





# ***The Pandemic Through Our Dogs' Eyes***

**Story by: Carolyn Otto, Professor  
Department of Mathematics  
University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire**

*Monday morning rolled around and after our morning walk and breakfast, Mom said “go to work.” That was our cue to lay down on the couch while the parents went to work. However, Mom went to her office room and Dad to the basement. We were confused but happy. They stayed home with us! After our morning nap, we heard them talk about getting out of the house for some coffee. They leashed us up walked us to a drive thru window to get coffee and this started one of many new routines for us.*

*Over the course of the next year, we got to explore Eau Claire. Every weekend we went on a long walk on the Chippewa Valley River Trail and then to downtown. Mom and Dad mentioned how important it was to get food at some of the local restaurants. They would pick up the food and eat it on benches and picnic tables around the city. Sometimes (most of the time) they dropped some food and we got to eat it!*

*We visited a ton of new parks, too! We got to see the dog parks and meet new friends! There were so many other parks in the city, too! Every week, we got to go out for walks with so many new smells! Mom and Dad said words like Sherman Park, Centennial Park, Boyd Park, River Prairie, Owen Park, Carson Park, High Bridge, Phoenix Park, and many more! There was one weekend we even got to go camping! We got to play all day with our ball and nap in the sun.*

*Mostly we walked or ran with our parents on our leashes, but sometimes we got to ride in the car! It seemed like Mom and Dad always wanted to get out of the house, but they didn't have anywhere to really go. We didn't mind though; we loved going for rides and being with them. They liked to get their coffee drinks and often went to different coffee places. We loved this and we often got “pup cups” which were delicious! We knew the drill of sticking our heads out the window so the workers could see us and give us our treats.*

*This past year has been great for us. However, Mom and Dad often seemed sad, and we never got to see many people like we did before. We love being petted and missed that strangers didn't get to pet us! We tried to make sure we would cuddle with Mom and Dad as much as possible, especially when they were on the couch usually mumbling something about “Zoom”. They seem happier now, but still always want to go for walks, coffee, and cuddle. We couldn't be happier...maybe some more treats would be nice.*

---

**Artist: Lark Keating-Hadlock, Assistant Archivist  
McIntyre Library  
University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire**

Lark Keating-Hadlock is the Assistant Archivist at UW-Eau Claire. Lark earned her BFA with an emphasis in both ceramics and painting as well as a BA in art history from the University of Delaware, and a graduate degree in library science from UW-Milwaukee. She has been painting in watercolor, oil, and acrylic on and off since childhood.

*I chose to interpret Carolyn Otto's story, told from her dogs' viewpoint, about exploring Eau Claire and visiting various parks around Eau Claire while social distancing from people who*

*once used to pet the dogs. I'm one of those people who got a puppy during the pandemic, so her story really appealed to me.*

**View all the pieces in the *Healing Reflections* [online gallery](#).**





# Making Rent

**Story by: Kensie Kiesow, Student  
University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire**

*Summertime for a student is for days spent lying on the beach, soaking up as much of that Wisconsin summer sun as you can before winter hits. It's for long road trips to Colorado, the west coast, or maybe just a neat park nearby with pine trees that remind you of Russian spires poking the sky. It's for a break from the constant stress of exams, essays, and grades. And, it's for that summer job. Working all summer to pay for tuition, rent, groceries, and necessities when the fall semester starts up, and you are once again a student with deadlines and responsibilities. When each week is another monster of essays, projects, lab reports, and readings to be vanquished, so you can't rake in as many hours at the gas station, or the bookstore, or the restaurant as you could have during those three months of sunshine and freedom. The semester is when you devote your time to study and practice the skills that you will carry with you into the future, the Real World that you've dreamt about for the last twenty-two years of your life. But, the Real World is all around us, and it's expensive.*

*Just like every other student, whether they're in high school or in college, I simultaneously look forward to and dread going to work for as many hours as my boss will give me during the summer. The paychecks are all worth the hours of serving cranky customers and running around the store to find the exact copy of Little Women with whimsical art painted by a dear artist for the customer's granddaughter, but in 2020, the opportunity to work long hours and save fatter cheques in the summer was shattered by the corona virus. Instead, I was stuck in my sweaty home all day, cowering from coughing strangers, and when I did escape my hermitage to buy groceries, I scurried between the aisles with my head down and a jar of peanut butter clutched in my arms like a football player making a mad dash to the checkout line. The cost of living in Eau Claire isn't bad compared to New York or San Francisco, but when you're working part-time for a little more than minimum wage, every dollar counts.*

*I found myself afraid to check my bank account after the first of the month, terrified that I hadn't saved enough for rent and my balance would be negative, or I had but there wasn't enough left over to cover the utilities. I considered my groceries very carefully. I stocked up on oatmeal and rice because they were cheap and could last me a long time, and I visited my family less and less often to save the gas I needed to get me to work. I'm so thankful for my parents and their generosity because without them, I would have had to quit my internship with the Chippewa Valley Writers Guild, too. Without them, I could not have afforded my last shreds of independence.*

---

**Artist: Anna Wendorff, Student  
Organizational Communication/English  
University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire**

*The fiery middle signifies the excitement at the beginning of the pandemic, but then everything quickly turning dark. The blue cracks slowly started to infect every area of life, like a collective mental burden. But like with the stories, there's light still---such resilient hope is signified by the yellow beams. And the messy background is for the unprecedented situation.*

View all the pieces in the *Healing Reflections* [online gallery](#).







# Chippewa River Parallel

**Story by: Megan Clark, Academic Department Associate  
Department of Art and Design  
University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire**

*On the surface, nothing seemed to change. Days were spent drifting lazily by, with the occasional dark branches stirring ripples in my calm demeanor. But underneath it all was a roiling mass of anxiety, heartache, and fear. I found parallels and companionship in the Chippewa River, which runs through the campus at which I work.*

*Everyone had different experiences through the pandemic. As a self-proclaimed recluse, I was hardly impacted; my lifestyle and routine barely changed. But as an HSP – a highly sensitive person – the extreme changes for my family and friends began to deteriorate my façade. The physical mask struggled to hide the emotional one, and I felt things tenfold. When winter gave way to spring in 2020, the winter melt of everyone's stress sent flood waters and life became a turbulent mess of emotional upheaval. I found myself dependent on solitude for my mental health.*

*By summer I felt haggard, the eroded remains of spring thaw floating through me and bacteria seeping along the edge of my thoughts. But I persisted, believing the sea of hope was before me. Much like the creatures who gather to drink at water's edge, many sought me as a source of healing. My affection was steady and reliable as someone who desires to provide support for all humanity, even if just behind the scenes. I was up-in-arms with my fellow Korean pop music enthusiasts as we supported Black Lives Matter and the other voices crying out for equity, doing what I could monetarily for support groups even though I was already a low-income household before the pandemic.*

*Fall and winter brought the cold again, and I hunkered down for respite. I sought dependable friends to join me on the quiet trek towards that hopeful sea. In that latter part of the year, one such friend invited me to experience a soul journey. At first, I thought I needed to find my fire again, the passion that had dwindled over the past year, to bring warmth back into my life. By the end of that journey, it was about new growth: trees growing at the river's side to protect it from mud and debris, and the river providing water to help them stay strong. A river gives life, and a river can take life. I lost loved ones and mourned. I gained stronger friendships and celebrated.*

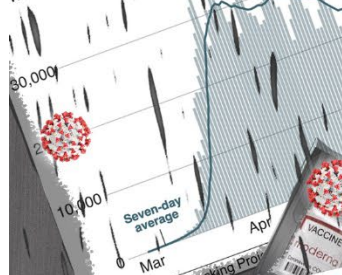
*Spring is here again, and the prospect of the vaccine brings new hope growing among the muck of an emotional tragedy created this last season of change. And with that, I close thinking of a quote from Heraclitus: "No man ever steps in the same river twice, for it's not the same river and he's not the same man." After COVID, no one will be the same.*

---

**Artist: Jill Olm, Associate Professor  
Department of Art and Design  
University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire**

**View all the pieces in the *Healing Reflections* [online gallery](#).**





**CORONAVIRUS COVID-19**

**17 DAYS ON VENTILATOR**

**CASES SPIKE**

**STAY AT HOME**

**VIRUS**  
**JABS**

**Life put on hold**

It's 'inevitable' here, CDC says

shelter in place

## Lookdown

state of emergency  
for COVID-19

# Crisis

**epicenter**

TRADITIONAL  
ESPRESSO



# ***I Hope It's Brighter Over There***

**Story by: Grace Wojkiewicz-Wielgus**  
**Student**  
**University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire**

*Fear permeated everything.*

*When classes were moved online, I remember being excited. I look back now and wish I could shake myself. I wish I could scream in my face that this is serious, and it is going to affect you, too. You aren't invincible. Look at the lives this is taking.*

*As time went on, everything got a lot more difficult. Having everything moved online caused insurmountable stress. Suddenly my bed was to safe place to sleep, but also to attend class, to work "on-campus," to record presentations, to take notes, to eat dinner, and so on. The divide between school and my personal life was nonexistent and my mental health suffered. As someone already fighting with anxiety on a good day, my worry about the health of those around me soared. I was afraid to go home, but all I wanted to do was see my family again. I was afraid to even go grocery shopping, when all we had left was cans of soup and ramen noodles. The push and pull made me dizzy.*

*I used to think I was someone who lived in the moment. If you would've asked me before, I would've said that I try to stay in the moment and appreciate what I have while I have it.*

*Now, a year and a half later, I find myself pausing to appreciate that I'm alive and healthy. I try to be a better friend. I push myself and my anxiety to take small risks because I survived.*

*I don't want to waste a single opportunity.*

*It's definitely a cliché, but as someone nearing 22, I never thought I'd have to be so concerned about when my life will end. Now that this grim reminder is seared into my brain, there's no way I'll let time slip out of my fingers again.*

--

*For now, maybe it's enough to cross our fingers, pick up the call to say hello to our loved ones, and to hope with everything we have left that things might get better again.*

*For me, it's enough to know that maybe one day we can peer deep into this dark tragedy, and if we squint our eyes and focus really hard, we might be able to see through to the other side.*

---

**Artist: Erin Hisey, Assistant Professor**  
**Department of Music and Theatre Arts**  
**University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire**

**View all the pieces in the *Healing Reflections* [online gallery](#).**







# Healing Reflection

**Story by: Gwenyth Wheat, Student  
University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire**

*I tuned into another Skype call, my eyes tired, dry, and aching for light that wasn't blue. Quickly, our group of friends appeared in the video call, each of us secluded to our bedrooms and propped up next to windowsills. My friend asked what life was like outside the walls of her recovery center, outside the walls that shielded her from the daily news, world events, and COVID-19.*

*"Empty streets," I said as I peered through my blinds to view the deserted Center Avenue staring back at me.*

*"People in face masks," Angie chimed in as our conversation blurred with my own distracted thoughts.*

*It was strange to think about- life in a global pandemic. Living life in a global pandemic. Being a part of a global pandemic. It was the beginning of the stay-at-home order, and everything seemed so still and dark.*

*But today, today I am thankful for the sunshine that brightened up my room even on the strangest of days. I am thankful for the time and space that allowed my mind to rest, recover, rejuvenate, and grow in creativity. I am thankful for the chance to dust off old passions that were hidden in the dark, shut out by the stress of "normal days". And even though life isn't far from normal, I'm glad those passions can shine amid the uncertainty. A doctor is becoming a writer. A teacher is becoming an advocate. A nurse is becoming a poet. A student is becoming a businesswoman. All from home. Today, I am thankful for the light and my father's patient reminder, "There is no light without darkness."*

---

**Artist: Anna Wendorff, Student  
Organizational Communication/English  
University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire**

*Emergence from Anomie*

*The red tones represent enormous loss (of people, of hope within the US) but you might see a half of a face. The face represents who we were as a nation before this pandemic, and the other side is yet undefined as we're still emerging from this life-changing period. The winking eye (within the face) is crying, but there's some hope to this story. The white tear is a rebirth of the people and the nation.*

**View all the pieces in the *Healing Reflections* [online gallery](#).**





# ***Finding Joy During COVID-19***

**Story by: Donna Anders, Student Services Coordinator  
Teacher Education Program  
University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire**

*We reserved our daughter's wedding venue in November of 2018 with no idea that the world would be turned upside down. They picked May 2, 2020, the 6<sup>th</sup> year anniversary of when they started dating. Life seemed normal until December of 2019 when two of our Chinese students from the UW-Eau Claire Host Friends Program talked about the COVID-19 virus back home. We watched the news with lock downs and mask wearing in China. My husband and I discussed that here in the US, we would not need to quarantine or wear masks. How wrong we were....*

*By March 2020, my husband and I started working from home and living like hermits. Our Host students worried about their families, and we finally realized that we would be impacted here in the US. Once the Governor imposed restrictions, we moved our reception to New Year's Eve 2020, plenty of time for the pandemic to end, we thought.*

*As May 2, 2020, approached our daughter and fiancé' decided it was important for them to be married so we had a small ceremony at St. Raymond's in Fall Creek with 10 of us attending. We live streamed the ceremony on Facebook and asked guests to send photos of themselves watching. It was a beautiful warm day. We had take-out in an open-air garage and a fireside dance. It was lovely and we got to spend the entire day with our daughter to celebrate.*

*With the pandemic continuing one of our Chinese students went home at the end of the May 2020 and the other one attended summer school and then went home. We enjoyed summer on our Pontoon and back yard patio. We had our reception plans solidified for New Year's Eve.*

*We were hopeful that going into Fall 2020 case counts would start to level off but by November we knew that was not going to be the case, so we postponed the reception to May 8, 2021.*

*Our last Host student graduated Fall 2020 and she stayed with us for a few weeks job hunting. She then headed to Seattle to continue her job hunt but returned to Nigeria the end of April 2021.*

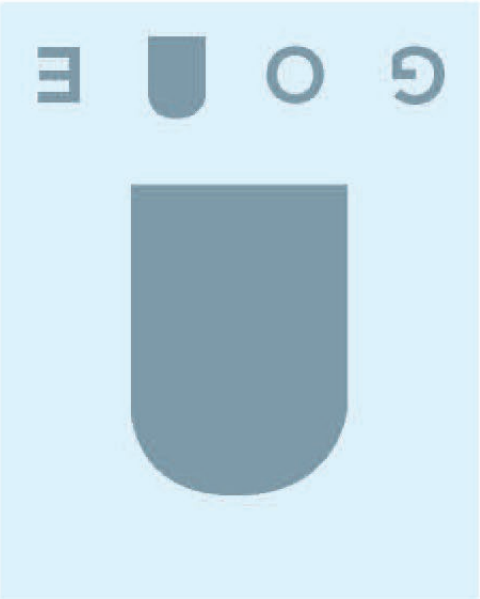
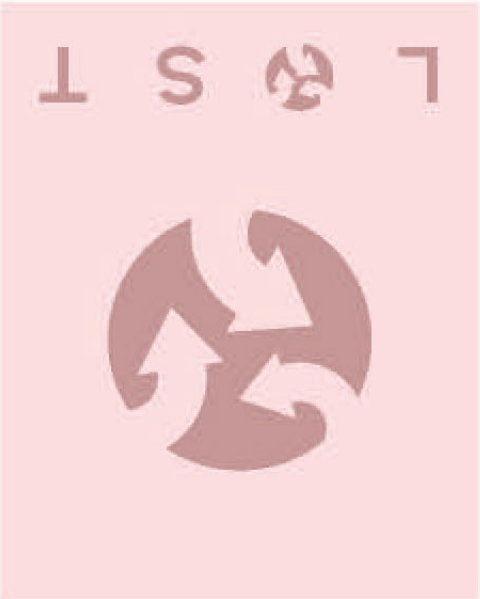
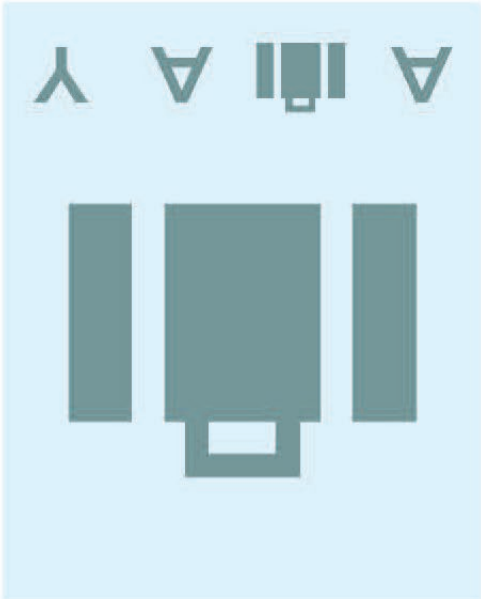
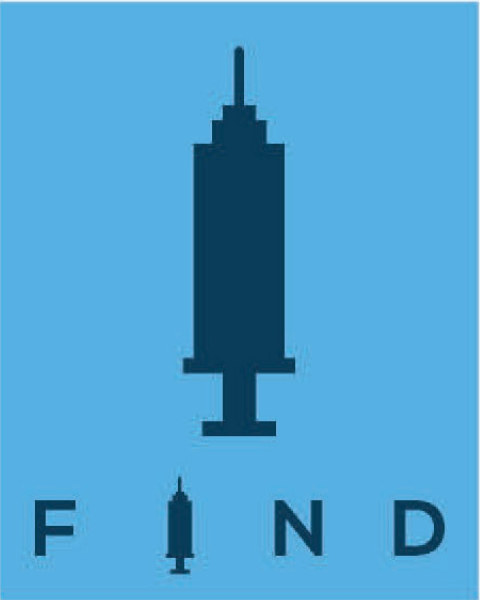
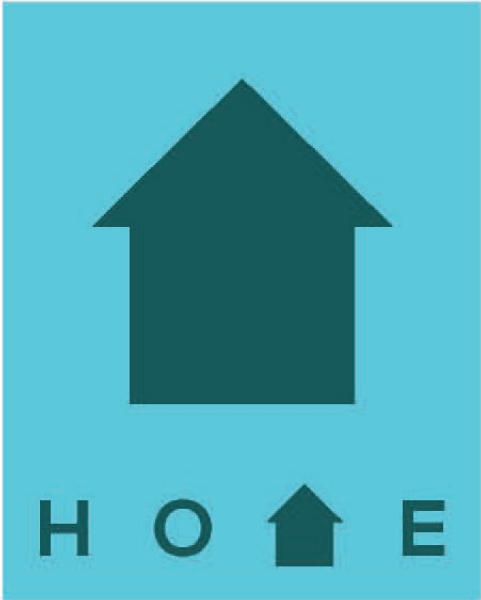
*As I write this, we are 4 days away from celebrating our daughter's reception. We will celebrate an outdoor vow renewal ceremony instead of inside our church. We have a venue with large outdoor and indoor spaces and will have guest seated in family groups, a plated meal, and butler served appetizers. We are hopeful that many of our guests have already been vaccinated and excited to see families who we have not seen in over a year. We have been fortunate, and our families have been spared severe illness from COVID-19. We are joyful to be able to celebrate our daughter's reception with our families and are hopeful there will be many happy days ahead.*

---



Artist Amanda Bulger, Lecturer  
Department of Art and Design  
University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire

View all the pieces in the *Healing Reflections* [online gallery](#).





# Healing Reflection

**Story by: Ali Liffbrig, International Program Coordinator  
University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire—Barron County**

*When the pandemic began, I thought it would be over quickly. That it would breeze through our lives like a tornado, deadly but brief. This is not a unique sentiment; most people felt the same. I didn't realize over a year of my twenties would be stolen.*

*I know a lot of people have found meaning in the pandemic; they've discovered a love of the simple life and gardening or treasured this extended time with their loved ones and realized the true importance of family. This was not the case for me. The pandemic and the resulting complete destruction of my social life devastated me. I threw myself into TV shows and music to pour my grief into something beautiful, artistic, and imaginary instead of our uncertain reality. I decided that I deserve anything that will get me through this. I also need to be kind to myself and not rush myself out of emotions just because they are negative.*

*I have still learned from this pandemic though. It has given me countless professional development opportunities as national conferences go online. I have seen the beauty in humanity as we create and innovate and test our creativity to the limits and it inspires me. Most importantly though, I have learned that I love people. I love sporting events and county fairs and concerts where the crowd sings along, loudly and off-key but together as one. I love food trucks and playing games with my family and jumping off the dock in the summer with my friends. The pandemic has reminded me to live my life. I will appreciate those things I love so much more because I will remember a time when I didn't have them.*

*When this is over, and COVID-19 is declared as dead as smallpox, I want to give a stranger a hug. I want to chat with a passing customer in the grocery store without clocking their distance from me. I want to celebrate with my town and my country and the world as we also recognize those we lost along the way. I want to hear the words "we made it through." Most of all, I just want the world to remember what we always seem to forget; that we may be different in so many ways but, in the end, there are more things that make us human than those that separate us.*

---

## The COVID Stage

**Story by: Sue Kleusch, Academic Department Associate  
University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire—Barron County**

*In 1997 we were blessed with a beautiful little boy. Through the years we watched him grow up into a nice young man. We had long spoken to him about the lasting effects of a great education and how his going to college was going to be his gift from us.*

*We watched as he took on classes without any hesitation, joined a business fraternity to make life-long friends, and bond with wonderful roommates throughout his four years. We marveled at his being able to negotiate his rental leases, tackle parking woes and keep a sense of humor. We were awed by all the community outreach he did in working with the underprivileged, how he navigated two awarded internships halfway across the country and waded through multiple job offers in his field of study.*

*There was everything to be proud of, as our hopes and dreams for him had come true with his hard work and dedication to his education. We had carefully planned out his graduation, had family and friends on the ready, and were planning a party to congratulate the graduate. What a milestone we were looking at and what a celebration it would be!*

*Until it wasn't.*

*As COVID moved into our society, families were torn apart. Losses of life were unbearable and job losses were at an all-time high. We listened to the news, read the papers, and nothing was more evident than we were living in the unknown world of an epidemic. There was a ripple effect of this disease and it effected nearly every person in their own unique way.*

*We were lucky. We didn't lose any loved ones, we didn't lose our jobs, and besides the small inconveniences of wearing masks and social distancing, we were trying to do our part to keep everyone else safe, along with ourselves, sane. Lonely it was not being able to see our family and friends.*

*But that fact paled in comparison to having our son's in-person 2020 college graduation ripped from his life, and our schedule. As we dreamed of him walking across that stage, getting his undergraduate accounting degree and achieving the extra 30 credits to sit for the CPA exam, all in four years, while working for the Controller and participating in out-of-state internships, we were beyond disappointed that this simple reward of accomplishment would be lost forever for this student who had worked so very hard to one day see it all come to fruition.*

*Covid won again. While a virtual ceremony was the best anyone could do to help these graduating students celebrate their accomplishments, it was in no way a replacement to him being able to walk the coveted stage in front of his professors, roommates, friends and loved ones.*

*So we framed his diploma and hope he remembers none of us wanted it to end this way; the stellar work he did will never be diminished by not being able to walk the commencement stage.*

---

**Artist Amanda Obenhoffer, Graphic Artist  
Integrated Marking and Communications  
University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire**

**View all the pieces in the *Healing Reflections* [online gallery](#).**





# ***The Healing Powers of Swimming and Secret Santas***

**Story by: Vicky Thomas, Director  
Services for Students with Disabilities  
University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire**

*Lives changed in March 2020. I celebrated my birthday March 12<sup>th</sup> and on Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>, our routines abruptly ended. Many of our favorite healing activities changed – time with friends and swimming for me. Friends stopped gathering and pools closed for swimmers.*

*Seven years ago, my husband and I began swimming laps at the YMCA pool. Our daughter wanted her wedding in our backyard with her father escorting her in his formal Army officer uniform. The pants had slightly shrunk since his retirement and he was determined to fit them. Together we committed to swimming, he fit into the pants, and we continued the routine. At my annual physical my nurse practitioner asked about my exercise, and when I shared our swimming plan, she added it to her routine and joined us in the pool in the early mornings.*

*Admittedly, getting up early and jumping into cold water wasn't always pleasant. Joining my husband and locker room mates provided some incentive, until the lockdowns. Our pool was closed for ten weeks, and when it reopened, we returned with excitement, willingly wearing masks, and socially distancing. The front desk staff and lifeguards were glad to see people. My nurse and another lady joined me in the locker room. But it was different than before. We were happy to be there, catch up with each other, return to our routines. When the holidays approached, my husband and I decided to expand our usual greeting card tradition with distant family and military friends, to our nearby neighbors and friends. We brought cards and Kind bars to the Y staff and shared photo cards with our swimmer friends.*

*The Kind bars must have worked. One morning someone brought in a huge Secret Santa box for a fellow swimmer. The front desk person asked us if we knew the last name of this Secret Santa swimmer, because she had asked her to take the box out to the Taxi that our fellow swimmer used each morning. The Secret Santa happened to be my nurse, so we told her the name. The front desk worker reacted, "No, I know the name of the person getting the gift – I want to know the name of the Secret Santa." We assured her that was her last name. She was surprised that both swimmers had the same last name, and it's not a common name.*

*The next day Secret Santa told me that she noticed that the name on the return label on our locker room friend's card was the same as her name. They unraveled the story and discovered that they were related. I was touched by the generosity of a Secret Santa and the coincidence that connected two friends who were truly family. In pandemic times perhaps such coincidences have deeper meaning. It was the simple everyday things shared with others that provided healing for me – Kind bars, friends, and swimming.*

---



**Artist: Erin Hisey, Assistant Professor  
Department of Music and Theatre Arts  
University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire**

**View all the pieces in the *Healing Reflections* [online gallery](#).**







# Healing Journals

**Story by: Madeline Krafcheck, Student  
University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire**

*Today I'm thinking about rollerblading. I'm thinking about gliding, soaring a little. I'm thinking of ten miles of pavement. Ten miles of the sun beating on my back, my friends by my side. A man's best friend and my best friend, gliding and soaring. I'm thinking about flying down a hill — the best pavement in town. And then I'm thinking about that one ride by myself when all was fine. And then I tripped on a stick. My front left wheel failing me and me going down like a ton of bricks. Cars passing, probably laughing, entertained by my crash. I lay on my back for a moment, staring at the sky, my elbow bleeding. What a ride I was having until that stick came along. I got up and went where I needed to go. Back home.*

*And back home it was quiet. Dad in the garage listening to the murmur of the radio that has become white noise to me. I unlaced my boots and wiped my elbow, wincing at the sting. Back on cement, my socked feet feel a little uneasy. I am slower now, no longer on wheels, no longer gliding alongside a strong, friendly dog. My mind moving faster than my body now, with nowhere to go. What a ride I was having until that stick came along.*

*We wake up to quiet streets and the hum of the dishwasher. The thought in the back of my head that I'm attempting to block yet again; 'just another day'. But the radio clicks on, the TV screen consists of the same banner at the bottom with some kind of message - usually the same, yet different. The same voices are beginning to blend together now. They sound urgent, but I remain on the same wood floors, the same morning chair. Tables are flipped, books are open, meaningless words in one ear and out the other. But one thought remains consistent: "in order to be together, we must be apart."*

*Today I'm thinking about rollerblading. Ten miles of pavement to start. About soaring and gliding and the sun. About eight wheels not only spinning, but eight wheels stopping, slowing down, suddenly stumbling. And then getting up.*

*I'm thinking about hugging friends, about sitting on the lap of the one I love. I'm thinking about warming my hands at a bonfire and sharing a drink with my best friend. I'm thinking about the "usual" with my gram, belly laughs, and smiles I can see from four feet away. Feel from four feet away. I think about that stick and falling — and falling hard. I fall and I fall and I fall. Today I'm thinking about getting up, wiping my elbow, keeping my boots on, and moving forward. Knowing I was alone but okay. Knowing that strong, friendly dog would soon be alongside me.*

---

**Artist: Sierra Lomo, Instructional Designer  
College of Business – Online Programs  
University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire**

Sierra Lomo is an illustrator and fine artist based in Wisconsin. They received their BFA in Illustration from UWEC (2018) and their MFA in Illustration Practice from the Maryland Institute College of Art (2020). Themes important to their work include health and health care, nature, and identity. See more of Sierra's work on Instagram @Sierrmo.

**View all the pieces in the *Healing Reflections* [online gallery](#).**