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BLACK HILLS WOMAN MAGAZINE

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FROM THE

Editor



Somehow, we've said goodbye to summer and hello to fall. Now is the time to welcome back-to-school routines, the warmth of crockpot dinners, and the crunch of crisp leaves, a gentle invitation to slow down and settle in.

As the days grow shorter, our focus shifts, feeling almost like a reset to a new year. But while January asks us to change everything all at once, September offers a quieter, gentler chance to start fresh. It is a season for turning inward, auditing our daily rhythms, and shedding what no longer serves us, much like the trees outside.

Personally, I look forward to using these cooler mornings to reconnect with the simple habits that keep me grounded: a hot cup of coffee in the early quiet, a new devotional, and the permission to just be. This season is a reminder that we don't always need to be rushing toward the next big thing. Sometimes, the greatest growth happens when we simply pause, recenter, and match the slower, steady pace of the world around us.

This fall, my hope for you is that you allow yourself the space to breathe, the time to reflect, and the grace to begin again exactly where you are.

Warmly, Kari Nielsen



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Tax Season is on the Horizon

To start your tax
preparation, have these
essential documents ready:

- Income Statements: W-2s, 1099s, 1098s
- Deduction & Credit Info: Charitable donation receipts, childcare receipts, education expenses
- Personal Info: Social Security card(s), bank account and routing numbers
- Other Docs: Last year's tax return, IRS notices/letters, foreign tax forms

This is a general guideline. Specific documents will vary based on individual circumstances.

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A TASTE OF

Someone's In
The Kitchen

BY KELSY PETERSON

Ashley Berry never expected her career to pivot from graphic design to owning a beloved local store in Rapid City. That is, until one near and dear to her heart came up for sale just as she and her husband were looking for a change in their work schedules. Ashley has always been drawn to creative spaces and thoughtfully curated shops, making her career change feel less like a surprise and more like a natural calling—one that seems obvious to anyone who has had the pleasure of shopping at Someone's In The Kitchen.

Ashley and her husband, Jade, grew up shopping at Someone's In The Kitchen when it was located inside Rushmore Mall. When she learned the store was for sale, Ashley shared, "I asked Jade if he'd be willing to take the leap with me, and as always, he was all in for the adventure." They worked closely with the previous owners, Dave and Betsy Lyons, to learn the ins and outs of the business. "Their love for the store was obvious in everything they did, and it reinforced our desire to preserve what made Someone's In The Kitchen so special."

Someone's In The Kitchen puts a great deal of

thought into selecting products that genuinely meet the needs of its customers. "We like to think of ourselves as the matchmakers of retail. Our goal is to connect people with products that solve a problem, improve their experience in the kitchen, or inspire them to try something new."

Whether you're stopping in for a coffee from the Gourmet Espresso Bar while browsing what's new or looking for guidance from someone with extensive product knowledge, Ashley and her staff are committed to making every shopping experience personal. By taking the time to get to know each customer and understand their needs, they help ensure everyone leaves with products that are the right fit for their kitchen.

In addition to creating an exceptional shopping experience, Ashley and her team invest significant time into carefully curating the store's inventory. "We spend a lot of time researching brands, testing products, listening to customer feedback, and looking for items that fit the needs of our community. It's less about having the biggest selection and more about making sure the products we carry are the right ones."



Ashley and Jade have worked hard over the years to be good stewards of a store that has been loved by the community for decades. That includes continuing cherished traditions like the cooking classes, which run from February through May and again from September through mid-November. Many of the improvements they've made have happened behind the scenes, including updating in-store technology and expanding the store's online offerings. "We love finding little ways to make things easier, and if we can knock one more thing off your to-do list, whether that's wrapping a gift or helping you find the perfect item, we're happy to do it."

That commitment is why you'll find complimentary gift wrapping available year-round and why Someone's In The Kitchen is open seven days a week. Ashley and her team understand that life doesn't always fit neatly into a Monday-through-Friday schedule.

"It's such a privilege to be part of so many milestones in our customers' lives, from bridal registries and housewarmings to birthdays, holidays, and everything in between. We never take for granted that people choose to celebrate those moments with us."



**"IT'S SUCH A *privilege* TO BE PART OF
SO MANY MILESTONES IN OUR
customers' lives... WE NEVER TAKE
FOR GRANTED THAT PEOPLE CHOOSE TO
CELEBRATE THOSE *moments with us.*"**

APPLE *galettes*



crust ingredients

- 2-1/2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 1-1/2 teaspoons Olivelle Vanilla Bean Infused Sea Salt
- 1 cup unsalted butter (2 sticks), grated and well chilled
- 4-6 tablespoons ice water

crust topping

- 1 egg, whisked for egg wash
- 1 tablespoon coarse sugar

filling ingredients

- 4 Gala apples, cored and cut into thin 1/8-inch slices using a mandoline
- 2 tablespoons brown sugar
- 2 teaspoons fine lemon zest
- 1 teaspoon lemon juice
- 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1/4 teaspoon grated nutmeg
- 1/4 teaspoon Olivelle Vanilla Bean Infused Sea Salt
- 1/3 cup apricot jam
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter, chilled and cut into small pieces

for serving

- Vanilla ice cream
- Sprinkle of cinnamon

MAKES TWO (ABOUT 10-INCH) SQUARE GALETTES

CAN FRESH APPLES BE CELEBRATED TOO MUCH? WE THINK NOT! THIS RUSTIC YET ELEGANT OFFERING SHOWCASES THE SEASON'S BEST APPLES IN AN EYE-CATCHING AND DELICIOUS WAY. JUICY APPLES ARE BAKED ON TOP OF A CASUAL CRUST WITH JUST THE RIGHT TOUCH OF SWEETNESS, A HINT OF CINNAMON, AND A POP OF LEMON. TOP EACH SERVING WITH A SCOOP OF VANILLA ICE CREAM FOR AN EASY, IRRESISTIBLE DESSERT.

directions

1. Mix the flour, sugar, and salt together in a large bowl with a whisk until evenly distributed.
2. Fill a small bowl with ice cubes and water. Place the grated butter in the flour mixture. Using a pastry blender, cut the butter and flour mixture together until a coarse texture is reached with some pea-sized pieces of butter remaining.
3. Add 2 tablespoons of the ice water by sprinkling on top of the flour/butter mixture. With a fork, gently toss the mixture. Continue adding ice water, one tablespoon at a time, tossing after each addition until a rough ball of dough forms. (Avoid adding too much water.)
4. Flatten the dough ball into a disk about one-inch thick, and wrap in plastic wrap. Chill the wrapped dough disk for an hour or overnight.
5. On a pastry slab or a cutting board, divide the dough into two even balls. Place the first half of the dough directly on a sheet of parchment paper and roll into a rough square, about 1/8-inch-thick. Create a rimmed edge by folding one inch of the dough onto itself around the perimeter. Chill for 15 minutes. While the first half is chilling, prepare the second half of dough into a square as well.
6. Preheat the oven to 425°F.
7. Meanwhile, prepare the filling. In a large bowl, mix the apple slices with the brown sugar, lemon zest, lemon juice, cinnamon, nutmeg, and salt. Toss until evenly coated.
8. Assemble the galettes. Spread the apricot jam evenly over the prepared crusts. Group apple slices together, and then carefully arrange the slices so that they overlap slightly.
9. Distribute the small butter pieces evenly on top of the apples. Use a pastry brush to lightly brush the crust rim with the lightly beaten egg. Sprinkle the coarse sugar on top of the crust.
10. Bake for about 30 minutes, or until the crust lightly browns. Allow to cool slightly. Serve with a generous scoop of vanilla ice cream!



APPLE, POMEGRANATE, *Kale Salad*

SERVES 6-8

DID SOMEONE SAY WARM, FALL SALAD? YES, PLEASE! IN THIS RECIPE, WE HIGHLIGHT DELICIOUS FALL PRODUCE LIKE CRUNCHY APPLES, HEARTY KALE, AND TART POMEGRANATES. PAIRED WITH EARTHY GORGONZOLA AND TANGY DRIED APRICOTS, THIS BEAUTY IS TOPPED WITH SWEET AND SPICY PECANS – A GARNISH SO GOOD YOU’LL NEED TO MAKE A DOUBLE BATCH!

salad ingredients

- 2 bunches Lacinato kale leaves, torn into pieces
- 1 bunch green kale, torn into pieces
- 1/4 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1 tablespoon Olivelle Sicilian Lemon Infused Olive Oil
- 3/4 cup pomegranate arils (or 1 pomegranate)
- 1 Honeycrisp apple, cored and thinly sliced
- 1 Granny Smith apple, cored and thinly sliced
- 1/2 cup Gorgonzola cheese, crumbled
- 10 dried apricots, sliced

sweet and spicy pecans

- 2 tablespoons butter, melted
- 1/4 teaspoon cayenne
- 1/4 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1 tablespoon brown sugar
- 1/4 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1 cup unsalted pecan halves

dressing ingredients

- 1/3 cup Olivelle Sicilian Lemon Infused Olive Oil
- 1 shallot, thinly sliced
- 2 tablespoons Olivelle Vine-Ripened Raspberry White Barrel Aged Balsamic
- 1 teaspoon fresh thyme leaves
- 1/2 tablespoon Dijon mustard
- 1/2 tablespoon maple syrup
- 1/4 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1/4 teaspoon black pepper

directions

1. Preheat the oven to 275°F. Combine the butter, cayenne, cinnamon, brown sugar, and salt in a medium bowl. Add the pecans and toss to coat. Spread the mixture on a parchment-lined baking sheet and bake for 30 minutes, stirring occasionally, until the nuts are browned. Remove from heat and let cool. (Store any leftover pecans in a dry, airtight container for up to 2 weeks.)
2. Meanwhile, add the kale to a large salad bowl. Sprinkle with the salt and olive oil and massage with your hands for 2-3 minutes until the kale pieces start to become tender.
3. Make the dressing by heating the olive oil in a medium skillet over medium-high heat. Add the sliced shallots and cook for 2-3 minutes until softened. Remove from heat.
4. Whisk together the remaining dressing ingredients. Pour the olive oil and shallot into the dressing and stir.
5. Drizzle half of the dressing on the kale and use tongs to toss. Arrange the pomegranate arils, apples, Gorgonzola cheese, and dried apricots on top of the salad. Drizzle the salad with the remaining dressing and top with the sweet and spicy pecans. Serve immediately.



Tagliatelle Pasta

WITH ROASTED DELICATA SQUASH AND CRISPY SAGE SAUCE

SERVES 4 - 6

THIS BEAUTIFUL FALL PASTA DISH CELEBRATES THE OFTEN OVERLOOKED DELICATA SQUASH. CREAMY AND SWEET, THIS GREEN AND YELLOW STRIATED SQUASH IS ROASTED UNTIL GOLDEN BROWN, THEN TOSSED WITH TOOTHY TAGLIATELLE PASTA IN A NUTTY, BROWN BUTTER SAUCE. TOPPED WITH TOASTED WALNUTS, CRISPY SAGE, AND A HEALTHY DOSE OF PARMESAN – DINNER IS DELICIOUSLY SERVED!

ingredients

- 1 cup walnut halves
- 1 large (or two small) delicata squash
- 4 cloves garlic, thinly sliced
- 2 shallots, peeled, halved, and thinly sliced
- 2 tablespoons Olivelle Wild Mushroom & Sage Infused Olive Oil
- 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1/2 teaspoon black pepper
- 1/4 teaspoon crushed red pepper
- 1/2 cup butter
- 15-20 sage leaves, washed and patted dry
- 1/2 cup vegetable stock
- 2 tablespoons dry white wine
- 1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice
- 1 cup finely grated Parmesan cheese
- 1 lb tagliatelle pasta

directions

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F. Arrange the walnut halves in a single layer on a rimmed baking sheet and bake until toasted, about 5-8 minutes. Stir halfway through to ensure even cooking. Once browned and fragrant, remove walnuts from the oven and set aside to cool.
2. Increase the oven temperature to 425°F. Scrub the delicata squash and cut off the stem and root ends. Halve the squash lengthwise and scrape out the seeds. Cut the squash into 1/2-inch wide pieces, leaving the peel on.
3. In a medium bowl, add the squash, garlic, and shallots. Toss with the olive oil, kosher salt, black pepper, and crushed red pepper until coated. Evenly spread the mixture on a rimmed baking sheet and roast for 20 minutes, or until the squash becomes tender and begins to brown. Remove from the oven and set aside.
4. In a Dutch oven over medium-low heat, add the butter and stir constantly until it begins to turn from yellow to light brown. Add the sage leaves and cook in the butter until crisp, using tongs to individually turn each leaf so that both sides are cooked. Once crispy, remove the sage leaves from the butter and place on a paper towel-lined plate. Continue to cook the butter until it is brown and has a rich, nutty aroma. Add the vegetable stock and dry white wine. Continue to cook on a low simmer until the sauce has reduced by almost half. Remove the Dutch oven from heat and set aside.
5. Boil the pasta according to the directions and cook until al dente. Drain the pasta, reserving some of the pasta water. Immediately toss the pasta in the brown butter sauce. Add the lemon juice and reserved pasta water 1/4 cup at a time as needed to coat the pasta.
6. Add in the delicata squash, garlic, shallots, and Parmesan cheese, and top with the crispy sage and walnuts. Taste and add additional salt and pepper as needed. Serve immediately.



helpful tip

DELICATA SQUASH DOES NOT HAVE TO BE PEELED, AND IS MUCH EASIER TO CUT THAN SAY, WRANGLING A BUTTERNUT SQUASH. THIS MAKES THIS DISH A QUICK-AND-EASY WEEKNIGHT PASTA! THE STRIATED GREEN AND YELLOW SKIN IS TENDER AND OFFERS A TEXTURAL DEPTH TO THE DISH, WHILE THE SQUASH'S FLAVOR IS SLIGHTLY SWEET AND NUTTY.

THE WOMAN
BEHIND THE
magic

MEET KRISTE
STEINKEN

GENERAL MANAGER
OF THE ELKS THEATRE

BY KRYSTAL BRESNAHAN



General Manager Kriste Steinken knows that experiencing the magic of the movies is only made possible thanks to the people who bring the Elks Theatre to life. Find out how her passion for service keeps people coming back to the big screen.

CAREER DEBUT AT THE HISTORIC ELKS THEATRE

The beautifully restored and renovated Elks Theatre harkens back to a movie-going era of silent films and charming nostalgia. Constructed in 1912, the elegant opera house and Elks Lodge once held live theater performances. Now the locally owned theatre debuts first-run films on the largest screen in the state and offers a second screening room upstairs in the former ballroom.

When Kriste Steinken's family moved to Rapid City, she often came to The Elks because her mom loved the popcorn. "On one trip, a staff member said, 'You should work here,' and I remember feeling so special, as if they personally chose me for the job. So, of course, I applied," Steinken says.

Eager to start work at a young age, she earned her first paychecks delivering newspapers and gained job skills through housekeeping and by serving and hosting at various restaurants. Her parents demonstrated the importance of hard work and commitment at home. Her father served in the U.S. Air Force before becoming a

Lutheran minister, while her mother stayed home to raise their children before reentering the workforce.

At 15 years old, Steinken interviewed for a part-time job at The Elks. At the time, Doug and Lori Andrews owned the theatre and had reopened it after fixing extensive flood damage to the facility. Curt Small managed the building and the team. "Curt was so easy to talk to. He made me feel like I could be part of creating an amazing experience for others, and I'm grateful he saw potential in me. He's given me every opportunity and encourages me to keep growing," she says. What started as part-time employment in high school became a passionate career.

Today, Curt Small owns The Elks Theatre, and Steinken serves as the General Manager. "My office now is where Curt first interviewed me," she says, and her smile shines.

CUSTOMER SERVICE MAKES MOVIE-GOING MAGIC

Training as a teenager at The Elks required Steinken to learn how to thread up a 35mm film projector. At 16 years old, she was trusted and trained to handle the delicate films distributed by studios. The process of preparing a film for public viewing required skill, precision, and extra time. She remembers the fear of making a mistake: "My heart was pumping. Back then, one small error could ruin a picture."







"GOING TO THE MOVIES AT THE ELKS STILL FEELS LIKE AN EVENT, AND WE TAKE PRIDE IN THAT."

In the 2010s, industry standards changed, and the unique art form of threading a projector faded away. Nowadays, all movies screened at The Elks are digital, and programming and scheduling are automated operations. According to Steinken, this means spending less time in the booth with film and allowing staff to devote more time and energy to the people coming to the movies.

"People don't have a lot of expendable time, so when they choose to spend it at The Elks, we want them to leave feeling it mattered," Steinken says. After reading online reviews of the Elks Theatre, it's clear her approach to service is winning over customers; many mention that the welcoming staff leaves a lasting impression. "We believe in the service we're providing for our community, and we have an attentive and smiling crew who is genuinely happy to see you."

Part of this tradition shows up in the overall appearance of the staff. The team dresses sharply seven days a week. For weekend viewing, they add a formal flair featuring tuxedos with gold vests, matching bow ties, and personalized name tags. "Our uniforms reflect the history of theatre attendants who printed tickets and helped guests navigate dark theatres to their seats. Going to the movies at The Elks still feels like an event, and we take pride in that," Steinken says. Her team's efforts are rewarded by giving people an unforgettable experience, show after show.

“We see hundreds of visitors each day, and it’s a tight turnaround between movie start times. We have 10 minutes or less to clean up, so as soon as credits roll, we’re on the countdown. I love the challenge! We all mop floors, clean bathrooms, and haul trash. There’s no job I would ask someone to do that I haven’t done before,” Steinken says. “All the work gets wiped out in a day, and we start over the next. We’re always working to provide a presentable auditorium. It’s a lot like welcoming people to your house.”

CREATING MEMORABLE MOMENTS AT THE ELKS THEATRE

The first time a studio contacted the Elks Theatre directly to release a film on its national opening day was in 2014 for *The Interview* starring Seth Rogen and James Franco. Due to controversy surrounding the film, other local theaters withdrew their bookings. The Elks sold out several times in the weeks that followed. “Not only did it show us that we could compete, it also showed the studios we could out-gross the corporate chains in our market,” Steinken says.

Going to the movies brings people together, and opening day always feels extra special. “Everyone is experiencing the unknown and

watching for the first time. It’s a unique chance to unplug and go on an adventure with fewer logistics. There’s no laundry. No planning for the weather. No emails. No interruptions. You get to fully immerse yourself in the film.”

“When you’ve all been looking forward to seeing the same movie, it’s something you won’t forget. Even waiting in line is exciting,” Steinken says.

Locals also like to line up for another reason. Legend has it that The Elks makes the best movie theatre popcorn in western South Dakota.

Most days, from 12:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m., you can find a line of people in the lobby ordering popcorn to go. High-quality kernels go from farm to kettle, seasoned with salt, drizzled in butter, and then scooped into bags (or buckets!) for loyal customers. “When you invest in your product and your customers enjoy it, they will let you know!” Steinken says. “Our popcorn might be the biggest star at our theatre.”

In fact, popcorn sales might have saved the Elks Theatre.

In March 2020, when movie theatres across the country went dark, the Elks Theatre announced a local popcorn delivery service available from 12:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. “It took two minutes for the phone to ring with the first order, and then it never stopped. We missed calls

"POPCORN MIGHT BE THE BIGGEST STAR AT OUR THEATRE."

because we were on the other line finishing orders. We went seven weeks without showing a movie, but we never closed our doors, and we were able to keep all our staff," Steinken shares. "The community kept our business alive during that time, and we're forever grateful."

Shared memories with strangers range from extraordinary moments, like ordering popcorn delivery during a pandemic, to the simple experiences of sitting, sobbing, screaming, laughing, or simply feeling more connected in front of the same big screen at The Elks.

Every holiday season, *It's a Wonderful Life* returns to the theatre. What started as a fun way to share a well-loved film became something bigger. "Regulars return to our theatre year after year, and we get the chance to build relationships. Families make it their Christmas tradition, and some customers say it's the service they choose to attend instead of church. It's amazing when lights come up and you see how many tears came down during the movie. It inspires me to be here for them," Steinken says. "Crowds continue to grow, and we plan to continue doing this as long as Curt owns this theatre."

More than a century after it was built, the Elks Theatre remains a beloved part of local history and a special gathering place. It's comforting to know that a kid who grew up going there to order popcorn and see movies with her mom is now mentoring the next generation of movie theatre magicians.



2026 BOND REFERENDUM

Investing in Safe, Efficient, Future-Ready Schools

THIS BOND PLAN
PROTECTS STUDENTS,
IMPROVES AGING
SCHOOLS, AND PREPARES
FOR GROWTH IN A
RESPONSIBLE WAY WHILE
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TAXPAYER DOLLARS.

The proposed \$107 million bond focuses on school safety, aging building systems, responsible growth, and long-term cost savings across the district. This plan protects students, improves aging schools, and prepares for responsible growth while making the most of taxpayer dollars. This bond referendum allows the district to implement the master plan more quickly, improving facilities for all students and staff.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Can bond money pay salaries?

No. Bond funds are restricted to capital projects only.

Can it cover operating expenses?

No. Utilities, supplies, and day-to-day costs are not eligible.

Does the State pay for it?

No. Investors provide the funds. Local property taxes repay them.

Does everyone pay the same?

No. Your cost depends on your property's taxable valuation.

If the bond fails, do the needs disappear?

No. The district still addresses needs — but projects take longer and often cost more due to inflation.



RCAS BOND REFERENDUM AT A GLANCE

HVAC

UPGRADES - \$32M

*Horace Mann, Meadowbrook
& North Middle*

Replace aging heating, cooling, and ventilation systems. Improve air quality, efficiency, and reliability while avoiding costly emergency repairs.

SAFETY AND SECURITY

UPGRADES — \$3M

*Black Hawk, Grandview,
Knollwood, Southwest & West Middle*

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SOUTH PARK ADDITION & RENOVATION — \$12M

Bring students under one roof, eliminate portable classrooms, improve special education space, update accessibility, and modernize heating and cooling.

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Connect building areas, improve supervision, reduce exterior access points, keep students inside during passing periods, and improve airflow throughout the school for a safer, more comfortable learning environment.



TAX INFORMATION

If passed, property taxes would increase by \$0.49 for every \$1,000 of property valuation. Full tax calculator available at [RCAS.org/bond-information](https://rcas.org/bond-information).

Growing with



Every Milestone



BY ELLA SMITH

Like many families in the Black Hills, summer in the Anderson house is wonderfully chaotic. With baseball games, birthday parties, and trampoline time, the Andersons are always active and often found all across Rapid City. For Halie Anderson, mom of four and allergy specialist, summer means embracing the chaos of busy schedules, the calm of family dinners, and celebrating every milestone her children reach.

“We thrive in the chaos,” says Halie. “We’re always moving in lots of different directions. My kids are happier kids when we’re doing something.”

Halie and her husband, Matt, met during med school. After marrying and completing their residencies, they moved back to the Black Hills, where Halie grew up, to raise their family. Halie has four kids: 11-year-old Kieran, 8-year-old Delaney, 5-year-old Avery, and 2-year-old Callum.

She describes her kids as very different from one another. “Kieran is super smart and incredibly motivated to do his best in everything. Delaney is the sweetest little heart. She’s always mediating between her siblings and taking care of them. Avery is our spitfire. She’s sporting a cast right now to prove it — the perfect combination of spicy and sweet. And Callum is everyone’s favorite. He’s full of such joy and happiness.”



“It [being a mom] made me want to be a better version of myself for my kids. Each kid has shaped me in different ways. Callum, our youngest, has really highlighted that.”

Halie remembers being nervous but delighted to become a mom and how each child challenged her to become someone better.

“I was so excited, grateful, and honored to be a mom,” says Halie. “It made me want to be a better version of myself for my kids. Each kid has shaped me in different ways. Callum, our youngest, has really highlighted that.”

When Halie and Matt were expecting their fourth child, they anticipated an experience similar to what they had with their first three children. But learning that Callum had Down syndrome and a complex congenital heart disease meant they had to reshape those expectations.

“You have in your mind these expectations for what adding another child is going to look like,” says Halie. “So learning that it wasn’t going to be that way was hard at first. I had to grieve the baby I had envisioned joining our family.”



Within 24 hours of being born, Callum was flown to Omaha. He underwent his first open-heart surgery at seven days old and another when he was two months old. During that time, Halie and Matt lived in the ICU, leaning on each other and taking each day as it came while family and friends kept life moving for their older children back in Rapid City.

“Don’t be afraid to accept help,” Halie advises moms. “If you have that village of people around you, let them help you. It brings them joy to do something tangible to help, and it brings you joy to let them into your life in that way. I’m so grateful to live in the Rapid City community where people are willing to step in and help.”

Halie also noted how that experience helped her grow, not only as a mom but also as a physician.

“A big part of my identity is being a physician and taking care of people,” says Halie. “But having a very sick baby and spending a month living in an ICU has really helped me understand how scary it is to be on the other side. I have a new appreciation for the trust a family puts in a doctor. It made me a more empathetic listener for my patients. I see how they need someone to hear them and advocate for them.”

As she watches Callum grow, Halie reflects on the incredible joy and love he has brought to their family.

“He’s just the greatest blessing to our family,” says Halie. “He’s filled with so much joy, and he puts into perspective

what really matters. When we’re tempted to get caught up in the ways of the world, he shows us all how to slow down.”

Like many children with Down syndrome, Callum has worked harder to reach each developmental milestone. The older kids have seen his hard work and matched it with celebration for each milestone he reaches.

“Loving Callum, who will walk a path different from theirs, gives them a different perspective on life. They love him just for being their brother.”

As Halie reflects on the last decade of being a mom, she notes how much her kids have helped her grow as a person and taught her to celebrate what is truly valuable in life.

“Looking back at who I was when I became a mom eleven years ago reminds me how much motherhood has grown and stretched me. Being a mom is my favorite title,” says Halie. “To love someone whose path looks different and who has different obstacles put in front of him makes you appreciate what you do have and not take for granted what you’ve been given.”





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Performing Arts Center

DISCO INFERNO

Featuring Anverrea Bennett
December 31, 2026 7:30 pm
Performing Arts Center

CUPID'S BOW

February 13, 2027 7:30 PM
Performing Arts Center

MAYA ANJALI BUCHANAN

April 10, 2027, 7:30 PM
Performing Arts Center

THE LOCAL

September

Polkapalooza

HILL CITY | SEPT. 11 & 12

Palmer Gulch KOA in Hill City is hosting a two-day festival filled with German food and live music. Admission is just \$5 per person for fun the whole family will enjoy.

Harvest Fest

SPEARFISH | SEPT. 12

Shop local vendors in downtown Spearfish who produce, grow, raise, or create their products from start to finish. It's the perfect opportunity to find delicious local produce or a special handcrafted gift. The event starts at 9:00 a.m. and features additional fall activities beyond shopping.

The Great Downtown Pumpkin Festival

RAPID CITY | SEPT. 19

The biggest event in Downtown Rapid City deserves a spot on your calendar. The Great Downtown Pumpkin Festival is a great way to kick off the fall season with the whole family. Enjoy pumpkin-themed celebrations featuring pumpkin chucking, catapulting, painting, weighing, and so much more!

Dynamix

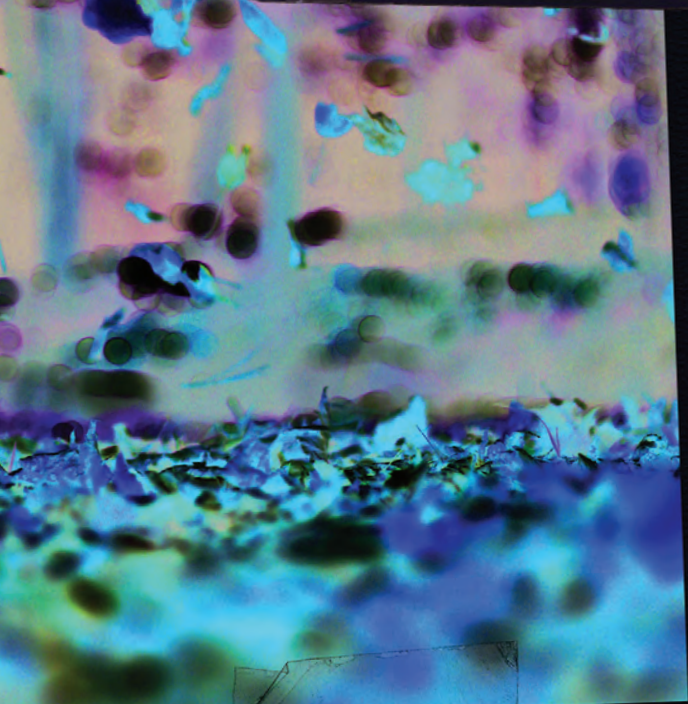
RAPID CITY | SEPT. 20

Multiple voices and harmonies come together during a Dynamix a cappella extravaganza. Experience the musical talents of this group as they perform a wide variety of genres at Seraphim Theater in Rapid City on September 20 at 2:00 p.m.

Crazy Horse Memorial® Fall Volksmarch

CUSTER | SEPT. 27

Catch a unique view of the Black Hills' fall colors from the outstretched arm of Crazy Horse during the semiannual Crazy Horse Memorial® Volksmarch. This organized 6.2-mile hike starts at 8:00 a.m. and costs \$4 or three cans of food to participate.



EDIT

BY KELS Y PETERSON

Mark your calendars! Fall events in the Black Hills don't hold back, and neither should you. Celebrate the changing seasons with all the festive fall fun below!

October

Oktoberfest

DEADWOOD | OCT. 2 & 3

Put on your lederhosen and head to Deadwood for the annual Oktoberfest celebration. Cheer on the thrilling wiener dog races, register to compete in the Beer Barrel Games, or simply enjoy a day filled with cold beer and Oktoberfest festivities in the Wild West.

Bierbörse Festival

RAPID CITY | OCT. 3

Main Street Square's 17th Annual Bierbörse kicks off on October 3 from noon to 5:00 p.m. Guests ages 21 and older can participate in the fluctuating fun of the beer stock exchange and sample a wide variety of beverages from regional breweries.

Harvest Moon Festival

CUSTER | OCT. 3

Free family fun will take place at Buffalo Ridge Camp Resort in Custer during the Harvest Moon Festival. Event activities include hayrides, bounce houses, a cornhole tournament, pet costume contests, pie eating, and more. You can also shop local vendors and enjoy food trucks and the beer garden!

Fall Festival Days at Old MacDonald's Farm

RAPID CITY
OCT. 3, 10, 17, 24 & 31

Every Saturday in October, fall festivities take over Old MacDonald's Farm in Rapid City. Enjoy all the usual animal cuteness at this favorite local attraction with a fall twist during festival days, including bounce houses, wagon rides, and more!

Deadweird

DEADWOOD | OCT. 30 & 31

Put together your best costume and celebrate the spooky season in Deadwood! Friday kicks off with the Monster Ball at Deadwood Mountain Grand and features live music, dancing, and the People's Choice Costume Contest. On Saturday, the fun continues with a costume contest at the Historic Franklin Hotel, followed by more spook-tacular music, dancing, and drinks.

THE STORIES
skin tells

BY MIRANDA O'BRYAN HERTEL

HOW DR. LYCIA THORNBURG BUILT HER DREAM CLINIC ON CONNECTION AND CARE



After more than two decades of caring for patients across the Black Hills, Dr. Lycia Thornburg hasn't simply opened the doors to a new dermatology clinic — she's realized a dream years in the making.

Every detail, from the welcoming lobby to the educational spaces throughout the clinic, reflects the philosophy she's spent her career developing: medicine should feel personal, patients should feel heard, and beauty should always begin with confidence.

"I'm more excited about my practice now than ever," Dr. Thornburg said. "What I love most is how supportive my family has been. Between my girls and my husband, we created this clinic together."

For Dr. Thornburg, who has called the Black Hills home for more than 20 years, opening her own practice marks the beginning of a new chapter — one built not only on medicine, but also on relationships, education, and the community she's spent decades serving.

Growing up outside Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Dr. Thornburg always felt drawn to medicine but, like so many young people, wasn't certain where that calling would lead. While studying abroad in France,

“I love
what I do.
I love being
a doctor.”

an unexpected illness led to the kindness of a physician who refused payment, asking only that she “pay somebody back someday.” That single act of kindness changed the course of her life.

“Because of that sweet doctor, I came home from studying abroad, changed my degree back to pre-med, and never looked back,” she said. “I love what I do. I love being a doctor.”

While in school, dermatology became the perfect intersection of science, artistry, and human connection. Dr. Thornburg quickly realized the skin tells stories far deeper than appearance alone — often reflecting health, confidence, identity, and emotional well-being. Today, those same philosophies shape every aspect of her practice and extend well beyond the exam room.

BEYOND THE EXAM ROOM

Nearly two decades ago, Dr. Thornburg founded Made for Shade, a nonprofit dedicated to skin cancer prevention and sun safety, with the support of Drs. Wittenberg, Finley, and Poling, community volunteers, and Riddle’s Jewelry. What began as a small initiative has grown into an organization that has funded shade structures, educational programs, trees, and grants for schools and nonprofits across the Black Hills.

“I think the secret sauce to Made for Shade is that it’s become something the community is proud of,” she said. “It’s not just mine; it’s all of ours.”

Dr. Thornburg didn’t stop there. Wanting to share the knowledge she couldn’t always fit into a 15-minute appointment, Dr. Thornburg published *Chasing Beauty: The Art, Science, and Business of Aesthetics* in 2025. Writing the book connected her with experts across the country and challenged her to grow beyond her role as a physician. In the process, she said she found the confidence to take another leap, opening Lycia Thornburg, MD Dermatology at the start of this summer.

“I’m having more fun being a doctor now than when I started,” Dr. Thornburg mused. “It’s all these side projects I’m doing that don’t necessarily pay me anything other than knowledge, connections, and really bringing all that back to Rapid City.”





A LEGACY OF CONNECTION

Whether she's spending a few extra minutes with patients she's cared for over the last 20 years or watching her three daughters find their passions alongside her, community remains at the heart of everything Dr. Thornburg does.

Over the years, she's celebrated milestones with patients, walked alongside families through difficult diagnoses, and watched children she once treated grow into adults with families of their own.

"Yesterday, a patient texted me and said, 'Keep an

eye out for a check for Made for Shade because you saved my life ten years ago,'" she recalled. "Moments like that are incredibly humbling. They remind me why I chose this profession, and I feel so grateful that I get to do this every day."

Those moments continue to remind Dr. Thornburg why she chose medicine in the first place and inspire her to continue making an impact — not only across the Black Hills, but in the lives of the women and families she serves.





"True confidence comes from health, authenticity, and embracing who you are."

HER ADVICE IS SIMPLE:

"Women do not have to earn their worth through perfection. Beauty is not about filters, comparison, or trying to look like someone else. True confidence comes from health, authenticity, and embracing who you are," she said. "I also want women to know that it is never selfish to invest in your health, your goals, or your growth, whether that means scheduling your skin check or pursuing a dream."

That same philosophy shaped every corner of her new

practice. The space was intentionally designed to feel less like a medical office and more like a welcoming home — a place where patients feel comfortable asking questions, learning about their skin, and feeling truly seen.

After more than two decades of caring for people across the Black Hills, there may be no greater compliment than hearing longtime patients walk into her new clinic and say, "It just looks like you."

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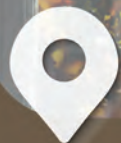


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This is Girlhood

BY JENNAE CECELIA

adult friendship is opening your calendar
and realizing the next free weekend
you both have is seven weeks away.
so you pick a date,
circle it,
and add a reminder two days before.

and when the day finally comes,
you sit across from each other
and talk about everything you meant to share
throughout the busy weeks.

you leave the restaurant feeling better.
wondering why you don't do this more often.
even though you already know.
life gets so loud.
but friendship is choosing each other
despite the noise and having grace
for it taking so long to catch up.

passing down a purpose

BY AVERY PORCH

Some families pass down traditions. Others pass down recipes or heirlooms. For Kristol McKie and her daughters, Kassie and Karris, what has been passed from one generation to the next is a commitment to serving others.

That shared purpose is rooted in an equally strong relationship, one built on trust, mutual effort, and years of choosing to

stay connected. "My daughters aren't just my children; they're two of my closest friends," Kristol says.

The three gather for family dinners, talk on the phone several times a week, and are all involved in the family business to some degree. But beyond their close bond, they share a deep sense of purpose: a desire to serve, make a difference, and improve their community.





Leading by Example

In Rapid City, Kristol McKie is known for her involvement in various nonprofits and arts organizations, most notably through her role at the Black Hills Community Theater, where she is currently directing the musical *Frozen*. Her volunteer resume is long and impressive, having worked with the Black Hills Works Foundation, the Performing Arts Center, Canyon Lake Little League, and the Rapid City Public School Foundation. “The running joke is, ‘If it pays, I don’t do it,’” she chuckles.

She graduated with a Bachelor of Music from the University of South Dakota (USD) in 1983, where she participated in choral music and solo vocal performance.

She even appeared in several operas at USD, which sparked her love for performing and later led to her involvement with the Black Hills Community Theater. She started volunteering as a way to keep her skills sharp, using her “natural gifts of organization and gab” to serve others.

“My inspiration to serve is totally need-based. There is always a need, no matter what kind of organization or nonprofit it is,” Kristol says. “Everyone is busy, but there is always something you can do, even if it is as small as organizing a group to handle one part of an event or making a few fundraising calls.” As a longtime volunteer, Kristol can attest that even the smallest contributions make a meaningful difference.

Striking a Balance

Kristol's drive and can-do attitude are evident in both of her daughters, who have each found their own ways to serve the community.

"Karris's life runs at warp speed between working and following her boys around. She is usually up at 4:00 a.m. working out and doesn't stop until after the kids are in bed. She juggles work, birthday parties, baseball mom duties, and everything else so seamlessly," Kassie says about her twin sister.

Karris is a partner in multiple automotive-related franchises and businesses alongside her family, including McKie Ford, Indian Motorcycle Sturgis, and several Budget Car Rental locations. She has worked within the organization for more than 19 years. She and her husband are also raising three young boys. "They fill our calendar and keep us on our toes," she laughs.

Karris admits that balancing work and family life can be challenging, even on the best of days. Even so, she still finds ways to invest in her community. "Right now, our focus is on our kids. All of our extra time and energy is spent at youth sporting events, and we're spending our time bettering those organizations."

When life feels overwhelming, Karris is grateful to have a role model to look up to. "What I appreciate most about my mom is that she understands the demands of both family and business because she's lived it herself. She's always quick to offer encouragement and reminds me that even when life feels anything but balanced, there's value in how we navigate it," Karris says.



A full-page photograph of two women jumping joyfully against a vibrant sunset sky. The women are silhouetted against the bright orange and yellow light of the setting sun, which is partially obscured by clouds. They are both in mid-air, with their arms and legs outstretched, conveying a sense of freedom and happiness. The sky transitions from a deep orange near the horizon to a darker purple at the top.

"Don't be afraid to ask for help."

Thanks to her mom, Karris has learned to give herself grace rather than strive for an impossible standard.

Karris also shares a deep bond with her twin sister, whom she describes as her “built-in best friend” and confidante. “Whether I’m navigating a challenge at work or feeling the pressures of a busy schedule, she’s often my first call,” Karris says. “She brings perspective, empathy, and a sense of calm that I deeply value. I’m grateful to have that kind of constant support in my life.”

Throughout every stage of life, Kristol has remained a steady source of guidance and encouragement. When it comes to raising a family, she believes it truly takes a village, a philosophy shaped by her own experience. “Rely on your support system as much as you can,” she advises. “Find out who you can count on, whether that’s a neighbor or a good friend. Most importantly, don’t be afraid to ask for help.”

A Calling to Serve

Like her twin sister, Kassie balances a demanding career with a full life outside the office.

After graduating from law school, she spent nearly 11 years as an attorney in private practice before accepting an in-house counsel position at a nonprofit. Kassie credits much of her success to her mom, whose drive and determination set a high standard. “My mom has always been a leader and has endless motivation and energy, it seems. She sees a problem or a project and wastes no time resolving it.”

A strong advocate for local organizations, Kassie serves on the boards of the Black Hills Area Community Foundation and West Hills Village. She and her mom also volunteer with

the Oglala Pet Project, fostering puppies and working at their spay and neuter clinic each summer.

“I have been lucky to have many role models who prioritize community service,” Kassie shares. “My parents have both served on different boards over the years and have been part of community initiatives, oftentimes quietly and under the radar. When service has been ingrained in your life, serving your community becomes an obligation and a calling rather than a burden.”

For Kassie, community involvement is an opportunity to learn from and connect with others. “Volunteering can be both a way to express your passion for a particular cause and a way to get to know other community members better. You’ll learn about needs and causes that you may not otherwise be exposed to,” she explains.

Kassie has learned that no one can do everything, but everyone can do something. “I just hope that people remember me as being kind and generous with my time. I really ascribe to the belief that you should leave a place better than you found it.”

A Legacy in the Making

For Kristol, Kassie, and Karris, service is not simply something they make time for. It is woven into the way they live. Whether through volunteering, supporting local organizations, or investing in the next generation, they each find meaningful ways to contribute to the community. Their paths may look different, but they share the same belief that small acts of generosity can make a lasting impact. More than a family tradition, service has become a legacy they are building together and carrying forward.



the weight OF TRUST

BY MADIGAN SCHMITZ

There are professions that serve people in their finest moments, and others that show up in their most vulnerable ones. Alexa Stulken has built her career squarely in the second category, supporting people through life's hardest, happiest, and most unexpected moments.

As Chief Wealth and Trust Officer at Black Hills Trust Company, Alexa leads a trust company built around one of the most intimate acts of confidence a person can extend: trusting someone else to carry out their final wishes. It's work that requires precision, discretion, and a deep well of compassion.

"We are here to improve lives through lasting, peace-of-mind solutions," she says, "rooted in stewardship, integrity, and compassionate fiduciary care."

Now, if you're unsure what a trust company actually does, it's worth unpacking. At its core, the work is about helping individuals





and families protect, manage, and transfer wealth according to their wishes. Sometimes that means serving as a trustee, overseeing assets on behalf of others according to carefully established instructions. Other times, it means administering estates, managing investments, and serving as a steady fiduciary during life's transitions.

Think of it as a formal promise: people entrust their assets, their legacy, and often the future well-being of their loved ones to a trust company responsible for

carrying out those wishes faithfully. Its role is to ensure those intentions are honored exactly as planned.

That's where Black Hills Trust Company comes in. Founded by Black Hills Federal Credit Union as South Dakota's first Credit Union Service Organization to offer trust services, Black Hills Trust Company is a public trust company built on decades of combined expertise and a commitment to redefining trust administration, estate management, and conservatorship services. The company offers

a full spectrum of fiduciary services — from trust administration and estate management to conservatorships, agency services, and custodial services — all rooted in the same foundational promise. Their role isn't to design the plan. It's to ensure it's carried out.

For Alexa, that distinction is everything.

"The most important aspect of my role is serving as a trusted fiduciary," she says. "It's about protecting our clients' wishes, preserving their legacy, and providing peace of mind for future generations."

Her day-to-day duties span the full breadth of what it takes to lead an organization like this, including fiduciary services, client relationships, strategic planning, HR, finance, and marketing. She works closely with clients, their families, and the professional partners who refer them. But at the heart of her work is building meaningful relationships with

her clients.

"Families trust us with some of their most important decisions," she says, "and that trust is something I deeply value and respect. I do not take it for granted."

Many people assume estate planning and trust ser-

vices are reserved for the ultra-wealthy, but the reality is far more personal. An estate plan can be as simple or as comprehensive as a family needs it to be. It might protect a child with special needs, help ensure a family farm stays intact for future generations, or simply guarantee that a grandmother's wishes are honored exactly as she intended. What all of those situations share is the need for someone trustworthy enough to

**"Families trust us
with some of their
most important
decisions, and that
trust is something
I deeply value and
respect."**

carry them out.

And that's the promise Alexa and her team make every day.

"Listening, being dependable, and consistently

putting their best interests first,” she says, “really goes back to building those meaningful relationships. Ones that can span generations.”

The relationships she’s most proud of are multigenerational. Many of the professional partnerships Alexa has cultivated throughout her career span more than two decades, and some client families have entrusted her with their affairs for her entire time in the industry.



That kind of longevity, Alexa says, doesn't come from technical expertise alone — though she certainly has that, holding both the Certified Trust and Fiduciary Advisor (CTFA) and Accredited Fiduciary Investment Manager (AFIM) designations. It comes from showing up consistently and honestly for people on some of the hardest days of their lives.

Outside the office, Alexa's life is full in the best ways. She and her husband have been married for 26 years and are raising a son who will be heading into middle school this fall. They also share their home with two adored dogs. She stays active, prioritizes her health, and travels whenever she can, but her real anchor, she says, is something simpler.

"Faith, family, friendships, and community," she says. "Those are what bring me the most fulfillment and keep my life in perspective."

She credits her grandfather with a piece of wisdom that has stayed with her since childhood — advice she didn't fully appreciate until adulthood, as is often the way with the best kind of wisdom. He always told her to stop and smell the roses.

"It serves as a good reminder to slow down, keep perspective, and appreciate the genuine relationships and moments that truly matter most," she says. "We just get so busy and we lose sight of that often."

It's a fitting philosophy for someone in her line of work. The families who walk through the doors of Black Hills Trust Company are often facing life's biggest transitions. Alexa meets them there with steadiness and care, helping ensure their wishes are carried out and their loved ones are supported with confidence.

While she serves as the company's leader, Alexa is the first to credit the team around her. She describes them as experienced, compassionate professionals who share a commitment to carry out each client's wishes with care and integrity.

Alexa and her team are the people you call when the stakes are highest — when responsibilities become complex, the path forward feels uncertain, and getting it right matters more than anything.

And for Alexa, that's not a burden. It's the whole point.

"You can't measure life in the things you have," she says. "It's in the people you love, the memories you create, and the difference you make in the lives of others."

"You can't measure life
in the things you have.
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difference you make in
the lives of others."

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Hollow Bones by Jodi Picoult | Contemporary Fiction

READING MOOD: EMOTIONAL & THOUGHT PROVOKING

RELEASES SEPTEMBER 15, 2026

Jodi Picoult's latest novel begins with a tragedy that changes one family's future forever. Molly Fitzgerald loses her mother during the September 11 attacks, an event that shapes every chapter of her life. As an adult, she has built a career helping others prepare for disasters, believing that careful planning can protect the people she loves from the unexpected. But when a crisis forces Molly to confront the limits of even the best-laid plans, she's drawn into a story of family, grief, resilience, and the difficult choices that define us. With Picoult's signature blend of emotional depth and thought-provoking questions, *Hollow Bones* explores how one devastating moment can echo across generations and what it truly means to heal.

CLUB

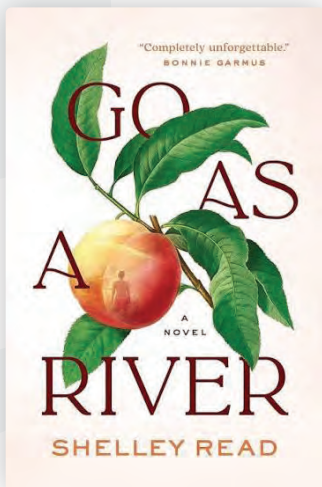


Villa Coco by Andrew Sean Greer | Literary Fiction

READING MOOD: ESCAPE & ADVENTURE

RECOMMENDED BY LESLIE

If you're looking for a story that feels like slipping away on an unforgettable vacation, *Villa Coco* is a wonderful place to start. With its beautiful Italian setting and cast of memorable characters, this novel blends humor, heart, and quiet moments of reflection. It's the kind of book that invites you to slow down, appreciate life's unexpected turns, and enjoy the journey as much as the destination. A lovely choice for readers who enjoy thoughtful fiction with warmth and a sense of adventure.



Go as a River by Shelley Read | Historical Fiction

READING MOOD: REFLECTION & RESILIENCE

RECOMMENDED BY JESSICA

Some stories unfold slowly, inviting you to savor every page, and *Go as a River* is one of them. Set against the breathtaking backdrop of Colorado, this beautifully written novel explores love, loss, resilience, and the courage it takes to forge your own path. Shelley Read creates a story that is both deeply personal and unforgettable, reminding us that even life's greatest hardships can shape us in meaningful ways. A wonderful choice for readers who appreciate rich storytelling, memorable characters, and stories that linger long after the final chapter.



The Girl in the Ice by Robert Bryndza | Crime Thriller

READING MOOD: SUSPENSE & INTRIGUE

RECOMMENDED BY MARKIE

If you enjoy a mystery that keeps you guessing, *The Girl in the Ice* is one you'll want to pick up. When a young woman is discovered beneath the frozen surface of a London park, Detective Erika Foster is called to investigate what first appears to be a straightforward case. As the investigation unfolds, hidden connections, long-buried secrets, and unexpected twists make it clear that nothing is as it seems. Fast-paced and full of suspense, this is the kind of novel that keeps you turning pages late into the night, eager to uncover the truth.



Pets and the City by Dr. Amy Attas | Memoir

READING MOOD: HEARTWARMING & HUMOROUS

RECOMMENDED BY CALLIE

Animal lovers will find plenty to smile about in *Pets and the City*. Filled with heartwarming, humorous, and sometimes emotional stories, this memoir offers a behind-the-scenes look at the special bond between people and their pets. Through memorable encounters and touching moments, it celebrates the joy, loyalty, and unconditional love that animals bring into our lives. Whether you're a lifelong pet owner or simply appreciate stories that warm your heart, this is a delightful read that's sure to leave you smiling.

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A full-page photograph of a pregnant couple in a field. The woman is wearing a denim crop top and a white lace skirt, and the man is wearing a cowboy hat, a light blue shirt, and jeans. They are standing in a field of tall grass with mountains in the background. A wooden fence is visible on the right side of the image.

RILEY WINTER

RW

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A CANVAS CALLED HOME

BY BREY FUHRMANN

"I've been creating art my whole life; it is who I am."

Lydia Grayce was born and raised in Houston, Texas. Having found her artistic calling early in life, she was free to explore art in a multitude of ways, starting with painting and drawing. "I've been creating art my whole life; it is who I am. I know I was painting before I was writing. I was homeschooled by my mom, and she was one of the biggest factors that encouraged my art. Support from my family to do art was really impactful, and being homeschooled, I could get schooling done early and spend the rest of my days making art."

As a young adult, she made the long-distance move to South Dakota to study fine arts at Black Hills State University (BHSU). Many of her early works focused on landscapes, and she was used to finding inspiration for her art in nature. Given the beauty of the hills, she soon discovered a love for the area. "Texas is so huge and has

really pretty parts to it, but to me, nothing compares to being in the Black Hills." Lydia has since settled in Spearfish with her wife, and they proudly call the area home. She often uses her natural surroundings to create or inspire new works of art.

CREATING FROM THE HEART

Her art shows a love for all things whimsical and explores themes of home, community, safety, and warmth, often reflecting the homesickness she felt after moving from Texas. Her schooling pushed her to explore new artistic mediums and even challenged her to create 3D art. Her "Nosey Neighbors" collection, one of the biggest projects she completed at BHSU, encouraged her to stop striving for perfection. "It was a good break away from realism. Rather than painting on the ceramics, they [Nosey Neighbors] were



more simple and whimsical. The characters could fit into one of the landscapes I've painted as if they were living there."

Lydia spoke about a few works of art, including her whimsical strawberry house. This piece, along with many of her other works, circles back to a common theme of home. It was apparent that creating the warmth of community and the comfort of a safe home were important parts of her creative process.

One of her favorite projects is her seven-piece series created using a medium called gouache. Gouache (pronounced "gwash") is a water-based paint similar to watercolor but completely opaque. It allows the artist to create layers in their work that dry smooth and velvety. Lydia's series displays layers of rolling hills and warm homes in an array of colors. When asked why this series was a favorite, Lydia responded, "It's a multiple-color scheme series that was created close to the time I started to not feel homesick. When I made this series, it helped me encapsulate my feelings without being overcomplicated.

I am a perfectionist. Being an artist and a perfectionist can be rough mentally at times. I learned the rules to break the rules."

Throughout her life, Lydia's art has evolved to reflect warm nostalgia and whimsical themes. While she enjoys creating commissioned work, she always makes time to create for herself. She believes the process of creating art is just as meaningful — if not more so — than the finished piece.

Lydia creates from her feelings and emotions, using her art as a way to bring balance to her life. "I see life positively. Art helps release anxiety and boredom, especially during the dreary winter months. It can dissolve or dilute negative feelings. I like being able to feel proud of myself for creating art that I enjoy, instead of making it just for a living."

DREAMS FOR THE FUTURE

Like many of us, Lydia had a teacher who supported her and helped build her



confidence. Today, Lydia dreams of opening her own studio — a place where she can teach, inspire, and help others discover self-expression through art.

She loves teaching children and encourages them to be kind to themselves throughout the creative process. Beyond offering art classes, Lydia envisions a welcoming space where artists can create, connect, and showcase their work through exhibitions. Building confidence in others while fostering a safe, encouraging environment is at the heart of her dream.

“I want to invest in making my dream come true of having a place where I can make art, teach art, and display art. I loved teaching my younger siblings art classes as a child. It’s super important to me that if someone wants to make art — whether they lack confidence or simply want to refine their skills — I can help them. I want to be the person who encourages them.”

Through her art, Lydia invites viewers to observe and hopes to evoke emotion in art lovers and casual observers alike. Many people describe feeling a sense of comfort, safety, and love when experiencing her art, while others are surprised by the nostalgic memories it evokes.

Lydia is currently working on a new series that she hopes to complete in the coming months. Her work can be found at local farmers markets, as well as on her website and Etsy shop. As her artistic journey continues, she remains focused on meaningful work while encouraging others to discover confidence through creativity.

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