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Minnesota's Guide to Specialty Shopping & Premier Events

May/June 2026

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Happy Mother's Day!

The Country Register

Minnesota's Guide to Specialty Shopping & Premier Events



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Months May/June 2026

Volume 32 Number 3

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Special Events

May

1-3.....	Monthly Sew In - Up North Quilt Shop - International Falls
2.....	Spring Opening - Country Craft Shed - Duluth
7-9.....	Sp[ring Fling Retreat - Quilt Haven on Main - Hutchinson
15-17.....	Monthly Sew In - Up North Quilt Shop - International Falls

June

2.....	Bus Tour - Iowa Quilt Museum - Winterset, IA
3-6.....	Quilt Retreat - Iowa Quilt Museum - Winterset, IA
5.....	National Catchup Day - The Quilted Steeple - Lone Rock, IA
5-7.....	Monthly Sew In - Up North Quilt Shop - International Falls
6.....	St. Cloud Spin Fest & Fiber Fair - Rocking Horse Farm - St. Cloud
6.....	Airing of the Quilts - Iowa Quilt Museum - Winterset, IA
11-13.....	The Minnesota Quilt Show - St. Cloud
13.....	Bus Trip to Minnesota Quilt Show - Quilted Dog - Cloquet
15-20.....	Finding Freedom Road Trip
19-21.....	Monthly Sew In - Up North Quilt Shop - International Falls
25-27.....	Eden Valley Daze - Lost and Found - Eden Valley
27.....	Quilt Auction - Shetek Luthern Ministries - Slayton

Deadline For the July/August 2026 Edition is June 1st!

Happy Father's Day!

Where in Minnesota?

Somewhere in Minnesota the image to the right can be found.

Where is it?

(Answer on page 7 of this issue)



The 2026 Minnesota Quilt Show Showcases National Talent, Inspiring Exhibits, and Creative Innovation

St. Cloud, Minnesota, June 11- 13, 2026. Minnesota Quilters invites quilting enthusiasts from across the region to experience the 2026 Minnesota Quilt Show, a premier celebration of artistry, education, and community. This highly anticipated annual event brings together renowned quilting instructors, extraordinary quilt exhibitions, and immersive creative experience - all inspired by this year's theme of sustainability, highlighting innovative approaches to reuse, resourcefulness, and environmentally conscious creativity.

A highlight of the 2026 show is its exceptional lineup of leading voices in the quilting industry, offering workshops and lectures designed to inspire quilters at every level. Taking center stage as banquet keynote speaker is Julia McLeod, an acclaimed quiltmaker, author, and textile designer known for her innovative use of reclaimed luxury fabrics. Her work will also be featured in a special exhibition, offering attendees a rare opportunity to experience her artistry up close.

Also featured is Maday Delgado, whose "Trash Talk" lecture at the Sustainable Fashion Show explores the creative potential of reuse. Celebrated for transforming discarded materials into striking textile art, Delgado brings a fresh and thought-provoking perspective on sustainability in quilting and fashion.

At the heart of the event are stunning quilt exhibitions, including special showcases from McLeod and Delgado, as well as two remarkable Cherrywood Fabric exhibitions from the Storytime Collection. The show's judged competition will be evaluated by judges from the National Association of Certified Quilt Judges, ensuring the highest standards of excellence and recognition within the quilting industry.

This year's President's Challenge will invite participants to create quilts in support of the Quilts of Valor Foundation, honoring veterans in celebration of the America250 initiative. This meaningful challenge highlights the power of quilting as a form of service, remembrance, and national reflection.

Attendees can also take part in the show's banquet, a celebratory evening bringing the quilting community together for connection, conversation, and inspiration, featuring the keynote address by Julia McLeod.

Beyond exhibits and education, the show features an exciting vendor marketplace offering the latest fabrics, tools, patterns, and quilting innovations. It serves as a vibrant hub for discovery and creativity, within the quilting community.

New for 2026, the Minnesota Quilt Show expands beyond quilting to welcome a broader range of textile disciplines, including weaving, felting, and dyeing. These hands-on experiences will take place at the Paramount Center for the Arts, creating a more inclusive and inspiring environment for all textile artists.

With a welcoming atmosphere and a legacy of excellence, the Minnesota Quilt Show continues to be a must-attend event for quilters and fiber artists alike—bringing together education, inspiration, and the joy of making.

Event Details:

What: 2026 Minnesota Quilt Show

When: June 11–13, 2026

Where: River's Edge Convention Centre, St. Cloud, Minnesota

Hosted by: Minnesota Quilters,

For more information, class registration and tickets, visit mnquilt.org/2026show.

Media Contact:

Alex Constantine

Show Director

Email: showdirector@mnquilt.org

Phone: (651) 224-3572

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Become Inspired

by Annice Bradley Rockwell

Soulful Spaces



As spring comes into full bloom, our yards become abundant with life. Our landscape becomes filled with green more and more each day. Our lawns are transformed and vibrant. The trees that line our country property are showing signs of increased vitality. Our perennial gardens seem to beckon us to enjoy some time getting back to a task we love—nurturing the herbs and flowers that have become a soulful part of what we call home.

With temperatures gently warming and daylight hours stretching out before us, this time of year is indeed a blessing. Spring is the ideal time to tackle some of the tasks we have planned all winter long. Whether it is mending our Williamsburg-style fence or putting a fresh coat of paint on our batten doors, spring often affords us both the weather and the motivation to bring our ideas to life. And at the end of the day, after all of the hard work, the satisfaction felt as you look upon the fresh improvements will be a sweet, welcomed reward to be enjoyed all season long.

Creating Interest and Delight

Preparing and decorating our outdoor spaces is time well spent. As we sip our early morning coffee on our stone patio on one of the first warm mornings, we may come up with special country touches that will add interest and delight to our outdoor spaces. Woven bee skeps are a signature country motif that can be put on a large, seasoned stump or tall post as a focal point to enjoy. Country accents like tall, colorful birdhouses can be hung against the backdrop of a primitive fence to add color amongst the growing herbs. A sundial can be mounted on a hand-hewn post to become a central image in the kitchen clipping garden.

When it comes time to harvest our first batches of tender herbs, there is nothing like bringing out our sturdy, splint gathering baskets to assist in this joyful country task. As we gather, bind, and hang our first bundles of sage, sweet marjoram, and lemon balm, we are easily inspired, for this is only the beginning. Our gardens, whether culinary, medicinal, or decorative will serve us well with our generous care. And in exchange for our efforts our reward will be a feeling of true peace that comes with deep connection.

Honoring True Beauty

This season take time to savor the simple yet significant gifts of spring. Delight in being surrounded by true moments of beauty—like the unexpected return of your first hummingbird, or the vibrant first blooms of the lilac bush that graced your front stepstone for generations. Take comfort in knowing that these reminders will always be around us if we take the time to honor them.

--Annice Bradley Rockwell is an educator and owner of Pomfret Antiques. She is currently working on her book, *New England Girl*. NewEnglandGirl2012@hotmail.com



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Scraps and Crafts

WHAT COULD BE BETTER?

by Deb Heatherley

Summer is a great time to pull out your scraps and put them to use! Scraps not only make great scrap quilts but fun crafts as well. Here are a few ideas for scrap projects to make with your grandchildren or other young people in your life. You can also donate scraps to a friend teaching a summer camp or to someone teaching crafts at Bible school.

For the youngest, cut a variety of colorful squares, rectangles and triangles from the scraps. Add paper, crayons or colored pencils, ribbon or twine and a glue stick, and you have everything you need! These items will be like paint to a young artists mind. As an added bonus you will be teaching about shapes. Small rectangles can be the petals and leaves for a flower. Triangles can be the sails of a boat. Small squares can be eyes and a rectangle can be a mouth on a funny face. The ideas are endless.

Older children, with a bit more patience, might enjoy using small snips in a collage. Tiny pieces can be glued to a drawing they create or use a coloring book page as the backdrop. Color the drawing or page first, then glue tiny bits of like colors on the page. Provide tweezers to help them carefully place the small bits and scissors for needed trimming. As a bonus, provide them with a small clear Christmas ornament in which they can place leftover bits. This ornament will memorialize a fun day.

Those old enough to use a rotary cutter and sewing machine (with supervision of course), are sure to love making the popular "hot dog" pillowcases. If you are not familiar with these, just google "hot dog pillowcase" for a tutorial. The term comes from the technique of rolling up the fabric and then pulling it out on one end. When I owned my quilt shop, this was always a favorite project for my kids club. They loved making them for themselves and as gifts. If you have an embroidery machine, let them personalize them! The look of fascination and delight as they watch the machine stitch out their name always made me smile.

Another favorite of my kids club was anything that lets them play with buttons. This mini flag is a perfect project to celebrate our country's 250th. You will need (1) 6 1/2" square of blue, (3) 1 1/2" x 7 1/2" and (2) 1 1/2" x 12 1/2" strips of red, (2) 1 1/2" x 7 1/2" and (2) 1 1/2" x 12 1/2" strips of white. Sew the 1 1/2" x 7 1/2" strips together and add to the right of the blue square. Sew the 12 1/2" strips together and add below. Sew on buttons in the blue square in any formation.

(I added some white chenille on the white strips but that is optional). You can make this into a mini quilt or add a back to make it into a pillow.

Summer is for memories and nothing could be better than creating those memories with the younger generation. When you take the time to instill the love of creation, you do more than just use up a few scraps, you plant the seed of creativity that will last a lifetime. Who knows, the craft you teach today could be a craft they will pass on for generations to come.

Deb Heatherley is a designer for Creative Grids® rulers and the author of eight popular pattern books. Creative Grids® fans are invited to join her Facebook group, "Grids Girls", for tips and inspiration, and two free mysteries each year. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/7704296498004571>. Shop Owners are invited to join her group just for you, "Grids Girls for Quilt Shop Owners Only" <https://www.facebook.com/groups/273593657256524>. Visit Deb's website at www.Debcatsquilts.com.



KISSed Quilts

by Marlene Oddie

Celebrate Earth Day!

In celebration of Earth Day, I'm sharing two new designs with fabrics shipping June 2026 to a local quilt shop.

I revisited an old friend when using a new Lumin Fabrics/Island Batik collection – Fossil Finesse. I originally designed this 'jewels' quilt in 2009 for a wedding. The version was called Peacock Jewels. With this new collection I used two slightly different background whites so you can see uniquely bordered jewels but also see white stars. The jewel tones and motifs in this fabric collection felt perfect for this



quilt pattern. I enjoyed custom quilting it to really show it off!

Earth's Essence is another Lumin Fabrics/Island Batik collection shipping soon. I used a fat quarter bundle of the collection to make this City Windows pattern. It really maximizes the use of a fat quarter and shows off some of those larger print elements in the collection.

Ask at your local quilt shop that carries Island Batik fabrics for these fabrics and patterns.



Marlene Oddie (marlene@kissedquilts.com) is an engineer by education, project manager by profession and now a quilter by passion in Grand Coulee, WA at her quilt shop, KISSed Quilts. She quilts for hire on a Gammill Optimum Plus but especially enjoys designing quilts and assisting in the creation of a meaningful treasure for the recipient. Fabric, patterns, kits and templates are available at <http://www.kissedquilts.com>. Follow Marlene's adventures via <http://www.facebook.com/kissedquilts> and <https://www.instagram.com/marlene.kissedquilts>



It's not hoarding if it's yarn!

Humble Life Acres

Age is just a number, unless we let it be a limit.

This year I am turning the big 5-0. I have to say, first I had to recount the years to ensure that was the number it added up to. It sounds funny, I know. Want to know a secret? I have not been acknowledging my age number since I was 29. I still celebrate the day every year. I am just not focused on the age number.

I found that by being focused on the age number, somewhere in my mind this also created un-necessary urgency, pressure, comparisons, timelines and the list go on. It became a negative at the back of the mind. A limitation. So now I see it as levelling up. The truth is it doesn't matter how old we are. It does not define who we are or what we can do unless we let it. We can be 80 years old and be a kid at heart. It is more about how we feel.

The problem with attaching meaning to age is that it can quietly create invisible walls. When we believe we are "too old" to try something new or too this or that, we start shrinking our own potential. Our human spirit is not meant to be limited. It is all about perspective.

Each year we are blessed with another year. Every day that we wake up to a new day, it should be seen as that you are blessed to see another day. Gifted more time to add more depth to who we are. More understanding. More connections with others. More Love. More stories. More experiences. More clarity about what matters and what doesn't. With time often comes a powerful freedom: the ability to care less about expectations and more about authenticity.

When we release the idea that we must accomplish certain things by a certain age. Something beautiful



happens. The pressure dissolves and the curiosity returns. The inner child begins to learn to play, have fun and dance. We begin living in the moment. Having gratitude for the smallest things and exploring our passions more freely.

Age then becomes what it was always meant to be. Not a limitation. Not an excuse. Not a barrier. Not something to be hyper focused on is a distraction from fully enjoying life. Our age is a collection of years that shapes who we are today. Celebrating our story.

The most important part? It is when we remember to take time to acknowledge the good in life. Gift yourself more moments of being in the moment – without the distractions. Discovering who you are without wearing all the hats. The heaviness of expectations placed on by others and losing who we are. Celebrate the journey.

Celebration does not always mean happiness. Sometimes it means acknowledging strength, courage and the space you hold in the most traumatic storms of your life. Sometimes the steepest mountain of experience that has tested our very soul, can run deep and hurt. It's important to be patient with ourselves. Talk to ourselves with love and understanding. Heal whatever that is. Its own journey of time. It is not for us to carry the heaviness or burdens for the rest of our lives. At some point we need to put the backpack down and leave it where it is to be free.

It is also about the beautiful moments you have experienced that you just want to last forever. Life is too short to be focused on the things we cannot change. We can't allow the bitterness to poison our entire being and over time define who we are. The antidote to bitterness is perspective, gratitude, self-compassion and love. By shifting focus to what nourishes us, the lessons we can learn, observations, understanding and the resilience we've gained. We transform what once felt like poison into something profoundly empowering.

Life becomes lighter, our hearts more open, and our souls freer when we refuse to let bitterness take residence. Because at the end of the day, we are not defined by what we endure. Each day is gift if we choose to see it. Never lose sight of seeing the good of each day.

The other thing I have realized is that you are responsible for your own life force energy. No one else controls the spark that drives your passion, your joy, or your sense of purpose. While the world can influence, challenge, or even drain you, the ultimate responsibility for how you nurture and protect your energy rests with you. You water your own garden.

Guard it fiercely. Feed it with experiences, people, and practices that uplift you. Slow down and give yourself the time to just be. Release what depletes you, whether it's toxic relationships, limiting beliefs, or endless comparison. Your energy is

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sacred. It powers your creativity, your resilience, and your ability to show up for yourself and for others.

When you take ownership of your life force, you stop giving away your power to circumstances or other people. You start living with more intention. Choosing what you allow in and what you keep out. You become the alchemist of your own inner world, transforming challenges into growth, and ordinary days into moments of vitality. Your energy is your responsibility and your greatest gift. Protect it, honor it, and let it flow freely.

A wise woman in my life said: 'I can't care more about you more than you care for yourself.' That really resonated with me. I also realize that after so many years of taking care of others I have been neglecting some of the things for myself. This year I am working towards and more focused on self. Self-care, Self-Love, dealing with things I have been procrastinating. It is not easy when we are used to driving in the lane we have been in for many years. That is why there is beauty in perspective. We never stop growing and learning unless you stop it.

Much love,
 Resha

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When I hear the CHIMES in my garden it's like fairies are going by.

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Find lots more about the garden in Susan's new Summer Book at www.susanbranch.com ~ Happy Spring! 'Tis the Season!





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 June 6th - Airing of the Quilts, with quilt displays throughout Madison County

Now Through July 5th 2026

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2026 Iowa Quilt Festival - IQM 10th Anniversary: June 3th - 6th

At the Iowa Quilt Museum, we're working on something special for the 2026 Iowa Quilt Festival and we can't wait to welcome you!

Join us June 3 - 6 for a celebration of creativity, connection, and quilting in the heart of historic Winterset, Iowa.

This year is especially meaningful as the Iowa Quilt Museum celebrates its 10th Anniversary. To mark this milestone, we'll be adding special prizes, promotions, surprise giveaways, and extra celebratory touches throughout the Festival. It's a year-long celebration, and the Festival will be one of the highlights!

New this year! We're kicking off the Festival with a Bus Trip to the International Quilt Museum in Lincoln, Nebraska, on June 2.

Enjoy a behind-the-scenes tour of the museum's quilt collection, a group lunch, and a stop at Lincoln's beloved quilt shop, The Cosmic Cow. It's the perfect warm-up for Festival week and a wonderful opportunity to connect with fellow quilt enthusiasts.

The Festival officially begins with our beloved Quilt Retreat at the Winterset Livery, offering three days of quilting, camaraderie, and creativity. It's the perfect time to gather your quilting friends and make a getaway of it.

In addition to the retreat, we'll offer workshops, lectures, Quilt Trivia Night, and more engaging events throughout the week. Whether you're joining us for a hands-on class, a fun evening gathering, or just a stroll through town, there's a place for you at the Festival.

And don't miss the grand finale: Saturday, June 6 – The Airing of the Quilts. Winterset will be transformed into a quilt lover's paradise as quilts are displayed on two of our iconic Covered Bridges of Madison County, as well as our beautiful historic courthouse, parks, churches, and in storefronts all around town.



New Exhibit at the Iowa Quilt Museum



On April 14, 2026, a new exhibit titled "In Flanders Field the Poppies Grow" officially opened at the Iowa Quilt Museum in Winterset, IA. The main exhibit is a spectacular display of 20" x 20" quilts which were made in response to the call for entries from Cherrywood Fabrics, a fabric manufacturer famous for its hand-dyed cottons. The quilts honor the spirit of American military service to the world by recalling the fields of poppies in that grew in Flanders and symbolize World War I.

The "Poppies" exhibit features 225 small, beautifully crafted quilts and will be the first time these works of art have been displayed all at once in a museum. The Iowa Quilt Museum is honored to host these pieces through July 5, 2026.

Accompanying the poppy quilts are six newly crafted Quilts of Valor, which will be awarded in a ceremony at the close of the exhibit.

As a bonus, a display of 50 small Baltimore Album-inspired quilts titled American Album celebrating the 50 United States is on display in the gallery through June 1.

Doing the math, the 225 "Poppies" quilts, plus six Quilts of Valor, plus the 50 Baltimore Album style works, add up to a whopping 241, by far the largest number of individual works ever displayed at the Iowa Quilt Museum, which is celebrating its tenth anniversary this year.

Windom



Search for the underlined words in the recipe in the word search below!

Garlic Parmesan Chicken Meatloaf

recipe from Recipes by Natalie

Meatloaf:

- 2 pounds ground chicken or turkey
- 1 cup parmesan cheese, shredded
- 1 cup panko breadcrumbs, or regular breadcrumbs
- 2 large eggs
- 4 cloves minced garlic
- 1 tsp garlic powder
- 1 tsp onion powder
- 1 tsp dried basil
- 1 tsp dried parsley
- 1 tsp salt
- 1/2 tsp black pepper
- 1/2 cup milk

For Glaze:

- 2 tsp unsalted butter
- 1/4 cup additional parmesan
- 2 tbs fresh parsley

Preheat oven to 375° and prepare baking sheet lined with parchment paper. Or grease a loaf pan. In a large bowl, combine ground chicken, parmesan cheese, breadcrumbs, eggs, minced garlic, garlic powder, onion powder, basil, parsley, salt pepper and milk. Stir gently until just combined. Form the mixture into a loaf shape and transfer it to the prepared baking sheet or greased loaf pan. Bake for 40-45 minutes or until the internal temperature is 165°. While baking, melt unsalted butter in a saucepan over medium heat. Add minced garlic and sauté until fragrant. Mix in additional parmesan and parsley, cooking until slightly thickened. Brush the creamy glaze over the cooked meatloaf and return to the oven for an extra 5-7 minutes. Let the meatloaf stand for 5 minutes. Slice and garnish with extra parsley.





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Over The Teacup

Mother's Day Quotes

by Janet Young

It's that time of the year as Mother's Day rolls around, that we begin to switch gears and begin to focus on our mothers. We celebrate the many blessings she has brought into our life.

This year I thought it would be a novel way to share some quotes that people have made about their mother. It may make you laugh, reflect, and recall some of the remembrances you have of your mother.

Let's get started.

- Mothers can look through a child's eyes and see tomorrow. *Reed Markham*
- Mother is a verb. It is something you do, not just who you are.

Cheryl Lacey Donovan

- All I am I owe to my mother. *George Washington*
- All that I am or ever hope to be, I owe to my mother. *Abraham Lincoln*
- A mother's arms are more comforting than anyone else's. *Princess Diana*
- My mother has a great deal of trouble with me, but I think she enjoyed it. *Mark Twain*

- A mother understands what a child does not see. *Jewish proverb*
- My mother is my root, my foundation. She planted the seed that I base my life on, and that is the belief to achieve, starts in your mind. *Michael Jordan*

The next three quotes are from unknown sources:

- Nothing is really lost until your mom can't find it.
- Life doesn't come with a manual it comes with a mom.
- Moms are like buttons; they hold everything together.

I hope as you read these quotes some made you laugh, and some touched your heart. But more importantly, I hope it brought back reflections of why your mother means so much to you.

For those whose mothers are in heaven, may you cherish the memories and feel the love that only a mother can provide.

Happy Mother's Day



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 the tune without the words

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Hope is the combination of the desire for something and the expectation of receiving it. When Ms. Dickinson connects the concept with nature it gives us a visual and sensual experience. I can just hear that little sparrow singing a song about flying to her babes still within the shell of her eggs.

GIRLFRIEND WISDOM:
 Hum a tune of Hope when doubt enters your world,
 it will calm your mind, lower your heart rate,
 and bring you some peace!

Joy & Blessings,
 Jody

Girlfriend Wisdom is written and illustrated by Jody Houghton®.
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June 28, 1904: Helen Keller, deaf and blind since an illness at just 19 months old, graduates from Radcliffe College in Cambridge, Massachusetts. She becomes the first deaf-blind person to earn a bachelor's degree.

Information found on www.history.com

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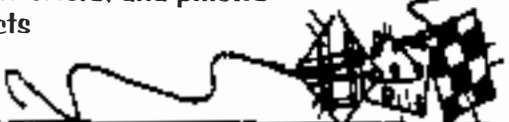
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LIFE—to be Continued

by Wayne M. Bosman

Last year was a momentous and chaotic one for our little family with the passing of both my daughter and my mother, but life continues on. With spring's annual rebirth going on all around us comes an inspiration to see what life has in store for us in this new season of life. While I am still slowly opening my eyes and heart to the joy of life, Kerri has already started exploring hers.

For her, the place to start was to revisit things that she has enjoyed in the past. She has always loved local history and been an avid seamstress. She has spent the last few years teaching preschool to indulge her love of young children. A natural meeting point of these things fell into place for her this spring.

When we moved to the North Carolina coast a couple of years ago, a new local history opened up. Because life can be busy, we never had time to explore the history of the region. We had passed right by the History Museum of Carteret County many times, always vowing to stop in. We have time now. What we found was an opportunity for her to pursue three of her loves.

The museum started a program aimed at opening up fourth graders to how their area was settled and grew to what it is now. Kerri fit right in. Over the years she made a number of true to period dresses that she wore giving tours at historical sites. Most of them still fit, although some apparently shrank or something.

She augmented them with new dresses and aprons that she spent enjoyable evenings creating. One of the characters she got to portray for the Museum program was a locally well-known woman who was a Civil War era spy for the Confederacy. Miss Emeline spent the war smuggling supplies to Confederate soldiers across Union lines. The voluminous skirts of the era coupled with a lady's personal modesty gave her plenty of hiding places. Kerri stitched together a slip with pockets capable of holding a pair of boots, two pairs of pants, bandages, sewing articles and an entire ham without looking out of place. She put her hair up in a way common to the era and hid notes in her hair that she gave to the fourth graders during their field trips.



The children loved it all. Opening a window for them to a time when there was no internet, no television or even radio. Telephones were not yet invented, much less cell phones. Cars? No. Malls? No. For most families, a trip to town was a major undertaking to sell what they produced or to buy what they couldn't. Kerri would come home from the museum excited and enchanted by the questions the children asked, and how some children's eyes lit up when something caught their imagination.

Kerri, for her part, started sewing things by hand whenever she could, to try to make everything as true to life as possible. No more zippers, which weren't invented yet. Elastic, invented in 1820, was technically okay, but the likelihood of it being available here was small. Buttons, hooks and ties were the order of the day. Dyeing by hand was common, especially with indigo as a local cash crop. She hasn't tried that yet.

For Kerri, Spring has sprung. For me, the first tentative shoots are emerging from my fallow soil. I hear the birds more now, insistently calling out their spring time message. I look over my unfinished projects and actually finishing some! I look out at the ocean, waiting for the schools of fish to migrate through, following a rhythm that only they understand. I stay still, grateful that I have a life to be continued.

Wayne Bosman is a retired auto mechanic living in Cape Carteret, NC

Piecing Life Together

by Barbara Polston
Learning



I had the great good fortune of beginning 2026 by attending a week-long creative seminar. I enrolled in this course for several reasons. Having admired the instructor's work for many years, I was excited to learn her techniques. She works mostly by hand in wool and cotton fabrics, embellished by beautiful embroidery stitches using a great variety of threads. I was excited to learn more about hand embroidery and how stitch patterns and threads are chosen to work together for such intricate and beautiful results.

There was no pattern to follow – we were instructed to do our own thing and appreciate the Zen of hand stitching. We spent the first two days building the background upon which we would ultimately embroider. All our background elements were to be applique stitched in place sewing by hand. I love doing applique work, but all mine is done by machine. With a few words of explanation from the instructor, I jumped in and stitched for hours to finish that part of the process. By day three, we were beginning to sample embroidery stitches and threads – but not, as I had hoped to learn, surrounding our applique shapes. All our stitches were to create texture in the background. Finally, on day four, we began highlighting our applique elements with stitches. There was little instruction other than demonstrations of different stitches or products to consider employing. We were encouraged to just give things a try.

I was happy with the progress on my learning piece, but I still didn't think that I was getting what I thought I signed up for. That is, until the last day of class. Everyone stitched the morning away until midday. At that time, each of us laid our work at our place. All the students wandered the room, looking at everyone else's work, taking inspirational pictures of things we wanted to try at home. It was eye-opening! Every work was delightful, completely original, and different. I am so glad that I trusted the process, even more so when the instructor complimented my progress.

While I didn't necessarily get what I thought I signed up for, I learned so much! I learned that, despite not doing hand applique, that I can do it, and do it well. I learned that I know more embroidery stitches than I believed I did. I can look at illustrated directions for how to complete a stitch and do so successfully. I learned that I could create work without a specific plan and find satisfaction in the result. I learned that I am willing to give something a try – and remove it if dissatisfied. I learned that slow stitching by hand is indeed Zen.

My sample work is far from finished. This is a project that can go on and on as new ideas to try present themselves. Did I get what I thought I was signing up for? No, I got so much more.

©Barbara Polston, February 2026. Barbara is the author of *Quilting with Doilies: Inspiration, Techniques, and Projects* (Schiffer Press, 2015) and a series of children's books inviting young children to share in *The Adventures of Puppy Brian* (www.puppybrian.com). Barbara lives in Tucson, Arizona where she has failed at retirement, but is getting more time for sewing in a variety of forms. Contact Barbara at barbarapolstonquilter@gmail.com.

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Spinning Wheels for Freedom

by Janet M. Bair



As the 250th anniversary of our country draws near, I have been contemplating freedom's cost. Freedom is not free.

When the American colonies decided to boycott British imports of tea and cloth, the American women did their part. By the 1750s, a great deal of cloth was imported from Britain.

We read these facts today, but it doesn't register the extra work this would mean for the average mother of a large household.

Making cloth involved many time-consuming tasks such as spinning thread from wool or flax and then slowly weaving the threads on a loom. The Patriot leaders called upon American women to create cloth locally so that the colonies were no longer dependent upon Britain to survive.

Wearing homespun became the patriotic thing to do. Just as women became creative in brewing teas made from native plants such as sage, raspberry and strawberry, they grew flax and sheared their sheep. Various plants were used to dye thread as well as onion skins, nut shells, and bark.

In the late 1760s and early 1770s, women got together for spinning bees for the cause of freedom. Each woman would load her spinning wheel into the back of a wagon and go to the appointed gathering spot, usually the minister's home. The women would sit and spin for a whole (farmer's) day, from dawn to dusk. The gatherings often numbered 100 women from all economic backgrounds. Freedom from Britain was their united goal.

It's no surprise to know that every scrap of fabric was cherished and re-used and re-worked until it became only small pieces, which were then patched into a quilt. The artistry and creativity of colonial women is to be admired. It makes me wonder what American women would do today to help the cause of freedom.

© Janet M. Bair of Ansonia, CT. You may contact her at librarybair@hotmail.com

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Writing From Life

by Jeanette Lukowski

Road Trip Season



This might make me sound silly, but while many people were spending the grey and somewhat gloomy days of January and February packing up and putting away the remains of their December holidays, I'm was thinking about where to travel during the upcoming summer months.

Perhaps this pattern began when I was a child, when my mother would drive us the five-hundred-plus miles to visit her parents, siblings, and a variety of cousins. If we were lucky, we made the drive two times a year—for winter holiday weekends, and the week-long summer vacation—but while the winter drives included my father, summers were most often reserved for my older sister, my mother, and I.

When my sister was in high school, there were additional drives to explore out-of-state colleges added; after my sister headed off to college, the summer drives naturally shifted more to just me and my mother in the car. Life sure looked different in the front seat than it had all of those years in the back!

Then, the magical year of holding a driver's permit arrived. What glorious adventures those five-hundred-plus miles became! The open road of interstate highways when my mother would drift off into a light nap in the passenger seat...I had never felt such freedom. Were those the moments when the passion for summer road trips was ignited?

Choosing a career as a teacher was decided by life's circumstances rather than the summer months of "unemployment," but I quickly learned to appreciate them. I began by planning little day trips the kids and I could take to places like zoos or historical farms which provided educational experiences for visitors; as the children got older, I planned other scenic drives which included a night or two in hotels, adding evening swims in the hotel pool to our trips focused on dinosaur digs and Girl Scout badge checklists. After my mother retired, she would join us as we headed to destinations such as Mount Rushmore—or job interviews I was offered in other states—but the drive my kids and I took to the Grand Canyon was part of a weekend birthday-gift-to-myself trek.

It's impossible for me to calculate all of the miles I've driven a car because, for me, the "prize" has been the scenery I've seen along the way. Last month, for instance, as my now grown son drove me in his car's passenger seat to my mother's burial (she purchased the plot years before her retirement—and subsequent move to be closer to her grandchildren), what did I spy on the interstate as we neared Madison, Wisconsin? None other than the Oscar Meyer Wienermobile! No kidding.

Reaching the Spring Equinox in March, my thoughts naturally turned towards summer road-tripping season. Where might I go? I admit to feeling a bit more apprehensive about driving by myself the older I get, but to stay home all summer?

© Jeanette Lukowski 2026. Jeanette is a mother, grandmother, teacher, and author who lives in Alesandria, MN. She is inspired by the lives of strong women. Her email address is: writingfromlife@yahoo.com

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Summer Vacation!

by Judy Sharer

As an adult looking back, I have many fond memories of summer vacations. Once school was out, it meant being free to spend time with neighborhood friends and visiting family.

Our neighborhood had many kids of all ages. We would gather together to play kickball, tag, hide and seek, or ride bikes. When the streetlights came on, it was a race to make it home.



In my family, Summer meant we had additional chores. I worked in the garden planting the vegetables and when the produce was harvested, I'd help with the canning. Dad had a small patch of strawberries, raspberries, and blueberries that we'd pick and make into jam and jelly plus enjoy with shortcakes and cobblers.

My brother was tasked with keeping the lawn mowed. My sisters did additional housework as well as looked after me, the baby of the siblings.

When I was young, I remember visiting my grandparents who lived in a neighboring town. My parents would put me on the bus with my little suitcase. I'd sit right behind the bus driver with instructions not to bother the other passengers. My grandparents would meet the bus at the bottom of the hill from their house. I liked visiting because I had my own room and bed to sleep in. Grandma taught me how to do needlework, knit and crochet. Families tended to live close in those days and mine was no exception. My aunt and uncle lived right up the hill on a farm. I'd spend time with them during the summer too. I'd help feed the beef cows, pigs and chickens with my uncle and my aunt and I would bake sweet treats to put in my uncle's lunchbox. We would often read books together after supper or listen to music on the radio while dancing around the living room.

All of these experiences contributed to making me the strong and capable woman I am today. Bored? We didn't have time to be bored. There was always something interesting to do.

Of course, this was in the 1960s; a time before cell phones, computers, Xboxes, and iPads, before a lot of things today's children have to occupy their time. Parents usually want their children to have more than when they were young, but if I could go back and change time, I wouldn't change a thing. I believe I turned out just fine. What will you be doing with your children or grandchildren this summer vacation? Hopefully, you'll be making some sweet memories.

Judy Sharer just released her spicy historical romance/family saga titled *Secrets in Room Four*, the first in her series *Love Lessons*. She is also the author of a sweet historical romance/family saga series titled *A Plains Life*. This four-book series also published by The Wild Rose Press is appropriate for the entire family and is available on-line wherever books and eBooks are sold. Visit Judy's website judysharer.com and follow her on Facebook and X.

Frugal Gardening Tips & Tricks

Gardening can be a simple way to beautify your yard, relieve stress and save money on your grocery bill, but like any hobby, you can get carried away buying necessary equipment.

Fun, frugal and environmentally friendly, these tricks can help you create a cost-effective garden:

1. Use a yardstick and permanent marker to mark inches and feet on the handle of your rake, shovel or hoe. The next time you plant, simply lay the marked handle along the row to create perfectly spaced holes for seeds.
2. Line the bottom of a clay pot with a coffee filter to keep soil from leaking out the bottom.
3. Use empty plastic water bottles or clear milk jugs to fill the bottom of large pots. They reduce the weight of the pot and require less soil to fill.
4. To test your seeds to see if they're still viable for this planting season, place a wet paper towel inside a zip-top bag, drop in 3-4 seeds and wait a week to see if anything grows.
5. One way to help prevent weeds is lining your garden with a layer of newspaper. Just top two or three sheets of newsprint with a layer of pine needles, grass clippings or dried leaves for an eco-friendly and inexpensive weed barrier.
6. Keep gardening twine handy. Nail a funnel to your potting bench with the spout pointing downward, feed the twine through and your string will never go missing. For a more portable solution, place a ball of twine inside a canning jar, make a hole in the lid and feed the end of the twine through the hole. Now, you can take twine anywhere, tangle-free.

Find more ideas for creating a garden without spending a bundle at <http://www.elivingtoday.com>
 Source: Family Features.com

Finding Freedom Road Trip

Free Pattern

For more fun and creative inspiration visit:
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Free Embroidery Pattern – May not be sold or used for commercial purposes. Use this pattern for embroidery, wool applique, punch needle or rug hooking, painted projects or whatever your imagination can dream up! Reduce or enlarge pattern as desired.

2 Minute Lift

Building Our Future: The River Bank Exchange

by Kathy Sotak

For years, I've gone to the river bank to put love in the water. Five years ago, a woman would go to the river bank to get love.

Years later I met a new friend. She shared her healing journey, which included how she would go to the river – my same spot – to get love.

She's been cancer-free for five years.

For years, I've watched a petite, gray-haired woman working at our organic food store. I never talked to her, but was touched by her smile and grace. Years later in her retirement, I met her at a Reiki exchange class. I learned that she sent Reiki energy – a loving, healing energy – to everyone who walked into the store.

I was the recipient of her love, along with thousands of others. She was doing her work with a capital W.

Perhaps why they call it a river bank. Only instead of exchanging money, we are exchanging energy. Throughout life we are always in an exchange – both giving and receiving. What kind of energy are we giving out today? On those days we need to receive – don't worry, help is nearby.

The help may be invisible – so close your eyes and feel the deposit.

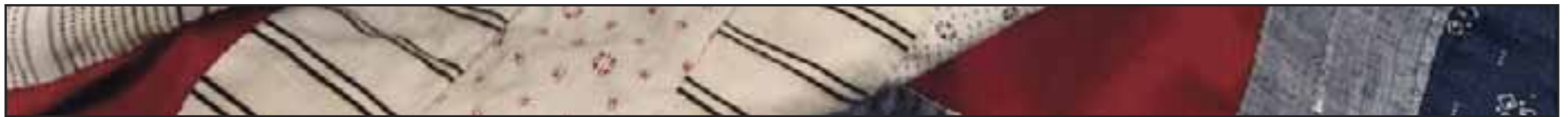


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Recipe: Pickles in a Blanket

Ingredients:

- 8 whole sweet gherkin pickles
- 4 slices thick sliced bacon
- 1/2 (8oz) container jalapeno cream cheese
- 1/2 cup shredded cheddar cheese
- 2 tsp sweet & hot mustard
- 1 1/2 tsp everything bagel seasoning, jalapeno
- 1 (8oz) refrigerated original crescent rolls
- 1 large egg

Directions:

Preheat oven to 375°. Line large baking sheet with parchment paper; set aside. Drain and pat pickles; set aside. Roughly chop bacon. Cook in large nonstick skillet over medium heat until crisp. Remove bacon with slotted spoon, drain. Stir together cream cheese, shredded cheese, bacon, 2 tsp mustard, 1/2 tsp bagel seasoning in a medium bowl. Unroll crescent rolls; separate into 8 triangles. Spoon about 1 tbsp cream cheese mixture onto the wide end of each triangle. Place on pickle on top of cream cheese mixture. Roll up and place on baking sheet. Lightly beat egg in a small bowl, brush each bundle with egg; sprinkle with remaining bagel seasoning. Bake for 12-16 minutes or until golden brown. Cool slightly.



Chocolate Donut in a Mug


Mug Cake

- 6 tbsp all-purpose flour
- 2 tbsp sugar
- 1/2 tsp baking powder
- pinch of nutmeg
- 3/4 tbsp vegetable oil
- 3 tbsp milk
- 1/4 tsp vanilla

Icing

- 1/4 cup chocolate chips
- 2 tbsp heavy cream
- Sprinkles (optional)

1. Whisk together flour, sugar, baking powder, nutmeg, oil, milk and vanilla.
2. Microwave for 90 seconds on high power.
3. Add chocolate chips and heavy cream to a small bowl.
3. Microwave for 30 seconds to melt chocolate. Stir until smooth.
4. Insert the large end of a baster into the cake to hollow out the center.
5. Frost the top with the warm chocolate sauce and add sprinkles.



Recipe and picture by Tip Buzz: tipbuzz.com

Duluth • McGregor

Pieces From My Heart

by Jan Keller

CONSISTENCY

It would be helpful if children were born with an instruction booklet mapping out the exact techniques for perfectly raising each particular child to adulthood. With an individually charted road map to follow, painful experiences for both parent and child could be avoided. Even if my children had arrived with instructions, I probably wouldn't have read them any better than I read the instructions that accompany kitchen appliances. I prefer to take the independent approach and wing it on my own—at least until difficulties force me to seek assistance.

Consistency was one of my major parenting objectives. I felt providing my children with consistent discipline throughout their formative years would create a strong base for their individual growth and development. Reflecting on this lofty goal brings the realization I blew it! Failed!

As the mother of an inquisitive three-year-old, I can still hear myself saying, "I already answered that question. I'm busy fixing your lunch. Stop chattering and go play." In contrast, when my children were 13-years-old I said, "Sit down for just a minute and talk to me. You never talk to me anymore!"

I remember shopping for school clothes when my kids were five and ready to start kindergarten. I told them, "These are just the kind of clothes all your classmates will be wearing—and the kind you'll want to wear, too." But when they were 15, my tune had changed to, "Who would want to look and dress like everyone else in your school?"

Don't act like such a baby," I pleaded with my six-year-old. "Aren't you ever going to grow up?" Then at 16, my message changed to, "You've got plenty of time. Slow down! Don't be in such a hurry to grow up!"

There were days when my children seemed to make it nearly impossible for me to accomplish my household chores. When they were seven and underfoot, I said, "It's such a pretty day—so nice outside—you don't even need a jacket. Why don't you go outside and ride bikes with your friends?" By the time they were 17, I flipped and said, "I don't think you need to go anywhere tonight! You're hardly ever home anymore because you're always going off with your friends!"

On second thought, maybe I didn't fail.

I was consistent—I was consistently inconsistent!



©2026 Jan Keller No reprint without permission Jan shares other pieces of her life in her books, *Pieces From My Crazy Quilt*, and *The Tie That Binds*. These books can be ordered by calling 719-866-8570, or writing: Black Sheep Books, 11250 Glen Canyon Drive, Peyton, CO 80831

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Say Cheese! (Cream Cheese, That Is)

I love cream cheese. Truly. But in our house, it comes with a side of caution. For my husband, cream cheese is less “spread the joy” and more “brace for impact.” He has gout, and certain rich foods can trigger an attack. If he spots cream cheese on a menu, he’ll often take colchicine preemptively, just in case. That may sound dramatic, but anyone who has experienced gout knows it’s no small thing.

Gout is a form of inflammatory arthritis caused by a buildup of uric acid in the body. When uric acid crystallizes in the joints, the result can be sudden, severe pain and swelling. Although it’s commonly associated with the big toe, gout can affect almost any joint — feet, ankles, knees, wrists, fingers, elbows, and even the spine. In fact, my husband’s first attack struck his spine, which was both unexpected and intensely painful. Our doctor jokingly suggested taking the medication with vodka, noting he was likely in for several uncomfortable days.

So where does cream cheese fit into all of this? Cream cheese itself is relatively low in purines compared to foods like organ meats or shellfish, which are well-known gout triggers. However, it is high in fat. While some research suggests that certain full-fat dairy products may not increase — and may even modestly lower — the risk of gout flares, moderation remains important. For us, that means enjoying cream cheese occasionally rather than generously.

What Exactly Is Cream Cheese? Cream cheese is a mild, soft, fresh cheese made from milk and cream. Unlike aged cheeses, it is meant to be consumed fresh and has a smooth, spreadable texture. Stabilizers are often added to improve consistency, and it’s available in a wide range of flavors, from plain to herb-infused to sweet varieties.

In the United States, cream cheese must contain at least 33 percent milk fat, giving it its rich, creamy character. Canadian standards are similarly robust. Regulations in other countries vary, but the defining feature remains the same: cream cheese is indulgent, smooth, and unapologetically rich.

A Brief History of a Breakfast Staple: Cream cheese was first developed in the United States in the 1870s. William A. Lawrence, a dairyman from New York, experimented with French Neufchâtel cheese and added extra cream, creating a richer, softer product. His innovation quickly gained popularity.

In 1879, Lawrence partnered with Samuel S. Durland to expand production. The following year, cheese distributor Alvah Reynolds began marketing the product as “Philadelphia Cream Cheese,” even though it was produced in New York. At the time, Philadelphia had a reputation for high-quality dairy products, and the name conveyed a sense of premium quality.

Reynolds later acquired the Empire Cheese Company to increase production under the Philadelphia name. After a factory fire, operations shifted to the Phenix Cheese Company, which eventually merged with Kraft. Under Kraft’s ownership, Philadelphia Cream Cheese became a widely recognized household brand.

From Dairy Case to Cultural Icon: Over time, Kraft’s marketing helped elevate Philadelphia Cream Cheese beyond a simple spread. Memorable advertising campaigns featured whimsical imagery — floating bagels, heavenly kitchens, and the well-known “Philadelphia Angel.” These ads positioned cream cheese as an essential ingredient for both everyday breakfasts and special-occasion desserts, especially cheesecakes.

The combination of strong branding, consistent quality, and clever advertising helped cement cream cheese as a staple in North American kitchens.

Canadian Production Standards: In Canada, cream cheese must be produced by curdling cream with bacterial cultures and forming the curds into a smooth mass. Specific stabilizers and preservatives are permitted within regulated limits, and only approved enzymes may be used in production. These standards ensure a consistent product while maintaining safety and quality.

A Simple Jalapeño Popper Tradition: Despite his dietary limitations, my husband insisted that I include our favorite cream cheese recipe: jalapeño poppers.

The truth is, it’s less a formal recipe and more a practical solution. One summer afternoon, faced with an abundant jalapeño harvest and no desire to visit the grocery store, I improvised with what was in the fridge.

I beat together cream cheese and Montreal steak spice in a stand mixer, then fold in grated cheddar cheese. The jalapeños are sliced lengthwise, seeds removed and filled with the mixture. I bake



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Recipe: Pineapple BBQ Chicken w/ bacon

Ingredients:

- 4 chicken breasts
- salt & pepper to taste
- 1 cup BBQ sauce
- 1 cup pineapple, diced
- 6 strips bacon, cooked and diced
- 1/4 red onion, sliced
- 1 cup mozzarella cheese
- green onion, diced

Directions:

Preheat oven to 400°. Spray baking dish with cooking oil. Place chicken in baking dish. Sprinkle with salt and pepper. Cover with BBQ sauce. Top with pineapple chunks. Cover with diced bacon and slices of red onion. Top with mozzarella and bake for 25-30 minutes until chicken is fully cooked. Broil for 3-4 minutes to crispen cheese. Top with more pineapple and green onions.

them in a cast-iron pan in the oven or cook them on the barbecue at fairly high heat until the peppers are tender and the cheese is bubbling.

There are no precise measurements; everything is added by feel. Despite that — or perhaps because of it — they are always a hit. I’ve served them to guests and received generous compliments, which feels slightly undeserved given how simple they are to prepare.

For us, cream cheese isn’t an everyday indulgence. It’s something enjoyed thoughtfully and occasionally. But when it does make an appearance — especially tucked inside a jalapeño and bubbling hot — it’s worth the wait.

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