



Black Hills Woman MAGAZINE

2021



Holiday Greetings & A Fond Farewell



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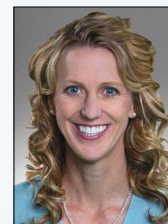
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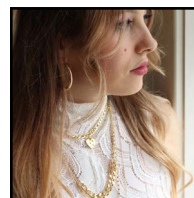


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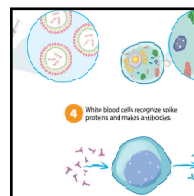


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A Fond Farewell

by Tracy Bernard



W help, here I am on the cover. No I don't think I'm Oprah but I have a bit of news and felt it was appropriate under the circumstances.

As many of you know, if you read my last editor article, my mom passed away in August. When she was diagnosed with stage 4 cancer in May, I began to consider how I could help my parents through treatment and started to entertain the idea of selling the magazine publishing portion of my business, Tout Advertising. With the marketing services Tout can provide, I can assist clients from anywhere with my laptop, but the magazines really require feet on the ground. The thought was that I could still run my business and travel back and forth to be with my parents wherever mom was receiving treatment if I sold the magazines.

Unfortunately, I had less time than I realized, and she passed away before I could really put the plan in action beyond talking to a couple people. At that point, I decided I needed to hit pause, mourn for a bit, and wait for a sign. A sign came, several in fact. My new need for flexibility really didn't go away with the passing of my mom. My dad now lives alone, and all my siblings live in different cities. I am also a new empty nester with kids in college. The ability to travel and be with family has become exceedingly important.

So, while this was a very difficult decision, it is also is an easy one. This will be my last issue and I have decided to put Black Hills Woman and Black Hills Boomer up for sale. Tout Advertising will continue to offer full-scope marketing, advertising, and website services - so please hire us!

I have so many people to thank over the years - countless individuals have been instrumental in the success of these magazines. The experience of publishing these magazines has been such a positive aspect of my life and I can't imagine a better community to have done it in. It has truly been an honor to share the stories of exceptional women in our community and to foster local media over the last 12 years.

Thank you from the bottom of my heart for reading, advertising, allowing your business to be a distribution point, writing, or working with me. Please keep being "local" it is more important than many people realize.



If you are interested in the becoming the publisher of Black Hills Woman or Black Hills Boomer magazine, email me at bhwsales@toutadvertising.com. Peace out Black Hills, with all my love.

Tracy

*Staple + Spice
& Everything Nice*

Article and Photos By Sarah Grassel



Down on the corner of St. Joseph St. and Mt. Rushmore Rd. is a little historic building. When you enter the building on a crisp morning, you're greeted by a strong aroma of herbs, teas, and more. In addition to smiles from the employees, you are also welcomed by the owner, Tammy Yanders.

For years, Tammy was a long-time customer of Staple & Spice Market. She notes, "I never thought that I would be the owner someday, until the day Carol (the previous owner) and I connected."

Carol was looking to sell and move, and after one five-minute conversation, Tammy's life changed. It was all she could think about. As a nurse for more than 20 years, health coach, and health and fitness guru, she saw this next step as a way she could reach more people on their own health journey.



Tammy has always loved the environment, aesthetic, and mission of Staple & Spice. Owning the store would be a big change but one for the greater good. Tammy says, “I want to encourage and help people with their own unique story, both with health and life in general.”

Instead of aiding the sick through her skills as a nurse, Tammy has now been able to focus on preventative care. “For several years, I took the time on my own health journey to figure out what worked for me, and I just want to offer that for others,” she says proudly.

While on the outside it seemed like Tammy was the picture of health, she was suffering from brain fog, gut issues, and fatigue. Taking her health into her own hands, she discovered her love for pilates, cycling, and sharing her health knowledge.

“To help someone on their own journey is very gratifying,” Tammy says. “It doesn’t matter what I do; we



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are all individual and unique, so it's about what you do for yourself."

A life event that made a big impact on Tammy was her dad's passing. Unfortunately, he passed at an early age of 50. "I'm blessed to be where I am today, and I am not taking it for granted," she says.

In addition to family and health, Tammy says she is most grateful for life, breath, and waking up daily. "There are so many people that I know that are sick," she tearfully adds. "We just cannot take life for granted."

Outside of normal store operations, Tammy has found a way to be involved in the bigger picture of the community. Staple & Spice occasionally has items and produce that cannot be sold due to FDA regulations, but just because their shelf date has been reached does not mean that the items are not safe to consume. Tammy explains, "Anytime we have items that expire, we try and donate them to groups in need like WAVI, Cornerstone Rescue Mission, etc."

Tammy also tries to help out for community events. One of the big ticket items that the market has to offer is a fresh produce basket.

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She adds, “When someone comes to me with an event, we try to donate one of those fresh produce baskets.”

The market is also stacked with local products and produce like honey and coffee year-round as well as seasonal items. Bringing in her personal beliefs of helping others and supporting her community, Tammy loves offering products from other local businesses in the store. Customers can also find local pottery for an added bonus.

While the space is historical, Tammy has expanded the store. The first half is original with not many modern updates, but beyond the racks of spices and tea, past the coolers and organic wines, customers enter a space for community events.

Filled by the warmth of the sun and live greenery in the corners, the event space eventually will be the home to monthly gatherings during the school year. “I want to have nurses, doctors, herb specialists, physical therapists, and other experts here to help further education on health and wellness,” Tammy says.

Taking it one step further, Tammy intends on making her social media pages an additional educational outlet. Tammy has now owned the space for more than a year, and she continues to strive to touch lives and families. “The work is rewarding and heartwarming, and I am grateful to be where I am today,” she says.

To learn more about what Staple & Spice can offer you, visit www.stapleandspicemarket.com.

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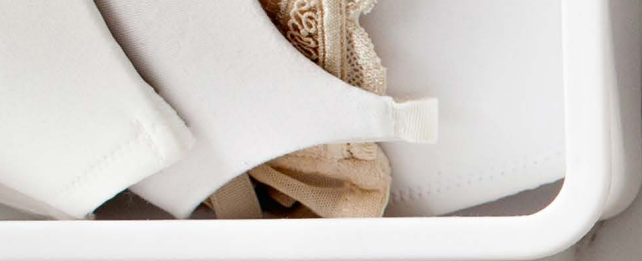


Holiday Health and Wellness Tips

By Tammy Yanders

1. Enjoy your family and be present. Be present and reflect within yourself. Don't lose sight of what is important.
2. Everything in moderation; be mindful of what you are eating. Embrace the moment and enjoy the holidays, but don't overdo it.
3. Move your body daily, whether it's physically or mentally. Enjoy the mountain morning air or mindfully meditate for five minutes before heading to work for the day.





CONTAIN THE CLUTTER

By Danielle Beadle





Is your New Year's resolution to keep a tidy home? As we spend more time in our homes during the winter, many of us will realize how much clutter we have collected over the years. Keep these tips in mind when putting your resolution into action.

Bins. Keeping items separated and in a designated space is the key to organization. All your things must have their own home. This will make tidying up much easier and eliminates the risk of clutter. If your bins are in a space where they won't be seen, like a cabinet, opt for clear bins. Clear bins allow you to find your items easily. If your bins are in an open space, like a shelf, opt for a style that match with your décor. Baskets made from natural material are a perfect option to not only add to your décor, but to also keep your space clutter-free.

Workspace. Not everyone has a home office available to them. However, now more than ever, it is important to designate a space or a setup for all types of paperwork. For a lot of people, their kitchen table becomes their office when they work from home. Investing in desk organizers is essential to keep your workspace tidy. Whether your workspace is your kitchen table, desk, or a picnic table, you can keep everything organized while you are working, then put your organizers away when you are done.



Utilization. To keep everything organized, make sure you are utilizing all the space in your home. Don't forget about those empty cabinets that require a step stool to access. You can make those a home for things that you don't use often but still need to keep around. There is so much space under the bed; consider storing clothing that isn't in-season in containers underneath. Hall closets tend to be a catch-all for some. Utilize bins and shelves to ensure that everything in the closet can be found and used.

Food. Although the hot trend is to put all your pantry goods into matching containers and get rid of its original packaging, for most this isn't a manageable solution to organizing the pantry. Instead, consider organizing your pantry by product type. Keep all your canned goods in one area and snack foods in a separate zone. Keeping these goods in bins or baskets is also very helpful. This not only helps contain your items, but it restricts the number of things you can stuff into your pantry. Keeping fewer items in your pantry will make it much easier to manage and organize. Keep these practices in mind when organizing your refrigerator as well. BHW



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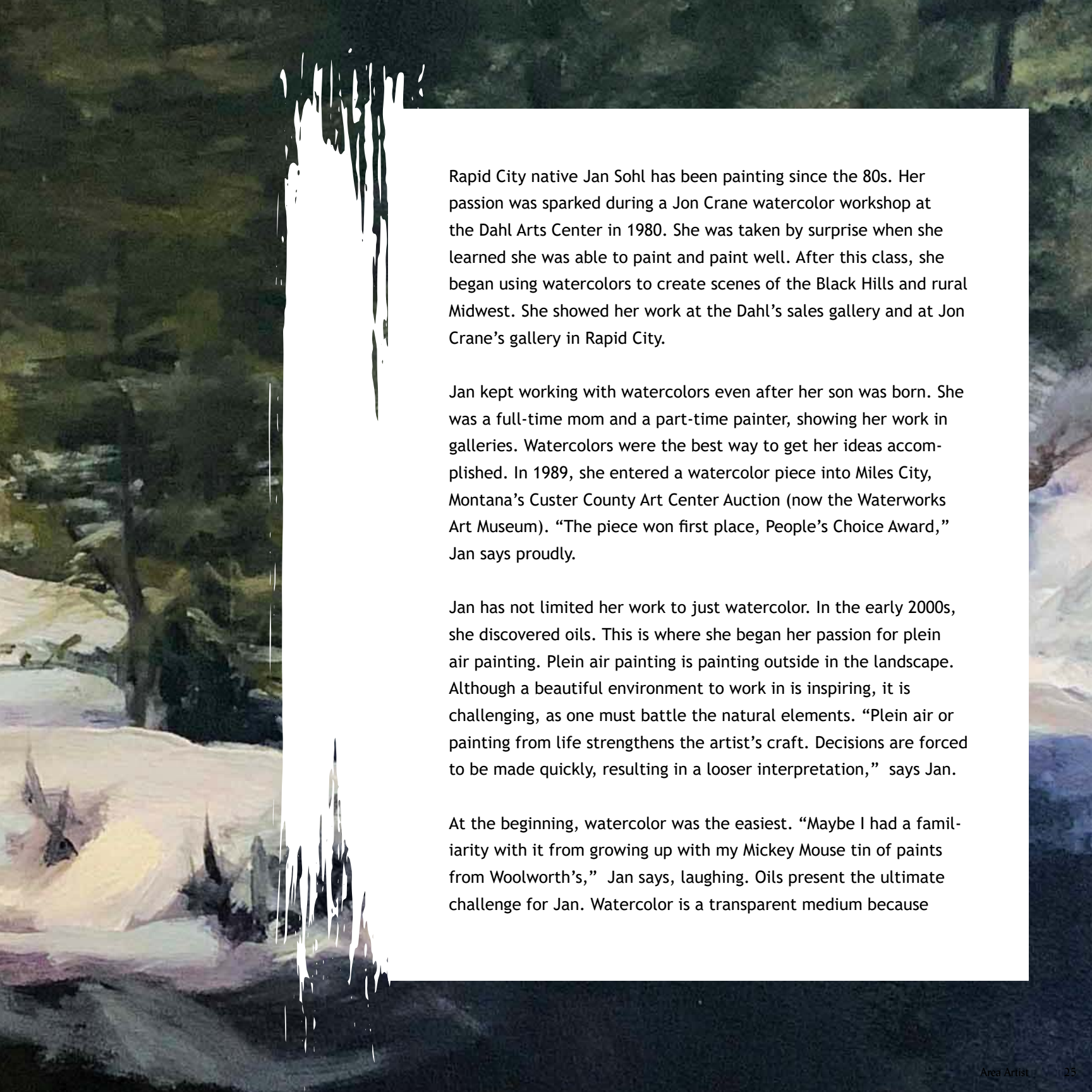
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The background is a dark, textured surface, possibly a wall or canvas, with a landscape painting. The painting depicts a sandy, light-colored area in the foreground, with dark, dense foliage and trees in the background. The text is overlaid on the dark background.

JAN SOHL

NOTHING PLEIN ABOUT IT

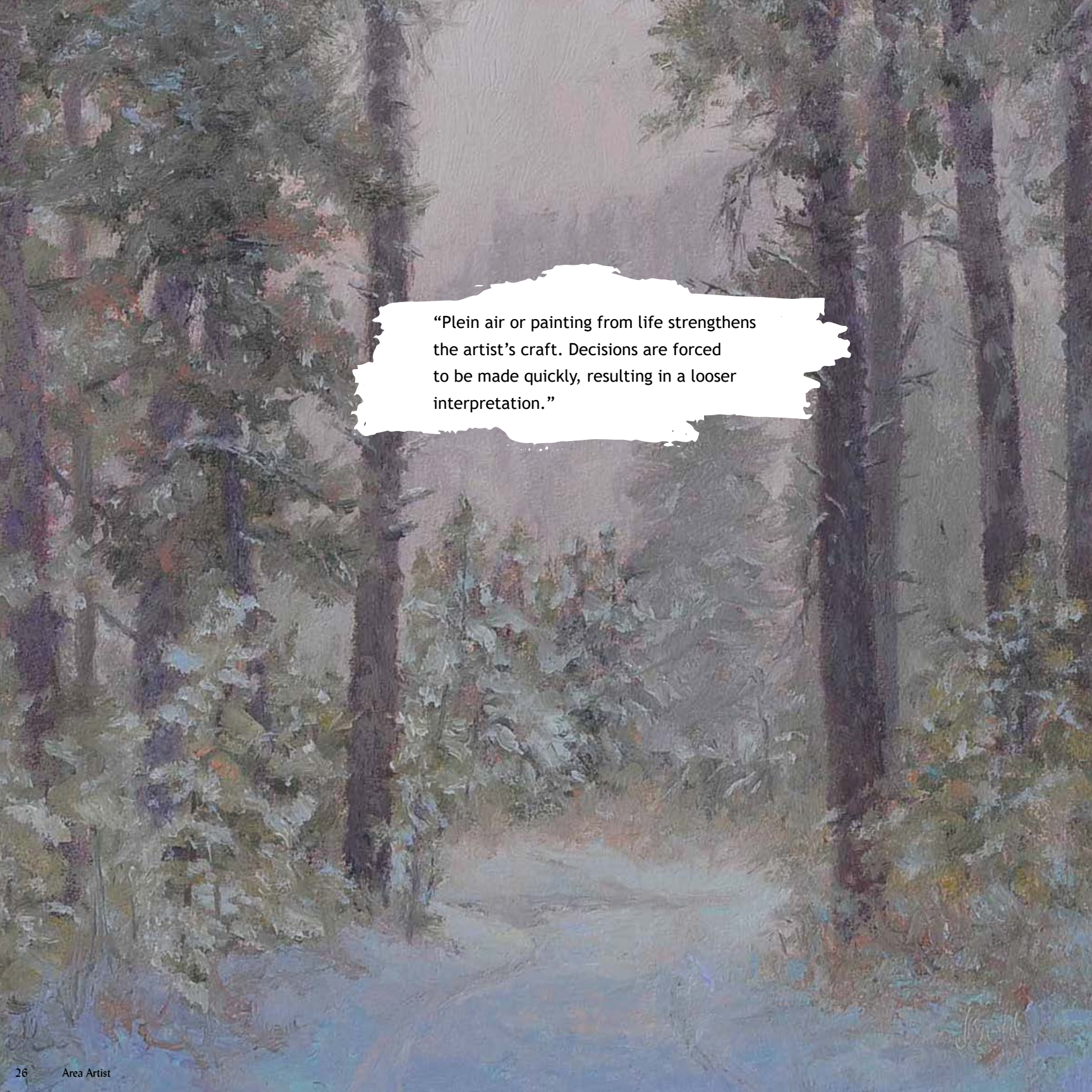


Rapid City native Jan Sohl has been painting since the 80s. Her passion was sparked during a Jon Crane watercolor workshop at the Dahl Arts Center in 1980. She was taken by surprise when she learned she was able to paint and paint well. After this class, she began using watercolors to create scenes of the Black Hills and rural Midwest. She showed her work at the Dahl's sales gallery and at Jon Crane's gallery in Rapid City.

Jan kept working with watercolors even after her son was born. She was a full-time mom and a part-time painter, showing her work in galleries. Watercolors were the best way to get her ideas accomplished. In 1989, she entered a watercolor piece into Miles City, Montana's Custer County Art Center Auction (now the Waterworks Art Museum). "The piece won first place, People's Choice Award," Jan says proudly.

Jan has not limited her work to just watercolor. In the early 2000s, she discovered oils. This is where she began her passion for plein air painting. Plein air painting is painting outside in the landscape. Although a beautiful environment to work in is inspiring, it is challenging, as one must battle the natural elements. "Plein air or painting from life strengthens the artist's craft. Decisions are forced to be made quickly, resulting in a looser interpretation," says Jan.

At the beginning, watercolor was the easiest. "Maybe I had a familiarity with it from growing up with my Mickey Mouse tin of paints from Woolworth's," Jan says, laughing. Oils present the ultimate challenge for Jan. Watercolor is a transparent medium because

The background of the page is a painting of a forest. It features tall, slender trees with dark trunks and dense green foliage. A path or clearing is visible in the lower center, leading into the woods. The painting style is impressionistic, with visible brushstrokes and a soft, atmospheric quality. A white, torn-edge rectangular box is superimposed in the upper-middle section, containing a quote.

“Plein air or painting from life strengthens the artist’s craft. Decisions are forced to be made quickly, resulting in a looser interpretation.”

the white of the paper is still seen through the washes of applied color, resulting in more of a glow in the final product. Oils require the application of opaque layers of color. The application of paint becomes more like sculpture, rather than washing the colors on the paper. Each layer is mixed differently. The color mixes make a huge difference in the subtleties of light Jan hopes to portray. “I mix the oils to achieve the gentle color shifts to reflect just the right memory,” says Jan. Jan is currently working with pastels to show another facet of the landscape. Pastels are a drawing medium that looks like chalk, but with thousands of colors to choose from.

As a child, Jan loved going with her family up into the Black Hills, Yellowstone, or the Big Horns. She has always been intrigued by the magnificent landforms, which is what inspires her to use the landscape as her primary subject. “I like the land’s mythology. It is stark and unyielding, fearless, gentle, and quiet. But it roars with power. It centers me,” she says.

Jan says that she is always learning. “As with all things, it is trial and error along with practice, practice, practice! I learn something new every time I go to the easel to paint,” says Jan. Her only formal art training was a couple of drawing classes taken in college while pursuing a degree for elementary education. Later, as she began to paint more, Jan took, and continues to take, workshops from accomplished artists to further master her craft.



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Jan admits she is a slow painter. A project usually takes several days to complete. “I try to do value sketches first, then perhaps a quick color study to test out an idea. Other times, I jump right in. Sometimes, I will leave an ongoing project on the wall for a while as I look it over. Usually I work small, so those go very quickly. Large ones can linger,” she laughs.

“One of my favorites is titled *Faultline*, a pastel of a rock formation near Box Elder Forks at Nemo,” says Jan. It started as a plein air piece and was finished in the studio after lingering for a while. “The ancient quartzite slab of rock is dynamic and forceful. I decided to keep it in my private collection. Our granddaughter has laid claim to it,” Jan says, fondly.

Jan has many tips for aspiring artists. “Draw and paint often from life. Study work from the pros at the top of their craft. Be brave and experiment with your palettes and materials. Quick sketches either with pencil or with your favorite medium can loosen one up. Have an artist friend critique a painting from time to time,” she says.

Jan draws a lot of inspiration from her local artist friends. She also draws inspiration from Harvey Dunn, a South Dakota painter famous for his illustrations in the *Saturday Evening Post* and other magazines in the early 1900s.

You can find Jan’s work throughout the Black Hills. Currently, she has work at Prairie Edge

Trading Company and Galleries here in Rapid City
and The Art Nest Gallery in Spearfish. You can
also see her work online at www.jansohlart.com.
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A-DRESSING A NEED

Q&A with Patti Trapp of Dress for Success

We sat down with Dress For Success Black Hills' Volunteer Coordinator, Patti Trapp and learned a thing or two about the organization and Patti's role. Patti first started as a volunteer and was later invited to join the Board of Directors for Dress for Success.

Dress for Success was conceived by Nancy Lublin in 1996, following a \$5,000 inheritance with the idea to enable women who once faced hardships to earn their own money and build new lives. Since then, the grassroots start-up has grown into an international not-for-profit organization promoting the economic independence of disadvantaged women worldwide. Today, Dress for Success serves women in over 130 cities around the world and is uniquely positioned as a global leader in addressing women's employment issues. Dress for Success Black Hills was started in 2016 by a local group of highly organized and compassionate women.





Q: Why did you choose this organization?

A: My maternal grandparents were involved in community giving and offering support to those who required it, with little fanfare. Upon my retirement, I wanted to become involved in a similar fashion. I had seen a commercial regarding the opportunities available at Dress for Success, so I reached out

Q: How does your role in this organization impact others?

A: I can assist women in choosing appropriate clothing for interviews and accepted positions. Many of these women suffer from low self-esteem, so our 1-to-1 fitting process allows for coaching and support for their next steps. I have also been active as a guest speaker in the Pathways to Healthcare Professions. These students are preparing for work or school in healthcare. As a nurse for more than 40 years who spent many years in a leadership position, I feel qualified to offer practical advice. As an active board member, I feel my leadership and organizational skills are useful.

Q: What has been the most impactful thing you've witnessed at Dress for Success?

A: The first client I assisted had escaped an abusive relationship in another state and was now relocating to South Dakota. She left with only the clothing she was wearing. Coming into the boutique, she looked broken, and very sad. She had obtained a job and needed clothing. We were able to provide her with a week's worth of clothing, including a winter coat and shoes. The look on





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“ I felt we had really made a difference in her life and knew I had found the correct place to volunteer. ”



her face and her body language when she left were looks of hope. It brought tears to my eyes. I felt we had really made a difference in her life and knew I had found the correct place to volunteer.

Q: What can people do to help?

A: Follow us on Facebook @dressforsuccessbh for boutique information. Quarterly, we have an intake day when we accept professional clothing in good condition; appointments can be made through Facebook for drop-offs. We are always looking for volunteers to staff our boutique. Monetary donations help us keep the lights on as well as purchase items we need, not received through donation.

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Merry Christmas!



AIR MAIL
PAR AVION



*Lie and Other Tips for
Writing the Perfect
Christmas Letter*

By Dorothy Rosby



*W*hen I was growing up, my father strung the Christmas cards my family received in an X across the ceiling in our living room. I don't receive enough cards to make an X on my ceiling. I probably couldn't even make a Y or an I. I might be able to make a semi-colon.

I used to get more cards, maybe because I used to write more cards. And yes, I mean *handwrite*. Here's how I did it: I'd start with the first person in my address book, my friend Sue Allen. I'd write on her card, then painstakingly copy its contents to my card for the Barbers. Then I'd use the Barber's card as a model for the Belmonts and so on. I wrote my cards in much the same way things were done before the invention of the printing press. My handwriting got worse with each card, but my stories got better.

It was tedious and time-consuming. In fact, the year I sent my last batch of handwritten cards, everyone from the Johnsons on got them around Labor Day. But it was so easy, I hardly had to think about it. Or anyway, I hardly did think about it. That might explain why, over the years, several friends complained that they'd received someone else's card. Someone named Sue.

The year Sue got someone else's card, I decided to quit sending cards. And I didn't for years. Unfortunately, in return, I got fewer and fewer cards myself until I was down to two—one from my insurance agent and one from a company that sells prepaid funeral plans.

So, I've decided to write a Christmas form letter this year. It won't look good papered across anyone's ceiling, but I won't have to buy cards or *handwrite* in them. And I'll use the following guidelines to help me avoid the common complaints one hears about holiday letters:

1. Don't wait. The earlier you get your letter out, the more you can enjoy the holiday season. At least, that's what I've heard.



2. Embellish. If your life is like mine, your Christmas newsletter could be—how can I say this diplomatically?—dull enough to induce a coma. I’m not admitting to anything here, but a lot of people think Christmas letters can be honest, or they can be interesting.

Still, you’ll want balance the need to embellish with consideration of your readers’ feelings of inadequacy. Sure, write about your travel adventures, but then mention your credit card bills. Along with writing about your successes, tell them about your speeding tickets and overdraft notices. And legal issues are always interesting.

3. Be brief. A holiday letter should be the trailer, not the whole movie. Don’t overdo it when describing the accomplishments of children and pets. Avoid blow-by-blow accounts of remodeling projects. And leave out the details of minor surgeries—unless there were complications. Write more than one page, and your readers may decide to read it after the busy holiday season. By then, it may have been tossed out with the wrapping paper and they’ll never know about your legal troubles.

4. Include a photo. A picture is worth a thousand words and, given the choice, I think most people would choose the picture. Besides, a photograph can say a lot that your readers would enjoy hearing: You’re alive and well. You appear to be happy. And you’ve gained weight like they have.



5. Personalize your letter. If you aren't careful, your Christmas letter will be as intimate as the back of a cereal box. Individualize it by typing the phrase "Merry Christmas" on the salutation line and then handwriting the first name of your recipient beside it. If you still don't feel your letter is personal enough, try enclosing a lock of your hair or your child's tooth.

6. Introduce. If you feel the need to discuss people not all of your readers know, make it a point to explain who they are. For example, "We went to Bill and Ann's for Thanksgiving" should be expanded to "Bill is Nick's cousin who moved here from Phoenix after he met Ann on the internet. Nick is our next-door neighbor who is married to Ann's sister Arlene who worked with me at the first job I had when we moved here in 2017." You get the point—if you made it this far.

7. And finally, keep your wits about you. Never put on a little Christmas music and curl up by your Christmas tree with a cup of cocoa while you write your letter. This is no time to be overcome with Christmas spirit. If you're not careful, you may say something to everyone on your address list that you only mean for a few of them. Something like, "If you're ever in town, you're welcome to stay with us."

Dorothy Rosby intends to have her Christmas letter out long before Labor Day.



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BREAKING THE ICE

Local ladies skate through marriage, motherhood
and careers having a pucking good time.

By Kayla Gahagan



When Allison Birrenkott slipped on her first pair of skates at the tender age of 5, she envisioned figure skating, not hockey.

But, with two brothers in the local hockey league, her father had a different vision and “accidentally” signed her up for hockey.

“I hated it,” she says, laughing at the memory. “It was stinky and I sat there at practice and my helmet hurt and my skates hurt.”

That was nearly three decades ago, and Birrenkott has her father to thank for her outlasting both brothers in a sport that thrills her. That 5-year-old girl stuck with hockey, fell in love with the sport, and recently resurrected her passion for the ice here in Rapid City as one of the few female players in the Rapid City Adult Hockey League.

“We like to call it our girl gang,” says Birrenkott, one of the half a dozen women who play in the mostly men’s league of close to 100 skaters. Several of the women play for the Swamp Donkeys, heading to the Roosevelt Ice Arena once a week for games. The rink offers two leagues, one currently in



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session and the second after Christmas.

“We have our own locker room and the men we play with are great and have welcomed us,” says Birrenkott.

“There’s something special about pursuing an activity you did before you entered the work force, got married, and had kids,” Birrenkott says. She’s a wife, a mother of two little girls, and a talented hockey player by night.

“It’s fun to be on a team again,” she says. “A lot of people play sports growing up and then they give



that part of their life up. They drop the things they used to do for themselves.”

Christy Hockett, 36, feels the same. “It’s my relaxation,” she says. She started playing hockey in Brookings, playing on a boys’ team until high school, when she switched to a girls’ team. In college, she attended South Dakota State University and helped start a women’s club team at the university. They saw success, traveling to Massachusetts in 2006/07 to play in the ACHA National Championship.

A couple years ago she moved to Rapid City and joined the Swamp Donkeys.

“Life is busy,” she says. “But as women, as mothers, as professionals, we need to take time for ourselves, even if that’s just for two hours a week. We need an outlet to revitalize ourselves. Hockey is my outlet.”

Inside the Roosevelt Ice Arena, the chilled air is quiet until the slice of the blades and the tap of hockey sticks cuts through the silence. It’s the adrenaline, the camaraderie, the movement that keeps them coming back, the women say.

“It’s fast-paced and I like the physicality of it,” Hockett says. “I’m out there for fun and for a workout.”



She's unfazed by the possibility of injury—her front teeth were actually knocked out by a softball years ago, so all of her front teeth are fake.

"I've had more injuries playing other sports than hockey," she says, laughing. "If you're wearing a helmet during hockey, you're probably going to be alright."

It's not for the faint of heart, on or off the ice, however, added Birrenkott.

"Just the bag is super heavy," she says. "It's 20 to 30 minutes to get ready and get all your gear on."

But then you get to the ice, and there's something unique about the sport.

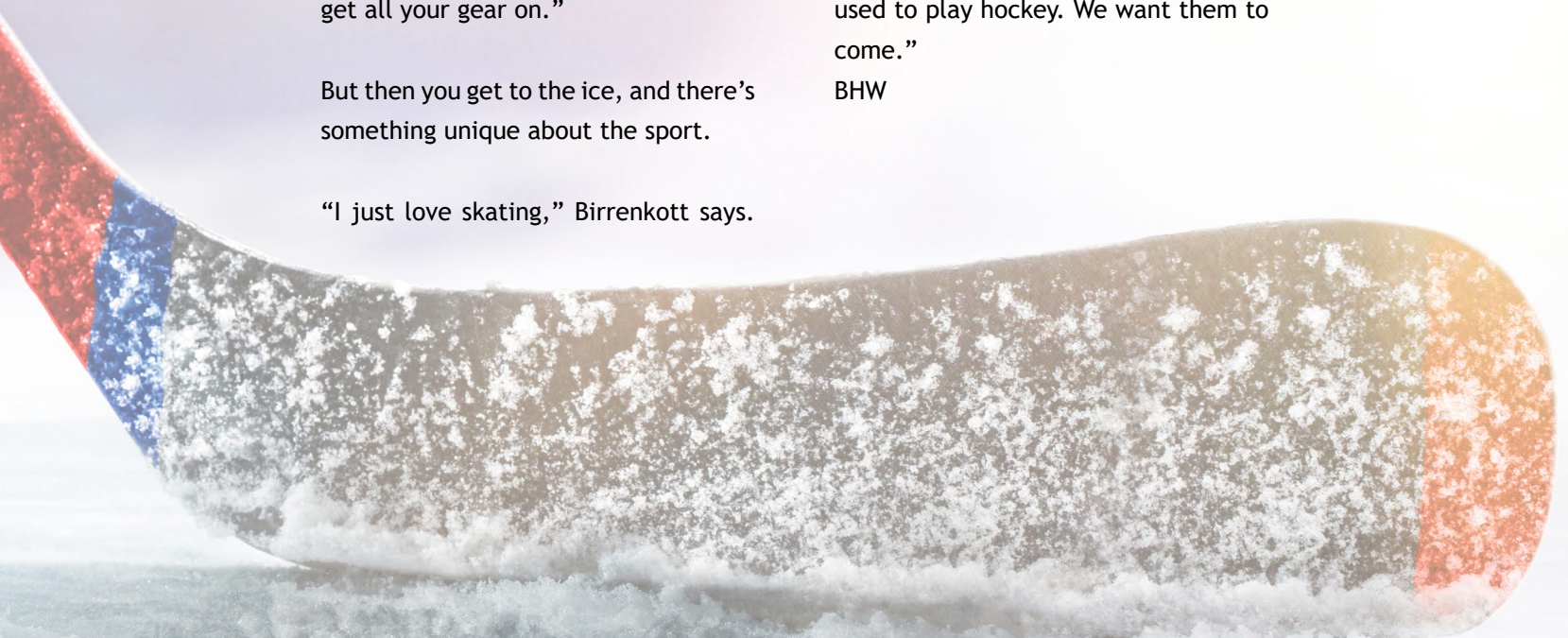
"I just love skating," Birrenkott says.

"It's the cold and the wind in your face. In so many other sports, you already know how to run and walk. But in hockey, the first few years, you are just learning how to skate before you can even learn the game."

They know there are more women in Rapid City, and they are calling them out to the ice.

"You have to make a point to do something for yourself," Birrenkott says. "We play at 8 or 9 at night, so the kids are sleeping and we come play. We know there are more women who used to play hockey. We want them to come."

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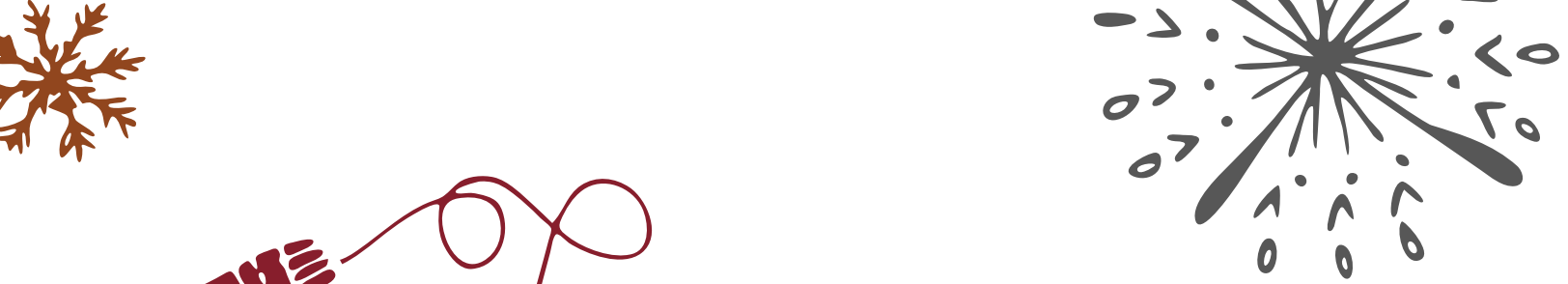
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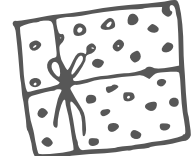


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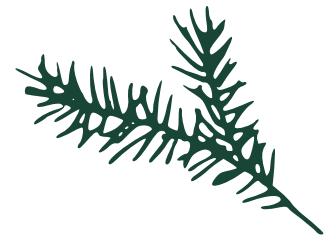
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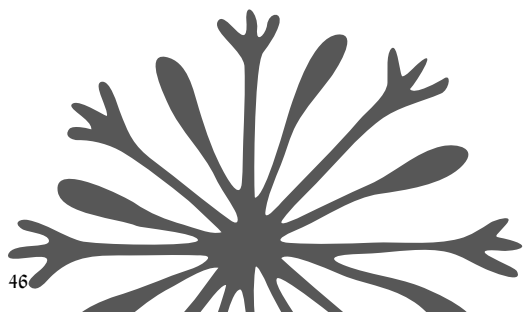
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A detailed image of a globe of the Earth, showing the Americas, hanging from a green pine branch. The globe is positioned in the lower half of the frame, with the pine needles framing it from the top and left. The background is a soft, out-of-focus white and light blue.

Preserving Our Earth During the Holidays

By Brittany Pruess

The holidays are precious treasures brimming with memories and bursting with celebration. In eager anticipation, people shuffle their calendars and prepare budgets. They are planning for the family vacations, meaningful time spent together, and the gifts to be purchased. Family and friends encourage each other through extra embraces and lavishing one another with tangible possessions. It truly is a celebratory time of year.

However, with all of the spending and abundant memory-making that occurs during this season, we must ask ourselves what we may be neglecting in the process. Unfortunately, the material expenditures and travel itineraries circling around this time of year can lead to significant waste accumulation and Earth depreciation. With the aim of creating lasting impressions, we are leaving a devastating mark on the beautiful planet we live on. Perhaps, while we are celebrating this deeply meaningful time of year, we can also extend our hands of gratitude to the intentional actions of preserving the planet we have been gifted to steward and sustain.

Homesteading the Holidays

As we reflect on what our ancestors did in preparation for the holidays and the true reason for the season, we begin fostering a proper perspective of this time of year. The holidays are, and have always been, a time of remembrance and hopeful expectation. For our relatives, they were days marked out to give thanks for what they had and to celebrate what was to come. Fires were kindled on the woodstove as candles were lit. The soup was prepared from the harvest of the year as wine was poured out. Handmade blankets were hammocks of comfort, stories were exchanged, and dancing was offered up as the primary source of entertainment. Gifts were prepared by hand, simplistic as they were, and evenings were honored by simple embraces and prayers offered up. By grounding ourselves in the real purpose of the holiday season and looking to our historical past, we regain the experience of hosting a simple celebration and reduce our carbon imprint by extension.



Subtle Swaps Making a Difference

As we approach the celebratory days ahead, there are subtle swaps we may consider making in order for this holiday season to be more sustainable and Earth-friendly. Many individuals are already recognizing the benefits of these shifts and how they are creating more opportunities to savor what the season is truly about. Here are just a few exchanges to consider:

Packaging + Gifting

Reusable baskets are quickly becoming the newest gift bags. Additionally, cotton twine, craft paper, and dried foliage are replacing unrecyclable gift wrap and embellishments.

We are baking homemade goodies rather than purchasing wasteful products, and we are creating handmade pieces to be cherished for years to come.



Some are researching and ordering gifts from local businesses where their loved ones live rather than shipping a package long-distance.

Others are exchanging tangible possessions for experiences and quality time.

We are thrifting, reusing, and reimagining what it means to give a gift that “keeps on giving,” and for the better.

Decorating

Orange slices and cinnamon sticks simmering on the stove can replace toxic candle scents. However, lit candles can also be more festive and earth-friendly than electrical lighting, choose natural waxes and essential oils over the more harmful alternatives.

Consider using scraps of foliage and dried fruits or sprigs of herbs for wreaths and garlands instead of synthetic products that use packaging and require shipping. Using natural elements to spruce up our spaces reduces what we leave behind and as a plus, they often provides better holiday ambiance.

Gathering + Feasting

Neighbors are celebrating with those within their local communities or carpooling to places closer to home



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with those they know and love.

Dinners are being prepared with less waste, reduced packaging, fresher produce, and a better farm-to-table ratio.

People are donating meals to local shelters, charities, or those in need in their very own communities, rather than stuffing their bellies or their garbage bins to the brim.

As we open our hearts and our homes to those who are near and those in need, and we create less waste and

a cleaner space as a result.

The holidays are most certainly a time to reflect upon and to celebrate the countless reasons we have to be grateful. As we linger in the memories, let us also consider how we can embrace the traditions of our ancestors, as well as a few simple substitutions, in order to care for our precious Earth a little more tenderly this year. Individuals within our community are already making an impact as they continue to implement more sustainable solutions and seek to provide a healthier, long-lasting environment. Perhaps we can proactively select one or two of these ideas to incorporate them into our own holiday festivities this year! **BHW**

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How Do mRNA Vaccines Work?

By Sara Sheeler



Vaccines have been around for a long time—perhaps much longer than most of us realize.

The first smallpox vaccine was created in 1798, following the research of 18th century English physician Edward Jenner. The rabies vaccine, created by French microbiologist Dr. Louis Pasteur and colleagues, dates back to 1885. Vaccine development has continued to grow ever since.

Today, the development of a new type of vaccine is speeding up. Named mRNA vaccines, they are currently being used to combat COVID-19, the disease caused by the virus SARS-CoV-2. But these vaccines could have applications that go well beyond the pandemic.

Traditional Vaccines: How They Work

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the goal of administering a vaccine is to provide a person with protection from a specific disease, typically one that is caused by a bacteria or virus.

Protection from a disease is also known as immunity. Having immunity to a disease, says the CDC, means a person can be exposed to it without becoming infected.

Traditionally, a vaccine contains a weakened or dead version of a specific bacteria or virus, along with other ingredients. When administered (usually as an injection), the vaccine triggers a person's immune system to create proteins called antibodies as well as special cells called T cells and B cells. These substances help the immune system quickly recognize and destroy foreign invaders and are the same substances the body would make if a person were exposed to the actual live version of the bacteria or virus.

It's sort of like putting on a dress rehearsal. The vaccine triggers the immune system to act as if it's been exposed to a real germ by "imitating an infection," as the CDC puts it. Now the immune system can build up a supply of protective substances so it will "remember" how to attack the real germ more quickly if a person ever comes across it in the future.



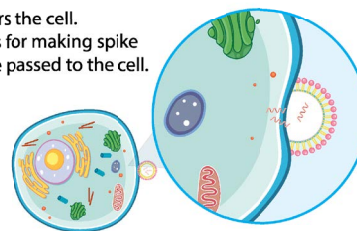
But compared to traditional vaccines, mRNA vaccines work quite differently.

How mRNA Vaccines Work

The new mRNA vaccines don't contain dead or weakened parts of a germ. Instead, they contain special molecules called messenger RNA, or mRNA for short.

The molecule mRNA is found naturally within the body. In fact, "all proteins in our bodies are made through a very common pathway that utilizes mRNA," explains Dr. Shankar Kurra, an emergency care physician and Vice President of Medical Affairs for Monument Health. But

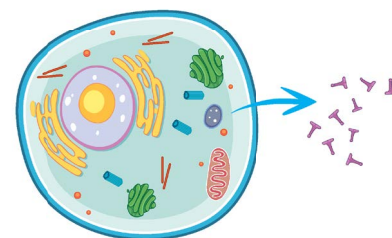
mRNA enters the cell.
Instructions for making spike
proteins are passed to the cell.



scientists have figured out a way to make mRNA that will tell the body to create viral-like proteins.

In the case of COVID-19, the mRNA vaccine tells the body to make something called a spike protein, which is similar to a protein found on the outside of SARS-CoV-2 that helps the

Cell makes proteins that leak out of the cell and create spikes.



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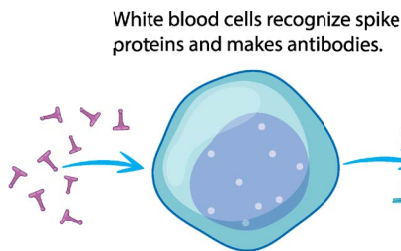
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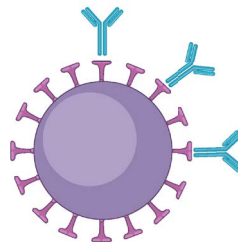


virus get into cells. When the immune system sees the spike protein created by the vaccine, it will recognize the spike protein as foreign and “get to work,” as Dr. Kurra says.



“[The immune system] says, ‘Okay, this is not something that is human, so we will create targeted antibodies to the spike protein that will neutralize the virus if it comes into the cell.’” In other words, if a vaccinated person is exposed to SARS-CoV-2 in the future, their body will be able to more quickly launch an attack against it,

Antibodies attach to viruses and block them from infecting cells.



preventing SARS-CoV-2 from entering cells and reducing the person’s chances of severe illness.

Dr. Kurra says the spike proteins are not dangerous on their own and that clinical trial data suggest an incredibly small amount of them are created in response to the mRNA vaccines—just enough to stimulate an immune response. Both the spike proteins and the mRNA molecules don’t last more than about two days in the body before degrading naturally. As for whether mRNA vaccines can alter our genetic make up,

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Dr. Kurra says vaccine mRNA does not enter the part of the cell where genes (in the form of DNA) are held.

mRNA Technology on the Horizon: Future Opportunities

Dr. Kurra says mRNA vaccine technology has been in the works for years and has been largely driven by the work of University of Pennsylvania scientists Katalin Karikó and Drew Weissman. Today, many leaders in the medical community, including Dr. Kurra, believe that the advent of mRNA vaccine technology is set to open up a whole new future of medicine.

At the moment, pharmaceutical companies including

Moderna and Pfizer are conducting clinical trials to determine whether mRNA technology can be used to treat other diseases, including HIV, the common respiratory virus RSV, and even cancers like melanoma.

And despite the challenging times we are in, Dr. Kurra believes the future looks “very bright.”

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