

R O C H E S T E R

ACTIVE LIVING

C H R O N I C L E S



FINDING FRIENDSHIP

Through Fitness | p. 3

FINDING MY PERSON

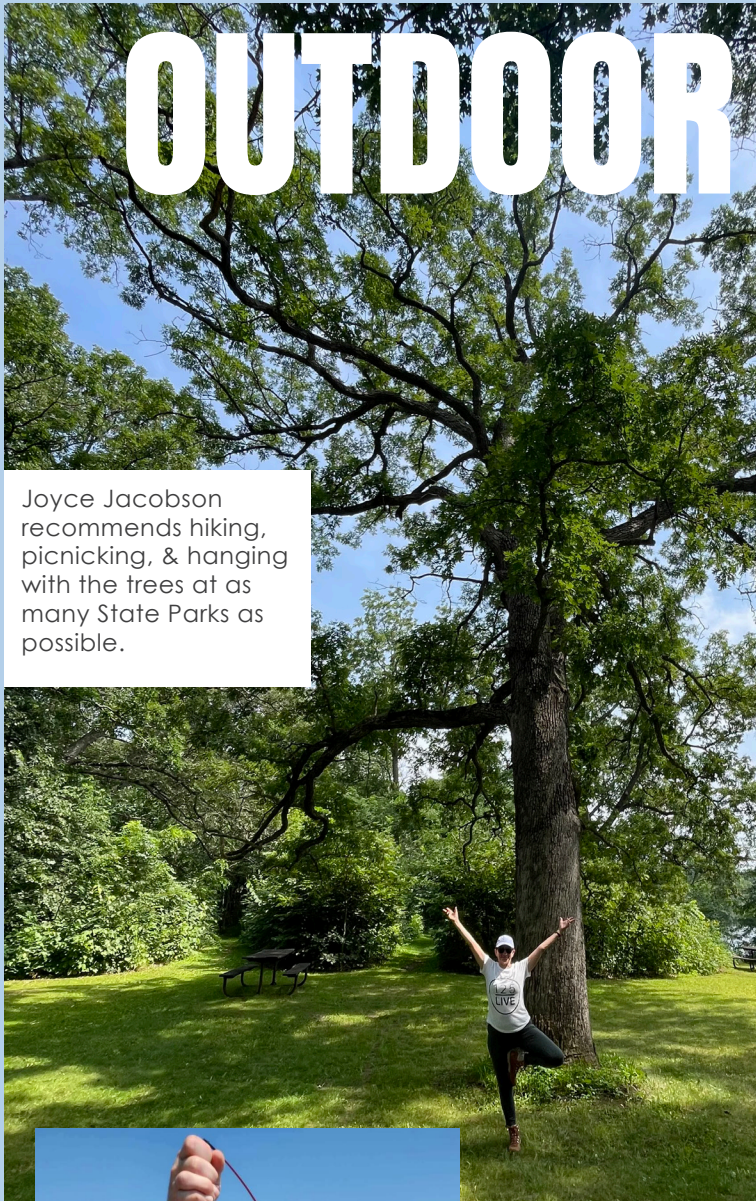
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125 GAVE ME MY LIFE BACK

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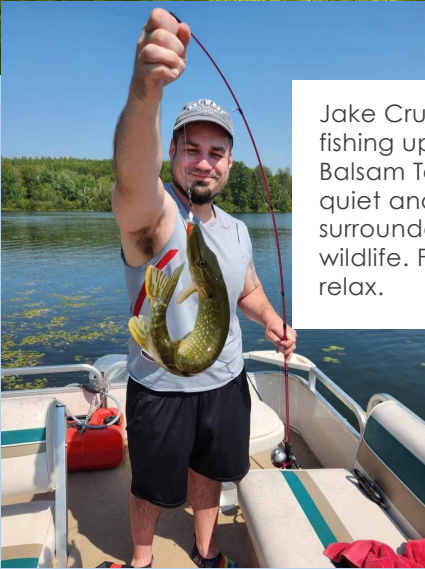
OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES



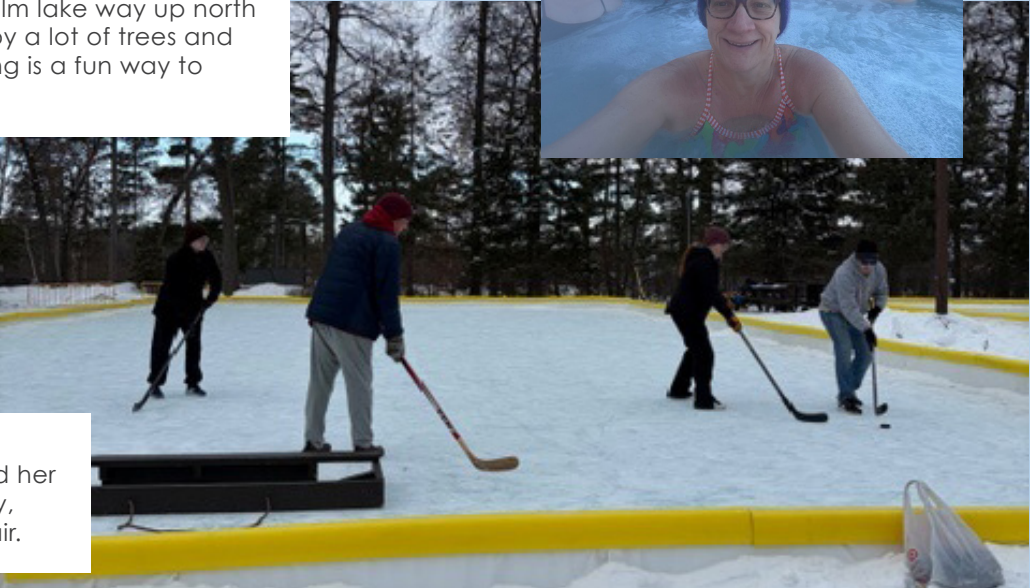
Joyce Jacobson recommends hiking, picnicking, & hanging with the trees at as many State Parks as possible.



Tamsin Barlow - This was from 2025 when I competed in a triathlon in Winona. The biking section is my favorite, and I was especially happy in this picture because I had survived the swim section. I came first in my age category (because there were only two in my age category).



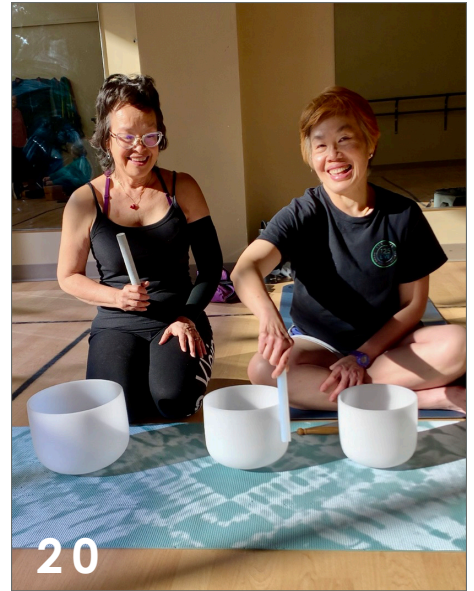
Jake Cruz- I like summertime fishing up north at Burrows Lake in Balsam Township, MN. It is a very quiet and calm lake way up north surrounded by a lot of trees and wildlife. Fishing is a fun way to relax.



Heidi Anderson-Isaacson embraces winter and she and her family love to ski, play hockey, plunge, and enjoy the fresh air.

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A close-up portrait of Sylvia Bujak, a woman with short, layered blonde hair and bangs. She has light green eyes and is wearing bright red lipstick. She is dressed in a dark navy blue blazer over a black textured sweater, accessorized with a gold chain-link necklace featuring a large toggle clasp. The background is a soft, out-of-focus grey.

dear READERS

After 14 years of calling Rochester home, I continue to be amazed by the kindness and compassion that define this community. Time and time again, I have witnessed neighbors stepping up for one another, strangers becoming friends, and people coming together with a shared spirit of generosity and care. There is something truly special about the way Rochester shows up - quietly, consistently, and wholeheartedly.

As we celebrate 10 years of 125 LIVE at our Elton Hills Drive NW location, I find myself reflecting on what makes this place more than just a building. It is where we gather not to sweat the small stuff, but to lift each other up - to laugh, to learn, to move, and to connect. Every day, I see new friendships forming, stories being shared, and experiences that remind us we are never alone on this journey.

I am deeply grateful to be part of a community that believes in showing up for one another. Thank you for making Rochester a place where compassion leads, where neighbors become family, and where 125 LIVE continues to be a welcoming home for connection, wellness, and belonging.

Sylvia Bujak

Cover Art:
*Anne Barlow and the mural is at 125 LIVE
in the Willow Room*



Finding Friendship *Through Fitness*

When Lori Milanowski moved to Rochester, joining a gym was already part of her plan. Fitness had long been a steady part of her life, and when her mom chose to become a member of 125 LIVE, it felt natural to join together as accountability partners. What she didn't expect was that this decision would lead to something far deeper than workouts and routines – it would lead to friendship.

At 125 LIVE, connections often begin in simple ways. A shared class. A familiar face week after week. A quick conversation after stretching. For Lori, the turning point came after a weekend class when she invited a few women out for tea. Hours passed in conversation, laughter, and stories – and a new circle of friends was born. That one invitation turned into a group chat, and today they make time to gather regularly for

meals, coffee, and shared experiences beyond the walls of the center.

Through these friendships, Lori has found what she lovingly calls her “bonus moms.” They offer advice, encouragement, and a genuine sense of care – showing up not only for workouts, but for life's milestones and moments in between. Their support extends into the community as well, attending events Lori helps organize and celebrating one another's successes along the way.

What makes relationships formed at 125 LIVE so meaningful is how naturally they cross generations. Here, age differences fade into the background as people connect through shared goals, laughter, and the desire to stay active and engaged. The friendships don't end when class ends; they grow into weekend plans, travel, and a network of support that members carry into their everyday lives.

If Lori were describing 125 LIVE to someone new to Rochester, she would call it a comfortable, affordable, and fun place to meet people while discovering great classes. It's a welcoming space – one where participation opens the door to belonging.

At its heart, 125 LIVE is about more than fitness. It's about creating a place where people feel seen, supported, and connected. While Lori's schedule allows her to attend mostly evenings and weekends, she sees firsthand the strong community her mom has built here and the joy that comes not only from movement, but from meaningful relationships.

Stories like Lori's remind us that when people walk through the doors of 125 LIVE, they may be searching for health – but often, they find friendship.





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Finding “My Person”

How Gary and Deb Found Connection at 125 LIVE



For Gary and Deb, 125 LIVE is more than a fitness and social center – it’s where an unexpected connection grew into something truly meaningful.

Both came to 125 LIVE after long and fulfilling careers, ready to embrace a new rhythm in retirement. Gary retired as a building supply receiving supervisor, while Deb concluded her career at Mayo Clinic as a General Radiology Supervisor. Like many members, they were looking for activity, friendship, and a sense of community.

Deb joined 125 LIVE in 2023 shortly after retiring. When she first signed up, she asked about volunteer opportunities and learned the center was hiring at the front desk. She applied – and, as she says, “the rest is history.” Working at the front desk introduced her to a wide circle of members and deepened her sense of belonging.

“I absolutely love my 125 LIVE family,” she shares.

Gary and Deb’s paths officially crossed in February 2025. Deb was covering the lower-level desk during a busy swim meet on a particularly nasty winter day. Gary was heading to the Willow Room for pickleball. What began as a casual conversation – both wishing they were golfing instead of braving the cold – quickly turned into something more when Gary asked if she would golf with him.

That first interaction felt easy and natural. Nothing

elaborate or planned – just two retirees talking about shared interests. But it opened the door to future plans and a growing connection.

Their relationship gained momentum through pickleball. A group of 125 LIVE members created a text chain to coordinate games, and both Gary and Deb became part of the regular group. Matches led to social outings, and the camaraderie on the court gradually grew into something deeper. Through fitness, friendly competition, and time spent together off the court, their bond strengthened.

Today, 125 LIVE represents the foundation of their shared story – the place where they met, stay active, and continue to build friendships. They work out together, play pickleball, golf whenever Minnesota weather allows, and cherish time with their grandchildren. As Deb says simply, “Gary is now my person.”

For anyone coming to 125 LIVE hoping to build meaningful connections, Gary and Deb offer straightforward advice: get involved. Join a class. Put your name on the text chain. Say yes to coffee after a game. Community forms through participation.

At 125 LIVE, a conversation at the front desk can turn into a tee time. A pickleball game can turn into dinner with friends. And sometimes – it can turn into finding your person.

The Power of Travel: Whether Across the Room or Across the Ocean

How movement, curiosity, and community keep us engaged at every stage of life

Travel has a way of reminding us who we are. Sometimes it means flying across an ocean to walk ancient streets, stand before great works of art, or see landscapes we've only known from photographs. Other times, it's much simpler - crossing the room to start a conversation, saying yes to an invitation, or stepping outside a familiar routine. In both cases, travel asks the same thing of us: to be curious, open, and willing to move.

For many active seniors, travel isn't about checking destinations off a list. It's about perspective. When we travel, we see how other people live, eat, worship, celebrate, and endure. We begin to understand that we have far more in common than we do differences. And it is from those differences - language, customs, traditions, and stories - that we learn. When we travel with open eyes and open hearts, the world gets a little smaller, a little kinder, and a little better.

Travel also stretches us in healthy ways. Navigating a new city, learning a few words of another language, or simply adapting to a different pace keeps the mind sharp and the spirit engaged. Even small journeys can reignite confidence: *I can still do this. I can still learn. I can still be surprised.* There is a quiet satisfaction that comes from realizing we are still growing — still becoming.

And then there's the joy. The laughter shared over a meal, the friendships formed on a bus ride or while waiting in line at a museum, or the quiet moment when a sunset stops you mid-sentence. These experiences linger long after the suitcase is unpacked. They become stories we tell, lessons we carry, and reminders that life is still wonderfully unfolding.

When traveling with an Ed-Ventures group, the experience goes beyond the fellowship and companionship shared along the way. Our team takes care of the details and opens doors to experiences individual travelers might otherwise miss. We're there to offer guidance with language differences, unfamiliar currencies, and cultural customs - and to provide an added sense of comfort and security - so you can feel confident, supported, and free to enjoy each moment of the journey.

At Ed-Ventures, we believe travel should be meaningful, comfortable, and enriching - journeys designed not just to see the world, but to experience it together. We invite you to join us on one of these life-changing journeys, where curiosity is encouraged, friendships are formed, and the world opens in ways both big and small. In the end, travel isn't about how far you go. It's about what opens up when you do.





Greece: In the Footsteps of History and Culture - Athens & Mediterranean Cruise

Departing **August 29 – September 6, 2026**, this Ed-Ventures Athens & Mediterranean Cruise -hosted in partnership with **KAAL TV** and **Randy Brock** - begins in historic Athens and sails the Aegean Sea to Mykonos, Santorini, Crete, Rhodes, Patmos, and Ephesus, Turkey. From ancient ruins and biblical sites to whitewashed villages and stunning island scenery, this journey blends history, culture, and relaxation into one remarkable Greek escape.



Ireland: Landscapes, Storytelling, and a Warm Welcome — Highlights of Ireland

Offered **September 17 – 27, 2026**, this tour reveals Ireland’s rolling green landscapes, historic sites, and famously warm hospitality. From the Cliffs of Moher to village conversations and shared laughter, Ireland reminds travelers how stories and community bring a place - and people - to life.



Germany, Austria & Switzerland: Tradition, Beauty, and Celebration - Including Oktoberfest

Traveling **September 12 – 23, 2026**, this classic Ed-Ventures journey blends alpine scenery, historic cities, and cultural traditions - highlighted by the joyful celebration of Oktoberfest. Music, shared tables, and time-honored customs create a sense of connection that turns travel into true community.



Slovakia & Hungary: Hidden Gems of Central Europe - Treasures of Hungary & Slovakia

Departing **August 26 – September 5, 2026**, this tour explores elegant cities, thermal baths, and centuries-old traditions in the heart of Central Europe. These lesser-known destinations offer rich history, welcoming locals, and the joy of discovering cultures that feel both new and familiar.



El Camino: A Journey of Purpose and Reflection — El Camino de Santiago

Traveling **September 6 – 19, 2026**, this meaningful pilgrimage invites travelers to walk portions of the ancient Camino alongside fellow seekers. Each step creates space for reflection, conversation, and encouragement — a reminder that movement itself can be deeply transformative.



The Holy Lands: Walking the Story of Faith — Multiple Departures

With **multiple departures in 2026**, Ed-Ventures journeys to the Holy Lands bring Scripture and history vividly to life. From Jerusalem and Bethlehem to Galilee, these sacred places deepen understanding, strengthen faith, and offer moments of profound meaning that stay with travelers long after returning home.

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Finding Your Rhythm

How Dance, Service, and Community Shape Eric Hoyer's Mission



We often talk about movement as a pathway to connection. For Eric Hoyer—President of Southern MN USA Dance, certified dance instructor, proud veteran, and passionate community leader—movement became something even deeper: a way to rebuild connection, rediscover purpose, and

help others find their own rhythm.

A Rochester-area native now living in Eyota, Eric's journey began with a strong sense of duty. In March 2006, moved by reports of ongoing casualties overseas, he enlisted in the Minnesota Army National Guard. Serving as an automated



logistics specialist with the 834th Aviation Support Battalion, he trained at Fort Jackson and Fort Lee before deploying in 2008 with the 34th Combat Aviation Brigade during Operation Iraqi Freedom. His service took him from a memorable send-off in Bangor, Maine, to missions in Balad, Tallil, and BIAP, returning home in 2009.

Coming home, however, proved to be the greater challenge. Eric speaks openly about the emotional distance that can follow military service. Relearning how to connect with family, friends, and everyday life took time and patience. “I struggled with crowds, trust, and connection,” he shares. “I still do – but it’s a lot better than before.”

Unexpectedly, dance became the bridge back.

In 2012, a free salsa lesson at a Winterfest fundraiser introduced him to something that demanded presence – rhythm, technique, and connection. Dance required him to be fully engaged in the moment. Over time, that practice grew into passion. Eric progressed from student to instructor, competitor, and eventually studio owner, building relationships within a global dance community and even meeting his partner through their shared love of movement. Yet Eric is quick to say that his story is not a blueprint – it’s an invitation.

“Dance may have helped heal me,” he says, “but it doesn’t have to be about coping for everyone. It can be fun, sport, challenge, vitality – or simply that feeling of being alive.” His philosophy centers on listening rather than projecting. True empowerment, he believes, comes from helping people discover their own reasons to move.

That mindset shapes his leadership at Southern MN USA Dance and his work within the 125 LIVE community. As instructors, Eric explains, the role is to provide tools – rhythm, technique, partnership – while allowing each dancer to interpret movement in their own way. “What you do with it is entirely up to you,” he says with a smile.

At 125 LIVE, Eric’s approach fits naturally into a community built on active, connected living. Weekly dance classes and social events bring members together not only to learn steps, but to build friendships and confidence. Research continues to show that dance improves cardiovascular health, balance, cognition, and emotional well-being – benefits that resonate deeply with our active adult community.

Every Friday at 11:00 a.m., members gather at 125 LIVE for classes that blend warm-ups with partner dances like waltz and swing.

Additional free sessions downtown at the Chateau Theatre or Peace Plaza invite the broader Rochester community to join in, while monthly social dances on the second Saturday transform 125 LIVE into a space filled with music, laughter, and connection.

For Eric, the mission is simple: create spaces where people feel welcome, supported, and free to explore movement in their own way. “The rhythm is universal,” he often says, “but the reason is yours.”

His story reminds us that reinvention is always possible. Whether someone arrives at 125 LIVE searching for healing, friendship, or simply a new experience, dance offers an open door – one step at a time.



125 LIVE Gave Me My Life Back

Joe Smith's Story of Strength, Community, and Living Forward



At 83 years young, Joe carries both profound loss and remarkable resilience. A recent widower after 56 years of marriage, he lost his wife in September 2022 – a life-changing moment that reshaped his path. Yet even in the face of grief and a new Parkinson’s diagnosis, Joe has chosen to stay deeply engaged with life, leaning into community, learning, and movement.

Before coming to Rochester, Joe lived in Las Cruces, New Mexico, where hiking, walking, and continuous learning were part of his daily rhythm. In August 2023, after receiving his Parkinson’s diagnosis at Mayo Clinic, he found himself searching for direction. Within two days, he discovered 125 LIVE – and immediately felt it was where he needed to be.

He made a bold decision: he sold his home and its contents without hesitation and moved to Rochester for the programs and sense of community that 125 LIVE promised.

Joe joined just one week after his diagnosis and quickly realized that 125 LIVE was more than a building – it was a network of people who genuinely care. He became part of the Parkinson’s Support Group, at the time led by dedicated volunteer Barbara Schroeder with support from Chuck and Dorey Johnson, who helped connect him to additional resources. Through their encouragement, Joe joined the Parkinson’s Voice Project at the University of Minnesota Duluth via Zoom. The results were life-changing: his swallowing improved, the choking episodes diminished, and his voice became stronger and clearer.

125 LIVE also became a place of healing as Joe navigated the loss of his wife. Through the Grief Group, held twice monthly, he found space to process emotions, share experiences, and rediscover connection during a difficult chapter of life.

Today, Joe maintains a consistent routine, exercising at 125 LIVE Monday through Friday – except on the coldest and iciest winter days, when he adapts by working out at home. He credits the wide range of specialized programs and the people who lead them for helping him stay active and hopeful. Volunteers like Steve Grinnell coach Cycling for Parkinson’s and Ping Pong for Parkinson’s. Professional staff lead vital classes such as Parkinson’s Wellness Recovery, Rock Steady Boxing, and Tai Chi – always encouraging members to keep moving forward.

For Joe, what makes 125 LIVE truly unique is its holistic approach. Beyond fitness, the center offers education, music, conversation, and creativity – all of which shape his daily life. Through 125 LIVE educational programs, he even discovered cooperative housing, a living style that now suits him perfectly. Small acts of care ripple outward as well – from microwave quilted dish holders that protect his hands to a sling for his dog made by the 125 LIVE Quilters.

He describes the culture here simply: management and staff who are deeply member-focused, and a community of people who genuinely look out for one another.

“125 LIVE keeps me kicking,” Joe says with a smile. “I haven’t found another place like it anywhere in the USA.”

His belief is clear: centers like 125 LIVE should exist in every city. Because what happens here goes far beyond exercise – it offers a blueprint for living well, staying connected, and finding purpose at every stage of life.

Joe’s journey reminds us that even in moments of loss or uncertainty, community has the power to restore hope. At 125 LIVE, healing often begins with a class, a conversation, or a simple welcome – and for Joe, it became the foundation for living fully again.



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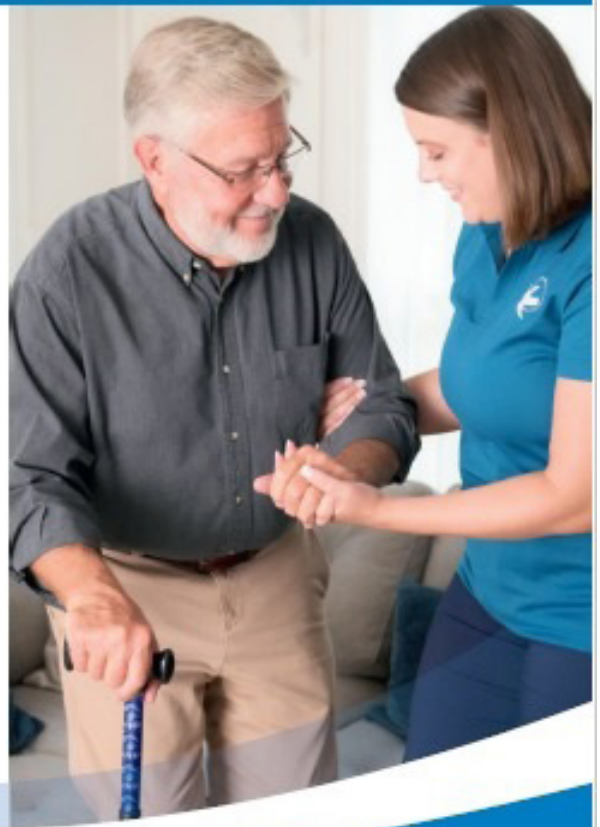
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Finding Community Through

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When Dan Plaisance moved from Oregon back to Minnesota, he wasn't just searching for a gym – he was looking for connection. Like many who walk through the doors of 125 LIVE, he arrived with a specific goal in mind: finding a place where he could continue exploring his love of pottery and deepen his creative practice.

The pottery studio quickly became more than a workspace. It became a place where creativity turned into conversation, and conversation turned into community. Dan's girlfriend, also an avid potter, joined him at 125 LIVE, and together they found a rhythm – shaping clay side by side while building relationships that extended far beyond the studio walls.

It didn't take long for those hours at the wheel to grow into meaningful friendships. While working in the studio, Dan and his girlfriend met another young couple who would soon become some of their closest friends. What began with shared tools and creative curiosity now includes regular

meetups for coffee or lunch at Novio's – a reminder that community often starts with a simple common interest.

For Dan, the connections at 125 LIVE feel different because they develop naturally through participation. “You get to know people by the activities they do,” he shares – a reflection of how shared passions create an environment where everyone feels welcome and accepted.

He credits the welcoming atmosphere – from the pottery studio to the front desk – for making it easy to step into community. In his words, 125 LIVE is “a place that creates community for everyone,” blending fitness, friendship, creative expression, and even essential resources like the food pantry into one inclusive experience.

Stories like Dan's remind us that connection doesn't always begin with a plan. Sometimes it begins with a simple act of creating – hands in clay, conversations unfolding, and friendships taking shape in ways we never expected.

At 125 LIVE, community is formed not only through movement, but through creativity, curiosity, and the courage to try something new.



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Carrying the Torch of Positivity

The Story of Darnell Williams



At 125 LIVE, members often say that the first smile they see when they walk through the doors belongs to Darnell Williams. His laughter fills the front desk, his energy lifts a room, and his presence reminds us that kindness can be as powerful as any fitness program we offer. But behind that joy is a story shaped by resilience, faith, and a deep commitment to people.

Darnell grew up in Chicago, Illinois, raised by the woman he still calls his greatest inspiration – his grandmother. Their home was small, crowded, and full of life. Thirteen siblings and cousins shared a three-bedroom house, and resources were scarce. Clothing came from thrift stores and rummage sales, and the family walked everywhere because there was no car.

Yet what they lacked materially, his grandmother made up for in strength and dignity. She raised every child under her roof while battling breast cancer, and she saw something special in Darnell from an early age. They spoke every day, and her belief in him became a foundation he still carries. From her, he also learned the importance of showing up with pride – she was always dressed beautifully, in elegant dresses and hats – a standard Darnell continues today.

He became the first in his generation to graduate from high

school, a milestone that set the tone for the life he would build. After graduation, he joined the Army Reserves, serving for eight years. He later attended Tougaloo College in Mississippi, studying English with dreams of becoming a second-grade teacher. When his grandmother's health declined, he left school to return home – a decision rooted in love and loyalty.

Life continued to shape him in unexpected ways. He married his high school sweetheart in 1988, and together they raised two daughters. Years later, he reconciled with both of his parents, finding peace and connection before their passing – an experience that deepened his belief in forgiveness and grace.

Darnell's path to Rochester was not immediate. When his former wife wanted to move closer to her sister in Minnesota, his first reaction was a firm "no." She went ahead, while he relocated to Clinton, Iowa, near his brother. Eventually, life brought him to Rochester – a move he now describes simply: "God put me where He wanted me to be."

Though he still loves returning to Chicago – where friends gather for reunion picnics that last for days – Rochester has become home. His family is here, including his oldest daughter and three grandchildren. His youngest daughter lives in Winona, and for the past 18 years he has shared life

with his partner, Debbie. With warmth and gratitude, he says, “Debbie has shown me the love I always watched on TV.”

For nearly seven years, Darnell has been part of the 125 LIVE team, and his impact is felt by members and staff alike. He believes that laughter has the power to shift a person’s entire day. “You can’t be upset if you’re laughing,” he says – a philosophy he lives out every shift. Whether greeting members by name or sharing a joke with co-workers, he finds purpose in knowing that people count on him to show up.

When asked about his positivity, Darnell reflects honestly on his upbringing. Growing up poor and Black shaped his outlook – not with bitterness, but with determination to carry forward a spirit of resilience. His goal is simple: to pass that light to his children and grandchildren, and to anyone who walks through the doors of 125 LIVE.

His advice is both gentle and powerful:

“Sometimes the people you love the most will hurt you the most. But you have to forgive people. Not forgiving only hurts you.”

At 125 LIVE, Darnell reminds us that community is built not only through programs or events, but through the people who choose to show up with heart every day. His story is one of perseverance, faith, and the quiet strength of someone who believes deeply in lifting others up – one smile, one laugh, and one connection at a time.



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Many of us can point to one person who made a lasting difference in our lives, someone who listened, encouraged us, and helped us believe in ourselves. At Bolder Options, we believe every young person deserves that kind of connection. Through meaningful one-on-one mentoring relationships, we help youth build confidence, resilience, and a sense of possibility during some of their most formative years. Along the way, mentors and mentees explore new activities, challenge themselves, and create shared experiences that are active, engaging, and genuinely fun, because growth happens best when young people feel connected, supported, and excited to participate.

Bolder Options serves youth ages 10-14, an important stage when young people are beginning to shape their identity, discover new interests, and decide how they see themselves in the world. Our program pairs each young person with a dedicated adult mentor who commits to meeting weekly for one-on-one activities and a monthly group experience. Together, mentors and mentees set goals, try new challenges, develop healthy habits, and strengthen the skills that help young people thrive both now and in the future.

The impact of Bolder Options is best seen through the relationships that grow within the program, like the one

between mentor Chad and his mentee, Gianni. Over the course of their year together, the pair bonded through shared interests and new experiences. Gianni, 11, loves art, and Chad quickly recognized his talent, encouraging him to continue developing his skills. Together they attended a Bolder Options watercolor class at 125 LIVE, learning new techniques and creating artwork to share with family and friends.

They also discovered a shared love of fishing. Although Gianni had talked about fishing before joining the program, he had never tried it. Chad took him on his first boat ride, and what was expected to be a short outing soon turned into hours spent fishing together, eventually even ice fishing. Reflecting on their time together, Chad shared, "Seeing his confidence grow each time he tries something new has been the best part of mentoring."

Mentors like Chad are the heart of Bolder Options, helping young people discover new experiences, build confidence, and see bolder possibilities for their future.

To learn more about becoming a mentor or supporting Bolder Options, contact Sarah Schaller at sarah.schaller@bolderoptions.org, or visit bolderoptions.org.

Morning Reactivation: *A Calm, Intentional Start to Your Day*

BY MICHAEL WUEHLER

Before the buzz of notifications, the pull of coffee, or the rush of responsibilities, there's a quiet window each morning that holds surprising power. How you use the first few minutes after waking can shape your mood, focus, and energy for the rest of the day. This simple Morning Reactivation ritual is designed to gently reset your nervous system, awaken your body, and set a positive mental tone—no equipment required.

Begin With Breath

While still in bed, close your eyes and place one hand on your chest. Breathing slowly and intentionally signals safety to your nervous system, helping your body shift from sleep to calm alertness.

Inhale through your nose for four counts, hold gently for two, then exhale slowly for six. Repeat this cycle several times. The longer exhale is key—it encourages relaxation and steadiness, grounding you before the day begins.

Gently Awaken the Body

Sit on the edge of your bed and begin slow, mindful movement. Gently move your head and neck forward and back, then in easy circles. Rotate your wrists and ankles, noticing any stiffness soften. Finish with a big, satisfying overhand stretch—reach up, lengthen your spine, and let your body fully arrive in the morning.

Shift Your Mindset with Gratitude

Take a moment to acknowledge something you're grateful for—big or small. Gratitude naturally guides the brain toward positive awareness, making it easier to notice supportive moments throughout the day.

Set an Intention

Ask yourself: What is one positive thing I want to honor or do today? Your intention doesn't need to be complicated. It might be patience, focus, kindness, or simply showing

up fully. Let this intention quietly guide your actions.

Meet Yourself with Kindness

Stand in front of a mirror, look yourself in the eyes, and smile. It may feel simple—even silly—but this small gesture reinforces self-connection and compassion, reminding your brain that you are safe, capable, and ready.

Rehydrate From the Inside Out

Your brain is made up of nearly 70 percent water, and after hours of sleep, your body wakes slightly dehydrated. Before coffee or food, drink one full glass of room-temperature water. This simple act supports mental clarity, circulation, and energy, giving your brain and body what they need to function well.

One Important Rule

Complete this entire ritual before food, coffee, or electronics. Protecting these few minutes allows your nervous system to wake naturally, without external stimulation pulling you into urgency too soon.



What Grievers



Really Want To Tell You

“JUST THINK HOW MUCH BETTER THIS WORLD WOULD BE IF MORE OF US TOOK THE TIME TO BETTER UNDERSTAND GRIEF. ASK YOURSELF—CAN I BE ONE OF THOSE PEOPLE?”

BY RANDY STOCKER

Imagine—It’s 2:00 in the morning. You can’t sleep. You are crying so hard that your body hurts. You can’t eat. You can’t feel anything. The sudden death of a loved one—a child, a spouse, a sibling, a parent, or a good friend—has left you so emotionally drained, you are uncertain if you can survive. You are not sure that you want to survive. It. Just. Hurts. So. Much.

This is how I felt on July 22, 2003, after learning that my mother, Jean, and my two daughters, Jenelle, age 19, and Amy, age 9, were killed by a distracted semi-truck driver who was

speeding and reading a book when he killed all three.

ASK YOURSELF—If your best friend’s spouse died today, would you know what to say? Would you know what to do? Would you know what they are thinking and how to “best help them”? Most people wouldn’t.

My story is not about my loss. It is about educating others to better understand grief. Please listen carefully as I am going to share with you what a griever is probably thinking about, but not saying to you.

1 Please be patient with me and supportive of me. I am not the same person I was before my loss. Not only did I lose a very important person in my life, but I lost the chance to make more memories with that person.

2 Please let me grieve in my own way and in my own time. Don't tell me how to grieve, when to grieve, or when to stop grieving. Everyone grieves differently. Please let me as well.

3 Please understand that you cannot "fix my grief" or "take away" my pain. Instead, please simply listen to me and let me cry on your shoulder. If you feel like it, please cry

4 Please forgive me if I say something thoughtless or hurtful towards you. I am frequently depressed and lose my temper often. It is nothing against you. It is my grief needing to escape. I may not even thank you for your help or apologize for my words. However, your help is always appreciated—even if I don't say so at the time.

5 Please share stories and memories with me about my loved ones. I need to know that they will always be remembered. Please mention their names frequently. I need to hear them. I might cry or get sad. However, remember that there are good tears and bad tears. Hearing a story usually brings about good tears that might bring a much-needed smile.

6 Please never tell me what to do or when to quit grieving. I am so tired of hearing hurtful or insensitive clichés like "time heals all wounds," or "they are in a better place," or "it was meant to be". I would much rather hear "I am so sorry for your loss" or "I am here for you and your family."



7 Please be clear that nothing you can say to me will take away my pain. What I need are "hugs and friendship." Please do not push me to do things that I am not yet ready to do, or feel hurt if I appear withdrawn. When I am ready to get back to some normal semblance of life, I will let you know.

8 Please never say "I know how you feel" because you don't. Instead, show empathy.

9 Please never stop calling me. You might think that you are respecting my privacy, but to me it feels like you are abandoning me.

10 Please accept me for who I am today. I have been through a very traumatic experience, and I am a different person.

Future Occupational Therapists Find Inspiration at 125 LIVE



Recently, we had the pleasure of welcoming several doctoral students from the University of Minnesota Rochester's Occupational Therapy program to 125 LIVE. Each of these students is currently pursuing a Doctorate in Occupational Therapy (OTD), bringing with them undergraduate backgrounds in psychology, kinesiology, biology, neuroscience, and applied health science. Their time volunteering here offered more than academic observations, it provided meaningful, real-world engagement with an active older adult community.

Why 125 LIVE?

When asked what first drew them to volunteer at 125 LIVE, the students were clear: they wanted to deepen their understanding of the older adult population. As future occupational therapists, developing a nuanced perspective on aging is essential. They were also enthusiastic about

supporting a community-based organization that empowers adults to define and pursue value in their own lives.

Several students had previously worked in assisted living and memory care settings. While those environments provided important clinical exposure, they were especially excited to engage with highly independent adults—individuals who actively choose how they participate, socialize, and stay well. At 125 LIVE, they encountered members who are self-directed, socially connected, and purpose-driven.

Moments That Matter

During their visit, the students participated in a scavenger hunt throughout the facility. At times, they intentionally allowed themselves to look a bit lost. What happened next made a lasting impression.

Members quickly stepped in to help—offering directions, encouragement, and conversation. The students specifically

highlighted the attentiveness and warmth of our front desk team. These spontaneous interactions reinforced what many of us already know: 125 LIVE is not just a facility; it is a community where people look out for one another.

A New Perspective on Aging

Spending time in such a vibrant environment reshaped how these future clinicians view aging. They were genuinely surprised by the number of members actively visiting, smiling, and engaging in activities throughout the day. One student compared the atmosphere to a college recreation center—energetic, social, and full of movement.

They also noted how comfortable they felt in our judgment-free, intergenerational space. One of the doctoral students is herself a 125 LIVE member and shared that she feels more at ease here than at other fitness facilities. The culture of inclusion and mutual respect stood out as a defining characteristic.

Influencing Future Careers

For students pursuing occupational therapy, exposure to all stages of life is critical. Their time at 125 LIVE reinforced the importance of understanding aging not as decline, but as continued growth, engagement, and adaptation. Connecting

with members in a non-clinical setting allowed them to observe how environment, community, and personal choice influence health and well-being.

Experiences like this strengthen their clinical perspective and deepen their sense of purpose. Occupational therapy is rooted in helping people participate in meaningful activities across the lifespan—and 125 LIVE offers a living example of that principle in action.

A Place for Everyone

When asked how they would describe 125 LIVE to someone their age, the students were unanimous: this is not a space “just for older citizens.” It is warm, welcoming, and designed for anyone 18 and older who values connection, movement, creativity, and lifelong growth.

Their visit served as a reminder that 125 LIVE is more than a destination for active aging—it is a dynamic community that bridges generations, supports professional development, and models what healthy, engaged living can look like at every stage of adulthood.

We are grateful for the opportunity to partner with the University of Minnesota’s Occupational Therapy program and look forward to continuing to inspire the next generation of healthcare professionals.



OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES



Ken Baerg and his daughter Cora love bike rides.



Sunny Chee loves practicing yoga poses outdoor at exciting spots. she feels the expansiveness of each pose becomes small in relation to the surrounding vast nature. This pose is called seated pigeon.



Kris Wagner loves hiking because she can tap into her adventurous side while being active and also feeling the benefits of being in nature. It's also a chance to connect with others.



Debbie Peterson and her family enjoy camping, hiking, and spending time outdoors together.

Emmarie Moon loves skiing because it's such a fun way to utilize the fact that it is winter for almost six months. It's a sport that almost any age and activity level can participate in, and it's so easy to forget about everything else to be present.





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125 LIVE

125 Elton Hills Drive NW
Rochester, Minnesota
www.125livemn.org

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