

## Editorial: UWRF unites to mourn the loss of three students

Isabella Chavira. Sabrina Hagstrom. Jasmine Petersen. These are the names of three University of Wisconsin-River Falls students who passed away between Oct. 3 and Nov. 3, 2023. All three students passed as a result of their depression, Chavira on Oct. 3, Hagstrom on Oct. 31, and Petersen on Nov. 3. The deaths were met with a range of emotions, from grief to anger, and a range of responses from UW-River Falls and the students themselves.

Students expressed their emotions on an anonymous social media platform called YikYak. Many responded with support. One student said, "I genuinely love each and every single one of you. Each loss breaks my heart. Please reach out to somebody, myself included, if you are struggling." Another posted: "I am willing to stay up all night talking with ANYONE regardless of whether I know you or not. I just don't want anyone else in my dorm or any dorm to die."

Isabella Chavira and Sabrina Hagstrom passed away in one of UW-River Falls' residence halls, May Hall, and students responded with support for its residents and resident advisors. One student posted, "everyone please check on the west side RAs, this has been a very difficult time for them to be dealing with this."

Another said: "If anyone needs to talk I'm here. I've struggled with my own mental health myself, and I won't judge. Two people is... too many, and I'm going to do all I can to make sure there isn't a third." This was posted before the death of Jasmine Petersen.

Other students used the platform to express sadness and fear. One said, "it kind of scares me, as a freshman and knowing this is happening, dealing with my own mental health issues."

Another posted: "As a may hall resident, the dorms [are] very quiet this evening, knowing what happened there's a



**Students, faculty, and community members gather to mourn the three UWRF students who passed away. (Photo by Souzeina Mushtaq).**

weight in my chest." This feeling of sorrow and loss, which has pervaded UW-River Falls for the last few weeks, was commiserated by other students as well.

One May Hall resident said, "this is taking a huge toll on some of us," while another student posted, "i've been feeling this since isabella passed away. such a heavy feeling."

At the Student Voice, we don't often draw attention to ourselves in our editorials, but we wanted to say to the stu-

dents and faculty of UW-River Falls that we feel the indescribable weight of the tragedies that have taken place, just as all of you do.

We may not be able to understand what Isabella Chavira, Sabrina Hagstrom, and Jasmine Petersen went through, but our hearts are bleeding, even as we write this, for all of those who have suffered from depression, or continue to suffer. It's moments like this that the words, "Sometimes even to live is an act of courage," become apparent. We all know how important this editorial is; in fact, it may be the most important editorial we will ever write.

The question on students' minds, and our minds as well, is: what should the university do about what has happened? UW-River Falls has sent out several emails to the campus community to inform students of the deaths, offer their condolences, and draw attention to various mental health services, including UWRF's Student Health and Counseling Services.

Many students, including us at the Student Voice, have criticized these emails as being more concerned with public relations than the losses that have occurred.

Others have said how similar these emails are, which makes them feel even more artificial. In addition, they are far from enough to address these losses, or the campus-wide wave of grief that has followed.

One student said on YikYak, "No one is saying this is the [university's] fault. But sending an email a few days after the fact then ignoring it, isn't making any of this okay." Actions speak louder than words, and that's what students want: action.



**Students add flowers to a memorial on Cascade Avenue. (Photo by Souzeina Mushtaq).**

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# A time for action

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After Sabrina Hagstrom's death, that's what UW-River Falls did: take action. On Nov. 2, a grief counselor from Pierce County Public Health visited May Hall to meet with residents, and, in the afternoon, therapy dogs from the organization Pet Partners visited the hall as well.

On the following day, grief counselors Joyce Barker and Kathryn Van Dusartz provided walk-in counseling in the University Center. In the waiting room, students were able to share their memories of Hagstrom, and write condolences to her family.

"We will collect these items and deliver them to the family during the funeral service," Alicia Reinke-Tuthil, the Interim Dean of Students, said.

In addition, Reinke-Tuthil; Laura King, the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs and Strategic Enrollment; and UWRF Chancellor Maria Gallo held a 'Community Conversation' for students to "come together and process the recent losses of fellow Falcons."

It's regrettable that it took the death of two students to result in this response from the university, but it is a step in the right direction nonetheless.

Students took notice of the efforts.

One student said, "uwrf is doing the best they can, which is a decent [expletive] job, with handling all of these situations. I've never seen this much support for 3 students and a faculty member." That faculty member is Andris Straumanis, a UWRF Associate Professor of journalism who passed away from natural causes on Sept. 11, 2023.

Another posted, "Everyone criticizing the river falls faculty should know that this is not normal for a college. almost no other colleges would not do anything let alone put this much effort in."

On Monday, Nov. 6, we at the Student Voice met to discuss our November editorial. We had planned to talk about the issues with Counseling Services, as mentioned earlier, but decided to discuss UWRF's response to the deaths instead. First and foremost in this discussion was processing grief, and how UWRF can help facilitate this.

When the university sent out emails announcing that a death had occurred, students were given little to no time or space to process this heartbreaking news. The only option, for many, was to continue on with classes and homework,

all the while with this weight on their mind.

One student posted, "I love that our campus community is coming together on Yikyak after another tragedy, but how come I never see it in person?... I hope to see this kindness spread in person everyday and not just on this app."

The university could, and should, address this by offering more opportunities for students to discuss and process their grief.

The Community Conversation was beneficial, but students need a place and time to discuss their memories of the students who have passed and how this has affected them. The Canadian Medical Association said that "exposure to suicide predicts suicide ideation and attempts."

Boston Children's Hospital said, "This risk, known as suicide contagion, can affect people who lived down the street from the person who died, went to school with them, or simply saw them around town." As such, it is vital that students have a way to process their grief, and the first step to processing grief is to express it.

This conversation should be as open and honest as possible, which means that, despite good intentions, faculty members should not be present. It may be beneficial for a grief counselor to preside over the event, however.

Many students have expressed issues with Counseling Services, especially with the wait times for in-person counseling. Some students, including a member of the Student Voice, have said that the wait list for an appointment can be as long as two or even three weeks.

The Student Voice member, who will remain anonymous, said that mental health resources at UW-River Falls feel out-of-reach and difficult to access because of these wait times. For someone suffering from mental illness, three weeks can feel like a hopelessly long time.

While UWRF's other services, like Mantra Health Services, which offers tele-therapy and even tele-psychiatry, may be beneficial, the wait times for in-person counseling, at present, are unacceptable.

The Student Voice calls on Student Health and Counseling Services to perform an emergency hire of a new counselor. While this will not eliminate the wait list, of course, it may alleviate the long wait times for counseling. Also, it would demonstrate that UWRF values Counseling Services and is working to make them more accessible.

We discussed another way that the university could

provide closure for students, which would be to send follow-up emails with information on students' obituaries and memorial events.

On Nov. 7, a day after our discussion, the university did: Reinke-Tuthil sent out an email with a link to Sabrina Hagstrom's obituary and details on her memorial, which was held on Nov. 11 at Ameritina Polo Farm in Woodville, WI.

Reinke-Tuthil also said in the email, "For those unable to attend who would like to share messages and memories with the family, we will be accepting them outside the [Rodli Hall] Meditation Room." UWRF staff then delivered the items to Hagstrom's memorial.

The university has also shared Jasmine Petersen's and Isabella Chavira's obituaries and details on their services.

Isabella Chavira's memorial service was held on Oct. 14 at Lakewood Cemetery in Minneapolis, MN. Jasmine Petersen's funeral service was held on Nov. 11, at the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints in Hudson, WI.

Similar to Hagstrom, the university collected messages and memories to give to Petersen's and Chavira's families.

Petersen's family requested that, in lieu of flowers, donations be made to the organizations SAVE or Coco's Heart Dog Rescue. Hagstrom's family requested that any donations be made to Lost Creek Ranch or a non-profit organization of choice.

In her email, Reinke-Tuthil also shared a link to UWRF's new mental health website, at [www.uwrf.edu/student-life/falcons-care](http://www.uwrf.edu/student-life/falcons-care). The website includes a list of events that were held from Nov. 7 to Nov. 9, as well as links to UWRF's mental health services and a guide for instructors called "Assisting Students During Emotional Distress."

We at the Student Voice praise these efforts, but exhort UWRF to continue to support students in this way not just over the course of this semester, but over semesters and years to come. UWRF's mental health website includes walk-in counseling, dog therapy, and yoga on its list of events, and one way that the university could support students now and in the future is by hosting more of these events. Loneliness plays a major role in depression and mental illness, and mental health events, and a variety of other events as well, could help address this.

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Left to right: Jessica Petersen, Sabrina Hagstrom, and Isbella Chavira. (Photos courtesy of, left to right: O'Connell Family Funeral Homes, Legacy, and Star Tribune).



# A time for mourning



By Nov. 8, the memorial was covered with flowers, notes, and art, showing UWRF's overwhelming support. (Photo by Jack Schindler Van Hoof).

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At the start of the semester, UWRF hosts a number of events: movie nights, bowling nights, nature walks, Silent Disco, and others, but, toward the end of the semester, fewer of these events are held.

Isolation is harmful when someone is suffering from loneliness or depression, and campus events give students who may be experiencing this the opportunity to meet new people, or, if they are not in the mood to do so, to have fun and destress. UWRF should offer more events near the end of the semester, and possibly more events overall.

We also wanted to include an idea a student posted: "I think that the school should send out a survey to all students and ask them questions like how do they feel, where do they go to for support, do they feel supported here, what can [UWRF] do to make them feel more supported."

The university could use this feedback to improve its approach to mental health.

Then, on Nov. 7, UWRF students united in a demonstration of support that took campus, and social media, by storm. Social work students created a memorial for Isabella Chavira, Sabrina Hagstrom, and Jasmine Petersen, as well as Andris Straumanis, on the UW-River Falls sign by the intersection of Cascade Avenue and Main Street in River Falls.

According to UWRF Journalism's Instagram page, UWRF Associate Professor of social work, Shawyn Domyachich-Lee, "collaborated with their students to create [the] memorial."

Students visited the memorial to add flowers, notes, art, and even a hat with Sabrina, Isabelle, and Jasmine's names written on it. The Instagram post had received over 3,000 likes, as of Nov. 9. Soon, the memorial was overflowing with flowers, so many in fact, that the UW-River Falls sign was almost hidden from view.

Shawyn said, "I believe people need a place to mourn,

support each other, and be part of what I hope will instigate change on this campus to raise awareness about suicide and prevention, providing resources necessary for students, staff, and faculty."

On Nov. 7, Chancellor Maria Gallo announced via email that all UWRF classes would be canceled on Nov. 20 and Nov. 21, which "extends the Thanksgiving break for the entire week." The additional time off is intended to give students time to rest, recover, and process everything that has happened on campus over the last few weeks.

One student posted, "For everyone excited that we get an extra long break remember why this break is happening. So instead of celebrating not having to go to class, remember the 3 beautiful lives that were lost in the last month. Rest and reset. You are so loved."

We at the Student Voice wanted to make it clear that the memorial, as well as the other efforts the university has made, are not to honor these deaths, but to mourn these deaths.

As many have said over the last few weeks, suicide is not a means to accomplish an end. It is a tragedy that brings pain and grief to family, friends, and an entire community, as can be seen at UW-River Falls.

The memorial demonstrates that students who are suffering are not forgotten, and that the students and faculty of UW-River Falls care deeply about them.

A student posted, "I love every one of you. Please stay one more day," and someone commented to say, "Or 2. Or 3. Or 4. As many as you can and naturally will."

If students are searching for ways to support their fellow students, here are three simple ways.

One is to reach out to friends and classmates; many people who have depression or another mental illness suffer in silence, and the only way to know if they are struggling is to ask them. Two, is Dan's Bandana Project, where students tie white bandanas to their backpacks to show that they will support anyone who is suffering.

The campaign's pledge states: "I will listen if you need to talk to someone. I will talk to someone if I need to be listened to. I will help you find a counselor when you need more than listening. I will find a counselor when I need more than to be listened to."

The campaign was started in 2014 after Daniel Gerbec, a student at UW-Eau Claire, took his life in September 2012. Gerbec was the son of Betsy Gerbec, a senior biology lecturer at UW-River Falls, who returned last spring.

Students can contact Student Health and Counseling Services for information on the availability of bandanas, and where they can be found.

Three, is to take part in the upcoming mental health first aid training. Chancellor Gallo announced that the Dean of Students Office would collaborate with Counseling Services over January 2024, to provide the training. "I hope many can take part," Gallo said. The university will send out an email with more information.

On Nov. 8, the university offered van trips to transport students to the UWRF Campus Farm, so that they could visit the farm's horses. Sabrina Hagstrom's favorite color was orange, and students braided the horse's manes with orange ribbons and gave them carrots.

The event brought to mind another post that read, "Sabrina loved horses," with the hashtag, "#rideforsabrina." The responses from students and the university, and the support that has been shared, show that we stand with the families, we stand with the friends, we stand with the community of UW-River Falls, and we stand together.

Continue on, and, ride for Jasmine, ride for Sabrina, ride for Isabelle.

Love,  
The members of The Student Voice

UWRF Counseling Services: 715-425-3884



# UWRF Women's Hockey opens season 4-0

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UWRF Women's Hockey opened their 2023 season 4-0, winning two on the road and two at Hunt Arena.

The Falcons won the WIAC tournament last season, beating UW-Eau Claire 5-1 in the championship game. Their regular season record of 21-3-1 was also the best in the conference.

The Falcons were ultimately selected to compete in the national Division Three tournament last season. They would lose in the quarterfinals to Gustavus Adolphus. This marked the second straight year that the Gusties had knocked the Falcons out of the national tournament.

Through four games this season, the Falcons retained their high-powered offense and outscored their first four opponents 19-3.

Forward Maddie McCollins returned for the Falcons this year. McCollins led the team in scoring last season, with twenty-eight goals. "She brings a whole other level to our team," said Head Coach Joe Cranston. Through four games, she has two goals, both coming against St. Scholastica. Cranston also returned for the Falcons, now in his 25th season with the program. UWRF has not had a losing season since 2000.

As for the Falcon defense, the team lost goalie Sami Miller after last season's playoff loss to Gustavus Adolphus. Jordan O'Connor is the current starter, and a goalie Coach Cranston feels good about. O'Connor played much of the 2020 season and has seen moderate playing time in the past few years.

Through four games, she's given up only three goals and has 79 saves. She is backed up by sophomore Jordan O'Kane and freshman Anna Rader.

Forwards Megan Goodreau and Alex Hantge have been efficient scorers early this season. Goodreau has three goals



UWRF Women's Hockey opened the season with a victory over St. Scholastica. (Photo courtesy of Carly Lynch).

on 13 shots, and Hantge has four goals on only 11 shots.

Though the Falcon's hot start is to be expected, their win against Augsburg University on Oct. 28 helped alleviate some demons from last season. In 2022, River Falls hosted Augsburg in their season opener. Despite going up 2-0, the Falcons blew the lead and lost 3-4. This was their first loss to the Auggies since 2004.

This season, UWRF hosted Augsburg in game two. River Falls went down 0-1 in the first period but scored three unanswered goals to win 3-1. The Falcon's next three

matchups all feature opponents from the WIAC. They'll face UW-Stevens Point, Northland College, and UW-Eau Claire. The Falcons are currently on a nineteen-game win streak against UW-Stevens Point and are 19-0 all-time against Northland.

Last season, River Falls went 10-1-1 in the conference, with their only loss coming on the road against UW-Eau Claire. UWRF will travel to UWEC on November 18, hoping to reverse last year's road loss.

## Women's Volleyball joins WIAC tournament

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UWRF Women's Volleyball is heading to the WIAC tournament for the second straight year. This is the Falcon's fourth WIAC tournament appearance in the last decade. Head Coach Dipen Patel, who was hired in 2022, holds two of these tournament births.

Last season, the Falcons snuck into the WIAC tournament with a 2-5 conference record. As the #6 seed, they would lose in four sets at UW-Stevens Point.

This year, the Falcons finished the regular season 19-9 overall and 3-4 in the conference. Three of the Falcon's final four games were against conference opponents, and they saw mixed success to close out the regular season.

On Oct. 20, UWRF faced the undefeated UW-Oshkosh Titans. The Falcons would drop the first two sets, 22-25 and 18-25, but crawl back in the third. In a heated third set, the Falcons held on for a 26-24 win. In the fourth set, the Falcons dominated the Titans, winning 25-11. This was the largest margin of defeat Oshkosh had all season in a single set. In overtime, the Falcons failed to grab the lead once and lost 8-15.

Though a heartbreaking loss, UWRF became only the fourth team to win two sets against the Titans this season. UW-Oshkosh went on to finish the regular season with a 33-0 overall record.

At home against UW-Eau Claire on Oct. 25, the Falcons faced the Blugolds. Both squads came in with 2-3 conference records and looked to leapfrog the other in the WIAC standings. The Blugolds became national champions in 2021, but have been regressing in overall record the last



UWRF Women's Volleyball celebrates a victory over UW-Eau Claire on Oct. 25. (Photo courtesy of Carly Lynch).

two seasons.

The Falcons went up 2-1, but Eau Claire forced overtime with a narrow 25-22 win in the fourth set. UWRF dominated early in the fifth set and went up 5-0 on UWEC. River Falls never lost the lead and won the final set 15-10. The win got the Falcons back to 3-3 in the conference and dropped the Blugolds to 2-4. This was UWRF's first win against UWEC since 2004.

To close out the regular season, UWRF faced the War-

hawks of UW-Whitewater. The Falcons, who have been much better at home this season, failed to capture a single set at Whitewater, losing 0-3. The Falcons have not defeated the Warhawks since 2009.

UWRF has drawn the Pioneers in the first round of the WIAC tournament and will travel to UW-Platteville. Earlier this season, the Falcons fell to the Pioneers 0-3. UWRF will look to rebound against Platteville on Nov. 7, hoping to capture Coach Patel's first playoff win as their head coach.



# Kaleb Blaha: A true dual-threat quarterback

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Starting quarterback Kaleb Blaha has the UWRF Falcons football team looking like true contenders this season. With only a game left in the regular season, the Falcons sit at 7-2 on the year and are 4-2 against conference opponents. Blaha's success this season can not be understated, but, as with most student-athletes, the path to success is one of longevity and adaptation.

Blaha says he began playing organized football in second grade and has primarily been a quarterback during his football career. During his freshman year of high school, he played on the varsity team as a safety and wide receiver. It wasn't until his junior year that he would be back at the starting quarterback position. Blaha would play quarterback through his senior year, but many universities noted his ability to play other roles as well.

Blaha received offers to play quarterback, safety, and wide receiver. He would ultimately commit to Winona State University before the 2020 season as a receiver. Unfortunately, for many football programs, the Covid-19 pandemic rendered the 2020 season unplayable. Blaha would never play a down for Winona and would soon transfer to UWRF to participate in the 2021 season.

Blaha says that, before he transferred, UWRF had always been a top option on his list. He connected with the coaching staff and with head coach Matt Walker.

In 2021, the Falcons experienced their first winning season in over two decades. Going 9-2 overall and 5-2 in-conference, the Falcons were led by quarterback Kole

Hinrichsen to an Isthmus Bowl win. Blaha sat behind Hinrichsen, serving as the backup quarterback until the following year.

Blaha stepped into the leading role in 2022. He would act as a major dual-threat quarterback, netting 2,488 pass yards along with 1,000 rush yards. The Falcons would regress slightly, going 7-4 overall and 4-3 against conference opponents. However, they would win the Isthmus Bowl for the second straight year against Washington University in St. Louis, MO.

With a full year of college experience under his belt, Blaha says he feels more comfortable this year. He has heavily cut down on turnovers through the air this season. He finished his 2022 campaign with 21 passing touchdowns and ten interceptions. Through this year, Blaha has 23 passing touchdowns to only four interceptions. Beyond being the Falcon's primary passer, Blaha carries the team's rushing game.

This season, he has 981 rushing yards and 19 rushing touchdowns. Blaha needs 19 rushing yards against UW-Oshkosh to make this his second straight year with over 1,000 total. On Oct. 28th, Blaha had his best rushing game at the collegiate level against UW-Stout. He went for 301 yards on the ground against a Stout team without answers. This more than doubled his previous single-game record, which was 146 rushing yards. Six of the Falcon's seven touchdowns were scored on runs by Blaha, and they defeated the Blue Devils 49-35. When asked about his situation, Blaha said, "I couldn't ask for anything better. I'm just grateful for it all."



**Kaleb Blaha leads the WIAC in rushing and third in passing. (Photo courtesy of UWRF Athletics).**

# UWRF Women's Soccer has rollercoaster season

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UWRF Women's Soccer's fall season was a "rollercoaster," according to team captains Aliviah McClinton and Madyson Shew. The team ended with an overall record of 6-8-4.

Madyson Shew is a fourth-year forward and center mid, and has been on the team since the fall of 2020. Aliviah McClinton is a fourth-year center mid and attacking mid, and has also been on the team since the fall of 2020. Both have been elected team captains by the team of 30 women.

Team captains have many responsibilities, which include planning the fall team bonding activities for the preseason and throughout the season; communicating with the coach, Sean McKuras; figuring out practice plans if the weather isn't good; relaying information to the team; and being leaders and good examples to the rest of the women.

"I feel like there are a lot of ups and downs," said McClinton of the season. We had some really good wins, like against Macalester.... They are regionally ranked; that was a good win for us. We won against St. Scholastica. We got the border battle trophy that we compete for every year, and, then obviously beating Stout. We had a really big win against Morris that was the highest amount of goals that have been scored in a game since 2005.... Then we had some lows.... With conference play we'd be up, and then we would get scored on, or like

just losing games that we didn't need to lose, even though we outplayed the other teams. So it's been a rollercoaster, I'd say."

Shew added, "I do feel like we've had a harder schedule this year than we have had in the past. [It's] been good for us to be able to compete with higher level teams than previous years. I think it helps our mindset and our work ethic going into conference play. I feel like, overall, our team dynamic has been way better this previous year than it has been in past seasons, which has helped a lot."

The captains said this year's team had a large incoming freshman, group which helped the team mesh together and made the season more fun. "The environment and the chemistry among the girls have improved a lot. I think the overall culture of the team has improved, [which] would not have been able to be done without everyone on the team," said McClinton.

The captains said that they have made extra effort to get the underclassmen and upperclassmen to come to team bonding activities, including playing video games on a Nintendo Wii. "I think we've also made an effort to get together outside of classes more than we have done in the past, and not just upperclassmen and underclassmen, it's been a mix of everyone encouraging everyone, regardless of what grade [they're] in, to come and hang out, just to chill," said McClinton.

Shew recalled her fondest memory on the team, which was their win against UW Stout. "Having that moment where we are



**The UWRF Women's Soccer team after their victory over UW-Stout. (Photo courtesy of UWRF Women's Soccer Instagram).**

all just running to each other with so much happiness; we were just all so excited after that game."

The captains have big goals for the upcoming season, already having identified things the team can work on. McClinton

said, "Growing the mindset to be mentally tough so that when we do come up to conference next fall, we'll be able to stay strong no matter what, if we are up or if we are down, so that we can start winning some games and going to playoffs."



# UWRF students win award for innovative dairy product

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A team of five UW-River Falls students won a national award in the Dairy Management Inc. New Product Competition on July 17, 2023. Students Yihong Deng, Ashley Gruman, Rafael Larosiliere, Kate Petersen, and Anna Euerle developed a product called RootCurd, which took first place in the competition. The competition focused on “products that calm,” according to its guidelines, “with a heightened emphasis on mental and emotional wellbeing.”

The competition was open to undergraduate and graduate students from across the United States, and Deng, Gruman, Larosiliere, Petersen, and Euerle, at the time of their win, were all undergraduates.

Grace Lewis, Assistant Professor of Animal and Food Science at UWRF, helped direct the team. “This team of students worked tirelessly to develop this product, and they had to overcome many, many technical difficulties along the way,” Lewis said in a UWRF Newsroom article.

The interview with Deng, Gruman, Larosiliere, Petersen, and Euerle is as follows.

**Why did you decide to enter the competition, and how did the five of you become teammates on this project?**

Anna Euerle: The competition was originally presented to us by our coach, Dr. Lewis. She had previously competed in the event and thought it would be something students at UWRF would be interested in, so she presented it to the Food Science Club. We set up an initial meeting just to see who was all interested, and we discussed the competition and the prompt more in-depth together. After a few more meetings we had narrowed down a few different ideas, and we had the team of 5 we proceeded with for the rest of the competition. We all knew each other through the food science department, so working together was nothing new for the five of us.

**What did you think of the competition guidelines, and especially the heightened emphasis on products that “calm”?**

Rafael Larosiliere: We thought the competition guidelines were in-line with market trends related to our genera-

tion. They embody our fast-paced lifestyle with consciousness of the foods we consume: their source, their quality & nutritional contents and of course their taste. The function of ginger and lavender provides the “calming effect” with an anti-inflammatory and relaxing effect. The heightened emphasis on products that “calm.”

**How did you and your team decide to base your product on ginger curd? Why was ginger curd a good candidate for the competition and its guidelines?**

Yihong Deng: We had a brainstorm for the initial ideation to think of potential ingredients that would have a calm effect. Ginger came to my mind as my mom would cook some ginger tea when I felt uncomfortable, which has a warming/anti-inflammatory effect. There is a traditional Chinese dessert made of ginger and milk, which is a good combination of functional ingredients and dairy. After reformulation of the original recipe, ginger curd with 89% dairy ingredients, 20g protein per serving, and the addition of lavender made it a good candidate for the guideline (51% dairy, a good source of protein and calming effect).

**What changes did you make to the ginger curd recipe for the competition, and why?**

Ashley Gruman: The recipe we used as a base for our product originates from Southern China. The changes we made to the recipe were to increase the dairy ingredients, add an additional calming effect, and eventually use the same recipe to scale up our product. We used lavender to promote an extra sense of calmness, in addition to the ginger that is already present. The increase in dairy ingredients helped develop a more structurally sound product, while also promoting dairy as a whole. One idea we really wanted to stick with was a clean label, as it is attractive to consumers. This meant that with any adjustment that was made to the recipe, we were conscious of how it would affect the “clean label” status, and how consumers would react to the adjustment.

**How long did it take for you and your team to transform the concept into a completed product?**

Ashley Gruman: From product ideation to final product

was about a six-month process. Because this was a competition, we did have to abide by the deadlines presented to us. Regardless, the entire process took from November of 2022 to April of 2023. It was a quick turnaround time for a process like this, but we spent a lot of hours developing RootCurd. Some nights we would spend somewhere from 2-6 hours working on the process, and we would end up plugging our computers in and watching the Bachelor while we were working on it.

**What was the process for RootCurd’s development, and what were the biggest obstacles that you and your team faced in creating it?**

Kate Petersen: The first step in coming up with RootCurd was just an ideation session. We had several ideas for different products, and two that we actually made a first prototype with, but we ultimately decided to go with what we now call RootCurd. After determining what our product was going to be, we made several versions trying out different levels of sweetness and ginger intensity, and adjusting the protein content with some milk protein powders. After finding the best formulation, the biggest challenge we faced was finding the correct processing. We added a couple of processing steps to overcome the development of the bitter flavors, create a smooth, creamy texture, and prolong shelf life. It was a troubleshooting process and time-consuming. We had several different levels of obstacles throughout the development process, but our teamwork and determination kept us going and allowed us to develop such a healthy and delicious product!

**What are your plans for RootCurd in the future? Are you looking to release it as a commercial product, and, if so, how do you plan to do that?**

Rafael Larosiliere: As of now, we are looking at getting our idea patented in the US with the help of WiSys. We have two options which would be to either start up a company to continue research & development on the product and eventually release it or license it to a company. We are still pretty new to handling something of this magnitude, our direction may change depending on the demands of our careers in the food industry.

# Equestrian therapy for veterans discussed on campus

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22 veterans a day commit suicide. This poignant statement, from keynote speaker Toni Mattson in the Veterans Day commemoration at UW-River Falls on Nov. 9, is a hard truth to stomach. According to the CDC, the veteran suicide rate is roughly 60% higher than the non-veteran rate, and makes up nearly 14% of total US adults suicides. This sobering statistic was tackled by Mattson in her Veterans Day speech.

Mattson is an author, podcaster, and one of the founders of Trinity Equestrian Center, a horse ranch which sports a wellness program for veterans and their families. The therapy incorporates three key pieces: the horse, the team, and the spirit, according to Mattson.

“We’re often not a veterans first choice,” she said, “but

often times we’re their last resort.”

In 2009, Mattson and the center launched its equestrian veterans wellness program, becoming one of the first in the region. “Since then, our team has provided thousands of free therapy hours and encounters to hundreds of veterans and their families and has been recognized as the Midwest leader in Equine Assisted Therapy,” Mattson’s personal website stated.

During her speech, Mattson detailed the importance that horses play in the program, and what they can do for veterans struggling with PTSD. “[The horses] have a really keen sense of what we’re feeling, and their intuition is flawless... it is absolutely authentic and effective,” she said.

Although not a veteran herself, Mattson grew up surrounded by veterans: her father, brothers, grandfather, and uncles.

The event was held in the University Center’s Falcons

Nest, with members of the student body, faculty, and community in attendance. In his remarks, Provost David Travis noted that there are 350,000 veterans in the state of Wisconsin and 125 student veterans currently on campus.

“These men and women, who have sworn to defend our state and our nation against all enemies, foreign and domestic, are indeed a precious and rare group of individuals who we must protect and treasure. On behalf of the university, thank you to those who have served, including those who are part of our university community both past and present.”

Mattson closed the event with her advice on how to thank a veteran on the holiday. “It isn’t so much as thank you for your service, but thank you for your trade,” she said. “Thank you, [veterans], for what you traded for us... there is so much that veterans have traded for us.”



# Narcan boxes added around campus as part of campus prevention efforts

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In collaboration with Wisconsin’s Voices of Recovery, UW-River Falls installed 17 Narcan (Naloxone) boxes around campus. The campus is taking preventive measures as opioid-related deaths are on the rise in the community.

According to an email sent out by Chief of Police Karl Fleury, the new Narcan boxes are located in all UWRF residence halls by the first-floor lobbies, the lower level of Chalmer Davee Library, the Falcon Center, and on the second and first floor of the University Center. The boxes contain two doses of Narcan nasal spray, instructions on how to use them, and a mask for rescue breathing. The boxes are connected to the internet, allowing Wisconsin Voices for Recovery to restock it when empty.

“We have not had a fentanyl overdose, an opioid overdose, here on campus, but what we are trying to do is be proactive instead of reactive. If it saves one life it is well worth it but again it’s better to be proactive than reactive to a situation,” said Fleury. Although no overdose has happened on the UWRF campus, Fleury’s email stated, “However, we have had incidents in our surrounding community. We feel it is important to be proactive as a university instead of reactive to help ensure the safety of everyone who visits or attends our university.”

“If you look at a penny and it covers about the size of Lincoln’s chin that could be a fatal overdose of fentanyl, an even smaller amount of the other [type of fentanyl], like a pin head, would cause death,” said Fleury. Opioid deaths have doubled in the United States since 2015 and surpassed 100,000 annually in 2021.

Wisconsin Stat. 895.48(1) provides that any person who renders emergency care at the scene of an emergency or accident in good faith shall be immune from civil liability for their acts or omissions in rendering such emergency care.

Wisconsin Stat. 961.443 provides immunity from prosecution for possession of drug paraphernalia, a controlled substance or controlled substance or analog or a masking agent if a person calls 911 to help another person who they reasonably believe to be suffering an overdose or other adverse reaction to any controlled substance or controlled substance analog.

According to the Wisconsin Voices for Recovery (WIVFR) website, their mission is “to unite people in and seeking recovery, their families, helping professionals, and our allies. As a diverse coalition of recovery advocates, we



The Narcan box located on the first floor of Chalmer Davee Library. (Photo by Liam Stein).

serve as a statewide network to link services and support to those in need.” WIVFR is a nonprofit organization that received a grant to help fund their Nalox-ZONE program. They have put these boxes in organizations, businesses, and schools counties all over Wisconsin.

WIVFR has many other programs, including Engagement to Recovery, 211 Helpline, and ED2Recovery+. According to their website, Engagement to Recovery is a community-based program that addresses disparities in health care. This program focuses on racial disparities in health care and treatment options for people with addictions, and, after identifying disparities, they will implement a community engagement plan. The 211 Helpline connects callers with the best treatment and care for their situations, in collaboration with community partners. The ED2Recovery+ program provides recovery coaches and certified peer

support services, with the goal to unite treatment systems. WIVFR also spreads awareness through their podcast, which features interviews with people who have struggled with addiction and are now sober.

More preventive efforts are taking place throughout campus, with the main goal of education. Pierce County Public Health put on an event called Narcan Training and Opioid Awareness in Rodli Hall on Oct. 16.

The one thing Chief Fleury wanted the campus community to know is to “Be aware of and educate about the dangers with drugs and fentanyl and the risk everybody takes with it. Because the thing is, just handling this stuff can be absorbed through the pores of your skin. It’s a danger and a risk and our students and campus community need to be aware of that.”

## STUDENT VOICE

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The Student Voice is a student-written and managed newspaper for UW-River Falls, and is published monthly during the regular school year.

All editorial content in the Student Voice is determined by the newspaper’s Editorial Board.

The opinions expressed in editorials and columns do not represent those of the newspaper’s advisor, student population, administration, faculty or staff.

Letters to the editor must be 300 words or less, and include a first and last name and phone number. They can be submitted at 304 North Hall, River Falls, WI 54022 or to editor@uwrfvoice.com.

The Student Voice reserves the right to edit any material for content, libel or space. It also reserves the right to withhold letters. All letters, news releases, briefs, display ads and classified ads must be able to be submitted no later than Wednesday at noon during the week of publishing. Information on publishing schedule can be obtained by contacting the editor.

Because of high production costs, UW-River Falls community members are permitted to collect one copy of the Student Voice per issue. A single copy of the Student Voice is valued at \$1, and additional copies may be requested from the editorial staff via email. Newspaper theft is a crime. Those who violate the single copy rule may be subject to civil and criminal prosecution.



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