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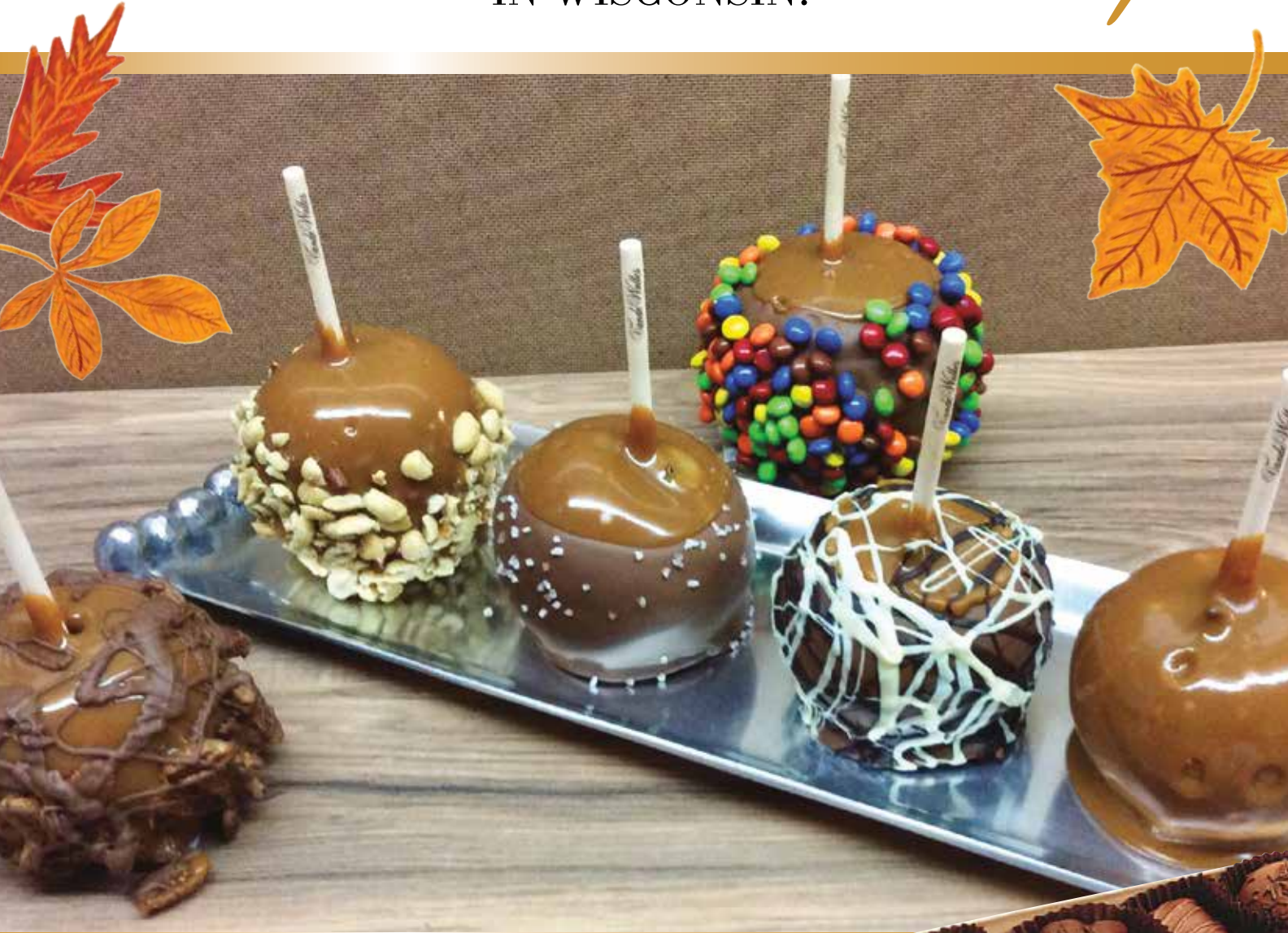
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FOUNDER & PUBLISHER

JON CROCE

jcroce@appletonmonthly.com

ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER

RACHELLE HANSEN

rachelh@appletonmonthly.com

EDITORIAL

EDITOR IN CHIEF

Sarah Peterson

SENIOR EDITOR

Tim Froberg

FOOD EDITOR

Jenni Eickelberg

COPY EDITOR

Jim Collar

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

Holly Boettcher,

Katie Carlson

Carly Cerniglia,

Jim Collar, Phyllis

Collar, Jenni

Eickelberg, Tim

Froberg, Angela

Halderson, Alyssa

Johnson, Steve

Johnson, Amanda

Krueger, Casey

Marion, Marissa Laird,

Dr. Seth Oberschlake,

Jason Patzer,

Sarah Peterson,

Adriana Sanderfoot,

Tyler Sjostrom,

Natasha Winkler

ART

SENIOR DESIGNER

Rachelle Hansen

CREATIVE DIRECTOR

Sarah Peterson

CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHERS

Holly Boettcher

Carly Cerniglia

Jenni Eickelberg

Debbie Daanen

Photography

Jason Patzer

Sarah Peterson

ADVERTISING

ADVERTISING DIRECTOR

Jon Croce

ACCOUNT EXECUTIVES

Greg Doyle

Katie Carlson

ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

Mackenzie Valentine

BUSINESS

Dean Pallex/CPA

CIRCULATION

Jon Croce

LETTERSTO THE EDITOR:

Mail to:

P.O. Box 2705

Appleton, WI 54912

editor

@appletonmonthly.com



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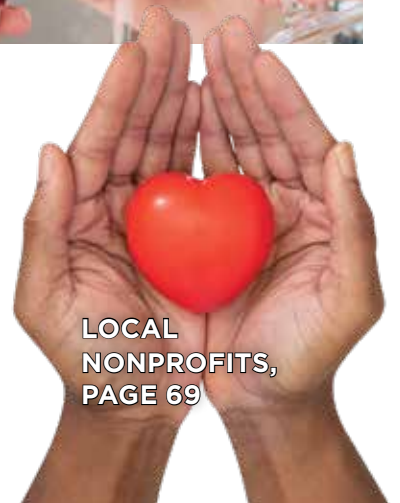
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FROM
THE
EDITOR

Fox Cities Strong

WHEN CHALLENGES ARISE, WE SEE JUST HOW POWERFUL A COMMUNITY CAN BE. Whether it's losing a home during the recent tornado, facing a personal crisis, or simply needing a shoulder to lean on, we are fortunate to have businesses, organizations, and neighbors who come together when it matters most.

In this issue, we celebrate the people, places, and stories that inspire us to engage in local life and embody the spirit of the Fox Cities.

Tim highlights two outgoing entrepreneurs in **the 920**: Carla Manns of Shear Images by Carla and Appleton Bundt House, and Kara Manuel of Lillians of Appleton.

In **Go!**, Alyssa shares the finalists from our fifth annual Women's Inspire Awards — six women making a difference in our schools, organizations, businesses, and families. Casey lists her top picks for cozy fall reads, and Phyllis examines relationships after 50.

Taste features Jenni's visit to Capitol Centre Sports Bar & Grill, Jason's update on three women-led coffee spots, and Steve Johnson's thoughts on why women have a unique approach to wine.

Natasha covers our vast network of nonprofit organizations in **Life**, while Dr. Seth helps identify pain in pets, and Holly wraps up garden season.

Thank you for your time, energy, resources, and heart. Well done, Fox Cities.

Keep going,

Sarah Peterson
EDITOR IN CHIEF

editor@appletonmonthly.com

P.S. CHECK OUT OUR NEW FEATURE
THE LOCAL PAGE 42-43.

CONTRIBUTORS



Phyllis Collar

A longtime "clothes horse," hopeless romantic, and dedicated foodie, Phyllis remains an aspiring curator of fashion, food, music, and words in general.

With her newly minted license in mental health counseling, she hopes to contribute fresh insights on everyday emotional wellness.



Holly Boettcher

Holly Boettcher is a Master Gardener, entrepreneur, and aspiring naturalist. Her love for the outdoors and nature shines through everything she does. Holly and her husband are the founders and former owners of Whistler's Knoll Vineyard, Hortonville. Follow Holly on her new Facebook page: *Gardening Through Life with Holly*.



Jenni Eickelberg

Jenni Eickelberg is a married working mom with two teenagers. She's an Appleton native passionate about food blogging on her "Food for Thought Fox Valley" Facebook group page. In her spare time, she loves to read, spend time with her family, volunteer, and travel.



Wisconsin Historical Society
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Appleton Monthly Magazine

the 920

BITS N' PIECES | RIPPLE EFFECT | FORTÉ | GOOD STUFF

A portrait of Carla Manns, a Black woman with long, dark, curly hair, smiling warmly. She is wearing a bright pink, long-sleeved dress and a multi-strand pearl necklace. She is seated in a wooden chair with a woven backrest. The background is a soft, out-of-focus studio backdrop.

Carla Manns Entrepreneur

A mother's Southern roots and family teamwork inspire downtown Appleton's sweetest new dual-business success.

By TIM FROBERG

BAKING, BEAUTY, & FAMILY BONDS

How Entrepreneur Carla Manns *finds joy in business*

By TIM FROBERG

Whenever Allayah Manns has a dilemma, she uses an old-school approach that consistently delivers better answers than modern-day information technology tools like Google or artificial intelligence.

She simply asks herself, "What would mom do?"



Mom is Carla Manns, a busy and successful Appleton entrepreneur who runs two businesses in the same downtown

building at 207 W. College Ave.: a hair salon known as Shear Images by Carla on the second floor and Appleton Bundt House, a main floor bakery she opened in January.

"It (Appleton Bundt House) has been an amazing experience," Carla said. "It's gone better than I expected, better than I projected, better than I had budgeted for."

Appleton Bundt House has a family feel. Allayah and her sister, Alexis, both work with Carla at the bakery. Allayah is the manager and also rents a chair at Shear Images where she and Carla work with all hair types, but specialize in ethnic hair needs. Alexis is the customer service supervisor/content creator for Appleton Bundt House.

"The three of us work really, really well together," said Allayah. "My mom has always been the pillar of any success I've had. She has great ideas and clearly knows what she's doing. Whenever we have ideas, she's always open to listening to them and trying to incorporate them into the business. It's like she's old school, we're new school, and it balances out really, really well."

Learning Culinary Skills as a Kid

Carla is exceptionally skilled with her hands, whether she's clipping hair or creating decadent desserts. She has more than 20 years of experience as a hairstylist, and although she's new to the baking business, she has years of experience whipping up tasty baked treats, including her specialty Bundt cakes. Carla learned to bake while growing up in Coldwater, Miss., a small town about 30 miles from Memphis, Tenn.

“I’ve always loved desserts — desserts and I always had a love relationship,” said Carla with a laugh. “I grew up in the South, and we had lots of family get-togethers. I would always go to the dessert table first and then to where the main food was because I wanted to make sure I had room for the desserts.”



“My aunts were all beautiful cooks and bakers, and that’s where I learned to bake. And I made sure that I taught my kids how to cook and bake.”



Carla has always found baking to be soothing and relaxing. She has baked for her family for years and decided to jump on a business opportunity when the first-floor property previously used as a restaurant became available. Carla had previously dabbled in the baking world with cookies, selling them to a pair of local restaurants, but chose to focus on Allayah’s favorite baked treat: Bundt cakes.

“Sunday is always our family day,” Carla said. “We put everything down and just turn our attention to family. We take turns going where everyone wants to go to lunch. Allayah always wanted to go to Nothing Bundt Cakes in De Pere.



“After a while, I was like: ‘I know how to make Bundt cakes. Let me make you some.’ She was like, ‘Oh my gosh, they’re so good.’ I knew I always wanted something to do with that space downstairs, so when it became available, I was like: ‘We should do Bundt cakes.’ It was something Appleton

didn’t already have and was in a great place in the hub of the downtown area.”

Appleton Bundt House offers freshly made-from-scratch Bundt cakes available in 12 flavors along with other sweet treats. Cakes are available in bite-size, single-serving, 8-inch (serves 8-10 people), 10-inch (serves 10-12), or larger tiered cakes. Cakes can be designed for special occasions such as weddings, birthdays, office celebrations, baby showers, gender reveals, anniversaries, religious occasions, and retirements.



Popular flavors at Appleton Bundt House include chocolate velvet (an early favorite that features three layers of chocolate), lemon love (a lemon cake with lemon cream frosting), pineapple upside down, German chocolate, red velvet, carrot cake, confetti delight, strawberry kiss (featuring chocolate with strawberry cream cheese frosting), peanut butter bliss (peanut butter cake swirled with peanut butter frosting), turtle (chocolate with caramel frosting and topped with toasted pecans), cookies and cream (chocolate with crushed cookies and creamy vanilla cookie frosting), and sweet potato.

Each cake on the menu has suggested drink pairings that match its flavor profile, including coffee, cold brew, lattes, matcha tea, water, milk, and Celsius.

Family Time at Work

“I have a love for baking — a love for creating something that makes people happy,” said Carla, who holds a bachelor’s degree in business from the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay. “It’s great to be able to celebrate special occasions with our customers.”

What’s even more satisfying for Carla are the everyday moments she gets to spend at the bakery with her daughters and other family members. Her son, Elijah, also helps out at the bakery along with Carla’s husband, Bishop Gerald Manns, her mother, Lula Coleman, and her nephew, Rashad.

“It’s fun working with my daughters,” she said. “Right now they’re both single and don’t have any kids, so it gives me a chance to spend some quality time with them. It’s been really easy working with them. They want the same success I do, and we’ve always had a very open, honest relationship. I know that I can trust them and they will do the very best they can.”

Working two jobs can be tricky, but the three handle the challenge with ease and never seem to be running on fumes. Alexis also owns her own art business, Art by Alexis.

"You know it's all about balance and making sure the customers in both entities feel very much appreciated and taken care of," said Carla. "When I'm working upstairs, I focus on what I'm doing up there. When I'm downstairs, I focus on what I'm doing down there."

"The thing is that because I have a passion for both businesses, it doesn't feel so much like work. Don't get me wrong, it's work, but it's not stressful work. It's joyous work. That makes it a lot easier."

Allayah, who holds a master's degree in higher education from the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater, added: "Honestly, we're blessed with both businesses being in the same building. I think of it as I'm getting my cardio in running upstairs and downstairs to each business. But no, it really doesn't feel like it's too much."

"I think God put us in these situations for a reason. We've been thriving. Both businesses have been successful. As a matter of fact, they're both growing. I don't know how we're doing it, but we're doing it."

The Three Entrepreneurs

Carla feels that it's important for her daughters to follow her lead and be entrepreneurs.

"They're not just my daughters, they're fellow entrepreneurs," said Carla. "I taught them how to be entrepreneurs, so we all have the business mindset to get things done. We're all learning together about how to grow a business."

Carla and her daughters have done that with their sublime baking skills and outgoing personalities. The vibe at Appleton Bundt House is friendly and welcoming. The business offers seating and tables for those who want to kick back and enjoy a warm drink and a delicious baked treat.

"We offer a warm, cozy atmosphere," said Carla. "We're very much a small, mom-and-pop-type shop where we get to know our customers and know their names. We offer free taste testing for wedding parties where the bride and groom can come in with whoever they want to bring, and that's a lot of fun."

"Our neighbors across the street like Home Burger (Bar) and Gibson (Community Music Hall) have been amazing and very supportive, coming here to buy stuff for their crew. We patronize each other all the time."

Appleton Bundt House has become a regular at the Downtown Appleton Farm Market and won first place during the Downtown Appleton Cultural Cuisine Walk for its sweet potato Bundt cake infused with warm spices.

When she's not tending to her busy work schedule, Carla enjoys walking, playing pickleball, tending to her dog, Pluto (a Lhasa apso), and traveling with Gerald, a senior pastor at Appleton Sanctuary Outreach Ministries Inc. The couple has been married for 34 years.

"We've been to quite a few different countries and love traveling, but we also love just hanging at home with our kids and walking our little dog," said Carla. "We still have family days on Sunday where we drop everything and family is the focus."



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John Chapman, better known as Johnny Appleseed, the American pioneer nurseryman who introduced apple trees grown from apple seeds and inspired folklore tales nationwide, was born on **Sept. 26, 1774.**



The heaviest apple on record, weighing 4 pounds 1 ounce, was grown and picked by Chisato Iwasaki at his apple farm in Hirosaki, Japan, in 2025, and was a cross between the Fuji and Mutsu varieties.



The United States grows about **11.1 billion pounds** of apples each year.

September features the full Harvest Moon, which rises shortly after sunset for several nights, providing extra light that once helped farmers gather crops before a frost.



The first American apple pie recipe was published in 1796 in *American Cookery* and called for a filling made with stewed apples, sugar, rosewater, cinnamon, and mace.



September was traditionally known as Haefest monath, which translates to "harvest month," and is the origin of the word "harvest."



The most popular apple in the United States is currently the Gala, which is praised for its sweet, fine-textured, and aromatic qualities.

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The Autumn Cascade

By NATASHA WINKLER

There is a brief window in the fall when Appleton and the rest of the Fox Valley becomes so picturesque. The canopy over our historic neighborhoods and City Park ignites into brilliant ambers and deep reds. Soon enough, those leaves are flying around and hitting the ground, and our neighborhood soundtracks shift to the hum of lawnmowers, leaf blowers, and the rhythmic scraping of rakes.

Raking is usually treated as a chore of curb appeal. But if you look down on the curb and into the street gutter after an autumn rain, you will see the starting line of a massive, hidden environmental cascade.

When fallen leaves pile up along city curbs, rain doesn't just wash them away; it brews them.

Water soaking through wet leaves acts like hot water on a tea bag, leaching out high concentrations of dissolved phosphorus. That nutrient-dense "leaf tea" flows directly into our municipal storm drains, which empty unfiltered into the Fox River and Lake Winnebago.

The biological cost of this runoff is astounding. According to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, a single pound of phosphorus entering our water system can fuel up to 500 pounds of toxic algae growth. Late-summer and early-fall algal blooms aren't just unsightly; they deplete oxygen for fish, choke aquatic habitats, and diminish the recreational life of our waterfronts.

This is where the power of individual micro-actions comes into play.

A landmark study by the U.S. Geological Survey conducted right here in Wisconsin revealed that autumn leaf litter accounts for nearly 60% of the total annual phosphorus load in urban stormwater. However, researchers discovered a simple solution: Timely leaf removal and keeping street gutters clear reduced phosphorus concentrations in stormwater runoff by more than 80%.

That means the simple act of sweeping the gutter in front of your house or composting your leaves is one of the most effective water restoration tactics available.

Every fall, the Appleton Public Works Department collects approximately 36,000 cubic yards of leaves across the city, hauling the vast majority off to farm fields and composting sites to be repurposed as nutrient-rich soil amendments. But municipal street sweepers can't be on every block every day. The defense of the Fox River relies on neighborhood stewardship.

When you mulch leaves directly back into your lawn as free fertilizer, bag them for municipal pickup, or keep the storm drain at the corner clear of debris, the ripple effect is profound. You are relieving pressure on city storm infrastructure, protecting local aquatic wildlife, and ensuring the Fox River remains clean, healthy, and vibrant for everyone.

As the leaves begin to drop this fall, remember, you aren't just cleaning up your lawn. You are safeguarding our waters, one rake at a time.



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Why Brick-and-Mortar Still Matters in a Digital World

By ADRIANA SANDERFOOT



From online shopping and mobile banking to virtual meetings and tools powered by artificial intelligence, technology has transformed the way we do business. Convenience is at an all-time high, giving business owners the ability to connect with clients, manage operations, and access information from virtually anywhere.

Yet despite all these advances, one thing hasn't changed: People still value human connection.

Trust Is Built Face-to-Face

Digital tools make it easier than ever to complete transactions, but relationships are often built through personal interactions. Whether it's greeting a familiar client by name, answering questions in person, or simply being present in the community, face-to-face experiences create opportunities to build trust that can be difficult to replicate online.

For many businesses, especially those serving local communities, those interactions remain a critical part of long-term success.

Visibility Matters

A physical presence does more than provide a place to conduct business. It creates visibility, reinforces credibility, and helps businesses become part of the communities they serve.

Local storefronts, offices, and service centers often become gathering places where conversations happen, relationships grow, and connections are formed. When people regularly see a business in their community, it creates familiarity and confidence.

For business owners, that visibility can be just as valuable as an online presence.



The Most Important Conversations Still Happen in Person

While routine tasks can often be handled digitally, many of life's most important decisions involve conversation and guidance.

Whether someone is seeking financial advice, purchasing a major product, planning for the future, or making a significant business decision, there is often comfort in speaking directly with a knowledgeable professional. These moments require more than information. They require trust, understanding, and personalized support.

Technology can enhance those interactions, but it rarely replaces them.

Technology and Human Connection Can Coexist

The future is not a choice between digital convenience and physical presence. Successful organizations understand the value of both.

Digital solutions provide speed, accessibility, and efficiency. Physical locations provide opportunities to connect, collaborate, and serve people in meaningful ways. Together, they create a stronger experience for clients and communities alike.

The value of a physical presence isn't limited to retail stores, restaurants, or local service providers. Across industries, organizations continue to recognize the importance of face-to-face interactions and community connections. In a recent interview, Landmark Credit Union CEO Timothy Mackay described physical locations as "trust anchors" and community hubs, reinforcing the idea that people still value the opportunity to connect with someone in person when making important decisions.

The Human Element Still Matters

As technology continues to evolve, businesses will undoubtedly find new ways to serve clients more efficiently. But the importance of relationships, trust, and personal interaction remains unchanged.

In an increasingly digital world, the businesses that continue to invest in people and community connections may discover that their greatest competitive advantage isn't found in technology alone. It's found in the relationships they build every day.

Adriana Sanderfoot holds a bachelor's degree from the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh. She loves to create connections with people on both a personal and professional level to work on their goals and help them achieve their aspirations. She is a member of the local area Junior Achievement board and works to bring financial education to young adults.



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KARA MANUEL

CO-OWNER, LILLIANS OF APPLETON

Kara and Tom Manuel have celebrated many wedding anniversaries, but 2026 marks another special anniversary for them.

The Manuels opened their clothing business, Lillians of Appleton, 10 years ago, and the popular boutique has become a fixture in Appleton's downtown business scene.

Lillians is known for its trendy and affordable women's apparel. It offers brand-name tops, sweaters, dresses, and bottoms in sizes XS-3X, along with shoes, handbags, and jewelry, as well as a line of men's clothing, including shirts, shorts, and hoodies.

Lillians has grown considerably since opening its doors in 2016. It expanded its building space from 1,500 to 3,000 square feet in 2018 and has more than doubled its staff to 12 part-time employees.

Lillians also has a thriving online business. Check out its apparel at lilliansofappleton.com.

Kara oversees the general operations of the business, but Tom is heavily involved, too. He handles the accounting aspect and store maintenance, while assisting Kara with clothing purchases and brand recognition.

Kara, a South Dakota native, and Tom, who grew up in Minnesota, have been married for 39 years. The couple moved to Appleton in 1985. The Manuels have two grown children: Calvin, who lives in the Appleton area with his wife, Kortney, and 9-month-old daughter, Laney; and Morgan, who resides in Seattle with her husband, Nick.

What's been the secret to your business success?

"I attribute a lot of it to our staff and certainly our customers. We have employees who have worked here for the entire time we've been open, and most of them have been here three, four, five years. Our customers are amazing, and they come back because of our customer service and how good our staff is. I think women like to be helped and have us show them what's cool and what we have in the store. We greet our customers, talk to them, and find out why they're here and how we can help them."

How do you keep on top of fashion trends?

"We rely on our staff for that as well, along with our customers and vendors. We have some core vendors we work and talk with weekly. They fill us in on what's out there and what's selling in other states and inventories. My husband makes fun of me because I watch videos all the time of different boutiques. I watch what they're doing, what they're bringing in, and what's happening. Our customers help us a lot. We ask them what they're looking for and what brands they like. Liverpool is our No. 1 brand, and we're the only one in the Appleton area that carries it. We offer some things that other boutiques can't."

How has the explosion of social media helped your business?

"Social media is huge. Without Facebook, we'd be nothing. Facebook is very important. We keep up with Instagram and do a little bit of TikTok. We just hired a new social media person to help with that and keep things creative. We keep our website fresh. What I find is that a lot of people look at our website and then come in and shop versus purchasing right off the website. But we do have some very good online customers, including quite a few from Florida."

By Tim Froberg,
Photo by Ashley Schmit,
Debbie Daanen Photography



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GOOD STUFF

By SARAH PETERSON



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Nestled along the scenic Niagara Escarpment, this hidden gem blends old-world Tuscan architecture with the natural beauty of the countryside. The picturesque grounds feature a vineyard, trails, gardens, and an artesian spring-fed pond with a historic wooden bridge. Indoors, a beautiful stone farmhouse warmed by antique furnishings and fireplaces creates an elegant atmosphere. It serves as a premier destination for weddings, private events, art markets and festivals, wellness experiences, concerts, culinary classes, and farm-to-table dinners. The venue is located at N2828 Givens Road in Hortonville.

givensfarmestate.com



GET PICKIN' IT'S APPLE SEASON

September brings cool breezes, crisp air, and the perfect excuse to go apple picking. Local orchards are the best spots for fresh, juicy apples, and many offer treats such as apple cider, apple butter, and the ever-popular caramel apples. Check out these local orchards:

- Bauer's Apple Shed, Hortonville
- Heritage Orchard, Chilton
- Hofacker's Hillside Orchard, Appleton
- Sharky's Orchard, Appleton
- Sprangers Orchard, Kaukauna
- Star Orchard, Kaukauna

wisconsinapplegrowers.org/member-orchards



JAM OUT UKULELE OPEN JAM

All skill levels are welcome to attend free Ukulele Jam sessions from 6-7:30 p.m. on Thursdays at the Neenah Public Library. Work on a solo piece or duet, or play along with your fellow ukers.

neenahlibrary.org/events/ukulele-open-jam



FETCH, PLAY + SIP

Fetch, Play + Sip in Appleton is a premier indoor dog park and daycare facility featuring a self-pour taproom. Pups can safely run, play, and socialize year-round while owners relax and enjoy local Wisconsin beverages.

fetchplaysip.com



SHOP LOCAL BLUEBIRD BOUTIQUE

Bluebird Boutique in Menasha offers a thoughtfully curated selection of unique fashion, distinctive accessories, and meaningful gifts. Enjoy a warm, personalized shopping experience while discovering exceptional quality items designed to inspire and delight your lifestyle.

bluebirdmenasha.com



HONOR CULTURE NATIONAL HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH

National Hispanic and Latino Heritage Month runs from Sept. 15-Oct. 15 and honors the rich culture, history, vital contributions, art, and food of Hispanic and Latino Americans in the United States. Celebrate at Latino Fest Sept. 19 at Pierce Park in Appleton.

hispanicheritagemonth.gov

Go!

OUT & ABOUT | WHAT'S TRENDING | MOVIES | SPORTS PAGE



Women's Inspire Awards 2026

By AMANDA KRUEGER and ALYSSA JOHNSON

Photography by ASHLEY SCHMIT
DEBBIE DAANEN PHOTOGRAPHY



2026

WOMEN'S INSPIRE AWARDS

By ALYSSA JOHNSON and AMANDA KRUEGER

WOMEN MAKING A

Difference

Five years ago, the Women's Inspire Awards were created to celebrate women whose impacts often happen quietly, behind the scenes. Over the years, we have had the privilege of sharing the stories of remarkable women who lead with heart, serve without expectation, and make our community stronger every day. Their journeys remind us that some of the most meaningful contributions are made not for recognition, but because someone simply sees a need and chooses to help.

That couldn't be more true of this year's honorees. They inspire our children, strengthen connections, support those facing difficult circumstances, and help move the Fox Cities forward. While their paths and contributions may differ, they share a common purpose: improving the lives of the people around them. Their dedication to service, leadership, and community impact is evident in everything they do.

Each woman featured in these pages was nominated by someone who witnessed that dedication firsthand and wanted to shine a light on the difference she makes. Their stories are a powerful reminder that inspiration often comes from the people beside us every day: our coworkers, neighbors, mentors, friends, and family members.

We are honored to share these stories with you and offer a glimpse into the lives of six extraordinary women. We hope their journeys inspire you as much as they have inspired us. We also encourage you to think about the women who have inspired you — the individuals whose kindness, leadership, and generosity often go unnoticed but deserve to be celebrated.

Thank you to everyone who has supported the Women's Inspire Awards over the past five years. This program would not be possible without our nominators, sponsors, volunteers, attendees, and community partners.

And to this year's honorees: thank you for allowing us to celebrate you. Your impact is immeasurable, and our gratitude is beyond words.

With gratitude,

Alyssa Johnson and Amanda Krueger

American National Bank Fox Cities



Kristin McCormack-Schroeder

ARTS ADVOCATE | STORYTELLER | COMMUNITY CONNECTOR

Kristin has spent her career helping people connect through the arts. As Senior Manager of Brand Engagement at the Fox Cities Performing Arts Center, she helps share the stories behind performances, programs, and initiatives that bring the community together. Through creativity, communications, and a deep appreciation for the arts, she plays a key role in creating experiences that leave a lasting impact.

Kristin is passionate about the power of storytelling and the unique ways the arts can inspire connection, learning, and understanding. Whether someone is attending their first performance, discovering a new perspective, or participating in a community program, she believes meaningful experiences have the ability to bring people together and strengthen communities.

One of Kristin's greatest passions is helping grow the P.A.C.'s Viewpoint Speaker Series, which brings influential voices and thought-provoking conversations to the Fox Cities. She is inspired by opportunities to create spaces where people can broaden their perspectives, engage with new ideas, and leave feeling inspired. She also remains committed to ensuring the arts are accessible, welcoming, and meaningful for all members of the community.

Kristin credits Maria Van Laanen, president and CEO at the Fox Cities Performing Arts Center, as one of her greatest professional influences. Having worked alongside Maria throughout much of her career at the P.A.C., she has witnessed firsthand the impact of thoughtful, visionary leadership. Kristin describes Maria as someone who leads with both heart and expertise — always willing to listen, offer guidance, and invest in the growth of others. Watching Maria help shape the P.A.C. into the organization it is today reinforced Kristin's own belief in the power of connection, community, and servant leadership.



“THE THINGS THAT CHALLENGE YOU ARE OFTEN THE THINGS THAT HELP YOU GROW THE MOST.”

— Nominated by Erin Kelsey

Melissa Toshner

EDUCATOR | ADVOCATE FOR STRIVING LEARNERS | CHAMPION FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

Melissa has dedicated nearly 25 years to helping students reach their full potential. As associate director of special education for the Appleton Area School District, she supports educators, students, and families while helping to ensure every learner receives the opportunity, encouragement, and resources they need to succeed.

Melissa's passion for special education began early in her teaching career when she discovered a love for understanding how students learn differently and finding creative ways to help them grow. She is inspired by the challenge of meeting learners where they are and helping educators create pathways for success. Whether supporting teachers in the classroom or helping guide district-wide initiatives, Melissa remains focused on one goal: ensuring every student feels valued, capable, and supported.

She is especially passionate about empowering the educators who work alongside students every day. Melissa often credits the teachers, support staff, and administrators around her for their heart, perseverance, and commitment to helping children thrive. She believes some of the most meaningful moments in education happen in small daily victories that eventually lead to lasting growth.

The educators she works with continue to inspire her through their compassion, resilience, and unwavering dedication to students. Their example is a constant reminder of the difference one caring person can make in a child's life.

**"IF YOU'VE GOT GRIT AND YOU'VE GOT HEART,
YOU CAN LEARN EVERYTHING ELSE."**

— Nominated by Carrie Willer



Dawn Ruchala

COMMUNITY IMPACT LEADER | CONNECTOR | ADVOCATE FOR OPPORTUNITY

Dawn has built a career around creating meaningful opportunities for others. As senior community engagement manager at U.S. Venture, she helps lead initiatives that strengthen communities, support nonprofit organizations, and improve lives throughout Northeast Wisconsin. Through her work with the U.S. Venture Open and Basic Needs Giving Partnership, she helps connect generosity with causes that are making a lasting impact on children and families across the region.

What drives Dawn is a belief that opportunity can change the trajectory of a life. As the first person in her family to pursue higher education, she worked hard to create a future that looked different from the one she knew growing up. Earning both a bachelor's and a master's degree required perseverance, determination, and a commitment to continuous growth — qualities that continue to shape her leadership today. Having experienced firsthand how education can open doors, Dawn is passionate about helping others discover what is possible for their own future.

Dawn is especially passionate about helping children and families build brighter futures. Whether through fundraising, community partnerships, or volunteer leadership, she is motivated by the opportunity to create pathways for success and connect people with the resources they need to thrive. She believes meaningful change happens when people come together around a shared purpose and use their gifts to lift others up.

Dawn credits her mother as one of her greatest inspirations. Her mother's resilience, determination, and ability to connect with people helped shape Dawn's own approach to leadership and service. Those lessons continue to guide her as she works to ensure future generations have the same opportunities to learn, grow, and succeed.

"KEEP FOCUSED ON THE BIG GOALS THAT YOU SET FOR YOURSELF BECAUSE YOU'RE GOING TO ACCOMPLISH ALL OF THEM AND THEN SOME."

— Nominated by Beverly Fesing



Andrea Bartel-Riffle

RETIRED EDUCATOR | COMMUNITY VOLUNTEER | ADVOCATE FOR OUR VULNERABLE

Andrea has spent her life helping others. After a 39-year career in education, she continues to serve the community by supporting individuals experiencing some of life's most difficult challenges. As assistant shelter manager with the St. Joseph Catholic Church Emergency Shelter, Andrea brings compassion, patience, and a deep commitment to helping others feel seen, supported, and valued.

Andrea's passion for service is rooted in the values she learned growing up in a large family and close-knit community. After retiring from education, she became increasingly aware of the housing challenges facing individuals and families throughout the Fox Cities. Believing that safe, stable housing is foundational to well-being, she felt called to become involved. Through her work with the emergency shelter, she helps connect people with resources, support, and opportunities that can help them take steps toward greater stability and independence.

Whether helping children in the classroom or individuals experiencing homelessness, Andrea approaches each person with empathy, patience, and respect. She has become a trusted advocate for many of the people she serves, helping them navigate appointments, access resources, and overcome barriers that can feel overwhelming. Andrea understands that lasting change often happens through small, steady steps, and she remains committed to walking alongside people as they work toward brighter futures.

Andrea is inspired by the many generous people she has encountered throughout her life, individuals who quietly give their time, energy, and support to help others. Their example continues to motivate her and reinforces her belief that strong communities are built through compassion and connection.



“KNOWING YOU HAVE SOMEONE WHO HAS YOUR BACK IS A REAL CONFIDENCE BUILDER. NOT EVERYONE HAS THAT, AND THAT’S WHY SHOWING UP FOR OTHERS MATTERS.”

— Nominated by Melanie Mailand, 2024 WIA recipient

Amy Bertram

BUSINESS LEADER | COMMUNITY SUPPORTER | FAMILY-FIRST ENTREPRENEUR

Amy knows that life doesn't always follow the path you originally planned, and that can be a beautiful thing.

Originally a special education teacher, Amy stepped away from her career to focus on raising her children, embracing the role of full-time mom during a season when her family needed her most. As life evolved, so did Amy's vision for what was possible. Alongside her husband, Ben, she helped build Fiberglass Solutions into a successful, growing business, eventually stepping into a leadership role she never originally imagined for herself.

Amy is passionate about creating opportunities, not only for her family and employees, but also for her community. Known for her willingness to jump in, support local organizations, and help bring people together, she believes leadership is less about recognition and more about making a positive impact on the people around you. Whether in business, at home, or through community involvement, she approaches every challenge with determination, humility, and a commitment to continuous growth.

One of Amy's greatest sources of inspiration is her family. Working alongside her husband has given her a unique appreciation for partnership, perseverance, and shared goals. At the same time, she hopes her children see something bigger in her journey: that it is never too late to learn something new, take a different path, or become the person you are meant to be. Her story is a reminder that success isn't always about following a plan; sometimes it's about having the courage to embrace the unexpected.



"LIFE DOESN'T ALWAYS FOLLOW THE PATH YOU ORIGINALLY PLANNED, BUT THAT DOESN'T MEAN IT WON'T LEAD YOU EXACTLY WHERE YOU'RE MEANT TO BE."

— Nominated by Ben Bertram

Leah Suprise

COMMUNITY VOLUNTEER | FOSTER PARENT | ADVOCATE FOR FAMILIES AND FIRST RESPONDERS



Leah has dedicated her life to helping others feel supported, valued, and cared for. As executive director of Project SIX, she works alongside first responders, families, and community members to provide meaningful support during both everyday challenges and life's most difficult moments. Beyond her leadership with Project SIX, Leah has spent nearly a decade serving local families through her work with the Girl Scouts and has opened her heart and home as a foster parent, helping children feel safe, supported, and loved.

Leah's commitment to service is deeply personal. Throughout her life, she has experienced challenges that shaped her perspective and strengthened her appreciation for the people who offered guidance, encouragement, and support along the way. Those experiences reinforced her belief that even the smallest act of kindness can make a lasting difference and continue to influence the way she serves others today.

Whether through Project SIX, foster parenting, the Girl Scouts, or countless volunteer efforts, Leah is passionate about ensuring people know they are not alone. She believes some of the most meaningful acts of service happen in everyday moments — showing up, listening, offering a helping hand, and reminding someone there is hope ahead. Her dedication to lifting others up has strengthened countless lives throughout the community.

Leah credits two high school teachers, Mr. Jack Wendt and Miss Linda Radke, as some of the most influential people in her life. Their encouragement, belief in her potential, and willingness to invest their time helped shape the person she is today. Their example continues to inspire her commitment to helping others recognize that their story is still being written and that their circumstances do not determine their future.

"I WOULDN'T BE WHERE I AM WITHOUT THE PEOPLE WHO SHOWED UP FOR ME, AND I HOPE TO BE THAT PERSON FOR OTHERS."

— Nominated by Sarah Peterson

WHAT BROUGHT YOU TO YOUR WORK?

KRISTIN: My career has taken a few different paths, but the common thread has always been creating experiences that bring people together. I started in entertainment marketing and public relations, worked with sports organizations and live events, and loved seeing how a shared experience could create excitement and connection. That passion eventually led me to the Fox Cities Performing Arts Center. Being able to connect people through storytelling, creativity, and the arts has been incredibly rewarding, and I still get excited seeing someone experience the P.A.C. for the first time.

MELISSA: I knew pretty early in college that I wanted to go into special education, and I couldn't imagine doing anything else. What intrigued me was trying to figure out how to help learners when the typical approach wasn't working. It became this challenge of, "How do I help this student succeed?" That opportunity to meet students where they are and help them grow is what has kept me going for nearly 25 years.

DAWN: I originally thought I would work for an advertising agency after studying marketing at UW-Madison. Instead, I found myself on the client side, working in marketing, communications, and events. Over time, I realized what I enjoyed most wasn't marketing itself. It was bringing people together around a purpose and creating something that made a difference. That eventually led me toward community engagement and the work I do today.

ANDREA: Many people have been touched by homelessness or housing insecurity in some way, whether through a family member, friend, or neighbor. I've always been interested in affordable housing because housing is such a key component of stability. I grew up with a home. I grew up knowing where my meals would come from. After I retired, I attended a meeting at church about homelessness and affordable housing, and my passion just grew from there.

AMY: I always assumed I would spend my career teaching. When I stepped away from teaching to stay home with our children, it opened the door to a path I never expected. My husband had always dreamed of owning a business. I remember him coming home one day and saying, "If we're going to work this hard, we're going to do it for ourselves." What started as his dream became something we built together as a family, and it completely changed the direction of my career.

LEAH: My passion for helping others comes from the people who showed up for me throughout my life. Growing up, first responders were often some of the people who made me feel safe and reminded me things were going to be okay. Teachers, mentors, and community members did that for me too. Those experiences stayed with me. Whether through the Girl Scouts, foster parenting, or Project SIX, I've always felt called to give back and be that person for someone else.



WHAT *motivates* YOU ON YOUR MOST CHALLENGING DAYS?

KRISTIN: Seeing the impact our work has on people is always a cup filler for me.

The P.A.C. is so much more than a place where performances happen. It creates opportunities for people to learn, connect, and experience something meaningful. Watching someone discover a new perspective or leave feeling inspired reminds me why this work matters.

MELISSA: I am surrounded by incredible educators every day.

When I'm having a hard day, I go into classrooms. I watch teachers do what they do best. That's where the magic happens. Seeing the care, compassion, and perseverance they bring to students reminds me why this work matters and why it's worth continuing to fight for every learner.

DAWN: I've always been gritty.

If something is challenging, I'm going to figure out a way to get it done. But more importantly, I try to keep things in perspective. Any challenge I'm facing at work is small compared to what many of the families we're helping are experiencing. Remembering our mission and the people we're serving helps keep me focused.

ANDREA: My faith really drives me.

I've learned that I can only do my small part and trust that others will step forward to do theirs. The older I've gotten, the more I've realized what really matters. It's how we treat one another. It's the love we share and the ways we care for others. That's what keeps me going.

AMY: I've learned that I need to break things down into steps.

When things feel overwhelming, I focus on what absolutely has to get done first and what can wait. It sounds simple, but it has helped me manage a growing list of responsibilities and keep moving forward. You can't do everything at once, and that's okay.

LEAH: Giving back.

When I got sick, I was overwhelmed by the number of people who reached out, sent cards, and showed support. I didn't realize how many people I had impacted because I never do it for gratification. I do it because we should be doing it. That reminder and those connections keep me going.

WHAT DO YOU *envision* FOR THE FUTURE OF YOUR WORK?

KRISTIN: I'm excited to continue creating opportunities that bring people together through the arts. The growth of the Viewpoint Speaker Series has been especially rewarding because it brings unbelievable stories to our community and gives people the chance to broaden their horizons. I'm also passionate about continuing to expand accessibility efforts so everyone feels welcome and able to experience the arts in a way that works for them.

MELISSA: I want to continue developing RISE, supporting our teachers, and advocating for special education funding. I'm also passionate about helping grow the profession. By the time I'm ready to step away from education, I want to know I've helped prepare and support the next generation of educators so they're ready to carry this work forward and continue advocating for students.

DAWN: I see tremendous opportunity ahead. Through the U.S. Venture Open and the Basic Needs Giving Partnership, we're in a position to make an even greater impact throughout Northeast Wisconsin. There is so much opportunity and impact we can have in bigger, broader ways throughout the region, and that's what gets me excited.

ANDREA: Of course, I'd love to end homelessness, but there will always be new challenges to address. What I hope for most is a community that continues to come together to support one another. We are only as strong as our most vulnerable members. If we can bring people together, lift each other up, and help people move forward with dignity and hope, we'll all be stronger because of it.

AMY: We definitely plan to keep growing, although I'm usually the one saying, "Let's figure out where we're at first." What excites me most is helping preserve and grow small businesses that may not otherwise have a succession plan. There are so many good businesses in Northeast Wisconsin whose owners are ready to retire, and we love helping continue what they've built while creating new opportunities for employees and families.

LEAH: I want to make Project SIX bigger. I want it to be something that continues long into the future and reaches even more first responders and families. I also want to do more for youth aging out of foster care because I've been there and understand how important support can be. Ultimately, I want people to know they have someone in their corner.



WHAT WOULD YOU TELL YOUR YOUNGER SELF TO *inspire* HER?

KRISTIN: TAKE MORE CHANCES.

I wish I would have studied abroad. I wish I had worried less about getting everything right. Looking back, I'd tell myself not to be afraid to fail, to stay curious, and to keep learning. Some of the most meaningful growth happens when you step outside your comfort zone and trust yourself.

MELISSA: KEEP GOING.

Keep your faith. Trust God's plan. Even in really dark places, those experiences can shape you and refine you into a better version of yourself. Looking back, some of my most difficult seasons taught me lessons I never could have learned otherwise.

DAWN: KEEP FOCUSED ON YOUR GOALS.

I always had big goals for myself and kept setting new ones every time I reached another milestone. Looking back, I would tell my younger self: keep focused on the big goals you set for yourself, because you're going to accomplish all of them and then some.

ANDREA: BELIEVE IN YOURSELF AND TRUST YOURSELF.

Don't be afraid to try new things, and don't worry so much about what everyone else might say or do. Find out who you are, know your strengths, and believe in them. You can make a difference just by being who you are.

AMY: TAKE ADVANTAGE OF EVERY OPPORTUNITY.

You never know which person you'll meet, what experience you'll have, or how a situation will impact your life years down the road. Every little connection matters. Stay open to possibilities, trust your gut, and surround yourself with good people. Things may not always make sense in the moment, but they often come full circle.

LEAH: DON'T BE SO ANGRY. PEOPLE ARE ONLY TRYING TO HELP YOU.

For a long time, I was upset because life didn't seem fair. Looking back now, I realize everything I went through shaped who I am. There is light at the end of the tunnel, and the impact I've been able to make in the lives of others outweighs the difficult things I experienced growing up.

Alyssa and Amanda are proud to support and uplift the women who make our community stronger every day. Thank you to our sponsors, American National Bank Fox Cities for believing in this mission, and to Jon Croce and Appleton Monthly Magazine for giving us the opportunity to celebrate these remarkable women!

IN THE GARDEN

Holly Boettcher

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September Provides a Grand Finale for Outdoor Live Music

By JIM COLLAR

FOX JAZZ FEST



Photo: Fox Jazz Fest

IRISH FEST FOX CITIES



Photo: Irish Fest Fox Cities

OCTOBERFEST



Photo: Octoberfest

Don't let anyone tell you that Labor Day weekend is summer's last hurrah. In the Fox Cities, September is summer's bonus month.

Sure, the kids are back in school, but there's still plenty of time for outdoor fun before temperatures slide into fall. September is packed with opportunities to put an exclamation mark on the warm-weather season, and our outdoor music stages save some of their best for last.

Get started at **Fox Jazz Fest**. Held Sept. 5-6, the free, two-day festival features both local talent and world-class performers. The sights are as good as the sounds, with the stage set up near Lake Winnebago at Jefferson Park in Menasha. Matt Wilson's Good Trouble headlines on Saturday evening, while New Jazz Underground closes the festival on Sunday.

Just down the road, the **Calumet County Fair** turns up the volume from Sept. 4-7 in Chilton. While carnival rides and agricultural exhibits bring many to the gates, its music lineup has grown into a legitimate draw. This year's fair includes top regional acts such as Driftwood, Vic Ferrari, Spicy Tie Band, and Johnny Wad. Country star Kip Moore performs Sunday night.

Pairing craft beverages with live performances always makes for a great night out. Head back to Menasha's Jefferson Park Sept. 10 for **Brews on Bago**. Enjoy music from Carbon Road, beverages from Stone Arch Brewpub, yard games, and food trucks from 5-8 p.m.

Then, Sept. 18-19, put on something green and get to Appleton's Jones Park for **Irish Fest Fox Cities**. It's a lively cultural celebration that's built on a foundation of some incredible music.

Gaelic Storm returns as the Friday headlining act. Starting as a pub band, they gained a national following after appearing in the blockbuster film *Titanic*.

Skerryvore also returns to Irish Fest Fox Cities and is all the way from Scotland. A four-time winner of Scotland's Live Act of the Year award, they seamlessly blend pop music with traditional Scottish sounds, including bagpipes, accordion, fiddles, and whistles. They'll perform before Gaelic Storm on Friday and headline the Saturday lineup.

Finally, the month ends with one of Appleton's biggest annual events. Put on your walking shoes and bring an appetite to **Octoberfest Sept.** 25-26. It starts Friday with License to Cruise. Come for the show cars and stay for a performance by Boogie and the Yo-Yo'z at Houdini Plaza from 6-9 p.m.

Saturday's main event provides a who's who of great Fox Valley bands across five stages. Highlights include The Glam Band at 3 p.m. at the west end of College Avenue and Kyle Megna & The Monsoons at 4 p.m. at Houdini Plaza. This year, Octoberfest added a country stage at the corner of College Avenue and Morrison Street, with Nashville Pipeline headlining at 4 p.m.

You could consider September as an encore to a great summer. In the Fox Cities, it's more of a grand finale. Get out and soak up every last moment.

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Out AND about

TOP 10 REASONS TO FILL UP YOUR CALENDAR THIS MONTH

By SARAH PETERSON

1. RHYTHMS OF THE WORLD

Experience this free celebration of multicultural music and dance from around the world and across the Fox Cities. *Sept. 12, 8:30 a.m.-1 p.m. at Houdini Plaza in downtown Appleton.*

facebook.com/events/975145951593657

3. MARKET ON MAIN

Enjoy a family-friendly street market focusing on unique handcrafted goods from local businesses in Little Chute. It will also feature food trucks, craft beer, retail vendors, music, and activities for children. *Sept. 12 from 1-7 p.m. in Little Chute.*

marketonmainlc.com

5. IRISH FEST OF THE FOX CITIES

Revel in the rich tapestry of Irish and Celtic culture with live music and entertainment, food, drinks, dancing, and laughter in Appleton's beautiful Jones Park. Visit the website to see the lineup and to purchase tickets. *Sept. 18 from 3-10 p.m. and Sept. 19 from 10 a.m.-10 p.m.*

irishfestfoxcities.com

7. WINES IN THE PINES

Sample three wines from Kerrigan Brothers Winery while enjoying an enchanting evening at Bubolz Nature Preserve. Light snacks, s'mores by the fire, and yard games are also included with a \$30 ticket. *Sept. 24, 6-8 p.m.*

bubolzpreserve.org/bubolz-events/wines-in-the-pines

9. OCTOBERFEST

Don't miss Appleton's Oktoberfest featuring live music, arts and crafts, and the family fun area. Stop by the food booths to support local nonprofits. *Sept. 26, from 9 a.m.-6 p.m.*

oktoberfestweekend.com

2. WORLD PEACE FESTIVAL

People of all ages come together for a day of celebration, reflection, and collective hope for a more peaceful world at Appleton's World Peace Festival. This event is family friendly and free to attend. *Sept. 12 from noon-4 p.m. at Pierce Park.*

worldpeacefestivalfoxcities.org

4. GIVENS FARM FALL FESTIVAL

Gather with family and friends to shop handmade goods and local products, listen to toe-tapping tunes, indulge in mouthwatering food, visit with animals, and enjoy kid-friendly activities. *Sept. 17, 3-6:30 p.m. at Givens Farm Estate in Hortonville.*

givensfarmestate.com

6. FOX CITIES MARATHON

This annual race weekend includes a full marathon, half marathon, half-marathon competitive walk, relay, 10K, 5K, kids fun run, diaper dash, and toddler trot. Visit the website for full race details and to register. *Sept. 18-20 in Appleton.*

foxcitiesmarathon.org

8. LICENSE TO CRUISE

Kick off Oktoberfest weekend with License to Cruise, a classic car show featuring more than 400 vehicles, live music, and food. Show your 2005-or-older vehicle for \$10. Special interest cars will be on display at the Fox Cities Exhibition Center. *Sept. 25 at 3 p.m. in downtown Appleton.*

oktoberfestweekend.com/license-to-cruise

10. LATINO FEST

Experience the ultimate summer evenings Celebrate Hispanic culture with live music, dance, art, authentic food, and family activities. Explore local vendors, cultural shows, and interactive fun for everyone. *Sept. 19 from 11 a.m.-5 p.m. at Pierce Park in Appleton.*

casahispanawi.org/latino-fest-2



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The Increasing Prevalence of ‘Gray Divorce’

By PHYLLIS COLLAR



It has been commonly said that half of marriages end in divorce. It turns out this statistic no longer holds weight. This quote dates to the peak divorce rates during the 1970s and 1980s. In fact, divorce rates have steadily declined over the past few decades and are now at their lowest.

Research shows this is because people are marrying later in life when they have a better handle on their finances, career stability, and a more mature perspective on relationships in general. Lower overall divorce rates also point to fewer marriages in the 2020s than in previous decades, with “partners” deciding to simply cohabitate.

Gray divorce — defined as divorce among adults 50 and older — has doubled since 1990, and the rate has tripled for those 65 and older. By 2010, 27% of divorces were among those 50 and older; by 2019 that number climbed to 36%. Some of the factors driving this phenomenon include increased financial autonomy, longer life expectancy, political freedom, and overall societal acceptance of divorce.

People in their 50s and 60s can safely foresee another 30 or 40 years. Although divorce can take a toll on emotional

health, it can also provide a chance at a fresh start. Since relationships can erode slowly over time, and no one should assume that anything great comes easily, partnerships at any age require work. They need healthy doses of presence, practice, and attention — and maybe even a bit of counseling.

After a gray divorce or when people partner up later in life, they often report more fulfilling relationships built on compatibility, common interests, and free will.

Our happiness is deeply shaped by those we share life with. It bodes well that younger generations are marrying later and not putting too much stock in legal institutions. No matter the age you marry, and whether it is your first or fourth partnership, relationships take practice and effort. Never assume a great relationship will just happen.

Instead, a relationship can become a skill you learn, such as playing the piano or riding a bike.

That said, relationships are not the only way older adults can garner connection. A network of support, including family and friends, fulfilling activities, and a strong sense of autonomy and freedom, can also bring the happiness you seek.

**No matter the age
you marry, and
whether it is your first
or fourth partnership,
relationships take
practice and effort.**



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When Hormones Change: Natural Ways to Support Healthy Hair

By ANGELA HALDERSON

For many women (and men), hair is more than just part of their appearance — it can be closely tied to confidence and identity. Thick, shiny, healthy hair often symbolizes vitality and wellness. When hair begins to thin after pregnancy or during periods of hormonal change, it can feel deeply personal and even unsettling.

Many women experience increased shedding after giving birth, while others notice thinning during perimenopause, menopause, or with conditions that affect hormone balance. The good news is that these changes can be supported by addressing nutrition, stress, and overall health.

After pregnancy, estrogen levels drop rapidly, causing many hair follicles to shift from the growth phase into the shedding phase. This condition, known as postpartum telogen effluvium, typically begins two to four months after delivery and often improves within six to 12 months.

One of the most important nutrients for healthy hair is protein. Hair is made primarily of keratin, a structural protein, so consuming adequate protein is essential for growth and repair. Women who are breastfeeding have increased protein needs and should aim for approximately 1.1-1.3 grams of protein per kilogram of body weight each day. Including protein-rich foods such as eggs, Greek yogurt, cottage cheese, fish, poultry, beans, lentils, and tofu at each meal can help provide the building blocks your hair follicles need.

Several important vitamins and minerals also play a role in healthy hair growth. Iron, vitamin D, and zinc are among the nutrients most commonly associated with hair health. Iron deficiency is a frequent cause of excessive hair shedding, particularly after childbirth if blood loss was significant. Zinc supports normal hair follicle function, while vitamin D appears to play a role in the hair growth cycle. Lean beef, oysters, eggs, and salmon supply high-quality protein along with iron or zinc, while fatty fish like salmon also provide vitamin D. Plant-based options like lentils, beans, pumpkin



seeds, and fortified foods can also contribute to healthy nutrient intake. Because excessive iron or zinc supplementation can be harmful, it's best to work with your health care provider to determine whether testing or supplementation is appropriate.

Stress is another often-overlooked contributor to hair shedding. Physical stress from pregnancy and childbirth, emotional stress, poor sleep, illness, or significant life changes can all increase the number of hairs entering the shedding phase. Supporting your nervous system may be an important part of a comprehensive hair health plan. Ashwagandha, an adaptogenic herb traditionally used in Ayurvedic medicine, has been shown in several clinical studies to help reduce perceived stress and lower cortisol levels in some adults. While research has not demonstrated that ashwagandha directly stimulates hair growth, it may indirectly support healthier hair in individuals whose shedding is related to chronic stress. Ashwagandha is not appropriate for everyone, so always discuss herbal supplements with your healthcare provider before starting them.

Although hormonal hair changes can be frustrating, nourishing yourself with adequate protein, nutrient-rich foods, stress management, and patience can help support healthy hair as your body finds its balance again.

Angela Halderson is the owner of Strong Meridian, a natural healthcare practice focusing on the root cause of dis-ease. She is a dietitian trained in functional medicine, energy medicine, homeopathy, and herbalism. When you are tired of being sick and tired, reach out to angela@strongmeridian.com for a virtual visit.

Smile!

We ♥ seeing our readers
having fun and making the most
of our beautiful communities!

BY: SARAH PETERSON

Send your photo submissions to: editor@appletonmonthly.com



Ashley of Debbie Daanen Photography and Alyssa and Amanda of American National Bank chat after **honoring recipients at the Women's Inspire Awards luncheon.**



Dads of the Appleton East Dance Team volunteer at a **Festival Foods Brat Fry fundraiser.**



The Krueger family **hangs with rock band Sweet Lizzy Project at Appleton's Mile of Music.**



Friendly staff from the AmberLulu Bubble Tea truck **hand out cold boba drinks at the Downtown Appleton Farm Market.**



Volunteers Nicole Green and Stacy LaCourse **deliver ice at the annual Art in the Park.**



Karen, Leighton, and Emalyn participate in the **kids' rummage sale during U.S. Venture Children's Week in Appleton.**

THE LOCAL

There is a subtle shift that takes place across the Fox Cities as September unfolds. The high-energy, open-air pulse of midsummer, the packed outdoor concerts, the crowds wandering through city plazas, the lingering evening walks along the Fox River — all begin to soften into something quieter and more introspective. As crisp autumn breezes sweep through the streets, our daily scenery naturally contracts. We trade sunlit picnic tables for indoor booths, and we begin searching for warm, welcoming corners where we can pull up a chair, order a hot drink, and stay a while.

This annual autumnal migration isn't just a reaction to the dropping temperature; it is a fundamental human search for connection. In urban sociology, these essential indoor sanctuaries are known as "third places." And as September settles over the Fox Cities, these public living rooms become a true focal point for our local community.

The Anatomy of the 'Third Place'

The term "third place" was coined in 1989 by the late sociologist Ray Oldenburg in his seminal book, *The Great Good Place*. Oldenburg proposed that a healthy, functioning human life relies on three distinct geographic realms:

The First Place: The home, our private, domestic sphere of family and personal solitude.

In an era where modern life increasingly pushes us into online echo chambers and socioeconomic silos, our local third places force us to look each other in the eye. They remind us that we share a physical geography, a climate, and a collective destiny with people whose lives and viewpoints look entirely different from our own.

While summer invites us to scatter across parks, trails, and backyards, September draws us back into proximity. The cities' local independent gathering spots, from cozy coffee houses with mismatched armchairs to neighborhood nooks, community library spaces, and generational diners, all step up to fulfill an essential psychological function.

Think about the sensory comfort of entering one of the Fox Cities' third places on a brisk September morning:

A warm, dark-roasted aroma hangs in the air.

The hiss of steam from an espresso machine frames the ambient hum of acoustic music.

The predictable chime of the front door opening, followed by a barista calling out a regular customer's



The Second Place: The workplace, our professional environment governed by tasks, deadlines, and economic production.

The Third Place: The informal public gathering space, the low-pressure, welcoming environment where people gather simply for the pleasure of company, conversation, and shared presence.

Oldenburg warned that modern suburban life was increasingly driving Americans into a fragmented "two-step pattern" of living: commuting back and forth between home and work, completely bypassing the shared public sphere. Without third places, he argued, civic life privatizes, loneliness rises, and the social fabric that binds a community together begins to fray.

To qualify as a true third place, a space must possess a few distinct qualities. It must exist on neutral ground, where individuals can come and go freely without the obligations of hosting. It must be accessible and accommodating, low-profile in its physical design, driven by a playful and conversational atmosphere, and, above all, populated by "regulars" who give the space its distinct soul.

The Power of Leveling

Perhaps the most crucial characteristic Oldenburg identified in a great third place is its role as a "leveler."

In our first and second places, social status, income, job titles, and political affiliations dictate much of how we interact with one another. A corporate executive sits in a corner office; a trade worker is on a job site; a college student is in a lecture hall. But when those same individuals step through the door of a downtown coffee shop, a local diner, or a neighborhood tavern, those artificial social hierarchies vanish.

At a communal counter, status is stripped away. The professor sitting with a laptop shares a multi-plug outlet with a local electrician reading the morning paper. The retired paper mill worker strikes up a conversation about the changing autumn foliage with a young graphic designer waiting for a pour-over coffee.

name before they've even reached the register.

Those moments of recognition — being known by name in a space that isn't your house and isn't your office — are a powerful psychological anchor. Sociologists refer to this as "thin ties": the informal, casual acquaintanceships we maintain with the people who inhabit our daily routines. We may not know their middle names or their life histories, but seeing their familiar faces in the booth across from us every Tuesday morning provides a deep, subconscious sense of safety, stability, and belonging.

Protecting Our Local Community Living Rooms

It is easy to view coffee shops, neighborhood cafés, and public gathering rooms simply as commercial transaction spaces, a place where \$5 buys a cup of coffee or a muffin. But that view misses the forest for the trees.

The real commodity being generated in these spaces isn't caffeine or baked goods, believe it or not; it is social capital. Third places are the incubation chambers of local culture. They are where neighborhood block parties are first planned, where local artists pitch joint exhibitions, where grassroots charitable initiatives take shape, and where simple human empathy is practiced daily over shared tables.

However, true third places are fragile ecosystems. They require our active presence and intention. In a digital world that constantly incentivizes us to stay on the couch, order groceries via an app, and stream content in isolation, choosing to put on a jacket, walk down the block, and sit among our neighbors is a quiet act of civic dedication.

As the leaves turn amber and the mornings grow crisp across the Fox Valley this month, resist the urge to immediately retreat into total isolation. Seek out a local public living room. Buy a cup of tea, find a comfortable seat, leave your phone in your pocket for 20 minutes, and really take in the vibrant, diverse human landscape of the community you call home.

Our third places are waiting for us, and the coffee is already brewing.

Live like a local!

Why Our 'Third Places' Matter More Than Ever

By NATASHA WINKLER



fall into a good book

Great Reads for Autumn

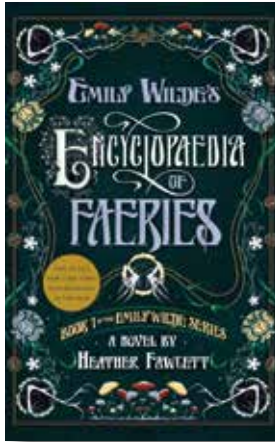
By CASEY MARION

It's that time of year when pumpkin spice lattes seem to almost magically appear in hand, and chunky sweaters find their way out from the back of the closet. If you're anything like me, the moment the calendar flips to Sept. 1, you're dusting off Halloween decorations and dreaming of pumpkin patch visits. Perhaps digging out those nostalgic 1990s rom-coms or immersing yourself in DIY decor is how you celebrate. Or maybe you prefer snacking on kettle corn while glued to the slasher on your television screen. No, don't split up! Or maybe, like me, you wish to experience all this time of year has to offer. Diving headfirst into the season seems to be the best way to enjoy it. No matter what you're popping into the DVD player (you can pry my Blu-ray from my cold, dead hands, Netflix!), there's just something undeniably comforting about wrapping up in a warm blanket, watching the colors start to change outside, and curling up with a good book.

As a self-proclaimed autumnal literature enthusiast, I've spent the last few years gathering all the best reads for the season. Whether you love cozy, low-stakes, small-town romances à la *Gilmore Girls*, heartwarming historical fiction, or bone-chilling horror, this list has something for you. After all, autumn reading doesn't have to mean terrifying thrillers that will have you double-checking the locks on your doors. It can be slow, thought-provoking historical fiction, sweet romances with just enough spice to have you pulling at your cable knit sweater and asking, "Is it hot in here?", or anything in between. There's really no wrong way to spend a crisp autumn afternoon with a book.

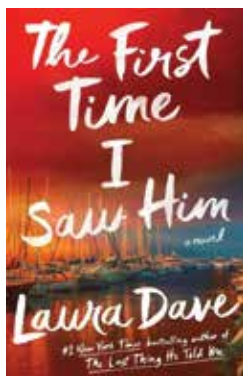
From debut authors just getting their start to novels in the process of being turned into blockbuster movies, every single one of these books holds a special place in my heart. Some are cozy, some are creepy, and some may have you questioning why you decided to read them alone at night. There are books for those looking to get lost in a charming little town, books for those craving something mysterious, and books for anyone who wants to spend the season completely immersed in the fantasy of another world.

So, if you're browsing for your next five-star read, trying to get through your TBR (to-be-read list), or simply searching for something that feels like the literary equivalent of a crisp autumn afternoon, I hope you find something here. Grab your favorite sweater, make yourself a warm PSL (pumpkin spice latte), and settle in. There are plenty of stories waiting to make their way onto your autumn reading list.



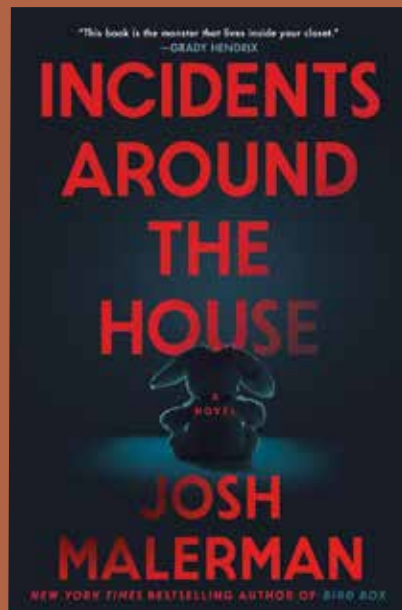
Heather Fawcett
*Emily Wilde's
 Encyclopedia of Faeries*

Emily Wilde is NOT good with people. Books? Sure. Her dog, Shadow? Of course. But not people. A highly educated professor at Cambridge, Emily's research of all things Faerie has led her to a small northern town called Hrafnsvik. It is there that she gets a feel for the savory locals, their culture, and runs into none other than her longstanding academic rival, Wendell Bumbleby. Wendell has a habit of throwing off her research and getting in her way as she searches for an elusive group of faeries. This low-stakes fantasy is the perfect autumnal escape for readers looking for something magical, charming, and cozy.



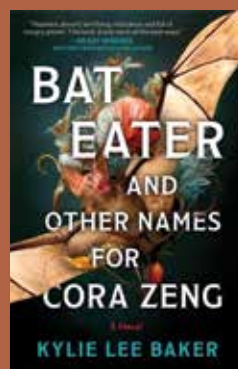
Laura Dave
The First Time I Saw Him

Half a decade ago, Heather's husband, Owen, disappeared. Since then, she's taken her stepdaughter and moved far away from the hurt, focusing on healing. But then Owen shows up when she least expects him, and danger follows closely behind, threatening everything she's built.



Josh Malerman
Incidents Around the House

From bestselling author of *Bird Box*, Josh Malerman's *Incidents Around the House* is a chilling horror story told through the eyes of 8-year-old Bela, a girl who values her family above everything: Daddo, Mommy, Grandma Ruth, and Other Mommy. Other Mommy is different. She looks like Bela's mother and sounds like her too, but there's something wrong about her presence. Every day, she asks Bela the question: "Can I go inside your heart?" What begins as a strange, friendly question soon turns horrifying as Other Mommy becomes impatient. Reckless, violent, and bolder, she needs an answer. Bela must cling to the ties that bind family together before it's too late.



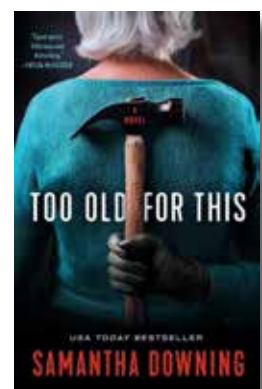
Kylie Lee Baker
*Bat Eater and Other
 Names for Cora Zeng*

After witnessing her sister's brutal murder, Cora thinks she's experienced the worst this life has to offer. That is, until deceased bats begin showing up at her job. Cora is haunted by the last thing the murderer said to her before fleeing the scene: "Bat Eater."



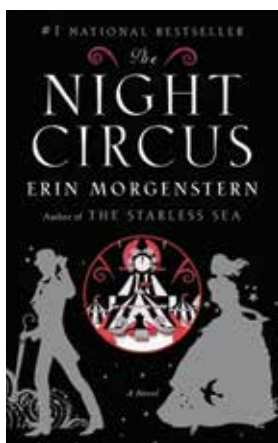
Sangu Mandanna
*The Very Secret Society
 of Irregular Witches*

Mika Moon is one of the last witches left in Britain. She's gotten this far by knowing how to responsibly use her magic and how to keep her head down — mostly. Mika has a secret social media account she uses to "pretend" she's a witch. That changes when she receives a mysterious letter asking her to teach three young witches at Nowhere House. Reluctantly, Mika goes and quickly becomes enamored with the students and staff, including the handsome house librarian, Jamie.



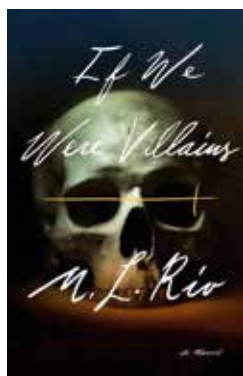
Samantha Downing
Too Old for This

When retired serial killer Lottie Jones answers her front door, the last thing she expects to see is an investigative journalist. Suddenly, she's being asked about crimes committed decades ago. To Lottie, there's only one logical next step to ensure she keeps her freedom: come out of retirement.



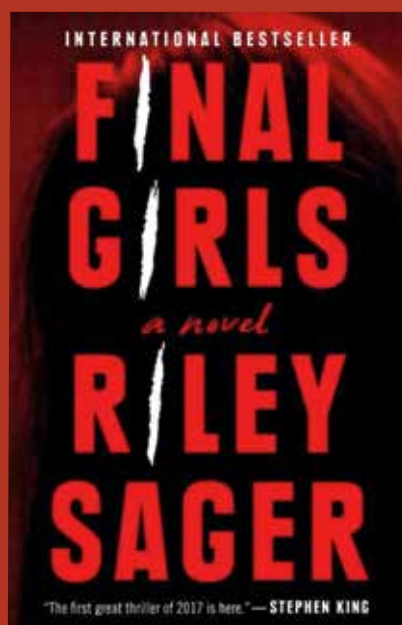
Erin Morgenstern
The Night Circus

The Night Circus is one of those reads that sticks with you long after you turn the final page. Magicians Celia and Marco belong to the Night Circus, a magical cirque show that appears with no warning, for one night only. Their entire lives, Celia and Marco have been groomed by their mentors to fight in a duel. Unbeknownst to them, only one can survive. As tensions rise and the night of the big show looms closer, Celia and Marco begin to fall for each other. They must navigate their newfound feelings while preparing for the fight of their lives. Written in beautiful prose, *The Night Circus* is an autumn must-read.



M.L. Rio
If We Were Villains

Oliver Marks is released after 10 years in prison for a crime he may or may not have committed. A decade ago, he was among thespians. When a gruesome murder occurs, Oliver and his fellow actors must put on the performance of a lifetime.



Riley Sager
Final Girls

Quincy belongs to a club no one wants a part of. She's a final girl. Alongside Lisa, the sole survivor of a sorority massacre, and Sam, who escaped a notorious serial killer while working the night shift at a local inn, the three are the only ones left alive to tell their stories. It's been 10 years since Quinn went camping with her friends and returned completely alone. She's spent the past decade healing, starting a baking blog, and meeting her soon-to-be fiancé, Jeff. But when Lisa is found dead, and Sam shows up on Quinn's door, things change. Someone is hunting the final girls — and won't stop until there's no one left.



Elin Hilderbrand and Shelby Cunningham
The Academy

Today is move-in day at Tiffin Academy, a well-known, party-friendly boarding school. But soon, a popular new app begins blowing up phones at Tiffin Academy, revealing secrets about everyone from staff to students. No one is safe from its encompassing reach.



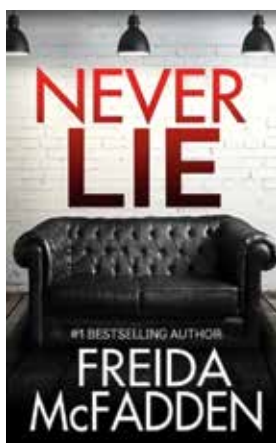
Erin Sterling
The Ex Hex

This sweet and sassy paranormal romance is the perfect way to kick off the spooky season. After a bad breakup, Vivienne, a witch from Graves Glen, Georgia, curses her evil ex-boyfriend, certain no real harm could come to him. Nine years later, Rhys returns to Graves Glen, and strange things begin happening. The town is under attack by unexplainable entities. It's up to Vivi and Rhys to break the curse before the town is completely overtaken.



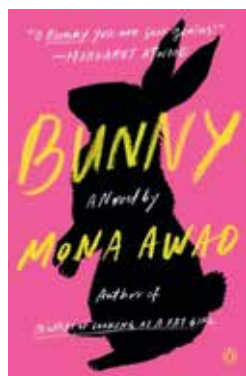
Tiffany Crum
This Story Might Save Your Life

Benny and Joy host a comedy survival podcast with millions of listeners. But when Joy and her husband go missing, all eyes turn to Benny. Through Joy's unpublished memoir, secrets emerge that could finally reveal exactly what really happened the night she disappeared.



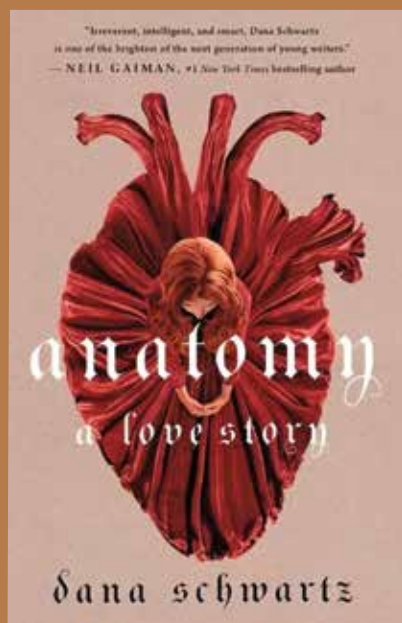
Freida McFadden
Never Lie

Largely regarded as Freida McFadden's spookiest work, *Never Lie* is a great book to add to your autumn reading list. The novel follows young newlyweds Tricia and Ethan as they begin searching for their forever home. When a nasty storm strands them at a particularly creepy house, they scour the estate for something to cure their boredom until the blizzard passes. They discover the house belonged to Dr. Hale, a psychologist who went missing years prior. They stumble upon a room filled with audio cassette tapes of Dr. Hale's sessions. One by one, Tricia plays them, slowly learning what exactly happened to Dr. Hale — uncovering secrets she wishes she'd never heard.



Mona Awad
Bunny

Samantha can't stand the girls in her writing class. They call each other Bunny and look like clones. But when Samantha receives an invitation to come over, she can't help but feel curious. Monstrous things happen at the Bunnies' house, changing Samantha's reality forever.



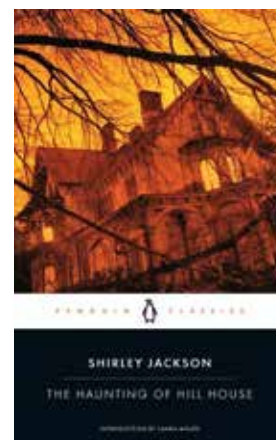
Dana Schwartz
Anatomy: A Love Story

This is the perfect historical fiction romance for anyone who doesn't mind a little body horror. The novel follows Hazel, a woman determined to become a surgeon in the early 1800s. After getting kicked out of a lecture because she's a woman, Hazel makes a deal with her professor: If she can pass the medical examination, she can enroll. That's where Jack comes in. Jack is a "resurrection man" who spends his days digging up graves. Normally, his job is easy. Except now, strangers are lurking around the cemetery, and people in Edinburgh are disappearing. It's up to Hazel and Jack to uncover the mysteries around them before it's too late.



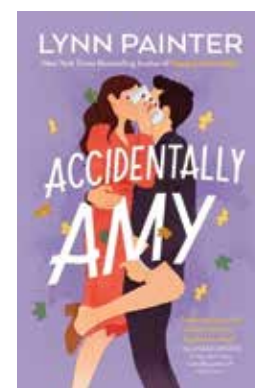
Karen M. McManus,
Nothing More to Tell

Brynn returns home after four years following her teacher's murder. Now an intern at a true-crime show, she's determined to find what police couldn't: who did it? With her ex-best friend as the key witness, Brynn uncovers secrets that could change everything forever.



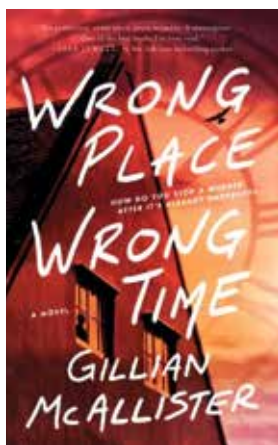
Shirley Jackson
The Haunting of Hill House

This novel is a classic, and for a very good reason. Shirley Jackson takes readers through the horrors of Hill House in this paranormal gothic mystery. *The Haunting of Hill House* follows four protagonists, each seeking out the manor for different reasons. As they comb their way through Hill House, horrors are unleashed, and each must grapple with the sinister psychological evil lurking within. Atmospheric, unsettling, and deeply haunting, this is a classic that deserves its reputation.



Lynn Painter
Accidentally Amy

In an act she isn't proud of, Isabella takes a latte that isn't hers. Holding a cup labeled "Amy," she runs into a kind, gorgeous man. On her first day at her dream job, she realizes that the handsome stranger is her new boss.



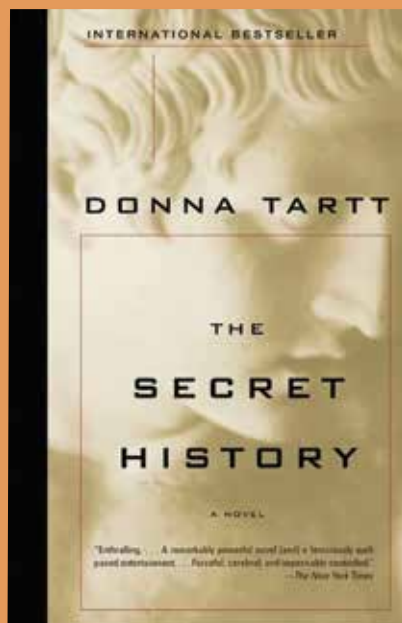
Gillian McAllister
Wrong Place, Wrong Time

In the early hours of Halloween, Jen watches her teenage son commit a gruesome murder. Horrified, she's helpless to do anything but watch as her son is arrested and dragged to the police station. Exhausted, she falls asleep, only to wake up and discover that the murder hasn't happened yet. It's Halloween again, and she has the chance to prevent this horrible atrocity from occurring. As the days go on, Jen continues waking up in the past — first days, then months, then years before the murder. Deep in the past, something is set up so her son becomes a killer — and Jen must find it and put an end to it.



Carissa Orlando
The September House

Every September, Margaret and Hal's house becomes haunted. After four years, Hal seemingly can't take it anymore and vanishes. Their daughter, Katherine, travels to search for her father, unaware of horrors lurking in the house. As the search continues, the haunting becomes worse.



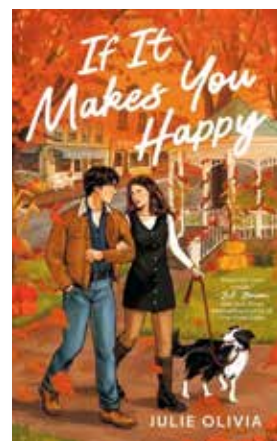
Donna Tartt
The Secret History

Credited with being the inspiration for the dark academia aesthetic, Donna Tartt's *The Secret History* is a great read for the colder months. At an elite liberal arts college in New England, a handful of misfits form a group around one of the university's more eccentric professors. In this small society, new norms are created, and in time, new morals. Told in beautiful prose, this novel expertly intertwines elements of a thriller with philosophy and psychology. Fans of *Kill Your Darlings* and *Dead Poets Society* will find much to love in this heartbreakingly thought-provoking novel. This is a story that will stay with you long after the final page.



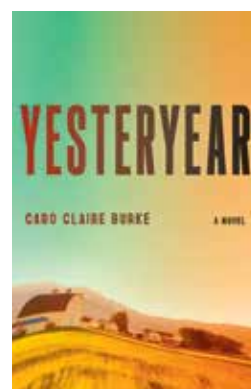
E.L. Chen
Slasher Summer

A group of friends reunite in their rural hometown, famously known as the backdrop to one of Hollywood's greatest slasher films. However, fiction and reality begin to blur as they realize they're being hunted and fall into the notorious roles found in slasher films.



Julie Olivia
If It Makes You Happy

Set in the late 1990s, this autumnal romance brings nostalgia akin to classic rom-coms. Michelle is licking her wounds after a nasty divorce when she takes over her family's bed & breakfast in Copper Run. Enter Cliff, a handsome, single dad next door who seems to embody the town itself. Michelle warms to Cliff as the days pass and the weather gets colder. What started as neighbors blossoms into friendship. But it's the other feelings that might end up hurting her.



Caro Claire Burke
Yesteryear

Tradwife influencer Natalie spends her days promoting her lifestyle to millions of followers, despite the army of help behind the camera. However, she wakes up one day living the reality she's spent years masquerading in, only to discover life isn't what it seems.

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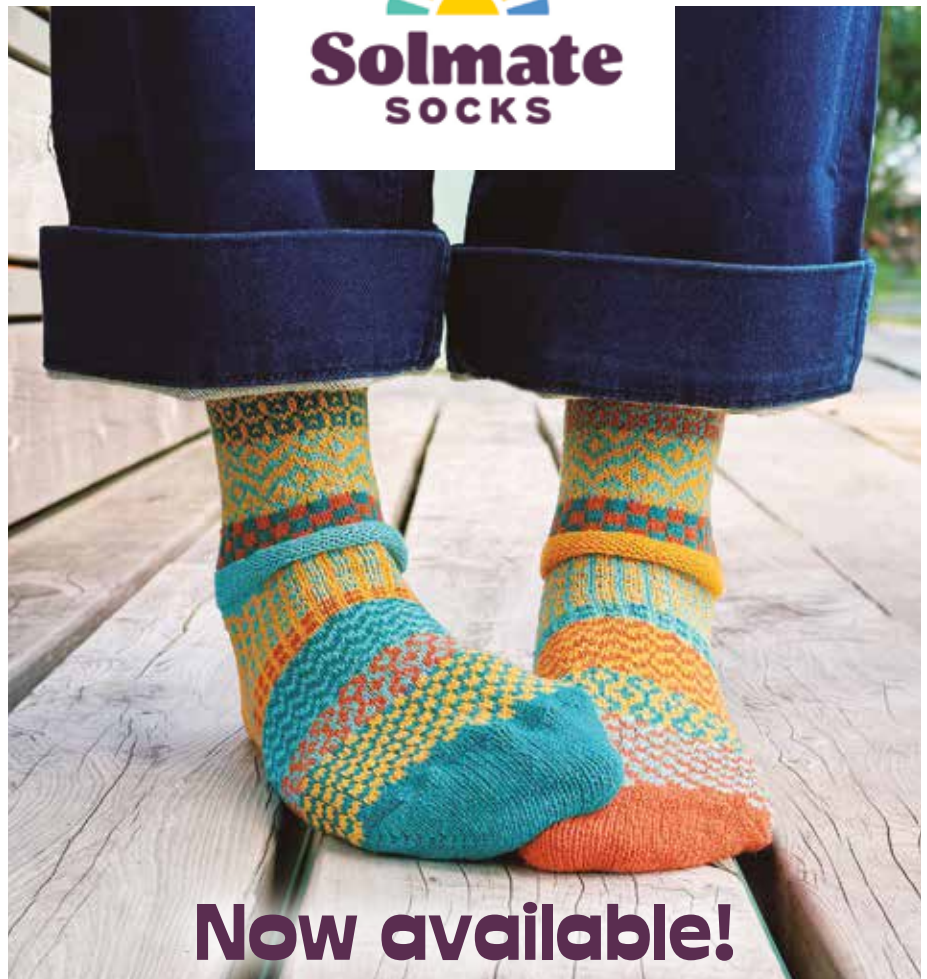
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WHAT'S TRENDING



COOL BLUES

This frosty color trend can be seen on fashion runways in cool blue coats and dresses, in makeup as shimmery pastel eyeshadows, and in room decor with soft slate or crisp ice-blue paint colors, velvet finishes, and frosted glass vases.



SNAIL MAIL

Pen-pal letters are making a comeback as people look for a break from digital overload and a more personal way to connect through handwritten notes, creative envelopes, snail-mail swaps, delayed-message apps, and paper subscriptions.

DARECATIONS

Trade traditional rest and relaxation for high-intensity physical challenges, adrenaline-fueled thrills, and mental tests, such as cliff camping, ice climbing, deep-cave diving, or big-wave surfing.



Fall Fads

September trends bring adventure, cool colors, and creative layering.

BY PHYLLIS COLLAR



ART DECO

Neo Deco brings Art Deco back for with sleek geometry, fan arches, glossy chrome or brass accents, rich jewel tones, rounded silhouettes, and a more restrained sense of glamour. Style it with one or two statement pieces, like sculptural lighting, a geometric mirror, or a bold metal accent, balanced with softer, tactile textures.



HELLO CABBAGE!

Goodbye cauliflower. Cabbage is having a moment in 2026, popping up everywhere from kitchens to home decor and fashion. It's affordable, versatile, and showing up in everything from fresh salads and kimchi cocktails to playful prints, handbags, tableware, ceramics, floral arrangements, and stylish home accents.



SCENT STACKING

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THE LATEST PRACTICES TO HELP YOU **Look and Feel Your Best**

By KATIE CARLSON

Conversations and consumer trends are reshaping the health, beauty, and wellness industry. People are realizing that the formula for a happier, healthier, and more confident self doesn't need to be complicated.

You can achieve optimal results and look and feel your best by focusing on the latest trends. Embrace these ideas and give them a try to see if they make a difference.



1. Minimal Skincare and Simplified Routines (aka 'Skinimalism')

One of the latest beauty practices is minimal skincare and simplified routines. There is a term for this floating around that you may or may not have heard: "skinimalism." It's a quick, easy routine that doesn't require 10 steps. Commit to using fewer, yet higher-quality products and formulas that serve multiple purposes. Invest in a gentle cleanser and a barrier-supporting moisturizer. Companies are even creating makeup that enhances your skin rather than just covering it up. The emphasis is on consistency rather than a long list of steps and products.

2. Slow Wellness

Another trend is slow wellness. Many are embracing this movement, which promotes sustainable wellness versus trying to master every health metric. For example, it entails more time spent outdoors in nature and committing to digital detoxes. Not only should you aim to have simpler daily routines, but also make room for walking, engaging with the community, and not feeling bad about carving out more time for rest and recovery. Slow living habits are being viewed in a more positive light, and many are reaping the benefits.



3. Commitment to Enhanced Nutrition

It's always wise to pay close attention to what you put in your body. What you eat not only impacts your overall health but also your appearance and mood. Instead of relying on beauty products alone, you can make a difference in how you look and feel by fueling up with the right nutrition. Consider consuming fewer processed foods, adding protein and fiber, choosing anti-inflammatory foods, or following a Mediterranean-inspired diet.



4. Recovery & Wellness-Focused Vacations

The last way you want to feel after some time off is like you need another vacation. Many people realize you don't have to be on your feet all day sightseeing to have a good time. Wellness travel, restorative destinations, and healthy activities are increasingly popular. The next time you're planning a trip, ask yourself if it supports recovery and your long-term health, or drains your energy.



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THE LIFE LIST

(ROMANTIC COMEDY 2025)

STARRING: SOFIA CARSON (ALEX)



This film is based on a novel by Lori Nelson Spielman. Alex's mom passes away from cancer, leaving the whole family heartbroken and dealing with grief. When the time comes to find out about the inheritance, all of the siblings receive their portion except Alex. Her mom had a different plan to help her continue growing in life, even from the grave.

Her mom's last wish was for Alex to finish a bucket list she had made when she was younger before receiving any of her inheritance. She believes Alex has given up on her dreams and hopes, and by doing this bucket list, she'll rediscover herself and find what truly makes her happy in life.

SECRET OBSESSION

(THRILLER/MYSTERY 2019)

STARRING: BRENDA SONG (JENNIFER)



After getting hit by a car, Jennifer ends up in the hospital with no memory of who she is. When her husband shows up, she tries to remember him, but no memories come to her. An investigation is started to find out who was driving the car, but with Jennifer not remembering the night, they have very little to go on. Once the doctors give her the all-clear,

the couple goes back home in the hope that it will spark some memories. As time goes on, little snippets of memories come back here and there, causing this weird feeling that something's wrong. Jennifer begins doing her own investigating in hopes of discovering the truth.

THRASH

(HORROR/ACTION 2026)

STARRING: PHOEBE DYNEVOR (LISA)
AND WHITNEY PEAK (DAKOTA)



When a Category 5 hurricane floods a coastal town in South Carolina, not all the residents are lucky enough to get out in time. A family of three kids is left to fend for themselves. Lisa, who is ready to give birth any minute, tries to outdrive the storm when her car becomes trapped under a tree. A young girl named

Dakota, trapped in her home all alone, tries to help bring Lisa to safety. The residents soon find out that the high water isn't the only danger coming for them. The waters have been infested with bull sharks, and they are hungry. Now the only choice they have is to fight for their survival and hope help comes to rescue them.

STOLEN BABY: THE MURDER OF HEIDI BROUSSARD

(DRAMA/CRIME 2023)

STARRING: EMILY OSMENT (MAGEN)
AND ANNA HOPKINS (HEIDI)



Based on a true story about the murder of Heidi Broussard. Magen and Heidi have been best friends since they were 16. Now, as adults, they are both expecting a baby around the same time. The only problem is that Magen is faking her pregnancy to get her boyfriend, Greg, to stick around. Three weeks after Heidi has her baby

girl, they both go missing. Heidi's fiancé, Cody, calls the police to file a missing persons report. All of Heidi's friends and family put together a search party and will do anything to find them.

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.



As the summer travel season comes to a close, your own personal voyage of discovery doesn't have to. This October, the Fox Cities Performing Arts Center is opening its doors to the wider world, serving up a spectacular multi-continental itinerary that spans European art, local history that crosses oceans, and the blinding lights of the Vegas Strip. Think of this as your ultimate fall passport for a globetrotting adventure, all without leaving the Fox Cities.

Stop 1: Ballet Hispánico's *CARMEN.maquia* (Oct. 7)

We arrive at your first destination in early October with an electrifying cultural cocktail of Picasso-inspired dance. Hailed as a "masterpiece" by the *Chicago Sun-Times*, *CARMEN.maquia* is a bold, contemporary reimagining of Bizet's beloved tragic opera brought to life by the famed Ballet Hispánico — a company that Fox Cities audiences already know and love from their visit in 2023. The sensual choreography blends fluid contemporary movement with the sharp, passionate styling of traditional Spanish flamenco and paso doble to create a visually arresting production with elaborate partnering and evocative, minimalist set design.

Stop 2: *The Accidental Hero* (Oct. 22)

Next, our journey takes a deeply personal turn with a story that brings international intrigue to our own backyard. *The Accidental Hero* chronicles the astonishing World War II legacy of Patrick Dewane's grandfather, Lt. Col. Matt Konop, who led the heroic advance unit that liberated Bohemian villages in Czechoslovakia in 1945. In a true twist of fate, Konop was unaware that he was stepping into the ancestral region

his own family had emigrated from; speaking the native Czech dialect, he was embraced by the townspeople as a liberator "from among us." Today, his image hangs proudly on monuments abroad and on memorial plaques in his hometown of Two Rivers. Featuring live musical flourishes from regional legends Copper Box, this unforgettable performance explores bravery, destiny, and the family bonds that time and oceans can't break.

Stop 3: *Lance Burton Master Magician & Friends* (Oct. 30)

To close out the month, the travel itinerary shifts from history and geography to a realm where reality itself bends. Lance Burton is Las Vegas royalty, having been named "Best Magician" by the *Las Vegas Review-Journal* for an incredible 18 consecutive years and famously praised by Johnny Carson as "the best I've ever seen." With his brand-new live tour, *Lance Burton Master Magician & Friends*, he is packing up the grand illusions, astonishing sleight-of-hand and enthusiastic audience participation of the Strip and bringing them straight to our stage. Featuring a lineup of amazing guest stars, this high-caliber Vegas headlining act promises an evening of "how'd-they-do-that?" wonder that is perfectly suited for a multi-generational family night out.

Ready to see the world from your seat in the theater? Whether you are looking to be swept away by the passion of a Spanish dance, moved by an extraordinary piece of World War II history, or utterly mystified by Vegas-approved illusions, your seat is waiting. Skip the airport lines this fall and secure your window to the world at foxcitiespac.com.



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EXPECT PACK TO MAKE LATE-SEASON PUSH

By TIM FROBERG

THE GREEN BAY PACKERS ENTER THE 2026 SEASON AS A BIT OF A MYSTERY TEAM.

Are they the contender that looked Super Bowl worthy 13 games into the 2025 season? Or are they the pretenders that melted like Popsicles in a microwave down the stretch without team leader and elite edge rusher Micah Parsons?

We're about to learn the Packers' true identity ... and buckle up, Green Bay fans, because it's going to be a wild ride.

What makes Green Bay such a tough read is that two of its best players, Parsons and tight end Tucker Kraft, are coming off major torn ACL injuries. The two are highly dedicated, incredibly motivated football guys, and the guess here is that both will come back strong and play close to their pre-injury form.

But you never really know with ACLs. Some players — and I'm thinking Rashan Gary here — are never the same, and some (David Bakhtiari) never really make it back. The Packers survived Kraft's absence last season by making adjustments in the passing game, but the wheels fell off without Parsons in a brutal 0-5 finish that had many screaming for Matt LaFleur's dismissal.

Parsons is expected to miss much of the season's first half. That's problematic considering three of Green Bay's first four games are on the road and the team couldn't get in the same ZIP code as opposing quarterbacks without him. With Parsons, the Packers looked like a top-five team that played with confidence. Without him, Green Bay's swagger became a stagger.

The Packers must learn how to win without Parsons — or at least hold serve and play .500 football until he fully returns. That should be doable considering Green Bay has plenty of high-end talent, including a franchise-caliber quarterback in his prime (Jordan Love); a solid receiving corps led by playmakers Kraft, Christian Watson, Jayden Reed and Matthew Golden; an upper-tier running back (Josh Jacobs); and some established (Xavier McKinney, Zaire Franklin), and ascending

(Edgerrin Cooper, Evan Williams, and Javon Bullard) players on a new-look defense.

The key offensively will likely be an O-line that underachieved last season. Jordan Morgan must emerge as an adequate starter at left tackle, and Green Bay needs its best lineman, tackle Zach Bako-Bewe (formerly Zach Tom), to stay on the field. Keep an eye on promising second-year guard Anthony Belton, who could add considerable punch to the running game with his people-moving ability.

Defensively, new coordinator Jonathan Gannon must find ways to pressure quarterbacks without Parsons. I don't care if it's Lukas Van Ess, Barryn Sorrell, Dani Dennis-Sutton, Brenton Cox Jr., or Bobby Boucher; the Packers must find legitimate pass rushers not named Micah or deal with the potential of weekly shootouts. If I'm Gannon, I'm going to do everything I can to unleash the pass-rushing power of the explosive Cooper.

Gannon's work will be much easier if the team can keep defensive tackle Devonte Wyatt healthy. Gannon's defenses have always been built around monsters in the middle like Jalen Carter, and Wyatt is a difference-maker, but injuries always seem to minimize his impact.

So how's it going to shake out? My guess is that the Packers will start slowly and

finish strong. Love and his playmakers might need to score a ton of points to keep Green Bay from unraveling early while the Parsons-less defense develops.

If Parsons returns by November looking like the game-wrecker he was before the injury, Green Bay should benefit from a late-season schedule with four of the last five games at Lambeau.

I see the Packers finishing 10-7 and entering the playoffs with a burst of momentum instead of their customary limp. Expect storms in the first half of the season. But if the Packers can weather them and get rolling upon Parsons' return, they might have what it takes to play February football.



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

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CAPITOL CENTRE SPORTS BAR & GRILL

For decades, Appleton has gathered at Capitol Centre for legendary burgers, great community, and comfort food.

By JENNI EICKELBERG

Good Food, Good People

Capitol Centre

SPORTS BAR & GRILL

By JENNI EICKELBERG



Capitol Centre Sports Bar & Grill has been part of Appleton's community for decades. The "Cap" is known for its easygoing atmosphere, friendly staff, and a menu full of comfort-food favorites. The building first opened as the Golden Globe in the mid-1980s before the Plamann brothers purchased it in 1999 and renamed it Capitol Centre. In late 2023, ownership passed to Mike and Kay Gonnering — two people who never expected to run a restaurant but stepped in out of necessity and quickly took on the challenge.

"We're not used to talking about ourselves," Mike said. "The staff deserves the credit for the quality food we serve." He and Kay enjoy cooking, but they're quick to point out that the flavors people love come from the team in the kitchen. Their philosophy is simple: serve good, straightforward meals made with fresh ingredients — the same kind of food they look for when they go out to eat.

This approach shows up across the menu. Capitol Centre starts with quality products, many of which are sourced through local partnerships such as Simple Simon's Bakery and Jacobs Meat Market. "Fresh is a game changer," Mike said. And while customers often say they don't like change, he's found they do enjoy new options. Be sure to watch for their updated menu, which will bring back favorites while introducing a few new choices.

During a recent visit, I sampled several dishes that show exactly why Capitol Centre has earned such a loyal following. The bacon cheeseburger is a juicy, surprisingly large half-pound patty topped with bacon and a choice of cheese. Their burgers are hand-pattied and taste even better than the ones made at home — big, flavorful, and cooked just right. The Bourbon-Shroom Burger takes things a step further with a warm mushroom blend,



bourbon-shroom gravy, and Swiss cheese on a ciabatta bun. It's rich, savory, and deeply comforting.

The Baja wrap brings a smoky, spicy bite with sliced tender steak, mushrooms, onions, pepper jack cheese, lettuce, and chipotle mayo. The grilled teriyaki chicken sandwich, topped with Asian slaw and a sweet soy glaze, offers a fresh, bright contrast to the rest of the lineup.

And don't miss the chippers — thin-sliced potatoes fried crisp and served with a side of Vidalia dip. The dip alone is worth the trip; its sweet, savory flavor absolutely blew me away.

Specialty burgers are a big part of the Cap's menu, and there are plenty of creative options beyond the ones I tried. Mike also pointed to other customer favorites: hand-battered jumbo chicken tenders, jumbo traditional wings, and their specialty pizzas.



Capitol Centre is so much more than a bar and grill. Their Event Centre can host gatherings from small celebrations to events with up to 200 guests. Weekly events like trivia, bingo, line dancing, cornhole, mobile golf, and Singo keep the place lively and give people plenty of reasons to stop in. But you do not have to visit in person to experience the menu; they also deliver through DoorDash.

Capitol Centre Sports Bar & Grill continues to be exactly what Appleton loves: great food, a welcoming environment, and a team that takes pride in what they serve. As Mike put it, "We start with great products at a good value in a friendly, comforting environment."

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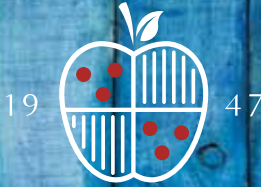


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Golden Rice Bowls With Ground Turkey

By CARLY CERNIGLIA



Beautifully golden rice is the star of the show in this easy dinner! Loaded with protein from ground turkey and Greek yogurt, this flavorful meal is both light and filling. However, the real winner might be what ties it all together: a zesty salad made with plenty of sumac and bright red onion. Mixed together, it is the perfect bite!

Serves 4-5

For the Golden Rice

Ingredients:

2 tablespoons olive oil
1 cup diced white onion
Three garlic cloves, minced
1 tablespoon tomato paste
1 teaspoon turmeric
1 teaspoon sweet paprika
1 teaspoon ground coriander
1/4 teaspoon black pepper
1 teaspoon kosher salt
1 pound ground turkey
1 cup jasmine rice
2 1/2 cups chicken broth

Directions:

In a large sauté pan with a lid, heat the olive oil. Add the onion and sauté until golden, about 5 minutes. Add garlic, spices, and tomato paste. Cook 2 minutes, stirring. Add ground turkey. Cook, stirring as needed, until turkey is done. While turkey is cooking, rinse the rice and drain. Add the rinsed rice to the pan once the turkey is cooked through, and cook for 1 minute, stirring. Add chicken broth and bring to a boil, stirring as needed. Reduce heat to a simmer, cover with lid, and set a timer for 20 minutes. Every 5 minutes, stir the rice. After 20 minutes, test the rice for doneness. Continue cooking if needed. Once done, remove from heat.

For the Sumac Salad

Ingredients:

1 cup thinly sliced red onion
Two small cucumbers, thinly sliced
1 cup quartered cherry tomatoes
1/4 cup parsley, minced
2 tablespoons fresh mint, minced
2 tablespoons olive oil
2 tablespoons red wine vinegar
2 teaspoons ground sumac
3/4 teaspoon kosher salt

Directions:

While the rice is cooking, in a medium bowl, mix red onions, red wine, salt, and olive oil. Let sit 5 minutes. Add cucumbers, tomatoes, herbs, and sumac. Stir. Let sit 15 minutes.

For the Lemony Yogurt

Ingredients:

1 cup plain Greek yogurt
One lemon
One garlic clove

Directions:

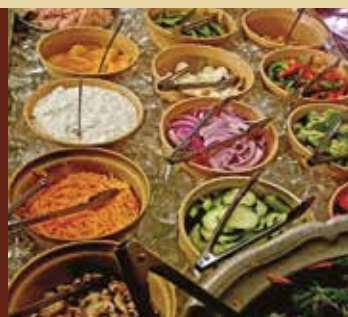
Place yogurt in a small dish. Zest the lemon and set zest aside for garnish. Juice the lemon, and add 1 tablespoon of lemon juice to the yogurt. Using a microplane, carefully grate garlic clove into the yogurt. Stir until well combined. Set aside.

To assemble: Divide rice into 4-5 portions. Top with lemony yogurt and sumac salad. Enjoy!

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WOMEN-LED COFFEE SPOTS STIRRING UP SUCCESS

By JASON PATZER

The last time my column was in our Women Inspire Awards issue, I wrote about nine different woman-owned or led coffee spots. You can still read that article on my website under the features tab, in the September 2024 issue. That was two years ago now, and I wanted to take this opportunity to update you on two of those businesses and add a fantastic new one.

Both updates involve mobile coffee campers opening full-time brick-and-mortar storefronts. Sonder Coffee started by operating the old Benjamin Brewer Shasta trailer but took the leap to brick-and-mortar in March of this year. They can be found at 540 Pearl St. in Oshkosh. On my last visit there, I treated myself to an espresso tonic and a hot ham-and-cheese grilled sandwich. They offer fun monthly specials, pre-bottled lattes, and cold-brew concentrate for drink-making at home. They have sold their coffee camper, and this is their only location. They are open daily 7 a.m.-4 p.m.

Little Birdie Treats & Coffee opened “The Nest” in Greenville. They have expanded their “treat” offerings and their coffee menu. Last time I was there, I had one of their famous cinnamon rolls and a nice cup of coffee. They also offer pre-bottled lattes at a few locations, including The Meat Block and Haen Meats. After their original camper, Birdie, was totaled in a car accident in the fall of 2025, they



were able to launch a bigger vehicle aptly named “Big Bird” this past spring. Big Bird operates a busy summer schedule, which is posted on their socials weekly. Their Greenville location offers regular daily hours.

The new addition to the list is technically not even a coffee shop, but they are just too good not to mention, and they do serve coffee. Cheeky Doughnuts in Kimberly opened in the fall of 2024. It’s been a labor of love for Kim and her daughters, who completely remodeled the space themselves, with a little help from friends and family. They offer fresh, made-to-order doughnuts that aren’t sitting in a case waiting for you. They are only fried and topped when you order and are served warm. The coffee they serve is roasted by a great little spot in Door

County called Isely Coffee Roasters. They picked Isley as an homage to Kim’s connection to and love of Door County. They also offer a great decaf option roasted by Coffee Wizardz in Allouez and Appleton. That way, no matter what time of day you’re there, you can still enjoy a coffee with your doughnut. They are also the only local shop that I know of that offers coffee floats — yes, like a root beer float, but with coffee. Their base is salted caramel ice cream, and you can get either hot or iced coffee with it. They have been known to offer seasonal ice cream options with it as well. Here’s looking at you, pumpkin season ...

Jason Patzer has spent more than 16 years immersing himself in the coffee industry. Through his website, patzercoffee.com, and social media accounts, he shares his passion and highlights local shops, coffee trends, tips and tricks, and unique brews from his travels.

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OUTDOOR PATIO FOR FALL DINING!



Shake-and-Go Mason Jar Salad

By CARLY CERNIGLIA

Mason jars are an ideal, portable container to prepare salads in for a quick grab-and-go lunch. You can prep them on Sunday and have them ready in your fridge for the work week.

There are a few key steps to follow to make the perfect mason jar salad, but the combinations and flavors are endless once you get it down. The general rule to remember is: wet on bottom, dry on top. The dressing always goes in first. Harder vegetables, beans, or meats that can handle the dressing and will marinate go next. Then, layer up your favorite veggies, olives, quinoa, nuts, cheese, or even pasta. Always end with the lettuce greens. Have fun and be creative.

Here is a Mediterranean flavor combination for you to try.

INGREDIENTS

For dressing:

1/2 cup olive oil
1/4 cup red wine vinegar
One shallot, finely chopped
One garlic clove, minced
1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
1 teaspoon Italian seasoning
1/2 teaspoon salt, to taste
1/4 teaspoon pepper

For Salad:

1 15-ounce can garbanzo beans, drained and rinsed
One small red onion, sliced
One English cucumber, chopped
1 cup cherry tomatoes, halved
1 12-ounce jar marinated artichoke hearts
1 cup kalamata olives, pitted
1/2 cup feta cheese
4 cups greens of your choice

DIRECTIONS

In a small bowl, whisk together vinegar, shallot, garlic, mustard, and Italian seasoning. Slowly whisk in oil until well blended. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

Prepare four wide-mouth, quart size mason jars with lids. Pour 3 tablespoons of dressing into each jar.

Layer in the following order: chickpeas, red onion, cucumber, tomatoes, artichoke hearts, black olives, feta cheese, and lettuce greens.

Screw on lids and refrigerate up to four days.

To serve: Shake and pour salad out onto plate or bowl.

Enjoy!





Happy Fall-idays!

Fall or autumn – whatever you prefer to call it! – is the time of year when we celebrate the beauty and wonder of everything Wisconsin has to offer. We get to enjoy the colors of the season, including walks on the trails, football games, Halloween, and get-togethers with family and friends. It is also the perfect time for those year-end summer sales plus garage and sidewalk sales.

Chef Carly will be featuring A HOLE NEW WORLD OF THE BELOVED BAGEL so be sure to join us in October!

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Makes 12 Muffins

Ingredients:

For the Muffins

1/2 cup butter, melted

1 cup sugar

1/3 cup vegetable oil

Two eggs

1/3 cup plain Greek yogurt

1 tablespoon vanilla paste

3 cups flour

1 teaspoon baking powder

1/2 teaspoon baking soda

1/4 teaspoon kosher salt

1 cup heavy cream

1 1/4 cups mini chocolate chips, divided

For the Crumble Topping

1/4 cup butter, room temperature

1/3 cup sugar

1/2 cup flour

Dash of cinnamon

Directions:

Start with all ingredients at room temperature.

In a large mixing bowl, whisk together melted butter, sugar, vanilla, yogurt, vegetable oil, salt, eggs, and heavy cream until combined. Stir in flour, baking powder, and baking soda until just combined. In a small bowl, toss 1 cup of mini chocolate chips with a sprinkle of flour. Stir into muffin batter. Cover with plastic wrap and let rest on the counter for 45 minutes.

Once 45 minutes have passed, preheat the oven to 425 degrees F. Line every other well of two 12-cup muffin tins.

Make the crumble: In a medium bowl, use a fork to cut butter into remaining ingredients until combined and crumbly. Set aside.

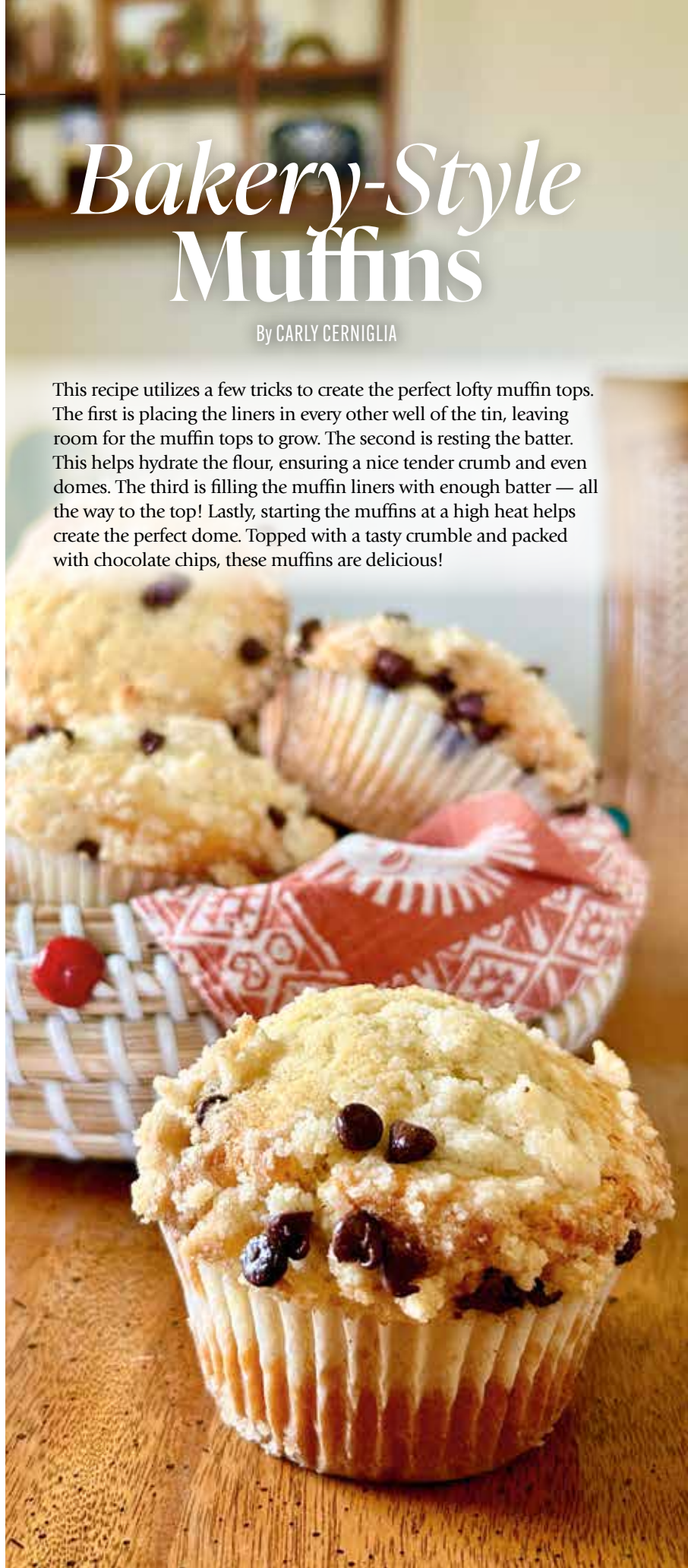
Scoop batter evenly into lined muffin tins. Fill until they are almost full, heaping a little. Top with crumble and remaining chocolate chips. Bake for 5 minutes.

After 5 minutes, keeping the oven door shut, lower the oven temperature to 350 degrees F. Bake an additional 20 minutes, or until a toothpick comes out clean when inserted in the center of a muffin. Muffins should be golden. Let cool in the muffin tins for 15 minutes, then remove to a wire rack to cool completely. Enjoy!

Bakery-Style Muffins

By CARLY CERNIGLIA

This recipe utilizes a few tricks to create the perfect lofty muffin tops. The first is placing the liners in every other well of the tin, leaving room for the muffin tops to grow. The second is resting the batter. This helps hydrate the flour, ensuring a nice tender crumb and even domes. The third is filling the muffin liners with enough batter — all the way to the top! Lastly, starting the muffins at a high heat helps create the perfect dome. Topped with a tasty crumble and packed with chocolate chips, these muffins are delicious!



Women AND WINE

By STEVE JOHNSON

Full disclosure: I write this as a man who grows, makes, and enjoys a lot of wine. Traditionally, wine critics and judges have been men. But things are changing in the wine world and probably for the better. Women now make up 16% of all U.S. winemakers and represent 50% of all students in enology and viticultural programs.

The reality is that approximately 60% of all wine is now purchased by women. Surveys show that nearly half of all female consumers in the U.S. prefer wine over beer and liquor. Therefore, it is time for wine discussion to become more female-centric.

But the reason is not just about numbers. I contend that women might have a better approach than men when it comes to wine. Science tells us that women often have a keener sense of smell and taste than men. But even more importantly, wine is a beverage of beauty, storytelling, and connection. Women are pretty good at those things.

I have dedicated the last 20 years of my life to growing and making the best, most distinctive, and authentic wines from this newest and most unexpected part of the wine world called the Wisconsin Ledge. I have learned a great deal, but above all, I have learned that the point of wine is to connect with one another and ourselves. I love wine and will occasionally enjoy a glass by myself, but I enjoy it most in the company of my spouse, friends, and acquaintances.

Women, like my beautiful wife, Maria, have shown me the power of presence — that is, the state of mind of being fully engaged with the place and person you are with. This is the most critical skill when enjoying wine. I can go through the five sensory steps of wine appreciation with the best of them and determine if a cabernet is Old World or New World, but connecting through the wine is what makes it more enjoyable than anything else.

Let's face it, women are frequently the planners and hosts who transform occasions into memories. Whether you are celebrating engagements, anniversaries, birthdays, or just Tuesdays, women know the importance of toasting with wine and celebrating one another and their loved ones. This is important because you will probably forget the name of that bottle of wine, but you will remember the conversations and atmosphere of those moments years later.

The story of our winery began with an impromptu lunch while on our honeymoon in Napa Valley in August 1994. At the Inglenook Winery, I found the least expensive bottle of wine I could afford and a baguette, and we snuck out into their vineyards and popped the cork. I turned to Maria and said, "Why doesn't someone do this in Wisconsin?" I don't remember the wine, but we both remember the moment like yesterday.



*Steve Johnson is co-owner and winemaker at Parallel 44 in Door County. His passion is growing and crafting wines from Northeast Wisconsin, an unexpected but increasingly recognized corner of the wine world. His book *Be a Trailblazer: Lead with Authenticity* is scheduled for release this September.*

Apple Cider Old Fashioned

Embrace the flavors of fall with this seasonal twist on a classic old fashioned. Sweet maple syrup, aromatic bitters, and fresh apple cider create a smooth yet spiced sip that's perfect for cozy fall evenings — and it looks beautiful in a glass.



By SARAH PETERSON

INGREDIENTS

2 ounces bourbon or whiskey
2 ounces fresh apple cider
1 teaspoon pure maple syrup
2-4 dashes Angostura
or orange bitters
Garnish: cinnamon sticks,
apple slices, or orange peels.

DIRECTIONS

Combine cider, bourbon, maple syrup, and bitters in a cocktail shaker or mixing glass with ice.

Stir vigorously until chilled, then strain into a rocks glass over one large ice cube.

Garnish with a cinnamon stick, a thin apple slice, and an orange peel.

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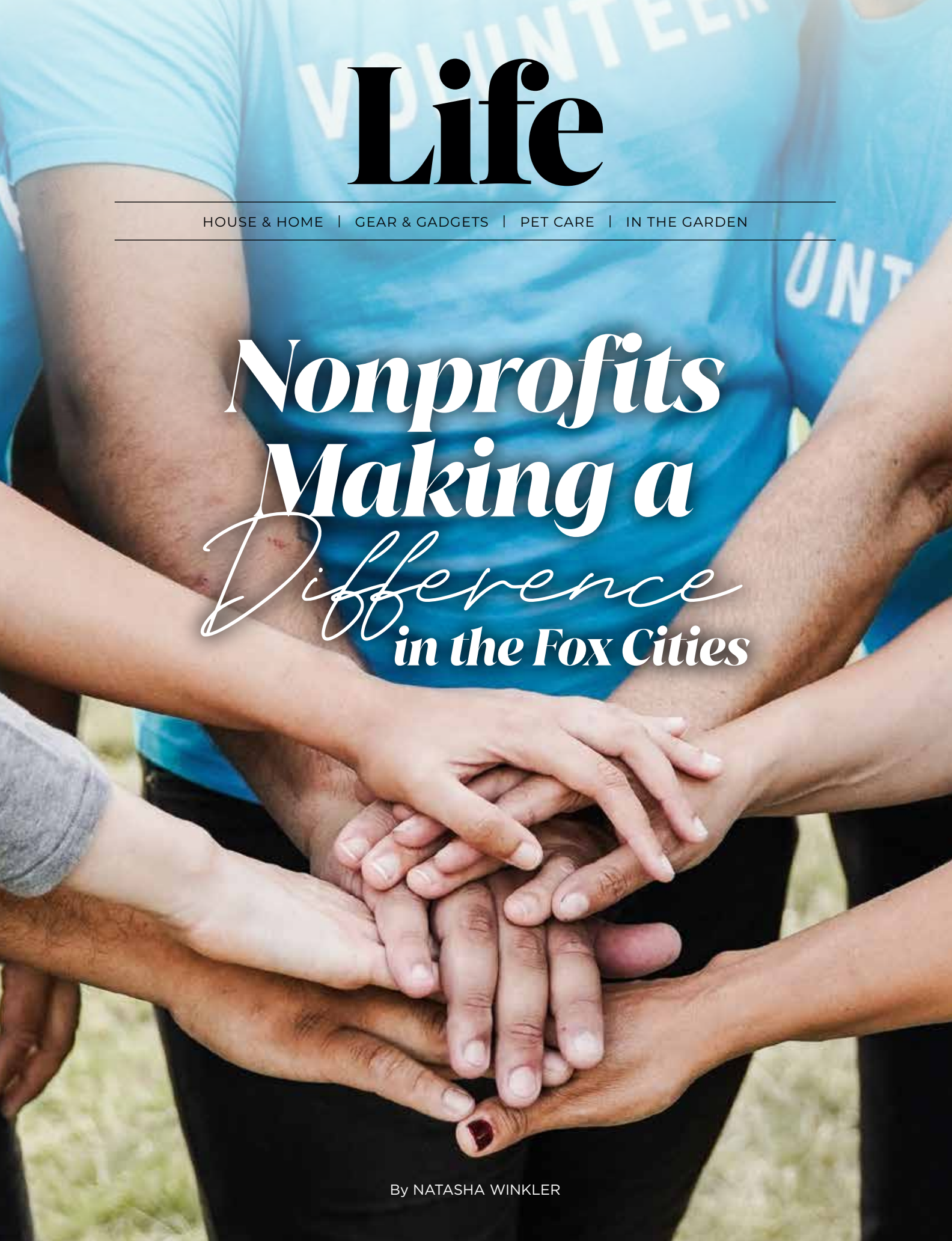
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Bloom N' Brew Co. is a hybrid flower shop, gift store, cafe, pub, and gaming venue. The family-friendly spot serves breakfast, lunch, and dinner, featuring standout morning items such as customizable bagel breakfast sandwiches with bacon aioli, potato scrambler bowls, yogurt parfaits, and protein-packed spinach and feta egg cups. Daytime favorites include craft burgers, the Bloom N' Brews Deluxe pizza, and Loaded Sidewinder Fries. A massive beverage menu caters to both morning coffee lovers and the night-out crowd, featuring their signature toasted peanut butter iced coffee and customizable Lotus energy drinks. Upgrade your favorite cold drinks into a 32-ounce souvenir bucket. Domestic beers, craft taps, and cocktails are also available.

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Life

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Nonprofits Making a Difference **in the Fox Cities**

By NATASHA WINKLER

Woven Together

How the Fox Cities Care for Their Own

By NATASHA WINKLER

In the heart of the Fox Valley, local vitality isn't measured solely by the energy along our main streets, the historic beauty of our riverfronts, or the peaceful neighborhood streets stretching across our cities, towns, and villages. The true measure of our region lies in the invisible, resilient threads of care woven through it every single day. As readers of *Appleton Monthly*, you already appreciate what makes our community extraordinary. Yet behind our economic growth and rich heritage lies an indispensable engine powering our high quality of life: our vibrant nonprofit sector. The organizations featured within this directory are far more than local charities — they are the vital safety nets, visionary educators, and dedicated stewards that keep the Fox Cities strong, compassionate, and connected.

The sheer diversity of these nonprofits mirrors the dynamic needs of our neighbors. When families hit unexpected crossroads, organizations like **LEAVEN** step in to prevent homelessness and stabilize households during acute financial crises. For those who served our country, **Wisconsin Veterans Village** offers a groundbreaking, veteran-centric community, designed to deliver affordable housing and tailored support. Meanwhile, specialized residential providers such as **Agape of Appleton** ensure individuals with complex needs live with dignity and independence, and **Big Brothers Big Sisters of East Central Wisconsin** provides the transformative mentorship that empowers local youth to reach their

full potential. These programs do far more than offer temporary aid; they uphold the fundamental dignity of every person who calls this Valley home.

Beyond essential basic needs, our nonprofits nourish the mind, spirit, and environment. Cultural gems like the **Bergstrom-Mahler Museum of Glass** and the creative spark of the **Fox Cities Performing Arts Center** enrich our lives with world-class artistry and performance. Concurrently, environmental guardians like the **Fox-Wolf Watershed Alliance** work tirelessly to protect our precious waterways and natural habitats for future generations. None of these initiatives operate on good intentions alone; they depend on the active generosity of residents and vital lifelines like mobile drives hosted by **The Community Blood Center**.

As you explore this directory, we invite you to view it not merely as a reference guide, but as a roadmap for meaningful engagement. Whether you choose to pack shelf-stable meals at the **St. Joseph Food Program**, fund academic opportunities through the **Appleton Education Foundation**, or donate your time to a local shelter, your involvement fuels a powerful effect. When we strengthen our nonprofit sector, we invest directly in safer neighborhoods, healthier families, and richer educational experiences for all. Turn these pages, discover a mission that speaks to your values or needs that you can help meet, and take your next step in shaping the future of the Fox Cities.



Community Program

Spotlights



PATHWAY
— OF —
HOPE

The Salvation Army – Fox Cities Pathway of Hope

While emergency food and shelter address immediate survival needs, breaking the cycle of intergenerational poverty requires a long-term strategy. The Salvation Army Fox Cities' Pathway of Hope initiative shifts the paradigm from temporary relief to lasting self-sufficiency for families with minor children. Rather than a quick fix, participants work with a dedicated caseworker to map out personalized milestones — from securing stable employment and education to mastering financial literacy and overcoming housing barriers. By tackling root causes like childcare and transportation hurdles, Pathway of Hope ensures families don't just survive crises, but build resilient, self-sustaining futures.

SERVICEWORKS®

Riverview Gardens – ServiceWorks Program

Located on the site of a former country club along the Fox River, Riverview Gardens operates an innovative urban farm that cultivates human potential through its ServiceWorks program. ServiceWorks is a 90-hour job training program designed to foster employment and stability for individuals facing barriers like poverty or homelessness. The program utilizes five social enterprises for hands-on training and provides three years of follow-up support to ensure job retention and success. Participants receive dedicated case management while harvested organic produce directly supplies local emergency food pantries. This closed-loop model empowers individuals to transition from public assistance to competitive employment.





Wisconsin Veterans Village Association – A Continuum of Care

Navigating the transition to civilian life or senior care presents complex challenges for military veterans. The Wisconsin Veterans Village Association (WVVA) addresses this through a groundbreaking neighborhood campus in Appleton, offering affordable, permanent housing across a complete continuum of care. The campus fosters a veteran-centric culture rooted in mutual respect and peer support, delivering integrated healthcare navigation, wellness initiatives, and social programming on-site. By relieving housing stress and social isolation, WVVA empowers veterans to age in place with dignity alongside peers who share their journey.



LEAVEN – The Power of Integrated Resource Navigation

A sudden medical bill or vehicle breakdown can quickly push a family living paycheck to paycheck toward eviction. LEAVEN (Local Emergency Assistance Network) serves as the Fox Valley's primary buffer against financial distress, evolving beyond emergency rental aid into a holistic stabilization hub. At its Community Resource Center in Menasha, LEAVEN co-locates multiple nonprofit partner agencies under one roof. Clients receiving emergency assistance are connected on-site to budget coaching, job placement aid, legal advocacy, and mental health counseling — eliminating transportation barriers and guiding families toward lasting stability.



NAMI Fox Valley – Iris Place Crisis Peer Respite

During a mental health crisis, emergency room visits can feel clinical and overwhelming. NAMI Fox Valley offers a compassionate alternative through Iris Place, one of Wisconsin's first crisis peer respite centers. Iris Place provides free, voluntary short-term stays for adults in emotional distress. Staffed entirely by certified peer specialists with lived recovery experience, guests receive 24/7 non-judgmental support while maintaining total personal autonomy — keeping their personal devices and daily work routines. This sanctuary de-escalates crises naturally while keeping individuals rooted in community support.

A

Agape of Appleton Inc.

Provides specialized residential, vocational, and adult day care services tailored for individuals with developmental disabilities and traumatic brain injuries.

920-734-9871
7 Tri-Park Way, Appleton
agapeinc.org

Appleton A Better Chance - ABC

Places high-achieving young men of color into supportive residential housing while they attend local public high schools.

920-852-5300
P.O. Box 424, Appleton
facebook.com/appletonabc

Appleton Community Music Inc.

Fosters local creative arts by backing original music performances, education initiatives, and grassroots musician support throughout the area.

120 N. Morrison St.
appletoncommunitymusic.org

Appleton Education Foundation

Founded to enhance public education by granting vital funding for creative learning projects across the Appleton Area School District.

920-832-1517
122 E. College Ave., Appleton
appletoneducationfoundation.org

B

B.A.B.E.S. Inc. Child Abuse Prevention Program

Offers free, nonjudgmental respite care and educational workshops designed to prevent child abuse and reduce parental stress.

920-733-6886
1331 E. Wisconsin Ave., Appleton
babeshelp.org

Beaming Inc.

Leverages equine-assisted services and adaptive riding lessons to improve physical, emotional, and cognitive well-being for participants of all ages.

920-851-6160
2692 County Road GG, Neenah
beaminginc.org

Bergstrom-Mahler Museum of Glass

Presents free world-class paperweight and art glass exhibitions to the public.

920-751-4658
165 N. Park Ave., Neenah
bmmglass.com

Big Brothers Big Sisters of East Central Wisconsin

Ignites the innate potential of youth by pairing them with adult volunteer mentors in professionally supported one-to-one relationships.

920-739-3542
1331 American Drive, Neenah
bbbsecw.org

Boys & Girls Clubs of the Fox Valley

Provides safe, engaging after-school environments where youth can access academic tutoring, healthy meals, and leadership development.

920-731-0555
160 S. Badger Ave., Appleton
bgclubfoxvalley.org

Building for Kids Children's Museum

Features two floors of hands-on interactive exhibits and STEM-focused discovery zones.

920-734-3226
100 W. College Ave., Appleton
buildingforkids.org

C

CASA of the Fox Cities

Recruits, trains, and supervises community volunteers who act as court-appointed special advocates for abused and neglected children.

920-257-4733
1500 N. Casaloma Drive, Appleton
casafoxcities.com

Casa Hispana Inc.

Advocates for and empowers the Hispanic and Latinx community through awareness, education, and celebration.

920-257-5699
1475 Opportunity Way, Menasha
casahispanawi.org

Center for Suicide Awareness

Offers immediate crisis support, suicide prevention education, and postvention resources to individuals and families in distress.

920-475-4748
centerforsuicideawareness.org

Child Care Resource and Referral

Connects parents with verified local childcare options tailored to their family's specific financial and scheduling needs.

920-886-1211
1001 W. Kennedy Ave., Kimberly
ccrrfoxvalley.org

Community Benefit Tree Inc.

Provides strategic guidance and practical support to families enduring severe financial hardship caused by sudden medical crises.

920-422-1919
1734 Ken Dale Drive, Kaukauna
communitybenefitree.org

Community Blood Center Inc.

Collects and supplies vital blood products to dozens of regional hospitals and medical facilities across the Midwest.

800-280-4102
4406 W. Spencer St., Appleton
communityblood.org

Community Clothes Closet

Supplies free, high-quality clothing, shoes, and household linens to individuals and families in need throughout Northeast Wisconsin.

920-731-7834
1465 B Opportunity Way, Menasha
communityclothescloset.org

Community Foundation for the Fox Valley Region

Manages hundreds of charitable donor funds and endowments to enhance local quality of life.

920-830-1290
4455 W. Lawrence St., Appleton
cfoxvalley.org

D-F

Feeding America Eastern Wisconsin - Appleton Center

Supplies millions of pounds of food annually to local hunger-relief programs.

920-202-3690
2911 W. Edgewood Drive, Appleton
feedingamericawi.org

Fox Cities Festival of Lights Inc.

Brings the community together each winter season by designing and erecting free public holiday light displays in Darbo Community Park.



920-421-5483
P.O. Box 693, Menasha
fcfestivaloflights.org

Fox Cities Habitat for Humanity

Partners with local low-income families to construct safe, decent, and affordable housing through sweat equity and zero-interest mortgages.

920-954-8702
921 Midway Road, Menasha
foxcitieshabitat.org

Fox Cities Performing Arts Center

Enriches the community by serving as a premier venue for live arts including theater, music, dance, educational opportunities, and cultural programs.

920-730-3760
400 W. College Ave., Appleton
foxcitiespac.com

Fox Valley Humane Association

Cares for thousands of homeless, abandoned, and neglected companion animals each year while facilitating adoptions into loving homes.

920-733-1717
N115 Two Mile Road, Appleton
foxvalleypets.org

Fox Valley Memory Project

Creates vibrant social connections and support networks for individuals living with memory loss, dementia, or Alzheimer's Disease.

920-225-1711
1800 Appleton Road, Menasha
foxvalleymemoryproject.org

Fox-Wolf Watershed Alliance

Dedicated to protecting, restoring, and advocating for the water resources throughout the Fox-Wolf River basin.

920-858-3982
526 W. Wisconsin Ave., Appleton
fwwa.org

Friends of High Cliff State Park

Works to preserve, enhance, and support the natural and historical assets of High Cliff State Park along Lake Winnebago.

920-989-1106
N7630 State Highway 114, Sherwood
friendsofhighcliff.org

Friends of the Grignon Mansion

Responsible for preserving, restoring, and interpreting Kaukauna's historic 1837 Grignon Mansion site.

920-766-6106
1313 Augustine St., Kaukauna
grignonmansion.org

G-K

Girl Scouts of the Northwestern Great Lakes

Builds courage, confidence, and character in young girls through skill-building activities, outdoor camping, and community service.

888-747-6945
4693 W. College Ave., Appleton
gsnwgl.org

Girls on the Run of Northeast Wisconsin

Combines dynamic running activities with character development lessons to empower young girls in third through eighth grade.

1806 Bond St. Suite 163, Green Bay
girlsontherunnew.org

Goodwill Industries of North Central Wisconsin

Converts retail donation store revenue into vocational training, employment services, and human support programs for individuals facing workplace barriers.

920-731-6601
1800 Appleton Road, Menasha
goodwillncw.org

Harbor House

Serves as the safety umbrella for victims of domestic abuse across Outagamie and Calumet counties by providing emergency shelter, crisis intervention, and legal advocacy.

920-832-1666
720 W. Fifth St., Appleton
harborhousewi.org

History Museum at the Castle

Presents interactive exhibits documenting Fox Valley history, local culture, and Harry Houdini's legacy.

920-735-9370
330 E. College Ave., Appleton
myhistorymuseum.org

King's Daughters Charity Circle of Appleton

Committed to funding and supporting health, welfare, and youth initiatives across the Fox Valley.

kingsdaughterswi@gmail.com
kingsdaughterswi.weebly.com

L-O

LEAVEN - Local Emergency Assistance Network

Provides crucial financial aid, case management, and resource navigation to area residents facing sudden housing, utility, or financial emergencies.

920-738-9635
1475 Opportunity Way, Menasha
leavenfoxcities.org

Missions of Honor

Organizes free, dedicated flights for military veterans to visit their war memorials in Washington, D.C.

920-257-2563
321 S. Nicolet Road, Suite A, Appleton
missionsofhonor.org

NAMI Fox Valley

Offers free mental health peer support groups, public education courses, and stigma-reduction programs to individuals living with mental illness and their loved ones.

920-954-1550
211 E. Franklin St., Appleton
namifoxvalley.org

Northeast Wisconsin Land Trust

Works to preserve, protect, and restore vital natural areas, forests, wetlands, and shorelines across 12 counties.

920-738-7265
14 Tri-Park Way, Suite 1, Appleton
newlt.org

P-R

Peaceful Purpose Inc.

Provides end-of-life care planning, grief education, and compassionate emotional support services to individuals facing terminal illness and their families.

920-515-4004
peacefulpurposeinc.com

Pillars Inc.

Operates adult and family emergency housing shelters while guiding clients toward permanent housing.

920-734-9192
605 E. Hancock St., Appleton
pillarsinc.org

Continued on page 78



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8 WAYS To Breathe New Life Into Your Home

By KATIE CARLSON

You don't need to complete a full renovation for your home to look more beautiful and function optimally. There are reasonable, cost-effective changes you can make that will give your home a facelift and bring it back to life.

It requires thoughtful enhancements that refresh your spaces and help you create a more comfortable and visually appealing home. Here are eight ways to breathe new life into your home and transform it for the better. When you're finished, your home will not only feel newer but also be a more enjoyable place to live.

1. Apply Fresh Paint

Fresh paint in your home is a great option because it's budget-friendly and makes an immediate impact on your spaces. If you have the time, energy, and motivation, it's a project you can take on yourself. Don't only consider new paint colors in the main living areas, but also paint your front door a vibrant hue and refresh a vanity or the kitchen cabinets. While neutral colors are a top choice for brightening up the walls in central locations, you may want to add an accent wall in an upstairs bedroom or use a bold color in a small half-bath.

2. Deep Clean Carpets and Windows

It's good to keep up with regular house cleaning. However, how often do you roll up your sleeves and dive in for a deep clean? For example, consider deep cleaning the carpets and windows. Your carpets get a lot of wear and tear, especially if you have kids and pets in your home. Ideally, you should have them cleaned every 12-18 months for optimal results. As for cleaning windows, doing so inside and out will remove dirt and grime buildup and allow more natural light to shine through.



3. Update the Entryway

You want to make sure your home makes a good first impression and instantly gives off positive vibes. One way to make this happen is through curb appeal, and the other is by updating the entryway. This is your chance to set the tone for the rest of the house and make guests feel welcome right from the start. Begin by painting the walls an attractive neutral color that brightens the space. Consider including pieces of furniture, such as a small bench or a table with fresh flowers. You'll want to have decent lighting and an area rug for shoes as well.

4. Revitalize the Kitchen Space

Your kitchen is the heart of the home. It's where you spend time preparing meals and visiting with family and friends. You don't necessarily have to spend a lot of money to make it look and feel more appealing and modern. A budget-friendly and effective way to breathe new life into your kitchen is to update the cabinet hardware and the faucet. Make sure your items are well-organized and that you have proper storage solutions. Adding a backsplash is a great way to bring color, style, and texture into your kitchen.

5. Create A Spa-Like Primary Bathroom

Wouldn't it be nice to have a spa-like experience in the comfort of your home? Well, you can with a few upgrades and tweaks to your primary bathroom. Focus on choosing a calming color palette and improving the lighting. Replace old towels and declutter your bathroom so it's clean and has very little visual noise. Not only bring in some greenery, but also incorporate natural elements such as bamboo, wood, stone, and linen. Make sure the room always smells good with an oil diffuser or candles, and include small luxuries like glass jars, soft slippers, and decorative storage baskets.

6. Spruce Up and Rearrange Furniture

Another way to breathe new life into your home is to spruce up and rearrange the furniture. There are several ways to upgrade and refresh old furniture pieces that are worn or dated, such as reupholstery, fresh paint, and new hardware. Create a more open look and feel in your rooms by removing certain pieces and strategically placing items to maximize space and enhance the flow. Pay attention to your soft furnishings as well, such as swapping out old throws and couch pillows and laying down a cozy area rug or two.

7. Improve the Lighting and Decor

The lighting in your home plays a big part in how welcoming and comfortable your spaces are throughout the day. Draw in natural light during the morning and afternoon hours, and use lamps, candles, and lights on dimmer switches in the evening. Replace dated fixtures with statement pieces and swap out light covers that are dingy and worn. Now is your opportunity to declutter your decor and include personalized items that put a smile on your face. You can showcase handmade or painted pieces, put out family photos, or create a gallery wall, and rotate seasonal decor items.

8. Refresh the Outdoor Living Space

It's also important to pay close attention to the exterior of your home. Refresh the outdoor living space so that you enjoy spending time outside when the weather cooperates. You can use it as a space to read a book in the sun or entertain guests. Spruce it up by power-washing the patio or deck and adding comfortable seating options. Incorporate flowers, plants, and water elements, and hang string lights. You'll want a grilling area and a plan for keeping the bugs at bay. Make sure you have options for getting shade, such as an umbrella or a pergola. You'll also want to keep up with landscaping tasks such as cutting back overgrown tree bushes and branches. Add fresh mulch and plant seasonal flowers that make your outdoor living space more beautiful and lively.

These tips will help ensure that your property is not only updated but also more beautiful and appealing. Decide which projects you can tackle now and in the future, and enjoy the opportunity to breathe new life into your home without too much trouble and money.



Prevent Suicide Fox Cities

Focuses on community-wide suicide prevention training, public education, and support for those impacted by suicide loss.

211 E. Franklin St., Appleton
preventsuicidefoxcities.org

Quad Communities Crime Stoppers

Coordinates anonymous tip reporting to assist law enforcement agencies in Kaukauna, Kimberly, Combined Locks, and Little Chute.

[facebook.com/
QuadCommunitiesCrimeStoppers](https://facebook.com/QuadCommunitiesCrimeStoppers)

Rawhide Youth Services

Provides comprehensive residential care, mental health counseling, special education, and job skills training for youth overcoming severe trauma and behavioral challenges.

920-982-6100
E7475 Rawhide Road, New London
rawhide.org

Riverview Gardens

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920-378-8527
1101 S. Oneida St., Appleton
riverviewgardens.org

S

Saving Paws Animal Rescue

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920-830-2392
N3141 Meade St., Appleton
savingpaws.com

SOAR Fox Cities Inc.

Empowers individuals with developmental disabilities through inclusive social, recreational, educational, and adaptive sports programs.

920-731-9831
211 E. Franklin St., Suite A, Appleton
soarfoxcities.com

Spierings Cancer Foundation

Grants direct financial assistance to local cancer patients enduring treatment-related costs while funding cancer research and care facilities.

920-706-1117
P.O. Box 171, Little Chute
spieringscancerfoundation.org

St. Joseph Food Program Inc.

Distributes fresh, nutritious groceries to thousands of low-income families, seniors, and individuals across the Fox Valley.

920-734-9461
1465 A Opportunity Way, Menasha
stjoesfoodprogram.org

St. Vincent de Paul

Operates local thrift stores while providing emergency financial aid, furniture vouchers, and food assistance to neighbors in need.

Appleton
1924 W. College Ave.
920-739-1679
svdpappleton.org
Neenah-Menasha
1425 S. Commercial St., Neenah,
920-727-1766
svdpneenah.org

T-Z

The Boys & Girls Brigade

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920-725-3983
109 W. Columbian Ave., Neenah
bgbrigade.com

The Salvation Army Fox Cities

Provides essential emergency housing assistance, food pantry support, disaster relief, and youth enrichment programs to community members in need.

920-886-3648
1525 Appleton Road, Menasha
[salvationarmyusa.org/wi/menasha/
appleton-road-corps](http://salvationarmyusa.org/wi/menasha/appleton-road-corps)

Tri-County Dental

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920-882-5500
9 Tri-Park Way, Appleton
tricountydental.org

United Way Fox Cities

Unites community resources to tackle root causes of local social issues across education, health, and financial stability.

920-954-7210
1455 Midway Road, Menasha
unitedwayfoxcities.org

Vets and Friends of Wisconsin Inc.

Offers food support, social gatherings, and peer networking resources specifically for military veterans and their families.

920-422-7706
100 W. Capitol Drive, Appleton
vetsandfriendsofwisconsin.org

Volunteer Fox Cities

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920-832-9360
1455 Midway Road, Menasha
volunteerfoxcities.org

Wisconsin Veterans Village Association

Operates a community campus in Appleton designed to provide affordable, permanent housing and integrated support services for military veterans.

920-574-3350
2919 W. Glenpark Drive, Appleton
wisvva.org

Women's Fund for the Fox Valley Region

Awards targeted grants to local programs that empower women and girls, fostering long-term economic security and leadership.

920-830-1290
445 S. Olde Oneida St., Appleton
womensfundfvr.org

YMCA of the Fox Cities

Operates multiple full-service family wellness branches offering youth sports, aquatic training, licensed childcare, and health programs across the region.

920-739-6135
218 E. Lawrence St., Appleton
ymcafoxcities.org

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for additional listings and
volunteer opportunities.



Past And Present Intersect In Volkswagen Buzz

By TIM FROBERG

The Volkswagen ID. Buzz gives off retro vibes with its 1960s hippie van look.

This bus-shaped vehicle may look like something peace-loving folks once drove to Woodstock, but it's about as cutting-edge as modern-day cars get.

It starts with the power source. The Buzz isn't a gas-guzzling mirage teleported from the Summer of Love. Its design clearly resembles the old Volkswagen buses from the 1960s, but the Buzz isn't a blast from the past. It's one of today's vehicles: an all-electric car.

The Buzz is also equipped with all the modern-day technology that 2026 consumers demand, such as driver assistance and safety gadgets, along with a 12.9-inch infotainment touchscreen with navigation.

Unlike the vans and buses from the flower power era, the Buzz has plenty of punch. It can accelerate to 60 mph in a swift 6.6 seconds.

The Buzz, which is classified as a minivan, also gets high marks for its smooth, safe ride and roomy interior. The Buzz hit the U.S. market in 2024, and gets its name from the buzzing sound of electricity

and its vintage exterior design mimicking a bus.

One of the main negatives of the Buzz is its steep price. It starts at roughly \$60,000 for a Pro S model, excluding a \$1,500 destination fee. The Pro S Plus runs from \$63,495- \$65,495, and the 1st Edition ranges from \$65,495-\$71,545. That's a lot of money for what is basically a family-oriented van, and buyers should be fully committed to an all-electric vehicle.

Another negative is its driving range of roughly 234 miles on a single charge, which is OK, but certainly not extraordinary. It takes 25-30 minutes to charge a Buzz to 80% capacity at a quick-charging station.

Reviews have been positive.

"At first glance, the 2025 Volkswagen ID. Buzz seems like a novelty," according to Edmunds.com, which gave it an 8.1 rating out of 10. "But live with this van, and you'll discover that it's genuinely useful. There's lots of space, plenty of tech and clever little interior touches. It has smooth, swift electric power and is exceptionally comfortable with cavernous cargo room. More range would be nice, but the ID Buzz is a compelling three-row EV."

U.S. News and World Report, which gave the Buzz a 7.9 rating out of 10, added: "The 2025 Volkswagen ID. Bus successfully captures the spirit of the original VW Bus, but with cutting-edge tech and modern minivan practicality. It isn't cheap, and some rivals are more well-rounded, but this VW is a fun and funky alternative to more traditional family haulers.

"It has a spacious and comfortable cabin, offers a balanced ride and handling, has capable powertrain options along with a long list of standard features including heated and ventilated front seats that massage you as you roll along."

Price: Starts at \$59,995

Body style: Five-door minivan

Powertrain: Electric APP 310 permanent magnet brushless motor

Horsepower: 282-335

Electric range: 234 miles on a single charge

Speed: Goes from zero to 60 mph in 6.6 seconds

Drive type: All-wheel drive

Is Your Pet Hiding Pain? Subtle Signs Every Owner Should Know

By DR. SETH OBERSCHLAKE

Our beloved pets often do not show pain the way we expect. Unlike humans, they can't tell us where it hurts, and their innate instincts help them mask discomfort rather than appear vulnerable. As a result, many dogs and cats live with painful conditions for weeks or months before owners realize anything is wrong — often dismissed as "just getting older."

In dogs, watch for slowing down on walks, hesitating before jumping into the car, sleeping more, struggling to rise, losing interest in play, licking or chewing one spot repeatedly, irritability, or panting without exertion. These are commonly mistaken for aging but can point to arthritis, dental disease, or back pain.

In cats, the signs are even harder to catch. Look for less jumping onto furniture, sleeping in odd spots, a decline in grooming, avoiding stairs, litter box changes, increased hiding, reduced appetite, or stiff, slower movement. Feline arthritis is far more common than most owners realize, yet often goes undiagnosed because it develops so gradually.

Don't overlook the eyes, ears, and mouth. Squinting, redness, cloudiness, tearing,



or rubbing at the face can signal eye pain, while head shaking, scratching, head tilting, or odor from the ears often point to painful infections. Oral pain is trickiest to notice since pets will often keep eating through it. Not chewing on toys, dropping food, chattering teeth, drooling, and chewing on one side can all be signs of dental discomfort.

Pain isn't only outward or physical — it can show up as anxiety, withdrawal, or

aggression, and pets may simply stop enjoying things they once loved.

Persistent changes lasting more than a few days warrant an exam. Try to get in as soon as possible if your pet can't bear weight on a limb, cries out repeatedly, has trouble breathing, stops eating for over 24 hours, seems unable to get comfortable, or shows sudden paralysis or weakness.

The good news: pain management in veterinary medicine has improved significantly. Medications, surgical options, and supplements can support long-term comfort, while therapies like laser treatment and acupuncture are increasingly used to ease inflammation and improve mobility — often alongside weight management and rehabilitation. Many pets benefit most from a combination tailored to their condition.

You know your pet best, and if something seems "off," trust that instinct — small behavioral changes are often the earliest clue your pet is hurting. Together, the veterinary team and pet owner can work as partners to keep our pets as comfortable as possible.

Dr. Seth Oberschlake is a 2014 graduate of the University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Veterinary Medicine. He has worked at Heritage Animal Hospital since 2015 and recently became the sole owner.

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Cinnamon

Cinnamon is a 6-year-old spayed female hound mix. She is sweet-natured and soulful, everything you would look for in a hound. She is in good physical shape for her age and still has plenty of love to give.



Sadie

Sadie is a 6-year-old spayed female coonhound mix. If you have a soft spot for hound ears and soulful eyes, look no further than Sadie. At 6 years old, she is still fit and energetic and would enjoy living with an active family.



Kiara

Kiara is a 1.5-year-old spayed female mixed breed. She can be bashful at first but is affectionate and fun-loving once she realizes she is safe. Kiara is still full of playful puppy energy and loves connecting with those she is comfortable with.



Sass

Sass is a 5-year-old female domestic shorthair. She is gentle and quiet, and she takes her time getting to know new people. She loves head scratches and making "happy biscuits." If you have a quiet lap and plenty of warm blankets, Sass is ready to meet you!

Wrapping Up the Garden:

Lessons Learned and **Big Plans** for Next Season

By HOLLY BOETTCHER

Doesn't it feel like summer slips away a little faster every year? One minute you're planting seeds, and the next the garden season is already winding down. Now is the perfect time to look back on what worked, what flopped, and everything in between. So, grab a cup of coffee and start planning for a great next year.

This year, one of my main goals was to find a better way to trellis my beloved tomato plants. I decided to use wooden pallets that were fastened together with screws. By growing a tomato plant at the base of each side, I was able to support the rapid growth by training and tying the branches as they reached the top. For the first time, my heirloom tomatoes (which can grow over 5 feet tall) had the room to expand without collapsing under the weight of their own mass.

Every year, I try something new. This March, when I started my tomato plants from seed, I also planted six different varieties of sweet peppers and started some artichoke plants.

The peppers were really fun! I ordered Jimmy Nardello, Ozark Giant, Habanada, Corbaci, Shishito, Sweet Bell, and, of course, jalapeño. It was interesting to see the different sizes and shapes, and I enjoyed grilling them for dinner and even pickling some. Since peppers freeze well, I also chopped and froze some for use during the long winter.

The artichokes were a disappointment! The growing instructions recommended placing them outside in early spring,

occasionally during a light frost, in order for them to set fruit. As I write this article, there are still no signs of emerging artichokes.

I love sunflowers and plant quite a few. The chipmunks dug some up, but they also planted some for me. And those are doing fantastic!

Annuals are quite pricey at the garden centers. So this year I started several dozen salvia plants from seeds. They are still blooming profusely, and their vibrant colors add interest to my numerous gardens. Also, the hummingbirds and other pollinators are always busy at work.

I've never had luck in the past at growing zinnias. I adore them because they are so colorful and are also a great nectar source. Since we have sandy soil, it's hard to start zinnias by sowing directly into the soil. Instead, I planted them in seed-starting containers. Once they were established, I transplanted them directly into my garden. This year they are the stars of the show, and I have nonstop butterflies visiting. Monarch and swallowtail butterflies especially are always flitting in and out of the blooms.

The garden season may be winding down, but the fun isn't over yet. I'm busy jotting down notes and dreaming up plans for next year. What will you try next season, or do a little differently? Whatever you decide, get out there and enjoy every moment in the garden!



Holly Boettcher is a Master Gardener, entrepreneur, and aspiring naturalist. Her love for the outdoors and nature shines through everything she does. Holly and her husband are the founders and former owners of Whistler's Knoll Vineyard, Hortonville. Follow Holly on her new Facebook page: Gardening Through Life with Holly.

DIRTBAGS, PIZZA, AND OTHER FAMILY TRADITIONS

For reasons that I'm sure will come out in therapy someday, I've spent a lot of time lately thinking about family traditions — how they begin, how a routine (boring!) becomes something greater (tradition!), and how (or maybe why) they end. I think about this stuff after my kids are asleep and the house is quiet. It's a tradition.

The balance is a tricky one — as an often-befuddled dad, I know that not even my best efforts to pin significance to certain meals or dates on the calendar will be successful. Because I know that traditions are fickle things. Fortunately, I've stumbled upon a few guidelines to keep in mind as you try, like me, to impress upon the youth the importance of Saturday morning cartoons.

No tradition starts as one. A few summers ago, my wife and I went on a camping trip with a few close friends whose kids were similar in age to ours. It was largely a rainout; I never wanted to camp again. But I was cajoled into it again the following year, and when the downpour came this time, I became one with the mud. I slopped through campground events like Chicken Drop Bingo and Russian Egg Roulette with a big ol' smile on my face. We just wrapped up our fourth such camping trip with the same group of enjoyable dirtbags (and their kids), and our sons are already counting the days til the next one. I am too.

Some things only become traditions with the benefit of hindsight. I'm the son of a retired pastor, and Sundays

were always special in our house for mostly holy reasons. But because Mom and Dad were always happy to have a low-effort dinner on that night — we even went to church in the evening! — Sunday night became pizza night somewhat by default. These many years



ONE MORE THING

By TYLER SJOSTROM

later, some of my favorite memories are sitting around the table eating Hot Stuff gas station pizza with my parents and brothers while the reverend tried and failed to conceal his delight during *Married...with Children*. We weren't looking for time-capsule memories.

We were just hungry and exhausted. But we found them anyway. And whenever I'm home, we never need to plan supper on Sundays.

Traditions are easiest to keep when more people are invested. My wife has a massive extended family, and I'm always impressed by their ability to get everyone together despite the distance. We tend to gather yearly, and it isn't easy (or cheap). But because so many are pulling in the same direction, and bugging the daylights out of each other to attend, these gatherings continue. I'd bet my life that they always will.

The only real rule when you have a tradition is that you try to keep it. You can't force a tradition into existence, but you can preserve one, and even resuscitate one under many circumstances. They're worth keeping, in my experience, and well worth the work.

So don't lose heart if you think you haven't started any true, hard-and-fast traditions. Because someday you may bite into a gas station pizza, or find yourself camping in the mud with the same dirtbags for the umpteenth year in a row, and you might learn otherwise.



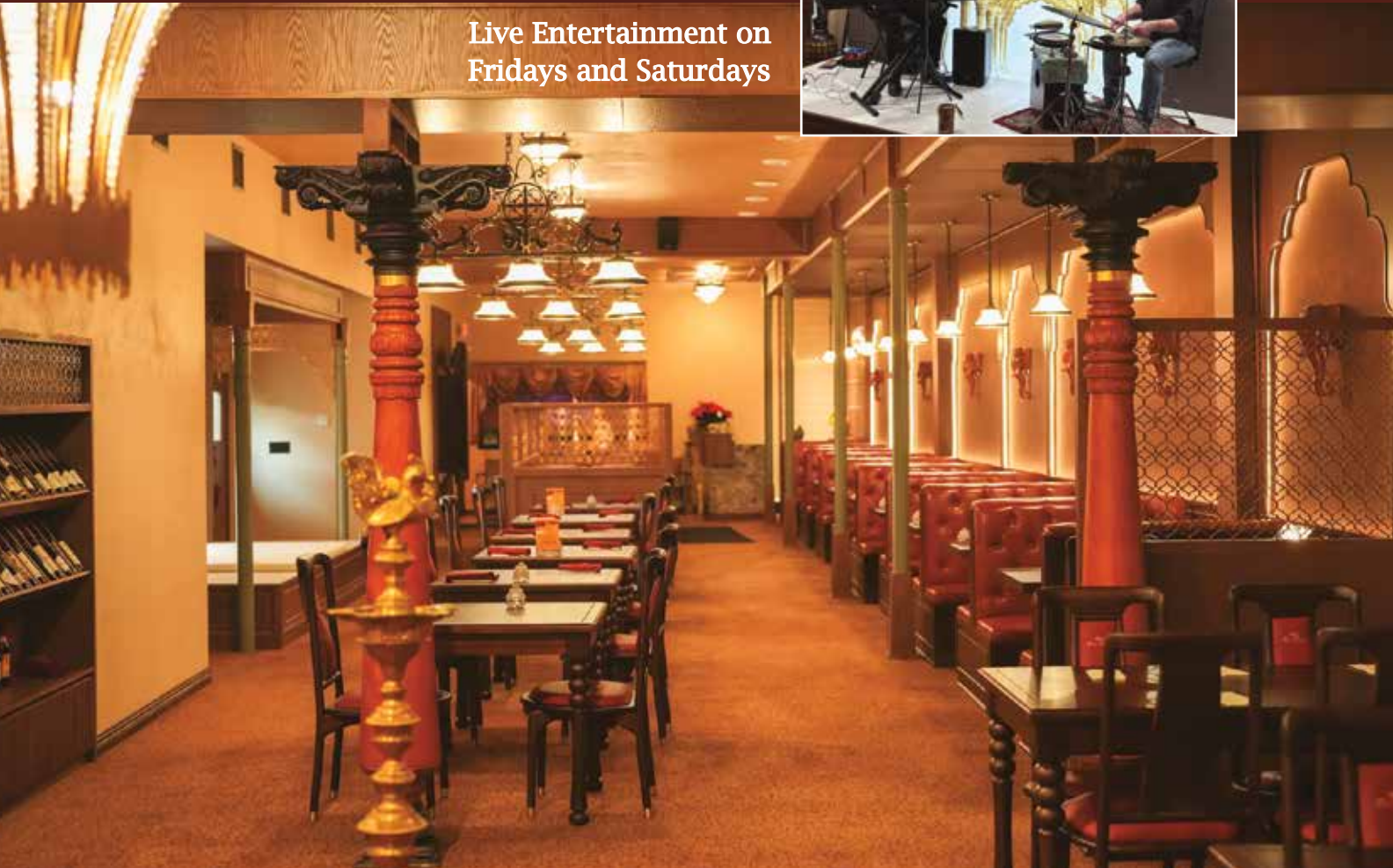
Tyler Sjostrom is an Appleton-based writer who will show you pictures of his kids whether you ask for them or not. Heckle him at tysjostrom@gmail.com or read more at tyler-sj.com.



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Building Beauty and the Next Generation

At Formosity Salon and Spa, owner Kate Bruesewitz has created more than a luxury beauty destination. She has built a place where guests feel genuinely cared for and emerging professionals are given the training, confidence, and support they need to thrive.

Kate Bruesewitz | Stylist/Owner, Formosity Salon and Spa

After more than 20 years in the beauty industry, Kate Bruesewitz knew exactly what she wanted when she created Formosity Salon and Spa in Appleton: a beautiful, elevated space where both guests and employees feel seen, heard, and valued.

For Kate, luxury has never been limited to high-end products or a beautifully designed salon. It is found in the details — the warmth of being welcomed by name, a thoughtful consultation, a service customized to the individual, and the ability to fully relax because you trust the person.

That philosophy became the foundation of Formosity, an Aveda salon and spa offering customized hair, skin, waxing, and natural nail services. Every part of the experience is designed with intention, combining advanced technique, premium products, and personal attention in a polished, yet welcoming environment.

But Kate's vision extended beyond the guest experience. She also wanted to create the kind of workplace she believed the beauty industry needed.

Throughout her career, Kate watched

talented new graduates struggle to bridge the gap between cosmetology school and working confidently behind the chair. She believed young professionals deserved a strong start.

"Training young talent became a true passion of mine," she said. "There is something incredibly rewarding about watching someone discover what they are capable of, gain confidence, and begin stepping into their own artistry."

That passion inspired Formosity's assistant training and mentorship program, created for cosmetology students and recent graduates who want more than just a first job. The program helps emerging stylists strengthen their technical skills while also learning the parts of the profession that cannot always be taught in school.

Mentorship is not treated as an occasional extra — it is woven into the salon's everyday culture.

That culture is guided by five core values: accountability, growth, luxury, love, and consistency. These values influence how the team serves guests and maintains the high standards associated with the Formosity name.

Kate believes investing in the next generation strengthens more than one salon.

"When we train and support young professionals, we raise the standard of care, creativity, and professionalism throughout the entire beauty industry," she said. "My goal is to help them build careers they are proud of — not simply teach them how to perform a service."

Today, Formosity Salon and Spa represents the combination of Kate's two greatest professional passions: making people feel genuinely beautiful and helping young talent become confident, capable professionals.

It is a place where luxury feels personal, and the next generation is given room to learn, grow, and thrive.

Formosity

SALON AND SPA

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