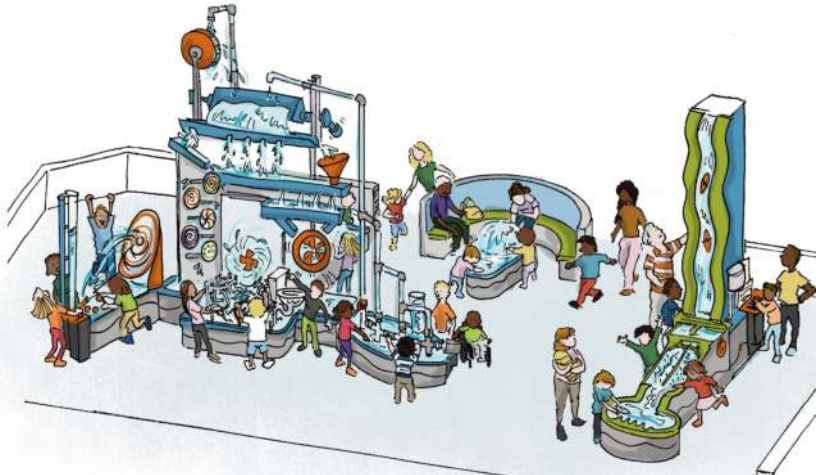

**online:**  
[childrensimaginarium.org](http://childrensimaginarium.org)

# KIDS PLACE

**A**fter years of anticipation, fun-seeking families are one step closer to entering Wausau's newest museum for kids. The Children's Imaginarium, which took root in 2013 as the brainchild of co-founders Maggie Gordon and Tammy Szekeress, will start construction in the spring of 2023 in a portion of the HOM Furniture building.





The museum will have a separate entrance and a unique façade facing the green space of the redevelopment area.

“Through the reimagined downtown development planned by Wausau Opportunity Zone and the generosity of local businesses, foundations and individuals, we have an opportunity for the Children’s Imaginarium to become a family-centered cornerstone of the downtown,” said Gordon, president & co-founder of Children’s Imaginarium.

The museum will feature five interactive galleries, two multipurpose rooms, space for traveling exhibits and one STEM lab centered on science, technology, engineering and math. Just feet away from the action will be ample parking.

The exhibits, produced by nationally recognized exhibit fabricator Kidzibits of St. Paul, support hands-on learning with a connection to Marathon County.

Since agriculture is at the core of the county’s heritage, it’s fitting to have a Farm to Fork gallery depicting the farming process of moving food from markets to dinner tables. Among other features, the Air Gallery will allow visitors to interact with and manipulate air and the Water Gallery will showcase the many ways we use water in our community, including an interactive sluiceway for kayaks.

STEM Tree Climber, an interactive climbing exhibit, will utilize simple machines to stimulate hands-on learning. For team building exercises, there will be a Construction zone for exploring different engineering concepts.

Programming is geared toward children of all abilities from two to 12 years old. The multipurpose rooms will be available for field trips, birthday parties and community learning and gathering space.

Andrea Lewens, Mosinee Elementary School teacher and mom of three young girls, said her family is thrilled that Children’s Imaginarium is on its way to the area.

“My girls are very intrigued by multi-sensory learning,” she said. “Curiosity is a powerful force in the learning process.”

She agrees with museum founders that it will be an asset to downtown Wausau and an important investment in the future.

“Early learning is crucial to developing social skills and interactions with peers. It builds confidence and brings out the imagination to help kids on their path to becoming life-long learners,” she said.

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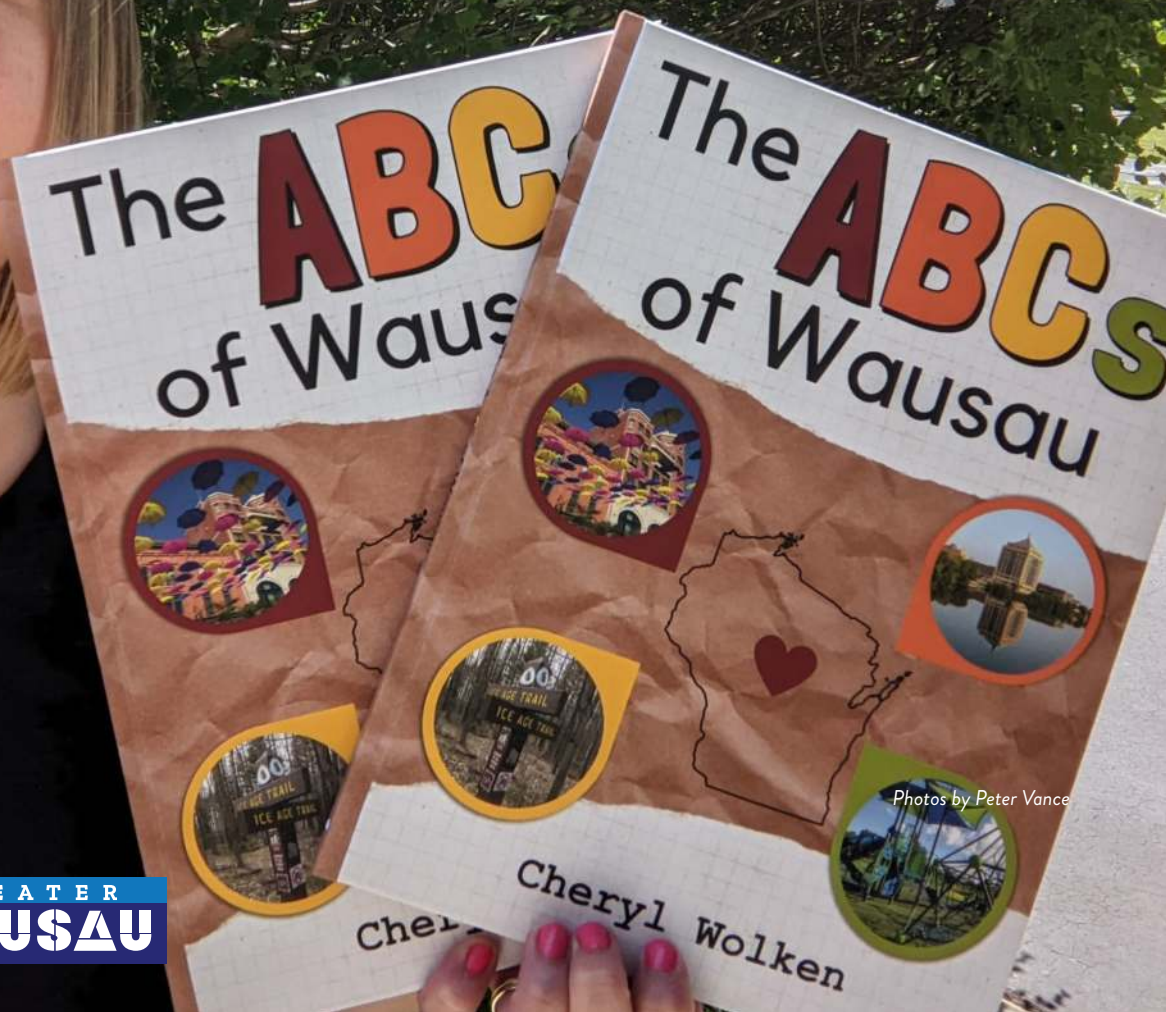
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# ABC AUTHOR

## TRANSPLANT WRITES THE BOOK ON WAUSAU

In January 2021, Cheryl Wolken was halfway through a year of helping her kids with preschool and virtual second grade, when she stumbled upon an idea - a children's book about Wausau. The idea came to her while she was organizing her kids' books. As she picked up books about Chicago, Seattle, and Washington D.C., she wondered if there was a book for kids about Wausau, and if not, whether she could create one.



Photos by Peter Vance

Although the idea for a children's book came somewhat out of the blue, Wolken was already an expert in the ins and outs of parenting in the Wausau area. For the past three years she had built a website for local parents from the ground up and had grown it into a comprehensive resource that included everything she wished she had known when she moved to the area with her husband and eight-month-old daughter in 2014.

Cheryl and her family relocated to the Wausau area after living in the Twin Cities for almost eight years when her husband

accepted a job. Without knowing anyone in the area or what activities were available for young children, the first few months for the family were

quite difficult. It was this challenging experience that spurred Wolken's interest in helping other parents to experience an easier transition than she did.

Wolken is now recognized around town as Wausau Mama: the face behind her website, WausauMama.com.



**online:**  
[wausaumama.com](http://wausaumama.com)

After finding out that there was not a children's book about the Wausau area, Wolken decided to utilize her knowledge about the region to create one. Never having written a book before, Wolken admitted that there was a huge learning curve. Through various online resources, she was able to teach herself how to complete all of the steps necessary in writing and creating a book.

In January 2022, The ABCs of Wausau became available to the public on Wolken's website and at Janke Book Store. One unique aspect of the process is that Wolken partnered with local organizations to donate 750 copies of the book to numerous local schools and non-profits that serve children.

The ABCs of Wausau has become a local best-seller with copies sold at multiple locations throughout the Wausau area. The most rewarding part for the new author has been hearing from parents how much their kids love the book.

"Every kid has a favorite page," said Wolken, "and when I read it to a group, it's fun to see how excited kids get when they recognize places in the book."

By publishing the book, Wolken hopes to not only help kids learn their ABCs, but to remind both locals and visitors of everything that makes the Wausau area a special place to live.

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**VICKY  
BLUMM**

*Warehousing/Extrusions  
Manager,  
Kolbe & Kolbe  
Millwork Co Inc,  
Wausau*

# WOMEN WHO BUILD

MEET SEVERAL LOCAL WOMEN THRIVING  
IN THE BUILDING INDUSTRY



## TIFFANY KOSS

Director of Sales & Marketing,  
Kafka Granite, Mosinee

The number of women in the building industry in central Wisconsin has grown dramatically in recent years. In the Wausau area women can be found working at building sites, manufacturing plants, leading projects and departments and running their own construction companies.

Even with this recent growth trend, women only make up about 10.9% of the workforce in this industry nationally. Locally, companies like Kolbe & Kolbe Millwork Co Inc now boast a female manufacturing leadership rate of 35 percent.

Women are capable of excelling in this field which requires both manual and mental exertion. The workers this industry needs must be able to think cognitively and exhibit sharp problem-solving skills. Women have much to bring to the table by often visualizing a project differently, unveiling new insights in terms of ways of working.

*“When I was little, I just saw the dirty, messy side of the business,*

*as my dad came home late at night covered in dust and grease.” said Tiffany Koss, Director of Sales & Marketing at Kafka Granite in Mosinee. “I now hold a deep love and appreciation that something so raw and dirty can be transformed into such beautiful architectural elements. The ways in which our products are transformed from Earth’s surface into spectacular installations never ceases to amaze me, and developing new ways that multi-million-year-old stone can be used is exhilarating.”*

SEE WOMEN CONTINUED ON PAGE 15



*“My career path chose me.”*

*said Vicky Blumm, warehousing/extrusions manager at Kolbe & Kolbe Millwork Co Inc in Wausau. About half of Blumm’s team at the company are women. “All along this journey, I’ve had many great mentors. Starting my career as an Army Specialist and working my way from material handler to shop floor manager at Kolbe, I encourage women to be open to all opportunities, especially the ones that are outside their comfort zone. Some of my most rewarding experiences in life and work have been because I’ve chosen the unknown and strived for more.”*

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