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WHAT I'VE LEARNED

From Mom

Dynamic Mother-Daughter
Teams That Inspire Us

"I love that we bond over art."

— Emily Balsley, with daughter Stella

THE HOME &
GARDEN ISSUE

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BEETHOVEN & BEYOND

21/22
SEASON

A NEW BEGINNING IS ON THE HORIZON

Our 21/22 symphony season is set to begin in the fall of 2021 — a joyous celebration of Beethoven that will feature many of the artists and programs we had anticipated experiencing throughout this season.

21/22 season renewals and new subscriptions will be offered starting in May, and single tickets will go on sale in late summer or early fall. We're excited to be together with you again feeling the thrill of live music with our orchestra and John DeMain in beautiful Overture Hall.

madisonsymphony.org/21-22

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JOIN US FOR TWO FREE VIRTUAL EVENTS THIS SPRING

An exciting performance recorded live in Overture Hall features MSO's Principal Organist Greg Zelek and trumpet soloist Ansel Norris premiered on April 27 — available to everyone who registers for **streaming through May 31, 2021**. Learn more & register: madisonsymphony.org/zeleknorris

"Wisconsin Young Artists Compete: The Final Forte," took place in Overture Hall on March 3, 2021, featuring the finalists who competed in the 2021 Bolz Young Artist Competition.

The performances and competition will be presented virtually in the spring. Watch for announcements. More:

madisonsymphony.org/finalforte

John DeMain is Music Director of the Madison Symphony Orchestra. Greg Zelek is the Madison Symphony Orchestra's Principal Organist and the Elaine and Nicholas Mischler Curator of the Overture Concert Organ. Artists, dates, and programs, subject to change.

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SHANNA WOLF

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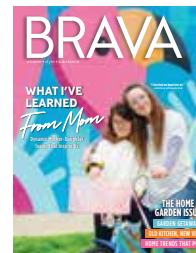
What life is like for four women with mental illnesses, and how we can support our loved ones.

DEPARTMENTS



ON THE COVER

Emily and Stella Balsley were photographed by Marla Bergh in front of the "Flamingo Swirls" mural. Balsley collaborated on with artist Liubov Szwako (@ohyastudio, @triangulad0r).



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MONEY SMARTS



MONEY SMARTS

BY KIM SPONEM

There is still so much uncertainty right now. I have a home and some money in savings, but what more can I do to give myself a cushion in case of unexpected expenses or lost income?

Uncertainty feels like it's everywhere these days, and taking control where possible is really empowering.

First, congratulations on having savings set aside. An emergency fund is one of the first things to build to help reduce financial stress and decrease the chances of overextending when an inevitable unexpected expense arises. As a homeowner, you know water heaters go out, dishwashers break down without notice, and siding gets damaged in a storm. In reality, it's probably more accurate to say we have expected expenses at unexpected times.

Homeowners can use the equity in their homes as a backup for untimely expenses. I think of it as a safety net. It can also be used for other types of expenses as well.

This back up loan is called a home equity line of credit, also called a "HELOC." A HELOC is a type of loan that lets you borrow against the

equity in your home (the difference between your home's value and your mortgage balance) and only take out the amount you need when you need it.

This is as opposed to a lump-sum home equity loan where you are given the loan funds at once and you begin paying back each month over a set repayment period. As you make payments on a lump sum home equity loan, the balance goes down and the money you paid back is not available to you anymore.

On the other hand, a HELOC works more like a credit card. You are approved to borrow up to a certain amount based on your home's equity, and you can borrow as much of it as you'd like right away or in the future. As you pay the balance down, the money you paid back becomes available to you again, just like the way payments you make on your credit card free up funds for you again. This is how a HELOC can provide you that stress-relieving cushion. You can go about your days knowing you can very quickly and easily get funds when you need them and only pay when you use them. It is really quick.

Some lenders charge annual fees for a HELOC. Find one, like Summit Credit Union, that does not. That is an expense you don't need to pay and money you can save. You'll also want to check with your lender on the draw period — how many years you can draw funds from your HELOC, and the repayment period — how long you'll have to pay the balance down. HELOCs can also be refinanced if it makes sense for you based on rates in the marketplace.

Another benefit is the HELOC interest rate is often much lower than credit card rates, so as long as you do not overuse your credit card(s), a HELOC can be a smart way to consolidate credit card and other higher-rate debt. You might use the monthly savings in payments to pay down the debt faster, making more of your HELOC available to you if needed.

A HELOC, ready when you need it, can be a stress reliever and another tool for managing your money. If you are a homeowner, I encourage you to reach out to Summit Credit Union, where our lenders are ready to help you build your own cushion of certainty. Now that's owning it.



SummitCreditUnion.com

Kim Sponem is CEO & President since 2002, of Summit Credit Union, a \$4.5 billion, member-owned financial cooperative with more than 210,000 members and is federally insured by the NCUA. Kim has a passion for empowering people to improve their financial well-being for a richer life.

Ask Kim your money questions at
MoneySmarts@SummitCreditUnion.com.



REMARKABLE WOMEN

Ever since I started at BRAVA, I have wanted to cover the topic of dynamic mother-daughter teams. I just knew that Madison had several amazing women and girls that we could talk to. And we were lucky to find three groups that blew us away with their talents, positivity, and most importantly, their tight-knit bonds.



It got me thinking about my grandmas and my mom, and the things I love and cherish about all of them. My dad's mom, Patricia, was a kind and gentle woman. You see, I have two older male cousins and two older brothers, so the first granddaughter for her was special. Although she passed away when I was only 6 years old, I still remember her kindness and love for me.



My mom's mother, Marilyn, who passed away in 2010, was also one-of-a-kind. A petite, sprightly woman, she had close-cropped blonde hair in her later years, always wore bright lipstick and was polished and put together — that was her generation, after all. In fact, she reveled in revealing a piece she was wearing was actually from “the Goodwill” — she was thrifty, yet stylish. She loved to go dancing with my grandpa and made the best pies.

My mom, Nancy, is much like her mother. Also petite, she radiates positivity — and her love of a bold lip shade and a well-thought-out outfit (and a good deal) is a constant. She worked at the same medical clinic for her entire career as an X-ray and mammogram technician until her retirement in January 2020.



My mom and I don't think we look alike (I take after my dad's side of the family), but we've always been close. One of my

favorite recent memories with her was a May 2018 trip over Mother's Day to New York City — just the two of us. A highlight was the opening of that year's Metropolitan Museum of Art's exhibition “Heavenly Bodies,” which showcased how fashion is influenced by religious themes.

Now that I have my own children, I'm much more cognizant of the sacrifices and the love my parents had for my brothers and I — and I know I'm not alone in this realization. In May and June, we celebrate both mothers and fathers for a reason, and we've spotlighted many ways throughout this issue you can honor Mom or Dad. Check out P. 9 (things to do with Mom), P. 11 (ideas to buy both), P. 42 (mother-daughter teams) and P. 70 (brunches to take Mom or Dad to).

We've curated a lot of other great content for you in this issue that we're proud to share with you, from the challenges COVID-19 long-haulers face (P. 18) to smart ways you can upgrade your home (starting on P. 25). Enjoy!

And, feel free to drop me a note at any time at Shayna@ntmediagroup.com. I love hearing from you!

Shayna Mace
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WE NEED YOUR INPUT! It's time for BRAVA's 2021 Reader Survey, where we ask about you, what you like in BRAVA and what you want to see more of in our pages and website. We want to hear from you! If you fill out our survey, you'll be entered to win one of four \$25 gift cards to Boulder Brewpub and Monk's Bar & Grill. **Check it out here:** bravamagazine.com/reader-survey.

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BRAVA Magazine is a publication of Nei-Turner
Media Group, Inc. Gary E. Nei, Chairman,
William Turner, President

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Subscription information:
(262) 729-4471 or kerri@ntmediagroup.com.

BRAVA (ISSN 1934-4317) May/June 2021,
Volume 22, Number 03, is published bimonthly
(six times a year) by Nei-Turner Media Group,
Inc. Periodicals postage paid at 3902 Milwaukee
St., Madison WI 53714 and additional offices.
Subscriptions are \$12/year. Postmaster send address
changes to: BRAVA Magazine, 951 Kimball Ln.,
Ste. 104, Verona WI 53593-1786.

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MARLA BERGH

Marla is a Madison-based portrait, lifestyle and commercial photographer whose work takes her across the country. She frequently shoots on location around the Midwest and works with clients in her natural light studio in downtown Madison. In this issue, she had fun shooting Emily and Stella Balsley for our cover as well as the "Mother & Daughter" feature, starting on P. 42. When not holding the camera, you can find her binge-watching Netflix and enjoying Madison's food scene with her husband and two children.

@mberghphoto



KATE LAWLESS

Kate is a journalism and history major who is finishing up her last semester at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. For the last three years, she has written for Moda, UW-Madison's fashion and lifestyle magazine, most recently serving as deputy editor. Aside from her magazine experience, Kate has also done nonprofit communications and legal internships, which inspired her passion for working with community-based organizations. After graduation, Kate hopes to continue working in publishing and make some more progress on her mile-long reading list. She penned a piece in "A Mental Health Shift" on P. 49 by talking to two mental health experts on how we can support our loved ones' mental wellness.

@katherinelawless



HYWANIA THOMPSON

Hywania is a freelance writer originally from the Chicago area. She moved to Madison in 2005 to work as a radio news reporter. She enjoys spending time with her family, volunteering, traveling (especially to Ireland) and listening to live music. She currently serves on the boards of directors for Goodwill of South Central Wisconsin, REACH-A-Child and Social Media Breakfast-Madison. Hywania contributed to the "Mother & Daughter" feature by interviewing photographer Marla Bergh (see above!) and her daughter, Layla. Find her story on P. 47.

@hywania

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Four Perfect Ways to Spend the Day With Mom

Show Mom some love on Mother's Day (May 9) — or any ordinary day — with a custom-crafted itinerary that you'll both enjoy.

BY JESSICA STEINHOFF



Brittingham Boats



Lake Monona Bike Loop

1 For the Outdoorsy Mom

Team up with Mom to explore the great outdoors. Start with breakfast at **Lakeside Street Coffee House**, which offers a scenic view of Lake Monona - and baked goods from Madison Sourdough. Then pedal around the 11-mile **Lake Monona Bike Loop**, pausing to visit Monona's **Aldo Leopold Nature Center**. Hike one of their award-winning prairie trails, then bike back to Madison for a burger lunch at **The Curve**.

After refueling and people-watching, make your way to **Brittingham Boats** to rent kayaks or stand-up paddleboards. Spend your afternoon catching up as you drift across Monona Bay.



The Vinery

2

For the Green-Thumbed Mom

Kick off a day of plant-themed pleasures at **The Victory**, which turns coffee beans into steamy pour-overs and creamy cortados. Once you're both fully caffeinated, admire 16 acres of display gardens, including a lush rose garden and a tranquil Thai pavilion, at **Olbrich Botanical Gardens**. Then stroll to **Daisy Cafe & Cupcakery** for a lunch of roasted veggie enchiladas (and cupcakes, of course).

Your next destination is **The Vinery**, a glass-art studio where you can make a garden stake or mosaic in a weekend class. Then travel to **West Star Organics** garden center in Cottage Grove, which sells more than 200 types of organic starter plants. Whether your mom wants to grow vegetables, herbs or flowers this summer, she'll find something that catches her eye.



Olbrich Botanical Gardens





3

Eno Vino Downtown



Dexter's Pub

For the Foodie Mom

The Capitol Square, home to the **Dane County Farmers' Market**, is the perfect starting point for a food-focused outing with Mom. Begin with lattes and lemon curd crepes at **Bradbury's**. This tiny shop's seasonal roast, custom-blended by Ruby Coffee Roasters, is also a must-try, so grab a bag to go. If it's Saturday, visit the market to stock up on farm-fresh cooking ingredients. (Check dcfm.org for the most up-to-date market locations.)

Lunch on **Sardine's** lakeside patio is next on the docket. If possible, order from the brunch menu, which includes smoked salmon sandwiches and mouthwatering moulles frites. Afterward, walk to State Street to browse vintage cookbooks at **Paul's Book Store**. Enjoy a Chardonnay at **Eno Vino Downtown** as you page through your finds and plan what to cook. Then end your day on a sweet note at **Gail Ambrosius Chocolatier**, where you can build a truffle box to take home.



Gail Ambrosius Chocolatier



For the Competitive Mom

Does your mom have a competitive streak? If so, this itinerary is a perfect fit. Start your day at State Street's **Short Stack Eatery** to see who can eat the tallest stack of blueberry pancakes. Then, race to **Vitense Golfland** for 18 holes of miniature golf. Three courses — two outdoor and one indoor — dare you to maneuver around a giraffe, slide down a mineshaft and more as you vie for the lowest score.

Next up are pinball and pizza at **Rossi's Pizza & Vintage Arcade** in Monona. Battle for bragging rights on an old-school arcade game like Joust, then zip over to **The Brass Ring** for a cocktail and a cutthroat pool or shuffleboard tournament. Get outside again and navigate to the **Perrier Parcourse fitness trail** near UW-Madison's Natatorium. Its 18 stations will prove which one of you is the champion of '70s-era physical challenges.

End your day in fan mode at **Warner Park** or **Dexter's Pub**. The park becomes the Duck Pond when it's game night for the **Madison Mallards**, a collegiate baseball team. This happens about three nights a week in the summer, and it's wise to buy tickets in advance. Love the Milwaukee Brewers? Catch a televised game at Dexter's, where you can cheer on the team and make new friends over a plate of chorizo nachos. 🍷



Madison Mallards

Jessica Steinhoff is a Madison-based writer and mom. She co-authored "Cbromatic: The Crossroads of Color and Music."

HEAD TO HIVE

BY SHAYNA MACE

PHOTOGRAPHY BY SHANNA WOLF



A beehive is known for its buzzy activity, and on a Friday in early April, Hive of Madison on Monroe Street had a similar energy, with customers milling about and lively conversations taking place. It felt (almost) like things are back to normal here. It's a good sign.

Co-owners and wife and husband Pam Schwarzbach (shown in photo, second from left) and Troy Kattreh opened the lifestyle boutique three and a half years ago, and the Monroe Street location was purposeful.

"I've lived in this area for 30 years, and there's such a vibrancy here — it was one of the only locations we would've considered in Madison," explains Schwarzbach.

Carrying popular brands Fjällräven, Arc'teryx, Birkenstock, Patagonia and more, the shop's clothing and accessories have an active bent — but with street-style cred. It fits our current desire for comfortable clothing suited for a busy day that's still presentable and polished for Zoom calls — and eventually, outings with friends again.

"This past year has really made people appreciate the value of walking into a local shop they love and supporting them," says Schwarzbach. 🌸

1904 Monroe St., Madison, hiveofmadison.com



SHOP THE LOOK



Boring shirt, begone! This Toad & Co. pick spices up his wardrobe. \$65



For the minimalist, Thread's elastic card holder snugly hugs cards and money with a dash of panache. \$16



Fjällräven's unisex bags are durable, stylish, come in fun colors and are up for any adventure you take them on. \$35



Birkenstock's Arizona sandals are the brand's signature style — shown here in a sleek copper rubber. \$45



We love Vuori's Ripstop women's pants for their enviable comfort — and this fresh coral shade. Cuff 'em with sneakers. \$89



Excellent for a walk, bike ride or just shopping, this Kavu cross-body handbag equals hands-free ease. \$35

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THE PURPOSE OF PLEASURE ACTIVISM

Professor Sami Schalk, who was named one of UW–Madison’s Outstanding Women of Color this year, talks about pleasure activism and how we need to examine the guilt, shame and denial of joy.

BY SHELBY ROWE MOYER

A lot of judgment, guilt and assumptions are placed on pleasure — from food to sex to moments of relaxation.

In general, we live in a society that places undue shame on an expansive list of things that bring people joy, says Sami Schalk, a pleasure activist, author and associate professor at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

The term “pleasure activism” is relatively new. Schalk first heard about it from the woman who coined it, adrienne maree brown, the author of the 2019 bestselling title, “Pleasure Activism: The Politics of Feeling Good.”

Schalk — whose research focuses on disability, race and gender in contemporary American literature and culture — likes discussing how pleasure activism intersects with people with disabilities. She notes that people with disabilities are often desexualized and there’s this assumption that living with a disability is inherently bad or painful.

“So, there’s been a lot of work for disabled folks to talk about the pleasure and the knowledge and the joy that can emerge from experiences of disability.”

And while pleasure activism is about much more than sex, sex and sexuality are also important components. Schalk actually has an essay within brown’s book where she shares openly about her ethical practice of polyamory (having intimate relationships with more than one partner with all partners’ consent) and BDSM (bondage, discipline, domination and submission) — something she’d never written about publicly. Initially, she figured brown’s book would have a niche audience, and then it became a New York Times Bestseller.

WHAT IS PLEASURE ACTIVISM?

Schalk is very involved in activism, and she says infusing more joy into social justice work is one of the main tenets of adrienne maree brown’s explanation of pleasure activism.

So what could that look like? One example could be having dancing, music and counselors at protests to help heal and rejuvenate the people doing this work. Activism is physically, emotionally and mentally draining, so the work can’t be the fight alone. Without joy, people get burned out.

“If activism is about liberation and freedom, then you also have to work on accessing your own liberation and freedom by being able to feel pleasure and provide yourself pleasure in order for this work to be sustainable,” Schalk says.

Another main aspect of pleasure activism spotlights how marginalized people often experience an “uneven surveillance” of pleasure, such as the police being called on people of color doing everyday things, like laughing, dancing or listening to music, says Schalk. A simple Google search reveals countless incidents where moments of leisure turned into police run-ins — Black people barbecuing in a park, sitting in a Starbucks and playing golf. The ability for everyone to freely express pleasure and live their lives is part of social liberation, Schalk says, and it’s something that needs to be collectively valued.

Want to learn more? Check out brown’s book, “Pleasure Activism: The Politics of Feeling Good.”

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"It gave me accidental permission to just lean fully into it," Schalk says. "... It was another kind of coming out. Like, whoa, this is a thing that I've been hiding and so scared of people finding out, because I'm worried people will think bad things about me, even though it brings me such joy. I don't want to live like that anymore."

Being established in her career made Schalk feel a little more confident about opening up about her intimacy practices. And it ties back to the politics of pleasure, and how it's oppressive to socially police and place stigma upon actions that aren't harming anyone, Schalk says.

"There's no way you can tell me that, 'Oh, you're not going to be a good teacher or a good scholar because you're queer or because you're poly or because you're kinky,' because I've been doing all these things the whole time, and ya'll just didn't know."

As another example, Schalk retells the story of the time she danced on stage



with Lizzo during a concert in Madison, and a video of it went viral. A group of online commentators said Schalk shouldn't be allowed to teach because this was inappropriate behavior for a professor.

"I was like, to go to a concert and dance? ... Me going to a concert and enjoying myself has nothing to do with my ability to do my job and do it well," she says.

Ultimately, pleasure activism is good for everyone. It gives everyone permission to enjoy what they like (as long as it's not harmful to anyone).

But indulging yourself isn't the end goal, Schalk says. There needs to be a widespread redistribution of pleasure. Check any instincts you have to suppress, denigrate or judge other people's joy. If you have money, donate it to social justice organizations. And be mindful of how your presence influences the experiences of others, Schalk says.

"Being able to break that pattern around shame really allows people to be their fullest selves," Schalk says 🌸

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TO FAST OR NOT TO FAST?

Intermittent fasting is in the health spotlight right now — but what does it mean, and is it beneficial?

BY EMMY BAWDEN



While the practice of fasting has existed throughout history, intermittent fasting (IF) has emerged as a popular strategy for improving health and losing weight. Experts believe this is due to its simplicity compared to other ways of eating, as well as research touting its benefits. Commonly studied IF methods include alternate-day fasting (eating less than 25% of your baseline food intake every other day), 5:2 fasting (fasting two days each week and eating normally five days per week), and daily time-restricted feeding (eating only during a certain time window, such as between 11 a.m. and 7 p.m.).

ARE THERE BENEFITS TO IF?

Although not fully understood, experts believe the beneficial effects of IF involve adaptive cellular responses that improve organ function and resistance to stress. The majority of IF studies have been conducted on animals, and results have shown a slowing or reversing of aging and disease processes, including diabetes, cardiovascular disease, cancers and neurodegenerative brain diseases. However, the results have been mixed and scientists are unsure of the influence that alternative variables such as genetics, sex, diet and age have on IF's effects.

Human studies offer less convincing evidence of IF's benefits. Of the human studies conducted, some demonstrate improvements in insulin resistance, inflammation and high cholesterol. However, these human studies haven't provided sufficient evidence of long-term health effects (including longevity) or safety, and have only looked at short-term interventions ranging from several days to months. This is compared to animal studies that assess IF's benefits throughout the lifespan. Experts also argue there is significant variation in how different mammals respond to calorie restriction, and that it's misguided to assume human responses to IF will mirror the life-extending results seen in small animals (such as mice).

Weight-loss results are also mixed. While some human studies show short-term weight loss, other studies (including a recent one in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*), show no statistically significant benefit from IF with either weight loss

or other health outcomes. That same study shows a significant loss of muscle mass with IF (65% of total weight lost, exceeding the expected 20-30%), which is positively correlated with weakness and weight regain.

With such conflicting data, it's clear just how complex nutrition science is!

IS IT SAFE?

IF has downsides, including a significant increase in the stress hormone cortisol, shown in a review of 30 studies on caloric restriction and fasting. Moreover, such restriction has been studied for its ability to induce binge eating and weight regain. One possible culprit here is the increased release of neuropeptide Y, a neurochemical that enhances the drive to eat while reducing energy expenditure in an effort to restore balance.

IF in real life is likely significantly different than in a controlled study, and we can't ignore the negative physical and mental health outcomes of such restrictive diets. In general, restrictive dieting is a significant predictor of eating disorders and weight cycling, which is associated with increased risk for heart disease, chronic inflammation, insulin resistance and increased abdominal fat. Because research shows the majority of restrictive diets fail within 1-5 years, in part due to a metabolic "slowing" and accelerated weight gain, it further supports the need for long-term IF studies.

WHO WOULD IF NOT WORK FOR?

Anyone considering IF should first discuss it with their healthcare provider; however, IF is not recommended if you:

- Have diabetes
- Are pregnant or breastfeeding
- Use medications that require food intake
- Have a history of an eating disorder/disordered eating 🌸

Emmy Bawden, MS, RDN, CD and LDN is a registered dietitian nutritionist and owner of the Madison-based nutrition therapy practice *Real Good Nutrition*. As a patient-turned-provider, Bawden is passionate about supporting her clients' health and relationship with food with personalized, evidence-based approaches.

Family Health Series



Climate change discussions usually warn about physical changes to the Earth – melting ice caps, water levels rising and extinction of animal species. But what about the health problems it's causing now? More recently, scientists and medical professionals are also focusing some of the attention on how these climate changes are impacting human health. Here are some of the major health impacts that experts are bringing to light.

Air Pollution

The rise in global temperature is worsening our air quality. Already we see longer allergy seasons and higher frequencies of asthma exacerbations.

What can you do? Download an app that tracks air quality. My favorite weather app that includes this is Wunderground, but AirVisual and Air Matters are other apps that give more specific data about pollen counts and air pollution status. Knowing the situation outside may impact your plans for lighter activity on poor air quality days

Why Medical Providers Are Worried About Climate Change

UnityPoint Health – Meriter's Rachel Kelly shares her advice on how your family can handle climate change-related health risks.

and when to take advantage of good air quality days for more intense activity, like a good run.

Vector-Borne Disease

Diseases spread by ticks and mosquitoes are called "vector-borne" diseases. A couple well-known examples include Lyme Disease and West Nile Virus. With increasing temperatures, there are longer seasons for tick and mosquito activity, meaning increased potential for spread of disease.

What can you do? If venturing into tall grass or wooded areas, protect your family with effective bug spray. It is safe to use products with 10-30% DEET (I like Off! Deep Woods) or with picaridin (such as Natrapel), for anyone 2 months and older, including pregnant and breastfeeding women. Follow instructions on product packaging for safe use. Remember to wear light colors and protective clothing to help prevent bites, and do regular tick checks after being outdoors.

Heat Waves

Climate change is measurably causing more extreme temperatures. Higher temperatures for more days of the year increases risk for heat-related injuries, like heat stroke and heat exhaustion. This is particularly dangerous for athletes, young children and pregnant women.

What can you do? Be sure your child has annual checkups. These visits offer the best opportunity to discuss safe conditioning and heat precautions. We also check the heart and lungs, and discuss healthy weight recommendations, to be sure your child is fit for moderate to intense physical activity. An assessment of your child's risk also includes review and discussion of any family history of heart problems.

– *By Rachel Kelly, Pediatric Physician Assistant for UnityPoint Health – Meriter*

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THE LONG HAUL OF COVID-19

Some COVID-19 patients experience symptoms long after they've cleared the illness. Experts aren't sure if these long-term effects are permanent or not.

BY EMILY MCCLUHAN



Lona Towsley, a two-time cancer survivor from Avoca, knows what it means to dig deep and persevere during a health crisis. After bouts of cervical cancer in 1986 and 1996, Towsley had already undergone surgery and a hysterectomy. But in April 2020, lying in the ICU at UW Hospital as fluid filled her lungs and her oxygen levels dropped, Towsley began to think it might be COVID-19, and not cancer, that could take her life.

While unconscious on a ventilator for four days after her COVID diagnosis, she received a transfusion of convalescent plasma as part of a nationwide study to determine if plasma from patients who had recovered from COVID could help those with current COVID diagnoses. Towsley's condition improved within days, and she was finally able to go home with an oxygen tank after three weeks in the ICU.

A year later, she's thankful for the plasma transfusion that saved her life and the nurses who were her support system through her darkest days. But her life isn't back to normal.

"I have to carry an oxygen meter everywhere, and when I start feeling bad I check my levels," says Towsley. "That determines [if I use an] inhaler, [do] breathing exercises or use the oxygen tank.



I get so frustrated because I liked being independent [before]."

Towsley suffers from what doctors and researchers call "long-COVID." Dr. Aurora Pop-Vicas, an infectious disease specialist at the University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Medicine and Public Health, says that up to three-quarters of patients who were hospitalized with COVID-19 report at least one symptom post-discharge. These include: difficulty breathing, fatigue, loss of taste or smell, chronic pain, difficulty concentrating (also known as "brain fog") and, in some cases, long-term organ damage.

"It's not that surprising, because after any very severe illness — especially one that requires artificial life support — patients often have some persistent problems related to the prolonged hospitalization," Pop-Vicas explains.

Pop-Vicas references the closest example to a severe outbreak caused by a coronavirus — the 2003 SARS epidemic — as one in which hospitalized patients also had prolonged symptoms after the initial viral infection. However, the scientific community was caught off guard in 2020 when even some COVID patients who were not hospitalized — and in some cases had only mild COVID symptoms during the acute illness — also experienced some of these prolonged effects.

"This subgroup of long-haulers ... experience these symptoms, but there is still very little published research on the biological mechanisms explaining the 'long-haul' phenomenon," explains Dr. Pop-Vicas.

According to the U.S. National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, 25-40% of individuals who have tested positive for COVID have experienced prolonged symptoms that can last months. Through apps like COVID Symptom Study, researchers are starting to piece together these trends and identify risk factors and causes for long-COVID.

"One of the theories for long-COVID is that there's persistent

inflammation in the body that just is not being turned off after the initial illness, and that might be responsible for some of these lingering symptoms,” Pop-Vicas says. “In most cases, this will dial down over time and the immune system will regulate back to normal.”

For example, Pop-Vicas notes that many long-haulers report loss of smell. She references a study done by Harvard neuroscientists that found that the COVID-19 virus does not attack the olfactory neurons, but rather the cells that provide metabolic and structural support to those neurons. Because the neurons can be impacted, loss of smell may occur. But the neurons are not directly damaged, so when the immune system eventually controls the virus, most patients recover their sense of smell.



“...There is still very little published research on the biological mechanisms explaining the ‘long-haul’ phenomenon.”

– Dr. Aurora Pop-Vicas

“Preliminary data is also beginning to accumulate, looking at brain scans comparing images from patients with long-COVID versus patients who didn’t have COVID at all,” says Pop-Vicas, and notes that a couple of studies now have shown that there’s a consistent pattern of hypometabolism, or decreased function, in regions of the brain like the cerebellum, temporal lobe or amygdala that are known to correlate with symptoms such as loss of smell, pain syndrome or difficulty concentrating. The mechanisms for how



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and when these symptoms subside are still being studied, says Pop-Vicas.

This initial data helps, but without definitive knowledge yet of who is most at risk for long-COVID or the causes of it, specific immunomodulatory therapies (in other words, medications to treat it) for long-COVID are not yet available, says Pop-Vicas. Currently, patient treatment is certainly available, and relies on doctor evaluation to determine the extent of lingering symptoms and whether there is persistent organ dysfunction to create a multidisciplinary, individualized treatment and rehab plan. In December 2020, Congress approved \$1.15 billion for the National Institutes of Health to study long-COVID and its causes.

For Towsley, she experiences the uncertainty of long-COVID every day. She says when her memory fails her unexpectedly, frustration sets in and she has to step back from conversations. Instead of hustling across the rehabilitation facility she works at for disabled patients, she forces herself to delegate more to avoid the chest pain when her lungs struggle. While “the new normal” is a term we’ve all started to accept, Towsley holds onto hope that someday she’ll have a little bit of the “old normal” back. ✨

Emily McCluhan is a program manager and freelance writer.



THE COVID-19 VACCINE SCENE

As of April 5, 2021, anyone age 16 and older is eligible to get the COVID-19 vaccine, according to the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS).

What does “effective” mean when it comes to these vaccines?

“We look at what a vaccine is effective against, as well as percent effectiveness,” says Dr. Nasia Safdar, medical director for control and infection prevention at UW Health. “For the COVID-19 vaccines, they are studied for effectiveness against complications that can lead to hospitalization or death. [With an] effectiveness of 95%, like that in the Moderna and Pfizer vaccines, that means that if 100 people were to get the vaccine, 95 of them would not end up getting severe COVID such that it requires hospitalization or complications that lead to death.”

If I’m still experiencing COVID-19 symptoms, will the vaccine make them worse?

DHS recommends waiting until you are recovered from the initial illness and are no longer in isolation. Researchers are starting to evaluate the effects of the vaccine on those who’ve had COVID, as well as long-haulers. According to Safdar, plausible explanations for the vaccine’s effects on long-COVID symptoms, if any, center around the possibility that the immune response triggered by the vaccine might somehow “reset” the overactive immune response that may be responsible for long-COVID symptoms.

Will I have to get the COVID-19 vaccine again in the future?

“With the way that variants of COVID-19 are spreading, it is possible that the vaccine would have to be tweaked to include that additional protection,” Safdar says. “In which case, people who have received the original vaccine will then need a booster. But it’s really too early to know for sure.” — EM





YOUR BIGGEST ASSET

By Joanna G. Burish

When I ask people, “What is your biggest asset?” nine times out of 10 they’ll respond that it’s their house. In my experience, that’s the wrong answer! Think about it: Who pays for that house, that car in the garage, those beautiful furnishings? It’s YOU — more specifically, your ability to work and earn a living to pay for the lifestyle you lead.

Why is it then most people find value in insuring their home or apartment, their car, their business, but not the main resource that pays for all of these things, which is your income? That’s where disability insurance has your back. This kind of insurance pays you a monthly benefit if you become disabled. The most common types of disability are: Pregnancy, digestive disorders, musculoskeletal disorders, cancer, injuries and mental health conditions.

To put the importance of disability insurance into perspective, statistically, 1% of homeowner insurance policies pay for fire damage, and 2% of car insurance policies pay out for car accidents. However, more than 25% of people 20 years and older will become disabled for three or more months before the age of 67. That’s one out of four of us! Disability is a common cause of bankruptcy but, with the right planning, it doesn’t have to be.



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SIX THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT DISABILITY INSURANCE:

- 1. Find out the details of what you may currently already have access to.** Many companies offer disability insurance as part of their employee benefits package. The benefit payout ranges from 50-60% of your salary. Sometimes the employer pays for your short-term disability and requires you to pay for your long-term disability, or, they cover both. Keep in mind that since your employer typically pays for this premium, the benefit will be taxed to you, so plan accordingly to live on more like 35-45% of your income, should you become disabled.
- 2. Consider gap disability insurance.** This covers the remainder of the 40-50% your employer’s benefits don’t cover. The great advantage here is that since you personally pay for the premium of this insurance, the benefit is 100% tax-free to you. This can help maintain your lifestyle!
- 3. Disability income insurance policies differ from state to state and vary in the details of what they cover in their features and benefits.** It’s not one-size-fits-all. You may think that you have full coverage, when the rules state you have to be “totally disabled” to receive your benefit, and there are various definitions to “totally disabled.”
- 4. Some policies state that while you may not be able to perform your current job duty, you may be able to perform another job at your company, hence the policy doesn’t have to pay (even if this new role pays less than your current role).** Pay attention to this language of “the ability to perform the substantial and material duties of your occupation” and “any occupation” versus “own occupation” rules. You’ll want “own occupation” verbiage, as you’ve worked hard to get to where you are and should receive the best income your role offers.
- 5. Disability insurance is based on your age, your income, your monthly expenses and a health underwriting process.** Some policies will also consider other benefits you receive such as social security disability insurance, and may lower your benefit based on that.
- 6. Be aware of your policy’s exclusions, limitations and reduction-of-benefit provisions.** These are often in the fine print, or worse, not spelled out in the employee benefit manual. If you have a preexisting condition it may be excluded. You can request these details from your HR department, or they can request full details from your company’s provider.

To see what your plan may look like with disability insurance, or if you want a professional review of your current personal or employer’s disability policy, please reach out to me and my team. We are happy to help offer you a second opinion or review.

VIRTUAL CONNECTIONS, MEANINGFUL WORK

How COVID-19 is upending company culture.

BY KATY MACEK



We are still learning the long-term effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, but the remote work trend will stick around, and some think it could alter the workforce landscape — for the better.

The rise of remote work started as a necessity for most office jobs back in March 2020. Upwork's "Future of Workforce Pulse Report" estimates an 87% increase of remote work from pre-pandemic levels by 2025. A Gartner, Inc.,

survey found that 74% of CFOs expect to permanently shift some employees to remote after the pandemic. Companies such as Twitter, Square and Facebook have announced indefinite work from home (WFH) policies for many employees.

Britt Gottschalk, CEO and founder of Madison-based ReVise Consulting, built a whole company around helping local employers develop remote-work best practices.

"With this shift, not only have we had the opportunity to rehumanize workspaces but also to change what a healthy employee culture means by giving employees tools they need to continually succeed," whether they're in the office or working from home, Gottschalk says.

She thinks it could be the potential "rebirth of corporate America" — if it's done right.

REASSESSING PERFORMANCE

"Having a butt in a seat doesn't show that people are doing work," Gottschalk says. She thinks employers should continue to take this time to reevaluate performance metrics that better reflect the quality of work getting done, rather than the number of people in the office.

Expectations should move from how many hours are spent in the office to the consistency and quality of the employee's deliverables. Hitting key performance indicators will still matter, but the criteria should change to reflect how organizations work in remote and hybrid work environments.

"Before it was easy for someone in-office to have a vague description of their duties and fly under the radar doing sub-par or little work," she says. Increasing an individual employee's autonomy while also depending on team projects will allow for a check-and-balance structure in a remote environment.

EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

The one thing remote work cannot do is replace human interaction. To be effective, it must instead change the focus of that interaction from unstructured coffee-room chats to intentional meetings where every minute matters.

"You can't develop an app that's going to replace these meaningful interactions and the work that gets done by employees who feel purposeful," Gottschalk says. "If we don't pay attention to what employee engagement is going to look like, we're going to be in big trouble."

"Meaningful" is key — it's all about maintaining connection and collaboration, she says. Keeping employees engaged prevents feelings of apathy and isolation, which leads to lower levels of productivity.

This means using virtual spaces to create events ranging from small-group luncheons and book clubs to planning randomized interactions with coworkers and creating "faux commutes" that mimic the start of the work day and recreate office life with purpose.

HIRING PRACTICES

Remote work not only benefits employees' work-life balance but can also improve the company's talent pool by finding the candidate who is the best fit for the job — not just lives closest.

Additionally, the flexible lifestyle of remote work can lead to retaining high-quality employees regardless of changing life situations.



"With this [remote work] shift, not only have we had the opportunity to rehumanize workspaces but also to change what a healthy employee culture means by giving employees tools they need to continually succeed."

—Britt Gottschalk

Gottschalk also thinks remote hiring and performance metrics will help eliminate unconscious bias for employees of color, the LGBTQ community and others from lower socioeconomic classes.

"The judgment will be more around the quality of work delivered, on what kind of timeline, and what their background looks like on video calls, which can be easily blurred or changed," she says.

Now that employees have gotten a "taste of the apple" of flexible work schedules, she says, they'll "want the whole thing."

"This has given the power back to employees to say, 'this is how I want to live my work life. I don't live to work, I work to live,'" Gottschalk says. "How employers choose to respond to that could decide the future of their company." 🌸

Katy Macek is a copywriter and freelance journalist who enjoys hearing about her community through the stories she gets to tell.

COURTESY BRITT GOTTSCHALK

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Clockwise from top left: Rainbow hanging planter, \$22, **The Madison Greenhouse Store**; washed cotton smock with pocket, \$20, **World Market**; pocket trowel multi tool, \$25, **Wildewood**; Better Gardens Beneficial Insect House, \$25, **The Madison Greenhouse Store**; 12" poppy planter, \$48, **The Bruce Company**; Eva Solo bird feeders, \$49 & \$55, **The Century House**; Hunter Boots Play clog, \$75, **Anthropologie**; Cavallini & Co. Bees & Honey vintage 1,000 piece puzzle, \$22, **Hazel General Store**; garden waist apron, \$44, **Anthropologie**; white galvanized steel and wood watering can, \$17, **World Market**; Mati 6.5" pot, \$35, **Wildewood**; Bird Bingo game, \$30, **The Century House**; and Modern Sprout Pollinator Seed lollipops, \$21, **World Market**. 🌸



WILDEWOOD

GOOD NATURE

How indoor plants can help you thrive.

Instagram is brimming with houseplant-clad interiors these days, but did you know that they serve a greater purpose than acting as living décor? First of all, some houseplants, like spider plants and English ivy, have the ability to clean the air when several plants are grown in a small space. Be sure to pair this with other elements that can improve your home's air quality, like purchasing an air purifier and opting for eco-friendly low-VOC paint.

Plants have also long been studied for their mental health benefits. For example, in a 2020 study by "Urban Forestry and Urban Greening," 74% of the 4,200 participants from 46 countries reported that their houseplants had a positive impact on their emotional health during lockdown. Scientists have proven that plants have the power to reduce anxiety and depression, increase happiness and foster mindfulness.

Caring for plants is a soothing activity, down to the dirt where they reside. According to a 2007 Neuroscience report, non-harmful bacteria in the soil affects the brain similarly to antidepressants. It's a good reason to get your hands dirty.

As for maintenance, optimal water and sunshine (and a whole lot of plant-specific YouTube videos) are the essentials. If you have a black thumb, there are some plants that can virtually survive anything. Look to snake plants, ZZ plants and philodendrons if you can only give them minimal attention.

Green up your home with the help of local plant purveyors Wildewood and Briar Loft and cultivate your spaces along with your well-being. — *Shelby Deering*



LOVELY LAWN

Going green in your yard yields benefits.

For a healthy lawn without toxic chemicals, organic fertilizer is the way to go, says Becky Kielstrup, general manager and horticulturist at Avant Gardening & Landscaping in McFarland. It might cost more, but the payoff is worth it. Be sure to check the organic fertilizer label for recognizable heavy metals like copper, which could hurt your lawn.

Compost is also a key ingredient to eco-friendly lawn care, particularly with the heavy clay soil in this region. "[Spreading] all that compost, it's getting all the good guys back into the soil; all the things that are necessary to make that grass healthy and happy," she says. Compost helps the grass develop stronger roots and grow to take up more space. That leaves fewer nooks and crannies for the seeds of weeds to take root.

Kielstrup recommends composting twice a year: First, when the spring rains are over and again in the early fall. Lawns treated with compost can get a boost from compost "tea," Kielstrup says. The liquid can be made at home (look it up on YouTube) with water, compost and a few other organic ingredients. Compost tea feeds microscopic organisms that are important in cycling nutrients. The tea is best applied with a sprayer after the compost works its way into the soil.

Aeration is also a big help to a healthy lawn. When using an aeration machine, make sure you pull the plugs (also called soil cores) out of the soil to reduce compaction in your lawn. Another tip: Don't mow your grass too short. "If you really want to have good, bluegrass-quality turf, it absolutely must be mowed no shorter than 3 inches ever. 3.5 or 4 inches is even better," Kielstrup says. — *Holly Marley-Henschen* ✨

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BE ON THE LOOKOUT FOR THESE COOL HOME TRENDS

Two local experts share how homeowners are reshaping their spaces to get the most out of their homes in this new COVID-19 world.

BY DEANNA KANE



you never gave a second thought have become your biggest pet peeve. Maybe it's the less-than-ideal flow around your kitchen island, the amount of appliances displayed on your countertop or the cramped workout corner in the guest room. These are all functions you may not have noticed pre-COVID, but sheltering at home in 2020 magnified these slight inconveniences.

Here are the top home building and renovation trends local builders say are popular now, and anticipate will stay strong.

HARD-WORKING KITCHENS

With more meals at home and a near-constant full house, kitchen durability has been put to the test, and has never been more important.

"People want more out of their kitchens than they have in the past," says Cook. "Clients are requesting more refrigerator space and higher-quality appliances. We are seeing people do more of their own research on the longevity of appliances."

This past year changed nearly every aspect of our lives, with one of the most impactful shifts being how we live in our homes. Our houses went from being a place in which we sought solace after a long day, to being an office, a school, a gym and an (even) harder-working kitchen.

"We are seeing a shift to the family home being a homestead again. Homes used to be a crash pad where people would come and go, quickly eat and drop off hockey bags," says Chris Cook, owner of Chris Cook Homes. "Now, people are eating in a lot more, and enjoying new amenities like home theaters and even indoor basketball courts."

Many of these lifestyle changes could become permanent. According to Upwork, a work marketplace, 22% of the American workforce will be remote by 2025. While the health impacts of the pandemic will hopefully continue to lessen, some of the lifestyle changes we have adopted are here to stay.

The past year has not only significantly changed how we live in our homes, but how we view our homes. Perhaps areas of your home that



TOP COURTESY CHRIS COOK | BOTTOM COURTESY VICTORY HOMES

INDEPENDENT PANTRIES

An independent room to store food and appliances can either be viewed as the ultimate luxury or a necessary way to live stress-free. In recent construction projects, creating a mini kitchen off the kitchen is becoming more of the norm.

"We are seeing pantries as their own room, designed like a custom closet. They are equipped with coffee bars, refrigerators, ice machines and microwaves," says David Roembke, vice president of sales at The Victory Companies, parent company of local builder Victory Homes of Wisconsin.

AT-HOME FITNESS

As we've been eating, working and learning at home, it's no surprise that creating a dedicated space to accommodate at-home workouts has become a priority.

"We are building more exercise rooms, indoor pools and even saunas in lower levels," says Roembke. "When it comes time to sell, the fitness rooms can become a flex room."

SECLUDED SPACES

While open floor plans had their moment in time, when the entire family is working, learning and playing at home, having private spaces is paramount.

Pre-pandemic, open areas like lofts were a gathering space for family movie nights and kids having friends over.

"Instead of open lofts, we are seeing clients transform these spaces into a



quiet kid's study area by enclosing the space and adding bookshelves and desks," says Roembke.

Homeowners are also taking every opportunity to enclose open, traditional sitting rooms in the front of the house, to create a quiet study space for school-aged children.

"In open-floor plan homes, there are typically two small spaces off the front door: 6-by-6-feet, or 4-by-5-feet. We are transforming these spaces into study spaces for kids," says Cook.

PROMOTED HOME OFFICE

Remote working is here to stay. Homeowners need more space to work from home, larger areas to work from home and better infrastructure.

"We are seeing an increase in work from home spaces. Almost every home in the design process has increased the size of the office space," says Cook.

With more time at home and family members working from home, the infrastructure also needs to keep up.

"We are also seeing better IT routers installed. Homes are being equipped with structured systems that can integrate lighting, security, audio and internet," says Cook.

In households where both partners need a



dedicated space to work, there is an increased need for two separate office spaces. While one work space may be a more traditional office, the other space may include a desk space, along with a command center — a drop zone for the household. This may be a space to organize incoming papers, such as mail and homework, a family calendar; electronics; and other odds and ends.

"We are designing more pocket offices in homes that also have a formal office," says Roembke. "This is a space that is typically 14-by-14-feet or 16-by-15-feet, and has a desk area, as well as a command center and even a laundry area."

INDOOR-OUTDOOR LIVING

Living in the Midwest means taking advantage of the nice weather when we have it. Creating an extra room outside offers the best of both worlds: enjoying the outdoor ambiance, with interior comforts.

"We are seeing more and more outdoor living spaces," says Roembke. "We are designing homes with covered rooflines off of the kitchen and primary bedrooms. More homes also include covered, open-air spaces with fireplaces and spaces with rolling screens. These spaces are also fully equipped with kitchens, wine bars and even ice machines." 🌸

Deanna Kane is an interiors, home décor and real estate writer, who also enjoys taking on her own home renovation and design projects.



TOP LEFT ELISABETH WITT | SHANNA WOLF

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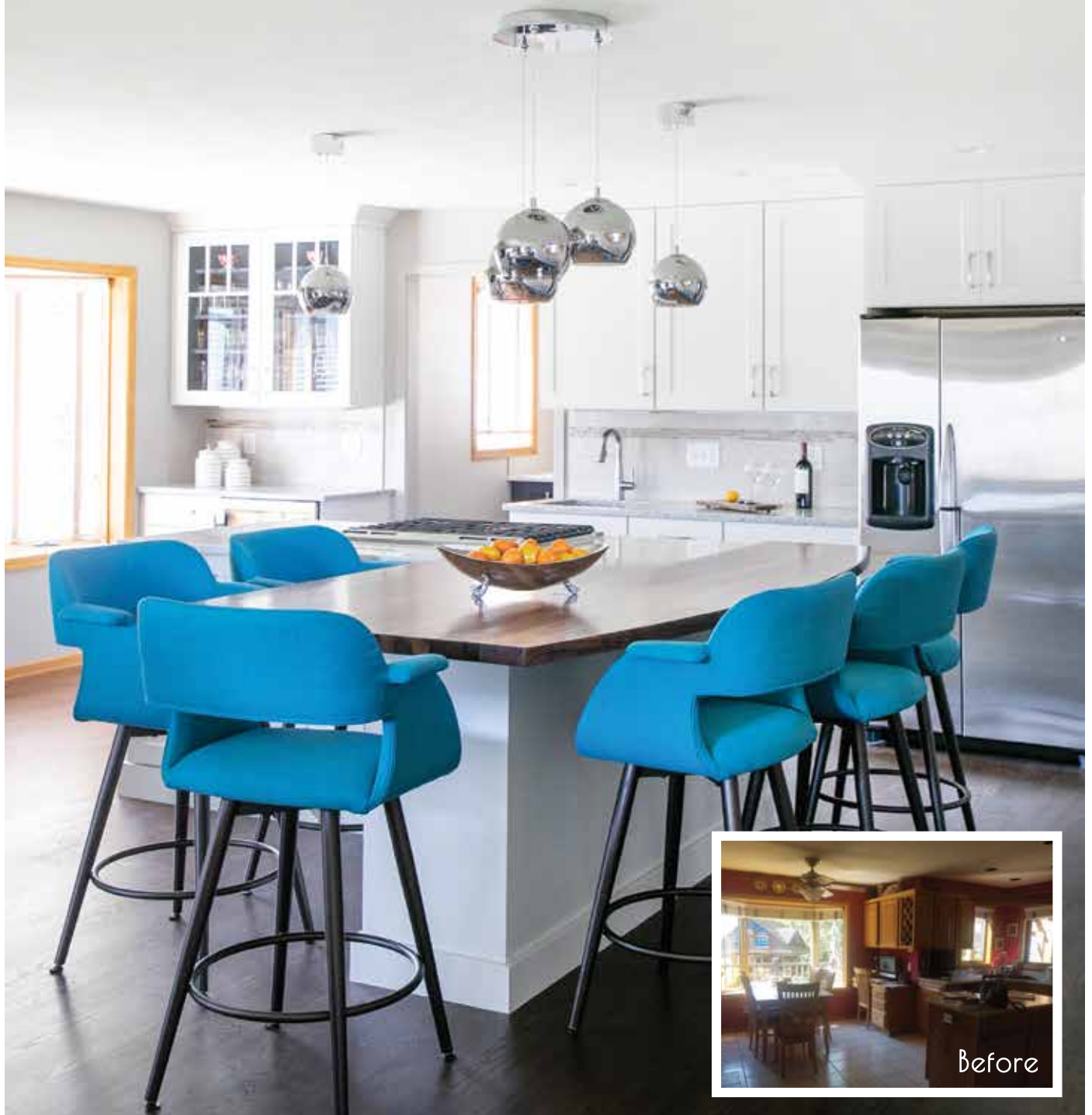
Hunter Douglas Design Studio™ Drapes



OLD KITCHEN, NEW VIBE

A dated kitchen receives a jaw-dropping makeover with plenty of style and luxe amenities.

By Shayna Mace | Photography by Shanna Wolf



When Joy and Stuart Geen moved into their home on Madison's west side 20 years ago, they were thrilled to be in their desired neighborhood, and they loved the home. It had enough room for their son, Clay, daughter, Sophia, and dog, Yadi.

However, the Geenens had to contend with an eyesore from the outset: a four-sided fireplace that partially separated the kitchen and family room (below). Visually, it wasn't attractive, and worse, it took up quite a bit of space in the kitchen that could've been used to expand its footprint. The kitchen's flow also didn't work because it centered around a small island, "and you couldn't really cook or work because everything was too close together," says Joy. "It was just a very bad layout."

Joy explains, "[We knew] we loved this house, but that fireplace had to go!"

The couple met with various interior designers over the years to reimagine their kitchen and family room, but none of the proposed plans quite hit the mark for the family.

"It took us 20 years to figure out what to do with the fireplace, because we kept hitting roadblocks of replacing the ceiling if it came out, or redoing the floor or redesigning the kitchen. We didn't know where to go next."

Finally in the fall of 2019, Joy and Stuart met with designer and general contractor Deb Corning and interior designer Alana Barrera of DC Interiors & Renovations to revamp their main floor once and for all. This time, the couple loved the plans put forth by Corning and Barrera, which involved taking out the fireplace (of course) and reconfiguring the kitchen's layout. But what really sold the Geenens was the addition of a scullery that serves as an expanded pantry and work area — something they never dreamed of adding in



Before

Before, the Geenens's main floor had a darker color scheme and a fireplace that separated the kitchen and family room.

After, the family is so happy with the light, bright feel of the space — and no fireplace blocking the views. Two TVs were installed in the kitchen and family room since the family loves to watch sports.



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Before, the kitchen island was too small and cramped the flow of the space. By installing a larger island, plus adding in the scullery, the room opened up and provides the family more storage. “Deb [Corning] came over many times and just sat and saw us interact in the space while we were talking through design ideas. So I think it’s really important to use designers in that way — they can visualize the space for you,” says Joy.



their kitchen.

“[The plan] was different than what everybody else had [shown them], and it provided everything they wanted,” says Corning. “They were excited to see something that was going to fit their lifestyle and be more contemporary — and use that space in a more efficient way.”

The three-month process was intense, and the couple was without a working kitchen during that time. First, a crew removed the fireplace. From there, all of the carpeting on the main floor was ripped out, and replaced with wood flooring. Then, all of the wood flooring was stained to match to unite the kitchen, family room and dining room.

Corning’s plans called for walling off part of the kitchen to devote square footage to the new scullery area — which was possible because the family gained square footage in the kitchen with the removal of the fireplace. (Win-win.) The dishwasher, microwave and another sink are all tucked away in here to lend the kitchen a tidy, uncluttered look — and serves as the ideal spot for meal cleanup and storage. In the kitchen, the sink shifted from an awkward corner to a spot right next to it. The tiny island was removed, and a much larger L-shaped,

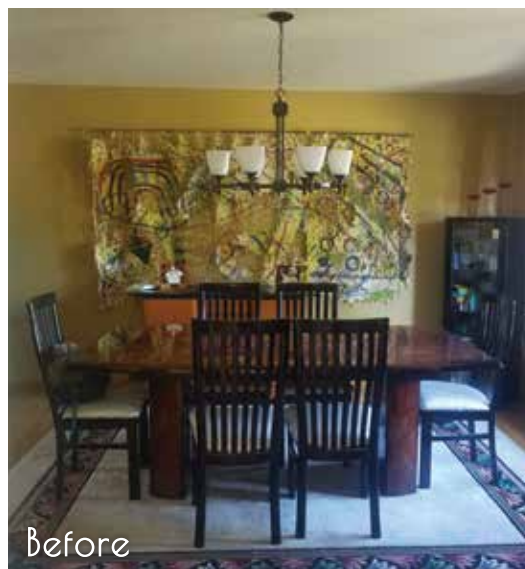


Top left: Joy loves the wine bar and fridge they added, which is another perk of their new space.

Middle: Behind the wine bar is the scullery, with its handsome navy cabinetry that adds in a pop of the unexpected.



With newly painted walls and stained floors, plus a new throw rug and artwork, the Geenen's dining room looks totally different from its dated past. Chairs from Rubin's, a pendant light from Madison Lighting and artwork from Décor (Corning's home accessories shop), was also peppered in.



walnut-topped island was swapped in.

The couple opted for Shaker-style cabinetry that reaches the ceiling by the Kitchen Ideas Center, beautiful quartz countertops throughout from The Granite Shop of Madison, Mercury glass-like globe pendant lights from Madison Lighting and teal and black midcentury modern stools from Rubin's that surround the kitchen island.

The rest of the main floor was redecorated to match the kitchen's new contemporary look. The kitchen and family room were painted a soft white shade (as opposed to a cool white) to play off of the warmth of the oak trim that's still throughout the house. New furnishings and artwork were purchased for the family and dining rooms to echo the white, teal, gray and blue color scheme. It all ties together perfectly and embodies the family's classic taste, with a contemporary twist.

"We've lived in the space a while now, and there really isn't anything we'd change. We just love walking into the space every day," says Joy. "It just feels good to have a nice, fresh space." 🌸



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Great Escapes

A peaceful prairie and an urban getaway are green sanctuaries for two area couples.

By Hannah Wente
Photography by Hillary Schave



Gardening is a labor of love—especially when a couple tackles a verdant landscape together. Whether it’s lovingly restoring acres of prairie land or transforming a desolate urban lot, two area couples regularly pour their hearts and souls into their gardening dreams, strengthening spousal bonds in the process.

PRAIRIE FOLK

Jan Froelich and Bob Novy of Verona bought 92 acres of land in Clyde, roughly an hour west of Madison, shortly after they were married in 2010. They share a passion for restoring land.

“We were both very interested in not necessarily perennial gardens, but native prairie plants and restoring prairie and restoring woodlands,” says Froelich.

The couple’s inspiration came from their neighbor, John Barnes, who owns 200 acres next to their residence near Verona. Novy helped Barnes do prairie burns and other land management activities, which inspired the couple to take on similar projects on their own land.

“We named the property Stars Aligned Ridge,” says Novy. “That’s kind of our thing from when we met. It’s our big labor of love—we just chip away at it.”

Forty-five of their 92 acres could be prairie, and they’ve “finished” 12 acres, working on about 2 to 4 acres at a time. They started with a kill-all-weeds approach,

but now use a lighter touch to knock back invasive grasses so the prairies can open up to new seed. The entire process takes five to seven years to resemble a prairie. It involves sowing seeds in the fall and winter and then mowing the first and second years of growth. Burning ideally happens in the spring of the third year of growth. A prairie burn helps to reduce nitrogen content, which is unfavorable for weeds, but tolerated by native prairie plants.

“We plant a prairie,” Froelich says, “and it’s literally going to look like weeds for the first couple of years – but you just have to keep nurturing it, and eventually burning it.”

They use a mix of local, state and federal programs to cover equipment, time and seed costs. Grants force them to tackle new projects, such as converting woods to native oak savannah.

Working the land takes up 75-90% of their free time. If they weren’t equally passionate, their relationship wouldn’t survive.

“We get very tired from all the work we do, but it’s awesome, and we’re seeing the rewards now,” says Novy.

Their dream master plan includes building a retirement house on the land this winter or next spring.

“We put a driveway to the top of this ridge, and it’s a gorgeous view of the Driftless Area,” says Froelich. “That’s going to be where we are for the rest of our lives.”

A HIDDEN URBAN OASIS

August is Nancy and Fred Risser’s favorite month. It’s when everything in their gardens are in full bloom. The longest-serving state legislator and his wife garden a spectacular 3,000-square-foot property in the heart of downtown Madison, as well as well as 11 guerrilla gardens, which are gardens on nearby neglected land.

“We had about an acre of land on Risser Road in Indian Hills, where we lived before moving downtown to our condo right across from the Capitol,” says Nancy. “We loved gardening there,



Top: Froelich and Novy’s pups, Sophie and Chloe, splash in Norway Hollow Creek, which runs through their property. Bottom: Native wildflowers, like daisy fleabane (left) and New England aster and Canadian goldenrod (right), dot the couple’s land and when viewed from afar, lend an Impressionistic quality to the landscape.



Froelich and Novy stand in front of a handmade metal sign bearing their property's name, Stars Aligned Ridge. The couple plan to build their retirement home here on the hill, behind the sign. Dogs Sophie, Gracie and Chloe are constant companions.



but we realized that as we were getting older it was going to be something we were going to try to keep up [with].”

Their current garden is nestled behind apartment buildings and student housing off of Blair and Johnson streets, accessible only by driveways and secret pathways.

They have a lifetime license to use the fenced-in, 3,000-square-foot property, which also has water access and a shed. That’s because a downtown developer wanted a small house Fred owned on Johnson Street for a project.

“It was two years before he got [the house] from us,” says Fred. “He didn’t get it until he was able to give us some gardening space.”

Partly in exchange for the house, the Risser got a degraded parking lot on Blair Street.

“It was really a mess,” says Fred. “We took over a parking lot that had a lot of cars and junk and turned it into a beautiful garden. It takes a little while and it takes a little work.”

Rehabbing a polluted lot hasn’t been easy. After attempting to plant multiple Japanese maple trees in a particularly icky spot, they found that a ginkgo tree thrived in the space. Ginkgo trees are able to grow despite polluted air and soil.

“We had to dig out a lot of the earth and get fresh soil in there for the trees and flowers,” says Fred. It took six inches of topsoil, and annual additions of



In the Risser’s garden blooms burst, including (from clockwise) rosette-shaped succulents, miniature yellow gold zinnias and purple asters.

soil, mulch and fertilizers. All the effort has made the soil not only workable, but very productive, according to Nancy.

“We covered up the chain link fence with wisteria vines with hanging bracts of purple flowers, honeysuckle vine and a series of bushes,” says Nancy. “One is called rose abelia and the other, one of my favorites, is calycanthus – a very tropical smelling flower. It smells like a piña colada!”

They worked with Steve Lesch of Landscape Designs, LLC to develop plans for the garden, including a berm for a rock garden in the center. He and his team planted the arbor vitae, Japanese maple and cherry trees around the periphery of the property.

The Rissers have hosted garden tours along with their landscape architect Steve Lesch for Olbrich Gardens, the Madison Symphony Orchestra and multiple community groups.

“[It’s a] labor of love ... it’s never a chore,” says Nancy. “Every day that we’re able to be down there, we are.” 🌸

Hannah Wente *builds community through her freelance writing and nonprofit work.*



Top: Fred and Nancy Risser stand in front of their plum trees.

Bottom: Apartment residents are treated to a glorious garden view from their balconies. Nancy ticks off an array of plants that are contained within their green paradise, such as “Quickfire” and “Little Lime” hydrangeas, hostas, Japanese Hakone grass, purple asters and blue fescue grass.





MOTHER

DAUGHTER

“Motherhood is the exquisite inconvenience of being another person’s everything.”

Motherhood is a unique, rich and captivating experience, and it’s impossible to encapsulate what it’s like for every woman — whether you’re a mom yourself, or you’re the daughter of a wonderful mom. We talked to some dynamic mother-daughter teams to learn why their bonds are special and how their mutual support is rock-solid.

By Shayna Mace and Hywania Thompson | Photography by Marla Bergh and Hillary Schave



Emily & Stella Balsley

Emily Balsley's art is joyful, colorful, powerful and just a little quirky – like the woman herself. But it turns out that her 13-year-old daughter Stella's art is equally as intriguing. A glance at Stella's Instagram account (@stellapuppystar) reveals whimsical animal sketches, strong superheroes and playful cartoon characters.

A sketchbook is a constant companion for Stella, and she has it in hand when we chat via video interview, and again at the

struck out on her own in 2008 and did freelance design and art work because of Stella's "significant health issues" at the time, which includes a serious heart condition.

In 2012, she started Emily Balsley Illustration. She's already had a prolific career, doing book illustration (including two American Girl books), magazine work and various projects from promotional materials to illustrating games for Mudpuppy. The inspiration for much of

Her cheeky "Flamingo Swirls" mural on East Johnson Street was co-created with Liubov Szwako – a nod to the city's official bird.

Art is a constant companion and source of comfort for both Balsleys. They spend a lot of time in Emily's studio, hanging out. For a while, Stella took private art lessons, but now she "does her own thing," says Emily, admitting with a gentle smile that Stella doesn't love accepting mom's feedback about her art. Both have such incredible ease and openness with one another that Stella shrugs, admitting that's true. When asked about her own artistic inspirations, Stella answers decisively, stroking her 19-year-old cat, Rothko: "Pinterest, my imagination and music."

She's equally sure about what she wants to do when she grows up: "author and artist." When pressed by Emily, she elaborates she not only wants to write books, but illustrate her own tomes. This tidbit of information is somewhat new to Emily, and she seems to delight in hearing this. After all, Stella's a teenager now, and sometimes information at this age can be hard to come by.

"I'm really cherishing this last year and the time we've been able to spend together," Emily reflects. "Being able to bond over art is definitely a huge thing. I mean, people joke that Stella is like my mini-me, which I'm sure she hates hearing, but for me, that makes me so happy. But she's [still] definitely her own person ... we're just very proud of the young lady she's becoming." – Shayna Mace

"Stella had a lot of challenges when she was younger ... now, she's older and much more independent. She knows who she is now and the challenges she has, and works with them. She's such a cool kid."

– Emily Balsley

photo shoot for this story. Even her fast and furious sketches done on the spot are brilliant. I tell her that I love a particular sketch of hers that she brought to the shoot. It has a vintage vibe, and it's of a girl wearing an outfit Stella owns. "That's one of the best compliments I've ever gotten," she beams.

That's just who Emily and Stella are – genuine people who are comfortable in their own skin, both with a disarming friendliness – and without a hint of superiority that they indeed possess immense talent.

Emily was an art major at UW-Madison, and upon graduation started working at Pacific Cycle doing design work. She met her husband, Stephen, there too. After Stella was born in December 2007, Emily

her work hearkens back to simpler times.

"I love thinking about things I liked to do as a kid. A lot of my stuff features outdoor activities, like climbing trees or playing baseball or riding bikes. I love drawing animals ... or, any opportunity to put a smiley face on some sort of inanimate object – I love doing that."

Even if you don't know her name, you've probably seen Emily's work. She's most proud of her mural at the Memorial Union, but she's also paired up with artists Ray Mawst and Brian Kehoe to craft large-scale, inspirational murals on the sides of buildings with messages like "Love Your Neighbor" in Middleton and "This Too Shall Pass" in Monona.

The Roach Family

(L-R) Abby, Ava, Andrea, Mary, Alicia and Alison.



A family with five daughters and no sons is relatively rare. Having the family's matriarch and all five of her daughters go into the nursing field is probably record-book-worthy-rare. Therefore, Mary Koenig-Roach's family is one-of-a-kind.

Mary, 61, has had a nearly 40-year nursing career, all of it in Madison. For the majority of it she worked at UnityPoint Health-Meriter as a mobile unit nurse, which is a nurse that "floats" from department to department, depending on what the needs are on that particular day. In 2016, she transitioned into being a perinatal float, working in postnatal care and the hospital's NICU.

"I love nursing, because it's never predictable," Mary explains. "It's not a boring job, and every day brings new situations. As a nurse, you're always touching somebody's life — and they actually touch your life also."

This enthusiasm for her career in health-care didn't go unnoticed by all five of her daughters: Alicia, 37; Andrea, 35; Abby, 28; Alison, 23 and Ava, 18. On the day we spoke, all but Andrea (who was at work) joined on a video call.

Mary's boundless energy and ambition has carried her through working nearly full-time (again, with five children!) all throughout her daughter's younger years. It didn't come without challenges, though. She frequently worked 12-hour shifts on weekends while her husband, Terry, a teacher, would be with the kids. During the week "sometimes I'd meet my husband in the parking lot at school and pick up a child,

go home and just nap if they took a nap. We rarely had childcare," says Mary.

Working while being present for her kids was, and is, of utmost importance to Mary. "You have to put your children and family first, that's for sure. And I feel like we did that together, as one of us was always able to be home with our children," she says. "Nursing is a great career to be a mother because ... there's such a variety of jobs out there for nurses. You can work in a school, hospital, clinic, home health. You can work part-time, too, which helps to be able to work and be home with your kids."

Luckily for Mary, she gets to work with two of her adult kids. Abby, a NICU nurse, usually works with Mary a few shifts a week. Alicia is a neonatal nurse practitioner, so she'll be scheduled every so often during Mary and Abby's shifts, too.

"It's kind of funny, the [other] nurses will be like, 'Oh, the whole family is [working] tonight,'" says Alicia, smiling.

Andrea works as a nurse in Meriter's Digestive Health Center. "After years of my mom telling me I should be a nurse, because she knows I have compassion and empathy that it takes to care for [people], I received my BSN in nursing, and it was a really great career choice," says Andrea.

Alison lives in Dubuque and works as chief medical scribe in the emergency room at UnityPoint Health Finley Hospital. She describes her job as

fast-paced, and she enjoys working alongside the doctors. "I've always enjoyed helping people and ... having a positive impact in their lives," she says.

Ava is a senior at Sauk Prairie High School, and will be attending UW-Madison next year with the intention of eventually working in the dermatology field.

All six women feel a deep-rooted desire to help others — the common thread woven in their family's tight bond. Both Mary and Alison even worked in COVID-19 units for a time in Madison and New Jersey, respectively. "My family was all against me doing it .. because of my age," says Mary. "I just could not say no, because I kept thinking, 'What if one of my family members ... was in the ICU and there weren't enough nurses to care for them?' I said, 'I have to do it.'"

The admiration for their mom is clear. Abby, the NICU nurse, was the one that reached out to BRAVA about her mom's career and her special family.

"We have a pretty unique group of women here, and just the fact that my mom has been in this career for 40 years is something to celebrate. "And then for all of us to follow in her footsteps ... to go into the same career field ... that was fun to share." — *Shayna Mace*

Thanks Mom!

We asked our readers on social media: "What's the best advice your Mom ever gave you?" and here's what they had to say.

Continue to make everything around you beautiful, no matter how ugly the world gets.

— *Christiana, Prima Nail Spa & Salon*

Trust your gut and never hesitate to call. — *Colleen C.*

When in doubt, cancel the plans, get the extra sleep; take care of yourself first. — *Mary M.*

Don't dwell on it. — *Lisa B.*

Don't worry about what anyone thinks. Do whatever makes you happy. Always think positive.

— *Cierra Y.*

There's not a problem a cup of hot cocoa can't fix.

— *Dena F.*

Put your kids in water or take them outside if it's getting tough. — *Laura C.*

Make your decision and forget about it. Move on and don't get stuck in the "what if" game. — *Theresa K.*

A woman is never over-dressed. — *Susan B.C.*

Accept people for who they are. — *KOSA Ayurvedic Spa*

Mejor sola que mal acompañada. (It's better to be alone than in bad company.) — *Mount Horeb Hemp*

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Marla & Layla Bergh

"[My mom says] your attitude determines your altitude." – Layla Bergh

On a recent Saturday in April, Marla and Layla Bergh were in Marla's downtown Daybreak Studio to photograph another mother-daughter team, Emily and Stella Balsley. While Marla expertly moved through the studio snapping happy shots of Emily and Stella, Layla sat quietly on the periphery, watching videos and occasionally helping her mom.

It's routine for Layla to accompany her photographer mom to the studio, even on a Saturday. It's something she really enjoys, and it makes sense for this dynamic duo who are super-tight – and even own a business together, called Sugar Snap.

Sugar Snap first started as an idea discussed around the dinner table, and the business launched during the pandemic, in April 2020. The mother-daughter duo (along with Abby Lipp) run the photo-based craft kit business that mails customers DIY crafts with photos.

As co-founder and junior CEO, 11-year-old Layla helps make decisions and brainstorm ideas to make sure they're kid-approved.

Last October, Layla had the idea to create a Halloween-themed box as an alternative to trick-or-treating. "I said, 'Mom, I think this is a cool idea. We can make this box with candy and Halloween-themed stuff for kids that can't go trick-or-treating because of COVID,'" she says. The box included crafts, photos and a Halloween-themed Spotify playlist. It was a hit, so the Berghs offered a themed box for Valentine's Day earlier this year called the Cupid Crate. It had goodies including a DIY photo frame kit, candy and a letter banner.

In addition to craft kits and activity boxes, Sugar Snap has a photo club (of course!). "We ask for permission to look at your [Instagram] feed and then we surprise you in the mail with three cool

Polaroids or three stickers, or ... photos from your feed," says Bergh. The goal is to help people get photos off their phone, she says.

Layla was even featured this past March on an "Access Daily" (a program put out by "Access Hollywood") segment highlighting young entrepreneurs. She talked about Sugar Snap's Birthday Box – a kit filled with photos, a small yearbook and candy to make birthday treats. Marla and Layla hope to build the photo club community this year and focus on year-round crafts.

The business is also philanthropic, reflecting a common desire in the younger set to run a successful business, but also make a difference. "When you purchase from Sugar Snap, a portion of the purchase we donate to a food bank or food-related cause – like Feeding America or a local food bank," says Bergh.

Bergh is also working to grow her photography business, Marla Bergh Photography, after suffering losses due to the pandemic. Her business had no revenue from March through May of last year. And when both of her kids started virtual school, Bergh found it challenging to provide service to customers. She does portrait and company brand work, as well as food and family pictures – work she says is rewarding. "I'm able to use my creativity to capture a moment in time and how I see the person or the family," Bergh says.

All of those trips to Marla's studio have been teaching Layla about business and photography, which she says will help her in the future.

"[I'm] being taught about how to sell stuff and my mom's teaching me how to edit photos," Layla says, "and that can really help me when I do art. My mom is a great partner."

And, the kidpreneur has advice to other kids who may be looking to start a business. "There is no such thing as a bad idea. And there's no such thing as a bad question," she says. "And do not say there's a limit to what you can do, because what you can do is limitless."

– Hyrwania Thompson ✨



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A MENTAL HEALTH

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ACCORDING TO THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF MENTAL HEALTH, NEARLY ONE IN FIVE U.S. ADULTS, OR 51.5 MILLION PEOPLE, LIVE WITH A MENTAL ILLNESS.

BY HOLLY MARLEY-HENSCHEN, KATE LAWLESS AND KATY MACEK

OF THIS NUMBER, 13.1 million adults aged 18 or older have what's considered a "serious mental illness," which is "defined as a mental, behavioral or emotional disorder resulting in serious functional impairment, which substantially interferes with or limits one or more major life activities."

Though mental health awareness is much more prevalent (and has become more so due to the pandemic), mental health disorders are still considered "invisible illnesses." We talked to four area women who have serious mental illnesses to find out what life is like for them and how we can best support our loved ones.

ON SCHIZOAFFECTIVE DISORDER BIPOLAR TYPE

Mary, 40, who asked to be identified only by her first name, is an outreach worker at Journey Mental Health and member of Journey's Yahara House. At 30, she was diagnosed with Schizoaffective Disorder Bipolar Type – a type of mental illness that's characterized by both schizophrenia and symptoms of a mood disorder (in Mary's case, bipolar) – that can lead to episodes of mania and, in cases such as Mary's, depression.

As told to Katy Macek

I was first diagnosed with ADHD, and those meds made me more psychotic than I really am. I struggled with that, and had a big psychotic break in my 20s. I would have trouble with thinking people were following me around to work and school. I thought I was part of a psych experiment and I was paranoid about my teachers. I worked a lot, tried to do a lot at once and I got so stressed out. I had reality issues where it was hard to distinguish between the two. It was kind of scary, but fortunately, it was only temporary.

When I started hearing voices, I was like, "This is enough." I went to the hospital for two weeks. It was helpful to be on medication, though it took me a while to find the right ones. I realized no one was following me, and I wasn't part of an experiment.

I've been working on my recovery now for 10 years. It doesn't happen overnight.

Since I have lived experience with mental illness, I joined Yahara House. It provides a community for me to belong to, and it gives me confidence to work on my goals, such as getting off disability. I really believe in working during my recovery, because it helps me feel connected; gives me purpose. For me, recovery is adding structure to my life.

I'm very much like a person without my condition in many ways. I do yoga, volunteer at a thrift store, work at a grocery store, run a support group at SOAR-Recovery Dane. I'm also a licensed massage therapist.

I might think about things a little too much, wonder about people, but I have to remember people are just living their lives. People are usually pretty good. I don't necessarily believe these thoughts, and it is annoying to have those thoughts. I don't believe everything I think after I think it, which can be good and bad. Sometimes I have to talk things out with my therapist, but I can often do reality checking on my own.

I think being a person with lived experience has helped me connect to other people with mental health diagnoses. I can't relate to everybody, but can relate to a lot of people.

If you would have asked me if I would have become disabled in my 20s, I would have been like, "No way." I still struggled with things then, had mood problems and insomnia, but I didn't think it was a problem.

I think sometimes a symptom I have is that I don't think anything is wrong with me. I like to realize I do have a mental illness.

I run a support group for people who

hear voices, and I learned from the people in my group about my own symptoms. It's a good way to build connections and support.

The stigma of my mental illness is probably worse than the illness itself. I don't tell everybody about my illness, but I think it's healthy for me to share, because then I can be more open and honest.

I do think it's harder to get jobs, and I gained a lot of weight because of the medications. There are a lot of downfalls, but I'm much clearer-headed, more grounded on my medication, so I appreciate them. It makes me more thankful than I was before I was diagnosed. I appreciate each day being above ground.

I can still live a full, happy and meaningful life despite my mental health diagnosis. There's so much negativity and stigma – that it's a scary disease, [that there's] no hope for people when they have that diagnosis. But I find that my life is pretty good.

If you would have asked me if I would have become disabled in my 20s, I would have been like, "No way."

ON PARANOID SCHIZOPHRENIA

Sonja Traverse was diagnosed with paranoid schizophrenia at age 29, after a long struggle with depression and a psychotic episode that friends, family and even doctors didn't recognize as a mental health disorder until she was hospitalized. Paranoid schizophrenia includes symptoms of delusions and hallucinations, blurring the line between what is real and what is not.

As told to Katy Macek

I've had several episodes in my lifetime where I get paranoid and start hearing voices, or feel like the TV is talking to me. I'd get delusional and suicidal, and I didn't really trust people in my life. Luckily, with medication, I don't feel that way anymore.

In my 20s, I was living with some roommates and wasn't getting out of bed, wasn't working — just really bizarre behavior. I would quit my jobs because I thought [my coworkers] hated me. I didn't know what was going on with me; I thought it was just my reality. Finally, my dad told my friends to get me to the emergency room. Because I was suicidal, the ER admitted me to a psychiatry unit, where I was diagnosed with severe depression.

I went several years without medication, and then it just got so bad I couldn't function. That's when I got diagnosed with paranoid schizophrenia. I got medication, but I went off it because I was paranoid the doctors were making up a fake diagnosis. I didn't think it was real that I had schizophrenia. When I went back to the hospital, I learned that it is real and can be managed by medication.

After my diagnosis, I accepted that I don't have to live a life like most of my friends do, or what might be expected of

a young woman. So many times when I was struggling my parents would say I just needed to get back to work. That wasn't the solution for me.

I took the stress of the expectation that your job defines who you are out of my life, and I started to do things that just feel good to me. The biggest thing was getting connected with Yahara House, which a psychiatrist told me about. That's where things really started to turn around for me. I had a place to go and a community that feels more like a family with both members and staff.

Just like with any diagnosis, it doesn't take away from the person you are. It

doesn't take away from your hopes and dreams about who you want to be. The stigma about mental illness is that you act like a crazy person, act weird, and that's not necessarily true. We're just as human as anybody else, we just have something different going on in our brains.

For example, if I were to go to a really busy place, I might be suspicious of why other

people are there, or think they are talking about me. I might be suspicious of signs or messages, thinking there's more meaning behind it than there is. So, I try to take myself out of the situation a little bit and look at what is actually happening versus what I'm reading into. It helps to have somebody that I trust with me, so I can talk about it.

There's such a stigma about mental illness that you're less of a person. Yahara House works with you to take your strengths and see what you can do as opposed to what you can't. The biggest thing it's taught me is that people with mental illness are still people, we still want the same things everybody wants: relationships, a community, a fulfilling life.



Here for HELP

There are a number of mental health organizations that offer assistance and resources. Some of the organizations below relate to the profiles we feature in this article.

Journey Mental Health Center

(608) 280-2600 for mental health emergencies;
(608) 280-2720 for appointments
journeymhc.org

Journey offers several programs from individual therapy to substance abuse treatment to programming for patients of African descent (the Ujima Program) and Clinica Latina, for Spanish speakers.

Madison Major Healthcare Providers

Group Health Cooperative, SSM Health, UnityPoint Health and UW Health all offer behavioral health services.

National Alliance on Mental Illness

(800) 950-NAMI
Text NAMI's Helpline for mental health resources or search nami.org for text and chat options.

National Crisis Text Line

Text "HOME" to 741741 for free, 24/7 crisis support from a trained crisis counselor.

National Eating Disorders Association

(800) 931-2237 for support, resources and treatment options.
nationaleatingdisorders.org

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

(800) 273-8255
A national network of crisis centers that are available 24/7 for free, confidential support.

Rogers Behavioral Health

(800) 767-4411 • rogersbh.org
Rogers assists children through adults with things like eating disorder recovery and depression and offers online options, like a virtual OCD support group.

Just like with any diagnosis, it doesn't take away from the person you are.

ON POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER

Jamie Fritsch had been in therapy since high school and realized an episode from when she was age 11 tied back to her diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder. After years of mental health counseling, she's learned to live — and thrive — with multiple mental health challenges.

By Holly Marley-Henschen

One day in July 2016, Jamie Fritsch went to her job of nearly 20 years at a grocery store deli in Monroe. But she doesn't remember any of it.

"I made it through like three-quarters of my shift in a blackout state. I was told that I was using a meat slicer," says Fritsch, now 52. Her coworkers noticed something was wrong and pulled her aside. Then one of them took her to the home she shared with her mother.

"My brother was there and he and my mom told me, 'You're gonna go to the hospital or we're going to call the police,'" she says. Fritsch had intentionally overdosed on her own prescription medication. It wasn't the first time.

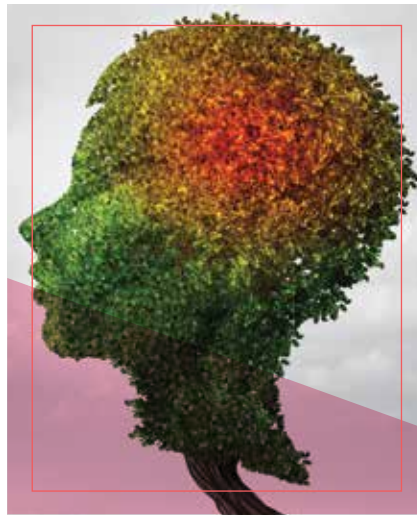
Up until that point, she had survived a lifetime of depression, cutting and several suicide attempts. "I was in a place of such darkness that I didn't know how to pull myself out of anymore," she says.

Fritsch had been in therapy since high school, after her first overdose. Though she wouldn't recall it until much later, someone she knew had sexually abused her at age 11. She buried the memories for decades. When they came back, she was diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). By 2016, she'd been hospitalized 10 times in psychiatric units and at Winnebago Mental Health Institute in Oshkosh.

"When I was in a hospital, it was like putting a Band-Aid on it and sending me home. I didn't know anybody who wanted

to take that time to sit and talk to me and say, 'Why are you behaving this way?'"

PTSD is a long-term response of the nervous system after trauma. Symptoms include intrusive thoughts and flashbacks, avoiding reminders of the trauma, and distorted thoughts and feelings about the trauma and oneself, according to the American Psychiatric Association. PTSD survivors are prone to altered states of arousal and reactivity, from anger and reckless behavior to paranoia and issues concentrating or sleeping.



After her most recent overdose, Fritsch's quality of life was low. In public, she felt anxiety and paranoia. At home, she slept much of the time. She avoided eating, grooming herself and doing housework. But the overdose shook her.

"It took that much for me to realize, 'Hey, I have to step up and do this; I have to try.' Because I knew if I didn't, I wouldn't be here," she says.

Fritsch checked into a residential program at Rogers Behavioral Health in Oconomowoc. Initially, she dismissed the treatment. One night, though, a

staff member asked her how she was doing. When she replied that she was fine, the facilitator saw through her. "That someone would not just enable my behavior, but call me out on it — it was the best thing that could ever have happened to me. From that day forward, I had a totally different outlook," Fritsch says. Taking part in cognitive behavioral and exposure therapies, she learned to monitor her thoughts and be more honest and assertive about her feelings. She spent five weeks in intense, consistent therapy followed by several weeks of partial hospitalization in Madison after being released.

Since leaving treatment, Fritsch reconnected with her high school sweetheart, and they were married in 2019. In early 2020, she was diagnosed with kidney cancer. This past February, she got a clean bill of health. Fritsch has drawn disability benefits since losing her job and insurance coverage after her cancer diagnosis. She lives with her husband and his mother in Monroe. She likes to read fantasy and true crime books.

Fritsch has learned to juggle her multiple diagnoses of PTSD, Bipolar Disorder, Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder and Borderline Personality Disorder. During the pandemic, she's worked at staying connected to people so she doesn't revert back to withdrawing from social situations. If she's anxious, she practices breath relaxation and questions her obsessive thoughts. "I get panic attacks going to stores, and I just tell myself that I've gotten through [it before]," she says.

Fritsch says it's been a long road, but her journey isn't over yet.

"I'd be lying if I said every day was sunshine and roses. It's not, and I have depressed days, but I don't have them like I used to," Fritsch says. "And I have not been back to that really dark place."

I didn't know anybody who wanted to take that time to sit and talk to me and say, 'Why are you behaving this way?'



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ON EATING DISORDERS

Lolita Lang describes what having an eating disorder is like and how she first identified the root causes of her struggles. Because eating disorders are complex, sometimes they are tied to other mental health conditions — like it was for Lang.

By Holly Marley-Henschen

Lolita Lang felt self-conscious about her weight from a young age. She remembers riding in a car with her mother around age 11.

"She turns and looks at me and says, 'Look at that belly!' I thought, 'Oh my gosh, like what does she think about it? Is it too big? Is it bad?'" Lang says.

At just 26, Lang has struggled with eating disorders for much of her life. She's now recovered, but that success didn't come easy.

Lang, who lives in Lodi, started playing competitive volleyball in fifth grade. Around the same time, she began comparing her body and weight with her teammates. As a high school freshman, stress and depression began to affect her, and that's when she started bingeing and purging.

"I ended up using it as a coping [mechanism] for emotions that I didn't want to feel," Lang says.

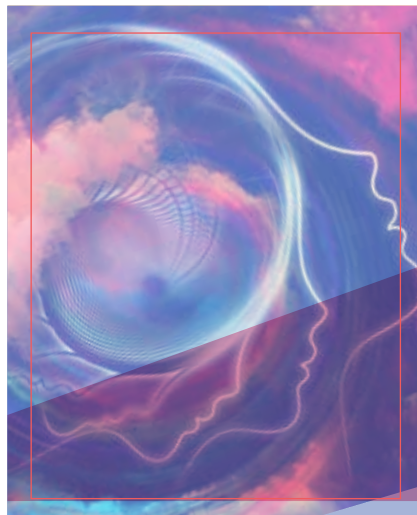
Though her family seemed normal from the outside, things weren't OK at home, and it fed into her eating disorder — a disorder that's associated with a lack of control. Her father, an alcoholic and addict, was convicted twice for felony drug possession. Halfway into Lang's junior year, he attempted suicide at home. Soon after, she was hospitalized for mental health issues.

At age 17, Lang started taking prescription medications that made her lose her appetite. She and her mother bonded over her weight loss. "She'd get really excited. And I was like, 'Oh, great. I'm making my mom happy,'" she says. Then she began to restrict her eating. "Food was like poison — it scared me so much to eat it. I was scared that if I ate three grapes, I was going to gain 10 pounds."

During an inpatient treatment program

for obsessive-compulsive disorder, which is often connected to eating disorders, a therapist noticed Lang's symptoms. She had dry skin, hair loss and difficulty concentrating. Convinced she was actually gaining weight, she refused to eat and was eventually hospitalized for an eating disorder.

For the next few years, Lang was in and out of hospitals and treatment programs, such as at Rogers Behavioral Health. Sometimes, she didn't want to be there.



People need people that have struggled to be able to help them.

Other times, she got bursts of enthusiasm to work toward recovery. But oftentimes, insurance would cover the inpatient and residential treatment, for example, but not the transitional, part-time programs that helped reinforce new behaviors.

At the same time, Lang did her best to live like a normal young woman. But she

also struggled with post-traumatic stress disorder, as well as suicidal ideation and a few attempts. Between hospitalizations, she was able to complete one semester of community college classes. Then, when Lang was 22, someone raped her. She checked into treatment and devoted herself to getting better. "I just realized how miserable I was," Lang said. "I was like, I want more than this. I want to be able to go to school, I want to be able to work a job," she says. Lang adopted coping skills and healthy eating habits with support from counselors in a group setting.

Since April 2018, Lang has considered herself recovered from eating disorders. She eats intuitively with guidance from balanced meal plans. She's also accomplished a major challenge for eating disorder survivors: accepting her weight — even though it's the highest it's ever been.

"I would rather be happy at the weight I'm at than miserable at a weight that I still will never reach," Lang says. "Even though I may not agree with everything with my body, I'm glad I'm in it, because my life is so much better in it."

Lang recently reached another milestone. After living primarily with her mother since high school, she moved into her own apartment in August. She lives with her cat, Ethel, a 9-year-old tuxedo.

Lang collects disability benefits and has some income from babysitting and cleaning a few days a week. At first, work brought on anxiety attacks. But Lang managed to handle strong negative emotions by taking walks and exercising. She still likes to play volleyball and hopes to get back to visiting new places with friends once the pandemic is over. Her family has healed together, though her father passed away in 2018. She's close with her sisters, nieces and a nephew. She and her mother now have a healthy, supportive relationship.

Lang hopes to work as a patient care technician at a facility like Mendota Mental Health Institute. "People need people that have struggled to be able to help them," Lang says.

Local health experts offer their advice on how to best support a loved one who is dealing with mental health issues in a way that's helpful and sustainable.

By Kate Lawless



SHARE THE WEIGHT

Since the pandemic began, many people have turned inward to reflect on their mental health. Loneliness and worry can affect relationships, and for some, those feelings can affect one's day-to-day life to the extent that they need to seek help.

So how do we respond to those struggling friends and family members in a productive, loving way?

To answer this question, we had a conversation with the Vice President of Healthy Culture at Rogers Behavioral Health, Sue McKenzie Dicks, and Clinical Specialist Laura Zimmerman of Journey Mental Health. At both Journey and Rogers, staff have seen an increase in people seeking help for depression and anxiety. Here's their advice on how we can support loved ones who are dealing with mental illness.

ASK

If you suspect someone is facing mental health challenges, you can broach the conversation by asking to talk about changes in their behavior or attitude. Avoid judgmental language and instead describe what you see. Have they stopped taking your calls? Do they seem overwhelmed or unable to do their normal, daily routine? McKenzie Dicks recommends saying something like, "This is what I've noticed, and rather than me make up a story about it in my head, can you help me understand these changes?" This allows them to explain their situation without feeling like you've already made assumptions.

LISTEN

After someone shares their mental health struggles with you, they need to know that you'll truly hear what they're going through. Don't interrupt or make judgments. Instead, McKenzie Dicks tells us to connect these experiences of hurt, worry or sorrow to our own experiences and let those feelings of empathy guide our listening.

And don't assume kids can't feel these same big feelings as adults. Zimmerman says, "Children suffer from mental health challenges, too," and it's important that parents don't write off negative feelings or behaviors as something children will eventually outgrow. Listen to your children in the same way you'd listen to an adult confiding in you.

ACKNOWLEDGE

After listening to your loved one, acknowledge the strength it takes to be honest and ask for help. Demonstrating your thanks for their bravery will reassure them that you understand that this is difficult for them. Honor that trust and show you appreciate this bravery and this relationship.

MAKE A PLAN

From there, you should make a plan on how to continue your support. By doing this, you remind your loved one or friend that they are not stuck in these feelings or this experience — they can build upon their bravery and take steps to improve their mental health.

The key here is to ask what kind of

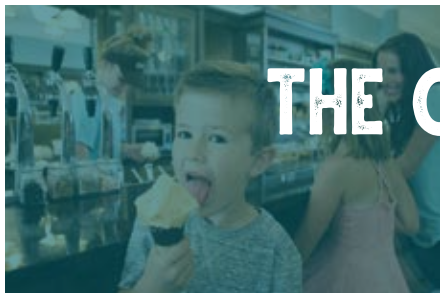
support they want. Do they need someone to check in on them every week? Or do they need to get in touch with a mental health expert? If they aren't comfortable continuing to share how they're feeling, Zimmerman says you can also offer to relieve some of their stress by taking on tasks to give them more time to themselves. Both McKenzie Dicks and Zimmerman also say that you should only offer help that you know you are comfortable with, and are capable of giving. Be realistic about your availability and comfort level so that you don't have to go back on your word.

INCLUDE

McKenzie Dicks says, "No one person should carry the weight of someone's mental health alone." For your sake, and the sake of your struggling friend or family member, asking to include another person — such as a mental health professional, friend or parent — allows you to share the weight and have a stronger support system. Ask your loved one, "I will do the best I can to support you and would love to know if there is someone else we can both turn to. Who else can we connect with?"

CONCLUSION

These are difficult conversations to have, especially with someone for whom you care deeply like a spouse or a child. Just showing up, listening and promising to be there for them can make a world of difference. ✨



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LET'S TAKE A ROAD TRIP

Your next vacation is less than two hours away at any of these locales abounding with breezy outdoor attractions, celebrated restaurants, charming shops and kid-friendly activities. The City of La Crosse touts the honor of hosting the most beautiful scene in the state. The Fox Cities offers 19 communities to explore. Monroe curates an annual attraction on Main Street. Mineral Point is brimming with Cornish culture and arts activities. And S&L Hospitality has a list of a few favorite resorts.

Of course, we recommend doing a little online perusing to see what COVID-19 restrictions are in place, but there's plenty of room for memory-making. Pack your bags! It's time to celebrate the sunshine with some fun.

By Maura Keller and Sue Sveum

THE FOX CITIES

Where urban style meets natural beauty.

By Sue Sveum



If you're looking for a great getaway, the Fox Cities might just be the perfect choice. Instead of one destination to explore, you get the benefit of 19 communities spread out along Wisconsin's Fox River.

"We take a lot of pride in offering our visitors an original, authentic experience," explains Maddie Uhlenbrauck, marketing communications manager with the Fox Cities Convention & Visitors Bureau. "We have such a unique combination of outdoor activities, shopping and museums — and the quality of all the experiences are top-notch."

The Fox Cities dot the shoreline of the Fox River, which was instrumental in shaping area development. Former paper and sawmills are now home to condos, hotels and restaurants, creating the urban and contemporary vibe of the Fox Cities.

If passing through, Uhlenbrauck suggests stopping by one of their local downtowns for some of Wisconsin's best shopping. "We

have eclectic, independent shops and galleries selling locally-made gifts along with clothing boutiques to please the fashionistas," she says. "And there's an abundance of restaurants and cafes for a quick lunch." You get that laid-back, relaxed small town feel with all the amenities of a big city.

"But to many people, the Fox River means watersports, like kayaking, paddling, boating, sailing and fishing, and you'll find plenty of that, too," Uhlenbrauck says, adding, "for a more relaxing water activity take a Fox River boat tour with River Tyme Too."

Hikers and bikers will definitely enjoy the Loop the Lake trail around Little Lake Butte des Morts. "The 3½-mile path is paved, and there are several parks along the way for kids to stop and play," says Uhlenbrauck. "Or visit High Cliff State Park, with its campground, picnic area and trails for hiking, biking and even horseback riding."

For family fun try Mulberry Lane Farm, a real working farm with guided tours where kids can see baby chicks and even milk a cow.

"If sports are more your thing, take in a Wisconsin Timber Rattlers game," says Uhlenbrauck, "where fans often get a glimpse of future Brewers at the team's minor league affiliate club."

Or kick back with a beer or gourmet soda and cheese curds at Appleton's Stone Arch Brewpub. More than 150 years old, it's the



oldest continuously running brew pub in the state.

For longer stays, the CVB suggests trying out all the different experiences the Fox Cities have to offer. "In just one day, you can go for a morning hike, visit Bubolz Nature Preserve, sample treats at Wilmar Chocolates and cheer on the Timber Rattlers at night," she says. "We have plenty of options to fill each day with different activities sure to please everyone."

Bad weather? Don't worry, there's also lots to do indoors. "Kids love the Harry Houdini magic exhibit at the History Museum at the Castle," says Uhlenbrauck. "Or tour the Bergstrom-Mahler Museum of Glass or Hearthstone, the first private residence illuminated with hydroelectricity." And the literal cherry on top might be a stop at Lamers Dairy in Appleton. "It's the only family-owned milk bottling plant in Wisconsin," says Uhlenbrauck. "You can watch the bottling process, buy milk at the country store and end the day with ice cream made with the dairy's milk."

Uhlenbrauck adds: "It's the perfect combination of urban amenities and one-of-a-kind natural wonders."

CHECK IT OUT

Do you prefer your trips to be filled with activity? With 19 communities along the Fox River, there's plenty to see and experience.



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MONROE

A charming and family-friendly locale.

By Maura Keller



Walk down the streets of Monroe, and you'll be delighted to find an array of historic buildings, charming shops and delightful eateries at every turn. To further engage visitors to this historic town, Main Street Monroe, a locally focused and funded, volunteer-driven nonprofit handles community development in the historic downtown district of Monroe, which is on the National Register of Historic Places.

"With our events, we seek to attract a variety of people to come to Monroe and experience all of the local flavor that makes Monroe what it is," says Jordan Nordby, executive director of Main Street Monroe.

A year into the COVID-19 pandemic, Main Street Monroe and the town's businesses are doing everything you would expect — from reducing indoor capacities to increasing outdoor capacities (hello, streateries!) — businesses continue to make adjustments to keep everyone safe and comfortable.

In fact, Main Street Monroe started a "mask up" campaign before the county health officials had done so last summer.

CHECK IT OUT

Each summer, Main Street in Monroe plays host to a creative theme, and this year riffs off the board game Monopoly with 24 "game pieces" placed throughout the square. It's always a fun, family-friendly attraction.

Masks continue to be available as needed and visitors will also find handwashing stations dotting the area.

"Our outdoor farmers' market has an expanded area to help guarantee social distancing. And our planned wine walk will be split up over two nights instead of one with registration happening outside, over a longer period of time, and stores having individual capacities," Nordby says.

Summer in Monroe has been defined since 2011 by the town's "summer themes." Each year a group of volunteers develop a different, family friendly theme. For example, one year the theme was "Once Upon A Square," based on classic fairy tales.

"A Romanian woodcarver, who now lives in Monroe, [often] creates anywhere from 12 to 24 pieces, which are sponsored by local businesses," Nordby says. "It's a wonderful blending of public art, imagination, pop culture and creativity."

This year's theme is "Mainopoly" — reminiscent of a certain classic game.

"We have a proper square and that lends itself to being a board game. We're going to have 24 pieces representing classic board game pieces displayed through autumn," Nordby says. "We're also proud of our Swiss heritage, and that will show up in some subtle and creative ways with this year's theme as well."

When not enjoying the various events, visitors can explore the many shops dotting the historic district or enjoy the various dining options featuring great nano



breweries, cheese shops, pizza joints and other edible delights.

And downtown Monroe is a dream for anyone who loves history. In addition to an audio walking tour, Main Street Monroe started a mural program back in 2017 and now proudly boasts five murals, as well as 14 alley cat mini murals cheekily painted on the facades of downtown businesses. Monroe is also a true shopping destination: There's a classic candy store that has a 30-foot marble counter top from the turn of the century, multiple women's clothing stores, a men's clothing store, multiple home goods stores, kitchen stores, a bridal shop and a jewelry store. And many may not know this, but the nationally distributed Zodia Perfumery is made right in the district.

For those who want to add a little cycling to their experience, an entrance to the Badger State Trail is located just a few blocks away from downtown's shops and restaurants.

"Monroe is really a special community. It's not always on everyone's radar, which makes it a hidden gem, but it's so close to Madison that it's more than ideal for a day trip or even an afternoon," Nordby says. "But there is also so much here that it can easily be a weekend escape. You name it, Monroe most likely has it."

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213 Mercantile: take a shot at the garland bar.

Busy Bee Floral & Gifts: it's all the buzz. gifts with a mission.

Baumgartners: legendary cheese sandwiches.

Artful Dressmaker: clothes, including bridal, made for you.

Monroe Arts Center: rotating exhibits in a restored 1869 church.

Orange Kitten Yarns: worth a spin. regionally sourced.

The Artful Gourmet: foodies, be aware. oil & balsamic bar.

Studio 906: look good. feel good. artistry for self care.

SET,

Rainbow Confections: homemade lemon meringue fudge!

Garden Deli: where baked potatoes reign.

House to Home Designs: decorate...or redecorate.

Suisse Haus: pizza, pizza. classic Wisconsin setting.

Zodica Perfumery: smell your sign. made in Monroe.

JoAnne's Dress Shop: better style and service. for you, your mom, and your daughter.

Frame 'n Color: sophisticated gifting.

Luecke's: celebrating 100 years. diamonds are still a girl's best friend.

Toy Haus: ages 1 to 100.

Heartland Graphics: game day swag.

Buggyworks: serving classic dinners and craft cocktails.

GO!

Grab a map and complete info at mainstreetmonroe.org/brava

MINERAL POINT

The crossroads of history, art and nature.

By Sue Sveum



As the third-oldest city in Wisconsin, Mineral Point boasts a lot of history, beginning tens of thousands of years ago when the Driftless Area was formed. Bypassed by the last continental glacier, no flattening, sand, or gravel (drift) was left in its wake. Instead, you'll find lovely rolling hills.

"If you're a runner or bicycle rider, you're in for a challenge around here," laughs Carole Spelić, program director at Shake Rag Alley Center for the Arts. "We definitely have hills!"

Established by immigrants from Cornwall, Mineral Point is known as "the most Cornish city in the U.S.A." Spelić says much of the downtown architecture comes from traditions and techniques settlers brought with them to Wisconsin — along with some much beloved cuisine.

"Your visit won't be complete without a Cornish pasty meal and figgyhobbin dessert," Spelić says.

As pandemic restrictions start to loosen up

a bit this summer, Spelić calls Mineral Point the perfect getaway for people who want to travel but are uncomfortable going too far just yet. "Visitors can enjoy themselves and feel safe at the same time," she stresses.

"If I could suggest only one thing, it would be walking the city streets and experiencing how people have interacted with each other and the landscape over the last nearly-200 years," she says. And if you're just feeling driftless, Mineral Point is a great place to relax without any particular goal.

For outdoor enthusiasts, Spelić says there are plenty of fresh-air locales, including three state parks nearby and several trails in town. For hikers, she recommends Merry Christmas Mine Hill Trails and Prairie. It's a part of Pendarvis, a Wisconsin Historical Society site. "A web of hiking trails takes you up a hill, through a prairie, past old mining equipment and down to a sturdy stone building," she explains, adding, "From the top of the ridge you get a great view of downtown."

And downtown is a place you won't want to miss. "Getting out and experiencing the city feels as if you've traveled much farther out of Wisconsin," Spelić says. "Mineral Point has some of the best-preserved historic buildings in the state." Make sure to stop by the Sweet Shop for a little treat. Or if you're there early in the morning, you may



be lucky enough to watch cheesemaking at the award-winning Hooks Cheese Factory.

"Then pop into a few of the many artists' studios and galleries around town, or discover other unique shops, cozy bars and one-of-a-kind restaurants," Spelić suggests. "And make sure to stop and chat with the artists and shop owners — many have been in Mineral Point for decades and have interesting stories to tell."

A brisk walk from the downtown is the 1860s Italianate mansion, Orchard Lawn, a gem of Mineral Point, which sits on nine acres. For an additional dose of history, check out the Railroad Museum. "It's the oldest surviving depot building in Wisconsin," Spelić says, "and the displays and photographs are an amazing reminder of what mining life was like."

If one-time events are more your style, Mineral Point has plenty of those, too. Plan a Driftless Weekend by booking overnight lodging so that you can enjoy special art, film, music and historical celebrations. Visit the Mineral Point Chamber of Commerce website for all of the festival listings...then take your pick.

CHECK IT OUT

To get a true sense of Mineral Point's Cornish history, be sure to enjoy a pasty meal and figgyhobbin dessert.



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Photos: SV Heart Photography

RESORTS APLENTY

Verona-based S&L Hospitality manages a variety of regional resorts for that perfect getaway.

By Maura Keller



Looking for a great escape? S&L Hospitality is a privately held and locally-owned family business based out of Verona and currently manages 11 hotels and resorts throughout Wisconsin, Iowa and South Dakota. Since 2005, S&L Hospitality owners Eric and Yael Lund have used their combined experience in hotel development and property-level operations — along with their corporate leadership team consisting of specialized hospitality industry experts — to be an authority on delivering first-class guest experiences at franchise and boutique hotels, as well as indoor waterpark resorts throughout the region.

The company has also taken significant measures to establish COVID-19 protocols that will help keep visitors, staff and community members safe.

Each of S&L's resorts offer their own unique amenities, but the following gems have proven to be favorites among visitors.

THREE BEARS RESORT

Located in the heart of Cranberry County in Warrens, Wis., the Three Bears Resort is an indoor and outdoor waterpark resort located 45 minutes north of the Wisconsin Dells. Skip the crowds and lines often found at other waterparks and enjoy the many unique features of Three Bears Resort's 60,000-square-foot indoor waterpark,

including three-story tube and body slides, wave pool, indoor/outdoor hot tub, activity pool, kiddie splash area and snack bar. The year-round, Northwoods-themed family resort offers a complete family vacation without ever having to leave the property, thanks in part to various eateries, an 18-hole mini golf course, outdoor sand volleyball court and laser maze challenge.

The resort's private villas feature full kitchens, firepits and sleep 10 people comfortably. The five-plex cabins can sleep up to 54 people — offering a great option for family reunions and large groups.

THE HARBORVIEW

Located in charming downtown Port Washington, Wis., the Harborview is nestled on the shores of Lake Michigan adjacent to the Port Washington Marina. Only 20 minutes north of Milwaukee, the Harborview is a short drive to popular attractions and seasonal events, Summerfest, Cedarburg Strawberry Festival, Harvest Festival and American Family Field. What's more, the resort is only steps away from unique, local shopping in the historic downtown Port Washington storefronts.

Having undergone an amazing multi-million dollar renovation, completed in 2020, Harborview guests enjoy spacious rooms with awe-inspiring views of Lake



Michigan; a new, full-service restaurant and bar called The Beacon; and an innovative fitness center, indoor pool and hot tub.

GRAND HARBOR RESORT

The historic Port of Dubuque is home to Grand Harbor, a premier destination in Iowa for family getaways. Featuring a winning combination of service, amenities and entertainment, Grand Harbor Resort is located on the Mississippi River and boasts picturesque views of either historic downtown Dubuque or the bluffs and river.

When not taking in the scenery of the surrounding environs, guests can enjoy the amazing 25,000-square-foot indoor waterpark, a laser maze, the onsite Tony Roma's restaurant and fun-filled arcade. Adjacent to the Grand Harbor, guests can try their hand at the many gaming options of the Diamond Jo Casino or enjoy a classic game of bowling at Cherry Lanes Bowling. And no trip to Dubuque or Grand Harbor would be complete without a visit to the adjacent National Mississippi River Museum. ✨

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GRAND HARBOR RESORT



THE HARBORVIEW



THREE BEARS RESORT

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LOCAL ATTRACTIONS:

- National Mississippi River Museum
- Cherry Lanes Bowling
- Diamond Jo Casino

HARBORVIEW AMENITIES:

- On the Shores of Lake Michigan
- Downtown Port Washington
 - The Beacon Restaurant
 - Indoor Pool and Hot Tub
 - Scenic Outdoor Patio Area
- Spacious Guest Rooms and Suites

LOCAL ATTRACTIONS:

- Charter Fishing
- Downtown Shopping
- Golfing, Biking and Hiking

THREE BEARS AMENITIES:

- Indoor and Outdoor Waterpark
 - Private Cabanas Available
 - 18-Hole Bear Trax Mini Golf
 - Redemption Arcade
- Full-Service Restaurant and Bar
- Private Villas Available with Fire Pits

LOCAL ATTRACTIONS:

- Wisconsin Cranberry Discovery Center
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threebearsresort.com**

LA CROSSE

A nature-centered respite.

By Sue Sveum

La Crosse County is known as the place “where rivers flow, bluffs rise and beer is always cold.” And the description couldn’t be more perfect. Situated right on the Mississippi River, this college town offers all manner of water activities, according to Ben Morgan, La Crosse County Convention and Visitors Bureau’s director of group sales. “You can go boating, canoeing, kayaking or for a ride on the La Crosse Queen Paddlewheel Cruise,” he says.

Morgan says one of their well-known attractions is the Shrine of Our Lady Guadalupe, which offers daily tours. And, he stresses you don’t need to be religious to enjoy the grounds. “The architecture is fantastic, and there are natural walking trails for those that just want to commune with nature.”

The 600-foot Grandad Bluff is another visitor favorite. “People voted it the most scenic view in the state,” says Morgan. “From the top, you can see the river and three states: Minnesota; Iowa; and [of course,] Wisconsin.”

In the center of town is Riverside Park where visitors can walk along the Mississippi River, stroll through International Friendship Gardens or listen to Moon Tunes concerts at the bandshell on summer nights. And check out Riverfest over the Fourth of July weekend for music, food and fun.

The revitalized historic downtown offers great local antique shops, boutiques, restaurants, breweries and bakeries. “And Third Street has the most bars per capita in Wisconsin,” laughs Morgan.

“You can enjoy the big-city amenities of a thriving downtown, and a short 10-minute drive away, you can take a nature walk and not see another person for miles.”



Explore the La Crosse Region, nestled between ancient bluffs and along the mighty Mississippi River.

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EATING SEASONALLY

Here's what area chefs are preparing with spring's bounty.

BY CANDICE WAGENER

As it continues to warm up, we all get a little giddy to see more vibrant colors around us, even on our plates. Local chefs relish springtime, as opportunities abound to use ultra-fresh ingredients. We spoke with three area chefs about what they love featuring on their menus this time of year.

MADISON SOURDOUGH

"It's so exciting to see the first rhubarb available at the markets," says Chef Molly Maciejewski. "It brings such a beautiful color to desserts, and a wonderful tang to savory dishes."

While the restaurant sources rhubarb from a local farm, Maciejewski has been cultivating from her sister's garden for personal use, and just planted rhubarb of her own this year, hoping to have her own bounty in a few years.

Maciejewski likes to use rhubarb in sweet applications such as galettes, pies, jams and sable bretons, but also favors savory applications. "It's a great addition to braised pork. You can pickle it and add it to salsas and salads; you can use it to make a shrub for a refreshing non-alcoholic drink (or add gin for a great cocktail)."



HILLARY SCHAVE

Chef Molly Maciejewski of Madison Sourdough



Madison Sourdough

BISTRO 101

Chef Mark Valaskey lights up when talking about spring ingredients, noting that May and June are perfect foraging months. "I am lucky enough to have permission to hunt on hundreds of acres of beautiful southern Wisconsin landscape for morels, fiddlehead ferns, wild ramps (an onion variety), wild asparagus,

black raspberries and wild strawberries, among a few other things," says Valaskey. "I would consider my specialty the elusive mushroom, though."

With the help of team members Tom Wolowik and Ryan Dresen, Valaskey has made Bistro 101 in Mount Horeb one of the most beloved fine dining experiences in Dane County. Pre-pandemic, Valaskey hosted an annual dinner at Bistro 101 highlighting spring ingredients, which was so popular he added a second date.

"So why doesn't a restaurant guy just keep scheduling these?" asks Valaskey. "That is part of the beauty of the season ... we are completely dependent on Mother Nature. Trying to time out dinner for 40 people with wild morels being the feature is a true feat in itself."

Valaskey supplements his own haul with that of other local foragers and farmers, including Squashington Farms, located right outside of Mount Horeb. "There are only limited offerings in the spring, but everything they grow is absolutely top-notch."

**CADRE**

"Late spring in Wisconsin is a magical time of year for eating seasonally," says Chef Evan Dannels, who shares an enthusiasm for foraging. He appreciates the fact that ramps, morels and

FAR LEFT HILLARY SCHAVE

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fiddlehead ferns must be foraged and are only available during this very brief window of time. “Luckily, all three can reasonably be found in the same day, and we have a couple secret spots we’ll visit throughout the season,” says Dannells.

He adds that local asparagus, rhubarb and strawberries, which are delivered to the restaurant directly by local organic farmers, are in peak season. Trips to the farmers’ market to connect and supplement their supply become routine again.



Dannells preserves ramps and morels to be enjoyed throughout the year, and he sweet-pickles rhubarb to pair with local strawberries in June. “Fiddlehead ferns and asparagus, on the other hand, we like to enjoy fresh with little manipulation,” says Dannells. “Asparagus, especially, will show up at every meal, such as in an omelet with a pungent cheese or local ham, or grilled to a slight char at lunch or dinner with lemon and pine nuts.” 🌸

TRY THESE RECIPES

Visit bravamagazine.com to get web-exclusive recipes from chefs Ryan Dresen and Mark Valaskey (ramp pesto and Valaskey’s grandmother’s berry pie), Molly Maciejewski (pickled rhubarb and a shrub) and Evan Dannells (foraged salad and a strawberry rhubarb granita)!

Candice Wagener is a freelance writer who enjoys telling stories that inform, intrigue and inspire. Her 14-year career has taught her more than she could have ever imagined.

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BEAUTIFUL BRUNCHES

BY CANDICE WAGENER

Spring has sprung, and it's slowly becoming safe to gather again. With Mother's and Father's Day on the horizon, what better way to celebrate the special people in your life than with brunch? We've rounded up some of our favorite spots to eat midday around town.

Bassett Street Brunch Club downtown is all about brunch. Just try and resist the call of breakfast nachos. They're loaded with queso fresco, braised chicken, guajillo chili sauce, avocado, jalapeños, cilantro, radishes and — to make it officially “brunchy”— two eggs over easy. brunchclubmadison.com

As their name implies, **Short Stack Eatery** has a thing for pancakes. Their sweet potato oatmeal stack is something you need to experience. Topped with fresh strawberries and bourbon maple mascarpone whipped goodness — this is indulgence at its finest. Or go for a classic: corned beef hash, which gets a nice little upgrade with sriracha horseradish cream. shortstackeats.com

With locations in Shorewood, Maple Bluff and downtown, **Ancora** is easily accessible. Beyond great coffee, their brunch menu is delicious. The honey bacon biscuit sandwich is a favorite, with fried egg and chives, bacon and cheddar, nestled between a homemade biscuit that's been drizzled with sweet-spicy Sriracha honey as the pièce de résistance. ancoracafes.com

In Monona, **Crema Cafe** is your brunch go-to. Their three-egg scramblers will fill you up. The Fungus is a great vegetarian option



with roasted mushrooms, red onion, asiago and truffle oil. You'd also be wise to check out their bakery case for delectable, house-made treats. goodcrema.com

If your idea of a perfect brunch includes waffles, make a stop at **Yola's Cafe** on the far west side. Their fluffy Belgian waffles are excellent and come in many variations. The Nutty Banana has freshly sliced bananas, walnuts and caramel sauce. Craving savory? The Country Breakfast waffle has cheddar and bacon (or sausage) baked in, topped with a fried or scrambled egg. Yola's has a dedicated gluten-free waffle iron and batter, and a rotating waffle of the month, with proceeds going to a local nonprofit. Doing good while brunching is always a win. yolascafe.com 🌸

**Please refer to each individual restaurant's website and/or social media channels for the latest COVID-19 restrictions and their dine-in/carryout situations.*

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Thought-provoking art, a citywide music fest and good reads.

BY KATE LAWLESS AND SHELBY ROWE MOYER



BEAUTIFUL AND HAUNTING ART

Located in Stoughton, Abel Contemporary Gallery has several new exhibitions this spring, featuring paintings, woodwork and sculptures. Highlights include oil painter **Gregory Schulte's masterful recreations of light through foliage** and artist ian van d.'s installation of sculptures that capture an unnamed spirit that haunts America. You don't need an appointment to enjoy these works of art during business hours, but you will need to make an online reservation, if you'd prefer a private showing. Hurry in — the exhibitions end May 30. abelcontemporary.com

WE'RE ALL EARS

Make Music Madison is back! Since 2013 the city has hosted this one-day celebration of music on June 21, in honor of World Music Day. Amateur up to professional musicians will perform live during the COVID-safe event between 8 a.m. and 9 p.m. at various outdoor venues around the city — parks, in front of businesses and public plazas. Check makemusicmadison.org for a list of venues and more information.



ADD THESE TO YOUR READING LIST

These Wisconsin-based, women authors have new works hot off the presses.

"I Thought You Said This Would Work," by Ann Garvin



Released this month, best-selling author and Madison resident Ann Garvin dives into the complexities of friendship with the story of two estranged friends stuck together on a road trip. Samantha and Holly find themselves traveling to Utah to rescue the dog of their mutual best friend, Katie, who's in the hospital with cancer. As the miles unfurl before them, so do unexpected twists, a romance and the secret behind their broken friendship.

"Love the Earth," by Mel Hammond



American Girl's new release aims to help kids 8 years and older understand climate change and empower them to use their skills to help slow it. American Girl editor Mel Hammond penned the book and included profiles of 15 real girls who are making positive, earth-friendly changes. The book is available at American Girl retail stores, as well as online and booksellers nationwide.

"The Seven Day Switch," by Kelly Harms



Award-winning Madison author Kelly Harms tackles the social judgment of parenting in her newest title. In the book, a sangria-filled potluck results in Celeste — the stay-at-home Pinterest mom — switching bodies with Wendy — the career-driven, powerhouse mom. The women have always loathed each other, but they're about to get a new perspective. The comedic tome releases in July.

"The Kindred Spirits Supper Club," by Amy E. Reichert



Milwaukee-based Amy E. Reichert's new novel serves up a much-needed, uplifting message proving that bad circumstances can become a great new adventure. Set in Wisconsin Dells, journalist Sabrina Monroe moves back in with her parents after she loses her job and is physically and metaphorically haunted by ghosts. However, her yearning for connection leads her to begin a series of anonymous acts of kindness that begin making a real difference in the community. This rom-com offers the warmhearted joy we all need. 🌸



HILLARY SCHAVE

FAMILY FIRST | The past year has emphasized the importance of family for all of us; after all, they're some of the only people we saw (in person) for a long time! We asked mother-daughter team Marla and Layla Bergh about why they're proud of one another. Layla, 11, says about her mom, "It's a global pandemic and she's kept her head up through the whole thing. Everybody should be proud of her. She shut down her entire [photography] business to homeschool us. She definitely deserves more credit than she gets."

Marla says, "[Layla and son AJ] make me proud because they are very honest, sweet and caring. I'm very proud of how they're maturing and how their empathy is leading them to be good people in the world." 🌸



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