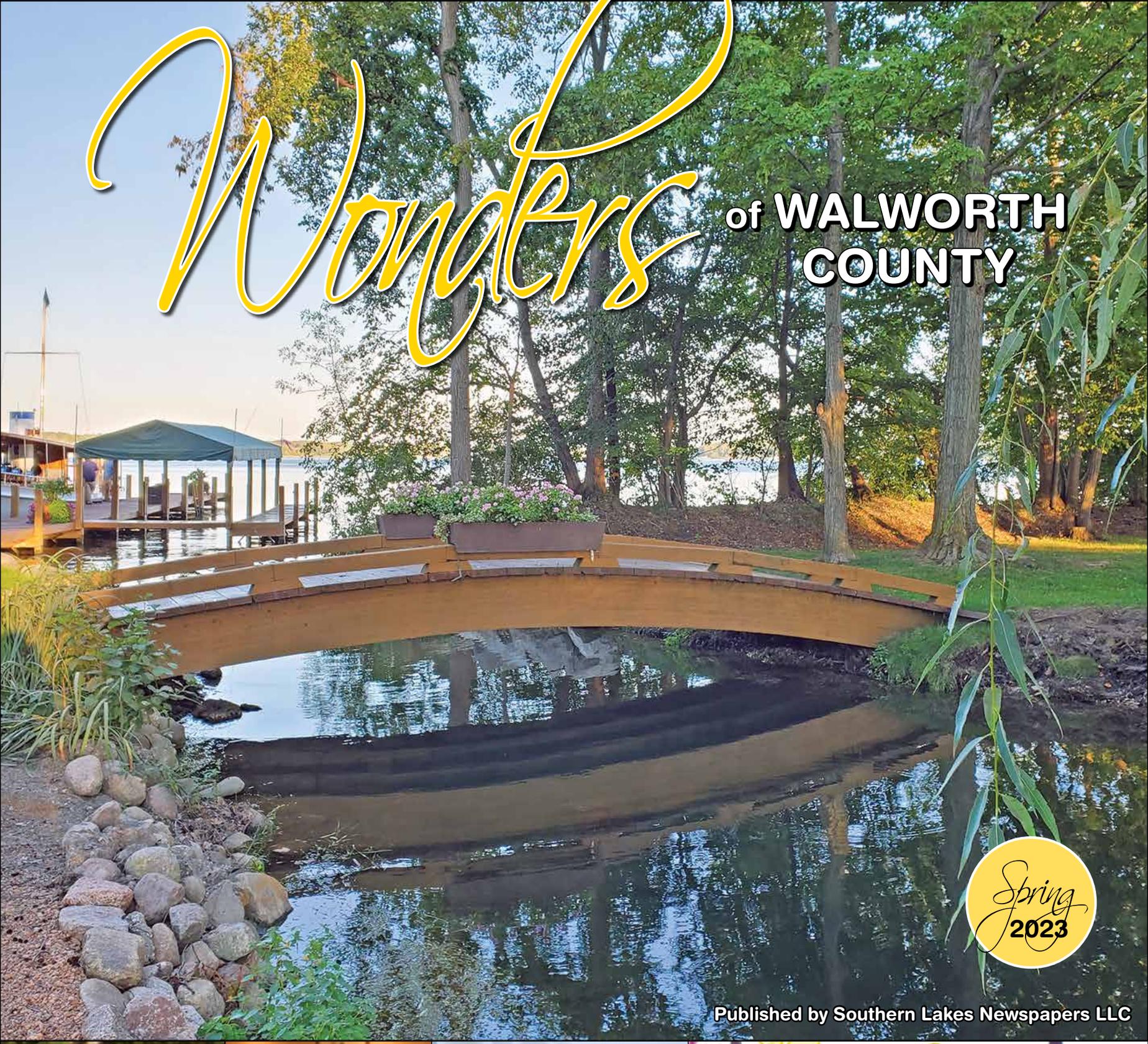




# Wonders

of WALWORTH COUNTY



Spring  
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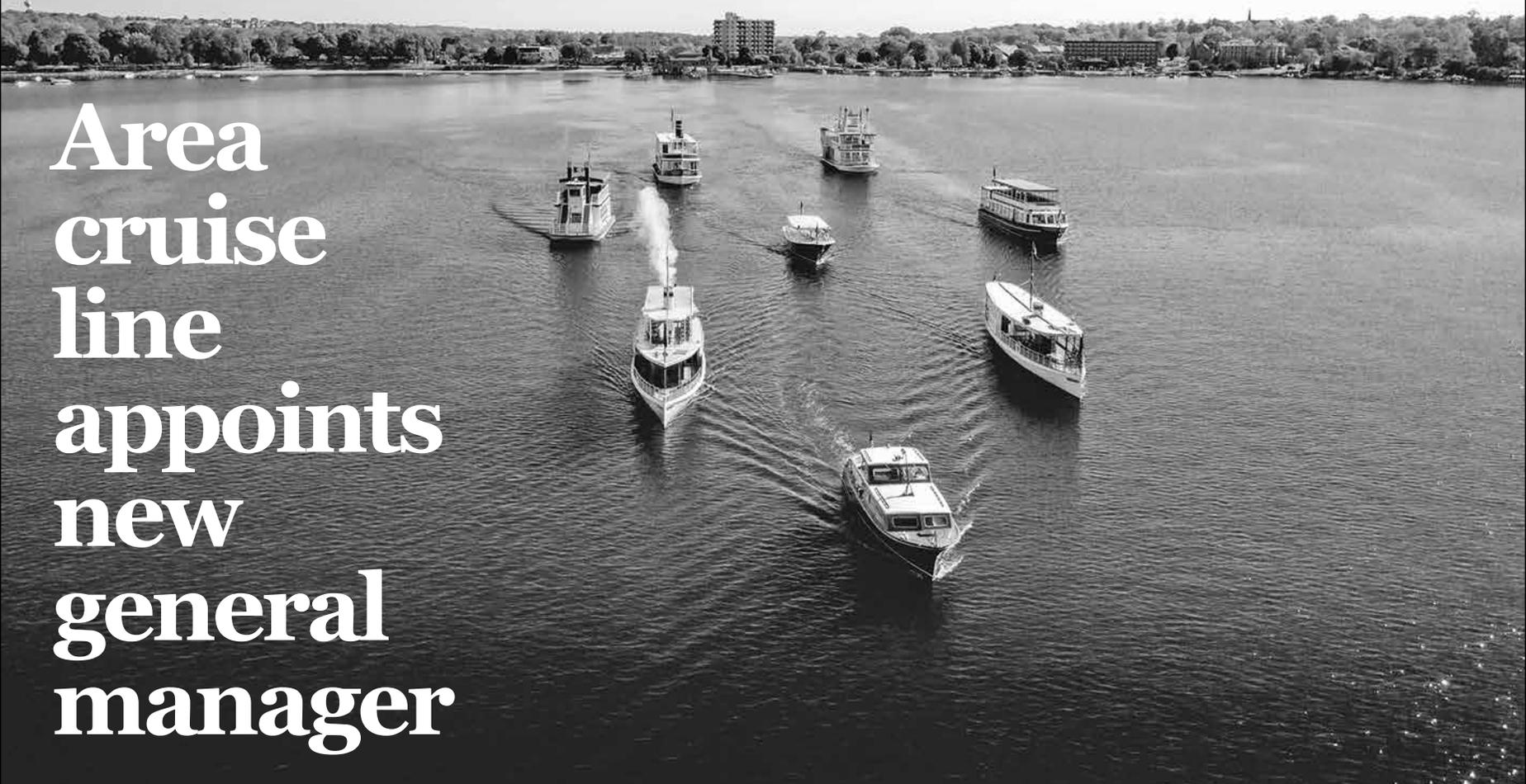


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# Area cruise line appoints new general manager

By Jason Arndt  
STAFF WRITER

As a college student, Ellen Burling spent summers working at Lake Geneva Cruise Line, ranging from ticket taker, tour guide and mail boat jumper.

"I was 19 when I started there. Between my freshman and sophomore year of college, I was hired and worked in the ticket office and as a tour guide to start with," Burling recalled. "Then the big was story was I wanted to be a mail jumper and the first year I was an alternate."

In the second year, she experienced a sprained ankle, but she continued her loyalty to Lake Geneva Cruise by working in the office.

Now 40 years later, Burling recently earned a promotion to general manager from assistant general manager.

For Burling, it was only a matter of time, considering her predecessor was set to retire after more than 30 years of service.

The discussions, she said, began last summer.

Burling, meanwhile, said in a news release that the promotion carries high importance since she has been part of Lake Geneva Cruise Line for most of her life.

"Being part of the Gage family of businesses and leading the cruise line division is something I have been a part of for more than half of my life," Burling



Ellen Burling

said. "I look forward to continuing the legacy and bringing some new ideas to the role."

Lake Geneva Cruise Line, founded in 1873, was purchased by the Gage family in 1958 and has continued to offer narrated boat tours, meal cruises as well as private parties, weddings, and corporate events.

Bill Gage, third-generation owner of parent company Gage Marine Corporation, believes Burling's promotion was well deserved since she has shown a stellar work ethic since she began as a young college student.

"Ellen's hard work and loyalty to the company over the past 40 years has been outstanding," Gage said in a news release. "Over the years moving from mail jumper to general manager shows her dedication and passion for this company. This promotion is well deserved, and we are excited to see what she does next."

Burling said Lake Geneva Cruise Line looks to bolster its staffing levels, including new captains to guide tour boats, with a look the future.

"We have quite a few new staff this year, we are kind of hoping to increase the number of captains that we have because some of them have been there many, many years," she said. "Not that we want them to leave us at all, but we know at some point they will. A couple of them were my grade school teachers and I am almost 60."

## Family affair

Burling, married to Eric and mother to three adult children, said the entire family has worked or is currently working at Lake Geneva Cruise Line.

Sons Ben, who graduated from Burlington High School in 2011, and Brad, a 2015 BHS graduate, as well as daughter Jessa have worked in multiple capacities for Lake Geneva Cruise Line.

As for Eric, who recently retired as principal at Burlington High School, he works part-time at Gage Marine serving in maintenance and valet services.

"My whole family has worked at the cruise line over the years," Burling said.

Burling attributes a strong staff for her loyalty to Lake Geneva Cruise Line.

"I think what has kept me here for so long is the staff," Burling said. "We have so many people who have been here 20 plus years, so I have really grown yep with a lot of these people. We also have an influx of young people."

Burling said Lake Geneva Cruise Line recently interviewed 25 to 30 people of all ages for various positions with the company.

While the cruise line has seen an influx, the family environment has remained the same, according to Burling.

"It is very much like a family," she said.

Lake Geneva Cruise Line, according to multiple sources, serves as one of the top attractions in Lake Geneva.

The cruise line offers a Geneva Bay Tour, Full Lake Tour, US Mailboat Tour, Black Point Estates Tour, Ice Cream Social Tour; cocktail, Sunday brunch buffet cruises, supper club dinner cruise, Jazz dinner cruise, special tours, among a series of other options.

Lake Geneva Cruise Line carries a fleet consisting of eight classic boats, including Lady of the Lake, Grand Belle of Geneva, Walworth, Duchess, Steam Yacht Louise, Polaris, Geneva, Lorelei as well as Pier 290.

All boats and locations each carry unique qualities and their own unique history, according to the company website.

For more information, visit [cruiselakegeneva.com](http://cruiselakegeneva.com).

## Wonders of Walworth County

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**above:** Lake Geneva Cruise Line boasts multiple boats in its fleet designed for touring Geneva Lake. The cruise line offers a variety of tours, cruises, and other features.

SUBMITTED PHOTO Wonders of Walworth County

**On the cover:** Spring is the perfect time to walk the Geneva Lake Shore Path.

PHOTO BY HEIDI SCHULZ Wonders of Walworth County

# Tales *with* tangible history

## Walworth County Historical Society using new space to show off multitude of donations

By Jennifer Eisenbart

STAFF WRITER

As with all things in life, items in the Walworth County Historical Society all come with a story.

For example, take the Civil War-era cannonball on the second floor. As WCHS's Jim Boardman explains, the cannonball was donated by an area resident who found it at a rummage sale in Nebraska.

The cannonball, though, wasn't from that state. In fact, the man who sold it regaled the buyer with a story. His son, the man said, nabbed it one weekend from a cemetery while attending the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater – the result of a college prank (and likely some alcohol).

When it was returned to Walworth County, Boardman said the Hazel Ridge Cemetery board recognized it as one of the many missing from its Civil War display. When the display was refurbished last year, though, the group told Boardman the historical society could keep the cannonball.

"You've got the better story,"

Boardman said he was told.

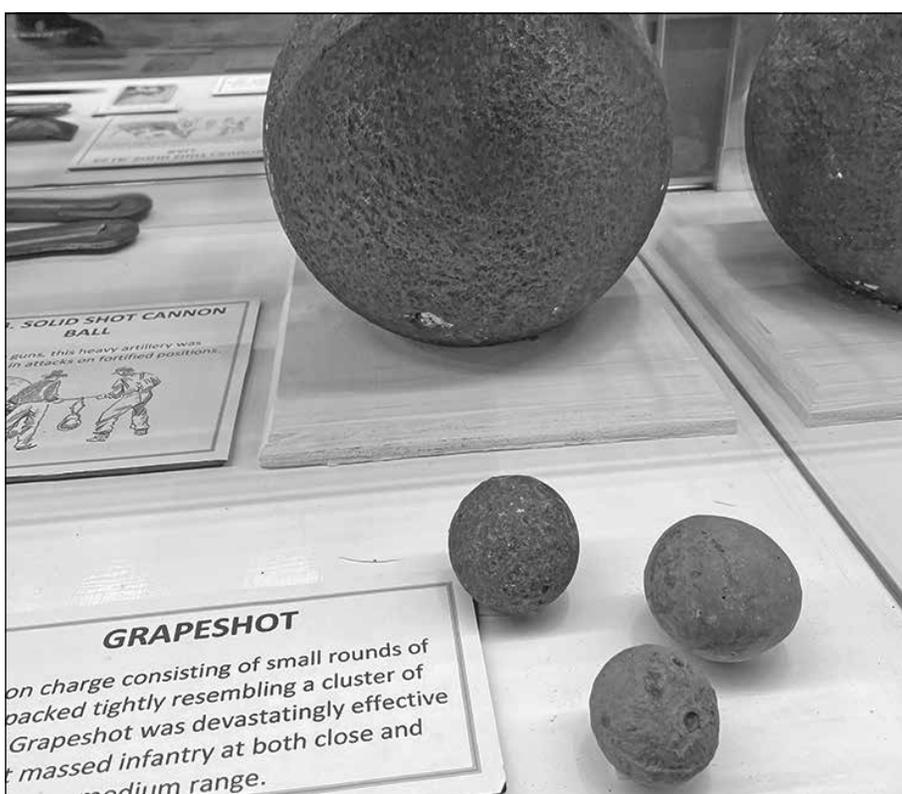
Slowly but surely, the Walworth County Historical Society is settling into the former Elkhorn municipal building – records, books and historical items all finding a place in the 20,000-square-foot space. With numerous different levels – five total, with the basement and the first floor each sporting two levels – the space that used to house first a fire department and then city hall is becoming a haven for those wanting to research their history.

"We've got space," Boardman said. "We've expanded. Most people don't know what we've got."

It's stories like the cannonball that help solidify the existence of historical societies everywhere. Pieces of history – whether they be books, documents, military uniforms or even scrapbooks – are kept so tangible history can not only be seen, but used in research and remembrance.

The move from the old WCHS building – just 1,800 square feet – has gone well. After the building was purchased in September of 2021, the first renovation phase of three was undertaken. Boardman said Phase I is finished, which included taking all of the cubicle and office spaces out of the first floor and converting it into document and research space.

On the main floor now is a full records room, along with displays of everything from Walworth County Fair memorabilia to old-fashioned scrapbooks and art. On the second level of the first floor is a genealogical research area and a library. That library features what could best be termed as a battlefield encyclopedia



**above:** This cannonball came to the Walworth County Historical Society from Hazel Ridge Cemetery. **top:** The abandoned second-floor auditorium at the Walworth County Historical Society is in need of renovations; and the genealogical research room.

JENNIFER EISENBART PHOTOS *Wonders of Walworth County*

of the entire Civil War, books that detail commanders, supplies, casualties and more. Numerous other tomes occupy the space as well, including a copy of Margaret Mitchell's "Gone With The Wind" – a story of special importance since Elkhorn resident Joseph Webster penned the song ("Lorena") that became the basis of the movie's main theme music.

The first-floor renovation also removed the carpeting to expose the old-fashioned terrazzo floors, as well as the non-functional but decorative first-floor fireplace.

"This is the only art deco building in the city," Boardman said. "And it's the first building that had public restrooms."

Now, though, the historical society is looking at the next two phases of the renovation process. Boardman explained that a first-floor museum will contain artifacts donated by Frank Eames – the former owner and operator of the *Elkhorn*

*Independent*.

The other museum that is part of Phase II is the Veterans Museum on the second floor. While both areas have what they need for the displays, it's a matter of getting everything set up, educational material printed and displays protected.

For example, the Veterans Museum space holds not only the cannonball as proof of the Civil War. On the wall is a hand-drawn recollection of Andersonville Prison – a prisoner of war detention facility for Union soldiers during the Civil War. Overcrowded and with the Confederacy unable to give resources to the prison camp, more than a quarter of the 45,000 prisoners sent there died.

The drawing unflinchingly displays the horrific conditions of the camp, drawn from memory by Thomas O'Dea. The WCHS copy was in the possession of Ervin Welch, who bought it at the James Churchill estate auction in 1964 and donated it to American Legion Post 45 in

Elkhorn.

The post, which still occupies the third floor of the building in spirit if not in full function, then donated the painting to the WCHS. It occupies a wall of the new Veterans Museum, roughly six feet long.

Also in the room is a collection of propaganda pamphlets dropped by the North Vietnamese during the Vietnam War, telling soldiers they were missed at home, imploring the military to go home before they died overseas.

There is also a North Vietnamese soldier's helmet, taken from a corpse by an area resident – later donated to the museum. Other uniforms, ammunition, firearms and memorabilia occupy the space.

For all the work left to be done on Phase II, however, it is Phase III that is in the most need of funds. Work on that space includes the second-floor auditorium, still featuring a stage with its original curtains. Drop ceilings cover up most of the ornate ceiling, however, and the elevator shaft ends in the middle of what used to be the seating area for the auditorium.

That space was used for everything from high school graduations to school plays, and also hosted several weddings – among them that of Kenny Amon and his wife, Bernice. Amon owned Amon and Sons, and died last year.

The area remains structurally sound, as Boardman explained, but needs extensive renovations. The stage and original dressing rooms are all intact, but the space has fallen into disuse. It currently serves as a holding area for much of the collection that awaits museum space.

Boardman said that restoring the space, which will include restoring the stage, all of the flooring, curtains and ceiling area, will cost roughly \$500,000. He added that if someone will fund the restoration, the WCHS will agree to name it after that person.

Boardman admitted that the historical society is looking for donors to help preserve the history they are working so hard to display. Phase I cost about \$340,000, which included a new roof on the building, and while the WCHS isn't broke, dues won't even cover a fraction of the costs of continued renovations.

Operating costs, which include utilities, internet and phone, also cost about \$30,000 a year.

Looking to the future, Boardman said that he is hopeful corporate sponsors or wealthy donors might come forward.

"People like that, that have some funding," he said. "That would be great."

For years, Boardman said, the lack of space meant the historical society simply accepted items that were donated and put them in storage. Now, with the space available, it's just a matter of putting money into the display.

As Boardman explains, the items in the WCHS building are only insured for a fraction of their worth because most are, in essence, priceless.

"We can't afford to insure pieces at what it's worth," he explained. "You can't replace any of it. We've got stuff, it's only one copy, it's the only copy."

If interested in donating or volunteering time with the WCHS, contact Boardman 262-949-4646 or the WCHS at 262-723-7848.

## A Q&A regarding hospice and palliative care

Illnesses and aging can force families to make challenging decisions regarding the health and well-being of people they love. Care facilities, home health aides and other services can help improve quality of life for those who are no longer well enough and physically or cognitively and to care for themselves. Palliative and hospice care are part of these care offerings.

### What is palliative care?

Palliative care is specialized medical services for individuals living with serious illnesses. It is not designed to cure or treat the condition itself, but it is a way to manage symptoms. It is typically used in conjunction with other forms of medicine that are attempting to treat or cure the disease.

### What is hospice care?

Hospice is similar to palliative care in that it is geared toward enhancing quality of life. Hospice care is for people in the last phases of incurable diseases and is intended to ensure they live as fully and comfortably as possible, according to the American Cancer Society.

Unlike palliative care, which accompanies traditional medical care, those who accept hospice care typically cease any other care attempting to cure the illness.

### Who can benefit from palliative or hospice care?

The National Institute on Aging says anyone living with a serious illness – such as cancer, dementia, Parkinson's disease, and heart failure – can appreciate the support palliative care provides.

It is helpful at any stage of the illness, and is best started soon after diagnosis.

Hospice care is for those who are in the final stages of their illnesses. Generally, hospice services are reserved for people who are expected to live another six months or less if their illness continues to run its course.

### Who is in charge?

Patients and their families decide what they want out of these care measures.

Palliative care teams are separate from the patient's medical care team that's managing their treatment.

Hospice care teams coordinate the majority of care for the patient and communicate with the patient's medical care team.

(METRO CREATIVE)

# Help wanted

## Hospice care volunteers make a difference

By **Tracy Ouellette**

EDITOR IN CHIEF

**H**ospice care can bring great comfort to its patients and their families during a very difficult time. Having a warm hand to hold or someone to talk with while on a walk can be the difference between despair and peace.

At Aurora Health Care's hospice program, volunteers are needed to help out in a multitude of areas, including visiting with patients, office work, running errands, sewing and more.

"To be a volunteer, all you really need is a kind heart and listening ear and you don't need any kind of healthcare background," said VeraJane "VJ" Johnson, Aurora Health at Home volunteer coordinator for the Burlington area and Walworth County.

Erica Reed, volunteer coordinator for Aurora Health at Home in Racine and Kenosha counties said anyone who wants to volunteer in hospice will find a place for their skills.

"Of course, our biggest needs are visits with patients," Reed said. "But we need people to do things like drop off baskets, help out in the office with paperwork and the admission packets, help with sympathy cards that can be written at home, people to make supportive phone calls with patients, which also can be done from home. There's so much people can do!"

Reed added that they also need sewers for their Memory Bear program.

"They make teddy bears out of our patients' clothing and/or blankets for the families," she said.

Regardless of what a volunteer wants to do, Reed and Johnson both said, their help is greatly appreciated.

"We will always work with our volunteers to find the best fit for them," Reed said. "If they come to us and are a bit nervous about visiting with patients, we will find other ways for them to give back to our patients and families."

She added that Aurora has a training program to provide volunteers with education on what to do in specific scenarios before they begin home visits. Most of the training is done one-on-one or in a small group, Reed said.

"We also do a background check and a health screening on all volunteers," Reed said.

### Volunteer experiences

Phil Kilkenny, of Darien, has been volunteering with Aurora Hospice for about 16 years now. He is also a deacon with St. Andrew's in Delavan and St. Patrick's in Elkhorn.

"For my hospice work, I visit in the rest home and in-home to give caregivers a break," he said. "It's usually an hour or two at a time. Some are on a regular basis and some are on an emergency basis."

Kilkenny, 77, said there is a shortage of men volunteers in hospice and he fills a much-needed opening for male patients.

"Because of the shortage of men volunteers, they try to team me up with other guys," he said. "They like it, we can talk



Sometimes a simple talk, game of cards or walk with a hospice volunteer can make a patient's day.



STOCK PHOTOS Wonders of Walworth County

about farming and that type of thing."

Kilkenny added that many men don't feel like giving supportive care is "their thing" but just talking to the patients is what's important.

"Just talk about their past and it will spark a memory and then the conversation is underway," he said. "This is such a rewarding thing and there's such great need so caregivers don't get worn out. They're so appreciative and happy to see you, both the patients and caregivers."

Kilkenny said he feels like his volunteer work in hospice is part of his ministry as a deacon.

David Miller, 66, of Delavan, is new to hospice volunteering, beginning about a year and a half ago.

"I retired in December of 2021 and started the following week," he said. "I absolutely love doing this and wish I could have done it sooner, but I had to wait until I retired. I was too busy."

Miller said he decided to volunteer after his mother needed hospice before she died.

"All the people caring for her in hospice were so nice and I knew this was right up my alley," he said. "I've been volunteering since I was 20 years old and knew I wanted to do this."

Miller visits patients on a regular basis,

having two to six patients at a time. He also is "on call" for emergency needs, including when a caregiver who needs a break.

"Most of my patients have been women, but most of the guys I've had would prefer men," he explained. "As far as I know, only a couple of us guys are involved in this."

Miller added that it works best when the volunteer can connect with the patient through a shared interest or activity.

"You try to find out what things they enjoy," he said. "After that, you gear the visit to that. Their interests run the gamut, but often it's a simple thing like playing cards that connects you."

Miller said that going into the visits with the knowledge that it's for a limited time helps with the grief after the patient dies.

"It can be hard sometimes," he said, "but it's probably the greatest joy you can get. To make someone happy with only showing up and being there, it makes it all worthwhile. It's amazing that just giving a little bit of your time can make someone that happy."

For more information about volunteering in the Burlington area and Walworth County, call Johnson at 262-757-2575.

For more information about volunteering in Kenosha County or other parts of Racine County, call Reed at 262-729-0010.

# Local couple work to create dementia friendly county

Bernadette and Eric Russow moved to Elkhorn 13 years ago and said they brought with them patience, a thirst to learn and find humor in the day-to-day, and an ability to love others.

In 2008, the Russows joined the Walworth County Aging Network and assisted in raising awareness and funding for the Walk to End Alzheimer's in Lake Geneva. Three years after, the walk was recognized as the No. 1 walk in the United States for communities of similar size.

In 2015, the Russows became trained and established the first Memory Café at the Matheson Memorial Library in Elkhorn. Since five additional Memory Cafés have been added: Lake Geneva, Delavan, Burlington, Whitewater and a second one in Elkhorn. Memory Cafés are comfortable, social gatherings for those experiencing minor memory loss and/or have mild cognitive impairments, and for caregivers.

In 2017, Bernadette, president, and Eric, secretary/treasurer, launched the Dementia Friendly Community Initiative in Walworth County, providing free training to individuals, police, first responders, groups, faith communities and businesses, interested in learning more about dementia. Their goal is to help the community become dementia friendly.

Former Wisconsin Gov. Martin Schreiber wrote in his book "My Two Elaines," "The biggest problem is ignorance about Alzheimer's."

Walworth County became the first county in Wisconsin to be nationally recognized as dementia friendly by the Dementia Association of America and the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging. To date, 6,000 people and 70



Walworth County Cycling Without Age pilot Chad Sutkay with Touching Hearts give a ride to a couple during the Elkhorn Christmas parade in December. The Dementia Friendly Community Initiative in Walworth County recently purchased two new trishaw bikes for the successful program.

SUBMITTED PHOTO Wonders of Walworth County

businesses in Walworth County have been trained.

After learning about the 16% increase in death by those with Alzheimer's in 2020 because of isolation, the Russows began sponsoring Cycling Without Age, a grassroots movement, which started in 2012 Copenhagen Denmark, with the purpose of providing free rides to elderly citizens struggling with isolation, dementia, Alzheimer's, and mobility issues. This interactive activity allows these citizens the time and space to feel

the wind in their faces and recall the joy of mobility. Cycling Without Age is an international phenomenon in more than 52 countries. Wisconsin holds the title of most chapters, in the United States with 16.

In 2021, DFCI's first year of operating Cycling Without Age, 400 rides with the use of two trishaw bikes, called Chats, purchased, and shipped from Denmark at a cost of about \$10,000 each. In 2022, 700 rides were provided with the help of 30 volunteer trishaw pilots, the eldest pilot being 88 years old. Most recently

the Russows became the winner of the David Bretl Community Betterment Award, presented by The Walworth County Economic Development Alliance.

Because of the generosity of contributors to the United Way of Walworth County, DFCI was awarded United Way funds and ARPA Grants managed by United Way of Walworth County, totaling \$20,750. DFCI just one of the 45-plus community vetted organizations helped by United Way of Walworth County.

This financial contribution helped the Russows purchase two additional trishaw bikes for DFCI, at an increased price of \$13,800 each because of inflation, and a second trailer.

"There are a myriad of ways. We would be remiss if we didn't thank Kunes Automotive," the Russows stated in a press release.

Kunes is loaning the use of a pickup truck used to pull the trailer to and from the numerous locations.

The financial need for DFCI continues, the Russows said, including the need of specialized skills in computer and accounting, social media, art design, and project management, as well as more volunteer pilots, for as little time as two to three hours a month.

The Russows ask that community members consider supporting the mission to create dementia friendly spaces and promote dementia awareness throughout the community.

"There is a role for everyone in Walworth County with the Dementia Friendly Community Initiative and Cycling Without Age," Bernadette said.

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# Programming *the* focus

## Tree House's Lauderdale hopes to raise awareness for child abuse prevention



Kayla Lauderdale, shown here with her nieces, is the new program director at the Tree House Child and Family Center in Walworth County.

*SUBMITTED PHOTO Wonders of Walworth County*

By **Jennifer Eisenbart**  
STAFF WRITER

There might be no better time for the Tree House Child and Family Center's new program director Kayla Lauderdale to be getting introduced to the community.

For Lauderdale, who joined Walworth County's premiere child abuse prevention agency in January, the last few months have led up to one of the biggest in her profession. April is Family Strengthening Month, previously known as Child Abuse Prevention and Awareness Month.

It's a subject Lauderdale, a Walworth County native, has dealt with extensively in her career. Since graduating from Badger High School in 2013 and then the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh in 2016 with a Bachelor of Science in criminal justice and a Bachelor of Social Work, Lauderdale has put in time advocating for children across the state.

Behind her decision to return to southeast Wisconsin and the Tree House is her love of her family. Her father, now a retired police officer, worked on the board at the organization and introduced Kayla to the work the group did at a young age.

Now with nieces getting into extracurricular activities, it was time for Lauderdale to come home.

"After the pandemic, I wanted to be closer to family," she explained.

Now Lauderdale and Tree House Executive Director Koko Cooper are working to provide opportunities in the community in April and to promote the programs that exist through the Tree House.

Some of those programs include:

- Healthy Mom, Happy Baby – A group for mothers 21 and younger, partnering with the Walworth County Departments of Health and Human Services and Public Health through Walworth.
- Empowering Caregivers – A support group for any

person taking care of a child that is not biologically theirs; for instance, stepchildren, foster care, guardianship and adoption, among others.

• A new group that is starting for caregivers like those above, but specifically aimed at those who have to take over because of substance abuse issues.

It's programs like these, Cooper said, that help organizations get ahead of situation that lead to abuse.

"With many things, when you look at some of the issues facing society, there's a desire to get upstream of the issues," explained Cooper when asked why April's focus on child abuse prevention had been renamed. "Can we address the issues and stop it before it starts?"

Cooper, like Lauderdale, grew up in Walworth County and called it "an amazing place to live." The prosperity of programs like the Tree House is because of the partnerships that exist.

"We are actually working collaboratively with several other non-profits," Cooper said. "It's very inspiring to see. But we can't do it alone. The more we work together, the more we are getting ahead."

Lauderdale agreed.

"Here in Walworth County, there is a very conscious effort not to duplicate efforts," she explained. "It makes it easier to expand our reach. It's going to help us not only with the month of April but with child abuse prevention year-around."

Cooper said that hiring Lauderdale came with an added bonus – Lauderdale loves working with statistics.

"She's using that information to inform and guide the programs and services that we bring to Walworth County, either standalone or in partnership with other organizations," Cooper said.

In addition, as of February, Lauderdale has taken the

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# 50 years later ...

## Long-time Lakeland volunteer honored

By **Jennifer Eisenbart**  
STAFF WRITER

Arlene Torrenga may have 50 years experience in volunteering with Lakeland Health Care Center, but her roots began inauspiciously.

As Torrenga explained March 5 at LHCC, she originally started volunteering as part of an initiative at her church, where people would go to spend time with the elderly at what was then called Lakeland Nursing Home.

“My first experience was ... not the best,” Torrenga recalled.

Torrenga’s first efforts weren’t necessarily received well. The first person she visited didn’t speak English, the second gave her one-word answers.

The third? Well, that woman flat told Torrenga, “I hate it here.”

Said Torrenga March 5, “I was like, ‘What do I say next?’”

But Torrenga persevered, coming back and even making progress with the third woman – who apologized the next time they met. That led Torrenga to bringing her family over to the care facility for its Christmas party that year, and many times since.



**above:** Arlene Torrenga (right) is introduced and honored by Lakeland Health Care Center Volunteer Services Coordinator Colleen Lesniak in an early March event. **below:** Arlene Torrenga has volunteered at Lakeland Health Care Center in its different iterations now for 50 years. Here, Torrenga shows off the cake in her honor during Sunday’s recognition of her service.

JENNIFER EISENBART PHOTOS *Wonders of Walworth County*

That same family was present March 5 as Torrenga was recognized for her 50 years of volunteer work, much of which has been spent singing for and with the residents. In fact, March 5 is the day Torrenga traditionally stops by to sing hymns with the residents.

It’s how the care facility managed to surprise Torrenga with flowers and cake, as well as family members in the audience.

Colleen Lesniak, the Walworth County Volunteer Services Coordinator, said she basically began her career with Torrenga, adding that she’s “known and loved” the woman in her time there.

“She had a life-long passion of giving back,” said Lesniak. “It is my great pleasure to just say ‘thank you.’”

Torrenga received a certificate of appreciation from Walworth County Administrator Mark Lubberda along with Lesniak, as well as another from the care center itself.

After Lesniak finished the presentation, one of the residents shouted out, “We love you!”

Torrenga appeared stunned, and admitted, “This is a real surprise.”

She then went into the history that led to her long-time service with the care facility.

Torrenga admitted her first experience with the elderly at the care facility didn’t go as planned. The third woman, in fact, gave Torrenga a small piece of her mind when she tried to console her.

“I said, ‘Well, if you have a warm bed to sleep in and food to eat and family and friends ... she said, ‘You can preach all

you want, but I hate it here.’”

Torrenga walked out thinking, “I don’t know about this,” but she came back the next month. When she went in to visit that woman, she was asked, “Are you that lady from Delavan?”

When Torrenga said yes, the woman told her, “Oh, I have to apologize to you. I was just really rude to you.”

Torrenga came a few more times, and then returned for the Christmas party with her children. She convinced the woman to join in the party, and went and sang during the gathering.

The volunteer coordinator said Torrenga had a beautiful singing voice, which started Torrenga’s long-time service. The hymn singing began when her mother was a resident at LHCC.

“I just learned from her that you should be humble and do things for others,” Torrenga said.

Eventually, her family would come and join in at the Christmas parties, with her husband, Bob, always singing the “Five Golden Rings” verse.

As the cake was passed out on March 5, Torrenga led the visitors and residents in a favorite hymn, “How Great Thou Art,” which Torrenga said, “I’ve sung here so many years.”

She said Monday that the children at March 5’s recognition were her brother’s grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

“I was just really pleased,” Torrenga said.

If interested in volunteering, contact the Walworth County Volunteer Services Coordinator by calling 262-741-4223.

## TREE HOUSE • CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

role of response team coordinator for the Walworth County Sensitive Crimes team. She is working with a multi-disciplinary team that includes law enforcement, child protective services, prosecution and child advocacy center staff.

“Those that are on the front lines,” she explained, pointing to the people working on intervention and response.

All of that works toward the group’s programming in April, which will include a number of different options for families. The Tree House will help coordinate a chalk art virtual gallery.

### How to participate

- Create a chalk masterpiece in your driveway, on the sidewalk, on the fence in your backyard, or (with your teacher’s permission) on your school playground. There is no specific theme, so feel free to get creative. Artists of all ages

are welcome.

- Submit a photo of finished artwork, along with the artist’s first name, first initial of last name, and age – as well as any information or story the artist would like shared about their work – to [info@treehouseforkids.net](mailto:info@treehouseforkids.net) with subject line Virtual Gallery. (This information will be posted with the photo unless submission indicates otherwise.) Multiple submissions from artists are welcome! Photos can be submitted now through Friday, April 22.

- Photos and artist information will be posted within two business days of receipt on the Family Strengthening Month Facebook page, @JoinHandsforKids.

The group also got a grant from the Child Abuse Neglect and Prevention Board in order to provide “Parenting on the Go” bags. Those include age-appropriate toys and activities for three different age groups – newborn to six months, six months to two years and school age, 3 to 6 years – to help

parents keep their children occupied when they are stuck in lines, running errands and the like.

“That is going to build good behavior in public for those kids and really build that parent/child bond,” Cooper said.

New Beginnings will offer “Spring Into Awareness” day April 2 in Elkhorn at Veterans Park, the Geneva Lakes Family YMCA will do Healthy Kids Day April 22 – the same day will be Whitewater’s International Children’s Day at Lincoln Elementary – and the Tree House’s Blue Ribbon Bingo Dinner will take place Friday, April 21, at Hawks View. Limited dinner tickets are still available by calling 262-755-8733.

For more information on the Tree House, go to [TreeHouseforkids.net](http://TreeHouseforkids.net). Additional information on family strengthening is available through Five For Families at [www.fiveforfamilies.org](http://www.fiveforfamilies.org) and the Wisconsin Child Abuse Neglect and Prevention Board at [www.preventionboard.wi.gov](http://www.preventionboard.wi.gov).

# Soothing SOUNDS

“ A sound bath is an immersive, full-bodied mystical experience that uses sound to invite powerful therapeutic and restorative process to nurture mind, body and soul. ”  
*Kimberly Lempart*

Sound baths promote relaxation and more

By **Jason Arndt**  
 STAFF WRITER

When people experience stress, they often seek a variety of ways to cope, ranging from simple meditations to taking a step back to unwind as well as other methods.

While many people likely try or rely on traditional methods, there is another option – what’s known as a sound bath.

Kimberly Lempart, of Delavan, has been involved in sound baths since she went to her first session two years ago in Lake Geneva.

Since then, she has found the method satisfying, and has regularly held sound bath sessions throughout the area.

“A sound bath is an immersive, full-bodied mystical experience that uses sound to invite powerful therapeutic and restorative process to nurture mind, body and soul,” she said. “Participants simply lie down and relax while I start with an introduction explaining this enchanting 90-minute experience.”

Lempart then guides participants through light breath work with a short meditation before she plays various instruments such as Quartz crystal bowls, Himalayan bowls, shamanic drums, chimes, bells, an ocean drum, seed pods, a Chau gong and a Paiste Chiron planetary gong.

Sound baths, she said, promote deep relaxation, release stuck energy, reduce stress, rejuvenate and help with sleep and fatigue, among other benefits.

“Sounds are used to harmonize, cleanse, release and bring spiritual awareness into a creative, magical space within yourself,” Lempart said. “The sound tools of vibration, which create harmonious resonance in the body, are a way to restore health.”

## SOOTHING SOUNDS

Lempart, born in Chicago and raised in Lake Como, graduated from Badger High School and worked in many area factories for most of her life until she encountered addiction.

While she has since recovered, Lempart found meditation, and eventually discovered sound baths about two years ago.

“I fell in love with this beautiful healing modality. I felt a connection to myself, my body and the Universe,” she said.

Lempart attended retreats, where she learned more about sound baths, and later purchased items so she could conduct her own sessions.

Since then, she has gradually increased her sound-healing equipment with items including Quartz crystal bowls, Himalayan bowls, shamanic drums, an ocean drum, chimes, bells, seed pods, tuning forks and sacred gongs.



Kimberly Lempart taps a gong during a sound bath demonstration.

SUBMITTED PHOTO Wonders of Walworth County

“Every bowl is tuned to different note and there are a wide variety of sizes which can produce different frequencies,” she said. “I also have different mallets for the bowls and gongs which can produce varying sounds and vibrations.”

## POSITIVE FEEDBACK

Lempart offers sound baths, yoga nidra with gong and restorative yoga with sound healing in the Southern Lakes Newspapers region.

She regularly presents sound baths at Big Foot High School in Walworth, Yoga Hohm in Delavan, Enlightened Living Center in Burlington, Elkhorn’s Eleven11 and at the Honey Creek Collective in East Troy.

“I have quite a few first timers to sound baths and they are always delighted at how wonderful it is,” Lempart said. “Experienced sound journeyers have given me great feedback about my style, diversity

and playing abilities. I love to hear about people’s sound journey experiences.”

As for people experiencing a sound bath for the first time, Lempart offered some simple, yet important, suggestions to foster a successful session.

“It is important to be warm and comfortable in a sound bath. I recommend wearing warm, comfy clothes, bring a yoga mat or pad, blankets, pillows, bolsters, eye masks or chair if you do not lie on the floor,” she said.

“People should expect to come away from a sound healing experience feeling extremely relaxed with some clarity, peace of mind, perhaps a resolve, an answer to a question they didn’t even know they wanted to ask,” she added.

## NATIONAL TRENDS

In recent years, sound baths have garnered national attention, including a

feature on NBC’s Today Show.

Today Show hosts Hoda Kotb, Jenna Bush Hager and Sheinelle Jones experienced sound baths and gave favorable reviews.

During the feature, Kotb and Bush Hager each explained their session brought them a relaxed state while Jones felt energized.

Dr. Helen Lavretsky, of the University of California–Los Angeles’ department of psychiatry professor in residence, told the Today Show that she believes sound baths – and musical therapy in general – have become popular because of the simplicity and not requiring extensive learning.

“It also has a particular effect on the brain because music or sound healing has a particular vibration,” Lavretsky told TODAY. “It’s just one practice, a very ancient practice, that can be part of the portfolio of tools that lead to stress reduction.”

Lempart said she is not surprised by the growing popularity.

“I think sound baths have become more popular because people are looking inward, making mental health a priority, and desiring change in themselves and how they react to the world,” Lempart said. “People are ready to heal.”

## PAYING IT FORWARD

For Lempart, presenting sound baths serves as a way of giving back, especially since sessions lead to many benefits for people.

“When I started playing sound healing instruments I realized how beneficial this was for me, how much it was helping me and I wanted to share this with others,” she said.

“I want to give back, to bring goodness, wholeness, peace and love into the world. I want to have a positive impact on the world, to connect and bring healing to people,” she added.

While she has regularly held sessions at several locations, Lempart is open to more opportunities including bringing sound baths to other institutions.

She is available for group or personal sound bath sessions in her space or at another venue.

“I would love to bring this to more schools, hospitals, nursing homes and recovery centers as well as yoga studios, retreats, wellness studios, businesses or right into your home,” she said. “This is a wonderful healing modality to offer to yourself, your employees, friends and family. Absolutely everyone can benefit from sound healing.”

Those seeking more information or looking to schedule a sound bath session may contact Lempart at 262-348-6681 or kimberlylempart@gmail.com.

# In remembrance

## Long-time community enthusiast Barb Fischer praised

By **Jennifer Eisenbart**

STAFF WRITER

The City of Elkhorn and Walworth County lost a bright light Dec. 21, 2022.

Barb Fischer, an Elkhorn resident committed to continuing education, to her community and to her family, died of injuries she suffered in a car crash in Lake Geneva shortly before the Christmas holiday.

“Christmas was her absolute favorite time of the year,” said her son, Travis, adding that Barb was excited to finally have all three of her children home at the same time.

Fischer’s memorial service was March 19 at Evergreen Golf Course.

Fischer’s son and those who she touched in the area are remembering a woman who cared about all around her.

“She was a special light in the community, without a doubt,” Travis said. “Always smiling, always friendly, always happy.”

The list of organizations and businesses that Barb contributed to is, in a sense, almost endless, the result of a life spent in the area. An Elkhorn-area native, she graduated from Elkhorn Area High School along with her husband, Art, the two opened Art’s Service and Sales in Elkhorn.

Barb also served in the community. For decades, she was clerk for the Town of LaFayette, working with numerous town chairs and board.

Bruno Schiffleger was one of those chairmen, and he appreciated all of the work Barb contributed.

“She was a very wonderful person,” Schiffleger said. “Her dedication to her job (was obvious). She was so efficient. Being town chairman was such an ease because she did everything so efficiently.”

Schiffleger said that one of his goals as town chairman was to rewrite the municipal code for coherency.

“It appeared every one of them was written by a different lawyer,” he explained. While it took nearly two years, the job was accomplished.

“Without her ... we never would have been able to accomplish anything,” he said.

Barb also worked with the Elkhorn Area Chamber of Commerce, spending more than 10 years working with Chris Clapper, the chamber’s executive director, in one capacity or another.

“What I admired about Barb was her way of being such a quiet but so very involved and important part of the community,” Clapper said. “Whether it being the town treasurer, treasurer of the Alice in Dairyland (board), EASD School Board member she took those responsibilities to the highest degree and was so professional but yet so very modest in what she did.”

The Alice in Dairyland finals are headed back to Walworth County this spring. Initially, the county was scheduled to host in 2020 but the COVID-19 pandemic forced the event to a mostly virtual platform.

Clapper said the reason that the county has been able to weather that storm is because of Barb.

“Barb served as our treasurer and was a reason that we were able to keep things financially responsible,” Clapper said. “The Walworth County committee has had to really plan and pay for the event twice on the money raised.”

There was also Barb’s devotion to the Elkhorn Area School District. She served on the School Board from 2006 until her death, and was recognized by EASD Superintendent Jason Tadlock for all that she did, including her roles as vice president, treasurer and deputy clerk.

“Not only did she fill the School Board seat, but she served on the CESA 2 board,” Tadlock said, adding that Barb was a Wisconsin Association of School Boards delegate as well.

“She was just a huge advocate for students,” Tadlock said.

Tadlock said Barb was always early to meeting, to “ask any questions, make sure she was always prepared.”

Tadlock pointed out that Barb would always attend school events, volunteering her time and her baking skills.

In addition to serving on the school board, Barb was also involved with the Elkhorn Area High School Scholarship Foundation and treasurer and secretary for the EAHS All-Sports Booster Club.

“She was just really involved,” Tadlock said. “She’ll be remembered for a long time.”

Her son said that, over the years, Barb likely interacted with thousands in her time at the Town of LaFayette, at School Board and at the family business.

“She didn’t have a lot of free time,” he said.

Travis said that he was hoping that drawing attention to Barb’s long-time devotion to the community would remind people of her selflessness.

“There’s a lot of people in the community she touched,” Travis said. “She was one of those beautiful, pure spirits.”



**Barb Fischer**



This painted by Sharon artist Martha Hayden, entitled “Red House in Summer,” was recently purchased by the Racine Art Museum as part of its permanent collection through the Watercolor Wisconsin 2022 statewide competition.

ARTWORK COURTESY MARTHA HAYDEN *Wonders of Walworth County*

# A familiar view for Hayden

## Painting of next door brings area artist award from RAM

By **Jennifer Eisenbart**

STAFF WRITER

For decades, Sharon resident Martha Hayden has shared her artwork locally, nationally and even internationally.

A graduate of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Hayden’s paintings range from still lifes to plein air to the mural at the Beloit Municipal Building – Wisconsin’s largest landscape painting.

But Hayden kept her latest honor in state, as she earned the RuthAnn Pettibone Memorial Purchase Award at the recent Racine Art Museum’s Watercolor Wisconsin 2022 statewide competition.

Hayden’s piece, called “Red House in Summer,” was announced Dec. 11 at the preview reception and awards ceremony at the Racine Art Museum’s Charles A. Wustum Museum of Fine Art.

Hayden said the red house – located next to hers in Sharon – is something she has painted hundreds of times. She continues to revisit the home because of the “tower” at the top of the house and its coloring.

She said she painted this version from her back porch and utilized the contrast between the greenery and the red of the house.

“When you really look at it, it’s a pretty spectacular house,” she said. “It’s a good

lesson in reds. When you get up close to it, it’s not really red at all.”

Hayden used gouache for the painting, a different kind of watercolor. Gouache doesn’t absorb into paper in the same way watercolor and other paints do. It remains on the paper’s surface, in a thick and opaque layer, which allowed her to come back and continue to alter the colors as needed.

The painting will now be part of the permanent collection at RAM – one of a few of Hayden’s works that are there.

Sharon has proved to be an ideal location for Hayden, who moved there in 1962 and has considered it her home since.

“It’s a very pretty area,” she said. “Sometimes I wish I had gone farther north. I still think it’s a good location.”

The location is more or less central to Milwaukee, Madison and Chicago, she said, allowing her to exhibit in all three cities.

“We needed a place to work,” she added. “It was an abandoned house, so it’s been an incredible amount of work.

“It’s been worth it,” she said.

Plans for the future continue to include travel for Hayden, who will paint outdoors this summer along with one of her daughters.

She is also planning on participating in the 57th Street Air Fair in Chicago in June – the oldest art fair in the Midwest.

“This was the first one, and it’s still going,” Hayden said.

RuthAnn Pettibone Memorial Purchase Award winners can be found at the Racine Art Museum’s website, ramart.org.



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