A black and white portrait of a woman with long, light-colored hair, wearing a nose ring and multiple bracelets. She is holding a fountain pen in her right hand and resting her chin on her left hand. Her left hand has a tattoo that says "pop". She is wearing a top with floral patterns on the shoulder. The background is a plain, light color.

MORE THAN
INK

EMMA MADSEN

BLACK HILLS
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I'm partial to **APRIL**

SPOILER ALERT: MY BIRTHDAY IS IN APRIL

And maybe birthdays aren't quite the celebration they were when we were kids—no Gigglebees and balloons and presents from all your closest friends—but they are still a reason to celebrate.

The amount of birthdays we have in a lifetime is not guaranteed.

I reflect on that every year. I could easily be sad about rapidly approaching 40 (especially while I still feel like a twenty-year-old in my heart), but adding to my age is a gift. God has blessed me with more time.

To watch my children grow, to love my husband, to soak up my friends and family, to do things I love like traveling, enjoying nature, and eating delicious food. It is a celebration of all the things I once prayed for—this beautiful life I get to live. So I think that's worth making a big deal over. A reminder of all there is to be thankful for.

Maybe you are young and birthdays are still enjoyable for you. Or perhaps you've long since stopped celebrating them. Maybe you don't enjoy the attention. However, I encourage you to embrace your birthday this year. Make it a significant occasion. Plan something special for yourself. Because the gift of time is worth celebrating—you are worth celebrating.

And if you're reading this having already had your birthday this year and feel like you missed out on an opportunity... consider this an invitation to go really crazy. Celebrate your half birthday instead.

We all need more reasons to celebrate.

Big moments like birthdays, and small ones too.

We only get one life. Embrace it. Honor it.

Warmly,

Kari Nielsen



MORE THAN



INK.

Emma Madsen's Art is Rooted in Story, Healing, & South Dakota Soil

BY MIRANDA O'BRYAN HERTEL

Creativity and connection come together the moment Emma Madsen, 22, picks up her tattoo machine. With each fine line she inks, she isn't just creating art – she's permanently tying someone else's story to hers.

For Madsen, tattooing started as a teenage dare and quickly revealed itself as a calling.

Now a self-taught fine line tattoo artist and owner of Duende Ink, Madsen discovered her passion at just 16 years old – not through an apprenticeship or family trade, but through curiosity and daring.

"I had a classmate in my junior year of high school tell me I should buy a tattoo machine. And so I did, and I learned to love it," she said. "I did a Google science presentation for my dad to talk him into me having a career in tattooing."

Growing up on a farm northeast of New Underwood, the path to becoming a tattoo artist wasn't necessarily obvious. But in many ways, her

rural upbringing prepared her for entrepreneurship long before she realized it.

"Running your own business is kind of like farming, in the way you don't really have a 9 to 5," said Madsen. "In my junior and senior years of high school, I spent time working at my dad's grain mill located in New Underwood. I had to figure out how to run QuickBooks and how to do customer service and all the background, manager-type stuff."

Those early lessons in bookkeeping, customer service, and long workdays became the backbone of her small business. After graduating high school, Madsen dove into tattooing headfirst, building her portfolio and client base from the ground up.

But carving out a space in this career hasn't been easy.

"The tattoo industry is very competitive, and so trying to start out at 19 years old, especially being a female and being self-taught, it feels like a lot of

"I feel like you're never really at your full potential in the art world. You can always learn something new."



tattooers look down at you," she said. "I feel like it is a kind of male-dominated, prison-stereotype industry. It can be hard trying to get your name out there, trying to advertise, and trying to compete with 20 years of experience — tattoo artists that have been doing it forever."

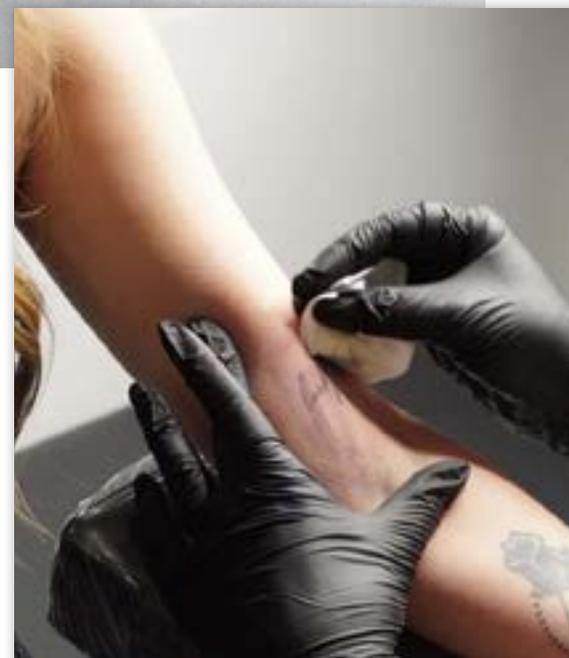
Rather than back down, Madsen leaned into what made her different.

Her fine line style – delicate, intentional, and

detail-focused – contrasts with the bold, heavy-lined aesthetic often associated with tattoo culture.

Her background, rooted in farm life and a religious upbringing, often surprises her clients.

"I feel like a lot of people get inspired by coming from a farm, coming from a Catholic family – that you're not supposed to do tattoos or get tattoos or anything," Madsen said. "I feel like my story, a lot of people have kind of found that cool."



STORIES BENEATH THE SURFACE

For many of her clients, that relatability builds trust before the first line is ever drawn.

Because for Madsen, tattooing is never just about ink.

It's about the stories behind it.

Every appointment becomes a shared experience – memorial pieces honoring loved ones, matching tattoos between friends, art meant to spark joy, symbols of survival, and reminders of strength.

In a profession built on permanence, vulnerability often comes first.

Recently, Madsen shared on social media a story of a sister who asked her to tattoo wings around her knee – a design her brother wanted but didn't live long enough to get himself. In another appointment, a simple script accompanying a deer read "papa Gary" – carrying generations of memory in just two words.

These pieces are less about aesthetics and more about preservation of lives, relationships, and moments.

And nowhere is that connection more prevalent than in the work she does for cancer patients.

Partnering with Monument Health, Madsen offers free microblading – a semi-permanent, superficial tattoo using fine, handheld blades to create natural, hair-like strokes for fuller eyebrows – to individuals undergoing chemotherapy. For many, the loss of eyebrows can feel like losing a piece of themselves.

"I had a 27-year-old cousin who passed away from colon cancer a couple of years back," she said. "I feel like I've seen firsthand how a lot of families are affected by cancer and how cancer patients are affected by losing their hair or losing their



eyebrows, because I feel like you're losing your identity.”

The service, referred to as Free Brows for Chemo Patients, has become one of the most meaningful parts of her work.

“One of my first clients for Free Brows for Chemo Patients, she actually had a ball cap on, and she had never, ever taken it off for anyone. Not her family, no one,” said Madsen. “You're kind of creating this connection with a stranger that you wouldn't normally ever have the chance to get.”

Moments like that help reinforce her decision to follow this career path.

ART THAT TRAVELS

While the studio offers consistency, Madsen has also built Duende Ink on mobility and accessibility — taking her craft across South Dakota and into communities in every rural pocket of the state.

Duende Ink began as a pop-up concept before eventually finding a permanent home in downtown Rapid City. Even now, travel remains central to her business model.

“I've been to Brookings, Chamberlain, Murdo, Spearfish, Rapid, just kind of all over South Dakota,” she said. “I worked the Stock Show. I did five days there, and that was my third year working at Rodeo Rapid City's Ladies Night.”

Pop-ups have also taken place at Flowers by LeRoy, Monarch Bookstore, the Black Hills Yoga Festival, and the Rapid City Rush's Ladies Night. At each event, Madsen offers a curated sheet of 15 to 20 unique designs available on a first-come, first-served basis — making tattooing approachable, spontaneous, and community-centered.

DEVELOPING NEW ROOTS

Today, Duende Ink has taken root on the east side of Rapid City with a new location. It opened on March 1st, just south of Western Dakota Technical College at 1770 Centre Street, Unit Three.

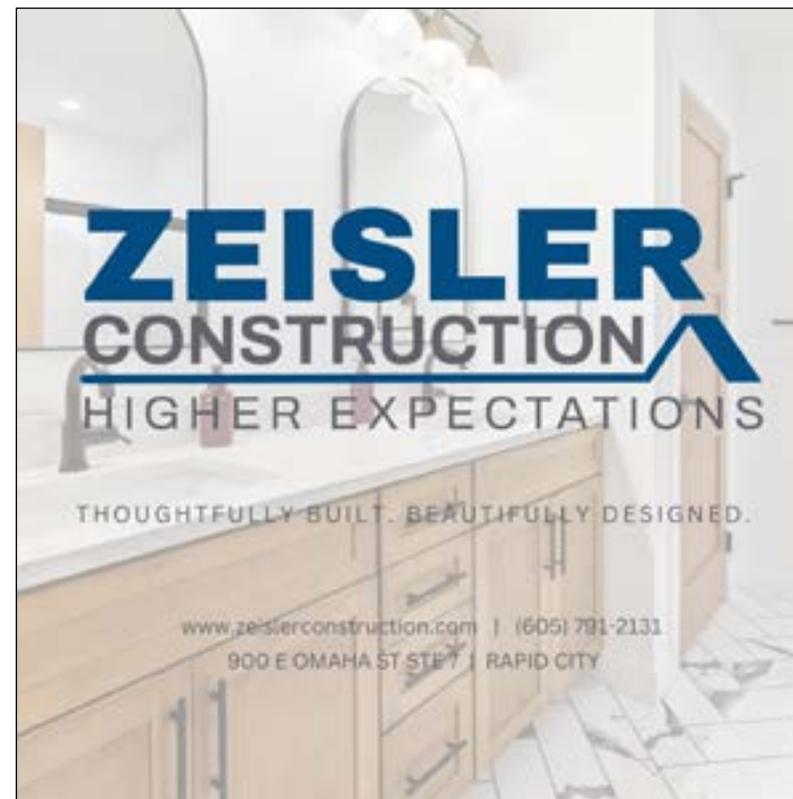
With a fresh start in a new space, Madsen says the future looks similar to the present: full of pop-ups, creativity, and holding space for clients wherever they are in life.

“I would overall just like to get better every day. I feel like you're never really at your full potential in the art world. You can always learn something new,” she said. “I like the creative freedom that it offers — customizing every single person's tattoo, memorial pieces, creating something special designed specifically for them that only they would ever get.”

For Madsen, success isn't measured by size or status. It's measured in the quiet moments — when someone looks in the mirror and sees themselves again, when a story is honored in ink, when art becomes something deeply personal.

Line by line, she is building more than her business.

She is building connection.



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The Caring Power of Community: Journey On

STORY BY KRYSTAL BRESNAHAN

In life's hardest moments, it's important to find compassionate responders, steady guides, and credible messengers willing to walk alongside you. The Journey On team shows up throughout Rapid City for suicide response, street outreach, and youth outreach with courage, cultural wisdom, and a rebellion of care. Meet the incredible women leading this local non-profit, and learn how they're building a better community for all.

Vision, Mission, & Culture

Journey On serves as a co-response team together with law enforcement and the Rapid City Fire Department's Mobile Medic. This model helps decriminalize homelessness, reduce strain on emergency and legal systems, and save taxpayer dollars by connecting people to appropriate support rather

than defaulting to crisis response. While officers and medics focus on acute situations, which require their specialized training, the Journey On team ensures relatives are treated with dignity, love, and grace.

"We say 'relative' rather than 'client' because we treat people the way we would treat our own family — with dignity, patience, and respect. Our team is committed to leaving people better than we find them and focusing on solutions rather than problems," Stephanie Kor explains. "It is an honor to serve as Executive Director of Journey On, and I lead with the belief that this organization doesn't belong to any one person — it belongs to the community. I'm most proud of our team culture. We have a strong leadership team, and we make decisions together, ensuring all voices are heard."



Every program at Journey On is led by local women, including the LOSS Team, Street Outreach, and Youth Outreach. "The way our team works with our houseless relatives, as well as youth and families overcoming loss, truly demonstrates the heart that each of us carries for this community," says Betsy Running Shield, Journey On Operations Director.

When hiring new team members, Running Shield says, Journey On looks for "credible messengers—individuals who have personally struggled and overcome challenges. We seek people who are now in a place where they can effectively support others who are still navigating those same struggles."

Local Outreach to Suicide Survivors (LOSS Team)

At the age of thirteen, Tayler McCarty lost a close friend to suicide, and it changed her life.

"In the aftermath, our school counselor brought together a small group of eight of us who had been impacted. Instead of allowing us to carry that grief alone, he created space for us to share our stories. Together, we began speaking to freshman and junior classes each year about suicide prevention, warning signs, and the importance of reaching out for help."



McCarty continued doing talks until she graduated, and the experience showed her the power of peer voice, honest conversation, and community response. She learned that youth can be more than recipients of prevention efforts; they can be leaders in them. Now she oversees on-scene response, volunteer coordination, survivor support services, and community partnerships as Program Director for the Journey On LOSS Team.

“At Journey On, lived experience isn’t something we hide; it’s something we honor,” she explains. “Our volunteers are usually survivors of suicide loss

themselves. They are parents, siblings, spouses, and friends who have walked this road personally and now choose to come back and sit with others in their darkest hour.”

Within hours of a suicide, trained LOSS Team members respond alongside law enforcement on scene to provide immediate, compassionate support to surviving family members.

“While deputies handle the investigative process, the LOSS team sits in living rooms, at kitchen tables, and sometimes on front steps, offering presence, answering questions, and helping families take their very first steps through shock and grief. We don’t replace law enforcement or mental health providers; we stand beside them, ensuring no family has to navigate those first unbearable moments alone.”

What truly makes the LOSS Team impactful is the continuity of care that follows.

McCarty describes what happens next: “We don’t hand someone a brochure and disappear... We walk alongside them through funeral planning, victim compensation, financial navigation, and the quiet months after the casseroles stop coming. We support youth differently from adults. We understand trauma responses. We recognize cultural and rural dynamics.

And we remain present.”

Street Outreach

When Priscilla Roach’s grandmother passed away, her family fell apart. Her grandmother’s home had always been like Central Station — the place they gathered, the place they fell back on when life got hard. Losing that stability meant losing her safety net, and without shelter, Priscilla ended up on the streets.

“I made decisions I’m not proud of, choices that helped me survive day to day, but also caused harm in our community. Eventually, I had to answer for those mistakes. That’s when I was introduced to the diversion program through the State’s Attorney’s Office,” Roach recalls. “At the time, I didn’t realize how much I needed someone to believe in me — but once I felt that support, everything changed. People like Mark Vargo, the late Tracy Sigdestad, my mother Lavonne, and my daughter Alejandria stood by me. Their belief in me helped me believe in myself.”

Roach went to treatment at Care Campus and started the journey of rebuilding her life. Once her life stabilized, she made a promise to herself that she would become someone people could depend on. Today she is Journey On’s Street Outreach Coordinator and says,

“the same streets that once broke me became the streets I now walk with purpose.”

Roach acknowledges no single agency, program, or person can meet every need alone. “Collaboration isn’t just helpful in this work; it’s essential. I’m proud to be part of a team that shows up with integrity and hope for people who are often overlooked. When we work together — coordinating our efforts, supporting each other’s roles, and staying aligned in our approach — we create real change for the people we serve. It’s how we build a safer, healthier, more connected community.”

Youth Outreach

Jillian Sutton returned to the Black Hills after graduating from college in Boston with a degree in conflict resolution and local community building. “Moving back home after school showed me what an incredible place we live in, but also the ways in which people are so easily made invisible and fall through the cracks.”

As Youth Outreach Coordinator, Sutton says her purpose is to empower youth to see that they are capable, no matter what the narratives have been throughout their life.

Transportation is one of the biggest barriers for

youth in our community, and Journey On Programs Director Eltina Three Stars shares why: “Without reliable transportation, young people can struggle to attend school, maintain employment, participate in extracurricular activities, or access essential services. By providing safe and dependable transportation, Journey On removes a critical barrier and expands access to education, employment, mentorship, and community engagement.”

According to Three Stars, transportation is not just about getting from point A to point B. It is about creating pathways to stability, confidence, and long-term success.

Journey On’s Safe Passage program provides consistent, visible safety support for elementary and middle school youth traveling through high-risk neighborhoods. Safe Passage Specialists are safe adults who are in the area when youth are getting to and from school, which helps to establish relationships with families that may otherwise be difficult to form. Outreach Specialists are interacting with youth every day, so they’re able to identify additional specific needs.

“The Safe Passage program started as a “walking school bus,” but has transformed into so much more,” Sutton shares. “Helping families get access to warm weather gear, food resources, and diapers are just some

of the benefits that have come along with this program.”

“For me, being a credible messenger means leading with your heart and truly seeing people,” says Kor. “I believe change begins when people feel seen and valued, because trust follows.” Three Stars agrees.

“Trust is the foundation of everything we do,” Three Stars says. “Many of the individuals and families we serve have experienced systems that have failed them. Because of lived experience within our team, we are able to build meaningful connections quickly. That trust allows participants to feel safe navigating resources, developing skills, and stepping into independence... Trust turns services into transformation.”

The Caring Power of Community Programs

The biggest goal for Journey On is sustainability — strengthening the foundation of their organization, so they can continue serving the community long into the future.

“We are backed by an incredible Board of Directors whose wisdom and guidance help us through growth and challenges. We also partner with many agencies across the community to ensure relatives have the best possible access to resources that may help them overcome their situation — whether it’s housing,



Pain can be held, witnessed, and integrated without destroying someone. Hope is sitting with a family on the worst day of their life and saying, you are not alone.

behavioral health, medical care, employment support, or something else...we are committed to building strong partnerships and lasting pathways,” says Kor.

Working closely with vulnerable populations is deeply rewarding, and also emotionally demanding, and can result in burnout and compassion fatigue. It’s necessary to lean on trusted mentors, elders, and team members

to strengthen coping strategies and to build hope.

According to McCarty, hope isn’t the absence of pain: Working at Journey On, “it’s the belief that pain can be held, witnessed, and integrated without destroying someone. Hope is sitting with a family on the worst day of their life and saying, you are not alone.”

Blueprint for Growth:

STORY BY MIRANDA O'BRYAN HERTEL

Spencer Hattervig's Rise in the Construction Industry

Spencer Hattervig is grateful for the opportunity to become one of the small percentage of women in construction, even though it wasn't her original career goal. What began as a front desk job has evolved into a career she now champions – one that challenges assumptions about what construction looks like.



“People don’t often associate construction with anything glamorous or exciting,” she said. “But construction isn’t just about being out in the field and getting your boots dirty. What many people don’t see is that it truly takes a village.”

For Hattervig, that understanding came from experience, not theory.

Eleven years ago, Hattervig entered the industry as a receptionist while attending classes at the university center. This entry-level position eventually evolved into a career path. Over time, she moved through multiple roles

within the company – each one offering a deeper understanding of how projects come together and how vital every position is to success.

“Behind every project is a team of dedicated professionals — many of them women — managing payroll, holding teams accountable to job budgets, ensuring employees have the right healthcare coverage, securing permits, document control, and overseeing contracts and insurance for every job,” explained Hattervig.

Having worked in many of these jobs herself, Hattervig developed the skills that prepared her

for her current role as a project manager with Zeisler Construction. Today, her responsibilities extend far beyond the desk. She works through every stage of a project, from early planning meetings to final inspections, all while building client relationships – something she describes as “extremely fulfilling and gratifying.”

Her career progression mirrors a broader shift taking place across the construction industry.

Last year, more than 1.3 million women reported working in construction, making up just over 11% of the workforce. While the field remains male-dominated, the number of women in construction has steadily grown – increasing by 45% over the past decade, with more than a third serving in leadership or professional roles. The steady rise signifies not only an expansion of opportunities but also a gradual transformation of who is considered suitable for construction environments.

Even so, stepping into those roles can require a level of confidence that doesn't always come easily.

“With anything as a woman, you must know that you deserve to be there. Stay confident in yourself and use your best qualities to your advantage,” Hattervig said. “Having a woman's perspective and being able to communicate clearly with assertion but

also grace has been a key part for me in handling my career in the male-dominated field. Being a woman brings a different point of view in many ways, and most of the time it is welcomed and appreciated.”

For Hattervig, success is not about matching the room's tone but about showing up authentically. She reminds women that while being assertive and direct is important, leading with kindness matters just as much — qualities she believes ultimately strengthen teams rather than divide them.

Outside of work, that balance between strength and grace carries into her home life. Hattervig is the mother of two daughters, Sylvie and Phoebe, and the wife of her husband, Jarrod. Like many working parents, she and her husband juggle full schedules, but are intentional about making time together count.

When they step away from work, the family heads outdoors as often as possible – hiking in the hills, visiting the bike park, and spending time cooking meals together as a family. Those moments ground and reinforce the importance of teamwork, both at home and on the job.

“I worked my way up and wore many hats throughout my time in the construction industry. I gained experience... One of the most rewarding

With anything as a woman, you must know that you deserve to be there. Stay confident in yourself and use your best qualities to your advantage.

aspects of my role was leading new hire orientations and assisting with employee benefits, which allowed me to build meaningful connections with the women and men working in the field.”

The collaboration she values in construction shows up in her family life. Whether coordinating subcontractors or planning weekend adventures with her girls, Hattervig understands that meaningful results are rarely accomplished alone.

Her message to women considering a male-dominated field is simple: don't dismiss an industry based on outdated stereotypes.



“If you've ever been curious about working in construction, I highly encourage you to reach out to someone you know in the industry and ask them about their experience. You might be surprised by the opportunities and the impact you can make.”

For Hattervig, construction isn't simply about building structures. It's about people – the teams behind the scenes, the relationships built over time, and the confidence gained by going into spaces where women have historically been underrepresented. And for those willing to give it a closer look, she believes the industry offers more opportunity than many realize.

framing a bright future

STORY BY AVERY PORCH



Nichole Buchholz doesn't remember exactly how she got involved with Black Hills Badges for Hope. "It just kind of happened," she laughs. "I believed in their mission, and I helped by photographing some events."

Founded in 2018, Black Hills Badges for Hope exists to support families of fallen officers, as well as facilitate positive interactions between first responders and local youth. The organization is well-known for community outreach initiatives like Badges N Kids, their annual Christmas shopping event. Black Hills Badges for Hope also offers scholarships to help children and their parents offset the costs of sports and extracurricular activities.

As the owner of a photography business, Nichole offers



several Santa sessions around Christmas time and uses the proceeds to purchase a pack of socks for every child who participates in the Badges N Kids event. Last year, Nichole raised enough money to buy socks for over 300 children.

"In my mind, this helps to fulfill a need so there's more funds for the wants at Christmas time, and I also think there's nothing more comforting than a new pair of socks," Nichole says.

Nichole hopes that the organization helps change

negative perceptions of first responders. "BHBFH creates positive relationships within the community. The organization helps kids to see first responders as someone to befriend, not as someone to be feared."

Nichole also manages the nonprofit's social media accounts, oversees its marketing initiatives, and brainstorms creative ways to advance its mission. Her background makes her well suited for this role — she studied mass communications at Black Hills State University and now works for Strider Education

Foundation as their public relations manager.

As a longtime volunteer and board member, Nichole has witnessed the impact of these programs firsthand. “I had someone approach me at an event and ask, ‘Is Badges N Kids happening right now?’” The young woman shared that she had participated several years ago and now worked for Youth & Family Services. To Nichole, that encounter felt like a full circle moment — a participant had received positive attention and, as a result, decided to give back to the community through her job.

Nichole could share dozens of heartwarming stories. Every year, during the Badges N Kids events, at least one child will buy flowers for their mom. “That pulls at my heartstrings, especially as a Mom myself,” Nichole says. There are also kids who come to the Christmas shopping event with a grocery list, wanting to make sure that their families are fed.

Events like these are especially impactful because most people only have encounters with first responders on bad days. BHBFH shifts the narrative, creating a fun and



lighthearted experience for both kids and police officers.

In addition to their Badges N Kids event, the nonprofit hosts an annual golf tournament to honor fallen officers and fundraise for its community outreach programs. The number of participants has nearly tripled since its launch in 2017, climbing from 13 teams to 38 teams. This year, the tournament will be held on Saturday, July 11. BHBFH is also introducing a brand-new, two-person golf tournament in September.

Nichole continues to help year after year, convinced that the organization is truly changing lives. “Ultimately, a nonprofit needs funding to continue to do what they do and be successful,” she explains. “Donating just \$10 a month makes it possible for one child to go Christmas shopping with a first responder.”

For Nichole, her involvement started with a simple “yes.” From organizing fundraisers to serving on the board, she is committed to investing in work that strengthens families and builds trust within the community — one photo, one event, one conversation at a time.

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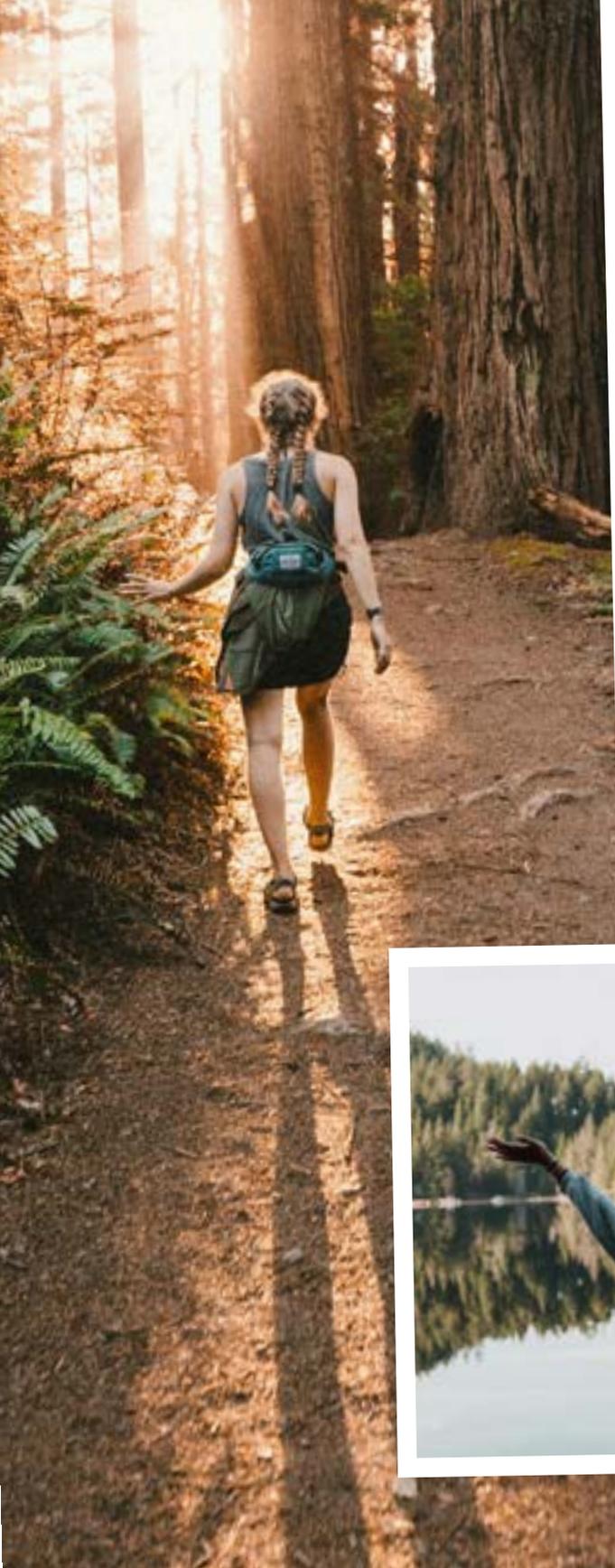
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of lives and whole towns destroyed or about
to be. We are not wise, and not very often
kind. And much can never be redeemed.
Still, life has some possibility left. Perhaps this
is its way of fighting back, that sometimes
something happens better than all the riches
or power in the world. It could be anything,
but very likely you notice it in the instant
when love begins. Anyway, that's often the
case. Anyway, whatever it is, don't be afraid
of its plenty. Joy is not made to be a crumb.

DON'T HESITATE | BY MARY OLIVER





Where *the* Pavement Ends

BY KELSY PETERSON

Spring is here, and we're eager to rejuvenate our minds and bodies with some well-deserved time on the trails. From short and sweet nature walks to some real booty-burners, we've got some suggestions ready for you to explore.

Always remember to leave no trace, respect wildlife, and leave trails better than you found them so we can continue to enjoy these gems for years to come!



Easy Hikes

Creek Caves Trail | Out & Back | 2.1 Miles

Located just off Nemo Road is the out-back trail of Creek Caves. Hikers will weave through quiet forest for 2.1 miles, enjoy stone-step creek crossings, before ending at a series of unique caves that line the creek.

Lakota Lake West Loop | 0.7 Miles

Tucked away behind the popular scenic drive, Iron Mountain Road, sits a small serene body of water. Visitors can take in the beauty of Lakota Lake with a short nature walk called the Lakota Lake West Loop. The trail in total is less than a mile, but it skirts along a portion of the lake back to where Iron Creek meets its waters. There is another trail that connects to this one, frequented by horseback riders, if you wish to keep exploring.

Moderate Hikes

Boulder Hill | Loop | 3.3 Miles

Trek through scenic forest and summit Boulder Hill for stunning views of the surrounding Black Hills. This 3.3-mile loop incorporates a few inclines and a small rock scramble finish - all worth the view greeting you at the top.

Upper Spring Creek/Flume | Loop | 3.1 Miles

Explore along Sheridan Lake before veering into the forest to discover pieces of Black Hills history. Upper Spring Creek Trail is a portion of the historic Flume Trail that sweeps through the Black Hills for a total of 12.4 miles.

This part of the trail follows the flume bed for 3.1 miles and showcases historic artifacts and takes hikers into a few fascinating tunnels.

Gold Mountain Mine | Loop | 3.9 Miles

Witness the only remaining gold mine site in the Black Hills National Forest with the mill frame still standing. Take some time to explore the Gold Mountain Mine and discover its history through the informational plaques that surround it.

Hard Hikes

Little Devils Tower | Out & Back | 3.8 Miles

Sweeping views of Black Elk Wilderness and beyond wait at the summit of Little Devils Tower. After a rock scramble to the top, you'll be greeted with stunning views of South Dakota's highest peak, Black Elk, along with a different angle of the astonishing Cathedral Spires.

St. Elmo Peak Trail | Out & Back | 1.9 Miles

The best way to break a sweat in the Black Hills is tackling the short, but steep trail to the top of St. Elmo. The rocky summit is the perfect place to relax (probably catch your breath) and take in the spectacular views that surround you. At the top, you'll have crisp views of the two iconic peaks of Custer State Park, Black Elk and Little Devils Tower.



Getting Ready to Plant for Spring

WITH THE PLANT SHOP AT ASPEN RIDGE LAWN AND LANDSCAPE

COMPILED BY KARI NIELSEN



The Plant Shop at Aspen Ridge Lawn and Landscape can best be described as “a small-town feel” for all your planting and gardening needs. Different from your typical nursery or garden center, this smaller-scale operation is able to get to know customers on a first-name basis and do what they do well. Not only can they help you find what you’re looking for, but also what best fits your individual needs. They have everything from the smallest houseplant to 10-foot trees!

Abby Kemp, Plant Shop Manager, and Hannah Hayes, Garden Sales Lead, are the driving forces behind The Plant Shop. Abby’s love for Aspen Ridge began when she spotted it driving by, and has now been there for three years. Hannah, on the other hand, discovered her passion for horticulture in college, and has worked in the green industry for 10+ years, gaining a B.S. in horticulture, and multiple credentials as a certified arborist.



In preparation for the upcoming planting season, Hannah was generous to share some tips and tricks she's learned along the way.

As spring approaches, gardening and planting become top of mind. What is the number one piece of gardening advice you wish people knew?

Be curious — have a why and goals with a clear purpose. They may seem similar, but they can differ. For instance, someone might want to remove a shrub. Why? Is the goal to have less maintenance or to have a shrub that is smaller? Determine your goals and end objectives. If you're unsure, list at least three things you don't want. Those are just as important. If you want to replace an evergreen, consider the color options. Narrow down your choices based on your preferences.

What is the number one mistake you see people make?

Many people claim to have a black thumb, often sharing a heartbreaking story of a failed plant attempt. Ask questions! The internet is both beautiful and dangerous. Gardening is a generational tradition. If your neighbor's garden thrives, ask them. Alternatively, attend Rapid City Gardening Club



or Master Gardening classes. Gardening is an art, not a science. Technically, something should work, but someone may share a successful method passed down through generations. Try the plant, don't get discouraged, and avoid repeating the same approach more than three times. Have fun and keep trying!

What are the hardest plants/flowers to kill for our area? On the same note, what won't the deer eat?

Karl Forester Grass is tolerant and doesn't spread or make a mess like other grasses. Karl Forester was an innovative plant smith responsible for many plant varieties that are still the gold standard in horticulture. Russian Sage is deer-tolerant and needs no water. Black-Eyed Susans are deer tolerant, but some deer nibble on them. Timing is crucial; plant deer-tolerant plants in the fall and consider caging them for a year or two until they're well established. Deer repellents are helpful; reapply every three weeks and if there's rain. If unsure, visit me or schedule a visit to determine your inputs, rabbit/deer pressure, and find the right plant for your space.

What advice would you give when picking out flowers for spring?

Read the tag for the best information on light and size requirements. Use the Missouri Botanical Gardens to find insect and disease problems for specific plants. For pots and hanging baskets, choose

annuals and long-blooming annuals. Shrubs and hydrangeas are difficult to container-grow due to their water needs and preference for soil. In gardens and landscaping, select both summer and fall-blooming plants for year-round interest. Spring-blooming flowers are fun, but a garden should be a year-round project. Remember, a landscape is planned, while a garden is a work in progress.

How often should you water? Is there one rule for everything, or does it vary by plant?

Plants have varying water requirements and soil conditions. My recommendation would be to water when the top 1-2 inches of soil is dry. Water should penetrate deep and then flow off. You cannot overwater in dosage, only in frequency. Deep, infrequent waterings allow the soil to dry out and prevent root rot.

What soil is best for potted plants vs. the yard?

There isn't a one-size-fits-all solution, but generally speaking, a light and chunky mix is ideal for potted plants. For the yard, it's best to incorporate a good topsoil rich in organic matter with your native soil. Conducting a soil test is highly recommended to rejuvenate the soil. If you're fertilizing but haven't done a soil test, you're essentially wasting money.

How do I know when to prune?

There are two main times and reasons for pruning: early spring to promote growth and late summer/early fall to control size. For instance, lilacs bloom on old wood, setting their blooms in the fall for the next year. Pruning in early spring can remove the blooms, but it may be necessary to manage their size. While there's a best time, doing it when you have the time is also beneficial.

How do you combine plants for the best visual impact?

Design rules can help plants look appealing with various combinations. In potted plants, the old "filler, spiller, thriller" rule works: a medium layer to fill the planter, a spiller that trails over the edge, and a thrilling tall piece that catches your eye. For landscaping, plan in groups of threes or fives instead of twos or fours. Ultimately, have fun and plant what you like! Take pictures of interesting plants and bring them with you. A vision and a "vibe" are helpful.

Aspen Ridge is your go-to destination for all your gardening needs. Stop in for hands-on help!

Here's what's coming up at Aspen Ridge:

Beers and Baskets:

On April 16th, 17th, and 18th, grab a beverage and design your own hanging basket. Aspen Ridge will take good care of them in the greenhouse until the weather warms up.

Open House:

On April 25th, the official start of the season, all the annuals are out and down, new spring inventory, plus a fun assortment of food trucks and coffee vendors.



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MEAGAN GOOD

Changing Lives

ONE SONNAGRAM
AT A TIME



STORY BY MADIGAN SCHMITZ

Being a business owner extends far beyond the obvious skillset that may come to mind when envisioning an entrepreneur. While plenty of people are capable of starting their own businesses, true success as a business owner requires heart, soul, and an unwavering commitment to giving back to the community they call home.

Healthcare practically runs through Meagan Good's bloodstream. She grew up in eastern Nebraska, where her mother was a nurse who provided care for rural communities. Watching her mother honor the profession she loved and make a positive difference in people's lives deeply inspired Meagan. From a young age, she knew that healthcare was what she was meant to do.

Now, Meagan's been a sonographer for the last decade, traveling throughout the Midwest to offer her services to all kinds of communities. Since settling in the Black Hills five years ago, Meagan has made a difference for patients throughout the state.

As the owner of Ultrasound Solutions and Oh Baby Ultrasounds, Meagan is able to provide essential services to people in all stages of life. From early gender determination ultrasounds to critical care imaging, she travels throughout the region —

and beyond — to ensure no one goes without care, especially South Dakota's rural communities and reservations.

"[Ultrasounds] are critical from every standpoint, from socioeconomic to location. When you live in a place that's rural, you may be an hour and a half to two hours away from a pediatric ICU unit," says Meagan. "If one of these places delivers a baby that isn't doing well, you have the extra burden of getting them to the care they require. That's why it becomes so important to have preventative work done beforehand, to best prepare for that scenario."

From weekly residencies in Hot Springs, to weekend visits to Pine Ridge, Meagan is always on the go to offer patients in need affordable and accessible care. She's found a passion in working with private practices to offer care to those who wouldn't

"I'm here to help you take care of yourself better, and it's a win for everyone."



be able to afford health insurance or expensive medical bills. Patients come to her after having been quoted thousands of dollars for life-saving imaging. She's able to provide that service for a fraction of the cost.

"I feel like this is what healthcare is supposed to be. The doctors that start these clinics do it because they truly, truly care about taking care of their communities."

When she's not traveling throughout the Black Hills for work, she's bringing joy to families with early gender determination ultrasound sessions. With Oh Baby Ultrasounds, she strives to create a comfortable space to enjoy the excitement of seeing early imaging of the newest family member. While doctors' offices often limit ultrasound attendees, and can feel cold and sterile, Meagan has created a welcoming, inviting environment that is conducive for families to celebrate together.

"I'll never forget the moment I found out what I was having, and I've always worked to honor that, and make it better. I can make that moment special," she says. "I'm able to include the grandma who's normally never going to get to see an ultrasound. I strive to honor each family's experience and make the moment that they find out as good as I can."

And for families with ultrasound appointments that don't go according to plan, Meagan meets them with kindness and compassion, the same way she approaches all of her patients. If

it's discovered that the baby has passed in utero, Meagan doesn't charge for the session.

"I refuse to make a mother who just lost her child pay for an ultrasound. When you know you're carrying a child that isn't viable, medical appointments are focused on what's wrong with the baby. I'm focused on — and what I want to offer families is a way to see what's good about their child, and let them bond with their baby as much as they can while surrounded by all of their loved ones," says Meagan.

Meagan has found her true calling in serving patients who need her services most — whether that's for financial reasons, medical reasons, or even location and transportation challenges. As a healthcare professional,

she meets each and every individual with empathy and compassion, and no matter how the appointment ends, she ensures everyone who she interacts with leaves feeling uplifted and hopeful.

In the coming years, Meagan hopes to make her services — and essential healthcare services across the board — even more accessible, no matter the circumstances. She sacrifices her nights, evenings, and weekends for those who need it, and for Meagan, making that choice is easy.

"I'm here to help you take care of yourself better, and it's a win for everyone. It's good for the patient, and for me. I get to do work that I feel good about. It brings me some good, knowing that I get to give back to these people."

"I strive to honor each family's experience and *make the moment* that they find out as good as I can."





MOM OF THE MOMENT

Michelle Chenoweth

Story by Maddie Graper, Intern Writer

For Michelle Chenoweth, family absolutely comes first. She's a mother to three of her own children: Jade, Kennady, and Cruz, along with being a dog mom to her golden retriever, and a newly named "Oma". She's also grown into a new family with her partner, CJ, and his children, Jonathan and Quinn.

"They're my people," she explains. The bond she shares with her children has become more than just a mother-child relationship. Through quality time and having meaningful conversations with each other, the relationship Michelle has with each of her children has blossomed into genuine friendship.

Something her children have inherited from Michelle is a strong personality. Although their strong personalities will undoubtedly carry them far, it has prompted Michelle to emphasize the significance of patience and the importance of taking the time to genuinely listen to her children. Still, they're also always able to joke and laugh with each other, creating countless memories.

Aside from being a mom, Michelle works as a real estate broker across multiple areas of the Black Hills. Originally going to college for business and marketing, she knew she always wanted to be in the line of business



LOVING
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YOU'RE AT,
THEN MOVE –
YOU'RE NOT
A TREE.

somehow – specifically owning her own. Despite not finishing her degree, this passion of hers never died and she pursued it hard. Her first business, a kitchen and bath design out of Pierre, ran for ten years before she decided to liquidate it. After being mentored, she ended up in real estate where she's happily landed for the last fourteen years. Through real estate, she gets to utilize her love and knowledge for home improvement and design. Along with this, she finds such fulfillment and humility in helping serve people through various walks of life. Living and working in the Black Hills has given Michelle a deep appreciation for community. She loves helping people find not just a house, but a place where they truly feel at home.

Whoever her clients may be – from new parents to someone who just went through a divorce – she enjoys getting to know each and every one of them. “I’m always humbled when people choose to work with me. They could choose anyone, and they chose me.”

Another area in which Michelle finds fulfillment is through assuming the role of a student. In real estate, there's a lot more to it than people think, so continuing to educate herself is something Michelle finds a lot of satisfaction in. Part of this is involving herself in many different areas. To name a few, she's the co-founder of the community workshop, Real Estate Talks; she teaches and is on the board for Junior Achievement; and is currently in the process of recording her own podcast. From working fifty hours a week to still putting dinner on the table for



her family, Michelle works hard to serve those around her. Her drive and commitment to both her passions and her community set her apart.

With all that she has on her plate, Michelle continuously learns the importance of self-care. She prioritizes her health through how she eats and moving her body through Pilates, hiking, or playing tennis and pickleball with her kids. Though self-care isn't just physical, it's also taking the time to do things that make your heart happy. Michelle finds this from old hobbies such as refinishing old furniture and decorating her home, socializing at local breweries, going into the Hills, and making time to go on different dates or trips with CJ.

An important aspect of self-care Michelle lives by is the power of self-talk.

“Loving yourself is huge. It's possible to change things about yourself. If you don't like who you are or where you're at, then move – you're not a tree.”

On the other hand, Michelle also believes in finding

people that can be trusted and who propel personal growth. “Surround yourself with people who will push you,” Michelle explains, “Not everyone should be accepted at your table.” Though self-care and self-talk are essential in becoming one's best self, it's also crucial to have people around that will aid in becoming that person.

To know Michelle Chenoweth is to know a selfless and passionate mother. She admits that the road hasn't always been easy. There were seasons where balancing motherhood, business, and personal growth felt overwhelming, but those moments are what shaped her work ethic and resilience today. More than anything, Michelle hopes her children see that hard work, honesty, and believing in yourself can create opportunities. She wants them to know they don't have to settle – they can build the life they want. Michelle's dedication is evident in motherhood and beyond; whether it be in work, hobbies, or her day-to-day routines, she's a force to be reckoned with.



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