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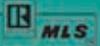
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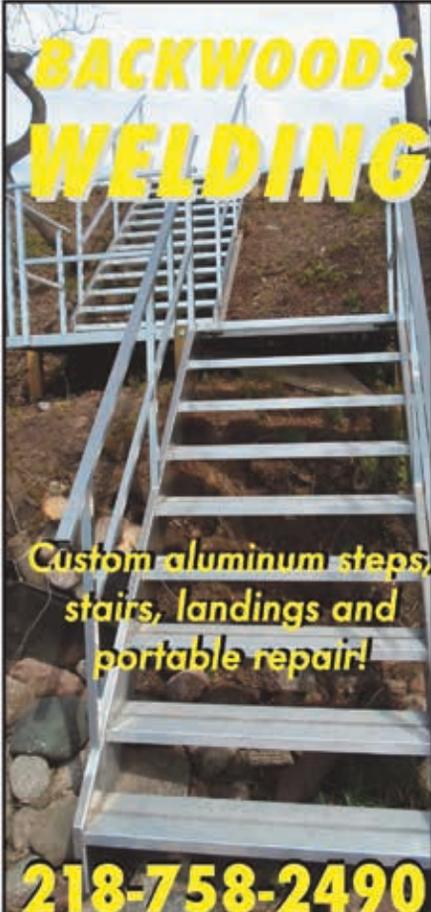
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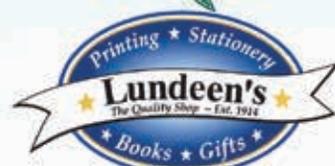


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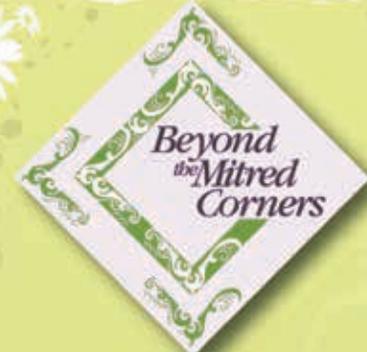
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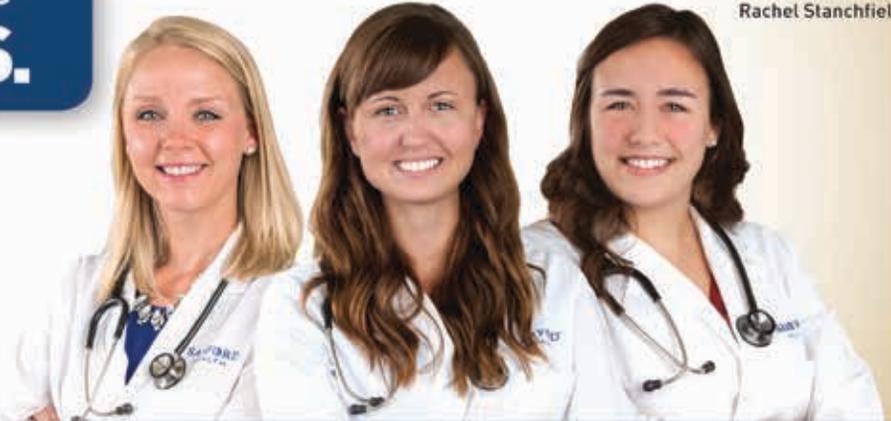
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STORY BY DAN THIMGAN
PHOTOS BY DAN & SANDRA THIMGAN



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OTC
FAMILY—FRIENDS & FUN
In Otter Tail County

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Our Otter Tales

Spring is so close I can feel it. After this colder winter, we are looking forward to warmer temps. I really enjoy all the seasons we have here

in Minnesota, each with their own charm. Spring's is like a wakeup call from a long sleep. Yes, we go through the thaw, the brown and dirty leftover of a good winter melt, but renewal is in the air. The temps start to climb. The ice retreats from the lakes (not before giving up some great fishing...I hope), and we start to get excited for what is to come. Not just the warmer temps, but the rebirth of everything we see. The grass greens up, the leaves come out, the flowers bloom, all filling the air with the greatest fresh smell of spring. I have this theory that it is the perspective we gain that makes us appreciate things more fully. So, after a winter like this, I know all of us will really enjoy this spring, we certainly earned it.

This issue of *OTC Magazine* is full of great stories that remind us of spring. From winter travel adventures, improving your health, weddings – all

setting us up with great expectation for what is to come. I really think you will enjoy the Virgil Jensen story about his collection of outboard motors. These amazing machines have propelled us into the summer enjoyment of boating...where would we be without them? No leisurely cruising on the lake, no fishing, no skiing or tubing, and certainly no "feeling the need for speed". Not good if you live in Minnesota. The people who invented outboards are my heroes for what they have added to spring, summer and fall fun...thank you!

Each issue, we try to bring you great stories of Otter Tail County residents each issue that add to the interesting fabric of where we live. I hope you enjoy reading about them. If you know of other interesting people out there, please let me know, we really like writing their stories for everyone to read.

Now it is time to get ready. Spring is almost here and we need to get busy spring cleaning our lives. Don't forget to get in the garage and shine up that outboard, it deserves our appreciation for what it will do for us in the upcoming months...power on.

— Ed Pawlenty, *OTC* Publisher



Fall 2017

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Fall 2017
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How to Take a Vacation... and Not Make Yourself Crazy

STORY BY DAN THIMGAN

PHOTOS BY DAN AND SANDRA THIMGAN

*Take time to take some silly pictures!
l-r: Sandy's brother Curt, Sandy, Dan*

So, you're going on vacation. Hmm.

Traveling is great, but it can be stressful. In fact, it can make you a little crazy. There's all that planning and packing! You don't understand the local language! You're sleeping in a strange bed! It's costing you lots of money! And...you ran out of underwear!

Over the last few years, my wife/traveling companion and I have learned there are a few ways to de-stress our vacation and help make traveling more enjoyable. Some of the following might resonate with you as you plan your next great trip or vacation.

The Basics

Of course, make sure you've checked that your driver's license and credit cards are up to date. It might be a good idea to let your credit card company know you're traveling. If traveling internationally, make sure your passport is current. You've gassed up the car and turned down the heat. So, what else?

Make Sure You're on the Same Page

You and your traveling companion(s) need to "get into negotiations" about the pace and scope of your travel scenario. Five straight days of wilderness hiking or art gallery visiting may not rest well with everyone. Look for some variety and change of pace.

Do your Homework and MORE Homework

Read about/study your destination before you go and not just from a travel guide – how about a book – fiction or nonfiction – concerning your destination's setting? Travel guides tell you about the sights; other books can give you insights.

Once you arrive, be sure to stop at your destination's Visitor Center. But, don't just pick up brochures, ask questions. Staff people are likely very knowledgeable about their area and can match local activities to your interests. They want you to enjoy your stay. Also, use social media: Trip Advisor, Yelp, and other online sites offer current reviews from other visitors.

Talk to the Locals

Strike up conversations with the locals. Talk to shop owners. Remember, you're a guest in their community, and they are likely proud of the place. Ask them what you should and shouldn't miss about their community. Be sure to find out their favorite place to eat.



Meet the Locals



Interact with the Locals / Mexico
l-r: Carmen, Sandy, Silvia

Don't Just Visit The Tourist Sights

Of course you're going to visit The Sights! But, be sure to find time to do normal stuff. Walk around your neighborhood, find places of comfort, places for reflection, a place to have coffee. Be sure to try that local food! Consider hiring a local guide if you have a particular interest or adventure in mind - like a whale watching excursion, or a guided jeep trip in the desert.



More meeting the Locals and trying the local food.
Enough already!



Dig into the Local Culture

Attend the local community festivals and parades. If you're a walker/jogger/runner/biker, consider taking part in local races or charity walks.



Take part in local festivities / California

Immerse yourself in local culture and history. Take in neighborhood concerts and theatrical presentations. Local convention centers often host a slate of unique events. We always go to the local farmers' markets - that's where you might learn to love candied jalapeños and huli huli chicken!



Dan helps with the Huli Huli Chicken / Hawaii

Keep a Travel Journal

If you keep a daily travel journal, you'll be able to relive your vacation for years to come. Write

down what you did, where you went and what you saw, who you met, what funny things happened. Also keep notes about what you packed. Did you pack the right clothes? Did you take the devices (and chargers) you needed? Later, these notes can turn into Travel Lists.

Take Lots of Pictures

Don't take pictures just of The Sights. Put people in them. Show yourselves. Take pictures of what you're doing, the people you encounter, the signs you see, the foods you eat, the things that capture your attention. Oh, and do some silly stuff, and share the pictures on Facebook! Make it memorable!



Always take pictures of beautiful food! / Hawaii



*Take pictures of unusual signs
I don't know what is on the menu, but it shouldn't take long / New Mexico*



Be sure to pose by the local sights!

Make Travel Lists

Check your travel journal and any notes you took. Now is the time to turn those notes into Travel Lists. You'll discover such lists instrumental when planning future trips. We have a file folder full of Travel Lists: a List of things to do to our house before we leave, several Lists of what to pack (adjusted for trip lengths), a List for carry-on luggage if flying, a List of groceries to buy when we arrive, a List of kitchen items to take along, a List of stuff to pack in your computer case. Travel Lists are truly useful and can totally de-stress your vacation prepping, planning and packing.

Be Sure to Pack your Sense of Humor...

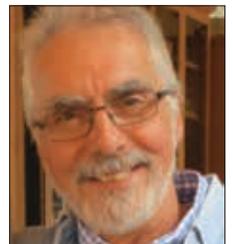
...because STUFF will happen – a dead car battery, a pat-down by TSA, a compromised credit card. They've all happened to us! Humor always lends some perspective.

Time Honored Advice

You are probably already familiar with the following famous bit of travel advice: Take half the clothes you were planning to pack, and twice the amount of money. Good advice! Be sure to do that!



Dan and wife Sandra love traveling, but it's just about to be summer in the beautiful lake country of Otter Tail County. Who'd want to miss that?





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Virgil Jensen: Conservator

STORY & PHOTOS BY JERRY BEGLEY

Do you need to know what company manufactured an antique outboard motor that has a variable pitch propeller? Don't bother using an online search engine, just ask Virgil Jensen. He will tell you it was a 1915 Caille, manufactured in Chicago. Want to know where to get solid-core mahogany plywood used in restoring historic watercraft? You can look locally, but Virgil knows it has to be imported from England. Building a knife and need to know where to purchase the highest quality stainless steel? You won't find it in America - Virgil will tell you to look in Canada or China.

Virgil's initial experiments with outboard motors and wooden resort craft started at a young age. Describing that he had an early bad habit of liking to eat, and that food cost money, he started repairing boats to purchase food. Moving from his Wyndmere, North Dakota, birthplace to the **Pease Resort** on Otter Tail Lake in 1934, gave him an opportunity to start what would become a lifelong passion of repairing, restoring and collecting watercraft and outboard motors.

World War II interrupted his plans as he enlisted in the U.S. Navy at the age of 14. The Navy found out, decided he was too young and sent him home. The U.S. Army later claimed him, found out he was a crack shot and placed him in the Special



Virgil with one of his hand-crafted model boats

Forces for duty during the war and the Korean Conflict.

Returning to Otter Tail County, he immediately resumed his repair work and found another love – his wife Donagene. A native of Dent, she met Virgil through a relative, married him in 1951 and celebrated their 66th wedding anniversary this year. Together they raised a daughter and two sons.

His reputation for quality work grew and restorations filled his schedule. Of the many boats restored his favorite five are: a 1919 16-foot built by the Alexandria Boat Works; a 1956 hard-top cruiser deep-water boat built by Larson Boat Works, Little Falls; another Alexandria Works 16-foot rowing boat used as a racer on Otter Tail Lake; a 1955 Runabout featuring that mahogany plywood; and a 1960 runabout from the Parkers Prairie Boat Works.

Two of his restorations are used for interior decorations in homes on Otter Tail Lake, one suspended upside down from the ceiling and the front bow of another protruding from the wall in a breakfast area. Another classic restoration of his is a wooden row boat prominently displayed in the Minnesota Fishing Museum and Hall of Fame in Little Falls.



Virgil and Donagene

He also has a hobby about a hobby, as he makes intricate model replicas of historic boats and has many displayed in his home. Sitting at the kitchen table in Virgil and Donagene's comfortable home in Battle Lake, one has no idea there is a display area below filled with treasures. Virgil's current collection includes over 100 fully-restored, gleaming models carefully arranged, cataloged and protected in an area adjacent to his shop. The oldest was made in 1915 and newest in 1957. They are his pride and joy.

No boat is complete without a motor and Virgil has worked on all of them. Start discussing the multitude of models and variations of each outboard, you quickly learn his vast knowledge and technical expertise in the field. Not only does he instantly recall technical information, but will tell you about the inventor, development, failures and peculiarities of that model. He humorously relays facts about Ole Evinrude and Ole's interaction with the Davidson Brothers of Harley Davidson fame. (By the way, did you know Everts Lumber in Battle Lake once sold outboard motors?) Many of the original outboards featured conveniences not available on today's engines. His current restoration project is a 1948, 33.4 hp, two-foot wide, four cylinder Evinrude that requires two persons to carry. And he just received a 1954 25-hp Evinrude that is frozen and needs to be repaired.



A few of the many outboards in Virgil's collection



Virgil in his shop

Virgil's other hobby is fishing, which led him into another profession: knife making. Cleaning a catch of salmon in the 30s, he determined that the current knives available were not large enough to fillet a large salmon – so he crafted his own. He still has that knife and it appears to be very capable of filleting a large salmon. Of course, this led to a profession that produced over 300 knives a year. His production ranged from pocket knives to fixed-blade knives and three styles of fillet knives that are still appreciated by many fishermen in the area.



Lowrance Fish Locators

Knife examples - top knife is the first one he made to fillet salmon

He proudly describes memorable creations: 19 knives especially created for a hunting group featuring antler handles embedded with the shell casing from their deer kill, and one specially designed for a game warden. His pictorial display of created knives eclipses most major knife manufacturer's offerings.

How did Virgil obtain the knowledge necessary to perform all these functions? Not in any formal technical training, just through trial, error, patience and experience. Because of his knowledge and reputation in these many fields, he serves as a resource for other restorers and is known as the man

to call about problems, parts availability and detailed history. His circle of friends and acquaintances include a list of Who's Who in the outdoor world, such as Ron Shara, Gary Roach and Tony Roach. Ron Shara spent time with Virgil and featured his talents in a segment of **Minnesota Bound**.

Other collections in Virgil's display area include hand-carved duck decoys, vintage models of Lowrance Fish Locators and rows of deer antler racks.



Setting aside water-related projects for a while, Virgil recalls interesting memories of his 13 seasons as a guide for Cowles Media Group on what is now known as Glendalough State Park. Still an avid

sportsman, he enjoys pheasant hunting and walleye fishing with his son and has large photos of their success.

Do you need to know what outboard motor did not have a water pump for cooling but utilized a vacuum/suction process created by the propeller? Check with Virgil!



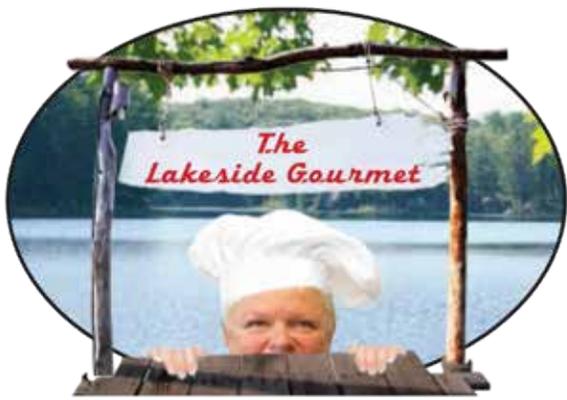
Jerry Begley is a retired Regional Director for a telecommunications company and resides with his wife Diane on Stalker Lake. While he enjoys all outdoor activities, he is returning for the first time to utilize his journalism major in college.



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The Lakeside Gourmet

BY SANDRA THIMGAN
PHOTO BY DAN THIMGAN

Couscous — a simple, sweet, and warm breakfast

Seeking an alternative to oatmeal for your morning comfort cereal? Look no further than couscous! What is couscous? Contrary to its appearance, this North African staple is a pasta, not a grain. It has a rice-like appearance but is actually made of semolina and wheat flour that is steamed. This sweetened version may become your new breakfast favorite. Imagine combining cinnamon-raisin bread and peanut butter into a warm, rich cereal. Couscous can also be made into savory dishes, so you have another tasty reason for culinary experimentation.

Sweet Couscous

3 cups milk
1/2 cup raisins
1/2 cup chopped peanuts
3 T. peanut butter of your choice
1/4 tsp. salt
2/3 cup plain couscous,
not flavored*

Bring milk, peanut butter, and raisins to boil.

Add rest of ingredients and return to boil for 1 minute.

Remove from heat, cover and let stand 10 minutes.

Top with raw/brown sugar, cream/milk and enjoy.

*Find plain couscous in the pasta, rice, or "international foods" areas in grocery stores. Two brands readily available are *Bob's Red Mill™* and *Near East™*.



We learned about couscous back in the 70s from an organic magazine and it has been a regular on our breakfast table ever since. Sharing it with others, they comment that it is a special hit with kids, so that's always a winner! Sandra Thimgan lives on Silver Lake with her husband, official taster and photographer, Dan.



WIN to Dine

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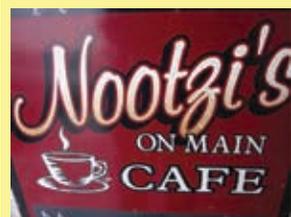
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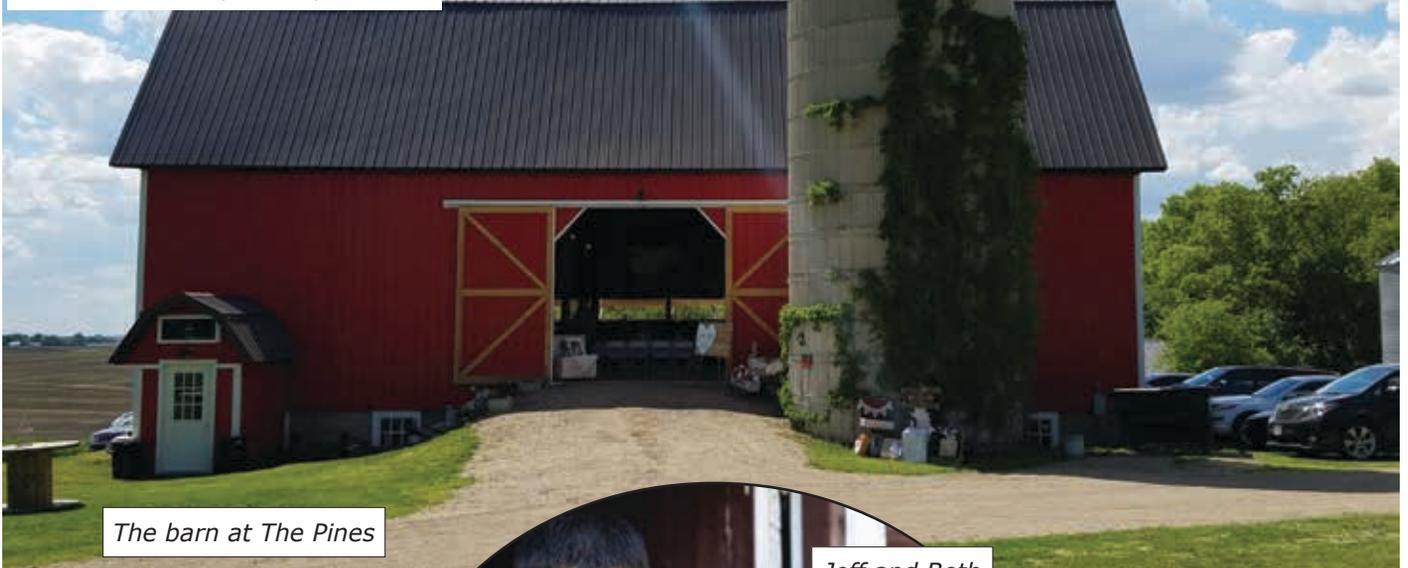
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Just Something About a Barn

STORY BY BECKY TIGHE

PHOTOS BY BETH (PENDER) LAVIGNE



The barn at The Pines

It was 2010, Jeff and Beth LaVigne were engaged to be married and looking for a home. Both originally from the Barnesville area, they hoped for a rural home with some acreage. New homes were pricey and sometimes lacked character, so they began investigating old farm properties. They eventually fell in love with the old Aarness farm near Pelican Rapids, MN. It was a scenic farm of 13 acres, including a six-acre farmyard with a pond and seven wooded acres. This place they now call *The Pines* was a family farm for three generations. It had a barn, a farmhouse with a pond view, a granary and various outbuildings. They purchased it just in time to celebrate their own wedding on the grounds of their new home.

The fine old barn had been built in 1907, a year before the house – a common practice for homesteaders – and it needed an “intervention” if it was to last. Jeff was a very handy guy and went to work rebuilding the collapsing side of the barn foundation and tinning the roof. Next, he had to clear an attached lean-to that fell in and then set to tinning all four sides. No doubt about it, they loved that old barn.

After attending a wedding at *The Barn* at Dunvilla, Jeff asked “Why don’t we hold weddings in



Jeff and Beth LaVigne

our barn?” Jeff was always thinking ahead to the next thing and it seemed like a natural. They put the word out that their barn was available for special occasions. There was immediate interest and a wedding was booked there even before the new barn floor was finished.

Now there was a reason for making more improvements. Renovating the barn while preserving its rustic atmosphere took over two and a half years. That included a fully tinned exterior including the cupolas, which still remain red, white and blue in honor of the U.S. Bicentennial. The old granary building became a bar with a rustic barn-wood counter.

Jeff has his own sawmill and the lumber he produces has come in handy to build everything from changing rooms to the installation of four bathrooms to accommodate events. The project was completed with a summer kitchen that was moved to the barn from a farm near Rothsay, Minnesota.

While developing their “homestead,” Beth and Jeff have also built a family with Cody (6), Evelyynn (3), Thomas (1½), and Whitmen (3 months). It’s a family affair, and the children like to plant and weed flowers around the grounds, ride a float in local

parades with their cousins, and set up for weddings. Beth says Cody's job this summer will be to water the many flowers. "I'm terrible at watering flowers. He does a much better job. We'll have to get him a little cart for watering."

There is just something about a farm setting that helps people really relax and enjoy a family event. This year, five weddings have already been booked for the summer. As part of their service to clients, the LaVignes set up and take down chairs and tables, direct traffic, and deal with guests' minor emergencies (such as the little girl whose dress somehow got all muddy).

The Pines Event Center's (Aarness) barn is visible from Minnesota Highway 108, and has long been a local landmark. It is easy to find, and if you get lost there is no shortage of locals who can point you in the right direction.



The kids: Evie, Cody, Whit & Tom



Bathrooms and bridal house

This is one option for a ceremony, with the pond in the background



2nd ceremony spot



Zach & Paige Griffin - 1st wedding at The Pines



Inside the wedding barn



Tent for extra seating if needed



Becky Tighe left advertising to volunteer with Christian non-profit ministries in Romania and Austria for 7 years. Returning to Minnesota, she settled in Battle Lake. She likes spending time with her 10 grandkids and living among BL's wonderful people.



LAZY J RANCH & HORSE RESCUE:

A Story of Serendipity, Persistence and Love

STORY BY REBA GILLIAND

PHOTOS BY JEANI YOUNG

Lazy J Ranch & Horse Rescue is in south Otter Tail County on County Hwy. 38 near Inspiration Peak. Jim and Jeani Young are the unsung heroes of this operation. They bring rescue horses back to health and find good homes for them. Theirs is a story of serendipity, persistence and, most of all, love.



Jim and Jeani Young at Lazy J Ranch & Horse Rescue. From l-r: "Dakota," Jim's horse; "JJ," Jeani's horse; "Diva," a new rescue; and "Whisky," a 2 year old who was rescued on her way to a kill pen and is Jim's current project.

Serendipity

It took a few years for Jeani Berg and Jim Young to become a couple. Jeani grew up on a dairy farm in Eden Valley, a town 70 miles west of the Twin Cities. After graduation, she was eager to move on, and she set out for Wahpeton to check out colleges.

Jim was born in Santa Rosa, CA, where his father was stationed at Fort Ord, an Army post

on Monterey Bay. By age nine, Jim, his mother and stepdad were living in Foxhome and Jim was attending school in Breckenridge.

They met Jim's senior year. One of his buddies had a band and Jim was helping with lights. Jeani was dating one of the band members and came to watch him play. Jim and Jeani started dating in 1995, but parted ways soon thereafter.

Fast forward 12 years. Jim was living in Foxhome, Jeani in West Fargo. Since 1995, both had married other people, but were both now separated. One November evening, Jim was driving backroads and by mistake took a right instead of a left. Instead of turning around, he kept on driving. Before long, he spotted a bar and decided to stop. Jim walked into the bar and looked around. "There she was," Jim says. Jeani smiles and said they haven't spent a day apart since that evening.

Persistence

Their story has several beginnings, but Wisconsin is probably where the seed of a horse rescue operation took root. They were living in Madison when Jeani got a call from a neighbor saying he knew of a horse that needed a home. They asked their landlord if they could keep a horse in the barn and he agreed.

With their new charge, Jim took a job at a boarding stable where he could work around horses. They both had grown up riding. On the farm, Jeani would throw a saddle on the horse and just go. Jim's stepfather "taught" him to ride – he said he was going to show Jim how to tie the saddle strap once and then he should get on and ride. Jim laughs, "I fell off every day for a year, but I learned to ride."

Jim's job came with a serendipitous bonus. While he worked there, one of the boarders abandoned his horse. Jim admired this horse and inquired

about him. The stable owner told Jim he could have the horse if he could ride him. The horse, Dancer, was so ornery he had to be medicated to even trim his hooves.

Jim says he went to the corral every day and gradually earned Dancer's trust. One day, Jim asked the stable owner to meet him at the gate. To the owner's astonishment, the horse walked over to greet Jim. The man made good on his promise. Jim says, "That horse made me a heck of a good rider."

A year went by. The lease on their home in Madison was up, and Jim's job had come to an end. Time to move on. With the promise of a place east of Dallas, TX, Jeani and Jim threw half their belongings into a truck, half into storage, loaded the horses, and set out.

It was one of those snowy, stormy mornings on the Interstate, Jeani says, when the truck blew up. And the place they were moving to was destroyed in a tornado. Instead of Texas, they headed home to Minnesota.

That winter Jim and Jeani lived with Jim's mother in Wahpeton – along with two horses, two dogs and (Jeani remembers) temperatures that fell to 27 degrees below zero. Their living arrangement was meant to be temporary, but it was a year before they found a place of their own.

A Place to Call Home

Jim had a cousin in Erhard where he and Jeani were keeping their horses. Trips to and from Erhard involved circuitous drives through the countryside looking for a place to live. One day they found a place that Jeani fell in love with. After a few phone calls, they secured the place. After all the months of praying and searching, they had found their home.

What's in a Name?

One day, they were sitting around with friends trying to come up with a name for the place. Just to be funny, Jim said, "How about 'Lazy J' – J because both their names began with a 'J' and 'lazy' because of an inside joke – people would call and ask what they were doing and Jeani would say, "Oh, just lazing around," when in fact they were baling hay or feeding the horses or doing any one of the hundreds of things that have to be done on a ranch.

Horse Rescue Operation

Once they settled in they started getting troubled horses, which they nursed back to health, trained and adopted. Word of mouth spread and soon they were running a horse rescue operation. Over the five years they've been in operation, Jeani

says that more than 200 horses have gone through their farm.

Calls to rescue troubled horses come from all over. Not long ago, they received a call from the Otter Tail County Humane Society to pick up horses. The judge had signed an order for that day only – the request was urgent: "How fast can you get trailers together and get the horses – there are 10."

Jim had to call his boss and say he could not be in that day, but they managed to set up temporary housing, find transport for the 10 horses, and trailer them to the ranch.

Jeani says it was a sad situation. The owner had dementia and wasn't caring for the horses. The horses were kept in stalls five feet on a side, where they couldn't even lie down. They hadn't seen daylight in a couple years. The owner would occasionally remember to feed the horses, but would get side-tracked and not get to the ones in the back.

Jim and Jeanie nursed the horses back to health and found homes for them. Firefly (pictured below) is now at a youth ranch near Fargo.



Before



After

Another rescue operation came with a surprise. A seizure brought in nine horses, including a two year old named Ruby. The owner had gotten too old to look after her horses and had allowed them to breed freely. Before long, they discovered Ruby was pregnant. The horses had various problems because of inbreeding, and Jim and Jeanie worried about her delivering. Ruby had her baby,



Jeani with "Winter"

Winter, just fine and in the spring Ruby and her baby, will find a new home.

Calls for rescuing horses come from all over – the Sheriff’s department, neighbors of troubled horses and other rescue operations. But Jim says they don’t want to get bigger. Jeani has her hands full with the ranch, and even with him working full-time, they don’t have the financial capacity to take in more horses.

Keeping the Place Going

Running a horse rescue ranch is an expensive proposition – Jim figures it takes about \$30,000 a year for operations.

“Winters are brutal,” Jeani says, “Just the cost of water warmers goes up to \$400 a month.” Horses need shots and hooves trimmed – with 13 horses at \$45 each, that’s nearly \$600 just to trim hooves, plus \$2.50 a mile to come over from Pelican Rapids (there are no horse veterinarians closer to home).

A friend suggested they become a nonprofit with the idea that people are more apt to help financially when their donation can be deducted. Jim and Jeani formed a nonprofit and held their first public fundraiser at Lions Park in Battle Lake in October 2013. Jeani says, “The turnout wasn’t great – Arlyn and Gail Hustad and a few others showed up, but it was good because we’ve all been good friends ever since.” Since 2013, they’ve held three more fundraisers and raised successively more money at each event until their most recent one brought in \$5,000.



Trailer at Lazy J’s first Fundraiser at Lions Park October 2013

to horses to help them gain weight. The sign at the ranch entrance on County Hwy. 38 was donated by a mystery painter from Ashby.

On the Road

Jim and Jeani’s rescue horses – and even a donkey – are popular attractions wherever they go. **Lazy J Ranch & Horse Rescue** brings up the rear at Battle Lake’s Wenonga Day parade, generating excitement and applause. Jim’s son, Skylar, the “pooper scooper,” works to the tune of loud and encouraging cheers.

Qtip, their mini horse and farm ambassador, was a big hit at Good Samaritan at Christmas.

Dressed in holiday finery, Qtip pranced through the halls ringing his bells and visiting residents and staff. This mini horse has severe hoof problems, so has a permanent home at Lazy J.



Qtip Visits Good Sam

Love

Lazy J Ranch & Horse Rescue

has been a labor of love for this exceptional couple – love for each other and love for the many troubled horses they nurture. They deserve our support.



Firefly gets attention



Late afternoon on the Ranch



Reba Gilliland: Some couples and stories really touch my heart and this is one of them. I know donations would be much appreciated as Jim and Jeani strive to bring horses back to health and find good homes for them.



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A New Lease on Life

After a decade of failing health, Fergus Falls woman replaces prescriptions with CrossFit

BY LAKE REGION HEALTH CARE

PHOTOS BY KATIE JOHNSON & KRISTEN ANDERSON



Gail Anderson after completing a 5K race last fall

Since battling a series of health challenges, Gail Anderson has been prescribed drugs for everything from osteoporosis to high cholesterol. But her most effective prescription is one she only has to take three times a week. It requires no insurance reimbursement and it has few side effects.

That miracle drug? **CrossFit**, coupled with a healthier diet.

The high-intensity fitness regimen incorporates elements from different sports and types of exercise. Since Anderson began doing CrossFit at Lake Region Healthcare's **CrossFit Fergus Falls** in spring 2017, she has lost 51 pounds, reversed her osteoporosis completely and gained more vigor and enthusiasm for life than she's experienced for decades.

"I feel so much stronger. I have more energy," says the rural Fergus Falls woman. "Things are so much different. It's not just physically, but mentally, I feel so much better. I have a reason to get out of bed now."

Anderson's story is all the more amazing when one considers what the past decade of her life was like. She had been besieged by one health crisis after another – including severe depression, a hysterectomy, a blood clot in her lung, breast cancer treatments, a lump removal from her back, cataracts and a devastating diagnosis of osteoporosis of the spine.



Gail at CrossFit

The osteoporosis treatment required yearly infusions of a powerful drug that prevented her body from breaking down bone. But it also gave her flu-like symptoms, so she never felt completely well.

She thought there had to be a better way. Fortunately, she was inspired by her 26-year-old daughter, Kristen, who was training at **CrossFit Fergus Falls** and recently competed in the **CrossFit Open**. Anderson approached Kristen's coach and asked if it was ever possible to reverse osteoporosis. Certainly, he said, pointing out that the right combination of exercise and strength-training could stop bone loss and even build bones.

Anderson took the plunge, jumping into classes with Kristen. "It was sort of intimidating but it was OK, because I knew everybody has to start someplace," she recalls.

Although everyone around her was encouraging, Anderson soon fell prey to injury. She didn't know how to do squats correctly, so she wound up injuring her knee. She took it easy so her knee could mend, but she also signed up for private lessons so she could guard against future injury. "That really made a difference," she says.

Anderson also became one of the **Diamond Ladies**, a group of older women who faithfully work out at *CrossFit Fergus Falls*. She's found she loves the camaraderie and accountability of exercising with a regular group.

"They're there for me as well as I am there for them. And we all push each other and encourage each other all the way along ... I thrive off of that," says Anderson, who also gains inspiration from her daughter/frequent workout partner, Kristen.

As Anderson became more active, she found herself acquiring other healthy habits – such as substituting meals with nutrient-packed protein shakes and drinking a gallon of water a day. In less than a year, she has dropped from 231 to 180 pounds. Even more importantly, her doctor informed her this fall that her cholesterol has dropped, and her osteoporosis is completely gone.

"It was such an exciting time when my doctor told me, 'Your bones are better.' I said, 'You're kidding!' and I just exploded in the room," she says. "My first stop after I got the diagnosis was here (at *CrossFit Fergus Falls*) and I told my coach. I was so excited I had tears running down my face. I conquered the big O – my osteoporosis is gone."

Buoyed by her successes, Anderson also began to run. She participated in six to eight 5Ks last fall, and may even try a 10k in the future. Another goal she has set for herself is to lose an additional 30 pounds by fall of 2018 for her daughter's wedding.

Anderson is the first to admit she's the unlikeliest of gym rats. She was 54 when she started doing *Crossfit* and she'd never considered herself an athlete. "When I was growing up, I hated gym class," she admits.

But she believes the fact she could do it is proof that anyone else can. "It's not something where you're going to come in here and say, 'Oh this is too much for me to do, or this is going to cause more pain.' A lot of times it's the opposite. A lot of times the way to fix things is to get stronger and your bones get stronger as you put muscle on," she says.



Diamond Ladies CrossFit class

In fact, her advice to others is to get a doctor's permission first, then use an expert coach and the correct equipment and, finally, take it one day at a time.

She's found that the exercise experts at LRH and *CrossFit Fergus Falls* know how to build strength and fitness to accommodate any age or ability. "They are certified, and they are into making you better emotionally and physically. They're here to make you stronger. It's not that you have to lift a bar up over your head, that's not the goal. The goal is to progressively get stronger as you go."

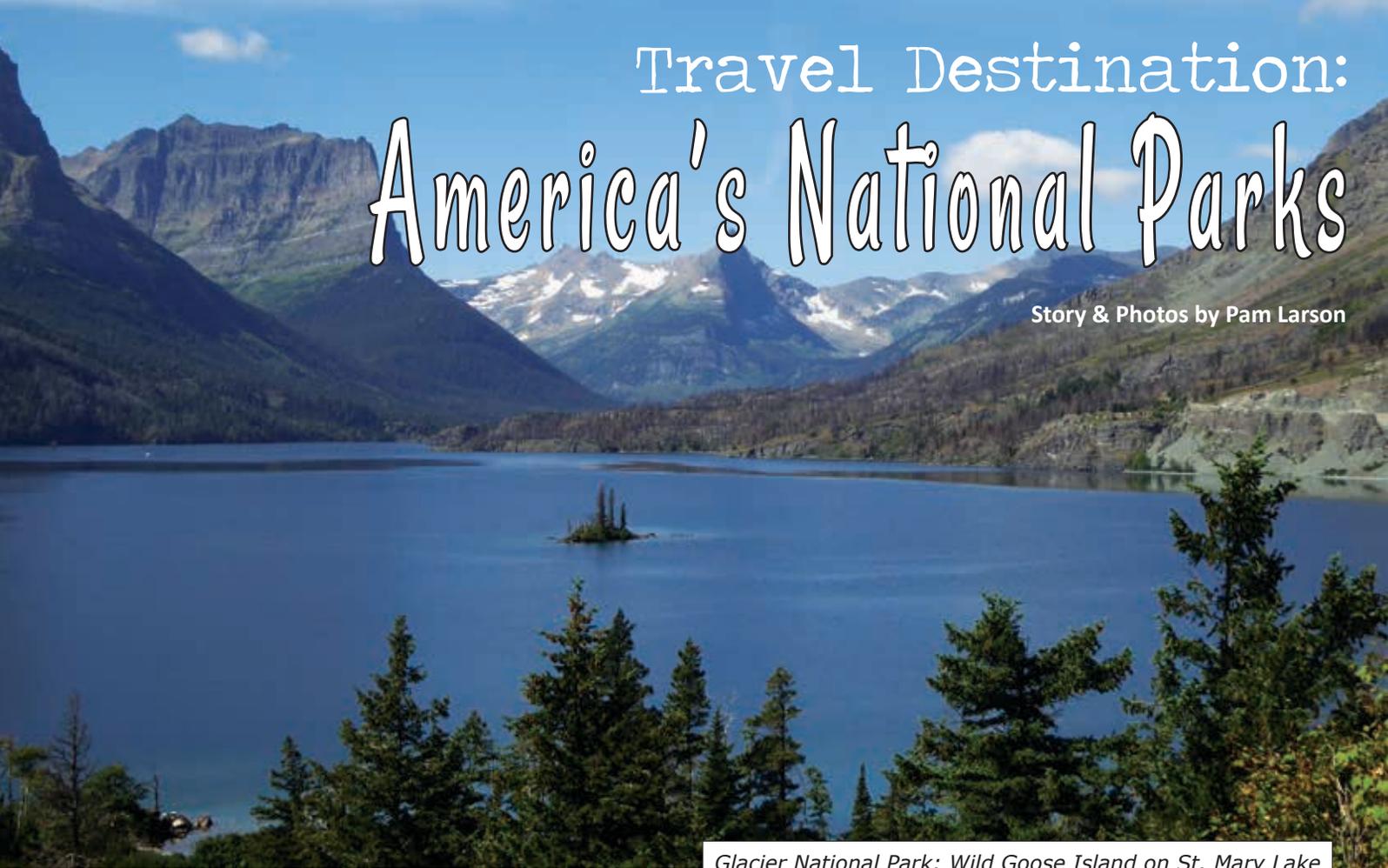
"Try it," urges Anderson. "It doesn't hurt to try."



Gail and her daughter Kristen celebrate the completion of a 5K together.

Travel Destination: America's National Parks

Story & Photos by Pam Larson



Glacier National Park: Wild Goose Island on St. Mary Lake

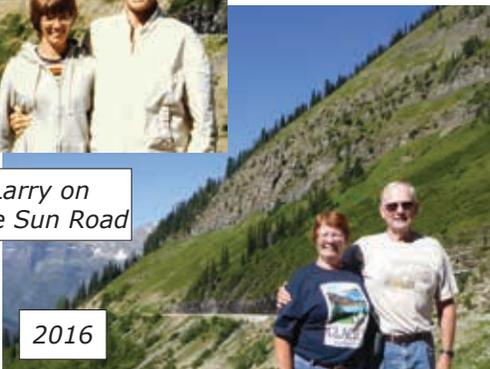
Larry and I have been to 34 of the 59 National Parks in the U.S. We have also seen many of the other areas in the National park system (which includes 417 parks, monuments, battlefields, military parks, historical parks, historic sites, lakeshores, seashores, recreation areas, scenic rivers and trails, and the White House).

Our visits as a couple began with our honeymoon in 1977 when we went to Glacier and Yellowstone. Glacier must be a favorite because we have been there seven times. Visit a park or two this summer and discover your own favorites!



1977

Pam & Larry on Going to the Sun Road



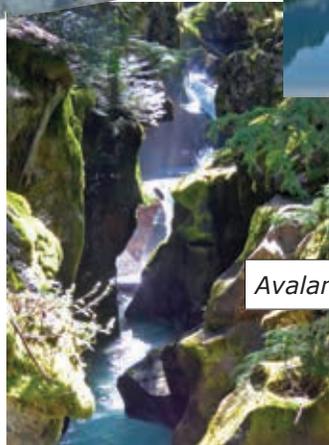
2016



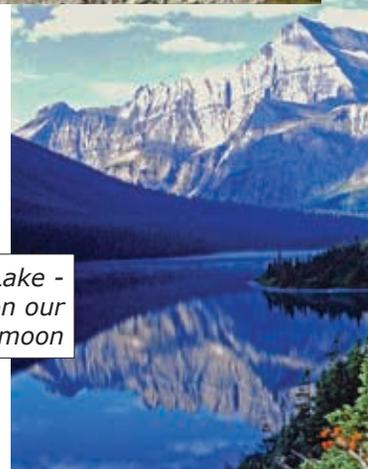
Montana



St. Mary Lake



Avalanche Creek



Grinnell Lake - taken on our honeymoon



Phainopepla bird

Saguaro and prickly pear cacti - it takes 60-75 years to start to grow arms on the cactus



South Dakota



close up of saguaro cactus



Arizona

"There is nothing so American as our national parks...The fundamental idea behind the parks...is that the country belongs to the people, that it is in process of making for the enrichment of the lives of all of us." — Wallace Stegner, 1983: "National parks are the best idea we ever had."



Minnesota

Voyageurs is mostly water & trees



Bald eagle



OLD FAITHFUL GEYSER



Wyoming



Tour boat



Lower Falls and Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone



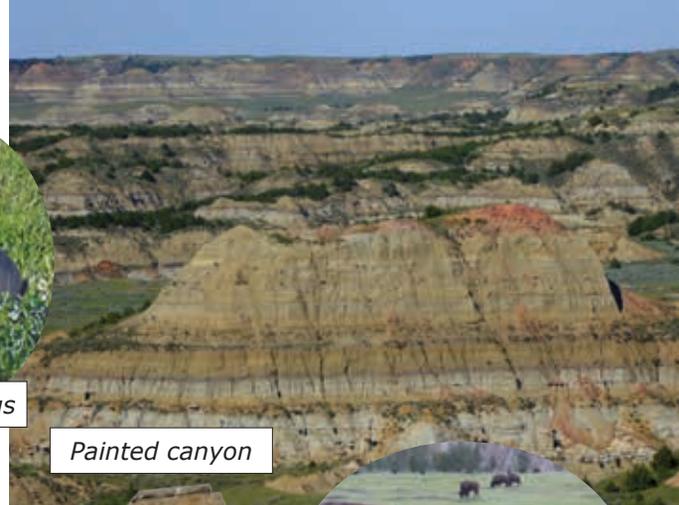
Loon family



El Capitan



Prairie dogs



Painted canyon

North Dakota



Bison

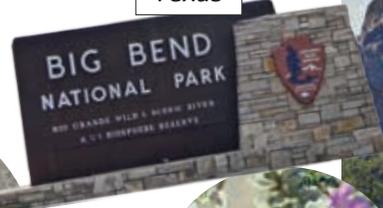
California



Yosemite Falls



Texas



Chisos Mountains



Road runner

Pink desert sage



Utah



These formations are all over and are called 'hoodoos'

Colorado



Gunnison River Valley - called 'Black Canyon' since the walls are often covered in shadows



Utah



Painted canyons

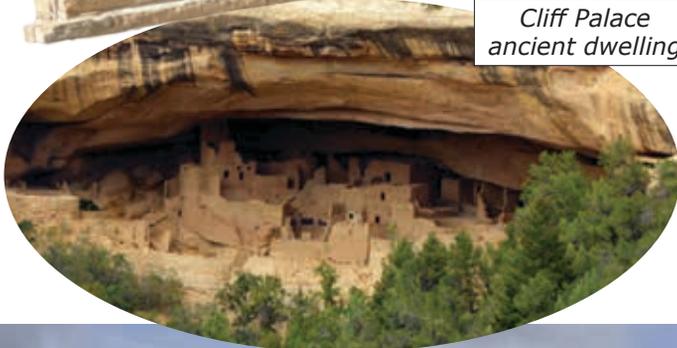


Arizona



Colorado

Cliff Palace ancient dwelling



Lookout Peak



Pam Larson: We don't intend to see all of the 59 parks, but we do have at least a couple more trips in mind. We have found photographs to be the best souvenirs - they don't take up much space and evoke great memories.

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 Garden
 Bird Seed/Feeders
 Grills & Accessories
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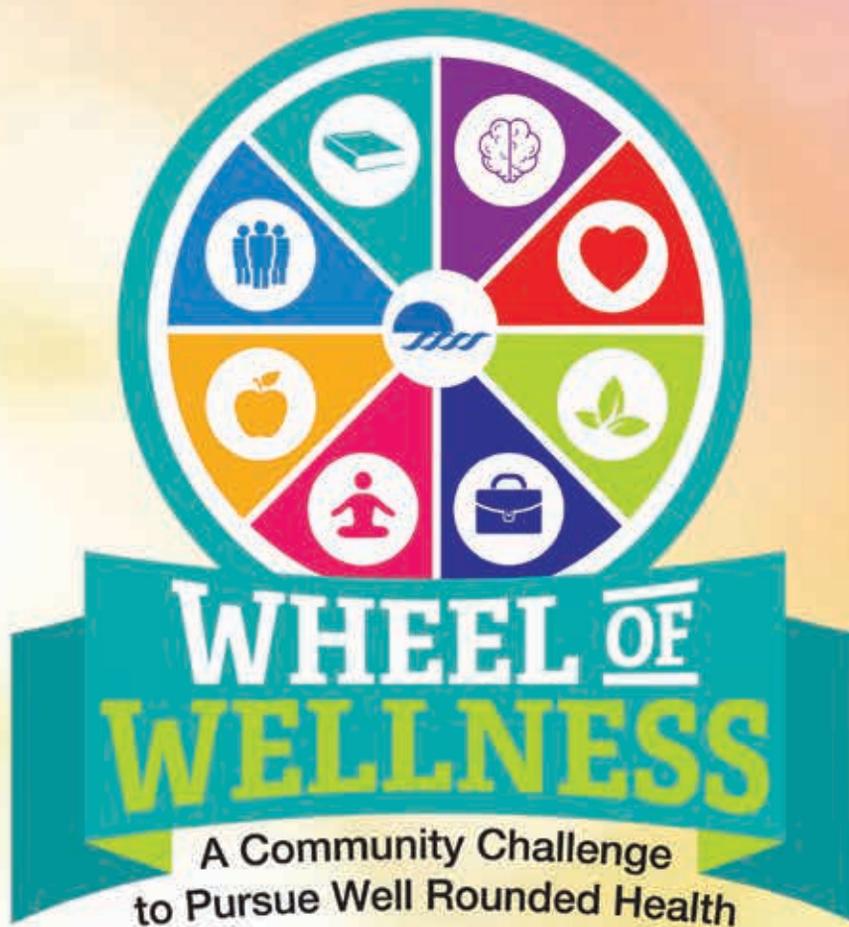
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Lake Region Healthcare 2018

COMMUNITY HEALTH EXPO

Thursday, March 15 | 5pm-8:30pm
M State Fergus Falls Campus

Featuring nationally recognized motivational speaker, Mark J. Lindquist.

Dinner & prizes

Free health screenings

Hands-on
learning sessions

Healthy living
booths & resources

Grand prize community
health challenge drawing

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*\$2,000 Travel Voucher drawing held at end of event.

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