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# Community Health

COMMUNITYHEALTHMAGAZINE.COM | SUMMER 2023






## Ascending the Trail

Hiking club connects women  
seeking the spirit of adventure  
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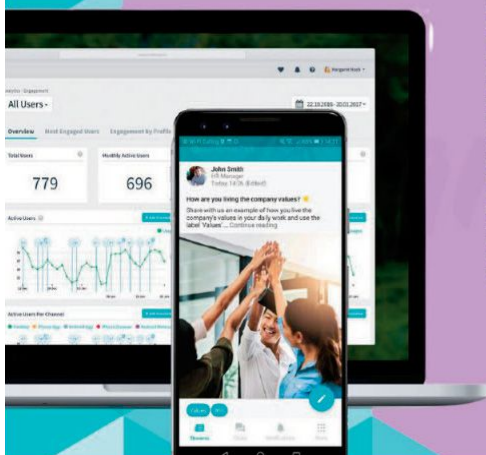


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- \*Upcoming Special Events
- \*Employee Recognition
- \*Company Sales Wins
- \*Access to HR documents
- \*Prizes and Contests
- \*Access to ADP



BEEKEEPER



COVER STORY

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## Community Health

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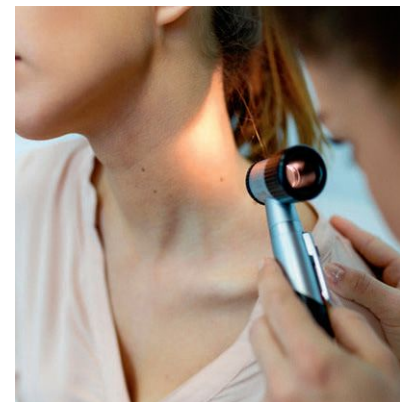
KLN Family Brands



COMMUNITY

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# Summer Wellness

Hello, and welcome to the summer 2023 edition of *Community Health*, our quarterly health and wellness publication. Hopefully, you've been soaking up all that this time of the year has to offer in the Land of 10,000 Lakes.

KLN Family Brands prides itself on putting people first and this magazine is part of that effort. As the seasons change, so will the valuable information within this publication to inspire you on your wellness journey, along with resources available to you through the KLN company health plan.

This edition is all about getting out and exploring Minnesota and the surrounding region, giving disc golf a whirl, safely serving up summer fun at your next gathering, and protecting your largest organ from sun damage.

According to the American Academy of Dermatology Association, skin cancer is the most common cancer in the United States, with approximately 9,500 people diagnosed with the disease every day.

With sunshine and summer fun, those startling statistics make wearing sunscreen and taking precautions to protect your skin all the more important when you're outside making memories. On page 15, an employee shares his experience with skin cancer, encouraging others to be more aware of the dangers of exposed skin.

For those of you looking for a new hobby, disc golf might pique your interest. With a handful of courses in Otter Tail and Wright counties, there are plenty of places to get some fresh air and throw some discs. You can learn more on page 12.

If you're not looking to break the bank but still want to get out and vacation, we've got some great options from fellow KLN employees. They share their favorite destinations to swim, bike, camp and adventure across the state. Personally, my family and I enjoy some lake time together on the weekends or whenever we can squeeze it in with our active summer schedule.

We would love to hear more stories about our employees' health, wellness and fitness endeavors. If you have something to share — a workout regimen, healthy eating plan, or places to enjoy the outdoors, just to name a few — please email me at [mmoch@klfamilybrands.com](mailto:mmoch@klfamilybrands.com)

We hope you enjoy this edition of *Community Health*. We'll be back with another info-packed issue this fall.



**Marni Moch**  
WELLNESS COORDINATOR  
KLN FAMILY BRANDS

"This edition is all about getting out and exploring Minnesota and the surrounding region, giving disc golf a whirl, safely serving up summer fun at your next gathering, and protecting your largest organ from sun damage."



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# Hike It Out



A group of She Ascends hikers on a spring road trip.

## Women find peace on the trail, share love of hiking and nature through She Ascends

By Erin Yarnall

**A few years ago**, Mindi Jensen needed a change in her life.

"I was burnt out," Jensen says. "For many of us, we work 40-plus hour weeks and raise families, we try to have relationships with our husbands, and we try to make time for family and girlfriends. I think, for my generation at least, work tends to consume us."

Jensen started hiking.

She and her son, Matt began hiking 10 to 15 miles at a time in Minnesota's state parks.

"I would get in such a rhythm, and I would get so tired that my mind would clear," Jensen explains. "It was the first time, for me, in many years that I had a sense of an empty mind. I wasn't making grocery lists or thinking about where my kids needed to go. It was just this moment in nature where my mind would just shut off."

Jensen and her son wanted to create a community out of these hikes, so they started the group Hike Hoppers in 2017. The group organized hikes "for whomever wanted to come

*Continued on next page*



A group of hikers from She Ascends' north region.

*Continued from previous page*

out,” according to Jenson, who says the ultimate goal was to get participants out into nature.

While she was happy with Hike Hoppers, Jenson wanted to bring together like-minded women. That led to her establishing She Ascends in 2019.

Jenson thought there had to be more women who shared her joy of hiking, and there were. She started hiking in Stearns County with two other women and news of the group soon spread.

“The first couple of months, there were like three of us that would hike,” Jenson says. “But slowly, by word of mouth, it just kept going.”

The group took its first road trip that summer for a day hike, kayaking and yoga at Scenic State Park in Itasca County. A few months later, 16 women went on She Ascends’ first weekend trip to Duluth, where they hiked state parks near Grand

Marais and Grand Portage.

The group is planning its first international trip to Iceland later this year.

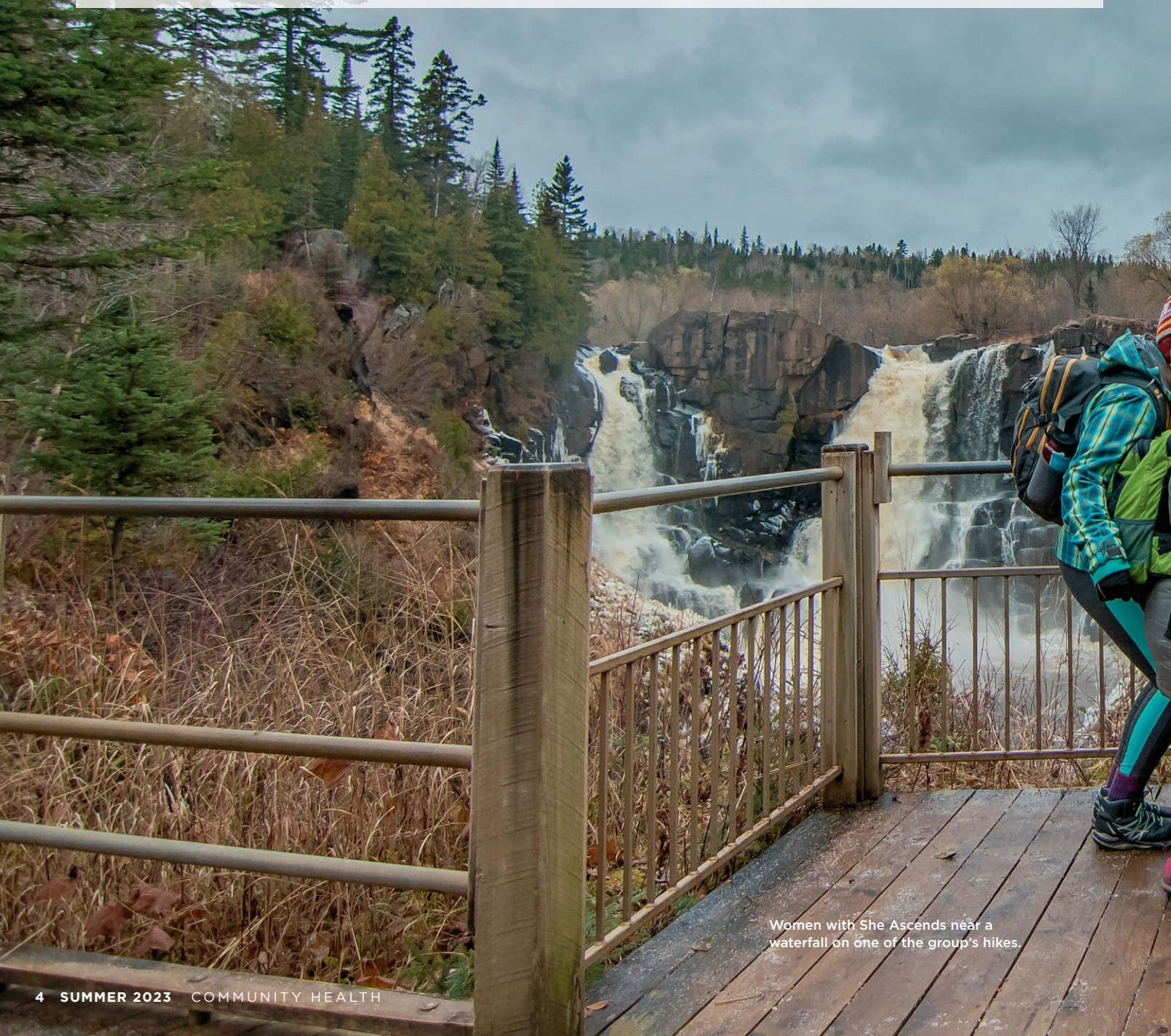
“It’s kind of a bucket list thing for me,” Jenson says. “It’s becoming a reality, and it’s pretty amazing.”

As She Ascends continues to grow, it is now divided into regions. There are north, central and south groups, and 25 guides that organize hikes several times a week.

“Now that the group is getting more established, women in central Minnesota will call south and north and get to know each other,” Jenson says. “This bond is growing.”

Jenson, who refers to herself as “an unlikely hiker,” says the group is open to all women, not just those who are passionate hikers.

“We try to keep it to a moderate-level terrain, and they last between an hour and two hours for the meetups,” Jenson said.

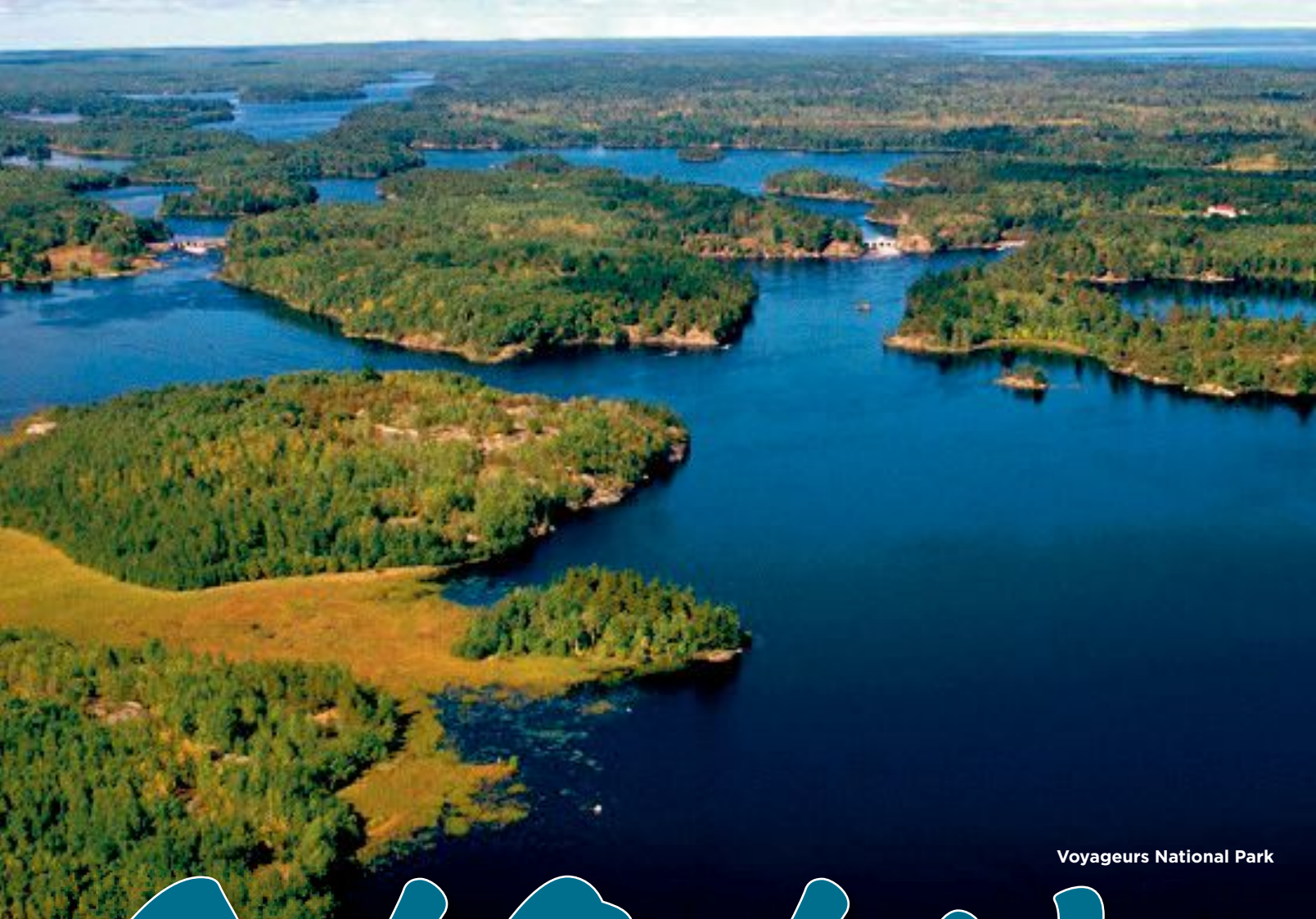


Women with She Ascends near a waterfall on one of the group's hikes.



## Hop to hiking

Hike Hoppers and She Ascends founder Mindi Jensen encourages Minnesota-based women who have an interest in hiking or nature to get involved with the club. An annual membership is \$40 and can be purchased online. The first hike as a member is free. To learn more or to purchase a membership, visit [hikehoppers.org](https://hikehoppers.org).



Voyageurs National Park

# Get Outside

Magical places to spend time outdoors  
in the Land of 10,000 Lakes and beyond

By Michael Gilbert

**Minnesota is a natural wonderland known for its abundance of water.** The state boasts more than 14,000 bodies of fresh water. So get out and enjoy these and the other natural resources in the Gopher State, or head to a neighboring region for fun and adventure.



St. Croix National Scenic Riverway



Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness

## Voyageurs National Park

Voyageurs National Park is less than two years away from celebrating its 50th anniversary. The park located near International Falls in northern Minnesota attracts more than 235,000 visitors annually.

Known for its water resources, Voyageurs National Park encompasses all or part of Rainy Lake, Kabetogama Lake, Namakan Lake and Sand Point Lake. The 360-square mile Rainy Lake is the largest body of water at the park and is a popular spot for fishermen looking to reel in walleye, pike, muskie, crappie and bass.

The park is home to more than 50 miles of trails with the 27.9-mile Kab-Ash Trail the longest and arguably the most difficult. The multi-day trail connects the Kabetogama and Ash River communities and takes hikers through backcountry forests and wetlands.

Be sure to pack the binoculars when visiting as the park is an excellent destination for bird watching. Anderson Bay, which can be accessed from the Rainy Lake boat launch, is home to 12 species of breeding warblers, as well as black-backed woodpeckers, ruby and golden-crowned kinglets, hermit thrushes and red-breasted nuthatches.

The park offers a variety of camping opportunities, including several primitive camping sites that are minimally equipped except for fire rings and cleared areas for pitching tents. Voyageurs has more than 140 camp sites on its grounds. One of the more unique attractions is to explore the park by houseboating. This activity allows guests to experience the park's solitude while having the comforts of home at one's fingertips. Visitors can discover the farthest reaches of the park without having to tent camp.

Visit [nps.gov/voya/planyourvisit/hours.htm](https://nps.gov/voya/planyourvisit/hours.htm) to view park hours.

## Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness

A mixture of forests, glacial lakes and streams greets guests at the nearly 1.1-million acre Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness in Minnesota. Established in 1978, the wilderness attracts around 150,000 visitors annually and is a popular destination for canoeing, hiking and fishing.

The Boundary Waters features a variety of trails. Among these is the Border Route Trail, a 65-mile long route that features dramatic topography and picturesque vistas overlooking the U.S.-Canadian border.

Fishing is a popular activity as 190,000 acres of the wilderness is covered by water. Northern pike, bass, panfish and trout are among the fish calling the wilderness home. The Boundary

Waters features one of the largest concentrations of native lake trout in the lower 48 states.

Those looking to spend the night under the stars will not be disappointed, as the wilderness features more than 2,000 backcountry campsites.

The wilderness lays claim to having one of the largest population of wolves in the contiguous United States. Other animals frequently spotted include deer, moose, beaver, black bears and bald eagles.

For more information about the Boundary Waters, visit [fs.usda.gov/visit/destination/boundary-waters-canoe-area-wilderness](https://fs.usda.gov/visit/destination/boundary-waters-canoe-area-wilderness).

## St. Croix National Scenic Riverway

Those seeking adventure will find it at the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway, made up of the St. Croix and Namekagon rivers. Offering more than 200 miles of water, the riverway invites guests to paddle, boat, fish and camp in scenic beauty.

Canoeing and kayaking are great ways to explore the riverway, which features some of the least developed country in the Midwest. Guests are welcome to bring their own equipment or rent at the riverway. Experienced anglers can test their luck fishing for smallmouth bass, trout and muskies. Novice fishermen can hire a guide for assistance. Bicycling, including e-bikes, is permitted on park roads and all St. Croix National Scenic Riverway trails. The riverway is also a popular destination for boating, camping and tubing.

Those interested in a less strenuous activity will find plenty of opportunities for bird watching. The riverway is home to more than 240 species of birds, including bald eagles, great blue herons, hawks and the yellow warbler. The Namekagon River is a great spot to view birds, as is the St. Croix River from Gordon Dam to Highway 8.

The riverway is open year-round, but the visitor centers for the St. Croix River and Namekagon do have seasonal hours. For more information, visit [nps.gov/sacn/index.htm](https://nps.gov/sacn/index.htm).

## Isle Royale National Park

It takes a bit of effort to visit Isle Royale National Park in Michigan as the remote island wilderness is located in the middle of the largest freshwater lake in the world and only accessible via ferry, seaplane or private watercraft.

Established in 1940, Isle Royale is the largest island in Lake Superior and offers many recreational opportunities.

*Continued on next page*



Isle Royale National Park

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With approximately 170 miles of trails, hiking is perhaps the most popular activity at the park. Hikers come from all over to explore the scenic views and trails that range from “easy” to “quite challenging.” At 40 miles in length, the Greenstone Ridge Trail is the longest in the park and reaches an elevation of more than 5,100 feet. The trail, which is generally completed in four or five days, passes through wilderness, inland glacial lakes, swamps, bogs and Mount Desor, which at nearly 1,400 feet is the highest point on the island. Hikers have reported seeing a variety of wildlife including wolves and moose on the trail. Red foxes, beavers and red squirrels are also quite common on the grounds.

Isle Royale is open from April 16 through Oct. 31. For more information, visit [nps.gov/isro/index.htm](https://nps.gov/isro/index.htm).

### **Apostle Islands National Lakeshore**

For the water-inclined, the Apostle Islands National Lakeshore offers a variety of sights and activities. From the beaches along the northeastern tip of the Bayfield Peninsula of Wisconsin on Lake Superior to 21 islands, visitors can see a cluster of lighthouses and much more.

People can take water taxis, cruises or boats to the islands, with public docks available on 12 of them. Fishing and kayaking are also popular. And there are more than 50 miles of hiking trails across the islands. Scuba diving is permitted within the national lakeshore boundaries, though people must acquire a free dive permit to do so. Camping opportunities can be found both on the mainland and on 18 of the 21 islands, according to the NPS. There are individual, group and primitive camping options.

Visitors can access the Apostle Island National Lakeshore via three visitor centers, though the islands themselves are only accessible by water. The islands are open year-round, but may be more difficult to access during certain seasons, according to the NPS. For more information, visit [nps.gov/apis](https://nps.gov/apis).

### **Superior National Forest**

Located in Minnesota’s Arrowhead Region between the Canada-United States border and the north shore of Lake Superior sits a massive, nearly 115-year-old national forest known for its recreational activities and breathtaking views.

At more than 3 million acres, Superior National Forest is the largest national forest east of the Mississippi River and makes good use of its vast amount of land. The area is home to approximately 2,000 miles of trails for hiking, hunting and bike riding as well as nearly 450,000 acres of water.

Many visitors come to take advantage of the forest’s world-class backpacking opportunities. One of the most frequented trails is the Superior Hiking Trail, which runs from Duluth to Grand Portage, passing through the eastern edge of the Superior along the way.

With around 2,000 lakes and rivers, boating and canoeing are two more favored activities. There are 77 boat-access points and several swimming areas.

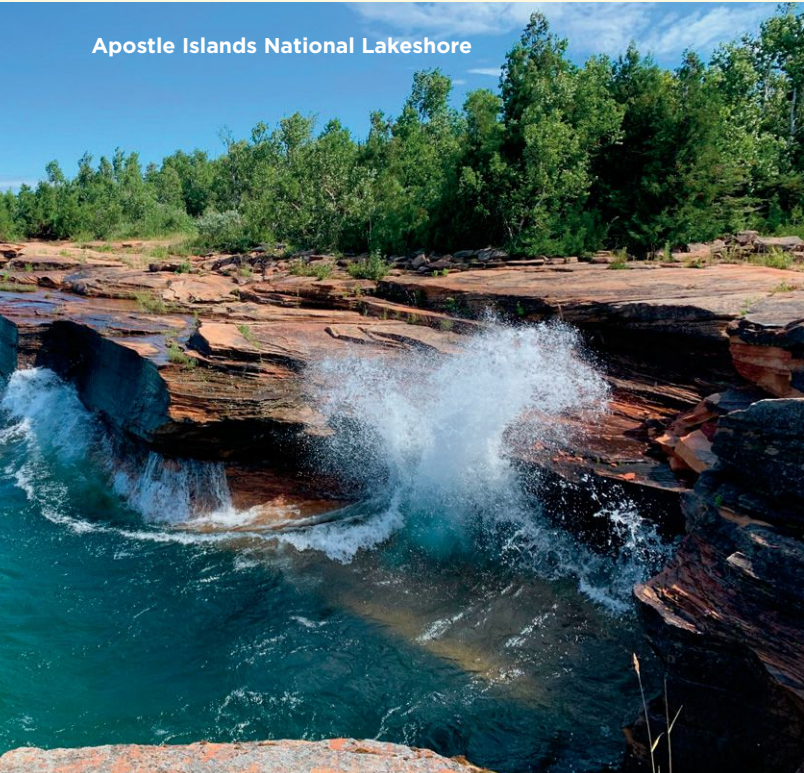
The area is made for fishing, so be sure to pack your rod and tackle box. Many of the lakes have rocky bottoms that harbor walleye, bass, crappie, lake trout, northern pike and yellow perch.

Hunting is permitted on all Superior National Forest lands except within the limits of developed recreation sites such as campgrounds and boating sites. Hunting opportunities vary from big game animals like white-tailed deer and black bear to small game such as grouse and snowshoe hare.

Campers have their pick of nearly two dozen developed campsites and 16 rustic campgrounds.

Superior National Forest is open year-round. For more information, visit [fs.usda.gov/superior](https://fs.usda.gov/superior).

Apostle Islands National Lakeshore



Superior National Forest

# Check it out sometime

KLN employees shared some of their favorite getaway destinations, from locally in Otter Tail County to the banks of the Mississippi and the Canadian border. Hiking, kayaking, mountain biking and spending time with family are just several of the reasons they visit these places:

Itasca State Park  
Tioga Beach  
Gunflint Trail  
East Lost Lake  
Lutsen Resort  
Devil's Kettle Falls  
Bemidji  
Babbitt

Maplewood State Park  
Tettegouche State Park  
Lake of the Woods  
Dead Lake  
Crow Wing River  
Duluth  
Grand Marais  
Park Rapids

Suomi Hills in Chippewa National Forest  
Bemidji State Park  
Cuyuna Lakes Recreation Area  
Lake Lida  
Underwood  
Brainerd  
Two Harbors  
North Shore

## Here's what some of them said:

### Robert Hawk | Favorite Place: Suomi Hills

*"I grew up doing an annual camping trip there with my family and friends. You canoe across one lake, portage your canoe and gear up a trail, and then canoe to an island on a secluded lake for fishing and camping games, like capture the flag (glow stick), canoe races, fishing and s'more-making."*

### Susan Moses | Favorite Place: Lake Lida

*"I was raised in the Lake Lida area. Fall is a wonderful time. All the maples you see in Maplewood State Park surround Lake Lida. Wonderful colors of trees and the blues in the lake."*

### Camelia Ramos | Favorite Place: Itasca State Park

*"I love to be with family and enjoy the fresh air."*

# COMMUNITY CALENDAR

## Local events and activities this summer and autumn

By Rebecca Fortner

**Aug. 4-6**

### **Parkers Prairie Fall Festival**

Fun for the whole family in Parkers Prairie, the festival includes fire water wars, kids games, tractor pull, prairie pageant and a parade at noon on Sunday, Aug. 6.

**Aug. 5**

### **Hanover Harvest Festival**

This one-day community event is packed with fun activities for families and people of all ages. In addition to a 5K run, the festival includes a parade, fireworks, lawn mower tractor pull, car show and more.

**Aug. 11-13**

### **Looney Days**

Come to Vergas for fun, music, food and shopping. Festivities in years past have featured a water ski show, weiner dog races, street dance, a parade and more.

**Aug. 12**

### **Corn Days**

The Corn Days Festival will take place from 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. in Long Lake. Enjoy music performances, a classic car show, wine pull, fiesta dinner, online silent auction, petting zoo and more.



**Aug. 12**

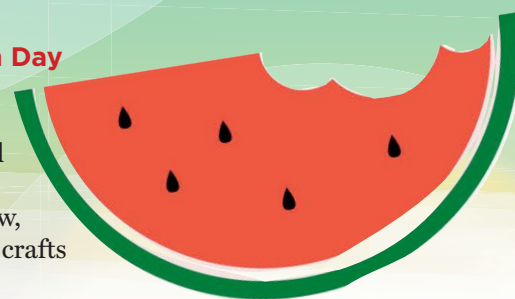
### **Ottertail Chamber Otter Fest**

Join the City of Ottertail from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. for a variety of events, including the Red Letter Band in Ottertail City Park.

**Aug. 19**

### **Vining Watermelon Day**

Gather in Vining to celebrate the delicious treat. The 50th annual event will feature free watermelon, a car show, 5k run/walk, vendors, crafts and live music.



**Aug. 19-20**

### **Finn Creek Summer Festival**

This celebration of Finnish culture features music, stories, student essays, food, grain threshing, sawmill operations and an antique tractor. The festival is held from 7:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. in New York Mills.



**Aug. 19-20**

### **Perham Pioneer Days**

Experience the days of old at Pioneer Village in Perham. Exhibits and activities at the 52nd annual event include an antique tractor pull, kids pedal pull, threshing, flea market and vendors. The Pat Fink Band will perform the first night.

**Aug. 26**

### **Stargazing**

Join naturalists at the Schroeder Campground to learn about the constellations in the night sky. Participants will also learn what constellations meant to other cultures. The stargazing event will be held from 8:30 to 10 p.m. Cost is \$5.

**Sept. 2**

### **Battle Lake Gathering of the Planes**

Watch vintage and modern aircraft arrive and take off from the airstrip, and learn about aviation at this annual event that honors late pilot Gerry Beck and supports community projects and events.



**Sept. 7-9**

### **Polka Daze**

The Ottertail Lions Club sponsors this three-day event. The 13th Annual Polka Daze features a variety of bands and dancing, food and drinks. Admission is \$20, and a three-day pass is \$45.

**Oct. 21**

### **State Hospital and Poor Farm Cemetery Tour**

The Otter Tail County Historical Society is sponsoring a walking tour of the Fergus Falls State Hospital and Poor Farm Cemeteries Oct. 21. The tour costs \$10. Dress appropriately and wear comfortable footwear as the walk is fairly long.



# For the Love of the Game

## Disc golf popularity growing in Wright and Otter Tail counties

By Jeff Vorva

What started out as a small group of people playing a round of disc golf in Perham has changed over the years, but Justin Aldrich says the love of the game and camaraderie among players hasn't.

"The best thing for me is that you are outside getting fresh air and exercise," says Aldrich, KLN Family Brands mail supervisor. "I normally can find a good group of people to go out with."

Aldrich has been playing the sport for close to a decade at the Perham Disc Golf Course, located in Arvig Park.

He has seen a few changes.



First, the small group he started with turned into a Tuesday-night spring and fall league in which more than 30 people may participate during a given event.

Second, Aldrich and his cohorts have revamped the course, putting in new baskets and lanes and turning what was a par-57 course when it opened in 2010 into a par-54.

Some courses feature hills and waterways to help gum up a score, but this course, while full of pine trees, is flat and without water hazards.

But it's still challenging.

"It's shorter and a strategic course," Aldrich says. "It's not just a throw-it-as-far-as-you-can type of course."

Over the years, equipment has changed. Aldrich and his Tuesday night league peers are not players who travel the country to compete, but they are serious enough where they head to the park carrying 15-20 discs either in a backpack or a cart.

"It's pretty crazy — there are all different kinds of molds," Aldrich says. "It's like regular golf. You have a putter all the way up to a high-speed driver. You have to have the right disc to make it do the right thing."

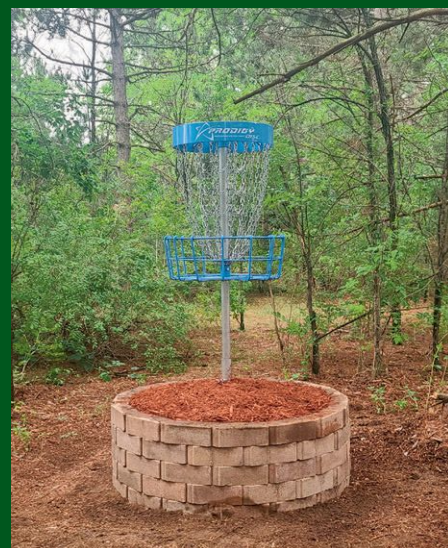
Aldrich says another positive to disc golf is that it's not necessarily expensive.

"Some places do have a fee, but it's not much, just for the upkeep and maintenance of the course," he says. "It's not like the cost of playing real golf."

Depending on how many are in a group, 18-hole rounds can last from 90 minutes to two hours. The Perham course has a steady stream of golfers throughout the day.



Justin Aldrich and his peers revamped the disc golf course in Perham in 2022.



Baskets were upgraded at Perham's disc golf course.



Improved pathways were a part of a facelift at the Perham course.

## Game On!

### Where to play disc golf

#### Becker County

Detroit Lakes City Park

#### Otter Tail County

Henning City Park

Fergus Falls Community College

#### Wright County

Buffalo Disc Golf Course in  
West Pulaski Park, Buffalo  
Montissippi Park Disc Golf  
Course, Monticello  
Clearwater/Pleasant

Regional Park, Annandale  
Montrose Disc Golf Course,  
Montrose  
Airborn Disc Golf Preserve,  
Clearwater  
Wildwood Disc Golf Course,  
Dayton



# Skin Deep

Take gentle care of your  
body's largest organ

By Michael Gilbert

**Skin disorders and diseases can vary in symptoms and severity.** Some may be temporary and painless, while others are permanent, painful and may indicate a more serious problem.

It's always best for individuals with a question to contact a doctor for further evaluation. Unfortunately, there isn't a short answer as to how one develops a skin disorder. According to board-certified dermatologist Anna H. Chacon, there are several factors that can lead to a skin disease or disorder.

"Skin disorders and disease can result from immune system issues, allergies, allergens, genetics, specific illnesses and genetic composition," Chacon says. "The place we live in, our

general health, and the lifestyle decisions we make all have an impact on the extrinsic elements that affect skin health."

Nutritionist Melissa Baker has spent years studying the relationship between diet and skin health. She agrees with Chacon's assessment that genetics, lifestyle and the environment all play a role and adds that eczema and psoriasis — two common skin disorders — can be triggered by stress, exposure to irritants and genetics.

Dr. Enrizza P. Factor notes something as simple as dust in the air can lead to a skin disorder.

"Dust can clog pores and increase bacteria on the face, which can lead to acne and spots," she says. "Chemical pollutants are also a real risk as they interfere with the skin's natural protection system. These pollutants break down the skin's oils, leaving the skin dry and subject to aging."

Treatment for skin disorders and diseases varies greatly depending on the severity, according to Dr. Alberto de la Fuente Garcia, a dermatologist at VIDA Wellness and Beauty. Milder conditions can be treated with topical treatments such as moisturizers, creams or ointments. In more severe cases, surgical procedures may be necessary, he says.

"If a person has a medical condition that is contributing to their skin disorder, then it is essential to treat the underlying condition in order to achieve better results," Garcia says. "In addition, eating a balanced diet, avoiding excessive UV exposure and quitting smoking can all help to reduce skin irritation or damage."

Garcia says the best way to prevent skin disorders and disease is to "practice healthy lifestyle habits."

"This includes using sunscreen when exposed to the sun, eating a nutritious diet that contains plenty of vitamins and minerals, avoiding smoking and alcohol, and keeping the skin clean," he says. "You should also be aware of family history, as certain skin disorders can be inherited. If there is a family history of skin conditions, it is best to speak with a doctor about any preventive measures that can be taken."

Along with using sunscreen, wearing a hat while outdoors and attempting to avoid direct sunlight during the peak hours of 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. are also good ideas, according to dermatologist Dr. Hari Kiran.

"The most important step [to avoiding skin disorders] is protecting your skin from sun exposure, but it's also

important to eat a healthy diet rich in vitamins, minerals and fatty acids and drink enough water each day to keep the skin hydrated and prevent dryness or oiliness. Steering clear of smoking, alcohol consumption and polluted environments can all help reduce the risk of developing skin issues.”

While many skin disorders pose little threat, Baker says it is important to have moles and other skin growths checked by a dermatologist if they change in size, shape, color, itch, bleed or have an irregular border.

“A doctor can determine if a growth is cancerous and provide appropriate treatment,” Baker says. “It’s also recommended to have a dermatologist perform regular skin checks to catch any potential skin cancers early.”

Dr. Factor concurs with Baker about getting moles and growths checked and says it is particularly important to pay attention to areas that are tender or spots in which pain goes away and then returns.

“Anyone can get skin cancer regardless of their skin color,” Factor says. If you notice any new spots on your skin, spots that are different from others or spots that are changing, itching or bleeding, make an appointment to have them looked at.”

Garcia says it is important “not to wait” until changes to the skin become more noticeable or uncomfortable before seeking medical help.

“Early detection is key in successfully treating skin cancer,” she says. “I recommend performing regular self-exams so you are aware of any changes that could indicate a potential issue.”



# Stay Vigilant

## Routine doctor visit leads to medical procedure and a new perspective on skin care

By Alex Keown

**Years of spending** leisure time among the thousands of lakes in Minnesota sent Al Carlson, KLN Family Brand’s recently-retired chief talent officer, on a months-long medical journey.

During a regular visit with Carlson’s primary physician, the doctor discovered a discoloration in the skin on his shoulder. A trip to the dermatologist determined the discoloration was suspect and needed to be removed. Carlson says the doctor removed skin from the discolored area. A follow-up appointment one year later called for another procedure to remove more of the concerning skin.

“You read about this a lot with Baby Boomers,” says Carlson. “We weren’t smart about being in the sun when we were younger. A lot of my generation, we spent a lot of time out in the sun and never thought about protecting our skin.”

Now, Carlson is making sure to protect his skin from the sun. Not only was his skin scare a wake-up call, Carlson explains that his wife was also diagnosed with melanoma. Whenever the two take their boat out on one of the many lakes in Minnesota, they make sure to take precautions. Those include wearing wide-brimmed hats that cover the face, neck, ears and shoulders, as well as sunscreen.

“We regularly take care of ourselves,” says Carlson. “I’m cognizant of the fact I have to take care of that shoulder. We value taking care of the skin. After all, it is the biggest organ in the body.”

They also make sure to bring extra hats and sunscreen to share with family and friends.

“We like being out (on the water) all day. We’re going to tan, of course, but now we’re going to do it the right way, not the old way,” he says.

Carlson says it’s important that people make sure they check any concerning skin discolorations or moles in order to maintain good health. He says you don’t want to ignore something only to later discover it is a deadly form of cancer.

Following his and his wife’s experience, Carlson says he has a regular checkup with his dermatologist that provides him with reassurance.

“As I’m aging, I’ve become more concerned about my skin,” he says. “You don’t want melanoma. Early detection is critical. Mine is a lesson in what not to do. Making sure you see a dermatologist is important. They are experts and my story is ongoing. That’s why I have a regular meeting each year.”



A photograph of a person's midsection, showing their hands resting on their hips. The person is wearing a black sports top and black shorts. The background is a light blue gradient.

# Gut Check

GUT

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# Health of microbiome impacts overall wellness

By Michael Gilbert

## Here's a gut check for you.

The bacteria that live in the human gastrointestinal tract — known as the gut microbiome or gut flora — aids digestion and can contribute to overall wellness.

“A healthy microbiome can help support our immune system, assist with digestion and nutrient absorption, and even influence our mood and behavior,” says Susan Schachter, a registered dietitian, nutritionist and adjunct professor of nutrition.

Schachter notes that gut flora helps break down the food we eat and helps the absorption of vitamins, minerals and other essential nutrients.

“This can affect our overall health and immunity, as a deficiency in certain nutrients can weaken the immune system,” she says. “Our gut flora also plays a crucial role in the development of our immune system, particularly during early childhood, as a diverse and healthy gut microbiome is important for proper immune system development.”

“Disturbances in the gut microbiome have been linked to an increased risk of immune-related disorders.”

Registered dietitian Dan Gallagher says the best way to encourage a healthy gut microbiome is to incorporate whole, nourishing foods into one's diet.

“It's also best to avoid processed or high-sugar foods — especially while on medication like antibiotics, which are known to destroy beneficial gut bacteria,” Gallagher says. “Incorporating a prebiotic and probiotic, or eating foods like yogurt — which include them naturally — is also a good decision.”

Gluten — a protein naturally occurring and found in wheat, barley and other grains — can be problematic for the microbiome because some people have difficulty digesting it.

“Gluten can be especially harmful for those with celiac disease because it can damage the lining of the small intestine and cause inflammation,” Schachter says.

Fiber, which is provided by vegetables, many fruits and whole grains, is a “powerhouse ingredient for gut health,” says registered dietitian Shauna McQueen, who recommends oats and barley as part of a fiber-rich diet.

A pair of other factors that may negatively impact gut health and cause inflammation are alcohol and stress.

“It is important to limit alcohol consumption and try to remain as stress-free as possible,” Schachter says.

One of the simplest ways to improve gut health, outside of diet, is exercise, according to Schachter. “Exercise increases the diversity and abundance of beneficial bacteria in the gut,” she adds. “Aerobic exercises like running, cycling or swimming can increase blood flow to the gut and stimulate the growth of beneficial bacteria.”

If pounding the pavement, pedaling or swimming laps doesn't sound appealing, resistance training

and weightlifting can have a positive impact on gut health by reducing inflammation and promoting the growth of beneficial bacteria. Yoga has also proven to help because it can reduce stress and anxiety, Schachter says.

Dietitian Juliana Tamayo says there are signs the microbiome may be imbalanced.

“Ongoing constipation, gas, pain and bloating are symptoms your gut bacteria may have died,” Tamayo says. “You can also experience a higher number of bacterial infections, such as urinary tract infections and an overall feeling of having a cold or the flu.”

“The best way to ensure your gut microbiome is at its healthiest is by consuming foods that naturally contain healthy bacteria in them. If you include foods like yogurt, kimchi and sauerkraut in your diet, you will notice positive health benefits including stronger immunity, weight maintenance and even more energy.”

## T HEALTHY PROTOCOL



Surfaces clean.



Create a good sleep routine.



Eat healthy meals & exercise.



Wash your hands with soap.



Take a quality probiotic.

# FINANCIAL WELLNESS

## \$TARTING *EARLY*

### High school students should learn how to build a budget, establish good habits

By Jeff Vorva

Whether students are in grade school, high school or college, the real world will soon be just around the corner.

That means doing “grown-up” things like managing finances, which may not be the most exciting thing in the world, but is important.

Students of all ages can get a head start if they learn to budget their own expenses, one step toward building their own financial wellness.

Jonathan Morales, division director of community banking and business development with Chase, has a five-step approach. The first step is to calculate all income sources.

“The most important rule of budgeting is to never spend more than you earn,” he says. “While that may sound basic, the truth is that many young people experience financial setbacks because they’ve never been taught how to budget.”

The second step is to list all expenses — including mandatory expenses like textbooks and discretionary costs like tickets to football games — in a monthly budget sheet, says Morales. Regularly monitoring bank balances online is also recommended.

Parents should then decide which bills their students will cover and establish a firm cap on entertainment expenses.

“Entertainment is the biggest budget-buster for high school and college students,” Morales said. “There’s a lot of pressure and temptation to spend money on social activities, but it’s important to help establish a strict limit on entertainment costs. And once their money allotted for ‘fun’ activities is gone, they can’t spend any more on that budget category for the month.”

The fourth step is to use easy ways to save on common costs, such as college students carpooling and using public transportation. Morales says high school students should make their lunches to avoid buying one at school every day. Purchasing used textbooks or checking out books free from the library can also cut down costs.

The final step is to create a habit of saving.

“Saving and establishing an emergency fund is also a key step and can provide peace of mind to help with life’s unexpected surprises,” Morales says. “Understanding the need for an emergency fund and how to build one can help your student at any stage of your life. Don’t be afraid to start small — it’s the idea of starting that is what’s most important.”

James Lewis, president of the National Society of High School Scholars, says there are some overlooked expenses to watch out for, such as health insurance, personal care items, school supplies and other items that may seem small, but add up quickly.

He also says other expenses such as medical emergencies, car repairs, technology expenses, membership fees and field trip expenses need to be considered.

“By being aware of these less common and unexpected expenses, students can better prepare themselves financially and ensure their budgets are effective and fit their needs,” Lewis says.

Lewis also recommends having a backup or emergency fund. “The recommended amount for an emergency fund is typically three to six months’ worth of living expenses,” Lewis says. “If stu-

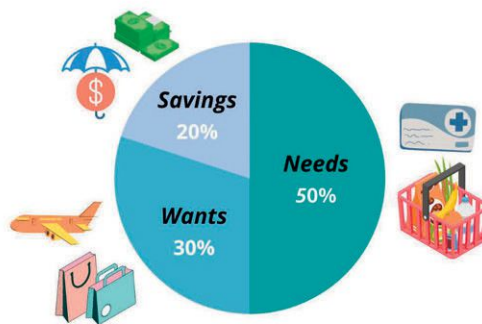
dents are able, they should aim for at least three months’ worth of living expenses. This fund acts as a safety net in case of unexpected events or emergencies like medical bills, unexpected travel, or temporary loss of income. It’s always better to be prepared for those unexpected surprises.”

For college students, there are many expenses to consider — basic and non-basic. Morales lists items such as tuition and fees, housing and utilities, food and groceries, transportation costs, entertainment and social activities, personal expenses, health insurance and medical expenses, recreation and fitness, and debt repayment.

“It’s important to assess your individual circumstances and priorities to create a budget that reflects your needs,” he says. “By being mindful of these expenses, you can manage your finances while navigating your college journey.”

“By considering these various expenses, you can create a comprehensive budget that aligns with your financial situation and priorities as a college student. Adjust the allocations based on your personal needs and seek ways to save money whenever possible.”

### 50/30/20 Rule



## *Saving for a Good Time*

### Things to consider when budgeting for a vacation

By Community Health Staff

Where do we want to go on vacation?

It’s a question just about every family discusses.

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

Instead of asking where to go, ask how much can be spent on a vacation, experts say. Once that number is established, destinations can be determined and plans can be made.

Experts note that there are two types of vacations: those for which you budget and those your budget allows.

A more expensive trip, for example, may require advance savings and planning, keeping in mind all costs including hotels, transportation, meals and attractions. Vacations a budget allows may be closer to home and easier to plan. They may not require extensive travel or involve expensive attractions.

Saving in advance can involve setting aside a specific amount of money from each paycheck. That dollar amount will vary depending on an individual or family’s needs and the type of vacation desired. The frequency of travel can also make a difference, according to experts.

Those looking to get away should also keep in mind that it’s not always the destination that matters, but simply spending time with family and friends.

# SAFETY + FIRST

## Cleanliness, proper storage & keeping pests away can help avoid food-borne illnesses

By Jeff Vorva

**Preparing food for parties**, whether they are indoor or outdoor affairs, is tricky.

The last thing a host or hostess wants is to have a guest fall ill because of something in the food.

But it could happen. And it could happen quickly.

A sneeze or a cough can do it. Or perhaps a fly landing on the food.

People can't cook in an airtight bubble, but they can tighten up their cooking area to keep germs and disease-carrying insects away.

Tony Abate, a certified indoor environmentalist, says to keep cooking areas as clean as possible.

"There are the basics like keeping the food at the right temperature and proper storage," says Abate, also vice president of AtmosAir Solutions in Fairfield, Conn. "People need to personally protect themselves. Wearing gloves and facemasks are not a bad idea in prep areas.

"You could transmit very small droplets or particles. This is how the COVID virus spread so rapidly. People cough, they breathe and they sneeze, and these droplets get into the air and they impact food."

He said clean air is also important. Restaurants have ventilation systems and filtration systems, but keeping the air as clean as possible at home can be achieved by making sure range hoods are working well and actively pulling smoke.

"Every residence has a range hood with a filter on it, and it captures a lot of grease and a lot of dirt," says Abate. "They should be cleaned and most of them are dishwasher safe. You should do it every few cooking events."

He also urges cooks to use EPA-certified cleaners near cooking areas and to make sure fingernails are clean because they can be a source of bacteria as well.

Heading outside poses a whole new set of challenges, especially with insects.

Dr. Mike Bentley, the director of training and education for the National Pest Management Association in Fairfax, Va., says not all insects are the enemy, but there are some that can

hang around an outdoor cooking area and cause trouble.

"Not all insects are created equal when it comes to transferring and spreading pathogens that spread disease," he says. "There are a few problematic insects that we consider public health pests — certain species of flies and cockroaches."

Bentley explains that these insects are "mechanical vectors of pathogens," meaning they pick up "nasty stuff" and can then transfer it to food.

Taking precautions to ensure a clean cooking area outdoors is even more important because insects can get to the food easier.

Bentley admits that cooking and serving food outside could be a losing battle, but he is not entirely against it. Once the food is prepared, he suggests a tent be used as an outdoor eating area. And he is a big proponent of sealed containers.

"The containers are effective because insects are looking for clues and conducive conditions," he says. "Bringing food outside is like ringing the dinner bell for them."

As for the dinner bell for humans, it's wise to stay vigilant with certain foods, says Mitzi Baum, the CEO of the Chicago-based Stop Foodborne Illness organization.

"Cold salads typically cause illnesses," she says. "We know what you're thinking — it's the mayonnaise, but it's not. It's the cooked potatoes, pasta, shrimp, egg or fish in the salad that can become dangerous.

"These ingredients provide the kind of environment that bacteria love to grow in — the mayonnaise not so much. These salads must be kept cold (maximum 40 degrees) to prevent harmful bacteria from growing at a rapid pace."

Baum adds that raw or undercooked meats such as chicken and beef should be monitored closely.

Maintaining proper temperatures and replacing some foods throughout an extended party or event is also key.

"Refresh dips, salads, and mains every two hours," Baum says. "Do not leave cooked chicken — or any other cooked foods — out for more than two hours without keeping hot things hot (minimum 135 degrees) and cold things cold (maximum 40 degrees). This prevents bacteria from growing."

# Summer Heat Good Eats

Plan a menu with fresh summer recipes

## Best Blueberry Crisp

### Ingredients

#### Filling

5 cups fresh blueberries  
1 Tbsp vanilla extract  
2 Tbsp fresh lemon juice  
2 Tbsp arrowroot powder or cornstarch  
1/4 tsp kosher salt

#### Topping

5 Tbsp cold unsalted butter  
1 cup rolled oats  
1/2 cup coconut sugar or granulated sugar  
1/2 cup almond flour  
1 tsp vanilla extract  
1/2 tsp kosher salt  
1 tsp culinary lavender, crushed until powdery (optional)

### Directions

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Lightly grease an 8-inch pie plate or cast iron skillet.
2. In a large bowl, toss together the blueberries, vanilla, lemon juice, arrowroot and salt until well-coated. Transfer the filling to prepared pie plate.
3. Wipe out the bowl, then chop the butter into small pieces and add, with the oats, sugar, flour, vanilla and salt. Pinch together with fingertips until it forms a shaggy, sandy dough. Sprinkle the topping evenly over the filling.
4. Bake for about 45 minutes or until the filling bubbles and the topping is golden brown. Allow to cool at least 15 minutes.



## Hawaiian Chicken Kabobs

### Ingredients

#### Kabobs

1 1/4 lb boneless, skinless chicken breasts, cut into 1-inch cubes  
1 red bell pepper, cut into large chunks  
1 green bell pepper, cut into large chunks  
1 yellow bell pepper, cut into large chunks  
1 red onion, cut into large chunks  
3 cups fresh pineapple, cubed  
Optional garnish: green onions and cilantro

#### Marinade

1/4 cup fresh pineapple juice  
1/4 cup reduced sodium soy sauce  
1 Tbsp honey  
1 Tbsp olive oil  
1 1/2 Tbsp hot chili paste  
2 tsp fresh grated ginger  
2 cloves garlic, minced

### Directions

1. Place chicken in a large bag or bowl.
2. To make the marinade, whisk together pineapple juice, soy sauce, honey, olive oil, chili paste, ginger and garlic until combined. Reserve 1/4 cup of the marinade and pour the rest over the top of the chicken until completely coated. Seal the bag and marinate chicken in the fridge for at least an hour to overnight.
3. Preheat grill on medium-high heat, making sure to lightly spray with oil to avoid sticking. Soak the skewers in cold water for 15 to 20 minutes to prevent them from burning on the grill.
4. To assemble the kabobs, thread chicken, veggies and pineapple onto the skewers and place on the grill, cooking the chicken 2 to 3 minutes on each side. Brush with reserved marinade until the chicken is cooked through.

## Quick and Easy Pasta Salad

### Ingredients

#### Pasta Salad

1 lb dried pasta (fusilli, penne, rotini or farfalle)  
1 cup sliced bell pepper (1 medium)  
1 cup thinly sliced zucchini (1/2 medium)  
1 cup halved cherry tomatoes  
1/3 cup thinly sliced scallions (5 to 6)  
1/4 cup sliced pepperoncini or banana peppers (optional)  
1 cup halved mixed olives  
1 cup grated parmesan cheese or other hard cheese  
1 cup fresh mozzarella balls, chopped  
1/3 cup fresh parsley or basil, optional

#### Dressing

1/3 cup red wine vinegar, white wine vinegar or champagne vinegar  
1/2 tsp fine sea salt, plus more to taste  
1/2 tsp fresh ground black pepper  
1/2 tsp dried oregano  
2-3 Tbsp juice from pepperoncini jar, optional  
1/2 cup extra-virgin olive oil

#### Directions

1. Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. Add pasta and cook until tender, 6 to 10 minutes (check the package for recommended cook time). Drain and rinse well under cold water.
2. While the pasta cooks, in the bottom of a large bowl, make the dressing. Whisk the red wine vinegar, salt, pepper, oregano, pepperoncini juice (if using), and the olive oil until blended. Add the drained and rinsed pasta to the dressing and mix well.
3. Stir in the bell pepper, zucchini, tomatoes, scallions, pepperoncini (if using), olives, parmesan, mozzarella, and the herbs (if using). Taste for seasoning and adjust with salt and pepper as needed. Serve or for the best results, cover and refrigerate at least 30 minutes and up to 5 days.



## Healthier BBQ Pork Sliders

### Ingredients

2 1/2-3 lb pork loin  
1 onion  
1 Tbsp olive oil  
Pinch of salt and pepper  
1/4 cup apple cider vinegar  
3/4 cup chicken broth  
1 1/2 Tbsp brown sugar  
1 Tbsp paprika  
1 Tbsp smoked paprika  
2 tsp onion powder  
2 tsp garlic powder  
1 tsp cayenne (optional)  
1 tsp salt  
1 tsp pepper  
1/2 tsp allspice

#### Creamy Kale Coleslaw

3 cups kale slaw mix  
1/2 cup Greek yogurt  
1/4 cup light or vegan mayo  
1 Tbsp Dijon mustard  
1 Tbsp apple cider vinegar  
2 tsp honey  
Juice of half an orange  
2 tsp pickle juice  
1 tsp celery salt

#### Extras

Bottle of favorite BBQ sauce  
Whole wheat buns, toasted and buttered  
Jalapeño slices and pickle slices (optional)

#### Directions

1. For the slaw, combine dressing ingredients, yogurt through pickle juice. Add the kale slaw to a bowl. Top with desired amount of dressing and toss until well-coated. Allow slaw to sit in fridge for at least an hour before serving.
2. For the pork, combine all the spices and rub over pork.
3. Using sauté mode on slow cooker or in a separate pan, add oil. Once oil is heated, add onions and cook for 8-10 minutes, until soft and beginning to caramelize. Add salt and pepper to taste.
4. Place pork on top of onions and add broth and apple cider vinegar.
5. Cook on low for 8 hours.
6. Remove pork and shred. Drain pan of juices, saving onions and some juice. Add shredded pork back to slow cooker with onions, juices and BBQ sauce. Keep slow cooker on warm.
7. Assemble. Top pulled pork with slaw, peppers and pickles as desired.

# ALL YOU NEED IS *Love*

## Experts say love is essential to well-being

By Michael Gilbert

**Exercise, diet and an overall healthy lifestyle** are three components most will agree are necessary to achieve wellness.

One component not typically associated with health and wellness is love. But does love and the act of loving actually impact our emotional and overall health for the better? Is it just as important as diet and exercise? Experts say yes.

For Stephen Harrison, the question is a simple one to answer.

"We need love to survive emotionally and mentally," says Harrison, senior medical officer for Researching Health. "Love is what makes us feel connected to other people and what makes us feel happy and fulfilled."

Matt Langdon, chief of wellness and mental health with The Great Brain Experiment, agrees, and says love is "essential for both physical and mental health."

"Research shows that," Langdon says. "People who are in loving relationships are more likely to have lower blood pressure, heart rates and less stress. They also tend to recover more quickly from illness and surgery."

Licensed psychologist Nicholas B. Bach went as far as to say people need to love and be loved to survive.

"Love is an act of empathy and compassion," Bach says. "It's the willingness to put oneself in someone else's shoes, even if it's just for a moment. It's also the willingness to forgive and forget."

Bach believes love can be defined in many ways, but at its core, it's about feeling connected to the person.

"We can love someone even when they're doing things that make us angry or hurt us," Bach says. "We can still feel connected to them and care for them. That's because we understand their feelings and motivations. We love them despite their flaws."

Not only does licensed clinical social worker Steve Carleton believe people need to love and be loved, he says it is an essential part of being human.

"Love is a powerful emotion that gives us purpose, connection and meaning," he says. "When we love and are loved by someone, we feel understood, accepted, and

secure. This connection can give us a sense of belonging and contentment that we often struggle to achieve on our own."

Carleton supports the theory that love helps an individual to grow emotionally and spiritually.

"Loving another person allows us to have empathy for the struggles they are going through and practice compassion toward them," he says. "We begin to appreciate different perspectives, learn to accept imperfections and become more patient. Through loving another person, we can also gain insight into our own strengths and weaknesses, helping us both understand and accept ourselves better."


A common question asked is whether love is an act or an idea. Kalley Hartman, a California-based marriage and family therapist, states it can be both.

"We show our love for others through how we act toward them, and this can manifest itself in various ways: physically, emotionally, verbally and so on," she says. "On the other hand, love is also a powerful concept that helps us form strong connections and relationships, elevating our emotional state."

Hartman strongly believes love is essential.

"The answer is a resounding yes," she says. "Love is

*continued on page 24*

A person with curly hair is shown from the back, making a heart shape with their hands against a bright, warm, orange-yellow background. The person is wearing a yellow shirt. The heart shape is formed by the fingers and thumbs of both hands, with the palms facing each other. The background is a soft, glowing light, possibly from a sunset or sunrise, creating a warm and romantic atmosphere.

“Research shows that people who are in loving relationships are more likely to have lower blood pressure, heart rates and less stress. They also tend to recover more quickly from illness and surgery.”

**MARK LANGDON**  
CHIEF OF WELLNESS AND MENTAL HEALTH,  
THE GREAT BRAIN EXPERIMENT



*continued from page 22*

essential for our mental well-being. Studies have shown that love plays an important role in human development and can provide comfort, security and stability to our lives. Furthermore, love helps build strong relationships, encourages empathy and compassion, and contributes to our happiness and self-confidence.”

Love has several different dynamics. Mental health expert and licensed counselor Megan Tangradi notes love can be between partners, between parent and child and between friends. In a relationship between two partners, Tangradi says there is typically an emphasis on mutual respect and understanding. For a parent to child relationship, the focus is on nurturing and protecting, while with friends there is usually an emphasis on trust, loyalty, fun times and mutual understanding.

“Love is an emotion that binds us to others and can be many-faceted,” she says. “It can include both physical and emotional components, and it involves trust, admiration, respect, patience and acceptance.”

Licensed social worker Candace Kotkin-De Carvalho explains the love between partners is often thought of as romantic love, but it can have a much deeper emotional connection.

“Partner relationships are built on mutual trust and respect,

and involve an exchange of giving and taking from both people to maintain the bond,” she says.

As the love between a parent and child involves both guidance and structure, it plays an important role in our later relationships, according to Kotkin-De Carvalho.

“Familial love is often unconditional and provides us with security, stability and emotional support,” she says. “All things that are essential for our mental health and well-being.”

Psychologist Raffaello Antonino circled back to the idea that love has a positive impact on our overall health.

“Love is an integral part of our lives and impacts our physical, mental and emotional well-being,” he says. “The act of loving another person or being loved in return can have a profound effect on us both as individuals and in relationships. Love, in the sense of giving and receiving affection, mediates and supports the development of a baby’s brain, as well as the extent of our adjustment to society and our ability to form and maintain meaningful relationships when we become adults.

“Love is a powerful emotion which can have profound positive effects and helps us connect with the people around us and build meaningful relationships.”

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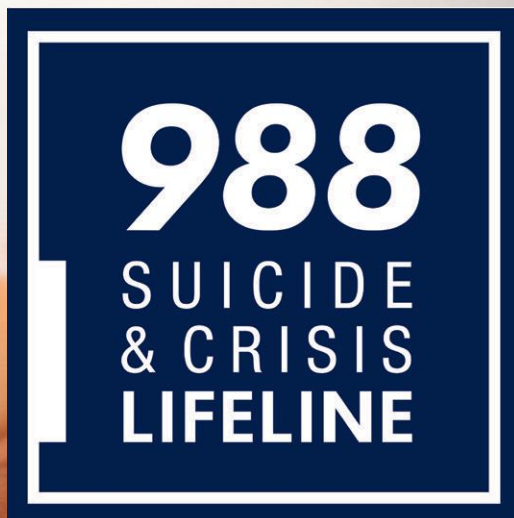
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# The Lifeline and 988

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline  
a resource for those in distress



For ways to support your local Lifeline network crisis center, visit the Crisis Centers page at [988lifeline.org/our-crisis-centers](https://988lifeline.org/our-crisis-centers).

To learn about the impact of the Lifeline, visit the 'By the Numbers' page at [988lifeline.org/by-the-numbers](https://988lifeline.org/by-the-numbers).

**988 has been designated as the three-digit** dialing code that will route callers to the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (now known as the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline) that is now active across the United States.

When people call, text or chat 988, they will be connected to trained counselors that are part of the existing Lifeline network. These trained counselors will listen, understand how the callers' problems are affecting them, provide support and connect them to resources, if necessary.

**The previous Lifeline phone number (800-273-8255) is still available to people in emotional distress or suicidal crisis.**

The Lifeline's network of more than 200 crisis centers has been in operation since 2005. It's the counselors at these local crisis centers who answer the contacts the Lifeline receives every day. Numerous studies have shown that callers feel less suicidal, less depressed, less overwhelmed and more hopeful after speaking with a Lifeline counselor.

**If you're a veteran, service member or loved one of a veteran/service member and want to know more about how 988 will affect the Veterans Crisis Line, visit [veteranscrisisline.net/about/what-is-988](https://veteranscrisisline.net/about/what-is-988).**

