

# 5IVE FOR WOMEN™

APR | MAY 2014

VOL 3 | NO 2

FAITH | FAMILY | FRIENDS | FITNESS | FINANCE

*New Beginnings*

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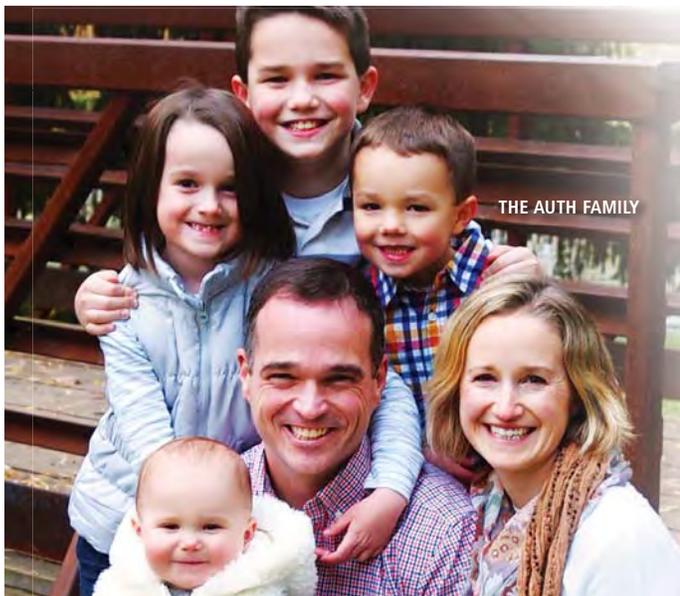
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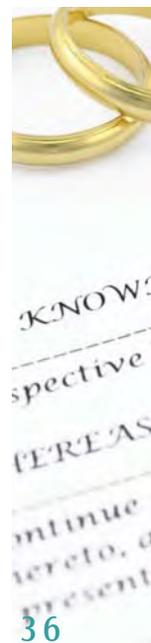
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With an emphasis on equilibrium and personal growth, *5ive for Women* encourages the on-the-go gal to pause for self-nurturing through insightful articles and thought-provoking features—supporting the not-so-simple balance between faith, family, friends, fitness, and finance.

At *5ive*, we are advocates of healthy priorities and fitness for life, while striving to motivate, energize, and inspire camaraderie of the Chippewa Valley sisterhood.



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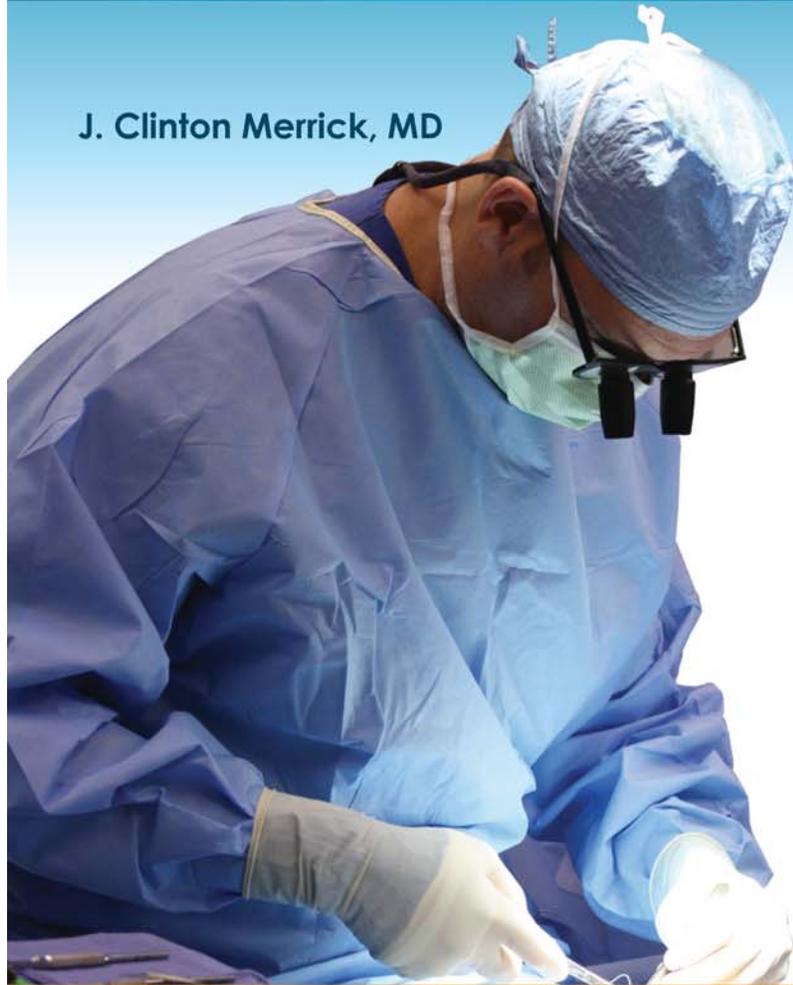
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*"Start by doing what's necessary; then do what's possible; and suddenly you are doing the impossible." - Saint Francis of Assisi*

Hello spring! I think we all can agree it has been a brutal Wisconsin winter. Not only am I thrilled at the idea of being able to go outside, but I look forward to cherished early morning runs without risk of hypothermia. Spring fever is in full swing.

I'm sure you'll be shocked to learn that there is, yet again, a lot going on in the Theisen household. The blessing of five kids greatly increases the likelihood that, at any given moment, we may be averting a crisis—it's simple math. Nevertheless, we've survived winter sports, and we're gearing up for spring activities. I just sent my eldest off to the mountains of Colorado for spring break. A great

adventure for him, leaving his mom on high alert until his safe return.

The month of May gets me thinking about motherhood. I am so proud to be the mother of my five children and count them as my greatest accomplishment to date. It's an absolute joy to watch them grow. I tell them often "You are amazing, you are going to do amazing things, and I cannot wait to see you do all that you will do. Now get to it." I thank my own tough, extraordinary mom. Mom made sacrifices so I could have a good life. Her example and demonstration of faith has made me the woman I am today—she instilled her rock-solid values in me.

We're excited to highlight outstanding moms in our May issue. One of my biggest heroes, my sister Katie, is featured in this month's "Taking 5ive" interview. I count myself blessed to have her as both a sister and a friend. Her honesty, strength, and bravery in a brand new beginning are sure to inspire many readers.

As we navigate through life, we often find ourselves starting anew. Stepping into a new season requires faith and courage. This issue, we celebrate women of valor with our annual sponsoring of the Courage is Contagious Project. Don't forget to submit your nominations for that bold and spirited lady inspiring you.

This "New Beginnings" issue will encourage you—whatever your season, whatever your new beginning. You'll read about becoming a family through adoption, and we'll explore the season of the empty nest. We'll learn about rest and renewal with articles heartening us to take care of ourselves. Discover the importance of improved sleep to be better equipped to be the best we can be. And don't forget to check out our new spring recipes for fun in the kitchen.

Ladies, life is busy and it just keeps going. I am so grateful for and so encouraged by the stories in this issue. I just know they will put a spring in your step as you stride into your new beginning. As time marches on, I challenge myself and my readers to grab our passion and just go for it. Let us make time to cultivate our interests. As we start new chapters in our lives, let us remember to slow down and enjoy what we are working so hard for. Let us be intentional in taking time for 5ive: faith, family, friends, fitness, and finance.

The journey continues.

*Jen Theisen*  
Publisher & Editor-in-Chief

# 5IVE FOR WOMEN™

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# Girls on the Run

## *A Positive Focus and New Beginning for Area Girls*

By Heather Rothbauer-Wanish

As many people know, the pre-teen and teenage years can be challenging times for children—especially girls. Along with body changes and growing personalities, girls often feel inferior to classmates, are sometimes subject to bullying, and might even believe that they are not as “worthy” as others. A national organization, Girls on the Run, aims to help girls boost their confidence levels, take leadership roles, and serve as role models for others. Fortunately, the Girls on the Run organization has a strong presence in the Chippewa Valley. And, the team at Meadowview Elementary School in Eau Claire is a living example to the strength of the program.

According to the Girls on the Run national website, the organization aims to inspire girls to be joyful, healthy, and confident using a fun, experience-based curriculum which creatively integrates running. Not only are these third through fifth grade girls learning life-long skills during their practices, they also are becoming active and fit by exercising. The Meadowview group meets each Tuesday and Thursday after school, from the end of February to the second week of May. During the practices, girls learn lessons relating to self-awareness, selecting healthy relationships, and celebrating their strengths.

After meeting with students involved in the endeavor, it is clear that the Girls on the Run organization is on the right path. Emma, a fifth grader, and Tessa and Taylor, both fourth graders, feel empowered and positive after becoming Girls on the Run. “The program teaches us lessons to feel better about ourselves and to not be negative,” tells Emma. “I feel like the program reduces bullies and grows leaders,” Taylor explains. Tessa adds, “My older sister was a Girl on the Run and I saw how it affected her. Because of that, I wanted to be part of it, too.”

The girls believe that the program helps victims of bullying, is a boost to girls who are left out, and provides a place where everyone can fit in and make new friends. By being Girls on the Run, the girls feel like they have found the right place.

And, it is obvious the program is working. Currently, only 20 girls can be in one group. At this point, Meadowview has enough coaches to support one group. Coaches include Mrs. Hunt, Mrs. Gruhke, Mrs. Winkler, and Mrs. Landorf. Mrs. Landorf, also a third grade teacher at the school, believes there are enough interested students to support at least three teams. “The girls have to apply to be a Girl on the Run; because of the impressive response, we actually have the director randomly choose participants,” describes Landorf. “It would be too difficult for us to choose; therefore, the random process ensures everything is done fairly.” The program is very popular throughout Eau Claire County, currently with 11 teams and plans for future growth.

Landorf has been a coach since the program started at Meadowview. She witnesses first-hand how the program affects girls, “Not only does it affect the fitness levels of the girls, but it impacts their academics and social skills, too.” While each practice involves running, the girls don’t compete. Each girl is simply focused on getting farther than she did last time. Depending upon their experience levels, each participant walks or runs between one and three miles during each session.

To maintain that positive connection among the girls that will extend beyond practices, at least one energy award is presented at each meeting. The award recipient gets in the middle of a circle. The other members then provide positive affirmations to that girl, telling her why she is special, important, and a leader. Taylor states, “We like to be good examples and role models for other students that are not in the program.”

The athleticism and stamina built up by the program are an added bonus. “I wanted to see how I would do as a runner in the program. Girls on the Run has helped me increase my running skills and has helped me with basketball, too,” tells Emma. Tessa reports, “I have played sports since first grade and feel that I am more of a positive athlete because of Girls on the Run.”

Not only does the running, positive leadership, and character-building resonate with the girls, it also infuses into the families. Explains Taylor, “This has been a great experience for me. I am running more at home and

go for runs with my parents.” Mrs. Landorf agrees and has witnessed how parents’ involvement leads to better health for them, too, “Many parents take up running once their girls do, and they have become healthier and lost weight on the journey...I can’t say enough about how the girls become leaders and role models for their peers.” By learning how to celebrate gratitude, encourage positive self-talk, and stand up to peer pressure, the girls are readying themselves for middle school and high school challenges.

“It’s a wonderful program that encourages running and learning at the same time. When you see how the students grow as people and become leaders, it is really priceless,” beams Landorf.

*Heather Rothbauer-Wanish owns Feather Communications, a local company that provides freelance writing, communication workshops, and resumé /cover letter assistance. In addition, Heather teaches business courses at several local universities.*



(L): Mrs. Winkler and Mrs. Landorf  
(R): Girls from left to right: Emma, Tessa, and Taylor

# Taking 5ive with Katie Hartsough

WRITTEN BY HEATHER ROTHBAUER-WANISH

Katie Hartsough, a kindergarten teacher at St. Charles Borromeo Primary School in Chippewa Falls, has kept the five Fs at the top of her priorities; and they have taken her places she never expected. As a teacher, mother, friend, and runner, Katie understands the importance of making time for what matters most. It's been a long and exciting journey, where Katie has learned that, sometimes, right back where you started is right where you belong.

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## FAITH

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When Katie was a child, her mother made sure the family attended weekly mass. And Katie did the same when she had a family of her own. With adulthood and parenthood came tests of Katie's faith, "The times I questioned my faith helped me to become closer to God. I would question, and then I would pray, and then God was there for me. I believe now that I just wasn't always listening, looking, or praying." With faith, Katie has conquered many trials in her life. When she was going through a divorce, she followed the plan God put on her heart, even though it meant leaving her life in Appleton and returning to Chippewa Falls for family support. "Have faith when you don't feel like having faith. I believe that is when you need it most," she advises.

In her Catholic school kindergarten class, Katie has the opportunity to direct her students toward discovering their own faith, "They look to me during the school day to help them figure out the awesome mysteries of God." What a humbling honor.

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## FAMILY

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Katie's family holds a special place in her heart; and she especially appreciates her children: Sam, Alexandria, and

Amelia. Finding time to spend with them can be difficult; so Katie makes a point to take her children on "Mom adventures." In addition, Katie's extended family takes an annual week-long summer trip to Hayward, Wisconsin. Katie has been vacationing in Hayward since she was child and plans to continue the tradition for many years.

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## FRIENDS

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Katie's friends are dotted across Wisconsin, and some of her closest friends are family. She'll always treasure her friends in Appleton and Oshkosh who selflessly helped her through struggles, "We laughed together, ran together, talked about our kids together, traveled together, supported each other, and sometimes cried together. I am pretty lucky to have experienced such great friendships." Now that she's living in Chippewa Falls again, she has made new friends and rekindled past friendships. Her sisters, Jen and Briana, are her very best friends, and they—along with her mom, brother Doug, and brothers-in-law Jon and Kevin—have been incredibly supportive.

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## FITNESS

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Fitness started for Katie at an early age. Her mother is a life-long runner and a running role model to the Hartsough girls. Katie ran track and cross-country in high school, and she has been running ever since. When Katie's mom qualified for the Boston Marathon in her forties, she inspired Katie to follow in her footsteps. Katie has run the Boston Marathon twice, along with several other marathons. With a tight schedule and not-so-accommodating Wisconsin weather, Katie has struggled to make time for fitness, but a YMCA membership (and an understanding of fitness



Jill Chumas Photography

benefits) motivates her. Reveals Katie, "If I make the time, I am more energized, think more clearly, and actually get more accomplished even though the workout takes time out of my day." Katie credits running for keeping her mentally strong; while she runs, she develops creative teaching ideas, prays, or listens to her favorite music.

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## FINANCE

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Although Katie admits that she is far from an expert on finance, she has learned many valuable lessons from her own experiences, like "living simply and modestly causes much less stress than worrying about elaborate expenses" and "it is important to save whenever possible." Focusing on needs instead of wants keeps her gaze on the important things in life, especially giving. Katie's motto—give help to others always—reflects her belief that there's always opportunity for giving. She is grateful for all she has, and giving helps her appreciate her blessings.

Katie has great memories from her childhood; and after moving back to the area, she can't wait to see what more God has in store for her, "I truly believe God has a plan for each one of us, and this was part of my plan. It wasn't necessarily going to be an easy plan, but I felt in my heart that this was the path I needed to take."

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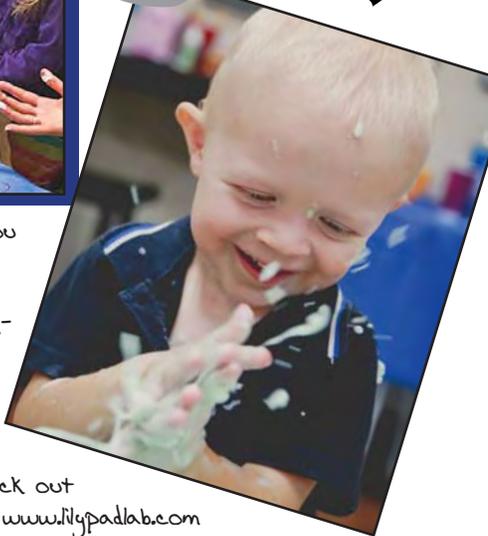
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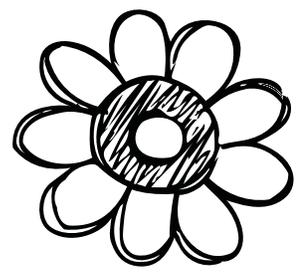


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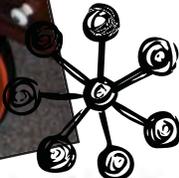
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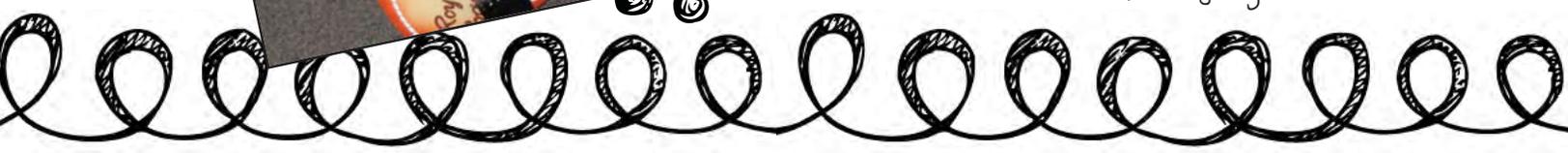
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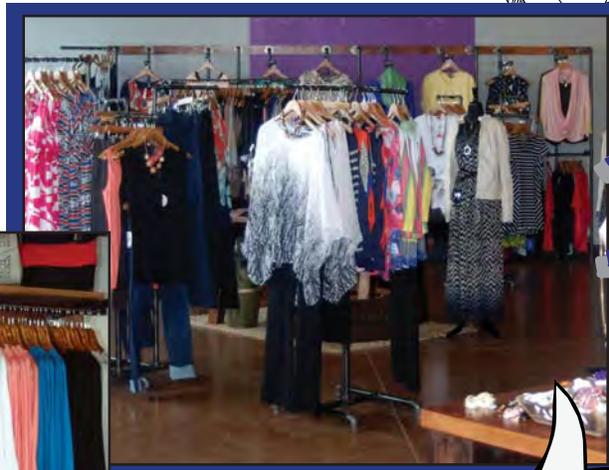
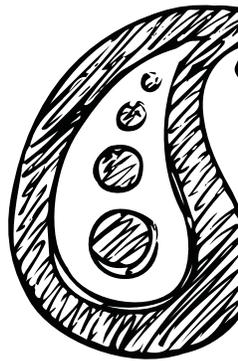


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My great friend Jane introduced me to Tacos Juanita. Sopa Azteca is their classic homemade soup—chicken and crisp tortilla strips in a lightly-spiced red chili broth and topped with cheese, sour cream, and fresh avocado slices. It looks amazing and is one of the best soups I have had in a long time!  
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12

# Blessings CONNECTING FAMILIES THROUGH ADOPTION

By Heather Rothbauer-Wanish

Family is one of the most important components of our lives. Great families give us strength to move forward, provide a foundation for behavior, and offer support during challenges. Families can be planned, unplanned, chosen, or biological. These diversities make each family unique. Adoption is one way for families to signal a new beginning and add love to a household. Different forms of adoption have positively impacted—blessed—families throughout the Chipewewa Valley.

Sandy Rutter and her husband, Bob, adopted three children from South Korea. Today, Alex John Jung Woon Rutter is 24, Kammi Lynne Jee Hye Rutter is 21, and Bradley Allan Hyun Soo Rutter is 17. “My husband and I were very anxious and excited to have children in our home. We tried to adopt children from the United States, but there was a very long waiting list,” explains Sandy. And, for the Rutters, the most important thing was to have children—not necessarily the children’s native country, “We knew that we could love any child and pursued foreign adoption, as it appeared there was a greater need for adoptive parents.”



Another local couple, Rhonda and Austin Herrick, recently finalized an adoption of a child from Haiti. The new addition, Jack, turned three years old at the end of March and joined their biological children, Charlie, age 11, and Amelia, age 8. “I had a chance encounter with someone who had a connection to an orphanage in Haiti that was seeking adoptive parents. We happen to be a perfect fit for the narrow requirements that Haiti had for adoptive parents at the time,” describes Rhonda. After that, they felt called to the country of Haiti, and the adoption journey began.



However, the Herrick family worked two long years to bring Jack home. During that time, the family took on a more purposeful focus, “We learned about Haiti and explained the hardships that country has faced to our two older children. They, along with the support and generosity of our extended family, collected an entire truckload of much-needed supplies for the orphanage Jack was living in.”



Since Jack arrived, the family has adjusted to the new addition. “Charlie assumed the role of big brother with ease, and Jack has looked up to him from the start. Amelia loves her new role as a big sister and is very caring and motherly,” tells Rhonda. “Both of our big kids say they can hardly remember our home before Jack was in it. They are

thrilled by his small successes as he increases his English and are thoroughly entertained by his big personality.”

Because the Rutter and Herrick families adopted internationally, keeping their adoptive children’s native heritage alive is very important. “We chose to keep our children’s Korean names to preserve part of their heritage and culture,” Sandy illustrates, “We also took them to a week-long Korean Culture Camp held every summer at Minnehaha Academy in St. Paul where they were immersed in Korean language, food, history, dance, music, and art by teachers from Korea.”

To preserve Jack’s Haitian heritage, Rhonda and Austin share photos and videos from Haiti on a regular basis, “We keep up with the orphanage’s blog, and Jack loves to see new pictures of his Haitian friends.” This summer, the Herricks will be attending Haiti Camp in northern Minnesota; the long weekend will consist of fun and relaxation with other families that have also adopted from Haiti.

Both Sandy and Rhonda mention faith and patience as must-haves when adopting internationally. This is also true for those seeking to adopt domestically, like local couple, Michelle and Bob Ritter. “Our daughter, Allahna was two and a half years old when we first met her, she was three on her ‘gotcha day’ when we brought her home to stay, and she was three and a half years old when the adoption was finalized,” discloses Michelle. The Ritters are also part of a smaller group of parents who have adopted special needs children, as Allahna has cerebral palsy.

“We both knew that we wanted a family immediately after we got married, and it didn’t matter to us if we had a biological child or adopted; we both had family members that were adopted,” indicates Michelle. After battling infertility, a failed adoption attempt, and several leads, everything came to a dead end for the couple, “We stopped and waited for God to make the next move. We continued on with life, but always had our hearts and arms open. When we finally got the email about Allahna and got to meet her, our life changed.” The Ritters then realized that all decisions they made were no longer about two adults; rather, they had a small human being that was affected by every choice they made, “Allahna filled a place in our heart that we didn’t know was missing—she is our everything.”

The Herricks also experienced changes when Jack arrived in the country, “When Jack was finally home, we found ourselves thrown back into baby mode—truly a new beginning

in many ways.” While the Rutters may have adopted many years ago, the joy they have received from doing so lives on each day. “Children bring so much joy and meaning to life. Steve and I could not imagine our life without kids,” reports Sandy, “I believe that children—whether birth children or adopted children—make life rich in a way that could not be experienced without kids.”

Today, adoption appears to be a much more “open” topic in society. And, these three families are more than happy to discuss their adoption journeys. “I think people are much more open about all kinds of topics today than they were in the past. I also believe that foreign adoption, where the children do not look like their parents, has made the discussion much easier,” explains Sandy. Michelle adds, “Adoption can be a very healthy thing for both biological and adoptive parents and the adopted child. We have an open adoption with Allahna’s biological family; it has been a very positive thing for us.”

Although there can be challenges along the pathway to parenthood, these families all are thrilled with their children and the new beginnings offered through adoption. “We never gave up hope and were led in a different direction than we originally planned for, but we have been blessed beyond belief with our daughter,” shares Michelle. Rhonda states tenderly, “It’s a unique and amazing experience to watch a child grow to trust and love you. We’ve watched Jack’s dependence on us and his love for us develop over the past several months. Jack now has a strong connection to all of our extended family, as well—he is truly a blessing to us all.”

Sandy Rutter believes that adopting her children has been one of the biggest blessings of her life, “I would definitely advise people to follow their heart in pursuing adoption. Keep your mind on the goal. It takes a lot of commitment in time, energy, and finances; but it is so worth the effort.”

For further information on domestic, international, relative, and step-parent adoption, please visit [www.cclse.org/adoption.php](http://www.cclse.org/adoption.php) or call 715-832-6644

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# 3rd Annual THE COURAGE IS CONTAGIOUS PROJECT

There are superwomen among us. They are our sisters, our neighbors, and our friends. They deflect life's obstacles with ease, navigating the complex world of carpools, latte in one hand and diaper bag in another. Trailblazing begins at 6 a.m. and ends late at night for our sassy sisters who collapse into bed exhausted but emotionally satisfied.

*5ive for Women* creator Jen Theisen and cancer-survivor-turned-yoga-retreat-planner Amy Annis decided it was time to unite like warriors and champion the best of these women.

They created the Courage is Contagious Project to offer pilgrimage to the women who stand out in their community and inspire.

The idea: to reward women who have demonstrated exemplary courage an opportunity to experience groundedness and renewal during a wellness yoga retreat. There is a universal understanding that women who practice yoga lead healthier lives and tend to feel better about themselves. The natural extension of this is to create a better world around them. We rely on the principal that the scholarship experience will be one of healing and renewal, inspiring recipients to make a difference in the lives of other women.

In 2014, we will again award two women a scholarship to attend a yoga retreat on Madeline Island. The retreat will include beautiful accommodations, organic and local meals, a daily yoga and meditation practice, hiking through the incredible State park, and health topic discussion with wellness experts.

The award criteria are broad by definition—we know there are buckets of feminine bravery out there—but we are thrilled it applies to so many. The scholarship is open to the many women who inspire us in daily life: the woman who kicked cancer to the curb, who overcame financial hardships and returned to college to improve her life, or who devoted her career to teaching in an effort to create a better community; that woman/guru/guerrilla who profoundly impacted her community with her devotion to a seemingly impossible task. The beauty of this program is women will decide.

The scholarships will be awarded to women nominated by their peers (you). A select team of women will evaluate the

nominations and publish the two winners in the *5ive for Women* June/July 2014 issue.

## NOMINATION CRITERIA

1. Women who have a healthy and positive approach to life
2. Age 30 years or older and understand that with age comes both wisdom and a desire to be of service
3. Ability and willingness to attend the 2014 Fall Wellness Retreat

Fundraising efforts, sponsorships from community leaders, and the repercussions of the positive energy put forth in this endeavor have made this amazing experience possible for a third year! Courage is Contagious continues to inspire.



In 300 words or less, describe how this courageous woman inspired you. Please include

1. How she exhibited courage and perseverance in her accomplishments.
2. The outside impact on her community of friends, family, and/or faith.
3. How your nominee leads a healthy, wellness-based life through example.
4. Tell us why she would benefit from a yoga and wellness retreat on Madeline Island.
5. Please include (with her permission) a JPEG-formatted picture of your nominee exemplifying her "inner warrior." For example, running a race for a cause, displaying inner beauty through service, or shining her heart out in a yoga pose. (Note: Photo may be posted in our magazine and websites.)
6. Her name, address, phone number, and email. Your name, address, phone number, and email. You may self-nominate.

Mail the nominations to The Courage is Contagious Project, PO Box 3073, Eau Claire, WI 54701

Or email a Microsoft document to amy@cleanspiritoyoga.com or jen@5iveforwomen.com

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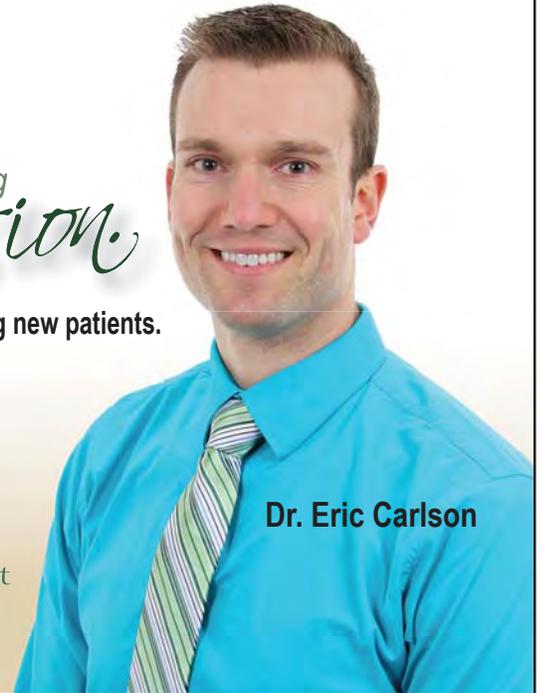
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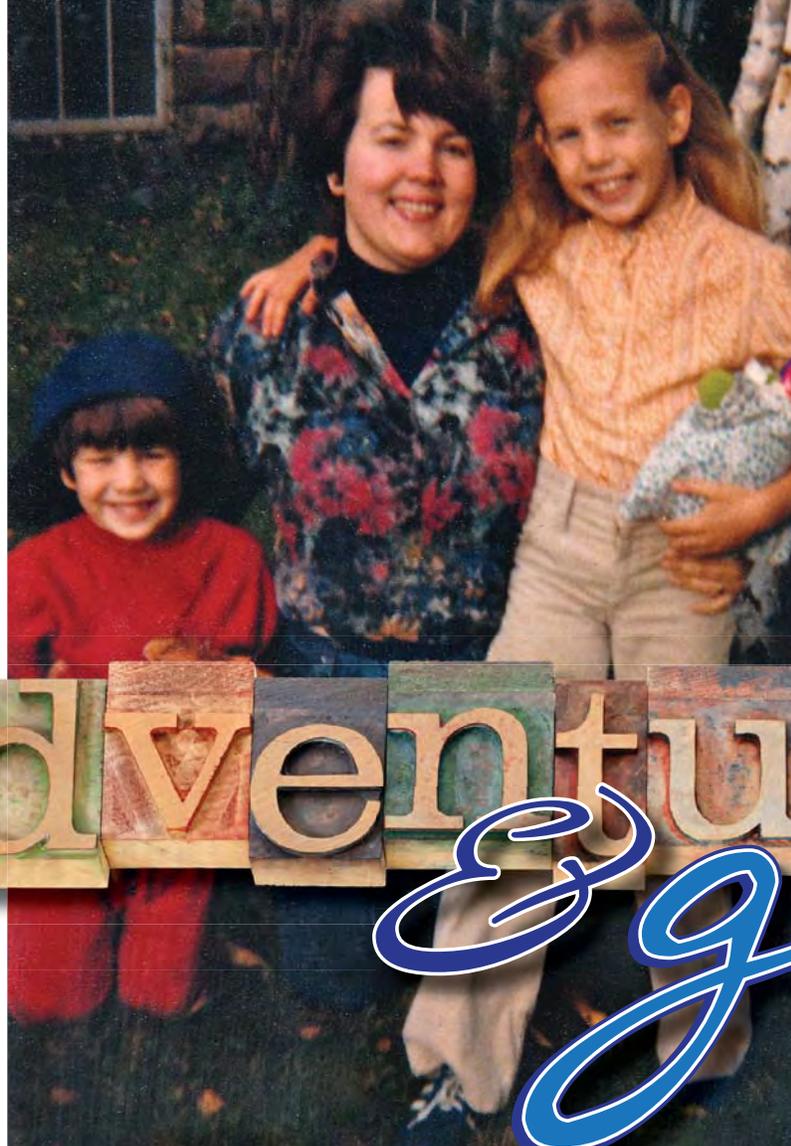


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# adventure

## Esq

*Adventure is about seeking, and trying, and learning—often not knowing even what treasures we seek, what tastes we will savor, or what lessons we will harvest. And isn't it funny how sometimes, even if we think we know which jewels we pursue, we still end up with "gems" we didn't expect?*

It was the summer of our nation's Bicentennial: 1976. I was almost five, and my little brother, Jimmy, was two and a half. For me, those Minnesota days were magical. My mother knew how to inject just the right doses of lazy and adventure into our sweet summer afternoons. We would work in the garden or visit the neighbors or drive down to the Como Zoo. Trips to the Minneapolis Riverside Co-op were a special treat—with those distinct earthy aromas, the shopkeeper who had a braid down his back longer than any braid I'd ever seen on a man, and where we could fill our own jar from the tap of bulk natural peanut butter that stuck to the roofs of our mouths when we ate it on warm, homemade toast. Sometimes we'd nap in our living room, petting our Siamese cats, watching Dad's big goldfish aloof in his aquarium, and listening to Mom sing us to sleep with Chrystal Gayle's "Don't It Make My Brown Eye's Blue" or one of her silly, simple, self-composed numbers:

"Vicki Leigh, Vicki Leigh. Oh, Vicki Leigh..." And then, "Jimmy Jum, Jimmy Jum. Oh Jimmy, Jimmy, Jimmy. Jimmy Jum!" Or a flamenco-style crescendo and diminuendo of "O-ran-ges...o-ran-ges...oran-ges...oranges...ORANGES!!! o-ran-ges..." Eventually, we'd doze off next to Mom and her acoustic guitar.

That summer, we had one particularly memorable adventure.

Now some parents might have stated simply, "Okay kids, we're gettin' out of this house, and we are going for a walk." But the way our mom animatedly described it, we were going on a great adventure, deep into the woods along the Mighty Mississipp'. Why, who knew what we would find? We'd previously discovered our curly, black-haired dog, Travis, on one of our adventures. (Of course, that's another tale.) In our wooded world, we delighted in items that, frankly, would be considered junk to those passers-by briefly greeting us with a Minnesota "Hull-Oh" or "Nice day!" For us, something as primitive as a "neat rock" was worthy of being unearthed and deliberated upon. "Wook!" was about all my marble-mouthed sprout of brother could say, lifting his stony prize with both of his pudgy hands. Thirty-five years later, I still have one marvelous souvenir from that summer: "Look Mom. An 'S'!" I'd exclaimed as I triumphantly held up the stiff serpentine vinebranch that stretched to my forehead. And following my lead, my only sibling was quick to locate a letter of his



own: a dense “L”. Meanwhile, Mom gathered a few pieces of tree-trunk-fungi for art canvasses. They were little treasures to Mom and, therefore, to us.

Now this particular Mississippi-trail adventure didn’t start out much different than any of our previous ones. Mom had learned about a new wild berry—the WONDERberry—and had readied us for picking by arming us with plastic ice cream buckets. We all shuffled out the door, and soon Jimmy and I were obeying Mom’s instruction to “Look both ways” before crossing busy Mississippi Boulevard. Then into the woods along the River path, we disappeared—sauntering, dilly-dallying, berry-pickers. After all, today our goal was not to reach the River, but to fill our buckets with these new, tasty, purple berries. I’m sure I beamed thinking of showing Daddy a colander of ripe, juicy, purple jewels upon his return from work that evening. And tomorrow, I’d be helping Mommy bake a Wonderberry Pie for him!

Mom and I chitchatted as we diligently filled our buckets. But Jimmy was only two. He was not yet one for much conversation. He didn’t need to be. He lived out endless adventures in his mind. Even as a toddler, while not verbally articulate, he expressed full-body animation and remarkable sound effects. Today was no different. Jimmy fought battles with sticks, circling and climbing, the hero of another adventure,

to which I only paid mild attention. As long as we could see each other, all was well. Or so we thought.

I distinctly remember watching Jimmy in what appeared to be a sword duel atop a large fallen log. It was like one of those logs from a Winnie the Pooh adventure in the Hundred Acre Wood. If Tigger were real, he would have been dueling and laughing and bouncing on that log alongside Jimmy. “This is what Tiggers do best!” Tigger would have exclaimed with Jimmy bouncing right along, his bright hazel eyes as big as saucers.

Unfortunately, what Jimmy’s bouncing produced was not a Tigger. Instead, Jimmy had unknowingly thrown down the gauntlet to a large swarm of wasps, whose home Little Jim had severely rattled.

The unrelenting wasps accepted the challenge by first confronting their offender, sending Sir James into a fit of screams and tears and the comfort of his mother’s arms. Mom realized what had happened the moment Jimmy’s piercing squeals reached her ears. “Wasps! Run!” she commanded. We dropped our buckets. Mom snatched her babe into her arms and we hoofed it for Mississippi Boulevard. As I was running, I felt a sharp zap to the exposed skin on my lower left side. “Oh Mommy. It hurts!” I cried out.

“Keep running,” Mom called back with tears in her eyes now, too. Her cub was clinging to her welt-spotted body, his emerald eyes now dark and horrified—brutalized by the relentless, whirring terrors.

“Ouch!” Another sting to the tender crook of my arm. I heard buzzing. Both of my wounds throbbed. “Daddy!” I shrieked, looking both ways to cross the boulevard again. Even as our home came into view, I continued to cry for my daddy. My father has never been a man to know how to comfort another person. Not even with a hug. But in that moment, that practical fact did not matter. Dad was a man of strength: consistent and predictable; and I needed him. Now.

Of course Dad wasn’t home from work when we returned, breathless as Goldilocks after her confrontation with the Three Bears.

The ripe, juicy, purple jewels we retrieved that day were definitely not wonderberries. Neither were our actual “gifts” wonder-full. Eventually, Mom encased each of our “amethyst treasures” in baking soda paste. I’d been lucky to escape with only two stings. Those merciless wasps had a far deeper impact on the tender body and soul of my precious baby brother.

Of course, we all survived. Forever wiser. And soon after that day, our family packed up our amber starter-home to discover fresh adventures on our new frontier along the Chippewa River.



*Vicki Larkowski hails from Chippewa Falls and continues to seek adventure—usually with her husband, Matt, or her adult son, Bret. When she’s not hiking, biking, gardening, or exploring, Vicki copyedits for 5ive for Women.*

# Empty Nest OR Big Blue Sky?

By Katie Mcky

Books have been written about Empty Nest Syndrome. Websites are devoted to it. Even the world-famous Mayo Clinic addresses it. Yep, it's a phenomenon. It's also a phenomenal opportunity. Sure, the eggs are long cracked and the fledglings have flown. You can look down at the egg shards and the compressed twigs of the nest or look up and around at the big, blue, beckoning skies.

Robin Fox, the comedienne, reframes loss of the chicks. She doesn't see the empty bedrooms of her children. She sees suddenly-available, rent-free storage lockers. She doesn't define herself as a parent who's lost her child, but rather the parent of a free-range child.

However, a vacant nest can produce depression and induce identity loss. The good news is that you're not alone. There are lots of empty nesters. Just don't expect someone with a chirpy nest to comprehend your loss. Find others like you. Feel less alone. Also, talk to your closest peer. Sharing something so intimate can buttress a relationship.

Speaking of spouses, once upon a time, your spouse was your world. Then came the dervish days of being a mom, aka singer, storyteller, referee, nurse, counselor, chef, maid, teacher, accountant, taxi driver, handywoman, and event organizer on call 24/7 with no time-and-a-half. Well, the reasons you loved your spouse are still there. They might be smeared by the smudgy fingers of toddlers or misplaced in the hurly burly of the teen years, but now you've time to remember why you married him. You don't have to whoosh to the beach. You can bring the beach to you. I'm not suggesting a wave machine that has the salty surf lapping at your doorstep, but rather an appreciation of days that don't demand reaching the soccer field by 3:30 and piano lessons by 5:15. Take a breath. Take two. Acclimate to the new normal. Then get busy with whim-whim situations: your whims and his. You are no longer constricted by the kinders' schedules. You have flex, so flex your freedoms. They're not newfound. They're returned to you. The new normal is the old normal. You know what to do. It's not just déjà vu. You've been here before, and you loved it then. Love it again.

However, it's unfair to expect your spouse to appreciate all your facets, and you might be a single parent. Homo sapiens' brains are hardwired for about 150 friends. If you're multi-faceted (You are, you are!), find the friends who best appreciate this and that facet. This will take time. Don't worry. An empty nest gives you that time.

However, just because you're a homo sapien doesn't mean you have to stick to your species. Canines can do, and felines are fine. Whatever you select, your pet can connect you to oth-

ers. Dogs are conversation catalysts. Whether at dog parks, puppy kindergarten, people parks, or simply on sidewalks, some people will want to pet your pet. Then they'll want to talk about their pets, past and present. Think of a pet as a furry letter of introduction, and introduce yourself to your missing 150 friends.

Dogs are also personal trainers. Unless you train your dog to use the toilet, you'll have to walk that dog. Like the postal carriers, you'll foray into the snow and rain and heat and gloom of night for pee-pee poo-poo. This is good. Rather than pay a personal trainer to bark at you and drag you through your reps, your pooch will bark at the door and drag you down the sidewalk. Most importantly, if you're singing the blues about the empty nest, your dog will be there for you. They always are. That's what they do.

However, if you absolutely, positively must have contact with bipeds, look to your local schools. There are children there who hunger for attention. Go. Read to them. Have them read to you. Want more kid contact? Become a Big Sister. The need is always there. The kids are waiting. Meet your needs by meeting their needs.

The empty nest is also the occasion to celebrate a job well done. If your child(ren) is gone, you've done your job. The alternative is the unprecocious progeny with the cheesepuff-stained t-shirt, cyber-battling zombies with a pixelated Viking battle-ax in the basement yelling, "Mom, I need more Hot Pockets®!" Plus, they pert near have to leave for grandkids to make the scene.

In the end, everything comes with loss. A dream home comes with a mortgage and more to clean. A promotion comes with increased responsibilities and longer hours. Babies come with midnight feedings and rank rumps. Conversely, most things that appear negative come with positives. For example, walking your dog in the wind and rain means better health and, upon your return, a deeper appreciation of an overstuffed chair and a plush blanket. A humbler house means less to clean and heat. And children fledging the nest lessen your nest-fluffing duties and open that big, blue sky to you. What to do, what to do? It's up to you. They spread their wings and flew. Your turn, too.

Katie Mcky, the author of *Wolf Camp*, *Pumpkin Town*, *It All Began with a Bean*, and *Tough Kids, Tough Classrooms*, lives in Eau Claire. She visits scores of schools every year, where she performs and teaches writing. In the summer, she retreats into the cultivated tranquility of her garden and the wild tranquility of the Canadian wilderness.



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# SPRING CLEANING

Out With the Old (YOU), in With the NEW!

By Jen Marsich

**I**t's that time of year again: when we clear the clutter from our kitchens, closets, and cabinets, organizing those things important enough to keep and disposing of the unnecessary excess. While it may not be a chore that we look forward to, there is no doubt that we feel much better when it is done. During this annual ritual, we often have the opportunity to relive the memories associated with the "clutter"—the good, the bad, and the ugly. Invariably, we must decide what is important enough to hold on to and what we must (or should) let go of. How many of you look at spring as an opportunity for a fresh start to a new YOU? When it comes to your past, what do you typically decide to hold on to?

The degree to which we hold on to past experiences, whether positive or negative, has a profound influence on who we are today and who we will be in the future. Taking the time to review the clutter that comes with simply living life will help you understand the person you have become. In order to make room for the new YOU, being deliberate about decluttering your mind is critical, and spring is a great time to do it! An essential part of the process of personal growth is examining the past objectively.

**Try this exercise.** Grab a sheet of paper and a pencil (an eraser may be helpful). Make a circle in the middle of the paper and write your name in it. Then make multiple spokes off of the YOU circle, leading to other circles. In those outer circles, list a variety of individuals and life experiences that have played significant roles in who you are today. Brainstorm, including both positive and negative influences. Who/what inspired you? Which memories are most vivid and meaningful? Parents, siblings, children, friends, relatives, spouses and ex's, coworkers, life events, and experiences are all fair game. This process can take some time, but identifying and writing this information can be quite cathartic. It is usually more difficult for people to acknowledge the negative influences in their lives, but be certain to take the time to do so—in many respects, this part of the exercise is more important. After identifying these meaningful pieces of your past, take the time to

recognize them as the building blocks of who you truly are. Whether or not we like it (or more importantly acknowledge it), we are all products of our life experiences.

Grab one more sheet of paper, and make two columns. In the first column, review the previous sheet and write down all of the positive influences from your life experiences. In the second column, write down the things you perceive as negatives.

**Now it is time for a little spring cleaning in order to declutter your mind!**

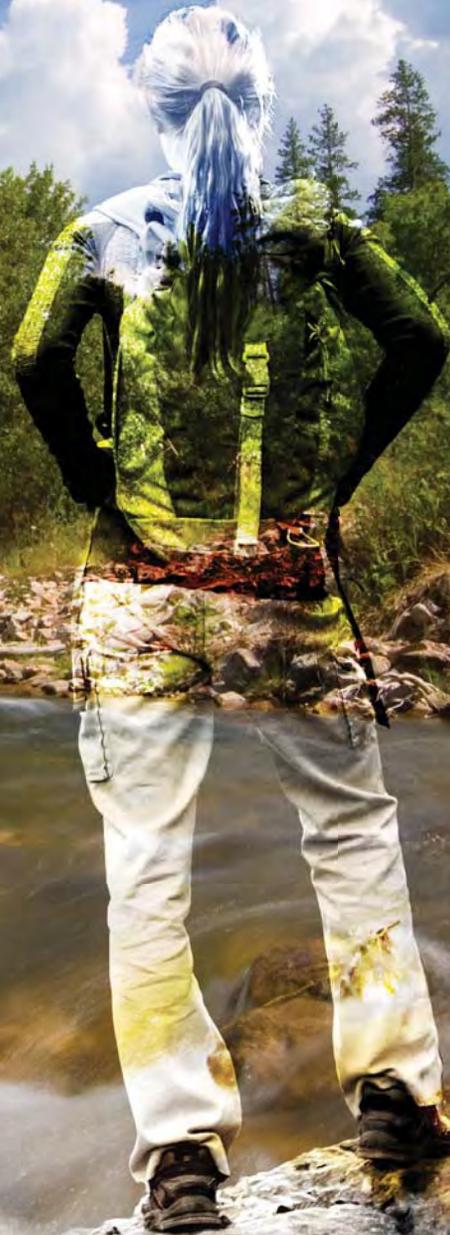
*The Secret* and other personal growth books reveal that focusing on the positives will lead to better future outcomes. We attract what we convey. That said, we must recognize that life is not always fair; negative things do happen. Also bear in mind that great strengths can be developed in the face of significant adversity. The problem for many people is failure to recognize that these negative life experiences continue to impact their lives on a daily basis. Whether it relates to trust or confidence issues, this clutter remains.

Ask yourself this question, "As I envision the person I would like to be by this time next spring, which memories are important for me to build upon and which memories should I acknowledge and throw away?" In order to make room for the new and improved YOU, you must declutter your mind and make room for growth. Who do you want to be by next spring, and what actions will you take now in order to get there? Make specific goals and share them with someone who will hold you accountable.

As you start looking at those closets and cabinets, remind yourself that cleaning the clutter in your *mind's* "closet" will help you in *many* areas of your life. Spring into a new you and LIVE LIFE BOLD!

*Jen Marsich worked at Sacred Heart Hospital for 16 years in Cardiac Rehabilitation before recently relocating to Woodbury, MN, where she has been taking online classes to become a Health and Wellness Coach, her true passion. She is married with two wonderful boys and an inactive basset hound.*

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# Sleepless in

# WISCONSIN

It's 12:30 a.m., and I'm staring at the bright red numbers on my alarm clock; they stare back at me. "If I fall asleep right now, I can still get five hours of sleep. Heck, I could get even more if I skip my morning exercise, but I've done that the last two days." On top of that, my mind is reviewing everything that I need to accomplish today. Sound familiar?

Insomnia is a common complaint among women in today's society; nearly 30% of us have difficulty falling and/or staying asleep. There are two types of insomnia: primary and secondary. Primary insomnia is not associated with any other health condition, while secondary insomnia is often a symptom of an underlying illness or disorder. Most women suffer from the former and can be treated with lifestyle changes and sleep hygiene practices. Daytime fatigue is the most common result of insomnia, but can also be caused by factors other than lack of sleep. (See the red Reasons for Fatigue box.) So, just because we're tired during the day, it doesn't necessarily mean we're not sleeping well. That distinction is important when developing a treatment plan.

Many things can disrupt our sleep, including these common sleep busters: stress, anxiety, illness, light, noise, caffeine, alcohol, stimulant medications, and keeping an irregular schedule. Hormonal changes—like pregnancy, premenstrual syndrome (PMS), perimenopause, and menopause—can also wreak havoc on sleep. Add waking toddlers, snoring partners, night owl teenagers, and it's a wonder any of us sleep!

The first step in addressing insomnia is to consider your sleep hygiene practices. Are there are some habits you could change to promote a better night's sleep? Caffeine keeps many people up at night. How late

in the day are you drinking coffee or soda? Do you treat yourself to a little chocolate before bedtime? Seven hours after your last sip of coffee, about half the caffeine is still in your system. At ten hours, 25% is still in your system. So, if at a noon meeting you drink two cups of coffee, each with 100 mg of caffeine, 50 mg is still in your system at 10 p.m. That is the equivalent of drinking one Diet Coke right before going to bed.

It's also important to keep a consistent bedtime to promote a regular sleep-wake rhythm. Many times, we stay up late on the weekends, telling ourselves we'll sleep in the following morning. Unfortunately, circadian rhythm (your body's internal synchronization with the rhythms of night and day) boosts blood pressure and cortisol hormone with the rising of the sun. So, after about 7 a.m., we begin to get less restful sleep. Waking at the same time and exposing ourselves to daytime light helps to maintain a healthy sleep-wake rhythm and suppresses melatonin levels, increasing alertness.

Alcohol disrupts sleep, too. Many people will have a cocktail to help them fall asleep. While alcohol initially makes you drowsy, it significantly and negatively affects the sleep cycle. Alcohol prevents REM sleep—that deep, dreaming sleep. After the alcohol wears off, you may experience REM rebound, which results in vivid, restless dreams. Alcohol also increases the likelihood of twitching and body movements during sleep; and alcohol withdrawal can cause night sweats.

For a good night's sleep, practice a bedtime ritual: something you do every night to signal your body that it's getting ready for sleep. Turn down the lights during the evening hours to increase melatonin production. Keep your room as dark as possible. Eliminate nightlights when possible. Use heavy blackout curtains to block streetlights or moonlight. Keep computers, televisions, and lighted alarm clocks out of the bedroom. If you live on a noisy street, use earplugs or a white noise machine. Exercise on a regular basis (but not too late in the evening). Eliminate screen time two hours before bedtime, including the television, computer, and smartphone. Screen time of any sort is stimulating and can delay sleep onset.

Insomnia affects the lives of many women in my practice, inspiring me to develop a comprehensive treatment approach. Together, we inventory their daily habits, eliminating sleep busters while implementing sound sleep hygiene practices. I also address potential hormonal influences and treatment options. At times, it may be necessary to begin sleeping medications or initiate a formal sleep study. This comprehensive approach has allowed many women to regain the most precious of moments: a welcomed morning.

*Hope Saeger has been a nurse practitioner since 2007. She lives in Eau Claire with her husband and three children. In her spare time, Hope enjoys running and participating in triathlons. To learn more about Willow Creek Women's Clinic, visit [willowcreekclinic.com](http://willowcreekclinic.com).*

## Sleep Hygiene Practices

- Keep consistent bed times & wake times
- Expose yourself to early morning light
- Keep your room dark and quiet
- Eliminate screen time two hours before bedtime
- Eliminate alcohol and nicotine
- Decrease caffeine intake and only have in the morning
- Exercise regularly and early

## Reasons for Fatigue

- |                          |                |
|--------------------------|----------------|
| • Medications            | • Pain         |
| • Boredom                | • Anxiety      |
| • Dehydration            | • Inactivity   |
| • Depression             | • Overactivity |
| • Anemia                 | • Obesity      |
| • Cardiovascular disease |                |

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# Mother AND Brother TO MANY

By Katie Mcky

Renee Meyer's life didn't go as she had envisioned, but, in a way, it went exactly as planned. Her plan was to care for people by becoming a nurse. However, she became pregnant before she could begin college.

Her son, Joseph LaPorte, was hospitalized with pneumonia when he was seven weeks old. That would be the first of many hospitalizations. At 11 months, he was diagnosed with cystic fibrosis (CF). Mucus accumulated in his lungs and pancreas. To expel that mucus, as nurses do, Renee pounded her son's back and chest two to four times a day for 30-40 minutes per session. She spent many days in hospitals, too, talking to doctors and nurses. During those many, early hospital stays, she would spend nights with Joey, often crawling into bed to comfort her young son because her caregiving was 24/7/365. The care she tended bore fruit. She got to witness her Joey grow and take chances like so many other boys.

*"One day he was riding his bike and doing jumps even though he had broken his arm and was wearing a cast. Well, he crashed and needed stitches and the doctor asked, 'How can you even ride a bike with a cast?' 'It's easy!' Joey said."*

Her son continued to grow and when he reached his teen years, Renee decided to become that nurse, to begin her dream again; but an unexpected, second baby intervened.

*"I had been told that I couldn't conceive because I'd had a tubal pregnancy with Joey, and there was scarring."*

Her second son, Alton Meyer, was born. Joey didn't call his baby brother by his given name. Rather, he always addressed him as "brother." Likewise, Joey's friends didn't refer to Renee Meyer as "Mrs. Meyer" or "Renee." They called her "mother" or "mom."

Improvements came for those suffering from cystic fibrosis. For example, a vest was developed that shook the mucus loose, meaning Meyer no longer had to pound on her son's back and chest.

*"You can have CF and live into your 50s, 60s, or 70s. It depends upon the type of gene you have. One is from the father, and one is from the mother, and there are variants. Joey had the two bad ones, but he still lived longer than what he was expected to live."*

Up to the end, he lived longer than he was expected to live.

*"He had been in the hospital for almost a week. His CO2 levels had been really high. I knew he wasn't going to make it, and he knew that too. That Saturday was going to be a big day because a lot of people were going to come visit him. I asked him if he was up to it, and he nodded his head, 'yes.'" The respiratory therapist was there. I walked to the window and all of a sudden, I heard her say, 'Joe, Joel!' The CO2 levels*

*were so high that he had slumped into unconsciousness. I sat and held his hand. The nurse and doctor came in, and the doctor said, 'Maybe a couple hours.' The nurse said it would be longer because his heart was so strong. I went to tell everyone else.*

*His friends and family came into the room. They were telling him that he was their brother, if not by blood, then by love. The whole family was there, touching him and talking to him. I held him as he passed away.*

*The nurse was right. He had lived another six hours. His heart was strong.*

*The night before he died, I asked him if I could crawl into bed with him and sleep next to him like when he was young. He said it was okay. He couldn't lie down because it was hard for him to breathe, but at least I got to have that before he took his last breath."*

Now, Meyer had to walk out of that hospital and begin the next part of her life.

*"It was so hard leaving that hospital. My mother helped. She has lost so much in her lifetime, including her own three-month-old child to SIDS. I asked her, 'How can you keep going on?' She said, 'You have to. It's what we do.' I don't know what I'd do without her."*

So, Meyer kept going on, working at Eau Claire Quick Clean on Water Street in Eau Claire, caring for others, being a mother to others.

*"I've always had compassion for people. Because of Joey, there's even more. When you're in a big hospital, you see so many babies and children who are suffering. You talk to their parents. You realize how many are hurting in this world. I realized I didn't have it as bad as them. I still had my child for a few more years. They were losing theirs."*

And Meyer has followed her son's lead.

*"Joey would do anything for someone else. Sure, he had his health challenges, but whether it was autism, breast cancer, or something else, Joey was there. One year, he colored his hair and beard pink for breast cancer awareness. He'd literally give you his last dollar and go hungry if you needed it."*

Like son, like mother.

*"My customers tell their life stories. They tell me their problems. They might want an answer, but I try not to tell them what to do. I just want to connect. They're drawn to me. They tell me everything, and I let them. I don't repeat what they say. Their stories are safe with me. I think it's healing for some of them to share. I get to witness their growth. I get to see them blossom. I see them talking to other people too, which they never did at first. Maybe the attention I give them is a kind of light that lets them begin to grow."*

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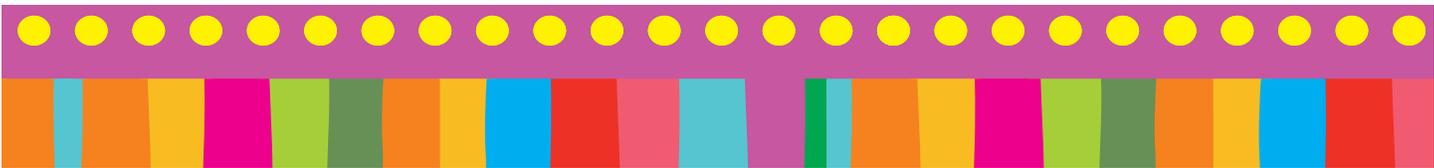
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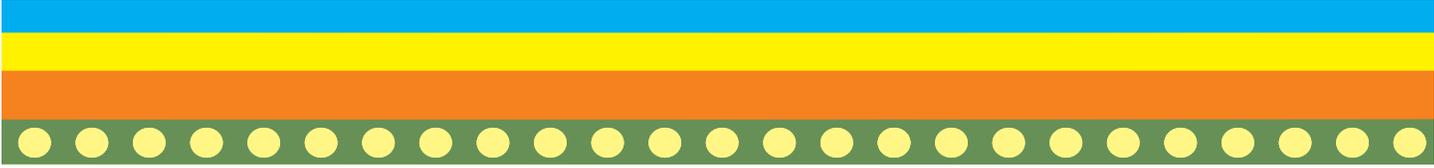
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# SHARING A PASSION FOR MUSIC.

*“If a composer could say what he had to say in words he would not bother trying to say it in music.”*

Gustav Mahler

By Lucie McGee

Over the past few months, the citizens of the City of Eau Claire have been engaged in intense discourse over the value of arts in our community. Citizens have been asked to consider how much should be invested in the future of the arts. With this often controversial discourse in mind, it seems worthwhile to talk to people working and living in our community who all share the love of one specific art—music—and explore what their art means to them, their families, and their community.

## Growing up with music

Elizabeth Hart, a pianist and the general manager of the Eau Claire Chamber Orchestra, began to play recorder and piano in elementary school. She remembers her parents telling her to “do what you love.”

From her own experiences and from teaching piano at the Eau Claire Music School, Hart has observed that musical ability is not a gift, but a skill you have to work at. “You have to put in the time,” she explains. When she was learning to play piano, she easily put in the three to four hours a day of practice. “Certain kids desire it more, but they have to work at it to eventually have the skill.”

Hart went on to be a piano performance major at UW-Madison. She continued her path not in music but earned a Ph.D. in French literature. However, she always played the piano. As she moved around as a young adult, she would search for a piano to play, even if it meant renting a studio with a piano for an hour. And, she was always making time to experience music at concerts and in other settings. She now encourages

her sons in their musical endeavors. One son plays the piano and just started on the ukulele, and the other son plays the cello.

Jodi Miller is the music teacher at Putnam Heights Elementary School, a position she has held since 1993. She began her life of music with piano lessons at age 5 and continued in high school with the French horn and in choral. She earned both bachelor’s and master’s degrees in music education. Her two children are involved in music. “I have encouraged them, but have not made them do music,” says Miller. “For our family, it (music) is huge; that is our free time together... it is how we enjoy other things we do.”

Shawn Smets, program director of the Eau Claire Music School, began piano lessons in second grade. He started playing trumpet in sixth grade and by the time he was at Memorial High School, he was playing in the jazz and marching bands. He realized one of his dreams when he played in UW-Madison’s Badger Band while earning his bachelor’s degree in elementary education. Over time, he has learned to play more than 30 different instruments, including the jaw harp and kazoo.

Smets describes his family as “musical.” Growing up in Eau Claire, he remembers going to concerts at the Sarge Boyd Bandshell (Owen Park Bandshell), and traveling to the Twin Cities to hear the chamber orchestra. He fondly remembers attending a concert on a family trip to Paris, France where he heard Vivaldi’s works performed.

Namji Kim is an associate professor of music at UW-Eau Claire. Kim began studying piano at age six. When she was 12-years-old, she went to Paris to study piano and harmony.

"My mother wanted me to practice, but she never had to force me to practice," she recalls. "I worked hard." Kim attended the National Superior Conservatory of Music in the mornings and practiced piano eight hours a day. In the afternoon, she studied her other subjects. At age 20, she continued her study of piano at the Juilliard School of Music in New York. Ten years ago she joined the UWEC faculty. Her husband teaches guitar at the Eau Claire Music School.

## Sharing their music

An accomplished performer, Kim shares her talent within the UW system. Kim will perform a piano recital featuring music from Ravel, Bach, and Schumann on Sunday, April 6, 2014 at 2 p.m. in Gantner Hall at the Haas Fine Arts Center at UWEC. (The concert is free and open to the public.) Kim has also performed throughout the United States, most recently in Texas, Seattle, and New York, and in Europe, Russia, and South Korea. Since 1993, she can be heard on Wisconsin Public Radio's *Sunday Afternoon Live from the Chazen*. This program features live chamber music concerts performed by Wisconsin musicians at the UW-Madison campus.

However, most days, Kim can be found at the University. "I love teaching others...it is a way to pass on tradition," Kim says. "There is nothing greater than to see a person blossom." Kim teaches applied piano (one-on-one lessons), classical piano, piano ensemble, and piano literature. She teaches approximately 44 traditional and non-traditional students per semester. Many of her students are piano performance majors, but some students have other majors. "We open our doors to every kind of student. It is important to have diversity." Her students tell her that they really enjoy playing music. "It relaxes them after a long day of hard work," she says.

"Music is a way to express feelings that go beyond words," Kim explains. "Some people are shy and are more comfortable expressing their emotions with music." She continues, "Music has the power to heal...it cheers you up and makes you happy."

"Music is good medicine," Hart asserts. She volunteers by playing the piano at Mayo Clinic's Healing Garden, located on the first floor of the Luther Building near the Critical Care Unit. The enclosed Healing Garden is open to the public and is a place to relax and find comfort amidst nature. Hart performs at the piano for an hour, one time per month.

Miller has the opportunity to teach music to every child at Putnam Heights Elementary School, which totals approximately 400 children annually. "We use different mediums to help kids learn to communicate through music." They learn performance, which includes singing, playing instruments, and creating sounds. They learn to listen to music, which involves comparing, analyzing, and evaluating what they hear. And, they learn the language of music, meaning creating and composing.

What do Miller's students gain from this musical experience?

She says, "self confidence." They also gain the ability to work in groups and to self evaluate. And, they gain endurance—the ability to keep practicing. "If a student does well in singing, he or she tends to be a more fluent reader," Miller explains. "If a student does well with rhythms, then he or she tends to be a better mathematician."

Hart agrees with Miller, stating, "Learning music is an important skill, like math and reading."

Smets also points out that "music creates social networks of good, successful children." He explains that music builds better students by enhancing their cognition and emotional intelligence, meaning the ability to recognize others' emotions. He further says that the discipline of practice encourages focus and persistence in life. Participating in a musical group teaches children to work toward a goal over time and lets them experience the joys and tribulations of working with others.

The Eau Claire Music School is in its fifth year of providing the community with a local music school experience that supports the local music programs in the schools. There are 22 instructors, and about 240 students walk through the doors every week. Smets describes a main part of his job as "pairing up students with the perfect teachers for their needs."

Smets strives to have good relationships with schools and other programs in the community while helping to supplement what they do. For example, this summer the music school is partnering with the YMCA to offer the Manitowish Music Week, June 16-21st. He also is exploring summer offerings in jazz, rock, and bluegrass along with the traditional individual lessons offered by the school.

"I love to hear what is going on as I walk around the school listening to kids playing," Smets says. "For many kids, music is critical to keeping them engaged in their studies. Music may be the main reason they want to go to school."

## Why music?

"Music transports you out of whatever you are doing," explains Hart. "You go on a journey and you come back refreshed."

"Music is an easy way to express yourself," says Miller. "You can always find a song that fits your mood."

"I love music. Music has the power to transcend." Kim further explains that a person may be having a tough time in life, but once you are performing music, "you forget and share the joy of music with others. You are giving something of yourself when you perform."

When asked about what he enjoys most about music, Smets answers, "This is my bliss."

*Lucie McGee is a former assistant city attorney for the City of Eau Claire. She is a 1997 graduate of Hamline University School of Law, where she was editor-in-chief of the Journal of Public Law and Policy. She also has a master's degree in journalism from Indiana University, Bloomington.*



# FOCUS ON WHAT EXCITES YOU

By Benji Williford

Committing to a fit and healthy lifestyle can be a daunting process. My new clients often either fear failing or feel like they should already be fit before they start. Although the latter is an oxymoron, it is a very normal feeling. I encourage you to consider a slightly different approach.

Pick one goal that really resonates with you. Whether it's running your first race or performing your first pull-up, you should feel truly excited about it.

Once you've picked your goal, keep it as your main focus throughout your training. Design a program to become proficient at the main skill needed to achieve your goal. Then, break it up into milestones, like increasing running distance or pull-up progressions.

In order to prevent overuse injuries and to improve your performance on your chosen activity, add components to your training. If your goal is to run a race, add cross training to your program—calisthenics, yoga, TRX Suspension Training, or kettlebells, for example. I recommend something that will give you a total body workout, giving you the most bang for your buck so you can focus on your running. Similar logic applies to a pull-up goal. Ensure that you are working the rest of your body in a functional manner, and possibly add some running. Depending on the intensity level and design of the total body workout, the cardio benefits will make running is less critical.



Next, look at how you are fueling and hydrating your body. You can't perform well if you are choking off your cells with processed foods. This step often evokes the most emotional (or perhaps irrational) reactions. Everyone can think of a junk food that we believe we can't live without. Allow yourself that "something" no more than 20% of the time, and eat clean the other 80%. Give this a chance—you'll be impressed by how it affects your training. Chances are, you will see improvements in performance and body composition; and you will feel better as a bonus!

In short, set a goal to do something that you are passionate about, do things that support the main skill needed for your goal, and limit things that sabotage the goal. The big bonus: body composition changes and health benefits will be positive side effects without even having made them the main focus. And the confidence boost of a hard-earned goal can never be taken away.

*Benji Williford is a personal trainer and owner of Chain Reaction Fitness. Read more about him at [www.BenjiWilliford.com](http://www.BenjiWilliford.com)*

# My Voice: A Public School Advocate

As a strong supporter of public schools, I am always on the alert for books and articles dealing with all aspects of education. (Perhaps my twelve years as a school board member heightened my awareness.) One particular Feb/Mar 2014 *Five for Women* article caught my eye, "Why School Choice?: What is the Wisconsin Parental Choice Program?" Some things in the article concerned me. It contained much good information about the Wisconsin Parental Choice voucher program. Yet, here are my concerns about the article and the voucher program:

First, I am concerned about accountability in the education that voucher-sponsored private schools provide. I am pleased that two local Catholic school systems—McDonell and Regis—use the same testing process that is required of public schools. Milwaukee, Racine, and Green Bay voucher schools are required to take the same state test (WKCE) as public schools and publically release the results. However, many other private facilities across Wisconsin do not require testing or the publication of the testing results. I believe if schools receive taxpayer funding, they should be required to adhere to the same standards as the public system.

Second, the "Why School Choice" article claims parents "may want to send their children to a private school with a great reputation for better test scores and results than their public school." If *some* private schools are compared to *some* public schools, this may well be true. However, I caution readers not to paint all public schools as falling short of all private schools. In many instances, public schools could be cited for their excellent performance. Some private schools have had no better student performance than the public schools the students left.

Third, the voucher program was initially implemented to help primarily inner city families with failing school systems—school districts with 4,000 or more students and two or more failing

schools. The program has been broadly expanded since then. As more and more voucher slots are opened up, the program is assisting parents/families at higher income levels. In some cases, where private schools previously would have awarded scholarship monies to those who could not afford tuition, because those families received vouchers, the scholarships are being used for families with better financial conditions. In addition, the income levels rose and the enrollment cap increased for the 2014-2015 school year, making even more families eligible for the vouchers.

Finally, the comparison of per-child costs for public versus private school students (using the figures given in the article) does not account for the extra expenses of that public system—for example, public school districts providing bus transportation to the private school students in that district. Another "extra" financial outlay is for the increasingly high cost of special education students. Added costs in one system and not the other make per-pupil expenditure figures difficult to compare.

I am a strong believer in our public school system in the United States, Wisconsin, and the Chippewa Valley. Good public (and good private) schools will create the good citizens of our country tomorrow. The voucher issue is a complicated one. Although I recognize the need for and desirability of good private education, I do not feel that private education should come at the expense of students in the public school system,

which has been such an important part of our state and country's development.

*Mary Ann King is a long-time resident of Chippewa Falls who has a major interest in government and public policy. She is a product of the Georgia and Missouri public school systems and has two grown children who were educated in Chippewa Falls public schools. Her interest in public education led her to serve several terms on the Chippewa Falls Board of Education. Mary Ann feels that we all must take a stance on issues that matter to us.*

Editor's Note: In general, *Five for Women* is not a political or editorial publication. However, we do listen to the various voices of women in the Chippewa Valley. Thus, since some readers felt the Feb/Mar 2014 school choice submission was a hot button issue, we are publishing this view from one concerned reader.



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# SPRING AHEAD!

## Ten Easy-Breezy Ways to Blossom

By Katie Mcky

Jimmy Buffet sang about changes in latitude triggering changes in attitude. Well, changes are coming for those of us at 45 degrees of northern latitude. Our days are lengthening, the sun is climbing higher, and Wisconsin is shucking its ice. As trees begin again at growing, we can join them. Like the clocks, we can spring ahead. Here are some easy-breezy ways to begin anew.

Perk up with a tennis ball! Sleeping on your belly compresses your back and torques your neck. However, old habits die hard and sleeping habits die harder, since you can belly flop at two in the morning. So, what do you do? Wear a t-shirt with a pocket to bed and put a tennis ball in that pocket. Presto, you'll be perkified, awaking more rested and limber as a ferret. Good sleep gives us more energy, better moods, and clearer thinking; and it's a tennis ball away.

Go green! If you recycle, good for you; but there's another greening that's also good for you and that's to enjoy the greening of the Chippewa Valley. Research reveals that connecting with nature is the whetstone to our brains: the budding leafs sharpen our thinking. A short walk to witness the blossoming can induce a blossoming in you, too. It doesn't take long. A five-minute walk here. Taking the kids out to the park over there. Synchronize with the trees, and get busy budding!

Google the "power of friendship" and you'll get nearly 200 million hits. However, brain studies have revealed the deep, abiding power of friendship. For example, lonely women are more than twice as likely to develop dementia. In a study of over 300,000 people over seven years, loneliness was found to be a health risk factor equal to smoking 15 cigarettes a day, being alcoholic, or not exercising. Loneliness was also shown to carry twice the health risk as obesity. People with large social networks live longer, heal faster, and are more likely to survive a major health challenge. So, start casting and hook some new friends.

Conversely, not all friendships are healthy. Do you have a friendship where you're the engine, the drivetrain, and the chassis? If so, do you resent primarily powering and propelling that friendship? Or do you have a friend whom you dread seeing? The good news is that there are billions and billions of people in the world. Because of our inter-connectedness, we are six degrees of separation away from all of us. That means you're five acquaintances away from knowing every single person in the world. Friends truly do come and go. It's

okay to walk away and go find a finer fit.

Commit some random acts of kindness. You can be randomly kind for free or for a few bucks. For example, get into the habit of reading the name tags of clerks. Use their names. Ask them about their days. Thank them for their service. Tell pet owners how handsome their dogs are. Tell parents how well-behaved their children are. Tell the older woman passing you how lovely she looks. If you have the financial means, in coffee shops or at fast food restaurants, buy the drink or the meal for the person behind you. Tip generously. On tollways, pay the toll of the driver behind you. You'll find it's cool to be kind.

In turn, accept kindness. When someone compliments you, use these words: "Thank you." Don't deflect the compliment. Don't secret it away to fetch and enjoy some distant day. Be in the moment. Look the giver in the eye, smile, and articulate gratitude with grace. They'll be more likely to compliment again, making the world a bit better. Those bits add up. Spice up your life! Seriously. I'm not talking about tangoing on some Sicilian seawall with some guy named Sergio as the sun sets (However, if you've done this or plan to do this, more power to you!). I'm talking about eating more of those concentrated packets of flavor, energy, and antioxidants: spices. Sprinkle away today and every day! Garlic, turmeric, ginger, cinnamon, coriander, oregano, and allspice ratchet flavor and health.

There's a reason pets are called pets. They're made to pet. Research has long shown that being touched produces profound, positive, physiological changes—however, touching does the same. Plus, our pets love to be petted. And want to know something cool about pets that Sheldon of *The Big Bang Theory* would be proud to know? There's this phenomenon called coherence where the electrical field of your heart can synchronize with the electrical field of your pet's heart. That's so cool that not only Sheldon should know this is so.

Most importantly, remember that change is hard even when change is good. We all acclimate to our status quo, so don't change this AND that. Change this OR change that. However, don't wait to change something, anything. After all, it's spring and you don't want to be left behind as the world is changing, minute by minute, around you. As Tina Fey, the greatest of our philosophers, said, "You can't be that kid standing at the top of the waterslide, over-thinking it. You have to go down the chute."

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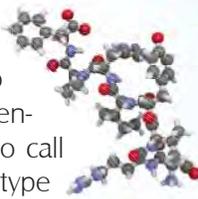
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# NEW BEGINNINGS - FOR YOUR SKIN!

As the sun begins to melt away the snow and long winter, and as the first buds of spring emerge, consider cultivating a crop of collagen this year. Now more than ever, chemistry and new technology make it possible to actually stimulate the precious, fleeting collagen in our skin and begin to defy the aging process. To understand the skin stimulating additives in the latest products, a brief chemistry and biology refresher is in order.

Among the most popular additives to today's skin care products are *peptides*. Simply put, peptides are fragments of *proteins*. *Amino acids* are the single building blocks of proteins. Two amino acids join together by forming a *peptide bond*. The resulting molecule is known as a *dipeptide*. Adding a third amino acid creates a *tripeptide*, and so on. By convention, at about 50 amino acids, we begin to call these molecules *proteins*. Collagen is one type of large protein. When collagen breaks down in our skin, smaller fragments (peptides) break off of the collagen protein molecules. These peptides signal the body to increase collagen production. Traditionally, women have sought chemical and laser peels to stimulate collagen. However, those procedures can cause injury. There is an alternative! By adding peptides to skin care products, we are able to trick the skin into thinking it is losing collagen and stimulate increased production.



Peptide

Most peptides are synthesized in the lab, some are derived from natural sources, and there are several different types of peptides. *Non neuroactive peptides* can be long or short chains of amino acids. In general, these only have the effect of tricking the skin into producing more collagen as mentioned earlier. The shorter the peptides, the better the skin penetration. *Neuroactive* peptides, the most common of which is GABA, have additional effects. GABA is a neurotransmitter that can actually block the communication between nerves and muscles and have a relaxing effect on the muscles of the face, helping to smooth wrinkles while stimulating collagen. *Argireline* is yet another peptide recently developed that has neuromuscular effects. By inhibiting the communication between the muscle and nerves, muscle contractility is lessened. *Copper peptides* are emerging as important additives in cosmetic products. Studies have confirmed that not only are these molecules helpful in wound healing, but also in stimulating collagen and firming the skin. Some controversy does exist surrounding copper, as it can create free radicals and inflammation. This is being investigated; but for many, the benefits seem to outweigh the risks.

*Growth factors* are another group of molecules, usually much larger than peptides. These proteins are naturally occurring molecules that stimulate and regulate cell growth as well as

the immune system. *Transforming Growth Factors* (TGFs) are a large and diverse group of molecules that can both stimulate collagen and elastin production while slowing down the enzymes responsible for breaking them down. *Epidermal Growth Factors* (EGFs) act to stimulate *fibroblasts* (those cells responsible for collagen and elastin production) to grow, divide, and produce collagen, elastin, and hyaluronic acid.



Transforming Growth Factor

Our bodies naturally produce growth factors in very small quantities at specific times. The daily use of growth factors in large amounts is somewhat controversial. The question of whether they hasten the growth of skin cancer has not been answered, nor has the potential drawback of overstimulation of collagen and contribution to excess scar formation. So far, neither of these effects is measurable. Growth factors do remain very effective agents in helping to regenerate injured skin, and they play a key role in recovery from laser/chemical peels and for post surgical patients. However, growth factors are very large, so they don't penetrate the skin very well. In addition, they can be unstable and break down in the bottle before you even use the product, rendering them ineffective.

To sum it up, the landscape of skin care products is changing. Each new product yearns to claim the Fountain of Youth title—no such product exists. Be skeptical. Products should not over-promise, claiming to be a Liquid Facelift or Liquid Botox®. The latest skin care products can be very expensive; usually their effect does not scale with their price, only esthetics of the packaging and abundance of marketing. However, I believe that the peptides are here to stay, are effective, and should be used in a daily skin care regimen. Growth factors should be used more sparingly. Buy small quantities of these, as the key ingredients are unstable. Don't hesitate to use these during periods of skin healing or injury, such as after a laser peel or dermabrasion. Be sure to ask your plastic surgeon or aesthetician which product would benefit you the most. Your new skin awaits.

*Dr. Merrick is a board certified Plastic Surgeon in Eau Claire. His office is located at 719 W. Hamilton Ave. and can be reached at 715-514-2550.*



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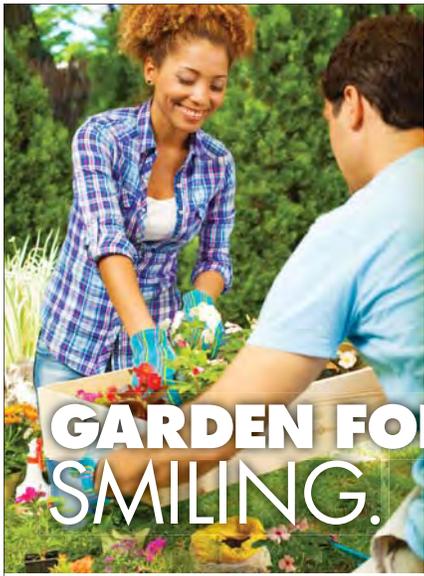
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# PREMARITAL AGREEMENTS: BEYOND THE STIGMA

By Attorneys Emily Long and Cindy Hangartner

New beginnings are an exciting time, but also an important time to plan for your future. For many years, premarital agreements have been stigmatized as showing "a lack of trust" or being "unromantic." Instead, premarital agreements should be seen as an important planning opportunity, especially if you and your fiancé will have a blended family.

Wisconsin is a marital property state. This means any earned income and asset appreciation gained during marriage is deemed marital property; each spouse owns one-half of the income and appreciation. Inherited property and property you bring into the marriage is individual property, as long as that property is kept separate from the marital property. However, this may not be as simple as it sounds. For example, if you have \$100,000 in a stock portfolio when you get married, the \$100,000 is individual property. But unless you have a marital property agreement or notarized unilateral statement in place, all income earned on that stock portfolio is marital property.

Further, the presumption in Wisconsin is that once individual and marital property are mixed, the property is entirely marital. An argument can be made to separate the income if it can be traced; but if the income is reinvested into your stock portfolio, tracing the individual property and marital property becomes very difficult. In effect, your individual stock portfolio now becomes marital property and your spouse is deemed to own one-half of the account.

Marital property agreements can alleviate this problem by allowing an individual to classify their assets, and their income, as marital property or individual property. Classification as individual property gives the owner of the individual property rights of management and control over these assets. By classifying certain assets as individual property, you may, with careful planning and execution, avoid the tracing problem described in the example above.

Two important components for a valid marital property

agreement are fairness and full disclosure by both parties. For premarital property agreements, each party should be represented by an attorney to ensure these conditions are met. A marital property agreement signed prior to marriage will not become effective until the date the parties marry. Married couples may sign a marital property agreement that is effective immediately.

Whether you are already married or planning to get married, a marital property agreement between you and your spouse or soon-to-be-spouse has many advantages, including as a valuable estate planning tool. Property ownership interests can be equalized to avoid or minimize the estate tax when one or both spouses pass away. Classifying assets as marital property will give a "stepped up" tax basis to the surviving spouse so that if the surviving spouse sells a marital asset after the first spouse dies, the surviving spouse could minimize the amount of capital gains tax attributed to the sale. Marital property agreements may also be used to avoid probate. For blended families, some inherited property may be preserved for your children from a prior marriage.

While there may be some hesitance to use marital property agreements for fear of offending a potential spouse, the agreements can prevent substantial family strife. For those who may still be skeptical about the stigma of a premarital agreement, the agreement can be used as a planning tool that specifically states the agreement will not apply in the event the couple divorces. Whatever your feelings, it is certainly worth serious consideration before issues arise.

*Attorney Emily Long is a shareholder with the Weld, Riley, Prenz & Ricci, S.C., law firm who practices in the areas of family law and divorce. Attorney Cindy Hangartner is an associate who practices in the area of tax and estate planning.*

*These materials are meant to serve as a guide and should not be construed as legal advice or a legal opinion on any specific fact or circumstance. These materials are intended for general informational purposes only, and you are urged to consult with competent legal counsel concerning your own situation and any legal questions you may have.*



PREMARITAL AGREEMENT  
I, \_\_\_\_\_, this Agreement is entered into on the \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_\_\_, ("Prospective Husband") and \_\_\_\_\_ ("Prospective Wife") (collectively, the "Parties").  
I, \_\_\_\_\_, do hereby agree to enter into a legal marriage under the laws of the State of Wisconsin, and I hereby describe my property as follows: \_\_\_\_\_  
I, \_\_\_\_\_, do hereby agree to enter into a legal marriage under the laws of the State of Wisconsin, and I hereby describe my property as follows: \_\_\_\_\_

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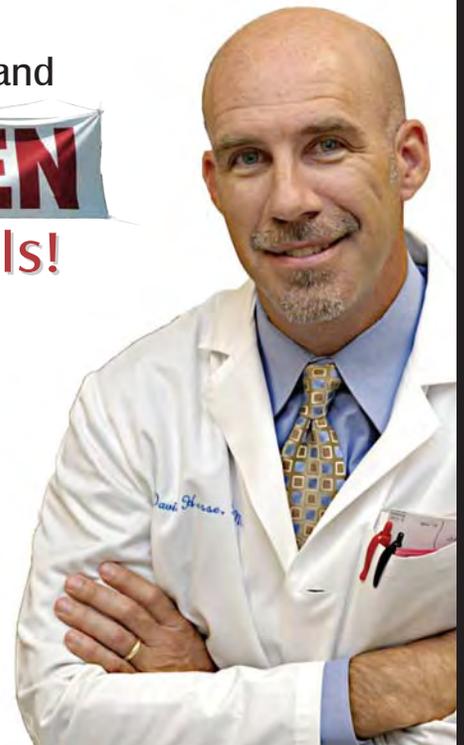
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# Simple Ways to Detox Your Life and Leap Into Spring

“Travel Light. Live Light. Spread the Light. Be the Light.” –Yogi Bhajan

We are emerging from a long, hard winter toward the sweet days of light and warmth. How truly exciting! Color and longer days are on their way back to us. Spring is the natural time of year to begin shedding some of the habits we leaned on to get us through those many months of snow and polar vortices. Now is the perfect time of year to plan gentle detox practices to prepare for the coming months. For most of us, the word detox conjures images of green juices, fresh clean foods, and perhaps caffeine-free mornings.

All of these practices are wonderful ways to wake up the body and prepare for spring. However, there are so many other ways to detoxify our lives that do not include making changes to our diet.

## Detox from clutter.

“Out of clutter, find simplicity.” –Albert Einstein

Do you need it? Do you love it? Does it raise your energy? Stuff can weigh us down. Find simplicity and more lightness in your life this spring by releasing what you can. Take it one drawer or closet at a time. Be gentle with yourself and simply begin where you can.

## Detox your vocabulary.

“What we think, we become.” –Buddha

Begin a gentle detox from negative self talk, and become aware of relationships where words shared are routinely gossipy or harsh. Dr. Masaru Emoto, a Japanese scientist, has shown the amazing effects of sound by photographing water crystals. His work is published in his book series, *Messages from Water*. Check out his amazing experiments on YouTube, too. Dr. Emoto also measured the impact of words on the crystalline structure of water. The results of his experiments match what scientists, therapists, and spiritual masters alike already knew intuitively. Our words and thoughts impact our wellbeing. Our bodies are 70% water. The words we speak and the sound environment we live in affect us on a cellular level. Turn off the violent or snarky television shows. Be gentle, loving, and compassionate when thinking and talking about yourself and others. Find ways to steer toxic conversations toward the positive. You will find greater health and vitality on all levels when you do.

## Detox from technology.

*There are few times that I feel more at peace, more in tune, more Zen, if you will, than when I force myself to unplug.*

–Harlan Coben

I become more dependent on technology during the colder months. Truth be told, so do my children. On some of those frigid days, the Internet filled a desire to be in touch with the outside world. The game Minecraft helped to bring all four of my kids together in creative ways on what felt like the

tenth day school was cancelled. At times, I have noticed an unhealthy attachment to my phone, as if it was an extension of my body. In polling my friends, many feel the same way. We feel the need to be constantly available to our kids and friends. Checking emails and texts becomes almost reflexive. Yet, for many, the idea of unplugging creates unease. Our technology has become a bit of a shackle.

No worries, spring is here! We can once again get outside and walk and garden and enjoy a glass of wine and a chat on our decks. It is the natural time of year to gently pry our hands off the smart phones and connect with others for real. Begin in small ways. Turn off your phone and remove your ear buds and take a walk outside. On that unplugged jaunt, give your entire attention to simply noticing what is going on in the natural world around you. How much more can you appreciate when you are present? Consider signing off of the social network for a few days or even a week. Instead, make plans to socially network over tea with a friend or two. Challenge yourself to turn off your phone and computer at 7 or 8 p.m. each night. Re-sync your central nervous system with the rhythms of nature, and sleep more deeply.

Technology is wonderful. When we use it as a tool, it makes life easier and more fun. When it controls our behavior, however, it is time to unhook. When we place a healthy distance between ourselves and technology, we give our loved ones and ourselves the best gift of all. This gift is presence, and there is no app for that.

*Join Aveen Banich and Life by Design for the Time to Bloom spring retreat, Saturday, April 26th 8 a.m.-5 p.m. at the Center. For further details and to sign up, email Aveen at [lifedesign4@gmail.com](mailto:lifedesign4@gmail.com) or visit [www.lifebydesignec.com](http://www.lifebydesignec.com).*

# Beginning *Financial Fitness* in 3 Easy Steps

Spring is a wonderful time to center our thoughts and goals on opportunities to become financially fit. Commonly, many individuals and families are uncertain about where to start and how to get started. Beginning the journey to financial fitness does not have to be complicated if you follow these steps:

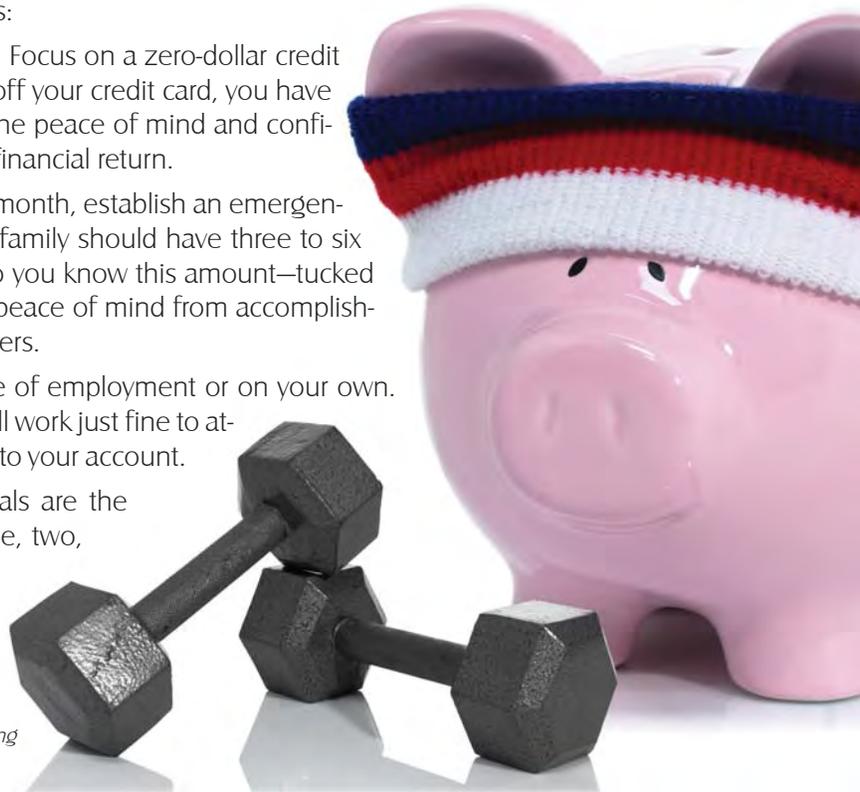
**Step 1.** Strive to pay off all credit card debt each month. Focus on a zero-dollar credit card balance and increasing your credit score. By paying off your credit card, you have effectively earned a 12% to 18% return on your money. The peace of mind and confidence of having a zero balance can even outweigh that financial return.

**Step 2.** Once your credit cards are at zero balance each month, establish an emergency fund—sometimes called a “slush” fund. You and your family should have three to six months of living expenses—pencil out a family budget so you know this amount—tucked away in an easily accessible savings account. Again, the peace of mind from accomplishing this goal is a huge weight off of your financial shoulders.

**Step 3.** Begin a retirement account, either at your place of employment or on your own. Remember, the turtle won the race, so slow and steady will work just fine to attain your goals. The key is to *begin* and *never stop* adding to your account.

These three simple tips for achieving your financial goals are the building blocks for financial fitness. It is as simple as one, two, three.

*Paul Woita of Woita & Associates is a native of Rhinelander, WI and has resided in Eau Claire since 1977 with his wife, Cathie. Paul has over 30 years of experience in the financial services industry and is passionate about working with his clients to help ensure they reach their personal and financial goals. He enjoys empowering people through teaching and helping to take the mystery and fear out of what can be complicated subjects related to financial planning and insurance.*



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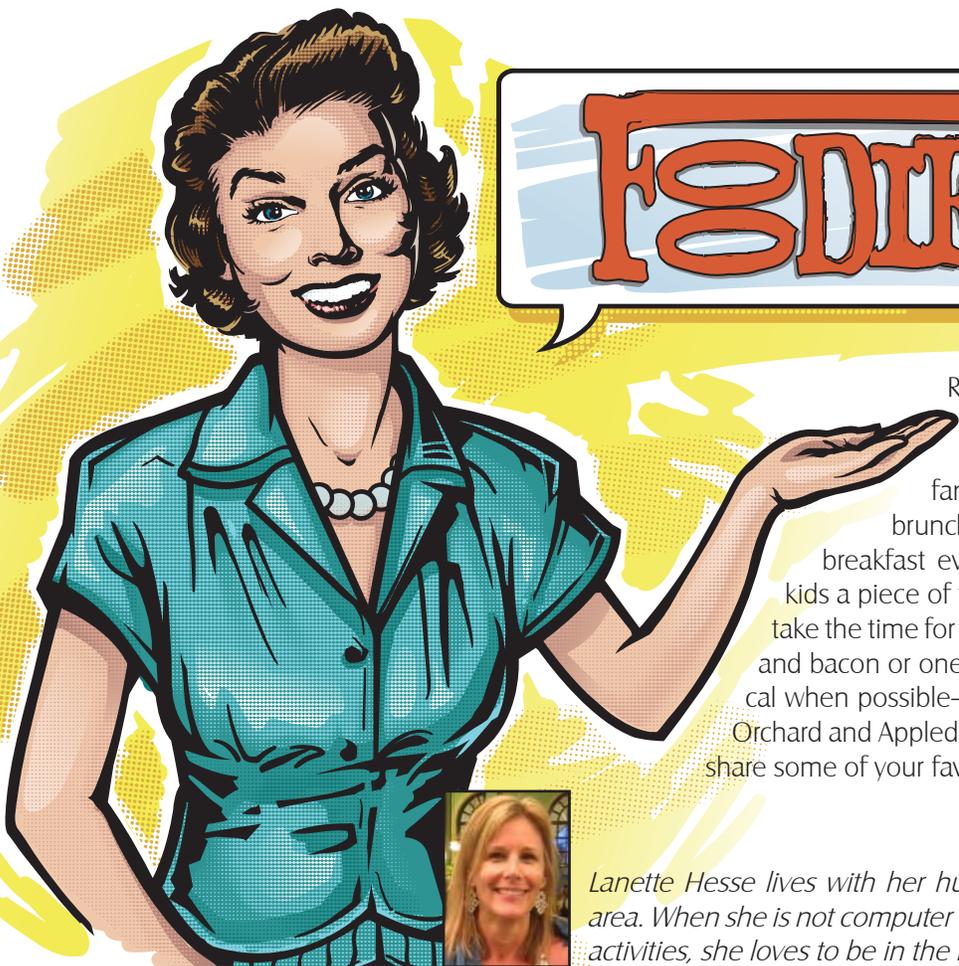
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# FOODIE FORUM



*Lanette Hesse lives with her husband and three children in the Eau Claire area. When she is not computer consulting, volunteering or enjoying outdoor activities, she loves to be in the kitchen cooking for her family and friends.*

## Beginnings

Recently, our family dined at Altoona Family Restaurant for Saturday breakfast. My kids love the waffles, and I am an Eggs Benedict fan. It got me thinking about great breakfasts/brunches. I wish we had time for a home-cooked breakfast every morning. Most school days, I hand my kids a piece of toast on their way out the door. When we do take the time for a breakfast or brunch, it's traditional pancakes and bacon or one of my favorite recipes below. I like to buy local when possible—like Kim Ayres for eggs and Blueberry Ridge Orchard and Appledore Woods Berry Farms for blueberries. Please share some of your favorite brunch recipes on our Facebook page.

Bon Appetit,  
Lanette

## Colorado Coffee Cake (Not Pictured)

- |                          |                                     |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 2¼ cups flour            | ½ teaspoon baking soda              |
| 1 cup sugar              | 1 teaspoon almond extract           |
| 1½ sticks butter         | 8 ounces cream cheese               |
| 2 eggs                   | ½ teaspoon vanilla extract          |
| ¾ cup sour cream         | ½ cup raspberry preserves           |
| ¼ teaspoon salt          | 2/3 cup chopped or slivered almonds |
| ½ teaspoon baking powder |                                     |

Preheat oven to 350°. Grease a 9 or 10-inch springform pan.

For Batter Base: Combine flour, ¾ cup sugar, and butter. Set aside 1 cup of this mixture for topping. To the remaining mixture, add 1 egg, sour cream, salt, baking powder, baking soda, and almond extract. Mix well, and spread over bottom and up the sides of the pan.

For Filling: Combine cream cheese, vanilla, 1 egg, and ¼ cup sugar. Spread this mixture over the batter base.

For Topping: Spread preserves on top of filling. Top with almonds and reserved base mixture.

Bake for 45-55 minutes or until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean. Cool at least 30 min before serving.

## Madison's Blueberry Lemon Poppy Seed Scones

- |                               |                                 |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 3 cups flour                  | 1 teaspoon salt                 |
| 1 cup sugar                   | 10 tablespoons butter, softened |
| 3 tablespoons poppy seeds     | 1 large egg, whisked            |
| 1 cup blueberries             | 2 tablespoons lemon juice       |
| 1 tablespoon baking powder    | 1/3 cup milk                    |
| 2 teaspoons grated lemon peel | 1 teaspoon almond extract       |

Preheat oven to 375°. Mix together all ingredients. Press into scone pan (or flatten into an 8-inch round cut into 8 wedges). Bake until golden brown, about 25 minutes. Drizzle with glaze mixture: 1 cup powdered sugar, 1 tablespoon butter, and 1 teaspoon lemon juice.

## Rose's Pesto Egg Muffins

Preheat oven to 350°. Grease a muffin pan and line each cup with one piece of thinly sliced ham. Crack an egg over each cup of ham. (If desired, break yolks for scrambled egg effect.) Top each egg with 1 tablespoon pesto. Bake to order, approximately 20-30 minutes.



# Quick fixes

by the five crew

## Mrs. Meyers Clean Day

Made from natural ingredients and essential oils, this countertop spray is a fresh way to get rid of kitchen messes. Basil is my favorite because it has a cool, crisp scent that revives the senses and clears the head.



## Kenu Airframe

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## Recipe-holding Hanger

Tired of flipping and re-flipping to read a recipe? Grab a pants hanger and hang your book from a cabinet knob. No more goopy pages either!



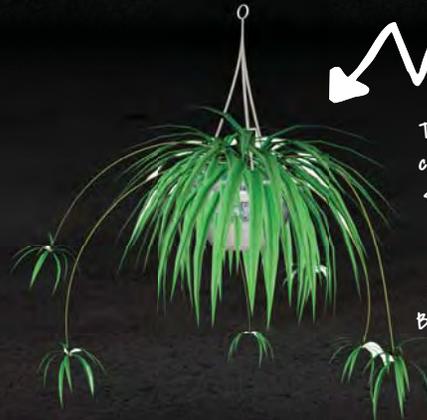
## Raw Cashews

Need a health boost? Just a few raw cashews per day provide magnesium—essential for good sleep and the prevention of high blood pressure, muscle spasms, migraine headaches, tension, soreness, and fatigue. Many consider raw cashews to be a "feel good" food, helpful for escaping the winter doldrums. Raw cashews also contain iron, potassium, phosphorus, manganese, calcium, copper, selenium, and zinc.



## Secret Ingredient: Apple Sauce

People always comment on how moist my cakes are. My secret is homemade apple sauce. Substitute equal parts apple sauce for vegetable oil when baking using applesauce will lower the calorie, fat and shame content of your baked treats!



## Purifying Plants

This time of year, the air in our homes can become pretty stuffy. Did you know some plants can purify this air? NASA has compiled a list of air-filtering plants which includes Boston Ferns, Spider Plants, Barberton Daisies, and Bamboo Palms. For more, see [http://spinoff.nasa.gov/spinoff2007/ps\\_3.html](http://spinoff.nasa.gov/spinoff2007/ps_3.html)



# Blind Your Ponies

By Stanley Gordon West

When I was visiting my sister in Montana last fall, she mentioned the book *Blind Your Ponies* and recommended it to me. My niece was reading it at the time, so I, of course, went right out and bought it. I am so glad that I did! With March Madness upon us, this book fits right in.

*Blind Your Ponies* is a story of a small town in Montana—Willow Creek—and the people that live there. It is the home of the Broncos, a high school basketball team that has been on a 93 game losing streak.

The team's quest for the state championship also mirrors the struggles of the townspeople. As the team of six discovers unexpected reserves within themselves, they encourage other locals, whose troubles include terminal illness, a child's death, and memories of a shooting.

Two themes stood out for me: first, everyone has demons and hardships to deal with that most other people are unaware of; second, everyone wants to believe that there is

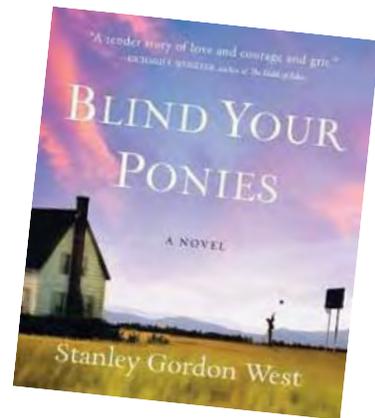
hope for something better, and that, just maybe, we are important enough to make a difference in this world.

The strength of this book is in the wonderful job Stanley Gordon West does of developing the characters in his novel. It is a story about heartbreak and heartache, pride, humor, regret, relationships, and hope. A tale of triumph and adversity.

The unusual title stems from a legend about the Crow Indians returning from a hunt and discovering their families destroyed by smallpox. The hunters deliberately blind their ponies and ride off a cliff that will rejoin them with their loved ones.

Whether you are a basketball fan or not, I think you will enjoy the story, and you will think about the true meaning of victory.

About the Author: Stanley Gordon West was born in 1932. He attended high school in St. Paul, Minnesota, and lived many years in Bozeman, Montana. He now resides in Shakopee, Minnesota. West has a large and devoted audience. Initially selling single-handedly, West sold 40,000 copies of his books from the trunk of his car.



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# RAYS OF GRACE XV1

WRITTEN BY GRACE THEISEN

## FAMILY TRIP

It's spring break travel time! Sadly, the Theisens are stuck at home this year. However, we still recall some memorable past road trips. There is nothing like piling seven family members into one car!

Last year, we drove to Alabama—think 22 driving hours with my four brothers. The trip started out pretty well. We played car games like “How long until the next big city?” and “When will the snow cover end?” Most importantly, we didn't argue much.

Oddly, as we drove farther south, the conditions worsened—heavy snowfall and very icy roads. By Springfield, Illinois, we had seen 107 cars in the ditch, including a semi (and we'd begun playing “count the cars in the ditch”). With no snowplows in sight, we found a hotel for the night. We weren't risking being ditched-car number 108.

Once we got past the Illinois blizzard, the ride went smoothly again. We stopped for lunch in Memphis for some traditional Southern cooking. We picked Gus's, a famous soul food restaurant—for my younger brother, Gus, and my youngest half-African-American brother, Quinn.

We ordered a ton of food, but then realized that they'd cooked everything in peanut oil. Quinn is allergic to peanuts. So, we'd taken him to get some cultural food, and all he got was coleslaw. (We hid the rest of the food from him—poor guy.)

When we finally pulled into the driveway of our beach destination, I started freaking out. I jumped out of the car and felt the cold sand on my feet. It was high tide, and the waves were crashing under our stilted house. It was truly amazing.

The next morning, I awoke to my younger brothers yelling about the dolphins they saw from our house. Although the weather was not perfect, we didn't care—we Wisconsinites would rather have 65 degrees over -10 any day. Alabamans were bundled up, wearing pants and sweatshirts, complaining about the weather. We ran right past them and went swimming in the ocean.



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# What's Going On Calendar of Events

## APRIL

**April 6th – Xcel Energy Kid's Expo** – Sunday, 11 a.m.-4 p.m. Largest Kids Event in Western Wisconsin! Spring into the Eau Claire Indoor Sports Center for the 2014 Xcel Energy Kid's Expo. Bring the whole family to enjoy performances, DJ entertainment, huge inflatables, family marketplace, face painting and much more! \$5 admission, children 12 and under are FREE!

**April 6th – Namji Kim Piano Recital** – 2-3:30 p.m. The UWEC Music and Theatre Arts Department will present a faculty recital with Namji Kim, pianist, performing. Gantner Concert Hall in the Haas Fine Arts Center, 105 Garfield Ave, Eau Claire. Free and open to the public. For additional information, call 715-836-4954 or email akrighnr@uwec.edu.

**April 11-13th – Here We Grow Again Children's Consignment Sale** – Friday 8 a.m.-5 p.m., Saturday 8 a.m.-4 p.m., Sunday 8 a.m.- 1 p.m. The sale will feature over 35,000 children's items from 400 families: new and gently used clothes for spring and summer, shoes, toys, books, DVDs, sports equipment, outdoor play items, baby equipment, nursery and children's furniture, vendors, goody bags and more. Open to the public. Hobbs Ice Arena, 915 Menomonie Street, near Carson Park Dairy Queen. For more information, go to [www.HereWeGrowAgainSale.com](http://www.HereWeGrowAgainSale.com) or call 715-456-8543.

**April 12-13th – Once Upon A Prom Extravaganza** – Saturday 2-6 p.m., Sunday 1-4 p.m. Prom dresses and accessories (shoes, jewelry, handbags, makeup, and local coupons) provided to Chippewa Valley and surrounding area girls who cannot otherwise afford them. In return, each girl must agree to donate six volunteer hours to her chosen community service. New location: The Salon Professional Academy, 3408 Mall Dr., Eau Claire. [www.onceuponaprom.com](http://www.onceuponaprom.com)

**April 19th – Chippewa Valley Easter Egg Hunt** – 9-11 a.m. Family-friendly activities lead up to the hunt at 10 a.m. Hosted by the Chippewa Valley Council Boy Scouts of America. Pine Point Pavilion inside Carson Park, Eau Claire. Please park in the large lots by the stadium.

**April 25-27th – Chippewa Falls SpringFest!** – All day. Sponsored by the Chippewa Falls Rotary Foundation. Local vendors display spring-related products, two heated tents with live music, family activities (5k fun run, petting zoo, inflatables, bonfire), food vendors, and more. Northern Wisconsin State Fair Grounds off Hwy 124, Chippewa Falls. [www.springfest-cf.com](http://www.springfest-cf.com)

**April 26th – Chippewa 50k & 10K Trail Run** – Run the beautiful Ice Age Trail, New Auburn. For details, times, and fees, visit [www.frontrunnerusa.com/event/chippewa-50k-and-10k-trail-run](http://www.frontrunnerusa.com/event/chippewa-50k-and-10k-trail-run)

## MAY

**May 8-11th – The Past Passed Here** – Thursday & Friday 3-6 p.m., Saturday 9 a.m.-6 p.m., Sunday 9 a.m.-1 p.m. A special event featuring hands-on activities highlighting the historic sights and sounds of early Chippewa Falls. Encampment visitors will experience camp skill competitions, 1800s-style food, traders row, and live entertainment. Allen Park, Chippewa Falls. [www.thepastpassedhere.org](http://www.thepastpassedhere.org) or 715-723-0619.

**May 9th – Chippewa Valley Theatre Guild's Fairytale Ball** – 6 p.m. Family event features an evening with the characters from Annie. Games, carnival, dancing, entertainment, horse-drawn carriage rides, food, photos, crafts, contests, and silent auction to raise monies for kids' education classes. Children and adults can dress up as their favorite characters. Florian Gardens, Eau Claire. For details and pricing, visit [cvtg.org](http://cvtg.org).

**May 10th – Mother's Day 5K Run/Walk and 8 Mile Bike Ride** – 10 a.m. Honor moms on this special day by spending quality time on a beautiful scenic route while giving back to local charities. This event is open to the public, including men and children! NEW this year: 8-mile family bike ride! Take your family or friends out on a beautiful day, and support a great cause! We encourage all families, friends, and bike enthusiasts to participate. Phoenix Park, Eau Claire. For tickets, visit [www.etouches.com/ehome/index.php?eventid=78362&](http://www.etouches.com/ehome/index.php?eventid=78362&)

**May 17th – Charity Ball** – Each year the St. Joseph's Hospital Partners host a dinner to give thanks to current donors and as a fundraiser for ongoing hospital projects. Dinner, big band music, games, and camaraderie. Cost for this elegant event is \$125/person. Avalon Hotel & Conference Center, 1009 W. Park Ave., Chippewa Falls. Visit [www.stjoeschipfalls.com/news\\_and\\_events/charity\\_ball.phtml](http://www.stjoeschipfalls.com/news_and_events/charity_ball.phtml) or contact volunteer services at 715-717-7439.

**May 23-25th – Ringelspiel Days** – The celebration includes a carnival, parade, bands, co-ed softball tournament, car show, food, and much more. Lotz Park, Boyd. For more information, call 715-667-3420.

**May 24th – The Oz Run** – Race Times: 8 a.m. for 13.1 Half Marathon, 9 a.m. for 5K Run/Walk. Anyone can participate, regardless of fitness level. The Oz Run will raise money for the new Irvine Park Welcome Center and the Feed my People Food Bank. Aiming for 3,500 runners/walkers at the first run of its kind in the Chippewa Valley. The scenic routes are just part of the fun. The event has a Wizard of Oz theme. Why? First, Irvine Park has a zoo...and what are the main attractions? Lions...and Tigers...and Bears...along with lots of other animals! Dressing up is COMPLETELY encouraged, but not required. There will be prizes for the best individual costumes and for the best group costumes. Irvine Park, Chippewa Falls. [www.theozrun.com](http://www.theozrun.com), 715-723-0051

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**PHOTOGRAPHER**

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