MINNESOTA
WOMEN'S PRESS

Hometown Values & Vision

WOMENSPRESS.COM | JUNE 2024 | ISSUE 40-6

Sponsored Content

Children's Mental Health

Challenges and Strengths

Addressing geographical inequities for Children's Mental Health in Rural Minnesota

Contributed by Thad Shunkwiler, MACMH Board Member, licensed behavioral health provider, and Associate Professor at MSU Mankato

It's no secret, the mental health challenges facing the youth of state have never been greater. While the reasons for these difficulties are complex and vast, one thing remains simple, we need to do more to help our children lead healthy and fulfilled lives.

Adding to the problem is the overall lack of children's mental health providers in Minnesota. Of the limited resources available for children and families, it's important to highlight that there is significant inequity in the geographical distribution of these providers. According to Minnesota data, the 7-county metro area makes up just over half of the state's population but has over 80% of all practicing behavioral health professionals. Even though emotional challenges for children occur at similar rates for metro and rural based youth, access to care remains a significant barrier in outstate Minnesota.

While rural Minnesota faces more challenges in relation to children's mental health, it also brings a wealth of strengths. Resiliency, or the ability to navigate the ups and downs of life, isn't a trendy buzz word in rural Minnesota, but rather a skill that is fostered and developed within our families. Rural communities pride themselves on connectedness and helping each other out. Adding to their strength is the growing ethnic diversity that brings new cultures and experiences to rural Minnesota.

Thankfully, we have an incredible organization dedicated to helping children and families across the entire state in MACMH. Collectively, we can and must help the future of Minnesota, our children.

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	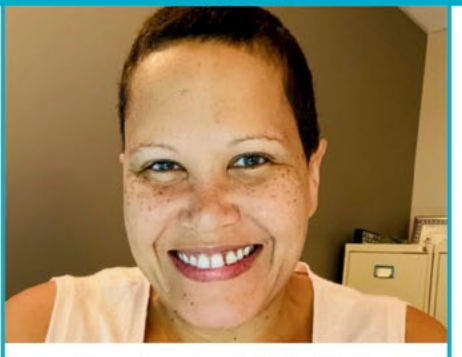	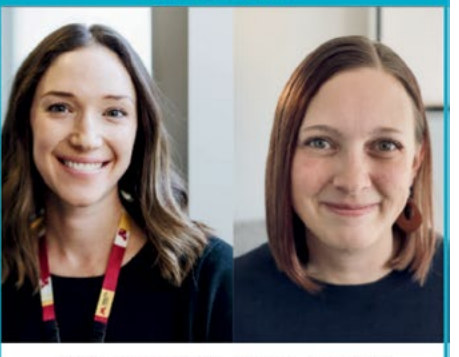
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June 2024

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Vision - All culturally and ethnically diverse children and families thrive in, participate in, and contribute to healthy communities.

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PHOTO SARAH WHITING

Sometimes the task of rebuilding — of accepting what has been broken and making things anew — is so daunting that it can almost feel easier to believe it can't be done. But it can.

— Alana Newhouse,
"Everything Is Broken"

WHAT'S INSIDE?

Editor's Letter 5
What Are Hometown Values?

Housing 8–10
- Why I Stepped Up With Neighbors to Say "Yes in My Backyard"
- Shelter Development in Saint Cloud

Tapestry 11–13
Challenges and Joys in Northfield

Politics 14–15
The Motivations Behind a Campaign

Collective Health: Brainerd 16–21
- Crow Wing County Jail
- Alex & Brandon Child Safety Center
- Relationship Safety Alliance

Changemakers Alliance 22–23
Ecolution, Mental Health, Readings

Thoughts 27
I've Arrived

SPECIALTY GUIDE

Home 6–7
Home Building in Florida

Elder 24–25
Reflecting From Time

Classified Ads 26

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Minnesota Women's Press has been sharing the stories of women since 1985, as one of the longest continuously published feminist platforms in the country. It is distributed free at 460 locations.

Our mission: Authentic community-based journalism that amplifies and inspires the stories, action steps, and leadership of powerful, everyday women (cis and trans) and nonbinary people.

Our vision: We all are parts of a greater whole. Our stronger future will be built from the collective energy of people who shift narratives to effect change.

Minnesota Women's Press LLC
800 West Broadway Ave., Suite 3A
Minneapolis, MN 55411

Vol. 40-6
©2024 by Minnesota Women's Press LLC
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Cover: Rachel Bohman. Photo by Sarah Whiting. See story on page 14.

Minnesota Women's Press earned six 2023 awards from the Minnesota Newspaper Association, including photography, editorial, social media, and community service leadership.

Upcoming magazine topics include Sports (July), MinneAsian (August), Menopause (September)

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What Are Hometown Values?

by Mikki Morrissette

This month's theme was inspired by a workshop I took more than a decade ago, when we were asked to consider one of our core values and discuss where it might have started. It fascinated me at the time: How often do we get to think and talk about the roots of what really matters to us? Where does our ethical code come from? Are we living out those values in our chosen communities?

The people we talked with for this issue are strong examples of neighbors living out values in communion with others. A three-story package inspired by a visit to Brainerd explores how neighbors, law enforcement officers and social workers, and domestic violence advocates are trying to create a safer environment. It includes frank discussions about the gaps that remain, what bystanders can do, and why domestic violence is an issue neighbors are involved with.

Our "Collective Health" online series will spend much of the next year examining how neighbors are attempting to solve public safety and health issues. Relying primarily on law enforcement and underfunded advocates to support vulnerable individuals is not enough.

A prime example of this "village vision" in action is the story this month from Jessica Mager, who prompted a "yes in my backyard" movement. She understood the value of a nearby youth mental health facility and did not let neighbors derail that vision.

We offer a glimpse of two candidates whose values are lifting them into political campaigns. Jen Schultz and Rachel Bohman are trying to unseat anti-choice incumbents in the U.S. Congress who represent northern and southern Minnesota.

Thanks in part to underwriting from the First Unitarian Foundation, I have begun to travel to cities around the state — including Ortonville, Worthington, and Chisholm — to learn directly from people about the challenges, values, and vision in their communities.

We now have a discussion guide about gender-based violence to use as the basis for upcoming conversations. What do neighbors understand about how to help families that are isolated in traumatic dynamics, who often do not call police? We will have conversations in Burnsville and Marshall, which are among the towns rocked by recent homicides stemming from violent and coercive behavior that went unchecked.

To my mind, one of the challenges we face is that many people tend to think of themselves as individual nouns — when, really, everyone is part of an interconnected process that adjusts and builds upon itself, day after day.

To support the "Collective Health" series, please become a Badass member. Our goal is 1,000 supporting members before our 40th anniversary celebration in April 2025. womenspress.com/be-a-badass

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Home Building in Florida

Two Red Wing Students Reflect on an Immersive Experience

reported by Hannah Coyle

Devonnah Nixon (l) and Alexis Parsons at Red Wing High School

November 2023 was a month of firsts for classmates Devonnah Nixon and Alexis Parsons. Parsons took an airplane flight to the ocean. Nixon took part in a deep-sea fishing adventure and shared a living space with peers.

For both Red Wing High School students, it also was their first time building a home. They were among ten students and four staff who traveled to Florida as part of a Goodhue County Student Educational Adventures (SEA) program.

The district offers volunteer services trips with Habitat for Humanity as part of an all-expenses-paid reward for juniors and seniors who have applied themselves in SEA. The program aims to engage and motivate students toward graduation through immersive courses and hands-on experiences. Each SEA course, offered during the school day, includes about 15 students from Cannon Falls, Goodhue, Kenyon-Wanamingo, Lake City, Red Wing, and Zumbrota-Mazeppa school districts, serving around 50 students annually.

In addition to Habitat for Humanity builds, courses feature adventures like winter camping, kayaking, canoeing, trips to Feed My Starving Children, team-building exercises, and activities at area elementary schools. The program is designed to inspire students who are facing challenges such as emotional dysregulation to find renewed enthusiasm for learning and to attend school regularly.

Nixon and Parsons were based in Florida for seven days, painting, installing insulation, and putting up the walls of a home. Parsons' favorite part of the building process was installing insulation, despite itchy skin resulting from contact with the fiberglass. The team was encouraged to place notes inside the walls for the future owners, which was a particular joy for Nixon.

At one site, the group were aided in their efforts by the pending homeowner as they framed walls. They talked while inside the future closet of her child's room. "It was nice to get to know who you're helping," says Nixon.

Parsons, a self-described "homebody," says the trip was outside of her normal comfort zone. "Doing this program was pretty big for me," she says.

She found that air travel, carpentry, labor, the blazing Florida sun, and finding "stinky" seashells while combing the beach — all new things — were not as difficult as she thought they might be.

In addition to the home build work, the group went deep-sea fishing, packed lunches together to eat at the Habitat sites, and reflected on their days through journaling and group discussion.

Nixon is inspired to volunteer in the future. "It makes me want to do it again, to make someone else feel happy," she says. MWP

PHOTO SARAH WHITING

Why I Stepped Up With Neighbors to Say "Yes in My Backyard"

submitted by Jessica Mager

Jessica Mager in front of the construction of the new mental health facility in West Saint Paul.

In November 2022, I read in our local newspaper that the construction of a mental health facility had been proposed for our neighborhood. Some of my neighbors quoted in the article, and one of the pastors at a nearby church, opposed it. That seemed strange to me.

West Saint Paul is a great community. It feels like a small town in a way. As a strong spiritual person, social justice is a huge value of mine. Objections to the facility went against everything I believe in.

I have a friend who has been struggling with her autistic son, who is dealing with serious mental health issues — he was in the emergency room for quite a while. She eventually had to rent an Airbnb to house him and a mental health worker. I don't know if the proposed mental health facility would even have a place for him, since he is a minor. Regardless, this kind of help is lacking in our society.

The neighborhood opposition didn't make sense to me.

I don't appreciate the stigma against mental health. I have a loved one who struggles with it. I didn't want our neighborhood to be the kind of place where a front of people fought against a welcoming, supportive facility. In my mind, it was a miracle that this place was going to be built. What the neighbors were objecting to seemed fear-based to me. Some of the comments in the article:

- "We are committed to keeping our neighborhood a safe place. We feel this center would dramatically reduce security and safety in our community."
- "When there is someone in crisis, they don't think clearly. It's not their fault. But my mind goes to the 185 children on our [Crown of Life Lutheran Church and School] campus. We all read the news, we know what they're capable of doing."
- "I'm not biased, I'm not prejudiced. But I strongly feel they don't belong in this neighborhood."

The people in this 16-person facility would attend voluntarily; they would not be brought involuntarily and locked up. The more I read about the facility, the more I realized it offered a supportive environment: yoga classes, ways to learn how to deal with mental illnesses, staff to help with medications.

Some of the space would be for people in crisis, with staff to help them figure things out. They could go somewhere

for hospitalization if they had more intense needs. The facility would help people avoid going to the hospital if they need a lower level of care. There would be an option for up to three months of residential treatment for patients to work through their conditions.

The center would be trauma informed, built to have a positive, cozy environment. Once inside, you would be able to see out in all directions, so you don't feel cramped inside or locked in. Currently, a similar facility exists in South Saint Paul — but it is three old houses next door to each other, without the trauma-informed design.

After I read the newspaper story, I sent texts to several people. Two people reacted as strongly as I had. We got together about a week later and became a force. We designed a form letter that neighbors could use to send messsages to city council members, the mayor, and the Dakota County commissioner in our area. We talked about why we supported this facility. Women of West Saint Paul is a group busy in local activism and helped so much. It was an amazing effort.

The voices that oppose things tend to be loud, but we can't sit back and be complacent. We need to get our voices out too.

Some of us prepared two-minute speeches for a city council meeting. We ended up having a ratio of four to one in support of the facility, compared to opposition. The city council vote was unanimously in favor.

What is difficult for me is that some of my neighbors opposed the construction. I love my neighbors and value them. Some of them came around to support the facility, but not all. I don't like conflict. But I believe strongly in supporting the facility, so I had to speak up.

The groundbreaking for the new facility was October 3, 2023. The center should be finished this fall. MWP

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Shelter Development Proceeding in Saint Cloud

from discussion with Avivo's John Tribbett

Due to legislative funding in 2023, the Department of Human Services has grants to cover the costs of food shelves and emergency shelters across the state. Avivo, which operates the emergency temporary housing shelter called Avivo Village in Minneapolis, applied for a $7.65 million grant to build another facility in Saint Cloud.

A commercial area with big box stores, strip malls, and restaurants was identified as a good location for a village of 56 independent units. Many people in the community were supportive. Some were not. The delay from opposition was putting the project in danger of not moving ahead. Says long-time housing advocate John Tribbett, "Some general opposition is what we come to expect, unfortunately — the assumption that people who are experiencing homelessness are going to bring problems to the neighborhood or community. There are always concerns to address — some because of the lack of familiarity or education or understanding of the realities that people have experienced that might cause them to be homeless."

In his decade in street outreach, "I would be hard pressed to find a time that I felt in danger from a person experiencing homelessness. Most often they are the people who are victims to predatory behavior, and not the people actually causing the problem and harm," Tribbet says. "There are plenty of people we work with and encounter in our lives who are working and sleeping in their cars, or in shelters. In our culture, we are often stuck in black-and-white thinking, which leads us to be fearful about things we don't fully understand."

Avivo was invited to build in Saint Cloud because of increased needs. "Wages are not keeping pace with everything, including that costs are increasing dramatically for everyone, which creates large systemic and structural issues," Tribbett says. "The reality in 2024 is that communities around the country, even outside the larger metro areas, are experiencing issues that traditionally were in the larger urban centers."

Many local business leaders in the neighborhood opposed the construction, but community members who supported the project pushed back.

After a nearly 4.5-hour public conversation, the city council of Saint Cloud approved a 20-year lease by a 5–2 vote. The building could be ready in early 2025.

Challenges and Joys in Northfield

PHOTO SARAH WHITING

Jennyffer Barrientos, Growing Up Healthy

I work for Growing Up Healthy, which is a program supported by the Healthy Community Initiative. Our early childhood navigators help with childhood screenings, vaccines, finding scholarships for preschools, sporting fellowships for kids, food resources — anything to help kids be ready for kindergarten.

Parent Child+ is an educational program in collaboration with Jewish Family and Children's Service of Minneapolis — a two-year intensive home visiting program with children 14 to 48 months old and their caregivers. Early Learning Specialists come to the family's home with a toy or book to play and read with the child and parent. Families receive free educational books and toys; parents discover creative ways to teach their children and learn together. It is a 30-minute visit twice a week during the school year.

If kids don't have a safe, secure home, it's harder for them to pay attention at school. Many families we work with live in mobile homes; many of them are deteriorating, with frozen water pipes in the winter. We have a rehab program that does minor repairs so families have time to figure out whether they can move out or find resources to do deeper repairs.

We work with about 300 families in Northfield and Faribault. Many of them include caregivers working in factories in Apple Valley and Faribault. There has been a rising number of new families coming, trying to find jobs and housing. We need more affordable housing at different income levels. Some families barely above the guidelines are struggling. There are a lot of two-bedrooms, but some have multiple families living in the same household who cannot live in a small apartment.

We have been talking a lot about transportation here. Families that have doctor's appointments in the city find it hard to get there. Services from Uber or Lyft are hard to find. To get from the north side of town to Cub Foods, in the south side of town, is generally a 12- to 15-minute drive, but takes an hour by bus. We have a shuttle, but that is spendy.

Our family engagement navigators work in the elementary schools and have seen a lot of mental health issues arise, especially after Covid. We are constantly looking for mental health services, especially from a diversity of providers so that people can speak with someone who looks and speaks like them.

We work to try to fill gaps in resources for immigrant families. Many come here from Central America and don't have blankets, cooking utensils, pillows — the basics. We collaborate with the United Way, Community Action Center, public schools, and local cities.

I feel like Northfield has come a long way since I graduated from high school in 2005. It is the community wanting to do good, and a willingness to hear directly from those who are struggling. The Northfield superintendent met with families in the evening hours to talk one on one about the school system. I think that is key to progress we are making.

PHOTO SARAH WHITING

Natalie Draper, Northfield Public Library

I moved here just a little over three years ago from Richmond, Virginia, during the pandemic. There's nothing quite like a global pandemic to make you evaluate things. There were a lot of openings for library directors. Northfield was extremely appealing. The community presents itself as values first; there is a strong sense of uplift here.

continued on next page

Richmond was a community that struggled a lot. The libraries did important work supporting the most underserved people, but we were understaffed and underfunded and underappreciated. The constant uphill battle was overwhelming. So I came to a place where the library was well supported. Many organizations in the community are focused on making sure that kids are getting what they need to perform well in school.

It can be hard for some people to get transportation to downtown Northfield, where the library is. We were able to raise $100,000 in a year to build a satellite location. I was impressed that we did not have to do a lot of convincing.

The strength of the library extends to bilingual services. Spanish-speaking residents also take computer and business classes, programming for children, and yoga. It's wonderful to have a diverse group of people who all feel welcome. When I left the library today, a family was getting passports and all the computers were full. It was humming with activity.

PHOTO SARAH WHITING

Kelli Podracky, Northfield Union of Youth

I was born and raised in Tampa. My husband and I spent the last decade in the Orlando area, raising four kids. Fighting against anti-LGBTQ+ legislation in Florida became exhausting and disheartening. Ultimately, we decided it was best for our queer family to leave the state.

Minnesota caught our attention, primarily because of its trans protection laws and the values of Governor Walz. Initially, we had our sights on settling in the Twin Cities, but a real estate agent introduced us to Northfield. I decided to check it out during an exploratory trip in April 2023 and found it charming, with a welcoming atmosphere epitomized by the library's "all are welcome here" sign.

We still thought we would work in the metro and perhaps commute from Northfield. I found an executive director position for Northfield Union of Youth (NUY). It was a good fit for my background in education, nonprofit, and advocacy for marginalized groups. I accepted an offer and started work shortly after moving here in August 2023.

NUY operates The Key, the nation's longest-running youth-run center, which serves as a life-giving, life-saving space for historically underserved youth ages 12–20. Many of the kids don't otherwise have anyone showing up for them; if you come in every day and say "I'm here," that is big.

The Key's youth board meets weekly to drive programming and initiatives. The youth board makes decisions on fundraising, what food is needed, what we are doing about mental health, how to get transportation to events, and more. Everyone on the leadership board is under the age of 21; some are as young as 12. It is a phenomenal model. I've never been a part of something like this before. The new youth board president has already established relationships with community partners.

The Key offers food access seven days a week. Just Food donates $350 worth of food weekly. The nearby Rotary Club and Bethel Lutheran Church bring hot meals to The Key. We collaborate with Carleton students who gather leftover food each week and bring prepackaged meals to The Key. We have a fully equipped kitchen, enabling kids to prepare meals. NUY partners with colleges to collaborate on access to classes, volunteerism, and interns.

NUY also oversees the Wallflower Project, which supports youth who are facing housing stability issues. Host homes in the community offer temporary accommodations. Emergency housing funds come from Northfield's Housing and Redevelopment Authority, which pays for hotel stays for youth 18 to 24.

I treasure the value of inclusivity in Northfield. When my college-aged son visited, he felt comfortable walking down the street with his partner, free from judgment or scrutiny. He and his partner will move here in July after graduation.

Northfield isn't perfect, and there's room for growth, but I tend to feel that most of the community is fighting alongside us, rather than against us.

Editor's Note: While we were conversing, a young person connected to The Key stopped by the table at a local coffee shop and shared what they found helpful in the space. "I lost a lot of folks around me. I started transitioning and exploring my gender identity about a year ago. The staff was very friendly and helped me explore my own thoughts about changing pronouns or changing my name. I didn't grow up in town, but visited whenever I could after I could drive. Now I live here."

PHOTO SARAH WHITING

Elizabeth Child, Rice County Area United Way

Our mission at United Way is to get people to care about what's happening. We're raising money, promoting volunteerism, and creating projects that might inspire people to care. We will do a Day of Caring in June. Workplace and residential campaigns bring in money.

Dolly Parton's foundation partners with us to give books to families with small children. Together we mail books to nearly half of all children up to five years old in Northfield and Faribault. We opened up a nonprofit bookstore and collected thousands of books; all the proceeds go back to community nonprofits.

We collaborate with the Greater Twin Cities United Way on the 988 and the 211 line. People call about housing needs. During the pandemic, some were looking for help to pay utilities, but now it's straight shelter. People are homeless. It's heartbreaking.

Nearly every nonprofit we work with cites transportation as a high barrier to access. It is hard to exist without a car here.

I am involved with youth mental health, which is a huge crisis everywhere. For example, the accessibility of drugs, reaching even kids in elementary and middle school, is a big issue. There just aren't enough mental health resources in schools. Getting mental health counselors to move to a rural area is tough. They're having enough trouble in the Twin Cities.

We're collaborating with health and education nonprofits to develop projects with youth who tell their stories and then do something creative with that to help fund mental health and substance use programs for youth. What do young people want parents and other adults to know? What would they like asked? MWP

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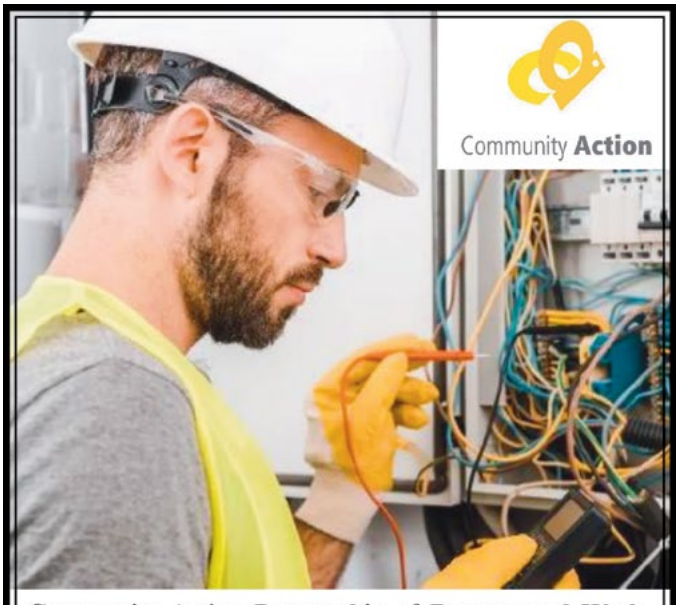

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We are looking for Electrical Contractors to partner with us in weatherizing the homes of income-eligible clients in Ramsey, Washington, and Anoka counties.

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Contractors must be fully licensed and insured. CAPRW encourages all minority/women-owned business enterprises to apply. The Call for Contractors will remain open to the public so long as work is needed.

Please call Seth Johnson at 651-444-5134 or email sjohnson@caprw.org.

PHOTO SARAH WHITING

The Motivations Behind a Campaign

Both Rachel Bohman of Rochester (District 1) and Jen Schultz of Duluth (District 8) are attempting to unseat anti-choice incumbents in the 2024 U.S. Congressional elections in Minnesota. Both districts cover vast geography.

We joined each of them on a day of conversations with community members, to learn more about the values, vision, and backgrounds of two U.S. Congressional candidates who are campaigning in areas of the state where it has been difficult for women to get elected.

Rachel Bohman, District 1

Rachel Bohman, who is seeking to unseat Rep. Brad Finstad (GOP), an anti-choice incumbent in southern Minnesota, was in two voter discussions on a Saturday morning in Mankato before returning to her hometown of Rochester, a 1.5-hour drive away, for a networking event. She is mother to two daughters.

As she said to one group, her incumbent opponent has indicated to voters that she is a "fancy lawyer from Rochester" who does not know enough about farming and other southern Minnesota needs. "My answer to that is, I grew up in poverty with a single mom," Bohman says. "She worked very hard. But she also struggled with addiction at times. We lived off of food stamps. I didn't have a car. We didn't have a TV. We didn't have a dining room table. I lost a brother to the opioid crisis when he was 22.

"But my mother also managed to get a technical degree at Rochester Community and Technical College. I put myself through college. I put myself through law school," Bohman continues. "I wanted to always give back, because it was the good people of southern Minnesota who gave us rides [and] Christmas baskets and clothing."

Bohman says that the area has great schools and teachers and sets industry standards in science and technology, due in part to Mayo Clinic. Family farmers are feeding Minnesotans. "But we are still struggling with critical issues like access to health care," she says. "We are still struggling with affordable child care, and being able to pay for gas and groceries."

She says she and her opponent differ about their approaches to having open and accountable government, access to clean water, and women's rights. Denying reproductive health care "is unacceptable to me. I believe that when people decide to start their families, that is not an issue for the federal government."

She announced her candidacy in late February, a few weeks after a friend called and urged her to run. "I had actually been up most of the night with a sick kid, so I said I needed a little time to think about it." She had been politically active — including in Hennepin County after her college years — and called some friends to test out the idea and gauge potential support. "Everything seemed to fall into place. It seemed like it was the right time to step out. I'm really enjoying doing this. I love connecting with people. I love talking about issues. I'm okay about having debates."

As a Rochester township officer, she did not need a party affiliation to run. As a congressional candidate, she needs the backing of the DFL delegation, but hopes to raise issues of commonality with voters, regardless of political affiliation.

Bohman says she wants to bring back the acknowledgment and strength of small-town vibrancy, with entrepreneurs and farmers supported by local consumers.

"I know what it feels like to struggle paycheck to paycheck, which I grew up with," she says. "I also know [the district] is full of people who work hard and take care of one another. When we work together, we can build beautiful things."

PHOTO SARAH WHITING

Jen Schultz: District 8

District 8 is currently represented by Rep. Pete Stauber (GOP). He is an anti-choice, pro-Trump supporter representing the northern swath of the state, which is as large as West Virginia. It includes Bemidji, Brainerd, Duluth, Forest Lake, Hugo, and the North Shore and Iron Range regions.

Schultz grew up in a small town. Her mother raised Schultz and her sister as a single parent, before reconciling with their father later in life. Her father, who struggled with addiction after serving in the Vietnam War, worked as a firefighter before dying of cancer at age 60. Schultz says the experience of her parents' marriage bolsters her belief that compassion, determination, and community connections with others can improve anyone's life. She has a doctorate in health economics, served four terms in the Minnesota legislature, and is raising two sons with her husband.

While on a tour with corrections officers and social workers at the Crow Wing County Jail (see story on page 16), Schultz responded to the story of a man who burglarized in the winter to get off the streets and into the warmer jail. "Addressing poverty doesn't cost very much," she said, adding that the undergraduate economics students she teaches at the University of Minnesota Duluth are required to read Matthew Desmond's book *Poverty, by America*. The book outlines how poverty is the problem behind many public safety issues, how it can be fixed, and what that will cost ($175 billion) — which is less than the expense of dealing with crime.

While at the Crow Wing County jail, Schultz talked about a program called HARP (Health and Re-Entry Project), which formed in 2022 — its national board convenes multiple stakeholders for policy recommendations. The focus is on how to offer smoother transitions to Medicaid for formerly incarcerated individuals, which enhances public safety. Currently, people in jails or prisons tend not to have medical assistance for medications.

Schultz says she is traveling a lot to do listening sessions like the one she had in Brainerd. "There are a lot of areas that feel neglected. We were in Mahnomen County recently. They need a new hospital. It's their number one priority, requiring $35 million, but local legislators, their state senator, and the state representative are not advocating for it. Their building is very old. They told me it is basically held together by duct tape. Being fiscally conservative does not mean not spending money to meet needs. The nursing facility attached to the hospital is the only facility that serves multiple counties in that rural area, and it is filled."

While visiting, she sat down with local elected officials and community members in the county, which includes the White Earth Reservation. "There is a lot of history there, and tension. I sat down with many folks to hear about issues they wanted me to understand." MWP

votesmart.org

What the Crow Wing County Jail Needs in Order to Reduce Crime

reported by Mikki Morrissette

As we followed U.S. Congressional candidate Jen Schultz during a day of connecting with people in Brainerd, one of her stops was the Crow Wing County Jail, which holds 276 people. We spent several hours there talking to law enforcement officers and social workers, including a group of women staff who shared their perspectives on what the community needs for increased public safety.

One area of concern, they said, is that most of the people in the jail have both mental health issues and chemical dependency. It is easier to get them into drug treatment programs — which they consider more helpful than jail — but people might go one or two dozen times to the same program because they aren't getting to the root of their mental health issues.

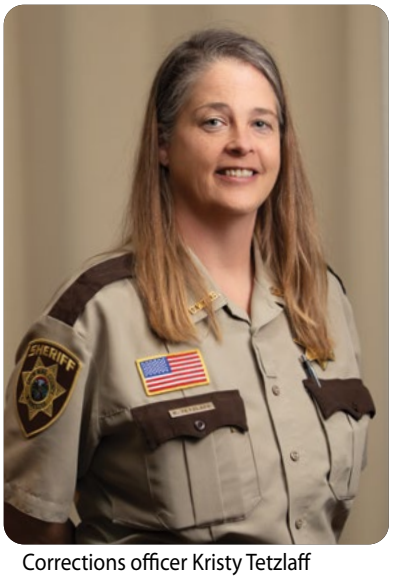
Said one staff member at the jail, "I have had clients tell me, 'You can send me to chemical dependency treatment all you want, and they're going to teach me how to identify my triggers and some coping skills, but the reasons I'm using are not being addressed.'"

Another said that many of the programs for addiction in Minnesota have a religious base to them, which isn't for everybody.

There are people in the community, regularly booked into the jail, who could benefit from health-related services. Said one staff member, "Some of them are nearly blind and need glasses, but cannot afford it."

We talked extensively with Kristy Tetzlaff, a correctional officer who has worked at the jail for 20 years, despite major challenges with the job. "It's hard to hire people who want to work here," she says. "They can get paid better elsewhere."

PHOTO SARAH WHITING



Corrections officer Kristy Tetzlaff

Describe the types of health crises you deal with at the jail.

Sometimes people held at the jail are in a full-blown mental health crisis or a drug psychosis. One day we were in the holding cells for a full day because people were flooding their cells, clogging up the toilet and flushing. Other times people have to be removed from their cell because they have urinated or defecated on the floor and we need to clean up.

Why have you stayed in this job for so long?

Because I love the fact that I can actually help people. I can take the time and talk to people. You see them at their worst, then you see them a day or two later, [and it] is a totally different person who is apologizing for what has happened and what they did. I don't take that personally. I know the person who came in was not who they are.

It's not that I haven't gone home and cried. We all have our times that someone pushes too far, but I've never taken it personally and thought, "Next time I see him, I'm going to make sure his life is going to suck." I talk to them about our IMPACT Program [a 15-week curriculum with coaching] and other educational options we have in the jail. For me, it is because I think that there's always hope. Though some days, it is harder to see the hope.

What are the needs in Brainerd that are not getting met from your law enforcement perspective?

Sometimes it takes months for someone with mental health issues to leave, because they have been committed. You might think that means they are going to a hospital — but they have to be held here until space opens up, which could take up to six months.

Some people here are doing great after completing a program, but then are kicked to the street. Every winter a guy would call to say he was about to burglarize a place. We'd bring him in. He said it was better than being homeless in the winter. It didn't matter to him how many charges were piling up. [Eventually,] he ended up going to prison, instead of our jail. But the crime truly was related to being homeless.

Communities Grapple With Abusive Partners Who Also Are Parents

a conversation with Melissa Scaia

PHOTO SARAH WHITING

One of the visitation rooms in the Alex & Brandon Child Safety Center in Brainerd

The Alex & Brandon Child Safety Center in Brainerd was created to provide a safe space for caregivers to hand off children to satisfy visitation rights. It was named for four- and five-year-old brothers who were killed by their father during an unsupervised visit in 1996. The community responded by spending four years raising funds to build the center, which opened in 2000.

Melissa Scaia is a long-time advocate for survivors of gender-based violence who also hosts conversations with perpetrators of abuse. She has been a mediator for supervised exchanges of caregivers and children. Her doctoral dissertation research was about how to design a supervised visitation center to meet the needs of children and adult victims of domestic violence.

We talked with Scaia about the dynamics in families with an abusive parent, and what can and cannot be done to change experiences.

Why are parents who have a history of abuse toward a partner allowed access to their children?

The standard in most states, including Minnesota, is to have both parents have contact with the child. The central factor for judges is, "What does the law say about how and if you account for domestic violence in custody cases?" That matters hugely in family law.

I could get a child the best therapist in the world, but the court is still going to give them contact with that parent. So, it's not that helpful to work with the child if you're not also working with the abusive parent.

Supervised visitation is a way to mediate that contact, but it does not last forever. I did have one family in which the judge said, "You're having supervised visitation for these kids until they are 18" — because that dad could never be sober. Those kids really wanted to see their dad. So, we had supervised visitation every Wednesday from 6–8pm.

It's complicated, because I do think some fathers are unsafe for their children, particularly nonverbal children. Even supervised exchanges, when one parent hands off the child in a public place, need more attention.

The most common supervised exchange places in Minnesota are McDonald's, Target, and Circle K. Women know they have the good video camera systems, with the best audio on their video, so that if something happens there is a record. Having a third-party witness makes a huge difference in court. Hearing a child say, "I don't ever want to go to Dad's house again. He's really mean," can help in a custody hearing.

Otherwise, the judges and attorneys can assume there is bias. They hear many people say, "He's a bad dad," or "She's a drunk mom." The court gets fatigued. So when you have third parties who intervene, it does make a difference.

continued on next page

You will also hear kids who love spending time with [the abusive partner]. I had to get permission to physically remove from a car a five–year–old who didn't want to leave.

There have been a number of research studies that show that abusers are more motivated to do well by their children than they are their partner. In a recent men's group conversation, my co-facilitator asked the group, "Tell me about the difference between being accountable for your children, but not your partner." What is interesting is that abusive men tend to blame their partner in part for their use of violence. Many are stuck in this thinking of "you made me do this to you." They don't think the same way about their kids; they don't think their kids made them hit their mother.

PHOTO SARAH WHITING

A sculpture of Alex and Brandon at the entrance of the child safety center.

Q: How are community programs working with men who are in prisons and jails to reduce violent behavior?

Not many men actually go to prison for domestic violence in Minnesota. Abusers who end up in prison are often there for other charges. Most men who are being incarcerated in Minnesota for domestic assault are doing local jail time. The law does not allow jails to hold anyone for more than a year.

The culture of incarceration tends not to invest in talking about treatment of women. I was with [long-time survivors advocate] Ellen Pence, talking with a warden in northern Minnesota about all the programming they offered. Most of them were run by churches.

Ellen said, "Warden, I am hearing a lot about them finding Jesus, but I haven't heard about many of them leaving prison having respect for women."

I am working with the Domestic Abuse Project [DAP] right now for a proposal to do programming [about gender-based violence] in prison for the Minnesota Department of Corrections. In 2024. We were doing that back in 2015. There were cutbacks, and then they weren't doing it anymore. We have all these men coming out of prison, a lot of them for drug offenses, who are also very violent to their partners. [We are not doing much to change behavior before they return.]

When men are on probation, we generally know from studies that survivors and children are safer. We also know that when the father is enrolled in a men's program, they're safer. When there's some intervening agency, like supervised exchanges and visits, people are generally safer.

One of the things we've also learned, doing supervised visitation since 2002, is that when you have domestic violence, and you have multiple children in the home, it's quite rare for each of the children to have the same experience.

Most abusers seek out one child to align with. One of the first women I ever worked with, in 1999, is someone I am still in contact with. She told me, "I am not going to be effective in undoing what he has done to our son. He is training our son to be like him."

That woman's boys are now grown. One of them, who is 28, recently said for the first time, "Mom, I just want you to know that I know you did your best. I want you to know I saw you trying to just maintain."

His brother is not the same; he has totally taken on his father's identity. They grew up with years of seeing the degradation of their mother, and came out of the experience in different ways.

If men don't live in a culture that motivates them to be better men, that doesn't help. Toxic masculinity is defined by some as "real manhood." Since 2016, the culture has shifted.

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Saint Cloud has a domestic violence court. Can you describe what this does?

Stearns County has created a system of specialized judges and prosecutors for domestic violence cases. They prosecute many more domestic violence cases than any other place in Minnesota. They invest in expert witnesses. They notify the defense about the use of these witnesses, which changes negotiations on the front end.

For example, many victims recant in court — now there is research [funded by the U.S. Department of Justice] about why this happens. With new expert witnesses to explain why victims recant, this fundamentally shifts the conversation.

When all parts of the system have an elevated response, you get the best results. Having a domestic violence court or a good men's program is great. But if you are a city with a not-so-great police response to domestic violence, then you are spinning on the gerbil wheel trying to help women. If the DAP can't rely on the Minneapolis police to do what they need to do about violations of orders for protections, for example, that's not helpful.

How do bystanders aware of abuse help to hold people accountable for their actions?

A perpetrator might say, "I just want a loving Jesus in my family." You ask, "Okay, great. How do you put together that you want love and Jesus in your family with what you've done to your family?" I can take his words and let him define it for me. My job is not to say, "Yes, it's great to have love and Jesus," when I know part of his reality is that he's done horrible things. It is okay to point out the contradiction, in a way that's genuinely respectful.

Advocacy organizations are the best go-to place for helping victims and perpetrators find the help they need, including therapists who know the dynamics of domestic violence — many therapists and pastors do not. Yet Minnesota does not adequately fund Crime Victim Services. I ran a program out of northern Minnesota for 17 years.

For 14 years, we got the same $44,000 in funding to help every woman in Itasca County. That's ridiculous.

Advocates are among the people in Minnesota who are the least recognized and have the biggest hearts in this state. Can advocates get a retirement plan and health insurance [like our law enforcement officers do]? That's really frustrating. MWP

To participate in community-based discussions about gender-based violence, add your email and city to this form and we will be in touch: tinyurl.com/talkGBV

Board Members Explain Why They Work With a Shelter

During our listening sessions in Brainerd with Jen Schultz, we visited the Louise Seliski Shelter and the nearby Alex & Brandon Child Safety Center, both led by the Relationship Safety Alliance. Leadership board members talked to us about why they were involved with the shelter. Here are a few of their stories.

Board member Shelly Pewitt: I'm the parent of five children. I want to see a new building that offers services not just to women but to men and the LGBTQ+ community. I was a client here at the women's shelter 15 years ago. I left home with my 15-year-old son and my 15-month-old daughter on Easter weekend; we stayed in a hotel. On Monday I called the shelter and explained what was going on. I met some wonderful people. I lived there for two and a half months. It was a hugely traumatic event. My son had to live with another family so he could continue going to school. That was hard for me; he was the youngest of my first four. It was a horrible time, psychologically and emotionally. The services are important after you leave the shelter as well. For me, it's been another 13 years dealing with an abusive ex and an abusive father. So this place is near and dear to my heart. It saved me, and offered food, shelter, and safety. They helped me understand what I was going through.

Board member Jan Lambert: My late husband was a police officer for the city of Brainerd. Many of his injuries were due to domestic violence. Being involved here has really opened my eyes. I'm very thankful to be here.

Board member Kalsey Stults: I'm a transplant to this community. I grew up in Tennessee. I grew up in a really tough childhood home with a parent who is an abuser; my parents did not model good behavior when I was growing up. It was really hard [to navigate] as a teenager, wanting to be in a relationship. I did not know what a healthy relationship looked like. I made some poor decisions about who I was seeking out.

My dad is an active addict right now. My mom is bipolar. It has led me to have a lot of compassion working with my clients in county services. Sometimes our systems are very punitive. My role is to give people the resources and the love that they need to be the best person that they can be.

A couple of quilts created by community members rest on one of the beds at Louise Seliski Shelter. When individuals end their time at the shelter, they are invited to take a quilt with them.

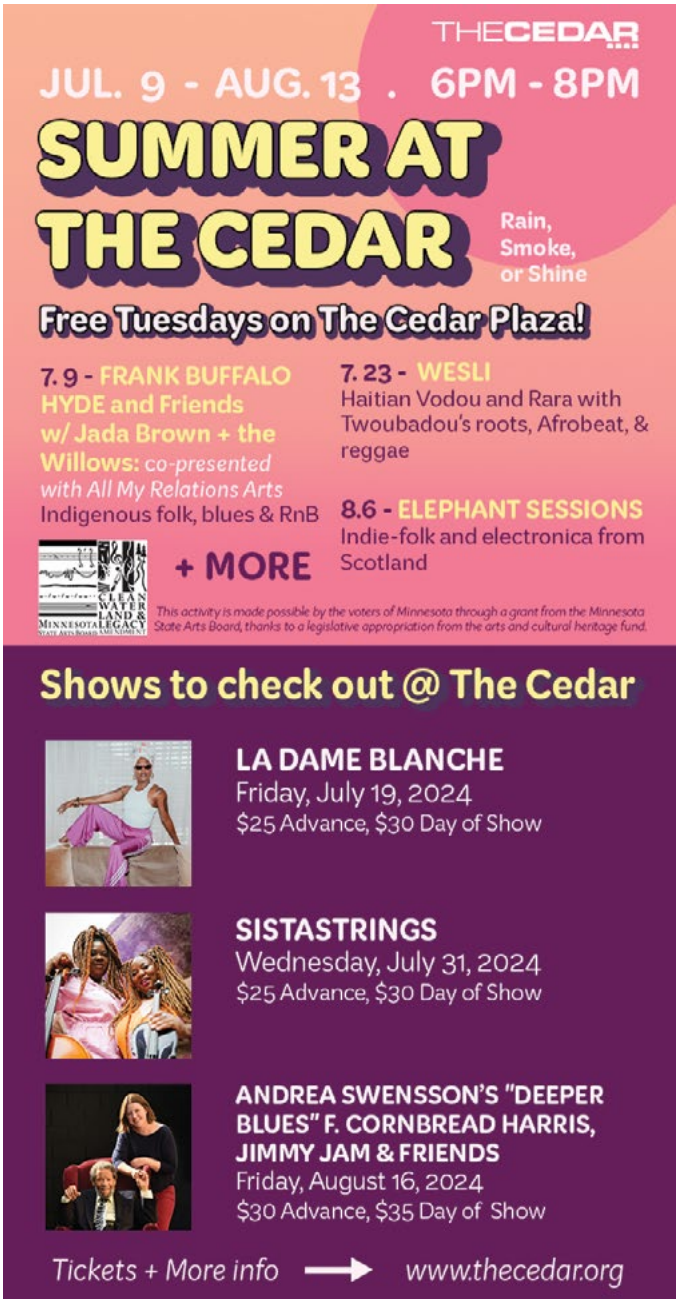
Board member Jim Grant: My sister was living in Oklahoma. My dad wasn't able to rescue her from an abusive husband. He asked me to go. I set up the time to go get Mary. We had it all set up to get out of the house. A day or two before we were supposed to do this, she called me to say, "I love him. He loves me. I'm gonna stay."

I couldn't do anything for her at that time. But she came to her senses after he dragged her out into the front yard, without clothes on, and beat her. He also threatened their little boy, who is now a drug addict. I have never quite forgiven myself — I originally introduced them. I [had] sold a car part to him, and he had seen a picture of her. Even today, all these years later, it bothers me.

She's got one son who's doing great. A daughter who has a lot of trauma and physical problems. And the third son is a convicted felon. I decided I needed to try to do something. I am tired of bullying across all spectrums.

Board member Mike Kuck: I was asked to emcee a few events for the Women's Center. But I didn't actually realize domestic violence was going on in our own community. I shielded myself from all of it, living in my own bubble. I started coming to the events and seeing people that I knew who were survivors. That really opened up my eyes, and [I] started diving in a lot deeper. I started asking questions and realizing how many people are affected.

Board member Angel Zierden: For me, it comes down to the policy side. We put Band-Aids on a lot of the problems in our society instead of looking at the root cause. What environments are children being raised in? How do you break the generational cycle — violence, mental health — and create a safe place to grow up? How do we make sure that we are taking care of our community? That's where the biggest change will come from. MWP



CHANGEMAKERS ALLIANCE

What's New Online?

story development designed for stronger conversations about statewide values, solutions, and action steps

"Four Steps to Help Small Farmers"

Small farmers in Minnesota bring fresh local produce to their communities. But the road to get there can be steep and rocky. Barriers are economic, logistical, and bureaucratic. Reporter Demetria Dickinson explores the challenges and solutions of small farmers, especially those attempting to adhere to the values of organic food production and ecosystem protection.

full story at womenspress.com/ecolution

Q&A With Deb Cavitt About Youth Mental Health

As part of our ongoing Collective Health series, we talked with Deb Cavitt, manager of education and advocacy for the Minnesota Association for Children's Mental Health (which is underwriting our mental health coverage in 2024).

One of her goals is to help youth "break the code of silence" and find trusted adults when they are worried about a friend or themselves. Being trauma informed helps teachers and others not take things personally when a child is acting out, creating a trusting relationship that leads to healing.

She indicated that many teenagers who take their own life might be using alcohol or other substances as self medication. "That pain is already there, and just treating the substance use isn't going to fix the mental health problems," she says. "They need co-occurring treatment."

She talks to people about how much courage it takes to ask for help. "I think sometimes young people feel so much empathy for their friend that's struggling. If something happens to their friend, they feel like they didn't do enough," Cavitt says. "But really, it needs that team approach. Communities, schools, and youth all working together. [Youth need to know they] can refer other youth to an adult who will listen."

full story at womenspress.com/mentalhealth

Suggested Readings: Collective Health

Our new year-long series will focus on interconnected systems that are broken and can be fixed. Our tendency as a country has been to divide into individual families and alliances, rather than come together as supportive neighbors. This can make things harder than they need to be if we are to create solutions to improve conditions for all.

Excerpts from "Everything Is Broken," tabletmag.com

Norman looked at us sympathetically. "There are still many good individuals involved in medicine, but the American medical system is profoundly broken. When you look at the rate of medical error — it's now the third leading cause of death in the U.S. — the overmedication, creation of addiction, the quick-fix mentality, not funding the poor, quotas to admit from ERs ... the unique thing here isn't that you fell down so many rabbit holes. ... "

I'm not looking to rewind the clock back to a time before we all had email and cellphones. What I want is to be inspired by the last generation that made a new life-world—the postwar American abstract expressionist painters, jazz musicians, and writers and poets who created an alternate American modernism ... a blend of forms and techniques with an emphasis not on the facelessness of mass production, but on individual creativity and excellence.

Excerpt from "The Double Shift," by Katherine Goldstein

Imagine if much of the country didn't have reliable internet. There were years-long waiting lists to get it, and its cost was so high you aren't sure how you'd afford it even if you got off the waitlist. ... Sometimes you could go to a friend or family member's house and use theirs, but ... you don't want to risk damaging the relationship by asking too often. What if every single day you had to cobble together how to find internet from all of these sources just to do your job and provide for your family? This is what it's like to be a working parent in need of childcare in America. MWP

Related reading: time.com/6967551/u-s-economy-childcare

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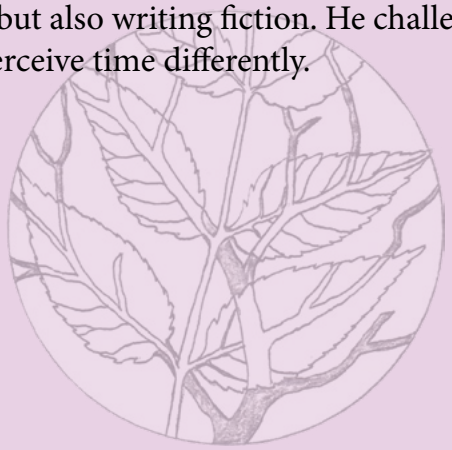
Reflecting From Time

written by Susan Thurston-Hamerski
art by Riki Kölbl Nelson

When I was an administrator at St. Olaf College, I would attend writer-focused events. At one of them, in the 1980s, I sat next to Riki Kölbl Nelson. She and Karen Herseth Wee co-founded Penchant, a respected group of women writers. I was walking on air to be asked to submit poems for consideration. I was even more excited to be invited to join the group. The weekly meetings became a life force for me as a writer and a woman. We take each other seriously as writers, which means we expect progress from each other. There is an obligation to show up, to be present for each other, and to pay constructive attention to what is brought to the meetings.

We meet every other week by Zoom. It's taken time since Covid to be with each other physically, but we're looking forward to a return of seasonal retreats and in-person meetings. With the launch of our fifth anthology, *What Wakes Her in the Night* (forthcoming from The Black Hat Press), there will be more of those opportunities and the synergy they produce.

The following was influenced by author Italo Calvino, who changed how I approach not only reading but also writing fiction. He challenged me to perceive time differently.



The Rewritten Version

Someday an old woman will tell a tale of this time. She will have white hair, thin skin, fragile ankles. Will be a master of revision, and offer the story. Not this version, but the rewritten one. The one in another language. The language of memory with a thick accent.

She will tell about the time when she no longer felt afraid of the river's back water. Heron-legged and eagle-watched, the river invited her, its aspect of shadow and twisted gnarl most ominous and seductive. She does not want to ever live too far from it.

The season hangs upon early April. Prelude to all things lush. And many deaths. The gasp, before green claims its pale tongue, when red-twigged dogwood offers the only color and asks no questions. The heart as sextant, lifted against the night sky to fix its location — there in the midst of five shining planets.

She reads more about string theory and chaos and is again entranced by other dimensions. And that luscious word: simultaneity. A good way to get much done. The best way to love, to make love — a mutual multiplicity coming. More than joined. Beyond intersection.

This was always the season when she parted from lovers. After all that winter, they would have explored as much as possible, and when uncovered by spring, realized there wasn't much more either wanted to reveal. There are a few exceptions.

Simultaneous. The best sort of realization. The only way no one gets hurt. All left as a pleasant memory, a present upon a pillow before the summer lover. Perhaps. Perhaps not. Some of their names are forgotten. She considers giving them each a name for the season or month when they met. Maybe just the day of the week. He was Wednesday. Call him February. She remembers Autumn best of all.

And so the someday-old woman finds herself again in April. She thinks they should always be in bed with her amidst worn books and several dark vintages that leave behind traces of moss and chocolate and clove. Her favorite scents. The finest tastes linger long on the tongue. Simultaneously. Ah, that word again! They feel their age. She has never felt younger. It is time to start thinking of a name worthy of this story. MWP

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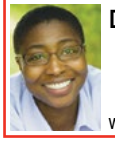
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NEXT DEADLINE FOR CLASSIFIEDS: Monday, June 10, 5pm

Ads are run in consecutive issues.
up to 150 characters: $36/ad, 1–5 issues
up to 150 characters: $26/ad, 6–12 issues
up to 300 characters: $62/ad, 1–5 issues
up to 300 characters: $47/ad, 6–12 issues

CLASSIFIED DISPLAY advertisements

Run a boxed ad (1 or 2 inches) in a classified category. Contact us for more information, categories, deadlines, and rates.

LINE CLASSIFIED advertisements

Place your ad at womenspress.com. Click on Classified Ads. Prepayment is required for the amount of the entire run. $38 minimum. Pay online with PayPal or mail check or Visa/MC info to Minnesota Women's Press, 800 W. Broadway, #3A, Minneapolis, MN 55411 or call 651-646-3968 with credit card info.

EMPLOYMENT advertisements

$2/word for print and online presence. $1/word for online-only ads. Minimum charge $50. Email your text to ads@womenspress.com. Include company name, address, contact person, and phone number.

Ads are placed both in the magazine and on womenspress.com.
For more info call 651-646-3968 or email ads@womenspress.com.

I've Arrived

written by Edie Barrett, Ortonville

I'm here
I've arrived
in rural Minnesota
a small town where the Dairy Queen
is the threshold guardian
along Highway 75.
I admit
when all the world seems too much for me
I seek refuge with her
in a vanilla swirl
dipped in nut crunch.

My camper rocks back and forth in the wind
and sometimes squeaks
like a mattress in a cheap motel.
I'm sure this will keep the neighbors wondering
about the woman from California
in the caravan.

Yesterday it hailed so hard against the tin roof
I put cotton in my ears.
I watched in awe
as the landscape was quickly covered
in a blanket of mothballs.

With one stray treat
I have won the heart of the dog next door.
I find his devotion to me
utterly…
crushing.

My sister's tulips
are blooming on the farm.
She walks around with her bucket and clippers
selecting red, yellow, and white flowers.
Her prized parrot tulips
sway in the wind
with their ruffled négligée edges.
They are so beautiful
but not as beautiful as she.

I am reading Kathleen Norris' *Dakota*
and I'm reminded of what it means
to be in a small town.
I am humbled by the thought
I am on my knees…
still
and I wonder how in God's name
I will keep a low profile
or
if I'm meant to.

But mostly
I pray to be smart.

From *The Sacred Prairie: Reflections of Nature & Self*, poetry compilation by Edie Barrett, published 2022

Now is the time to reserve space in the 2024 WOMEN'S DIRECTORY

Reach our audience of decision-making women all year in print and online.
Tap into 39 years of experience of connecting businesses with women.

Your ad receives:

» **Full color**

» **Print & online presence with website link**

» **Preferred placement**

DISPLAY ADVERTISING

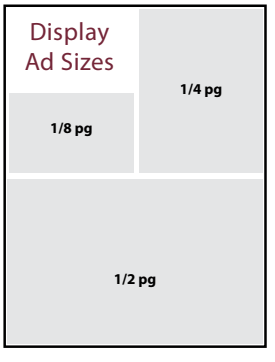
Your full-color ad in print and 25-word descriptive listing in print and online for a full year for one affordable price.

Display ads (includes a listing)	Width	Height	
Full page	7 1/4″	9 1/8″	$3,593
Half page vertical	3 1/2″	9 1/8″	$1,801
Half page horizontal	7 1/4″	4 1/2″	$1,801
Quarter page vertical	3 1/2″	4 1/2″	$811
Eighth page horizontal	3 1/2″	2 1/8″	$520

PRINT & ONLINE DESCRIPTIVE LISTINGS

Your business or organization name, logo, address, contact name, telephone, email, website, and descriptive text.

Descriptive listings only	
100-word listing	$376
50-word listing	$326
25-word listing	$244



PLACE YOUR AD NOW!

July 22: Final deadline

MINNESOTA WOMEN'S PRESS

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Our media kit is online at womenspress.com