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Editor



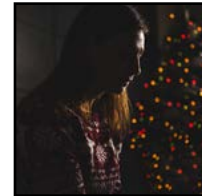
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Your Everest

By Kelsey Parker



I said “yes” before I knew enough information to say “no.”

When Tracy Bernard, former owner/editor of *Black Hills Woman Magazine*, and I were enjoying a glass of wine, she asked, “Would you ever consider running a Ragnar Race? Our team needs another runner.” I didn’t know what a Ragnar Race meant, but I figured, whatever it was, it would be a good challenge. She won me over when she showed me pictures of the cute Airbnb we would stay in.

As I booked my flight and began reading about what a Ragnar Race is, I thought, “What in the [insert swear word] did I sign up for?” Teams of 12 run 200(ish) miles over the course of 36 hours. Each runner must run three separate times.

Just days before the race, I began packing my carry-on bag, reading through the list carefully put together by the experienced Ragnar ladies. It included the basics: tennis shoes, socks, water bottle, etc. It also included “headlamp.” I inquired with Tracy, “Do I really need a headlamp? I’m not planning on running through any caves... right?!” Tracy explained, “One of your runs is going to be in the middle of the night; it may be the only light you have to see.” Oh, boy. I immediately Googled “bugs in Kentucky” and “predators in Kentucky” ... why am I going to Kentucky?

It was the day of the race. The Dakota Divas were off to run the Bourbon trail in Kentucky.

As I watched women hop out of the van and casually crank out miles, then hop back in with a smile on their face, I thought, “This must be easy.” It was the smiling ... that’s what tricked me. My first leg was supposed to be an “easy” 3.6 miles. I have serious questions about the mental soundness of the person making such qualifications.

I’m not a runner. That’s an identifier I’ve used for a long time; “Not a runner.” However, every Sunday I hop on my treadmill (more like dreadmill) or head outside and push through some miles. I don’t do it for the workout. I do it to soak up some soul-filling goodness, an episode of one of my favorite podcasts.

As I mentally prepared for my next run, my long run, I decided I needed to treat it like every other Sunday. I’d pop on my headphones and listen to a podcast. My husband recommended an Ed Mylett (one of my go-to podcasts) episode with Colin O’Brady, a man who has climbed Everest and traversed across Antarctica unassisted. (“Conquer Your Everest & Unlock Your Best Life”)

Around 4:00 a.m., I began gearing up - which included putting on my headlamp. Thank God for that headlamp. There wasn’t a single





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streetlight...or any other light...besides that glorious headlamp on my head. I saw seven humans as I ran 7.9 miles through the backwoods of Kentucky. I prayed not to see any bugs, predators, or whatever lives in the backwoods of Kentucky.

The message of the podcast was fitting, maybe divine.

Do hard things. Don't create a life where every day is the same. Take risks. Do things that make you uncomfortable, maybe even cause some pain. The days you'll remember most will be the days where you pushed yourself and overcame challenges.

Find your Everest. Do something that scares you and physically challenges you. You are capable of so much more than you think you are.

Take time to be alone. Turn off your cellphone and go out in nature. Take time to slow down and listen. Get rid of distractions and go inward.

I felt my watch buzz “5 miles.” I told my van I would text them when I hit the 5-mile mark, so they’d have an idea of when I’d get to the exchange. I went to grab my cellphone out of my waist band when my headphones suddenly turned off. My iPhone screen read, “iPhone unavailable. Try again in 4 minutes.” Well, that’s not good. This went on for about 20 minutes. Message received, Universe. Nothing but me ...in nature...with my thoughts.

As we ate dinner the night after the race, we went around the table to do “highs and lows.” Each woman was grateful for the experience and detailed memorable moments during the race. Our Everest did everything it intended. The race challenged us physically and mentally, and it reminded each of us how capable we are of doing hard things. It was unanimous that the Ragnar Race was a great, memorable experience. It certainly wasn’t an average day, but one we will each remember. **BHW**



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BEHIND the Camera WITH MADONNA ROSE

Madonna Rose, or Wichape Ojanjan Win (Shining Star Woman), is proud to have roots that stem from the Black Hills of South Dakota. “I am lucky to embrace my heritage, as well as the fact that I am mixed with beautiful cultures that I have been lucky enough to connect with, including indigenous South America, Jemez Pueblo, and Italian.”

Madonna takes pride in her culture as a member of the Oglala Lakota Tribe, and her pride shines through her art. “Growing up, I attended Catholic school as a child and faced a lot of inner battles as well as racism, which has led me to be even more passionate about correcting misconceptions about my culture and being proud to represent my heritage through my art.”

Inspired by her mother to live a full life, Madonna takes chances and excels in everything she puts her mind to. “I lost my mother this past year, and as a mother myself, I can never truly ever thank her enough. She was definitely who inspired me to not just exist but live and to live fearlessly. She once asked me when I was struggling and not believing in myself, “Why are you afraid?” I don’t remember my response ... but her words I still do; “Fear is lack of faith,” whether that be faith in yourself or a higher power. She said, “Don’t be fearful, my girl. You got this!”



Madonna has no fear. She’s jumping into her next adventure – attending The Los Angeles Film School, where she’s taking classes for Film and Media. She’ll use her experience and education to expand her media and photography business.







Madonna hopes to use her skill set to expand beauty standards to be more inclusive. As a young girl, Madonna didn't see enough representation of Native American women. "Growing up with Barbies and Disney Princesses ... I didn't see how my own features and body were beautiful. Slowly, we are seeing an immersion of change, and I knew I wanted to be part of that." There's no question: the beauty of Native American culture shines through Madonna's lens. Her pictures capture the richness of her heritage.

You can follow Madonna's work on Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok under the tag name Indi. Go.Go (Indigenous World Photography). BHW





An advertisement for AJ's WICKED SALON & SPA. The background is a black and white photograph of a salon interior, showing a mirror, a small round mirror on a shelf, and a potted plant. In the top left corner, there is a circular logo with the text "AJ's WICKED SALON & SPA". In the bottom right corner, there is a white box containing the text "live beautifully." in a cursive font, a phone icon, the phone number "605.791.5898", a globe icon, and the website "www.ajswickedsalonandspa.com".

An advertisement for Smith's LIQUOR GALLERY. The background is black. At the top, the text "YOUR DESTINATION for HOLIDAY SPIRITS." is written in white and yellow. In the center, there is a Christmas tree made of yellow liquor glasses, with a yellow star on top. Below the tree, there is a small illustration of a bunch of grapes. At the bottom, the text "Smith's LIQUOR GALLERY" is written in white. At the very bottom, the address "2218 JACKSON BLVD." and the website "SMITHSLIQUOR.COM" are written in white.

A woman with long dark hair is shown in profile, looking down. She is wearing a dark, patterned sweater. The background is dark, with a Christmas tree and its lights visible on the right side. The lights are out of focus, creating a bokeh effect. A white, torn-edge banner is overlaid on the bottom left of the image.

Dealing with Grief During the Holidays

with Megan Burgard

While the holiday season can be filled with baked goods, quality family time, and moments filled with joy, the holiday season can be a challenging time for those dealing with the loss of a loved one. The missing presence of a family member can make enjoying the holidays more challenging and more difficult to navigate.

“Grief is complicated. While new losses are often more difficult to navigate, grief isn’t linear and can be experienced in different ways over your lifetime,” says Megan Burgard, Certified Nurse Practitioner at Manlove Brain + Body Health. Burgard recommends giving yourself grace during the holidays. “You may not have the energy or desire to attend every gathering, and that’s okay. Set your own limits. Don’t let someone else decide what you ‘should’ do. On the flip side, don’t cancel the holidays. Pick an event or events that you feel most comfortable and supported in and remember you can always leave early.”

Burgard encourages those dealing with grief to continue practicing old traditions to honor the memory of a loved one. “It’s inevitable that the action will spark stories from years past. It’s a way to keep the memory of a loved one present. The way our kids know about friends and family they never met is to talk about those people. It’s one way to knit family and friends together through shared experiences.”

While reminiscing about past holiday experiences, give yourself permission to create new traditions. “Making new traditions and memories doesn’t erase the old ones,” says Burgard. Those dealing with grief may experience guilt while creating new traditions. “Know that emotions are complicated. You can experience grief and joy simultaneously,” says Burgard. “If you’re struggling, reach out. There isn’t a timeline for grief. Whether it’s been two weeks or ten years, you are allowed to feel whatever you are feeling, and you are allowed to ask for support if you need it.”

Oftentimes, those dealing with the loss of a loved one struggle to ask for help or know exactly what they need. If someone you know is dealing with grief, offer a helping hand. “Offer to host, play Santa, make food, etc. Invite the person dealing with grief to participate, without expectation,” Burgard recommends. Don’t be afraid to talk about the person who passed away; share fond memories, laugh about past experiences, and create new memories in honor of the passed loved one.

There are many ways to honor those who have passed on. Burgard recommends trying one or a few of the following: continue traditions, donate to a charity or volunteer in their name, write a letter to the person who died, light a memorial candle, hang a Christmas ornament with a picture of your loved one, share stories and designate someone to write them down or record them, and/or go to a place you shared together. BHW

ESTABLISHING HEALTHY BOUNDARIES DURING THE HOLIDAY SEASON

With Tracey Palecek

Some of your favorite holiday films depict the humorous interactions of families during the holidays.

“Would it be indecent to ask the grandparents to stay at a hotel?” - Audrey Griswold, *Christmas Vacation*.

“You really can’t spell ‘families’ without lies.” - Brad, *Four Christmases*.

While there can be an abundance of joy during the holidays, spending time with family can cause stress and anxiety, or even trigger suppressed trauma.

Tracy Palecek, Licensed Professional Counselor and owner of Palecek Therapy and Consulting, recommends that you get clear about the benefits and consequences about attending family functions. “Am I attending due to obligation or fear of someone being angry or disappointed? Are there certain people or events that are really triggering or stressful? If so, it may be time to decline or limit these interactions. It may be possible to consider how you can alter or change the circumstances to limit negative impact. For example, if it is triggering to see a certain family member, you may choose to reach out and arrange an early or later date to celebrate privately, without that person in attendance.”

If spending time with family can be triggering, give yourself permission to set healthy boundaries. Healthy boundary setting can include limiting attendance at family events.

“Setting boundaries involves first getting clear about what you





feel is best for you and your family. Second, it is important to recognize that if you need to set a boundary, it is likely that there will be push-back from those you are setting a boundary with. It is best to expect that and be prepared with a response,” Palecek says. “If you have decided that you will only be attending Christmas brunch and not Christmas Eve dinner, you may expect that family will be upset. Your response may be something like this: ‘We have decided we will be spending Christmas Eve alone this year, but we look forward to seeing you for Christmas brunch.’”

Communication is important when it comes to setting boundaries. “Being kind but firm is key. Boundaries need revisiting, as people may try to convince you to change plans. Simply reiterate your response in a calm, kind way,” Palecek recommends.

Difficult family gatherings may result in big issue questions from children about a relative’s behavior. “I think it is important to discuss these things as simply as possible. For example, if your kids are younger, you may simply say, ‘Aunt Sally isn’t feeling well and is not acting like herself right now.’” The conversation should change as children get older. “As they grow older having, a conversation prior to seeing them is important. You may explain, ‘Aunt Sally is a wonderful person who has an addiction. Once people become addicted to a substance, it causes them to act in irrational ways. We love her and we support her trying to recover from this disease.’”

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Palecek recommends making your mental health a priority this holiday season, even if it means doing this a little differently than normal. “I encourage you to give yourself the gift of time and reflection this year. Make an appointment with yourself each month to reflect on the previous month and plan for the next one. Ask yourself questions like, ‘Did the time I spent last month reflect what I think is important? Did I take time to have fun, spend time with friends and family, pursue hobbies that I find rejuvenating?’ Schedule those things for the next month. Then fiercely guard those times against outside requests. You are in charge of caring for yourself. You deserve to live intentionally, and with purpose and meaning. Plan and live the life you design.”

Tracy Palecek is owner of Palecek Therapy and Consulting. She is a Licensed Professional Counselor, Training Specialist, and Consultant dedicated to helping individuals and agencies work with meaning and purpose. She understands that working with people means dealing with complex problems and complex emotions. Tracy has many years of experience working with trauma and is also an Adverse Childhood Experiences Master Trainer and Fellow. She is passionate about helping people overcome tough circumstances on their journey to healing.



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Striking a Chord

A note about
Amanda Swartz, new
Concertmaster of the
Black Hills Symphony
Orchestra

By Kayla Gahagan

There's rarely a day that Amanda Swartz doesn't pick up her violin and make music.

"I can't imagine not; it's just a part of who I am now," said Swartz, who first developed her interest in music performance while growing up in Rapid City and began violin with the Black Hills Suzuki School.

She has been named the new Black Hills Symphony Concertmaster, a high-level position that involves maintaining the principal chair in the First Violin section, working hand-in-hand with the conductor to prepare concerts, and leading other musicians during practice and performances.

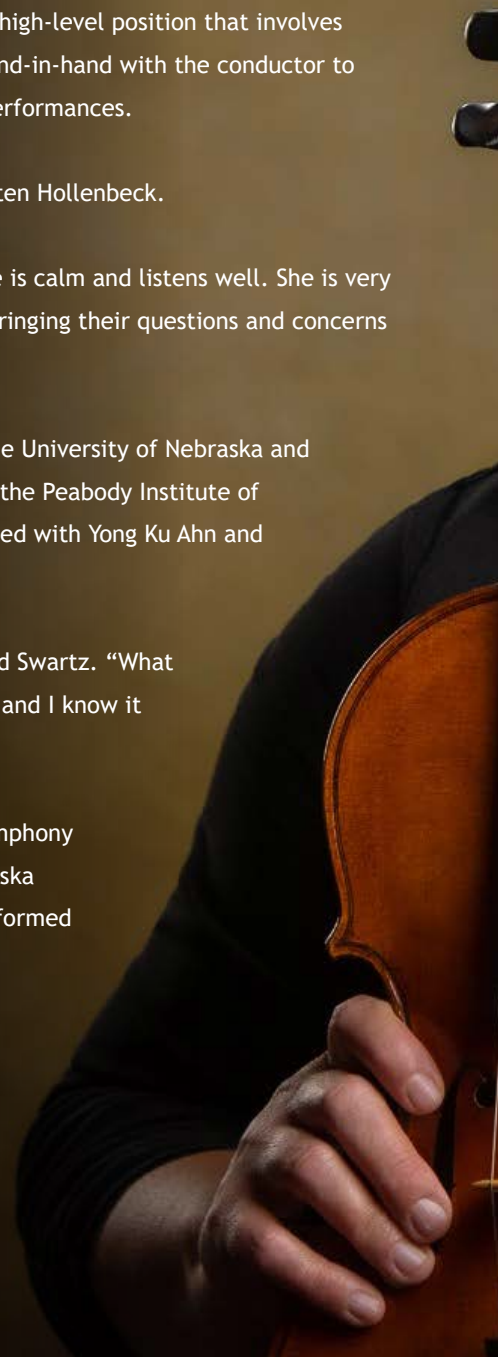
Swartz is more than up to the challenge, said executive director Kirsten Hollenbeck.

"Amanda is a good teacher and an excellent leader," she noted. "She is calm and listens well. She is very approachable, so other members of the orchestra feel comfortable bringing their questions and concerns to her."

Swartz earned a Bachelor of Music degree in violin performance at the University of Nebraska and completed a Masters of Music in violin performance and pedagogy at the Peabody Institute of the Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Maryland, where she studied with Yong Ku Ahn and Martin Beaver.

"The opportunities to learn here in the Black Hills are so strong," said Swartz. "What I learned here in my youth definitely shaped who I am as a musician, and I know it does for other kids here as well."

Swartz's resume is extensive; she has performed with the Lincoln Symphony Orchestra, the Hastings Symphony Orchestra, the University of Nebraska Orchestra, and the Nebraska Cornhusker marching band. She has performed with the Brevard Music Center Orchestra and the Peabody Institute Symphony Orchestra. Her journey came full circle in 2008 when she returned to the Black Hills with her family and got involved with the Black Hills Symphony Orchestra and the Black Hills Suzuki School.





*What exactly does a
Concertmaster do?*

- The Concertmaster is the principal violin for the First Violin section and leads all the violins.
- She “tunes” the orchestra at the beginning of all rehearsals and performances.
- She plays all solo violin sections in the pieces that the orchestra is playing.
- She leads the strings in the orchestra, planning (with the conductor and the personnel manager) how the sections are arranged in terms of which player sits in which position.
- She writes the “bowings” for the violins in the orchestra. That way, the strings play in unison with their bows all going up and down together and not everyone going up and down individually.

Swartz, who was selected through an application process, said she is excited about the new chapter in her journey. "I love playing music and this is just an extension of who I am," she said.

The practice and the performance are equally important, she said.

"The performance is so special because you get to demonstrate what you've been working on so long and you get to see the people in the audience react," she said. "But the practice room is so unique and special because you have those moments when you've been working on something a long time and overcome it. It's really something to be proud of." To new musicians, her message is clear: it doesn't happen overnight, so give yourself some grace.

"Sometimes they get frustrated because we have this sound in our head of what a professional violinist sounds like, so polished," she said. "And we expect that of ourselves. But it doesn't happen without hours and hours and hours of practice, patience, and listening."

The symphony has returned to in-person concerts following the COVID-19 pandemic and Swartz is ready for the season. "We just want to give the audience a wonderful experience," she said. "Music is for everyone, even classical music. I would love to see more young people at our concerts. It's not stuffy; it's just a lot of fun."

Hollenbeck agreed.

"Our hope and expectation for this concert season is that we will have an excellent, joyful, and musically challenging season filled with concerts that exceed our audience's expectation," she said. "We truly hope our audience is ready to return to live, in-person concerts, and we can all find some community through appreciation and performance of beautiful music. Amanda will be an integral part of making that happen." BHW

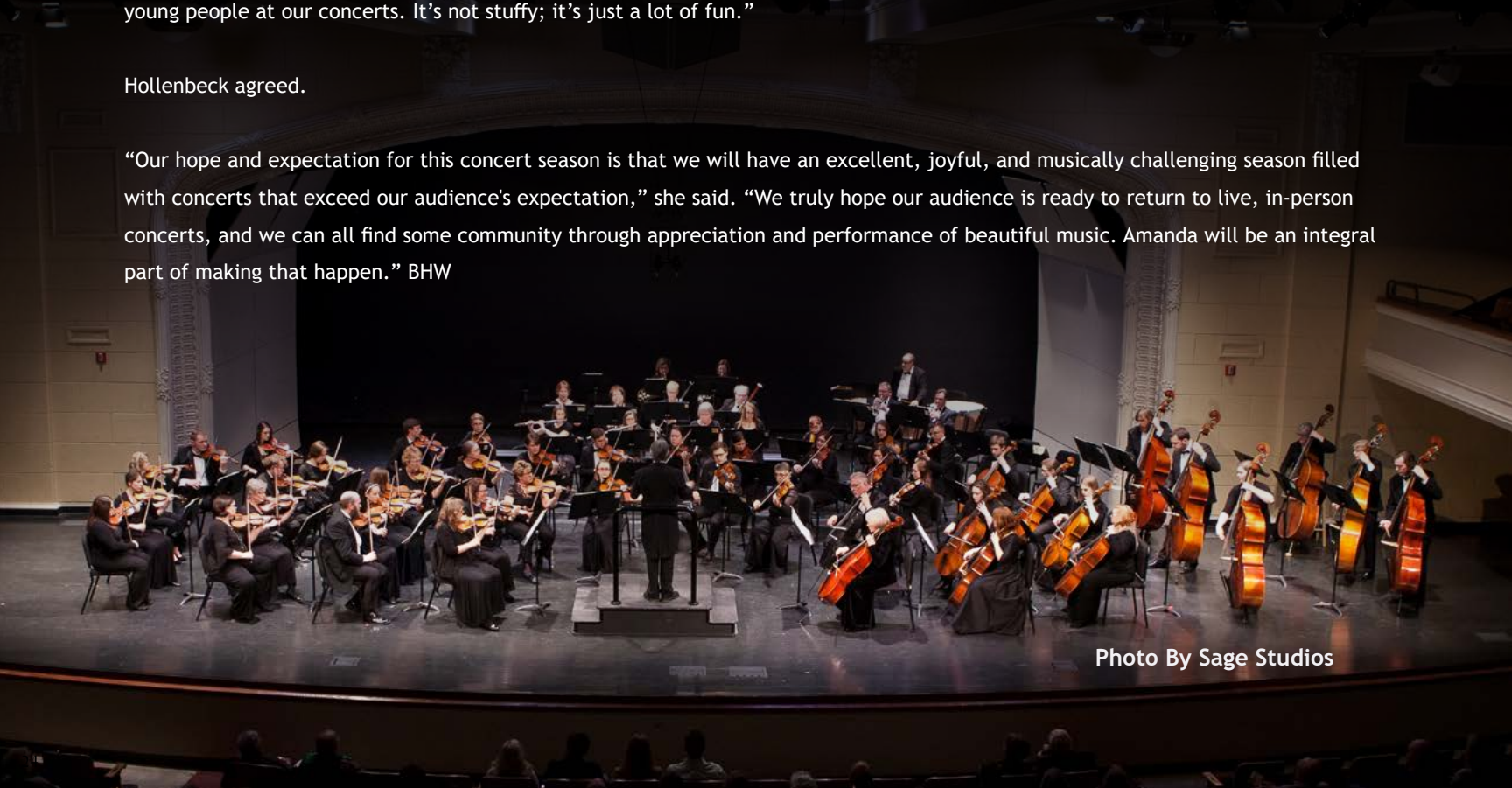


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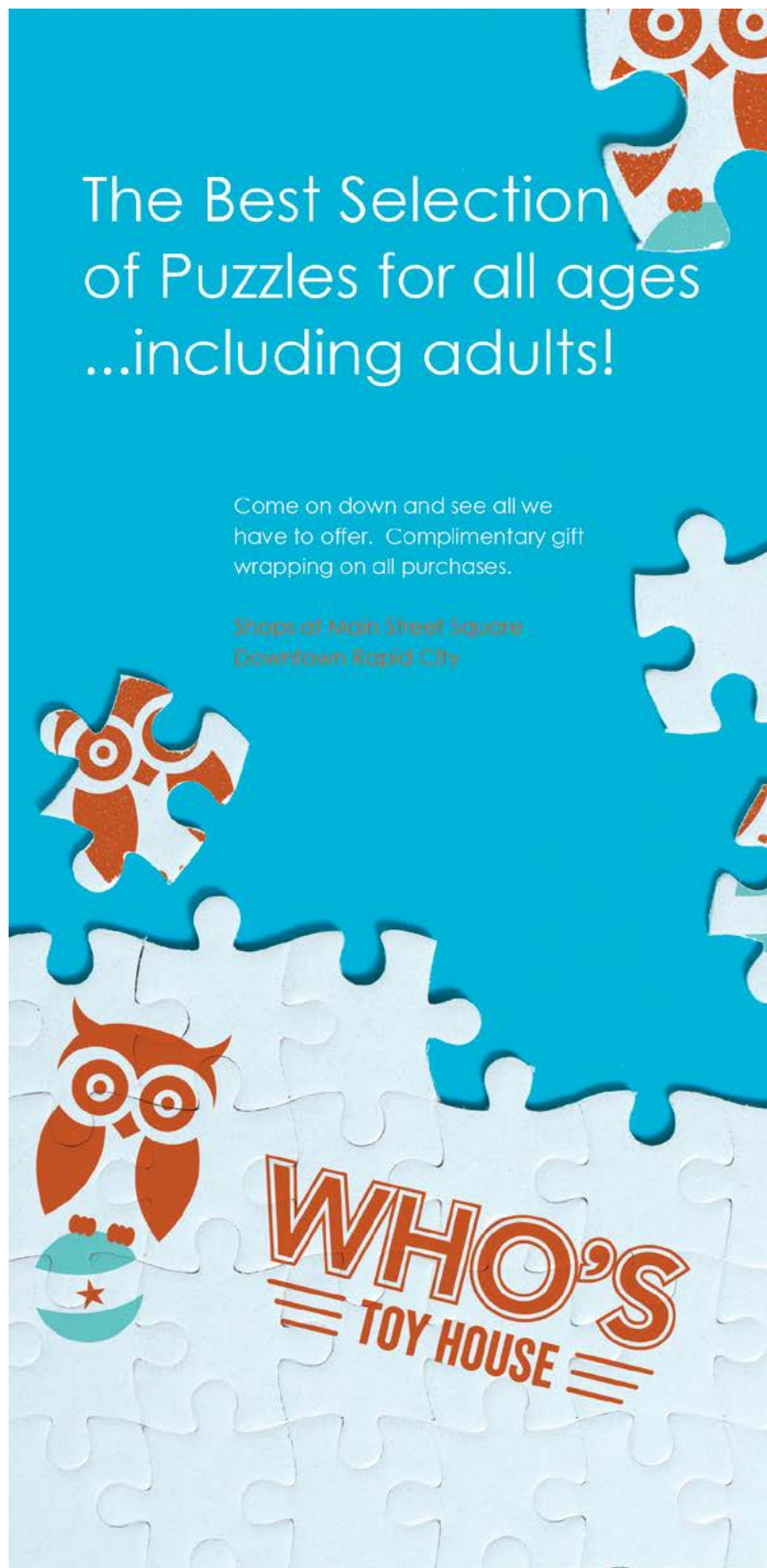
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Baking for the Holidays

By Kari Nielsen

The holidays are a time of idyllic representation, the warmth of togetherness, and the sharing of memories. It is a time to delight in those once-a-year creations like Grandma's pumpkin pie, Mom's green bean casserole, and Auntie's sugar cookies. As adults, we often look forward to mealtime the way we used to wait for Santa as children. It is an anticipation for comfort and the familiarity of tradition. However, preparing for those meals and holiday treats can often kindle more stress than joy. We sat down with Marinell Simpson, owner of Nell's Gourmet, and Lauren Moir, Nell's head pastry chef, to discuss how to make being in the kitchen a little less wearying and a lot more fun.

Prep Prior

"The holidays seem so wholesome," said Marinell. "But without preparing ahead of time, it can be stressful. Try doing things in steps."

For example, baking cookies is perhaps the most common form of holiday baking. Peanut butter blossoms, gingerbread, candy canes, sugar cookies... think of your favorite holiday cookie and you are probably instantly transported to a favorite memory. But to prepare the dough, bake the cookies, and frost or decorate them all in one sitting is not only a lot of work, but it can also be incredibly overwhelming.

"Start early," Marinell said. "Make your

Marinell Simpson, owner of Nell's
Gourmet

Photos by Riley Winter Photography



cookie dough ahead of time and put it in the freezer. Then when it comes time to bake the cookies, your kids will be ready to help with the most fun part.”

“The easiest thing to do for the holidays is cookies,” said Lauren. “And it’s fun to get everyone involved with decorating.”

Cut back on the time spent in the kitchen by preparing as many things as possible in advance. Think of other things that can be frozen, like pie dough, casseroles, and breads. Save unused vegetables from your garden to use later in sauces and soups.

“Utilize your freezer,” Marinell said.

Transform Tradition

The holidays are all about tried-and-true recipes or, perhaps, an entirety of a dinner menu that has rarely, if ever, changed. A holiday meal is a certainty that can be counted upon.

“Family recipes are real treasures,” said Marinell. “They are something that have been passed down from generation to generation. Maybe the fun of Christmas is you do pull out the pie recipe Grandma made for 50 years and you’ve made for 15. But I also encourage looking for new things.”

Whether that is changing one ingredient in a traditional recipe or adding a whole new accompaniment to the table, allow the ability to experiment with ingredients to transform your time spent in the kitchen.



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“You may make the same casserole every year with the same flavor,” said Lauren. “Try changing one ingredient, like adding an herb. It will still be a tradition, but you can spice it up a little.”

“Keeping with tradition is fun,” Marinell said. “But making something new can be fun too.”

Throw in a new vegetable. Make a different salad. Try a fresh dessert. Transform the holidays to include traditions of your own. Nowadays, we have access to a whole new world of cooking and baking right at our fingertips. There are so many opportunities to try new ingredients and recipes.

“You might try something one time and everyone may love it,” Marinell said. “And suddenly you have a new tradition.”

Stock Staples

For those uncomfortable in the kitchen, it may be hard to know where to start. What ingredients should a person have on hand? What are the utensils necessary to cook and bake well? You may be surprised to find that a few basic investments can have you prepared for about anything.

“There is always going to be more stuff you could buy,” Marinell said. “But if you start with a small and medium saucepan, one frying pan, a deeper kettle, a couple of good knives and a sharpener, and some spoons and spatulas, you can basically make anything.”

“Flour, sugar, salt, eggs, a leveling agent (such as baking soda),

and butter,” said Lauren. “Simple ingredients are the key, and you can always use them to make a recipe your own. Add butter to anything and it will always taste better.”

Stocking staples and using what you have can ultimately save you time and money. Know before the day of what you’re going to need, but if you run out of something, improvise.

“If a recipe calls for something and you don’t have it, what do you have?” Marinell said.

“Cooking becomes easy when you can just keep adding things to make it new,” Lauren said.

Make Memories

“Relax and enjoy your family,” Marinell said. “Don’t get stressed out about everything being perfect.”

Get everyone involved and make it merry. Instead of a big preparation that needs to be executed a certain way, make it a memorable activity where each family member can lend a helping hand. Maybe your husband can stir gravy, your uncle can chop vegetables, and your children can make a royal mess frosting cookies that may not look pretty but that they’re certain to eat.

“Your kids will remember that it was fun to be in the kitchen,” said Marinell. “Not necessarily what food is on the table.”

The holidays are less about what goes into our stomachs and more about the people filling up our hearts. In the hustle and bustle of trying to present a picturesque tabletop, we often forget that in the creating lies the real experience. Food may be synonymous with comfort, but the sharing of it together is what ultimately creates the memories we will treasure for years to come.



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And if you're still stuck on how to possibly do it all, outsource. "Nell's Gourmet can help save you time by eliminating the shopping, the prep, and the clean up," said Marinell. "We do everything," said Lauren. "We even customize a lot of options. You can call and say you want something not on the menu or something that is but you want prepared a little differently."

You can pre-order holiday favorites like a variety of sides, vegetables, salads, potatoes, and desserts. Thanksgiving ordering begins in early November, and the Christmas menu will be up for grabs in early December.

"Decide what you want to do yourself and what you want help with," Marinell said.

Nell's Gourmet takes the hassle out of the holidays by offering tried-and-true favorites that everybody loves with none of the stress.

"Food is the number one thing that makes people happy the most," Lauren said. "We like to help bring those memories back." **BHW**





Balsamic Glaze

2 cups good quality balsamic vinegar
1/2 cup brown sugar (optional)

Heat balsamic vinegar in a small saucepan over medium heat.

Add sugar, if desired, and stir well. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat to medium-low heat and simmer, stirring occasionally, until the vinegar thickens and is reduced to about 1/2 cup (about 20 minutes). It should be thick enough to coat the back of a spoon.

Beautiful Roasted Vegetables

Recipe provided by Nell's Gourmet

1 to 2 pounds any vegetables, variety of colors
(mixed-color carrots, baby potatoes, peppers)
1 tablespoon EVOO
1 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
Balsamic glaze (bottled varieties found in grocery store or make your own)
Nuts such as shelled pistachios, salted almonds, pecans, or walnuts
Crumbled cheese such as feta, blue cheese, cotija

Preheat oven to 425° F.

Rinse and peel vegetables (if desired). Spread on a clean dish towel

or paper towels to dry before cutting into uniform pieces so they cook evenly. Place vegetables in a large bowl. Add the oil, salt, and pepper, and toss to combine.

Spread vegetables evenly on a rimmed baking sheet in a single layer. If they are too crowded, the vegetables will steam instead of roast. If needed, use two baking sheets.

Roast for 25-30 minutes. Pierce with fork to test for doneness and look for slight char on the edges.

Transfer vegetables to a serving dish and taste for salt; drizzle with balsamic glaze, sprinkle with nuts and/or cheese.



Sugar Cookies

Recipe provided by Nell's Gourmet

Roll out or scoop this recipe
Yields about one dozen cookies

3/4c butter, softened

3/4c sugar

1 egg

2tsp vanilla extract

2-1/4c flour

1/2tsp baking powder

1/4tsp salt

Combine all the dry ingredients in a large bowl and set aside. Cream together the butter and sugar until light and fluffy (2-3 minutes). Add in the egg, mixing until fully combined. Add in vanilla extract and mix to combine. Add in the flour

mixture and slowly mix until just combined and a dough has formed. Roll out dough to about 1/4" thickness and cut out cookies with a 3" cookie cutter, or scoop the dough, using a spoon or 2oz cookie scoop. If scooping the dough, lay onto a parchment-lined sheetpan about 1-1/2" apart and smash cookies with the palm of your hand until they are flat and about 1/4" thickness.

Bake at 350° F for 8-10 minutes or until the edges are only just beginning to brown. The tops of the cookies should still be blonde. Once cooled, you can eat plain or decorate with your favorite frosting. If your cookies are bigger than the 2oz scoop or 3" cookie cutter suggested, they may need extra time in the oven (1-2 minutes).

Psst. Use this recipe to make the Caramel Apple Cookie Sandwiches on the next page.

Caramel Apple Cookie Sandwiches

Recipe provided by Nell's Gourmet

Yields about six sandwiches

One batch of cookie dough (see the sugar cookie recipe on the previous page) scooped and baked into 12 cookies

1c vanilla frosting

1/2c apple pie filling

1 jar caramel sauce

Fall sprinkles for decoration

Lay out cookies upside down on a parchment-lined sheet pan. With a piping bag or plastic baggie, pipe a ring of frosting around the edge of three of your cookies. Fill the center of those cookies with a spoonful of apple pie filling. Drizzle your favorite caramel sauce over the top of the apple pie filling, and sandwich together with one of the plain cookies. Pour your sprinkles into a large bowl and dip the edges of your cookie sandwich into the sprinkles so they stick to the frosting. All of the filling ingredients are readily available at most grocery stores, or be a little adventurous and make them all at home.



Chocolate Sugar Cookies

Recipe provided by Nell's Gourmet

This recipe is great for thumbprint cookies

Yields about one dozen cookies

3/4c butter, softened

3/4c sugar

1 egg

2tsp vanilla extract

2c flour

1/4c cocoa powder

1/2tsp baking powder

1/4tsp salt



Combine all the dry ingredients in a large bowl and set aside. Cream together the butter and sugar until light and fluffy (2-3 minutes). Add in the egg, one at a time, scraping down your bowl and mixing until fully combined in between each addition.

Add in vanilla extract and mix to combine. Add in the flour mixture and slowly mix until just combined and a dough has formed. Scoop the dough, using a spoon or 2oz cookie scoop onto a parchment lined sheet pan about 1-1/2" apart. Using your thumb, make a well in the center of your cookie dough ball and fill with your desired filling or candy. At Nell's, our pastry chef likes to fill them with mini Reese's Peanut Butter Cups.

Bake at 350°F for 8-10 minutes or until the cookie is set and the sides have started to crack.

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Baking Traditions

With Julie Smoragiewicz

Julie Smoragiewicz's love of baking started early.

“My grandmother Adeline was a serious baker. Every year, she baked more than 100 dozen cookies and candies for Christmas. Her annual holiday assortment included turtles, divinity, spritz, almond bark, thumbprint cookies, cherry winks, and traditional iced sugar cookies, to name just a few. There was always a pot of coffee brewing and freshly baked cookies for visitors. She would also send friends and family home with a plate or tin of her home-baked treats.”

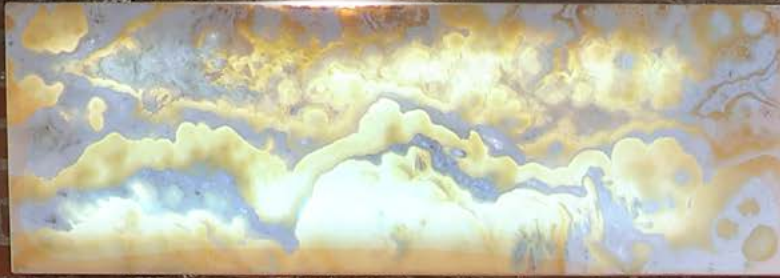
Julie continues the holiday tradition of baking family favorites including biscotti, panettone, gingerbread cookies, almost crescents, peppermint marshmallows (recipe included), shortbread, and Christmas turtles (recipe included), with her family.

Julie will share recipes and demonstrate how to make a few of her family's favorites during a holiday baking class at Someone's in the Kitchen on November 10, 2022.

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Peppermint Marshmallows

Recipe by Julie Smoragiewicz © Yak Ridge 2014-present All Rights Reserved.

These light and fluffy treats are the perfect topping for hot cocoa and for eating on their own.

- 1 tablespoon butter
- 2/3 cup cornstarch
- 2/3 cup powdered sugar
- 4 envelopes unflavored gelatin
- 1 cup cold water
- 2 ½ cups sugar
- 2/3 cup water
- 1 cup honey
- ¼ tsp salt
- 2 tsp peppermint extract or ¼ tsp peppermint oil
- 5 drops red food coloring paste

Mix powdered sugar and cornstarch in a shallow bowl.

Butter a 9" x 13" pan, silicone if available. Dust buttered pan with two to three tablespoons of powder mixture. Set aside pan and powdered mixture for later.

Place unflavored gelatin and one cup cold water in the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with a whisk attachment. Stir and set aside to allow gelatin to bloom.

Mix honey, sugar, salt, and water in a small stock pot. Stir to combine all ingredients.

Cook over medium heat until the sugar is dissolved and the mixture begins to boil. Insert a candy thermometer and increase heat to medium high. Continue to boil until the temperature reaches 240 degrees or soft ball stage. Do NOT allow temperature to exceed 240 degrees.

Set mixer speed on low and slowly pour hot sugar into the turning whisk of the mixer. After all of the sugar syrup is in the mixer, increase mixer speed to high until soft peaks form. This may take 10 minutes. Add flavoring and mix for another one to two minutes. Stop mixer and lift mixer head. Using a tooth pick, place drops of coloring on different wires of the whisk. Place whisk back into the mixture and whisk on low speed until streaks of color appear in the marshmallow, or blend longer for a solid color.

Pour marshmallow mixture into prepared pan. This mixture will be sticky and you will need to move quickly to extract as much marshmallow from the bowl as possible. Dust with additional powder mixture, and top with a sheet of parchment to flatten the marshmallow mixture.

Set aside for at least an hour, or until the marshmallow is no longer sticky to the touch. Flip the marshmallow block onto a cutting board. Using kitchen shears, or chef's knife, cut into half inch pieces and drop into powdered mixture, tossing to coat. Store marshmallows in an airtight container. Add to hot cocoa or simply enjoy as is.





Recipe by Julie Smoragiewicz
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Grandma's Christmas Turtles

- 1 can sweetened condensed milk
- ½ cup butter
- 1 package wrapped caramels
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 2 lbs pecans, coarsely chopped
- 12 ounces semisweet chocolate chips
- 12 ounces milk, dark, or a combination of chocolate chips
- 2 ounces coconut oil

Butter four sheet pans.

Melt butter in a stock pot. Add the sweetened condensed milk and vanilla and stir to combine. Add caramels and stir over low heat until melted. Stir in pecans.

Quickly drop caramel pecan mixture by the teaspoon full onto buttered baking sheets. (Modern day spoonalas, a spoon-shaped silicone spatula, are a great substitute for spoons.)

Chill on baking sheet for several hours or overnight.

Melt chocolate and coconut oil over a double boiler with simmering water. Keep the water below the bottom of top pan.

Using a fork, dip the caramel pecans into melted chocolate.

Allow excess chocolate to drip back into the melted chocolate.

Place turtles onto sheet pans covered with parchment to cool. Store in airtight container.

Yields approximately 100 turtles

Variation

Replace caramel mixture with 30 ounces of homemade caramels (cooked to 240 degrees) so they can be poured over the pecans.



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Breathwork for Stress Relief



By Kayla Gahagan



Feeling a little stressed with the approaching holidays? Work it out with some stretching and breathing, experts say.

According to the American Psychological Association, nearly a quarter of Americans have reported feeling “extreme stress” come holiday time. And that stress can manifest itself in all sorts of places in your body.

“Physical stress, emotional stress, mental stress, pain, and fear of pain changes how you move and changes how you breathe,” said Laura Bonsness, a physical therapist at About You Physical Therapy in Rapid City.

If you’re experiencing pain or loss of strength, mobility, or balance, pay attention, Bonsness added. “The presence of those symptoms is your body’s engine light signaling that care is needed,” she said.

Something as simple as learning how to breathe properly can make a real difference in your body’s response to stress.

“The central nervous system, or brain, moves our muscles and is also what regulates breathing (neuro-respiratory system),” Bonsness added. “Breath of life exercises during your day can help reset an uptight neuromuscular system.”

Simply put, postural and breathing awareness throughout the day can loosen you up, improve your mood, and release some of the tension tightening up your body.

The great thing about breathing exercises? They can be done anywhere, Bonsness noted.

“These can be done in any position because you’re always breathing,” she said. “Being intentional with posture and breath can position your neuromuscular system into a state of peace.”

Here is a sequence on how to make the most of your breathing and stretching:

1. Begin with upright, softened postures and avoid uptight over-extended postures.
2. Exhale out all anxiety as you allow the rib cage around your lungs to relax and funnel downward.
3. Pause three seconds at the end of the exhale.
4. Then, with a quiet neck (relaxed), inhale through the nose, allowing the three-dimensional column (rib cage) to slowly fill and expand with new air. BHW



Combating the Great *Resignation*

By Kelsey Parker



The Great Resignation has shifted what employees are looking for in an employer and has challenged employers to keep and retain hard-working, dedicated employees. Since the pandemic, record numbers of employees have quit in hopes of finding greener pastures. In a recent study, most workers who quit in 2021 claim they left employment due to low pay, lack of opportunities for advancement, and not feeling respected.

Those who stayed in their positions are now dealing with increased workloads and combating workplace burnout. Now coined “quiet quitting,” employees aren’t leaving their jobs but are committed to working within the parameters of their job description and refusing to take on more duties or added hours.

Today, Gen Z and millennials are looking for jobs with more flexibility, more work-life balance, and a work culture that shares a greater purpose.

While businesses around the country struggle to fill vacant positions, some local businesses are taking great care to recruit and retain exceptional employees by offering competitive wages and benefits packages, along with some unique benefits that encourage longevity with their companies.

The first step to finding great employees is ensuring great candidates know about job opportunities. Lynzie Montague, Chief Sales and Marketing Officer at LIV Hospitality, gets creative when it comes to recruiting candidates by promoting on social media. Additionally, “LIV Hospitality attends numerous job fairs throughout the area; we have also hosted our own. We partner with colleges and universities to recruit students who are interested in a paid internship program.”

Choosing the perfect candidate isn’t just about what appears on a resume. Autumn Hughes, Head of People at Property Meld, considers the holistic makeup of a candidate. “What are their characteristics, and personal values, and what are the moments and milestones that have shaped them in their lives? We truly believe in finding the right fit between what a candidate is looking for in their career and what we are seeking for our team. We hire for heart ... and work to see the person and not just the resume. I personally love a resume that tells a story and exposes the personality of the individual.”

Locally, businesses have seen a shift in what employees are looking for in their work. August Hicks, Human Resource Manager at Black Hills Federal Credit Union, said, “People want to come to work and be appreciated and **cared** about. We spend most of our days at work, and at BHFCU, we strive to create a supportive environment. Many of our candidates are looking for flexibility and opportunities for growth.”

While salary, 401(k)s, vacation time, and insurance benefits are priorities for jobseekers, LIV Hospitality and Property

Meld offer other unique benefits to keep their employees happy and engaged in the community.

At LIV Hospitality, "every employee receives five WaTiki waterpark passes daily; they also have access to Vertex Sky Bar whenever they wish. They receive food & beverage discounts at all of our outlets, casino free play (for those 21 and over), and hotel discounts for them and their friends and family!" Property Meld encourages their employees to give back to the community through an initiative called Meld Cares, where employees get a paid week of time off to serve the local community.

Offering flexible work schedules and remote work can be a game-changer for employees, especially those with young children. Black Hills Federal Credit Union believes in promoting a healthy work-life balance for their employees. "That's why we offer flexible work schedules, including remote work. For some of our positions, eligible employees can work remotely for all or part of their workweek. Offering flexible work schedules allows our employees to attend their child's holiday concert or avoid that morning commute construction zone. Our dress code allows staff to make the call. We follow the dress-for-your-day approach to ensure our employees feel comfortable while professionally serving our members," said Laura Klapperich, Benefits Specialist at Black Hills Federal Credit Union.



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Hiring great employee isn't enough. Today, the average Americans changes jobs every four years. LIV Hospitality encourages longevity with the company by promoting within whenever possible. "We want to reward those who have proven results and have worked hard for our company," Montague said.

Klapperich says the key to motivating long-term employment is investing in their employees. "We provide many opportunities for advancement and professional development throughout our organization. All employees have access to internal training that encourages a growth mindset. BHFCU also takes pride in our Women in Leadership focus, with 65% of BHFCU management and seven senior leaders being women."

Hughes says motivation, sense of purpose and belonging, well-being, and clear communication are necessary for engagement and longevity. "We know that our talent needs a sense of purpose and belonging, a strong tie to the mission of the organization and the vision we are building towards. We continually focus on well-being throughout the organization and year after year have improved our benefits and well-being offerings." BHW



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Painting Joy with Melissa Wood

by Kari Nielsen



Melissa Wood was captivated by watercolor 15 years ago.

“I don’t know what I would do if I couldn’t paint,” Melissa said. Melissa was originally introduced to watercolor by her wonderful and talented friend, the late Richard DuBois. She painted in a group of women affectionately nicknamed “Dick’s Chicks” for eight years before his passing.

“He taught me everything I know about watercolor,” Melissa said. “I keep his memory alive by continuing to do the things he loved.”

Richard was a founding member of the Northern



Plains Watercolor Society (NPWS), in which Melissa has now served as President for the past four years. He was also very involved in the Children’s Home Society.

“Every year the Chicks and I go out there to teach the kids watercolor,” Melissa said. “It is such a great source of therapy.”

Melissa is passionate about making watercolor accessible to kids of all ages. Through the NPWS, a \$1,000 grant is given to Stevens High



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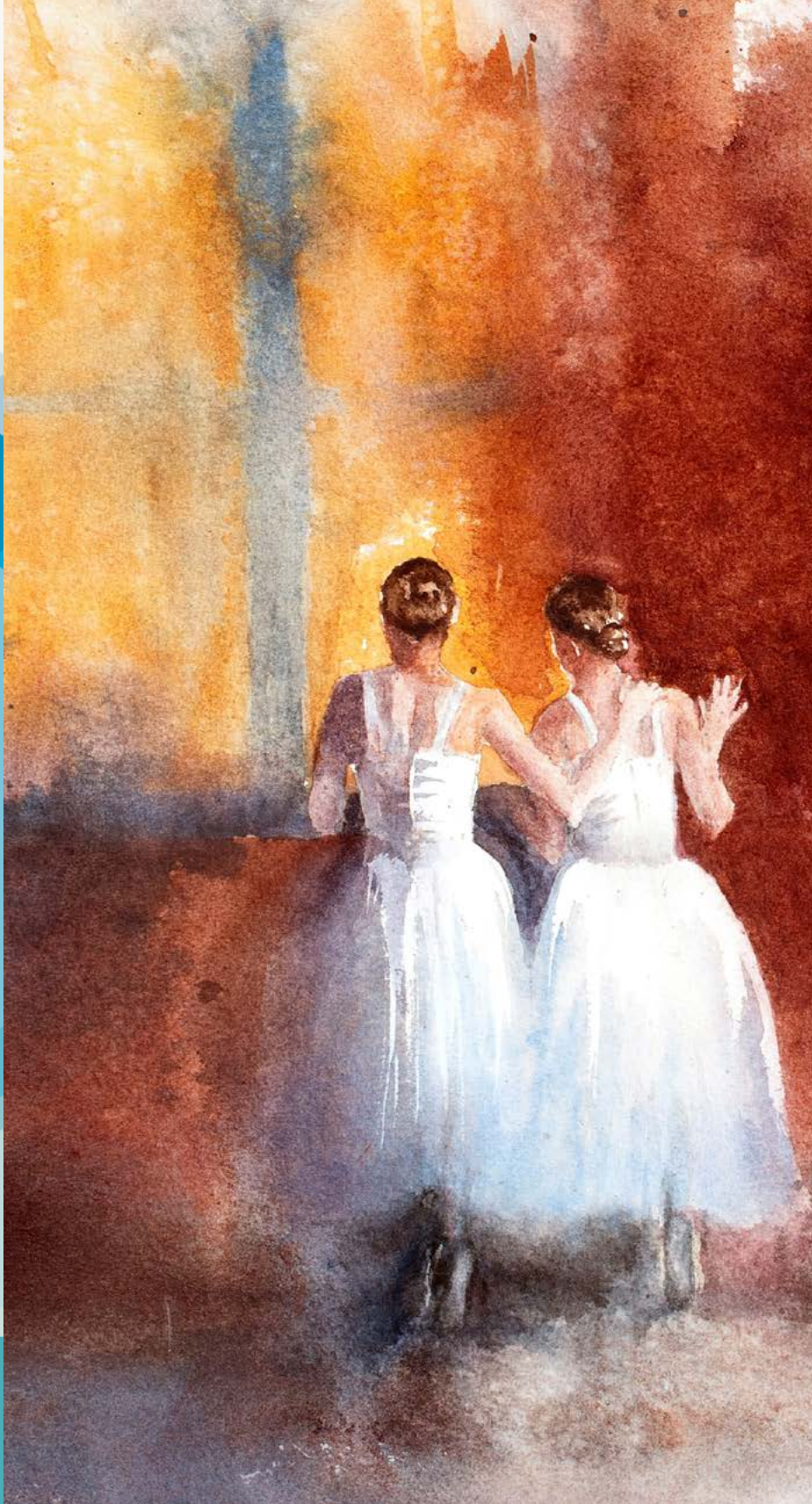
Marvin Buehner, M.D.



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School's advanced art students each year in order to purchase professional supplies.

"We want to get more kids painting," Melissa said. "It is becoming a lost art form. And we know the biggest hurdle is budget, so this provides enough money to get them started."

Getting started may change someone's life, the way it changed Melissa's.

"Art is magical because it is reflective of you," Melissa said. "Putting it out there makes you vulnerable, but it is such a huge honor when people buy or compliment one of my paintings."

She describes her paintings as loose, watery, and not perfect. But that free expression is what makes it art. She loves painting portraits of kids, as well as an abundance of wildlife. Lately, she has been painting a ton of buffalo. And her work is 100% inspired by her mood.

"When I'm stressed, I tend to use darker colors," Melissa said. "When I'm feeling more lighthearted, I use cheery colors."

But regardless of the subject or the tone of



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her paintings, her art is her passion, one she is now sharing with others on a public scale through downtown Rapid City's newest gallery, the Melissa Wood Gallery: A Fine Art Boutique, which just opened in September. This space also doubles as her studio, a creative combination.

"I never used to think about opening a gallery," Melissa said. "I'm not a businessperson. But I am just so thankful to have the opportunity."

She credits her husband Pat for his incredible support, along with her four children.

The gallery houses Melissa's artwork, along with artwork from other talented women artisans from not only across the country but across the world.

There are earrings composed of brass, bone, and beads from a lady in Africa. Letter writing kits complete with handmade paper and wax seals from the UK. Wine bottle lanterns with original paintings handcrafted by local artists Gwen Ray and Joanne Nelson. Handmade cards from members of the NPWS. Gorgeous pottery molded by local artisans Cookie Anderson and Calahan Wood. And soap from Massachusetts embracing the witch history associated with that area.

"Really who were witches but strong and powerful women?" Melissa said. "Those are the types of women I will be featuring in my shop."

Melissa's talent speaks for itself, having paved a path to showcase her own beautiful paintings alongside unique, one-of-a-kind pieces you won't find anywhere else in town. All of it is fine art meant to be explored and enjoyed.

"Art is a personal connection, and we as a society have gotten away from the personal connection," Melissa said. "It is soul food that we all need. When you see the right art, it ignites you in a way you don't get anywhere else." BHW

Located at 914 Main Street, the Melissa Wood Gallery: A Fine Art Boutique is open pop-up hours or by appointment. Stop in to check out all the art mentioned, along with a rotating feature artist each month.

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In Your Dreams

By Dorothy Rosby



ne night, I dreamt there was an actual three-ring circus going on in my house. At the same time, I had two visitors planning to stay the night, and as I led them past the circus and down the hall to our guest room, I apologized for the chaos and wished them a good night's sleep despite the racket. In the way dreams do, it all made perfect sense while I was dreaming. Actually, the way my life is, it kind of made sense when I woke up too.

And it inspired me to go to that fount of all knowledge, the internet, and do a little research on dreams and their interpretation. Sleep experts think dreams are the brain's way of working out important issues, problems, or emotions leftover from our day. I'm not sure how well it works, though, because when I woke up, my life was still like a circus with the monkeys loose.

But I find the subject interesting anyway. I read that some of the most commonly reported dream themes are death, being late, flying, and falling. Falling is the only one of those I remember having. And according to my research, that could mean I feel like I'm losing control over something in my life. If you had a three-ring circus going on in your home, you'd feel like you were losing control too.

Losing teeth is also a common theme in dreams. That seems like a curious thing to dream about—unless you're a dentist. I don't remember ever having that one myself, which doesn't mean I haven't. According to the National Sleep Foundation, we dream up to six times each night, but we forget 95 percent of our dreams. That's probably a blessing considering some of the most common dreams are about death, falling, and losing our teeth.

A lot of people also have school-related dreams, even if they've been out of





school for decades. They don't know their class schedule, or they can't get their locker open, or they're struggling to take a test they haven't studied for. I once dreamt I lost a library book. Oh wait. I was awake when I did that.

Another one of the most commonly reported dream themes involves appearing naked in public, though I wouldn't call that a dream. I'd call it a nightmare. I guess we can all be glad dreams aren't premonitions.

But according to my research, if you've had this dream, it could mean you're honest, open, and carefree by nature. Or it could mean you're feeling vulnerable, judged, and as if everyone is looking at you. Of course, if you're going around naked, they probably are.

Fortunately, I don't recall ever having that one, and it seems like the kind of dream I'd remember. I have dreamt many times about appearing in public wearing my bathrobe, though. I'm not making that up. I'm not sure what it means except that maybe I'm more modest than other dreamers.

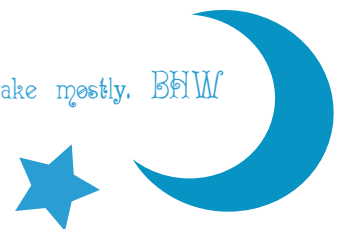
I've had several dreams where I was back at my former place of employment wearing my robe. Maybe it means I was comfortable and relaxed around my coworkers. Or that I cut it kind of close getting out of bed and ready for work when I was employed there. Mostly I have good dreams, but I occasionally have dreams about being chased, which is another commonly reported theme. Experts interpret it as a result of stress or a sign that you're failing to deal with something in your life. They're so negative. Personally, I think it's impressive that I've never once been caught.

One other unpleasant theme that shows up in my dreams is that of not being prepared. I'm about to give a speech and I haven't practiced it or even written it. Or I'm in a play and I'm about to go on stage, but I don't know my lines. On the bright side, I'm usually wearing something other than a bathrobe in those dreams.

Lucky for me, I'm one of those people who occasionally has what sleep experts call a lucid dream. That's the kind where you're aware you're dreaming so you're able to control what happens. It doesn't happen often, but when it does, I'm able to cancel the play or shoo the circus clowns out of my living room.

I was surprised to read that not everyone has lucid dreams, though I shouldn't be. If more people could control the outcome of their dreams, they'd put their clothes on before they went out in public. Or at least their bathrobe.

Dorothy Rosky was wearing her bathrobe when she wrote this column. But she was wide awake mostly. BHW



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