

Community Health

COMMUNITYHEALTHMAGAZINE.COM | SUMMER 2022

STRESS Management

Use the resources
at your disposal to
address your mental
health needs | **PAGE 14**



Take charge of your financial health

Just like your physical health, your financial health is important to your overall well-being – and it's always a good idea to work toward keeping yourself healthy.

If you are stressed about your financial health, you are not alone. While financial stress centers around money, it is nonetheless a form of stress that can adversely impact many aspects of your life and health.

But we can help you change that – and turn financial stress into financial wellness. The following resources are available to you whether or not you are participating in the 401(k) plan.

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COVER STORY

Community Health

SUMMER 2022 | VOLUME 1 | ISSUE 1

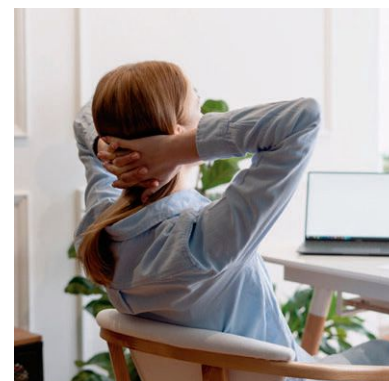
KLN Family Brands



COMMUNITY

Real Appeal

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This way to wellness

Greetings, and welcome to the inaugural issue of KLN Family Brands Community Health. I hope all of you are doing well and have enjoyed your spring, and are ready for a fun-filled summer.

We are very excited to bring you this publication. As a people-first company, KLN Family Brands takes pride in being invested in our employees' health and wellness. This magazine will be another resource you can utilize on your wellness journeys.

Community Health will educate and inform you on myriad topics, including best health practices, fitness, healthy eating and how to get the most value out of your health care benefits, just to name a few. We want to spread that awareness with the hope it contributes to better health for you and your loved ones.

We understand everyone's wellness journey is unique, and that what works for one person might not work for another. One of our goals with Community Health is to foster peer-to-peer engagement by including stories about the health challenges and triumphs of your co-workers. If you have a story to share or if there is a particular topic you would like to see in the magazine, please reach out to me. Your story could help inspire someone else to make positive changes to their life.

In this inaugural issue, you will find a package of stories about financial wellness beginning on page 4. These articles feature information on saving and investing, as well as how you can conveniently track your finances using the Securion Financial app. We also have a story on page 7 about how you may be able to streamline your savings and make prudent decisions when it comes that all-important time away from work.

Following that on page 8 is information about Real Appeal. This science-based weight-loss program provides you the tools and support you need to make healthier choices.

Check out page 12 for a story about biometric screenings, and how meeting certain biomarkers and participating in KLN wellness programs can reduce your monthly health care premiums.

I hope you enjoy this issue of Community Health, and that you find it useful as it pertains to living a healthier life. Stay well, and have a safe and enjoyable summer.



Marni Moch
WELLNESS COORDINATOR,
KLN FAMILY BRANDS

If you have a story to share or if there is a particular topic you would like to see in the magazine, please reach out to me. Your story could help inspire someone else to make positive changes to their life.



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Easy Access

Clinic a convenient resource for multitude of health care needs

By Jeff Vorva

Shannon Guck can name three reasons why a no-cost on-site primary care clinic has been successful for KLN Family Brands.

“It works because we’re small and quick and easy,” says Guck, a physician assistant for Sanford Health and an integral part of the clinic.

The clinic for KLN employees and their families opened in the KLN/Shearer’s office building in 2017, and since has operated out of the Perham Health Clinic.

“From my standpoint, we’re trying to help limit their barriers of keeping their employees and family members healthy,” Guck explains. “It’s pretty easy access and it’s a smaller part of the main clinic, so you can get in and out a little bit faster.

“That’s less time away from work. If they work a night shift, it’s less time away from sleeping.”

The clinic is open from 7:30 to 9:30 a.m. and 1:30 to 4 p.m. Mondays and Wednesday, and 7:30 to 9:30 a.m. Fridays.

Employees who utilize the clinic can obtain their health information through My Chart, which is also used by Perham Health and Sanford Health.

Employees covered by KLN’s health insurance plan get basic lab work and 30- to 90-day supplies of generic prescription drugs at no cost.

“We see patients for acute illnesses/injuries, chronic disease management such as diabetes, hypertension, hyperlipidemia, mental health, and annual wellness exams and preventive health for adults,” Guck says. “We are able to help refer patients to specialists within Sanford Health and outside health systems as well.”

Guck has been KLN’s primary provider at the clinic since 2017.

“It has been a great partnership with KLN, and hopefully has improved their employees’ overall health and access and affordability to health care.”



Now and Later

Proper planning and mindful management can help you make the most of your money — in the present and future

By Michael Gilbert

There's an App For That



Understanding the financial world can be like learning a new language, particularly for people who find working with numbers challenging or who have never managed finances.

Trying to figure out the benefits of a 401(k), prepping for retirement or creating a monthly household budget can cause headaches that test even the strongest over-the-counter medicines.

Fortunately, KLN Family Brands employees have an ally that offers guidance and expertise on even the most complex financial matters.

Casey Nelson, KLN's financial advisor for the past 11 years, meets with all new employees to discuss KLN's financial plans and answer any questions they may have.

"KLN means a lot to me because it is a family brand, so I think it's important to sit down with all new employees as they become eligible for benefits and talk about the plans that are offered," Nelson says. "I find these in-person meetings to be much more effective than if employees were just to receive a flier about the 401(k)."

Continued on next page

By Michael Gilbert

The first step toward creating a more secure tomorrow can be as simple as opening the App Store or Google Play and downloading the Securian Financial app.

The free and secure app — users can require Face ID to log in — allows one to manage their workplace retirement benefits as well as life insurance, annuities and investments purchased through a financial professional.

One of the highlights of the app is the ability for the user to take control of their 401(k) and other retirement accounts. Users can check account balances for annuities, investments and life insurance; update contact and beneficiary information; and view their monthly retirement income. The app also gives users the ability to view and amend investments, and access statements, documents and forms.

Launched in 2020, the app has been well-received. Users have praised the app for its simplicity, wealth of information and security.

"I love the ability to check in on my 401(k) using my face to log in," one reviewer writes.

"[The app] is so simple to use and tells me exactly what I need to know. Finally, the experience that I'm looking for to manage my wealth and financial future," says another.

The app outlines a sample 401(k) plan and provides users with a pre-retirement calculator to help determine how much they should be saving, based on their retirement goals. The app also provides an estimated gap between current savings and what one may need to sustain financial security throughout retirement.

To download the app, search "Securian Financial" in the App Store or Google Play."



Continued from previous page

Nelson's availability isn't solely limited to new employees. His personal cell phone number is on file should anyone need to consult with him. Many employees have sought his advice or asked to meet with him when he is visiting one of KLN's plants.

"I've had discussions with people about things above and beyond a 401(k) plan," Nelson says. "I've been asked about mortgages and property casualty insurance — just about everything you can think of. I even had a guy talk to me about rolling over seven 401(k)s into the KLN 401(k)."

Speaking of the 401(k), the employee-sponsored plan is a wise investment, according to Nelson. KLN matches half of an employee's contribution up to 6 percent of their paycheck. Employee do not pay federal income tax on the amount they defer to a 401(k) account.

"Beyond that the tax savings on a 401(k) are above what you can do in a non-qualified brokerage investing," he adds. "We have both the traditional and Roth 401(k) options, so people can really dial in to what's best for them."

Nelson says funds should not be withdrawn from a 401(k) until retirement.

"I love the idea of getting six months of salary saved in emergency-type areas like savings and checking. It takes work and it's a process, but remember, you don't automatically bench press 450 pounds the first time you lift weights."

CASEY NELSON
KLN FINANCIAL ADVISOR

"401(k)s are long-term and they should be viewed as retirement assets only," he says. "You should think of them as out of sight and out of mind because they are for age 59½ and older. It's a

commitment to saying, 'I'm going to live on 90 percent instead of 100 percent.'"

Nelson cautions against contributing too much to a 401(k), which can make it difficult to pay for necessities in the present.

"Some people get a bit too excited and put 20 percent of their paycheck into their 401(k), but we don't want you to get cash-strapped," he says. "There's a happy medium between what saving means and what investing means."

He also recommends setting up an emergency fund, a cash reserve set aside for unplanned expenses. The amount in an emergency fund varies depending on a person's financial situation and lifestyle, but it is wise to add a few dollars every paycheck to better handle an unforeseen circumstance, he advises.

"It's not easy because everyone has things going on in their lives, but I love the idea of getting six months of salary saved in emergency-type areas like savings and checking," he said. "It takes work and it's a process but remember, you don't automatically bench press 450 pounds the first time you lift weights. You build up slowly, and the same can be said for your emergency fund and 401(k)."



Saving for a Good Time

By Michael Gilbert

Where do we want to go on vacation?

It's a question just about every family discusses at some point during the year.

But there is a different question they should be asking, according to some financial professionals.

"I would challenge families that instead of asking 'where do we want to go,' to ask, 'what are we able to allocate toward a trip?'" says Dustin Baker, a financial consultant for ESL Investment Services in Rochester, New York. "You need to think about how much money would you feel comfortable removing from your savings. Once you find that number, then you can figure out what that trip will be and where you want to go."

Patrick Manuel, a financial advisor and president of Rochester-based Novem Group, says it is important to understand there are two types of vacations — those for which you budget and those which your budget allows.

"If I want to take my family to Hawaii, I certainly need to plan and budget for that vacation understanding the costs of hotels, transportation, meals and parking," Manuel says. "Vacations that the budget allows might be going to a nearby beach and staying at cheaper lodging."

"It's important to understand the true expenses and costs."

There's not a hard-and-fast rule as to how much one should put away per paycheck for a vacation, Manuel adds. A lot depends on the person and how they like to spend their free time.

"If you are a travel nut and going on vacation is all you want to do, then saving for vacation needs to be a budget item," he explains.

If a family's budget doesn't allow them to go where they want, Baker says it's important to remember the location shouldn't be the deciding factor as to whether a vacation is enjoyable.

"At the end of the day, it's really not where you go but who you are with," he says. "I think families will find out that wherever they go, they are going to have a good time because they are together."



Set for Success

Real Appeal empowers people to make healthy choices and work at their pace on way to wellness

By Alex Keown

Real Appeal, a program available to KLN Family Brands employees through the company's health plan, can help. Real Appeal focuses on empowering people to making practical steps toward wellness goals, with the benefit of online support and guidance, and other resources that can motivate and inspire. Its approach centers on practicing healthy behaviors.

There are also online meetings during which participants can share their weight loss-journey stories and find encouragement in the successes of others. For the first six months of the

"You're set up for success, but it's something that is left up to you," she adds. "You're the one who has to make the decisions about what foods to eat, and the Real Appeal program is there to guide you through it."



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PACC

Fitness Incentivized

As if the benefits of working out aren't reward enough, KLN reimburses employees who use the PACC and other fitness centers

By Jeff Vorva



The Perham Area Community Center, already a top-flight fitness facility, will soon be even better.

The PACC, as it is known in the area, was essentially a construction site as it underwent a renovation and refurbishing. The result, however, will be an improved place to work out and play. Construction was scheduled to be complete by the end of spring.

That's good news for KLN Family Brands employees who use the facility.

"Something bigger and better is coming," says Marni Moch, KLN wellness coordinator.

Employees and their spouses covered by the company's health insurance plan can work out at the PACC for free — provided they meet the minimum requirement of at least eight visits to the facility per month.

"They will be reimbursed a specific amount depending of the package they are in," Moch says. "It's a free membership if they utilize it."

PACC Adventure Land — a huge children's play area — has a targeted opening date of August, and the facility's pool reopened May 9. Moch and Todd Ziemke, KLN IT Department tech manager, found that to be great news because one of their favorite aspects of this program is the opportunity to bring family members to the PACC.

"I like the family feel to it," Moch says. "I like to bring my kids to it, especially during the winter months to burn some energy. My husband likes to use the noon basketball league. My biggest thing is it's nice to have an option to go there when going outside isn't ideal."

The PACC offers many things for families, Ziemke says.

"If you are a weightlifter, you can work out," he explains. "There is basketball or you can go into the pool for a few laps. When it's minus-10 outside, let's take the kids there. I love the options."

A good question is not how Ziemke uses the PACC, but how doesn't he use it.

"I participated in every possible activity there in my younger years," he says. "I would participate in basketball and volleyball programs. Now I do more weightlifting and running, all sorts of fun stuff like that."

"Quite honestly, this is really nice to have in our community. Fitness is a big deal in our family."

For employees who don't live in Perham, KLN offers reimbursements for using their own health clubs if they go eight times a month. For clubs whose fees exceed those of the PACC, KLN pays the amount they would pay if they used the PACC.

The PACC was built in 1989 and prior to the ongoing expansion was a 66,000-square-foot facility. The five-year project that started in 2017 increased that to 140,000 square feet.

Upon completion, the upgraded facility will feature new equipment, a weight room, a cardio room and two group fitness studios, as well as a cycling studio, field house, walking track, and multiple meeting and party rooms.



Lower Numbers, Greater Savings

Employees can earn reduction in insurance costs by improving their health

By Alex Keown

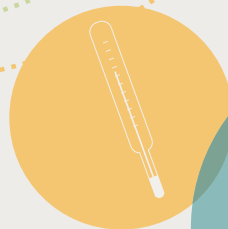
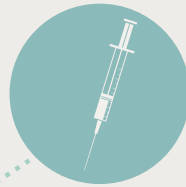
When it comes to knowing where your health stands, it can help to take a look inside the numbers with a baseline reading of biomarkers such as blood pressure, blood sugar and cholesterol levels.

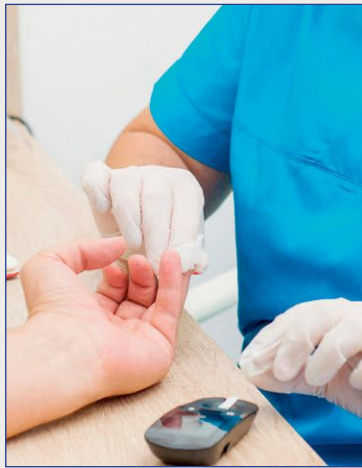
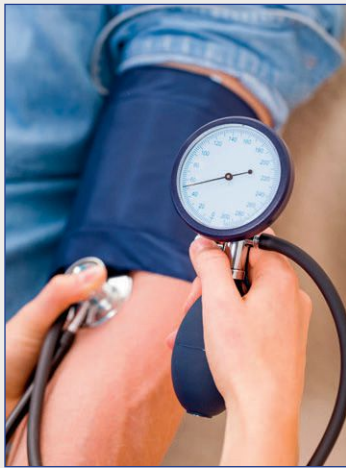
At KLN Family Brands, biomarker readings are available to employees through the company's wellness program managed by Health Strategies. Employees who undergo a biomarker screening and meet the program's requirements, and participate in three other wellness programs, are eligible to have their health insurance costs reduced by as much as \$150 per month, says KLN Wellness Coordinator Marni Moch.

Single health insurance coverage through the company's health plan costs \$175 per month. Savings through the biomarker program can amount to \$1,800 per year.

"That's a pretty good deal," Moch says.

Biomarker screenings are offered to employees each summer on-site at KLN, through employees' primary care physicians and at a local clinic that partners with KLN.





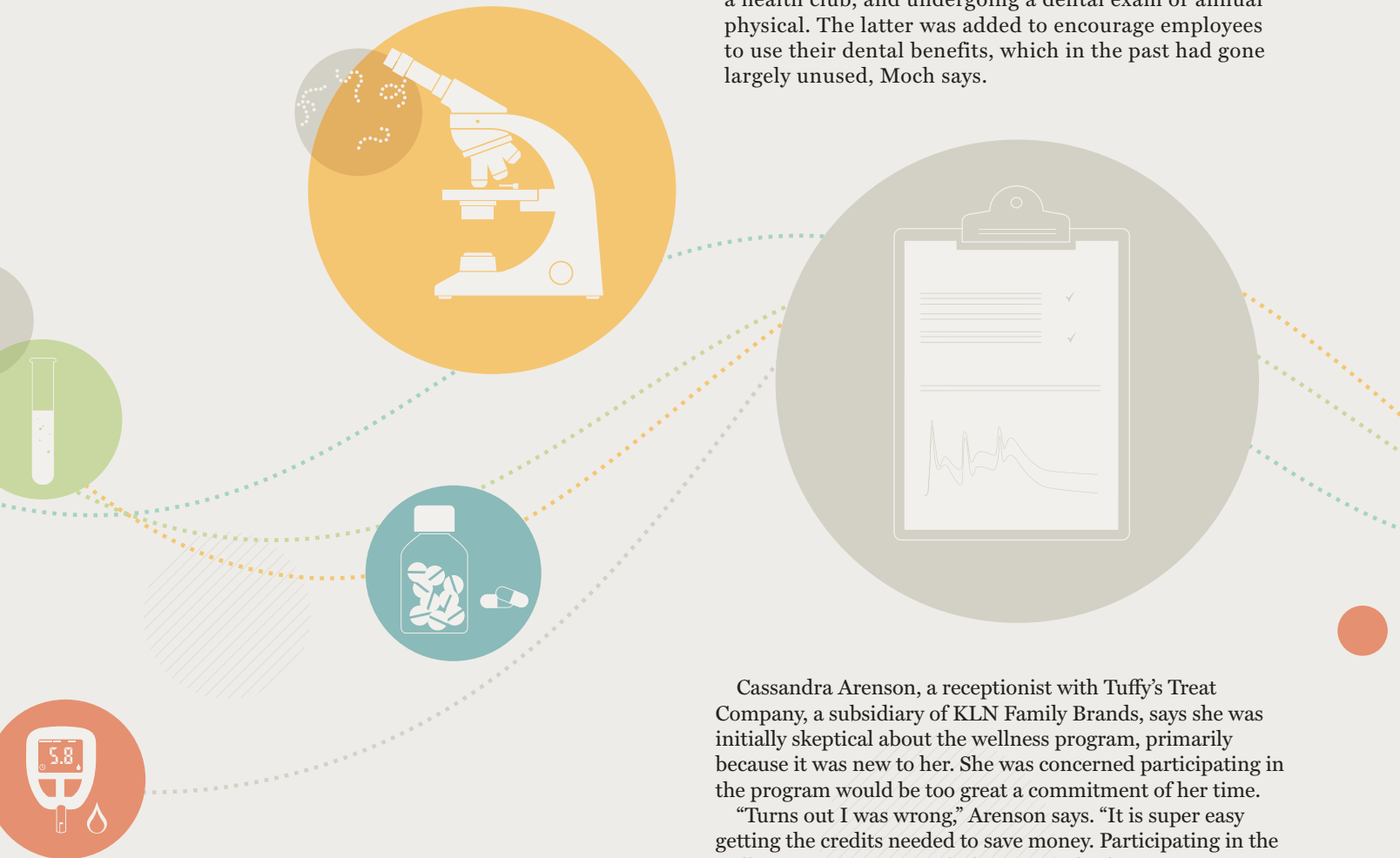
KLN Family Brands will conduct biomarker screenings Tuesday, July 19 and Wednesday, July 20 at its on-site clinic in Pelham.

The biomarker requirements employees must meet to realize the health cost savings include a body mass index of 28 kg/m², or have a waist circumference of 39 inches or fewer for men or 34 inches or fewer for women. They must also have a blood pressure of 134/84 or lower, a blood sugar (A1C) count of 110 or lower, total cholesterol/HDL ratio of 4.5 or less, and be nicotine-free.

While some people may not be able to meet all the requirements and enjoy the maximum financial savings, Moch says they can still earn some reductions on their health insurance costs if they strive to make improvements to their numbers. This can be accomplished through lifestyle changes or use of prescription medications.

“If you can improve baseline, they’ll work with you,” Moch says. “We want to promote improvements to their health.”

Employees are also tasked with participating in three other wellness activities, the options which include attending wellness talks conducted on site, showing proof of using a fitness tracker outside of work, patronizing a health club, and undergoing a dental exam or annual physical. The latter was added to encourage employees to use their dental benefits, which in the past had gone largely unused, Moch says.



Cassandra Arenson, a receptionist with Tuffy’s Treat Company, a subsidiary of KLN Family Brands, says she was initially skeptical about the wellness program, primarily because it was new to her. She was concerned participating in the program would be too great a commitment of her time.

“Turns out I was wrong,” Arenson says. “It is super easy getting the credits needed to save money. Participating in the wellness program is worth the time and effort.”

Arenson has been able to keep some extra money in her pocket and has a better understanding of her health.

“The reason behind the screenings is to make employees aware of their biomarker numbers, Moch says. “Whether they’re good or bad, you need to know them.”



Emergency Preparedness

KLN employee **Nathan Rooney** understands the importance of being resilient and mindful of his mental health

By Karen Marley

When Nathan Rooney's phone rings, he knows he could soon be on his way to any number of potentially stressful or traumatic situations, from a minor car accident to a person trapped in a burning building or submerged vehicle.

Rooney, KLN training supervisor, is also a volunteer firefighter for the Perham Fire & Rescue Department. As such, he needs to be mentally prepared for a worse-case scenario 24-hours a day, seven days a week.

As a first responder, he has witnessed many traumatic events, including fatalities. So, in addition to being prepared for what he might find when he arrives on the scene, he must also have effective coping skills to deal in as healthy a way as possible with the after-effects of such experiences.

Perham Fire and Rescue is an entirely volunteer service serving 164 square miles in rural Minnesota, roughly 200 miles northwest of the Twin Cities. All 32 volunteer firefighters are on call any time they are not out of town.

"When you're available, you go," Rooney says. "We get calls at all hours of day and night. You have to respond accordingly."

Call of Duty

Even though the volunteer firefighters are asked to respond whenever possible, it's understood they won't always be available. Work, family events and other occasions are respected, but even during those times Rooney grapples with his sense of responsibility to public service.

He describes his motivation as an ingrained desire to help, not an obligation to respond. When he does respond, the stress can escalate quickly and the possible scenarios start to run through his mind.

"When I get the initial call, my adrenaline starts going," he says. "I immediately start formulating a plan. What will I encounter? What will be my job to help rectify the situation? What will my duties be when I arrive? What will we accomplish?"

While on the scene, Rooney and his crewmates are entirely focused on the duties at hand. The most difficult part can be when the job is done.



Nathan Rooney is a KLN training supervisor and a volunteer fireman for the Perham Fire & Rescue Department.

"You need some quiet time to process everything," he explains. "For me, I start thinking about the next step and how [a victim's] family will feel. It wears on you some."

"I may not have had someone in my own family be in a similar traumatic situation like a car accident, but as a responder I have a lot of empathy, because getting news about a loved one ... that's a bad phone call to get."

Rooney says first responders get emotionally involved in an incident even after it has passed. It's critical for them to find a way to establish some separation between a traumatic incident and their own lives, he adds.

Emotional Support

Rooney understands each person deals with emotional stress in a different way. For him, talking to someone is helpful. His wife, Courtney, is a social worker, and it is easy for him to talk to her.

There are multiple resources available to help Perham's firefighters manage emotional stress. They have access to a telehealth counseling service, and additional help is available to firefighters who are struggling after an incident, Rooney says.

He and his fellow firefighters also take comfort in knowing they can lean on one another for support.

"Responders need a network of close people in their lives," he says. "In those traumatic situations you want to go to the person you can trust. Someone you can talk through what you're going through and what you've seen."



It Takes a Village

Employee Assistance Program offers help for life's challenges great and small

Life is filled with unexpected twists and turns. People sometimes need a little guidance to navigate it successfully and address their mental health and emotional well-being.

KLN Family Brands employees and their dependents covered by the company's health plan have that help available through The Village employee assistance program (EAP).

"We're a nationwide EAP program with a local focus," says The Village Account Executive Manager Charlie Lindberg. "Our EAP provides short-term, wellness-based counseling that is confidential, and free of charge to all employees and household members."

The Village offers mental health counseling services and professional guidance for myriad life issues, including addiction and substance abuse, workplace conflict, crisis counseling, financial wellness and legal matters. It offers support for approved education classes on topics that cover topics from parenting to relationships to healthy lifestyle programs.

Talking to a counselor is convenient, whether it is done face to face, on-site or through a web-based meeting on a phone, tablet or computer. The Village has been offering online sessions for 12 years, long before the COVID-19 pandemic made such a convenience necessary and fashionable.

Lindberg says employee should take advantage of the service for the sake of improving their overall wellness.

"You don't need an emergency to use this service," he adds. "We encourage employees to call about an issue before it becomes a crisis. Think of it as preventive: We want to help people before larger problems arise."

The Village EAP is easy to use. To schedule an appointment call (800) 627-8220 or visit VillageEAP.com.

Help When You Need It

Five ways your KLN employee health plan can address your mental wellness

Under KLN Family Brands' UnitedHealthcare (UHC)

health plan, employees have access to benefits that protect their whole-body wellness with an array of mental and behavioral health resources. These ancillary benefits can help a person lead a happier and healthier life.

Live and Work Well

Accessed through the "MyUHC.com" account, Live and Work Well is UHC's behavioral health website. It's filled with tools and helpful information. It's also where employees can go to locate providers if they are seeking care. The website is open to all members.

Sanvello

Sanvello is a mobile app that uses clinically proven techniques to help users reduce symptoms of stress, anxiety and depression. It connects them with tools — daily mood tracking, meditation, guided journeys and personalized progress trackers — that are accessible as symptoms appear. Sanvello's online community lets participants connect while remaining anonymous.

All health plan members have free access to Sanvello's premium version.

Real Appeal

Real Appeal is an online weight loss program designed to help participants establish healthier habits and lifestyles. It's rooted in clinical research for lasting results. After registering, participants get a kit that includes exercise equipment, a food blender, a food scale and access to online resources. They also connect with a Real Appeal coach and an online support community of other members.

Real Appeal comes at no cost to health plan members. Participants access Real Appeal through MyUHC.com under "Health Resources."

Virtual Visits with Providers

If a person needs additional support beyond self-guided help, they can find it at The Village, KLN Family Brand's employee assistance program (EAP). In addition to The Village, a member can do a virtual visit with a provider. UHC recommends Talkspace for 24/7 online therapy that includes a texting option.

Facility-Based Care

If a person needs more than virtual care, UHC encourages members to see a clinician for face-to-face, facility-based care. Providers can be found on the Live and Work Well website.



Question. Persuade. Refer.

Suicide-awareness training educates about the signs of a mental health crisis

By Karen Marley



CPR can save a person's life if they are having a heart attack. For a choking victim, there is the Heimlich maneuver.

QPR, or "Question. Persuade. Refer," is the intervention protocol for saving the life of someone contemplating suicide.

QPR was designed in 1995 by a clinical psychologist for the purpose of increasing a person's chances of surviving an emergency mental health crisis. Today, the QPR Institute teaches people how to be QPR Gatekeepers: the individuals who are in a position to recognize the warning signs that someone may be contemplating suicide.

Maria Willits, a psychiatric LPN, has been a certified QPR Gatekeeper Trainer for roughly six years. She is also the founder of Shatter the Silence, a grassroots suicide prevention and education organization in rural Minnesota.

Willits founded Shatter the Silence in 2010, the year after she lost her son, Ricky, to suicide when he was a high school senior.

"My initial thought was to get into the high schools," Willits says. "Students hadn't been taught the warning signs to suicide. It wasn't even discussed as a topic."

After Ricky's death, Willits learned suicide is the second cause of death for people 15-24 years old in Minnesota and North Dakota, and the third cause of death for that age group nationwide. Her suicide awareness talks progressed beyond the high schools and into communities, churches and businesses. One of those businesses is KLN Family Brands.

Suicide Prevention

Willits held the QPR Gatekeeper certification online through televideo in January 2022. Paul King, KLN Family Brands warehouse logistics manager, participated in the company's suicide prevention training.

King appreciated the information, as he has had first-hand encounters with people who were at potential risk of suicide. He says the training reinforced his managerial philosophies, including his priority of getting to know his employees.

"If you don't recognize the individual, it makes suicidal thoughts harder to detect," he says. "You cannot lose sight of their morale and engagement levels. You must talk to your employees regularly and get to know them."

QPR

The QPR training has provided King with a newfound confidence and a clear actionable plan should he identify an employee who is experiencing mental health issues. He says he learned to:

- **Question.** Ask a person how they are doing. Get details and facts.
- **Persuade.** Encourage an employee to seek help through KLN Family Brands HR resources, like The Village or the UnitedHealthcare plan. Put these resources on their radar.
- **Refer.** Know the network of resources available to help in these situations. King knows he can go to HR and ask for assistance, and that HR can follow through with a phone number, counseling or treatment center. A gatekeeper does not direct a person to a counselor or an external resource.

"This course gave me peace of mind and know-how on handling these situations with people on my team," King says. "I had an idea of what to do. The training confirms it."

"You develop relationships with your workers, it's never easy to see someone you care about going through difficult experiences."

Willits is conducting her QPR trainings through a grant provided by the Minnesota Department of Health, housed by Productive Alternatives. For her, helping people feel more comfortable asking the initial questions about suicide is deeply personal.

"It keeps Ricky's memory alive to share his story," Willits says. "It's healing knowing I'm making a difference for others and saving somebody's life."



Living in Lakes Country

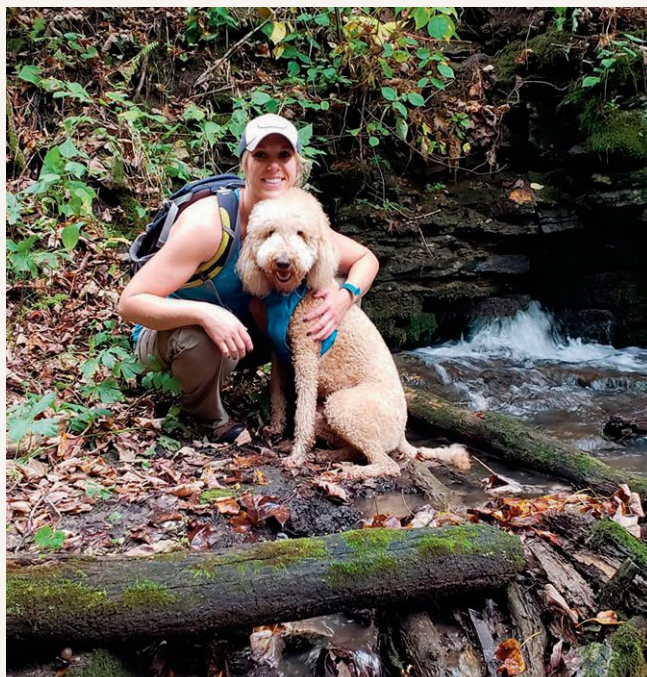
KLN employee takes every opportunity to enjoy what Mother Nature has to offer

By Michael Gilbert

Katie Lange craves the outdoors.

“I’m obsessed with nature,” says Lange, brand marketing coordinator at KLN Family Brands. “I love to hike, mountain bike, ski, kayak, camp — I just enjoy being outdoors. It’s a great way to find peace and simplicity.”

Even in the dead of winter, when many Minnesotans would prefer curling up on the couch with a blanket and a good book, Lange would rather grab her cross-country skis or snowshoes and head to the trails.



Katie Lange is an avid adventurer who enjoys exploring Minnesota's outdoors year-round.



"I'll go out in any weather," she says. "I just dress warm and make sure I have my water, and I'm all set."

One can imagine her excitement now that summer is here and there are even more recreational activities for the Perham resident and former news anchor to explore and enjoy.

Topping her to-do list is a visit to Maplewood State Park in Pelican Rapids. Maplewood features more than 30 miles of hiking trails and eight lakes, and the heavily forested landscape harbors countless hardwood trees including sugar maple, basswood, American elm and oak.

"Maplewood really has some beautiful trails," Lange says. "The park is extremely scenic. I love visiting Maplewood."

Itasca State Park, roughly 20 miles north of Park Rapids, is another of her favorites. Itasca is notable as the site of Lake Itasca, the headwaters of the Mississippi River and which was designated a National Natural Landmark in 1965. The park spans more than 32,600 acres and is a great place to fish, canoe, boat or kayak. Itasca also has 33 miles worth of hiking trails that pass several historic sites and provide access to back-country campsites.

"Itasca obviously has some nice hiking trails but there are plenty of opportunities for fishing as well," Lange says. "There is a paved bike trail and nice interactive visitor center, too."

Lange is a frequent visitor to Forestville Mystery Cave State Park in southeastern Minnesota. The 3,170-acre park is home to many species of wildlife, including rare glacial snails and timber rattlesnakes. But is best known for being the home to Mystery Cave, the longest cave in Minnesota.

"It's a lot of fun to explore the cave," Lange says. "There are also great hiking and horse trails, and if you enjoy fishing they have great trout-fishing opportunities."

Cuyuna Country State Recreation Area, a state park in Crow Wing, is another of her favorite destinations. The park has ample opportunities for hikers and mountain bikers, and is endorsed by the International Mountain Bicycling Association as a top spot.

"There are more than 50 miles of mountain biking trails so it's a great spot for all levels," Lange says. "Cuyuna has crystal clear blue waters, so you will also see a lot of paddleboarders, kayakers and snorkelers there."

Lange has been to more than half of Minnesota's 66 state parks and is looking forward to another summer with her mountain bike and kayak in tow. She encouraged everyone to visit a state park or two or a nearby trail in the coming months.

"There are just so many recreational opportunities right outside a person's doorstep," she says. "That's one of the reasons I love living here. No matter your ability level there's something here for you."

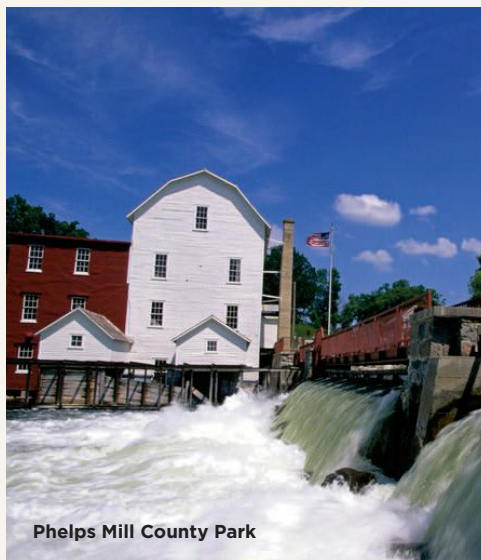


Minnesota has an abundance of natural areas in which to enjoy outdoor activities including camping, fishing, hiking, canoeing and kayaking, just to name a few.





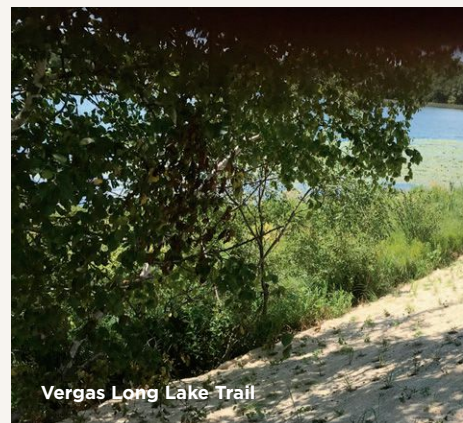
Inspiration Peak State Wayside Park



Phelps Mill County Park



Monticello County Park



Vergas Long Lake Trail

The Great Outdoors

By Michael Gilbert

Phelps Mill County Park, Underwood

"Find your inner Otter" is the catchphrase of choice for residents of Otter Tail County, and one place to do that is Phelps Mill County Park.

Located along the banks of the Otter Tail River, the park is the perfect spot for fishermen to try to reel in sturgeon, smallmouth bass and catfish. The Otter Tail River flows into the Red River within the park, and there are multiple dams and bridges that provide refuge for fish. As the river is rather shallow, wade fishing is a good option and the clear water makes it easy for one to see what they are walking into.

The Otter Tail River is kayak- and canoe-friendly.

The park is also home to the Phelps Mills, a 130-plus year-old mill built by local entrepreneur William E. Thomas and which was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1975.

Vergas Long Lake Trail, Vergas

The Vergas Long Lake Trail had quite an addition in summer 2020 when an 846-foot boardwalk opened. The trail can be used for a variety of activities including walking, cycling, running and fishing; it's common to see families fishing off the boardwalk.

Along with the boardwalk, the trail is also home to Tin Can Alley, a half-mile unpaved trail that runs along the shore of Long Lake. With a bluff on one side and a gentle slope to the water on the other, Tin Can Alley is quiet and peaceful. Dog owners love it as the spot is safe to let their dogs off-leash to run and explore.

Vergas Long Lake Trail is also home to the largest loon in the world. The 20-foot statue serves as the town's mascot, and is photo spot and tourist attraction.

Inspiration Peak State Wayside Park, Brandon

In the southern part of Otter Tail County is a collection of glacial features known as the Leaf Hills. The highest of these rises 1,750 feet above sea level and is

known as Inspiration Peak. Hiking the quarter mile to the top of Inspiration Peak can be a challenge, as it involves traversing a worn trail with some steep sections; but it is also rewarding. Inspiration Peak is the highest point in the county and one of the highest points in Minnesota, and provides picturesque views of the deciduous forest to the east and prairie to the west.

Hiking Inspiration Peak isn't exactly a walk in the park but there are several benches along the way for those who need to stop for a breather. Expect to see a variety of flowers along the way to the top, including pasque-flower, blazing star, asters and goldenrod.

Maplewood State Park, Pelican Rapids

People looking for a bit of history to go along with their recreation will find it among the 9,250 acres of Maplewood State Park. Sitting on a series of high, tree-covered hills that provide visitors with striking vistas of small, clear lakes nestled in deep valleys, Maplewood was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1978.

Maplewood boasts eight major lakes and many ponds offering places to swim, fish, boat or relax. Lake Lida borders the park to the west and is one of the most popular destinations for swimmers and anglers.

Grass Lake, located adjacent to the main campground, is a popular spot to catch panfish. Muskie fishing is popular in Beers Lake, while Bass Lake has a large population of rainbow trout.

Bertram Chain of Lakes Regional Park, Monticello

Wright County and the City of Monticello joined forces to create Bertram Chain of Lakes Regional Park, a 1,200-acre natural area. The park has 7.5 miles of trails for hikers and walkers, and 14 miles of single-track mountain bike trail.

The 100-acre Bertram Lake is one of five bodies of



Glendalough State Park



Bertram Chain of Lakes Regional Park



Lake Maria State Park



Clearwater Pleasant County Park

water at the park and holds northern pike, largemouth bass, bluegill and black crappie. The southern portion of Bertram Lake features a beach.

Make it more than just a day trip by pitching a tent at one of the park's 38 campsites or stay in one of the six camper cabins.

The park is open daily from 6 a.m.-10 p.m.

Clearwater Pleasant County Park, Annandale

This popular park packs plenty in its 210 acres. One of the biggest attractions is an 18-hole disc golf course. Bikers, walkers and joggers can get their exercise on a 1.8-mile paved path that partially runs parallel to Pleasant Lake.

Speaking of Pleasant Lake, visitors can soak up the sun at the beach at the northern-most part of the lake. Swimming, fishing and boating are permitted. Just north of the beach is a multi-purpose recreational area featuring a sand volleyball court, playground and horseshoe area.

Bring the dog, as an off-leash pet area near the disc golf course is the perfect place for dogs to socialize and get some exercise.

Montissippi County Park, Monticello

The 170-acre Montissippi County Park may be small compared to other parks on this list, but it isn't lacking in recreational opportunities. The park has a shaded sand volleyball court, 18-hole disc golf course and a picnic area, and more than two miles of paved trails for bikers, walkers and runners. The trails traverse forested areas and provide welcome shade during the summer.

Those looking for a more rugged hike can check out the 1/2-mile unpaved trail that offers views of trees, flowers and plants. Those taking a casual stroll on this path may catch a glimpse of the abundant wildlife that call the park home.

Another perk to visiting Montissippi is a boat launch with a dock on the Mississippi River. Many guests fish

right from the dock for bass, bluegill catfish and crappie.

Glendalough State Park, Battle Lake

Glendalough State Park is quiet, peaceful and nestled between a prairie and hardwood forest. It's 1,930 acres provide plenty of space for recreation, as well. Hikers will find approximately 8 miles of trails populated with all kinds of wildlife.

Glendalough is an angler's paradise that features six lakes, including 335-acre Annie Battle Lake. Located near the park campground, Annie Battle was for the most part a private fishing lake for many years, and its fish population is much larger than most public lakes.

Bird-watchers will have a field day as the park has five wildlife observation areas. It is not uncommon to even spot an eagle or two at Glendalough along with a slew of waterfowl and marsh birds. Visitors can rent a kayak, canoe or rowboat and head out onto the water or enjoy the sandy beach and swimming area.

Glendalough is open from 8 a.m.-10 p.m. daily.

Lake Maria State Park, Monticello

Lake Maria's 1,475 acres appeal primarily to hikers, backpackers, horseback riders and anglers. The park has 14 miles of trails providing options for both novice and experienced hikers. Six of those miles are also open for horseback riding.

While out on the trail, be on the lookout for deer, red foxes, gophers, mink, beaver and muskrat. An incredible 205 species of birds have been identified in the park as well.

Anglers will enjoy the Little Mary Fishing Pier, which features a picnic area. Game fish include crappie, bass, bluegill, northern pike, bullhead and perch. The park is also known for its population of Blanding's turtles, a semi-aquatic turtle that is listed on the endangered species list.

TASTE OF SUMMER



GRILLED WALLEYE

Minnesotans have a longstanding love affair with the walleye. The state fish is sought by anglers for its fight and by eaters as fare. From the walleye sandwiches commonly sold at pubs to deep-fried walleye on a stick at the Minnesota State Fair to the fillet-and-fry-it fishermen, the people of the Land of 10,000 Lakes consumer more walleye than those in any other state.

As is the case with many fish, less is more with the walleye when preparing. Often regarded as one of the tastiest freshwater fish on North America, minimal seasoning is required. A little salt, pepper, oil and garlic can go a long way toward bringing the fish's natural flavor to the next level. But experimentation is healthy, so try a spice such as paprika or cayenne, or an herb such as cilantro or fresh basil. Most importantly, enjoy it.

Ingredients

walleye fillets, rinsed and dried

2 Tbsp butter, melted

1 garlic clove, minced

fresh lemon, cut into wedges (optional)

Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

Directions

Preheat grill to medium-high

In a small bowl, mix together melted butter and minced garlic.

Use a butter or an oil of your preference to lightly coat tinfoil or fish grilling basket

Baste one side of the fillets with the garlic oil/butter and cook for approximately 3 minutes, flip and repeat. Fish is cooked when it flakes easily with a fork and is opaque in color.

Great served with grilled asparagus and potatoes, and a grain such as rice or quinoa.

This recipe can be used to prepare and foil-cook the fish when camping.

Spray a piece of heavy foil with oil and place walleye fillets skin-side down in the center of the foil.

Spread/brush butter or oil and garlic seasoning on fillets and top with another piece of foil, sealing at the edges.

Cook for 6 to 7 minutes on each side or until it flakes easily with a fork.

Season with salt and pepper to taste and serve.



FISH TACOS

This recipe can be made to suit any taste. A lean, flaky whitefish works exceedingly well for fish tacos, but any fish you enjoy will do. They can be prepared with the fish sauce in this recipe, a store-bought fish sauce or your own seasoning.

Ingredients

1 lb fish fillets (walleye, perch, tilapia, lake whitefish)
 salt and freshly ground black pepper
 2 Tbsp oil (vegetable, olive or canola)
 1 small lime, juiced
 1 clove garlic, minced
 1/2 tsp chili powder
 1 tsp ground cumin
 1/2 tsp paprika
 1/4 tsp cayenne, optional
 8 small tortillas, any kind
 fish taco sauce
 1/2 cup sour cream
 1/3 cup mayonnaise
 1 small lime, juiced
 1/2 tsp garlic powder
 1/2 tsp cumin
 1/4 tsp salt
 hot sauce, to taste

Toppings

pico de gallo
 Cotija cheese
 shredded cabbage
 fresh cilantro
 avocado
 lime wedges
 red onion
 hot sauce

Directions

Season the fish with a little salt and pepper on both sides.

In a mixing bowl whisk together the oil, lime juice, garlic, chili powder, cumin, paprika, cayenne.

Add fish to a large zip bag and pour the marinade over fish. Seal bag and allow fish to marinate for 20-30 minutes.

Preheat grill to medium-high heat. Brush grill grates with oil and grill fish filets for about 3-4 minutes on each side (cook time will vary depending on thickness of fish), flipping only once.

Add the corn tortillas to the grill and warm for about 15 seconds on each side.

Transfer fish to a plate and allow to rest for a few minutes before gently breaking into pieces.

Add desired toppings.

Serve with rice, quinoa or other grain.



MUSHROOMS WITH WILD RICE

Ingredients

1 1/4 cups uncooked wild rice blend (about 9 ounces)
 2 1/4 cups chicken broth, divided
 2 bay leaves
 1 1/2 tsp kosher salt, divided
 3 Tbsp olive oil, divided
 2 leeks, trimmed, halved lengthwise, and finely chopped
 2 carrots, finely chopped
 2 celery stalks, finely chopped
 2 shallots, finely chopped
 3 garlic cloves, finely chopped
 2 tsp finely chopped fresh sage
 1 tsp fresh thyme leaves
 1 pound fresh mushrooms, cut into large pieces
 1 cup unsweetened dried cranberries
 1 cup roasted chestnuts or toasted pecans, chopped
 Fresh sage leaves, for garnish

Directions

Stir together rice, 2 1/4 cups chicken broth, bay leaves and 1/4 teaspoon salt in a medium saucepan. Bring to a boil over high. Reduce heat to low, cover and simmer until liquid is absorbed, 40 to 45 minutes. Remove from heat and let stand, covered, until rice is tender, about 10 minutes. Fluff with a fork and set aside.

While rice cooks, heat 2 tablespoons oil in a large skillet over medium. Add leeks, carrots, celery, shallots and garlic and cook, stirring occasionally, until leeks are crisp-tender, about 8 minutes. Add chopped sage and thyme leaves, and cook, stirring constantly, until fragrant, about 1 minute. Add mushrooms and remaining 1 tablespoon oil and cook, stirring often, until mushrooms are tender and lightly browned, 10 to 15 minutes.

Transfer mushroom mixture to a large bowl; fold in wild rice, cranberries, chestnuts, remaining 1/4 cup chicken broth, remaining 1 1/4 teaspoons salt until well mixed. Transfer to a serving dish, and top with sage leaves.



SUMMER STRAWBERRY SALAD

This recipe is perfect for taking on the go to a picnic or on the boat. The dressing can be made as many as five days in advance, and the salad will keep for up to six hours refrigerated or on ice.

Ingredients

Salad

8-10 ounces greens, such as arugula, spinach, red leaf lettuce or dandelion
 1/4 cup Italian parsley leaves or basil
 1 pound strawberries, hulled and quartered
 1 seedless cucumber, sliced into 1/2-inch chunks
 1 pint cherry tomatoes, sliced in half
 1/4 cup sliced red onion
 1/4 cup crumbled feta cheese
 feta cheese

Vinaigrette

1/4 cup sliced strawberries
 3 Tbsp extra virgin olive oil
 2 Tbsp balsamic vinegar
 1 Tbsp chopped shallots
 1 Tbsp fresh lemon juice
 1/4 tsp salt

Directions

Dressing

Combine all ingredients in a blender or small food processor until smooth and creamy. Dressing will keep refrigerated up to 5 days.

Salad

Put the arugula in a large salad bowl or a large serving platter. Top with the remaining ingredients and drizzle with 3 tablespoons of the dressing. Toss together gently. Serve with additional dressing on the side.

Tip

Dress the salad shortly before serving to avoid wilting the greens. If prepared ahead of time, top undressed salad with a cold, damp towel and keep refrigerated or on ice in a cooler.

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