

BLACK HILLS  
*WOMAN*  
MAGAZINE

*Marmie Herrmann*

**LEADING  
WHERE FEW  
WOMEN HAVE  
BEEN**

*A Fresh (Re)Start*

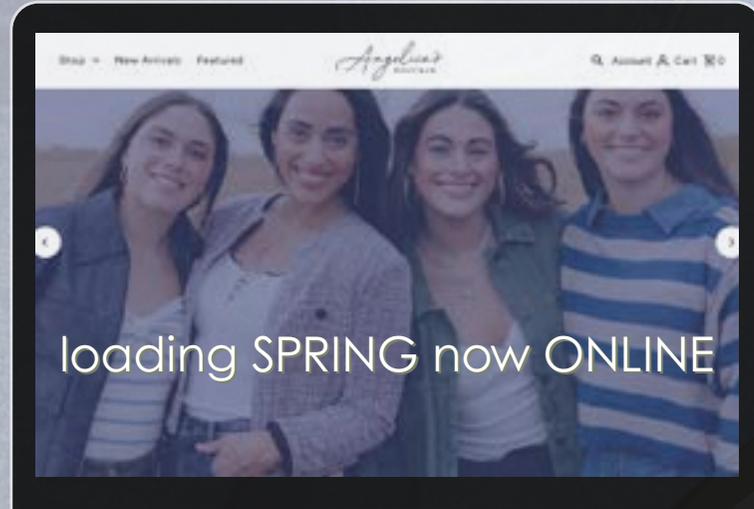
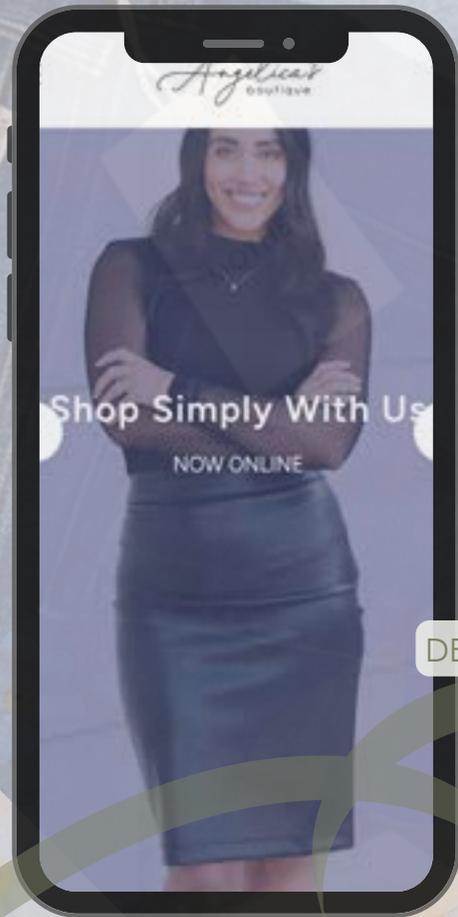
WITH ELSIE WHITESELL

*International  
Women's Day*

CELEBRATING 10  
LOCAL WOMEN

FREE | MARCH/APRIL EDITION | 2026





DENIM | mother brand exclusive dealer ELEVATED basics | knits | jackets

Angelica's  
boutique

4855 5<sup>th</sup> STREET | Rapid City SD | 605 863 4221

@ANGELICASON5TH



# BLACK HILLS WOMAN MAGAZINE

TO PLACE AN AD:  
HELLO@BLACKHILLSWOMAN.COM  
OR 605-430-9068

LOCALLY OWNED • LOCALLY OPERATED

PUBLISHER:  
M&S MEDIA • RAPID CITY, SD



FOLLOW US ON FACEBOOK,  
INSTAGRAM, AND LINKEDIN  
@BLACKHILLSWOMAN

BLACKHILLSWOMAN.COM

M&S Media assumes no responsibility for unsolicited manuscripts, photography or artwork and reserves the right to accept or reject any editorial or advertising material. Articles, advertisements, and opinions in this publication do not necessarily carry the endorsement of M&S Media. ©2025 M&S Media



CHANTEL MCDONNELL  
owner



KARI NIELSEN  
editor-in-chief



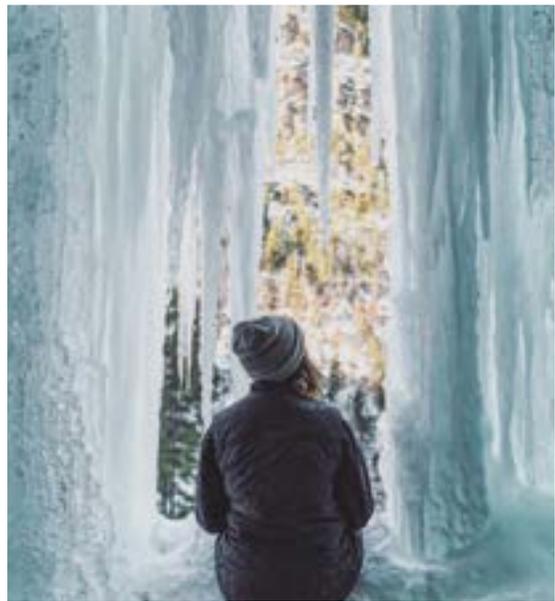
KAYLA MOSLANDER  
graphic designer



RILEY WINTER  
cover photographer

# contents

## ART & DESIGN



- 6 Editor's Note
- 8 **CALENDAR**  
The Local Edit
- 12 **ARTIST FEATURE**  
Capturing a Moment,  
Creating a Memory

## CUISINE



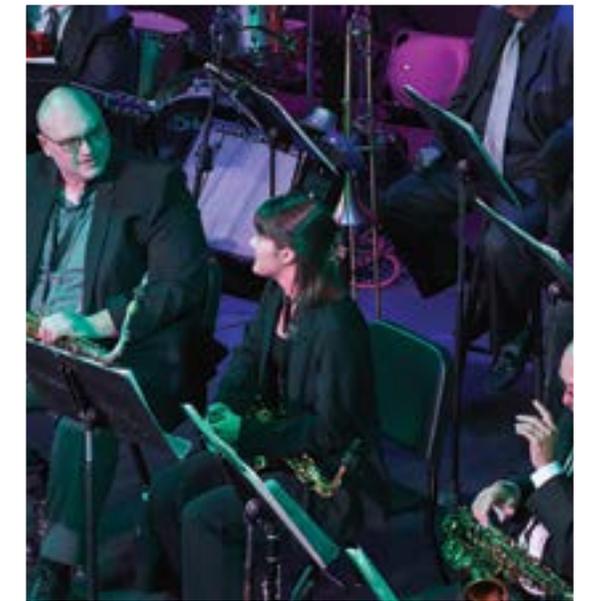
- 18 **CREATIVE CORNER**  
What I Have Learned  
About Sisterhood
- 20 **CUISINE**  
A Fresh (Re)Start  
for Healthy Living

## COVER STORY



- 28 **COVER STORY**  
Leading Where Few  
Women Have Been
- 36 **BOOK CLUB**  
What's On Our Shelf
- 40 **COMMUNITY**  
International  
Women's Day

## MUSIC



- 60 **MOM OF THE MOMENT**  
Markie Zacharias
- 65 **MUSIC**  
Women Behind  
the Music of the South  
Dakota Jazz Orchestra



There is something hopeful about spring. As nature begins to come alive, so do we. Winter gives us the freedom to hunker down and pause; spring propels us forward. There is an awareness of self that awakens. A desire to bloom just like the flowers. To root ourselves into something more, to become, to flourish.

But the question lingers: what are

we anchoring ourselves into? Is the soil we're cultivating nourishing our growth?

Growth looks different for all of us. Maybe it looks like forward progress in our careers, prioritizing quality time with loved ones, working on our inner selves, enhancing our physical strength, or stepping outside our comfort zone to embrace new experiences. It may also involve increased self-awareness, regulating our emotions, and living authentically.

Regardless of the form it takes, spring presents an ideal opportunity to refocus on our goals and ensure that our "watering cans" are adequately filled with the nourishment we need.

We've often heard the phrase — you can't pour from an empty cup. But it can be argued that what we're pouring from is just as important. We can fill our lives to the brim, but if meaningful substance is lacking, then we will not bloom, no matter how saturated our soil becomes.

So, bloom where you are planted, but ensure that place feeds your soul.

Warmly,

*Kari Nielsen*

## Book **YOUR** LADIES Night

HART RANCH GOLF CLUB

Thursdays @ 5pm | April 30<sup>th</sup> - May 28<sup>th</sup>

Sign-up each week. Call 605-341-5703.

*Bring your crew!*



### 25-30 Minute Clinic

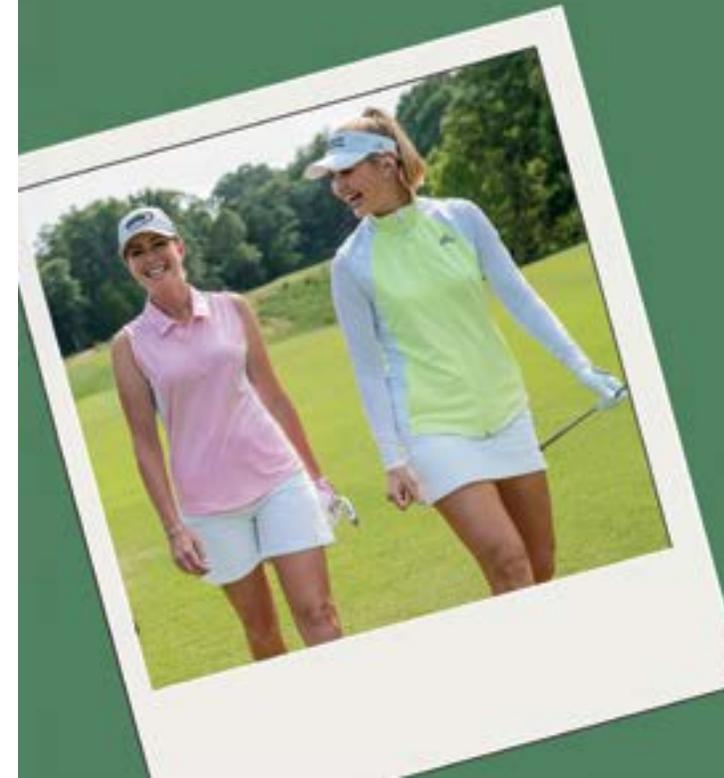
Instruction covering a variety of topics, not just the golf swing, so you can feel confident on the course.

### 9 Holes with Cart

Enjoy reserved tee times so you can immediately put your new skills into play in a fun, low-pressure setting.

### \$45 per week

Includes the clinic, 9 holes with cart, and a drink ticket. Everything you need for an enjoyable evening on the course.



# THE LOCAL EDIT

BY KELSY PETERSON

It's time to crank some Shania Twain and rejoice - International Women's Day is right around the corner. While we celebrate all year round, here are a few area events sure to make March and April the months to refresh, connect, and relish in all that it is to be a woman.

MARCH

## Woman & Wellness Marketplace Popup

**RAPID CITY | MARCH 14** Treat yourself to an event curated just for women! On March 14th, The Monument will be hosting local businesses so you can discover health and lifestyle brands, skincare and self-care products, boutique fashion, jewelry, decor, and more. Admission is free, so make sure to come shop from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

## Self-Care Sundays

**SPEARFISH | SECOND SUNDAY OF THE MONTH** Take a break from the hustle and bustle with a Self-Care Sunday at The Matthews Opera House. Hosted on the second Sunday of every month (until June), this event provides an opportunity for you to enjoy vibrational healing. Sessions may include light yogic warmups, so bring a yoga mat, water bottle, or any other props to help you settle in to relaxation. Tickets are \$15 per person, and the class is limited to 30 people.

## World Ballet Company's Cinderella

**RAPID CITY | MARCH 24** Witness your favorite fairy tale come to life at The Monument. Cinderella features a cast of 40 international ballet dancers as they perform a stunning Broadway-style production, a spectacle for all ages. Tickets are on sale now on The Monument website.

## Friends Fair

**RAPID CITY | MARCH 27 & 28** Visit The Little Book Shoppe (located inside Rapid City Public Library) during the Friends Fair to find a great selection of rare and unusual books, puzzles, games, journals, and more! This event is hosted by volunteers of the Friends of Rapid City Public Library. Every sale helps to support library events.

APRIL

## Slow Art Day

**RAPID CITY | APRIL 11** Celebrate Slow Art Day at the Journey Museum! Enjoy a full day of special programming including slow flow yoga, sound baths, storytelling, STEAM learning, and more. The Journey is one of 100+ global host venues encouraging museum goers to embrace a slower pace and discover new ways of seeing art. Bonus: This is a FREE community event for all ages.

## Wine in the Pines

**SPEARFISH | APRIL 18** Enjoy a getaway to the heart of Spearfish Canyon, where you'll find an evening filled with a delicious 5-course dinner, wine pairing, and a performance of dueling pianos, followed by a relaxing stay at the Spearfish Canyon Lodge. Packages start at \$379 for two. Call now and make a reservation for this fun-filled night!

## Black Hills Jazz Fest

**RAPID CITY | APRIL 25** Walk, crawl, roll, and stroll into 10+ venues in downtown Rapid City hosting live music for Black Hills Jazz Fest. This free event features exceptional musicians from across South Dakota playing alongside internationally touring artists.

# BE A PART OF SOMETHING BIG

## BY PROMOTING YOUTH, GROWTH, & CONSERVATION

South Dakota Youth Hunting Adventures is a youth-serving, outdoors-based, non-profit that gives local youth the opportunity to experience safe and realistic outdoor adventures - hunting, fishing, shooting, and wildlife conservation. Their mission is to foster a lifelong enthusiasm and respect for the outdoors, with a focus on hunter safety, ethics, respect, conservation, access, shooting sports, and landowner relations. This opportunity is directly related to mentorship. Youth are paired with an adult who serves as a positive role model, not only in discovering the great outdoors, but also as a friend and safe person.

Hunting, fishing, and outdoor recreation are on a decline in our community and nationwide. SDYHA looks to break down barriers so every kid has the chance to experience the rich heritage and tradition of the outdoors in the United States. These activities also serve as a diversion to involvement in things that do not benefit the youth or community. These youth then grow into conservation-minded individuals who understand and protect our wild spaces, hunting, fishing, and all outdoor recreation.

### THEY ARE THE FUTURE!



### PRIMARY GOALS OF SDYHA:

1. Provide an opportunity for youth, ages 12-17 (who do not otherwise have an opportunity) to enjoy a safe, realistic, and quality outdoor experience while having a positive adult role model in their lives.
2. Educate youth about firearm safety and hunting ethics. All mentees must take and pass HuntSAFE before they may participate in our program.
3. Promote and educate youth on wildlife conservation, the importance of habitat, public lands, access, shooting sports, and outdoor opportunities.
4. Improve landowner relations and teach the youth the importance of working with farmers and ranchers for outdoor opportunities.
5. Promote and educate youth on South Dakota Game, Fish, & Parks and their vital role in conservation, hunting, and fishing.
6. Encourage youth to volunteer in their communities and to strive for academic excellence.

### A CALL TO MENTORSHIP:

Mentoring is the Key to Success! Mentors are experienced hunters from all over South Dakota. They have knowledge and passion they are willing to share through the role of a friend, confidant, and guide. Mentors truly care about helping children develop a love for nature and hunting. They are supportive, encouraging, patient, and open-minded. Mentors are willing to give their time and attention to support youth.

### PERKS OF MENTORSHIP:

The program is 100% free to mentees and families. SDYHA covers the cost of clothing, gear, and equipment. Each mentee is outfitted from head to toe with a yearly SCHEELS shopping stipend. All events are also free - gear, food, and drinks provided. Mentees essentially get a free hunting guide, fishing guide, shooting instructor, hiking buddy, etc. A SCHEELS Reward Program is also offered for grades, attendance, and volunteer work in the community.

Mentors also receive perks, as they are the lifeblood of the program. SDYHA Mentors receive Pro & Guide discounts from several major outdoor brands. The program also hosts exclusive mentor appreciation hunts and fishing trips, as well as covering the cost of transporting mentees with a fuel stipend. Mentors are also provided with yearly swag - hats, caps, shirts, vests, hoodies, etc.

SDYHA NEEDS MORE MENTORS!  
**APPLY TODAY.**

IF THIS SOUNDS LIKE A  
GOOD FIT FOR YOU, APPLY AT  
[WWW.SDYOUTHUNT.COM](http://WWW.SDYOUTHUNT.COM)  
(MUST BE AT LEAST 21 YEARS OF  
AGE AND WILLING TO SUBMIT A  
BACKGROUND CHECK)



GREATEST HUNTING MENTOR PROGRAM IN THE NATION! THIS GROUP WORKS HARD AT MAKING IT AS EASY AS POSSIBLE TO TAKE KIDS HUNTING IN A SAFE, EDUCATIONAL MANNER. — DEREK NELSON



# Capturing a Moment, Creating a Memory

BY MADIGAN SCHMITZ

For Ellen Larson, photography started out as a hobby. “In eighth grade, I got my first camera — a Kodak point-and-shoot,” she says.

As young girls do, she took photos of anything and everything. From selfies in the mirror to friends at school and especially the Black Hills. Ellen is a western hills native, and while she’s moved around throughout her life, she knows that this little corner of the world will always be home. The stunning nature surrounding Rapid City — where Ellen grew up — captured her eye from a young age, snapping photos of the landscape whenever she could get the chance. Inspired by National Geographic-style photographs, she was captivated by the beauty of the natural world.

“I’ve always been somebody who just loves the outdoors. I think the essence and adventure of immersing yourself in a new environment is very therapeutic,” says Ellen. “Being outdoors is what grounds me, and having that connected with creating art as well is what did it for me. I love that I see something through my camera, and I’m able to bring that to life and create a tangible moment that you can hold on to forever.”

Throughout high school, Ellen’s love of photography only grew. She started out taking senior photos for graduating friends as a courtesy, but when a friend insisted on paying her, she realized that her photography could turn into much more than just an after-school hobby.

“At that point, I was like, Oh my gosh, I can make money at this. This is crazy.”

This led to her pursuing a degree in Photography at Black Hills State University in Spearfish. It was here that her skills were fostered, and she considered being able to turn her love into something that made a living. With an eye for design and a unique ability to create artistic, editorial shots out of unconventional surroundings, Ellen made a name for herself through her portraiture. Utilizing textured backgrounds, contrasting clothing and makeup, and an innate talent for capturing the perfect light, she created dynamic photographs that made viewers of her work stop and take notice.

After years of developing her style, expanding her portfolio, and adding to her ever-growing list of clientele, Ellen finally felt confident in stepping away from typical



## “Being outdoors is what grounds me, and connecting that with creating art is what did it for me.”

“I kind of killed it,” she said.

This helped her gain faith in herself and trust that her artwork would only continue to improve if she pursued the kind of photographs that spoke more to her heart.

“I thought that I could do better at this than the portraits, and I love doing this even more.”

Today, Ellen is an accomplished landscape photographer whose breathtaking work is displayed in homes and businesses throughout the Black Hills.

She’s even had her work published in Outside Magazine — one of the nation’s leading publications on outdoor recreation. Her photo was a unique one, shot during the winter in Spearfish Canyon’s community caves. This was one of what she calls “advanced selfies,” where she’d use her professional camera equipment to take a photo of herself in an exciting environment. In the photo, Ellen sits at the mouth of a cave, and icicles frame her as she looks out at the canyon.

“[Outside Magazine] found it on my Instagram account, back in the early days of Instagram when anybody could

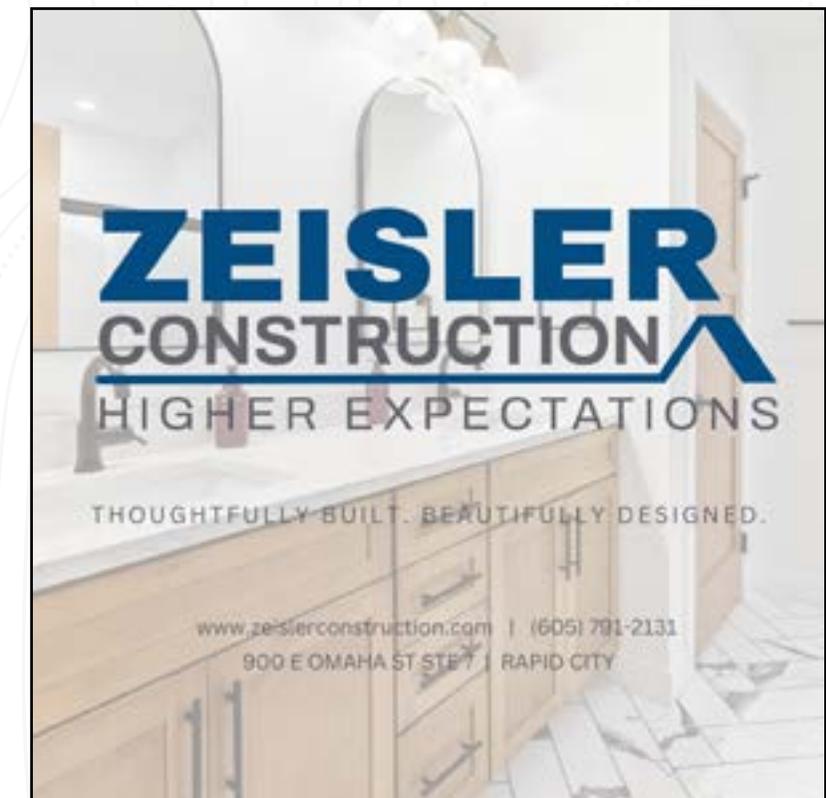
find you through a hashtag,” she said. “I don’t know what hashtag I used, but they had found me through there, and they asked if they could use the photo in their upcoming edition and I was like, ‘Absolutely! That’s so awesome!’”

She’s continued to establish herself as a landscape photographer in the years since her publication, and was recently awarded an ADDY through the American Advertising Awards, recognizing a photograph she took of lightning striking Bear Butte outside of Sturgis.

As she continues to create art and capture moments worth remembering, she is proud of the work required to reach this point. Advocating for herself as both a promising artist and a female entrepreneur has been a journey worth taking, and she hopes to inspire other young women who aspire to pursue this field.

“I always told myself that when I finally learned the ropes, I want to be an open book for those who are starting out because I know how it feels. I would love nothing more than to give people the things that I have learned that have taken me over a decade, and help them learn it in a fraction of the time. Even if we’re not in the same field, I want to be a cheerleader and let them know that they can do it because I did it.”

Browse Ellen’s portfolio at  
**ELLENSCOLLECTION.CO**  
and adorn your walls with the views that  
you’ll want to remember for a lifetime.





The details that  
say *everything*.

**RIDDLE'S**  
JEWELRY  
RIDDLESJEWELRY.COM

**SOUTHERN HILLS**  
FAMILY MEDICINE



CARING FOR YOUR WHOLE FAMILY

**We take immense pride in serving  
your family and the local community  
from newborns to adults.**

#### **FAMILY MEDICINE SERVICES**

- ✓ OB/GYN
- ✓ Dermatology
- ✓ Women's Health
- ✓ FEMM

#### **NEW IN 2026**

- ✓ Botox
- ✓ Medical Facial Peels
- ✓ Micro Needling
- ✓ IV hydration
- ✓ Laser Hair Removal
- ✓ Body Sculpting
- ✓ Hormone Pellet Therapy



**Brandy Tarap, MD**  
**Jennifer Zettl, DNP**  
**Tiffany Pullins, FNP**

**WALK-IN SAME-DAY APPOINTMENTS**

☎ 605-673-3900 🌐 [southernhillsfamilymedicine.com](https://southernhillsfamilymedicine.com)

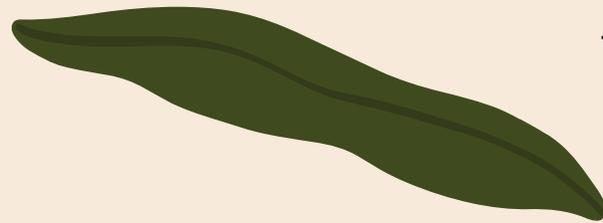


FILL YOUR LIFE WITH WOMEN WHO EMPOWER YOU,  
WHO HELP YOU BELIEVE IN YOUR MAGIC,  
AND HELP THEM BELIEVE IN THEIR OWN EXCEPTIONAL POWER  
AND INCREDIBLE MAGIC TOO.

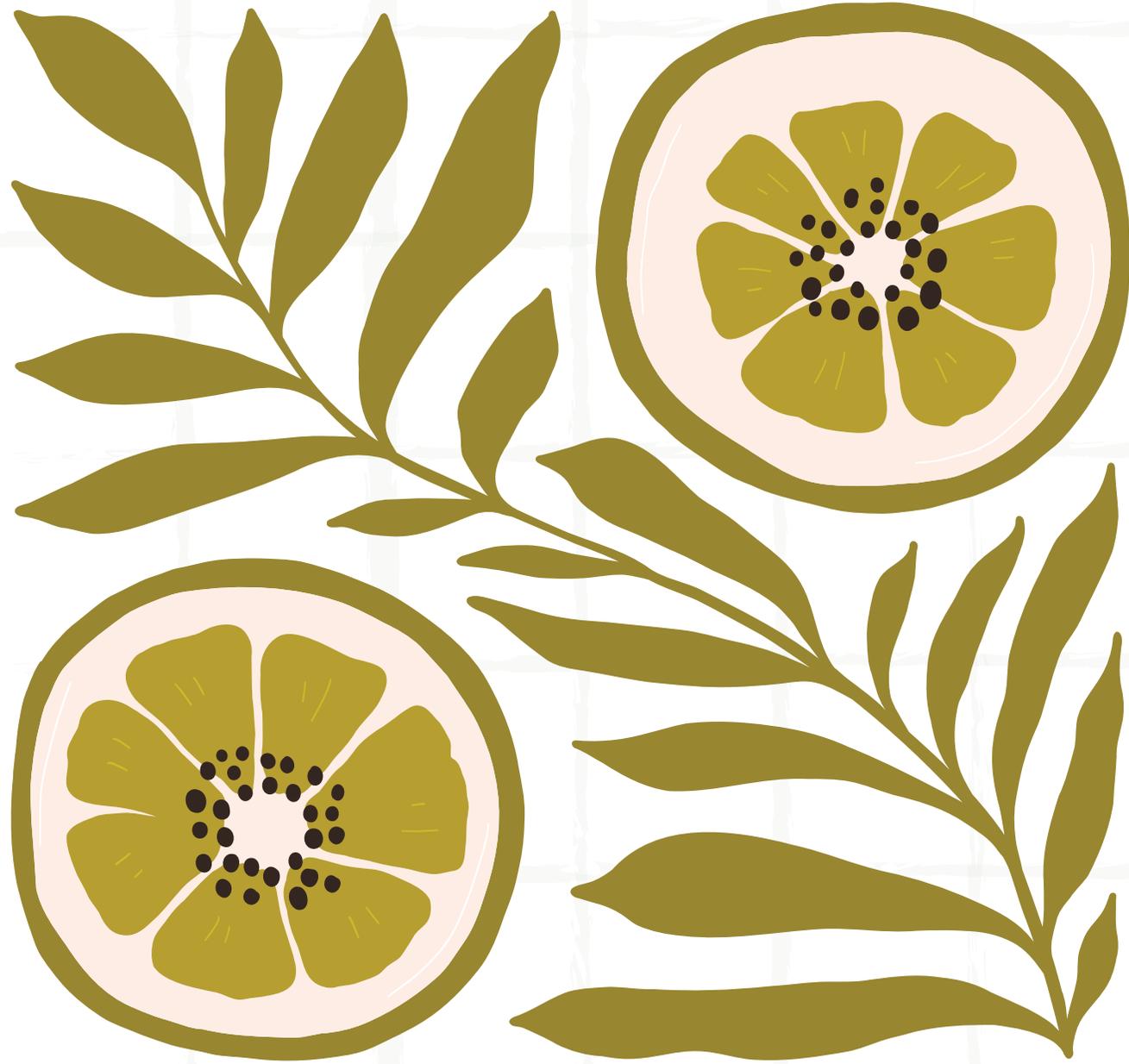
WOMEN WHO BELIEVE IN EACH OTHER CAN SURVIVE ANYTHING.  
WOMEN WHO BELIEVE IN EACH OTHER CREATE ARMIES  
THAT WILL WIN KINGDOMS AND WARS.

REMEMBER ALWAYS,  
THE ONLY PEOPLE WHO CAN SAVE US ARE EACH OTHER,  
THE ONLY PEOPLE WHO CAN LOVE US ARE OURSELVES.

WHAT I HAVE LEARNED ABOUT SISTERHOOD  
BY NIKITA GILL



# A FRESH (RE)START



## FOR HEALTHY LIVING

STORY BY KRYSTAL BRESNAHAN • PHOTOS BY CADEY REISNER

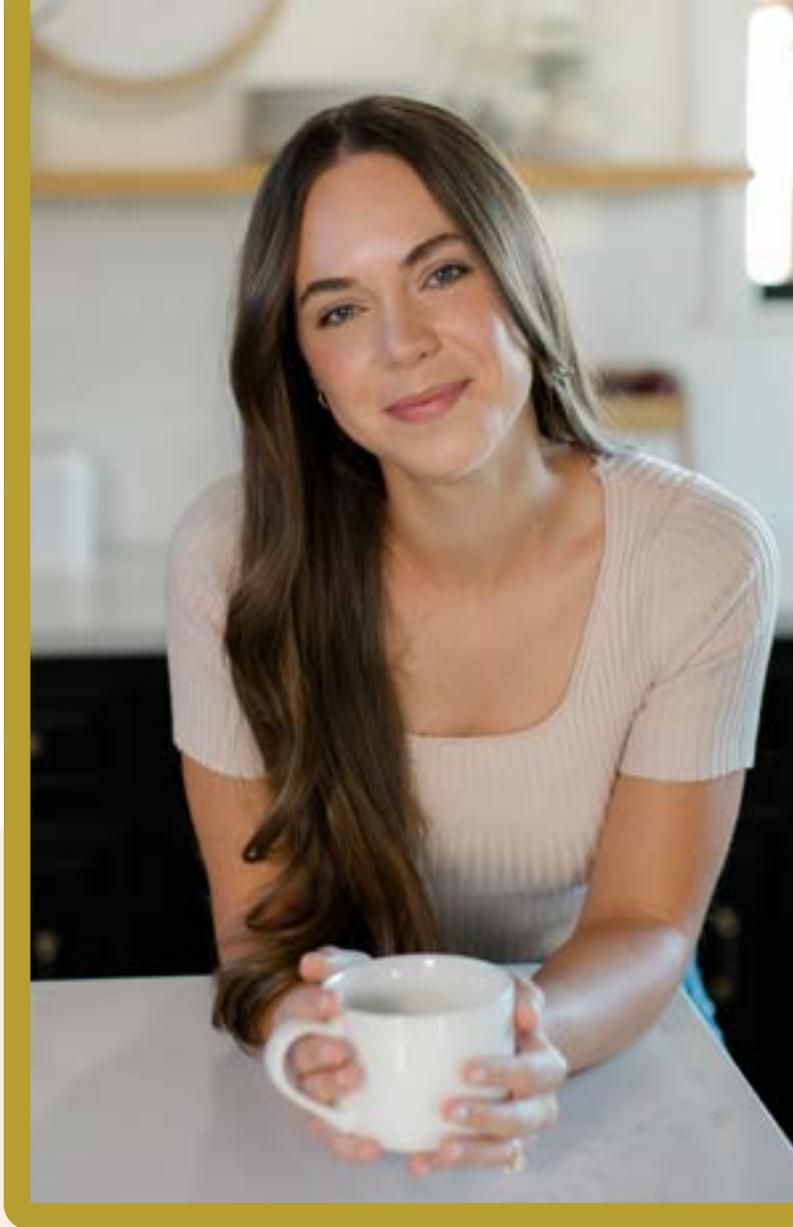
Three months into the year, and the excitement around life-altering resolutions and trendy diets has passed. But if happier, healthier living was on your try-to-do list for 2026, there's still plenty of time to make progress toward your goals. Elsie Whitesell is here to guide you with practical tips, custom health coaching options, and delicious recipes.

### NEW HOPE FOR YOUR HEALTH GOALS

When it comes to health, expectations for quick fixes and fast results ruin the fun of starting fresh. It's common to feel discouraged when you believe everything needs to change all at once.

Luckily, Elsie Whitesell, MS, RDN, knows how to help her clients in these difficult moments.

"I remind women that a healthier lifestyle is meant to make their lives better, not harder. Instead of focusing on restriction, I encourage balance. Adding in nourishing foods, enjoyable movement, and mindfulness," she says.



Elsie explains that "it's about seeking nourishment rather than avoiding calories, carbs, or food altogether. I approach health holistically, looking at nutrition alongside stress, mindset, routines, and lifestyle because that's what true, sustainable health actually requires."



## NEED TO BE NOURISHED

Elsie's online health coaching business – Need To Be Nourished – was born from her own desire for a fresh start in helping people reach their personal goals. As a registered dietician, nutritionist, and certified yoga teacher, she's gained a well-rounded education and experiences ranging from clinical, fitness, and food service settings.

“Equally important was my own personal journey. Transforming my relationship with food and body image while navigating my own health struggles has shaped the way I guide people today. It led me to help other women break free from diet culture and the narrow definitions of ‘health’ we're often taught to believe.”

Her goal is to make life easier, not more overwhelming, with options for individual or group coaching. “Coaching isn't about telling someone what to do, it's about meeting them where they are and being their guide, listening without judgment, and supporting them in the way they need.”

## SMALL STEPS TO SUSTAINABLE CHANGE

Fresh starts are often spurred by changing seasons, shifting careers, (re)defining relationships, and even peeling the shiny plastic off of a new calendar. So, now how can women keep the energetic charge that comes from a fresh start?

According to Elsie, “you don't need another product or expensive supplement... you can begin exactly where you are, using what you already have.”

No matter if your progress toward health goals has stalled this year, you can start again. “If you've tried every diet or feel stuck, I encourage you to change your approach,” Elsie says. “Diets don't work long-term. Learning about food, your body, how to support it, and how to build habits that fit your life does. Small, supportive changes add up over time.”

Self-compassion is a better motivator than self-criticism, especially when making life changes, and having a supportive coach like Elsie in your corner can make a positive difference. Take a small step toward happier, healthier living this spring by trying one of her homemade recipes.



# FREEZER FRIENDLY BREAKFAST BURRITOS

(MAKES 6-8 BURRITOS)

## INGREDIENTS

- 8 large eggs
- 1-2 medium sweet potatoes, diced
- 1 can black beans, drained and rinsed or 8-10 oz turkey or chicken sausage, cooked and sliced
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 teaspoon cumin or smoked paprika
- salt and pepper, to taste
- whole-grain or flour tortillas
- verde salsa, for serving

### OPTIONAL ADD-INS:

- Sautéed peppers and onions
- Spinach or kale
- Shredded cheese

## INSTRUCTIONS

1. **ROAST THE SWEET POTATOES:** Preheat oven to 400°F. Toss diced sweet potatoes with olive oil, salt, pepper, and spices. Roast for 20-25 minutes, until tender and lightly browned.
2. **COOK THE FILLING:** While the sweet potatoes roast, cook sausage (if using) in a skillet until heated through. Scramble the eggs gently in a separate pan.
3. **ASSEMBLE THE BURRITOS:** Lay tortillas flat and add eggs, roasted sweet potatoes, beans or sausage, and any optional veggies or cheese. Roll tightly into burritos.
4. **STORE OR FREEZE:** Wrap individually in foil or parchment. Store in the refrigerator for up to 4 days or freeze for up to 3 months.
5. **REHEAT:** Reheat in the microwave or oven until warmed through.

ELSIE'S TIP: ADD SALSA AND AVOCADO AS TOPPINGS AND ENJOY WITH A SIDE OF FRESH FRUIT!

# HEARTY BEEF & VEGETABLE SOUP

(SERVES 4-6)

## INGREDIENTS

- 1½ lbs beef stew meat or chuck, cut into bite-sized pieces
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 small onion, diced
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 3 carrots, sliced
- 2 celery stalks, chopped
- 1-2 cups potatoes or sweet potatoes, diced
- 1 cup green beans or peas
- 1 can diced tomatoes
- 4-6 cups beef broth
- 1 teaspoon dried thyme
- 1 teaspoon dried rosemary
- salt and pepper, to taste

### OPTIONAL ADDITIONS

- mushrooms
- kale or spinach stirred in at the end
- a splash of balsamic vinegar for depth

## INSTRUCTIONS

1. **BROWN THE BEEF:** Heat olive oil in a large pot or Dutch oven over medium heat. Season beef with salt and pepper and brown on all sides. Remove and set aside.
2. **BUILD THE BASE:** In the same pot, sauté onion, garlic, carrots, and celery until fragrant and slightly softened.
3. **SIMMER:** Return beef to the pot. Add potatoes, tomatoes, broth, thyme, and rosemary. Bring to a boil, then reduce to a simmer.

4. **COOK UNTIL TENDER:** Cover and simmer for 60-90 minutes, until the beef is tender. Add green beans or peas in the last 10-15 minutes.
5. **FINISH AND SERVE:** Taste and adjust seasoning. Stir in leafy greens if using and serve warm.

ELSIE'S TIP: THIS SOUP TASTES EVEN BETTER THE NEXT DAY AND FREEZES WELL, MAKING IT IDEAL FOR BATCH COOKING. PAIR IT WITH SOURDOUGH BREAD OR A SIMPLE SIDE SALAD FOR AN EASY, BALANCED DINNER.



# COZY PEAR & PEANUT BUTTER YOGURT BOWL

SERVES 1

## INGREDIENTS

- ¾–1 cup plain Greek yogurt
- ½–1 ripe pear, thinly sliced
- 1 tablespoon peanut butter
- 1 tablespoon chopped walnuts (optional)
- 1 teaspoon honey, or to taste

## INSTRUCTIONS

1. SPOON GREEK YOGURT INTO A BOWL.
2. TOP WITH SLICED PEAR, PEANUT BUTTER, AND WALNUTS IF USING.
3. FINISH WITH A LIGHT DRIZZLE OF HONEY.

ELSIE'S TIP: THIS YOGURT BOWL IS A GREAT GO-TO SNACK WHEN YOU WANT SOMETHING COMFORTING, NOURISHING, AND EASY. IT INCLUDES PROTEIN, HEALTHY FATS, AND FIBER-RICH CARBOHYDRATES, AN IDEAL COMBINATION TO SUPPORT STEADY ENERGY AND KEEP YOU SATISFIED BETWEEN MEALS.



# TERIYAKI CHICKEN QUINOA BOWL

(SERVES 3–4)

## INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup dry quinoa
- 1½ lbs boneless, skinless chicken thighs or breasts
- 1–2 cups broccoli florets
- 1 cup shredded carrots
- avocado oil
- salt and pepper, to taste

## SIMPLE TERIYAKI SAUCE

- ¼ cup soy sauce or tamari
- 2 tablespoons maple syrup or honey
- 1 tablespoon rice vinegar
- 1 teaspoon grated fresh ginger
- 1 clove garlic, minced

## OPTIONAL TOPPINGS

- sliced avocado
- sesame seeds
- green onions

## INSTRUCTIONS

1. **COOK THE QUINOA:** Rinse quinoa well. Cook according to package instructions and set aside.
2. **MAKE THE TERIYAKI SAUCE:** In a small bowl, whisk together soy sauce, maple syrup, rice vinegar, ginger, and garlic.
3. **COOK THE CHICKEN:** Heat oil in a skillet over medium heat. Season chicken lightly with salt and pepper and cook until browned and cooked through. Pour the teriyaki sauce over the chicken and simmer for a few minutes until slightly thickened. Slice or shred.
4. **COOK THE VEGETABLES:** Steam or sauté broccoli until tender-crisp. Lightly season to taste.
5. **ASSEMBLE THE BOWLS:** Add quinoa to bowls, top with chicken, broccoli, and carrots. Finish with avocado, sesame seeds, and green onions if desired.

ELSIE'S TIP: THIS BOWL STORES WELL IN THE FRIDGE FOR 3–4 DAYS, MAKING IT A GREAT MEAL-PREP OPTION. PREPARE THE QUINOA, CHICKEN, AND VEGGIES SEPARATELY AND ASSEMBLE FRESH THROUGHOUT THE WEEK.

# leading where few women have been

**MARNIE HERRMANN'S  
IMPACT IN BANKING, LEADERSHIP,  
AND THE BLACK HILLS**



For almost 30 years, Marnie Herrmann has been a steady force across the Black Hills, both professionally and personally. From having a seat at the boardroom table to lending her time and leadership to area nonprofits, Herrmann has learned the value of credibility and confidence — especially for women navigating traditionally male-dominated spaces.

“Banking in the Upper Plains in particular

is predominantly male in senior leadership positions,” said Herrmann. “That’s changing slowly, but it’s just the nature of it.”

That understanding of resilience and adaptability was shaped long before Herrmann entered the banking world — beginning in her early years.

While Herrmann was born in Las Vegas, Nevada, the Black Hills were a part of her story long before she called the area home.



PHOTO BY MICHAELA MADE PHOTO CO.



“My family is from the Black Hills, multiple generations. Both my mom’s family and my dad’s family came to the Black Hills area in the 1880s. So we have really deep connections to Custer County in particular,” she said.

Her parents moved Herrmann and her four siblings to the Midwest when she was in the sixth grade, a transition that marked a dramatic shift in lifestyle.

“We went from living in the middle of a city to living in the middle of the woods,” Herrmann said. “We lived on an old family property that was 10 miles from Custer, 11 miles from Pringle, and five miles off the last paved road. So we went really remote, really fast. And that was pretty formative.”

## Earning a Seat at the Table

After graduating from high school, Herrmann attended the University of Oregon, where she initially envisioned a career in broadcast journalism.

“I thought I was going to be on TV news — that’s what I went to school for initially,” she said. “I majored in journalism and then realized I was better at other stuff: writing, strategic planning, public relations.”

Following college, Herrmann and her husband of nearly four decades returned to the Black Hills. She began her career at the Custer Chamber of Commerce



PHOTO BY AMBER HEREDIA LASTING MEMORIES STUDIO





before joining Security First Bank in 1999 as director of marketing — an entry point that would grow into a long-term professional home.

“My first boss, Linde Manlove, was enormously helpful to me during my college years and the first two years out of school, when I worked at the Custer Chamber of Commerce, where she was the executive director,” said Herrmann. “And my aunt Michele Lintz, who demonstrated how to lead with confidence and to take calculated risks

in order to achieve big things.”

While those early examples came from strong women, Herrmann said working in a male-dominated industry also introduced her to mentors who valued performance over perception.

“Two of my key mentors were men, and they gave me the chance to do things — to grow in my profession,” she said. “I didn’t really think of it as a male versus female thing. It was just, ‘I think you can do this job.’”

In the mid-2010s, Herrmann attended the American Bankers Association Stonier Graduate School of Banking and the Wharton School, where she obtained a certificate in Executive Leadership.

Today, Herrmann serves as Security First Bank’s Chief Banking Officer, overseeing core operations including lending, deposit growth, and retail and commercial banking services — a role historically held by men.

She doesn’t frame her position as exceptional, but she is candid about what it takes to succeed.

“You have to do a better job than everybody else,” Herrmann said. “You just have to absolutely know your stuff, be prepared, and you have to work harder. I don’t say that as a ‘woe is me.’ It’s just how it is.”

For Herrmann, leadership has been less about visibility and more about consistency and

commitment to the community. She said it means arriving prepared, understanding the details behind decisions, and earning trust over time.

Rather than focusing on breaking barriers, Herrmann has built a career around doing the work well and doing it thoroughly.

With the slogan, “a relationship you can count on,” Herrmann’s experience with Security First Bank is about connection not only with her employers but also with the community.

“Putting a building in town and maintaining it sends a message to the community that you’re here to stay and that you care,” she said. “That commitment matters — to customers, to employees, to the community.”

Looking back on her career thus far, Herrmann said the lessons that stand out most now extend beyond titles or milestones. For her, lead-

ership has increasingly become about how you treat people along the way.

When asked for advice, Herrmann first pointed to kindness. Not just for women, but for all young professionals. She also encourages women to be intentional about how they present themselves. Herrmann believes that when a person’s

appearance aligns with who they are, it quietly reinforces confidence and helps them show up prepared, mentally and physically.

Those principles — kindness, preparation, and presence — have guided Herrmann through leadership roles often dominated by men. Rather than trying to fit a mold,

she has demonstrated a steady commitment to quality and relationship building. In doing so, she has helped redefine what leadership can look like in both business and community spaces.

The same commitment to preparation and service extends beyond the workplace.

**"You have to do a better job than everybody else."**

"Just say yes and give it a try. That's how you grow."



## Service Beyond the Office

Over the years, Herrmann has volunteered her time and leadership across the region, serving on numerous boards, including the Sanford Health Board of Trustees, Rapid City Youth and Family Services, and the Rapid City Area Chamber of Commerce (now known as Visit Rapid City and Elevate Rapid City).

"I was the chairman of the City Area Chamber of Commerce board of directors, also a predominantly male position. I think in 140 years, there have been six women chairing that board," said Herrmann.

For her, those opportunities reinforce the importance of saying yes.

"Just say yes and give it a try," she said. "That's how you grow."

For Herrmann, civic engagement has been both a responsibility and a way to give back to the community that helped shape her.

"I definitely love this community and love our state," she said. "I feel really fortunate that we were able to build a life here and raise our kids here."

We support healthy dental development from their first tooth to their last dental check-up, because

**EVERY SMILE GROWS AT ITS OWN PACE!**

From babies to pre-teens and all those in between—Our team is here to help your family through each of their dental phases, one visit at a time!

**CALL TO SCHEDULE YOUR CHILD'S 6 MONTH CHECK-UP, TODAY!**

BLACK HILLS  
**Pediatric DENTISTRY**

(605) 341-3068

700 Sheridan Lake Road  
Rapid City, SD 57702

[bhpediatricdentistry.com](http://bhpediatricdentistry.com)



- ✓ Mommy's helper
- ✓ Dinner's little black dress
- ✓ Weeknight wingwoman
- ✓ Domestic goddess backup
- ✓ Kitchen co-pilot
- ✓ Hostess insurance policy
- ✓ Chef's night off hero
- ✓ The edible assistant

**Nell's**

Gourmet to Go...and a few other things

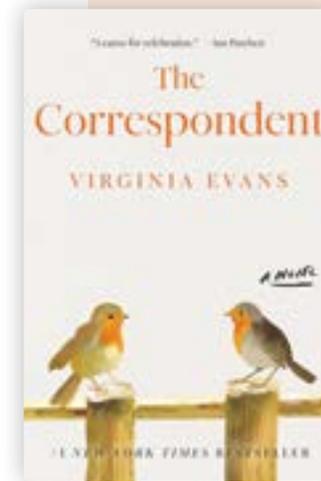
[nellsgourmet.com](http://nellsgourmet.com)

# BHW BOOK



# CLUB

## what's on our shelf

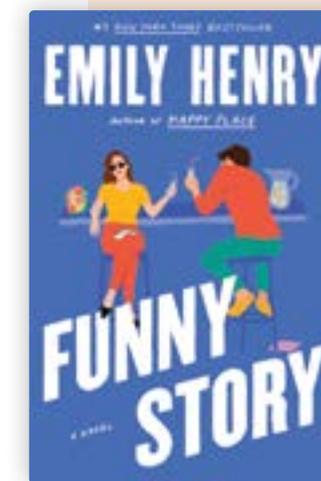


### KARI'S PICK

*The Correspondent* by Virginia Evans | Literary Fiction

It has been a while since a book has moved me to tears. But the prose here is so beautifully crafted, elegantly weaving together the relationships of these characters. This is a heartwarming and, at many times, heartbreaking epistolary novel reminding readers that life is fragile and flawed and also full of redemption and love.

**BRIEF SYNOPSIS:** This novel follows Sybil Van Antwerp, a woman in her 70s, who communicates primarily through letter writing. It is through this correspondence that the reader gets to know Sybil through all the seasons of her life. She confronts past and present trauma, mends relationships, and creates new ones, showcasing the truth that self-transformation and the acceptance of love is not defined by age. This novel highlights the power of literature and the transformative meaning of words, the ability to form connections and change lives simply by reading something truthful.

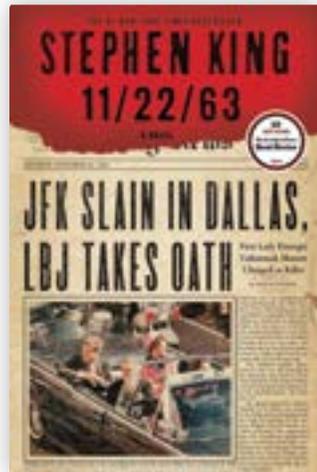


### CHANTEL'S PICK

*Funny Story* by Emily Henry | Romantic Fiction

Ready for a book you don't want to put down? This book piqued my interest due to the author's past history of writing wonderful novels. It's a novel that focuses on the journey of self-discovery, exploring your wants, needs, and likes. Additionally, it will tug at your heartstrings, resonating personally and emotionally.

**BRIEF SYNOPSIS:** Daphne, heartbroken after her fiancé Peter dumped her to marry his childhood friend Petra, finds herself in a predicament. She has her dream job and needs to find a new place to call home. She approaches Petra's ex-boyfriend, Miles, and asks if he has a vacant room, which sets the stage for an unexpected turn of events. Their shared trauma turns into healing, leading them into an accidental dating situation when they both are invited to Peter and Petra's wedding. As they navigate this fake charade, their bond deepens, and you'll be left eagerly anticipating the unfolding story.



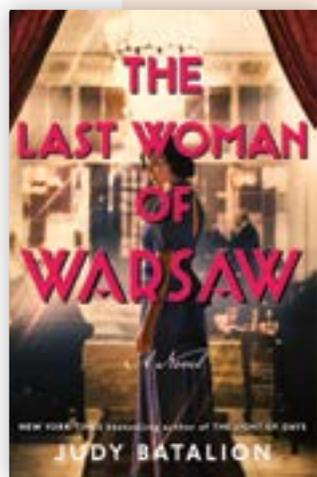
### KAYLA'S PICK

*11.22.63* by Stephen King | Thriller

This is a long read, but SUCH a good one! Although he is known best for being the King of Horror, Stephen King's *11/22/63* is a lot less scary and a lot more fun than most of his novels. Part time-travel, part love story, this is my absolute favorite of King's work (and I've read or listened to most of it). This book is full of many dynamic characters who will stick with you long after the final page. Steer clear of this one if you're not willing to shed a few tears!

**BRIEF SYNOPSIS:** Jake Epping is a high school English teacher who gets sucked into a ploy to travel back in time to stop the JFK assassination in an attempt to prevent further destruction to society that is believed to have stemmed from the president's untimely death. Unfortunately, the only portal available for time travel will only take people back to 1958, so Jake must stay in the past for five years before being able to take any action against the assassination. And if waiting five years isn't already hard enough — especially with time working against his efforts — Jake meets a woman who will become the love of his life, and must choose between preventing the one thing he came to stop and being able to stay with the woman he loves.

## saving a spot for...



*The Last Woman of Warsaw*  
by Judy Batalion | Historical Fiction

**EXPECTED RELEASE DATE: APRIL 7, 2026**

**BRIEF SYNOPSIS:** This novel, set in Warsaw in the late 1930s, centers around an unlikely friendship between two young Jewish women. Amidst the looming danger, the novel vividly portrays the vibrant city before the war. Fanny Zelhinsky, a talented artist and privileged daughter of the elite, and Zosia Dror, an activist fighting for equality, share a common mentor in artist Wanda Petrovsky. Their bond deepens when Wanda goes missing, leading them to explore the transformative power of friendship, forbidden love, and female empowerment.



# celebrating ten amazing women

International Women's Day is a celebration of the remarkable progress women have made and the obstacles they continue to overcome. From the workplace to the home, women are driving change by empowering others, giving generously of their time, supporting friends and family, and leveraging their talents to make a positive impact in both their professional and personal lives. Nominated by those closest to them, these ten women are a representation of what Black Hills Woman is all about - women supporting women and recognizing the remarkable impact they have in our own community.



## NOMINATED BY: BRENDA STEIDLER

*Shaina has been empowering women to see who they truly are as entrepreneurs. She continually pours into women through podcasts, Zoom calls, and more! Her heart always comes through in whomever she is speaking with, and her passion to help women be the best they can be business-wise, spiritually, mentally, and physically. Shaina is a woman of great knowledge and passion!*

# Shaina Hargens

**PROFESSION:** Motivational Coach, Speaker, Author

## WHAT DOES INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY MEAN TO YOU?

It means that we are in this together. Women are meant for community, and having a day with honorary intentions is a soft way to tap each other on the shoulder and say "I see you, too".

## HOW DO YOU ACTIVELY EMPOWER YOURSELF AND THE WOMEN AROUND YOU?

I am a natural encourager and giver of permission — I am always looking for the opportunity to speak life and light onto someone else's vision and give them the excitement and permission to keep going. It's not 'crazy' or 'out there' for YOU because it's your vision — if someone else questions or puts down your ideas, it's because of their vision, not yours.



## WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE YOUR YOUNGER SELF OR OTHER WOMEN TODAY?

1. Say NO — and — say YES. This takes acknowledging your vision and your season of life and doing the work of putting the two together. Planning. Put things on paper, with intention and communication.

2. Set boundaries and share your vision with your close circle — they love you and need to know — even if they don't fully understand.

## WHAT BRINGS YOU THE GREATEST SATISFACTION IN YOUR LIFE?

A home-cooked meal. Sitting down and sharing food with friends and family with quality ingredients and wholesome conversation. And when my daughter says 'please' or 'thank you'. Honestly, it's those simple words that make the place you are in better than when you walked in.

## WHO ARE YOUR ROLE MODELS AND WHAT QUALITIES DO YOU ADMIRE?

My mom - she isn't afraid to say NO. My grandma — for teaching me how to make bread at a young age. My friend Pat — who loves Jesus, her late husband, and her garden. And many other women who ask me to stretch myself while also offering to show me how.

## SHARE AN INSPIRING QUOTE FOR OTHER WOMEN.

"Find out who you are, then give yourself away."  
Kody Bateman

# Shelbi Kaul

## NOMINATED BY: GILLIAN SPIVA

*Shelbi is an incredibly inspiring woman who has been a teacher at Black Hills Children's Home Society for the past two years. I have had the privilege of witnessing her show up for those kids every single day with patience, compassion, and unwavering dedication. She meets each child where they are, creating a safe and supportive environment where healing and growth can happen. Her impact reaches far beyond the classroom, and her work truly changes lives.*

## PROFESSION:

Teacher at Black Hills Children's Home Society

## WHAT DOES INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY MEAN TO YOU?

International Women's Day is a day to celebrate the women before us, those who surround us now, and those to come. I honor and thank the women I know and those who have come before me to give me the life I have now. As a teacher, I like taking time to educate students about the history of International Women's Day and why it is so important. This holiday is a time to celebrate how much progress we've made but also serves as a reminder of what is yet to come. Our lives are forever changed by the women who made sacrifices for our future. It's up to those around me and myself to continue where they left off.

## HOW DO YOU ACTIVELY EMPOWER YOURSELF AND THE WOMEN AROUND YOU?

I actively empower myself and the women around me through my profession. I try to find ways to encourage my female colleagues and students to speak up, share their stories and perspectives, and find alliance in one another. I've come to learn that we are so much better off when we work together, create spaces to feel heard and understood, and mentor each other into leaders we strive to be.

## WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE YOUR YOUNGER SELF OR OTHER WOMEN TODAY?

The advice I would give my younger self or other women today would be to give yourself grace. As a child, I harshly critiqued myself or compared myself to those around me. This is still something I struggle with, but I'm making progress. It can be difficult as a teacher and woman to remember that I am doing a good job. I've learned that I'm my worst critic and being so hard on myself doesn't help me grow and learn. Surrounding myself with positive role models and friends, continuing my education, and using healthy coping skills will help me grow more than negative thoughts about myself ever could.

## WHAT BRINGS YOU THE GREATEST SATISFACTION IN YOUR LIFE?

One of my greatest satisfactions is working with the students I serve. So many of the children I teach come from unimaginable circumstances. They've experienced extreme poverty, homelessness, abuse, and so many other things I'll

never begin to comprehend. Yet, each day they show up and are willing to learn. I try to remind them that education is the most powerful tool, and no matter what they go through in life, no one can take that away from them. Building relationships with and watching my students grow is one of life's biggest blessings.

## WHO ARE YOUR ROLE MODELS AND WHAT QUALITIES DO YOU ADMIRE?

My role models are the women I am lucky enough to call my friends and mentors. When I received the phone call that I was chosen for this article, I thought there was a mistake. I didn't think this because I wasn't deserving but instead because of how many incredible women I know. Cory Tomovick and Heather Hoeye are two that come to mind instantly. Cory is a singer, songwriter, and performer in the Black Hills area. Her grace and eloquence bring a sense of peace to me whenever I'm with her. Heather is a bold, fierce woman who has taught me that taking up space and being myself is exactly what the world needs. Both women have offered me so much advice both professionally and personally, taught me to accept myself for who I am, and encouraged me to do the same for the other women in my life.

## SHARE AN INSPIRING QUOTE FOR OTHER WOMEN.

The purpose of life is not to be happy. It is to be useful, to be honorable, to be compassionate, to have it make some difference that you have lived and lived well."  
Ralph Waldo Emerson



**"I HONOR AND  
THANK THE  
WOMEN I KNOW  
AND THOSE WHO  
HAVE COME  
BEFORE ME TO  
GIVE ME THE LIFE  
I HAVE NOW."**



# Taylor Davis

## WHAT DOES INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY MEAN TO YOU?

It all comes down to choices and voices. International Women's Day is a reminder that the rights and protections many of us have today exist because of the women who came before us. Our grandmothers did not always have choices and opportunities, but they raised their voices to push forward anyway. They believed in more than themselves; they believed in us and the futures we could create. I believe the best way we can honor their commitment and sacrifice is by living confidently and authentically, making choices that are true to who we are. We have the ability to shape not only our own paths but also our community, and that is both a privilege and a responsibility. International Women's Day reminds me not to take that for granted.

## HOW DO YOU ACTIVELY EMPOWER YOURSELF AND THE WOMEN AROUND YOU?

I believe deeply in telling people when they are doing great and impactful things and giving credit where it is due. Empowerment is about pulling people up with you and making sure no one feels invisible along the way. I try to be intentional about recognizing effort, growth, and progress in others.

I also empower myself by reframing what progress really looks like. When I feel like I am not doing enough or could be doing more, I look back at how far I've already come. Real change does not happen in one big moment. It happens through tiny, incremental steps that move us forward over time. You do not have to give 100 percent every day if you do not have it. Sometimes giving 20 percent effort is all you can offer, and that counts when the alternative is not showing up at all. That is still progress, and progress matters.

## WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE YOUR YOUNGER SELF OR OTHER WOMEN TODAY?

My sisters and I grew up in a single-parent household where our

mother worked multiple jobs just to keep our heads above water. During high school, I woke up early to work the opening shift at McDonald's to help pay bills before heading off to class for my senior year and the field for team practice as our soccer team went to the playoffs.

It took me some time to accept that the realities of my life looked different from most of my teammates. It took me even longer to understand that if I wanted something more, I would have to create the opportunity myself. I knew that my education was a way to make that happen.

But as a first-generation college student, there was no one around me who understood the process or how to help. It was sink or swim. I had to figure out how to hold myself accountable, build my own structure, and keep going even when it felt like a lot. Honestly, it felt like a lot of responsibility for an 18-year-old. Over time, though, what felt like I was just figuring things out as I went slowly turned into a system that worked. Looking back now, I'm proud to say I'm the most educated person in my entire family.

Soon after, I married an active-duty military member, and upon graduation, I moved with him to a new state to begin our lives, followed by two more moves after that. Each transition required starting over with new jobs, new homes, and new communities. Reinvention became a constant, and resilience became a skill I relied on. Each time, I chose to push myself forward and trust that I could build something meaningful again.

All of this has shaped the advice I would give my younger self and other women today. Keep going. You do not need someone else to give you the right answers. You just have to believe in the direction you are headed.

## WHAT BRINGS YOU THE GREATEST SATISFACTION IN YOUR LIFE?

My greatest accomplishment in life will always and forever be my daughter, Olivia. It has been the honor of a lifetime to watch her grow, learn, and love, all of which never seem to reach capacity. There is nothing more awe-inspiring than to re-discover our world through her lens, and she gives me genuine hope for what's to come.

In many ways, the work I do every day is a love letter to her. I am

deeply motivated by the idea of helping create a world where opportunity is accessible, education is valued, and people are empowered to build meaningful lives. If my work helps shape a future where she and others like her have more choices, more stability, and more possibility, then I know I am doing something that truly matters.

## WHO ARE YOUR ROLE MODELS AND WHAT QUALITIES DO YOU ADMIRE?

I come from a long line of self-described "strong women," with my mother, Robin, and my grandmother, Dorothy, as the clearest examples. They are incredible women, shaped by lives that required strength whether they wanted it or not. Life presented them with challenges that did not always come with choices, and they met those moments with their heads held high.

The qualities they modeled for me are resilience, selflessness, and authenticity. They never pretended to have everything figured out. They struggled, they juggled, and they persevered. What I appreciate most is that they never expected the same path for me. Instead, they gave me the courage to choose differently, even when they did not have the answers or the ability to guide me through it. Their strength gave me permission to imagine something more, and that is a gift I carry with me every day.

## SHARE AN INSPIRING QUOTE FOR OTHER WOMEN.

As my friend Reese Niu would say, "Slow motion is better than no motion." Keep moving forward, whether that is an inch or a mile at a time. Your path forward doesn't have to match anyone else's to be meaningful.





# Frances Davis

## NOMINATED BY: KANDRA WALSH

*For more than five decades, her life has been a living testament to devotion, resilience, and unconditional love. Married for 55 years, she is the proud mother of seven children, grandmother to fourteen, and great-grandmother to six, each generation shaped by her steady presence and unwavering care. She chose with her whole heart to be a devoted wife, a nurturing mother, and the anchor of her family. Her story is not one of loud accolades or public recognition, but of quiet heroism, the kind that shapes families, sustains marriages, and leaves a legacy that cannot be measured.*

**PROFESSION:** Mom

## WHAT DOES INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY MEAN TO YOU?

It means to me that we're recognizing women all over the world. All women because all women have value; they have something that they have contributed. I feel like all of us have something that we are put on this earth to do. We have purpose, and so this day that we're setting aside for women is just to say — you are important.



## HOW DO YOU ACTIVELY EMPOWER YOURSELF AND THE WOMEN AROUND YOU?

First of all, I feel like having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ was the biggest turning point in my life because I was one of those people that had very poor self-esteem. And when I came to that day of realizing that Jesus loved me, it was a turning point because I was so excited about knowing that He loves me. I also came to the realization that He loves all people, even the unlovable person that I might meet. He loves them just as much as He loves me. So I started this campaign of saying - you are important.

## WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE YOUNGER SELF OR OTHER WOMEN TODAY?

I would say. Life is good. The things that happen to us may not be good, but it's the way we have an outlook on it. There's always something that we can be thankful for. Every situation has something that we can be thankful for, so we need to focus on those things.

## WHAT BRINGS YOU THE GREATEST SATISFACTION IN YOUR LIFE?

Quality time with my family.

## WHO ARE YOUR ROLE MODELS AND WHAT QUALITIES DO YOU ADMIRE?

You know, Jesus is mine. Other than that. A person that just keeps bouncing back. The person that always finds the positive in life — I'm drawn to that type of person.

## SHARE AN INSPIRING QUOTE FOR OTHER WOMEN.

There are so many women that are deserving of this. It's not like I'm that extraordinary of a person. There are others doing even more than even I am. I'm just one in the crowd. So I would encourage the other ladies like me that are busy doing this and maybe doing a better job than I am to, "Keep on going. Keep on and don't be discouraged. Don't give up. It will pay off. In the long run, it's gonna pay off for us in the end."

**"WE HAVE PURPOSE, AND SO THIS DAY THAT WE'RE SETTING ASIDE FOR WOMEN IS JUST TO SAY — YOU ARE IMPORTANT."**

# Beth Massa

## NOMINATED BY: ALEXANDER MASSA

*Beth Massa is a steadfast and unwavering role model and trusted confidant for women of multiple different generations. Her grace, grit, tact, and wisdom have inspired women around her to reach for the stars and feel that they, too, can do anything they set their minds to. Having focused the last ten years on philanthropic work, she has directed hundreds of millions of dollars toward organizations that protect, support, and empower women across classes, races, ethnicities, and status. She is a true leader with a unique ability to connect our community.*

**PROFESSION:** Director of Foundation Relations  
South Dakota Community Foundation

## WHAT DOES INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY MEAN TO YOU?

International Women's Day reminds me to reflect on my own journey. I've been fortunate to have had some wonderful role models and mentors throughout my career, and for the most part, I've felt supported and valued. There was only one time when I felt I wasn't given the same opportunities as my

male colleagues, and that experience stayed with me. To me, International Women's Day means being treated equally and being able to be strong, confident, and capable without that strength being mistaken for aggression. It's a reminder of how far women have come, and why it's so important to keep supporting one another and pushing for continued progress.

## HOW DO YOU ACTIVELY EMPOWER YOURSELF AND THE WOMEN AROUND YOU?

I try to actively show up as an authentic "me" and encourage other women to do the same. Empowerment can be a valuable and powerful characteristic so long as it's not thrown in one's face. There are too many women who feel they need to show up as a bully or a know-it-all to prove their worth or superiority as a woman. That's not leadership. True leaders don't need to prove themselves – they need to believe in themselves and the person they are, and model good behavior. Others will come along.

## WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE YOUR YOUNGER SELF OR OTHER WOMEN TODAY?

The advice I would give my younger self — and other women today — is to be yourself and be proud of who you are. And if you're not proud yet, that's okay too — work on it. Confidence grows from self-awareness, experience, and learning, not from pretending to be something you're not. I've seen younger women be overly bold without the experience to back themselves up – and it worked against them and how they are perceived. You earn the title of "leader" by your character and how others see you.

## WHAT BRINGS YOU THE GREATEST SATISFACTION IN YOUR LIFE? WHO ARE YOUR ROLE MODELS AND WHAT QUALITIES DO YOU ADMIRE?

What gives me the greatest satisfaction in life is being present for the people I love. I love being a wife, a mother, and a friend, but perhaps the most meaningful — and most difficult — role has been being there for my aging parents. It's one of the reasons we moved back to Rapid City, and I deeply treasure the final years I was able to spend with my mother, who we lost in October 2024. While there were certainly frustrating moments, that time gave me the gift of seeing her as a whole person, not just as my parent, but as a woman navigating her own journey.

My mother stayed home to raise me and my three siblings, while also opening our small home to my grandfather and great-uncle. As we grew older, she returned to work and became the Director of Social Services at the Sturgis Hospital and Nursing Home. I watched how hard she worked in a demanding field, how deeply she valued her colleagues, and how much integrity she brought to her work.

In her later years, I saw her become an even stronger presence in her community — being a loyal friend, actively involved in her church, helping those less fortunate, and still finding time to be fully present in my boys' lives. She modeled what a full and meaningful life looks like, and I can only hope that one day my children will say the same about me.

Now, it's just as important that I'm there for my dad, who is 95 years old. While very independent, he still needs



someone to hold him in line and help with some of the things he once didn't think twice about. He's always been a proponent of hard work and doesn't think I should retire anytime soon! He has taught me the value of serving others and treating everyone the same.

## SHARE AN INSPIRING QUOTE FOR OTHER WOMEN.

"The unexamined life is not worth living." — Plato  
A woman doesn't need to be the loudest voice in a room; they need to be the most authentic and honest voice in the room. That comes from learning from our experiences and growing into the person we want to be.



# MiKayla Boswell

## NOMINATED BY: FALINA SELCHERT

*MiKayla Boswell of Beards and Shears is a shining example of what it means to build something meaningful through hard work, passion, and heart. As a business owner, MiKayla has built a welcoming space where people feel comfortable, confident, and valued. She supports other local businesses, gives back to the community, and leads with authenticity and integrity. Her work ethic, entrepreneurial spirit, and commitment to making those around her feel their best make her a standout woman in the Black Hills.*

**PROFESSION:** Professional Men's Hairstylist

## WHAT DOES INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY MEAN TO YOU?

"International Women's Day (IWD) is a global day celebrating the social, economic, cultural, and political achievements of women." ([www.internationalwomensday.com](http://www.internationalwomensday.com))

To be completely honest, I've not put a lot of thought into what IWD means to me specifically. Most days are just another day. We're bombarded with days of

celebration (siblings day, pet owners day, talk like a pirate day, etc.) but now as a mom, business owner, and professional men's stylist in a small rural town, I realize it's about celebrating resilience, grit, and the ability to juggle a million roles... sometimes while sweeping hair off the floor and answering a text from a teenager asking what's for supper and when I'll be home to make it.

## HOW DO YOU ACTIVELY EMPOWER YOURSELF AND THE WOMEN AROUND YOU?

I empower myself by showing up, even on the hard days, and reminding myself that progress doesn't have to be perfect. I empower other women by being honest about the challenges, cheering them on, supporting local businesses, and reminding them that they don't have to do it all alone. The phrase "it takes a village" isn't just in raising kids. It's often how these small towns function. Sometimes empowerment looks like encouragement; other times it's just saying, "Yep, this is hard, but you've got this."

## WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE YOUR YOUNGER SELF OR OTHER WOMEN TODAY?

Stop doubting yourself. You're more capable than you think. Don't wait for permission, don't apologize for taking up space, don't hesitate to ask for help, and trust your instincts. Also, rest is not laziness, and saying no is a complete sentence. Things that I'm still

learning how to do, but things I wish I'd heard a long time ago and was able to implement sooner.

## WHAT BRINGS YOU THE GREATEST SATISFACTION IN YOUR LIFE?

Watching my boys grow into hardworking, respectful young men is at the top of the list. I also find a lot of satisfaction in serving my community — building relationships with clients and creating a space where people feel comfortable, confident, and welcome. There's something beautiful about loving what you do and where you do it.

## WHO ARE YOUR ROLE MODELS AND WHAT QUALITIES DO YOU ADMIRE?

I'm borderline obsessed with Cher. She's been a huge role model to me. She's overcome so much self-doubt, conquered so many setbacks in her career, rose to the top, and dominated the industry. She is who she is, doesn't apologize for it, doesn't let people's thoughts or opinions of her dictate what she does, and for those reasons, she's a phenomenal example of being resilient and proves hard work pays off.

## SHARE AN INSPIRING QUOTE FOR OTHER WOMEN

"Women have to harness their power... It's just learning not to take the first 'no.' And if you can't go straight ahead, you go around the corner." - Cher



# Richelle Bruch

## NOMINATED BY: BECCA ROTTERDAM

*Richelle is, and always has been, a huge advocate for the Black Hills. She loves the community she lives in and is always doing everything in her power to serve the Black Hills area wherever she's capable of! Richelle is a member of the Sturgis Kiwanis, she serves on the Chamber of Commerce board, and over the years she has done an entire "More to Sturgis" promotion urging people to shop local and support their community. She's a strong woman who loves the Black Hills with her entire heart.*



**PROFESSION:** Community Advocate & Writer

## WHAT DOES INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY MEAN TO YOU?

International Women's Day is a moment to pause and truly celebrate the greatness women across the world have accomplished and will continue to accomplish. It offers a glimpse into what women are capable of when given space, opportunity, and belief. To me, it's both a celebration and a reminder that our impact reaches far beyond what is often recognized.

## HOW DO YOU ACTIVELY EMPOWER YOURSELF AND THE WOMEN AROUND YOU?

Women are often harder on themselves than society ever is, so I lead with kindness, grace, and encouragement whenever I can. When I see a moment to challenge someone who is doubting herself, I take it. I've found that when you ask a woman why she's holding doubt, it's often something she's placed on herself. I try to help whisk that doubt away, reminding women that we are far too hard on ourselves, and that everyone is exactly who and where they need to be in their life at that moment. And most importantly, they are enough!

## WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE YOUR YOUNGER SELF OR OTHER WOMEN TODAY?

Stop and be present in whatever season of life you are in. There are moments in life when you feel pressured to make a decision or take a step forward, even when it doesn't feel right. You don't have to rush. Be present in both the good and the hard moments.

There is no timeline on your future success. You are allowed to take the time you need to get where you're going, and that time is never wasted.

## WHAT BRINGS YOU THE GREATEST SATISFACTION IN YOUR LIFE?

Being told "No". I thrive on it. I see "no" as the starting point, not the end. Whether it's losing an election, changing careers, or training for a marathon, being told something might not be possible pushes me to find another path forward.

Through conversations, compromises, and action, I've learned that a "no" in its original form can often become a "yes". Finding those solutions, and doing the work to make them happen, is where I find the greatest satisfaction.

## WHO ARE YOUR ROLE MODELS AND WHAT QUALITIES DO YOU ADMIRE?

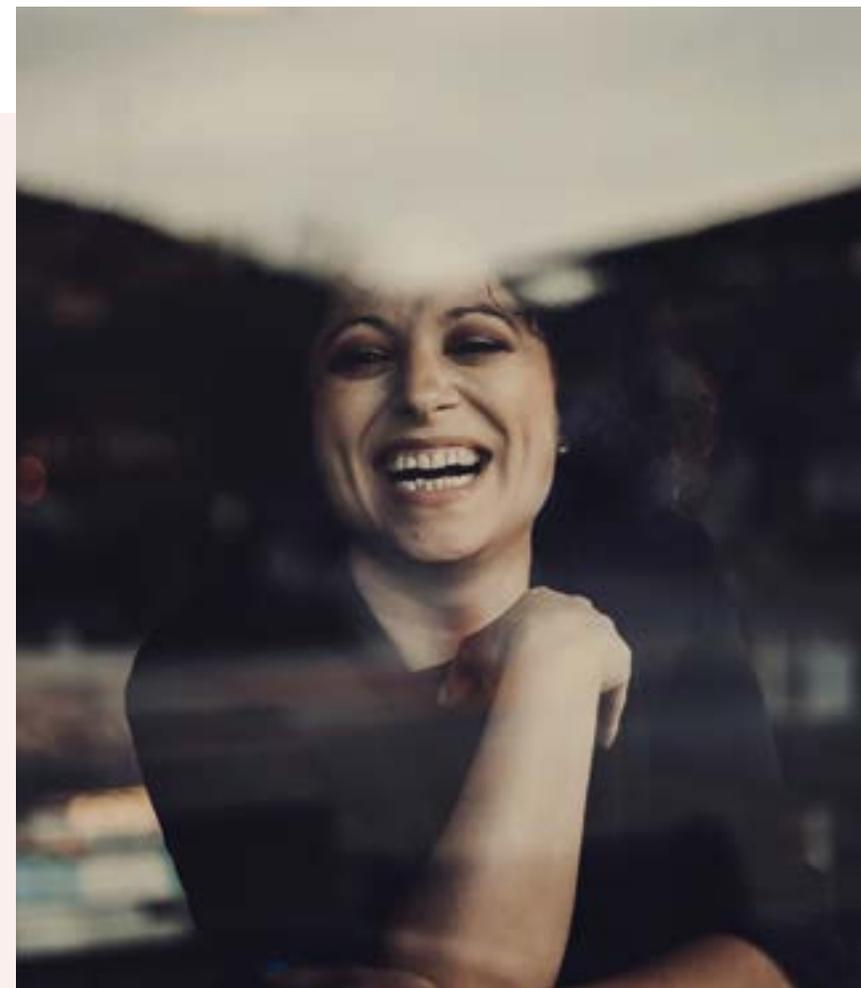
Fran Lebowitz is a role model for her unapologetic honesty and refusal to soften who she is to make others comfortable.

Princess Diana of Wales taught me the power of compassion and empathy and how to hold space for everyone, regardless of circumstance.

And Ruth Bader Ginsburg represents unwavering resolve. Her refusal to accept anything less than equality for women laid a foundation for who I am. She proved that women can exist in male-dominated spaces and fight not just for themselves, but for generations to come.

## SHARE AN INSPIRING QUOTE FOR OTHER WOMEN.

"The question isn't who is going to let me; it's who is going to stop me." — Ayn Rand



**"BE PRESENT IN BOTH THE GOOD AND THE HARD MOMENTS."**



# Jolene Geary

## PROFESSION:

Marketing, Clogging Instructor, Business Owner

## WHAT DOES INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY MEAN TO YOU?

Celebrating women for the positive impacts they've made in their family, the community, and the world.

## HOW DO YOU ACTIVELY EMPOWER YOURSELF AND THE WOMEN AROUND YOU?

As a clogging instructor, confidence is built by doing something new (how to clog) and learning how to do hard things (complicated steps & routines, performing in front of people).

As a business owner, I enjoy building youth's confidence in learning customer service skills, counting back change, and the responsibilities of entrepreneurship.

The statewide toolkit for domestic violence, sexual assault, and sex trafficking that I recently helped develop gives confidence on how to identify and respond to abuse. It can be found here: <https://SouthDakotaSurvivorTaskForce.com/>

Confidence builds growth, growth builds empowerment. Seeing others grow brings me joy, in turn, builds my own confidence.

## WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE YOUR YOUNGER SELF OR OTHER WOMEN TODAY?

Don't be afraid to ask for help. Surround yourself with people who encourage, challenge, and support you — those who pray for you and show up when you need them most.

## NOMINATED BY: ANYA MUELLER

*Jolene is an amazing person who gives so much of herself. She consistently uplifts others and makes a meaningful impact through her actions and examples. Besides working full time, Jolene runs the local clogging studio year-round, as well as a shaved ice truck in the summer, in addition to volunteering for Bible Study Fellowship and Operation Pets. Jolene is the type who would drop everything to help someone out.*

**"SURROUND YOURSELF WITH PEOPLE WHO ENCOURAGE, CHALLENGE, AND SUPPORT YOU — THOSE WHO PRAY FOR YOU AND SHOW UP WHEN YOU NEED THEM MOST."**

## WHAT BRINGS YOU THE GREATEST SATISFACTION IN YOUR LIFE?

Watching others grow in their abilities, talents, and character.

## WHO ARE YOUR ROLE MODELS, AND WHAT QUALITIES DO YOU ADMIRE?

I admire my mom for her incredible work ethic, perseverance, and dedication. She's the right-hand lady on my parents' farm and ranch, running equipment, making parts runs, fixing fences, and helping with the cattle — including calving out the heifers — they're her babies. She drives a truck, unloads grain, and keeps meticulous paper records, all while making meals and keeping a clean house. In my eyes, she's the glue that holds it all together. She is a true inspiration.

## SHARE AN INSPIRING QUOTE FOR OTHER WOMEN.

Blessed is the person (woman) who keeps on going when times are hard. (Endurance) James 1:12



# Melinda Henderson-Koehn



## NOMINATED BY: LIZA WHITKAMP

*Melinda Koehn is a dance instructor at National Dance Clubs Rapid City and is an incredible Black Hills woman! What she provides goes far beyond access to dance lessons; she creates opportunities for personal growth and real-life learning in every class. She reminds me of one of my role models, Dick Van Dyke — her energetic love for life radiates positivity through every performance and every lesson. Through her time, talent, and dedication, our community gains immensely. She has helped countless people grow individually and together, truly celebrating life through dance!*



**PROFESSION:** Professional Ballroom Dance Instructor

## WHAT DOES INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY MEAN TO YOU?

I have never really celebrated it consciously, but I think it's a great day to reflect how one is treating their fellow women and honestly everyone around them. Women can get easily pitted against one another; therefore, I believe it's a great reminder to be encouraging and to remember we are all trying our best.

## HOW DO YOU ACTIVELY EMPOWER YOURSELF AND THE WOMEN AROUND YOU?

I love cheering on the women around me and supporting them in any way I can, whether it's with words, baked goods, or just a good laugh. I have also found it to be particularly empowering to learn how to follow as well as lead on the ballroom dance floor. It is always so cool for me to see the empowerment my students get as they let go and let the music and their partner sweep them into a dance.

## WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE YOUR YOUNGER SELF OR OTHER WOMEN TODAY?

Do not ever give up. Some days are heavy, and you feel like you will never make it through or be happy again. You will. One of my favorite quotes ever:  
"Through the Lord's mercies we are not consumed. Because

His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; Great is Your Faithfulness." -Lamentations 3:22-23

## WHAT BRINGS YOU THE GREATEST SATISFACTION IN YOUR LIFE?

First, being at peace with God gives me great restfulness. Next, hanging out or doing anything with my awesome husband, Zack, is the highlight of my day. And then in the studio, it's working with amazing people and getting to see how movement to music in sync transforms people's lives and helps them create fabulous memories! I love getting to be a part of it!

## WHO ARE YOUR ROLE MODELS AND WHAT QUALITIES DO YOU ADMIRE?

I admire Maria von Trapp, played by Julie Andrews. I love her free-spirited energy and how she doesn't back down or give up.

My Mom and how she loves and gives unconditionally! Also, my friend, Melissa. I love how she teaches dance and how she playfully interacts with people and makes them laugh. She's also a safe haven I love confiding in.

## SHARE AN INSPIRING QUOTE FOR OTHER WOMEN.

"Dance, when you're broken open. Dance, if you've torn the bandage off. Dance, in the middle of the fighting. Dance in your blood. Dance when you're perfectly free." -Rumi



# Megan Batteen

## WHAT DOES INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY MEAN TO YOU?

International Women's Day means taking time to acknowledge the impact women have across all roles and to think about how we can continue.

## HOW DO YOU ACTIVELY EMPOWER YOURSELF AND THE WOMEN AROUND YOU?

I empower myself by giving myself permission to learn as I go; I don't have everything figured out in work or life. Staying involved in continued learning opportunities and community events is a good way to stay empowered. Having a hobby and activity that you're passionate about outside of work is a way to empower yourself in other ways. Mine is always finding a way to enjoy the beautiful Black Hills and all they have to offer.

I empower other women by offering encouragement, celebrating their wins, and supporting them through challenges. I enjoy speaking at and attending events where both professional and emerging businesswomen are present.

## WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE YOUR YOUNGER SELF OR OTHER WOMEN TODAY?

I'd tell my younger self to trust that learning as you go is enough. Reaching your dream job can take time, and roles you're unsure about can still be valuable. Thinking of them as opportunities to gain experience, like an internship or an extension of school, can help put them in perspective.

## WHAT BRINGS YOU THE GREATEST SATISFACTION IN YOUR LIFE?

In my career, seeing my ideas move from concept to execution

and knowing they had a real impact on a business brings me the most satisfaction. I also find a lot of fulfillment in mentoring.

In my personal life, it fills my cup up to spend time with family and friends and being social. I love connecting with others. Also, camping (in a camper though) is my jam.

## WHO ARE YOUR ROLE MODELS AND WHAT QUALITIES DO YOU ADMIRE?

My parents have been a major influence on me. They both demonstrated strong work ethics, and from them I learned what it takes to be committed, responsible, and successful. Those values have stayed with me throughout my career. They also taught me I

can be whatever and whomever I want to be.

My previous boss, who retired in October, also played an important role in shaping my professional growth. She took a chance on me early on, when I had no experience really, and invested time in training and mentoring me. That trust and guidance helped build my confidence and skills. I'm also continuing to learn from the company's new owners, whose leadership and perspective have been valuable and appreciated as I grow in my expanded leadership responsibilities.

## SHARE AN INSPIRING QUOTE FOR OTHER WOMEN.

You can be both a masterpiece and a work in progress.

## NOMINATED BY: ALLIE GEIER-BARLOW

*Megan is a true leader in the advertising industry and an integral part of what makes Midwest Marketing so successful. She consistently goes above and beyond, often putting in long hours to ensure every client receives thoughtful, strategic guidance. Her depth of knowledge spans countless industries, and her advertising expertise is second to none. Megan's impact hasn't gone unnoticed; she's been honored as the AAF Black Hills Unsung Hero of Marketing and recognized as one of Rapid City's 40 Under 40 in 2025.*

**PROFESSION:** President at Midwest Marketing

**Pella is rated #1 by homeowners for the HIGHEST CRAFTSMANSHIP.\***

We sweat the little extras. Our windows and doors are made specifically for your home with meticulous care and attention. Our wood craftsmen have been honing their skills, on average, for over 14 years – that's longer than it takes for most to earn their PhD.



Windows and Doors

**HeartlandPella.com**  
**2704 Plant St.**  
**Rapid City Showroom**  
**605.341.2045**

\*Study of homeowner perceptions of leading national brands. Study commissioned by Pella, 2019.



## MOM OF THE MOMENT

# Markie Zacharias

STORY BY MADDIE GRAPER, INTERN WRITER

Markie Zacharias, who has resided in the Black Hills for sixteen years, has found a piece of her heart here. She and her husband met during her first week in the area and were married almost a year later. Now, she's the proud mom of Steven, her twenty-eight-year-old stepson, and her thirteen-year-old son, Kamden.

When Markie talks about Kamden, there's no doubt raising him has become her ultimate passion in life. He aspires to become a professional baseball player — something that takes years of hard work and discipline — but the main thing that Markie tells her son is “Why not you?”. Somebody in the world has to achieve the things that are sought after, so why not you?

For the second year in a row, Kamden prepares to head down to the Dominican Republic for baseball. Last year, his eagerness and fearlessness upon arriving there is held as one of Markie's proudest moments as a mother. Although it's bittersweet, Markie offers nothing but support for Kamden as he grows up and continues to pursue his dreams.

She states, “I want to watch him do the things he wants to do, and I want to watch him succeed.”

This kind of thinking is foundational in her household. This mentality isn't solely in support of Kamden; she incorporates it into her own routines to achieve success for herself. To balance her role as a mother with her personal life, Markie makes time for exercise and self-care. She took up running about six years ago and has since accomplished multiple feats, such as starting the goal of running a marathon in each state — already completing nineteen. She also challenged herself to complete seven half-marathons in seven states in seven days.

Pushing herself to do hard things is essential for Markie. “I don't limit my kid, so why would I limit myself?” The things she challenges herself with in her free time are what mold her into, not only a better woman, but a better mother. She emphasizes the importance of being better for yourself in order to be better for your family and those who look up to you in life.



“I want to show myself that it’s good to be strong, fit, healthy, and to be the best mom and wife I can be...you can’t fill from an empty cup.”

Currently, Markie works as a real estate agent in the Black Hills and loves it.

“It’s hard, but I wouldn’t trade it for the world,” she states. The hours can be all over the place for her, as she’s had to write offers from the stands at her son’s baseball games or even from the beach when on vacation. However, it also allows her to be there for whatever she needs to be for her family. There’s a lot of freedom in it despite needing to work whenever her clients need

her. It’s also proven to be a rewarding career for her, as Markie has been able to meet and connect with many amazing people. Whether they’ve been buyers, sellers, or others in the world of real estate, she’s loved getting to know so many individuals.

Along with this, she’s also experienced the true joy of coming alongside people in some of their best moments. She has always known she wants to

help people, and she has found that passion fulfilled through her career as an agent.

Whether it be through the support of her son’s dreams or the growth in her own career, Markie

firmly believes in saying “yes” to opportunities. Life can look different for everyone, but she emphasizes that if you don’t say yes to things, you’ll never know where life can take you.

“There’s no checkboxes to a successful life. You don’t have to fit the mold, and there’s no linear path,” she says.

This quote of Markie’s can be applied to almost anyone, no matter what phase of their life

they’re in. To say her wisdom and outlook on life is refreshing would be an understatement. As a mother, she’s inspiring her son to chase his dreams as hard as he can – something she believes can’t be taught. However, the strength and dignity she exudes as a woman is surely something that rubs off on, not only him, but everyone she comes into contact with.

“I WANT TO SHOW MYSELF THAT IT’S GOOD TO BE STRONG, FIT, HEALTHY, AND TO BE THE BEST MOM AND WIFE I CAN BE...YOU CAN’T FILL FROM AN EMPTY CUP.”

## TAX TIP TUESDAY

[ktllp.cpa/blog](http://ktllp.cpa/blog)



FOLLOW OUR BLOG FOR WEEKLY TAX TIPS AND STAY UP TO DATE ON THE LATEST FROM OUR TAX EXPERTS.



**KETEL THORSTENSON**  
CPAs • ADVISORS

Your Goals. Our Experts.

[KTLLP.CPA](http://KTLLP.CPA)

**HOPE HEALTH**  
**TALLOW BASED SKINCARE**

New products releasing soon!  
Shampoo, Conditioner, Body Wash, Deodorant and more.

All natural, high quality products to nourish your skin using tallow and other nutrient dense ingredients.

Find us at local retailers or shop online  
[www.hopeandhealth.shop](http://www.hopeandhealth.shop)

Learn more about tallow and why we use it

## PAW PATCH IS YOUR PETS HOME AWAY FROM HOME! WHERE YOU AND YOUR PET ARE LIKE FAMILY!

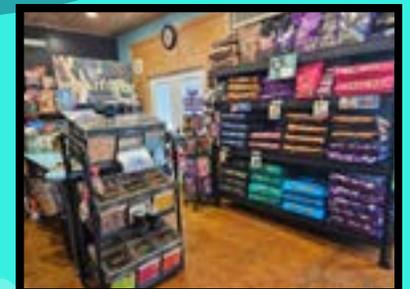
SCAN ME BOOK HERE:



**WOMAN OWNED, FAMILY OPERATED**

### OUR SERVICES:

- Boarding
- Doggy Daycare
- Grooming
- Pet Supplies



**BEST DOG FOOD PRICES IN THE BLACK HILLS!**

24493 Gumbo Lily Lane, Hermosa, SD 57744  
(605)-255-4413 | [pawpatchspa@gmail.com](mailto:pawpatchspa@gmail.com) | [@pawpatchblackhills](https://www.instagram.com/pawpatchblackhills)



RILEY WINTER

RW

WWW.RILEYWINTERPHOTOGRAPHY.COM



# Women Behind the Music

OF THE SOUTH DAKOTA  
JAZZ ORCHESTRA

BY KRYSTAL BRESNAHAN

Jazz and Black American music have been hailed as cultural gifts to the world. While this holds truth, it only tells part of the story. This music was born from communities stripped of civil rights, land ownership, and generational wealth, yet rich in a resilient culture of storytelling and improvisation. These traditions trace a lineage stretching from Africa to Cuba to New Orleans.

Men dominated the dance halls and parlors where jazz bands historically played. These were deemed immoral places for women to enter, let alone perform. Women fought harsh stereotypes against race, gender, and musical abilities, so it's important today to recognize alto saxophonist Mary George and trumpeter Abby Scott — two women who take the stage with the South Dakota Jazz Orchestra (SDJO).

## South Dakota Jazz Orchestra History

In 2009, the SDJO was founded in Sioux Falls by trombonist Joel Broveleit, and the first ensemble director was Dr. Corliss Johnson. The group emerged as the state's most consistent and artistically ambitious jazz ensemble. They performed classic big band tunes by legends of the music like Count Basie and Duke Ellington while also introducing audiences to contemporary and original compositions.

Between 2009 and 2012, the ensemble maintained a weekly residency on Monday nights in Brookings and Sioux Falls. Unfortunately, after a shift in the music scene, many of the orchestra's staple musicians left. For nearly a decade, the SDJO was inactive.

Then in late 2023, the orchestra was headquartered in Rapid City as an initiative of Improve Arts, a local non-profit. 2025 proved to be an exceptional year with unforgettable SDJO shows in Spearfish, Sioux Falls, and Rapid City. The orchestra averaged 18 players per performance and attracted talent from across the country.

Since reestablishing in Rapid City, the SDJO's mission has been clear: to serve as ambassadors of Jazz and Black American Music for the state of South Dakota, to bridge cultural and musical divides within the state, and to broaden both who the orchestra serves and who they hire.

## Learning (And Loving) Jazz

From a young age, the performing arts help shape meaning in life. Students are often introduced to a variety of instruments and experiment to find their fit. When Abby was in sixth grade, she wanted to play the flute, but she couldn't get a sound out of it. When she tried the trumpet, it resonated.

"I've always enjoyed playing in jazz bands. I started

when I was 14 years old," Abby says. "I was in jazz band, band, pep band, and orchestra. I took private lessons and auditioned for many groups. I was in All-State Jazz Band and Orchestra for multiple years. My goal was to play in a professional orchestra."

In college, Abby toured in Spain, performed at improv nights, and changed her major (more than once). She wanted music to stay a central part of her life. In 2024, when asked to be in the SDJO, she was honored: "I have grown so much as a musician in this group, and I am surrounded by people who make me love jazz even more."

Similarly, Mary picked up her sax in fifth grade band, but she didn't play much jazz until college. "Dave Martinson took me on as a private student early on in high school and helped me enormously with classical saxophone. Then, in college, Josh Lehman, Lucas Olson, Ethan Garrido, and I started learning pop songs and playing at bars. Memorizing other people's music was one thing, but then Josh began bringing original jazz charts to our rehearsals that were heavily reliant on improvisation. It felt like I had to go back to square one of playing my instrument," she explains.

"There's a big difference between reading music and understanding music, and jazz requires both. It's something I expect to work at for the rest of my life."

## Embracing Challenges as Women in the Orchestra

Joining the South Dakota Jazz Orchestra was intimidating for both women at first.

"My biggest challenge is not feeling like I will match the level of musicianship of the other players who have 20+ years of experience," Abby shares. "I overcome this by listening to the other players in the group and...this allows me to understand the style of the piece."

Mary agrees, "Even now, with a music degree and years of gigging under my belt, the imposter syndrome

is hard to kick. I'm constantly reminding myself that music is not a race to the finish line and that all of the incredible musicians around me had to start somewhere."

Abby and Mary are grateful for the supportive members and leaders of the SDJO. "It's a real gift to be able to play with a group of people who all want the best for each other," Mary says. "[Co-Directors] Alex Massa and Danny Thornburg are great at pushing everyone to their fullest potential while simultaneously keeping things light-hearted and fun."

Looking back, Abby shares her proudest moment at a sold-out gig at The Matthews Opera House in Spearfish, SD. "I looked around and realized my life is like a movie. The lighting and the music created an incredible atmosphere and made me realize that I am exactly where I'm supposed to be."

## Encouraging Future Women Jazz Players

"The most important lesson I can pass on to women and girls who are practicing at home in hopes of performing in public is this: start before you're ready!" Mary offers. "I can't honestly say I've ever felt completely prepared for a single gig. You will make mistakes! But people don't seek out live music to see perfection; they want to see humanity."

Abby encourages players to remember everyone in the ensemble is there to support you, so it's important to play like no one's watching. "Being ready' for the stage means knowing the music, knowing the style, and listening across the ensemble to create a cohesive and creative piece. Confidence and relaxation are key for playing jazz music."

"You just have to go for it," Mary says. "Those moments when your hands stop shaking, your mind calms, and you're really able to hear the music make it all worth it."



**To support the South Dakota Jazz Orchestra and find upcoming gigs, follow them on Facebook.**



# Supporting Children. Empowering Families.

**Autism Support and  
Early Intervention  
Tailored for Your Child.**

**April is Autism  
Awareness Month,  
but support matters  
all year long.**

Early support can change a child's future. At Beautiful Minds, we help families navigate diagnosis, therapy, and next steps with clarity and care.

If you have concerns about your child's development, you don't have to wait months for answers. Our team walks beside you from the very first conversation.

**Start their journey today.**

**Beautiful Minds, PLLC**

Compassionate, individualized ABA therapy for children & families

Serving the Black Hills Region • 605-805-0833

[info@beautifulmindssd.com](mailto:info@beautifulmindssd.com) • [beautifulmindssd.com](http://beautifulmindssd.com)



**SCAN TO BOOK**