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women

AREA HOME AND GARDEN MAGAZINE

LOCAL LEADERS

A WISE Effort
from 7 Rivers Alliance

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Spring's
Leading Trends

Maureen Freedland
Leading by Example





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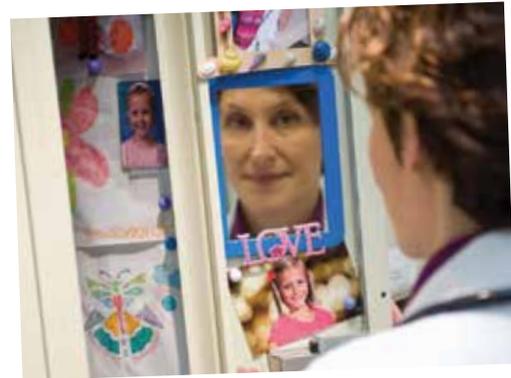
Shared duties and a strong staff help Kara Tomashek develop a trio of businesses.

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Revitalize your wardrobe and step into this spring's leading looks.

Pictured on cover and above: Maureen Freedland, La Crosse County Board. Photos by Jordana Snyder Photography.



KNOWING THEIR BODIES SAVED THEIR LIVES

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Like many women, I suspect, I don't think of myself as a leader. I don't hold a "leadership" title, like manager or chair or CEO, and I'm fine with that. I'm very content hunkering down behind the scenes, getting my work done and doing it well, getting others what they need on time and encouraging, empowering and cheering them on to do their own good work as well. I think of a leader as the person in the spotlight, the one taking charge and enjoying the attention granted to a person holding a particular title. Me a leader? Not so much.

When I first contacted Maureen Freedland about appearing on the cover of our leadership issue, I got a similar response. "Me?" she asked. "I don't really think of myself as a leader. Have you considered ..." and she ticked off a list of highly qualified and well-known women leaders in town.

I assured her it was she who we wanted, and I ticked off my own list of reasons why. It looked a lot like the list of qualities I

wrote above: Someone who, quietly or not-so-quietly, works behind the scenes for the betterment of a community. Someone who does her work well, with others benefiting from it. Someone who stands up for others with less of a voice, who encourages and empowers and cheers others on so they, too, can do the good work they were meant to do. Maureen Freedland's life is a long litany of examples of just this type of work. In my mind, I told her, that made her a leader.

"My hope," I added, "is that other women read your story and realize that they are leaders, too." And then I had to laugh, because it had just dawned on me, right there on the phone with Maureen, that my own description of a leader defined me as one as well.

If so, I'll take that title. And so have all the women featured in this issue of *Coulee Region Women*, who are making change and cheering others on all over the region, for the betterment of our business communities, educational institutions, shops and restaurants, and for the betterment of all, no matter who they are or how much of a voice they have. You'll meet business leaders like Lisa Herr and millennial professionals, all of whom strive to establish and maintain a strong workforce in the Coulee Region. You'll meet leaders of the heart and soul, like the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration, who tackle some of the deepest social issues of our area. And "everywomen" like Glenna Temple, Viterbo's new president, combine skills and personality to be true servant leaders.

You'll meet the educators who train our local chefs, learn you're not alone navigating difficult journeys such as divorce, enjoy "leading" fashion and much more in this issue. And as you do, take a moment to reflect on the important ways you are a leader—a mentor, a role model—to others, perhaps as a mother, a grandmother, a coworker or a friend.

Betty

coulee region women

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FIFTH-GRADE SMARTS

You once learned which planet is the biggest in our solar system, but if you were in front of an audience—without Internet access—would you come up with the correct answer? (It's Jupiter.)

Now you can find out just how well 16 local celebrities will do under the same circumstances. The celebrities will have one thing you may not, however, and that is a fifth-grade student to help them out. The competition is all part of Coulee Region RSVP's ninth annual Are you Smarter Than a Fifth Grader? fundraising event. Last year's event raised a record of more than \$83,000.

Stop by the Center Court at Valley View Mall on Saturday, April 22, from 10 a.m. to noon. If you'd like to support one of the celebrities or one of the schools being represented by fifth graders, you can make your donation at the event or on the RSVP website: www.rsvplax.org.



A WOMEN'S FUND FLING

What could be more fun than ushering in the new season with a group of your best girlfriends at the Women's Fund annual Spring Fling? Laughs and creativity abound as groups of eight to 10 vie to win the best themed table award and individuals pull out all the stops to win the best dressed award. If you feel more comfortable leaving the costume at home, fear not, there's plenty of fun for all. The event includes a silent auction, a brief program and a sit-down lunch. Make plans for Saturday, April 29, from 10:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the event's new venue: the Radisson Center, 200 Jay St., La Crosse. Tickets are \$30 each or \$250 for a table of eight. Register at www.womensfundlacrosse.org.



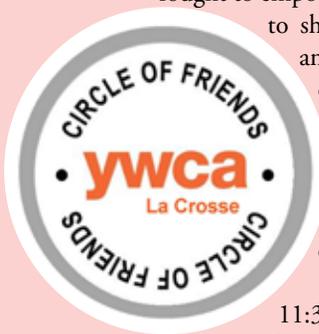
OPEN DOORS DOWNTOWN

On Saturday, May 13, approximately 10 historic buildings in downtown La Crosse will be open for the public to come in, wander around and get a glimpse of the people and places of a bygone era—and it's all free of charge. Downtown Mainstreet Inc. hosted the Open Doors event last year, and it was so successful, they're doing it again. The buildings are open for self-guided, open house tours from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Want even more insight? Join a walking tour led by architectural historian Barbara Kooiman from 11 a.m. to noon beginning at the corner of Second and Main streets. For a complete list of all participating historic sites, go to www.lacrossedowntown.com.

CELEBRATE FRIENDS WITH THE YWCA

For more than 110 years, YWCA La Crosse has fought to empower women and eliminate racism. You're invited to share in that mission at the YWCA La Crosse annual Circle of Friends luncheon and awards on Wednesday, April 19. You'll hear stories of hope and inspiration from people whose lives have been positively affected through the work and programs of YWCA La Crosse. The organization will also honor its 2017 Volunteer of the Year and Philanthropist of the Year.

The Circle of Friends luncheon begins at 11:30 a.m. in the La Crosse Center Ballroom, 300 Harborview Plaza. Tickets are \$25 each or \$250 for a table of 10. Reserve your seats by texting YWICALax to 41444 or by going to safedonate.us/YWICALax.



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If you ask Maureen Freedland what it is that makes her a leader, she struggles to find an answer. “I don’t try to be a leader,” she laughs. “I just try to figure out how to get the job done with integrity.”

However, it is her unwitting practice of leading by doing that has marked Freedland as a community leader. “My best way of serving is by finding issues that count and accomplishing a goal,” she says—a trait that, among an extensive list of others, has led her since her teen years to become a neighborhood advocate, a legal aid attorney and a five-term County Board Supervisor in La Crosse. “It’s kind of eerie how this desire to impact my community has been a common thread throughout my entire life.”

Jumping in to help

Born and raised in New Orleans by parents who emigrated from Czechoslovakia as Holocaust survivors, Freedland grew up in a family that stressed education and conformity as a means of blending in with a new culture dramatically different than the one they left behind. Having experienced religious persecution, Freedland’s family was sensitive to bias and encouraged Freedland and her brother to embrace the opportunities that being an American offered. However, as somewhat of a self-described rebel, Freedland was drawn outside the confines of her family’s ideals and often explored the neighborhoods surrounding her home. “It was in these neighborhoods that I learned about poverty. It was eye-opening, and I found myself jumping in to every opportunity I had to help based on what I had seen.”

A Lifelong Leader

From neighborhood advocacy to legal service to county leadership, Maureen Freedland stands up for her community.

BY MARTHA KEEFFE

Photo by Jordana Snyder Photography



Freedland at the La Crosse County Landfill. She serves as chair and co-chair of the policy boards regarding landfill and recycling.



Freedland is also a Jail Visitation Volunteer—keeping children occupied with books, games and conversation while their parents are video-conferencing with an inmate.



Freedland (right) attends an ERA rally with her mother in New Orleans in 1982.

Inspired by that experience and fascinated with the development of societies and cultures—specifically how the roles of women are affected by changes in their home environments—Freedland began her post-secondary studies in anthropology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison after attending Emory University in Atlanta. However, applying her academic knowledge to real-life situations proved inefficient, and Freedland sought a new outlet to effect change. On the advice of her mother, she earned a law degree from Loyola University Law School in New Orleans and began to work directly with the social justice issues to which she had always gravitated. It was a decision she has never regretted and one that became a catalyst for her lifelong interest in community development.

“It was the ’60s and ’70s, and there was an attitude of working on social issues as a community,” Freedland says. “At the same time, law was becoming a way to bring positive change in addition to its traditional roles in corporate or business settings. Public-interest law clinics were beginning to actively seek out disadvantaged people and organizations that needed help.”

Assuring equal justice

Bolstered by this newfound awareness, Freedland dove into her position as a legal services lawyer and tackled issues on behalf of vulnerable low-income and elderly clients. She was also an assistant attorney general for the State of Louisiana, representing the interests of the public. Following her marriage to Dr. Robert Freedland and a subsequent move to the Midwest, where they

raised three children, Freedland continued to represent low-income people on consumer, public assistance and housing concerns on a pro bono basis with Legal Action of Wisconsin. It was a service she was proud to have provided for 10 years. “I did this because assuring equal justice to those who could not otherwise afford an attorney, to me, was the right thing to do.”

Inviting women to lead

However, not one to be alone in the effort, Freedland recruits and encourages women to become actively involved in their communities. Through her enduring participation within the community, Freedland has had the opportunity to meet and work with women from all walks of life who not only possess a wide range of interests but bring with them a variety of skills and talents. For Freedland, these women provide a remarkable pool of possibilities.

“Women tend to be reluctant to take on leadership roles because they don’t think they have the skills or experience,” she says. “But I’ve seen what they have to offer; I’ve seen their talents come through when they volunteer. That’s when I—with the help of others like fellow County Board Supervisor and Chair Tara Johnson—like to help them figure out where their strengths lie and how we can work together to bring about change.”

In turn, this approach to teamwork gives Freedland the ability to lead from a position she knows best: handling behind-the-scenes details that make a project a success. Whether that requires putting in hours of research, writing endless emails or sitting down to talk with decision makers, this is the area in which

Freedland shines and one that, she admits, often suits her better than being in charge. “I’m okay with being the president or not,” she says, attesting to the fact that she often relies on the support of others for strength and confidence. “It’s the group that carries you.”

Buoyed by the energy and cooperation of her friends and colleagues, Freedland remains visibly active in the community both as a public servant and as a volunteer, where she is a strong advocate for economic justice, equal opportunities and mutual respect among all people. In addition to currently serving in county government, where she is on the Executive Committee and is chair of the Public Works and Infrastructure Committee, she is on the board of Midwest Environmental Advocates, the president of the La Crosse County Jail Ministry and co-vice president of Compassionate Community Faith Alliance, where she says she feels privileged to engage in interfaith community justice work, unlike her parents, who didn’t have the same opportunities. Though the list of Freedland’s commitments seems long, it is merely a sampling of what makes her dossier complete while she lives out her Jewish faith through the work she does in the community.

Next on Freedland’s agenda is an invitation to women to join her as leaders in our community. “Dare to venture into the community for a cause you believe in,” she says. “Connect with others; act on your convictions. You’ll be surprised at how much can be accomplished if we work together.” *(crw)*

Martha Keefe lives, writes and works to get a few things done in La Crosse.

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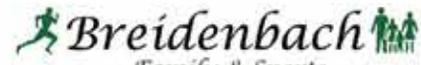
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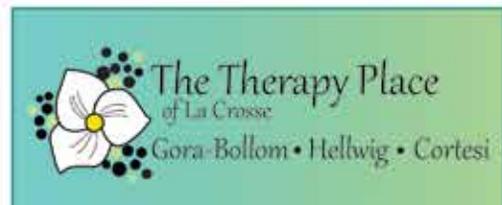


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Lisa Herr (second from left), collaborates with her staff at 7 Rivers Alliance.

Building a Business Community

Lisa Herr leads the 7 Rivers Alliance in building a local workforce.

BY ANASTASIA PENCHI
Contributed photos

When local businesses succeed, the communities and people around them thrive.

But when businesses can't get employees, the effects can be devastating. And it's not just a matter of training more locals to do the work, says Lisa Herr, CEO of the 7 Rivers Alliance in La Crosse. Our area has more people leaving to work elsewhere than coming in. Add in low unemployment and the fact that the number of local workers older than 60 is expected to increase from 25 to 33 percent during the next five years, and there is a serious challenge ahead.

That's why Herr is leading the charge to plan for business needs by focusing on employee training, talent recruitment (bringing others here) and talent retention (keeping them here once they arrive) through the Workforce Innovation for a Strong Economy (WISE) Plan.



Lisa Herr, CEO of 7 Rivers Alliance

The creation of this "regional talent plan" focuses on everyone from the entry-level worker to the top manager. The project was funded jointly by the U.S. Economic Development Administration, the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation and community partners. Its goal is to help local employers fill jobs for the next 10 years.

"We have to do something, or we will not be able to support our companies that are here," Herr says.

Addressing barriers to employment

The 7 Rivers Alliance was created in 2003 to support and advance the economic vitality of the area, and it is using its newfound funds to bring in nationally known consultants to create a blueprint through meetings with business leaders, community leaders and various work groups.

For three days during one week in February,

consultants met with more than 100 businesses in the alliance's region—defined as three counties in Minnesota, two counties in Iowa and nine counties in Wisconsin—to help identify best practices and better understand workforce gaps.

Input is also being gathered by local experts in the areas of child care, housing and transportation to address barriers workers face. Herr offers one example of a local challenge: There is public transportation from Lansing, Iowa, to La Crosse, but it picks up at 10 a.m. and drops back off at 2 p.m.

"That's excellent for a doctor appointment, but that doesn't work for a job," Herr says.

Hidden gems

Herr knows there are hidden employee gems in every community—she hired one to work for her (Chin-Chin Minniear, Manager of Strategic Initiatives) and she has been one herself. A career woman in Washington State, she was "on the fast track to be a college president" when she woke up with the desire to be a mother.

She adopted her daughter, Grace, 10, from Guatemala, but the story doesn't end there. Her staff insisted she "get a life" and signed her up on a dating website. Within five weeks she was dating a pediatrician who was working on an American Indian reservation more than 1,200 miles away. Soon they were both traveling frequently to spend time together despite a four-and-a-half-hour commute. On the wall of Herr's office in the Associated Center, located at the corner of Seventh and La Crosse streets, are some professional "family" pictures that then-boyfriend Tom Herr insisted she schedule one day after they had been dating for a while.

"He proposed right after those pictures were taken," she says, beaming.

The couple identified three states where they wanted to live, and Tom was offered a job at Vernon Memorial Healthcare in Viroqua. Herr saw the posting for her job at the 7 Rivers Alliance the day she arrived.

Passion for community

Herr says the passion for her work comes in part from her passion for the community she now considers home. Grace is a student at the School of Technology and Arts I in La Crosse, and Herr has joined Rotary. The family has a home that's located halfway between her and her husband's jobs.

Herr says she strives to be a good role model for other women, and she credits her success to the many professional women who took the time to mentor her as she rose through the ranks.

While she knows her task at the 7 Rivers Alliance is daunting, she also knows it is important for the continued vitality of the area. She must carefully navigate the interests of three different states, two university cities (La Crosse and Winona) and many rural communities—all with very different needs.

She encourages all interested businesses to contact the 7 Rivers Alliance to give feedback on its project and learn how it can best support them.

"We have to get aggressive," Herr said. "Our businesses cannot continue to thrive if they don't have workers." 

Anastasia Penchi is a graduate of UW-La Crosse and a longtime Coulee Region writer who has written for many area publications.



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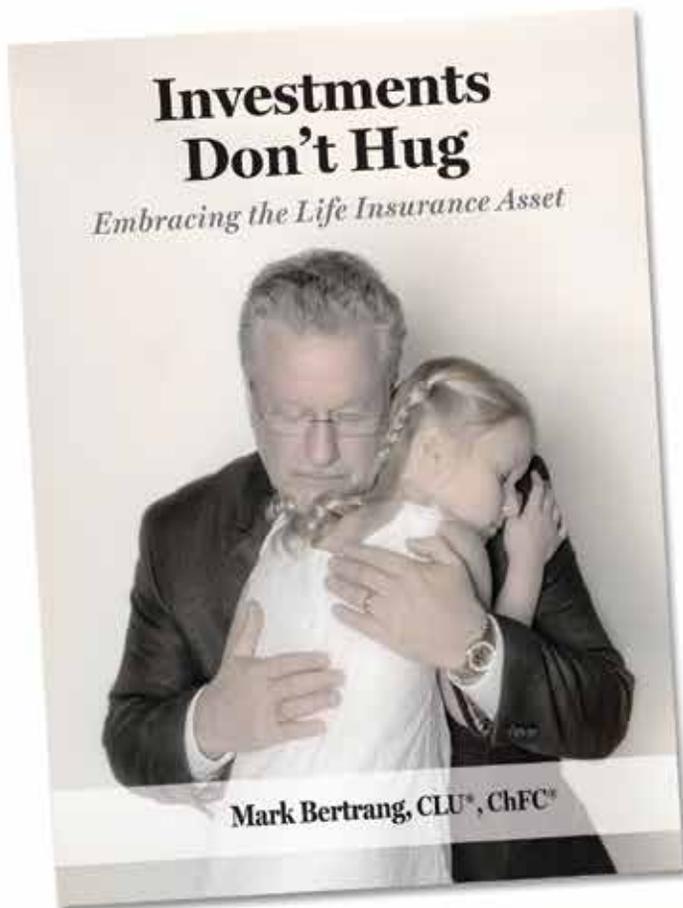
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EXCERPT

It should have taken only six short minutes from the gymnasium floor, where Jim had collapsed during the first few minutes of that winter basketball game, to arrive to the sterile regional hospital emergency room. Though the distance Mary was traveling was twice that which would bring Jim to the hospital, she arrived before the ambulance.

"I don't remember arriving at the hospital," Mary said. "I just remember standing there, asking if he was there yet; and he wasn't. So, I just stood by the door and waited for what seemed like an eternity. They worked on him at the school, and they continued to work on him in the ambulance and all the way to the hospital. It seemed like it was taking forever. I remember someone telling me that he was coming in, and that his skin color would be blue. They were still trying to revive him. I was in the emergency room when they brought him in. As they worked on him, I held his hand."

As you read "Investments Don't Hug," have a highlighter nearby to mark important passages, and a pen at hand to make notes within the margins of its pages. It's also wise to have a box of tissues close by, as you pause to take in the emotional significance of its message through the tears shed by the narrators and the author.

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Young Professionals of the Coulee Region offers networking opportunities.



Rotary After Hours members engage in community service.



An Ugly Sweater 5k is one of many Rotary After Hours activities.



Young Professionals learn from area employers.

LEADING IN BUSINESS

Young professional groups lead the way in creating a vibrant business community.

BY JESSIE FOSS | Contributed photos

Strong, vibrant communities with involved leaders as citizens is the ideal for many cities in the Coulee Region. Young Professionals of the Coulee Region and Rotary After Hours are two area organizations aiming to do just that for young professionals in the area.

“The Chamber’s Young Professionals group has realized this group has a voice in how to move La Crosse from good to great,” says Vicki Markussen, Executive Director of the La Crosse Area Chamber of Commerce, the organization that started Young Professionals of the Coulee Region. “[Group members] value the small-business charm of our community as critical to attracting and retaining talent.”

Founded in 2011, Rotary After Hours is composed of people who share a passion for community service and friendship. The club is nearing 80 members, and while people of any age are welcome to join, its members are largely millennials.

Rotary After Hours: Service before self

Rotary After Hours is a part of Rotary International, a global organization made up of more than 34,000 clubs, whose goal is to come together to make positive, lasting change in communities at home and abroad. Rotary’s motto, “Service before Self,” is something that Rotary After Hours takes seriously and in part what drew President Laura Hundt to the group.

“To see a group of young professionals come together to give back in our community and put that motto into action is amazing,” she says.

Rotary After Hours offers its members both social and volunteer opportunities. Past activities include happy hours, scavenger hunts, Salvation Army bell ringing, volunteering at local festivals and building a school in Africa. The organization also sponsors an annual ugly sweater 5K run and mini-golf tournament.

“As president of the club for the current year, I’m astounded by the drive that each of our members has to give back,” Hundt says. “If anyone is looking to give back, to learn more about our community and meet new like-minded young professionals, Rotary is the place to be. I am so proud to say that I’m a member of Rotary After Hours.”

President-Elect Austin Kaiser sought out Rotary After Hours as a way of making new friends. She was new to the area and felt the organization fit her demographic—young professionals who are motivated, ambitious and enjoy social activities. One of the biggest benefits she has found being a member of the organization is the leadership experience she has gained.

“As a young professional just out of college starting a career, it can be very difficult to move up into management or leadership positions within your career because you don’t have any experience,” Kaiser says. “It can be hard to gain this experience at work when you are surrounded by people that have worked at your company longer than you have been alive. Being a leader in Rotary has helped me gain leadership experience that I can apply at work.”

Young Professionals of the Coulee Region

Members of Young Professionals of the Coulee Region started about five years ago as a way to help create and grow a business climate while attracting and retaining the region’s next generation of business leaders through social and community involvement. The group holds monthly educational luncheons and quarterly socials as well as quarterly connection events. Group membership includes attendance to one monthly educational event and one other event. Other events include Commotions to Connect: a movement activity,

Cocktails to Connect: an after-hours event, Coffee to Connect: a morning gathering, or Community to Connect: an outreach event.

“Many businesses use the Young Professionals organization as a way to engage people new to the professional world or the community,” Markussen says. “Through the Young Professionals group, people form an instant network of friends. In some cases, these become their best friends moving forward.”

Membership has been steadily increasing. In January 2015, the group had 60 members. As of December 2016, the organization boasts 185 members.

Group members have played an integral part in providing feedback on challenges, including affordable rental options, for young professionals. Markussen says that young professionals uniting with other business and city leaders are helping spark interesting ideas and sharing their feedback in ways that make the La Crosse area an attractor for young talent.

Moving ahead, Young Professionals of the Coulee Region will be focusing on another need the group has identified: mentoring, or, as Markussen refers to it, coaching. The Chamber will be working on developing a system with more than 675 businesses to create relationships in which young professionals are learning from experienced professionals and vice versa.

More information on Young Professionals of the Coulee Region can be found at www.lacrossechamber.com/young-professionals, and more information on Rotary After Hours can be found at www.rotaryafterhours.org. (crw)

Jessie Foss is a freelance writer who lives in La Crosse. As a young professional herself, she enjoyed hearing about others involved in the community in such positive ways.

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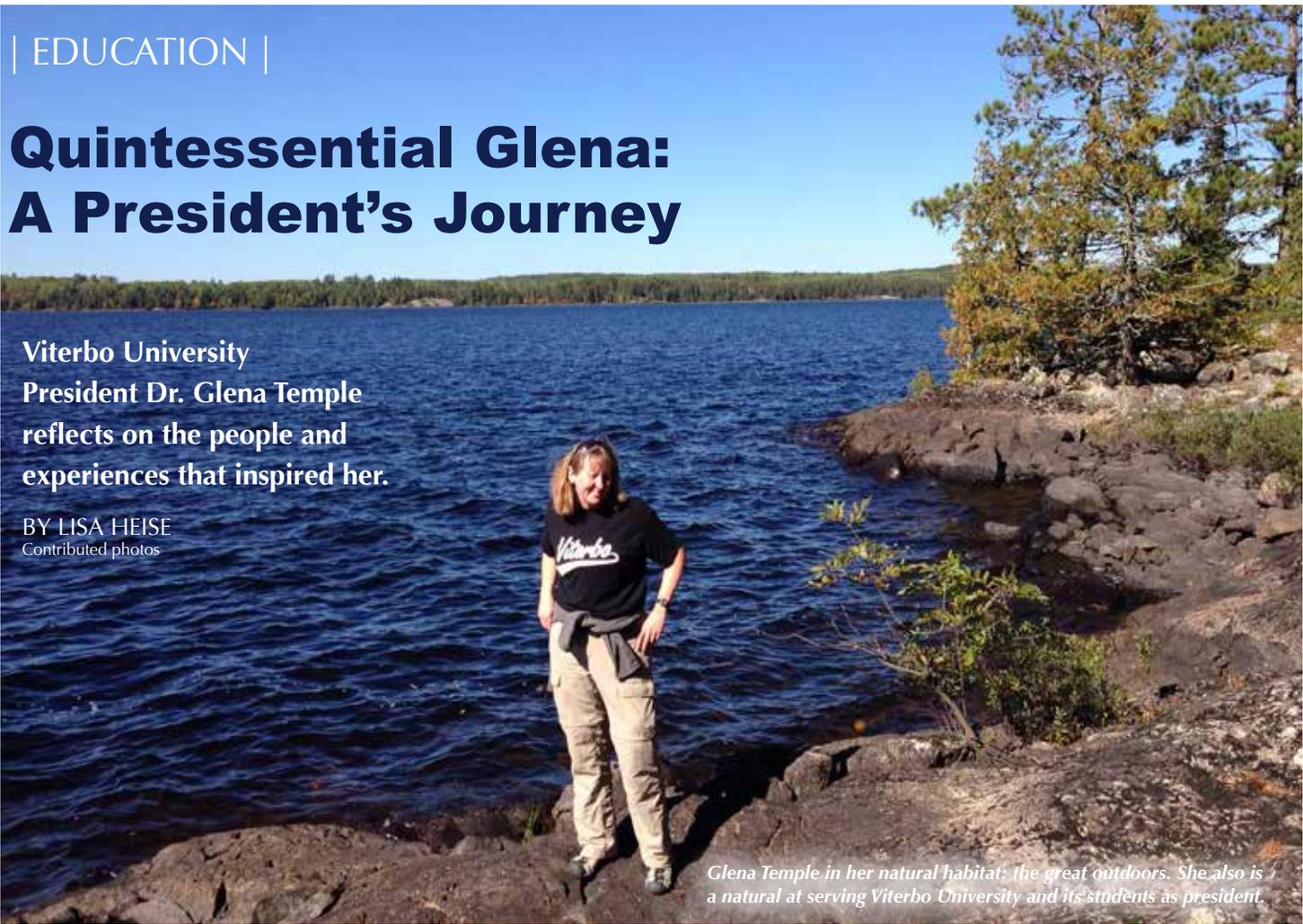
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Quintessential Glena: A President's Journey

Viterbo University
President Dr. Glena Temple
reflects on the people and
experiences that inspired her.

BY LISA HEISE
Contributed photos



Glenn Temple in her natural habitat: the great outdoors. She also is a natural at serving Viterbo University and its students as president.

In her early years of college, it didn't take long for Glena Temple to realize that a major in pre-med might not be right for her. She loved science and helping people, but she learned the hard way that she passed out at the sight of blood. At first, "I felt like a failure," Temple recalls, but she was resilient. A volunteer experience at a local school fostered a newfound love of teaching, and soon she had a fresh passion to pursue. Fast-forward to the present: That passion has brought Temple to the position of president at Viterbo University.

out her educational experience: from large research universities to two-year institutions to a private liberal arts college.

She loved her experience at Viterbo and felt especially inspired by the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration, its founding body. Temple remembers interviewing Sister Mary Ann Gschwind of the FSPA about getting more women into higher education and being challenged by her response. "She told me that it's my work, that it's everyone's work. She empowered me and made it personal about what I'm doing, mentoring and nominating instead of waiting for others to build those paths." Following Gschwind's advice, Temple moved into a leadership role as an academic dean at Viterbo. After working in the UW system for a year, Temple returned to Viterbo as the Vice President for Academic Affairs. This year, she became president of Viterbo University.

Building paths for women

In addition to her excitement for educating, Temple developed an appetite for research, which led her to a doctoral program at University of California, Riverside. Upon completion of that degree, the New York native found herself in the Midwest conducting postdoctoral research while teaching part time at a community college. As she experienced different models of higher education, says Temple, "I became fascinated at how education systems work, at the purpose of each and how they accomplish their goals." This fascination led her to pursue a master's degree in Higher Education Administration.

Temple met her husband, Stephen, during her postdoctoral work in Minnesota. When his career path led him to La Crosse, she joined him when a teaching position opened at Viterbo University. This rounded

Helping others succeed

Temple has faced challenges in her journey. Being a woman in the sciences came with unique hurdles; balancing her career aspirations with her husband's has



Glenn Temple, president of Viterbo University

also presented a puzzle at times. Additionally, notes Temple, “I’m an introvert, and most of the presidents I know have been extroverted,” which led to reflection on whether her innate qualities were compatible with a leadership position at the senior-most level.

Past President Rick Artman has been supportive in helping the transition go smoothly, notes Temple, and she’s confident moving forward in her new role. She finds joy in seeing students and employees succeed and thrive, and she also enjoys “digging into data to try to understand how we can better achieve our mission.” Temple hopes to send the message that even in the president’s office, she can focus on individuals and their successes. She wants to be approachable, to help others reach their goals.

Leadership is about passion

Temple encourages women who are interested in leadership, particularly in academics, to “understand what gives you joy and what is your passion.” With the demands of leadership responsibilities, she notes, if you’re not following your passion, the job becomes difficult.

In her free time, Temple enjoys traveling, kayaking and bird watching. A self-proclaimed science nerd, she loves outdoor activities and enjoys the Boundary Waters area in northern Minnesota. During the winter, Temple says she is still looking for that hobby that will get her outside—“It’s so cold!” she laughs. Luckily, she finds time in winter to read. She’s a big fan of Jane Austen.

Grete Stock-Kupperman, Director of Viterbo’s Library and Instructional Design, shares her “unqualified admiration” for Temple. Having worked with Temple as a colleague, then having been directly supervised by Temple, Stock-Kupperman knows her well. In addition to Temple’s “incredible work ethic” and “astounding” productivity,



A “humble leader,” Temple thrives on helping students and employees succeed and reach their goals.

Stock-Kupperman discusses Temple’s character. “She has an amazing ability to clearly articulate her vision ... but she shares the creation and enactment of that vision with everyone around her. She’s a humble leader; she embraces others to rise and be highlighted.”

These qualities become apparent near the end of our interview, when Temple says, “Thank you for writing about women and the great things they’re doing. You know who else you might want to consider ...” and then talks at length about local women she admires. That, says Stock-Kupperman, is “quintessential Glenna.” 

Lisa Heise lives, teaches and writes in La Crosse.



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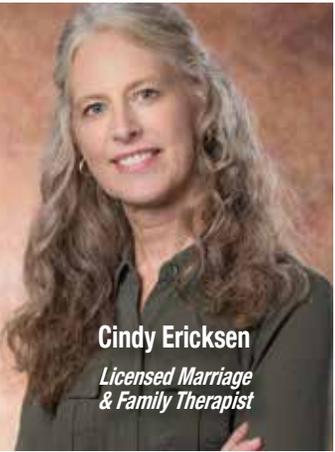
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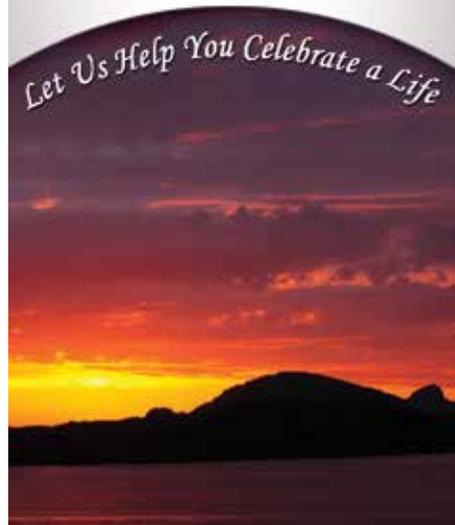
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LEADING FROM THE HEART

The Sisters of the FSPA embody servant leadership in La Crosse.

BY ELIZABETH D. LIPPMAN
Contributed photos



Sister Karen Lueck serves as president of the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration.

If attention is, as the French philosopher Simone Weil wrote, “the rarest and purest form of generosity,” the women of La Crosse’s Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration (FSPA) embody a profound generosity of spirit. From empowering victims of modern slavery to advocating for immigrants and providing a warm space for those who are homeless, the Sisters’ commitment to justice and peace fuels deep-hearted ministry to the most vulnerable and, too often, invisible.

“Our overall mission as FSPA is to serve the needs of the poor and marginalized and to be a loving presence wherever we are,” says Sister Karen Lueck, FSPA president.

The group focuses on recognizing and empowering “leaders in every chair,” Lueck says, and emphasizes collaboration with community members and organizations. “We bring a Franciscan voice to the conversations,” Lueck explains. “Together we are building a web of vibrant relationships and accomplishing things that could never be accomplished alone.”

Vitally entwined with their values are their ongoing efforts to eradicate human trafficking and homelessness, spearheaded by Sisters Marlene Weisenbeck and Karen Neuser.



Sister Marlene Weisenbeck leads the La Crosse Task Force to Eradicate Modern Slavery.

Eradicating modern slavery

According to the Polaris Project, an organization working to end modern slavery globally, victims of human trafficking include children involved in commercial sex; adults brought into the sex trade through force, fraud or coercion; and children and adults who serve as domestic or farm workers held and laboring against their will.

The Obama administration invited Weisenbeck to serve on the White House Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships' advisory council in 2012. "We were just plain told that we would be studying the topic of modern slavery and making recommendations to the president of the United States," she says.

When she returned to La Crosse, Weisenbeck began giving presentations about human trafficking and connecting with others who shared her concern. She now leads the La Crosse Task Force to Eradicate

Modern Slavery, created in 2013 with more than 50 members affiliated with law enforcement, education, legal and social services and health care. Members strive to raise awareness of human trafficking in the region and better identify and serve the needs of its victims.

At first, many community members wouldn't acknowledge the problem. "It's like a secret," Weisenbeck says. "Who wants to admit that people in our own communities are doing this?"

But last year the task force surveyed 86 agencies in the Coulee Region to find out how they might respond to potential victims. Of the 45 percent that responded, 18 agencies reported that they have had encounters with potential victims. Professionals in health care, domestic violence shelters, law enforcement and education are among those on the front lines of aid efforts.

"Now we have people stepping forward and saying, 'Yes, I have seen it,'" Weisenbeck says. "But it probably took us three years to educate people and develop awareness."

Listening to the victims and survivors is critical. "One victim said to me, 'Just teach me what normal is about, because I don't know,'" says Weisenbeck.

One in four victims of human trafficking are children, she says, and the average age is 13. Victims often come from families with a history of drug abuse and violence. Children find themselves homeless and vulnerable on the streets, she explains, and within three days are picked up. "Oftentimes it's because there was no place else to go," she says.



Sister Karen Neuser coordinates outreach to homeless people in the Coulee Region.

Having a place to go

Sister Karen Neuser works to address that reality through programs to help those who are homeless find temporary and, eventually, permanent housing.

With the 2011 opening of the La Crosse Warming Center, now operated by Catholic Charities, Neuser says local awareness of homelessness began to grow. FSPA members volunteered to be a "solid community expression of interest and concern and love," Neuser says. "Our awareness was raised because of human contact with individuals who are wonderful human beings who just needed a hand. Not a handout, but a hand. A presence."

City residents became more aware because of the obvious presence of people waiting outside the Warming Center—originally prominently located on West Avenue—to get a seat at night. "It disturbed a lot of people to see individuals sitting there, sometimes at

3:00 in the afternoon to get in at 9:00. But you know, that discomfort is not a bad thing. People are responding. We are paying attention."

FSPA established its Homelessness Initiative Committee in 2012 and began planning for a daytime respite site. In 2015, along with Catholic Charities and a wide range of community supporters, they opened the Franciscan Hospitality House. Open from 12:30 to 4:30 p.m., it

provides a safe space for homeless individuals to be with each other and members of the community. Laundry and shower facilities are available, and volunteers offer services ranging from legal counsel to foot care to mental health and rehousing services.

From October 1 through December 31, 2016, the Franciscan Hospitality House served 1,981 guests (a number that includes repeat visitors), according to Neuser. And a social worker helped house 12 guests.

The FSPA committee also collects household items for those needing help getting set up in a new home and creates hygiene bags for adults and children identified through the Salvation Army and social workers serving in area schools.

"Homelessness is more expensive than housing individuals. That's a proven fact," says Neuser, who stresses the importance of getting to the root of the problem.

A community-wide response

In a powerful display of community cooperation, FSPA recently joined forces with representatives from more than 30 La Crosse agencies to create the La Crosse Collaborative to End Homelessness.

The group has identified three target groups—veterans, the chronically homeless and families with children—and is working through three focused 100-day sprints to address their specific needs.

Their first goal was ending veteran homelessness in La Crosse by Christmas 2016. They successfully housed 15 veterans, and new veterans who come forward are being housed within 30 days and given continued care through social services.

Next, they'll tackle chronic homelessness, which includes adults who have been on the streets for more than a year. Then they'll focus on families with children. In preparation for that sprint, they will work with schools and groups that specifically work with families, she says.

FSPA will host a fundraiser, ParTee for a Cause: Chipping Away at Homelessness, in April. All proceeds will go to the Franciscan Hospitality House and the La Crosse Collaborative to End Homelessness.

"Keep the conversations going in your circles," Neuser urges, "so we don't lose sight of this because it's not on the front page. The reality is still there." **crw**

Elizabeth Lippman is a freelance writer and editor based in Winona.



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NAVIGATING THE LEGAL TERRAIN OF DIVORCE

Patricia Heim gives women guidance on a lonely path.

BY DOREEN PFOST
Contributed photo

Planning to See an Attorney about Divorce?

Here are steps Patricia Heim suggests you think about before you pick up the phone.

- 1. Do some research before retaining an attorney.** Ask friends for recommendations; read the websites of the attorneys or law firms you're considering.
- 2. Before your first meeting with an attorney, write out all of your questions.** The first consultation typically follows what Heim calls a general outline, but you may have questions particular to your own circumstances.
- 3. Pull together as much financial information as you can, including several years' tax returns.** The more complete your financial picture, the better able your lawyer is to help evaluate your situation.
- 4. When emotions run high, it's far too easy to post something inappropriate on social media,** and such indiscretions may be especially harmful in custody cases. Facebook, Instagram, Twitter: "Get off everything," says Heim. "Just stay away from them." Close your social media accounts, at least temporarily, and change your email passwords.
- 5. If you decide to file for divorce, you may want to change any powers of attorney for finances or health care if they name your spouse.** As Heim notes, the unexpected can happen at any time, regardless of your age, and "you don't want your future ex to have that kind of control."

When a marriage ends, the first steps toward divorce can feel like the beginning of a long and potentially frightening journey without the benefit of a guide or even a map.

Attorney Patricia M. Heim has made a career of helping clients find their way on a path that is often marked by feelings of disappointment and regret but that can ultimately lead to a fair and just outcome. A senior member at O'Flaherty Heim Egan & Birnbaum, Ltd. in La Crosse, Heim leads the firm's family law practice, which includes divorce, custody and placement, child support and related issues.

Heim has practiced law since the 1970s and remembers a time before Wisconsin's family law treated marriage as a partnership with





Attorney Patricia Heim, O'Flaherty Heim Egan & Birnbaum Ltd.

two more-or-less equal partners. Previously, Heim notes, "There was no such thing as assuming property would be divided equally."

Emotional and financial

While Wisconsin's marital property law now means women are treated more equitably than before, finances are still a major concern to women who contemplate divorce. As Heim observes, "Divorce

is emotional, but it's also financial." When a woman first visits an attorney, she may be wondering whether she'll be able to support herself after divorce. "It's a rare situation, even today, that the woman is making more than the man," says Heim, and that's especially true of older women.

Heim works with clients to develop a clear-eyed assessment of their financial situation as well as a "likely outcome or range of outcomes." That kind of knowledge empowers a client to decide how—or even whether—to proceed with a divorce.

For women with children, finances—important as they may be—are outweighed by questions about custody and placement. Mothers

want to know how much time they will have with their children and whether arrangements they reach with their spouse will be the best thing for the kids. Again, Heim works with clients to evaluate possible outcomes.

Regarding the range of outcomes in both custody and financial matters, Heim says she sometimes emphasizes the negative end of the spectrum, just to ensure that clients have realistic expectations of what a fair outcome could look like. For Heim, it's rewarding when she's able to "help a client achieve a fair resolution"—one in which she has discussed expectations with the client and has been able to achieve those expectations.

A zealous advocate

Still, Heim says, "I talk a lot about fairness, but that doesn't mean I don't zealously advocate for my client." Being a good advocate, however, does not mean demonizing the other spouse; nor does it necessarily mean going to court. Heim notes that although she enjoys trying cases, it's not always the best way to reach a good outcome. "You're much better off as a family if you can come to a resolution," she says.

And being better off as a family is arguably, though perhaps ironically, the destination most people try to reach when embarking on a divorce, especially when children are involved. Heim says she knows she's succeeded in that regard when children grow up and get married, and both parents can attend the wedding and be civil to each other. "That gives me a lot of satisfaction," she says. **(crw)**

Doreen Pfost is the author of This River Beneath the Sky: A Year on the Platte. She lives in Elroy.

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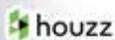


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The **IMPACT** of **MENTORS**

Local leaders reflect on the women who gave them guidance and inspiration.

Contributed photos

No matter where you're at in your life—starting your first job or at the pinnacle of your career—chances are you have an important memory of someone who helped you on your way. Perhaps he or she shared words of wisdom, paved the way for you or gave you guidance and support. Here, several Coulee Region women leaders share the memories of the women who shaped and inspired them.



My mentors include my grandparents, parents, some key teachers and business leaders. But one of my most significant female mentors was Beth Newburger Schwartz. Beth blasted through the glass ceiling before the term was coined. She started her career in the late '50s in the newspaper business and is accomplished in everything she has done: a business owner, a savvy Washington insider, involved community member, respected board member, wife, mother and grandmother. Beth has been a constant source of encouragement, savvy insights and wise counsel. More than anything, it was Beth's example as a role model that provided me with inspiration and tangible actions I could use as I charted my own course in life. I am grateful for Beth and the many trailblazing women like her.

—Barbara A. Nick, President and CEO, Dairyland Power Cooperative



My wonderful mother, a stay-at-home-mom, could never understand how she had a daughter like me, one who wanted to have a family and a career. But her sister, my Aunt Wynn, always encouraged me to think big. Aunt Wynn had traveled the world with her architect husband. When we were together, she wanted to hear about what I was doing and encouraged me to do more. She once said to me, "Why don't you run for the Senate? You could do that!" As the busy CEO of a nonprofit, Couleecap, for 31 years, I did not have time to be a senator. Still, Aunt Wynn was an inspiration at a time when the career options suggested to women were quite limited.

—Grace Jones, Executive Director, Couleecap



Sr. Ladonna Kassmeyer led the FSPA development office since its inception in 1987. I served on her Development Advisory Committee. Her little nudges led me to apply for the Development Assistant position at the convent. It was in that position that I blossomed. Her willingness to teach, coach and "let go" to allow me to make my own way made it possible for me to step into her position as director when she decided to retire after just one year.

I feel the qualities of a woman leader should include affirmation, trust, listening skills and the ability to know when it is time for a change and gracefully move on to the next chapter in one's profession. Sr. Ladonna exuded all those qualities, and I feel I have used them to mentor young women along the way.

—Madalene H. Buelow, Director of Development, Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration



My mom, Eleanor Jane Edwards Johnson, learned to fly—literally learned to fly—at the age of 52 after a lifetime of wanting to. She was a World War II Army brat who was frustrated by the rules of her youth that didn't allow girls to become pilots. Well, by golly, she broke through those barriers, and just 10 years before she died, she earned her private pilot's license in the State of California. While none of them were learned in the kitchen, there were many, many other important lessons Mom taught me throughout my life. However, her reaching her dream of flying after all those years showed me the value of never giving up and always learning new things. Thanks, Mom!

—Tara Johnson, La Crosse County Board Chair

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"The Old Ramlow Place, 2610 Cass," painted by Kathie Wheeler of Viroqua, offers an image of what many envision when they think of a house created within one's heart.

Creating the Home Within You

Authors and architects inform what you know instinctively—how to create a home you love.

BY MARK HALTER

Photos by Roger Grant

Do you like your home? How do your surroundings make you feel? Does your home reflect you, the unique person that you are?

These questions were raised recently by a series of publications that crossed my desk almost at the same time. Perhaps not surprisingly, they come mostly from women and reflect an evolution—if not revolution—in the way we design the spaces around us.

First, I read a piece by Erika Taylor in the December 2016 *Professional Remodeler* presenting the views of Brent Hull of television's *Lone Star Restorations*, who loves old homes for their quality, uniqueness and history. He's not happy with homes being built today. Particularly, he has no time for "McMansions," which he calls "gaudy things—cheap, cheap, cheap, basically a tract house on steroids" and for which

he notes an interesting statistic: The demand for oversize homes has recently declined in 85 of the top 100 U.S. housing markets.

Shortly after, I talked with Onalaska architect Deb Kees, who showed me a copy of her mentor Michaela Mihady's book *Welcoming Home*. Mihady doubles down on Hull's dissatisfaction with McMansions, calling them "assemblages of the latest trends and amenities (that are) rambling concoctions of vacuous spaces, covered over by huge empty roofs, intending to impress by their size and glamorous gadgetry."

A house that feels good

Mihady has a better idea, formed early on in her training. As a student, she was introduced to the usual current design theories,



The dining room (left) and front hallway of Mark Halter's new home—the “old Ramlow place”—exhibits how making a place your own is what transforms a house into a home.

particularly modernism. But in her senior year, she was asked by an instructor to create a house that would “feel good” to her, a house that would satisfy both mind and body, a house that would be delightful, comfortable, engaging and magical. That challenge would become Mihady's life's work.

Her initial inspiration came from the way she felt while visiting her Austrian grandmother Theresia's hillside meadow home. The feeling evoked was “Come in. Be safe. Be warm. Be alive.” For her class project, Mihady channeled this feeling, combined it with the Arts and Crafts style and designed a home to please the heart.

Welcoming Home is a portfolio of Mihady's houses, but it also includes those of her firm's partners (Kees has two notable contributions). Perhaps the best known of the featured homes is Maple Forest, whose construction progress was documented by the series *Hometime* on PBS and subsequently offered in blueprint form by *Better Homes and Gardens*. Thousands of plans were sold. People simply loved the home—new yet old—and the feeling it created in them.

The journey to within

How do you start to create a home that meets your physical and emotional needs? Very easily, says home design psychologist Toby Israel in her book *Some Place Like Home*. She defines the challenge this way: “You want to buy a house. You want to redecorate. You look to newspapers, to magazines, to books, to designers, to mentors. And then you look to ... YOU, just you and the accumulation of all you are and all you have been and all you have the power to become.”

You needn't go solo when starting the journey to within. Israel has developed a series of exercises to guide you through your domestic past and to give you insight into the qualities of a home that will give you personal satisfaction. In addition to answering guiding questions, your task includes development of a Special Objects Inventory, listing possessions from your or your family's past that you wish to be part of your new space. Here, think of Maureen O'Hara in the 1952 film *The Quiet Man*, who, when she wasn't being dragged through a cow pasture by John Wayne, comes to realize that she will never be happy in her cozy thatch-roofed Irish cottage until she retrieves her “bits and pieces”—including her beloved piano—from her skin-flint brother Victor McLaglen. Your special objects are probably more easily at hand.

Armed with these insights, you will be much better prepared—and will use expensive design time much more efficiently—when you begin to meet with your architect, builder or interior designers.

Coming back to home

When my wife, Susan, and I first came down off the green hills of Stoddard after selling our farm, we settled into a little jewel box of a home on 21st and Cass in La Crosse, featured in the January 2015 issue of *Coulee Region Women*. We presumed it would be our last home. But the next spring, while driving to La Crosse Floral to pick up some cocoa bean mulch for the garden, we noted a “For Sale” sign at 2610 Cass. I had never seen that home for sale before. In fact, it had been off the market for 91 years! Curious, we drove up the driveway and were instantly smitten. The lot was spacious, the trees were stately and the birds were singing. Grandad Bluff towered above. The solid old house was graced with a marvelous screened-in back porch on the east side, overlooking limestone walls, a little pond and a pine woods. We made an offer within the week.

We came to learn it was the old Ramlow place. Dr. Bob and Marion Ramlow had moved in as young marrieds in the early 1950s, having bought it from Marion's parents, owners since 1923. We left the interior floor plan completely intact. We redid the kitchen and, with the help of Janelle Byus at J Company Design Studio, selected new paint, wallpaper, fabrics and textiles for the interior. Raven and Ardis Granger of Granger Interiors did much of the restoration with great skill, and Judson Steinback of Coulee Region Ecoscapes has begun renovating the grounds.

Recently one wintry day, Susan and I were wandering around the house. Sunlight was pouring in, the antique bookcases were full of our favorite books, our art was all hung, a fire was in the hearth and our little dog, Lily, was curled up asleep on the sofa in the warm sunshine. Without prompting, Susan proclaimed, “I love this house, and do you know why? It reminds me of my folks' place in Pine City.”

Maybe F. Scott Fitzgerald had it exactly right. Recall the last line in *The Great Gatsby*: “So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past.” When it comes to creating a home we love, we shouldn't resist. 

Mark Halter is the owner of J Company Interior Design Studio in La Crosse. He is hopelessly addicted to old house renovation.

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Margaret Ninneman
(left) and Deb Klug of
Western Technical Col-
lege are leaders in local
culinary education.



Top Chefs

**Western Technical College's
culinary instructors connect
college and community.**

BY JULIE NELSON
Contributed photos

If you've eaten at a local restaurant in the past 40 years, chances are good Deb Klug has in some way influenced your experience.

Klug is the Foods Program head and an instructor in Western Technical College's culinary programs. Over the years, she's trained thousands of students in the art of chopping onions, butchering beef and sautéing vegetables. She's also taught them how to keep a food prep area safe and sanitary, how to fold napkins and set a table, how to provide good customer service and a whole lot more.

"I can't go out to eat without seeing at least one of my graduates working at the restaurant," says Klug, "and with a job like this, I tend to eat out a lot." Seeing her students on the job is always rewarding. "It means we've put the right people in the right spots."

Community opportunities

Klug says she gets between four and five calls every week from someone in the restaurant industry looking for recommendations on students who might make good employees. "I see myself as a liaison between the college and the community; I think this is one way we've influenced the local restaurant industry, by providing quality, well-trained help."



Western boasts a food program well stocked with cutting-edge equipment and technology.



Microgreens raised on-site in Western's new greenhouse make their way into the culinary program as well.



At Western, students learn every aspect of food preparation—from food safety to culinary artistry, customer service and dishwashing.

Thanks to the popularity of the Food Network and shows like *Top Chef*, enrollment in culinary programs has been booming.

Margaret Ninneman is a lead instructor in Western's culinary program and is Klug's right-hand woman. "Students come in with a lot of misconceptions about the food industry," she says. "There are no magic gnomes that come in and prepare a complete sample dish while you demonstrate how to cut up a few of the ingredients, you're not going to graduate from here and land on TV and you have to clean up after yourself."

Ninneman and Klug emphasize the most important aspect of food service: It is a team sport. "You cannot survive by yourself," says Ninneman. Every student in the program is required to take part in every part of the experience.

"Our industry requires you to work from the bottom up," says Klug. "We don't have an automatic dishwasher here. The students do that."

Training for the future

While dishwashing has always been a part of food service, Klug says other aspects have changed by leaps and bounds. "New technologies and different types of equipment are just in their infancy," she says, adding that this has transformed both the types of food that are prepared and the equipment that is available to prepare it. The recently upgraded kitchen at Western boasts everything from smokers and multiuse convection ovens to an ice cream maker. "Everything we do is for the students. We have to be cutting-edge here because we are training for the future."

Ninneman says another change in the industry is the increase in the number of women in the field. "Julia Child really broke a lot of barriers for us," she says. "A female chef was unheard of at the time she started." Ninneman says while this is still a male-dominated field where women typically are paid less than men, women are making significant strides.

Klug and Ninneman love their work and are constantly exploring ways to move the program forward. They are working closely with the new greenhouse on the Western campus. Students in the greenhouse get the experience of growing foods requested by the culinary program while culinary students get to experience and learn about fresh greens. Klug and Ninneman have added a class on work ethics and have redesigned the entire program to easily allow students to move from one level of competency to the next, without having to repeat similar material in higher-level classes. They've also taken their program to prisons, teaching an employable skill to inmates hoping to be released; they're also adding a one-year bakery program and, in their biggest dreams, are hoping to work with other Western departments to build a food truck.

A good life

"Food service is a rough life, but if you like it, it's a good life," says Klug. "I love the diversity in people, the diversity in the tasks and the ability to be creative." At 61, Klug is starting to think about retirement, but she says it's not around the corner yet. "I'm still enjoying the field and the students, and I feel like I have more to give. Once I lose my passion, then it's time to give it up." We all hope that day will be a long time coming.

Following are a sampling of the typical recipes Western students will learn to master.

BEER CHEESE SOUP

- 7 oz. onions, chopped
- 4 oz. celery, chopped
- 4 oz. carrots, chopped
- 7 oz. potatoes, chopped
- 1 qt. + 1½ cups water
- 2⅓ oz. chicken base
- ⅛ cup fresh parsley, chopped
- 7 oz. margarine
- 1½ cups all-purpose flour
- 11 oz. American cheese slices
- 3-3½ cups milk
- 1.2 oz. Worcestershire sauce
- 1 T prepared mustard
- 1½ cans beer

Bring the first seven ingredients to a boil and simmer until vegetables are tender. In a separate pan, melt the margarine and whisk in the flour to make a roux. Add to vegetable mixture and cook until thick. Mixture should be thick, with paste-like consistency. Add cheese slices, stirring until melted. Stir in milk, adjusting to reach desired consistency. Add Worcestershire sauce and mustard. Heat to 180°F degrees to cook roux. Add beer. Heat to 165°F and adjust consistency. Makes one gallon.



Peeled onions await their destiny in the culinary program at Western.

“PHILLY” STUFFED MUSHROOMS

- 2 lb. medium-size mushrooms
- 6 T margarine or butter
- 8 oz. cream cheese, softened
- 2 oz. blue cheese, crumbled
- 2 T onion, finely chopped

Remove mushroom stems and chop enough stems to measure ½ cup. Cook mushroom caps in margarine over medium heat, about 5 minutes; drain. Combine cream cheese and blue cheese, mixing well. Stir in chopped stems and onions. Fill mushroom caps with cheese mixture. Place stuffed mushroom caps on a sheet pan. Broil until golden brown. Can be served hot or cold. Makes 2 dozen. (crw)

Julie Nelson was a news reporter at WKBT-TV when she first became a fan of Deb Klug. She thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity to reconnect with this positive, enthusiastic woman.

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There are scientific reasons why some wines are chilled and some are not. Studies indicate serving temperature does make a difference in taste.

For example, astringency and bitterness are perceived less at warmer temperatures. Dry red wines often have bitter and astringent qualities, so they are usually served at room temperature. In contrast, cool wine temperatures enhance appreciation of the subtle flavors. Because of that fact, the more delicate white wines are served chilled to exhibit the lighter flavor qualities of those wines.

Some wine temperature recommendations are based on common logic. Like a warm kettle of soup on the stove, a warmer wine allows the volatile aromas to escape into the air. This provides that swirling burst of aroma that red wines provide.

Many winemakers put chilling recommendations on their bottles, such as "chill and enjoy" or "best served at 65-70 degrees."

Whatever the temperature, the main thing is that you enjoy the wine at the temperature you choose!

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La Crosse County Health Department director Jennifer Rombalski speaks to a group of UW-La Crosse Health Education graduate students on public health accreditation and administration of a public health laboratory.

HEALTHY LIVING FOR A LIFETIME

Jen Rombalski leads La Crosse County residents to lifelong healthy living habits.

BY JANIS JOLLY
Contributed photos



Jen Rombalski, director of the La Crosse County Health Department

Some people are born leaders. Most have to acquire the skills over time.

Jen Rombalski is the director of the La Crosse County Health Department, a responsible position for someone as young as she is. Yet she says she wasn't born a leader. "I come from humble beginnings," Rombalski says, having grown up in the country near the small town of Eleva, Wisconsin. "Yet as a young person, I always wanted to do what I could to make a better life for my family." For example, she convinced her family members to always use seatbelts and helmets to keep them safe. Preventing injury, she knew, was better than repairing damage. "I've always been ambitious," Rombalski says. "I wanted to identify my gifts and figure out how I can use them to help others."

Driven by a desire to help

The first in her family to attend a four-year college, Rombalski gravitated to nursing because of her love of anatomy and a desire to help others. She discovered early on that public health nursing would be her specialty. "Nursing is such a diverse field," she says. "But the only area of nursing that is focused on prevention all the time is public health nursing, with its emphasis on healthy habits, immunizations, early childhood nutrition and more."

Streamlining Health Services

Rombalski, along with Sandy Brekke, director of St. Clare Health Mission, and Mary Kay Wolf, executive director of Great Rivers United Way, has worked for months developing a pilot project to improve the delivery of human services in La Crosse County. This new model, called GRACE Hub, is based on the Pathways Community Hub model and brings together social and medical sectors to improve health outcomes.

With the Hub system, community care coordinators guide clients through the somewhat bewildering assortment of human service agencies: They do a single intake and follow the client through agencies, making sure services are not duplicated and the client gets help quickly. The coordinator will also track the resolution of the client's needs, helping them set goals and find pathways to achieve them. The coordinator works with a client's family in a holistic approach, using existing agencies and funding. The program plans to accept its first clients in the fall, after a director and a half-time resource specialist are hired.

She completed her nursing degree at UW-Eau Claire, and then worked as a public health nurse and health officer/public health supervisor in Buffalo County, where, as part of a six-person staff, she was exposed to all parts of public health services. She later became health director at the Chippewa County Health Department. Now, at age 37, she has more than 11 years of experience in public health administration.

Healthy living for a lifetime

Rombalski says that the public health department promotes healthy living from pregnancy throughout the lifespan. The nutrition program for pregnant women, babies and children; parent education on child car seat installation and immunizations; health education; the farm-to-school program; and the very popular Strong Seniors exercise program are some of the services it provides. None of these programs exists on its own. Collaboration, cooperation and good communication are key to their success.

At La Crosse County, Rombalski says she is in her dream job, largely because of the cooperation and support she gets from the department, county and community. "This is the first time in my career that I've had the

support and resources I need to implement creative, unique approaches to public health problems," she says. "I can go to the city, go to my supervisors, the board, the public. We can work together to solve problems. I'm not in this alone."

She describes her leadership style as participative. "I get input from staff, recipients, all stakeholders involved before making a decision," she says. Open communication is key. "We all need the best, most complete information if we are to make good decisions." She keeps her office door, which is at the end of a very long hall, open and takes care to return telephone calls and emails promptly. Good communication and transparency, with people working together, result in good leadership.

On the job in La Crosse County since February 2016, Rombalski was recognized in October as a "Rising Star Under 40" by the La Crosse *Tribune* and was recently named to Governor Walker's Task Force on Opioid Abuse. She lives with her husband and three children in Trempealeau County. 

Janis Jolly is a retired copy editor and ESL teacher who lives in La Crosse.



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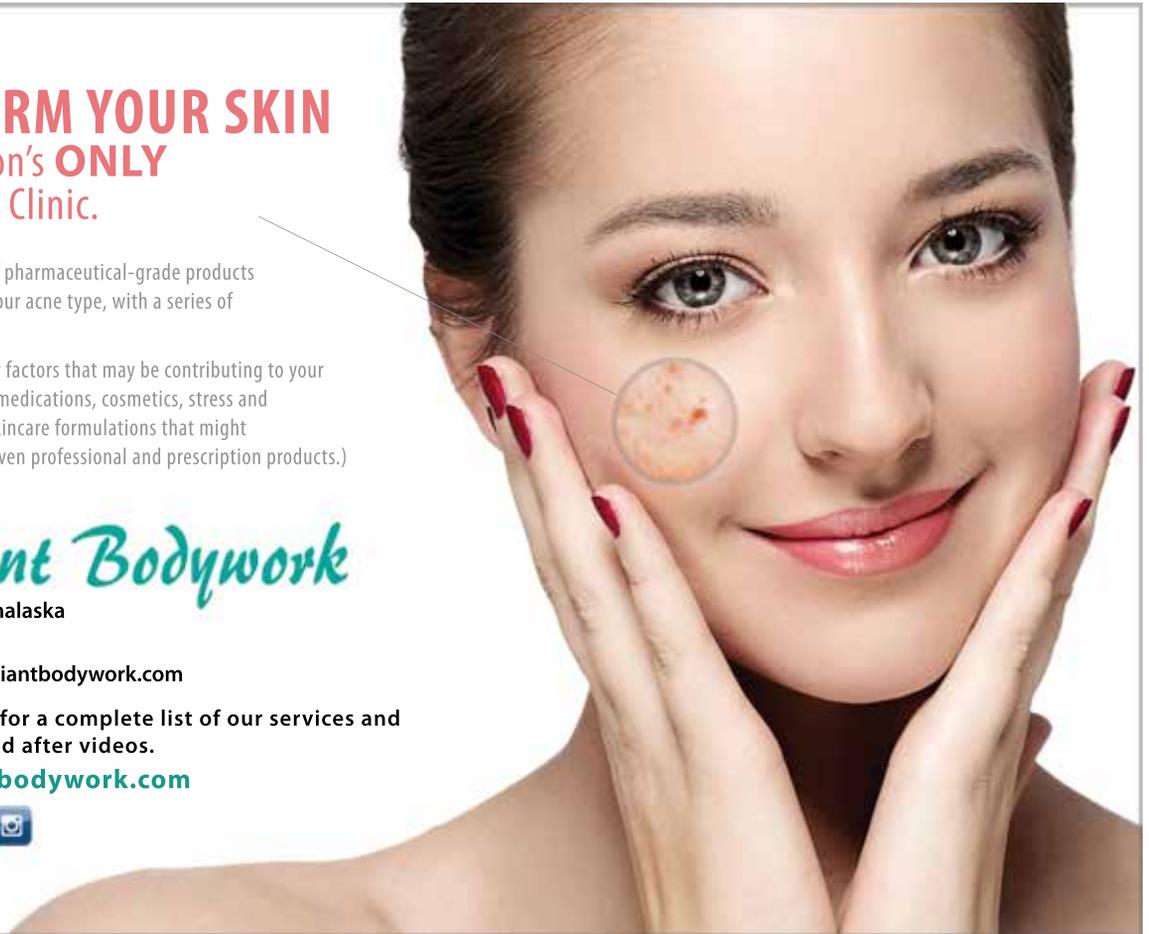
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LEADING FUTURE LEADERS

Adult leaders of youth clubs
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BY LEAH CALL
Contributed photos

Local youth programs, such as 4-H, teach kids to be good leaders and responsible citizens—all while enjoying a healthy dose of kid fun.



The many Coulee Region women who mentor area youth through organizations such as the Girl Scouts, Boys & Girls Clubs and 4-H don't just practice leadership; they develop leadership skills in young people throughout the region. For Coulee Region kids of all backgrounds, these mentors offer support, direction and opportunity.

Cookies and confidence

In early February, Rachael Kaiser had 12,000 boxes of cookies in her garage—with more to come. Kaiser, who co-leads eight Girl Scout troops in La Crosse, anticipated her troops would sell more than 15,000 boxes this year. And while that's a sweet financial boost for the organization, Girl Scouts encompasses much more than cookies.

In existence for more than 100 years, the organization's mission is to build "girls of courage, confidence and character, who make the world a better place." Some 800,000 adult volunteers through the United States help fulfill that mission. Here in the Coulee Region, leaders like Kaiser organize fundraisers and community-focused projects, facilitate monthly meetings and chaperone activities throughout the year.

Girls can join the Girl Scouts in kindergarten and continue until they graduate from high school. Kaiser became a leader seven years ago when her daughter joined as a kindergartener. There are 72 girls total in the troops that she oversees today.

Kaiser finds her role incredibly rewarding, "especially seeing the girls who started out as shy kindergarteners who now have matured," she says. "Girls who wouldn't even talk are out there selling cookies

and rock climbing and going on the ropes course at UW-La Crosse. I think a lot of the things we work on in Girl Scouts contributed to that confidence."

Members think of Girl Scouts as a safe place, says Kaiser. "They support each other whether they succeed or fail, so they are not afraid to try."

Older scouts represent the area at national conferences and even international events, financed in part by money raised from cookie sales. Kaiser and some of her girls are planning a trip to Savannah, Georgia, the birthplace of the Girl Scouts.

Kaiser hopes her Girl Scouts learn that "whatever they want to do, they can do. If anybody tells them they can't, it's a good challenge to show that they can."

Impacting young lives

The Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater La Crosse strive to turn young lives in the right direction. Making that happen is a staff that models and inspires positive behavior, providing leadership to more than 500 area youth.

Youth and Family Services Director Laquita Becker is part of that staff. With a master's degree in mental health counseling with an emphasis on children and adolescence, Becker helps youth who may be struggling at school and at home.

"The club directors identify kids who are struggling—exhibiting behaviors that lead to them getting sent home or suspended from the club, such as physical aggression or violence, substance abuse or severe emotional behaviors like self-harm or suicidal ideation," says Becker.



Girl Scout leader Rachel Kaiser does her part to raise girls of “courage, confidence and character, who make the world a better place.”



Local 4-H youth pledge their head, heart, hands and health to better their club, their community, their country and their world.



Laquita Becker, Youth and Family Services Director, Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater La Crosse

“From there we establish goals to work toward.”

Becker counsels 10 to 15 kids in her office daily, but it’s often the interaction outside the office she finds most rewarding. “I get to see them every day they come. I get to interact with them and build that relationship. I get to witness some of the behaviors we are working on, and I can coach them to use some of the skills we talked about.”

Youth develop leadership skills through programming in theater, music and sports. In 2016, Becker and other B&G staff facilitated a Keystone Group focused specifically on developing leadership qualities. “The group comes up with a leadership quality of that week, and we talk about what that means and usually do some sort of team-building or skill-building exercise,” explains Becker. “We talk about how they can use the skill when they leave.”

While she’s pleased with the impact she’s had on kids at the club, Becker says it’s a team effort. “We have such great staff here. We have a saying that not every staff can talk to every kid, but every kid should connect with a staff every day.”

Head, heart, hands, health

Another key youth group in this area—4-H—began in about 1900, focused largely on farm issues. Today, the organization provides numerous and varied learning opportunities to both farm and city kids, developing young heads, hearts, hands and health.

“4-H has really evolved, with our focus being on essential elements of belonging, mastery, independence, generosity and building skills that will serve youth well over their lifetime,” notes Vernon County 4-H Youth Development Educator Colleen Pulvermacher. “4-H youth development includes programming beyond traditional projects such as horses, sewing, woodworking. Today we provide STEM education, along with Teen Court/Restorative Justice, Social Emotional Wellness and Youth in Governance programs.”

4-H is a national organization overseen by county-based university extension staff with clubs in counties throughout the Coulee Region. Vernon County alone is home to 14 clubs, with 505 total members. Each club has co-leaders, the majority of them women.

“We have wonderful 4-H leaders in Vernon County who dedicate countless hours to our youth,” says Pulvermacher, who has been involved in 4-H professionally since 2004 and as a parent to her own 4-H youth prior to that.

Vernon County 4-H leaders have a unique opportunity to attend a semi-annual 4-H Leader Retreat, adds Pulvermacher. “It’s a program of recognition, education and fellowship that provides volunteer leaders the resources and support they need. We have been doing this for 10 years and have earned state, regional and national recognition for this model of supporting volunteers.”

Club leaders and other adult project leaders help youth grow in a large range of interests and skills from dairy to dogs, fishing to forestry, art to aerospace and everything in between.

Kids can join 4-H as Cloverbuds in kindergarten and continue throughout high school. Members serve as club officers and run the monthly meetings. Older youth can also become camp counselors and serve on state-level art or drama teams.

“Once youth are in sixth grade, opportunities open up for them to attend NASA Space Camp in Huntsville, Alabama,” says Pulvermacher. “Then as they age, the opportunities continue to expand to include 4-H State Youth Conference on the UW-Madison campus, I Want to Know STEM Camp, Citizen Washington Focus and National Conference in Washington, D.C., and National 4-H Congress in Atlanta, Georgia.” Far from a program just for farm kids, for youth in 4-H, the sky’s the limit. 



Colleen Pulvermacher, Vernon County 4-H Youth Development Educator

Leah Call is a freelance writer who lives in Westby.



Beyer Cabinets Celebrates 30 Years

Beyer Cabinets Ltd. at 440 Commerce St. in West Salem is celebrating 30 years in business. Jerry and Donna Beyer started the business in their garage in 1977. With several expansions, their space is now more than 20,000 square feet. In March 2016, ownership was passed along to the next generation, daughter and son-in-law Ronda and Rod Young. They are proud to continue the customer service and quality of products that have built the business. With design staff and custom builders skilled in styles from classic to contemporary, Beyer Cabinets' extensive selection works with any taste or budget. For more information, visit their showroom or www.beyercabinets.com.



Elmaro Vineyard: 2016 Wisconsin Winery of the Year

Elmaro Vineyard, N14756 Delaney Road, Trempealeau, Wisconsin, has received the 2016 Wisconsin Winery of the Year award from the Wisconsin Grape Growers Association (WGGA).

Elmaro is proud to be a family-owned and family-run start-up operation. Planting their first vines in the spring of 2006, they set out not only to grow the best-quality grapes and produce award-winning wines but also to share their experience and love of grapes with all who visit. Winemakers and wine lovers alike can enjoy their picturesque vineyard and winery. For more information visit info@elmarovineyard.com.



New Book Honors June Kjome

Two beloved local women have teamed up to celebrate peace, justice and a lifetime of service. Social justice advocate June Kjome shares her wisdom and insights from a long life of making change in a new book penned by local author Susan Hessel: *June Kjome: Reflections on Aging*. Both Kjome and Hessel have been very active in social justice both locally and around the world. The book is available at Pearl Street Books in downtown La Crosse and on Amazon.com. Join Kjome and Hessel for a book signing at the Main Library in La Crosse on Sunday, April 23, from 1-3 p.m.



Listen to Your Mother Returns

It's the second season, and finale show, of *Listen to Your Mother: La Crosse!* Once again, *Listen to Your Mother* is joining folks around the region to give motherhood a microphone. Come hear personal stories, written and performed by members of our community, that share the good, the bad and the barely rested truth about motherhood. *Listen to Your Mother* takes place on Friday, April 28, at 7:30 p.m. at the Weber Center in La Crosse. For more information on the show, the cast and the sponsors, visit www.listen toyourmothershow.com/lacrosse.



YWCA Honors Madalene Buelow

YWCA La Crosse will present the Emily "Sis" Hutson Award to Madalene Buelow at the 2017 Circle of Friends luncheon April 19 at 11:30 a.m. at the La Crosse Center Ballroom. Buelow, who served on the YWCA La Crosse board both as a member and in three officer roles, also served on strategic planning and governance committees and has been instrumental in development efforts. The award is named after a remarkable board president and community volunteer and recognizes outstanding service to YWCA La Crosse. Purchase tickets for \$25 each by calling 608-781-2783 or by texting 41444 to safedonate.us/YWCALaX.



Roz Schnick Receives YWCA Award

YWCA La Crosse will name Rosalie "Roz" Schnick this year's recipient of the Olga Schlieter Memorial Philanthropic Award, in honor of outstanding philanthropy. A longtime partner in the YWCA La Crosse mission to empower women and eliminate racism, Schnick embraces the work of all the YWCA La Crosse programs, but she has a special place in her heart for CASA for Kids and women in transition. These and other programs will be highlighted at the Circle of Friends luncheon April 19 at 11:30 a.m. at the La Crosse Center Ballroom. Tickets are \$25 each. Text 41444 to safedonate.us/YWCALaX, or call 608-781-2783 for more information.

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TALENTS AND TEAMWORK

Shared duties and a strong staff help Kara Tomashek develop a trio of businesses.

BY SHARI HEGLAND

Contributed photo



Kara Tomashek relies on her managers to successfully run the three resale stores she owns with her husband, Andy. From left, Shelby Alverson manages Plato's Closet (teen's clothing), Heather Buchholtz manages Once Upon a Child (children's clothing), Tomashek oversees all stores and Jordyn Rasmussen manages Style Encore (women's clothing).

Tomashek's Advice for Young Professionals:

- Take feedback, absorb it and don't get upset or frustrated about it. There are so many things to learn.
- Remember what your focus is and why you are doing it. That will get you through the good days and the bad days.
- Figure out what you like to do, and do it well.

Kara Tomashek admits that when she graduated from UW-Eau Claire in 2004, she expected to do what many of her contemporaries were doing: leave for a big job in the big city.

But when her husband, Andy, took a job in La Crosse, her career trajectory changed, and she couldn't be happier with the way it has allowed her and her husband to each focus on their strengths and surround themselves with like-minded, ambitious colleagues.

Tomashek turned her first job out of college—managing a children's clothing resale store—into an entrepreneurial dream. In 2008—three years and two babies after she took over as manager of Onalaska's Once Upon a Child store—she and Andy had the opportunity to purchase the business, which also allowed him to leave a job that entailed weekly out-of-town travel.

Now, nine years and two more children later, Tomashek says their complementary skill sets and the motivation of their management team are the perfect combination to lead a trio of resale clothing stores with target markets for children, teens and women.

Teamwork: personal and professional

"We have this culture where our dynamic works well together," Tomashek says. The managers of each of the stores—Once Upon a Child, Plato's Closet (opened in 2011) and Style Encore (opened in 2014)—know whom to come to with different types of questions.

Tomashek loves the merchandising and customer relations part of the businesses, while her husband handles the financial details and technology. And all of the store managers, she says, are driven to keep moving and improving.

"We all have to have that same mentality to keep our team moving," she says. "They aren't afraid to try things or afraid of making mistakes."

The culture of working together to improve is reinforced by weekly meetings that start with nuts-and-bolts discussions, then move into the creative details of setting the floor and highlighting the best the stores have to offer.

"We challenge each other," Tomashek says. "It's a way to refocus our week and start fresh."

She says one key to working together as a team and as a family as the Tomasheks operate a business and homeschool their children, is to acknowledge each other's talents and contributions, both at home and in the business setting.

Another key to their success, she says, is keeping all of their endeavors in perspective.

"Family comes first," she said. "Loving these people comes first." 

Shari Hegland is a freelance writer who lives in Holmen.

LEADING TRENDS

Revitalize your wardrobe and step into this spring's leading looks.

BY PAIGE FORDE

Photos by Dahli Durley



Light up the room with a fresh palette of fuchsia, pink and sorbet hues. Create soft volume with loose-fit fabrics and add in a floral scarf to complete this exquisite spring look from **E&C – Etcetera**, modeled by Jamie Dahl.

Valencia boot-cut pant, \$195; Citybloom floral print scarf, \$145; Halo scoop neck tee, \$65; Buenos Aires tweed jacket, \$495; makeup by Beauty Counter.

Denim is a must-have this season. Put a new twist on this casual spring look with some layered necklaces and colorful patterned rain boots from **Urban Shoetique** in Winona, modeled by Kaylee Kriesel.

Liverpool jean jacket, \$98; Kenzie gray T-shirt dress, \$68; Joules wellyprint rain boots, \$80; jewelry by Jovy Rocky; makeup by Ultimate Salon & Spa.



Pairing classic black-and-white patterns creates the flawless contrast in this sleek, on-trend ensemble from **Touch of Class** in downtown La Crosse, modeled by Mrs. La Crosse, Meagan Waddell.

Eileen Fisher matte jersey dress; Joseph Ribkoff striped vest; Cecile et Jeanne handbag; Eileen Fisher nubuck sandal; Syna gold link chain with golden champagne, black onyx and hematite diamond drops; Labradorite champagne diamond ring; Chanluu bracelet.



Unleash the power of fashion and dress for success! These leading fashions of the season are sure to leave you feeling more confident and motivated than ever.

Give 'em the cold shoulder in a light floral top and play with intricate details from head to toe in this unique, eye-catching outfit from **Mainstream Boutique** in Onalaska, modeled by Laura Williams.

Miss Me blush cold-shoulder top, \$74; Miss Me skinny print jean, \$110; Madeline Winning heels, \$59; Fashion Bella rhinestone necklace, \$34; Blessing Bracelet set, \$28; makeup by Ultimate Salon & Spa.

2017 La Crosse Go Red Executive Leadership Team



Photo by Jordana Snyder Photography



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Jenifer Livingston
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Take Charge of **Your Heart Health**

Heart disease is the #1 killer of women. Coulee Region Women magazine is committed to making women aware of the importance of heart health and making your journey a healthy one. The Executive Leadership Team of the American Heart Association's La Crosse Go Red Luncheon has made it their mission as well to help fight heart disease. Please join us at the luncheon to learn how to make your heart journey a healthy one.



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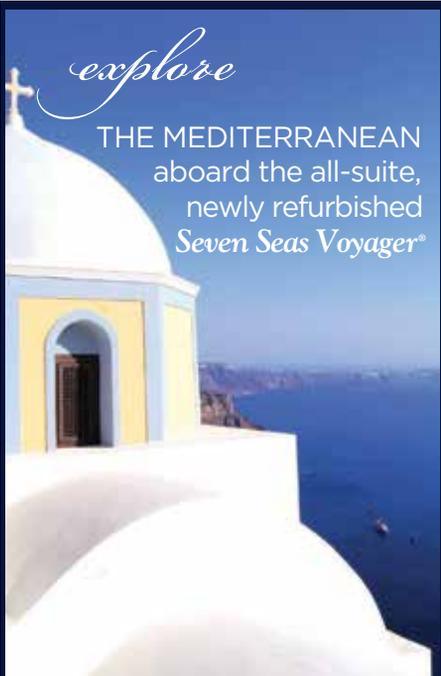
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Children enjoy the Smile Holiday at Baan Dek in Chiang Mai, Thailand.

A WORLD OF HOPE

To understand the global poor, a Coulee Region woman walks a mile in their shoes.

BY MARY BACH

Photos courtesy of Baan Dek Foundation

In October, my husband, Tom Filla, and I went to Hong Kong, Thailand and Macau. While that's exotic enough for a Coulee Region woman like me, it wasn't the skyline and restaurants of Hong Kong, or the casinos and architecture of Macau, or the elephants and temples of Thailand that were the most memorable. It was the NGOs.

An NGO—nongovernmental organization—is a nonprofit that is independent from any government agencies, usually funded by donations. We visited two NGOs that serve the poor in different ways, thanks to my friend Lori McLaughlin-Noguchi, PhD, who lives in Macau and works in international development.

Sacrificing for family

Our first visit was to Crossroads Foundation in Hong Kong, where we participated in a “poverty simulation.” Crossroads was founded by Malcolm and Sally Begbie in 1995. Their son, David Begbie, was the facilitator of our simulation experience.

We were first taken to a pole shed where Begbie invited us to sit on the chairs of the poor—the ground—then put us into “family”

groups. In many parts of the world, the urban poor make bags out of used papers to earn money to survive, so that's what we did. We had to make bags, *fast*, then beg “shopkeepers” to buy them. If we kept working after time was called, our bags would be torn up. If the bags were not good enough, they might be torn up. If we did not have the correct number of bags, a shopkeeper might still accept them—along with a back rub.

When one of us went to Landlord Begbie to pay for rent and food, he might barter with us if we didn't have enough money, and we usually didn't. Soon a table was filled with smartphones, watches and shoes. After everyone had “spent” their possessions, he accepted hugs to make up the difference. And all the time we were being scolded to hurry and work harder.

At the end, I was pleased to see that my “family” would have enough to pay our bills. Then Begbie asked everyone who had sold him a kidney to stand, and I watched with shock as my husband stood up.

The emotional impact of this simulation was profound. Would

I sell an organ or rent my body to feed my family? Would I send my child to work or school ... or to the home of a rich family? Then Begbie brought our attention to the room, and we noticed for the first time that it was strewn with torn-up papers. Poverty of this kind leaves no time or energy for concerns about the environment or anything else.

Besides this, Crossroads does simulations on other issues, including refugee experiences, HIV/AIDS and blindness through their Global X-perience programs, often with business leaders in a position to do considerable good.

The foundation also runs a fair-trade shop and an online project called Global Hand, a web portal where companies and individuals from the for-profit world can find nonprofit projects to partner with. Begbie described it as a “computer-dating site for corporate donors and nonprofits.” This worked so well the UN had the Crossroads team design a similar portal for its relief efforts.

For more information on Crossroads Foundation, visit www.crossroads.org.hk.

Like children everywhere

While Crossroads is far-reaching in scope, the next NGO we visited, Baan Dek, concentrates on a very specific population: children of Chiang Mai construction workers. *Baan Dek* means “kids’ home” in Thai and is located in Chiang Mai, Thailand. It was founded by Nicola Crosta, his wife, Magali du Parc, and Acha Sripaurya in 2001. Their mission is to “facilitate access to education, healthcare and safety for all children in need from the construction sector.” To do this, they work with local government and the private sector, primarily construction companies.

Chiang Mai has a large construction labor force; 80 percent is made up of immigrants from Myanmar, Laos and other nearby countries with dire living conditions. Workers and their children live in temporary slums, in shacks built from discarded construction materials. Workers typically move every six months to three years, the length of a building project. These conditions put their children in a particularly vulnerable situation.

When Baan Dek started, most of the school-age children they served were not in school, but now 98 percent are enrolled. Our visit fell on a school holiday, so there were more than 100 children 12 and under at the



Mary Bach (far right) rides with other volunteers in the back of a “tuk tuk” delivering kids back to their homes at the end of a day at Baan Dek.

center participating in the “Smile Holiday” program. In this program, children enjoy a day of educational, supervised activities and are provided a meal. Activities are offered in rotating stations that involve physical skills, language skills, social and emotional skills and cognitive skills. The children are happy and eager to learn.

Another activity children participate in is a program called Superheroes Academy. Using superheroes as role models, children are introduced to life and safety skills. In the program, they become superheroes themselves and wear superhero capes during the sessions. The children learn about oral health, waste management, road accident prevention, nutrition, financial literacy, protection against insect-borne diseases and more.

Baan Dek has several other programs: Access prepares children to participate in school. Tchin Tcho Nursery offers a safe environment for toddlers who would otherwise be unsupervised while their parents are at work. The Flying Library is a mobile library with books in several languages and reading sessions tailored to each community. And recently the foundation has created a social sharing network so families can connect.

Baan Dek also offers individual support programs for more than 1,000 children. The staff know each child personally and ensure they have access to education, health care and a safe living environment. Despite all their challenges, the children, families and (mostly volunteer) staff at Baan Dek are filled with joy and hope.

For more information on the Baan Dek Foundation, visit www.daandekfoundation.org.

Cause for hope

My brief experiences with the Crossroads and Baan Dek foundations bring to mind a quote from J.R.R. Tolkien: “The world is indeed full of peril, and in it there are many dark places; but still there is much that is fair, and though in all lands love is now mingled with grief, it grows perhaps the greater.” There is much poverty and peril, but there is great cause for hope. People motivated by love are working on many levels to help reduce the causes of grief, and so can we. Check out the websites of these NGOs or give to your favorite charity. Or start your own! 

Mary Bach is a writer and photographer who enjoys life in the Coulee Region but is always up for a trek into the larger world. Check out her blog *In Other Words* at <https://othermary.wordpress.com>.

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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.

Children's Museum of La Crosse weekly programming: **Save-On-Sundays** \$1 off admission every Sun., noon to 5 p.m.

Mt. LeKid Climbing Wall open every Sat. 11 a.m.-4 p.m. and Sun. 12-4 p.m.

Wee Move for ages 1-7 with adult, every Fri., 10:30 a.m.

Little Learners for ages 1-7 with adult, every Thurs., 10:30 a.m.

Coulee Region Professional Women (CRPW) 4th Tues. of each month, Shenanigans, 5:30 p.m. Beth Kirchner, crpwomen@gmail.com, 608-317-5703.

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 Toastmasters Club 2nd and 4th Tuesday of each month, 7 p.m., Gundersen Health System Urgent Care Bldg., Basement, 1830 S. Ave., La Crosse.

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., South Side Neighborhood Center, 1300 S. 6th 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., Globe University, Onalaska.

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

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

Women's Alliance of La Crosse (WAL) 2nd Thurs. of each month, noon, The Waterfront Restaurant, Kasey Heikel 608-519-8080, drkasey@naturallyalignedchiro.com

CALENDAR EVENTS

Mar. 31-Apr. 9, Avenue Q, 7:30 p.m. Fri-Sat., 2 p.m. Sun, Weber Center for the Performing Arts.

Apr. 2, Family Fun Expo, 11 a.m.-4 p.m., Onalaska Omni Center, www.cpclax.com/calendar.

Apr. 4, Tea Tasting Party, 6-7 p.m., Dim Sum Tea Shop, La Crosse, pre-register by phone, 608-738-1221.

Apr. 4, Wine Pairing Dinner: Wines of South America, All Day, The Waterfront Restaurant and Tavern, www.thewaterfrontlacrosse.com, pre-register by phone, 608-782-5400.

Apr. 6-8, Ed Setra & The Hashtags, The Heart of La Crosse, 7:30-9:30 p.m. Thurs.-Sat., The Pump House, www.thepumphouse.org.

Apr. 8, Natural Egg Dyeing Class, 9:30-11 a.m., People's Food Co-op, La Crosse, pre-register in person or by phone, 608-784-5798.

Apr. 8, UW-L Project Funway Runway Spring Fashion Show, Valley View Mall, www.myvalleyview.com.

Apr. 8, William Florian's "Those Were the Days," 7:30 p.m., Heider Center for the Arts, www.heidercenter.org.

Apr. 8-9, Figure Carving Class, 9 a.m. Sat-5 p.m. Sun, Norskedalen Nature & Heritage Center, Coon Valley,

www.norskedalen.org.

Apr. 8-9, Onalaska Omni Center Spring Gift & Craft Show, 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Sat., 10 a.m.-3 p.m., Sun., Onalaska Omni Center.

Apr. 11, Viterbo University Community Health Fair, 2-6 p.m., Viterbo Mathy Center.

Apr. 19, Mindfulness as a Core to Wellness, 6-7:30 p.m., People's Food Co-op, La Crosse, pre-register in person or by phone, 608-784-5798.

Apr. 21, Spring Fling Open House, 4-8 p.m., Downtown La Crosse, www.lacrossedowntown.com.

Apr. 21-22, Vintage Market, 10 a.m. Fri., 9 a.m. Sat., Coon Valley Village Hall.

Apr. 21-30, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, 7:30 p.m. Thurs.-Sat., 2 p.m. Sun., Toland Theatre, Center for the Arts, UW-La Crosse.

Apr. 22, Between the Bluffs Beer, Wine & Cheese Festival, Oktoberfest Grounds, La Crosse.

Apr. 22, Lost Lakes, 7:30 p.m., The Pump House, www.thepumphouse.org.

Apr. 23, Spring Volunteer & Awards Luncheon, 11 a.m.-3 p.m., Norskedalen Nature & Heritage Center, Coon Valley, www.norskedalen.org.

Apr. 23, Stunt Dog Experience, 3 p.m., Viterbo Fine Arts Center.

Apr. 24, ParTee for a Cause: Chipping Away at Homelessness, 4:30-9 p.m., Radisson Hotel, La Crosse, www.fspa.org.

Apr. 28, Night Out at the Museum, 5:30-8 p.m., Children's Museum of La Crosse, www.funmuseum.org.

Apr. 28, Listen to Your Mother: La Crosse, 7:30 p.m., Weber Center, La Crosse, www.listentoyourmothershow.com/lacrosse.

Apr. 29, Walk MS 2017, 9 a.m. check-in, 10 a.m. walk, La Crosse Center. Register at www.nationalmssociety.org or 800-344-4867.

Apr. 29, Stayin' Alive: Tribute to the Bee Gees, 7:30 p.m., La Crosse Center, www.lacrossecenter.com.

Apr. 29, Women's Fund Spring Fling, 10:30 a.m., Radisson Center in La Crosse.

Apr. 30, Earth Fair, 11 a.m.-5 p.m., Myrick Park, La Crosse, www.earthfairlacrosse.com.

Apr. 30, Healthy Kids Day, 10:30 a.m., Myrick Park.

May 3, Recycled Percussion, 7:30 p.m., Viterbo Fine Arts Center.

May 5-7, Festival Foods Granddad Half Marathon Events, Granddad Bluff, www.granddadhalfmarathon.com.

May 5, Harmonious Wail, 7:30 p.m., The Pump House, www.thepumphouse.org.

May 5-June 2, Downtown Walk Around, Downtown La Crosse, www.lacrossedowntown.com.

May 6-7, Money Expo, Valley View Mall, www.myvalleyview.com.

May 9-11, Watercolor Portrait Workshop, 9 a.m.-4 p.m., Days Inn on French Island.

May 12-28, *Titanic: The Musical*, 7:30 p.m. Thurs.-Sat., 2:00 p.m. Sun., La Crosse Community Theatre, www.lacrossecommunitytheatre.org.

May 13, Annual Plant Sale, 9 a.m.-3 p.m., Hillview Urban Agriculture Center, La Crosse, www.hillviewuac.org.

May 13, Open Doors Downtown La Crosse, 10 a.m.-5 p.m., www.lacrossedowntown.com.

May 19-21, Westby Syttende Mai, www.westbywi.com.

May 20, River to Ridge 5 Mile Run/Walk, 9 a.m., Riverside Park, www.wiscorps.org/riverstoridge.

May 24, Go Red for Women Luncheon, 12 a.m., Cargill Room at the Waterfront.

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