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NEW YEAR, NEW YOU!

John Bogan, head chef and owner of the Lake Geneva School of Cooking, sharpens his knives prior to a recent session.

SANDRA LANDEN MACHAJ
Spirit of Geneva Lakes



IT'S COMIN' UP JANUARY EVENTS

Jan. 6 Canine Companions Puppy Raiser Class for Future Service Dogs

– Come learn about Canine Companions Volunteer Puppy Raiser Program and participate in training future service dogs. Learn about training puppies, in general, and what it takes for a puppy to become a service dog.

This class is open to anyone over the age of 10 years old (children ages 10-15 must be accompanied by an adult). The only dogs in these classes are the Canine Companions puppies being trained. No pet dogs are allowed. Participants will work on basic obedience, walking calmly on a leash, distractions and socializing with new people. Anyone who attends a session will have a chance to work with the puppies on the various training exercises.

There is no cost to attend a class however, pre-registration is required as only six people are allowed per class. To register, visit lakegenevaschools.revtrak.net, select Badger Community Education, Winter and on the following page scroll down to "Puppy Raiser..." From there select a class date.

Classes will be held at Badger High School, Room 312, from 11 a.m. to noon on Jan. 6 and 27, Feb. 3 and 24, and March 9 and 23.

Jan. 25 Interview with Iconic Lake Geneva Entrepreneurs

– Join the Friends of Lake Geneva Public Library in their presentation of an interview with local, iconic entrepreneurs John Reed and Paul Lauterbach of Lake Geneva Tennis at 6:30 p.m., Jan. 25.

Other upcoming interviews scheduled: Feb. 29 – Amy Peterburs Stuebs of Lorelei Bittner's Bakery; March 28 – Rob Pesche, of Pesche's Greenhouse.

Attendance is free for all Friends of the Library members; \$5 for non-members. Membership forms are available at the library and before sessions begin.

Lake Geneva Public Library is at 918 W. Main St. For more information, call 262-249-5299.

Jan. 27 Abominable Snow Race

– The Abominable Snow Race is a 4- to 6-mile race featuring 25-plus winter-themed obstacles, held at Lake Geneva Zipline and Adventure Park. It's fun for the whole family (ages 4 and older). Run Just for Fun, go for the distance, or compete for cash and prizes. All racers receive a Finisher's Medal, an Abominable T-Shirt, and a craft beer (21-plus) or hot chocolate.

Lake Geneva Ziplines & Adventures is at N3232 County Rd. H. For more information, including registration, visit abominablesnowrace.com

Jan. 31-Feb. 4 Winterfest

– VISIT Lake Geneva and the City of Lake Geneva will present the 29th Annual Winterfest, featuring the U.S. National Snow Sculpting Championship. The event welcomes the most talented and award-winning sculpting teams from across the country. Witness 15 state-champion teams at work during an epic three-day competition where their artistry is put to the test in creating remarkable, larger-than-life snow sculptures.

The snow sculpting competition begins at 11 a.m., Wednesday and continues through 1 p.m. Saturday at Riviera Plaza and Flat Iron Park along the beautiful shore of Geneva Lake. It's free to attend and view, and sculptures will remain on display through Sunday (and until they melt).

Also enjoy an array of more wintery fun throughout the Lake Geneva region during Winterfest. Don't miss the Downtown Ice Sculpture Walk, bonfires on the beach, live entertainment and much more for the whole family. For more information, go to visitlakegeneva.com.

Ongoing events

Tristan Crist Magic Theater, at 609 W. Main St., Lake Geneva. One of a kind performer that wows audiences with with, jaw-dropping illusions and gut-wrenching escapes! For show dates and times call 262-248-0505 or visit lakegenevamagic.com.

Dancing Horses Show. At the Dancing Horses Theatre, 5065 Highway 50, Delavan. This dazzling spectacle features an array of horse breeds that perform alongside their trainers in this cavalcade of equestrian artistry. Visually stunning, and performed in a state-of-the-art, 300-seat theatre. For show dates, ticket prices and additional information call (262) 728-8200 or visit thedancinghorses.com.

Beginner Pickleball Clinics every other Tuesday, 10:30 to 11:30 a.m. – Lake Geneva Tennis Club, 630 Veterans Pkwy., Lake Geneva. Free of charge (a deposit will be required for new clients to hold their spot), eight people per class. Learn the fastest growing sport in America. Men and women welcome – no experience necessary and all equipment will be provided. Register by calling 262-812-0033 or email john@lakegenevatennis.com.

The calendar of events is compiled from a variety of sources including area chambers of commerce and visitor bureaus and contains events available as of press time.

Dates and times may change and events may be canceled. Please verify details and locations prior to making plans.

THE SPIRIT

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GENERAL MANAGER
Sue Z. Lange

EDITOR IN CHIEF
Heather Ruenz

ADVERTISING DIRECTOR
Vicki Vanderwerff

CREATIVE DIRECTOR
Heidi Schulz

PAGE DESIGN
Jennifer DeGroot

SALES
Pete Hansen
Tamera Hamilton

DISTRIBUTION DIRECTOR
Lindy Sweet

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THE SPIRIT

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Kickstart your **creative** side

COOKING, SIGN PAINTING CLASSES AMONG LOCAL OFFERINGS

by **Sandra Landen Machaj**
CORRESPONDENT

In addition to saying goodbye to old habits, the New Year is also an ideal time to try something new.

One place to develop creativity is by spending time at the Lake Geneva School of Cooking, participating in one of a wide variety of culinary classes offered. Under the direction of award-winning Chef John Bogan, participants gain culinary skills and of course, enjoy an elegant dinner prepared throughout the class.

Not surprisingly, cooking is Chef John's

favorite activity. He began his career in Providence, Rhode Island where he attended the Johnson and Wales Culinary School. He then worked in Boston until relocating to Chicago and later, to the Lake Geneva area.

He had his own restaurant, Fedora, was the Chef at the French Country Inn on Lake Como and finally – in July 2008 – opened the Lake Geneva School of Cooking in downtown Lake Geneva.

The school is a unique experience of taking a cooking class with friends or family that ties in food preparation,

pairing wines with foods, socialization, and sometimes even dancing. The classes feature a variety of food dishes from around the world and each one ends with the participants sitting down to a delicious, quality meal that they helped prepare.

The evening begins with a glass of wine, fresh popovers, an introduction from Chef John followed by an overview of what will happen, a demonstration of basic cuts, and safety instructions. The class is then divided into teams, each of which creates one of the courses for the meal.

The professional kitchen where guests

From groups of friends to corporate workshops, Board & Brush in Lake Geneva offers a chance to enjoy time together in a relaxed atmosphere while bringing out the creativity of those in attendance.

PHOTO COURTESY BOARD & BRUSH Spirit of Geneva Lakes

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work features two professional gas stoves and large surfaces to prepare food on. Chef John and his professional staff are there to help every step of the way while working hard to make the class a memorable cooking experience.

While cooking classes are available all year, Chef John tailors the experiences and the menu to the group as well as to the holidays and seasons.

Early 2024 classes

In January, one of the popular cooking classes will be “My Life in France with Julia Child” which will be offered two separate dates – Jan. 12 or Jan. 20.

Most people who enjoy cooking liked Julia’s style and her use of wine – to cook and drink – and the class will emulate her relaxed style and some of her favorite recipes. The menu will consist of her classic French onion soup, a freshly tossed Caesar salad, Chicken Coq au Vin

as the main course, and a decadent chocolate mousse for dessert. Of course, the menu will include pairing wines with the food—a must for a class honoring her cooking.

Once the hands-on portion of the class is complete, Chef John might quote Julie Child by announcing: “We will take off our aprons and enjoy our meal.”

February, although the shortest month of the year, is busy at the Lake Geneva School of Cooking. In addition to the regular classes, there will be special events for Valentine’s Day and Mardi Gras, and Chef John has a special plan for each of them.

Chocolate! Chocolate! Chocolate! is a family-oriented workshop that’s perfect for the chocoholics in your family. It will include decorating assorted pastries with whimsical designs, will be held on Sunday, Feb. 4 from noon to 3 p.m. and include a light lunch.

Super Bowl Sunday is a favorite day for many, particularly if their



above: Valentine Midnight Truffles are rich and chocolatey – perfect for a special occasion. **middle, right:** Potato Crusted Salmon is one of the special entrees created at the cooking school. **at right:** Pasta Shells Stuffed with Three Cheeses is a favorite Italian dish that features pasta handmade in the cooking class.

PHOTO COURTESY LAKE GENEVA SCHOOL OF COOKING *Spirit of Geneva Lakes*

top, right: Recipes from the “Seasons of My Life,” written by Chef John Bogan, helps attendees create delicious and flavorful meals at home, including ones learned in class at the Lake Geneva School of Cooking.

SANDRA LANDEN MACHAJ *Spirit of Geneva Lakes*

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above: A special project, these door mats provide a personalized, welcome addition to your home. **top:** A special date night at Board & Brush allows couples to create signs that compliment each other.

PHOTO COURTESY BOARD & BRUSH Spirit of Geneva Lakes

football team is playing or if they enjoy the fun of hosting or attending a tailgate party. To mix things up a bit, consider spending Feb. 11 at Chef John's class, making homemade Italian sausage from scratch that will be among a special tailgating menu prepared that day. The meal will be served during the game, which can be viewed on all the TVs in the place.

Valentine's Day and Mardi Gras will feature a variety of events from Feb. 9 to the 14. Enjoy a New Orleans dinner on Feb. 9 or 10, a festive Mardi Gras style event on Feb. 13 or a more romantic Valentine's Day dinner on Feb. 14.

Note that these festive cooking classes require advance registration and tend to fill up quickly. It's not too soon to make those reservations now.

Prices for cooking classes vary by date and event and Chef John and his staff will do their best to make it an evening their guests will enjoy and not soon forget.

For more information about the Lake Geneva School of Cooking, 727 Geneva St., Lake Geneva, call 262-248-3933 or visit lakegenevaschoolofcooking.com.

Here's your sign

Anyone who has wondered if they have artistic talent—and considered painting or drawing but were too embarrassed to try it—should check out Board & Brush Creative Studio in Lake Geneva.

A class at Board & Brush offers guests an opportunity to create a sign on wood with the guidance of staff on hand.

Creating a professional looking sign is possible even for beginners as the instructors will guide participants through each step of the process. With each step, beginning with sanding the wood, distressing, and staining it followed by painting it using a stencil and finally waxing, the confidence of those taking the class increases.

A workshop usually lasts about three hours and at the end, there is a sense of accomplishment as attendees have turned a simple piece of wood into a beautiful sign they can hang on a wall at home.

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The concept was created by Julie Selby of Hartland, in 2015, after she invited friends to her home as a social evening to do some painting on wood.

It was so well received that more gatherings followed and not long after, she was getting requests to open stores from areas of Wisconsin but also other states. By 2016, more than 40 Board & Brush stores had opened in a variety of states.

Open to all abilities

“Today there are over 200 Board & Brush stores, part of a franchise but each store is individually owned,” said Chelsea Rudig, owner of the Board & Brush Creative Studio in Lake Geneva.

Rudig who said she has spent her life around creativity, has always enjoyed arts and crafts. So, it’s not surprising that this is the perfect business for her.

“I have been around wood and tools my whole life as my father owned a construction company,” Rudig said. “I always feel very close to my late father when I am working with wood and tools.”

It was this love of creating that led her to this business, feeling it was the perfect fit for her – one that she continues to enjoy and expand.

Board & Brush offers a variety of classes. For the beginner who has not worked with wood signs before, it’s recommended they choose a do-it-yourself workshop where everyone works on the same design project.

For someone more secure in their ability or those who’ve created other sign art pieces they can sign up for a workshop that allows participants to choose their own project.

“All the wood used in the projects is new and usually pine. We use pine because it is affordable and a great wood to distress and make into your own vision,” shared Rudig.

Those interested can sign up for a class alone, with a friend or with a group. Private events can also be booked to celebrate birthdays, a bachelorette party, or other special event. Businesses are known to book team building events at Board & Brush.

“It is a great place to come for a girls night out, a date night, a family outing or business team building event. The options are endless,” said Rudig.

“You do not have to be artsy or creative to leave my studio with a project you will be proud to display in your home,” she added.

Board & Brush is at 262 Center St., Lake Geneva. Classes are priced at \$73 per project and some projects have a \$5 up charge for additional labor or parts.

For more information or to make a reservation, call 262-725-5194 or visit the website at boardandbrush.com.



top: Imagine an evening of fun with friends creating beautiful wooden signs to hang in your homes. **at right:** It’s a moment of truth when the stencil is removed and guests get to see how their project looks.

PHOTOS COURTESY BOARD & BRUSH Spirit of Geneva Lakes

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Take time to **RECHARGE**

Make yourself a priority from workouts and therapies to hair and nails

by **Sandra Landen Machaj**
CORRESPONDENT

The holidays are behind us and our homes and schedules have returned to normal. All the Christmas holiday decorations have once again been packed away until the next holiday season. Now it's time to focus on you.

For many, the holiday season was a hectic time from cooking, cleaning to shopping and entertaining, leaving little, if any time to focus on your own needs or

allow your body to relax and be restored.

In the Lake Geneva area, there are a number of spas, both large and small that offer services that can help you be the best version of yourself.

Before choosing a spa, do some research on the quality of the services offered. Make certain the people providing them are licensed, if applicable, and that experienced and knowledgeable personnel are overseeing the operation to make certain regulations are being followed.

It's also advised that you visit the spa to learn about what services are offered, that it's clean, welcoming, and comfortable, and that any equipment you may be using is in good working condition. If possible, get a recommendation from someone you know

who has used the services and read reviews.

Next, decide what you're seeking to provide the feeling of relaxation and restoration you are seeking. You may want to speak with someone at the spa who can help you choose services that will work well together to accomplish the better, healthier body on your New Year's wish list.

THE SPACE

One of the newest places in the Lake Geneva area that offers a variety of well-being and fitness center services is The Space. It's in a building on Main Street that was built in 1897. Owner Amber Mae explained that it took two years to remodel the building so it would complement the

left: The hair stylists at Rau Salon keep up with the latest trends and offer cuts to men, women and children. They can also help give customers a new look from cut and style to color and extensions. **right:** Having a pedicure includes relaxing in these comfortable chairs enjoying a foot soak and by the time you're finished, your feet will look and feel renewed.

SANDRA LANDEN MACHAJ *Spirit of Geneva Lakes*



business' offerings.

"While it took two years to turn the building into a space that could encompass all our needs, it took much longer to create a space that embraces a healthy life center... a place that allows one to be their own guide. It has been my dream to open such a space for many years," Mae, who has spent a significant amount of time in the fitness and gymnastic realm.

"Our goal was to create a space that will bring out the jungle in you while offering a fresh new raw approach to holistic health," she added.

When you enter The Space, you will find the first floor warm and welcoming with a raw juice bar. The rest of the floor is dedicated as the Jungle – a place to purchase a variety of workout clothes and objects such as crystals and books to aid you on the road to a better you.

"We carry a variety of clothing from the brands Lululemon, Free People, comfortable and moveable clothing," Mae explained.

The second floor provides ample space for the variety of services provided by the spa. As you climb to the second floor, you might feel the weight of the world falling from your shoulders because of entering the serene room with a fireplace where activities such as yoga, meditation, and Pilates are held.

There are a variety of different health services offered that can be tailored to your needs, each provided by an expert in the field. They combine a variety of both Eastern and Western health practices.

Along with the traditional massage, meditation and

at left: Rau Salon carries a wide variety of products to help clients take better care of their hair and skin at home. **below:** The Space makes its home in this 1897 building at 605 W. Main St. in Lake Geneva. It features a variety of services and classes that aim to help guests help achieve health, wellness, relaxation and happiness.

SANDRA LANDEN MACHAJ *Spirit of Geneva Lakes*





yoga classes, The Space offers a number of services that may be new to you, such as the Black Light Spin Cycling class.

“The bikes are in a room with no light except black light. The coordinator yells encouragement into a microphone to encourage the best effort of the cyclers,” said Mae, who frequently runs these classes. “Being in the dark encourages the rider to focus on their own work, not that of others in the class.”

Sound Bowl Therapy, which might also be unique to guests, uses crystal bowls to produce various frequency sounds that are meant to create an energy that encourages peace and calm during meditation.

Another feature is salt room therapy, which has become more popular over the past few years. The Space has a beautiful salt therapy room, a comfortable relaxing area where you sit, relax and inhale the salt as it’s released in the air.

Unique to The Space is the Hydration Room where – under medical supervision – one can receive IV hydration delivered by registered nurses. Many come for hydration when recovering from various illnesses including covid, migraines, and even after a night of over-indulgence. Vitamin cocktails are also infused as needed.

For an interesting mini-spa experience, consider a dip in the small cold plunge pool followed by some time in the hot sauna – the combination of which is sure to refresh and renew. This is likely similar the feeling of being in Scandinavia where cold plunges and hot saunas are enjoyed regularly, though usually outdoors in the snow, to improve their health.

Those looking for more traditional services such as facials, waxing, body scrubs, eye lash application and body scrubs can find all of them here as well.

If you’re ready to branch out, give one of the less traditional services a try, such as acupuncture, card readers, a boxing class or a visit with a shaman or mental health therapist.

There are also classes offered, including dancing and boxing, as a way to relieve stress while working on body movement.

“Boxing classes are used to encourage relieving the stress and anger that are held within,” Mae explained.

“Relieving the inner stress and anger makes one a better, calmer person, our goal for everyone,” she added.

Different services are available on different days depending on the



top left: Amber Mae, owner of The Space, stands near the raw juice bar on the first floor of her business, which she said she’s dreamed of owning for years. **at left:** This quiet, peaceful room offers a relaxing vibe where meditation and yoga classes are held.

SANDRA LANDEN MACHAJ *Spirit of Geneva Lakes*

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availability of the teaching specialists who rent time at The Space to provide their classes. Some classes may be available only once or twice a week, others more often. If you are interested in providing classes, contact The Space for space rental availability.

The Space is at 605 W. Main St., Lake Geneva. For more information, including an interest in providing classes, finding out what classes are currently being offered, or to schedule an appointment, call 262-812-4000 or visit www.thespaceilg.com.

RAU SALON

A New Year might mean it's time for a new look for many. Turn in last year's hairstyle and color into a new look and kickoff the New Year with a fresh start.

Your visit to the Rau Salon, which services between 300 and 400 customers weekly, can help with a variety of services, including the latest in hair design, makeup application, and nail services.

"The Salon keeps up to date with all the latest trends. We offer training in cutting, styling, and the latest trends in hair coloring and styling. Hair styling and colors are influenced by fashion trends, and thus change with the trends," shared Wendy Rau, owner of Rau Salon, which is in Twin Lakes.

For many years, beauty shops only served women while men went to barbers. Today, hair salons offer services to men and women as well as children, along with providing a variety of other services.

When considering a new hairstyle, a salon that puts forth an effort to stay current is a good place to start. If you are unsure what look you would like or what might work best for you, begin with a consultation with one of the knowledgeable stylists at Rau.

There is never a wrong time to consider a change in style or color and one of the latest in coloring techniques for hair is balayage. With this technique, the hair closer to the scalp is the darkest and it becomes lighter as it moves away from the scalp. The variation in color allows clients to go longer between touchups, which saves money and provides an up-to-date look.

Hairpieces can be added for those seeking a fuller or longer look or to add color. Some hairpieces are easy to place and can be added or removed when needed. Hair extensions made by Halo are also easy to work with and can be added for a quick change.

More permanent hair extensions can be woven into the hair by a professional stylist and continue to be adjusted by the stylist as the hair grows. Whether a permanent or more casual hair piece, these are both suitable options to add to the fullness or length of your hair.

Once the new hairstyle is completed, consider a professional makeup session to



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SANDRA LANDEN MACHAJ Spirit of Geneva Lakes

add to your new look. This may include adding eyelashes that are fuller or longer than your own, whether for a special occasion or just to present a different look for the fun of it.

Manicures and pedicures are procedures that help keep nails healthy – on hands as well as feet – and adds a clean look. The shellac polish that's available is recommended for your fingernails as it lasts for up to two weeks before needing removal and replacement.

For a fun family day, make a visit to Rau Salon a time for bonding with your

daughter, niece or granddaughter. New haircuts and a manicure and pedicure for each and you'll not only leave feeling refreshed but have made a memory to add to your collection. Then close out the quality time by going out for lunch or dinner where you can both show off your new look.

Rau Salon is at 316 N. Lake Ave. in Twin Lakes. For more information about the services offered, call 262-877-2188 or visit www.rausalon.com. Salon hours are 9 a.m. to 9 p.m., Monday through Thursday and 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., Friday and Saturday.

Ice Castles to become Winter Realms





Changes aimed at staying open if weather proves challenging

by **Sandra Landen Machaj**

CORRESPONDENT

A winter activity that has become a family favorite in the Lake Geneva area has been a visit to the Ice Castles. The first year it was on the shore of Geneva Lake but the following year moved to Geneva National where it has continued to be built each year since.

Ice Castles are built out of hundreds of thousands of individually created icicles that are hand placed by professional ice artisans into the unique structure and then sprayed with water to mold them into an ice wall that has a unique texture.

LED lights are inserted into the walls and a variety of specialty structures inside the castle have been enjoyed by people of all ages.

While visitors look forward to attending the special attraction each year, the Wisconsin weather has at times interfered with the ice remaining frozen. Last year was a prime example because a warm spell

a few days after the opening of the event caused it to melt.

The warm weather lasted long enough that the artisans could not replace the melted icicles. Unfortunately, it was cancelled for the season after only three days, far sooner than anyone hoped or expected.

This year, the company that creates Ice Castles has rebranded and updated the display under the name Winter Realms. The new displays will be different but still include many of the activities that have been enjoyed by fans the past five years.

Winter Realms will debut in Lake Geneva and also in Lake George, New York this winter.

The Ice Castles were first created by Brent Christensen after his family moved from sunny California to snowy Alpine, Utah as a means to entertain his children in the winter and encourage them to play outside.

He built the first one on the front yard of his home and soon found that not only his children but their friends and neighbors – adults as well as children – enjoyed his creation. That led to the concept of starting Ice Castles.

As has been said in the movie *Field of Dreams*, “If you build it, they will come,” he built it and they did. As Ice Castles began to appear around the country in areas known for cold winter weather and snow,

visitors purchased tickets and made their way to enjoy the beautiful sights. Some visited more than once as there is a different look in the daytime than at night when the colorful LED lights that have been placed inside the walls of ice reflect out.

The original Ice Castles was a frozen house of fun with slides, thrones and tunnels to enjoy. These beautiful ice caverns with colorful LED lights that have been frozen into the walls presents visitors with narrow pathways of crusted snow and sometimes, the tall walls of ice have created large, cavernous areas.

This will be the first year of Winter Realms and will include many activities in the beautiful open areas on the grounds of Geneva National, its walking trails and golf course. There will also be some private areas where visitors can enjoy a break from the main attraction to sit by a firepit.

While the event will have many new creations to enjoy, there will still be ice caverns, thrones, slides, and tunnels to traverse through.

The new creations are considered to be more “weather resilient” in the way they are created, although they are still created by the same ice artisans that have built the Ice Castles, according to the company.

This year’s new events will include horse drawn wagon rides that make their way along the golf course among glowing lights. It’s even more beautiful at night and when there is a covering of snow on the

above: The walking tour paths will be brightly lit and will travel throughout portions of the Geneva National property.
opposite: Walking through an illuminated tunnel is one of many sights to enjoy at Winter Realms.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF WINTER REALMS *Spirit of Geneva Lakes*

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ground, the lights shine.

Those who prefer to walk can enjoy a stroll along one of the walking pathways decorated with colorful lights that unveil a world of magic with every step while you breathe in the cool, crisp, fresh winter air.

The Polar Pub is a place for adults to purchase beer or winter cocktails as well as for those who prefer, non-alcoholic drinks and snacks, provided and sold by Geneva National. Visitors can sit and relax and sip their drinks before, after or in between some of the activities. A fireplace is also available to gather around though guests can also take their beverages with them as they stroll through the Realm.

The popular ice slides will once again attract visitors of all ages as they are built for adults and children. Take a ride down the new tubing hill with a snow path that will be groomed for safety, speed and fun.

The Arctic Village – a complex of towers, caverns, igloos and snow sculptures, including a gigantic ice throne will be part of this year’s display.

The Ice Volcano will wow visitors as they watch it bubbling in the distance. Stop and warm up while sitting closer to it and then continue to the next attraction. Snacks, both savory and sweet, can be purchased at the concession stands.

For those who are visiting with a small group and prefer private time, the Arctic Alcove can be rented. It’s been known to be rented as a space for a marriage proposal or other important moment, such



at right: People of all ages can enjoy the Ice displays. **below:** The beauty of the LED lights inside the ice creations is a sight to see after dark.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF WINTER REALMS *Spirit of Geneva Lakes*



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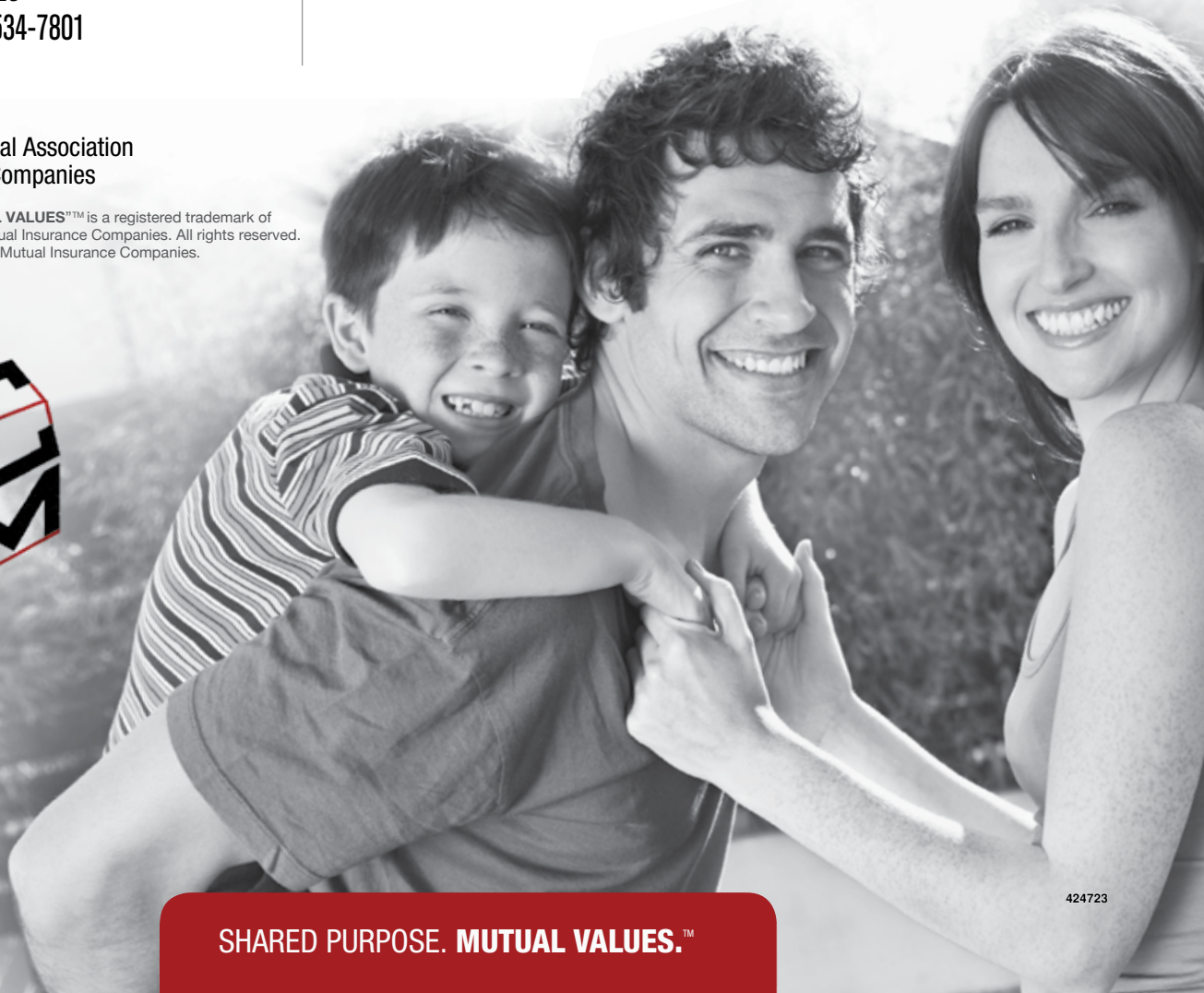
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as a birthday or small family gathering but is available to rent for other groups as well.

The Arctic Alcove is ideal for celebrating in a beautiful setting. If you are going to be using it for a special occasion, notify the administration as they can arrange a 20-minute advance time to set up decorations, which must be completed by the renter, not the staff.

The space is available for \$450 per hour and includes six tickets to explore Winter Realms at their leisure. Two additional tickets may be purchased if desired. The space is inside and includes a furnished lounge area and private fire pit. A complimentary sleigh ride for the party of six is included in the Arctic Alcove ticket, along with a 20% discount on any merchandise purchased at the gift shop. A digitalized or printed photo of the group is also included.

Those who visit Winter Realms are

advised to dress appropriately for the weather. Wear warm boots with soles that will grab onto the ice or snow to prevent sliding or falling. Dress boots with high heels are not recommended. Snow pants for warmth and to keep dry are recommended for those planning on tubing, riding down the slides, or crawling through the tunnels. Do not forget gloves and a hat, along with a warm coat.

“Our commitment to innovation allows us to continue creating enchanting moments proving that even in the face of changing climate patterns, the spirit of winter can be celebrated,” Ice Castles CEO Kyle Standifird states on the website.

The site goes on to explain that Winter Realms will still include a structure created by the same artisans who created Ice Castles but they will be built in a way that will allow them to close off sections of the display if they become unsafe due to weather while still allowing the safe

portions to remain open. Because of the dependence on winter weather for this event, some activities may be closed when weather does not co-operate.

Tickets for Winter Realms can be purchased online at winterrealms.com. Reservations for the Arctic Alcove and horse drawn wagon rides need to be purchased online at time of purchasing tickets. The alcove spaces tend to sell out especially on weekends so those interested are advised to make reservations as soon as possible.

The attraction is expected to open sometime in January but is weather dependent so keep an eye on the website for updates. Tickets are issued for a certain entry time. While there is an entry portal of a half hour, there is no mandatory exit time.

Winter Realms is located at Geneva National Resort and Club, 1091 Hidden Cottage Circle, Lake Geneva.

Passing through the narrow passageways offers a wow factor at these ice creations.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF WINTER REALMS *Spirit of Geneva Lakes*

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‘Out with the old’

Decluttering will save time, stress in the long run

by **Sandra Landen Machaj**

CORRESPONDENT

How many times have we heard the phrase, “Out with the old, in with the new,” especially as we start a new year? It’s often the time of year we realize that our possessions are taking over our lives and it’s time to get them and our home under control.

According to a survey conducted by the National Organization of Professional Organizers, it was reported that 80% of the items in our homes are rarely if ever used. That means we generally use 20% of the items we’ve accumulated.

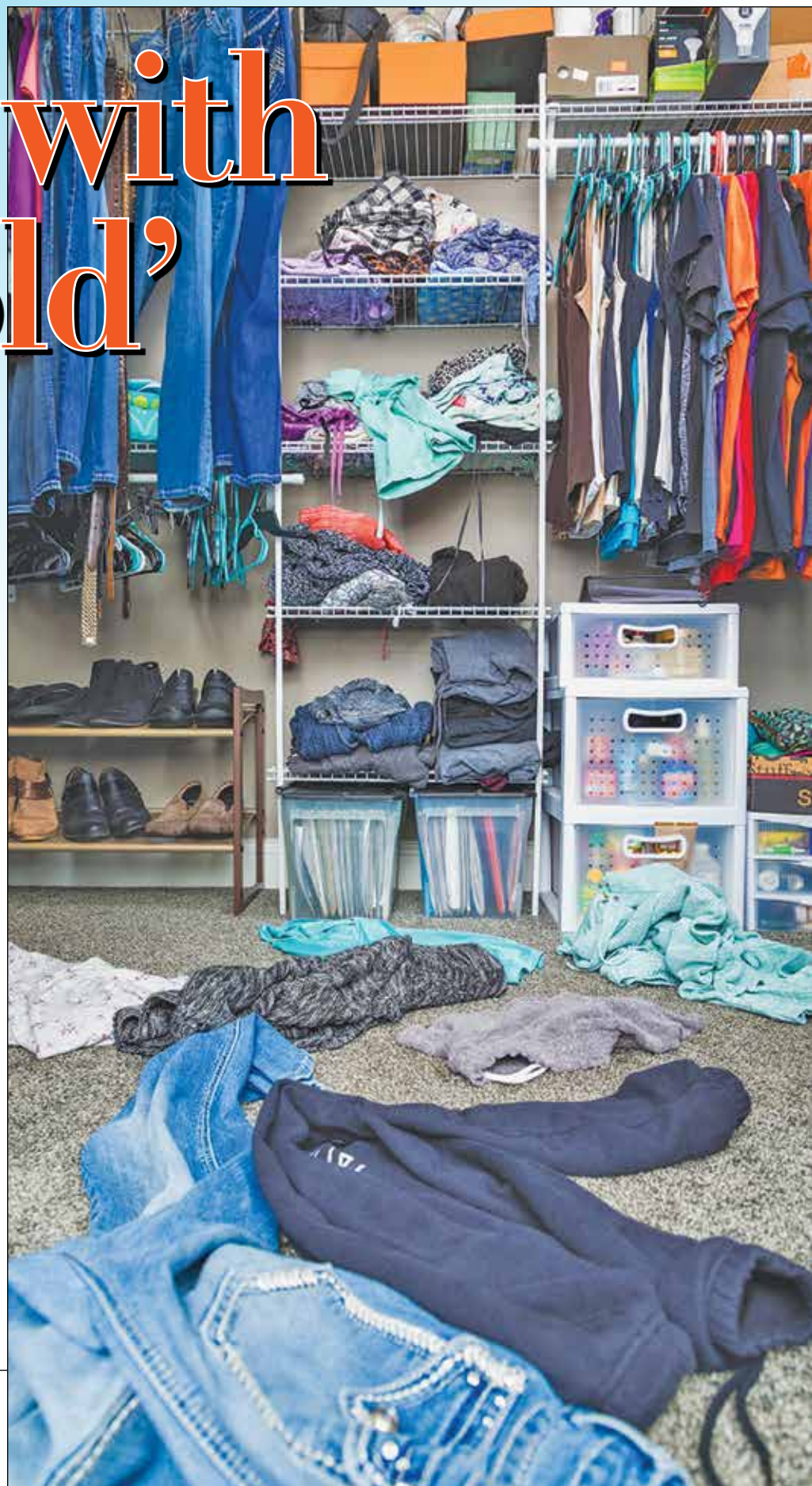
The average American home holds 300,000 items, many of which aren’t used, but stored in a closet, attic or garage, if not cluttering up our living space. And the larger the home often means more unneeded items as we tend to fill up the space available.

Are you able to park at least one of your automobiles in your two-car garage? If so, you are among the 75% of homeowners who can, compared to the 25% of two-car garages that rarely, if at all, have space for one vehicle let alone two.

In addition to everything stored in our homes 2.3 billion square feet of self-storage units are also filled with things – items not only not used but that people are paying to store. Granted, there are legitimate reasons to need a storage unit and they’re ideal for those situations, but it’s likely many could be cleared out – a task made easier once more space is available in our homes.

If sorting and organizing seems like an overwhelming project, start with one area, such as a closet, and only work on that area until it’s finished.

STOCK PHOTO *Spirit of Geneva Lakes*





For those ready to embark on a journey of clearing out the clutter, dive in and get started because once the decluttering begins, it should become easier. There are also several advantages of doing so. For example, a decluttered living space will be easier to clean – with some estimates that it could reduce cleaning time by as much as 40%.

While many of us have good intentions on decluttering, we often find reasons not to follow through on it – too much to go through, not enough time in the day, and then the question of what we do with everything that we plan to remove?

It seems the longer we have lived in our homes, the more we accumulate so perhaps moving more frequently could be a solution but it's not likely for most.

There are many self-help books on how to declutter that may help, including "The Joy of Tidying Up," by Marie Kondo.

Kondo theorizes that we should only keep things that bring us joy. While her method was popular some years ago, for many, it was too extreme as people were not ready to give up so many of their possessions at one time.

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Begin in easy areas

According to some organizers, the best way to begin the journey of junk removal is to start in an area that contains things to which we are not personally attached such as the basement or the garage. Because of the lack of attachment, we should be able to go through them faster and part with items not needed more easily.

To begin with, divvy items up into three separate piles – things to keep, things to put in the trash, and things to give away. Then, once you have enough items to fill a container with objects to donate or throw out, remove them immediately so you aren't tempted to keep them.

Once you have cleared the space, clean it and then decide on what types of storage containers to use for the items you are keeping. If possible, use clear containers.

If cleaning out a certain area does not appeal to you, let a family member handle it or leave it for another day and move on to a different area. The purpose is to clear out as much as possible in the time available, even if the amount of time is limited. Rather than stressing or wasting time in an area you know will take longer, choose an area you are ready to tackle.

Small spaces can give quick results

The kitchen or bathroom may be a place to start and can often be done in a shorter amount of time.

Go through the bathroom medicine chest and pull out all of the old bottles and other items in there, especially anything that hasn't been used recently. Anything expired should be disposed of but old medications should not be thrown in the trash or flushed; instead, put those in a bag and then contact your local police department or pharmacy for advice on where they can be dropped off for safe disposal.

The spice cabinet is another small area that should be relatively easy to clear but likely in need of decluttering. When did you purchase that spice for a special dish and when was the last time you used it? If you're not sure, you can probably part with it. Also check expiration dates and if there aren't any but you know the packaging is different now than it is on the spice container you have, it's likely time to get rid of it. Fortunately, we are generally not so attached to a spice that we can't bear to part with it.

Kitchens also tend to accumulate the latest fad appliance that are used once or twice and then sit on the counter collecting dust. From bread machines and stand mixers to smoothie makers and coffee grinders, if we don't use them on a regular basis, they're simply taking up space. Those items can be donated or, in some cases, sold, which might make departing with them easier.

Pans also seem to multiply while in the cabinet because we buy a new one or receive a set as a gift but don't swap out the old ones. We likely won't use all the pans at once and therefore, we don't need to keep so many. The same might be said for dishes, bowls, casserole dishes and kitchen gadgets.

Then there are plastic containers, many of which have lost their lids, are stained or warped, and likely not used. If we do use plastic containers regularly, it might still be worth clearing out the old and buying a new set that can be stacked neatly and take up less cabinet space.

Cluttered closets

Closets seem to be a common place where the overflow ends up – items we

Above: It's estimated that 25% of homeowners with a two-car garage don't have room to park two vehicles because of other items filling up the space. By clearing out items not needed and using shelving and cabinets, the space can be opened up. **opposite:** Just because we decide to unload items we no longer use or need doesn't mean they all need to be thrown out as many can be donated.

STOCK PHOTOS *Spirit of Geneva Lakes*



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don't use, or no longer wear – but instead of getting rid of them right then and there, we find a spot to save them.

Dresser drawers are also known to be overflowing because again, we buy new things but add them to our ever-growing collection.

Suffice to say if it's difficult to find things you do need and wear in your closets or dressers, it might be time to take action.

Some organizers recommend beginning by getting rid of any clothes or shoes that haven't been worn in a year. Regardless of the reason – weight loss or weight gain, a change in jobs, a new style – it might be time to part with those items.

When starting to declutter a closet, it's recommended to go through all of one article of clothing – such as slacks or blouses – rather than all types of clothing at once. Try on each item (unless you know it needs to go), make sure it fits, is comfortable, is not too worn and is still in style and then, to use Marie Kondo's advice, ask yourself, does it bring me joy? If it doesn't pass any one of those requirements, it's likely time to part with it.

One local woman who had recently cleared out her closets because she was planning a move to a smaller home offered this suggestion about clothes: If you are not sure about an item, look at pictures that are more than 10 years old and if you're wearing it in the pictures, it's time for it to move on.

As most women will admit, purses and shoes take up a lot of space to store and let's be honest, most of don't need the amount we have of both. Some people do switch out their purse regularly and wear different shoes all the time, in which case they could be among the minority, but if we're wearing the same three pairs of shoes and only changing out our purses once or twice a year, we can free up some space in our closet.

Keep in mind that if the clothes, shoes and accessories we choose to depart with are good quality, we can try to sell them or check with a resale shop.

Make a commitment

The most common piece of advice from the experts is to clear one space completely before moving on to another. As we see progress, we'll be motivated to continue and tackling one area at a time will feel less overwhelming.

Start by committing to short amounts of time, such as 30 minutes or an hour. Set a timer and don't succumb to distractions. Even when we don't have much time, we can always find enough time to clear a shelf, clean out a cabinet or organize a drawer.

Before long, our space will begin to look organized and because that will motivate us, it'll be easier to continue, one step at a time.

If you find that you have more than you can manage – perhaps due to changes in

How to get started

For those of us tired of putting off the seemingly overwhelming project of cleaning out items not needed and clearing up our home once and for all, the start of a new year is an ideal time to tackle it, once and for all.

Here are some simple steps to get started:

1. Pick an actual date when you will start to declutter.
2. Decide what area you will tackle first.
3. Once an area is chosen work in that area until it's done (decluttered, cleaned and organized).
4. Set aside time each day to work on the decluttering, even if it's a very busy day and you only have 15 minutes to spare, that time will make a difference.
5. Before beginning, assemble three containers or boxes and label them trash, give away and keep. Large contractor bags are strong enough to hold heavy trash and items being donated.
6. Remove trash and give away items as soon as possible so you aren't tempted to rethink letting them go.
7. Buy containers for storing the items you are keeping.

Clear containers are recommended so it's easier to see what is inside. It's recommended not to purchase more containers than are needed, which can lead to more areas needing to be decluttered in the future.

Containers can be purchased at various places including Target, Home Depot, Dollar General, Walmart and Dollar Tree. Local moving and storage companies also often have them for sale.

If you are overwhelmed and not sure you can even begin to tackle this type of project, get help by contacting professional organizers.

A few local options are: Level Up Organizing, 847-857-8650; Julie Bona (Bona fide Decorating), 262-748-6894; online at [Angi.com](https://www.angi.com) (formerly Angie's List).

Some cleaning services also offer assistance with decluttering. Others who may be able to recommend reputable companies would be senior communities and local chambers of commerce.



When decluttering, experts recommend removing items not being kept as soon as possible to avoid second guessing if it's the right decision.

STOCK PHOTO *Spirit of Geneva Lakes*

your family, physical limitations, or the need to downsize your residence – consider contacting a professional organizer who can step in and assist in sorting items, making decisions about what to keep or get rid of in record time, and organize the items that

remain.

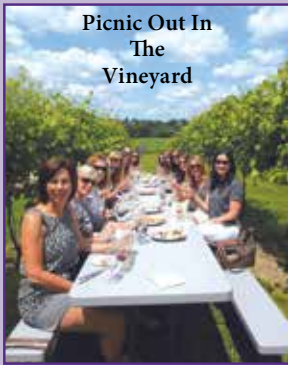
To find a professional organizer, check with area cleaning companies, senior communities (they may have referrals for helping people who are downsizing) and chambers of commerce.

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