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Karisha Soloman Death Doula,
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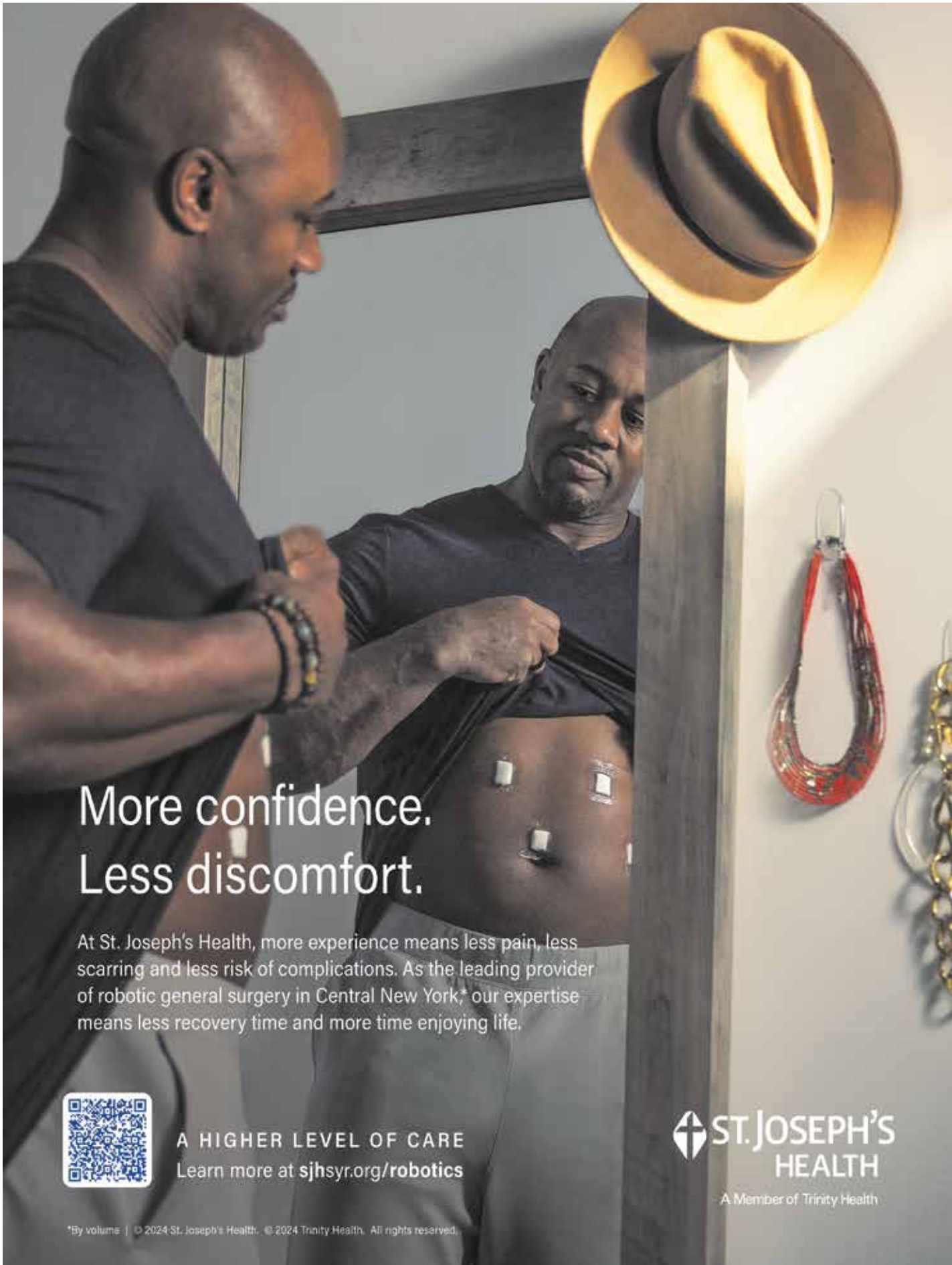
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Stephanie Pestillo

Syracuse women — Let's welcome in the New Year!

The start of this New Year is an exciting time, filled with the opportunity for fresh beginnings! It's also the perfect moment to reflect on the past, set new intentions and create goals for your future. For 2025, truly make health and wellness take top priority when planning for the year ahead. Whether you're looking to improve your physical health, mental wellbeing, or overall lifestyle, there are several ways to embrace the New Year with positive habits and self-care practices that can set you on the path to success.

Have Healthy Intentions

A positive step in bringing health and wellness into the New Year is to set clear, attainable goals. This may seem like a straight-forward idea, but it's important to approach goal setting with a mindset of sustainability and self-compassion. Rather than focusing on extreme changes, aim for gradual improvements that feel achievable and realistic. For example, rather than resolving to lose a large amount of weight, focus on making small changes, such as eating more veggies, drinking enough water, or increasing physical activity. Setting intentions around health and wellness should go well beyond physical appearance. It's essential to consider mental and emotional health, as these aspects are so important in maintaining a balanced lifestyle. Incorporate practices such as mindfulness, stress management, and self-care into your goals.

Prioritize Your Physical Health

Physical health is often the main focus of so many as a New Year's resolution. Taking care of your body can improve energy levels, increase longevity, and help you feel your best. Begin by assessing your current fitness level and determining realistic goals that align with your hobbies and interests. Whether you enjoy yoga, walking, swimming, cycling, or strength training, finding an activity that excites and interests you - it will increase the likelihood of sticking to it. Start with small goals, such as committing to 20-30 minutes of exercise a few times a week and gradually build from there.

Focus on Your Mental Wellness

Mental health is just as crucial as physical health, and taking care of your mind is an essential part of achieving overall wellness! In the world we live in, stress, anxiety, and burnout are common obstacles. As you move into this New Year, consider making mental wellness a priority, by implementing strategies to manage stress and promote relaxation. Practices such as: meditation, deep breathing, and journaling can help calm your mind and improve your focus. Spending time outdoors, taking breaks during the day, and maintaining healthy boundaries with work and personal relationships can also reduce your stress levels. Additionally, don't hesitate to seek support if

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you're struggling with your mental health. Therapy, support groups, or talking to positive and neutral friends and family members can provide valuable and needed assistance.

Your Self-Care Routine – Make it a Priority

Self-care is a vital aspect of health and wellness, yet it's often overlooked in daily life. Creating time for your relaxation, personal growth, and self-reflection can help improve both your physical and mental wellbeing. This might include reading a book or magazine, spa time (even at home soaking in your tub), practicing yoga, or engaging in creative activities. Make self-care a non-negotiable part of your routine and allow yourself the space to unwind and recharge. Additionally, getting enough sleep is a crucial element of self-care! Quality sleep

supports better immune function, improved cognitive performance and emotional stability.

And here we are...2025!

Where did the time go in 2024? As you welcome in 2025 in Central New York, consider taking these approaches to health and wellness. By setting these healthy intentions, prioritizing physical and mental health, and making self-care a regular practice, you can enter into the days and months ahead with a sense of balance and true purpose. Embrace the opportunity for growth...and be kind to yourself on your wellness journey! Remember, the key is "progress... not perfection," and every small step you take will lead you to a healthier, happier version of yourself in the year ahead.

With kindness and care to you, Stephanie. SWM

Stephanie Pestillo is the community relations manager at Fidelis Care.

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WBOC's Holiday Hoedown

WBOC (Women, Business, Opportunities, Connection) hosted their annual Holiday Auction & Party on Dec. 4. Drumlins Country Club was transformed into a honky tonk by MLH Events, and the "Holiday Hoedown" featured lessons by Lake Effect Line Dancers and a surprise performance by country vocalist Chris Taylor. The event celebrates the season and supports the mission of WboConnection.org.

Photos by Sarah Heppell Photography





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Girls speak out

LOCAL SCOUTS ADVOCATE FOR GIRLS AT UNITED NATIONS



Three Girl Scouts of NYPENN Pathways members from Troop 60500 in Jamesville participated in events at United Nations (UN) Headquarters in New York City this fall, advocating for girls' rights, leadership and empowerment. The experiences provided a global platform for each Girl Scout to engage with leaders and youth activists from around the world as they contributed to discussions on gender equality, mental health and youth leadership.

Aarohi Rastogi attended the UN's Summit of the Future in September, invited by Adwoa Aidoo, senior director of Global Girl Scouting at Girl Scouts of the USA (GSUSA). During the event, she participated in Action Days, a series of youth-focused sessions where young activists engaged directly with policymakers on issues affecting their futures.

At the summit, Aarohi addressed global challenges such as the climate crisis, gender-based violence and the importance of youth voices in policymaking. She spoke at events hosted by the Malala Fund and AGIP, emphasizing the need to hold governments accountable for protecting girls' rights and promoting gender equality. "I had the chance to meet my idol, Malala Yousafzai, and speak at an event she hosted. It was amazing to realize that my voice truly matters in this

world," she said. "The experience reaffirmed my belief that youth, especially girls, can shape a more equitable future."

Girls Speak Out: International Day of the Girl

The following month, Aarohi returned to the UN with fellow Jamesville Girl Scouts Rayna Reed and Mia Enders to participate in the UN's 11th Annual Girls Speak Out event, marking International Day of the Girl. Organized by the Working Group on Girls and UN partners, the event advocates for girls' rights, leadership and government accountability on policies affecting young women.

Aarohi was selected as a speaker after moderating the previous year. She addressed youth activists and UN representatives on gender-based violence and advocacy. She also drew from her Girl Scout Gold Award project to highlight the importance of mental health support for girls. "After the town hall, I led a workshop where I helped other girls create personal advocacy plans. It was inspiring to see their passion for change. Preparation for this took five weeks, which was challenging while balancing school and gymnastics, but I was determined to make an impact," she said.



Through the event, Aarohi also connected with Robert Rae, Canada's Permanent Representative to the UN, who expressed interest in future collaboration and UN Ambassador and model Farah Zulaikha, who praised Aarohi's speech and potential for future initiatives. "Meeting leaders like Mr. Rae and Ms. Zulaikha was motivating," she said. "It showed me they were listening and eager to support our work. I left feeling inspired and excited for what's ahead."

Rayna moderated Girls Speak Out for the first time, an experience she found both exciting and filled with responsibility. "I really had to be prepared, especially since I was sharing my Girl Scout Gold Award project on peer mentorship," she said.

Rayna used the opportunity to show how older girls can balance Girl Scouts with school and other responsibilities. "I want to prove that even as you get busier, you don't have to give up Girl Scouts. It's about connecting it to your community and being a positive example," she said. She hopes her work, both at the UN and through her Gold Award, inspires other girls to take on leadership roles and make an impact.

Mia participated in Girls Speak Out as a girl activist through her work as a peer mentor for Rayna's Gold Award project. She found the experience deeply inspiring. "It was incredibly uplifting to work with other girl activists, all striving to make the world a better place," she said.

During her time at the event, Mia learned more about Girl Scouting from her fellow attendees and Jordan Cruz, associate in GSUSA Federal and State Affairs and the girls' chaperone on the UN floor.

Mia found the experience so moving that it further sparked her desire to continue supporting the causes she cares about. She has since joined Rayna and Aarohi's Girl Scout troop. "Meeting passionate girls from around the world showed me that we can all make a difference, no matter our age," she said. She is now working on her first Girl Scout leadership journey, Mission Sisterhood (It's Your Story! Tell It!). Former Congressman Brandon Williams (NY-22) recently honored the three scouts on the house floor for their participation at the UN on International Day of the Girl, with his remarks entered into the Congressional Record.

Both UN events emphasized empowering young women as leaders and advocates for change and the three girls' work demonstrates how youth voices can shape global solutions to gender inequality, mental health and girls' education. "Our Girl Scouts' involvement in these key UN events shows they're already making a real impact on the world."

GSNYPENN CEO Julie Dale said. "We're incredibly proud of Aarohi, Rayna, Mia and all GSNYPENN members leading the way toward a better future. Their voices and leadership will drive lasting change." ^{SWM}

girl scouts 
of nypenn pathways



Photos courtesy of Girl Scouts of NYPENN Pathways. Aarohi Rastogi, Rayna Reed and Mia Enders of Jamesville Girl Scout Troop 60500 at United Nations Headquarters this fall.

Hope & Heels

The sold out 2024 Hope & Heels Fashion Show and Brunch was inspirational, educational, fun and rewarding. The event featured a large silent auction and many vendors and attendees were treated to a Teal Squeal cocktail to kick off the event. Awards were presented for inspiration and dedication to the cause and an \$80,000 grant was presented to the Ovarian Cancer Research Alliance.

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Keonna Franklin
Founder and CEO, KSF Consolidated, LLC

Keonna Franklin is the founder of KSF Consolidated, LLC, a bookkeeping and tax preparation business that helps small businesses manage their finances with clarity and confidence. Her mission is more than just balancing numbers—it's about helping others gain financial stability and overcome barriers.

Keonna works closely with her clients, many of whom are nonprofits, solopreneurs, and small business owners. She takes pride in being a consistent partner for her clients, ensuring they get one-on-one attention. Keonna's passion for empowering others has set her business apart. Her clients know they can rely on her not just for bookkeeping but for practical advice and mentorship. "When you work with me, you're part of a team," she says.

Keonna's journey to business success has involved navigating numerous challenges and changes. In 2008, she launched her first business as a general contractor. For years, she built decks, installed windows, and managed other home improvement projects. But without strong financial systems, her business struggled to stay afloat. By 2016, she had to close the business. "There were a lot of things I didn't know back then that I know now that probably could have saved that business." Reflecting on what went wrong, she realized she had focused so much on performing her business's services for her customers that she neglected the back-office tasks that keep a business running smoothly.

Years later, while working as an Uber driver, Keonna was beginning to explore new career options. Due to an injury, she was no longer able to work as a contractor. One day, she was asked to help clean up the books for a small business that was struggling. That experience reignited her entrepreneurial spirit, and in July 2022, she launched KSF Consolidated.

Keonna's growth as an entrepreneur was fueled by her determination to connect with others and seek out opportunities to improve her business. Networking with local organizations like Fearless Queens and WISE Women's Business Center gave her valuable resources, connections, and opportunities. Recognizing the need for structure in balancing client demands and family responsibilities, Keonna committed herself to carving out time for long-term planning and growth, and enrolled in WISE's Business Plan Intensive. She made it a priority to focus on her goals and strategies, ensuring KSF Consolidated could thrive.

As an introvert, Keonna found public speaking and networking challenging, but she didn't let that hold her back. She took deliberate steps to step outside her comfort zone, eventually leading workshops



and participating in events, including a presentation for the CNY Women's Network. These experiences helped her grow in confidence and solidify her role as both a business leader and mentor to others.

Looking ahead, Keonna has big dreams for KSF Consolidated. While she's currently focused on gaining local recognition, she has her sights set on expanding nationally. Her goal is to be a trusted resource for contractors and small business owners, empowering them to succeed by addressing the challenges she once faced herself. She hopes to serve primarily construction clients in the future, using her experience to provide tailored services. Keonna's journey shows that challenges can be opportunities and that through continuous learning, and adapting, your obstacles can become your biggest successes.

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“**WISE** words of wisdom
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KARISHA SOLOMON



'Death doula' helps people prepare for end of life

Alyssa Dearborn

When we enter a new year, we tend to make plans and goals in hope of bettering our lives. But while we make resolutions to better our finances, live healthier, or finish projects, maybe we should also make the effort to have a better relationship with the concept of death. Professional death doula Karisha Solomon uses her business to normalize important conversations, assist people through preparations, and comfort those going through the dying process. As a death doula, her role can vary depending on what clients ask of her. But this varying role is something that Karisha has spent much of her professional life preparing for.

"I got two degrees in gerontology, one from Ithaca College and one from Miami University," she said about her experience, "I'm a social gerontologist, which is different from a geriatrician. I don't do anything medical. But every place that I've worked in, there's always been death around me. So it was very familiar to me and I'm comfortable with it and I know how to handle it. I didn't really know it was a thing, I just have always been doing it in the community."

After becoming a certified death doula, Karisha has been able to bring a variety of services to the community through her business and through collaboration with organizations, such as Madison County's Rural Health Council. Because each individual death doula can offer widely different services, she has been able to offer services ranging from those that are expected from a death doula to those that may surprise potential clients.

"For the actual dying process, I can help people if they [would prefer] to die at home," she said when asked about what a death doula typically does. "And, it seems a little old fashioned, but it's what we used to do. Some people want to pass in their home. And if they've preplanned and have talked about their wishes, we know everything that they want. Do they want candles lit, opera music playing, lights down low? Do they want their hand massaged? And I can also talk the family through what is happening through what is happening for the dying process. It takes the fear away. We get ready and prepare ourselves for birth. We celebrate that. We celebrate graduating and retirement. But people don't prepare for or think about death and we've taken away all of the interactions with death. We only see them at the funeral home. And so we are also not processing our grief. So this helps people see that it can actually be a beautiful thing. The body naturally is letting go."

A lot of a death doula's job is listening and sitting with the person and helping them with the emotions that they have, Karisha explained. The job requires flexibility, as not every person or family shares the same needs and ranges of emotions. "You're not the boss. You're not the main person. You're just supporting them for what they need."

As a death doula Karisha also provides support and assistance to those who are not yet dying. Part of her work's mission is to help people become more comfortable with mortality so that they can live more purposefully. She has held death cafe meetings and death over dinner meetings where like-minded, curious people can meet and talk about their grief, fears, and wishes.

"I like to do celebration of life parties as well." She said when asked about the unique services she offers as a death doula. "The funeral industry is changing in how we celebrate a person who has passed.

Some people are doing the parties beforehand, even if they're not sick. I just did it for my 42nd birthday. I just had friends get together and we shared about why they're a friend of mine, what I like about them.

And they shared back with me. . . You invite all the people that you love and they tell you that they love you while you're still alive. It's not like gifts and that kind of thing. It's usually a meal shared with people that you love. And you can do that while you're well. People are doing it for their 60th, 70th, 80th birthdays."

Another focus of her work is helping people preserve their loved one's legacies. It's a common experience for people to have a variety of mementos from their loved ones who have passed – clothes, quilts, photographs, collectables. Much of the time, a grieving person may not know how to use those items to memorialize their loved one.

Karisha helps guide people through projects where those items can either be turned into something else or further used for a greater cause. However, with her emphasis on preplanning, she also helps the living with their own legacy memorializing.

"Legacy projects are good for people who have not passed yet," she said, "We don't all have enough money to have a hospital wing or big things named after us, but you can put a plaque on a bench somewhere you love to sit or plant a tree or buy a brick at a walkway. There's a lot of different things that you can do to help your legacy live on. I just talk to them about what they really love in their lives and then figure out where they can be remembered."

Much of her work is put into helping people make decisions about their own dying process so that their wishes will be known in the future. Helping people navigate the process can be difficult because she is facilitating the types of conversations that are usually avoided.

"You don't even need to be sick or dying to do preplanning," she said. "I think that the best gift that you can give your family is to have all of your stuff in order, including important paperwork, your death wishes, and your household. Because it's so overwhelming. I see the aftermath of when a person dies and I continue to help the family. I think it's the best thing that people can do. It's a hard sell, I'll tell you that. People don't necessarily want to talk about it or do the preplanning. But I've seen it done, and it's so beautiful and such a gift to the family."

When people are more honest about dying, they can live freer lives. Conversations about grief can be had more openly, individuals' wishes about their own dying can be known ahead of time, and people can live more honestly and intentionally. People live better when mortality is accepted, Karisha explained.

"In all of the workshops, people come for all different reasons. But there's always time for people to share with each other. And that is important. It's never going to be the same, but they're going through a similar situation, and those are hard feelings that they're having. It makes you feel more normal."

If you are interested in learning more about Karisha's work as a death doula, visit her website at www.karishasolomon.com SWM

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DIVIJA NANAVATI

Merging technology and mindfulness to create happiness

Kate Hanzalik

According to diverse ancient texts across countries, spiritual traditions, and cultures, happiness is a fleeting emotion toward which our striving causes suffering. We should seek to transcend our desire for happiness, these texts say; only then can we eradicate our suffering and find peace. But Divija Nanavati, founding team member and Senior Vice President of Mind Technologies, Inc. is helping many to find peace, a positive outlook and a sense of mindfulness through an app she co-created called My-Happy-Mind.

“To me happiness is something I feel in everyday moments of life like flowers blooming in the spring, walking in nature, sunshine in the morning, the laughter of kids playing, warm soup on a cold day, the smell of lavender or eucalyptus and spending time with loved ones,” says Divija, who is a wife, mother, and self-described “technology entrepreneur.” “The purpose of our My-Happy-Mind app is to help people manage stress and build emotional strength. It was designed to provide short and simple effective tools to uplift our mood throughout the day. It has the combined power of music, meditation, laughter and learning, gratitude and more.”

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“The purpose of our My-Happy-Mind app is to help people manage stress and build emotional strength.”

—Divija Nanavati

Merging technology and mindfulness to create happiness FROM PAGE 19

How did Divija get to where she is today? “My best friend from high school in India now lives in Massachusetts. Her brother-in-law had started a new venture, Mind Technologies, Inc. and was working on something, when she suggested he speak to my husband. After one conversation, my husband suggested he speak with me and the rest as they say, is history! I joined forces with him and his other co-founder as we began to further develop the venture, navigating the intersection of mindfulness and technology.”

Her work has given her ideas for her own wellbeing. She believes in the power of nutrition, yoga, meditation, and being engaged in the world around her while using technology as a beneficial tool for health and wellness.

“So far yoga has helped me improve my flexibility, posture, and digestion. Yoga and meditation both help me manage stress better, clear my mind, improve my focus and sleep. With nutrition what I’ve learned is that each body is different and just as importantly, for each person the nutritional needs and tolerances may change with time and age.”

Over the years, her knowledge about health and wellness has grown. “I realized the benefits of healthy nutrition when my husband was studying for his Integrative Medicine Board Exam,” she said. “Out of curiosity, I would read some of the chapters from his books and enjoyed discussing some of the topics in greater detail with him. I became more aware of what I was putting in my body by paying attention to ingredients, reading labels and started making better food choices. This awareness in our home helped to reshape our lifestyle.”

She grew up as a lacto-ovo-vegetarian, avoiding meat while consuming vegetables, eggs, and dairy. Now her diet is mainly plant-based. “I cook soups, dals (a variety of lentils), vegetables with Indian spices, quinoa, leafy green salads, tofu dishes, bean dishes – mainly a plant-based diet. I do believe that what we eat can impact our mood as has been shown through multiple studies focusing on the gut-brain axis.”



An online course that she took in positive psychology from Harvard Health Publishing helped her to understand “the importance of in-person engagement for our overall happiness and well-being.” And years ago, she began yoga and meditation to navigate the stresses of being a stay-at-home mom. She started yoga by practicing at the YMCA; today she does not rely on a teacher and has her own routine. She started meditating for ten minutes a day with the assistance of an app; today, she has co-created her own app that assists others.

There are several features to the app, explains Divija. “Happiness Garden for expressing gratitude or sharing positive thoughts anonymously, 3-minute specially composed instrumental music for positive moods, unique wave meditation, 1-minute laughing exercise to generate happiness hormones, 3-minute podcasts offering practical guidance on daily life, a feelings tracker, unique self-awareness tool for awareness of inner strengths and reminders to help you take breaks throughout the day.”

She has taken a leadership role at Mind Technologies, Inc. “When we started building the app, I was involved in the entire process of figuring out the features and front-end user experience of the app. I had fun testing each feature and button in the app as it was being developed. The initial thought was to build an MVP (minimum viable product) and then go get external funding to develop it further, but we were so enthusiastic and excited about it that we ended up building the whole app. After developing the My-Happy-Mind app, we felt the need to offer physical tools to go with the app for encouraging in-person connection and engagement . . .

I came up with the idea of the ‘Happily Mind-Spa’ kit to go with our My-Happy-Mind app. Our goal is to have the Happily Mind-Spa kit be fun like a happiness party in a box, full of fun group activities that promote mindfulness, connection, and creativity.

We researched science backed tools to bring together a uniquely curated collection of simple yet fun activities that can be used in a group setting or individually for wellness promotion. This kit also introduces and encourages people to use our app to build emotional strength. To put it simply, Happily Mind-Spa is a proactive way to care for our minds.”

With the Happiness Garden “digital engagement tool,” users click a white flower on the screen and share an

inspiring message. “Then see the magic happen as a colorful flower blooms with your message inside!” says Divija. “The purpose of this patent-pending tool is to encourage sharing positive thoughts, express gratitude, happy feelings, and affirmations. A simple anonymous digital tool for humanity to spread happiness and positivity in the world. Imagine this on a big screen, it could act as a ‘Gratitude Wall’ or an interactive message board in a stadium.”

The company is extending its reach to a wide range of communities. “We are also exploring collaboration with existing wellness spaces that would be interested in offering Happily Mind-Spa activities. In fact, I recently got a chance to facilitate a Happily Mind-Spa session for caregivers of children with special needs and life-threatening medical conditions on behalf of David’s Refuge, a local non-profit, during their caregiver wellness day.”

According to Divija, Mind Technologies, Inc. is trying to reach small and large businesses. “We are looking to partner with cafes that would be interested in having Happily Mind-Spa tools on tables for patrons to share meaningful time and Happiness Gardens on screens to encourage positivity and engagement. We are reaching out to colleges and universities that are interested in offering Happily Mind-Spa tools and the Happiness Garden as an additional resource for their student and employee wellness programs.” She hopes to expand their sales and marketing team as well.

In addition to her work, she has many hobbies that bring her joy. “I like reading non-fiction books on everything from health and wellness to personal finance. In fact, the latest book that I really enjoyed was *The little book of Hygge: The Danish way to live well* by Meik Wiking from The Happiness Research Institute, Copenhagen. I also enjoy listening to music while cooking, going for nature walks, making handmade cards, playing board games, and spending time with family and friends. These hobbies are important to me as they help me relax, recharge, and connect.”

Divija’s understanding of happiness has made a positive impact on her ingenuity, and the lives of those around her both now and in the future as Mind Technology, Inc. grows. “Happiness can be felt emotionally through an attitude of gratitude, from an appreciation of the world surrounding us, helping others and acts of kindness.” *SWM*

“Our goal is to have the Happily Mind-Spa kit be fun like a happiness party in a box, full of fun group activities that promote mindfulness, connection, and creativity.” —Divija Nanavati

Welch Jewelers' Ladies Night

Another successful Welch's Ladies Night was celebrated on Thursday Nov 21. A lovely gift bag of bling was given to all who attended along with raffles and refreshments all night long and attendees also wrote their jewelry wish list for Santa. Welch's Jewelers is celebrating 19 years of Ladies Nights and getting Syracuse women in the holiday spirit.

Photos by Nancy Miller



Baby boom at St. Joe's



St. Joseph's Health Hospital is experiencing a unique "baby boom" among its own staff. Ten of the dedicated nurses in Women and Children Services are expecting babies of their own – talk about a growing family! All are due between October and May, with four already having welcomed their little ones. Most of them are giving birth in the very hospital where they provide care.

"This is exciting because it's such a unique situation, but it also presents challenges for staffing," said Heather Shimer-Bero, director of women and infants service line. "We're here for them as they take time with their babies, and they're there for each other like a close-knit group. It's truly special to have a 'work family' that understands exactly what you're going through, from pregnancy to raising children."

Key Bank's Key4Women

KeyBank's Key4Women Syracuse Chapter held its annual awards breakfast in October at Bellevue Country Club. Theresa Slater, president and CEO of Empire Interpreting Service, a certified Women Owned Business, was the keynote speaker. She shared stories from her career journey as an entrepreneur, starting her business Empire Interpreting Company; business advisor, and author of her newly released book "The Language of Success." Her book outlines how her personal life's journey shaped the future and success of her business.

Theresa was also honored by Key as its 2024 Key4Women Leadership Achieve Award Winner. It honors and recognizes the accomplishments of women business leaders and their contributions to the Central New York Community. The award is open to clients of KeyBank and is given annually to a female leader in the region who has achieved a high level of success in her profession, is a community leader, and is a supporter of other women in Central New York. In addition to the award, KeyBank also made a \$2,500 donation in Slater's honor to WISE – Women Igniting the Spirit of Entrepreneurship.

Key4Women is an avenue of growth and advice for many women business owners and leaders. As a relationship-based bank, Key partners in helping our clients use every tool possible, providing them with access to capital while knowing exactly what best fits their business and financial goals. Learn more and sign up by going to key.com/women.



KeyBank Key4Women Committee Left to Right: Tamika Otis, Andrea Victory, Courtney Gauthier, Rachel Galusha, Amy Bidwell, Julia Trivisonno, Sabrina Webster and Penny Parisi (missing Rani Ristau).



St. Joseph's is thrilled to share this special journey with its patients, as the women who care for them are also embracing motherhood. Everyone is looking forward to welcoming the newest members of the St. Joseph's Health family.

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Starting the New Year strong

UNLOCKING YOUR HEALTH POTENTIAL

Eric Rose

A new year brings a sense of renewal, offering a fresh start to tackle goals we've been putting off. For many of us, health tops the list — whether it's eating better, moving more, or finally prioritizing self-care. But let's be honest: knowing where to start can be overwhelming. If you're feeling unmotivated, tired, or unsure how to begin, the best place to focus might surprise you — your gut health.

Your gut does more than digest food; it's a powerhouse that affects how you feel, think, and act. When your gut is balanced and healthy, you're likely to experience better energy levels, a clearer mind and even a more positive outlook. On the flip side, a gut out of balance can leave you feeling drained, sluggish, and uninspired, making those health goals seem out of reach.

Improving your gut health is a simple, effective way to jumpstart your overall well-being. Start by cutting back on processed foods and refined sugars, which disrupt the balance of good bacteria in your digestive system. Replace them with nutrient-rich options like vegetables, fruits, whole grains, and fermented foods such as yogurt, kimchi, or sauerkraut. These foods help nourish your gut, creating a strong foundation for the rest of your health journey.

As you improve your gut health, it's time to think about muscle. Why muscle? Because as we age, we naturally lose it in a process called sarcopenia. Without enough muscle, everyday activities become harder, metabolism slows, and we risk losing strength and independence.

The good news? You can combat this by making protein a priority. Protein is essential for maintaining and building muscle, and most people need 0.8 to 1 gram of protein per pound of body weight daily. For example, a 150-pound person should aim for 120–150 grams of protein per day.

Getting enough protein can seem daunting, but it's easier than you think. Start by including a high-quality protein source in every meal — think lean meats, fish, eggs, tofu, or beans. Snacks like Greek yogurt, cottage cheese, or a protein shake are convenient ways to boost your intake.

Pair your protein-rich diet with strength training exercises. Lifting weights or using resistance bands two to three times a week helps maintain muscle, improve bone density, and boost metabolism. If weightlifting feels intimidating, yoga is an excellent alternative. It builds strength, enhances flexibility, and creates a strong mind-body connection.

While protein is critical, it's not the whole picture. Your body also needs healthy fats, complex carbohydrates, and fiber to function optimally. Healthy fats — like those found in avocados, nuts, seeds, and olive oil — are essential for brain health, hormone regulation, and sustained energy. Complex carbohydrates, such as sweet potatoes, quinoa, and whole oats, provide a steady energy source without the crashes associated with refined carbs.

Don't forget about fiber. Found in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and legumes, fiber supports digestion, promotes heart health and helps

you feel full longer. Most adults need 25–30 grams of fiber daily, so make a point to include fiber-rich foods in your meals.

As your energy improves and your body feels stronger, movement becomes more enjoyable. Regular physical activity is one of the most effective ways to improve overall health. Find activities you enjoy — it doesn't have to mean hours at the gym. Brisk walks, yoga, swimming, dancing, or even gardening can all count. The key is consistency, so aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate movement per week. Beyond the physical benefits, regular exercise improves mood, reduces stress, and enhances sleep quality.

Changing your health habits doesn't require a complete overhaul overnight. Focus on small, achievable steps that build momentum over time. Start with your gut health. Once you feel better from the inside out, you'll find it easier to tackle other habits like meal planning, exercise, and reducing sugar.

From there, prioritize protein to maintain muscle and fight the effects of aging. Add in healthy fats, complex carbs, and fiber for balanced nutrition, and find movement that keeps you energized and engaged.

Remember, health isn't about perfection; it's about progress. Each small step you take — choosing a gut-friendly meal, lifting weights, or going for a walk — moves you closer to your goals. By focusing on sustainable changes, you'll create habits that last far beyond January.

This year, make it your mission to start strong and stay consistent. Whether your first step is improving your gut health, adding more protein to your plate, or lacing up your sneakers for a quick walk, know that every effort counts. Here's to a healthier, happier you in 2025!



Top 5 health tips for the New Year from Health Coach & Chef Eric Rose

- 1. Start with Your Gut Health** – Cut processed foods and refined sugars; eat more fruits, vegetables, and fermented foods.
- 2. Prioritize Protein** – Aim for 0.8-1 gram of protein per pound of body weight daily with lean meats, fish, eggs, or plant-based options.
- 3. Incorporate Strength Training** – Add resistance exercises or yoga to maintain muscle mass and boost metabolism.

4. Eat for Balance – Include healthy fats, complex carbs, and fiber from whole foods like avocados, sweet potatoes, and legumes.

5. Take Small, Consistent Steps – Focus on gradual, sustainable changes for lasting success.

High Protein Healthy Meal Options

Protein-Packed Coffee Shake

A delicious way to kickstart your day with a boost of energy and muscle support. This recipe combines your morning coffee with a protein shake for a satisfying, energizing drink. Packed with protein, healthy fats, and the caffeine you love, this shake is perfect for breakfast or a mid-morning pick-me-up.

To make a coffee protein shake with Optavia Active Whey Protein, you can mix one scoop of protein powder with 2 fluid ounces of room temperature water, stir well, and then add it to an 8 fluid ounce cup of hot or iced coffee. You can also shake one scoop of protein powder with 6–8 fluid ounces of cold water in a blender or shaker bottle.

Here are some tips for mixing protein powder with coffee:

- **Don't mix with hot coffee** Some protein powders, like whey, coagulate in hot liquids and can become clumpy.
- **Heat the protein shake** To avoid curdling, you can heat the protein shake before mixing it with coffee.

Cauliflower & Asparagus Risotto with Chicken

By Chef Eric Rose

Serves 4

This Cauliflower & Asparagus Risotto with Chicken is a delicious, high-protein, and fiber-packed meal that's both satisfying and nutritious. The addition of nutritional yeast enhances the flavor while providing beneficial B-vitamins, making this a simple, wholesome dish perfect for any time of day.

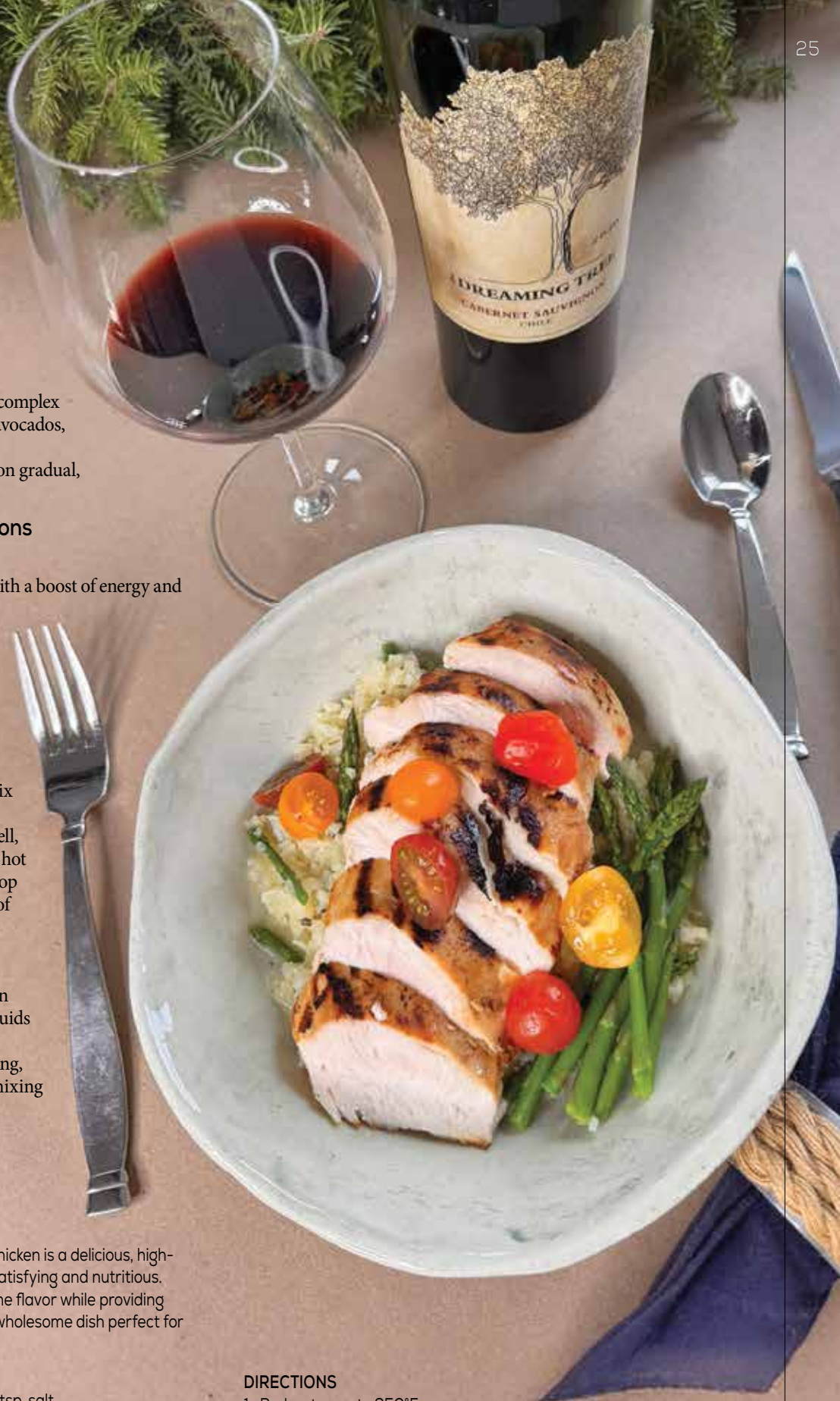
INGREDIENTS

2 lbs. boneless, skinless chicken breasts	¼ tsp. salt
¼ tsp. pepper	2 tbsp. butter, melted
5½ c. riced cauliflower	½ c. chopped asparagus
½ c. chicken stock	½ c. of low-fat cottage cheese
⅓ c. diced tomatoes	4 tsp. large flake nutritional yeast

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 350°F.
2. Place chicken in a casserole dish and season with salt and pepper. Pour melted butter on top of chicken, and roast until chicken reaches an internal temperature of 165°F, about 30 minutes. Remove from oven and allow to rest. (You can grill it.)

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Starting the New Year strong FROM PAGE 25

3. Meanwhile, combine cauliflower rice, asparagus, and chicken stock in a pot and simmer until tender, adding water as needed. Fold in cottage cheese at the end to make creamy.
4. When finished, remove cauliflower and asparagus risotto from the stovetop and mix in the nutritional yeast. Top with diced tomatoes and any chopped herb for garnish. Serve risotto with roasted chicken breast.

Pumpkin Spice Protein Coffee Smoothie

INGREDIENTS

- 1 scoop vanilla protein powder
- ½ c. brewed coffee (cooled)
- ½ c. unsweetened almond milk (or milk of choice)
- ¼ c. canned pumpkin puree
- ½ tsp. pumpkin spice (plus more for garnish)
- ½ tsp. vanilla extract
- ½ frozen banana (for creaminess and natural sweetness)
- ¼ tsp. cinnamon (optional)
- 5 to 6 ice cubes



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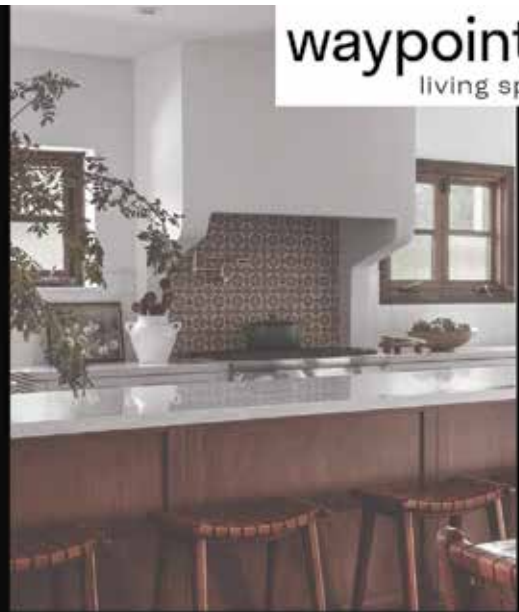


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TWO CNY HEROINES HELP FILL THE EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION GAP

Maggie Nerz Iribarne

It is well-documented that early childhood education is extremely important to human development yet undervalued due to many factors from unlivable wages to resistant policy to public disinterest. Not surprisingly, there is a shortage of affordable childcare options across the United States, one that has far-reaching effects. A June 7, 2024 article from the website www.zerotothree.org states: "As the demand for quality childcare continues to outstrip supply, the ripple effects are felt across communities, impacting the economy and the well-being of families nationwide."

Central New York is no exception, but there are those in our community who are dedicated to making a positive impact. Tanika Jones and Ann Schaefer are two veteran teachers who, operating in different settings and meeting different needs, share a relentless passion for their mission as early childhood educators.

Tanika Jones' grandmother was a professor of education at Syracuse University, her mother a long-term public school teacher. Tanika studied social work, originally employed as a community organizer where, among other tasks, she planned rallies and protests. After suffering a big personal loss she became inspired to open her own at-home childcare center. Following her inner compass and deep spirit-uality, she trusted that "if she built it, it would come."

A single mother of two daughters, Tanika understood the need for quality early childhood education in the city of Syracuse. With her social work and organizing background and possessing a lifelong desire to create new employment possibilities, she was well suited to make change. Exasperation with gun violence and drugs in her neighborhood was the last straw that propelled her to action and It Takes a Village (ITAV) was born.

"The message I received was that if I gave back it would all work. My children, my family, my neighbors all bought in," Tanika said. "My house became the daycare house. People protected it. I felt on assignment to deliver this service."

One of the most important aspects of ITAV is its 24 hours a day, seven days a week schedule.

"When I think of the economy after 5 p.m., I think of the people who keep it running and if they have children and who is providing care for those children, and if they are safe and well cared for," she said. "I make SURE that ITAV 24-hour childcare continues to serve families seven days a week, even on some holidays! Non-traditional hours of care is imperative to keep the economy going."

Tanika makes it clear ITAV is not a babysitting club for the many children in her charge, setting high standards for them and their parents. She provides a positive environment where children are offered an English and Spanish curriculum while engaging in play and ultimately preparing for school. Below age-appropriate reading levels for black and brown children is a concern, explaining a deep focus on reading and literacy. A wide and ever-evolving array of activities are offered to engage and inspire - field trips, STEM lessons, cooking, yoga. Tanika's school is shoes-off with plenty of dancing and singing. After school, ITAV offers enrichment and tutoring.

"I have to kick them out at the end of the day. This is a big, happy, fun place," she said.

Tanika and her 20 staff members are lifelong learners, holding themselves to the same high standards they hold their students, constantly engaging in professional development and trainings. People want to work at ITAV because it is a fun, loving, and flexible environment, but everyone employed there must believe in Tanika's positive philosophy. She has a no gossiping, bullying, or cell phone policy. Her staff is a team and must be dedicated to the vision of the school.

One of ITAV's greatest challenges is the increased number of children with special needs and the lack of input childcare owners have with law and other decision makers.

"Celebrating 11 years we are proud to say that we have made a huge impact on the community through the childcare services we provide and employment opportunities we have created," Tanika said. "This is not just childcare, it is a ministry and it blesses me as the CEO and it bless others."

Ann's word: *Empath* Tanika's word/phrase: *Change-Maker*

Ann Schaefer of Ann Schaefer Childcare in Lafayette also comes from a family of educators and social workers. A former nurse and stay-at-home mother to four children, she became aware of a need for childcare when her own kids were small and began filling it, creating a unique experience for babies and children up to four years old in her rural community.

Ann's curriculum is child-led, Montessori-inspired, and nature based. Children spend as much time as possible outdoors.

"This approach helps children develop physical strength, fine and gross motor skills, spatial awareness, and overall fitness," she said. "They grow into strong, independent, and capable little humans."

"We share a garden, tend to bird feeders, care for chickens, plant flowers for butterflies, and learn about trees and insects. The children climb, jump, and enjoy nature walks. I've created special spaces like mud kitchens for sensory play. We also read books, sing songs, and fill our days with rich exploration, fresh air and meaningful experiences."

Ann does not have to advertise and does not use a waiting list. Her students come to her by word of mouth. Her bucolic setting and model of education self-selects families who are looking for a nature-based, intentional play curriculum. Ann believes passionately in the importance of early childhood education and feels the failures at this level are what contribute to broader issues in education.

"Teachers are leaving... most of their day is spent correcting

behaviors because the early childcare educator is not meeting those executive functioning skills," she said, referring to a set of higher-level cognitive skills that help planning, organization, self-control, and emotion management, laying a foundation for lifelong learning.

Ann sees her mission as having far reaching effects. She believes she can make the change she wants to see in the world child by child.

"How can I set a foundation for a child who's eventually going to be an adult and be a part of forming our future society? How can I

model how to be a good human and how to be accountable, even at age three? How can I teach them their own self-worth and the self-worth of others? How can I create a conscience?" she says.

Ann acknowledges the steep hill to climb surrounding these questions.

"Quality care from educated providers is rare, and the lack of adequate childcare workers, combined with low wages, creates a cycle of burnout and attrition... Simply put, the system is deeply flawed and in need of meaningful reform."

For now, Ann continues living out her dream for a better world under the open skies and wide fields of her pre-school in Lafayette. She knows she might never see the ultimate fruits of her vision, but her faith in its value is unwavering.

"With the current shortage of childcare providers, the experience I offer is not just rare—it's a unique and meaningful learning opportunity during a crucial developmental period in a child's life." SWM



Night Market

Night Market, the holiday pop-up shopping event that feels like a party, was held in November at Sky Armory. Each year, Sky Armory celebrates Small Business Saturday by welcoming more than 1,000 shoppers to shop for unique gifts from more than 70 artisans, makers and retailers with live music, food and cocktails.



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SWATHI UTURKI



Using pageants as a platform for good

Anna Edwards

Swathi Uturki, a biomedical engineer from Marcellus, was awarded second runner-up at the 2025 Mrs. Universe USA Pageant. She is the first from Upstate New York to ever receive the honor.

Uturki grew up in India but moved to Marcellus about eight years ago after receiving her master's degree from Cornell University. She said her time at Cornell brought her to fall in love with Upstate New York.

In her professional life Uturki is a biomedical engineer at Baxter, formerly Welch Allyn and Hillrom. Along with her professional life, Uturki has been involved in her community as an advocate for sustainability and social equality, and she felt that a pageant could give her a new platform to talk about issues that matter to her. Uturki leads diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives in Skaneateles and is involved in social issues in the area. She volunteers at Rescue Mission Samaritan Center, prepares Meals on Wheels, and runs community events, and is a part of Junior League of Syracuse, a women's leadership organization that works towards community initiatives while enhancing women in leadership roles.

"It's something I feel like I need to do for my community," she said.

Uturki is also involved in environmental efforts and works to minimize waste in the area. "Our planet is definitely degrading," she said. "And so I started helping everybody else around

my community to learn a little bit more about how this works... It has kind of become a collaborative thing."

Uturki said she decided to take things up a notch after thinking about what else she could do to help her community and work towards her goals. She said she has always seen beauty queens stand up for social causes and advocate through their platform.

She found out about the Mrs. Universe USA pageant two weeks before it took place and signed up, hoping for the best.

Most contestants spend months or years preparing for the pageant, but she didn't have the luxury of time or experience.

"I'll be honest, I'm a T-shirt, jeans and sneakers person. Wearing five-inch heels was never my thing... It was very new for me. But I'm a person who likes to challenge myself," she said.

Uturki spent the couple of weeks before the competition with lessons on how to answer questions and how to carry

herself in a pageant, all while working and taking care of her children. "While driving, I was listening to pageant radios," she said. "I'm a tomboy, so it was a whole other journey."

The pageant took place in Edison, New Jersey from Nov. 29 to Dec. 1. Uturki said she appreciated how all of the 39 participants uplifted each other and stood for important issues. "I really felt blessed about being a part of this journey because every single woman out there who I met stands for something more than their work," she said. "They want to make an impact. They want to be the change-makers in society."

The competitors were judged based on introduction sessions, photoshoots, interviews dinner parties, ramp walks and dance. The pageant's focus was on domestic violence, so the women were asked questions on domestic violence and evaluated by a panel of judges. There was also a costume round where women came up with a creative costume based on something that they advocate for. Uturki dressed as an ocean goddess, with the theme "Protect our oceans, preserve our future."

Uturki plans to use her platform to further her work on community causes such as social equality, mindful living and sustainability. She hopes to speak at schools and community gatherings to encourage others to take action for a larger cause. She aims to collaborate with local nonprofits that align with her mission.

Uturki also plans to emphasize education of future generations and make kids more aware of the issues happening in the world. She believes in mentorship, outreach and the use of social media to spread messages. And with this new platform, she can no spread her message even further. *SWM*

Submitted photos. Swathi Uturki, a biomedical engineer who calls Marcellus home, earned second runner-up at the 2025 Mrs. Universe USA Pageant.



CHARY GRIFFIN



Submitted photos
 Chary Griffin, 76, has been competing in triathlons for 34 years. On Oct. 19, the Cazenovia resident placed third in her division at the World Triathlon Championship Finals 2024 in Torremolinos, Spain.



**World Triathlon
 Championship Finals**
 TORREMOLINOS-ANDALUCÍA
 2024



OFFICIAL TIME

04:05:21

Cazenovia athlete continues to conquer triathlons in her seventies

Kate Hill

Cazenovia resident Chary Griffin, 76, has competed in triathlons for more than three decades.

She got into the sport just over a decade after women first appeared on the triathlon scene and has now competed in nine world championships, racing in Australia, Hungary, England, Canada, the United States, New Zealand, Germany, and twice in Spain.

“I started when there were only two or three women in a race, [and we used] our kids’ road bikes,” Chary said. “Most races were only sprint distance. [Today,] what I enjoy most about training and racing is the comradery with my fellow athletes and my coach, Kristen Roe. Kristen and I have worked together for many years, and she is the reason I have been able to work my way up the ladder slowly and carefully with very few injuries.”

In October, Chary represented the US at the World Triathlon Championship Finals 2024 in Torremolinos, Spain, a resort town on the Costa del Sol in Andalusia. She qualified for the race by finishing in the top 10 — placing fourth — last year in Pontevedra, Spain.

“Over 5,000 triathletes raced [this year], and Team USA was 500 athletes strong,” she said. “The weather was 75-80 degrees and sunny. That being said, the water was 67 degrees with a stiff wind and tidal currents. There were numerous distance events and subsets, such as sprint distance, aqua-bike, duathlon, under 24, juniors, elites, paratriathlon, and mixed-team relay, all spanning four days of racing.” Griffin competed in the Age Group Standard Triathlon and placed third in her women’s 75-79 age group.

Also known as an Olympic triathlon, a standard triathlon race consists of a 1.5-kilometer (0.9-mile) swim, a 40-kilometer (24.8-mile) bicycle race, and a 10-kilometer (6.2-mile) run.

“Making the podium this year was very satisfying as I have come close several times,” Chary said. “I look forward to next year to see what I can do. [This was] a milestone to be remembered for sure.”

For Griffin, mantras and visualization are valuable tools for staying motivated during races.

She remarked that while she employs phrases such as “All things are possible” and “Piece of cake,” she more frequently turns to visualization.

“I take a mental snapshot of a cold winter day and mentally bring it back as the run gets hotter, or I visualize a cord pulling me from the chest up the hill,” she said. “Another key point is to travel the bike and run course slowly and know where you are in relation to the finish so you can confidently pace yourself.”

Although her athletic achievements to date are numerous, fitness was not something she considered until she was an adult with a family. She pointed out that in her younger years, there was little opportunity for girls in the 1950s to participate in sports.

“I remember jump roping at school and swimming lessons, but girls were supposed to be ‘ladylike,’ not fit,” she said. “However, fitness became more important when, as a mom, my kids asked me to help them with sports. I realized I was woefully out of shape and began my fitness journey — first aerobics and then, at the suggestion of my

aerobics instructor, Dani Riposo, I began to ‘jog.’ I never stopped. In later years, I realized that fitness was the key to good health, a positive attitude, and longevity.”

Outside of athletics, Chary is a real estate agent for Berkshire Hathaway who has been selling homes in CNY for 30 years. She got into triathlons 34 years ago as a seasoned marathon runner. She realized that running 30-40 miles weekly on a canted road surface for marathon training left her bored, stiff, and sore.

“I decided to find a way to train for the same number of hours and [at] the same heart rate but mix it up,” she said. “I grew up near the ocean and was a surfer in the ‘60s, so open-water swimming held no fears for me. My main mode of transport as a child was my bike, so basic biking was easy, and, of course, I had a lot of running under my belt already. I completed 10 marathons, many half marathons, 10Ks, and 5Ks.”

Chary discovered some small Central New York-area triathlons and added triathlon training to her summer schedule. She recalled that the event that opened her eyes to what she could potentially achieve in the sport was the Casio Triathlon in Lake Placid.

“Long before they hosted Ironman, Lake Placid was the home of the Casio Triathlon,” she said. “It was the Olympic distance, which was a step up for women distance-wise, and the athletes largely came from New York City and had fancy bikes and equipment.”

Each year, after her final race of the competition season, Chary works to mix up her training again.

“I take a break and head to the ‘no excuses gym’ in my basement as the weather turns, and I work on strength,” she said. “I also get on the trails for a run [and] get the snowshoes on for some ‘fast grass’ workouts before winter hits and it’s time to snowshoe race. I began snowshoe racing on trails when I found running on icy, snowy roads more dangerous than I would like. It’s a fun change of pace and very aerobic.”

She also stays active by joining YMCA groups for pool swims or winter hikes, working out with the Syracuse Chargers and CNY Triathlon groups, and doing “useful exercise” like shoveling snow and push mowing her yard. Additionally, she is a fan of 261 Fearless, a non-profit launched by Kathrine Switzer — the first woman to officially complete the Boston Marathon — that uses running to empower women to overcome life obstacles and embrace healthy living.

In preparation for the next triathlon competition season, Chary picks up her training at Easter and trains for seven months, six times a week.

“So, each season builds on the next, yet [it also] mixes things up and keeps the journey fresh and exciting, as there is always something to look forward to,” she said.

Next year, she will head to Australia for the 2025 World Triathlon Finals.

“[I’ve] already rented a bike and hotel,” she said. SWM

To learn more about the World Triathlon Championship Series, visit wtcs.com.

Solvay Bank Announces Recent Hires and Promotions

Solvay Bank, the oldest community bank established in Onondaga County, has announced four recent hires and promotions.



Rebecca Bivone

The Customer Relations & Operations team recently welcomed Rebecca (Becky) Bivone as operations specialist. Becky brings nearly two decades of experience in the financial services industry. She has served in various roles ranging from in-branch leadership to back-operations, most recently serving as head teller at a local bank.

In 2009, Becky was recognized as Customer Service Representative of the Year for her outstanding performance. In the community, Becky is an active volunteer and supporter of local animal support organizations.

Elizabeth (Liz) Roy joins the bank as AVP, assistant enterprise risk manager. A 2009 graduate of Providence College, Liz has built a successful career in financial services, holding various leadership positions.

Her expertise is in risk management, compliance, regulatory affairs, security, and internal controls. Liz is a skilled leader with a proven track record in the financial industry.

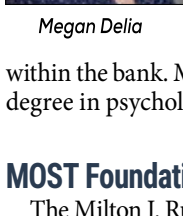
Alexis Bojczuk has been promoted to assistant branch manager at the Camillus office. Alexis joined Solvay Bank in 2022 as a teller with the Westvale team and was later promoted to banking solutions representative. She continues to expand her skills and is excited to take this next step.



Elizabeth Roy



Alexis Bojczuk



Megan Delia

Megan Delia has been promoted to banking solutions representative at the Westvale Office. Megan joined Solvay Bank in March 2024 as a mobile banking associate, supporting all retail offices. She has quickly developed her skills and is excited to take on this new role, where she looks forward to getting to know the Westvale customers and further expanding her abilities

within the bank. Megan is a 2022 graduate of SUNY Buffalo with a degree in psychology.

MOST Foundation Board Welcomes New Directors

The Milton J. Rubenstein Museum of Science and Technology has added Isabelle Harris and Kimberly Sadowski to its board of directors.



Isabelle Harris

Isabelle is chief of staff to Onondaga County Executive Ryan McMahon. In her role, she oversees day-to-day operations of the office of the county executive, serving as liaison to multiple community organizations and supervising multiple departments within county government. Prior to serving as chief of staff, Isabelle was director of strategic initiatives for Onondaga County where her focus was

to oversee projects funded by the American Rescue Funds. She also has extensive experience in government relations and economic development policy. Before joining Onondaga County, Isabelle held positions with both the federal and state governments, including district director for Congressman John Katko. She also served for over 8 years in positions in New York state government. Isabelle currently serves on several local boards, including the Landmark Theatre Board

of Directors, Home HeadQuarters, Inc., and the Onondaga County Community Development Steering Committee.



Kimberly Sadowski

Kimberly Sadowski is vice president and chief financial officer at the Central New York Community Foundation, where she leads the organization's finance, administration and information technology and oversees budget development, investment strategy, financial reporting, and regulatory compliance. Her strategic vision and proactive leadership have been instrumental in supporting the Community Foundation's growth while enhancing its financial performance and operational efficiency. She is a highly accomplished certified public accountant (CPA) with an extensive track record of leadership and expertise in financial management, strategic planning, and organizational development. Kim has held key executive positions in both the nonprofit and private sectors, including chief financial officer at ARISE Child and Family Service, Inc. Kim currently serves as the board treasurer of AccessCNY.

St. Joseph's Health Celebrates Cardiac Sonography Class of 2024

This highly specialized, 13-month certificate program equips students with the skills and knowledge to perform diagnostic procedures in adult echocardiography settings. Graduates learn to evaluate the heart's and function through techniques such as transthoracic echocardiography (TTE), transesophageal echocardiography (TEE), and stress echocardiography (SE). The program combines intensive classroom learning with 46 weeks of hands-on clinical training at St. Joseph's Health and other medical facilities, fostering a foundation of excellence in cardiac imaging.

The Class of 2024 includes Carl Butch, Sarah Casselman, Morgan Giordano, Samantha Kellogg, Svitlana Khmelnytska, Kristen Nunes, Miah Rafferty, Alysia Rising, Brianna Wallace and Nafysa Williams. "We have risen above challenges and persevered," said graduate Sarah Casselman. "I will forever be thankful for the cardiology department, which helped me build a strong foundation."

"At this moment, we are officially cardiac sonographers, and we'll go all around the world performing this task," said Svitlana Khmelnytska. "This is only the beginning of our journey, and the future is looking so bright."

"Congratulations to the Class of 2024 for your hard work, perseverance and dedication to becoming compassionate and skilled cardiac sonographers," said Danielle Gage, program administrator. "You are now equipped with the knowledge and clinical expertise to make a meaningful impact in the lives of patients."



Carl Butch, Sarah Casselman, Morgan Giordano, Samantha Kellogg, Svitlana Khmelnytska, Kristen Nunes, Miah Rafferty, Alysia Rising, Brianna Wallace and Nafysa Williams.

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Jan. 5

Holiday Hangover Pajama Brunch

What: Are you exhausted from Thanksgiving, Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanza, New Year and all the holiday merriment? Come relax in your pajamas and enjoy brunch food, cocktails, and a raffle.

Where: Talking Cursive Brewing Company, Syracuse.
When: 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.
Info: www.talkingcursive.com/about-2



Jan. 12

Nature Sketching

What: Join a naturalist for thoughtful sketching and nature art. Learn to draw trees, leaves, snow, and animals. Some supplies provided, but feel free to bring your own.

Where: Beaver Lake Nature Center, Baldwinsville.
When: 2 p.m.
Info: \$2 for members, \$3 for non-members. www.beaverlakenature.org.



Jan. 15

WBOC Virtual Open House

What: Join for a virtual meet-and-greet to learn more about WBOC membership. Learn about the different types of meetings, how you can participate, marketing opportunities.

Where: Zoom.
When: Noon.
Info: Free. Register at www.wboconnection.org/event-5830345.



Jan. 17-18

Newsies

What: It's 1899 in New York City and a charismatic newsboy rallies his fellow newsies to strike against unfair working conditions. This musical has a timeless message for all ages.

Where: OnCenter Carrier Theater, Syracuse.
Info: Tickets available at www.armysyracuse.com/events/2024/newsies



Jan. 22-Feb. 9

Primary Trust

What: In a small town, 38-year-old Kenneth has a good job, a great boss, and the best friend a guy could ask for. But his boss is moving, the bookstore he works at is closing, and his best friend is imaginary. This 2024 Pulitzer Prize winner is a story of modern loneliness, kindness, and joy.

Where: Syracuse Stage.
Info: Tickets available at www.syracusestage.org/primary.



Jan. 23

Syracuse Orange Women's Basketball

What: Support women's basketball and watch Syracuse Women play against North Carolina State Wolfpack.

Where: JMA Wireless Dome, Syracuse.
When: 6 p.m.
Info: Tickets available at www.cuse.com/sports/womens-basketball.



Jan. 24

Disney Channel Throwback Night

What: Join for hours of nostalgia with music from 2000s Disney movies and shows.

Where: The Westcott Theater, Syracuse.
When: 7 p.m.
Info: Tickets available at www.thewestcotttheater.com



Jan. 29

Lunar New Year Concert

What: Join the Syracuse Orchestra to welcome the Year of the Snake and celebrate Asian culture. Experience unique melodies, instruments, and arrangements of some of the oldest music in the world.

Where: Inspiration Hall, 709 James St. Syracuse.
When: 7 p.m.
Info: Tickets available at www.syracuseorchestra.org



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Photo: Keith Anderson by Matt Cozzani

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