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FRONTLINE FIREFIGHTERS



INSPIRING WOMEN & GIRLS TO JOIN THE FIRE SERVICE

STORY BY **KRYSTAL BRESNAHAN**

ACCORDING TO THE NATIONAL FIRE PROTECTION ASSOCIATION, 9% OF U.S. FIREFIGHTERS ARE WOMEN. FIND OUT HOW TAMMY STADEL — THE FIRST FEMALE FIRE OFFICER OF THE RAPID CITY FIRE DEPARTMENT — IS INSPIRING MORE WOMEN AND GIRLS TO SEE THEMSELVES AS FIREFIGHTERS, PARAMEDICS, HAZMAT SPECIALISTS, EMERGENCY MANAGERS, MOBILE MEDICS, AND LEADERS WITHIN OUR COMMUNITY.

A TASTE OF LIFE AS A TRAILBLAZER

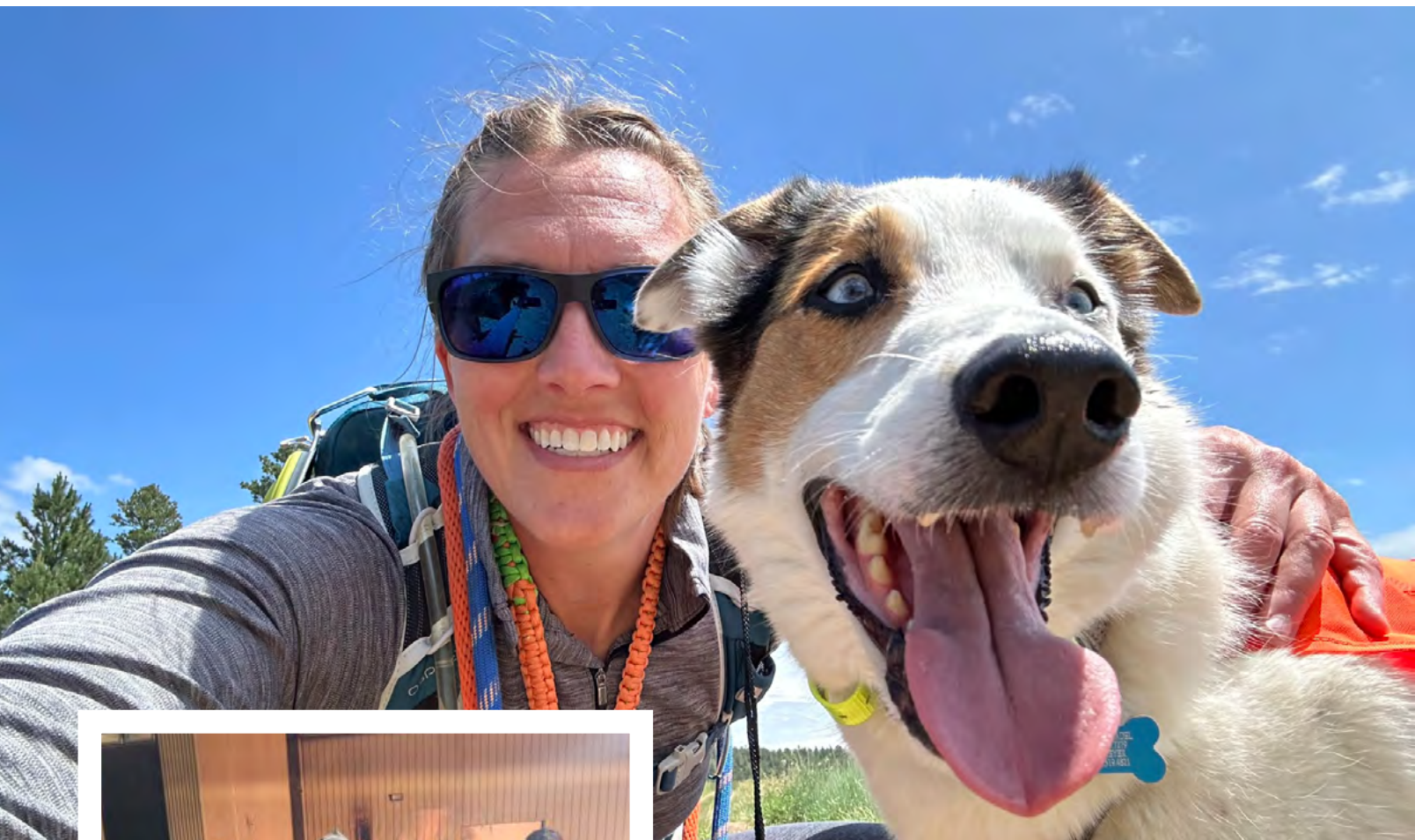
Tammy Stadel refers to herself as an “accidental firefighter.” When she first started in the fire service, she wasn’t sure about her career goals and aspirations.

“I was really fortunate to start as a volunteer. This gave me so many great opportunities to attend classes and be part of the community. Many people don’t realize they can volunteer for their local department, either fire or ambulance,” she says.

While earning her engineering degree, she joined a volunteer fire department and

Pennington County Search and Rescue. “This is when I really fell in love with the Black Hills, being outdoors, working with dogs, and firefighting. I was born and raised here and realized I didn’t want to leave,” Stadel says.

With limited options for entry-level engineering jobs, she decided to test for the fire department and received a job offer a few months later. Still, she believes learning about engineering informs her firefighting. “Engineering is all about process imple-



mentation and problem-solving. As a firefighter, that's most of [what we do]. We learn to recognize problems and find solutions to them.

Her unique blend of volunteer training, education, and life experiences shaped her path forward to help community members prepare, prevent, and protect against fire emergencies.

When asked about her proudest moment so far, Stadel says it's all about pushing herself. "Being a female officer has had many challenges, but I think I lead a little differently than the guys do. I bring a different perspective and use different techniques, hopefully making a more rounded and diverse fire officer group."

She hopes to inspire other women who might not be sure if firefighting is for them.

UNDER FIRE: LESSONS LEARNED ON-THE-JOB

“I’ve been fortunate to work in many different roles. As a volunteer, I was a training officer, assistant chief, team leader, and worked on many different county boards. With the Rapid City Fire Department, I’ve been able to deploy to wildland fires all over the country, be a HAZMAT Specialist on the regional response team and South Dakota Task Force 1, work as a rescue tech, and lead as an officer.”

Stadel’s job involves fighting fires, working on an ambulance, and training to help people through their worst day.

“I also get to work on a national incident management team managing wildland fires and other natural and manmade disasters. These opportunities allow us to bring experience back to the city to help keep our community safe and provide higher-level services,” she tells me.

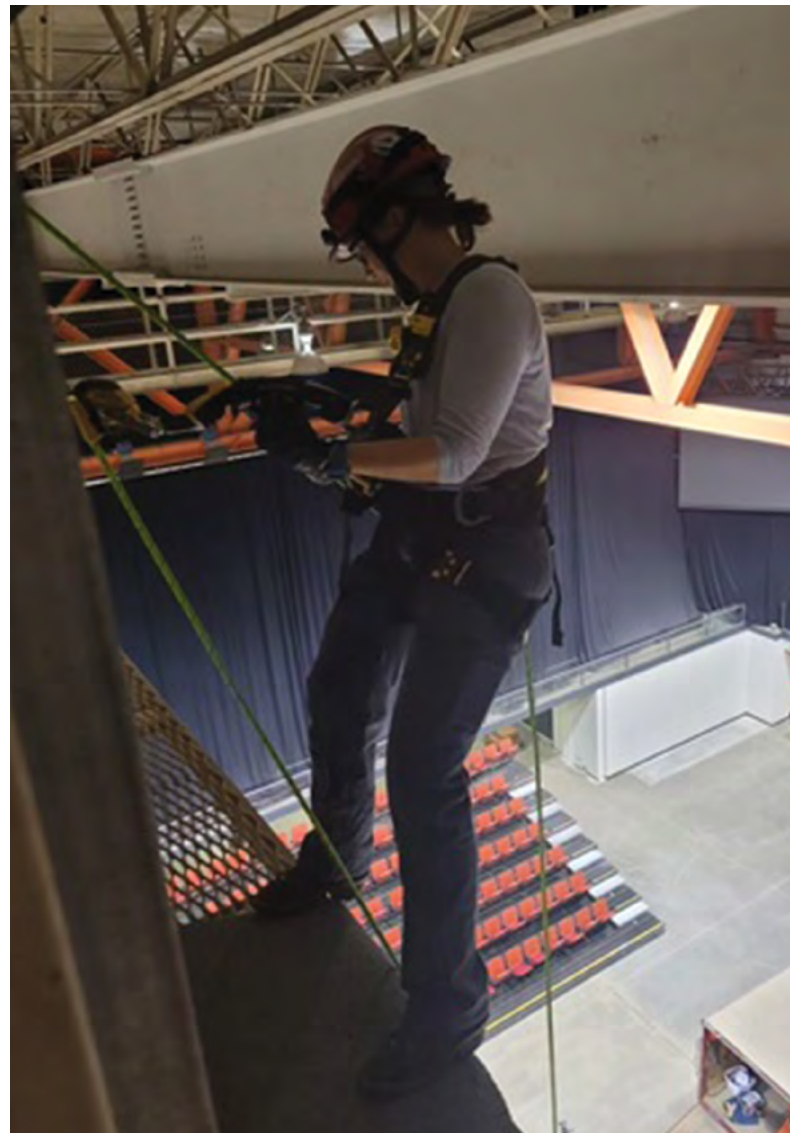
When providing public education in the community, two common questions come to mind. First, do firefighters actually rescue cats from trees? The answer is yes! While it’s less likely for cats to get stuck, sometimes they just can’t make it down and that’s when her team arrives on the scene to help.

“Another common question is how to keep families safe during a fire. The best way is through prevention such as using heating materials appropriately (space heaters, ovens, fireplaces, etc.) and focusing on cooking safety. In the event there is a fire, sleep with doors closed, practice

exiting your house and have a meeting place, and keep fire extinguishers handy,” she says.

Stadel believes being part of the community makes her better at her job. By participating in leadership programs, volunteering through Big Brothers Big Sisters, and serving on local boards, she learns about the people and places in our area and shares her experiences with her crew.

“Education is so important in any profession. It doesn’t have to be a degree program, but continually learning new things keeps us well-rounded and keeps challenging



us. I hope I can instill this in my crew and push them to be better.”

In 2016, Stadel finished the National Fire Academy’s Executive Fire Officer Program and this last year she was credentialed as a CPSE Fire Officer. She’s proud of both accomplishments and for good reason – only a few folks in South Dakota have done

either of these, not to mention both.

“I never thought I’d be considered a leader, but helping others develop their skills has been really rewarding. The most important thing I’ve learned is that it’s good to challenge yourself. You can do more than you think you can,” she says.

In 2024, she’s tackling another learning



opportunity: Completing her doctorate program in Organizational Leadership. Her research proposal compares the leadership skills firefighters look for in a leader with the skills leaders currently possess. By joining her passion for education with a



problem in the fire service, she hopes to help current leaders to refine their skills, and improve how future leaders are promoted and/or mentored.

“Being a firefighter also means you gain a whole new family... we’re together for holidays, birthdays, weddings, funerals, births, promotions, retirements, and everything in between. We go hiking together, help each other move, and learn about each other’s families. It is a special group and having these people in my life means so much.”

IGNITING BRIGHT FUTURES FOR WOMEN IN FIRE

Stadel encourages women and girls to consider a future career or unique volunteer opportunity with the fire service.

As a woman trailblazing a meaningful career in a male-dominated field, she leaves us with these words of encouragement: “One of the most powerful tools is doubt – both self-doubt and doubt from others. It is important to have people who believe in you and people who don’t because it creates levels of support and determination. When you have people who are there to push you because they think you can do more, you have encouragement. When you see people who doubt that you should be there at all, you push yourself.”

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HEALthyHORMONES



with Teresa Parker

STORY BY ABBIGALE WINTER • PHOTOS BY LOVE BY SARAH PETERSON

The New Year is here, and the idea of setting lifestyle and wellness goals is a common thought for many. There are numerous benefits to practicing yoga at every stage of life. Starting now and implementing it as a habit will HEALTHYHORMONES (HEAL-thy-HORMONES) and ensure health goals are met.

This topic is fundamental to Teresa Parker, who has been in the health and wellness industry for over forty years. Her experience obtained through certifications, courses, and self-education has been vital to helping others accomplish their health and wellness goals.

Teresa says she spends most of her days “personal training, teaching group fitness classes, and helping health professionals implement wellness solutions into their practices.” In her spare time, she also loves “spending time on a sandy white beach by the turquoise blue ocean, hiking in the beautiful Black Hills, and watching functional and lifestyle medicine webinars.” Teresa loves talking about healthy hormones and yoga, especially as it relates to peri-menopausal and menopausal women.

Eating nutritious food, staying hydrated, and obtaining enough sleep are all very important aspects of maintaining wellness goals.

“Yoga is a fantastic tool to create healthy hormones and wellness at any age, including peri-menopausal and menopausal women.” Teresa says. “The meaning of yoga

is to unite or yoke. This connection of the mind, body, and breath helps these women create healthy hormones. Practicing yoga can have a positive impact on all systems of the body.”

Creating healthy hormones is essential when discussing health and wellness goals. The muscular system, detoxification system, and endocrine system are all systems of the body that can be impacted by yoga.

Peri-menopausal and menopausal women’s metabolism and the ability to maintain a healthy body fat percentage is related to the muscular system.

“Skeletal muscle is an endocrine organ,” Teresa says. “Muscles are involved in regulating hormones such as insulin and growth hormones. Using our own body weight with the option of adding bands, dumbbells, balls or cables to your yoga practice can help create lean muscle mass. Muscle tissue is metabolically active.”

Detoxification is another key to ensuring the body is metabolically active, involving the skin, liver, kidneys, intestines, and lymphatic system. Hot yoga is a great tool for this.

“[Hot yoga] is an environment that combines infrared heat and humidity,” Teresa says. “It is a fantastic recipe to assist in making the detox magic happen!”

“Specific yoga poses (asanas) can be incredibly helpful during peri-menopause and menopause to stimulate glands, organs, and systems to create healthy

hormone harmony,” Teresa explains. “A consistent yoga practice has been shown to be beneficial at releasing mental, emotional, physical, environmental, and chemical stressors. This release can increase energy as well as reduce the joint or muscle pain that many peri-menopausal and menopausal women suffer from.”

The endocrine system is another system of the body that yoga can have a positive impact on. The endocrine system coordinates the body’s hormones. This relates to energy, the response to stress, metabolism, and so much more.

“Hormones are chemical messengers,” Teresa says. “It is common for insulin, thyroid hormones, adrenal hormones, and sex hormones to become unbalanced during peri-menopause and menopause. Breath work (prana), specifically balancing and relaxing category breathing, are free and effective tools to help regulate the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems. This shift from fight or flight to rest and digest can improve the mental focus and gut issues that many peri-menopausal and menopausal women suffer from.”

The new year is the perfect opportunity to start fresh and develop lasting and beneficial lifestyle changes. Positively impacting metabolism, maintaining a healthy body fat percentage, detoxing the body to reduce joint pain, and balancing the hormones are all real outcomes of practicing yoga.

“I believe that functional yoga is about creating a balance between pushing and pulling, giving and receiving, holding on and letting go, inhaling and exhaling, ego and soul.”

“Receiving my yoga and breath coaching certifications are two of the best decisions I’ve made for both myself and my career. The benefits go way beyond physical. For me, and many of my clients, the mental and spiritual benefits are the special sauce!”



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Cancer Care

featuring Dr. Schuth & Dr. Semmens

STORY BY **SARAH GRASSEL**

Monument Health in Rapid City has been dedicated to community-based health care serving more than 10 communities across the western region of South Dakota and into eastern Wyoming. Part of the Mayo Clinic Care Network, Monument Health consists of five hospitals and 38 medical clinics and specialty centers.

One of the specialty services includes The Cancer Care Institute. Kristi Gylten, Cancer Care Institute Director says, “This institute in particular serves more than 40,000 patients each year. The physicians and caregivers there work collaboratively with each other and other teams at Monument Health.” Two of the dedicated physicians that work closely with the Cancer Care Institute are Dr. Ogla Schuth, plastic and reconstructive surgeon and Dr. Ashlea Semmens, breast surgical oncologist. Focusing on women’s health, Dr. Schuth and Dr. Semmens share similar goals and missions in the career field while coming from vastly different backgrounds.

Both of the specialties that they studied

have a heavy hand in cancer treatment. “Dr. Semmens treats a wide spectrum of conditions including benign breast disease, acute breast problems, patients with an elevated risk of breast cancer, and those who have already been diagnosed with cancer,” Monument Health Clinic Director, William Reynolds adds. “Dr. Schuth specializes in reconstructive, cosmetic and hand surgery. Reconstructive surgery includes post-cancer resection, like breast, as well as post-trauma defects.”

“One in eight women in the United States (U.S.) will develop breast cancer in their lifetime. It thus accounts for 30% of all new U.S. female cancer diagnoses each year.”



Meet Ashlea Semmens, M.D.

Dr. Ashlea Semmens is originally from the midwest region, but she has an incredibly diverse experience through her education. After completing her undergraduate degree in Montana, she moved to the pacific northwest and was part of the Washington, Wyoming, Alaska, Montana, and Idaho (WWAMI) Program at the University of Washington School of Medicine. “This allowed me to participate in clinical rotations in several different states before moving to Iowa where I completed my general surgery residency,” Dr. Semmens shares.

Finishing off her education, the last step was a move to Memphis, TN at the West Cancer Center where Dr. Semmens completed her breast surgical oncology fellowship. She adds, “I have been extremely fortunate to work with many incredible mentors throughout my training and am excited to be working here in the Black Hills.”

Not only is Dr. Semmens the breast surgical oncologist at Monument Health, she also serves as the director of the Breast Center and works closely with the team at the Cancer Care Institute. Early on in medical school, Dr. Semmens developed her passion within the operating room, but it wasn't until about halfway throughout her residency training that she felt drawn to breast cancer patients in particular.

“It is such an honor to walk alongside a patient from their initial diagnosis, multi-specialty treatment, and into survivorship,” Dr. Semmens explains. “I am able to develop a bond with each patient and highly value a shared decision-making model of care.”

Others on her team recognize her individual level of commitment to each patient as well. William shares, “She advocates for her patients and really cares for them through all aspects of their journey.”

Outside of work, you can find Dr. Semmens enjoying her homelife with her husband, their two young daughters, and two golden retrievers. “We have been enjoying outdoor adventures throughout the Black Hills,” she smiles. When she isn't making memories with the family, Dr. Semmens says she also enjoys being in the kitchen cooking or baking, curled up reading a good book on the couch, or quilting! Quilting is a new hobby she took up just before the family relocated to the Black Hills.

“Only one eighth of the plastic surgery field consists of cosmetic procedures.”

Plastic surgery also includes reconstructions after cancer removal, wound coverage, migraine surgery, craniofacial surgery, hand surgery, burn treatment, and much more.

Meet Olga Schuth, M.D.

Born in a small historic city in Russia, Dr. Schuth moved to the US 20 years ago pursuing her dream. “Even as a kid in Russia, I wanted to become a doctor, but it wasn’t until I went to Brody School of Medicine at East Carolina University where I met my first mentor, Dr. Zeri, that I became enamored with the art and creativity of plastic surgery,” she shares.

After that first part of her education, her journey continued on at the Virginia Commonwealth University for her residency program. Dr. Schuth adds, “I was fortunate during that residency to find additional mentors and learn a wide range of skills that the field of plastic surgery encompasses including botox, fillers, and complex microsurgery flap cases.”

Dr. Schuth also had a fellowship for hand and microsurgery in Tennessee. There she gained a deeper understanding of how much the hand really can impact an individual’s daily way of living. William adds, “Dr. Schuth recognizes that when patients come to see her they are in a particularly vulnerable time in their life. While her goal is to return to form and restore function, she makes it a priority to listen to her patient’s needs and ensure that she is taking care of the

whole person rather than an individual problem.”

In her freetime out of the office or operating room, Dr. Schuth and her husband are taking in the beauty of the Black Hills. “There seems to be endless amounts to do outdoors,” she smiles. Recently, the two ran the Crazy Horse half marathon together. Dr. Schuth also really enjoys reading the collections found at the Rapid City Public Library. If she isn’t at the library or exploring outdoors, Dr. Schuth is tending to her orchids or cooking.



blazing her path

**WHILE
LEADING
OTHERS**



Sonali Khachikian never expected to call the Black Hills home. After embracing the circumstances that led her here, she has thrown her heart and soul into working to make her career as a woman in a STEM field meaningful beyond the work she does with her patients and has become a force for female empowerment in the community.

After completing schooling, Khachikian began a meaningful career in medicine, ultimately landing in Rapid City where she works as an Endocrinologist.

"I like that I can have relationships with patients. Endo affects your whole body and I like the idea of putting everything together. I also like how refined it is. Small changes in hormones cause shifts in the whole body. You can incorporate it into day-to-day life, and you get to see patients succeed," said Khachikian.

When speaking with Khachikian, it is apparent to anyone that her passion lies with her patients. She truly cares about making a difference in her patients' lives, both physically and emotionally, and repeats that many of her patients feel like family.

"When you come into my office, it doesn't matter who is or isn't around. I'd give you the same advice I'd give my own family. My patients know that when they're in my room, it's like they're the only person in

the world. I have that relationship with my patients," said Khachikian.

As an Endocrinologist, Khachikian, or Dr. K, as she's affectionately called by her patients, works directly with the endocrine system. She studies how hormones have different effects on parts and conditions throughout the body. Patients of all different needs come to see her in order to find relief from hormone related symptoms. Khachikian finds immense joy and satisfaction in working with patients to figure out exactly what they need to feel better.

"I consider myself a success when I can see the 'a-ha' moment in patients. I can see that I've given them the tools to do what they're going to do," she said.

She enjoys getting to take a more personal approach with her work in medicine. She treats each and every patient with respect and kindness, and regards those as some of the most important aspects of not just her work, but her life, taking the lessons she's learned in the hospital and passing them down to her daughters.

"I think patients respect when you say to them 'I don't know what the answer is, but I will look to find the answer and guide you in the right direction.' I think medicine is such a unique field. In no other room do you go into a room and share your life story and drop all boundaries

and barriers. That shouldn't be taken for granted. It's a huge responsibility to take care of patients and you have to do that with a lot of respect. I always say this to my daughters. 'In a world where you can choose to be anything, choose to be kind.' Because you don't know what people have been through. It's important to choose kindness. To have people come in and you shut the door and have people tell you all about their lives, it's so precious," she said.

Khachikian has faced her own set of challenges being both a woman in a male-dominated STEM field, as well as a woman of color. From not feeling heard, to the ever-present imposter syndrome, she's seen it all. However, she has embraced these challenges, and used them to fuel her for good. It has pushed her to be better for her patients, her daughters, and herself.

"One of the biggest things I've had to overcome is imposter syndrome. I tell other women that they need to step up and come into their own in a kind way. Up until you get to a certain stage in life you're trying to emulate someone else's footsteps, and at some point you pivot from that and have to find your own stride," she said.

At this stage, Khachikian personally feels like she's achieved what she hoped to achieve within her professional career. She hopes now that she's able to be a positive female role model, and wants to show the next generation of women that they're absolutely able to do any-

thing they set their minds to. Whether that's pursuing a career in medicine, or raising and taking care of a family, or both. She believes that by knowing and recognizing their own self-worth, women truly can have it all if they choose to do so.

"As a female in medicine or STEM it's fantastic, and women— especially in the midwest— they don't need to fit into a mold. The mold needs to change. My daughters will tell you that I make dinner every night and pick them up from school and go to their activities, but I also have a career and am up and at it at 4:15 for my job. I showed them that this is normal and this is what we do. Women can do both. Damn right I'm a woman in medicine, and I take my stethoscope and my heels off and I'm just like everyone else. Every woman can decide what their path is going to be, and if a woman wants to stay home and take care of her family, that's just as bold as going to work and being a physician," she said.

For young girls hoping to pursue a career in STEM, Khachikian emphasizes always staying kind, but not at the expense of your seat at the table. Knowing your worth and value, and learning to advocate for yourself is essential, and understanding that someone is always taking notice of the way you carry and handle yourself in situations where times get tough.

"The most important thing is not to be a pushover, but be kind to yourself

*blazing
her path*



**"I LIKE THAT I CAN HAVE
RELATIONSHIPS *with* PATIENTS.
ENDO AFFECTS YOUR WHOLE BODY
and I LIKE THE IDEA OF PUTTING
EVERYTHING TOGETHER."**

and be kind to people around you. Do not view being submissive as being kind. You are not being true to yourself. All the young people and women in this area start to rise and stand a little taller knowing you're there, because someone is always taking a life lesson from the way you're carrying yourself. Hold your head high, and maintain your integrity," she said.

**KHACHIKIAN IS IMMENSELY
GRATEFUL AND THANKFUL
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HOW TO BE YOUR OWN BEST FRIEND IN 2024

STORY BY DOROTHY ROSBY

I made just one New Year's resolution for 2024. I resolved that this will be the year I finally accept myself as I am. I figure it's about time. Plus I'm hoping it will make a lot of other resolutions unnecessary.

I went to my usual source for guidance, wisdom and time-wasting drivel—the internet—and found several articles on the subject of self-acceptance. You may find what I learned helpful. But remember, if it were easy, we all would have done it by now.

All the articles I read had some variation of the advice to let go of the things we can't change. Or at least the things we can't change without major surgery. I added that part because for me letting go of the things I can't change means accepting the

fact that I'll always have my father's nose and I'll never have a flat stomach.

Letting go sounds effortless, like blowing dandelion seeds into your neighbor's yard. But it's not that easy. Just when I think I've finally let go of my dream of flat abs I see a Peloton commercial or a 21-year-old in a midriff top. Then I sit right down and do 50 bicycle crunches. Or at least I sit right down and think about doing 50 bicycle crunches.

One of the articles I read said that if we're ever going to accept ourselves we must come to terms with our limitations. That's not easy either. I've been trying to accept my seasonal allergies for years. And my inability to say no to chocolate. And the fact that I can't stay up past 10 o'clock

if I want anyone to like me the next day. I guess other people have limitations too.

Maybe the hardest part of self-acceptance is practicing self-compassion. Of course being kind to yourself means getting plenty of rest, eating right and exercising. I eat right and exercise pretty well, at least for a short time after I see a Peloton commercial.

But it also means speaking kindly to yourself—as kindly as you would to a friend. And that's much harder. No friend of mine would stick around if I said to them what I've already said to myself today: A first grader could fold clothes better than you do. And when was the last time you dusted? 1980? And you lazy slug! If you put off finishing your column any longer, you'll miss the deadline and they'll have to use it in the next issue.

And speaking of friends, the experts say we should avoid people who criticize us or in other ways make it harder to accept ourselves. From here on out, I intend to avoid 21-year-old women wearing midriff tops.

On a more positive note, they encourage us to acknowledge our abilities. So here goes. I'm proud to say I am so good at putting in eyedrops that I can even do it in the dark. I will say that this skill must

be tempered with the wisdom to avoid keeping other small bottles in your nightstand—lavender oil, for example. I have the ability to learn from my mistakes too.

I can read while I walk on a treadmill or ride in a moving vehicle. A lot of people can't do that—especially when they're driving. I'm kidding! I don't do that.

By the way, I can also sleep in a moving car. Some people can't do that either. I've never tried sleeping on a treadmill.

I'm able to locate my husband's glasses, cellphone, keys and whatever else he misplaces. Someday I hope I can do the same with mine.

And I can sneeze loud enough for the neighbors down the street to hear. Not everyone can do that. But then, not everyone wants to.

Experts also say we should embrace what makes us unique. I think the way I fold clothes is unique. So is the way I sneeze. So are my abs.

And finally, in order to accept ourselves we should learn to celebrate our accomplishments. I think I have a few. My dishwasher is running at this very moment which means I finally got it loaded. And I remembered to get the garbage out in time for pick-up this week. I forgot last week and my garage smelled like a landfill.



Dorothy Rosby is worried she'll have to make the same resolution in 2025.

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BLACK HILLS COMMUNITY THEATRE

STORY BY **SARAH GRASSEL**

Theater and arts has always been a favorite in the Black Hills. At the Black Hills Community Theater in Rapid City, the mission is to inspire, entertain, and educate the community through quality theater. They carry that mission out through inclusivity and dedication to excellence during productions.

Merlyn Sell is the current artistic director and has been involved in one way or another for more than five years. Holding a bachelor degree in theatre and a masters of fine arts in Shakespeare and performance, Merlyn is thriving in her new role. She says, "As an organization, we've really been focusing on reaching out more and more to the wider community which includes our upcoming project next summer."

Coming up in 2024, the Black Hills Community Theater will be offering a traveling show. Details are still being worked out, but Merlyn says the group is excited for the new opportunity for serving more individuals.

The summer stage series is bringing Shakespeare's play *Love's Labor's Lost*. One of his early creations, the story is about the King of Navarre and his three friends. Together, they make a pact to swear off love just in time for fate to bring four beautiful, funny, and smart women into their lives.

The show is a romantic comedy and is free to attend. "Bring a picnic and the whole family and enjoy performances coming June 1-9," Merlyn encourages. Along with the performance, attendees can expect a variety of theatre games for kids and a pre-show performance by young actors.

HISTORY AND EDUCATION AT BHCT

Going into the 56th year in the community, BHCT has seen a lot of change over the years. Originally it was formed under the name Group Theatre in 1968 providing opportunities for local performers and enthusiasts in the area.

Merlyn shares, "The organization adopted the name of Black Hills Community Theatre in 1992 to reflect its commitment of service in the community."

Over the years, the group has moved from several schools and churches. They even

performed at the Dahl Fine Arts Center for more than 30 years. In 2007, the BHCT opened a storefront theater in the Uptown Rapid (previously known as Rushmore Mall). Shortly thereafter, BHCT came together with other local performing arts organizations and formed the Performing Arts Center of Rapid City.

This space has two state-of-the-art theaters, dedicated rehearsal spaces, set and costume shops, and several office spaces.

As part of the mission for education, the BHCT hosts several workshops throughout the year for both youth and adults. They also have a playwriting group and free outreach programs that partner up with local schools.

Merlyn says, "Thanks to support from the Sheldon Reese Foundation, we are able to offer, at no cost, workshops and short-term residencies to local students."

The workshops have many well-documented benefits to individuals who participate. "Students are encouraged to think critically, collaborate, communicate, and develop an overall sense of emotional awareness," Merlyn adds.

With her educational background, Merlyn is one of the leaders during workshops alongside Heidi Dehn. Heidi focuses on the inner workings of theatrical production and can walk students through the logistics and requirements as well as the creative thinking that is required for success behind the curtains.

The school residencies have served more than 15 schools in the Black Hills.



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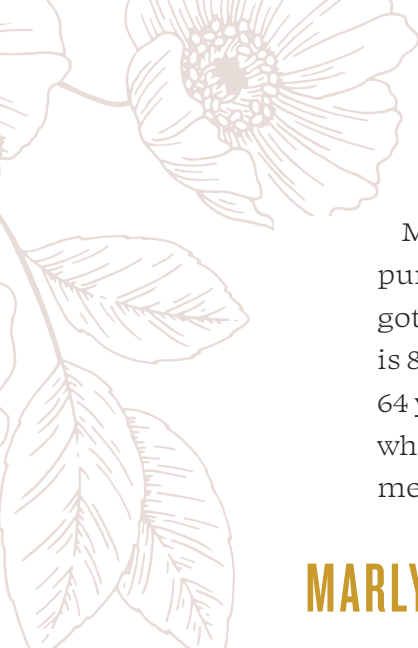
LIVING A BLESSED

life

with
MARLYS FURCHNER

STORY BY **ABBIGALE WINTER**





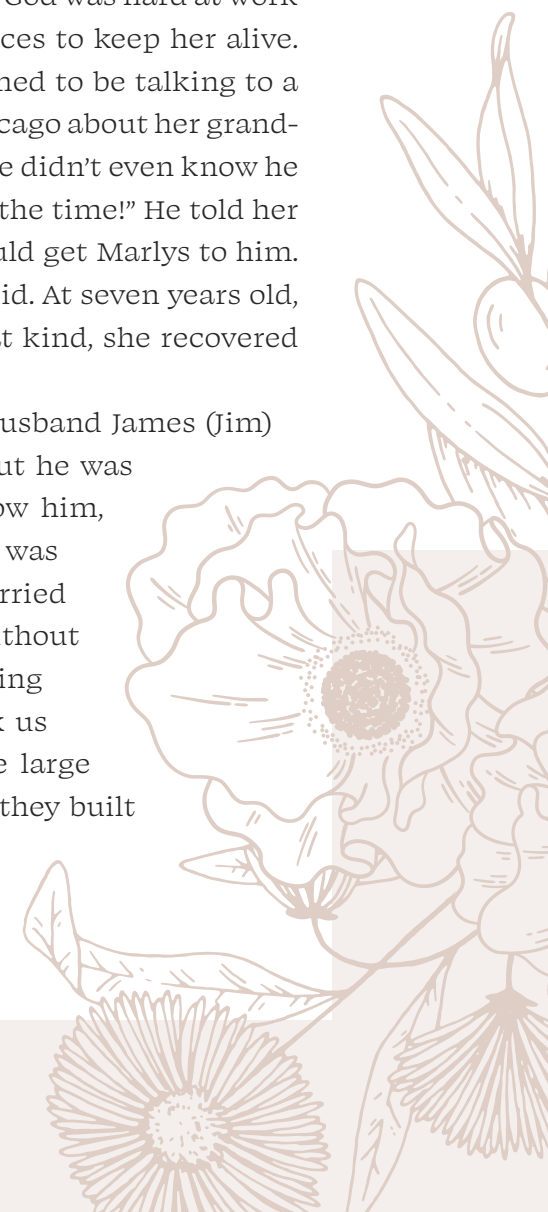
Marlys Furchner has lived a blessed life that she reflects back on with pure joy. She said, "Prayer is a staple in my life," and believes this has gotten her through the challenges she has faced over the years. Marlys is 86 years old, a widow to a husband she has loved passionately for over 64 years, a mother to three men, a grandmother to seven grandchildren who are now busy having her many great grandchildren, and a vital member to her church. Her life has been full, and she has lived it in a way that people absolutely adore and respect her.

**MARLYS FURCHNER
HAS LIVED A
BLESSED LIFE THAT
SHE REFLECTS
BACK ON WITH
PURE JOY.**

Marlys has developed an unparalleled positive mindset that has carried her through some of the hardest days of her life. She was born sick; her family and doctors didn't expect her to live into adolescence because of a heart condition. This is a huge moment in Marlys' life that she feels God was hard at work aligning all the right pieces to keep her alive. Her grandmother happened to be talking to a heart specialist from Chicago about her granddaughter's condition, "She didn't even know he was a heart specialist at the time!" He told her he would help if they could get Marlys to him.

That is exactly what he did. At seven years old, she had the first successful heart surgery of that kind, she recovered and has lived a healthy life since.

Many years later Marlys fell in love with her husband James (Jim) Furchner. "I had known him all my life really. But he was five years older than me. So, I didn't really know him, know him, until he got back from the service. I was working in a café, and he was there." They got married in 1955, however, their wedding day didn't pass without at least a couple hiccups. The day of their wedding there was a bad snowstorm, "The snowplow took us to church twelve miles away." Regardless of the large storm, "the church was full of people!" Together they built their family, having three boys and moving to Rapid City, South Dakota to raise them. She has only good things to say about her sons, who





are now grown men with children and grandchildren of their own. “They grew up to be wonderful strong men. They are very respectful of other people, and I am very proud of all three of them”.

Living with a positive mindset has allowed Marlys to not let any inconveniences or illnesses impact her life. She is now able to look back at her memories, feeling absolute joy in them and oftentimes also humor. Her marriage was, “Really good, however, not without some problems at times. But we always worked them out and got through them.” She held onto prayer and the strong family values her parents instilled in her, passing them onto her three boys. Respect and strong values were and still are very important to Marlys, especially while raising her sons. She wanted to raise them to be respectful of others and believes this is essential for parents to do today.

After experiencing so much life, Marlys has a substantial amount of sage advice that would benefit people today. “Be respectful and be kind and polite to people, it goes a long way. I also think it’s important to greet people by their name if you know it.” She believes in the importance of building a life filled with love, value, and respect. “I was never wealthy in money but very wealthy in life,” she said. Marlys would not change a thing about her life, “I lost a sister and brother that I wish I wouldn’t have. But that’s the way life is. I have all healthy kids and wouldn’t change a thing”.

Living for 86 years is not something Marlys takes for granted. She continues to live intentionally, respecting others, and spreading love as often as she can. “Prayer helps me a lot. My church and family and friends are all very precious to me. I have had a very blessed life.”

LIVING FOR 86 YEARS IS NOT SOMETHING MARLYS TAKES FOR GRANTED. SHE CONTINUES TO LIVE INTENTIONALLY, RESPECTING OTHERS, AND SPREADING LOVE AS OFTEN AS SHE CAN. “PRAYER HELPS ME A LOT. MY CHURCH AND FAMILY AND FRIENDS ARE ALL VERY PRECIOUS TO ME. I HAVE HAD A VERY BLESSED LIFE.”

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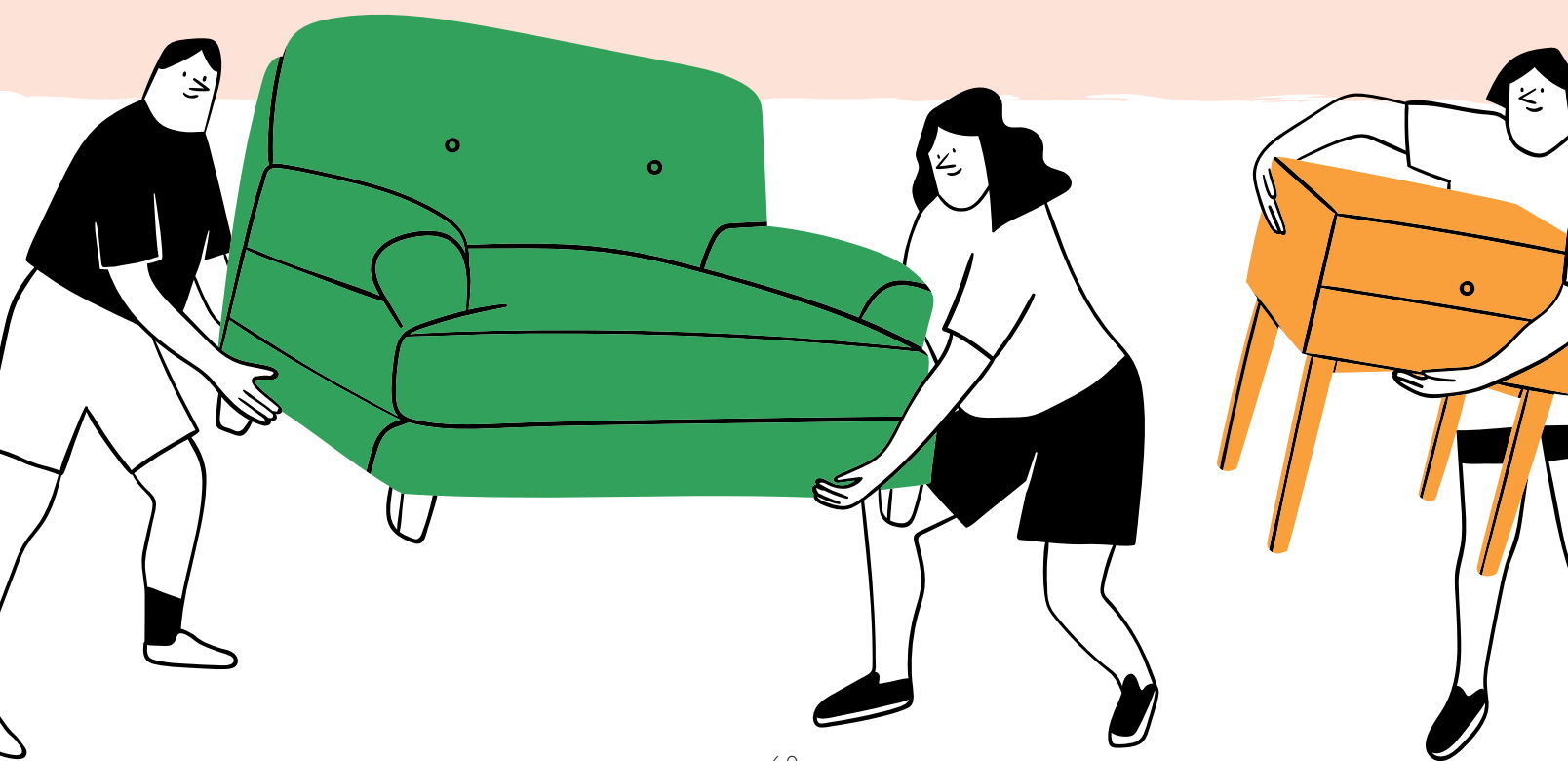
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KEEPING THE HEART OF OUR
COMMUNITY BEATING

RISE

Furnishings & Décor

STORY BY **JAMIE WRIGHT**



See a need, fill a need -- that's the goal of Love INC. That's where a very cool furniture store called RISE Furnishings and Décor comes into play in Rapid City. RISE is so much more than just your everyday standard home store. What makes this store so special is not only the previously loved and refurbished furniture and decorations you'll find inside, but the mission behind the company. RISE is sponsored by Love INC, which, according to their website, fosters a "national movement of the Body of Christ helping their neighbors." Love INC has locations in 29 states and Kenya. RISE is one of over 100 locations partnered with Love INC and spreads the mission of mobilizing churches to transform lives and communities in the Name of Christ.

RISE Furnishings and Décor is a non-profit business whose earnings return to the ministry and church. Items inside the store are community donated and then given to the carpenter team that takes each piece and gives it a little bit of love and elbow grease to create a new, showstopping piece to place in the store. The artistry of these

carpenters is truly amazing as they can take the simplest explanation or inspiration photo (from websites like Pinterest) and make it a reality! The furnishings are always high quality, made from real wood pieces that are exceptional and distinctive because of their hand-touched love. These talented volunteers have made every piece of furniture you'll see inside at RISE. Decorations like throw pillows and fabrics are all donated by the community. You can see some of RISE's previously crafted furniture in many Airbnb's across the Black Hills, giving visitors to our region a taste of our loving community.

Inside, you'll meet some of the 10 to 20 volunteers who run things in the store, from refurbishing donated furniture to maintaining a rich and fulfilling shopping experience. RISE is open for business only on Saturdays from 9 AM to 1 PM. With limited shopping hours, RISE makes an event every Saturday. You can expect a totally redecorated store with new pieces every shopping day, and on Fridays, videos are released on so-

cial media



showcasing what's new in store so you can get a game plan ready; just be sure to get to the store early Saturday morning because there will be a line of excited customers keen to get inside!

Behind the scenes, as carpenters are busy working on pieces for the store, participants are working on furniture for another purpose: to fill the Earned Warehouse from where they are earning furniture for their own homes. Anyone in need of furniture can work in the workshop as a Participant for up to 90 days. They can redeem six hours of their time for a piece of furniture from the warehouse. This can be repeated up to five times. The program is inspiring

in that people who need help get to be part of helping others. Participants relearn or learn for the first time how great their self-worth is inside the workshop. Beyond furniture, participants can be connected with services provided by RISE that can provide kitchen

appliances and linens. Often, participants return as volunteers because of the love felt by everyone at RISE.

The RISE workshop provides a safe place for participants to get involved with each other and to understand that they are not alone in our community- it's a place where everyone's story is heard and respected. As a faith-based program, Love INC helps fulfill a need to participants in the physical, tangible items, but even more significantly, they are also supported by volunteers in a lifelong way by connecting with other community members, resources, and maybe with their faith. RISE truly lives by their name of taking things that need a little help and bringing them to life again...people included.

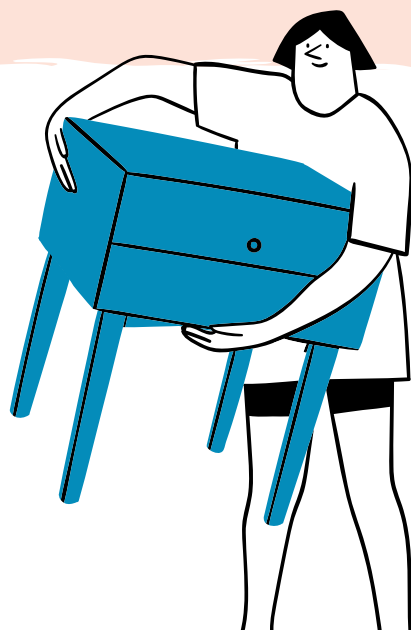
You can visit RISE Furnishings and Décor at 414 East Omaha Street in Rapid City during business hours for a store preview or a workshop tour. You can also visit them on their socials: Facebook under their company name and on Instagram @rise.loveinc.



Extra hands are always needed!

Anyone can volunteer, and you can get involved on their website if you want to volunteer opportunities. If you need assistance, RISE can help direct you in the right direction with their connection center for the most appropriate sources. Information for volunteers and those needing assistance can get more information on their website:

loveinonline.com/rise-furniture-ministry/



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