

WINTER/SPRING 2025

senior focus



*ADRC offers tips to
a good start in 2025*

*Art improves the
lives of seniors*

*FORK and the legacy
we leave behind*

A Special Publication of the Vilas County News-Review and The Three Lakes News



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The legacy we leave behind

The lasting difference a person's life makes in the world around them is their legacy. People whose efforts to live such a meaningful life often find, in their striving to leave their mark, a measurable increase in their overall feelings of satisfaction and fulfillment. All this effort is so that in the end, a person can be said to have left the world a better place than they found it.

Why do we, or should we care about what we leave behind after we are gone?

The answer to that question has no single answer. Because our personal needs or motivations that drive us to work toward the long-term betterment of the world are as different as our human DNA.

As the heads of our families, we strive, through our actions, to be an example of kindness, responsibility, hard work, empathy, resilience and love.

Through our life's work, our jobs, we can make a lasting difference when we help others to achieve their own success. We change lives when we are a model of fairness, compassion, positivity, grit, and integrity.

Within our world or the local community, our legacy is often seen as a measure of our own humanity. Setting an example of that humanity is often achieved through giving of our personal time and treasure toward the betterment of others. Such actions establish a personal legacy that can, and often does, inspire and motivate those around us to make a difference in their own way.

A positive legacy is not just sought after by individuals. Companies and organizations also work to be known for the positive change they foster through their good work.

An example of a local organization that is focused on building their own legacy is Feed Our Rural Kids (FORK). Created just over 5 years ago, FORK has been focused on impacting the lives of children living in food-insecure homes across the North Woods.

In our area, FORK's reputation already represents food for children who need help today. But from day



one, the organization's board of directors started discussing not only the immediate nutritional needs of local kids today, but the needs of children for generations in the future; their legacy.

FORK President Perry Pokrandt explained, "From our very first meeting we talked about the challenge of sustainability of our mission. From those conversations, the organization's board created the FORK Legacy Fund. This fund is a financial endowment that will ensure long-term financial stability and sustainability of both FORK as an organization, as well as all other local childhood nutrition support efforts across the community.

"The Legacy Fund will be FORK's Legacy to this community," declared Pokrandt. "Because of the organization's foresight and planning, Feed Our Rural Kids, as a promise of hope to children, will be here for generations to come."

Of course, FORK is just one of many local, regional and national organizations that will turn your own volunteer hours or financial contributions into a recognized personal legacy.

A legacy-enhancing donation, or gift of your time as a volunteer with any good cause, will be seen as a sign of the caring person you are. It represents a personal legacy of caring in the best possible way.

Financial support to charitable efforts that impact the community today says a lot about what is important to you and how you feel your support can best be represented. These types of financial donations are needed to meet an organization's budgetary demands of today; Thus they are critical to all nonprofit entities.

While at the same time, a personal financial contribution to a future-focused charitable foundation or community-based endowment allows you to influence and shape the world for generations to come.

"Charitable giving with an eye toward ensuring a better tomorrow, offers donors a chance to shape a future in ways that are important to themselves as individuals," offered Pokrandt. "It is a unique opportunity to shape the future of their community in ways that will be felt long after they are gone."

But how do you decide which 'future-focused' organization deserves your gift?

"You start by deciding what is important to you," suggested Pokrandt. "Then decide what it is you want your gift to represent about who you are, as well as define the difference that organization will make over the long term."

To determine what you want to achieve through your gift, Pokrandt suggested that people start by cross-matching those personal goals with organizational goals. That is answering the question as to what organization's mission most closely aligns with your values.

Pokrandt concluded, "From that introspective process you will likely have a list of potential choices. I only suggest that before you give, you ensure that the organization you select has an internal structure and an organizational mission that will stand the test of time.

Building a personal legacy calls for selflessness and requires a long-term perspective. We must think beyond ourselves and embrace the idea that what we do today shapes the world for all those who follow. Whether through environmental stewardship, advancing social causes, or creating institutions that reflect our values. The specifics of the path you choose are up to you.

As Nelson Mandela said: "What counts in life is not the mere fact that we have lived. It is what difference we have made to the lives of others that will determine the significance of the life we lead."

ADRC offers tips to a good start in 2025

BY PATRICK SMOTHERS
ELDER BENEFIT SPECIALIST

The Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC) of Vilas County offers various services and programs that will help you make a good start in 2025.

After all the holiday feasting and making merry, we all may be noticing our growing waistlines, and thinking about the steps we can take to make healthier choices for 2025. What are some of these steps we can take?

One is to add more exercise to our weekly schedule. You should do any physical activity that you enjoy for up to 20 to 30 minutes, 5 or 6 days a week. Always talk to your healthcare provider about the right exercise program for you.

Of course, we all need to eat well. You should eat a healthy diet of different foods, like fruits, vegetables, proteins, like meat or beans, and whole grains. You should also limit the amount of saturated fat that you eat. This will help you keep a healthy weight. Also, watch your portions, and try to balance the number of calories you eat with the number you burn by exercising. Figure out how many calories a person your age and body type should consume daily, and plan to stick to it.

We all should be thinking about our health coverage as well. One nice perk of having Medicare or a Medicare Advantage plan is the Annual Wellness Visit, which is part of the free Medicare Preventive services. The Annual Wellness Visit is NOT the same as a traditional annual physical.

You should ask for the

Annual Wellness visit by name. The focus of this Annual Wellness Visit is to create and update a prevention plan based on your current health and risk factors. You will be asked to complete a "Health Risk Assessment" to help your provider create a personalized prevention plan.

If you are turning 65 and are curious about Medicare, the Aging and Disability Resource Center of Vilas County presents a free Medicare "Solving the Insurance Puzzle" Workshop every first working Tuesday of the month. Patrick Smothers, the Elder Benefit Specialist, will guide you through the confusing maze of Medicare, Medicare Supplements and Medicare Advantage plans. Get the information you need to make better health coverage decisions!

The Elder Benefit Specialist is a paraprofessional trained by the Greater Wisconsin Agency for Aging Resources attorneys to help persons 60 or older who have issues or questions with their private or governmental benefits such as Medicare and Social Security. Benefit Specialists are called "Red Tape Cutters" because they assist older persons with the extensive and complicated paperwork that is often required in benefit programs. They help older persons figure out what benefits they are entitled to, explain what is required to receive those benefits and aid with the appropriate application processes. If you have any questions about the Elder Benefit Specialist program or any of the other services that the ADRC offers, contact the ADRC at 715-479-3625.

Trees for Tomorrow says nature is a prescription for life

BY TREES FOR TOMORROW
STAFF

When was the last time you took a stroll through the woods, felt the crunch of leaves underfoot, or simply sat and listened to the sounds of nature? In today's fast-paced world, nature offers something rare: a chance to slow down, breathe deeply and reconnect. The benefits of immersing oneself in the outdoors are profound. Connecting with the natural world isn't just a pleasant way to spend your time — it's a powerful way to improve your mental, physical and social well-being.

Let's explore why stepping outside might be the best thing you do for yourself this season.

Boost Your Mind and Melt-Away Stress

Feeling overwhelmed or stuck in a rut? Nature is like a spa day for your brain. Research shows that just 20 minutes spent in a natural setting can lower your stress hormone levels, boost your mood and even sharpen your focus. Whether

it's a forest trail, a lakeside bench or your own backyard, these moments of connection can:

- Reduce anxiety and increase feelings of calm.
- Help you think more clearly and creatively.
- Provide a fresh perspective on life's challenges.

Strengthen Your Body

Exercise doesn't have to mean gym memberships or lifting weights. While these are great, gentle physical activities like walking in nature, gardening or snowshoeing can work wonders for your body. The fresh air and natural surroundings can make movement feel effortless and enjoyable. Benefits include:

- Improved cardiovascular health and mobility.
- Increased energy and reduced joint pain.
- Better sleep and a stronger immune system.

And the best part? Nature provides a sense of purpose to your movements — exploring, discovering and simply soaking in the beauty around you.



TFT offers numerous outdoorsy, hiking adventures to strengthen bodies and nurture souls.

—Contributed Photos

Nurture Your Soul While Finding Connection and Community

Nature has a way of bringing people together. Whether it's walking with friends, joining a nature group or participating in outdoor workshops and programs, shared experiences in the great outdoors create lasting connections. These connections can:

- Reduce feelings of isolation.
- Foster meaningful relationships with like-minded individuals.
- Bring joy and laughter through shared adventures.

Even solo moments in nature can feel like a connection — with yourself, with the earth and with something larger than life.

Why Nature Matters at Any Age

The beauty of connecting with nature is that it meets you where you are. You don't need to be an athlete or an adventurer to enjoy its benefits. From a simple morning walk to exploring sustainable living practices, every small step you take outdoors adds up to a healthier, more balanced life.

Nature also reminds us of the bigger picture. The trees, the wildlife, the changing seasons — they all teach us about resilience, growth and the importance of taking care of what sustains us.

Explore Accessible Outdoor Adventures

If you or someone you know could benefit from adaptive equipment or accessible trails, start by exploring what's

available at local and state parks. Whether you're navigating trails with a wheelchair, need extra support or require assistive devices to enjoy nature's sounds and views, there are tools and resources available to enhance your outdoor experience. Many state and local parks, including those supported by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR), offer adaptive equipment to make the outdoors more accessible. More information can be found by visiting <https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/openoutdoors/equipment>.

Adaptive equipment and tools available:

- All-Terrain Wheelchairs & Track Chairs – These motorized or manual wheelchairs are designed for rugged terrain, allowing users to explore trails, beaches and snow-covered paths. Additional information can be found at <https://www.accessabilitywi.org/>.

- Portable Stools and Benches – Lightweight, portable, foldable seating for those who need to take breaks while enjoying the outdoors.

- Listening Devices – These tools amplify sound, making it easier to hear speakers or presentations during outdoor programs. Some devices are also designed to amplify the subtle sounds of nature, allowing participants with hearing impairments to fully immerse themselves in the outdoor experience.

- Sit-Skis and Adaptive Snow Equipment – Perfect for enjoying winter trails, these devices allow

individuals to participate in snowshoeing and cross-country skiing.

- Accessible Fishing Gear – Adaptive fishing poles and support devices make casting and reeling easier for anglers with limited mobility or dexterity.

- Trail Accessibility Features – Many trails now include wide, smooth surfaces, handrails and ADA-compliant signage to accommodate wheelchairs, walkers and strollers.

Start Small

Reconnecting with nature doesn't have to be a grand adventure. Start small:

- Find a local trail or park and take a short walk.

- Bring a friend or loved one to share the experience.

- Set aside 15 minutes a day to sit outside and simply observe.

If you're in Eagle River, Wis., consider exploring the 1-mile walking trail right on the Trees For Tomorrow (TFT) campus. This accessible trail offers a peaceful stroll through the North Woods, complete with fun, interactive features. In the summer, follow the Story Walks, where you'll discover pages of a nature-themed storybook spread along the path — perfect for sparking curiosity and creativity. Don't miss the Talking Tree, a unique feature that shares stories and lessons about the forest as you approach.

And if you're bringing the grandkids, make a stop at the Nature PlayScape! Designed to get kids into nature early, it's the perfect spot for them to climb,



The TFT campus has accessible trails and adaptive equipment available for those who may need them.

explore, and let their imaginations run wild in a safe, outdoor environment. Watching their joy as they interact with nature is a wonderful reminder of how these experiences can shape lifelong connections to the outdoors.

Explore Local Opportunities with Trees For Tomorrow and Community Partners

While you may not always see TFT's work, it's deeply embedded in the local community and beyond. For more than 80 years, TFT has been in the Eagle River area providing Student Outdoor Learning Experiences (SOLE) for all ages. TFT's mission isn't just about programs — it's about creating a ripple effect. By connecting people with nature, TFT fosters a deeper understanding of its importance and how to sustainably manage it for generations, inspiring individuals to make small, impactful changes in their lives and communities.

If you're ready to deepen your connection with nature and experience its life-changing benefits, TFT offers a range of opportunities tailored for adults. Whether you're seeking a peaceful

time in the woods, educational adventures or hands-on workshops, these programs offer the perfect next step to enhance your well-being and bring you closer to nature and community.

Outdoor Adventures at Tara Lila: Your Free Ticket to Tranquility

Tara Lila, located in Eagle River, is a wilderness conservation project born out of a collaboration between landowners Richard and Amy Jo Aylward and the Three Eagle Trail. They manage 1600+ acres of private land in three park units that are open for public enjoyment. The "Outdoor Adventures at Tara Lila" program (TFT's partnership program with Tara Lila) opens the door to a network of stunning trails, offering peace, quiet and gentle exercise that's perfect for all activity levels. Best of all, these guided adventures by TFT professional environmental educators, are FREE. Whether you're walking, hiking or snowshoeing, every visit to Tara Lila feels like a gift to your body and mind. Dates and times are listed on TFT's website and pre-registration is required at <https://www.treesfortomorrow.com/>



Tara Lila offers free tickets to tranquility with their outdoor adventures program.

Current-Activities/. Registration and detailed information about programs and events open three months prior to their start date.

What you'll experience:

- Breathtaking Trails – Explore well-maintained paths winding through beautiful forests and wetlands. These trails are quiet and accessible, providing just the right challenge for a brisk walk or a meditative stroll.
- A Year-Round Retreat – From summer walks surrounded by wildflowers to winter snowshoeing under towering pines, every season offers a new reason to visit.
- Moments for Reflection –

Nature is a powerful reset button. Find your favorite bench or scenic spot, breathe deeply and let the sounds of the forest bring you a sense of calm and clarity.

Why it's perfect for you:

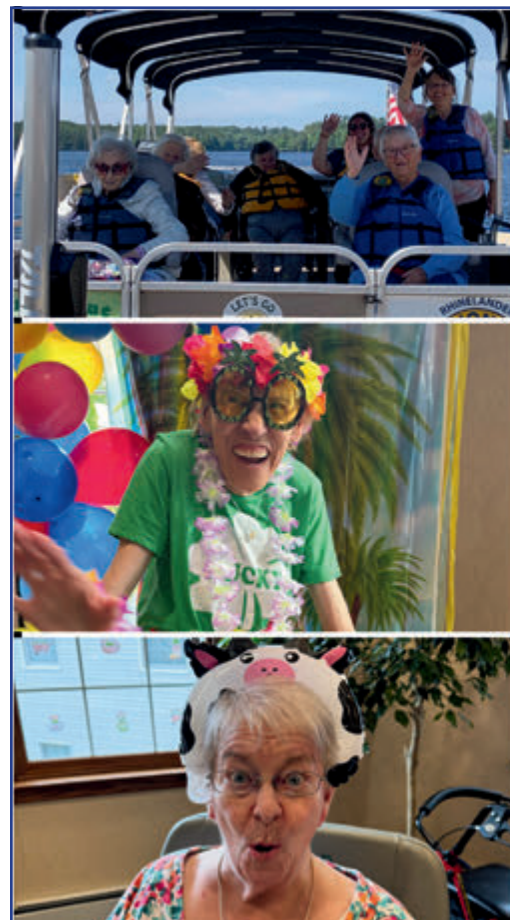
- Stay Active – Gentle exercise supports mobility and cardiovascular health while being easy on your joints.
- Connect with Nature – Reap the mental and emotional rewards of fresh air, peaceful surroundings and beautiful scenery.
- Capture Memories – The picturesque trails are perfect for snapping photos, journaling or simply soaking in the beauty.

Sustainable Living Institute – Learn, Create, Thrive

TFT believes that sustainable living is about making small, meaningful changes that benefit both you and the planet. That's why they offer the Sustainable Living Institute, a series of hands-on workshops designed to empower you with skills that you can implement right away.

These workshops, offered several times per year at a nominal cost, are perfect for adults looking to live more intentionally, reduce their environmental

To NATURE Pg. 13



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Challenge your mind with the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point's LIFE (Learning is ForEver) Program

BY ED MILLER

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-STEVENS
POINT PROFESSOR EMERITUS
OF POLITICAL SCIENCE AND LIFE
PRESIDENT

Have you wondered what to do after retirement? Taking care of grandkids, going on trips and keeping medical appointments are all important. Equally vital is keeping your mind sharp.

As Sanjay Gupta, M.D. said to stay sharp, "Find new ways to stimulate your brain through learning and challenging your Mind."

Keep Sharp: Build a Better Brain at Any Age. This is where the LIFE (Learning is ForEver Program) of the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point Continuing Education comes in. LIFE offers presentations on Zoom (from the comfort of your home) and hybrid (in-person and on Zoom) along with local tours (e.g. Worzalla Publishing, Northwood Solar and George Meade - Wildlife Area), and discounts on day trips (e.g. Brewers and theatres). Subjects of LIFE's programs range from more academic (e.g. artificial intelligence, dementia related to air pollution, climate change and historical topics) to those of personal interest (e.g. film, gardening, doing your family history and health). Presenters are experts in their field, volunteering for the LIFE program. Unlike broadcasts on television or YouTube, members get to interact with presenters and fellow attendees.

What if you miss a program that you want to see? No problem as most of the presentations are recorded and available to members through LIFE's growing video library.

To participate, you don't have to live in the Stevens Point area. With most

programs available on Zoom, you can be involved regardless of where you live. We have members scattered throughout the country.

We also have had presenters who are in other countries. The magic of the internet gives us the opportunity to make programs widely available. Accessing the programs is simple. We send daily and weekly emails. All you have to do is click on the bar under a program in which you want to participate, and you will be automatically connected.

In addition to these events, LIFE offers a very popular "Tech Q & A" where you can learn about a variety of topics including getting the most out of Zoom and your computer, buying and using Smartphones, using photo editing software and purchasing electronic devices. Participants are encouraged to ask questions about how to do something, how to deal with a problem, and the most economical way of purchasing a device. Whether you are interested in buying a computer, a tablet, laptop, television or camera, the presenter will have answers and if they don't, they will find them.

With university programs being expensive, you would think that LIFE membership is an expensive service. Not so. Member costs are only \$59 a semester regardless of the number of programs you choose to attend. This beats cable, streaming or even filling up your car with gas. Why not join to see the great programs LIFE offers each semester and to interact with your friends and neighbors?

To sign up go to <https://www3.uwsp.edu/conted/Pages/LIFE.aspx> for more information and find a guide on upcoming programs.



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Building a financial legacy for your grandchildren or children

BY JUSTEN SCHEMMEL
PATTERSON INVESTMENT
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SOLUTIONS

With the holidays firmly behind us, it might feel early to start thinking about next year's gifts.

However, finding the perfect present for your minor grandchildren or children can be a challenge, especially if you want to give something more meaningful and lasting than toys or gadgets.

As grandparents or parents, one of the most rewarding gifts you can give is a foundation for a brighter future. The timeless tradition of gifting money has evolved, with modern financial tools designed to grow these gifts over time. These tools can offer significant benefits for both the giver and the



Schemmel

receiver. Let's explore three impactful options for this year, and beyond: 529 accounts, UTMA accounts, and Custodial Roth IRAs.

If you want to support your loved ones' educational aspirations, a 529 plan is an excellent choice. These accounts are designed to fund future education expenses and offer significant tax

advantages. Here's why they make a great gift:

- **Tax-Free Growth:** Contributions grow tax-free as long as the funds are used for qualified educational expenses, including college, apprenticeships, and even some K-12 tuition.

- **State Tax Benefits:** In many states, including Wisconsin, contributions are tax-deductible. For 2025, Wisconsin allows up to \$5,130 in state tax deductions per beneficiary for individuals or married couples.

- **Flexibility:** As the account owner, you can change the beneficiary to another family member if the original beneficiary doesn't use the funds. Unused funds can even be rolled into a Roth IRA for the beneficiary under new SECURE Act

2.0 provisions, subject to certain limitations.

- **Long-Term Impact:** Funds in 529 plans never expire and can continue to grow tax-free until used. This makes them a lasting investment in your loved one's future.

- **Caution:** If funds are used for non-qualified expenses, taxes and a 10% penalty on earnings apply, and investment options may be limited.

For a more flexible option, consider a UTMA (Uniform Transfer to Minors Act) account. This type of custodial account allows you to gift assets to a minor without restrictions on how the money can ultimately be used. Key benefits include:

- **No Spending Restrictions:** Funds can be used for anything that benefits the child, from

summer camp to a first car, or even a home down payment in the future.

- **Unlimited Contributions:** There are no caps on how much you can contribute, making it an ideal choice for larger gifts.

- **Investment Freedom:** UTMA accounts offer nearly unlimited investment options, allowing for tailored growth strategies.

- **Custodial Control:** You manage the account until the child reaches the age of majority (21 in Wisconsin). At that point, the funds become theirs to use as they see fit.

- **Considerations:** UTMA funds are counted on FAFSA forms, potentially impacting financial aid eligibility, and earnings are taxed at the minor's income level.

If your grandchild or child has earned income from a part-time job or other work, a Custodial Roth IRA is a fantastic option to help them start saving for the future. This gift can set them on a path to financial independence:

- **Tax-Free Growth:** Contributions grow tax-free, and withdrawals in retirement (after age 59½) are completely tax-free.

- **Contribution Limits:** For 2025, contributions are limited to \$7,000 or the total amount of the minor's earned income, whichever is lower.

- **Flexibility:** While earnings are subject to taxes and penalties if withdrawn early, contributions can be taken out anytime and used for any purpose, such as

To GIFTING Pg. 11



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Oneida County Senior Dining Sites

Aging & Disability Resource Center of Oneida County

100 W. Keenan St., Rhinelander, WI 54501

715-369-6170 or 1-800-379-7499

Lunch settings throughout the area provide hot meals for those 60 or older and their spouses. There are no income requirements, but donations are appreciated. Call the dining site one day in advance for reservations. Sites offer on-site dining and delivery. Contact dining sites for exact meal time.

Locations, service days and the number to call for reservations are as follows:

- Reiter Center, Three Lakes, Mondays thru Thursdays, 715-499-3738.
- Holy Family Catholic Church, Woodruff, Mondays-Fridays, 715-892-4045.
- Aging and Disability Resource Center of Oneida County, Rhinelander, Mondays-Fridays, 715-369-6170.
- Ray Sloan Community Building, Lake Tomahawk, Mondays and Wednesdays, 715-614-2908.
- Cassian Town Hall, Cassian/ Harshaw, Tuesdays and Thursdays, 715-277-4190.
- Nokomis Town Hall, Nokomis, Mondays and Wednesdays, 715-499-5026.
- Sugar Camp Town Hall, Tuesdays and Thursdays, 715-499-5027.

Vilas County Senior Dining Sites

Aging & Disability Resource Center of Vilas County

330 Court St., Eagle River, WI 54521

715-479-3625 or 1-800-374-1123

Various lunch settings throughout the county provide hot meals for those 60 or older and their spouses. There are no income requirements but contributions are appreciated. Call the dining site one day in advance for reservations.

Locations, service days and the number to call for reservations are as follows:

- The Rock Mission Center, Eagle River, Mondays-Fridays at noon, Jennie Johnson, 715-891-1221.
- St. Germain, home-delivered meals only, Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays at noon, Pam Cira, 715-891-5453.
- Northern Exposure, Phelps, Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays at noon, Judi Heikkinen, 715-545-3697.
- Gateway Lodge, Land O' Lakes, Tuesdays and Wednesdays at 11:30 a.m., Anna Moore, 715-5476076.
- Manners Café, North Lakeland Elementary School (NLES), Tuesdays and Wednesdays at 11:15 a.m., Mary Ellen Duranso at 715-904-0065.
- Lac du Flambeau Wellness Center, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays at noon, Serena Johnson, 715-588-4388.

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Journeying into the woods with Tom Hill

BY JOAN MEEDER
CORRESPONDENT

Tom Hill's passion is making your 'walk in the woods' extraordinary through a selfless devotion to those who seek to enjoy nature.

Hill, of Phelps, keeps active outside in winter pursuing his hobbies, working and volunteering. Hobbies include ice fishing and a bit of hunting rabbits and predators. He is a caretaker for seven summer homes year-round which, in winter, consists of weekly check-ins.

Hill voluntarily maintains the Deerskin snowshoe trail system as well as that of the Anvil Trail. The cabin there gets special attention making it a magical spot for families especially.

Tom's family roots run deep in the area.

He stated, "I have lived my whole life — almost 78 years — in Phelps. With grandparents who came from Finland, I am 100% Finnish. My dad was one of 10 children born in a Watersmeet logging camp. The family later moved to Phelps where they farmed in summer and logged

in winter. My dad graduated from eighth grade and went to work in a 100% Finnish logging camp near Alvin but when the company found out how young he was. He had to leave."

That work ethic runs deep in Hill's blood, too, as he has been maintaining the Deerskin snowshoe trail system by clearing it of brush with the go-ahead from the Forestry Service for almost four years.

The Phelps Chamber of Commerce, the Town of Phelps and the US Forest Service marked the trails and graveled the parking lot. Of the four different trails, the Green Trail sees the most use with its riverside location and it can be walked in winter when the snow is hard-packed. The Red Trail is along a logging trail, the Yellow Trail is 3 miles long in mostly hardwood with some pine and then there is the Blue Trail, over 3 miles long. In non-winter months people walk the trails often. Last year he spent 53 1/2 hours maintaining these trails, checking periodically after storms and strong winds to clear them. He says that people

have been going to the Anvil National Recreation Trail system since the 1930's.

Nowadays, in winter, visitors ski, walk or snowshoe there.

If skiing, Hill urges beginners to use only the East-West or 9 Mile Trail, never Devil's Run, as unfortunately there have been visitors with broken arms and legs from spills on terrain inappropriate to their skill level.

Every Saturday and Sunday, after church from early October through mid-May, Hill is out maintaining trails, supplying items for the warming cabin including firewood, bird seed, peanuts and s'more necessities that he donates and maintaining the surrounding area and building (made out of logs with a fieldstone fireplace). He also educates people about area history and hands out trail maps.

Last year, Hill estimated that on Saturdays and Sundays when he was there, 1,673 people were on the trails and he put in 283 hours of maintenance. During the recent period between Christmas and New Year's Day alone, he said that

there were 443 visitors.

How he got the idea to supply the bird seed, peanuts, firewood and s'more needs was when he visited the Anvil Trail and its warming cabin ten years ago, and noticed kids there with cold hands and their parents therefore taking them home after 15 minutes being out on the trail. He saw a need that he wanted to fill.

Hill said that sometimes children visiting have never been camping or had a s' more before. He enjoys the look on the faces of visitors outside the warming cabin when a chickadee or nuthatch lands on their open hand containing bird seed and also when people don't want to leave such a unique and awe-inspiring place of close encounters with nature.

Hill noted that sometimes the birds aren't out and about but he will call them and they'll flock nearby; for this reason, he has nicknames of "The Bird Whisperer" and "Bird Man of Anvil Lake." Chickadees and nuthatches prefer to eat peanuts, picking them apart.

Hill remarked, "You never

know what you're going to run into or experience there. The winter before last, a red fox would hang out near the cabin. One day when we had 10 inches of snow, I was sitting at the picnic table and threw out pieces of fat from my ham sandwich. The fox came and picked them up. A red squirrel also approached me and ate peanuts out of my hand. Another time visitors got to observe a porcupine in a tree nearby. People come yearly from several countries, such as Norway, Poland and Russia, including a recent family from Russia with their four-year-old son, all only speaking their native language. The second time they came out and saw me, the boy spoke his first English word 's' more.'

"Last Saturday, there were 47 people visiting the cabin including a bus full from Trees for Tomorrow, which almost cleared me out of supplies for s'mores." Hill summarized, "I get satisfaction from all of it and have always enjoyed doing things for people: volunteering outside and interacting with visitors and birds makes my day!"

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Protecting the land we love — the Gellis Family legacy

BY CARRIE RASMUSSEN
NORTHWOODS LAND
TRUST

Sandra Brown Gellis and Mark Gellis made a lasting gift to the natural world and future generations by donating a conservation easement to the Northwoods Land Trust (NWLTL).

Their donation permanently protected 20 acres of land and 100 feet of frontage along the Minocqua Thoroughfare in Arbor Vitae in Vilas County. However, their story is about much more than a conservation donation — it's about the enduring connection between a family, their land, and the power of taking action before it's too late.

A Century of Family Connection

Winat Road, named after Sandra's grandfather Henry, has been central to the Brown family legacy for nearly a century. Henry, a highway engineer and surveyor, laid out the roadway nearly 100 years ago, and in 1952, Sandra's grandparents built a cabin there. For generations, this land was a summer retreat where Sandra, her siblings, and later her own daughter, Eliza, built cherished memories of exploring the forest, fishing on the lake and discovering remnants of the area's rich history.

"When I was growing up, we built close family relationships at the cabin. It was a special place to us because it's where we formed those bonds,"

Eliza reflected. "It's that feeling of timelessness — of returning to a place you loved as a child, unchanged and beautiful. That's why preserving this land means so much to us."

A Pivotal Decision

In 2020, Sandra and Mark purchased a 20-acre parcel adjacent to the family's original property with the intent of conserving it. After connecting with NWLTL, the nonprofit land trust in Vilas County, they worked diligently to establish the conservation easement. The process took almost a year, and on July 7, 2021, the easement was finalized, ensuring the land's protection and stewardship in perpetuity.

"It's amazing to know the land will stay natural forever," Sandra said at



Donating conservation easements to the Northwoods Land Trust can be a lasting give made to the natural world. — Contributed Photo



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the time. “If the land is important to you, protect it. Because once it’s conserved, it’s forever.”

Health Challenges Reinforce Their Beliefs

Just months after finalizing the easement, the Gellises faced significant health challenges. Mark suffered three heart attacks within two months, and shortly afterward, Sandra was diagnosed with two types of cancer.

“The outcome for either of us was uncertain,” Sandra shared. “We’re both still here today, but it was a wake-up call. If we had waited to conserve the land, who knows if we would have been able to do it. Our message to others is: don’t wait. If you have the means and desire to protect your land, do it now while it’s still yours to conserve.”

Sandra credits the conserved land and the surrounding natural beauty with aiding their recovery.

“Nature is healing,” she said. “Living here, surrounded by this conserved preserve, has been restorative. We love seeing wildlife — bobcats, foxes, moose, flying squirrels, even wolves. These creatures wouldn’t



The Gellis Family

thrive if this land had been developed.”

Looking Ahead

As Winat Road approaches its 99th year of connection to the Brown family, the Gellises reflect on their conservation journey with gratitude. They’ve ensured that future generations will enjoy the unspoiled beauty of the land and its rich wildlife.

“This is about legacy,” Sandra said. “It’s about giving my children, grandchildren and their children the woods and lake to come to — a place where they can build their own relationships and memories, just as we have. That’s why we did this. That’s why it’s so important.”

With their story, Sandra and Mark hope to inspire others to take action to protect the lands they love.

As Sandra puts it, “If conserving your land is something you’ve been considering, don’t delay; take action while you can. The process was straightforward, and NWLT made it easy for us. There’s no better time than now to act — for yourself, your family and the future.”

Contact the Northwoods Land Trust at (715) 479-2490 or visit www.northwoodslandtrust.org to learn about land protection options including conservation easements, property donations, and donations of land with a reserved life estate.

Giftgiving

From page 7

buying a car or paying for college.

• **Long-Term Impact:** Starting early gives the account decades to grow, potentially resulting in a significant retirement nest egg.

Instead of toys that might be forgotten by the next holiday season, these financial gifts can grow and provide meaningful benefits for years to come. Here’s a quick guide to choosing the right account:

• **For Education:** A 529 plan is perfect for ensuring

future education costs are covered.

• **For Flexibility:** An UTMA account allows funds to be used for any purpose that benefits the child.

• **For Long-Term Growth:** A Custodial Roth IRA can give your loved one a head start on retirement savings.

By giving a financial gift, you’re not just making the holidays special — you’re helping to secure a brighter future for your loved ones. Consult a financial advisor to determine the best fit for your family’s needs and start building a legacy that truly lasts.

Justen Schemmel is a

financial advisor located at Patterson Investment & Retirement Solutions at 930 Highway 45 South, P.O. Box 1747, Eagle River, WI 54521. He offers securities through Cambridge Investment Research, Inc., a broker-dealer, Member FINRA/SIPC and is an Investment Advisor Representative of Cambridge Investment Research Advisors, Inc., a Registered Investment Advisor. He can be reached at justen.schemmel@patterson-invest.com, or on Facebook at www.facebook.com/pattersoninvest.

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Art improves the lives of Seniors

BY NEWS-REVIEW STAFF

The Warehouse Community Arts Center in downtown Eagle River is hosting free watercolor group meetings on Tuesdays from 10:30 a.m. - noon.

"I just love this group so much," said Mary Schultz. "It's become like family."

Led by volunteer Steve Opfer, Watercolor Group is open and welcome to anyone, with no registration required. A weekly theme is selected with multiple reference photos, and everyone paints while chatting and enjoying each other's company. Many seniors participate in this free weekly art group.

"I love seeing what everyone creates and how supportive everyone is of each other," Schultz said.

Many retirees have joined the Watercolor Group without any prior experience, but have found a love of both the watercolor medium and the community that is created. Making art with others has proven to increase self-esteem, motivation and social connection.

"We've had numerous folks tell us how they retired to the North Woods and were having a tough time making friends until they joined a group or class



The Northwoods Ukers are one of several groups that provide creative activities to those who visit the Warehouse Community Arts Center in Eagle River.

—Contributed Photos

at the Warehouse," said Warehouse director Kim Adamovich. She laughs, "Come for the people and stay for the art."

It's been proven that engaging in the creative arts gives older adults a better quality of life. And having these social connections through the arts reduces isolation and depression.

"Most of the artists in Watercolor Group are senior citizens," says Mary Jerde. "So we all are now, or will someday be, facing serious life challenges. I've heard conversations ranging from just needing a time-out away from their

spouse to the more dreadful issues of health, family, finances and loss not just for themselves, but for everyone they love. These artists especially need time spent amongst a supportive cohort that is non-judgmental, empathetic and experienced in life's challenges that is willing to promote community resources, offer ideas that may be helpful, and HUGS, HUGS, HUGS as needed."

Researchers are examining how participating in arts activities may be linked to improving cognitive function and memory, and studying how the arts can be used to reduce behavioral symptoms of dementia, as well as promoting social interaction, which has multiple psychosocial benefits.

"I don't know who enjoys the class more; me or my husband. He knows how much I needed this," said Mary George. "Working towards creating something beautiful soothes the soul, calms the mind and offers a temporary escape from the outside world — sounds like good medicine to me."

It's not just the Watercolor Group



The Warehouse hosts Watercolor Group on Tuesdays from 10:30 a.m. to noon, free of charge.

Nature

From page 5

impact and learn practical skills to use at home. Plus, you'll leave with something to take home — whether it's a project you've built, a new skill or a plan to start living greener. Dates, times and prices are listed on TFT's website at <https://treesfortomorrow.com/Current-Activities/> and pre-registration is required. Registration and detailed information about programs and events open three months prior to their start date.

What you'll experience:

- **Skill-Building Workshops** — Learn how to process maple sugar, start a compost system or forage for wild edibles. Each session is hands-on, engaging and accessible to all experience levels.
- **Take-Home Tools and Projects** — Whether it's a foraging ID book, a tree-tapping kit or a compost bin, you'll leave with tangible tools to put your new knowledge into action.
- **Guidance from Experts** — Led by skilled instructors, each workshop is full of practical tips and easy-to-follow advice so you

can confidently use what you've learned.

Why it's perfect for you:

- **Live with Purpose** — Learn ways to make small changes that benefit the planet and bring fulfillment to your daily life.
- **Get Creative** — Enjoy the satisfaction of creating something with your hands that has long-lasting value.
- **Give Back to Nature** — Discover ways to support local ecosystems and wildlife while building skills you can pass down to others.

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TFT proudly hosts Road Scholar programs on their Eagle River campus.

These multi-day adventures offer a perfect mix of exploration, education and camaraderie, designed for those who want to go deeper into nature while enjoying an extended, enriching getaway.

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What you'll experience:

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Explore the forests, lakes and ecosystems of the North Woods with knowledgeable guides who offer fascinating insights into the natural world.

- **Hands-On Activities:** From hiking forests of northern Wisconsin and the Upper Peninsula, every day is filled with engaging, brain-boosting adventures.
- **Extended Stays** — Take your time to truly connect with nature and like-minded participants during multi-day experiences hosted right on the TFT campus.
- **Evening Connections** — After a day of discovery, relax around the campfire or enjoy conversations with new friends who share your love of learning and adventure.

Caregiver Grants Available

To help make these adventures accessible, Road Scholars offers caregiver grants, ensuring that participants can step away from their routines and fully enjoy a well-deserved, immersive experience.

Registration for Road Scholars programs is managed directly through the Road Scholars organization, with costs varying depending on the type of adventure

you select. For program details, pricing and availability, visit <https://www.roadscholar.org/>.

Why it's perfect for you:

- **Meaningful Adventures** — Enjoy an extended opportunity to learn, explore and connect with the world around you.
- **Take Time for Yourself** — Recharge mentally and physically while experiencing the healing benefits of nature.
- **Discover Community** — Build friendships with others who share your curiosity and passion for the outdoors.

Whether you're walking forest trails, listening to the songs of local birds or learning something new under the open sky, Road Scholars programs offer an unforgettable way to embrace lifelong learning, adventure and connection.

Why These Programs Matter

Each of these opportunities — whether you're exploring trails, diving into a workshop or joining a learning adventure — offers so much. By connecting with nature, you:

- Reduce stress and boost your mood.
- Stay active and healthy with gentle, enjoyable movement.

- Meet like-minded people and build meaningful connections.
- Learn new skills that enhance your life and help the planet.

As you spend more time outdoors, you'll find that the benefits — mentally, physically and socially — begin to ripple into other parts of your life. So why not step outside today and let nature work its magic?

About Trees For Tomorrow

Trees For Tomorrow's campus, located in Eagle River, Wis., includes National Forest property under permit from the USDA Forest Service. Private property owned by TFT, the Wisconsin Newspaper Association and Tara Lila LLC are also utilized for education and outreach purposes. TFT is an accredited nonprofit environmental center specializing in overnight environmental education programs for K-12 school groups with facilities that include dormitories, a full-service dining hall and classrooms. Trees for Tomorrow annually serves 14,000 youth and adults with the mission to promote sustainable management of our natural resources through transformative educational experiences.

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Art

From page 12

promoting camaraderie. The Warehouse Community Arts Center also has free music groups that bring seniors together and provide artistic opportunities. A string orchestra group meets seasonally on Tuesday evenings, and the Northwoods Ukers meet every Friday afternoon at 1:30 p.m. The Ukers are a fun-loving group of mostly seniors, and they play and sing a variety of tunes, from Tin Pan Alley to rock 'n roll to country. They are always welcoming new members, and will teach ukulele to those who need it. There are even a few that come just to sing along and enjoy the company. When people take the risk of making art with others, it's therapeutic and allows community-building to happen quickly and powerfully.

Participating in the arts can improve a person's sense of happiness through creative engagement.

"Some people just need a creative outlet for expression, feeling whole and getting those creative juices flowing. Since coming to class, I have been able to find my happy place. Everyone is very kind and supportive. It truly doesn't matter what abilities you have, it's just a fun place to come and relax," said Jerde. The Warehouse offers a variety, including ceramics, painting, stained glass, wood carving, yoga, journaling and more. Taking classes can form better cognitive function, memory and self-esteem, reducing stress and increasing social interaction.

Kathy Schuh retired three years ago, and after running many businesses over the years, didn't know what to do with her time. She took a wheel-throwing pottery class at the Warehouse and was immediately hooked.

"There haven't been too many days in the last three years where my hands didn't have clay on them," she said.

She started as a relative beginner and now, three years later, is an Open Studio monitor and teaching at the art center.

"I love to share what I have learned with other beginners. To see them smile when they advanced a skill is heartwarming; we seem to become very good friends playing in the mud." There are quick, single-day ceramic classes offered, as well as longer, multi-week pottery classes as well. And through the Northwoods Veterans Center, veterans can take free classes at the Warehouse.

Unfortunately, not all seniors are able to come to the Warehouse because of mobility issues. However, the art center has a program sponsored by the Northwoods United Way called TimeSlips to fill this need. Johanna Buwalda, a ceramic artist and teacher

at the Warehouse, hits the road and visits two local nursing homes once a month to bring art to them. Buwalda, who was also a trauma and war therapist for 30 years, provides photography pieces and leads the groups through a series of artistic expressions, writing stories and drawing.

"It's a really beautiful way for these seniors to be creative and express themselves. Some stories are sweet and happy, others might be sad, or some totally made up and funny," she said. It provides opportunities for artistic expression celebrating imagination rather than memory.

Senior citizens benefit from having the arts in their lives, and members of the North Woods community are encouraged to check out the Warehouse Community Arts Center in Eagle River.

The Warehouse includes a ceramic studio, an art classroom, a full bar with



Programs offered through the Warehouse can help seniors be creative and find new avenues of expressing themselves through pottery, watercolors, music and storytelling.

a gallery and a community room. A patio with alley access to public parking are open during the snowless months. It is located in

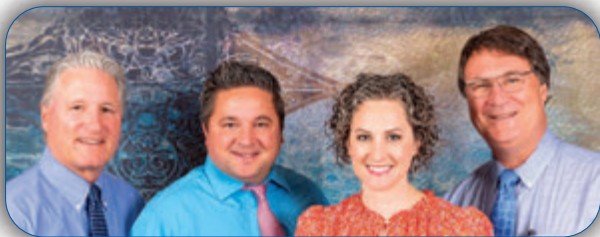
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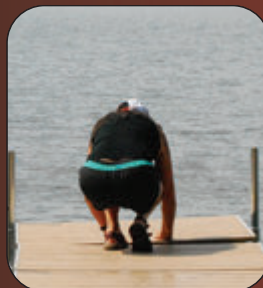
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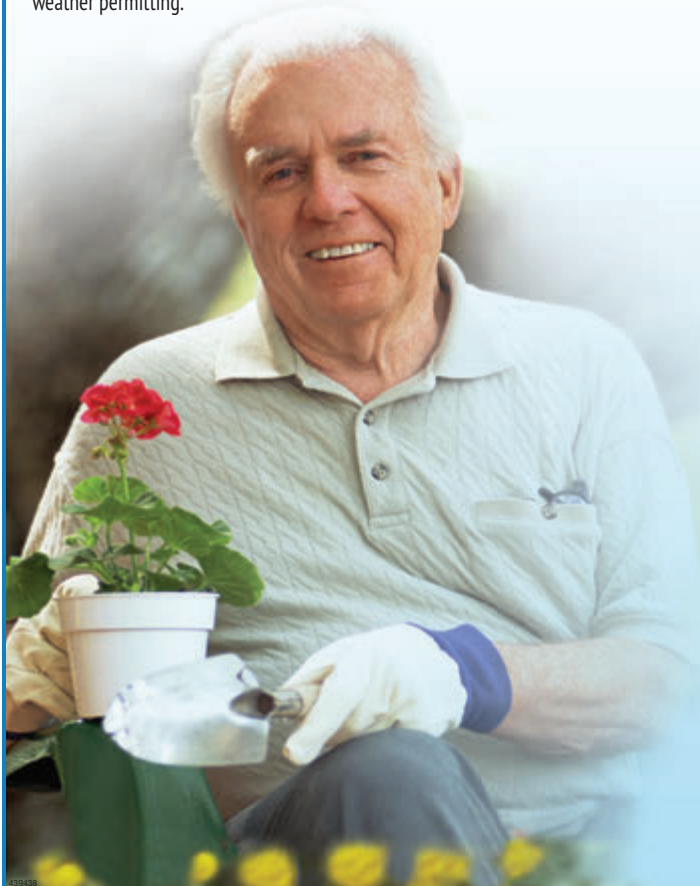
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- Healthy Living with Diabetes. A program to help people better manage their diabetes.
- Mind Over Matter: Healthy Bowels, Healthy Bladder (MOM). Learn how to manage bladder and bowel incontinence.
- Stepping On. This online program is proven to reduce falls and build confidence in older people.
- Strong Bodies. This is a virtual class to increase strength, muscle mass, and bone density. Twice weekly for 12 weeks.
- Bingocize. This program provides fun and fitness. It is twice weekly, for 10 weeks.

CYCLING WITHOUT AGE-VILAS, ONEIDA

Cycling Without Age (CWA) - Vilas, Oneida is a non-profit organization. CWA was started in Copenhagen in 2012 by a man named Ole Kassow and is based on five guiding principles: Generosity, Slowness, Storytelling, Relationships, and without age or ability. The trishaws provide a social outlet for those that are not able to get out and enjoy the great outdoors. Rides are available from May to October, weather permitting.



DEMENTIA CARE SPECIALIST

The role of the Dementia Care Specialist is to support people with dementia and their caregivers to ensure the highest quality of life possible while living at home. To accomplish this the DCS role will help facilitate a dementia-friendly community and work closely with people with dementia and caregivers to ensure they have needed support and information to thrive.

CAREGIVER SUPPORT PROGRAMS

The Alzheimer's Family Caregiver Support Program provides information and/or funding to caregivers of family members who have Alzheimer's disease or other closely related irreversible dementia and are financially eligible. The National Family Caregiver Support Program provides families and informal caregivers with information, support, respite care, and supplemental services.

CAREGIVER SUPPORT GROUP

The Dementia Caregiver Support Group provides support to those caring for someone with dementia. The group meets the third Thursday of each month from 10:30 to 11:30 AM. The Caregiver Support Group provides support for those caring for anyone with chronic illness. The group meets the fourth Wednesday each month from 1:00 to 2:00 PM Please call the ADRC for more information.

NUTRITION PROGRAM

Serves hot and nutritious meals. The following sites are located throughout the county: More Than a Meal Cafe-Eagle River area; Lac du Flambeau Wellness Center-Lac du Flambeau area; Gateway Lodge-Land O'Lakes area; Northern Exposure Restaurant-Phelps area; Manners Cafe located inside North Lakeland Elementary School-serving Manitowish Waters, Presque Isle, Boulder Junction, and Winchester areas; St. Germain area-Home delivered meals only-no dine-in. Home-Delivered meals are available in most areas throughout the County and are delivered to eligible homebound people. Meal reservations are required 24 hours in advance. Contributions are encouraged to maintain the viability of the program but are not required.

MEDICAL & PERSONAL TRANSPORTATION

Volunteer drivers provide rides for people unable to drive themselves to medical appointments and personal business. Call (715) 479-3625, two business days in advance to arrange a ride.

CHORE SERVICE

Matches workers with people who are financially eligible and need light housekeeping.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Our volunteers are an integral part of the ADRC programs. If you or someone you know is interested in volunteering for one of our programs, please call our office at (715) 479-3625.

We need volunteers as

- Transportation Drivers, Home-Delivered Meal Drivers and Office Help.

**MILEAGE
REIMBURSEMENT
IS AVAILABLE.**



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