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Dear Readers,

Many years, winter is my favorite season. I love it when the world gets quiet and still outside, and we give ourselves license to stay wrapped up and warm inside our houses with a good book, a new recipe or a long-delayed project. Especially in the Lake Geneva area, which can feel so overwhelmingly bustling, absolutely bursting with activity during the summer, winter provides a pleasant pause — an opportunity to take a breath, to catch up and to dream new things.

Winter can also be a deeply beautiful time of year, as our Digital Editor and Photographer Holly Leitner captured on page 42 in her photo essay “Frozen Beauty,” a series of photographs taken last year during a once-in-a-lifetime weather event that left the area glistening like a fantasy land. And speaking of Holly, she and her husband, Sean Marquis, have some great suggestions to share about creating a cozy retreat similar to their charming log cabin vacation rental in “Cozy Chalet Getaway,” on page 88. If you’re looking for a good article to curl up with under a blanket, check out “Spying the Skies” on page 32, where we dig into the history of a nearly forgotten military installation between Williams Bay and Elkhorn that played a vital role in the nation’s Cold War military defense strategy in the 1950s. And finally, if your winter project is planning your wedding (congratulations!), then our 12th annual Wedding Guide, “Getting Married At the Lake,” on page 55, will give you plenty of inspiration.

Here at *At the Lake*, we will be spending the winter dreaming up some new ideas for 2022 — I can’t wait to share them with you over the next several months. And don’t forget to order your 2022 *At the Lake* calendars, available in our online store, full of gorgeous photography of the Lake Geneva area and reminders of the most popular local events and festivals in every season. Because love it or hate it, winter doesn’t last forever.

Anne Morrissy

Anne Morrissy, Editor



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26 SEEING THE BIG PICTURE

BY AMANDA N. WEGNER

Award-winning videographers and photographers Matt and Megan McGuinness of Fine Idea Studio share their journey

32 SPYING THE SKIES

BY ANNE MORRISSY

Remembering the history of the Williams Bay Radar Base, a Cold War-era military installation that once made Walworth County an "important link in the nation's air defense"

42 FROZEN BEAUTY

PHOTOS BY HOLLY LEITNER

A stunning portfolio of photography from a rare display of rime ice and hoarfrost in the Lake Geneva area



55 GETTING MARRIED AT THE LAKE

12TH ANNUAL WEDDING GUIDE

88 COZY CHALET GETAWAY

BY MAURA KELLER

At the Lake's Digital Editor Holly Leitner-Marquis and husband Sean Marquis give a tour of their Northwoods-inspired vacation rental



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IN EVERY ISSUE

EDITOR'S PAGE	6
CURRENTS	20
EMILY'S CORNER	24
DINING DIRECTORY	104
CALENDAR OF EVENTS	110
ADVERTISER INDEX	113
LIFE AT THE LAKE	114

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48 **WELL BEING:
KOMBUCHA,
EFFERVESCENT**
BY SHELBY DEERING
A local nutritionist and two local kombucha makers weigh in on the benefits of this trendy drink that has roots in ancient China

84 **LAKESHORE LIVING:
STEBNITZ BUILDERS**
Special Advertising Section

96 **SOMETHING TO
THINK ABOUT:
"KISHWAUKETOE:
A NATURE
CONSERVANCY
FOR THE CHILDREN
OF TOMORROW"**
BOOK EXCERPT
BY JAMES E. KILLIAN AND JEN SCHILDGEN
Enjoy an excerpt from this new book that chronicles the full history of Williams Bay's Kishwaukee Nature Conservancy



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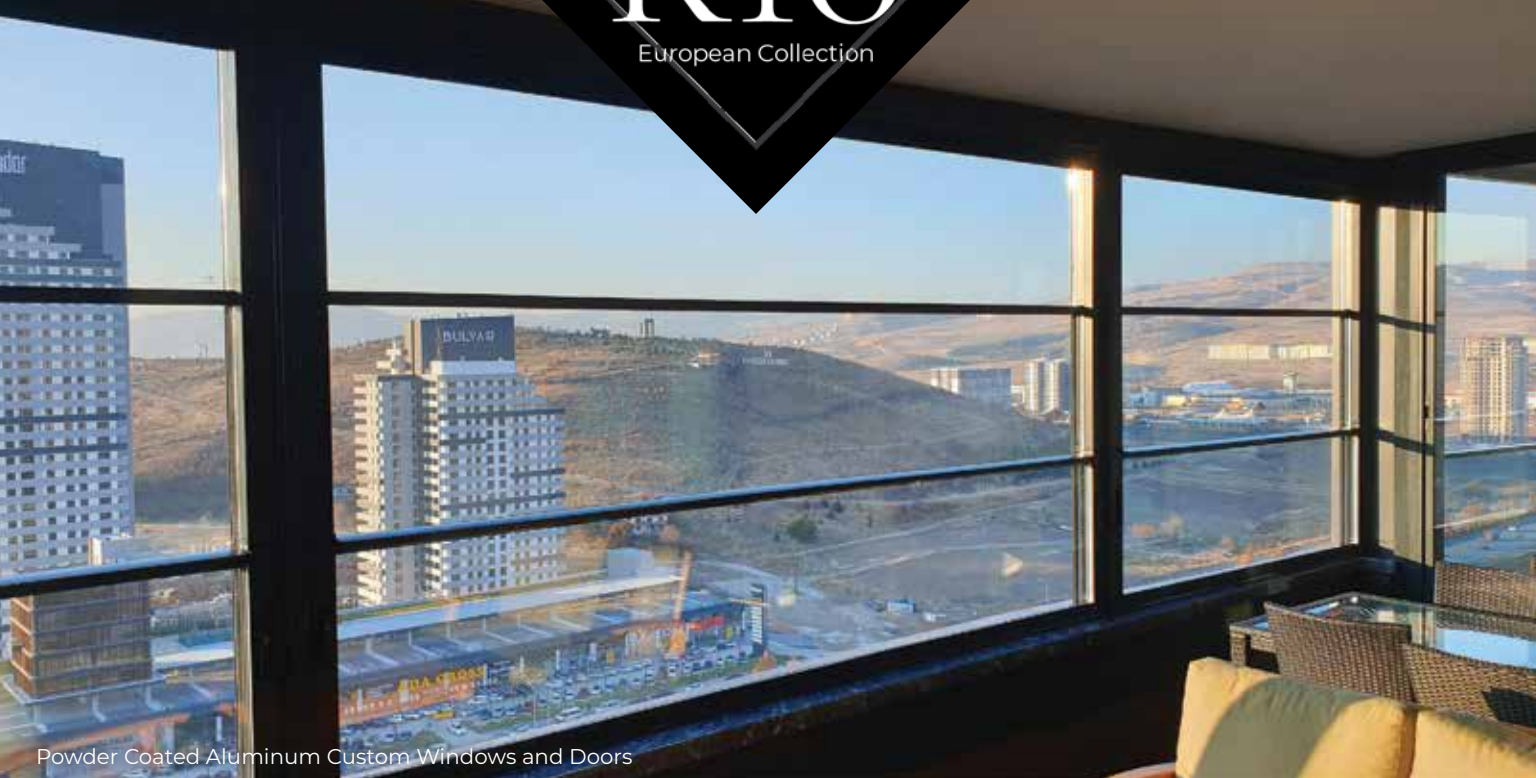
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A representative rendering of the completed library renovations. Courtesy of FEH Design and the Lake Geneva Public Library.

RENOVATIONS BEGIN AT LAKE GENEVA PUBLIC LIBRARY

The first phase of a multiyear renovation project is underway as the Lake Geneva Public Library looks to add more workspace and privacy while reconfiguring the layout of its bookshelves with accessibility in mind, according to Director Emily Kornak. “It needs to be redone in a thoughtful and intentional way for people to use or have the space they need to work, read or study in or to find what they’re looking for,” she says. “That’s kind of the goal.”

During this phase, the renovation plans aim to expand the footprint of the library’s youth area and move offices and staff rooms to the Main Street side of the building in order to maximize patron use of the building’s expansive lake view windows. As part of the reconfiguration, two private reading rooms will be added. “Because it’s an open floor plan, sound travels in very strange ways,” Kornak says. Additional updates include:

expanding and moving public restrooms to the lobby area; restoring the building’s original fireplace; updating the carpeting; and installing a new HVAC system. This phase of the renovation will also add a “program patio” outside the library’s lake-facing lobby doors for the purpose of hosting youth programs, activities and children’s storytimes as weather permits, according to Kornak. Outdoor programming space became a high priority identified as part of COVID-19 health and safety protocols.

The renovation process began in September with asbestos abatement, and the current phase of the project is expected to be completed by the end of January or early February, Kornak says. The timing of subsequent phases of the renovation will depend on funding. So far, the capital campaign has raised about \$700,000, with the city of Lake Geneva approving funding for the new carpeting, HVAC system and lobby doors. The library will cover the remainder of the

estimated \$1 million price tag with reserves and endowments.

Though plans are not yet in place, Kornak says the library “definitely” will mark the grand reopening in a special way. “Everyone will be really ready to celebrate this, and I think it’ll be a lot of fun,” she says.

As part of the library’s additional fundraising efforts, Kornak says there are two new gift donation options available. The 100 Extraordinary Women display will appear over the renovated fireplace off the lobby and will provide an opportunity for donors to commemorate an extraordinary woman in their lives. Donors can also choose to adopt and engrave a patio paver in the new outdoor patio space in honor of themselves or their gift recipient. All proceeds from these initiatives will fund the renovation project and new furniture, shelving and equipment. For information or to donate, visit www.lakegeneva.lib.wi.us.

"A STRING OF PEARLS" GALA RAISES MONEY FOR FIRST RESPONDERS

Almost 90 years after the Riviera Ballroom was first constructed, the city of Lake Geneva hosted a fundraiser on Aug. 28 in the newly renovated space to raise money for the city's first responders.

"Shortly after I was elected in 2020, I was having a conversation with the fire chief, and he told me about this cost they were incurring," Lake Geneva Mayor Charlene Klein explains. She says a firefighter who wants to become an emergency medical technician (EMT) must pay for training out of pocket, and expenses run as high as \$4,500 per person. "Not just that, but they have to take time off to go to training, which involves several months on nights or weekends." Like many rural areas in the country, Lake Geneva has no full-time firefighters and is short-staffed.

The gala fundraiser featured music by the Glenn Miller Orchestra. Klein says that when booking the entertainment, she was looking to feature one of the



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big bands still in existence from the 1930s, when the Riviera first opened. The evening's theme — A String of Pearls — referenced one of the orchestra's most popular songs, and Klein says the majority of women who attended dressed the part.

According to Klein, the event was a success. Around 200 people attended the gala, and a silent auction brought in an additional \$7,000, bringing the total

raised to around \$73,000 in support of first responders. "Anything like this builds a sense of community [and] builds an awareness of things perhaps people didn't know before," Klein says.

TOWN OF DELAVAN CELEBRATES OPENING OF WATERS EDGE

Town of Delavan officials and members of the Parks and Tourism Committee

celebrated a ribbon cutting on Oct. 23 for Waters Edge, a new wedding and event venue located in Delavan Township Park. The facility occupies the same space as a former storage shed that was occasionally used for township events, and offers a significantly upgraded event venue space designed to maximize its prime Delavan lakefront location. "This location is really the crown jewel for the Town of Delavan," explains Executive Event Director Becky

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Dreyer, who came on board two years ago to help guide the project.

Dreyer credits Parks and Tourism Committee member Kevin Kiekhafer with spearheading the idea of a modern, rentable event venue in Delavan Township Park more than five years ago — he is also the person who came up with the venue's name. The new space contains a lower level that includes a prep kitchen, patio, restrooms and event space to accommodate up to 240 guests comfortably, as well as an upper-level loft with a walk-out balcony overlooking Delavan Lake. Dreyer says that the site also affords the option of a lakefront tent setup or a lakeside ceremony.

More than 800 people toured the site and venue as part of the grand opening weekend, which featured food trucks, dance performances, a craft fair and kids' games and activities. Dreyer says there are already several weddings and events scheduled in the space for 2022, with the Town of Delavan's Winterfest on January 15 set as the first major event of the year. ⚓



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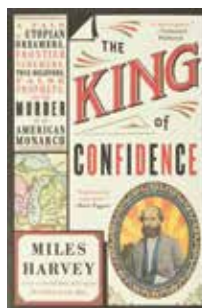
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EMILY'S CORNER

Lake Geneva Public Library Director Emily Kornak shares some of her favorite winter reads with local ties.



THE KING OF CONFIDENCE: A TALE OF UTOPIAN DREAMERS, FRONTIER SCHEMERS, TRUE BELIEVERS, FALSE PROPHETS, AND THE MURDER OF AN AMERICAN MONARCH
BY MILES HARVEY

A nonfiction account of the sensational and dramatic life of the 19th century self-professed Mormon prophet James Jesse Strang, who originally established a settlement east of Lake Geneva before moving his community of believers further north. An entertaining true tale of gift, miracles, controversy and murder.



MAILBOAT
BY DANIELLE LINCOLN HANNA

Montana author Hanna has set her murder mystery series locally, on Lake Geneva Cruise Line's famous "Mailboat." The premise: What if one of the mail jumpers happened to discover a body in the lake? Told from rotating perspectives, this book is a page-turner and the author's diligent research in Lake Geneva shows. Readers who enjoy this one will be happy to learn there are several more books that follow in this series.



SHOPPING, SEDUCTION & MR. SELFDRIDGE
BY LINDY WOODHEAD

Immerse yourself in the early 1900s when self-made Harry Selfridge opened the first department store, Selfridge's, in London. Before moving to England, the Wisconsin-born Harry and his wife, Rose, summered in Lake Geneva at their lakefront estate, Harrose Hall. This book shares details of the opulent acres of retail at Selfridge's and the extravagant lifestyle of Harry Selfridge himself. For fans of "Masterpiece Theater," "Downton Abbey" or general biography.




BLACK POINT
BY JEROME T. BURKE

In this time-travel romance, a present-day lawyer stranded a century before his time contends with saving a woman from an impending boat disaster. Not to be confused with Black Point Estate and Gardens, this historical fiction novel, set in Lake Geneva, takes place in Harry Selfridge's era, with Chicago's Pullman Strike as a backdrop. Great for descriptions of Lake Geneva circa 1895, or for fans of "The Time Traveler's Wife" and "The Devil in the White City."

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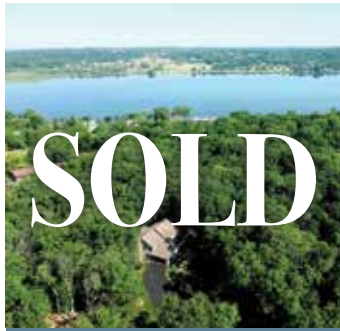


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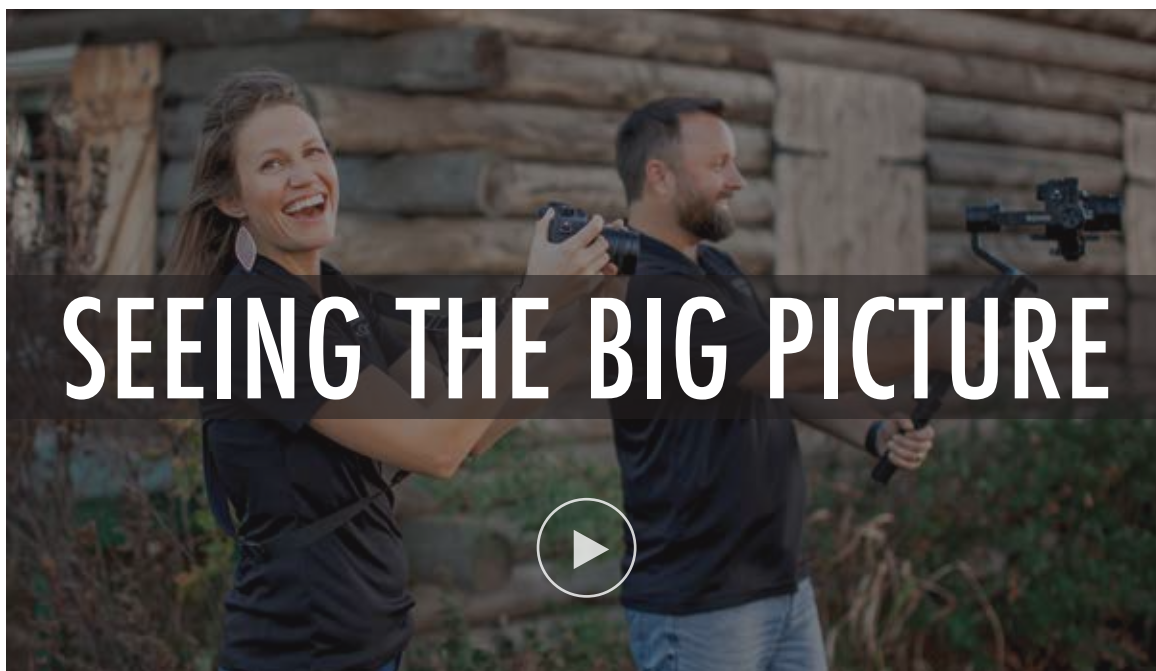
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Matt and Megan McGuinness grow their award-winning photo and videography business

BY AMANDA N. WEGNER | PHOTOGRAPHY BY ANNA URBAN

Matt and Megan McGuinness of Elkhorn are not just busy raising a family, they're also growing a business together. The McGuinnesses own and operate Fine Idea Studio, an award-winning video production, drone photography/videography and social media marketing firm. Together, they help local businesses and organizations build their brands, working with such clients as the Walworth County Fair, Stebnitz Builders, A+ Powersports & Equipment and Paisano's on Broadway. Along the way, they've won an award or two for their work, including three American Advertising Awards (Addies).

But the McGuinnesses aren't resting on their laurels, as they continue to grow and expand their business and craft. The couple launched Fine Idea Studio three years ago, and in February, opened a physical studio space in downtown Elkhorn. And while Matt has usually been the man behind the camera, Megan is learning the craft as well. "It has grown and grown over the past few years, and now it's getting as

much as we want it to be," says Megan. "We're grateful for how the community and area have supported us."

FORGING A PASSION

"It all goes back to the arts," explains Megan of how she and Matt came together. "Matt was in a band with my brother — a local band in the Lake Geneva area — a long time ago. We knew each other many years as acquaintances and got together about 11 years ago." They celebrated their ninth wedding anniversary earlier this year.

Matt, however, adds a fun fact to the story: This connection all started thanks to MySpace, an early social media platform. "I was already in a band that was looking for a lead singer," says Matt. "I put an ad out on MySpace, and Megan's brother answered it. It's one thing we can thank MySpace for," adds Matt with a chuckle.

Matt, who grew up in Williams Bay, spent most of his 20s working as a golf

pro in Wisconsin and California, but even then, he was starting to dabble in his future career, serving as the "unofficial photographer" on the golf course. And before drone photography existed, he was dangling a camera out of plane windows to get aerial shots of the course.

After leaving the golf world in 2007, Matt ventured into the technology and creative services space. He parlayed that career shift into designing websites and eventually began learning video production. But it wasn't until he started working at Kunes Automotive Group about six years ago that he became fully immersed in the field of video and got his start with the drone. "That's where I became laser-focused on video," says Matt. "It really became a passion... There is no other medium where you can establish a personal connection like video."

In 2018, McGuinness spun that passion into what is now Fine Idea Studio, so named because it was, in fact, a fine idea.



“Honestly, we were going over ideas for names, and that one just popped,” says Megan. “As soon as we searched and found it was available, that’s when it was official.”

“It’s an old phrase,” says Matt. “But the key for naming a business is making sure it’s unique, that no one else has it.”

BALANCING WORK, MORE WORK, LEARNING AND PLAY

Both Matt and Megan have full-time

careers in addition to running their business; Matt still works in video production for Kunes, and Megan works for the county health and human services department. They also have three children who keep them busy. “[Fine Idea Studio is] an evenings-and-weekends venture, but we love it,” says Megan, who moved around a bit as a child but spent most of her youth in Lake Geneva.

Initially, Megan focused more on the financial side of the business, handling

billing, bookkeeping and taxes. But this year, she’s been more hands-on behind the camera.

“That is new for us and really exciting,” says Megan. “I’ve been on Camera Two for a few events and a wedding [recently] — I’m just really getting my feet wet with the camera, but it’s truly changed my excitement because it gives me a different perspective both into the process and into the business itself.”

Matt is excited to see Megan growing her skills behind the camera. “It’s amazing to see her just go out, use the fundamentals and get some great clips. It’s been very gratifying to watch her learn.” Megan has also been learning how to edit videos. “She helps tremendously with keeping up with the editing side,” adds Matt.

Both Matt and Megan are self-taught in the business. Matt has supplemented his experience with classes, and Megan is learning on the job. What Matt loves about videography is the creative process and seeing the end results. “Video can

A couple is lying on a bed in a luxurious room, holding champagne glasses. The room has dark wood paneling and two bedside lamps. The text "So Luxe" is written in a gold script font at the top. Below it, in a black box, is the text "LUXE STAY. LUXE DINING. LUXE ADVENTURES." and "YOUR ONE-STOP GUIDE TO YOUR PREMIERE STAY - AN ELEVATED LAKE GENEVA, WI EXPERIENCE." The Luxe Geneva logo is in the bottom right corner.

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make businesses and organizations all come to life. I just love the whole process,” says Matt.

“It’s exhilarating to watch it happen, and you get excited to see a project come together,” adds Megan. “It’s really a pretty cool field to be in.”

LOVING WHAT THEY DO

The McGuinnesses make their “nights-and-weekends” business work thanks to a roster of loyal regular clients. For businesses, video marketing has become increasingly important over the past several years, driving online engagement, conversions and sales. Adding video to a marketing strategy can help a company build the trust and credibility that is so crucial for consumers. On top of this, the algorithms guiding social media platforms and search engines like Google tend to favor video, weighting sites with video content higher than sites without, ensuring that those sites and posts receive more attention. As a consumer, this means that if you search for, say, “farmer’s markets,” the farmer’s market websites with video will more likely appear toward the top of your search. Using this knowledge to their benefit and adding video content to their sites can help businesses and organizations stand out in a crowded online market. And while video marketing was once reserved for those with large advertising budgets, it’s becoming increasingly accessible for organizations of all sizes.

For example, the McGuinnesses say that for one of their clients, A+ Powersports & Equipment, they film for two to three hours on the weekend once a month, and then produce four videos from this footage, which the company rolls out on their social channels and their website each week of the month. With another client, Stebnitz Builders, the McGuinnesses pair the company’s existing content with new content from two monthly shoots to create new videos. What the couple loves about video is the impact it can make. “People love watching videos,” adds Matt. “You don’t have to be on cable or TV. You can do online advertising ... on a modest budget. Without spending a ton of dollars, videos can get you more engagement than still photos or graphics.”

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The advertisement is a vertical poster with a dark blue background. It features several cans of Topsy Turvy Brewery beer, including 'PSTY TURVY', 'HAZY IPA', 'STELLA', 'BLONDE ALE', and 'TWISTED HAMMOCK'. The central text box is white with a dark blue border. The text 'FLIPPIN GOOD BEER' is in a bold, sans-serif font. Below it, 'LAKE GENEVA'S LOCAL' is in a smaller font. The main logo 'TOPSY TURVY™ BREWERY' is in a large, bold, sans-serif font. Below the logo, 'WINTER CHEER IS HERE! COME AND TRY OUR AWARD WINNING BEER!' is in a bold, sans-serif font. At the bottom, 'BOTTOMS UP' is in a bold, sans-serif font. The address '262-812-8323' and '727 Geneva St., Lake Geneva' are at the very bottom. There are also some snowflake graphics.

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For Matt and Megan, their weekends are generally filled filming local events, including festivals like Rib Fest, the Walworth County Fair or Delavan's Scarecrow Fest, which they filmed in mid-September. They also film some weddings. In total, Fine Idea Studio films about 200 ads and events each year. "It's a nice balance to keep busy, keep profitable and build our brand," says Matt. "We're as busy as we want to be and can still have free time."

"Somehow, it's strangely orchestrated, and we find balance," says Megan. "There are times we're overwhelmed, but it just seems to happen, and we find time to get everything done."

Matt and Megan's new studio in downtown Elkhorn presents an opportunity to meet with clients and expand their operation. They have a full video and photography studio there, including green screens to create composite photographs. (Composite photography is the practice of combining different images to create a new image.) Matt and Megan use the technology for niche portraiture — photographing children in costume, then dropping the costumed kiddo into a relevant scene, for example. "We might, for instance, photograph a kid in a Spider-Man costume in front of the green screen and then drop them into a Spider-Man scene with skyscrapers," explains Matt.

Matt is also an FAA-licensed drone operator, which allows him to capture aerial video and photography, day or night.

While their decision to open a dedicated studio might hint at the McGuinnesses' desire to take Fine Idea Studio full-time, Matt loves his job at Kunes, and the couple says they are happy with how their business has developed. "We spent the first two years buying gear, and now we're in a good spot with that — it's astounding what it takes to get started in this business," says Matt. "But we're happy where we're at, so we're going to keep enjoying it and watch it grow."

"We're in a good spot overall and loving what we do, so we're just going to go where the wind takes us," adds Megan. 🌊

MEMORABLE PROJECTS

MATT AND MEGAN REFLECT ON SOME OF THEIR MOST UNFORGETTABLE PROJECTS TO DATE

"A Little Time Alone," a public service announcement video developed as a collaboration between Fine Idea Studio and the Walworth County Fair, features the quiet fairgrounds amid the coronavirus pandemic. The video was created to encourage Walworth County and Wisconsin residents to stay strong and to remind viewers that their time together would be better appreciated after time apart. Larry Gaffey, general manager of the Walworth County Fair, developed the concept and script for the video, and Fine Idea Studio helped bring Gaffey's vision to life.



The video received over 140,000 organic views on Facebook and was awarded 1st Place Outstanding Video in 2020 by the International Association of Fairs and Expos. "It was off the charts and was probably the biggest thing we've done," says Matt. "But it was also a piece with impact."



Farther afield, some scenic drone shots Matt captured of downtown Milwaukee in 2020 have been used to lead off Milwaukee Brewers games on the local broadcast. "It was a beautiful, sunny day in Milwaukee last spring, when I captured those drone clips," he says. "It's been pretty cool to see them interspersed in the intro to the games."

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SPYING

THE SKIES

The Cold War-era Williams Bay Radar Base made the area an “important link in the nation’s air defense system”

BY ANNE MORRISSY | PHOTOGRAPHY BY HOLLY LEITNER, UNLESS NOTED

At 10:24 a.m. on October 25, 1952, Walworth County residents from Lake Geneva to Delavan and from Williams Bay to Elkhorn heard a loud explosion rip through the otherwise quiet air. At a farm near the intersection of Highway 67 and Palmer Road, north of Williams Bay, a woman looked out the window and saw “balls of fire floating to earth.” Just moments earlier, two military F-86 Sabrejets had been passing over her farm fields, flying low toward the northeast. But that day, with no outward warning, something went wrong with one of the jets. It exploded at an altitude of 400 feet, breaking apart into hundreds of pieces that fell across a mile-wide area, and crashed with such force that the ground shook. The pilot — Lt. George M. Lovas, age 24, of Campbell, Ohio — was killed instantly. His body, still strapped in his seat, was thrown from the explosion into a field on the John Finley farm.

According to neighbors at the scene of the crash, these flights over Williams Bay and Elkhorn had become a regular occurrence over the previous year, ever since the U.S. Air Force opened a new installation just east of Highway 67. The project was



The Radar Base as it appeared from the air around 1958, after a second radar tower was added to the site.





PHOTO COURTESY OF THE JANESVILLE GAZETTE





The military barracks as they appear now and as they appeared in 1952 (right).

originally shrouded in secrecy, but a few months before the crash, in an attempt to strengthen community relationships, the military made their presence and their mission public. Known locally as the Williams Bay Radar Base, the installation was home to the United States Air Force's 755th Aircraft Control and Warning Squadron, which operated large radar on the site. This information had been revealed to the public in May of 1952 under a headline in the Janesville Gazette, "Williams Bay Is Important Link in Nation's Air Defense System."

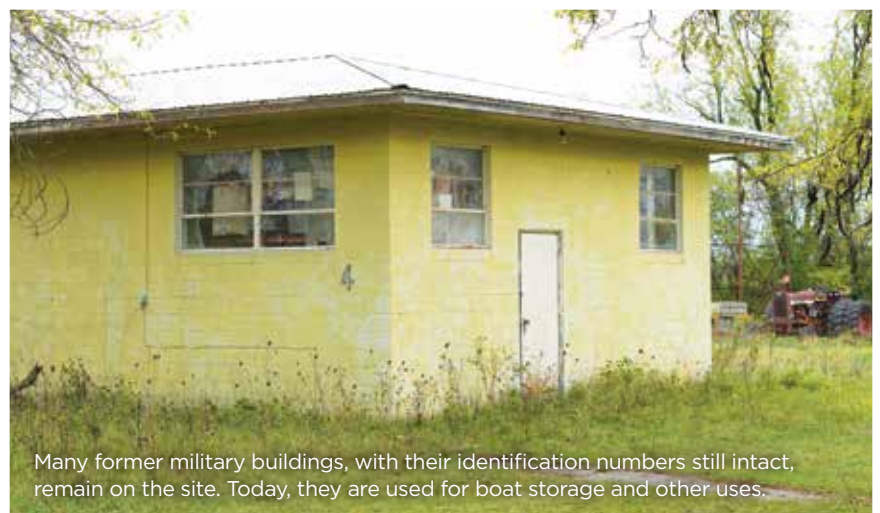
At the crash site that day, secrecy still prevailed. Military personnel armed with Thompson submachine guns confiscated and destroyed photos of the wreckage taken by local media and stunned spectators, closely guarding the site until U.S. Air Force crash investigators could arrive from Chicago's O'Hare Field. The military later revealed that the planes had been participating in a radar tracking exercise, designed to test and train the site's ground-control intercept and warning capabilities.

MILITARY BARRACKS BUILT IN FARMERS' FIELDS

The Williams Bay Radar Base was one of 28 radar stations built as part of the military's Air Defense Command (ADC) program, an expanded surveillance



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE JANESVILLE GAZETTE



Many former military buildings, with their identification numbers still intact, remain on the site. Today, they are used for boat storage and other uses.

network approved by Congress in response to the fear of Soviet bomber attacks associated with the outbreak of the Korean War in June of 1950. Nationally, the ADC engaged thousands of radar operators, pilots and technicians in a common mission: "detection, identification and interception" of potential enemy aircraft.

According to newspaper reports, the

Williams Bay Radar Base was built in 1950 at an estimated cost of \$1.5 million on 30 acres of land purchased from local farmers, a location chosen for its high elevation. The base was staffed and operational by late 1951. More than 200 servicemen lived in dorm-style barracks, ate in a cafeteria-style mess hall and supported the operation of the large radome-covered radar antenna on the site.



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PHOTO COURTESY OF FRANK DRABEK

Frank Drabek, IV, of Williams Bay (second from right) and the team of civilian employees who staffed the Radar Base maintenance shop in the 1950s.

Oscar Ortiz served as an Airman Second Class stationed at the Williams Bay Radar Base in 1958 and 1959, following his service as a radar operator in Korea during the war and then in Japan following the armistice agreement. “A lot of those guys from [the radar bases in] Korea came to the Williams Bay Radar Base after the war,” he remembers. In his role as a radar operator, he says that he “watched the [radar] scope and tracked the planes overhead,” including both civilian and military planes.

VIGILANTLY SCANNING THE SKIES FOR DANGER

Chris Sturdevant, Chairman of the Midwest Chapter of the Cold War Museum, says that radar bases like the one in Williams Bay were intended as an important line of detection defense in the case of enemy attack by air. “People were really scared, fresh off [of WWII],” he explains. “Russia successfully tested an atomic bomb in 1949. There was a lot of fear that Communism was coming — movies were coming out in the late 1940s and early 1950s about the Soviets invading, and [Wisconsin Senator Joseph] McCarthy is out there drumming up fear of [the Soviets and] Communism.”

To defend the United States against this perceived threat of Soviet air attack, the U.S. military devised the ADC system of radar surveillance stations connected at first by telephone and then by an early, primitive computing system, with the intention of providing fast and automated coordination of ground-controlled interception of enemy aircraft — a program that eventually came to be known as the Semi-Automatic Ground

Environment (SAGE) system. The military patches issued to members of the 755th Radar Squadron in Williams Bay featured an image of a radar dish sending a signal out to the sky, positioned above the SAGE acronym.

A SECURE POINT OF DEFENSE

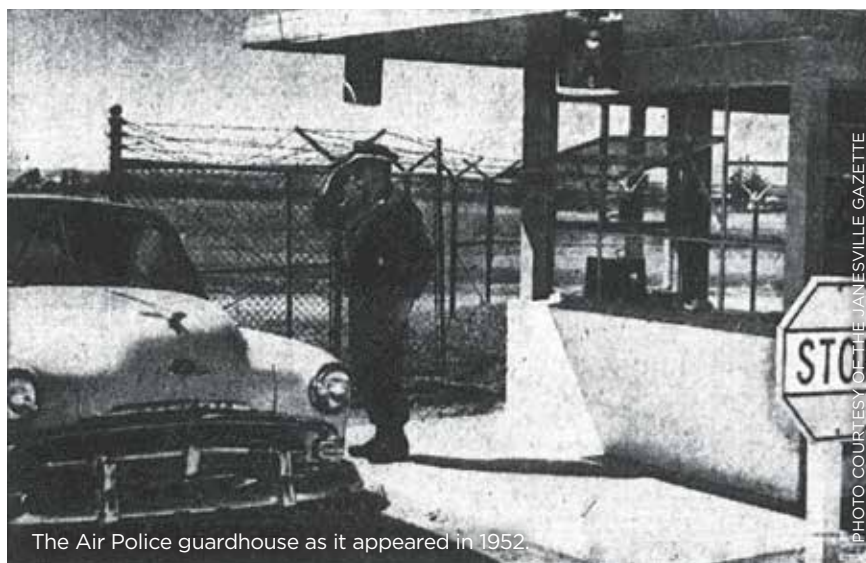
The security at the Radar Base reflected the importance of the work being done there. A barbed-wire fence enclosed the perimeter, and an Air Police guard station served as the site’s gatekeeper. According to a Janesville Gazette article from 1952,

“All traffic either in or out of the base is stopped at this point while the AP ascertains whether occupants of the car may be permitted to pass... If permitted to enter, [visitors] are met at the security office by another armed guard who guides him to his destination.”

Ortiz remembers: “We had guards at the gates, so you had the [outer] compound, and then you had another inner compound, and it was enclosed within the gates. Then you had a big, steel door that you had to go through to get into the room where the radar units were. Outside you had the big bubble that contained the radar equipment.” The tight security proved effective. Ortiz remembers that the closest the base came to a security breach during his time there was the night a cow from a neighboring farm met its demise when it wandered too close to the perimeter and startled the armed guards.

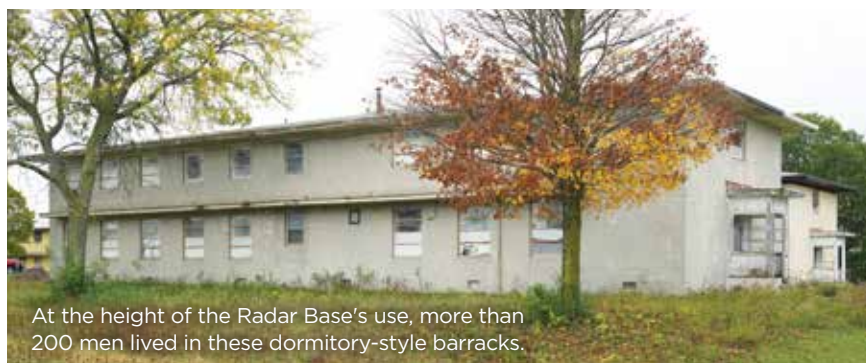
A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A RADAR BASE AIRMAN

Ortiz describes the Williams Bay Radar Base as “a good assignment.” As a radar



The Air Police guardhouse as it appeared in 1952.

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE JANESVILLE GAZETTE



At the height of the Radar Base’s use, more than 200 men lived in these dormitory-style barracks.

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Airmen stationed at the Radar Base enjoy a meal in the modern, cafeteria-style mess hall.

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE JANESVILLE GAZETTE



A small but well-stocked exchange offered the Airmen a chance to stock up on everything from snacks to cigarettes.

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE JANESVILLE GAZETTE

operator, his primary role was to monitor the radar screens and record the activity he observed. "We particularly tracked certain military planes: where they went to and where they came from," he explains. "It was a lot different than [the tracking we did in] Korea." As Ortiz remembers it today, the hardest part of his duty in Williams Bay was pulling the dreaded "KP" — "kitchen patrol" duty that kept him on shift from early in the

morning until late at night. Despite that, he says he always got "three good meals a day."

A newspaper article from the Janesville Gazette in May of 1952 describes some of the modern amenities offered to the men stationed at the Williams Bay Radar Base: Coca-Cola vending machines, "modern steel-and-plastic furniture," a TV set, a library, pinball machines, a juke

box, a piano, athletic equipment and a small but well-stocked PX store that also contained a soda fountain.

Airmen from the Radar Base passed their off hours playing football and baseball (the Radar Base team was a formidable opponent to several local teams in the Central Wisconsin Southern Division), organizing a barbershop quartet singing group, marching in local parades and



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attending local church services. Ortiz says another favorite off-duty activity was dancing at a local club off the base called The Chateau, where the owners "were very nice to servicemen." In fact, it was at The Chateau that Ortiz first met a Williams Bay High School senior named Joyce Johnson, who introduced him to her classmate Carol Stenstrom. Stenstrom and Ortiz were married three months later and recently celebrated their 63rd wedding anniversary.

OBSOLETE TECHNOLOGY

The Williams Bay Radar Base remained operational from 1951 to 1959, by which time the Air Force opted to close several of the ADC radar sites. According to Sturdevant, the successful launch of the Soviet Union's Sputnik satellite in October of 1957 shifted the U.S. military's focus away from traditional air defense to long-range missile defense. That same year, realizing that technological advances had already made many of the ADC radar stations redundant, the Air Force began making plans to relocate the men of the 755th Radar Squadron from Williams Bay to the Arlington Heights Air Force Station.

The Air Force issued a closure notice for the Williams Bay Radar Base in October of 1959; by November 1, the site was home to just five "gap-filler" personnel before it was abandoned entirely. The Radar Base sat empty for a few years, but eventually the federal government sold the property to the State of Wisconsin for use as a prisoner re-release minimum security prison, a role it served from 1962 until 1972. The land was then sold to a local developer who converted it into an industrial park.

Today, a handful of the original buildings remain and are used primarily for storage. In order to ensure that the once vital Cold War-era installation is not forgotten, the Wisconsin Historical Society erected a commemorative plaque on the site, reminding visitors that "built on one of the highest elevations in the region, [the Williams Bay Radar Base's] two radomes scanned the skies 24 hours a day... ready to provide instant communication about suspicious aircraft."

The presence of the historical marker dovetails with a growing effort to commemorate and honor the veterans of the Cold War. In September, retired Col. Jennifer Pritzker and the Pritzker Military Museum & Library in Chicago announced plans to build a Cold War Veterans Memorial on 290 acres of prairie in Somers, Wis., in nearby western Kenosha County. An international design competition is currently under way and a winner will be announced in March, with construction of the interactive monument expected to take about three years.

“People tend to overlook the Cold War or call it a ‘bloodless war,’” explains Sturdevant. “But there were Cold War casualties, training accidents that happened.” In fact, due to the presence of the Williams Bay Radar Base, one of those training accidents happened over a farm between Williams Bay and Elkhorn on a clear October morning in 1952, Lt. George M. Lovas giving his life in service to his country so that our skies might remain forever free of enemy aircraft. ▲



A Wisconsin Historical Society marker commemorates the site's history.



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FROZEN BEAUTY

PHOTO ESSAY BY HOLLY LEITNER
TEXT BY ANNE MORRISSY



Last winter, the Lake Geneva area experienced a rare and beautiful weather phenomenon when the conditions developed for a truly stunning display of hoarfrost and rime ice. Every outdoor surface was covered with layers upon layers of ice crystals, transforming the landscape into an otherworldly winter wonderland.

What's the difference between hoarfrost and rime ice? Hoarfrost is a direct deposit of moisture from the atmosphere, which freezes into ice crystals without the moisture ever passing through the liquid phase. Rime ice is formed when a super-cooled cloud or fog droplets in a liquid state then freeze rapidly upon contact with an object.

The combined effect of these two processes, compounded over several days of perfect conditions, created a once-in-a-lifetime local display, captured in these photos taken during the first week of January, 2021.















Kombucha, *effervescent*

Local experts shed light on this trending health drink

BY SHELBY DEERING | PHOTOGRAPHY BY HOLLY LEITNER

First came green tea. Then soy milk. Then smoothies, electrolyte water and aloe juice. In the arena of health-benefitting drinks, there always seems to be something new around the corner. Sometimes, these trends prove to be short-lived, and researchers find that the latest “wonder drink” doesn’t have as many health benefits as once thought. But occasionally, some health fads move beyond the trends and prove their staying power and real-deal benefits.

One of those promising trends is kombucha tea. Pronounced *kuhm-boo-chuh*, this healthy beverage can be found in many locations these days, from local supermarkets and health food stores to bars and restaurants, but many consumers are still discovering it for the first time.

WHAT IS KOMBUCHA?

Although kombucha has only recently gained widespread popularity in the U.S., the drink has been around for thousands of years. It’s believed that kombucha originated in China around 220 B.C., where it was praised for its healing properties. Since then, people have continued to brew kombucha at home for several centuries, and today it’s available on a commercial scale thanks to modern-day kombucha breweries.

So, what is kombucha exactly? Sam Schleiger, an integrative and functional medicine dietitian and the owner of Elkhorn-based private practice Simply Nourished, describes it as a fermented tea made from bacteria, yeast, sugar, and green or black tea. Kombucha’s main claim to fame is that it is highly probiotic — in other words, it’s full of beneficial bacteria. Studies show that probiotics can balance the digestive system, improve mental health conditions and even alleviate some digestive disorders. Schleiger calls this “supporting an optimal gut microbiome.”

The combination of bacteria and yeast in kombucha is known as SCOBY, which stands for “symbiotic culture of bacteria and yeast.” With this combination, and the addition of tea and sugar, the kombucha brewing process begins. Fermentation takes place over a week or more, during which time the live cultures metabolize the sugar and tea ingredients.

The result is a naturally carbonated beverage that contains beneficial vitamins and antioxidants. It can either be consumed “raw,” which enthusiasts believe is the healthiest form of the beverage, or it can be fermented for another round, in which fresh fruits, botanicals, vegetables and honey can be added as additional ingredients. And yes — the fermentation process does leave behind small traces of alcohol, but not enough to categorize it as an alcoholic beverage. Kombucha can carry a flavor that’s reminiscent of beer, but Doug Grall, owner and founder of Kombocho Brewing located in Whitewater, describes the taste as “tart, fizzy but still a little sweet.”

Schleiger narrows down the flavor profile even further, saying that kombucha offers “a slightly acidic, sour flavor” that will be “fizzy” when consumed — which means you shouldn’t shake the container, just like a can of soda. Schleiger points out that the additional ingredients added for flavor can also offer additional health benefits. “Many brands of kombucha offer different ‘flavors’ where the basic ingredients will also include additions such as apples, mangoes, spirulina and others for added polyphenols [nutritious plant-based compounds], antioxidants and other beneficial properties,” she says.

Kombucha Brewers International reports that “sales [of] and access [to kombucha] have recently exploded, as kombucha has gone mainstream, with sales estimated at over \$500 million.” The popularity



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of kombucha has grown rapidly over the past several years — some restaurants and bars have even starting crafting cocktails with it.

WHAT ARE THE HEALTH BENEFITS?

Kombucha Brewers International lists several possible health benefits of kombucha, referencing a nickname that the drink has had for centuries: the “elixir of life.” The organization cites kombucha drinkers who say that consuming the beverage:

- increases energy
- aids in digestion
- supports healthy liver function
- balances the internal pH
- controls hunger
- eases constipation
- boosts immunity
- enhances overall health and wellbeing
- makes the consumer just “feel good”
- lowers bad cholesterol and raises good cholesterol levels in the blood, which can significantly decrease the chances of developing heart disease and/or having a heart attack or stroke.

Scientific studies over the past 150 years have researched kombucha’s ability to combat high cholesterol, diabetes, toxins, free radicals and even cancer while supporting healthy liver function. Kombucha Brewers International says that the recommended serving size is “what feels good for your body,” and that those with specific health issues find that drinking small amounts of kombucha (around 4 to 8 ounces) one to three times a day may prove beneficial, though some enthusiasts drink much more kombucha in a day.

According to Schleiger, the science behind kombucha might just explain all the health benefits its supporters claim. She says that the body has about 100 trillion cells of bacteria and yeast that line the membranes of the mouth, skin and gut, comprising an astounding 3 to 5 pounds of living bacteria, which is also known as the microbiome. When the microbiome is balanced, it will produce serotonin and GABA, otherwise known as anti-anxiety neurotransmitters. It will regulate one’s stress response as well. Schleiger calls the gut “the second



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brain of the body,” since it’s directly connected to the nervous system of the brain and spine.

“When you can get the gut balanced, restored and flourishing,” she says, “you’re able to experience less bloating, less gastrointestinal disturbance, less inability to tolerate certain foods, improved regularity, clearer skin and you’ll find yourself generally ‘happier,’ among many, many other things.”

Although she points out the best way to achieve this balance is through a nutritious, whole-foods approach to your overall diet, Schleiger says that it’s key to include probiotic-rich foods, like kombucha, in your diet to “support the diversity of your gut microflora.” She adds that scientific evidence supports the idea that a diet rich in fermented foods and beverages — including kombucha but also sauerkraut, kefir, kimchi, yogurt and miso — provide the gut with excellent sources of beneficial bacteria. Also, since kombucha is made from green or black tea, consumers will also benefit from the “powerful antioxidants” in the tea.

As with any alternative health approach, experts say that kombucha’s benefits warrant further research, but many studies do point to kombucha’s potential health properties. At the same time, anyone with certain health conditions, especially digestive ones, should speak with a doctor before adding kombucha to their daily regimen. Schleiger says that even for those without health conditions, if you notice bloating or other digestive upset after consuming kombucha, it’s best to discontinue drinking it until you consult with your doctor. She adds that people with compromised immune systems or those who are pregnant will want to “proceed with caution” before drinking kombucha, since it does contain a small amount of alcohol.

For fans of kombucha, there are endless flavors to sample and increasingly creative recipes, including cocktails, baked goods and dressings — all of which come with the added benefits of potentially improving one’s health at the microbiome level. We’ll drink to that. 🍷

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In 2018, Doug Grall and Aaron Axelsen founded Komboocho Brewing in Whitewater, with the goal of supplying a healthy drink to Walworth County consumers and distributing one of the fastest-growing beverages in the United States. Komboocho specializes in crafting locally brewed kombucha using high-quality ingredients —

Grall points out that they prefer to use locally sourced ingredients whenever possible. Some of their most popular flavors include Berry Hibiscus, Orange Blossom, Jasmine Peaflower and Elderberry.

Sporting pink, purple and orange hues, Komboocho's Instagram-worthy bottles and cans ensure that shoppers can't miss their bubbly, colorful branding. Grall says that he loves brewing kombucha in Whitewater because nearby Lake Geneva "is a progressive resort community

with a sophisticated taste for unique beverages." The company sells their kombucha beverages at local farmers' markets in the spring, summer and fall, and shoppers can also purchase their drinks at local stores including the Cheese Box in Lake Geneva, Gooseberries Fresh Food Market in Burlington, the Whitewater City Market and Basics Cooperative Natural Foods in Janesville.

For true kombucha enthusiasts, Komboocho can even provide a kombucha keg to be served at events and parties. They say they also welcome new flavor ideas, which can be submitted through their website at komboocho.com.



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GETTING MARRIED *At The Lake*

**MILLION DOLLAR
MOMENTS**

Page 56

**DON'T STOP
THE PARTIES**

Page 64

**REAL
WEDDINGS**

Page 72

Million Dollar Moments

ELEVATE YOUR WEDDING PHOTOS
AND AVOID THE MUNDANE

BY STEPHANIE SEIJA

When you hire a photographer for your wedding, you're entrusting them with one of the most important aspects of your big day. Memories fade but photographs last forever! Professional photographers are talented artists and they know how to make you look your best for your engagement shoot and your wedding day. But there are also steps you can take to set your photographer up for success. With a little bit of planning, you can make decisions that will elevate your photos and create an inspiring scene for your photographer to capture. Keep reading for some practical tips that will take your wedding photographs from bland to beautiful.

PERFECT TIMING

Even if you plan ahead and account for last minute changes, everything will take longer than you think on your big day. It's important that you build additional time into your wedding day timeline so that you are prepared for any delays, setbacks or extra shots you might want. Ask your photographer if they have suggestions for a specific time of day to take certain photos so you can prepare a photography-friendly wedding day timeline.

TIPS FOR GETTING READY

Are you starting your big day by getting ready with your wedding party? If you want to get some shots of this exciting time with your besties, you should plan about 30-45 minutes for photos at the end of your getting ready time. This is the perfect opportunity for your photographer to use that natural morning light streaming into the window for capturing detail shots of your dress and jewelry, plus it will give you the chance to pose for some group shots. Want an insider's tip? Wait until you're actually finished



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getting your hair and makeup done to take most of those primping photos. It may seem a little fake, but do you really want a photo with your face only half made up, or your hair lopsided and only partially in an updo? Save a few key steps to complete while taking photos, like adding one last decorative hairpin or applying a final dusting of powder or lipstick.

Be mindful of any items that might create an eyesore in photos. Whether you're getting ready in your home or in a packed hotel room, designate a corner where all your girls can stash their belongings. Nothing cheapens a photo like several overnight bags overflowing with brightly colored unmentionables! Pick a spot that will be out of the photographer's line of sight and hide everybody's personal belongings. That way your favorite candid shot won't be ruined by random clutter.

GOLDEN HOUR

The 30-45 minute window right before the sun sets is undeniably the best time to capture magical photos. The sun gives off its warmest hues and lights up everything in sight with a glittery soft light. No matter what time of day you're holding your ceremony and reception, be sure to talk with your photographer about how you will take advantage of this short time frame to capture the most important photos. Couples often choose to use this time to take their "couple" portraits, the more intimate photos of you two looking adoringly at one another. Golden hour is also the ideal time to schedule an engagement shoot. Take note of a tricky time frame: noon

to 2 p.m. has the brightest sunlight and, therefore, creates the harshest shadows and squintiest faces. Avoid taking outdoor photos at this time if possible!

SNEAK-AWAY SESSIONS

Once your day begins, it doesn't stop! You'll be surrounded by people and hurrying from place to place, so be intentional about grabbing your photographer to sneak away for some quick, private sessions throughout your day. Would you like to see your reception venue set up before guests



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arrive?
Sneak in with your partner and your photographer before they open the room to your guests. You'll get some genuine shots of your reaction to the space, and you can even take a practice twirl on the dance floor! Once the night is over, you'll be thankful to have some photographic evidence of your perfect venue, and your photographer will love that you planned a time for them to capture all the beautiful reception details.

Another time to sneak away for

a photo op is at the end of the night, either when you want a break from dancing or after your guests have gone home. Go outside and create a little getaway under the stars. Soft lantern or street lamp lighting is romantic, and gives you and your partner much-needed alone time to take in the day. Since the big day is complete and the stress is over, these photos can be some of the most genuine and intimate you'll capture.

HASSLE-FREE GROUP SHOTS

While wedding photos can vary dramatically from wedding to

wedding, one common element is the group shot. Why not step it up and try something unconventional? Whether this is your classic family portrait, your wedding party session or groups of friends during the reception, here are some tactics you can use to breathe new life into your group photos for greater visual impact.

Posing: Most people are not natural models, and it can take a little bit of coaxing to get your family or wedding party out of their shells and looking comfortable. Start putting people at ease by playing music from someone's phone to get everybody moving, smiling and laughing. Photos



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YOUR NEW LIFE AWAITS...GET ON BOARD

can be very flattering when the subjects are in motion — walking towards the camera, laughing while gathered close together or dancing as a group. For wedding parties, experiment with poses beyond the straight line, like circles and semicircles, clusters of small groups spread out, differing levels (some sitting and some standing) or turning your back to the camera to catch those special back-of-the-dress details. In the end, trust your photographer. They've shot hundreds of weddings and know how to get the best angles from everyone.

Reception Groups: Group photos aren't over once you've taken the family and wedding party shots. How about taking one giant group photo at your reception, or capturing other large specific group photos? From college friends and childhood classmates to work buddies and extended family members, these group shots will give you priceless memories to cherish forever. What could be better than commemorating this moment in time with all of the

people who love you most and came to celebrate your union?

The logistics of that many people in one photo can get tricky; so, you should talk to your photographer first if this is something you'd like to try. They may need to bring a special wide-angle lens to make it work, or you'll have to think creatively about your space. Is there a large staircase you can pose people on strategically? Can your photographer peer out a window onto a wide lawn filled with people? Have your DJ help facilitate this group photo process so it goes as quickly as possible with the least amount of fuss.

GET THE PICTURE

The Lake Geneva area is a truly beautiful place to get married. Your photographer can create jaw-dropping imagery with the city's gorgeous scenery and backgrounds. And as much as we love the classic wedding day photos, you will also want to capture those unique settings that speak to you and your partner's one-of-a-kind love. You and your

photographer can create the perfect moment that will have your Instagram followers double-tapping every time.

Nature: The Lake Geneva area has a nearly endless list of options for couples who want a true Mother Nature backdrop for their wedding



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LAKE LIFE BEGINS WITH GAGE

photos. Williams Bay's Kishwaukee Nature Conservancy and Lake Geneva's White River County Park offer a variety of photo ops with stunning natural backdrops. And several wedding venues in the area — including Elkhorn's Evergreen Golf Club, Lake Geneva's Hawk's View Golf Club and East Troy's Alpine Valley Resort — are situated on acres of photo-worthy Wisconsin landscape.

Waterfront: The best part about getting married in the Lake Geneva area? The lakes! If you're looking for the perfect waterfront shots, there are options galore. On Geneva Lake, the various public beaches, piers and parks on the lakefront offer lots of photo ops with the lake as your background. And wedding venues like Lake Geneva's Riviera Ballroom, Geneva National, Delavan's Lake Lawn Resort, Fontana's Abbey Springs, The Abbey Resort and Williams Bay's Pier 290 offer lakefront views to ensure the very best waterfront photos.

Historic: History lovers will find plenty of spaces for incredible wedding photos around Lake Geneva as well. Rent an historic yacht for wedding photos steeped in Lake Geneva history, or arrange for photos at Lake Geneva's Maxwell Mansion or the Baker House, both built in the 19th century. Downtown Lake Geneva and downtown Delavan offer charming historic main streets that make for memorable wedding photos, and don't forget the area's many historic churches dating back to the 1800s — Lake Geneva's St. Francis de Sales was built in 1852!

Rustic: For those looking for gorgeous rural-life backgrounds for their wedding photos, Walworth County is the perfect spot. Several local event venues offer rural barn settings, making it easy to get the rustic wedding shots of your dreams. For something a little more unusual, try photos in front of the authentic log cabin at the Walworth County Fairgrounds in Elkhorn or head a little farther afield to take wedding shots in front of the original farmhouses and

outbuildings that pepper the Wisconsin Historical Society's Old World Wisconsin living history museum site in Eagle.

VENUE MAGIC

The background of your photos will be just as noticeable as the people in the foreground! Your photographer will naturally scope out the best settings at your venue, but you can help them by thinking this through ahead of time and creating a dramatic backdrop that will look stunning in photos.

Specialty walls and installations:

Consider asking your floral designer to create a large, flat structure with a stand that can serve as a background wall, and cover it with floral and greenery with a customized neon sign. You can use this "wall" behind the head table (for all those teary-eyed toast reaction shots) or as a photo booth background for all of your guests. Balloon installations are no longer cheesy props you see at a kid's birthday. Elaborate and elegant arches mixed with florals can make a statement. You can even repurpose a floral ceremony arch as a reception photo op spot!

Lighting: This can't be overstated — the right lighting can make or break your wedding photographs! In general, the greater the number of soft lighting sources, the better. When your background is dark, you might be washed out or details will be lost. Think about renting uplighting from

your venue or a lighting designer.

Uplighting comes in a variety of colors and can feature patterns or textures (called a "gobo") meant to illuminate the walls, floors and specific focal points. Remember that warm colors like pink, purple and orange tend to flatter most skin tones, and you can even get custom lighting designs like a monogram or your last name that you can shine onto a dance floor or prominent wall for a personalized experience.

There are plenty of lighting options that go beyond being simply functional — they are beautiful to look at and they're even prettier in photos! Have you seen how eye-catching string lights can be when they're draped across the top of an open outdoor space? What about rustic lanterns on tables or hanging from trees, or candles of different heights scattered around in ornate candelabras? String lights can also create a tented ceiling structure when draped from a central pole or hung from above, and look especially romantic when they glow from behind sheer fabric. Before you



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plan on lighting hundreds of candles, remember to check with your venue to see if they allow open flames. There are plenty of non-flame options that look real and create a softly-lit mood.

ACCESSORIES TO THE RESCUE

A few props and accessories go a long way in making your photos unique and special! Toss items are not limited to your ceremony exit — consider bringing items like confetti or even a champagne bottle to pop for other

occasions, like pictures with your squad or group shots with your family. You could also bring along a few signs to hold in photos, like “Just Married,” your new last name or “Thank You” to be featured on your thank-you notes later on. If you’re getting married in the winter, think about a glamorous wrap or silk scarf to keep you warm and add some texture for snow-filled outdoor photos. Want one of those beautifully curated invitation suite photos? Remember to bring

decorative accessories to style this look, from coordinating ribbons to a fancy ring box and loose flower petals.

The furniture in your photos shouldn’t be an afterthought. While you can find something to sit on anywhere, you can get an elevated look in photos by bringing along or renting a vintage velvet chair or chaise lounge. A coordinating blanket is also a lifesaver, especially for engagement shoots. You and your partner can snuggle together, wrapped up in it, or you can put it on the ground so you won’t get dirty for any seated poses. And don’t forget about a specialty hanger for those dress shots — there are a lot of cute options for personalized hangers that will match the style of your gown and really pump up your photos.

MORE PHOTO OPS

After the big day, many of our experts hear that a couple wishes they would have added on additional photography services. These services often include adding a few hours to their wedding photographer’s contract to have



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them capture the sweet details and moments of a wedding shower, the excitement and toasts of a rehearsal dinner or the relaxed charm of a post-wedding brunch. These are more relaxed, intimate moments of your wedding weekend that you will appreciate having photos of after all the excitement passes.

In addition to these extra wedding events, consider additional photographic sessions. If you're looking for a more sensual and playful option, photographers are seeing an increase in demand for boudoir photoshoots. This is perfect for the bride who wants to gift her partner with a photobook of steamy images on their wedding day. With a "trash the dress" session, photographers usually work with brides to choose an environment that starkly contrasts with the elegance of a wedding dress. These photos are generally dramatic and artistic, giving you a unique way to memorialize your fabulous wedding gown.

Don't overlook your pets when it comes to your big day. Whether in the engagement shoot, or on the wedding

day, be sure to include your furry friends in your photos and you'll always look back with fondness on your family photo.

The best way to elevate your wedding photos and engagement shoot is to think ahead and then let your true personality shine. Remember to relax and enjoy the day. Your favorite photos will most likely be the ones capturing the candid moments between you and all your loved ones.

TIPS AND TRICKS

Wedding photographers have truly seen it all — here are a few additional tips and tricks to make sure you are picture-perfect when it comes to your big day. Make sure someone has white chalk on hand in case you get any unfortunate stains on a white dress or shirt. Avoid any lotions or makeup with shimmer as they can reflect light and create an undesirable effect in your photos. Start your skincare routine and any skincare procedures early! Photographers can retouch photos to a certain extent, but no one

can artificially create the gorgeous glow of healthy skin.

And last, but certainly not least, make sure you talk with your photographer about any questions or concerns you have before your big day. Your photographer wants to make sure the final photos are what you expect, so don't assume he or she knows what you want without specifically communicating about it. Make sure they have your wish list of not-to-be-missed photo ops, for memories you'll cherish forever. 🚤



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DON'T STOP THE PARTIES

BREAKING DOWN ALL OF THE WEDDING-RELATED EVENTS
AND WHO TO INCLUDE AT EACH

BY BAILEY HELDMAR

MATT MASON
PHOTOGRAPHY

You're busy planning and prepping, and it's easy to forget about all the events leading up to your big day. From an engagement party to a day-after brunch, each event is a chance to celebrate your love story with your nearest and dearest. But more events also mean more questions. Who should you invite? Where should you have it? Who's supposed to host, plan and pay for them all? We have rounded up the most common wedding-related events, along with the tradition and etiquette for each. Keep in mind that none of these events are

required (besides the ceremony, of course!), but the more celebrations the merrier!

ENGAGEMENT PARTY

You said "yes," which is definitely cause for celebration! There's not a rule for who hosts the engagement party, but it's usually the parents of the couple. However, many couples choose to plan their own. Held during the first few months of the engagement before the stress of wedding planning kicks into high gear, the party is a fairly casual



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affair. Although if everyone is in on the surprise, you may head straight to your engagement party after the proposal!

You don't have to invite everyone that you plan to invite to the wedding; in fact, it's customary to keep the guest list to just family, the wedding party and perhaps a few other close friends. However, don't invite anyone to the engagement party that you don't also plan to invite to the wedding. Speaking of invitations, an engagement party doesn't require formal, mailed invites. Evites or even a Facebook event are an acceptable and easy way to get the word out.

Host your engagement party at home or at your favorite restaurant to keep cost and planning to a minimum. It's still early, so save your budget for the big day! Many restaurants and bars have rooms available to rent for large groups that are perfect for engagement parties. If you host at home, ask a few close relatives to pitch in with food prep and decorating.

No matter what size your party is in terms of number of guests, make



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sure to assign someone (a reliable close friend or family member) to take candid photos throughout the night. And it's also fun to have some sort of guest book, or even a place where guests can write down a quick tip or advice about wedding planning.

While most guests will likely bring a small gift, it's not mandatory at the engagement party. Some guests might take a peek at your registry if you already have one, but don't feel obligated to register before the party. A card and nice bottle of wine are an appropriate engagement party gift.

BACHELOR & BACHELORETTE PARTIES

Hosted by the bridesmaids and the groomsmen, bachelor and bachelorette parties take place closer to the wedding — think two months to two weeks before. While it's tradition to have them on the same weekend, don't stress if you and your sweetie celebrate your final days as singles on different dates. It's more important to find a time that works for everyone in your individual wedding parties. While not everything about the party has to be a surprise, your friends should take on the majority of the planning for this event. After all, it's a time for you to relax, let loose and forget about wedding planning.

The guest list for the bachelor and bachelorette parties is by no means limited to only those in your wedding party; feel free to include other close friends and siblings. This is another event that does not call for formal invitations. In fact, a group text may be the easiest way to determine everyone's schedule to start planning!

Whether your friends have planned a night on the town in your hometown or a weekend getaway to a different city, the most important thing is to have fun at your bachelorette or bachelor party. Whether you go out for dinner and dancing, enjoy manicures and a wine tasting, take in a local sports game, explore a new city or simply lounge by the pool, there are endless ways to celebrate your upcoming wedding with friends!

One point of contention for bachelor and bachelorette parties can

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be the cost. As a rule of thumb, the wedding party should treat the guest of honor to a night out; however, if travel is required, the bride or groom should cover her or his own expenses, with the exception of a nice dinner or a few drinks on their friends at the destination. And if you do opt for a weekend getaway, don't be offended if some of the invitees can't attend; there are plenty more opportunities to celebrate you.

Bachelorette parties are notorious for being recognizable in public because the entire group is wearing matching sashes, shirts or hats. Make sure to let your wedding party know if there is anything (a wearable item, wording on a shirt, planned party destination) that would make you uncomfortable, so there's no tension during the weekend of the festivities.

BRIDAL SHOWER

Another event that takes place in the last month or two before the big day is the bridal shower. True to its name, the bride is showered with love and gifts at this traditionally daytime



ANNA URBAN PHOTOGRAPHY

event. As for the host, it can be anyone from your maid of honor to your mom or another close female relative.

Historically ladies only, the guest list should include family, the wedding party and other close friends of the bride. A classic wedding shower is brunch at the host's home; opening presents would follow light snacks, refreshments and maybe a few games. If you're imagining something less

traditional and a little more relaxed, have the festivities at a restaurant or an art class.

As with many events on this list, the female-only rule is increasingly broken by couples that choose to have a joint shower. As with a traditional wedding shower, a relative or the couple's close friends would host a coed event at their home or favorite local spot. Whatever kind of event you

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choose to have, mailed invitations are expected.

Make sure to register for wedding gifts before your shower because guests will look to it as a source for what to gift you at the shower. Often the shower hostess will coordinate the purchase of a larger, more expensive item to be gifted by a group of guests. Alternatively, some brides opt to have a lingerie shower where guests are asked to gift lingerie or sultry sleepwear for the honeymoon. While this doesn't require a registry, be sure to list your sizes and perhaps a few preferred brands on the invitation.

REHEARSAL DINNER

The groom's parents traditionally host the rehearsal dinner, which is always held the night before the wedding. After the couple and their wedding party rehearse the ceremony at the venue, they'll head to dinner to celebrate with their closest relatives and friends. While the father of the bride, best man and maid of honor will give speeches the next day at the

reception, the rehearsal dinner is a time for other guests to share their fond memories and well wishes for the couple. You might consider putting together a slideshow or video of you as a couple to watch after dinner.



Like the engagement party, you don't have to invite everyone to the rehearsal dinner that you invite to the wedding. The guest list should always include the wedding party and immediate family, but many couples choose to invite extended family and other close friends as well, and often guests who have traveled for the wedding and are staying overnight. In

the case of a destination wedding, it's a courtesy to invite all guests to the rehearsal dinner.

Since the main event is the next day, most couples opt to have a more casual rehearsal dinner that complements the wedding. The rehearsal dinner is a time for everyone to mingle and enjoy each others' company before the production of the wedding day. Be sure to thank guests from near and far for attending and being a part of your celebration as you rest assured that everything is set for the big day.

The venue could range from your parents' backyard to your favorite restaurant. Whatever you choose, the rehearsal dinner is the perfect time to infuse a little of your personality as a couple into the wedding weekend. Was your first date at a taco truck? See if you can rent it for the event! Did you bond over a love of craft beer? Host the rehearsal dinner at your favorite brewery. If it's a destination wedding, think about a restaurant that showcases the local cuisine.

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CEREMONY AND RECEPTION

The main event! Although tradition states the bride's parents host the wedding and reception, like many traditions, this one no longer holds firm. Many couples choose to host their own wedding, the groom's parents may offer to host or all three parties could chip in a little bit to pull off your dream wedding. The wedding ceremony and reception should need no explanation, but there are a few details that often need clarification.

The guest list is historically the same for both events, but some couples choose to have an intimate ceremony

followed by a larger reception. Although it depends on the couple's style, the ceremony and reception will be the most formal of all your events, which means mailed invitations are a must. The typical wedding stationery suite will include an invitation, reception card, an RSVP card with pre-addressed envelope, directions to the venue, an accommodations card for out-of-town guests, as well as any other information you think your guests will need.

Whether you hold the ceremony and reception at separate venues or at a location that can accommodate both, it's helpful to have a day-of coordinator.

Even if you choose not to have a wedding planner, most event spaces have an event coordinator that keeps things running smoothly while you enjoy your special day to the fullest. Similarly, you wouldn't want your mom or best friend running around the venue putting out fires instead of celebrating at your side.

Guests should bring gifts from your registry to the wedding. Register for gifts at a variety of price points at a few different stores so that every guest can find the perfect gift at a price they feel comfortable with. If you don't need or want physical gifts, you can also ask that guests contribute money to a honeymoon fund. Although this trend is still catching on, there are a few websites designed to help.

DAY-AFTER BRUNCH

Whoever hosted the ceremony and reception may also host a brunch the day after the wedding. Especially common for destination weddings, the informal and completely optional party is for wedding guests to say a final goodbye to the newlyweds before they jet off to their honeymoon. Of

for the rehearsal dinner and are sent after you receive wedding RSVPs. Guests do not bring gifts to the rehearsal dinner, but the night before the wedding is a good time to give thank you gifts to your wedding party, especially if it's something you'd like them to wear during the ceremony. It's the perfect opportunity to thank your wedding party in person for being part of your celebration.

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course, a brunch is just one more event to add to an already busy wedding calendar; nobody will question if you choose to skip this event and start the honeymoon a little early (or you just want to sleep in).

Invitations to the brunch can be an added insert in the wedding invitation, but a digital invitation is equally appropriate. While destination weddings typically call for inviting everyone that attended the wedding, in other cases, it's acceptable to invite only the wedding party, immediate family and out-of-town guests as a courtesy. Common places to host a morning-after brunch are at the host's home or at the hotel where most of your guests stayed.

Fitting the more casual atmosphere, the day-after brunch can be a come-and-go event. Let guests know that they should feel free to stop by anytime within a two- or three-hour period to offer any final congratulations. A buffet or an à la carte menu are easy ways to feed your guests without much stress; offer light breakfast options like muffins, quiche and fruit that do not require a sit-down meal. While a mimosa or Bloody Mary bar is always festive, be sure to have plenty of coffee and water!

If you take anything from this, it should be that there are a few rules that can't be broken. Talk to your family and friends well in advance about what events are a must and which you'd rather skip. Discuss who might be willing to host and what you'd like to take on yourself, and set budget expectations for each event. Most importantly, remember that every event is supposed to be a celebration of your unique love story! ▲



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SARAH + MICHAEL

December 31, 2020 | Photography & Videography by Matt Mason Photography

Sarah was traveling in Greece on the Fourth of July when she first met Michael, a handsome member of the United States Navy stationed at a nearby base. What might have remained a fleeting encounter blossomed into a cross-continental romance. In 2019, while spending the Fourth of July in Lake Geneva, as Sarah has done her whole life, Michael proposed on a boat ride to Big Foot Beach.

The wedding was originally planned at The Ridge for summer 2020, but due to the pandemic restrictions, Sarah and Michael moved

the date to New Year's Eve. Two days before the wedding, Lake Geneva was transformed into a winter wonderland after receiving 18 inches of snow.

The black-tie affair suited the setting. Sarah wore a custom gown designed as a nod to the dress her mother wore on her own wedding day, adding a fur wrap. The bridesmaids wore gowns in a shade of blush with cream-colored faux fur wraps, and the groom wore a shawl-collar tuxedo with custom cufflinks that read, "You are my greatest adventure."

Following the wedding ceremony

in the Fireside Room, the party moved into the main ballroom for cocktails, dinner and dancing. The menu included ravioli portobello pomodoro, filet mignon and salmon. After dinner, guests enjoyed cake, cookies and cupcakes emblazoned with the wedding's theme — "Our Adventure" — before hitting the dance floor and socializing in one of four heated outdoor igloos. At midnight, the couple and their guests counted down the end of 2020, and at the stroke of midnight, Sarah and Michael began their newest adventure together.



THE DETAILS

CEREMONY & RECEPTION VENUE: The Ridge Hotel

EVENT PLANNER: Hillary Connelly

ENGAGEMENT & WEDDING RINGS: Neil Lane

BRIDE'S GOWN: MS Moda

BRIDE'S SHOES: Badgley Mischka

BRIDE'S JEWELRY & ACCESSORIES: Earrings from MS Moda; Necklace was family-provided; Purse from MOH; Fur Shawl from MS Moda

BRIDEMAIDS' DRESSES: BHLDN, WTOO Bridesmaids, Jenny Yoo

BRIDEMAIDS' FUR SHRUGS: Etsy

FORMALWEAR: Blk Tux

GROOM'S CUSTOM CUFFLINKS: Etsy

GROOMSMEN'S FORMALWEAR: Men's Wearhouse

HAIR: Alex Izaguirre of Deco Adamo

MAKEUP: Kayla Consolo of Deco Adamo

INVITATIONS & STATIONERY: Minted

TABLE SIGNS & SEATING CHART: Mary Beth Langkamp

FLORAL: Tommi's Garden Blooms

DÉCOR: Elegant Presentations

CATERING & MENU: The Ridge Hotel

CAKE & SWEETS: Erica Koren Cakery

ENTERTAINMENT & UPLIGHTING: John Ludy, A Personal Touch DJ

TRANSPORTATION: Y Drive Limo





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MELISSA + RYAN

May 22, 2021 | Photography by Ideal Impressions Photography

Ryan and Melissa lived across the street from each other while attending college at Northern Illinois University, but it wasn't until after they had both graduated that they met as spectators at a Norge Ski Jump event in River Grove. Their relationship soared from there and they got engaged in 2019 at a "Friendsgiving" party.

Although they had originally scheduled the wedding for Halloween of 2020, pandemic restrictions led them to reschedule for May of 2021. They chose Delavan's Rosewood for

their venue, loving its "rustic, vintage and eclectic" vibe, as well as its ample outdoor firepits for socializing and a gazebo for the ceremony itself. The floral décor featured an arrangements of dahlias, peonies, David Austin roses, ranunculus and spray roses.

Melissa wore a sleeveless lace gown and carried a bouquet of deep red, sage, yellow, ivory and blush-colored flowers. The bridesmaids wore gowns of deep red while the groomsmen wore gray suits with red ties and boutonnieres of red roses.

The color theme was continued through the event — during the traditional wedding ceremony, the couple and their parents each poured glass beads into a vessel, which was then hand-blown into a sculpture.

A cocktail hour followed the ceremony and featured two signature cocktails named for the couple's beloved pets — Oliver, a miniature poodle and Rosie, a goldendoodle — who also made an appearance as part of the cake topper. Dinner and dancing rounded out the evening, the mood lively and upbeat.



THE DETAILS

CEREMONY & RECEPTION VENUE: Rosewood

EVENT PLANNERS: Beth Iverson and Dianne Watson of Rosewood

BRIDE'S ENGAGEMENT & WEDDING RINGS: Family-provided

GROOM'S WEDDING RING: Studio D Jewelers, Woodstock, Ill.

BRIDE'S GOWN: Tovah Lane by Sottero and Midgley, Volle's Bridal & Boutique, Lake Zurich, Ill.

BRIDE'S JEWELRY & ACCESSORIES: Family-provided

BRIDEMAIDS' DRESSES: Azazie

GROOM & GROOMSMEN'S FORMALWEAR: Men's Wearhouse

HAIR & MAKEUP: Athina and Vesna of Elana Darrus Makeup and Hair

INVITATIONS & STATIONERY: Zazzle

FLORAL & DÉCOR: Petals & Promises, Rosewood

CATERING & MENU: Rosewood

CAKE & SWEETS: Cakes by Dea, Marengo, Ill.

ENTERTAINMENT: Mark Hladisch, Rosewood

TRANSPORTATION: Van Galder



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HEIDI + NICK

June 26, 2021 | Photography by Anna Urban Photography

Heidi and Nick first met in high school and became good friends, but it wasn't until both moved back to their hometown after college that they started dating and fell in love. Nick proposed on a vacation to the Cayman Islands, seizing the perfect sunset moment to get down on one knee.

Their original wedding date was scheduled for June of 2020, but the global pandemic limited that event to a small ceremony for close family. So on June 26, 2021, Heidi and Nick celebrated a larger wedding event with 215 guests at Lake Geneva's Hawk's

View Golf Club. "We wanted something beautiful, a little rustic, but also relaxed," Heidi explains. "Hawk's View gave off that perfect vibe."

Heidi opted for a sleeveless, fitted dress in ivory lace and the bridesmaids wore gowns in Sedona pink. The floral theme incorporated greenery, white flowers and succulents. For the reception tables, Heidi and Nick chose numbers that were important to them, and the centerpieces featured wine bottles hand-painted by Heidi's father.

Heidi walked down the aisle to Ben E. King's "Stand By Me." The

short ceremony featured an exchange of vows Heidi and Nick had written themselves. Following the ceremony, they joined their guests for a cocktail hour featuring signature cocktails — an old fashioned for Nick and a lemon drop martini for Heidi. Dinner and dancing followed on the covered outdoor patio.

Guests dined on steak in a red wine sauce, a wild rice-stuffed chicken breast in cream sauce and vegetarian ravioli before dancing into the night to the sounds of DJ Felix. Heidi says the party was a hit: "I think everyone had a great time."



THE DETAILS

CEREMONY & RECEPTION VENUE:

Hawk's View Golf Club

EVENT PLANNER: Becky Farber at Hawk's View Golf Club

ENGAGEMENT & WEDDING RINGS: Goodman's Jewelers, Madison, Wis.

BRIDE'S GOWN: Marah's Elegant Bridal, Mount Horeb, Wis.

BRIDE'S SHOES: Badgley Mischka

BRIDE'S JEWELRY & ACCESSORIES: Marah's Elegant Bridal, Mount Horeb, Wis.

BRIDESMAIDS' DRESSES: David's Bridal

FORMALWEAR: Men's Wearhouse

GROOM'S ACCESSORIES: Tie from Men's Wearhouse; pocket square from The Tie Bar

GROOMSMEN'S FORMALWEAR: Men's Wearhouse

HAIR: Hair by Rachelle

MAKEUP: Kristen Willert & Chelsey Rodenkirch

INVITATIONS & STATIONERY: Paper Source, Madison, Wis.

FLORAL & DÉCOR: Tattered Leaf Designs Studio

CATERING & MENU: Hawk's View Golf Club

CAKE & SWEETS: Gooseberries Fresh Food Market

ENTERTAINMENT: DJ Felix Entertainment

TRANSPORTATION: Hawk's View Golf Club; Fairfield Inn and Suites shuttle



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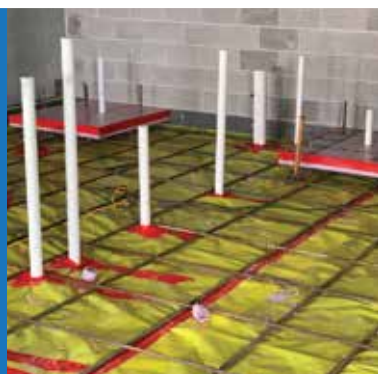


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Working as a remodeling consultant and designer for Stebnitz Builders, Jeff Auberger has jotted down endless creative ideas over the years for his dream home. He and his wife, Shelly, already owned a beautiful 30-acre property in Wisconsin, and finally in 2019 they were able to start construction on their unique vision. With sustainability in mind, Jeff decided on a modern pole barn design and knew that Stebnitz would be the ideal contractor for the project.

The firm is no stranger to unique and sophisticated builds, and as a third-generation owner of Stebnitz Builders in Elkhorn, Chris Stebnitz is a veteran in the residential construction industry. In fact, next year the firm will proudly celebrate 50 years of full-service residential remodeling and home design. "While we are extremely proud of the hundreds of projects we've completed and the relationships we've created with those homeowners, none

of those could have been possible without the tremendous team we've had throughout those 50 years," says Stebnitz. "There are so many people who helped us become the team we are today. The one constant that exists is the passion to understand the needs of our clients and the goals they have for their homes."

The company is interwoven with the Walworth County community — sponsoring charity events, donating to organizations like Habitat for Humanity, United Way of Walworth County and establishing the Stebnitz Builders scholarship for high school students to continue their education in the skilled trades field.

Stebnitz Builders continues to receive recognition for the impact they have on the industry and their community. They received the GuildMaster Award in 2014 in recognition of their service excellence, and have recently been named a Fred



Case Remodeling Entrepreneur of the Year Award finalist, which celebrates innovation in the industry, like unique building processes or use of materials and creative use of technology.

Tracy McHugh, a sales and brand manager at Stebnitz, has been named a Women in Construction Honoree by The Daily Reporter, for outstanding achievements by top women in the construction industry. McHugh and her team brought their combined expertise to complete the Aubergers' vision of an ultra-efficient home with a rustic-meets-industrial vibe, and she states that the high efficiency and sleek look can be duplicated for any project. "The materials for this design were carefully selected and sourced for the Aubergers' home, but these materials can be applied to any remodel project, not just a new



home build like this,” says McHugh.

The Aubergers’ pole barn home totals 5,000 square feet, of which 2,500 square feet is living space, and its design perfectly captures the cozy but modern aesthetic Jeff and Shelly had in mind. However, the visual impact was a secondary factor for the homeowners, who had extensive experience with green building through the years and opted to build with low-maintenance, sustainable materials. Typically featuring laminated columns or perma-columns, a pole barn construction (also referred to as post frame) is a cost-effective and energy-efficient design. With columns spaced farther apart than traditional studs, the buildings have a larger wall cavity that provides more room for insulation, lowering heating and cooling costs.

The Aubergers decided to cover the exterior of their home with corrugated red, black and gray metal, which is maintenance free, increases efficiency and enhances the industrial look. Glass garage doors separate the living space from the three-season room, protecting the interior from outside changes in temperature. “The polished concrete floors feature in-floor heating, which saves energy,” says Jeff. “The home is also zoned on different thermostats for added efficiency.” Metal was used to add unique flair to the exterior of the fireplace, and the kitchen features a natural stone island and custom built-ins showcasing rift-sawn wood from central Wisconsin.

Modern, trendy features like the corrugated walls and black shower doors in the bathroom impress guests and add to the rich design elements — which were all carefully curated and executed by the pros at Stebnitz Builders to complete the Aubergers’ dream home. “Our team has always been focused on listening to our clients,” says Stebnitz. “We ensure a design that fits the lifestyle they choose in a manner that offers peace of mind and enjoyment throughout the lifespan of the project. This process allows our clients to relax and fully enjoy the experience of working with Stebnitz Builders.” 🏡



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Cozy CHALET GETAWAY

A local vacation rental captures the essence of the Northwoods

BY MAURA KELLER | PHOTOGRAPHY BY HOLLY LEITNER

There is no question — today's American family is seeking a different kind of vacation rental. A cabin or lake home is no longer just a place to store your clothes, throw some meat on the barbecue or head out swimming. Modern vacation rentals need to transport guests to an entirely different mindset. Because of this, the most popular vacation rentals are usually teeming with character and aim to meet the eclectic needs of couples and families who are looking to get away from it all, in a "home away from home" atmosphere. And that's exactly what *At the Lake* Digital Editor Holly Leitner-Marquis and her husband, Sean Marquis, have created with their unique vacation rental homes in the heart of Williams Bay.

When Holly first stumbled upon the Bay Chalet, a delightful log cabin built in the 1970s, with a towering, two-story vaulted living room and lofted second bedroom, she knew that it was exactly what she was looking for in a home for herself. With its rustic charm, surrounded by

giant pines and a mere one mile from the Williams Bay Beach, the home stole Holly's heart, and she made an offer during the Christmas season. "I couldn't stop dreaming about the potential," she says. "The Bay Chalet needed some sprucing up and TLC. I love a good project so I immediately got to work on updating the house."



Out went the tired bronze and red brick fireplace, replaced instead with a stunning, floor-to-ceiling stone fireplace that anchors the two-story great room. "It really pulls you in as you enter the house, creating that 'up-north' feel," Holly says. She also built a new kitchen island; updated the lighting fixtures, faucets and outdoor fixtures; and replaced exterior doors. Today, Holly and Sean continue to complete many of the maintenance projects themselves, but often turn to local carpenters, electricians and plumbers for additional help. "Log cabins are a lot of maintenance — every couple of years things need to be stained and treated," she says.

So how long did it take before Holly decided to transition the Bay Chalet from her private home to a vacation rental? “I lived in the house for two years before I transformed it into a vacation rental,” she explains. After she met Sean and they moved into a home they found together, they decided to rent out the Bay Chalet — adding beds and upgrading finishes to accommodate a high-traffic environment.

Holly had already owned another vacation rental located in downtown Williams Bay, so she knew the specific features that would be most appealing to vacationers. As she explains it, the home fit the bill perfectly: it has charm and character; it’s cozy but boasts enough space for couples or small families; it’s private and quiet, yet close to town; and most importantly, it’s located in an area with the proper zoning to comply with local laws regarding vacation rentals.



In order to obtain the necessary vacation rental permits, Holly and Sean had to first file the proper paperwork with the county and then consult the Town of Delavan

about the local laws pertaining to vacation rentals. A state inspector came through the home to evaluate the property and ensure compliance with health and safety standards. Once these terms were met, the couple had to apply for a state permit, which they renew every year.

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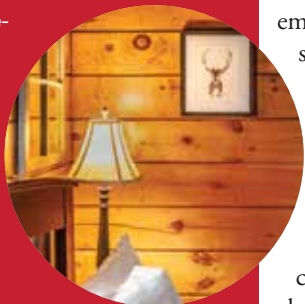
HOW TO GET THE *Look*

Creating an “elevated Northwoods” vacation feel is the cornerstone of Leitner-Marquis’ vision for the Bay Chalet in Williams Bay.

“I wanted the Chalet to be the kind of place that people can’t wait to return to year after year,” she says. To get that classic look, the cabin boasts plush leather couches, overstuffed plaid pillows, unpainted wood finishes, a towering stone fireplace and nature-inspired accents.

The rental also offers guests plenty of classic diversions: board games, card games, floor checkers and a record player, as well as modern-day amenities like cozy beds, smart TVs, state-of-the-art appliances, high-speed WiFi and central air conditioning in the summer. Outside, a propane fire pit table encourages guests to enjoy the gorgeous, wooded setting.

As the Bay Chalet demonstrates, you don’t have to move to the wilderness to get that log cabin vibe in your own home. The right choice of flooring, wall treatments and furniture can set the tone of any space. Select warm, cozy finishes including natural hardwoods, stone accents and rugged-yet-inviting furniture, such as rich, dark leather pieces. And remember, accent pieces including rustic antiques, plaid-wool blankets, plush rugs, wrought-iron lamps and nature- and wildlife-inspired artwork are easy details that can enhance the rustic look you’re craving.



In fact, the Bay Chalet property supports two vacation rentals. “When I bought the home, it also had a rundown ‘guest cottage’ on the property that I updated by turning it into a separate, beautiful tiny-house vacation rental,” Holly explains. Called the “Tiny Bay House,” this structure complements the Bay Chalet and features a separate yard. “It holds its own feel and style,” she says. “Sometimes people book both properties when they want to have family get-togethers but in separate living quarters.”

In the Bay Chalet, Holly has embraced a Northwoods design style, with rustic-yet-elegant details throughout — from modern black fixtures to varying shades of wood accents to a wealth of natural elements, including stone. “I want it to feel cozy while also feeling a little elevated in style,” she explains.



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“Sean is very involved with the maintenance,” she explains. “He’s great at woodworking projects and fixing things.” Holly is involved with guest relations, marketing, décor, online listings and bookkeeping.

She’s also quick to point out that this is a hospitality business above all, so the guests’ enjoyment is the number-one priority. “It really helps if you’re handy and able to make a considerable time commitment because there are always things to [do for] upkeep and questions to answer about the rental property,”

Holly says. “Sean and I are both very actively involved in it and thankfully we make a good team. Our primary home is in Lake Geneva and I’m a fourth-generation family member of this lake community. It truly feels very special to be able to share our love of this area with our guests.” ▲



“Think salt-light candles, plaid blankets, ceramic mugs and nature-themed artwork. Decorating is like a puzzle, and I like to play with the pieces until it’s just right. I don’t like log cabins that feel too kitschy and overly decorated. Less is more.”

Both Holly and Sean maintain full-time careers, so their vacation rentals are a fun and rewarding side business.



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// SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT //

Excerpts from

KISHWAUKETOE

A Nature Conservancy for the Children of Tomorrow

JAMES E. KILLIAN & JEN SCHILDGEN



PHOTO BY JEN SCHILDGEN

Eight years ago, Williams Bay resident James E. Killian retired from a career in healthcare administration and turned his attention to helping his community. Soon he was elected as a trustee to the Williams Bay Village Board and assigned the task of working as a liaison to Kishwauketoe Nature Conservancy (KNC), established in 1990 by former Village President and current KNC Board Chairman Harold Friestad, to whom the book is dedicated. Before long, Killian was a regular volunteer and then a Kishwauketoe Board Member.

In this role, he recognized the need for a comprehensive history of the Conservancy. In 2018, Killian enlisted the assistance of Jen Schildgen, a professional photographer and graphic designer with a deep love for Kishwauketoe, and together they began compiling the Conservancy's history and story through archival research, interviews, photographs, maps and artwork. The result of this collaboration is "Kishwauketoe: A Nature Conservancy for the Children of Tomorrow," a 256-page, full-color coffee table book, available for purchase through the Friends of Kishwauketoe. As of press time, the books have not been shipped from the printer. Visit friendsofknc.org for updates on availability.

At the Lake is pleased to present excerpts from the new book "Kishwauketoe: A Nature Conservancy for the Children of Tomorrow," detailing the history, mission and vision of this privately funded, 231-acre nature preserve in Williams Bay.



12

FOR THE CHILDREN OF TOMORROW

*"We seem to understand the value of oil, timber, minerals, and housing,
but not the value of unspoiled beauty, wildlife, solitude, and spiritual renewal."*

- Bill Watterson, via Calvin of "Calvin and Hobbes"

Undeniably, Kishwaukee's history is vast and intriguing, far beyond our humble written record here. Setting down these pages, and stepping foot into the park from the Route 67 entrance, one begins to sense the whispers of the past with each breath of fresh air. What feet hugged this earth a week passed? (Ten years passed, ten decades?) Who called this land home, searched these marshes for food, slept beneath these trees, casting similar questions about the future into the starry night sky?

Turning left towards the humble banks of Southwick Creek, leaves of towering cottonwoods shiver on the breeze, a reminder that it often takes a quiet mind to hear what wisdom nature seeks to whisper. Heading north along Southwick Creek Trail, lush, early summer foliage folds in, creating a gentle tunnel, filled with the subtle song of red-wing blackbirds and the playful chirping of squirrels and chipmunks alike. At each level, the forest reveals new inhabitants, all relishing in the beautifully balanced form and function of their natural home.

At dusk, a raccoon scurries hurriedly up to nest, frightened by the soft crunch of approaching footsteps. A snapping turtle makes his way towards the warmth of the creekside and a late night meal. At dawn, twin fawns frolic clumsily through the underbrush, stretching their new legs not far from their mother's watchful gaze.



Cottonwoods alongside
Southwick Creek trail.

PHOTO BY JEN SCHILDGEN



Tree swallows dancing in the sunshine.

PHOTO BY JEN SCHILDGEN

Centuries ago, much was different here. Yet, in the lives of Kishwaukee's true residents, much remains the same. It is our presence that has shifted around them — at times offering a symbiotic bond, other times, threatening to encroach upon their very existence. When we pause long enough amidst the elderberry and cattails that line the northern boardwalk, we have the opportunity to see first hand how our paths are literally entwined.

The healthier this land is, the healthier its inhabitants and visitors become.

Working eastward towards the North Prairie and the Woodlands, a maze of native shrubbery gives way to rolling hills of big bluestem grasses, undulating like waves in the wind. And as we imagine those venerable civilizations that came so long before us, it behooves us to ask, what more can this land teach us, beyond the wisdom of hard learned lessons from the past?

As the grasses of the North Prairie yield to ancient oaks, stretching their great limbs towards the flowering meadow below,

an answer begins to take shape. Just as the quiet decay of leaves and carbon feed these gentle giants, they breathe oxygen into our waiting lungs. Just as the fieldmouse feeds the eager adolescent bald eagle above. We are all in the midst of the greatest circle ever known. Our fates are woven together; our futures, our past.

Tree swallows dance below, swooping elegantly, all speed and grace. Their iridescent blue feathers glint briefly in the sunlight. Time stands still.

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PHOTO BY JEN SCHILDGEN

Spiderweb covered in dew.

If you're lucky, walking back across the prairie, you may hear the call of a resident pair of sandhill cranes, signaling to this year's colt that he should stay near, lest this newest passerby poses some threat. Warily, they will watch you, and if you move slowly, with grace and respect, they may stay, sharing with you their feeding grounds — trusting that there is more than enough in the way of snails, snakes, and seeds in this fertile land to support your brief intrusion. After all, they too are just seasonal residents here. Having danced, mated, nurtured, and dined, they will fly south, towards temperate Florida, once the October frost kisses a cold goodnight to their hunting grounds.



Sandhill crane pair and colt.

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PHOTO BY JEN SCHILDGEN

Past the arboretum, up the Railroad Trail, where the pokeweed grows, fields of orange jewelweed wait, ready to enchant your senses, and ease your mosquito-bitten skin. Surely, there are some small discomforts to be found here. But overcoming our fear of the spider as she weaves her story into nightly webs, means being able to finally experience the startling beauty of dew drops on silvery strands.



PHOTO BY JEN SCHILDGEN

Jewelweed, covered in dew, which can be crushed and used as a salve to relieve itching from bug bites, stinging nettle and poison ivy.



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"Z," exploring the vast expanse of the sky over Kishwauketoe.

PHOTO BY DANIELLE SIMONS

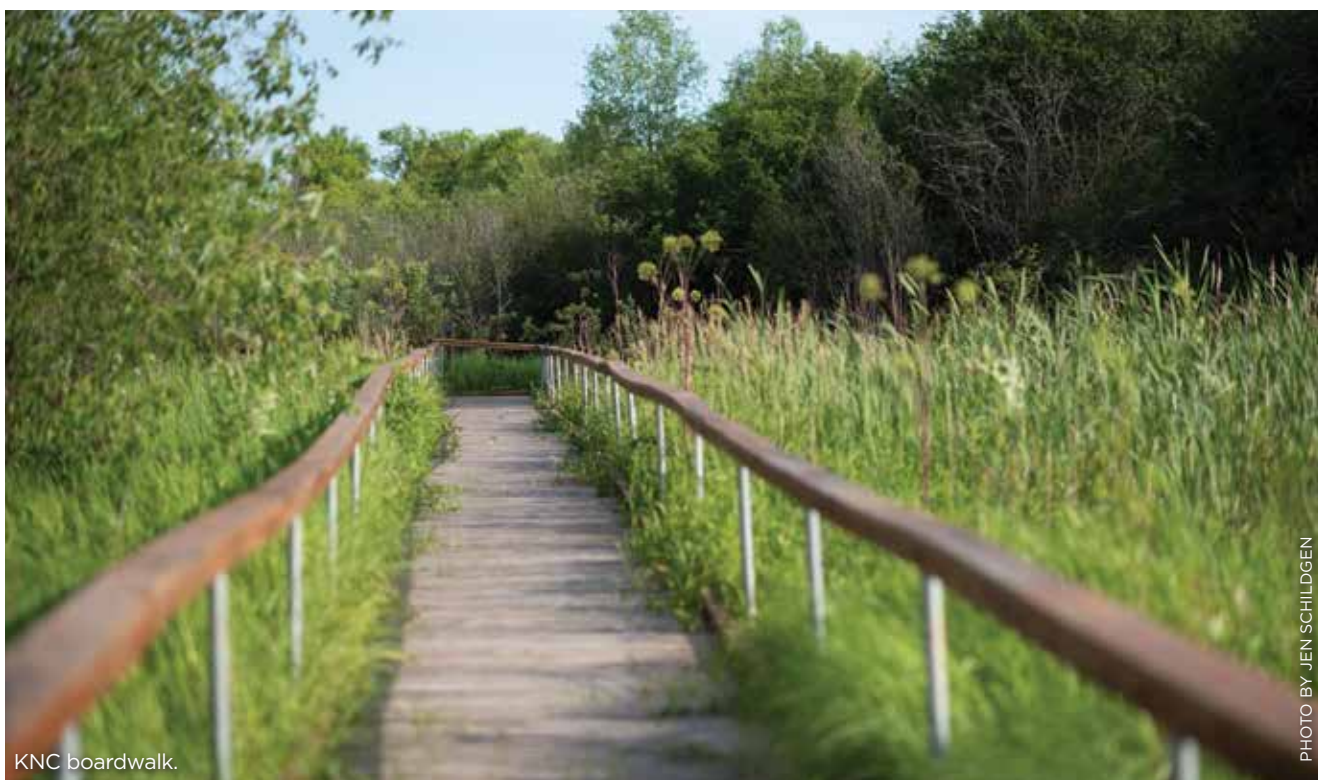
What a grand and expansive place to wander as a child. To grow tall year by year, visiting an oak planted with family and friends.

To practice rewilding, taking to heart the art of imagining, and learning firsthand the careful quiet that signals the natural still before a storm.

These gifts are given, over and over, without want of thanks, or expectation to the children of Williams Bay. Unassumingly, the land teaches us truths long forgotten. It reminds us of our tender roots, and grounds us to the wisdom of the Earth.

In the midst of our man-made chaos and constant striving for more, better, faster, stronger, the land urges us to breathe. To trust. To know that we are connected, already, to something far greater than we can forge from steel or cement.

This is the legacy of Kishwauketoe. To instill, with unwavering patience and subtle grace, the knowledge that we are now, and forever will be, a part of nature. We watch over this land so that the children of tomorrow may always remember to hold dear the values of solitude, imagination, exploration, and connection: so that they may steer clear of the mistakes of our past, and look to nature to understand the delicate balance of respect which is vital to the survival and thriving of all. 🌱



KNC boardwalk.

PHOTO BY JEN SCHILDGEN

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of Hwys. 50 and 67), Delavan;
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ICE CASTLES

HOLLY LEITNER

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 send the date, time, location and cost, along with a brief description and contact phone number, to anne@ntmediagroup.com. Submission deadline for the spring issue is Feb. 1.

ONGOING EVENTS

BELFRY MUSIC THEATRE HOLIDAY SHOWS

A variety of holiday-themed performances ranging from "A Chicago Christmas" to "A John Denver Christmas" to "Christmas in New York" with Sir Franc D'Ambrosio. Select dates through Dec. 19, Belfry Music Theatre, 3601 State Hwy. 67, Delavan; (262) 394-6460 or belfrymusictheatre.com

BREAKFAST WITH SANTA AT GRAND GENEVA

Seatings from 8 a.m. to 11 a.m., Saturday and Sunday mornings, Nov. 27 through Dec. 19. Cost is \$40 for adults and \$20 for children ages 3-12. Grand Geneva Resort & Spa, Lake Geneva. Call (262) 249-4788 for reservations.

CUSTOM SCENT EXPERIENCE

Create a signature scent for candles, room sprays, body sprays, diffusers or wax tarts while socializing with friends and patrons. Reservations strongly recommended. The Candle Mercantile, 870 W. Main St., Lake Geneva; (262) 203-5557 or thecandlemercantile.com.

DANCING HORSES CHRISTMAS SHOWS

Through Jan. 15. Las Vegas-style show featuring riders and acrobats on elaborately trained horses. Dancing Horses Theatre, 5065 State Hwy. 50, Delavan. Call (262) 728-8200 or visit thedancinghorses.com for tickets.

GENEVA LAKE MUSEUM OF HISTORY
Learn more about the history of the Geneva Lake area at this informative museum; (262) 248-6060 or genevalakemuseum.org.

GINGERBREAD HOUSE WALK

8 a.m. to 8 p.m., Sundays through Thursdays, Nov. 21 through early January. Grand Geneva Resort & Spa, Lake Geneva; (262) 248-8811 or grandgeneva.com.

ICE CASTLES

An illuminated ice kingdom features frozen slides, crawl spaces and fountains built into a frozen outdoor landscape. Dates are weather-dependent. Geneva National Resort & Club, Lake Geneva. Visit icecastles.com for tickets and up-to-the-minute opening details.

LIVE MAGIC SHOWS

Enjoy 60 minutes of world-class magic, comedy and illusion at the Tristan Crist Magic Theatre in Lake Geneva; (262) 325-5567 or lakegenavamagic.com.

OUTDOOR ICE RINK

Open when conditions are favorable for ice, Mondays through Thursdays, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., Fridays through Sundays, 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. Bring your own ice skates. Ice rink is open when a green flag is present. Lions Park, Williams Bay. Call (262) 686-8001 for conditions.

PARADE OF TREES

Through Jan. 4. Admire Christmas trees decorated by local businesses and individuals while touring the museum. Geneva Lake Museum, Lake Geneva. Call

(262) 248-6060 or visit genevalakemuseum.org/parade-of-trees.

SANTA CRUISE

Embark on a magical Christmas cruise to Santa's North Pole Hideaway. Along your lake tour, you will be enchanted by holiday lights and displays. Cruises depart Nov. 26 through Jan. 1. Lake Geneva Cruise Line, Gage Marine – Winter Harbor, 1 Liechty Dr., Williams Bay. Call (262) 248-6206 or visit santacruziselakegeneva.com for tickets.

SNOW SHOE AND CROSS-COUNTRY SKI RENTALS

Sizes go fast, especially on the weekends. Call to verify availability. Clear Water Outdoor, 744 W. Main St., Lake Geneva; (262) 348-2422 or clearwateroutdoor.com.

SNOW SHOE RENTALS

Rentals available all winter when there are at least 3 inches of snow on the ground. Mondays through Fridays, 8 a.m. to 2 p.m., Saturdays and Sundays, 8 a.m. to noon. Cost is \$5 per hour or \$20 for the day. Williams Bay Recreation Department Lakefront Office, 15 E. Geneva St., Williams Bay. Call (262) 686-8001 or email rentals@williamsbay.org to reserve 24 hours in advance.

THURSDAY NIGHT TRIVIA

Teams of up to six people compete for bragging rights and to win a \$20 gift card. 7 p.m. on Thursdays, The Hive Taproom, W2463 County Road ES, East Troy. (262) 684-5400 or thehivetaproom.com.

TUESDAYS @ TWO LECTURE SERIES

Informative lecture series chronicling the history of the Lake Geneva area. Geneva Lake Museum, Lake Geneva. For topics and reservations, call (262) 248-6060 or email staff@genevalakemuseum.org.

WINE-Y WEDNESDAYS

Drink specials and activities every Wednesday. The Bottle Shop, 617 W. Main St., Lake Geneva; (262) 348-9463 or thebottleshoplakegeneva.com

WOOD DÉCOR WORKSHOPS AND CLASSES

Design and create a personalized wood sign while socializing with family and friends. Board and Brush Lake Geneva, 262 Center St., Lake Geneva; (262) 409-1639 or boardandbrush.com.

WORKSHOPS & CLASSES

Geneva Lake Arts Foundation offers a series of workshops, classes and a gallery of exhibits. Gallery 223, Downtown Lake Geneva; (262) 249-7988 or genevalakeartsfoundation.org.

NOVEMBER

26: COMMUNITY TREE LIGHTING CEREMONY

Caroling, tree lighting and Santa arrival by firetruck. 5:30 p.m. Phoenix Park, Delavan; delavanwi.org.

26: WINTER WREATH WORKSHOP

9 a.m. and 3 p.m., The Makery @ Bella Botanica, 1787 Walworth St.,

Springfield. Class is \$38 per person. Call (262) 379-8786 to register or visit bellabotanicaaboutique.com/makery.

27, DEC. 2, 3, 17: DINNER TIME, WINE TIME COOKING CLASSES

Hands-on cooking classes with changing themes. Lake Geneva School of Cooking, Lake Geneva. To reserve a spot, call (262) 248-3933 or visit lakegenevaschoolofcooking.com.

27, DEC. 18: BREAKFAST WITH SANTA AT LAKE LAWN RESORT

Enjoy a fully stocked breakfast buffet and meet Santa himself in the Courtyard Garden. Children will be able to take home a holiday craft. Seatings at 9 a.m., 9:30 a.m. 10 a.m. and 10:30 a.m. Tickets are \$22.50 for adults or \$12.50 for kids. Lake Lawn Resort, Delavan. Call (262) 725-9214 for reservations.

28: PHOTOS WITH SANTA AT THE ABBEY

This all-outdoor event will feature holiday cookies and cocoa, holiday music, a screening of holiday classics, a bonfire with popcorn and s'mores, and a socially distanced opportunity to have your picture taken with Santa. 5 p.m. to 7 p.m., Harbor Lawn, The Abbey Resort, Fontana; (262) 275-9000 or theabbeyresort.com.

29, DEC. 6, 13, 20: BRUNCH WITH SANTA AT THE ABBEY

Santa will be ready to meet you in the outdoor gazebo on the Harbor Lawn. 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., 240 West at The Abbey

Resort, Fontana; (262) 275-9000 or theabbeyresort.com.

DECEMBER

3: VICTORIAN CHRISTMAS

Lighted, horse-drawn carriage parade, beautiful lighting displays and townspeople dressed in period costume. 5 p.m. to 9 p.m., historic downtown Sharon; (262) 736-6246 or historicdowntownsharon.com.

3: BURLINGTON FROZEN FANTASY CHRISTMAS PARADE AND TREE LIGHTING

Parade viewing from historic downtown Burlington and a tree lighting ceremony afterward. Santa and Mrs. Claus, Door County Sled Dogs, caroling and music will accompany the tree lighting. Parade begins at 6:30 p.m. in downtown Burlington; tree lighting to follow in Wehmhoff Square Park; (262) 763-6044 or burlingtonchamber.com.

3-4: CHRISTMAS MARKET AT THE BARN

Gift barn and winter wonderland filled with holiday décor, featuring local makers, artisans and crafters showcasing their wares. Friday 4 p.m. to 8 p.m., Saturday 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Terra Yard Creations, 202 E. Grant St., Elkhorn; (262) 379-1700 or terrayardcreations.com.

3-5: 2ND ANNUAL LET IT GLOW FESTIVAL

Free holiday festival featuring whimsical light displays, Balsam Boulevard and Santa viewings. Friday 6 p.m. to 9 p.m.,



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Saturday from 5 p.m. to 9 p.m. and Sunday from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. Walworth County Fairgrounds, Elkhorn; (262) 723-5788 or elkhornchamber.com

3-5, 10-12, 17-19: CHRISTMAS TRAIN, EAST TROY RAILROAD MUSEUM

Trips leave from the East Troy Railroad Depot on Fridays at 4 p.m. and 6:15 p.m., Saturdays at 10 a.m., 1 p.m., 4 p.m. and 6:15 p.m., and Sundays at 10 a.m., 1 p.m. and 4 p.m. Online advanced reservations required; visit easttroyrr.org/christmas-train.html or call (262) 642-3263.

3-5, 10-12: "GOOD OLD-FASHIONED REDNECK COUNTRY CHRISTMAS"

Presented by the Haylofters. Fridays and Saturdays at 7:30 p.m., Sundays at 2 p.m. Malt House Theater, Burlington; (262) 763-9873 or thehaylofters.com.

4: 46TH ANNUAL LAKE GENEVA ANNUAL ELECTRIC CHRISTMAS PARADE

Begins at 5 p.m. Downtown Lake Geneva; (262) 248-4416 or visitlakegeneva.com.

4: CHRISTMAS PARADE TRAIN, MUKWONAGO TO EAST TROY

A holiday tradition dating back to 1972 — spectators can catch a glimpse of Santa safely from inside their heated vehicle along County Road ES. The parade train departs from the Elegant Farmer in Mukwonago at 5:30 p.m. and continues non-stop until arriving at the East Troy Railroad Depot at approximately 6:30 p.m. Visit easttroyrr.org/christmas-parade-train or call (262) 642-3263.

4: ELKHORN ANNUAL CHRISTMAS CARD TOWN PARADE

Christmas decorated floats, novelty acts, music, animals and Santa and Mrs. Claus. 1:30 p.m. Downtown Elkhorn; (262) 723-5788 or elkhornchamber.com.

4: A VERY BELLA CHRISTMAS

Fresh, handmade wreaths, hot cider and treats, unique Christmas gifts, herbal make-and-take workshops. 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., The Makery @ Bella Botanica, 1787 Walworth St., Springfield; (262) 379-8786 or bellabotanicaaboutique.com/makery.

4-5, 11-12, 18-19: VISIT WITH SANTA
Meet Santa. 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. The Elegant Farmer, Mukwonago; (262) 363-6770 or elegantfarmer.com.

5: KIDS BUILD IT HOLIDAY LIGHT UP SIGN & ORNAMENTS WORKSHOP

Get into the spirit with holiday mini-camp, where each child will create a holiday light-up sign and a pair of wood slice ornaments. Noon to 3 p.m., Nailed It DIY Studio, 41 S. Wisconsin St., Elkhorn; (262) 374-8834 or elkhorn.naileditdiy.com.

5-31: EAST TROY LIGHTS

A holiday light show attraction timed to music broadcast on 90.9 FM. Shows begin on the hour from 5 p.m. to 9 p.m. nightly. East Troy Square, downtown East Troy; visit easttroylights.com

10-12, 17-19: "ELF, THE MUSICAL"

The Lakeland Players will perform this musical version of the beloved Christmas

movie. Walworth County Performing Arts Center, Elkhorn; (262) 728-5578 or lakeland-players.org.

11-12, 18-19: HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS AT OLD WORLD WISCONSIN

Explore vibrant holiday traditions brought to Wisconsin by immigrant ancestors while creating your own holiday memories. 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., Old World Wisconsin, W372 S9727 State Hwy 67, Eagle; (608) 264-4848 or oldworldwisconsin.wisconsinhistory.org

12: "LIGHTWIRE THEATER: A VERY ELECTRIC CHRISTMAS"

The neon lights of Lightwire Theater present an electrified, awe-inspiring Christmas tale. 3 p.m. and 7 p.m., Young Auditorium, UW-Whitewater; (262) 472-2222 or uww.edu.

12, 19: CHRISTMAS CANDLELIGHT DINNER

Hands-on cooking class that culminates in enjoying a candlelit holiday meal. \$120 per guest. Lake Geneva School of Cooking, Lake Geneva; (262) 248-3933 or lakegenevaschoolofcooking.com.

19: BOTTLE TOPPER WORKSHOP

Create three gnome bottle toppers while enjoying a glass of wine. Cost is \$50 per person plus Paypal fees. 12:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. Studio Winery, 401 E. Sheridan Springs Road, Lake Geneva; (262) 348-9100 or studiowinery.com.

27-31: COUNTDOWN TO NEW YEAR'S EVE

Hands-on cooking classes with wine tastings. Lake Geneva School of Cooking, Lake Geneva; (262) 248-3933 or lakegenevaschoolofcooking.com.

JANUARY

1: POLAR PLUNGE

Take part in an invigorating community plunge into Geneva Lake. 12 p.m., Williams Bay Beach.

15: WET-FELTED WORKSHOP

Learn the basics of wet felting using water, soap and pressure. 10 a.m. to noon, The Makery @ Bella Botanica, 1787 Walworth St., Springfield. Class is \$30 per person. Call (262) 379-8786 to register or visit bellabotanicaaboutique.com/makery.

23: FLORENTINE CHILDREN'S OPERA PERFORMANCE

This child-friendly opera performance is an annual family favorite. 3 p.m., Young Auditorium, UW-Whitewater; (262) 472-2222 or uww.edu.

FEBRUARY

2-6: WINTERFEST & U.S. NATIONAL SNOW SCULPTING CHAMPIONSHIP COMPETITION

The 27th annual National Snow Sculpting Competition, plus an ice sculpture tour, s'mores and bonfires on the beach, a cocoa crawl, a Fire & Ice bar, hovercraft rides and more. Downtown Lake Geneva; (262) 248-4416 or visitlakegeneva.com.

5: "BARRON RYAN: CLASSIC MEETS COOL"

Pianist Barron Ryan performs sounds ranging

from Mozart to Michael Jackson. 7 p.m., Big Foot Auditorium, Walworth. For tickets, visit bigfootfinearts.com or call (262) 275-2117.

5: "LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD"

Presented by the Missoula Children's Theater. A classic tale performed by the largest touring children's theater in the country. 2 p.m., Young Auditorium, UW-Whitewater; (262) 472-2222 or uww.edu.

5: LAKE GENEVA SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA CONCERT

Performing Mozart and Mahler. Tickets are \$20 general admission or \$50 priority reserved. Free for students (through college) with a valid ID. 7:30 p.m., Calvary Community Church, 2620 Harris Road, Williams Bay; (262) 359-9072 or lakegenevaorchestra.org.

6-7: WELLNESS RETREAT

Retreat and be rejuvenated with a day full of workshops and local vendors sharing their wellness products. Workshops will be announced in January. 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., The Makery @ Bella Botanica, 1787 Walworth St., Springfield. Call (262) 379-8786 to register or visit bellabotanicaaboutique.com/makery.

12: "WINTER DANCE PARTY"

The official live and authentic re-creation of the final tour of Buddy Holly, Ritchie Valens and the Big Bopper. 7:30 p.m., Young Auditorium, UW-Whitewater; (262) 472-2222 or uww.edu.

13: WELLNESS RETREAT

Make a tiny paper collage using vintage paper in a bezel-cut, heart-shaped necklace. Class is \$30 per person. 10 a.m. to noon, The Makery @ Bella Botanica, 1787 Walworth St., Springfield. Call (262) 379-8786 to register or visit bellabotanicaaboutique.com/makery.

18: "SCHOOL HOUSE ROCK!" LIVE

A live adaptation of the beloved 1970's educational series. 6:30 p.m., Young Auditorium, UW-Whitewater; (262) 472-2222 or uww.edu.

18-20, 25-27: "THE NERD"

The Lakeland Players perform the classic play. Walworth County Performing Arts Center, Elkhorn; (262) 728-5578 or lakeland-players.org.

27: "THE CHURCH BASEMENT LADIES: 20TH ANNIVERSARY TOUR"

A revival of a beloved musical comedy. 2 p.m. and 6 p.m., Young Auditorium, UW-Whitewater; (262) 472-2222 or uww.edu.

MARCH

2: APOLLO CHORUS PERFORMANCE

7 p.m., Big Foot Auditorium, Walworth. For tickets, visit bigfootfinearts.com or call (262) 275-2117.

4: "BOBBY HORTON: SONGS AND STORIES OF THE CIVIL WAR"

Dressed as a 19th Century performer and using instruments of the period, the artist will explore the stories of the Civil War. 7 p.m., Big Foot Auditorium, Walworth. For tickets, visit bigfootfinearts.com or call (262) 275-2117. ▲

ADVERTISER INDEX

@properties..... 4-5	Elemental Skin & Body	Knoll Crane Inc. 30	Oakfire Pizza.....103
@properties	Medical Aesthetics..... 53	Knoll Steel Inc. 40	Paper Dolls Home Furnishings
Martha Cucco.....22	Imagine Theater.....113	Lake Geneva Blind Co.....14	& Interior Design.....91
The Krause Team.....25	Evergreen Country Club.....71	Lake Geneva Lodge.....67	Pier 290.....59
Stephanie Parent/Mary	First National Bank & Trust.....40	Lake Geneva Window & Door.....52	PlasmaLift Skin Clinic.....50
Brennan.....54	Flat Iron Tap.....105	Lake Home Living.....93	Rauland Agency Inc.....19
Abbey Resort &	Fontana Home.....94	Lake Lawn Resort.....15, 61	The Riviera Ballroom.....62
Avani Spa.....18, 78	Foremost Electric LLC.....93	Lake Life Market.....24	Shorewest Realtors
Abbey Springs.....65	Gage Marine.....58	Lakefront Shuttle.....69	Christine Fox.....8
Alpine Valley.....63, 100	Geneva Cabinet Company.....115	Lakes Brick & Block.....82	Soberg Window & Door.....82
Angelus - Home,	Gino's East.....106	Lazy Cloud Lodge	Something Blue
Garden, Lifestyle.....19	Haberdapper.....30	Bed & Breakfast.....66	Lake Geneva.....74
Anna Urban Photography.....57	Hawk's View Golf Club.....67	Le Roux Construction.....95	Stebnitz Builders.....84-87
Artistic Cleaners.....6	Ideal Impressions	Lowell Custom Homes.....2	Streblow Custom Boats.....39
The Baker House.....79	Photography.....74	Luxe Geneva.....28	Studio M Design Center.....9
Balsitis Contracting Inc.....116	Keefe Real Estate	Matt Mason Photography.....68	Studio Winery.....107
Blue Verve Photography.....65	Mick Balestrieri.....31	Matustik Builders.....11	Systems Design.....24
The Boat House.....111	Donna Brongiel.....13	Maxwell Mansion.....75	Theresa Hansen Interiors.....90
The Bottle Shop.....69	Tricia Forbeck.....51	McCormack &	Topsy Turvy Brewery.....29
Bruno's Liquors.....67	Janis Hartley.....7	Etten Architects.....35	Tuscan Tavern.....68, 108
Caravelle Lighting Inc.....14	Jerry Kroupa.....41	Newport West Shoppes.....17	Undercover Canvas.....38
Chuck's Lakeshore Inn.....70	Mark Larkin.....101	Nick's Upholstery &	Unique Surface.....16
D'aprile Properties.....3	Linda Tonge.....37	Lidia Design.....93	Verlo.....99
Delavan Lake Resort.....23	Bob Webster.....21	Northern Mechanical.....83	Waters Edge.....74

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the empty fields round
me; and my legs pounding
along roads; and sleep; and
animal existence.”*

Virginia Woolf



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