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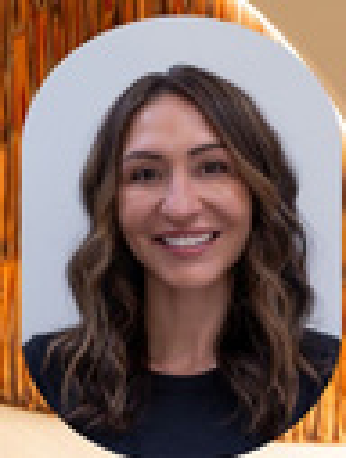
WOMAN

MAGAZINE

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GIVING BACK

Rising Up

THE

MYTH

OF

PERFECTION

I've struggled with perfectionism for as long as I can remember. From a young age, the pressure to excel was evident, born from outside expectations and my own internal drive. That pressure created a competitive nature that pushed me to be the best — from achieving perfect grades in school to swiftly advancing in each job opportunity I explored. But that competitive nature came with a cost: whenever I fell short, I felt like a failure. It took time, maturity, and a few hard life lessons to realize that mistakes don't define who I am. Instead, they are the very foundation of growth.

If we really were perfect, what would we learn? Mistakes force us to examine what went wrong. In tangible terms, like being the editor of this magazine, each small error prompts me to delve deeper and implement additional measures to prevent any oversight. On a personal level, it allows me to become more resilient — allowing each mistake to fuel forward progress instead of acting as an obstacle that holds me back.

Maybe mistakes drive my desire for perfection — I want to improve upon what went wrong. But from another angle, it allows me space to

step back and realize that mistakes are okay. And it doesn't make me less qualified or worthy; it is simply a reminder that I am human. There is no such thing as perfect. And if we never put ourselves out there or take chances, we miss out on the beauty that comes with experience. It takes courage to try something new. And even more to admit when we're wrong. But I would argue that is more admirable than never trying.

So, make the mistake. You never know what path it will lead you on.

*Warmly,
Kari Nielsen*



STORY BY MADIGAN SCHMITZ

for all kids



Being a school board member goes far beyond attending meetings and casting votes. Plenty of people care about their local schools. But to truly serve a community's children, it takes heart, conviction, and a willingness to walk into a room where you're not expected.

Jamie Clapham didn't plan on running for the Rapid City Area School Board. A physical therapist by trade, she spent her days helping patients regain movement and independence at Monument Health, and her evenings shuttling her two kids between extracurricular activities. At first, politics was never on her radar.

COVID hit soon after her son started school, which meant Jamie started paying closer attention to school board meetings. What she saw frustrated her. Kids

were being pushed to the margins while cultural issues were taking center stage. School board elections are nonpartisan for a reason, and Jamie felt that was getting lost in the discourse.

"I was really frustrated," she says. "It seemed that politics was taking precedence over kids, and schools should never be that way."

After watching a particularly heated board vote, and the announcement of the incumbent Area Six Representative's retirement, Jamie turned to an online parents group and posed a simple question: who can we get behind? The first response she got was a challenge she didn't expect.

"You should do it," was the overwhelming response.

She sat her husband down, and then she sat her kids down — her daughter was seven, her son nine — and she explained what running might look like. As it turns out, her son would give her just the answer she needed.

"Mom," he told her, "I think you should help all the kids."

So that's what she set out to do.

Now, Jamie's been in the seat for four years, and she entered the role in the way she means to go on: informed, collaborative, and focused on relationships.

"It seemed that politics was taking precedence over kids, and schools should never be that way."

*"Mom,"
he told her,
"I think
you should
help all the
kids."*



Her background is almost uniquely suited for the role, even if it doesn't look like the typical path. Her father has been an educator for more than half a century. Her mother-in-law and father-in-law both taught in the Rapid City district for over 25 years. Education isn't just something Jamie cares about. It's woven into the fabric of her family. While Jamie's professional experience is not in education, as a physical therapist, she also brings something invaluable to the table: the ability to see people, not systems. She knows what it feels like to sit with someone on the hardest day of their life. She's heard teachers describe doing the same, spending the first thirty minutes of the school day crying alongside a student who needed it. Those are the people, she says, who need someone in their corner.

"They need somebody to advocate for them," she says.

One of the shifts Jamie is most proud of is cultural. In her first year, she remembers visiting schools and feeling a sense that the board existed somewhere above, removed from the people actually doing the work. Now when she walks into a school building, she says, staff greet her easily. That ease and trust is something she's worked hard to build, and something she works just as hard to protect.

On the policy side, her mark has been left on some of the district's most meaningful recent progress. She's been a driving force behind bringing a bond to the November ballot — the first in 53 years — to address school buildings with an average age of more than 60 years. She helped launch the junior kindergarten program, backed by a \$3 million literacy grant, and is one of the loudest voices in the room pushing for expanded preschool access. South Dakota is one of only six states without preschool standards, which means federal funding is off the table. This is a barrier Jamie is actively working to change.

Balancing all of this with a busy job, two kids in multiple activities, and being an active member in her church is exactly as complicated as it sounds, but with support from her husband and Monument Health, it's equally rewarding.

What grounds her, beyond her family and faith, is something she didn't expect: the sisterhood. The female legislators, board members, and community leaders she's met through this work have become an unexpected gift. It's allowed her to meet women who show up to knock on doors for each other in the rain, who call each other when things get hard.

"I could pick up the phone right now and call all five legislators," she says.

That kind of belonging means everything. For nearly 12,000 kids across Rapid City, it means having someone in that room who showed up because a nine-year-old told her she should help all the kids.

And she listened.

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And she listened.





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BY KRYSTAL BRESNAHAN

DREAMERS & DOERS

HOW BLACK HILLS TIRE REIMAGINED AUTO REPAIR

Before buying the old Sinclair station or deciding on a business name, Tenise Chapman and her husband Weston started writing a manifesto. Seven years of scribbling in journals, jotting ideas on sticky notes, and believing in each other inspired a list of six grounding guidelines that continue to shape a lasting legacy for Black Hills Tire today.

DREAMING & DOING

“It was never a goal of mine to start a business. I thought, ‘Nope, not for me — I like sleeping at night,’” Chapman says. “Weston always knew what he was going to do with his life. He dreamed of owning his own auto shop. I wasn’t quite sure what I wanted.”

After graduating from Western Dakota Technical College, the two pursued distinct career paths. Weston gained experience working in auto shops while Tenise applied her advanced skills in Excel and a degree in Marketing and Business Management to launch a 15 year career at a local credit union.

“We were taught how to learn at Western Dakota Tech and that’s the foundation. Then we had to build the rest,” she





says. “I’ve always loved the quote: If you are going to be a dreamer — you better be a doer.”

Through the years, she and her husband saw what they could change in the auto repair industry and tried to do better for customers, and then in the fall of 2018, they founded Black Hills Tire. “We were open a little more than a year when the pandemic started. We had to find a way to keep our team safe and also keep providing services the community needed. We failed at times and we worked hard to keep learning. We’re a united front against the challenges, the ups and downs of running a small business.”

Within two years, this dream required more energy, effort, and support, so in the summer of 2020, Tenise joined the team full-time. “It was a tough decision. My identity was wrapped up in my work, and it was scary to leave my finance career. I remember the first time I was waiting at the service counter by myself. I was ready and willing to help, but not exactly sure what would happen next.”

“At first, we thought there’d be more tires, hence the name, but now we’re more auto repair, and while the business evolved — our manifesto stayed the same,” she shares.

The Black Hills Tire manifesto is intentionally public, published on the company website, posted in the shop, and included at the end of the article here. It’s a guide for dreaming and doing, fixing cars and becoming family, working and living in the community.

FIXING CARS AND BECOMING FAMILY

Similar to a manifesto, family lore and memories can instill beliefs, inspire actions, and give a sense of direction. Both Tenise’s grandparents and Weston’s parents provided living examples of how to build a successful business while creating a rewarding life and supporting family.

“Grandma refused to join softball. Instead, she played second base for the baseball team,” Tenise recalls. Her grandma was fierce, funny, and also made a great

team with her grandpa.

“My grandparents ran their own auto repair shop and gas station in North Dakota, and my grandma took pride in her work. She cleaned the bathrooms, and she did it so well that the shop was recognized with a national award for cleanest bathrooms, but when it came time to travel to accept the award,

my grandpa went. Women weren’t even invited to go.”

At the end of her life, her grandma asked Tenise to give her eulogy. She wanted it to be a celebration filled with humor and love, and she believed “no one else would do it right.” She also reminded Tenise to “make sure you keep those bathrooms clean at Black Hills Tire. That was my job.”

For Tenise and Weston, nothing matters more than family. They model being good teammates to each other — just like their parents and grandparents — and their Black Hills Tire team is a community of

"IF YOU ARE GOING TO BE A DREAMER — YOU BETTER BE A DOER."



coworkers who have become family. “We win and lose as a team. We would do anything for each other, and we don’t take that for granted,” Tenise says. After two decades of lessons learned, hard work, lots of love, and making their own luck, Black Hills Tire supports 16 employees and their families.

“Culture is what your team is doing when you’re not there, and our manifesto drives our culture. We have shared goals of great service and a business where employees say ‘this is a place I’m proud to work.’”

Inside the shop, family photographs of Tenise’s grandparents are proudly displayed in the entryway. “Like our manifesto, those photos remind us how we got started and reconnect us to our purpose.”

WORKING AND LIVING IN COMMUNITY

In most industries, there’s an attitude of “we’ve always done it this way;” however, Tenise’s bold vision for nurturing community among her staff and with her customers has created a new approach to service at Black Hills Tire.

“When we got started, we were told many times, ‘That’s never going to work, you can’t do it that way,’ but we kept our heads down, worked hard, and believed in each other. There was no ‘we’ve always done it this way.’ Instead, we were creating how it’s done.”

Black Hills Tire offers unique learning experiences that serve our community. One example is Camp DRIVE, a nationally recognized two-day summer camp led by staff who encourage youth to explore automotive careers. Kids



learn about tires, brakes, and alignments, and get hands-on experience helping with repairs. Plus, there's a welding station to make your own mini-motorcycle and a pit crew competition!

"Camp is all about team building and having fun, especially for our staff. They just glow when they teach the kids," Tenise says. "And in the winter, we hosted a relaxed ladies' night where women were invited to stop in, see the shop, meet our team, and ask questions." This seasonal Sip at the Shop event focused on creating a comfortable environment to show women just how easy and friendly car care can be with no pressure and no stress. Black Hills Tire partnered with other local businesses, including Victoria's Garden, Mystique Edge, Uplifted Winery, and Black Hills Running Company, to create an elevated experience.

Tenise says their number one priority is community: "We wouldn't be here without it, and we need to support it. Being blessed enough to do these things absolutely changes why we get out of bed in the morning."

That's the "why" behind daring to dream and doing things differently. But where do these incredible ideas come from?

"Usually, I'm sitting in my camp chair, and I'll say, 'Hey, we should try this!'" Tenise laughs. "If I can find time to get out of the shop and turn off the mundane, day-to-day noise, then I start having ideas. It's important for Weston and me to have downtime and to rest, so we can keep coming up with what's new and seeing what's possible."

BLACK HILLS TIRE MANIFESTO

- 1 NEWER ISN'T ALWAYS BETTER, & THAT THERE IS SOMETHING INHERENTLY GOOD IN HARD WORK.
- 2 THAT FRIENDS WHO FEEL LIKE FAMILY ARE THE BEST KINDS OF FRIENDS AND THAT NOTHING MATTERS MORE THAN FAMILY.
- 3 IN SEEKING THE BALANCE BETWEEN HUSTLE AND REST, AND STRIVING TO BE PASSIONATE ABOUT BOTH.
- 4 A LEISURELY FIRST CUP OF COFFEE TO START THE DAY MINDFULLY AND THEN AT DAY'S END, NOT CLOCKING OUT FROM A JOB UNTIL YOU ARE PROUD.
- 5 IN SUBTLE BEAUTY, THE KIND THAT DOESN'T DETERIORATE WITH AGE OR WEAR.
- 6 IN DOING WORK THAT WE LOVE AND IN CHOOSING THAT, NUDGING OTHERS TOWARDS DOING WHAT THEY LOVE.



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THE LOCAL EDIT

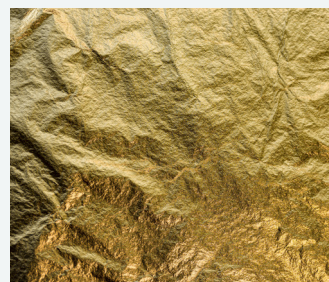
JULY



Badlands Astronomy Festival

BADLANDS NATIONAL PARK
JULY 17 - 19

Stargazing hits a whole new level in the Badlands. The dark skies of the park allow you to take in the wonder of space exploration. Enjoy daily family-friendly activities and evening presentations with special guest speakers during this three-day festival. Check out the Badlands National Park website for the full schedule of events.



Gold Discovery Days

CUSTER JULY 17 - 19

Head to Custer for this three day event! Offering fun for the entire family, attendees can enjoy a carnival, car show, arts and crafts fair, volleyball tournament, 5K fun run, cornhole tournament, golf scramble, hot air balloon rally, and one of the largest parades in the Black Hills.

Festival in the Park

SPEARFISH CITY PARK
JULY 17 - 19

Take a stroll through Spearfish City Park and browse the booths of over 200 regional vendors. You'll find goods ranging from jewelry to food and even furniture as you enjoy live music.



Hills Alive

RAPID CITY JULY 18 & 19

Memorial Park in Rapid City becomes host to a free, two-day Christian music festival during the Hills Alive event. Come out and enjoy a beautiful summer day with popular genre artists, food vendors, family-friendly activities and more throughout the park.

Haven Races

RAPID CITY JULY 25TH

Lace up your trail runners and head to the Haven Races. Hosted at the Hisega Adventure Lodge, you'll have three course options to choose from (6.55M, 12.37M, and 20.35M). After running on dirt, up hills and over creeks, head back to the lodge to enjoy food and beverages with live music.



AUGUST



Back to School Block Party

RAPID CITY AUGUST 10

Take part in a free, end-of-summer celebration at Main Street Square! The Back to School Block Party combines the fun of the fountains, water slides, food trucks, and local vendors for one last hoorah before school starts.



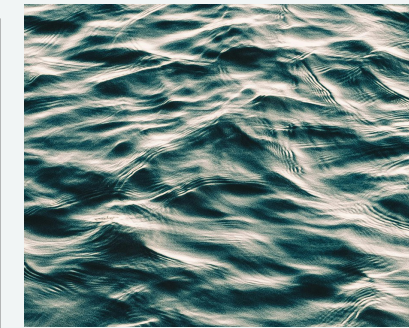
Shoot Like A Girl

RAPID CITY
AUGUST 15 & 16

Cabela's will be hosting Shoot Like A Girl on August 15 and 16, a free confidence-building and hands-on shooting experience for women and families. This semi-truck mobile shooting range offers participants a safe space to shoot a pistol, rifle and bow with expert guidance. Participants must be 18 years or older to shoot inside the range.

BY KELSAY PETERSON

There's still plenty of summer left to enjoy. From stargazing to live music to celebrations of history, the hills have a packed lineup to carry you through the season.



Pure Pactola

PACTOLA AUGUST 29

Race through the waters of the largest lake in the Black Hills! Pure Pactola offers four race distances of half a mile, 1.2 miles, 2.4 miles, and 3.1 miles. They even have 100m and 200m for kids who want to participate.

Moon Walk: Walking Through the Past to See the Future

CUSTER AUGUST 29

Explore Meeker Ranch with staff of the Black Hills National Forest. Meeker Ranch was built in 1887 by former Pony Express Rider Frank Cunningham Meeker. The ranch sits outside Custer, and portions have been undergoing historic preservation and restoration. This walk will include multiple subject matter experts sharing insight into the location throughout the experience.



formulas for flavor

BY KELSY PETERSON

KATIE LEE WILKEN'S SWEET JOURNEY

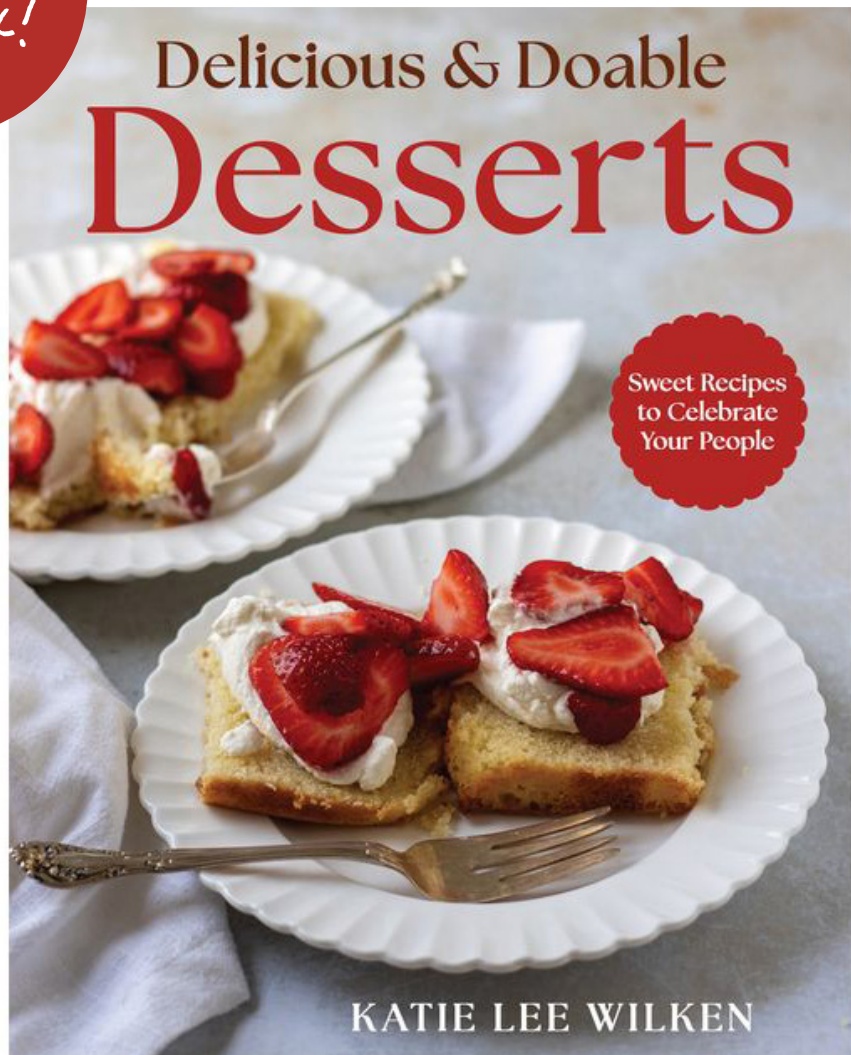


On a typical workday, you'll find Katie Lee Wilken educating the minds of high school students on the subject of mathematics. Once school is out, you'll find her reconfiguring the ratios of recipes in her kitchen as she creates delectable desserts. In her pursuit of baking, Katie has found herself competing on a baking show, sharing doable desserts with her growing community of followers on Instagram, and publishing her first of two cookbooks — all accomplishments that make her much more than your average home baker.

Katie's love for baking started at the young age of five, thanks to her Grandma. As next-door neighbors in rural South Dakota, Katie often joined her in the kitchen to help bake muffins, shape buns, and participate in whatever recipe she was making. As she grew older, she recalls her choice of reading material was often cookbooks and cooking magazines. "I loved the day when the *Taste of Home* magazine would show up in our mailbox and reading the cookbooks I checked out at the library. It was before there were recipes on the internet, so it felt like there was never enough to soak up."

Katie's first official start to baking began as a senior in high school when she started making wedding cupcakes. Without any professional training, she gained her most valuable learning experiences through trial and error. Katie shares, "I've always liked trying new recipes and that is the best way to learn by just giving them a try."

Out now!



"MY FIRST COOKBOOK IS CENTERED AROUND CELEBRATION. ON TOP OF 100 DELICIOUS AND DOABLE RECIPES, IT ALSO INCLUDES PRACTICAL IDEAS TO CELEBRATE THE PEOPLE IN YOUR LIFE."

As her baking abilities grew, Katie decided to apply to be a contestant in the Silos Baking Competition, a popular Magnolia Network series that features home bakers. The application process alone required the creation of multiple recipes. After days of developing different options, Katie submitted a peach cupcake recipe inspired by her Grandad and a recipe for a brown butter s'more bar. Her hard work paid off, and she landed a spot in the competition with the opportunity to meet Chip and Joanna Gaines in Waco, Texas.

Eventually, Katie's love for creating complex and beautiful recipes changed into a desire to create simple, yet delicious, recipes that people could create at home. She recalls, "One day, as I was finishing teaching a day of school and sitting at my desk on my computer, I Googled, 'How do you write a cookbook?' and the theme I kept seeing was 'platform'. You must have people that are interested in what you are doing." So in the fall of 2020, Katie did just that. She started posting content featuring easy-to-follow recipes on YouTube and Instagram. She took occasional breaks from posting, but after about three years, she noticed a significant change in her Instagram account. "I remember going to bed with 800 followers and waking up the next day with thousands." Today, she has 216K followers for her Instagram account @KatieLeeWilken.

A cookbook was always the motivation

behind her social media platform. Once her account started seeing growth, she got started. "I wrote a proposal, which is basically a 50-page document with the concept, sample chapter, as well as a business plan for how I could sell the book. This took me several months to write." Next steps included finding and signing an agent and then pitching to different publishing houses. "In the spring of 2024, I signed a two-book deal with Harvest House, a mid-size Christian publisher. My first cookbook, *Delicious and Doable Desserts*, came out in March 2026, and my second book, *Coffee Time Treats*, will come out in fall 2027." Her inspiration for these recipes comes from all aspects of Katie's life — her travels, her grandma, recipes she grew up with, and more. "My first cookbook is centered around celebration. On top of 100 delicious and doable recipes, it also includes practical ideas to celebrate the people in your life through simple ideas like how to write a meaningful birthday card, host a honey roast, celebrate the memory of someone, and raise a toast."

The future for this local baker looks promising as she works to wrap up her second cookbook, launching next fall. Katie states her love for teaching hasn't changed, and she will continue to work toward balance in both careers, even when it feels like too much. However, her goal with baking remains the same: "to continue to share recipes that inspire viewers to bless the people around them through food."

GET A TASTE OF JUST HOW **DELICIOUS & DOABLE** KATIE'S RECIPES ARE WITH HER SHEET PAN PAVLOVA!



sheet pan pavlova

Mix up your next gathering with a ginormous fruity pavlova! If you've never had a pavlova it starts with a meringue that has a crunchy outer layer and is soft in the middle. To balance out the sweetness in the meringue it's topped with a lightly sweetened whipped cream and loads of fresh fruit. I chose to use blackberries and sliced kiwis, but you can swap them out for whatever fresh fruit you prefer.

meringue

- 8 large egg whites at room temperature
- 2 C sugar
- 1 tsp cream of tartar
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- ¼ tsp salt

whipped cream

- 3 C heavy whipping cream (360ml)
- ¾ c powdered sugar (30g)
- 1 Tbsp vanilla extract
- 10 kiwis, peeled and sliced
- 2 (6 oz.) pkgs. fresh blackberries

yield: 24 servings
(3 x 3 inch squares)

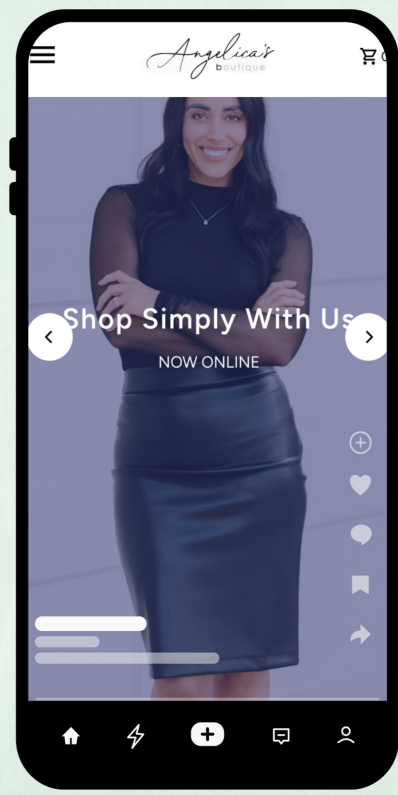
instructions

1. Preheat the oven to 250 degrees.
2. Add all the meringue ingredients to a stand mixer fitted with a whisk attachment. Start the mixer on the lowest speed, gradually increasing the speed about every 5 minutes. Stop and scrape the bowl occasionally.
3. It will take 20-30 minutes to get to the proper stage. A few key things to look for are, first a thick, glossy meringue. Secondly, if you take a bit of the meringue between your fingers, it should be smooth without any grittiness.
4. Dump the meringue onto an ungreased parchment-lined 13 x 18-inch rimmed baking sheet. Use an offset spatula to smooth the meringue into a large rectangle leaving about a 1 inch gap all the way around the meringue so that it has room to expand. Shape the meringue so that there is a slightly thicker edge to help keep the toppings on. Bake at 250 for one hour or until the meringue changes from a glossy finish to a matte one. Turn the oven off and crack the door to let the meringue dry out for one more hour. Cool completely.
5. Beat whipping cream, powdered sugar, and vanilla in a stand mixer fitted with the whisk attachment until soft peaks form.
6. Scoop whipped cream onto the meringue and spread it into an even layer using an offset spatula. Top with the fruit. Serve immediately. It is best enjoyed the day of. Store leftovers in the refrigerator.

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The Fall Refresh

5 WARDROBE STAPLES TO SHOP THIS SEASON

BY AVERY PORCH

Trends come and go, but a great wardrobe is built on pieces that are timeless, wearable, and made to last. We sat down with Angelica, owner of Angelica's Boutique, to discuss the must-haves for the season ahead.



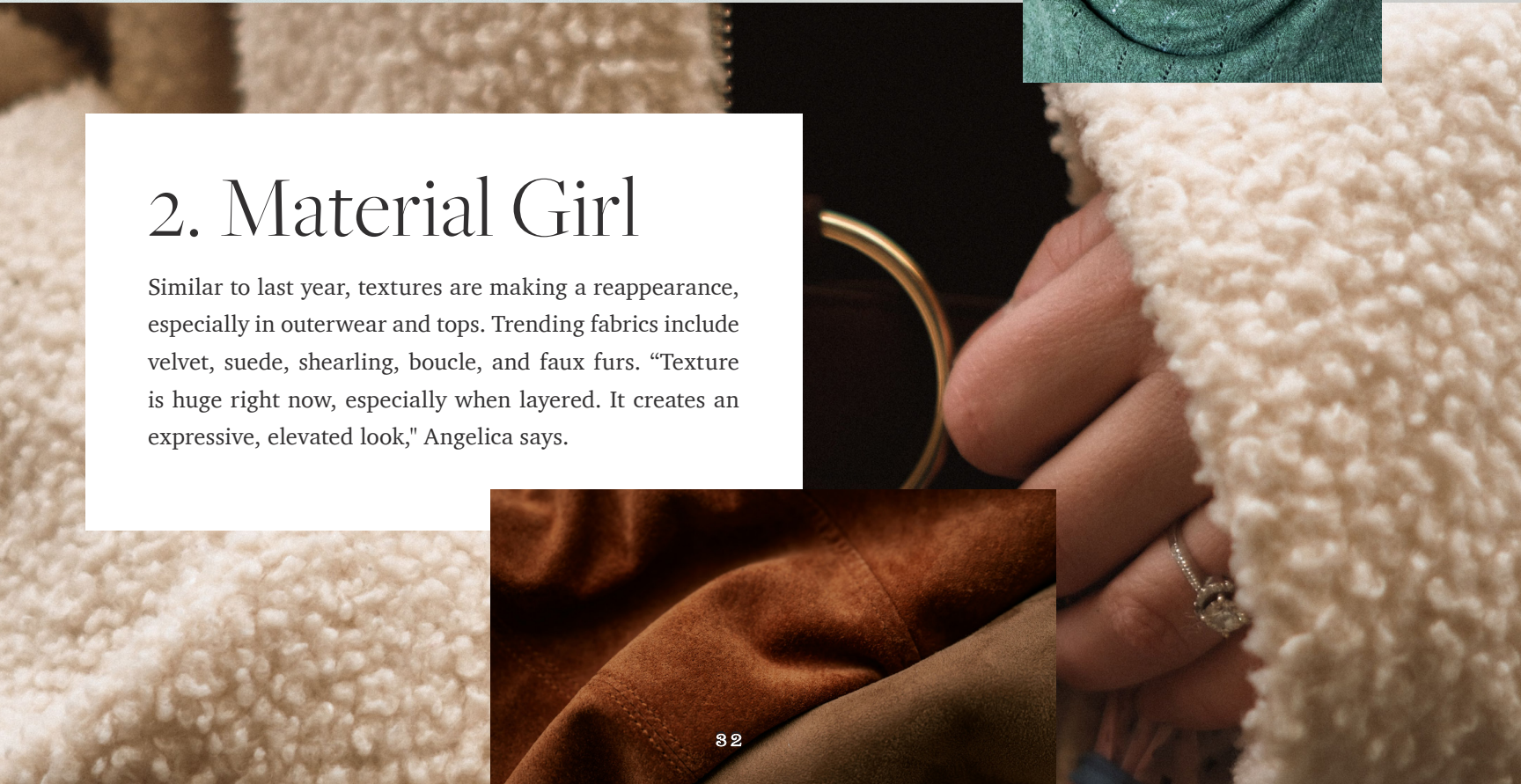
1. Bold is Back

Goodbye, butter yellow! Expect to see jewel tones and dark, earthy shades like olive green, espresso brown, and deep burgundy this fall. Mix and match colors — like an emerald blouse paired with light-wash jeans — or layer a jewel-toned top under a neutral jacket for a pop of color.



2. Material Girl

Similar to last year, textures are making a reappearance, especially in outerwear and tops. Trending fabrics include velvet, suede, shearling, boucle, and faux furs. “Texture is huge right now, especially when layered. It creates an expressive, elevated look,” Angelica says.



3. Your Fall MVP

Bundled up in the morning but sweating by lunchtime? Outerwear pieces offer the perfect solution for fluctuating fall temperatures. Angelica suggests building a collection of interchangeable pieces to choose from, ranging from cropped leather bombers to oversized denim jackets.



4. Blue Jean Baby

Who doesn't love a great pair of jeans? The denim industry is evolving, offering more styles than ever before. Rather than featuring one particular cut, brands are embracing a variety of styles in new colors and washes. Whether you prefer a modern bootcut or tailored barrel leg, you can choose whatever you look and feel best in.



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The Art of Becoming



INSIDE ABBEY LEACH'S DEBUT ALBUM

STORY BY KRYSTAL BRESNAHAN

Singer-songwriter Abbey Leach is releasing her debut album this summer. She's transformed ten years of hard work and open-hearted living into 11 original songs featuring musicians from the Black Hills. Now, please welcome Abbey Leach to the page.

DEVELOPING VOICE & STYLE WITH VULNERABILITY

"Developing your voice is one of the most fun things about being a musician. I like to listen to lots of different music, and let those sounds sink in. I've spent years practicing, trying new things, and honing my style," Leach shares.

"Recordings are just a snapshot in time, and if I don't get those snapshots, I'll have no record of myself growing as a musician."

As a kid, she didn't have a lot of exposure to female singers, so the qualities she wanted in her voice were more natural for men to achieve. "Joan Baez was the first female musician I looked up to, and I've had a few since then. I started appreciating my feminine voice more when I found influences who are like me."

Her upcoming album's musical style draws inspiration from country, bluegrass, folk, and jazz, all infused with a nostalgic 1960s vibe. "I'm most excited about the diverse styles. That's made it easy to include different musicians and showcase their talents. There are six contributors besides myself, including current and past band members, friends, and new collaborators. Collaborating can feel vulnerable, but everyone I worked with on this album was invested in doing their best work and serving the song."

PUSHING THROUGH PERFECTIONISM

"I imagined one day I would 'arrive' somewhere musically, and know that my music was high-quality and consistent. Now, I feel that artists are in a constant state of becoming, and I avoid putting pressure on myself to be a certain way," Leach says. "Recordings are just a snapshot in time, and if I don't get those snapshots, I'll have no record of myself growing as a musician."

Her self-titled album is composed of 11 songs that share her coming-of-age story, starting with her mother during her childhood all the way to moving again last summer. "It's bold to think I have something to say, and people will want to listen. This album helped me piece together

a meaningful narrative of my youngest years, and I hope that others will enjoy the story and reflect on what it's like to be naive, hopeful, self-conscious, and new."

"I could work on a single album indefinitely, but at some point, I have to let a project be good enough so I can start thinking about what's next," Leach says. "I'm happy with this album as a display of my current skill level, and I think I'll be lucky if I can look back on it in a few years and think I could do it better."

WRITING NOW, NOT WAITING FOR A MUSE

"If I'm feeling inspired, it helps to just keep writing. My best songs are a stream-of-consciousness where I let the song write itself without trying to make choices. Not every song is like that, but the fun ones are," Leach shares.

Her writing process for a new song starts by sitting quietly with her guitar. When asked about her motivation and the message she wants to share through her art, Leach says she likes to let her music speak for itself.

"I try not to elaborate too much about the backstory of a song. As a person, I frequently feel misunderstood, but as a songwriter, I can express myself freely and intentionally. People make their own interpretations of my songs, and that doesn't bother me. I'm satisfied knowing I meant what I said and I said it the best I could."

SUPPORTING MORE BLACK HILLS WOMEN MAKING MUSIC

"As a woman trying to accomplish anything, there are times you're the first woman on a project or the only

woman on a bill. I can't even begin to list the bands I know who don't have a single woman on stage or behind the scenes."

Leach says it's hard to explain just how disheartening that lack of representation can be. Although her hometown is a lot bigger than Box Elder, SD, she's noticed there are more female musicians on stages here in the Black Hills. "While equality is another thing that feels like it's in a constant state of becoming, I think the Hills should be proud of the way they treat their women artists," she says.

"Relying on other women is a huge source of relief and excitement for me. I intentionally support women in the local scene by hiring them to play, sending their info to venues, and going to their shows. I see a lot of other locals doing these things and more! I'm grateful for all the encouragement and connection I've found here."

Abbey Leach Album Release Show:

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more than MEDICINE

How a Small Town Clinic Heals Through Connection

BY MIRANDA O'BRYAN HERTEL

Southern Hills Family Medicine isn't your typical clinic. With an all-female staff, children selling chicken eggs, and even a wiener dog providing holistic healing, this clinic in Custer goes beyond traditional healthcare. Here they are fostering connections and creating community.

Opening their doors in January 2022, Paul and Dr. Brandy Tarap wanted to provide their small town with easy access to medical care when and where they needed it.

"It had always been a lifelong dream," said Dr. Tarap. "I rotated with a private practice family medicine doctor, and I kind of fell in love with the idea, so we decided to jump at the chance." Dr.

Tarap went on to say that most of her patients prefer to stay closer to home rather than travel to Rapid City for every appointment, minor or emergent.

"Patients appreciate the more you can do, the better. They would almost rather have an arm fall off than have to go to Rapid," she joked. In reality, though, she said patients want to feel seen and comfortable in a medical setting, and Southern Hills Family Medicine does that in their own backyard.

"Within four months, I had as many patients as I had had in five years [in a hospital]," Dr. Tarap explained, saying the need was apparent and exploded rather quickly. "I couldn't handle that load by myself, but I didn't want to

close my practice." Today, the clinic has added two family medicine nurse practitioners, Jennifer Zettl, DNP, and Tiffany Pullins, FNP.

While it's a female-led practice, it's also a family affair. Dr. Tarap's husband, Paul, runs the clinic behind the scenes as the office manager; her mother is the front-desk liaison; even their daughters, Paisley and Emmy, have found a place within the clinic.

"We call them the little bosses of the office," laughed Dr. Tarap. "They sell their chicken eggs at the office, and those are a hot commodity. We actually got a business card from a new patient last week, and my daughter said, 'I'm supposed to call her when we have more eggs because she wants to be first on the list.'"

While entrepreneurs at heart, Dr. Tarap's daughters are also finding their own connection to medicine alongside their mother.

"In the summer, they're at the office all the time. They'll take vital signs and write their initials up on their whiteboards on the front door before they walk into the rooms," Dr. Tarap said. "They make sure to hand out suckers to all the kids getting shots, or we've got little ice cream coupons to the local ice cream store in town, just to kind of ease that pain a little bit."





Their presence doesn't go unnoticed.

"We do have some patients that will only book appointments on Fridays because they want to see the girls," she added with a laugh.

That same sense of comfort and care extends throughout the Tarap family, right down to four paws and a wagging tail.

"Pebbles, our little wiener dog, is our clinic therapy dog," said Dr. Tarap. "Kiddos that are getting shots, she hangs out with them in the room to distract them."

But Pebbles' impact goes beyond simple distraction and into healing.

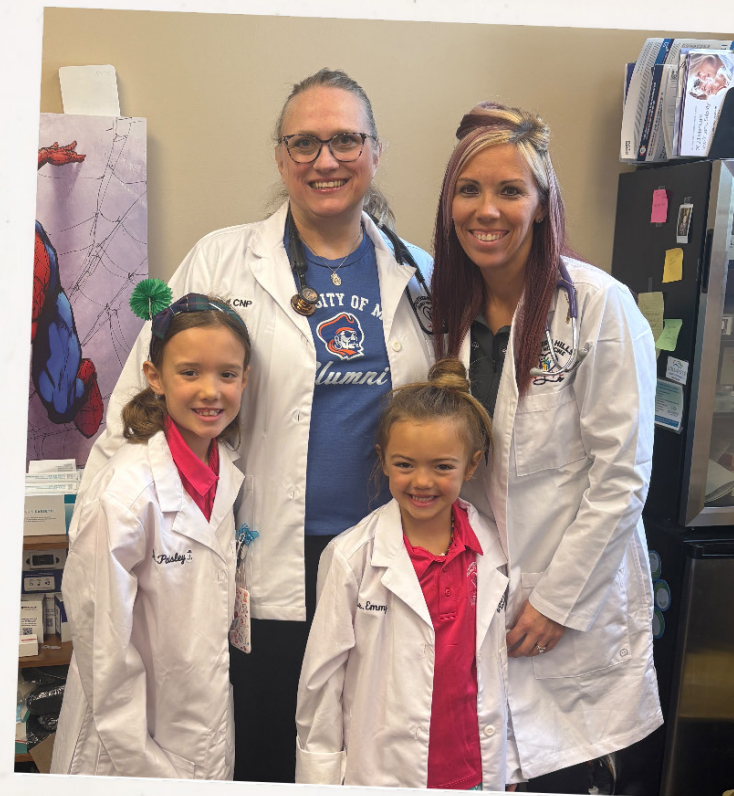
"If people have really high blood pressure, I'll bring her into the room, and they'll hang out with her for a few minutes and drop their blood pressure," Dr. Tarap explained.

Paul recalled a moment that stuck with him. "Brandy had a patient with 180 blood pressure, which is getting close to a hospitalization, even a stroke alert," he said. "Brandy walked in and gave the patient Pebbles, came back a couple of minutes later, and her blood pressure was already all the way down to 120."

Moments like that reflect what Southern Hills Family Medicine is truly about — creating an environment where patients feel at ease, supported, and truly cared for.

That sense of care is woven into every part of the clinic, even beyond traditional medical services.

Recently, nurse practitioner Tiffany Pullins suggested a food pantry for patients and community members in need — an effort rooted in the understanding that health goes beyond prescriptions and appointments.



Located just inside the building's entrance, the pantry is accessible to anyone without entering the clinic itself. "People can take what they need, and then they can leave what they don't need," said Brandy. "It's kind of nice because no one's going to see you take anything. There's no judgment; you don't have to be nervous or anxious that people are watching you."

For the Tarap family, care isn't confined to appointments; it's part of how they show up for their community.

Brandy and Paul are both active in the local school district, serving on the local school board and coaching middle school basketball. Brandy also finds time to extend her medical expertise beyond the clinic, serving as Custer's

medical director and the director for the local ambulance. For the Taraps, Custer may have started as a place to build a life — drawn in by the open air, a return to farm roots, and small-town charm — but somewhere along the way, it became something more.

It became a place where their work, family, and purpose could exist under one roof.

At Southern Hills Family Medicine, that can be seen in the small moments: children handing out suckers after shots, a patient finding support with a dog in their lap, a dozen eggs exchanged at the front desk, or a neighbor supported through a difficult time.

Medicine isn't just about treating patients; it's about caring for people.

"Medicine isn't just about treating patients; it's about caring for people."

RILEY WINTER

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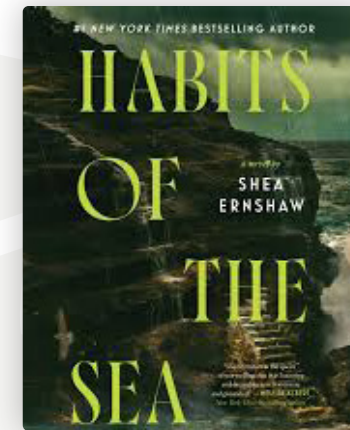
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CLUB

SAVING A SPOT FOR...



Habits of the Sea by Shea Ernschaw | Literary Fiction

RELEASE DATE: JULY 7, 2026

BRIEF SYNOPSIS: Ellie Mills is twelve years old the first time she visits the mythical island of Saltwell. There she meets a man named Clay Lockhart, who has been living adrift since a violent storm tore his land away. Fast forward, Ellie is now in her thirties and cannot stop thinking about the island. When it resurfaces, Ellie discovers things are exactly as they were — including Clay, who has not aged. Torn between reality and the enchanting island, Ellie must wrestle with love and promise of a life shaped by wonder instead of certainty.

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How Creativity & Collaboration are Shaping the Black Hills

Bringing Homes to Life

For Lori Yusten, moving to Rapid City and starting her own business wasn't just a life shift; it was a full-circle moment. Returning to the state that raised her, she brought with her a passion for texture, pattern, color, and a desire to dive into something new. Yusten is the owner and visionary behind Paisley Sky

BY MIRANDA O'BRYAN HERTEL





"You can scare yourself into not doing things. But don't let that fear hold you back from trying something out. You never know what's ahead."

Interiors, an interior design studio offering everything from furniture and décor to space planning, remodeling and renovation design, and new build design.

"I have 17 years of experience, but I worked for other companies," Yusten said, who opened her business in July 2024. "So when I decided to come here and launch my own design studio, I thought I'd give it a change and see how it goes."

While she admits it can be scary at times, owning and operating Paisley Sky Interiors is something she knows she won't regret. "You can scare yourself into not doing things," Yusten said. "But don't let that fear hold you back from trying something out. You never know what's ahead."

That same willingness to "go for it" and embrace creativity is reflected in the name of her business. "I'm an 80s girl, so I'm a big fan of Prince," Yusten said, noting she was inspired by the artist's 1985 hit, Paisley Park and his studio album of the same name. "And then just the whole idea of patterns and colors — it made sense for the company name."

For Yusten, design is about more than aesthetics; it's about helping people find individuality in a space and step outside of their comfort zones. She approaches each home like a blank canvas, layering color, texture, and personality in a way that feels both intentional and personal to each client.

"A lot of people play it safe by doing very neutral colors in their home," said



Yusten, who loves to help people add color to their home and life. “Sometimes they’re afraid to pull the trigger, or they just don’t know where to start. I’m there to help them step out of their comfort zone. I give them permission to do something different.”

Whether it’s refreshing a single room or transforming an entire space, Yusten’s approach is rooted in the belief that “your imagination should know no bounds” and that “the sky is the limit when it comes to transforming your home into something extraordinary.” This motto and mindset, combined with encouragement from those around her, helped bring Paisley Sky Interiors from a dream into reality.

“My sister was the one that kind of proposed the idea of moving to Rapid City, being closer to family,” explained Yusten. “And then at that point, she had randomly gone into Bella Patina and started talking with Natalie Walch.”

That conversation would become more than just a passing moment.

“Natalie was really great and encouraged me to come here and open my own design studio,” Yusten said. “She told me, ‘We could use your experience; you should come and open your own company.’”

“I just love the interaction with people. It’s a job where I can love what I do every day, so it doesn’t feel like work.”

For Walch, that kind of encouragement comes naturally. “I feel like I’ve always been an advocate for women to have the courage to start their own businesses,” she said. “I try to offer support, encouragement, and advice to help empower their passions.”

Walch has long been part of the Rapid City community, first moving to the area in 1988 after finishing design school. What began as a love for interiors, furniture, and antiques eventually led her to open Bella Patina in 2004 – a space rooted in both beauty and evolution.

“Bella means beautiful, and patina refers to vintage finishes,” Walch explained. “When I first started, we would travel to Europe and bring back containers of antiques. Since then, we’ve evolved with the trends, now it’s a little more modern, a little more Scandinavian.”

For more than two decades, Bella Patina has remained a staple in the community, offering a curated collection of furniture, art, rugs, lighting, and décor. “I really wanted to bring a special collection of unique home furnishings to our area,” she said. While design is the foundation of her work, it’s the people who have sustained it.

“I just love the interaction with people; it makes them happy,” Walch said. “It’s a job where I can love what I do every day, so it doesn’t feel like work.”

That shared passion for both design and connection naturally led to collaboration between Walch and Yusten, one rooted not just in business, but in mutual respect and support.

“Natalie actually has referred me to different clients, which has been great,” said Yusten, explaining



the way she and Walch work hand in hand, providing clients a gorgeous space filled with high-quality, locally purchased pieces.

“I love creating a collection each season and interacting with my customers who have become friends over the years,” said Walch. “Lori is now working for me part time and is available to go into homes to help with any project. She is very personable, and our community is lucky to have her.”

Recently, Bella Patina and Paisley Sky Interiors partnered together in a new way. The businesses joined forces to host a Ladies Night event, offering a space for women in the Black Hills to gather, connect,

and find inspiration for their own homes. “A good place to start any kind of project in your home is talking to a designer,” said Yusten. “If somebody wants a full room makeover, we can help with artwork, lamps, area rugs, all of that.”

For Walch, creating those in-person experiences is just as important as the products themselves. “I’ve worked hard to keep it going through economic shifts, changing trends, and COVID. We really need to support our local brick-and-mortar retail stores so we can have the experience of in-person contact;

to see, feel, and touch the amazing handmade products,” said Walch. “Shopping online just isn’t the same.”

Together, Yusten and Walch are doing more than just designing beautiful spaces; they’re helping build a community rooted in creativity, connection, and the courage to try something new. And in a place like the Black Hills, that kind of collaboration doesn’t just transform homes; Walch and Yusten are a perfect example of inspiring people to live more boldly within them.



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No Name

BY EMILY BERRY

What can I tell you? It was a summer that seemed to be making history — their personal history — almost before it began, and they stood back slightly, still in it, but observing it, saying “the summer this,” “the summer that,” all the while it was going on. They became obsessed with a fountain, for example, one they walked past each day, how abundantly it would reach upwards and yet be pouring back down itself the whole time — all winter this fountain had been dry, not saying a word. What more can I tell you? Oh, everything — like how they would walk home in the evenings when the light was soft, anything bad sliding off them, and they would feel owned, completely owned, in a good way, by the air, which would touch them constantly, sometimes urgently, sometimes lightly, just to let them know it was there, and they would think maybe this is what being alive is, when they saw how complicated a tree was and how it wanted them looking at it and saying this, how the color of a particular flower at this particular moment was redder even than the life force, whatever that is, if you could open it up and get right down inside it, if you could put your mouth to it and become as red as that rose even, it was still redder than that, and they wouldn’t know what to do with themselves so they wouldn’t do anything except listen to the songs in their heads which were sad ones like nearly all good songs and watch this feeling rolling in, sunshine or rain, we don’t know yet, it’s a good one, it’s the best one, though it has no name.



BORN TO BE A MOM

Chosen to be a Grandma

BY SAMANTHA LINDE



Most people are driven by a defining purpose. For Gayleen Raber, her heart's mission was motherhood.

Gayleen was seventeen when she met the man who would become her husband. She had a long-term boyfriend when she met Ronald, and fondly recalled, "I had a boyfriend, but not for long." After two years of dating, the couple married in Belle Fourche and embarked on a new life together. Three years later, Ron established his welding business, Raber's Welding. Gayleen worked side-by-side with her husband doing secretarial work. Together, they had three beautiful children: Justin, Gina, and Kelli.

Gayleen always knew she wanted to be a mother, despite the challenges. When she first became pregnant with Justin, she leaned on her mother for support. She giggled as she thought about the first time she went into labor. "I called my mom and asked, 'Mom, am I in labor?'" Her mom became an anchor for Gayleen to lean on as she grew into motherhood.



Gayleen stayed home with each child until they went to school. She cherishes this time in her life, stating that having their own business provided them with more flexibility, enabling the children to come to work with them. The children helped with the business throughout their entire childhoods. Aside from that, Gayleen taught them good manners, how to say please and thank you, grace before meals, and kindness. This period of time taught Gayleen what truly mattered to her, and that was her children.

When each of her children graduated, Gayleen said those were her proudest moments. They had grown into well-rounded adults, and she was confident in their futures. She focused more on her secretarial work with the business until she recognized that although she enjoyed working alongside Ron, she had another dream.

“After working with him for twenty-three years, I thought, ‘I have to do something different.’” She tried working at Home Health for a year and a half — going into people’s homes, giving them showers, doing their hair, and visiting them. “I got sick,” she said. And she missed being with children. “I knew taking care of kids was better for me.”

Driven by this desire, Gayleen established her own at-home daycare, aptly named Barnyard Kids. Among the children in her care was her beloved granddaughter. There were two other children who registered for that first year as well. Barnyard Kids provided childcare for children from infancy until they reached the age of four. Gayleen smiled remembering how they purchased a new modular home for their land with the intent of using it for the daycare.

The new home was placed over their walk-out basement where the daycare operated. To this day, they have the ramp that leads downstairs. To each of the children that went through the daycare, Gayleen was known as “Grandma Gayleen.” Ron also enjoyed spending time with the children when he could. He became “Papa Ron,” and he would sometimes take the children on four-wheeler rides. After about five years, Gayleen hired an assistant, and together they expanded Barnyard Kids to include a preschool that transformed into a country school.

Gayleen instilled in each child everything that she had taught her own children. “Grandma Gayleen” became a safe place for each child. Many of those children are now in high school and still affectionately refer to her as “Grandma Gayleen.” However, Gayleen’s motherly heart extended beyond the children.

“They are a *precious commodity,* children are.”

Gayleen’s impact also touched the hearts of the parents. She recalled at least two mothers who got pregnant and were overwhelmed with fear at how they would manage another child. Gayleen reassured these women, just as her mother had done for her. And she helped them — she listened to their fears, answered questions, and helped take care of their babies when they were old enough to join Barnyard Kids. For many women,

Gayleen became a mother, a mentor, and a friend.

After twenty years of running Barnyard Kids, and with over 100 kids who had made it through the program, the business closed. Sometimes Gayleen wishes it hadn’t, but she felt it was time. Her assistant, who was like a daughter to her, left, and Gayleen knew she didn’t want to continue running Barnyard Kids alone.

Her family hosted a retirement party, and many of the children that Gayleen helped to raise attended with their families. They shared stories about “Grandma Gayleen” and “Papa Ron.” For Gayleen, each of these children had been a light in her life.

“They are a precious commodity, children are,” she shares.

For Gayleen Raber, children have always been the most important thing — whether she is “mom,” or “Grandma Gayleen,” she has made sure that everyone feels cherished and loved in her presence.



Rising Up

STORY
BY AVERY
PORCH



Most people think sex trafficking only happens in big cities or during large, annual events like the Sturgis Motorcycle Rally. Sadly, sexual exploitation occurs every day, year-round — even here in the Black Hills.

Esthers Rising, a faith-based nonprofit founded in 2020, is one of the few local organizations dedicated to combating sexual exploitation and supporting survivors on their journey toward healing and restoration.



Answering the Call

Cheri Hartman, executive director of Esthers Rising, helped start the nonprofit six years ago with a friend. They met with local anti-trafficking leaders and learned that adolescent survivors often struggle to find specialized support. Recognizing a need in the area, they felt called to provide restorative care services for survivors in the Black Hills.

While brainstorming for the nonprofit, the two women felt drawn to the

Biblical story of Queen Esther, a young Jewish girl who risked her life to save her people. For their logo, they chose a dragonfly — a symbol of wisdom and transformation — and incorporated the color purple to symbolize royalty.

“The name ‘Esthers Rising’ was inspired by our desire to step out in faith like Esther to begin this work. We also hope to empower those we serve to rise up and become the Esthers of their own generation,” Cheri says.



Building a Strong Foundation

The nonprofit started by offering a program called Free23, providing trauma-based counseling for adolescent girls ages 12-17. The program also includes access to group therapy, skills classes, and support services. Free23 operates as a referral-based model, and all services are provided at no cost to the client.

In December 2025, the team purchased property in the Southern Hills to begin building a restorative care home. Fewer than 600 beds are available nationwide for child sex trafficking survivors, and more than 88% of survivors are unable to access residential care. Even more alarming, roughly 80% of survivors are revictimized if they do not have a safe place to go. This heartbreaking reality ignited a passion in Cheri to create a home for vulnerable girls with nowhere else to turn.

Currently under construction, the first bungalow will house four to six girls. The floor plan includes individual bedrooms and bathrooms, a shared living room and kitchen, and private quarters for live-in staff. With enough support, they hope to expand and build two additional homes on the property. But for now, they're starting small: "We want to build a strong foundation before broadening our reach," Cheri says.

"We want to build a strong foundation before broadening our reach."

Spreading Awareness

The team also gives presentations and workshops throughout the Black Hills, sharing about the reality of sex trafficking. "We realized how many people had no idea this was happening in our community," Cheri says. "Since then, a major part of our mission has involved education and awareness — helping people understand the reality of exploitation and equipping them to recognize the signs."



Often, sexual exploitation doesn't look how people expect it to. In the Black Hills area, between 40% to 50% of cases involve familial trafficking; often, parents or relatives exploit their dependents in exchange for money or drugs.

Sexual exploitation occurs in other ways, too. Widespread access to technology has opened new avenues for predators, who use digital platforms to target vulnerable children.

Through her work at Esthers Rising, Cheri has witnessed



We know that knowledge is power. The more people are educated and aware, the more we can prevent exploitation, identify victims, and empower survivors. It takes all of us working together.”

the devastating impact of online exploitation. In some cases, adolescents have attempted to take their own lives after being targeted online by multiple individuals. “In those instances, the parents had no idea what was happening to their child online. That is why providing education, awareness, and support for parents and caregivers is so important,” she explains.

Community engagement plays an important role in their mission. During Human Trafficking Awareness Month, Esthers Rising distributes yard signs throughout the Black Hills, and the nonprofit also organizes a “Run for the One” 5k every May. “We know that knowledge is power. The more people are educated and aware, the more we can prevent exploitation, identify victims, and empower survivors. It takes all of us working together,” Cheri says.

In August, Esthers Rising is hosting their 5th Annual Hope Givers Gala, featuring a guest speaker, live auction, and dinner. All proceeds support their mission, bringing hope to survivors of sex trafficking and sexual exploitation.

You can learn more and get involved by visiting esthersrisingministry.com.

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