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WOMAN
magazine

COVER STORY

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“I’m honoring my mother
by taking care of myself”

FOR A GOOD CAUSE

Making a difference,
a quarter at a time

WBOC LEADING LADY

Sarah Fredenberg

IN HER OWN WORDS

Caron Grossman

HEALTHY EATING

Heart-healthy cooking

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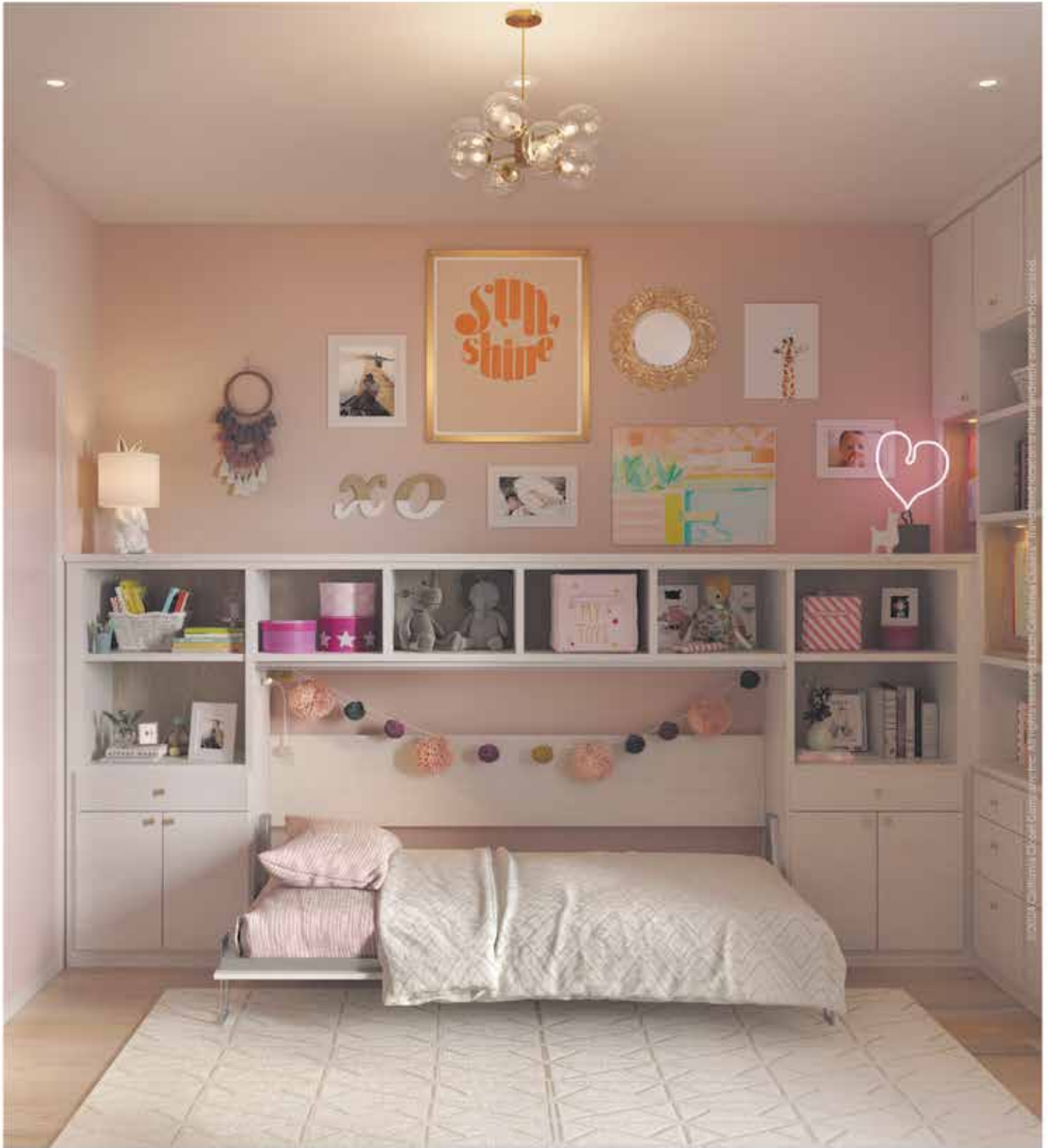
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Lynne Shopiro

Women need CPR, too

When people think of things women should worry about as they age, cancer tends to be one of the first things mentioned. While breast cancer is deadly and something women should be screened for – heart disease is the No. 1 killer of women. Heart disease is the No. 1 killer of new moms. Women are less likely to receive CPR than men.

Heart disease remains underdiagnosed and undertreated due to the attitude that this still predominantly affects men. We must raise awareness in our communities, optimize prevention, and continue research focused on women.

February is American Heart Month. It's the perfect time to stop and consider your own heart health. According to the American Heart Association, nearly 45% of women over age 20 are living with some form of cardiovascular disease. Talk to your health care provider about your own risk. Talk to your family about your family history.

As a cardiac registered nurse who has had the privilege to care for and improve lifestyles; I received my calling to the profession early in life. A personal commitment to improve the lives of cardiac patients still is true after 40 years in the profession. While women typically take care of everyone else in their lives first and themselves last; educating and empowering women to make more informed healthcare choices for themselves and their loved ones is key to our well-being.

A woman's risk for developing heart disease and her experience of a heart attack is significantly different from a man's. With changes across the lifespan, including pregnancy and menopause, women often have different issues and concerns. Throughout a woman's life, good health behaviors are important for the prevention and management of heart disease.

It is never too early or too late to reduce risk factors: smoking, diet, exercise, cholesterol, blood pressure and blood sugar. If you know and understand your risk factors and share with your provider you can start your journey for better health.

While women are less likely to receive CPR from a bystander, only 39% of women in cardiac arrest received CPR from strangers in public. Men's odds of surviving a cardiac arrest are 23% higher than women. Too many women die from cardiac arrest, partly because people are afraid to touch them, and partly because too many people believe that women are less likely to have heart problems.

It is the goal of the "American Heart Association's Nation of Lifesavers" initiative to turn bystanders into lifesavers, so that in the time of cardiac emergency anyone, anywhere is prepared and empowered to become a vital link in the chain of survival and provide CPR. If you see an adult – male or female – collapse, there are two steps to Hands-Only CPR: 1) Call 911 and 2) Push hard and fast in the center of the chest until help arrives. If other people are in the area, assign someone to call 911. If you are out in public, assign someone to find the nearest AED. Immediate CPR and AED use can double or even triple a person's chance of survival.

Women are also underrepresented in research. In fact, only 38% of cardiovascular clinical research trial participants were women as of 2020. The American Heart Association is working to increase representation and funding for research on cardiovascular disease in women.

As president of the board of the American Heart Association, I am proud to be part of an organization that is focused on community, prevention and research. Heart disease unfairly targets women, but we can save lives and pioneer scientific discoveries to help fight our greatest health threat. You can learn more about women's heart health at www.GoRedforWomen.org.

Lynne Shopiro is president of the board of the American Heart Association.



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SARAH FREDENBERG



Photo by HSP Studio

Sarah focuses on building her clients' brands

Alyssa Dearborn

From an early age, Sarah Fredenburg of Sarah Heppell Photography & SHP Brand Bash knew that her future would involve photography.

"I was always the one in high school with a camera," Sarah recalled, "I wasn't the best high school student. I didn't get in trouble; I was just the class clown. But I feel like the class that I succeeded the most in was photography. And my teacher saw that... But I feel like photography has always been there in some form."

Today, Sarah uses her photography business to offer traditional offerings like wedding and engagement photography. But a major part of her business is putting her skills to the test as a cheerleader for local entrepreneurs and the creative community. As a branding photographer, she helps other businesses create branded photos through her Brand Bash photoshoots and her portrait pop-ups. Through her work, she hopes to become "biz besties" with her clients.

"I was never good at being a Monday through Friday, nine to five-er," Sarah said when asked about how she decided to start her business, "I feel like I've always worked best without a rigid routine. I find that I'm more productive and happier when my days differ. I just feel that there's nothing better than the freedom and flexibility."

While it was a risk, her business allows her to set her own schedule. If she needs to take a slow morning, she can. If she's inspired and on a roll, she can work late into the evening.

"I knew I had to go out and be my own boss and start my own business," she said. "And even though that was terrifying – it's terrifying to do in your early 20's – I just knew I needed to do it and be a full-time wedding and portrait photographer. And it was more exciting than terrifying."

One of Sarah's most unique offerings is her branded photoshoots geared towards small businesses, entrepreneurs, freelancers and any other individual trying to build a brand. These Brand Bash photoshoots require a lot of preplanning and conversation with her clients, but that allows her to create stronger relationships with her client and know their brand going in, "to help them feel confident about their shoot so I can capture them authentically."

"After they complete their contract, I send over a Fun Sheet," she said. "That's kind of like a questionnaire, things like their brand story, their values, their favorite brands, where they look for inspiration, their ideal customer, their aesthetic, process, what makes them special, like, what's their 'special sauce'. With the Fun Sheet, I get to get inside their heads and that helps me help them plan their shoot."

From there, Sarah discusses the types of shots the client wants, the outfits the client will wear, and the props that the client will bring to help bring their branded photos to life.

"Then it's shoot day," she continued, "and everyone's prepared. They have the timeline, they know what photos they're going to get, they know what they're going to wear, they know what they're going to bring, and it helps them feel prepared and excited for the shoot."

For clients who only want a small taste of a Brand Bash photoshoot or want supplementary brand photos, Sarah offers portrait pop-up events, an experience inspired by her involvement in the creative community. These quarterly events are planned for one day at a set location where clients can sign up for a time slot to work with Sarah.

"So, I'm in the creative world," she explained, "I have a lot of maker friends. They do art markets and sometimes those have been called pop-ups. I wanted to play on that and call it a portrait pop-up because I thought that a lot of those types of creatives would be those who would be booking this type of shoot."

She calls it a "bite-sized Brand Bash" and described it as a great way for clients to dip their toe into this type of branding or to get supplemental photos like seasonal shots or photos to go with recent product launches. One of the reasons Sarah enjoys helping her clients with brand photos is that she understands how important personal and business branding is for a successful business.

"I think having a recognizable and relatable brand can be the reason someone is attracted to your business," Sarah explained, "I think it's literally step one to creating your relationship with your dream audience. So, imagine two people are offering the same type of service. One of them has the coolest earrings, is always making you laugh on their social posts, or they share so many things in common with you that you're always going back to their feed to see what they're up to. And the other person isn't as relatable or you just haven't had that personal connection with them. Which are you more likely to spend your money with when you need that service?"

"I think when someone can recognize you from your vibe, your brand, or that one thing you have in common, it's that much easier for someone to fall in love with what you do and why you do it," she continued. "And I think, at that point, you're that much closer to making the sale."

Sarah is optimistic for the near future of her business. She is making important moves that will help her improve – and expand – her services. In addition to her optimism for her work, she is also optimistic about the local creative community as a whole and has recently signed a lease to open a studio in the former Strathmore Paint Building.

"I imagine it being not only a photo studio for myself, but also a creative studio for other creators," she said. "I want all creatives to be able to flourish within this space. I want to help others grow their businesses with the use of the space by renting it, by doing monthly memberships."

For her own business, she envisions rehabbing portions of the space to give her clients options for the types of scenes and backgrounds they may need for their branding photos.

"I just have a vision to make a kitchen nook, make a living room nook, a desk area," she said. "All the little spots that people need for their brand photos." *SWM*

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**“This cannot
be my heart,
I said aloud...
then reality
set in”**

Caron Grossman



remember it like it was yesterday, yet it was 46 years ago. I heard from someone, somewhere, that women present differently than men when having a heart attack. At 13-years-old, after watching my 39-year-old mother die of a heart attack, I couldn't understand that if this was true, why didn't doctors do things differently? Why did the doctor tell my mom that her hiatal hernia was acting up when she complained about her symptoms, which included abdominal and chest pain, doing no testing to confirm if this diagnosis was true?

Shortly after my 58th birthday, on December 21, 2021, I was chatting with a friend on the phone when out of nowhere an odd electric current shot up both sides of my jaw. I had never felt anything like it before. It was symmetrical, starting at the center of my chin moving up both sides of my jaw to my ears. As quick as it came it quieted down to a residual dullness. Then came an ache in my upper back, at the base of my neck. It was an odd location I'd never felt discomfort in before.

As a nurse working in a hospital known for its cardiac care, I began a head-to-toe assessment. Discomfort in upper back: 2 out of 10. Jaw pain: initially sharp in its quick ascension, now a dull ache, loud enough to remind me it was there. "Maybe an anxiety attack," I thought, as I took in a deep, easy breath. As much as I hoped it was simply anxiety, I knew it wasn't. I was incredibly calm.

I continued with my assessment, checking for signs that we are told to look for with a heart attack. I had no shortness of breath. No chest pressure, squeezing or tightness. No pain, numbness or tingling down my left arm. No elephant sitting on my chest. No impending doom. I took a step back in my mind, attempting to see this objectively. Something was happening, but what?

Sitting on the edge of my bed, I googled, "Can you have a heart attack after a clean echo?" It had only been a little over a month since I had a stress echocardiogram, receiving a perfect score.

"This cannot be my heart," I said aloud to an empty room. Google said otherwise, and reality began to set in.

I thought of calling a friend of mine, a cardiac nurse, but I knew she would tell me to call 911 and I wasn't ready for that. Still taking slow, easy breaths, extremely aware of each moment, I thought of driving myself to the hospital. It's only 2 miles down the road, I reasoned. Fortunately, as quick as that idea came, it left. It didn't feel wise.

Despite some dampness when I touched my forehead, everything felt so subtle, almost imperceptible. My thoughts were so clear and concise. I thought of my 34-year-old daughter and 27-year-old son, still too young to be without their mom. I thought of my 1-and-a-half-year-old granddaughter and all the adventures I want to have with her. I thought of my friends, my dreams and of death itself. Oddly, I had no fear of dying, but if I had a choice, I wanted to live.

And then the most important thought popped into my mind. I remembered that women present differently than men when having a heart attack. It occurred to me, no one ever says what the difference is.

I considered, what if this is the difference? What if it's as simple as a swift, symmetrical electric current up the jaw that dulls as quick as it came? What if it's just an uncomfortable 2/10 ache in your upper back nowhere near where you would think it would be?

Continued on page 16

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“This cannot be my heart...” from page 15

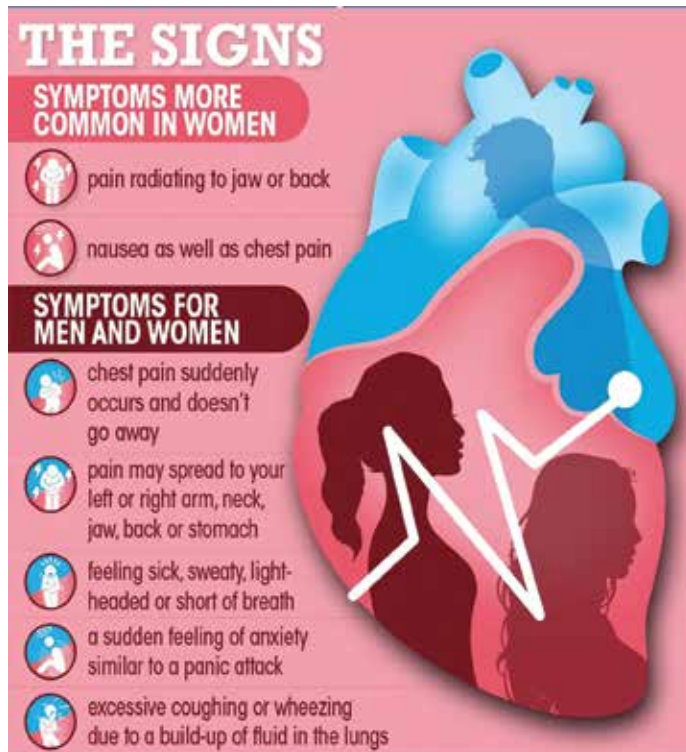
It was with this thought, after 25-30 minutes of assessment, thoughts and denial, I called 911. When the man answered, I calmly said, “I think I’m having a heart attack,” although still in disbelief.

He asked the questions, “Are you having chest pain, pain in your left arm, jaw pain, sweating, shortness of breath?” I said yes to all his questions. I knew I had to lie. I couldn’t admit I had just a dull ache in my jaw and 2/10 upper back discomfort. As a woman, I couldn’t take the chance of not being heard.

After arriving quickly to the hospital, the cardiac catheterization showed I was indeed having an MI, myocardial infarction, a heart attack. They found no plaque in my arteries other than the small piece that exploded, unprovoked, off the side of my artery, blocking my right coronary artery 100%.

I have no risk factors other than genetics and if I did not know that women present differently than men when having a heart attack, I could’ve easily gone about my day, hoping this weird feeling would pass, dying along the way.

Women may experience typical signs of a heart attack, such as pain or tightness in the chest or arm. Most often though the symptoms tend to be subtle. According to the American Heart Association, women can have flu like symptoms, including nausea, vomiting, unusual fatigue, heartburn, shortness of breath, lightheadedness, or dizziness. In the expectations and busyness of life, we can deny our intuition, ignore what our bodies are saying, and push through, tending to ourselves when everyone else is taken care of. STOP. LISTEN. ACT. SWM



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Making a difference, a quarter at a time

David Tyler

There's a new jukebox at the Speech Family Candy Shoppe, and the owners of the iconic Syracuse shop are using it to spread a little love and a little change.

Each month, a different not-for-profit in the Syracuse area is selected to receive the proceeds from the new custom-made Rock-ola 45 Bubbler Jukebox. Shoppers come in, drop a quarter in the music maker and select from more than 100 new and vintage 45 rpm vinyl records. They can enjoy the music as they shop and 100 percent of the proceeds from the jukebox are donated to charity.

"People love it," said Michael Speech Jr. of the new jukebox. When older customers come in, the old-timey candy store and jukebox bring on a sense of nostalgia. Many children coming to the store have never seen an old-fashioned jukebox and get a kick out of pressing the buttons and dancing around the store.

Online shoppers can also participate in the Quarters for Change program by simply clicking on the donate button at check out.

"We're doing this as a way to continue to give back," Speech said, noting that spreading awareness of the missions of these charitable organizations is just as important as the financial contribution. "We're just trying to make people aware of some of these charities."

This isn't the first time the Speech Family Candy Shoppe has found an innovative way to give back to the community.

In 2020, in conjunction with its 100th anniversary, the shop introduced its "10 Decades of Giving" event. From January to October, the shop represented 10 different Central New York nonprofits, relayed a portion of profits generated to the organizations and allowed each one to choose a specially made and labeled product that would solely benefit their missions with every purchase, regardless of the month the order was placed.

The chosen organizations - the CNY chapter of the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation, GiGi's Playhouse Syracuse, Front Row Players Inc., Hospice of CNY & Hospice of the Finger Lakes, ACR Health, Joseph's House for Women, Vera House Inc., Misfits Animal Rescue & Sanctuary, Father

Champlin's Guardian Angel Society, and the Rescue Mission Alliance of Syracuse, NY - garnered the most nominations from community members via email, social media and other outlets out of 130 suggested nonprofits.

Because it took place during the Covid pandemic, that program wasn't as successful as they had hoped, Speech said, so the shop is banking on the Quarters for Change program to pick up where that left off.

The store has a long and storied history in the Syracuse area.

Michael's great-grandfather, also named Michael Speech (originally Michele Spicciati) emigrated from Italy around the turn of the 20th century and eventually founded the business on North Townsend Street in 1920 after learning how to make hard candy at Coughlin's Cough Drops. He would soon develop ribbon candy, butter cream and peanut brittle recipes.

The candy shop and its production center moved around, relocating to North Salina Street, a spot further down on Lodi Street, Burnet Avenue, Grant Boulevard and even the city of Cortland at one point.

Sons John, Vick, Joe and Tony all involved themselves in the business during the century-long timeline, but it wasn't until the 1980s that it regained a brick-and-mortar location in Liverpool under the watch of Michael Ernest and Susan Speech.

The couple ran the shop until Susan Speech began searching for another job to get better health coverage to take care of her ailing husband, who she called a "go-getter" and "the personality behind the business."

Michael Jr. had originally focused on other pursuits, but in 2007 when his mother left her full-time role at the store, he told his parents that he would run it for at least three years - which has now turned into 16. Now, recently retired from her other position, Susan is back to being a "permanent fixture" at the store and has "refound the joy of the candy-making piece," he said.

The Quarters for Change program has been so popular with local not-for-profits that Speech already has charities lined up well into 2025. *SWM*



The three-story candy shop features a store with a backroom, offices, a full kitchen and rented out living space. The building at 2400 Lodi St. in Syracuse had been owned by the Speech family beforehand, but it became home to the shop in 1994.



Michael Ernest Speech, who passed away in 2018, ran the business with his wife Susan for about 25 years before handing it down in 2007.

SELECTED CHARITIES FOR UPCOMING MONTHS ARE:

January 2024: The Salvation Army of Syracuse

February 2024: The NAACP of Syracuse and Onondaga County

March 2024: AccessCNY - Unbroken Ties Fund

April 2024: McMahon Ryan Child Advocacy Center

May 2024: The Upstate Foundation, Inc.

June 2024: 60 for 60 - The Mohawk Run Inc.

July 2024: Greater Liverpool Chamber of Commerce

August 2024: Onondaga Community College Foundation

September 2024: Hope 4 Heather

October 2024: Redhouse Arts Center

November 2024: David's Refuge

December 2024: Francis House

January 2025: The Keys Program

February 2025: Liverpool High School Dollars For Scholars


March 2025: Syracuse Ducks Unlimited

To learn more about the program, make a donation or nominate a local not-for-profit for Quarters for Change, visit speechfamilycandy.com. Jason Klaiber contributed to this article.



Michael Speech Jr. and his mother, Susan, at the store in 2020.





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LEKIA HILL

'I'm honoring my mother by taking care of myself'

Norah Machia

Lekia Hill is a heart disease survivor, entrepreneur, community advocate and most important, a mother who wants to be around to see her daughter, 15, and son, 23, for many years to come.

Hill has a condition called hypertrophic cardiomyopathy, which her mother had lived with for many years. It causes the heart muscle to become abnormally thick, making it harder for the heart to pump blood. While there is no cure, treatment can help control the condition.

Continued on page 24

"I started taking my medications on a regular basis and I've changed my diet. If I can control my blood pressure, I can live longer."

—Lekia Hill

Photo by Alice G. Patterson

“I’m honoring my mother by taking care of myself” from page 23

Although her mother had been diagnosed many years ago, it took some time for Hill to also receive the same diagnosis. Hypertrophic cardiomyopathy often goes undiagnosed, but it’s usually passed down through families. “My heart contracts harder than most people,” she said. “Stress makes it worse.”

At the time she learned of her condition, Hill recalled her mother’s doctor telling her “she could be walking down the street and just drop dead from a heart attack.”

Hill knows she has to do everything possible to control her condition by adopting a healthy lifestyle and taking her medications on a regular basis, along with reducing the stress in her life. But that didn’t happen right away.

Her journey toward reaching a diagnosis and making changes in her lifestyle started many years ago, when she was experiencing symptoms such as shortness of breath and chest pain. “I was in and out of the hospital, but I didn’t have doctors asking about my full family history,” Hill said.

Although she was admitted and discharged several times, it was in 2012 that she had a real scare. Hill had been living in Yonkers and was busy building her career in political and community engagement when she woke up in the middle of the night with a symptom she had not previously experienced.

“I was having trouble breathing, but I also felt an emptiness in my chest, as if the air was leaving my body,” she said. “I thought I was going to die.” Hill said she “trusted her gut” that this was something serious. She drove herself to the Westchester Medical Center, and parked next to an ambulance.



"I sat in my car until I saw the EMTs come out the door and back to the ambulance," said Hill, who did not have the strength to walk to the emergency room entrance.

She made it to the back of the ambulance, where the EMTs had her lie down on a gurney. They took her vitals, and told her to remain calm as they believed she was having a heart attack.

Hill was taken into the emergency room and admitted. She was later diagnosed with uncontrolled hypertension (not a heart attack) and after more testing, it was confirmed she had hypertrophic cardiomyopathy. "The doctor asked what I did for a living, and I told him I worked as a political and community organizer," Hill said. "He suggested I do something less stressful."

Hill had developed a passion for her work, which started when she was asked to help organize a rally in Yonkers on behalf of the Alliance for Quality Education, Albany, to save programs that faced potential budget cuts, including universal pre-kindergarten.

In two weeks, Hill had knocked on doors and canvassed neighborhoods, managing to organize a rally of more than 1,000 people. After that experience, she started freelancing as a political and community advocate, working tirelessly to inform people about a variety of issues affecting their communities.

But after her scare at the Westchester hospital, Hill realized she had to make some changes in her life. "The doctor told me to change my career," she said. "At that time, self-care wasn't a popular term." However, she quickly realized she needed to take steps to improve her health, not only for herself, but for her two children.

It was after that experience that Hill was offered a new job opportunity working for Citizen Action of New York, a social services organization in Syracuse. While it was still advocacy work, she would not be doing it as a freelancer, but rather, as full-time employment, serving as the agency's lead organizer.

Although she didn't know anyone in Syracuse, "I was looking for a new start" she said. Hill relocated here in 2013, but initially kept her young children with their grandparents so they could finish out the school year.

That job led to another position at Interfaith Works in Syracuse, a nonprofit agency that assists refugees resettle in the community. In 2019, Hill joined Hueber-Breuer Construction Co. Inc. as a community outreach and diversity coordinator, working with regional stakeholders to promote partnerships.

Community advocacy work was still calling her, and she had a desire to break out on her own. By connecting with a friend experienced in developing Apps, she created the "Powerful Voices App" that allows users to type in their zip codes and connect with their local governmental representatives to voice concerns about community issues. She received support through the Tech Garden business center in helping to promote her new app, and also made connections with other female entrepreneurs and leaders in the Syracuse community.

But she was still having symptoms that were causing her to be "in and out" of the hospital, she said. One of her friends referred her to a cardiologist "who asked me a lot of questions about my mother's health," said Hill. "She really cared about me."

Continued onpage 26



"The doctor asked what I did for a living, and I told him I worked as a political and community organizer. He suggested I do something less stressful."—Lekia Hill

Photo by Alice G. Patterson

“I’m honoring my mother by taking care of myself” from page 25



Photo by Alice G. Patterson

Last year, Hill’s mother, Vernadine Hill, passed away at the age of 61 from cardiac arrest, just hours after she had watched her grandson’s college graduation ceremony online.

Hill said she had not always been compliant with taking her medications, and “I have to be accountable for that.” After her mother died, “I decided I wanted to live as long as I can for my own children,” she said. “I’m honoring my mother by taking care of myself.”

“I started taking my medications on a regular basis and I’ve changed my diet,” she said. “If I can control my blood pressure, I can live longer.” While hypertrophic cardiomyopathy can’t be prevented, “you can help control the symptoms if you pay attention to them and seek medical advice,” she added. Hill recently made a video message about her experience for the American Heart Association.

“It’s not the fault of the doctors if they are unable to treat your condition because you’re not taking your medications,” she added. “I learned that as well.” Hill also noted “because I’m a black woman, medications can affect me differently. It was important to me that my doctors understood that concern.”

Hill is now the owner of Lekia Tech LLC, a business development & management consultation firm that works with small businesses, nonprofits, the private sector and government agencies.

“Our mission is to help businesses achieve sustainable growth and success by providing them with the tools and strategies to navigate the complexities of the modern business landscape,” Hill explained.

Her company uses technology to conduct research and case studies to deliver data-driven solutions for clients, Hill added.

“We offer customized solutions to meet the specific needs of each client, including help with strategic planning, process optimization, change management, and employee services, or any other business aspect,” Hill said.

She also does public speaking about promoting diversity and inclusion in tech-related fields. *SWM*

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“I decided I wanted to live as long as I can for my own children. I’m honoring my mother by taking care of myself.”—Lekia Hill



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Heart-healthy cooking

A SYMPHONY OF FLAVORFUL WELLNESS

Eric Rose





In the whirlwind of contemporary life, prioritizing heart health often takes a backseat. However, recent medical statistics underscore the pivotal role that lifestyle choices, especially dietary habits, play in preventing heart disease. When it comes to heart health, there's a deep connection to the food you eat. Foods heavy in sugar, salt, and saturated fat can increase your risk of heart disease and other serious issues down the road.

But hold the phone – we're not suggesting cardboard flavored eats for your family dinner or date night. A heart-healthy diet can still include super flavorful meals that feature most of your favorite ingredients.

Take into consideration some of my healthy tips that not only nourishes the heart but also infuses joy into the kitchen, emphasizing healthy swaps, delectable recipes, and the wonders of one-pan roasting and air frying.

The heart of the matter

Recent statistics from the American Heart Association emphasize heart disease as the foremost global cause of mortality. The encouraging news is that a substantial portion of heart issues can be thwarted through straightforward yet impactful lifestyle changes, particularly in our dietary decisions. But we're also sad to report we are losing the battle of obesity which is a major contributor to heart complications and disorders.

The kitchen harmony

Cooking at home emerges as a key strategy in promoting heart health. It not only grants us control over ingredients and portions but also cultivates a warm and inviting atmosphere that enhances connections and happiness.

Cooking for couples

For couples, the act of cooking together transforms into a romantic and health-conscious activity. Imagine preparing a vibrant Mediterranean salad with your partner, tossing fresh veggies, olive oil, and a sprinkle of heart-healthy nuts. Engaging in this process not only strengthens the relationship but also ensures that both partners align in making heart-smart choices.

Family fiesta

In families, cooking becomes a celebration of togetherness. Involve the kids in a fun and educational DIY Wrap Night, where each family member assembles their heart-healthy wraps with lean proteins, vibrant veggies, and whole-grain tortillas. This hands-on approach instills healthy eating habits in children while creating cherished family moments.

Healthy swaps: elevating flavor, reducing risk

Small, conscious choices in the kitchen can yield significant impacts on heart health. Consider these easy and tasty swaps:

- 1. Whole grains over refined:** Opt for brown rice, quinoa and whole-grain pasta to promote healthy cholesterol levels.
- 2. Lean proteins:** Choose poultry, fish, beans, and tofu as sources of protein with lower saturated fats.
- 3. Heart-healthy fats:** Incorporate avocados, nuts, and olive oil for monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats that support heart health.
- 4. Colorful bounty:** Fill your plate with a rainbow of fruits and vegetables, rich in antioxidants, vitamins, and minerals.

A dash of encouragement

Embarking on a heart-healthy culinary journey doesn't equate to sacrificing flavor or enjoyment. It's about relishing the pleasures of wholesome, nourishing food that fuels both body and soul. As you explore new recipes and cooking techniques, every small step toward a healthier lifestyle is a triumph.

Invite your loved ones to join you on this journey. Share your newfound recipes, swap cooking tips, and relish the joy of creating delicious meals that contribute to a healthier, happier home. The kitchen, once seen as a place of mere utility, transforms into a haven for heart-conscious living and joyful connections.

Cooking for a healthy heart is an act of self-love and care for those we cherish. So, put on your apron, gather your loved ones, and let the heart-warming aroma of nutritious meals fill your home. Here's to a heart-healthy and delightful culinary adventure! *SWM*

Eric Rose is an award-winning chef and health and wellness coach.

One-Pan Delight Roasted Veggie Extravaganza

Continued on page 30

Heart-healthy cooking from page 29**ONE-PAN DELIGHT
ROASTED VEGGIE EXTRAVAGANZA****INGREDIENTS**

Chicken, Steak, Sausage, Shrimp or Salmon
 Assorted vegetables (carrots, zucchini, cherry tomatoes, etc.)
 Olive oil
 Garlic powder
 Dried herbs (thyme, rosemary, oregano)
 Salt and pepper to taste

DIRECTIONS

Roasting veggies on a single pan not only simplifies cleanup but also intensifies flavors. Toss your favorite veggies with olive oil, sprinkle with garlic powder and dried herbs, roast until golden. The result? A delightful medley that's both heart-healthy and palate-pleasing. Get creative and add your favorite seasoned protein to the dish. You might need to add later depending on fast it cooks. Fish usually takes less time than the vegetables.

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PICKLE JUICE AIR-FRIED CHICKEN

Serves 4

INGREDIENTS

4 chicken breasts (about 8-9 oz each)
 2 eggs
 ½ cup almond flour
 ¼ cup Parmesan cheese
 1 pinch Cayenne Pepper
 ¼ tsp salt
 ¼ tsp black pepper
 Fresh thyme for garnish

DIRECTIONS

The day before place raw chicken in a bowl and fill with pickle juice. Make sure it covers the breasts. Marinate in refrigerator overnight. Preheat air fryer at 400°F for five minutes. Mix the pepper, flour and Parmesan cheese and spices in another bowl. Take each piece of chicken and pat dry. Dip the chicken in the egg bath and let drain off a bit. Then batter the chicken in the mixture of almond flour, pepper and cheese. Spray a piece of parchment paper with nonstick spray, place the chicken on it and then put into the air fryer. Cook at 400°F for 15 to 18 minutes, flipping when there's about five minutes left.

One-pan delight roasted veggie extravaganza with salmon



Air-fried coconut shrimp

AIR-FRIED COCONUT SHRIMP

Eric Rose

Serves 4

INGREDIENTS

2 lbs raw shrimp, shell and tails removed

½ cup almond flour

½ cup unsweetened shredded coconut

2 Tbsp McCormick Perfect Pinch Fiesta Citrus salt-free seasoning or

Trader Joe's 21 Seasoning Salute

2 egg whites

DIRECTIONS

Combine almond flour, unsweetened coconut, and seasonings in medium sized bowl. Dip raw shrimp in egg white and add to an almond flour coconut mixture and toss to coat. Place shrimp in air fryer and spray lightly with cooking spray. Cook at 400°F for 4 min. Open the basket and flip shrimp to the other side. Spray lightly with cooking spray. Cook for an additional 4 minutes or until crisp. Do not overcook shrimp or they will be dry. Sprinkle McCormick Perfect Pinch Fiesta Citrus salt-free seasoning or Trader Joe's 21 Seasoning Salute over cooked shrimp to finish it off. Enjoy!

Note: You could also bake the shrimp at 400°F for 15 to 20 minutes, flipping halfway through.



Pickle juice air-fried chicken



What's your biological age?

HINT: IT'S NOT ON THE CALENDAR

Having high cardiovascular health may slow the pace of biological aging, which may reduce the risk of developing cardiovascular and other age-related diseases while extending life, according to a preliminary study presented in November at the American Heart Association's Scientific Sessions 2023 in Philadelphia.

Researchers examined the association between heart and brain health, as measured by the American Heart Association's Life's Essential 8 checklist and the biological aging process, as measured by phenotypic age.

Instead of a calendar to assess chronological (actual) age, phenotypic age is a robust measure of biological (physiological) age calculated based on your chronological age plus the results of nine blood markers - routinely captured during clinical visits - for metabolism, inflammation and organ function. Phenotypic age acceleration is the difference between one's phenotypic age and actual age. A higher phenotypic age acceleration value indicates faster biological aging.

"We found that higher cardiovascular health is associated with decelerated biological aging, as measured by phenotypic age. We also found a dose-dependent association - as heart health goes up, biological aging goes down," said study senior author Nour Makarem, Ph.D., an assistant professor of epidemiology at the Mailman School of Public Health at Columbia University Irving Medical Center in New York City. "Phenotypic age is a practical tool to assess our body's biological aging process and a strong predictor of future risk of disease and death."

After calculating phenotypic age and phenotypic age acceleration for more than 6,500 adults who participated in the 2015-2018 National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES), the analysis found that participants with high cardiovascular health had a negative phenotypic age acceleration - meaning that they were younger than expected physiologically. In contrast, those with low cardiovascular health had a positive phenotypic age acceleration - meaning that they were older than expected physiologically. For example, the average actual age of those with high cardiovascular health was 41, yet their average biological age was 36; and the average actual age of those who

had low cardiovascular health was 53, though their average biological age was 57.

The study also found that after accounting for social, economic and demographic factors, having the highest Life's Essential 8 score (high cardiovascular health) was associated with having a biological age that is on average six years younger than the individual's actual age when compared to having the lowest score (low cardiovascular health).

"Greater adherence to all Life's Essential 8 metrics and improving your cardiovascular health can slow down your body's aging process and have a lot of benefits down the line. Reduced biologic aging is not just associated with lower risk of chronic disease such as heart disease, it is also associated with longer life and lower risk of death," Makarem said.

Study participants were average age of 47 years; 50% were women; and were self-identified as 6% Asian adults, 10% were Black adults, 16% were Hispanic adults and 64% were white adults.

Life's Essential 8 is a checklist of healthy lifestyle behaviors and health measures that drive optimal cardiovascular health. The 8-item scoring tool includes healthy sleep, not smoking, regular physical activity, healthy diet, healthy body weight, and blood glucose, cholesterol and blood pressure. A person's overall score is calculated using an average of all eight metrics, resulting in scores within three categories: high, moderate or low cardiovascular health.

"These findings help us understand the link between chronological age and biological age and how following healthy lifestyle habits can help us live longer," said Donald M. Lloyd-Jones, M.D., Sc.M., FAHA, chair of the writing group for Life's Essential 8 and a past volunteer president of the American Heart Association.

"Everyone wants to live longer, yet more importantly, we want to live healthier longer so we can really enjoy and have good quality of life for as many years as possible."

The American Heart Association and the National Institutes of Health funded the study. *SWM*



This article was submitted to Syracuse Woman Magazine by the American Heart Association.



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Menstrual cycle disorders may be



Two reproductive health conditions common in women, polycystic ovary syndrome and dysmenorrhea, are each associated with increasing cardiovascular disease risk, according to two preliminary studies presented at the American Heart Association's Scientific Sessions 2023.

Cardiovascular disease, including heart disease and vascular diseases such as high blood pressure, is the leading cause of death in women. According to the American Heart Association's Heart Disease and Stroke Statistics-2023 Update, nearly 45% of women 20 years of age and older have some type of cardiovascular disease.

Improved disease prevention would help lower heart disease incidence among young women, according to an author of one of the studies Eugenia Alleva, M.D., M.S., a postdoctoral research fellow at the Windreich Department of Artificial Intelligence and Human Health and the Hasso Plattner Institute for Digital Health at Mount Sinai in New York City.

"Menstruation-related factors in general are important to look at since they are specific to the young female population, which is a population overlooked by current risk prediction tools that were developed based on an older and predominantly male population," Alleva said.

Two new studies, by separate research groups, explored how common reproductive health conditions in women may affect cardiovascular disease risk. One study looks at polycystic ovary syndrome, which is an imbalance in reproductive hormones characterized by irregular or missed periods and cysts on the ovaries that is estimated to impact one in 10 women of child-bearing age. The second study evaluates pain with menstrual periods, known as dysmenorrhea, which is the most common menstrual cycle problem women experience.

High blood pressure risk in teenage girls

In a study of nearly 170,000 U.S. girls, ages 13 to 17 years, the risk of high blood pressure (blood pressure 130/80 mm Hg or higher) was 30% higher for girls with polycystic ovary syndrome compared with those without the condition. Up to 5% of U.S. children and adolescents have high blood pressure, and as many as 18% have elevated blood pressure.

"While data are emerging on the cardiovascular effects of polycystic ovary syndrome throughout the lifespan, few studies have examined associated health risks specifically among adolescents," said lead study author Sherry Zhang, M.D., a resident physician in internal medicine at Kaiser Permanente Oakland Medical Center in Oakland, California. "Studying adolescents will allow us to better identify possible cardiometabolic complications of polycystic ovary syndrome that may develop at a young age in hopes of reducing future cardiovascular risk."

Researchers found the prevalence of high blood pressure was much higher for those with polycystic ovary syndrome at 18.6% versus 6.9% among those without polycystic ovary syndrome. Polycystic ovary syndrome was also associated with a 1.3-fold higher risk of having a hypertensive blood pressure reading of greater than 130/80. "These findings emphasize the importance of routine blood pressure monitoring and lifestyle modification in at-risk adolescents, including those with polycystic ovary syndrome, to prevent the development of hypertension," Zhang said.

linked to heart disease

Dysmenorrhea's impact on heart disease

Another study focused on more than 55,000 women under the age of 50, about 30,000 of whom had been diagnosed with dysmenorrhea, which is characterized by painful menstrual periods. The analysis found that the women with dysmenorrhea were twice as likely to have an increased risk for ischemic heart disease (including angina, heart attack, heart attack complications and chronic or ongoing ischemic heart disease) compared to those who did not have the condition.

According to the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists,

more than half of women who menstruate have some pain for 1 to 2 days each month. Usually, the pain is mild. But for some women, the pain is so severe that it keeps them from doing their normal activities for several days a month.


"Studying dysmenorrhea is important given that dysmenorrhea stands as the most prevalent menstrual concern. It is associated with heightened stress and disruption of the autonomic nervous system, which influences heart and vessel function and is associated with the increase in certain molecules related to inflammation," said study lead author Alleva. "Both inflammation and stress are also associated with increased cardiovascular risk,

with stress particularly noted for its relevance in heart disease among young women."

Researchers found that compared to women without dysmenorrhea, women with the condition were twice as likely to have overall ischemic heart disease, characterized by chest pain or discomfort when part of the heart muscle does not receive enough blood. Women with dysmenorrhea were also more than three times more likely to experience chest pain known as angina and were twice as likely to have chronic or ongoing ischemic heart disease, which is a long-term condition where the heart gets lower blood and oxygen due to narrowed blood vessels.


"Our findings suggest that dysmenorrhea is an important risk factor for heart disease in young females that could be used for refining cardiovascular risk in this population," Alleva said. "These findings also add to the ongoing research efforts aimed at identifying and building tailored risk models for young women, ultimately enabling improved risk prediction and disease prevention." ^{SWM}

This article was provided to Syracuse Woman Magazine by the American Heart Association.



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GINA VAUGHN WILSON

Reflections on a harrowing journey with heart disease

Kate Hanzalik

If you go to @emmiesheartjourney on Instagram, you'll find Emmie Wilson, a cute two-year old with bright blue eyes, shiny blond hair and a high ponytail, smiling in pictures. You'll see the reasons why she's alive today: her parents Gina Vaughn-Wilson and Ian Wilson, her sister Liberty (Libby), her grandparents, and so many friends, family and healthcare workers. What you won't see is that she has a large hole in her heart, or that she's prone to heart failure, or that she might be on heart medication for the rest of her life.

Emmie is the Inspirational Honoree for the 2024 American Heart Association's Heart Walk. Her journey with heart disease started early, Gina explained. "Right around six months is when I started to realize she wasn't meeting milestones. And maybe by nine months, it was evident that she was getting further and further behind. So we started with getting a referral in for early intervention services to help her. I kind of always had these suspicions that she couldn't hear. There were all these little pieces. She wouldn't startle when she was younger. The smoke detector went off once and she wasn't even looking for this noise."

And other things started to happen too: she wasn't developing muscles, she often choked on her food, she vomited, she had fevers and a persistent phlegmy cough. A pulmonologist ruled out cystic fibrosis; a neurologist ruled out seizures; a geneticist confirmed the developmental delays and found they were the result of a rare genetic mutation. To rule out any heart abnormalities commonly associated with the mutation, they went to a cardiologist. An electrocardiogram revealed a murmur; the doctor told them to follow up in a year.

"Then four weeks later we were at the pulmonologist who noticed a fast heart rate – and sent us to Golisano at Upstate where we stayed for eight days in the PICU. She was in heart failure, and diagnosed with the heart disease, dilated cardiomyopathy, at Golisano Upstate by our cardiologist there. They were the ones to put her on heart meds and we continue to follow up with [them] today," said Gina, adding, "I fully believe that [the pulmonologist] saved her. We were at the cardiologist four weeks before this happened, and they let us walk out of the hospital. In four weeks, it had escalated that much . . . Where could we have been if this wasn't caught? If he wasn't so diligent?"

Gina has perspective. "[Doctors] say with this condition they use the rule of thirds. A third [of patients] get better, a third stay the same, and a

third get worse, which would mean like heart transplant or death." While Emmie's heart is still struggling, she's doing well.

"My stepmom said something that has stuck with us. And it's, 'You know what? In the hospital, she was responding to the meds, so she wasn't getting worse. And it wasn't necessarily getting better.'"

But she said, 'today we're winning.'" Such encouraging words demonstrate how important family and friends are to a child with a precarious health condition. "We kind of call it our village, you know, like the saying 'It takes a village.'"

Throughout this journey, Gina and Ian's friends have visited, brought them meals, sent them messages. Gina's mom lived at their house for over a week, taking care of Emmie's sister, Libby, bringing her to school and sports, and helping her with homework. The couple has relied on Gina's dad and his wife, who have helped them with anything from playing with the kids to shoveling snow out of the driveway.

"I think that's how we [have] coped and managed, literally relying on the support of all of our people."

Gina and Ian rely on each other too. She is a social worker and mental health therapist, which helps her to stay calm in chaos, whereas Ian was a medic in the Army National Guard. "I think we kind of tag-teamed, him and I. Some days were harder for him, so I was back in my go-mode.

And then when he was on it, I was like, okay, 'I get to fall apart now.'"

Gina urges those in need to reach for support, even if it's just to meet someone for lunch. And take time for self-care. "It's hard . . .

[but] we have to take care of ourselves to advocate.

Emmie has changed in some ways. She's more compliant at doctors' appointments, she knows what to do when prompted to get her pulse checked, and she points to her heart when medical students check on her. She remains on heart medication, but she still loves to play just like any other kid and recently returned from Disney World. "She looks really fine. You would never know. But it's really not an indication of what's going on inside," said Gina. Thankfully Emmie's heart size and strength are improving, even if it's the slightest bit. "That's a huge win for us. We're going in a good direction." *SWM*

To learn more about Emmie Wilson, visit @emmiesheartjourney on Instagram and Emmie's Heart Journey on Facebook. The Syracuse American Heart Association Heart Walk is set for April 14, 2024. To sign up or donate, visit https://www2.heart.org/site/SPageServer/?pagename=heartwalk_register&fr_id=9815



GARGI MISHRA



AHA funded researcher focuses on improving heart health

Janelle Davis

Mitochondria are responsible for producing energy within your body, according to The National Genome Research Institute. When your mitochondria don't receive the instructions needed from your body's DNA to make energy, it can damage your cells or cause them to die early.

Mitochondria dysfunction can greatly affect your heart health; a topic that Gargi Mishra is researching as part of her predoctoral fellowship. Gargi is enrolled in the MD-PhD program at SUNY Upstate and is currently in the third year of her PhD training. She was awarded a predoctoral fellowship with the American Heart Association (AHA) last January which will run until December 2024.

"My research focuses on mitochondrial protein import defects and their implications for human diseases," Gargi shares.

Gargi started her college career at Mount Holyoke College, where she majored in biochemistry and minored in mathematics. After graduating in 2018, Gargi worked for a year in a cancer immunology lab at the Broad Institute.

Gargi's interest in the medical field originated from her interest in science. "In college, I had begun working in a lab studying reproductive immunology, but the questions being addressed in that lab had profound relevance to pregnancy-related disorders. So in my sophomore year, I started thinking about medicine as a career path for me," Gargi says.

Ultimately, she decided to combine her interests and apply to dual degree MD-PhD programs. Realizing she was interested in pursuing both science and medicine, Gargi matriculated into the MD-PhD program at Upstate. She is currently pursuing her PhD dissertation in the lab of Dr. Xin Jie Chen in the Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology.

"My rotation in doctor's labs to study mitochondria was a wildcard," she said. "I was kind of exploring different fields of biology because I didn't want to restrict myself to what I had studied in college."

Mitochondria, which is an organelle, has many important functions for our organs. "To me, mitochondria is an extremely beautiful organelle with implications for many, if not all, organ systems at some point in development throughout life, especially with heart function," Gargi explains.

Gargi explains that the heart needs a lot of energy and nutrients to be able to pump oxygenated blood to all other organs. It gets its energy and nutrients from mitochondria.

Mitochondria requires 1,500 types of proteins to function. If the required protein gets stuck in the gates on its way to fuel mitochondria, then the mitochondria can't function properly. This event, in addition to an accumulation of cells that cause toxicity, can lead to stress in the cell.

If this occurred in the heart, then the heart cell could no longer obtain enough energy from the mitochondria. The build-up of unimported proteins would kill the heart cells. These defects cause many heart diseases.

Gargi continues to say that if mitochondrial dysfunction in a heart cell isn't resolved and damaged mitochondria are not cleared, it could lead to eventual heart failure. These heart diseases are either genetic or can be developed by the individual. When treating these diseases, the focus is on identifying the process by which the proteins are transported to the mitochondria.

Gargi's project aims to use a yeast model to identify such mechanisms. "Baker's yeast provides a unique tool to make such discoveries," she adds. Using Baker's yeast, Gargi has identified two ways in which cells maintain the import of proteins into the mitochondria during stress.

"The gene that we use to model mitochondrial dysfunction has actual mutations that are implicated in various heart diseases in humans, specifically cardiac hypertrophy. Hypertrophy is where cells thicken and enlarge so the heart is not able to pump blood as effectively as it should," explains Gargi.

In a few years, with more research, Gargi "hopes to better understand some of the pathways that helped restore mitochondrial function during times of stress and to figure out how that can help a cell survive."

She hopes to continue the research she's conducting as a PhD student in whatever future endeavor she takes, as a postdoctoral researcher, a professor, or a future physician. "The goal would be that whatever I find in my research, I can hopefully translate into potential therapeutics in the future that target mitochondrial function to improve cardiac health," says Gargi.

In terms of any findings she can share, Gargi said that they definitely found a pathway that supports mitochondrial health during times of protein stress. They're in the process of better characterizing that and hope to be able to share results by next summer.

Taking care of your mitochondrial health will in turn take care of your heart health. When asked how we can care for our mitochondrial health, Gargi advises, "It's everything we already know that is important—diet, sleep, and exercise. Anything that reduces oxidative stress, like eating foods rich in antioxidants and limiting processed sugars. Your mitochondria need healthy fats to create energy efficiently. A good cardiovascular exercise regimen is great too."

Foods like fish and olive oil, that contain Omega-3s are excellent choices to support the health and function of your cells.

Gargi is very grateful to the American Heart Association for the fellowship and for giving her this opportunity to pursue this research. She hopes that she can continue this relationship at future levels of training. What Gargi is researching will help us understand the correlation between how cells and mitochondria interact and how it can improve the quality of life. *SWM*

Strategic Communications announces changes to leadership team



Virgie Townsend, JD

Syracuse-based Strategic Communications has announced two major updates to its senior leadership team: Virgie Townsend, JD, has been promoted to vice president of client strategy and business development, and Alice Maggiore has been appointed as Director of Public Relations. Virgie most recently served as director of public relations and led the company through significant growth in 2023. Company President Crystal DeStefano, APR, said: "Virgie has brought tremendous value to our clients

and to Strategic Communications through her client strategy and business development expertise. I'm very excited for the future potential of our company with Virgie in this new role."

In her new role as vice president of client strategy and business development, Virgie will continue to oversee the development and delivery of overall client strategy, and will remain on select client accounts that align with her specific areas of expertise, while dedicating more time to represent Strategic Communications within the local business community and leading new client opportunities and initiatives for Strategic Communications across Central New York.

Virgie received her bachelor's degree in newspaper journalism, magna cum laude, from the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications at Syracuse University and her J.D. from the Syracuse University College of Law. In 2021, the Central New York Business Journal recognized Virgie as one of its 40 Under Forty Awards honorees. She serves on the board of the Central New York Biotech Accelerator, operated by SUNY Upstate Medical University.



Alice Maggiore

The role of director of public relations at Strategic Communications will now be filled by local PR and media expert Alice Maggiore, who has worked with the company as a public relations consultant since 2020. DeStefano said, "I've spent two decades working in the Syracuse media market and haven't met anyone better connected to our local media than Alice! She immediately provided strategic insights and critical value to our clients when she joined the team in 2020, and

she has continued to lead successful media relations initiatives for our clients in Syracuse, Binghamton, and across New York State."

As director of public relations, Alice will oversee more of Strategic Communications' clients as well as provide public relations direction and oversight to other members of the Strategic Communications team. Additionally, drawing on her experience working directly in the media and the community, Alice will continue to develop strategies, write compelling content, and nurture relationships to secure positive news coverage for the company's clients.

Alice earned a bachelor's degree in mass communications and a bachelor's degree in communication studies from SUNY Oneonta. She started her career as a producer and multi-media journalist at WBNG-TV in Binghamton, then served as a producer for CNY Central (NBC 3, CBS 6, and CW 6) in Syracuse. She transitioned to public relations with her role as director of communications for the Downtown Committee of Syracuse, and most recently served as associate director of public information for The Great New York State Fair at the Department of Agriculture and Markets. She is a 2018 graduate of Leadership Greater Syracuse.

Waters to lead Crouse Health Foundation



Heather Allison Waters

Crouse Health has announced that Heather Allison Waters has been named executive director of the Crouse Health Foundation. A community leader and accomplished development executive, Waters most recently served as Head of Impact for Akili Ventures, Nairobi, Kenya, responsible for raising capital for infrastructure development. Prior to that, she was consulting co-executive director for the Matilda Joslyn Gage Foundation in Fayetteville, where she directed operations and fundraising for the

foundation and historic home. From 2013 to 2021 Waters was Assistant Dean for Advancement for Syracuse University's School of Education, where she increased annual fundraising from \$700K to \$4M and raised over \$30M in gifts and grants.

In her role as Crouse Health Foundation executive director and working with the foundation team, Waters will provide leadership and strategic direction for all foundation activities and operations in support of the Crouse Health mission, including donor stewardship, major gifts, planned giving, cultivation and solicitation of major gift prospects, capital campaign oversight and special events.



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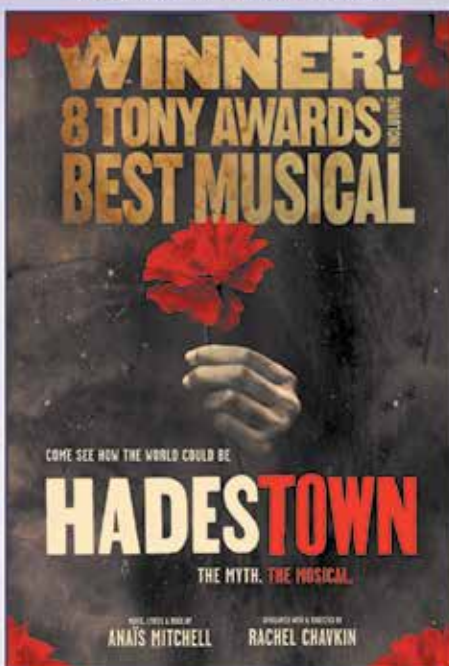
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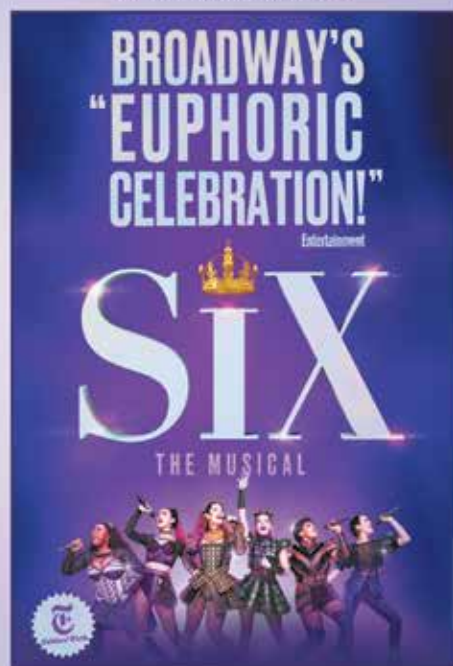
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Clyde's

What: Creating the perfect sandwich is the quest of the formerly incarcerated staff at Clyde's truck stop. From two-time Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright Lynn Nottage comes a dramady full of wit, heart and big surprises.

Where: Syracuse Stage

820 E Genesee St, Syracuse, NY 13210

Info: Tickets starting at \$29. www.syracusestage.org.

**Tuesday Trivia Night (every Tuesday)**

Where: The Tasting Room

330 S. Salina St, Syracuse, NY 13202

When: 7 to 9 p.m. Hosted by Syracuse Trivia

Info: Free to play. Prizes for 1st and 2nd place winning teams. Food & drink specials



February 2

AHA National Wear Red Day

What: This annual event unites millions of people by wearing red to raise awareness about cardiovascular disease in women and to help save lives.



February 2 - 4

Baldwinsville Theater Guild presents FOREVER PLAID

What: On the way to their first big gig, tragedy strikes Forever Plaid, a "guy group" specializing in barbershop quartet harmonies and pitch-perfect melodies. Forever Plaid begins when the guys are given the chance to perform from the afterlife.

Where: First Presbyterian Church Fellowship Hall

64 Oswego St, Baldwinsville, NY 13027

When: 7:30 p.m. on Feb. 2 and 3 and at 3 p.m. on Feb 4.

Info: baldwinsvilletheatreguild.org.



February 7

Transforming Ourselves: How to Play Your Bigger Game

What: Join the WBOC and Barb Stone of Build Your Path, LLC for a program to help you keep your New Year's resolutions. Discover a life-transforming methodology that fuels inspiration, helps you push your boundaries, and create a vibrant life.

Where: Collegian Hotel

1060 E Genesee St, Syracuse, NY 13210

When: 4:30 to 6:30 p.m.

Info: \$25 for non-WBOC members. Register at www.wboconnection.org/event-5358337.



February 8

Chocolate Discovery

What: Come for a sweet night and enjoy hor d'oeuvres from Lemon Grass, chocolate from Sweet on Chocolate, sparkling wine, and a star-crossed lovers planetarium show.

Where: The MOST

500 S Franklin St, Syracuse, NY 13202

When: 6 p.m.

Info: \$50 for one. \$80 for a couple. www.allevents.in/syracuse/chocolate-discovery/200025972051705.



February 9 and 10

Valentine's in the Forest

What: The annual Valentine's in the Forest, features a four course meal, delicious dessert, one hour open bar, entertainment and complimentary horse drawn sleigh rides. Catering is by White Linen Hospitality.

Where: Highland Forest

1254 Highland Park Rd, Fabius, NY 13063

When: 6 to 9 p.m.

Tickets: \$180 per couple, bullandbearroadhouse.com/merch.



February 10

BeatleCuse

What: Since 2004, BeatleCuse has been the #1 all-local music event, featuring over 40 musicians. Headliner will be Joey Malland of Badfinger.

Where: Middle Ages Brewing Concert Hall

120 Wilkinson St, Syracuse, NY 13204

When: 3 p.m.

Info: 18+. Tickets starting at \$35. www.middleagesbrewing.com/events/beatlecuse-10.



February 14

Valentine's Day Market

What: Shop from a selection of locally made gifts, enjoy craft beer and food, and listen to live music.

Where: Seneca Street Brew Pub

315 E Seneca St, Manlius, NY 13104

When: Noon to 5 p.m.

Info: Family friendly. Free admission.



February 17

Northeast Plant Show

What: Shop from over 60 tables of houseplants and plant-themed items. Enjoy interactive classes including macrame, beneficial bugs and more.

Where: Driver's Village Conference Center

5885 E. Circle Dr, Cicero, NY 13039

When: 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Info: \$5 cash admission. Ages 15 and under free.



February 22 - 25

Moonlight Snowshoeing

What: Take advantage of the moonlight at Beaver Lake! Will take place if there is adequate snow cover.

Where: Beaver Lake Nature Center

8477 E. Mud Lake Rd, Baldwinsville 13027

When: 5 to 8:30 p.m.

Info: Park admission: \$5. Snowshoe rentals: \$5.



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