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AREA HOME AND HEALTHY LIVING MAGAZINE

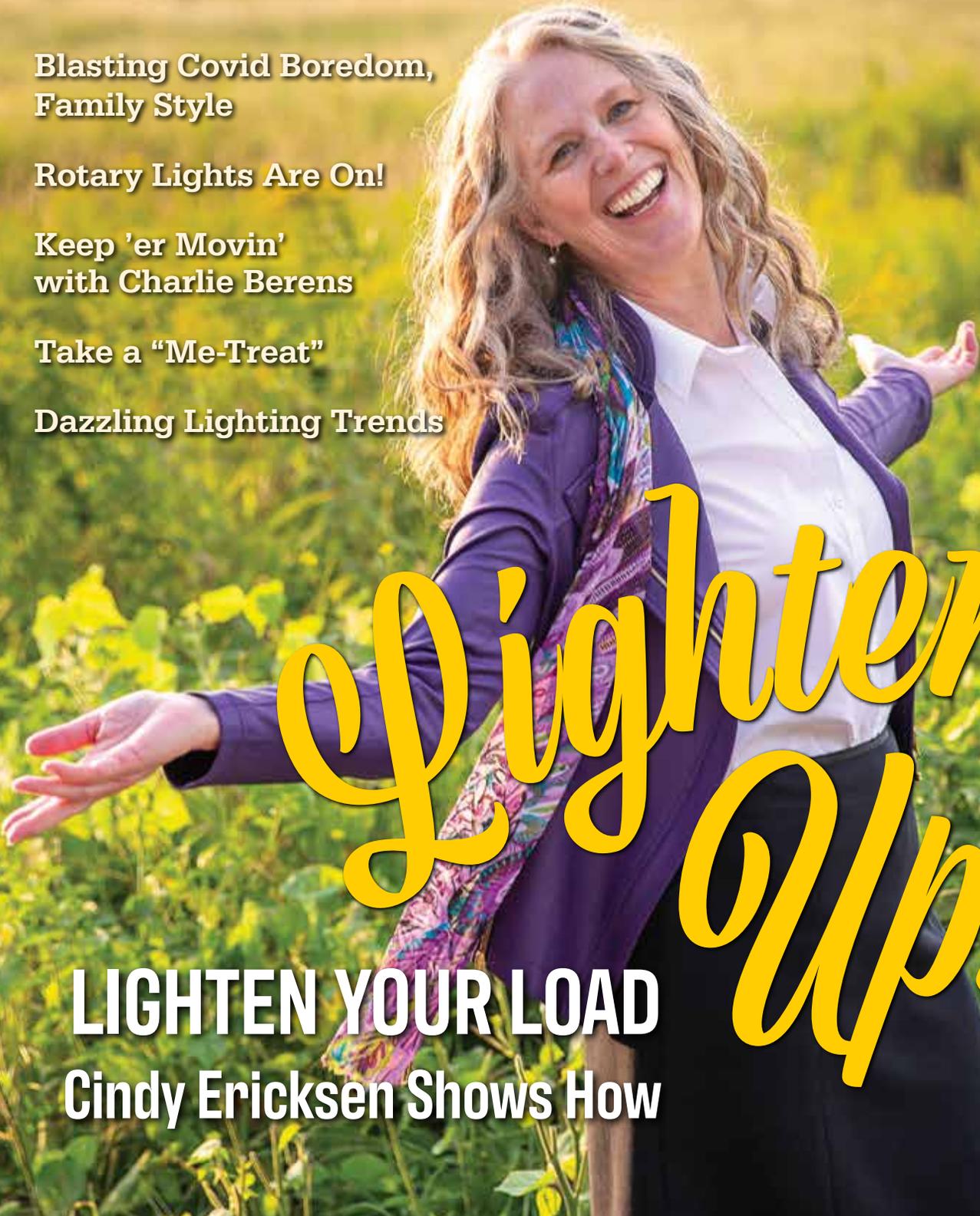
**Blasting Covid Boredom,
Family Style**

Rotary Lights Are On!

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Cindy Ericksen Shows How



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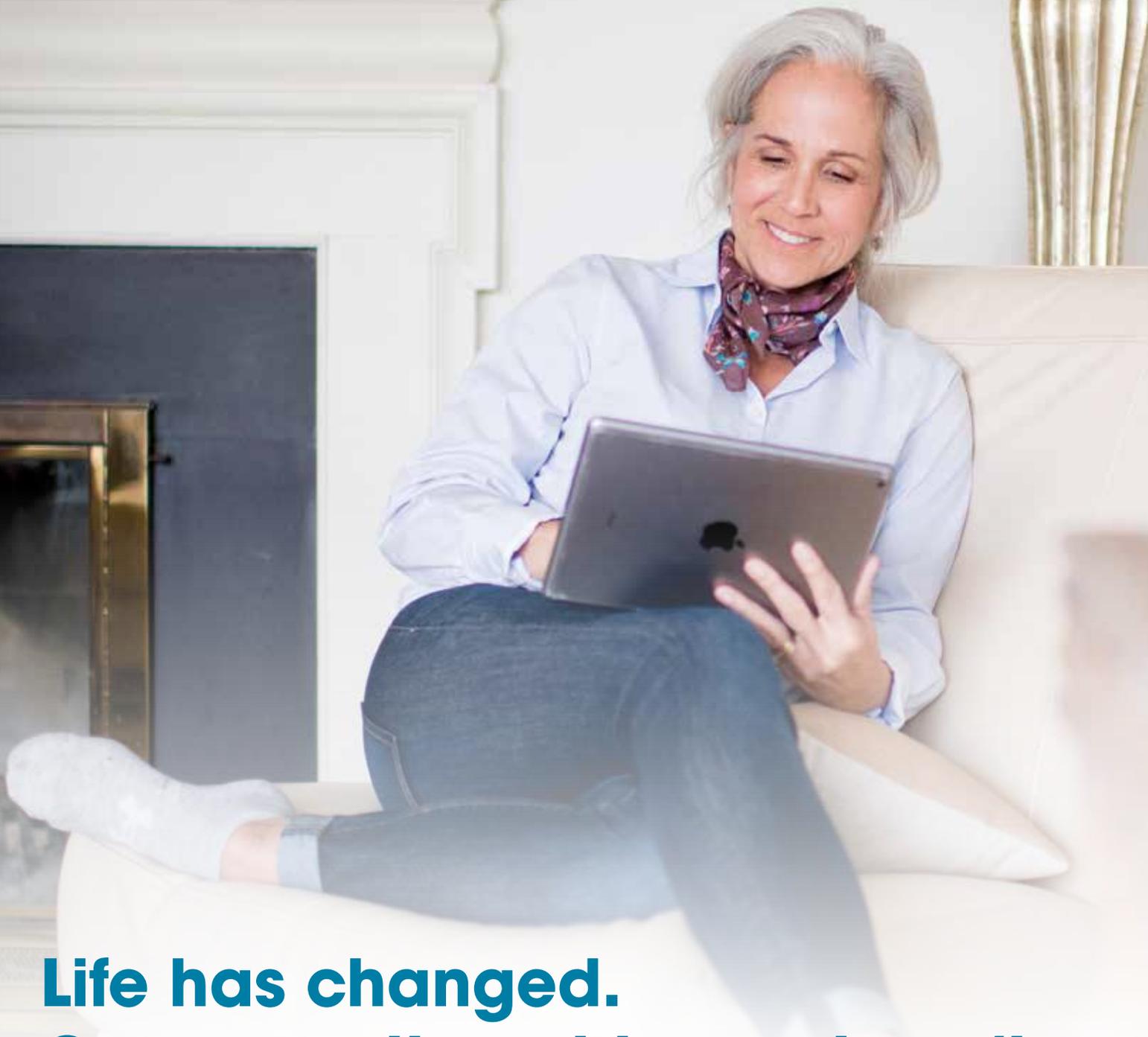
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A Journey Within

Take a "me-treat" and find solitude in your soul.

Pictured on cover and top left: Cindy Ericksen, therapist and owner of HeartJourney Marriage & Family Therapy. Photos by Frontier Photography. Hair and makeup by Anna Seidel at Orange Pearl Salon. Photos taken at Bittersweet Flower Market.

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This time of year, we start to notice light. The long, light evenings that have accommodated outdoor get-togethers are waning. Light filtering through changing leaves startles us with color and joy, but also a wistfulness, as the days are about to get considerably shorter. And as I write this, a smoky haze from the West is softening the sun and diffusing its light. It's a time a year when light is beautiful, fleeting and heartbreaking all at once.

Light—and lightness—is a precious commodity these days, and not just because of fall and the looming winter. It's been a long year of disappointment, stress and even fear. We women, especially, have been pushed to our limits as the careful balance between work and family has collapsed, and we find we not only have to take care of everything and everyone, we have to do it literally all at once. The responsibilities are heavy, our concerns are heavy—and we need to lighten up.

“Lighten up” seems like a flip remark considering everything on our minds and hearts these days, so let me rephrase: Let's focus on lightening our loads. Now more

than ever, we need tools to find calm and peace, ease our minds and soothe our souls.

I've learned to isolate and appreciate even the smallest moments that bring a sense of lightness to my life. An afternoon of hiking in a state park with my family, a photo shoot with a delightful cover woman on a beautiful evening, a glass of wine with a friend on her patio—all have filled me with gratitude and helped me keep moving forward.

Especially, I look to the light—a star-filled sky over a northern lake, a rich sunset over our river valley, even the bittersweet haze of a late-summer sky are stored in me like solar cells, banked away to be drawn upon when I need a little light.

This issue, we seek to help you lighten your load and fill you with the light and energy you need to move forward, too. We begin by sharing with you some true tools for calm and peace—meditation and therapy—through the words of our cover woman Cindy Ericksen. We share with you the stories of families who have found ways to make and share fun amid the pandemic and businesswomen who lift each other up. We invite you to bring light and warmth to your homes with fireplaces and new trends in lighting. We give you recipes for eating light, enlighten you with inspiring community projects and explore the rejuvenating idea of a “me-treat” from it all. We even take a moment to lighten up with Wisconsin's own antidote to Covid despair, comedian Charlie Berens. (His Quarantine Kitchen video with instructions for making a brandy old-fashioned while completing the census got me through the early days of the lockdown.)

Mostly, we hope to inspire you to find your own light in this time. It can be found within us, in meditation and solitude. It can be found outside of us, among family and friendships. And it can be found in literal light, wherever we can find it. Autumn sun, winter stars, firelight, a candle's glow—may light of all types give you the inspiration to move forward another day.

Betty

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WOMEN VOTING THEN, WOMEN VOTING NOW

One hundred years ago, after a long-fought effort by suffragists, women finally won the right to vote. Notably, Wisconsin was the first state in the nation to ratify the 19th Amendment guaranteeing that right, on June 10, 1919.

Today, the importance of voting—and women voting—is as keen as ever, especially considering that the very process of voting is facing disruption owing to Covid-19 restrictions, mail delivery changes and misinformation.

This is why volunteers with the nonpartisan League of Women Voters of the La Crosse Area, in partnership with La Crosse County and the Driftless Voter Coalition, are getting out the vote on many fronts. “We’ve updated our website, we’ve created videos, we’re on Facebook and Instagram, and we’re running Get Out the Vote ads on billboards, TV and radio,” says Chris Haskell, voter services director of LWV. She admits one-on-one voter outreach is challenging during a pandemic, but LWV volunteers have still been busy distributing door hangers, planting yard signs and holding outdoor voter registration events on college campuses.

“There’s a certain percentage of people who just don’t vote,” says Haskell, “but we’re pretty successful at reaching them.” She points to high voter participation in 2018, and also in the April 2020 election, which boasted the highest turnout of registered voters in a comparable election.

LWV member Margi Hanson notes that some don’t vote because they don’t like the candidates or feel their vote doesn’t count. “But think of all the people who’ve fought for this right,” she says. “It’s our responsibility to pay homage to them. If you don’t like your choices, vote in the primaries. Vote at the local level. Run for an office yourself. All elections matter.”

YOU CAN HELP

Now more than ever, LWV needs volunteers to help with this effort. Numerous opportunities to help can be found on the “Requests for Volunteers” tab on LWV’s website, www.lwvlacrosse.org. Volunteers can hang door hangers, distribute yard

signs, witness signatures on absentee ballots, write letters to the editor and more. Volunteers can also help municipal clerks mail absentee ballots and, especially, work polls on Election Day. “Every community needs people,” says Hanson.

We all can help, Haskell adds, simply by reminding family and friends to vote.

“Ask them, ‘What’s your plan for voting this election?’” she says. “Do they know where and how to vote?”

She adds that, while absentee voting is immensely popular, voting early in-person at your municipal clerk’s office is also an option, and many simply prefer to vote in person at their poll on Election Day. “They just love getting that ‘I Voted’ sticker,” she says—which, by the way, is provided by LWV.

Both women, like all LWV members, are passionate about voting. “It’s just so important to have your voice heard,” says Hanson.



KNOW YOUR VOTING OPTIONS

Much information and misinformation is circulating regarding mail-in and in-person voting. Here are the facts:

- Make sure you are registered to vote, especially if you have moved or changed your name since you last voted. Go to MyVote.wi.gov to register or check your registration status. Have identification handy; MyVote.wi.gov will tell you what you need.
- You may request an absentee ballot by mail at MyVote.wi.gov, and your ballot will be mailed within 24 hours of your request if submitted before October 29—but it’s best to request it sooner, rather than close to the deadline.
- You must return your absentee ballot by mail or in-person delivery to your municipal clerk no later than 8 p.m. on November 3. **If mailing, plan on at least one week for delivery.** All mailed ballots are tracked. To find the status of yours, go to MyVote.wi.gov or call your municipal clerk.
- You may drop off your ballot at your polling place by 8 p.m. November 3.
- You may vote early in person at your municipal clerk’s office.
- You may vote in person at your local polling location on November 3. Note that locations may have changed since you last voted; find yours at MyVote.wi.gov. Identification is required to vote.



REMEMBERING SUE HESSEL

This summer, we at *Coulee Region Women* lost one of our own: our friend and writer Sue Hessel. Sue was known and beloved by our community as a writer and keeper of family and community history. We remember her for that and so much more.

Sue was a writer we could call on for just about any story, on topics ranging from family to government to humor and more. We appreciated her eagerness to write and her dedication to the craft. She was thorough and reliable—she never missed a deadline—and she most certainly had her own “voice,” one that paired well with any number of *Coulee Region Women* topics.

More than that, Sue was a friend. She kept things lively, she made us laugh and she shared her passions—with us and with a wide community—in regular blog posts in which her musings ran from personal to political. Always, she expressed her deep care for this community and our national community, and she was a fighter for justice. Sue never shied away from tough topics, even when they included her own health and her battles with cancer. She was as much an advocate for breast cancer patients as she was for any group who needed a voice.

We loved her energy, her passion, her wit and her generosity. We are saddened that she left this world on June 15, and our heart goes out to her family and everyone who was touched by her life and her words. Thankfully, we have many happy memories of working with Sue, and her voice and her spirit live on. A motto Sue lived by is “Be a kind human.” We think there is no better way to honor her memory than to live by those words as well.



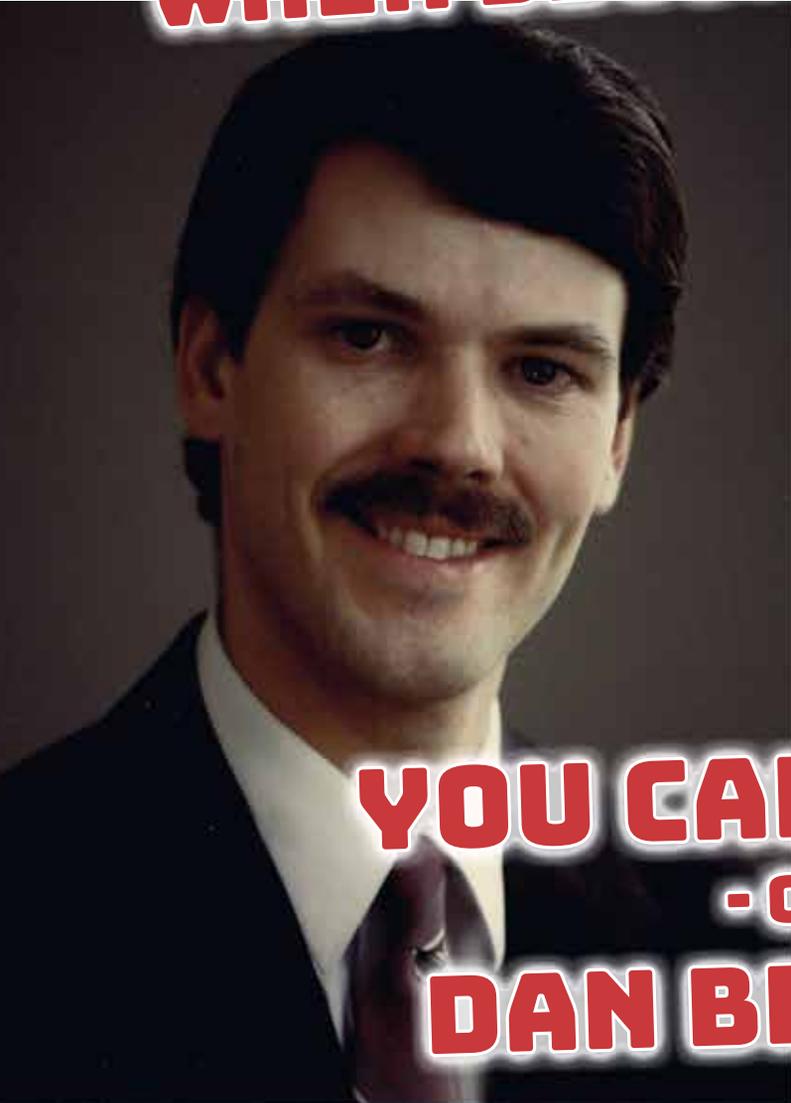
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Keep Calm and Breathe

Therapist Cindy Ericksen guides us through lightening the emotional load.

BY LEAH CALL | PHOTOS BY FRONTIER PHOTOGRAPHY



Cindy Ericksen, therapist and owner of HeartJourney, encourages meditation and mindfulness to get through challenging times.

2020 is certainly a year to remember. The weight of a worldwide pandemic combined with civil unrest and a divisive political climate has many of us struggling to carry the emotional load. Fortunately, people like Coulee Region woman Cindy Ericksen are providing tools to lighten the load through mindfulness practices that can help us cope with uncertainty and stress.

“Mindfulness and meditation, specifically, can be life changing for people,” says Ericksen, therapist and owner of La Crosse-based HeartJourney. “It strongly affects the things we are most challenged with during this time. It helps us feel more comfortable with our own emotions and the emotions of others. It helps us handle our emotions better, and it has been proven to reduce depression and anxiety.”

When the Safer at Home order was implemented to prevent the spread of Covid-19, Ericksen knew it would protect physical health, but she also anticipated the negative impact it would have on mental and emotional health.

“I saw right away that people were going to be anxious and fearful and really sad. My first thought was ‘we all need to be meditating,’” says Ericksen, who uses meditation and mindfulness to help individuals and couples work through relationship conflict, anger management, depression and anxiety.

YOU’VE GOT THIS

Ericksen is among the many mental and physical health professionals who stepped up to help people cope with the uncertainty of the pandemic. She began offering free guided meditation videos on her Facebook page and website as a way to support her clients through this tense time.

“I’ve had so much positive response,” she says. “I have people following my meditations from all over the world. It has been very heartwarming and inspiring.”

Ericksen recommends meditating for 10 minutes a day, five days a week. If 10 minutes is too much for busy adults and parents with

young children, squeezing out just five minutes can make a difference. Numerous meditation apps such as Insight Timer, Headspace, Smiling Mind and Ten Percent Happier can help people build a meditation habit and stick with it. Many of these are free.

“The main thing that meditation does is help our brain function more effectively,” notes Ericksen.

In addition to meditation, Ericksen embraces self-compassion exercises pioneered by Dr. Kristin Neff to reduce negative emotions and manage stress. These self-compassion exercises include changing our inner self-talk and having a go-to phrase, such as “You’ve got this” or “It’s going to be OK,” that comforts and reassures.

“The first part is saying the phrase, and the second part is physically comforting yourself,” adds Ericksen. “That might be putting your hand on your heart, giving yourself a hug, putting your hands to your cheeks or maybe just rubbing your legs—whatever is physically comforting to you.”

Another stress-reducing tool: just breathe. Ericksen suggests breathing in for four counts and breathing out for six counts. “If you breathe out longer than you breathe in, it actually helps lower your heart rate; that then allows you to calm down and be more relaxed and centered.”

For those needing additional support for chronic anxiety or depression, a call to Ericksen at HeartJourney can help put you on the path to positive change.

“People often don’t want to come for therapy until things are really out of control, but it makes much more sense to start early when you first start feeling not yourself,” says Ericksen, who suggests three to five sessions to get back on track. “If you wait longer, you end up being in therapy for quite a while, and it takes a lot longer to actually feel better.”

HER HEART JOURNEY

Ericksen’s own journey was a winding path that always included work with families and children. About 15 years ago, she became a therapist with a degree in marriage and family therapy. She started HeartJourney seven years later. In non-Covid times, she would see clients in her office in the Exchange Building on Fifth Avenue in La Crosse; she currently conducts teletherapy from her home.

“I would say half of my clients are couples with relationship challenges. That’s my specialty,” notes Ericksen. “The rest of my clients come to me with anxiety and depression.”



“We can use mindfulness skills to get through those difficult moments, so we can be our best selves.”

—Cindy Ericksen

Clients often don’t know the cause of their anxiety or depression. They need change in their lives, but they need some support to identify and implement that change.

“As we work together, they gradually start to realize that there is some part of their life that isn’t working for them. Then we start working on whatever that is and help them make that journey to create the change they need in their life to find fulfillment and happiness.”

Four years ago, Ericksen added coaching to her list of services, focusing on mindfulness coaching and transition coaching. “Coaching is much more goal and action oriented. Where therapy is more about healing, coaching is more specifically about making changes in your life—setting goals and working toward those goals to make changes.”

Like therapy sessions, coaching sessions are done via phone or (in non-Covid times) in person. The changes brought about through these coaching sessions ultimately help individuals live happier, more authentic lives.

Whether she is working with individuals, couples or families, mindfulness and meditation are at the center of all the services Ericksen offers. “I love it, because it is so positive and nonjudgmental. We can use mindfulness skills to get through those difficult moments, so we can be our best selves and be the person we want to be in our relationships, in the workplace and in our family.”

Helping people to live their best lives is a pretty rewarding career. “I am so blessed to have a career where I can help people. It is an honor to be able to walk that path with so many people and see them blossom into their full selves.” **CRW**

Freelance writer Leah Call lives and writes with her family in Westby. She is now hooked on Cindy Ericksen’s meditations and highly recommends them to find some calm in these crazy times.

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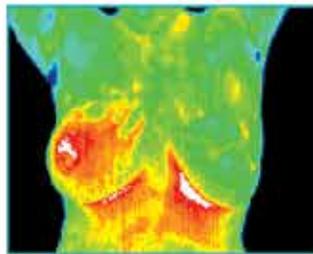
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WARMTH AND LIGHT

Angela Kupietz talks community, industry
and creating a cozy place with La Crosse Fireplace.

BY SAM STROOZAS | CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

As the seasons change, so do the interests of consumers. While we welcome the crispness of an October day, we will soon be bearing the upheaval of winter as well as the continuation of Covid-19 and uncertain times. However, Angela Kupietz would like to add an element of warmth and light to this wintry equation, one that begins at La Crosse Fireplace.

Kupietz grew up in La Crosse and has been with the La Crosse Fireplace team since 2002. She now resides in Brownsville, Minnesota, with her partner of 14 years and four children. Her family tries to be out on the river as much as possible, and when she's not doing that, she is either reading or spending time with her children.

In 2001, her father began La Crosse Fireplace, and she and her brother later joined—Kupietz as manager and her brother as the current owner. The fireplace business has always been a part of Kupietz's life. In 1988, her father was part owner of another company, and as a teenager, she would help with tasks such as cleaning and filing. "I never thought this would be the career I would actually go into," says Kupietz.

She also speaks to the sense of community she feels at work. The employees are more family than business, which has aided in the company's growth and sufficiency. "The average employee has been with us for 14 years," says Kupietz. "The biggest part of our

business is that we have truly built a family with all of our employees.”

A CHANGE OF PLANS

Kupietz originally attended Western Technical College to become a nursing assistant, but as her clinicals began, she felt the burnout of working in the health care field, and she reconsidered health care as a career. Her father was looking for someone to start in sales at La Crosse Fireplace, and Kupietz found her footing once again in a familiar place.

“Working here was the best decision for me,” she says. “I absolutely love sales and building relationships with customers.” It is such a unique industry; we all know each other in the surrounding communities, and it is a close-knit specialty service.”

Kupietz acknowledges that although she loves her industry, it must be mentioned that it is a male-dominated space. Most of the women she sees in the industry, mirroring her own background, are either wives or daughters of men who are employed by the business. She believes that women shy away from the industry because of this but emphasizes that their voices can make an impact and should be included.

“My advice for women who want to work in the fireplace industry is to keep an open mind about what you can learn,” she says. “Most of my job is creating a cozy place for a customer. You’re building something that is a part of that family’s home, for many years, that they can enjoy.”

As she has worked in the business, Kupietz has noticed a shift from how the fireplace is showcased in a home and what customers want to



Angela Kupietz, manager of La Crosse Fireplace

draw attention to. “It used to be that the fireplace was the focal point, that what is around it is afterthought, but in the last 10 years, that has changed. It is about how you see the fireplace now in your home, not the other way around,” she says.

THE PURCHASE YOU’VE ALWAYS WANTED

In the new world of Covid-19, more people are spending time inside and analyzing their homes in ways they never have before. For Kupietz, this is good news. “More people are home now, and maybe a fireplace is something they’ve always wanted. Now, they are investing in a purchase. We have been up in sales this summer and have also seen an uptick in outdoor fireplaces.”

Adding warmth and light to a home will become more vital as the seasons change and we welcome winter, but among the implications of Covid-19, purchasing a fireplace could also be the answer to your long winter blues.

Kupietz suggests that customers set up a consultation sooner rather than later to beat the rush, as La Crosse Fireplace usually books out six to eight weeks in advance come fall. Sales for the fall and winter usually begin in August, Kupietz notes, adding that a cool summer morning often reminds customers of the winter ahead, therefore encouraging a trip to La Crosse Fireplace. **CRW**

Sam Stroozas, recent graduate of University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, is a graduate student in journalism at Northwestern University.



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MANY HANDS MAKE LIGHT WORK

Women business owners lend each other a hand during Covid-19.

BY JAN WELLIK | CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS



Trempealeau's In the Making sells items made by local handcrafters, giving their businesses a boost.

Local Crosse-area women business owners often lend each other a hand by cross-promoting each other's businesses, but during the uncertainty of the pandemic, those helping hands have been more essential than ever.

SHIFTING BUSINESS MODELS

Amy Brenengen, owner of In the Making, located in Trempealeau since 2018, sells locally made handcrafted items in her gift shop. According to Brenengen, popular local makers include Purple Thumb Lavender (handcrafted soaps and lotions) from a farm in Lomira, Wisconsin, and Wildwood Specialty Food, which makes soups, seasonings and dip mixes in Trempealeau.

Although hours of the store have fluctuated this spring and summer from closed to partially open to fully open, their online shopping option is always available, says Brenengen.

During the Covid crisis, Brenengen created the Sending Smiles program so that customers could



Kimberly Bentzen-Tabbert, owner of Mainstream Boutique. Photo by Jordana Snyder Photography.

go onto her website and choose a dollar amount to spend on a friend or family member, and her shop would select the items and either deliver them or ship them to the recipients.

"People were so touched that someone thought of them. It created an amazing amount of gratitude and was really heartwarming," she says. Sending Smiles is still available via the online store.

Before the virus pandemic, Brenengen was making plans with Sharon Spahr, owner of the Craft Barn in Galesville, and Lauri Stettler, co-owner of the Holmen Meat Locker, to create a map game for local shoppers to visit local businesses. Last year they had a similar "shop hop" and this year they were going to make it bigger, until local businesses were shut down, she said.

"I'm really interested in cross-promoting with other businesses. We've got to all work together to make it," says Brenengen.

"We're all in uncharted territory," she adds. "Everyone's business model has had to shift."

ALL IN THIS TOGETHER

Taking care of customers when face-to-face access is limited has been a big challenge for most local businesses.

Kimberly Bentzen-Tabbert, owner of Mainstream Boutique in Onalaska, suddenly had to close her women's clothing shop and turn to selling online during the shutdown. Though she's once again open for business, tactics she used early in the shutdown still serve her today.

"We do live videos each week featuring new and featured products," says Bentzen-Tabbert, whose Onalaska location is part of a larger franchise based in Minneapolis. "We help our customers look and feel their best." Now that the shop is back open, she says, "I am willing to come in early and stay late to accommodate people."

Helping neighboring business owners, like Claire Prudent of Frenchtastic Bakery, is also part of her success. Prudent brings bakery samples over to Mainstream Boutique shoppers, and Bentzen-Tabbert does live videos while visiting and shopping at her neighbor's business.

"We talk about the marketing and technology of our businesses, and we have helped each other when we were short-staffed," says Bentzen-Tabbert. "With Covid right now, everyone is just trying to figure it out and how to go forward." For example, Mainstream Boutique offers curbside pick-up and delivery and plans to continue this service after the pandemic.

"We also created Mainstream Moments, and every day I would do a live video and chat with customers and share inspirational quotes," she says. "I wanted them to know they are not alone, we are all in this together."

COFFEE AND COMMUNITY

Holmen business owner Melodie Sciborski, of Cozy Coffee, supports fellow local business owners with a small boutique within her

coffee shop that carries locally made crafts.

Sciborski opened in 2018 and calls Holmen "a great community." She helps to cross-promote Burn Boot Camp, located in the same plaza, by using their Afterburn whey protein in her smoothies and cold brew coffees, she said.

The coffee shop remained open during the pandemic as a drive-thru only. Currently, the dining area is open again with "proper precautions to keep our customers and employees safe, such as social distancing tables, a sanitizer station and a shield by the register," says Sciborski.

There's a strong community of women working together in the La Crosse area, with several local networking groups available to women in business such as WAL (Women's Alliance of La Crosse), Coulee Region Professional Women (CRPW) and WEW (Women Empowering Women). "We always refer people to other local businesses to help support each other," says Bentzen-Tabbert. CRW

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



Melodie Sciborski, owner of Cozy Coffee



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Blasting Covid Boredom, Family Style

Creative families share humor, music and joy with a virtual audience.

BY MARTHA KEEFFE | CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS



Thumbs up, thumbs down: Covid-19 gave the Filips family an opportunity to bond while sampling new foods, then giving reviews via Facebook.

Amid the confusion and uncertainty ushered in by the coronavirus, people have learned to adjust and find ways to make the best of the situation. Zoom cocktail hours replaced “happy hours,” social-distancing hikes took the place of in-person fitness classes and family members became reacquainted through game nights and dinners around the table. But for some families—like the Filips and Koleks—Safer at Home provided them with an unexpected opportunity to brainstorm fun, creative and interactive ways to stay connected—and sane—while battling Covid-induced cabin fever.

CULINARY ADVENTURES

For the Filips family, finding an enjoyable, long-term ritual that they could all commit to on a weekly basis was crucial to choosing an ideal family activity. “I love to try new foods and wanted to expose our kids to different cultures, so I decided to bring home a unique food every week from the grocery store, something that maybe told a story or had a unique background,” says Lisa Filips, who—along with her husband, Doug, and daughters Meggie, Ana and Grace, 11 to 16—dubbed their new culinary venture Filips Family Fun Food Friday, or F5. From canned peas to SpaghettiOs to exotic foods sent by friends and relatives from around the world, the Filips have wholeheartedly embraced their new foods experience, which they share every Friday with family and friends via Facebook. “Sometimes we try to take unique photos, rank our preferences in order or invite friends to participate. It always leads to great conversations.”

And it’s not just great conversations, but a stronger commitment to sample the less-appelling meats and cheeses that, according to Filips, “for some reason, scare them the most.”

To deal with those occasional bouts of hesitation, the family set guidelines to encourage each other while making the experience challenging: all food must be ready-to-eat, everyone in the family can make a selection and everyone has to be open to trying whatever is served—at least once. “I convinced them all to try ‘special meat,’ which was headcheese (a meat jelly often made with flesh from the head of a calf or pig), and they’ll never let me forget that!” says Filips, recounting how they all burped headcheese all night. “It was awful.”

And whether the food has been awful or not, Filips values the time with her family more than the fried chicken skin or licorice soda they’ve tried. “We know that every Friday night, no matter how crazy our week has been, we will be together enjoying weird foods, funny stories and each others’ company.”

GOING LIVE!

Inspired by the live posts of a friend who shares his music on Facebook, Jennie Kolek of Holmen encouraged her husband, Tim, marketing president at U.S. Bank in La Crosse and a local musician, to give it a try. “I thought it might be fun for Tim to do also,” says Kolek, whose husband hasn’t been able to play publicly due to Covid restrictions. “When he hit the LIVE button, we figured a few neighbors and family members may pop on to see him. We didn’t expect such a positive response and the amount of people who would view it.”

"We didn't expect such a positive response and the amount of people who would view it."

—Jennie Kolek

With dad Tim, a local musician, at the helm, the Kolek family entertains on Facebook every Friday night.



Heartened by the positive responses to their postings, Kolek has become the official producer of the show (J-Ko Productions) and takes requests, shares observations, reads on-air comments submitted by viewers and provides input concerning sound quality. And on occasion, she even joins in. "I'm part of the show now," she laughs, adding that their daughter Erin will at times lend her vocals and guitar to the mix. "Plus, if I get enough practice, I sometimes make an appearance and sing."

With no intention of discontinuing their Friday night shows (which have been airing since March 22), the Koleks—along with daughters Erin, Megan and Alison, 13 to 21—have found this venture

to be a fun, relaxing way to spend their Friday nights. And thanks to the support of her sisters, who made promotional T-shirts, and friends who tune in every week, the memories generated by this project are an added bonus. "It's fun to see them support us," says Kolek of the many viewers who send in pictures of themselves watching around the fire or who display the show on their big screens. "Every now and then I would go out to watch him play around town," says Kolek. "As it turns out, this is a much better way to connect." **CRW**

Martha Keefe lives and writes in La Crosse. She feels safer at home when she heads outside.

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THE *Jewelry* OF THE HOME

Nothing makes a home dazzle like the latest in lighting.

BY HEIDI OVERSON | CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

Lighting is the jewelry of the home—the decorative touch,” says Grace Gleason, lighting consultant at Gerhard’s Kitchen & Bath Store in downtown La Crosse. “It should not be an afterthought while you’re building, and people should think of it throughout the design process.” She adds that she and her cohort, lighting consultant Mindy Kaehler, “are here to help and guide, and we listen carefully. If you have a common theme in mind, we’ll show you fixtures, see what you’re drawn to and take it from there. We realize you have to love the fixture. If you’re drawn to something, there’s a reason.”

Both women know that lighting is changing all the time, and people can trust them to be keeping up with the trends. So what exactly is trending right now?

THE TREND: UNIQUE

“We see people wanting unique, nongeneric pieces and custom-made fixtures,” says Gleason. “There’s a resurgence of American-made products, and the rustic, farmhouse look has evolved and is still very popular right now. Fixtures made with natural elements are big—people want that cozy, homey feel.”

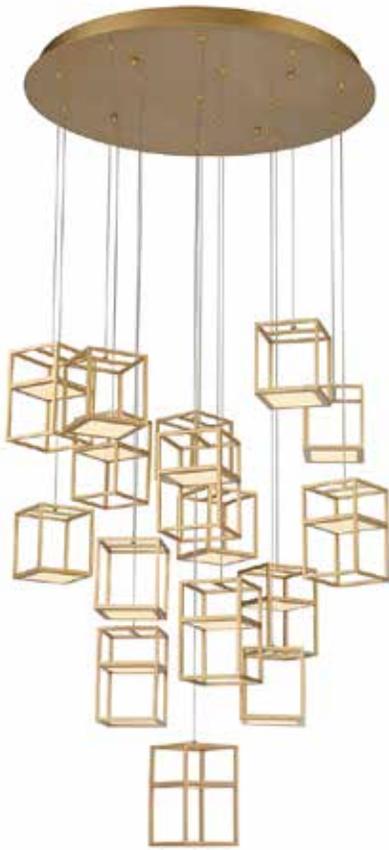
Other popular lighting trends include the use of designer bulbs, lights with geometric shapes, clear glass with clear bulbs, and glass that is plain, beaded, fluted or ribbed. Gerhard’s also sells a lot of open fixtures without glass that many people like because they’re easier to keep clean. LED lighting that is integrated and covered with acrylic or glass in fixtures is trending as well.



Grace Gleason, lighting consultant at Gerhard's Kitchen & Bath Store



Mindy Kaehler, lighting consultant at Gerhard's Kitchen & Bath Store



“LED lighting has come a long way and has risen in popularity,” says Gleason. “It comes in all shapes—whatever you want, we can get, from small to large, regular or dimmable, color-changing lights, LED tapes and more.”

MIX AND MATCH

As far as fixture colors that are currently trending, the designers are seeing the once-popular bronze being replaced by matte black, which can stand alone or be mixed with a shade of gold or brushed nickel.

“Gold is coming back,” says Gleason. “And mixed finishes are just the answer sometimes. While chrome and matte black fixtures are popular right now, we’re also seeing people drawn to other natural finishes, like metal and wood, beading and shell, woven material, rattans and white or black leather.”

Ceiling fans are evolving; customers are ordering them as large statement pieces for their bigger rooms. The fans are visually appealing and most often the focal point of the room, accenting other room features such as a fireplace, high ceilings or wood beams.

“We have the traditional five-blade fans, but people are ordering more and more three-blade and even eight-blade fans,” says Kaehler. “The standard ceiling fan used to measure 52 inches, but now we see fans as large as 70, 80 or 96 inches.”

As with lighting fixtures, there’s more than a large variety of ceiling fans out there, with or without light kits. The designers have seen some beautiful styles: mixed metal, wood-grain look, bronze, cherry, light driftwood—and even tie dye, although they have yet to sell that style.

SHOPPING MADE EASY

Gleason and Kaehler recommend that people make a consultation appointment so time can be devoted to showing the displays and gathering all the details of a home project. They’ve found it usually takes several visits to complete a consultation and order. Walk-ins are welcome; it might be worth dropping in to walk around the showroom



prior to making an appointment. Gerhard’s offers virtual visits, and they have an online catalog with a wish list option. Whatever method a customer chooses, the customer service will be superb.

“There are several reasons to visit a showroom rather than buy online,” says Gleason. “We offer more choices than a chain store; you can’t beat seeing the many displays in our showroom. We are professional consultants who are trained and who truly care. We provide smart solutions, offering the look you love with the price you have in mind. And we offer more features with our selections; we know the trends, advancements and manufacturers inside and out.”

EXPERTS IN LIGHT

You can trust that Gleason and Kaehler know their stuff, too. Both previously worked at Lighting Designs by Wettstein’s until that



store closed its doors in 2018. Gerhard’s Kitchen & Bath Store quickly welcomed the team into the 80-year-old business on Cameron Avenue. Gleason and Kaehler were excited to set up the new lighting section at Gerhard’s, and the addition of a lighting product line to Gerhard’s already-strong offerings proved to be a successful venture—contractors and homeowners throughout the Tri-State Area have kept the designers hopping.

“Our clientele is loyal and trusts us,” says Kaehler. “We form lasting relationships, and many come back when they need us. They know we’re a great alternative to buying from box or online stores.”

Gerhard’s has seven designers who all know the basics in most areas, but two who focus on lighting, two cabinet designers and three plumbing designers. Kaehler is the primary lighting consultant. She’s been consulting for 23 years, and she is one of only two Certified Lighting Consultants in the Tri-State Area who’s certified through the American Lighting Association. Gleason is the showroom manager and fills in on the floor as needed. Their pleasant, friendly personalities put the customers at ease right away.

“We assist a large range of age groups, from young couples designing their new homes to older people building their smaller retirement homes,” says Kaehler.

“And we’re still here!” she adds. “The Tri-State Area never lost us, and we remained devoted to the area as well.” **CRW**

Heidi Overson writes from her home office with minimal lighting. After writing this story, a decision was made to change that.

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Easing Stress

You can help your body heal itself
from damage caused by stress.

BY JANIS JOLLY | CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

When we speak of stress, we usually have something negative in mind: headache, anxiety, indigestion. But stress can be positive as well as negative. Stress is simply the body's response to changes that create taxing demands. It makes the heart beat faster, it makes the blood course through our veins and it heightens all our senses. If changes in your life make you have more energy or feel excited—for example, if it improves your performance—it is a good thing. We are unlikely to seek help when we experience positive stress.

Negative stress, on the other hand, causes anxiety or concern. It feels unpleasant. It can decrease performance and leave us exhausted. We seek out help from friends, physicians, spiritual advisors or others to relieve and manage stress.

Learning to manage this all-too-common negative stress can have a positive effect on our lives when we learn to cope and find new ways to take care of ourselves. The Coulee Region is fortunate to have many people in the helping professions who can help us mitigate common stressors.

One method that is becoming easier to access is biofeedback, a technique that helps neutralize the body's reaction to stress using modern technology and mindfulness training.

HELPING THE BODY TO HEAL

Embraced by many holistic health practitioners, quantum biofeedback targets stress with electronic frequencies. "Biofeedback reminds the body of what it felt like when it wasn't stressed," says Billy Bergeron of Bluffland Biofeedback, who uses a type of biofeedback machine that "sends healing frequencies through the body so it can

use its own great healing abilities." He adds that biofeedback does not diagnose or treat the cause of the stress.



Billy Bergeron of Bluffland
Biofeedback

Bergeron points out that people store stress in certain parts of the body, such as the lower back, the upper back and neck. Some people get bad headaches or have digestive problems. Biofeedback can interfere with the frequencies of the body to neutralize the stress.

A typical quantum biofeedback session is relaxing and painless. First, the practitioner converses with the client about how they are feeling and how stress manifests in their body. Then the client is connected to the biofeedback machine and a computer, which provides a readout. The client then rests in a comfortable chair for 20 to 60 minutes. During this time, the biofeedback equipment uses the information it has gathered about stress factors within the body and emits frequencies to attempt to neutralize that stress.

At the end of the session, Bergeron shares the results with the client. The readout from the session can show something about the nature of the stress. The client then learns what to pay special attention to in their life and their body.

"The stress management is not instantaneous; the client needs to pay close attention to how they feel after each session," explains Bergeron. "It typically takes three sessions to assess and neutralize feelings of stress."

Bergeron is a certified practitioner of biofeedback, having completed a one-year course provided by the maker of the equipment he uses. **CRW**

Janis Jolly lives in La Crosse and plans to learn lots more about biofeedback.



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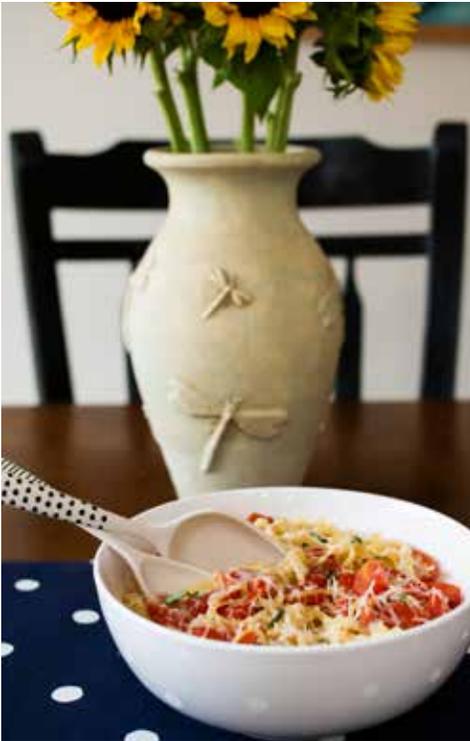
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KEEPING IT LIGHT

Local dietitians weigh in on how to avoid the “Quarantine 15.”

BY TALLITHA REESE | CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS



Light yet delicious meals like One-Pot Tomato Basil Pasta (left) and Zucchini and Black Bean Quesadillas (right) add variety and nutrition to your diet. Both recipes are on page 33.

Many of our routines have been upended by the Covid-19 pandemic. Work, school, shopping and social activities don't look anything like what they used to, and that spills over into our eating habits as well—hence another side effect of the pandemic: gaining the dreaded “Quarantine 15.”

With more time at home due to quarantining, following stay-at-home directives or working remotely, as well as a general rise in stress, worry and anxiety for much of the population, it's important to remain mindful about how and what we're eating.

CHANGING WORLD, CHANGING EATING HABITS

“Some people find that their days have less structure lately, which may lead to less structured eating and not really paying attention to their hunger and their fullness,” says Cindy Solis, registered dietitian and clinical manager of the nutrition therapy department at Gundersen Health System. “Others are

tempted to exercise control over their eating when everything else feels out of control, which isn't a good thing, either.”

“For the unforeseeable future, this may be our ‘new normal,’” adds Jamie Pronschinske, a registered dietitian at Mayo Clinic Health System. “It is important that we learn ways to manage and cope that promote our long-term health and well-being.”

Successful management and coping practices will look different for each individual. For some, meal planning can be a useful tool, while others might benefit from focusing on remedies for boredom and stress that don't include food. In some cases, actively avoiding having unhealthy snacks and foods in the house might make the biggest difference. Keeping a food diary that provides a way to look back at when, why and what you eat could also benefit some people.

“If your usual routines have been upended,” Solis says, “try to implement and follow a new routine”—one that includes balance and being mindful of your eating habits. “Include time for yourself to relax, practice a hobby or find activities



Cindy Solis, Gundersen Health System

you enjoy,” she adds. “Feeling balanced mentally and emotionally can make it easier to plan balanced snacks and meals.”

Pronschinske also highlights the importance of checking in with your hunger to determine if you’re actually hungry or eating for emotional reasons like boredom, loneliness or a need for comfort.

“Think about why you are eating,” says Pronschinske. “Learn to differentiate between true physical hunger and emotional hunger that is triggered by boredom or stress. If emotional hunger arises, practice dealing with this using alternative behaviors like distraction.”

WHAT AND WHEN TO EAT

When it comes to the actual act of eating and what exactly should be on your plate, both dietitians stress that some flexibility when it comes to meal scheduling should be anticipated and that everyone should allow for the enjoyment of their food.



Jamie Pronschinske, Mayo Clinic Health System

“We all need to eat, and we should allow ourselves to enjoy the experience of eating,” says Solis. “A balanced meal consisting of foods you enjoy is going to be both filling and satisfying. Try to include vegetables or fruits with all (or most) meals and always include a protein food as part of a balanced meal.”

Pronschinske also points out that a good meal schedule will look different for everyone. “There is no right or wrong way to eat,” she says. “However, eating regular meals throughout the day can help prevent us from getting too hungry and reduce the risk of overeating. Meals that include a combination of lean protein, fiber-rich carbohydrates and healthy fat are the most satisfying and provide a good variety of essential nutrients.”

LIGHTEN UP ... ON YOURSELF

With the stress and upheaval that many people have been experiencing during this pandemic, Solis says it’s completely natural to see a change in how we eat as well.

“Temporary changes in eating habits due to stress or other environmental factors is a common and normal response,” she explains. “How or if our eating habits change in situations like this depends on how we are able to respond to and cope with the changes and the stress. Food isn’t the problem. Finding healthy and productive ways to respond to change, stress and other emotions will help curb unwanted changes to your eating habits.”

“I think it’s important to point out that these are challenging times for many people,” adds Pronschinske. “Be gentle with yourself. Don’t let food be another stressor.”

The following recipes offer options for meals that are healthy, enjoyable and satisfying, even in pandemic times.

Orecchiette with Pesto and Oven-Roasted Tomatoes

Rebecca Stetzer, RD, Nutrition Therapy
Gundersen Health System

Serves 8

Pesto

- 2 cups fresh basil leaves
- ½ cup olive oil
- 1 large garlic clove
- ½ cup grated Parmesan cheese
- ¼ cup pine nuts or walnuts

Add all ingredients to a food processor or blender and process until smooth, scraping down the sides as necessary.

Orecchiette

- 1½ cups grape tomatoes, sliced in half
- 1 tsp. olive oil
- 16 oz. orecchiette pasta
- 1 batch of homemade pesto (see above)
- 1 cup fresh mozzarella

Preheat oven to 425°F and set a large pot of salted water on high heat to boil for the pasta.

In a bowl, toss the tomatoes with the olive oil. Lay them in a single layer on a lined baking sheet and roast 15-18 minutes.

Cook pasta according to directions and strain, reserving ½ cup of the pasta water.

Add the pesto to the pot and stir to coat. If the pesto is too thick for your liking, thin it out a bit with the reserved pasta water, adding a little at a time.

Add the oven-roasted tomatoes and fresh mozzarella. The warmth of the pasta will soften the cheese. Add salt if needed.

Per serving: 430 calories, 23g heart-healthy fat, 14g protein, 44g carbohydrate, 2g fiber, 175mg sodium.



Orecchiette with Pesto and Oven-Roasted Tomatoes

Zucchini and Black Bean Quesadillas

Mayo Clinic Health System

Serves 4

- 1½ cups reduced-sodium black beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 cup finely diced zucchini
- 1 cup frozen sweet corn kernels, thawed
- ¾ cup red onion, finely diced
- ½ cup reduced-fat cheddar cheese, shredded
- ¼ cup fresh cilantro, chopped
- 1 tsp. cumin
- ½ tsp. salt
- Pinch of ground black pepper
- ¼ tsp. Tabasco sauce
- 2 whole-wheat tortillas (12-inch diameter)

In a large bowl, combine the beans, zucchini, corn, red onion, cheese, cilantro, cumin, salt, pepper and Tabasco sauce. Heat a large nonstick skillet to medium heat and coat with cooking spray. Place one tortilla in the pan to warm. Place half of the bean mixture on one side of the tortilla and fold over to cover. Cook for 2-3 minutes per side or until tortilla is golden brown and cheese has completely melted. Repeat process with second tortilla. Cut each quesadilla into 4 even slices. Serve with your choice of condiments.

Per serving (2 slices): 281 calories, 8g fat, 4g saturated fat, 15mg cholesterol, 522mg sodium, 41g carbohydrate, 14g protein, 16g fiber.

One-Pot Tomato Basil Pasta

Mayo Clinic Health System

Serves 6

- 12 oz. dry whole-wheat linguine
- 3 cups cherry or grape tomatoes, halved
- 1 yellow onion, thinly sliced
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- ½ tsp. red pepper flakes
- 6 leaves fresh basil, chopped (or ½ tsp. dried basil)
- 2 T olive oil
- 1 tsp. salt
- ¼ tsp. pepper
- 4½ cups water
- ½ cup Parmesan cheese

Combine pasta, tomatoes, onion, garlic, red pepper flakes, basil, olive oil, salt, pepper and water in a large pot. Bring to a boil over high heat. Boil, stirring pasta frequently until pasta is al dente and water has nearly evaporated, about 9 minutes. Top with Parmesan cheese.

Optional: Boost this recipe and use more fresh veggies by adding sautéed zucchini or eggplant, wilted chard, spinach or kale, or use your imagination!

Per serving: 310 calories, 9g fat, 2g saturated fat, 10mg cholesterol, 540mg sodium, 47g carbohydrate, 6g fiber, 11g protein. **CRW**

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



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To Chill or Not to Chill? That's been a question for at least 100 years.

So what's the answer? As with many wine questions, the answer is "it depends." There are scientific reasons why some wines are chilled and some are not. Studies indicate serving temperature does make a difference in taste. For example, astringency and bitterness are perceived less at warmer temperatures. Dry red wines often have bitter and astringent qualities, so they are usually served at room temperature. In contrast, cool wine temperatures enhance appreciation of the subtle flavors. Because of that fact, the more delicate white wines are served chilled to exhibit the lighter flavor qualities of those wines. Some wine temperature recommendations are based on common logic. Like a warm kettle of soup on the stove, a warmer wine allows the volatile aromas to escape into the air. This provides that swirling burst of aroma that red wines provide. Many winemakers put chilling recommendations on their bottles, such as "chill and enjoy" or "best served at 65-70 degrees." Whatever the temperature, the main thing is that you enjoy the wine at the temperature you choose!

Lynita Docken-Delaney
Winemaker, Elmaro Vineyard



ACCOMPLISHMENTS



Women's Fund Names New Director

Sarah Ellingson has been named the new executive director of the Women's Fund of Greater La Crosse. Ellingson brings with her over 20 years of experience in for-profit and nonprofit strategy and development and has served on the Women's Fund marketing committee for over three years. She has worked with businesses and organizations of all sizes, including State Farm Insurance, State Bank Financial and the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and she has served on numerous nonprofit boards and committees including Friends of the La Crosse Library board. Ellingson lives in La Crosse with her husband and two daughters.



GoMacro Powers Viola

GoMacro, a mother-daughter-owned Viola, Wisconsin, company known for its organic, plant-based nutrition bars, has announced that all residences, businesses and schools in Viola will be powered by 100 percent renewable wind energy thanks to a new partnership with the Village. In the first known arrangement of its kind in the country, GoMacro will cover the additional costs of purchasing renewable energy credits (RECs) for the entire municipality, effectively subsidizing all Viola residents' use of renewable energy. GoMacro's mission is to spread awareness for a balanced, plant-based lifestyle with products that have positive effects on the world and inspire others to have a healthy body, sharp mind and bold spirit.



Deb Lash-Stangel Is Interim Director of DMI

Downtown Mainstreet, Inc., in La Crosse has named Deb Lash-Stangel, owner of The Wedding Tree and Court Above Main, its interim executive director while the organization searches for a permanent replacement for Robin Moses, who resigned from her position in August. Lash-Stangel has served on the board of DMI for 13 years and recently finished serving her term as past president. "I'm excited to be able to use my experience in business and in Downtown La Crosse to be able to move this organization forward and set it up for a promising future," she says.

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Gundersen Health System Celebrates 45 Years of Midwifery

In 1975, Gundersen's first midwife delivered 12 babies. Today, 15 midwives across the health care system help hundreds of women through pregnancy and childbirth every year. September 2020 marked the 45th anniversary of Gundersen's certified nurse midwifery program—the longest continuously running midwifery program in Wisconsin.

Midwifery focuses on the health and wellness of a woman and her baby, with a CNM's scope of work including prenatal care, support during labor and delivery, preventive health care and more, while helping women achieve a low-intervention pregnancy and birth whenever possible. "We work hard to provide safe, compassionate, evidence-based care to women and families," Angela Connely, CNM, says. "We all care deeply about women's health and value our opportunity to empower women at every encounter we have with them."

Accomplishments is a paid section featuring your business or organization. Call 608-783-5395 or e-mail info@crwmagazine.com for more information.

Furry Family Fun

Now might be a great time to welcome a pet into your home.

BY RACHEL PERSSON | CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS



From left: Volunteers Nancy Strelow, Diane Foerster and Charmaine Uphaus.



Volunteer Uphaus introduces a furry friend ready to adopt from La Crescent Animal Rescue.

Nothing adds life and light to a home like a new furry face. And while families understand the demands of bringing a new pet into their home, now—with so many family members working or schooling at home—presents a particularly good opportunity to welcome a new pet with the attention it requires. Just ask the volunteers at the La Crescent Area Animal Shelter.

Diane Foerster, Charmaine Uphaus and Nancy Strelow are familiar faces at the La Crescent Area Animal Shelter. Each of them volunteer over 1,000 hours annually, assisting this no-kill shelter care for the animals. Foerster and Uphaus are cat health care coordinators, and Strelow is the dog health care coordinator.

EDUCATE YOURSELF

With more families spending time at home these days, the time is right for many to adopt a pet. The volunteers at the La Crescent Animal Shelter have some suggestions for those planning to add a pet to their family.

“Make sure everyone is on the same page when it comes to adopting a pet,” says Foerster. Adding a new member to your family requires thinking and preparing for what you want. Will a dog or cat work better with your family’s lifestyle? Do you need a

pet that meshes well with very small children? Can your family handle the needs of a young, high-energy pet, or could you provide a loving and calm home for an older pet, or one with special needs?

“Do your research,” Strelow says. “There’s so much that goes into adding a member to your family, and it’s such a big commitment, that you need to think about all that is involved in it.” Health care, food and daily care are all things that need to be considered. So is creating a safe environment for your pet—including learning which plants in your home might even be toxic to pets.

“We are so big on education here,” Strelow says. “I send (families) home with many resources and pamphlets about best practices to care for their pets.” The volunteers at the La Crescent Animal Shelter are an excellent resource for helping you care for your pet.

THE ADOPTION OPTION

When you bring a pet home from the La Crescent Animal Shelter, you are taking home an animal that has been taken in and cared for by capable hands. “But you won’t bring a pet home the same day,” says Foerster. “We have a three-page application, and it’s pretty thorough,” adds Strelow. The team at the La Crescent Animal Shelter is dedicated

to making sure the adoption is in the best interest of the pet and family committed to the animal. “Being prepared is the best thing you can do,” says Uphaus. “It’s a lifetime commitment when you bring home a pet from our shelter.”

The La Crescent Animal Shelter opened in 2005 and is 100 percent built and run by passionate volunteers who give their time to animals looking for their fur-ever home. Currently, they are limited to caring for animals within the city limits of La Crescent. “We are the only shelter in Houston County,” Foerster says.

“We would love to serve more, but the adoption fees alone do not cover what it costs to save these animals. We depend on donations to help us survive,” Uphaus adds.

If you are considering adding a furry member to your family, please make an appointment to visit the shelter or donate to support this amazing group of volunteers. More information on adoption, volunteering and supporting the shelter can be found at www.lacrescentanimalrescue.com. **CRW**

Rachel Persson is a freelance writer and Marketing and Events Coordinator at Downtown Mainstreet, Inc. A Coulee Region native, she now lives in Cashton with her husband.

Keep 'er Movin'

Charlie Berens helps us find levity in tough times.

BY JESS WITKINS | CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS



Charlie Berens, creator of *Manitowoc Minute*, keeps Midwesterners laughing—usually at themselves.

You likely know him from his hit video series, *Manitowoc Minute*, but Charlie Berens is also an Emmy-winning journalist and comedian. While born in Wisconsin, he now works all over the country hosting comedy shows and working both behind and in front of the camera for news stories and comedy hits. He's been a regular on *Funny or Die*, garnering millions of views with his comedic Midwest-inspired voice. Though his touring life changed since Covid-19 first hit, his adaptability and sense of humor have only heightened, and with them, a reminder to us all to “keep 'er movin'” when life gets us down.

Hello, Charlie. Welcome to CRW! What's it like being a comic during a global pandemic?

It's been pretty wild. I spent the past two-and-a-half years touring. In a day, that changed. Standup for the most part died, so I adapted, like a lot of other comics. I started doubling down on videos, which seemed to work. In the early days of the lockdown, my audience grew quite a bit. I think people were hungry for some levity in all the fear and uncertainty.

You've really drawn a crowd with your well-crafted, Midwest-focused video series, *Manitowoc Minute*, and more. (My fave is the therapy session with a mosquito.) What do you love about the Midwest? What makes us so great to poke fun at?

First off, thank you for loving that video. It was definitely out there. What I love about the Midwest is we don't take ourselves too seriously. Life's too short for that. Take Wisconsin, for instance. We took the name “cheese head” (which I think was an insult at first) and

made it a thing of pride. Some of us have even worn a cheese head to a funeral a time or two at the request of the deceased.

What's been the biggest struggle for you during this time?

It's tough seeing people tear each other apart on social media. I don't think anyone ever had their mind changed by a demeaning comment on Facebook, and yet we watch adults act like children every day. Most people leave these comments to make themselves feel better at the expense of everyone else.

One thing this pandemic has shown us is that women really do run the world—from education to child care to parenting to the workplace. Women are being pulled in more directions than ever right now. How would you help us find the levity you mentioned?

Well, I'll tell you what I do and see if that works for you. It's a trick my Grandpa Bob taught me, but I seen my Grandma Sue do it since he passed. You go out to the garage, crack a beer and pull up a lawn chair. Then you count the cars until you forget what was bothering you.

Cheers! Will you tell us a joke?

I says to my buddy come on over, bring a beer or tree. He showed up with a sequoia. Gosh darnit!

You can find more of Berens' comedy and the *Manitowoc Minute* at www.charlieberens.com. **CRW**

Jess Witkins is a writer, blogger and storyteller. Her mission: making pathetic look cool since 1985. She can often be found wordmongering in the Coulee Region's many coffee shops.

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A MILLION SPARKS OF Joy

Rotary Lights shine on in 2020!

BY JULIE NELSON
CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS



Rotary Lights, one tradition that can't be broken by Covid-19, will shine on in 2020. Photos by Cassie Clark.

Canceled events and festivals have you feeling blue? Cheer up: soon a million sparks of joy will be lighting up the night and putting a twinkle in your eye. If ever there was a festival meant for a pandemic, it's the one where people either stay in their cars or walk around outside with their hands and faces covered. Rotary Lights, you can't come soon enough!



Volunteer Sue Crothers helps keep Rotary Lights running behind the scenes.

MOSTLY THE SAME

Of course, even this outdoor festival will have to make accommodations for the current pandemic. Don't expect Santa to be inviting hundreds of children to sit on his lap, for example, and do expect the igloo and warming house for the ice rink to be handled differently as well. As for the kickoff parade and the crowd-

drawing lighting ceremony ... maybe just wait for next year on those.

But the most important aspects of Rotary Lights will remain the same. Starting the evening of the Friday after Thanksgiving, Riverside Park will light up with more than a million bulbs of different colors, illuminating everything from fire-breathing dragons to skaters on ice. Visitors will be able to walk or drive through the park, and trucks and volunteers will collect those all-important donations of food and cash.

BEHIND THE SCENES

Other components remaining the same are ones the public doesn't often see, like the work done by all the volunteers and the food that keeps those volunteers happy and warm. Sue Crothers is the driving force behind the cookies, sloppy joes, pizzas and gallons of hot chocolate that add to the camaraderie. Over the course of 43 days, Crothers coordinates nearly 1,500 meals donated by restaurants, churches and private individuals. And the best part, she says, is that she doesn't even have to ask—restaurants call *her* asking to be included in the supply of food donors. "You know you have a special place in people's hearts and minds when you have this type of support," she says.



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Crothers has been the food genie for about seven years now. She is down at the park every single day, making sure all goes as planned and calling for emergency donations when more volunteers show up than expected. It's a huge time commitment, but Crothers says there is no place she would rather be. "The winter months aren't always the happiest times of the year," she says, "but when you walk down (to the park) and there are all these volunteers from different walks of life, it's so uplifting. It's a wonderful way to bring people together."

JOY AND RELIEF

Rotary Lights 2020 won't be exactly the same as in other years, but Crothers says she and the other members of the steering committee are always looking on the bright side. "There is so much positivity and ideas for moving forward," she says. She adds that the volunteers are committed to continuing the tradition of collecting food for the pantries, and they recognize that now, more than ever, the Coulee Region is hungry for the lights. "Our goal is to bring joy and relief to everyone who enters the park." CRW

As a member of Valley View Rotary, Julie Nelson is proud of all the contributions Rotary makes to the community.

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BRINGING HISTORY TO LIGHT

The Enduring Families Project educates the community on its African American history.

BY BETTY CHRISTIANSEN | CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS



Through the Enduring Families Project, local actors portray individuals important to La Crosse's Black history in school presentations, at community events and in a new video project. From left: Walfsty Pierre, Torrence Chester, Sara Pederson, Denise Christy Moss, Issachar Bryant and Darrell Ferguson. Photo by Phil S. Addis.

Few Coulee Region residents know that in the late 1800s, La Crosse was home to a thriving Black community that included business owners, a presidential candidate and an Olympic medalist. But that's changing, in no small part because of the efforts of the Enduring Families Project, a theater performance group begun by two retired teachers from the Milwaukee Public School system.

SHARED PASSIONS

Denise Christy Moss and Rebecca Mormann-Krieger both taught at the Milwaukee High School of the Arts and relocated to the Coulee Region after retirement. Both had an interest in the Black history of the area. Moss's husband had family ties to Cheyenne Valley—a 19th-century community in northern Vernon County comprising the state's largest rural settlement of African Americans, who owned farms alongside European immigrants and Native Americans in an environment of harmony and mutual respect. And Mormann-Krieger was exploring African Americans in La Crosse as part of research on Wisconsin history. When she discovered several noteworthy historical figures in La Crosse, the seeds of the Enduring Families Project were sown.

A former theater and social studies teacher with a passion for getting her diverse student body involved in history and theater,

Mormann-Krieger began writing monologues based on these prominent Black figures in La Crosse's history, which she hoped to share with the community in some form. Moss, a former teacher of theater and speech, lent her production experience to the project, locating actors, costumes and performance opportunities through which these stories could be told. With the fiscal sponsorship of the La Crosse Historical Society, their project took root.

ON THE BUS

The Enduring Families Project debuted Juneteenth 2018, when four sets of actors—including Moss as Nellie Poage, sister of La Crosse's Olympic medal-winning George Poage—stationed themselves at locations in La Crosse where they could reenact the stories of Black members of La Crosse's history. Modeled after the LCHS Silent City tour, the event featured a bus tour with stops at each site, where participants could observe the performances and interact with the actors. "That really put us on the map," says Mormann-Krieger. Both women recall audiences of all colors fascinated by a piece of La Crosse's history they never knew. "People really wanted to know these stories," recalls Moss.

"The key was putting the actors in the actual locations where the stories took place," she adds. "I hadn't known about George



Rebecca Mormann-Krieger, left, and Denise Christy Moss accept a Community Project of the Year award for the Enduring Families Project at the 2019 YWCA Tribute to Outstanding Women event.

Edwin Taylor”—who in 1904 was the nation’s first Black presidential candidate—“and he used to live near the building that housed Wettstein’s.” A substantial Black population drawn to the area by the logging industry in the late 1800s led to a boom in Black-owned businesses, such as Elizabeth Burr’s Vine Street boardinghouse and barbershops owned by members of the Moss family, also stops on the tour.

The women extended the project further into the community by bringing performances to schools and community gatherings. In both settings, the stories made deep impacts.

“The kids would have great questions,” says Mormann-Krieger of the school performances, “and it was so important for kids of color to see people like themselves on stage.” She recalls that one of the performers is also a barber, and a boy in one audience tracked down his North Side shop to see him again. Another time, she recalls three girls of color so fascinated by the stories of Black businesswomen that they begged to know where they would be performing next.

Moss recalls her favorite moment in nearly every performance: “It’s the gasp,” she says. “It happens when people are surprised by a piece of history—I didn’t know that; I want to know more.”

ENDURING STORIES

The group has recently begun a video project in which 10 to 11 stories will be produced for film in authentic historical settings. The group’s repertoire has expanded to encompass more historical figures, more stories and more performers, including children and a runner-actor who plays George Poage. Three of the videos made a Zoom debut via the La Crosse Public Library in September.

Capturing the performances on video ensures they endure as a record of La Crosse history, but the real meaning behind the project’s name lies with the historical figures themselves.

“These were *enduring* families,” says Moss. “This is our way of saying, ‘We were here, too,’ of showing pride in a people who have been marginalized.” The project creates “an umbrella of inclusion for all,” she says, one that gets bigger with every performance. **CRW**

Betty Christiansen is publisher and editor of Coulee Region Women.



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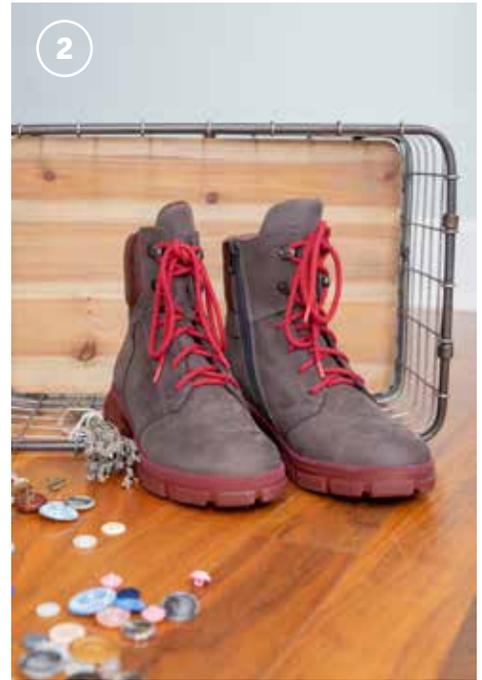
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BOOT WEATHER

There's a pair for every fall style.

PHOTOS BY JORDANA SNYDER PHOTOGRAPHY

There's nothing like the return to fall fashions—and boots top our list. From classic to romantic to utilitarian, our favorites this season hail from Urban Shoetique, Touch of Class and Mainstream Boutique.



- 1. Nicole** "Shiri," \$118, Mainstream Boutique
- 2. Think!** "laz," \$415, Urban Shoetique
- 3. Gentle Souls** "Ella Boot," \$299, Touch of Class
- 4. Nicole** "Kelby," \$98, Mainstream Boutique
- 5. BedStu** "Aldina," \$260, Urban Shoetique
- 6. Gentle Souls** "Best Moto Boot," \$279, Touch of Class





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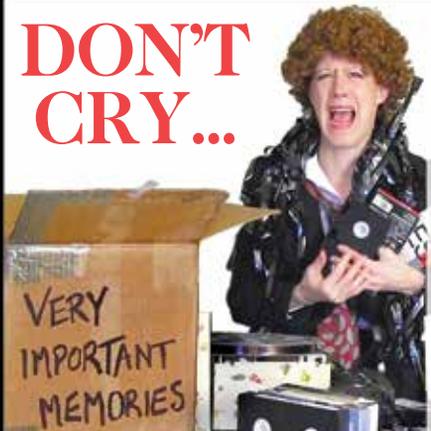


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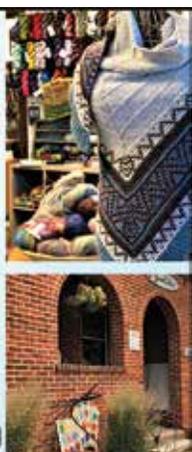
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The author on her annual fall me-treat.



The hermitages on St. Joseph's Ridge offer a getaway to solitude.



Mandy Hansel hiked 50 miles of the Superior Hiking Trail alone.

A Journey Within

Take a “me-treat” and find solitude in your soul.

BY SHARI HEGLAND | CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

August would normally be the end of a three-month summer break, with my son bouncing around the house as I work from home. Instead, August 2020 marked five months of him home with at least two more looming, and that is when I booked a cabin for my fourth-ever “me-treat.”

My “me-treat” is a solo trip in the fall to a cabin somewhere I can hike, build a campfire, listen to nature and just exist. The quieter and more secluded, the better—though still within a half-day’s drive of La Crosse. One of the options on my “me-treat” list is even closer and more convenient—just a half-hour from downtown La Crosse on St. Joseph’s Ridge.

SOLITUDE AMID SOCIAL ISOLATION

Audrey Lucier, director of the Franciscan Spirituality Center, admits that it may seem counterintuitive to voluntarily spend time in solitude when we are being asked to socially isolate, but it actually makes sense.

“Many of us are just trying to have enough space to really listen to what all of this means to us,” she says. And many are also isolated in homes with family members nearly 24/7, without adequate space to “get away.”

But the silence of a solo retreat to one of the three single-room hermitage cabins the FSC operates can help quiet minds that need time and space. “It’s so hard to hear the voice of God or the divine in regular life,” she says, or even to hear what is happening in our own hearts.

Lucier says even those who thrive on connection need to occasionally unplug. “I am a person that likes people and action,” she says, “but I really grew to enjoy the silence (at the hermitages). If you really want to hear, you have to get rid of the extraneous noise.”

The hermitage cabins allow for just that, with no internet service, no television and a network of trails through the surrounding woods.

Instead, they offer a fireplace, cozy chairs for curling up with a book and a writing desk for journaling.

A LITTLE PIECE, BUT IMPORTANT

Mandy Hansel found silence in which to listen to her heart two years ago, but on a grander scale. In September 2018, the Goodview, Minnesota, woman hiked 50 miles of the Superior Hiking Trail in Minnesota alone. At times, she says, she would just stop along the trail to sit and think and pray—and she learned something about herself.

“Looking at the expanse of the lake and all the trees, I realized I’m just this little piece of what the world is made of, but I also felt that I was where I was meant to be, and even though I’m a little piece, I’m still important,” she says.

Hansel says that all women need to find “me” time. “So often, we have ‘we’ time,” she says. “I wanted to do what I wanted to do, when I wanted to do it, and not worry about anybody else.”

It’s not selfish—it’s self-preservation.

I agree. Trips with friends are fun, trips with family make memories, but time spent alone, especially in a natural setting with no obligations or distractions, refreshes the soul. **CRW**

Holmen writer Shari Hegland’s “me-treats” provide a mental reset from family and work obligations and an opportunity to simply appreciate the world around us.

ABOUT THE HERMITAGES

- Three secluded single-room cottages with bathrooms and kitchen facilities
- No internet service or televisions
- Hiking and snowshoe trails on site
- Can be reserved for 2- to 3-day weekend stays
- <https://www.fscenter.org/content/hermitages>

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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](http://www.aauw-wi.org).

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

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

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

NAMI Family Support Group 2nd Mon. of each month, 6:30 p.m., Family and Children's Center, 1707 Main 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.

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

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

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

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

Please contact each group for meeting status at this time.

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

CALENDAR EVENTS

OCTOBER

Oct. 2-3, Cameron Park Farmers Market, Fri. 4 p.m.-dusk, Sat. 8 a.m.-1 p.m., King and Fifth Streets, La Crosse, <http://www.cameronparkmarket.org>.

Oct. 3, Expert-Led Owl Prowl, 6 p.m., International Owl Center, Houston, Minnesota. www.internationalowlcenter.org.

 **Oct. 3**, Saturday Art Market, 10 a.m.-3 p.m., Main Street Plaza, Riverside Park, La Crosse, www.lacrossedowntown.com.

Oct. 3, Vote Safely and Make Your Voice Heard webinar, 12:30-1:30 p.m., AARP Wisconsin, wiaarp@aarp.org, register at <https://local.aarp.org/aarp-event/aarp-wi-vote-safely-and-make-your-voice-heard-webinar-10720-6ynw9cxcfc2.html>.

Oct. 7, Women's Fund Virtual Fall Event Day, 11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m., register at www.womensfundlacrosse.org.

Oct. 9-10, Cameron Park Farmers Market, Fri. 4 p.m.-dusk, Sat. 8 a.m.-1 p.m., King and Fifth Streets, La Crosse, <http://www.cameronparkmarket.org>.

Oct. 10, Sparta Half Marathon/5K, 8 a.m.-12:30 p.m., Elroy Bike Trail, www.spartahalfmarathon5k.com.

Oct. 10, Saturday Art Market, 10 a.m.-3 p.m., Main Street Plaza, Riverside Park, downtown La Crosse, www.lacrossedowntown.com.

Oct. 10-11, Civil War Immersion Weekend, Norskedalen, Coon Valley, www.norskedalen.org.

Oct. 13, League of Women Voters October Virtual Lunch & Learn with Diana DiazGranados, Public Health Advocate, 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m., register at www.lwvlacrosse.org.

Oct. 16-17, Cameron Park Farmers Market, Fri. 4 p.m.-dusk, Sat. 8 a.m.-1 p.m., King and Fifth Streets, La Crosse, <http://www.cameronparkmarket.org>.

Oct. 23, Jason Farnham live performance, 7:30-9:30 p.m., The Heider Center, www.heidercenter.org.

Oct. 23-24, Cameron Park Farmers Market, Fri. 4 p.m.-dusk, Sat. 8 a.m.-1 p.m., King and Fifth Streets, La Crosse, <http://www.cameronparkmarket.org>.

Oct. 23-30, *The War of the Worlds: The Panic Broadcast* streaming performance, Center for the Arts, UW-La Crosse, www.uwlax.edu/theatre-arts/performances-box-office/season-listing/.

Oct. 24, Family Trick or Treat, Norskedalen, 5:30-7:30 p.m., Coon Valley, www.norskedalen.org.



Oct. 24, A Return to Life! live chamber concert featuring Tai Murray, La Crosse Symphony Orchestra, 7:30 p.m., Viterbo Fine Arts Center, www.lacrossesympphony.org.

Oct. 28, Social Security and Your Retirement free virtual seminar, 12 p.m. and 6 p.m., Altra Federal Credit Union, sign up at www.altra.org.

Oct. 30-31, Ghoulies in the Coulees drive-thru event, 6-9 p.m., Norskedalen, Coon Valley, www.norskedalen.org.

Oct. 30-31, Cameron Park Farmers Market, Fri. 4 p.m.-dusk, Sat. 8 a.m.-1 p.m., King and Fifth Streets, La Crosse, <http://www.cameronparkmarket.org>.

Oct. 31, Expert-Led Owl Prowl, 5:30 p.m., International Owl Center, Houston, MN. www.internationalowlcenter.org.

NOVEMBER



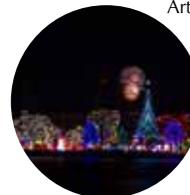
Nov. 7, Virtual Fashion Cornucopia style show for Women's Clothes Closet, Our Saviors Lutheran Church, find details at www.oursaviorslutheranchurch.net.

Nov. 18, *Otherwise Known as Sheila the Great* live performance, 10 a.m. and 12:45 p.m., The Heider Center, www.heidercenter.org.

Nov. 20, Collide Vocals live performance, 7:30 p.m., The Heider Center, www.heidercenter.org.

Nov. 19-22, Annual Holiday Fair, 12-8 p.m. Thurs.-Fri., 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Sat., 10 a.m.-3 p.m. Sun., La Crosse Center, www.lacrossecenter.com.

Nov. 21, Celebrating Heroes! live chamber concert, La Crosse Symphony Orchestra, 7:30 p.m., Viterbo Fine Arts Center, www.lacrossesympphony.org.



Nov. 27-Dec. 31, Rotary Holiday Lights, open daily 5-10 p.m., Riverside Park, La Crosse.

Nov. 28, Expert-Led Owl Prowl, 4:30 p.m., International Owl Center, Houston, MN. www.internationalowlcenter.org.

DECEMBER

Dec. 2-9, *It's a Wonderful Life: A Live Radio Play*, streaming performance, Center for the Arts, UW-La Crosse, www.uwlax.edu/theatre-arts/performances-box-office/season-listing/.

Dec. 5, Old-Fashioned Christmas, Norskedalen, Coon Valley, www.norskedalen.org.

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



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