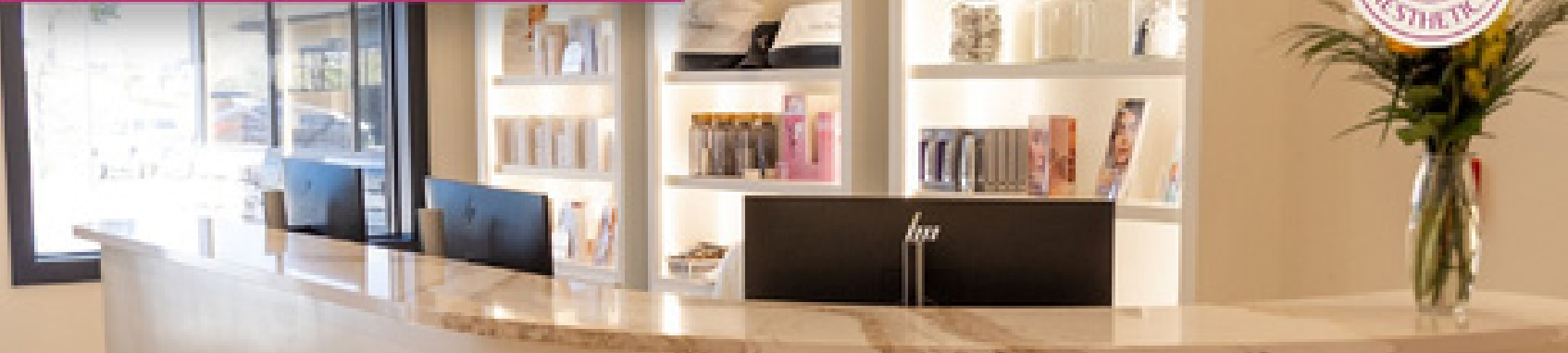


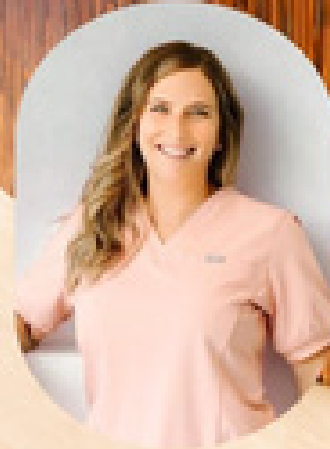
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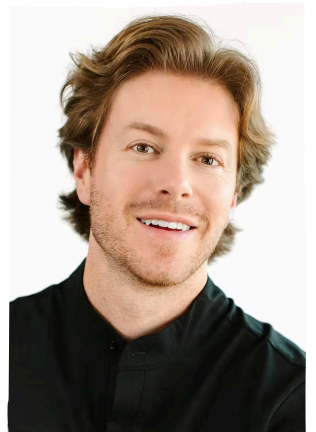
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A Century of Lessons



Letter FROM THE Editor

It's easy to celebrate the big holidays. Having just celebrated America's birthday, you might think Labor Day is the next exciting thing to look forward to. But have you ever noticed the numerous unofficial "national" days that are celebrated each month? I reviewed the list for August and discovered several that seemed worthy of mention. Maybe they'll resonate with you too.

AUGUST 1: NATIONAL GIRLFRIENDS DAY

Where would we be without the amazing women in our lives? I, for one, would not be who I am without the impact of my girlfriends. The ones who truly see me for who I am, the ones who let me cry on their shoulder when things get rough, the ones who encourage me and pray for me and who are always a phone call away if I need anything. In the words of Anne Shirley (Anne of Green Gables), "A bosom friend — an intimate friend, you know — a really kindred spirit to whom I can confide my innermost soul..." The women who walk alongside us and lift us up. Their influence is definitely worth celebrating.

AUGUST 9: NATIONAL BOOK LOVERS DAY

Anyone else? Or just me? I love books. I have for as long as I can remember. Maybe not surprising considering I have a degree in English... but reading books is an amazing way to see the world in a different light. To dive into an unknown world. To immerse yourself in characters that start to feel like friends. To expand your perspective and challenge your thoughts. Reading books is transformative, and having a day to remind ourselves of that is important.

AUGUST 15: NATIONAL RELAXATION DAY

Can I get an AMEN? This is the one thing I don't get enough of. Honestly, do any of us? Often, we are trying to fit as much as we can into one day. "But relaxing — actually unwinding — is something we should make time for. Time to de-stress. Time to disconnect from the busyness and the have-to's. Allow yourself to just be. Do something that recharges you mentally, emotionally, physically, or spiritually. Maybe that is as simple as taking a nap.

AUGUST 22: NATIONAL EAT A PEACH DAY

Summer wouldn't be summer without enjoying fresh, ripe, juicy peaches. My kids wait and wait for peach season, and once it's here, I can never keep enough on hand. Last year, some friends of ours introduced us to the most delicious way to enjoy a peach — on the grill. Cut a peach in half, grill it, then top with a sprinkle of sea salt and a drizzle of honey. Finish with a fresh scoop of vanilla ice cream for an extra yummy treat!

AUGUST 30: NATIONAL BEACH DAY

As the days of warm weather wind down, it seems appropriate to celebrate another thing August is perfect for — a wonderful day at the beach. Pack up a beach tote, load up the cooler, make sure everyone has plenty of snacks, and make your way to any of the picturesque beaches the Black Hills has to offer. Soak up the sun and have some fun!

Until next time.

Warmly, Kari Nielsen





more than a house, a Lifeline

BY MIRANDA O'BRYAN HERTEL

*“If I didn’t
have the Ronald
McDonald
House, where
would I have
been?”*

“If I didn’t have the Ronald McDonald House, where would I have been?” said Kristi Sabo, a mother of two young girls, both of whom required medical care that led her to call Ronald McDonald Houses home.

A MISSION DECADES IN THE MAKING

Ronald McDonald House Charities first opened its doors in 1974 in Pennsylvania, when pediatric oncologist Dr. Audrey Evans identified an immense need to have a home near the hospital for the family members of her young patients. She would go on to collaborate with the Philadelphia Eagles after player Fred Hill’s daughter was diagnosed with leukemia. This family’s need for a place to stay near the hospital helped spark what eventually became a global network. Today, Ronald McDonald House operates homes in most U.S. states and in 62 countries.

Forty-two years after opening its first South Dakota house — and after decades of unmet need west of the Missouri River — Ronald McDonald House is expanding west. A new Rapid City location, the House in the Hills, will serve the western half of the state and the surrounding region.





Currently under construction, the House in the Hills sits at the corner of East Fairmont Boulevard and Elm Avenue and will initially be able to house 12 families, with infrastructure already in place to expand. It's a project that has stalled, resurfaced, and been reimaged for more than two decades.

Now, it's finally becoming a reality.

"IT FELT LIKE A SECOND HOME"

In 2020, Sabo was forced to deliver her oldest daughter, Lennon, at just 28 weeks. Lennon had been diagnosed with hydrops fetalis — a rare and sometimes fatal condition for infants — and was flown more than 350 miles away to Sioux Falls for life-saving treatment at one week old. At the time, the nearest Ronald McDonald House was in Sioux Falls.

Sabo stayed by her daughter's side, but after long days in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU), she had no idea where she would sleep each night. That changed when she learned about the Ronald McDonald House. "It always felt like a second home to me. I stayed there for the first time for four months straight."

Sabo said knowing that Ronald McDonald House is in Rapid City brings her relief for families who will one day face circumstances like hers.

"It's a weight off their shoulders," she said. "The people we never met, that cared enough to lift some of our burden off at that time, they gave us a little bit of stability, some dignity, a safe place to land during the longest and most exhausting chapters of our life." Having a space like this in Rapid City will be life-changing for those who need it, she said.

Like other Ronald McDonald Houses, this new addition will feature multiple common spaces, a teen game room, a toddler playroom, and a fully equipped kitchen stocked

"The people we never met, that cared enough to lift some of our burden off at that time, they gave us a little bit of stability, some dignity, a safe place to land during the longest and most exhausting chapters of our life."

with premade meals and ingredients for families to cook. Each of the 12 bedrooms will also include a private bathroom.

A LONG ROAD TO BREAKING GROUND

Groundbreaking for the House in the Hills took place on October 1, 2025, a milestone more than 20 years in the making.

"I knew there was the desire for it," said Kevin Miles, CEO of Ronald McDonald House South Dakota. While reviewing historical records, he found attempts to start a Rapid City House dating back to 2002, 2003, and again in 2006. "We began talking to the hospital administration again, saying, 'Please help us help families out there.'"

To open a new Ronald McDonald House, a formal request from the local hospital system is required as confirmation that families in the region need this level of support. That request came in 2022, when Monument Health leaders realized the need was no

longer theoretical.

"Our numbers tell the story of why this is so urgent," said Robin Zebroski, Monument Health's chief brand officer. "Last year alone, patient volumes in our Pediatric Intensive Care Unit doubled. More families than ever need specialized pediatric care, and they need a place to stay while their children heal."

Once complete, the house will support families 30 miles outside Rapid City and throughout a 250-mile radius, including portions of Wyoming, Montana, Nebraska, and North Dakota.

"We serve a huge geographic area," said Zebroski. "While our hospital teams focus on clinical care — the surgeries, the treatments, the healing — this house will provide what medicine alone cannot: a place to rest, a community of understanding, and the comfort of being just steps away from your child's bedside."

Though Monument Health is the region's primary system, the house will serve families receiving care not only at Monument Health, but also at Black Hills Orthopedics, Oyate Health Center, and other regional medical providers.

OPENING THE DOORS & KEEPING THEM OPEN

As construction moves forward, the focus is shifting from building walls to building what will fill them: staff, volunteers, and a community ready to support families when they need it most.

The house will require around-the-clock staffing through a combination of full-time and part-time employees, supported by a strong network of volunteers. Interest has already been overwhelming.

"People call daily wanting to volunteer and help,"

said Sheila Klosterman, the Development Officer for Ronald McDonald House South Dakota. “There’s just so much excitement around it.”

That excitement will carry into several upcoming community events, including a fundraising gala in October to support the house’s ongoing needs, followed by an open house in November, giving the public a first look at the space before it begins serving families.

For Klosterman, that excitement is deeply personal.



Years ago, she experienced the realities many Ronald McDonald House families face. In 1998, she gave birth to twin boys at just 24 weeks. Both boys passed away within days. Four years later, she had twins again, born prematurely and requiring weeks of intensive care.

During that time, she saw firsthand how difficult it was for families traveling long distances to be with their children.

“I was so fortunate to live close to the hospital,” she said. “But I saw so many families who couldn’t be there the way they wanted to be.”

That experience is what drives her work today.

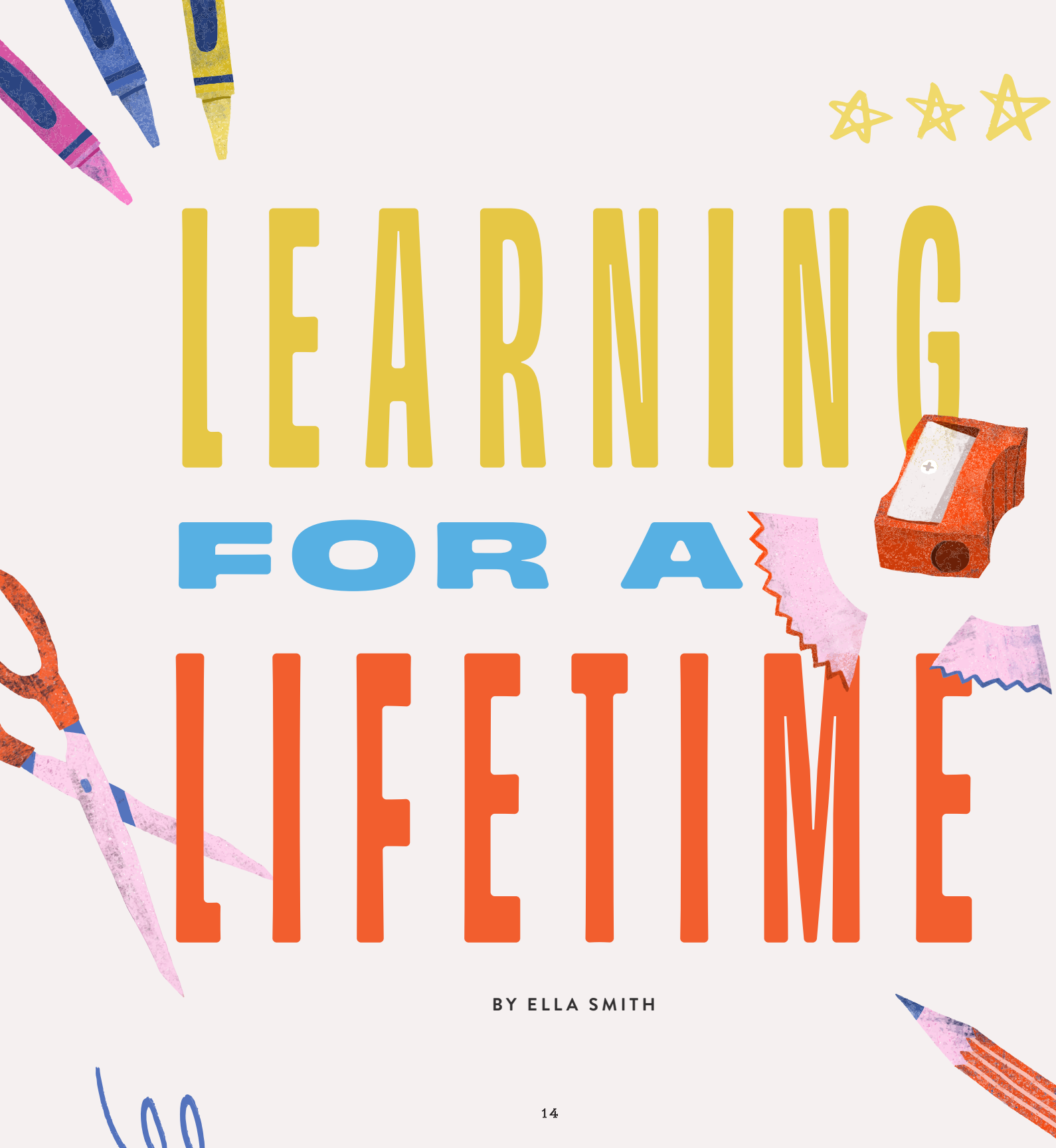
“When you have a sick child, that’s all you should have to focus on,” Klosterman said. “You shouldn’t have to worry about where you’re going to stay, what you’re going to eat, or how you’re going to afford it.”

For families across western South Dakota and the surrounding region, the House in the Hills will soon make that possible — offering not just a place to stay, but a place to breathe, regroup, and remain close when it matters most.

With doors expected to open to families in late 2026, the long-awaited project is finally nearing the moment so many have hoped for. And for those who have waited decades to see it built, that impact is already clear.

It won’t just be a house; it will be a lifeline.





LEARNING FOR A LIFETIME

BY ELLA SMITH



It's 8 a.m. on a Monday, and kids ranging from kindergartners to 5th graders rush into Wilson Elementary School. Some worry about a math test they're about to take, while others run to catch up with their best friend. Meanwhile, a few students carry heavier burdens that cannot fit into their backpacks. Despite what they bring to school, all of the students are met with a friendly smile and a fist bump from Brittany Henry-James, school counselor and the lead elementary counselor for Rapid City Area Schools. Brittany and the other staff from Wilson Elementary station themselves in the hallways to welcome students, offering encouragement while learning their names, struggles, and dreams.



Anyone who meets Brittany can see she is a natural fit in her role, but counseling was not her original plan. Born and raised mostly in east-river South Dakota, Brittany went to college at South Dakota State University (SDSU), where her academic path took some time to unfold. “I struggled to find the right major and figure out where I would land,” Brittany said. “I went through almost the entire catalog of majors in two weeks.”

Eventually, a mentor encouraged her to try out a couple of teaching classes. While she enjoyed the classes, it was her time participating in classroom visitations that won her over to becoming a teacher. “I wanted a job where I loved what I was doing,” said Brittany. “I’m not one for watching time go by on the clock.”

During her time as a Family and Consumer Sciences teacher, Brittany loved implementing her own ideas, even creating a community garden project to give her students hands-on learning experiences. However, her ambition didn’t stop at the classroom. Alongside her teaching, which eventually also included gifted teaching education, she began taking school counseling classes at SDSU. She would teach middle school classes in Sioux Falls all day, then drive straight to the university in Brookings to attend her own night classes.

“I connected with great mentors and loved the therapeutic process and working with students in a different capacity in the school system,” Brittany said. “It’s a special thing to be a part of.”

Shortly after Brittany and her husband welcomed

their first daughter, they felt it was time for a change. “Our dream was always to move to Rapid City. We love it out here, and I was immediately sold when I heard there were no mosquitoes,” said Brittany. “I love South Dakota. It’s such a special state with a lot of diversity. Even though I grew up on the east side of the state, the Black Hills have always felt like home to me. I love the smell of pine trees, being in nature, and exploring the endless areas of the Black Hills with my family.”

It has now been five years since Brittany and her family moved to Rapid City. During that time, she’s held counselor positions first at Robinson Elementary School and currently at Wilson Elementary School. At Wilson, she is known as the one who shows up early, puts on a pot of coffee, and dives into whatever needs to be done to serve the students and their families.

One recent project Brittany has led is the Morning Nest program. This program invites students to come to school before classes start to enjoy a slower, softer beginning to their day. Rather than rushing into classes still blinking back sleepiness, students can get ready and ease into the day feeling calm and refreshed.

“When you think about getting ready in the morning, you think about brushing your teeth, someone combing your hair, or helping you tie your shoes. Morning preparation gives you a win before the day even begins because you think, ‘Wow, someone cares for me!’ and that changes things,” Brittany said. “Kids are coming to school with different struggles: rough mornings, a pet passing away, friend challenges, or an upcoming test. To have a spot where you can

just go — where you don’t have to share anything, and where you can take care of yourself, wash your face, put lotion on your hands, or braid a friend’s hair — that serves students in a bigger way than we even realize.”

Morning Nests has become a popular program, regularly welcoming many students and providing them with a unique opportunity to build community within their school.

Even in her current role as lead counselor, Brittany strives to learn more in her spare time as she has been working toward becoming a Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC) over the past two years. She is also planning to open a dedicated office space for wellness professionals to practice called Nurture + Nest. It has been a dream to establish a space centered on serving

families and children in the Black Hills area. However, as most people can relate, larger, seemingly impossible dreams often take a back seat to the busyness of life. It was Brittany’s husband who encouraged her to chase that dream by sharing a quote from former Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf: “If your dreams don’t scare you, they aren’t big enough.”

That bold approach paid off. This year, Brittany was named South Dakota Counseling Association’s Counselor of the Year. While she was surprised and honored to receive the award, she noted how special it was to have her family there to celebrate the milestone with her. Looking back on her life and career, three themes define her journey from an undecided major to an award-winning lead counselor: dream big enough, stay curious, and never stop learning.

"To have a spot where you can just go — where you don't have to share anything, and where you can take care of yourself, wash your face, put lotion on your hands, or braid a friend's hair — that serves students in a bigger way than we even realize."

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Cultivating the Good Harvest

FROM HOME KITCHEN

to local shelves

BY KELSIE PETERSON

The Good Harvest products originated from a mother's desire to provide the best for her family. However, as others learned about what she was creating, her products quietly spread throughout the Black Hills community. At its core, The Good Harvest is all about simple, real food and sharing something meaningful with others — something it continues to do as it populates the shelves of local stores throughout the area.

Miranda Valderrama is a full-time mom of three and the brains behind The Good Harvest. This California girl, who now calls Rapid City home, describes her childhood as one “rooted in nature, family, and simple food.” While she often finds herself classified as the “crunchy mom,” she shares these values stemmed from the way she was raised. “We didn’t have fast-food restaurants where I grew up — fresh food was the norm, and being outside wasn’t something we planned; it was simply part of everyday life.”



Creating her business and selling her goods locally was never a part of Miranda's plan. It began in her home as she sought out healthier snack options for her three boys. "I've always tried to make healthier choices for my family, but I haven't always made everything from scratch. As my boys got older, I became more aware of the ingredients in many packaged foods and started looking for simple, wholesome alternatives." Miranda wanted to feel good about what she was giving her kids, so she started experimenting with freeze-drying and small homemade batches. Freeze-dried foods retain more nutritional value than any other method of drying. Eventually, friends and family started asking for them too. "From there, it grew naturally — rooted in a personal need, with the business side developing as demand followed."

"AS MY BOYS GOT OLDER, I BECAME MORE AWARE OF THE INGREDIENTS IN MANY PACKAGED FOODS AND STARTED LOOKING FOR SIMPLE, WHOLESOME ALTERNATIVES."

Miranda credits the organic growth of her business to all the wonderful support she's found throughout the community, as well as at home. "One of the very first people to believe in my products was Jana, the original owner of what is now T&M AG Supply (formerly D&M). She was incredibly supportive early on and placed my



products right at the front counter where customers would see them immediately when they walked in.” Shortly after this counter placement, The Good Harvest appeared at Jolly Lane Greenhouse right before the busy holiday season. Miranda shares, “Those early partnerships gave my business its first real momentum.”

That growth, however, had her encountering some challenges she hadn’t expected. At the time she needed it most, Miranda couldn’t find a commercial kitchen space available for rent in Rapid City. “Not wanting to compromise on quality or safety, I began looking for other options and reached out within my community,” Miranda explains. Through a personal connection, she happened to learn about the owner of Sunny Lemons Cookie Shop, who had recently opened her own commercial kitchen space. “I reached out to Hayden, and what followed was a simple coffee meeting that turned into a very natural partnership. She didn’t need the additional income, but she was open to sharing her space, and it became exactly what I needed at the right time.”

Looking back now, Miranda can see how each challenge or opportunity felt like it had the right door opening at the right time. “My faith has always been a grounding part of that for me. There were many times I simply prayed for

clarity and trusted that if something wasn’t meant for me, it wouldn’t come together. Over and over again, doors opened in ways I couldn’t have planned myself.”

Along with support from friends and the community, Miranda credits her business success to the help she receives from her husband. “He’s been incredibly supportive from the beginning while also allowing the business to remain fully mine.” Being an entrepreneur himself, he has the knowledge and experience of what it takes to build a business from the ground up.

Miranda and her family made the move from California to be closer to relatives, and she shares that having that support nearby has also made a huge difference. “My mom lives just down the street and helps with my boys when I need, which allows me to show up fully for my business.”

When it comes to balancing this growing business and being a mom, Miranda states it’s not about doing everything perfectly; it’s more about making sure she’s being intentional about her time and energy. “As a stay-at-home mom of three with a growing business, my days are full, so I’ve learned to prioritize what matters most in each season. At the end of the day, balance is really about giving myself grace, staying present where I am, and doing my best in each role without trying to do it all at once.”



The Good Harvest products are now carried in several local shops in the Black Hills. You can find them at Jolly Lane Greenhouse, T&M AG Supply, Prairie Edge Trading Co., Sunny Lemons Cookie Shop, Staple and Spice, and Angelica’s on 5th. Soon they will also be in the newly opening Flatlander Coffee & Flowers — a local coffee shop and floral boutique opening in Rapid City this summer.

For now, Miranda shares that she’s focusing on doing a few things well, which includes an assortment of freeze-dried fruit, simmer pots, and sourdough starter. “I love keeping things simple and intentional, and making sure everything I offer is something I truly stand behind.” For the future, she shares, “I’m always open to new ideas, but I want to expand slowly in a way that still aligns with my values and the quality I want to maintain.” She plans to continue on the path of natural growth with her business and ensure she’s always providing simple, intentional products she truly believes in.

“At the end of the day, I’m a mom first. The Good Harvest is simply an extension of what I was already doing — nourishing my family and sharing that same simplicity with others.”

*"Over and over again,
DOORS OPENED IN
WAYS I COULDN'T HAVE
PLANNED MYSELF."*



*Follow along with
Miranda on instagram!*
@THE_GOOD_HARVEST



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DREAMS OF BECOMING A DJ

“Growing up in the Midwest doesn’t yield many examples of vibrant dance floors and inspirational DJs,” Soulscent says, but music is woven into the fabric of her family life. “My mom was a dance teacher and put my sister and me through dance classes. My dad played the guitar, and I played the cello when I was young.”

Soulscent started burning tracks from her mom’s iTunes library on CDs. Soon after, she bought her own tracks, building a library to dance and daydream to in her backyard, the basement, friends’ houses, and the car. Her skills evolved through CD and MP3 players to iPods and iPhones and now a big 50lb piece of equipment called a DJ controller.

As technology advanced, so did her love for dance and electronic music. “I’ve been a notorious playlist master for most of my life, setting an energetic and joyful tone to a space wherever I was given the opportunity,” she says. “After the height of the

pandemic, I had an itch to dance and nowhere to scratch it. So I started hosting a series of curated outdoor dance parties at my home nestled in a canyon on the outskirts of [Rapid City].” These monthly Patio Parties offered opportunities for semi-public performances ranging from global grooves to experimental soundscapes to a disco funk house set at a private New Year’s party.

“Learning how to use my equipment for live performances on the dance floor was very DIY. I still only know how to use a fraction of what DJ controllers are capable of, but my current skillset serves me and my community groovers well.”

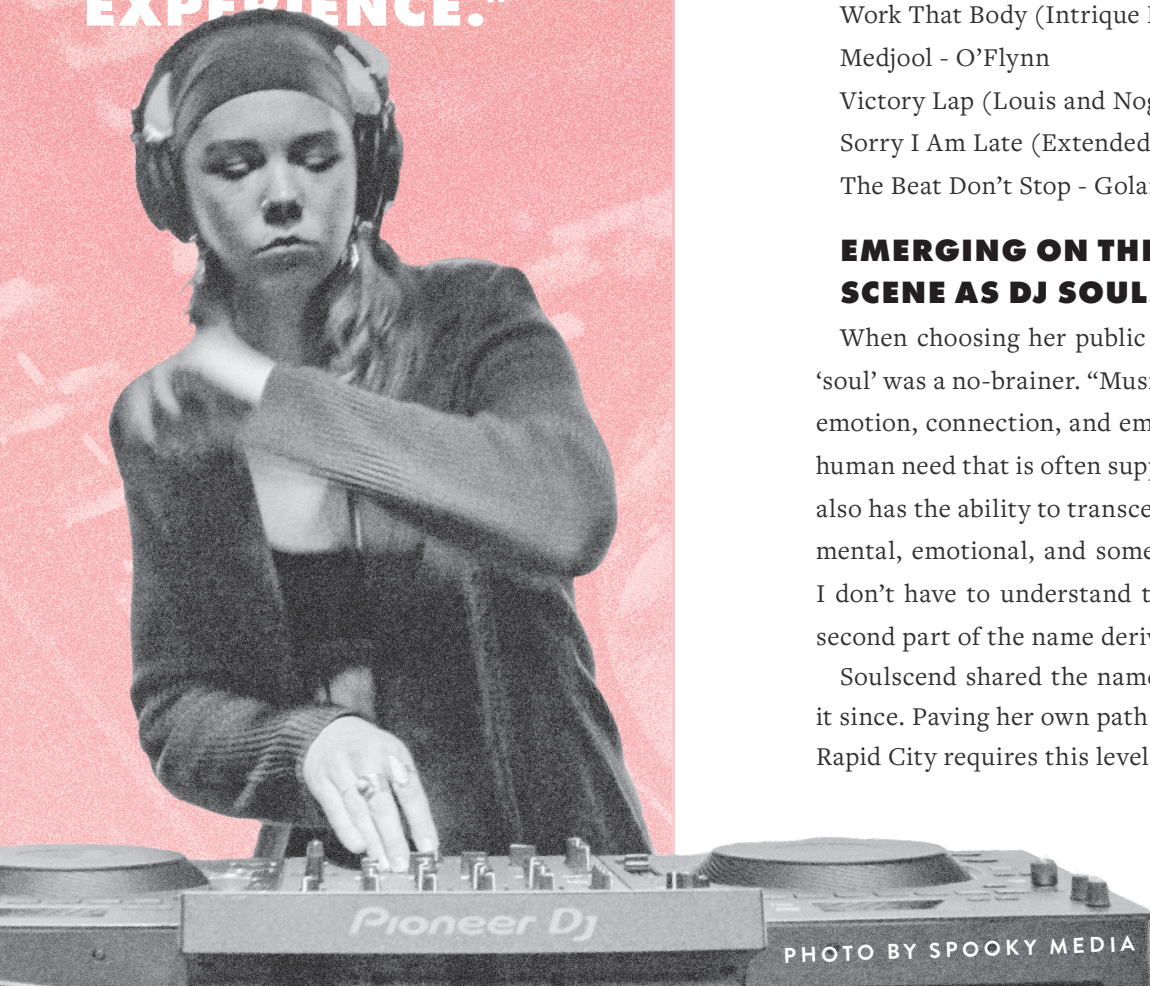
CURATING SET LISTS & DANCE PARTIES

Soulscent’s passion spurred from curating set lists. “I start with what inspires me — a track I enjoy, a particular subgenre or cultural influence I want to explore, a theme or mood. I seek diversity of sound and rhythm. In the months leading up to an event, I spend my mornings with a cup of coffee, headphones on, shuffling through tracks on various streaming platforms and piling them into a playlist.”

Once that spark of inspiration ignites, she moves on to the careful work of curating. Soulscent compiles more than enough tracks to cover the length of a set time, and then needs to narrow it down. “I write out a chart with energy levels on one axis (e.g., intro, low,

BY KRYSTAL BRESNAHAN

"THE DANCE FLOOR CAN BE A LIVING SYMBOL OF COURAGE, COMMUNITY, AND OUR SHARED HUMAN EXPERIENCE."



mid, high) and on the other axis, I write keep, unsure, or remove. My selected tracks are now in some energetic order and get put into my software, so I can start mixing them together.”

Through the process of mixing music and experiencing “a bunch of beautiful people moving and grooving to what I’m playing,” Soulscent has learned to let go of trying to make transitions between tracks perfect. Instead, she focuses on the overall setlist and the stage she sets for the dance floor.

“When we are connected to our own bodies and have the freedom to release emotions in safe spaces with others, we are more resilient to the forces keeping us divided, isolated, depressed, and fearful. The dance floor can be a living symbol of courage, community, and our shared human experience.”

FIVE FAVORITE TRACKS YOU’LL LIKELY HEAR AT A SOULSCEND SHOW

Work That Body (Intrique Hardclub Mix) - Temper

Medjool - O’Flynn

Victory Lap (Louis and Noge Miami Bass Flip) - Posse Up!

Sorry I Am Late (Extended) - Kollektiv Turmstrasse

The Beat Don’t Stop - Golan

EMERGING ON THE SCENE AS DJ SOULSCEND

When choosing her public artist name, Soulscent says the word ‘soul’ was a no-brainer. “Music is a universal language that breathes emotion, connection, and empowerment, and taps into an intrinsic human need that is often suppressed in the world we live in today. It also has the ability to transcend every layer of my being — physical, mental, emotional, and some other mysteriously divine thing that I don’t have to understand to know it’s there...which is where the second part of the name derives from.”

Soulscent shared the name, it stuck, and she’s never questioned it since. Paving her own path in the male-dominated music scene in Rapid City requires this level of self-assuredness.

“Nearly every person I interact with — from the business owners, bar managers, venue and sound coordinators, to security and fellow DJs — is a man. It takes confidence in those spaces to own who I am, what I am trying to build, and what I deserve in regard to respect, trust, and compensation,” she says. “There have been tough moments of unsafe dance floors, derogatory comments, and a lack of understanding about why it’s so important to uplift a community of artists and dancers who have historically been excluded from the scene.”

In addition to her artistry, she maintains full-time professional work as a local community organizer. “I don’t compartmentalize any of my pursuits from the purpose of nourishing our spirits, imagination, and actions for building a better world.”

Her blend of tracks and perspectives shapes a distinct approach to motivating people to step on the dance floor. One example is Soulscent’s one-of-a-kind birthday bash hosted at Aby’s in 2024. “A huge crowd of gorgeous people showed up that night, and the dance floor remained a safe, empowered place for everyone. The joy and energy were palpable. I didn’t want it to end.”

She insists that this is why representation matters so much. “What’s possible for us and future generations when our core identities, experiences, and values are given the stage? This is where creativity truly lives and thrives.”

Soulscent encourages others to embrace their creativity by holding a vision for what’s possible and owning it. “Find or deepen relationships with people who are invested in you stepping into your most empowered self,” she says. “I couldn’t have accomplished all that I have as Soulscent without countless supporters who helped plan and set up events, DJed alongside me, or religiously attended my gigs late into the night.”



SOULSCEND

TO FIND YOUR WAY ON A FUTURE DANCE FLOOR, FOLLOW @SOULSCEND ON INSTAGRAM OR LISTEN ON SOUNDCLOUD NOW.

Ode to the Sundress

by Raquel Franco

That needs no reason for you to wear it except to soften the angry heat of August. You are the occasion, ripe like a tender Donut Peach. Let the cotton thread applaud the garden of your body. Twirl barefoot on the front lawn. Soak up how wonderful it is to be a woman, to slip on a garment as light as a breeze and feel beautiful.





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For many kids, a visit to a national park involves becoming a junior ranger. Enthusiastic elementary and middle school students scamper around the parks, completing activities, promising to “explore, learn, and protect” the outdoors, and earning a shiny, plastic badge to take home.

What most people don’t know? Junior ranger programs are often subsidized by organizations like the Black Hills Parks and Forests Association.

Founded in 1946, the association operates retail services on behalf of local national parks, with proceeds supporting education, interpretation, and visitor programs. Patty Ressler, executive director of BHPFA, has been with the nonprofit since 2010. “Congress chartered organizations like ours back in the 1930s, when people started traveling to national parks and wanted information and products to help

them learn more about the places they were visiting. Cooperating associations exist to provide those interpretive products at various locations,” Patty says.

Each product must have an educational or interpretive component and be approved by agency partners, including the National Park Service and U.S. Forest Service. “Our products tell a story about the places we support,” Patty says. As an official nonprofit partner, BHPFA donates a portion of its proceeds back to public lands. In western South Dakota, those funds help support projects and programs at Wind Cave National Park, Jewel Cave National Monument, and Black Hills National Forest.

Faced with significant government budget cuts over the last decade, the Black Hills Parks and Forests Association has expanded beyond retail



partners in preservation

STORY BY AVERY PORCH



operations to offer public programming and educational resources. “Our partners just don’t have the resources or the staff to offer certain services, so we’ve developed programs that help people learn about where they live and teach them skills to take out into nature,” Patty says.

This past spring, the organization piloted a program called Homeschool Nature Adventures, offering guided nature education for kids ages 5–12. Running from January through May, the program provides opportunities for homeschoolers to explore nature, learn survival skills, and participate in seasonal science projects at Circle Z Ranch in Custer.

Their programs have attracted adult learners as well. Last winter, Patty and her team organized a series of talks at Lost Cabin Brewing Company, drawing dozens of adults eager to learn about local wildlife and the Black Hills environment. “We knew people wanted to learn, but we didn’t realize how much,” Patty says. “Seeing that level of enthusiasm was exciting — it showed us we’d really hit on something that resonated with people.”

The association also began offering Nature Connection Workshops, providing opportunities for participants to build outdoor skills with experienced field instructors. Past sessions have included hands-on instruction in animal tracking, wildlife communication, and nature journaling. They strive to keep their programs accessible, offering tiered pricing that individuals and families can afford.

Beyond standard educational programming, the Black Hills Parks and Forests Association partners with SheJumps, a nonprofit dedicated to getting girls and women outdoors. Together with SheJumps, BHPFA brings cave tours, navigation workshops, and group hikes to women across the Black Hills region.

Even after years of working at the BHPFA, Patty is continually amazed by how much there is to see and experience in the Black Hills. “All of our parks and forests are hidden gems, in my opinion. People visit the area knowing about Badlands National Park and Mount Rushmore, and that’s what they come here to

see. Most people have no idea that Wind Cave and Jewel Cave exist until they get here.”

When chatting with visitors, Patty highlights the historical and ecological significance of these lesser-known sites and encourages them to visit. Most people are surprised to learn that Wind Cave was the first cave to become a national park, and that both Wind Cave and Jewel Cave earned federal protection long before Mount



"Seeing that level of enthusiasm was exciting — it showed us we'd really hit on something that resonated with people."

Rushmore and the Badlands National Park were established. “Jewel Cave is one of the largest hibernacula — or winter roosting spot — for local bat species and also the largest bat hibernacula in North America,” Patty adds.

The Black Hills Parks and Forest Association is a membership-based organization, which gives South Dakotans the opportunity to invest in projects and programs that better public lands. “The more members we have, the more of our retail operating funds we can give back to our partners,” Patty explains. The nonprofit also relies on volunteers, with opportunities ranging from event and pro-

gram support to park ambassadors and greeters.

With the Black Hills Forest and Parks Association celebrating its 80th anniversary this year, Patty reflects on how far the organization has come. “I’m proud of how we’ve helped elevate BHPFA over the last five years and the increased support we’ve been able to provide to our partners.” After operating out of the Wind Cave office for nearly eight decades, the association moved into a building of its own earlier this year. The organization plans to launch a capital campaign to fund the build-out, which will include a dedicated educational space and an immersive retail area.

Patty is eager to see what the future brings — and to continue to do what they do best. “Our organization makes such a difference and really does impact people’s lives. We get to see their excitement from the very beginning, and that’s incredibly rewarding.”

"Our organization makes such a difference & really does impact people's lives. We get to see their excitement from the very beginning, and that's incredibly rewarding."



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The Heart of the *Racks*

BY MADIGAN SCHMITZ

How Wear It Again Sam became a Rapid City staple — thirty years, one consignment rack at a time.

Small business ownership extends far beyond merely opening a storefront. Building that business into a community fixture requires deep dedication, sharp instinct, and an enduring passion that doesn't dim but thrives — even after thirty years.

Tara Morgan was just 14 years old when her journey with Wear It Again Sam began. Her mom was killing time during Tara's piano lesson, and a chance encounter with the store's founder, Janis Jones, changed the entire trajectory of Tara's life. What started as an after-school job quietly became her calling — one she never saw coming and has never regretted.

"It ultimately started as a way for me to make money to buy clothes," she laughs, "and it just turned into my lifelong career."

Tara has been part of Wear It Again Sam since 1992, just two years after the store opened its doors in Rapid City. She worked there through high school and college, dedicating her time between classes to the shop. When the original owner's health forced her into retirement and the shop needed someone to carry it forward, Tara was the obvious choice. She officially bought the store in 2016, but truthfully, she had been running it in spirit for years before that.

"I just couldn't imagine my life without this store," she says. "I grew up in it. It became such a part of who I am."

Wear It Again Sam is a consignment and resale boutique, but calling it a thrift store would be selling it short. From the beginning, Tara and the women who built the shop before her made it their



mission to elevate the resale experience.

"We always set out to make resale shopping feel like a boutique experience," Tara says, "and I think we've done just that."

For Rapid City, that matters more than it might in a larger market. Western South Dakota offers limited access to shopping, and the brands and styles that fill the racks at Wear It Again Sam simply aren't available anywhere else locally. Customers drive in from rural communities across the southern hills specifically to shop there, and Tara doesn't take that for granted for a single second.

"They'll tell me, 'Your store is my first stop,'" she says.

"What greater compliment is there? People have so many places they can go, and they choose us."

There's a particular joy she gets from watching a customer find a piece in near-perfect condition and light up at the price tag. That moment, she says, never gets old. Neither do the consignors who now ship items to her directly, trusting her with their pieces because of the relationships she's built over decades.

Inside the store, Tara has built something that goes beyond retail. Her staff, typically five to seven women plus herself, operates more like a family than a team. Many of her employees are young girls, just like she was, and many return

"I just couldn't imagine my life without this store," she says. "I grew up in it. It became such a part of who I am."

summer after summer, year after year.

"I'm a mom, first and foremost," she says. "I genuinely care about what's going on in my employees' lives. People sense when that's real."

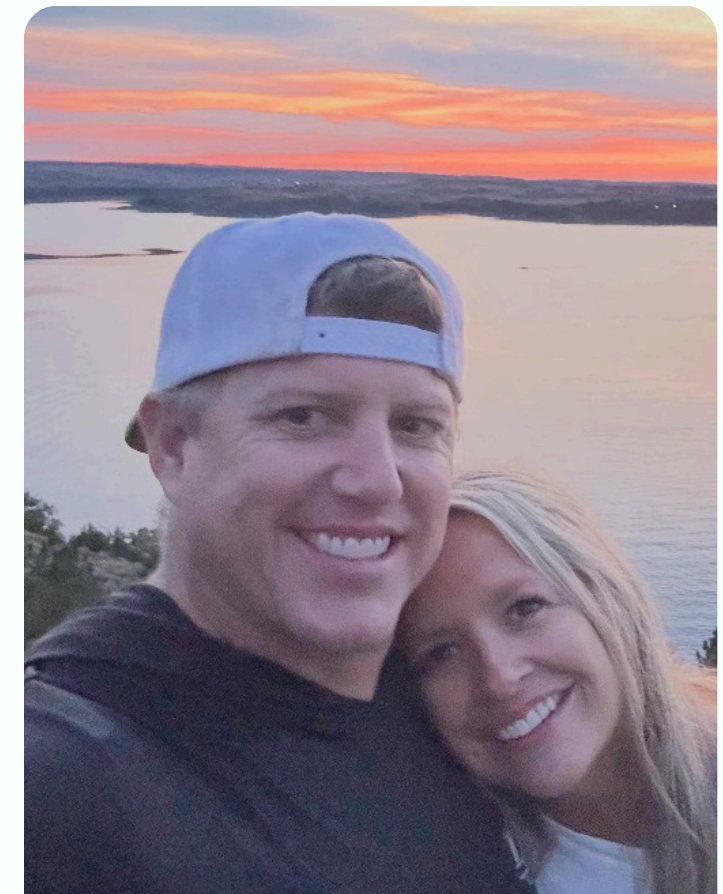
She's also a "girl mom" in every sense of the phrase, and someone who understands that for a lot of young women, their first job shapes how they see work for the rest of their lives. She wants the faces of her business to look like they love what they do. And in an environment like the one she's built, it's easy to say they do.

Outside the store, Tara is in the thick of one of life's sweetest seasons. Her daughter is heading into her senior year and is a competitive softball player who has — wisely, both of them agree — chosen to work at a coffee shop rather than for her mom. Tara is also newly engaged, planning a May wedding, and trying to hold onto the last stretch of time with her daughter before she heads off to college. Bittersweet, she calls it, in the best possible way.

Through all of it, the store remains a constant. What keeps her from burning out after more than three decades is the variety. She thrives on the daily newness of not knowing what's going to come through the door, what consignment will arrive, or what display she'll reimagine. Every day brings a small goal and a small satisfaction.

"I feel like every day I come to work, I have things I want to accomplish," she says. "That's what keeps it fresh."

Wear It Again Sam has been a mainstay in Rapid City for over thirty years. It has clothed women for first dates and funerals, given rural shoppers access to brands they'd otherwise never find, and provided a generation of young women with their first taste of what a good workplace can feel like. That's the legacy Tara inherited — and the one she's spent a lifetime making her own.



THE LOCAL EDIT

AUGUST

BY KELSYPETERSON

The sounds of summer aren't complete without the toe-tapping melodies of live music. Grab a crisp beverage, a dancing partner, and hit up these events before the summer season comes to a close.



The Goo Goo Dolls

RAPID CITY | AUGUST 1

The Goo Goo Dolls are hitting the stage in Rapid City. Catch their performance in the Summit Arena on August 1st at The Monument. It's bound to be an unforgettable night filled with cherished songs and new core memories.



Hometown Thursdays

BELLE FOURCHE | AUGUST 6

Hometown Thursdays in Belle Fourche are all about good company, good food, and good music. This weekly music festival is held along the river behind the Tri-State Museum. On August 6th you can enjoy the musical sounds of JJ Kent with Aces and 8's.

Miranda Lambert

STURGIS | AUGUST 11

Award-winning country music singer Miranda Lambert will headline the main stage at Full Throttle Saloon on Tuesday, August 11th. Her performance is part of an impressive line-up for the 86th Annual Sturgis Motorcycle Rally.



Kool Deadwood Nights

DEADWOOD | AUGUST 18 - 23

Free concerts are just part of the fun that rolls into town during Kool Deadwood Nights. The historic streets of Deadwood become home to a plethora of classic cars and other event activities. Free concerts take place multiple times a day during this multi-day event and celebrate the sounds you know and love.



Low Gap at The Beacon

CUSTER | AUGUST 27

Free and open to the public, The Beacon welcomes you to enjoy the musical sounds of Low Gap on August 27th. This five-piece band blends 90s alt-country and Americana with modern country — celebrating their Eastern Kentucky and Ohio roots.

Summer Sunset Festival

RAPID CITY | AUGUST 29

Main Street Square blends together the best of the summer season during the Summer Sunset Festival. Enjoy live music by Jessica Looney while sipping a cool beverage and watching the colors of the sky transition to a vibrant sunset.



A CENTURY OF LESSONS

*the story where
no one is forgotten*

BY SAMANTHA LINDE



In the town of Belle Fourche, South Dakota, lives 93-year-old Wilma Dick. Born during the Great Depression, Wilma has spent nearly a century witnessing history unfold while quietly shaping the lives of those around her. Today, she lives in a small English cottage. Anyone who has the pleasure of visiting her is greeted at the door by a warm smile, a tight hug, and her signature elegant updo as she eagerly shares the many lessons a lifetime has taught her.

Wilma's father was a self-taught mechanic who taught her the value of hard work from a young age. She was allowed to go out with friends once during the week and once on the weekend; otherwise, her days were spent working. Wilma reflects on that time in her life with pride, sharing how she worked at a bar in Spearfish during her sophomore year of high school. She used her earnings to make herself a dress, buy her clothes, and purchase her own class ring. Her father's influence remained with her throughout her life. "Self-esteem and confidence come from being a part of the program," she says.

Her mother was a seamstress who instilled in her a deep compassion for others. "She never said a negative thing about anyone." Wilma laughs gently as she realizes she adopted this trait from her mother as well. "There are so many times people are outspoken, and it's often related to something else that happened in their day." Wilma believes it matters to genuinely care about each and every person because what they are going through is often left unspoken.

Wilma's compassion was also forged early in life by a childhood defined by illness. When she contracted red measles at age ten, it marked the beginning of a long struggle. "I caught everything," she recalls. From chickenpox and mumps





to strep throat and rheumatic fever, Wilma was constantly sick. Throughout this ordeal, her grandmother, a nurse, provided constant care and comfort. Although Wilma grew stronger and became less prone to illness by high school, another defining chapter of her life was about to begin with the onset of World War II.

Wilma vividly remembers the bombing of Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, when her family lived in Hot Springs. Only eight years old, she was walking home from the downtown elementary school to meet her brother when she overheard several anxious women on the school's staircase asking, "Did you hear about Pearl Harbor?" Though she did not yet understand what she had overheard, she soon learned the gravity of the war. Her family soon relocated to Spearfish to be closer to relatives. There, she remembers seeing a downtown monument listing every local man and boy who had joined the military. She also remembers navigating food rationing, but what stood out most was the community's spirit. "Nobody complained," she says with wonder. The war left a lasting impression of generosity, epitomized by her soldier uncle, who kindly sent her a box of candy for her birthday. By the time the war ended, Wilma was twelve years old.

After high school, Wilma joined the Twelve Week Wonder Program on June 6, 1951. This was an intensive, emergency summer initiative created to fast-track high school graduates into classrooms to combat the severe post-World War II teacher shortage. Requirements for teachers had changed, and the program was created to provide schools with immediate reinforcement. Those twelve weeks of intensive education greatly influenced how Wilma approached her first teaching position.

Her first classroom was in Nisland, South Dakota, where she began teaching at just eighteen years old. This early start allowed her to gain invaluable experience while also earning money for college. After several years of higher education, she married her husband, Jack, and together they had four children: Michael, David, Stephen, and Melanie. After twelve years as a stay-at-home mother, Wilma returned to school and ultimately earned her doctorate in education.

Some of Wilma's favorite teaching memories came later, when she began overseeing Title I programs. Working with Title I taught her two revolutionary lessons that completely transformed her teaching style: first, "to be sure you come back and don't leave anybody out," and second, that students "need to evaluate their own work." In addition to academics, she also made sure to teach life lessons, sharing that "love can be silent, but gratitude should never be." To ingrain this principle, she placed a gratitude marble jar in her classroom, adding a marble anytime she or a student noticed an act of kindness. Wilma retired at age seventy after a remarkable thirty-eight-year career in education.

Teaching, however, was not Wilma's only passion; she always prioritized her community. "Our family has always had one common problem," she jokes. "We decorate! It is

genetic. Every organization I have belonged to has been a victim!" Some of her lucky "victims" included rodeo queen luncheons, state conventions, county fair booths, Christmas festivals, weddings, and the Tri-State Museum. Wilma's personal touch and care have shone through every event she has been involved in.

Wilma's nearly century-long journey is a testament to her unwavering commitment to ensuring that no one is left behind. Her enduring beliefs continue to shine through her volunteer efforts, leaving a lasting impact on everyone she encounters. Her story is more than a reflection of the past—it's a legacy passed through generations, reminding us that our families, our history, and our communities are shaped by the kindness, gratitude, and compassion we choose to share.

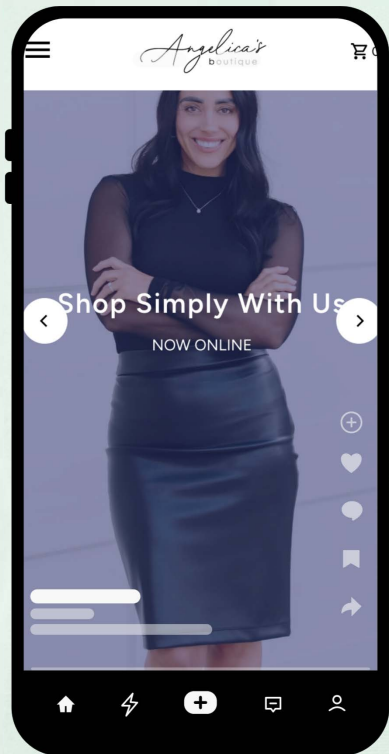
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