

March / April 2023

Black Hills WOMAN MAGAZINE

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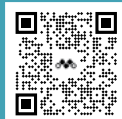
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Copy Editor



Riley Winter
Cover Photographer

Black Hills WOMAN MAGAZINE

PUBLISHER

Parker Media, LLC
Rapid City, SD

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Kelsey Parker

COPY EDITOR

Katie Pavel

LAYOUT & DESIGN

Tracy Bernard

TO PLACE AN AD

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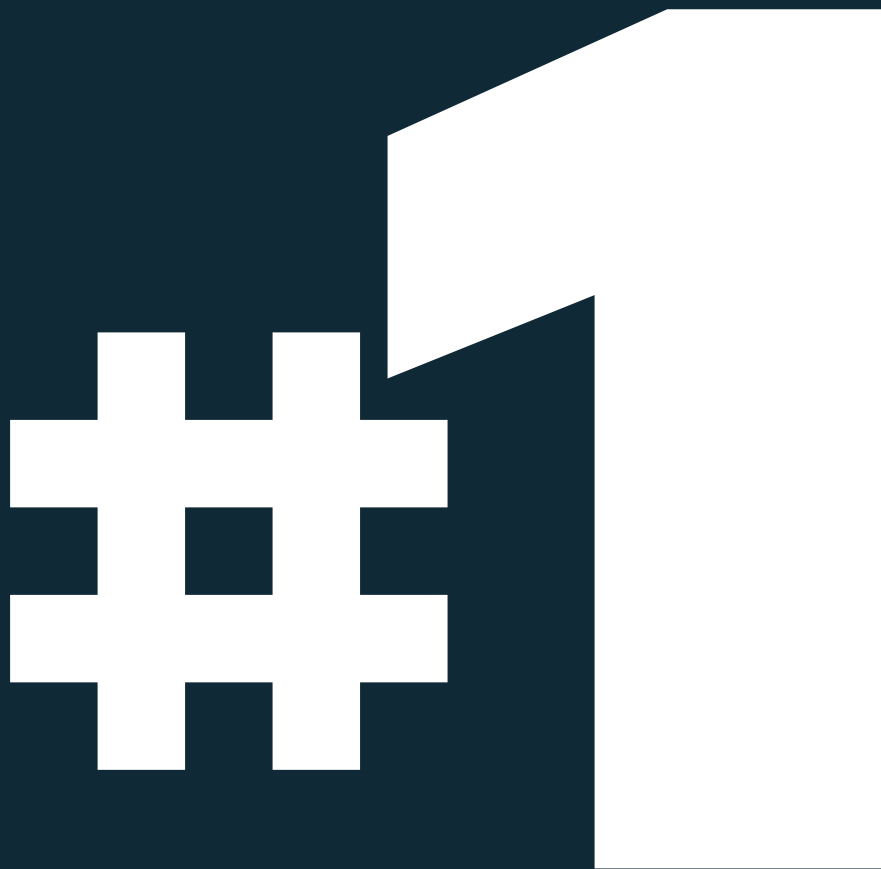


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**Whiskers, Wags & Second
Chances**

Animal Kingdom





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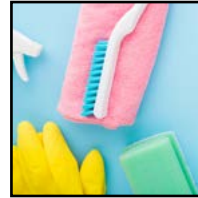
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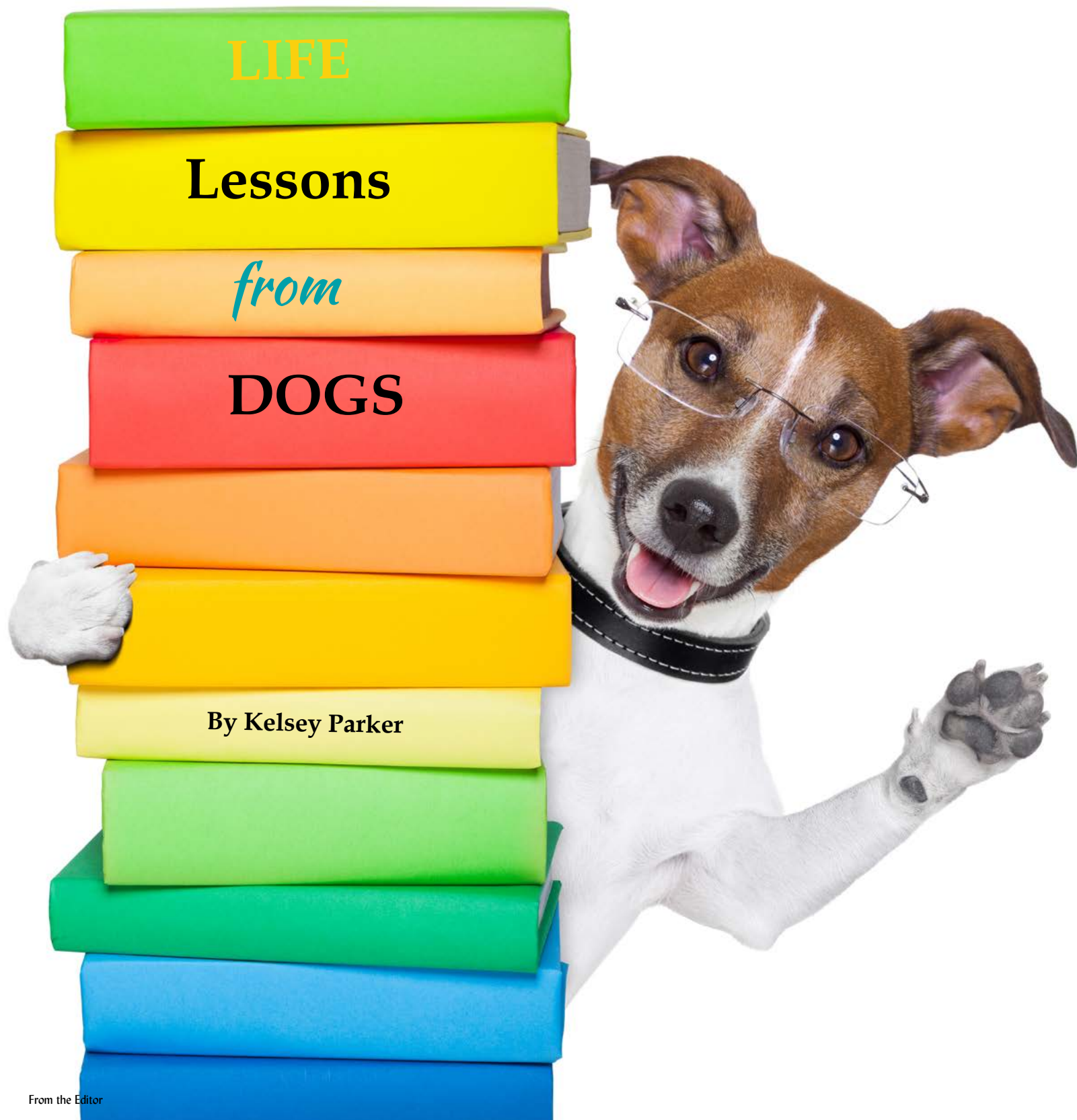
Marvin Buehner, M.D.



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Cassie Applegate, C.N.M.



We recently lost our beloved dog, Gus. He was tiny and fierce. Although small in stature (10 pounds), his voice demanded attention. He lived up to his name, meaning “unassuming vibe yet a mighty connotation.” He was particular; he knew exactly what he liked and didn’t like, and he wasn’t afraid to tell you either way. For example, he preferred that walks occurred when the temperature outside was between 50-70 degrees - not too hot, not too cold. When he sprang out of bed in the morning, he expected everyone else to, too.

Unlike relationships with humans that can be complicated and dynamic, a relationship with a dog is pure and simple. It is based on one simple foundation: unwavering and unconditional love. A dog’s love is not predicated on a human’s behavior or achievements. A dog’s love does not come with terms and conditions. Dogs don’t play games. They want you to know how much they love you, even as imperfect as we are. Their loyalty isn’t demanded; it’s gratuitously given.

Kelsey



Life's most important lessons learned from dogs:

1. LIFE IS SHORT AND BEST LIVED WITH AN ABUNDANCE OF LOVE.
2. MAKE SURE PEOPLE KNOW HOW YOU FEEL ABOUT THEM.
3. HAPPINESS IS NOT ACHIEVED THROUGH THE ACCUMULATION OF THINGS.
4. GREET PEOPLE WITH ENTHUSIASM AND EXCITEMENT.
5. LEAVE PEOPLE EAGER FOR YOUR NEXT REUNION.
6. SAVOR EVERY TREAT.
7. A WALK OUTSIDE, A GOOD STRETCH, AND QUALITY TIME WITH THOSE YOU LOVE ARE THE SOLUTIONS TO MOST PROBLEMS.
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Lending a Hand For the Community

By Sarah Grassel

Photos by Riley Winter





Katy Kinnan is originally from rural Kansas. For almost 15 years, she's called Rapid City home with her husband, David, and four kids. When she came to the Hills, Katy dove right into the community and never looked back.

When she started her career in education back in Kansas, Katy worked on an army base as a middle and high school teacher. "There was a ton of diversity, poverty, and kids moving in and out of the area, which is completely different from the rural community I had grown up in," she starts.

There was a lot of environmental and situational pressure that weighed on students and staff in the schools. Katy was challenged to find a teaching method that was outside of the traditional concepts. She explains, "First, we needed to make sure we saw each other and cared about each other because no one cares about the irrigation in Mesopotamia if their water is turned off at home."

Her experience as an educator in her unique situation inspired her and has really influenced her time here in the Hills. Leaving her teaching career on pause, Katy's path took a turn after moving, nine months pregnant with her second child.

Upon relocation, many factors went into the decision to ultimately begin her volunteer opportunities on the back-end of Fountain Springs Church, where her husband serves as pastor. "There was just a lot we were walking through and a lot we were holding," she reminisces. "We really wanted to be able to give our time and attention to our family, community, and our church as a team."

Landing in the position of Local and Global Outreach Director, Katy has been given a multitude of opportunities to learn about organizations serving others, those being served, and helping people learn about the community and get involved.

In the community, her impact is becoming more and more visible. Passing it off as no big deal, Katy loves what she does. She goes out of her way to go the extra mile whenever the opportunity arises and is involved in numerous organizations serving the needs of many in the Rapid City area.

“It’s the most incredible gift and privilege for me to be able to help build bridges and help people connect with other people and causes,” Katy says.

Growing up with a “neighbor helping neighbor” mentality, helping others comes as first nature to Katy. “There’s no other way to do it. It’s a core belief of mine that we are best when we are not just in our community, but we are for our community,” she adds.

Some of the organizations that Katy volunteers with include the Cornerstone Rescue Mission, Love Inc., Rapid City Area Schools, Shift Garage, Homeless Connect, YMCA, Youth and Family Services, WAVI, and others. One of her first connections was through a group she originally served in Kansas, Volunteers of America.

“I want to continue to be for my community and not just in it. More than anything, I want my life to be a reflection of the love I have found in Jesus; he is my motivation,” Katy closes. “We all have reasons and motivations for what we do. Mine is to put feet to words He shared and the life He lived, to love Him and to love my neighbors.”

OH BABY



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Katy's "why" and Fun Facts

Other than helping in the community because she loves it, there are three big reasons Katy does what she does. She explains,

"The first is that I get to meet with people working in the trenches of causes that matter.

Second, I get to have a deeper understanding and appreciation for the needs in the community and the ways that those needs can be supported.

Third, I think it's been helpful for me to remember that no one person or group can or should do it all."

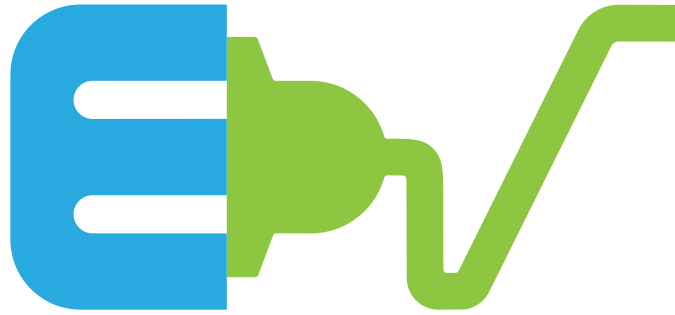
In her home is a collection of rocks, but not just any rocks. The rocks that Katy collects resemble hearts! "They are everywhere, you just have to pay attention," she smiles.

Outside of work and volunteering, you can find Katy with her family. Self acclaimed as wild and sarcastic, the family loves to explore the Hills biking or hiking, going to various sports and extracurricular activities, cheering on their favorite Kansas City Chiefs, or just hanging out in the home. **BHW**



My heart has always been about learning and teaching in everything I get to be a part of, and I hope to carry that posture my whole life.





ELECTRIC VEHICLES

A Shift in Power

By Kari Nielsen

The push toward electric vehicles (EVs) is on the rise. From a national standpoint, the Biden administration hopes that 50% of vehicles sold by the year 2030 will be electric. In contrast, our neighbor to the southwest, Wyoming, has proposed to ban the sale of EVs within the state by 2035 to protect the gas and oil industry. So as we find ourselves in the middle of a polarizing shift, where does South Dakota fall?

It may come as no surprise that South Dakota has a lower adoption rate than a lot of states. That could be attributed to disinterest in EVs as a whole, but further education points toward the fact that it is simply limited accessibility, not only in terms of the types of cars that are available as electric, but also how feasible it is to get from point A to point B in our area.

Sarah Bockleman, Director of Business Development for Black Hills Energy (BHE), says, “The biggest barrier in rural service territories is range. Nobody wants to buy a car if they can’t travel far with it.”



Matt Koupal, Electric Operations Supervisor at BHE, echoed this sentiment.

“We need more fast chargers along major highways,” Matt said. “Living in South Dakota, we’re used to driving pretty great distances. Right now, with limited charging, you simply can’t drive more than 200 miles or so.”

The South Dakota Department of Transportation has developed a plan to change that within the next year or two. With the help of federal funding, charging stations should become available every 50 to 60 miles statewide.

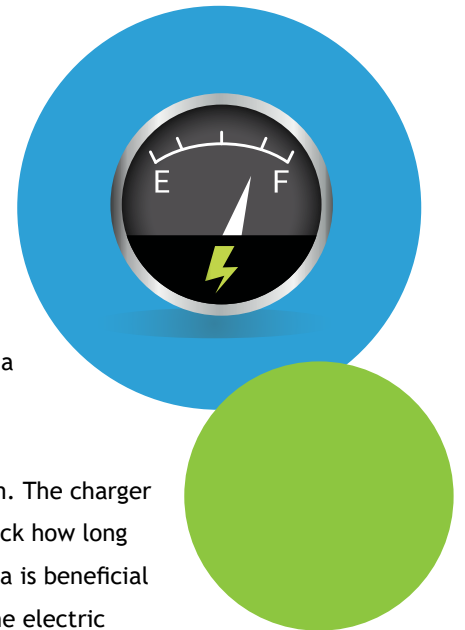
“We are accustomed to the freedom to jump in our car and stop for gas in any town,” Matt said. “As the charging availability starts to become more accessible, we will see a shift.”

And as the shift to EVs becomes more prominent, what does that mean for the increased consumption of electricity and the cost to the consumer?

“We have developed a program called Ready EV,” Sarah said. “This supports folks who want to purchase an electric vehicle by offering a modest rebate on a charger. As we continue to see growth, we are prepared to respond to that.”

Both residential and commercial customers are eligible for this rebate program. The charger must be purchased through one of two companies that partner with BHE to track how long the vehicle is plugged in and how often electricity is being consumed. This data is beneficial in determining what future consumption will look like and how that impacts the electric infrastructure.

So, how much electricity does an EV take to charge at home? First it should be noted that there are three levels of chargers. Level 1 chargers would use a standard wall outlet. Level 2 chargers are purchased by the consumer to have installed in a designated space like a garage. Level 3 chargers are known as DC fast chargers and are the type of chargers that would be found in stations along a highway. Most EVs are charged with a Level 2 charger at home.





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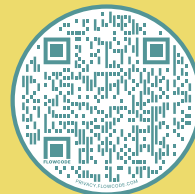
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“You won’t see anything above a Level 2 in a residential home,” Matt said. “This type of charger requires the same amount of electricity as a clothes dryer or an electric range. The rate of the charge is dictated by the car, but generally a vehicle can recharge overnight.”

By looking at the capacity of the car battery times the average rate of usage in Kilowatt hours, a consumer can determine how much that would cost to charge an EV. And if that happens to be confusing, Black Hills Energy is a ready and willing resource.

“For customers considering any major purchase, as you do research in that decision, we are very happy to help walk you through those costs,” Matt said.

“We are here to support customers who want to make the change to electric vehicles,” Sarah said. “We will continue to provide safe, reliable, service, but also be innovative.”

“It’s not just the government pushing this change,” Matt said. “Auto makers are putting in significant investment into EVs. In the next several years, we are going to see a lot more availability. There are certain automakers who have pledged to go fully electric by a certain date, in as little as 12 to 15 years.”

This ties into the availability for those in our area. Until recently, sedans have been the only option on the market. Now, options for pickup trucks are starting to become available. Options for large families (e.g. vans) are also likely to contribute to the number of consumers who are interested in purchasing an EV.

As our area continues to see growth, Black Hills Energy is prepared to respond to that. And whether you are for or against EVs, it is beneficial to know what resources are available and what the inevitable shift means as a consumer. The decision to own an electric vehicle is personal preference for now, but the future has yet to be written.

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Whiskers, Wags, & Second Chances

By Sarah Grassel





Giving the gift of a second chance is one of the most humbling and rewarding acts one can do. Jerry Steinley, executive director of the Humane Society of the Black Hills (HSBH), says, “People who adopt an animal from the shelter are helping an animal in need and providing them with a second chance at their fairy tale ending.”

The HSBH is very supported by the community and serves as more than just an adoption shelter. The humane society was incorporated in 1968, and its present location was opened in the spring of 1999.

In total, the shelter has around 200 kennels for dogs, cats, and small animals. This last year, they adopted out just over one thousand cats, 892 dogs, and several birds, rabbits, fish, reptiles, rodents, and a pig. “We’re an open admission shelter, meaning we’ve helped a variety of species other than cats and dogs that have come through our doors,” Jerry shares.

One of the biggest active programs that HSBH offers is the spaying or neutering of every animal prior to adoption, making sure they have their first round of vaccinations, and inserting microchips. Jerry says that not only is this one of the biggest programs, but it is also one of the most important things an animal owner can do to reduce the unwanted animal population.

He explains, “There are medical benefits you could talk with your veterinarian about, but from the shelter’s standpoint, that one simple step could drastically reduce the number of unwanted populations in our communities on a nationwide scale.”

“We also have a foster program and a foster-to-adopt program to get animals the care they need and into loving homes,” Jerry adds.

Fostering alone is a valuable service for animals that often have health issues or are too young to adopt. It is more of a rehabilitation program that prepares the pet for adoption.

On the other hand, think of foster-to-adopt like a trial run. An animal can be placed into the home that intends to adopt, which ensures that the potential adopter's lifestyle/children/other pets are a good environment for the pet.

Adopting a pet is something that benefits both the family and the animal. Jerry explains, "For the adopters, animals are great companionship, become part of the family, and sometimes get you outside for walks and exercise. Adopting an animal also supports the care of thousands of other animals in need every year."

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The Humane Society of the Black Hills would not still be able to provide the support in the community that it does without the help of individuals and businesses from the community itself. “We have a very supportive community. Our community support now comes through financial donations, donations of time from volunteers, and donations of food and supplies,” Jerry says.

In 2022, Jerry reported in-kind donations totaling at \$137,809. In-kind donations are items that are used in the shelter on a day-to-day basis, including that of food, blankets, towels, kitty litter, toys, carriers, etc. The shelter calculates the items at an assigned value based on monetary value.

“Total intake for 2022 was 4,247 animals. Of that, 105 were rabbits, 60 were guinea pigs, and 61 were lizards. We also had 9 turtles, 2 sugar gliders, and 3 ferrets, among other critters.”

Jerry Steinley



Dogs Available for Adoption

(at the time of print)

Pudge

Pudge is a four-and-a-half year old male Border Collie, shepherd mix. Already house-trained, the shelter says he's a "gentle giant" that just wants all of the love and attention anyone can spare. Pudge is a little overweight, loves treats, does great on a leash, and will be your best pal! Adopting Pudge means an eight year (or more!) commitment.

Wesson

Wesson is another male shepherd mix. Still a puppy, he's just over a year old. The shelter is not sure if Wesson is house-trained at this time. He is very food motivated, a little hyper, will require some training still, and can be a "tad jumpy" when meeting new people. Adopting Wesson means a 13 year (or more!) commitment.

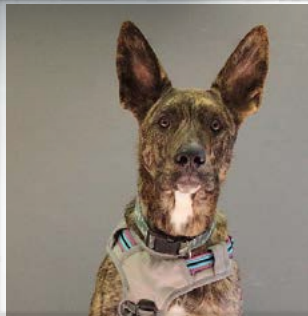
Bear

This fluffy giant, Bear, is a seven-year-old Great Pyrenees mix. His size requires a home with a large yard and going on frequent walks. Bear is super shy and takes a minute to warm up, but the shelter says once he does, he wants to be pet all the time and will nudge you for your undivided attention. The shelter also recommends that Bear go to a quiet family home, as he is a little timid when being introduced to anything new. Adopting Bear means a three year (or more!) commitment.

To learn more about the Humane Society of the Black Hills, visit <https://www.hsbh.org>.



Pudge



Wesson



Bear



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Smile and Say Squinch

By Dorothy Rosby





In the interest of truth in journalism, I decided it was time to update my column photo. Columnists are notorious for putting this off. I know some who are still using their eighth-grade graduation pictures. I'm not that irresponsible. My last one was my high school graduation photo.

But I have a good reason for waiting: I'm in the witness protection program. Kidding! It was time, so I made the appointment. Then I prepared by getting my teeth professionally whitened, scheduling a couple of visits to a tanning salon, and having "a little work done." No, I didn't do any of that. I did schedule an appointment with my hairdresser, though. I tried to make it far enough ahead of my photo shoot so that my hair wouldn't have that "just cut" look, but not too far ahead so that it wouldn't have that "needs cut" look either.

Then I went to the source of advice on everything, the internet, and researched tips for having professional photos taken. There was a lot, but the article I found most helpful was about a New York-based portrait photographer named Peter Hurley. The author said Hurley specializes in making people look better than they do in real life. I thought that was why God made Photoshop.



But I was open to suggestions so I read the article. For starters, apparently very few people have symmetrical faces so, Mr. Hurley says it's important that your photographer select your best side. Good point. No one wants to be on my bad side.

I could see I was going to have to practice the other tips a lot if I wanted to appear spontaneous and natural. So I watched several videos where Hurley demonstrated his techniques with the help of models who, as far as I could see, had no bad sides. Then I went to my mirror. Hurley stressed the importance of bringing the face forward to emphasize the jawline and prevent a double chin. That makes sense. I've never believed the camera adds 10 pounds, but I can see how a double chin might add one or two.

I stood in front of my mirror practicing jutting my face forward until my neck hurt. I looked like a meerkat looking out of his hole. That didn't seem quite right, so I adjusted and went on to the smile.

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Hurley prefers a natural smile, not the cheesy grin we often get when someone tells us to smile or offers us ice cream. I came up with something somewhere between Mona Lisa's smile and an "I'll-take-hot-fudge-on-mine" grin.

Next came the eyes. Hurley recommends a squinch to make the subject appear more confident. Not a squint, mind you. A squint makes you look like it's time to visit your optometrist. A squinch is less, well, squinty.

Those who fear the camera tend to get a deer-in-the-headlights look, which he says can make them appear less confident. And I think we can all agree deer in headlights don't look confident at all. To be fair, I don't think that's their biggest concern at the moment.

It took some practice to get from deer in the headlights to squint to squinch but I finally settled on sort of a Clint-Eastwood-about-to-say-make-my-day gaze.

After an hour and a half standing in front of the mirror practicing, I put it all together: my Mona Lisa-wants-ice-cream grin, my Clint Eastwood eyes, and my face forward past double chin but not quite to meerkat. It wasn't bad. I felt ready for my photo shoot and pleased I'd come across such a helpful article. Also that I was home alone.

BHW

Dorothy Rozby is still trying to determine which is her best side.





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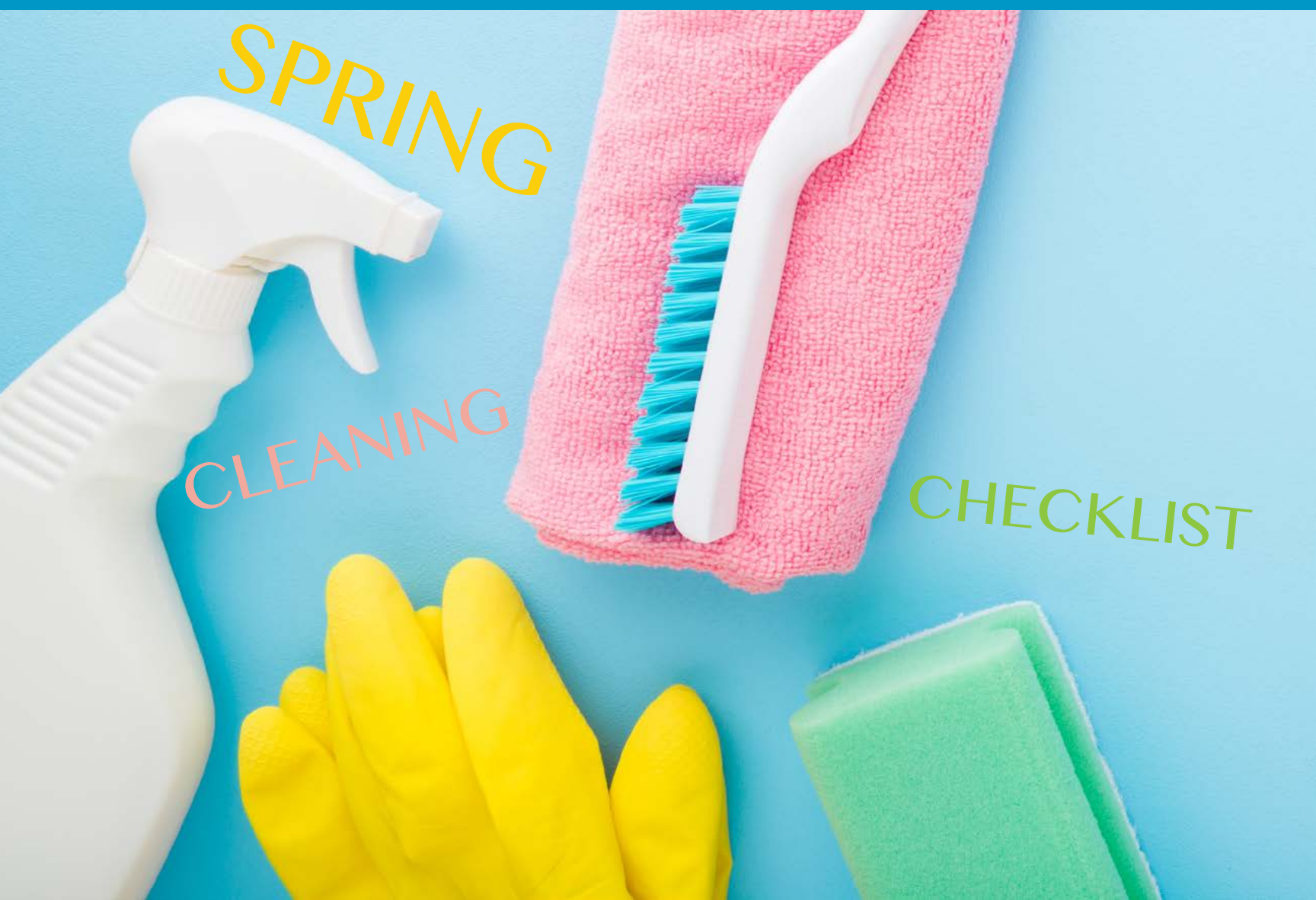
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CLEANING

CHECKLIST

It's time to declutter and deep clean your home after months of cold weather! Spring cleaning is a tradition that helps prepare your home and your life for the busy spring and summer months ahead. The thought of deep cleaning every room in your home can be a bit overwhelming. Experts recommend cleaning and organizing one room at a time to make the job more manageable. On top of your normal cleaning, complete the following checklist to ensure your home is in tip-top shape this spring.

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KITCHEN

- Clean major appliances.
- Wash table linen or chair pads, if applicable.
- Empty refrigerator and wipe down drawers and shelves.
- Clean behind your refrigerator.
- Replace water filter on refrigerator, if applicable.
- Throw away expired food in your pantry, refrigerator, and freezer.
- Donate non-perishable food you don't plan on using.
- Empty and wipe down cabinets and cabinet doors.
- Wipe down your blender, toaster, waffle iron, and other small appliances.
- Wipe down hard-to-reach surfaces (top of cabinets, refrigerator, etc.)
- Wipe down baseboards.

BATHROOMS

- Throw away expired personal care items.
- Properly dispose of old medications to drop-off sites.
- Scrub tile grout.
- Clean shower head.
- Scrub tub and shower.
- Empty and wipe down cabinets and cabinet doors.
- Remove and clean toilet seat and seat bolts.
- Dust light fixtures.
- Disinfect door handles and light switches.

LAUNDRY ROOM

- Wipe down interior of washing machine and dryer.
- Run a “machine wash” cycle.
- Clean your washing machine filter.
- Clean lint trap and dryer vent.
- Wipe down your washing machine and dryer.
- Organize laundry supplies.
- Wipe down walls and baseboards.



BEDROOMS

- Organize closet.
- Donate unused clothing or items.
- Wash all bedding, including bed skirts.
- Flip mattress.
- Dust ceiling fan, lamps, curtain rods, and blinds.
- Wipe down closet doors, dresser drawers, baseboards, and other bedroom furniture.
- Shampoo rugs or carpets.
- Disinfect door handles and light switches.
- Vacuum underneath beds and furniture.

LIVING ROOM

- Dust electronics, ceiling fan, lamps, curtain rods, and blinds.
- Disinfect remote controllers, door handles, and light switches.
- Shampoo carpets or rugs.
- Wash decorative pillows and blankets.
- Vacuum sofa and chairs.
- Wash windows and windowsills.
- Wash vent covers.
- Wipe down walls and baseboards.

Open the windows, throw your headphones on, and get to cleaning! BHW

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Behind the Camera

with

Alyssa Crawford



Alyssa Crawford, of Alyssa Crawford Photography, can perfectly capture any moment. Scrolling through her social media, you'll find photos of newborns, expecting mothers, families, and more. There's something special about her perspective: Alyssa captures people just as they are.

"I've been told multiple times that I capture their kids exactly the way they are and the way they see them. As a mom, that compliment means the world to me because, one day, I want them to look back and see them in this very moment, and if they do from a photo I took for them... that brings me immense joy."

A few rave reviews posted on Alyssa's website express the same sentiment: "Alyssa makes capturing the little moments and big moments so easy."

Perusing through her photos is like flipping through a cherished family photo album. "I shoot film quite a bit for my personal work so I always try to mimic film a little when I'm shooting for clients as well. I love the timeless feel of it. Nostalgic. I don't know if that's necessarily my style, but that's what I strive for."

How does she catch the perfect shot? "Capturing connection," Alyssa says. "I'll typically prompt a client to do or say something and then I'll watch the interactions, and those are the moments I'm trying to capture. They're always my favorite." It's the moments of genuine connection or humanness that Alyssa captures in her work. Alyssa has always loved photographing people, especially her kids.



Now with many years under her belt (camera strap), Alyssa remembers the best piece of advice she received about running a photography business. “Do it right from the very beginning. Business and all. Shoot what you want, how you want, when you want, and don’t compromise your vision.”

Alyssa’s advice to future photographers: “Shoot, shoot, shoot! You won’t know what you love to photograph until you’ve done it over and over and over again. Build a portfolio. Don’t be afraid to do free shoots to experiment and find your style.” BHW

You can follow Alyssa here:

Instagram: @alyssacrawfordphoto

Facebook: Alyssa Crawford Photo

Website: <http://www.alyssacrawfordphotography.com>

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By Siri Knutsen-Larson, M.D.

The skin is the largest organ in — or more appropriately, on — the human body. Keeping your skin healthy is important to your overall health and wellness. Additionally, our skin is often the first thing that people notice when they meet us. Having healthy skin can help you feel confident and make a great first impression. The physicians and caregivers at Monument Health Dermatology are happy to help you with any concerns you may have about your skin.

Dermatology encompasses a number of services that typically fall into one of three categories — surgical, medical or cosmetic. Monument Health Dermatology specializes in surgical services like skin cancer removal, Mohs surgery, removal of abnormal moles and other minor skin excisions. We also specialize in medical services including skin cancer surveillance and monitoring and treating diseases of hair, skin and nails like acne, psoriasis, eczema, rashes, nail abnormalities and more. We also offer cosmetic services such as Botox®, fillers, laser treatment and laser hair removal. Although it isn't necessarily a cosmetic service, we provide recommendations for products to help with sun protection, anti-aging and other cosmetic solutions.

Surgical and medical services are provided as needed steps in care plans, but cosmetic services are often elective. Despite the rising popularity of these services, many people don't have a full understanding of what these cosmetic options really provide. Botox® is very effective at reducing wrinkles and lines found in the facial muscles that do a lot of moving, including frown lines, forehead lines and crow's feet. Filler can help smooth deep and superficial lines, as well as enhance facial contours. There are several cosmetic concerns that can be addressed with laser treatment, including red and brown lesions, wrinkles and unwanted skin growths.

These treatments aren't for everyone, but our patients have found the results very worthwhile. If you're interested in learning more, I would urge you to reach out to us and schedule a consultation. No two people are the same, so the approach is different for every individual. The best way to learn more about what may be right for you is to discuss it with one of our physicians or providers.

LUXE: *A Level Up*



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For Katy Odenbach, opening her own salon was not a matter of “if.”

“I knew I was capable of owning my own salon,” Katy said. “And I knew I was the only one who could make that dream happen.”

Since opening in March of 2021, Luxe has quickly become one of the most sought-after salons in Rapid City. Having already undergone a re-model and expansion in September of 2022, the evident growth speaks for itself. Luxe’s atmosphere is light and bright, clean and inviting. The presence of fresh plants and big windows, coupled with the open concept layout, is a design clients can feel at home in.

“I wanted to create a space unlike any other in our area,” Katy said. “We have a productive table where guests can bring their laptop to work, order lunch, read their favorite book, chat with their service provider, or simply enjoy a hot cup of coffee.”

Luxe is aiming to “level up” the salon experience. Thus, the name.

“Many clothing brands and skincare lines offer a luxe line in their collection,” Katy said. “This means it is a higher end line. That’s why I decided on the name Luxe. I wanted to stand out and provide a high quality, luxurious experience.”

But don’t just take her word for it.

“I love going to Luxe because it feels good the minute

you walk in the door,” one client said. “You know every detail has been thought out, from the decor to the layout to the client extras. Katy has brought a unique combination of professionalism while still giving her clients a relaxed vibe.”

“I really feel like I can be myself at Luxe,” another client said. “I always leave feeling even better than I came. Everyone is so professional and genuinely invested in learning and continuing to be better at what they do.”

Luxe currently has eight stylists and two estheticians offering services that include hair coloring, hair cutting, hair extensions, waxing, sugaring, facials, eyelash extensions, eyebrow and eyelash enhancing, and permanent jewelry. Behind every professional that works there is a passion for their craft and a continued drive to bring more to the table.

“Furthering education is not required for cosmetologists,” Katy said. “But I think it is necessary to keep up on current trends and prepare for what’s to come. I wanted Luxe to be an open and inviting place to provide education for stylists, not only at Luxe, but also in our community and surrounding towns so that we could all thrive together.”

As most continued education tends to take place out of state, Katy has made it a goal to bring in different successful and well-known stylists to Luxe to teach different techniques in order to make education accessible to her team and the community.

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“One of the things I love about Luxe is that we are independent but also team based,” Katy said. “Not one professional is above any other. We support each other and are there for each other when we need help, assistance, or advice.”

“I love that I can trust anyone who walks into the salon is in good hands,” said Shaye Sparks, stylist. “Every stylist is highly skilled and truly cares about the work leaving their chair. I feel inspired every day.”

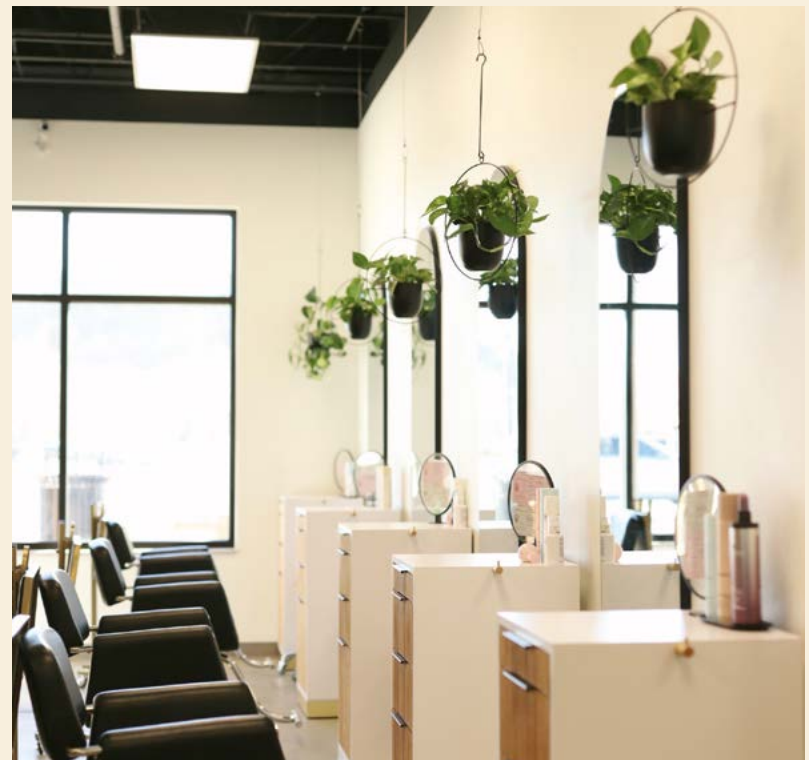
“Everyone has such a different personality so there’s someone for everyone,” said Allie Cox, stylist. “But we all fit together so well and bring something unique to the table. Everyone is so collaborative and willing to share knowledge and lend a hand.”

The warm interactions amongst the team certainly impacts the kind of experience clients are certain to receive. Luxe is a safe space for women to lift each other up.

“We are a salon that supports women empowerment,” Katy said. “We want women to have freedom from self-doubt, equipping them with the ability to step out of their comfort zone to reach their utmost potential. Whether it’s in something as little as an eyebrow shaping or a brand new hair color with extensions, we want you to feel like the best, most confident you!”

Each team member holds each other to a high standard and, in turn, is setting the bar high for the clients they encounter each and every day. Luxe values consistency and is just getting started.

“Our clients can always expect to experience personalized salon services provided by talented, experienced, and friendly professionals,” Katy said. “My long-term goal is to open a second salon in the future to expand the availability of those services to more people in Rapid City.” **BHW**





Hello! My name is Krista Leischner and I am a wife, mom (of a human being and dog), and the Student Nutrition Manager for Rapid City Area Schools (RCAS). My team and I have the pleasure of serving thousands of meals to students across Rapid City each day. To be more specific, we serve approximately 2,500 breakfasts and 6,200 lunches per day. The task is a big one. I'm excited to share with you a "behind the scenes" look into what goes on to make sure kids in our community are provided healthy meals from one of our rockstar team members.

We operate multiple United State Department of Agriculture (USDA) funded child nutrition programs. The two main programs we operate are the School Breakfast Program and the National School Lunch Program. Our department, Student Nutrition, employs 72 employees. We have seven production kitchens throughout the district, where food is prepped and served on site and where we accept multiple food and milk deliveries per week. Each production kitchen has a Team Lead and anywhere from five to fifteen Team Members. The production kitchens are what most people would think of when they reflect on their lunchroom experience. The food comes into the building, staff prepare the food, and then they serve it to students in the cafeteria. While this is how we serve half of our lunches in the district, you may be

surprised by how the other half of our lunches are served to students.

About 3,000 lunches are served out of small closet-sized kitchens. The district has 12 elementary school kitchens that house only an oven, a milk cooler (or two), and one Team Member that serves between 180-400 lunches per day. Our team must be very efficient, creative, and prepared to make the best use out of these kitchens to best serve students. Short of giving you a tour, I think the best way I can describe these kitchens is they're about the size of some people's primary bedroom closet. As you can imagine, these kitchens do not provide the prep nor storage space to prepare food on site. Therefore, lunches for these 12 kitchens are prepared at Central High School.

The meals are packed at Central High School the day before service via conveyor belt and kiss-seal machines, which takes approximately three hours depending on staffing. We never know the exact number of lunches necessary to serve students until we receive the lunch count from the 12 schools. We use past data and best guesstimates to know how many meals to prepare. While packing meals for the following day, meals for the day of service are sent out via warehouse trucks by 9:00 a.m. to the appropriate schools. Meals arrive on site and are served on fold-up tables

in what I like to call, caféter-asiums (aka: a gymnasium that also doubles as a cafeteria). I would say this process is not ideal in the sense that it creates many limitations in what we're able to prep and serve; however, we make the best of it!

Most of us have fond memories of our favorite school lunches, and maybe some memories of days we'd prefer to skip school lunch. Creating a menu for students isn't as easy as it may seem. The programs Student Nutrition operates are highly regulated by the state and federal government. In addition to minimum and maximum amounts for calories, saturated fat, and sodium, we are also required to offer certain types of food (fruits, vegetables, grains, protein, milk) in certain amounts on a daily and weekly basis. While necessary to create a balanced menu, this limitation can be challenging when it comes to creating meals students will enjoy and consume. We work diligently to create a menu that is healthy, balanced, in compliance

with regulations, and desirable for students. Whether it's a broccoli Alfredo meal, chef salad, or chicken & vegetable dumplings, we are always looking for ways to improve and be more creative.

Lastly, I'd like to mention the amazing people that make this department what it is. We strongly believe we are more than just "food service." Our team truly believes what we do matters, and we take the responsibility seriously. Not only can we nourish students and assist in their learning, but we also know that we can make a difference in their lives with a smile and a "how's your day?" in the serving line. Many other employees of the district help support our department and serve kids. Custodians help clean up after lunch, warehouse drivers help deliver meals, and teachers, principals, and lunchroom monitors help students during mealtimes. The task of feeding thousands of students each day is a big one and one we are honored and proud to be a part of! BHW





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