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*magazine*



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23

# june

## GUEST COMMENTARY

*Lauren Cobello*

Focus your priorities on those things most dear ..... 6

## PAST EVENTS

Party for the Pantries ..... 8

Crawfish for a cause & Syracuse Orchestra Gala ..... 10

## WBOC LEADING LADY

*Emily Tills* ..... 14

## ON THE COVER

*Lexi Spadaro*

Mrs. New York International is the Queen of her Castle ..... 23

## HEALTHY WOMAN

*Dr. Suchitra Kavety*

Mind. Body. Wellness. "It's time for me." ..... 18

## OUR HEALTHY MEN

Men's health through the decades ..... 28

## OUT & ABOUT

The Hive Café ..... 30

## HEALTHY EATING

*Chef Eric Rose*

Navigating picky eating: A guide for family harmony ..... 34

## INSPIRE

Cady Henry ..... 38

Rebecca Oppedisano ..... 40

Rosemary Lepiane ..... 42

MOVERS & SHAKERS ..... 44

UPCOMING EVENTS ..... 46



40



18



14



38



30



32



32



6



28

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Lauren Cobello

## Focus your priorities on those things most dear

There is a pervasive myth among female business owners and entrepreneurs: The notion that you must have it all together. There is a lie that life must be in perfect balance for me to be truly successful. I believed that myth for many years until the failure of not having it all together became too heavy for me to bear, and I crashed and burned.

A little background on me. I am the founder and CEO of Leverage with Media PR, a million dollar PR agency that works with celebrity clients such as Ryan Serhant and Yvie Oddly from RuPaul's drag race. We also represent some of the world's most renowned podcasters, speakers and entrepreneurs, assisting them in launching their books. I have five full-time employees, three part-time employees and am a single mom of four.

Prior to starting my agency many of you may have seen me on the cover of *Syracuse Woman's Magazine* 10 years ago as the coupon lady. I used to run a popular coupon website called *Iamthatlady.com*. I've been a backup co-host on *Bridge Street* for 12 years and a regular part of the Syracuse entrepreneur community for 15 years. I sold my coupon website two years ago and started my agency, and we've quickly become the go-to PR agency for non-fiction entrepreneurial authors in the US. I also run Mastermind Groups for women interested in building successful companies and brands.

I was an entrepreneur first, then became a mom. I've built two million dollar companies while birthing children, nursing, running back and forth to school, plays, practices, games and I've had to juggle so many balls. There was a time where the pressure of having it all together paralyzed me. Why? Because I believed the lie that I had to have it all together.

Where does this pressure come from? Historically, women have been expected to fulfill domestic roles as caretakers and homemakers. When women entered the workforce and entrepreneurial spaces, they faced the dual expectations of excelling in business while still maintaining their traditional roles at home. The media also contributes to this myth, showcasing females who can perfectly juggle everything in their lives with ease. Having clean homes, freshly cooked meals every night, happy children and ending the night relaxed with a glass of red wine.

My nights usually look like, answering emails at stop signs in between lacrosse practice pickups, throwing something in the crockpot or "Doordashing" fast food to the kids still at home while I am driving around, and taking client calls at my kids' sports games. All to come home to a house full of laundry and dirty dishes. Writing this may make other women judge me, "Oh my gosh... she needs to stop doing those things." But that is where part of the problem lies - in women judging other women for the way that they balance their lives. I bet that more women can relate to my schedule than not.

We all have the choice to either feel like a failure as business owners or learn how to juggle these balls appropriately. My goal in life is not have balance but to make sure that the most important things aren't dropped when juggling all the things. There are two types of balls that I juggle in my life and my business.

*Continued on page 7*

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## GUEST COMMENTARY

**Focus your priorities** FROM PAGE 19

There are glass and plastic balls. The glass balls are the most important things. The things in my life that I cannot drop. These things are: my finances, my self care, my children and their wants and needs, feeding my kids, my relationships with my boyfriend and my friends, my mental health and sleep. When the glass balls drop, they shatter. They are hard to pick back up.

Then there are the plastic balls. The plastic balls are things that I can drop and pick back up at any time. They bounce but don't break. They may roll under the couch, the cats may play with them, I may lose them for a little bit. At any time, I can pick them back up, but no damage is done when they are dropped. Some examples of these plastic balls represent: A dirty house, a homecooked meal every night, laundry undone.

My goal every day is to not drop the glass balls. Those are too important. I can drop the plastic ones and pick them back up, but as I go throughout my busy and full days, I say to myself, "which balls are glass and which are plastic? What can I drop and what do I need to hold up?" When I

am out around the country speaking at events, I share this story often and have the audience write their list down of the things in their lives are glass balls and plastic balls. I tell them to let the plastic balls down, stop juggling them because they are getting too heavy. We only have a certain capacity in life.

We get to choose as moms and women what we juggle. Will you continue to stress yourself by juggling the plastic balls in place of the glass ones? Let yourself put the plastic ones down and pick up the most important ones, the glass balls. Don't let them drop. Balance is a swearword in our house. It doesn't exist. It's a myth that so many of us still believe. And that myth keeps us from growing in our businesses and thriving.

So, if you see me out and about with my kids smiling, know that I have a pile full of laundry and probably a mess back at home. And I am 100 percent okay with that, because my glass balls are up in the air and everyone that is important to me is happy. That makes me successful more than anything else!

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# Party for the Pantries

Bright sunshine and the best views in Onondaga County were the backdrop for the Onondaga East Chamber's Party for the Pantries, held May 7 at Heritage Hill Brewhouse in Pompey. The event featured a silent auction, live music and a smorgasbord of smoked beef, chicken and pork. Proceeds from the party help support the FM Food Pantry and Heaven's Pantry in Minoa, both of which have seen an increase in need for their services.









### Crawfish for a cause

The local nonprofit Operation Northern Comfort once again hosted its flagship fundraiser, the Syracuse Crawfish Festival, in Clinton Square on Saturday, May 4. Proceeds from the 17th annual festival support the mission of Operation Northern Comfort (ONC) to provide assistance in the form of neighbors helping neighbors within Central New York as well as natural disaster relief in other parts of the United States. The main draw is the Cajun-style crawfish and shrimp flown in fresh straight from the waters of the Gulf Coast the day before the event. *Photos by Rebecca Flanagan*





# Syracuse Orchestra Gala

The Marriott Hotel Syracuse was the scene for the Syracuse Orchestra Gala honoring David Ridings for his generous support over many years of the arts in Central New York. The highlight of the evening was the performance of four of David's favorite pieces by the Syracuse Orchestra. Both Sean O'Loughlin and Larry Loh conducted the Offenbach, Secunda and Dvorak pieces.





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# SMART FAMILY SKINCARE

Jena Murphy, Certified Nurse Practitioner at The Cosmetic Queens

With summer on the horizon, selecting the right sunscreen can be perplexing. But fear not! By the end of this brief article, you'll have a clearer understanding of how to choose sunscreen that suits you and your family, ensuring you're ready to bask in the Syracuse sunshine (finally)!

Why sunscreen, you ask? Well, aside from keeping your skin looking youthful and radiant, it's your frontline defense against skin cancer. Shielding your skin from harmful radiation, which can lead to skin cancers (basal cell, squamous cell, and melanoma) is paramount. At *The Cosmetic Queens*, my colleague (and bestie) Stacey and I field countless queries about anti-aging, and one of the top contributors to premature aging is sun damage. Hence, SPF should be your daily ally, the final touch to your morning routine.

Sun damage is cumulative, beginning with that very first tan (or burn). Teaching children the importance of regular sunscreen application is crucial in mitigating their risk of skin cancer in the future. I like to make sun safety enjoyable for my kids by following the "S's" mantra: Slip on a shirt, Slap on sunscreen, and Slap on a hat! Additionally, I'm a fan of the brand Blue Lizard because its bottle cap changes color when exposed to UV rays, providing a playful reminder for kids to protect their skin. And parents, lead by example by applying your own sunscreen, demonstrating to your children how "cool" it is to be sun-safe!

When selecting a sunscreen, prioritize two key factors: SPF 30+ (or higher) and broad-spectrum protection. SPF, or Sun Protection Factor, indicates the degree of protection against UV rays, with SPF 30 filtering out approximately 97% of these harmful rays. Broad-spectrum sunscreen shields you from both UVA and UVB rays. UVA rays, which penetrate deeper into the skin, contribute to wrinkles, brown spots, and overall skin damage. UVB rays primarily cause sunburn. And while some sun exposure is necessary for vitamin D synthesis, the bulk of our vitamin D intake should come from a balanced diet, not from harmful UV rays. Remember, "water-resistant" doesn't equate to waterproof, so reapplication after swimming or sweating is crucial!

So, which sunscreen is safest? The one you'll use consistently! There are two main types: physical (mineral-based) and chemical-based. Physical sunscreen acts as a shield, reflecting harmful rays away from the skin and is ideal for kids, sensitive skin, and conditions like melasma. Look for ingredients like titanium dioxide and zinc oxide in physical sunscreens. Chemical sunscreens absorb UV rays like a sponge, converting them into heat and releasing them from the body. Ingredients such as avobenzone, octinoxate, and oxybenzone characterize chemical sunscreens. Many sunscreens combine both physical and chemical ingredients. When in doubt, consult reputable sources like The Skin Cancer Foundation for recommended products, our makeup stand, one in the car, and another in our purse, ensuring accessibility at any time!



For the anti-aging generation, you might also want to consider sunscreens that contain antioxidants like vitamin C and E, as they can help combat free radicals generated by UV exposure and blue light, thereby supporting anti-aging efforts. Stacey and I love Colorescience sunscreens. One popular product from Colorescience is their Sunforgettable Total Protection Brush-On Shield SPF 50. This innovative sunscreen comes in a convenient brush applicator format, making it easy to apply and reapply throughout the day. It's designed to be used over makeup and provides a sheer, matte finish, making it ideal for touch-ups on the go. It's also fantastic for reaching areas that can be tricky with cream-based sunscreen, such as the hairline. We often joke with patients that we're so fond of it, we keep one on our makeup stand, one in the car, and another in our purse, ensuring accessibility at any time!

Stacey and I advise applying sunscreen 15 minutes before heading outdoors and reapplying every two hours while in the sun. For the face, dispense sunscreen onto your middle and ring fingers and apply evenly, remembering to cover your ears and neck. For the body, a shot glass-sized amount (approximately 1 ounce) should suffice for full coverage. With spray sunscreen, hold the nozzle about an inch from your skin, avoiding the face to prevent inhalation. Remember to rub it in and apply a second coat for thorough protection!

## JENA'S SUN SAFETY TIPS:

Consult your pediatrician before using sunscreen on infants under six months old. Seek shade between 10 am and 4 pm, the peak hours for harmful rays. Opt for SPF 30 or higher and reapply every 2 hours (more frequently if swimming or sweating). Maximize protection with protective clothing, hats, and sunglasses, and steer clear of indoor tanning beds at all costs! Come have your full body skin check at *The Cosmetic Queens* to ensure your skin is in good health and to go over any of your dermatologic concerns.



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Jena Murphy,  
Certified Nurse Practitioner  
at The Cosmetic Queens



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## EMILY TILLS

**Keeping clients healthy for the long haul**

Alyssa Dearborn

Weight loss is a common wellness goal that people make for themselves as part of their new year's resolutions, in preparation for a wedding or class reunion, or for any other number of reasons. The Center for Disease Control estimates that 56.4% of women and 41.7% of men have tried to lose weight over the past 12 months.

But these dieting habits commonly focus on the number shown on the scale, the image in the mirror, or the size of a pair of jeans and less on nutritional wellness. Emily Tills, a registered dietitian and the owner of Nourished with Emily, works with people every day trying to meet their personal goals. However, she wants her work to inspire her clients to think about their wellness as a lifelong commitment.

"When I was in high school, I had an eating disorder," Emily said when asked about the beginnings of her nutritionist career. In the span of just three months, she had lost 40 pounds and began to get treatment from a registered dietitian.

"I was super nervous going into that appointment, especially since food is very personal for everyone," Emily said. "To be able to go into an appointment and meet with a registered dietitian and have it be such a warm and welcoming environment, that inspired me to become a registered dietitian. I wanted to help other people in that same way [my dietitian] helped me."

Although most of her clients seek out her services for weight loss, Emily is able to help people reach their goals without forming dangerous habits. With the positive results she had in her own experience with a dietitian, Emily could see the need for men and women to build healthy nutrition habits to stave off dangerous health conditions and avoid struggling with weight loss their entire lives.

"As someone who had that eating disorder, food was the enemy," Emily said. "And there's so many people that are around us every day... that struggle and fear food when it doesn't have to be that way. You can still eat the food that you like and not have to fear them at the same time, to be able to have that balance and not have it be something that turns into an eating disorder."

In her practice, Emily focuses on building sustainable habits and teaching people about their food and how to navigate it so that they can lose weight and keep it off without having to track their food and without having to worry about how many points something has.

"We really want to help people learn how to eat for the next 90 years, not just for the next 90 days," she said. "Nutrition is really something that we should be focusing on now and focusing on consistently. I firmly believe that everyone should have a registered dietitian in their life helping them to make change."

According to the National Eating Disorder Association, 9% of Americans – about 28.8 million people – will experience an eating disorder at some point in their life. Nourished with Emily does not

work with active disordered eating patients, but the business sees many clients who have past experience with disordered eating patterns.

"I see more people who had a history of dieting in their past or have a history of eating disorders when they were younger. They [may] know the signs for themselves and they're far beyond in their recovery where it's not so much of a risk for them anymore. But they don't want to go down that path anymore. They don't want that to be a risk for them. They want to build a healthy relationship with food and not have it turn into an eating disorder."

Although not all diets turn into a full-fledged eating disorder, the pressure to lose weight as fast as possible leads to many people developing unhealthy and misinformed nutritional habits. Many of this misinformation about nutrition and dieting, according to Emily, comes from unqualified individuals spreading misinformation on the internet. At best, misinformation is a silly social media trend.

At worst, misinformation is a danger to one's physical health. In contrast, working with a professional nutritionist like Emily helps clients form healthy habits.

"Eating is something that we have to do every single day," she said. "Eating is tied into our energy levels and our health today, tomorrow, and long term, too. There's a lot of pressure from society and especially social media. Then there's also people who aren't qualified to be talking about nutrition stepping outside of their lane and into our lane, which tends to border on advice that can actually harm people more than help people."

"In the 90s, there was that huge low-fat craze. Well, that also triggered higher intake of carbohydrates, which then triggered more diabetes. Now we're in this huge low-carb craze where people having more instances of fatty liver disease, high lipid levels, and high cholesterol because of the result of eating higher fat diets... I think it's a combination of bad information that's out there and unqualified people giving advice [as well as] the pressures on social media."

As a business owner, Emily has found essential support and encouragement through the WBOC. Through the WBOC's resources and events, she has had the opportunity to make connections and build valuable friendships.

"WBOC has not only helped me in expanding my network, the WBOC has also helped bring me some great, valuable friendships. There are women in that group where I go in and get coffee multiple times a month or have a call and help keep each other accountable," Emily said. "There's another woman who I'll go and get all of my brand pictures done with. So, it's not only helped me as far as extending my network, but also to help build those valuable friendships that keep me engaged and inspired and accountable, to continue to work on my business and grow."



Clients go to Emily with their own goals in mind. Emily's clients may want to lose weight, form better eating habits, or build the nutritional foundation for a healthy future. But Emily also has her own goals for her clients.

"Our goal with our clients is really to help them build that nutritional foundation so they can go into any eating situation," she said. "Whether they're planning their meals for the week [or] they're going out to eat, they feel confident, they know how to build a healthy plate where they're getting all the nutrients they need, where they actually feel satisfied. They know and understand what their hunger and fullness cues are...And [they] understand why we're pairing certain foods together, what to look for to make a healthy meal and to be able to apply that to their own lives." SWM

"We really want to help people learn how to eat for the next 90 years, not just for the next 90 days."

—Emily Tills



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Julia remains dumfounded that with all the TICK news coverage, and LYME DISEASE information on TV, this isn't promoted as the first line of defense. She fully believes it should be subsidized in areas where there are known high levels of TICKS with Lyme bacteria.

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Dr. Suchitra Kavety

**D**id you know that women make over 80 percent of the family and health decisions today. It's time to take note of this and consider what impact this may have on your own overall health and wellbeing. Don't continue to put off your own care. So many times, over the years, I have had that patient arrive in my office with a particular problem that has been ongoing for years and just not addressed. Sometimes these are very serious concerns.

It's 2024, and what a unique world we now live in. Today, the family unit no longer consists of the partner and children.

Today we often have very extended families, including stepchildren, former partners, and their families, and don't forget our aging parents, who you are now caring for much more actively in one way or another. The household has grown and no longer do the 24 hours in a day give you enough time to care for them as well as your own needs.

Running to gymnastics or baseball, lacrosse or dance, attending a school musical event, checking on Mom or Dad, who still live independently, or at the nursing home, or with you at your home, getting dinner ready for the whole family... how do we make the day's activities all fit into those 24 hours?

I thought I would touch on a couple items that I think are worthwhile to consider. They have helped me and I bet they can help you.

First, let's talk about those true medical concerns that we think are OK to put off. Abnormal uterine bleeding. Please don't put this off. If you are nearing menopause or already there and suddenly start having unexpected bleeding, please call your provider. After a year of no bleeding, this needs to be considered abnormal and needs attention. Right away. Not next week or next month.

Bleeding that is too long and too heavy is likewise a warning concern and needs attention. Too often, we will put this off because there are too many other things that need our attention - the above mentioned kids activities, checking on the parents, and getting the car serviced, etc. The list goes on and on.

Uterine cancer is one of the most treatable types of cancer a woman can get, but delay in diagnosis leads to advancement of the cancer and usually poorer outcomes, when straightforward hysterectomy is almost always curative. And today can be performed outpatient with very rapid recoveries.

What about taking care of oneself do we not understand. Even the simplest task like taking multivitamin or calcium supplements. Two calcium tablets daily with vitamin D, not only improves overall wellbeing in so many ways, but it is also quite preventative for development of osteoporosis. Most of us do not get enough vitamin D, and we need this to absorb calcium for our bone health.

Osteoporosis and the consequence of a fall can be the most expensive part of our health. In fact, studies have shown that we spend more money during the last 30 days of life on health care, surrounding consequences of falls from osteoporosis than compared to any other time of life. Taking vitamin D, calcium and exercise can be very beneficial in keeping your bones strong and preventing that fracture when we do fall as we age.

And, obviously, I struggle with finding the time for exercise, as we all do. Often, I just say I can't do it. Or it hurts too much. The aches and pains. But exercise daily or at least three to four times per week is so beneficial. It can help with the dreaded weight gain in that perimenopause/menopausal time. It can help with getting rid of those last few baby pounds that we can't seem to shed. And it can help with overall mood and sleep. Who wouldn't want that?

And even better than going to the gym to work out for 30 to 40 minutes each day is yoga, an even better choice. It gives me that respite from the world of stress we all live in and is even better than using that elliptical machine for 30 minutes at the gym that I just can't seem to make it to. So many classes are available, and often can be completed in the quiet of your own home, online.

But here's an even better idea. What about taking the kids with you for a brief walk in the neighborhood. OUTSIDE with the kids. NO cell phones. NO Tik Tok, Facebook, Gamebox or all the other web-based options and games that our kids can't seem to detach from. Maybe we struggle ourselves, from detaching as well.

So, I think we have talked about a bunch of items. From the abnormal bleeding and urgent issues that need attention, to our own wellbeing. Vitamin D and calcium supplementation to prevent osteoporosis, and all the sequelae associated with this. And even more importantly, how to disconnect from those devices for my children and myself. Share some face-to-face time with the kids outside and feel better, look better and be better. You are truly the most important part of this family unit that keeps us all going. We need you. Take care of yourself. *SWM*

*Dr. Suchitra Kavety is an obstetrics and gynecology specialist in Syracuse, NY and has over 26 years of experience in the medical field. She is affiliated with St. Joseph's Hospital Health Center.*





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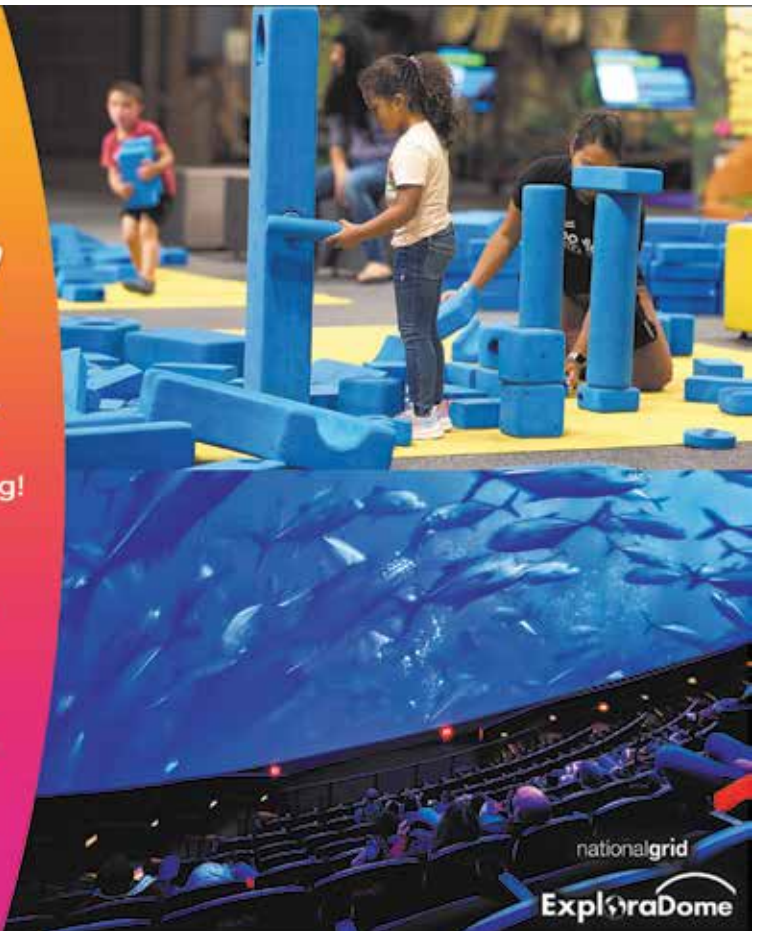
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# LEXI SPADARO

## Mrs. New York International is the Queen of her Castle

Maggie Nerz Iribarne

“The crown and the sash are beautiful things, but I want people to see who I am inside.”

—Lexi Spadaro



Photo by Alice G. Patterson



**Mrs. New York International** FROM PAGE 19

The alarm goes off at 6:15 Monday morning. Lexi and Cody Spadaro begin their usual well-orchestrated preparation. While Lexi dresses, Cody makes lunches and breakfasts and feeds and walks their dog. Their three and one year old sons, Easton and Axel, giggle and wriggle as Lexi dresses them and they make their way to the kitchen. After Cody leaves for his carpenter job at 7:15, Lexi feeds the cat and bunnies and prepares her own lunch before finally pouring herself a cup of coffee. By 8:00 the boys are off to the babysitters and at 9:00 Lexi is ready to welcome her second graders at Hastings-Mallory Elementary School in Central Square. All of this seems like a lot, but Lexi Spadaro is not just a wife, mother, and teacher, she is also the reigning 2024 Mrs. New York International.

Born in 1992 in Fairmount, Lexi Kerr grew up attending West Genesee schools. With her younger brother, Joshua, and their parents, Michelle and Charles, they formed a close-knit group that still enjoys vacations to Disney World, cruises and camping trips with extended family.

“My parents always told me to chase my dreams and do what made me happy,” Lexi remembers. “They gave me the opportunity to competitively figure skate for about 20 years, participate in competitive cheerleading, model, dance, participate in gymnastics, and sing! They always did whatever they could to allow me to experience anything I wanted.”

Chasing those dreams proved fruitful in other arenas. At age 15, Lexi met her future husband, the friendly and funny Cody Spadaro, at the Camillus ice skating rink where he played hockey and she skated. After high school, Lexi went on to study education at SUNY Cortland (graduating in 2014) and then pursue a master’s in early literacy from Southern New Hampshire University.

Her mother’s hairdressing career motivated Lexi to add a cosmetology license to her resume, working in that field for a number of years (She still does wedding hair and makeup on weekends). Ultimately, she felt something was missing and reconnected with her vocation teaching elementary school.



“I’ll continue to work on my platform but bring it...to new heights and reach hundreds, if not thousands of more people in hopes to continually make a difference.” —Lexi Spadaro

“The relationship I have with all of my students makes me smile and I know I’ve made a positive impact on their lives because I still have students coming to visit me years later,” she said. “That alone speaks volumes!”

Another key moment in her formative years was the realization of her father’s growing disability related to his childhood diagnosis of facioscapulohumeral muscular dystrophy, a genetic muscle disorder affecting the face, shoulder blades, upper arms, and other muscles. For many years the disease did not affect him very much, but over time it slowly progressed.

“At first, he was embarrassed and didn’t want others to know... But he slowly began to accept his condition and learn how to live life in a new way,” Lexi said. “He got a wheelchair scooter, ankle braces, and soon a chairlift. If we’re out to dinner and they fill his water cup too much, I take some sips to make it lighter for him. I hold his arm as he goes up and downstairs. I get his dinners ready when I’m with him, and so much more. The biggest challenge was when we were in public and people made fun of the way he walked. I’m now not afraid to say something and stand up for my dad.”

Lexi’s passions fused when she became involved with pageantry, specifically the International Pageants Organization. Interested in pageantry from an early age and buoyed by a friend’s involvement, she competed in smaller events, winning state, national, and international competitions. In 2017 she planned on doing the makeup for the Miss New York International Pageant and was so taken by the organization’s uniquely high standards and commitment to their contestants’ families and platforms she decided to enter the pageant herself, winning that competition and placing in the top ten of the Nationals.

“I didn’t know that I could incorporate my passion for giving back to the MDA community and educating others [about] muscular dystrophy. That discovery was the answer to my question of if I should compete,” Lexi said. “Seeing what [my father] goes through, and also knowing the financial burden it puts on families to get the medical technologies and assistance needed... pushes me to advocate for others and make a difference within the Muscular Dystrophy Association (MDA) community.”

Through this first experience with the International Pageants Organization, she realized that pageants give their participants a way to amplify their fundraising goals and efforts they would not have otherwise.

“My pageant platform, Muscle Warriors, is dedicated to fundraising and education for muscular dystrophy. I’m a certified national volunteer for the organization and before the pandemic I participated in many local events for the MDA such as the Muscle Walk, Christmas Celebration, and Fill the Boot,” Lexi said. “Since COVID shut down local offices there’s now just one national office that puts together different events, campaigns, and fundraisers. Thankfully, I’m still able to volunteer virtually for the organization and even reach out across the country!”

After her 2017 Miss New York International victory, Lexi promised herself she’d be back to compete in and hopefully win the Mrs. New York competition, and in 2024, after getting married and having her sons, that dream came true. Lexi is currently working hard to represent New York at the 2024 Mrs. International competition this summer in Nashville. Of course, it will be a family affair as Cody and the boys will come along. The crowning event happens to fall on July 27th, Lexi and Cody’s fifth anniversary, a good luck sign for sure.

“If I were to win the title of Mrs. International I would have achieved my ultimate dream,” she said. “I’ll continue to work on my platform but bring it...to new heights and reach hundreds, if not thousands of more people in hopes to continually make a difference.”

After her long workday, Lexi treasures sacred time with her husband and children playing, eating dinner (Lexi admits she is not a very good cook. Cody takes the reins in this department.), doing tubby time and reading before a 7 p.m. bedtime. She hits the gym three nights a week only after her boys are asleep.

Not too long ago she found her son Easton standing on her crown box, his weight causing it to bend a little out of shape, a good metaphor for what it’s like to be Mrs. New York. In Lexi’s house there are two closets full of gowns and a box holding a crown, but there are also Legos and clothes scattered here and there, children and animals to be fed, lesson plans to write.

“The crown and the sash are beautiful things, but I want people to see who I am inside,” she said.

Lexi hopes to boost others by her life and work. She wishes for all women to have the confidence to celebrate their inner and outer beauty and pursue their dreams. She knows that if she can impact others, then anyone who’s willing to dedicate their time, passion, and hard work can do the same. *SWM*



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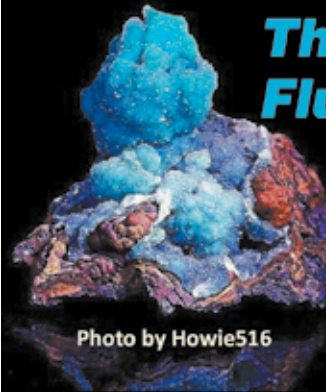


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# Men's health through the decades

According to the Department of Labor, women are the primary healthcare decision makers in the home 80 percent of the time. As such, women are often keeping track of men's health: appointments, check-ups and screenings.

June is Men's Health month, a great time to check in with the men in your life and remind them of the important steps they can take now to ensure a lifetime of good health.

At any age, being physically active, not smoking, maintaining a healthy diet and staying at a healthy weight, drinking alcohol only in moderation and taking preventative medicines if recommended by your healthcare provider can aid in men's (and women's) overall health.

The following screening recommendations are a great starting point, but a primary care provider (PCP) is an integral part of maintaining health throughout any decade.

## Men in their 30s

### GENERAL HEALTH SCREENINGS

- Yearly full check-up with a primary care provider including weight and height
  - Discuss your sleep habits at this appointment
  - Discuss a need for a thyroid screening at this appointment
- Immunizations
  - Tetanus-Diphtheria booster – needed every 10 years
  - Yearly Influenza vaccine
- Diabetes
  - Get screened if you have sustained blood pressure greater than 135/80, take medicine for high blood pressure or are at risk for diabetes (talk to your PCP)
- Cardiovascular health
  - Blood pressure screening – every two years
  - Cholesterol screening - ask your PCP if needed
- Reproductive health
  - Discuss testicular exam and STI tests with your PCP
- Eyes, ears and teeth
  - Eye exam if you have visual problems or changes in your vision
  - Hearing test – every 10 years
  - Dental exam – every 6 months
- Skin health
  - Do a monthly self-exam for moles and get checked every three years by a provider

## Men in their 40s

### GENERAL HEALTH SCREENINGS

- Yearly full check-up with a primary care provider including weight and height

- Discuss your sleep habits at this appointment
- Discuss a need for a thyroid screening at this appointment
- Immunizations
  - Tetanus-Diphtheria booster – needed every 10 years
  - Yearly Influenza vaccine
- Diabetes
  - Get screened if you have sustained blood pressure greater than 135/80, take medicine for high blood pressure or are at risk for diabetes (talk to your PCP)
- Cardiovascular health
  - Blood pressure screening – every two years
  - Cholesterol screening - ask your PCP if needed
- Reproductive health
  - Discuss testicular exam and STI tests with your PCP
- Prostate health
  - Speak to your PCP about a Digital Rectal Exam and/or Prostate-Specific Antigen
- Eyes, ears and teeth
  - Eye exam - every 2-4 years
  - Hearing test – every 10 years
  - Dental exam – every 6 months
- Skin health
  - Do a monthly self-exam for moles and get checked every three years by a provider

## Men in their 50s

### GENERAL HEALTH SCREENINGS

- Yearly full check-up with a primary care provider including weight and height
  - Discuss your sleep habits at this appointment
  - Discuss a need for a thyroid screening at this appointment
- Immunizations
  - Tetanus-Diphtheria booster – needed every 10 years
  - Yearly Influenza vaccine
- Diabetes
  - Get screened if you have sustained blood pressure greater than 135/80, take medicine for high blood pressure or are at risk for diabetes (talk to your PCP)
- Cardiovascular health
  - Blood pressure screening – every two years
  - Cholesterol screening - ask your PCP if needed
- Reproductive health
  - Discuss testicular exam and STI tests with your PCP
- Prostate Health
  - Speak to your PCP about a Digital Rectal Exam and/or Prostate-Specific Antigen





- Eyes, ears and teeth
  - Eye exam - every 2-4 years
  - Hearing test - discuss with your PCP
  - Dental exam - every 6 months
- Skin Health
  - Do a monthly self-exam for moles and get checked every year by a provider
- Colorectal Health
  - Fecal occult blood test, flexible sigmoidoscopy, colonoscopy - talk to your provider about which screening is right for you and how often you may need it

## Men in their 60s

### GENERAL HEALTH SCREENINGS

- Yearly full check-up with a primary care provider including weight and height
  - Discuss your sleep habits at this appointment
  - Discuss a need for a thyroid screening at this appointment
- Immunizations
  - Tetanus-Diphtheria booster - needed every 10 years
  - Yearly Influenza vaccine
  - One-time only Pneumococcal vaccine
  - One-time only Herpes zoster
- Diabetes
  - Get screened if you have sustained blood pressure greater than 135/80, take medicine for high blood pressure or are at risk for diabetes (talk to your PCP)
- Cardiovascular health
  - Blood pressure screening - every two years
  - Cholesterol screening - ask your PCP if needed
  - If you were ever a smoker, get a one-time Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm screening
- Reproductive health
  - Discuss testicular exam and STI tests with your PCP
- Prostate health
  - Speak to your PCP about a Digital Rectal Exam and/or Prostate-Specific Antigen
- Eyes, Ears and Teeth
  - Eye exam - every 1-2 years
  - Hearing test - discuss with your PCP
  - Dental exam - every 6 months
- Skin health
  - Do a monthly self-exam for moles and get checked every year by a provider

- Colorectal Health
  - Fecal occult blood test, flexible sigmoidoscopy, colonoscopy - talk to your provider about which screening is right for you and how often you may need it

## Men in their 70s

### GENERAL HEALTH SCREENINGS

- Yearly full check-up with a primary care provider including weight and height
  - Discuss your sleep habits at this appointment
  - Discuss a need for a thyroid screening at this appointment
- Immunizations
  - Tetanus-Diphtheria booster - needed every 10 years
  - Yearly Influenza vaccine
  - One-time only Pneumococcal vaccine
  - One-time only Herpes zoster
- Diabetes
  - Get screened if you have sustained blood pressure greater than 135/80, take medicine for high blood pressure or are at risk for diabetes (talk to your PCP)
- Cardiovascular Health
  - Blood pressure screening - every two years
  - Cholesterol screening - ask your PCP if needed
  - If you were ever a smoker, get a one-time Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm screening
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After perusing the shelves of the attached gift shop, visitors who stop into Honey & Things in East Syracuse can now grab a fresh bite to eat.

Located at 226 Old Bridge St. by the Big 4 Tire and K-9 Kamp Dog Daycare, the restaurant might seem secluded at first, but as owner Karen Russell said, it's tough to miss the bright yellow building the restaurant and gift shop call home.



The café's menu of freshly made meals includes breakfasts like blueberry pancakes, three-egg omelets, cinnamon coffee cake muffins, and almond cherry turnovers as well as "hive hamburgers," salads, soups and a selection of hot sandwiches such as a turkey focaccia melt and "The Stinger," which has a chicken breast drizzled with hot honey and spicy cilantro lime mayo.

The restaurant relies on a separate food truck parked in the front for its kitchen and

everything made inside it is passed along via conveyor belt and served to guests at the tables indoors. Russell said the menu for the café was fashioned around the limitations of the food truck, which contains two fryers.

Previously an online business, the gift shop had already been open for about a year and two months at the Old Bridge Street location by the time the café was introduced in May, 2023. That connected shop sells items like aprons, cutting boards, welcoming camping signs, moisturizing soaps, bottles of all-natural honey, teapots and candles.

Russell, who co-owns the business with her partner, Terry, is the beekeeper responsible for supplying the gift shop and café with all the honey needed day to day. The two have additionally been running the Koala Kare Childcare Center in Baldwinsville for decades.

Russell's interest in all things honey-related starts with the bee yard she looks after located off Kirkville Road. At the apiary, she carries about 40 to 50 hives every summer that altogether produce 2,000 pounds of

honey "on a good year" and "a little less on a bad year."

Russell said she enjoys beekeeping as a hobby because it satisfies her scientific side and it interests her to see the bees

inside the hives grow as colonies. She said she appreciates the interaction among them, their way of flapping their wings to remove humidity and dry up the nectar that turns into honey, and how they innately divide up their different roles, from forager and guard to nurse bee and wax maker.

Russell, who also does her share of baking and cooking, said it was a team effort among relatives and friends to get the café up and running. That included the decorative work of employee Kevin, the creation of the menus with friend Kim, her brother Greg's placement of the wood paneling with her brother-in-law Blake, and a group job that involved her sister Jessica to put in the finished gold and brown epoxy flooring.

"It was a family affair and a friend affair to get it done," Russell said. "We all chipped in with everybody's ideas...I'm very lucky to have such wonderful people who helped me achieve this because it's not just one person—it never is."

On top of its familial element, The Hive Café is designed to feel as inviting as a home, with a quiet atmosphere and warm colors to make it a calming space.

"We didn't want it to be a huge space," Russell said. "We wanted it to be a place that people could come in and visit to enjoy their lunch. It's not fine dining but it's comfortable."

Going forward, there's an plans to have The Hive Café host trivia nights and bring in live music, while the Honey & Things gift shop is

set to begin selling beekeeping equipment like the proper boxes and frames to use for a setup. The business is also attempting to recruit local artisans to sell pottery, carvings, and objects like birdhouses out of the shop.

The Hive Café at Honey & Things is open Wednesdays, Thursdays and Sundays from 7:30 a.m. to 3 p.m., and as of the new year, its Friday hours have been extended from 7:30 a.m. to 8 p.m. to serve dinner like fish fry platters. SWM

*The Hive Café at Honey & Things is located in the bright yellow building at 226 Old Bridge St. in East Syracuse.*





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# Navigating picky eating:

A GUIDE FOR  
FAMILY HARMONY

*Chef Eric Rose*





In many homes, the most challenging question of the day is: “What’s for dinner?” And when you have picky eaters or children with food allergies, the nightly decision-making can be downright fraught. One option is to make separate meals for everyone, but let’s be honest, who wants to spend hours in the kitchen catering to individual tastes? Another common approach is to simply hope that tonight’s meal is met with approval, crossing your fingers that everyone finds something they like on their plate. However, there’s a better way—a way that brings harmony to the family dinner table without sacrificing taste or nutrition.

Cooking for picky eaters requires a delicate balance of creativity, patience, and understanding. As a parent, guardian, or caretaker, it’s essential to navigate these culinary waters with finesse, ensuring that everyone’s needs and preferences are met without causing undue stress or frustration. But fear not, because armed with the right strategies and recipes, you can transform mealtime from a battleground into a joyous occasion filled with delicious food and happy faces.

## Understanding picky eating

Before delving into practical tips and mouthwatering recipes, let’s take a moment to understand picky eating. Picky eating is a common phase for many children and even some adults. It’s often characterized by a reluctance to try new foods, a preference for familiar or “safe” options, and a sensitivity to certain tastes, textures, or colors. While picky eating can be challenging, it’s essential to remember that it’s usually a temporary stage of development rather than a permanent condition.

## Tips for overcoming picky eating

Research shows that involving children in the meal process can increase their investment in trying new foods. When kids help with recipes or choose food for the family, they often end up enjoying mealtime more. Changing picky eating habits requires consistency and commitment from parents. Establishing and sticking to rules, such as being good role models and having fun experimenting with new foods, can lead to positive changes over time.

Parents should also understand that pickiness is normal in toddlers and shouldn’t worry if their 2-year-olds refuse unfamiliar food. Modeling healthy behaviors, like choosing water over soda, can influence children’s food choices positively.

## Top 5 ideas for picky eaters

**Build-your-own meals:** Set up a DIY meal station with various components, such as tacos, salads, or pizzas. This allows picky eaters to customize their meals according to their preferences, empowering them to make choices while ensuring they still receive a balanced meal.

**Sneak in nutrients:** Get creative with how you incorporate fruits and vegetables into meals. Blend spinach into smoothies, puree vegetables into pasta sauces, or add shredded carrots to muffin batter. By disguising nutritious ingredients in familiar dishes, you can increase their intake without resistance.

**Offer variety:** Introduce new foods gradually and repeatedly, offering them alongside familiar favorites. Encourage adventurous eating by presenting food in different forms - try raw vegetables with dip, roasted vegetables with seasoning, or steamed vegetables with a drizzle of olive oil.

**Get kids involved:** Invite picky eaters into the kitchen and involve them in meal preparation. Whether it’s washing vegetables, stirring ingredients, or assembling sandwiches, cooking becomes an interactive and educational experience that fosters a positive relationship with food.

**Lead by example (*No thank you bites*):** Set a positive example by demonstrating adventurous eating behaviors yourself. Children are more likely to try new foods when they see adults enjoying them, so be adventurous in your own culinary explorations and share your enthusiasm with the whole family. It can take up to 10-15 bites for a pallet to become accepting of a taste so train them to take “No thank you bites.”

## Practical tips for success

Now that we’ve explored some top ideas for picky eaters, let’s dive into practical tips to streamline your cooking process and maximize mealtime enjoyment:

**Plan ahead:** Take the stress out of mealtime by planning your weekly menus in advance. Consider each family member’s preferences and dietary restrictions when crafting your meal plan and involve them in the decision-making process to foster a sense of ownership and excitement.

**Keep it simple:** Stick to straightforward recipes with minimal ingredients and preparation steps. Save the elaborate gourmet dishes for special occasions and focus on creating wholesome, satisfying meals that are easy to prepare on busy weeknights.

**Embrace familiar favorites:** While it’s essential to encourage culinary exploration, don’t underestimate the power of familiar comfort foods. Incorporate beloved classics into your meal rotation to provide a sense of stability and security for picky eaters.

**Celebrate small victories:** Acknowledge and celebrate each step towards expanding your picky eater’s palate. Whether it’s trying a new food, eating a larger portion, or demonstrating curiosity

*Continued on page 36*



## Navigating picky eating FROM PAGE 35

about unfamiliar ingredients, praise their efforts and offer positive reinforcement to nurture their culinary confidence.

**Maintain a positive atmosphere:** Approach mealtime with a relaxed and positive attitude, creating a welcoming environment where picky eaters feel comfortable experimenting with new flavors and textures. Avoid power struggles or negative reinforcement, as these can reinforce picky eating behaviors and lead to mealtime battles.

Cooking for picky eaters is undoubtedly a challenge, but it's also an opportunity to foster a love of food, exploration, and family togetherness. By understanding the root causes of picky eating, implementing creative meal strategies, and maintaining a positive atmosphere, you can transform mealtime from a source of stress into a cherished ritual that brings joy and nourishment to the entire family. So roll up your sleeves, have conversations with the, don your apron, and let's embark on a culinary adventure filled with delicious discoveries and memorable moments around the dinner table.

Bon appétit! SWM

### My favorite no-fail children recipes

#### Healthy Meatballs (with hidden vegetables)

Serves: 8-12

With the texture you expect from a traditional meatball but added nutrition from three types of veggies, your whole family will love them.

##### INGREDIENTS

½ cup carrots, roughly chopped	1 egg
½ cup parsley leaves, lightly packed	2 Tbsp milk
Small onion, peeled and halved	½ tsp salt
½ cup Italian-flavored bread crumbs	½ cup grated
1 pound ground beef	Parmesan

##### DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat the oven to 375 degrees F and line a rimmed baking sheet with foil. Coat with nonstick spray. Place the carrots, parsley, and onion into a food processor.

2. Grind well, stopping to scrape down the sides of the bowl as needed.
3. Add the remaining ingredients and grind to combine into a smooth mixture. Portion into 2-tablespoon-size meatballs and place on the prepared baking sheet.
4. Bake for 22-25 minutes or until cooked through. Serve with warm marinara sauce and pasta (or ketchup and other simple sides!) as desired.

#### Greek Yogurt Pizza Dough

Serves 1-2

##### INGREDIENTS

1 cup all-purpose flour
1 cup 0% Greek yogurt
2 tsp baking powder
¼ tsp salt
¼ tsp garlic powder

##### DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 400° F.
2. Start by combining the flour, baking powder, salt and yogurt in a bowl. Knead the dough with your hands to evenly incorporate the flour and yogurt. Add more flour to your hands as needed to form a dough.
3. Transfer the dough to a greased 9" skillet or roll it out onto a parchment lined tray for a thinner crust. Bake the dough on 400° F for about 10 minutes.
4. Top with your sauce, cheese and toppings then bake the pizza for another 15 minutes. Finish it off with your favorite herbs and spices and enjoy!

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





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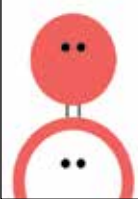
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# CADY HENRY



Photo by Alice G. Patterson



# Guiding parents through one of their toughest challenges

Janelle Davis

Many families depend on childcare providers to care for their children, so parents can work or go to school. But according to The Child Care Technical Assistance Network, childcare availability has steadily fallen over the last 10 years. Cady Henry, childcare expert and owner of Cadysitting, agrees.

According to Henry, it's more challenging than ever to find and keep "good" childcare between parental nerves and childcare unavailability or the "childcare desert." But what constitutes "good" childcare and how do you find the right one for your family? Moreover, when you find a place to comfortably send your child, how can you communicate your needs or developing concerns? Henry is here to help.

"It can be difficult to figure out how to manage and build the relationship between the provider and the parents. Assumptions and judgments can be made on both ends," Henry explained.

In the early 2000s, when Henry graduated with her master's in education, the teaching field was saturated. She started nannying for a family. As she was out and about with the kids, people would approach her interested in her nanny services. This is when Henry noticed the need and started a professional nanny business.

Upon giving birth to her son in 2019, she transitioned from nannying into offering childcare in her own home. Once Covid hit, she shut down and reopened soon after with a smaller group of kids. She found that she had developed a waitlist, like many other local childcare centers.

More and more, Henry noticed the need for childcare, along with a growing interest from parents in managing childcare expectations and communication. She wanted to help.

Henry started Cadysitting and began offering consultations for parents and childcare providers. Through the consultations and her blog, Henry started offering parents advice and helping them navigate childcare.

Henry doesn't restrict herself to helping parents, she also considers the childcare provider's perspective.

"They're doing their best. Sometimes they may be accommodating and caring for 14 children at once. That might look a little different than what the parents expect if it were one-on-one care," Henry said. "There can be a delicate balance between the caregiver wanting a level of autonomy while bringing their expertise."

Henry's consultations help parents with their concerns about hiring either a nanny or a babysitter, the difference between preschool and daycare, where to start looking for child care, how to maintain relationships with the childcare provider, and many personal concerns.

She shared about a woman who had an issue that arose with her nanny that she wasn't comfortable with. The woman wasn't sure how to address the situation. Henry's consultation with the woman explored her relationship with the nanny, her issues, and how to have a conversation with her nanny moving forward. She also informed the woman of industry standards and what she could expect from her nanny, in terms of expectations and responsibilities. Parents need to

be aware of childcare responsibilities, so they can recognize when things fall outside of those responsibilities.

She also has consultations with families who want to hire a nanny or a babysitter, but need guidance and education. And she has coached mom groups to help them get started in childcare and what that process looks like.

Henry was interviewed for a blog post that was featured in the Huffington Post called "7 Red Flags to Watch Out For When Hiring A Babysitter." While it's important to be aware of the red flags, Henry also wants to focus on the positive aspects of childcare.

She has a download listing, both the green and red flags to look for when choosing the right childcare for your family. "Because we are in a 'daycare desert,' there are so many variables in choosing your childcare provider and how to make it work cultivating a positive relationship where everyone is happy. Kids pick up on when you have a strong relationship with your provider," Henry explained.

At the same time, Cady holds babysitting workshops for younger kids interested in getting started with babysitting. "In Onondaga County, there is a demand for nannies, but not as high as babysitters. Many stay-at-home or part-time parents just want someone to come in a couple of times a week," Henry shared.

Henry would overhear other parents talking and recommending babysitters to their friends, but not without one caveat or another. Henry thought that as a babysitter, maybe these young people just aren't aware of what to do to set themselves up for success. Once they are, "there are endless parents that will snatch them up and they'll have all the work they could ever imagine," Henry said.

The babysitting workshops are for kids ages 11 to 14 years old who want to start babysitting or become a mother's helper. They are designed to help them get started in the world of babysitting. In an hour and a half to two hours, Henry covers topics like determining their comfort level, babysitter expectations and responsibilities, how to communicate with families, and the interview process. She also starts them off with marketing themselves by making professional flyers or utilizing social media in a way that will catch a family's attention.

Cady currently works at Jowonio Preschool and continues her consultations and babysitting workshops. The next babysitting workshop will be in June at the Cazenovia Library. Henry is consistently adding valuable content to her Instagram page and blog for parents.

"Onondaga County doesn't have a referral agency for babysitters. Because the need is so high I've been thinking about the future and possibly finding a way to merge my babysitting workshops with services," Henry said.

In the meantime, Henry suggests asking for referrals from trusted community members, like your local library. "Babysitting groups on Facebook are also great!" Henry added. "I want every parent to feel confident and comfortable with who is taking care of their child. We do have some control and I feel very fortunate for my experiences and the opportunity to help other families because I understand." *SWM*



# REBBECA OPPEDISANO



Photo by Alice G. Patterson

# Bringing young families together through music

Norah Machia

In 2007, Rebecca Oppedisano, who began her career as an elementary school music teacher, established Bluebird Music Together, a unique business that teaches the joy of music to infants, toddlers, preschool and early elementary school children. “When I had my own children, I wanted to step away from the school system and be with my kids,” said the mother of three sons. “I started teaching these classes myself, and as my children grew, so did my program.”

The Music Together curriculum is nationwide, and Rebecca decided to incorporate the Bluebird name in her business. The state bird of New York “represents joy and freedom,” and the symbolism helps people feel part of the music community, she said. Bluebirds are one of the first birds to return north in the spring.

Bluebird Music Together is focused on introducing children from infancy through early childhood to music with activities that include singing, playing instruments and dancing.

Rebecca’s business has grown to include six part-time instructors who have been trained in the Music Together curriculum. The program is education and research-based, and the philosophy is to reach children with music in a way that is “joyful and playful,” she said.

“It has a strong foundation that encompasses many styles of music,” said Rebecca.

“It reaches children in a way that is interactive.” Learning music is like learning a language, she added. “It’s a process that you can start early in life, even exposing babies in utero,” she added.

Learning music at a young age “helps children to develop neuro connections in their brains, and if you nurture it at a young age, anyone can sing in tune,” she said. “When children are in a musical environment, they will naturally absorb it.” Rebecca believes that music is a lifelong activity and can be enjoyed at any age. “My 96-year-old grandmother is sharp as a tack and plays the piano each day,” she said. This testament to the enduring power of music underscores Rebecca’s vision of fostering “lifelong learners” through her work.

Bluebird Music Together is not a training program for children to necessarily become professional musicians. “It’s to give them the opportunity to find happiness in music-making,” said Rebecca. The parents who attend the classes with their children also find that same joy through the program, which brings “more music into family life,” she said.

The classes also include movement activities. “We get ourselves into the musical experience with shakers, rhythm sticks, jingle bells, drums, and props like scarves,” Rebecca said.

Most of the classes are designed for children up to five years of age. “These are family-style classes that allow people to bring multiple children together,” she said. “The younger children look up to the older kids, who can be role models.” The Bluebird Music Together program also has classes specifically for infants and a “Rhythm Kids” program for children ages four to eight, which includes learning music from around the world.

The classes are held in rented spaces throughout Central New York, including churches and dance studios. “This way we can meet in the communities where the families live,” she said. “A lot of parents may not want to travel a long distance or may be working and have a tight window of time.”

“We have wonderful relationships with the building owners in each town,” said Rebecca. This summer, classes will be held in Cazenovia, Dewitt, Liverpool, Clay, Camillus, Skaneateles and Auburn. An average of 500 families enroll each semester. “I’ve really enjoyed watching the program grow and develop over the years,” she said.

Rebecca has a bachelor of arts degree in music education and a master of arts degree in education. She studied at the Crane School of

Music at SUNY Potsdam and taught elementary general music and chorus for several years, and music at a number of local preschools. She has sung with the Syracuse Chorale and is currently a member of the Syracuse Opera Chorus. In 2012, Rebecca was awarded Music Together Certification Level I by the Center for Music and Young Children in Princeton, NJ. She was awarded the MAKERS award by WCNY for excellence in Arts in 2014.

Rebecca said all three of her sons are very musical, and they love to sing and play instruments. Her middle son is attending college and plans to earn his degree in music therapy.

Registration is open for Bluebird Music Together summer classes. Participants will receive a songbook to use at home with family members. SWM

For more information: [www.bluebirdmusictogether.com](http://www.bluebirdmusictogether.com)





# ROSEMARY LEPIANE



# Providing a collaborative solution to divorce or separation

Janelle Davis

A marriage separation or divorce can leave anyone involved feeling sad, frustrated, exhausted, or confused. Rosemary Lepiane, matrimonial family law attorney, partner at Bousquet Holstein, and president of the CNY Collaborative Family Law Professionals group helps families find solutions that work the best for all parties involved.

The CNY Collaborative Family Law Professionals is a non-profit organization committed to offering families out-of-court solutions for divorce or separations. They achieve this professionally while keeping relationships cordial.

Lepiane has been practicing family law for almost 20 years. With a background in criminal law and other general civil litigation, she learned that she really enjoys working with families. "I have done a lot of rewarding work while practicing criminal law, but I've gravitated towards family law because of the monumental impact a person can make on the family, as a whole," Lepiane shared.

Lepiane enjoys working together with clients to create solutions that go beyond their experiences with her. She explains that the reason she became an attorney was to help people. Practicing within family matrimonial fulfills that desire.

She explained that collaborative law, also known as collaborative divorce, is the service that she and the CNY Collaborative Family Law Professionals group provide. According to their website, the advantages of the collaborative process include no court appearances, lower cost, protection of the children, and teamwork, to name a few.

"I get to work closely with other trained attorneys, financial experts, and mental health counselors to educate our community about options other than litigation for divorcing couples," Lepiane said. The collaboration process is a team effort with a more fluid line of communication.

Although Lepiane represents one client, usually, the husband or the wife, during a collaborative divorce, she creates pathways for future problem-solving. For clients with families, many times issues come up, such as co-parenting.

"Divorce is not the end of a family, but a change in its structure," Lepiane explained. Often, she said, both parties acknowledge the same goal regarding how their new family structure is going to look like.

"Every couple is different and the needs of every family are different," she said. "No one size solution fits all." Lepiane emphasized that there

are methods of the divorce process other than litigation that better meet the needs of a family or their situation. The collaborative process is outside of the court system, allowing the two parties to come together and create out-of-the-box solutions that best meet the needs of their family.

"It's a non-traditional approach to find solutions regarding custody, spousal maintenance, or child support that you normally wouldn't get a court to order because the collaborative approach is figuring out what's best for the family, based on their needs" Lepiane shared.

People on the team act as neutral facilitators to help clients reach their common goals. Many times, the spouse's goals are the same, they just don't always know how to get there. When they do file for divorce with a collaborative agreement, things usually go more smoothly because they've already agreed on their goals and what their divorce will look like.

The team at CNY Collaborative Family Law Professionals group has the same goals for their clients.

They strive for the best outcome for them.

Lepiane was recently elected as president of the Board for CNY Collaborative Family Law Professionals. She was previously vice president of the organization. "I enjoyed my time as vice president. I was really honored when they elected me to lead the organization as

president," Lepiane said. Her goal as president is to bring visibility to the collaborative process and the benefits of it for people going through a divorce. It's important that people know that this is an available option and that they don't need to go through it alone, she said.

"It can be a difficult time for families. Don't be afraid to reach out for support. That's why we're here. We don't expect our prospective clients to know anything about the process, or to even know what they're looking for. Just reach out and we can help," Lepiane advised. She explained that's why it's so important to inform the general public that there is a way to go through this process without ever having to step foot in a courtroom.

Lepiane also feels that it's important that a person choose an attorney they're comfortable with, no matter the method of divorce. "It's important that you trust your attorney. CNY Collaborative Family Law Professionals are a great group of professionals in our community. We are all a part of the group because we believe in the collaborative process," Lepiane concludes. *SWM*



CNY Collaborative  
Family Law  
Professionals, Inc.



## Katya Dashkevich Joins RMS as Research Associate



Katya Dashkevich

Research & Marketing Strategies, Inc. (RMS) has announced the recent hire of Katya Dashkevich as research associate.

Katya's main role in the analytics department will be to assist with programming surveys, coordinating recruitment, and cleaning, analyzing, and reporting survey data. Katya will also support many other divisions at RMS, including helping with phone recruitment in their call center or research needs within their healthcare division.

"We are thrilled to have Katya join the RMS team. She has already shown what a great team player she is, always eager to learn and jump in on any tasks needed. She's been a great addition to the RMS team, and I am excited for what the future holds," shared Patrick Fiorenza, director of research analytics.

A Syracuse native, Katya holds a bachelors in analytics and marketing from Le Moyne College. During the winter months, Katya enjoys skiing. During the summer, she enjoys swimming, paddle boarding, hiking, and playing soccer. When Katya is not doing any of those things, you can find her spending time together with friends, sipping bubble tea, reading, or spending time with her pets, a German shepherd and a cockatiel.

## Solvay Bank Welcomes Kristin Brabham



Kristin Brabham

Solvay Bank, the oldest community bank established in Onondaga County, is pleased to welcome Kristin (Kris) Brabham to its Solvay Office as an accounting clerk in the finance department. Kris brings many years of office experience to the Bank, followed by another ten years in the retail industry. Most recently, she worked in accounts payable. Kris is a graduate of Elmira College.

In her spare time, Kris has dedicated herself to volunteering with the Boy Scouts of America, Girl Scouts of the USA and the ESM Marching Band for 15 years. Additionally, she is a regular volunteer at the Food Bank of CNY, demonstrating her commitment to supporting her community.

## Suzanne Kondra is at the top of her field



Suzanne Kondra

43 years ago, Suzanne founded Kondra & Jaquin Enterprises, Inc. in order to acquire Potter Heating & AC and Perrone Plumbing Services. Both of these companies were founded in 1944 and will be celebrating their 80th anniversaries in June. From humble beginnings, Suzanne built her business into the largest independent Plumbing and Mechanical contracting firm in Central New York.

Kondra leads a management team that includes plumbing and mechanical general managers, a chief financial controller, superintendents, safety managers, and field personnel while fostering a collaborative work environment.

Notable projects include serving as contractor at the Fort Drum Army base, universities, school districts, park facilities, municipalities, apartment complexes, Binghamton University's Welcome Center and contributed to the Guthrie Corning Cancer Center.

Kondra was also the first female president of The Syracuse Heating and Air Conditioning Contractors Association and one of the first women to hold a mechanical license in Central New York.

In her free time, she has volunteered at St. Joseph's Hospital and serves on a variety of boards.



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**UPCOMING EVENTS**

Weekly in June

**Friday Night Vibes**

**What:** You've worked hard all week, so have a wine or whiskey flight and food and enjoy live music.

**Where:** Epicuse, Downtown Syracuse.

**When:** 5 to 9 p.m.



June 2

**Annual AIDS Walk and Run**

**What:** Help continue the tradition of supporting HIV/AIDS programming and the awareness of addiction, poverty and LGBTQ+ equality.

**Where:** Willow Bay at Onondaga Lake Park, Liverpool

**Info:** Leashed pets are welcome! Register at [trisignup.com/race/ny/liverpool/aids5k](http://trisignup.com/race/ny/liverpool/aids5k).



**Bones East Concert**

**What:** Bones East is a 25-30 piece trombone ensemble made up of semi-professionals, retirees, and students.

**Where:** Dewitt Community Church, 3600 Erie Blvd. E., Dewitt, NY 13214

**When:** 2 p.m.



June 5

**Dementia Community Forum**

**What:** Learn about Alzheimer's, dementia and memory loss. For caregivers, those living with Alzheimer's or dementia and community members. Presented by the Alzheimer's Association of CNY.

**Where:** Upstate Oasis, 6333 NY-298, East Syracuse, NY 13057

**When:** 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.

**Info:** Register at [bit.ly/3vxxhki](http://bit.ly/3vxxhki) or call 800-272-3900.



June 6-9

**St. Sophia's Greek Cultural Festival**

**What:** The 51st annual Greek Fest will feature food, dancing and music celebrating Greek heritage, as well as a number of vendors offering Greek-themed items.

**Where:** 325 Waring Rd, Syracuse, NY 13224

**Info:** [syracusegreekfest.com](http://syracusegreekfest.com)



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June 13-15

**NY Blues Festival**

**What:** A celebration of the Blues, featuring Little Feat, The Record Company, Shemekia Copeland and much more with free admission.

**Where:** Chevy Court, NYS Fairgrounds

**Info:** [www.nysbluesfest.com](http://www.nysbluesfest.com)



June 15

**Bike-a-Thon**

**What:** Join for one, two or three hours of fun as we raise money for programs at the Northwest Family YMCA. Hourly music themes include oldies, Soul Train and Taylor Swift! All riders entered into a raffle.

**Where:** Northwest YMCA, 8040 River Rd, Baldwinsville, NY 13027

**When:** 7 to 10 a.m.

**Info:** Register at [www.ymcacny.org](http://www.ymcacny.org).



**Syracuse Juneteenth Festival**

**What:** CNY's largest Juneteenth celebration takes place in Clinton Square and features live musical entertainment from local performers, food, vendors and much more.

**Where:** Clinton Square, downtown Syracuse

**When:** Beginning at 1 p.m.



**Biggest Bake Sale Ever**

**What:** Over 100 individual and professional bakers help create a delicious event! Shop sweet treats, a silent auction and crafts. Proceeds benefit Humane CNY.

**Where:** Clay Volunteer Fire Department, 4383 Rt. 31.

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



**Westcott Art Trail**

**What:** Find artists demonstrating and selling a variety of mediums including painting, photography, sculpting, glass and more. Enjoy performers and local restaurant discounts.

**Where:** Westcott Community Center, 826 Euclid Ave.

**When:** 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.



June 21

**Elder Abuse Conference**

**What:** Join for a day of classes as we work together to age with grace and dignity.

**Where:** Hilton Doubletree, East Syracuse.

**When:** 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

**Info:** Lunch and refreshments provided. Register at [eventbrite.com/vera-house-75355440333](http://eventbrite.com/vera-house-75355440333).



June 22

**CNY Pride Festival and Parade**

**What:** Come together to celebrate our local LGBTQ+ community! Enjoy a parade, vendors, food trucks, community resources, family fun area and more.

**Where:** Syracuse Inner Harbor.

**When:** 11 a.m.

**Info:** Free.



June 26-30

**Syracuse International Jazz Fest**

**What:** Join for the annual four-day festival featuring outdoor performances and indoor performances at various clubs, bars and restaurants.

**Where:** Clinton Square, Downtown Syracuse.

**Info:** Visit [syracusejazzfest.com](http://syracusejazzfest.com) for the festival's lineup.



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