

coulee region

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APRIL/MAY 2021
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women

Go with the Flow

**Processing Loss with
Christine Kortbein
and Catherine Tyink**

Flowing Through Change

Cooking as Meditation

Living in a River Lodge

Know Your "Flow"

Dreaming of Your Next Destination



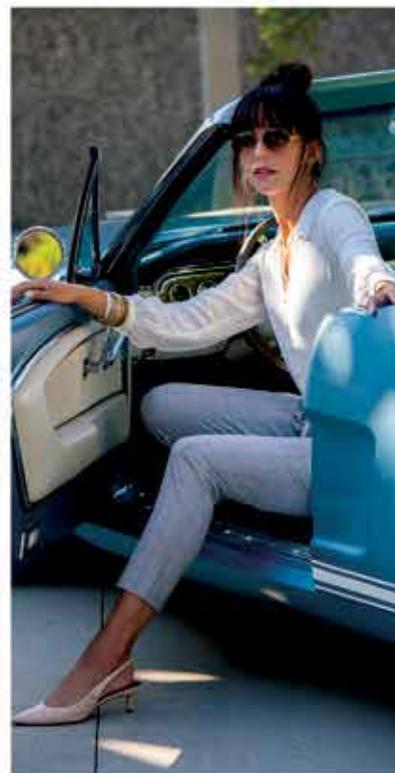
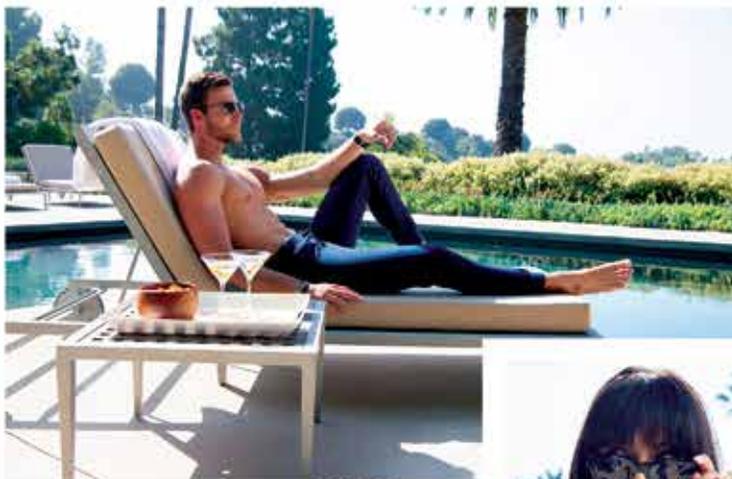
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Go with the Flow

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Pictured on cover and above left: Christine Kortbein and Catherine Tyink, authors of *Grief Reimagined: 50 Creative Strategies to Build Resilience*. Photo by Apropos Photography.

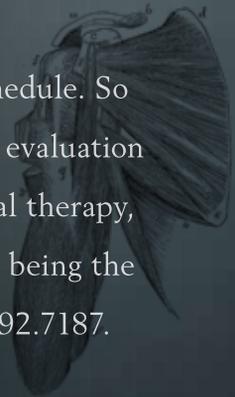


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*Shoulder
Joint*





Diane Raaum Photography

From the moment the Covid-19 pandemic impacted our area—and I always mark that moment as the day last March that schools were closed—my family adopted the motto that saw us through the whole ordeal: “We’re just gonna roll with it.” Packet pickup and Zoom meetings for school? We’re just gonna roll with it. Canceled spring musicals and class trips? We’re just gonna roll with it. Distancing from grandparents? Virtual 4-H projects? Online school in the fall? Roll, roll and roll some more.

In some ways, we rolled very successfully. Having everyone at home was fun at first, and the holiday Zoom celebrations that required no travel in bad weather were a hit. Running, biking and skiing were welcome ways to get out of the house and mingle with friends, social-distance style.

In other ways, we did not roll so well. By June, the recycling bin was filled with stacks of unfinished worksheets. The virtual 4-H projects never materialized. Our home Wi-Fi could not handle five Zoom meetings at once, and someone was always getting frozen out of a math class or production meeting.

Then, as if our motivation—and our spirits—weren’t low enough, subzero temperatures in February rolled them right over the edge.

But just when we thought we couldn’t take it anymore, spring came, vaccines came and the kids were able to return to school. The days when we can hug the grandparents are in sight. It seems we are finally being rewarded—just a little bit—for enduring everything we’ve been through. It hasn’t been easy, this year of letting go of expectation and outcome, this pre-grieving that comes with knowing something you want very much may ultimately be taken away. But all in all, going with the flow—that rhythm of rolling with life’s ups and downs—has paid off.

Just ask the women featured in this issue of *Coulee Region Women*, who demonstrate in their lives and careers how to “Go with the Flow.” First up are our cover women, Catherine Tyink and Christine Kortbein, who have literally written the book on how to process that grief for lost opportunities, lost milestones and, of course, lost loved ones. Then there’s the irrepressible Tammy Zee, who shares the flow of yoga with students across the region. You’ll meet county health directors who have “rolled with it” like few others, and speaking of rolling, a Coulee Region man, Richard Chrz, demonstrates his mad adaptive cooking skills from his wheelchair. The Winona Outdoor Collaborative may beckon you out to a river adventure, and a riverside renovation of a storied Genoa lodge also inspires. The icing on the cake? Fun spring styles in Retail Therapy and travel plans on the horizon.

We hope this issue inspires you, too, to go with the flow—to embrace life as it comes to you, with all its joys, hardships, heartbreaks and hope. We hope “rolling with it” rolls you to a place of healing and (literal) hugs, a place of spring warmth and new opportunities. We hope we all can look back on this year and realize that, while life was not always pretty, we coped better than we thought possible, and we are stronger than we ever thought possible, too.

Betty

coulee region women

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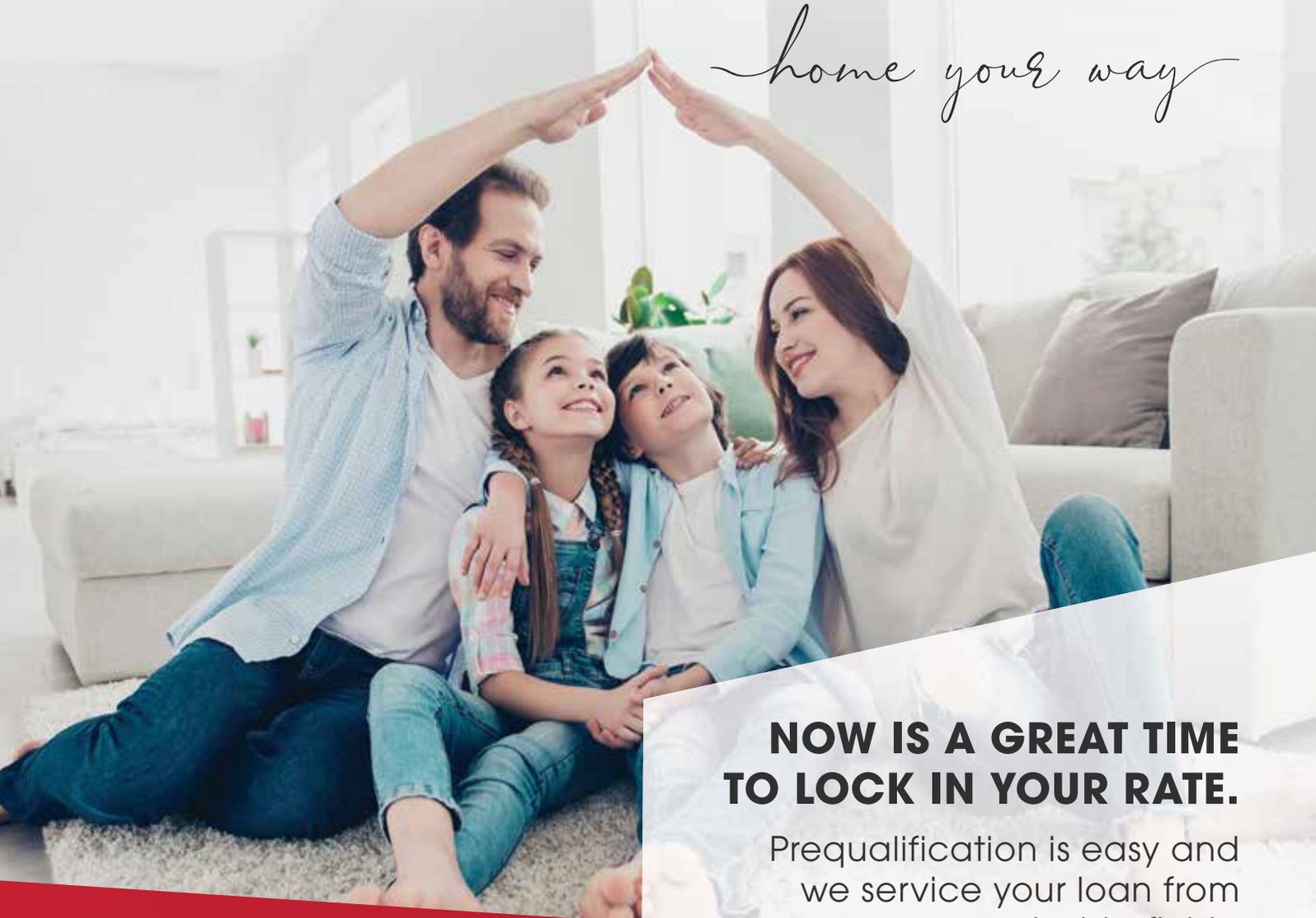


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MARY KESSENS NAMED OUTSTANDING WOMAN

The Women’s Fund of Greater La Crosse has named Mary Kessens, president and CEO of Aptiv, as its 2020 Roberta Zurn Outstanding Women in Leadership Award winner. In her role with Aptiv, a nonprofit organization



Mary Kessens, president and CEO of Aptiv

... serving people with disabilities in the Coulee Region and beyond, Kessens leads 300+ employees supporting 1,400 people with disabilities to live and work independently.

Aptiv’s services, with Kessens’ direction, have helped many women living with disabilities reach goals of independence they may not have thought possible.

Kessens has long served as a role model for other women and encourages her women staff members and mentees to “step into their power!” She is also the founder of the Disability Action Network (DAN), a group of funders, parents/guardians/people with disabilities, service providers and community members enabling collective impact and communication across the disability service system. She has served on the board of Wispact and the Western Wisconsin Workforce Development Board and currently serves on the La Crosse County Housing Authority Board.

The annual Roberta Zurn Award, named for philanthropist and volunteer Roberta Zurn, is awarded to women in our community who have encouraged the advancement of women and girls.

MAZZA AT THE PLAZA

After months of renovations, Elite Repeat Consignment Shop in La Crosse’s Jackson Plaza is reopening in May under its new owner, Kay Mazza. “The renovations included a complete overhaul of the store to give it a fresh new look,” says Mazza. “I’ve been envisioning a shop of finely curated consignment ... a boutique experience for shoppers who want something special.”



Kay Mazza, owner of Elite Repeat

Mazza, a retail industry veteran and La Crosse native, acquired the business in February, following an extensive career working for Saks Fifth Avenue in New York as well as local favorites Herberger’s, Touch of Class and Dales Clothing for Men and Women. Mazza brings not only a passion for fashion to the business, but a passion for people. “What’s great about having a physical location like our space in Jackson Plaza,” she says, “is that you can come down, take a yoga class at Palm & Pine, grab a cup of coffee from Bean Juice and then stop in and chat with our staff while you browse for that next perfect treasure. It’s not just about buying something; it’s about the experience of visiting a neighborhood store, seeing a friendly face and supporting locally owned, women-owned businesses.”

The store will continue to offer women’s clothing, accessories, shoes and home décor and will be adding men’s items. Stay up-to-date with store news on Facebook and Instagram.



CLEAN WATER: CLEAR MISSION

April is Earth Month, and Resoul Day Spa in Onalaska, an Aveda concept spa, is celebrating by partnering with Aveda to support efforts to supply clean and safe water throughout the world. In April, Resoul Day Spa will provide numerous opportunities to support the clean water nonprofits Alliance for the Great Lakes and charity: water. Resoul will offer reusable totes sponsored by local businesses and earth-friendly soy candles for purchase, as well a variety of service enhancements; 100 percent of the proceeds raised will go directly to clean water efforts.

Aveda strives to set an example for environmental leadership and responsibility, and Earth Day provides a special opportunity to spread greater awareness of clean water efforts. Aveda partners with charity: water to provide access to safe drinking water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) to people in developing countries, and with Alliance for the Great Lakes to support our regional supply of fresh water.

You can help keep our regional and global water supplies clean by going to www.resouldayspa.com or visiting Resoul at 2850 Midwest Dr., Ste 101, Onalaska, to partake in Earth Month opportunities.

HEROES BEHIND THE SCENES

During the Covid-19 pandemic, we’ve applauded doctors, nurses, researchers and frontline workers of all types. But April 18-24, Medical Lab Professionals Week, we celebrate a group of hidden health care professionals who work behind the scenes in labs across the region processing tens of thousands of Covid-19 tests and much, much more.

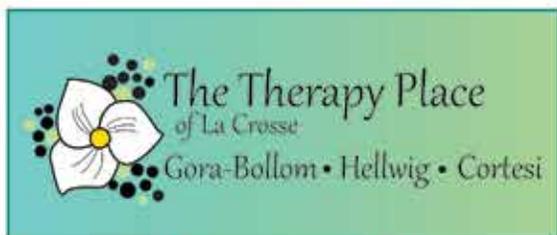
“Especially after this year, we want to celebrate these unsung heroes,” says Andrea Peirce, clinical laboratory scientist at Mayo Clinic Health System in La Crosse. “It’s been a challenging but illuminating year. We’ve had to collaborate, work together like never before, answer difficult questions and be very agile” as they processed staggering numbers of tests quickly while navigating a compromised supply chain for tests and supplies.

It’s worth noting that area medical labs are staffed mainly by women. Peirce says, “It’s a good job for science-minded women who are resourceful and adaptable,” who love microscopes, chemistry and biology. As Peirce tells the students she teaches at Western Technical College and UW-La Crosse, these positions offer women challenging STEM careers, good work-life balance and growth in essential jobs—ones we could not have come through the pandemic without.



Andrea Peirce MS, MLS. Photo by Teresa Hase, Mayo Clinic Health System.

Women in Wellness



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

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Catherine Tyink, left, and Christine Kortbein collaborated to create a unique book focused on strategies to move through many different types of grief.

Time to Heal

Christine Kortbein and Catherine Tyink offer strategies to find meaning in loss.

BY LEAH CALL | PHOTOS BY APROPOS PHOTOGRAPHY

There's light at the end of the Covid tunnel. As more people receive the vaccine daily, the cloud of uncertainty lifts. We can begin to process all that was lost in the past year: lost opportunities, lost freedoms, lost celebrations and time with loved ones, lost lives. *Grief Reimagined: 50 Creative Strategies to Build Resilience*, by Christine Kortbein and Catherine Tyink, offers timely insight to help us deal with the grief we feel over myriad losses.

"When we learn to look at our loss as an outlet for us to have meaning, and create meaning through rituals and activities like we have in the book, that gives us the feeling of purpose in life and helps us flourish, and helps us maintain self-care and develop that well-being," says co-author and therapist Kortbein.

TAKING A DIFFERENT APPROACH TO GRIEF

Longtime friends and sisters-in-law, Kortbein and Tyink each have ties to the Coulee Region. Art therapist Kortbein, now living in Florida, developed the Life Enrichment program at the La Crosse-based assisted living community Eagle Crest South while caring for her elderly parents.

Tyink worked as a school counselor at Onalaska and West Salem high schools, then abroad in Switzerland and Germany, where she

counseled children in boarding and private schools. Covid brought Tyink back to the area, where she now works as a grief support therapist. Disappointed by the lack of books available for use in her grief counseling role, Tyink joined forces with Kortbein to create the type of resource she needed.

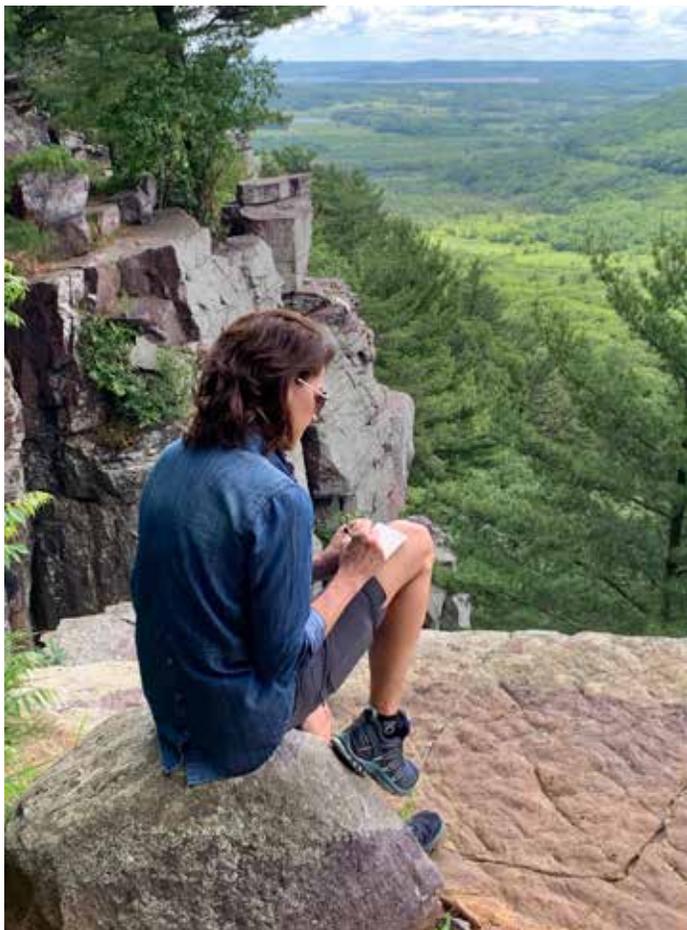
"Everybody knows diet, exercise and sleep are really important, but what about above and beyond that? How do we get a little more creative with building resilience in ourselves? You have the shock of changes and losses in your life; how do you grow from that?" asks Tyink, who notes that the process of writing the book was her own personal self-care and growth.

BUILDING RESILIENCE THROUGH SELF-CARE

Self-care is at the heart of the 50 strategies presented in the book, an eclectic collection of personal stories from a mix of backgrounds and cultures. The book is divided into four sections:

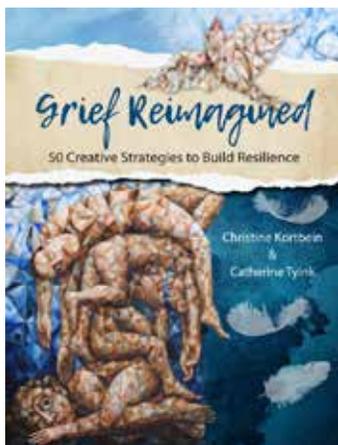
- Alone: Personal Ceremonies
- Together: Connecting with Others
- Creative Tools: Art, Music and More
- Integration: Living with Grief

Tyink and Kortbein interviewed more than 70 people to assemble



Art therapist Christine Kortbein spends time in nature to cultivate well-being and inspire her art. Photo by Mark Tully.

a collection of real-life examples of resilience. “We didn’t want to just tell our theory of what we think is good self-care,” notes Kortbein. “We wanted to find all these stories, so people could relate. What better way to relay ideas about building resilience than through stories?”



Readers of *Grief Reimagined* are sure to find inspiration in the techniques used by others to find meaning in loss. Tyink notes the strategies fall in 10 general categories: nature exposure, visual art, use of humor, massage or therapeutic touch, music, positive psychology, therapeutic letter writing, social support, mindfulness and intentional rituals.

Individuals in the book use hiking and nature to deal with the physical and emotional toll

of war, create a time capsule to cope with a loss of home and embrace the therapeutic effect of sketching and music to deal with anxiety and depression.

Twenty-six of the 50 strategies are based on stories of Wisconsinites, including some local residents. One story depicts La Crosse-based

“The message of the book is that we have to take care of ourselves first before we can be there for others in our families, in our work. We have to build ourselves up.”

—Catherine Tyink

psychotherapist Tom Roberts’ use of Tibetan singing bowl therapy to help a woman overcome physical and emotional pain brought on by the trauma of an abusive relationship.

Everyone processes grief and loss in their own way. Kortbein suggests readers get out of their comfort zone. “In tackling any type of strategy ... give it a shot. If you try it and you hate it, don’t do it again. But sometimes if you are open to the experience, it can be more helpful than you think.” Kortbein herself discovered the benefits of forest bathing, called “shinrin-yoku” in Japanese, spending time in nature to heal and cultivate personal well-being. This strategy, detailed on page 88 of the book, is shared through the story of Moira Farrell, whose practice of forest bathing led to the launch of her business venture, Hike and Heal Wellness.

Both authors hope to dispel the myth that self-care is self-indulgent.

“The message of the book is that we have to take care of ourselves first before we can be there for others in our families, in our work,” notes Tyink. “We have to build ourselves up.”

FIND YOUR STRATEGIES IN THE BOOK

Grief Reimagined is a valuable tool for caregivers, parents, therapists and faith-based organizations. Kortbein and Tyink have converted a portion of the book—10 of the 50 strategies—into an online professional development course for nurses, counselors and social workers. They are also involved in workshops and class presentations throughout the state. Upcoming events are listed on www.christinekortbein.com.

The book is available for purchase through the website and locally at Pearl Street Books, Viroqua Public Market, Arcadia Books and Birdy’s Bookstore.

Jennifer Lusk of Bloomfield, Colorado, discovered *Grief Reimagined* after the loss of her mother. “Since my mother passed, this book has been nurturing in my quiet mornings. I love the stories ... and find them so healing to read. It speaks to all the different kinds of grief we can have ... our country has been in states of various losses, and we personally have been having our own losses. Life does keep moving forward, but taking time to really honor and feel these things has been so important to me,” she says.

Tyink and Kortbein encourage others to take action in their own mental health. When loss hits, don’t underestimate your power to heal.

“One thing that I’ve really learned from the book is the importance of rituals,” notes Tyink. “Just saying goodbye to something, taking the time to intentionally acknowledge and then also maybe express some gratitude for each other. These little things don’t take a lot of time, but they can be powerful.” **CRW**

Freelance writer Leah Call found her own resilience-building strategies in Grief Reimagined; she thanks Tyink and Kortbein for writing this book.

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Fitness That Flows

Yoga enthusiast Tammy Zee strives to stay at the forefront of exercise culture.

BY JESSICA ZEN | CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS



Fitness enthusiast Tammy Zee (above left) took on the challenges of a pandemic without missing a step as Om Yoga Studio flowed directly into online classes and back to in-person offerings over the last year.

After talking with Tammy Zee, owner of Om Yoga Studio, for just a few minutes, you won't be surprised to learn that she was a cheerleader, gymnast and track athlete in high school. Her bubbly personality and "joie de vivre" are contagious and put you at ease. Once you hear about Zee's background, it becomes obvious why she's a successful yoga studio owner.

After high school, Zee went to cosmetology school, but it wasn't her true calling. She randomly attended an aerobics class at her high school and fell in love with it. Zee went from taking the class to teaching it. "I would watch Jane Fonda, Joanie Greggains and *20 Minute Workout*, all these programs that were on," says Zee. She pursued an education in fitness at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, receiving an undergraduate degree in park recreation administration.

SHARING HER TALENTS

While earning her degree, Zee started teaching intramural classes at the university and working at Valley View Fitness and Racket Club. She became a director at both locations, a clear indication she had followed her passions into the ideal profession. She earned her master's degree in exercise sports science/human performance in 1995.

As yoga became popular, Zee jumped in headfirst and was instantly hooked. She was offered a job at UW-La Crosse as the yoga instructor with only three days to prepare. "I literally picked up two books and two VHS tapes and self-taught myself over the weekend," laughs Zee.

Eventually she completed her 500-hour yoga teacher training and is now a yoga therapist. She started working with the American Aerobic Association International to train others to be yoga teachers, aerobic

instructors and water exercise instructors. "My passion is teaching others how to teach. That's my lane, my wheelhouse, my jam," says Zee.

Eventually, it was time for Zee to open her own studio, originally called Tammy Zee's Yoga Studio. Just over two years ago, she moved to her current location as owner of Om Yoga Studio in Onalaska with her business partner, Nedra Blietz.

KEEPING CURRENT

Zee loves to stay on top of new fitness trends, having taught everything from kickboxing to Pilates and a few things in between. "I always kept my hand on the pulse and brought it back to the students," she says.

This past year was hard on everyone and took "going with the flow" to a new level, even for a yoga studio. Om Yoga Studio stayed open until the last day they were allowed when lockdowns started, and picked up with online classes the very next day in order to maintain a semblance of normalcy. As soon as the lockdown lifted, Zee was back in the studio. "We never missed a single day or class," Zee proudly says. It's all about trying to make a connection.

Zee keeps a positive attitude with a little help from her husband, Dennis, daughter, Olivia, and their two golden retrievers, Bella and Luna. We're all in this together, says Zee, and we have to focus on the positive, never give up, be grateful and look for the good in life. **CRW**

Jessica Zen is a freelance writer and yoga novice who dabbles in beginner classes every once in a while to change up her workout routine.



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FROM THE BACKGROUND TO THE SPOTLIGHT

Public health leaders balance change, communication and collaboration to address pandemic challenges.

BY TALLITHA REESE | CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

Members of the Vernon County Health Department, led by Amy Kleiber (center back), have stepped up to the challenges presented by Covid-19.

Public health officials are fairly used to dealing with a variety of scenarios from day to day, but taking on new roles in the midst of a worldwide pandemic has thrown an extra layer of the unknown into the lives of three area leaders.

AMY KLEIBER, VERNON COUNTY

“We’re really taking it a week at a time to get through the pandemic,” says Amy Kleiber, who stepped up as Vernon County Health Department health officer/director in October 2020. “With a large-scale health crisis, we’re all learning.”

Prior to her current role, Kleiber was a public health nurse for the department, but now her days feature many meetings and collaboration with both her own team and the community.

While Kleiber notes that the Vernon County Health Department has always worked alongside other area health departments and community entities, during the pandemic the value of those relationships has really come into focus.

“Everything changes so fast with all of this, so if we didn’t have that communication and those connections, we wouldn’t be able to function,” says Kleiber.

Vernon County’s small health department typically serves in the background, providing care and information in a high-need capacity,

working closely with people in face-to-face visits, but during the Covid-19 pandemic, many practices and internal structures shifted.

Face-to-face visits were halted, the workloads of nurses and other staff were shifted to contact tracing and the department quickly learned to accommodate a work-from-home model.

In the sudden need for information relating to the pandemic, Kleiber says the department’s use of social media as a communication tool increased exponentially, with in-house staff taking management of the increasingly active accounts as well as working on ways to communicate with those who can’t be reached in that capacity, all in addition to their other duties.

As Covid-19 numbers dropped, health department staff shifted again from contact tracing into vaccine management.

“We have a wonderful staff, and everyone is a team player, which makes all the difference,” says Kleiber. “We always have to be ready to pivot, and luckily our team is really good at doing that.”

For Kleiber personally, the support of her family, friends and co-workers has been invaluable during this hectic time.

“We’re all in the same boat, and trying to take care of our physical and mental health is really important,” she says.



Amy Kleiber, Vernon County Health Department

“Everything changes so fast with all of this.”

—Amy Kleiber

“One of the biggest things has been changing direction and adapting on the fly.”

—Tiffany Giesler

TIFFANY GIESLER, MONROE COUNTY

Tiffany Giesler, Cashton native and former public health nurse, became director of the Monroe County Health Department at the end of 2020 after both the former director and assistant director retired.

“Together, they had 80-plus years of experience, so we’ve gone through a major internal change with transitions and onboarding of staff,” explains Giesler.

Then on top of such a significant reorganization, the pandemic has thrust all health departments into an emergency response situation and into the public’s eye.



Tiffany Giesler, Monroe County Health Department

“One common saying in public health is that ‘if we’re doing our job right, you never know we’re here,’ so we’re not used to being in the spotlight,” says Giesler. “However, one of the critical roles of public health is emergency preparedness.”

As a public health nurse, before the pandemic Giesler’s focus ranged from emergency preparedness to prenatal care coordination and more. When Covid-19 reached the Coulee Region, she took the lead on Monroe County’s first case, moving into an

information-gathering role tracking updates and changes related to disease investigation and contact tracing.

“One of the biggest things has been changing direction and adapting on the fly,” says Giesler. “Prior to Covid we had a general sense of what the day would hold. Covid hit and you never knew what the next minute would hold.”

With the emergence of the pandemic, priorities and programming shifted, with Covid becoming the primary focus and other projects being put on pause or taking longer.

“One of the biggest challenges is that since this is a new virus, there are answers that we don’t have,” says Giesler. “Making sure that staff don’t get burned out [is another challenge] ... this pandemic has required that our staff put in a lot of extra hours.”

Giesler notes that as flexibility and adaptation have become the new normal, community partnerships have only been strengthened.

“This has allowed us the opportunity to connect and work together more closely. No one organization can handle this alone, and coming together to serve our community has been uplifting,” says Giesler. “I look forward to our continued work together as we move through this pandemic and into new opportunities for collaboration post-pandemic.”

JANE KLEKAMP, LA CROSSE COUNTY

Like the others, Jane Klekamp stepped into her current position mid-pandemic with the February 2021 departure of Jennifer Rombalski, former La Crosse County Public Health Director. Klekamp, the associate county administrator, is temporarily leading the department after Rombalski took on a state level position.

“My job will be to provide support and guidance to a team of people that have been working with community partners to ensure the community is as safe as possible, along with ensuring the health department is ready for its next leader,” says Klekamp.

Klekamp has worked for La Crosse County since 1989 and became the associate county administrator in 2015.

Klekamp notes that while there are many different challenges that come with the pandemic, one of the toughest for the health department has been how long it’s lasted—trying to keep the pace for that amount of time has caused fatigue among staff.



Jane Klekamp, La Crosse County Health Department

Though the situation overall is a difficult one, Klekamp explains that health departments have ongoing training in public health emergency response, and because of this they were ready to respond by using an incident command structure where each person is assigned a role.

Regarding the idea of a new type of “normal,” Klekamp isn’t sure there’s any such thing.

“I have relearned that nothing is ever normal—or maybe all things are normal?” she says.

Though the pandemic brings challenges, Klekamp and the other public health leaders see positives as well, such as the recognition for those who show up to do what needs to be done despite challenges and restrictions.

“We have all learned we can work together even when we can’t be together. We’ve learned we can provide services across the county with the restrictions in place ... but we also learned that we have fantastic staff that have come to work every day, changed how they work and provided great service,” says Klekamp. “We have changed everything about how we work, but we’ve not changed that we are here for all who live, work or travel in La Crosse County.” **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.

“We have all learned we can work together even when we can’t be together.”

—Jane Klekamp

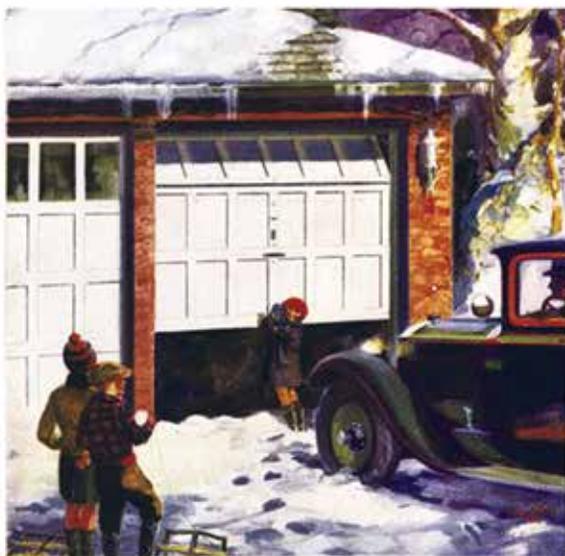
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“Flow” Throughout Our Lives

Essential information women need to understand about their menstrual cycle.

BY SHARI HEGLAND | CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS



That time of the month.” “Code red.” “Crimson tide.” “A visit from Aunt Flo.” Or just “my period.” No matter what you call it, menstruation is something most women will contend with for half of their lifetime, so understanding what’s normal and what’s not at every age and stage along the way is essential to maintaining health and well-being. We asked women’s health practitioners from around the area to provide some tips on everything from helping our young daughters prepare for that first period to understanding our bodies through menopause and beyond.

AGE 12

Menarche, or the first menstrual bleeding, typically occurs around age 12 or 13, but providers say that the beginning of a girl’s healthy relationship with her body begins much, much younger as parents teach her about her body. “It is important to teach young girls the correct term for their various body parts (vulva, vagina, breasts, etc.), as this fosters a sense of normalcy regarding body functions and encourages clear communication,” says Jennifer Meyers, certified nurse midwife (CNM) at Mayo Clinic Health System in La Crosse.

Parents and girls can also prepare, as other signs of puberty develop (breast development and growth of pubic hair), by creating “period kits” to keep in backpacks or lockers that include pads, wet wipes, a change of underwear, hand sanitizer or even the newly available “period underwear.”



Jennifer Meyers, certified nurse midwife, Mayo Clinic Health System, La Crosse



Dr. Sonya Rice Thompson, Winona Health

“This way, if they get their first cycle away from home, they have the security of knowing they are prepared,” Meyers says.

While a first Pap smear and/or pelvic exam isn’t necessary until age 21 (or when sexually active), our experts say teens should develop a positive relationship with their health care provider, who can help if they develop abnormal cycles:

- Bleeding that lasts more than seven days
- Bleeding that occurs more frequently than every 21 days
- Heavy bleeding that requires changing a pad or tampon more than once every one to two hours

Sonya Rice Thompson, MD, with Winona Health points out that it is common for cycles to be irregular in the first few years, but that tracking them can identify changes, as well as help girls plan for when they should expect the next cycle.

AGE 22

“As women reach their 20s, the normal menstrual cycle has usually developed a more consistent pattern,” Dr. Rice Thompson says. But women will want to talk to their provider if menses are too frequent or infrequent (less than 24 days or more than 38 days), if there is prolonged bleeding or if it is especially heavy.

“Flow, or how much someone bleeds, varies, but it can be normal to have heavier days where you are changing your period product every few hours, while some days might just be light spotting,” says Allison Welle, DNP, APRN, CNM, with Olmsted



Pregnancy can change your cycle—it may be longer or shorter, heavier or lighter than it was before pregnancy.

Medical Center. “Some people also experience symptoms such as mood changes, bloating and cramping, which can also be considered a normal part of your cycle.”

But if those symptoms are so debilitating that you are missing work or school, seek help, as there are many options—both hormonal and nonhormonal—that can ease the discomfort.

WHAT ABOUT PREGNANCY?

After giving birth, it can take anywhere from 6 to 12 weeks, if not breastfeeding, for normal cycles to resume.

“If you are breastfeeding, your period may be suppressed for a number of months,” says Dr. Rice Thompson, potentially for as long as breastfeeding is continued. “It’s important to know that even though your period is absent, a breastfeeding mom can still become pregnant if she does not use adequate contraception.”

When it does resume, the post-partum cycle may be different than it was before pregnancy—longer or shorter cycles, heavier or lighter flow.

AGE 32

Melissa Richards, MD, with Olmsted Medical Center, says that women in their 30s and 40s should understand that if their cycles are causing them to alter plans or miss work, they need to see their doctor.

“Women need to be aware of all the options available for management of menstrual cycles,” she says. “As someone who has previously struggled with ‘bad periods,’ helping a woman understand why her period is impacting her life and what we can do to dramatically improve her symptoms is one of my favorite parts



Dr. Melissa Richards, Olmsted Medical Center



Allison Welle, certified nurse midwife, Olmsted Medical Center

about being an obstetrician/gynecologist. I joke that I do believe women should be able to wear white pants every day of the month.

“Painful and heavy cycles can be aided by many hormonal forms of birth control, such as the patch, vaginal ring, daily pills, injections or implants,” Dr. Rice Thompson notes. “There are so many options, and your physician can help you decide which treatment may be right for your cycles depending on the type of problem you are having as well as your lifestyle.”

Dr. Richards also points out that heavy bleeding during menstruation can cause anemia, or low hemoglobin, which can increase stress on the heart, but many women don’t realize that their heavy periods are having that effect.

AGE 42

The advice given for women in their 30s holds through most of our 40s, but with the knowledge that things are about to change.

While the average age of menopause (defined as 12 consecutive months with no vaginal bleeding) is 51, perimenopause or pre-menopause can start up to 10 years earlier, says Meyers.

The changes that can occur in perimenopause as a result of hormonal fluctuations include hot flashes, vaginal dryness, night sweats, insomnia and mood disturbances. These symptoms are typical, but as with other aspects of our lifetime of menstruation, doctors say that if these conditions are significantly impacting your life, talk to your physician or provider.

“Reasons to schedule an appointment would be for any symptoms of perimenopause and menopause that are unbearable, such as depression, hot flashes, etc.,” says Meyers.

AGE 52

Once you have reached menopause, women’s health providers say *any* bleeding needs to be addressed with your doctor.

“One of my passions is making sure that every woman understands that any bleeding after menopause warrants a visit to the doctor and an evaluation. This includes bleeding like a period, brown discharge or spotting,” says Dr. Richards. “She has already made it through menopause; she should not have to deal with troublesome bleeding. More importantly, these symptoms can be an early sign of a precancer or cancer in the uterus. I literally have had a patient save her friend’s life by giving her this information.”

No matter where you are in the river of life, having open, honest conversations with your doctor is the best way to ensure that your flow doesn’t interfere with living it to the fullest. **CRW**

Shari Hegland is a freelance writer, PR & marketing content creator and editor of Coulee Region Women.



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RIVERSIDE RENOVATION

Nancy and Scott Swanson bring a long-empty Genoa lodge back to life.

BY ANASTASIA PENCHI | PHOTOS BY DIANE RAAUM PHOTOGRAPHY



Where once there was green shag carpeting and 1970s wood paneling, Nancy and Scott Swanson have updated a long-empty home with riverside views, installing all-new flooring, a renovated kitchen and more.

“Don’t ever sell the Genoa house,” the elderly man reportedly told his son. “It’s paradise.”

The father who made this request, Harry Lello, was so passionate about the house that he dubbed it “Lello Lodge,” and his son held on to it for more than 20 years after his father’s death, even though no one ever lived in it.

It took a year of weekly phone calls and reports of its ongoing deterioration for Scott Swanson to convince that son, Dennis Lello, that he should sell the property on Highway 35 to Swanson and his wife, Nancy, who had also fallen in love with it.

To look at the photos posted on Nancy Swanson’s Facebook page, one would agree “paradise” is a suitable description. Tugboats push barges on the Mississippi River between picturesque bluffs. Sunset layers of pink and orange hover over an unspoiled river bank. Even local media personality Bill Graul chose to feature one of Nancy’s pictures during the news on WKBT News Channel 8.

“I take a picture about every night at sunset,” she says.

STUMBLING ONTO A RIVERSIDE GEM

Scott was first to see the house in October 2018, when he was asked to assess the need for a garage roof repair. The couple both work for Interstate Roofing & Waterproofing, Inc., and one of the house caretakers had reported the problem roof to Lello, who lives in Illinois.

Scott knew right away the place was special, and with the owner’s permission, he brought Nancy to see it. She didn’t let the wall-to-wall green shag carpeting, paneling throughout or the growing mold

impact her decision—the couple has renovated houses before. Nancy was more concerned with the increased commute, as they lived in Onalaska, just two miles from work, at the time.

But by Thanksgiving of that year, Nancy said, “Yes.”

The two-bedroom split-level house was built for Harry Lello in 1973, Scott says, and it features four floors and a unique layout that is difficult to describe. All four floors walk outside to ground level because of the way the 2,330-square-foot home is built into the side of the bluff.

BRINGING THE BEAUTY BACK

Renovation began prior to closing in October 2019 because the couple had sold their Onalaska home and needed to move right in. Most of the interior of the former Lello Lodge has since been renovated.

The grand, refurbished staircase greets those who come through the colossal front door. Additional stairs and turns are required to access all the levels inside. Nancy says the staircase alone took 120 hours to remove the carpet, putty the holes, and then sand, stain and clear-coat.

The couple kept all the oversized patio doors and massive, uniquely shaped windows that frame the spectacular vistas of the Mississippi River. Those views are now highlighted because they have cleared 25 trees—including three giant elms—from the property.

Much of the home was remodeled with the help of Nancy’s son, Mitchell Schiffer, of La Crosse, who owns Schiffer Services. Carpet



While Nancy and Scott Swanson updated much of the long-vacant Genoa home, touches of the “Lello Lodge” history remain in the fish mounts, hidden sauna and distinct entrance to the home overlooking the Mississippi River.

was replaced with a light-colored, wood plank luxury vinyl flooring throughout. The kitchen was gutted in favor of espresso-colored shaker maple cabinets and granite countertops. The original Sub-Zero refrigerator, which was also covered in matching paneling, had to be removed with a crane.

DISCOVERING UNEXPECTED TREASURES

As the couple began working on the house, they began to uncover its secrets. Scott noticed hinges on a mirror in the master bathroom and uncovered a small storage room, which is now a closet. Only after entering the guest bathroom shower did they find the secret door to the sauna.

“I flipped it on and it works like a charm,” Scott says.

“We use it all the time,” Nancy adds.

Two safes were located in an area the couple has since converted back into a garage (nothing was in them). Another hidden room was located behind a pegboard wall. The couple tore out at least six security systems, hidden floor sensors and an entire wall’s worth of security monitoring equipment. Electric curtains were also removed.

SHARING A HOME WITH HISTORY

Harry Lello, a businessman who lived in Rockford, Illinois, used the property as a getaway for himself and his family and friends for more than 20 years. He loved to take visitors fishing, and Scott counted 65 fish mounts that were still on the walls when they bought the house.

Genoa residents tell stories about Harry Lello, as he liked to have people over to watch films on the motorized projector screen hidden behind a beam that was apparently installed just to hide it. He was an

active member of St. Charles Borromeo Catholic Church in Genoa and always sat near the back of the church during Mass. He was known to take the priest out to dinner regularly and even helped finance an addition to the church’s school—still called the Lello Room to this day.

Scott and Nancy found more than 50 pails of fishing lures in addition to many smaller packages of lures that Harry Lello would hand out as gifts to visitors. No one left Lello Lodge without a present, they’ve been told, and there were wrapped boxes of candy and coffee mugs, too.

Scott says Dennis Lello and his family brought a U-Haul one day to take home Harry’s driftwood furniture and other personal items, but they left a pool table and piano among some river-related mementos that the couple has placed around the house.

The poured concrete and exposed aggregate deck just off the kitchen, with its wooden pergola, is the couple’s favorite spot. They said they love to sit outside and watch the river traffic, trains and the eagles that nest on their property.

A scaffolding accident broke an outdoor mosaic table that had been left by the Lellos, and Scott couldn’t stop thinking about it. Ultimately he pulled its metal table legs out of the dumpster.

He is now crafting a granite table featuring a swan and a sun to mark the house’s next chapter of ownership (the Swansons).

“I think what we really like is that we did it all ourselves,” Nancy says. “We are proud of our work.” **CRW**

Anastasia Penchi is a freelance writer who has considered Genoa her home for 13 years. She agrees with the sentiment that the area could be described as “paradise.”



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Technology for the Home with Justin Snyder from the Audio Video Pros

12:30 p.m.

How to Install a Reclaimed Wood Accent Wall with Larry Hutson from Used Anew

1:30 p.m.

Geothermal 101 with Mark Flock from Flock's Heating & Air Conditioning

2:30 p.m.

Dealing with Household Hazardous Materials with Greg Smith from La Crosse Hazardous Materials Facility

3:30 p.m.

The 5 Variables That Affect All Construction Projects with Tom Kruse Professional Home Inspection Company

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La Crosse resident Richard Chrz savors the mental aspects of cooking as much as the finished product.

ROLLING WITH THE CHANGES

Cooking and meditation provide Richard Chrz with a path through chronic illness and life.

BY JULIE NELSON | CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

Life is about Yin and Yang. You must get comfortable in the down area so you appreciate the good. The key is to go with the natural flow and think about the stories you are telling yourself, the script that is in your head. This is where growth comes from.”

These words of wisdom come not from a Buddhist monk nor a popular podcast, but from Richard Chrz, a 48-year-old La Crosse man who lives with chronic pain and fatigue.

Chrz (pronounced Kriz) was diagnosed with lupus in July 2010. Since then, the autoimmune disorder has attacked his nervous system to the point where Chrz has to carefully consider when and how he uses his arms and hands each day, and his legs are no longer strong enough to even hold him in a sitting position. But that’s just his body: Chrz’s mind is going full steam ahead. Chrz has a great sense of humor and is one of the most upbeat people you could ever hope to be around. When it comes to finding and maintaining his positive attitude, he gives the women in his life a lot of the credit.

FINDING PEACE IN MEDITATION AND COOKING

Earlier in his diagnosis, Chrz was spending six hours a day in a hospital receiving a chemo drip to fight the lupus. Talk about boring. And frustrating. “My sister, who is a nurse, had just been to a conference on mindful body stress reduction meditation and health care,” he says, “and she suggested I try it.” He spent his next six-hour sessions meditating on what he can and cannot control. The meditation changed his outlook. He now sees himself as walking alongside the disease, not as a victim to it. When his physical abilities change, Chrz—with much support from his wife, Renee—adapts and finds a way to keep living.

One way he discovered to roll with the changes was through food. “I’ve always liked looking at food. I’ve always seen the art in it, and of course, I like eating it,” he says. He decided to tackle the process of learning to cook and now lists his specialties as sourdough bread, charcoal-cooked brisket and homemade pizza.

“Though there may be some of my former teachers who disagree with this,” he quips, “I’ve always liked learning. My cookbooks are

more like science books. If I know why different ingredients act the way they do, I can figure out the how, without a recipe.”

ADAPTING TO THE POSSIBILITIES AND REALITIES

This approach is what has made the sourdough a possibility for him, though his hands are no longer strong enough to knead the dough. He says bread baking has been a lesson in resilience; by understanding what has to happen in the mixing and kneading, he was able to create his own ways of doing it. Sourdough bread is ideal for Chrz because it doesn’t happen all at once. He feeds the starter two days before he plans to do the kneading, and while the bread is rising, Chrz is resting.

Chrz says that’s also why he’s become so good at brisket. He’s figured out how to keep charcoal at 225 degrees for 20 hours straight, which means he doesn’t have to attend to it constantly. “I make food that I can sleep through,” he says with a laugh.

Pizza is a week-long process. He spends the first part of the week chopping the ingredients, and then the dough is made over three days. When it’s time to dine, cooking is a simple assembly process. With Renee there to open the oven door, the pizza is ready in no time.

Even more so than a carpenter, Chrz has to think twice and act once in his cooking process. The Chrz house doesn’t have adapted counters; instead, Richard’s chair will elevate to the height needed. That means if he drops something, it’s an annoying ride down to pick it up and another putzy ride back up to get to the counter. Going from the counter to the pantry involves a three-point turn in his wheelchair, so Chrz wants to make darned sure he has every ingredient he needs before getting to work. He has a tray with edges on it to collect supplies, and sometimes his lap serves as the most convenient place for a cutting board. For Chrz, the mental challenge of determining the strategy and logistics is part of what makes cooking fun.

ANTICIPATING CHANGES WITH CONFIDENCE

Chrz reserves as much energy as he can for the weekends, when he will make big meals with leftovers that can easily be created into something new on weeknights. Of course, there are times when his

body doesn't cooperate with his plans, and he wakes up on a weekend morning knowing he will have to put his cooking plans aside. "That's my life," he says. "I try not to dwell on the negative or attach myself to any one thing, other than learning."

Though Renee is willing to help with the kitchen tasks, Chrz takes pride in being the one to provide the meals and does 99 percent of the cooking. Renee opens the oven door and lifts the 20-pound bag of charcoal, but Chrz does nearly everything else himself. He even enjoys washing the dishes. "I treat it as a meditation," he says. "I remember the food I selected, the dishes I prepared and the way they tasted. I am grateful for the food, for our house and even the warm water I am washing in."

While Chrz may always be able to soak his hands in warm dishwater, he recognizes the day will come when he won't have the hand strength to prepare the food or perhaps even hold the plates in the sink. Yet his strategic brain is already kicking into gear. He enjoys taking pictures of his food and could shift more toward photography. He also has a wealth of knowledge about cooking techniques, adaptive kitchen tools

and meditation that he enjoys sharing. He could foresee doing a video blog or even product reviews for adaptive equipment on his YouTube channel.

However bumpy the road is ahead, Chrz knows he and Renee will roll over it together. "My wife is my rock," he says. "She is always there to help when I need to ask for it, and yet she is gracious in giving me the space to be as independent as possible." There is no cure for lupus, and the changes happening to his body are forever. In some ways, the disease has made them stronger as a couple. "We know what we need from each other as we learn to flow through this together," he says. "It is a team approach."

"I practice life; that's my motto. At the end of the day, you've got to be kind to yourself. Forgive yourself for anything that maybe you weren't proud of or you could have done better. I just say that's today. Tomorrow I get to practice life again." **CRW**

Julie Nelson is a Coulee Region writer who is inspired by Richard's resilience and sense of gratitude. She has even offered to let him do some of his meditation over the sinkful of dirty dishes at her house.

PRO TIP FROM RICHARD CHRZ

A good meat thermometer is worth the minimal investment in saving your meals from being under- or overcooked. My favorite is the ThermoPop by ThermoWorks. I have abused the heck out of it—it's been dropped so many times.

Strength matters second to accuracy, and it's super accurate. In addition to accuracy and durability, I prefer them for their "accessible" view. The size of the face is good for dexterity, I can put it in my hands, even with somewhat of a closed hand, and still read it. The display rotates all directions if needed. It has a plastic face that never feels hot, so it is safe even for those with sensory issues.

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~ Laura Roessler



Carne Asada with Fresh Chimichurri Sauce

Chimichurri

- ½ cup parsley, finely chopped
- ¼ cup cilantro, finely chopped
- 2-3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 cup olive oil
- ¼ cup freshly squeezed lemon (about one lemon)
- 1 T oregano
- 1 T crushed red pepper
- ½ T kosher salt, or to your taste

Mix all ingredients well. This may be made no more than 7 days in advance and stored in the refrigerator.

Flank steak

- 1 flank steak, 1¾-2½ lbs.

Trim the thin side off the steak.

Run a knife up and down with the grain to loosen up the cut and trim the fat off. Rub with a mixture of salt, pepper and cumin. By loosening up the cut with little slits, it allows the seasoning (and the grill flavor) to soak into the meat further.

Set up two-zone cooking on a charcoal grill (coals and fire on one side, nothing on the opposite side)—you can also set up a cool side to move the meat to if needed. Grill and flip the steak every minute or two, to get equal grill flavor evenly for each bite. Use a quality thermometer probe to temp the meat. If the thicker side is slow to match, leave the thinner side on the non-flame side of the grill, and the thicker on the side with flames.

Throw the trimming from the thin side of the steak on the grill at the same time. This will cook much faster, and cooking them separately prevents an inconsistent cook on your main cut. These little bits are also your reward for cooking.

When you cut the flank steak, it is important to slice it thinly and across the grain. This makes for a better eating experience. We like to serve it as carne asada on grilled flour tortillas with the chimichurri sauce poured over. Dress it up however you would like.

Red Sauce

- 4 28 oz. cans of whole peeled San Marzano tomatoes
 - ¼ cup olive oil
 - 8 cloves garlic, finely chopped (or roughly 3 T of store-bought pre-minced garlic)
 - 2 T butter
 - 1 tsp. dried oregano
 - 1 tsp. red pepper flakes
 - 1 medium onion, split in half (you can leave the skin on it)
 - 1 large stem of fresh basil
 - 1 large carrot cut in 3 sections (for dexterity and hand weakness substitute 4 mini carrots)
- Salt and pepper to taste

Start with a large 5-quart Dutch oven, something with handles that can go in the oven for 6 hours. Add the butter, oil and garlic, and let them warm up together slowly, which releases more aroma. Add in the oregano, red pepper flakes, salt and pepper to taste—start with less and add as it simmers. Continue to cook for another minute.

Crush the tomatoes by hand and add them to the pot. (You can also use a stick blender, countertop blender, hand mixer, etc.) Two important notes: 1. Do not make this completely smooth; leave a few chunks in it. 2. Choose whole peeled tomatoes, which are generally the best tomatoes. Tomatoes with bruising or flaws can be hidden in pureed and finely chopped versions. It is important to start with a quality whole tomato like the San Marzano from Italy, which are available in various brands at local stores.

Add in the large stem with leaves of basil, the two onion halves and the carrots; you will scoop all of these out at the end.

Bring it up to a small simmering boil over high heat, put the lid on the Dutch oven and then transfer it into an oven at roughly 190°, stirring every hour or two. Check on it early to see how it is cooking; you don't necessarily want it boiling, a little simmer is good. I generally take it out around the 6-hour mark.

When done, take out onions, carrots and basil. This can be used immediately or stored in containers.

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A Place to Belong

Winona Outdoor Collaborative makes outdoor activities inclusive for all.

BY JAN WELLIK | CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS



Hiking in all seasons has been one of the most popular activities offered so far by the fledgling Winona Outdoor Collaborative. Other events planned through the spring and summer include workshops on camping, a backpacking trip and paddling the backwaters of the Mississippi River.

I feel like we are a little spoiled in the Driftless region, because a lot of people don't know about this area," says Alexa Shapiro, co-founder of the Winona Outdoor Collaborative (WOC). "It's small and not too crowded."

GROUP ORIGINS

Shapiro initially started the organization as Women of Winona Outdoor Collaborative in 2019, with the "common thread that women are not always comfortable being out on their own exploring outdoor recreation," she says. "We wanted them to feel confident to get out."

By 2020, Shapiro joined forces with fellow co-founder Sydney Bockelman and realized that efforts to increase individuals' comfort level with outdoor pursuits "is not just for women; it includes other groups of people too." LGBTQ individuals, people of color and other minority groups may not see people like them in the outdoor community, she says. "These people are not feeling represented in the outdoors, and outdoor equipment can be expensive, so we opened up to a wider audience, to make outdoors inclusive for all."

BUILDING INCLUSIVITY

Although women ages 25 to 50 are the current main audience, WOC seeks to "build our community around outdoors for all," says



Alexa Shapiro, co-founder of Winona Outdoor Collaborative

Shapiro. But, she says, "it's hard to reach all those groups when they have been ignored for decades. ... We are building anti-racism culture in our organization for this long-term goal."

The WOC Board has identified that, in the next one to two years, they want to engage youth, people of color and people who are new to the outdoors. "We want to help people who are intimidated by the outdoors," says Shapiro. "We want to create a welcoming, inclusive outdoors for all people in Winona County."

LONG-TERM VISION

Within their business plan is a goal to open a member-driven rental shop for outdoor equipment that is affordable for low-income families, since there is currently no central hub in Winona that has all the equipment and gear you need to get outdoors.

Currently, WOC is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization and offers free monthly meetups, quarterly paid workshops and paid guided trips and retreats.

"We are hoping in the next couple years to offer more services," Shapiro says.

One step toward offering more services is for leaders to acquire the proper certification. Bockelman is earning a graduate degree in

teaching at St. Mary's University and is certified in rock climbing. Shapiro is getting Wilderness First Responder training this summer. "We are hoping to build up and offer cross-country ski and paddle certification," she says.

"A lot of people have asked us about mountain biking, rock climbing and paddling," she says. They are hoping to offer ice climbing by 2022-2023.

So far, hiking is their most popular activity, attracting a wide array of ages and demographics.



Sydney Bockelman, co-founder of Winona Outdoor Collaborative

OUTDOOR EXPERIENCE TO LEAD THE WAY

Shapiro served as the Winona YMCA program director of afterschool care, planned the outdoor summer camps for three years and now has a master's degree in recreational management from the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse.

Her experience with long-distance backpacking includes hiking the Pacific Crest Trail (PCT) with her husband in 2017 from California to Washington state. She was inspired by her parents, who hiked it in sections over seven years. Her mother was diagnosed with cancer in 2012, and her parents kept hiking during her chemo and radiation. "She brought me a lot of inspiration about the healing power of nature," Shapiro says.

Shapiro calls her PCT hike the "best and worst experience" ever. "The desert is hot and hard to find water," she says. But more significantly, "after five months on the trail, connecting to people and nature, it was hard to go back to real life."

Shapiro also solo-hiked the Superior Trail in Minnesota over two weeks in 2018. In the near future, she would like to hike the Ice Age Trail across Wisconsin, the North Country Trail from North Dakota to Vermont and the Continental Divide Trail from New Mexico to the Canadian border.

"Backpacking is where my passion is," she says. "And I'm getting into paddling."

This summer Shapiro is planning a four-week paddling trip with a friend to circumnavigate the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness.

Exploring the outdoors is her passion, and empowering others to do so might be her vocation. **CRW**

Jan Wellik is a writer and outdoor educator in the La Crosse area, who once backpacked for three weeks mostly off trail at 12,000 feet in the White Cloud and Sawtooth Mountains of Idaho. She wants to take her 9-year-old son on a long-distance backpacking trip this summer.

LEARN MORE AND REGISTER FOR EVENTS:

www.winonaoutdoorcollaborative.com

You can also find Winona Outdoor Collaborative events in our Community Calendar on page 46.

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Freshly Picked for Spring

Brighten your wardrobe with fantastic finds that are sure to erase those winter blues!

BY JESSICA ZEN | PHOTOS BY FRONTIER PHOTOGRAPHY

Spring has sprung, and we couldn't be more excited for what it has brought. Florals, pastels and prints, oh my! If you're out and about enjoying the warmer temps, be sure to check out these beautiful items freshly picked from the Coulee Region's blooming retail garden.



Shiny Objects Boutique, Holmen

This trendy boho look is perfect for the free spirit! The flowy dress will make you feel like roaming wildflower fields, and the adorable handbag is both functional and fashion-forward. Layer some bracelets to polish the look.

Lovestitch dress, \$68; Elan jacket, \$84; Free People "Cecile" ankle boot, \$168; Seeds circle pendant, \$22, and bracelets, \$13-\$15 apiece; chain link necklace, \$18; Bed Stu leather handbag, \$180.

Touch of Class, La Crosse

Nothing says spring like white jeans. Pair them with a fabulous blazer and stunning accessories, and you've created a classic outfit perfect for work, dinner with friends or a not-so-casual trip to the grocery store.

Eileen Fisher round neck shell top, high-collar shaped jacket and slim ankle jean; Echo Design Group bandana; HOBBO sable wristlet; Ilse Jacobsen recycled microfiber slip-on shoes; CATH•S horn necklace.



.....
**Mainstream Boutique,
Onalaska**

For a more relaxed look, give joggers a try. These incredibly comfy pants feel like loungewear, but still look chic. Show off a fresh pedicure with these versatile leather sandals. Add an adorable Wisconsin state necklace, and you are ready to conquer the day.

Soft top, \$28; side seam contrast joggers, \$44; sandals, \$39; crossbody, \$46; tiger eye earrings, \$20; state tag necklace, \$58.



.....
**Urban Shoetique,
La Crosse & Winona**

Mixing prints creates a seriously mod outfit. Pair this flowy blouse and trousers with an electric pink sweater, and you have instant style. Don't forget the shoes! They are imperative to the perfectly polished outfit.

Liverpool Los Angeles blouse, \$68, and knit trouser, \$98; Pink Martini sweater coat, \$165; All Black "Airy Guy" shoes, \$177.



**Regina Siegel
Named to
VP Role at
Trust Point**

Regina Siegel has been named Vice President, Organizational Development and Community Outreach at Trust Point. Her ability to quickly develop and nurture meaningful relationships has allowed her to accelerate team growth, and her leadership skills permeate throughout Trust Point.

In her new role, Siegel works alongside team members to identify and assess organizational needs, then to design, implement and evaluate professional development and continuous learning for staff. She also coordinates the Trust Point Young Professionals and mentoring programs, which cultivate future leaders, continuing Trust Point's legacy of excellence that has spanned over a century.

To learn more about Siegel and Trust Point's impact in the community through service and collaboration, go to www.trustpointinc.com.



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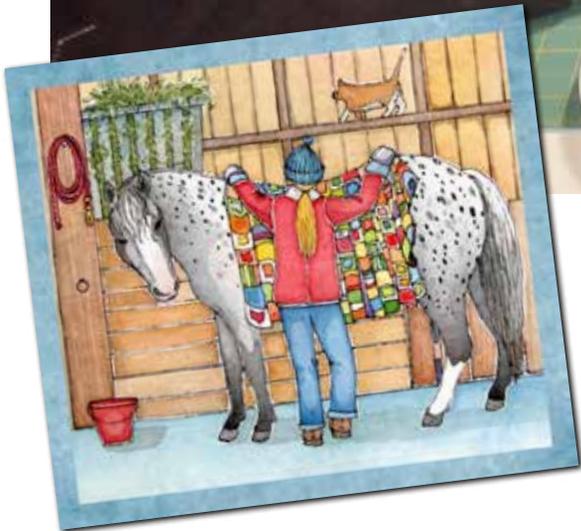


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Illustrator Sharon Christensen



THE CREATIVE FLOW

An author and an illustrator connect virtually to create a heartwarming children's book.

BY BETTY CHRISTIANSEN | CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

It's easy to underestimate a children's book. They're mostly pictures with just a few words on a page that tell an often-simple story. Anyone could write one, right?

But as author Susan Huppert and illustrator Sharon Christensen know, there's much more to a children's book than meets the eye. Their journey of co-creating *Mrs. McGiggle Makes a Way*, a self-published book that tells the story of a beloved horse and her devoted owner, is testament to that.

THROUGH CHILDREN'S EYES

Huppert, of Pepin, Wisconsin, knew she was a writer early on. As a girl, "I was always journaling and writing," she says. "I found so much satisfaction in it." Although she

took writing classes in high school, she didn't delve into a writing career right away. "I raised my family first—five kids," she says. Then, in her late 30s and early 40s, she studied journalism at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls. After completing her degree, she became a writer for the RiverTowns media group, the boating magazine *Great Lakes Scuttlebutt* and other news outlets. "I kept writing and writing wherever I could," she says.

Huppert also wrote two children's books—*The Perfect Gift* in 2007 and *Climb Aboard* in 2009—before embarking on the newly released *Mrs. McGiggle Makes a Way*, a story inspired by a Pierce County woman, Vicki Nelson, who had a heart (and a barn) big enough to take in a horse

that needed a home. It's a story of love and dedication, but also loss—a tough concept for anyone, especially children.

“Children have so much love and concern for their pets and other people, especially during the days of Covid,” Huppert says. “Mrs. McGiggle gives them someone who understands love and loss and helps them navigate it all.”

THROUGH AN ARTIST'S BRUSH

But telling the story was only half the book—an illustrator's touch was needed to draw in young readers and bring the story to life. While browsing in an Onalaska gift shop, Huppert spied note cards created by a local painter, Sharon Christensen, whose style she loved. She contacted Christensen, and the two met in a coffee shop in November 2019 to discuss the book.

Like Huppert, Christensen had been interested in her art her entire life. “Art always something I was good at,” Christensen says, having received a fine arts degree at UW-Whitewater and studying art education at UW-River Falls. “I traveled a lot in my 20s, then painted when I had more time in my 30s, while teaching,” she says. Since then, her art has remained her profession, and her cards, printed linens and more can be found at area art fairs and at www.sharonchristensenart.com.

The story behind *Mrs. McGiggle* appealed to Christensen, as she, living in a rural area between Arcadia and Ettrick, has horses of her own. She saw the project as “a good opportunity to expand my repertoire,” and it was. “I have a newfound respect for children's book illustrators,” Christensen says. “You really have to be on the same



Author Susan Huppert

page as the author. It's not just painting pictures.” She learned to craft her illustrations to what Huppert envisioned; at times, Huppert even tweaked the text to more closely match Christensen's illustrations.

Not long after their first meeting, Covid-19 shutdowns prevented them from working together in person, but that didn't slow them down. Christensen illustrated the entire book in just a month and a half, following a multi-step process for each picture. She first took reference photos using a neighbor's horse and a friend as models for the main characters. From these, she drew rough sketches to compose each scene of the story. After sharing these with Huppert and making some changes, she began drawing the actual illustrations in pencil, then tracing over the pencil with black marker and finally painting them in watercolor. The finished pictures were digitally scanned and emailed to Huppert, who eventually sent the final book layout to the publisher electronically.

“It was a big accomplishment for that amount of time,” says Christensen, who completed 19 illustrations for the book.

FROM IDEA TO REALITY

The book was published in November 2020 through Amazon Kindle Direct Publishing and is available through Amazon and Pearl Street Books in downtown La Crosse. “One of the real pluses of the project was that it was something positive happening in spite of Covid,” says Huppert. “It felt good to keep moving forward and have that creative energy flowing back and forth.” CRW

Betty Christiansen is the publisher of Coulee Region Women.



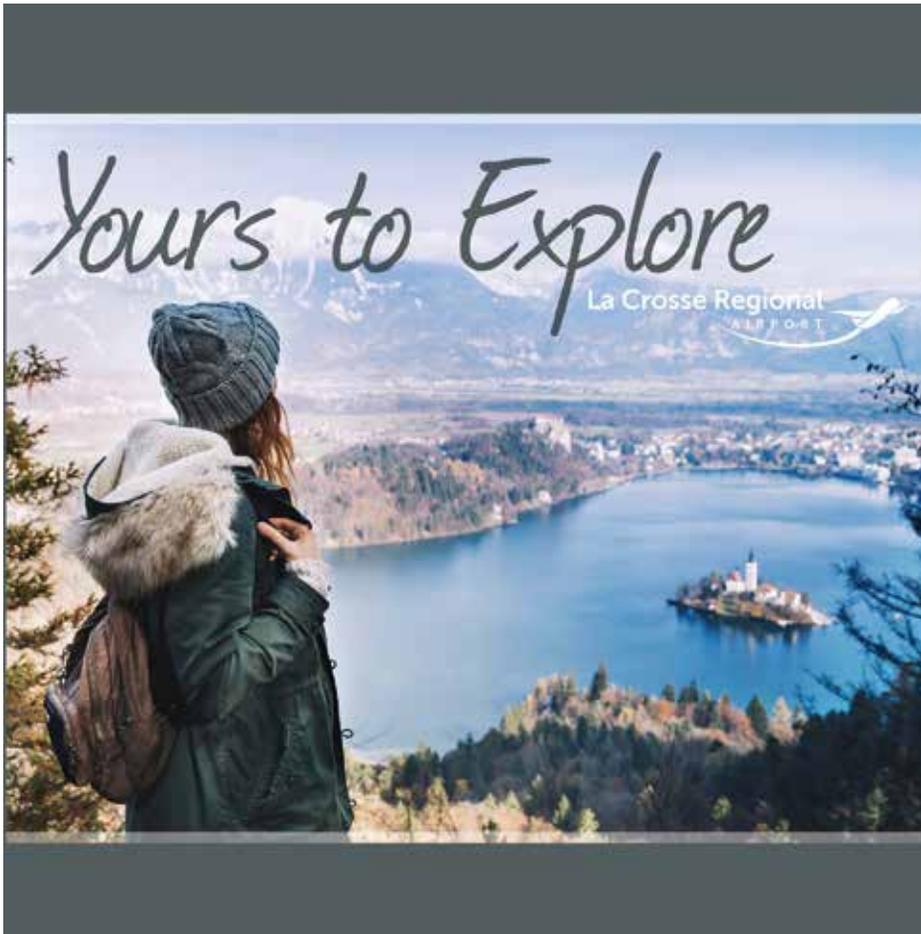
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BY CHRISTINE HALL | PHOTOS BY CHRISTINE HALL



When exotic travel is off the table, there are still wonders to be found around the corner on nearby roads and trails, and even in our own backyard.

The pandemic has changed our life in many ways, and the travel industry without a doubt has taken one of the hardest hits. In the first weeks of quarantine, I was glued to my computer checking travel sites to see where it would be possible to go come summer, then come fall, then come winter. At some point I grudgingly gave up because I realized that the world had changed to the point where hopping on a plane just because of a good airfare deal was no longer a viable option.

A TRAVEL BUG FORCED TO STAY HOME

What's one to do in place of booking hotels and planning trips? Here's how I coped over the last year. Through the first few months of the stay-at-home order, I kept the UPS man (an essential worker!) busy by ordering photo prints and scrapbooking supplies and put together scrapbooks of recent trips to Scotland and France. It had been years since I had scrapbooked, and I looked forward each morning to

rediscovering the scenery, sites and people I had encountered on those vacations. A dose of reality about what was going on in the world hit me when I would look for information on the internet for a specific place to write about in my scrapbook—the website would read “Closed due to Covid-19.” The Louvre, Culloden Battlefield, whiskey distilleries, Edinburgh Castle, the Eiffel Tower, hotels, countries—all closed. The world was closed.

Summer came in waves of heat. Days that would normally have been spent with friends or in air-conditioned restaurants for a night out were instead spent at home trying to forget what was going on in the world. I am lucky to live on a country property with an escape to the outdoors. My partner and I made good use of our campfire ring. We took country drives on back roads we never had reason to drive down before. We put a roof over our deck, turning it into a porch, which is now my favorite “room” in the house. And on the hottest days we binge-watched TV series that took us to exotic places.



Writer and travel bug Christine Hall satisfied her urge to experience new places during the Covid-19 pandemic by revisiting past travels through scrapbooking and exploring (sometimes literally) her own backyard and nearby destinations like Door County. She also offers tips for returning to the road safely this year.



A trip to my doctor for my annual physical in August encouraged me to venture out on a short trip. She said it would be good for me and advised me to follow CDC guidelines: avoid crowds in bars and restaurants, wear a mask, social distance, everything we've been told time and again. My traveling companion cousin and I decided to give it a try.

VENTURING OUT, THEN BACK TO QUARANTINE

In September, we ventured over to Door County for four nights during the week. We rented a wonderful Airbnb cottage, stocked up on wine and cheese, visited numerous parks, took the ferry to Washington Island and enjoyed ourselves thoroughly. We never felt at risk, and being on the go again brought about a balance we both needed. It was refreshing to take photos of scenic places (in our own state!), visit with strangers (through masks and six feet apart) and do a little local shopping (cherries, apples and wine).

A few weeks after our trip, however, the Covid-19 numbers started to spike. Just when I thought I could start looking into a trip for late 2020, schools went virtual, sports events were canceled, foreign countries again went into lockdown and, for the first time, people we knew began to get sick with the virus. Confined to our acreage again, I began exploring the woods and trails as though I had all the time in the world. Well, because I did.

WHAT IS THE FUTURE OF TRAVEL?

Now, as spring starts to unfold and more people are getting their Covid-19 vaccinations, I see the light at the end of the tunnel.

The travel industry is still very fluid, and things change rapidly. For example, my cousin booked a Tahitian cruise for March, but it was canceled since French Polynesia shut down all its territories again. Meanwhile, other places are experiencing strong bookings. Shel Hansen of Travel Leaders/Goli's Avenues of Travel in La Crosse says she has been selling Florida a lot lately. "A short three- to four-hour flight can have you into an 82-degree destination and a poolside drink," she says.

Other encouraging signs include the Covid-19 safety protocols followed by the airlines, hotels, transfers, restaurants and other tourist destinations—public spaces have never been so sanitary. Now is a good time to explore our own country depending on your comfort level. The travel agents at Travel Leaders all agree that many U.S. destinations shouldn't be overlooked. Danette Jacob suggests "the obvious choices of Florida and Arizona, but other ideas could be San Antonio or Charleston. Even Tennessee is an interesting state with things to offer ... Nashville, Memphis, mountains."

Many destinations, especially foreign countries, require negative Covid-19 tests. If you are unsure of the requirements, now might be the time to use a travel agent to navigate all the conditions of travel that one must adhere to so there are no surprises when you get to the airport or the port of entry.

As the travel industry reawakens, here are a few key points to remember:

- Read full cancellation policy of any travel you book.
- Use a credit card to purchase.
- Use a travel agent for best up-to-date information.
- Be flexible.

I am encouraged when I hear people talk about positive experiences as travel opens. Now that our household has been vaccinated, we are stepping out next month with a short trip to Galena, Illinois. My partner and I also have our maps out and are again planning our annual backpacking trip to the canyons of Utah in May. In addition, my traveling cousin and I are planning a special birthday trip to Egypt in 2022. As Tracey Hummel of Travel Leaders says, "Dreaming of your next destination may cheer up your quarantining." Yes, I am dreaming, and my mood is lifting. What's your next dream destination? **CRW**

Christine Hall lost her father this year during the pandemic as did many who have not been able to grieve properly together with friends and family. With travel avenues opening up, celebrations of lives lost during this time will allow everyone to gather again soon and begin to heal. She believes it's time to be together, celebrate, explore and give thanks again.

Life doesn't come with a
manual

it comes with a

Mother!

THANK YOU FOR **EVERYTHING** YOU DO!



HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY

FROM YOUR HOMETOWN TEAM



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, May-Nov., 4 p.m.-
dusk Fri., 8 a.m.-1 p.m. Sat., Cameron Park, La
Crosse, www.cameronparkmarket.org.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Please contact each group for
meeting status at this time.**

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

CALENDAR EVENTS

APRIL

Mar. 29-Apr. 16, *Squiggles* free video performance, UW-La
Crosse, www.uwlax.edu/theatre-arts.

Apr. 1, Wild Fire, 7:30-9:30 p.m., Heider Center, www.
heidercenter.org.



Apr. 5, Identity Theft: Prevent and
Protect online event, 6:30-7:30
p.m., La Crosse Public

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

Apr. 9, Sinatra Tribute, 7:30-9:30 p.m., Heider Center,
www.heidercenter.org.

Apr. 13, A Sheltered Day of Solitude (via Zoom), 9 a.m.-
4:30 p.m., Franciscan Spirituality Center, preregistration
required, www.fscenter.org.

Apr. 14, Women with Purpose, "Intentional Living &
Creating Your Legacy," Melissa Van Gheen, 11:45 a.m.-1
p.m., La Crosse Country Club, register at cr.wvpwi.org.

Apr. 16-17, Finding Serenity in the Midst of Chaos (via
Zoom), 7-9 p.m. Fri., 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Sat., Franciscan
Spirituality Center, preregistration required,
www.fscenter.org.

Apr. 17-18, Spring Craft & Gift Show, Onalaska Omni
Center, https://cityofonalaska.com/craftshow.

Apr. 18, Finding Calm (via Zoom), 3-6 p.m. Franciscan
Spirituality Center, preregistration required,
www.fscenter.org.

Apr. 19, Art as Prayer (via Zoom), Franciscan Spirituality
Center, 6-7:30 p.m., preregistration required,
www.fscenter.org.



Apr. 19-25, *Earth Fair Week-
Long virtual event*, www.
earthfairlacrosse.com.

Apr. 20, Mindfulness for
Self-Care virtual event, 6-7:30
p.m., People's Food Co-op,
register at https://www.eventbrite.
com/e/mindfulness-for-self-care-
tickets-145135101997.

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

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

Apr. 25, Drive-Thru Recycling Fair, 10 a.m.-3 p.m., Myrick
Park, La Crosse, www.earthfairlacrosse.com.

Apr. 25, Winona Outdoors Collaborative Monthly Meet
Up: Earth Day Clean-Up, 10 a.m.-12 p.m., Lake Winona,
register at www.winonaoutdoorcollaborative.com.

Apr. 29, What to Do with Your Digital Pictures online
event, 6-7 p.m., La Crosse Public Library, register at www.
lacrosselibrary.org.

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

MAY

May 1-7, *Songs for a New World* streamed performance,
UW-La Crosse, tickets available at www.uwlax.edu/
theatre-arts.

May 1, Old Style Chapter's Beer & Brewery Collectibles
Show, 9 a.m.-2 p.m., Onalaska Omni Center, Erik Forde,
608-792-9782, axela315@charter.net.

May 1, Centering Prayer: Silent Listening (via Zoom), 9
a.m.-5 p.m., Franciscan Spirituality Center, preregistration
required, www.fscenter.org.

May 1, Roman Holiday (Livestream), 7:30-8:30 p.m., La
Crosse Symphony Orchestra, www.lacrossesymphony.org.

May 8, 6th Annual Mayfair Art Fair, 10 a.m.-2 p.m.,
West Salem Lions Shelter, www.
heidercenter.org.



May 8, *Valentine Ball 2021:
Rescheduled and Reimagined!*
**La Crosse Symphony Orchestra
fundraiser**, sign up at www.
lacrossesymphony.org.

May 12, Women with Purpose,
"Creating Community Connections to Increase Your Life,"
Amanda Zieba, 11:45 a.m.-1 p.m., La Crosse Country
Club, register at cr.wvpwi.org.

May 15, Mid West Music Fest, 10:30 a.m.-10 p.m.,
Prairie Island Park, Winona, purchase tickets at www.
midwestmusicfest.org.

May 16, Winona Outdoors Collaborative Monthly
Meet Up: How to Utilize Your Public Parks, 3-5 p.m.,
Farmer's Community Park, Winona, register at www.
winonaoutdoorcollaborative.com.

May 18, Mindfulness for Stress Reduction virtual event,
6-7:30 p.m., People's Food Co-op, register at https://
www.eventbrite.com/e/mindfulness-for-stress-reduction-
tickets-145138688725.

May 22, Reaching In & Reaching Out: Our Call to
Ecological Relationship (via Zoom), 9 a.m.-12 p.m.,
Franciscan Spirituality Center, preregistration required,
www.fscenter.org.

May 27, BYOB: Bring Your Own Book Club online book
discussion, 7-8 p.m., La Crosse Public Library, register at
www.lacrosselibrary.org.

JUNE

June 2, Winona Outdoors Collaborative Monthly Meet Up:
Rock Climbing, 6-9 p.m., Sugarloaf Trailhead, Winona,
register at www.winonaoutdoorcollaborative.com.

June 5, Camping Basics Workshop, Winona Outdoors
Collaborative, 10 a.m.-3 p.m., register at www.
winonaoutdoorcollaborative.com.

June 5, Trial and Triumph (Livestream), 7:30-8:30 p.m., La
Crosse Symphony Orchestra, www.lacrossesymphony.org.

June 8-13, Superior Hiking Trail Backpacking Trip,
Winona Outdoors Collaborative, register at www.
winonaoutdoorcollaborative.com.

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

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