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S Y R A C U S E
WOMAN
magazine

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DIAMOND THAXTON
AND LOLA ALAO
**Therapists with a
higher perspective**

SPECIAL FEATURE

Safe Space CNY

OUT & ABOUT

Willowdale Bend Farm Sanctuary

HEALTHY EATING

Time for a party!

HEALTHY WOMAN

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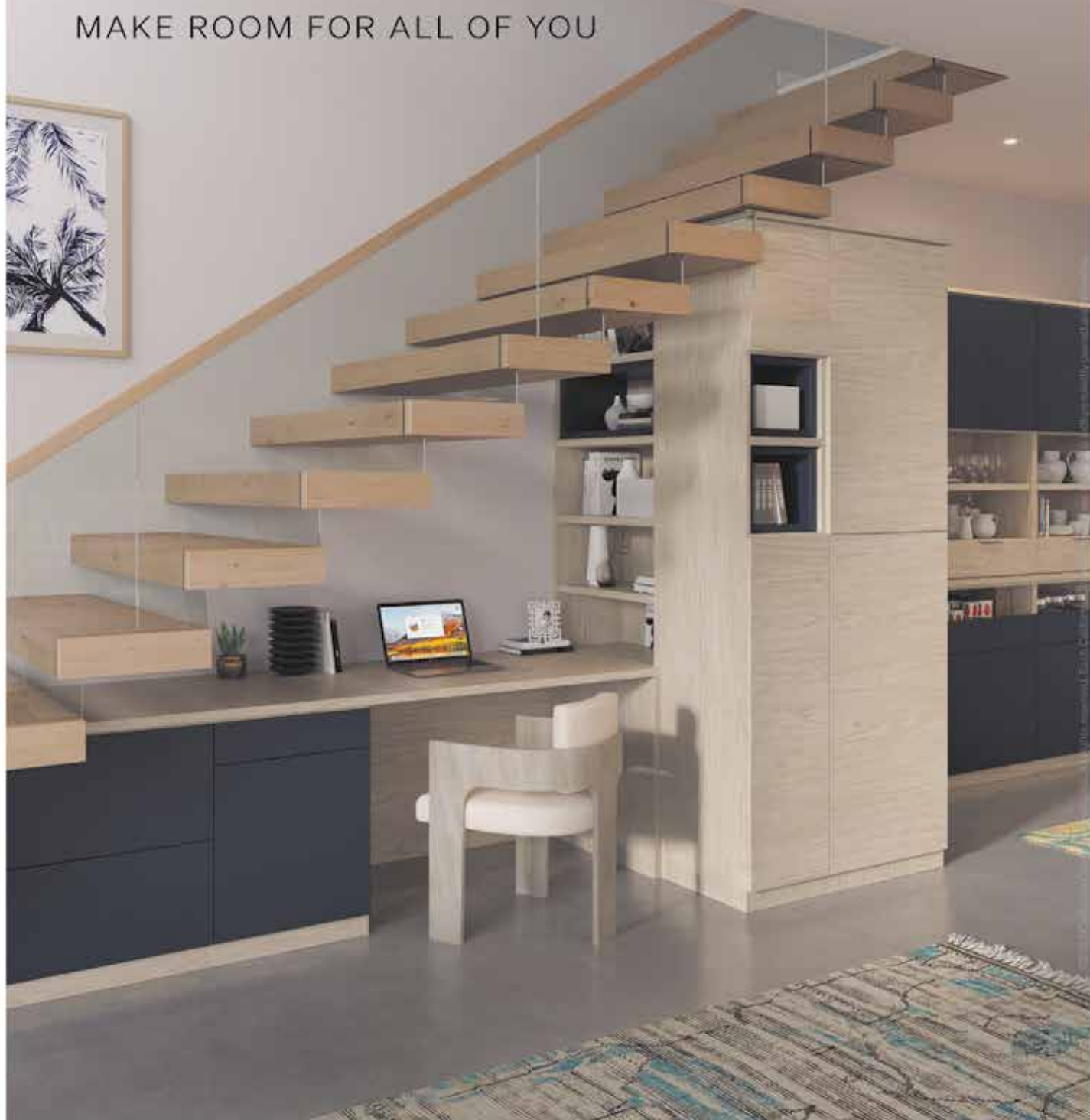
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may



A photograph of an elderly woman with grey hair, looking off to the side with a thoughtful or perhaps slightly distressed expression. She is wearing a patterned blouse with green, purple, and white floral designs. A younger woman, presumably a caregiver, is standing behind her, her hands gently resting on the elderly woman's shoulders. The background is a softly blurred indoor setting with a window showing some greenery outside.

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Amber Smith

Dear Cancer,

I decided to write you a letter. It seems strange to sit down and write a letter to something that can take on many different forms, however, I'm going to try. You and I have had a relatively short relationship, only spanning the course of three years. Cancer, I never really understood you. I lived in a pretty naive and blissful world. Don't get me wrong, I always heard about you and what you were capable of, but I never had any direct contact with you. I saw you in commercials, movies, and Instagram posts. I saw ribbons and complete months plastered in pink in awareness of you. I just figured if I don't pay attention to you, you wouldn't pay any attention to me, and I was perfectly fine with that.

You, however, didn't care that I wasn't looking and came for me through my mother in December 2020. December 16th to be exact. The day my mom told me that she was diagnosed with cancer, it was also my birthday. You can be so cruel, you know. Her fight with cancer was short. Just seven weeks. You were pesky and hiding all over the place. When a doctor pinpointed you and started to destroy you, you popped up somewhere else. One thing you didn't realize is that I was observing, listening, and spending every moment learning while we settled in at the hospital for our two-week stay before she passed.

When you decided to take my mom from me in such a quick and abrupt manner, giving her no room to beat you, you opened my eyes. I was as close as I thought I would ever be to you. I was angry. I was so sad. Even more, I was determined to never meet you again.

To make sure I did everything possible, I asked my doctor for an early mammogram. Understanding that I was sensitive to cancer after my mom's passing, she agreed it was a smart move. That's when we found you. Again, hiding in dense breast tissue so that I had to go through several exams, and a biopsy to confirm that it was you. This time, though, things were going to be different.

This fight against you was going to be calculated. You had no idea who you were messing with. You had no idea the people that stood right beside me pushing me to get better. You had no idea that I would be so organized and tenacious. You didn't know I would be so particular about my appointments and be so diligent with all my paperwork. You thought I wouldn't raise over \$20,000 with Cycle for Survival just to figure out how to stop you. You thought I would just let you win.

This is where you are very wrong.

You thought you could spread before we found you. Little did you know that finding you would point my life in a direction that is even better than it was before. Without you, I would have been fine, happy and content. With you, I have met incredible people, found my passion, and become closer to people in my life. You gave me a set schedule and forced me to feel emotions and be scared and make decisions with my now husband that make us so incredibly grateful and excited for our future.

Dear cancer, thank you. Thank you for picking me to fight you because I won't back down. I may be cancer free but the lessons that you left with me are here to stay.

Sincerely,
Amber Smith
@ambervscancer



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Fashion and fun

Syracuse Fashion Week culminated with an elegant evening of fun and fashion at the Mohegan Manor on Saturday, April 22. Michael Benny was the master of ceremonies for the event, which served as a fundraiser for the Food Bank of Central New York.

Photos by Linda Jabbour.



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A successful summit

The 2nd Annual CNY Women’s Summit was again a smashing success. More than 300 women came together to celebrate International Women’s Day with us this year. We greatly appreciate the commitment from our sponsors, ambassadors, vendors, advertisers, and community supporters as we created new relationships and raised money for the future generation of leaders with DECA Region 9.

Photo credit: Jenna Hayes of JMariePhotography



Foundation's donation supports breast cancer detection at Crouse

Crouse Health Foundation has received funding of \$406,000 from the Saint Agatha Foundation to purchase a tomosynthesis machine for the Hadley J. Falk Breast Health Center at Crouse Hospital.

Digital tomosynthesis machines provide 3D mammography tests. The Breast Health Center provided 8,500 3D mammography tests in 2022.

The Hadley J. Falk Breast Health Center was the first facility in the area to provide 3D mammography using digital tomosynthesis. Saint Agatha funds will be used to

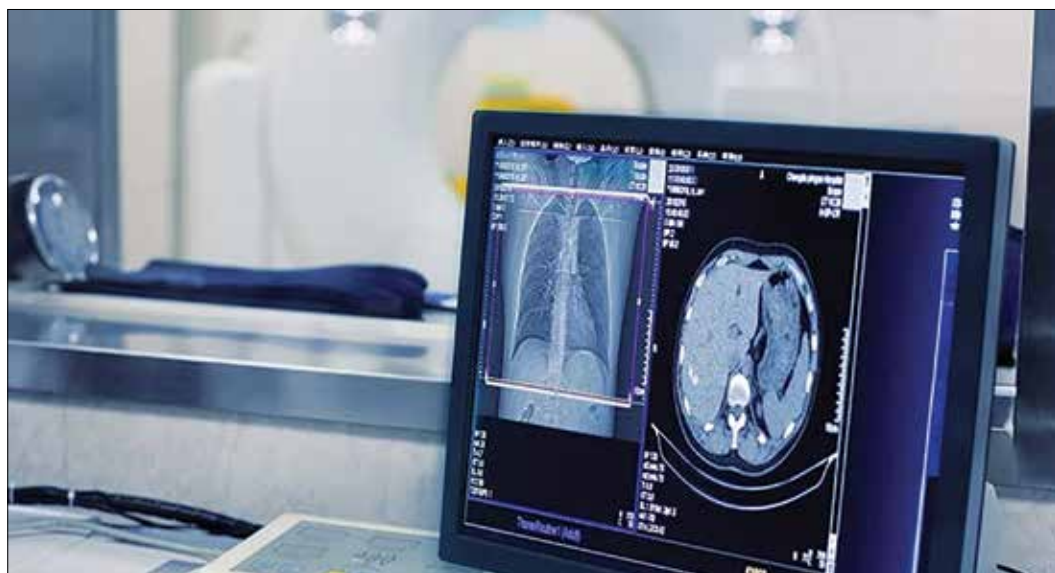
purchase the next generation of this extremely useful detection equipment. This new equipment will make breast cancers easier to see in dense breast tissue, will make breast screening more comfortable and will provide the lowest possible dose of radiation.

"We are enormously grateful to the Saint Agatha Foundation for their generous support of Crouse's

breast health program," said Dr. Stephen Montgomery, director emeritus at the Breast Health Center. "The new tomosynthesis machine will make it possible to continue to provide our patients with the highest level of care."

"We are so very thankful to the Saint Agatha Foundation for their generous gift," said Salvatore Raccuia, MD, medical director at

the center. "This state-of-the-art tomosynthesis unit will help us continue Crouse Health Hospital's mission to provide the best in patient care with the most advanced equipment available."



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Building a network of women entrepreneurs

WBOC, WISE the Women's Opportunity Center and Syracuse Woman Magazine came together earlier in April for a fun evening of networking and socializing at the Collegian Hotel in Syracuse. Each of the women's business organizations described how they support female entrepreneurs and women business owners from all over Central New York had an opportunity to highlight the work they do. *Photos by Nancy Miller.*





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Safe Space

A PLACE FOR HEALING THROUGH EMPATHY, COMMUNITY, CONNECTION

Kate Hanzalik

The winter in London, 1962, was the coldest it had been in a century, and the poet Sylvia Plath felt it like the depression in her bones. It had returned, caused by the pains of motherhood, the role she played as a wife. It was caused by feelings of guilt, unworthiness, and the trauma of her “suffering the atrocity of sunsets,” she said. At night, she was an insomniac, “inhabited by a cry.” During the day, she wrote poetry with a “a dark thing that sleeps in [her].” This, following multiple suicide attempts and rounds of electroconvulsive shock therapy. This, as she wrote a collection of poems that would win the Pulitzer Prize after her suicide.

Plath’s readers felt for her and empathized with her – her tormented soul became the salve to their own suffering. In much the same way, Safe Space is a sanctuary where those who went through periods of their life where they were struggling with their mental health offer support to those who need it the most.

Founded by Tracy Mergler in 2020, Safe Space offers services, classes, and support groups for many things, ranging from eating disorders, post-traumatic stress, postpartum experiences, men’s mental wellness, and more. Currently, the organization is partnering with local providers and offering these services until Safe Space’s physical space is completed, at which point everything can be offered under one roof.

Mergler, who grappled for decades with an eating disorder and depression, conceptualized the organization after she returned from an in-patient facility for the sixth time. “I said, ‘What do I need, what is missing that I need in this community?’ And honestly that night, being the special ed teacher that I am, I laid out a piece of paper and markers and I drew Safe Space. So it is built off of my

own recovery, what I found worked for me, and what we were lacking in the community.”

During her in-patient treatment, Mergler was forced to join a group for patients with eating disorders. “I was surrounded by individuals that had gone through something I had gone through . . . In treatment, it was that feeling of being understood [that] validated everything,” she said. “It was a game changer, and I was like, we have to normalize this in community. We just kept coming back to that. How do we create community? But do it in a way that is safe. And so, ‘Safe Space.’”

Safe Space has grown over the years. Now, the organization offers six peer-to-peer support groups, with more in development. Safe Space has a partnership with Right Mind Syracuse and is doing a four-part series with them partnering mental wellness and art. “We also are doing community pop ups through the Westcott Community Center, Southwest and Northeast to bring Safe Space services TO the community and find out what they want to see more of,” Mergler said.

Classes in yoga, meditation, breathwork and drumming will all be offered in the next month on the second floor of the Gere Block building that has been gracious enough to allow Safe Space to use that space until theirs is completed. All of this is because of the high demand and the desire of those who want to help because they can relate.

“We need the medical model with the holistic model,” said Mergler. “We are encouraging individuals to build their own toolbox of supplies because what works for one person doesn’t necessarily work for the other.

So what peer-to-peer support does is it puts us on the same playing field. [Group facilitators] can say, ‘I’ve sat where you’ve sat and I’ve gotten to the other side.’”

Rina Brule is one such person. She leads one of the postpartum support groups. After the birth of their first daughter, both she and her husband suffered from some postpartum depression/anxiety.

“I felt completely unprepared for being a parent, despite all the books we had read and classes we had taken. I felt really scared and alone. And I couldn’t believe that no one had given me an honest heads-up about how difficult the postpartum period can be,” Brule said. But the more I talked to other people in the same position, the better, less alone, and stronger she felt.

“In my opinion, support groups are magical - meeting people at their most vulnerable, experiencing the same





struggles and joys as you—there's just something that binds you together and strengthens the entire group,” she said.

Participants in The Men's Group know the magic of meeting like-minded people; it is one of the largest groups in Safe Space. The facilitator, Sean MacMaster, is a single, divorced father whose friendship with a man who has a shared experience led MacMaster to understand why community dialogue is so valuable.

“There is a huge need for men to have a space to discuss issues they are facing today. So many men suffer in silence because we are taught to ‘suck it up’ or ‘be a man’ or any other phrase that doesn't allow us to be able to be authentic,” MacMaster said, noting that nearly 80 percent of adult suicides in America are men. “Seeking help is seen as a sign of weakness. The goal of the group is to change that narrative.”

All groups are well attended and helpful to many, and Mergler wants to make sure it stays that way. She does outreach to local providers, therapists, and dieticians to collaborate. She's raising funds to finish the space. She works with her board for executive decisions and networks with other women entrepreneurs in Syracuse.

“There is an unlimited amount of people that need this support,” Mergler said. “So because [Safe Space] is built to fit Syracuse, I see it only continuing to grow.” SWM

If you are interested in learning more about Safe Space, check out safespace.com or find them on social media. If you would like to donate to help fund the completion of the space, go to givebutter.com/BgKTH7 or email Tracy Mergler at tracymergler@safespace.com.

wise

WOMEN IGNITING THE SPIRIT
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FEATURED ENTREPRENEUR

Dr. Tina Chee

Owner and Founder
UpDesign Primary Care, LLC

Dr. Tina Chee is the Owner and Founder of UpDesign Primary Care, LLC, a direct primary care medical practice in Central New York. The practice offers affordable and comprehensive healthcare services to patients of all ages with tiered pricing based on age, and a flat monthly subscription fee to access unlimited appointments and communicate directly with your physician. Since opening in July 2022, UpDesign has attracted patients from all income levels seeking personalized and cost-effective healthcare.

Tina's passion for being a physician stems from her interest in physiology and biology. Her desire to help people live their healthiest lives possible led her to primary care, where she can guide her patients on their journeys to make health improvements over time. Tina received her medical degree from NYU and has an MPA in Health Policy & Management. Her experience in the healthcare system during her medical school years illuminated the challenges people face in accessing affordable healthcare, which led her to explore the direct primary care model. As the child of immigrants, Tina is acutely aware of how this lack of appropriate access to care impacts the most vulnerable populations of people. Operating a direct primary care model allows Tina the freedom to treat patients in a way that makes good sense to her, instead of having to adhere to the paperwork and headaches that insurance can bring to both patients and providers.

While Tina has always been passionate about helping people, she has faced several challenges as a business owner. Starting a business requires a different skill set than practicing medicine. She notes that you have to think about all of the processes that were already built by the organizations that employed you before. Realizing that it's on you now can be daunting. Tina has found support in resources like WISE Women's Business Center and WBOC. Having a WISE business coach has been particularly helpful for her, providing different perspectives on business validation and giving her a sounding board for her ideas. The challenge is her favorite part of business ownership so far, and she enjoys learning



new business skills. One of her favorite business tasks is getting creative and putting together social media posts for UpDesign. Before operating her own business, Tina held a variety of roles in the medical field, as a physician in a hospital, as an educator for residents and medical students, and as the medical director of a community health center.

Dr. Tina Chee is constantly moving in her pursuit of solutions to help her patients and community improve their well-being. She is always looking for ways to help her patients and community improve their well-being. Future goals include planning a group walk and holding educational webinars to help patients build accountability and make tangible changes together. Additionally, she wants to hold educational webinars that are open to anyone and will provide an opportunity for broader education to the community. Tina believes this model of direct primary care is the future, and expects to continue expanding her practice.

WISE HAPPENINGS:

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-Dr. Tina Chee

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Towpath Quilt Guild: Quilting for a cause

Alyssa Dearborn



Every month, the Towpath Quilt Guild meets at the Fayetteville Methodist Church to sew, socialize, and to keep the art of quilting alive in Central New York. Founded in the spring of 1981, the guild has consistently advocated for its mission to “promote awareness and provide educational opportunities in the art of quilting.” But another important aspect of the guild is how passionate its group members are for helping others in the community.

“I think that quilters are very generous people first of all,” said guild President Donita Whelan when asked about the charity quilts created by members. “Even though it is not in our mission statement, it’s always been something important to the members of

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Towpath to reach out into the community and to help those who can be comforted by a quilt.”

Together, the guild has used their sewing skills to help create quilts, placemats, and even wheelchair bags for a variety of local organizations including Meals on Wheels, McMahon Ryan Child Advocacy Center, the YMCA, the Syracuse Veterans Hospital and many more.

“This year, our service project is for ALS,” she continued.

“It’s the ALS Challenge and it’s my understanding that they do sell some of the quilts and that money is used for research. Many of the quilts are directly given to people who suffer from this horrible disease.”

When asked about the work that goes into making each of the quilts, Donita emphasized that it is a team effort.

“It’s the energy in the air



when you do something like this. It’s incredible. It’s done like an assembly line fashion where someone is cutting the fabric, someone is ironing the fabric, and someone is actually sewing the quilt together,” she said.

“But there are several people who choose to work either in small groups at their homes – I have done this several times – or on their own they can create quilts that are for the same cause.

Continued on page 24

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Quilting for a cause from page 23

It's very rewarding. Like I said, it's not part of our mission statement, but it's extremely rewarding to know that we're helping somebody with our God given talents."

Another guild activity that Donita and the rest of the guild looks forward to is the annual quilt show. The annual show displays some of the quilts created by members, but attendees can also enjoy vendors, a boutique, and several raffles.

"Our quilt shows are amazing. I humbly say that," she said with a laugh. "We have usually somewhere between 150 to 200 quilts to display. There are demonstrations. There's a boutique. This year, all of our boutique items are handcrafted by members for the public to buy...It's a very exciting time. We have a quilt that is raffled, so we've been selling tickets for that now. So that's raffled off at

the show. We also have a basket raffle, where this year we have 20 baskets lined up for raffling. These baskets are just amazing, all put together by members of the guild."

The quilt show also celebrates and recognizes the work put into quilt making and also helps the guild network with potential members.

"There's a public voting where the public can vote on best-in-show. There's a lot of ribbons that are given out according to categories. It's just an exciting time, not just for the quilt guild members, but for the public. Of course, a lot of quilters will come, quilters from all over. But people will come with a friend that kind of tagged along and they are just so taken aback. We will often recruit new quilters from this event. We love it when people join the guild having seen our show, and that is a plus.



We're always very welcoming to quilters of any skill level from novice to expert."

If someone is interested in joining the guild, the best way is to visit the Towpath Quilt Guild website and fill out the application form. If someone does not know if the guild is right for them, Donita says that the guild is always welcoming to visitors.

"They can meet with us," she explained. "Guests are



more than welcome to come. The first time they visit us, it's free. They don't have to pay anything. Maybe they're just a little interested, but they're not quite sure if it's for them. So they can come and pay \$5 to attend another meeting. And then after that, we encourage them to become a member and the money they have put in is subtracted from the membership fee...I always say that it's the best \$30 that I spend all year."

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The guild is passionate about how it helps bring the art of quilting to the community, but it also wants to ensure that the tradition of quilting has a place in the future. The membership of the guild is aging, so Donita is pinning her hopes on new members to create a stability for the guild in the future.

"Our hopes are that we can continue to grow. As with many of the guilds, COVID set us back a bit. We were not able to

meet that year and so we met via Zoom. So between losing some members who didn't come back and because a lot of our members have been with the guild since it started in 1981 – we have members who are moving into assisted living; a lot of our members have died," she said. "We would like new blood. We would like to increase our membership. We would like to welcome new quilters and keep this beautiful tradition of

quilting – quilting in a group, all that the guild is an example of – we want to keep that going." *SWM*

If you are interested in learning more about the Towpath Quilt Guild, visit www.towpathquiltguild.org.




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Therapists with a higher perspective

Kate Hanzalik

"I see what others
can't see about
themselves."—
Diamond Marie



If you're living with depression, you're not alone. It's one of the most common mental health conditions in the United States. Over 8 percent of all U.S. adults have experienced at least one major depressive episode. If you're seeking treatment such as psychotherapy and prescriptions, there's a chance that you're one of many people who don't respond to treatment. While many therapists point out that prescriptions can be a wonderful tool, some therapists are adding to their toolbox with alternative therapies.

In Syracuse, two women combine innovation with ancient practices to heal the people who've turned to them for help. Diamond Marie, PsyD, a licensed mental health counselor and chief transformational officer of Thaxton Therapy, offers transformational therapy. Lola Alao, NP, co-owner of TMS Restoration Psychiatry, offers transcranial magnetic stimulation (TMS) and prayer therapy. Their approaches are successful – they've helped many people to become happier and healthier. But part of what makes Marie and Alao's impact so inspiring is that they're using some of their own methods to heal themselves.

Transformational Therapy

Diamond Marie wakes in the morning with a routine – get her son to school, get ready to see clients, host a webinar, and work on content creation for her business, Thaxton Therapy. Sure, this routine may be straightforward, but taking a closer look into her past, Marie's day-to-day life is the culmination of a lot of trauma and personal growth.

"I'm from the inner city of Syracuse, southside to be exact. I grew up always knowing something was off with me but wasn't ever sure what that was," she said. "Being a young girl of color in poverty I had very low self-worth. I aspired to be a medical doctor thinking that with that title I'd finally be seen as valuable and respected. After a long road in college, I stumbled into mental health counseling completing my masters and doctorate and became a licensed mental health counselor."

Marie was living in what she describes as "a dark period." She was diagnosed with borderline personality disorder [BPD] that worsened after the death of her husband in 2018. "I didn't want to live. I wanted another life. I was all over the place," she said. "After finishing my studies, seeing a therapist, and learning to really love myself, I was finally in recovery. I also met my current partner who was patient enough to see the best in me while I self-sabotaged for a while."

She recognized the strength in her struggle. "One thing I really did appreciate about an element of my BPD was my empathy and being in sync with others. I missed that connection."

As Marie was helping others, her recovery helped her to become more energetic, to vibrate at a higher level, so to speak. But something was missing—she longed for a transformational experience, so she turned to spirituality.

Chakras are like pinwheels, energy centers in the body that spin at the speed of light, explains anatomist Ray Long, MD. We might not be able to see them on an fMRI, but, as expert James Van Praagh notes, they're there receiving, transmitting, and processing the world around us. When life gets us down, it's likely that at least one of our chakras is blocked. When they open again, we can feel more joyful, empowered, and alive.

For Marie, she opened her third eye chakra, which helps us to see life more clearly, if not clairvoyantly. This opening took her abilities as a therapist to the next level. She said, "One of my catchphrases is 'I see what others can't see about themselves.'"

This is my third eye. I help people to still see, acknowledge,

"Even if you are not faith-based, prayer therapy is for everybody."—Lola Alao

and love the messy version of themselves. Only true healing can happen after that is done."

As part of her healing journey, Marie underwent treatment with ketamine, a compound that, according to *Nature Journal*, is proven to reduce depression in days rather than months like antidepressants, and it is also shown to help people with bi-polar disorder and PTSD. During treatment, ketamine can create a dissociative effect that causes a person to see themselves and their environment in a different light, which has many benefits.

Marie explained, "Ketamine and psychedelics allow you to dissociate in a good therapeutic way. Instead of escaping because things are too much, you can have a higher, bird's eye perspective on what you are going through." Her transformation made her "able to learn to be in tune with the universe and really tap into my spirituality," she said.

Along with clinical therapy and life coaching, Marie offers ketamine therapy. She partners with Captivate, which delivers ketamine to her clients, then she provides therapy after the treatment. "I'm a therapist who follows the science, but I also follow the heart."

TMS and Prayer Therapy

Lola Alao, NP, follows the science with TMS. It's a noninvasive procedure where magnetic pulses are used over the course of several weeks to stimulate a patient's nerve cells in their prefrontal cortex, the region of the brain responsible for mood and depression. The treatment is also FDA approved for obsessive-compulsive disorder, anxious depression, and smoking cessation. According to Clinical TMS Society, studies show that 60 percent of patients respond well to treatment.

"It takes time, it builds up," Alao said. "When they start [the treatment], you can still see the symptoms are there. But by the time they get to between three to four weeks, we start noticing. Initially the first thing they will start talking about is [relief from] insomnia. . . [And] some people tell me, 'Lola, I can smile again.'"

One patient told her, "Lola, at least I don't want to kill myself anymore." "People who don't even shower, we start seeing them really changing their hygiene going to the next level because they have more interest and desire," she said. "They can see themselves, and notice. So it's just been [a] breakthrough for psychiatry."

Alao also follows her heart. She uses prayer therapy for those who request it, which seems to have rapid results. "Over the years I have seen a lot of patients that are faith-based patients. So they are looking for something more and they have been asking and requesting me to pray with them. . . And I will pray with them . . . and they will leave hopeful and relieved."

A patient who was so panic-stricken that he could not sit in a chair asked her, "What do I do?" She said, "I prayed for peace over him and he calmed down." On a scale of 1-10, he said his panic score was a 20.

After the prayer therapy, he said it was a 4. "I still don't understand how he used me, but I know there is something from me, which is relief and hope." Even if you are not faith-based, prayer therapy is for everybody, Alao said.

She first discovered the power of prayer therapy for her patients when she worked at the Ghali Clinic in Syracuse. "[The patients] were finishing their medication. . . and they would tell me they are still struggling, I'm like, 'We're already at the very top of where you need to go with medication' . . . We would just pray and they would feel better. I was like, okay there is something going on here. So that led me to open my own clinic."

Eventually, after opening her own clinic, she and her husband, a psychiatrist, opened TMS Restoration Psychiatry where they work together to offer TMS, medication, and prayer therapy.

Alao knows how well prayer has worked in her own life. "Faith has actually sustained me to where I am right now. It's been really difficult. I lost a senior sister, lost a junior brother, and, you know, life happens to everybody. But it gives me hope to keep moving, and that there are better days ahead." *SWM*

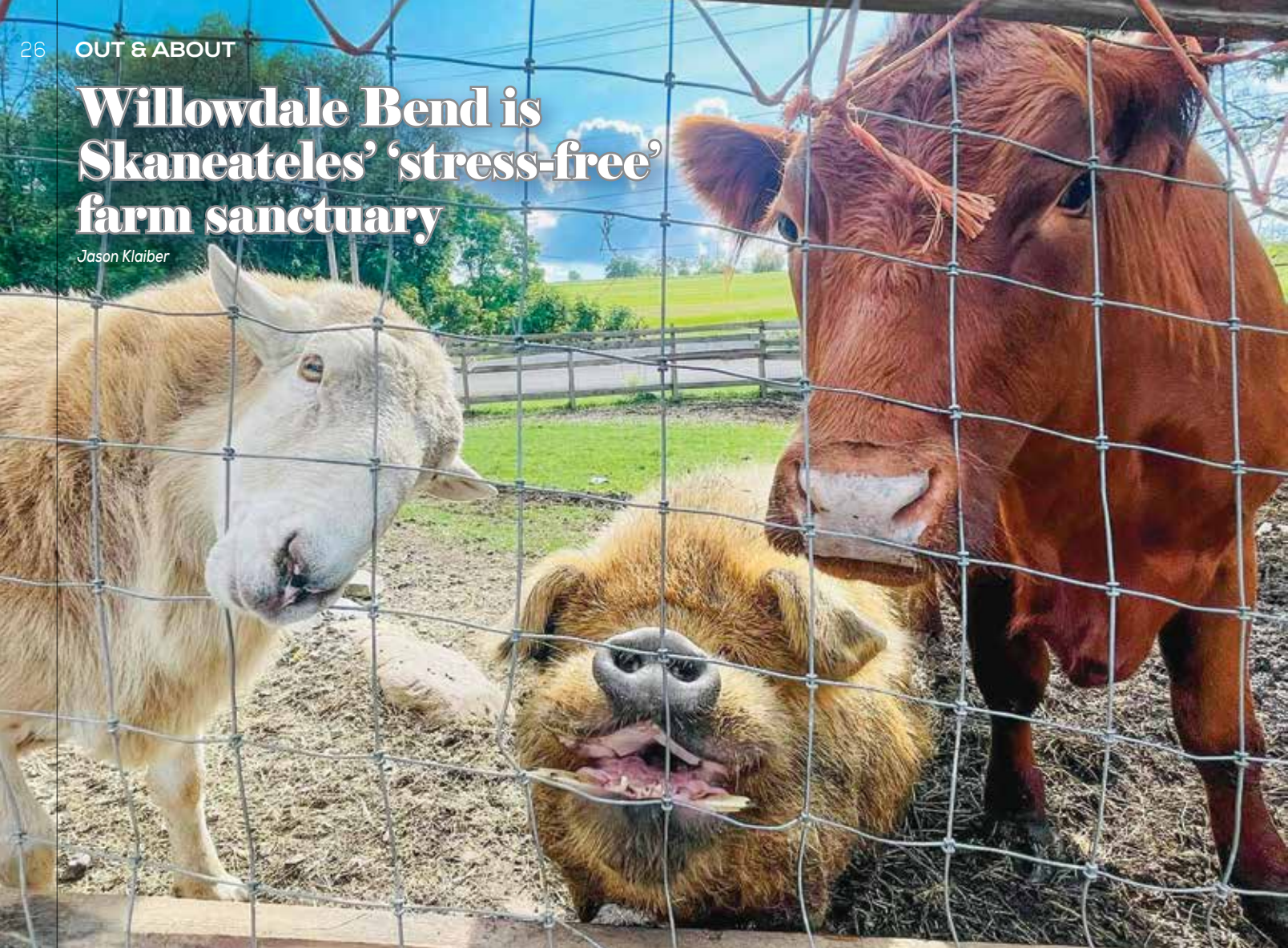
If you're interested in learning more about TMS, please visit www.clinicaltmsociety.org. To learn more about Lola Alao and TMS Restoration Psychiatry, visit tmspsychiatry.org. More information about Diamond Marie and Thaxton Therapy can be found at thaxtontherapy.com.



Photo by Alice G. Patterson

Willowdale Bend is Skaneateles' 'stress-free' farm sanctuary

Jason Klaiber



Situated in Skaneateles not far from Otisco Lake, Willowdale Bend Farm Sanctuary will be the place to be this summer for a host of events and a good helping of fun with animals.

In 2019, the 40-plus-acre farm owned by Rick and Joyce Frost was turned into a healing home for animals rescued from slaughter as well as animals that had been injured or could no longer be cared for by their owners.

From that moment onward, its seven-person board of directors has tried its best to acquire funding and create improved pastures and new shelters for the animals so that they're less spread apart across the property. Just two months ago, Willowdale officially became a 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to the recovery and advocacy of animals in need.

Dianne Catherman, one of the members of the board, said the more than 60 animals on the farm—many of them retired former residents of Rosamond Gifford Zoo—are all “well socialized” because visitors can get “up close and personal” to pet the animals.

“The unconditional love these animals give is second to none,” Catherman said. “You can tell that they appreciate what we do for them. They’re so kind and gentle.”

Bison, goats, alpacas, emus, chickens, ducks, geese, peacocks, donkeys and ponies are among the animals that can be found at the safe haven.

At 20 years old, Marshmallow the bull is the oldest animal on the farm and oftentimes the first sight greeting people upon their entrance into the sanctuary.

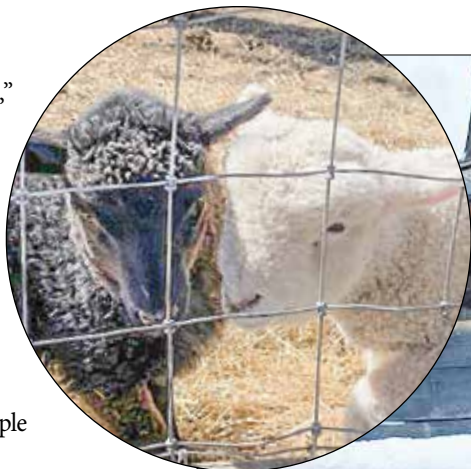
"He's like the staple of the farm," Catherman said. "You go there and you pull into the farmhouse and he's the first thing you see in his big pen. He's very friendly and he loves it when people come up to him."

Gordy, a popular pig who sits for his treats, was taken from a local police station to Willowdale Bend after falling off a transport truck in Auburn as a baby. There's also Sammy the African sulcata tortoise, who loves to have his shell rubbed, and Walter the one-year-old sheep.

Willowdale woolies are beanies made with Walter's shaved-off fur sewn in and found on the merchandise page of the new website willowdalebendfarmsanctuary.com. The purchases go toward vaccinations for the animals and trotter and hoof care.

The Willowdale property at 2080 Willowdale Road in Skaneateles contains a yellow farmhouse with country store antiques, TV monitors and a tavern where craft beers and wines are sold.

Continued on page 28



Willow Bend Sanctuary from page 27

Outside folks will come across picnic tables, wooden recliner chairs, a sandbox where kids can play, a small pond, and a 30-by-100 pavilion with a stage that can be rented out by bands and others.

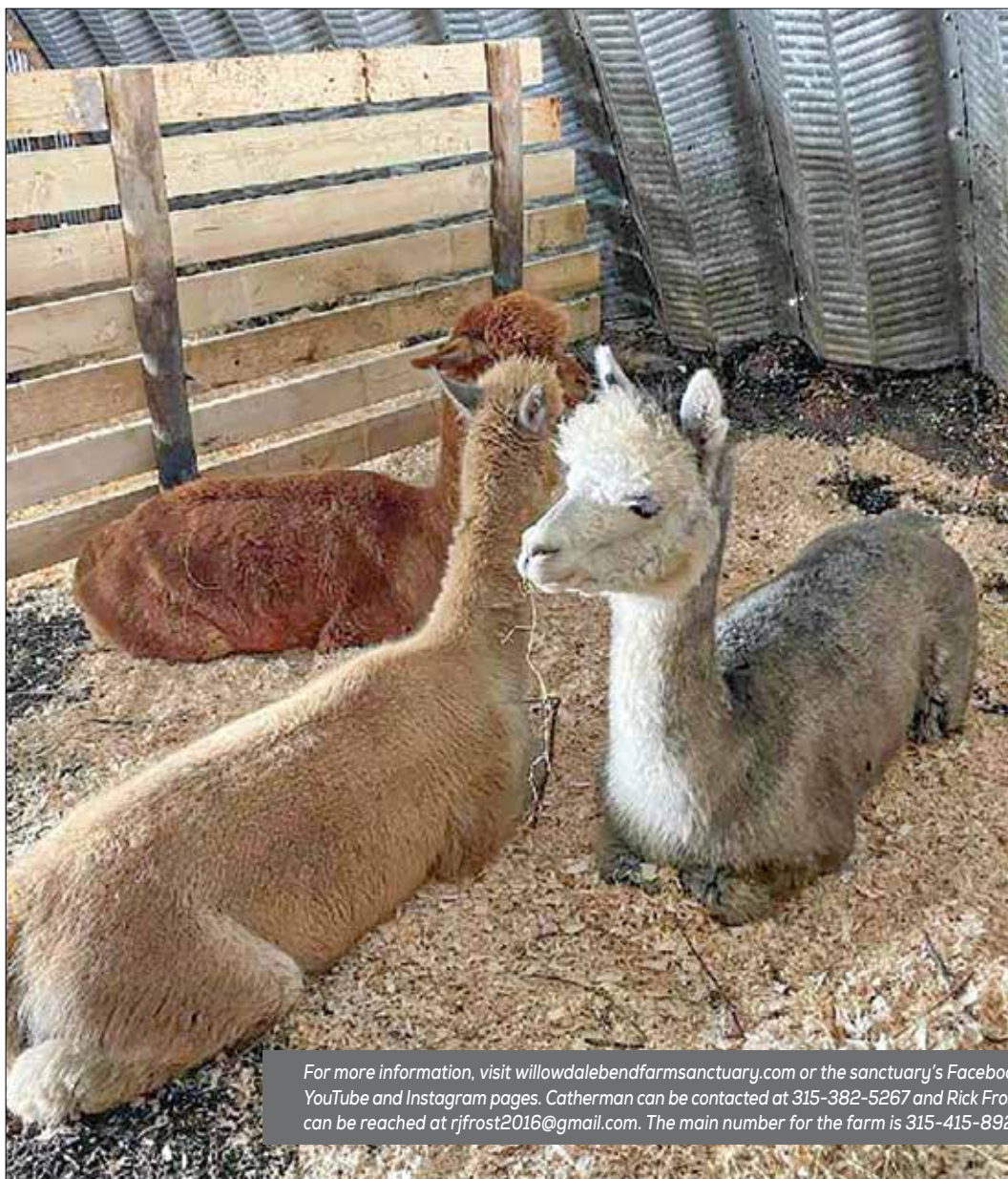
Catherman said the farm sanctuary is a place to not only interact with animals but also unwind.

"I love everything about the farm," she said. "You go there after a hard day of work, and it's a stress-free atmosphere. There's also something about knowing the backstories of the animals being rescued."

The non-profit sanctuary is open for the season starting Mother's Day weekend and lasting through October. Its hours will be 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. on Saturdays and 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Sundays.

Events going on this year at the property include a daylong benefit on Saturday, June 10 for both Upstate Golisano Children's Hospital and the farm sanctuary. That occasion sponsored by the Cabin Cycles repair shop will feature a motorcycle parts swap meet and a music fest with Matt Chase, Nosmo Kings, Cousin Jake and The Rev as the day's acts. There will also be a field of craft vendors and food trucks, with general admission at \$5 per person and free for kids under 12.

On Saturday, Oct. 7, the farm sanctuary is having its first Pet-a-Palooza as a family-friendly way to promote other animal rescue organizations. The Skaneateles nonprofit is also working on putting on car and motorcycle cruise-ins on Sunday afternoons this season. *SWM*



For more information, visit willowdalebendfarmsanctuary.com or the sanctuary's Facebook, YouTube and Instagram pages. Catherman can be contacted at 315-382-5267 and Rick Frost can be reached at rjfrost2016@gmail.com. The main number for the farm is 315-415-8925.



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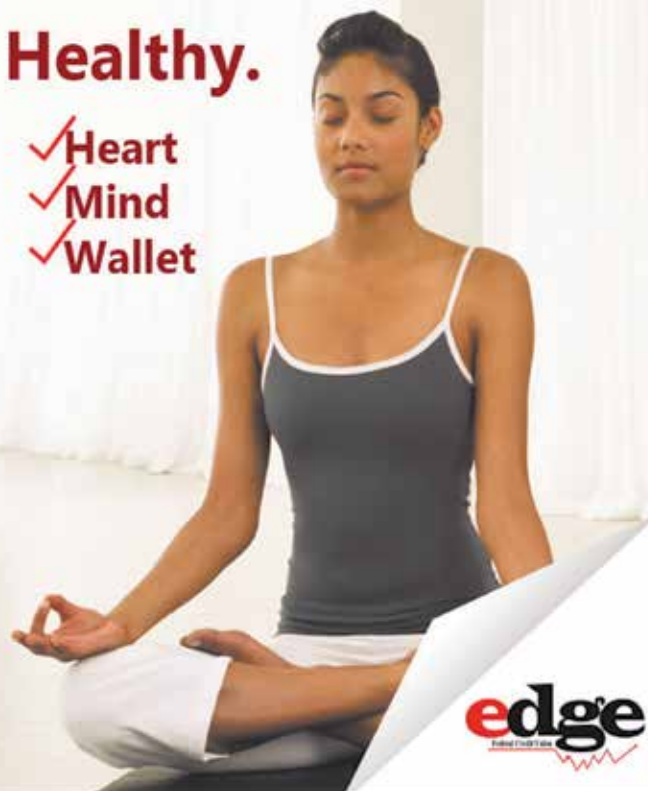
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The long-lasting benefits of self-care

Ashley Tracey

Self-care is the practice of taking action to preserve or improve one's health. This process can vary from person to person, but some basics everyone should focus on are eating healthy, being active, getting enough sleep, and avoiding unhealthy habits such as excessive alcohol consumption and smoking. Self-care helps you feel your best and is essential to living a happy, healthy life.

Working for a medical practice, I see firsthand the positive impact self-care has on a person's mental and physical health. Bio-identical Hormone Replacement Therapy, routine skin exams, and maintaining a positive self-image are some ways people practice self-care.

Hormones are chemicals made by your endocrine glands that tell other parts of your body how and when to work. Hormones affect many systems and functions in your body. Even the slightest imbalance can cause a variety of ailments that can negatively affect your mental and physical health. Common ailments include mood swings, fatigue, brain fog, and low sex drive.

Bio-identical Hormone Replacement Therapy (BHRT) is the method of replacing missing or depleted hormones to bring the system back into balance without the unnecessary risks of synthetic replacement. There are several methods of BHRT, including topical creams and gels, buccal tablets, suppositories and pellets. Due to their success rate and convenience, pellets have become one of the most popular options. Pellets are tiny cylinders (smaller than a tic tac) fused with hormones that are inserted under a layer of fat in the upper buttocks. Typically, women's pellets will last three to five months, and men's pellets will last anywhere between five and six months. Pellets have also been proven optimal in combating menopause symptoms.

"I have seen significant improvement in patient's energy levels, mental clarity, sleep, and libido," said Brandon Crandall, a nurse practitioner at Syracuse Plastic Surgery. BHRT is an excellent option for men and women suffering from hormonal imbalances.

A skin check is a head-to-toe assessment of your skin to screen for skin cancer. Skin cancer is very common and can affect people of all races. There are several types of skin carcinoma. The most common and less severe cases are basal cell and squamous

cell. The more serious and less common is melanoma. Melanoma, if left untreated, can spread and become deadly. Diagnosis for melanoma has increased significantly over the past decades, outpacing almost all other cancers. Early detection can save lives. Knowing the warning signs of skin cancer can help ensure it is detected and treated before it spreads.

"We are seeing a rise in skin cancer diagnosis in our younger patients," said board certified plastic surgeon Dr. Enrique Armenta. "It is crucial that people of all ages get routine skin exams. Some common characteristics of skin cancer are fluctuations in size, shape, color, and texture in a mole or spot."

Routine skin checks, at-home self-checks, and sun protection can significantly impact your health and should be a staple in everyone's self-care regimen. Studies show that a poor body image can lead to low self-esteem, negatively impacting one's mental health. Individuals wanting to improve their body image can seek professional help from therapists, nutritionists, personal trainers, support groups, and physicians.

"Breast augmentations and tummy tucks are two of the most sought-after procedures for patients struggling with their body image," said Dr. Dean DeRoberts, a board certified plastic surgeon at Syracuse Plastic Surgery. "Being able to help patients feel better about themselves is a gratifying part of my job."

All in all, self-care can look different to everyone. Understanding your physical and mental needs is essential to finding care that is right for you. Self-care is beneficial to your quality of life and should be a priority. If you feel your physical and mental needs are unmet, you should look for ways to improve them.



Ashley Tracey is a sales and marketing coordinator for Syracuse Plastic Surgery.



Summer's nearly here – Time for a party!

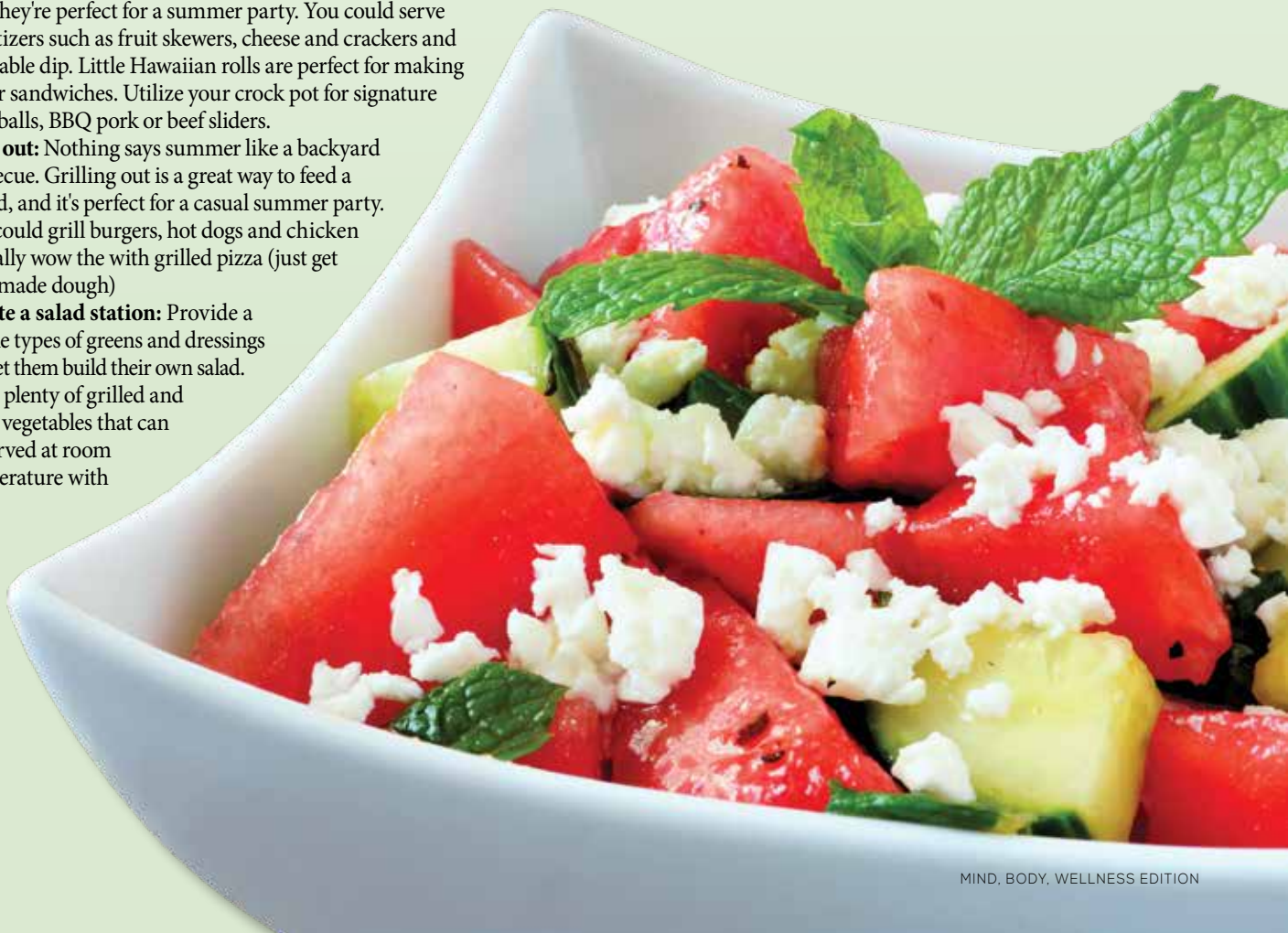
Chef Eric Rose

Summer is nearly here, which means it's time to host a party and entertain friends and family. With warm weather and longer days, it's the perfect time to gather and enjoy each other's company. Hosting a summer party doesn't have to be stressful or complicated and with a little preplanning you can wow your guests. Here are a baker's dozen of tips and ideas to help you throw a cool summer party that your guests will love.

- 1. Plan ahead:** The key to a successful party is planning. Start planning at least a few days in advance so that you have enough time to prepare and make any necessary arrangements.
- 2. Choose a theme:** A themed party is always more fun. You could choose a luau, beach party, or even a backyard barbecue. Whatever you choose, make sure it's something that your guests will enjoy.
- 3. Create a playlist:** Music sets the mood for any party. Create a playlist of songs that fit your theme and that your guests will enjoy. You could also ask your guests to suggest their favorite songs to include in the playlist.
- 4. Set up a beverage station:** Set up a beverage station where your guests can help themselves. Include a variety of drinks such as lemonade, iced tea, and punch. One way to draw attention is to make designer ice cubes. Freeze fruit and herbs into the ice like strawberries or blueberries with mint or basil leaves. Another favorite is freezing a little sweetened coffee with cream in ice cube containers. Consider having a signature drink premade in a nice pitcher or container.
- 5. Serve finger foods:** Finger foods are easy to prepare and serve, and they're perfect for a summer party. You could serve appetizers such as fruit skewers, cheese and crackers and vegetable dip. Little Hawaiian rolls are perfect for making finger sandwiches. Utilize your crock pot for signature meatballs, BBQ pork or beef sliders.
- 6. Grill out:** Nothing says summer like a backyard barbecue. Grilling out is a great way to feed a crowd, and it's perfect for a casual summer party. You could grill burgers, hot dogs and chicken or really wow the with grilled pizza (just get a premade dough)
- 7. Create a salad station:** Provide a couple types of greens and dressings and let them build their own salad. Have plenty of grilled and fresh vegetables that can be served at room temperature with

a couple different cheeses and protein. It's also great to have a composed salad as well like a seasonal potato salad, or pasta salad. A couple summer favorites sure to entice your guest are watermelon salad or Mexican corn salad.

- 8. Charcuterie boards:** Add a taste of summer to the board by selecting two or more crisp, garden-fresh vegetables such as mini cucumbers, carrots, radishes, and zucchini. Slice them for dipping. Stack slices of tomato and mozzarella with basil leaves or skewer cherry tomatoes, bocconcini, and basil for grabbable mini caprese salads. Drizzle them with a balsamic reduction for bonus points. Turn the grill on and add a smokey charred accent to your charcuterie board. Grilled bread seems fancy but is easy to make; simply crisp bread over the fire and serve. Grill and marinate vegetables—zucchini, eggplant, and summer squash make a pretty trio—for a zesty component that feels fresh.
- 9. Taco bar:** A taco bar lets guests select their favorite fillings and fixings, choosing from chicken, pork, lettuce, radishes, cilantro, cheese, sour cream, salsas, and a squeeze of lime. To keep the toasted tortillas warm, wrap them tightly in a dish towel, then in foil. Place in a 200-degree oven for up to 30 minutes. Remove foil, and transfer tortillas -- still folded in the towel -- to the buffet.
- 10. Create a photo booth:** A photo booth is a fun addition to any party. You could create a simple backdrop using a sheet or some streamers, and provide props such as hats, glasses and boas. Everyone is up for a great Instagram group shot.



11. **Provide outdoor games:** Outdoor games are a great way to keep your guests entertained. You could set up a game of horseshoes, cornhole, outside Jenga or even a water balloon toss.
12. **Offer desserts:** No party is complete without desserts. Offer a variety of sweet treats such as cupcakes, classic cookies or mini milk shakes.
13. **Provide shade:** Make sure you provide plenty of shade for your guests. You could set up umbrellas or a canopy to provide some relief from the sun. *SWM*

RECIPES

Here are a few easy and delicious recipes that are perfect for a summer party:

Watermelon Salad

INGREDIENTS

1 small watermelon, cubed
 1 cucumber, peeled and sliced
 1 red onion, thinly sliced
 ¼ cup chopped mint
 ¼ cup crumbled feta cheese
 2 Tbsp. olive oil
 2 Tbsp. balsamic vinegar
 Salt and pepper to taste

INSTRUCTIONS

1. In a large bowl, combine the watermelon, cucumber, red onion and mint.
2. In a separate bowl, whisk together the olive oil, balsamic vinegar, salt and pepper.
3. Pour the dressing over the salad and toss to combine.
4. Sprinkle the feta cheese over the top and serve.

Grilled Pineapple

INGREDIENTS

1 pineapple, peeled and sliced
 ¼ cup honey
 2 Tbsp. lime juice
 ¼ tsp. cinnamon
 Pinch of salt

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Preheat your grill to medium-high heat.
2. In a small bowl, whisk together the honey, lime juice, cinnamon and salt.
3. Brush the honey mixture over the pineapple slices.
4. Grill the pineapple slices for 2-3 minutes per side.

Continued on page 34

Time for a party! from page 33

Mexican Street Corn Salad

INGREDIENTS

4 ears fresh corn, husked or two cans drained

Extra-virgin olive oil, for brushing

1½ tablespoons mayo, (or vegan mayo)

1 garlic clove, minced

Zest and juice of 1 lime

½ cup chopped scallions

¼ cup crumbled Cotija, or feta cheese

¼ cup finely chopped cilantro

¼ tsp Tajin

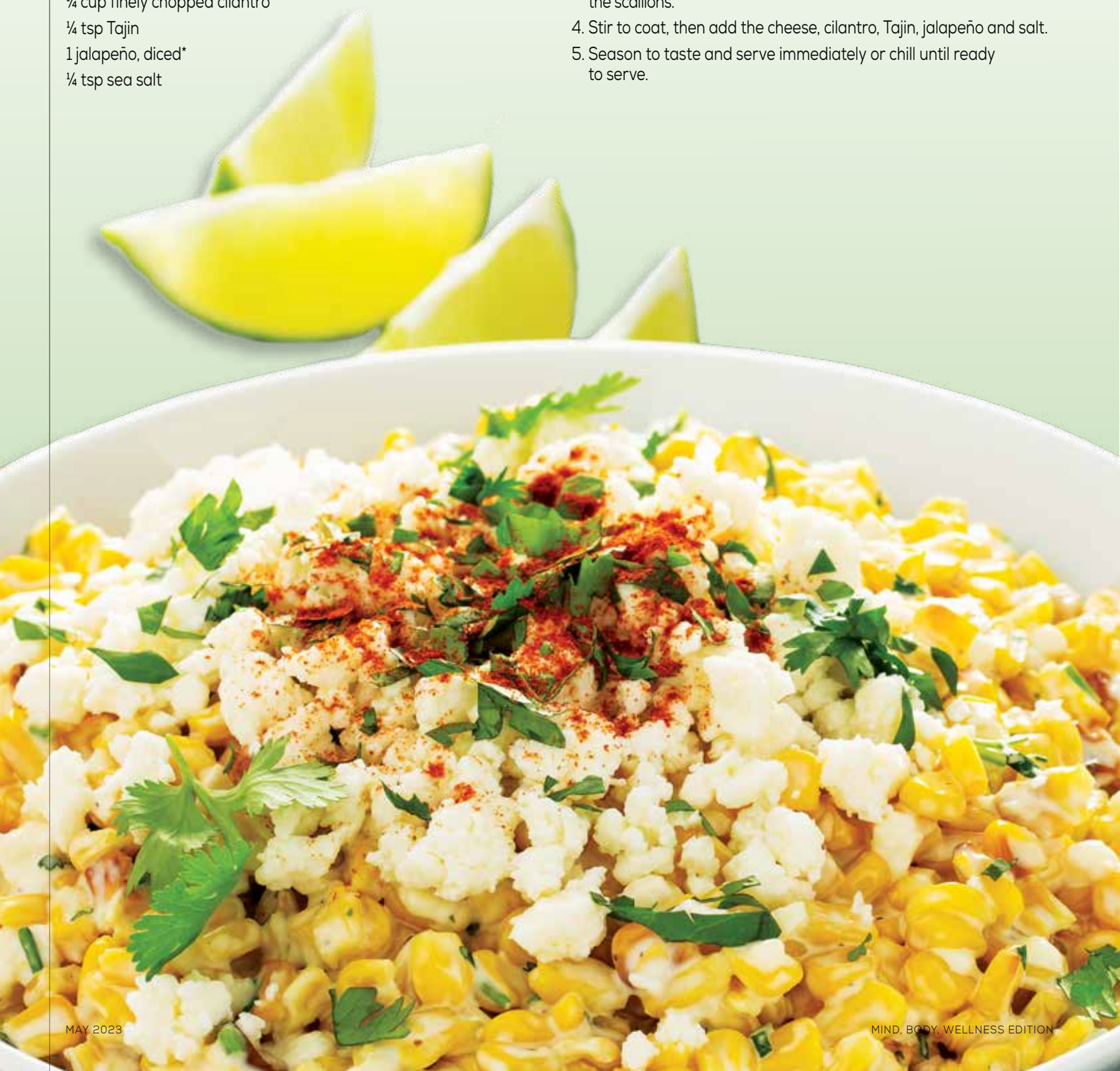
1 jalapeño, diced*

¼ tsp sea salt

You can serve this Mexican street corn salad just after you make it, although I love it best after it chills for a bit.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Preheat a grill to medium-high heat. Brush the corn with olive oil and grill for 2 minutes per side, or until char marks form or toast can corn in a pan with oil. Remove from heat and set aside.
2. In a large bowl, combine the mayo, garlic, and lime zest and juice.
3. Slice the kernels off the corn and add to the bowl along with the scallions.
4. Stir to coat, then add the cheese, cilantro, Tajin, jalapeño and salt.
5. Season to taste and serve immediately or chill until ready to serve.



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Operation North Comfort preps for Crawfish Festival

Jason Klaiber



A full calendar year has passed since she assumed the role of CEO for Operation Northern Comfort, and Cicero resident Laurel Flanagan is still seeing more and more how the charitable organization has helped and can assist those in need.

At the very start of 2022, Flanagan took over at the helm for the nonprofit's founder, Norm Andrzejewski, whom she called an "inspiration and a visionary" as well as one of the most generous people she knows.

Andrzejewski had been pursuing his master's degree in public health from Tulane University when Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans in 2005, and in the wake of its devastation he sought to do more than write a check on account of his personal connection to what had happened.

According to Flanagan, he went through his personal Rolodex and gathered friends from Central

New York to go down there, clean up and rebuild. That was the start of Operation Northern Comfort, as it became known, and in the ensuing years its volunteers have made nearly 50 visits to help reverse the wreckage in Louisiana and Mississippi.

"He worked so hard to figure out how we could help somebody that needed it," Flanagan said. "When he approached me about taking over, I was a bit of a deer in the headlights because I was like, 'Wow, those are big shoes to fill.'"

The organization has additionally sent volunteers following natural disasters in Houston and parts of North Carolina, not to mention closer places like the city of Oneida in the aftermath of considerable flooding. Amid the COVID pandemic, however, the service

trip side of Operation Northern Comfort (ONC) was put on pause for three years, right up until an advanced team of five made their way to Fort Myers, Fla., this past January to cut out moldy drywall and pull out floors damaged by Hurricane Ian.

ONC has held Crawfish Festival every year for a decade and a half except 2020, when it was forced to cancel because of the pandemic.

It was sorely missed, Flanagan said. The festival was, after all, Flanagan's entry point into volunteer work with ONC about six years ago. Around that time her husband, Michael, was boiling crawfish for the yearly occasion and working for festival sponsor Suburban Propane when he noticed that her hotel management degree could be useful for expediting food handouts.

With a mask mandate and

social distancing measures still in place, the Crawfish Festival returned in 2021 after the year away for a take-and-go event called "The Crawfish Rodeo," and by the next year it was back at full steam.

The daylong event, which always takes place on the first Saturday of May, has had several homes over the years, but it has settled in Clinton Square.

As Flanagan said, it kicks off the festival season but arrives at the tail end of crawfish season. "After that, the condition of the shells on the crawfish is such that they're not the best quality anymore," she said. "We get them when they're the best and we fly them up here directly from Louisiana the day before, so it's as fresh as you're ever gonna get right here in Central New York."

The 16th Crawfish Festival will take place on May 6 from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. and will replicate the Pelican State's festivals with stands





containing crawfish mac and cheese, crawfish and shrimp boil, clams, gumbo, jambalaya, red beans and rice, pulled pork sandwiches, cinnamon bread pudding and beignets. There will also be eight food trucks to order from, a kids zone with games and face painting stations, and over 50 crafters showcasing jewelry, candles, signs, woodworking, upcycled clothing and other items. The event will feature performances from C'est Bon, Letizia & the Z Band, The Fabulous Ripcords and Brass Inc.

"It's a lot of dance type of music that just makes everybody feel like getting up and having a good time," Flanagan said.

She said alumni from Louisiana State University and people who moved to the Syracuse area from the South have told her that the festival's offerings remind them of home. One man, Flanagan says, is almost always the first person in line, and he makes sure to buy 11 pounds of crawfish every time to fill a cooler he brings.

"To get that kind of endorsement from somebody who

obviously loves to eat crawfish is amazing," Flanagan said. "We know how to do it right."

After this year's festival, ONC will turn its attention to Buffalo and Watertown to repair pipes caused by an excess of snow this winter.

Locally and elsewhere, ONC's efforts have included home and building modifications for senior citizens, veterans, local food pantries and other people having trouble getting around. They've built ramps where permitted as well as railings, grab bars, sliding doors, widened doorways, platform lifts, safer staircases and shelving units.

Though the labor remains free, they ask the recipients of their assistance for financial contributions to cover materials if possible, even in installments, but it's never a deal-breaker, Flanagan said.

Seeing that some kids were using in-home surfaces like iron-

ing boards to do their homework during quarantine while others were clustered around the kitchen table with their siblings and distracted as a result, ONC built over 1,500 desks for PGR Foundation, Inc., a mentorship program for girls ages six to 18 that stands for "Poised, Gifted and Ready." From there, ONC branched off to build more than 200 bookshelves for kids to encourage literacy.

With the second journey to Fort Myers on March 19 marking Flanagan's first-ever service trip for ONC, she said it's been something she's waited on but wanted to do for a while now.

"I think it's an important part of being the CEO of Operation Northern Comfort, and it's been a long time coming," she said. "I've heard everybody talk about the stories but I wanted to personally experience it. I feel responsibility for our volunteers, and I want to make sure that they're safe."



The volunteers have places to stay and make meals together, but they're expected to cover their own transportation expenses. With each visit, they make as much headway with given projects as they can, leaving the situations better than before.

"There's some personal investment," Flanagan said. "It's not a vacation, but across the board every time, they say they get more out of it than expected. People find it very rewarding."

Operation Northern Comfort usually ventures as much as an hour outside the Syracuse city center for more local jobs but has referred people to separate charitable entities that can step in as well. For more information about this 100% volunteer organization, visit its website at operationnnc.org. *SWM*

The Central New York nonprofit Operation Northern Comfort organizes the yearly Crawfish Festival in downtown Syracuse, helps with home modifications and plans service trips to other parts of the country.

RENEE HAGAR- SMITH



Helping people stress less and thrive more

Janelle Davis

When Renee Hagar-Smith became a mindfulness-based wellness coach, her mission became to help people stress less and thrive more through mindful self-care, self-love, and self-compassion practices. It was a mission that Renee first learned to teach herself.

Renee's husband had been living with an undiagnosed and untreated mental illness for many years, causing stress in their household. "It was a very challenging time," Renee said. To be supportive of her family and also remember who she was as a person, she recognized that she needed to make changes in her life.

"At the time, I was working in an office and I found myself leaving out of the back door because I didn't want to speak to anyone," she said. "I just wanted to hide away," Renee said.

Then Renee took a yoga class, which started her mindfulness journey, a path which led her to attending more yoga workshops, and then yoga teacher training, which involved meditation.

Noticing that yoga was helping her to deal with stress a little better and was reconnecting her to her own goals and dreams, Renee started to expand on her training. She became certified in Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR), which she explains is a specific type of mindfulness practice that brings us into the moment.

"It changed my life in many ways. It helped me learn to pause in the moments of chaos and be in the present moment," Renee shared. MBSR taught her to be more responsive instead of reactive, which Renee often helps her clients with.

Renee is also trained as a Reiki master. Reiki is an energy healing technique where a Reiki master uses gentle hand movements to guide the flow of healthy energy through the client's body to reduce stress and promote healing. Additionally, Renee became certified in Mindful Self Compassion which is an extension of MBSR. "It helps people deal with critical thinking and looking at themselves with kindness and compassion, even in moments of judgment, anger and stress. It is a beautiful practice," Renee shared.

A huge turning point came for Renee when in August 2021, her husband took his life by suicide. She and her son went to counseling knowing the importance of taking care of your mental health.

"Along with counseling, I realized I needed to go back to the mindful modalities that helped me thrive before. As a result, I was able to find hope again and bring hope to my son. So about a year ago, I decided I wanted to bring all of these practices to other people and help them stress less, and thrive more," Renee said.

Renee works with individual clients to reach a specific goal, either via Zoom or in person at her Fayetteville location.

Different packages are offered depending on the client's needs. Services start with a free consultation to learn your goals and if you are a good match. Programs are specifically tailored for each client. "Coaching is very rooted in mindful self-love, self-compassion and self-care. I strive to help people reduce anxiety, let go of limiting beliefs, thrive in their lives and commit to their authentic selves," she said.

Renee also offers workshops at different intervals, anything from stress reduction to healing from a loss to learning to love yourself more. Corporate wellness programs support balance in the workplace and mindfulness training. Renee recently offered training for the Central New York Society of Human Resource Managers.

Renee offered some great tips for people not in the position to hire a coach but who still want to nurture their self-love or alleviate stress. "I think that one of the first things when you look at adding more mindfulness to your life, is to pause, slow down, and consciously come into the present moment," she said. "Some of the best ways to do that are to become aware of your breath. Use your senses and come into your body because when we come into our body, we lose that part of our mind that is racing and has anxiety."

Start with a simple task, she said, like brushing your teeth or making your bed, and do it with mindful intention. "Make sure you are doing these tasks with complete awareness which will center you for the day." The more you can bring yourself into the present moment, the more aware you can be as you go through your day.

She also suggests practicing heart mudra. A mudra is a gesture that helps to cultivate a specific feeling or emotion. Heart mudra helps us to connect with our heart center, harmonize emotions, and balance upward and downward flows of energy. To practice, place your right hand over your heart with your left hand on top. If it feels supportive, close your eyes or lower your gaze. Breathe into the heart center, and you may add a mantra, such as: "May I be safe and at ease. May I be happy and at peace."

Another tip she shared is to start each day with an intention or affirmation. Affirmations can help us to feel empowered and centered. Some affirmation examples include: "I choose how I respond to any situation," "I create my own safety," and "I am full of confidence, and everyone around me can feel that." You can even add this affirmation to your phone as a calendar reminder to help you remember during the day.

"Anxiety grows, and we tend to think more about the future and are very reactive in our emotions, so taking that step to pause and be present makes a huge difference," Renee said. *SWM*

"...one of the first things when you look at adding more mindfulness to your life, is to pause, slow down, and consciously come into the present moment." —Renee Hagar-Smith

HELENA ZERA-AXELROD



Helping people find peace in a healthy lifestyle

Janelle Davis

// believe in the concept that you are what you think you are. You are what you eat, you are what you see, you are what you hear, and you are what you ingest,” said Helena Zera-Axelrod, founder of Vyana Yoga and Polari Tea. “We ingest from all of the senses of our bodies. That’s what yoga means to me and how I help people, not just on a physical level, but many different levels of healthy lifestyle and wellness.”

With initial dreams to become a nurse, Helena found a second calling when she discovered yoga 24 years ago. She suffered from anorexia but rose above that challenge to become a nurse in hopes of helping people also suffering from anorexia. She put herself through nursing school and ended up working in intensive care and the operating room.

After marrying her husband who is a doctor, Helena gave birth to three boys and became a stay-at-home mom. While raising her boys, Helena stayed active with skiing, tennis, and Tai Kwon Do. And then she discovered yoga.

“I felt my body was coming apart at the seams. I had all these injuries, including back issues. And somehow yoga healed me physically, mentally and emotionally. Back then, it wasn’t something that everyone talked about,” she said.

She was so inspired by yoga that she decided to take a change in course and train to become a yoga teacher through Shiva Rea’s Yoga Teacher Training. The training took her all over the world from India to California. Helena became a polarity therapist, someone who uses a variety of

techniques to manipulate energy flow and balance.

Shiva Rae was on the cutting edge of moving yoga from what it was all the way back in the 1970s and making it more creative and inspired. There was a lot of energetic alignment, as well as flow. This catapulted Helena into a whole world of knowledge. Studying Ayurveda, the sister science of yoga, and how our bodies differ and digest differently, brought Helena back to her desire to help people with anorexia.

“Yoga has allowed me to really see things differently. When you slow the breath down, you slow the mind down. When the mind slows down, the mind can listen to the heart, and the silence of the heart can only speak to the mind. You don’t have to shut your mind off completely, as long as you are present and observing things,” shared Helena.

As an registered nurse and polarity therapist, Helena considers herself a “hands-on teacher” with loving guidance and deep humility in the holistic health and wellness service. “I enjoy helping people, not only physically through yoga but also through the practice of Ayurveda,” said Helena.

She goes on to explain that the different styles of yoga are good for different styles of people with different doshas. “We’re all made up of the elements. We are made from the stars in the sky. We all come from the earth and water.”

Walking into Vyana Yoga Studio you’re immediately met with a tranquil setting of zen, peacefulness, and dim lighting, to prepare you for a mindful break from the everyday stresses of life. The studio teaches a variety of styles of yoga.

Helena explains that yoga is more about healing yourself from mobility, movement, and functional mobility, where it used to be doing a lot of handstands and drop-back bends. Not everyone can do those movements, so it is



Continued on page 42



Helping people find peace from page 41

more about healing. "It's not as much of a gymnastics show as it used to be," she said.

Some classes Vyana offers are gentle yoga, physical yoga, Kundalini yoga, and Prana Flow. Helena also teaches meditation and breathing techniques, which are incredible for anxiety and calming the nervous system. Helena explains that you can't completely turn off the nervous system, but you can harmonize and balance them.

"My newest favorite thing that I do is alchemy sound journeys," shared Helena. People get comfortable with blankets and bolsters and Helena plays crystal tones, alchemy gemstone singing bowls, gongs, harps, and ceremonial resonance instruments. The heavenly sounds lull people into a meditative state. It is described on Vyana's website as, "Where soul force merges with spirit." "People enjoy coming in after a long day of work, and then they float home and have a great night's sleep," said Helena.

Helena used to perform sound journeys at Vera House and is interested in bringing them into

schools and hospice settings because of how calming it is for people's anxiety.

Vyana Studio has a Great Yoga Wall, which is the only one in the area within 30 miles. The Great Yoga Wall is a wall where you can do movements like Downward Dog without using your hands and getting tired, but you are still getting a distraction from the spine. It is beneficial for the back and it's a lot of fun.

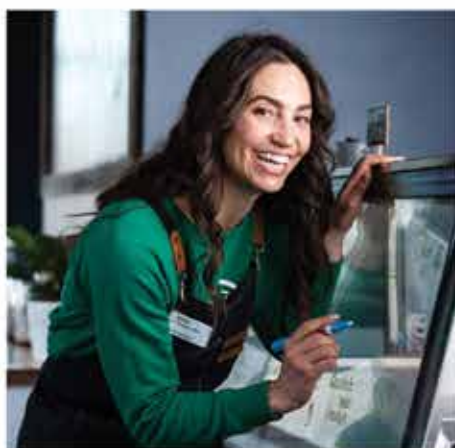
Her love of Ayurveda is "steeped" in the zen den Vyana Tea Lounge implementing adaptogens and Ayurvedic principles in creative and delicious beverages, elixirs, and tonics for health, longevity, and wellness. Everything is made fresh with natural ingredients including energy balls, lattes and almond milk. Their coffee is organic and they make their syrups with fresh fruit and either maple syrup, honey, or unbleached sugar.

"This is my mission. This is my dharma," she said. "I knew when I started yoga, that there was something I was meant to do. Everything I have done in my life has led me to where I am now." *SWM*



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Loretto announces new director of nursing



Aderonko "Ade" Alao

Aderonko "Ade" Alao has been named the new director of nursing at Loretto. "Over the past 9 years, Ade has proven that she is absolutely the right fit for the clinical care that Loretto provides, as well as the culture we want to create for our employees, and the compassionate, healing environment we want for our residents," said Dr. Joelle Margrey, chief nursing officer at Loretto. Alao joined Loretto as a Nurse Manager in July 2014 and has been serving as an assistant director of nursing since January 2019. She brings more than 15 years of progressive nursing experience to this role, including previous positions at Upstate Medical Hospital, St. Joseph's Health, and James Square Nursing Home.

As the director of nursing, Alao will develop an interdisciplinary approach to the residents' total care, including rounding on all floors daily, collaborating with administrators, the nursing team and medical director, working with Loretto's nurse educator in the development and delivery of educational programs, supporting residents and families, and assuring the delivery of safe, effective, and efficient care.

Alao holds a bachelor of science in nursing from Keuka College and earned her RN degree from Morrisville State College. She is an active volunteer for the Abundant Life Christian Center and a Liverpool resident.

Loretto names new assistant director of nursing



April Pirie

After years of managing residents' daily and long-term care, providing physical and emotional support, April Pirie will now develop, implement, and evaluate the day-to-day functions of the nursing department at Loretto Health & Rehabilitation. Pirie will direct the resident care planning process, coordinating nursing practices and determining staffing needs.

"April has been a true role model, inspiring her team and leading by example in her work to uphold Loretto's mission every day," said Courtney Lyon, administrator at

Loretto Health & Rehabilitation.

Pirie brings more than 10 years of nursing experience to this role, having worked on medical surgical units, rehabilitation units, and in managerial roles within skilled nursing facilities prior to joining the Loretto team. She holds a bachelor of applied nursing science from SUNY Canton.

Solvay Bank announces recent promotions



Caitlyn Wynn

Caitlyn Wynn has been promoted to retail operations specialist in the branch administration department at Solvay Bank. She has previously held the roles of head teller, banking solutions representative, and assistant branch manager. Wynn volunteers for various Solvay Bank affiliated organizations and graduated from Saints Peter and Paul Catholic College.



Jan Lighton

Jan Lighton is starting a new position as assistant vice president, branch manager in the branch administration department at Solvay Bank. She previously held the title of assistant branch manager and has 15 years of banking experience. The Onondaga Community College graduate also has had her NMLS since 2016 and will be working with the Camillus Chamber of Commerce in the near future.

Firm adds new partner



Lisa DiPaola Haber, Esq.

The divorce and family law firm Wesley Clark and Peshkin has added a veteran partner to lead its Syracuse office.

Lisa DiPaola Haber, Esq. focuses her practice on representing clients in divorce actions and also serving clients in family court custody and child support matters as well as appeals. Prior to starting her own divorce and family law firm in 2014, she worked with businesses and individuals in complex commercial disputes.

"I am thrilled to merge my law practice with Wesley Clark & Peshkin's. WC&P shares the same values as I do and is dedicated to family law, divorce and estate planning," DiPaola Haber said. "I look forward to providing the same high level of service that my clients are accustomed to."

"Adding talent and outstanding legal professionals is paramount to our practice," said WC&P Managing Partner Kevin Clark, Esq. "Lisa has built a reputation as one of the most respected family law attorneys in Central New York and combining our practices not only helps to meet the increased demand for divorce practitioners but continues to elevate our exceptional customer and community service."

Haber graduated magna cum laude from both Syracuse University College of Law and S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications and can be reached at 315-679-5512 or lisa@wcplaw.com. Wesley Clark & Peshkin CNY office is in the State Tower building at 109 South Warren Street, Syracuse.

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UPCOMING EVENTS

Wednesday through Saturday, through May 28

Made in NY 2023 Exhibition

What: View 81 pieces from 79 NY artists in an exhibition highlighting works about nature.

Where: Schweinfurth Memorial Art Center, 205 Genesee St, Auburn, NY 13021

When: 10 a.m.-5 p.m.

Info: \$10 for admission to just the Schweinfurth, \$15 for the Schweinfurth and the Cayuga Museum.



Wednesday, May 3 through Sunday, May 21

Tender Rain

What: See the world premiere of Kyle Bass's play about a white banker and an older black woman living in a 1950s southern city. This play explores how pain, violence and suffering rooted in an oppressive society leach onto our relationships.

Where: Syracuse Stage, 820 E Genesee St, Syracuse, NY 13210

Info: Purchase tickets on www.syracusestage.org.



Saturday, May 6

ONC's Crawfish Festival

What: Enjoy live bands, crafters, vendors and nearly 20 food trucks offering a taste of the bayou, including the freshest crawfish available. Crawfish Festival helps support Operation Northern Comfort and their efforts to provide relief to areas hit by natural disasters.

Where: Clinton Square, Syracuse

When: 11 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Info: operationnc.org



Sunday, May 7

Spring Wildflower Walk

What: Join botanist Joe McMullen in search of beautiful spring wildflowers will last about an hour.

Where: Clark Reservation State Park, 6105 E Seneca Turnpike, Jamesville, NY 13078

When: 2 p.m.



Sunday, May 7

Syracuse Chorale Spring Concert: New Worlds

What: Spend part of your afternoon listening to a variety of musical selections.

Where: Pebble Hill Presbyterian Church

5299 Jamesville Rd., Syracuse NY 13214

When: 4 p.m.

Info: \$15. Online or cash/credit at the door.



Wednesday, May 10

Upstate Mammography Van

What: Women who are 40 years and older and have not had a mammogram in the past 12 months can get screened for breast cancer. The van is equipped with a 3D mammogram system, private exam room, dressing room and waiting room.

Where: Centro Transit Hub, 559 S Salina St, Downtown Syracuse, NY 13202

When: 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Info: Appointment recommended. Visit www.upstate.edu/noexcuses or call 315-464-2588.



Saturday, May 13

Adult Zoo Camp

What: Adults! Enjoy activities including arts and crafts, making enrichment for animals, meeting animals, and more.

Where: Rosamond Gifford Zoo, 1 Conservation Pl, Syracuse, NY 13204

When: 9 a.m. to Noon or 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.

Info: \$50 for members. \$60 for non-members.



Saturday, May 20

Teal Ribbon Run/Walk

What: Benefits Hope for Heather, a local non-profit dedicated to ovarian cancer education, awareness, patient support and funding research. Participants can choose from either a live or virtual event.

Where: 225 South Main Street, Minoa, NY 13116

When: Event begins at 9 a.m., start time for race is 10 a.m.

Info: TealRibbonRun.org for information and registration.



Thursday, May 25

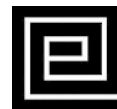
Macrame and Mojitos

What: In this hands-on workshop, you will learn basic macrame knots and techniques for your own take-home plant hanger, all while enjoying a mojito.

Where: Everson Museum of Art, 401 Harrison St, Syracuse, NY 13202

When: 5:30 p.m. to 8 p.m.

Info: For ages 21 and older only. \$50 for members. \$60 for non-members.



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