

# senior review

FREE

July 2023

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A Senior Magazine for Living a Healthier, Smarter and More Active Life in Eau Claire

## Discovering Family Roots *By Ken Anderson, The Mayberry Guru, themayberryguru@gmail.com*

It was in 1929 when my 22-year-old father boarded the Gripsholm to embark on his voyage to America. It would be the last time he saw his homeland and his family. Sweden was behind him forever.

Through the years and up until my father died in 1961, he was able to communicate with his Swedish family through letters. However, because of the language barrier following his death, my family lost track of all our relatives in Sweden. We did not hear from any of them again.

I always felt an essential part of my life and heritage was missing. With the help of the internet, in 1999, I began a search for family members in Sweden. I was able to contact a Lutheran pastor who resided in Skane, Sweden, the area where my family lived. He was able to locate three first cousins, and he gave me their addresses. I wrote to one of my cousins, wondering if he could read English. Fortunately, my cousin Kjell was able to have my letter translated. It was shortly after that when I received a phone call from Sweden. Kjell had contacted another cousin who was quite fluent in English, and he phoned me.

My wife and I decided we would make the trip to Sweden to meet my Swedish family. It was shortly before our scheduled departure date that my wife, Linda, was able to make contact with one of her cousins in Sweden. My wife's grandfather also emigrated to America. So our visit to Sweden would be very special to both of us as we met relatives for the first time.

Our visit to Sweden was very emotional. I met my three first cousins and their families for the first time. I saw the cottage where my grandmother

lived as a child, and we visited the church and school that my father attended as a child. We also spent time at my father's home, where he was living when he left Sweden.

We also spent time with Linda's cousin, who lived in another part of Sweden. She was able to walk on the farmland where her grandfather lived, and the members of the oldest wooden church in Sweden hosted a gathering for us.

During our two-week visit to Sweden, I had many memorable experiences. However, the most meaningful was our visit to my grandparent's graves. Before our trip, Linda suggested I take some soil from my father's grave in Dorchester to place on his parents' graves in Sweden. So I put that bit of dirt on my grandparents' graves. Then I took a small amount of soil from their graves, and when we returned to Dorchester, I placed that soil on my father's grave. It is a satisfying feeling knowing that, in a small way, my father and his parents in faraway Sweden are once again united.





# balanced living.....

Tips and ideas for a healthy and balanced life

## JUICY NEWS

That purple pigment so deep and lush it's almost black? It comes courtesy of anthocyanins—phytonutrients that give blackberries their beautiful hue *and* some major healthy benefits. In a recent study published in the journal *Nutrients*, overweight men who ate about 4 cups of blackberries a day for a week had improved insulin function. Insulin is a hormone that regulates blood sugar, and when it's out of whack, it's linked to type 2 diabetes, heart disease, nonalcoholic fatty liver disease and even dementia. (Granted, you're probably not eating 4 servings of these fruits at a time, but it does make a compelling case for enjoying plenty of purples.) And balanced blood sugar may have skin-deep pluses too. University of California, Davis researchers report that anthocyanins may help reduce moderate breakouts—because in-check insulin levels seem to decrease acne-promoting hormone production. Choose berries at their ripest. Studies show they have 43% more anthocyanins than their puckery counterparts. Sweet!

Source: Julia Westbrook, *Eatingwell* magazine



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### • SOOTHES YOUR TUMMY •

It's possible to ease tummy pains brought on by irritable bowel syndrome by taking peppermint oil supplements. The mint's cooling properties can calm nerves in the belly that trigger pain.

### • BOOSTS YOUR MEMORY •

Sipping peppermint tea can keep your to-do lists at the top of your mind. One study shows that people who drank peppermint tea before a memory test scored better than those who drank water or chamomile tea.



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## The Way We Think Affects Our Health



Research has shown that people who have **POSITIVE** perceptions of aging live 7.5 years longer than those who don't. In addition, people who regard aging as a positive thing experience much higher rates of recovery from illness and injury. That's not to say that these folks don't get sick or they never fall. However, it does mean that they feel better and heal faster.

The research also showed improved memory and better brain performance. This doesn't mean that positive perceptions of aging will eliminate memory loss and dementia...if only it were that simple. Perhaps it's because the research also showed that people are more likely to participate in activities and lifestyle choices that can reduce the risk of memory problems.

Positive perceptions of aging also lead to more conversations with doctors about health concerns. These folks are more likely invest in their future health by getting flu shots, preventive screening, blood pressure checks and participating in healthy living programs.

Probably what we see the most in the ADRC among people with a positive perception about aging is the overall greater sense of control over life. They live longer and it's not because their health is perfect. They experience aches and pains. They might not be able to drive or fix their meals or grocery shop. But still they have a sense of control and a greater will to live!

Think about your own perceptions of aging and challenge yourself to think positively...7.5 years might not seem like a lot but it is a lifetime for those loved ones that want those extra years with you!



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Based on the book  
by E.B. White (Charlotte's Web)  
Adapted by Joseph Robinette

*For kids and families...*

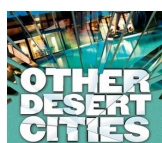
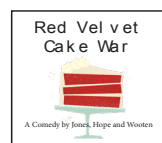
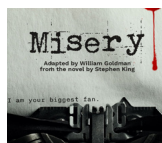
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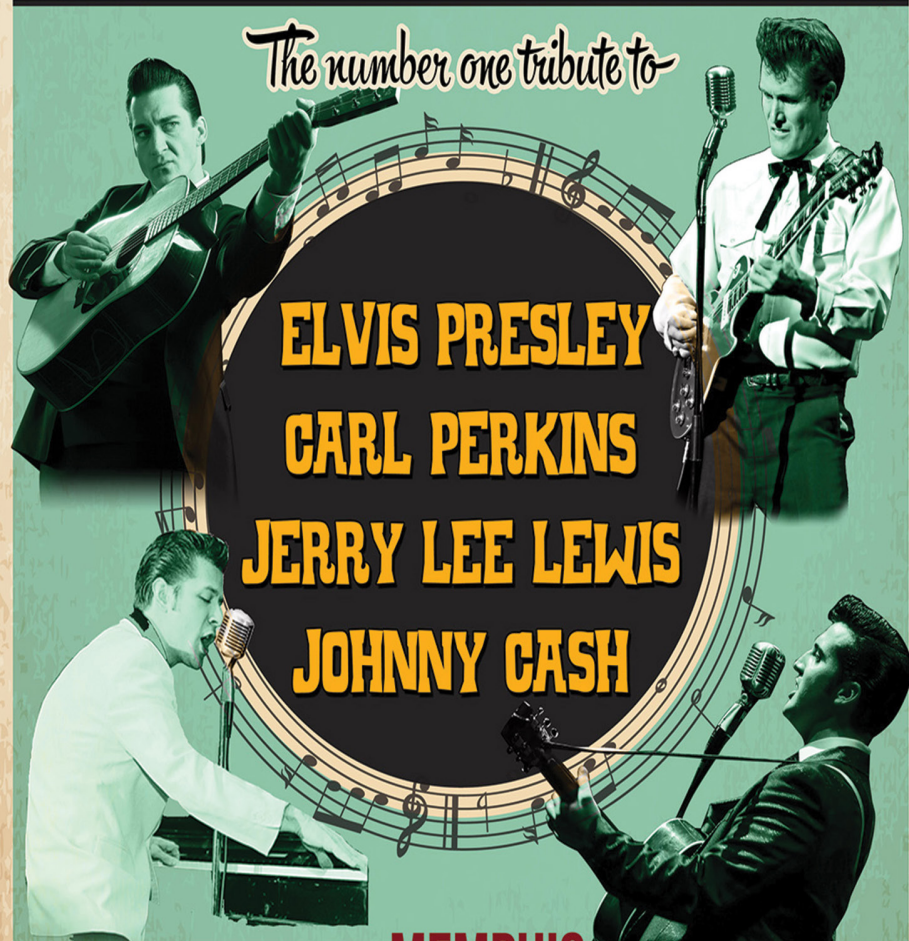






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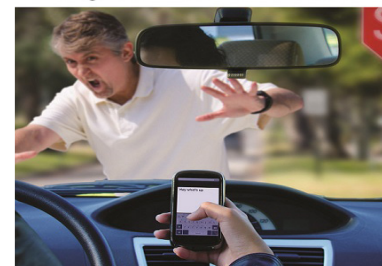
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# Scam Alerts—Medicaid Renewal and Foodshare

By the GWAAR Legal Services Team

The Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) has been made aware of a scam targeting Medicaid members via two text messages. The first text message states that their case is at risk of cancellation. The second text message states that benefits have been cancelled and requests that the member call 1-877-687-4221. If the member contacts this number, they are informed they have lost their health insurance coverage and need to pay to be reinstated. DHS does not send text messages with this type of language and does not charge a recertification fee.



The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has learned that criminals are using phony text messages that say a recipient's SNAP EBT Card (FoodShare Quest card) has been locked. The text message provides a phone number to call for help. This is known as a phishing scam and is a type of fraud. If you do not know if a request for information is real, contact your local Income Maintenance agency.

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# Managing a Cemetery *by Kristi Gay, freelance writer*

Now before you start taking it personally that an article about cemeteries is part of the Senior Review, let me remind you that the only truth in life is that it will someday end. However, when my dad died in 2020 (you may have read the article about Mike Ruffedt in the April newsletter) my mom and I learned a lot about many things that no one wants to be an expert on, cemeteries being one of them.

My parents live in Bloomer, Wisconsin, town of many of my Ruffedt ancestors, so it was obvious that Mike Ruffedt would be laid to rest in the Ruffedt Cemetery northeast of the city north of Highway 40. When we called the phone number of the “sexton” which is the name of the person that deals with the cemetery map and grave plots, we learned that not only did my dad and all of his siblings have a plot ever since my grandparents had died 30 years earlier, but that said map was only available to be viewed by stopping over at Jim’s house, the sexton who also has many relatives buried there and is likely somehow distantly related to me.

When Jim, who is around 80 years old, and his live-in sister Sharon who was the Ruffedt Cemetery President and Secretary for 25 years prior, invited us into their Bloomer home, one of the first things they mentioned was they are looking for a replacement President and Secretary. Mom and I were clearly not in a clear state of mind with the loss of Dad but I mentally made the note, HECK YES I’M TAKING THIS OVER.

Fast forward to a year later when we are President (Mom) and Secretary/Treasurer (me) and are hosting our first annual meeting of the “Ruffedt Cemetery Associates”, which are just interested parties that either have a future grave plot for themselves or have a loved one there. I had published an electronic map of the cemetery and mailed it to everyone I had on the list of involved parties (only about 50, and there are maybe 200 graves there), and about 20 people came to the meeting in Mom’s backyard where we had cake, coffee and lemonade waiting.

The average age of the people involved is 70, and most of them don’t have a computer or email so all communication is by US postal mail including any updates that the sexton, Jim, has for me which come by a hand-written note in the mail. The annual meeting is really just to vote on any changes, and to collect annual dues. The dues are meant to pay for the insurance and the lawn mowing and gas which is over \$1,000 per year.

Our first concern was when these involved people all pass on, where will the money to cover expenses come from unless they get their kids involved now? Our other concern was some of these sales went back to the 1930s when a group of eight grave plots were sold as one “lot” together for \$5. Nowadays a single grave plot is \$225. The difference is with the annual fees, for which are only \$25 each. So a person that bought 8 or 10 graves pays \$25 total, but also someone that buys a single grave plot this year will pay \$25. To us newcomers as President and Secretary/Treasurer, we thought it would be easiest to just charge an annual fee for each grave to encourage other families connected to each of those in the lot to all join this “association” so the funds continue after our small group is gone. Also the time to mow and weed whack around each grave is the same regardless of what packages were sold. OH NO they did not like that change, and because it is an association that needs a majority vote on any changes, we have to keep things as they are. The good news for us volunteers that keep the books is we don’t have to keep track of groups of graves or single graves. Everyone that is associated pays a single fee of \$25 regardless of how many graves were purchased and which year.

There is still a bunch I don’t know and am still learning, like the relationship with funeral homes and monument setting companies. Jim, the sexton, still deals with most of that. But the more we learn the better because at 80 years young, we have less than 20 years probably before we’re on our own, if we’re still in charge of this place by then! Hopefully you know some new interesting facts about at least one cemetery. How different cemeteries are from each other, I have yet to find out.



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## Eat Well, Eat Local

*By Janessa VandenBerge, MPH, CHES®, Public Health Specialist,  
Eau Claire City-County Health Department*

**B**right red strawberries, crunchy cucumbers, and warm corn on the cob means fresh, delicious fruits and vegetables. Despite all the fresh produce grown in Wisconsin during the summer months, almost 2 out of 5 Wisconsin adults report not eating fruit daily and 1 out of 5 Wisconsin adults report not eating vegetables daily (Wisconsin Behavior Risk Factor Survey, 2021). In addition, more than half of Eau Claire County high school students report not eating fruit and vegetables daily (Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 2021).



The good news is you can increase your fruit and vegetable this summer by visiting our local farmers markets throughout Eau Claire County. Most experts agree that healthy eating doesn't need to be complicated. Sticking with a few simple and sustainable changes will promote a long, happy, and healthy life. A few simple ways you can eat more fruit and vegetables throughout the day include:

### Breakfast

- Add bananas, raisins, or berries to your cereal.
- Add chopped vegetables to your eggs or potatoes. Try onions, celery, peppers, or spinach.

### Lunch

- Put vegetables on your sandwich, such as cucumber, sprouts, tomato, lettuce or avocado.
- Have a piece of fruit or raw veggie sticks instead of chips.

### Snacks

- Keep raw veggie sticks handy, such as green or red bell peppers, green beans, celery or carrots.
- Have any type of fresh fruit: grapes, apple, banana, orange, kiwi, etc.

### Dinner

- Have a side salad with dinner.
- Add chopped vegetables when cooking soup, stew, beans, rice, or sauces. Try onions, garlic, and celery.

This summer, shop locally for your fruit and vegetables. The Eau Claire County Government Center Farmers Market is held in downtown Eau Claire next to the beautiful Chippewa River. The market runs on Tuesday's from June 20th through September 19th. For hours, location, and more information on the market, visit: **Farmers Market at Eau Claire County Government Center | City of Eau Claire, Wisconsin (eauclairewi.gov).**



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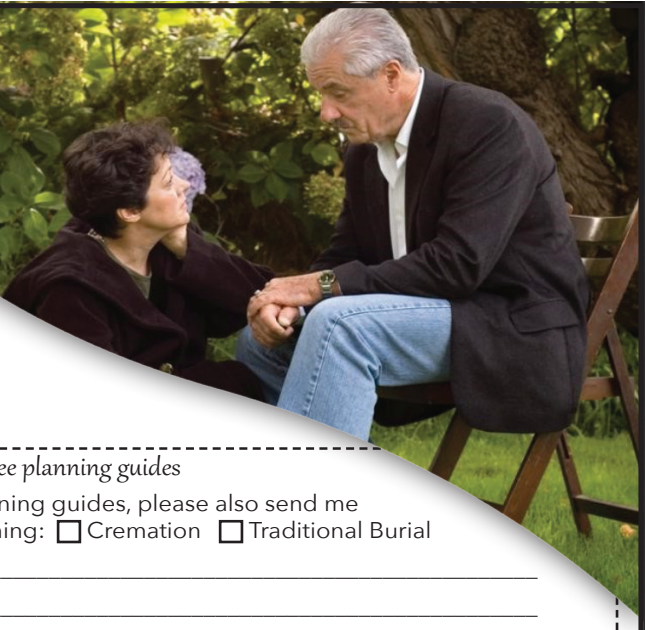
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# Hold With Both Hands... Each Precious, Glittering Moment of Your Life

By Sheila Dembowski, freelance writer

Back in late May we experienced one of life’s milestones - the high school graduation of our only child. Michael’s life has been momentous from the beginning. He was the product of a difficult, health-challenging pregnancy that was supported through knowledgeable medical staff and loving family and friends.

All along Michael’s journey I have received help from a wide variety of people and resources - wonderful pediatricians, guidance counselors, the Birth to Three program, daycare providers, teachers from preschool through high school - all providing me with help along the way.

And then there were the many family and friends, giving their time, advice and love for the past 18 years. Our son’s graduation party brought some of those people back into my life and reminded me of how fortunate I am to have them in my life.

Today I also missed those who have gone before me and I use this newsletter as a way to honor them by not only reflecting on the importance of their relationships to both myself and our son but also as an opportunity to promote the power of love and kindness which were attributes of all of them, each in their own unique way.

This past week also saw our local community go through the loss of two young high school students - victims of a car accident, with two additional students still hospitalized from their injuries.

As I went through the process this week of celebrating our son and his accomplishments, I also did take time to think about how those families and their lives were forever altered and how blessed each one of us are for every moment we live.

I kept my emotions in check this week and I was proud of myself for that. But at the end of the evening, as Michael and I went through his

gifts, I could tell how touched he was by each card and gift and the thoughtfulness behind them. We only had gotten through opening about half of them when we decided to finish up opening the rest in the morning, when we would be more refreshed (party planning is quite the experience!)

Michael then went to text a thank you for one of the gifts and he had me read it before he sent it. I was blown away by not only his writing but also the emotions and the beauty behind his words. It was a moment that reminded me what a wonderful young man he has grown up to become and how very blessed I am to be his mother.

I ended the evening sitting outside listening to the sounds of a cardinal chirping in a persistent yet reassuring way... The cardinal was a favorite of my mother and her absence was very noticeable today. But the gentle bird call was a sign and a symbol of the connection with the past and those whose love lives on in each and every precious, glittering moment of life. How fitting...how very fitting...

Sheila Dembowski is a free-lance writer trying to promote positive stories as often as possible. Her online newsletter entitled the Kindness Boomerang newsletter can be found at: <https://sheiladembowski.substack.com>





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## City of Eau Claire Housing Rehabilitation Loan Program

The City of Eau Claire Housing Division is taking applications for its Housing Rehabilitation Loan Program. The Rehabilitation Loan Program is Federally funded and offers loans up to \$20,000. This program is for homes in need of repair, not for extensions or cosmetic renovations.

### Types of Eligible Work:

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- Plumbing repairs or upgrading
- Accessibility Modifications
- Electrical repairs or upgrading
- Carpentry repairs
- Heating system replacement
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- Siding repairs or replacement

### Applicant Eligibility Requirements:

- City of Eau Claire resident
- The assessed value of the property may not exceed \$165,750
- Property must be a minimum of 25 years old
- Owner occupied (at least one year)
- Good credit history
- HUD income guidelines apply: not to exceed 80% of area median income



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# Liberty, Freedom and Effort

By Carl A. Trapani, MA, MS, LPC, Chippewa Manor Campus Chaplain

Almost 25 centuries ago there lived a wise man named Plato. One day Plato told a story to a group of his friends about some prisoners who lived their entire lives chained inside a cave. These men were chained so they could only see what was directly in front of them – the rear wall of the cave. Unable to see anything happening behind them, they were unaware of a fire that was kept burning at the front of the cave. It was the only light in the cave. They were also unaware of low wall, about the height of a man that stood behind them and the fire. In the space between the wall and the fire, people moved back and forth carrying puppets and other objects on their heads. The wall hid the people's movements as they walked back and forth casting shadows on the wall. The only things the captives saw were the shadows. They never saw real objects like dogs, cats, birds, vases, or chairs. They knew nothing of the fire or the wall or people carrying objects to cast the shadows they observed. The prisoners only saw the shadows. Plato said that as the prisoners watched these shadows, they believed them to be real. He said they even named the various shadows and discussed what they must be like. Never having the liberty to know anything different, they tried to make the most of being stuck in a two-dimensional world.

Then one day a prisoner broke free of his chains. As he stood up and looked around, he saw the fire, the wall, and the people carrying puppets and objects. He realized the shadows on the cave wall were not real, they were just shadow images - fakes. Cautiously, the prisoner escaped from the cave. Once free outside he was astounded to discover a whole new world, a three-dimensional one he had never even imagined. Seeing and experiencing the outside world, he realized how much more there was to life than the one he'd known in the cave. Moving freely through fields and meadows, hills and valleys, his thinking changed. He began to realize that there was more to reality than shadows and the darkness of the cave. The outside world with sunlight, moon and stars was so much bigger and more wonderful than what he had known as a prisoner. As he looked about, he saw the world in a new way. His liberty had allowed him to understand that reality is greater than shadows on a wall. He was delighted to be free to experience reality in a new dimension.

Excited by his new-found liberty and knowledge, he thought of his friends still chained in the cave. He realized how miserable their lives were sitting chained in darkness gazing at shadows; ignorant of what the world is really like. Moved with compassion, he wanted them to share his freedom and discover what he had. So, he returned to the cave to free the other prisoners. He planned to share with the captives the great news of a bigger and better world. Upon his return to the cave, the prisoner was blinded at first because his eyes were not accustomed to the darkness. As he groped his way towards the place where the prisoners were chained he called out to them about what he had seen and experienced. His words sounded like nonsense and gibberish to the prisoners still held in chains. Upon reaching them, he seemed like a crazy man babbling about "reality, the outside world, sunlight, colors, flowers and trees and other wonderful things." His words and groping from being temporarily blinded by the dark cave only frightened the men in chains. They didn't understand what he was talking about. Alarmed at seeing him in such a state, the other prisoners were instantly convinced they would be harmed if they tried to leave the cave. They heard the free prisoner describe the wonders of the real world. They heard his offer to help them break their chains and lead them to freedom. They heard his appeal for them consider the wonders of a world they had never known. But the prisoners turned him down. They were afraid of becoming like the liberated prisoner – groping and babbling. They were fearful of anything other than the reality of their shadowy two-dimensional world. They decided to stay where they were, content with what they knew. Instead of choosing to break free, they decide to remain where they were and stick to their beliefs.

Plato's famous story of the cave considers one of life's ultimate questions: what is reality? According

to Plato, reality is based on our sensory experiences, and the knowledge we gain through them. Our senses develop our perception, conviction, beliefs, opinions and values of what reality is. Many of the things we believe about ourselves and our experiences turn out to be false. My dear unmarried aunt had never worn a man's necktie but she believed that neckties were warm or cool depending on the material they were made from. Each Christmas she gave me a woolen necktie "to keep your neck nice and warm." One day, I showed her that neckties were not the same as scarves – they did nothing to raise or lower the wearer's temperature. I never got another necktie from her after that!

The prisoner who escaped his chains and discovered a greater reality suggests that freedom comes only when we make the effort to attain it. It follows our efforts to be free to experience life more fully. Freedom ultimately leads to greater knowledge, and the more knowledge we gain, the freer we become. America is the land of the free. For the past 500 years, our shores have welcomed the oppressed and downtrodden peoples of the world. Lady Liberty's torch held high in New York's harbor sends a beacon of hope to immigrants seeking freedom. America is the "promised land" offering the promise of liberties that most people on earth don't have.

Each generation of Americans must answer these questions: "how much effort is liberty worth and what truly is freedom?" We may not all share the same answers to these questions - but the important thing to remember is that we have the opportunity to pursue them. As you form your own answers - consider your roots – where in the world would you be living if brave ancestors hadn't made the effort to get here to experience freedom?

Enjoy your liberty. Be grateful for those who carved out the freedom you enjoy. And God Bless America!

*Carl Trapani, MA, MS, LPC serves as campus Chaplain at Chippewa Manor. He has more than 50 years of pastoral service and professional counseling experience. For more information please call (715) 723-4437 or email him at [carl.trapani@chippewamanor.com](mailto:carl.trapani@chippewamanor.com).*





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Anyone with a FoodShare or SNAP EBT card can gain free or reduced cost admission to participating museums, zoos, art museums, children’s museums, aquariums, nature centers, and other adventures. Museums for All is a national access program that encourages individuals of all backgrounds to visit museums regularly and build lifelong museum habits.

The website Museums4All.org has a list of participating locations in every state with more than 1,000 museums throughout the United States. Wisconsin has 20 participating locations including:

- Above & Beyond Children’s Museum in Sheboygan
- Atlas Science Center in Appleton
- Betty Brinn Children’s Museum in Milwaukee
- The Building for Kids Children’s Museum in Appleton
- Central Wisconsin Children’s Museum in Stevens Point
- Charles Allis Art Museum in Milwaukee
- Children’s Museum of Eau Claire in Eau Claire
- Children's Museum of Fond du Lac, Fond du Lac
- Children's Museum of La Crosse, La Crosse
- Door County Maritime Museum—Death’s Door Maritime Museum, Ellison Bay
- Door County Maritime Museum—Sturgeon Bay Museum, Sturgeon Bay
- Ephraim Historical Foundation, Ephraim
- Explore Children’s Museum of Sun Prairie, Sun Prairie
- Madison Children's Museum, Madison
- Manitowoc County Historical Society, Manitowoc
- Milwaukee Public Museum, Milwaukee
- The Mining & Rollo Jamison Museums, Platteville
- Northwoods Children’s Museum, Eagle River
- Wausau Children’s Museum, Wausau
- Wisconsin Maritime Museum, Manitowoc

There are also many great participating museums in Minnesota, Chicago, Illinois, including the Shedd Aquarium, Chicago Botanic Garden, the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago History Museum, Adler Planetarium, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum, Lincoln Park Zoo, the National Veterans Art Museum, and many more.



Pre-registration is not required, and there is no limit to how many participating museums families can visit at the discounted admission rate. Simply show the EBT card and a photo

identification upon admission and the museum will grant the discounted rate for up to four people per EBT card.

The Museums for All initiative was launched in 2015 by the Institute of Museum and Library Services, a federal agency based in Washington, D.C. Since 2015, more than five million visitors nationwide have been served through the program, allowing people of all income levels to feel welcome at cultural institutions.



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# Curb Appeal, Transaction Advice By Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices

## Does Outdoor Improvement Bring Happiness?

Would you be happier if you had a new outdoor fireplace, swimming pool, or patio?

The 2023 *Remodeling Impact Report:*

*Outdoor Features*, cosponsored by

the National Association of REALTORS® and the National Association of Landscape Professionals, found that homeowners reported increased happiness with their new outdoor improvements – 9.7 out of a possible “Joy Score” of 10.

The survey examined 11 landscaping projects. Included were: fire feature (\$9,000), in-ground pool addition (\$90,000), irrigation system installation (\$6,000), landscape lighting (\$6,800), landscape maintenance (\$4,800), new patio (\$10,500), new wood deck (\$16,900), outdoor kitchen (\$15,000), overall landscape upgrade (\$9,000), tree care (\$2,875) and standard lawn care service (\$415).

Homeowner happiness was not tied to the highest cost recovery. The highest Joy Scores were for in-ground pool additions (10), landscape lighting (10), and new patios (9.9). Standard lawn care service, the least expensive of the



11 projects, had the highest cost recovery (217%), followed by landscape maintenance (104%), an overall landscape upgrade (100%) and an outdoor kitchen (100%).

Outdoor remodeling enhances curb appeal and resale value, which is as important to homebuyers, says NAR, as giving homeowners happiness.

## HOME IMPROVEMENT, INTERIOR DESIGN, LIFESTYLE

### The Decline of the Open Kitchen

During the pandemic, many households sought larger homes with more creature comforts. What many found were homes that had been designed and built for busy dual-income families featuring a large bright “open kitchen.” Instead of separating the cook from the action in the den or living room, open floor plans allow cooking, eating, TV watching, working and socializing to take place in one large contiguous space. They promote connectivity for overscheduled families, but the result was more noise, more messes to look at, and a more chaotic environment.



For homeowners who value privacy, relaxation, and comfort, the open kitchen plan is giving way to homes with more room differentiation. To create an elevated lifestyle, these homes are designed, built or remodeled to be more intentional with interior design, wall placement, and traffic flow.

Good wall placement helps establish the desired ambiance for each space. The den becomes a family retreat again, and the kitchen is no longer party central. Explains MansionGlobal.com, separating rooms makes each one feel better proportioned. An open plan must be more cohesive in design and décor, while defined rooms can have their own personalities and colorways, making them easier to furnish, use and enjoy.

**Monthly Quick Tip:** Watering your lawn and keeping it green are two different things if you don’t water correctly. Most of the water evaporates before it can penetrate the ground when it’s the hottest part of the day. To reduce evaporation and conserve water, it’s advisable to water during the cooler and calmer mornings or evenings. Additionally, watering during these times takes advantage of the calm air, which decreases the chances of water being carried away by summer breezes. An effective approach is to water in two short intervals in the evening and morning, allocating 10 minutes per section.

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## What is the Eau Claire City/ County Paratransit Program?

The City of Eau Claire & Eau Claire County provide a joint specialized transportation program for people whose disabilities prevent them from using the city bus system. It is also available to individuals with disabilities or are 60 years old and older who live in the rural parts of the County who do not have access to any transportation services.

The program is contracted through Abby Vans, Inc and requires an application to be submitted to the City of Eau Claire to determine eligibility. Applications can take up to 21 days to process.

Paratransit applications can be approved for full eligibility or on a limited term basis. If you are found to be capable of using Eau Claire Transit for all trips, without the help of another person, you will not be eligible for paratransit.

Paratransit runs Monday-Saturday 6:00 am until 10:00 pm and Sunday 7:00 am-2:00 pm. Paratransit can be used for medical, employment, shopping, social & personal business purposes.

For more information, you can contact the ADRC at 715-839-4735 or Eau Claire Transit at 715-839-5111 or visit [www.eauclairewi.gov/services/transit-services](http://www.eauclairewi.gov/services/transit-services) for an application.





# Dusting Off Some Local History: “The Grocery Business”

By Greg Kocken, Archivist, UW-Eau Claire, [Kockeng@uwec.edu](mailto:Kockeng@uwec.edu)

Recently, while strolling through a grocery store, I stopped for a moment to ponder just how impressive our grocery selection is today. The sheer volume of items available and the magnitude of brands offering those items is impressive. It is a marvel of today’s global market that so many different products can be made available, year-round, in our grocery stores. It certainly was not always this way. Even as a child in the 1980s I recall the selection available in grocery stores was significantly less than what it is today. Naturally, this drove my curiosity to explore how early American and European settlers in the Chippewa Valley provisioned themselves in the mid-1800s. At that time, many communities across Northwest Wisconsin were relatively young and not well established.



*A selection of dry and canned goods can be seen in this 1880s image of the interior of the William Kneeland Grocery Store in Eau Claire, Wis. Image courtesy of the Chippewa Valley Museum.*

Early newspapers from the Chippewa Valley provide some insight into the availability of foodstuffs for early settlers in the region. An advertisement appearing in the July 5, 1860, edition of The Eau Claire Free Press announced the opening of the new P. J. Bellinger grocery store. Among the items highlighted in the advertisement are: sugars, molasses, coffee, tea, spices, raisins, prunes, preserved fruits, canned sauces, fresh oysters, sardines, pickles, dried fruits, pork, lard, butter, cheese, ham, dried beef, and fish. Bellinger’s store was one of many grocers operating in the area. Bellinger also placed a notice to local farmers in the same newspaper soliciting to, “pay the highest market price for fresh butter, lard, eggs, and dressed poultry.” Transportation by wagon over trail and via steamboat up the Mississippi connected the area to other markets which furnished local stores with provisions to sell. Hotels and lodging houses also advertised warm meals, available at any time, consisting of broiled chickens, grouse, and other items.

In the early 1870s, the railroad arrived in the Chippewa Valley, significantly improving the region’s connections to the national market. The railroad provided retailers with access to more goods, including perishable goods that were otherwise unavailable, or available for only limited times during the year. While selection would rise in the early 1900s, the basic elements of the grocery business, dominated

by small local stores reliant on regional wholesale distributors, remained stable well into the 20th century. The 1939 Eau Claire City Directory lists over 80 retail grocery stores. Many of those stores were no larger



*The selection in a new Piggly Wiggly store that opened in Eau Claire in 1959 was considerably greater than the small retailers of the 1800s and early 1900s. Image courtesy of the Chippewa Valley Museum.*

than the size of a living room today. Listed among those retail stores were two that pointed to changes about to come, the “Great Atlantic and Pacific Tea Company,” and “Piggly Wiggly Midland Company.” Eau Claire’s A&P store opened in the early 1920s, it was part of chain that would boast over 16,000 stores by the end of that decade. Atlantic & Pacific (“A&P”) would drastically change the grocery business by working directly with manufacturers and undercutting wholesale distributors. This allowed A&P to sell products at lower prices; prices that would spell the end for many small, local grocers. By 1989, the Eau Claire City Directory lists only 26 grocers, many of which were part of large national or regional chains.

Is there a local history mystery or topic you want to know more about? Do you have a suggestion for an upcoming column of “Dusting Off?” Please contact Greg at the UW-Eau Claire archives. He would love to hear from you.

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