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WOMAN

magazine



COVER STORY

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TOVAR
SPINOZA**

**Harnessing
the power
of self-care**

HEALTHY WOMAN

Paving the Path to Recovery

WISE LEADING LADY

Ebony Pengel

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ETHNICITY Native American Asian Black/African American White Other Decline to say

WILL YOU HELP US WITH OUR DEMOGRAPHICS?



Susan Hartman Brenizer

True joy is found in our relationships

Steve Jobs, the founder and CEO of Apple, Inc., died a billionaire at the age of 56 from pancreatic cancer. On his deathbed, he spoke to his biographer on the meaning of life. "In others' eyes, my life is the epitome of success," he said. "But, aside from my work, I have little joy." He went on to say "Treasure love for your family, love for your spouse, love for your children, your friends....cherish others....true happiness is having (close relationships) with friends and family....it does not come from things in the material world."

Steve Jobs did not know at the time that recent research by Dr. Susan David, out of Harvard, would find that "for too long, the essence of what makes us human - our empathy, values and emotions" have been dismissed as "soft skills and relegated to the sidelines." Yet, as Dr David continues, "these capacities drive everything: culture, engagement, leadership, innovation, collaboration and... more."

Her research fits perfectly with new research out of the renowned Mayo Clinic, which displays that "kindness in our relationships" helps to boost two "feel good" neurotransmitters: serotonin and dopamine. In the mental health field itself, we know that there is a direct reduction in both anxiety and depression that is linked to acts of kindness, empathy toward others, and compassionate acts in one's community.

Most people all over the world ascribe to the notion that more money will make one happy. (Now, as historically, we are confronted with viewing humanitarian crises and extreme poverty, we do know that having enough money and "agency over one's life" is connected to survival and fulfillment.) Beyond the basics, all the research refutes the notion that wealth will make us happy.

To speak to the issue highlighted in the May issue of Syracuse Woman Magazine's topic of "mind, body and wellness," aren't we all trying to discern better (more effective) ways to create health and happiness in our lives? Committing to a healthier self inexorably leads to healthier relationships with others and more compassion for others in the world, as long as we prioritize the skills which Dr Susan David describes. As well, we also know that we are immersed in an "epidemic of loneliness," described as a top public health hazard. In 2024, it is imperative that we actively address this epidemic of loneliness for ourselves, for our families, for our friends and coworkers, and even for our neighbors!

The desire for emotional intimacy and connection with family and friends is wired into us for survival. It is more important than any desire for money, fame or material goods. The quest to be one's authentic self and to find and keep emotional intimacy takes precedence over all else.

Susan Hartman Brenizer, is a New York licensed marriage and family therapist and a clinical fellow with the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy.

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Unlike any other publication in the Syracuse area, our feature articles address major topics that interest local women. Each issue includes articles on health, fashion, fitness, finance, home matters, dining, lifestyle and personal perspectives, as well as a spotlight on local Syracuse women. Ads are due on the 15th of the month prior to publication. The print magazines will be distributed locally in over 350 locations and will be in your inbox electronically by the middle of every month.

The publication is available free of charge.

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SFW turns 10!

Syracuse Fashion Week celebrated its 10th anniversary, with events throughout the area April 11 through 13. It provided an opportunity to glimpse the work of many local vendors, artists, designers and models and proceeds from events benefitted the Food Bank of CNY's vital work in our community.

Photo credit: Dennis Fernando



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Mon. 6/10	The Fab Cats	British Invasion	NBT Bank
Wed. 6/12	Born to Run	Springsteen Tribute	Greater Liverpool Chamber of Commerce
Mon. 6/17	The Baby Boomers	60s & 70s	Rosie's Traskside Diner
Wed. 6/19	The Jess Novak Band	Pop & Rock	Available
Mon. 6/24	Power of Two+3	Harmonious 70s Vibes	Syracuse Hearing Solutions
Wed. 6/26	Soul Mine	Dance Funk/R & B	Available
Mon. 7/1	Liverpool Community Band	Patriotic tunes - "Share the Music" Instrument	Dr. Steve Pierce Family+Liverpool Chiropractic & Wellness
Wed. 7/3	The Monterays	Old Time Rock & Roll	Available
Mon. 7/7	The Cassidy Lynn Band	Nashville Recording Country Artist	Available
Wed. 7/10	Mark Macri + The Funk Junkies	Funk & Blues	Available
Mon. 7/15	The Arcade	80s tribute	Sterling Financial Group
Wed. 7/17	Letzia & The Z Band	Dance Band	Hope For Healthier
Mon. 7/22	Loren Barrigar	Fingerstyle Guitarist	Hearing Life
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Women & Wine

On April 3, WBOC, WISE, the Women’s Opportunity Center and Syracuse Woman Magazine came together for an engaging evening of networking at the Collegian Hotel in Syracuse. Each group was afforded an opportunity for a brief presentation followed by networking with women leaders and business owners.

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Eclipse at the Zoo

It was perfect timing, as National Zoo Lovers Day fell on the same day as the total solar eclipse, and it provided an extra special opportunity to see how the animals reacted to the celestial phenomenon. In the wild, an elephant herd would close ranks, keeping their young between them as protection if anything made them wary. The herd at the Rosamond Gifford Zoo displayed this same behavior. The herd was scattered about the yard grazing, and when it started to get dark they all came together. The herd kept the babies near them, and Targa and Romani shared a reassuring touch of their trunks when the light returned.

Zoo Photo credit: Camille Murphy



Eclipse at the MOST

The Museum of Science and Technology took advantage of the total eclipse to come together and celebrate community while educating people of all ages about astronomy and space science. The next total eclipse in New York State won't take place until 2079, so for many, it was truly a once-in-a-lifetime experience.

The MOST Photos courtesy The MOST





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Zoo Run Run

Even though the weather was a little dreary, with more than 700 registrants, spirits were high for the annual Zoo Run Run. Howling wolves, curious cranes, elephants, camels, tigers, snow leopards, penguins and more all tried to get a good look at the runners as they passed. The Friends of the Rosamond Gifford Zoo send a huge thank you to all the runners, fundraisers, and especially our sponsors who showed up to support the mission of conservation at the Rosamond Gifford Zoo.

Photo credit: Camille Murphy



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Ebony Pengel
Founder, Unique Consults, LLC



Ebony Pengel is the founder and driving force behind Unique Consults, a consulting business that not only delivers impactful solutions but also embodies her core values of integrity, accountability, transparency, and respect. Her entrepreneurial journey mirrors the challenges many face when transitioning careers, discovering their passion, and ultimately taking the leap into self-employment.

For Ebony, the entrepreneurial spark ignited when she realized that traditional work environments weren't aligned with her desire to effect meaningful change. Tired of feeling

confined within corporate structures, she made the courageous decision to launch her consulting firm, Unique Consults. Motivated by a vision to empower organizations, especially nonprofits, Ebony set out to provide them with the tools and support necessary to thrive. Recognizing the financial constraints nonprofits often face, Ebony aimed to bridge the gap by offering specialized services without the overhead costs of full-time employees.

At Unique Consults, Ebony's focus is on three core areas: HR, facilitation, and fractional CEO services. Her approach is rooted in authenticity and a genuine desire to make a difference. Unique Consults has built a reputation for excellence and impact by delivering tailored solutions and personalized attention to each client. Business ownership empowers Ebony to work with businesses whose needs align most with her services and with whom she can harmonize to be able to help them achieve their best possible results. Through compelling case studies and testimonials, Ebony's profound influence on clients' success stories comes to light, highlighting the true value of her consultancy.

However, Ebony's path to entrepreneurship wasn't without its hurdles. Like many aspiring business owners, she grappled with self-doubt and imposter syndrome. Ebony found strength in community and mentorship relationships. WISE Women's Business Center played a pivotal role in Ebony's entrepreneurial journey, offering programs and resources that provided insights into business planning, pricing strategies, and networking opportunities. The support she received helped Ebony overcome challenges and pave a path forward for Unique Consults.

Collaboration and community emerge as significant themes in Ebony's journey. She attributes much of her success to the relationships she

has cultivated, from fellow entrepreneurs to mentors and supporters. Ebony emphasizes the importance of women's networks and the empowerment that comes from being surrounded by determined, like-minded individuals, saying, "There's just something about a group of determined women in a room that just fuels you."

Through Unique Consults, Ebony has carved out a niche, empowering non-profits and businesses to thrive in today's ever-evolving landscape. Looking ahead, Ebony is enthusiastic about Unique Consults' future and the opportunity to expand its impact. She will continue delivering high-quality consulting services while focusing on training and development initiatives.

WISE HAPPENINGS:

► Check out www.wisecenter.org for a complete list of upcoming events!

Breaking Boundaries: Women Entrepreneurs Unlocking Opportunities & Collaborating to Succeed in CNY
May 23rd, 4-6 PM
Brewster Inn, Cazenovia, NY
Register at wisecenter.org

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DR. ZULMA TOVAR SPINOZA

Harnessing the power of self-care

Kate Hanzalik



"Working on something you love is crucial and loving what I do makes it easier."—Dr. Zulma Tovar Spinoza

Harnessing the power of self-care

Kate Hanzalik

Dr. Zulma Tovar-Spinoza is a pediatric neurosurgeon specializing in treating and doing surgery on children with conditions such as brain tumors, epilepsy, spina bifida, and traumatic brain injuries resulting from child abuse. Carrying such immense responsibility, she primarily views herself as a doctor, healer, and compassionate individual. "My role is to offer the highest quality of up-to-date expertise and empathy, assisting families during their challenging times," she said.

She believes strongly in the importance of connection and trust. "Healing is a process that not only requires skill but also the development of a trusting relationship with the patient to ensure there is an energetic connection. Even if you are a great brain surgeon, the process may not be as successful if the patient and their parents don't feel that they are an integral part of the healing process. Therefore, I strive to adopt the most positive and supportive approach and make sure to extend this to both the patient and their family."

Because of Zulma's approach toward her patients and their caregivers, David's Refuge, an organization that supports the caregivers of children with special needs, will be honoring her at Taste of David's Refuge in June.

"What makes Zulma stand out is the way that she shows compassion to her patients," said the executive director of David's Refuge, Kate Houck. "And not just her patients but also their families. The moms and dads who are going through this really traumatic situation. . . what she does in these situations is she empowers the caregiver. She makes them feel like they are a part of the solution. She keeps them informed down to the very minor thing that's not minor at all. She gives them a hug; she reassures the family with compassion."

Zulma has learned some important life lessons from the children she's worked with over the years, such as the value of humility, being loving, and living in the here and now. "Kids are amazing. Kids bounce back from the most difficult situations and end up teaching all of us what is important because of the simplicity of the way they see life." Working with children has made her realize that the problems we think we have aren't problems at all, she says.

Being a mother to her three sons, Ari, Itai, and Eitan, has enhanced Zulma's professional skills. "I believe I became a better doctor after becoming a mother. Parenthood broadens your perspective, revealing aspects of care you might not have noticed before. This holistic view truly allows me to not only understand the challenges that my patients and their families face but also to guide them through these difficult times more effectively."

The power of self-care

Zulma describes her career as "very intense at times," but her mindset helps her manage the pressure. "My patients energize me. Working on something you love is crucial, and loving what I do makes it easier." She dedicates her passion to her patients and their families, while also prioritizing self-care. "Maintaining balance is essential. Staying healthy and improving ourselves, both physically and spiritually, is vital. I share this advice with my patients' parents too. We need to take care of ourselves to be able to care for others. Loving ourselves first is necessary to truly love others."

Zulma finds relaxation and balance by engaging in creative activities. She writes children's books and creates vibrant abstract paintings that evoke happiness. Additionally, she meditates,

practices yoga, and enjoys spending time in nature. "Maintaining a disciplined approach is essential to keep oneself in the best mindset, ensuring that I can give my best to both my patients and their caregivers," she explains.

Brought together by their shared value for self-care, Zulma met Kate Houck at a women's retreat in Skaneateles. It's as if they were destined to become friends and work together to address and ameliorate what's happening to caregivers in the face of trauma. According to Kate, the divorce rate for couples whose children have special needs is 80 percent. "Their relationships become starved," she said. "If you go to the point of exhaustion as a caregiver, you are no longer able to tap into the vital resources your family needs. . . We teach caregivers the tools and have them first think of themselves, keep themselves healthy, keep themselves well, so that they can better care for their family. That's really our greater mission." Parents feel guilty for taking time for themselves when their children are struggling, but David's Refuge sees things differently. "Our mantra is self-care isn't selfish," said Kate.

Zulma said, "These parents go through so much, especially when kids have disabilities, and they require 24/7 care. I mean, these parents don't have a second for themselves, and finding David's Refuge is just this incredible support system."

A World-Class Surgeon with a global perspective

Zulma's global experiences have profoundly influenced her approach to practicing medicine. "Living in diverse cultures across South America, Israel, Canada, and the United States has exposed me to various types of medical practices and life diversities. I believe it's crucial to integrate these perspectives into how we perceive others and acknowledge cultural sensitivities. Being respectful and empathetic is important. Facing cultural differences, one must remain curious and strive to understand, respect, and learn about other cultures."

Zulma was born in Colombia to an "amazing, loving" mother and a father who was both a perfectionist and a creative spirit. She credits her mother with providing an incredible level of support throughout her career. "She has been an integral support system for me in becoming a brain surgeon. She taught me what selfless love is... my mom is the best mom ever. She's very understanding, loving, and always there for me, no matter what."

Her father, an interior designer and architect who passed away in 1999 at the age of 52, also had a significant impact on her life. "He always encouraged my sister and me to strive to be the best of the best. His motto was, 'If you're not planning on being the best with this, then don't get involved.' He was definitely a perfectionist, but he instilled in us the belief that we could achieve whatever we dreamt of."

Since she was a child, Zulma has been driven by a desire to become a doctor and help others heal. Today, she has realized her dreams, including becoming one of the few female brain surgeon professors in the world. She recently enhanced her qualifications by earning an M.B.A. With this new achievement, she looks forward to a promising future where she can blend her medical expertise with her management skills. "Give your best. Be the best. Foresee the best," she advises.

Taste of David's Refuge takes place on June 14 at Heritage Hill Brewhouse in Pompey. All are warmly invited to experience this

meaningful event. Secure your tickets online at Davidsrefuge.org and be part of something special.

Zulma, who has witnessed the incredible support David's Refuge offers to many parents of her patients, shares, "I am deeply honored and humbled to be part of this organization. It holds a special place in my heart and I've seen their remarkable impact firsthand." Come see for yourself the wonderful work they do. SWM

"Our mantra is 'self-care isn't selfish.'"

—Dr. Zulma Tovar Spinoza

*Dr. Tovar-Spinoza
Pediatric
Neurosurgery*



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OUR PARTNERS IN THIS LIFE GIVING, LIFE SAVING INITIATIVE

Paving the Path to Recovery

Alyssa Dearborn



Tracy Carmody

Most of us know someone who has experienced mental health challenges or has had the experience of living with a mental illness ourselves. Mental health challenges have been on the rise over the past couple of years.

According to the National Institute of Mental Health, it is estimated that more than 1 in 5 U.S. adults live with a mental illness. Despite the prevalence of mental health conditions across the country, the NIMH reports in its latest survey that only 47.2% of U.S. adults living with a mental illness received mental health services.

Tracy Carmody, the executive director of Paths to Recovery Counseling, has been working with individuals with a wide variety of issues for more than 13 years. She helps clients with diagnosed illnesses such as depression and obsessive compulsive disorder and life challenges like relationship stress and grief.

“Clients are calling and we are seeing a lot of requests to treat anxiety. We are seeing many more in-person requests for counseling versus telehealth as well,” she said. “For so long, we had a lot more telehealth because of COVID and it seems that the preference really has resumed for in-person. So, anxiety, depression, life transitions.”

COVID had other large impacts as well, as working from home instead of going to an office led to less socialization and increased anxiety about going out in public.

While the pandemic played a outsized role in the increase of mental health challenges, it is far from the only contributor. For many, everyday life are saturated with endless social media scrolling.

While they may be more connected through technology, young and older adults alike find themselves more lonely and isolated than they were in past years. And accessing mental health treatment and resources can be challenging with or without insurance.

The constant intake of content, lack of meaningful social connections, and systemic flaws within the healthcare system combined with the pandemic present real challenges to people’s mental health. When asked about these challenges, Tracy emphasized the role these societal issues have on people’s health.

“There’s often systemic issues in accessing care,” she explained, “People are starting to get a little bit depressed or anxious. They might identify it. However, life doesn’t always grant us these opportunities [to help ourselves] or that time to dive in and take care of ourselves. And people will often say ‘tomorrow, tomorrow.’ And all of a sudden, they get really far from themselves.”

With over 200 different mental illnesses a person can be diagnosed with, some people seeking help may not know what they specifically need help with.

“It can be difficult to access [care] if you don’t know your feelings,” she explained, “And you go to access care, there’s a bit of a systemic issue in knowing where to find care. Is it a private therapist? Is it a psychiatric crisis? Is it higher levels of care? So people can find it difficult to connect and know where they fit for their symptoms. If you have a cold, you go to a doctor and you don’t have trouble finding a primary care doctor, or you shouldn’t. But mental health, it’s a little bit different. If you’re struggling with OCD and don’t know it, often you might have 10 appointments for mental health and that diagnosis might not be accurately identified.”

There are immediate ways to handle an active mental health issue, such as reaching out to local healthcare providers or accessing online resources and help lines. But just as it is important to be proactive



about our physical health, it is beneficial to be proactive about our mental health. Developing healthy coping skills, staying socially connected, and practicing self-care are common methods of being proactive about caring for mental health. But one of the most effective ways of caring for mental health is treating your mental wellbeing as you would treat your physical wellbeing.

Many would equate self-care to spa days, picking up a little sweet treat, or relaxing with an adult coloring book. Although it is important to indulge in the small pleasures in life, it is more important to see self-care as investing in your health and taking care of the basics. Making sure you're hydrating may not be as glamorous and treating yourself to a manicure, but according to Tracy, those mundane necessities are the foundation of better mental health.

There a number of different ways that people can advocate for their own mental health needs or help support someone in need, Carmody said. It may be as simple as sharing your concerns, or helping a friend or family member reengage in the community, just by asking them out.

"We look at superficial self-care, a massage, nails - a lot of the time self-care is proactive wellness. Having the primary care doctor, having the provider before you need it. Having a place and space to dump stuff outside of your immediate friend and family group is a great opportunity to be proactive in your life and wellness," she said.

Even things like grocery shopping, cooking, cleaning, and a host of common daily tasks can lead to a positive mental disposition.

"We don't like to pay our bills, but it feels good to be able to," she said. "We don't love to have to cook and clean and go grocery shopping, but it feels good to know that we are taking care of ourselves. It feels good to have clean clothes. It feels good to have a clean space. But as your mental health struggles, those are the things that suffer first. You look around and think, 'I'm not functioning well'.

Sometimes, it can be a loved one taking the step to help with some of those more fundamental self-care tasks."

Taking care of daily self-care is something that almost anyone can do. But sometimes a person facing mental health challenges needs to connect with a professional. Accessing professional care can be a barrier to better mental health, but Path to Recovery Counseling is doing its part to make connecting with professional help easier. Path to Recovery offers a point of contact service for those looking to connect with a professional who will accept their insurance.

"People can call us and say 'hey, we have this insurance'," Tracy explained. "We may not accept it, but we have providers that we can directly connect them to. It is a service that does not exist outside of Paths to Recovery Mental Health Counseling in Central New York. It is specifically to connect to the private sector where we have an abundance of services and an amazing, amazing group of clinicians. You just give us a call, you let us know what's going on, and we're going to put a request out there. *SWM*



PATH TO RECOVERY
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If you or someone you know needs help finding mental health resources, visit Path to Recovery's website at www.ptrcounseling.com or the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' website at www.mentalhealth.gov.

Unlocking the health secrets of vibrant Mexican cuisine

Chef Eric Rose



Mexican Chopped Salad

As an accomplished chef and expert in ethnic cuisine, I've delved deeply into the culinary treasures of various cultures, uncovering the health benefits woven into their traditional dishes. Mexican cuisine, in particular, has captured my attention for its vibrant flavors and nourishing ingredients, making it a perfect choice for the sunny days of summer.

Embracing culinary heritage

Mexican cuisine is a celebration of tradition, rooted in a rich tapestry of flavors and ingredients. From the humble corn tortilla to the hearty goodness of beans, each element reflects a deep connection to the land and a commitment to wholesome eating. As a chef, I've witnessed firsthand how these staples can be transformed into dishes that not only tantalize the taste buds but also nurture the body.

Diverse delights

While Mexican cuisine varies across regions, certain elements remain constant, serving as pillars of nutrition and flavor. Whether exploring the bold flavors of the North or the coastal abundance of seafood, the essence of Mexican cuisine lies in its reverence for fresh, seasonal ingredients. From the fiery kick of chili peppers to the creamy richness of avocado, each component adds depth and vitality to the table.

A nutritional treasure trove

The question of whether Mexican food is healthy is often met with skepticism. However, as a chef and health expert, I can attest to its nutritional prowess. Whole grains like corn and protein-rich beans form the foundation of countless dishes, while an array of vegetables and spices provide a symphony of flavor and wellness benefits. From boosting heart health to enhancing digestion, Mexican cuisine offers a holistic approach to nourishment.

Elevating wellness

Recent research underscores the health benefits of embracing a traditional Mexican diet, mirroring the acclaimed Mediterranean approach. Studies suggest that incorporating Mexican culinary traditions into our meals may lead to improved cholesterol levels, reduced inflammation, and even a lower risk of certain diseases. These findings highlight the transformative power of food and its potential to elevate both body and mind.

Navigating nutritional terrain

Despite its nutritional merits, Mexican cuisine is not without its challenges, particularly in the face of modern dietary trends. The prevalence of processed foods and added sugars has led to concerns about the healthfulness of certain dishes. However, by prioritizing fresh, whole ingredients and mindful cooking techniques, we can navigate the culinary landscape with confidence, crafting meals that nourish and delight.

Crafting culinary harmony

Building a balanced Mexican meal is a culinary adventure, guided by the principles of variety and wholesomeness. From savoring the warmth of homemade tortillas to relishing the crispness of fresh vegetables, each component plays a vital role in creating a symphony of flavors and nutrients. As a chef, I encourage exploration and creativity in the kitchen, inviting others to embrace the essence of Mexican cuisine and reap its many rewards.

Embracing the essence

In conclusion, Mexican cuisine offers a gateway to a world of flavor and vitality, where tradition and innovation intersect with delicious results. As we embark on this culinary journey, let's honor the rich heritage of Mexican cooking and celebrate its ability to nourish both body and soul. So, as the summer sun beckons, let's gather around the table and indulge in the vibrant hues and flavors of Mexico, knowing that each bite brings us closer to a life of abundance and well-being. *SWM*

SUGGESTED FOOD SWAPS

- White rice to hearts of palm rice or cauliflower rice
- Tortilla shells to low carb wraps or jicama wraps
- Taco shells to lettuce wraps or jicama wraps

Continued on page 28



Unlocking the health secrets of vibrant Mexican cuisine FROM PAGE 27

Mexican Chopped Salad

Serves 4

This Mexican Chopped Salad is a light and healthy salad that's loaded with Tex Mex ingredients. It's very simple to throw together and bursting with flavor!

- (1) head romaine lettuce chopped
- (1) 15 ounce can black beans rinsed and drained
- 1 cup corn kernels
- (2) Roma tomatoes seeded and chopped
- (1) large avocado diced
- (1) small red onion diced
- ½ small jicama chopped
- ½ cup chopped cilantro
- ¼ cup cotija cheese

Cilantro Yogurt Dressing

- ½ cup fresh cilantro
- ¼ cup Greek yogurt
- (1) small garlic clove
- (1) tbsp lime juice
- ¼ tsp Kosher salt
- ¼ tsp cumin
- 1 tbsp extra virgin olive oil

INSTRUCTIONS

To make the dressing, add the cilantro, Greek yogurt, garlic, lime juice, salt and cumin in the bowl of a food processor. While the food processor is running, slowly pour in the olive oil and allow it to emulsify the sauce, scraping down the sides of the food processor as necessary.

Divide the salad ingredients into four bowls and drizzle the dressing on top.

Chicken Avocado Jicama Wraps

Serves 4

- 2 lbs rotisserie pulled chicken
- 8 jicama wraps
- (1) avocado
- (1) bag of coleslaw mix
- (1) jalapeno

Cilantro Yogurt Dressing for Chicken Avocado Jicama Wraps

INSTRUCTIONS

Make as above and mix dressing in coleslaw mix. Slice jalapeno and avocado. Build wraps by placing coleslaw mix in the middle and top with two ounces of chicken, sliced jalapeno and avocado. Enjoy this fresh healthy take on tacos with zero guilt.

Chicken Avocado Jicama Wraps

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DESTA ANTHONY



Bringing boutique opportunities to a memory care community

Lorna Oppedisano

When Desta Anthony enters The Heritage Memory Life Community at Loretto, she's not simply walking into the place she works. She's also stepping foot into the home of 78 individuals who receive memory care day in and day out. So, when Desta had the idea of creating a boutique shop for residents to interact with, to bring The Heritage residents a piece of their previous lives, she knew she had to bring that dream to reality.

"A lot of patients don't leave this building. The patients who do leave the building, they'll often go to lunch with their family members or they'll go to their family members' homes," she said. "But to go to the mall and go shopping — I don't know of one patient I have in this building who would say they're going to a boutique to go shopping." Since the space opened in February, it's been a hit, along with the nursery area Desta created and opened at the same time.

Now an integral member of Loretto's team, Desta didn't always plan to work in memory care, let alone the health care field in general. Growing up, she was an artist and first entered higher education to earn a fine arts degree from York University in Canada. After that, she pivoted to enter the field of neuropsychology. It was in that program Desta met students studying nursing and she realized that was the path she ultimately wanted to follow.

"I have some family who are in the medical field," she added. "I think seeing them was a bit of an influence."

After becoming a nurse practitioner, Desta worked in internal medicine for five years and then wanted to do something different. "I started doing some research and the one thing that was not available in this area was house call practice," she said.

In 2007, Desta began doing house calls, including at Loretto, as well as for some residents in the general public. Almost a decade later, in 2016, Loretto approached Desta about taking over the practice. They agreed and Desta also began working with PACE CNY patients, which she still does currently. (Programs of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly, or PACE CNY, is a community-based health care program created for people 55 and older who require nursing-home-level care but prefer to receive it in their own home, according to Loretto's website.) In 2021, Desta took back her practice, Dementia Solutions of CNY. Now, she balances her time between PACE CNY, Loretto and patients in the greater community.

Spending time working with residents with dementia at Loretto helped Desta understand the need for purposeful activity. Loretto's recreation department is large and provides focused activities, Desta explained, but she started to notice additional needs she could fill.

"I saw patients who are unable to participate in those structured activities having a lot of agitation and behavioral problems because they didn't have a purpose and they didn't have something to do," she said.

Desta and her daughter went thrifting one weekend, looking for items they could use to populate a boutique. For the female residents,

that meant blouses, purses and bags, jewelry and shoes, and coats and jackets for the male residents. They noticed items that would fit nicely into a nursery, too, like lifelike baby dolls, cribs and clothes.

"We had no intention of doing the nursery," she explained. "But, when I got there, there was a plethora of things. I thought, 'Let's just get everything and do the nursery at the same time.'"

Even before the boutique was opened, the interest of the residents was piqued. On the first day, as Desta set up the space, people were already perusing the items.

"The second day, when I came back to put the finishing touches on it, I had residents who were very high-functioning — who I didn't even think would really be interested — lined up down the hall waiting to come in," she said.

The nursery has also become a popular spot, Desta said, especially with those residents a little further along in their dementia. They identify with the caregiving piece of tending to the children, she explained.

"They take the baby out of the nursery. I'll see them sleeping on the couch with the baby," she said. "And if you ask them, they'll either tell you the name of the child or they'll tell you what they're doing."

Baby Doll Therapy (BDT) is offered in Loretto's memory care facilities as a way to help decrease stress and agitation that many residents with Alzheimer's and dementia experience, and there are currently studies to find out if caring for the dolls can also reduce the need for psychotropic medication. Caring for a doll can put responsibility, caring and structure back into the lives of those with memory loss, and a recent study published in the *Geriatric Nursing Journal* concluded "the dolls significantly reduced behavioral and psychological disturbances among older nursing home residents with dementia."

The next interactive piece Desta wants to offer residents is a café. While opportunities exist now for people to watch the recreation staff cook, she hopes to offer a more hands-on approach.

"Having an activity where they can actually take the ingredients and make the meal itself, that's purposeful and meaningful," she said, explaining her vision of half the space designated for cooking and the other half a café to socialize. She even hopes to paint a mural on the wall to make the space more reminiscent of a café residents would have visited in their past.

Overall, Desta's approach to care is holistic. She attributes this to being able to interact with the residents, along with their caregivers and medical staff, in their own living space.

"In a traditional medical practice, I don't know any other provider who would have access to be able to have that kind of information that's really vital to understanding the whole of the person," she said. SWM

To learn more about Loretto, a nonprofit organization providing 19 specialized programs to the eldercare community in Central New York, visit lorettocny.org. For more on Desta's practice, visit mobilenp.com.

KRISTINA HENSON



Thriving through creativity

Norah Machia

Kristina L. Henson describes herself as “a woman who has to create” and she expresses that creativity through both artwork and writing, focusing on her love of nature and wildlife. The Marcellus resident has a special affinity for sketching and writing about birds.

She has built a successful career as a graphic artist, while using her “spare time” to write and illustrate two books, create a variety of artwork and establish a blog. At the same time, she has been a single parent, raising her daughter, Lily, now 23.

Through her artwork and other projects, Kristina has discovered the power of nature in helping to heal both physical and emotional challenges.

In February, Kristina decided to participate in The 100 Day Project, a worldwide online art initiative that involves choosing a creative project and doing it every day for a 100-day period. The initiative draws thousands of people who commit to “100 days of creating” and post their works daily on Instagram or other social media accounts using the hashtag #The100DayProject.

Kristina turned back to her roots to find inspiration for the project she started in February, titled “What the Duck.” She has spent countless hours watching and sketching the many ducks that flock to Webster Pond, a place where the artist finds “peace and refuge.”

As a young child growing up in the Valley neighborhood in Syracuse, a quiet residential area a few miles south of downtown, she first discovered her love of nature at Webster Pond.

“I remember playing outside for hours,” she said. “When you’re a kid, you don’t realize how important it is to get outside.” Her grandmother was very involved with birdwatching, which also contributed to her fascination with birds, said Kristina.

Webster Pond is a small sanctuary where volunteers open the gates to the area and monitor the property to allow the public to feed an array of waterfowl.

Described on its website as “Nature’s Best Kept Secret,” the pond is operated by the Angler’s Association with assistance from the nonprofit Friends of Wildlife organization. Visitors may purchase corn or lettuce and sit on benches near the water to feed the ducks and geese. There is also a short walking trail alongside the pond.

“I lived two blocks away for most of my childhood and would ride my pink huffy bike there with my sisters or best friend, Julie,” Kristina wrote on her blog. “With a few pennies in my pocket, I could buy a cup of corn. We would stay there for hours feeding the ducks, looking for fish, exploring the woods.”

“As I got older and moved around, my visits weren’t as frequent, but I always stopped by when I was in town,” she added. “Webster Pond has never lost its magic.”

This is the second time Kristina has participated in the online art project. Several years ago, she decided to join and for 100 days, Kristina sketched colorful birds and drafted whimsical poems and stories from the perspective of those individual birds.

That effort resulted in the publication of her first book, titled “One Hundred Birds Telling One Hundred Little Stories.” She describes her book as portraying a “feathered cast of characters” that take the reader through the “joys and challenges, the changing seasons and even the occasional life-changing event, with hope, smiles and an occasional snack of seed or suet along the way.”

That 100 Day Project was started after Kristina became housebound following an accident that resulted in a broken leg. The commitment to the project gave her the “accountability” to post her artwork each day, she said.

“I lived downstairs for months watching the birds at the feeder,” she said. “I had always dreamed about creating a book, but I never felt I had the time. Things shifted when I was stopped in my tracks.” Kristina has also created a variety of vivid and colorful artwork featuring birds sold as individual prints, greeting cards, bookmarks and coffee mugs. A diverse number of birds are featured in her artwork, including cardinals, pileated woodpeckers, blue birds and owls.



Since her first venture with The 100 Day Project, Kristina has written and illustrated a second book titled “Letters to Lily” in honor of her daughter. The book is a collection of prose, poetry and short stories to help guide parents whose adult children have left home for the first time. It was drawn from her experience of dropping off her only child at college.

She decided to write that book because none of the previous ones she had read “prepared me for leaving a wide-eyed teenager on the sidewalk in front of her dorm room,” she said. After the college drop-off, “the days that unraveled afterward were sweet, sad and hilarious,” the artist added.

Kristina had published “Letters to Lily” to encourage others to “write about the complex, funny and painful bits of loving someone so you never forget how beautiful, complicated and maddening it all was,” she said. *SWM*

For more information and to view her books and artwork for sale, visit www.kristinahenson.com. To follow Kristina’s “What the Duck” project: @kristinalhenson on Instagram.

SALLY MANAHAN



Caring for others in mind, body and spirit

Janelle Davis

To Sally Manahan, nursing is a lifelong practice of compassion, caring, and supportive healing.

“My mother, Jeanne Manahan, was a role model of what nursing truly is for me. She taught me that caring for someone was a spiritual practice. When you are caring for someone, you care for the whole person. Care should nurture their physical, emotional, and spiritual needs,” Manahan shares.

Manahan’s care is reflective of the African word, Ubuntu, which she explains as “I am what I am because of you.” She believes that people learn to be human through their relationships with other humans. It is in our relationships that we see our own humanity.

Manahan has been nursing since she was 20 years old. She worked with her mom at St. Camillus, first as a candy striper, and then as a nursing assistant. Inspired to pursue nursing as a career, Manahan attended Niagara University. She returned to work as an oncology clinical nurse specialist and nurse practitioner at Crouse Hospital. While working on call at the Francis House in Syracuse, she also taught spirituality and nursing at Crouse and Le Moyne.

Manahan has worked at the Francis House for almost 14 years. According to their website, “Francis House provides a home and extended family to persons with terminal illnesses so they can die with dignity surrounded by the unconditional love of God.”

Manahan describes it as a Franciscan ministry entirely based on relationships. She shares their mission statement: “We provide a family and a home to people with terminal illnesses so that they can die with dignity and experience the unconditional love of God.”

We use our lived experience as a resource for others. Our core values are compassion, unconditional acceptance, respect, and dignity.”

Manahan started there as director of resident care. After completing a Franciscan-based program through Fr. Richard Rohr’s Living School, she started working as a vice director of outreach and education at the facility, providing education and spiritual care.

“We have the privilege of walking people home. Our focus is providing compassionate, accepting, respectful care, and ensuring dignity,” she boasts.

Manahan explains that she came to Francis House because she wanted her life to reflect those values. Like Ubuntu, she has learned to live her principles by surrounding herself with those who strive to do the same. “We support each other, even when the journey is hard.”

Manahan provides holistic care to those served by Francis House by recognizing their spiritual, physical, and emotional needs. “We help

to give residents a sense of belonging and care. We surround them with love through respectful care. We make sure their dignity is honored and protected.”

Manahan explains that the goal is for residents to know that as soon as they enter Francis House, they feel like members of the Francis House family. Not only do residents feel at home through the exceptional care they receive, but also through the comfort of the house and homemade meals provided by the volunteers.

The residents’ families are also supported and provided a strong sense of belonging. They feel the compassion and care that their loved one is not alone. They are also treated as extended family members. “It’s a beautiful opportunity working in an environment every day filled with love and care, especially in a world that can be challenging,”

Manahan admits. Manahan says that she is privileged to work at the Francis House and doesn’t take it lightly. She says it circles back to relationship – she gives and receives.

Manahan also works as a spiritual director with the Spiritual Renewal Center, a Christian ministry offering spiritual direction and resources to the community. “This is also a way for me to be with people who believe in finding the sacred in everyday life,” Manahan explains.

The Spiritual Renewal Center believes in transforming the power of God’s love offering opportunities for growth and Christian spirituality. They achieve this through education, evangelization, spiritual direction, and ministries.

“We offer a lot of programs for anyone to come who is interested in exploring their spirituality,” Manahan shares.

“My mother always told me that if I started overthinking about myself, I should get out of my own way and help someone else.

She was a woman of service.” Manahan has always lived by this advice in nursing, understanding that it is about service and relationships with others, not just nursing tasks.

She says that nursing means serving one another.

“I will always be a nurse – you can’t take the nurse out of me,” she says.

Manahan points out that many people don’t feel worthy of love. When they visit Francis House or the Spiritual Renewal Center, they are treated with love and respect. This treatment helps them to begin to recognize their own worth. It opens them up to healing. Although she surrounds people with the unconditional love of God, some people are not used to feeling that kind of love.

“To surround someone with God’s unconditional love means we love and accept people no matter what,” Manahan said. “What better wellness practice is there?” SWM



14-year old is business owner, pageant winner and published author



Emily Spatto

Emily Spatto - a ninth grader from Remsen - has accomplished more by the time she entered high school than many have as adults! This highly driven young lady is poised for success in many areas of her young life. As she is getting ready to pitch her business to investors next month and competing at the Princess of America National Pageant in July.

Emily is the baker, owner, and operator of The Tasty Crown Bakery, a baking business she began in 2023 fueled by her love for baking. Specializing in giant cookies, she sold several hundred at the Remsen Barn Festival last year and has even combined her love for community service in the business by planning to deliver cookies to the patients at the Golisano Children's Hospital.

Emily is a participant in Mohawk Valley Community College's Young Entrepreneurs Academy (YEA), where she is enhancing her business model, working with mentors, and formulating future goals for her business. She will be pitching at YEA's Investor Panel event on April 17th and vying for start-up money from investors along with twelve other student businesses.

Emily is also the reigning Princess of America Miss Teen New York. She began doing pageants when she was 13. With her current title, she has been working diligently with pageant coaches to get her ready for nationals this July in Missouri. To secure her title, she competed in traditional categories like interviewing, formal wear and casual wear, but also wowed judges with a performance of "This Is Me" from The Greatest Showman in American Sign Language (ASL).

Now, Emily can add "published author" to her list of accomplishments. She is passionate about diversity and inclusion of all individuals. She developed her platform - Different is Beautiful - in November 2023. She works through Different is Beautiful to make a more welcoming and just world through her Diversity Club at school. Her diversity club also attends Elevating Student Voices (ESV) at OHM BOCES to find more ways to make the community and school a more welcoming and just place. Hoping to spread more awareness towards the deaf community in particular, Emily authored "Milo and Luna - Standing Out and Fitting In," a story that teaches about bullying, inclusion, and a sense of belonging, where the bond between a brother and sister leads to acceptance.

Named CNY Remarkable Woman



Frieda Weeks

Frieda Weeks, president of Hope for Heather.org was selected as the 2024 Winner of Nexstar Communications' annual CNY Remarkable Women award. The program, administered through affiliate WSYR TV 9, is an annual community outreach program that focuses attention on the vital work local charities accomplish.

Weeks received an interview on the local show Bridge Street, a segment on their work in the 2024 Remarkable Women documentary, a \$1,000 cash prize for their charity work. Plus, a star-studded trip to Los Angeles to gather with 112 winners from Nexstar affiliates from all over the USA. This trip included multiple activities: a tour of Grauman's Chinese

Theatre Walk of Stars, the Jennifer Hudson TV show and an evening Hollywood Gala with food from famous chefs. The national finalists were named at this gala with the winner selected and honored.

McKeon honored by SUNY



Kayla McKeon

Kayla McKeon, Onondaga Community College Class of 2022, will receive a SUNY Honorary Doctor of Humane Letters. McKeon is the first lobbyist in United States history with Down Syndrome, the spokesperson and manager of grassroots advocacy for the National Down Syndrome Society, and she worked with Mattel to design the first Barbie doll with Down Syndrome.

McKeon began taking college classes at OCC in 2009 and received her general studies degree in 2022 when she graduated with honors. She is represented on Cicero-North Syracuse High School's Wall of Distinction, completed an MIT Management Executive Education program, and has won multiple Special Olympics Medals. In 2023, OCC named her a distinguished "Alumni Faces" honoree.

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UPCOMING EVENTS

Weekly in May

Friday Night Vibes

What: You've worked hard all week, so have a wine or whiskey flight and food and enjoy live music.
 Where: Epicuse, Downtown Syracuse.
 When: 5 to 9 p.m.



May 4

Star Wars Emo Party

What: May the 4th be with you! A dance party full of pop punk and emo covers.
 Where: The Song and Dance, Downtown Syracuse.
 When: 7 p.m.
 Info: \$10. Attendees under age 16 must be accompanied by a guardian.



May 7

Market Your Art Webinar

What: Hughie and Avery Stone present a webinar on how to market your art.
 Where: Online, Zoom.
 When: 5 p.m.
 Info: Free. Register at www.cnyarts.org.



May 8

WBOC Virtual Open House

What: Whether you're already a member or would like to learn about membership, join for an overview of the types of meetings, how to participate, marketing opportunities, and networking opportunities.
 Where: Online, Zoom.
 When: Noon
 Info: Free. Register at www.wboconnection.org.



May 10 & 11

Food Truck Battle

What: A delicious, fun-filled day with over 50+ locally-owned food trucks. Live music, low-cost samples, kid zone, yard games and more. Cast your vote for the best truck!
 Where: New York State Fairgrounds.
 When: Friday: 5 to 10 p.m. Saturday: 11 a.m. to 10 p.m.
 Info: \$10. Cash only at the door.



May 12

Mother's Day Brunch

What: Mother's Day brunch at the Rosamond Gifford Zoo. Admission to the zoo included in ticket price for the brunch and pre-registration is required.
 Where: Rosamond Gifford Zoo
 When: 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. or 1 to 2:30 p.m.
 Info: rosamondgiffordzoo.org



May 15

Syracuse Orchestra Gala

What: Honoring longtime orchestra supporter, David A. A. Ridings. Night includes cocktails, dinner, and a full orchestra concert.
 Where: The grand ballroom, Marriott Syracuse Downtown.
 When: 6 p.m.
 Info: \$250-\$1000. Cocktail or formal attire.
www.syracuseorchestra.org/event/the-so-gala-in-honor-of-david-a-a-ridings.



May 16

Celebrating Life Through Chocolate

What: Admission includes a complimentary wine tasting, live musical entertainment by Wits End Unplugged and delicious treats from local chocolatiers and bakeries. There will also be a silent auction, wine pull and additional games. Proceeds directly benefit the Hospice of Central New York's patients and families.
 Where: Bella Domani, 5988 East Taft Road, North Syracuse
 When: 5:30 to 8 p.m.
 Info: e.givesmart.com/events/Bd7/



May 17 & 18

Battle of the Wings

What: Kick off the summer festival season with wings from local restaurants, craft beers, live performances and fireworks. Vote for your favorite wing.
 Where: Syracuse Inner Harbor.
 When: Friday: 4 p.m. and Saturday: 10 p.m.
 Info: www.facebook.com/battleofthewings/events.



May 18

Master Gardener Plant Sale

What: A sale featuring a large variety of perennials, herbs, ferns and native plants, all grown locally and starting at \$3.
 Where: Immanuel United Methodist Church, 303 Kasson Road, Camillus
 When: 9 a.m. to noon



May 18

Honor & Remember Hybrid Run/Walk 5K

What: Held on Armed Forces Day, this event brings communities together to honor those that have served and remember those that have sacrificed. Participants can also join in "virtually" from their favorite run/walk location. All proceeds support The Cpl. Kyle R. Schneider Foundation, a local CNY Not-For-Profit foundation, formed in honor of fallen United States Marine, Cpl. Kyle R. Schneider, who lived in Lysander.
 Where: Van Buren Park, 2607 Connors Road, Baldwinsville; cplkyleschneider.com.
 When: 7:45 a.m.
 Info: cplkyleschneider.com To register, visit runsignup.com and search for Honor & Remember Run/Walk 5K.



May 22

Salt City Market X Savorcuse Event

What: Take your tastebuds on a trip! Enjoy \$2 samples from each vendor in the market. Fill out a passport for a chance to win Market Money and swag.
 Where: The Salt City Market, Downtown Syracuse.
 When: 5 to 9 p.m.
 Info: <https://square-link/u/z7INxM26>.



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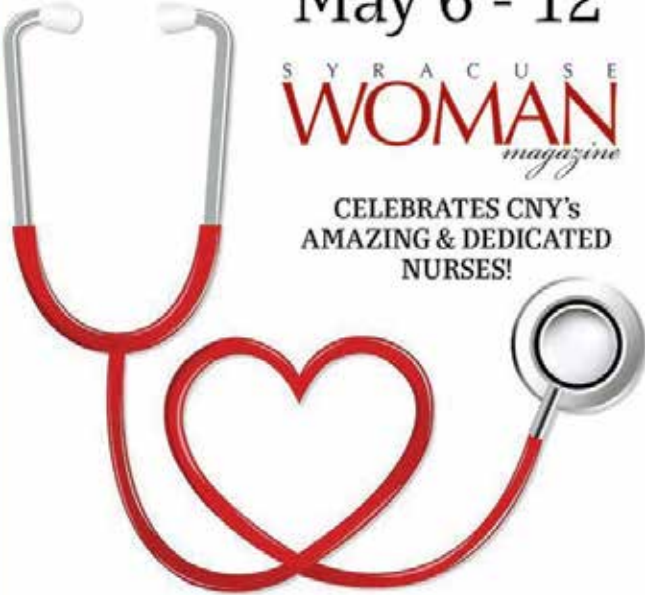



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May 6 - 12



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- ✿ Plant new grass & aerate soil




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