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women

AREA HOME AND HEART MAGAZINE

Dreams

**Maomoua Vue
Dreams Big**



**A Dream
Deferred**


**To Sleep,
Perchance
to Dream**

**Dark Sky
Dreaming**

**Super Street
of Dreams**

**The Next
Dream Home**

**INSIDE:
Coulee
Region Living
HOME
SHOW!**

A decorative vertical bar on the left side of the page, featuring a series of white and teal icons on a dark blue background. The icons include stylized human figures, a location pin, a Wi-Fi signal, a heart, a bicycle, a magnifying glass, and a heart with a smiley face.

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Pictured on the cover and above left: Maomoua Vue, registered dietitian/nutritionist, La Crosse County Health Department WIC Program.
Photos by Frontier Photography.

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When I started college in a journalism program years ago, in the back of my mind, I thought maybe, someday, I might work for a magazine. Having grown up on a ranch with a thriving horse program, of course, my target was more *Western Horseman* and *Horse & Rider* than *Better Homes & Gardens* or even *Time*. But as life often does, my focus shifted slightly and the opportunities at graduation put me on the path of newspaper journalism, something that was more accessible and still fed my need to share amazing and essential stories.

Dreams, and life changes, are nothing new to women in the Coulee Region and around the world.

As a young teen anticipating a new life in America, having crossed the Mekong River with her family to escape Vietnam and lived for years in refugee camps, Maomoua Vue's dreams of her new home were based on what little she knew of the United States: Hollywood. Neither Pennsylvania, her first home in America, nor La Crosse offered palm trees, beaches and movie stars, but they did plant a new dream: college and a career.

Today, Vue is an inspiration and a caring heart for other women in similar situations, especially non-English speaking women who receive the services of the Women, Infants and Children Program to help provide their families with the nutrition needed to thrive.

Her caring nature is matched by her determination to meet needs, working both locally and on a statewide level to bring culturally appropriate educational materials to families in the languages they understand best.

Women of all ages from across the Coulee Region have shared with us their dreams:

Entrepreneur Marcie Culver started her business 20 years ago based on her passion for animals and to fit her need to be present for her sons. Today, she has multiple locations and dozens of employees. She successfully found the right team members to handle the "business" end of things so that she can still spend her time on the grooming floor, hands full of fur and heart full of love.

Megan Heacox shares a common situation for many dual-income families: one person must put some career dreams on hold to manage home life. But she is also proof that dreams delayed aren't necessarily dreams denied. Having the right outlook pays off when the time is right to take those big steps.

Carolina Guerrero left the Coulee Region briefly in pursuit of other dreams, but realized her calling was back here in the restaurant industry she had thought she wanted to leave.

Samantha Hosch shows us you're never too young to go after a dream. At 19 she purchased a business and is bringing little girls' imaginations to life with slumber parties that delight kids and make it easy on the parents.

Jane Wood has learned how to make any home her dream home by focusing on things that bring her joy and fit her needs at the moment.

It's hard to dream, of course, if you aren't getting the rest you need. Tomah Health's Kelly Thayer provides advice for getting better sleep and addressing health problems that may interfere. Darker skies could be one solution—a local organization wants everyone to understand the importance of pushing back against light pollution.

For me, 30+ years and many miles later, I've been lucky enough to fall back into that long-ago dream: editing a magazine full of stories about amazing women. With every issue, we are entrusted with sharing their dreams, challenges, successes and lessons with our community of readers, supported by our many advertisers also striving to bring their own dreams to life. Thank you to all of you: readers, advertisers and story subjects, for letting us accompany you on this journey.

Shari

coulee region women

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INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY: ACCELERATE ACTION

The La Crosse Chapter of American Association of University Women invites all women to join them in recognizing International Women's Day with a special event 5-7 p.m.

Tuesday, March 4, at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse Student Union Bluffs Room. This is the 13th year that AAUW La Crosse has hosted an event for International Women's Day.

The free event, focused on the 2025 theme of #AccelerateAction, emphasizes the importance of taking swift and decisive steps to achieve gender equality. The theme calls for increased momentum and urgency in addressing the systemic barriers and biases that women face, both in personal and professional spheres.

The La Crosse event will include networking opportunities plus a panel discussion featuring three women from outside the United States, including Nepal and Turkey. Attendees will be invited to submit their own questions for the panel at the beginning of the event.

Sponsoring organizations include AAUW La Crosse, Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration, League of Women Voters La Crosse, YWCA, Women's Fund of Greater La Crosse, UW-La Crosse International Education and Engagement and Viterbo University.

OVERCOMING CHALLENGES WITH GRIT & GRACE

From the kidnapping of a child to phobias and anxiety, physical trauma and other obstacles, four stories of overcoming hardship and finding hope will be told at the Franciscan Spirituality Center on Saturday, March 29. The annual event, Overcoming Challenges with Grit & Grace, will include keynote speaker Patty Wetterling of St.



Patty Wetterling

Joseph, Minnesota, who will share her nearly 27-year journey of seeking light and hope after her 11-year-old son, Jacob, was kidnapped in 1989. She became and remains a strong advocate for children's safety and a vocal critic of sex offender registry laws. She co-founded the Jacob Wetterling Foundation, a nonprofit organization dedicated to child safety education, and serves on the boards of the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children and the International Centre for Missing & Exploited Children.

Also sharing their stories at the event will be:

Stacey Lantagne of northern Wisconsin, author of a children's book series that focuses on fears, phobias and anxieties, inspired by her personal struggles of coping with these.

Rebecca Kaldunski of Trempealeau, who experienced the grief of losing her aunt and parents, the trauma of a spinal cord injury and the healing power of faith and community as they gave her a new outlook on life and motivated her to embrace her talents as an artist.

Mia Davis of La Crosse, who has transformed obstacles and challenges into sources of passion, demonstrating remarkable resilience in the face of adversity. An 18-year-old graduate of Logan High School's Class of 2024, she is the owner of Mia's Kitchen on Wheels and Catering Service, a co-owner of Lipa Yoga Studio, a board member of La Crosse SOUP and vice president of Black Student Leaders.

Registration for the 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. event is \$75, which includes lunch. Find more details at www.FSCenter.org.



Amanda Goodenough Lynda Drews

WOMEN'S STORIES, WOMEN'S CONCERNS

The local American Association of University Women chapter is gearing up to host the AAUW Wisconsin state convention April 25-26 at Stoney Creek Inn in Onalaska. Registration is open to non-AAUW members, as well as members. The weekend's keynote speakers include Amanda Goodenough, an educator and consultant who works to elevate historically marginalized voices and advance racial justice. She is currently lead executive officer and founder of Goodenough Consulting LLC. Prior to assuming that position, she worked for 17 years as the director of the Research and Resource Center for Campus Climate at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse.

Also speaking will be Lynda Drews of Green Bay, author of *The Maid and the Socialite: The Brave Women Behind Green Bay's Scandalous Minahan Trials*. Her keynote, "Uncovering the Lost Histories of Women," will discuss the true story behind the book.

Other concurrent sessions throughout the weekend will feature topics such as the differently abled, artificial intelligence, money and politics, the Holocaust, reproductive health and local African American history. Anyone interested in registering for the AAUW Wisconsin State Convention should watch the local organization's website and Facebook page for links and details.

REPROECO: FROM NEW YORK TO LA CROSSE

La Crosse actor and writer Diane Breeser is one of six playwrights chosen for ReproEco (www.reprofreedomarts.org), a New York-based theater project, which will be performed in La Crosse as a series of play readings. The collection of short plays explores the intersection of reproductive health and environmental justice. Climate, PFAS and microplastics impact all of us and our future. The free readings include a panel of healthcare and environmental experts.

- 6 p.m. Saturday, March 8 at First Congregational Church
- 5:30 p.m. Thursday, March 20 at Oolala! Consign
- 7 p.m. Saturday, April 5 at The Nature Place
- 7 p.m. Thursday, April 24 at The Pump House

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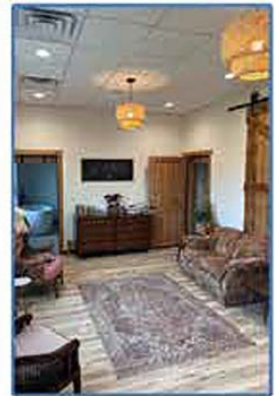
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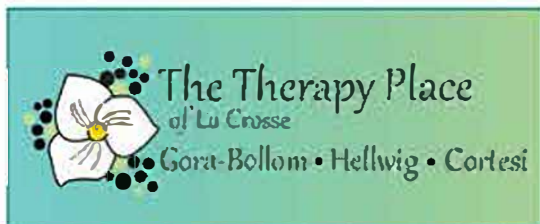


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Dream Big

Maomoua Vue sees beyond personal and cultural challenges to recognize possibilities.

BY MARTHA KEEFFE | PHOTO BY FRONTIER PHOTOGRAPHY

Much can be learned about determination from Maomoua Vue's life.

Born in Laos in 1965, Vue's childhood was spent in the shadows of the Vietnam War. Following the United States' withdrawal from the conflict in 1975, Vue and her family were forced to leave their home due to her father's status with the CIA. Under considerable threat to their lives, they escaped on foot and traveled through mountains, forests and across the Mekong River in hope of finding refuge in Thailand. Upon arriving in Thailand, Vue and her family spent four years in refugee camps, including Vinai. In 1979, they boarded a plane and prepared to leave their past behind. Their destination was Freeport, Pennsylvania—a place where they didn't understand the culture, where they couldn't speak the language and where it was rumored that Americans were giants who ate small Asian people. But despite an uncertain future, Vue was excited to begin this new life “where everything is possible, and people are free.”

LAND OF OPPORTUNITY

“At the camps in Thailand, we heard and saw in movies, the United States is the land of freedom and opportunity—especially for women and girls,” says Vue, who eventually became the first Hmong registered dietitian nutritionist in Wisconsin. “My family was on a plane to be landed at the Pittsburgh International Airport. I looked ... and saw the most wonderful millions and billions of brightly shining lights underneath and thought to myself, this is the land of freedom.”

However, to Vue's surprise, the land of opportunity was covered in cold and snow, not in sunshine and beaches as depicted in the movies. And the “giants,” whom they were taught to fear, did not devour them, but instead warmly welcomed Vue and her family with open arms. “With the kindheartedness of love and support from our sponsors and the Freeport community, we knew we would not be eaten,” says Vue, who fondly recalls being outfitted with coats, hats, boots and mittens upon their arrival. “We will survive in the land of freedom.”

And not only did Vue survive, she thrived. “When I arrived in the United States, I was 14 years old, spoke no English and was placed in the seventh grade,” says Vue. “The first year was challenging, but due to community and sponsors' support, I quickly learned English and the American culture,” she says, noting that though she attended school in Laos (a privilege generally extended only to boys), hopes of continuing her education were cut short in the refugee camps. It was not until she was in high school that she first learned that getting a college degree and having a career was a possibility.



While she is a thoroughly American professional, Maomoua Vue also takes pride in showcasing the intricate hand embroidery and turban that are hallmarks of the Hmong culture.



Left: Maomoua Vue's family came to the United States in 1979 when she was a young teen.

Bottom left: Vue graduated from Viterbo University in 1998, already a mother of three.

Below: Her work to bring culturally appropriate nutritional education to the Hmong community includes creating a video series for the La Crosse County Health Department's WIC program.



CARING AND CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING

Since then, Vue has proven to be an invaluable resource in the field of community health. Despite her own reservations about her abilities, Vue was entrusted with taking her ideas and expanding them from local to state programs.

"The first year of my dietetic career was to develop the Wisconsin State WIC Bilingual Competent Professional Authority Training manual and to conduct classroom training along with Hispanic registered dietitian Betzaida Silva to provide culturally appropriate nutrition/health education to non-English speaking Hmong and Hispanic WIC families," says Vue, whose initial goal was to make an impact in the La Crosse area, though the entire state of Wisconsin would benefit. "I had many sleepless nights. I would wake up in the middle of the night to jot down ideas."

Between those sleepless nights, Vue's resume continued to grow. As a full-time RD, she provided nutrition and breastfeeding education and counseling for WIC families and worked as a case manager for prenatal and Fit Family programs. In recognition of her professional accomplishments, as well as her community involvement, Vue was presented with the 2018 Viterbo Distinguished Community Services Award and was named a YWCA Outstanding Woman of the Year in 2006 and 2024. In 2005, Vue was appointed to chair the La Crosse Hmong New Year Festival, an honor that spoke to Vue's strong character, as leadership roles are typically reserved for men. However, it was from the support of her family (and those who saw her potential) that she found the commitment and drive to succeed.

DREAMING ON

"I try to be a good mom, a wife, a grandmother and a professional career woman," says Vue. From making more time to spend with her family to continuing to develop different platforms to promote nutrition and breastfeeding resources to Hmong families, Vue's future is a clean slate of possibilities and dreams. "I was amazed that if anyone can pass a state board exam during labor delivery, anything is possible," she says. **CRW**

Martha Keffe lives and writes in La Crosse. She is honored to share Maomoua Vue's story of inspiration and determination.



THE BIRTH OF A CAREER

Intrigued by this prospect, Vue dreamed that she would someday attend college. However, life circumstances put Vue's dreams on hold as, at the age of 16, she married and moved to La Crosse. She attended Logan High School and, in 1985, graduated with honors. Following graduation, Vue was hired as a bilingual interpreter for the La Crosse School District, and while simultaneously raising a family, she never abandoned her desire to learn.

"After working for the school district for five years, and with the support of my husband, I took a major risk of pursuing my college education dreams," says Vue, who as a recipient of the WIC program (a federally funded nutrition program for Women, Infants and Children) recognized a need for culturally appropriate program assistance and education. It was during an appointment with her own WIC-appointed registered dietitian (RD), that Vue seriously considered becoming an RD herself.

Gathering all her courage, Vue inquired where she could get a dietetics degree, and the next day, she found herself at Viterbo University. Though she had no idea of the cost or what college entailed, Vue was determined to succeed. In 1998 she graduated cum laude with a bachelor of science degree in community-medical dietetics, and shortly after passing her state board exam (which she did while lying on her back during active labor with her fourth child) Vue was hired by the La Crosse County Health Department WIC program.



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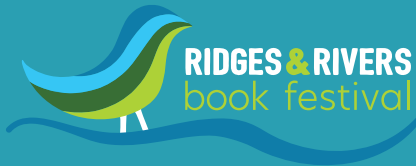
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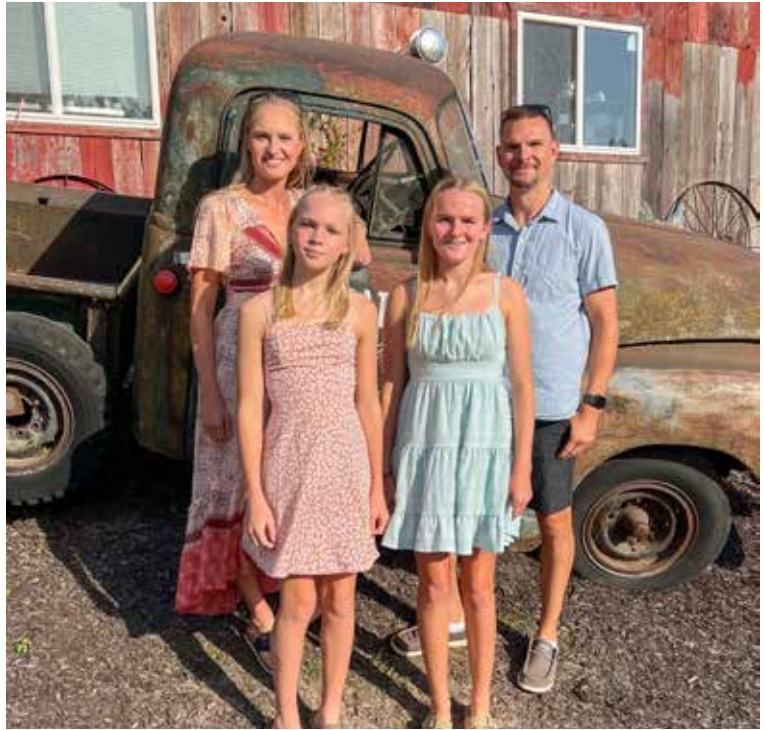
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Megan Heacox avoided career risks for years while her husband, Chet, was in the military and their daughters, now 12 and 15, were young.

DEFERRED BUT NOT DENIED

Megan Heacox and her family flip the script after years of playing it safe to manage the home front.

BY JAN WELLIK | CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

Compromise is a part of life for married working couples. For Megan Heacox of Holmen, that meant playing it safe with her own career and holding down the fort while her husband, Chet, pursued military service.

Since his retirement from 21 years in the military, she has had the flexibility to go after more demanding roles and rapidly advance in her own career; Heacox is now senior manager for strategic business initiatives at US Cellular.

FAMILY NEEDED FLEXIBILITY

While completing her degree at Winona State University, Heacox began working at Sprint in 2007, starting in customer service and moving up to a team lead role managing large accounts. She married Chet the same year, working full time and attending school part time to finish a bachelor of arts in mass communication with a focus on advertising and a minor in Spanish in 2008.

Then, in 2009 her husband was deployed for six months in the Army Reserves, while they had a newborn girl. Shortly after he returned, he was deployed to Iraq for just under one year.

"I had to be super flexible with my schedule," Heacox says. "He was a Warrant Officer and went to specialized schools in Georgia for six months at a time, and we had an infant at home. Someone had to manage the household."

UNCERTAINTY AND WAITING

She chose a career path that was "safe," she says, as their family grew.

"My husband was able to do a ton of travel and complete his career, and mine was put on the back burner," she explains.

"I worried that the time, energy and money I spent on a college degree had been wasted, and when I had the opportunity to pursue a career, it would be too late—I wouldn't have the skills or I wouldn't be good enough," she says. "Many coworkers, career professionals, my husband and trusted friends helped me see the skills I had obtained while playing it safe were valuable and applicable if I looked at them in the right light."

EYE ON THE FUTURE

Trusting that her time to shine would come, Heacox consistently took on "stretch

projects" to challenge herself and build skills that would position her for the series of advancements she would seek out when the time was right. After mass layoffs at Sprint, she took the time to retool and obtained Project Management Professional (PMP) certification. She was then hired as a customer lifecycle manager at US Cellular, and within a year, she was promoted to her current position.

"This helped me work with many types of people, and I discovered that I like to manage projects and teams," she says. "I enjoy promoting high-performing, collaborative teams and helping my team grow professionally," she says. And she knows that growth can come at any time, even if it has been deferred to fit family needs.

"Be fearless and go for it," she advises other women in similar situations. "It's going to be scary. It's going to be uncomfortable. But the life skills you have picked up along the way are all incredibly relevant and mean something, even if it doesn't feel like it right now." **CRW**

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



Marcie Culver first opened her dog grooming business to provide the flexibility she needed when her sons, Nolan Wahoske, left, and Adam Gross, were young.

FROM LABOR OF LOVE TO DREAM COME TRUE

Marcie's Pet Spa has grown from a one-woman West Salem storefront to a multi-location success.

BY NICOLE CZARNOMSKI | CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

It took countless hours, unwavering dedication and an unstoppable passion over nearly 20 years for Marcie Culver to transform her vision for a dog spa into reality beyond her imagination. Marcie's Pet Spa started in West Salem and now has four locations and 70 employees.

A DREAM ROOTED IN FREEDOM

The dream took root when her youngest son was diagnosed with type 1 diabetes. Culver, a single mom of two boys, needed flexibility in her work. At age 31, she taught herself how to groom dogs, opening her first location across the street from her children's school.

"I wanted a lifestyle that allowed me to be present for my boys. Every decision I made was based on my children's needs," says Culver. She prioritized attending football games and other events. Her clients understood if she rescheduled dog grooming appointments to care for her son when he had low blood sugar. "I built this business in a community I loved and supported. In turn, they did the same for me," she says.

She soon outgrew that first West Salem location because clients needed not only grooming, but also a place to board their dogs.

Culver continued to groom and board pets and soon started hiring and training new employees so she could support the growing



Marcie Culver

needs of the community. Each employee became family to Culver. It took approximately three years to train someone to groom a dog. "In that time," she says, "you grow to appreciate and care for the people surrounding you."

A TEAM TO GROW THE DREAM

When she opened her second location in Ripon, Wisconsin, she hired Katie Henriksen as a human resources and business manager. Culver handpicked Henriksen to do the work she couldn't do. As a business owner, there comes a point when you can't do everything. This realization led Culver to also hire JR Schmidt, her boyfriend and financial advisor.

Her businesses flourished, and eventually,

locations in Sparta and Fond du Lac came to fruition. Culver has surrounded herself with a team to help manage the growing business. Her son Nolan Wahoske is now working as general manager. He does a lot behind the scenes. "He was the missing piece to my team, and I am super excited to have him as a business partner. Nolan has a very entrepreneurial spirit," Culver says.

CHALLENGES MAKE THE DREAM THAT MUCH SWEETER

Culver's dream of having a dog spa far exceeds anything she thought possible, but it hasn't been without challenges. On the outside, her passion and bubbly personality are so inviting, but inside, she has a strength and grit you don't often see.

Culver beat ovarian cancer, lost her parents around the same time she started Marcie's Pet Spa at age 31 and had multiple back surgeries. Despite everything, she shows up daily for her customers, staff and team. "I listened as God guided me along this journey, and I trusted my gut. There's no way this dream of mine wasn't going to be successful," she says. **CRW**

Nicole L. Czarnomski is a freelance writer living in southeastern Minnesota. She believes in dreaming without limits.

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DREAMING OF A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP

Not getting the recommended seven to nine hours per night? Tomah Health's Kelly Thayer has tips to help.

BY SARAH ARENDT-BEYER | CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS



Good sleep. You feel better when you have it, and you miss it when you don't. According to Kelly Thayer, an FNP-C advanced practice nurse practitioner at Tomah Health Sleep Services, tossing and turning for one night isn't a big deal. But when that one night turns into a month or two, it may be a sign that it's time to see your health care provider.

Adults should get seven to nine hours of sleep per night. And when you don't, Thayer says, "It's hard on your body. It's hard on your heart. It's hard on your cardiovascular system and your brain. It's just hard on your overall well-being because you feel bad when you don't get enough sleep."

Disordered sleep can happen for several reasons. "Obstructive sleep apnea, narcolepsy, insomnia, restless leg syndrome, to name a few," Thayer says. It's estimated that one in five adults have sleep-disordered breathing, and 80 percent are unaware and go untreated. Often, it's the spouse or partner who says, "Something's up." Snoring is one symptom.

Another is "witnessed apnea," either stopping breathing during sleep or waking up multiple times during the night and not knowing why. Or waking up choking and gasping.

RISK FACTORS

Risk factors for disordered sleep include obesity, hypertension and reflux. Sometimes, people are just born with a narrow airway. Sleep apnea can be hereditary: If your parents have it, you're at a higher risk for it. People who have had a traumatic brain injury or stroke can be at risk for central sleep apnea. This occurs when the brain doesn't tell the body to breathe. "And," says Thayer, "there are a few people that we don't know why they have it ... it can be very complex."

Typically, patients with sleep concerns will first be evaluated for sleep apnea. Sleep apnea is obstructed breathing where either the airway is occluding (closing up or obstructed) or hypopnea is occurring (shallow breathing—when you're not moving enough air). "When that happens," Thayer says, "then your oxygen drops in your blood, and your body is like, 'Hello, wake up and take a breath!' And so then you don't cycle through the sleep stages."



Kelly Thayer, FNP-C, Tomah Health Sleep Services

TREATMENT

CPAP (continuous positive airway pressure) is the most common treatment for adults with sleep apnea. The patient will wear a CPAP device while they're sleeping. It's a mask-like structure that plugs into an electrical outlet and delivers pressure to force air into the body. It also has a water chamber to humidify the air. "People sometimes come in and think, oh my gosh, this is going to be awful," Thayer says, "but there's so many different types of masks now that you can have one that's just under your nose, or under your nose and over your face, or over your full face." What works for each individual may be different. There are hundreds of options, so Thayer advises figuring out which one works for you.



GOOD SLEEP HYGIENE

To improve your sleep, Thayer recommends good sleep hygiene practices like staying off your electronic devices for at least an hour before bedtime, not drinking a lot of caffeine after noon, sticking to a set bedtime and wake-up schedule and keeping your bedroom cool. If you're overweight, losing weight may also help. "We see some people who lose a significant amount of weight, and then their sleep apnea either improves or they actually don't have to be treated any longer," Thayer notes. If you or a loved one are experiencing sleep issues, talk with your health care provider.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

One thing that surprised Thayer after she began working in the Sleep Center is how many people are at risk of sleep apnea and how much it affects them. That's why she finds the work so rewarding. "I think that's the best part of it," she says, "because people just feel so much better. We've had a couple of patients come in and say, 'This is amazing. I feel great.'" Two months after receiving his CPAP device, one patient came in for a follow-up appointment and joked, "You're not taking this away from me!" because he felt so much better using it.

"That's why you go into medicine," Thayer says, "to make a difference in people's lives." **CRW**

Sarah Arendt-Beyer is a writer in La Crosse.



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5 pm Building & Remodeling Pro Panel + Q&A

6 pm Design Your Next Home
- Avalon Design Group

7 pm How to Use Habitat for Humanity's ReClaim
- Habitat for Humanity of the Greater La Crosse Region

SATURDAY, MARCH 29

10:45 am Building & Remodeling Pro Panel + Q&A

11:45 am Construction Loan Process Step-by-Step
- Altra Federal Credit Union

12:45 pm Financing Home Renovations with Solar Solutions
- Ethos Green Power Co-op

1:45 pm What to Do with Your Waste and Recycling
- Hilltopper Refuse & Recycling

2:45 pm How to PAY for Your New Construction Home
- Associated Bank

SUNDAY, MARCH 30

10:30 am Create a Thriving Living/Working Indoor Space
- ActivePure Technologies

11:30 am Build with Insulated Concrete Forms (ICF)
- Balduzzi's

12:30 pm Home Buying Seminar
- Gerrard-Hoeschler, Realtors

1:30 pm Radon Awareness and Safety
- La Crosse County Health Department



Seminar Details
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DOUGLAS BILLINGS

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On behalf of the La Crosse Area Builders Association, it is my distinct pleasure to welcome you to the 2025 La Crosse Area Builders Association Home Show! We are delighted to have you join us for this vibrant event dedicated to celebrating all things home and lifestyle.

Prepare to be inspired as we showcase the latest innovations, trends, products and services in home improvement, interior design, landscaping and beyond. Whether you're an experienced homeowner, a first-time buyer or simply someone passionate about crafting a space that reflects your personality, this event offers something special for everyone.

Explore a wide array of exhibitor booths featuring high-quality products and services to elevate your home. Experience hands-on demonstrations, interactive displays and engaging activities that will ignite your creativity. And, of course, connect with fellow homeowners, industry professionals and enthusiasts who share your passion for creating beautiful and functional living spaces.

If you're feeling hungry, be sure to visit the delicious variety of food trucks on site, offering something for every craving. And don't forget to check out our informative seminars, where industry experts will share valuable insights and tips to inspire your next project.

Be sure to check out our schedule of events to make the most of your time:

- Friday, March 28, 4-8 p.m.: Date Night
- Saturday, March 29, 10 a.m.-4 p.m.: Community Day
- Sunday, March 30, 10 a.m.-3 p.m.: Family Day

We are committed to making your Home Show experience exceptional. Should you have any questions or require assistance, our friendly staff and volunteers are here to help.

Thank you for being part of this exciting event. We look forward to seeing you at the LABA Home Show and hope you leave inspired, energized and brimming with ideas to transform your living spaces.

Welcome to the world of possibilities!

Douglas Billings

Home Show Committee Chair

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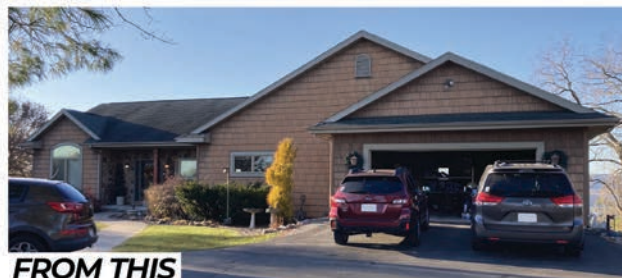
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5 WAYS TO JUMP-START YOUR HOME REMODEL

Is a home refresh in your 2025 plans? Here's how to get started.

After years in your home, you may be ready to change the look and feel of your house. Perhaps you are ready to upgrade your kitchen or add more space. Whatever the impetus, the thought crosses your mind: Maybe it's time to start a home remodel. If you are having trouble figuring out how to approach your remodel, consider the following five simple steps to jump-start the process.

STEP 1: Gather Ideas

The first step is to develop an idea of what you want to do with your home remodel. Next, write a prioritized list of your needs and wants. There are many sources to find design ideas for your home remodeling project. Attend the LABA Home Show, look at magazines and websites and collect pictures of homes or remodeling projects you like. The more clearly you can envision the project and describe it on paper, the better prepared you'll be in making your decision.

STEP 2: Think About How You Utilize Your Space

Think about traffic patterns, furniture size and placement, colors, lighting and how you expect to use the remodeled space. If your decision to remodel involves creating better access for someone with limited mobility, you may consider contacting a Certified Aging-in-Place Specialist.

STEP 3: Consider Home Energy Efficiency

You may want to improve home efficiency and hire a professional remodeler for green home remodeling. These projects include replacing windows and doors, upgrading heating and cooling systems, adding insulation and other updates to make the home more energy efficient, easier to maintain and more comfortable.

STEP 4: Think About Your Budget

Figure out how much money you have to spend on the home remodeling job, furnishings, landscaping or any other cost you might incur. There are several remodeling cost calculators online to give you a general idea of how much your home improvement may be.

STEP 5: Find a Qualified Professional

Whether your remodeling project is large or small, it's important to carefully think through your options and talk to several remodelers before you get started. Hiring a professional remodeler is the best way to ensure your project's success. These remodelers are dedicated to maintaining the highest integrity and standards in the industry.

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Top 3 Color Trends for 2025

Pick your palette for a fresh, modern home.

Are the white walls of your new home begging for some personality? Or is your room in need of an update? No matter the circumstance, choosing a wall color is not an easy feat. Sifting through hundreds of swatches can be overwhelming. Thankfully, the top paint manufacturers have released their top color picks for the year to help you narrow your selection. So what's in store for 2025? It's looking like purples, browns and beach house colors are going to make their marks.

Purples

Purple is often considered an accent color, but some are daring enough to use it for an entire wall or room.

Purple Basil from Glidden is a blend of warmth and energy, inviting you to embrace the transformative power of color.

Cinnamon Slate by Benjamin Moore is a delicate mix of heathered plum and velvety brown.

Violet by Minwax creates eclectic interiors and unique pieces.

Rumors from Behr is a luxurious ruby red so deep it borders on purple, adding warmth and rich allure.

Browns

Some play it safe with earth tones by opting for beige, but even neutrals can be bold.

Mocha Mousse by Pantone is a warming brown hue imbued with richness.

Raku by C2 is an earthy, burnt brownish red with oxidized undertones that infuses spaces with drama and intimacy.

Caramelized by Dunn Edwards is a warm terracotta brown with soft, earthy tones reminiscent of sunbaked clay.

Beachy Hues

There's a reason people love beach houses; the blues and greens offer freshness and tranquility.

Quietude by HGTV Home by Sherwin-Williams is a soft sage with a whisper of blue influence, and an emerging color for enduring design.

Encore by Valspar is an anchoring shade that embodies constancy and confidence to let you create a joyful respite.

Mapped Blue by Dutch Boy is versatile medium-tone blue with subtle yellow undertones that provides a dependable foundation.

Lastly, Sherwin-Williams opted for a curated collection of colors for its "2025 Color Capsule of the Year" that fits nicely with trends above, featuring both shades of brown—such as **Grounded** and **Clove**—and a light, muted shade of purple called **Mauve Finery**.

Need help deciding what works best for your space? Attend the Home Show, contact the La Crosse Area Builders Association at 608-781-5242 or info@labaonline.com, or visit LABA on the web at www.labaonline.com to find designers and paint specialists who can guide you.

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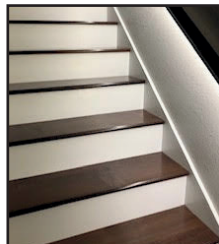
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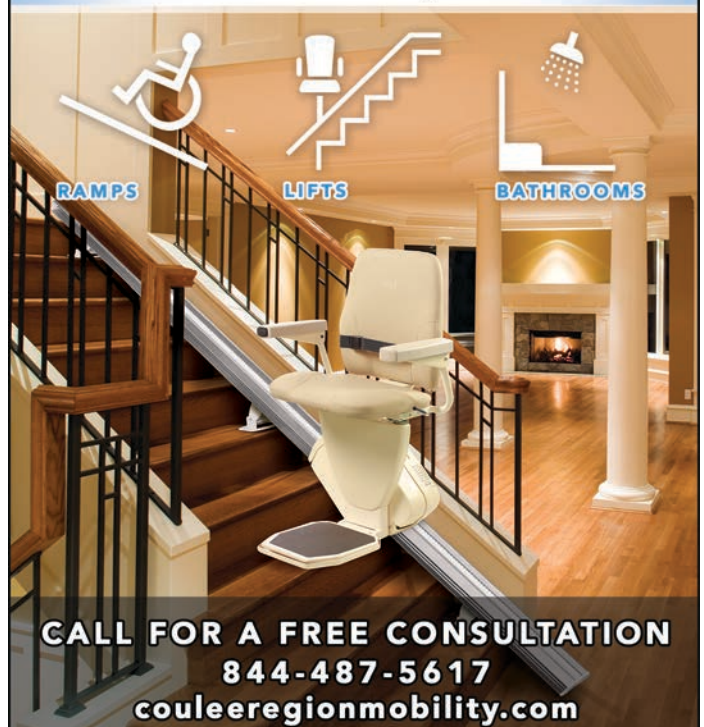
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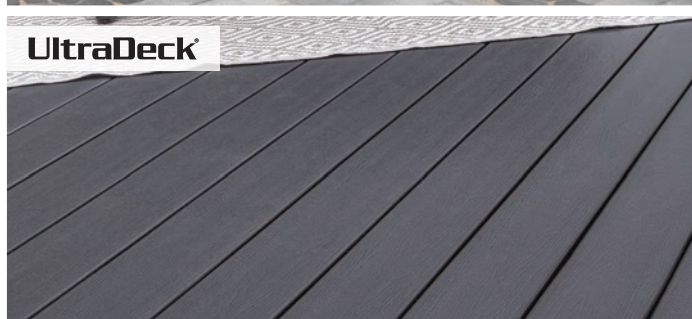
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A LIFE WELL DESIGNED

Jane Wood masters the art of creating dreamy living spaces that suit her style.

BY MICHELLE BYOM | PHOTOS BY DIANE RAAUM PHOTO



A bright, cozy kitchen greets guests and displays beloved art and artifacts in Jane Wood's home.

"Home is the nicest word there is." – Laura Ingalls Wilder.

What does home mean to you? An apartment in the city, a condominium on the golf course, a house in the suburbs, a traveling recreational vehicle or a cabin in the woods? As we move through different life stages, our needs and dreams of the perfect style, size, functionality and location of our home might change, too.



Jane Wood is at home in a new space graced by her keen eye for design.

Just ask Jane Wood, who has actually lived in a castle. Through the years her homes have included houses both modest and grand, quirky and classic, all beautifully designed and decorated. Her current home, a newly constructed townhome in the Historic District of La Crosse, is the perfect fit for her life today.

Though perhaps not as ornate as her castle abode, this multi-level twin home, with approximately 2,700 finished square feet, boasts quality craftsmanship and a functional floor plan. It is close to area businesses and well suited for gathering with family and friends while offering separate spaces for quiet moments. The bright, airy main floor with an open kitchen showcases cabinetry and tile Wood selected

during the building process: white cabinets and light paint for most walls and ceilings, providing a nice contrast to the dark wood flooring and complementing her traditional décor.

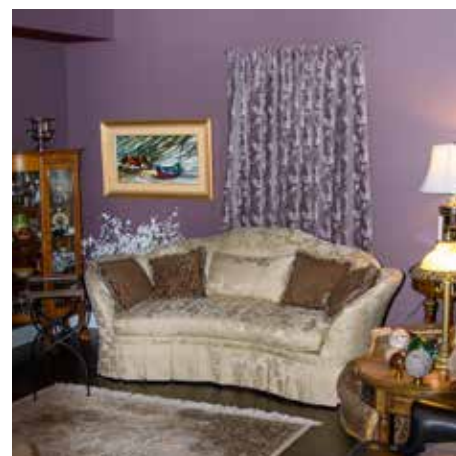
As Wood leads the way to the lower level, the colors intensify to deep shades of plum on both walls and ceiling. She described her vision in creating a space similar to a speakeasy, quiet places hidden from sight during the Prohibition where patrons imbibed alcohol unnoticed. Wood worked with Bob Schreier from International Furniture to select the colors for the speakeasy, a rich, removed space with a vibe of its own. Long velvet curtains add to its ambience and create separation between a storage area and a guest bedroom.

A HISTORY OF RENOVATION

Wood's keen eye for design was honed over years of practice in a number of homes. She and her late husband, Grant Wood, loved to buy and build beautiful homes. They lived for a time on the Hazeltine Golf Course in Minnetonka, Minnesota, while Grant was an executive with Colgate Palmolive, and they had two homes



Every room in Wood's home—the traditional living area, the dining area and the “speakeasy” in the lower level—tells a story of good design and details that feel right at home no matter where she lives.



on the Whitefish Chain of Lakes in northern Minnesota. “We remodeled one, and in the other, we tore everything off but the basement, and built a shingle-style home,” Wood says. They lived in homes in Tucson, Arizona, and near Hilton Head, South Carolina. They even lived in Puerto Rico for two years, when Grant’s work took them there.

“Grant and I never lived in a house longer than seven years,” Wood explains. She pauses to check off the number of homes that they lived in during their 37 years together, stopping when she reaches 12. “Sometimes we redecorated, and other times we made structural changes.”

The Woods were ready for a challenge two decades ago when they took on a historic home renovation project with the Castle on Cass, at 1419 Cass Street in La Crosse. The Woods returned the large structure with its Romanesque influence to a single-family home and lived there from 2006 to 2012. After Grant passed away, Wood downsized to nearby 16th and Cass Streets, where she renovated again. In this home, she doubled the size of the kitchen, added two bathrooms and finished the basement.

Other building adventures included building a home made from shipping containers in Colorado. “I was at the sports show at the La Crosse Center,” Wood explains. “I met a vendor from the Minneapolis area who made garden and hunting cabins out of shipping containers. I challenged him to design a small house, and he did,” she says. With plans in hand, Wood joined her niece in Colorado, purchased several acres in

Crestone, and built a charming 960-square-foot home in farmhouse French style.

She and her current husband, Dave Lee, sold the Colorado home in 2023 and were looking for another home in La Crosse when they learned of the twin home project, spearheaded by Jay Lokken, Ken Riley and Dick Record and built by Wieser Brothers General Contractor, Inc. Given the location and the team behind the project, Wood knew this would be her next dream home.

A STORY OF GOOD DESIGN

Although the structure of her current home is new, the artwork, furniture and lighting designs bring to life Wood’s stories of acquiring special treasures from art auctions, galleries and other countries. Much of the furniture and fixtures have been curated from her other homes, telling a story of a life well designed. After all, how many people can say that they lived in a castle?

The sleek curved couch from the castle’s front parlor is now a perfect fit and style for the speakeasy. In the main living area, the regal chairs that beckon guests to sit and visit are from her South Carolina home. The library looking onto King Street is filled with collections of books that graced other elegant libraries.

A magnificent crystal chandelier fills the dining room with its beauty and shimmering light. “The chandelier came from the 16th and Cass Street house,” Wood explains. She also points out a richly colored rug at the foot of the stairs, a Turkish rug she purchased when she and Grant traveled there.

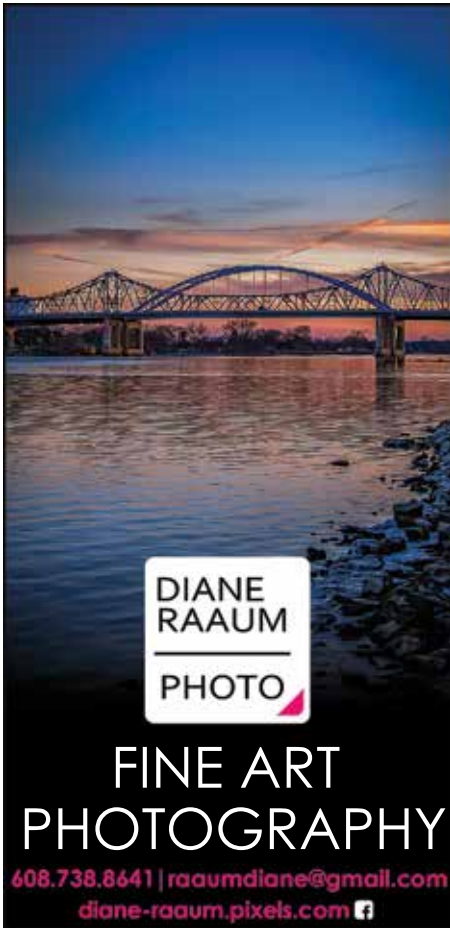
Other pieces tell stories old and new. The 1939 hope chest at the foot of her bed belonged to Wood’s mother. In another bedroom, a beautiful storage trunk she and Dave found at Habitat for Humanity was the perfect complement to a colorful bed cover in a red and blue bird print. “We picked it up in Mulege, Mexico, knowing it would be perfect for this room,” Wood says.

HOME IS WHERE YOUR HEART IS

Wood offers advice that has served her well in decorating spaces that bring joy: “Use what you have, if you love it.” And Wood’s home is full of pieces that reflect love.


An original painting of the Statue of Liberty signifies the story of Wood’s father, Axel Lindborg, who came to America from Sweden in 1920 at the age of 18 with his sister and nephews. The framed watercolor paintings of dear family pets were painted by Dave’s talented granddaughter, Devon Lee. Wood’s home, the perfect size and space for her life now, is filled with the things she loves, and her heart is full. **CRW**

Michelle Byom is a writer based in Holmen.



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Carolina Guerrero and her brother, Luis, own and operate two Super Street Tacos locations: Onalaska and La Crosse.

SUPER STREET OF DREAMS

Carolina Guerrero's road brings her back to family and the restaurant business.

BY DIANE BREESER | CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

Carolina Guerrero grew up working at her parents' restaurant, Tequila's, in Onalaska. In fact, it was such a part of the family that there was little time for anything else. But certainly, there was more to life than food ... right?

A BRIEF DETOUR

As a teenager, Guerrero waited on tables rather than participating in school-related activities. While her friends understood that being part of a family business took up much of her time, Guerrero explained it wasn't just expected of her. Both of her parents are from Mexico, where families are very close. "It's a cultural thing for us (to work together)," she says proudly.

After graduating from Onalaska High School in 2017, Carolina longed for a "normal," 9-to-5 job away from the restaurant business. The California native moved back to the Golden State in search of life beyond tables and tips. She attended Chaffey Community College in Rancho Cucamonga, studying psychology and cinema. But soon a voice from home was calling: It was her brother, Luis.

Back in Wisconsin, Luis would phone his younger sister to tell her about the new taco shop he was starting up in Black River Falls. Gifted with restaurant savvy, Luis designed the menu on Mexican street vendor food—the homemade, fresh and creative items sold out of wagons or trailers. Guerrero had to admit that it sounded intriguing.

MAKING A U-TURN

Guerrero describes Luis as her best friend; the two are very close despite a five-year age gap. Luis' gentle persuasion eventually worked, and Guerrero was on her way back to the thing she tried to escape: the business of food. With the help of family, Carolina and Luis launched their first Super Street Tacos in 2021.

Covid was still impacting society, and there were challenges, but they discovered how

to hire employees, make schedules and order supplies. They learned what worked and what didn't. The sibling business partners adjusted their menu and prepared to start a second taco shop.

It was 2022 when another Super Street Tacos opened—in La Crosse at 1800 State Street. Near a well-traveled intersection by the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse campus and surrounding neighborhoods, this location brought traffic of all kinds. With Covid in the rearview mirror and students back in class, business was as hot as fresh jalapeno cheese curds (yes, you'll find those on the Super Street Tacos menu).

MAPPING THE ROUTE AND HITTING THE GAS

Super Street Tacos uses all fresh ingredients, and each order is made from scratch. Family recipes are the basis of all items on the menu. "We stick to what we know," Guerrero says.

The menu is both classic and diverse, offering the usual tacos, burritos, nachos and quesadillas. But with more unique



choices like pastor (pork marinated with pineapple), camaron (shrimp), horchatas (sweet drink made from rice) and elote (jazzed-up fresh sweet corn; see recipe), Super Street Tacos is not your ordinary taco shop.

Among the most popular menu items at Super Street Tacos are:

- **California Burrito:** Choice of meat (chicken, beef, fish, pork or shrimp), lettuce, diced potatoes, beans, rice, guacamole, sour cream and pico de gallo wrapped in a 12-inch tortilla (a favorite of the UW-La Crosse football players, post-practice).
- **Tortas:** Your choice of meat plus lettuce, tomato, cheese, avocado and sour cream on a toasted bun (described as a “Mexican sub sandwich”).
- **Super Fries:** French-fried potatoes dressed in cheese, pico de gallo, sour cream, jalapenos and guacamole with your choice of meat.
- **Elote:** The aforementioned Mexican “street corn” served either on the cob or in a dish. A creamy and spicy side dish, snack and comfort food.

Guerrero describes her mother as a “top chef” and a major influence. She and Luis brought in other relatives and friends, who grew up on family farms in Mexico, to work at the restaurant.

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Though not everyone at Super Street Tacos is a member of the Guerrero family, she likes to think of all her employees as *la familia*. She strives to create a nurturing team environment so all who work there feel confident, welcome and safe.

"Sometimes it's hard to be the boss," she admits, as she works closely with the employees, many of whom are her age. Other challenges as a business owner include doing weekly inventory ("the most hectic day") and taking vacation time.

SLOWING DOWN

To relax, Guerrero enjoys getting up early to swim laps at the Onalaska YMCA. "There are no other people my age there at 5 a.m.," she laughs. But that's a plus for the 25-year-old, who loves chatting with the older generations, too. "They have wisdom and experiences," she notes, and she always learns something new from them.

Despite success at the newer La Crosse location, Luis and Carolina Guerrero closed the original shop in Black River Falls. They both discovered that balancing their schedules became difficult, and the demographics of the location was not a recipe for success. Still, Guerrero refers to it as "a great learning experience," and enjoyed the customers they served.

AROUND THE BEND

Much like Dorothy in the movie *The Wizard of Oz*, Guerrero found out that there certainly is no place like home. Being a business owner in this area is more special to her; or, as she puts it, the Coulee Region "is where it's at." Super Street Tacos opened an Onalaska location on Sand Lake Road in 2023. Creating fresh and unique Mexican fast food is a niche that she and Luis continue to perfect.

Refining the art of operating multiple locations again, Guerrero's dream is to eventually own more taco shops across the upper Midwest, adding new items to the menu. Her perspective on being a restaurateur is that "it is demanding but not hard. When you really like what you are doing, when you have a passion for it, it's not like working at all."

THE REAL KEYS TO SUCCESS

Guerrero's philosophy to making Super Street Tacos a success goes deeper than a bowl of pico de gallo. Although the quality of the food is important, she says that love is a vital ingredient in everything. She also takes great care in greeting customers with a smile; you never know what is happening in the lives of others when they walk through the door. Regular customers become part of the Super Street Tacos family.

Though the La Crosse area is her home, Guerrero sees the bigger picture of creating community and helping humanity by way of the kitchen. The onetime restaurant rebel now wholeheartedly declares, "Food is the key to this world."



ELOTE, AND HOW TO MAKE IT

(sort of)

Elote is a spicy and creamy "street corn" popular throughout Mexico and the United States.

In its original form, a fresh ear of corn is boiled or grilled, then dressed with mayonnaise and/or sour cream, chili powder and cotija cheese (powdered or flaked), then finished with a squeeze of lime and a dash of cilantro. Though not a glamorous way to eat corn, it's arguably one of the tastiest.

There is a more elegant way to consume elote, however—in a dish or *en vaso*. The corn is cut off the cob after cooking, then slathered with all the dressings.

The Super Street Tacos menu lists both versions: "whole on a stick or shaved in a cup."

While personal tastes may vary the recipe a bit, Carolina Guerrero, co-owner of Super Street Tacos (both La Crosse and Onalaska locations), offers a few suggestions for making elote.

"I've heard some recipes use canned corn, but that is an absolute crime!" Guerrero proclaims. Fresh sweet corn is the basis for this dish, after all. She also says that one "secret" to their version is using lime-infused mayonnaise. (Having never heard of such a thing, and trying to overcome my fear of this condiment, a bit of research showed me that Hellman's and McCormick both make it.)

There are several recipes for elote online with varying measurements and some differing ingredients. You can spend time looking up several variations and experimenting with just the right blend.

But I suggest going to Super Street Tacos and getting it freshly made-to-order, with love and served with a smile. **CRW**

Diane Breeser is a local actor and writer who had never heard of elote until writing this article. Overcoming her fear of mayonnaise, Diane now claims elote is magical. Contact her at dbreesr@gmail.com.

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Amanda Evenson has taught automotive technology at Minnesota State College Southeast in Winona since 2019, part of a slowly growing number of women in the industry.

DRIVEN TO SUCCEED

Amanda Evenson's dreams take her under the hood and into the classroom.

BY ANASTASIA PENCHI | CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

Her dad taught her that she was capable of doing anything she dreamed of doing, so Amanda Evenson decided to take automotive repair classes after graduating high school in 2006.

Today she is an automotive technology instructor at Minnesota State College Southeast in Winona, where she once graduated from the program herself. In between those years, she worked for various automotive repair shops (dealerships as well as independently owned) and continually took college classes, mainly online, to earn her associate and then bachelor's degrees.

And if she had a dime for every time someone asks her why she wrenches on cars, she would be rich.

A CAN-DO ATTITUDE

"I was raised to be an independent person," Evenson says. "It was something we were taught as we grew up."

Evenson grew up on a farm in Lewiston, Minnesota, and was hired at the college to teach in fall 2019. She says some of the challenges today's students face are a lack of support for careers in the trades and the fact many households no longer even have auto repair tools on hand.

"We don't do stuff for ourselves anymore," she says.

But the statistics for female auto workers are improving. When she started teaching about five years ago, more than half of U.S. drivers were women, but only 3 percent of auto service technicians and mechanics were

female, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics in 2018.

That statistic increased to 12 percent in 2023.

"Every year we get two, maybe three (women) who start," Evenson says. "I think we are having more success with them completing the program."

COORDINATION AND PLANNING

Evenson says working on vehicles is less about having big muscles and more about coordination and practice. Good mechanics plan a path and use the right equipment. Every week they will be stronger, more coordinated.

"I know how to use my body," she says. "I know how to stand."

Evenson and her husband, who is also in auto repair, also own an automotive repair shop near their home in Ridgeway, Minnesota. They met while working together in the industry.

Evenson says she realized how much she enjoyed teaching while working as a lab assistant at Southeast. She was named Outstanding Educator of the Year by the Minnesota State Transportation Center of Excellence in 2021.

She now works with a second automotive technology instructor since the program has grown. He joined in fall 2023.

LIFELONG SKILLS

Evenson says studying automotive repair is a good move for anyone who might have interest as it helps build many skills that can be applied to other hands-on repairs.

"It builds lifelong skills even if you don't go into automotive repair," she says. "I don't think anybody should be afraid to do it or be intimidated." **CRW**

Anastasia Penchi is ashamed to admit she doesn't know much about cars, but she loves the idea of more female auto techs. She can be reached at callmeloislane@hotmail.com.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS



Rachel Burrow

HAWKINS ASH NAMES BURROW PARTNER

Hawkins Ash CPAs is excited to announce the promotion of Rachel Burrow, CPA, to Partner. Burrow has been with the firm since 2018 and specializes in audit services for a broad range of clients, including nonprofits, private schools and employee benefit plans. Based in the La Crosse office, she has demonstrated a commitment to providing outstanding service while fostering long-term relationships with clients and the local community. Managing Partner Abe Leis and La Crosse office Partner-in-Charge Brittany Leonard are both confident in Burrow's leadership and contributions to the firm's growth.



GRANTS FUND PERINATAL, POSTPARTUM YOGA

The Motherhood Collective has received grant funding from Gundersen Health System through the UW School of Medicine and Public Health to improve maternal and infant health and health equity. They are offering two grant-funded class series free to the public.

The first 4-week series is a Perinatal Yoga series, open to both pregnant and postpartum individuals, Mondays at noon, February 3 to 24. The second 4-week class is a Postpartum Yoga + Strength series Mondays and Wednesdays at noon, March 24 to April 14. By removing the barrier of cost, individuals of all backgrounds and abilities are empowered to support their physical and mental health in the perinatal period. Register at www.themotherhoodcollectivelax.com.



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PARTY ALL NIGHT

Samantha Hosch brings magic to kids' overnight events with Slumber Party Solutions.

BY JULIE NELSON | CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS



Samantha Hosch and two of her former charges as a part-time nanny showcase the dreamscape she creates for children's events through her business, Slumber Party Solutions.

Samantha Hosch was one of those kids who loved draping sheets and blankets over the living room furniture to create a cozy "fort" where she would play for the rest of the day. Perhaps it's no wonder that, as an adult, she jumped at the chance to buy a business creating indoor forts for kids' slumber parties.

Hosch always wanted to be an entrepreneur and a business owner. Now, at the impressive age of 19, she is making her dreams come true. She saw the slumber party business on Facebook Marketplace in March 2024 and immediately knew it was for her. She invested her own money and launched her career.

MORE THAN A "BED-IN-A-BAG"

As the sole employee of Slumber Party Solutions, Hosch arrives on the appointed day carrying A-framed tents, foam mattresses, gift bags and extra decor to fit a theme. She sets up (and later takes down) a magical encampment, accommodating a minimum of four and maximum of 12 kids. The host chooses the theme from possibilities such as rainbow, cinema, woodlands and the highly popular Taylor Swift.

Once Hosch rings the doorbell, she'll set up the slumber party in about 30 minutes. She admits hauling in the mattresses, especially, is a workout, but she says the effort is worth it. "I always saw myself as working hard so I could own my own business. This job gives me a lot of freedom and I get to be creative, which is perfect for me."

NO STRANGER TO FUN

When Hosch says, "This work is in my blood," she isn't kidding. Her parents are Paul and Debbie Hosch, the founders of The Big Event Company (better known as The Big E). Sam spent many childhood weekends tagging along as her parents set up inflatables for parties and events. Her parents are thrilled and supportive of her career choice. They allow her to store equipment in the family basement, assist her with managing the business end of the enterprise and, best of all, brainstorm with her on themes and other ideas to expand the business.

Already Slumber Party Solutions has added a luxury picnic setup for grown-ups, complete with pillows, a small table, a charcuterie board and a handful of question

cards to spark conversation. Hosch says a popular picnic spot is along the quarry trails, where picnickers can enjoy a perfect view of the sunset. Hosch brings all the supplies up the hill in a wagon and then sets up her hammock a comfortable distance away to be ready to tote everything back down when the picnic is over.

The picnic setup also works well for indoor events, and Hosch has provided the setting for girls' night gatherings such as painting, crafting or a game night.

Next in her sights is creating pieces that can be used at wedding receptions. She envisions backdrops ideal for picture-taking and arched entryways to welcome the bridal party.

While the future burns bright for Hosch, she says her favorite moment right now is when the birthday child first sees their slumber party set up. Squeals of "It's the party of my dreams!" are music to the ears. **CRW**

Julie Nelson also has fond memories of using living room furniture to create a variety of forts. She is a frequent contributor to Coulee Region Women.

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WRAPPED IN LOVE

Sleep in Heavenly Peace gives children beds
with a special addition from the St. Patrick's Church quilting group.

BY MACKENZIE R. HANSON | CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS



Sleep in Heavenly Peace—La Crosse County has built and contributed more than 500 beds to children in this area since 2019, many of which have included handmade quilts contributed by a quilting group from St. Patrick's Church in Onalaska.

Since the group's founding in June 2019, volunteers with Sleep in Heavenly Peace—La Crosse County (SHP) have made it their mission to provide Coulee Region children with a place of their own. With a slogan of “No kid sleeps on the floor in our town,” the group aims to make beds accessible. In the last five years, the group has built and delivered 540 beds to children in La Crosse County. Many of those beds, while built to the specifications of the national organization, have been accompanied by a purely local, personalized addition.

A UNIQUELY LOCAL ADDITION

Coulee Region children often find an extra treasure with their bed delivery gifted by the women of the St. Patrick's Church quilting group in Onalaska. “To top it off with a quilt, which is something so personal for kids that started out without a bed, really makes it special,” says SHP volunteer Jeff Murphy.

Kathy Ring, a quilter and SHP's original contact with the St. Patrick's Church quilting group, says, “A quilt is like a hug, so while we may not know the person receiving one, we're still able to be there for people.” Like each child who receives a bed, each quilt is uniquely special to the recipient.

The group of women began making quilts together roughly 10 years ago for

other area charities and schools but reached out to SHP to offer their services not long after chapter president Mike Suchla founded the organization's local chapter. The quilting group gathers every Wednesday morning for camaraderie and to create something handcrafted to give to others. Quilters typically join the group through word of mouth or affiliation with the parish. When enough quilts have been made, SHP collects the handcrafted items for distribution along with the beds.



The St. Patrick's Church quilting group meets weekly, sewing blankets for Sleep in Heavenly Peace and other organizations.

ALL WELCOME TO HELP OR APPLY

With a core team of 10 to 15 bed builders, SHP—La Crosse County sees anywhere from 20 to 70 area volunteers of various skill

levels on open building workshop days. Volunteers of all backgrounds and building abilities are welcome and encouraged to contact the local chapter through their Facebook page. On public building days, core team members guide new builders, giving volunteers the opportunity to see their efforts come to fruition by the end of a building session.

La Crosse area families in need can apply for one of the handcrafted beds through the SHP—La Crosse County website. Despite information being collected to ensure the beds are delivered to the correct location and family, the process is objectively anonymous and judgment free. Suchla is present for most deliveries. “It's very fulfilling,” he says. “For some of us, the delivery is where the rubber meets the road, and we get to see the reaction of the families, especially the kids. ... When we leave there, we know that the kid has a spot of their own where they can read a book, they can just chill or get away from their siblings. It's their own space, and everybody knows we all need our own space.” **CRW**

MacKenzie R. Hanson is a La Crosse-based freelance writer and artist who would someday love to learn how to quilt. Contact her at mackenzierhanson@gmail.com.

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BY ELISE WEINBENDER

PHOTO BY JORDANA SNYDER PHOTOGRAPHY

Are your 2025 goals already feeling out of reach? Find recommended reads to fuel your dreams, all available at **Pearl Street Books**.

If living well is on your list for 2025, read *Outlive* by **Peter Attia, M.D.**, the #1 New York Times bestseller that focuses on proactively preserving health and preventing disease. *Eat to Beat Disease* by **William W. Li, M.D.**, explores the science of your body's power to heal itself by using food as medicine. And to help you build a practice of gratitude, *The Serviceberry* by **Robin Wall Kimmerer** explores generosity and abundance in the natural world, relating the concept of natural reciprocity to our lives.

—Recommended by Beth Hartung,
owner of Pearl Street Books

Brené Brown's book *Dare to Lead* challenges individuals to lead with purpose, integrity and clarity. *Braving the Wilderness* encourages readers to step away from perfectionism and find true belonging within themselves.

—Recommended by Gretchen
Poellinger, M.S., LPC, of
Resilient Roots Counseling

Becoming by **Michelle Obama** offers insights on navigating ambition, family and values—all while staying grounded. And whether you consider yourself an artist or not, *The Artist's Way* by **Julia Cameron** offers a roadmap for prioritizing and finding the creative voice inside us all.

—Recommended by Jodi Vandenberg-Daves, Ph.D.,
of JVD Consulting





Diane Rasmussen Photo

Susan Cushing, above left, is part of a group that has formed the Kickapoo Dark Sky initiative, focused on educating the public about light pollution.

SEEKING DARKNESS

The Kickapoo Dark Sky Initiative is educating the public on light pollution.

BY RHONDA SIEBECKER | CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

An area along the Kickapoo River was recently considered so dark, it came very close to being designated as an “International Dark Sky.” However, after three years of measurements and getting very close to the distinction, the area’s light pollution had increased so much by November 2023, it no longer qualified.

The Kickapoo Dark Sky Initiative, a newly formed nonprofit group, is working to bring back that darkness.

BRINGING LIGHT TO THE PROBLEM

The idea was formed a few years ago, when John Heasely, a retired teacher from Richland Center and an avid astronomer, taught night programs in the area and wanted to go for the certification.

The Kickapoo Reserve, Wildcat Mountain State Park and Mississippi Valley Conservancy make up the three entities that comprise 14,000 acres along the Kickapoo River. The Chicago Northwestern University Astronomy Club had been coming to Wildcat Park for a few weeks each year for almost 40 years.

“This would have been a big deal for tourism,” says Susan Cushing, one of the initiative’s board members.

The new group consists of electrical engineer Scott Lind, his wife, Marla, Cushing, Carol Wesley and Don Rauls. “This is the main group of people working on it,” Cushing says. “We are getting organized, making the bylaws and clarifying focus.”

That focus includes working with utilities, businesses and individuals to educate them on good lighting. The board members are talking to government entities and attending conferences for electricians and contractors. They are also speaking at public libraries and a wide range of other places.

WHY DARKNESS MATTERS

Cushing says excess lighting is profoundly disrupting human health, causing serious side effects on the body that affect blood sugar levels, sleep levels and even, potentially, cancer risk.

“[The body] wants the darkness to balance the light, and too much light is just as harmful as too much darkness,” Cushing says. “Our dream is to reduce the light pollution in the Driftless Region so we can apply for the Dark Sky Park again.”

She suggests three simple ways to cut down on light pollution and create a darker, healthier future:

- Turning off outside lights when not in use.
 - Changing bulbs to a warm temperature, such as yellow (not blue).
 - Shielding lights to make them point down to where the light is really needed, without expanding into the sky.
- “These are not expensive and very easy fixes,” Cushing says.

DARK FUTURE AHEAD

Lind is also optimistic about a dark sky future. “We have a chance of getting there,” he says. “It will get brighter before it gets darker, but we have the technology we need to keep the sky darker.”

He says knowledge about the problem of too much light in the sky is increasing, and there are now lamp colors available in warmer tones that were not available three years ago. “I’ve been working over 20 years on dark skies, and I’m more optimistic now than ever that we will get there,” he says.

Additional resources may be found at www.darksky.org. **CRW**

Rhonda Siebecker is a freelance writer/photographer from Baraboo who sometimes likes to live on the dark side.

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Community Calendar

ONGOING EVENTS

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

CheezLand Uke Band, Wed., 6-8 p.m., Moose Lodge, 1932 Ward Ave., cheezland.info@gmail.com, www.cheezlandukeband.com.

Coulee Country Embroiderers Chapter of EGA 2nd Mon. (Sept.-June), 9:30 a.m. and 6:30 p.m., Our Redeemer Parish Hall, La Crosse, <https://tinyurl.com/egacc>.

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

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

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

La Crosse Area Quilters 4th Tues., 6:30 p.m., Stoney Creek Hotel-Conference Center, Onalaska, www.lacrosseareaquilters.org.

La Crosse-Bantry Friendship Association 4th Wed., 5:30 p.m., La Crosse Eagles Club, www.lacrossebantry.org.

La Crosse Lions, 2nd and 4th Wed., 6:30 p.m., Lunda Center, Western Technical College; www.lacrosselions.org.

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

La Crosse Rotary East Mon., noon-1 p.m., Schmidt's Bar & Restaurant, La Crosse, www.lacrosserotaryeast.org.

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

League of Women Voters of the La Crosse Area Monthly programs, 2nd Wed. Sept.-April, www.lwvlacrosse.org/program.

NAMI Support Groups See namilacrossecounty.org/support for programs, times and locations.

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

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

Rotary After Hours, 2nd and 4th Tues., 6 p.m., The Main Event Center, La Crosse, www.rotaryafterhours.org.

Valley View Rotary, Wed., 7:30-8:30 a.m., La Crosse Family YMCA-Houser Branch, Onalaska, www.valleyviewrotary.com.

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

Women with Purpose, 2nd Wed., 11:45 a.m.-1 p.m., La Crosse Country Club, cr.wppwi.org.

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

FEBRUARY

Feb. 7-16, *Sex Tips for Straight Women from a Gay Man*, 7:30 p.m. Fri.-Sat., 2 p.m. Sun., La Crosse Community Theatre, Weber Center, www.lacrossetheatre.org.

Feb. 8, 35th Annual Valentine's Ball for La Crosse Symphony Orchestra, 5-11:30 p.m., The Cargill Room at The Waterfront, www.lacrossesymphony.org.

Feb. 9-16, Frozen River Film Festival, times and locations across Winona, www.frff.org.

Feb. 10, Women Who Dared, 10 a.m., West Salem Library, www.lacrossecounty.org/library.

Feb. 12, Winter Full Moon Candlelit Walk, 5-7 p.m., Lower Hixon Forest Trails, www.oratrails.org.



◀ **Feb. 13**, *Dragons and Mythical Beasts Live*, 6 p.m., Viterbo University Fine Arts Center, www.viterbo.edu/fac.

Feb. 15, Collin Raye, 7 p.m., Westby Area Performing Arts Center, www.westbyareapac.com.

Feb. 15, Dailey & Vincent, 8 p.m., Historic Temple Theatre, Viroqua, www.historictempletheatre.com.

Feb. 18, Get the Led Out: A Celebration of "The Mighty Zep," 7:30 p.m., Viterbo University Fine Arts Center, www.viterbo.edu/fac.

Feb. 20-22, Dancescape 2025, Winona State University Theatre and Dance, 7:30 p.m., Vivian Fusillo Main Stage Theatre, Winona State University, www.winona.edu/about/news-events/arts-season/#dance.

Feb. 20-22, Heart of La Crosse Improv Show, 7:30 p.m., Pump House Regional Arts Center, www.thepumphouse.org.

Feb. 21, Tab Benoit, 8 p.m., Historic Temple Theatre, Viroqua, www.historictempletheatre.com.

Feb. 21-22, Viroqua Community Theatre's Variety Show, www.viroquacommunitytheatre.org.

Feb. 21-23, *The Marriage of Figaro*, 7:30 p.m. Fri.-Sat., 2 p.m. Sun., Weber Center, www.viterbo.edu/fac.

Feb. 27, The Hall Sisters, 7:30 p.m., Heider Center for the Arts, www.heidercenter.org.

Feb. 28-March 1, *August: Osage County*, 7:30 p.m., Crosse Community Theatre, Weber Center, www.lacrossetheatre.org.

Feb. 28, Lisa Rock in Close to You: The Music of the Carpenters, 7:30 p.m., Weber Center, www.viterbo.edu/fac.

Feb. 29, La Crosse Symphony Orchestra with Guest Artist Society Social, 5 p.m., Cappella Performing Arts Center, www.cappellaperformingartscenter.com.

Feb. 28-March 9, *Much Ado About Nothing*, 7:30 p.m. Fri.-Sat., 2 p.m. Sun., Toland Theatre, Lowe Center for the Arts, University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, www.uwlax.edu/theatre-and-dance.

MARCH

March 1, UW Badger Band, 7 p.m., Westby Area Performing Arts Center, www.westbyareapac.com.

March 1, Nordic Heroes, La Crosse Symphony Orchestra, 7:30 p.m., Viterbo University Fine Arts Center, www.lacrossesymphony.org.

March 2, Wedding World La Crosse, 10 a.m.-2 p.m., La Crosse Center, www.weddingworldlacrosse.com.

March 3, Holmen Area Historical Society Women's History Month program: A Nurse Responds on 9/11, 6 p.m., Holmen Area Community Center.

March 4, International Women's Day program by AAUW, 5-7 p.m., UW-L Student Union Bluffs Room, lacrosse-wi.aauw.net.

March 6, 90th Anniversary Party: Linked to Local History, 7-9 p.m., Winona County History Center, www.winonahistory.org.

March 6-9, British Invasion #1 Hits: Cocktails & Caberet, 7:30 p.m. Thurs.-Sat., 2 p.m. Sun., Pump House Regional Arts Center, www.thepumphouse.org.

March 7, *Sesame Street Live*, 6 p.m., La Crosse Center, www.sesamestreetlive.com.

March 7, Ryanhood, 8 p.m., Historic Temple Theatre, Viroqua, www.historictempletheatre.com.

March 8, Street Market Indoor Garage Sale, 8 a.m.-2 p.m., Onalaska Omni Center.

March 8, Amara Rose Foundation 3rd Annual Chili Challenge and Baked Goods Auction, 1 p.m., Viroqua Eagles Club, www.amararosefoundation.org/.

March 8, Repro Eco: Play Reading Series, 6 p.m., First Congregational Church, La Crosse, www.reprofreedomarts.org.

March 8, Jared & The Vagabonds, 7:30 p.m., Heider Center for the Arts, www.heidercenter.org.

March 9, Family Fun Expo: Super Hero, 11 a.m.-3 p.m., Onalaska Omni Center, www.theparentingplace.net.

March 12, Enduring Families Project presentation, 1 p.m., Holmen Library, www.lacrossecounty.org/library.

March 13, Winter Full Moon Candlelit Walk, 5-7 p.m., Gateway Trails at Grandad Bluff Park, www.oratrails.org.

March 14-23, *Steel Magnolias*, 7:30 p.m. Fri.-Sat., 2 p.m. Sun., Crosse Community Theatre, Weber Center, www.lacrossetheatre.org.

March 15, Celtic Stories & Songs, 7 p.m., Pump House Regional Arts Center, www.thepumphouse.org.

March 15, Flamenco Dance Troupe, Winona Arts Center, www.winonaarts.org.



◀ **March 15**, *The Magic of Bill Blagg Live!*, 7:30 p.m., Viterbo University Fine Arts Center, www.viterbo.edu/fac.

March 20, Repro Eco: Play Reading Series, 5:30 p.m., Oolala! Consign & Furniture Annex, La Crosse, www.reprofreedomarts.org.

March 21, The Music of Billy Joel and Elton John starring Michael Cavanaugh, 7:30 p.m., Viterbo University Fine Arts Center, www.viterbo.edu/fac.

March 22, Trail Running Film Festival, 5-9 p.m., Winona County Historical Society, www.stormsportingevents.org.

March 26, The Ukelele Orchestra of Great Britain, 7:30 p.m., Viterbo University Fine Arts Center, www.viterbo.edu/fac.

March 28-30, La Crosse Area Builders Association Home Show, 4-8 p.m. Fri., 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Sat., 10 a.m.-3 p.m. Sun., Onalaska Omni Center, www.labaonline.com.

March 29, Overcoming Challenges with Grit & Grace, 8:30 a.m.-3 p.m., Franciscan Spirituality Center, www.fscenter.org.

March 29, Coulee Hoolie Ceili Fundraiser for La Crosse-Bantry Friendship Association, 6-10 p.m., La Crosse Legion Hall, 711 6th St. South, www.lacrossebantry.org.

March 29, Spring Pops, La Crosse Symphony Orchestra, 7:30 p.m., Viterbo University Fine Arts Center, www.lacrossesymphony.org.

March 29, Steep Canyon Rangers, 8 p.m., Historic Temple Theatre, Viroqua, www.historictempletheatre.com.

APRIL

April 2, *Right in the Eye*, a Live Movie-Concert, 7 p.m., Historic Temple Theatre, Viroqua, www.historictempletheatre.com.

April 4, James Taylor & Stevie Nicks Tribute, 7 p.m., Westby Area Performing Arts Center, www.westbyareapac.com.



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