 2006 Weston Street, La Crosse, 608-788-5483.

Apr. 10, Viterbo University Community Health Fair, 2-6 p.m., Viterbo Mathy Center.

Apr. 12, Fresh Homemade Pretzels Class, 5:30-7 p.m., People's Food Co-op, La Crosse, pre-register in person or by phone, 608-784-5798.

Apr. 12, *William Shakespeare's Long Lost First Play*, 7:30 p.m., Viterbo Fine Arts Center.

Apr. 12-14, Heart of La Crosse Comedy Troupe: Class Reunion, 7:30 p.m., The Pump House, www.thepumphouse.org.

www.thepumphouse.org.

Apr. 13, Spring Fling Open House, 4-8 p.m., Downtown La Crosse, www.lacrossedowntown.com.

Apr. 13-14, Mid West Music Fest-La Crosse, www.midwestmusicfest.org.

Apr. 13-15, Spring Sale, River Trail Cycles, www.rivertrailcycles.com.

Apr. 14, Piano Men: A Musical Journey Through the Seventies, 7:30 p.m., Viterbo Fine Arts Center.

Apr. 14-15, Onalaska Omni Center Spring Gift & Craft Show, 9 a.m.-3 p.m. Sat., 10 a.m.-3 p.m., Sun., Onalaska Omni Center.

Apr. 17, Baking with Food Network Champion Jen Barney, 6-8 p.m., People's Food Co-op, La Crosse, pre-register in person or by phone, 608-784-5798.

Apr. 18, Lisa Olson, *Laughs on Wry* book release and signing, 6-8 p.m., The Pump House, www.thepumphouse.org.

Apr. 20, Celebrating Sinatra: His Life in Music, 7:30 p.m., Viterbo Fine Arts Center.

Apr. 20-29, *The Arsonists*, 7:30 p.m. Thurs.-Sat., 2 p.m. Sun., Toland Theatre, Center for the Arts, UW-La Crosse.

Apr. 20-29, Restaurant Week La Crosse, Downtown La Crosse, www.lacrossedowntown.com.

Apr. 21, Women's Fund of Greater La Crosse Spring Fling, 10:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m., Celebrations on the River, www.womensfundlacrosse.org.

Apr. 21, Ultrasonic Duo, 7:30 p.m., The Pump House, www.thepumphouse.org.

Apr. 21-22, Sports Card, Craft, & Collectibles Show, Valley View Mall, www.myvalleyview.com.

Apr. 21-29, *James and the Giant Peach*, 3 p.m. Sat. & Sun., Weber Center for the Performing Arts.

Apr. 22, The 3 Redneck Tenors, 4 p.m., Heider Center for the Arts, www.heidercenter.org.

Apr. 22, Award & Fundraising Celebration, Norskedalen Nature & Heritage Center, Coon Valley, www.norskedalen.org.

Apr. 26, Intro to Baking with Sourdough Class, 6-8 p.m., People's Food Co-op, La Crosse, pre-register in person or by phone, 608-784-5798.

Apr. 27, *Camisado: A Rock Ballet*, 7:30 p.m., The Pump House, www.thepumphouse.org.

Apr. 27-28, Mid West Music Fest-Winona, www.midwestmusicfest.org.

Apr. 27-28, Vintage Market, 9 a.m.-4 p.m., Coon Valley Village Hall.

Apr. 28, Between the Bluffs Beer, Wine & Cheese Festival, Oktoberfest Grounds, La Crosse, www.betweenthebluffsbeerfest.com.

Apr. 29, Earth Fair, 11 a.m.-5 p.m., Myrick Park, La Crosse, www.earthfairlacrosse.com.

May 4-June 1, Downtown Walk Around, Downtown La Crosse, www.lacrossedowntown.com.

May 5, Chris Young, 7:30 p.m., La Crosse Center, www.lacrossecenter.com.

May 11-27, *Cabaret*, 7:30 p.m. Thurs.-Sat., 2:00 p.m. Sun., La Crosse Community Theatre, www.lacrossecommunitytheatre.org.

May 12, Annual Plant Sale, 10 a.m.-2 p.m., Hillview Urban Agriculture Center, La Crosse, www.hillviewuac.org.

May 19, Danceworkz in Motion, 1 & 6 p.m., Page Theatre, Saint Mary's Performance Center, Winona.

May 19, Old School Variety Show, 7:30 p.m., The Pump House, www.thepumphouse.org.

May 19-20, Westby Syttende Mai, www.westbywi.com.

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