

Central New York's EXCLUSIVE Women's Magazine

SYRACUSE WOMAN magazine

COVER STORY

DR. MONIQUE WINNETT **Bridging the gap**

INTEGRATING MENTAL HEALTH
INTO PRIMARY CARE

Healthy Eating

Re-living Nonnas:
The recipes that raised us

Special Feature

Towpath Quilt Guild 2025
presents "Along the Towpath"

Walking for Elizabeth:

*Couple's 5-year
trek aims to stop CMV*

Healthy Woman

Bioidentical Hormone
Replacement TherapyPelvic therapy for
women and men

Good News

Assemblyman Stirpe honors
Women of Distinction

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june

GUEST COMMENTARY
Parenting through the storm.....6

PAST EVENTS
Celebrating Home Builders Association
and Remodelers.....8
A Cajun celebration10
17th annual Teal Ribbon Run and Walk.....14

HEALTHY WOMAN
Bioidentical hormones: Prolonging the
summer of your life16
Pelvis therapy can help support both
women's and men's health.....40

SPECIAL FEATURE
Towpath Quilt Guild 2025.....18
Walking for Elizabeth: Couple's 5-year
trek aims to stop CMV44

WBOC LEADING LADY
Janet Oppedisano.....20

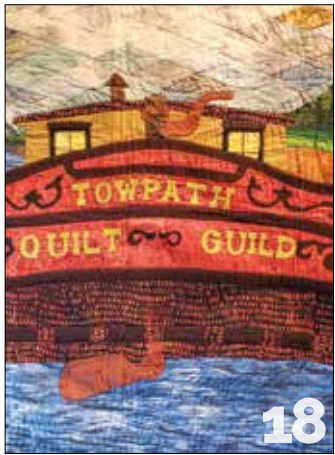
ON THE COVER
Dr. Monique Winnett
Bridging the gap.....23

HEALTHY EATING
Chef Eric Rose
Re-living Nonnas: The recipes that raised us30

INSPIRE
Joni Steigerwald.....34
Claire Collie36

MOVERS & SHAKERS.....42

UPCOMING EVENTS.....46



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Tara Wright

Parenting through the storm

COPING, CONNECTION, AND COMPASSION FOR FAMILIES

Family is often simultaneously our greatest joy and largest stressor. Caring so deeply for another human puts us in a unique position to share in their wins and losses, their love and heartache. When raising young babies we are met with literal cries for immediate needs - eat, sleep, diaper, sometimes illness. It is exhausting and can be overwhelming, but it is often relatively

simple. In a blink, those little baby faces become adolescents - a mix of adult and child with a complex array of needs. The joys and stressors of this stage of parenting are so much more nuanced.

Adolescence in 2025 is also so much more complex. Our teens are faced with 24-7 pressure from peers and our children's access to information is vast and minimally filtered at best. The push of adult expectations on adolescents is enormous. College courses/AP classes, multiple activities and year-round sports are the norm instead of the exception on college applications. Be it adult pressures, societal changes, post-COVID isolation and academic struggles, today's adolescents have a life that is almost unrecognizable when we think of the word "childhood", and adolescent mental health struggles are on the rise.

What we don't talk about enough is the feeling of helplessness that comes with having an adolescent who struggles with their mental health. Often we focus so much on that adolescent, trying to "fix" their pain. Engaging with professional help is critical, but what we often overlook is how much power and healing comes from changes we make within ourselves. Parents are a child's greatest influence and each small adjustment you make within yourself has a direct effect on your child - through modeling, through direct experience, and through love. Below are a few of my favorite subtle focuses that have an amazing impact.

- Being content instead of being grateful. Gratitude is a common focus and a lovely attribute, but contentedness is a deeper, lasting state of being. A way to think of this would be changing the way you eat long term instead of doing a short term diet. Gratitude is short term thought and feeling. Contentedness is a way to live.
- Demonstrating positive coping strategies and resilience. Life can be hard, really, really hard. What coping skills do your children see you using? Maybe you use some not so healthy coping strategies. Maybe you are like me and you bury your struggles and don't really even give your children a chance to see you using positive coping strategies. That is a lesson I'm still learning myself, after 20 years of parenting.
- When a conversation with your adolescent isn't going well, put most of your focus on how you are reacting including your facial expression, posture, and tone. Adolescents are hormonal, ill equipped for much of the adult experiences they encounter on a daily basis, and often they are just plain hungry! It can be so very painful when an adolescent says something hurtful or snarky, but, in those moments, we as parents have a wonderful opportunity to model a cool tempered response, strong coping skills, and the ability to keep the door always open for forgiveness.
- Model how you build community. Interdependence with others is the base of family and community. Consider how you demonstrate for your children the give and take of relationships with others. Go out of your way to include your children in these relationships. Model how you heal relationships instead of cutting others out. Instead of labeling people as "toxic" reframe this to identify them as "struggling".
- Share how you find fulfillment and purpose in your life and help your child identify how you see them experiencing fulfillment and purpose. If children always feel on the receiving end of support sense of self worth can be affected.
- Create shared experiences. Sometimes with adolescence comes changes in communication. Instead of pushing conversations or trying to fill silence, create shared experiences. It could simply be working on a house project together, helping a family friend, volunteering at a local fun run or watching a sporting event together. Small shared experiences breed natural conversation.

Parenting is a flurry of emotions, ups and downs, opportunities and reflections and most importantly, love. It is a balance between supporting, nurturing and letting go. The adolescent years can be so very tricky, but try to bask in the joy because those adolescents will be grown in a blink!

Tara Wright is a licensed mental health counselor, certified school psychologist, and mom of four. She oversees the Learning Center program at Northwood School and she provides private counseling, executive function coaching and consultation services through her practice, Flourish Mental Health Counseling, PLLC. For more information visit

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A Cajun Celebration

Operation Northern Comfort held its annual Crawfish Festival on May 3 in Clinton Square featuring live music, Irish dancing, and, of course, an abundance of tangy Cajun treats. The organization, which was born out of Operation Southern Comfort - an effort to help the victims of Hurricane Katrina - has turned its attention to needs closer to home since 2012, all focused on the mission of empowering and giving hope to those in need.



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Assemblyman Stirpe honors Women of Distinction

In March, Assemblyman Al Stirpe hosted his 13th Annual Women of Distinction Awards Ceremony at the Fayetteville Fire Department. Women from the 127th District, which includes Cazenovia, Clay, Cicero, and Manlius, were honored for their remarkable contributions, serving as testaments to the celebration of Women's History Month. Categories include achievements and service in education, volunteerism, communications and civic affairs, business, and healthcare.

Congratulations to Katherine Mittiga for her commitment to education, Theresa Harris for her volunteerism efforts, Laurel Flanagan for her service in the community and civic affairs, Deana Bollinger Ingram for her strides in business, and Tania Lyons for her remarkable devotion to healthcare.

Honoree Katherine Mittiga says, "Teachers don't usually get recognized for the hard work we do, so it is extremely meaningful to be recognized by Assemblyman Stirpe. I love teaching high school chemistry, as well as being involved in my school community. It helps knowing my efforts are valued and worthwhile."

"As a mental health and substance use professional, being recognized with a woman of distinction award in the healthcare field is so much bigger than me." Honoree Tania Lyons remarks. "It is the recognition of mental health as health. I'm so honored to have been presented with this award, but I'm truly privileged to work alongside other incredible women serving some of our community's most vulnerable members in unique and innovative ways."

"I am humbled to receive the 2025 Women of Distinction award," Laurel Flanagan said. "This award has accomplished its purpose of

recognizing the efforts of women in CNY to improve the conditions of the people around them. I am so grateful for the spotlight this award shines on the amazing organizations that I work with; Operation Northern Comfort and the Fayetteville Free Library are the true heroes; the Proclamation hangs proudly on the wall in my office."

Honoree Theresa Harris adds, "Having devoted decades in pursuit of gender equality with Zonta International, the Woman of Distinction Award for Volunteerism is deeply appreciated. At a time where women's rights are being suppressed, Assemblymember Al Stirpe's purposeful recognition of women's contributions is particularly significant to our community. As Melinda Gates stated, 'When we lift up women, we lift up humanity.' I share this recognition with my Zonta colleagues; their teamwork was vital."

"Receiving the Women of Distinction in Business Award was an incredibly humbling and proud moment." Said honoree Deana Bollinger Ingram. "It was a recognition not just of my individual efforts, but of the incredible support from my team and the community around me. The honor affirmed my passion for empowering others and reinforced my commitment to driving positive change in the business world."

"Some people may wonder why we have the Women of Distinction Awards," said Assemblyman Stirpe. "To which I point to the incredible example of our honorees. Each woman we have recognized today have inspired positive and lasting change in the lives of those around them. These awards serve as a celebration of service, heart and leadership that all the honorees and nominees have put forth into our community." SWM



At a ceremony in March, Assemblyman Al Stirpe honored five women from his district as Women of Distinction. From left to right are Deana Bollinger Ingram, Tania Lyons, Assemblyman Stirpe, Katherine Mittiga, Theresa Harris, and Laurel Flanagan's daughter, Rebecca, who accepted the award on behalf of Laurel's absence.



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The 17th annual Teal Ribbon Run and Walk was held on Saturday, May 17 at Lewis Park in the Village of Minoa. The event featured a 5k timed run and a 3k family walk. All proceeds benefit Hope for Heather which funds vital research for ovarian cancer education, awareness and patient support.



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Prolonging the summer of your life?

August Lindsey

Dr. Wendy Scinta, MD, MS – a Fayetteville-based, nationally recognized expert on bioidentical hormone treatment for both men and women – acknowledges that aging is inevitable. Women face menopause, men encounter andropause and with both the hormonal imbalances that follow bring with them challenges like fatigue, insomnia, weight gain, muscle weakness, mood changes, sexual dysfunction, and, for women, the ever-dreaded hot flashes and night sweats. For those facing these issues, Dr. Scinta urges, “Get your hands on some form of bioidentical hormone replacement therapy (BHRT) – it’s a game-changer that can pave the way for a greatly improved overall quality of life!” Once hormone levels are restored to the balanced state your body previously enjoyed, you’ll experience better sleep, renewed focus, high energy and improved libido, according to Dr. Scinta. “It is also very safe,” she adds.

For both women and men, her practice mainly uses testosterone, and - specifically for women – a plant-based estrogen that is identically mimics what the female body naturally produces. BHRT is tailored individually for each patient, based on bloodwork, hormone levels, and weight. After the first hormone insertion, at the four-week mark bloodwork is checked and then at six weeks the patient is evaluated to see if a booster is needed to achieve optimum results. According to Dr. Scinta, many patients see improvement in as little as a week.

Specifically, Dr. Scinta explains, BHRT at her practice is administered through pellets. These pellets are certified organic and plant based. Derived from yams, they contain the natural vegetable substance sterols, essential for synthesizing estrogen and testosterone. This is the only ingredient used, with the exception of stearic acid (a common component of vegetable fats), which holds the pellets together. Each of the small pellets is about the size of a grain of rice and easily slipped under the skin, after a bit of lidocaine numbing, via a tiny incision. The whole process only takes two to five minutes. The pellets remain in the body three to five months for women, and six to eight months for men, providing a steady release of hormones bringing levels back to the range patients enjoyed in their twenties.

There are six myths about bioidentical hormones that are often misunderstood, leading to misconceptions about their effects on both men and women. Dr. Scinta offers clarity with this checklist:

1. MYTH: Testosterone is a male hormone only.

In fact, testosterone is equally important for men and women, and for both sexes is the dominant hormone. In fact, a 20-year-old woman has six to 10 times more testosterone than estrogen.

2. MYTH: Testosterone causes prostate cancer.

Low testosterone (Low T) can triple the risk of prostate cancer, and it’s often the increased estrogen in men with low T that leads to this risk. Replacing testosterone in men actually helps prevent prostate cancer.

3. Myth: Hormone replacement therapy for women only involves estrogen. Actually, bioidentical testosterone is a significant part of the BHRT regimen for female patients. When administered, 85% of women naturally convert a portion of the testosterone into estrogen through a process called aromatization. According to Dr. Scinta, this is often sufficient to address estrogen-related symptoms such as hot flashes and night sweats.

4. MYTH: Testosterone is dangerous for the heart.

By contrast, Dr. Scinta confirms that testosterone is actually beneficial for the heart. The hormone boosts nitrous oxide, reduces bad LDL cholesterol and triglycerides, and can even help reverse diabetes, improve Lyme and Alzheimer disease symptoms, dramatically improves traumatic brain injuries, Parkinson’s disease, multiple sclerosis, and overall brain health.

5. MYTH: BHRT increases breast cancer risk.

According to Dr. Scinta, this is one of the greatest lies out there and unfortunately causes many women to not seek treatment. In fact, studies demonstrate that using estrogen with testosterone for bioidentical hormone therapy produces a dramatic reduction in breast cancer rates compared to the general female population.



Dr. Wendy Scinta, MD, MS

This is because when the ovaries secrete estrogen, they also secrete the protective hormones testosterone and progesterone, Dr. Scinta explains. The therapy employed at Dr. Scinta's practice provides hormone replacement to women in the same ratios as the young female body produces. Because this therapy encompasses other protective hormones (not just estrogen), the risk of estrogen-related cancers drops significantly.

6. MYTH: Estrogen in bioidentical hormones causes blood clots. Dr. Scinta refutes this myth as well: estrogen only increases blood clot risk if it's given in oral form. Used in pellet form, it bypasses the liver and does not increase the risk of blood clots.

Wendy Scinta is considered a "maverick of medicine" by many in the field - as well as by the thousands of patients she has helped with her innovative approaches to care. Scinta began medical school at Upstate Medical University, completing her residency at Duke University. She then returned to Syracuse to practice family medicine working for other doctors.

During this time, she was introduced to the concept of reversing medical conditions with lifestyle changes. In 2006, she opened Medical Weight Loss of New York and became the first board-certified obesity medicine doctor in the area, now regularly serving between 500 to 1,000 active patients at a time in a 3,000 square foot state-of-the-art facility located in Fayetteville.

She began bio-identical hormone replacement therapy for her patients over a decade ago. *SWM*

For more information,
visit weightlosscny.com



Towpath Quilt Guild 2025 presents “Along the Towpath”

Terri Feola

The Towpath Quilt Guild will present its biennial quilt show, *Along the Towpath*, on Friday, July 11, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Saturday, July 12, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Cazenovia High School gymnasium.

Founded in 1981 by a small group of women passionate about quilting, the Towpath Quilt Guild has grown to more than 67 members across Central New York. The Guild's mission is to “promote awareness and provide educational opportunities in the art of quilting.”

Quilters of all skill levels are welcome, from beginners to seasoned experts. The Guild meets monthly on the second Tuesday at the Fayetteville United Methodist Church in Fayetteville, offering workshops, guest speakers, and opportunities to learn from one another.

This year's show will feature approximately 150 quilts crafted by Guild members, including an array of “challenge quilts” - each created from the same pattern but personalized with fabrics and colors that reflect each quilter's unique style.



Two special exhibits will be showcased this year:

A Tribute to Freddy Moran

The Guild will celebrate the life and work of Freddy Moran, an internationally recognized quilter, artist, and teacher who passed away in 2024 at age 94. Known for her vibrant, colorful designs and her motto “Red is a neutral,” Freddy's creative spirit continues to inspire.

To honor her, 24 Towpath members have each created “face quilts”—playful and imaginative portraits accompanied by whimsical poems—capturing the joy and boldness of Freddy's work.

For more information on Freddy, search ‘Freddy Moran Faces’ in your web browser.

A Piece of History: The 1935 Friendship Quilt

This treasured quilt, made in Cazenovia in 1935, found its way home thanks to Gillian B. of London, England. After purchasing the quilt on eBay and uncovering its origins, Gillian researched the women who stitched it together and will travel to Cazenovia to attend the show.



Patrons of the *Along the Towpath* quilt show in July will have a chance to win this stunning quilt, crafted by Carol Holladay, Arlene King, Cathy Lee, Dale Shinneman, and Kate Toole.

The Guild will display this beautiful artifact of community and craftsmanship, and will welcome Gillian as our special guest, showing how quilting creates friendships across generations and around the world.

The Towpath Quilt Guild show offers more than quilts. Throughout the event, there will be live quilting demonstrations, raffle baskets, local vendors from area quilt shops, a Guild boutique filled with handmade gifts and goods, and scissor sharpening will be available. Guests can also purchase tickets to win the stunning raffle quilt, crafted by Guild members Carol Holladay, Arlene King, Cathy Lee, Dale Shinneman, and Kate Toole. Tickets will be available at the registration desk; one dollar each or six for five dollars.

The Towpath Quilt Guild is deeply committed to supporting the Central New York community. This year, members have created and donated nearly 123 quilts for children and 529 infant burp cloths to the Ronald McDonald House of Syracuse.

Past charitable contributions have supported organizations such as the YMCA Men's Shelter, Hospice and Palliative Care, the ALS Society, McMahon Ryan Child Advocacy Center, and many others. Through quilting, Guild members bring warmth, comfort, and hope to those in need - a passion that lies at the heart of their work.

While visiting for the show, families can explore all that the charming village of Cazenovia has to offer including Lakeland Park, a variety of restaurants and cafes, the Cazenovia Public Library Book Barn and Cazenovia Artisans. *SWM*



For more information visit www.towpathquiltguild.org. Admission to the show is \$8.

On display at the Along the Towpath quilt show will be this 1935 Friendship Quilt, which was made in Cazenovia.



The Towpath Quilt Guild will honor famed artist Teddy Moran at the quilt show on July 11 and 12.

JANET OPPEDISANO



Photography by Alice G. Patterson

From vision to lavender fields

Alyssa Dearborn

If you've ever stood in a field of lavender, you will know how much of a multi-sensory experience it is. You are surrounded by purple-blue buds and floral aroma warmed by sunlight. You might even spot some bees fluttering around the lavender. Lavender has the special power to attract and delight humans and insects alike. This popular plant is what influenced Janet Oppedisamo to found Faverolles Gardens in LaFayette.

With a background in biology and a talent for growing plants, Janet has a passion for biodiversity and plant life. However, it was not until 2019 when she purchased property that she began realizing her dream of owning a lavender farm.

"I looked at different crops to decide what I wanted to grow and lavender ended up being it," Janet said. "I love it and I love that it has so many different uses. Culinary and aromatic and health and wellness. It's just an all around good plant."

Growing plants and starting a farm takes time, so it was not until 2021 that Janet started her farm and not until 2024 that over half of her original lavender plants reached maturity. Today, Faverolles Gardens continues to grow lavender and includes a variety of native plants, a retail shop, and events. Lavender remains one of the farm's most popular offerings, selling culinary buds, lavender bouquets, and lavender plants. With the many known benefits and uses of lavender, many fans of lavender do not know that there are different variations of the plant that have their own purposes.

"There are multiple varieties of lavender," Janet explained.

"There's culinary varieties that can be eaten. I sell culinary buds and I also do workshops teaching people how to use the culinary buds in seasoning and cooking and mocktails and cocktails. They're very versatile."

"But there is a difference between culinary lavender and the type of lavender that smells really great, the aromatic that people are more familiar with. You typically do not want to eat any of the lavender that is very aromatic. Because it will be bitter. So, it's kind of important that people understand that there are multiple varieties and they have different uses. They've been bred by horticulturalists over time to serve those different purposes."

In addition to lavender, Janet's farm also grows native plants. Native plants – plants that are historically from a particular area – are important for creating biodiversity and for helping improve the local environment. Janet recognizes how important indigenous plantlife is to local wildlife and also sees the diverse beauty of plants native to Central New York.

"Oh, that's difficult! I love all the native plants," she said when asked to name some of her favorite native plants. "They have so many different functions and I think what my favorite native plants are are ones that work together as a guild to provide a lot of ecosystems benefits in a specific area. So, I love to put sedges down as ground cover and then have some beautiful labilias growing within, and some sunflowers and bee balm all in the same area. And if that can be within 50 feet of a nice tree, that is fantastic."

"Because they evolve and co-evolved with the insect populations in a specific geographic region," Janet continued, "[native plants] are able to support more insects in the environment than any ornamental plant would typically be able to do. Ornamentals are the ones we think of as perennials from garden centers. Not that I'm against them. I love my hydrangeas and my lilacs and my peonies. I love all of that. But native plants actually support the environment. The greater the biodiversity, the greater the number of species represented in an environment. That, historically, has been translated into higher resilience in the environment."

As beneficial it is for the environment to grow native plants, some may not feel as if their efforts make a difference. Not everyone has the space for a large garden. Others may be notorious pant killers. However, Janet emphasizes that all efforts to grow native plants are good efforts.

"In terms of native plants, I often get the question, 'how much can we do?' I mentioned that it makes a better environment for everyone, but I think it's important that people understand even planting a few native plants and then growing your native plant gardens over time is important. As each of us do that [we create] a patchwork quilt that will change overall biodiversity within a specific region. I think it's really important for people to know that everything helps."

As Janet looks to help the local environment through Faverolles Gardens, she looks to the WBOC for help with building her entrepreneurial skills and connecting with other local business women.

"The WBOC is amazing," she said when asked about her experience with the women's business organization. "It's a group of very supportive, very intelligent, smart business women. They have provided me with ideas. They offer workshops that help me understand things like marketing...and my demographics for what I sell. I learn about other people's businesses. And sometimes there are great ideas that are generated just from learning about how someone else is doing things." SWM

To learn more about Faverolles Gardens, visit www.faverollesgardens.com.



"Giving back is the most gratifying and philanthropic way of saying thank you for my health and the life I love!"



Dr. Phillip Capozzi, Jr., is leaving a legacy gift to the Upstate Foundation to endow a professorship in the department of urology at Upstate Medical University. He is a member of the Upstate Legacy Society, which was established as a tribute to donors who have included the Upstate Foundation in their estate plans.

He is very grateful for the care he received as a prostate cancer patient. An anesthesiologist practicing in Central New York for 20 years, Dr. Capozzi was referred to Upstate for treatment of a very aggressive tumor.

"I am eternally grateful for the medical care provided. Giving back is the most gratifying and philanthropic way of saying thank you for my health and the life I love! And more amazing is how generous giving has a way of coming back to you many times over," Dr. Capozzi explained. "And the Upstate Foundation has the expertise to support my desire to give back."

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DR. MONIQUE WINNETT

Bridging the gap

INTEGRATING MENTAL HEALTH
INTO PRIMARY CARE

Lorna Oppedisano

For more than 15 years, Dr. Monique Winnett has made psychology more approachable and accessible by bringing therapy to the places people already go when they're seeking help: an existing medical system with which they're familiar.

As a clinical psychologist embedded within the medical teams at St. Joseph's Health in Syracuse, Monique aims to integrate behavioral health into primary care — a shift she believes has the power to normalize therapy, reduce stigma, and change lives across generations.

"I'm a big believer in the relationship between our brain and our body. They don't operate in isolation," she said. "So, for me to have behavioral health be this whole other silo that's separate from medical health just never made sense. I think they should go hand-in-hand. One impacts the other and vice versa."

Monique's work involves supporting patients alongside their primary care providers, treating conditions like insomnia, chronic pain, and anxiety with evidence-based behavioral therapies that complement physical care. For many patients, this integrated approach is their first entry point into therapy.

Continued on page 24

"The more people you have feeling healthier, feeling better, contributing to society and bringing positive energy into society, I think that can make a difference for everybody."
—Dr. Monique Winnett

Bridging the gap FROM PAGE 23

"I truly think that we are getting treatment for behavioral health for patients who wouldn't otherwise be seen because of the stigma around it," she said. "There's something about being able to come to someone who's in their doctor's office where they're used to coming anyway. It helps more people access it than they otherwise would."

A natural fit

Growing up in Corning, Monique knew from an early age that she wanted to end up in a helping profession. "From a high school age, it's what I felt drawn to," she said.

Her early volunteering experiences introduced her to people with wide-ranging needs, sparking a fascination with their stories. "I've always been interested in people's stories and always feel humbled by people's willingness to share those stories with me," she said.

Though she considered pursuing the medical side of medicine, psychology ultimately felt like a better fit. After earning her undergraduate degree in psychology from SUNY Geneseo, she pursued her master's degree and doctorate at the University of Hartford. She was then placed for her clinical internship at Upstate Medical University — an experience that brought her to Syracuse and, eventually, to St. Joseph's.

In her work for St. Joseph's Health, she splits her time between direct clinical care and administrative work, which includes supervision as well as navigating systems to offer behavioral health services in a medical facility. "I'm able to work in medical facilities doing the behavioral health work," she said, "so it feels like a nice blend for me."

The family ripple effect

While the bulk of her work is individual therapy, Monique doesn't lose sight of the broader systems at play, particularly within families. "Within a family, everyone's connected for better or for worse, right?" she pointed out. "What happens in a family impacts other people in a family."

She often compares it to a mobile hanging over a crib: "If you hit one of the animals on it, they all kind of move around. So, I think that an individual getting themselves to a healthier and more stable place can be healthy for a family system as a whole."

Monique spoke about the power of parents modeling healthy habits for their children, including seeking therapy themselves. "I think it's a great way for parents to be able to model good self-care to their children and reduce some of that stigma," she said. "When a parent is able to come in and get their own treatment, they're showing kids that it's an okay, healthy thing to do."

This belief is personal. As a mother to three children — ages 9, 7 and 5 — Monique sees how what she's learned through her work influences the way she and her husband parent.

"It gives me a little bit more of a basis for some of the parenting decisions that I make, in terms of knowing the science and research backing certain things," she said. She and her husband, who works as a director of technology for a local school district, are committed to maintaining a low-screen household. Monique shared what she said is her husband's take on technology in a school setting; he tries to make sure when children use technology at school, it's aiding education as opposed to replacing it.

The influence of technology on mental health

One of the most urgent challenges Monique sees today, especially among youth growing up during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, is the overwhelming presence of technology.

"The reliance on technology is big," she said. "Engagement in social media can have its benefits and provide some socialization, but what most of the data shows is that it's not the same quality of socialization as face-to-face interactions. The depth of the relationships is not always as strong."

Monique is especially concerned about children whose most formative years occurred during the pandemic — a time of isolation, remote schooling, and increased screen time. Those things can lead to increases in the likelihood of anxiety and depression, she said, and we're still seeing the trickle-down of the pandemic effects.

Still, she's hopeful.

"It'll be interesting to see, because there's a lot more research now coming out on how detrimental some of it can be," she said. "So, I'm hoping that as this current generation grows up with at least a little more awareness of how it might affect children, they might look to parent their children differently or do things a little bit differently."

A purpose-driven practice

Whether she's meeting with patients or guiding healthcare systems toward better integration of mental health, Monique's work is rooted in a clear and compassionate mission.

"My 'why' is that I know there's a lot of people who need and want the help, and I truly believe that our work can be helpful and make a difference on an individual basis, but also on a societal basis," she said. "The more people you have feeling healthier, feeling better, contributing to society and bringing positive energy into society, I think that can make a difference for everybody." SWM

For more information on St. Joseph's Health, visit sjhsyr.org.





Photo by Alice G. Patterson

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Re-living Nonnas

THE RECIPES THAT RAISED US

Chef Eric Rose

If you haven't seen the movie "Nonnas" on Netflix yet, it's time to queue it up. With a cast that includes Vince Vaughn, Susan Sarandon, Lorraine Bracco, Talia Shire, and Linda Cardellini, the film delivers more than entertainment - it delivers emotion, legacy, and a powerful reminder of where so many of us first learned to cook: right at home.

The story, inspired by a real-life restaurant in Staten Island called Enoteca Maria, celebrates the wisdom and warmth of grandmothers from around the world. At this unique restaurant, real grandmothers do the cooking - each one representing a different country, each dish steeped in love, tradition, and memory.



Watching the movie, I was transported back to the kitchens of my childhood. And I'll be honest - I cried. Twice.

My friend Mark Burgasser, one of the best chefs I know and a man who's opened more restaurants than I can count, called me right after he watched it and said, "Eric, you've got to see this."

Mark and I often get caught in long, winding conversations about the food we grew up on. Maybe it's because we're both chefs, but really, I think it's because food was how our families loved us best.

Mark's passion for cooking was born in his mother's kitchen, just like mine.

I grew up learning to cook from my mother, Linda Esposito and her parents. Then there was Grandma Dlugolenski -



not my biological grandmother, but the mother of my godfather who lived next door.

To me, she was family. I remember watching them make some of the best Polish food on the planet.

I was just a kid, but I knew I was witnessing something sacred: pierogi rolled out on flour-dusted counters, cabbage leaves filled and folded with care, and simmering pots that seemed to speak their own language.

That kitchen was a classroom, a chapel, and a gathering place. It's where I first understood that cooking isn't just about food - it's about connection.

That's the heart of Nonnas - and it's what I want to encourage you to rediscover.

This June, I invite you to do something simple, but deeply meaningful:

- Think about a recipe from your childhood that brings you joy - something that gives you a shot of pure nostalgia and comfort.
- Talk to your parents, grandparents, or any family member who can help you remember it clearly.
- Write it down. Recipes are stories, and stories need to be preserved.
- Make that recipe with your kids or grandkids. Let them stir the pot, get messy, and ask questions.

- Tell them why it matters - share the who, the when, and the why behind the food.

These recipes are more than meals - they are part of our lineage.

They are our love letters to the past and our gifts to the future. You don't need a holiday to make them. You just need a kitchen, a little time and someone to share it with.

Let this summer be the one where you stir up the past and serve it forward.

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



Apple Cake
 Peel & cut 4 apples - Max 4 cups sugar -
 1/2 cup cinnamon, sprinkle 1/2 cup apples -
 set aside
 Beat together
 2c sugar
 4 eggs
 1c oil + 1/2c orange juice
 Add 3c flour - 3 tsp. & p., salt 2 1/2 tsp
 vanilla - Mix well. Grease & flour
 take pan - brown in 1/2 butter oil
 add 1/2 of the apple slices, then batter
 & remaining apples. Sprinkle remaining
 sugar & cinnamon mixture on top

Apple Cake by "Bubbie" Shirley Racoon



Rebs
 4-6 ribs
 meaty side up - 450° oven with
 slices of onion & lemon on top
 for 1 hr. - drain fat.
 Sauce
 1c ketchup
 2c water
 1/3c worcester sauce
 1 tsp chili powder
 1 tsp salt

Ultimate Chocolate Chip Cookies 375°
 3/4 cup of butter-flavor Crisco shortening
 1 1/4 cups firmly packed light brown sugar
 2 Tablespoon of milk
 1 Tablespoon vanilla
 1 egg
 1 3/4 cups of flour
 1 teaspoon of salt
 3/4 teaspoon of baking soda
 1 cup of semisweet chocolate chips
 1 cup of coarsely chopped pecans or walnuts (optional)
 If nuts are omitted - add an additional 1/2 cup
 of chocolate chips.

Combine shortening, brown sugar, milk,
 and vanilla in large bowl. Beat at medium
 speed of electric mixer until well blended.
 Beat egg into mixture.

Combine flour, salt, and baking soda.
 Mix into creamed mixture, just until
 blended. Stir in chocolate chips, and nuts.
 Drop rounded Tablespoon full on ungreased baking
 sheet. 8 to 10 minutes for chewy
 11 minutes for crisp.

Cool 2 minutes on baking sheet. Remove to
 foil or waxed paper to cool completely. About 36 doz

Ultimate Chocolate Chip Cookie Linda (Esposito) Rose

Italian Sauce

Large batch

- 2 16.02 cans of crushed tomatoes
- 1 16.02 can of tomato paste
- 1 16.02 can of tomato paste
- 2 16.02 cans of water (approx.)
- 1 clove of garlic
- Olive oil
- 3 Tbs. Oregano
- 3 Tbs. Basil
- 3 Tbs. Parsley
- 1 Tbs. Black Pepper
- 2 teaspoons salt
- 1 " " Garlic powder
- 1 " " Onion powder

approx.
(to taste)

Fry chopped garlic cloves in olive oil a little
 bit (maybe 30-40 min). Add sausage to brown
 & cook (15-20 min) or other meats; pork;
 beef; etc.

Add all ingredients above. Bring to a slight
 boil, with lid on, then down to a simmer
 for how ever long (1 hr; 2 hr.)

For sauce to thicken, you need to take lid
 off of pan, whatever thickness you like.
 then put lid back on to simmer. Stir often.

Trial and Error! What ever your preference!
 Cook favorite pasta and put your sauce on. Enjoy

Italian Sauce by Linda (Esposito) Rose



Continued on page 26

Re-living Nonnas FROM PAGE 29

Recipe Name: Luscious Cookies From: Carrie Scarpino
 Serves: 150 Cooking Time: 8-10
 4 cups flour (4 cup at a time)
 1/2 lb. shortening
 3 eggs (peas trap)
 3/4 cup sugar
 2 teaspoons baking powder
 1 teaspoon vanilla
 1 teaspoon salt
 Mix 2 sides, pat down 8-10



Half Moon Cookies 375° about 10 to 12 minutes
 3/4 cup of shortening
 1 1/2 cup of sugar
 2 eggs
 1 cup of sour milk
 3 1/2 cups of flour
 1 teaspoon of baking soda
 1 teaspoon of baking powder
 1/2 teaspoon of salt
 1 teaspoon of vanilla
 Cream shortening and sugar
 Add eggs, beat well. Add in
 sour milk (1 Tab. lemon juice
 in milk to make 1 cup.)
 Add dry ingredients, mix
 well. Add van. Drop from
 Table spoon on to greased
 cookie sheet. Bake 375°
 for about 10 to 12 minutes.
 Cool and frost as desired
 (1/2 choc; 1/2 white)
 Store loosely covered.

Half-moon cookie by Linda (Esposito) Rose

Recipe Name: Italian Goo Cookies From: (Mama)
 Serves: 150 Cooking Time: 375° - 8 min (10)
 6-7 cups flour
 4 tbsp. baking powder
 1 lb. melted butter
 1 cup grape jelly
 2 cups sugar
 1 lb. white
 1/2 cup brandy coffee
 2 tsp. vanilla
 1 tsp. salt
 1 cup. pecans
 1 cup. pecans
 1 cup. pecans
 Choc chips

The
Gourmet
Recipe
Collector

RECIPE: Cut Outs
 FROM THE KITCHEN OF: Ann Burgasser Serves: _____
 INGREDIENTS: 1 cup margarine (melted) soft
 3 cups sugar
 1 cup pure anise
 1 1/2 cups baking powder
 1 1/2 cups baking soda
 3 eggs
 8-9 cups flour
 1 lb of cream cheese
 INSTRUCTIONS: Bake 375° until brown
 on bottom
 mix butter, sugar, anise, eggs
 + cream cheese
 mix baking powder, baking soda,
 + flour
 per cup - 1 Tbsp. confectioner sugar
 1/2 cup butter

Cut out cookies by Ann Burgasser



What's cooking? Carrot Zucchini Serves: _____
 Recipe from the kitchen of _____
 Cut up fresh carrots
 Green bell pepper, cool.
 Beat eggs, sugar, salt, pepper
 2 tbsp. margarine
 1/2 cup water
 Add enough flour to
 thicken. Add 1/2 cup baking
 powder. Drop by spoonful
 on oiled cookie sheet.
 Add brown sugar. Bake

Pictured are
(center)
Owner Tim
O'Connell with
sons Ryan (left)
and Dan (right)



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JONI STEIGERWALD



Perfecting the work/life balance

Janelle Davis

Joni Steigerwald, Principal Consultant in Planning at C&S Engineers, has built a life based on hard work, family values, and community engagement in the heart of Syracuse. Raised in rural Texas outside of Dallas, Joni has extended her Southern warmth and candor to the Northeast, where she's raised four successful daughters while advancing her career and contributing to her community.

Joni grew up in Texas and was the first in her family to graduate from college. Upon meeting her future husband, she decided to return to his hometown of Syracuse. Joni followed a few years later, having secured a position at C&S through an interview before relocating.

"I interviewed with C&S before I moved up here and, yeah, it was a great fit," Joni recalls. This decision would shape her professional path and her personal life for decades to come.

A company that supports families

After establishing her career at C&S, Joni made the significant decision to take eight years off to raise her daughters. What makes her story particularly remarkable is how she was able to return to the same company when she was ready to re-enter the workforce.

"When my girls got a little bit older, and I needed some help financially, I was ready to get back, and just needed something more," she explains. "Taking off to raise kids is not easy. It was hard work and I needed to get back."

C&S demonstrated exceptional flexibility, allowing Joni to return gradually. "They allowed me to come back, one day a week. That's how I started. And I gradually built up from there. I went from one day a week, then to two, then to three, and just built back up."

This progressive return enabled Joni to balance her family responsibilities with her career aspirations. Today, she continues to thrive professionally at C&S, working on significant projects including the I-81 project, the Micron project, and various airport initiatives.

Raising four daughters

Joni and her husband, who owns Lieh's and Steigerwald, a local "mom and pop shop," instilled strong work ethics in their four daughters. Three played lacrosse in college - two at the University of Michigan and two at schools within New York state - and all are finding their professional paths.

"I'm proud that they're finding what they like and what they can do," Joni says, highlighting one daughter who initially couldn't pursue nursing while playing collegiate lacrosse but later returned to nursing

school after graduation. "She's finding her path of what she really wants to do, and I think that's important."

Joni attributes their children's success to the example she and her husband set. "Both my husband and I work hard, and he owns a business, and as a business owner, you have to work hard. And they always saw that."

She also brought a touch of her Texas upbringing to parenting. "If you see somebody and they look good, you tell them." This openness and directness has influenced her daughters' approach to life.

Community engagement

Joni's commitment to community service began in her twenties in Dallas, where she volunteered with the March of Dimes. In Syracuse, she joined the board of the McMahon Ryan Child Advocacy Center about 11 years ago.

"I've always had that desire to give back and get involved," she explains. Of her work with McMahon Ryan, she notes, "They have a place in my heart, and I think they do a lot of great work that's not fun to talk about. It's not glamorous, but it's necessary."

Additionally, Joni serves on the C&S Foundation board, which supports employee-driven charitable initiatives. "The fun part of this foundation is giving the money. We look at our employees' requests and passions for what they want to share, and that's what our company gets to support."

Balancing it all

When asked about work-life balance, Joni acknowledges that it has evolved over time. With four athletically active daughters, juggling work, school events, sports, and community service was challenging. "It gets easier," she says, describing her current life stage as "kind of the sweet spot" with her older children now more independent.

Her advice to parents trying to raise community-minded children? "Don't sweat the small stuff. You pick your battles in parenting." For instilling community values, she believes in leading by example. "I just showed them that this is what you do, you help people. I want to lead by example and show them that giving back is important and caring about others in whatever form it is."

As for retirement, that's not on Joni's radar yet. "I'm still in the throes of it. I'm still learning. I really enjoy my job," she says, embodying the work ethic and passion for growth that have defined her journey from Texas to Syracuse. *SWM*

CLAIRE COLLIE



The heart behind Fernwood Flower Farm

Elena Ehrhart

Claire Collie is more than just a mother, wife and farmer. She is the face of Fernwood Flower Farm, emerging as a female business owner and getting her foot in the door of the world of wholesale flowers and beyond in Central New York.

Originally from Rhode Island, Claire has spent much of her life dedicated to farming and teaching others the craft. While breaking into gardening in the Ocean State, Claire worked for a fine gardening business owned by a local woman. It was there that she learned more about planting roses and caring for fine flowers. It was also there that Claire found the inspiration to become her own boss.

"I've always wanted to farm and grow flowers," Claire said of the future she has always desired. "And I've always wanted to work for myself."

Over the years, Claire and her husband moved around the country before joining friends in the rolling hills and open farmland of Pulaski in 2021. It is there that the stunning antique farmhouse and lush green fields provided Claire with the opportunity she had always dreamed of.

This is Claire's fourth year running Fernwood. After a rough start her first year, she is finally finding her place in the local flower scene. "I'm looking to expand next year," she said, gesturing to the vast field that expands farther back than her current crop. "I would love to add more." Claire created a five-year plan, which includes expanding her flowers to 10 rows and venturing into flowering branches.

The expansion would also include hiring seasonal workers. Given her background in teaching young people in the field, Claire believes she can be a boss not only to herself, but to others. She is looking forward to being able to afford hiring young people eager for work, looking to learn and gain experience. This could take years to achieve, especially since the business does not provide a stable income yet. Despite the challenges, Claire loves what she does.

"I like [being my own boss] a lot. I like working in the mornings and evenings, which are typically the best times to harvest flowers," Claire said.

Now four years into her business, she has helped to create The Flower Collective – an LLC run by mostly female wholesale flower growers. In total, there are nine businesses involved, each with their own specialty area, providing local florists with a wide variety of fresh floral choices. The Flower Collective also aids members with pricing and helps customers find a wide selection of appropriate choices for celebrations like weddings and baby showers or funerals.

Wholesale flowers are a tight market because they are a high-value and perishable product. Being fresh and in bulk, it is a delicate business that takes a lot of care. In Claire's own words, "flower farming isn't hard, but it can be heavy lifting and a lot of labor."

Some crops are planned a year in advance. Claire talks with buyers to figure out what they want in terms of color palettes and designs.

In the world of retail, Christmas flowers are planned out in the summer and are prepared months in advance.

This is where Claire digs up more business. On top of selling wholesale flowers, she also creates wreaths out of dried flowers, grapevine and trees in her yard. Although they began and continue to be an endeavor Claire pursues for friends, aunts and her mother, some are also sold through Terrain, a retailer for home and garden with several locations around the country, including Los Angeles and Brooklyn, as well as online.

"It's nice to have flowers around all year," Claire said, gesturing to the dried flowers from the winter hanging above her kitchen and the wreaths of strawflower, dusty miller and eucalyptus decorating her walls.

To have flowers all year outside of those she dries, Claire wants to build a greenhouse capable of withstanding the difficult winters so she can continue to grow cut flowers all year. In January, Claire begins to plant some of her crop inside, sheltering it from the challenging Upstate winter.

"The snow was about a foot high," Claire said as she and her daughter walked through muddy patches of grass between the rows of budding blooms in the first field she made. "It's good for the fields; the snow acts as insulation – the ground didn't freeze this year, that's the best part of it."

Among the small sprouts of dusty miller and other late spring crops like feverfew and Sweet William, Claire's gardens cater to more than just the life of her plants. A small depression among the blooms is all that remains of a kildeer nest Claire and her daughter had been checking nearly every day. Around the grounds, redwing blackbirds, robins and other critters chirp and scamper about, only adding to the haven Claire has created.

As summer approaches, Fernwood Flower Farm is reaching the busy season and as time goes on, Claire hopes to develop her business with each new season.

"I plan on being around for a long time," she said. "In 20 years or so, I want to be one of those older people who are really knowledgeable about a specific plant or flower." In Claire's case, she sees herself wanting to be expand into growing carnations, a flower that is no longer grown on a large scale in the United States, but is now making a comeback.

But as for right now, she is happy focusing on roses, having worked with them for her first job out of college. Beyond her greenhouse and expanding her fields, Claire's goals are quite simple: to continue doing what she loves and bringing a little bit of beauty to those around her. *SWM*

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Pelvic therapy can help support both women's and men's health

Nora Greeley



Physical therapists are known as musculoskeletal experts. They're the providers you go to when you have back pain, hip pain, or just had surgery. But where do you go when you have pain in the pelvic area? Who do you see when you pee every hour and can't get through a meeting? Do you see a urologist or GYN? What if you have painful intercourse, or testicular pain?

Often women and men don't know where to seek help and are placed on medications to manage the symptoms or are told that an injection or surgery could be the answer. Or worse, told they must live with the problem. These interventions may or may not provide temporary relief, but they don't always address the cause of the symptoms.

Getting to the root of the problem involves some detective work that physical therapists are trained for. We can spend 45-60 minutes at each session to clinically assess and analyze your movement and abilities. This affords us the opportunity to discover the source and develop a custom plan for rehabilitation.

What do pelvic floor therapists treat?

Urinary incontinence and frequency. Leaking urine may be common, but it's not normal or acceptable just because we are aging or had a hysterectomy, prostatectomy or vasectomy. Urinary leakage can be a normal part of recovery after having a baby or surgery, but the amount of leakage should be decreasing within that healing window of four to six weeks. If it's not, it may be time to schedule a visit with a pelvic floor physical therapist.

MEN: "Urinary incontinence is reported in 11% to 34% of older men, with 2% to 11% reporting daily occurrences²."

WOMEN: Among adult women in the United States (approximately 80 million individuals), over 60% report some degree of urinary incontinence, with one-third experiencing leakage at least monthly.

Constipation. Constipation is defined as having fewer than four bowel movements per week and can be managed by a pelvic floor physical therapist. Prescriptions and over the counter medications can have long-term negative effects on the gut and intestinal health, leading to an increase in dosage as years progress. A pelvic floor therapist can assist in conservative management with education and treatment strategies. These methods may include increasing water intake, teaching diaphragmatic breathing and how to massage the long intestine. Natural supplements of probiotics, magnesium citrate and fiber can assist in softer and easier stools.

Pain. Pain in a variety of areas, such as hip, back, pelvis, vulva, penis, testicles, vagina, and anus, are often signs of a tight pelvic floor. Prolapse, defined as one or more of the pelvic organs – including the womb (uterus), bladder and the last part of the bowel (rectum)

descending into or out of the vagina or rectum. Signs are variable and may include the following: feeling like something is falling out, feeling like there's a foreign object in your abdomen, needing to urinate often, or difficulties urinating, pain during sex, problems with bowel movements, low back pain, pressure sores and bleeding in the vagina. Women benefit from pelvic floor therapy at every level of severity to reduce abdominal pressure, learn how to use their pelvic floor muscles to assist in supporting their organs and to reduce the severity or progression. Ideally, women would improve their surgical outcome when attending pelvic floor therapy pre-op and post-op prolapse repair surgery.

Women AND men both have pelvic floors. More commonly, women are sent to pelvic floor therapy than men. Some would speculate it's because women attend more healthcare appointments during childbearing age. But what if you're having pain while cycling or pain with sexual function and all the urology testing is negative?

Men often say they're told it will 'go away eventually,' or to 'drink more water and exercise more.' These men question their perception and reality of pain. By the time they learn about pelvic floor physical therapy, their symptoms have existed for years, and it can be more difficult to treat. A little-known secret about rehabilitation is, the longer you have lived with the pain or dysfunction, the longer the rehabilitation time. The brain and body are smart and can adapt in a multitude of ways to keep you going!

If you've ever been to physical therapy, the pelvic floor assessment is similar. We observe how your back and hips move, measure how strong your hips are and assess hip and pelvic joint mobility. Often an internal examination is performed to assess muscle tone and ability. Are you able to contract and relax your pelvic floor muscles? Do you have internal pain and where is the pain located?

If it's appropriate and will be beneficial, I often train patients how to contract and relax the pelvic floor muscles with long sustained holding while breathing, and quick contractions while breathing. Many times, learning how to perform these two tasks at the same time is challenging. Finally, a treatment plan, or plan of care, is established and you'll return in one week to advance your skills, knowledge and training. ^{SWM}

Nora graduated from the University of Puget Sound in Tacoma Washington with a Doctorate of Physical Therapy in 2018 and her pelvic health certification in 2020. As a clinician, she specializes in the evaluation and treatment of patients with pelvic organ prolapse, pelvic pain, postpartum recovery, incontinence, constipation, sexual health issues, pre and post prostatectomy care, and testicular pain. She lives in Dewitt with her three daughters and enjoys CrossFit, stand-up paddle boarding, hiking, and advocating to improve the quality and accessibility of physical therapy. She works at St. Joseph's Hospital Outpatient Physical Therapy in Fayetteville.

Honored by *Consulting* magazine



Victoria Bracco

Encore Media Agency announced that its CEO, Victoria Bracco, has been recognized by *Consulting* magazine with the 2025 Excellence in Leadership Award. This national honor celebrates consulting leaders who demonstrate exceptional vision, impact, and dedication to advancing the industry.

Victoria's recognition reflects her professional achievements and her commitment to building a purpose-driven agency that supports small to midsize businesses and

nonprofits, and empowers the next generation of leaders.

"I'm deeply honored to receive this award," said Victoria, CEO of Encore Media Agency and co-founder of Strategic Executive Alliance. "Leadership isn't about titles; it's about responsibility, service, and the courage to challenge what's possible. This is for every entrepreneur who's dared to dream bigger. This is proof that small businesses can have a big impact."

She will be honored alongside this year's other recipients at *Consulting* magazine's awards gala in New York City in June.

Sen. Ryan names all-female senior leadership staff



Hollyanne Lupi

To lead his office in his first term in the New York State Senate, Sen. Christopher Ryan has appointed an all-female senior leadership team. The announcement reflects his dedication to diversity and creating pathways for women in leadership roles.

The team is led by Chief of Staff Hollyanne Lupi, a seasoned strategist with a deep understanding of legislative processes. She is joined by Director of Communications Brooke Schneider, Legislative Director Sara Garcia-Ryan, and District Director Amy Connolly.

"I am incredibly proud to have such a talented and dedicated group of women leading my office," Ryan said. "Their expertise, leadership, institutional knowledge, and commitment to public service will be instrumental in advancing our legislative priorities and serving our constituents effectively."

Hollyanne previously served on the New York State Senate Majority Intergovernmental Affairs team, where she acted as a liaison between members and Senate leadership. Last fall, she was campaign manager for the re-election of Sen. James Skoufis. She has also held roles at Gramercy Communications and the Boys & Girls Clubs of the Capital Area, both based in Troy.

Brooke most recently served as senior public information officer for the City of Syracuse under Mayor Ben Walsh. She has a background in media relations and previously worked as an account executive at Burson.

Sara joined the office from the New York State Office of Cannabis Management,



Amy Connolly

where she was a program specialist overseeing compliance. She has also worked for the New York City Office of Management and Budget and the New York State Senate Finance Committee.

Amy managed Ryan's successful state Senate campaign. She has also worked as a field organizer for the New York State Democratic Committee and served in research and administrative roles at Syracuse University and the Town of Constantia.

AmeriCU names manager for new Fulton location



Shaela Long

AmeriCU Credit Union has appointed Shaela Long as financial center manager for its new Fulton location. Shaela brings nearly a decade of banking experience, having started as a teller and advanced into leadership roles. She joined AmeriCU in June 2024 as an assistant manager.

"I am honored to help open the Fulton location and build a strong, community-focused team," Shaela said. "I look forward to reconnecting with members and helping them achieve their financial goals."

She attributes her success to strong leadership and her ability to build relationships with members. She is active in the community, serving with the Greater Oswego-Fulton Chamber of Commerce, David's Refuge and Safe Space Organization.

Oswego Health appoints Andrea Doviak to lead the Manor at Seneca Hill



Andrea Doviak, RN

Oswego Health has named Andrea Doviak, RN, as executive director and administrator of The Manor at Seneca Hill, a 120-bed skilled nursing facility.

Andrea is a respected leader within the Oswego Health system, known for her clinical expertise and commitment to quality care. She previously served as interim executive director from August to November 2022 and again starting in February 2025.

She joined Oswego Health in April 2022 as a clinical RN. Her leadership has helped guide The Manor's staff and uphold the organization's patient-centered values.

"Andrea has consistently exemplified the leadership and clinical expertise that Oswego Health stands for, and we are excited to have her lead The Manor at Seneca Hill," said Michael C. Backus, president and CEO of Oswego Health.

Andrea earned her Bachelor of Science in nursing from Roberts Wesleyan College and has been a licensed RN since 1995. She earned her nursing home administrator license in 2015. Before joining Oswego Health, she served as administrator and director of nursing at Morningstar Care Center.



Brooke Schneider



Sara Garcia-Ryan

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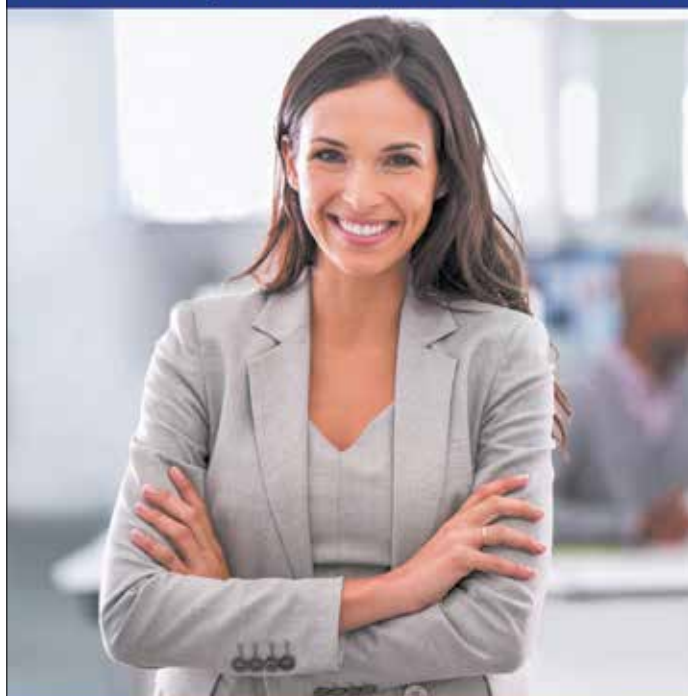
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Walking for Elizabeth

COUPLE'S 5-YEAR TREK AIMS TO STOP CMV

Anna Edwards

Lisa and Jim Saunders, who lost their daughter, Elizabeth, in 2006 after a battle with cytomegalovirus, recently completed the 360-mile Erie Canalway Trail to continue spreading awareness for their fight against the virus.

Congenital cytomegalovirus (CMV) is the leading viral cause of birth defects. It can cause hearing loss and autism. CMV is often spread through contact with the saliva or urine of young children. Lisa did not know this at the time of her pregnancy, and since her daughter's death, she has made it her mission to educate future and current mothers on the dangers of the virus.

The Saunders spent five years completing the Erie Canalway Trail, visiting the trail about once a month and placing Stop CMV rocks along the way to spread awareness for their cause. They faced rain, ice, snakes, and mosquitoes. They often had to double back on the trail to retrieve their car, walking twice as far as they really needed to.

Lisa said the trail brought them closer to Upstate New York as they tried new foods and learned about both personal and general history. Walking the trail was a way for her to do something for the cause that many mothers aren't able to do.

"Putting out the Stop CMV rocks is a way for me to make people aware," she said. "Yeah, not everyone is going to pick them up, but people do."

When the the Saunders completed their journey in Albany at the end of April, Lisa went to the Legislative Office Building in Albany and asked members of the Assembly Health Committee to pass a new CMV bill that would require testing of all newborns in New York State for congenital CMV. This bill would allow newborns positive for CMV to be considered for antivirals, which need to be given in the early days of life to improve brain growth and hearing. Lisa emphasized the importance of diagnosing all cases at birth so that treatment plans can be made.

About 275 of the 210,000 babies born in the state between October 2023 and September 2024 had "convincing evidence of congenital CMV," according to Andrew Handel, MD, of Stony Brook Children's Hospital. Handel is the Co-Primary Investigator of PROACTIVE NYS, a long-term follow-up study of young children with congenital CMV.

"We've seen cases of missed clinically apparent CMV during the NYS universal screening program. There have been some infants with features of cCMV that went unrecognized until the universal screen returned positive," he said.

In 2022, "Elizabeth's Law" was passed in New York State. Named after the Saunders' daughter, the law makes it so that child-care providers and pregnant women in New York State receive educational materials on how to protect pregnancies from CMV.

Following the victory, Lisa has continued to fight for legislation against this overlooked virus.

"I want people to be aware of how to protect their pregnancy. That's why I do everything that I do. So that they won't be like me: surprised," she said. Lisa is now a "Canalway Challenge Ambassador," meaning that she will encourage others to take the challenges on the Erie Canalway Trail between Buffalo and Albany. Trail-goers can take the 1st, 15, 90, 180, 200 or 360-mile Challenge. Finishers of the various challenges receive a certificate, magnet, sticker, and Erie Canal 200 commemorative patch.

Lisa said 2025 is the Erie Canal's Bicentennial, so it's a great time to begin the challenge. She said she hopes to use her platform to inspire people to become "end-to-enders," or to complete any other mile goal.

"People are encouraged to register their Canalway Challenge because it shows support for the Erie Canal and the Canalway Trail by providing data on how many use it and in what way, which helps justify further investment in the canal," said Lisa.

Lisa registered her Challenge as a team: "Lisa & Jim Saunders to Stop CMV, #1 Birth Defects Virus."

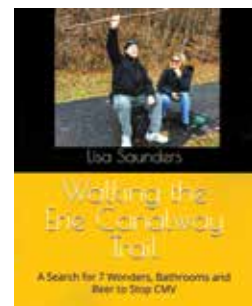
As a part of her ambassador role, Lisa will be giving talks on her 360-mile journey at the Jordan Historical Society on Aug. 5 and at

the Baldwinsville Rotary Club on Sept. 17.

"I enjoy talking about the history of the Erie Canal, our walk across New York State one step at a time, and what inspired us to persevere," she said.

Lisa also released a book after completing the trail, titled, "Walking the Erie Canalway Trail: A Search for 7 Wonders, Bathrooms and Beer to Stop CMV." It is available on Amazon. *SWM*

Lisa and Jim Saunders recently completed the 360-mile Erie Canalway Trail to continue spreading awareness for their fight against CMV.





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June 4**WBOC Member Showcase**

What: The WBOC will highlight incredible women in the community featuring real stories and inspiring lessons. Enjoy casual networking in the lounge!

Where: Bistro 1926, Drumlins Community Club
800 Nottingham Rd, Syracuse, NY 13224

When: 5 p.m.

Info: www.wboconnection.org.

**June 10****Party for the Pantries**

What: The Onondaga East Chamber will hold its annual fundraiser to benefit the F-M Food Pantry and Heaven's Pantry in Minoa. This casual event features live music, great food and a silent auction with many donations from area businesses. John Goodfellow of Four Seasons will be honored for his lifetime of community service.

Where: Heritage Hill Brewery
3149 Sweet Rd, Pompey, NY 13138

When: 5 p.m.

Info: Tickets: onondagaeast.com

**June 11-29****The National Pastime**

What: In this play, a mysterious illness rips through the the American embassy in Havana, Cuba. Meanwhile, the Houston Astros are stealing signs on their way to the World Series. Two nations play a dangerous game with two shared national pastimes: baseball and espionage.

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

Info: www.syracusestage.org.

**June 12-14****New York Blues Festival**

What: With a mission to preserve and promote blues music and culture, this annual festival celebrates the far-reaching influence of one of America's most iconic genres.

Where: NYS Fairgrounds
581 State Fair Blvd, Syracuse, NY 13209

Info: Free admission. www.nysbluesfest.com.

**June 12 & 13****Pride Ethos: A Living Exhibit**

What: A two night celebration of queer artistry featuring drag, burlesque, dance and theatre throughout the museum.

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

When: 7 p.m.

Info: \$30 suggested donation or pay what you can. One ticket includes both nights.

**June 13 & 14****Juneteenth Festival**

What: Celebrate the history of emancipation and change-makers in Central New York, both past and present. The festival will include a flag raising ceremony, performances, food, community organizations, vendors, and a victory parade.

Where: Clinton Square, Downtown Syracuse

When: Noon to 10 p.m.

Info: www.syracusejuneteenth.com.

**Fridays, Saturdays & Sundays****June 13-22****Shakespeare in the Park: Othello**

What: This year's play is the story of the destructive power of unchecked jealousy and the importance of questioning the motives of others.

Where: Thornden Park

Thornden Park Dr, Syracuse, NY 13210

Info: Free. Premier seating starting at \$40.

www.onthestage.tickets/syracuse-shakespeare-in-the-park.

**June 20-22****Syracuse Polish Festival**

What: Celebrate Polish culture with traditional food, family activities, vendors and performances. Don't forget to watch the pierogi eating contest!

Where: Clinton Square, Downtown Syracuse.

When: Friday: 4 to 10:30 p.m.

Saturday: Noon to 10:30 p.m.

Sunday: Noon to 5 p.m.

Info: www.polishscholarship.org.

**June 21****CNY Pride Parade & Festival**

What: A vibrant celebration of Syracuse's LGBTQ+ community featuring entertainment, vendors, food and a family area.

Where: Progress Park, Inner Harbor

360 West Kirkpatrick St, Syracuse, NY 13204

When: 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.



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Michelle J. Auerbach, DO



Catherine W. Bailey, MD, MPH



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Samantha Bell, NP-BC



Birx Nolan, MD



Kathleen Spillelt, CNM



Kaitlin Corona, FNP-C



Cassandra Hunsberger, FNP-C



Cheryl A. Luttinger, RN, MSN, FNP-C



Kandice Kowalewski, RPAC



Mary Kate Hauck, PA-C



Megan Riddick, FNP-C

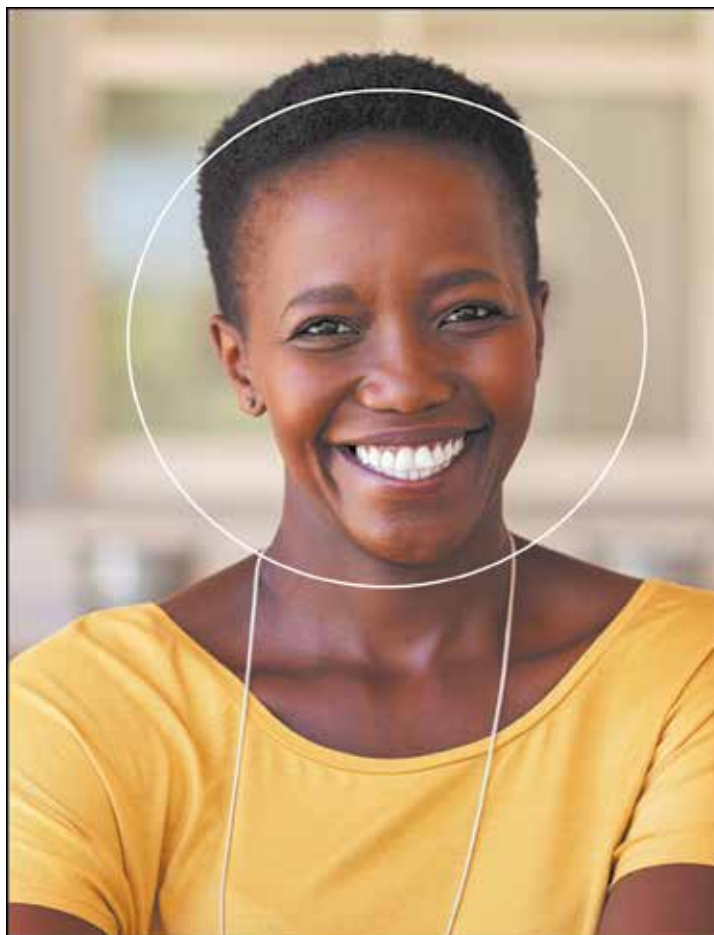
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