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women

AND HEALTHY LIVING MAGAZINE

Necessities

**Carol Abrahamzon Carves Out
Space for Nature**

**A Great Place to Work
A Safe Place to Be
Great Smile, Great Health
Community Through Quilting
Exploring the English Countryside**





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Pictured on the cover: Carol Abrahamzon, executive director of the Mississippi Valley Conservancy. Photo by Jordana Snyder Photography.

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What do you need right now?

I challenge you to take a minute to think about that question. Maybe use it as a conversation starter when you gather with friends, whether over coffee, a book club or even on the bleachers next to other parents at a child's sports practice.

There are many things we need, but yet find ways to do without. Sleep comes to mind—it can be hard for women to get all that they need regardless of their stage in life. We may be getting up to nurse an infant, restlessly waiting for a teenager to get home late at night, struggling with the hot flashes of menopause or simply weathering the body's changing needs as retirement sets in. We may need connection but be too busy to find time for a long conversation. We may need a mental reset, but work projects are unrelenting. And, of course, we are often great at rationalizing wants vs. needs—in both directions. How often have you told yourself you don't really need to go to bed early (after all, that laundry NEEDS to be done), then decided that a large latte is absolutely necessary to get through the day?

The necessities of life, according to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, of course begin with what we must have physiologically to

survive: food, air, water, shelter. Ensuring everyone has access to those essentials takes many different forms. Our cover woman, Carol Abrahamzon, leads the Mississippi Valley Conservancy, which is dedicated to protecting natural areas that are important to maintaining clean water and air for all of us, while the advocates at the REACH Center connect vulnerable community members to resources for food, shelter and more.

The next level of Maslow's hierarchy focuses on safety—which includes both physical safety, as addressed by our Community story with Ann Kappauf at New Horizons, and the security of a job and source of income. That also means access to childcare for those with children, the focus of Jodi Widuch at The Parenting Place. Health, and access to health care, is also part of this category of needs—can we take care of ourselves physically?

And we need love, belonging and connection. A group of creative La Crosse area women have found that friendship in a shared love of quilting, stitching together connections across generations and personalities. Where do you feel loved and share a sense of belonging?

The top two levels in Maslow's hierarchy are esteem and self-actualization, which we can only find if our other needs are met. Esteem—which includes self-esteem, respect, status and freedom—often hinges on feeling safe or secure and having those connections that tell us we belong. And self-actualization—the desire to be the best we can be—is at the peak of the pyramid, building on the foundation of having had our other needs met.

As individuals and as a community, we all play a role in providing these necessities, whether we donate food or time to an organization dedicated to providing basic physiological needs, take steps to help others be safe or simply prioritize finding time to build friendships and connections with others. I believe that when we each make an effort to fulfill the basic needs of others, the end result can be achieving our own higher-level needs of esteem and self-actualization.

My wish for each of you, our readers, is that you have those necessities which enable you to reach for what you need to be whole.

Shari

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SCHOLARSHIPS, NETWORKING AND MORE!



The Women's Alliance of La Crosse (WAL) offers the unique opportunity to connect with Coulee Region women from a variety of professions through monthly networking gatherings and raises funds to provide annual scholarships to bright, motivated women seeking to further their education. And now,

WAL is looking for both scholarship applicants and new members.

Do you know a woman pursuing higher education who could use a lift? Encourage her to apply for a WAL scholarship at www.womensalliancelacrosse.com/scholarship from October 1 to 31. Applicants should be current students who will be attending an educational institution for the spring term in 2023 and should have ties to the La Crosse area. The scholarships target applicants who have overcome significant challenges or who can demonstrate that financial support will enable them not only to complete their studies, but also to make their community a better place. The committee seeks women who have shown strength, leadership and drive, and recognizes that other factors are just as important as a high GPA.

Then, join WAL yourself to connect with a fun, inspiring group of women, enjoying a lunch, speaker and great company 12 to 1 p.m. the second Thursday of each month at the Waterfront Restaurant. To learn more, go to www.womensalliancelacrosse.com.

SCORE SEEKS VOLUNTEERS



The West Central Wisconsin and U.P. Michigan chapter of SCORE, which includes La Crosse County, is seeking individuals with diverse backgrounds and experiences to serve in a variety of roles as business mentors and local community advocates. SCORE was

created in 1964 to recruit retired business executives as mentors to assist the Small Business Administration in mentoring small business owners or prospective business owners, and it quickly grew to include actively employed volunteers. Today, SCORE consists of more than 320 chapters and 11,000 volunteers across the country.

Volunteer mentors are needed in the La Crosse area. Anyone interested in volunteering can find more information at www.score.org or contact SCORE mentor Shari Laffredi at Shari.Laffredi@scorevolunteer.org.

GREY AREA PRODUCTIONS DEBUTS SEASON PREMIERE



Grey Area Productions, a theater company committed to presenting pieces that challenge current conceptions, inspire growth and stick with the audience long after the final curtain, will present its first show of the 2022-2023 season October 27 through November 6 at the Pump House Regional Arts Center.

Mitzi's Abortion: A Saint's Guide to Late-Term Politics and Medicine in America, written in 2006 by Elizabeth Heffron, is based on the

true experiences of a young military wife whose unborn baby is diagnosed during the first ultrasound with anencephaly—no cranium or brain. She faces the decision of whether to deliver immediately, which would likely be considered by both the government and her insurance company as an abortion, or carry the pregnancy to term, knowing the baby cannot survive outside the womb.

While the storyline of the play revolves around an unviable pregnancy, Heffron addresses all facets of the abortion debate. Her characters are as complex as the issue at hand, sharing viewpoints ranging from the evolution of Christian beliefs, to feminist reasoning, to ethics in medical care. At the forefront of Heffron's social commentary, however, are the characters' humor and honesty.

For tickets, showtimes and more information about Grey Area Productions, visit www.thepumphouse.org.



EVERYONE VOTE

For nearly 100 years, the League of Women Voters of the La Crosse Area (LWV) has focused on empowering voters and defending democracy—and 2022 is no different. LWV is launching its 2022 Get Out the Vote Campaign by partnering with MOKA owner Joan Wilson and with Johnny and Jordan Davis, twin brothers of basketball fame, creating campaigns to drum up voting enthusiasm among younger and newer voters especially. In addition, LWV will partner with postsecondary schools, provide information to high school seniors and publicize voting at local cultural events this fall to ensure all eligible voters are registered and ready to vote November 8.

Look for Everyone Vote yard signs, billboards and digital messages and custom VOTE T-shirts, as well as social media blasts on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter at [@lwvlacrosse](https://www.facebook.com/lwvlacrosse). Go to www.lwvlacrosse.org for all the local voting information you need—including links to register and ballots to preview.

LWV is a nonpartisan nonprofit organization that does not endorse either candidates or parties. The organization's objective in the community is registering and educating voters.

IMPORTANT DATES FOR THE GENERAL ELECTION

October 19: Last day to register online or by mail

October 25: First day of early voting

October 25: Recommended last day to request an absentee ballot

November 1: Recommended last day to mail your absentee ballot

November 8: Election Day—same-day registration at the polls



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Women in Wellness



Left-Right: Sheryl Gora-Bollom, MS, LCSW; Melissa Hellwig, MS, LPC; Mary Cortesi, MSW, LCSW

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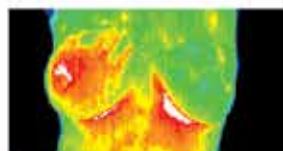
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The Necessity of Nature

Carol Abrahamzon and the Mississippi Valley Conservancy protect natural areas for future generations.

BY MARTHA KEEFFE

PHOTO BY
JORDANA SNYDER PHOTOGRAPHY

Most people prefer not to bring their work home with them. But Carol Abrahamzon, who is both the executive director of the Mississippi Valley Conservancy in La Crosse and owner of a 100-acre beef farm in rural Minnesota, welcomes the overlap between the two. “When I get up in the morning, watching the sun come up over the horizon as I do my farm chores and get ready for my day at the Conservancy, I’m surrounded by the beauty of nature,” says Abrahamzon, whose work at the organization, which is celebrating its 25th year, helps to preserve natural spaces for years to come. “As my day winds down and I head back out the door to take my dogs for a hike, finish my farm chores and harvest some food from the garden for dinner, I’m again reminded of how important the work that I do for the Conservancy is every day. It truly is a full-circle day for me.”

LEARNING TO LOVE THE LAND

Introduced to farming by her husband, Bill, Abrahamzon embraced life on the farm despite having a degree in nursing from the University of Wisconsin-Superior. “I quickly fell in love with farming and was happy to partner with Bill in his profession,” says Abrahamzon when asked about her decision to transition from medicine to agriculture. “We have been farming since we got married—first dairy, then beef—both of those in farm management for others until we bought our own farm in 2001.”

During this time, Abrahamzon, along with her two daughters, became actively involved with the American National CattleWomen, which provides a platform for women to promote and share their passion for the beef industry. “When I was with the American

National CattleWomen, I was the program manager for the National Beef Ambassador program. Like the CattleWomen, this program gives students the opportunity to talk to consumers about the humane treatment of cattle, beef nutrition and food safety,” she says. “That included hosting a national competition in a different state every year, setting up the entire conference—from booking the hotel to tours for the attendees—and finding judges for the contest. Once the five winners were chosen, I trained them and took them to consumer venues throughout the United States.”

MEANINGFUL RELATIONSHIPS

From Denver to the Boston Marathon and locations in between, Abrahamzon enjoyed her travels, but she especially cherished the relationships that she and her students built along the way. Not only have many of these connections lasted throughout the years, that season of developing relationships and learning how to effectively manage people helped prepare her for her current job.

“I wear two hats at the Conservancy,” says Abrahamzon who, due to logistical issues, chose to leave her job with the CattleWomen. “In addition to being the executive director, I also do the major gifts fundraising, which together requires a lot of interaction.

“After working with the CattleWomen and raising my kids, I was looking for something meaningful to do,” says Abrahamzon. Inspired by the Conservancy’s mission to conserve native habitats and farmlands in the Driftless Area for the health and well-being of current and future generations, Abrahamzon found what she describes as “the most dedicated supporters to our mission that you’ll ever find.”

In 2013, she joined the Conservancy and has been working to forward the goal of the organization ever since. “Land conservation



Whether exploring the woods in adventure races or caring for her family's herd of beef cattle, Carol Abrahamzon stays connected with the natural world and encourages others to find ways to do the same.

benefits the public in a multitude of ways," she says, noting that not only does the permanent protection of land help mitigate the effects of climate change, but it secures natural spaces for people to enjoy as they hike, hunt or fish. Likewise, it creates healthy environments that encourage wildlife and vegetation to thrive and protects local farms from encroaching development.

CONSERVATION ALL AROUND US

"Farmers can be really great conservationists," says Abrahamzon, explaining that in addition to being a safeguard against overdevelopment, the sustainable methods that conservation teaches can be practiced at home. "For example, on our farm we do not grow crops to feed our livestock. Instead, we employ rotational grazing: rotating the cattle from pasture to pasture, which gives the grazed portions time to recover before being grazed again," she says. "This practice protects the land from becoming overgrazed, promotes soil health and improves pasture quality by training the cattle to eat the weeds. It also allows us to feed more cattle per acre."

Moreover, by opting to use manure instead of commercial fertilizer and maintaining the forest that covers approximately one-half of their property, the Abrahamzons have created an enhanced environment that supports a variety of grazable vegetation, birds and wildlife. "The stand of aspen trees on the property is home to ruffed grouse, and there are bobolinks, which have been struggling due to a lack of habitat. We have red-tailed hawk, red-headed woodpeckers, whippoorwill, a kestrel nest and a nesting pair of eagles," she says. "We also see turkey, deer and an occasional black bear."

However, conservation is not limited to rural properties or protected lands. Urban and suburban homeowners can also take steps to create eco-friendly habitats in their own backyards. The Conservancy educates people on what they can do to grow native habitats on their property, such as removing invasive species and introducing native flowers into their landscaping. "We also offer a Trail Trek Challenge (which encourages people to hike at least five of the 26 preserves), eight guided hikes throughout the year and numerous volunteer opportunities that connect the public to our natural areas," she says.

CONNECTIONS WITH NATURE

As with Abrahamzon, whose work at the Conservancy and home life come full circle, people who have a connection to nature better understand the effect our environment and daily lives have on each other.

"I absolutely love to run, bike and paddle outdoors as I prepare for my next triathlon," says Abrahamzon, as another example of how much she appreciates what her surroundings have to offer. "I refuse to train indoors and will even go out on rainy days." And though we may not all run triathlons, by preserving natural areas and responsibly managing farmlands, we can all benefit from the opportunities that caring for our environment brings.

"With careful conservation," says Abrahamzon, "nature will always have a place." **CRW**

Martha Keefe lives, writes and enjoys the outdoor recreational opportunities in the La Crosse area.

For more information on the Mississippi Valley Conservancy, Trail Trek Challenges and more, go to www.mississippivalleyconservancy.org, where you can also sign up to receive their newsletter.

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A GREAT PLACE TO WORK

Altra Federal Credit Union helps employees live their best lives.

BY MICHELLE BYOM | CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS



Altra Federal Credit Union employees Carol Dejno, Amanda Moe Peterson and Tammy Gile volunteer at the Kane Street Garden.



Jean Schroeder and Karen Fries volunteer at the La Crosse Community Theater during Altra Gives Back.

We're living in what's been coined the "Great Resignation," where millions have decided to leave their jobs during the pandemic. As consumers, we see the impact as employers face staffing shortages, condense business hours and wrangle fewer employees into doing the work of many. Given that tumultuous picture, just how do organizations like Altra Federal Credit Union achieve a Great Place to Work Certification™?



for employees to give back to their communities. "It comes full circle," explains Cheryl Dutton, senior vice president and chief marketing officer. "If we have a healthy community, people can give back."

A GREAT PLACE TO WORK™

Great employees, Dutton explains, are hands-down the reason behind the organization's efforts. Altra achieved the Great Place to Work™ certification based on some of the

following features available to members and employees:

- enhancing employee skills and providing ongoing training
- assisting with tuition for continuing education
- investing in young professionals and encouraging participation in programs that help build their careers, such as Future Business Leaders of Altra
- providing the best benefits package possible, including PTO, retirement and wellness
- supporting work-life balance with policies and procedures such as remote work options
- giving back to the community through volunteering and donations to causes important to members

UNDERSTAND THAT CHANGES ARE INEVITABLE

Kim Bauer, vice president of human resources at Altra, explains how the organization's long history of being employee-friendly was more pronounced during the pandemic. "When a lot of places were laying off employees and reducing pay, we actually paid our essential workers a premium," she says. "The sense of care for employees has always been there, but it was elevated even more with the pandemic."

Bauer shares that Altra has not been completely left out of the unstable climate. "It's definitely a different environment right now," she says. "We focus on growth and development of our employees, and we understand that growth might eventually take them elsewhere. We want the best for all our employees, both former and current."

A VISION THAT COMES FULL CIRCLE

Recently, Altra created a new vision statement: Helping you live your best life. It speaks to employees, credit union members and communities. Altra invests in its employees through training, education, health and wellness benefits and providing time and space

INVESTING IN EMPLOYEES' WELL-BEING

With Altra's Work on Wellness program, participating employees accumulate points for maintaining a healthy lifestyle and attending annual wellness physicals or other activities, such as donating blood or exercising. "Points accumulate, and employees and their spouses can



Cheryl Dutton, senior vice president and chief marketing officer, Altra Federal Credit Union

receive a wellness premium on the health plan and other rewards, such as a Fitbit,” Bauer says. “If employees prioritize a healthy lifestyle, then that mindset transfers to their work, not just for Altra, but for the communities where they live and volunteer.”

Altra also upgraded its employee assistance program to include additional visits at no charge and options to include in-person or video visits. They partnered with a chaplaincy program, where chaplains make rounds to the La Crosse area locations each week. “(The chaplain is)

great to talk with, and sometimes just talking with someone helps take that burden off your shoulders a bit,” Bauer says.

“We’ve added a third level of care for more extreme or urgent (mental health) needs,” Bauer adds. “All of these options help our employees and their families get in to see someone more quickly than they might be able to otherwise, since there is such a shortage of behavioral health providers and such a high demand for care.”

MAKING MEMBERS’ FINANCIAL WELLNESS A PRIORITY

Altra prioritizes its members with programs and resources that allow them to maintain and grow their financial wellness. “There’s a quiz called ‘The Best Life Financial Wellness Quiz’ on the home



Kim Bauer, vice president of human resources, Altra Federal Credit Union

page of our website,” Dutton explains. “You get a score that identifies what you’re doing well financially in terms of budgeting and saving and what you might improve.” Financial counselors are on staff to provide members with advice to help them become more financially sound.

GIVING BACK TO LOCAL COMMUNITIES

“Altra gives back \$1 million organization-wide each year to the communities we serve,” Dutton says.

Altra is closed for one business day each year for Altra Gives Back, a designated day for employees to volunteer their time and talents to causes important to them and to the communities, such as food pantries and the Salvation Army. Additionally, employees receive volunteer time off as an employee benefit they can use.

Altra’s Best Life Community Awards Program has so far awarded \$90,000 to various nonprofits. Members in each community vote online to select the nonprofit that will receive the donation. “We want to make sure the things we are doing are important to our members,” Dutton says. **CRW**

Michelle Byom is sometimes a laggard in terms of technology, and that includes when she’s watching her son deposit a check to his Altra account with his phone.

ALTRA FEDERAL CREDIT UNION FEATURED ON THE WORLD’S GREATEST TV SERIES

Altra Federal Credit Union was selected as best in its category and appeared on the World’s Greatest TV series that highlights the world’s greatest companies, products, places and people.

The organization followed a rigorous application and interview process and was selected based on continued growth, a solid culture of innovation and experimentation, innovative products and services and commitment to serving its members and communities with such features as

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- mobile applications that encourage young members’ financial wellness
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Source: www.altra.org/altra-federal-credit-union-recognition-day

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The Challenge of Childcare

Jodi Widuch and The Parenting Place adapt to support childcare providers and parents.

BY JAN WELLIK | CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

We were the first in the state to offer support and resources for parents and childcare providers under one roof,” says Jodi Widuch, who joined The Parenting Place in La Crosse in 1998 as assistant director. Named executive director of the nonprofit agency in 2002, she observes that the role has changed constantly since, to include managing 45 staff members and building community involvement with funders and grants.

The Parenting Place supports childcare providers in La Crosse County, where the number of regulated childcare providers has decreased from 400 to only 90. “It’s very demanding work, and there are not enough,” Widuch says.

The organization helps childcare businesses with certification, preclicensing, business planning, site selection for a quality environment and professional development at low to no cost, she explains. It connects providers to funding opportunities and advocates for their needs. “We’ve been trying to help find solutions to the childcare crisis.”

CHALLENGING BUT REWARDING

The lack of regulated childcare providers is “mostly linked to compensation and lack of benefits for providers,” says Widuch. “They need to have health insurance and more income for their families.”

Childcare is challenging but rewarding work, she says. “(Providers) are still referred to as babysitters, rather than educators, so it can be an unattractive career choice. Right now, we are looking for ways to help support early childcare providers to help move us out of this crisis.”

Covid made it even harder for providers. “But they are resilient and savvy and bend over backward for families,” she explains. “They had to stay open during Covid.”

CONNECTING PARENTS

In addition to helping support childcare providers, The Parenting Place supports parents with resources and programs, including play groups and parent support groups. During these programs, parents interact with other parents and children. “We know they are successful when parents say we’ll meet at the park tomorrow,” she says. “Parenting can be very lonely if you’re not connecting.”

The Parenting Place also provides an online database of childcare providers for parents. Widuch quotes the Center for American Progress as saying mothers are 40 percent more likely than fathers to feel the negative impact of childcare on their careers. In addition, the pandemic has shifted work environments and the need for childcare.

A new innovation since the pandemic are weekly “forest” playgroups, which invite parents and young children to be outdoors for exploration and play, no matter the weather. “There are so many benefits to just being outside,” she says.

Other popular programs include the diaper bank, which provides diapers for parents who are financially challenged, and the Birth to 3 Program, which provides in-home services to help children develop.

ADAPTING TO CHANGING NEEDS

“We’re paying attention to what parents are looking for now versus before the pandemic,” explains Widuch. “Parenting needs are changing constantly, and we want to continue to be a support and resource in the community.” **CRW**

Jan Wellik is very familiar with the challenging and rewarding work of childcare and education at all levels—here’s to the healthy support of parents and childcare providers everywhere!



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MORE THAN JUST A PRETTY SMILE

Good dental hygiene is essential in maintaining whole-body health.

BY JOAN KENT | CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS



An orthodontic assistant at Great River Orthodontics shows a patient her new smile. Dental health and alignment are both important to maintaining physical health and a healthy outlook.



Dr. Jim Allen of Allen Dental in West Salem uses the Solea Laser to do a filling without anesthesia.

“A smile is the best makeup any girl can wear.”

—Marilyn Monroe

If a woman wants to be physically healthy and attractive, a toothbrush and dental floss are two of her best friends. A woman's dental health affects much more than her teeth.

THE SMILE IS JUST THE BEGINNING

“Many people don't realize how important flossing is for maintaining healthy smiles,” says Michelle Hansen, patient care coordinator and dental hygienist at Allen Dental in West Salem. “Not only does it keep your teeth safe from cavities and your gums clear of gingivitis, it also helps prevent many health conditions. So, the next time you think of skipping flossing, remember the few minutes it takes to practice proper oral hygiene care are well worth the effort when it comes to your oral and overall health.”



Michelle Hansen, patient care coordinator and dental hygienist, Allen Dental

“Bacterial infections associated with

poor oral health, such as gingivitis and periodontitis, can spread to the heart,” she warns. “The toxic bacteria can enter the bloodstream and end up in the heart, where they can cause deadly endocarditis.”

And as most calcium is stored in the teeth and bones, if a woman lacks calcium, her body will start to take it from her bones and teeth, Hansen adds. “This weakens them and places her at elevated risk for tooth decay and osteoporosis.”

Noticeable symptoms of calcium deficiency may take time to develop but could include weakened bones, loss of teeth, nail changes, fatigue, abnormal heartbeat, cramps, convulsions or fatigue. Absorbing calcium and optimal mineral balance are critical for the formation and repair of bones and teeth. “They're also responsible for helping teeth maintain their structure to last your entire life,” Hansen says.

ALIGNMENT IMPACTS EVERYTHING

Teeth that are properly aligned improve a woman's health, looks and self-confidence, says Dr. Kimsey Anderson, an orthodontic expert serving in the Coulee Region. “Your teeth are the beginning of your digestive system, so how they are working affects the rest of



Dr. Kimsey Anderson, orthodontist

the body. Better alignment affects what you want to eat, how you chew your food and how it's digested. Better alignment also helps teeth last longer. It's like with a house—you can paint the shutters or fix the foundation.”

It has a psychological effect too, she says, “because smiling and self-confidence are priceless attributes. Every investment in time and resources is important in how it can change your life because the act of smiling actually changes your chemistry. And that results in different life experiences for women.”

In addition, Dr. Anderson says, when people like the way they look when they smile, they smile more often and take better care of their mouth because they value their teeth.

ROUTINE TIPS FOR A TOP SMILE

Allen Dental recommends that people with a healthy mouth have their teeth cleaned and examined every six months and have X-rays taken every one to five years depending on the type of X-ray. “People with periodontal disease need to come in more frequently at three- to four-month intervals to decrease progression of the disease,” Hansen says. “Good home care of brushing twice and flossing daily, possibly with a mouth rinse, is recommended. Other dental cleaning aids are available and very useful.”

The American Association of Orthodontics recommends parents

have their children's teeth alignment checked at age seven, Dr. Anderson says. But she says there is no wrong time to have the work done, noting that she had it done when she was an adult. “The best time is as soon as a problem is identified,” she says, “because many times delayed treatment makes it more challenging and may require more work because the wear pattern of the teeth has started.”

THE IMPACT OF HORMONES

Dental health affects all stages of a woman's life, both experts say. “Some women get swollen and sore gums, which may bleed, during pregnancy,” Hansen says. “Bleeding gums are caused by plaque buildup, and hormonal changes during pregnancy can make your gums more vulnerable to plaque, leading to inflammation and bleeding.” Although pregnancy gingivitis generally subsides shortly after birth, it should be monitored to prevent the gingivitis from turning into more serious (and irreversible) periodontitis.

Menopause also signifies a substantial change in women's hormones, Hansen says, making women more susceptible to conditions such as gum disease, tooth loss, dry mouth, “burning mouth syndrome” and weakness in the jawbone. The decline in estrogen that occurs with menopause also puts women at greater risk for bone loss or osteoporosis, she says. Loss of bone, specifically in the jaw, can lead to tooth loss.

Being attentive to oral health is essential at all stages of life, Dr. Anderson says. “What woman doesn't want to feel beautiful? When there is optimal function of the body, it portrays more health.” **CRW**

Joan Kent is a retired journalist whose last job was covering city politics for the La Crosse Tribune. She lives in La Farge, near the Kickapoo Valley Reserve where she and her husband, Don, hike.



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EVERYONE DESERVES SAFETY

Ann Kappauf and New Horizons encourage individuals and the community to advocate for others.

BY SUSAN C. SCHUYLER | CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS



Purple ribbons adorn Main Street trees and the New Horizons office building during October, Domestic Violence Awareness Month.

Ann Kappauf first realized she was a domestic abuse survivor 18 years after she left her physically abusive first husband. During her 2004 interview for the executive director position at La Crosse's New Horizons Shelter and Outreach Centers, which serves those who have experienced domestic and sexual abuse, she quickly rattled off a long list when asked for reasons victims stay in abusive relationships.



Ann Kappauf,
executive director
of New Horizons

"How would I know that if I wasn't a survivor?" she says. "I just thought I was in a crummy marriage."

She got the job, but she wishes it didn't exist. "I want to hang a sign on the door that says, 'Closed Due to Lack of Business,'" she says. She doubts that will happen in her lifetime. "Many people don't understand what abuse is or think that it's a partners' problem," she says.

A COMMUNITY PROBLEM

Kappauf illustrates the challenge of creating a societal solution to domestic violence with a story from her first marriage. During a dinner date with another couple, her husband punched her in the face. "No one said a word," she says.

When abuse occurs, silence threatens others' safety. "When people realize that abuse is everyone's problem, they become stronger and more willing to stand up and advocate for others," Kappauf says.

HELPING OTHERS

Kappauf offers some things we all can do to support a survivor, stop a domestic-violence incident and stay safe:

- **Pay attention:** When you see a couple in public in a heated argument that is potentially violent, you may be able to prevent a violent incident by politely interrupting to ask for directions or to check the time. If you are concerned about someone's immediate safety, or your own, call 911.

- **Reach out:** If you feel physically and emotionally safe doing so, believe the survivor and offer support any way you can. Assure survivors they are not to blame for the abuse and that you are

concerned for their safety. Avoid telling them to leave the relationship. The survivor is the only person who can decide what's right for them.

- **Help survivors develop a safety plan:** A safety plan is a set of actions that can help lower a survivor's risk of being hurt by a partner. It includes information specific to each survivor's life to increase safety at school, home and other places visited on a daily basis.

RECOGNIZING ABUSE

As Kappauf's story illustrates, survivors often don't recognize abuse in their own relationships. Domestic violence includes a pattern of behaviors used to gain or maintain power and control, according to the National Domestic Violence Hotline's website. In addition to physical violence, like Kappauf survived, beware if your partner

- says you never do anything right
- shows extreme jealousy of your friends or time spent away from them
- prevents or discourages you from spending time with others
- insults, demeans or shames you, especially in front of other people
- prevents you from making your own decisions, including about working or attending school
- controls finances, including taking your money or refusing to provide money for necessary expenses
- pressures you to have sex or perform sexual acts you're not comfortable with
- pressures you to use drugs or alcohol
- intimidates you through threatening looks or actions
- insults your parenting or threatens to harm or take away children or pets
- intimidates you with weapons or other objects
- destroys your belongings or your home

The abuse survivor is never to blame. "The blame is always on the perpetrator. That's who we should hold accountable," Kappauf says. Surprisingly, she adds, abuse perpetrators often are well-liked, high-profile members of a community, as are abuse survivors. "Abuse knows no boundaries," she says. **CRW**

Susan C. Schuyler is a freelance writer who believed domestic violence never would affect her family. She was wrong.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HOTLINES, INTERVENTION AND OTHER SERVICES

Organization	Service Area	Language Services	Survivors Support Groups	Crisis Intervention/ Counseling	Shelter	Emergency Lodging
Deaf Unity 608-520-0203 Text Hotline (limited hours)	Wisconsin Statewide	ASL	Yes			
Gundersen Health System 608-775-5950 Crisis 800-362-9567 Ext. 55950 24/7 Crisis www.gundersenhealth.org/patients-visitors/social-services/domestic-abuse-and-sexual-assault-program/	Wisconsin counties: Adams, Crawford, Grant, La Crosse, Jackson, Juneau, Marquette, Monroe, Richland, Trempealeau, and Vernon	Yes	Yes	Yes		
Hmong Family Strengthening Helpline 877-740-4292 24/7 Hotline www.bbwpcalition.org/helpline	Wisconsin Statewide	Hmong				
Ho-Chunk Nation 877-847-8689 24/7 Crisis Toll-Free 715-284-2622 Office ho-chunknation.com/	Ho-Chunk Nation and Jackson County		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
New Horizons Shelter & Outreach Centers 888-231-0066 24/7 Crisis Toll-Free 608-791-2600 Crisis Line 608-667-9944 24/7 Text Only Line 608-791-2610 La Crosse County Office 715-538-2810 Trempealeau County Office nhagainstabuse.org	Wisconsin counties: Buffalo, Crawford, Jackson, La Crosse, Monroe, Trempealeau and Vernon	Hmong Spanish	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Safe Path, Mayo Clinic Health System (800) 362-5454 24/7 Crisis Toll-Free (608) 392-7804 Office mayoclinichealthsystem.org/locations/la-crosse/medical-services/domestic-abuse	La Crosse County			Yes		
Bluff Country Family Resources, Inc. 866-367-4297 24/7 Crisis Toll-Free 507-894-2676 Office bluffcountry.org	Houston County, MN			Yes		
Advocacy Center of Winona 507-452-4453 24/7 Hotline www.advocacywinona.org	Winona County, MN		Yes	Yes		Yes
Brighter Tomorrows 888-886-2327 24/7 Hotline www.mocobrightertomorrow.com	Monroe County		Yes			

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Creating Cozy for the Holidays

Refresh your décor to make guests feel at home.

BY HEIDI OVERSON | PHOTOS BY KARLEE MIKKELSON PHOTOGRAPHY



Mittens, flannel, ornaments and more—anything that suggests warm feelings can create cozy holiday décor.

The holiday season is around the corner, and many families may be hosting a holiday gathering for the first time in a long time. If you are wondering how you can refresh your décor and make your family and guests feel at home once again, here are some great tips for getting your home holiday ready.

Vinhøst Vintage Mercantile in Viroqua, which is owned and operated by Lois Gardner and daughters Sharon, Ellen, Carmen and Renae, offers some fantastic decorating ideas.

“First and foremost is to have fun,” says Gardner. “Everyone’s home is different, but we all share the common desire to make our spaces warm, comfortable and inviting. What’s great about decorating is you don’t have to spend a lot of money to achieve your goal. It’s all about being creative. Think outside of the box.”

START GATHERING IDEAS NOW

They suggest going on home holiday tours to get ideas. Stop at your library and peruse holiday issues of magazines like *Country Home*, *Country Living*, *Modern Farmhouse*, *Victoria* and others to look at decorating trends. You can also find countless decorating ideas online.

Take time to walk through the displays of a craft or secondhand store. If you don’t have the time to go on a tour, visit the library or do some specialty shopping, simply look around at what you have on hand. You’ll be amazed at what you can create.

10 TOP TIPS

Some of Vinhøst’s favorite ideas for refreshing your holiday décor are these:

1. Hang ornaments with fishline from a tension curtain rod in your windows.
2. Put ornaments in a large glass bowl and display on a tartan plaid runner on your counter or table.
3. String twinkle lights above your kitchen cupboards.
4. Use children’s chairs as décor. Place candles, quilts or festive stuffed animals on them.
5. Fill wooden platters with spruce or pine boughs, ribbon and holiday-scented candles.
6. Place a big bowl on a holiday runner and fill with holiday cookie cutters.
7. Hang copper cookie cutters throughout the house.
8. Deck a wicker basket with ribbon, pine cones and lights.
9. Place plaid throws with fringes over chairs. Throw pillows can also dress up an ordinary seat.
10. Place beautiful ornaments on metal trays and display on tables. This creates a really homey feel, even in more modern homes.



From left: Sharon Larson, Ellen Thelen, Lois Gardner, Renae Mikkelson and Carmen Mlsna are the owners of Vinhøst Vintage Mercantile in Viroqua.

SCENTS OF THE SEASON

“Don’t forget that scents are powerful sensory triggers,” Gardner notes. “One’s sense of smell can really bring them back to the wonderful holidays they experienced in the past.”

Nothing can beat the smell of fresh-baked pie or bread. When your family walks in the home, the aroma of a sweet treat or favorite childhood scent will spark the warm and fuzzy feelings of special times spent there with loved ones.

FINDING SPACE FOR ALL

If you are entertaining and short on space, there’s no reason to

panic. When friends and family get together, the spirits of forgiveness and “let’s accommodate” rise, as simply being together is more than enough. However, to make your gathering run more smoothly, Vinhøst suggests bringing out card tables or TV trays for your guests.

You can also find snack plates that have a spot for your guests’ drinks, which can be carried around to eat and drink from in case there is no place to sit down. The women add that Melmac picnic plates with compartments for the food are also a lot of fun to use, if you can find them.

WHOLE HOUSE HOLIDAY

If you’re looking for other fun ideas that can be implemented throughout the entire house, consider hanging antique or vintage dresses on wooden hangers to place in your bathrooms and bedrooms. String woolen mittens and make a mitten chain, or simply drape them on a bench or chair.

Another cute idea the Vinhøst women love is to take winter or holiday sweaters and tops and dress up a space with them. Add a hat, ribbon or scarf, and together, they look very charming.

The sky is the limit once you set your mind to being creative. Play some holiday music to get in the right mood. When you ignite the holiday spirit, you’ll be amazed at how simple decorating can be. Your reward will be seeing the looks on your guests’ and family’s faces when they once again walk through the door and realize they are really, truly *home*. **CRW**

Heidi Overson loves the “er-month” holidays and can’t wait to host her family’s gatherings. More about Heidi and her writing can be found at heidioverson.com.

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CUT COSTS, NOT FLAVOR

Local women offer tips and recipes for budget-friendly menus to beat inflation.

BY JULIE NELSON | CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

When it comes to necessities, food tops the list as one of those commodities we truly must have. While grocery shopping offers a lot of flexibility in a household budget, the recent spike in inflation has made it harder to fill the pantry without breaking the bank.

To ease your pain, *Coulee Region Women* asked other women for their best money-saving tips at the grocery store. Their advice ranges from straightforward and practical to whimsical—but we're sure you can find at least a few ideas you can use.

AT HOME

Sometimes you have to spend time to save money on groceries. These meal-planning tips ensure savings at the checkout:

- Plan your menu for several days to a week before you shop and get only what you need.
- Get a freezer and use it to store foods purchased on sale.
- Buy uncooked beans and cook them in an InstaPot. Make a big batch, break it into smaller servings, and freeze the servings you won't use right away.
- When you buy a bunch of cilantro or another herb for a recipe that only calls for one tablespoon full, freeze the rest.
- In smoothies, frozen spinach works just as well as fresh. Use an ice cube tray to break up the package and freeze in single servings.
- Overripe bananas are great for smoothies and banana bread and can be stored in the freezer to use as needed.
- Specify one night each week as an “eat from the pantry night,” and eat the food you already have in your pantry and refrigerator. Throwing away perfectly good food is one of the quickest ways to spoil your food budget.
- Designate an “eat me first” area of your refrigerator and stock it with the items that will only last a few days or a week.
- Eat at home or take your lunch as often as possible. You'll soon find your meals are cheaper, tastier and healthier.
- Eat a meatless meal once a week.

IN THE STORE

Laura Huber of La Crosse keeps it simple: Buy store brands, she

says, rather than name brands. Other top tips for getting the most from your money as you shop include these:

- Know your grocery stores and where you can find the best deals on different items.
- If you tend to get a lot of impulse items on your way out of the grocery store, use the self-checkout line.
- Purchase herbs and spices in bulk at the People's Food Co-op or other stores that offer this option. This is especially frugal if you only need a couple teaspoons of an ingredient or need something you won't use very often.
- Some sources suggest having your teenager work for the grocery store for the family discount.

GOOD WORKS FOR GOOD FOOD

Kaye Johnston of La Crosse offers ideas for turning volunteer time into tasty savings on the food budget. She says that volunteers at Gundersen Health System receive certificates to eat in the facility's dining room. Or she suggests signing up for the Lions' Ride for Sight Bike Ride.

“It costs \$25 to enter, but you'll likely win a \$20 gift card, you get lunch after the ride and you get a certificate for two free Mc Donald's cheeseburgers,” she says.

Another volunteer opportunity that reaps rewards for the kitchen table is the Kane Street Garden, which welcomes volunteers to help on Mondays, Wednesdays and Saturdays through the growing season. At the end of the shift, volunteers get to take home some of that day's harvest.

TAKE ADVANTAGE OF TECHNOLOGY

Put your smartphone to work with the iBotta app, suggests Katie Sparks of Onalaska. “It gives you cash back for buying qualified products,” she says. Check the app before you shop, save the deals, upload the recipes and receive a gift card for the same retailer where you made the purchase.

Keep reading for recipes our sources shared that will also help you cut the budget, not the flavor, in your home menus.



Bean and Rice Burritos

From Julie Nelson's husband, Ross Seymour

- 2 T vegetable oil
- 1-2 onions, diced
- 2-3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1-2 T chipotle peppers in adobo sauce, diced
- 2 cups cooked black beans (cook ahead of time and store in the freezer)
- 1 cup cooked rice (also can be cooked and stored in the freezer)
- 4 tortillas
- Salt and pepper
- Shredded cheddar cheese
- Salsa

Heat oil in a nonstick fry pan over medium high heat and add the onions. Cook and stir until the onion is translucent, 8-10 minutes. Add minced garlic and stir 1 minute. Add chipotle peppers and some adobo sauce; stir to incorporate. Add the beans and stir 2 minutes.

Add cooked rice and stir, cooking until all is heated through. Add a splash of water if the rice is clumpy and too dry. Add salt and pepper to taste.

Put $\frac{1}{4}$ of the mixture onto an edge of each tortilla and add shredded cheese on top to taste. Add salsa to taste. Roll the tortilla into a burrito and enjoy.



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Garden Burritos

From Laura Moriarity, La Crosse

Fill your tortilla with tomatoes, greens, peppers or basically any veggies you like.

Warm some canned refried beans, sprinkle on cheese and enjoy!



Clean Out the Fridge Frittata

From Beth Sullivan, La Crosse

- 2 T vegetable oil
- 1 small onion, chopped
- Whatever veggies you have in the refrigerator
- 6 small red potatoes, peeled, cooked and sliced
- 5 large eggs
- ¼ cup shredded cheddar cheese
- Salt and pepper

In an 8- or 9-inch ovenproof skillet, sauté onions until softened, add veggies and potatoes and spread to cover the bottom of the pan.

In a separate bowl, whisk together eggs, salt and pepper. Reduce heat to low and pour egg mixture over vegetables, covering completely. Cover and cook until egg mixture has set around edges but center is still liquid, about 6 minutes.

Pre-heat broiler. Scatter cheese over the surface of the egg mixture. Cook under broiler until lightly golden, about 4 minutes.

Cut frittata into 4 wedges and serve warm.

Walter Cronkite's Diet Casserole

From Emma Ledbetter, Cashton

Brown hamburger and drain—the amount is up to you. (If ground turkey or ground chicken is cheaper, go for it!)

Add chopped cabbage and a can of (undiluted) tomato soup.

Cook until the cabbage is as tender as you like it.

Add pepper or other seasonings to taste.



Poutine

From Erin Derr, La Crosse

- 1 bag frozen french fries
- 1 packet gravy mix
- Cheese curds

Cook fries according to package directions. Make gravy from package directions. When fries are done, pour the gravy over the fries, add cheese curds, mix well and serve.

Pineapple Upside-Down Sundaes

From *Cheap.Fast.Good!*

- 1 15¼ oz. can pineapple tidbits packed in juice
- 1 T butter
- ½ cup firmly packed light brown sugar
- ¼ cup brandy (or ¼ cup of the drained pineapple juice for non-alcoholic)
- 2 T orange juice
- 6 scoops vanilla ice cream

Drain the pineapple, reserving the juice for another use. Set the fruit aside.

Melt the butter in a small saucepan over medium-low. Add the brown sugar, brandy and orange juice. Stir constantly until the brown sugar melts, about 2 minutes. Add the pineapple. Raise the heat to medium-high and bring the sauce to a boil. Boil, stirring occasionally, until the sauce is slightly thickened, about 2 minutes. Remove it from the heat and set aside, covered, to keep warm.

Place a scoop of ice cream in each of six dessert dishes and spoon the sauce evenly on top. Serve at once.

The sauce can be prepared ahead of time and refrigerated in an airtight container for up to 3 days. To reheat, place the sauce in a microwave-safe bowl, cover with a paper towel and microwave on high until warm, about 1 minute. Stir the sauce before serving. **CRW**

Julie Nelson is the Community School Coordinator at Northside Elementary. She swears her husband could eat beans and rice every day of the week.

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Area residents seeking assistance at the REACH Services and Resource Center work directly with (from left) Rebecca Bosworth, resource advocate; Loretta Hass, program director; and Jessica Schroeder, resource advocate.

HELP WITHIN REACH

Collaboration centers on empathy and empowerment to help vulnerable neighbors.

BY JANIS JOLLY | CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Asking for help is hard. We fear asking for help, being refused help, exposing our vulnerability and conversely, staying in an uncomfortable life situation forever. Loretta Hass, program director of the REACH Services and Resource Center, emphasizes that problems causing people to seek help are usually not permanent; rather, they are transitions.

REACH, at 212 11th Street South in La Crosse, is an inviting place where residents of La Crosse County can access services from a range of nonprofit social service agencies. Hass describes it as a centralized hub for community services. She is assisted by two resource advocates who are the client's first point of contact. They do the initial intake and a brief assessment of the client's needs.

FIRST THINGS FIRST

When people access REACH, "we first deal with their presenting problem, no matter what it is, and go from there," says Hass. "If they need food assistance, we have a small food pantry here. We can give them enough food to last until they can get to a larger pantry. Then we figure out other help they might need. We support and facilitate connections with the other partner agencies that share the building with us."

The partner agencies that share the space are Catholic Charities, Independent Living Resources, the Salvation Army, CouleeCap, Inc. and YWCA La Crosse, which is Hass' employer.

Immediate assistance includes clothing, medical supplies and hygiene products. REACH can't and doesn't try to solve every problem. The focus is on filling the gap between a community member's initial needs and longer-range solutions provided by other agencies. Many people need help filling out forms and completing applications for jobs, school or financial assistance. REACH has a computer set up for clients to use and helps them fill out and submit forms correctly.

FILLING THE GAPS

Hass emphasizes that the agencies work to serve everyday people with everyday needs, not just those who are displaced from housing. REACH has a limited fund available to support some of these needs to help prevent future instances of homelessness in the community. For example, a family that had lost housing and was camping on Goose Island couldn't afford the camping fee for the next couple of weeks. Both parents had just started new jobs and hadn't been paid yet. REACH filled the gap by paying the camping fee.

“It’s important that people feel welcomed, not judged when they seek help,”

—Loretta Hass

Another person, just released from the hospital, needed transportation to his home in Tomah; REACH could fill that gap by providing a ride. A man locked his keys, phone and billfold into his car and didn’t know what to do; REACH called a locksmith. Another man needed major repairs on his truck, which was essential to his self-owned business, and while REACH couldn’t finance all the repairs, the organization was able to purchase parts to support the repairs. Each of these instances were about filling critical gaps for neighbors in our community.

“It’s important that people feel welcomed, not judged when they seek help,” Hass says. The resource advocates meet with clients in separate, comfortable rooms where they have privacy and one-on-one attention. One of the things Hass likes best about the REACH team is that they have “lived experience” with many of the struggles the clients being served face. The compassion is real.

OUTREACH BEYOND THE CENTER’S WALLS

REACH provides regular in-person services to Houska Park and other unsheltered residents through the Independent Living Resources Homeless Outreach Team, which visits the site at least three times a week. This team works to establish trusting rapport with individuals and provide information about shelter options, access to emergency medical services, housing navigation and access to general resources in the area. Conditions in an outdoor camp aren’t ideal, and keeping clean and dry is difficult for many. Hygiene products and first aid supplies are always needed. Staffers distribute supplies as well as towels, socks and other supplies at the shelter in Houska Park. Food, some clothing, first aid items and hygiene supplies are also available at the REACH building for those who need them.

COMMUNITY COMING TOGETHER

REACH was developed out of the Collaborative to End Homelessness that was established in 2019.

YWCA La Crosse and the REACH partners moved into the center building in July 2021 with an official opening in October of that year. Walk-in services and resources are available Monday through Thursday 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Fridays 8 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

For more information, visit www.reachcenterlacrosse.org or call 608-781-2783, ext. 200. Community members interested in contributing to the REACH fund to help close the gap for other neighbors can donate at www.reachcenterlacrosse.org/donate. CRW

Freelance writer Janis Jolly is grateful for all those people with helping hearts.



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Common Threads

The La Crosse Area Quilters stitch together friendships through service and shared interests.

BY SHARI HEGLAND
CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Members of the La Crosse Area Quilters display a quilt that will be raffled at the organization's QuiltFest on the Mississippi October 21 and 22 at the Onalaska OmniCenter. From left: Claudia DeVetter, Stephanie Ruetten, Joan Yeatman, Joyce Abernathy and Pam Krogness.

It's hard to say which brings the bigger smiles to the room when the La Crosse Area Quilters gather: the beauty of the colors and patterns all around them or the colorful banter and obvious friendship around the table.

From a gathering of just seven people in 1980 to today's roster of nearly 100 members, the guild has grown in numbers with a wide range of ages (up to 99!) and talents, coming together from a three-state area under the blanket of quilting.

DIFFERENT BEGINNINGS, SHARED PASSION

Many members of the La Crosse Area Quilters began sewing at an early age, through 4-H projects or following in the footsteps of a mother, grandmother or aunt. Joyce Abernathy of La Crosse remembers sewing clothes on treadle machines alongside her mother and four sisters in the family basement before discovering her gift for the art of quilting. Today, she creates wall hangings, typically on commission, that bring scenes to life in tiny detail with intricate stitching that often creates a picture on the back of the piece just as intriguing as the front.

Joan Yeatman also started sewing clothes at a young age before discovering the hobby she has continued for more than 40 years. "I thought it was great after all those years sewing clothes," she says, to make the switch to quilting, where she favors block quilts. "I like doing the traditional blocks, but playing with colors," she says.

Beyond individual talents and artistic work, guild members say the true value of the organization is the community it fosters. Pam Krogness moved to the area 10 years ago knowing no one. "This is where I've built my whole community," she says: connections formed through the guild.

That sense of community may include a shared sense of humor, as talk of UFOs and PhDs fills the room ("unfinished objects" and "projects half done" for the uninitiated), but community also means service: sewing Quilts of Valor for veterans, pillowcases and quilts for the Family & Children's Center and more than 500 cloth masks during the height of the Covid-19 pandemic.

"The necessity of this guild is that it helps us maintain our sanity," says Claudia DeVetter.

FIND THE BEAUTY

We can all enjoy the beauty of the community and art created by La Crosse Area Quilters year-round at the La Crosse Public Library's main branch, where rotating displays serve dual purposes of showcasing these local artists while helping to muffle echoes in the large building.

An even better opportunity for an eyeful of the diversity in the art form will be available October 21-22 at the Onalaska Omni Center for QuiltFest on the Mississippi. The fest will include more than 100 quilts of all sizes, from small wall hangings to king-size bed quilts, including traditional, modern and art pieces. There will also be exhibits of "mystery" quilts and challenges sewn by guild members throughout the year following either the same pattern or same topic, often with very different interpretations. Abernathy and Yeatman are the featured artists for this year's fest, the 18th hosted by the local guild. The event also features vendors, a boutique, demos and a raffle. To learn more about the guild and QuiltFest, go to www.lacrossequiltguild.com. **CRW**

Shari Hegland was delighted to see the details of Joyce Abernathy's "Bird City" piece and enthralled by the colors and patterns in those showcased at the La Crosse Public Library.



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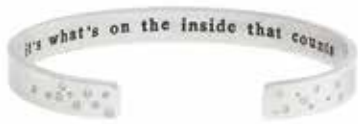
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BY ELISE WEINBENDER
PHOTOS BY
FRONTIER PHOTOGRAPHY

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simple by supplying
yourself with reliable
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then personalize with
accessories that show off
your unique style.**

Shacket Season

The perfect fall jacket is an item you will reach for over and over again throughout the autumn season, and this “shacket” (shirt-jacket) from **Mainstream Boutique** pairs perfectly with jeans and a camisole. Choose from a palette of lace-detailed camis and add a handbag, sunglasses and jewelry for a complete fall look.

Staccato shacket, \$119; Liverpool Abby ankle jeans, \$74; Elietian lace inset top, \$34; Elietian reversible V/scoop neck top, \$28; Jen&Co. handbag, \$39; Savanna sunglasses, \$35; earrings, \$24; necklace, \$29.



Quirky Classics

Wardrobe staples are the items that make you feel comfortable and confident, and this tunic from **Outrageous Boutique** can be paired with a variety of possibilities while always looking great. A neutral cream pant with a fun ruched detail is the perfect pairing. An outfit is not complete without a personalized touch: Show off your style with a colorful scarf, whimsical necklace or hand-stitched belt.

Connie K tunic, \$89; Wearables pant, \$79; Tolani scarf, \$49; Jenny belt, \$79; Ficklesticks necklace, \$72.

Timeless Chic

Few options look as classy and timeless as a white button-down shirt. Beautiful buttons and a modern silhouette make this **Touch of Class** top stand out. A high-quality black pant is another wardrobe staple—complete the look by accessorizing with a luxurious scarf and an autumn-toned handbag.

Habitat Deep Slit Perfect Shirt, Habitat City Pant, Echo Design Group Wild Rose silk square scarf, Hobo Shelia tote.



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SANDY CLEARY IS NAMED MRS. OKTOBERFEST

Local businesswoman Sandy Cleary is the newly crowned Mrs. Oktoberfest 2022. Oktoberfest is almost literally in Cleary’s genes, as she hails from parents and grandparents who were former Festmasters and Fraus. The executive vice president of Cleary Management Corporation and the owner of a number of local businesses, Cleary is a longtime volunteer and former director of the Fest. “I am very honored to be part of an amazing group of women,” Cleary says of her new role. “They come from so many different walks of life but have a common thread of giving to our community. I hope to carry on the tradition.”



LOCAL ARTISTS FEATURED IN PUMP HOUSE SHOW

A group of 18 local artists, part of an informal group who have come together for inspiration, camaraderie and art-making for over 20 years, are displaying their work in a special show at the Pump House Regional Art Center, 119 King Street, La Crosse, through November 5. “Drawn Together” features a wide variety of work from drawing and oil painting to experimental printmaking, created by a group that meets regularly to create art together. An open house and “meet the artists” event will be held 5-7 p.m. Friday, October 7, in conjunction with La Crosse’s First Fridays Downtown Art Walk.

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Writer Leah Call and her hiking partner Laurel Shea began their 10-day hike through the Cotswolds at Kings Head Inn (above). Their journey would take them past connections to other famous writers, including the door at St. Edward's Church (right), said to have inspired the Doors of Durin in J.R.R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* trilogy.



WALKING THE ENGLISH COUNTRYSIDE

History and adventure are found in the footsteps of Jane Austen, Charles Dickens and J.R.R. Tolkien.

BY LEAH CALL | CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

I am in love with the Cotswolds. After spending 10 days walking this idyllic region in southern England, my heart aches to return. As I reflect on this Covid-delayed, long-anticipated experience, I'm transported back over wooded paths, past honey-colored stone cottages, down quiet lanes, through wooden gates and along tall hedgerows.

There's no better place to experience the English countryside than the Cotswolds. And there's no better way to take it all in than on foot. A maze of walking trails and public footpaths meander through the region, connecting villages, gardens, farms and historic sites. Used for hundreds of years, these public footpaths allow walkers the "right to roam" as part of England's Rights of Way laws.

Longtime friend and walking pal Laurel Shea roamed the Cotswold countryside with me. Our adventure was custom-designed by a company called Foot Trails. The itinerary included two nights each at five different inns, starting in Bledington at the top of the Cotswolds and ending in the historic city of Bath.

Each day was a new adventure with 7- to 12-mile walks that took us past historic manors, pretty gardens, medieval churches and into villages just in time for lunch at the local pub. We sometimes set out on foot from our inn. Other times our driver picked us up and dropped us at the start of the day's hike. Bonus: Our luggage was transferred to our next inn, so we only needed a day pack as we hiked through this fairytale land.

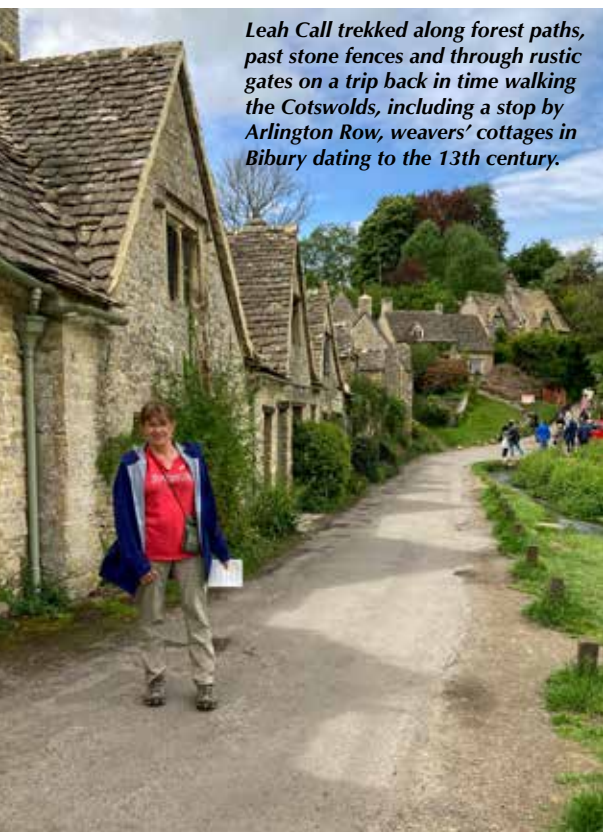
THE JOURNEY BEGINS

When we arrived at our first inn, The Kings Head Inn in Bledington, we were taken to our room overlooking the courtyard of the 16th-century cider house. The inn's owner handed us our Walk and Explore Box, filled with maps, step-by-step trail instruction for each day, vouchers to hand to our drivers and a voucher for a beverage from the inn's pub, which we enjoyed in the courtyard, toasting the adventure ahead. Cheers!

After a good night's sleep and a full English breakfast, we met our driver, Roz, who dropped us at the start of our first 8½-mile walk. Looking over our trail instructions, Roz likened it to a treasure hunt. It was indeed a treasure hunt, and the first gem was Stow-on-the-Wold. Our walk took us into this historic market town, where, in its heyday, some 20,000 sheep were traded daily. We wandered through the town, buying cheese and bread for later, then stopping in the market square to eat an ice cream cone on a bench near the stocks, where wrongdoers once suffered public humiliation.

Before leaving Stow, we wandered through and around St. Edward's Church, making sure to stand before the north door, said to have inspired J.R.R. Tolkien's Doors of Durin in the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy. As we ambled over meadows and down wooded paths throughout the Cotswolds, I often felt like we were on a quest with the elves and dwarves in Tolkien's tale.

Leah Call trekked along forest paths, past stone fences and through rustic gates on a trip back in time walking the Cotswolds, including a stop by Arlington Row, weavers' cottages in Bibury dating to the 13th century.



“If adventures will not befall a young lady in her own village, she must seek them abroad.”

—Jane Austen, from *Northanger Abbey*

FOLLOW ME TO BIBURY

Our walk into the magical village of Bibury was possibly my favorite. This 8-mile walk began in Coln St. Aldwyns, named after the founder of a nearby seventh-century abbey. Leaving the village, we made our way over the narrow road, past a church and down to the River Coln. There we followed the road entering a field through a wooden gate—don't forget to latch the gate! Keeping the river to our right, we walked past two swans enjoying the spring sun, then through another gate and into the woods.

I stopped on the forest path to listen to the wind rustle the leaves above as birds welcomed us into their realm. As we approached Bibury, we walked past an impressive house in Bibury Court thought to have inspired Charles Dickens's *Bleak House*, then over a bridge to Arlington Row, a famous row of weavers' cottages dating back to the 13th century.

Before leaving Bibury, we grabbed a pint of ale at the Catherine Wheel Pub. From there, a footpath took us to a narrow, wooded path, on the lookout for the stile in the high stone wall on our left. We found it and climbed over, then up a hill and down through pastures of grazing sheep. A mother sheep fixed her protective gaze on us, two lambs securely at her side. We paused to take their picture before continuing to the gate at the bottom of the hill. Passing through farm buildings, we walked through a churchyard entering yet another quaint village to meet our driver, who ferried us onward to our next inn.

JANE AUSTEN WAS HERE

Visiting this region of England is truly like traveling back in time. I'm humbled at the thought of walking the same paths as Jane Austen, Dickens and Tolkien. Standing outside Adlestrop House, where Austen visited relatives, I could feel her presence. As we left the village, we stopped and turned. A passage in our guide quotes Austen's book *Mansfield Park* describing a village on a hill—a description she could have written from the very spot where I stood. I was overwhelmed as it seemed her ghost passed through me.

We encountered Austen's ghost again in Bath at the Jane Austen Center and at apartment #4 Sydney Place, where she lived with her family from 1801 to 1804. Bath, the final stop on our journey through the Cotswolds, offers a glimpse into the past of not only Austen, but of royalty, lords and ladies, and fifth-century Romans who came to the city, once called *Aquae Sulis*, to bathe in the healing waters of the Roman Baths.

On our final evening in the Cotswolds, we made our way through the narrow streets to Bath Abbey, built in 1499, grabbing a pew in the back just in time for Evensong service. As angel voices rose to the rafters, I thought of the humankind before me who sat there, gathering inspiration, asking for forgiveness, bowing in gratitude. At that moment, I was filled with gratitude for the 10 days in May spent walking the Cotswolds. **CRW**

Westby-based writer Leah Call is already planning her next adventure.

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.

Cameron Park Farmers Market, 4-8 p.m. Fri., 8 a.m.-1 p.m. Sat., May through October.

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

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

Holmen Area Rotary Club, every Wed. 7 a.m., Holmen Community Center, 600 N. Holmen Dr., holmenrotary@outlook.com.

La Crosse Area Genealogical Society 4th Tuesday of each month (Sept.-May), 6-7:30 p.m., La Crosse Public Library, lacrosseags@gmail.com.

La Crosse Area Quilters 4th Tuesday of each month, 6:30 p.m., Stoney Creek Hotel-Conference Center, Onalaska, www.lacrossequiltguild.com.

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

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

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

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

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

Valley View Rotary, every Wed., 7:30-8:30 a.m., La Crosse Famous Dave's, www.valleyviewrotary.com.

Viroqua Farmers Market, 8 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Sat., May-October.

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

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

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

Women's Alliance of La Crosse (WAL) 2nd Thurs. of each month, noon, The Waterfront Restaurant, Visit www.womensalliancelacrosse.com for more information.

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

OCTOBER

Sept. 14-Nov. 5, Drawn Together art exhibit, The Pump House Regional Arts Center, La Crosse, www.thepumphouse.org.

Sept. 23-Nov. 18, Caffeinated Conversations for Hope, New Horizons Shelter and Outreach Centers, 8:30 a.m. Fridays via Zoom, register at bit.ly/caffeinatedconvs.



◀ **Sept. 29-Oct. 1, Oktoberfest, Southside** Oktoberfest Grounds, La Crosse, www.oktoberfestusa.com.

Oct. 1, Maple Leaf Walk/Run, 7 a.m., Riverside Park, La Crosse, www.laxymca.org.

Oct. 1, Oktoberfest Maple Leaf Parade, 10 a.m., La Crosse, www.oktoberfestusa.com.

Oct. 3, Dare to Self-Care Event, 12-4 p.m., REACH Center, 212 11th St., La Crosse, www.nhagainstabuse.org.

Oct. 3, Mrs. Oktoberfest Ladies Day Luncheon featuring Misty Lown, 11 a.m.-1:30 p.m., Cargill Room, The Waterfront, www.oktoberfestusa.com.

Oct. 6, Stewards of Children training, New Horizons Shelter and Outreach Centers, 11:30 a.m.-2 p.m., Hamilton Elementary School, La Crosse, register at www.nhagainstabuse.org/events/stewards-of-children-fall-2022-trainings/.

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

Oct. 7, Taste of Downtown, 4-7 p.m., Cargill Room, The Waterfront Restaurant, www.lacrossedowntown.com/events.

Oct. 7-9, Outdoor Climbing Retreat at Devil's Lake, 2:30 p.m. Fri.-3:30 p.m. Sat., register at www.winonaoutdoorcollaborative.com.



◀ **Oct. 7-9, Footloose: The Musical**, 7:30 p.m. Fri.-Sat., 2 p.m. Sat.-Sun., Viterbo Fine Arts Center Main Theatre, www.viterbo.edu/fine-arts-center.

Oct. 7-23, Charlie and the Chocolate Factory, 7:30 p.m.

Thurs.-Sat., 2 p.m. Sun., La Crosse Community Theatre, Weber Center for Performing Arts, www.lacrossecommunitytheatre.org.

Oct. 8, The Civil War Experience reenactment, 11 a.m. and 2 p.m., Norskedalen Nature & Heritage Center, Coon Valley, www.norskedalen.org.

Oct. 8-9, Hardanger Embroidery Retreat, 9 a.m., Norskedalen Nature & Heritage Center, Coon Valley, www.norskedalen.org.

Oct. 9, Art in Nature Workshop, 1-4 p.m., Perrot State Park, Trempealeau, register at www.winonaoutdoorcollaborative.com.

Oct. 13, Hope Yoga benefit for New Horizons Shelter and Outreach Centers, 7-8:15 p.m., Franciscan Spirituality Center, preregistration required, www.fscenter.org.

Oct. 14-15, Creating an Authentic Life, 7 p.m. Fri.-4 p.m. Sat., Franciscan Spirituality Center, preregistration required, www.fscenter.org.

◀ **Oct. 14-23, Murder on the Orient Express**, 7:30 p.m. Thurs.-Sat., 2 p.m. Sun, Toland Theatre, Center for the Arts, UW-La Crosse, www.uwla.edu/theatre-arts.

Oct. 15, Historic Downtown Day, downtown La Crosse, www.lacrossedowntown.com/events.

Oct. 15, Charlie Berens, 4 and 7:30 p.m., La Crosse Center, www.lacrossecenter.com.

Oct. 18, Women's Fund of Greater La Crosse Fall Luncheon, 11 a.m.-1 p.m., UW-La Crosse Student Union, www.womensfundlacrosse.org.

Oct. 19, Scott Bradlee's Postmodern Jukebox, 7:30 p.m., Viterbo Fine Arts Center Main Theatre, www.viterbo.edu/fine-arts-center.

Oct. 22, Logan High Craft Show, 9 a.m.-3 p.m., Logan High School, 1500 Ranger Dr., La Crosse.

Oct. 22, A Festive Homecoming, 7:30 p.m., La Crosse Symphony Orchestra, www.lacrossesymphony.org.

Oct. 27, Ghoulies in the Coulees Family-Friendly Trick-or-Treat, 5:30-7:30 p.m., Norskedalen Nature & Heritage Center, Coon Valley, www.norskedalen.org.

Oct. 27-Nov. 6, *Mitzi's Abortion: A Saint's Guide to Late-Term Politics and Medicine in America*, 7:30 p.m. Thurs.-Sat., 2 p.m. Sun., Grey Area Productions, The Pump House Regional Arts Center, La Crosse, www.thepumphouse.org.

Oct. 28, Spooktacular Ghoulies in the Coulees haunted hikes, 5:30-8:30 p.m., Norskedalen Nature & Heritage Center, Coon Valley, www.norskedalen.org.

Oct. 29, Downtown Trick or Treat, 11 a.m.-2 p.m., downtown La Crosse, www.lacrossedowntown.com/events.

Oct. 29, Movin' to Musicals, Platinum Edition and Diamond Edition show choirs, 7:30 p.m., Viterbo Fine Arts Center Main Theatre, www.viterbo.edu/fine-arts-center.

Oct. 29, Roll On—Tribute to Alabama, 7:30 p.m., The Heider Center, www.heidercenter.org.

Oct. 29, Ghosts & Toasts Ghoulies in the Coulees, Norskedalen Nature & Heritage Center, Coon Valley, www.norskedalen.org.

NOVEMBER

Nov. 3, Stewards of Children training, New Horizons Shelter and Outreach Centers, 11:30 a.m.-2 p.m., La Crosse County Administrative Center, register at www.nhagainstabuse.org/events/stewards-of-children-fall-2022-trainings/.

Nov. 3, Meditation for Emotional Health via Zoom, 6:30-7:30 p.m., Franciscan Spirituality Center, preregistration required, www.fscenter.org.

Nov. 4, Holiday Ball 2022 Gala Fundraiser, La Crosse Community Theatre, Weber Center for Performing Arts, www.lacrossecommunitytheatre.org.

Nov. 5, Purple Xperience, 7:30 p.m., Viterbo Fine Arts Center Main Theatre, www.viterbo.edu/fine-arts-center.

Nov. 11, Holiday Open House, 4-8 p.m., downtown La Crosse, www.lacrossedowntown.com/events.

Nov. 12, Made in America, 7:30 p.m., La Crosse Symphony Orchestra, www.lacrossesymphony.org.

Nov. 17-20, Holiday Fair, 12 p.m. Thurs.-Fri., 9 a.m. Sat., 10 a.m. Sun., La Crosse Center, www.lacrossecenter.com.

Nov. 18-20, Measure for Measure, 7:30 p.m. Fri.-Sat., 2 p.m. Sun., Weber Center for the Performing Arts, www.viterbo.edu/fine-arts-center.

Nov. 19, 'Tis the Season of Joy—and Stress and Grief, support for the holiday season, 9 a.m.-3 p.m., Franciscan Spirituality Center, preregistration required, www.fscenter.org.

Nov. 19, Rave On—Tribute to Buddy Holly, 7:30 p.m., The Heider Center, www.heidercenter.org.

◀ **Nov. 25-Dec. 17, Scrooge in Rouge: An English Music Hall Christmas Carol**, 7:30 p.m. Thurs.-Sat., 2 p.m. Sun., La Crosse Community Theatre, Weber Center for Performing Arts, www.lacrossecommunitytheatre.org.





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