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# RISE

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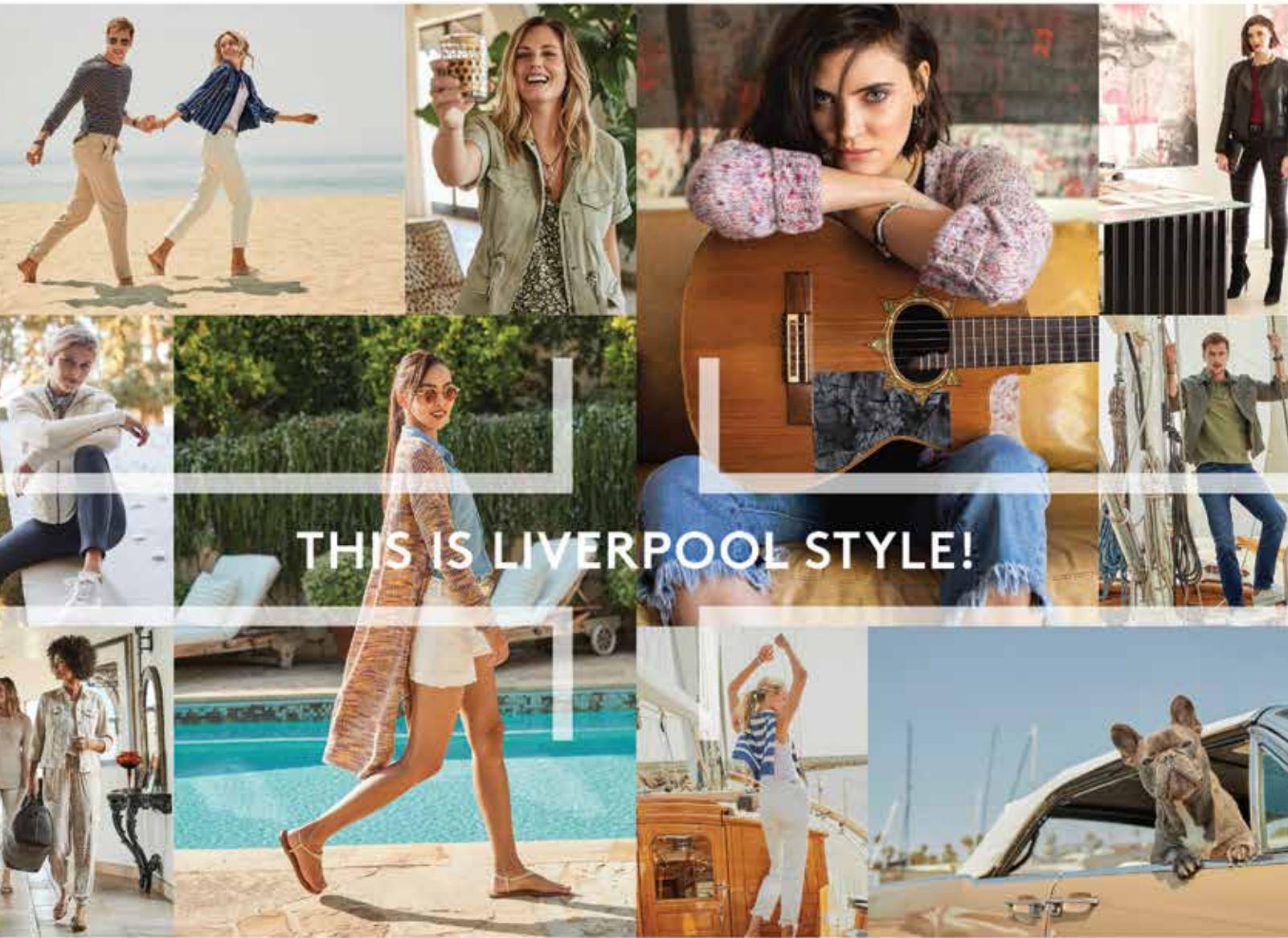
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Pictured on the cover: Jen Barney, owner of Meringue Bakery and Café. Photo by Frontier Photography.

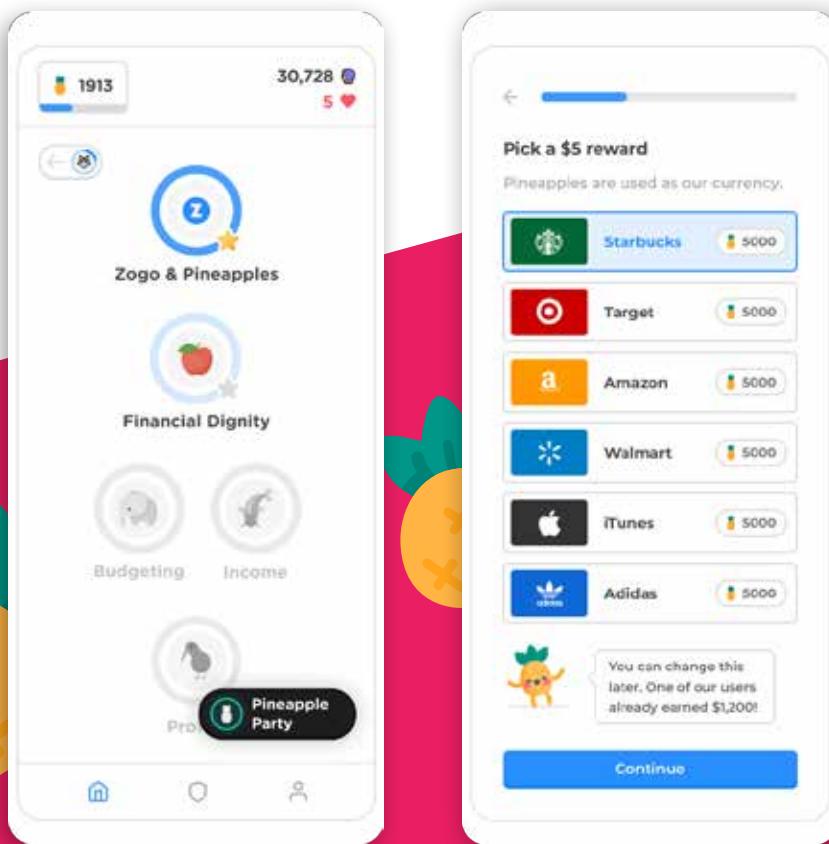
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Photo by Frontier Photography

## Quick—look up!

Have you ever been out hiking a trail, walking downtown streets or relaxing in your own backyard when something up above catches your eye? So, you call out to your friend or child: Look up!

If they are quick enough, they, too, can witness the majesty of an eagle circling above, the exhilaration of a squadron of fighter jets passing over at air show time, a seldom-noticed architectural detail in a century-old façade or even a simple monarch butterfly floating on the breeze.

Look up.

We spend so much of our lives focused on what is directly in front of us: our keyboard, our to-do list, the people we know best. And, from time to time, we are reminded to look ahead—as this was written, I was knee-deep in figuring out summer travel plans, work schedules and obligations three months out.

But I think we often forget to look up. To consider the possibilities. To consider things from a new perspective. In this RISE issue of

*Coulee Region Women*, we wanted to explore all the meanings that word could bring to the table. What does it look like if we fix our focus on what lies above us?

It might mean moving up from a basement bakery to the top of a television competition, as our cover woman Jen Barney has done. She admits that she is a dreamer, thinking big, thinking of what could be, and now she is making it a reality.

There are those who help others rise, who uplift the people around them and encourage them to envision where they want to be. They are people like the physical therapists and physicians in our Healthy Living story who help those who are physically down find the right reasons and the right methods to rise up after medical set-backs. They are people like Jazzma Holland, committed to helping young people see themselves attending and succeeding in college, while also lifting up voices that aren't often heard in our community. And they are people like Brenda Schafer, with a dream and purpose for her store that goes beyond beautifying homes to brightening lives.

Looking up, literally, may be the only way to see Rebecca Seibel, an arborist and safety trainer who loves her life in the trees. And for an uplifting travel experience, what could encourage you to look up more than a hot-air balloon festival?

There is one caveat I would offer about looking up: sometimes you have to stop moving forward first. I've learned this the hard way when hiking or running—taking your eyes off the trail ahead to take in the scenery or eyeball an eagle can be hazardous when the roots and rocks are just waiting to snag your toes. But, you know what? It is totally worth it. Totally worth the slower pace, or even the occasional stumble, to soak in the world around you and think about the possibilities. Don't allow yourself to be so engrossed in the day-to-day in front of your face that you forget that there is more to life.

Look up.

coulee region

# women

AREA HOME AND HEALTHY LIVING MAGAZINE

ISSUE 121, VOLUME 21, NUMBER 2

JUNE/JULY 2022

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

Send check to the address above.

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

*Coulee Region Women* assumes no responsibility for unsolicited materials.

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

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## “HAMMER GAMS” PHOTO EXHIBITION AND WRITING WORKSHOP



**A**rtist Cathy Dodge Williams never enjoyed having her photo taken, though she dabbled in photography.

Then, one spring day in 2020, beautiful morning light streamed into her bedroom window. It compelled her to grab her phone to capture the play of shadow and light across the bedding, and her legs and feet.

“At first, I kept the photos hidden in my phone,” says Williams. “But I really enjoyed them and felt a growing need to share the images. Ideas kept coming for more settings. The process was fascinating and became addictive.” Thus began Hammer Gams Photography.

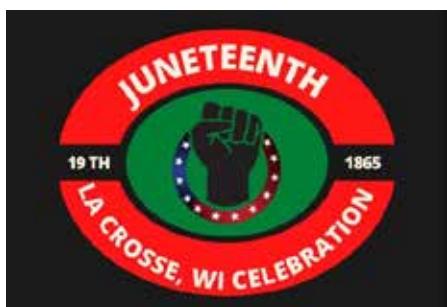
As her faceless self-portraits made their way into the world, Williams learned her struggle between wanting to be seen, yet not wanting attention, is not uncommon. Uninvited changes that come to our bodies during the aging process deepen the conflict. “My legs have the beginnings of varicose veins, a bunion is growing on my right foot and my thighs aren’t what they used to be. My intuition was to accentuate those flaws in the photos,” she says.

“Modesty has been pounded into us,” William observes. “Though there is nothing wrong with a little modesty, we shouldn’t let it impede some of the beautiful things we are meant to bring into the world.”

Hammer Gams sessions have taken her around the state, photographing her legs in abandoned buildings, at shorelines, in classic cars, kitchens and more. Some of these images can be seen on Instagram under Hammer Gams.

A collection of Williams’ work is currently on exhibition at the Pump House Regional Arts Center, Kader Gallery, through July 16.

On Tuesday, June 28, from 5:30 to 7 p.m., Williams’ evocative Hammer Gams photos will be used as inspiration for a writing workshop led by writer, storyteller and educator Deb Biechler, also to be held at the Pump House. Registration information is available by calling 608-785-1434.



### JOIN IN CELEBRATING JUNETEENTH

**S**everal La Crosse organizations invite the public to join them for an annual Juneteenth Celebration, planned this year for noon to 8 p.m. Saturday, June 18, at Riverside Park.

Open to the public, this free multicultural eco-friendly festival will provide family entertainment including live music, hip-hop dance, educational programming, a hypnotist, presentation of the Youth Juneteenth Court, free food, a dedicated youth fun area with games and prizes, a trolley tour featuring reenactment of La Crosse’s Black historical figures and numerous booths highlighting local organizations and businesses.

The event commemorates the end of slavery in our country and honors the Black community. Event hosts include Hope Restores, Black Leaders Acquiring Collective Knowledge (B.L.A.C.K.), Enduring Families Project and Black Student Leaders.

More information is available at [www.juneteenthlaxwi.com](http://www.juneteenthlaxwi.com).

## SUMMER ARTS EVENTS ABOUND IN WINONA

**W**hether you’re looking for Shakespeare, Beethoven or something with a little more swing, Winona has you covered this summer.

**Great River Shakespeare Festival**, set for June 18 through July 31, promises theater for



everyone with creative adaptations of *Richard III*, *The Taming of the Shrew* and *Twelfth Night*. Performances rotate between shows throughout the season, beginning at 7 p.m. most Wednesdays through Saturdays and 3 p.m. Sundays. A complete list of performances, classes, community conversations and more can be found at [www.grsf.org](http://www.grsf.org).

Fans of classical music will want to check the calendar of the **Minnesota Beethoven Festival** at [www.mnbeethovenfestival.org/festival-schedule/](http://www.mnbeethovenfestival.org/festival-schedule/) for a summer of music ranging from piano and violin virtuosos performing at Saint Mary’s University to the Minnesota Orchestra presenting an outdoor pops concert at the Lake Park Bandshell. The series begins June 26, with a total of nine concerts, concluding July 17.

A different take on music will be on stage noon to 5 p.m. July 30 at the LaCrosse Park Pavilion for the **35th Annual Winona Dixieland Festival**. While the birthplace of jazz may be at the other end of the Mississippi River, the afternoon will be full of toe-tapping music close to home.



### ART FAIR ON THE GREEN

**T**he American Association of University Women’s Art Fair on the Green returns Saturday, July 30, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., in Myrick Park. There is no admission charge for this year’s event, which will accept donations that are used to fund local scholarships. The event’s website at [www.artfaironthegreen.org](http://www.artfaironthegreen.org) will feature artist information beginning in July.

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## SWEET TASTE OF SUCCESS

**Jen Barney rises from a basement bakery to star power with the Food Network and Meringue Bakery.**

BY SUSAN C. SCHUYLER | PHOTOS BY FRONTIER PHOTOGRAPHY

Jen Barney, owner of La Crosse's Meringue Bakery, remembers the precise moment when she first realized she could mix her passion for art and food into a job as she watched a television recruiting ad for pastry chefs.

"I didn't even know that was a career path you could take," she says, flexing both hands above her head to illustrate how the idea blew her mind at the time.

Within months, she enrolled at Le Cordon Bleu College of Culinary Arts in Minneapolis/St. Paul to study pâtisserie, the art of French pastries and cakes. "It had to be baking. It really did," Barney says with an affable smile.

She is dressed casually, seated at a bistro table where her generous laughter echoes against the crisp white walls of her Main Street bakery. The temptation to gaze at the shop's gleaming casework is irresistible. There, meticulously prepared and arranged, are colorful rows of delectable homemade pastries, macarons, cupcakes—and so much more.

### A RISING STAR

Barney's masterful storytelling is equally hard to resist as she explains why she chose to pursue master baking instead of taking the

path of traditional chefs. "I could be a little more visually creative, and bakers have a lot better hours," she says. And so it began—Barney's meteoric rise to become the baking-competition television star and successful business owner she is today.

To get there, Barney left behind a brief career as a corrections officer and an abandoned attempt to become an art teacher, and she has never looked back.

After culinary school, she worked three years as a pastry chef in the Albuquerque Hyatt, then briefly returned to her hometown in Stanley, Wisconsin, to help at her parents' restaurant, and later followed her best friend to La Crosse. Here, Barney honed her skills in many of the city's most notable restaurant kitchens, including Four Sisters, The Waterfront and The Mint.

### STAR LIGHT, STAR BRIGHT

"I was meant to be in pastry," Barney says. She also knew that she was meant to start her own business. She got the chance to strike out on her own at Pogreba, a North Side La Crosse restaurant housed in a converted church, complete with a catering kitchen in its basement. "I worked third shift, trying to get my product out to all the farmers' markets in town," she says.



A colleague at The Waterfront worked hard to interrupt Barney's career trajectory by forcing an introduction to his cousin, Brian Barney. It's a vaudevillian meet-up story, fraught with near misses, but it has marriage as a happy ending. "We are a yin-yang couple," Barney says. "He's very literal, and I am very much the dreamer."

Personality differences aside, the couple shared the longing to start a family, which sparked a yearlong buildout in their home's basement. "Our initial plan was to have the basement bakery because I knew I wanted to start having kids," Barney says.

Barney grew up with seven siblings, two of whom were adopted foster children. Her mom made a career out of caring and advocating for special-needs foster children, and the Barneys became licensed foster parents to honor that tradition in building their own family as Jen felt settled in her career. "My hope was that I would just take on a couple of weddings a weekend and use the basement as a legal place to work—but mostly just be a mom," she says.

Before long, in what Barney describes as a "whirlwind," two brothers, the youngest of whom was just two months old, were placed in their home. "We took on that challenge, like, wholeheartedly," Barney says.

### THE STARS LINE UP

Suddenly, things got complicated. "I got pregnant within a month of getting the boys," Barney says. Their daughter, Millie, arrived in 2017, and they adopted the younger foster sibling, Wyatt.

In the tangle of construction, adoption and parenting a newborn daughter and special-needs son, Barney got an unexpected call from a Food Network scout inviting her to audition for a televised baking competition.

The scout reached out to Barney after discovering her husband's photographs of her creations during an internet search. At first, Barney thought it was a scam. She was flattered and shocked when she learned it wasn't. "It just fell in my lap," Barney says. "I would have never in a million years pictured that for myself, and I still don't fully identify with it."

Barney says she didn't know what she was getting herself into. "The process of getting into these shows is almost like a part-time job for two months," she says. The network demands quick turnaround on reams of time-sensitive paperwork, conducts multiple interviews and requires several Zoom cooking demonstrations.

### THE BIRTH OF A SHINING STAR

Having completed all that, Barney spent a month in New Orleans to compete in the network's Holiday Baking Championship. She was at first stunned by the basketball-court-size studio and the legions of people involved in production. Learning the workspace during her first baking challenge was equally overwhelming. But Barney got the hang of it and made it to the finale.

She won the competition and a \$50,000 prize. But Barney also won something else. "Something really changed in me in that competition," she says. "I walked away with the feeling, 'You could do anything.'"

That confidence carried her through four more competitions. Barney's success intensified her exposure and built the momentum to move her bakery to the Main Street space. She was excited to move in April 2020, but Covid-19 moved in as well, forcing quick pivots to help her business survive.

### STAR GAZING

Now that the pandemic is easing, and with another Food Network victory in 2021 under her belt, Barney is counting on a robust summer wedding season. What's up next? Maybe writing a cookbook, expanding cooking classes to an online platform and spending more time with her family. Luckily, the sweet taste of success seems to be baked into all of Barney's plans. CRW

*Susan C. Schuyler is signing up to take Meringue Bakery's French macaron class to avoid the embarrassment of visiting too often to buy them.*

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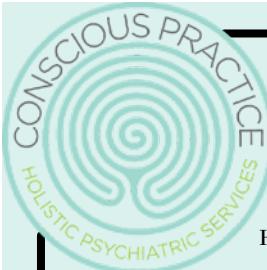


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# THE NEXT STEP UP

**Anna Prinsen proves her entrepreneurial prowess as owner of Modern Crane.**

BY SHARI HEGLAND  
CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS



Anna Prinsen, owner of Modern Crane in Onalaska



**W**hen Anna Prinsen introduced herself at her first national industry conference in 2017, the looks—and questions—she received were incredulous.

"So, what exactly is your role there?" "With your husband, right?" "Who helps you?"

The group wasn't expecting a young, petite Asian woman to introduce herself as the owner of a crane company.

Prinsen was only 31 and the mother of two young girls when she purchased Onalaska's Modern Crane; she admits that on the first day walking into the office, she knew very little about cranes. But she did know the business side of the construction industry, skills she learned in more than a decade with general contractor Fowler & Hammer in La Crosse.

## PATH TO ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Construction wasn't her original plan. Prinsen began studying nursing while working part time in the construction business operated by her mother, Sue Christopherson, and uncle Jim Fowler. When a full-time opportunity arose in the firm's accounting department, the course of her career shifted.

She advanced through roles as contract administrator and office manager, to CFO and vice president with an ownership role in the company.

"I thought that was where I was going to be," she says. But then she discovered that the owners of Modern Crane were looking to sell, and 18 months of discussion, discovery and sleepless nights began.

## FROM UNDERDOG TO GROWING BUSINESS

The purchase process wasn't all smooth sailing, but Prinsen told herself, "You're going to regret it if you don't go out on your own."

In the beginning, Prinsen relied heavily on the experience of the staff as she learned the specifics of the crane industry. "For the first two years, it was soaking up a lot of information," she says. "You always have to be open to learning and taking critiques. I don't think you can grow unless you are willing to sit and reflect."

The business and industry aren't without challenges, of course.

"As a young minority woman, the biggest obstacle was that people don't take you seriously at first," she says. "Even after five years, it can be a little intimidating. You embrace being the underdog at the end of the day."

## SO, WHO HELPS HER?

Prinsen says that while she doesn't have a partner in the business, she has not been alone.

"Our community has so many resources for people who want to go out on their own," she says. "People want to see you succeed in this community."

Along with tapping into grant and loan programs for women, minorities and disadvantaged businesses, Prinsen has relied on a team of advisors, including not only her mother, but also Anne Hlavacka at the Small Business Development Center at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, CPA Herb Gust at Morrison & Associates in La Crosse and her knowledgeable employees.

"I don't think I could do it without those pillars in my life," Prinsen says.

## RAISING THE FUTURE

As a mother and community member, Prinsen is compelled to support her community's future, serving on the boards of the La Crosse Area Education Foundation and the La Crosse Area Family YMCA.

"It's really important as you grow throughout your career to get involved and give back to the community," Prinsen says. "This community raised me to where I am, and whatever we can do as adults to ensure that for our youth is important as well." CRW

*Holmen writer and Coulee Region Women editor Shari Hegland enjoyed meeting the dynamic face and personality behind the cranes she sees towering over Highway 53 on her drives to La Crosse.*

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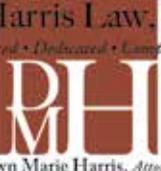
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# Envision yourself in these places

**Jazzma Holland encourages students and the community to rise to their potential.**

BY JAN WELLIK | CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS



*Participants in the 2021 Wisconsin Black Women Empowerment Conference, hosted in La Crosse by Jazzma Holland, director of Upward Bound at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse.*

**W**e are their personal cheerleaders," says Jazzma Holland, director of Upward Bound at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, of the students she serves. "We help them get into college and to stay in."

Upward Bound is a free program that helps high schoolers prepare for college. It serves first-generation, low-income and academically at-risk students, of which the majority are students of color.

"We push them to make sure they go to tutoring and have the best grades possible so they can get into the college of their choice," says Holland. Students receive a stipend for participating, along with tutoring, academic counseling and free college tours.

"Many families don't know the college application process if they are first generation, like my family," she says.

## UNDERSTANDING THE CHALLENGE

Holland was an Upward Bound participant herself in Milwaukee, and later became assistant director of the program in La Crosse in 2019.

"It was an amazing experience," she explains. "I remember the big impact it had on my life."

As the sixth child in a family of 10 kids, Holland says Upward Bound was her first introduction to earning money. "It helped me see that college was something I could do," she says. "My family talked about college, but I knew I was going to need more support."

Upward Bound staff help students choose a college that fits them academically and personally so they can be as successful as possible, Holland explains. "The staff are amazing—all have experience with the population we serve. We ask students to envision what they want about a college," she says, then they work together to find a good match.

Upward Bound at UW-La Crosse currently serves 70 students, and they are taking applications from eighth graders who will start next year.

## BUILDING COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

In addition to her work with Upward Bound, Holland is active in diversity community building in La Crosse. She co-founded and has been president of B.L.A.C.K. (Black Leaders Acquiring Collective Knowledge) in La Crosse since 2015.

"Our main mission is to empower the Black community of La Crosse, and to motivate and uplift community members," she says, doing so through mentorship, friendship and assistance to small business owners. "It helped me find community and meet new people," says Holland, who was often the only Black student in her graduate classes at UW-La Crosse.

She also helps organize the annual Wisconsin Black Women Empowerment Conference. The next conference will be in October in La Crosse, addressing topics that are important to Black women, according to Holland, such as "business, connecting, healing, empowering and forming sisterhood in Wisconsin."

## LISTENING AND UPLIFTING VOICES

Holland has her own podcast, All That Jazz, in which she interviews Black individuals in La Crosse through in-depth, intimate talks about sisterhood, mental health, Covid and more—"a range of conversations," she says. "It's a way to uplift those voices that are not often heard."

Her own high school experience in Upward Bound helped provide support and guidance, she says. "I found mentors in the community and advisors." This is what she offers to her students now. "I ask them to envision themselves in these spaces. In whatever form, we're here to help them get there," she says. **CRW**

*Jan Wellik is a writer and educator in the La Crosse area with great love and respect for community builders like Jazzma Holland.*



Liz Stine, LPC and Tara Farmer, LPC, CSW



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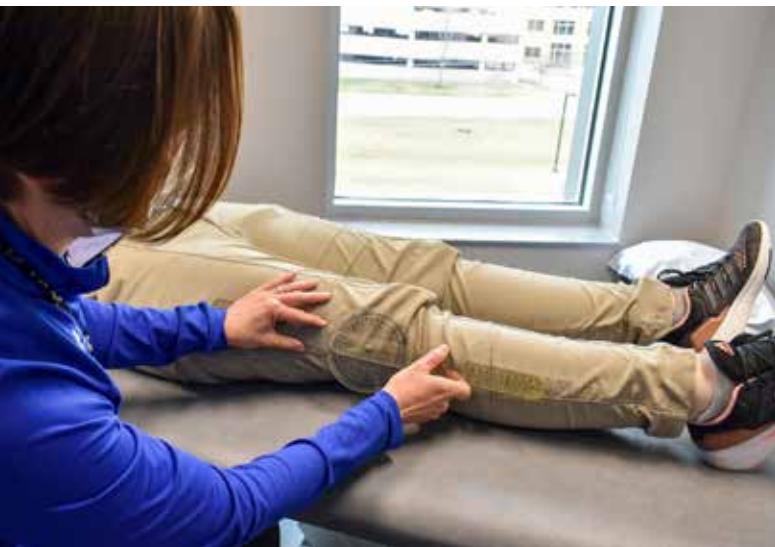


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# REASON TO RISE

**Rehabilitation teams help patients find the motivation and movement to achieve recovery goals.**

BY ANASTASIA PENCHI | CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS



*Winona Health physical therapist Valerie Mullen helps a patient work to regain range of motion in the knee.*



**T**hroughout the Coulee Region, teams of professionals are helping the physically broken rise again.

Whether the setback is temporary, due to a procedure like a knee or hip replacement, or because of a chronic condition with ongoing issues like stroke, Parkinson's disease or multiple sclerosis, these medical cheerleaders expertly guide us to do the work needed to get back on our feet.



*Dr. Christine Brose,  
rehabilitation physician,  
Gundersen Health System*

social workers join the team, too.

And talented healers are in demand—Dr. Brose is typically booked out six months.

Dr. Christine Brose, a rehabilitation doctor for Gundersen Health System in La Crosse, says rapport builds between patients and professionals due to time spent together.

She sees patients at the time of the initial emergency, and is likely to do so every two to three months after it passes. A physical therapist might see patients two to three times each week.

Trust builds as the patient successfully meets goals. They might work with a rehab doctor, physical therapist, speech therapist and/or occupational therapist. Sometimes



*Valerie Mullen, physical therapist, Winona Health*

wants to return to work.

"You definitely need to know your patient, because different patients need different things," Dr. Brose says.

One local woman in her 40s had a stroke and wanted to return to work. She went from being paralyzed when Dr. Brose first met her to going back to work full-time thanks to lots of physical therapy and special braces she now uses to help her walk.

Dr. Brose begins with the diagnosis, but she gets pulled in as needed for pain management and insurance issues. On the day of this interview, she is helping someone with a spinal cord injury as his physical therapist reported new pain.

"I love what I do," Dr. Brose adds. "A lot of other specialties don't get to know people that well."

## KNOWLEDGE IS POWER

When tragedy occurs, it can literally knock a person off their feet. In emergency rooms, patients start in a bedridden state. In order to walk again, a good medical crew figures out the inspiration needed.

Is this person a grandmother who wants to get back on the ground to play with her grandkids, or does she want to crochet again? Maybe she

"They (physical therapist and patient) grow very close relationships and they know each other very well," Dr. Brose says.

## TEAM APPROACH

Dr. Katrina Hammel, a hospitalist and internal medicine doctor for Winona Health, says communication and trust are necessary for team success.



Dr. Katrina Hammel, hospitalist and internal medicine physician, Winona Health

While Dr. Hammel orders walkers for her patients, others make sure the walkers are the correct height and patients are taught to use them.

One man Dr. Hammel works with needed to learn to use a slide board to transfer himself from his wheelchair to his bed. The social worker and Dr. Hammel identified additional items needed for independence: an adjustable-height bed, a toilet riser and grab bars.

Dr. Hammel dealt with insurance, and therapists worked with the patient.

The skill needed determines the specialist who will teach it. Dr. Hammel says occupational therapists focus on "waist up" work—teaching patients to use adaptive equipment like utensil grippers, which make silverware easier to use. Physical therapists use technology, exercise and water therapy to help people with "waist down" activities like walking.

"For every day in bed, it takes two to three days of therapy to get the strength you lost," Dr. Hammel adds.

Other therapy can be included as challenges arise. If someone's voice is too soft, it might make communication difficult. Or if their swallowing reflex is compromised, it can put them at a higher risk of pneumonia. A speech therapist can teach speaking tips and chin manipulation.

"Being able to communicate with people is absolutely essential to your being," Dr. Hammel says. "Those are all things I take for granted every day."

## SUPPORTING THE WORK

Physical therapists like Valerie Mullen, who also works for Winona Health, use resistance bands, balance balls and body-weight exercises to help patients walk again.

Mullen has been a physical therapist for 25 years and says today's

physical therapy centers on retraining the muscle/brain connection so the brain's neuropathways function again.

She starts by talking to the patient, but the patient does the work. There is strength training and building up leg and core muscles. Repetitive stepping and side-stepping exercises are necessary for some. Others practice lying on the ground and then standing up.

At Winona Health, physical therapists use a special treadmill so patients can walk in the pool. Another technology, E-stim, sends electrical pulses through the skin to stimulate injured muscles.

Physical therapy can be draining, especially for those in pain. But Mullen has also seen those patients rise. They start bedridden and progress to sitting at the edge of the bed. Later they stand, then walk with a walker. Then comes a cane, and some eventually walk without assistance.

"You definitely need to act as a cheerleader," Mullen says, as lives are turned upside down in medical emergencies, and patients often need others to "bring them around."

## PATIENT SUCCESS

Jarod Tews of Lewiston, Minnesota, knows about the patient/medical team relationship. He had a brain tumor in 1994, a stroke in 2014 and a second stroke in October 2021. He's been through surgery, radiation, chemotherapy and rehab.

Tews enjoyed his relationship with Mullen (the physical therapist he saw after his most recent stroke). Twice a week, he joked with her as he did the work needed to strengthen his left leg.

"If I can make them laugh, it makes me feel better, and things go better," Tews says. "I didn't want to stop (physical therapy) because I consider her a good friend."

Tews' first therapy goal involved walking. At every appointment, he used a treadmill for six minutes to measure how far he could walk. His first try was 600 feet; the next was 900. He told Mullen he would hit 1,000 feet at his next visit, but he went almost 1,100.

Tews says physical therapy isn't always fun—he hated getting on and off the leg press machine. Although he no longer attends regular appointments, he still exercises at home in the hope he can return to work one day.

"I'm one of those people who loves my job and can't wait to go back," he says. "The only way out of it is to do what they tell you to do." CRW

*Anastasia Penchi is inspired by Jarod Tews and others like him who focus on the positive. She can be reached at callmeloislane@hotmail.com.*





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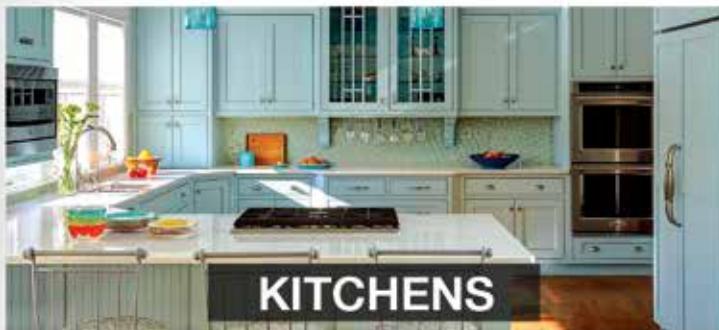
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*Kim and Pete Schwab have turned their fourth-floor Winona apartment into a home with a style Kim calls more transitional than traditional. They enjoy the convenience and views that Main Square Apartments offer.*



## TOP FLOOR STYLE, DOWNTOWN CONVENIENCE

**Kim and Pete Schwab bring transitional style to their modern Winona apartment.**

BY SARAH ARENDT-BEYER | PHOTOS BY ATYPIK STUDIO

**W**hen it was time for Winona natives Kim Schwab and her husband, Pete, to downsize from their Brownsville, Minnesota, home, it made sense to return to a community they love.

The couple was ready for the convenience an apartment could provide, and Main Square Winona apartments in downtown Winona were the perfect option, with easy access to shops, restaurants, events and bike trails—topped off with great views of the city. “As soon as we heard of the concept, we were on board with it,” Schwab says. “We thought it would be very fun to live downtown and to just be able to come and go, and not have to get in the car, and to have everything close by.”

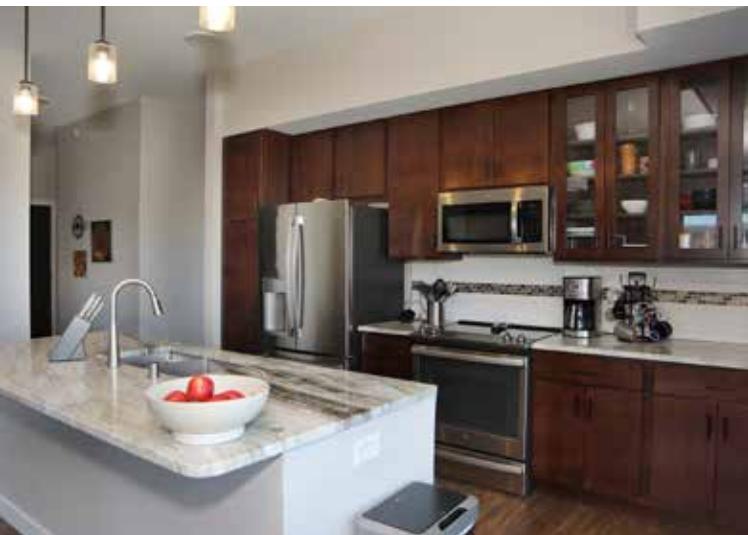
It didn’t hurt that their company, Schwab Construction Services, was building the project.

Schwab says it was fun seeing the construction process. “I would tag along sometimes on the weekends when we would come through and climb ladders, go up and look at things, and envision what it was going to look like.”

### A MODERN BUILDING IN A HISTORIC TOWN

Main Square Winona consists of three connected buildings on what was known as “the Hardee’s block.” The Pinnacle is located on the corner of Johnson and Fifth Streets and contains 23 luxury apartments. Next to The Pinnacle, The Landmark is made up of 29 luxury apartments. Finally, there’s The Cornerstone, consisting of 31 market-rate units. The buildings span an entire city block and rise four stories. Despite its modern provenance, the building is designed to fit in with neighboring landmarks. Its tan brick matches the color of City Hall, and its red bricks are the same color as the Exchange building. The metal accents are the same as the nearby Historical Society’s new addition. And Biesanz stone from the local Biesanz Stone Company enhances the graceful lobbies.

Construction on The Landmark wrapped up in February 2020. The Cornerstone came to completion a few months later in April. Due to the coronavirus pandemic, there could be no grand opening



An open concept and plenty of windows to take in the fourth-floor view combine with amenities such as heated bathroom floors and marble countertops to bring a luxury experience to downtown Winona living.

ceremony. Yet, as Jessi Pohlman, assistant property manager for Sunstone Management and Real Estate, says, “It really didn’t have much impact. We still had people that wanted to come in here, and because we were housing industry, we weren’t shut down. So we continued to work. We had to take precautions. We had to sanitize, and we would limit the tours … and we were still able to fill the building without being able to have a grand opening.”

Phase Two of construction saw the completion of The Pinnacle in May 2021, where the Schwabs have their home.

“The biggest surprise,” Schwab says of moving from a house to an apartment, “is how much we like it!”

## A TOUCH OF CLASS

Schwab enjoyed her involvement in recommending luxury components for The Landmark and The Pinnacle. She and her husband visited the Twin Cities to research what other high-end apartments offered. Today, they enjoy those special luxury touches, like heated floors in the bathrooms, tile showers and elegant marble countertops.

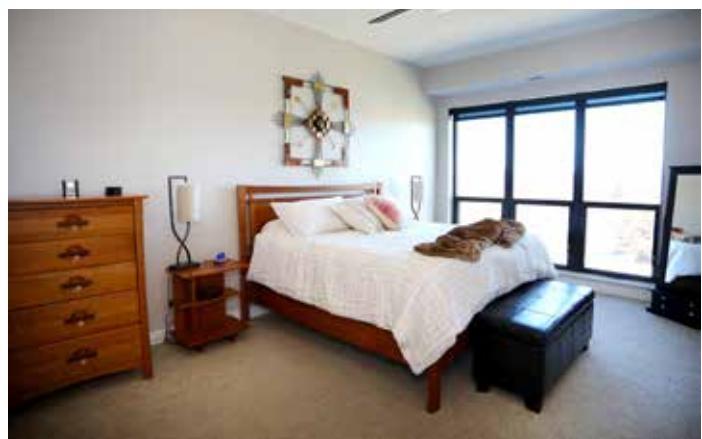
Gracious windows flood their open-concept, high-ceilinged space with light. When asked about her favorite room, Schwab says: “Oh, I would certainly say in here,” gesturing to the spacious living and dining area, “and in the summertime, it would be sitting out there,” indicating the large, open-air balcony where the couple enjoys watching the goings-on below. From their fourth-floor view, they can see the college students venture out at night and the children attending the adjacent Main Square Montessori School play during the day.

The Schwabs’ apartment is picture-perfect. The stainless-steel appliances gleam, and everything is thoughtfully arranged. “I’m kind of a minimalist,” Schwab says. “I don’t like clutter; I like things open.” Her preferred aesthetic is “transitional”—“Not traditional,” she says, “but not on the edge, either!” Carefully selected artwork adorns the walls, interspersed with family photos for a homey feel.

## COMMUNITY

Winona is a tight-knit community. Shared spaces in Main Square Winona help build an even further sense of community among tenants.

Kim and Pete Schwab both enjoy the clean and well-equipped



fitness center. “Pete works out about 5, 5:30, and I come down about 7,” Schwab says.

Each building has a clubroom. Both The Pinnacle and The Landmark have an outdoor terrace adjacent to the clubroom outfitted with patio furniture and gas grills. Schwab takes advantage of the clubrooms for hosting meetings, for entertaining guests for alfresco dinners (she’s a talented grill master) and for special events like an upcoming bridal shower. They’re great for kids; Pohlman recalls one tenant treating his granddaughter to an indoor camping trip in one.

Tenants range in age from college students to those in their 90s. “It’s fun to meet people,” Schwab says. “There’s a nice mix in here. There are some older people, and then there are some young people—quite a few young people, actually. We love having a mix of people. It just makes it more fun; it’s more energy.” Pohlman adds, “We have older tenants who have looked at 55-and-older complexes, and they come back and say, ‘We like it here because there’s younger people, and it keeps us feeling younger!’”

Perhaps the cutest residents, however, are the four-legged ones. Dogs under 40 pounds and cats are allowed. Many of them enjoy stopping in to see Pohlman in her office for some treats before heading out to explore the town with their owners.

The sense of community and “pride of home” is evident. One tenant has decorated the common areas with plants, and another organizes regular card games.

“We really want our tenants to feel at home; we want it to be their home,” Pohlman says. Schwab agrees: “We just feel very comfortable here. We don’t really feel like it’s an apartment; we feel like it’s our home … we love every aspect of it!” CRW

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

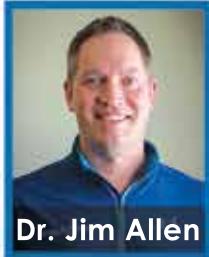


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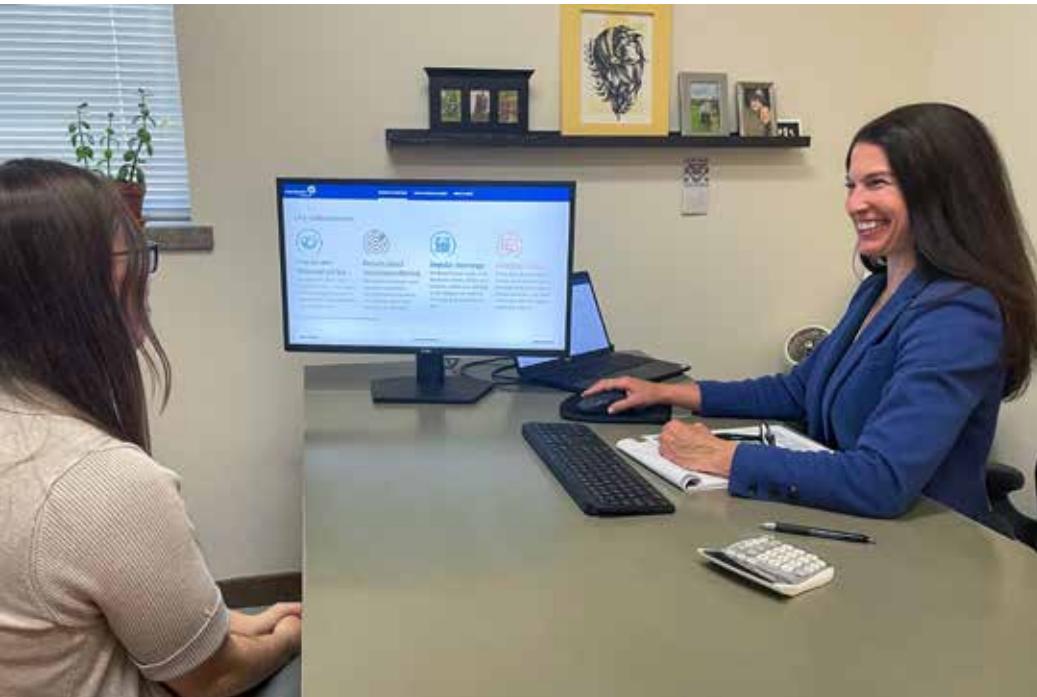
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# RISE TO RETIREMENT

**Here's how to plan ahead for financial and social changes in post-career years.**

BY JANIS JOLLY | CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS



*Financial advisor Moriah Cody, Hanson and Associates, Ameriprise Financial Services LLC, says each person has a unique retirement picture, and she encourages them to envision the possibilities.*



*Margaret Severson, Edward Jones Investments, Viroqua*

**R**etiring means different things to different people. For some, it's a shining light at the end of a tunnel; to others a barren landscape. The reality is likely to be neither extreme. Those who know what they want in retirement, and plan to make it happen, will have the best outcome.

Saving for retirement, planning future needs and applying for Social Security can seem daunting tasks. Fortunately, in the Coulee Region, many skilled professional financial advisors, bankers, websites and government entities are ready to help navigate the ocean of information available.

Margaret Severson of Edward Jones Investments in Viroqua and Moriah Cody of Hanson and Associates, Ameriprise Financial Services LLC in La Crosse, are both experienced in helping people transition toward retirement from financial planning and investing to applying for Social Security and Medicare. Planning for your financial future is especially important for women, who typically earn less than men but also live 5.4 years longer on average, according to National Public Radio.

Cody says each person has a unique retirement "picture." "When you begin to think about retirement," she says, "envision the possibilities. What will you do to find purpose and fulfillment during your retirement years? This could include helping care for grandkids or aging parents, volunteering or even reinventing a career. What are the fun things you've always wanted to do, such as travel or start a new hobby? Will you still have debt, like a mortgage payment or car payment? Will you need the same current take-home pay when you retire? Identifying the sources of income that will create your retirement paycheck is key."

## DON'T WAIT TO PLAN

Saving for retirement is best started early. A critical look at current expenses is a good place to start. "Know what your essential living expenses are and be mindful of wants versus needs," says Cody. "I encourage clients to think of their savings as a bill each month. It's crucial to have an emergency fund. In addition, know what your employer is offering in terms of retirement savings, and take

*Ruth Kinstler, director of Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) in La Crosse, understands that there is more to retirement planning than financial number-crunching. She helps retirees find the social connections they crave through volunteer work in the community.*



advantage of these benefits. Being disciplined with your spending and saving during your working years could make all the difference in retirement."

While you are still working, you want your money to grow as much as possible. If you can tolerate the ups and downs of the stock market, you can make more money over time. This wealth accumulation phase will morph into the distribution phase when you retire, according to Severson.

#### FIGURE OUT THE FINANCIAL PUZZLE

If you retire at 62, you will need enough money to maintain an acceptable lifestyle for 20 to 30 years, based on life expectancy.

Listing your current expenses in detail also can help you predict how much money you will need when you retire, subject to inflation. Working has many built-in costs that disappear when you retire. Retired people don't have to maintain a work wardrobe, buy as much gas or eat out as often. If you sell your large family home and move to a smaller house or an apartment, your expenses may be less.

Conversations to have with a financial advisor include deciding when to start drawing from Social Security, how continuing to work might impact benefits, and planning for potential loss of those benefits with the death of a spouse.

#### WHERE TO VOLUNTEER IN RETIREMENT

To volunteer through RSVP, contact Ruth Kinstler at 608-785-7632. Possibilities include:

- Retail outlets such as the Gundersen Health Systems gift shop and Habitat ReStore
- Nursing homes that need dining room assistants and companions
- Schools that host reading buddies for students
- Large events, such as the La Crosse Symphony Orchestra, Blue Stars drum corps performances or Clearwater Farms activities, that need ushers and other extra help
- Hunger Task Force and area food pantries
- Explore La Crosse's Welcome Center

"Long-term care is also an important topic to plan for," says Cody. "Someone turning 65 today has almost a 70 percent chance of needing some type of long-term care service in their remaining years, and many of these types of services are not covered under one's health insurance or Medicare."

#### FILLING YOUR TIME AND SOCIAL NEEDS

On the other hand, retirement frees up a lot of time, and you get to decide what to do with it. Try to visualize how you want your days to look when you don't have to put in the 9 to 5. You could travel, take up a hobby you haven't had time for or spend more time with family. You could take an art class or learn a new musical instrument.

Many choose to volunteer for a charity they feel passionate about. There is much work that needs to be done in the community, says Ruth Kinstler, director of Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) in La Crosse.

Retiring is a huge lifestyle change, perhaps equal to getting married or having children. Kinstler points out that when we are working, our socialization is centered around the workplace. Retirement is a break from that life and often that group of people, and most look elsewhere for friends and companionship. She sees volunteering as a cure for isolation that has added benefits for the community.

Kinstler likes to interview people when they first retire to learn their interests and skill set. "At first, a retiree may have a list of things they haven't been able to do while working, and once they have done all those things, they don't know what to do with their time," she says. "There is no reason to sit at home alone, when there is much need in the community."

Volunteering provides an opportunity for people to try something completely different from what they did while working, she said. A medical person may enjoy volunteering in a retail setting, or a retired teacher may enjoy providing rides to medical appointments. Some RSVP members volunteer for the La Crosse Symphony and can enjoy the concerts for free.

Retirement is the opportunity of a lifetime of work. It is what you make of it. And it's never too early to plan and to dream. **CRW**

*Janis Jolly is a freelance writer and retired. She thinks the ideas and advice in this article are spot on.*

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## FOLLOWING HER HEART

**Brenda Schafer uplifts with love and positive energy at Practically Posh.**

BY LEAH CALL | CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

If your spirits spike after a visit to home décor boutique Practically Posh, that's exactly what owner Brenda Schafer wants. She even scribed positive messages, including "Blessings for those who enter," "I love you" and "Good Vibes," in permanent marker on the subfloor beneath the flooring in her Onalaska store.

"I hope that all of those blessings touch my customers' hearts," Schafer says. "When people leave here, even if they don't purchase anything, I want them to feel something special—like something special just occurred."

In addition to positive vibes, customers can expect to find unique home décor items they won't find anywhere else in the area: lamps, linens, pillows, vases, florals and more. While factoring cost and value into her selections, Schafer says she follows her heart when choosing the items she carries in her store. "It's a gut instinct when I see a piece. I buy what I love. I won't sell things I don't love."

For those lacking a flair for interior design, Schafer is happy to lend her expertise. "I can use my visual imagination as they describe their space to me ... I also tell people to bring in pictures, paint chips, whatever they have, so I can help them create the space they want," she says. "People sometimes have a hard time saying exactly what that is, because it's a feeling. So if you can capture that feeling, you've got it."

### PATHWAY TO POSH

"Life is a winding path, and my path has led me to right where I'm supposed to be," says Schafer, who entered the retail realm after moving to New Jersey in her mid-20s.

Encouraged by a supportive boss, her career blossomed, soon taking her down the road of management and merchandising.



Brenda Schafer, owner of Practically Posh

"It didn't take me long to realize that was my true passion—the merchandising and the relationships I developed with people," recalls Schafer. "I started following my heart and leaning into my intuition of what it was I really wanted. That's when I got involved in the home décor industry."

She ran her own interior design business for a few years, but she missed the interaction with customers. Then, in July 2014, she launched Practically Posh on La Crosse's south side, moving to the current location in Onalaska in July 2021. "I really love the new location," says Schafer.

Customers agree. Practically Posh was recently named among the Best of La Crosse award winners.

### FEELING BLESSED

Schafer is pleased to have her children, Jeremy, 26, and Jamie, 23, involved in the business.

"Hiring my son and daughter has been wonderful. They are learning about entrepreneurship, about running a business. And at the same time, they are teaching me," she adds, appreciating the fresh perspective they provide. "They have so many great ideas. We are learning to work together not just as a family but as a team."

It's the relationships, both with her adult children and with new and returning customers, that Schafer calls "the best aspect of my career."

"I feel very blessed doing what I do," she adds. "The community has really come out and supported Practically Posh, and I am so appreciative of everybody." **CRW**

Westby-based writer Leah Call plans to visit Practically Posh for her summer home decorating projects.

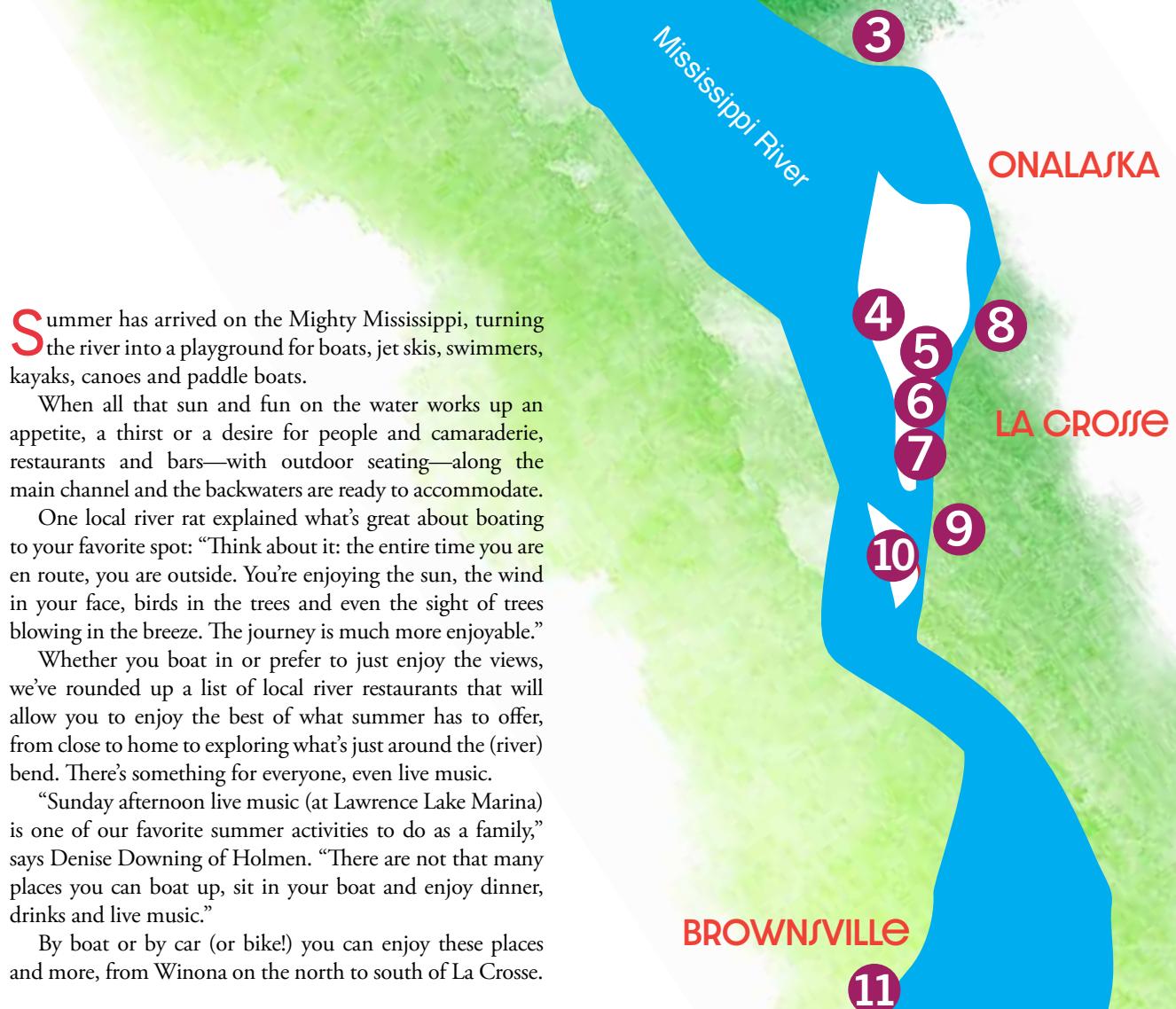
1  
WINONA

2 TREMPEALEAU

# Patio Paradise

Riverside restaurants offer views and great food to top off a day on the water.

BY JULIE NELSON  
CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS



**S**ummer has arrived on the Mighty Mississippi, turning the river into a playground for boats, jet skis, swimmers, kayaks, canoes and paddle boats.

When all that sun and fun on the water works up an appetite, a thirst or a desire for people and camaraderie, restaurants and bars—with outdoor seating—along the main channel and the backwaters are ready to accommodate.

One local river rat explained what's great about boating to your favorite spot: "Think about it: the entire time you are en route, you are outside. You're enjoying the sun, the wind in your face, birds in the trees and even the sight of trees blowing in the breeze. The journey is much more enjoyable."

Whether you boat in or prefer to just enjoy the views, we've rounded up a list of local river restaurants that will allow you to enjoy the best of what summer has to offer, from close to home to exploring what's just around the (river) bend. There's something for everyone, even live music.

"Sunday afternoon live music (at Lawrence Lake Marina) is one of our favorite summer activities to do as a family," says Denise Downing of Holmen. "There are not that many places you can boat up, sit in your boat and enjoy dinner, drinks and live music."

By boat or by car (or bike!) you can enjoy these places and more, from Winona on the north to south of La Crosse.

## 1. BOATHOUSE RESTAURANT

2 Johnson Street, Winona

**Food:** Seafood, hamburgers, fish, walleye tacos, salmon, tuna, housemade dressing

**Drinks:** Full bar, craft cocktails, top shelf liquor only

**Known for:** Fish and chips, seafood, high-quality food, good view of the river

**Docking:** On Levee Park, a one-minute walk

**Fuel:** Nearby at Winona Marina and Dick's Marine

**Swimsuits and flip-flops allowed:** Yes

**The owners say:** "We travel a lot and bring back ideas for drinks and food from Maui, Key West and more. Our philosophy is when you come to dine with us, you should feel like you came to visit a family member's cabin on the river."



Trempealeau Hotel

## 2. TREMPEALEAU HOTEL

11332 Main Street, Trempealeau

**Food:** Changes daily, depending on availability and chef's choice

**Drinks:** Full bar, including craft beers from the Midwest and Elmaro wine

**Known for:** Farm-to-table cuisine made from scratch and expertly muddled Old Fashioneds

**Docking:** On the river, nearby

**Fuel:** No

**Swimsuits and flip-flops allowed:** Yes

**Other:** Live music, all seats can see the stage, very friendly staff, pets allowed on patio.

## 3. RED PINES BAR AND GRILL

W7305 County Road Z, Onalaska

**Food:** Walleye and other lake fish, hand battered from scratch, and smoked meats including brisket, plus pub burgers

**Drinks:** Full bar including bourbons, craft beer and cocktails

**Known for:** Atmosphere, consistently quality food, friendly service, lake view

**Docking:** Only if you have a flat-bottom boat, a kayak or canoe

**Fuel:** No

**Swimsuits and flip-flops allowed:** T-shirt or other coverup required. Dress code is "classy casual."

**Other:** A second bar in the summer, volleyball leagues on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays and Sundays. Bonfire every Friday and Saturday. Live music on the deck. Tuesday is International Night.

## 4. RIVER RATS

1311 La Crescent Place, La Crosse

**Food:** Appetizers, burgers, wraps, salads and soups

**Drinks:** Beer, seltzers, liquor and specialty drinks

**Known for:** Views of the river and a fun atmosphere

**Docking:** On the river

**Swimsuits and flip flops allowed:** Yes

**Our readers say:** "River Rats is small but has a patio, live music and really good food. The Bloody Marys are awesome." — Nicole Wohlrab, French Island



Castaways on the Island

## 5. CASTAWAYS ON THE ISLAND

131 Clinton Street, La Crosse

**Food:** Seafood, steak, gourmet burgers, crab legs and other seafood

**Drinks:** Full bar plus drink specials every week

**Known for:** Voted best fish fry in La Crosse. Same owner as Tom Sawyer's, but a little more upscale.

**Docking:** In back; call to get the spot best for your boat

**Fuel:** No

**Swimsuits and flip-flops allowed:** Yes

**Other:** Pets allowed, on leash and under control

## 6. TOM SAWYER'S

136 Clinton Street, La Crosse

**Food:** Appetizers, wraps, sandwiches, fish

**Drinks:** Full bar

**Known for:** Pan-fried haddock on Friday nights, drink specials every week

**Docking:** Call to arrange the best spot for your boat

**Fuel:** No

**Swimsuits and flip-flops allowed:** Yes

**Our readers say:** "Tom Sawyer's sometimes has live music and great outdoor space. They are also open for breakfast which is a great option. The owner is very present and always greets customers and makes sure drinks are full. My favorite at Tom Sawyer's is

the fish tacos or the fish fry. They have some great burgers, too. And they accept reservations." — Nicole Wohlrab, French Island

## 7. HUCK FINN'S ON THE WATER

129 Marina Drive, La Crosse

**Food:** Seafood, burgers, steaks

**Drinks:** Full bar, fun summer drinks including ice cream drinks and mojitos

**Known for:** Wing Dam Shrimp

**Docking:** 4 slips nearby for guests

**Swimsuits and flip-flops allowed:** On patio only

**Fuel:** Near the marina next door.

**Other:** With windows all around, all indoor seats have a great view.

## 8. MOXIE'S TIKI BAR

1835 Rose Street, La Crosse

**Food:** Wraps, burgers, salads

**Drinks:** Full bar plus mojitos, margaritas, Miami Vice, Yellow Bird

**Known for:** Moxie Tots, jumbo wings

**Docking:** 10 docks on the river

**Fuel:** No

**Swimsuits and flip-flops allowed:** Yes

**Other:** Live music Wednesday through Sunday. Volleyball leagues Tuesday through Thursday. Adding a portable bar this summer near the beach.



Waterfront Restaurant and Tavern

## 9. WATERFRONT RESTAURANT AND TAVERN

328 Front Street South, La Crosse

**Food:** Traditional, elevated Americana and upscale tavern fare

**Drinks:** Full bar

**Recommendations:** Waterfront Bloody Mary and hand-muddled mojitos

**Known for:** Legendary service and seasonal rotating menus

**Docking:** Hourly seasonal docks

**Fuel:** No

**Swimsuits and flip-flops allowed:** T-shirt or other cover up required

**Other:** Due to seasonal volume, reservations are recommended, and large parties may not have access to seating immediately.



Pettibone Boat Club

## 10. PETTIBONE BOAT CLUB

600 S. Pettibone Drive, La Crosse

**Food:** Sandwiches, burgers, wraps, fish

**Drinks:** Full bar, including strawberry daiquiris, Miami Vices, pina coladas

**Known for:** Friday night fish dinner; "ginormous" nachos

**Docking:** 8 to 10 slips available for guests

**Fuel:** Yes

**Swimsuits and flip-flops allowed:** Yes

**Our readers say:** "It has great views of the river, and the food and the staff are great. Among my favorites on the menus are the cheese curds and salmon salad." — Toni Smith Jensen, La Crosse



## 11. LAWRENCE LAKE MARINA

8995 Lawrence Lake Lane, Brownsville, MN

**Food:** Wraps, sandwiches, pizza

**Drinks:** Beer, wine and set ups (you bring the booze, they'll supply the mixer; liquor store on site)

**Known for:** Friday night steak fry

**Docking:** Plentiful

**Fuel:** Yes

**Swimsuits and flip-flops allowed:** Yes

**Our readers say:** "We love the atmosphere at Lawrence Lake Marina. I feel like the marina is a hidden gem on Pool 8 on the Mississippi." — Denise Downing, Holmen

Need just one more idea? Lonna Simanovski of Winona has plans for one of her kayak outings this summer: "I've only been there two times, but the Hungry Point Bar and Grill in Trempealeau gets points from me. The service was great and the food was so yummy. We are planning to do a kayak trip and make that our 'afters' spot—not fancy, but the kind of place you can be with friends and laugh a lot."

And isn't that what summer on the river should be? CRW

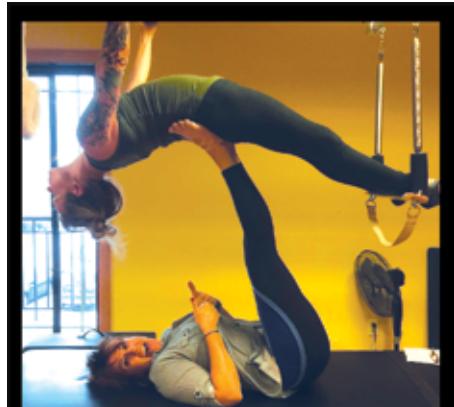
A kayak is Julie Nelson's preferred method of water recreation, and she considers an outdoor patio with good food and craft beer to be the perfect summer night out.



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HANSEN NAMED OUTSTANDING WOMAN IN LEADERSHIP

Andrea Hansen, director of the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse Self-Sufficiency Program since 2011, has earned the 2022 Roberta Zurn Outstanding Woman in Leadership Award. The award was presented this spring by the Women's Fund of Greater La Crosse at the organization's Spring Fling.

The Self-Sufficiency Program is a pre-college program that makes college accessible for single parents and others in the community. In addition to her service with the program, Hansen was cited for her role in stepping forward to address issues of diversity, inclusion, equity, housing and food insecurity throughout the community.

The Roberta Zurn award includes a \$1,000 grant to be split between the honoree and the charity of her choice.



HAWKINS ASH CPAS PROMOTES ACCOUNTING SERVICES DIRECTOR

Hawkins Ash CPAs has promoted Beth Kirchner to become the firm's Accounting Services Director. A Senior Associate in the firm's La Crosse office, Kirchner has worked in public accounting for more than 15 years. She provides clients customized QuickBooks setup, training and support services, and payroll and bookkeeping services.

As Accounting Services Director, Kirchner will be responsible for advancing the firm's accounting services technology, developing payroll and accounting service best practices, training accounting services staff and leading marketing efforts for the firm's accounting services.

Kirchner graduated from Viterbo University with a bachelor's degree in accounting. She is a Certified QuickBooks ProAdvisor.



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Are you feeling stressed out? Are you juggling your career, household and finding time for self-care that isn't just managing to take a shower in peace?

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Wurzel believes that everyone deserves to take time for themselves and to be heard. Visit her website at [www.skywardbehavioralhealth.com](http://www.skywardbehavioralhealth.com) or call 608-860-1585.

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Holmen's Rebecca Seibel, pictured in center with Women's Tree Climbing Workshop co-founder Bear LeVangie, has built a career around arboriculture and training.

## At Home in the Trees

**Arborist and safety trainer Rebecca Seibel combines science and the love of the outdoors.**

BY SHARI HEGLAND | CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

From her vantage point high in the trees, Rebecca Seibel of Holmen sees a world where "women can run around with a chain saw and climb trees," and she wants that to be what young girls with interests like hers see as well.

While her dream world for girls who want to pursue outdoor careers is expressed in casual terms, her "day job" is grounded in doing those things safely.

### FROM CLASSROOM TO FOREST

An Appleton, Wisconsin, native, Seibel says she has always loved nature, and she was headed toward a science career in academia, earning a bachelor's degree at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire before starting graduate school at Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge. But then, the forest called.

"The lab work and the classroom were not for me," she says.

Seibel left the classroom for the forest, joined a tree care company in Minnesota and never looked back. Or down.

Twenty-five years later, she is director of training for North American Training Solutions, where she can be found training arborists, utility workers and others who work in "at-height" careers around the country.

### WOMEN'S TREE CLIMBING WORKSHOP

She also teaches groups of women—budding arborists, ornithologists and scientists who work in the canopy, even women who perform with aerial silks or work in industries such as window washing—how to climb trees as a lead instructor with Women's Tree Climbing Workshop.

Seibel met the co-founders of WTCW, twin sisters Bear LeVangie and Melissa LeVangie Ingersoll, through industry conferences. "When

you're in an industry that doesn't have a lot of women in it, and when even fewer of those women climb, and fewer yet climb daily," Seibel says, "you gravitate toward your tribe who are doing things like you with a common goal."

The common goal that developed into WTCW was to help women who wanted to do the same things Seibel and her colleagues were doing. Today they lead intense weekend workshops around the country. The 2022 schedule includes a half-dozen opportunities from North Carolina to Colorado to Massachusetts, including one August 26-28 at Eagle Bluff Environmental Learning Center near Lanesboro, Minnesota.

### MORE MIND THAN MUSCLE

One of the key messages Seibel hopes women take from the workshop, and that girls take away from watching the WTCW team in action on a CBS "Mission Unstoppable" episode that aired this spring, is that succeeding as an arborist is not a matter of being the biggest or the strongest.

"It's what you have between your ears that makes you a good arborist," she says, pointing out that just in the act of trimming a branch away from a homeowner's skylight, you engage a variety of mathematical and scientific skills: tree biology, the biomechanics of your own body, the physics involved in rigging the block and tackle and the ecology of the entire yard or forest.

"It's absolutely a mix of the science of nature with the beauty of using your body outdoors," she says. CRW

*Writer Shari Hegland probably hasn't climbed a tree in 40 years, but Rebecca Seibel has her thinking it would be an empowering experience.*

SEE WOMEN'S  
TREE CLIMBING  
WORKSHOP IN ACTION

Seibel and her colleagues were filmed here in the Coulee Region in fall 2021 by producers for "Mission Unstoppable," a program designed to reach teenage girls interested in STEM careers. You can find their episode, which aired in mid-May, on the program's YouTube channel at [www.youtube.com/c/CBSUnstoppable](https://www.youtube.com/c/CBSUnstoppable).

# ON THE WINGS OF OWLS

**The International Owl Center auctions art created by Ukrainian children to aid Ukraine.**

BY HEIDI BLANKE | CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS



International Owl Center executive director Karla Bloem presents a barn owl during a public event. Bloem and her colleagues turned owl artwork by Ukrainian children, mined from the organization's archives, into a successful fundraising event for UNICEF this spring. Photo courtesy of Karla Piper, Rochester Post Bulletin.

**W**hen Russia invaded Ukraine in February, many Coulee Region residents felt moved to help—but how? The globally known International Owl Center in Houston, Minnesota, came up with an idea that was equal parts serendipity and goodwill. The Center offered an opportunity to acquire owl-themed art created by Ukrainian children themselves by digging into its own archives. Under the leadership of Executive Director Karla Bloem, the International Owl Center raised more than \$220,000 by auctioning the children's owl artwork, fetching as much as \$8,000 for a single piece, with most bidders located within the Minnesota borders.

## A FLEDGLING EFFORT

In 2003, the International Owl Center created an Owl Festival in order to raise awareness about owls. “Along with it,” Bloem says, “there was a children’s coloring contest; within a couple of years, worldwide coloring entries appeared in the mailbox. It’s just kind of grown and changed over the years from a local coloring contest to a highly competitive international art contest.”

Initially the winners were selected at random, though the art is now judged by professionals. “The awards we gave were things like educational books about owls. As we started to get more foreign entries, it didn’t make sense to be giving books as prizes,” as language differences and shipping costs became obstacles. “Then we did cash prizes, but that was awkward” due to currency rate differences and logistics. “It was complicated,” Bloem says.

A switch was made to fancy certificates instead. “Many of the people who enter are from Eastern Europe and Asia, and for a lot of them, it’s very important to get certificates, stamps, signatures and seals,” Bloem says. “We had a custom wax seal made.”

## CREATING A NEST EGG

The internet hastened the growth of the festival and its art contest. “Kids anywhere in the world looking for an art contest found it. Somebody had posted the contest on a major Russian social media outlet. We were inundated with artwork. This year we got a box of over 400 from China,” Bloem says. Among the thousands of entries sent in over the years, many were drawn by young Ukrainians. All were kept in the archives at the International Owl Center.

“When war broke out in Ukraine, I pulled some out and posted them on social media,” Bloem says. “It touched so many people, and several asked to buy the art. Between staff and volunteers, we went through our thousands of pieces and had 300 from Ukraine. The best way to make this count was to do an online auction.” The impressive \$200,000 sum collected so far proves that Bloem’s instincts were correct.

Not all the artwork was auctioned this spring; the center is considering another sale later in the summer. Funds are donated to UNICEF and earmarked for Ukrainian children.

## TAKING FLIGHT

The International Owl Center is the only owl-exclusive educational facility in the country. Soon it will have a new home in Houston that will give everyone more breathing space, including the owls. The new building will have increased display space and large aviaries. Bloem takes the center’s growth in stride. She laughs, saying, “We never intended to be this big, but the Owl Festival got out of hand.”

For more information on the International Owl Center and the Ukrainian Art Auction, visit [www.internationalowlcenter.org](http://www.internationalowlcenter.org). **CRW**

*Heidi Griminger Blanke is a La Crosse freelance writer who wishes she could turn her head and blink like an owl.*

# Rise to the occasion—in the perfect dress

No matter your style, local boutiques have the dress for you.

BY ELISE WEINBENDER

PHOTOS BY  
JORDANA SNYDER PHOTOGRAPHY  
PHOTOGRAPHED AT THE LA CROSSE CENTER

This summer, be prepared for any occasion with the perfect dress. With the choice to dress it up or dress it down, you'll be ready for every summer soiree.

## Vibrant, Day or Night

Enjoy a summer evening in an eye-catching dress and colorful jewelry from **Willow**. A chic handbag and bright sandals from **Urban Shoetique** complete the dreamy yet fun look.

Deluc dress, \$105; The Lucky Collective earrings, \$20; Token necklace, \$60; Market & King bracelets, \$20; All Black box bag, \$175; Camper multicolor sandals, \$150.  
Modeled by Ashlee Page.



## Easy and Elegant

Be ready for any formal event by pairing heels and a classic dress from **Touch of Class**. Add a handbag and matching scarf to create an enchanting look.

Alquema pocket tank dress; Kingston Mini Tote;  
Inoui Editions Scarf; Deborah Grivas earrings;  
Seriously Haze Kean pump.  
Modeled by Paige Twite.

## Boho Summer

A flowing patterned dress from **Shiny Objects** is the perfect fit for a perfect summer day. Complete the boho look with a sunhat, backpack purse and wedge sandals.

Free People Julianna maxi dress, \$168; Free People WTF Soho Convertible bag, \$128; Braided band straw hat, \$33; necklaces, \$22-\$22.50; earrings, \$22; Kork-Ease Tatum Yellow sandals, \$125. Modeled by Brynne Weinbender.





*Jordana Snyder* J S P  
PHOTOGRAPHY

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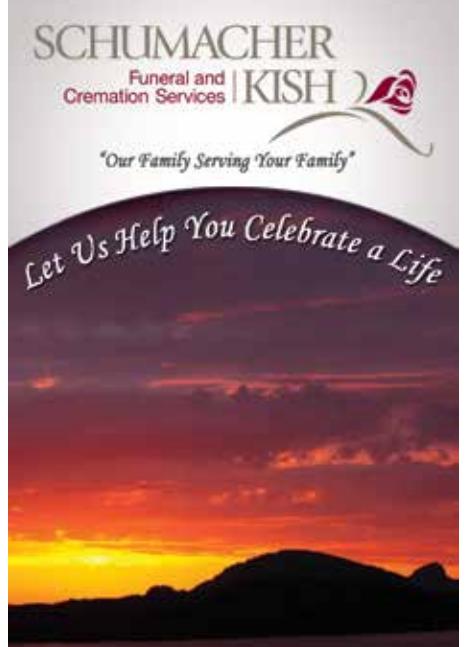


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# RISING ABOVE

**Hot-air balloon festivals from New Mexico to next door offer uplifting views and opportunities.**

BY CHRIS HALL | CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS



I don't know about you, but whenever I see a hot-air balloon rising aloft in the blue skies, I invariably start to hum the tune "Up, Up and Away," a song by Jimmy Webb made famous in 1967 by the group The Fifth Dimension. The cheerful colors and uplifting buoyancy of hot-air balloons can't help but make most people smile.

What is it about these colorful orbs moving silently through the skies that has so many people intrigued with them? They certainly are romantic—their history stretches back to 1783 France, when two brothers demonstrated their invention in front of a crowd of dignitaries. Ten years later, the hot-air balloon made its way to America, and by the time the U.S. Civil War was in full force, the Union had formed the Union Army Balloon Corps, consisting of seven hot-air balloons that did air reconnaissance over battlefields, establishing an integral part of what would become modern logistics strategy.

## TAKING TO THE SKIES

Today, hot-air balloons are used mostly for recreation. Thousands of people each year take part in balloon festivals as pilots, crew members, passengers, spectators or photographers. And the granddaddy festival of them all is the Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta. Held the first week of October, when the southwest air is crisp and cool, the next festival will be October 1-9. For 50 years, this balloon festival has hosted hot-air balloons from all over the world floating above the New Mexican desert over nine days of perfect conditions.

Each day, the Fiesta starts off with Dawn Patrol: a group of specially trained balloon pilots who take off early to test the air density and

prevailing winds. This will ensure that conditions are safe for all the other balloon pilots the rest of the day.

One of the most impressive sights of the morning is the Mass Ascension. This is when the 500-plus balloons in attendance rise at the same time. This makes for an awe-inspiring scene over the arid landscape. Cameras click nonstop, as you can't get a bad photo when the vibrant colors fill the skies. And don't fret about the balloons bumping into each other—each pilot and crew flies at a coordinated time to prevent this. It is orchestrated beautifully after many years of practice.

Balloon Glow is another special event at the Fiesta. It occurs in the evening as dusk falls. The balloons are inflated but tethered to the ground. Spectators can wander around them for an up-close view, often including signs with statistics about each balloon such as how old it is, what country it is from and more.

While at the Fiesta, you don't have to stay grounded. The opportunity for balloon rides is plentiful. Prices start around \$200 per ride. If you prefer to stay on the ground, you have one-third of a mile of food vendors to choose from for a meal. The smell of roasting chiles or fresh tortillas will surely tempt you more than once.

Over 900,000 people attend the Fiesta, making it the largest balloon festival in the United States.

## CLOSER TO HOME

If you can't make it to Albuquerque but still want to experience a hot-air balloon event, we have several right here in the Midwest.



The Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta, pictured here, is one of the nation's largest hot-air balloon events, but there are other opportunities closer to home to experience lift-off within just a few hours' drive in Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa and Illinois.



#### CALEDONIA BALLOON RALLY, CALEDONIA, MINNESOTA

Caledonia, Minnesota, typically hosts an annual balloon rally in mid-October, along with a “glow up” during the Winter Wonderland parade the first weekend in December. During the rally, the goal is to launch the hot-air balloons at least three times, and rides are also available for purchase. Organizers say that while dates are not finalized, readers can follow their Facebook page @Caledoniaballoonnrally to keep updated on this year’s rally.

#### GREAT GALENA BALLOON RACE, GALENA, ILLINOIS

Set in scenic Galena, this event will feature 20 hot-air balloons flying majestically over the river valleys June 17-19. There will also be a car show, an art show, a night glow and balloon rides ([www.greatgalenaballoontarce.com](http://www.greatgalenaballoontarce.com)).

#### TASTE N GLOW BALLOON FESTIVAL, WAUSAU, WISCONSIN

This second annual event, scheduled July 8-10, will feature 30 different balloons over the weekend. It is combined with A Taste of Marathon County, where local restaurants and food trucks come together to highlight their food. The event will include a lumberjack show and a walk-through balloon (<https://tasteandglow.com/>).

#### NATIONAL BALLOON CLASSIC, INDIANOLA, IOWA

If you can't be in Albuquerque, this might be the next best place to be. They take their ballooning seriously in Indianola, Iowa, home of the National Balloon Museum. This year the nine-day hot-air balloon festival is July 29 to August 6. It will feature more than 100 hot-air balloons in addition to the usual celebratory happenings like live music and a parade. One thing this event has that others do not is the U.S. Ballooning Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony. If you want a hot-air balloon ride here, they suggest making your reservation early through their website, as they sell out long before the event starts ([www.nationalballoonclassic.com](http://www.nationalballoonclassic.com)).

#### GLOWING REVIEWS

While writing this article, I spoke with several people who have taken balloon rides, and everyone I talked with gave ballooning a glowing review: It was like nothing else they have ever done. It was quiet, serene; they felt “like a cloud” floating along and seeing the world from a view they never could otherwise.

Jimmy Webb maybe knew something when he was writing his song. In his words:

The world's a nicer place in my beautiful balloon  
It wears a nicer face in my beautiful balloon  
We can sing a song and sail along the silver sky  
For we can fly, we can fly.  
Up, up and away  
My beautiful, my beautiful balloon. CRW

*Writer Chris Hall has a fear of heights, and hot-air ballooning has never been high on her list of must-do adventures, but after researching this story, her stance may be changing.*

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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.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Women Empowering Women (WEW)**, last Wed. of each month, 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.womensalliance lacrosse.com for more information.

**Please contact each group to confirm meeting status and location.**

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



## JUNE

◀ **June 1-30, "Trempealeau Connections"** exhibit by Colleen Shore, Elmaro Winery and Vineyard, N14756 Delaney Rd., Trempealeau, cshoreartwork.blogspot.com.

**June 4**, Live in Viroqua Summer Music Series, 6-9 p.m., Court St., Viroqua.

**June 4**, Rock, Gem, and Mineral Show, Coulee Rock Club, 10 a.m.-4 p.m., Omni Center, Onalaska.

**June 4-5**, Winding Roads Arts Tour, self-guided tour of local artist studios in and around Viroqua, www.viroqua-wisconsin.com.

**June 8**, La Crosse Concert Band, "Royalty," 7 p.m., Riverside Park Band Shell, rain site Logan High School auditorium, www.lacrosseconcertband.org.

**June 9**, Moon Tunes: Tribute to Motown, 5:30-8 p.m., Riverside Park Band Shell, www.moontuneslacrosse.com.

**June 10**, Viroqua Night Market, 6-9 p.m., Eckhart Park, Viroqua, www.viroqua-wisconsin.com.

**June 10-11**, Artspire, 6-10 p.m. Fri., 10 a.m.-9 p.m. Sat., The Pump House, La Crosse, https://artsprise.thepumphouse.org.

◀ **June 10-19, Lizzie: The Musical**, 7:30 p.m. Thurs.-Sat., 2 p.m. Sun., La Crosse Community Theatre, Weber Center for Performing Arts, www.lacrossecommunitytheatre.org.

**June 12**, Bike Maintenance & Cruise, 2-4 p.m., Sinclair Park, 310 E. Broadway St., Winona, register at www.winonaoutdoorcollaborative.com.

**June 12**, Ridge History Park Concert Series, Carol Montag, 2-4 p.m., Ridge History Park, N1794 Korn Clements Rd., Bangor, www.ridgehistorypark.org.

**June 15**, La Crosse Concert Band, "Family Travels," 7 p.m., Riverside Park Band Shell, rain site Logan High School auditorium, www.lacrosseconcertband.org.

**June 16**, Moon Tunes featuring La Crosse Jazz Orchestra, 5:30-8 p.m., Riverside Park Band Shell, www.moontuneslacrosse.com.

**June 17-19**, Rock Climbing at Devil's Lake State Park, Baraboo, WI, register at www.winonaoutdoorcollaborative.com.

**June 18**, Live in Viroqua Summer Music Series, 6-9 p.m., Railroad Ave., Viroqua.

**June 18-July 31**, Great River Shakespeare Festival, Winona State University, www.grsf.org.

**June 21**, Make Music La Crosse, locations throughout downtown La Crosse, www.makemusicday.org/lacrosse.

**June 21**, Summer Solstice Sunset Hike, 7 p.m., Sugarloaf Bluff, Winona, register at www.winonaoutdoorcollaborative.com.

**June 22**, La Crosse Concert Band, "Dancing by the Riverside," 7 p.m., Riverside Park Band Shell, rain site Logan High School auditorium, www.lacrosseconcertband.org.

**June 26**, The Kingston Trio, 5 p.m., Viterbo Fine Arts Center Main Theatre, www.viterbo.edu/fine-arts-center.

**June 26-July 17**, Minnesota Beethoven Festival, St. Mary's University, Winona, www.mnbeethovenfestival.org.

## JULY

**July 2**, Live in Viroqua Summer Music Series, 6-9 p.m., Court St., Viroqua.

**July 6**, La Crosse Concert Band, "A Night at the Movies," 7 p.m., Riverside Park Band Shell, rain site Logan High School auditorium, www.lacrosseconcertband.org.

**July 7**, Moon Tunes: Tapestry of Songs, 5:30-8 p.m., Riverside Park Band Shell, www.moontuneslacrosse.com.

**July 8-9**, Seussical Jr., 7 p.m. Fri., 2 p.m. Sat., La Crosse Community Theatre, Weber Center for Performing Arts, www.lacrossecommunitytheatre.org.

## CALENDAR EVENTS

**July 9**, Bangor Garden Club garden tour, 9 a.m.-2 p.m., begin at First Responder Building, 1702 Commercial St., Bangor.

**July 10**, Ridge History Park Concert Series, Under Paris Skies, 2-4 p.m., Ridge History Park, N1794 Korn Clements Rd., Bangor, www.ridgehistorypark.org.

**July 10**, Jazz in the Park: LJO Goes Hollywood, 7 p.m., Riverside Park Band Shell, La Crosse, rain site Cavalier Theater, La Crosse Jazz Orchestra, www.lacrossejazzorchestra.com.

**July 13**, La Crosse Concert Band, "Great American Road Trip," 7 p.m., Riverside Park Band Shell, rain site Logan High School auditorium, www.lacrosseconcertband.org.

**July 14**, Moon Tunes: Country Night, 5:30-8 p.m., Riverside Park Band Shell, www.moontuneslacrosse.com.

**July 16**, Rail Fair, 10 a.m.-4 p.m., Copeland Park, La Crosse, www.4000foundation.org.

**July 16**, Live in Viroqua Summer Music Series, 6-9 p.m., Railroad Ave., Viroqua.

**July 17**, St. Elias Mediterranean Festival, 12-5 p.m., St. Elias Orthodox Church, 716 Copeland Ave., La Crosse, www.stelias-lacrosse.org.

**July 17**, Jazz in the Park: Salute to Our Nation and Freedom, 7 p.m., Riverside Park Band Shell, La Crosse, rain site Cavalier Theater, La Crosse Jazz Orchestra, www.lacrossejazzorchestra.com.

**July 20**, La Crosse Concert Band, "Dances for New Dads," 7 p.m., Riverside Park Band Shell, rain site Logan High School auditorium, www.lacrosseconcertband.org.

◀ **July 21, Moon Tunes: Classic Rock Night**, 5:30-8 p.m., Riverside Park Band Shell, www.moontuneslacrosse.com.

**July 21**, Family Pizza & Paint Night, 5:30-7 p.m., Franciscan Spirituality Center, register at www.fscenter.org.

**July 22-23**, La Crosse Storytelling Festival, The Pump House, La Crosse, https://artsprise.thepumphouse.org.

**July 22-24**, Rock Climbing at Palisade Head, Beaver Bay Township, MN, register at www.winonaoutdoorcollaborative.com.

**July 22-Aug. 14**, Avenue Q, 7:30 p.m. Thurs.-Sat., 2 p.m. Sun., La Crosse Community Theatre, Weber Center for Performing Arts, www.lacrossecommunitytheatre.org.

**July 24**, Jazz in the Park: The Best of the Best, Highlights from Over 40 Seasons, 7 p.m., Riverside Park Band Shell, La Crosse, rain site Cavalier Theater, La Crosse Jazz Orchestra, www.lacrosejazzorchestra.com.

**July 27**, La Crosse Concert Band, "Alexa, Directions to Riverside Park," 7 p.m., Riverside Park Band Shell, rain site Logan High School auditorium, www.lacrosseconcertband.org.

**July 28**, Moon Tunes: String Band Night, 5:30-8 p.m., Riverside Park Band Shell, www.moontuneslacrosse.com.

**July 29-30**, As You Like It, 7:30 p.m. Fri., 2 p.m. Sat., La Crosse Community Theatre, Weber Center for Performing Arts, www.lacrossecommunitytheatre.org.

◀ **July 30, Art Fair on the Green**, 10 a.m.-5 p.m., Myrick Park, La Crosse, www.artfaironthegreen.org.

**July 31**, Dixieland Jazz Festival, 12-5 p.m., La Canne Park Pavilion, Winona, https://visitwinona.com/directory\_entry/dixieland-jazz-festival/.

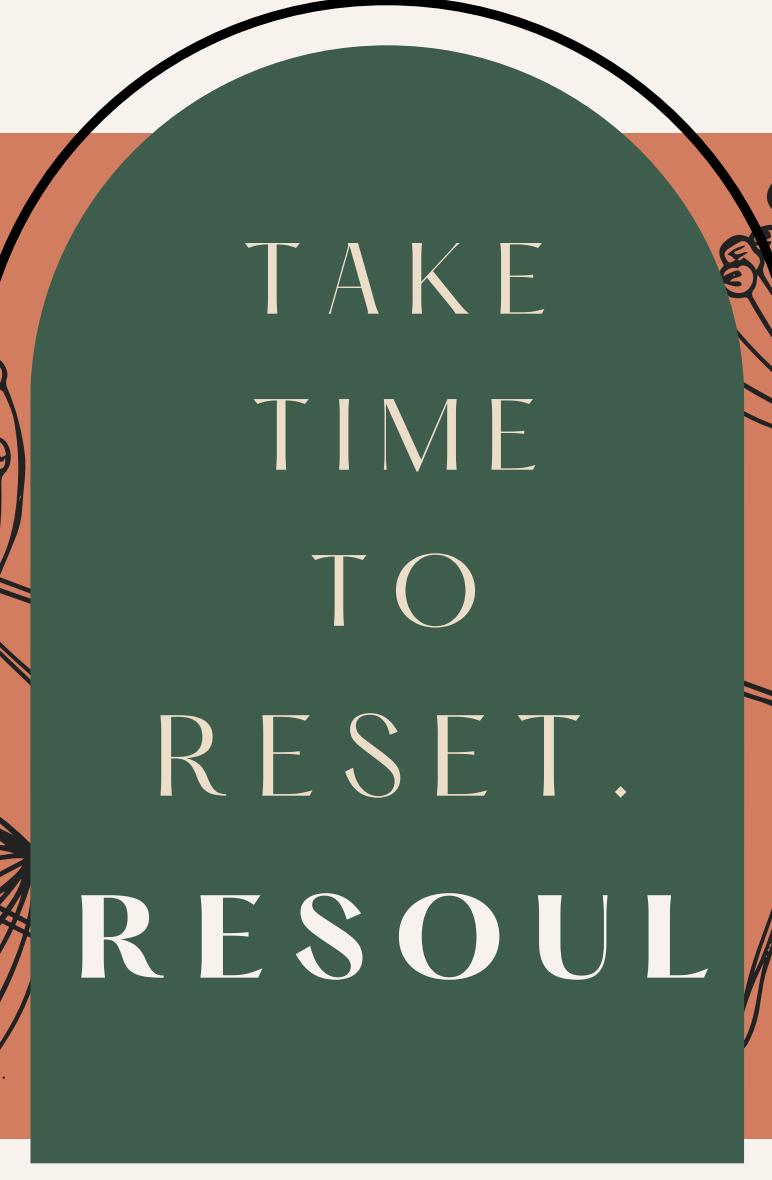
**July 31**, Jazz in the Park: Celebrating 100 Years of Women Jazz Composers 7 p.m., Riverside Park Band Shell, La Crosse, rain site Cavalier Theater, La Crosse Jazz Orchestra, www.lacrosejazzorchestra.com.

## AUGUST

**Aug. 4**, Moon Tunes: World's Largest Jam Session, 5:30-8 p.m., Riverside Park Band Shell, www.moontuneslacrosse.com.

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