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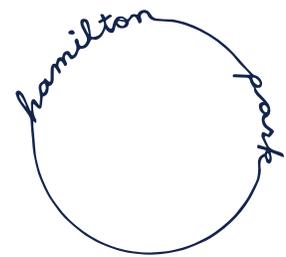


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WELCOME

EDITOR'S NOTE



Welcome to the latest issue of *Seasons of New Haven*, and happy Spring!

As we head out of a long, cold winter, this issue highlights some adventures that can be enjoyed outside. We bring you a glimpse into Common Ground - one of the outdoor gems of New Haven, with something for nature lovers of all ages – and examine the meaningful impact Connecticut horse riding centers are having on people's lives through equine therapy.

We also sit down with two powerhouse women: Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro and WTNH News 8 anchor and reporter Jocelyn Maminta. DeLauro, who has served Connecticut's 3rd Congressional District since 1991, lets us in on her hopes – and fears – during an uncertain time, and Maminta shares the passions that drive her as a newswoman, entrepreneur and mother.

There are so many great people and organizations that contribute to the fabric of Greater New Haven. We are proud to showcase some of them in this issue, including nonprofits and businesspeople who work every day to make our region even better.

As always, I invite you to join the conversation and connect with us on Twitter, Instagram and Facebook.

Happy reading,

Cara

Cara Rosner, Editor
cara@seasonsofnewhaven.com



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SPRING 2019

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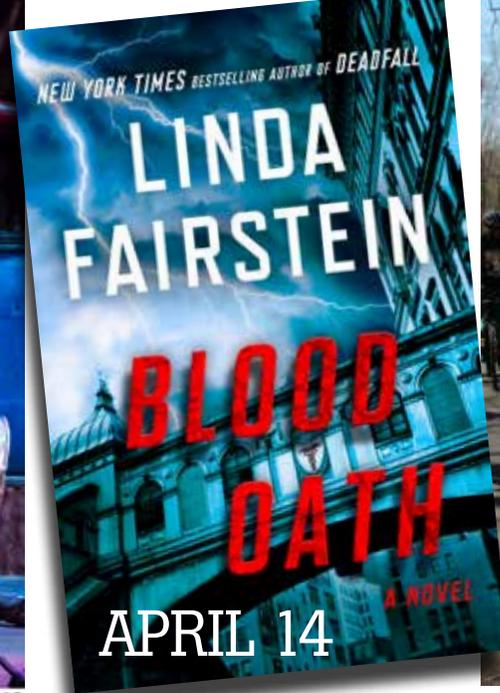


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APRIL 5 THRU 7

STOMP. © Steve McNicholas 2012



OUT & ABOUT IN

Get Ready to Get Loud **April 5-7**

The international percussion sensation STOMP comes to the Shubert April 5-7. The eight-member troupe uses wooden poles, brooms, garbage cans, Zippo lighters, hubcaps - everything but conventional percussion instruments - to fill the stage with inventive and provocative rhythms. This show is recommended for spectators ages 5 and up. 247 College St., New Haven; shubert.com.

AIDS Walk New Haven **April 13**

The 15th annual AIDS Walk New Haven will take place from 9:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. on April 13. The event will kick off from the New Haven Green and include performances, speakers, information booths and food trucks. Registration is now open. Organizers of this year's walk have a goal of raising \$10,000 to benefit local HIV/AIDS prevention initiatives, awareness efforts and treatment groups. aidswalknewhaven.org.

Bluegrass, Blues and Americana **April 13**

Enjoy the sounds of The BluesGrass acoustic duo, Mark White and Jon Swift, when they present an "Americana" mix of bluegrass, blues and oldies from 2-3:30 p.m. April 13 at the Cheshire Public Library. Their performances feature strong duet vocals and powerful instrumentals. 104 Main St., Cheshire. cheshirelibrary.org.

Beyond the Page **April 14**

New York Times bestselling author Linda Fairstein will sign copies of her latest book, "Blood Oath," at 3 p.m. April 14 at R.J. Julia Booksellers in Madison. Fairstein was chief of the Sex Crimes Unit of the district attorney's office in Manhattan for more than two decades and is a legal expert on sexual assault and domestic violence. In her latest novel, she tackles the first biomedical research center in the United States as well as the #MeToo movement. The event is free and open to the public, with online registration. 768 Boston Post Road, Madison. rjjulia.com.

Idyllic Art on Display **Now until April 21**

Take in the "Victorian Idyll" exhibit at the Yale Center for British Art before it ends its run April 21. See works by artists including Frederick Walker (1840-1875) and Sir Hubert von Herkomer (1849-1914), dubbed "Idyllists," who struggled with subjects of poverty, homelessness and labor unrest even as they avoided some of the harsher realities of urban life. The exhibit, which opened in January, showcases the gift of works made to the center from the collection of the late Lee MacCormick Edwards, a scholar of Victorian art. The center is free and open to the public Tuesday through Sunday. 1080 Chapel St., New Haven; britishart.yale.edu.



APRIL 27



APRIL 13

GREATER NEW HAVEN

Behind the Scenes

April 26

Join filmmaker Nick Doob, an Emmy-winning New Haven native and Yale University graduate, for a screening and discussion of four of his newly preserved films, three of which are shorts, at 7 p.m. April 26 at the Whitney Humanities Center. The films will have their preservation premiere at this event: *Plastic Saints* (1967), *Costumed Dancer* (1968), *42nd Street Movie* (1968) and the feature-length *Street Music* (1979). The event is presented by the Yale Film Study Center and Films at the Whitney, and sponsored by Treasures from the Yale Film Archive. Admission is free. 53 Wall St., New Haven; whc.yale.edu.

Pedal Power

April 27

The 11th annual Rock to Rock Earth Day Ride will take place April 27. Each year, about 1,000 people participate in the fun and scenic ride that starts at Common Ground High School, at 358 Springside Ave. in the west end of New Haven, and traverses the city before ending at East Rock Park. The 2018 ride raised a record \$227,000 for 34 local organizations, according to event organizers, and the ride has raised nearly \$1.25 million since its inception. commongroundct.org.

Tea and Talk

Every Monday

Enjoy interesting conversation inside one of the Elm City's most beautiful settings with "Mondays at the Beinecke," taking place weekly at 4 p.m. at the Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library. Each event will feature informal discussions and tea. The library contains the principal rare books and literary manuscripts of Yale University. One of the largest buildings in the world devoted entirely to rare books, it has room for 180,000 volumes in its central tower and more than one million volumes in its underground book stacks. 121 Wall St., New Haven. beinecke.library.yale.edu.





Making Connections

Jewish Family Service Offers Help to Last a Lifetime

by CARA ROSNER / photography by TONY BACEWICZ

Sandra Hagan (left), food pantry director and coordinator of agency operations and Amy Rashba, CEO of Jewish Family Service of Greater New Haven, stand amid the shelves of the organization's Whalley Avenue food pantry.

Tucked behind a popular diner along a high-traffic stretch of Whalley Avenue, Jewish Family Service of Greater New Haven's headquarters likely goes unnoticed by many who drive by it. But make no mistake: from this unassuming home base emanates a far-reaching and meaningful impact.

In 2018 alone, JFSGNH distributed more than 100,000 pounds of food at its food pantry, served more than 300 households with its Social Work Outreach Services program, provided care for 25 adolescents through its therapeutic foster care program, and helped provide food to 354 students through the Food4Kids program it administers with the Women's Philanthropy division of the Jewish Federation of Greater New Haven.

"We have a myriad of programs, and there's a lot of interface between them," says Amy Rashba, who became CEO of the organization in November. JFSGNH has programs to help people in all stages of life, from children to the elderly, she adds. "We really help people through their lifetime."

Many mistakenly presume the organization is geared solely to Jewish people, but JFSGNH will help people of all faiths and backgrounds – anyone who needs assistance and can benefit from its growing roster of services: foster care and adoption services, emergency food and utility assistance, counseling and family support, services for domestic violence victims, and emergency and caregiver services for Holocaust survivors, just to name a few.

FEEDING THE NEED

One of the most visible aspects of the organization is its food pantry at 1440 Whalley Ave. (on the ground floor, beneath its headquarters) to meet emergency and long-term needs of individuals and families.

"We serve anybody without question" who is hunger-insecure, meaning they can't provide three meals a day for themselves or their family, says Sandra Hagan, food pantry director and coordinator of agency operations.

About 90 percent of the pantry's clients are on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly known as food stamps. The pantry serves people from throughout Greater New Haven but most clients are

from the Westville area of New Haven, Hagan says.

Adults over the age of 60 are the most common among clients, she says, and many of those are Russian Jews who emigrated and settled here in the 1980s. But demand for food at the pantry is rising across the board, Hagan says.

"The need is constantly going up. If the need wasn't there, there wouldn't be so many pantries in Greater New Haven," says Hagan, adding an average of 250 families visit the JFSGNH pantry monthly.

In January, Hagan heard from concerned clients who worried how the longest federal government shutdown in history would impact their SNAP benefits. Demand for food rose as people depleted their SNAP benefits and realized they were short on funds. Though that shutdown ended Jan. 25, the threat of a future one lingers.

Clients must apply to access the pantry and visit by appointment only, though emergency walk-ins are accepted, says Hagan. While there, many clients learn about and connect with other JFSGNH services, such as utility assistance or social work, she adds.

The pantry is open Wednesdays from 9 a.m. to noon and Thursdays from 9 a.m. to noon and 1 to 3 p.m. JFSGNH added the Thursday afternoon hours in February to meet growing demand. Most clients are referred to the pantry from 2-1-1, the free info-line run by United Way of Connecticut and the state. Most of the food that lines the shelves comes from the Connecticut Food Bank, at reduced prices or for free, while the rest comes from community donations.

"On any given day we go through 900 to 1,500 pounds of food," Hagan says, noting that's just non-perishables and doesn't include meats, fruit and vegetables that clients also can get.

FOSTERING STABILITY

Another JFSGNH service that sees continued increases in demand is the therapeutic foster care program, which places children – mostly teens who have been removed from their birth families – with foster families to provide not only a stable living environment, but also a range of therapeutic services.

"We're in dire need of foster families," says Rashba, adding many in the community aren't aware of the need.





Betsy Fiske, a past board president of Jewish Family Service of Greater New Haven, was a board member for 25 years and now volunteers in the nonprofit's food pantry.

“WE’RE IN DIRE NEED OF FOSTER FAMILIES.”

“We really need families desperately.”

Fostering a child is rewarding, but can be challenging, says Elaine Benevides, JFSGNH’s team leader for therapeutic foster care. Many of the youths seeking placement have been removed from their homes by the state Department of Children and Families (DCF) due to neglect or abuse and suffer the effects of trauma, she says.

“A lot of these kids have bounced around the system so much it becomes confusing for them,” she says, and many develop trust issues or have difficulty learning and abiding by household rules. “Our major goal is to keep kids in the homes that we place them in.”

The program’s goal is to keep youths in a good home until they “age out” of the foster care system, Benevides says.

“A lot of time, I think the system takes the easy way out,” she says,

adding that if a foster parent complains about a child, the state typically will move the child from that home and into another one. JFSGNH’s approach is different, she says. “We go out there and we work with the family and [the child], and work through the issue to keep [the child] there.”

Cases are referred to Benevides by DCF, and she doesn’t have enough families to meet the need.

“I get multiple referrals every day from across the state,” she says. “A lot of these referrals are emergency referrals; they say, ‘We need it tonight.’ There are more kids in the system who need a home than there are families that do this.”

Benevides has about 20 families on her list that she can call when referrals arise.

“It’s a very small program,” she says, and recruiting families is hard. “These kids have been really damaged,

and I talk to people [prospective families] about that when they call.” A lot of families want to foster babies, she adds, but “we don’t have babies; we have older, difficult kids. I’m very honest with people when they call. I want you to know what you’re getting into.”

The program places about eight youths in foster homes each year, according to Benevides. JFSGNH is one of 16 agencies throughout the state that do similar work.

“We recruit our own families and we train our families. We get to really know these people; I know these families really well,” she says. “The most important thing you can do for [a foster] kid is be forgiving and keep trying again, not giving up so quick.”

For those who take on the challenge, Benevides and two full-time care managers are there to help. They seek families who live within a 45-

mile radius of New Haven so they can get to homes quickly if problems arise that need immediate, in-person attention.

“We give a lot of support to our families. We’re there for our families through thick and thin.

They can call us anytime, day or night,” Benevides says, adding the therapeutic component of the foster care program is crucial. “We have an understanding of trauma and how it affects [youths].”

MINDFUL OF ITS PAST, AND THE FUTURE

JFSGNH has deep roots in the community, dating back to 1881 when lay leaders created the Hebrew Benevolent Society to help Russian immigrants arriving in the area. That group later combined with others that had similar missions, and in 1919 they together became United Jewish Charities.

The group eventually hired a



professional social worker and United Jewish Charities was renamed Jewish Family Service of New Haven in 1940. In 2015, the group tweaked its name to include Greater New Haven, to better reflect its geographic scope.

Many employees have long-standing relationships with JFSGNH. Rashba has been involved there since 1986, when she was pursuing a Master of Social Work degree. Hagan has worked for organization more than 20 years, Benevides for 21.

“We’re a family agency where people treat each other like family,” Rashba says proudly.

Betsy Fiske, a past board president, served on the board for 25 years and now volunteers in the pantry.

“I didn’t know what Jewish Family Service did [at first],” says Fiske, but she was drawn to the group by its mission and impact. “I liked that we were involved in the local community. I liked being able to be hands-on.”

The nonprofit continues to evolve to reflect the needs of its clientele and community. Up next, it will expand its services for aging adults. JFSGNH offers various services to help older individuals, but Rashba wants to formalize and expand its offerings, and have a social worker on staff whose job is dedicated to aging adult services.

“We really want to start it [a program] in earnest,” she says, noting the organization receives many calls from adult children looking to connect with services to help their elderly parents. “There’s a real need in the community.” 

WE REALLY NEED FAMILIES DESPERATELY.” *—Amy Rashba*



Volunteer Bill Gosselin of Woodbridge stocks shelves in the Jewish Family Service of Greater New Haven food pantry.

The JFS Spring Celebration

will take place at 6 p.m. June 13 at The Towers, 18 Tower Lane in New Haven. The event will celebrate past presidents and the growth of the organization’s Aging Adult Program. Individual tickets start at \$72. For more information, contact Rachel Scolnic Dobin at rsdobin@jfsngn.org or 203-389-5599, ext. 109, or visit jfsngn.org.



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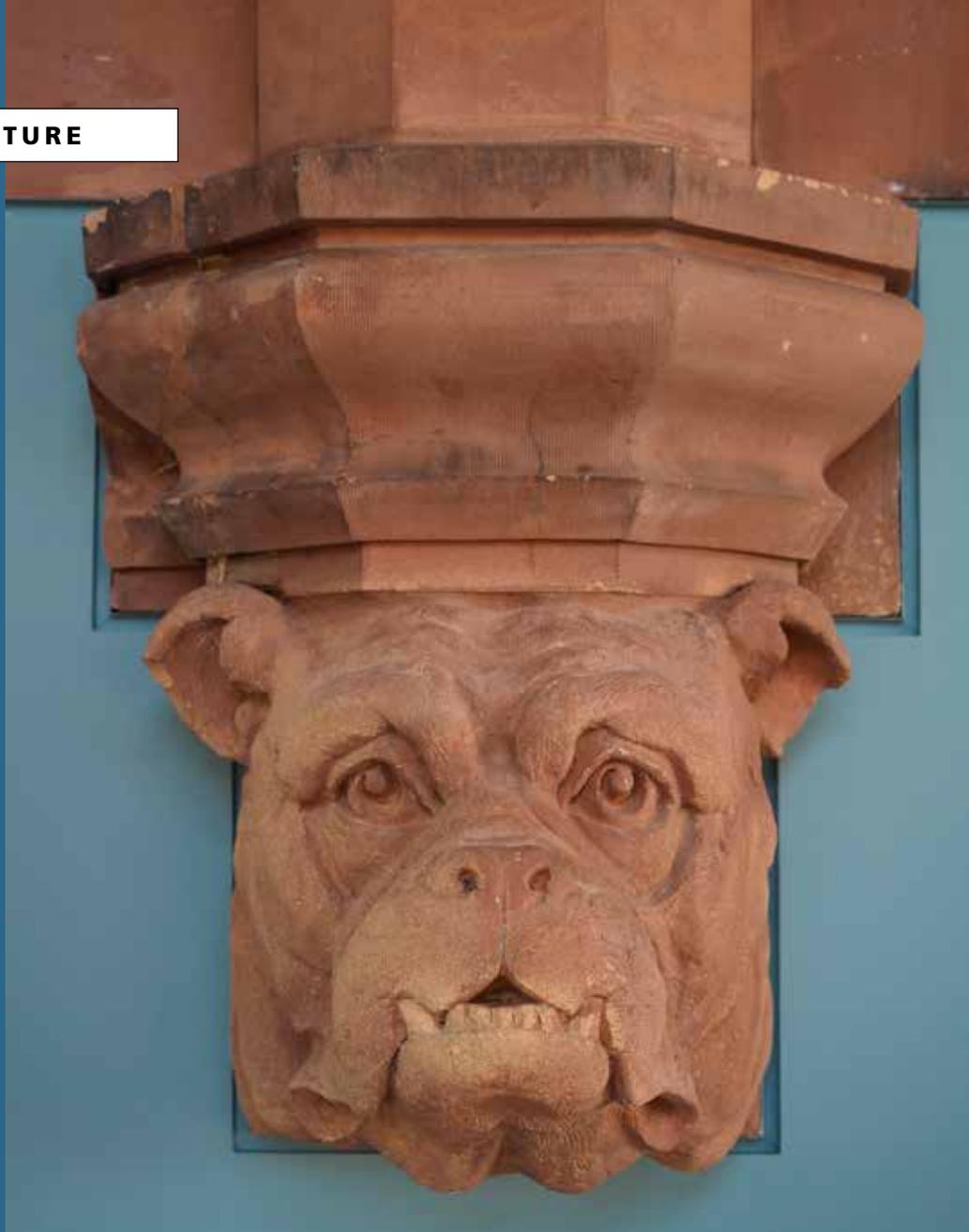
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SAFE HAVEN

Above: One of two terracotta bulldog heads, crafted more than a century ago, that look out from the second floor of the new Canal Dock Boathouse in the Long Wharf District. They previously adorned Yale University's Tudor-style Adee Memorial Boathouse. ON OPPOSITE PAGE: A large crowd, including New Haven Mayor Toni Harp and Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro, gathered to celebrate the ribbon cutting at the boat house late last year. (Photo by Donna Caruso Bowden)



Canal Dock Boathouse Proves Worth the Wait

by **DONNA CARUSO BOWDEN** / *photography by* **TONY BACEWICZ**

Two terracotta bulldog heads, crafted more than a century ago, have settled into their new home. The clay canines used to look out from the western façade of Yale University's Tudor-style Adee Memorial Boathouse at the foot of the Quinnipiac River. Today, they stare from the second floor of the new Canal Dock Boathouse in the Long Wharf District.

The bulldogs are among the intriguing historic pieces, both original and recreated, that are woven into the new community facility, which was meant as compensation for the Adee's destruction when the old Pearl Harbor Memorial Bridge was replaced. Politicians, city officials, academics and organizers have been lauding the 32,000-square-foot boathouse since its long-awaited opening late in 2018. The project's \$40 million price tag included the structure and one-acre pier.



The long-awaited boathouse replaced the Adee Memorial Boathouse, which was being used as an office building when it came down in 2007 to allow for construction of a new bridge.

“I supported it with my heart and soul because it’s an opportunity. It’s a beautiful opportunity to incorporate our waterfront for all of the people of the city of New Haven,” Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro told a crowd gathered for the ribbon cutting. DeLauro was one of those who worked for years to protect the original mitigation funds from the federal government.

The Adee Memorial Boathouse, named after 1867 Yale alum George Augustus Adee, was being used as an office building when it came down in 2007 to allow for construction of the new bridge. It had only been used by Yale crew for five years after its 1911 construction; the university’s rowing program preferred quieter waters on the Housatonic River. The building was sold in the 1950s, the same decade that highway traffic began whisking by the bulldogs’ ears.

Its latest incarnation, as the Canal Dock Boathouse, was

a long time coming.

The last tenant in the building was Gregg Wies & Gardner Architects. Rick Wies, lead architect for the Canal Dock Boathouse, worked beneath a rowing shell he had stored high in the rafters. He likes to use the term “dogged perseverance” when talking about the close to 20 years it took to plan and bring about a new boathouse in New Haven.

“Through it all, the program had the elements of historic preservation remaining largely intact,” he says. “It’s a telling success story of dogged perseverance.”

That perseverance had many fronts. There were the preservationists who wanted to save the Adee boathouse. When that didn’t happen, there were the city and state officials and politicians who needed to retain the federal compensation money – not to mention finding additional funds. There were the architects, designers and contractors

working to save parts of the Adee and put together its waterfront successor. There was the organization created to develop programs and usage for a new community boathouse, whenever that might come to be.

The nonprofit Canal Dock Boathouse, Inc., was put in place to run the new boathouse. For years, its purpose lagged without a boathouse in sight. John Pescatore, an Olympic rower and former head coach of the Yale Heavyweight Men's Crew, joined the board of directors and became president in 2013. Pescatore was inspired by a comment made at a board meeting by former City Planner Karyn Gilvarg, one of the most consistent driving forces behind the new facility.

"You can imagine when there was nothing and somebody's telling you we're going to have a boathouse," says Pescatore. "I remember when she [Gilvarg] said something like, 'Let's just get some programs going.' She realized this is how you get things started. ... I remember I learned a lot from when she said that, and I was like, 'Okay, I get it. Let's get some programs going.'"



Pescatore did just that. He put in place a rowing program for high school students on the Quinnipiac River. Laura Rosado, a competitive swimmer from Wilbur Cross High School, decided to give it a try.

"I started out really slowly," says Rosado, who attended weekly

rowing lessons. "It probably was a month or so of weekly sessions when I remember the feeling of being in total control of that boat. It was really cool."

Before long, Pescatore asked Rosado to help organize a team for a fledgling Dragon Boat Regatta. She embraced the task with gusto, pulling together a full boat crew for the competition. The event blossomed, and heads into its fourth annual run this year. Meanwhile, a collaboration with the Metropolitan Business Academy (MBA), a New Haven magnet school, became the signature program of the Canal Dock Boathouse. The after-school program includes fitness, paddling and rowing.

Talks that had been under way with the University of New Haven yielded the creation of a Marine Science Center in the new boathouse, which will serve as an



The 32,000-square-foot boathouse cost \$40 million to build and includes a one-acre pier, and Marine Science Center, among other features.



The dramatic, glass entrance lets visitors know they are entering a special place - one that combines long-standing history with state-of-the-art amenities.

integral part of the university's marine biology program. An events coordinator was put in place to plan for rentals of the second-floor rooms with panoramic views of New Haven Harbor. At the same time, even without a boathouse, a membership program grew. It includes paddling outings, rowing lessons, fitness classes and social events to accompany public access at the waterfront.

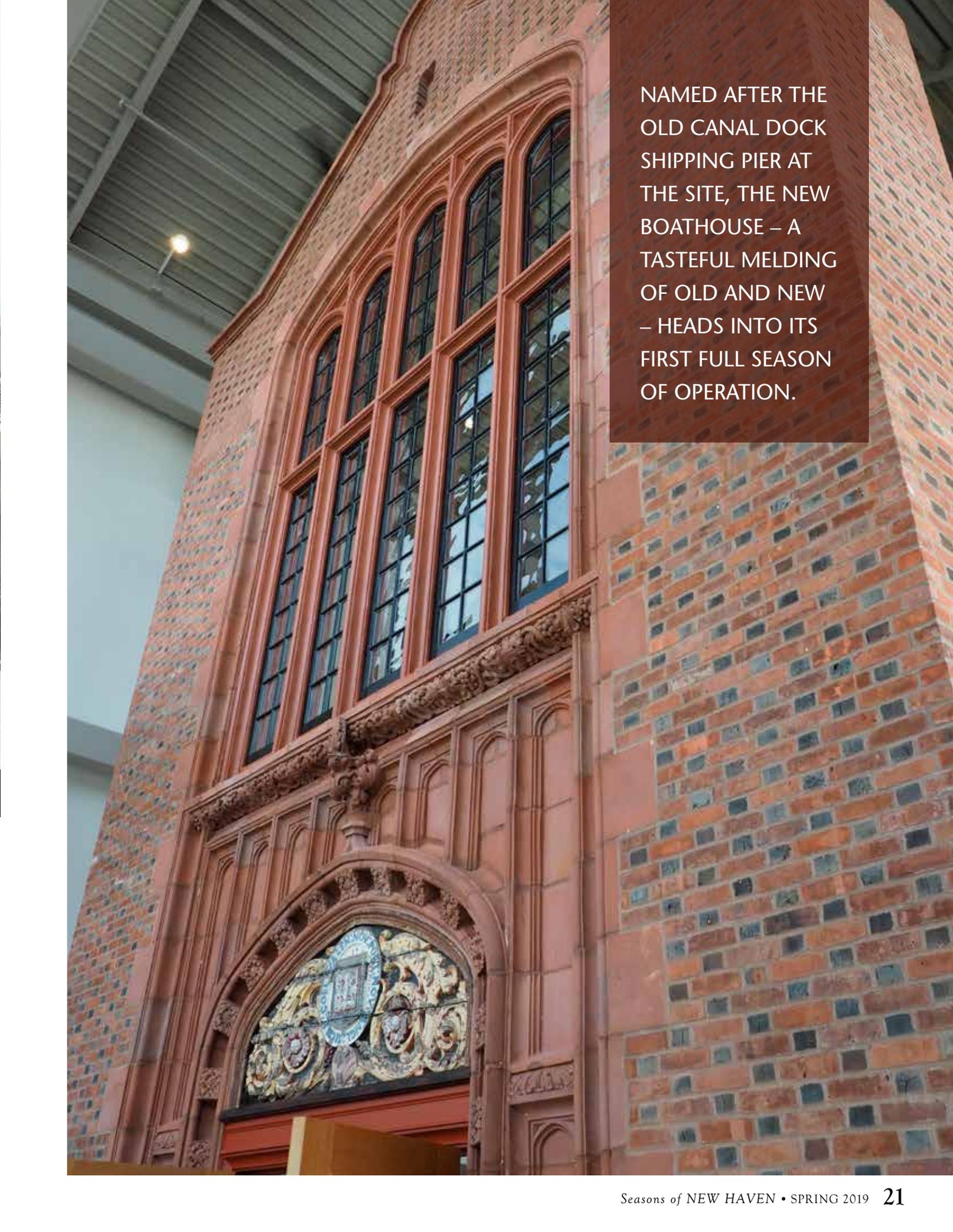
The actual boathouse appeared slowly and with its share of challenges. The pieces of the Adee Memorial Boathouse had been carefully disassembled in 2007. Multi-paned windows, finials, tapestries of brick, a Yale crest, a fireplace mantel, trusses, copings, the bulldogs and more had been stored in an unused city building. Over time, leaks in the building damaged some of the pieces. Some survived intact while others had to be recreated. In the end, the Canal Dock Boathouse turned out to be well-studded with memories of its predecessor.

"Sometimes you lose the building, but it's not always as

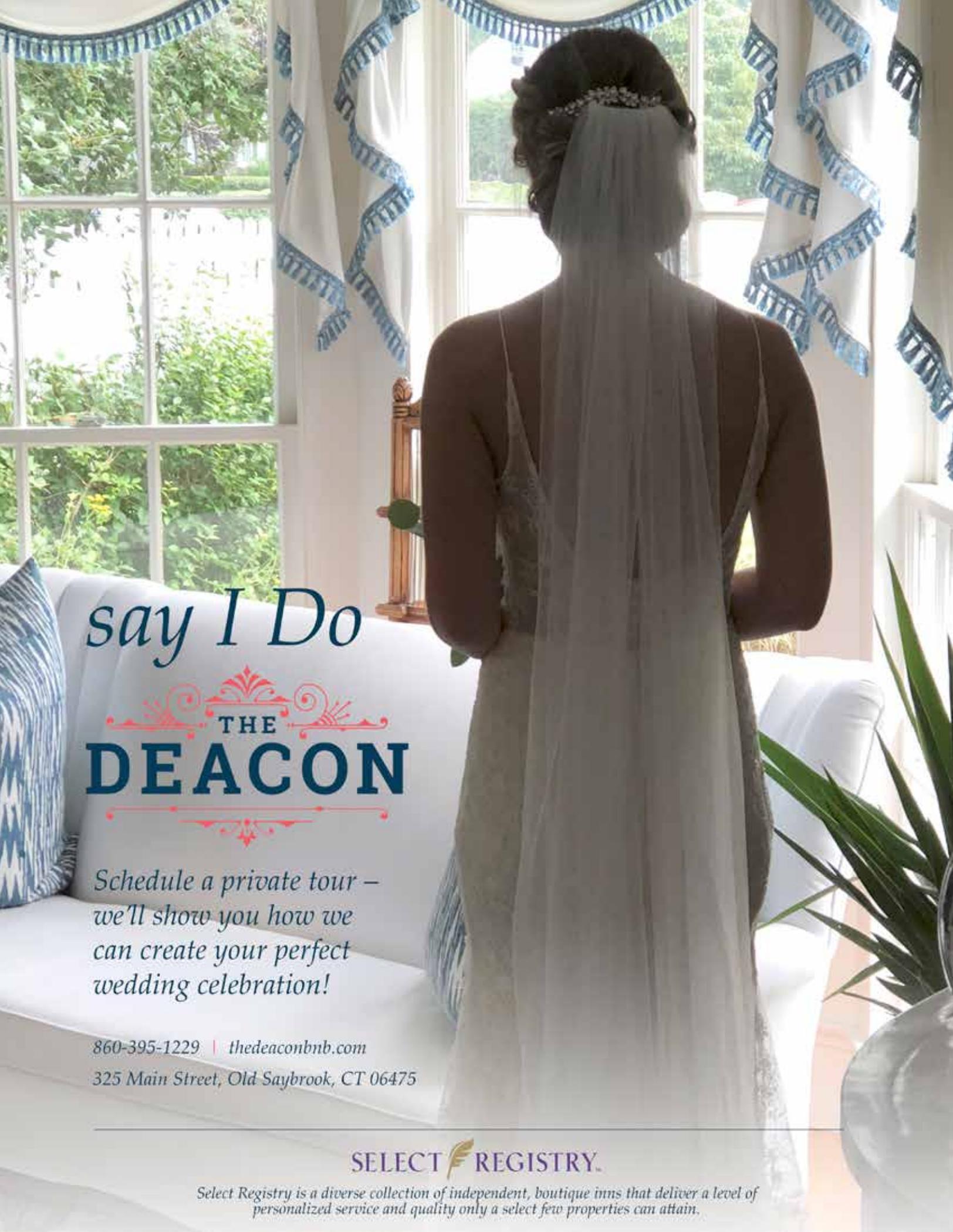
black and white as that," says Wies. "You can save pieces of things or do alternative strategies that keep the history alive."

Named after the old Canal Dock shipping pier at the site, the new boathouse – a tasteful melding of old and new – heads into its first full season of operation. Inside, there are interpretive plaques with museum images that tell the story of the two boathouses. Outside plaques detail New Haven's waterfront.

Behind a towering glass entrance, visitors are greeted by a 35-by-20-foot intricate portal from the Adee. It is bedecked with the Yale crest, multi-paned windows, terracotta ornamentation and recreated wood doors. The second floor showcases the historic fireplace mantel, finials from Adee's roof and the Yale bulldogs. Their chiseled faces, still furrowed in the brow, look out toward the fast-moving transit of I-95. 



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Seabury-Hill Realtors is a Key Player in The Greater New Haven Real Estate Market

By CAROL LATTER / Photography by NICK CAITO

Since its serendipitous beginnings in 1926, Seabury-Hill Realtors has become the go-to residential sales and rentals company for countless home buyers and renters throughout Greater New Haven and the shoreline.

The family-owned, full-service boutique agency, located at 233 Wooster Street in Wooster Square, New Haven, was the top real estate office in sales and rentals in New Haven in 2016, 2017 and 2018, with more than \$57 million in sales and over \$694,000 in rentals last year. Jack Hill, son of company owner and broker Barbara S. Hill, was the top selling agent for all three of those years. Jennifer D'Amato and Cheryl Szczarba are consistently number 2 and number 3 in sales within the office, with Melanie Gunn close behind. Roseann Iuvone was the top New Haven renter's agent for 2017 and 2018.

But for the folks at Seabury-Hill, success isn't about the numbers. It's about the people they help, each and every day.

"We really take pride in taking care of our clients like family," says Jack. When it comes to buyers, especially those unfamiliar with the region, "we educate; we don't sell. We love New Haven and its surrounding towns and shoreline. We want to teach people why we love it here – and help them find the perfect home."

He says whereas salespeople from some of the larger real estate agencies may be focused on closing a deal as quickly as possible and moving on to the next, "we become friends with all of our clients and we make the process fun. I think our clients really know we have their best interests at heart."

For Seabury-Hill's 16 agents and supporting staff, it's all about going that famed extra mile. The tight-knit team of hard-working agents – most of whom grew up in the New Haven area and know it like the back of their hands – are laser-focused on helping people find just the right place, ensuring they have all of the resources they need as they're moving in, and are ideally positioned to make a great deal once they're ready to sell.

For instance, says Jack, for those looking to purchase, "our clients may be first-time buyers and money might be tight, so we really want to make sure that some of the major elements of the home they're considering – the roof, windows, furnace, etc. – are in good condition."

Seabury-Hill agents also pay attention to more subtle details – like whether the client's furniture will fit up a staircase or into a narrow living room, given that many of New Haven's homes were built from the turn of the century up through the 1930s.

And the relationship doesn't end there. Jennifer D'Amato,

an agent with the firm since 2012, notes that she and her colleagues will happily help a buyer, seller or renter find a plumber, electrician or interior designer, if they need one, to ensure that the client doesn't feel stressed about a move. She keeps a list of local contractors and service people who are responsive, reliable, and reasonably priced, "and we always connect our clients with that source." While agents at other real estate agencies may feel that's not their job, "I feel proud when clients call me, because I know they feel they can rely on me," D'Amato explains.

"It's our job to serve people. We're here to help them find the house they want, but also to provide them with whatever else they need. If a tenant moves out and the apartment needs to be cleaned or painted, I'll meet the painter and cleaner there. I'll make all the arrangements to make that happen. That's just how we operate. We don't think twice about it."

"What we also do," adds Jack, "is focus on 'resellability.' We are in an academic town where people sometimes are not here that long. We're really good about telling people what sells a house, so they have an easy time" selling in the future.

THE BUILDING OF A BUSINESS

Seabury-Hill Realtors has a long and proud history as an independent, woman-owned business, built through hard work, a little bit of luck, and a smattering of happenstance.

As agency owner and broker Barbara Hill tells it, the firm – originally known as Mabel B. Seabury Associates – was founded by one of the first female realtors in Connecticut some 90 years ago. "Mabel was a formidable lady, a 'grand dame,' married to Dr. Seabury, a doctor for many athletic teams at Yale. She had three small daughters at home but wanted something more."

Asked what she liked to do, Mabel said, "I'm very good at helping people who are coming to New Haven find a home." In fact, Barbara says, Mabel kept selling her own house to friends or acquaintances every time someone wanted something in that area. "Poor Dr. Seabury never knew what house he was coming home to." She also suggested friends' houses that she knew would soon be available and sold them before they ever went on the market.

After her husband died, Mabel moved into a house on Trumbull Street that doubled as a real estate office, and hung out her shingle. In her 80s, she married her neighbor, retired, and moved to New Hampshire, leaving daughter Jane Seabury Hendel, a broker, in charge.

Barbara's own mother, Cay Schoonmaker, became a real estate agent at Mabel's firm after her husband died, and encouraged her daughter to follow her lead.

"At first, she had me doing bookkeeping and working as the receptionist." But by the time Jane, in turn, announced she was going to retire in the mid-1980s, Barbara was the leading sales agent and, at age 39, was the youngest in an office where "most were older and thinking of retiring." She quickly got her broker's license and took the helm.

Her son, Jack, was introduced to real estate at an early age. "When I started as a real estate agent, he was two years old," Barbara recalls. "I would carry him around on my hip. He would hear me say something to a client during a showing and he would point out different features of the home. He was my 'mini me.' Everyone got a real kick out of it."

Later, as a college student, Jack was uncertain of his career path. His mother suggested he get his real estate license and

help her out in the summers until he made a decision – just as her own mother had done with her. "He loved it, so he stayed." And the rest, as they say, is history.

Now, her daughter, Cathy Hill Conlin, is also part of the firm. It's a real family business," Barbara says.

SOMETHING OLD, SOMETHING NEW

These days, the firm is a blend of old and new – proud of its history and living up to the time-tested values of honesty, hard work and customer service, while focused on meeting the needs of its modern-day clients.

Barbara says when Jack joined the firm, he set off a process of renewal, from engaging a team of young, energetic real estate agents to recognizing a lucrative niche in the rental market, which has grown to become a sizable portion of the company's business.

Today, business is booming.

"It's expanded tremendously," says Barbara. "Not only our sales, but the rental piece is huge. We handle 37 or 38 per cent of the rental market in this area." Most of the 3,000 apartments Seabury-Hill Realtors handles are rented by Yale-associated people – both in New Haven and on the outskirts of the city. The agency also rents luxury apartments, condos and homes in New Haven and on the shoreline.

In addition to residential sales and leasing, Seabury-Hill specializes in investment and commercial properties and buyer representation, and offers free market analysis and consultation. Seabury-Hill is located on the first-floor level of a newly renovated building, with the extra convenience of a large parking lot in back for agents and clients alike.

Jack attributes the success the agency has enjoyed to a commitment to excellence and sheer hard work. "I work 12 hours a day, every day," he says, and his colleagues are equally committed. "What's amazing in our office is that we all are involved with our client transactions every step of the way. It's a little bit old school, but we offer that personal touch. We still show our houses ourselves; we don't just throw a lockbox on the door. Every day, we're there, showing houses, which most people don't do anymore."

Jillian Hill, Jack's wife, who is part of a team managing the office, agrees. "We have a company full of really driven, hardworking people who like what they do. They've been working in real estate full time for a long time. They devote their nights and weekends to finding people the perfect house or rental. It's not something they just do when it's convenient, or part time. It's really a 24/7 job, especially in the spring and summer."

And because they all live locally, "they're experts in the city's neighborhoods and surrounding towns, and suggest what might be a good fit, depending on what clients are looking for," she adds.

"We work together well as a team. There's a great camaraderie. Everyone's authentic and really just hustling – running in, grabbing keys and running back out. It is fun, it's energetic, and we all enjoy what we do. A lot of times, clients will come in and say, 'Where is everyone?' And I'll say, 'They're all out with clients, selling houses.' And that's what we want."

For more information on Seabury-Hill Realtors, visit seaburyhill.com. For information on rentals, visit seaburyhillrentals.com. For a list of agents, visit seaburyhill.com/agents.

Leaning In With Rosa DeLauro

More Than 40 Years into Her Career,
This Congresswoman's Still Looking Forward

written and photographed by **FRANK RIZZO**

Rosa DeLauro leans in when she speaks. She can't help it. Maybe it's a natural pushback from decades of mansplaining. Perhaps it's a way to become more personal with whomever she is speaking to. It could also just be that she feels the clock is ticking and there's not a moment to waste.

Even from behind her desk at her Congressional office in downtown New Haven, she leans closer towards her interviewer, past the neat piles of paperwork, her clasped hands reaching out as she makes point after point, for this congresswoman is on a roll.

Two days after the midterm elections, when this interview took place, she has the wide-eyed spirit of the Born Again, singing the gospel of the Progressive Democrats and banging the tambourine of the party faithful. Voter turnout was record-breaking for a midterm election; Democrats took commanding control of the U.S. House of Representatives; and there were big wins in the Connecticut legislature and governorship, too.

Only the U.S. Senate remaining in Republican control spoiled the perfect party. "But that was a long shot anyway," says DeLauro, instead pointing to fresh Democratic candidates losing in squeakers, in such GOP strongholds as Texas, Georgia and Florida.

In a Congressional world of gray suits and

grayer personalities, DeLauro stands out by her forceful personality as well by her fashion choices. On this day she is dressed in a stylish olive-colored top and burgundy scarf and – as if to give any doubts of her willingness to go bold – she sports a hipster streak of purple in her close-cropped hair.

At 76, DeLauro speaks with the breathless vigor of a freshman legislator eager to shake things up, not a Congresswoman who had just finished her 15th campaign for Connecticut's Third District with yet another slam dunk.

"There's new energy with our very diverse caucus," she says, getting right to her stream of consciousness policy points. "We are going to have more than 100 women in the House."

"There will be a great focus on making a change and moving forward on issues and policy that people have been clamoring about – like health care, prescription drugs, covering people with pre-existing conditions, jobs, training, infrastructure, ridding corruption and dealing with campaign finance reform."

With Democrats in the majority led by pal Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, DeLauro chairs the subcommittee on labor, education and health. "Through the appropriations process, we can reinforce our priorities and reverse some of the outrageous things they [Republicans] did. I think the appropriations piece is going to be at the center of it all."

What worries her most?



For Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro, politics is in her DNA.

“I don’t know the extent of the fears the president will continue to play on and what that does to the electorate – and the country at large. For me, in terms of this election, this fight was for the soul of the country – as well as for democratic institutions, the rule of law, freedom of speech. People are now skeptical of democratic institutions and that is scary. And if you think about the ways in which [Republicans] tried to suppress the vote – unbelievable – and it’s still all at risk. Still. The more frightened the president becomes about his own future, the greater he lashes out.”

When asked if she has changed her M.O. over the nearly three decades in office, she pauses – but just for a moment.

“I don’t think so, no,” she says. “I am who I am.”

POLITICAL ROOTS

And who she is remains rooted in her family heritage. You could say politics is in her DNA.

She is the only child of her Italian immigrant father Theodore DeLauro and his first-generation Italian wife Luisa Canestri DeLauro. From their home at 352 Greene St., just off Wooster Square, her parents saw civic engagement as a way of helping others. Around their kitchen table where politics was the lingua franca, neighbors, and especially Italian immigrants, gathered to voice their concerns and needs to her politically active father and her mother, who would follow her husband as alder, serving more than three decades – the longest run in elected city government.

“C’mon, girls. Let’s make ourselves heard.” - Luisa DeLauro

But politics wasn’t always the Congresswoman’s personal goal. She says as a little girl, what she really wanted to become when she grew up was a tap dancer.

“I went to Phyllis Grande School of Dance for 12 years and I loved it. But my father said, ‘Well, you need to get a more stable profession.’ That’s the God’s-honest truth. I would do it now [take tap lessons] in a heartbeat if I had the time. I still love it.”

DeLauro attended the London School of Economics in 1962 and 1963, graduated cum laude from Marymount College in 1964, and earned a master’s degree in international politics from Columbia University in 1966.

She was one of the first community organizers in the War on Poverty program, the first executive director of the political action group Emily’s List, and was executive assistant to Frank Logue and ran his New Haven mayoral campaign in 1975. “I was part of the insurgency,” she recalls, referring to a new era of political change for New Haven.

DeLauro became the first woman to run a statewide

campaign in Connecticut with Christopher Dodd’s first senatorial bid. She then became his chief of staff from 1981 to 1987. In 1986, she learned she had ovarian cancer, and after treatments, she’s been a cancer survivor for the last 33 years.

When then-U.S. Rep Bruce Morrison decided to run for governor, DeLauro approached Democratic leaders about running for Morrison’s seat.

“I knew enough about politics to know that the door doesn’t stay open long. This was an opportunity, so you either take it or it may not come by again,” she says. “Running for this office was the culmination of a lot of things I had done. But I was scared to death. I had helped a lot of people get elected but I had never run for office myself. It was steep learning curve.”

Others were interested in the seat as well, but DeLauro was methodical and went town to town, connecting with each potential delegate, and then did door-to-door voter outreach until she secured the nomination and eventual first win.



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HER MOTHER'S DAUGHTER

DeLauro's husband is Stanley Greenberg, president of a research and polling firm, and together they have three grown children. In Washington, D.C. the liberal power couple live in a townhouse not far from Capitol Hill. (Former Obama chief-of-staff and current Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel once rented their basement apartment.)

They also have a home in New Haven and three years ago downsized to a condo at The Eli downtown, just a few blocks from where DeLauro grew up.

But more than the many powerful men who have helped shape her political career, it was her mother who influenced her the most and whom she still refers to regularly in conversations.

"You know this is the first time my mother hasn't been here on election night," says DeLauro sadly, noting her mother died in 2017 at age 103.

Though Luisa DeLauro began her elected career as an alder in the '60s, her political involvement began much earlier.

"In the '30s my father was the president of the 10th Ward Democratic Club and my mom was recording secretary; that's a job they gave to the women. She wrote this article and it's a really a touchstone to me. It urged women to get involved," DeLauro says.

She keeps a copy of an article her mother wrote to

Democratic women when she was 19, and her parents weren't yet married.

"We are not living in the Middle Ages," Luisa DeLauro wrote, "when a woman's part in life was merely to serve her master in her home, but we have gradually taken our place in every phase of human endeavor and even in the heretofore stronghold of the male sex: politics."

The last line is: "C'mon, girls. Let's make ourselves heard."

That rallying cry has buoyed her daughter over the years, in good times and bad.

When asked if she ever got depressed, DeLauro looks directly at the questioner with her fierce brown eyes. "We don't have time to be depressed. The stakes are very high. That's a driving force."

She quotes former U.S. Rep Shirley Chisholm, the first female African-American elected to the U.S. Congress (1968), the first black candidate for a major party's nomination for president, and the first woman to run for the Democratic Party's presidential nomination, in 1972.

"She's a great hero of mine. When she was running, it was really tough going for her. But she said you don't walk off the field, you don't stand in the sidelines, you don't complain and don't whimper. You just move forward." 

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MEET



Fashion designer Neville Wisdom measures out a new dress for his collection on a dressmaker's mannequin.



WORDS OF WISDOM

An Elm City Fashion Designer Shares His Journey

by **AMY J. BARRY** / *photography by* **STAN GODLEWSKI**





Wisdom reminisces about his journey starting as a young boy in Jamaica to where he is today as owner of a successful New Haven fashion design company.





It was a roundabout route that brought Neville Wisdom from his small, rural Jamaican village to where he is today as head designer and owner of a thriving New Haven-based clothing company.

But when you look at the whole picture, there is clearly a common thread that began with a young boy's endless fascination with fashion, combined with a love of learning, street smarts, and a smattering of serendipity – all woven together with the willingness to do whatever it took to capture his dream.

Speaking in a cadence that evokes his island roots, the stylish entrepreneur in his mid-40s, sporting long salt-and-pepper dreadlocked hair and a jacket of his own design, tells his story. It is a tale filled with colorful characters and plot twists that eventually landed him in New Haven, growing and refining his upscale retail and custom clothing label.

Today, Wisdom's primary location is 903 Whalley Ave. in Westville, where he manufactures and sells his clothes. He also has a downtown retail store at 1090 Chapel St.

AN EARLY CALLING

"Clothing was always interesting to me. It was always about looking good or feeling that I should look good," Wisdom recalls, "but because of my family's financial





Automation has afforded Wisdom the ability to produce clothing all made in the USA.

restraints, it was hard to fulfill this desire, this yearning, to be fly.”

Wisdom grew up with the idea that if you can't buy it, make it. His mother sewed, but having 11 children, she made very basic clothes. She taught her son how to operate a sewing machine, but he wondered, “How was I going to fulfill this burning desire to have unique things nobody else had?”

Wisdom's fashion exposure broadened when his father, who left Jamaica for America when Wisdom was seven, started shipping clothes to his kids. Poring through his mother's Vogue magazines also provided him with a source of creative inspiration, as did the glamorously dressed women he saw in old movies when the family finally got a television (one station) in the early 1980s.

His high school didn't teach sewing, so when a tailor moved down the street when he was 16, he saw it as a perfect opportunity to learn from someone “who could make stuff.” But the tailor wasn't keen on teaching him to sew. Instead, Wisdom spent hours watching him, until after about a month, the tailor invited him to do an apprenticeship.

Wisdom wanted to impress the tailor with how serious he was about learning, so he spent a whole weekend at home making a pair of pants, complete with back and side pockets.

“When I brought the pants to him



on Monday, he took one look at them and he kicked me out of his shop,” Wisdom laughs. “He told me, ‘You are going to learn to sew so well, you’ll take away my business. I can’t teach you anything.’”

At just 17, he went on to become a business partner, handling all the money, at a bar and restaurant that opened up next to the tailor’s shop.

About a year later, Wisdom found a school in Kingston with a government-run program where he could learn to make clothes.

“Jamaica was big in clothes manufacturing and that’s where my love for manufacturing was developed,” Wisdom says. “And that’s where I took a machine operating course and realized there was an actual machine that could make welt pockets, and all these other machines that did specific things. That intrigued me. I always thought everything was made by hand.”

He took classes from a dressmaker at the school named Neville Walker. He went to work for Walker upon completing the six-month program.

“I worked day and night, but it was really fun,” he says. “I became his women’s pants guy. He was impeccable about every stitch and seam and demanded a lot. But he trusted me, and he had some fussy women customers, boy. And so it was an honor.”

By age 19, Wisdom had saved some money and rented an apartment in a Kingston building that had an empty front room.

“I put a door on top of a barrel and my old Singer sewing machine from ‘the country’ on top of that,” Wisdom says. “I bought a Serger, and started my first business in a room I wasn’t paying for. I almost got into trouble,” he smiles.

ARRIVING IN AMERICA

In 2000, Wisdom came to New Jersey with his Green Card to live and work with his father, a building contractor. Wisdom was very

“THE BUSINESS HAS GROWN THROUGH A LOT OF HARD WORK AND FINDING THE RIGHT INDIVIDUALS TO HELP WITH THAT SHARED DREAM.”

- NEVILLE WISDOM

good with the tools, but it wasn’t a sustainable situation. So he made a go of pursuing a career in the fashion capital of the world, New York City.

“I had really good skills but navigating New York and the lack of communication in the [business] made it impossible,” Wisdom says. “I couldn’t find work.”

That’s when he landed in New Haven. His sister, an educator working in the nursing department at Yale-New Haven Hospital, connected him with a training program and job in instrument sterilization for surgical procedures.

“It was very hands on. I learned very fast,” Wisdom says.

He made enough money working at the hospital to pursue his true passion, purchase the equipment he needed, and open his first clothing shop on Church Street. Meanwhile, he traveled back to Kingston for a few months at a time, where he hired native Jamaicans to sew the clothes.

“But that was a temporary model,” Wisdom says. “I had to figure out how to make clothes here. I knew the equipment was expensive and it was going to be a huge investment.”

After pitching various business plans, he received a grant from the Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) for an automated pattern cutting system that streamlines an eight-hour workload

into a single hour, affording him a way to produce USA-made clothing.

A DREAM REALIZED

Wisdom describes his designs as timeless with some funk – where the classic meets some interesting lines or patterns.

“Comfort is very important to me,” he says. “I design clothes that a woman can run out of the house in and feel a little stylish, but still be comfortable.”

Clothing that flatters a woman’s figure is also a priority and he affectionately refers to the women who purchase his clothing as the “Women of Wisdom.”

Wisdom’s clothing label is unique in that 30 percent of his business is entirely custom, but even his off-the-rack pieces include fittings and alterations, at no extra cost.

“Many of the dresses are designed to be customized, so everything is custom in a sense,” he explains.

Although it’s only about 10 percent of his business, Wisdom also fashions men’s button-down shirts, suits, coats, and pants, all custom made.

These days, price-slashing and fickle fashion trends are affecting the world globally, which Wisdom says can be challenging.

“People will ask, ‘So when are you having a sale?’ and comment that we’re a little pricier than some stores around here. But we’re not trend-driven,” he says. “We use beautiful fabrics and know what it takes to factor in all of our costs to make our clothing all here in New Haven, in order to stay in business and make a profit.”

Wisdom reflects on how his life-long dreams of designing his own fashions and owning a clothing company have come true.

“The business has grown through a lot of hard work and finding the right individuals to help with that shared dream,” he says. “Right now, we have two very passionate people here, [brand director and stylist] Lauren Sprague and [apprentice]



Apprentice Dwayne Moore makes some final adjustments to a custom-designed man's jacket.

Dwayne Moore. They're like soul mates. They're driven by this world, in their own ways. They're very involved in the process of the company."

Clester Oswald, head tailor and dressmaker, also plays an integral role in the company. He is known for his patient steadiness in carefully constructing and manufacturing the clothing.

COMMUNITY MATTERS

In addition to his full-time job running his business, Wisdom is big on giving back to the community, whether mentoring aspiring designers, teaching children in various New Haven schools, hosting on-site field trips, or curating charity fashions shows. He says giving back was always instilled in him as a child.

"There was never a lot going around, but my mother

still somehow made a little plate of food for her friend down the street in worse condition than we were," he says. "Taking care of all these kids by herself without the kind of support she would have wanted from her husband, she still always found it necessary to give to other people.

"For me there's a joy in being able to give and I like being happy, so this is part of what you do," Wisdom says. "Anyone who wants to learn, I'm more than willing to teach."

For the second year in a row, Wisdom is fulfilling his personal challenge to make "100 Designs in 100 Days," each piece one-of-a-kind. He launched the effort in January. Follow his journey on Instagram @NevilleWisdom and learn more about him and his company at nevillewisdom.com. 

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The Joy of Eating

Don't Be Afraid To Unleash Your Inner Cook

written and photographed by SARAH ALDRICH

It was the food critic and writer Michael Pollan who wrote, “Eat food, not too much, mostly plants.” This was his ultimate approach to eating healthfully and well. Each element of the sentence describes a crucial piece of the joy of eating: the act of eating itself, the art of moderation, and the benefits of following a mostly plant-based diet.

From a purely biological standpoint, eating is pure nourishment. Eating is giving the body what it needs to survive and thrive. But is it just that? Anyone who’s had the pleasure of enjoying a slice of Frank Pepe’s pizza in New Haven knows that there is more to eating than just fueling. Indeed, the gustatory experience of a good meal can transcend both time and memory.

I remember this one particular meal I ate with my best friend and her parents – it was a salad, dressed with a simple oil and vinegar dressing, served with the most delicious crusty bread and a glass of red wine. That meal has stood out to me over the years not because it was complicated or fussy, but rather because the simplicity and quality of the ingredients made it so memorable.

But to a degree, I think many Americans have lost the simple joy of eating. It has become increasingly easier to order takeout or delivery than it is to cook a homemade meal. I know that I am certainly guilty of this. People who know me as a food photographer and blogger would be shocked to hear how often I’ve let restaurants cook for me. In my case, I think that I had come

“Eat food, not too much, mostly plants.”

—Michael Pollan

to conflate “food” with “work,” and slowly lost my love of preparing my own meals. For a time, cooking had become more of a chore than a path to happiness. But it doesn’t have to be this way, for me or for any home cook.

I believe that everyone can cook. Why? Because every single person is the arbiter of their own taste, the ultimate judge of what they love to eat. Anybody can learn to make a variety of meals that they will enjoy and savor. And don’t get me wrong, there is a time and place for eating out at restaurants. But there is something undeniably satisfying about enjoying the fruits of your own labor – the simple joy of eating a home-cooked meal.

Invariably, the question I get asked after making such a statement is, “How can I do this? How can I recreate my favorite restaurant flavors at home?” I used to be stymied by this very question myself. With so many different cuisines, ingredients, and techniques, the process of cooking can get very overwhelming. But there are simple tips and tricks that any home cook – or eater – can employ to make their food taste delicious.

My top suggestion is to be generous with salt. Ever wonder why restaurant food tastes so flavorful? The chefs aren’t afraid to use salt, and you shouldn’t be either! Salt itself is flavorless but acts as a magnifying glass that amplifies existing flavors in the food. Of course, over-applying the salt can render a dish inedible, but it’s been my experience that most home cooks under-salt their food. In general, a liberal pinch of salt can add an amazing dimension of flavor to your roasted vegetables, soups, and pastas.

My second tip is to familiarize yourself with sources of flavor, such as herbs, spices, and condiments. A homemade stir-fry can taste better than takeout with a simple splash of tamari (a variety of soy sauce). Even something as simple as a bowl of rice can be transformed with a handful of chopped parsley and a squeeze of lemon juice. Finding little ways to add flavor to your existing meals can transform them into something that’s truly delicious. Some of my favorite condiments and flavors include grainy, tangy Dijon mustard, spicy hot sauce, fresh citrus juice, apple cider vinegar, and nutty tahini.

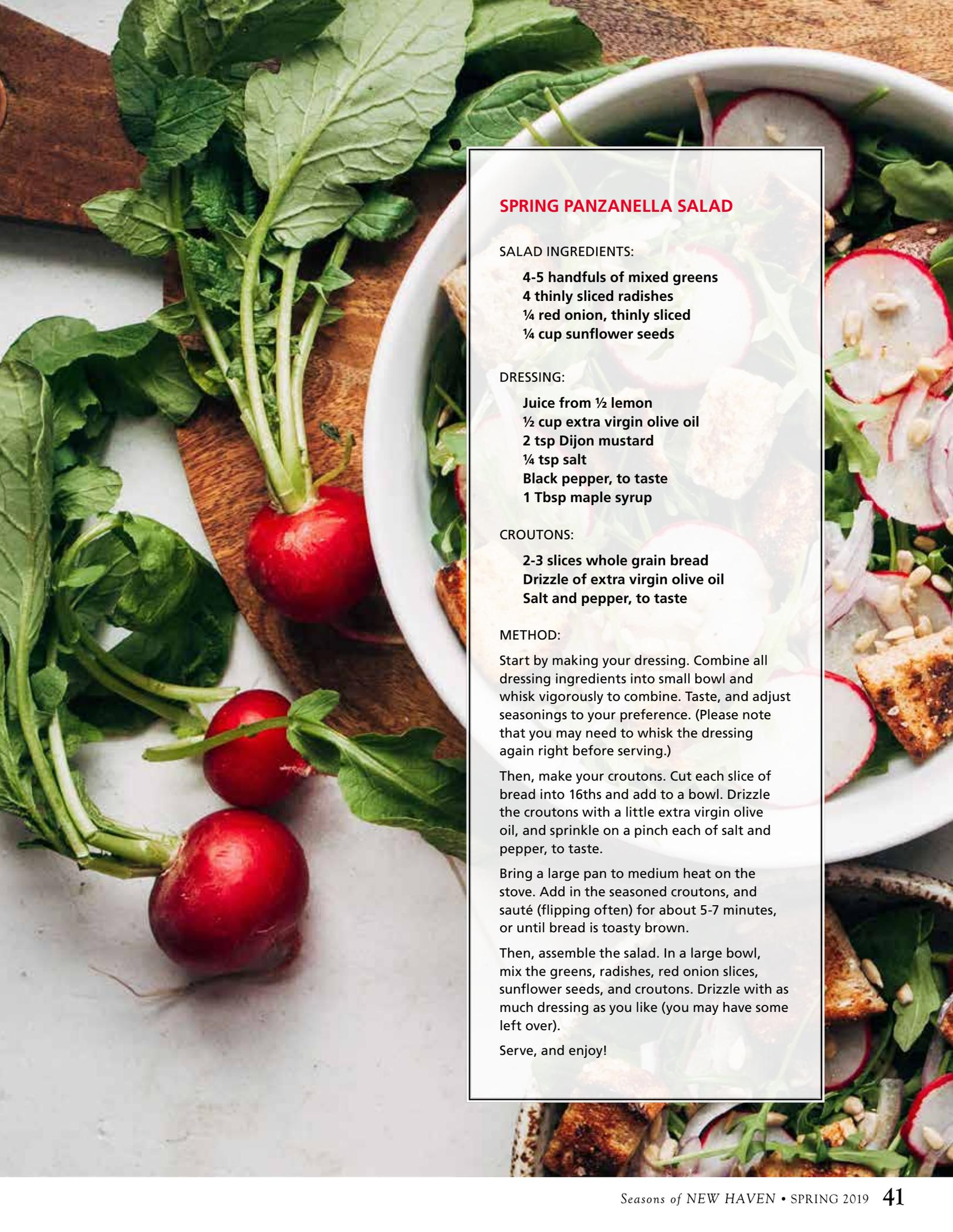
My third tip, and the very foundation of my own culinary experience, is to read and cook from cookbooks. My copies of two of my favorite cookbooks, “My New Roots” by Sarah Britton and “The First Mess Cookbook” by Laura Wright, are studded with Post-it Notes and handwritten ideas in the columns. Learn how your favorite cookbook authors approach food and try applying their techniques to your own cooking.

At the very least, reading a variety of cookbooks will open your eyes to flavors and food combinations that you never would have considered before. In fact, one of the best pasta dishes I’ve ever had was from a cookbook; the sauce was a combination of tomatoes, mustard, smoked paprika, and sriracha. It was a combination that I read very warily, but the sauce turned out to be smoky, tangy, and bursting with flavor. It was one of the best things I had ever eaten! Keeping an open mind with your cookbook recipe selection can turn out to be the best thing you’ll do for your palate.

Armed with these tools and tips, the journey towards becoming a proficient home cook can be a delicious and joyous one. Food has the incredible power to nourish, to enliven, and to heal. So many of our societal joys are centered around food – the meal shared together on a first date, the gathering of family for Thanksgiving dinner, the barbecues that declare the start of summer – that it’s no wonder that it has undeniable powers to bring people together. People of all different cultures, backgrounds, and life stages can come together over a delicious meal.

Finding your inner cook and connecting to the joy of eating is a lifelong process that is rewarding in so many ways. Even something as simple as a soup recipe can be passed down from generation to generation, bridging families across time and space. The love of food, and the love of eating, is something that’s so universal and undeniably human. For all of you reading this, I wish you joy and happiness on your cooking and eating journeys! 🍷

Sarah Aldrich is a food photographer and blogger. Find her blog devoted to plant-based eating, [Well and Full](http://WellandFull.com), at wellandfull.com.

A top-down photograph of fresh ingredients for a Spring Panzanella Salad. On the left, there are bunches of green leafy vegetables, including arugula and spinach, and several whole red radishes with their green tops. On the right, a white bowl is filled with a prepared salad, showing sliced radishes, green leaves, and golden-brown croutons. The background is a light-colored surface, possibly a countertop or table.

SPRING PANZANELLA SALAD

SALAD INGREDIENTS:

- 4-5 handfuls of mixed greens
- 4 thinly sliced radishes
- ¼ red onion, thinly sliced
- ¼ cup sunflower seeds

DRESSING:

- Juice from ½ lemon
- ½ cup extra virgin olive oil
- 2 tsp Dijon mustard
- ¼ tsp salt
- Black pepper, to taste
- 1 Tbsp maple syrup

CROUTONS:

- 2-3 slices whole grain bread
- Drizzle of extra virgin olive oil
- Salt and pepper, to taste

METHOD:

Start by making your dressing. Combine all dressing ingredients into small bowl and whisk vigorously to combine. Taste, and adjust seasonings to your preference. (Please note that you may need to whisk the dressing again right before serving.)

Then, make your croutons. Cut each slice of bread into 16ths and add to a bowl. Drizzle the croutons with a little extra virgin olive oil, and sprinkle on a pinch each of salt and pepper, to taste.

Bring a large pan to medium heat on the stove. Add in the seasoned croutons, and sauté (flipping often) for about 5-7 minutes, or until bread is toasty brown.

Then, assemble the salad. In a large bowl, mix the greens, radishes, red onion slices, sunflower seeds, and croutons. Drizzle with as much dressing as you like (you may have some left over).

Serve, and enjoy!



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NATURAL SELECTION

New Haven's Common Ground
Has Something for Everyone

by CARA MCDONOUGH / *photography by* TONY BACEWICZ





More than two dozen families participated in a recent weekend hike from Common Ground High School to Judges Cave atop nearby West Rock in New Haven.

When Rebecca Holcombe, director of community programs at Common Ground, trains new staff members, they often ask about the “rules.” Observing the day-to-day activity at the high school, urban farm and environmental center, this seems a valid question.

First of all, there’s a lot.

Common Ground, located at the base of West Rock Ridge State Park in New Haven, offers an impressive range of constant programming, from free family hikes and campfires to a bustling summer camp, as well as the daily schedule of an environmentally focused charter school.

What’s more, the organization’s primary focus, in each of its well-honed programs, is on connecting people with nature. And nature can be, well, unpredictable.

So when Holcombe gets asked that question by new staff, she has a standard, solid reply: “We don’t have those types of rules here.”

That’s not to say there aren’t rules; they’ve got plenty. But cultivating a sense of freedom and adventure within the safe confines of the natural world on Common Ground’s campus is a big part of why what they do there is so special.

It’s why children and adults taking part in the programming offered throughout the year – whether they’re climbing trees, building fairy houses, studying environmentalism, roasting bannock (a type of quick bread) over open flames or feeding the sheep, goats and chickens that live on the farm – are having so much fun.

And importantly, those experiences are why families might start including more outdoors time their day-to-day lives beyond Common Ground; it’s why the young people hanging out there very well might be tomorrow’s environmental justice leaders.

Before getting too far into the philosophy behind these programs, however, it’s best to start with a primer on the basics. Common Ground does so much so well, which means there are a lot of ways to get in on all that fun.

First, a little history: Common Ground’s founders, including teachers, environmentalists and philanthropists, set out to create an environmental learning center in the late 1980s. After several years of running pilot programs and seeking out a permanent home, Common Ground High School was approved as a charter in 1997.



A Common Ground high school instructor leads a hike from campus up the wooded trail to Judges Cave.



CULTIVATING A SENSE OF FREEDOM AND ADVENTURE WITHIN THE SAFE CONFINES OF THE NATURAL WORLD ON COMMON GROUND'S CAMPUS IS A BIG PART OF WHY WHAT THEY DO THERE IS SO SPECIAL.

Today, the school boasts a 100 percent college acceptance rate for its attendees, who participate in unique courses like environmental justice, food and the environment, and environmental education. Furthermore, Common Ground's Green Jobs Corps program connects them to paying environmental jobs within the community – including jobs at Common Ground itself.

From there, community programming grew. And grew.

Common Ground started with 35 kids in its first year running summer camp; it's expanded to nearly 1,000 kids annually today. Other activities increased to include festivals, school field trips, "Open Farm Days," family hikes, the "Seedlings" nature class for young children, birthday parties, a robust afterschool school programs and an urban farm that produces more than 10,000 pounds of locally grown produce each year. Then there's Common Ground's CT Schoolyards Program, helping New Haven schools create educational garden programs on site.

More recent programs have helped to even further spread their mission. The NatureYear, a program available to families through an application process, allows elementary-aged school children from anywhere in the state to visit the campus once a week (instead of one day of attending regular school, or in addition to home-schooling) for nature-based learning. Enrolled children are outside most of the day, if possible, and collaborate on activities including animal tracking, fort-building cooking and – importantly – group problem-solving.



Children on the hike stop to say hello to a goat on the Common Ground High School campus.

It's not so much a science program as it is a social and emotional program, with children from different backgrounds coming together in ways they might not in school.

"NatureYear meets my daughter's energy and curiosity at just the right point. While our family has always valued outdoor play, NatureYear augments our experiences at home and in the world," says Erika Simonian, parent of a seven-year-old NatureYear student. "We have outdoor fires on cold days and notice our environment in more detail than I ever did growing up – the colors of moss, observation of trees, plants – and animal activity, whether it be bird-watching, tracking, etc."

Families not enrolled in regular programming can reap these benefits, too. One of Common Ground's newest regular community events is the Nature Playdate and has proven remarkably popular, offering families the opportunity to visit the campus for both unstructured and structured play on a weekend afternoon. Holcombe says they've been delightfully surprised to find 200 to 400 people coming out for the events, even in overcast 30-degree winter weather.

"It's been so powerful," she says, of watching children and families revel in nature, happily getting dirty, expressing creativity and making friends in the process. "The energy on campus is so joyful."

This depth of programming means that on any given day, Common Ground is awash in activity. Rather than chaos, though – which parents might expect when imagining young people engaging in unbridled exploration outside – the vibe is serene, if jubilant. From the high schoolers working out math problems during a break in the cafeteria to NatureYear students observing plants along a trail, experiences at Common Ground unfold in tandem, creating an environment with a strong sense of connectivity and purpose. Common Ground High School students are some of the key staff members for community programming, for instance, and

A photograph of a woman and a young girl in a wooded area. The woman, Karen Reilly, is wearing a green puffer jacket and a striped knit hat. The girl, Eve, is wearing a dark blue puffer jacket and pink gloves, holding a stick. They are both smiling. The ground is covered in brown leaves, and there are trees in the background.

Karen Reilly of Branford and her daughter Eve wait for other family members to catch up to them on the trail back to Common Ground High School.



Children on the hike got to try their hands at roasting bannock dough over an open camp fire.

NatureYear families promote weekend programs among friends.

That's no accident.

"Because there is so much going on here, connecting the pieces is something we are always trying to work on," says Joel Tolman, Common Ground's director of impact and engagement.

Starting with a basic idea – that every individual and family has a right to connect with the natural world and the sources of their food – staff at Common Ground continually work on ways to ensure experiences click for those involved.

"How do we create these pathways and that experience here?" says Tolman. "How do we meet people where they are?"

The breadth and integrity of their offerings are two answers. Common Ground has as much room for the adventure-seeking outdoorsman as it does for the young child who has just had her first taste of mint – right out of the garden – at a friend's birthday party.

That first taste might lead to more: attending summer camp or becoming a high school student or nature educator, Tolman says.

And as the Common Ground staff and families have seen firsthand, making those first connections can truly alter an individual's relationship with the natural world.

"You carry those values into the future," says Holcombe.

"Having our kids in Common Ground programs – NatureYear in particular, has made us much more

adventurous as a family. I used to be self-conscious and nervous taking the kids into the nearby woods of Edgewood Park. Now we take 'adventure walks' in all seasons," says Joanna Price, the mother of a six-year-old NatureYear student. "I thought people passing by would give us strange looks as my kids climb, play, and explore in their rain suits and boots, but the comment we get the most is, 'It's so nice seeing kids be kids!'"

That brings us back to the idea of risk and rules; the concept of feeling comfortable enough to explore the natural world with confidence – and appreciate the environment so much more, because of it.

"There are wide-open boundaries here," says Holcombe – before adding, "but there are boundaries!" Common Ground offers its visitors the chance to wander, create and observe in a safe place, then take that gleaned enthusiasm home, and beyond.

Holcombe, who says she's learned to appreciate the value of the programming all the more since having children herself in recent years, notes the sensory details on the campus at Common Ground as the ideal background for this type of lifelong learning: frogs croaking in the wetlands or baby chicks hatching from eggs laid on site.

These unforgettable sights and sounds define the experience for staff, students and visitors at Common Ground.

"I really believe in connecting kids to nature," she says. "You carry those values into the future." 

Fueling Growth

American GreenFuels is intent on improving the Earth – and the economy – with biodiesel

by **CARA ROSNER** / photography by **TONY BACEWICZ**

In just a few years, American GreenFuels, LLC has grown from a small startup with a few employees to the largest biodiesel producer in the Northeast.

From its plant in New Haven Terminal, the company currently has the capacity to produce approximately 40 million gallons of biodiesel each year – and that number is poised to grow further as the company continues to expand, investing in Connecticut’s economy and people along the way. Its most recent capacity expansion project was completed late in 2018. Since its inception, American GreenFuels, LLC quadrupled the business’ initial annual output of 10 million gallons to meet a surge in demand.

Company officials are now making a push to educate Connecticut consumers about the myriad benefits of biodiesel. As awareness about its product grows, American GreenFuels hopes to continue to increase its ability to produce biodiesel, which will further and positively impact Connecticut’s environment and economy.

“We absolutely have ambitions to expand again. We would love to increase our capacity again in the near term,” says Paul Teta, vice president of government and public affairs at American GreenFuels, LLC and its parent company, Kolmar Americas, Inc.

American GreenFuels makes biodiesel, a cleaner, renewable, alternative to diesel fuel, derived from feedstocks – namely, used cooking oil that it sources from restaurants and food manufacturing businesses in Connecticut and neighboring states. It sells its biodiesel to wholesalers throughout Connecticut and the Northeast,



who then blend the biodiesel with traditional (ultra-low sulfur) diesel and sell it to retailers. Those retailers subsequently sell the blended product, typically under names like BioHeat® heating oil, to consumers for use as home heating oil or to power diesel engines, as in the trucking industry.

Typically, most biodiesel blends sold to consumers contain anywhere from 5 to 20 percent biodiesel and, respectively, 95 to 80 percent ultra-low sulfur diesel, says Teta, but company officials hope to see a higher concentration of biodiesel become the norm.

“We would like for consumers to ask their retailers for higher blend percentages,” he says. “The more biodiesel that is blended into traditional diesel heating oil, the more we will reduce carbon emissions, and as demand increases from more use, and

higher blend percentages, we will expand the production capacity again.”

The popularity of biodiesel has grown nationwide over the past decade or so, and the industry marked a major milestone when it first crossed one billion gallons in annual production in 2011, according to the National Biodiesel Board trade group. Following that, the market quickly doubled, to more than two billion gallons, by 2015, according to the group.

The industry has a goal of producing about 10 percent of the diesel transportation fuel market by 2022, which the trade group says would lessen the United States’ dependence on oil imports, improve national security and reduce the trade deficit – and, of course, improve air quality.

Biodiesel is made from renewable energy sources like

plant oils, animal fats, used cooking oil – and even algae. It has no petroleum in it, but it can be blended with petroleum to make a product that can be used in diesel engines with little or no modifications, according to the National Biodiesel Board.

It also is the only fuel produced commercially nationwide that meets the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s definition of an “advanced biofuel,” according to the group. Advanced biofuel must meet a life-cycle greenhouse gas emission reduction threshold of 50 percent, and has to be made from feedstock that meets the definition of a renewable biomass.

The environmental benefits of biodiesel are clear – and American GreenFuels goes above and beyond industry standards to ensure that its product is of the highest quality. Its biodiesel has earned several important certifications showing it meets or exceeds standards for how its fuel is produced, including one that denotes it will result in a 78 percent to 92 percent reduction in carbon emissions, compared with ultra-low sulfur diesel, when delivered and used within 100 miles of the manufacturing plant.

The company also meets standards set forth by ASTM International – one of the world’s largest organizations setting standards for manufacturing, materials, products, processes, systems and services – so consumers know that the fuel they are getting is high quality. Additionally, the plant has received accreditation through another program, called BQ-9000 Producer, that vets numerous aspects of its manufacturing process. American GreenFuels is proud to produce certified biodiesel and provides further information about the certifications on its website, www.americangreenfuelsct.com.

Beyond its “green” appeal, American GreenFuels biodiesel isn’t just good for the environment, but also boosts the state’s economy.

The company employs, on a regular basis, about 50 workers at its New Haven plant. Another 50 people are employed by American GreenFuels’ parent company, Kolmar Americas, Inc., which procures feedstocks and markets American GreenFuels biodiesel. However, American GreenFuels, LLC often utilizes more than 200 employees and contractors during large-scale expansions or maintenance projects, Teta notes. The company buys the feedstock used to make biodiesel from roughly 5,000 restaurants and food companies, supporting those regional businesses in the process. American GreenFuels also proudly makes a concerted effort to hire veterans, who currently comprise about a quarter of its workforce.

To keep growing as it envisions, the company has to increase demand for its product, says Teta, and a key component of that is making consumers aware that biodiesel is an option for them. To that end, the company has launched its “You Are What You Heat” campaign. The advertising and awareness campaign includes social media, billboards and other advertising that company officials hope



American
GreenFuels^{LLC}
A KOLMAR AMERICAS COMPANY

will spur consumers to learn more about biodiesel.

“I don’t think consumers have been made aware of biodiesel,” says Teta, noting many homeowners who heat with oil likely assume traditional diesel-based home heating oil is their only choice. If more people knew about the availability and benefits of biodiesel – and how easy it is to make the switch from 100 percent traditional home heating oil – they would be inclined to call their home heating oil retailers and ask for biodiesel. “It’s one of the reasons we’re having this campaign, to help educate consumers, who are not our direct customers.”

Biodiesel and ultra-low sulfur diesel are competitively priced, Teta says. Like many other fuels, diesel is derived from crude oil, a commodity that can lead to pricing changes that ebb and flow with the markets. “On any given day, one component can be a little more expensive than the other,” he says. “But based on the percentage of biodiesel in heating oil, or in diesel engines, for that matter, fluctuations in price are not noticeable.”

For those interested in learning more, the company provides a list of retailers that offer certified biodiesel produced by American GreenFuels at www.americangreenfuelsct.com.

When retailers, and ultimately consumers, choose certified biodiesel produced by American GreenFuels, they can take comfort in knowing that they are supporting a company that cares deeply about the product it produces and the people it serves.

The company’s success is due, in no small part, to the strong core values it embodies. Officials and employees know teamwork and trust-based, long-term relationships are key factors in growing and maintaining a thriving business. The company’s culture embraces a strong emphasis on being safety minded, honest and ethical, respectful, results oriented, innovative, motivated and forward thinking.

Those tenets, combined with an employee base committed to producing a quality product, have allowed the business to grow exponentially since the New Haven plant opened in 2012 and became operational in 2013. Kolmar Americas acquired the company in 2015, and American GreenFuels is a wholly owned subsidiary.

“The plant originated as a real startup company that struggled at the beginning,” Teta says, noting it had few employees in its early days. Kolmar Americas, seeing the potential the company had and realizing the importance of the work it was doing, invested in its vision and mission. Along the way, as the business’ production capacity increased, so did demand, Teta notes proudly. “We built it; they did come.”

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For Love of The Game

Youth travel sports represent fun,
opportunity ... and big business

by JOHN TORSIELLO

The term “youth sports” used to connote a handful of kids getting together for a pickup game in someone’s backyard or on an open field somewhere in the neighborhood. Then, Little League and other sports organizations formalized local play, introducing standardized rules, coaches, and regularly scheduled games.

Today, organized sports – especially travel sports – has become a business ... big business.

Across the United States, travel sports has morphed into a \$15.5 billion industry, with parents often treating an out-of-state tournament as a family vacation involving flights, hotels, restaurant meals and sightseeing, on top of the sports travel league fees.





A rendering of Fastpitch Nation Park, which opens April 27 in Windsor.

In Connecticut, the travel sports category represents a growing economic sector, with developers – like elsewhere in the country – recognizing its enormous financial potential.

Last year, plans were announced for a \$150-\$200 million sports complex near Bradley International Airport in Windsor Locks. The proposed project, set for a 2020 opening, was to include an outdoor stadium, an indoor arena, two hotels and a convention center, built on some 76 acres of former tobacco land. The vision included 16 indoor basketball and volleyball courts, along with eight multipurpose synthetic turf fields for field hockey, softball, soccer, flag football and lacrosse.

The Long Island developer said he hoped “All Sports Village,” as it was dubbed, could be a premier facility for top youth athletes from around the country, and especially for Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) basketball. It was also projected to create an estimated 400 full-time and 100 part-time jobs.

According to town officials, the project is “in progress” but is still at a very early stage.

Meanwhile, in Windsor, the developer of the brand-new Fastpitch Nation Park is preparing to unveil a \$3 million complex comprising 11 regulation fastpitch fields on a 20-acre parcel on Day Hill Road. The facility, the largest of its kind in New England, was the brainchild of long-time fastpitch softball coach and league official David Rocha. Opening day is April 27.

“Travel sports, whether it is softball, baseball, soccer

and other sports, have mushroomed,” says Rocha, owner of Fastpitch Nation, which he created in 2008. His Bloomfield location is the largest (24,000 square feet) indoor fastpitch softball training facility in Connecticut, annually hosting more than 450 games, along with lessons and clinics.

Rocha says the new project includes a 3,200-square-foot building featuring retail space, a food court, bathrooms, and live streaming of all games on the fields. Tournaments will be played from April through October, mostly on weekends.

“There is nothing like this park anywhere in New England,” he says. “The lack of these sorts of parks, which are numerous in other areas of the country, will make our new location the most sought out park for teams to play in the region. Our goal is to create a family-oriented park with zero negative impact on the surrounding area and a huge positive economic impact for Windsor and surrounding businesses.”

Rocha, who does not field teams, says interest and excitement in Fastpitch Nation Park is already at a fever pitch.

“My facility is almost 100% per cent booked for the whole season, and we’re not even open yet.”

BASEBALL

Of course, youth travel sports is not just about business and profit margins. It’s also about fun ... and opportunity.

Tom Nicholson, a youth baseball pitching coach with Fastpitch Nation – just one of several Connecticut organizations offering facilities and services to help children

and young people achieve their athletic ambitions – perhaps put it best when asked what the allure of being part of a travel sports team is for a youngster.

“The beauty of a travel team is the open road and sky,” he says. “The Little League-aged teams I met on planes were flying over neighboring states to play. The fields and umpires available to the kids offer new limits as to where they can go to throw the horsehide around the diamond.”

But there’s more to it than just the diversity of experience. “I wouldn’t have gotten seen by as many college coaches as I did if I didn’t travel and play in national tournaments,” says Dillon Lifrieri of Wilton, now a freshman on the University of Arkansas baseball team, which advanced to the College Baseball World Series championship last year.

“Travel baseball also exposed me to players in other areas of the country and gave me an idea, especially at the start, how much I had to improve,” adds the 19-year-old Wilton High School graduate. In high school, Lifrieri was the sixth-ranked player in Connecticut by Prep Baseball Report and was ranked #293 in the nation by Perfect Game. He was the only player on his team to earn all-state honors in 2017.

“We give kids a place where they can improve,” says Dan Kennedy, director of baseball operations and player

development at the Connecticut Baseball Academy in East Hartford. “If a kid wants to play college baseball or even professionally, he pretty much has to play travel baseball and get that experience and playing time.”

The baseball academy, one of the biggest training facilities in New England, fields 16 travel teams for ages 13 through 18. “Team Connecticut Baseball” squads have won numerous national titles, including last year’s 14-year-old champs.

Its travel teams compete around the country in tournaments and offer players top level competition, as well as the chance to be seen by college coaches and even Major League Baseball scouts. The academy boasts that more than 70 of its players have been selected in the Major League Baseball draft, and many others have played, or are playing, college ball.

Evan Curtiss of Simsbury is in the 13-and-under group there. “I want to get experience for high school. This is my second year and I was able to travel to New Jersey last year.” And for a starry-eyed youngster in love with baseball, New Jersey might just as well be California.

Meriden’s CT Edge Baseball Academy, a training facility with 15 travel teams for ages 8-and-under (8U) to 18-and-under (18U), competes in regional and national level tournaments. The goal is to place players in front of college



Chase Leonard of Newington gets ready to make a catch at the Connecticut Baseball Academy.



Kids get plenty of opportunity to practice and compete at the Farmington soccer fields.

and pro scouts. Says owner Dennis Boucher, “The travel program growth over the past 10 years has exploded. The exposure at a young age, along with teaching from talented and experienced coaches, places young players in a position of growth and improvement.”

SOCCER

Garret Ratcliffe, director of travel soccer for Farmington Soccer, says his organization has had a “long tradition” of developing successful players at every level and “our teams continue to be among the best in Connecticut.” He added, “Winning state championships is always our long-term goal for the kids, so developing high level players who have passion and excitement is a key component.”

Most youngsters who participate in travel soccer improve significantly over those who play strictly recreational soccer. It’s simple math, really: The youngsters on travel teams get more practices per week and typically have more experienced coaches to teach them enhanced skills and tactics. Also, they are playing against stronger competition.

J.P. DiTommaso, director of events and sponsorship as well as club coach at the Farmington Sports Arena, says the draw to youth travel teams gives players and families the opportunity to travel outside their communities and experience playing soccer in new settings.

“Travel soccer becomes the true collection of players coming from different geographical areas and styles of play to create a new team. Traveling and competing locally, regionally and nationally allows players to experience the game how it is played outside of their immediate community.”





The Farmington Soccer Arena (FSA) features 130,000 square feet of indoor and outdoor fields, practice areas and a track.

“PARENTS OF KIDS AT THIS AGE LEVEL (UNDER 10 AND UNDER 12) ARE READY TO MAKE THE COMMITMENT OF BRINGING THEIR PLAYERS TO AWAY GAMES TO PLAY AGAINST OTHER TOWNS. WITH TRAVEL, YOU GET TO SEE OTHER TALENTED PLAYERS WITH DIFFERENT LEVELS OF SKILL.”

- TATIANA O’CONNOR, NEW HAVEN YOUTH SOCCER

The arena is a Mecca for sports, with 130,000 square feet of indoor and outdoor fields, practice areas, a track, locker rooms, a café, and a retail store. “Our goal is to provide an environment that entices players to work hard and compete to the best of their ability,” DiTommaso says. “The travel team concept attracts established and educated coaches crucial to the development of young players. Success is achieved through the dedication of the player to grow as both an individual and a team member.”

Todd Hill, a former player with New Haven Youth Soccer who has served as a coach since 2002, says the organization’s programs have grown in recent years as families look for a balance between competitive and recreational sports. Today, the group offers a recreational league, a middle school league, and a travel league. “We have many programs that address the ever-changing landscape of youth soccer in our community. We see soccer as a means to a healthier person. The sport part is important, but we look to also build the overall health of the child.”

Tatiana O’Connor, an official with New Haven Youth Soccer, has seen growth in younger age groups, U-10 and U-12, particularly with the boys. “Parents of kids at this age level are ready to make the commitment of bringing their players to away games to play against other towns. With travel, you get to see other talented players with different levels of skill.”

BASKETBALL

Jennifer Labrie, president of Norwich-based Connecticut Storm Girls Basketball, says players in that nonprofit club’s basketball program – especially those in older age groups – are looking to play in college.

“They are playing with the best in their area and against the best from all over the country. College scouts attend their games and recruit players that would be a good match for their college

programs,” Labrie explains. “Our graduating teams from the last two years have 11 players currently playing in college and even one playing professionally. For tournaments on the weekends, older players travel all over the place.” Younger grades compete mostly locally.

Connecticut’s annual AAU boys’ and girls’ basketball tournaments currently draw more than 140 teams from around the state, with teams playing at various high schools



in the spring of each year.

This year, male and female players will try to out-dribble, out-pass and out-dunk opponents at tournaments in New Haven, Woodbridge, Trumbull, Waterford, Canton, Bristol and Harwinton. But they will also travel beyond state borders to attend competitions in Rhode Island, Massachusetts, New York, New Jersey, Delaware, Pennsylvania and Virginia.

THE PRICE OF PARTICIPATION

The word “travel,” when applied to youth sports teams, can run the gamut, from teams sponsored by individual towns and organizations to those fielded by private or semi-private facilities. The cost to play can range from hundreds to thousands of dollars a year.

The Farmington Soccer Club prides itself on being one of the lowest-cost travel programs in the state. It raises

money from hosting a tournament over Labor Day weekend, which helps defray some of the cost of playing. Also, coaches and managers are volunteers, and that helps keep expenses low. “Playing soccer in Farmington is extremely affordable for any family and if they qualify, we also provide financial assistance,” says Ratcliffe.

NHYS charges \$325 per player for travel teams in the fall and spring and offers financial aid. Says Hill, “The cost is fair and includes the player’s uniforms, one home and one away jersey. New Haven Youth Soccer is an absolute steal with its travel costs. The club uses a sliding scale, so the U10s will pay less than the U12 to U19s. Based on age and ability, the costs are reasonable.”

Labrie explains that playing for the Storm “is fairly expensive” due to the cost of tournaments, gym space rental fees, as well as travel to tournaments. “However, we do understand that cost may be an issue for some families, so the Storm never turns a player away due to financials. We always work with our families to make sure the athlete can play.”

Fees for intensive travel programs at the Connecticut Baseball Academy range from \$500 to \$2,000 per player for fall teams, while for the spring/summer season the rates are \$1,950 to \$3,500 per player. The spring and summer travel fees entitle players to participate in 35 to 65 games, depending upon the age bracket, and around a half dozen tournaments.

For the money, especially at the high end of the spectrum, parents and youngsters expect results.

“Our goal with The Storm is to promote the full individual,” says Labrie. “On the basketball end, we are looking at a full scope and sequence of the game, and each coach is trained on what skill set their players need before they move on to the next grade level. As coaches are passing off players, the next grade level coach knows exactly what the players have learned, and can build on those skills. The goal is that by the time they reach high school, they have a full skill set to play at a high competitive level. We also promote the individual off the court. We talk to our players about grades and making sure they are focused in school.”

Nicholson, a baseball coach who has taught and played at all levels of the game, including as a former 4-year Division I pitcher at Siena College, addresses both the mental and physical aspects of pitching with his students. Speaking both as a parent and as a



professional pitching coach, he says youth travel teams – and all they encompass – should be for children and teens who are mentally, emotionally and physically ready to handle “everything that goes into traveling and playing on the road.” He adds, “Just because the parent has a good checkbook doesn’t necessarily mean it’s good for the young kid.”

Kennedy says in order to avoid burnout in one particular sport, the Connecticut Baseball Academy “encourages kids to play all sports, not just concentrate on baseball, although some do.”

DiTommaso agrees that “too much of anything can have negative effects on the mental, physical and emotional well-being of individuals. That’s why we have focused on developing programs to continue to challenge our players while avoiding the burnout phenomenon that often occurs in youth sports. We strive to find the balance between motivating and pushing players to be the best they can be, without turning them off to the sport they love.”

Today, youth travel teams are exposing boys and girls to better competition, college coaches and pro scouts, and places in the country only dreamed about when “travel” meant simply walking down to a neighborhood field or playground for a game of pickup ball. 



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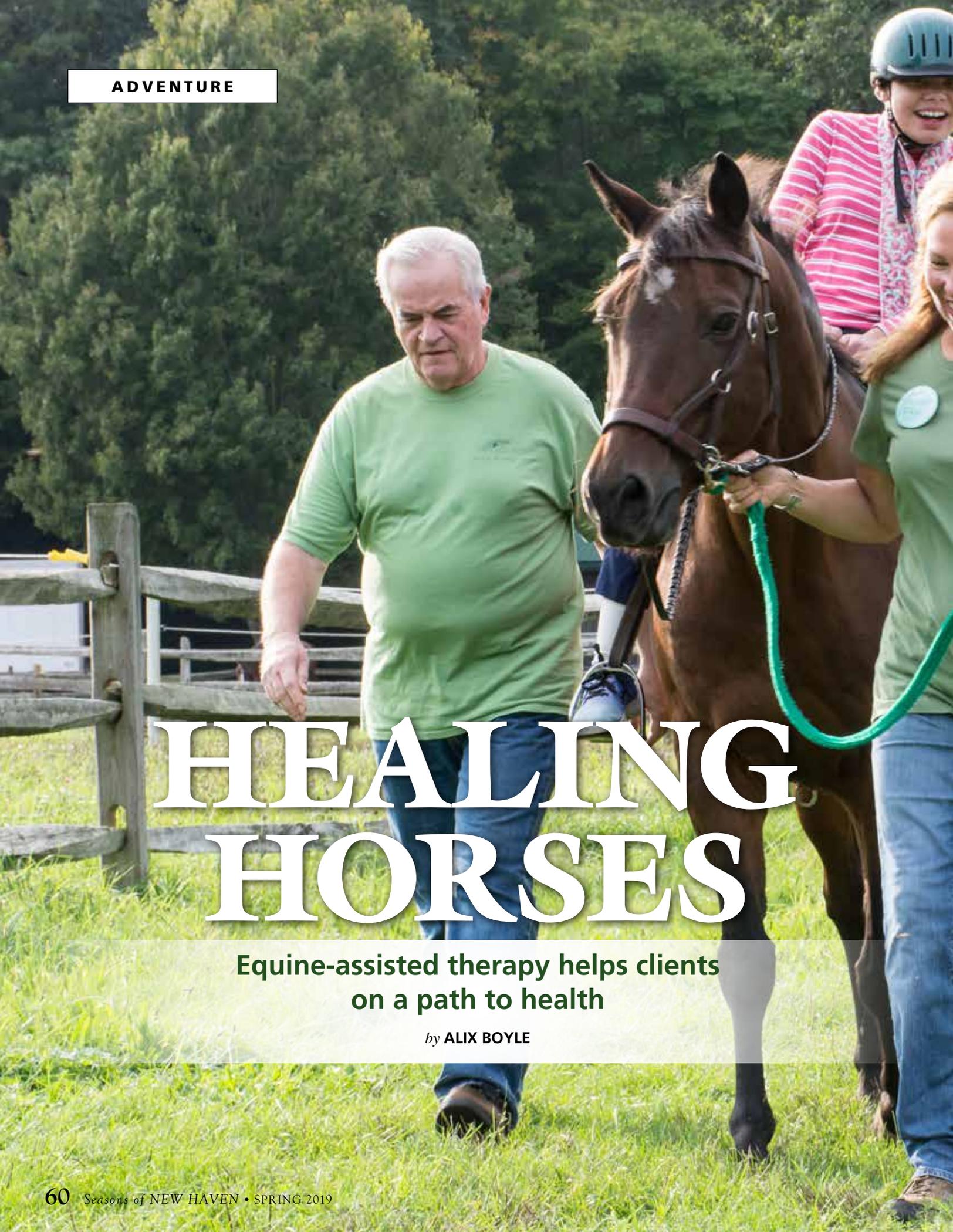


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HEALING HORSES

Equine-assisted therapy helps clients
on a path to health

by ALIX BOYLE



Manes & Motions is the only therapeutic riding stable that's associated with a hospital in the U.S.

When Christine Valeri suffered a brain aneurysm followed by a stroke in her mid-60s, she lost strength in her right hand and had difficulty speaking. Now, 18 months later at age 67, she's riding horses.

"She has to use both hands on the reins and greet and speak to the instructor," says Christine's son, John Valeri. "It's like physical, occupational, and speech therapy rolled into one, in a fun way. She's giving the horse commands, like 'walk' and 'trot,' and she's even posting." Christine Valeri rides once a

week at Manes & Motions Therapeutic Riding center in Middletown.

Affiliated with the Hospital for Special Care in New Britain, the program offers equine therapy for people with a variety of physical and emotional diagnoses, including cerebral palsy, autism, Down Syndrome and traumatic brain injury. Participants are assisted by volunteer leaders and side-walkers as they ride a horse, play games and perform exercises on horseback in a heated indoor ring, or go out on trail rides. Riders who are unable to mount the horse on their own are placed into a lift.

Riding a horse helps to build core strength and loosen tight muscles. Each horse is unique, with a long stride or shorter one, and riders are paired up with one of 11 horses in the herd that will meet their needs, says Jeanna Pellino, the program coordinator at Manes & Motions.

Equine therapy can also help veterans suffering from PTSD, teens battling eating disorders, kids with ADHD or behavior problems, neglected and abused children, or people with anxiety, to name a few applications. Connecticut is home to a number of equine therapy programs, many of which are certified by the Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International (PATH) or the Equine Assisted Growth and Learning Association (EAGALA). Many programs take children ages four and up, as well as adults.

"The lessons we can learn from horses are unlimited. A horse is a great equalizer," says Kitty Stalsburg, executive director at High Hopes Therapeutic Riding in Old Lyme. "He [a horse] will give you unconditional acceptance as long as you treat him with respect."

Many of the student riders at High Hopes have autism, Stalsburg says. Working with horses helps



“HORSES HAVE A HIGHLY SENSITIVE FIGHT-OR-FLIGHT INSTINCT, MAKING THEM IDEAL FOR WORKING WITH VETERANS AND OTHERS SUFFERING FROM POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER ...”



quell the repetitive motions often associated with the disorder and teaches them fine and gross motor movements, social and emotional skills and teamwork. In grooming or tacking a horse, riders learn to follow instructions and complete the task in the assigned order.

Horses have a highly sensitive fight-or-flight instinct, making them ideal for working with veterans and others suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, who may also be unable to shake the hyper-vigilance that served them well on the battlefield, Stalsburg says.

High Hopes offers the Equus Effect program, combining exercise, mindfulness meditation, and herding the horses, under the guidance of a veterans' counselor.

Mark, who appears in a marketing video for High Hopes and is identified only by his first name, a 30-year veteran of the Air Force and diagnosed with PTSD, credits his relationship with Latino, a thoroughbred/shire horse mix, with saving him from the depths of depression. "Looking back, I think he [Latino] knew what I needed before I did," Mark says in a video about his experience with equine therapy. He's now a volunteer at High Hopes.

Dylan and Ethan Richmond of Madison, both 16, volunteered last summer at High Hopes as side-walkers in the summer camp. "It made me feel good to help other kids who would not normally be able to ride a horse. Then they ride and realize they are just as capable as anyone else," says Ethan Richmond, who also mucked stalls, groomed horses and took photos for the website.

"It was a great opportunity," says Dylan Richmond. "When do you get a chance to be that close to a horse? I felt very excited and in awe, because horses are very majestic beings."

Some 650 people volunteer at High Hopes annually for 28,000 hours, according to Stalsburg. The 120-acre farm is home to a herd of 24 working horses serving 230 riders per week. High Hopes is also a leading facility for teacher training in equine therapy, with students from all over the world.

Mary Acri, an associate professor of social work at Southern Connecticut State University, says there has been too little research into the effectiveness of equine therapy for children with anxiety and other mental health issues. In a 2016 paper in



“ THE HORSE STANDS RELAXED SO A PERSON CAN JUST LAY THEIR HEAD ON HIM. I’VE SEEN TEARS; PEOPLE JUST GET OVERWHELMED WITH EMOTION. WE CAN HARNESS THAT TO USE IN A THERAPEUTIC SETTING. ”

the journal “Applied Developmental Science,” she and colleagues reviewed studies of animal-assisted therapies for kids at risk for, or diagnosed with, mental health problems.

Acri hopes to work with area stables to test various interventions and conduct research. She also plans to write a curriculum about using equine therapy to treat children with anxiety.

“There’s a lot of variability in animal-assisted therapy,” Acri says. “It’s not always run by a psychotherapist, and we want to look at who the therapist is and what are the activities. Otherwise, it’s hard to draw firm conclusions. We want to move the field forward and create rigorous research.”

Nestled in Hartford’s Keney Park, Ebony Horsewomen, Inc. Equestrian & Agricultural Center has been offering equine therapy and equestrian activities since 1984. Among its many programs, the junior mounted patrol is comprised of young African-American and Latino men, ages 10 to 18, who meet on Sundays under the guidance of adult mentors to encourage them to become productive leaders in their communities and eventually patrol the park.

“In Hartford, there’s a shortage of positive male role

models,” says Patricia E. Kelly, described on Ebony’s website as “a former U.S. marine, award-winning community leader and equestrian trailblazer with a storied history as a Black cowgirl” who has headed the non-profit youth organization for more than 30 years.

“Boys tend to imitate whatever thing they think a man should be doing – like being loud and boisterous and fathering a bunch of kids. You can’t control a horse, but he is hardwired to be in a herd and is looking for a leader. We are teaching that young man to let go of that macho stereotype and think of the horse as a partner. You get the horse to trust you by leading in a positive manner, not a threatening manner. You become the stallion with compassion.”

Ebony Horsewomen has three licensed social workers on staff as well as a nurse, and provides equine-assisted psychotherapy. For example, one middle-school-age boy came to the stable to talk about being bullied in school. He role played what he would say the next time the bully approached. This new skill broke the aggression, and his schoolwork improved.

“Nobody can change the mess in your life, but you can



Ebony Horsewomen, Inc., founded by Patricia Kelly, offers a variety of equine activities, from summer camps and after school programs to equine assisted psychotherapy, at its facility in Keney Park in Hartford.

change how you approach it,” Kelly says.

For girls, Kelly runs a dressage program. “It’s not about hair and make-up, but whether you can sit to the trot,” she says.

The psychotherapy is done under the EAGALA model, in which a therapist, an equine specialist and a horse come together in an arena. Client and horse interact, which creates an environment for the client to reflect on issues in their life. The horse is not ridden during this particular type of therapy.

In addition to horses, the farm has chickens and rabbits that are also used for therapy. Kids learn about horse anatomy in a science classroom, read horse books in the on-site library and eat healthy meals including produce grown on the farm.

All of the kids involved graduate from high school and 82 percent graduate from college, Kelly says.

Feeding, stabling and providing veterinary care for horses is an expensive endeavor. Ebony Horsewomen, High Hopes and Manes & Motions are all nonprofits that rely on fee-for-service, grants and donations to fund programs. If a child is referred for equine therapy from a

social service agency, often the agency will pick up the tab.

Niki Cogliano, the owner and operator of Red Skye Farm in Bethany, has participated in equine-assisted psychotherapy sessions as the specialist in charge of the horse, is certified by EAGALA, and seen the impact firsthand.

“Horses are intuitive prey animals. Their instinct is to be aware of their surroundings. If you’re angry, or sad, the horse will sense that vibe,” Cogliano says. “The horse stands relaxed so a person can just lay their head on him. I’ve seen tears; people just get overwhelmed with emotion. We can harness that to use in a therapeutic setting.”

Currently, the barn is no longer offering this service because the therapist needed to stop due to other commitments. Red Skye still offers lessons, birthday parties and other activities.

“The adult clients who take lessons have said they feel better after riding and their relationships at home are better,” Cogliano says. “It’s their therapy, informally, an hour away from the job or the kids, and time to be mindful and just think about what you are doing on the horse.” 



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BREAKFAST WITH

Breakfast with JOCELYN MAMINTA

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What's
Right
with Schools

8

Maminta, who is best known to many as the 9 a.m. co-anchor show on News 8's Good Morning Connecticut, feels right at home in the studio.



Maminta, shown here on the Good Morning Connecticut set, first fell in love with journalism as a general assignment reporter in North Carolina. Her father wanted her to become a doctor, but she had other dreams.

To call Jocelyn Maminta a busy woman is an understatement. Many know her as the 9 a.m. co-anchor of News 8's Good Morning Connecticut and the station's medical reporter, but her high-profile day job is just one aspect of the entrepreneur, philanthropist and mother's life.

In addition to her career as an Emmy Award-nominated newswoman, she is co-founder of Caroline's Room, an effort to create safe places inside hospitals where families can cope with the challenges surrounding the birth of a premature baby. Maminta and husband Gary Doyens were inspired to create these spaces after losing their daughter, Caroline, at the age of two months. What started at Yale-New Haven Children's Hospital has spread to Connecticut Children's Medical Center as well as to hospitals in Florida, Indiana, Missouri, Ohio, Texas and Virginia.

Maminta also is CEO and founder of Frangi Pangi, a company that makes hosiery for women of all colors. And she serves on the board of The Friends of Yale-New Haven Children's Hospital, is an advisory member of the Arts Council of Greater New Haven, and is a member of the Junior League of Greater New Haven.

She recently took time out of a busy afternoon – ducking into an unoccupied room at the television station to sip some tea and chat – to share what she loves best about her work and the city she calls home.

Q: What is a typical work day like?

A: I get up around 6:30. I do some time on the stepper when I'm watching the morning news headlines. I take a quick look online because I need to know what's going on before I walk into the newsroom. As soon as I get into the newsroom, I start reading the scripts for the 9 a.m. newscast. I do my hair and makeup – yes, we do our own hair and our own makeup! After that, I make my calls to set up my medical stories [I'm working on] and any health news that might be breaking that day. Usually I have a shoot already set up that I do after the 9 a.m. show. After my [work] day, I have a lot of public appearances. It's not unusual for me to be rushing out of work to be getting to an event that is obviously very well worth it – usually a nonprofit event.

Q: What led you to a career in reporting?

A: I wanted to be a doctor originally. My dad's a doctor, and wanted us all to be doctors. Keep in mind, I'm an immigrant from the Philippines. In college, I decided that wasn't for me. I graduated with a major in political science and a minor in business. [I moved to Washington, D.C.] and became administrative assistant to Ursula Meese, whose husband was U.S. attorney general under President Ronald Reagan. Just through the years working with them, I obviously was exposed to the media and just felt I could do a better job of reporting the facts. A lot of the coverage about them just

was not accurate, and I thought I could do a better job. [After internships in the news industry] my first job was in North Carolina as a general assignment reporter. Once I got into it, I realized that I really, really enjoyed news. Initially I wanted to be a sports reporter but I realized I could make a bigger difference in news. I just wanted to make a bigger impact in people's lives.

Q: Are there any stories you've covered that have really stuck with you?

A: It's my storytelling as a medical reporter that probably gives the most satisfaction. What I really love most is when someone tells me that they learned something from me. What it tells me is that the viewers are paying attention and I'm really making a difference to people. I'm blessed that I have the ability to do this. My job is to take a complex story and simplify it so people at home can understand.

Q: What spurred you to start Frangi Pangi?

A: My frustration at not finding hosiery that would match my skin tone. You want that barelegged look, and I could not find that tone that matched mine. My product fulfills a need. [Frangi Pangi hosiery comes in 10 different shades, plus black.]

Q: Where's your favorite place to grab lunch in New Haven?

A: Zoi's and P&M deli. I know the owners; they've become friends. And I love Olea for dinner.

Q: What are your hobbies?

A: I watch sports, a lot of sports. I watch it all. I watch baseball, basketball, golf, soccer, boxing. I can not tell you a sport I do not watch. I just love sports. I also love to read; I'm a voracious reader.

Q: What do you love most about spring in New Haven?

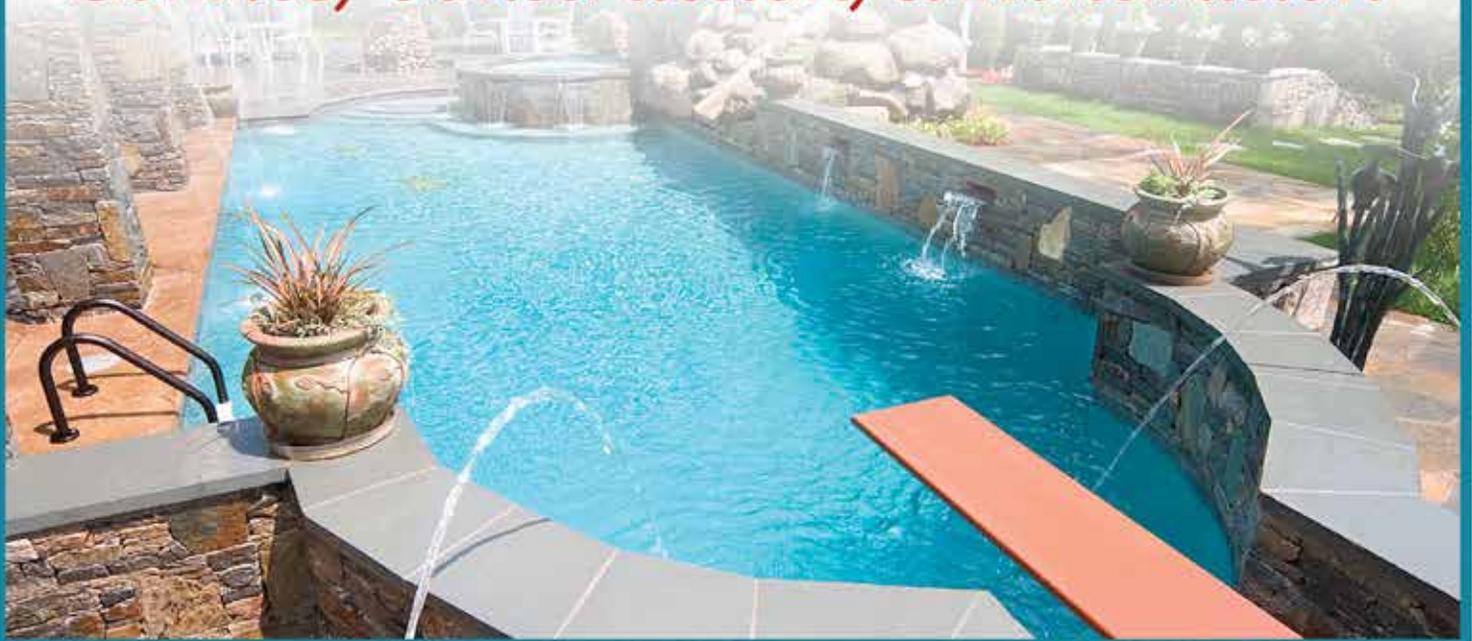
A: The biggest thing for me is I can go outside and walk and I see my neighbors again. I love seeing my neighbors. I have a great neighborhood [Westville] for that. 



A monitor shows Good Morning Connecticut co-anchor Laura Hutchinson and Maminta delivering the day's news. Typically, once she's done on air in the morning, Maminta shifts gears to focus on her medical reporting.

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Six New Ways To Be ‘Fit’

By **AMY J. BARRY**

The traditional definition of “keeping fit” has expanded over the years to include much more than working out at the gym or going on a diet. Today’s concept of fitness encompasses a holistic, mind-body-spirit approach that takes into consideration various factors that add up to a happy, healthy, meaningful life.

We spoke to six professionals in New Haven and surrounding towns to get some advice on creating mental, physical, spiritual, and financial well-being; reducing stress; cultivating positive relationships; and finding balance in our often hectic, multitasking lives.



MIND

There is a lot of research linking positive self-talk with positive mental and emotional health. And Linda G. Goodman, a clinical social worker and psychologist with a private practice in

New Haven for 25 years, has plenty of anecdotal evidence to support that theory.

Starting with such basics as eating healthy

food, drinking enough water, and exercising, there are many ways, she says, to counter negative thoughts and boost a positive frame of mind.

“Many of us go right to this harsh, critical voice in our heads,” she says. “But instead, you can tell yourself, ‘This is what I learned from this experience; this is what I can do next time.’”

Sometimes people feel they’ll be burdening others to ask for feedback, but often family and friends can help you problem solve, Goodman points out.

A simple exercise she recommends to enhance positive mood is gratitude journaling. “Think about three things you’re grateful for before you go to bed. This creates a more positive attitude that can help you relax and have more peaceful sleep,” she says.

Journaling in general, she notes, is a good way to not let the occasional bad days overshadow the good ones. “It doesn’t have to be an entire memoir,” she says, “but just writing how you’re feeling – even briefly on a calendar or your phone – can give you concrete [confirmation] that it was only a few days that weren’t great, and after that, it did get better.”

“I don’t believe anyone goes through life without ever feeling down or depressed,” she states, noting that sometimes professional help is called for. But if you can change your inner



dialogue, the anxiety won't be as intense, you can get through it quicker, and can build on that success. It's about realizing that as difficult as this moment may be, it's not forever."



BODY

Andrea Cashman, a certified yoga and Let Your Yoga Dance instructor, knows two things for sure: First, people need to keep moving their bodies throughout their lifetimes to stay physically fit. Secondly, it will be hard to do that if you see exercise as a chore, rather than something you love to do.

But working to achieve or maintain physical fitness doesn't automatically mean sweating it out at a gym. Cashman's students of all ages love the "Let Your Yoga Dance" class she offers in Milford and Orange because it gives them joy, connection, and a great workout.

"It brings together the core value of yoga, which is connecting mind, body and spirit, but in a way that makes you feel really happy and free, moving to great music," she says. "The idea is to engage without feeling like you're working at it. People in my class will say, 'It's been an hour already? Where did the time go?'"

For this class, no previous dance experience is required, only enthusiasm. "The dance steps are not complicated and there's room for improvisation. It's about having fun and finding that spark."

But no matter what activity you choose, the bottom line, she says, is to keep moving – for instance, she recommends dancing while cooking. "First, find a play list for yourself, some music that inspires you to dance around while you're waiting those five minutes for your pasta to boil or those 25 minutes for rice to cook," she says.

"If you don't move, you might as well start burying yourself," she warns. "Your body has to move, otherwise it thinks it's time to shut down. Sometimes it's hard to find what sparks you, but you've got to keep searching."



RELATIONSHIPS

Forming and maintaining healthy relationships are keys to a happy personal life and a satisfying work life.

Daryn David, a clinical psychologist and leadership development coach, has plenty of experience in this area – both in her private practice, where she helps couples navigate and enhance their relationships, and as assistant

clinical professor in the psychiatry department at Yale School of Medicine, where she teaches courses focused on interpersonal relationships.

“We are fundamentally social creatures from the time we’re born, wired to relate to others,” David says. “To live in an authentic, fulfilled and meaningful way, it’s about having relationships that are healthy and giving and supportive.”

David makes the point that although social support is necessary when times are difficult “as a source of solace and to buoy us,” relationships are not just for when we’re feeling down, and they’re about giving as much as receiving.

“We know ourselves through relationships and they can be so life-affirming and enriching when we can be of service to others, and connect with others,” she says. “It can be in our families, the workplace, the community – where we’re contributing in a positive way, helping, listening, teaching a skill.”

Work relationships present different challenges than do personal relationships, she notes. But what matters is “working toward the goal of creating relationships that are functional and whole and allow you to get the work done in a fulfilling way that meets whatever the matrix is.”

At home or on the job, she says, “The degree to which there is trust and a feeling of psychological safety to say what you want to say can be critical in allowing people to feel healthy and whole in their relationships.”



FINANCES

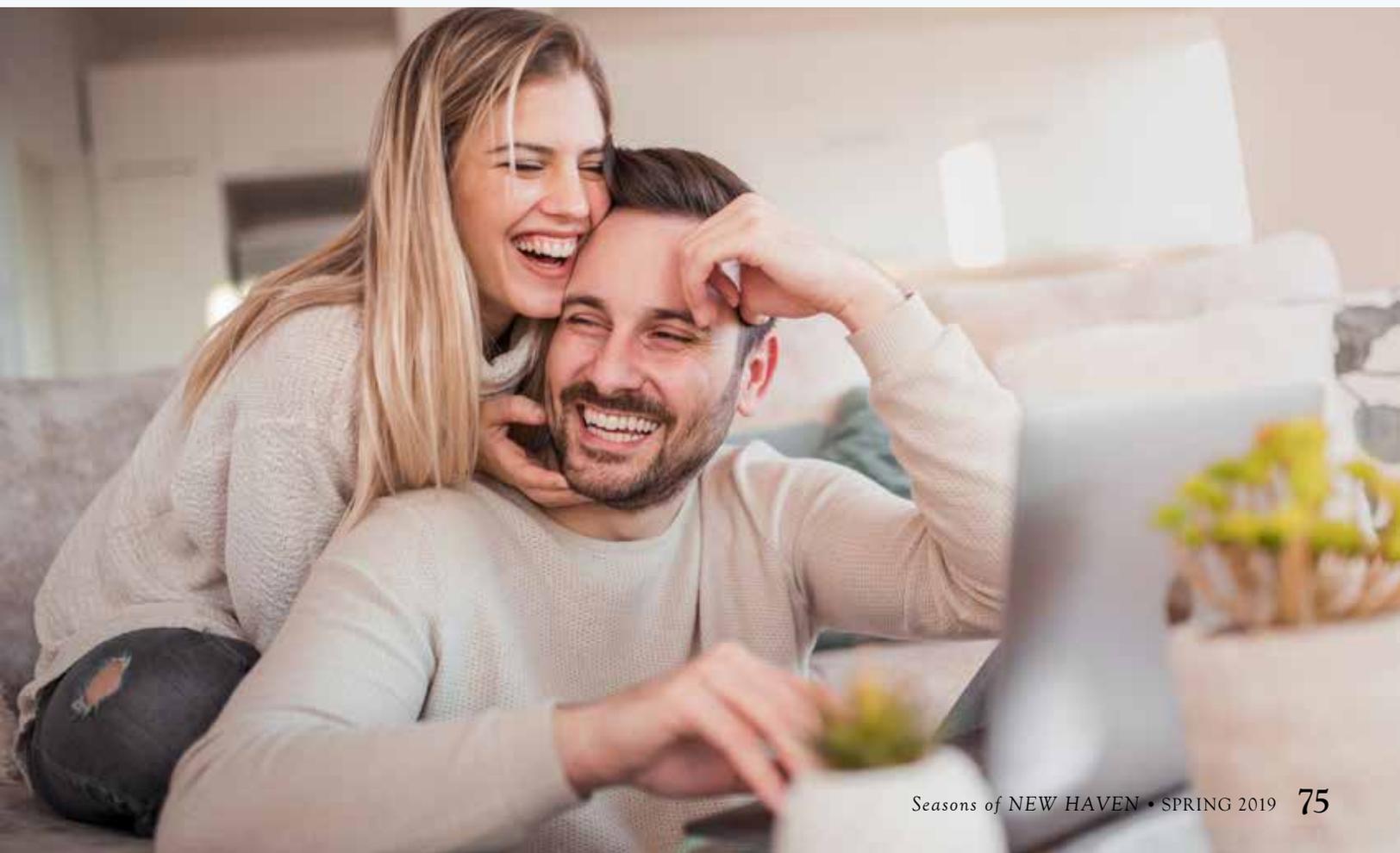
Carl Casper, vice president of customer advocacy at Connex Credit Union, headquartered in North Haven, works with people of all ages and incomes. Connex, a nonprofit cooperative, provides members with financial literacy tools.

He understands that financial fitness doesn’t require a huge investment portfolio, but it does require some foresight and planning.

At the top of Casper’s list is the simple exercise of creating a budget. “It’s sound financial planning,” he says. “Understanding what’s coming in and going out, and then everything flows off of that.”

Next, it’s time to look at debt: mortgage, car loans, credit cards, etc. “You’d rather be earning interest on your money, so try to reduce debt as best you can. in a measured way,” he says.

Third is having a savings plan – knowing how much you want to save and how you want to allocate funds, whether it’s for a new car, vacation, college education. The plan should include a rainy-day fund for unplanned expenses. Long-term savings are an integral part of a financial plan, Casper says.



“It’s never too early to think about saving for retirement. And there are a variety of ways to achieve that end,” he says, noting that whatever your income and assets, there are professionals to help you craft a financial plan, as well as online tools to help you do it on your own.

There are also emotional aspects of financial fitness.

“Working toward maintaining open and honest communications with your spouse about finances is important,” he says, “and ties back into your well-being and peace of mind, and greater quality of life.”

All in all, Casper suggests taking a big picture view.

“You plan before you run a marathon. That’s how your financial life is. It’s not a sprint, it’s a marathon. You need building blocks to get you to the end of the day.”

BALANCE

As a busy mom, therapist, and business owner, Venice Garner-Moore, a licensed social worker and owner of Embracing Your Difference LLC, understands that finding balance is a critical component of staying

physically and emotionally fit.

“Where we live, everything is fast-paced; there’s hardly any down time. You have to pay attention to that and create time for yourself,” she says.

“If you’re a mom, you can’t be just a mom,” she adds. “You need to have other things to fulfill you to avoid depression, burnout, major stress.” This includes authentic friendships with “someone who knows you and can challenge you personally and professionally,” she says, “and you can laugh and be free with, and who holds you accountable to doing the things you’re passionate about.”

Sometimes it’s harder for men to reach out, she observes, but it’s equally important for them to not let work become all-consuming. Garner-Moore suggests men join a league or a club where they can connect to other men, volunteer, or become a mentor. “It gives you purpose, and when you pour into others, you’re really pouring into yourself, too,” she says.

Vacations are also high on her balancing act list. “It doesn’t have to be extravagant and cost a lot of money,” she says. Go to the nearest town and stay in a hotel, take yourself out to dinner, read a good book. Turn the power off

for a little bit.”

Balance is always a work in progress. “You have to take moments to do a little more in one area, and a little less in another,” she says. “We’re always going to have things we need to do. It helps to be vulnerable enough to realize you’re in a place where you don’t have balance – and admit when you’re struggling.”

Whether you find it in a higher power, in nature, in art, “stay aligned with your core beliefs,” Garner-Moore says. “It all helps.”



SPIRIT

A spiritual practice is part of a well-rounded fitness routine. Today’s definition of spirituality can range from organized religious worship to a walk in the woods to meditation on a yoga mat.

For Ameya Krishnan, meditation is a wonderful way to nurture her own spiritual

needs and those of her students. She has been practicing SKY (Sudarshan Kriya® Yoga) meditation since 2008 and teaching it since 2015.

Krishnan says that regular meditation has been proven to have a positive impact on physical and mental well-being. “The core technique brings the rhythms of the body, mind, and emotions into harmony with the innermost self,” she says.

As a clinical social worker treating trauma in young children at Yale Child Study Center, Krishnan says, “my work is psychologically demanding and meditation enables me to stay grounded and centered, to leave work and leave it at work, and it protects me from feeling burned-out.”

What makes SKY unique, she says, is “it’s easy to practice and is effective even when the mind is restless or caught up in emotions. So it’s a great technique for people who have tried to meditate and feel it’s a real struggle.”

It also can have huge benefits in as little as 20 minutes a day, but any amount of time is better than nothing, she stresses. “People should start where they can. Naturally over time, it becomes a priority and a habit, like brushing our teeth,” she says.

Ideally, Krishnan suggests designating a quiet area for meditation in your home where you won’t be interrupted and turning off the phone. “That said, people can meditate on trains and places with noise all around them. The beauty of mediation is being able to find stillness within, in the midst of all the activity we’re surrounded by.”





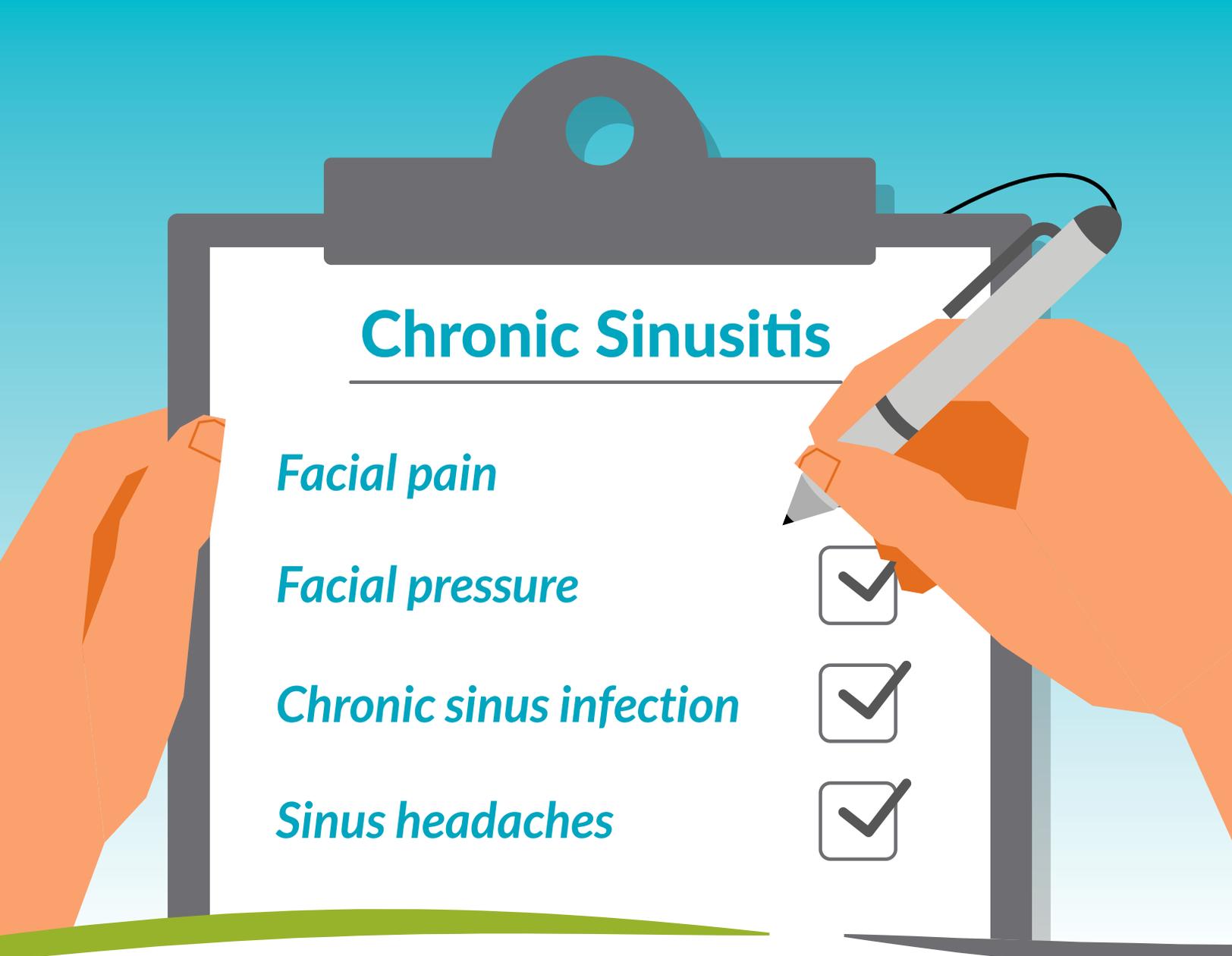
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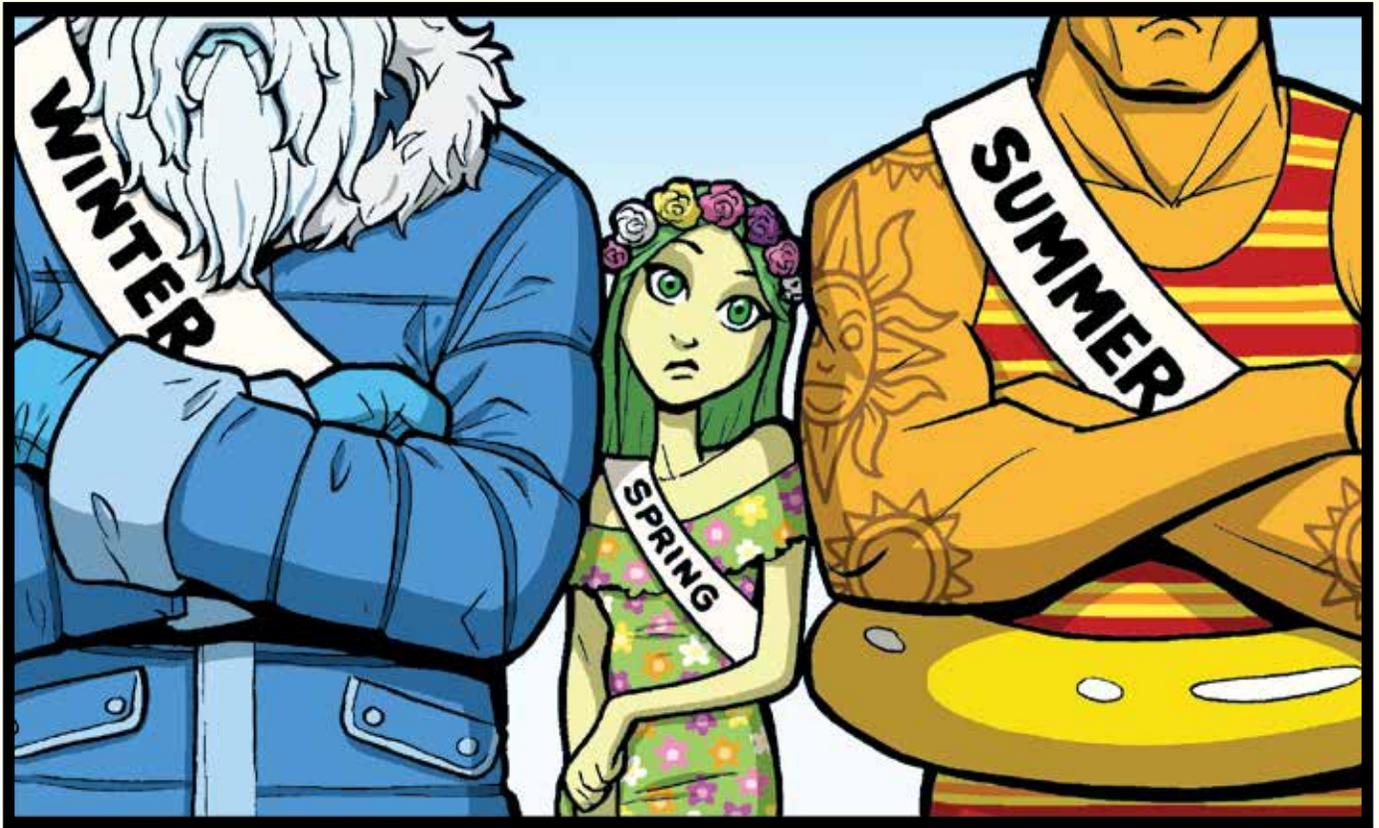
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The Worst of Times

My daughter tells me that spring is her favorite season. This, of course, is ridiculous, but she's 10 years old. I can forgive her foolishness because she still has a great deal to learn. What can I expect from a person who won't try macaroni and cheese and still tries to rationalize with her six-year-old brother?

We all suffer from naiveté from time to time.

Spring is a compelling concept but does not come close to measuring up to its claims. Conduct a Google image search of the word "springtime."

It's ridiculous.

The screen is filled with impossibly

green fields of the most remarkable colors you've ever seen. Sunshine and butterflies and honeybees. Smiling children lying in swaths of pristine grass.

Nonsense.

Spring is, of course, the worst season of the year. The least defined season. Barely a season at all. Spring is the bastard stepchild of seasons. It's the season still living in its parents' basement well into adulthood, uncertain about what to do with its life.

Spring is like a philosophy major. It doesn't know what it wants to be.

"But Dad," my daughter counters. "What about all of those springtime flowers?"

Flowers? The parts of spring that aren't buried in three feet of snow or a

foot of mud might have the odd blossom, but the summer and fall are filled with flowers. The flowers that finally appear at the end of spring... they are everywhere in the summer. Wildflowers and roses and mums and more.

Besides, the idealized notion of spring lasts about nine minutes. It's more often than not overrun by winter and overtaken by summer. Snow on the ground in April. Beach days in June. Honest-to-goodness spring, with all its flowering beauty, probably lasts about three days every year.

How can you be known for flowers if it's still snowing during your season?

Fall has foliage. It's got an iron-clad contract with the trees. No leaf even thinks about changing color until

autumn has arrived.

Winter has snow. Skiing and sledding and snowmen are all firmly affixed in the wintry months.

Summer has surf and sand. Bathing suits and beach towels.

Spring?

Spring is a transition from snow to slush to mud to something marginally more delightful for half a second or so.

What does spring really have?

Baseball begins in spring, but let's not fool ourselves. Baseball players are called the "Boys of Summer" for a reason, and the World Series is known as the "Fall Classic."

Easter lands squarely in spring, which might mean something to those who celebrate this holiday, but the rest of the seasons have far more impressive holidays of their own.

Winter has Christmas and New Year's Day. A formidable one-two punch. Throw in Valentine's Day and Presidents' Day, which offers a day off for many, and winter's holiday lineup is second to none.

Fall has Halloween and Thanksgiving. Another impressive one-

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two combination. And unlike Easter, Thanksgiving is celebrated by almost every American regardless of their religion and often comes with a blessed four-day weekend.

And summer? Besides the glory of summer vacation for children everywhere, summer begins with a holiday (Memorial Day), ends with a holiday (Labor Day) and has a holiday smack dab in the middle, too (Fourth of July). It's got fireworks, parades, backyard cookouts, and pool parties.

Easter is nice, but c'mon. Unless you're one of the few who get Good Friday off, it doesn't even offer its celebrants a day off from work.

So what does spring really have? It has a story. A story of flowers bursting forth from the thawing tundra. Trees returning to their gloriously green states. The elimination of winter coats and hats and mittens, and all of this is true.

Maybe. Briefly. Almost imperceptibly.

Obviously, my daughter is mistaken. The season she's chosen as her favorite is hardly a season at all. It's a sloppy buffer between two well-defined, legitimate seasons. Spring is a grifter. A con artist. It's a season that offers the promise of excitement and renewal but more often than not fails to deliver on any of its guarantees.

Spring is approaching, and my advice to all you springtime lovers is simple:

Don't blink or you might miss it.



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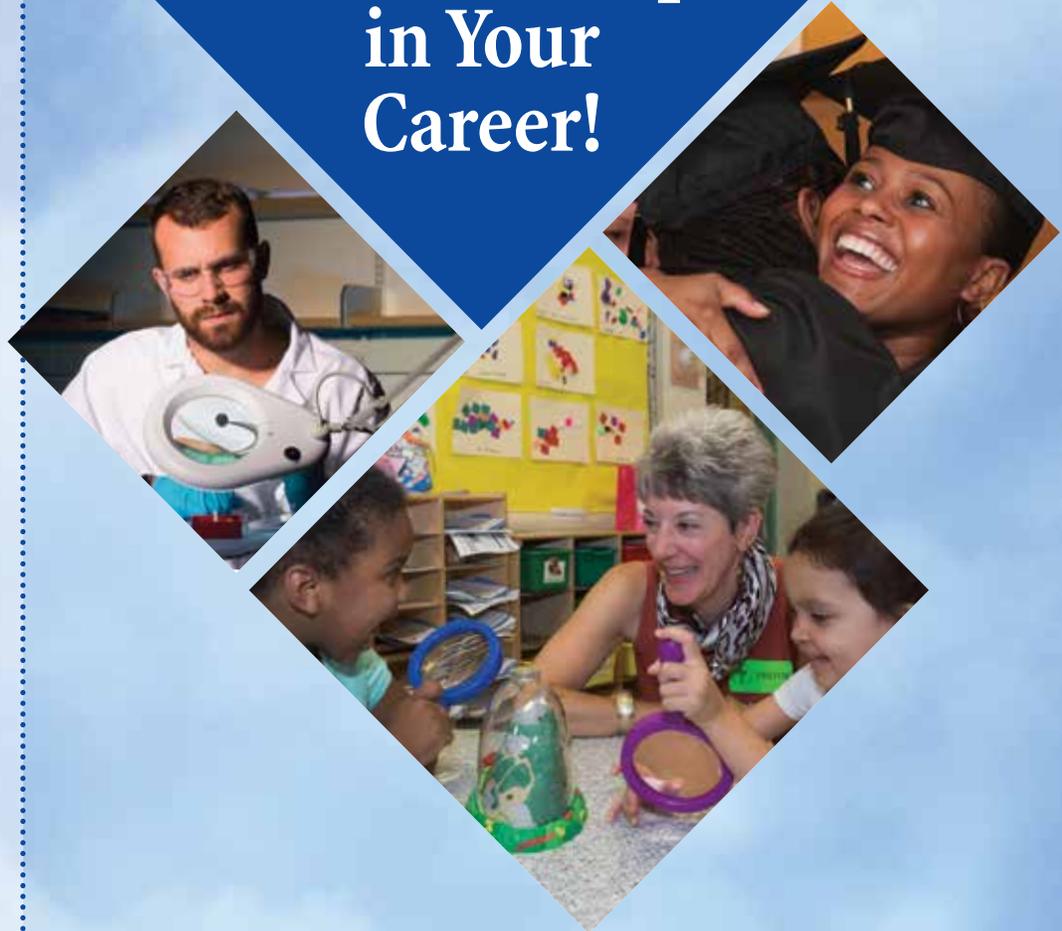
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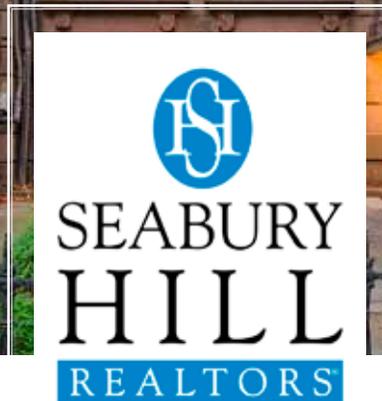


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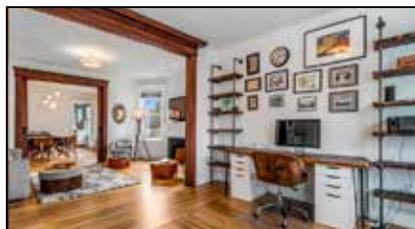
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