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# Appleton

February 2026

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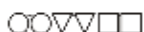


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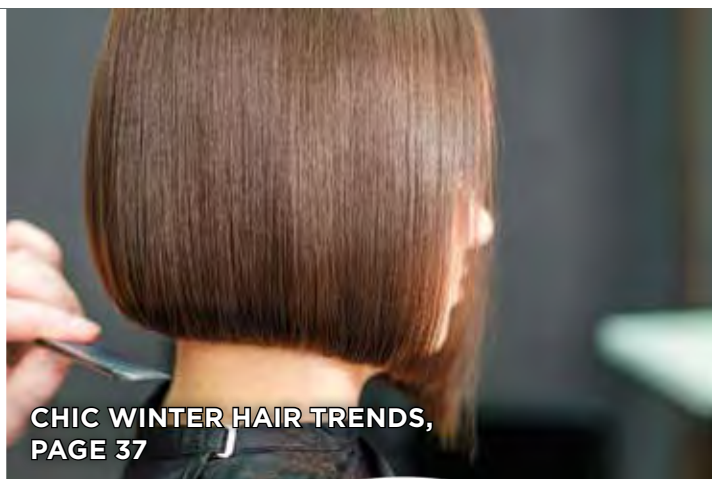
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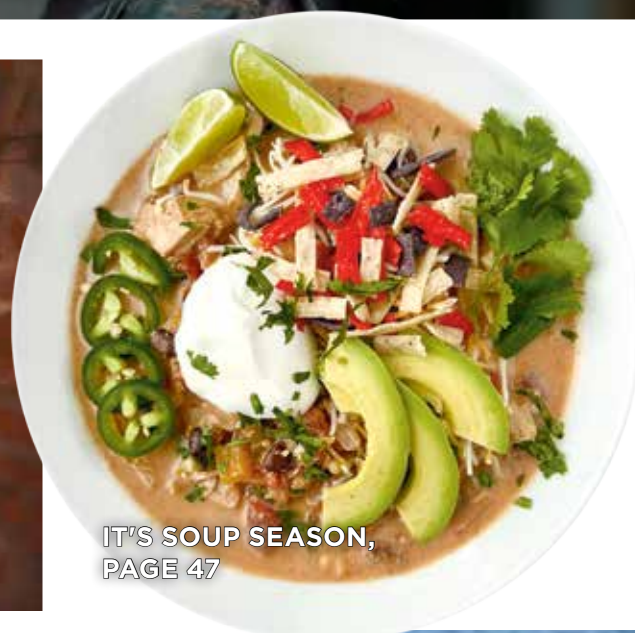
# APL FEB



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Chief Programming  
Officer  
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Business & Finance  
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Upfront  
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Good Stuff

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FROM  
THE  
EDITOR

# Savor & Explore

**AS FEBRUARY SETTLES OVER WISCONSIN, WE FIND OURSELVES IN THE HEART OF WINTER** — a season for embracing the comforts of home and the thrill of the outdoors.

In our new VOICE feature, *Ripple Effect*, Natasha shares how restructuring the College Avenue traffic pattern has changed downtown Appleton for the better, and Angela introduces us to the principles behind the Proper Human Diet.

Whether you love gliding across ice, hitting snow-covered trails, or simply cheering on winter sports from your favorite chair, Tim has something for you in TODAY: The best of winter recreation.

We celebrate what we fondly call “soup season” in TASTE, when simmering pots warm our kitchens and our spirits. Chef Carly shares six nourishing and flavorful soup recipes, including Italian white bean and Hungarian mushroom.

It’s prime time for bald eagle watching with renowned nature photographer John Van Den Brandt in MORE. Holly shares why a cyclamen plant makes the perfect Valentine’s surprise, and Tyler captures the timeless bonds created by family recipes.

Whether you gear up or hunker down, make time to savor the tastes and experiences that set Wisconsin winters apart.

Stay warm,

Sarah Peterson  
EDITOR

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### Holly Boettcher

Holly Boettcher is a master gardener and an aspiring naturalist. Her love for the outdoors and nature shines through in everything she does. Holly and her husband own Whistler’s Knoll Vineyard on Highway JJ near Hortonville.



### Joel Laper

Artistry, home design, and cosmetology have all been passions throughout Joel’s life. He has created art and spaces of all styles. He enjoys keeping up with the latest design trends.



### Natasha Winkler

Natasha Winkler is a versatile author and strategist specializing in journalism and storytelling, leveraging her background in human behavior. She blends psychological insights with strategic vision to create impactful, resonant content for audience connection.



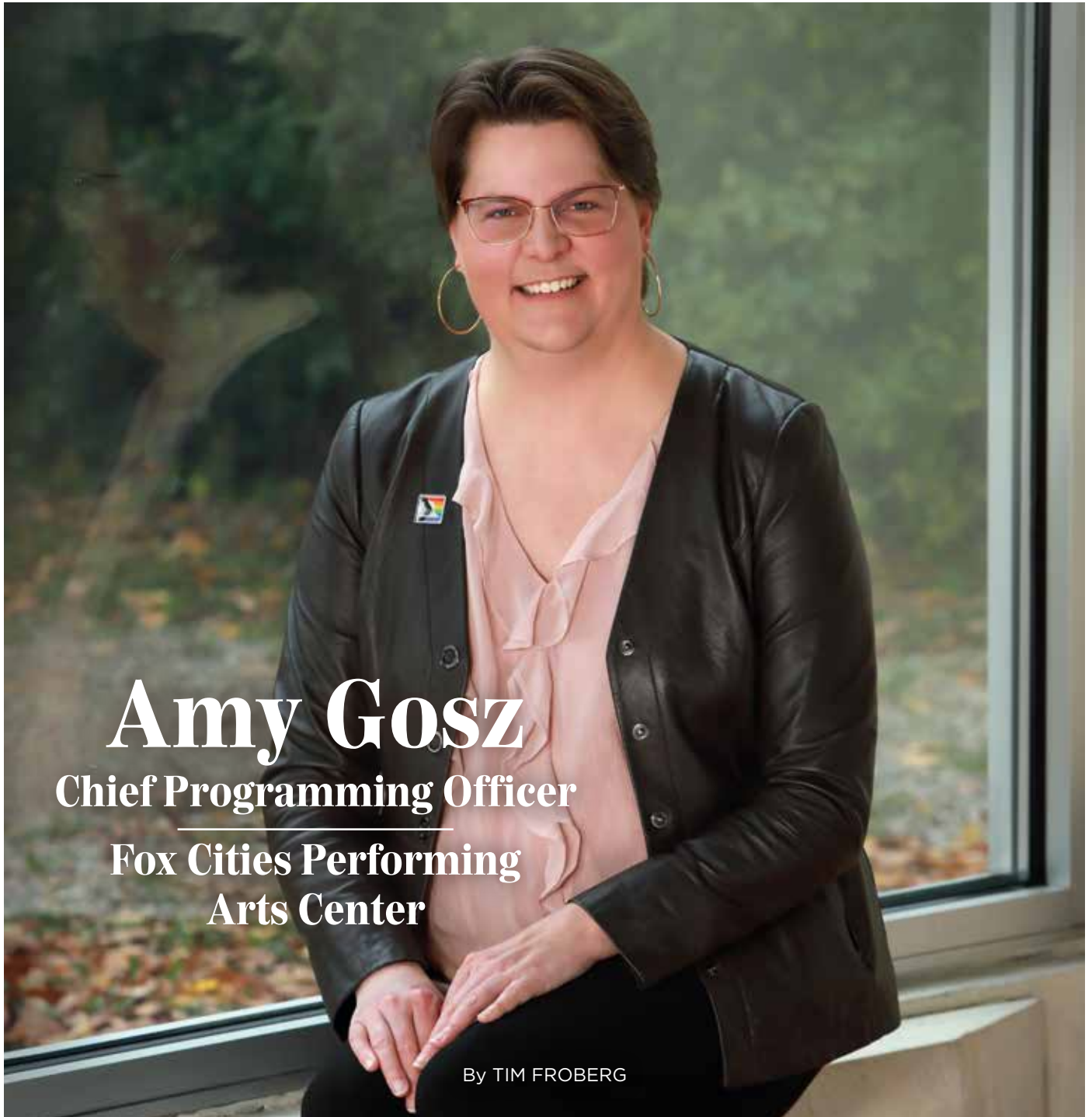
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# The SHOW Must Go On

## GOSZ HELPS PULL STRINGS AT THE P.A.C.

By TIM FROBERG



The performing arts are all about entertainers reaching audiences emotionally through song, dance, and theater.

Amy Gosz has spent most of her professional career working to consistently create that powerful connection — right here in Appleton.

Gosz has worked at the Fox Cities Performing Arts Center since the day it opened its doors to the public on Nov. 25, 2002, with a performance by legendary crooner Tony Bennett.

Gosz — the Fox Cities P.A.C.'s chief programming officer — has seen it all. She has played a significant role in the center's overall growth over the past 23 years into a well-rounded business and excellent venue for Broadway plays, concerts, comedy shows, and other high-level entertainment performances.

In addition to helping draw top national and international performers to Appleton, Gosz leads the Fox Cities P.A.C.'s educational programs and works to make the center a welcoming venue for all. She's not a person who barricades herself in her office. She regularly goes out into the community to attend different networking events and talk with local residents to learn what the public wants to see and hear.

"Amy has been the creative and driving force behind the center's education and community engagement programming since our opening in 2002," said Maria Van Laanen, the president and CEO of the Fox Cities P.A.C. "Our mission is to make the Fox Cities Performing Arts Center a welcoming, multicultural gathering place come to life through many of the very programs Amy has helped create."

The most rewarding part of Gosz's job has been seeing the excitement on the faces of audience members while taking in *Les Misérables* or *Fiddler on the Roof*.

"The programming and some of the things the center has embraced and done has really grown over the years," said Gosz. "But that core value of being a multi-cultural gathering place for the community has stayed the same, and I would say has even grown in the 23 years I've been

here. To me, that's pretty amazing."

Gosz's career journey has been pretty amazing, too. She actually began her career as a kindergarten teacher before taking a life-changing job at the Fox Cities P.A.C. where she worked her first four years as its education coordinator and the next 14 as director of programming and community engagement. Gosz began her current executive leadership role in 2021. She works with a six-person team to research, curate, and contract events for the center while leading the way on community engagement, educational programming and cultivating partnerships.

"I wear a lot of hats," Gosz said. "I have a great team, and we work in collaboration to bring many of the shows we present here. My job is probably less about Broadway and more about communication, partnerships, community engagement, and our education programs. I also work with our production team to make sure everything runs smoothly.

"Having Broadway right here in our backyard is great. But what I appreciate about being here the last 23 years is just understanding more about all the other programming the center does besides Broadway to help introduce people to all the dance, theater, music, and other programming we have.

"That's been a large part of my role — introducing people to arts they can see in their own backyard without having to go to Chicago or a large city and see world-class dance music, and theater."

Gosz and the entire Fox Cities P.A.C. staff have experienced excellent success bringing top-of-the line talent to Appleton, whether it's a Broadway smash like *Phantom of the Opera*, or local performances such as the Fox Valley Symphony, the Center Stage High School Musical Theater, the Boldt Arts Alive Series, and the Viewpoint Speaker Series.

What Gosz has noticed after observing and working with so many skilled performers is humility, a love of the performing arts, and a basic human decency.

"The artists that come through our door, they're human just like us," Gosz said. "You can have conversations with them. I remember having a backstage



conversation with Darlene Love, who is famous for her Christmas music, before she went on stage.

"It was like having a normal everyday conversation with your neighbor. We have a value here that we treat everybody like a star — no matter who is in the building. Whether it's high school students from our Center Stage Showcase or someone from *Hamilton*, we try and have the same level of excitement and energy for their show."

Gosz and her PAC team have worked to keep the bright lights shining on so many incredible shows in Appleton. As a theater aficionado, she admits it's a huge job perk to eventually sit back and enjoy the performances.

"I love being an audience member and it's an important job because the arts need an audience," she said. "The performers on stage need that feedback from a live audience. That's why we try and treat our audiences like stars as well."

One of Gosz's favorite Fox Cities P.A.C. memories was hearing a presentation from Mikhail Gorbachev, the former Russian politician and leader of the former Soviet Union.

"It was shortly after the center opened, and it was fascinating to be in the audience," she said. "I mean, where else was I going to hear a world leader speak?"

There are plenty of good reasons why thousands of renowned performers have visited and eventually revisited the Fox Cities P.A.C.

"They love coming to Appleton," Gosz said. "When you ask them if they're enjoying Appleton, a lot of them will tell you they love being in a city where they can just walk outside the theater and get a cup of coffee.

"They like that the hotels, the restaurants, and all the amenities are right downtown within walking distance of the theater. And they love how friendly and nice everyone is. These are the types of things I hear."

"They love coming here and they come back because they know it's a place where they will have great audiences and be treated well. It says a lot about our community that they want to come back. We've been able to establish a high level of trust with them."

The performances Gosz enjoys the most, though, are the ones that lack



big-name star power.

"My favorite shows are probably the ones where we're able to shine a spotlight on some of the local performers, like *The Nutcracker* when we had local performers from the Makaroff School of Ballet and the Fox Valley Symphony Orchestra.

"To see local talent on our stage making a world-class play like *The Nutcracker* come to life in front of their families and friends, that's pretty magical. It was magnificent."

Gosz never dreamed she would be working at a performing arts venue when she launched her professional career after graduating from the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse in 1999 with a degree in elementary education.

Teaching was her chosen profession, and she worked for two years (2000-2002) as a kindergarten teacher in the Nekoosa school district. Her life changed dramatically when her husband, Joe, a middle and high school social studies teacher in the Weyauwega-Fremont school district, encouraged her to apply for a job at what would be a brand-new entertainment center.

"My husband is from the Fox Cities and saw they were building the Fox Cities Performing Arts Center and were hiring for an education coordinator," Gosz said. "He said, 'You know what? You would be really good at that job. You should apply.' I did, and here I am 23 years later."

Music and theater, though, were nothing new to Gosz. She was a member of choir and show choir groups while attending La Crosse Central High School.

"My dream job growing up was to become a teacher, but I also loved everything about music and the arts," she said. "I was a choir kid and always went to shows. I love the arts, but back then nobody told me I could go to school and get a job at theater.

"I wish someone had told me that I could, this was the type of job I could have. When I do tours and talk with students, I tell them that theater is more than just the people on the stage.

"There are so many different jobs a person can have if they love theater or music. You can work in administration, marketing, or work on the finance side.



I think it's important for students to understand there are ways to incorporate the passions they have into different jobs and to feel like they can explore them."

Gosz is also a member of the business advisory board for the Appleton Area School District and the education and the outreach committee for Celebrate Diversity Fox Cities.

When she's not performing tasks for the Fox Cities P.A.C. or volunteering on community boards, Gosz enjoys family time with Joe, their two sons, Andrew, 19, a student at the University of

Mississippi, and Zach, 15, a student at Menasha High School, along with their golden doodle, Beamer.

"Beamer needs a lot of attention," said Gosz with a laugh. "When we're not playing with him, we like to go to the movies, especially Zach and I."

**Tim Froberg** has worked as a reporter for the Appleton Post-Crescent, Green Bay News-Chronicle, and Marinette EagleHerald. He won eight Wisconsin Newspaper Association writing awards. He and his wife, Sharon, live in Greenville with their Siberian husky mix, Elvis.

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**Feb. 15 is National Wisconsin Day** — honoring the state's history, people, and culture, particularly its cheese and famous brewing.

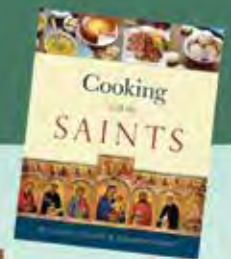


George Washington was a passionate dog lover and kept many breeds. **He often gave them humorous and endearing names such as Sweet Lips and Truelove.**



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# LOCAL SEO: YOUR SMALL BUSINESS PRIORITY IN 2026

By AMANDA KRUEGER



As we enter 2026, many small-business owners are evaluating the most effective marketing strategies for their budget. One answer might surprise you: search engine optimization, or SEO, remains one of the highest-return investments that a small business can make, and it's more accessible than ever.

When someone in the community searches "best coffee shop near me" or "Appleton plumber," search engines determine which businesses appear at the top. That ranking can mean the difference between a thriving storefront and an empty one. The good news: Small businesses have distinct advantages in local SEO that often outweigh corporate competitors.

## Start with Google Business Profile

If you do nothing else, claim and optimize your Google Business Profile. This free tool is the foundation of local search visibility. Ensure your hours are accurate, add high-quality photos of your business, and request reviews from satisfied customers. Responding to

reviews — both positive and negative — shows potential customers you're engaged and trustworthy. Businesses often increase their local visibility by 50% simply by maintaining an active, complete profile.

## Your website matters more than you think

Your website doesn't need to be fancy, but it does need to be fast, mobile-friendly, and clear about what you offer and where you're located. Include your city and region naturally throughout your content. Write blog posts or articles addressing common customer questions. When a local resident searches for solutions, helpful content from trusted community businesses can establish authority and drive qualified traffic.

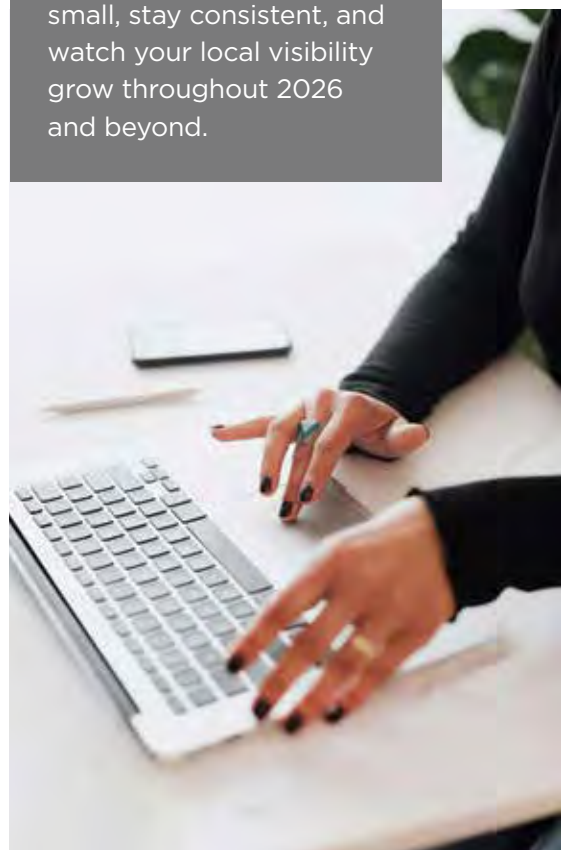
## Local links build local credibility

Search engines trust businesses that other local organizations trust. Get listed in the area chamber of commerce directories, partner with local nonprofits, sponsor community events, and earn mentions in local news outlets. These connections signal to search engines that you're a legitimate, established part of the community.

## The AI search revolution

AI-powered search tools are changing how people find businesses. The key remains the same: Create helpful, accurate content that genuinely serves your community. Search engines increasingly reward businesses that demonstrate expertise and trustworthiness, not those trying to game the system.

**SEO isn't about tricks or shortcuts.** It's about making it easy for your neighbors to find you when they need what you offer. For small businesses with limited marketing budgets, few strategies deliver better long-term results. Start small, stay consistent, and watch your local visibility grow throughout 2026 and beyond.



*Amanda Krueger is the chief marketing officer for American National Bank Fox Cities. She is a 2016 Future 15 award recipient and graduate of Leadership Fox Cities.*

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**Debbie Daanen**  
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# The Proper Human Diet: AN INTRODUCTION

By ANGELA HALDERSON

As we step into 2026, more people than ever are questioning the modern diet and searching for a healthier, more natural way to eat, reverse disease, lose weight, and heal their bodies.

Welcome to the Proper Human Diet — an approach centered on real, whole foods and a better understanding of how the human body is designed to thrive. Rather than chasing trends or quick fixes, this way of eating focuses on simplicity, nourishment, and long-term health. In this article and future ones, I'll explore the principles behind the Proper Human Diet and how it offers a thoughtful alternative for the modern world.

The term "Proper Human Diet" is used by some physicians and nutritionists to describe a way of eating that focuses on foods humans have relied on for most of our evolutionary history: meat (and sometimes dairy).

At its core, the Proper Human Diet prioritizes whole, real food: grass-fed meat, wild-caught fish, eggs, healthy fats, and — depending on the individual — small amounts of dairy. Highly processed foods, refined sugars, and industrial seed oils are completely removed from the diet, and yes, so are fruits and vegetables. Sounds crazy, right? Or is this actually the way humans should be eating? Did our cavemen ancestors eat meat or veggie lasagna?

Supporters of the Proper Human Diet often point out that for most of human history, food was scarce, seasonal,

and unprocessed. Humans did not evolve eating refined flour, sugary drinks, or ultra-processed snacks. From this perspective, many modern health issues — such as obesity, type 2 diabetes, and fatty liver disease — are seen as consequences of a mismatch between our biology and the modern food environment.

The Proper Human Diet also brings us carbohydrate awareness. While not everyone following this approach eats only meat or dairy, all followers of the Proper Human Diet completely avoid all grains, fruits, and starchy vegetables like potatoes. This is based on evidence that excess carbs raise blood sugar and insulin levels, which cause metabolic disease.

Followers of the Proper Human Diet also remove fruits and vegetables from their diet for a variety of reasons. First, fruits are high in fructans and other sugars. Years of food science have also increased the sugar content of fruits and vegetables. Other data shows natural plant chemicals like lectins, phytates, oxalates, or salicylates block absorption of other nutrients from a diet. Why eat something if it is going to limit your body's ability to absorb nutrients?

Over the next few months, I'm going to talk more about this very different way of eating. Have we been taught wrong? Or, is this just another silly diet trend?

Continue reading at [strongmeridian.com](https://strongmeridian.com).



**Angela Halderson** is the owner of Strong Meridian, a natural healthcare practice focusing on the root cause of disease. She is a dietitian trained in functional medicine, energy medicine, homeopathy, and herbalism.

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# The College Avenue RECONFIGURATION

By NATASHA WINKLER

## It was once the drag strip of the Fox Cities.

For decades, College Avenue was a four-lane gauntlet where the goal of every driver was simple: get through as quickly as possible. But look at our downtown today, and you'll notice a different rhythm.

In March 2025, the Appleton Common Council made a historic decision to move past the pilot phase and make the downtown lane reconfiguration permanent. By transforming four lanes of traffic into two, with a dedicated center turn lane and bike lanes, Appleton didn't just change its traffic pattern; it fundamentally shifted its community priorities.

## The Safety Ripple

The primary driver for this road diet was safety, and the data from the 18-month trial period is hard to ignore. Reportable crashes dropped by nearly 13%. While average speeds only decreased by about 3% (roughly 0.6 mph), the calming effect on the street is palpable.

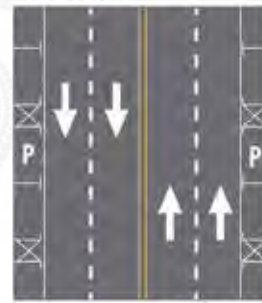
For a senior trying to cross the street to reach the Fox Cities Performing Arts Center or a parent helping a toddler out of a car-side door, those few feet of buffer and the elimination of lane-weaving drag racers are transformative. The ripple effect here is one of accessibility, making the heart of our city a place where everyone, not just those behind a steering wheel, feels they belong.

## The Economic Ripple

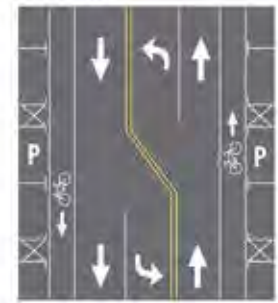
There is a common fear in urban planning: If you slow down cars, you kill business. However, the window shopping economy tells a different story. When traffic is forced to move at a human pace, drivers actually see the storefronts they used to blur past.

According to surveys by Appleton Downtown Inc., roughly 63% of downtown business owners expressed satisfaction with the outcome. While some friction remains regarding peak-hour flow, the trade-off is a much more pleasant sidewalk economy. Reduced engine noise and a wider buffer from traffic have made outdoor dining more attractive, turning a quick lunch stop into a lingered-over afternoon. As College Avenue becomes less of a highway and more of a destination, the ripple effect is a more resilient, foot-traffic-heavy retail environment.

BEFORE



AFTER

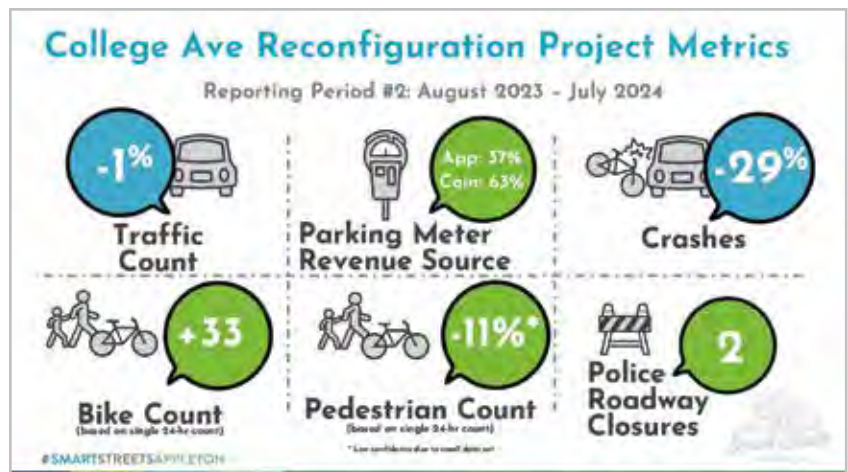


## The Social Ripple: Appleton's Living Room

Perhaps the most significant ripple will be cultural. A multimodal corridor means we are finally designing for the way we actually live. Our downtown is the stage for music, the Downtown Farm Market, and countless parades and other community events. By making these wider lanes and bike paths permanent, we have pre-integrated the infrastructure for our most beloved events.

The reconfiguration reinforces the idea that College Avenue is the "living room" of the Fox Cities. It is no longer just a path from point A to point B; it is once again a destination.

As we look toward the future, the decision to keep the "Smart Streets" layout reflects a growing understanding that a city's health isn't measured by how fast a car can leave but by how many people want to stay. The ripple effect of this road reconfiguration is a downtown that finally breathes, invites us to linger, and, most importantly, keeps us safe while we do.



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# ONE MORE THING

► Tyler Sjostrom

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# UPFRONT

## STEPHANIE MAAS AND BODO

POLICE OFFICER/K9 HANDLER  
KAUKAUNA POLICE DEPARTMENT

Police officer Stephanie Maas has a terrific work partner, roommate and friend.

His name is Bodo and he's a beautiful 7-year-old German shepherd who was born in Holland.

Maas and Bodo work together as partners in the Kaukauna Police Department's K-9 program. Maas has been Bodo's handler for the past five years.

The two are 24/7 partners. Bodo lives with Maas and the two share a close relationship. Bodo is actually owned by the City of Kaukauna, but Maas will get the option to purchase Bodo when he retires from service.

Maas and Bodo are only the second handler-dog combination in the history of the department's K-9 program, following the work of Officer Lucas Meyer and Rocko, a Dutch shepherd from Mexico.

Maas is an Appleton native and Appleton East graduate who has been with the Kaukauna Police Department since 2015.

"I've always been an animal lover, and dogs have always fascinated me," Maas said. "I always wanted to learn and understand more about them."

By Tim Froberg  
Photo by Ashley Schmit  
Debbie Daanen Photography

### HOW DO YOU DESCRIBE THE BOND YOU HAVE WITH BODO?

"I spend more time with him than any other person or animal. When I work a 40-hour week, he works a 40-hour week. When I work a 60-hour week, he works a 60-hour week. We spend practically every waking hour together. When he's not working, he's not resting in a kennel. He's with me."

### WHAT SPECIFIC TYPE OF WORK DOES BODO DO?

"Bodo has two specialties. He's a narcotics canine who helps keep drugs off the street. He's located large quantities of drugs. He can also do tracking, where he helps search for people. He also goes along with me on patrol. He's a huge asset for our department."

### HOW DOES HE IMPRESS YOU WITH HIS POLICE-ASSISTING SKILLS?

"Oh, Bodo is amazing. Sometimes, I'm like, 'Wow. That was really cool. I didn't think he was going to be able to jump up like that or locate those drugs like that.' I took a course on tracking, and we had to re-lay the same track 24 hours later. I was like, 'There's no way he's going to be able to do it,' and he did it. These dogs impress me so much."

### WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO BE A HANDLER?

"A lot of training. We have had thousands of hours of training together. When I first started training with him, I didn't even know how to handle the leash correctly. Now I'll look at other people with dogs and think, 'Why doesn't your dog listen?' I love working with Bodo. I love the work and love the dog. I wouldn't trade it for anything in the world."



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# GOOD STUFF

By SARAH PETERSON



## SATISFY CRAVINGS

### INSOMNIA COOKIES

Craving something sweet but think it's too late? A beloved late-night bakery brand is now open in downtown Appleton. Insomnia Cookies offers in-store, pickup, and delivery options for customers to indulge in the company's signature warm, delicious cookies — as late as 3 a.m. The menu features everything from classic cookies such as chocolate chunk to larger "deluxe" options like chocolate peanut butter cup. Customers can also enjoy ice cream, brookies, brownies, blondies, as well as vegan and gluten-free options. Order online or through their app.

[insomniacookies.com](https://insomniacookies.com)



## HIT THE TRAILS

### ARIENS NORDIC CENTER

Ariens Nordic Center in Brillion specializes in world-class winter experiences for all skill levels. This facility features 5 kilometers of groomed and lighted trails for novice and professional cross-country skiing, a biathlon target system, and a 10-million-gallon pond for snowmaking. Spectate at one of the many competitions that are held there such as the U.S. Biathlon and World Snowshoe Championships. The center is open year-round and can also be used for warm-weather sports such as running, and roller skiing.

[ariensnordic.com](https://ariensnordic.com)



## KNIT AND READ

### NEEDLES AND NOVELS

If you love to knit and you also love to read, visit The Book Store on in Appleton for Needles and Novels. Bring a knitting project and thoughts on your recent reads. Meets the second Thursday of each month.

[thebookstoreappleton.com/events](https://thebookstoreappleton.com/events)



## VAULT 202

Vault 202 is the perfect place to gather and unwind over craft brews, brick-oven pizzas, and oven-fired wings. Located in the 1962 former First National Bank building in downtown Appleton, it features an authentic bank vault transformed into a specialized tasting room.

[vault202brewery.com](https://vault202brewery.com)



## GET ARTSY

### ROOT AND RUNNER

A creative community hub, Root and Runner of Neenah provides shared inspiration and diverse art classes in drawing, painting, book arts, jewelry making, and more. It also has an onsite gallery featuring local artists and open studio time.

[rootandrunnercreative.com](https://rootandrunnercreative.com)



## SCALE NEW HEIGHTS

### ODYSSEY CLIMBING

Appleton's newest and largest indoor climbing facility, Odyssey Climbing + Fitness, offers a variety of adventures for all skill levels. The gym features extensive roped climbing walls, auto belays, bouldering areas, expert-led classes, youth programs, and community competitions.

[odysseyclimbing.com](https://odysseyclimbing.com)

# TODAY

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# *It's the Best of* WINTER

Beat Winter Blahs in Wisconsin with Activity

By TIM FROBERG

**O**ld Man Winter can be one scary dude.

Practically every poll taken reveals winter to be America's least favorite of the four seasons and by a large margin.

There just doesn't seem to be much to like, especially in the real-life snow globe of the Midwest. The temperatures are cold and the white stuff piles up, forcing us to spend far too much time indoors and away from our backyards, parks and barbecue grills. Our days are significantly shorter, and it seems like we're living a vampire's existence — always dealing with darkness.

Winter, though, doesn't have to be a foe. With an open mind, a little bit of energy, a willingness to try new activities, and the proper wardrobe (prioritize warmth over fashion, or you will be a walking icicle), you can turn winter into an actual friend.

So stop fighting winter. Make peace with it. It can be done. I grew up in Michigan's Upper Peninsula and hated winter for the first 30 years of my life. Then I learned how to ski, and my anti-winter attitude changed. I actually find myself complaining when the snow starts melting in March — comments that usually draw concern from friends and recommendations for mental-health counselors.

Trust me when I say that finding a winter hobby can change everything.

Our "It's The Best of Winter" guide can help. In the following pages, we'll take a look at how to make the most of winter through various activities and opportunities that pop up in the dead of this unpopular, unappreciated season. Along with suggested winter activities, we'll throw in a few road trips and venues to keep cabin fever from creeping in.

Who knows? If you try a few, you might even crack a smile by the end of March.



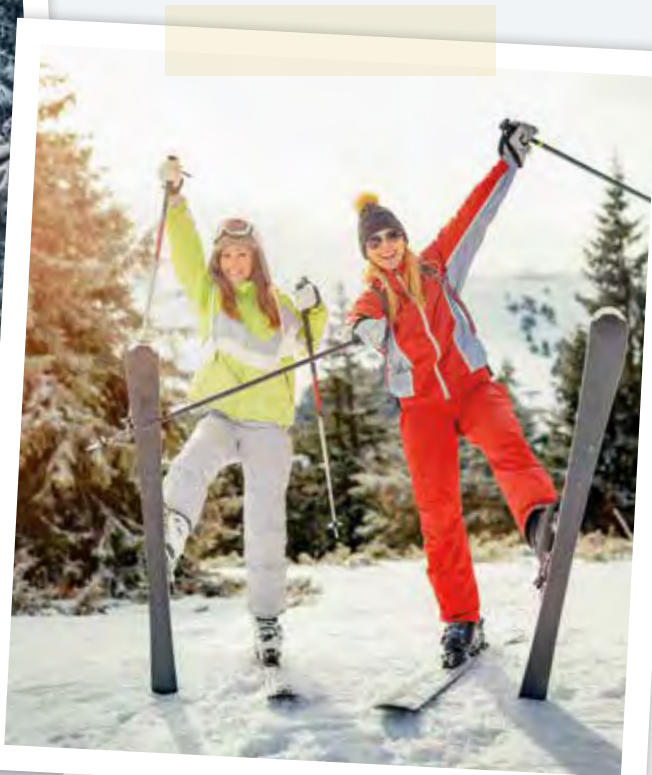
## CROSS COUNTRY CRUISING

Moving at high or even slow speeds with your feet strapped to pieces of wood can be terrifying for inexperienced skiers.

But if you take the time and spend the money to learn cross-country, downhill skiing, or snowboarding, an avenue toward winter fun may suddenly open.

Cross-country (Nordic) is safer and less expensive than downhill (Alpine) skiing and is a superior cardiovascular sport. Most cross-country skiers own their own equipment (skis, boots and poles), but it can also be rented at many places such as Gordon Bubolz Nature Preserve for a nominal price. There is usually a fee to navigate cross-country trails, but it's generally inexpensive.

Bubolz features more than 8.5 miles of groomed trails.



Plamann Park and Reid Golf Course in Appleton, the Menasha Conservancy Area, Woodland Prairie Park in Menasha, High Cliff State Park in Sherwood, and the Brown County Reforestation Camp in Green Bay also offer popular cross-country trails.

Regular cross-country skiing will keep you in excellent shape and isn't particularly dangerous, but it's important to understand the degree of difficulty the trail poses. Some trails feature steep hills that can send you flying downhill at high speeds, much like the alpine experience.

For information on ski trails and conditions in the Wisconsin State Park System, visit the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources' top-notch website at [dnr.wisconsin.gov](http://dnr.wisconsin.gov).

## HIT THE SLOPES

Downhill is a far more daring choice among skiers. There is a steep learning curve involved, and downhill skiing can be dangerous if you take it on without knowing the basics.

If you are a beginner, always take a lesson or two from trained ski personnel at the hill. They will teach you fundamentals and important safety rules that can save your life. Beginners must learn how to turn, snowplow (slow yourself down) and stop before venturing to the top of the hill.

Don't rely on well-meaning, but unqualified friends to teach you the basics. And don't be so naïve as to think you can immediately teach yourself this difficult, humbling sport. Stay patient, listen to your instructors, and be willing to laugh at yourself because you may take a tumble or four.

So where to go? A lot depends on your skill level, how far you want to drive, and how much you want to spend. But to me, Granite Peak in Wausau (also known as Rib Mountain) is tough to beat, especially for intermediate and advanced skiers. Granite Peak offers the most terrain with over 200 acres, 68 runs, seven lifts, including two high-speed ones, and the highest vertical drop (700-plus feet).

Other well-regarded ski resorts within driving distance of Appleton include Cascade Mountain (Portage), Devils Head (Baraboo), Whitecap Mountain (Upson) and Alpine Valley (Elkhorn).

Beginners may want to learn the ropes at nearby Nordic Mountain in Wild Rose where they will get a less challenging, budget-friendly ski experience.

There are plenty of good ski resorts in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. Mt. Bohemia is a Colorado-style hill for serious skiers, while Big Powderhorn Mountain, Ski Brule and Marquette Mountain are solid options.

If you catch the ski bug, consider joining the Sly Fox Ski Club, a local organization that organizes trips to exotic distant ski destinations for bargain prices.



## SNOWSHOE SHUFFLE

Looking to enjoy the beauty of winter with a safe, slow activity that won't send you sprawling? Give snowshoeing a shot. It's a chill activity that provides solid cardio exercise and is super easy on the body. Because you're moving at a gradual pace, snowshoeing gives you time to take in and fully appreciate Wisconsin's winter wonderland.

If you don't own snowshoes, they can be rented at venues with excellent trail systems such as Gordon Bubolz Nature Preserve, Heckrodt Nature Preserve in Menasha, Mosquito Hill Nature Center in New London, and Plamann Park in Appleton.



## SEE THE LIGHT

An outdoor winter activity that has skyrocketed in popularity is the candlelight experience, whether it's a hike, cross-country ski, or snowshoe event.

These low-key activities are held at night in forested areas and allow hikers, snowshoers or skiers to journey down groomed trails illuminated by candles that are either electric or have actual flames inside ice luminaries.

Most places offer roaring bonfires and hot drinks to be enjoyed after the hike. Many state parks and nature centers offer these events, so check park websites and the Wisconsin DNR website for dates, prices, and times.

Rib Mountain State Park, Newport State Park in Door County and Friends of Governor Thompson State Park in Crivitz will offer candlelight snowshoe hikes on Feb. 14.

Candlelight events are fun, back-to-nature activities that will get you out of the house and help you appreciate the wonders of winter.

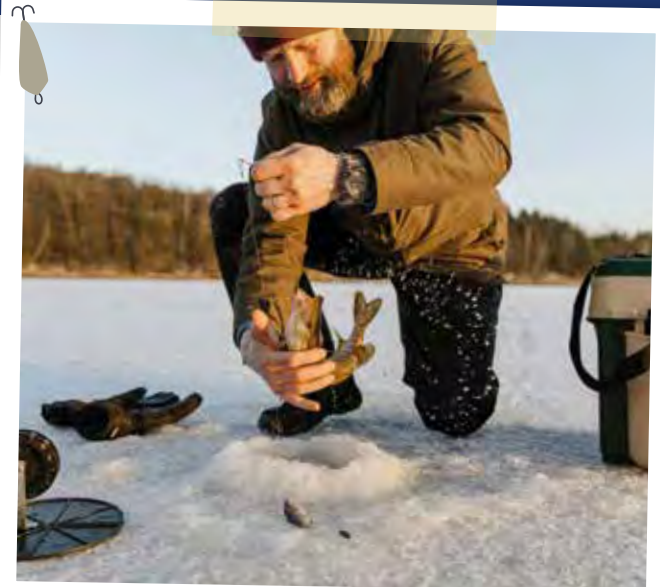


## ICE, ICE BABY

Ice fishing is another good way to beat cabin fever without breaking a sweat. Outdoor enthusiasts have found excellent success on Wisconsin waters, especially Green Bay (for walleye) and Lake Winnebago (walleye, panfish). February is prime time for Wisconsin ice fishing, with sizable walleye being caught on the Fox River, which flows into Green Bay.

For a classic Wisconsin ice fishing experience, take a road trip to Rhinelander, which bills itself as the "Ice Fishing Capital of the World."

Always check ice conditions from the DNR before considering an ice fishing excursion. At least four inches of clear solid ice is needed for walking, while 5-7 inches is necessary for a snowmobile or ATV and 8-12 inches for a small car or light truck. Don't be one of those who drives a truck onto thin ice and soon finds the vehicle taking on water.

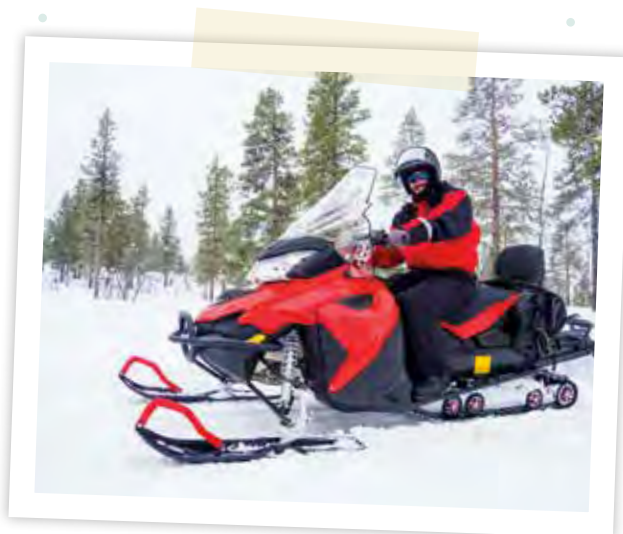


## FIRE UP THE SLED

Snowmobiling is a fast, exhilarating sport that allows exploration of remote areas. There are 300-plus miles of snowmobile trails in Outagamie County maintained by local clubs and the Outagamie County Parks Department.

Snowmobiling is heavily dependent on actual snow. Generally, at least six inches of snow cover is needed along with temperatures below freezing. Check the trail conditions hotline (920-832-4790), extension 3, before firing up your sled.

Many Wisconsin snowmobilers prefer to head to the Northwoods of Eagle River, Minocqua, Rhinelander, or Michigan's Upper Peninsula, where there is deeper snow and access to Lake Superior.



## SLIP-SLIDING AWAY

So you tried skiing and it's not your jam. No problem. There are plenty of winter outdoor activities that are fun, easy to learn, and far less expensive.

Sledding is one of them. All you need is a sense of adventure and a simple sled — whether it's plastic, wood, or aluminum — that can be purchased at retail outlets like Scheels, Menards, Costco, Target, and Ace Hardware. Sledding is a terrific family event in which both kids and adults can participate. Just make sure you're not riding a Clark Griswold-approved saucer coated with a super slippery, speed-promoting substance.

There are plenty of small hills in the Appleton area at local parks such as Plamann (257 acres of scenic hills and trails), Prairie Hill, Memorial, Pierce, Erb, Arbutus, Grignon (in Kaukauna), Fritsch (Menasha), and Jennerjohn (Greenville).

Snow tubing — sliding downhill on plastic inner tubes — is another sled-related winter option. Many ski areas, such as Nordic Mountain in Wild Rose and Sylvan Hill Park in Wausau rent tubes and offer lift services.

If you want something more memorable with a view of America's most iconic football stadium, head to Green Bay's Titletown District and Ariens Hill. Tubes are available along with a tow service to the top where a 46-foot drop awaits. Tubing fees vary by day, but there is no charge for the actual tube.





## GLIDE YOUR WAY THROUGH WINTER

Skating — much like skiing — can't be mastered overnight and requires a fair amount of learning. But with a little patience and practice, most folks pick it up well enough to at least complete a few laps with the kiddos. There are plenty of good outdoor ice rinks at Appleton public parks and several fine indoor rinks with open skating hours like Appleton Family Ice Center, Tri-County Ice Arena, Community First Champion Center, and Cornerstone Community Ice Center in De Pere.

Visit the gorgeous Plaza at Gateway Park in downtown Neenah for a can't-beat outdoor skating experience. The Plaza opened in 2021 and is an awesome winter gathering place. Think Rockefeller Plaza, only in Neenah. The outdoor skating rink is the focal point during the winter, and firepits are available along with hot drinks and food. Skates can be rented on-site, and there is a small admission fee. The Plaza is a spectacular facility and a must-visit outdoor venue for both area residents and tourists — even if you don't skate.

Green Bay's Titledown District offers a terrific outdoor skating option at Hy-Vee Plaza. Rental skates are available, and there is an admission charge, but with all the beautiful lights and historic Lambeau Field towering in the background, it provides an unforgettable skating experience.

While you're in the Titledown District, check out all Lambeau has to offer. Visit the Packers Pro Shop or Packers Hall of Fame, and have a bite to eat at 1919 Kitchen & Tap. Take the time to snap a few selfies alongside legendary Packers coaches Curly Lambeau and Vince Lombardi, or at the interactive Lambeau Leap structure.



## HIT THE ROAD JACK

Looking for something completely different? Take a road trip to Marquette, Michigan, and be a Yooper for a few days while checking out the U.P. 200 Sled Dog.

The annual event is set for Feb. 12–16, starting from downtown Marquette.

The U.P. 200 is a 12-dog, 228-mile mid-distance race that serves as an Iditarod qualifier. The Midnight Run, an eight-dog, 82-mile race, and the Jack Pine 30, a six-dog, 26-mile event, are also part of the festivities.

Visit the website, [up200.org](http://up200.org), for more information.



## ENJOY MOTHER NATURE'S WORK

The wrath of a Wisconsin winter can produce some spectacular natural formations like the magical ice structures found in Door County.

Visit Cave Point County Park near Sturgeon Bay and check out the ice layers, frozen waterfalls, and massive icicles along limestone cliffs where Lake Michigan waves and seeping water have created jaw-dropping winter sights. Whitefish Dunes State Park — adjacent to Cave Point — Bailey's Harbor and the North Bay State Natural Area are also worth a look.

These wonderful ice formations are best seen in February when temperatures are consistently cold. Be aware of local ice conditions and wear proper footwear because the ground at Cave Point can be slippery during winter.

The spectacular sea caves at the Apostle Islands — about a four-hour drive from Appleton — are even more stunning, but have been inaccessible in recent years due to unstable ice conditions. Before planning a trip, contact the Bayfield Chamber and Visitor Bureau (715-779-3335) or visit its website, [bayfield.org](http://bayfield.org), for updated information on the caves.

## TAKE THE PLUNGE

Waterparks used to be strictly a summer thing, but that's no longer the case. Several waterpark hotels with year-round slides have opened in recent years, including a variety in the Wisconsin Dells area.

Kalahari Resorts — which opened in 2000 and has a unique African theme — was one of the first to offer a large-scale indoor waterpark and remains a popular family destination for both little and big kids (adults). Additional indoor waterpark resorts in Wisconsin Dells include Great Wolf Lodge, Atlantis Family Waterpark Hotel, Mt. Olympus Indoor Water Park, and Chula Vista Resort.

But you don't necessarily need to make the two-hour drive to Wisconsin Dells to experience the splash-splash fun of an indoor water park. Tundra Lodge in Green Bay has a three-story indoor waterpark featuring a lazy river and also provides the opportunity to visit iconic Lambeau Field — just four blocks away.



## CROSS THE BORDER

If waterparks aren't your thing, put your football grudges aside and visit the Windy City. Chicago is loaded with fun and educational attractions that will blow your mind. The Shedd Aquarium, Field Museum, Museum of Science and Industry, and Adler Planetarium are must-see world-class venues where you can spend hours eying fascinating sights.

Check out "The Bean," a giant stainless steel sculpture in Millennium Park, Lincoln Park with its dazzling zoo lights display, or Navy Pier, which is open during winters for ice skating and other events.

## WATCH THE WINTER OLYMPICS

Say "Buongiorno" to the Winter Olympics, which will transport us to Italy (in Milan and Cortina d'Ampezzo) for a two-week television takeover from Feb. 6–22.

The Winter Olympics is a major global event that builds momentum and viewership with each passing day. It will be broadcast as usual on NBC.

Some of the marquee events are figure and speed skating, hockey, downhill skiing, bobsledding, and luge. While some prefer the Summer Olympics, the Winter Olympics is a very watchable event that always seems to create intrigue and produce significant stories.

These television-documented tales occasionally involve bribery, cheating, and even criminal activity like the mind-blowing Tonya Harding-Nancy Kerrigan saga of 1994 that people still talk about today.

There have also been heartwarming, inspirational stories like the "Miracle on Ice" in 1980 and Dan "The Heartbreak Kid" Jansen's gold-medal win at Lillehammer in 1994 following personal tragedy and disappointing showings in previous Olympics.

Several funny, yet uplifting underdog stories have also emerged from the Winter Olympics. Who could forget the Jamaican bobsled team's efforts to compete with the elite teams in the 1988 Winter Olympics despite limited resources and a total lack of background in the sport? Their unforgettable story was retold in a terrific 1993 Hollywood movie, "Cool Runnings," which you should definitely watch if you haven't already.

Another underdog who inspired a full-length movie was Eddie "The Eagle" Edwards: a not-so-talented chap who became the first competitor to represent Great Britain in Olympic ski jumping. With a non-athletic build and thick glasses that often fogged up, Eddie didn't look like a ski jumper. Picture WKRP's Les Nessman on skis. He didn't jump like one either. His skill level was so far behind fellow competitors that there was a push to ban him from competition in fear that he would seriously hurt himself.

But the Eagle was eventually allowed to fly. Eddie predictably finished dead-last in the competition — miles behind his counterparts — but gained an enormous global following for his competitive spirit.





## HAVE A SUPER SUNDAY

The biggest event of America's sports season takes place Feb. 8 at Levi's Stadium — home of the San Francisco 49ers.

The Super Bowl started modestly in the late 1960s. It was initially called the AFL-NFL World Championship Game and played before countless empty seats at the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum. Almost every Cheesehead knows that Vince Lombardi's Packers won the first two Super Bowls in 1967 and 1968.

The game has morphed into a must-see event for diehard, casual, and even non-football fans. Some tune in simply to watch the creative multi-million-dollar commercials and high-profile halftime show.

The 2026 halftime show features Latin American singer-rapper-entertainer Bad Bunny, a controversial choice considering that he's criticized U.S. immigration policies and enforcement. But controversy sells, and it will be interesting to see if Bad Bunny pokes the bear.

## BE A HOCKEY PUCK

The harsh Wisconsin winter forces us indoors for an extended period, but there are plenty of excellent live sporting events to watch.

No sport is more connected to winter than hockey. The Green Bay Gamblers offer an excellent hockey experience at a bargain price. The Gamblers are a Tier 1 junior hockey organization of high-level amateur players looking to advance to the collegiate or professional level.

The Gamblers operate similarly to the Wisconsin Timber Rattlers in terms of promotions, themed nights, t-shirt tosses, and mascot appearances. Chances are you will have a good time — even if you don't like hockey.

Or, check out kids' hockey. The Appleton area has three established boys' and girls' high school hockey programs in Appleton United, Neenah-Hortonville-Menasha and the Fox Cities Stars.



## GET MAD IN MARCH

One can also follow the bounce of the basketball in February and March. The Milwaukee Bucks have struggled through a tough season, but have been a stable, successful franchise for decades and boast one of the planet's top players in Giannis Antetokounmpo.

If you want to save a few dollars while making a shorter drive to Oshkosh, the Bucks' developmental G League team, the Wisconsin Herd, provides an entertaining alternative.

Many find college basketball to be even more scintillating than the pro game. The Wisconsin Badgers have been a consistent winner in recent years, and Bucky has long been the state's marquee amateur team.

The University of Wisconsin-Green Bay offers the high skill level of Division I hoops, while the WIAC is one of the country's top Division III basketball conferences.

One of the best parts winter is March Madness when the intriguing NCAA tournaments tip off. What makes it so fun is that everyone gets a chance to make a buck or earn the respect (or disrespect) of buddies and co-workers by trying to predict the wildly unpredictable outcomes of games through millions of pre-tourney brackets.

## SUPPORT HIGH SCHOOL SPORTS

High school sports have a charming, hometown feel. Whether you're enjoying the action on the court, the antics of the student body, or the rousing school band, prep sports are terrific entertainment. Take in a basketball game and support the Papermakers, Polar Bears, Ghosts, Mustangs, Patriots, Lightning, Terrors, Rockets, Foxes or Hawks.

The high school basketball season stages its own version of March Madness, and the Fox Cities is loaded with quality boys' and girls' basketball programs capable of making deep tourney runs. But more than just hoops and hockey are played during winter. Kaukauna boasts the state's elite prep wrestling programs. Coach Jeff Matczak's Ghosts have won an amazing five consecutive WIAA Division I state wrestling championships and nine overall. I wouldn't bet against the Ghosts extending that streak to six in March.



# LITTLE KNOWN | art house

By JENNY JAKL

**J**ackie Sanders is the creative, founder, and owner of the recently opened Little Known Art House on Washington Street near the Appleton Public Library. Taking occupancy in February 2025, she transformed the space — with help from family and friends — into a vibrant creative hub that serves as a gallery, shop, and her working studio.

Jackie Sanders grew up in Wisconsin and has called Appleton home for the past 10 years. She holds degrees in art education from UW–Madison and photography from the Madison Area Technical College. While much of her career was spent as a professional photographer and educator, her creative practice has always spanned a wide range of mediums, including drawing, painting, clay, and woodworking.

A strong believer in lifelong learning and accessible education, Jackie founded Fox Valley Photography to build community around photography. In 2019, she began exploring printmaking as a new creative outlet. After the birth of her daughter in 2021, she stepped away from photography to focus on family and further develop her printmaking practice.

The arts have been central to Jackie's life from an early age. Jackie grew up surrounded by makers including carpenters, musicians, and artists. So naturally, creativity felt like an organic and meaningful path for Jackie to pursue. In college, she immersed herself in as many art disciplines as possible, deepening her appreciation for diverse forms of making.

Creativity has guided every stage of her career, from photography and teaching to marketing and styling. Storytelling, color, and composition remain at the core of the work that Jackie creates. Jackie says that these experiences, combined with motherhood and years of art market participation, culminated in the creation of Little Known Art House.

Jackie credits the people in her life — along with inspiring instructors at MATC — for shaping her creative voice. Jackie says that photography taught her how to truly see and pay attention, a skill that carries into her printmaking today. Her fascination with small, often overlooked details began with macro photography and has been renewed through the curiosity of her young child.

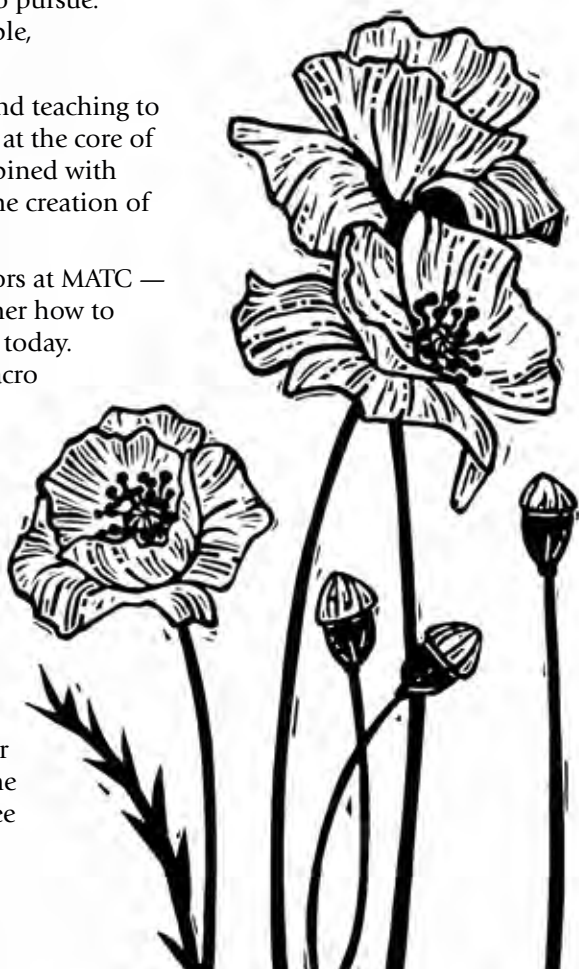
One highlight of opening her own space was completing a large-scale mural inspired by poppies, her daughter's birth flower — one of the most fulfilling projects she has created. At heart, Jackie simply loves to make. When asked what she dreams of down the road, she said writing and illustrating a children's book remains a long-time goal.

Outside of being creative and running the shop, Jackie enjoys biking or walking to her shop. She and her husband have been slowly rehabbing a vintage Serro Scotty camper. She's an avid reader who loves exploring, even if it's just a new place down the street. She makes a great lemon-raspberry scone and didn't start drinking coffee until she was in her 30s.

**Visitors can find Jackie at Little Known Art House in Appleton**

**Instagram:** @littleknownarthouse | @nimblelemonink

**Websites:** [www.littleknownarthouse.com](http://www.littleknownarthouse.com) | [www.nimblelemon.com](http://www.nimblelemon.com)







# CELEBRATE YOUR VALENTINE'S DAY IN *Perfect Harmony*

By JIM COLLAR

**I**t's the date night of all date nights, and this year, there's one more thing to consider: Valentine's Day falls on a Saturday, so cuddling on the couch just isn't a suitable option. It's a time set aside for making memories. Exchange gifts. Dine out. See a show.

The Fox Valley's entertainment scene is ready to make your evening perfect, and if music speaks to your heart like it does to mine, there are many wonderful options to enjoy together. From country to jazz and hip-hop to oldies, there's something for everyone to love.

## Pull out all the stops

*Hamilton* is the hottest ticket wherever it's playing. Blending hip-hop with history, the smash Broadway hit is arriving at the right place at the right time. Its 13-day run at the Fox Cities Performing Arts Center includes two Valentine's Day performances. Start your day together with a 2 p.m. matinee or head out for dinner before the 8 p.m. show.

Believe it or not, *Hamilton's* founding fathers will have some competition. Appleton has become an important stop for Americana artists and a key tour is swinging into Poplar Hall. Two-time Grammy nominee **Sierra Hull** will co-headline with **The Milk Carton Kids** as part of their High Lonesome Harmony Tour. The show begins at 6 p.m.



## Make it a romantic evening

Can you think of anything more romantic than candles and stringed instruments? Green Bay's National Railroad Museum will host *Candlelight: Valentine's Day Special* at 6 p.m. on Feb. 14. Featuring the Listeso String Quartet, the



evening will feature a variety of favorite love songs amid a warm, flickering glow.

Avoid the crowds and start your celebration early with dinner and a show from the **Green Bay Jazz Orchestra**. They'll perform at 6 p.m. at the historic Tarlton Theatre on Feb. 12, and a full menu will be available.

Adventure is important to romance, so try something new. Hilbert's Crystal Ballroom will host a **Valentine's Day Couples Country Dance**. The evening begins with a dance lesson from 6 to 7 p.m. Afterwards, put your new moves to work until 9:30 p.m.

## Get nostalgic and have a little fun

This Valentine's Day offers opportunities to hear your favorites from talented musicians who also play the part. Choose from several tribute acts.

**Too Hype Crew** will bring an old-school hip-hop experience to Maloney's in Kaukauna at 9 p.m. Catch a disco vibe and some legendary love songs as the **Australian Bee Gees Show** unfolds at North Star Mohican Casino Resort in Bowler. The show is free and doors open at 8 p.m.

Green Bay's Riverside Ballroom will host its annual Valentine's Day dinner and show featuring Journey tribute band, **Separate Ways**. Or maybe you'd like to spend some time with Elvis. **The Autistic Elvis Tribute Artist Aaron Smith** will perform at 4 p.m. at Appleton's Tandem Wine and Beer.

Valentine's Day is all about filling your senses alongside the person you love. However you choose to celebrate, make sure to relish one another and the precious time together.



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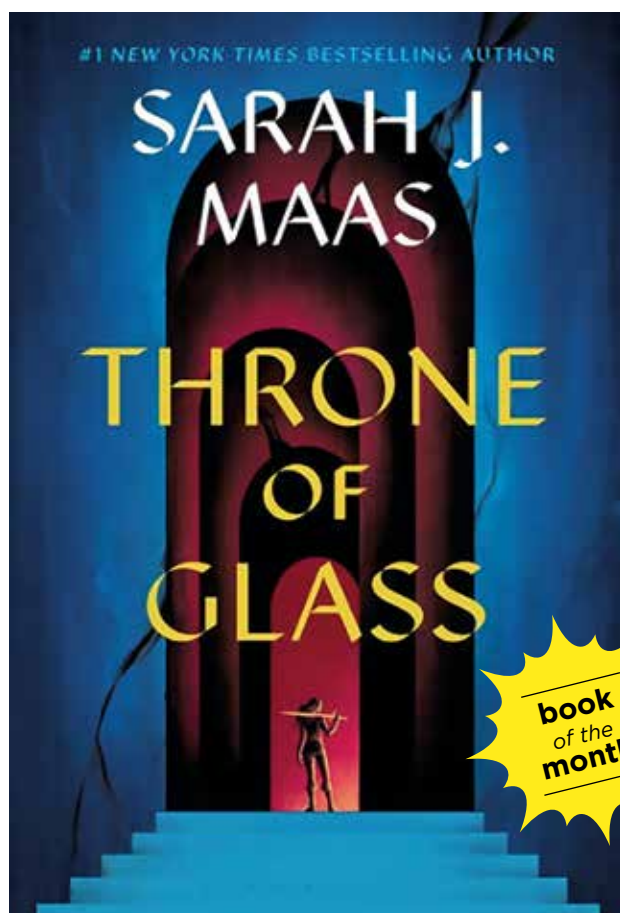
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**Sarah J. Maas**  
*Throne Of Glass*

Sarah J. Maas' *Throne of Glass* launches an epic fantasy series that rivals genre icons like *Game of Thrones* and *The Lord of the Rings*. Celaena Sardothien, a notorious assassin, has endured years of brutal labor in a salt mine as punishment for her crimes. Her chance at freedom arrives when the Crown Prince summons her to compete in a deadly tournament to become the King's Champion. Facing 23 ruthless contenders, Celaena soon discovers that survival means more than winning. Dark magic lurks within the castle walls, claiming lives one by one. As danger intensifies, the fight for victory becomes a battle against an ancient evil threatening the entire kingdom.

**Gordon Korman**  
*Snoop*

Gordon Korman's *Snoop* follows Carter, a young boy whose ski-hill mishap (fueled by his brother and a distracting phone) leaves him with two broken legs. During recovery, Carter begins using cameras and a drone, uncovering secrets while spying on classmates in unexpected ways.

**Kelly Bishop**  
*The Third Gilmore Girl*

Kelly Bishop's autobiography, *The Third Gilmore Girl*, chronicles her remarkable journey from Broadway to Hollywood. She reflects on decades of acclaimed performances, culminating in her iconic portrayal of Emily Gilmore in the early-2000s television phenomenon, *Gilmore Girls*.

**Jessie Garcia**  
*The Business Trip*

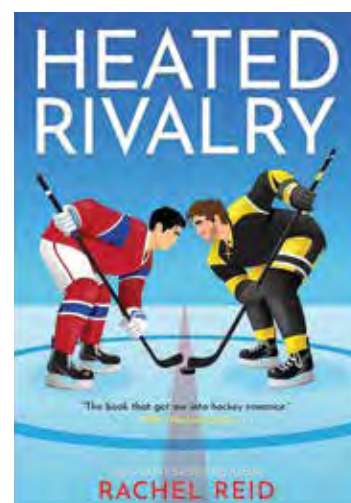
Jessie Garcia's debut explores two women — strikingly similar yet complete opposites. Seated together on the same flight, Stephanie and Jasmine pursue vastly different destinations. When both women vanish mid-journey, those left behind must unravel the mystery of what truly happened aboard.



**Iliana Xander**  
*Love, Mom*

*Love, Mom* by Iliana Xander is a fast-paced thriller that will keep you flipping through its pages all night long. When a best-selling author passes away in an accident, her estranged daughter, Mackenzie, reunites with family at the funeral. Soon, Mackenzie begins receiving letters that include pages of her mother's diary, all concluding the same way: Love, Mom. Mackenzie retraces her mother's steps in an attempt to find out the truth about her death.

**Casey Marion** is an aspiring author and struggling college student. She works at the Kaukauna Public Library and can always be found with a book in hand.



**Rachel Reid**  
*Heated Rivalry*

*Heated Rivalry* by Rachel Reid has taken social media by storm due to the book's recently acclaimed TV adaptation by the same name. Shane Hollander is an unshakable force on and off the ice. His name is up in lights, and his reputation is spotless as he becomes the captain of the Montreal Voyageurs. Dominating headlines is the rivalry he shares with the dreamy, hot-headed captain of the Boston Bears, Ilya Rozanov. Ilya is cocky, talented, and nearly unbeatable. When the heat of the game turns into undeniable passion off the ice, the two must figure out how to navigate new feelings and protect both their relationship and careers.



# A THUNDEROUS WELCOME FOR DRUM TAO



*Boom. Boom. Boom.*

As the Fox Cities Performing Arts Center kicks off its schedule for 2026 with Broadway sensations such as *Hamilton* and the Tony Award-winning *Kimberly Akimbo*, a steady drumbeat is nearing in the distance.

*Boom. Boom. Boom.*

*DRUM TAO*, the electrifying Japanese drum ensemble with over 10 million spectators worldwide, brings the breathtaking power of traditional wadaiko drums to the Fox Valley on Friday, March 13. On the heels of sold-out Off-Broadway shows and high-profile engagements at venues in Moscow and Paris, *DRUM TAO* continues the tradition of pulse-pounding percussion at the Fox Cities Performing Arts Center.

"The word that comes to mind is 'explosive,'" explains Amy Gosz, Chief Programming Officer for the Center. "Similar to shows like *Drumline LIVE!* and *Step Afrika* from past seasons, *DRUM TAO* is a fully immersive display of percussion, with athletic movement and energy you can feel. It's truly an unforgettable experience."

It's also an experience that's suitable for all ages. The striking choreography and vibrant costumes make *DRUM TAO* an attention-holding spectacle for younger audiences, while the reverent spirit and soulful melodies of Japanese flutes and harps open eyes that have seen it all.

The multicultural appeal of *DRUM TAO* sets the stage for many more great performances to come at the Fox Cities Performing Arts Center in 2026. Nature photographer David McLain will present *The Blue Zones: Unlocking the Secrets of Longevity* on April 28, while lovers of dance will be drawn to *Flamenco Vivo Carlota Santana* on May 1.

But the thunder of *DRUM TAO* will lead the way. The first beat hits on Friday, March 13.

*Boom.*

Get your tickets for *DRUM TAO* at [foxcitiespac.com](https://foxcitiespac.com).

A vertical promotional banner for the event. At the top, the words "THE BEST" are written in a red, stylized script. Below this, a black and white photograph of a performer in a dynamic pose is shown. The performer is shirtless, wearing a patterned loincloth, and has one arm raised. The background is dark with some circular patterns. Below the photo, the title "DRUM TAO" is written in large, bold, white capital letters. Underneath the title, the date and time "MARCH 13 7:30 P.M." are displayed in white. Below that, "FOX CITIES P.A.C." is written in red. Further down, there is a QR code with a red arrow pointing to it from the text "Scan for tickets or visit". Below the QR code, the website "foxcitiespac.com" is written in white. At the bottom, there are two logos: the Fox Cities Performing Arts Center logo with the tagline "Where the Arts Come Alive!" and the "BOLDT Arts Alive! Series" logo.



**REGRETTING YOU****(ROMANCE 2025)**

STARRING: ALLISON WILLIAMS (MORGAN), DAVE FRANCO (JONAH), & MCKENNA GRACE (CLARA)



Based on a Colleen Hoover novel, a horrible car accident leaves Morgan widowed and Clara without a dad. Family secrets are brought to the surface, and facing the hard truth could drive the family apart or bring them closer together.

**THE WRONG PARIS****(ROMANTIC COMEDY 2025)**

STARRING: MIRANDA COSGROVE (DAWN) & PIERSON FODÉ (TREY)



Dawn's dream has always been to go to Paris, France, for art school. When she learns about a dating show taking place in Paris, she enters, hoping to get one step closer to her dream. But a surprise awaits when she arrives in Paris, Texas instead of the Paris she expected.

**GALENTINE'S DAY NIGHTMARE****(MYSTERY THRILLER 2021)**

STARRING: ANTHONY GRANT (BRIAN) & CAMILLE STOPPS (CLAIRE)



Looking for a romance with a twist? When a group of girls goes out on Galentine's Day (Valentine's Day only for girls) they are interrupted by an attractive man named Brian. Claire feels an instant connection. But after meeting him, her life is turned upside down, and she is now being accused of murdering her boss.

**DADDY'S HOME****(COMEDY/DRAMA 2015)**

STARRING: WILL FERRELL (BRAD) & MARK WAHLBERG (DUSTY)



Being a stepdad is hard enough, but Brad tries his best for his wife's two kids. Things get even harder when the kid's rebellious father shows up unexpectedly. Constantly butt-ing heads, the two dads find themselves fighting for the top spot in the kids' lives.

*Marissa Laird is a movie lover who lives in Appleton. Her favorite genre is horror, which makes sense since she is obsessed with Halloween. She also enjoys spending time with her husband and their dog, Remi.*

# Get the Look: CHIC WINTER HAIR:

By PHYLLIS COLLAR

**H**aircuts this year include softer silhouettes and lower maintenance, allowing us to conquer the cold and bounce back after removing outerwear. Hair that features sharp lines and excessive styling effort will fall flat when faced with winter humidity, dryness, or static electricity.



## THE BOB

This year, relaxed cuts that balance softness and adaptability allow us to focus on warmth and comfort rather than fuss. There are a couple of versions of the bob. The varsity bob, a medium-length bob, verges on looking undone with invisible layers and volume to spare. The French bob, a shorter version of the varsity bob,

can be more structured and might also include bangs.



## THE PIXIE

Pixie hairstyles are prominently featured this year. The power pixie, cropped and layered, offers a sharp, sculpted appearance and deliberately androgynous edge, allowing for sufficient length at the top and front, making it an effective alternative to blowout styles, especially for fine hair. When long enough to

be tucked behind the ears, this cut contours the jawline and cheekbones. This look transitions seamlessly from a punk-inspired daytime aesthetic to a refined, polished for the evening.

The bixie blends both the bob and pixie. Chin-length or slightly above, this cut features light, choppy layers and a soft finish. It is easy to wear, short enough for a youthful look, and perfect for those wanting to try a short cut without going full pixie. It suits fine to medium hair, adding texture to the mid-lengths and ends.



## THE SHAG

Shag haircuts became increasingly popular this year. The shaggy bob, standing out even under hats or scarves, features effortless movement and relaxed texture. The modern shag introduces updated layering techniques to add softness and volume without removing excess weight from thick hair. Unlike overly layered cuts that leave hair

lacking shape, these cuts remain soft and full. For those with finer hair, a wolf shag features carefully placed layers that enhance both volume and texture without making the hair look thin.



## BANGS

Let us wrap up with a style that's remained popular for years: bangs. Curtain bangs add shape and softness. They can graze just below the brows and include face-framing pieces near the ears for a natural appearance. They frame the face without requiring a major bangs commitment. Texturized bangs — such as 1960s

inspired thick, dramatic fringe that starts far back on the crown — are created using point cutting and texturizing to lighten and remove bulk. They are by no means subtle, and are bold enough to redefine facial features. Gucci bangs, another trendy and impactful look, highlight a gently parted, slightly grown-out look. Bangs work especially well for those with fine or thin hair, adding extra volume and versatility that flatters any face shape.

With the new year upon us, winter presents the perfect opportunity for change. This year's hair trends blend fresh styles with timeless favorites, giving you the chance to reinvent your look with ease.

Photos: [woman-trend.com](http://woman-trend.com), [fabbon.com](http://fabbon.com), [thepinkgoose.com](http://thepinkgoose.com), [stylishhairideas.com](http://stylishhairideas.com)



# THE SCENE

Top 10 reasons to fill up your calendar this month

By SARAH PETERSON

## 1. WINTER GALA

Enjoy professional snow sculptures or create your own. Try broomball or snowshoeing, and warm up in the heated pavilion with hot cocoa and cookies. *Feb. 7 from 12–3 p.m. at Smith Park in Menasha.*

[facebook.com/events/1186220842964810](https://facebook.com/events/1186220842964810)

## 3. DEATH BY CHOCOLATE

Get ready for an indulgent day on the Avenue. Stroll downtown Appleton sampling decadent chocolate, exploring unique shops, and finding the perfect Valentine's gift. Tickets required. *Feb. 7, 1–4 p.m.*

[appletondowntown.org/events/death-by-chocolate](https://appletondowntown.org/events/death-by-chocolate)

## 5. DOWNTOWN NATURE WALK

Explore the flora and fauna in downtown Appleton on this 90-minute, smooth-surface walk. Nature apps will help identify various species.

*Feb. 10, 11 a.m.–12:30 p.m., starting at the Appleton Public Library.*

[appleton-wi.whofi.com/calendar/event/1301189](https://appleton-wi.whofi.com/calendar/event/1301189)

## 7. FAMILY VALENTINE'S CELEBRATION

Spend Valentine's Day with the people you love! There will be themed activities, festive projects, and heart-healthy snacks. No registration required. *Feb. 14, 9 a.m.–4 p.m. at the Building For Kids.*

[buildingforkids.org/upcoming-events](https://buildingforkids.org/upcoming-events)



## 9. BATTLE ON BAGO

Catch the big one at Wisconsin's largest ice fishing tournament and family fishing event, featuring over \$475,000 in prizes, food, and music. Proceeds from the event will support youth and conservation. *Feb. 20–21 in Oshkosh.*

[battleonbago.org](https://battleonbago.org)

## 2. VALENTINE'S MARKET

Shop sweet treats and unique, handmade gifts from local vendors during this fun-filled weekend market. *Feb. 7, 10 a.m.–8 p.m., and Feb. 8, 11 a.m.–6 p.m. at the Fox River Mall.*

[eventbrite.com/e/appleton-valentines-craft-vendor-market-tickets-1978465779405](https://eventbrite.com/e/appleton-valentines-craft-vendor-market-tickets-1978465779405)



## 4. FOX CITIES PARADE OF HOMES

Take self-guided tours of newly constructed and remodeled homes built by the Home Builders Association of the Fox Cities. *Feb. 7–8 and 14–15, 11 a.m.–5 p.m.*

[foxcitiesparadeofhomes.com](https://foxcitiesparadeofhomes.com)

## 6. CRAFT & COCKTAIL

Learn the art of needle felting while enjoying cocktails and dessert at Bubolz Nature Preserve. Each guest will create one felt embroidery piece. Registration required. *Feb. 12, 6–8 p.m.*

[bubolzpreserve.org/bubolz-events/calendar](https://bubolzpreserve.org/bubolz-events/calendar)

## 8. AVENUE OF ICE

Go on a frosty adventure in downtown Appleton, featuring stunning ice sculptures that celebrate "What We Love About Wisconsin." Stroll and snap photos, then warm up inside shops and restaurants. *Starting Feb. 20 at noon.*

[appletondowntown.org/events/avenue-of-ice](https://appletondowntown.org/events/avenue-of-ice)



## 10. AN EVENING WITH AUTHOR JOHN ARMBRUSTER

Wisconsin author John Armbruster discusses *Tailspin*, the true story of WWII tail-gunner Gene Moran. Books available for sale and signing. *Feb. 25, 6:30–7:30 p.m. at Neenah Public Library.*

[neenahlibrary.org/calendar#/events](https://neenahlibrary.org/calendar#/events)

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# COFFEE CULTURE

Jason Patzer  
Coffee Guru  
In Appleton Monthly

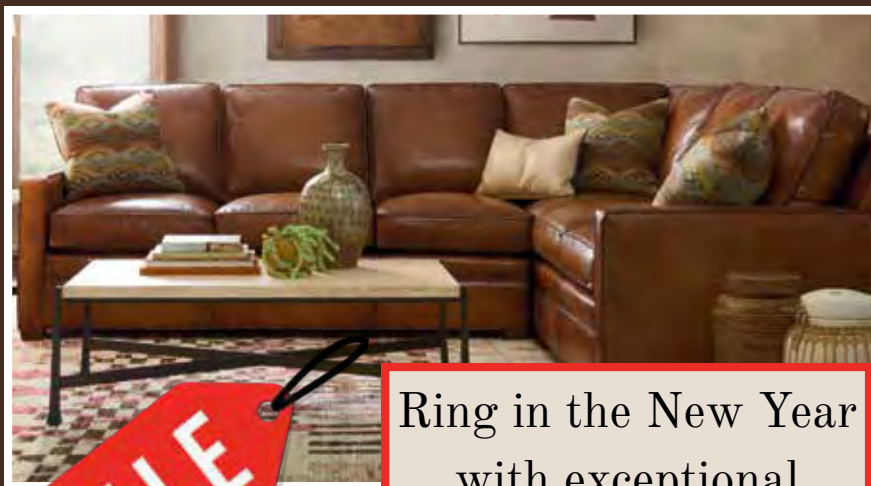
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# ZERO PROOF

## REVOLUTION

By NATASHA WINKLER

The scene is a familiar one across the Fox Cities: a dim, amber-lit lounge, the low hum of conversation, and a bartender carefully expressing a swath of orange peel over a chilled glass. But look closer at the label on the bottle. There's no ABV. The drink is a Sassy Rose, a blend of nonalcoholic (NA) Aperol, house-made ginger beer, and a fresh rosemary sprig.

Welcome to the new Appleton nightlife. While Wisconsin's identity has long been tied to its legendary tavern culture and the ubiquitous brandy old fashioned, a massive cultural shift is bubbling up in the Fox Cities. The "sober-curious" movement is no longer a niche health fad; it's becoming the hottest trend in our local hospitality scene.

### BEYOND THE SHIRLEY TEMPLE

For years, the non-drinkers' options were limited to a soda or a cloyingly sweet Shirley Temple. Moving into 2026, however, the trend is toward sophistication. Local establishments are treating NA drinks with the same culinary respect as their



spirited counterparts, using high-end tequila alternatives, botanical accents, and complex bitters.

According to a survey conducted by NCSolutions (a leading consumer data and advertising effectiveness firm), national data shows that nearly 50% of Americans plan to drink less this year. This trend is led by Gen Z and Millennials, who prioritize wellness without sacrificing their social lives. In a city like Appleton, where grabbing a drink is the default social setting, the availability of high-end NA options is a game-changer for inclusivity.

### LOCAL PLAYERS RAISING THE BAR

Several local favorites are leading the charge. Stone Arch Brewpub has moved far beyond its famous root beer, now offering an entire "mocktail" section featuring spicy pineapple margaritas and NA lemon dreams. They even offer a low

ABV old fashioned for those looking to dip a toe into the trend without the full commitment.

Even our classic neighborhood spots are evolving. D2 Sports Pub and local lounges across the Fox Cities are increasingly dedicating real estate on their menus to "spirit-free" selections. These aren't just afterthoughts; they are complex, hand-shaken drinks that prove the ritual of grabbing a pint is being joined by the ritual of the craft mocktail.



Our retail shelves reflect the trend; the Stevens Point-based Siren Shrub Co. has become a staple in homes and bars throughout the Fox Cities. Their apple cider vinegar-based concentrates offer a tart, complex bite that satisfies the palate in a way a sugary soda never could.

### WHY IT'S STICKING

The "why" behind this trend is simple: ritual. People don't go to these establishments just for the ethanol; they go for the clink of the glass, the atmosphere, and the connection. The zero-proof revolution allows the designated driver, the expectant mother, the health-conscious athlete, or the curious local to remain part of that ritual.

Appleton's social scene is growing up. It's becoming a place where the quality of the conversation and the craft of the glass matter more than the proof of the pour. Whether you're going "Dry January" or just "Mindful Monday," the best seat in the house now comes with a zero-proof menu, and it's never tasted better.

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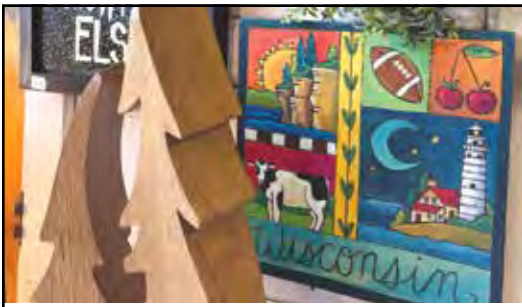
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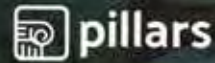
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# HEALTHY LIVING

► **Angela Halderson**

Every month in  
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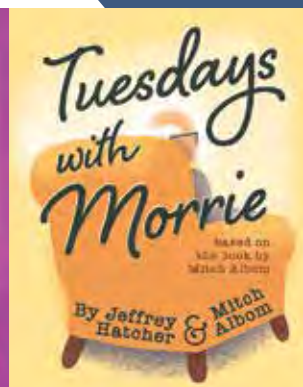
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## ATTIC THEATRE 2026 SEASON



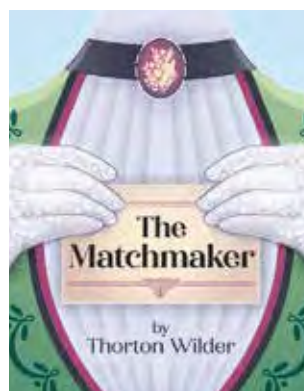
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BY: SARAH PETERSON

Send your photo submissions to: [editor@appletonmonthly.com](mailto:editor@appletonmonthly.com)



Peter, Lucas, and Ellis Linden reel in a walleye while **ice fishing on Lake Winnebago**. Photo credit: Peter Linden



Future Neenah staff and volunteers are still smiling after a busy weekend at the very first **A Very Neenah Christmas Market**. Photo credit: Future Neenah



Neenah High School choir students pose after singing carols at **A Very Neenah Christmas**.



Lainey enjoys her fourth birthday celebration at **the Building for Kids**.

Photo credit: Colleen Schepp



Emma, Agnes, and stuffed animal Husky, Beno, enjoy a **snowy winter day outdoors**.



Mom and daughter Tracy and Cassidy Roffers look festive at **Appleton's Light the Night Market**.





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# GO FOR IT HAS BECOME NFL'S MANTRA

By TIM FROBERG

If Kenny Rogers were with us today, I'm guessing he would be one of Roger Goodell's top advisers. The legendary country singer was known as "The Gambler," and the ever-changing National Football League has turned into a casino on turf.

It's fourth-and-3 at midfield in a close game. What's your favorite team going to do? They're going to go for it and it doesn't matter whether it's the first or fourth quarter.

Field position used to be a top objective of NFL head coaches. But that play-it-safe philosophy has gone the way of leather helmets. The NFL has become a "go for it" and then "go for it again" league. Every head coach is gambling on fourth down like he's Charlie Sheen on a Vegas weekend. Even coaches previously known for conservative game management have turned into rambling, gambling risk-takers who look like they're ready to spin a giant roulette wheel on the sideline.

Not so surprisingly, league records were set this season for fourth-down attempts, fourth-down conversions, and fewest punts.

Analytics, better quarterbacking, bigger offensive linemen, spread offenses, and rules that prevent defensive players from basically breathing have played into this dramatic shift in game management.

The Philadelphia Eagles may have started this bold new way of thinking when they introduced the "tush push" in the early 2020s. Dan Campbell took the wheel from there. Campbell wanted to inspire confidence in a perennially struggling Detroit team, so he started gambling on fourth down and never stopped. He quickly became the face of the game's go-for-it mantra, and football fans embraced the free-spirited Campbell — a guy who probably bets what time his toast will pop up each morning — for adding pizzazz to an already intriguing game.



Imagine how old-school coaches would react to the NFL's go-for-it madness. I'm guessing Forrest Gregg, Bud Grant, and Chuck Noll would have hated it, and Mike Ditka would have loved it. I'll bet the great Vince Lombardi would have been on board. Lombardi was a progressive thinker who became a coaching legend with the ultimate gamble: eschewing a game-tying field goal for Bart Starr's championship-winning quarterback sneak on the final play of the iconic Ice Bowl.

The NFL's fourth-down bravado has been well received.

Aggressive game management creates more exciting moments, promotes higher-scoring games, and leads to better fan engagement and terrific television ratings. Viewers don't tune in to watch punts and field goals. They want to see contested games, high drama, and good theater — all promoted by those wild and crazy guys in headsets.

It's all good stuff until a fourth-down gamble costs your team a victory. The Green Bay Packers lost at least two games this season that could be linked to Matt LaFleur's decision to bypass easy field goals for fourth-down conversion attempts that were blown up. Don't get me wrong: I

enjoy the fearless game management we consistently see, but coaches have gotten downright reckless at times and need to balance aggressiveness with practicality, not shelve their kickers like they were old typewriters.

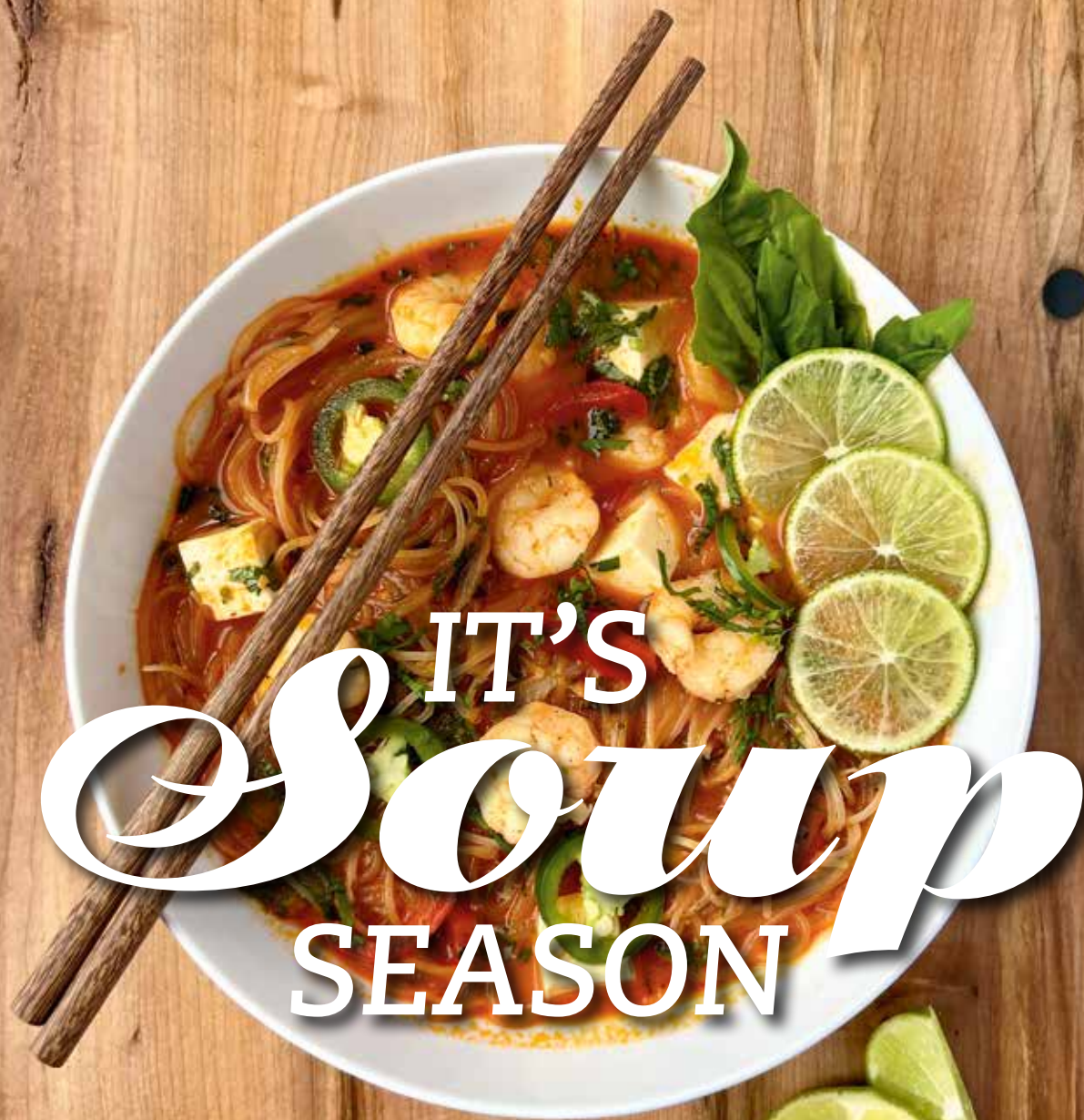
Love it or loathe it, the go-for-it mentality has become standard operating procedure in the NFL. Call it modern-day football. Call it Kenny Rogers football. But you can't call it boring.



**Tim Froberg** is a professional writer who covered the Packers Super Bowl appearances in New Orleans (1997) and San Diego (1998), and has written several feature stories for various Packers Yearbooks.

# TASTE

CARLY'S PASTRIES 56 | BEER + BREWING 58 | FOOD & DRINK 60



By CARLY CERNIGLIA



# *Celebrating* SOUP

By CARLY CERNIGLIA

*Season*

## 1. Hungarian Mushroom Soup

Mushroom lovers, rejoice! This soup is to die for. Packed with mushrooms, this soup is rich and bursting with umami flavor. The sweet paprika adds a delicious depth that is complemented by the sour cream and dill garnish.



## 2. Thai Red Curry Soup

This zippy soup is made with an amazing ingredient: Thai red curry paste. The paste creates a flavorful broth with notes of garlic, shallot, and lemongrass. And let's not forget its gorgeous red color! This soup is simple to make, and perfect for a weeknight meal.



## 3. Chicken Tortilla Soup

Sometimes we can't be bothered with sitting over a pot all day, but that doesn't mean we still can't make soup. This chicken tortilla soup is made in the slow cooker to make our lives easier. Simply dump, shred, and enjoy with festive garnishes.

**Keep warm** this winter with these six nourishing and flavorful soup recipes. From creamy ham and pea to hearty Hungarian mushroom, these one-pot wonders make mealtime easy and delicious. Whether you're craving something creamy, hearty, or packed with flavor, this collection brings simple, soul-warming dishes you can count on all season long.



#### 4. Italian White Bean and Potato Soup

This deliciously cozy soup is packed with flavor. The broth is creamy with a hint of spice from red pepper flakes that will have you going back for more! Tender white beans add a nice creamy bite along with russet potatoes and hearty kale. This soup is perfect for cold winter days.



#### 6. Ham and Pea Soup

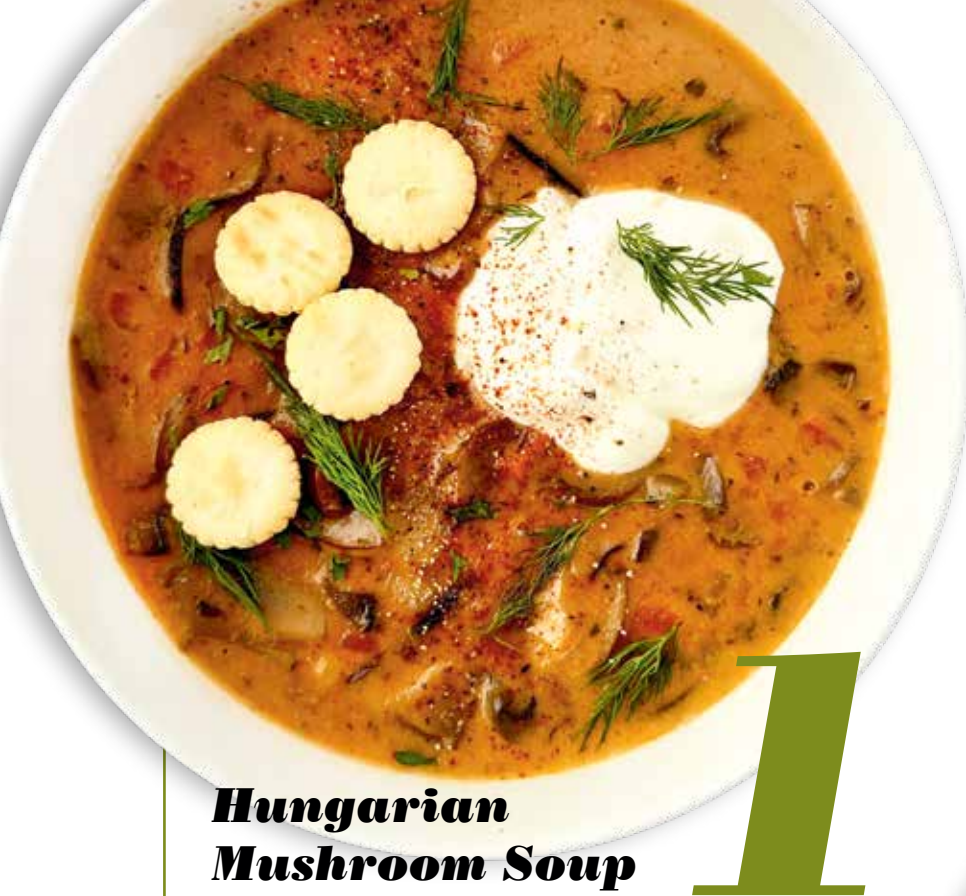
Ham and pea soup should be hearty and packed with salty ham. The broth should be nice and thick, which we accomplish by blending peas and potatoes. If you're making this soup after you've cooked a whole ham, save some of the cooking juices from the ham and replace 2 cups of the chicken stock with the ham juices. It will be amazing!

#### 5. Lemon Chicken Orzo Soup

This bright lemon orzo soup is flavorful and satisfying. Don't let the lemon scare you; it acts more like a flavor enhancer, needing less salt while brightening it up. Cooking the orzo in the soup makes it creamy without the fat. Serve with a crusty piece of bread and enjoy!







## Hungarian Mushroom Soup

*Serves four to six*

### INGREDIENTS

38 ounces mushrooms, washed, destemmed, and sliced

Four small shallots, sliced

2 tablespoons olive oil

One medium carrot, minced

One rib celery, minced

1/4 cup Marsala or sherry cooking wine

1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce

2 teaspoons minced garlic

1 1/2 teaspoons kosher salt

1 tablespoon and 1 teaspoon sweet paprika

1 1/2 teaspoons garlic powder

1 teaspoon onion powder

1/2 teaspoon black pepper

2 teaspoons dried parsley flakes

Two bay leaves

4 cups beef stock

1 cup heavy cream

3 tablespoons cornstarch

3 tablespoons water

### For garnish:

Sour cream

Fresh dill

### DIRECTIONS

In a large stockpot, heat oil. Once hot, sauté the shallots, carrot, and celery until tender. Add the sliced mushrooms and the kosher salt and sauté until the mushrooms are about halfway cooked. Stir in the Marsala cooking wine, Worcestershire sauce, and minced garlic. Cook for 2 minutes.

Add paprika, garlic powder, onion powder, black pepper, and parsley flakes. Cook mixture for 5 more minutes, stirring occasionally. Pour in beef stock and add the bay leaves and bring to a simmer for 20 minutes.

Stir in the heavy cream. In a small bowl, mix together cornstarch and water. Slowly pour into the soup while stirring quickly. Let it simmer for 10 minutes, stirring frequently.

Serve the soup hot, garnished with fresh dill, sour cream, and a hunk of crusty bread.



## Thai Red Curry Soup

*Serves four to six*

### INGREDIENTS

2 tablespoons oil

1 pound shrimp

1 cup sliced red bell pepper

Four small shallots, sliced

One jar red curry paste

1-inch piece ginger root, grated or minced well

Three cloves garlic, minced

6 cups chicken broth

One can coconut milk

1 tablespoon brown sugar

1 1/2 teaspoons fish sauce

4 ounces vermicelli noodles

1 pound silken tofu, diced

1/4 cup chopped cilantro

1/4 cup chopped basil

Salt and pepper to taste





2

#### For garnish:

Lime slices  
Jalapeño slices  
Fresh cilantro and basil leaves

#### DIRECTIONS

In a large stockpot, add the oil and heat until hot. Sauté the shrimp until cooked through and pink, about 5 to 8 minutes. Remove the shrimp from the pot and add the shallots and red pepper. Sauté until tender.

Add the curry paste, garlic, and ginger root, and cook, stirring, for 2 minutes. Add the chicken broth and coconut milk and bring to a boil.

Add the vermicelli noodles and cook until translucent and chewy, but not crunchy. Stir in the brown sugar, fish sauce, silken tofu, cilantro, and basil. Simmer for 10 minutes until everything is hot.

Season with salt and pepper to taste, and serve hot with extra cilantro, basil, sliced limes, and sliced jalapeños. Enjoy!

## Chicken Tortilla Soup

Serves six to eight

#### INGREDIENTS

1 cup diced onion  
One bell pepper, any color, diced  
One jalapeño, seeded and diced  
4 cups chicken stock  
2 pounds chicken breast  
One 26.5-ounce can black beans, drained and rinsed  
One 10-ounce can fire-roasted diced tomatoes and green chiles  
One 14.5-ounce can petite diced tomatoes  
One 4-ounce can chopped Hatch green chiles, mild  
One 11-ounce can white shoepeg corn, drained and rinsed  
1 tablespoon cumin  
1/2 tablespoon six-chili powder  
1 tablespoon smoked paprika

1 1/2 teaspoons garlic powder  
1/2 teaspoon onion powder  
1/2 teaspoon oregano  
One bay leaf  
1 1/2 teaspoons seasoned salt  
Salt and pepper to taste  
2 teaspoons minced garlic  
2 tablespoons cornmeal  
1 cup heavy cream

#### To garnish:

Shredded cheese  
Sour cream  
Cilantro  
Jalapeño slices  
Avocado slices  
Tortilla strips  
Lime wedges

#### DIRECTIONS

Add all the soup ingredients except the cornmeal and heavy cream to a large slow cooker. Cook on high for 3 hours, stirring occasionally.

Remove the chicken and shred it. Return it to the slow cooker. Stir in 2 tablespoons of cornmeal and add salt and pepper to taste.

Add heavy cream and cook on high for another hour, until the soup is hot.

To serve, garnish with cheese, sour cream, cilantro, jalapeño slices, avocado slices, tortilla strips, and lime wedges.

3







## Italian White Bean Soup

*Serves six to 8*

### INGREDIENTS

1 pound ground mild Italian sausage

4 ounces diced pancetta

One large rib celery, small diced, about 1/2 cup

One large carrot, small diced, about 1/2 cup

Two small onions, small diced, about 1 cup

Four small cloves garlic, minced

7 cups chicken stock

3 cups sliced russet potatoes, skin on

Two bay leaves

1 1/2 cups heavy cream

1/4 teaspoon oregano

1 teaspoon ground oregano

1 teaspoon ground fennel

1/4 teaspoon hot pepper flakes

1 teaspoon parsley flakes

1/2 teaspoon dried basil

4 cups shredded kale

One 15.5-ounce can cannellini beans

4 ounces Parmesan cheese, grated

Salt and pepper to taste

### DIRECTIONS

In a large stock pot, sauté Italian sausage until browned and cooked through. Remove the sausage from the pot and set aside. Sauté the pancetta in the pot until crispy. Remove pancetta and set aside. In the fat from the pancetta, sauté the onions, celery, and carrot until tender. Add minced garlic and sauté 1 minute. Pour in the chicken stock and add the bay leaves and potatoes. Bring to a boil and cook until the potatoes are tender.

Add the seasonings and heavy cream and bring to a simmer. Stir in the kale and the cannellini beans with their liquid, and cook until the kale is tender. Stir in Parmesan cheese and cook until melted. Season with salt and pepper to taste, and serve hot with a nice toasty baguette.

## Lemon Chicken

*Serves four to six*

### INGREDIENTS

12 tablespoons butter

One medium onion, diced

Three carrots, sliced

Two ribs celery, diced

Two cloves garlic, minced

6 cups chicken broth

One lemon, juiced

3/4 cup orzo

1/2 teaspoon dried oregano

1/2 teaspoon dried thyme

1 teaspoon kosher salt, to taste

1/4 teaspoon pepper

Two cooked chicken breasts, cut in bite size pieces

### For garnish:

1/4 cup parsley



# Orzo Soup

## DIRECTIONS

In a large soup pot, melt butter over medium heat. Add the onion, carrots, and celery. Stir and cook until softened, about five minutes. Add the garlic, oregano, thyme, salt, and pepper. Cook for another minute.

Pour in the chicken broth and bring to a boil. Add the orzo, reduce the heat to medium, and simmer until the orzo is tender, approximately 10 minutes.

Add chicken and lemon juice. Cook until heated through, adjusting seasoning to taste.

Ladle into soup bowls and garnish with parsley.

5



6

## Ham and Pea Soup

*Serves six to eight*

### INGREDIENTS

2 tablespoons olive oil

1 1/2 cups diced onion, about two small

1 1/2 cups diced carrot, about one large

1 cup diced celery, about two large ribs

Three cloves garlic, minced

1 teaspoon kosher salt

7 cups chicken stock

2 cups peeled russet potatoes, diced

5 cups frozen peas, divided

1/2 pound cooked ham, cubed, about 1 1/2 cups

1 teaspoon seasoned salt

1 teaspoon garlic powder

1 teaspoon onion powder

1/2 teaspoon smoked paprika

1 teaspoon Dijon mustard

1 tablespoon honey

Two bay leaves

1/2 tablespoon parsley flakes

1/2 cup heavy cream

### DIRECTIONS

In a large pot, heat oil. Add celery, onions, carrot, and salt. Sauté until vegetables have softened. Add the garlic and sauté for 1 minute. Add the chicken stock and potatoes. Bring to a boil and cook until potatoes are almost fork-tender. Add 4 cups of frozen peas and boil until potatoes are cooked through.

Remove from the heat and blend with an immersion blender until smooth. Add the remaining peas, diced ham, honey, Dijon mustard, and spices. Simmer for 20 minutes, stirring frequently. Stir in the 1/2 cup heavy cream.

Serve hot in a bread bowl or with a baguette on the side.



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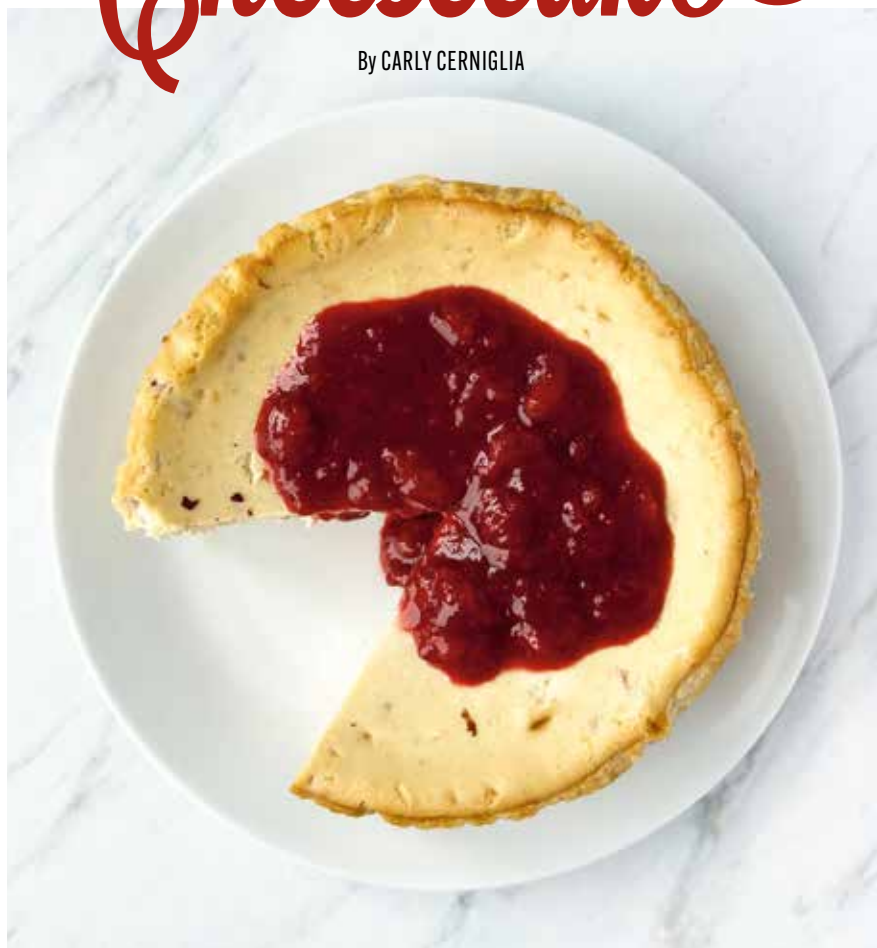
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# STRAWBERRY Cheesecakes

By CARLY CERNIGLIA



*Love is in the air, and so is the scent of strawberries and cheesecake. This cheesecake is creamy and light, and surprisingly easy to master. The strawberry topping also couldn't be easier with only two ingredients. Pair them together, and yum!*

## INGREDIENTS

### For the crust:

1 3/4 cups sugar cookie crumbs  
(I used an 11.2-ounce package of Sandies)  
1/4 cup sugar  
5 tablespoons melted butter

### For the filling:

40 ounces cream cheese, room temperature  
1 1/2 cups sugar  
1/2 cup sour cream  
2 tablespoons vanilla bean paste  
Four eggs, slightly beaten  
1/2 cup strawberry preserves

### For the strawberry topping:

2 cups frozen strawberries  
1/4 cup strawberry preserves

## DIRECTIONS

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F. Line an 8-inch, 4-inch deep cake pan with parchment paper, placing strips crosswise so you can lift the cheesecake out of the pan. Alternatively, spray a 9-inch springform pan with cooking spray.

Mix together the crust ingredients. Pour into the prepared pan and press evenly across the bottom. Bake the crust for 7 minutes. Remove from the oven and lower the oven temperature to 325 degrees.

While the crust bakes, in the bowl of a stand mixer, beat together the cream cheese, sugar, sour cream, and vanilla bean paste. Scrape the bowl, then slowly beat in the beaten eggs and strawberry preserves. Scrape the bowl again and beat at medium speed for 2 minutes, or until smooth.

Pour the batter over the crust and smooth the top. The pan will be very full. Bake an 8-inch pan for 45 minutes, or a 9-inch springform pan for 30 minutes. Without opening the oven door,

lower the oven temperature to 250 degrees and bake for another 45 minutes.

Turn off the oven and leave the door closed for 30 minutes with the cheesecake inside. Then prop the oven door open with a wooden spoon for 1 hour. After an hour, remove the cheesecake and let cool to room temperature, about 3 to 4 hours. Wrap with plastic wrap and chill for at least 6 hours.

To make the strawberry topping, add the frozen strawberries and strawberry preserves to a small saucepan. Heat gently until strawberries have thawed and softened, stirring occasionally, for about 20 minutes. Let cool.

To serve, slice the cheesecake with a clean knife, and top with strawberry sauce. Enjoy!

Remove the ice cream sandwiches from the pan. Using a hot knife, carefully cut into the desired number of bars. I cut eight large bars, but you can cut as many as you like. Store leftovers in the freezer. Enjoy!

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# BARLEY WINES

By STEVE LONSWAY

Barley wine is a beer style that could use a little explanation. The reason wine is used in its name is that it contains a higher alcohol content, usually in the range of 6% to 12% alcohol by volume. Because of the higher alcohol concentration, the flavor profile may come across as slightly wine-like. Don't let this confuse you, these are still beers at heart. Expect this style to provide complex flavors from caramel and dried fruit to toffee, toasted bread, and malty sweetness throughout. Aged versions can enhance its sherry-like or wine-like characteristics. American versions tend to be hoppier with citrus and pine notes. English versions tend to be more malt-forward with a balanced hop profile.

Because barley wines have higher alcohol content, they age quite well. Often, barley wines need some aging after purchase to mellow the flavor profile. When storing or aging them, it is important to keep them in a dry, dark place with consistent temperature. You will be rewarded for taking the extra steps to care for your product.

Barley wines got their start in England in the 18th century. Traditionally, they were brewed for the wealthier population and called old ales. With record keeping and



modern day brewing tools largely absent, most of the style's history has been passed down through spoken words rather than in writing. In 1900, Bass Brewery in Burton-On-Trent, Staffordshire, England, released its version and called it barley wine. Also in 1900, England created a beer tax based on beer's original gravity. Because barley wines have extremely high original gravities, they became quite expensive. With the added tax and changing palettes of consumers, production remained quite small. In 1970, when the American craft beer revolution was just launching, Anchor Brewing in San Francisco, Calif. released its version called Old Foghorn. This brew inspired many brewmasters, and the style remains prevalent in the American market.

Many U.S. breweries offer a version of barley wine, typically in the winter months. One of the more

iconic examples is Bigfoot Barley Wine from Sierra Nevada Brewing Co. You simply cannot go wrong with this one! I highly recommend buying a few each year and storing them properly. After a few years and a built-up inventory, invite some friends, offer a multiple-year flight, and enjoy the nuances time brings.

*Steve Lonsway is the brewmaster and owner of Stone Arch Brewpub in Appleton. His passion shows in the beers he creates and in the national recognition he receives for them.*





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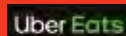
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# Cupid's Potion

Cupid's Potion is a delightful cocktail that captures the essence of romance in a glass. With a delicate balance of sweet and tart, it features key ingredients such as vodka, tangy cranberry, sweet raspberry, and a hint of fresh lemon. Each sip is both indulgent and refreshing, creating a perfect treat to share with your sweetheart.



## INGREDIENTS

2 ounces vodka  
1 1/2 ounces cranberry juice  
3/4 ounce fresh raspberry syrup  
(or simple syrup)  
1/2 ounce fresh lemon juice  
Red sugar (for rimming)  
Fresh raspberries or a candy heart (for garnish)  
Ice

*Optional: splash of champagne or club soda*

## DIRECTIONS

Moisten the rim of a chilled glass with a lemon wedge or syrup, then dip it in red sugar.

Fill a cocktail shaker with ice, then pour in the vodka, cranberry juice, raspberry syrup, and lemon juice.

Shake vigorously for 10 to 15 seconds, until the mixture is well-chilled. Strain into the prepared glass.

For an optional sparkle, top off with a splash of champagne or club soda.

Garnish with fresh raspberries or a candy heart on a toothpick.

# GRAPEVINE



## CEDAR CREEK PORT ROSÉ

Cedar Creek Port Rosé, a gold medal winner, is a sweet twist on port wine crafted from Wisconsin grapes. It has a fruity flavor with notes of pomegranate. Serve chilled with appetizers.

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## Bald Eagles





# Eyes on the PRIZE



# Winter Brings Prime EAGLE-WATCHING Opportunities

Eagle watching is a thrilling experience that brings joy to nature enthusiasts and bird watchers alike. In a state with one of the highest populations of bald eagles in the country, the Fox Valley is considered a particular “hot spot” especially during the winter months when the river freezes and eagles gather near dams and spillways. These areas remain unfrozen, providing a rich hunting ground for eagles that feast on fish in the shallow, rushing water.

The best times to witness these majestic birds are in the early morning or late afternoon, when glowing sunlight enhances their graceful flight and the eagles are most active. Dams, rapids, parks, recreation trails, and boat landings along the Fox River are all likely to yield eagle sightings. Scan the large trees along the shore with binoculars, looking for white spots among the bare branches that might indicate an eagle’s head. Your car serves as a warm blind, allowing closer viewing than the birds might otherwise tolerate. Avoid leaning out the window, as this may cause eagles to fly away, unnecessarily expending valuable energy in frigid temperatures.

The sight of a bald eagle diving and skillfully plucking a fish from the water is a breathtaking spectacle that fills the heart with wonder and appreciation for the natural world. It’s a bucket list experience that many people in other parts of the country travel far and wide to witness. Fortunately, the hungry eagles of the Fox Valley make the opportunity available to us every day. Here are my top six locations to experience this spectacle yourself. As with all wildlife watching, remember that nature rewards patience and persistence. Take your time and enjoy the show!

**1000 Islands Environmental Center, Kaukauna**

**Sunset Park, Kimberly**

**The College Avenue Bridge and the Lawe  
Street to Newberry Trail, Appleton**

**Lutz Park, Appleton**

**The Loop the Lake Trail in Neenah/Menasha**

**Jefferson Park, Menasha**



# 1

This eagle's perch reveals the lethal nature of the bird's talons. Resembling a fistful of fish hooks, each foot's four razor-sharp, curved claws are well-suited to capturing, killing, and carrying prey in flight. Eagle talons can grow to 2 inches in length and, combined with incredible leg strength, give bald eagles a grip strength of 400 pounds per square inch — about 10 times that of a human hand.



# 2

Powerful wings and tremendous grip strength allow bald eagles to comfortably carry prey weighing about 3 to 4 pounds. While tall tales abound of eagles carrying off animals like sheep and large dogs, their maximum carrying capacity in flight is actually around 10 pounds. Occasionally, a bald eagle will capture a fish that is too heavy to lift into the air. Rather than surrendering its prize, it may try to reach shore by awkwardly rowing with its wings.



# 3

Bald eagles are remarkably adapted to withstand cold and snowy conditions. Their dense layer of insulating feathers, including a thick down underlayer, helps trap body heat and protect against freezing temperatures. Additionally, eagles have a specialized circulatory system in their legs and feet that allows them to perch on icy branches without frostbite. Their large, powerful bodies also generate heat efficiently, and they often roost in sheltered areas.





## 4

The bald eagle's beak is an extraordinary tool, perfectly adapted to its role as a predator. Its large, hooked shape allows it to efficiently tear through the flesh of its prey, such as fish and small mammals. The beak's sharp, curved tip is ideal for gripping and ripping, yet it is also highly sensitive, enabling precise control. This sensitivity allows the eagle to perform delicate tasks, such as gently feeding small bits of food to its young.



## 5

Bald eagles use keen eyesight, powerful flight, and precise technique to catch fish. After spotting fish from high perches or by flying above waterways, they execute a swift, controlled dive. Just before reaching the water, they extend their strong legs and open their talons, skimming the water's surface, hooking the fish and plucking it from the water with their sharp claws. An eagle's feet are covered with rough bumps called spicules that help grip the slippery fish.



## 6

Immature bald eagles display a distinctive mottled brown-and-white plumage that can make them harder to identify. They won't develop their iconic white-headed, white-tailed adult appearance until they're 4 to 5 years old. Observing an immature bald eagle offers a unique glimpse into the growth stages of these magnificent raptors as they develop the keen hunting skills and striking appearance that define adulthood.





**7** The comeback of the bald eagle from the brink of extinction is one of America's greatest conservation success stories. Bald eagles were on the brink of disappearing in the early 1970s. Legal protections, the banning of DDT, and dedicated conservation efforts led to their rebound. Today, the bald eagle thrives, including Wisconsin's robust population of about 1,600 breeding pairs. This resurgence demonstrates the power of environmental stewardship and nature's resilience.

John Van Den Brandt is a professional wildlife photographer and owner of Wild Wind Images LLC ([wildwindimages.com](http://wildwindimages.com)). His wildlife images have appeared in numerous articles, websites, textbooks, and ads. John's framed fine art prints grace the walls of homes and businesses across the country. His calendars have sold more than 100,000 copies. Van Den Brandt makes his home in Appleton with his wife, Jean, his "field assistant, muse, and co-conspirator in planning an adventurous life."



# DECORATING WITH 2026 **COLOR TRENDS**

By JOEL LAPER

**W**isconsin is typically cold and gray this time of year. Snow has blanketed the ground, and the cold temperatures seem never-ending. The new year can, however, be a colorful time of year when it comes to home decor and painting. Every fall, major paint brands announce their “Color of the Year”. These newest color trends influence not just paint colors but also other aspects of home decor, such as clothing and textiles. Use this dreary time of year to research and be inspired by the newly announced color trends in the design world.

A strong trend toward earthy and warmer colors has excited designers and consumers who were tired of the cooler tones that have dominated the industry for the past several years. A resurgence of deeper tones is adding warmth and depth that we have not seen recently. If you’re ready for some added richness and dimension in an entire room, on an accent wall, or with the use of accessories, these trending colors will warm your living space as well as your heart.



## Some major paint brands’ “Color of the Year” for 2026 are:

**Sherwin-Williams:** Universal Khaki – a warm and versatile midtone neutral

**Behr:** Hidden Gem – a smoky jade with blue-green hues

**Valspar:** Warm Eucalyptus – a soft green with warmer undertones

**Glidden:** Warm Mahogany – a rich reddish brown that adds sophistication

**Benjamin Moore:** Silhouette – a burnt umber with notes of charcoal

stick swatches that make it easier to visualize the finished project. Check the color samples throughout the day to see how both natural and artificial light will affect them. Take color samples with you when shopping for furniture, rugs, and accent pieces to see how these items look when paired with your colors. Take your time, and you’ll be sure to choose just the right color for you.

When choosing a new color, take home several samples to get a good idea of how different colors and tones will look in your space. Some brands have larger, peel-and-

**Joel Laper** | Artistry, home design, and cosmetology have all been passions throughout Joel’s life. He has created art and spaces of all styles. He enjoys keeping up with the latest design trends.



# WARM TIPS *FOR A COLD WINTER*

By SARAH PETERSON

**W**isconsin winters, with their chilly days and lingering daylight, bring a unique set of challenges for homeowners. From battling dry indoor air to maintaining healthy routines, this season calls for practical home solutions to improve comfort and well-being.



**Heat your home efficiently:** To keep your house warm and your heating bills cool, check for drafts around windows and doors and seal them with weatherstripping or draft stoppers. Layer rugs on cold floors and use insulated curtains to help retain heat. Have a professional inspect and maintain your furnace, and program your thermostat to lower the temperature based on your sleep schedule.

**Combat dry air:** One of the most common complaints during winter is excessively dry indoor air, which can lead to dry skin, irritated sinuses, and static electricity. Running a humidifier can help maintain optimal humidity levels. For a natural approach, place bowls of water near heat sources or add houseplants that release moisture, such

as peace lilies or spider plants. Diffuse essential oils like eucalyptus or tea tree, which may support respiratory health.

**Maximize natural light:** The shorter days of winter can impact mood, energy, and warmth. Make the most of available sunlight by keeping curtains and blinds open during the day. Arrange furniture to allow light to flow through living spaces. If natural light is scarce, consider full-spectrum light bulbs or light therapy lamps to help maintain a positive atmosphere.

**Create a winter emergency kit:** Winter storms cause power outages and road closures, so it's important to be prepared. An emergency kit should include flashlights, extra batteries, a charged, portable phone charger, non-perishable food, bottled water, blankets, extra clothing, and essentials for your pets.

**Manage winter gear:** Extra snowfall can turn entryways into wet, cluttered zones. Install hooks to hang coats and ski pants to dry. Use indoor/outdoor mats with a non-slip backing to prevent floor damage and slips. A rubber boot tray can contain melting snow, mud, and salt. Consider an electric boot dryer to thoroughly dry boots, shoes, and gloves.

**Organize and declutter:** Winter months are ideal for simplifying your home. Use the extra time indoors to tidy closets, purge old pantry items, or sort through paperwork. Creating clean and efficient living spaces can bring peace to your home, and reduce stress as you await spring.

**Create cozy spaces:** Boost comfort by creating inviting nooks for reading, relaxing, or connecting with family. Add extra throws, pillows, and soft lighting to make living areas more appealing. Consider starting a new book or indoor hobby, such as crafting or puzzles to make the most of winter.

**Plan for spring:** Start planning your garden, order seeds, or clean gardening tools. Use a journal to sketch the layout of your plants. Organize spring cleaning supplies and create checklists for upcoming projects. Early planning makes the transition to warmer months smoother and more enjoyable.

By addressing these common winter challenges, you can create a comfortable, healthy, and welcoming environment for yourself and your family. Embrace winter with thoughtful adjustments, and look forward to the promise of spring ahead.

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# Ninja Blender is a Smooth Operator in the Home

By TIM FROBERG

Looking to whip up a quick smoothie, margarita or milkshake?

Shake up your world with the Ninja Professional Plus Kitchen System.

The Ninja Professional Plus is a versatile and powerful 1,400-watt blender and food processor. With the touch of a button, it can blend, puree, mix (up to 2 pounds of dough), and chop items like ice, nuts, and veggies. The end result is superbly blended concoctions that can be created efficiently and effortlessly.

Ninja blenders are known for their versatile functions, durable construction, and ability to handle tough ingredients and achieve smooth results.

The Ninja Professional Plus offers a 72-ounce pitcher, an 8-cup food processor bowl, and single-serve cups. It features Auto-IQ, one-touch technology with five presets for smoothies, ice crushing, extracting, chopping, and mixing.

The Ninja Professional Plus received good reviews, earning a 4.6 average rating on a 5.0 scale based on 3,527 reviews. It received high marks for its power and performance due to its strong motor, versatility, stability, attachments, Auto-IQ, and easy operation.

The Ninja's primary criticisms were its loud noise — especially during ice crushing — and the staining of its plastic containers.

"It's a powerful, multi-functional machine that saves time and space for many tasks like smoothies, ice, and chopping," stated one review. "If you prioritize power and versatility and don't mind the noise and potential for staining, it's a strong contender. But if quietness and seamless thick blending are crucial, it might have drawbacks."

A second review read: "I am not sure how I functioned before this blender/food processor, smoothie set. I use it daily — sometimes twice daily. Can't wait to take on all the recipes that were too hard with a smaller other-name-brand blender."

"This is the second one we have purchased," said a third reviewer. "We loved ours so much we got one for our daughter. Well worth every dime. Ninja products are built well."

The Ninja Professional Plus can be bought either online or on-site at local retail outlets including Kohl's, Target, Walmart and Best Buy.

Ninja blenders are built by SharkNinja, a global company founded in Montreal, Canada, in 1994 that originally focused on

steam cleaners and vacuums. It moved its headquarters to Needham, Mass. in 2007 when the Shark vacuum brand was launched.

The company introduced its high-powered blending systems in 2009, challenging existing market leaders with its unique stacked blade technology. Ninja has quickly become a major player in the blender market, competing with established brands like Vitamix and Blendtec.

Ninja has become a top choice for chefs, culinary enthusiasts, and those just looking to create a quality smoothie in the comforts of their own home.

The company also produces air fryers, coffeemakers, and more.

**Price:** \$219.99 (prices may vary)

**Motor:** 1,400-watt base

**Weight:** 13.89 pounds

**Blades:** Total crushing stainless steel blade assembly

**Technology:** Auto-IQ with pre-programmed settings

**Cleaning:** Dishwasher-safe pitcher, blades and lid

**Warranty:** One year

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# Success *and* Failure

By DR. JIM ZIEGLER

As a veterinarian with way too many years of experience, I naturally reflect on life and the years that have gone by. Whether in private practice, shelter medicine, or other aspects of personal life, memories linger of both the successes and failures that have occurred along the way.

The world of rescue and shelter work exemplifies both winning and losing. Animals are saved, and animals are lost. The reasons for both are many and varied. In the end, success far outnumbers failure, but it always seems that the cases you lose are the ones that tend to stick with you.

There are generally two populations of animals in the shelter world that cannot be saved. The first are those who are injured or sick, to the point that there is no hope for them. At times, euthanasia is a humane outcome for alleviating hopeless suffering. The other population is behaviorally challenged animals. Feral cats can often be saved by making them working cats on a farm. Behaviorally damaged dogs are another story. Unfortunately, some dogs



cannot safely be put into a home, and behavioral euthanasia is the outcome. Behavioral losses are tough because they are often the result of human ignorance and neglect.

In the end, it all must be reconciled. Success is great, but it is celebrated briefly, as there is always a never-ending stream of lives to be saved in its wake. Failures are often difficult to get past since they typically involve a lot of

work, both physical and emotional. Every loss is often preceded by heroic efforts in the hopes of a better outcome. Keeping it all in perspective is essential to surviving the world of animal rescue.

The interesting thing about it is that we often unknowingly grow stronger, gain more wisdom, and become more resilient when we learn to deal with failure. Most often, overcoming failure better defines us than our victories do. Failure can, in the long run, often lead to more success in the future. So true in the animal rescue world, and true in life in general.



**Jim Ziegler DVM** | A veterinarian for more than three decades, he recently served as medical director of Fox Valley Humane Association before returning to private practice.

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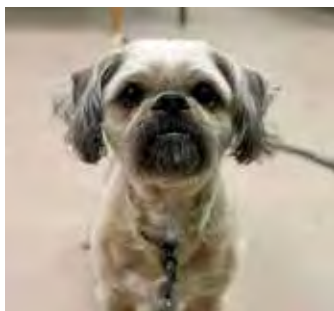
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### **Raquel**

Raquel is a 2-year-old spayed female mixed breed. A few of her favorite things are swimming and being close to the people that she trusts. In foster care, she has been learning some basics as well as building her confidence.



### **Milo**

Milo is a 5-year-old Lhasa Apso mix. He is seeking a home where his family can understand his sensitive nature and fear-based behaviors. Milo does have some touch sensitivities and would benefit from a patient guardian who can help him feel safe.



### **Dandelion**

Dandelion is a 9-month-old Rex mix. He is an energetic and curious explorer. He loves to investigate new sights, sounds, and enrichment toys. When the zoomies strike, watch out! He enjoys a good binky — that happy bunny jump — that he has plenty of space to run.



### **Toddsworth**

Toddsworth is a 2-year-old neutered male. He came to FVHA as a stray, initially shy and unsure of human contact. Since moving into a foster home, we have gotten to know his more charming side. He has become more curious and enjoys gentle affection.



# Cyclamen: *The Ultimate Valentine's Day Surprise*

By HOLLY BOETTCHER

While roses are classic, they have a short shelf life. Within a week, those expensive stems droop, fade, and end up in the compost bin.

This year, why not break the pattern? If you want to give a gift that truly symbolizes lasting affection, look no further than the cyclamen plant. With its stunning, upswept petals and distinctive foliage, this plant offers a unique way to say "I love you" that lasts far beyond mid-February.

## Heart-Shaped Leaves and Vibrant Colors

Valentine's Day is synonymous with reds and pinks, and the cyclamen delivers these lovely shades. You can find varieties in:

- Deep, romantic Valentine's Day reds that rival the finest roses.
- Playful pinks ranging from soft blush to hot magenta.
- Royal purples and lavenders for a touch of elegance.
- Snowy whites that symbolize your pure affection.
- The blooms aren't the only showstopper this plant has to offer. Heart-shaped leaves are a symbol of your love.

## Why Choose a Potted Plant Instead of Cut Flowers?

Choosing a living plant over a bouquet isn't just about aesthetics; it's a practical and thoughtful choice that shows you put extra effort into your gift. The blooms last for several months, although I had one in my kitchen window last winter that continued to blossom until autumn.

## Easy Care of Your Blooming Cyclamen

- **Light:** They crave bright, indirect light. A north or east-facing window is perfect.
- **Temperature:** They prefer to be cool. They thrive in temperatures between 50 degrees F and 65 degrees F (10 degrees C to 18 degrees C). If your home is very warm, try to keep it in a cooler area.
- **Watering:** They dislike soggy soil, which can rot their tubers. Water from the bottom. Instead of pouring water over the top, place the pot in a saucer of water for 15–20 minutes. The roots will drink up what they need. Wait until the top inch of soil feels dry to the touch before watering again.

## Grooming for Growth

To keep the plant looking its best and encourage new blooms:

- **Deadhead:** When a flower fades or a leaf yellows, remove it promptly. Don't cut it; follow the stem



down to the base near the soil, twist it slightly, and pull sharply. It should pop right off. This prevents decay and directs energy to new flowers.

## Don't Worry, It's a Dormancy Phase

It's important to tell your Valentine that the plant isn't dying when it stops blooming in late spring! As temperatures rise, cyclamen naturally enter a dormancy phase. The leaves will turn yellow and die back. This is normal.

- Stop watering gradually.
- Store the tuber in its pot in a cool, dark, dry place for the summer.
- In autumn, bring it back into the light, resume watering, and watch the cycle of love start all over again.

By gifting a cyclamen, you aren't just giving a flower; you're giving a living piece of decor that brightens the home and serves as a constant, growing reminder of your affection.



# IT'S MORE THAN JUST SOUP

Over the holidays, a few members of my wife's family huddled around the dining room table to organize a stack of yellowed recipe cards. There were breads and puddings and bread puddings galore, all marked with notations and suggestions from grandmothers long departed. I even noticed a few smudges that were either dried cranberries or, perhaps, the blood of an ancestor; clearly, these were sacred texts.

Great recipes always come with great stories. So, over the course of an afternoon, I watched as they laughed and recounted the family heirlooms (and weird Jell-O salads) of yesteryear. College football bowl games droned in the background. I hit a parlay. It was a perfect scene.

One recipe my sister-in-law unearthed was for Grandma Phyllis' "scalloped rhubarb" — which, apart from being a tremendous name for a band, had been her signature dish. Phyllis was my wife's grandmother, a lovely woman who passed away last year. Looking over the typed card and the handwritten revisions in the margins, my mother-in-law went quiet for a moment, taking in its significance.

"Mom brought that scalloped rhubarb to every family gathering for years," she said. "After she passed, so many of the condolences mentioned that dish. It was hers."

Two years ago in this column, I shared a recipe of my own. "Cheesyburger Stew" is a creamy, cheesy broth packed with beef, veggies and herbs, but the ingredients aren't the point. The point is the person who gave it to me.

Susan is the mother of my lifelong best friend. This means I was a resident of her basement for long stretches of my youth, and she likely sits in third place behind my wife and mother for "most loads of Tyler's laundry folded." When my wife and I said our vows nine years ago, Susan hand-sewed a tuxedo for my dog so he could serve as ring bearer. She



## ONE MORE THING

By TYLER SJOSTROM

once drove 20 hours roundtrip just to see me play at Mile of Music. It's among my fondest relationships, and the kind that I enjoy appreciating whenever I make her soup. Because that recipe is hers. It's special to me because she is.

As we speed blindly into this curious future where time is money and every available shortcut is a good one, I worry that recipes like these — lovingly made, fine-tuned over countless iterations, time-consuming in their execution — don't stand much of a chance. It's price-of-progress stuff, really. And that's why I make the soup. Susan will be gone someday, but if I have anything to say about it, her soup won't be.

Because when you've concocted a recipe so memorable that people talk about it when you're gone, you've accomplished something pretty remarkable. Because it's not really about the cheesyburger stew, or the scalloped rhubarb, or whatever familial foodstuffs you might uncover that also could double as a great band name.

It's about the yellowed recipe card that's survived decades and multiple relocations. It's about the smudge of dried cranberries that might not be cranberries.

It's about a recipe that was theirs becoming yours.



*Tyler Sjostrom is an Appleton-based writer who will show you pictures of his kids whether you ask for them or not. Heckle him at [tysjostrom@gmail.com](mailto:tysjostrom@gmail.com) or read more at [tyler-sj.com](http://tyler-sj.com).*

# A letter to Appleton and Fox Cities.

I'm Jon Croce, founder and publisher of *Appleton Monthly Magazine*. I don't expect you to know me, but if you've ever picked up a copy in Appleton, the Fox Cities, Northeast Wisconsin, or beyond over the past 10 years (hopefully you have), you've likely become a regular monthly reader. We are a general-interest publication if not by name, then by the unending, quality articles and features you find within *Appleton Monthly's* pages. EASY TO FIND. EASY TO READ.

The seeds of *Appleton Monthly Magazine* go back to 2015. The vision began with a prototype and then the premier issue, in which *Appleton Monthly* was born. We weren't the first, but we have always strived to be the best. We're here for you!

Being a sales **ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE** is not for everyone, but it can be fun and rewarding. The late Jim Rohn said it best: "To succeed in sales, simply talk to lots of people every day. AND, what's exciting, there are lots of people." This may sound easy, but we all know it takes effort, hard work, and the desire to succeed.

*Appleton Monthly Magazine* is currently looking for people who have a desire to work in the print industry with an established magazine that has a reputation for quality, value, reach, and results that are second to none in Northeastern Wisconsin. Please feel free to contact me at 920-707-0013 or via email at [jcroce@appletonmonthly.com](mailto:jcroce@appletonmonthly.com) to discuss your interest.

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**Jon Croce**

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