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Dear readers,

For the past two years, I have been working on a book for Lyons Press about the history of Chicago's Taxi Wars. I am thrilled to announce that, as of March 5, *Street Fight: The Chicago Taxi Wars of the 1920s* is now available for purchase everywhere books are sold! This is a story that is near and dear to my heart because my great-grandfather, Charles W. "Charlie" Gray, was an integral part of Chicago's Yellow Cab Company from its earliest days, and eventually rose to become its president, a position he held for just two years before dying under unusual circumstances at the height of the Taxi Wars. This incident inspired me to start researching this dramatic and nearly forgotten aspect of the city's history.

The book is also a story with Lake Geneva ties, as one of the co-founders of Yellow Cab was Walden W. Shaw, who retired from the cab business in 1920 and bought one of the most impressive homes on Geneva Lake: Wadsworth Hall (better known today as the former home of Richard Driehaus). If you're looking for more recent Lake Geneva history, our spring issue of *At The Lake* is full of similarly great stories! Turn to page 104 to read about the enduring popularity of a game that was invented in Lake Geneva 50 years ago: Dungeons & Dragons. For those interested in the history of the west end of the lake, check out page 38, where we chronicle the past 100 years of Fontana, as that village celebrates its centennial this year.

For foodies, we've got a piece on the best local brunch spots (page 133) as well as tips to create your own Bloody Mary bar at home (page 137). If you're looking for spring activities, read the heartwarming story of a newly formed hiking group and get their recommendations for great spring hiking trails (page 121). Whether you're curling up with a good book or heading out into nature, we've got everything you need for a fantastic spring in the Geneva Lake area.

Anne Morrissy
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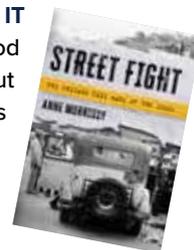
BACKYARD GETAWAY

Percy the corgi captured our hearts in this photo portfolio about "She Sheds," or private backyard retreats (page 50).



READ ALL ABOUT IT

Looking for a good read? Check out Ellen Ward-Packard's *At The Library* column (page 119): this issue's installment includes my new book!



AL FRESCO FEAST

Our gorgeous spring cover was styled by Stephanie Huttner, owner of the new Lake Geneva Picnic Company — meet her on page 67!

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A Room of One's Own

Three local women share their "She Sheds," creative spaces that reflect their owners' personalities.

By Shelby Deering
Photos by Holly Leitner

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Playing Her Cards Right

Lake Geneva's Grace Eckland reflects on the many ways she has worked for "positive impact."

By Anne Morrissy

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From Past to Present

As Fontana celebrates its 100th anniversary, a look back at the history of this lakeside town.

By Anne Morrissy

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The Enduring Adventure of Dungeons & Dragons

The iconic game, invented in Lake Geneva and turning 50 this year, is more popular than ever.

By Jim McClure



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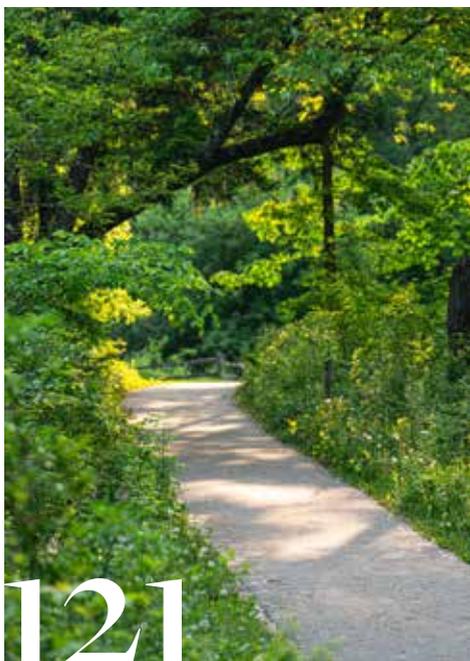
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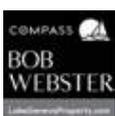
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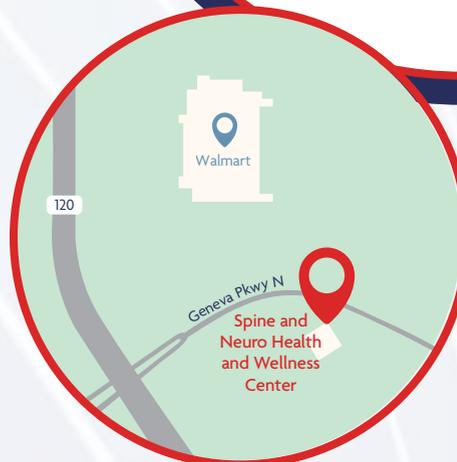


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ON THE COVER



A spring picnic staged by the Lake Geneva Picnic Company in Lake Geneva's Library Park.

*Photo by
Holly Leitner*

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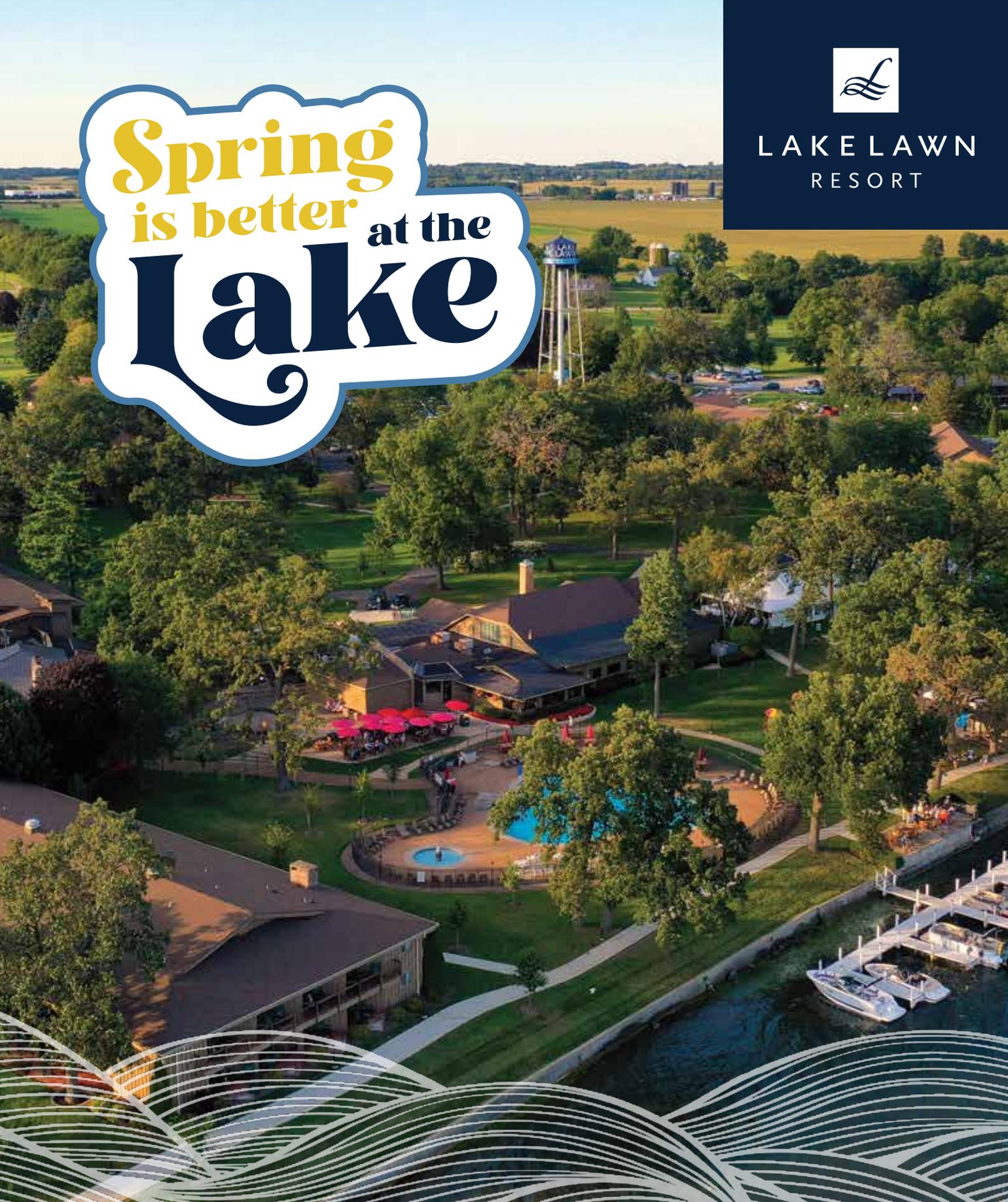
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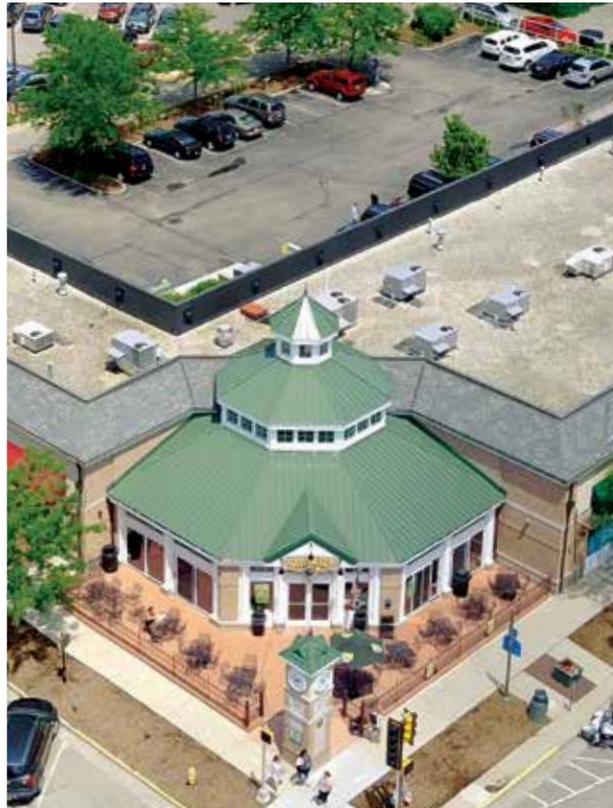


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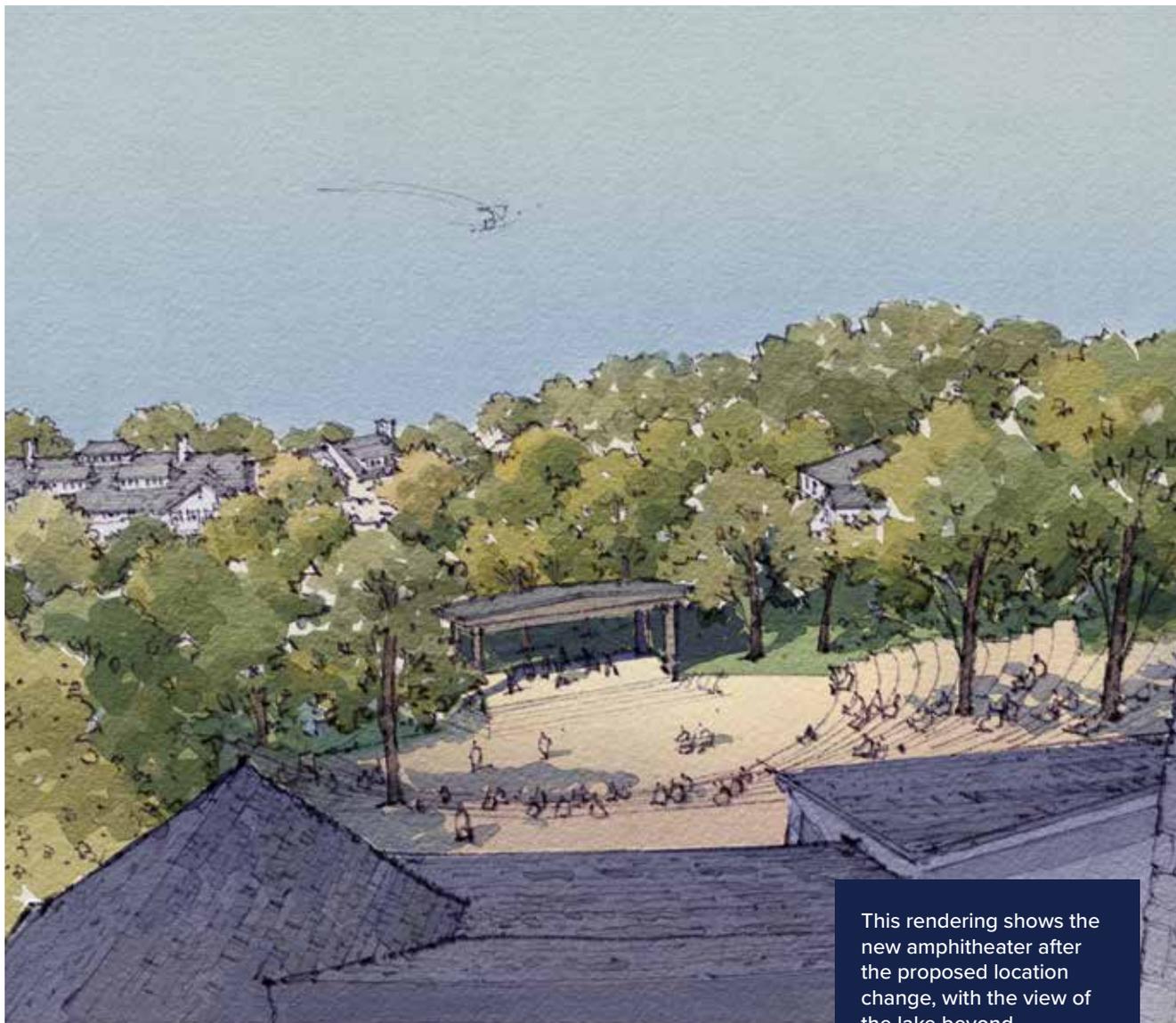
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This rendering shows the new amphitheater after the proposed location change, with the view of the lake beyond.

From College Camp(us) to Luxe Retreat

Topography Hospitality enters contract to acquire George Williams College campus

BY ANNE MORRISSY

After several months of speculation regarding the fate of its George Williams College (GWC) campus in Williams Bay, Aurora University announced on Dec. 20 of last year that it planned to sell the 137-acre property to a boutique hospitality firm. Topography Hospitality is headed by Liam Krehbiel, “scion of a noted Chicago-area business family,” according to the Chicago Tribune. Krehbiel is the founder and CEO of A Better Chicago and owner of Ballyfin, a similar boutique hospitality property in Ireland.

This rendering shows a birds-eye view of Topography's proposed changes to the George Williams College land.



In its announcement, Aurora University officials declared that they had “entered into a contract to sell the GWC campus to a boutique hospitality firm whose emphasis is sustainability and ecology.” The press release went on to add that, “Plans for the property, in addition to conferencing and lodging, include creating a perpetual preserve of the currently undeveloped land that will be available for the community to enjoy, as well as the continuation of an annual music festival.”

At a meeting of the Williams Bay Village Board in January, Topography Hospitality presented their plans for a luxury inn, retreat center and nature preserve they have named The Preserve at Williams Bay. Renderings of Topography's plans for the property show plans to convert the current 90-acre golf course (shuttered for 20 years) into a public nature preserve which will be linked to the Geneva Lake Shore Path. On the main campus, Topography's plans include a country inn and cabins, a restaurant and a full-service spa, as well as a new retreat center, a performing arts center and an amphitheater, which would continue to host the popular Music by the Lake series.

According to the Chicago Tribune, initial building concepts submitted to

the Village of Williams Bay Planning Commission suggest that several of the existing structures on the property would remain in the redevelopment, while others would be demolished (including the current Ferro Pavilion), with the total building square footage decreasing from 109,143 square feet to 94,000 square feet.

Early reports from the Lake Geneva Regional News indicated that initial response from the Village Board — including Village President Bill Duncan, a 41-year veteran administrator at George Williams College — was generally positive. However, Duncan did express concern about changing the permitted use of the site from nonprofit, institutional use to commercial use. The Village Board's vote on the necessary rezoning of the property had not been scheduled as of press time and a final decision may be many months away.

If approved, the Preserve at Williams Bay could be sited directly next to another proposed retreat center. Ann Drake, a Chicago business leader, has proposed the construction of a Women's Leadership Retreat Center on an 8.6-acre parcel of land previously owned by the University of Chicago's Yerkes Observatory, located directly to the east of the

George Williams College campus. The Village Board approved a conditional-use permit necessary for the construction of Drake's retreat center, but the project ran into a snag when Drake's team objected to a handful of public easements recommended by the village's building engineer, including one for a future sewer line. Negotiations are ongoing.

Six Decades of Service

Geneva Lake Women's Association celebrates diamond anniversary

Construction began on the iconic St. Louis Arch. The Olympic Games took place in Innsbruck, Austria (winter) and Tokyo (summer). And a little band from Liverpool made its first trip to the United States: Beatlemania ensued. The year was 1964. In Lake Geneva, the year also saw the formation of a new social and civic organization: the Geneva Lake Women's Association (GLWA). This year, the GLWA will honor its 60th anniversary with a year-long celebration featuring a diamond theme.

The group's origins can be traced to a group of women who had been members of the Jaycettes, the now-defunct women's corollary to the Lake Geneva Jaycees. Like the Jaycees, the Jaycettes had an age limit of 40. So in 1964, a group of women who were about to age out of the Jaycettes formed the GLWA to continue their civic and social engagement through a new channel. The new group proved to be so successful that it has outlived the Jaycettes, which was obsoleted nationally when the Jaycees became a co-ed organization in the early 1980s. The GLWA declared its independence from the Jaycees in 1986, but continued its focus on fundraising and social projects to benefit the community.

Now in its 60th year, the GLWA's membership is stronger than ever, and the membership has more than

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doubled just in the past two years. “There were some lean years, where there were so few active members that we could meet in people’s living rooms,” explains current president Laurie Hallmark. “Today, we have over 70 members. We have to find places that can accommodate us now.”

Hallmark attributes the new popularity of the organization to increased exposure, both online and in real life. “Social media has helped us a lot,” Hallmark says. “It can be a game changer. And then there are all the fun events we do throughout the year ... that catch people’s attention.”

She also points out that the GLWA can help new members make social connections in the community. “I’m from a little town between Janesville and Beloit,” she explains. “When I got married I moved to [Lake Geneva], but all my friends were in Janesville... I went to a [GLWA] meeting, and the next thing you know I’m a member. The rest is history.”

Some of the events that GLWA has sponsored or participated in include their annual Ladies’ Day Luncheon, Women’s Weekend Lake Geneva and DAS Fest, among others. The GLWA is also the longtime organizer of Safety Town, a beloved local summer day camp that teaches kids street safety through fun, interactive play.

This focus on giving back to the community is at the core of the GLWA’s mission, and the organization has been a strong supporter of many local charities and nonprofits throughout the years, including Meals on Wheels, Twin Oaks Shelter for the Homeless and Lakeland Animal Shelter. This year, as part of its 60th anniversary celebration, the GLWA will increase its support of local nonprofits with the addition of six \$5,000 grants on top of its typical donations. Recipients of the special grants will be announced at a Women’s Weekend Kickoff party at the Riviera on Friday, April 26. The Women’s Weekend theme will be



“Diamonds are a Girl’s Best Friend,” a nod to the landmark anniversary.

The group has planned several other events to commemorate the milestone as well. This year’s Ladies’ Day Luncheon, featuring the theme “Diamonds, Bunnies and Bestsellers,” will take place at Grand Geneva Resort & Spa (formerly the Playboy Resort) on Sept. 9. Christina Clancy, author of the novel *Shoulder Season*, about a local woman who becomes a Playboy Bunny at the Lake Geneva Playboy Resort in the early 1980s, will be the featured speaker. On Nov. 9, the GLWA will host its first-ever Fall Gala event at the same location, with the theme, “GLWA in the Sky with Diamonds.”

Looking back at the organization’s 60-year history, GLWA member Anne Kordus marvels at the group’s longevity and its deep impact on the community. “GLWA is a dynamic organization that has touched many, many lives,” she says.

Continued Inspiration

Inspiration Ministries celebrates 75 years of helping people with disabilities

This spring, local nonprofit organization Inspiration Ministries will celebrate its 75th anniversary with

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“Alive to Thrive,” an anniversary gala benefit on May 10th at the Abbey Resort and Spa in Fontana.

Inspiration Ministries was founded as the Christian League for the Handicapped in 1949, with a mission to serve people with disabilities in a faith-based environment. In 1960, the organization broke ground on its current campus at the intersection of State Hwy. 67 and Co. Hwy. F, west of Williams Bay.

The multimillion-dollar project included residential housing for people with disabilities, a demonstration building, workshop, restaurant, gift shop, a nursing and convalescent home, a children’s dormitory and a chapel. An on-site farm provided meat and supplementary income for the campus. Residents received job training and employment, as well as rehabilitation and caregiving services

and Christian spiritual guidance. The on-site workshop employed a majority of the residents, who engaged in the work of packaging, assembly, small machine operation and inspection for a number of companies, including Boeing.

In 1999, the organization changed its name to Inspiration Ministries, to better reflect changes in the terminology used to describe people with disabilities. Today, the campus provides holistic care, programming and many other services to over 70 adult residents.

In June of 2020, Inspiration Ministries also opened Inspired Coffee in downtown Lake Geneva, a premium coffeeshop staffed by people with intellectual, developmental and physical disabilities. The cafe serves as a space for job training and coaching, with the goal of allowing its

employees to gain the hard and soft skills necessary to fully integrate into the community.

May’s benefit gala will celebrate the organization’s achievements over the past 75 years and honor the people who have worked to ensure that the services provided by Inspiration Ministries are available to as many people as possible.

Chief advancement officer Merik Fell says the anniversary reflects the organization’s long-term commitment to the local disabled community: “For the past 75 years, [Inspiration Ministries] has been at the forefront of serving people with disabilities and helping them thrive in Christ-centered community,” he says.

More information about the gala, including ticket purchasing information, will be available in April at inspirationministries.org.



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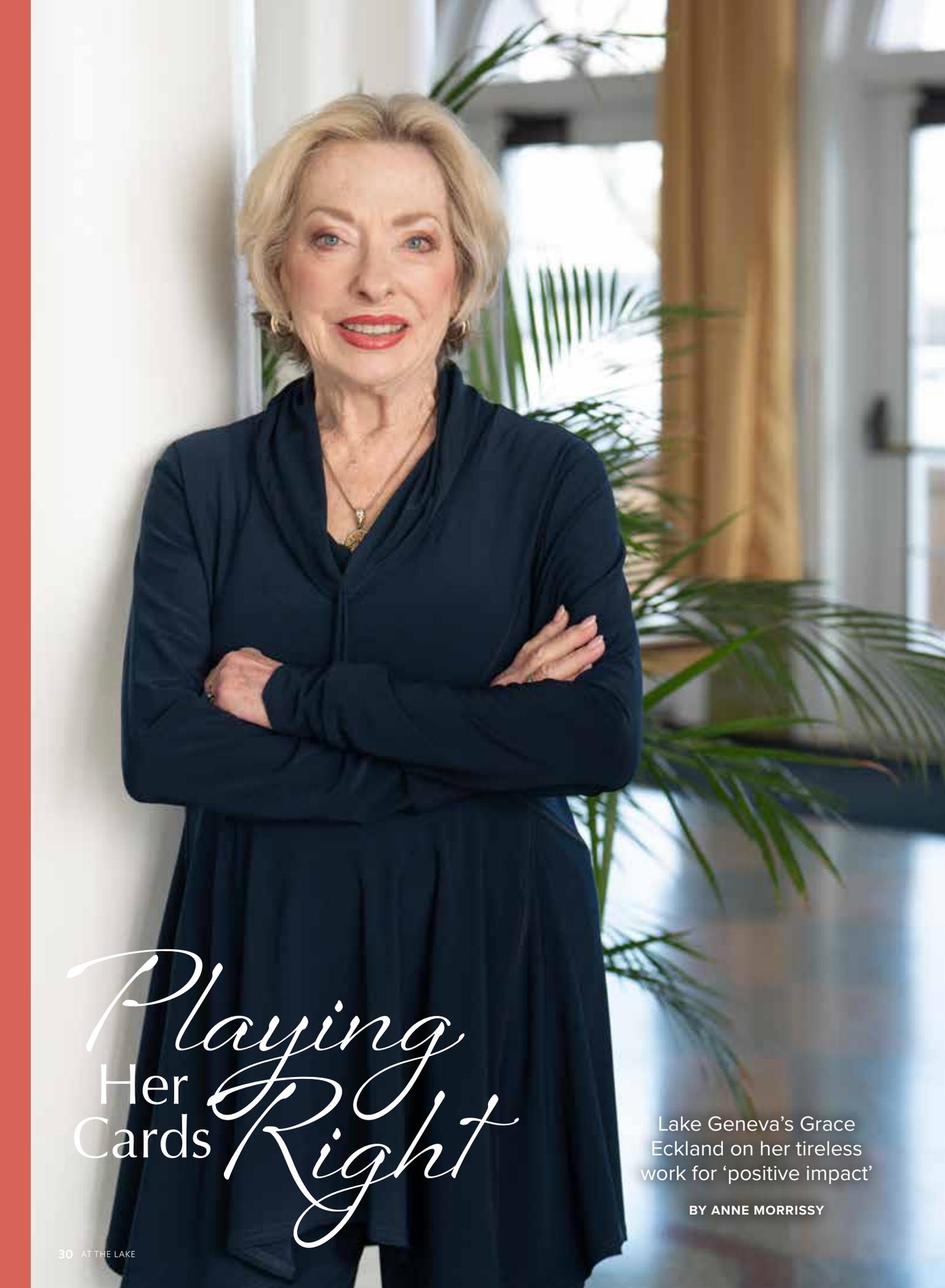
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Randy Erwin



Natalie Torres





*Playing
Her
Cards
Right*

Lake Geneva's Grace Eckland on her tireless work for 'positive impact'

BY ANNE MORRISSY



OPPOSITE PAGE: HOLLY LEITNER, TOP TO BOTTOM: HOLLY LEITNER, LAUREN HARRIGAN, CLINT FARLINGER, SHANNA WOLF, SHANNA WOLF

Lake Geneva Beautification Committee. Black Point Historic Preserve. The Lake Geneva Symphony Orchestra. Gateway Technical College. The Walworth County Workforce Development Board. Lake Geneva Wine Festival. Kishwaukee Questers. Rotary International. Horticultural Hall. Geneva Lake Conservancy. Geneva Lakes Family YMCA. American Association of University Women. The Lake Geneva Library Foundation. This is just a sampling of some of the local organizations that have benefited from the energy, talent and passion of one Lake Geneva resident: Grace Eckland.

In hindsight, Eckland’s path of civic leadership may have been inevitable. Early in what turned out to be Eckland’s impressive career in banking technology, editors from Time Magazine approached her then-employer, IBM, for a story they were working on about corporate employees who were enriching their communities. IBM leaders nominated a handful of people from their company, including Eckland, who worked as an election judge in her Chicago neighborhood. “There I was, in Time Magazine,” she marvels today. But as it would turn out, this early foray into civic work was just the beginning of what would eventually become a guiding passion for Eckland.

As with many things in her life, the path to discovering that passion was a winding one. Before she landed at IBM, Eckland had initially trained as an opera singer. While still in college at UCLA, she toured with the Roger Wagner Chorale and the Robert Shaw Chorale, had leads in opera and light opera productions and worked at paid recording sessions. Returning to Chicago, she later performed with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra Chorus and the Fourth Presbyterian Church Chorus. “I loved it all and there were many [memorable] experiences,” she says.

However, by her junior year, Eckland changed her focus, and ultimately graduated with a degree in business administration ... “in hopes to ward off starvation,” she explains. This was how she found herself on the ground floor of the banking division of a major, international company that was rapidly transforming the business of banking through its revolutionary technology: IBM. She was the first female “salesman” (the company had not yet updated its titles) at the company.

Through that job, Eckland met her late husband, Bob, and they went on to have two children together. When their kids were young, Bob was offered a position managing a bank in Lake Geneva. Eckland had only been to the area once before, on a day trip in college, and she had just a few weeks to pack up and sell their house in the Chicago suburbs and relocate her family to Walworth County. They arrived in time for the start of the new school year, and got a crash course in rural Wisconsin winters: their first year in Lake Geneva, more than 80 inches of snow fell throughout the season. “The kids could climb the snow piles up on to the roof,” she remembers with a laugh. “And dig tunnels through the snow.” Despite this, Eckland found she loved Lake Geneva. “It’s a utopia,” she says.



Eckland (center) accepting the Stu Herzog Outstanding Citizen Award in 2015.

After moving here, Eckland drew on her experience working at IBM to help local business owners figure out the best emerging technology to adopt for their more specialized needs. “I did all kinds of consulting after retraining [on mid-sized computing systems],” she explains, listing Klockit, EduSystems and Pat’s Services among her clients. Then she was approached by Bill Gage, owner of Lake Geneva Cruise Line, and cruise line director Harold Friestad. “Bill was looking to add a computerized reservation system,” she explains. “Friestad had ambitious, good ideas about not just standard reservations, but online reservations for private parties and things like that as well.”

There was no technology system available on the market at the time to do exactly what Gage and Friestad were looking for. However, it turned out that Eckland had the perfect expertise to conceive and test a new system tailored to their business model. In order to make the concept into a reality, she hired a handful of employees, starting with a programmer. “All of a sudden, I became a company,” she explains. Eckland and Associates, Ltd. provided software development and marketing and technology consulting to Lake Geneva Cruise Line, and then expanded to a wide roster of clients in various industries, including dairy, credit management, supply chain, catalog management and banking.

Thanks to that experience working with Lake Geneva Cruise Line, Eckland eventually identified a business opportunity to expand the online reservations system her company designed for Gage and Friestad, selling its use to similar vendors throughout the country and acquiring clients as far as away as Hawaii. Eckland and Associates, Ltd. became the nation’s leading vendor for reservation systems servicing excursion venues.

Then one day, Eckland was invited to a luncheon at the Hunt Club Restaurant at Geneva National, where she happened to be seated at the same table with Sue Ann Thompson, wife of then-Governor Tommy Thompson. Because of that chance encounter, Eckland was invited to a meeting with the head of the department of gaming for the state of Wisconsin, who was interested in Eckland’s experience. He wanted to know how she could help streamline the state’s stake in gaming opportunities.

After hearing her ideas and arranging a meeting between Eckland and the state’s representatives, the state gaming department formalized a relationship with Eckland. “They hired me to come as a consultant,” she explains, which led her to a position as the Lottery Division Administrator, which included a position on the Multi-State Lottery Board as well.

By 1992, the riverboat gaming industry was growing rapidly and Eckland and Associates, Ltd. was perfectly positioned to benefit. Trase Miller, a major reservations services firm aspired to get into riverboat gaming and offered to buy Eckland’s company, bringing Eckland on for one year as Vice President of Marketing and Sales.

With the successful sale of her company, Eckland was free to focus on caring for her husband, who had recently been diagnosed with cancer, and directing her energy to another passion: civic improvement. That was the beginning of what Eckland describes as her “community phase.”

It all started when Milwaukee’s Marcus Corporation bought the former Playboy Club Resort in Lake Geneva in 1992. The company began investing time and resources into developing tourism opportunities in the area. However, at the time, Lake Geneva did not yet have an entity common to other tourist destinations known as a “convention and visitor’s bureau,” or a CVB. So leaders from the Marcus Corporation and the city of Lake Geneva tasked Eckland with the facilitation of strategic planning for just such an organization here. From these planning meetings, the

“I think I’m proudest of how I believe, in my own small way, I’ve had a positive impact. My heart is really here in Lake Geneva.”

— Grace Eckland

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CVB — now known as VISIT Lake Geneva — was born.

One of the first events that the new Lake Geneva CVB took over was the fledgling Winterfest celebration. Eckland assumed leadership of Winterfest in its second year. She realized that she needed to raise significant funds to keep the event going, so she started a local tourism magazine and sold advertising in the publication, applying the proceeds to the Winterfest budget. “I think that year we raised around \$40,000 to \$50,000,” she says. “I eventually got it up to \$70,000 to \$80,000 [in subsequent years]. And I placed ads in the Chicago market to bring people in.”

Eckland remained as the marketing consultant for the CVB and continued leading Winterfest for about a dozen years. But her civic inclinations did not stop there. The list of her contributions to the local community over the past two decades reads

like a master class of civic service: officer of the American Association of University Women; a member of the Walworth County Education Advisory Board; a member of the Board of Directors of the Geneva Lakes Family YMCA; chairman of the board of the Geneva Lake Conservancy; first woman president of the Lake Geneva chapter of Rotary International; president of the Lake Geneva Beautification Committee; president of the board of directors for Black Point Historic Preserve ... the list goes on and on. Eckland’s passion for community improvement has led to many, many awards and recognitions, including the Stu Herzog Outstanding Citizen Award.

Over the years, Eckland’s impact on the community has been truly immeasurable. Her tireless energy and unique talents have touched nearly every aspect of life in the Geneva Lake area. “The activities I’ve chosen to get involved in and participate in are things that I felt

would benefit a lot of people,” she explains. “For example, [the] Beautification [Committee] is one you can see, the [Lake Geneva Public Library] foundation had a big effect on the library, and will continue to have into the future. I have tried to work on things that benefit the children of the community, and I feel it’s extremely important to preserve history as well.”

After many years spent dedicated to her work and her community, today Eckland is finally taking some well-deserved time off. She enjoys spending time with her grandkids and traveling, and she rarely misses a weekly game of bridge with friends.

When asked what she is most proud of from her career and her life of community service, Eckland says it is hard to choose a single thing. “I think I’m proudest of how I believe, in my own small way, I’ve had a positive impact. My heart is really here in Lake Geneva.” 




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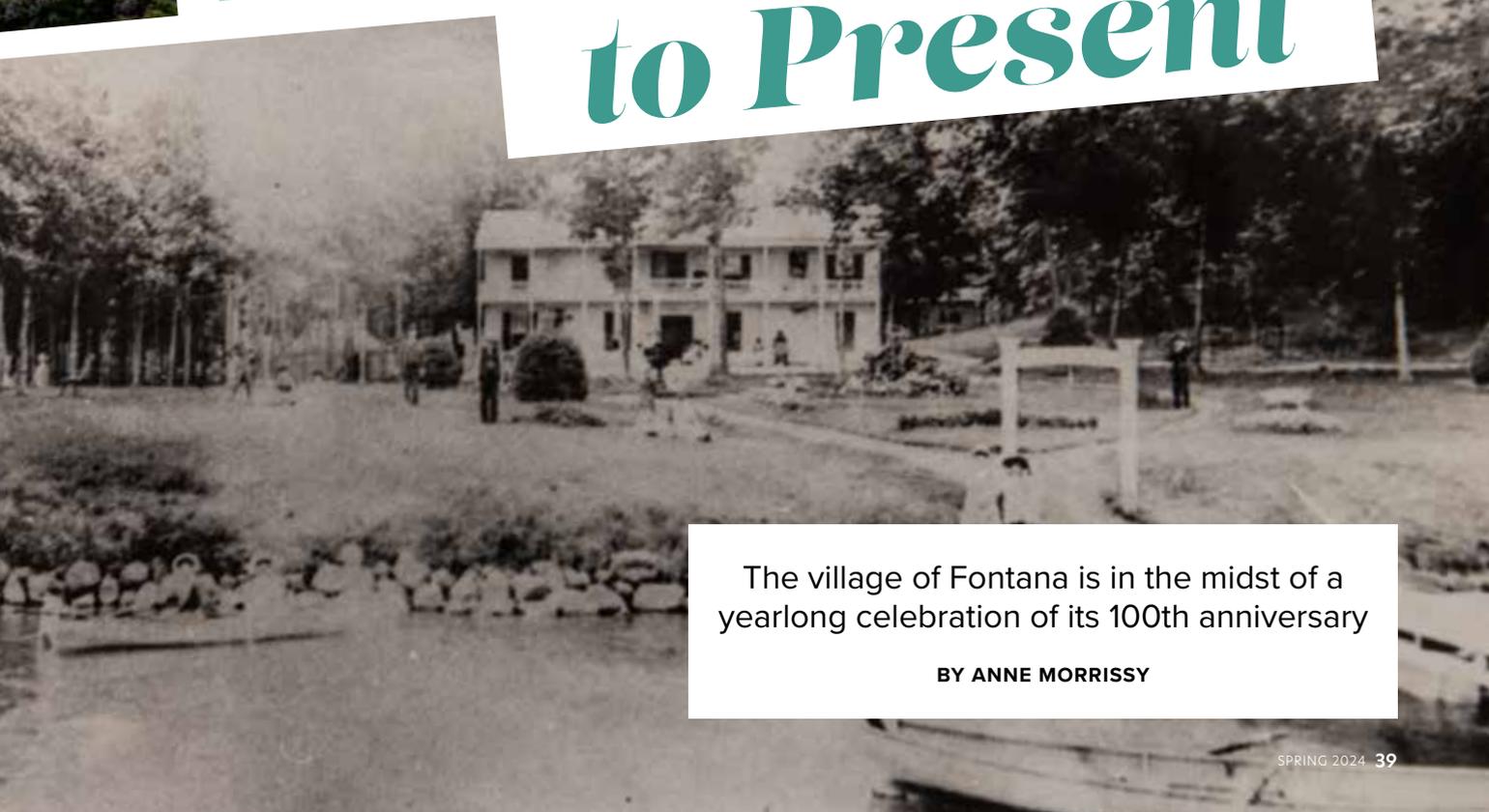




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PRESENT DAY: HOLLY LEITNER



From Past to Present



The village of Fontana is in the midst of a yearlong celebration of its 100th anniversary

BY ANNE MORRISSY



On April 15, 1924, more than 100 people packed into Fontana’s Woodman Hall (near the intersection of modern-day Mill St. and Fontana Ave.) for a very important town meeting. Just two weeks earlier, an election had been held for the leadership positions in the Town of Walworth, which at that time still contained within its borders the village of Fontana. The Fontana residents had put up several candidates in the election in the hopes of having their village’s concerns and priorities addressed, but all of their candidates had been trounced. Acknowledging their defeat at the polls, the villagers immediately decided to try a new tactic: incorporating as an independent village. The meeting that night was the first step toward this goal.

Following the meeting’s presentation, the organizers asked the attendants to sign a petition requesting the committee to “incorporate said proposed village on our behalf.”

More than 130 people signed the petition. The corresponding vote after the discussion was “practically unanimous” in favor of incorporation. It would take a few more months, but by mid-September of 1924, the Village of Fontana became its own, independently governed town.

“THIS CHARMING LANDSCAPE”

The area that made up the newly incorporated Village of Fontana was in fact one of the oldest inhabited areas on Geneva Lake. As early as 1695, a Potawatomi village had stood at the lake’s west end, stretching from what is now part of the Buena Vista subdivision south to Reid Park. That Native American village contained a main council house which served as the home of the chief, and a cluster of round and square huts that extended for about a quarter of a mile along the shoreline.

In the spring of 1831, John Kinzie and his wife, Juliette, passed through the area on their way from Chicago back to their

home in Portage, where Kinzie served as the federal government’s Indian Agent. Juliette Kinzie wrote about their journey and her impressions of what came to be known as “Chief Big Foot’s Village”:

On a rising ground at the foot of one of the bold bluffs in the middle distance, a collection of neat wigwams formed, with their surrounding gardens, no unpleasant feature in the picture... a howl of delight bursting involuntarily from the whole party as this charming landscape met our view.

However, just two years later in 1833, the Potawatomi signed the Treaty of Chicago, which led to their removal to Kansas by the United States government. (A bronze statue in modern-day Reid Park by local artists Jay and Barbara Brost entitled “One Last Glance” commemorates the sad occasion of Chief Big Foot’s departure from Geneva Lake.) By 1837, the first white settlers arrived in the area and began establishing claims on the land. They chose the name Fontana (“fountain” in Italian) for their



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small enclave, presumably due to the prevalence of natural springs at the lake's west end.

“PALACES FOR SUMMER RESORT SHALL YET RISE”

The small settlement of Yankee pioneers grew slowly throughout the second half of the 19th century, centered around the small downtown area near Main St. and Mill St. A handful of tent campers also discovered the charms of the lake's west end, creating several tourist camps in Fontana for summer vacations: Harvard Camp (later Harvard Club), Montague & Porter's Park and Forest Glen Resort among them. Despite this, the area remained mostly undeveloped, a result of the lack of a train line or other easy transportation options to the area. Historian James Simmons, writing in 1897, described Fontana as a still-rustic place: “Although [the] years have done very little toward developing this embryo village, we hazard nothing in predicting that palaces for summer resort shall yet rise beneath its cool shades and in the vicinity of its babbling brooks and crystal springs...” His words were impressively prescient.

With the arrival of an electric trolley line from Harvard, Illinois, in 1899 and



Visitors to camps like Montague & Porter's Park (pictured here) stayed in platform tents.



In 1899, access to Fontana expanded with the introduction of an electric trolley from Harvard, Illinois.

a branch of the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railroad in 1901, Fontana quickly became a hot spot for more permanent developments. Between the 1890s and the 1910s, many former tent camping sites became subdivisions of summer cottages, including Buena Vista Park, Belvidere Park and Glenwood Springs. Beginning around 1910, the proliferation of the automobile brought more and more people who would discover the beauty of Fontana-on-Geneva Lake and then decide to make a home there, whether permanently or in the summers only.

THE “COUNTRY CLUB” SET

One year prior to the vote to incorporate as a village in 1924, a group of 20 prominent citizens from Fontana, Walworth and Harvard joined forces to purchase a large tract of land on Fontana's lakefront south and west of Glenwood Springs. The

690-acre property had previously belonged to Levi Z. Leiter, a Chicago businessman and former partner of Marshall Field's. Leiter's main home, Linden Lodge, was located on the lake's east end in what is now the Lake Geneva Manor subdivision, but Leiter also owned this property on the west end, which he used as a farm and fish hatchery, making use of several natural springs, brooks and ponds. The property made up about 40 percent of the original acreage of Fontana. When Leiter passed away in 1904, ownership transferred to a trust supporting his wife and their adult children, but by the early 1920s, the Leiter family was eager to sell their Geneva Lake holdings.

By combining funds, these 20 investors formed the Geneva Lake Improvement Association. After working out an agreement to acquire the Leiter Farm,

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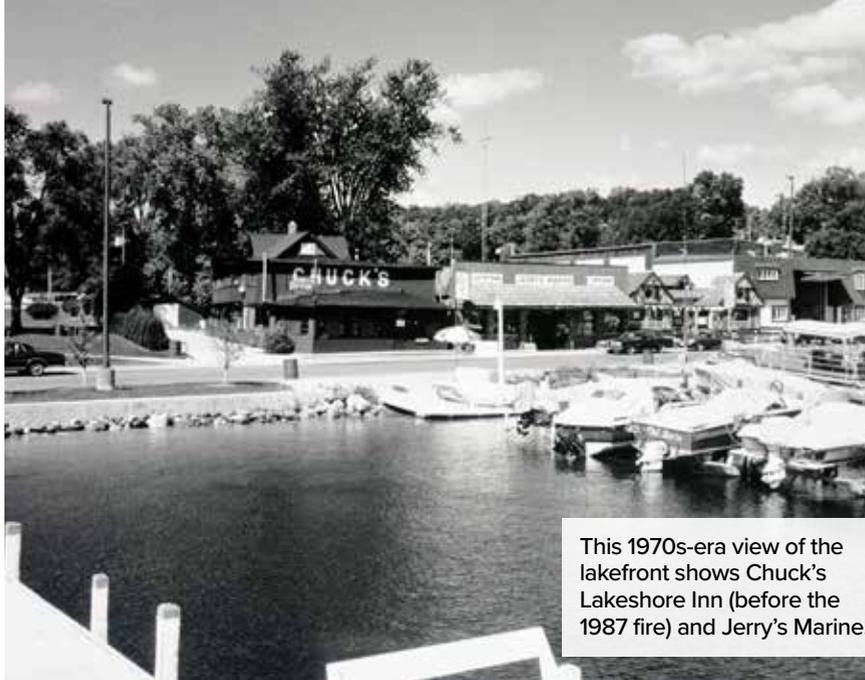
the association agreed to use 220 acres of the land to create a golf club, which eventually came to be known as the Big Foot Country Club. On a portion of the remaining acreage of the former Leiter farm, real estate developer Arthur B. Jensen sold home-building lots in a subdivision he named Country Club Estates. Leaders of the investor group maintained control of 90 acres of the property and access to the lake along the 1,100-foot frontage on the public road to ensure their vision of a residential community unspoiled by commercial development.

“Fontana would not have become the crown jewel of Geneva Lake as a successful residential community 100 years later but for the vision and courage of the group of citizens who gained control of the Leiter Estate property,” explains historian James Reynolds, author of the forthcoming book *The Fontana Story*. “They also bought out the lakefront dance hall and deeded it to the Village in a bargain sale. Their legacy is a beautiful beach, public parking and Reid Park.”

“A MILLIONAIRE’S THRILL”

Although the Great Depression and World War II slowed development in Fontana, by the post-war years, the area saw an influx of young families looking to establish roots here or invest in summer homes. One such visionary with a young family in the post-war years was Gordon “Gordy” Whowell, who bought a home in Indian Hills in 1945 and opened a small business offering speedboat rides at the lakefront in Fontana, with the tagline, “A Millionaire’s Thrill for One Thin Bill.” That modest business would eventually blossom into a family-run business empire that continues in Fontana today.

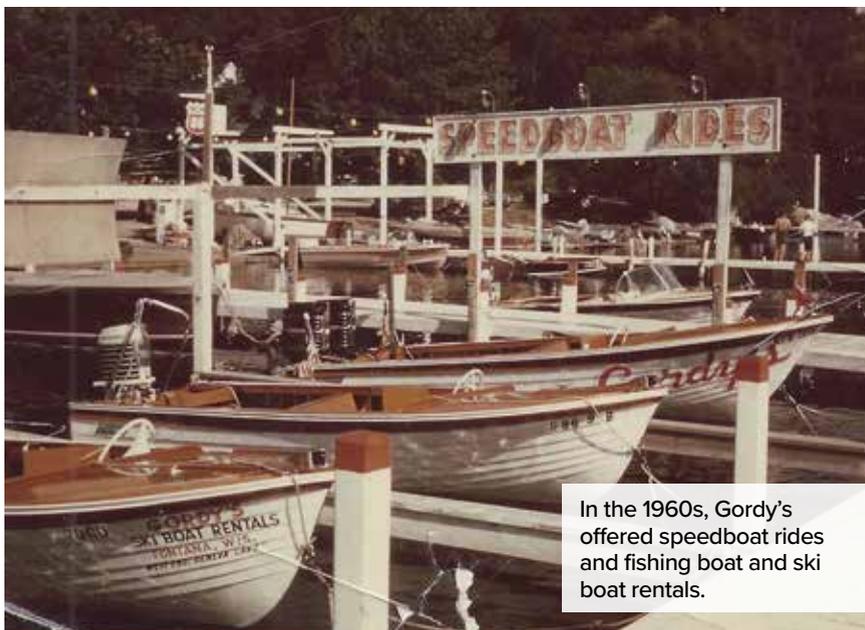
“[Gordy] believed in the future of the recreation industry in Fontana and high-quality service,” explains Tom Whowell, Gordy’s son who now runs the Gordy’s family of businesses in Fontana. “An entrepreneur, restaurateur, philanthropist ... Gordy was an individual, but he has been aggrandized into a larger-than-life figure.”



This 1970s-era view of the lakefront shows Chuck’s Lakeshore Inn (before the 1987 fire) and Jerry’s Marine.



Beachroamers Inn was a popular gathering spot on the Fontana lakefront.



In the 1960s, Gordy’s offered speedboat rides and fishing boat and ski boat rentals.

TOP TO BOTTOM: CAROL AND JAMIE HOWELL, FONTANA PUBLIC LIBRARY, THE HOWELL FAMILY



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Businesses along Fontana’s lakefront area came to define the village for the new “Baby Boom” generation: Meier’s Drive-In, Gordy’s Boat Rentals (later Gordy’s Lakefront Marine, Gordy’s Pro Shop, Gordy’s Boat House and Gordy’s Bait Shop), and popular bars Beachroamers Inn and Chuck’s Lakeshore Inn drew a young, trendsetting crowd of locals and visitors to Fontana.

Then, in 1963, a group of investors built The Abbey Resort in Fontana. The full-service resort was the largest in the Midwest at that time, and one of the most luxurious. Its distinctive A-frame architecture, designed by A. Epstein and Son architects, won a national design award sponsored by the National Lumber Manufacturers Association. When The Abbey opened, the 90-acre resort included a 225-room hotel, convention facilities for groups of up to 500 people, a fine dining restaurant headed by a French-trained chef, a casual restaurant, a café and cocktail lounges, as well as several recreation areas and indoor and outdoor swimming pools.

Developers of The Abbey had also undertaken a new marina project, converting what had been Van Slyck

Creek and the natural springs and some of the pools of the Leiter Farm fish hatchery into The Abbey Marina, a 20-acre manmade harbor with mooring for up to 250 boats, including large yachts. The presence of The Abbey Resort and Marina established Fontana as a premier vacation destination for discerning travelers.

MARKING THE 100TH ANNIVERSARY

Today, 100 years after that group of villagers sat in Woodman’s Hall and voted to pursue incorporation, the Village of Fontana boasts a population of around 1,800 year-round residents and a summer population that may be many times higher than that.

To celebrate the centennial, village leaders have been marking the anniversary with a series of events over the past year, including an Oktoberfest celebration, a holiday tree lighting and Fontana Winterfest in February. Festivities will continue in support of all of the annual Fontana celebrations in 2024 — including the Fontana Garden Club Fair, the Lobster Boil & Steak Fry and the Fontana Triathlon, among others — and include a special centennial closing dinner as well. In addition,

the centennial committee plans to reintroduce the “Music in the Park” series, with six free concerts this summer.

To honor the first 100 years of Fontana, last fall the centennial committee members also released Finding Fontana, a new coffee table book featuring full-color photography and historic images of Fontana throughout the past century. The book is available at local retailers including the Fontana Public Library and Fontana Home.

For those looking for a deeper dive into the village’s history, historian Reynolds will soon publish The Fontana Story, which chronicles the details of the village’s history from its earliest days through 1940.

“We villagers love it here,” explains centennial committee member and Finding Fontana editor Margaret Reuland. “Those who came before made it a priority to protect and conserve the abundant natural gifts they found, and to support their neighbors whenever needed. That ‘Fontana Spirit’ will continue as our community celebrates what was, and what will be moving forward.” 🦋





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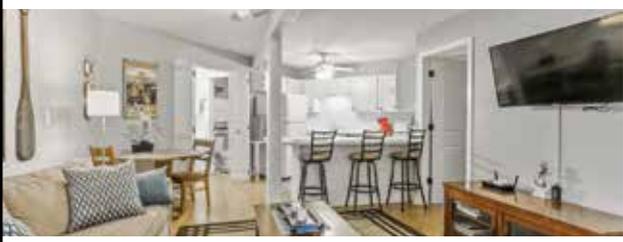


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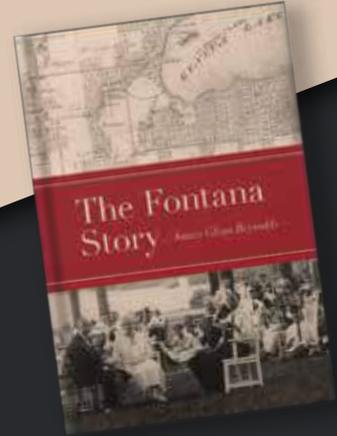
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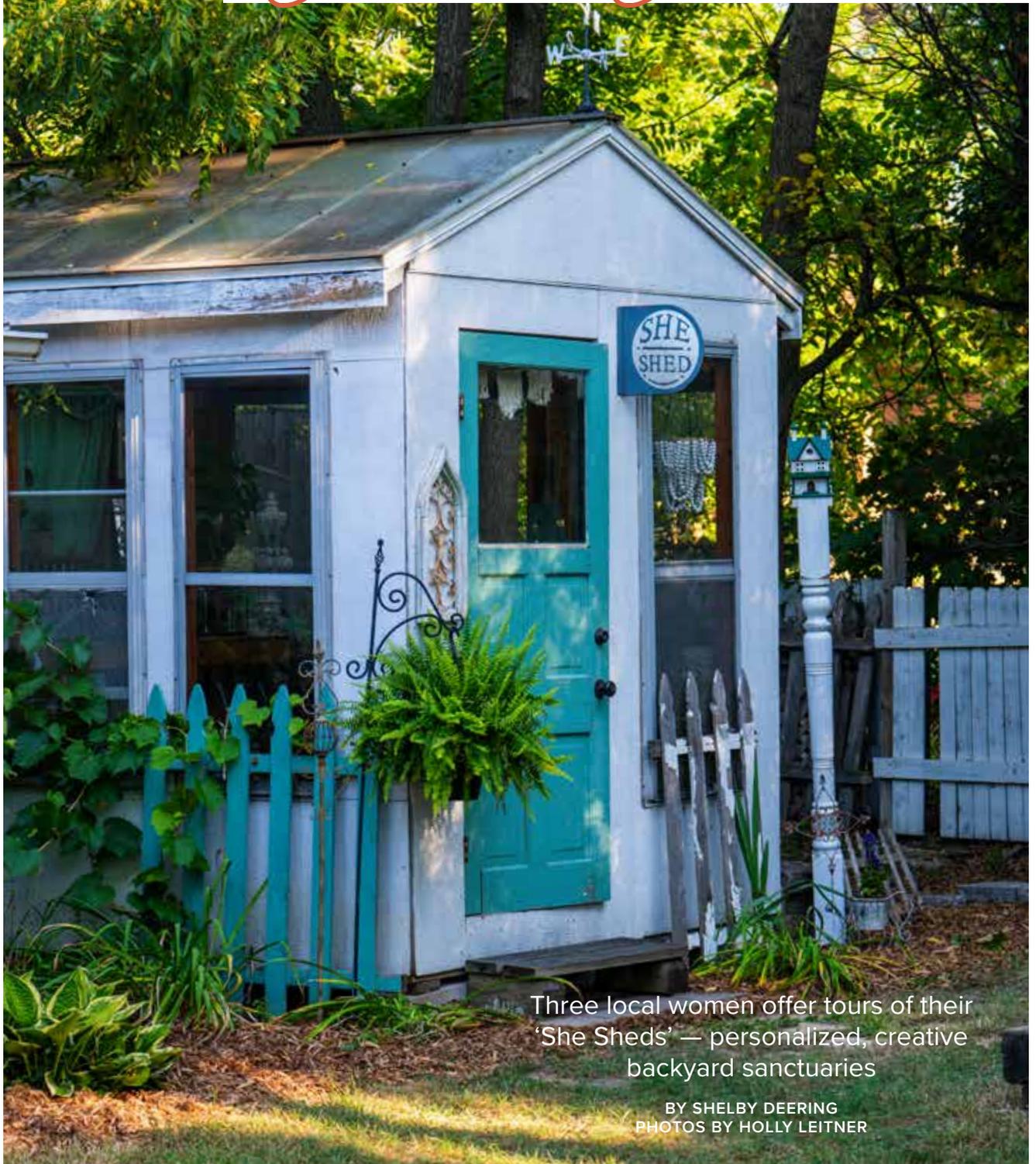
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A Room of

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Three local women offer tours of their 'She Sheds' — personalized, creative backyard sanctuaries

BY SHELBY DEERING
PHOTOS BY HOLLY LEITNER



You may have heard the term “She Sheds” becoming more widespread in recent years, highlighted on Pinterest, Instagram or HGTV. But what is it exactly? Essentially, it’s a small private space for a personal backyard retreat, and a She Shed’s uses are as varied as their owners.

Whether it’s a converted gardening shed, a greenhouse or a prefab or purpose-built structure, a She Shed (or “He Shed,” as the case may be) allows people to indulge in their favorite hobbies or get some work done in a space separate from the daily hustle and chores of the home space. These backyard sanctuaries may offer views of idyllic surroundings, and the interiors provide a peaceful, private and stylish space conducive to enhanced focus and creativity.

These types of spaces became even more popular during the pandemic, and their appeal continues to grow. As Holly Leitner-Marquis, She Shed owner and *At the Lake* photographer, puts it: “A She Shed is all about having a room of one’s own. A space to do the thing that really resonates with your soul. Away from the house, the laundry, kids and endless lists.”

A Gardener's *Haven*



In East Troy, Instagrammer Mikaela Stewart (@so_sheddy) has curated a shed filled with collected heirlooms, handmade décor and vintage pieces discovered at flea markets. But Stewart says it's not just a "She" Shed — it's also where she spends time with her husband, Blake, and their corgi, Percy. Starting with a distinctive green hue for the door, the couple built a fresh color palette around it as they renovated the shed. They also had a goal for the shed to act as "a charming extension" of their garden and backyard entertaining area.

"Plants and vegetable gardening are our passion, and we wanted to create a space that we could share with family and friends," Stewart says. "When we started making our own mini bread loaves with zucchini from the garden, we leaned in to our new hobby by naming them 'She Shed Bread.'"





A Colorful *Oasis*





Overlooking a beautiful pond on the southeast side of Lake Geneva, Lisa Lasch crafted a She Shed that she calls her “little slice of contentment.” For this special spot, she chose the name “Sitooterie,” a Scottish term that refers to a small building where people can enjoy the outdoors. With its diminutive size, playful colors and proximity to nature, Lasch says she thinks of her She Shed as something right out of Alice in Wonderland.

The Sitooterie’s primary function is to host outdoor picnics and card games Lasch plays with her sisters and grandchildren. To boost the sense of fun, she opted for bright hues to deck out the She Shed — the bolder, the better. And with windows that open to balmy breezes, it’s also where Lasch loves to sip sangria and lemonade in the spring and summer. “My goal was to have a destination to relax and unwind,” she says. “I have a flower farm and rarely do I stop working in the summer to just sit. The Sitooterie is there beckoning me to slow down.”



A Bespoke *Retreat*



When *At The Lake's* photographer and image editor Holly Leitner-Marquis set out to create a She Shed in her lush, expansive backyard in Lake Geneva, she didn't want to go with anything that was "typical." That's why she chose to have her She Shed custom-built to match her home and fit her preferences. "I needed an office space, which justified the build, and I wanted a space to make art," she says. "I hadn't made art for art's sake in years."

A wall of nearly floor-to-ceiling windows maximizes natural light. Additional luxe details like a wine fridge, heated flooring and Bose speaker create a petite haven for both art-making and work, and an open-concept design lends itself to yoga sessions as well. Leitner-Marquis explains that the decor is inspired by moments that have shaped her life: trinkets from trips to Europe, photo booth memories with friends, vintage family photos, pieces from her first art show, framed words of wisdom and coasters from favorite bars around the world stand alongside new art projects.







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Down the Garden Path

A Walworth couple transformed an 80-acre farm into a blooming wedding venue

BY LAUREN EVE

In 2021, Rob and Amy LaRocque stood under a gazebo on a beautiful, 80-acre farm in Walworth and posed for their wedding portraits. In fact, as it turned out, the land they stood upon that day would play an important role in their shared life together. Just 48 hours earlier, the couple had signed the closing papers that made them the new owners of the picturesque farm where they were, at that moment, commemorating forever the day they promised “to have and to hold.”

home & garden *revitalization*

Rob LaRocque, originally from the Chicago suburbs, and Amy LaRocque, originally from Milwaukee, met in hospitality school at the University of Denver. Like many couples, after they got engaged, the couple began searching for the perfect wedding venue in a convenient location that would bridge the gap between their hometowns.

However, unlike many newly engaged couples, Rob and Amy were not searching for wedding venues in the traditional way, via *TheKnot.com* or by attending a wedding expo. Instead, they were looking for a piece of property that they could buy and turn into the perfect wedding venue, using their combined skills and experience in the hospitality industry.

The LaRocques discovered the 80-acre Walworth farm on a real estate website and were deeply drawn to the beautiful landscape. With their shared background in hospitality, they immediately recognized the potential of the property. The site was positioned conveniently between Milwaukee, Chicago and Madison, making it the perfect wedding venue. Although the farm was not quite ready in time for the LaRocques' own wedding ceremony, they did use the site for

their wedding photos and spent some of their wedding weekend enjoying the property, which would become their future business and home as well. They named it LaRocque Farms.

When the LaRocques purchased the farm, it included a rustic red barn, a silo, an expansive prairie, forests, gardens and a farmhouse where the LaRocques currently reside. Shortly after they were married, the couple moved in and got to work preparing the farm as a rentable wedding venue.

“Our wedding weekend was so special,” says Amy. “We wanted to offer our property to couples so they could customize their own special day too.”

First, the LaRocques hired local contractors for the restoration of the barn. White siding and new barn doors were added to the exterior. New gallery windows throughout the barn provide panoramic views of the surrounding prairie. The barn's interior underwent the largest overhaul, allowing for the addition of modern amenities including bathrooms and the “silo lounge,” transforming the barn into a multi-purpose space while maintaining its rustic charm. The LaRocques chose



to preserve the original wood that dates back nearly 150-200 years, utilizing it for various purposes, including repairs throughout the barn and restoring the original wood flooring.

Next, the LaRocques added a 27-foot sailcloth tent equipped with flooring and canvas siding, providing a comfortable and aesthetically pleasing semi-outdoor space for entertaining. The tent serves as a permanent structure during the summer months next to the existing barn. “We include tables and chairs in the tent,” explains Amy. “We try to make the planning process easier for couples with less to worry about.”

But what initially drew the LaRocques to the property was the expansive landscape — the rolling prairie hills, the exquisite gardens and acres of mature trees and fruit orchards. They knew these were valuable natural resources that were not easy to replicate with new landscaping.

The landscape of the farm is diverse and enchanting. It features apple, cherry, peach and pear trees as well as natural, untamed prairies containing beautiful native plants like purple coneflowers, phlox and asters. The LaRocques wanted to breathe new life back into the property. “Everything



The 80-acre property contains flower and herb gardens, native prairie land and acres of mature trees and fruit orchards.



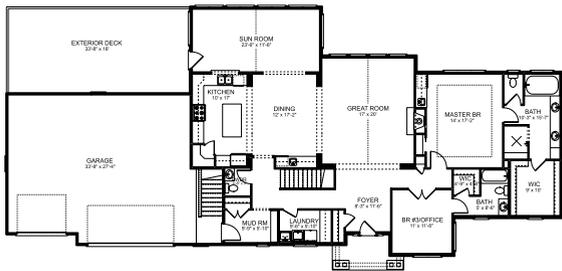
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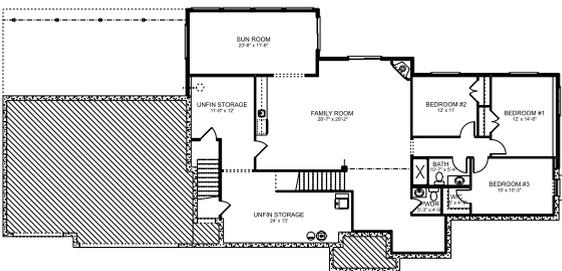
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home & garden *revitalization*

[the gardens and fruit orchards] was already here,” explains Amy. “It just needed some love.”

They discovered a one-acre organic garden planted by the previous owners and decided to cultivate additional produce and herbs, including raspberries, pumpkins, beets, carrots, tomatoes, mint and basil.

Amy manages the garden throughout the summer and says she continually introduces new varieties of produce and herbs to enhance its diversity.

The couple designed LaRocque Farms as a truly personalized experience for everyone involved — couples, guests, and vendors included. Chefs and bartenders are encouraged to explore the flower and herb gardens and orchards to select fresh produce and



herbs to incorporate into their menu offerings for wedding guests to enjoy. Brides are encouraged to explore the property and gather wild prairie flowers, which they can use for their ceremony and as decorations for the wedding.

“We want couples to make their special day personal to them,” explains Amy. “It can be DIY or fancy. We wanted to see what people could dream up with our space.”

Choosing to use these natural resources not only contributes to a unique and meaningful wedding experience but connects everyone who visits with the beauty of the farm. “We want everyone who comes [to the farm] to really experience it,” explains Amy. “What better way than to use what the farm has to offer.”

The farm also provides plenty of beautiful spots for couples and guests to capture photos. There’s a garden gazebo, plus areas with large river rocks, wildflowers and even a gentle waterfall that pours into a small pond near the barn. A simple white pier in the pond echoes the distinctive white piers of Geneva Lake nearby and provides a stunning backdrop for photos as well.



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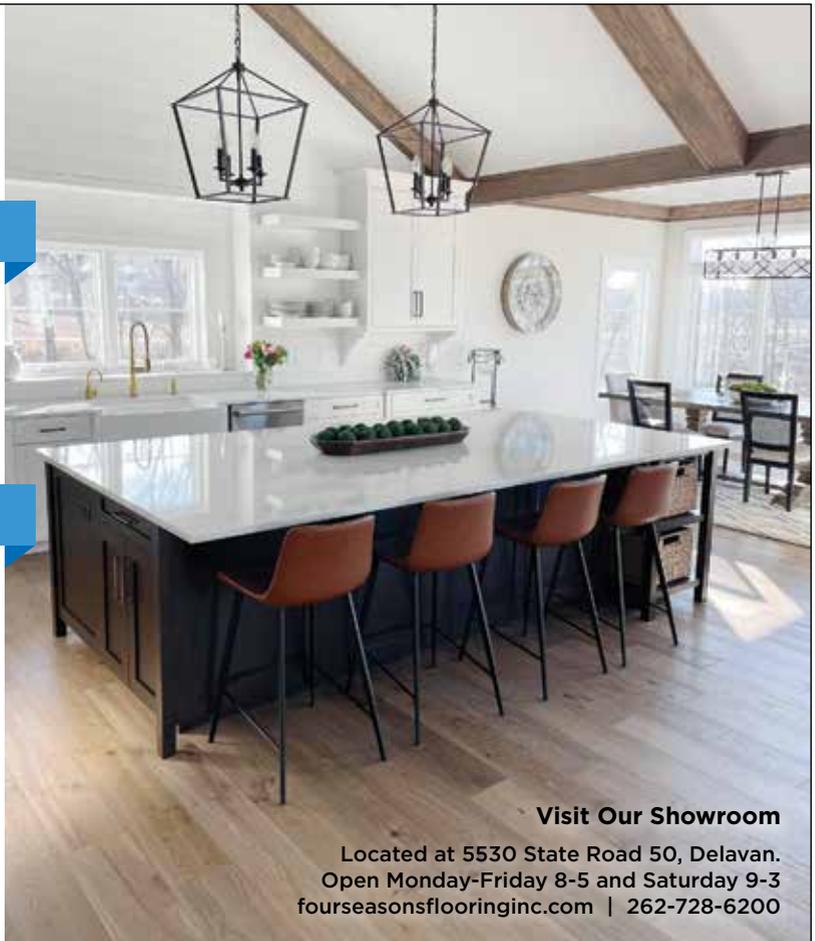
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Guests are encouraged to explore the garden paths and trails that wind throughout the property in a two-mile-long loop. The rustic trails lead over prairie hills, past expanses of wildflowers and alfalfa fields, through forests and across a charming bridge that leads to the entrance of the farm. This allows guests the freedom to immerse themselves in the natural beauty of the surroundings, say the LaRocques, adding to the experience of attending a wedding at the farm.

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One of the unique challenges that the LaRocques encounter is making sure the farm landscape continues to grow and thrive after the winter season. Each spring they schedule a controlled burn as part of their land management strategy. This important step helps maintain the health of the prairie grasses and wildflowers, preventing overgrowth caused by invasive plants. "It is very important to us that we maintain the integrity of the land," says Amy. "Doing this each year brings more life and growth to the entire farm."

Couples who rent LaRocque Farms for their wedding day enjoy exclusive access to the entire property, allowing them the freedom to create a unique and memorable experience tailored to their preferences. "We have no requirements," says Amy. "We learned from our own search that most wedding venues only allow one-day reservations. Here, we allow setup and cleanup in addition to the ceremony and reception, Friday through Sunday. You get the whole weekend."

Throwing themselves into their new business, the LaRocques choose to work every wedding themselves, making use of their education and expertise in hospitality and event planning. They hope to continue to add even more plantings and gardens to the property as the years go on. But for now, the couple says they are thrilled with the opportunity to be a part of such an exciting occasion in people's lives. "We are in the dream business," says Amy. "It's not work." 

Q&A

Luxury Picnics

Creating gorgeous, bespoke picnic experiences is the heart of Stephanie Huttner's new business, Lake Geneva Picnic Company

BY LAUREN EVE



Stephanie Huttner, a local interior and event designer, recently founded the Lake Geneva Picnic Company to create a luxurious and personal lake-side experience for residents and tourists. By drawing on her expertise in interior design and years in the wedding industry as an event stylist, Huttner founded her new company to create unique and luxurious picnic experiences in the Geneva Lake area. Huttner uses guests' preferences to select colors and patterns to create a dreamy, Instagram-worthy aesthetic, and applies her polished styling techniques to deliver a curated picnic experience. We recently sat down with Huttner for more details about her new business.



TOP: HOLLY LEITNER, BOTTOM: COURTESY OF LAKE GENEVA PICNIC COMPANY

ATL: What inspired you to create the Lake Geneva Picnic Company?

Stephanie Huttner: I wanted to create a high-end guest experience like I have [in the past] for weddings, but on a smaller, more intimate scale. That's when I realized that, with the support of local vendors, picnics would be the ultimate luxury experience. It has truly been an awesome experience!

ATL: What can guests expect from the Lake Geneva Picnic Company?

SH: They can choose everything from colors to themes. No two picnics are the same. We include the table(s), flowers by [Lake Geneva's] Lilypots, decor and food all designed by local vendors. We also provide a standard, stocked picnic basket with all the essentials, including a Polaroid camera, sunscreen, hand sanitizer, a Bluetooth speaker, fans, umbrellas and more depending on the season. Your only job is to come and enjoy!

ATL: Where can guests have their picnics set up?

SH: Just about anywhere! Library Park is one of our favorite, and most highly requested, locations with beautiful views of the lake! We have

also set up picnics in backyards, sunrooms and front porches. The possibilities are endless!

ATL: What were some of the challenges you face?

SH: The only challenge we have faced is the change in weather. We can easily pivot to set up indoors or outdoors. Regardless of where we are, we will be creating something memorable and beautiful, and we are available year-round!

ATL: What kind of occasions lend themselves to a picnic?

SH: We can do engagements, baby showers, date nights, company outings, weekend getaways, brunch or anything our guests want to make memorable.

ATL: What is your hope for the future of the Lake Geneva Picnic Company?

SH: These picnics are a great opportunity to connect with friends and family and celebrate in a new way, while surrounded by the beauty of our area. I hope that this unique service will become one of those "must-do" sort of things for visitors, and that we continue to expand our offerings through collaboration with other local businesses. 🌿

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STYLING & PHOTOS BY HOLLY LEITNER



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At Home

At The Lake Magazine's 18th Annual Special Advertising Section

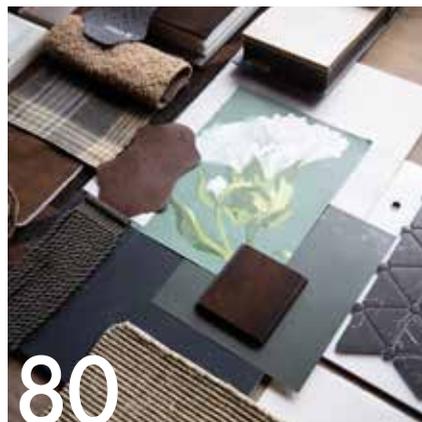
Welcome to At Home, our 18th annual special advertising section highlighting the best in home building, design, maintenance and more!

The Geneva Lake area is synonymous with exceptional homes. No matter what size project you have in mind, whether it's a renovation, a light refresh or a full luxury home build, the superior vendors highlighted in this section provide best-in-the-business client care and experiences, and specialize in everything from locally sourced products and expert installation to internationally recognized, cutting-edge goods and services. If you're thinking of tackling a project on your home this spring, start here.

TOP: SHANNA WOLF



73



80



96

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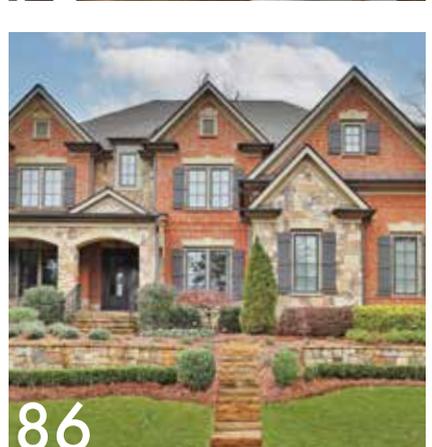
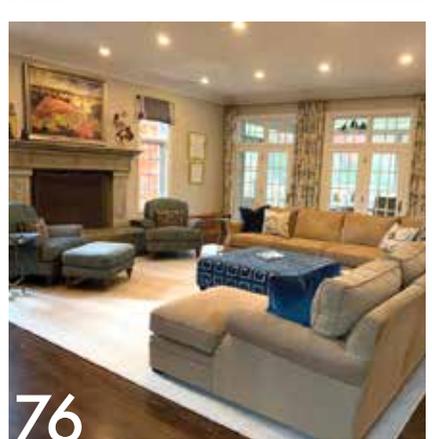
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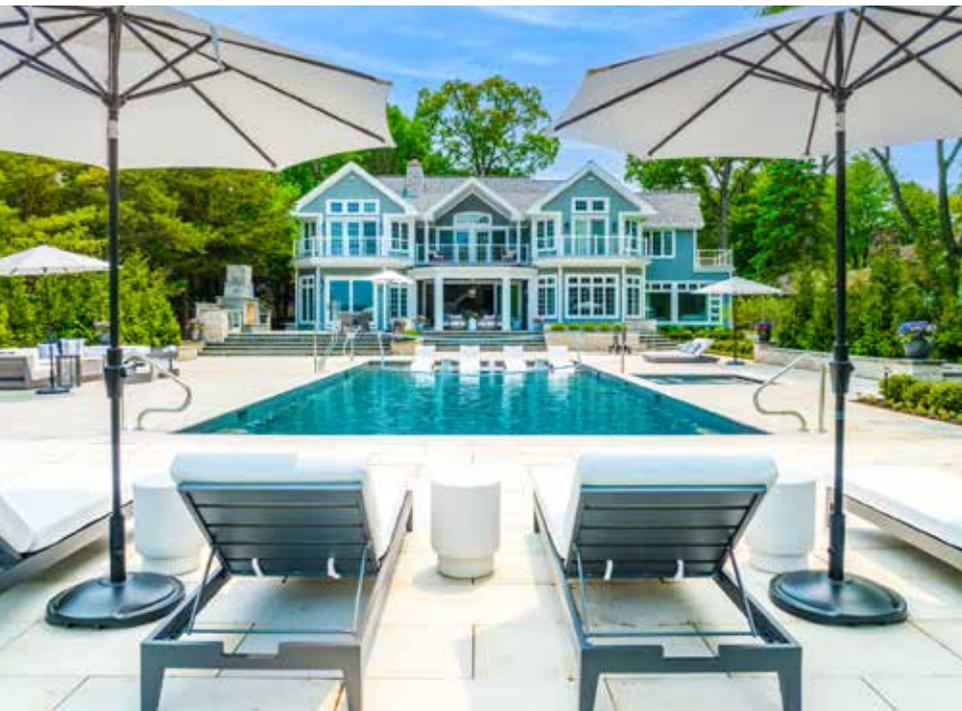
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Composed of the finest architects, designers, subcontractors, suppliers and other top professionals, the Matustik Builders team has been building high-quality custom homes in the Lake Geneva area for 30 years. The company is helmed by John Matustik, who has been pursuing his passion for homebuilding for decades, and understands how each home he builds is a dream of a client's imagination brought to fruition by his company.

The Matustiks are no strangers to the Lake Geneva area, as John's family purchased a summer home in the area when he was a child. In addition, his father owned rental properties, and John attributes his love of construction and building to working on those rentals when he was younger. After pursuing a degree in urban design and development, John met his wife, Kathy, in Fontana, and together they have loved working in the Lake Geneva area and the southeastern part of Wisconsin, designing and constructing custom homes that clients love.

When beginning a project, the Matustiks are dedicated to listening

to their clients before anything else. "We talk about the clients' goals, their dreams and their visions for their new home," says John. "We get a feel for what the client is looking for, and how we can best bring that vision to reality, and stay within their budget."

John says he likes to meet with clients before any plans are even drawn. He explains that each piece of property is unique, and it's important to design a home, which maximizes views from that unique property to create a one-of-a-kind residence that exemplifies the owner's lifestyle, utilizing high-quality products. From there, Matustik Builders finds the perfect personnel needed to complete each distinct construction project, from architects to artisan craftsmen.

What often sets Matustik Builders apart from many other companies is John's direct involvement with

projects. While some company owners will put projects in the hands of a superintendent after the initial meeting, John works with clients personally from the initial meeting through the completion of the project. "From the planning and design stages, through breaking ground, through the day-to-day construction, to the landscaping and delivery, and long after," he explains. John is involved with each step of the process. "I love what I do and treat every home like it's my own," John says.

To make the process fun and transparent, Matustik Builders sets up a client portal on their website so that customers can see photos of the daily progress on their homes under construction. "This way, even clients who are out of state can watch their homes being built," John explains. "Our goal is to simplify the building process and exceed homeowner expectations by completing their home on time and on budget."

Above all, Matustik Builders remains dedicated to making sure that every home they build receives their utmost time and attention, and that every homeowner can ultimately enjoy a stress-free construction process and a beautiful home. To see more of their work and get inspiration for your own home, visit the Matustik Builders project gallery at matustikbuilders.com. ■



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Whether you are looking at an empty space in your home or feel the need to change up an already-decorated space, you are not alone! Renovations, new styles and other design changes can be a daunting task. Interior designer Lidia Pastiu has faced these challenges head-on. With over 30 years of hands-on experience, including architecture, construction and decorating, Pastiu is an expert in her field. She taps into this deep knowledge and experience, together with her husband Nick, to create custom projects to please every client.

The Fontana location is the perfect place to house their current businesses: Lidia Design, a comprehensive interior design firm; Nick's Upholstery, custom furniture, upholstery or restoration of old pieces and antiques with a vast fabric gallery to help assist in any project; and Lake Home Living, a home-goods store that evolved out of Lidia and Nick's passion for furniture and old pieces that have unique styles and good quality, preserved,

transformed and updated for today's lifestyles. Lake Home Living is also the home store for the Fontana C. Frog landmark that many in the community grew up with, playing miniature golf and enjoying family time back in the day. "We love hearing the stories of those that come by, sharing a bit of memory with us," Lidia says.

"Lake Home Living is a hidden gem," she continues. "After nine years of being in Fontana, we realize that there are still customers who are discovering us, admiring the pleasant surroundings and absorbing all that the store has to offer."

The store offers many unique furniture pieces perfect for the lake homes or smaller cottages in many different styles: from mid-century modern, farm style, nautical, contemporary and modern to antiques and traditional. Furniture and accessories for the home are available for the taking. The store merchandise is carefully selected by Lidia, which gives her the ability to draw from many of these items and incorporate them into her customer's home designs. "In a world

where quality has been done away with and the 'disposable mentality' is everywhere we turn, we still cherish what has been instilled in us, striving to provide the best possible service and quality in all we do. We give each customer the best we have to offer," Lidia says.

Lidia's current success is the result of her past experiences, including a degree in interior design and an early career working at an architectural firm, giving her valuable insight into construction (both new and historic), remodeling, project management and so much more. She uses this knowledge to guide material selections and many other aspects of interior design. By combining this expertise with the craftsmanship and knowledge of textiles gained from working alongside Nick's Upholstery, Lidia has been able to fine-tune her skill set and push past the competition.

What truly sets Lidia Design apart from others offering similar services is Lidia's drive to truly understand her clients' needs. "When it comes to truly helping your customers to fulfill their needs and desires, you must really take the time to get to know them," Pastiu explains. Whether a space is a new build or full remodel, is in need of new furnishings, window treatments, lighting or decor, Lidia uses her expertise to create lasting and stylish results while respecting the existing architecture. ■





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We've all done it: watched someone on TV paint a room and thought, "I could totally do that: how tough can it be?" But then we pick up a brush or a roller and begin the painting project, only to find out how difficult the job really is! The color does not cover evenly, the old color starts to bleed through and the edge where the ceiling meets the wall is a nightmare. Within hours of starting the project, we wish we had called the professionals from the very beginning.

Enter D&K Painting, Inc. owned by Dan and Kim Jelinek and based in St. Charles, Illinois and Fontana, Wisconsin. D&K Painting, Inc specializes in both exterior and interior painting, and services both the Fox Valley area in Illinois and the Lake Geneva area in Wisconsin. The company also offers small drywall repair, deck refinishing, pier cleaning and painting, custom staining and refinishing of cabinets and staircases and full-service power washing of everything from building exteriors to sidewalks and patios. Truly a family-owned business, Dan started the company after working in his high school's work-training program

as a painter. Today, more than 20 years later, Kim runs the office, and the couple's high-school-aged daughter helps on the job sites during the summer months, and in the office during the school year.

"Dan has always been interested in bringing out the best in his jobs," Kim says. "We all enjoy the gratification of seeing what we can accomplish, and we have enjoyed the challenges that painting can bring."

Painting is very often a task that homeowners feel they can tackle themselves, but Dan says the best reason to hire a professional is because "straight lines matter: the preparation on the job matters and the details matter."

This year, the company will tackle several new projects, including a log home on one of the local lakes. Dan says they are excited to work on such a unique home. "We love preserving homes, bringing homes back to life and even giving them a whole new look with paint. The best compliment we can get is when we can paint [a client's] house in Illinois and their house in Wisconsin.

We want to earn your trust, loyalty and word-of-mouth referrals."

So, what is the hot new color for 2024? As it has been for a while, Kim says gray is still extremely popular. If you've already done that and want to update your space, she suggests that adding an accent color can make a big difference.

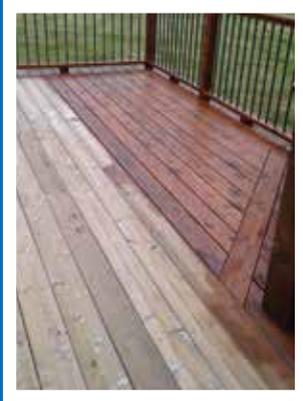
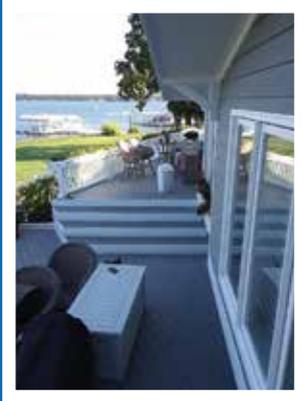
"A great example of this is Benjamin Moore's 2024 Color of The Year, Blue Nova. "This color has a classic appeal," Kim says. "It is neutral, but still has depth. The cooler color has a warm undertone and looks different in various lighting. Whatever color you choose, you need to feel drawn into the space and very comfortable."

No matter what color you choose or what you need done, Dan and Kim say their main goal is to get the job done right. "We clean up after our work and care about your house as if it was ours," Dan says. "We are all about the prep and finish details. We care about our business, reputation and customers."

Kim agrees. "Dan works on the job sites, and quality, safety, professionalism and honesty are our top priorities," she explains. "Let us paint your pad, we will vacuum our way out!"

D&K Painting has received numerous awards including the 2014 Historic Preservation Award from the city of Geneva, Illinois. ■





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Curate Design Group

101 Park Pl., Delavan | 262-725-7181 | curate-design.com



It is no surprise that our moods are very often affected by the spaces in which we spend our time. Spaces with beautiful designs often make us feel welcome, comfortable and warm, while spaces with poor designs can make us feel crowded, cold or even irritable.

To test this theory, consider for a moment the design of a commercial healthcare lobby, and now think about your own home's living room, which likely features softer lamplights, cozier furniture and comforting colors and textures. Where would you rather be?

Making ANY space into one that perfectly combines purpose and beauty can be a challenge, but it can be achieved with the help of Garrett Cheyne and the staff at Curate Design Group in Delavan.

The company started in 2016, opened its first showroom in 2018, and is now expanding to a new design studio in Delavan this spring/summer. Cheyne is the owner and principal designer at Curate, and he brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to the field.

"One of our favorite projects that we had the opportunity to design is The Bottleworks Hotel Indianapolis," he said. "This 1920 historic property was originally a Coca-Cola bottling plant. Today it stands as a 139-room boutique hotel for the modern traveler. We were asked to keep a lot of the original details and finishes, incorporating our classic and modern design style that we have become known for."

Curate Design Group works in both residential and commercial/hospitality spaces, but one element is common throughout all the firm's work: making sure clients feel confident in their choices and completely satisfied with the finished projects.

For many home or business owners, deciding how to design a space can be challenging, and even stressful. But Cheyne says that the experts at Curate are ready and willing to lend a hand and help customers who don't know where to begin.

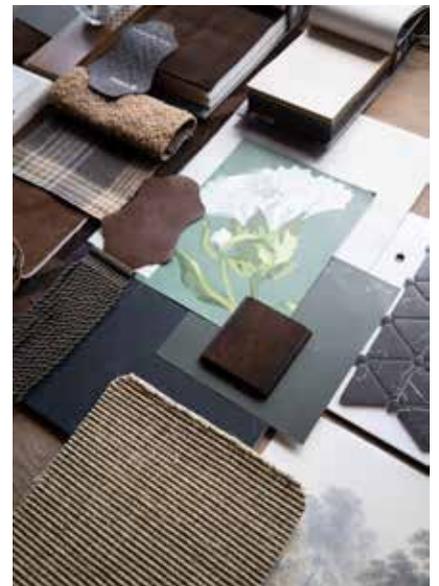
"We have experts in every field that know the ins and outs of their trade,

and there is nothing like doing it right the first time," Cheyne says. "We know how to elevate what our clients are trying to convey in a way that they could never imagine."

One of the ways in which they do this is by using materials which make their designs unique to each particular project. In many cases, this is accomplished by using antique, vintage, one-of-a-kind or custom-designed products.

Cheyne says this kind of attention to detail and design really comes to fruition when clients collaborate with experts who care deeply about the work they do. "Our designs and clients over the years speak volumes about our work and overall style," he says. "We eat, sleep and breathe design. It never shuts off for us."

Whether you'd like your kitchen to transport you to an Italian villa or your living room to take you to the seashore, it starts with a goal. If you don't know where to begin, call Curate or stop into their showroom in Delavan. "Every client brings a new set of challenges to the table, and we live for that," Cheyne says. "If you don't know where to begin, it really just starts with a simple phone call." ■





CURATE DESIGN GROUP

INTERIOR DESIGN

101 PARK PLACE, DELAVAN

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Marble Emporium Inc.

2200 Carlson Dr., Northbrook, IL | 847-205-4000 | marbleemporiumchicago.com



is a work of art for each client they serve. They recognize that choosing the ideal natural stone is an aesthetic and personal decision, much like selecting the perfect artwork for a space. Marble Emporium's designers are trained to assist in providing critical guidance in slab selection, and through knowledge and experience they can offer advice both artistically and technically, helping clients with each material's appropriate usage and budget. It's this attention to detail and dedication to customer satisfaction that is critical to the Marble Emporium mission.

And while Marble Emporium provides a wealth of experience in natural stone fabrication and installation for kitchen and bathroom applications, the company also provides stone for custom fireplaces and other unique uses such as floors, staircases and walls. ■

For many homeowners, the kitchen is truly the heart of the home. While today's stainless steel appliances and gorgeous wood cabinetry enhance a kitchen's design, it is the countertop selection that often makes the most impact. That's where Marble Emporium Inc. comes in. The company has proven itself as the leading expert in natural stone fabrication and installation for both residential and commercial projects for over 30 years. In addition, the company was the first fabricator in the Midwest to become accredited by the Marble Institute of America (MIA).

Marble Emporium's MIA accreditation uniquely positions it in the industry. This recognition for natural stone fabricators and commercial contractors means it's an elite company that meets only the highest standards for technical expertise, business priorities and ethics, product knowledge, safety, finance, fabrication and installation.

Located on Chicago's North Shore in Northbrook, Illinois, Marble

Emporium fabricates and installs natural stone as well as engineered stone (quartz). Their advanced, state-of-the-art equipment combined with hands-on artisan skills result in stunning design options for residential and commercial construction and renovation projects.

Marble Emporium's skilled processes mean the company can fabricate virtually any design concept — confidently, efficiently, accurately and on time while producing field installations without problems or delays.

And at Marble Emporium the term "custom" truly means "custom." Their designers' primary goal is to ensure that the stonework the company creates



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Balsitis Contracting Inc.

1021 Proctor Dr., Elkhorn | 262-203-3952 | balsitiscontractinginc.com



Building custom homes that exceed client expectations and completing large-scale home remodeling projects in a similar fashion has quickly become what Balsitis Contracting is known for throughout southern Wisconsin and northern Illinois.

Upon the company's founding in 2017, president and CEO Joey Balsitis decided it would operate in a unique manner. "We offer high-end construction services with total transparency — no hidden fees and completely open and clear communication," Joey Balsitis says. "Our clients see all invoices, live schedules of the building process are available through our online portal, and pictures and videos of project progress are regularly provided. This enables our clients to know what will happen at each phase and step of the project."

Headquartered in Lake Geneva with an office in downtown Milwaukee, Balsitis Contracting serves Wisconsin and Illinois residents from Madison to Chicago, and everywhere in

between. The growing team of qualified experts — including an operations manager, selections coordinator, design coordinator and project manager — have accumulated more than 200 years of combined experience building custom homes and completing large-scale remodeling projects. Balsitis Contracting team members use a hands-on approach when designing and constructing a home or completing a renovation project.

This group is complemented by two seven-person carpentry crews, who have long careers in the home construction and remodeling industry.

"For projects like a whole home renovation, addition or custom home design, it is imperative to work with a company in which you have the utmost confidence," Balsitis says. "We're dedicated to offering intense attention to detail, and providing the finest product within the established budget based on honesty, integrity and trust. Plus we'll keep the project on schedule. From start to finish, we ensure questions are answered, misunderstandings avoided and the home you desire is realized."

Working as a partner with its clients is essential to the success of Balsitis Contracting. "By listening intently to our clients' ideas and understanding their needs and lifestyle, we are able to construct a home or complete a renovation that not only achieves, but surpasses, the objectives of the project," Balsitis says. "When we finish building a home, an addition, or complete a renovation, we find that our clients see us as friends and trusted advisors as they begin a fresh chapter of their life in a new home or remodeled space." ■





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Soberg Window & Door Company

W5820 County Rd. B, Walworth | 262-275-2150 | sobergwindows.com



As the temperatures begin to rise and Wisconsin begins to thaw, many homeowners are ready to open their windows and enjoy some fresh air. But what happens when the cool breeze is still coming in after the windows are closed? Or, how about trying to open a window, but feeling like you need all your strength just to get it to open smoothly?

Just like many other elements of our homes, windows won't last forever, but it is possible for them to last for decades, even in the Midwest, which can be a particularly harsh climate for home maintenance. With the wide range of temperatures from summer to winter, and everything from wind and snow to hail and heavy rains, making windows last as long as possible is due in part to the use of only the best materials. Soberg Window & Door Company owner Troy Soberg says there's none better than Infinity® from Marvin®.

Soberg Window & Door Company prides itself on one motto: "Do it once, do it right." And while many companies offer a wide range of

home-improvement services, Soberg specializes in replacing residential windows and doors — and that's all. Soberg explains that the idea is simple: do one thing and do it well.

"Our [Infinity from Marvin] windows are fiberglass, which hold up to the elements better than any other materials on the market," he explains. "We do not sell vinyl or wood products, as they are inferior products."

While having a stellar product is one thing, having your window-replacement project well-managed and expertly installed is also important. Soberg says that the initial task of window-replacement can feel daunting, but by enlisting the help of professionals, it can be much easier!

"Researching windows can be very overwhelming for a homeowner and there are a lot of high-pressure window replacement companies that will take advantage of people," he says. "We are NOT high pressure, and we try to make the entire process as painless as possible."

If you think you might be ready to replace your windows, Soberg recommends starting with a simple phone call to set up an appointment in which the company can assess the old windows and talk about the Infinity from Marvin products available.

"We then give a no-obligation quote to the homeowner," he says. "From there we hope to continue and do business with you. That is just the start for us. We then handle every aspect of the process from the installation and even beyond."

Soberg reiterates that while there is no way to necessarily determine the lifespan of the windows in a home, in most cases, simply replacing old windows with new and more efficient ones can solve many problems. Soberg and his staff are dedicated to doing things right. Most projects take only 1-3 days to complete, and the company is dedicated to making sure one project is done before moving on to the next one.

"We have the best crew here at Soberg Window & Door. We make sure, no matter what, that our customers are happy and satisfied from start to finish," he says. "Customers not only buy from us for the product we sell, but they also buy because of us! We are selling ourselves and our reputation, and that's what separates us from anyone else!" ■



We have a very simple philosophy at
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**We do what we say
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Jorndt Fahey LLC

168 Elkhorn Rd., Williams Bay | 262-607-6121 | jorndtfahey.com



Whether building a home on one of the area's many lakes or in the surrounding communities, many people are drawn to the beauty, small-town feel, safety and security, and plentiful opportunities to enjoy outdoor activities in the Geneva Lake area.

Jorndt Fahey, LLC, headquartered in Williams Bay, specializes in new-home construction and luxury remodels in Lake Geneva, Williams Bay, Delavan and the surrounding areas. Celebrating their 25th year, the company was formed when Douglas and Bryan Jorndt of Jorndt Builders, LLC, combined their resources and talents in custom homebuilding with Dan Fahey, a seasoned professional and craftsman in the building industry. Today, the company focuses not only on new construction, but also on remodels and additions.

"We find building and remodeling homes in Lake Geneva rewarding and gratifying because we are a part of beautifying the communities in which we live," Fahey says. "We enjoy getting to know our customers personally and

establishing relationships with them that go beyond the building process. We are honored to be a part of making peoples' dreams for their homes a reality, and to be entrusted with that responsibility is something we don't take lightly," he adds.

Fahey says the company prides itself on meeting project deadlines and staying up-to-date on current building trends that offer clients different insights into the remodeling/construction of their home. "We will continue to communicate effectively throughout the construction process and execute our commitment throughout the end date of the project," he says. "This has always

been a strength for our company and something we will continue to deliver on, something that our customers appreciate."

Fahey and his team are well aware that there is strong competition among homebuilders and contractors in the Lake Geneva area, but he says that how they treat their customers is what sets Jorndt-Fahey apart from competitors. "We understand and value a dollar, and understand that people are entrusting us with a huge responsibility ... we feel honored and privileged to deliver results," he explains. "We are committed to our customers and deliver a superior product from start to finish."

To begin the process, Fahey suggests scheduling an initial consultation. It helps to have an idea of the scope and size, budget and deadline of your project, as this will help with the efficiency of the project goals and timing of the construction. Fahey also suggests selecting a builder prior to the design stage. "When we are on board early, not only does the client receive our input on design, but we help keep the design in budget," he explains. "We take a detailed approach to the execution of our projects, and make those projects a unique experience for our customers."

Fahey says a picture is worth 1,000 words: for a photo gallery of some of the company's home construction and remodeling projects, visit jorndtfahey.com and click "Projects." ■



JORNDT FAHEY LLC



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Our Mission is to build a Quality Home and to maintain an open line of communication with our client throughout the building process... from the initial design concept to its final and outstanding completion!

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New Homes ~ Renovations ~ Additions

Tailored Spaces

300 W. Front St., Ste. 105A, Harvard, IL | 815-770-0390 | tailoredspacesllc.com



Turn on the television on any day of the week, and you're likely to find any number of home improvement shows, all of which aim to make home decorating and design more approachable for the everyday people thinking about home renovation or design. But attempting to tackle your interior design needs without expert help can lead to overspending and mistakes. Instead, it's best to seek the help of a professional.

From the time she was young, Natalie Spiniolas knew she had an eye for detail and design. From spending time in her aunt's drapery workshop to building her career as a custom cabinet designer, Spiniolas finds beauty in creating, collecting, organizing and designing. She recently combined all of these experiences into a custom interior design firm, Tailored Spaces. Spiniolas says her business allows her to "[create] spaces that provide the ultimate in enjoyment and comfort while ensuring a functional aesthetic."

Headquartered in nearby Harvard, Illinois, Spiniolas says that more than 85 percent of her clients live

in Walworth County. Like many homeowners and visitors, Spiniolas is drawn to the beauty of the Lake Geneva area, but she says she also loves the relationships she has been able to build with the tradespeople, contractors and suppliers in the area.

Spiniolas strives to incorporate her ideas in rewarding ways. In one recent project, she designed the guest home for a fashion influencer, incorporating a sports-viewing room that featured concealed televisions, as well as what she calls "a showstopper closet" with a rolling library ladder. Another recent project incorporated the client's own stained-glass windows and custom barn doors. Mixing materials in this way often enhances what the designer calls "visual texture."

This year, Spiniolas is hoping to further expand her portfolio, including the opportunity to work in vintage-inspired homes, or even a converted factory or loft building, allowing her to include reclaimed design elements or "found pieces." Spiniolas says she and her team are "adamant about staying on top of industry trends, and are

always up-to-date with leading vendor products. We do everything we can to guarantee that each project is paired with the proper materials and budget."

For homeowners, collaborating with a company like Tailored Spaces also alleviates the stress surrounding the task of beautifying their spaces. Spiniolas says it's important for homeowners to consider not just a potential "wish list" of design ideas but also a list of the challenges they are trying to solve in the home. "These become the most important things we want to change for our clients," Spiniolas explains. She encourages clients to save magazine clippings or start a Pinterest board of ideas they love. "In many cases, we can look at these images and see clear patterns that sometimes even the clients themselves don't see."

Whether it's new construction, renovation and remodeling projects or simply product selection and design consulting for decoration, Spiniolas and her team are able to create a design plan that meets every homeowner's need.

The company also has a retail branch called Varnished Velvet by Tailored Spaces, located at the Excursion Market in the Starline Factory in Harvard and open five days a week. The retail branch offers homeowners a chance to view things hand-selected by Spiniolas and her team — "our favorite products, vintage finds, homemade décor and small cabinetry pieces," Spiniolas explains. ■



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Lake Geneva — one of the most scenic and naturally beautiful destinations enjoyed by those who find the need to occasionally be “the tourist” and briefly run away from home, or those who take up permanent residence lakeside. Not confusing given the main attraction — the incredible lake.

As winter temps fade and the bustle of spring activities begin again, it is also a time to “spring” into managing the exterior cleanup that cycles each year.

Maybe you haven’t heard of us before now, but House Shampoo has earned the community’s trust and reputation as the leader in roof and exterior cleaning and restoration in the Lake Geneva area and beyond. In part, this can be attributed to the expertise that we possess, having a comprehensive history as business owners in all areas of exterior building construction. Knowing exterior feature vulnerabilities and strengths is critically important to the course taken in how they are safely cleaned and restored. What makes us unique in this field is

our ongoing investment in the latest technology, our processes, and our personally designed equipment all required to flawlessly operate our proprietary solution-based cleaning system. This system enables us to work on complex, immense lake properties with expansive architectural features that simply require customized treatments. Our delivery system is foundational to our business and alleviates the risks for damage or sub-par cleaning results that traditional power washing methods are known for. Power washing methods are only appropriate for rugged materials like stone, pavers and concrete. The results we achieve are three to five times

better and last longer than power washing. But seeing is believing, so consider visiting our website to view our work: houseshampoo.com.

House Shampoo has acquired a diverse menagerie of clients. They range from neighborhood homeowners to many locally visible and renowned celebrities, business owners, builders, property managers and real estate brokers. Over the 10 years we have worked in the area, we have cleaned hundreds of luxury lake homes, as well as some highly recognizable iconic properties. Each and every day that we go to work, we give thanks for the incredible privilege we experience having these opportunities available to us.

A recent project — worth mentioning due to its profound nature — was a historical cemetery where we were hired to clean and restore every gravestone. Many of the monuments were covered in excess algae and lichen growth and were unreadable. Long forgotten, we revitalized over 850 headstones dating back to the 1700s. More reason why we truly love what we’ve been called to do and why our motto is, “If it needs cleaning, House Shampoo has THE solution!”

We can’t help but feel immense gratitude for the many relationships we have made by simply cleaning exteriors and we look forward to continued growth by God’s grace. ■



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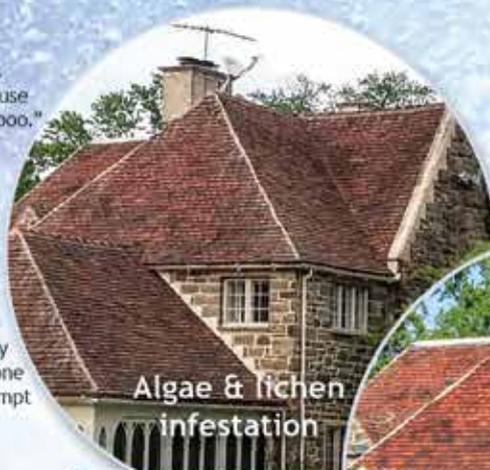
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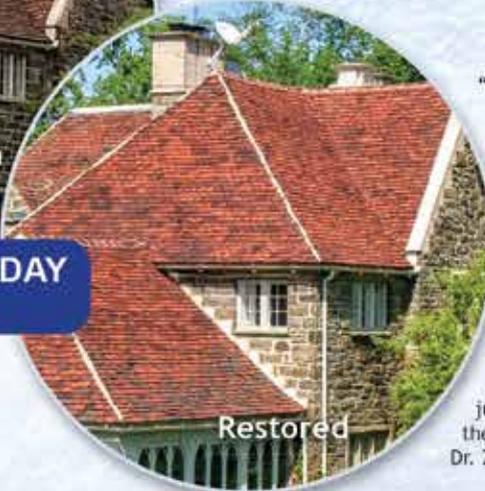
"These guys are unbelievable!
We got our roof, siding, decks and walks cleaned and all the work was spectacular! We've got a "new" house
We highly recommend House Shampoo."
G. Storandt - Lauderdale Lakes, WI

"House Shampoo is Awesome!!
10 Star Review!!
I cannot say enough positive things about Gary and his crew. Our home looks brand new, they washed every surface from the roof to the flagstone pathways. Lovely to deal with, prompt and beyond professional!!!
I would not hesitate to call them."
W. Abrams - Lake Geneva

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Let me just say- Wow. I was totally floored at how my home looked after it was all done-down to every detail."
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"We could not be happier! Our cedar roof, stonework and patios .. everything was cleaned to perfection. We've told at least a dozen people about their service. Can't wait to do it again!"
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The pavers look like they were just installed. You'd never know they've been down for 20 years."
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We're fortunate to enjoy the full array of seasons, living here in Wisconsin. But sometimes, Mother Nature treats us to that wide array, all in the same day!

With those broad temperature swings and the range of weather patterns we experience, many homeowners are turning to three-season rooms to protect against the elements and afford a more comfortable experience throughout the entire year.

Chris Stebnitz, third-generation owner of Stebnitz Builders, has seen this growing trend over the last several years. "As many families expand, space becomes an even greater premium," Stebnitz says. "Often, a three-season room is the perfect solution."

"Our team is creating impressive three-season rooms that are exceedingly flexible extensions of the home and can meet a variety of needs and goals of our clients."

Stebnitz Builders recently completed a screen room for their clients — two

sisters who purchased a home with the goal of keeping their families close together. They wanted a room that could comfortably fit the family while taking advantage of the serene setting around them," Stebnitz says. "When they walk through the back door, they are welcomed by an exterior space meant to entertain and fully integrate into those surroundings."

The brick-paved patio not only features two grills and ample seating, but it provides a beautiful hardscape that also allows for natural drainage, keeping their yard dry and pristine.

The design team responsible for creating this new space was led by Jeff Auberger, Remodeling

Consultant for Stebnitz Builders. His team chose the Sun Space vinyl window system as it was the perfect fit for the situation, taking advantage of warm breezes in the summer, while providing protection from crisp and chilly autumn winds.

Additionally, Auberger explains that the distressed beams in the room added a "rustic" flavor to the space and made for a beautiful transition in style from inside the home. The dual-sided fireplace also assists in the transition by providing the family a "sneak peek" into their living room through the flames of a warm fire.

Stebnitz Builders has been serving the greater Walworth County area for over 50 years. Their decades of experience designing and renovating homes here is an invaluable asset in integrating today's various lifestyles and the latest design trends into existing homes — some built over a generation ago.

Regardless of a project's size or complexity, Stebnitz Builders is equipped to help. Chris explains why they have such a wide range of projects they'll complete: "Our focus is ensuring our process is the best solution for the homeowner rather than just the best project for our team. While we're very good at what we do, we recognize our system isn't for everyone and every situation. It's our responsibility to ensure we're the best fit with the goals of the homeowner to consistently deliver the experience our clients deserve." ■





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quality products available today. Marvin's industry leading innovations and quality control, along with its timely service, make them the perfect partner for Lake Geneva Window & Door.

"We're only as good as our suppliers," says Ackman, "but our relationship with Marvin takes all the guesswork out of it."

Lake Geneva Window & Door also has the ability to replace your existing windows using the wide variety of Marvin brand windows.

"Our in-house carpenters will take your replacement job from start to finish, including the measuring of your custom windows to factory pre-finishing to match your existing trim," says Ackman.

Choosing the right windows and doors can be a difficult task, but when you sit down with Jennifer Ackman and Rick Ackman Jr. at Lake Geneva Window & Door, this sometimes difficult task becomes an enjoyable journey.

"The excitement of working with a contractor or homeowner on their dream home is not lost on us at Lake Geneva Window & Door," says Ackman. "Our significant investment and constant updating of our showroom allows us to have the homeowner or contractor see firsthand the latest Marvin products."

"Catalogs are great for ideas, but being able to open and close the window and door, and feel the quality of the hardware that you will live with can only be accomplished in our showroom," she explains.

Lake Geneva Window & Door is a division of Ackman Glass, which will celebrate its 47th anniversary this year. In July 1977, Dick and Katie Ackman relocated from Illinois to start Ackman Glass, and today

a third generation is operating the business. Their three grandchildren: Rick, Jennifer and Peter Ackman would make their grandparents proud due to their dedication to running the family business as well as transforming it into the well-respected and diversified company it is today.

Lake Geneva Window & Door has partnered with the Marvin brand to supply its customers with the highest

Putting customers' needs above all else is an integral part of the success of Lake Geneva Window & Door. It's the driving force behind the company, according to Ackman. And as stewards of the family business that their grandparents started over 46 years ago, they know the company's long-standing tradition of excellence is their mission to continue. ■



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The Lofts of Brick & Mortar

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for The Lofts say that the spaces are “clean, friendly, and perfectly situated to enjoy the [Lake Geneva] area,” and that, “there is nothing the owners haven’t thought of to make the trip comfortable and cozy, offering every amenity we needed for our trip.”

Each of the three 1,600-square-foot units features two bedrooms and one bathroom, all fully equipped with products and design elements from the Brick & Mortar stores. Each unit also boasts balconies and outdoor patio seating areas, again equipped with furniture and housewares from Brick & Mortar. And the best part? Anything within the units is available to purchase. Love the lamp on the nightstand or the sofa you’re sitting on or even the Smeg coffee pot? Feel free to purchase it and take it with you after your stay!

For years, Lake Geneva has been a place to visit for a weekend getaway, plan a wedding in a local venue or put down roots by purchasing real estate. And no matter the purpose of your stay in the area, it is virtually impossible to walk the streets of Lake Geneva without seeing the Brick & Mortar name.

“The Brick & Mortar brand has really expanded to touch and embrace everything Lake Geneva has to offer,” co-owner Thomas George explains. He and his wife Kathy started their business with The House in 2009, and then expanded to Brick & Mortar Home & Outdoor in 2014. The Lofts of Brick & Mortar opened in 2023, and The Porch, a café and market, will be opening in 2024.

Located at 252 Center Street, new vacation rentals The Lofts sit atop Brick & Mortar’s 4,800-square-foot showroom and assembly room. There are three themed loft spaces: the City Loft, which captures “the vibrant energy of urban living”; the California Loft, which features “the west coast vibe with beautifully

appointed kitchen and bath suited for couples”; and the Lake Loft, which highlights “the serene ambiance of the lake-themed rental.” Each loft is available for visitors or long-term renters booking online through Airbnb, VRBO or Geneva Lakes Vacations rental management, located in downtown Lake Geneva.

“The simplicity of the units allows guests to edit their stay to their taste while enjoying all the area has to offer,” Kathy says. Visitors who have already enjoyed the properties tend to agree: the 5-star reviews online

“Brick & Mortar’s storefronts have become the trusted stores for home furnishings and gifts that show your taste for the good life here at the lake and beyond,” Kathy says. “Amber, Monika and our experienced leaders curate products that continue to show a timeless taste and passion for life.”

The Georges’ expansion into vacation rentals is just another way the Brick & Mortar brand is becoming synonymous with life in Lake Geneva, and they wouldn’t have it any other way. ■



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Rendering by CBW Interiors

For more than 40 years, Lowell Custom Homes (LCH) has been a familiar name in the design and construction business throughout the Lake Geneva area and the Midwest. Though they are perhaps best known for their work on the development and design of the homes located at Geneva National, Lake Geneva's coveted golf and residential community, the company's portfolio boasts an impressive collection of beautiful projects of all sizes and designs.

Despite its impressive history, LCH is far from reaching the pinnacle of success. LCH recently welcomed a new Director of Operations, Erik Olsen. Originally from Williams Bay, Olsen worked for his father's concrete company before eventually moving to Minnesota. His family background, coupled with his work in Minnesota over the past three decades, allowed him to gain what LCH VP Kim LaCroix calls, "invaluable experience in every aspect of the building process." She adds that, "Erik brings a wealth of expertise to Lowell."

Collaborating closely with company founder Scott Lowell, Olsen and

Lowell's blended experience is the perfect recipe for the next phase of LCH. LCH will continue to deliver its superior quality and craftsmanship that Lowell established over the years, while also adding new technologies, materials, techniques and processes with Olsen's experience.

"This year we have [also] expanded our architectural team, which has allowed us the opportunity to introduce several new and exciting designs to our portfolio," LaCroix explains. "These designs highlight a distinct, contemporary style that not only sets them apart in our portfolio but also brings a fresh and creative flair for our clients, their families and the entire community to enjoy."

One of LCH's new projects is The Residences of Geneva Lake in Fontana. Only steps away from The Abbey Resort and Marina, this luxury townhome development will feature five buildings containing 17 incredible townhomes, each with more than 2,000 square feet of living space, two to three bedrooms, a spacious great room with custom finishes and an attached two-car garage.

For each project, LaCroix emphasizes that LCH works as a team, not only within the company, but with all those involved in the building process. "Transparency is key to cultivating relationships," she adds. Though they may be designed and built by the same company, LCH prides itself on the fact that no two homes they build are exactly alike. And for LCH, no client's request or dream is too big or small to consider.

"We thoughtfully select materials and forge partnerships that will 'Deliver the Dream,'" LaCroix says. "Our close collaboration with homeowners allows us to determine where they want to indulge and where they prefer to be more conservative. We prioritize working with local companies and tradespeople. However, we are also open to exploring worldwide for options that may fulfill any unique product or service request from our homeowners."

Whether clients are looking to actively participate in the process of designing and building their home, or whether they would like a more "hands-off" approach which relies on the expertise of the team members at LCH, Lowell, LaCroix and the rest of the team are ready to turn any dream into reality. ■



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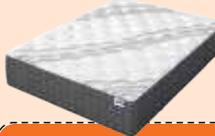
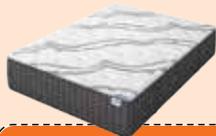
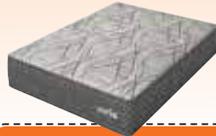
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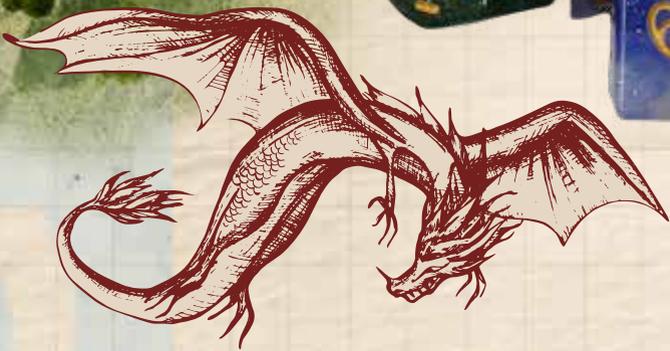
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THE ENDURING ADVENTURE of Dungeons & Dragons

Celebrating 50 years of the iconic game
invented in Lake Geneva

BY JIM MCCLURE

1 square = 5 feet
X = Point of Interest



The fantasy role-playing game Dungeons & Dragons (D&D) is famous to millions of people around the world, having spawned everything from a hugely successful series of novels to a 1980s cartoon series to two full-length movies. Today, as more and more people discover the joy of playing D&D, it has claimed a nearly unrivaled spot in the modern pop-culture pantheon.

Yet many people are still surprised to learn that the game's origins lie right here in Lake Geneva, where late resident Gary Gygax and co-creator Dave Arneson first published a revolutionary new game in 1974 that allowed players to create their own complex storylines — a world full of wizards and heroes, soldiers and sorcerers, kings and castles. And dungeons. And dragons.

THE ORIGINAL DUNGEON MASTERS

Gygax was a self-described nerd, who developed his game after spending hundreds of hours playing (and later writing) tabletop war strategy games. Gygax and Arneson's creative breakthrough in inventing Dungeons & Dragons was to allow players to select a character at the start of each game (called a "campaign" in the game's lingo), and then play the game as that character: the first-ever role-playing game.

By inventing this new type of game, Gygax bridged a gap in the market: the pencil-and-paper mapping and tabletop gaming common in the war games he loved, and more traditional dice-throwing board games of chance. But the added

element of character role play is what really distinguished D&D from other forms of gaming, and started a cultural revolution. "Role-playing games have been a significant part of popular culture since the first publication of Dungeons & Dragons," explains educator and entertainer Dr. Steven Brown, an avid D&D player.

Gygax published the first edition of Dungeons & Dragons in January of 1974 using capital from a handful of local investors, and it quickly became a hit in the niche world of gaming, where it benefited from placement in specialty game shops and an active word-of-mouth network. As the popularity of D&D spread, it turned out that Gygax's innovation had universal appeal beyond the niche gaming community. By 1981, it was a certified pop culture phenomenon, with more than 30 million players worldwide.



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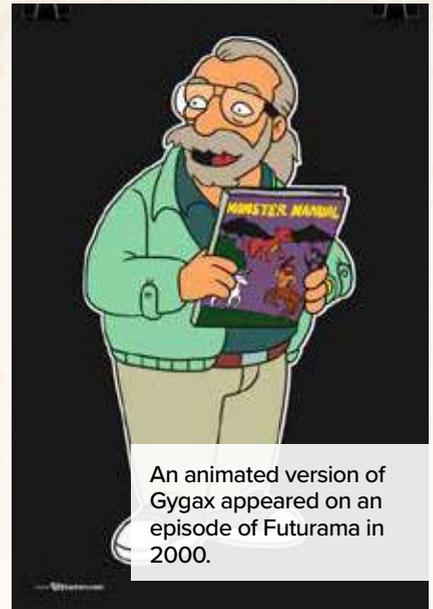
Today that number is more than 50 million players worldwide. This surge in playership reflects trends in gaming generally. “Role-playing is a hugely popular pastime [today], and features various subgenres, such as live-action role-playing; massive, multiplayer, online role-playing; text-based online gaming forums; videogames; and tabletop board game role-playing [like D&D],” Brown says.

Last spring, Smithsonian Magazine declared that Dungeons & Dragons “may be in a new golden age,” just as a new movie hit theaters — Dungeons & Dragons: Honor Among Thieves, starring Hollywood powerhouse Chris Pine. Netflix’s smash hit series, Stranger Things, is set in a small town in Indiana in the 1980s, and follows the treacherous journey of four young D&D players as their real life begins to share increasing similarities to their game life. And the game has been mentioned in countless other TV shows, including South Park, Buffy the Vampire Slayer, Community, The Big Bang Theory, The Goldbergs and Futurama, where an animated Gygax even appeared as a character on one episode.

ADVENTURING PARTIES

Further evidence of the enduring popularity of Dungeons & Dragons can be seen at Gen Con, the massive Dungeons & Dragons-themed gaming convention held in Indianapolis each spring. Today, it is the largest gaming convention in North America, but Gygax actually started the event in 1967 before he even published D&D, holding the first-ever “Geneva Convention” (a play on words related to the war games he played) in his basement before moving it to Lake Geneva’s Horticultural Hall for many years. The annual event has since exploded in popularity — last year, more than 70,000 people attended Gen Con 2023 at the Indiana Convention Center, setting an attendance record.

Closer to home, gamers honor Gygax’s memory at Gary Con, another Dungeons & Dragons-themed convention held at Lake Geneva’s Grand Geneva Resort & Spa each



An animated version of Gygax appeared on an episode of Futurama in 2000.



Netflix’s smash hit Stranger Things features several scenes in which characters play Dungeons & Dragons.



More than 70,000 people attended Gen Con 2023, setting an attendance record for the event.

spring. The event focuses on the game's history, its early development and its founder, Gygax, catering the lineup of activities for those players who consider themselves particularly devoted fans.

Gygax was a living legend in his lifetime, but an accessible one. "Gary stories" are part of the lore of the subculture, and part of the fun of Gary Con. "Any gamer from that [early] era knows that D&D originated in Lake Geneva," explains Annemarie Schmid, member of the Brown Ullstrup Foundation theater troupe and an early D&D player. "The pinnacle of nerd-dom was to game with the master himself — Gary Gygax. And I can say that I have."

"I'm a Dungeons & Dragons nerd and I'm not ashamed to admit it," she confesses. "My husband, Mike, is also a D&D nerd, but he lords it over me that he learned first-edition rules, while I was obviously a neophyte



Attendees at Gen Con 2023 play a game of Dungeons & Dragons.

having started with second edition."

Gary Con, now in its 16th year, even attracts celebrities who love the game: actors Vince Vaughn and Joe Manganiello and musician Tom Morello have attended in the past, not as panelists but as fans of the game and general attendees.

HONORING A BIRTHRIGHT

As the massively popular game celebrates its 50th anniversary this year, fans and locals alike agree that there's room for improvement in connecting the history of Dungeons & Dragons with the history of the town where it was invented. Enter: The Gygax Memorial Fund. This nonprofit

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Gygax and his family lived in this house at 330 Center St. when he published the first version of Dungeons & Dragons.



Mike Carr, former TSR employee and friend of Gygax, uses a sword to cut the ribbon on the Gen Con Founder's Stone in August 2023.

organization, founded more than 15 years ago by Gygax's widow, Gail, has been working in recent months to commemorate and acknowledge the importance of Gygax and the legacy of Dungeons & Dragons to the local community.

To this end, the organization successfully petitioned the Lake Geneva City Council to declare July 27, 2023 as "Gary Gyax Day" in honor of Gygax's birthday. Other achievements followed. So far, the group has: placed an "Adventurer's Map" statue at 330 Center St. (Gygax's former home, where he was living when the game was invented); placed a "Gen Con Founder's Stone" at the entrance to Horticultural Hall; dedicated the Gary Gyax Appendix N Alcove at the Lake Geneva Public Library; and dedicated a park bench in Lake Geneva's Library Park to Gygax's memory. At the Geneva Lake Museum, a new permanent exhibit entitled "The Wizard of Lake Geneva" chronicles the game's invention here. And fundraising for a statue of Gygax seated at a game table at the west end of Library Park is currently under way.

In addition to this, the Dungeon Hobby Shop Museum opened in 2021 in the same space that originally housed the first headquarters of TSR, Inc., the company that Gygax founded to produce and distribute Dungeons & Dragons in 1976. The museum, curated by former TSR employee Jeff Leason,

features artifacts from the company's early days, including an original wood-box version of the game from the initial run of 1,000 that Gygax produced in 1974 (another of which is on display at Seattle's Museum of Pop Culture). The Dungeon Hobby Shop Museum also hosts regular game nights.

This fall, the Gygax Memorial Fund will honor the 50th anniversary of Dungeons & Dragons at a festival called "Dragon Days" in Lake Geneva from Sept. 27-29. Plans for the citywide festival include a fantasy Renaissance faire, a costume contest, a hay bale dungeon maze, face painting, circus performers, Medieval music, demonstrations of Medieval craftsmanship, fantasy book signings and walking tours of Lake Geneva's historic D&D sites, among other activities.

TAVERN SIDE QUEST

In November of 2019, local entrepreneur Daniel Cowell made headlines when he revealed the early concepts for an ambitious, Dungeons & Dragons-themed entertainment venue he called The Griffin & Gargoyle. This future restaurant and entertainment experience would include a 350-seat immersive restaurant and a retail space in Lake Geneva.

"Inspiration for the project came out of my friendship with Harold Johnson, owner of the [now-shuttered] Breadloaf Bookstore [in Lake Geneva]," Cowell explains.



The Gen Con Founder's stone in front of Horticultural Hall.



Dungeon Master Ken Haylock leads a game of D&D at the Lake Geneva Public Library.

ALL PHOTOS THIS PAGE: LAUREN HARRIGAN EXCEPT LOWER RIGHT: HOLLY LEITNER

“Harold was the editor on the original *Dungeon Master’s Guide*, and through my friendship with him, I came to know the amazing community of [D&D employee] alumni who so instrumentally helped to shape the face of gaming.”

Out of that vision, Cowell’s idea for *The Griffin & Gargoyle* was born. So far, Cowell has acquired rights to 26 acres of commercial property near the Emagine Theater Complex, but is still seeking funding to make the dream a reality.

Cowell believes firmly that *Dungeons & Dragons* persists in popularity because role-play gaming fulfills a basic human need. “It allows us to explore facets of our personalities that may be outside the norm of our day-to-day lives,” he explains. “I’ve seen the shy become outspoken and brave, I’ve seen the brash become quiet and wise, I’ve seen the magic transformation of someone exploring their identity outside of the gender norms ... it’s an amazing gift, and it is my fervent desire to create an institution that can serve as a gateway to introduce the magic of collaborative storytelling to the community at large.”

PRESTIGE CLASS

And what of the exciting future including and beyond this summer’s 50th anniversary revelry? According to Cowell, “There are so many amazing stakeholders working to help define Lake Geneva as the go-to destination for fantasy enthusiasts.”

Today, more than 50 years after it was born in Lake Geneva, *Dungeons & Dragons* remains as relevant as ever, and the game’s devoted fans include many celebrities. Stars with household names who have publicly declared allegiance to *Dungeons & Dragons* include CNN’s Anderson Cooper, comedy host Stephen Colbert, actor Vin Diesel, director John Favreau and a host of others.

Hollywood film actor Tony Mockus, Jr. (*Backdraft*, *Major League*) has local ties and first started enjoying the role-playing game in high school. “It’s a world that you create and make your own...” he explains, likening the role-playing in *Dungeons & Dragons* to an actor playing a part. “An actor starts with envisioning the backstory for his or her role based on the script, not unlike one follows the [D&D] rules as to how the actor and action play out. And against that rich tapestry comes the fun in acting out a role ... on stage, screen or in a game.”

Brown agrees that the ongoing appeal of *Dungeons & Dragons* is rooted in the way the game captures players’ imaginations. “In today’s fast-paced world of AI, the game world itself changes so dramatically and quickly from game to game... With [D&D], players can immerse themselves in any imaginary environment of their choice.” 



ADVENTURE FURTHER

For more on the history of *Dungeons & Dragons*, read “*Dungeons & Dragons: A Journey of Imaginations*” in *At The Lake’s* Winter 2015 issue by scanning the code or visiting atthelakemagazine.com/dungeons-dragons

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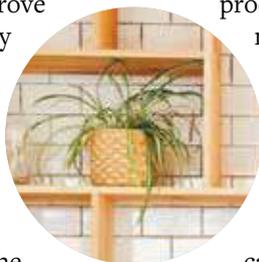
Houseplants can have positive effects on your mood, health and environment

BY NAT WEXLER

Spring weather in the Midwest, especially southeastern Wisconsin, is often extremely unpredictable. At this time of year, we can experience all four seasons in a matter of hours, which means that outdoor gardening has to wait until very late in the season when the threat of frost has fully passed. For those who are looking to keep their green thumbs in the game before the ground thaws, however, the solution lies close to, or rather inside, the home.



Houseplants are an excellent way for gardeners to enjoy the beauty and benefits of plants year-round. In addition to the visual charm they add to any space, houseplants are known to boost mood and improve indoor air quality, and many indoor plants even offer medicinal benefits. That makes indoor gardening a perennial activity with lasting benefits.



In a study published in the journal *Frontiers in Psychology*, scientists have found a correlation between houseplants and improved mood — in short, people who live in homes with plants tend to be happier than those who don't. Studies show that individuals who take care of plants also report lower stress levels than those who do not, as well as decreased levels of depression and anxiety. Some mental health professionals even prescribe the care of indoor plants to their patients as a treatment tool.

Plants may help to boost indoor air quality by clearing out carbon dioxide and producing oxygen, while helping to remove pollutants and volatile organic compounds (VOCs) from the air. During the photosynthesis process, which is the chemical change that creates the energy a plant needs to survive, plants combine the carbon dioxide in the air with water and sunlight. As a result of this process, oxygen is released into the air. Therefore, having plants in a space can decrease the amount of carbon dioxide and other irritants in the air and increase the amount of oxygen.

Additionally, the leaves of a plant can act as a filter to catch airborne particles that can be irritating to humans when inhaled. (Though it is important to note that plants that produce pollen or spores do not provide this benefit and can be detrimental to those with allergies or weakened immune systems.)

A number of houseplants can have medicinal benefits. For example, plucking a leaf off an Aloe vera plant and applying the gel inside to a minor burn or skin irritation (but not an open wound!) can provide some natural relief. Chewing on mint leaves or steeping leaves from a mint plant in hot water for tea can help to relieve symptoms of indigestion and increase an individual's intake of Vitamin A. Some studies have even shown that people who are recovering from surgery heal faster when there are plants present in their hospital rooms.

To take advantage of these potential health benefits, it's important to choose the correct plants for your environment and lifestyle. "Plants need three things to live: light, air and nutrients," explains Brenda Williams of Pesche's Greenhouse. "Many people believe that water is the most important element, but I think it is light."

Because of this, plants should not be placed in a dark or windowless

space. Light is so important that, Williams says, "a plant without light will show detrimental growth in just a few days." Additionally, some plants require frequent watering, making them more high-maintenance than other plants, and therefore are not well-suited for people who travel frequently or lead busy lives. And of course, before selecting a plant for a space with children or animals, it is important to ensure that the plant is not harmful to them if touched or ingested.

So what are a few plants that can help brighten up any indoor space and ease the long thaw until it's time to head back outside?

- **Zanzibar Gem (ZZ Plant).** These plants are known to survive droughts and as a result, they do not require watering every day. These plants thrive when placed in bright rooms with indirect light, so make sure to occasionally move them around the house for optimal health.
- **Aloe vera plant.** This medicinal plant needs to be in a bright and sunny space. Because it is a desert plant, Aloe vera should not be kept in moist soil. They should only be watered when their soil has completely dried out, about once every two weeks or so. When removing a leaf for its gel, snip the leaf using scissors as close to the stem as possible.
- **Fresh herbs.** Local garden designer Katie Oglesby recommends growing your own fresh herbs instead of processed spices since they are "much healthier and more flavorful." Make sure to remove the leaves from their stem before adding the herbs to a recipe. Fresh herb plants like rosemary, thyme, mint, basil, parsley, oregano or sage grow well indoors. These plants need to be watered a few times a week, and most need roughly 4-8 hours of sunlight a day.



• **Lavender.** This plant is not only beautiful to look at, but it also offers a multitude of health benefits. The scent of lavender has been known to improve sleep and reduce stress levels. Initially, lavender needs to be watered twice a week, but after about a year, the plant can be watered more infrequently. In order to thrive, this plant needs full sunlight.

• **Peace Lily.** These plants can be placed in low light and low humidity areas, and they do not need to be watered every day. After studying the air effects of several indoor houseplants, NASA declared this one of the best plants for air purification. (Note that direct sunlight will burn the leaves of a Peace Lily, so finding the right spot in the house is important.)



• **Ferns.** These are very low-maintenance plants that thrive in low-light conditions, which makes them a perfect plant for those long stretches of Midwestern winter that feel devoid of any sunlight. However, ferns do require a certain humidity level to thrive, so pay attention to your indoor humidity levels.

• **Orchids.** For those looking to add some flowers to their indoor space, consider an orchid. Orchids are stunning flowers that require full sun but only need to be watered once a week. (Ideally, a daily mist of water will help to keep them from drying out.) However, orchids are notoriously fragile and prone to root rot, and as a result they require



special soil, so make sure to do your research if you're interested in these stunners.

• **Monstera Deliciosa, aka the "Swiss Cheese Plant."** These aesthetically pleasing plants have large leaves that resemble Swiss cheese. They only require a good watering every one to two weeks. Like Peace Lilies, Monsteras should not be placed in direct sunlight because their leaves will burn and dry out.

• **Succulents.** Some varieties of succulents, such as snake plants, Echeveria and ox tongue plants, can thrive in low-light environments. Succulents can also be combined with small figurines, rocks and other elements in a glass vessel to build a terrarium, which can help add a little magic to any space. 🌿

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He's Got the Look

The Mr. Lake Geneva Pageant provides ironic amusement while raising funds for local charities

BY NAT WEXLER



There are a number of reasons to look forward to springtime in Lake Geneva: long walks on the lakefront trail, a return to dining outside and, for the past few years, the Mr. Lake Geneva Pageant. A new, annual tradition, the Mr. Lake Geneva Pageant is a tongue-in-cheek “beauty” pageant that subverts the traditional feminine competition and transforms it into a masculine one instead. The fun spring event raises funds for local charities and is sponsored by Lakes Area Lifeway, a nonprofit that aims to “provide opportunities that initiate self-development, spiritual growth and community enrichment.”

Lakes Area Lifeway CEO and founder Kelly Gerlitz came up with the idea for the pageant a few years ago as a fun way to raise awareness and funds for meaningful causes in the Geneva Lake area. Gerlitz says the idea was initially met with some skepticism, but the event has proved to be a smashing success. In its first

year in 2022, the pageant raised approximately \$43,000 for local nonprofits, and the second year it raised over \$71,000.

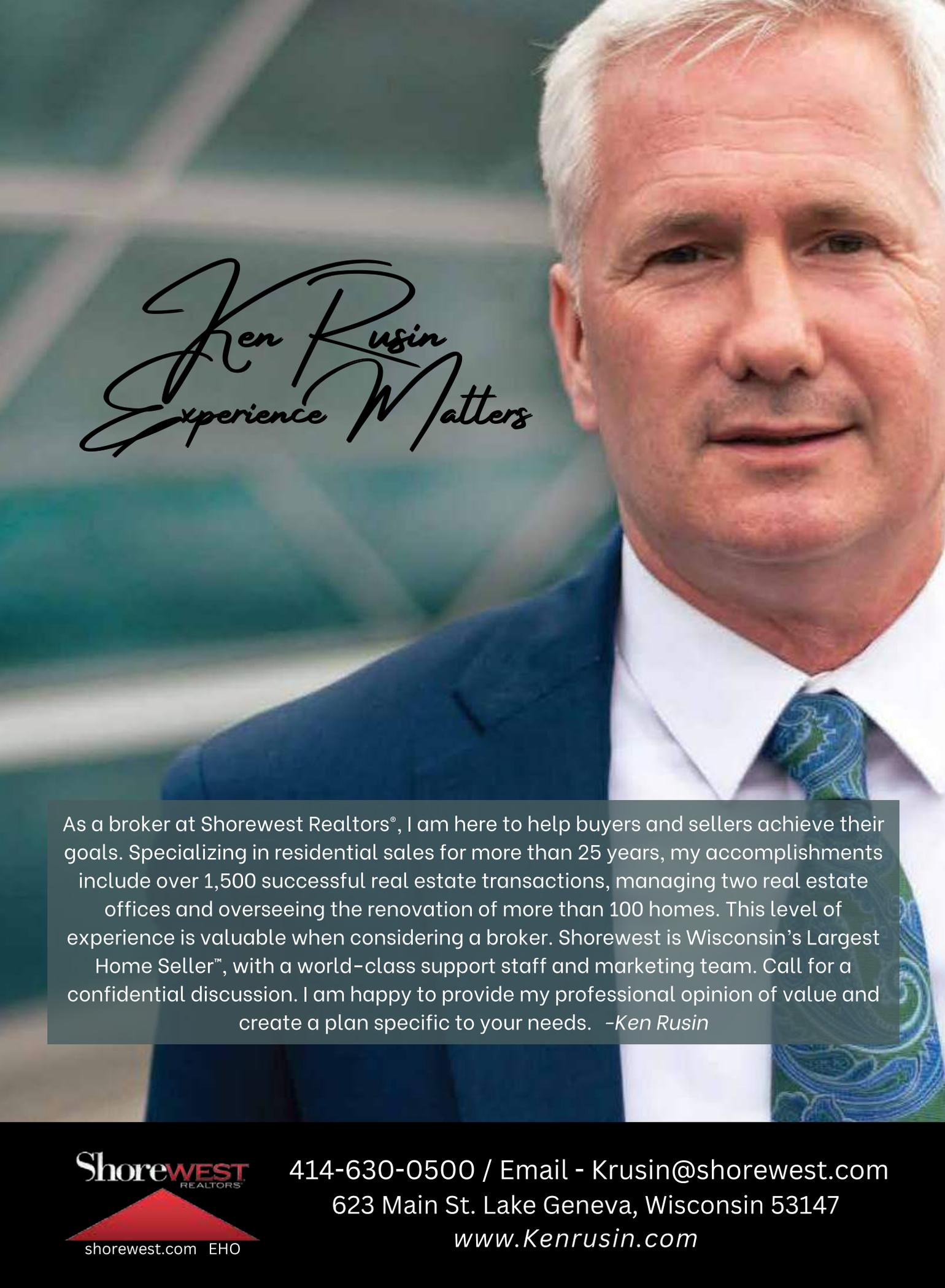
Each year, Lakes Area Lifeway board members and other members of the community nominate local men to participate in the pageant. Once the

group is chosen, preparations for the event begin in earnest. Weeks before taking the stage, the group of approximately 10 contestants starts rehearsing their act, forming friendships with their fellow competitors and fundraising for their chosen causes. Past fundraising beneficiary organizations have



In past years, the event has raised more than \$70,000 for local nonprofits.

COURTESY OF LAKES AREA LIFEWAY

A close-up portrait of Ken Rusin, a middle-aged man with short, light-colored hair, wearing a dark blue suit jacket, a white dress shirt, and a blue and green patterned tie. He is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with greenery and a building.

Ken Rusin
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included Habitat for Humanity, Walworth County Special Olympics and Open Arms Free Clinic.

On the night of the pageant itself, the participants compete in four rounds of activities in front of a packed auditorium. For the first round of the pageant, the contestants perform a group dance together. Next up, they change into their beachwear (yes, really!), followed by the talent portion of the night. Finally, each man puts on his finest evening wear to answer interview questions. While the evening's program is an ironic nod to classic beauty pageants, the scoring for the Mr. Lake Geneva pageant adds another element to the definition of success: 50 percent of a contestant's final score comes from their pre-pageant fundraising efforts, while 50 percent comes from their performance on the night of the pageant.

In a few years, Gerlitz says she would



love to host an all-star version of the pageant where past winners and contestants come back for a second chance at the crown or to become a two-time winner.

The Mr. Lake Geneva Pageant is not the only event that Lakes Area Lifeway hosts. The organization also hosts seasonal crafting workshops, educational gatherings for middle

and high school students and various service projects, among others.

This year's pageant will take place on Saturday, June 1. Tickets are \$25 and can be purchased on Lakes Area Lifeway's website. For more information about the pageant, including this year's competitors and the causes they are supporting, visit lakesarealifeway.org.

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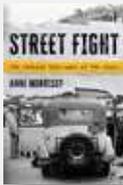
Take your spring break up a notch with these book with local ties, recommended by Lake Geneva Public Library Community Engagement Librarian Ellen Ward-Packard.

PUBLIC ANCHOVY #1 BY MINDY QUIGLEY



The third cozy mystery set in Quigley's fictionalized version of Lake Geneva finds pizzeria owner Delilah O'Leary dealing with two great trials: inventing a vegan, tomato-free, gluten-free pizza, and keeping a resort-town restaurant profitable in the winter. Readers will enjoy references to a familiar-sounding library, though we can confirm that no LGPL fundraiser has ever ended in murder.

STREET FIGHT: THE CHICAGO TAXI WARS OF THE 1920S BY ANNE MORRISSY



"Thrilling" is not the word that usually comes to mind when discussing Chicago transit options, but this history of the Taxi Wars of the 1920s (by *At The Lake's* editorial director Anne Morrissy!) is just that. Covering labor disputes, early automobile history and gang involvement in the taxi industry, Morrissy's book will appeal to urban infrastructure enthusiasts and anyone with Chicago connections.

SURVIVAL FOOD: NORTH WOODS STORIES BY A MENOMINEE COOK BY THOMAS PECORE WESO



This food-focused memoir chronicles the author's early years on the Menominee Indian Reservation in the 1980s and 1990s. Writing with equal affection for both squirrel stew and the shelf-stable commodity foods distributed by the government, Weso shares an intimate portrait of Native American eating and drinking in Wisconsin.



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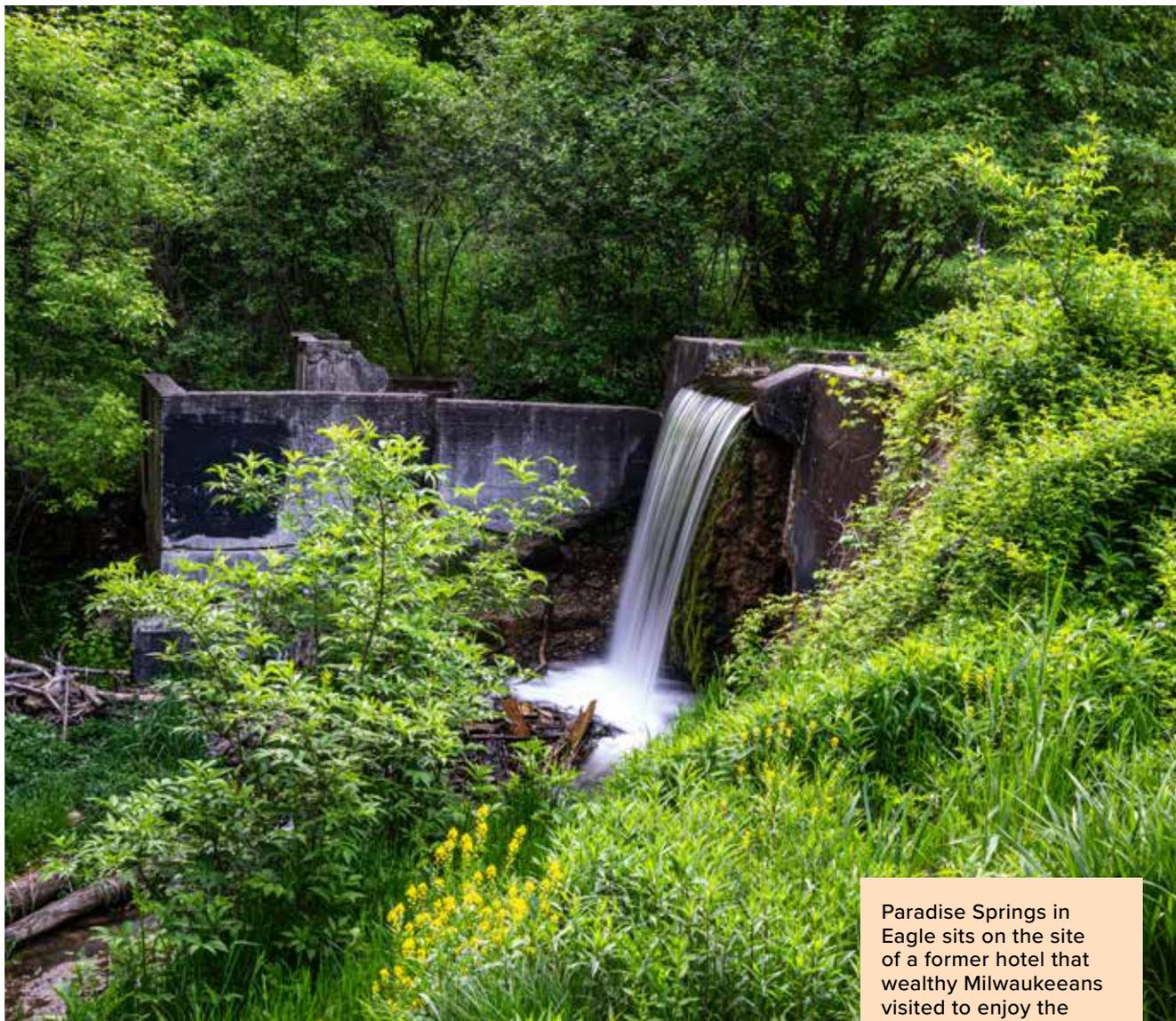
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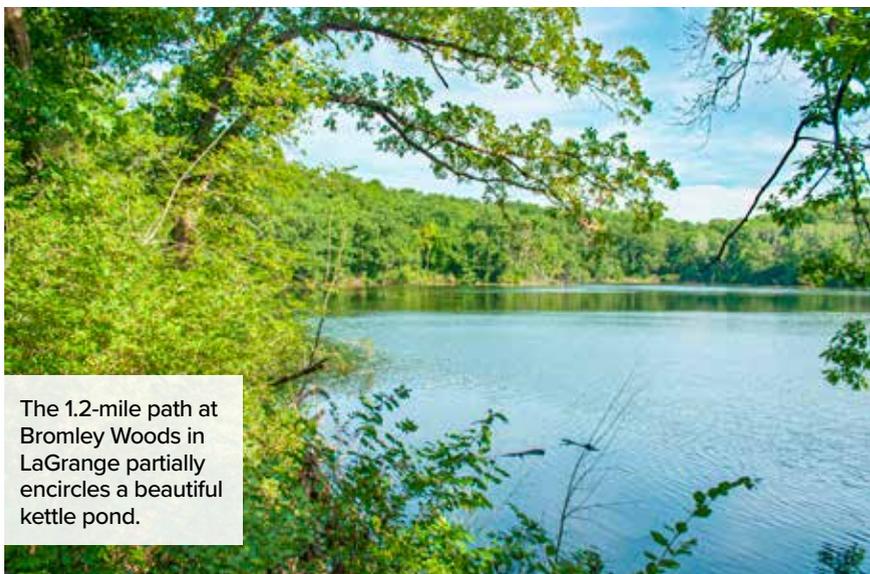
Paradise Springs in Eagle sits on the site of a former hotel that wealthy Milwaukeeans visited to enjoy the natural spring water.

Off the Beaten Path

How a large group of nature-loving strangers have ended up hiking together as friends

BY JESSICA ELSE

Last year, Delavan's Amy Hankins found herself at a crossroads in life. She had recently lost one of her best friends to cancer, and was deep in grief. Knowing she needed to do something to start living again after that devastating loss, Hankins looked to an activity in which she'd always found peace: hiking. But Hankins didn't want to hike alone, so she brainstormed ideas for ways she could find a connection with one or two women who also loved hiking outside.



The 1.2-mile path at Bromley Woods in LaGrange partially encircles a beautiful kettle pond.

With that in mind, Hankins ultimately founded a Facebook group called Women’s Hiking Group for Southeastern Wisconsin, hoping to find a few local women online that she could hike with. From that small act, she created a platform where more than 1,000 women have come together, forming a unique community that translates to real-life friendships, outdoor adventures and true camaraderie.

Hankins says response to the group was immediate. “The goal of the group is to have a safe place where women can meet other like-minded women and meet up and go on hikes,” Hankins says. “I encourage our members to post pictures of their adventures and let the group know about favorite places to hike or do other outdoor activities.”

Hankins manages the group with the help of Victoria Vick and Laura Elicker. The team is also launching a book club for the group and just held their first nature-themed amateur photography contest. Members use the forum to share locations of hiking trails, schedule meet-ups and post photos. They swap safety tips, drop gear reviews and chat about other outdoor activities and shared interests. “Posting and asking if anyone wants to go on an impromptu hike is encouraged,” Hankins says.

Hankins moved to Delavan from Chicago in 2006, but she was originally from Missoula, Montana, and has been a hiker all her life. Her first “solo hike” involved toddling away from her parents on a trail in Glacier National Park when she was just two years old, according to her mother.

Hankins said the group has brought her many new friends and has also introduced her to new hiking trails. Hiking with others in the group also provides an extra layer of safety, making it easier to enjoy the outdoors and stay on the trail longer.

Now numbering more than 1,200 members, the group has been a source of newfound friendships for many people. Members use the group to find connection and inspiration. “It’s really nice to be able to meet other people who enjoy hiking and being out in nature like I do,” group member Stacy Solberg Uebersohn says. “I don’t have any other women in my ‘normal’ life that share this passion.”

While members of the group enjoy hikes throughout southeastern Wisconsin, there are a handful of locations near Lake Geneva that they say are perfect for hikers of varying abilities.

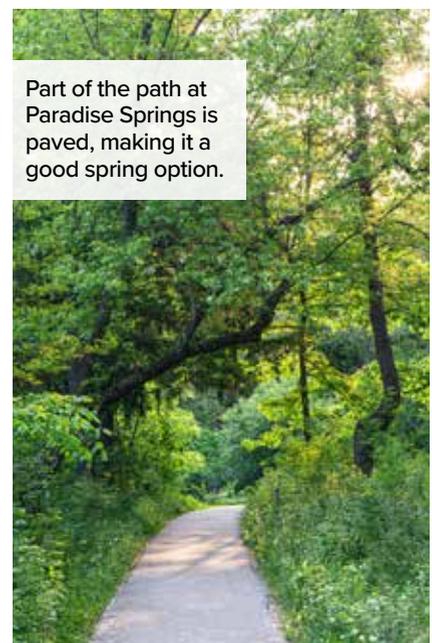
Paradise Springs is an easy, 7/10-mile, partially paved trail near the

town of Eagle that circles through deciduous forest and takes hikers to the ruins of a spring house, from which crystal-clear water flows into a large pond.

In the 1920s, the natural springs served as the centerpiece of a wellness resort called Paradise Springs Resort Hotel, a getaway for wealthy Milwaukee residents, that included a golf course, wading pool and shuffleboard and tennis courts. Water from the springs was bottled and sold under various names as late as the 1960s. More than 30,000 gallons of water flow from this spring each hour — about 500 gallons every minute.

In Williams Bay, **Kishwaukee Nature Conservancy** sits on 231 acres, with nearly four miles of hiking trails that meander through wetlands, oak forests, meadows and prairie. Sturdy wooden boardwalk spans several portions of the trail, providing a good surface for easy walking even during muddy weather. The land was purchased and set aside as a nature conservancy in 1990.

Bromley Woods in LaGrange contains a 1.2-mile, moderate walking path that loops around a kettle pond in a forest of mature oak trees. The 40-acre parcel of land is



Part of the path at Paradise Springs is paved, making it a good spring option.

protected by the Geneva Lake Conservancy and is the site of the Bromley family homestead, established in 1844 when the family emigrated from England. Known for warblers in the spring, the trail is popular for birding, hiking, biking and running.

White River County Park in Lake Geneva is a 200-acre county park with two acres of frontage along the White River, including four hiking trails of moderate difficulty level that lead through forests and prairie terrain, past the river and ponds.

For an easy hike, the group recommends **Four Seasons Nature Preserve** in Lake Geneva, which includes an 8/10-mile loop trail that circles through hardwood trees, around a pond and through open prairie with a viewing tower. The trail, perfect for more leisurely strolls or dog walking, offers views of scattered wildflowers blooming in the spring.

As the group continues to grow, Hankins says she is happy to see a safe and respectful community of women supporting each other, both online and in real life. “We have a wide range of hikers, from brand-new to women who have hiked hundreds and hundreds of miles,” Hankins explains. “I’ve been blown away by the continued kindness and respect the members show each other.” 🐾

GABRIELLE GASSER



The boardwalk at Kishwaukee Nature Conservancy provides relief from muddy trails and encourages wildlife watching.



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Powerhouse Pedaling

Competitive mountain biking explodes in popularity for kids in grades 6-12

BY JESSICA ELSE

From mountain bikes to zip lines, athletes in the Geneva Lakes Composite Youth Mountain Biking Team (GLC) spend their summers flying through the trees and sleeping under the stars. They learn mountain biking skills, but more than that, they learn how to build community. They also get a chance to make some incredible s'mores.

During the summer months, the competitive mountain biking team, which includes members from throughout the Geneva Lake area, gathers twice a week to practice. Team members ride trails at Grand Geneva Resort & Spa and Lake Geneva Ziplines and Adventures to prepare for race weekends, which take place from the end of August through October.

Race weekends are "like nothing any other team sport offers," according to GLC founder Andrea Pether, who started the team in 2021 with the help of local road and mountain biking club Treadhead Cycling and other local sponsors. The two-day events kick off with pre-race



rides of the courses, located in places like Mt. Telemark Village in Cable, Trek Trails in Waterloo and Minooka Park in Waukesha. Families camp together overnight, sharing stories, games and food over campfires before racing day on Sunday.

“Athletes, coaches and parents from across the state come together with a common thread of the love for the outdoors, being active and having fun,” Pether said. “Phones get put away and these athletes have a chance to ride, laugh, play campfire games and have fun together in an unbiased atmosphere.”

Since its founding, the GLC has grown from three competing athletes in 2021 to 19 on the roster in 2023, with 12 coaches serving the team. There are plenty of opportunities for new members, and all student athletes in grades 6-12 are welcome to join. Part of the National Interscholastic Cycling League (NICA), the Geneva Lakes Composite team finished 17th overall out of 59 teams in Division II in the 2023 season. They participated in five events throughout Wisconsin.

When they aren’t racing or practicing, team members ride to the beach to go swimming and eat pizza, or go ziplining, rock climbing and gather for events like their annual “sandwich social.” The season wraps up in the fall with a banquet to celebrate the athletes and the community.

Bikes and scholarships are available for athletes who need equipment to get started with the team and Pether said they are always looking for volunteers. “As a parent, coach and team director it is an incredible organization to be part of,” Pether said. “Everyone rides and everyone participates. Racing is optional, but it’s a ton of fun.” 🚴

OPPOSITE PAGE: ALL PHOTOS COURTESY ANDREA PETHER AND NICA WISCONSIN

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events at the lake



GARYCON XVI **MARCH 21-24**

Players and enthusiasts of the iconic game Dungeons & Dragons gather to honor the memory of game creator and Lake Geneva native Gary Gygax at this gaming convention. Grand Geneva Resort & Spa, 7036 Grand Geneva Way, Lake Geneva. For tickets or more info, visit garycon.com.

THE GREAT BALLOON ADVENTURE

APRIL 11-21

Led by Lake Geneva's Sara Meyer, balloon artists from around the world will create a balloon installation around the theme "Follow the Yellow Brick Road." Gage Marine Boat Barn, 1 Liechty Dr., Williams Bay. For tickets and more info, visit santacauses.org/balloonaventure.



SPRING FOOD TRUCK FESTIVAL

MAY 18

Featuring 20+ food trucks, plus games and live music. Veterans Park, Elkhorn; (262) 723-5788 or elkhornchamber.com.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: HOLLY LEITNER, COURTESY OF ELKHORN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, ANNE MORRIS

MARCH 1:

“ON YOUR FEET: THE STORY OF EMILIO & GLORIA ESTEFAN”

The original Broadway musical featuring the music of Emilio and Gloria Estefan. 7:30 p.m., Irving L. Young Auditorium, 930 W. Main St., Whitewater. Visit www.edu/youngauditorium for tickets.

MARCH 9-10

DELANAN TRAIN SHOW

Free admission for a family-friendly day with model trains, interactive exhibits and tasty food! Saturday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.; Sunday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Delavan American Legion Post and City Hall, 111 S. Second St., Delavan; delavantrainshow.com.

MARCH 10

SOUTHEAST WISCONSIN BRIDAL SHOWCASE

Over 40 local wedding vendors displaying their goods and services. Free admission. 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., The Ridge Hotel, W4240 Hwy 50, Lake Geneva; Visit eventbrite.com/e/geneva-lake-bridal-

showcase-2024-tickets-791599063107 for complimentary tickets.

MARCH 21

BLACK POINT ESTATE'S SPEAKER SERIES

The truth behind the novel “Black Point.” 6 p.m., Big Foot High School, 401 Devils Lane, Walworth. Tickets are \$10 and advanced registration is required. Visit bigfootfinearts.org.

MARCH 21

RHYTHM OF THE DANCE

25th anniversary tour of the National Dance Company of Ireland, featuring star vocalists and world-champion dancers. 7:30 p.m., Irving L. Young Auditorium, 930 W. Main St., Whitewater. Visit www.edu/youngauditorium for tickets.

MARCH 23-24, 29-30

EAST TROY ELECTRIC RAILROAD BUNNY TRAIN

Ride aboard a historic train to the Elegant Farmer. During the ride, there will be

coloring activities and a scavenger hunt out your window, and on the return trip, get your picture taken with the Easter Bunny. Trains depart at 9 a.m., 10:30 a.m., noon, 1:30 p.m. and 3 p.m. Advance reservations required. East Troy Depot, 2002 Church Street, East Troy; For tickets, call 262-642-3263 or visit easttroyrr.org.

MARCH 30

EASTER BRUNCH

Enjoy an elegant Easter buffet brunch at a newly renovated restaurant on Delavan Lake. 9:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. 1878 on the Lake, Lake Lawn Resort, 2400 E. Geneva St., Delavan. Call (262) 728-7950 for reservations.

MARCH 30

EASTER EGG HUNT

Rain, snow or shine. Celebrate spring with a traditional egg hunt. Bring your own basket. Starts promptly at 10 a.m. Duck Pond, Fontana. (262) 275-2117 or bigfootrecreation.org.

Geneva Lakes Burger Throwdown

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MARCH 30

EGG HUNT AND EASTER BUNNY VISIT

Community-wide Easter egg hunt sponsored by the Delavan Chamber of Commerce. Arrive at 9:45 a.m., Phoenix Park, Delavan; (262) 728-5095 or delavanwi.org.

MARCH 30

“HYPNOTIZED: A FLEETWOOD MAC TRIBUTE”

A concert that pays tribute to Fleetwood Mac, one of the most successful rock and roll bands of all time. Tickets are \$30. Doors open at 7 p.m., show starts at 8 p.m. Lake Lawn Resort, 2400 E. Geneva St., Delavan. (262) 728-7950 or lakelawnresort.com.

APRIL 5-14

“CHITTY CHITTY BANG BANG”

The family-friendly, 1960s-era movie comes to the stage, performed by the Lakeland Players. Fridays and Saturdays at 7:30 p.m., Sundays at 3 p.m. Sprague Theater, Elkhorn. For tickets, call (262) 441-3924 or visit Lakeland-players.org.

APRIL 7

SPRING WINE WALK

Throughout downtown Lake Geneva. Visit visitlakegeneva.com for more info.

APRIL 12

B2WINS DUO PERFORMANCE

Uplifting, high-energy live show that is equal parts rock concert, dance party, jam session and vacation for the soul. 7 p.m. Big Foot High School, 401 Devils Lane, Walworth. Tickets available at bigfootfinearts.org.

APRIL 19-21

WEE WHISKEY FEST

This three-day event opens with a grand tasting at The Ridge Hotel on Friday night, followed by a whiskey-pairing dinner and party on Saturday and additional whiskey tasting at bars throughout downtown Lake Geneva on Sunday. Ticket packages range from \$125-\$945. Visit weewhiskeyfest.com.

APRIL 20

MODERN DAY ROMEOS

Fun and high-energy show from a group that has shared the stage with several big-

name bands. Tickets are \$30. Doors open at 7 p.m., show starts at 8 p.m. Lake Lawn Resort, 2400 E. Geneva St., Delavan. (262) 728-7950 or lakelawnresort.com.

APRIL 20-28

LAKE GENEVA RESTAURANT WEEK

A variety of local restaurants feature special menus and entertainment. Throughout Lake Geneva; visitlakegeneva.com for more info.

APRIL 26-28

WOMEN’S WEEKEND LAKE GENEVA

Sponsored by the Geneva Lake Women’s Association. A three-day retreat featuring workshops, wellness events and social networking opportunities, including a special 60th anniversary kickoff party at the Riviera. Events are ticketed individually. For the full schedule of events or to purchase tickets, visit lakegenevawomensweekend.com.

MAY 5

BURGER THROWDOWN

Custom burger samples created by area chefs. Proceeds benefit the Badger High School Culinary ProStart Program. VIP Admission starts at 11:30 a.m., general admission 12:30-3 p.m. Advanced tickets required. The Ridge Hotel, W4240 Hwy 50, Lake Geneva. Visit vancoevents.com/us/CFFC for tickets.

MAY 8

ANNUAL GOLF OUTING

Welcoming golfers of all skill levels to play in an 18-hole scramble. Includes lunch and 18 holes of golf, followed by a steak cookout. Evergreen Golf Club, N6246 US Hwy 12, Elkhorn; (262) 723-5788 or elkhornchamber.com.

MAY 17-19

WISCONSIN CHEESE FEST

Inaugural celebration of all things cheese. Friday 4-9 p.m., Saturday 11 a.m. to 9 p.m., Sunday 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Lake Geneva House of Music, N3241 County Road H, Lake Geneva. Visit cheesefestwi.com.

MAY 18

LAKE GENEVA SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Thrilling musical journey of movie scores. 7 p.m. Big Foot High School, 401 Devils

Lane, Walworth. Tickets available at bigfootfinearts.org.

MAY 19

ELKHORN ANTIQUE FLEA MARKET

Over 500 dealers both inside and outside. Free parking, \$5 admission. Opens at 7 a.m., Walworth County Fairgrounds, 411 E. Court St., Elkhorn; walworthcountyfair.com.

MAY 27

MEMORIAL DAY PARADE

Followed by a special service in Veterans Park. 10:30 a.m. Downtown Elkhorn; (262) 723-5788 or elkhornchamber.com.

MAY 27

MEMORIAL DAY PARADE

Williams Bay.

JUNE 1

MR. LAKE GENEVA PAGEANT

Watch local men compete to be crowned “Mr. Lake Geneva” while raising funds for local charities. Badger High School, 220 E. South Street, Lake Geneva. For tickets, visit facebook.com/lakesarealifeway.

While we do our best to ensure a comprehensive, accurate listing of events, we recommend that you contact each event host ahead of time. If you’d like to include an event in our upcoming calendar, please email anne@ntmediagroup.com or submit it via our website: atthelakemagazine.com/submit-an-event. Submission deadline for the summer issue is Apr. 15. 

Scan this QR code with your phone’s camera app to view more spring events in the Geneva Lake area.



SAVE *The* DATE

APRIL 26-28, 2024



Diamonds
are a Girl's
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Rise and Dine

Our guide to the Geneva Lake area's top brunch spots

BY BRIAN THALHAMMER
PHOTOS BY HOLLY LEITNER

Springtime in the Geneva Lake area ushers in a wave of culinary delights served as part of that quintessential mid-morning feast: the beloved brunch. From classics like breakfast pastries and cooked-to-order omelets to full carving stations and an array of delectable seafood dishes, the area's spectacular brunch options offer a little bit of everything. (Our definition of brunch: a meal that includes both breakfast food and heavier dishes, as well as the option for alcohol,



often consumed in the form of a mimosa or Bloody Mary cocktail.)

With spring comes the celebration of events such as Mother’s Day, Easter and graduations, all of which lend themselves to a special brunch experience. Picture this: sitting lakeside or on a pretty patio, a gentle breeze carrying the fragrant aroma of freshly brewed coffee and tantalizing dishes while the sun paints the beautiful scenery beyond in shimmering hues. All of this and more is possible locally, so we decided to embark on a journey to savor the best brunch options in the Geneva Lake area.

For a truly decadent experience, try the classic Sunday brunch at **Geneva ChopHouse** at Lake Geneva’s Grand Geneva Resort & Spa, a AAA four-diamond resort with dining options to match. The ChopHouse’s all-you-can-eat brunch service is incredible, offering everything from smoked salmon on mini bagels to an avocado toast station, from fresh oysters to a tantalizing spread of pastries, each dish boasting an artful presentation and delicious taste.

But the crown jewel of this experience? The chef-carved prime rib and the mouthwatering pork belly Benedict, each bite an ode to culinary excellence. Then there’s the free-flowing champagne and a bottomless mimosa bar. This brunch is perfect

for catching up with friends or family over one of the most impressive menus Lake Geneva has to offer, with impeccable service and a symphony of flavors.

For a fantastic brunch with picturesque views, head to **The Getaway on Lake Como**. This one-of-a-kind space was once a speakeasy during Prohibition, adding to the historic ambiance of this brunch experience. Today, the full-service restaurant boasts a popular breakfast menu as well as a full bar, welcoming guests to savor their favorite libations while basking in the cozy atmosphere.

The Getaway breakfast menu is available Thursdays through Sundays and includes enticing options like the homemade prime rib pot pie

(Thursdays only). Don’t miss The Getaway’s “Homemade Basket of Biscuits” or “The Bootlegger Stuffed Breakfast Biscuit,” which includes a delicious homemade biscuit stuffed with scrambled eggs, sausage gravy and cheddar cheese, topped with extra sausage gravy, for a warm and inviting meal. The Crab Benedict is a “big fan favorite,” according to The Getaway’s friendly staff. This dish is made with two toasted English muffins topped with poached eggs, lump crab meat, avocado, Hollandaise sauce and Old Bay seasoning, a perfect brunch item for those who enjoy lakeside views and seafood eats. And for those looking for an alternative to mimosas, The Getaway’s “Whiskey Thursdays” highlights a fine assortment of whiskey, rye and bourbon options.

If you’re looking for a local food-



focused, chef-created brunch experience, try **Fire2Fork** in Delavan. This isn't just a restaurant; it's a celebration of local produce. Chef John Schnupp and his sons, Jesse and Jakob, bring classic expertise from the Culinary Institute of America. This farm-to-table establishment boasts a rustic, open-kitchen concept, where every seat offers a view of the culinary creations in real-time.

Their highly-coveted brunch is a pop-up event, taking place on select Sundays from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. The frequently changing menu showcases their commitment to locally sourced ingredients. Fire2Fork is dedicated to the craft, with a mission that defines the team's motivations. "Every ingredient and product has been carefully chosen," their website proudly boasts. "Every recipe is prepared with enthusiasm for our craft. We know where our food comes from, and we think it's important that you do, too."

Featured brunch items currently include chilled East Coast oysters and crab cakes, followed by delectable dishes such as locally revered "Millie's caramelized apple German pancakes" (a nod to Fire2Fork's location in the former Millie's Restaurants and Shopping Village space), fried chicken and waffles and their mouth-watering "Breakfast Pizza," designed with the best morning ingredients: tomato, spinach, cheddar and fried egg. Those with a sweet tooth can also find pleasure in cobbler, crème brûlée and cannoli, and the best part of this brunch menu is that all of the alcoholic beverages — mimosas, Bloody Marys and Spotted Cow — are included in the price!

For those who prefer live entertainment as part of their brunch experience, head to the Sunday Harborside Champagne Brunch at **240 West at the Abbey Resort**. The Abbey's main dining room offers a buffet teeming with breakfast

favorites and savory seafood in a classic resort fine dining experience, plus the added bonus of live music.

240 West suggests trying their "Meaty Sunday Starter," a "carnivore omelet" comprised of chicken sausage, bacon, brisket, Wisconsin cheddar, caramelized onion and rustic potatoes for those seeking extra protein. There's also a variety

of treats such as savory crêpes, frittatas and a personal favorite — lemon blueberry cornmeal pancakes! The star of the menu, however, is the 240 West Signature Bloody Mary, a drink that reimagines the classic with Kurvball whiskey (from nearby Pewaukee, Wisconsin) and Bloody Mary mix, rimmed with a BBQ spice rub — it is a must-try for cocktail aficionados.

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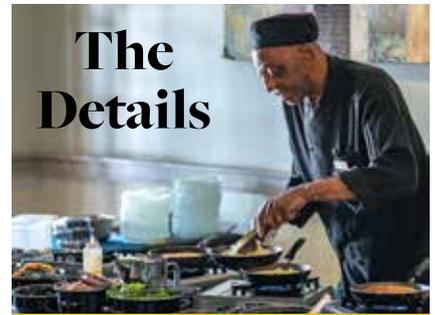
History buff brunch diners can transport themselves to a bygone era at **The Baker House** in Lake Geneva, located in a converted Victorian mansion built in 1889 and once hailed by USA Today as the area's Most Beautiful Restaurant. Here, Sunday brunch is a harmonious blend of nostalgia and gastronomy. Reserve a seat to immerse yourself in the charm of an era long past while appreciating the carefully curated menu offerings, designed to elevate your morning ritual.

With classical guitar tunes by Garry Allen often setting the tone on Sundays, diners can indulge in a bottomless mimosa brunch experience where culinary delights await at two buffet lines. The "cold line" offers refreshing fruit salads and delectable desserts, while the "hot line" boasts a tempting array of options such as eggs, bacon, sausage, succulent salmon and cod.

Adventurous eaters can relish the bold flavors of their popular kielbasa hash which keeps diners coming back time and again.

What truly sets these brunch spots apart from a prosaic breakfast isn't just their drinks, menus or settings; it's the intangible personality of springtime socializing they exude. It's the laughter that mingles with the clinking of glasses, the conviviality shared among strangers-turned-friends and the warmth that emanates from passionate chefs and attentive servers. It's the perfect time of year to plan an elevated brunch and seize the opportunity to make new memories with close friends and family over culinary delights.

Editor's note: Special thanks to 240 West at The Abbey Resort and The Getaway on Lake Como for hosting the photo shoots for this piece. 



For full details on the brunches mentioned in this article, including the most up-to-date hours and pricing, scan the QR code or visit: atthelakemagazine.com/rise-dine-area-brunches



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SPICED RIGHT

Create your own DIY At-Home Bloody Mary Bar

BY BRIAN THALHAMMER | PHOTOS BY HOLLY LEITNER

In 1921, a young bartender named Fernand “Pete” Petiot was working at a bar in Paris incongruously named Harry’s New York Bar, when he had a moment of inspiration. Paris in the 1920s was a melting pot of people seeking refuge in the City of Light, and Petiot used this mingling of cultures to combine a Russian staple — vodka — with a new canned product imported by American expats called a tomato juice cocktail. He combined the two with a little lemon juice and a handful of spices and voilà! The Bloody Mary cocktail was born.

Today, the classic Bloody Mary has evolved into a playground of creativity, with bars and eateries constantly reinventing this iconic brunch cocktail. From extravagant garnishes to fiery infusions and unconventional twists, the possibilities are endless. Bartenders are now infusing Bloody Marys with bold flavors, from jalapeño-infused vodka to bacon-infused spirits or even daring elements like ghost peppers. The glass rims are no longer just seasoned with salt; they boast crushed potato chips, bacon bits and Old Bay seasoning. Forget the traditional

Add Some Extra Flavor

Looking for a few more items to add to your DIY Bloody Mary bar? Here are some suggestions with local ties.



- 1 Gourmet Red Hot Sauce**, Hellfire Hot Sauce, hellfirehotsauce.com.
- 2 Cheese & Sausage Sampler**, Hill Valley Dairy, Lake Geneva.
- 3 Basil & Garlic Pickled Mushrooms**, River Valley Ranch & Kitchens, Burlington.
- 4 Tito's Vodka** (a local favorite), Walworth Cellars, Walworth.
- 5 Bloody Mary Seasoning**, Lake Geneva Spice Company, Lake Geneva.



tomato base — some variations feature carrot, beet or Clamato juice for added depth and a harmonious blend of flavors.

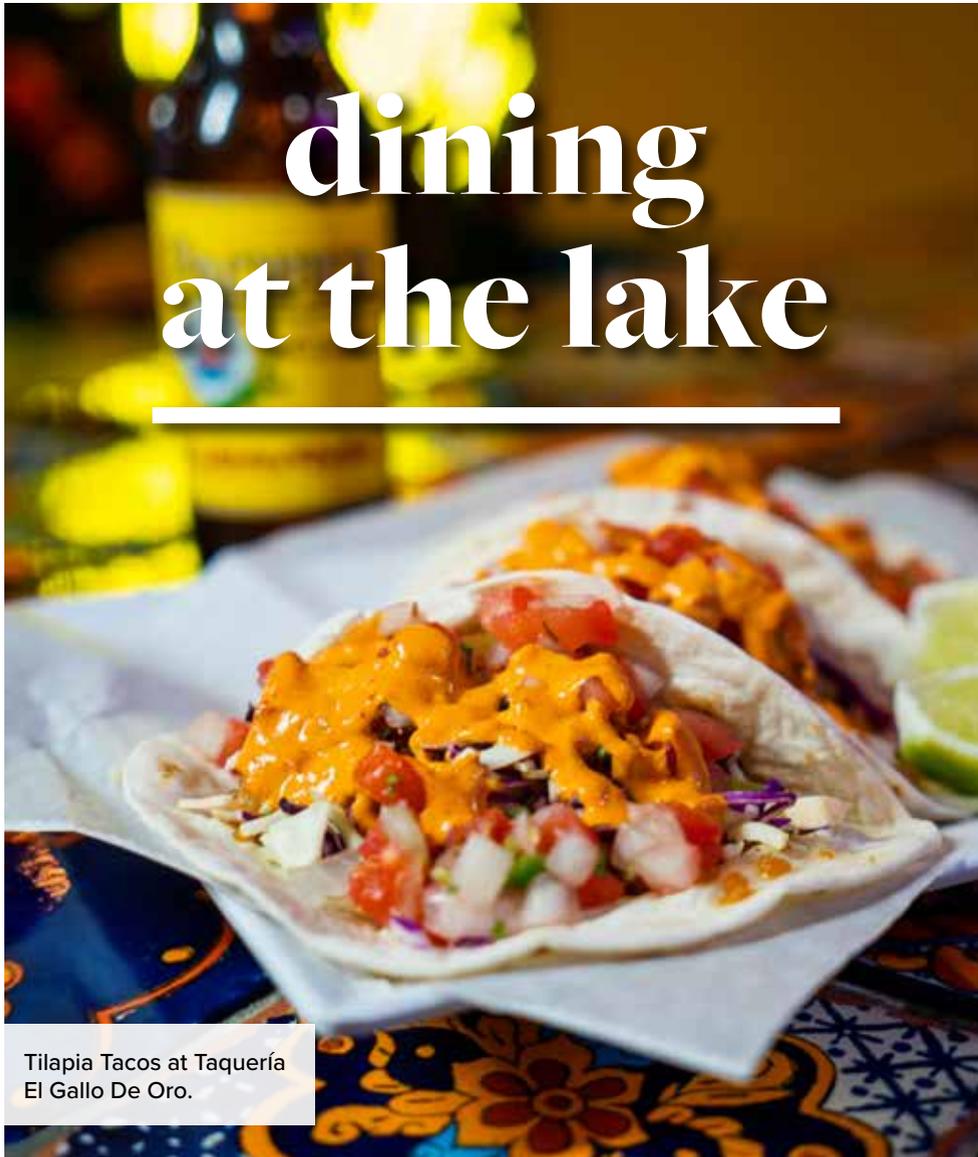
Why limit the Bloody Mary experience to bar and restaurant outings? Create a DIY Bloody Mary bar at home and let the creativity flow! Start with a base of quality vodka and diverse mixers, then embrace the unconventional with innovative garnishes such as crispy bacon strips, pickled vegetables like asparagus spears, green beans or spicy pickled okra for that extra kick. If you're feeling especially inventive, mini cheeseburgers perched atop the glass are just as delicious as they are aesthetically pleasing!

Spice it up by incorporating unique seasonings to enhance

the flavor profile. Consider infusing the vodka with garlic, jalapeño or herbs for a personalized touch. Explore exotic spice blends like smoked paprika, celery salt or even a pinch of curry powder to create a bold, zesty concoction. Gourmet mixes featuring flavors like horseradish, chipotle or white tomato juice add a distinct twist. For the adventurous, experiment with sauces ranging from mild to fiery, adjusting the heat to your own preference.

Encourage guests to experiment, mix and match ingredients to craft their ultimate creation. With nearly limitless ingredients and combinations, your at-home bar will be the talk of the town, offering a personalized twist to this beloved cocktail. 🍷

dining at the lake



Tilapia Tacos at Taquería El Gallo De Oro.

Information is subject to change. Please contact individual restaurants for hours of operation. Inclusion in this directory should not be considered an endorsement by *At The Lake*. Visit atthelakemagazine.com to view the full directory online.

Scan this QR code with your phone's camera app to see our full list of Geneva Lake-area dining options.



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food & drink *dining guide*

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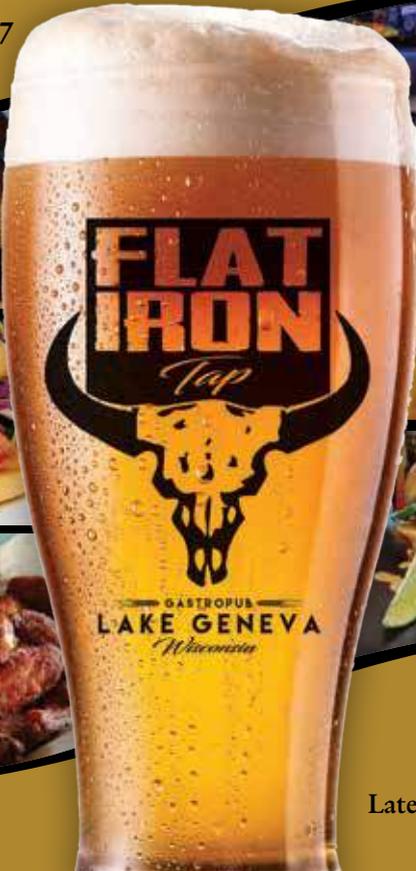
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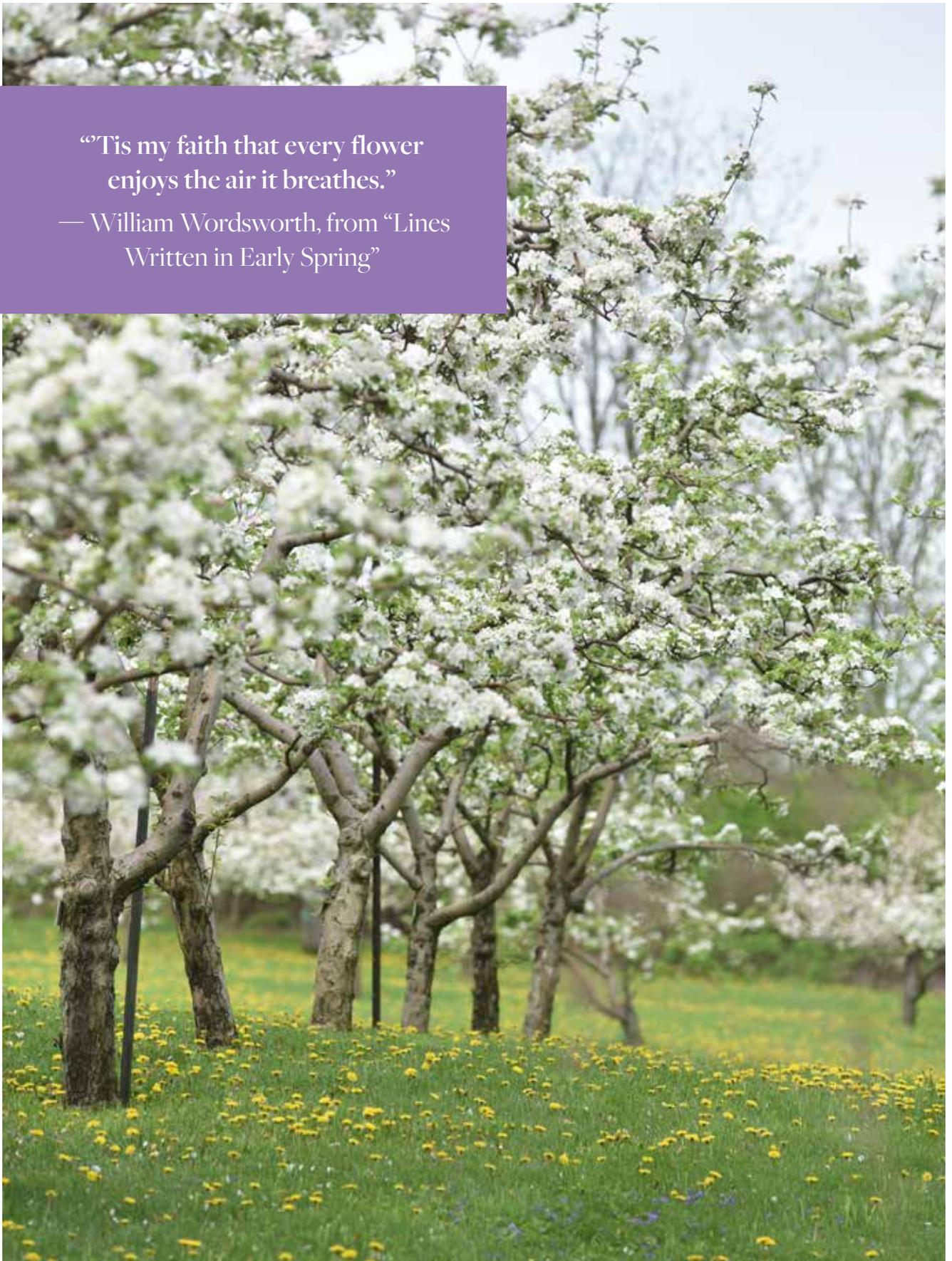


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