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Our Queen of Hearts is Ashley Elsasser. Photo by Robin Crystal Photography, Goshen.

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Denise Fedorow has been a freelance journalist, feature writer and columnist for over 20 years, writing regularly for a number of local publications. She's been writing for The Goshen News and Elkhart County Living magazine since 2001. A native New Yorker, she's lived in the Midwest for over 40 years. She has two grown sons, six grandchildren and two shelter cats. She started writing at 11 years old, is a voracious reader and is active in her church. She loves the variety her writing career offers and all the experiences she's had as a result, including being a member of The Goshen News's team covering President Barack Obama's visit to Wakarusa (and has the White House Press pass as a memento). She believes everybody has a story to tell and is honored to be the one to share it.



POLLY HOOVER

Polly Hoover is a Goshen native with ties to the West Coast. Her love of the outdoors grew from a love of trail running and adventure races. "I've been exploring since I took my first plane ride when I was 2 years old," she said, adding she has visited all 50 states. My favorite saying is 'Follow Your Bliss.'"



AMY LANT-WENGER

Amy Lant-Wenger is a Wakarusa resident and a mother of three. She has been writing professionally since 1985, starting as a newspaper reporter in her hometown of Bremen. She is a board member of the Wakarusa Historical Society and a member of the Maple Syrup Festival committee. In her spare time, she enjoys history, genealogy, music and reading.



JASMINE MILLER

Jasmine Miller graduated from Indiana Wesleyan University in 2021 with a bachelor's degree in journalism and a minor in criminal justice. She has been a freelance reporter for The Goshen News since the beginning of 2022. "I value spending time with my family, friends and my two dogs (Apollo and Ares)," Jasmine writes. "I have enjoyed being able to meet and share the stories of the amazing individuals in this community. My goal has always been to help people share their stories and the work that they do. In my free time I read a lot."



IGOR SAPUCAIA

Igor Sapucaia is a Brazilian international student-athlete at Goshen College majoring in Journalism with a Marketing minor. He is part of the volleyball team as well as a Sports Editor for The Record and a Multi Media Journalist for the 91.1 The Globe. He serves as an intern at the Goshen News with a weekly editorial focused on sports at GC titled "GC Weekly."



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FROM THE EDITOR



Three more months to spring

We have to be really kind to ourselves for the next three months. Seriously. For those of us who have lived in northern Indiana all of our lives, we know the gray days of January through March are real. Top that with biting cold that reaches into negative numbers and it's easy to understand why people have Seasonal Affective Disorder.

So consider this your guide to self-care.

Many of you may have made New Year's resolutions. We spoke with clinical psychologist, pastor and life coach Jay Shetler about how people can attain their goals. He gives us five tips to help.

But if you truly cannot handle the gray, we've got some destination vacation locations that are known for their sun and warmth. I might consider visiting some friends in the Sunshine State myself.

In the midst of those cold, bleak days is one of the warmest holidays — Valentine's Day!

Now, you might not feel like getting out of your house in mid-February, but you need to spoil your boo.

I highly suggest chocolate and pizza.

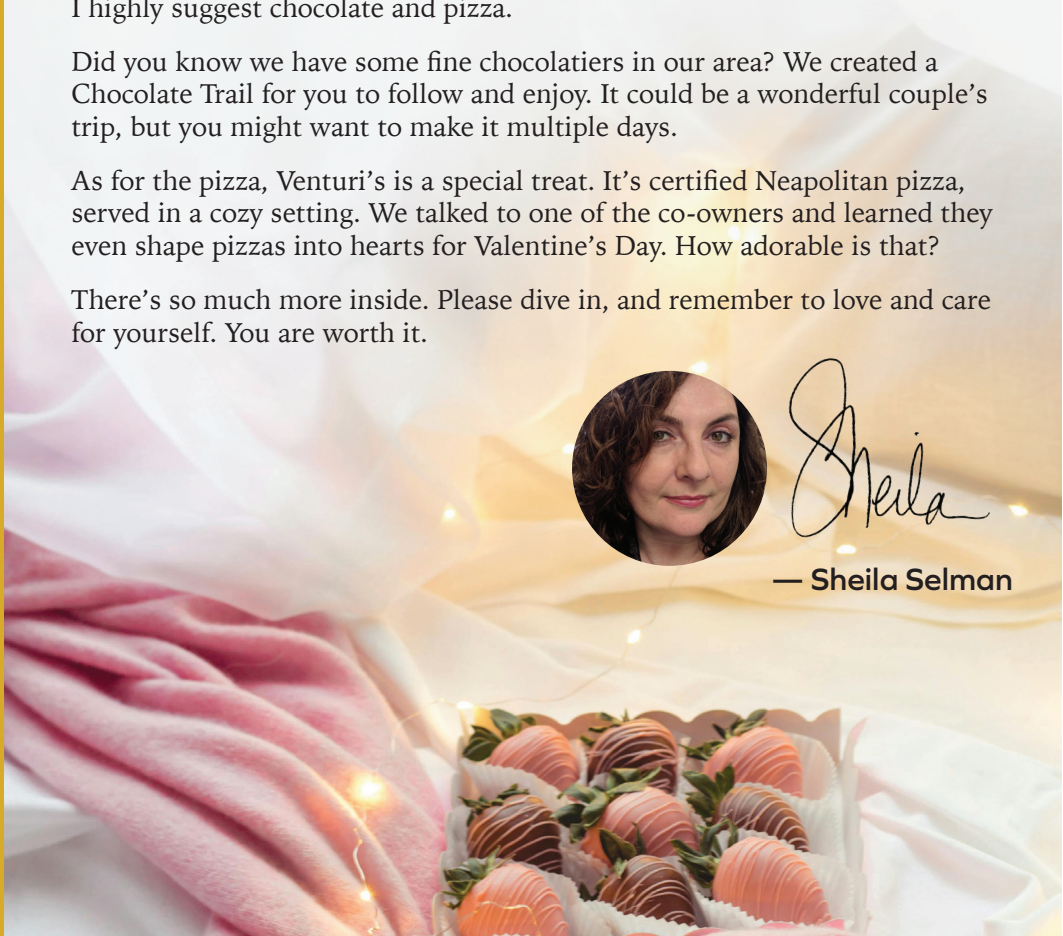
Did you know we have some fine chocolatiers in our area? We created a Chocolate Trail for you to follow and enjoy. It could be a wonderful couple's trip, but you might want to make it multiple days.

As for the pizza, Venturi's is a special treat. It's certified Neapolitan pizza, served in a cozy setting. We talked to one of the co-owners and learned they even shape pizzas into hearts for Valentine's Day. How adorable is that?

There's so much more inside. Please dive in, and remember to love and care for yourself. You are worth it.



— Sheila Selman





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HEALTH

SHOW SOME LOVE



Pamper

BY JASMINE MILLER

Valentine's Gifts for your pets

While we are sharing the love this Valentine's Day, don't forget to shower your fur babies with love, too. From treats, to clothes, to collars and more, here are a few ideas of some toys and treats for your pet this holiday.



1.

Chewy has many gift ideas for pets of all kinds, one example is the Frisco Valentine Box of Cards Hide & Seek Puzzle Plush Squeaky Dog Toy. This toy is currently listed at **\$12.99** without the price of shipping and can be ordered from the chewy.com website.



2.

Nothing screams love like a pink heart hoodie by Youly from Petco. This adorable sweatshirt is one of many festive sweaters currently on sale both at Petco.com and in-store. The sweater is currently priced at **\$14.99**.



3.

What better way to spoil your fur babies this Valentine's Day than some sweet treats. Milk-Bone sells many different treat options at several locations, such as the Milk-Bone Mini's Sweetheart Dog Treats available at Walmart for **\$6.99**.



4.

Jewelry is typically a gift given for Valentine's Day, so let's spoil the pets in your home the same way. Five Below is currently selling Valentine pet jewelry. One example is the Pearl & Heart-charm Pet Jewelry that is currently listed at **\$5**.



5.

Another toy option for the dogs in your family are ropes and specifically the Midlee Valentine's Heart Rope Dog Toy from Kohls. This adorable, durable toy is perfect for any dogs that play hard and is currently **\$26.49**.



6.

Lastly, is the three pack of ZippyPaws Happy Hour Crusherz Valentine's Three Pack. This three pack is perfect for multiple pets or to spoil one sweetheart. ZippyPaws.com is currently selling these toys for **\$33.99**.



For more ideas visit any of the locations or website above and check out the many other options available for your furry friends this Valentine's Day.



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Getting cozy in hard winter

BY JASMINE MILLER

Despite the holiday season coming to an end, there are still many months left to enjoy the cozy winter weather. While we pack up our Christmas trees and put away the stockings there are plenty of new, beautiful ways to spruce up your home this winter.

From cozy blankets to snuggle into on the cold winter days to snowglobes that remind you of brighter days, there are just a few ideas to add a little comfort to your home through the winter months.

Alpine Corporation Snowman Statue

This lovely Snowman decoration is a beautiful addition to have either inside or on the front porch. It lights up any space that you put it in.

From Ace Hardware /
\$89.99



Winter House Draft Stopper

With snow and the winter comes cold winds, this draft stopper is an adorable way to help keep the heat in and the cold out during the winter months.

From Boscov's / \$11.99



Fraser Hill Farm 6ft Christmas Snow Flocked Garland

Greenery is always an appreciated touch for homey decor. This snow-covered garland is a perfect piece for a mantle of table decor this winter.

From Tractor Supply Company / \$29.99



Thomas Kinkade Journey Home For The Holidays Snowglobe

Thomas Kinkade is one of many artists that make pieces that represent cozy, dream-like winters. This snowglobe is a touch of sweet comfort while appreciating the chill of the winter months.

From The Bradford Exchange / \$169.99

Winter Wonderland Table Decor

Table decor has shown as a trending decor staple in recent years and Kohls has just what you need to decorate your counters. This piece can be paired with most other winter themed table decor.

From Kohls / \$7.49



Madison Park Duke Long Fur Throw

Nothing says a cozy winter like a warm, fluffy blanket. This blanket from Home Depot is one of many colors and designs currently being sold both in store and online.

From Home Depot / \$28.87

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LET'S GO OUTSIDE!

Winter camping means being prepared

BY POLLY HOOVER

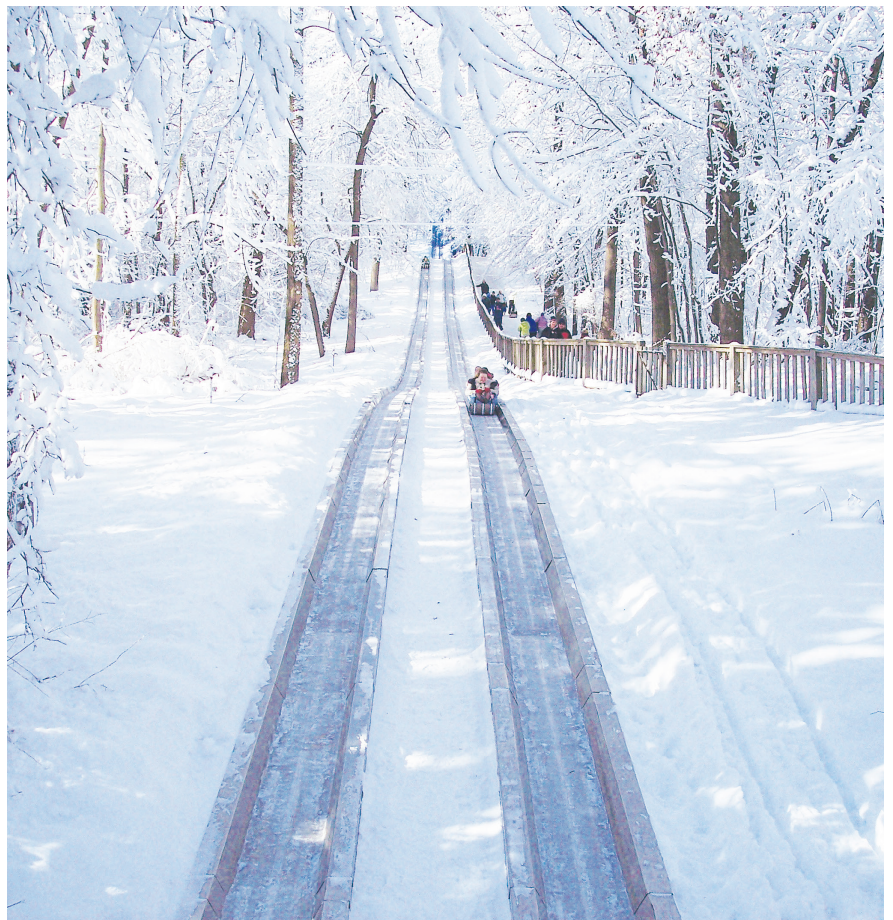


At the beginning of every year I try to set up my intentions and rough plans for the year. I always leave room to add new interests and ideas, but I do have a general plan for what and where I want to visit and experience. 2026 is going to be the year of the Southwest, exploring state and national parks in Arizona, Nevada and Arizona — be on the lookout for the next adventure!

2026 winter is all about camping. Planning and preparing for everything is important when the plan is to sleep in a tent in cold weather. The most important part is staying warm during the overnight hours. A zero-degree sleeping bag, as well as, a sleeping pad with a high R value is important when planning. R value is a number used by camping equipment companies to rate the temperature/insulation of the item. Unfortunately, there is not a standardized system to grade the R value, but generally, the higher the number the warmer the item should keep you. Pokagon State Park allows winter camping at its campground and the Potawatomi Lodge has a restaurant. There are also cabin suites and historic cabins on site available for rental year round, if tent camping just isn't an option for you during the winter season. Renting a cabin is also a great way to get away and spend time outdoors during the winter.

There are hiking trails throughout Pokagon, and you can rent cross country skis, boots and poles, as well as snowshoes. The toboggan run is open through March 1 and costs \$20 an hour for a toboggan.

There's a saying in Norway, there's no such thing as bad weather, just unsuitable clothing. Wearing layers, wool or alpaca base layers and a waterproof and windproof outerlayer will keep you surprisingly warm while exploring the outdoors.



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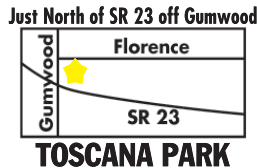
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Romantic NIGHT

Venturi brings Italy to Goshen

BY IGOR SAPUCAIA

Located in downtown Goshen, Venturi is the closest you will ever get to Italy without having to catch a flight. Known for its wood-fired pizzas, cozy atmosphere, and certified Neapolitan-style, Venturi has become a favorite spot for date nights for couples around Goshen and Elkhart County. Certainly, Valentine's Day is no exception. An Italian dinner with your significant other has got to be a thought that runs through your mind when thinking about how to celebrate such a special occasion.

Its origin dates back to the spring of 2009, when Justin Venturi, the business' co-owner, started a small pizza project behind the Mercantile in Shippshewana.

"I was experimenting with traditional Neapolitan-style pizza, serving a simple menu to locals and visitors and learning, one bake at a time, what people connected with," Venturi said.

What started behind a building as a potential business is nowadays recognized for its uniqueness and quality. Venturi was voted by Esquire's readers No. 15 most life-changing pizza in the U.S., as well as being named one of Yelp's Top 50 restaurants in the state of Indiana. Besides, it is a recipient of Tripadvisor's Certificate of Excellence.

The Margherita pizza is considered their specialty from Venturi's



Savor



“

Venturi is a place where guests can slow down, enjoy intentional food, and experience something rooted in both **AUTHENTICITY AND COMMUNITY.**

”

JUSTIN VENTURI

perspective, and the one he personally recommends for couples. Its simplicity highlights the fresh dough, tomatoes and creamy mozzarella cheese, offering the perfect amount of flavors while still causing an impact.

“It’s the dish that best represents what we do,” he said. “Couples often share it, and it always hits the mark.”

In addition to their 18 options of pizzas currently available on their menu, the establishment offers a variety of antipasti (appetizers) that go from garlic knots to crunchy bruschettas to be served before the main course. To add a bit of sweetness to the evening, the traditional Italian tiramisu is a must-try. On top of that, rich Nutella-flavored pizzas are also served, turning a meal into a full, shared experience for two people.

As Feb. 14 approaches, Venturi adds slight but thoughtful touches to their customer service to make the evening feel extra emotional. In past years, the team has shaped the pizza doughs into hearts, creating a memorable and romantic moment while keeping the menu’s core untouched.

“It’s all about keeping the menu true to our craft while



adding small, memorable details,” Venturi said.

The restaurant also has seasonal specials that sometimes make an appearance, such as roasted vegetable pizzas or balsamic-drizzled salads, which add more depth to the celebration.

The inside of Venturi’s small but comfortable location sets the stage for romance itself. The walls highlight white bricks and a kitchen surrounded by glass, which allows couples to watch the traditionally thin dough being hand-stretched by the chefs and getting baked to perfection inside their wood-fired oven. Little space divides one seating from the other, creating an even cozier atmosphere for a cold evening in February.

“Venturi is a place where guests can slow down, enjoy

intentional food, and experience something rooted in both authenticity and community,” said the owner.

Beyond Valentine’s Day, Venturi constantly seeks to refine its menu and the overall guest experience. The staff is currently focused on improving kitchen systems, training and consistency, making sure every dish meets the high standards that Venturi has already set, and continues to refine its menu and service.

“The goal is to make sure every guest, new or returning, feels the care and craft that define Venturi,” he said.

Venturi offers a setting where love, romance and pizza are celebrated with careful touches and thoughts that make every visit an experience. This Valentine’s Day, couples in Goshen and Elkhart County can slow down, taste quality food and enjoy a romantic dinner that will make couples feel more loved than ever.

A Positive CHANGE

Five tips to maintain and achieve your New Year's goals



BY DENISE FEDOROW

Many people start the New Year with resolutions and good intentions to make positive changes in their lives, but just a few weeks later they've abandoned those goals.

Jay Shetler, clinical psychologist, pastor and life coach, shared five tips for having more success in achieving those goals. Shetler said, "I'm one who loves a New Year, something about starting over, getting a fresh start — it gives us energy and hope. But change is hard. Initially New Year's gives us the energy to get the ball rolling."



He also shared that one study said 90% of New Year's resolutions fall apart by Valentine's Day — less than six weeks. Working with his clients he has five things that "if we shift the way we look at goals or habits, we'll have a much better chance of success."

He said some of these are based on a book titled "Atomic Habits" by James Clear, who talks about a 1% rule that making a small change consistently can lead to good progress.



1. THINK IDENTITY VERSUS BEHAVIOR

Shetler said there's a difference between focusing on behavior or outcome versus focusing on identity. For example, you can focus on trying to lose weight or focus on being a healthy person who can get down on the floor and play with your kids or grandkids. The latter is an identity statement and identity statements make goals stick better and allows us to follow them better. "It's hard to form a habit if it's not part of who we are," Shetler said. "Step one is think identity. How do I make this part of who I am?"

2. THINK SMALL

People try to do too much too soon and give up because it's too hard. The number one predictor of success is consistency. Shetler said there's a method called the two-minute rule. The first week, do whatever your goal is for two minutes and no more. If it's exercising or running, do it for two minutes and stop. "It sounds ridiculous but if you do it for seven days, you're much more likely to then go 10 minutes or 20 minutes. It's a really low bar, but if you start at an hour, you won't be able to keep it up." It's easier to improve on a habit than to establish one.

The second part of that is don't expect too much too soon. We start with high hopes and then we step on the scale and get disappointed. The author Clear said we tend to think our goal will be a straight line up, but it's more like exponential growth. Nothing changes for awhile and then we see a sharp increase. For every habit you have to put in the work before you see results. Clear calls that the "Valley of Disappointment." If you understand that up front, it's easier to persevere through it. Recognize the work. "Saying no to one piece of chocolate cake probably isn't going to move the scale, but doing so repeatedly over time will bring results."

3. FOCUS ON ENVIRONMENT OVER WILLPOWER

"Most of us rely on willpower, thinking if we work harder, but willpower is horrible when it comes to goals, it's a great way to fail. Our environment drives our habits, goals and behaviors. Design the environment to make the right choices easier and the wrong choices harder." If you want to eat healthier, don't buy junk food, just don't have it in the house. If you want to read Scripture, put your Bible near your coffeepot and you can read your Bible when you're drinking that cup of coffee. If you want to get away from scrolling through your phone late at night, don't bring your phone into the bedroom. "Willpower is why you're in trouble in the first place," he said. Also, part of that is habit stacking — pair a new habit with an existing one. If you have a favorite show, the only time you can watch it is when you're on the treadmill. Think about what you can pair with something you're already doing.

4. REDUCE THE NOISE

"We're all busy and juggling a million things and change takes time, energy and effort and we need to create space for that. There's a difference between urgent and important," he said. Shetler said make your goal a priority on your schedule and schedule your priorities and make everything else work around it. We all have technology clutter and can find ourselves endlessly scrolling. He suggests reducing your notifications because they're interruptions. He said when we were only getting snail mail imagine we got 50 pieces of mail a day and instead of delivering them all at once, the mailman showed up at your door 50 times and each time he rang the doorbell, we stopped what we were doing and opened the door. But that's not what we do, we get the mail all at once and deal with it on our own time. But that's not how we treat email and notifications. Silence the notifications and only look at them once or twice a day. Get rid of distractions.

5. DO IT WITH SOMEONE

Meet up with someone at the gym and you're more likely to show up. If you can't do the goal with someone, share it with someone so they can hold you accountable and encourage you. Some people are much more internally motivated while others need more external encouragement and support.

Shetler also said, things like SMART goals (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time Bound) are "super helpful" but he cautioned when measuring, to be sure to measure the effort, not the outcome. If you exercised every day but didn't lose an inch or a pound, you still achieved success. Continue being consistent and the weight will come off. He also said to be prepared for when you blow it — that's part of the journey. What's your reboot plan? Our thoughts are so powerful. If you fall and the thinking goes to "I can't so why try" instead of "it was a setback, I can restart." Know what your reboot plan is when you start the journey.

Shetler uses a life wheel with his clients that is a pie chart representing different parts of our lives that we care about and you can rate each area from 0-10 to see what holds importance in your life or where you need to improve.

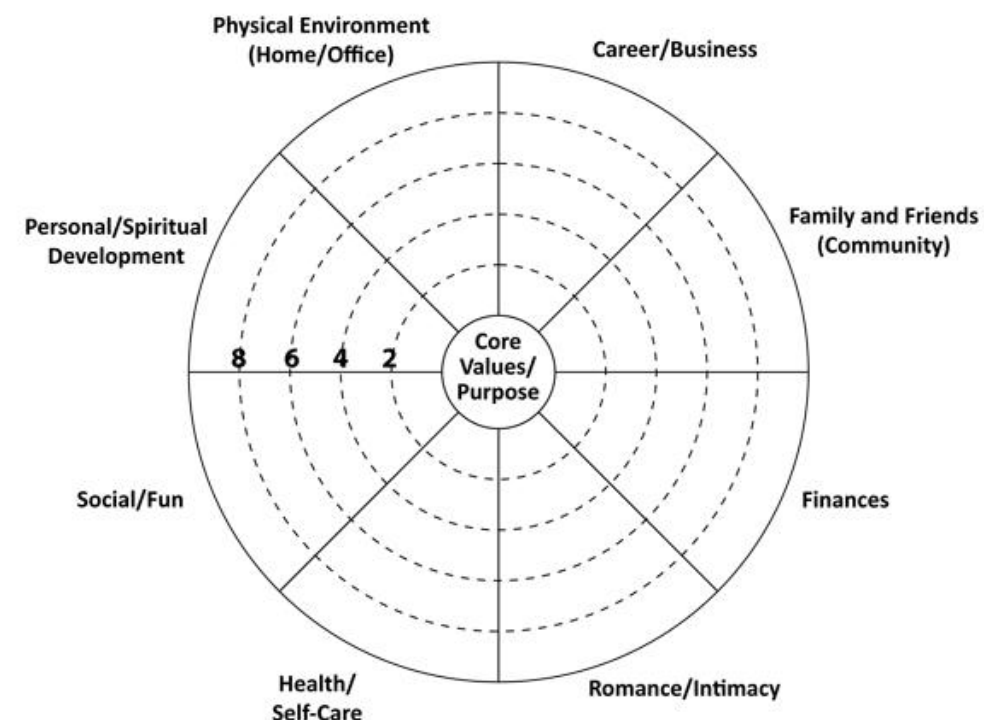
He said, "To be a flourishing human we have to have something we're working toward or we're not growing. We all need something to aim for."

LIFE BALANCE WHEEL

Step 1: On the wheel, rate how fulfilled you are in each area of your life with 10 being the most fulfilled.

Step 2: Draw a line to connect your scores in each area.

Step 3: Set goals for improvement in each area.



5 APPS

for health to download



BY AMY LANT-WENGER

Another new year awaits, and with it, another opportunity to renew, refresh, and reset. With the quietude of the winter season settling in, it's an opportune time to consider priorities and goals for the months ahead. And becoming a steward of one's own health should be among those goals.

Thankfully, there are ways that your smartphone can serve as an accessory along the wellness journey. There are a number of apps that can be downloaded in seconds, apps that monitor everything from nutrition to sleep, and from mental health to fitness. Being able to track your progress and have a sense of accountability can be a wonderful motivator to whatever level of success you're hoping to achieve.

Here are a few of the top-rated apps heading into 2026, based upon such factors as customer feedback, ease of use, and overall benefits to aspects of personal health.



MyFitnessPal

This free app can be synced with other such fitness apps as Fitbit, Samsung Health, Apple Watch, and Garmin Connect. The goal is to create mindfulness and statistics about nutritional information based upon what a person is eating. The user can enter data about food consumed, either by scanning bar codes or submitting photos of a meal and/or its ingredients. The database holds information about over 14 million types of foods, and can break down the data to include carbohydrates, the macronutrient content, protein intake, and fat.



Calm

The Calm app promises to provide exactly what the name suggests. There are various inroads to utilizing this app, which dates its origins back to 2012 as an outlet for relaxation and quietude. The app can walk users through various meditation videos, narrations of a journal known as "Sleep Stories," and soothing music. It's a collaborative experience, with celebrities providing daily inspirational messages and selections from their albums that promote serenity and mood regulation. The Calm app can be purchased for both Apple and Android devices, and has recently launched an auxiliary app known as Calm Health, which approaches issues from a clinical standpoint.



Athlytic

This particular app is one that works with the Apple Watch, and is touted as a health and fitness app that can analyze key cardiac functions and sleep habits. The app collects data on HRV, resting heart rates, exertion scores and target zones, and workout tracking. There is a feature that also allows manual journaling to help monitor accountability for dietary issues, alcohol consumption, and external stress factors. Over time, it can help assess patterns and offer solutions to tailoring exercise and training methods to balance the body's optimum fitness levels. For sleep analysis, Athlytic can detect changes in sleep quality, duration, consistency, and whether the latency (time it takes to fall asleep) is in normal parameters.



Bearable

The Bearable app has been lauded by users as a premium resource to keep track of not only physical ailments and conditions as they arise, but the user can catalog their moods and symptoms, as well as the medications being used. It can be used as a chronicle for injuries and illness, and it can project reports that can, in turn, be forwarded to an appropriate health care professional. There is a free version of the app, which can also be connected to Apple Watch and Google Fit. And memberships are also available with more advanced options for as low as \$6.99 per month. Medical therapists, professionals in mental health, and a sense of community are all just a few clicks away.



Waterllama

Instead of the dull and dreary reminders to drink a certain amount of water everyday, consider the Waterllama app, which is a reliable yet whimsical way to monitor your daily hydration. There are challenges that are adaptable to whichever types of beverages you prefer, while also steering users clear of less ideal vices such as sugary sodas or alcoholic drinks. Some of the animal themed character challenges include the "Escape Caffeine Capuchin," the "Tea-Rex," and the "Drop Beer Dear." There are more than 40 available beverages on the Waterllama program, with contests designed for personal motivation or for group participation. There are two widgets for iPhone and the Apple Watch, and the app makes hydration feel less like a chore and more of a pleasure.

A Sweet TRAIL

Follow the route to local chocolatiers' shops

BY DENISE FEDOROW

Whether or not you believe that chocolate is “a gift from the gods” like the ancient Mayan and Aztec cultures did, chocolate is very popular in any form — dark, milk or white chocolate, in liquid or solid forms. Our local chocolatiers may have different ways to bring chocolate to you, but they are all passionate about their chocolate. Most offer shipping across the country.

STARTING IN GOSHEN

CHOCOLATTE in the Old Bag Factory, 1100 Chicago Ave., is owned by Jana Mast. Mast said she was inspired to become a chocolatier by growing up in Fort Wayne, home of DeBrand Chocolate. She had a couple of former shops, but she always wanted to have a shop in Goshen so when the opportunity arose three



years ago, she opened her shop in the Old Bag Factory.

Chocolatte is also a coffee shop, and she serves light breakfasts, but her passion is chocolates. She wanted each piece of chocolate to be a piece of art, elegant, not rustic. Her chocolate is European and has really clean ingredients.

“The centers I make are made with real chocolate; we do not use any artificial flavors. If I flavor with something I use zest or for coffee flavors, I use our espresso. If we do

use flavorings, it’s with essential oils and all natural flavors.”

Mast said when she creates a bon bon, she thinks of it as a dessert. For example, the key lime layer of her key lime bon bon is made with key lime zest and she added a cookie crust layer.

“I look at desserts and think, ‘How can I make a bon bon of this? My whole thing is how do I make chocolate pretty? You can hand dip anything, but I want it to be as appealing to the eyes as it is to taste.’”

Chocolatte does custom orders — for corporate gifts she can put a logo on a chocolate or a monogram or logo on caramels. For weddings she can customize the colors of the bon bons to match the wedding colors.

Mast explained her chocolate has 40-72% cacao and that high level requires her to temper the chocolate. Mast said her hope is that when customers come into her shop that they understand the value and that it makes them feel special.

“My goal is to create beautiful chocolates so that every person that steps in will try it and love it. Every person that steps into my shop is worth the time and effort I put in to make them feel special and create an experience for them,” she said.

OLYMPIA CANDY KITCHEN, 136 N. Main St., Goshen, has been making candy “the old-fashioned way” for four generations. Current owner Kare Andersen said his great-grandfather Nick Paflas started making hand-dipped chocolates in 1912 and bought the business in 1920. Then his grandfather Lamar Paflas took over and then his mother, Kathy Paflas Andersen before him. Andersen said they make most of their candy “from scratch — the old-fashioned way — caramels, toffees and the majority of our cremes with a few exceptions like peanut butter for example.” He said the quality of the ingredients makes the difference.

“I always say it’s more of an art than a science,” he said.

They offer homemade seasonal candy. At Christmas they make the candy canes and ribbon candy and all of their molds are solid chocolate like Santas, Easter Bunnies, etc. They roast their own nuts. Olympia Candy Kitchen is also an old-fashioned diner and soda fountain counter, serving breakfast and lunch and they make a lot of the food from scratch — even their mayonnaise. They make their own chocolate sauce and caramel for the ice cream sundaes.

Orders can be called in at 574-533-5040.

A couple of blocks away at 204 S. Main St. is **THE NUT SHOPPE**, which has been in business since 1982. Justin Bell and his wife Denae bought the business from the original owners in 2000. They roast their own nuts, but they’re also known for their chocolates.

“We make all the chocolates here, make all the centers, the caramels and toffee and cremes for the truffles,” he said.

They also use European-style chocolate and quality ingredients. Their top sellers are turtles, crème truffles and toffee. They also sell a lot of gummies, sour candies and Jelly Belly jellybeans. The Nut Shoppe hours are Monday-Thursday 10 a.m.-5 p.m., Friday 10 a.m.-6 p.m., Saturday 10 a.m.-4 p.m.

Justin suggested folks “Come try the chocolates for themselves!”



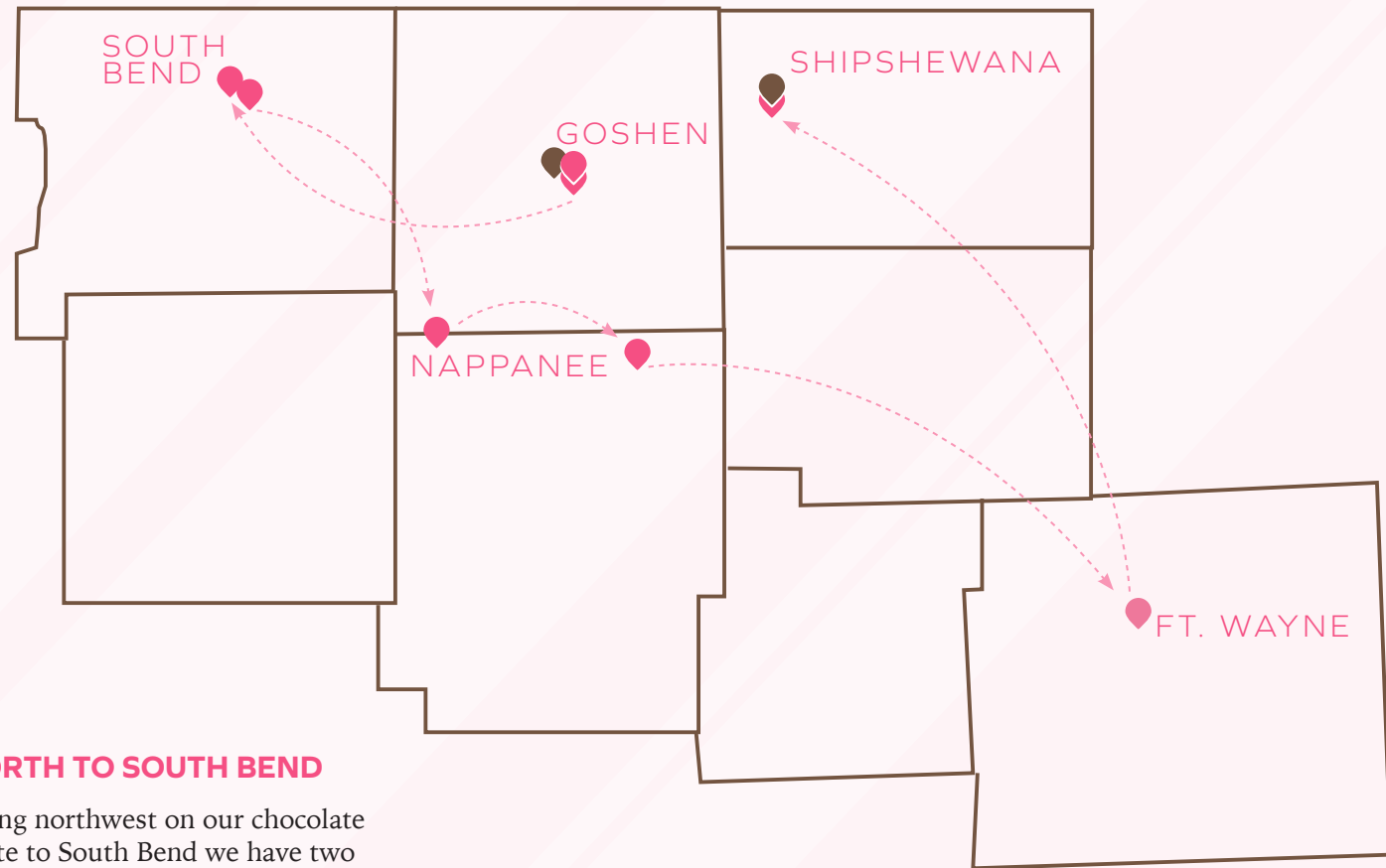
Olympia Candy Kitchen

Fourth generation owner of Olympia Candy Kitchen Kare Andersen, holds a tray of “Charlie Chaplin” chocolates made at the shop.



The Nut Shoppe

On the map



NORTH TO SOUTH BEND

Going northwest on our chocolate route to South Bend we have two stops. **THE SOUTH BEND CHOCOLATE COMPANY** not only has chocolate café locations at 122 S. Michigan St. and 211 N. Eddy St., but also at 7102 Lincolnway West, South Bend, where the factory is located.

According to Jennifer Small, director of marketing and events, “The South Bend Chocolate Company’s factory is where the magic happens. Fresh chocolate, roasted nuts, caramel corn drizzled in chocolate, and coffee are crafted daily by hand, using time-honored recipes and premium ingredients. A proud local company since 1991, we’ve always loved serving the community and sharing our passion for great chocolate. Visitors can step behind the scenes on our factory tours, where they’ll watch chocolate being made, learn the history of our company and taste samples along the way. The tour offers a fun, flavorful experience for families, groups and chocolate lovers of all ages.”

Ticket prices for the tour are \$20 for adults, \$17.50 for seniors, \$15 for kids (3-17), kids 2 and younger free. Tickets can be purchased online or in person. Phone 574-233-2577 and the website is www.sbchocolate.com.

VIOLET SKY CHOCOLATE, located inside Cloud Walking Coffee, 1215 Mishawaka Ave., South Bend. Chocolatier Hans Westerink said he started making chocolate 11 years ago at home on a small scale and then expanded. His chocolate is bean to bar, meaning he does all the processing starting with raw cacao beans, roasts the beans and refines the chocolate. He has a melanger where he can process 50 pounds of chocolate at a time and has a tempering machine. “It’s a four-day process,” he said.

They make a variety of things like truffles, “But the core for Violet Sky is the chocolate itself — our two-ingredient chocolate bars have a very different flavor.”

All the hot chocolate sold at the shop is from his in-house roasted beans. Westerink said he just wants “to provide a high-quality dark chocolate.”

He said they do a lot of flavored bars as well — one he makes a lot is a caramelized white chocolate. He had to shop around to find a high-quality cocoa butter and milk powder to make a good tasting white chocolate. He makes his chocolates in small batches because its very labor intensive but that’s what “elevates it and makes it unique,” he said.

Visitors can watch the chocolate and coffee being made through a viewing window. The shop is open seven days a week. Monday-Thursday 7 a.m.-6 p.m., Fridays 7 a.m.-9 p.m. and Saturday and Sundays 8 a.m.-6 p.m.



Veni's Sweet Shop

SOUTH TO NAPPANEE

Right on the corner of Main and Market Street in Nappanee is **VENI’S SWEET SHOP**. Marilyn Miller said they use pure chocolates with no additives. “Genuine pure chocolate,” she said.

They have chocolate tempering machines at the shop and the company they receive their chocolate from was founded in Switzerland. Veni’s in Nappanee does a lot of corporate gifts, putting custom logs on bars, etc.

“The biggest sellers are truffles, pecan clusters and fudge — we also make all our own fudge,” Miller said.

They also sell a lot of seasonal molded chocolates. For Valentine’s Day and Mother’s Day they offer chocolate-covered strawberries but only enough to sell that day, so they can do special orders. Their Veni Mints are also very popular including the cappuccino mint. The soft mints melt in your mouth. They also offer deluxe nuts in tins.

Trave east from Nappanee to Syracuse to **BREW CITY ROASTING COMPANY**, 605 S. Huntington St. Cassandra

and Derek Poirier are both professionally trained chocolatiers and pastry chefs who met at the Culinary Institute of America in New York. Cassandra really felt called to do chocolate confections. They opened Brew City five years ago. Cassandra said because of the A-frame shape of the building, they don’t make chocolate year-round as it gets too hot in the warm weather. So, they have it for sale in the shop before Christmas and until after Valentine’s Day. They make candied orange peel, panned (coated) hazelnuts and caramels. She explained panning is continuously coating the item with chocolate and then she dusts it with cocoa powder. They make hot chocolate mix and s’mores kits and for Valentine’s Day they offer chocolate marshmallows and whiskey and champagne truffles in four-packs. Their hours are 6 a.m.-2 p.m. Thursday-Monday. Closed Tuesday and Wednesdays and closed the month of January.

Further south to Fort Wayne is **DEBRANDS FINE CHOCOLATES**. They have two locations at 10105 Auburn Park Drive and 4110 W. Jefferson Blvd. in Fort Wayne. Cecelia from

All the chocolate

SHIPSHEWANA’S HEARTLAND HANDMADE CHOCOLATE TRAIL

All February long, explore the Heartland Handmade Chocolate Trail where locally owned shops celebrate chocolate in all its deliciously sweet forms.

From chocolate doughnuts, chocolate popcorn, chocolate sundaes, chocolate candies, even books about chocolate, you’ll discover delightful chocolate bites, treats and handcrafted goodness along the way.

Visit 16 different shops and pick up a single handmade chocolate candy from each shop to fill your own box. In between stops you can enjoy a meal at the Blue Gate Restaurant where you can have chocolate pie and cookies for dessert. Sip on hot chocolate at Kitchen Cupboard, Das Kaffee Haus or Fawn River +Morton and book a room at the Blue Gate Garden Inn or Farmstead Inn to enjoy your chocolates.

Sponsored by the Shipshewana Conventions and Visitor’s Bureau, learn more by visiting www.visit-shipshewana.org.

customer service shared that DeBrand offers “three extraordinary gift box collections — all handcrafted to the highest standards — each created for a different kind of chocolate lover. The Classic Collection features beloved American and European favorites. “It’s universally loved and always a perfect choice when you want to delight anyone.” The Truffle Collection features large, beautifully decorated truffles — ideal for the true chocolate enthusiast who wants a decadent experience inside and out. Each piece is like enjoying an individual mini dessert. The Connoisseur Collection presents small, delicate colorful pieces that are hand-garnished or painted with unique combinations of spices, fruits, nuts and more. It’s the perfect choice for the adventurous palate and the refined chocolate connoisseur. Each collection is available in multiple gift box sizes. Beyond the boxed collections they offer a wide variety including caramel pecan patties, peanut butter cups, Indiana popcorn tasting bars, caramel pretzels and much more. They have celebration bars with messages for special occasions and can also be customized. DeBrand also offers tours of their chocolate factory.

WRAPPING UP IN SHIPSEHWANA

Wrapping up our tour in Shippshewana there are two chocolate shops and Naomi’s candies, which doesn’t have its own retail location but has a licensed kitchen and her chocolates are sold in several retail locations around the region.

AUNT MILLIE’S CANDY KITCHEN inside Davis Mercantile, 225 N. Harrison St. Linda Bontrager said she started making chocolates in her home and then expanded to her shop. They make all the cremes, caramels and once a week they make fudge. They hand-dip all the chocolates and all the chocolates are made in-house or locally in Shippshewana as a lady in town makes

their cocoa bombs. The source of their chocolate is a company out of Pennsylvania. All the cremes are hand-rolled.

“If you come on a Wednesday, you can see us frantically dipping chocolates,” she said.

They roast their own almonds and have a variety of milk and dark chocolate. They have a tempering machine, so Bontrager said, “It’s the real deal.” For Valentine’s Day, Bontrager said customers can customize their own heart-shaped boxes. “Pick out all the cremes you want or if you want, all caramels. We’ll customize it and make it exactly what you want,” she said.

Their hours are Monday-Saturday 10 a.m.-5 p.m. year-round. They’re closed Sundays and holidays.

VICTORIAN CANDY COMPANY, 457 S. Van Buren St., is owned by Martha Yoder and her husband. Martha said, “We both loved working with candies so when the opportunity to get the shop we did.” Yoder said their real specialty is fudge — they have over 40 different kinds of fudge, including a lot of chocolate fudge, but usually have 10-12 in the counter at a time. They make chocolate-covered nuts, pretzels, Oreos, etc. They make chocolate-covered strawberries seasonally as they have a short shelf life. She said she wants to try fudge-covered strawberries instead as they’re softer and the chocolate won’t crack. Like the rest of the shops, they make everything on site, roast their nuts and she said they make a brittle brackle, which is softer.

Last on the tour is **NAOMI’S CANDIES** by Naomi Privett. Naomi has been making candy for 23 years starting out at Ron’s Bakery in Nappanee making hard tack candy and it took off so she had to have a licensed kitchen to sell other places beside Ron’s Bakery and did that in Milford, where she lived at the time. She now has a licensed kitchen at her home in Shippshewana. Das Dutchman Essenhaus sells her candies and that’s



“My goal is to create beautiful chocolates so that every person that steps in **WILL TRY IT AND LOVE IT.** Every person that steps into my shop is worth the time and effort I put in to make them feel special and create an experience for them.”

JANA MAST,
OWNER OF CHOCOLATTE

when she started making chocolates.

“I just kept getting accounts and I’d be up late at night coming up with new ideas,” she said.

She makes the caramel and chocolate covered apples for the Nappanee Apple Festival each year. One year a customer in Warsaw asked for truffles so she learned how and though it was her first try, she was told they were “the best truffles I’ve ever had.”

Some of Naomi’s candies are sold at the other candy stores in Shippshewana and also at Martin’s Custom Butchering in Wakarusa, Bale’s Butcher Shop in Syracuse, Six Mile Café, Shippshewana, Country Lane Bakery 2.0 in Shippshewana and a couple of hotels carry small quantities.

If you like chocolate, you should take our chocolate tour around the region and as Bell said, “try it yourself!”

Aunt Millie's Candy Kitchen

SPRING BREAK

Escape the cold with southern destinations



BY IGOR SAPUCAIA

Winter is finally here, and, like every year, it arrives way too fast and sticks around far too long. Luckily, you've landed on this article. I'm here to give you the Top 3 destinations to escape the Midwest cold and find a little warmth again.

CABO, MEXICO

For my first location, I couldn't go with anything else than Cabo, Mexico. Cabo has been praised all over social media this past fall, and it is surely a place where fun, relaxation, and affordability intertwine.

From gorgeous beaches to an amazing culture, the town is going to make you feel like home away from home — and a much warmer one. The place is breathtaking, with the ocean and desert cliffs connecting in a way that feels unreal in person. Staying in an all-inclusive resort is what you and your family are looking for, paying prices from \$500 for five to seven days to enjoy the ocean, the warmth of Mexican food, and everything that makes it special.

My recommendation would undoubtedly be the Riu Palace Cabo San Lucas, a resort with over 600 rooms, direct beach access with free sun loungers, multiple pools (two large main pools plus two children's pools), several restaurants offering Mexican, Japanese, Indian, fusion, and poolside-steakhouse options, and seven bars (plus a pastry/ice-cream shop). And again, it is an all-inclusive package that includes 24-hour room service, Wi-Fi, and an on-site gym, spa, and daily entertainment, giving you unlimited access to all these services.

Flights to Cabo are around \$300 to \$400. It is a destination that feels both fun and peaceful at the same time, which is exactly what most people hope for during the freezing months.



PUNTA CANA, DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

For another must-visit tropical location, we simply can't ignore Punta Cana in the Dominican Republic. This gorgeous destination is located between the Caribbean and the Atlantic, and it's famous for its crystal-clear waters and a welcoming population that will treat you like a lifelong friend.

Along its coast, there are more than 100 resorts for tourists, which makes it a challenge to choose only one. If your priority is great food and a calm, relaxing spot, Lopesan Costa Bávaro is the perfect place to recharge your energy for the start of a new year. This all-inclusive resort features 13 of the most renowned culinary spots in Punta Cana, a lively communal area with seven freshwater pools where kids and families can enjoy sunny days, or even walk down the stairs and sit by the beach, and an adult-only zone that offers privacy and quiet — the perfect balance for a well-planned trip. If you choose to stay at the Lopesan Hotel, you'll definitely find excellent service, delicious food, plenty of activities to keep you busy all day, and the relaxation you've been looking for!



You can find a round-trip to Punta Cana for as low as \$250, which makes the destination even more appealing. It is the type of place I guarantee both families and solo travelers will feel comfortable since it is an extremely friendly and easygoing environment.



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FORT LAUDERDALE, FLORIDA

Shifting it to a national scale, the U.S. can also be an amazing spot to escape bad weather. I recently visited Fort Lauderdale in the fall, and let me tell you this: I did not stop wishing I could stay longer. The beaches, the restaurants, the nightlife, and the people make that place a total must when thinking of Florida as a possibility to fly to. Unlike bigger cities like Orlando and Miami, it is perfect for you to chill by the beach while still enjoying some of the most culturally diverse cuisine in the state.

Since hotel prices in the U.S. can be pretty high, I highly encourage you to book an Airbnb in advance. If you choose to do so, your dream neighborhood is Central Beach. Anywhere you stay will put you within easy walking distance of Fort Lauderdale Beach, where you'll find clear water and plenty of sandy space for beach volleyball and other social activities.

Right across the street from the sand is Marina Village, an open-air complex surrounded by palm trees and featuring eight different restaurants from Italian to American to Japanese and Chinese.

There's truly something for everyone. At night, the city comes alive with one of the most praised nightlife scenes for young adults, featuring bars and clubs lighting up the streets.

If you're looking for something more casual but still fun, Las Olas Boulevard is the place for you. The street is filled with bars and restaurants, again, rich with culture from all around the world. It's the kind of area where you can spend an entire evening just wandering, snacking, and people-watching without even noticing the time go by. Public transportation is also a great option for getting around quickly and safely, with buses running about every 20 minutes. The fares are cheap, and bus stops are everywhere.

Flights to Fort Lauderdale run around \$200 for a round trip, and trust me, you won't regret going.

Each of these destinations brings something different, but all of them guarantee warmth, relaxation, and a break from winter with memories that you will cherish forever. Whether you end up in Mexico, the Dominican Republic, or Florida, my hope is that you will come back feeling recharged and ready to face the rest of the season.



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a little green TO BRIGHTEN THE GRAY



Gardening tips for surviving the winter



BY JASMINE MILLER

Winter has come and for many local gardeners the season has already been well prepared for. The question is what are the next steps to prepare for the fast-approaching spring.

A local aunt and niece duo worked together this last year to produce over 10 different fruits, vegetables, herbs and flowers from April to September. “Aunt Anna” shares how she gets her gardens ready for the spring time.

“I pull all the dead plants out, weed the beds out, add chicken poop to all tomato and pepper beds to mix into the beds,” Anna Yoder said. “In other beds I use 10-10-10 fertilizer to mix into the beds. I use trifecta from MiGardener as my main go to fertilizer. I typically do not rest the beds like most people do. When the beds are ready I plant at that time in April onwards.”

She stated that she learned online how to garden and over the years has developed a talent to produce the garden that she has now.

“I learned from YouTube and other experienced gardeners in the family of different methods,” Yoder said. “I started learning in 2010 when I moved back down here with my (now) husband who grew up with gardening.”

Along the way, Yoder got her niece involved in participating with her garden and has been able to share her knowledge.



“I’m new. I learned a few years ago I’ve always wanted to garden but when I became a military wife it made it harder to participate with how often you move. I was taught by my husband’s aunt (Yoder). She has a lot of knowledge on gardening and is always there to help,” Sarah Hawkinson said.

Yoder said she has always been interested in gardening.

“I’ve always wanted to garden. I find it relaxing and challenging. Every year is different. From different weather patterns and various bugs. It all depends on how winter went that determines the next gardening season,” Yoder said.

They shared that they typically like to start from seeds during the month of January through April. The overall consensus was to try your best to get the seeds you would like in the fall to ensure you get the seeds you would like.

“Plan out what you want to grow the year before and make a list and plot it out on paper,” Yoder said. “Then find a seed company that has a high germination rate. A lot of seed companies are in name only with success. Another thing when I first started was learning what zone I was in and all the different garden methods there are. I’ve tried various methods over the last 15 years. I learned to start small and add slowly so as to not get

burned out.”

Another tip that she shared is once a plant is done with its production she tends to leave the plant in the soil to allow the soil to absorb optimal nutrients.

“I make sure that all my plants are done for the season and pick what I can even if I have to set it out to change the rest of the way. I then just let my plants die where they’re at so the soil can get the extra nutrients and to help keep the weeds away,” Yoder said.

Hawkinson stated that it is good to keep in mind that each year will produce different results and to be willing to take advice on how to continue to improve not only your skills but your garden overall.

“That it takes time to get started and that you have to be patient,” Hawkinson said. “You also have to realize that every year your produce will come in differently. There may be good years where you get a lot and then you’ll run into slow years. Just don’t give up, there are always people out there that you can ask for advice.”

Yoder finished by sharing not to overthink and save space for growth with your skills.

“If you’re just starting out don’t overthink things. Give yourself room to learn and be willing to make mistakes,” she said. “The best thing about gardening is doing it.”

“If you’re just starting out **DON’T OVERTHINK THINGS.**

Give yourself room to learn and be willing to make mistakes.

The best thing about gardening is doing it.”

SARAH HAWKINSON

Blind date with a book

BY DENISE FEDOROW

If you're looking for a quiet, cozy way to spend a winter evening, how about a blind date? With a book, that is. If you're not familiar with the concept — a blind date with a book is purchasing a book that is wrapped so the purchaser doesn't know which book they're getting.

Bella's Books & Curiosities in Nappanee has a good selection to choose from. Owner Wanda Campbell said one of her employees suggested the idea and she admitted she was hesitant at first, but it's been very popular. The Blind Date with a Book idea has been around for a while and Campbell said there are so many varieties. Sometimes, the outside just states that the book is a mystery or science fiction. At a recent vendor event someone was selling Blind Date with a Book for children, and the books just had the age range listed on the outside.

Campbell said at Bella's Books they keep it simple and they put in a bookmark, a couple of stickers and a brief description of the book, a teaser, on the outside and the book is gift-wrapped.

Campbell laughed and said, "I tell people it's safer than dinner with a stranger."

"Some people just like the mystery of it and come back repeatedly for more," she said.



Wanda Campbell, owner of Bella's Books and curiosities in Nappanee stands by a display of Blind Dates with a book books.

The Blind Date with a Book concept is like a grab bag — the fun often is the not-knowing what you're getting and being surprised when it turns out to be great.

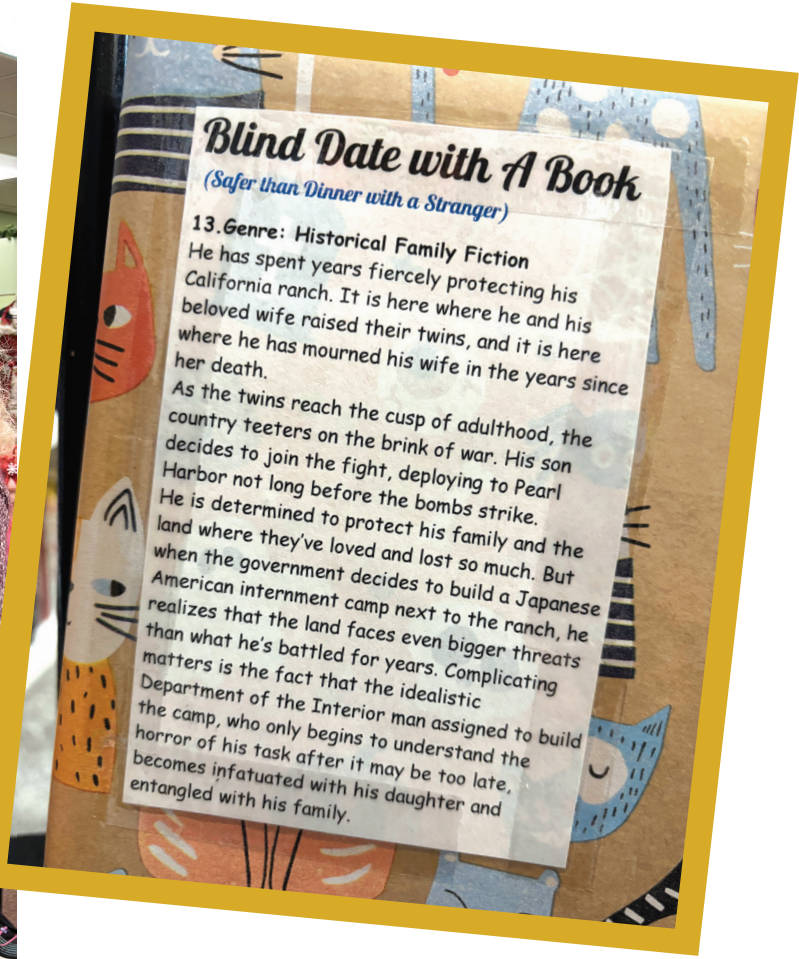
Campbell said, "It's a lot of fun to talk to them about it after they've read the book."

She explained that personally when she has her "blind dates," she likes to have her hot tea, make sure the dogs have been let out and she grabs her book and blanket and snuggles up with her cat Bella on her lap and hopes her husband stays

quiet so she can enjoy her book.

Customers come back to tell her how much they enjoyed the book and want to know how she chooses the books for the "dates." She said she hand picks them all, usually they are books she has enjoyed or that her staff has recommended. She said they haven't always read every book that gets chosen to be a date book, but if they haven't read it, they do research them first.

Bella's Books has been selling them for around three years and sells them year-round but admitted it's



hard to keep up with wrapping them during the Nappanee Apple Festival or at Christmas time.

Campbell said, "They make great gifts because they're already gift wrapped!"

Especially if you know what type of book the recipient likes to read. Campbell said if she was buying a Blind Date with a Book for a friend, to make it like a "real" date, she'd think about the person and what they enjoyed reading and decide whether to choose a book she personally enjoyed or one she thinks her friend would like. She'd put the book in a gift bag along with a bottle of wine or hot cocoa with a mug and "fuzzy socks, of course!" and probably some chocolate. She'd include an invitation to come to her house at a certain date and time and bring the gift bag along so they could read together.

"This way the gift is not only the book, but also my time," she said.

Whether you want to treat someone to a Blind Date with a Book with you or to give them a special treat for them to enjoy on their own, or maybe you deserve to give yourself that time to relax, the winter is a great time to indulge.

Visit Bella's Books & Curiosities in Nappanee, 151 S. Main St., Nappanee, or your local bookstore and ask for a "blind date."



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RABER DIRTWORKX^{LLC}

CALL FOR
A FREE
ESTIMATE

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raberdirtworx.com

PO BOX 138, MILLERSBURG, IN 46543 | M-SA: 7AM-4PM

SERVICE DONE RIGHT.

Started by family in 2017, Raber Dirtworx continues operating on family values daily. From the first call to installation to repairs, we don't just "get the job done." We build septic systems that are designed to last. Plus, we believe great customer service begins before we start an excavating or septic project. That's why we offer free estimates to ensure we can provide what you need. To save time and money, give us a call and we'll evaluate your property within a few days. Now that's service done right.

New Year Giving Opportunity



We are truly grateful for your sponsorship. Because of your support, we continue to grow and reach more prisoners with the hope of the Gospel.

As we begin a new year, would your family consider making a special gift to strengthen this ministry? Your support will help us place gift packages and Bibles into the hands of men and women who desperately need encouragement.

A new-year donation will also equip us to respond to the many prisons inviting us to come and minister in the months ahead—opening doors to share the love of Jesus with thousands more.

**Year-Round
Ministry**

Christmas Behind Bars Outreach Ministries delivers gift packages and Bibles to prisoners all year long, bringing hope, truth, and comfort to those who often feel forgotten.

Please help...

\$10,000	reaches ...1,000	inmates
\$5,000	reaches500	inmates
\$1,000	reaches100	inmates
\$500	reaches 50	inmates
\$100	reaches 10	inmates

How to donate to this ministry:

By Mail: Christmas Behind Bars, PO Box 474, Bluffton, IN 46714

By Credit Card: Call 260-827-8835

Online: ChristmasBehindBars.org/donate



Upcoming ENTERTAINMENT

JAN.

Jan. 10
A1A: Jimmy Buffett Tribute Show
Blue Gate Performing Arts Center
\$14.95-\$49.95

Jan. 10
An Evening with Rakim
Lerner Theatre
\$53.55-\$166.95

Jan. 16
Josh Turner
Blue Gate Performing Arts Center
\$29.95-\$99.95

Jan. 16-18
Seussical, Jr.
Elkhart Civic Theatre
\$14-\$16



Jan. 17
EagleMania: The World's Greatest Eagles Tribute Band
Blue Gate Performing Arts Center
\$19.95-\$54.95

Jan. 17
Magic of Motown
The Lerner Theatre
\$40.15-\$104.05

Jan. 20
Building Block Talks – Community Foundation of Elkhart County
Goshen Theater
FREE

Jan. 20
Free Movie: Inside Out 2
Goshen Theater
FREE

Jan. 23
Mark Schultz
Blue Gate Music Hall
\$34.95

Jan. 23
Taylorville: A Tribute to Taylor Swift
Blue Gate Performing Arts Center
\$19.95-\$54.95

Jan. 24
John Berry
Blue Gate Music Hall
\$34.95

Jan. 24
Adrenalize: The Ultimate Def Leppard Experience
Blue Gate Performing Arts Center
\$19.95-\$49.95



Jan. 24
October London
Morris Performing Arts Center
\$52.75-\$94.75

Jan. 27
Cirque Kalabanté
Goshen College Sauder Concert Hall
\$10-\$55



Jan. 30
Colt Ford
Blue Gate Performing Arts Center
\$19.95-\$49.95

Jan. 30
Dion Pride
Blue Gate Music Hall
\$34.95

Jan. 31
Rhett Walker
Blue Gate Music Hall
\$39.95

Jan. 31
Joe Nichols
Blue Gate Performing Arts Center
\$34.95-\$79.95

Jan. 31
Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 6
Morris Performing Arts Center
\$29-\$95.75

Jan. 31
Hairball
Silver Creek Event Center
\$38-\$123

FEB.

Feb. 1
Colin & Brad: Asking for Trouble
Morris Performing Arts Center
\$52.55-\$88.55



Feb. 5
LOCASH
Blue Gate Performing Arts Center
\$29.95-\$79.95

Feb. 6
The Rocket Man Show
Blue Gate Performing Arts Center
\$24.95-\$69.95



Feb. 6.
John Branan
Blue Gate Music Hall
\$24.95



Feb. 7
Hometown Jams: Lee Brice
The Lerner Theatre
\$60.24-\$123.09

Feb. 7
Blackberry Smoke: Rattle, Ramble and Roll Tour 2026
Blue Gate Performing Arts Center
\$24.95-\$295.45

Feb. 12
Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir
Goshen College Sauder Hall
\$40-\$65

Feb. 12
Clay Walker
Blue Gate Performing Arts Center
\$34.95-\$89.95

Feb. 12-13
David Pendleton
Blue Gate Music Hall
\$29.95

Feb. 13
Little River Band
Silver Creek
\$54.75-\$206



Feb. 14
Aaron Lewis and the Stateliners
Firekeepers Casino Hotel
\$39+

Feb. 14
Love, South Bend Symphony Orchestra + The Bergamot
Morris Performing Arts Center
\$29-\$103.25

Feb. 14
Billy Dean
Blue Gate Music Hall
\$49.95

Feb. 14
Journey From The Heart
Blue Gate Performing Arts Center
\$19.95-\$54.95

Feb. 15
Elkhart County Symphony – Northern Expressions
Goshen College Sauder Hall
\$21.20-\$34.60

Feb. 18
Brit Floyd - The Moon, The Wall and Beyond
Morris Performing Arts Center
\$58.55-\$220.55

Feb. 19
Buddy Holly, Ritchie Valens, Big Bopper Tribute - Winter Dance Party
Blue Gate Performing Arts Center
\$14.95-\$49.95

Feb. 19
Concord Jazz
Ignition Music Garage
\$9



Feb. 20
Buddy Jewell
Blue Gate Music Hall
\$34.95

Feb. 20
The Milk Carton Kids & Sierra Hull
Blue Gate Performing Arts Center
\$19.95-\$64.95

Feb. 21
The Phil Collins Story
Silver Creek Event Center
\$30-\$101



Feb. 21
Ryan Stevenson
Blue Gate Music Hall
\$39.95

Feb. 21
JJ Grey & Mofro
Blue Gate Performing Arts Center
\$39.95-\$229.95

Feb. 21
Joe Bonamassa
Morris Performing Arts Center
\$63.00-\$223.75

Feb. 26
The Simon & Garfunkel Story
Blue Gate Performing Arts Center
\$34.95-\$179.95

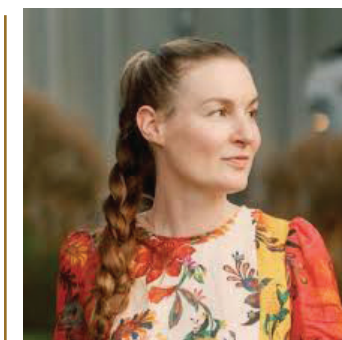
Feb. 27
Outback Presents: Rodney Carrington
The Lerner Theatre
\$54.05-\$220

Feb. 27
Dinosaur World Live
Blue Gate Performing Arts Center
\$19.95-\$44.95

Feb. 27
Lewis Black
Firekeepers Casino Hotel
\$29+

Feb. 27
TG Sheppard
Blue Gate Music Hall
\$49.95

Feb. 28
Beethoven's Eroica
Morris Performing Arts Center
\$29-\$95.75



Feb. 28
Charity Gayle
Blue Gate Performing Arts Center
\$39.95-\$69.95

MAR.



March 5

**Sal Vulcano:
Everything's Fine
Tour**

The Lerner Theatre
\$54.30-\$79.95

March 5

Gene Watson

*Blue Gate Performing Arts
Center*
\$19.95-\$59.95

March 6

**Tommy
James & The
Shondells**

*Blue Gate
Performing Arts
Center*
\$44.95-\$104.95

March 6

**"Tied up in Knotts"
w-Karen Knotts**

Blue Gate Music Hall
\$24.95



March 7

**Performing Arts
Series: Goitse**

Goshen College Sauder Hall
\$10-\$45

March 7

**The Wichita Lineman
- A Tribute to Glen
Campbell**

Blue Gate Music Hall
\$29.95

March 7

**Micky Dolenz - 60
Years of the Monkees**

Silver Creek Event Center
\$42-\$174



March 7

**Chase Matthew -
Holdin' it Down Tour
2026**

*Blue Gate Performing Arts
Center*
\$24.95-\$64.95

March 10

**Lords of the Sound
- The Music of Hans
Zimmer**

Morris Performing Arts Center
\$64.75-\$140.75

March 12

Three Dog Night

Blue Gate Performing Arts Center
\$34.95-\$99.95

March 13

Free Movie: Titanic

Goshen Theater
FREE

March 13

**An Evening With
TOTO**

Silver Creek Event Center
\$96-\$354



March 13

Meredith Andrews

Blue Gate Music Hall
\$34.95



March 13

Ian Munsick

*Blue Gate Performing Arts
Center*
\$44.95-\$189.95

March 13-15

Mrs. Doubtfire

Morris Performing Arts Center
\$53.75-\$101.75



March 14

Wade Hayes

Blue Gate Music Hall
\$34.95

March 14

**Marshall Tucker Band
feat. Hunter Flynn**

Blue Gate Performing Arts Center
\$39.95-\$89.95

March 13-15

**Premier Arts Academy
All School Musical:
Seussical the Musical**

The Lerner Theatre
\$12-\$17.15

March 19

Rhythm of the Dance

Blue Gate Performing Arts Center
\$19.95-\$59.95

March 20

The Inspirations

Blue Gate Music Hall
\$34.95



March 20

**Trisha Yearwood:
The Mirror Tour**

*Blue Gate Performing Arts
Center*
\$59.95-\$129.95



March 21

Bohemian Queen

The Lerner Theatre
\$28.95-\$133.05

Calendar

the **VENUES**

Looking to purchase tickets or find more events around the area?

GOSHEN THEATER

216 S Main St.

www.goshentheater.org

Box office: (574) 312-3701

IGNITION MUSIC GARAGE

120 E. Washington St., Goshen

www.ignitionmusic.net

Box office: (574) 971-8282

FUNNY PHARM COMEDY CLUB

1100 Chicago Ave., Goshen

www.funnypharmcomedy.com

Box office: (574) 971-8056

GOSHEN COLLEGE SAUDER HALL, GOSHEN COLLEGE MUSIC CENTER

1700 S. Main St.

<https://goshen.universitytickets.com>

Box office: (574) 535-7361

ELKHART CIVIC THEATRE

Bristol Opera House, 210 E. Vistula St.

www.elkhartcivictheatre.org

Box office: (574) 848-4116

THE LERNER THEATRE

410 S. Main St., Elkhart

www.thelerner.com

Box office: (574) 293-4469

BLUE GATE MUSIC HALL / PERFORMING ARTS CENTER

175 N. Van Buren St., Shipshewana

www.thebluegate.com/shipshewana/

blue-gate-theatre

Box office: (260) 768-4725

SILVER CREEK EVENT CENTER

Four Winds Casino New Buffalo, Mich.

www.fourwindscasino.com/newbuffalo/entertainment/event-center

Box office: (866) 494-6371

FIREKEEPERS CASINO HOTEL

11177 E. Michigan Ave., Battle Creek, Mich.

www.firekeeperscasino.com/shows

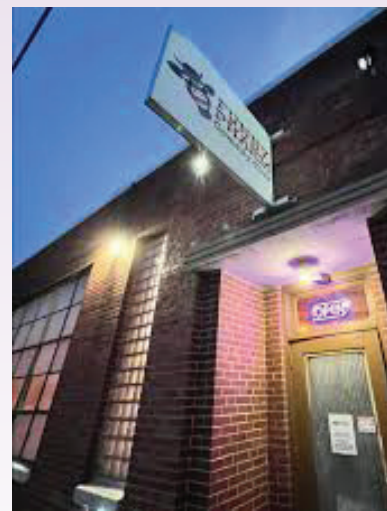
Box office number: (877) 352-8777

MORRIS PERFORMING ARTS CENTER

211 N. Michigan St., South Bend

<https://morriscenter.org>

(574) 235-9190



Make a personalized calendar for the new year

BY AMY LANT-WENGER

When it comes to gift giving, there are some options that strike a perfect balance between practical and personal.

For example, if you have someone in your life who is meticulous about keeping track of schedules, but would also love to have daily reminders of special people and moments in their lives, a family calendar is an ideal and unique treasure. And now, making a personalized calendar is easier than ever, with user friendly websites ready to help customize the details to create an unforgettable keepsake.

Create

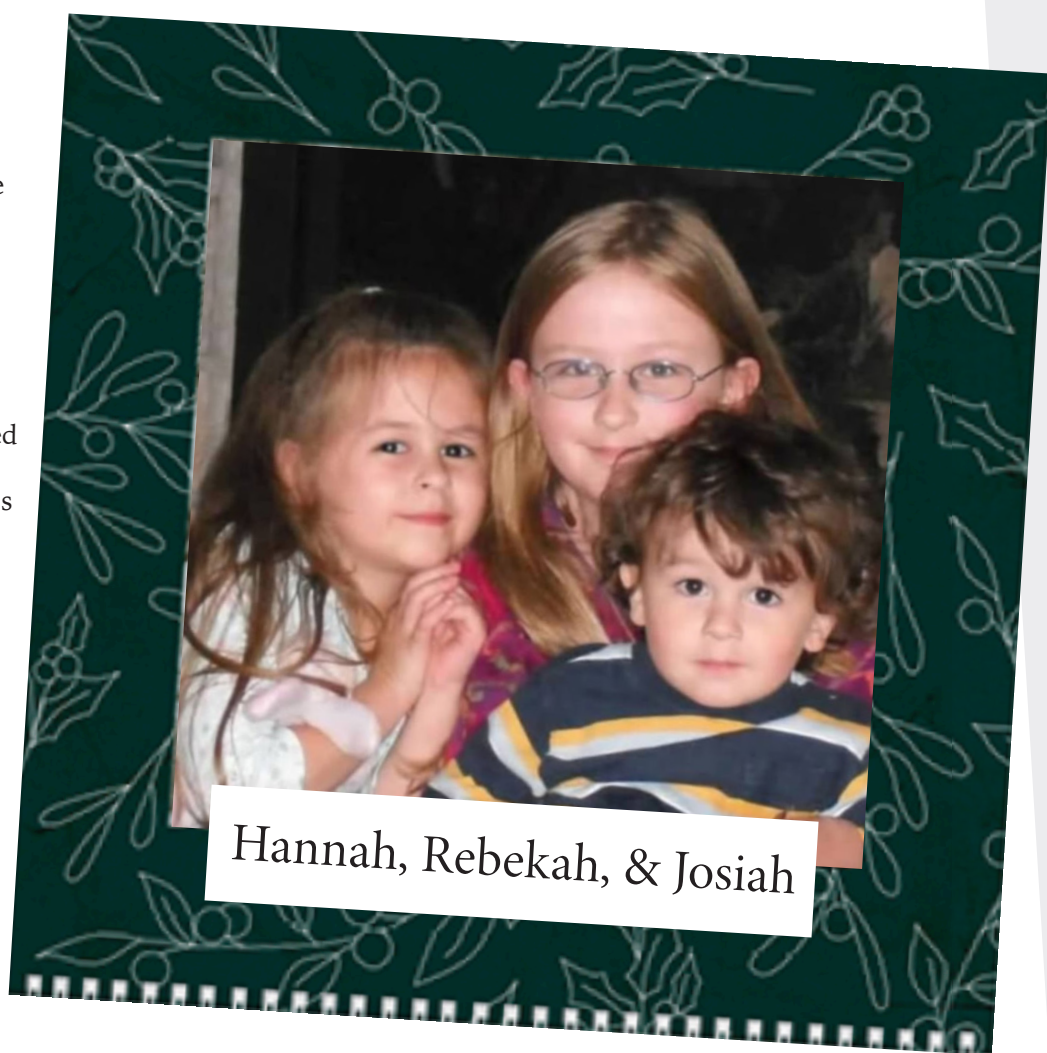
As someone who has given many of these types of calendars over the years, I can personally attest to the fact that designing such a gift is a heartfelt experience. Depending upon the recipient, I strive to select images that are particularly meaningful and memorable. And the website that I use to guide me in making each calendar as distinctive as the individual who will own it.

My personal endorsement goes to Shutterfly, which can easily be found at www.shutterfly.com.

Shutterfly is one of the most highly rated websites for personalized items, ranging from wall art to greeting cards to individual photo prints. Once you initially visit the site, you can head the category marked for calendars, and then select the size you're shopping for. There are several design options and themes to browse through, or if you're really inspired, you can start with an entirely blank slate and add your own elements along the way.

This year, I've just completed a special project for an immediate family member that highlights both the accomplishments of my three children, along with a few glimpses of them as little ones from years ago. And speaking as someone who is admittedly not very computer savvy, Shutterfly makes the creation process very easy.

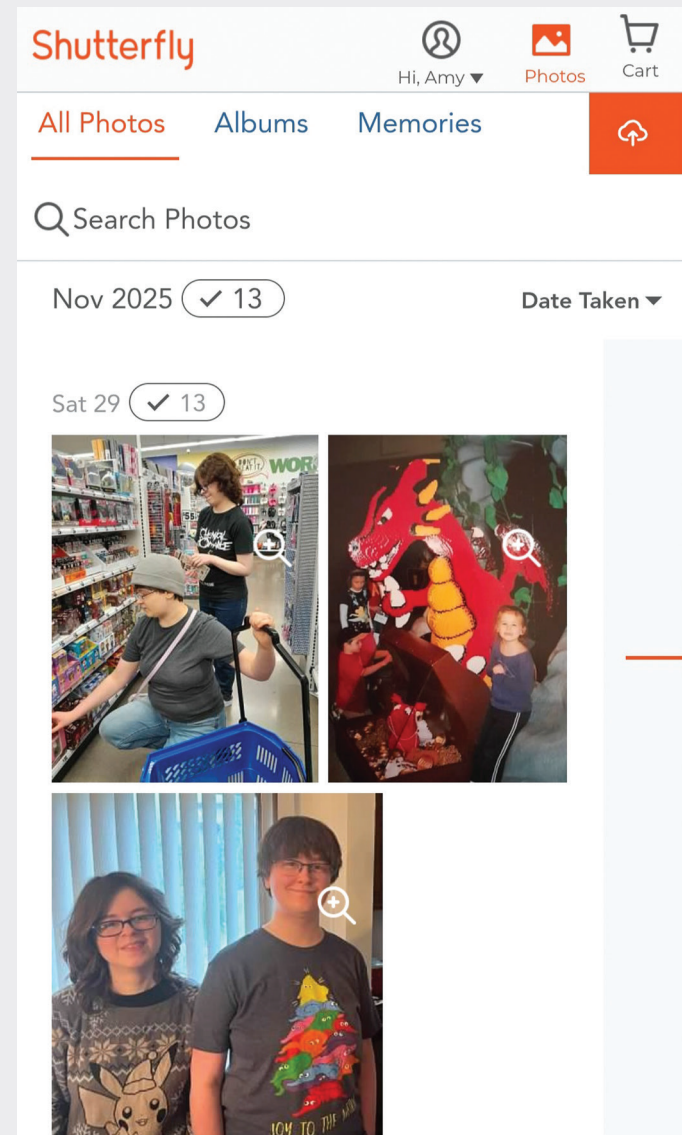
After I chose the pictures that I wanted to feature, I



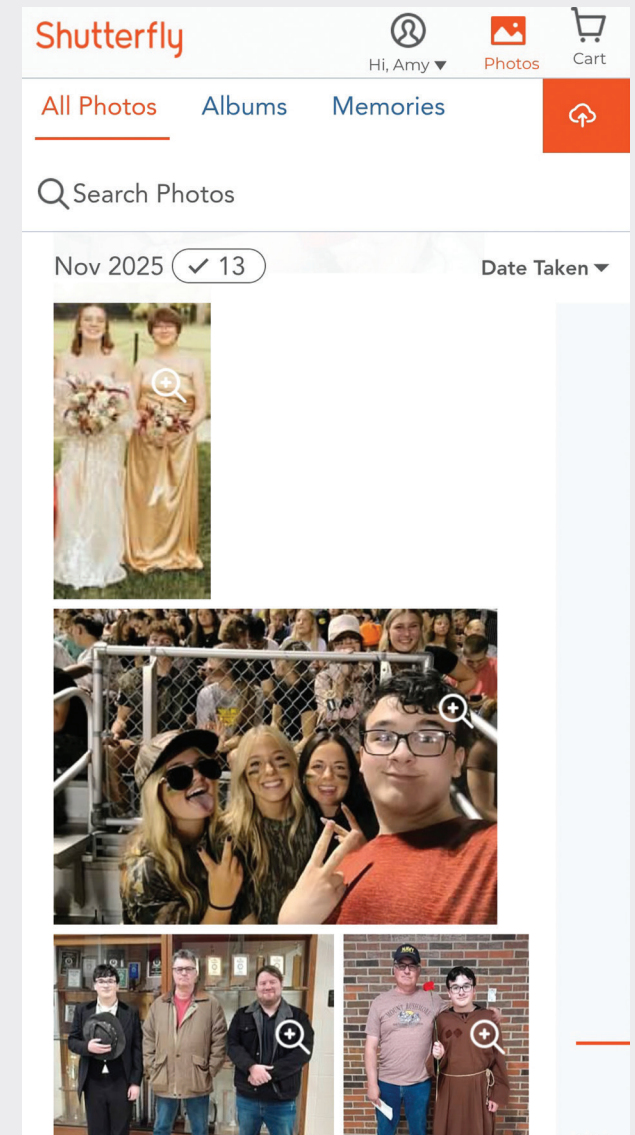
You can even choose an image for the cover, and you can add text or simply leave things blank. The phrase I chose to symbolize this older photograph of my kids is "Forever our babies."

uploaded them to the website. There are various templates that you can use to customize the pages, including specific layouts for one photo, all the way up to as many as can fit on a page. You can also add text with a variety of fonts, and you can even add birthdates, anniversaries, or other important milestones to the calendar.

If you don't quite have the time to work through an entire calendar in one session, Shutterfly will ask you to create an account, and it will save your project for you, so that you continue where you left off, whenever you're able

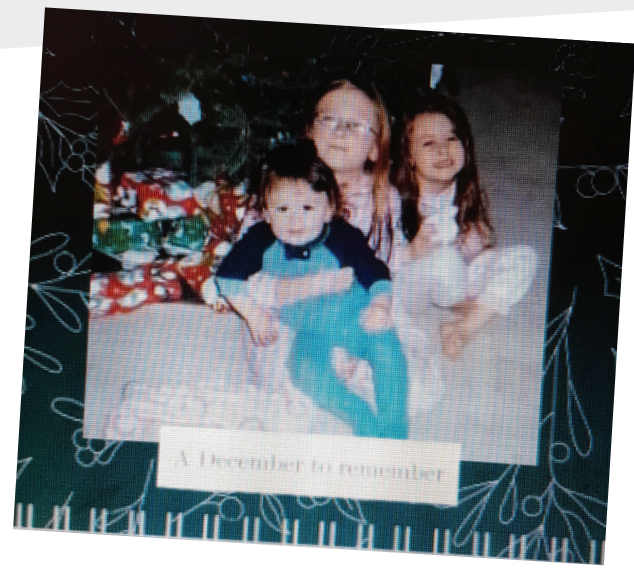


I selected a number of pictures of my children, Hannah, Rebekah, & Josiah, and saved them to a calendar project I'm planning on gifting to a family member for 2026. The website I chose is Shutterfly, a longtime personal favorite of mine for its easily navigated website and attention to detail.



to return. When the work is finished, you can walk through a number of editing layers to make absolutely sure you can preview the calendar, just as it will appear in the end result.

Shutterfly also drops a lot of sales throughout the week, so I recommend signing up for e-mail notices as well. Coupon codes are being issued almost daily, and it's not unusual to see buy one get one offers, along with other deep discounts. I used a code that promised free and expedited shipping, so I'm well assured that the item will be ready for the holidays.



Part of the fun in creating a seasonal theme was giving thought to selecting pictures that seemed appropriate for the month. Like this example, for December of 2026, I went with an all-time favorite photo of the kids beneath the Christmas tree.

BLING FOR YOUR BOO

Jewelry for Valentine's Day

BY IGOR SAPUCAIA

Fashion

THE SILVER EARRINGS

These gold-plated earrings offer a cool combination of clean shape and elaborate detail. Their design gives them a modern feel, but they still feel soft and elegant. Again, they also work well with everyday outfits but can easily elevate an evening look too. As a Valentine's gift, they're a great choice for someone who loves simplicity and something it won't add extra weight to their ears.

Price: \$45

Designer: Kendra Scott

Store: REFIND - Downtown Goshen



SILVER AND PINK NECKLACE

This extra-long silver necklace with pink crystals is both romantic and timeless. The soft rectangles, leaves, and stone shapes give it a Valentine's Day feel without making it too trendy. It's a piece you can wear across many seasons, whether with a simple summer shirt or a dressy long-neck outfit for the winter. The color is all you could ask for to use on a date and match the romantic energy.

Price: \$76

Designer: Kendra Scott

Store: REFIND - Downtown Goshen



THE HEART NECKLACE

This silver necklace presents a beautifully detailed heart, making it a sweet pick for Valentine's Day. The double-heart design adds depth and texture, and it gives a meaningful look without feeling over exaggerated. It's bold enough to stand out yet simple enough to wear often, whether layered or on its own.

Price: \$60

Designer: Kendra Scott

Store: REFIND - Downtown Goshen



THE RED "Y" NECKLACE

This gold necklace with deep red stones instantly brings a romantic vibe. The red color alone makes it a perfect Valentine's Day pick. The "Y" design adds an eye-catching and uncommon energy to it. It's a piece that stands out in a simple, confident way and makes any outfit feel a bit more special, especially when using it to impress your significant other.

Price: \$65

Designer: Kendra Scott

Store: REFIND - Downtown Goshen



GOLD BRACELET

This bracelet is simple, classic, and versatile, making it easy to wear with almost anything. It's not the kind of piece that goes out of style because it has clean lines and a timeless look, so that you can enjoy it for years. It works for everyday outfits or for a nicer evening out, making it very versatile.

Price: \$45

Designer: Kendra Scott

Store: REFIND - Downtown Goshen





BY JASMINE MILLER

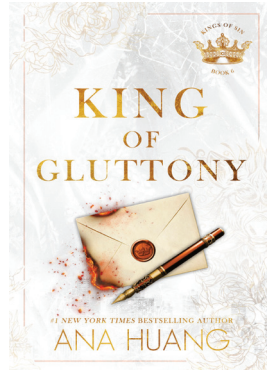
Be my valentine — or not

King of Gluttony (Kings of Sin Series, Book 6)

BY ANA HUANG

Book 6 focuses on Sebastian Laurent and his rival since childhood Maya Sign. The book takes you through their journey of having to work together despite the deep hate or potentially love-hate that they have for each other. Can their story prove that the line between lovers and rivals is a lot thinner than expected.

Release Date: April 28, 2026

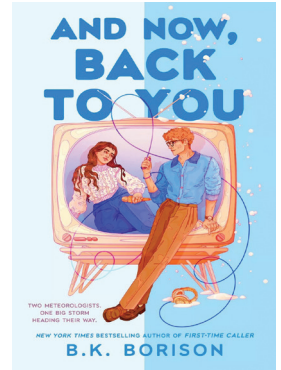


And Now, Back to You (Heartstrings Series, Book 2)

BY B.K. BORISON

A “When Harry Met Sally”-inspired romance features two competing meteorologists who are forced to work together and find common ground. Will the journalists make their relationship strong enough to face the storm?

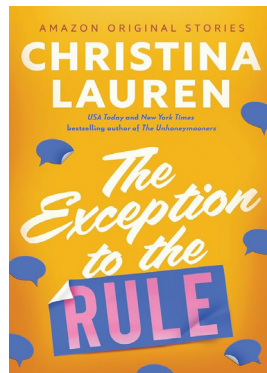
Price/Release Date: Feb. 10, 2026



The Exception to the Rule

BY CHRISTINA LAUREN

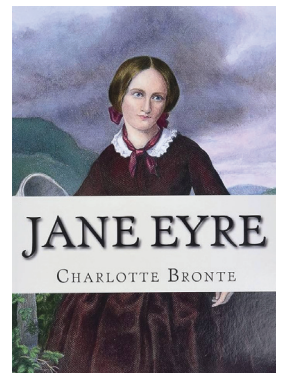
This novella tells the story of two strangers who accidentally find each other through an email mix-up during high school. Callum and Terra have turned this accident into a yearly tradition and the question stands: do we meet or keep the anonymous bond?



Jane Eyre

BY CHARLOTTE BRONTË

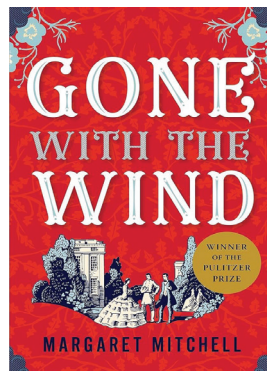
The story follows a strong-willed orphan with a harsh childhood behind her. The story walks through her childhood and into the potential of her becoming a governess and potential love with her employer.



Gone with the Wind

BY MARGARET MITCHELL

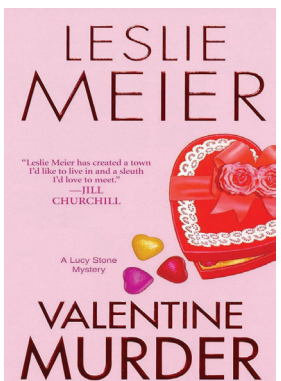
This historical novel is set in the Civil War era and focuses on the strong-willed Scarlett, a southern belle with the war teaching her the fight for survival. Scarlett is learning how to navigate complicated relationships and learning lessons of love, loss and resilience.



Valentine Murder (A Lucy Stone Mystery Series, Book 5)

BY LESLIE MEIER

On Valentine's Day Lucy Stone finds herself not keeping her thoughts focused on the cupcakes that she is making for her children, but on the librarian that was found dead in the newly renovated library. Is the killer an insider? Will they find the killer?



Read



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