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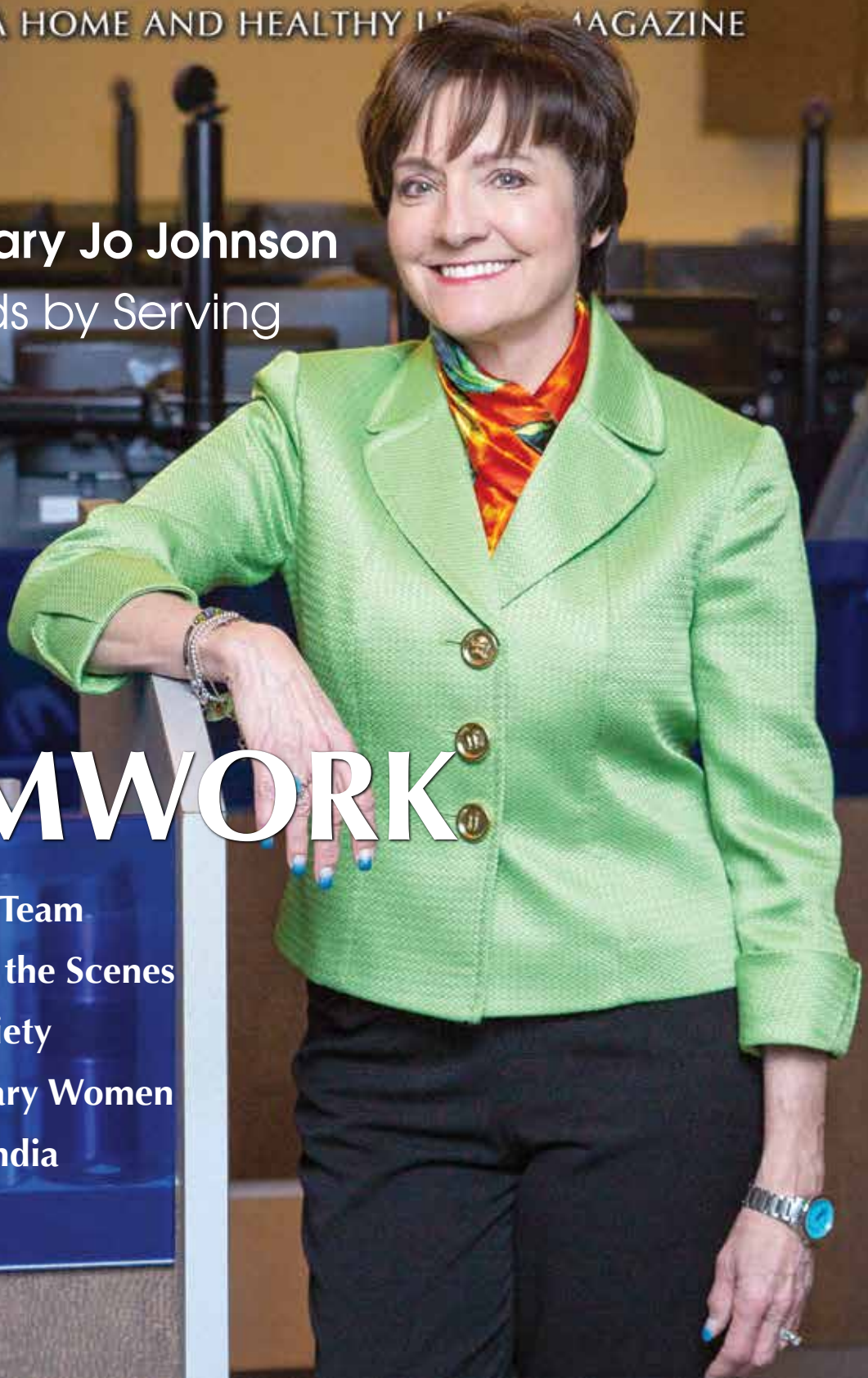
women

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TEAMWORK

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AREA HOME AND HEALTHY LIVING MAGAZINE

TEAMWORK



Pictured on cover and above: Mary Jo Johnson, CEO of EO Johnson Business Technologies. Photos by Jordana Snyder Photography. Photos taken at EO Johnson Business Technologies, Onalaska.

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When I interviewed for my position at Coulee Region Women, I was asked a question about how I would work as part of a team. I remember getting very excited as I answered.

“There’s *nothing* as satisfying as working on a really well-functioning team!” I gushed. “The best teams are ones where each person is really good at what they do, and the other team members trust them to do their best work. You have both talent and mutual respect—and then you can do wonderful things.”

Ten years later, and still part of one of the best teams I’ve ever worked on, I get just as excited over being a part of great teamwork. And this issue in particular has made me realize how far-reaching our *Coulee Region Women* team really is.

Call it the Ides of March, blame it on Mercury in retrograde and for goodness’ sake, blame the weather—but it felt like this issue came out despite obstacles thrown in our way. There was the polar vortex that shut school for days and kept us from the office. There was snow and ice that forced us to reschedule not one but two photo shoots. There were travel schedules to work around for those team members lucky enough to escape, and there were sick kids. We even

suffered through mechanical failures from cars that wouldn’t start to the writer who lost all her interview notes when her cloud-based recording service had a server go down.

But these glitches were no match for Team Coulee Region Women. Interviewees gladly engaged in more conversation, persistent photographers accommodated our schedules and writers persevered. In the end, amazingly, we came in ahead of schedule, handing our files off to our printer just in time to send one of our graphic designers off on a well-deserved vacation.

This vignette proves my point above about a well-functioning team, but it also expands that team far beyond our small staff. Not only did we rely on our own talents and hard work, but a whole community’s worth. This is true not only of the magazine you hold in your hands, but of every issue we publish. We rely on an army of very good writers as well as photographers who are as flexible and cheerful as they are talented. We count on women who are willing to share their stories, whether personal or professional. We are so grateful for marketing teams who help us arrange complicated stories and photo shoots at their places of business. And we are honored to have the support of advertisers who believe in community and connection as much as we do.

The result? Our “Teamwork” issue, filled with women engaged in teams and teamwork of all kinds. You’ll meet team builders like our cover woman, EO Johnson CEO Mary Jo Johnson, who leads eight branches of her company with generosity and grace. Another team leader, Cindy Roberts of Mayo Clinic Health System, shares her secrets for building a great team. You’ll witness a surgical team in action and see what a team of women can do for their community when they put their minds and money together. You’ll learn how sharing our stories and supporting each other can lift us all through life’s struggles.

Women have always understood that, while we each can do great things, we can do even more in numbers. So in the spirit of teamwork, let’s celebrate each other’s individual talents—and then see what wonderful things we can accomplish when we put them together.

Betty

coulee region women

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Since 2011, Mid West Music Fest has been a one-of-a-kind music event with more than 100 acts, including special events and collaborations. The festival is celebrating its 10th year in 2019

with 120 bands in two river towns and four days of nonstop music, starting in Winona May 3-4 and continuing in La Crosse May 17-18. The multi-venue, multi-genre festival hosts a wide variety of the best-established and up-and-coming acts of the upper Midwest and beyond.

Local favorites include Reed Grimm, Them Coulee Boys, TUGG and Mike Munson, plus new headliners such as Nashville-based Banditos, Ruby Boots and Luthi, and Twin Cities-based Nooky Jones, Alex Rossi and Graveyard Club.

Find the full lineup at www.midwestmusicfest.org. The 2019 festival will highlight the contribution of women to the local music scene with a Women in Minnesota Music Showcase at the Burke Music House, sponsored by Treedome, The Current and Carpet Booth Studios, featuring performances by Aby Wolf, Humbird and Annie Mack. Other special events include the First Annual Uke Fest at the Alexander Mansion in Winona on May 4 sponsored by Rock the Cause and a brunch time show on May 19 at La Crosse Distillery with Them Coulee Boys to close out the 2019 fest. There's even a place at the fest for kids, with acts such as Dr. Bob's puppets, the Dangerous Fun Side Show and the Magick Solar Suitcase, plus stages in both Winona and La Crosse where local youth can perform.

Mid West Music Fest seeks to promote music and art activism in the region, creating opportunities for artists, stimulating downtown economic development and providing educational resources for artists, community members and children. Tickets are available online at www.midwestmusicfest.org.



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Enjoy river views while sampling the best the Coulee Region has to offer in terms of food, wine, beer and desserts at the ninth annual Taste of the Coulee Region benefit event held by YWCA La Crosse. Sample delectables from more than 20 restaurants, vintners, brewers and bakers in our area and try your luck at winning great prizes in a silent auction and wingspan raffle. The Coulee Region's premier tasting event will be held Thursday, June 6, at Celebrations on the River at 2100 Dawson Ave., La Crosse, from 5:30 to 8 p.m. Tickets are \$40 in advance and \$50 at the door, and can be purchased at www.ywcalax.org. For more information, email info@ywcalax.org or call 608-781-2783.



ROCK THE SUMMER

Get your summer off to a rockin' good start by checking out upcoming events sponsored by the Coulee Rock Club. Start by attending Community Lapidary Day on Saturday, May 11, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. in the Community Room at 515 Quincy Street in Onalaska. This free open house offers hands-on demonstrations related to rocks, minerals, jewelry making, lapidary work, beading and all things fun and stony!

Then, don't miss the Rock, Gem and Mineral Show June 1-2 at the Onalaska Omni Center. From 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday and 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sunday, you can visit over 20 vendors offering agates, geodes, crystals, fossils, jewelry, gemstones, polished stones and more from all over the world. There will also be prize drawings, silent auctions, demonstrations, kids activities, food and much more, all in the comfort of air-conditioning! For more information, contact Allison Conrad at 507-895-8109 or rockinbabe@acegroup.cc.



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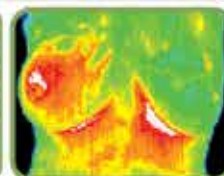
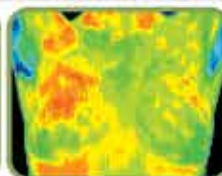
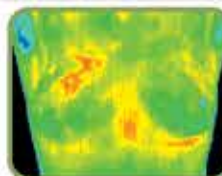
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THE SERVANT LEADER

| PROFILE |

Mary Jo Johnson leads the team at EO Johnson with four core values in mind.

BY JESSIE FOSS

Photos by Jordana Snyder Photography



Mary Jo Johnson leads teams at eight EO Johnson locations, including Onalaska.

Caring, trustworthy, customer vision and stability

are the cornerstone values of EO Johnson Business Technologies—values that hark back to its beginnings in 1957 and its founder. What began as a small business rooted in copy machines based in Wausau has become a business with eight locations in Wisconsin (including Onalaska), Minnesota and Iowa, powering businesses with document, copier and information technology business solutions. Despite EO Johnson's growth and expansion, it has remained rooted in these four core values. The commitment to keep these values in the forefront comes from the top, from its leader and core team-builder, owner and CEO Mary Jo Johnson.

Years ago, explains Johnson, she had heard from employees, customers and community members that something set EO Johnson apart from other companies. "We looked at it, had focus groups, and it went back to those core values," Johnson says. "It's the values that have spurred the behaviors that make us different. We took those four core values and asked how they look in the community and when

helping a co-worker or customer."

So successful is Johnson at implementing these values—to the benefit of staff, clients and partners—that she was named a 2018 Women Influencer by *The Cannata Report*, a national intelligence resource for the business technology, managed services and imaging industry, and was honored at an event in New York City in November. Yet Johnson is quick to emphasize that any recognition received is the result of a team effort. "As a company," she says, "we wouldn't be where we are today without the thoughtful contributions of our customers and the hard work of all our employees and partners. In my mind, each and every one of them share in this recognition."

Community first

The desire to serve first was the foundation of EO Johnson long before the term servant leadership was the buzzword it is today. Johnson's father, Emery Orville Johnson, built his company on the principle of community first.



Mary Jo Johnson with her father and EO Johnson founder Emery Orville Johnson celebrate a company milestone.

“The shining star for me was how my dad looked at community service,” Johnson remarks. “If he couldn’t do it with money, then he did it with time. He believed it was important to give back because ‘the businesses in my community have built my business.’ You have to say thank you, so you get involved and you give back.”

Johnson’s father established a copier business in Wausau and relocated the family from Milwaukee just before she was born. Emery, who was selling adding machines business to business, took a chance on the copier machine business after seeing a copier for the first time.

Johnson says her father was constantly seeking ways to make business better. He was always trying to be on the cutting edge of technology tools that would take businesses further, an effort that Johnson continues today.

Stepping up to lead

Johnson took over the company in 1999, but going into the family business is something Johnson never saw herself doing.

“I wasn’t going to follow in my dad’s footsteps,” she says. “My love was psychology—why people work the way they do. I majored in psychology, planned to get a doctorate, but I met a man, and he was finishing school.”

The two planned to marry, so Johnson found a job to support them while her future husband finished school. In those days, Johnson says, it was assumed if you lived in Wausau and had a college degree, you would work for Wausau Insurance. She was hired at the company as a commercial property insurance underwriter, a title and job description Johnson says she knew nothing about when she first started. In fact, she had to research the position at the library before her first interview.

Wausau Insurance relocated Johnson to Dallas, a move Johnson describes as the best thing that ever could have happened to her. She had lived in Wausau all her life, was very close to her family and had a wide range of friends. Moving allowed her to come into her own.

“I was so busy and was enjoying life,” Johnson says. “I ended up managing an inside sales team—a nice management job with nice

hours. I had made my own little spot in Dallas.”

About five years into her stay in Dallas, Johnson’s father decided he wanted to make some changes at EO Johnson by starting an inside sales department at the business, and he wanted Johnson to help him do it. Johnson took a hiatus from her job in Texas and planned on returning after she had the department at EO Johnson up and running. She never went back.

“I loved it,” Johnson says of her job at EO Johnson. Like her modern-day colleagues, “I kept wondering what was different here, and it came down to the values my dad had built the company on and how that played out in the company’s culture.”

The servant leader

Many of those values are rooted in Christianity, Johnson says, but they basically boil down to treating others as you want to be treated.

“Do the right thing; treat folks as they like to be treated; count your blessings. That is everything that was my dad, his feelings and what was in his heart. He wanted this company to be a trusted business adviser, a sought-after employer and a community builder. I could feel that in 1985,” when she began at EO Johnson.

Today, as CEO, Johnson says her guiding principle is simple: “Lead as a servant. That was a core value of my father’s that I continued.”

Looking to the future, Johnson hopes EO Johnson continues to flourish as a local, family-owned business while investigating and bringing new information solutions to companies.

“My legacy will hopefully be a continuation of my dad’s: to provide valued data assistance to our local business friends, to support our communities, clients and our employee families with their information needs and to continue to do so for many more generations,” Johnson says. (crw)

Jessie Foss is a freelance writer living in La Crosse. Her solution to fixing copy machines typically involves yelling and screaming, so she appreciated talking to someone who has a love and passion for the business.



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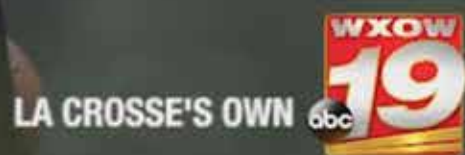


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COLLABORATION IS KEY

Cindy Roberts of Mayo Clinic Health System explains how to build a strong work team.

BY JUDITH MUNSON

Contributed photos



Cindy Roberts, Planning Analysis Manager—Strategy Management at Mayo Clinic Health System

Theories about how to achieve the most productive workplace culture have changed tremendously since, say, the cutthroat, top-down management days of previous decades. But one thing's certain: An unhealthy work environment left unchecked will see nothing but people walking out the door in today's tight labor market.

Just about everyone has a bad work story, and it usually starts with a tale of toxic gossip, lack of communication, power plays or lack of (or poorly executed) leadership. It's good news that the top-down leadership tradition handed down to Boomers and Gen Xers is being replaced with one that emphasizes transparency, collaboration and mutual support of team members.

It's a Millennial-driven culture, but one employees of other generations appreciate as well after years of office dysfunction. So how, exactly, does an organization go about creating this environment?

For that information, we turn to Cindy Roberts, Planning Analysis Manager—Strategy Management at Mayo Clinic Health System, who employs a collaborative approach to every aspect of managing her team.

How healthy teams happen

How, in your experience, has the role of teamwork changed in the last 15 to 20 years?

Team members have to feel safe challenging old ideas and methods,

while understanding that the progress made before them served a valid purpose but may no longer serve the organization's changing needs.

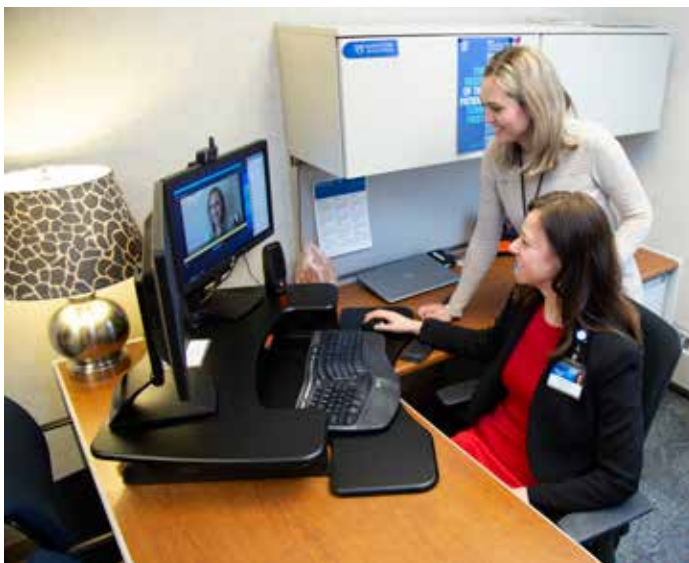
Great leaders encourage teamwork when they challenge team members to have a bias for action versus waiting for permission, foster clear understanding of the organization's mission in the daily work and expect team members to work together to resolve conflicts, coaching them while holding them accountable to have difficult conversations. "Minnesota nice" is no longer an acceptable excuse for avoiding conflicts and leaving issues unresolved.

How does a leader create a collaborative mind-set?

When I interviewed for the position I currently have with Mayo Clinic Health System, the feedback I received concerning what differentiated me was that, when I talked about successes and accomplishments, I used the word *we* instead of *I*. I was intentional about that, because I believe the greatest leaders recognize they can achieve bigger wins by fostering a culture of engaged, passionate team players.

Today's leaders are told to listen twice as much as they talk. What advice do you have for managers trying to solicit more input rather than deliver it?

What I've learned over the years in the teams I've led is that most people are not auditory learners, yet managers often lead meetings in this way. Knowing that, for many employees, meetings are annoying



Roberts consults with team member Marissa Dickinson, Strategy Consultant in the Business Strategy & Planning/Planning Analysis department at Mayo Clinic Health System.

but a requirement, our team meetings are often working sessions, where someone brings a project and we share ideas.

I ask team members to take the lead so it's not just my voice that's being heard. I'll prompt with questions versus statements and probe for dialog. I also call on those who are quieter and send materials in advance knowing several need to have time to prepare their thoughts.

Giving and receiving feedback is, for many, a stressful chore. How do you manage feedback and accountability?

The most surprising things a new person experiences when joining my team is the number of collaboration and feedback processes we've implemented. It makes people uncomfortable early on, but they soon realize that having this in place ensures that, when they interact with the C-suite and physician leaders, we've prepared them for the challenging conversations they will be facilitating.

I also hold regular "discuss and debate it sessions" so we can agree on the best approach to a project and to think through the possible objections our clients may have, so we are prepared, ensuring a productive, forward-thinking discussion.

As a leader, I strive to model the culture I expect, so I admit when I'm wrong or have made a mistake. We work to resolve our issues within the team versus airing our issues in other venues.

Sharing ownership of success

As Roberts' words suggest, in many respects, this more collaborative style of project management is necessary for the survival of businesses today. Technology and consumer demands are forever evolving, so no one can sit still. Businesses of all sizes need to attract and retain creative self-starters, and creative self-starters rarely welcome directives shouted down from on high. So, it's time to share ownership of success and a process that welcomes contributions from every team member to ensure that success. (crw)

Judith Munson is a freelance journalist and memoir writer living in western Wisconsin.

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ERASING INK AND OFFERING HOPE

Brilliant Bodywork offers fresh starts through tattoo removal.

BY SAMANTHA STROOZAS

Contributed photo

It is not often that we get a second chance in our lives, and it's even more rare to do so in the professional world. Brilliant Bodywork, a spa offering massage treatment and skin care in Onalaska, is aiming to change that philosophy through a new tattoo removal service, Restorative Ink, that focuses on giving a second chance to all people. In doing so, Brilliant Bodywork has created a platform that serves the La Crosse community and beyond.

Adam Stevens, the manager of Brilliant Bodywork, along with Stephanie Andresen, the co-owner and lead aesthetician, actively work to spread their message to the public. The tattoo removal service began a few years ago for Stevens, he says. "I was invited to try out some of the newest laser technology in Denver," he says. "During my visit, my host took me to a variety of facilities that utilized the new piece of equipment, and I was asked to help at one clinic in particular that offered laser tattoo removal. During my time there, I was able to help remove tattoos from former gang members under the Jails to Jobs program."

Jails to Jobs is a nonprofit that helps ex-offenders enter the workforce by offering a number of services, including removing gang-

related tattoos free of charge. This service helps them become more employable by ridding them of tattoos that may make a negative impression during job interviews and in the professional world. "The ladies and gentlemen that I treated were some of the kindest individuals I have ever met," says Stevens, "and it dawned on me that everyone does deserve that second chance to change their lives. The idea expanded to also assist domestic violence survivors as well as sex-trafficking survivors, as oftentimes they are branded with tattoos to show ownership. These programs can literally help to change someone's life and allow them to continue down the path of healing."

The chance for a fresh start

Stevens has worked to understand how attitudes toward tattoos impact individuals in their future endeavors. For example, it makes a difference to employers whether or not prospective employees have visual tattoos. "Although employers are not supposed to make judgments based on appearance, we know that this is not the case most times," he says. "Often, people who have visible tattoos are




Stephanie Andresen, co-owner and lead aesthetician of Brilliant Bodywork, and winner of several awards for spa services, is helping change lives through tattoo removal. Photo by Sarah Schultz Photography.

passed over for jobs even if they are better qualified for the position. Tattoos that carry a gang insignia or that are located on the face, neck or hands can often leave potential employers feeling uneasy with the candidate. Being able to remove these tattoos allows the individual a more level playing field and increased self-confidence during the interview process.”

The people who have worked with Brilliant Bodywork come in for a multitude of reasons, and Stevens says the process is rewarding. “Everyone has been so incredibly grateful for the opportunity for a fresh start. It is an honor to be a part of the healing process for clients.”

The chance to give back

Pricing for tattoo removal is on a sliding fee scale for those in the process of recovery from domestic violence, sex trafficking or gang participation. These instances usually require a referral from a social worker or a parole officer, and some people even qualify for free tattoo removal, depending on their circumstances.

Brilliant Bodywork is a small family business, but it is growing more and more each year. “We started our business 10 years ago in a 300-square-foot office and have grown to a 3,500-square-foot spa,” Stevens says. “We feel blessed to be part of such an amazing community and want to give back more than we have received.” 

Samantha Stroozas is a student at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse. She does not have any tattoos, but would like to get one of a sheet ghost in the near future.



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Dr. Dana Benden's ob/gyn surgical team at Gundersen Health System in La Crosse includes several members who have worked together for more than 10 years. Included in that group are, from left, Shanna Lueck-Quimby and Andrea Ritter, both certified surgical assistants, Dr. Benden, and Sarah Nevsimal, physician assistant.

SEAMLESS TEAMWORK

Communication is key to a surgical team's success.

BY SHARI HEGLAND
Contributed photos

In a sterile surgical suite, at an hour when many people are just sipping their first morning coffee, six women in nearly identical blue scrubs quickly and quietly move through a series of tasks to prepare for their first case of the morning. The conversation is light, with no orders given, few questions asked and an ease that shows just how comfortable this group is with each other.

The fact that they don't need to talk much on a morning like this is the result of years of working together with a common goal—the well-being of the patient—and a history of communicating well: clearly, openly and respectfully.

A pretty tight team

Dr. Dana Benden, an ob/gyn surgeon with Gundersen Health System in La Crosse, says that while there is some rotation among



Dr. Dana Benden, ob/gyn surgeon with Gundersen Health System

the members in the operating room, when performing a robotic surgery as they are this morning, most have been working together for more than a decade, with more than a thousand robotic surgeries to date. “We often have a pretty tight team,” she says, noting that four of the women in the room were part of the original group to train on the da Vinci® Surgical System when it was introduced to Gundersen Health System 11 years ago.

“It's nice when everybody knows their role and their job,” says Shanna Lueck-Quimby, the certified surgical assistant serving as the technician charged with prepping, counting and recounting all of the sterile instruments needed for the procedure. Having worked together so much, she says, they each know

what the other person expects from them.

Andrea Ritter, also a certified surgical assistant who helped guide



Certified surgical assistant Shanna Lueck-Quimby, left, and Jenn Inderdahl, RN, begin gathering and counting instruments and supplies as Dr. Benden (with the blue hair net) and surgical assistant Andrea Ritter, second from left, close up the small incision used for a robotic-assisted hysterectomy at Gundersen Health System in La Crosse, with Dr. Vanderwielen, anesthesiologist (behind sheet) and Lauren Gruber, right, a physician assistant student, looking on.

the camera and other instruments during the morning's procedure, agrees. "We are very in tune with each other," she says, including understanding how best to communicate with different personalities, which she does as she assists with robotic surgeries for the urology and general surgery departments as well. "Sometimes you have to approach things differently."

Fostering healthy relationships

As the patient is brought into the room, everyone moves into place to help transfer her to the operating table and ensure she is comfortable and calm. "Everyone" includes Dr. Benden, which isn't unnoticed by the rest of her team.

"Dr. Benden wouldn't have to help with transferring and positioning the patient," notes Dr. Beth Vanderwielen, an anesthesiologist and one of the newest members to this team, having joined Gundersen in 2018. But it is an extension of Dr. Benden's overall leadership approach in the operating room. While the surgeon may literally be the one at the controls, she recognizes the important role each individual plays and the need to foster an atmosphere of openness and respect.

Dr. Benden says much of her current approach to communication and teamwork, both in the operating room and in other roles, relates to a program Gundersen used years ago called Fostering Healthy Relationships,

which helped individuals understand their own communication styles and needs as well as those of their teammates. And she credits Sarah Nevsimal, the physician assistant who has worked closely with her for 18 years, for helping her recognize times when she needed to change her approach.

"You need to have people on your team who feel safe coming to you and can do that respectfully," Dr. Benden notes in relating how Nevsimal helped her recognize when her own quick and concise communication style left others in the department needing more clarification.

"She is very open to feedback," Nevsimal says, "and she takes the ideas of everyone in the room seriously," setting a tone of being very approachable. "When you are a good listener and communicate well, that helps everyone function as a team."

United by purpose

Jenn Inderdahl, RN, a circulating nurse and one of two team members with military experience (she was recently promoted to captain in the Army Reserves), was joined by several team members in pointing out that while there are a number of different personalities among the group, they are united by their focus on the patient.

"When you come for the same purpose, it comes into place," she says. "We're all doing it for the patient."

And while this group can work together

seamlessly now, they also understand the importance of recognizing the need for different communication when someone new is in the room.

"There are more questions with new surgeons," Inderdahl says, and Lueck-Quimby points out that if she is working with a circulating nurse who isn't as familiar with Dr. Benden's surgical team, she may need to be more specific in requests or give them more time to find items. "We have to adjust expectations based on the other person's experience in the room," Lueck-Quimby says.

Nevsimal says that the communication style the group has developed, of openly listening to everyone, eases the transition when someone new joins the team. "We encourage questions. We like ideas from new people."

Another advantage of both the familiarity the members of this team have developed and their open communication style, according to Dr. Benden, is that it is immediately obvious when something isn't right. "That flow means you hear it when there is something out of the ordinary," she says, and because everyone on the team has learned to trust the others' judgment, all will take note if someone questions a situation.

Open, honest and respectful

As the procedure wraps up, another round of tasks begins, again with little need for anyone to be given directions about what comes next. Dr. Vanderwielen points out that the open communication Dr. Benden brings to the operating room carries over as they transition the patient to recovery and bring those nurses up to speed, and as she speaks with the patient's family.

The surgical suite is quickly cleaned, instruments and materials tallied, notes taken and recorded, and the team disburses to their next assignments, with the light banter of familiarity mixing with music in the background.

Working together to perform procedures that improve the lives of their patients is just another day on the job, made better by each person's willingness to speak openly, honestly and respectfully to build a better team. (crw)

Observing a surgical team in action was a first for Holmen writer Shari Hegland, and it spurred an appreciation for the level of trust each member of the team has in the others as they each perform their role flawlessly for the benefit of the patient.

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STRENGTH IN NUMBERS

When it comes to women and anxiety disorders, we can help each other.

BY DOREEN PFOST
Contributed photos

“You are in a place that is meant to be helpful and compassionate, and you are with people who want to lift you up.” That’s the message Faye Ellis delivers to her students, in and out of the classroom. A senior lecturer who teaches labs in anatomy, genetics and cellular biology at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, Ellis begins each semester in an unusual way. She not only describes the supportive learning environment she wants to engender, but explains why it’s important to her: “I want to start,” she says, “by telling you I have generalized anxiety disorder.”

In the third-floor biology department office she shares with a colleague, Ellis’ metal desk and shelves hold the books and family photos you might expect to find in a professor’s workplace. But she also has in her desk a trove of treasured items: handmade cards, personal letters and messages from students who respond to a positive, nurturing classroom setting and to her self-disclosure about having generalized anxiety disorder, or GAD.

Always wanting to do better

Ellis decided several years ago to begin openly discussing anxiety. “If I had a medical condition, I wouldn’t hesitate to share it,” she says. “The first time was scary, but the response from students quickly helped me put aside any feelings of discomfort, because they let me know it made a difference.”

Although she was in her 20s when diagnosed, Ellis now recognizes

that she has had anxiety since childhood. In her own experience, GAD manifests itself as persistent worry about whether she is good enough: a good enough wife, mother, teacher. “I am constantly critiquing myself, wanting to be better,” she says. The desire to improve can be healthy, she observes, “but when you can’t turn off the thoughts of always wanting to do better, then it becomes problematic.”

A world of worry

Dr. Katie Fassbinder, psychiatrist and medical director at La Crosse County Human Services Department, explains that people



*Dr. Katie Fassbinder,
psychiatrist and medical
director at La Crosse
County Human Services*

with GAD experience anxiety or worry that’s excessive to the situation they’re in. The anxiety occurs more days than not for at least six months and causes distress or impairment. A person may be aware that they’re worrying excessively, but still be unable to control it. Worries can range from work, family and relationships to politics or the state of the planet.

Dr. Fassbinder describes the process by which generalized anxiety can become a crippling disorder. “People tend to avoid situations that make their anxiety worse,” she notes, “but with GAD, almost every

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GAD is just one of several anxiety disorders, including post-traumatic stress disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder, panic disorder and social anxiety disorder. Symptoms often overlap, so a professional diagnosis is important in getting appropriate treatment. Your primary care physician can provide guidance, but additional resources are available:

Great Rivers 2-1-1 offers confidential La Crosse-based referrals, resource information and crisis services. Call 211 or 800-362-8255. Links for text and chat support are at www.greatrivers211.org.

National Alliance on Mental Health:

NAMI La Crosse (www.namilacrossecounty.org) provides support groups, classes and local resources. In a crisis, call 800-950-6264.

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offers face-to-face and/or telephone response to individuals experiencing a mental health crisis. Provided 24 hours/7 days a week at 608-784-HELP (4357).



Faye Ellis, senior lecturer in the biology department at UW-La Crosse, is open with her students about her own anxiety issues, which in turn has helped them face their own.

situation makes anxiety worse.” So people try to stay in their comfort zone, but the longer they stay, the harder it becomes to leave. “Over time,” she says, “their world becomes very small.”

Furthermore, the fight-or-flight response induced by anxiety is physically and mentally exhausting. It interferes with sleep, impairs concentration and thus disrupts learning, even in intelligent people.

You’re not alone

Counseling is central to treating GAD, although medication is sometimes also useful. In addition, says Fassbinder, because anxiety is often experienced physically, its effects can be lessened through exercise, yoga and meditation. Alternative techniques such as acupuncture, massage therapy and Reiki help some people as well.

Appropriate treatment can help fend off depression, “anxiety’s ugly cousin,” Dr. Fassbinder says. “And we want to prevent people turning to unhealthy coping mechanisms” such as alcohol, drugs or harmful behaviors.

Fear and stigma often prevent people from seeking assistance, but in the past two decades, the growing use of “peer support specialists” has helped overcome these barriers. Trained professionals, who are in recovery themselves, provide individual support to persons with anxiety. Peer support specialists “get it” on a level that other professionals may not, says Dr. Fassbinder. “I think that’s one of the most powerful ways to beat stigma—to recognize that you’re not alone.”

Dr. Fassbinder notes that GAD, which affects about 9 percent of people in the United States, is diagnosed twice as often in women as in men. “The jury is still out as to why this is,” she says. Women may have a biological predisposition or are perhaps more likely to seek help—or something else. “In any case,” she says, “we need to be there for each other and recognize that one in 10 of us is dealing with this.”

Extend a hand

That’s Faye Ellis’ attitude as well. In her personal

life, she says, “when I started talking about my anxiety with people who are close to me, I realized that so many of us are experiencing similar things, but not sharing them with each other.”

The response in her classroom was likewise a revelation. “Through opening up and being honest, I have found that I’m not alone, and other people find that *they’re* not alone.” It became clear to her that her anxiety disorder was not merely a vulnerability, but a source of strength that fuels compassion and kindness toward others. By sharing her own story, she has seen the atmosphere in her classes transformed: “I can feel the respect in the classroom—the compassion students show me and the kindness they show to one another.”

The calm and nurturing environment in Ellis’ classes tends to help all students, and their feedback confirms this. But it also prompts some students to look inward, and it may help them recognize their own struggles with anxiety or other mental health difficulties. Some realize they’re ready to ask for help.

If students seek Ellis’ guidance regarding anxiety issues, she explains that she’s not qualified to advise them, but offers to help them access campus counseling services. That may sound like going the extra mile—and beyond—but Ellis says, self-effacingly, that it’s simply a matter of trying to be kind. “I’m not doing anything that we shouldn’t all do for each other.”

Is it easy? Not always. Extending a hand, whether to seek help or offer it, makes us vulnerable and requires courage, especially for someone with an anxiety disorder. Still, says Ellis, it’s a choice. Acknowledging our imperfections is, paradoxically, an opportunity to grow. “You can choose to remain in your comfort zone or you can choose to grow,” she says. “If we all did this, it would only strengthen us.” **(crw)**

Doreen Pfost is the author of This River Beneath the Sky: A Year on the Platte. One of her interests is wellness, especially the connection between mental health and time in nature.

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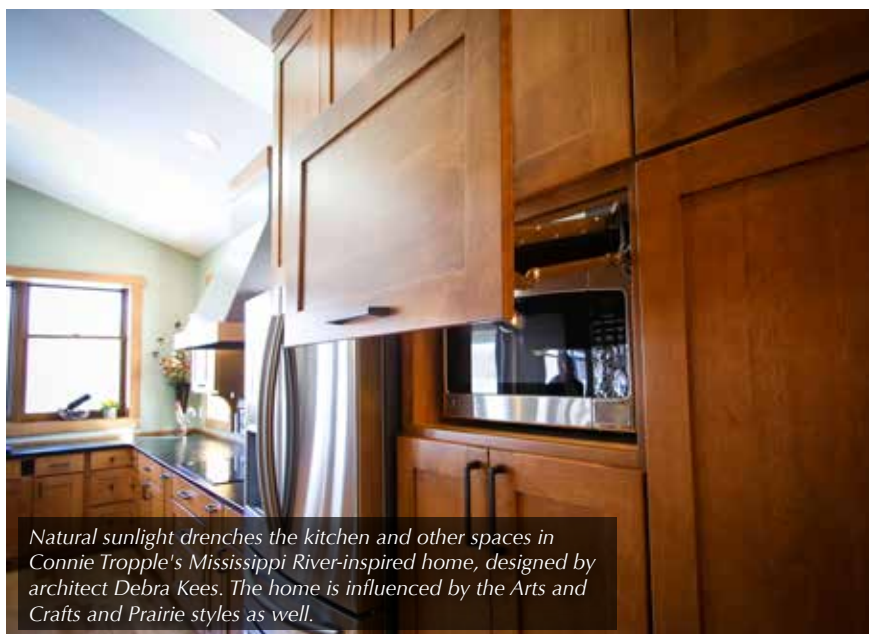
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Natural sunlight drenches the kitchen and other spaces in Connie Tropple's Mississippi River-inspired home, designed by architect Debra Kees. The home is influenced by the Arts and Crafts and Prairie styles as well.

A VISION OF HOME

A Winona home illustrates what a strong homeowner-architect team can do.

BY ELIZABETH D. LIPPMAN

Photos by Atypik Studio

The Mississippi River courses deep through Connie Tropple's childhood memories, adventures filled with swimming and camping and playing on sandbanks. "Growing up, that's where we hung out," Tropple says. And now—surrounded by mementos from years spent in Texas and travel overseas—the river, she says, looking through her north-facing windows, brought her home.

"I kind of live with the sun," says Tropple, explaining that its rising rays light up the kitchen where she spends much of her time in the mornings. The room is part of a house she imagined herself, along with the expert assistance of Debra Kees, an architect based in Onalaska.

"It's everything I had dreamed of," she says. "And Deb was able to bring it to life."

Tropple finally moved into her new three-bedroom, three-bath home on Prairie Island Road in Winona, where she was born and raised, last September, just over three years after she discovered Kees in a *Coulee Region Women* article. They began making plans to transform

the river property into what Tropple calls her forever home, where she will age in place. She says she always knew in her soul that she wanted to return.

"My happy place is designing my house," she says. "The whole idea is that you can come in and feel comfortable taking your shoes off."

Vision and trust

Tropple says she believes in supporting women. She and Kees had lunch to discuss her ideas, and they hit it off. She believed Kees understood her lifestyle and goals and says she would do it all over again. "Find a contractor who gets you," she advises.

"I think Connie's project is a beautiful example of a strong woman's vision combining with a trusted team of professionals to create a home that truly feels like home," Kees says.

Tropple values function and efficiency. She situates her design selections somewhere between the Arts and Crafts movement and

Prairie style and credits a copious amount of research into materials and layout possibilities as a dominant influence on her choices. The welcoming atmosphere is ideal for entertaining, and Tropple regularly welcomes family and friends to her space. “It’s dog friendly, kid friendly and people friendly,” she affirms.

Getting things just right

The first floor—from the inclusion of a bedroom and wheelchair-friendly width of the hallways and shower—is designed with Tropple’s future needs in mind.

She loves to cook (pasta dishes are her favorite) and chose her soapstone countertops not only for their durability, but also for the character they embody from use. Her cabinets were custom stained according to a particular shade in her wood floor that she wanted to match, and appliances blend in seamlessly with their surroundings. Corner drawers and slide-out shelves provide abundant storage, and the cheery yellow exterior is evidence of Tropple’s commitment to getting things just right.

She chose family-owned Benson Construction to build her home and gives glowing recognition of their craftsmanship and creativity—from the overall building to custom porch pillars to a mantel fashioned from a barn beam and the placement of loved furniture. “They took care of it like it was their own,” she says.

The property’s unique characteristics presented some design challenges, such as how to deal with the regulations that exist as part



Beautiful as well as functional, rooms such as the bathroom are designed with future needs in mind, such as wheelchair accessibility.



Homeowner and architect team Connie Tropple (left) and Debra Kees celebrate a satisfying project and a home that feels like home.

of its presence on the Winona dike system. But working with the city and the Army Corp of Engineers, Tropple says, was a positive and productive experience. With the help of her team, she gained approval for her plan and created the tree-filled view she wanted.

An inspiring aesthetic

“We drew inspiration for the project from the site and Connie’s lifestyle,” Kees notes. “Large expanses of glass are oriented toward the river, while skylights and transom windows are used on the sides of the home to allow natural light but maintain privacy. Covered porches and screened rooms expand the interior spaces to the exterior for social gatherings. This is also a trick to allow a smaller footprint, necessitated by the tight site geometry, to feel larger and be more flexible depending on the number of people in the home.”

Tropple’s aesthetic prioritizes clean lines and a lack of clutter, a sense reflected consistently throughout her home in everything from the subtle placement of outlets and light switches to the location of

stairs. She visited the construction site daily, she says. And though she remained flexible with some decisions as ideas and possibilities shifted during the building process, others—like the use of insulating concrete forms to establish the primary rectangular frame of the home—she wouldn’t compromise.

“Connie’s style and our inspiration were based on a space that is both beautiful and livable at the same time,” Kees says, “where original artwork can be paired with comfortable chairs, locally crafted cabinets paired with unique soapstone, and everyone feels welcome.”

“It’s paradise”

As for future plans, Tropple looks forward to developing her outdoor palette in the spring. “Gardening was really kind of my thing in Texas,” she says.

Tropple also envisions potential collaborations, such as with the Women’s Resource Center of Winona, which would benefit community members, such as women fleeing violence who need a helping hand or a safe place to stay. “I believe in sharing,” she says.

The landscape is, by many accounts, peace-imbedded. “In the summer, in the evenings,” Tropple remarks, “there are no waves on the water. It’s like glass with the reflection of trees.”

“I’ve attempted to wake up in a bad mood,” Tropple says, laughing, “but then the eagle flies by. It’s paradise.” **crw**

Elizabeth Lippman is a freelance writer and editor in Winona.



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100 EXTRAORDINARY WOMEN

A team of women makes the Westby Area Performing Arts Center a reality.

BY LEAH CALL
Contributed photos



The state-of-the-art Westby Area Performing Arts Center offers performing space to Westby High School students and nationally known music groups alike.

Roughly a year has gone by since the Westby Area Performing Arts Center at Westby High School (WHS) held its dedication ceremony. The center is a decades-long dream come true, thanks to teamwork, persistence and 100 Extraordinary Women.

The 100 Extraordinary Women fundraising project was part of a larger effort to raise \$800,000 in order to hold a referendum to build the center. “I don’t think many people thought we could do it,” says Linda Dowling, chairman of the Fine Arts Foundation of the Westby Area (FAFWA), the group charged with raising the funds.

While Dowling and others on the FAFWA board worked tirelessly to secure the funds, a call to Jodi Sweeney, the Madison-based founder of the fundraising effort 100 Extraordinary Women, changed everything. “We couldn’t have done it without her,” says Dowling. “She is amazing.”



Jodi Sweeney, founder of the Madison-based 100 Extraordinary Women

100 women

Sweeney helped the board—a group of mostly women—launch the 100 Extraordinary Women effort. The board members made phone calls, wrote letters and made public pleas. In just a few months, more than 100 women committed to donating \$1,000 each over five years.

“Initially, we thought that when people heard \$1,000, they would be gone, but Jodi knew what she was talking about,” recalls Kim Tainter, FAFWA board member and one of the extraordinary women. “I have \$25 taken out of my checking every month. Who misses \$25 a month? And people were ready to make this happen.”

A total of 150 women ultimately participated, with some



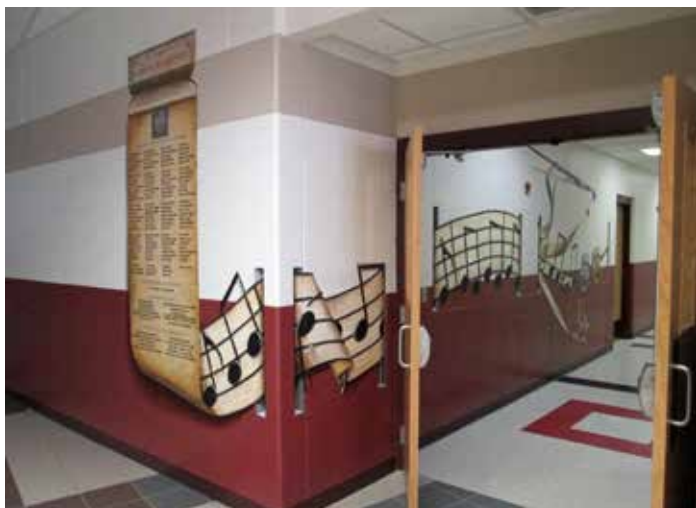
The FAFWA board has long been committed to building a performing arts center.

committing to the \$1,000 in pairs. The \$135,000 raised was used to fund the Star Dressing Room and a mural, both dedicated to Carmen Armbruster, a Westby woman who died of breast cancer at a young age.

Armbruster supported the performing arts center project and had two sons who both participated in the music program at WHS. Coon Valley-based muralist Sarah Pederson, owner of Lucid Painting, painted the mural in memory of Armbruster. The mural lists the names of the extraordinary women who helped bring the center to life: mothers, teachers, alumni, community members, music lovers, and friends and family of Armbruster.

A place to shine

Armbruster’s sons were part of the 75 percent of the student body at WHS involved in choir, band or both. The high school has the highest music participation in the state—a distinction deserving of a state-of-the-art performance venue.



Sarah Pederson of Coon Valley painted this mural in the Westby Area Performing Arts Center in dedication to longtime WHS music supporter Carmen Armbruster.

"It was important to me to get the center built, because I had four kids that graduated from Westby, and all of them participated in music," says Dowling.

Dowling's reason to support the Performing Arts Center is shared by many residents of Westby, Coon Valley and Chaseburg.

Prior to the Performing Arts Center, students performed in the gymnasium, something Dowling says was an "injustice to the kids." For some in the audience, the difficulty of climbing bleachers or sitting on metal chairs for an extended period kept them from hearing their children's or grandchildren's performances.

Women: the secret to success

Sweeney has helped other groups around the state raise funds with a similar approach. She has discovered the secret to a successful fundraising effort: women.

"There is a process to it. I have templates and materials and a timeline, but honestly, it is just the synergy of women coming together to get something done," explains Sweeney of the effort she has trademarked.

"The nice thing about 100 Extraordinary Women is that not only does it raise money, but you now have this cadre of women all over town talking about it," adds Sweeney.

That buzz helped FAFWA raise the additional funds needed to hold the referendum, which easily passed in 2016. Since the dedication of the 475-seat facility one year ago, the center has been alive with not just the sound of talented student performances but also big-name performers from around the state and the country.

Upcoming shows can be found on the Westby Area Performing Arts Center website and Facebook page.

The ambitious women of FAFWA are not done yet. They still welcome donations toward the center's grand piano, acoustical shell and operational expenses. And they won't give up until every dollar is raised.

"I've never been very good at asking for money, but I've gotten pretty good at it now," jokes Dowling, who doesn't regret a minute of the countless hours spent bringing the performing arts facility to life. "Music is a lifelong skill, and you just can't take that away." *(CRW)*

Westby-based writer Leah Call is proud of the musical talent and dedicated women in her community.

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KITCHEN COOPERATION

Cooking classes teach teamwork to families and groups.

BY JULIE NELSON
Contributed photos

"Cooking with Herbs" was a recent People's Food Co-op class presented by Hillview Urban Agriculture and Savory Creations. Photo by Pam Hartwell.

Whether preparing a special holiday meal, the family recipe for chocolate chip bars or just a regular weeknight meal, there's something about cooking together that builds bonds between people. But if food preparation at home doesn't always work for you, it may be time to get out of the heat and find a new kitchen.

"We are seeing an increasing number of people sign up for cooking classes as teams," says Linda Riddle, the member services manager for the People's Food Co-op and the organizer of the store's classes. "Sometimes couples use it as a date night; sometimes a parent and child share the activity, and sometimes it's a group of friends getting together."

Riddle says even when people sign up as individuals, they often end up working as a team. Classes are regularly divided into four stations where each group works on their own part of the recipe or meal. "Food is a great communicator. People who start as strangers become acquainted. You can hear the laughter grow as the night moves on."

Enthusiasm is contagious

Bonding over cooking is easy when everyone loves to cook, but it may not be as instantaneous when some are lukewarm to the entire process. To engage everyone, especially when working with a group of kids from the YMCA or students from Western Technical College, Riddle makes a point of talking about the food, where it comes from, how its texture compares and what cooking techniques bring out its best flavor. "Loving good food and being able to be enthusiastic about it can be a motivator to others," she says, adding that when people need to show the results of their cooking, they tend to be even more engaged in the process and can bond even further with their teammates.

Cooking classes at the People's Food Co-op in La Crosse were on hiatus during most of the store's remodeling projects, but resumed in

March. "We typically hold four to six classes a month," says Riddle. Some are typical cooking classes featuring Thai foods, homemade pesto or healthy Indian cooking, while others stretch into a different area. Tapping trees for maple syrup, making bath teas and making goat milk soaps are examples of classes that are a little outside the breadbox. "The people who take classes here are very interested in hands-on work, so we try to provide as many opportunities as possible," she says.

Cooking fun for everyone

Riddle says there are several local businesses that offer the opportunity to attend People's Food Co-op cooking classes as a wellness benefit and a few more that use the classes as a team-building experience, but she says you don't have to come to a formal classroom to get that sense of shared experience and camaraderie.

If you'd like to do a cooking experience at home, whether it's for a girls' night in or an activity for the entire family, Riddle offers these tips to make it a success:

Make it fun. Consider your group and what will make the experience enjoyable. Writing fortunes for fortune cookies can produce a lot of laughter.

Pick good recipes. Select dishes that will be pleasing to most people and, when done right, are visually appealing and delicious.

Make sure everybody has something to do that's real. People have more fun when they are participating and contributing. Choosing which three eggs to crack doesn't count.

Wine goes over well with adults.

Get ideas on what people liked for future sessions. If you're thinking of attending or hosting a cooking class, consider the advice of celebrity chef Carla Hall. "Say YES. Adventure follows."

HERB-SEARED CHICKEN WITH CHARRED SUCCOTASH SALAD

Shawn McManus, Savory Creations

Herb-Seared Chicken

- 4 6 oz. boneless skin-on or skinless chicken breasts
- 4 T grapeseed oil, divided

Chicken Rub

- ¼ T fresh chopped thyme
- ¼ T fresh cumin seeds (whole)
- ½ T fresh chopped basil
- ¼ T coarse-ground coriander seeds
- ½ T chili powder
- 1 tsp. pink Himalayan salt
- ½ T Szechuan pepper (coarse ground)

Preheat oven to 350°F.

In a medium bowl, add 2 T grapeseed oil, chicken breasts and all chicken rub ingredients. Rub the seasonings on the chicken until fully coated. Heat a large skillet over high heat and add 2 T grapeseed oil. Add herb-coated chicken skin side down. Cover and sear approximately 3 minutes on each side.

Place chicken on baking sheet or pan and bake at 350°F for 10-15 minutes, until internal temperature reaches 165°F.

Charred Succotash Salad

- 4 T grapeseed oil, divided
- 4 oz. blanched and cooled fresh green beans, cut into 1-inch pieces (about 1 cup)
- ½ cup fresh sweet yellow corn kernels, pre-cooked or grilled and chilled
- 1 medium shallot, thinly sliced
- 1 cup roughly chopped red or orange bell pepper
- 1 cup half-moon-sliced zucchini or summer squash
- 1 cup sunburst, cherub or teardrop tomatoes, halved
- 1 T white wine vinegar
- 2 tsp. chopped fresh tarragon (optional)
- ¾ tsp. pink Himalayan salt, divided

Add 2 T grapeseed oil to the skillet over high heat; swirl to coat. Add green beans, corn and shallot. Cook, stirring occasionally, until beans are bright green and slightly charred, about 4 minutes. Add red bell pepper; cook, stirring occasionally, until slightly softened, about 2 minutes. Add zucchini; cook until charred and tender-crisp, about 4 more minutes. Remove from heat; stir in tomatoes and ½ tsp. salt.

Remove chicken from oven and let stand 5 minutes. Meanwhile, combine vinegar, tarragon and remaining ¼ tsp. salt in a small bowl. Whisk in remaining 2 T oil until combined.

Slice chicken and serve over succotash. Drizzle with dressing.



Herb-seared chicken with charred succotash, served with a simple salad of mixed greens, pecans, blue cheese crumbles and red onion.

FORTUNE COOKIES

Aleta at Allrecipes.com

- 1 egg white
- 1/8 tsp. vanilla extract
- 1 pinch salt
- 1/4 cup unbleached all-purpose flour
- 1/4 cup white sugar

Preheat oven to 400°F. Generously grease 2 cookie sheets. Write fortunes on strips of paper about 4 inches long and 1/2 inch wide.

Mix the egg white and vanilla until foamy but not stiff. Sift the flour, salt and sugar, and blend into the egg white mixture.

Place teaspoonfuls of the batter at least 4 inches apart on one of the prepared cookie sheets. Tilt the sheet to move the batter into round shapes about 3 inches in diameter. Be careful to make cookies as round and even as possible. Do not make too many at once, because the cookies have to be really hot to form, and once they cool, it is too late. Start with 2 or 3 to a sheet and see how many you can do.

Bake for 5 minutes or until cookies have turned a golden color 1/2 inch around the outer edge of the circle. The center will remain pale. While one sheet is baking, prepare the other.

Remove from oven, quickly move each cookie with a wide spatula and place upside down on a wooden board. Quickly place the fortune on the cookie, close to the middle, and fold the cookie in half. Place the folded edge across the rim of a measuring cup and pull the pointed

edges down, one on the inside of the cup and one on the outside. Place folded cookies into the cups of a muffin tin or egg carton to hold their shape until firm. (crw)

Julie Nelson is the Community Engagement Coordinator for Great Rivers United Way. She has attended a handful of cooking classes at the Co-op and enjoyed them all.



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The Winter of 2019

How will this year's harsh winter affect the grapes in the area? It depends.

Not all grapes are created equal. The Minnesota Grape Growers Association (MGGA) reports that St Pepin can only withstand -26o F, but Frontenac Gris is cold-hardy down to -38o F or more. Varieties like La Crescent, Edelweiss, Frontenac and Marquette fall between those extremes.

Snow cover offers protection of grapes. But you may remember that during the "Polar Vortex," snow covered the ground, but it wasn't deep. This affects the temperatures that grape plants can withstand.

Finally, grape plants need to adjust to the cold, just like we do. If they don't get a gradual introduction to winter, damage may be increased. The mild early winter may have impacted their ability to survive.

Check out the MGGA website (www.mngrapes.org/page/varieties) to learn which wines might be scarce this year. Then, stock up!

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WASTE NOT

Local organizations—and the women who work there—keep our community and the environment clean.

BY ANASTASIA PENCHI
Contributed photos

Megan Schultz refurbishes laptops at Dynamic Lifecycle Innovations in Onalaska, where she is an operations supervisor.

As if spring isn't reason enough to celebrate the natural beauty of the Coulee Region, April also brings Earth Day, and with it, a festive reminder to do what we can to protect our environment and the earth. For some women in the region, this responsibility is their career—and they embrace it wholeheartedly.

Redirecting, reusing and renewing

Jackie Davis helps keep the Coulee Region clean by redirecting waste that is delivered to the La Crosse County Landfill to other locations where it can be used for a variety of purposes.

She helps make sure tires are separated and recycled into products like road subbase or wastewater filters. Clean wood that isn't painted or treated—like pallets or brush—is ground up and sent to the Xcel Energy French Island Generating Station, where it is used to produce energy.

The Stoddard woman began working for the La Crosse County Landfill in September 2014 as its operation technician for special wastes, which means she's in charge of classifying, analyzing and tracking petroleum-impacted soils and other types of similar waste. She also helps complete the landfill's required environmental monitoring programs.

A member of the Solid Waste Association of North America Young Professionals program, Davis believes her gender is a benefit to this male-dominated industry, as diversity allows for new ideas and perspectives.

And her favorite part of working in waste?

"I love that every day is different," Davis says. "I am constantly working to overcome challenges and learn new things."

The percentage of women employed in the waste management and remediation services industry was 10 percent in 2016, according to the most recent U.S. Census Bureau figures reported on the DATA USA website.

That number appears fairly stable, as the industry reported 10 percent female employment in 2014 and 12 percent in 2015 (the industry as a whole declined from 2015 to 2016). Locally, there were 1,042 total industry workers in La Crosse County during 2016.

Nick Nichols, sustainability coordinator for La Crosse County, says he would've guessed there were more women in the waste-related workforce, but said 10 percent probably makes sense considering the industry's past.

"Historically this has been a get-out-of-the-truck-and-manhandle-trash-into-a-vehicle (industry)," he says. "This could change now with automated collection."

The La Crosse County Landfill provides reuse, resource recovery, recycling and disposal services in addition to programs it's designed to reduce the toxicity of various waste streams, according to its website.

It works with businesses and landlords who need to dispose of anything from mattresses to asbestos. Citizens can drop off used oil; used needles and noncontrolled prescriptions; florescent bulbs and fixtures; electronics waste like computers, phones and small

appliances; and smelly, nasty things like paint, gas, pool chemicals, automotive fluids and lawn/farm chemicals such as herbicides and insecticides. Sometimes there is a cost involved.

Breathing new life into electronics

In Onalaska, Dynamic Lifecycle Innovations' staff works with businesses to create electronic recycling solutions. Dynamic also offers business-to-business electronic material transportation, asset disposal, materials recovery, and refurbishing and resale assistance.

While its workforce was 9 percent female in 2014, that percentage is growing. It doubled to 20 percent in 2019.

"Historically, Dynamic Lifecycle Innovations has had a very male-orientated workforce, but we've seen a substantial increase in our female workforce throughout the years," says Alicia Suessmith, vice president of People Operations. "Not only is the number of female team members increasing, but leadership positions are also rising among them."

One of that company's pioneers is Megan Schultz, who was the only female entry-level warehouse worker refurbishing and testing laptops when she was hired to work there in 2017. The Onalaska woman



Jackie Davis redirects waste that is delivered to the La Crosse County Landfill, where she is an operations technician.

describes the work she did back then as "very physical and very demanding."

Schultz says she loves both the company and the culture at Dynamic Lifecycle Innovations, and she says an added benefit is the amount of electronic waste she helps to keep out of the landfill. Whether workers are removing and refurbishing processors or computer memory boards, they help breathe new life into electronics.

What one company might consider obsolete, she adds, another might find useful.

When Schultz was hired, she says she had the entire female locker room to herself. She has since been promoted twice, and now supervises a team of 11 other employees as an operations supervisor. Her team includes two other women.

Schultz said her gender adds value to the company because she is able to communicate, reach and connect with her team members on another level.

Still, she adds, "You come in and you are part of the family." *(crw)*

Anastasia Penchi appreciates efforts that reduce, reuse and recycle. She can be reached at callmeloislane@hotmail.com.

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YWCA La Crosse Names Award Recipients

YWCA La Crosse will present the Emily "Sis" Hutson Award to Lynn Berra at the 2019 Circle of Friends luncheon April 17 at 11:30 a.m. at the La Crosse Center Ballroom. Berra, owner of Simple Changes, has been an active volunteer for YWCA La Crosse transitional housing programs. The award is named after a remarkable board president and community volunteer and recognizes outstanding service to YWCA La Crosse. YWCA La Crosse will name Olive Meyers as this year's recipient of the Olga Schlieter Memorial Philanthropic Award. An Onalaska elementary school student, Meyers' active giving and contagious enthusiasm have made a great impact on monthly giving to YWCA La Crosse in the past year. Purchase tickets for \$25 each by calling 608-781-2783 or by texting 41444 to safedonate.us/YWCALaX.



DMI Celebrates Restaurant Week

Join fellow foodies April 22-28 in celebration of Restaurant Week. Hosted by Downtown Mainstreet La Crosse, Restaurant Week is a weeklong food festival celebrating local restaurants and eateries in downtown La Crosse and throughout La Crosse County. During Restaurant Week, visitors and locals may enjoy three-course meals along with beverage pairings. Restaurants will offer prix fixe menu options at tiered level pricing. Learn more at www.restaurantweeklacrosse.com, then come downtown to experience La Crosse one bite at a time.



WWBIC Serves Up Strong Women, Strong Coffee

The UW-La Crosse Small Business Development Center and the Wisconsin Women's Business Initiative Corporation (WWBIC) is hosting the area's first Strong Women, Strong Coffee networking event on Thursday, May 9, 7:30-9 a.m., at the Black River Beach Neighborhood Center in La Crosse. For over 30 years, WWBIC has supported entrepreneurial women; part of this effort has been hosting networking sessions that feature local businesswomen. WWBIC has hosted these sessions for the past four years in other parts of the state; in 2019, it plans to host them quarterly in La Crosse. The first session's speaker will be Betty Christiansen, publisher and editor of *Coulee Region Women*. To register, go to www.wwbic.com.



WWink Becomes Mississippi Valley Writers Guild

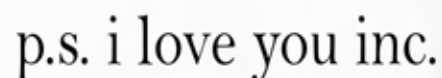
Women Writers Ink has changed their name and more! At their annual spring reading this March, the area writers organization announced their official nonprofit status and their new name, the Mississippi Valley Writers Guild. The organization has been slowly growing and becoming involved with more event planning. They help organize guest author visits and workshops for the literary collaboration Great River Writes in addition to hosting their own critique groups, readings and book fairs. The organization also made the decision to become co-ed and changed their name to be both more inclusive and professional. They're launching their fourth critique group this spring. For more information, go to www.mvwwg.org.

| ACCOMPLISHMENTS |



The Pilates Studio Announces Instructor Training

The Pilates Studio is very excited to bring the first Comprehensive Pilates Teacher Training to our region. Located in Onalaska, The Pilates Studio has partnered with the Pilates Sports Center of Encino, California, to offer instructor training in classical Pilates, with curriculum for different population groups. When you are finished with our program, you will be employable as a Pilates instructor anywhere in the world. Compared to traditional education avenues, this program is a much smaller investment for a comparable income. Helping people discover their strengths, reduce pain and have better quality of life is fantastic. To learn more about Comprehensive Pilates Teacher Training opportunities, call The Pilates Studio at 608-781-2656.



New Nonprofit Aids Grieving Families

Photographer Sarah Schultz and her husband, Brent, have started a new nonprofit, P.S. I Love You, Inc., which creates art pieces using photography, audio and cinematography to help memorialize lost loved ones—from infants lost to miscarriage or stillbirth to adults. P.S. I Love You captures memories of those gone too soon, honors those who are still fighting and remembers the hard times in life that challenge us, showing that the other side of tragedy is hope, the other side of despair is courage and the other side of pain is love. To learn more, call 608-397-5364, email thep.s.iloveyouinc@gmail.com or go to www.psiloveyouinc.org.

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Welcome to Our City

A new sculpture in Onalaska's Great River Landing Park will be unveiled this summer.

BY SUSAN T. HESSEL
Contributed photos

Sometime in the second half of 2019, expect wheels squealing as travelers on the Great River Road in Onalaska stop for photo ops, including selfies, at the Great River Landing Park. The draw will be a 15-foot-high sculpture featuring a bird taking off in an 8-foot-wide cast-bronze circle illuminated with cut glass.

"It will become a symbol of our city, a symbol to take into your heart," says Joyce Diveley, a potter and chair of the Onalaska Arts Council, which spearheads this project. "This is my city. This will be part of our culture, something unique to Onalaska."

Women at the wheel

In addition to Diveley, the council is composed of Linda Lyche, Jennifer Jahr, Mary Cody, Sue Kolve and Mike Hayes. Each brought her or his talents, energy and contacts to help raise money for the project. "They've brought us closer and closer to our \$175,000 goal," Diveley says. "This small group has really worked well together and done their part."



Potter Joyce Diveley represents the Onalaska Arts Council, a group primarily of women spearheading the Great River Landing art project.

The council began with a larger group to gather ideas about what this public art project—showcased in the space at Second Avenue and Main Street—should be. From there, the council worked with the Park and Recreation Department, the Great River Landing Committee and the Onalaska City Council. It held a public hearing, which drew strong support for an art installation.

Honoring nature

The council sought something that had not been done before, would not block the view and would honor nature. The council solicited



The prototype of the art installation slated for Great River Landing Park offers a taste of beauty to come amid great views.

designs from artists and received seven excellent proposals. Local artist Mike Martino was chosen in part because his design enhanced the view instead of blocking it. Visitors can see through the circle to the bluffs, trees and other nature. "It will be a wonderful addition to our city. It adds character," Diveley says.

The outside of the circle will be embossed with images of wildlife. The loop inside will be flat, allowing for a poem, story or sentence about

the city—a contest will be held to decide what those words should be. The 3/4-inch stained glass will be produced in Winona at internationally known Willet Hauser Architectural Glass.

Open to interpretation

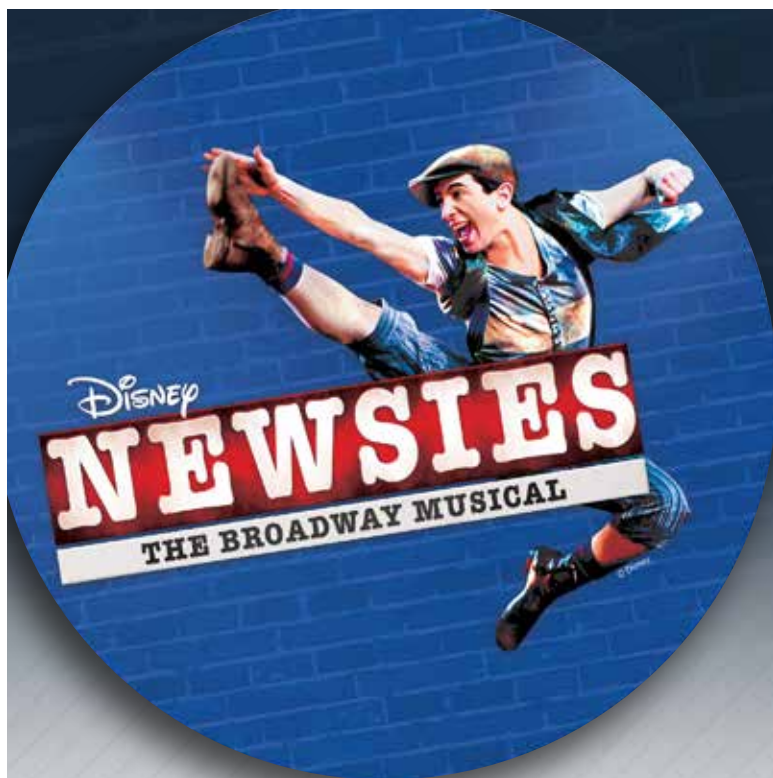
Is the circle an O for Onalaska? "This is an interpretive piece," Diveley says. "The O may be for Onalaska, or for infinity, opportunity or hope. The bird flying off to the sky is a symbol of hope."

Tax-deductible donations supporting the project have come in from the entire region. "This is good for the whole Coulee Region," adds Diveley. "We have had donations from La Crosse and Holmen. Everyone wants this to come to fruition."

Public art actually improves the quality of life. "If you do research on it," says Diveley, "you find cities that have public art have higher property values. People don't realize how important it is until it is there. Then you wonder how you could have gotten along without it." **(crw)**

Susan T. Hessel is a writer, personal historian and recent resident of Onalaska who helped support this project.

You can learn more about the art project at the Onalaska Sculpture page on Facebook and support it through the Onalaska Sculpture page on www.gofundme.com. You can also mail a check to Onalaska Enhancement Foundation, tagged for Onalaska Sculpture, 711 Pleasant Court, Onalaska, WI 54650. All donations are tax deductible.



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SPRING IS IN THE PAIR

Revive your warm-weather wardrobe with this season's trendiest handbags and shoes.

BY PAIGE FORDE

Photos by Jen Towner Photography

Say goodbye to snowy shoes and winter blues! With temperatures on the rise, one of the easiest ways to instantly upgrade your look is to add in a set of refreshed accessories. After this Wisconsin winter, you (and your wardrobe) deserve it.



Romantic

Embrace spring through soft, feminine lines and pastel colors with these accessories from Mainstream Boutique in Onalaska. Neutral strappy sandals are easy to dress up or down, while color-blocked accessories serve as statement pieces. As a bonus, these Mona B accessories are upcycled from various canvas products, making them incredibly sustainable and equally authentic.

Madeline taupe warrior sandals, \$59; Mona B items: purse, \$62; luggage tag, \$14; crossbody bag, \$56.

Boho

If you prefer a more boho look, changing up handbags frequently can help achieve the perfect balance of textures and colors with each outfit. This purse and clutch from Willow in downtown La Crosse make any look instantly polished. While this neutral bag balances out a more patterned or colorful outfit, this deep green clutch adds a modest pop of color to a monotone outfit.

Hobo leather bag, \$288; Noel Asmar genoa suede clutch, \$220.





Casual

This deep taupe handbag with matching sandals from Urban Shoetique in Onalaska is the perfect go-to for accessorizing an everyday look. The intricate woven pattern on this handcrafted bag is a popular trend this spring, while these asymmetrical slide-on shoes give an unexpected edge to an otherwise casual outfit.

Bed Stu cobbler series orchid woven bag, \$245; Antelope low studded slide sandals, \$160.

Beach Chic

Embrace summer with these elegant, unique prints from Touch of Class in downtown La Crosse. This graphic print bag emulates some of the woven accessories seen on this season's top runway shows and is the ideal size to hold all of your springtime essentials. Combine with colorful statement sandals to complete this beach-ready look.

Mephisto leather sandals, \$190; Apprelleduany tote, \$158.



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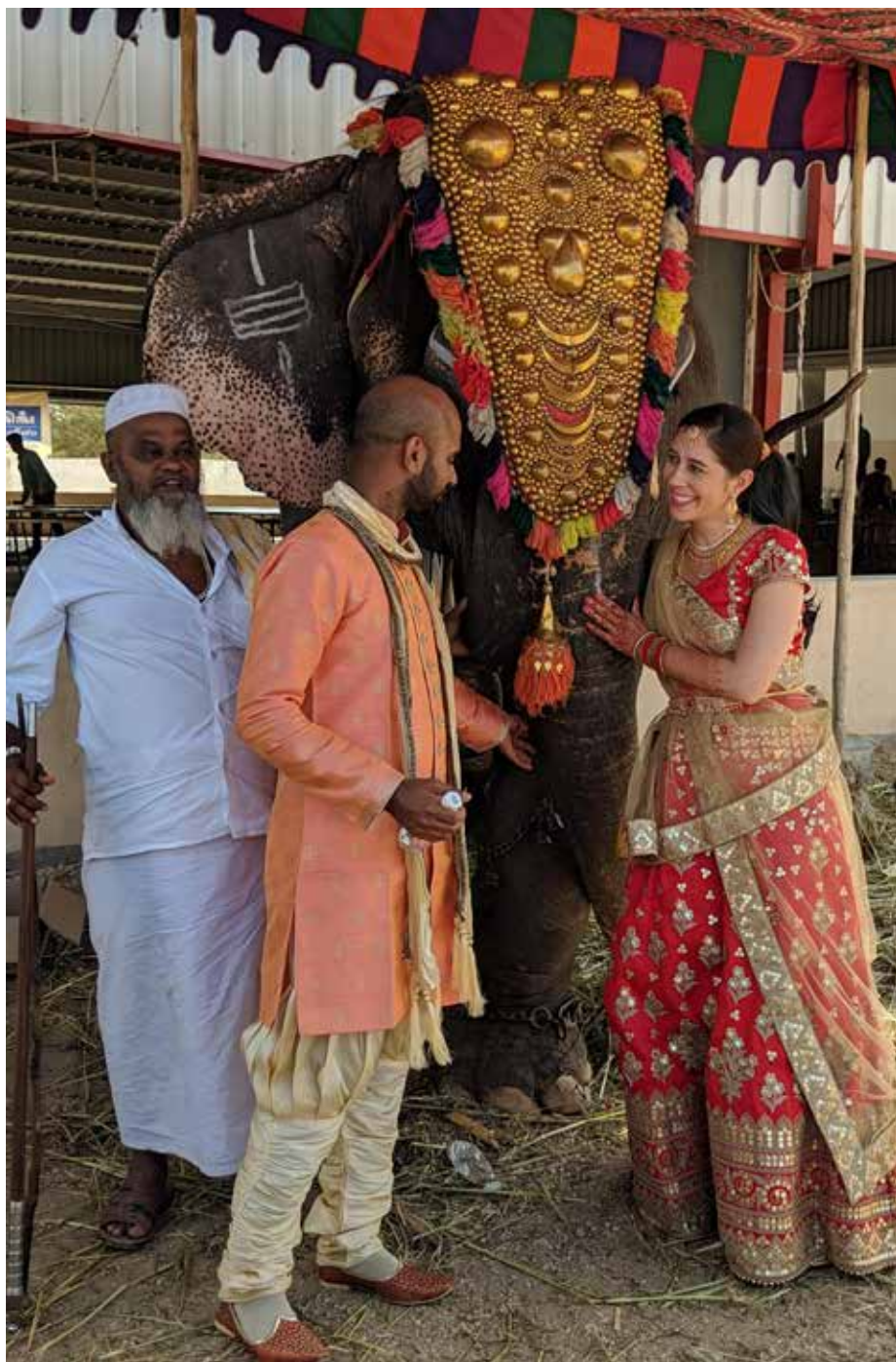
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A WEDDING IN INDIA

A Viroqua family takes the trip of a lifetime to celebrate a daughter's big day.

BY VERONICA KLEIBER
Photos by Veronica and Emily Kleiber



Angela Kleiber and Prithvi Chellamuthu celebrate their wedding in India with family from India and Viroqua in a days-long ceremony the Kleibers will never forget.

Previous page, clockwise from left: One highlight of the elaborate Indian wedding ceremony was an elephant that placed boas around guests' necks. The Kleibers explored Hindu temples such as the Subramania Swamy Murugan Temple near Coimbatore. A view from a cottage overlooks the lagoon at the Taj Kumarakom Resort and Spa in Kerala. The couple is wed in a traditional Indian ceremony.

This page, clockwise from left: Among the festivities was a Mehndi party where women guests, like Emily Kleiber, had their hands decorated with henna in traditional Hindu designs. After the wedding, the family explored the city of Kochi. Traditional wedding foods included colorful local curries. Guests were fitted with custom-made wedding clothes at a shop called Chennai Silks in Coimbatore.



On January 19, the Kleiber family—Joe and Veronica, son Joe Jr. and wife Amy, daughter Emily and husband Chris Estrada, and friends Laura and Bill Meeks—flew to India to celebrate the wedding of their daughter, Angela, and son-in-law, Prithvi, at a traditional Hindu wedding ceremony.

We flew into Mumbai, India's largest city, then flew south to the lovely city Coimbatore, where we were fitted with wedding clothes: two different types of saris for the women and custom-made shirts and dhotis, the traditional skirt, for the men. We feasted on delicious curries and local tropical fruit—pineapples, bananas, papaya, coconut, watermelon and mango—and explored Hindu temples and nearby coconut farms.

The first of the festivities was a Mehndi party hosted by the groom's aunts, where we had our hands decorated with henna in traditional Hindu designs.

Next, we went to Vellakovil, Prithvi's hometown, for the wedding ceremony. Vellakovil has a very large wedding hall that serves

thousands of people at a time—the whole town is invited! One of the high points of the ceremony was an elephant that was trained to put flower boas over the heads of the wedding guests with its trunk. The food was delicious: local curries and fried breads served on banana leaves and eaten with our hands.

After the wedding, we traveled to a resort in Kerala, on India's largest lake, where we relaxed on a riverboat as we slowly cruised around the lake. The weather was beautiful as was the scenery. Later we traveled to Kochi, a modern southwest coastal city on the Arabian Sea, to do a little shopping and sightseeing. It is a city full of museums and art galleries, and while there we saw an intense play about Lord Krishna taken from the Bhagavad Gita and put on by the local community playhouse.

Everywhere we went in India, the people were kind and generous and excited to show off the best of their country. As Joe Jr. often remarked, this was a trip of a lifetime. (crw)

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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.

Business Over Breakfast La Crosse Area Chamber of Commerce, 4th Wed. every month, 7:30-8:45 a.m. Preregister 608-784-4807, lacrossechamber.com.

Coulee Region Professional Women (CRPW) 4th Tues. of each month, Shelli Kult, crpwomen@gmail.com.

La Crosse Area Chamber of Commerce monthly breakfast meeting. 2nd Mon. of each month, 7 a.m., Radisson. Admission is \$5 and includes breakfast, lacrossechamber.com.

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

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

League of Women Voters 2nd Tues. of each month, noon, Radisson Hotel, Nancy Hill, 608-782-1753, nfhill@centurytel.net.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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, Schmidt'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, Kasey Heikel 608-519-8080, drkasey@naturallyalignedchiro.com.

CALENDAR EVENTS

Apr. 4, Patchouli: "The Landscape of Guitar," 7:30 p.m., Heider Center for the Arts, www.heidercenter.org.

Apr. 6, Women's Fund of Greater La Crosse Spring Fling, 10:30 a.m.-1 p.m., Radisson Ballroom, www.womensfundlacrosse.org.

Apr. 6, Dr. Seuss' *The Cat in the Hat*, 9 a.m., 11 a.m., and 1 p.m., Frederick Theatre, Morris Hall, UW-La Crosse.

Apr. 6, Seven River Boy Scouts Pinewood Derby, 9 a.m.-1 p.m., ULTA Court, Valley View Mall, www.myvalleyview.com.

Apr. 8, Monty Python's *Spamalot*, 7:30 p.m., Viterbo Fine Arts Center.

Apr. 9, Healthy Indian Cooking Class, 6-7:30 p.m., People's Food Co-op, La Crosse, www.pfc.coop.

Apr. 10-13, The Frogs, 7:30 p.m., Winona State University.

Apr. 11, Alter Eagles, 7:30 p.m., Viterbo Fine Arts Center.

Apr. 11, *Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus*, 7:30 p.m., Lyche Theatre, Weber Center for the Performing Arts.

Apr. 11, Homemade Pesto Class, 6-7:30 p.m., People's Food Co-op, La Crosse, www.pfc.coop.

Apr. 12-13, CRHS Make a Friend for Life Pet Adoption,

1-5 p.m., JCPenney Court, Valley View Mall, www.myvalleyview.com.

Apr. 12-14, River Trail Cycles Annual Spring Sale.

Apr. 13, Women's Health Fair, all day, Valley View Mall, www.myvalleyview.com.

Apr. 13-14, Spring Gift & Craft Show, 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Sat., 10 a.m.-3 p.m., Sun., Onalaska Omni Center.

Apr. 16, Harlem Globetrotters, 7 p.m., La Crosse Center, www.lacrossecenter.com.

Apr. 17, YWCA La Crosse Circle of Friends luncheon, 11:30 a.m., La Crosse Center Ballroom, 608-781-2783.

Apr. 17, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 7 p.m., Lyche Theatre, Weber Center for the Performing Arts.

Apr. 25, Cooking Class: Goat Milk Soap, 6-7:30 p.m., People's Food Co-op, La Crosse, www.pfc.coop.

Apr. 26-27, Spring Rummage Sale, 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Fri., 8 a.m.-11 a.m. Sat., Mary, Mother of the Church Parish.

April 26-May 4, *The Country Wife*, 7:30 p.m. Wed.-Sat., 2 p.m. Sun., Toland Theatre, Center for the Arts, UW-La Crosse.

Apr. 27, Affinity for Dance: "Waves," 4:30 & 7:30 p.m., The Pump House, www.thepumphouse.org.

Apr. 27, Between the Bluffs Beer, Wine & Cheese Festival, Oktoberfest Grounds, La Crosse, www.betweenthebluffsbeerfest.com.

Apr. 27, Walk MS 2019, 10 a.m., La Crosse Center, South Hall, www.walkms.org.

Apr. 28, Earth Fair, 11 a.m.-5 p.m., Myrick Park, La Crosse, www.earthfairlacrosse.com.

May 2, Home Free, 7:30-10 p.m., La Crosse Center, www.lacrossecenter.com.

May 2-3, Dance Kaleidoscope 2019, 7:30 p.m., La Croix Black Box Theatre, Viterbo University.

May 3-4, Mid West Music Fest Winona, 507-494-8079, www.midwestmusicfest.org.

May 4, Aging Gracefully Expo, all day, Valley View Mall, www.myvalleyview.com.

May 4, Festival Foods Grandad Half Marathon, 6 a.m., Grandad Bluff, www.grandadhalfmarathon.com.

May 4, Old Style Chapter's Beer & Brewery Collectibles Show, 9 a.m.-2 p.m., Onalaska Omni Center, Contact Erik Forde at (608) 792-9782.

May 5, Cinco de Mayo Celebration, 12-5:15 p.m., Children's Museum of La Crosse, www.funmuseum.org.

May 5, Spring 3-on-3 Basketball, 9 a.m., Onalaska YMCA, www.laxymca.org.

May 5, 14th Annual Mayfair Arts Fair, 10 a.m.-3 p.m., West Salem High School.

May 9, Michael W. Smith & Newsboys, 7 p.m., La Crosse Center, www.lacrossecenter.com.

May 9, Strong Women, Strong Coffee, 7:30-9 a.m., Black River Beach Neighborhood Center, www.wwbic.com.

May 10-11, Kinesis Dance Theatre, 7:30 p.m., Toland Theatre, Center for the Arts, UW-La Crosse.

May 10-26, Newsies, 7:30 p.m. Thurs.-Sat., 2:00 p.m. Sun., La Crosse Community Theatre, www.lacrossecommunitytheatre.org.

May 11, Community Lapidary Day, Coulee Rock Club, 10 a.m.-3 p.m., Community Room, 515 Quincy St., Onalaska.

May 17-18, Mid West Music Fest La Crosse, 507-494-8079, www.midwestmusicfest.org.

May 17-18, DockDogs Aquatic Competition, 4-9:30 p.m., Onalaska Omni Center.

May 18, Latin Fire Driftless Chamber Music Concert, 7-9 p.m., Viroqua Temple Theatre, Viroqua.

May 18-29, Westby Syttende Mai Norwegian Festival, www.westbywi.com.

May 19, Wild Edibles of the Midwest, 1-4 p.m., Eagle Bluff Learning Center, Lanesboro, MN.

June 1-2, Rock, Gem and Mineral Show, Coulee Rock Club, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Sat., 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Sun., Onalaska Omni Center.



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