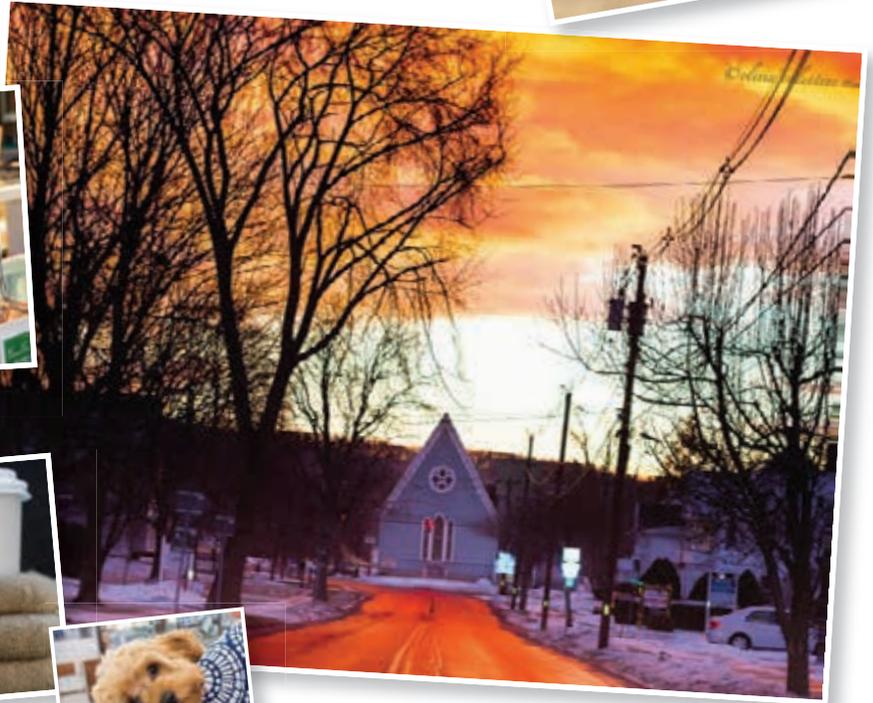


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FEBRUARY IS FOR LOVERS

February is the month of three things, in my opinion: 1. Groundhog Day and, more importantly, the fact that the movie with Bill Murray is played on repeat is just awesome! 2. We then quickly come to the realization that we are still stuck right smack in the middle of dreadful winter and you're so sick of it. 3. Those emotions are slightly interrupted by Valentine's Day with its romance, and bright and sweet flowers and chocolates.

So in effect, February could be viewed as the month for lovers! It's cold out, so what better activity than to snuggle up to your special someone, and come the middle of the month there's sure to be some extra romance. And this love fest is kicked off with the sheer love that we all have for Bill Murray and *Groundhog Day*! ... or maybe that's just me, because *Groundhog Day* is one of my favorite movies.

So for this month of lovers, we bring you our February issue which is chock-full of stories – as usual! There was no theme to this month's issue and so we have quite the diversity of stories for your entertainment. I'd like to begin by welcoming three new writers who have contributed to this issue: Regina is a transplant who just recently moved to the Rhinebeck area all the way from Hawaii! (I'm guessing that she might be missing the Hawaii winters right about now). Regina has penned a piece that might come in handy for a few of us, you know, in case you need any help in the idea department for a Valentine's Day gift!

In addition to Regina, we have two young writers and future journalists who I had the pleasure of speaking to at a local high school. I offered all of the interested students to pitch me a story and I selected Madison and Anne to pen pieces in this issue. Anne penned a piece about why we fail to maintain our New Year's resolutions and gives tips on how to stick with them. Madison took on a "tougher" subject, but one that she was passionate about, and gives us insights into the challenges of being a high school student today.

We also have great pieces about a local coffee brewing company, a local distillery, an interview with Parry Teasdale of *The Columbia Paper*, winter runners, and the benefits of saunas. Mary and her daughter Olivia also share their experiences with the non-profit Simply Smiles and working at the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe in La Plant, SD ... and a few other great stories that I don't have more room here to tell you about, so flip the page and enjoy!

– Thorunn Kristjansdottir



FEBRUARY 2018

A snow-covered country road in Sharon, CT.

Cover photo by Lazlo Gyorsok

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JOHN BELARDO:

In the manner of the masters

By CB Wismar
arts@mainstreetmag.com

There is a chance ... merely a fantasy, mind you ... that John Belardo would have gotten on famously with Pablo Picasso. It was the great Picasso who said, after all, "Every child is an artist. The problem is how to remain an artist once we grow up."

John has met that challenge, with great success. Problem solved. Picasso would be proud.

As a child in the Capital Region of New York, the notion of drawing and sketching was as much a part of John Belardo's formative years as the joy of "making things." Staying close to home, Belardo graduated from The College of Saint Rose in Albany with a degree in studio art, a concentration in education, and an emerging vision of what he wanted to become.

Teaching was the real draw but not, as he is quick to admit, the middle school pupils he had encountered in his student-teaching days. "I loved the notion of sharing and challenging and watching students grow," confides John, "but they needed to be more mature."

Humble beginnings

A Master of Fine Arts degree in sculpture from the New York Academy of Art narrowed the focus even more. With imagination, perseverance, and a measure of good luck, Belardo ended up at Lehman College CUNY in the Bronx. He was looking for work, and the assignment was short-term. The tasks assigned were not so much artistic as supportive of the creation of work in clay. Studio assistants do not have glamorous jobs, but entry level jobs are just that – the entry.

"I started out as a studio tech ... loading and unloading kilns, working with molds and clay." Although two decades have expanded between those days and his present position, there is still a sense of humor in his delivery. "I guess I never left."

More than 21 years on, John Belardo is still at Lehman CUNY, having emerged as both a recognized sculptor with his work in permanent collections and installations – at Georgetown University Medical Center, Lehman College CUNY, and the Cooperstown Theater Festival – and also enjoying his position as Adjunct Instructor of Drawing, Sculpture and Painting at Lehman College. As if that were not enough of a commitment, he also serves on the faculty of his alma mater, the New York Academy of Art as Adjunct Instructor in Sculpture.

His commute to work is not without challenges – he and his family live in Pine Plains, NY, in a charming older home near the village center. Lehman College is in the Bronx and the New York Academy of Art is down in Tribeca, so hours and miles are a major part of each week. When his students arrive in each term at the point where projects are due and critiques are scheduled, the times can get super-human. "I did a week of 14 hour days last week," sighed Belardo as he contemplated the luxury of a holiday vacation break. "It'll be family time, and the chance to get into my home studio without interruption."

Creating, teaching, and giving back

Beyond his academic credentials, John Belardo has been an active member of the artistic community for years. He has served as both a board member, treasurer, and president of the Hudson Valley Art Association, a very active consortium of artists who present wide ranging exhibitions across the tristate area.

To "layer on" responsibilities, John is also a visiting scholar for the Institute for American Universities (IAU). That commute is a bit more intense. IAU is located in Aix-en-Provence, France, but being aligned with the institution has allowed



Above, top to bottom: Cotton paper mold. The artist, John Belardo. Photo by CB Wismar.

him to travel, to study, and learn from the various European masters and to expand the on-going process of refining and clarifying his own work.

Magic in the sketchbook

“I’ve filled notebooks with sketches of work by Michelangelo, Cellini, and Giambologna,” he acknowledges. “My style is heavily influenced by the classical, Mannerist sculptors, and seeing their work in person is both invigorating and highly motivating.”

So detailed are his sketchbooks that the publication *Drawing* featured John’s sketchbook in a 2016 feature that showed the evolution from sketch to finished sculpture.

Belardo’s study of the Mannerist school translates into striking pieces that reflect the Mannerist perspective, exaggerating proportions, balance, and the idea of beauty. *Persephone*, a 2016 work, depicts the mythological goddess of the underworld from the artist’s forced perspective of the human form. It is a Mannerist gem.

The ways of clay

Working in terracotta, Belardo begins working on a new piece with a sense of a motion ... a position of the figures that expands as he works with the clay. “Looks change ... the position of an arm or a leg may change several times before the piece is where I want it.”

When the sculpture meets his expectations, he gingerly hollows out the forms, keeping the walls of

the piece consistent in thickness so that it dries evenly. Only then is it done.

In this case, “done” means ready to thoroughly dry, then be set into a large kiln where the clay is fired to a staggering 1830F degrees. “It takes three days for the firing to be complete,” offers Belardo. “The ramp-up or ‘candle’ stage consistently adds temperature until the firing temperature can be held for 24 hours. Then, there is the ‘ramp-down,’ as the piece slowly cools to avoid cracking.”

If, as is often the case, the piece has had to be carefully cut apart to transport and fit into the kiln, John then carefully reassembles the piece, using an epoxy compound, followed by giving the entire piece a seamless patina with an iron oxide wash and several coatings of wax. “I love the delicate, reddish cast it leaves on the surface of the finished piece.”

Into the great outdoors

Since terracotta sculptures can survive only indoors, the lure of creating public sculptures has taken John into the world of bronze, aluminum, and steel – utilizing his created pieces and digital designs as the base from which they are cast and burnished.

Through Belardo’s career, the impact of technology and the advances of digital design have created a curiosity, experimentation, and resulting creative work that crosses media. Since his students are eager to understand and employ the most contemporary techniques, John makes a concerted effort to stay current on technique and the possibilities of execution. *Liberty’s Face* is a large (110 inches high) piece executed in 2009 out of aluminum, and exhibited in several sculpture shows. *Suspension* translates a digital design into steel that has developed a rust patina.

And, the experimentation continues. Having worked in clay relief, John is now exploring the nuances of cotton paper formed over an existing relief sculpture to create a work that can be duplicated and popularized. The ease with which a patron could acquire the cotton



relief as opposed to the terracotta piece will make collecting his work more accessible to his interested public.

John Belardo’s Artist’s Statement reflects both the imagination and the creative spark that has allowed the artist as child to become the artist as adult. “My work explores complex, multiple-figure, sculptural compositions in terracotta. The intent is to cultivate a dynamic system in which several figures interact physically. There is a spontaneous order that emerges through the interaction of the individual figures that results in a complex, yet delicately unified composition.”

It would be fair to presume that Picasso would agree. ●

Explore John Belardo’s creative catalog at www.johnbelardo.com.

Are you an artist and interested in being featured in Main Street Magazine? Send a brief bio, artist’s statement, and a link to your work to arts@mainstreetmag.com.

Above: *Persephone*.
Below: *Liberty’s Face*. All images courtesy of John Belardo.



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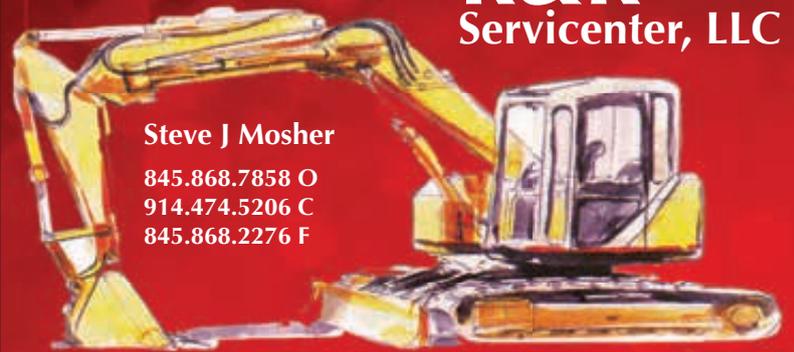
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Brenda Marchionne has worked at the Dutch Treat in Craryville, NY, a family-run business, since 1990 with her mom, sister, and daughter. “What I love most about my job is of course the people. I got to raise my kids here and they got to meet all kinds of great people.” Nowadays Brenda’s favorite thing to do outside of work is to play with her grandkids, Leo and Lydia, “My grandkids make me happy.” Brenda also enjoys golfing, walking, boating on Copake Lake, singing, talking, and hanging out with her friends. “I have lived here my entire life and absolutely love it! Everywhere you go you know someone and everyone is always there to help if you are ever in need. It’s also the best place to raise kids.” Hey Brenda, we’ll catch you for breakfast at the Dutch Treat!



Gerald Jennings is a senior at Ichabod Crane in Columbia County, NY, and like most seniors he’s counting down the days until graduation. Outside of school Gerald works part time at Tractor Supply in Hudson, NY. “I’ve been there since last January. I stock feed and like to assist customers, too.” In his spare time Gerald likes to work on his trucks; a 2002 Chevy Duramax and a 2001 Chevy Silverado. “I hope to get them running well over the winter.” As for his plans going into the summer, he is looking forward to helping mow lawns with MLF Mowing, “We make a good team, and I like being outdoors.” As a lifelong resident of the Hudson area, Gerald says he likes that there is so much to do, but more importantly he loves the wide-open spaces.



Kelly Roger works at Riley’s Furniture in Millerton, NY, and is the “office girl” (answering the phone and helping where help is needed). “I’ve worked for Riley’s for about 14 years now and I love customer service and meeting new people that come into the store. I also love changing the store around when new furniture comes in.” When Kelly isn’t at Riley’s she loves being outdoors, designing and building things with pallet wood, and she looks forward to summer trips to the ocean with her family. She’s also been a volunteer at the Millerton Fire Company for the past five years and counting, helping the community in any way she can. “I grew up in Pine Plains and moved to Millerton twenty two years ago when I met my husband Keith. I am so fortunate to live in such a nice area and be part of a great little community!”



After a short break in her banking career, **Georgina Chamberlain** is now one of the tellers at The Bank of Greene County’s new branch in Copake, NY – adding to her eleven years of customer service in banking. “Not only is The Bank Of Greene County a community committed bank, but I get to work with a great team, and I am able to help customers that are my friends and neighbors.” When Georgina isn’t at the bank, she enjoys spending time with her family, friends, being outside, camping, kayaking, and watching her boys play sports. Georgina is a self-proclaimed “Route 22 girl” – she was born and raised in Millerton and has been a Copake resident for the last seventeen years. “I love being a part of the community and enjoying the outstanding beauty which we are surrounded by.”



Peter Lorenzo III has 14 years of experienced in tree service, tree take down, and tree removal. “I love the risk, adrenaline, and satisfaction when the job is complete and the customer is happy.” When Peter isn’t up in a tree, he enjoys traveling, digital photography (mostly of landscapes), and cycling as much as possible. He is a born and raised native of Salisbury, CT, and is currently living in Lakeville. “What I like most about the area is that it’s a great place to grow up, and it’s safe and quiet.” Peter is always open for helping people who want to learn digital photography, and helping them understand how modern cameras work. “Most people often buy a camera, or come across one, and never learn how to use it.” [Peter currently has an exhibit of his images in our gallery at 52 Main Street in Millerton, NY].



Lisa Smith is a women’s clothing designer and sales woman based in Hillsdale, NY. She has been designing clothing and garments for over 40 years, “My website offers clothing for women that I design and sew in my studio.” Lisa also works part time at Hudson Home on Warren St. in Hudson, NY. Originally from West Hurley, NY, Lisa lived on the West Coast for many years, earning a fashion degree from the Fashion Institute of Design and Merchandising (FIDM) in Los Angeles. “What I love most is fabric, the pleasure of working with colors and textures to create wearable clothing.” When Lisa isn’t busy producing designs (which can range from one-of-a-kind tops to versatile kimono-style jackets), she enjoys gardening, reading, baking biscotti, doing yoga, watching old movies, and her favorite – sewing!



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Telling the story: PARRY TEASDALE, EDITOR AND PUBLISHER, *THE COLUMBIA PAPER*

By Christine Bates
christine@mainstreetmag.com

Why are we interviewing and, in effect, promoting what some might view as a direct “competitor” of ours? Local newspapers and magazines are after all fighting for much of the same readership and advertising dollars. But what some might not realize is that quite a few of our local publications work together in different capacities (i.e. reprinting stories, sharing camera-ready ads for our advertisers). I have known Parry since the inception of his *Columbia Paper*, and he and his staff have done a wonderful job of bringing everyone the news, weekly to boot! In a time when a lot of publications are folding and people say that “print is dead,” I thought it pertinent to share with you how and why print can thrive with the right folks behind it and with the right stories. And so Christine was able to catch up with Parry and share how he brings us the news. — Thorunn Kristjansdottir



Why in the depths of the recession in 2009 did you start a weekly newspaper? What was wrong with you?

It's not a choice most business people would make. It's not a way to accumulate a fortune; it's the satisfaction of providing people with information about where they live. I've never calculated the hours I spend working but it's a six-day a week labor of love. It's so satisfying when people come up to you and say, “I love your newspaper.”

I was editor of the weekly *Woodstock Times* when I was offered the job as editor of *The Independent* in Columbia County in 2000. A few months after I arrived here the local owners sold *The Independent* to the Journal Register Company chain. I remained editor until February 2009, when the Journal Register, on the verge of declaring bankruptcy, closed *The Independent*. The writing had been on the wall for quite a while so I wasn't surprised. They never really understood weekly newspapers. Within ten days, working with former staffers we

had a *Columbia Paper* website up and running with local news and in three months the first edition of the printed newspaper was on the stands. We're still here nearly ten years later and our paper is growing. It's a real tribute to the group of people who have worked on this project.

Did you write a business plan for this new venture?

From my days as an entrepreneur writing a business plan was easy. I can't say it was very forward thinking to start a paper in a community where the paper had just been closed. I laugh and say one of the options was success, but not necessarily a financial success. I had to raise a small amount of money to produce the first issues and a whole lot of people were willing to contribute to make it happen. It was more an article of faith. I also sought the advice of many people who offered information and moral support and never sought recognition. I remain committed to doing local news for this community, Columbia County, and the only way to do it is through display advertising in a newspaper.

Have you ever considered acquiring other newspapers?

There was one chance to acquire another publication but there was no synergy between the two papers. There has to be an affinity between communities served to make sense of combining efforts.

You're both editor and publisher. Is that difficult?

It certainly has been a learning curve. The toughest problem is finding the right people to do ad sales. I had no expertise in direct selling and I'm still learning. And it takes time to build public awareness about your publication.

What stories has *The Columbia Paper* published that have made a difference?

I know that Diane Valden's continuing coverage of Copake's serial scoff-law and polluter Salvatore Cascino have made a huge difference in the public knowing about environmental pollution. What do you do when someone flouts the law and manages to elude being held accountable? Cascino has spent 18 years violating



Above, top to bottom: *The Columbia Paper* is well read throughout Columbia County, NY. Parry Teasdale, the editor and publisher of *The Columbia Paper*.

Continued on next page ...

federal, state, and town laws for illegal dumping and now he's in jail for contempt of court. Covering big issues that face communities connects us to the rest of the world. It's not lucrative, reporters can't survive on what we can pay, but the satisfaction is getting the news out.

How many subscribers do you have? Who are they? Where do they live?

Our readership has grown every year and now we're at about 2,400, which isn't bad considering there are only 62,000 people in the whole county. We do have some snowbirds but almost everyone is a Columbia County resident. We are fortunate because our population skews older and these people are used to reading newspapers. They know what a newspaper is and are loyal readers. Our circulation is also helped by the fact that Columbia County has terrible internet and cell phone service, which creates an opportunity for us. In addition there is no county-wide competition from other papers and even the radio market is fragmented.

Who are they? There's that old adage: we know they can spend a dollar a week and can read. They are also interested in Columbia County and believe they can trust the news we print. About 40% of our sales are at retail outlets and 60% are delivered to post offices, which put the papers in people's boxes or delivers them to homes.

Where's the best place to sell newspapers? How much does a store get for every paper they sell?

The best place to sell a newspaper is where other newspapers are sold and where people are making other purchases. We distribute to about 75 locations in the county. Retailers get 15 cents for every copy sold, but their larger benefit is that newspapers provide another reason to come into their store and maybe newspaper customers will also buy an ice cream cone, a hot dog, or a quart of milk.

How does your website fit in?

We have about 10,000 users a month, but there's seldom anything online

that hasn't already appeared in the paper. There's no pay wall and users are willing to wait for repurposed news. We dole it out in little ladlefuls to keep the site fresh. The money in publishing is still in print newspapers. We've never considered the option of doing a digital-only version because all the money goes to Google and Facebook.

Who are your employees? How many do you have? Where is the paper printed?

We have no employees; all 20 committed people who put the paper together are independent contractors, including my daughter Emilia who's the deputy publisher. It's the only way to do a newspaper in a gig economy. Many of them worked at the *Journal Register*. Everyone gets paid, but not very much, and no one gets benefits. It's a labor of love.

The Berkshire Eagle produces our paper in their Pittsfield, MA, printing plant. It used to take them just 15 minutes to print *The Columbia Paper*, but as we've grown and added color it's taking a little longer.

What is your schedule for the week?

Our deadline for all content is Wednesday afternoon. The paper is printed late in the day on Wednesday and arrives here in Ghent, NY, on Thursday morning. We put the labels on for all of our subscribers and send the rest out to our retail distribution points in the county – gas stations, grocery stores, etc. Thursday afternoon we discuss what will be in the next week's paper and spend Friday, Saturday, and Sunday working on stories and the weekly calendar. All ads are in by Monday at the end of the day, and reporters start sending me stories. We provide a page chart to the printer late on Monday with the size of the paper. On Tuesday the page layout is finalized and on Wednesday the actual content is complete. This week was really exciting with the arrest of DACA protesters outside our Congressman John Faso's office. It happened on Monday and we had to get it into the paper. We can't publish old news. It's a little mysterious how it all comes together – it's like a performance.



Above: A screenshot of *The Columbia Paper's* website.

Do you ever make mistakes?

We try not to but we're human. You have to take responsibility for your errors and need to let people know what the record should actually show. No one derives benefit from misinformation.

How much space do ads take up in an issue?

Balancing content with ads is a constant juggling game. Every week I have to make a decision about this. If we could get to 50% ads and still have space for more news, I'd be delighted.

What traits make a great reporter?

Good reporters like to tell real stories based on facts. You must organize information that is compelling to read without distorting it. Telling a story fairly and honestly is a true skill. There's no better way to learn than to start at a local community paper and learn how to write, and how to meet deadlines. It's motivation and discipline that you find nowhere else.

What's your advice about a career in journalism?

Journalism is a calling that fulfills you. My advice is to know something and know something about story telling. Reporting teaches you how to process information that is fair, accurate, and relevant. You must learn the practical tools for communicating. There is still no better way to get started than as a local reporter.

When the *Journal Register* owned *The Independent*, everyone was on a salary and could live modestly. Now you need an additional job, but the experience is no less valuable. The beneficiaries are the readers who find out what's going on.

Why media career started at Woodstock when you filmed the crowds with portable video equipment, cutting edge technology at the time. How does that experience relate to publishing a local newspaper now?

Then the challenge was finding outlets for your content. In 1969 the three networks had a strangle hold on all broadcasting media. Today it's the opposite. There's a super abundance of outlets for news from cable to YouTube. The conditions are clearly different, but the issue of finding your audience remains the same.

What papers do you read everyday?

I read *The New York Times* every day and the *Times Union* out of Albany. I also look at news online so I can know what all sides are saying. You know newspapers are the most subversive thing out there. ●

To learn more about Parry Teasdale and The Columbia Paper, visit their website at www.columbiapaper.com.

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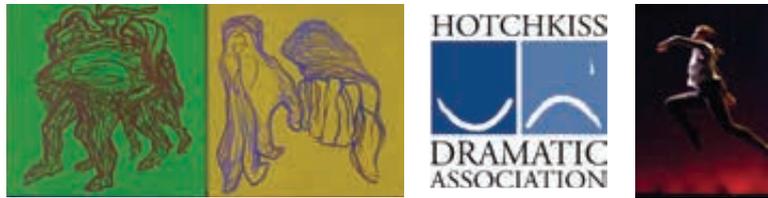
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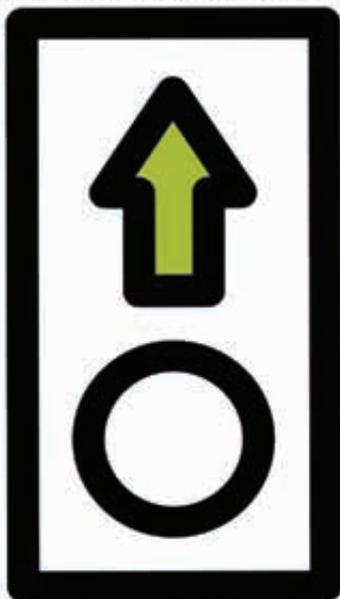
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HOW TO STICK WITH YOUR

New Year's resolution

By Anne Savage
info@mainstreetmag.com

The days are getting longer and longer, the cold weather is hopefully alleviating slightly, and love is in the air – in short, it's February. One month of 2018 has already passed. Thirty-one days ago, many people made New Year's resolutions in the hopes of improving their lives.

A recent survey conducted by the Marist Poll found that for the second year in a row, Americans' number one New Year's resolution is to be a better person. The previously most common goal was that of weight loss, which has been relegated to the number two slot. Its continued prevalence corresponds to overall national trends – at least fifty percent of Americans made health-related resolutions in 2018, such as losing weight or wanting to quit smoking. One third of Americans this year aspired to make financial changes, like saving money. One could interpret the popularity of wanting to become a better person over more selfish goals as a optimistic sign of a change in cultural values.

But unfortunately, this increase in magnanimity most likely won't last. Studies show that almost eighty percent of people won't keep their New Year's resolutions through the end of this month.

The success of short-term vs. long-term goals

Findings published in a 2016 issue of *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* discovered that people are more encouraged by short-term compensation than they are motivated by the more durable benefits of long-term goals. This explains why so many New Year's resolutions fail within a few months. Without discernible results, people become dissuaded and disheartened. They abandon their resolutions, because immediate rewards are more enticing than delayed results.

So, how can people change their behavior to make their resolutions more effective? After all, they approach the New Year with the genuine intention

to change. How can people make that initial impulse of self-improvement more persistent?

The steps needed

The first step one can take to form more lasting resolutions is to narrow down to only one goal. It's easier to focus on and commit to a singular target than to try to institute many changes all at once. Resolutions that were made and broken in the past should not be repeated in the exact same way year after year; they should be changed and made more realistic.

Once a resolution has been chosen, it should be broken down into miniature goals that produce real results at shorter intervals. A vague, enormous effort can seem insurmountable, and quickly become a source of frustration. This correlates to the psychological theory about people's desire for fast outcomes; no one wants to feel like their hard work isn't paying off. For example, the resolution "I want to lose weight" is too generic to be effective. The goal of dropping one pound every two weeks until the desired weight is reached is more achievable. The person who made the resolution would be more likely not to give up if they see that the number on the scale is really dropping, and they're actually accomplishing something.

There are a few other tricks that can help people continue to work successfully towards their New Year's resolutions. One is writing down the goal. Putting pen to paper and making a record of the resolution solidifies the concept in a person's mind. The piece of paper should then be placed somewhere visible – ideally, people should see it and be reminded of it every day.

If the New Year's resolution isn't too private in nature, family and friends could also be informed about it. Often, telling others puts a fire in a person's belly to do what they say they're going to do, especially if those other people are keeping tabs on what



the person with the resolution actually accomplishes. If someone else has a similar New Year's resolution, collaboration can also be a great strategy. For instance, if two friends both wanted to go to the gym more in 2018, they could schedule to work out together. Reaching their mutual goal therefore becomes more feasible, and more fun as well.

Another tip to help sustain momentum with New Year's resolutions is to be careful with the phrasing of the resolution. Word choice is powerful! Psychologists have found that the word *should* has an admonishing connotation, similar to a command. "I should take my dog for long walks" makes the resolution sound like an annoying obligation. Replace *should* with *will*. "I will take my dogs for long walks" is more encouraging and exciting, and the resolution itself then becomes a promise, not just another chore to be completed.

For those who did not make resolutions, or those who have already given up on their initial New Year's ambitions, don't be daunted by the arrival of February. Dates are ultimately arbitrary – and for the Chinese, the New Year doesn't even start until the sixteenth of this month anyway. The most important thing to remember is that if someone wants to improve some aspects of their life, or others' lives, it doesn't need to be New Year's to make a change. ●

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Love is in the air

“EXPERIENCE GIFTS” ARE AN IDEAL WAY TO MAKE MEMORIES AND STRENGTHEN BONDS

By Regina Molaro
info@mainstreetmag.com

It's almost time for cuddly cupids, heart-shaped cookies, blooming bouquets, and sweet messages of love. Before even committing to booking or cooking an intimate dinner and ruminating over gift ideas, lovebirds should take a moment to reflect on the history of Valentine's Day.

The history of V-Day

This holiday of hearts, which is celebrated on February 14, honors Valentine – a priest who was martyred in Rome around 278 AD. At the time, Roman Emperor Claudius II wasn't having much success in recruiting soldiers to serve in the military. He believed the issue stemmed from Roman men who were deeply committed to their wives and families, and didn't want to serve.

To resolve the issue, Emperor Claudius II banned marriages and engagements in Rome, but Valentine continued to perform marriage ceremonies in secrecy. When his actions were discovered, Emperor Claudius II arranged to have Valentine killed. After his death, Valentine was named a saint.

According to legend while Valentine was in jail, he left a thoughtful note for the jailer's daughter who he befriended while in prison. The note

was signed “From Your Valentine.

In honor of St. Valentine's efforts, lovers still exchange thoughtful notes and gifts. While traditional gifts such as chocolates and flowers will delight most recipients, there's nothing like spending quality time together to strengthen a couple's bond.

Experience gifts

With that said, there's been a shift in the value of experience gifts, which bring happiness and promote well-being. Marketing experts say that the excitement one feels when receiving a material gift fades quickly, but experience gifts tend to retain their allure. Experience gifts are also social in nature and promote bonding.

It's a new year, so perhaps it's time to get creative and dare to bring a bit of innovation to this year's Valentine's Day gift giving. Explore something different like cross-country skiing or treat

your partner to a wine tasting or a couple's massage. Other ideas include purchasing tickets to a play or membership to a local theater such as The Center for Performing Arts at Rhinebeck. Upcoming shows include Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House* (February 2 to 18). Check out the schedule online at centerforperformingarts.org/all-shows

After the holiday season, most of us need some relaxation. Indulge your other half in a partner's private yoga session or couple's vibrational energy healing session. Both are offered at Rhinebeck's Rubystar Healing Arts, which also offers massages (including aromatherapy and hot stone) and spiritual counseling. Gift certificates are available. Visit them online at rubystarhealingarts.com.

I Kneaded This! Massage Therapy & Skin Care is also located in Rhinebeck and offers soothing massages, facials, and more. Go to their website ikneadedthis.com for upcoming specials.

Continued on next page ...



Above: A glass of red wine by The Greens' fireplace. Image courtesy of The Greens.



Photo: istockphoto.com contributor Belitas



Above: Dessert wines at Hudson-Chatham Winery. Below, right: Chocolates at Verdigris. Images courtesy of Hudson-Chatham Winery.

Well paired: Wine tastings

Wine and food enthusiasts can enjoy time spent together sipping wines and nibbling on artisanal cheese at Hudson-Chatham Winery. On February 10, the vineyard's Ghent location will orchestrate the perfect match. Its wine connoisseurs will play matchmaker by pairing wines with fine chocolates that hail from Hudson's Verdigris Tea & Chocolate Bar.

It offers indulgent treats from destinations around the globe. A candlelit fireplace ushers some ambiance and a romantic vibe to the sun-filled tasting room at the Ghent location. On February 10, the Troy location will offer a similar pairing with goodies from chocolatier Oliver Holecek from Primo Botanica.

Hudson-Chatham Winery's tasting rooms also offer other locally produced gourmet items including artisanal cheeses from the Hudson Valley as well as delectable jams and sauces. For those who wish to celebrate Valentine's Day after the holiday, gift certificates are available and redeemable at the Ghent, Troy, or Tannersville locations. Visit them online at hudsonchathamwinery.com to learn more.

Beyond the special Valentine's dinner and wine pairing at The Greens at Copake Country Club, winter sports

enthusiasts are welcome to cross-country ski or snowshoe in a winter wonderland. When there's enough snow on the ground, the country club offers ski rentals (there's a minimal trail fee). Those who prefer to warm up to one another while indoors can enjoy a virtual golf experience in the pro shop.

Calling all the ladies! You're invited to enjoy the annual GAL-entine's day party being held at The Greens at Copake Country Club on February 12. Cheers to your female friends who are always there to offer support. Spend time together sipping wine, tasting chocolates, and enjoying crafts, fun games, and more. To learn more about both the couples' offerings as well as GAL-entine's, visit their website at copakecountryclub.com.

Romantic retreats

The Barn at Copake Lake is also available for romantic getaways. The visionaries behind this charming rental destination can assist couples in crafting the ideal package to suit their preferences. A private chef, massage therapist, yoga instructor, or wine tasting event can be arranged.

The 3000-square-foot barn, which boasts water views, traces its history back to the 1800s. The peaceful retreat was recently renovated and offers three full bedrooms and baths, and a spacious modern kitchen complete with stainless steel appliances, Bobby

Flay cookware, an antique bar, and beyond. To learn more visit them online at thebarnatcopakelake.com.

Sweet somethings: Gourmet chocolates and flowers

More traditional romantics can opt for gifts of chocolate or colorful flowers. With locations in Saugerties and Rhinebeck, Krause's Chocolates offers handmade sweets and other delicacies. The company offers more than 50 varieties of handmade treats including decadent truffles, creamy caramels, chocolate-dipped fruits, and beyond. Those who yearn to cater to their partner's preferences can bring some creativity to the mix by making their very own customized box. Those who wish to simplify the gift giving process can select one of the many assorted boxes, which offers everything from caramels to creams, fruits, and more. To learn more about the chocolate-y goodness, visit them online at krauschocolates.com.

Creativity knows no limits! Gift givers can even make their own gift card redeemable for hugs, kisses, a night off from cooking, or whatever inspires the giver.

For roses or other blossoms, explore the selection of bulbs and greens at Wonderland Florist in Rhinebeck. Visit them online at wonderlandflorist.com.

There are lots of ways to express your love and connect with your partner, so start planning your Valentine's Day and make it a celebration to remember. ●



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Lemon bundt cake

By Jessie Sheehan
info@mainstreetmag.com

I very much identify with team-chocolate, if you must know. For instance, I always feel some sense of regret while dining out if the dessert menu arrives and its chocolate offerings are sub-par or – horror! – non-existent. I really have trouble relating to those fond of vanilla cupcakes with vanilla frosting, and candy is not candy unless chocolate is involved (in other words, no need to share your licorice or Swedish Fish with me at the movies). This is a long way of saying, that you won't generally find me baking sweets of the non-chocolate variety, unless, of course, the dessert I'm baking is a lemon bundt cake.

Lemon bundts appeal to a chocolate lover like me for a variety of reasons. First, I love a bundt for its shape and excellent glaze-drizzling possibilities. Second, if you brush your lemon bundt with a lemon syrup, not only does the cake get exponentially more lemon-y (an important attribute when making a lemon cake) but it is also made more moist (and to say I live in mortal fear of eating dry cake is an understatement). Third, and finally, when you dribble said lemon-y and moist bundt with a lemon glaze (a glaze that essentially shatters when you piece it with the tines of your fork) you have “put the frosting on the cake,” as it were: The intensely tart and citrus-y flavor of the cake truly sings once dribbled (it's that combo of the sweet and the tart, I'd say), and truth be told, it looks awfully pretty, too.

This cake is an easy one to make, as you do so in a single bowl, mixing by hand, with a whisk and then a rubber spatula. It does require the zesting and juicing of a copious amount of lemons, but the smell of lemons wafting through your kitchen as the cake bakes, and the resulting lemon-y

flavor when you take your first bite, makes it all worth while. I highly recommend making the lemon syrup and glaze, but truly the cake is great on its own, if you are feeling less than excited about a recipe requiring you to prepare three different components. Finally, the flavor of this cake improves with time, so it is perfect to make in advance (I am not a terribly spontaneous hostess, so I find this attribute in a cake particularly appealing). And it travels well to boot (if you want to slice it up to share at the lodge, après ski).

February can be a dark and chilly month. Here's hoping this bright-tasting (and brightly colored!) cake will bring much needed light and warmth to your kitchen, and perhaps even put a zesty pep in your step.

Ingredients for the cake

Yield: 12 slices
 2 cups all-purpose flour
 1 cup cake flour, sifted
 1 tablespoon baking powder
 1 teaspoon table salt
 2 1/3 cup granulated sugar
 1/3 cup lemon zest, lightly packed
 1 1/4 cups vegetable oil
 1 tablespoon lemon extract
 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
 4 eggs
 2 yolks
 1/4 cup freshly-squeezed lemon juice
 1 cup crème fraiche (you can substitute sour cream or even whole-milk plain yogurt)

For the lemon syrup

1/4 cup freshly-squeezed lemon juice
 1/4 cup granulated sugar

For the lemon glaze

2 1/2 cups confectioners' sugar, sifted
 1/4 cup freshly-squeezed lemon juice, or more as needed
 1 tablespoon crème fraiche (or sour cream or yogurt)



Instructions

To make the cake: Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Spray a 10-cup bundt pan with cooking spray. Dust it with all-purpose flour, knocking out any excess.

In a medium-sized bowl, whisk together the flours, baking powder, and salt and set aside.

In a large mixing bowl, combine the sugar and the zest and using your fingers, rub the zest into the sugar until fully incorporated. Add the oil and extracts and whisk until incorporated. Add the eggs and yolks, one at a time, whisking to combine between each addition. Add the juice and whisk to incorporate; and then the crème fraiche – don't be afraid to whisk relatively vigorously throughout all of this.

Add the dry ingredients all at once, and using a rubber spatula, very gently incorporate the dry into the wet. Stop mixing when you can still see a streak or two of flour.

Transfer the batter to the prepared pan and bake for 50 to 55 minutes. While the cake bakes, make the syrup.

To make the syrup: Combine the juice and sugar in a small saucepan and over medium heat, gently warm the mixture until the sugar melts. Remove from the heat and set aside.

Start checking on the cake after 45 minutes or so (just in case your oven is running hot) and remove the cake when a toothpick inserted in the

center comes out with a moist crumb or two. Let it cool in the pan about 10 minutes or so, and then invert the cake onto a cooling rack (the bottom is now the top). Make holes all over the cake with a wooden skewer or tooth pick and brush the cake with the lemon syrup. Let cool to room temperature before glazing.

To make the glaze: Place the confectioners' sugar in a large bowl along with the lemon juice and the crème fraiche. Whisk vigorously until smooth. Add additional lemon juice, if necessary, in order to make a thick but pourable glaze. Transfer to a large measuring cup with a spout.

Place the cake (still on its cooling rack) over a cookie sheet with sides and pour the glaze over the cake while holding the measuring cup a bit higher above the cake than you might think otherwise. This height allows you more control as you dribble the glaze and makes for prettier dribbles, to boot. Let cool until the glaze is set. The cake will keep tightly wrapped in plastic wrap on the counter for a few days – and is even better on day two. ●

Jessie is a baker and cookbook author; you can learn more about her through her website jessiesheehanbakes.com.

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REFLECTIONS ON VOLUNTEERING WITH SIMPLY SMILES ON THE CHEYENNE RIVER SIOUX TRIBE RESERVATION

By Olivia H. May and
Mary B. O'Neill, PhD
info@mainstreetmag.com

Last summer Olivia May (18) and her mother Mary O'Neill volunteered with the non-profit Simply Smiles on the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe Reservation in La Plant, South Dakota, where they have worked since 2009. Olivia was a summer intern and Mary was one of the scores of weekly volunteers who come to the Reservation each summer.

While Simply Smiles is headquartered in Bridgeport, CT, they have a strong volunteer presence in our area. Several local organizations have sent individuals and groups to "the Rez," including Salisbury Congregational Church, Silver Lake Conference Center, Millbrook School, and Sisters for Peace. The Alice & Richard Henriquez Memorial Fund of the Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation and the Christian Action Committee of the Salisbury Congregational Church have provided grants for Olivia to volunteer on the Reservation for the past three summers.

What follows is a mother-daughter reflection on their time spent embedded in the Lakota community who call La Plant, South Dakota their home.

OLIVIA

Three summers ago, when I spent my first week as a volunteer with Simply Smiles, I knew it was something that I couldn't only do once. Even now, I don't understand how people can volunteer on the Reservation with Simply Smiles and not feel a deep need to return.



Above: Olivia's intern family. Below, left: Quality mother-daughter time. All photos courtesy of Simply Smiles.

Once is not enough

On the way home after that first week, I was already planning to go back the next summer – for longer. The following summer I returned for a two-week volunteering stint and once again felt it was not enough time to dedicate to the organization and the people it works with.

In getting to know some of the summer interns I realized that I wanted to spend my summers how they did – using latrines, taking infrequent and freezing showers, and developing back issues from the number of piggy-back rides given.

I talked to the Simply Smiles Volunteer Coordinator, Samantha Steinmetz about the possibility of becoming an intern and we both thought that was a good idea. I once again was planning my return to the Rez on the plane flight home.

People ask me why I return each summer. Every time I get on the shuttle bus to the airport for the return home, I deeply feel that I need to go back. There is no doubt that this is the most worthwhile way I could be spending my summers. It's hard to put into words, but I'll try to explain my passion for working with this organization and the people in La Plant through a few anecdotes.

Rez life

Life on the Reservation is hard, especially for the kids that grow up there. One of the most important things that Simply Smiles does on the Reservation is run a summer camp. Camp runs weekdays all summer, and let me tell you, each day of camp was an adventure. It didn't always go well, but small daily victories made it all worth it.

My favorite day was River Day. Every Wednesday, we took the big red school bus to the river. At any given time there were at least five splash fights, three people jumping in the water and several piggy-back rides. It was pure chaos, but was always a hit with the kids and the volunteers, especially when the temperature reached above 100 degrees for several days in a row.

Ties that bind

Volunteer groups from communities, high schools, colleges, and houses of worship filter in and out every week, which can make it difficult for them to develop close relationships with the kids. As a summer intern though, I spent a lot of concentrated time with the kids. Some of them even remembered me from my previous times on the Reservation. As a result, I made

deep connections with several of the kids.

For several reasons, the kids on the Reservation are reluctant to trust the volunteers at first. However, I think one of the most rewarding, but difficult parts of being an intern was how close I became with the kids. These new bonds were an amazing thing and I'm so grateful to have gotten to know the kids as well as I have.

This can also be emotionally taxing at times. A lot of the kids have difficult home lives and experience things that no child should. I, along with the other interns, became confidants for the kids. I felt honored that they felt that they could trust me and my peers. However, this could be extremely stressful, overwhelming, and deeply saddening still, maintaining and developing these relationships is one of the most compelling reasons why I return every summer.

Hoop dreams

The weekly basketball clinic targeted a group of teenage girls who are amazing basketball players and could no doubt play in college. Part of the goal is to help them realize that. I always looked forward to these practices

Continued on next page ...





Above: A double rainbow over this very special place!

even though it meant missing the weekly visit to Dairy Queen with the volunteers.

These athletes were very close and kept to themselves, except when dominating volunteers and interns alike in the frequent basketball tournaments. For a while, I couldn't forge any sort of relationship with them. Until finally, when picking teams, I heard my name called. My subpar basketball skills were impressive enough to have me drafted by the girls to be on their team. It's no big deal or anything (actually, it's a huge deal – kind of like being recruited to UConn's Huskies).

Lean on me

As an intern, bad days were inevitable and we all occasionally had one. Whether it was exhaustion, difficulty with one of the kids during camp, or the negative aspects of reservation life became overwhelming that day, I knew that I could rely on the other interns for support. I feel so lucky to have met and worked with such an incredible group of peers and am so happy I can call them my friends. I don't think I'll ever be surrounded by such a dedicated, caring, and fun group of people – until this summer when I return as an eight-week intern! Having such a great group to rely on and vice versa was something I never took for granted. My experience would be very different if not for the other interns and the Simply Smiles staff.

The elders

The adults in town were also an important presence. Ford is an Elder in the community with endless knowledge about Lakota history and personal anecdotes that he's always willing to share.

Hanna, a fellow intern, and I were driving a group of the kids home after camp and came across Ford walking on the side of the road. We pulled over to talk and he informed us he was walking in 100 degree heat to Eagle Butte, a mere 32 miles away, to get his car, which was being fixed. We called the staff to ask if we could drive Ford so he wouldn't have to hitch-hike. During the drive, he shared stories of attending Indian boarding school, growing up on the Reservation and how much it's changed since. While in Eagle Butte we stopped at Dairy Queen and treated Ford to a burger and some ice cream. While we ate, he told us how grateful he was for Simply Smiles and the interns.

After any interaction with Ford, you're left feeling humbled and grateful that he chose to bestow his wisdom upon you. That afternoon in particular was an extremely special experience that I'm so lucky I had.

South Dakota dreamin' on a winter's day

The five weeks I spent as an intern were tiring – emotionally and physically. But I'd be hard-pressed to find a summer job more fulfilling and worthwhile than volunteering with

Simply Smiles and the amazing kids in La Plant.

I knew that every task I was assigned while there had a purpose that would affect the lives of Reservation kids. Whether it was pushing Hunter on the swing, playing basketball with Ashton, painstakingly measuring and re-measuring trim for the doors for Kris's new room, or driving two hours to Walmart and checking out with eight carts of food for community meals, I was committed to doing the best work I could at all times.

I constantly find myself thinking about the people I met on the Reservation and there isn't a day where I don't catch myself looking forward to this summer when I can be out there again.

MARY

I wish I could tell you I went on the trip to the Reservation with Simply Smiles primarily from a deep-seated need to serve, but that's not entirely true. The driving force was a need to get out of my own head. The opportunity happened to be familiar and proximate, and ultimately life changing for me.

Out of the comfort zone

Big changes swirled on my horizon last summer, leaving me disoriented and a bit untethered. Kids leaving for school, a career change, and another birthday that cemented me solidly in mid-life, left me in a funk – nothing bad was happening, but I felt icky.

Having taught a college course on the philosophy of happiness, I knew what Buddhism, the ancient Greeks, neuroscience, and psychology had to say about creating happiness, well-being, and resilience. I had lectured students on the importance of altruism, service, finding a larger purpose, and venturing outside their comfort zones. Now it was time for me to practice what I had been preaching.

I like my creature comforts. I'm a proper bed and private toilet and shower kind of gal. They have always been non-negotiables for me. I didn't think I could, or maybe didn't want to, hack the rougher living required on the Rez, albeit only for a week.

This past summer I determined that this trip was what I needed and that I'd regret not having this time to see Olivia doing something she felt called to do in some way. After we sent her off to South Dakota the idea continued to form.

Preparations

The Universe cooperated in every way. I had enough frequent flier miles – with one mile to spare – to get to Rapid City. Simply Smiles found a week for me that overlapped with Olivia. They even allowed me to take a blow-up camp mattress, which filled me with some measure of relief. Now I just had to deal with the 30 other volunteers sleeping beside me in the room and the outhouse!

My husband, Jeff, offered to go with me to ease my nervousness. Yet, something inside me told me that I needed to do this on my own. I was craving this small test of character and a chance to give back on my own terms.

Before the trip, I read about Native American history. What I read disturbed me greatly. Our treatment of Native peoples has been, and continues to be atrocious. Broken treaties, obliterating a culture in the name of civilization, creating dependence and fostering neglect, and killing and plundering in the name of Manifest Destiny were aspects of history I hadn't been taught – ever. I was humbled, deeply embarrassed by the exploitative historical foundations of my own privilege.

Team building

Once on the Rez we were explained the flow of the week. Mornings were for work projects. Afternoons were spent on a summer camp for the town's children playing games with them, creating crafts, and brokering peace over jump ropes and Lego pieces. In addition, there were several community meals we would host.

We met the staff and interns, among them was Olivia. They had an easy rapport with each other and a joyful approach to their tasks. What a truly remarkable group of young adults! I was so proud that Olivia had chosen this peer group. They were smart, funny, empathetic and kind, courageous, and true critical thinkers and problem solvers – and they worked hard, I mean really hard. Up early each morning and to bed late each night they supervised volunteers, cooked our meals, facilitated work projects and camp, managed mischief, gave countless hugs, and made volunteers feel valued and taken care of. A week with this group and you'd have no worries about the future of our world.

My team's assigned work project was installing the kitchen in Delema's home. Susan, Chuck, and I must finish by week's end so that Delema and her five grandchildren could finally move back in.

I learned to measure twice and cut once, use two kinds of power saws, and the limits of wood glue against the forces of gravity. I also learned the power of Zach, our Simply Smiles project manager. Slight and bookish, he would calmly stand, tapping his

index finger on his lips and review our progress, almost summoning the Jedi Force to have the job completed on time – and to his exacting standards.

Happy campers

After a hearty lunch we prepared for the mad rush of campers. You heard them before you saw them as they stampeded through and around the building running to their favorite activities or being swept up in the arms of their favorite interns. They ranged from toddlers to teens, bold to quiet, and athletic to artistic.

This is the part of the day that the older volunteers, me included, found challenging. The trust and affection shown to the interns and teenage volunteers didn't easily extend to those over 30. I naively thought the transitive property would apply – the kids liked Olivia, Olivia is my daughter, therefore the kids will like me. I was quickly disabused of that notion! My mere presence on the Reservation that week didn't mean I earned the trust of these kids – nor should it have. I needed to work for it.

The first day of camp was a disaster for me. I couldn't find an access point and I didn't quite know what to do about it. I wanted to go home. But being in Big Sky country, with a pow-wow circle to sit and think, can provide answers.

The next camp day I decided to stop trying so hard and look for an small opening. One sporty girl wanted to play wiffle ball, but it wasn't on the day's schedule. I saw her standing alone and made my pitch. "I'll play wiffle with you, but you have to let



Above: Olivia giving one of the many piggy-back rides of the summer! Below, left: A family photo fit for a holiday card.

me help you improve your form and stance," I offered. She shrugged nonchalantly and off we went. Within ten minutes a game of sorts had formed. My brief softball career in college was finally paying dividends!

Minute by minute

I trimmed back my aspirations with the children. I started thinking in terms of minutes. Can I change this child's next ten minutes? After all, life is made up of these smaller units of time stacked on top of each other.

Simply Smiles understands this extraordinarily well. They have a deep respect for what the Lakota Sioux Tribe has endured and survived, an appreciation of simply creating a smile, and the patience to wait for residents of La Plant to let them know what the community wants – whether it's a community center, a food garden, or an archery range and horseshoe pitch – and then work with them to achieve it.

Wisdom of the elders

Community dinners brought a chance to meet elders of the tribe: the women who create extraordinary quilts, the men who play horseshoes, and the stories they told – of being torn from their families and sent to boarding school; of being denied their families, their language, and their culture; of the loss of their children to addiction and suicide; of treaties made and broken; and of unemployment and dependence so old it's part of

the dusty earth. Yet, their strength in the adversity and suffering and their acquired wisdom is inspiring and humbling.

Being helped by helping

Before we knew it, the day had come to leave. Our work was done and it was performed refreshingly without ego, which I attribute to the clarity of our common goals. Having this kind of focus on a purpose – the "why" of our week – was empowering and motivating.

I worked hard that week and contributed my best efforts, but I left having been helped much more than helping, leaving me feeling weirdly guilty. And I was provided a chance to forge another bond with my daughter – a shared pool of meaning.

Regarding that fear of outhouses, I found respect for the power of an occasional laxative – further illustrating that in life it's also okay to receive help and depend on someone or something to break a negative cycle. In the end, learning how to lend and receive help are the flip sides of the same coin. •

To find out more about Simply Smiles, visit www.simplysmiles.org. To volunteer on the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe Reservation in South Dakota, or at the Home for Children in Oaxaca, Mexico, contact Samantha Steinmetz at sam@simplysmiles.org. Silver Lake Conference Center in Sharon, CT is hosting a youth volunteer trip to the Simply Smiles Home for Children in Oaxaca, Mexico in April. For more information, call Heather at (860) 364-5526.



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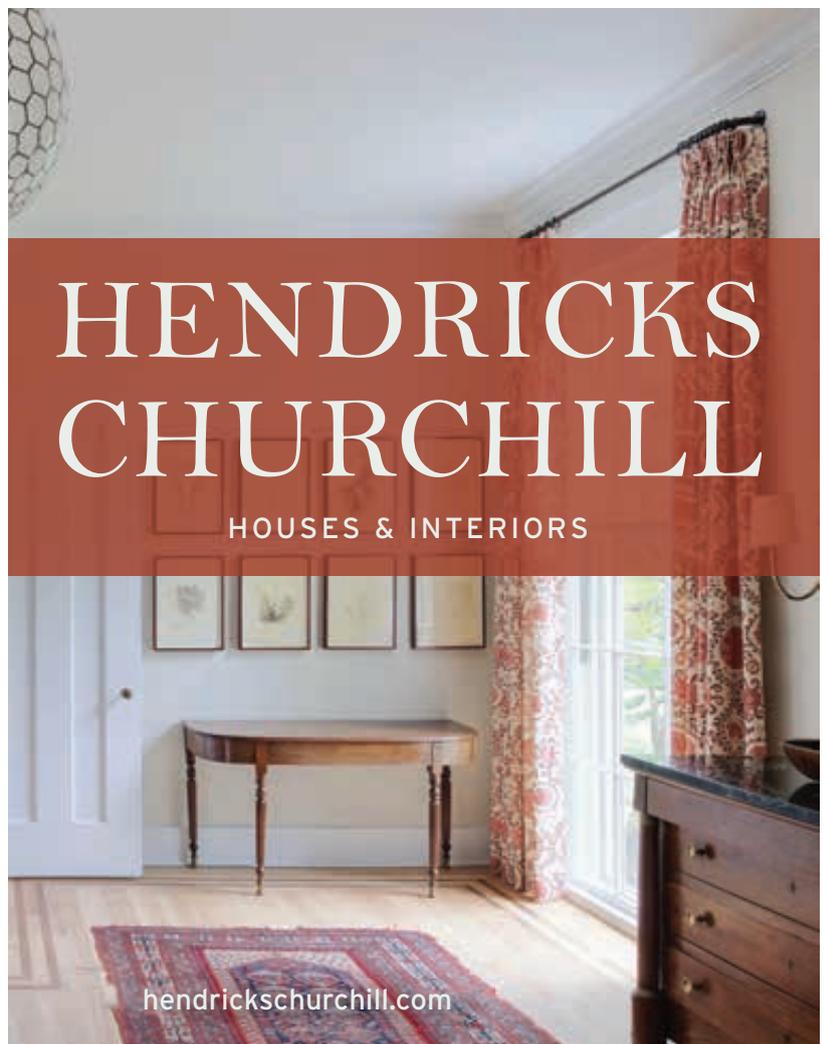
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No. Six Depot: A taste of the tropics

By Ian Strever
info@mainstreetmag.com

In the first days of 2018, the ice on the Housatonic River began to rack itself in heaves and plates. One night, I walked beside it under a full moon and heard it shifting and breaking from the cold, halting one kind of motion and creating another. It was so cold, I could hear the sap popping in trees, limbs cracking here and there like old joints.

I love the winter, but two weeks of sub-freezing temperatures had me longing for tropical climes ... or at least the coffee they produce.

A love of coffee

I long for coffee often, but especially in the winter months, when it is cold and the pace of life is slower. Frigid days and house-bound weekends allow me to really be present with a cup of good coffee, savoring the nuances of the bean, the roast – and if I really lose myself, the equatorial lands from which they come. Like wine, cheese, and chocolate, coffee is practically a celebration of life: each cup contains the characteristics of a particular location, season, and procession of hands that brought it to my table. To savor a cup is to appreciate the very wonder of how it got there.

A few years ago, I converted to the pour-over method of coffee-making after experiencing it in a side street café in Philadelphia. This



involves using a Chemex decanter and their magical filters to brew coffee in the simplest way possible: by pouring hot water over the grounds and waiting for the coffee to drip into the bottom of the glass container. It is ritualistic, and it requires some attention to the process, but I was suddenly tasting an abundance of flavors I'd never associated with coffee: cherries, chocolate, even vegetable notes. I've used a glass Chemex carafe with a variety of beans, but over time, I noticed that smaller, drier-looking, African beans seemed to provide the most complex flavors.

So I guess this makes me a coffee snob. Consequently, part of my self-imposed affliction is that in this area, I can only get the aforementioned beans from two roasters: Irving Farm out of Millerton, NY, and No. Six Depot in West Stockbridge, MA. No. Six Depot sells its beans in bulk form at the Berkshire Co-op, so between the price and the environmental benefits of buying in

bulk, theirs is more likely to find its way to my cup.

How coffee gets to my cup

But exactly how does it get there? On a particularly cold day in December, I contemplated the process over a cup of Yirgacheffe, conveyed from a high-altitude region in south-central Ethiopia. Somewhere around 5000', a farmer hand-picks coffee cherries, most likely on a small, privately-owned farm. Most of the beans from this region are wet-processed or washed, meaning that workers remove the fruit surrounding the coffee seed and use an immersion bath to ferment or scrub any additional parchment skin from the bean. They are then usually dried in the sun before heading off to the roaster.

While science and technology have changed these processes in some facilities, there is still an art to getting the beans right. In the fermentation process, farmers are feeling for a "pebbly" texture before

Above: Coffee tastings are a regular event at the café for those who want to know more about how coffee makes his magic. Left: The No. Six Depot is a gathering place for coffee fans throughout west-central Massachusetts. Photos: Lisa Landry.



Continued on next page ...

setting beans out to dry. The roasting process that follows is equally artistic.

An education in coffee

I arranged to meet with Flavio Lichtenthal, roaster and co-owner of No. Six Depot to see the process up close. Their roasting facility is in the back of their West Stockbridge café, so before we got to the roaster, we tasted. The staff inquired about my flavor preferences and poured me a cup of Kenyan that carried berry flavors over a slightly creamy palette. Flavio began my education by contrasting this with a pour-over of Ethiopian, a bean that is similar to the Kenyan, yet different in some nuanced ways. The Ethiopian brew had a brightness, a high citrus note at the top of the flavor that was more pronounced than the Kenyan, and overall it was more tea-like and clean than the prior cup.

As we chatted, Flavio flitted about the café, adjusting the grinder, greeting the regulars, and paying attention to details of his operation in a way that only an owner-operator would.

For the next hour, the Argentine transplant generously and patiently revealed the subtleties of his work, from acquiring beans to educating consumers about the coffee trade. Although he has made numerous expeditions to coffee-producing countries to investigate the origins

of his product, he relies on a discerning and principled network of buyers to procure the highest quality beans. These suppliers provide every possible detail about the bean, from the country of origin to the exact farm, altitude, and processing method, all of which affect a bean's flavor, and therefore, all of which appear on the label of a No. Six roast as information for their discriminating buyers.

Flavio's selection process

Flavio selects beans by balancing his desire to offer a wide variety of beans with his desire to make a profit, so while Brazilian and Costa Rican roasts are widely available, the attentive and open-minded buyer will find more exotic Rwandan and Burundian offerings from time to time.

One to three-thousand of

these "green" beans arrive in West Stockbridge each week, and Flavio is responsible to transforming them into the aromatic bouquets we all associate with good coffee. There are light and dark roasts, yes, but Flavio's goal is to help each bean attain its optimal roast. He accomplishes this with an artist's touch, coaxing the beans to "first crack" after about seven minutes, when the beans have heated sufficiently inside from both convective and conductive heat to shed their skin like popcorn. From there, he smells, observes the color, and listens to the sound of the roast before it gets to "second crack," which is a darker roast found in French and Spanish coffees. His aim is to perfectly cook the beans to retain their essential oils and flavors.

Roasting to purchase

The entire roasting process takes about three days, mostly due to the settling period, when oils redistribute throughout the bean much like the way juices will in a roast beef right after cooking. The finished beans are then bagged with one-way valves that allow gases to pass outside of the bag, and sent to various merchants that include Whole Foods, gourmet supermarkets, and eventually, the Berkshire Co-Op, the last step before my cup.

Flavio also recommends the pour-over method to get the most flavor out of his product, and I can assure you, it is worth the effort. No less than a taste of the tropics – warm, rich, and brilliant – awaits. ●



Above: In addition to their fabulous coffee, the café serves as a stage for a range of events from art openings to World Cup viewing parties. Photo: Sabine Vollmer. Below, left: No. Six Depot also features a line of epicurean salt, available at the café and in gourmet supermarkets throughout the tri-state region. Photo: Lisa Landry.



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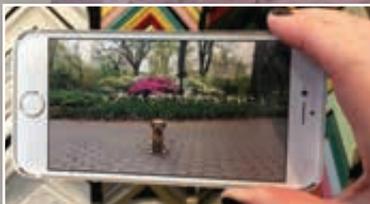
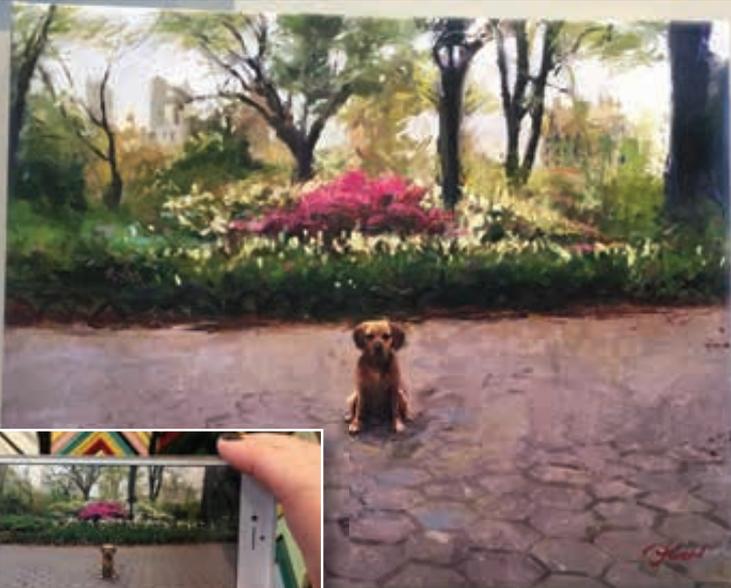
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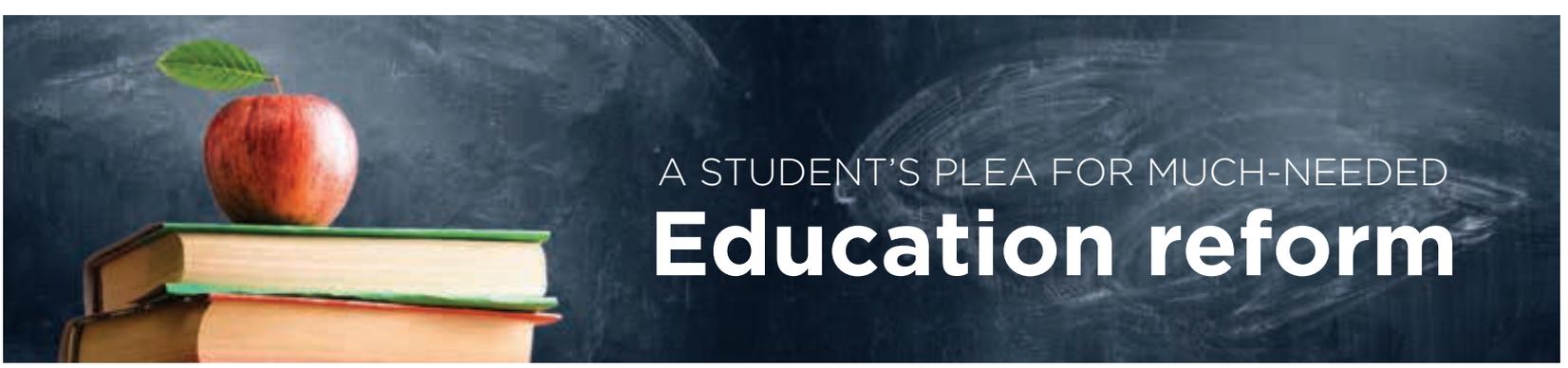
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A STUDENT'S PLEA FOR MUCH-NEEDED Education reform

By Madison Smith
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Madison is a local high school junior whom I met when I was asked to speak at her school about writing and journalism. I offered interested students the opportunity to pitch me a story to be considered here for publication. Madison is one of the students I selected and she wanted to write about her frustrations with the education system. I was intrigued to hear her opinions, as she is a student whom the system directly affects, so who better to offer her critique and opinions on the matter?

I have attended the same school since I was in kindergarten. It's an underwhelming feeling to be stuck in the same place for thirteen years of your life, but I think I've managed to find a bit of variation between my days. Sometimes it feels like my brain has been preset to autopilot. I just drift through my classes, not really absorbing anything, not feeling any drive, my mind adrift somewhere above the clouds. But, other days, I can feel every single grueling second as they pass me by. Those are the days I go home and find that my shoulders ache because of how tense I'd been as I dragged myself through six-and-a-half hours of school. All days are different. Some are better, some are worse, but one thing is certain: it's because of these days trapped in the never ending cycle of public education that I have lost so much of my passion for learning.

A systematic problem?

The system is set up in a way that views its students as statistics, as opposed to real people with real needs. Our worth is determined by an unfair grading system, held up by a tedious and heavy workload. We aren't being made to think for ourselves. We aren't being encouraged to question what we're told. Instead, many class's curriculums are based around rote memorization and regurgitation of knowledge. Schools are designed to focus on testing students instead of exploring student's passions and recognizing their student's needs.

I remember entering middle school with an intense love of reading. I could

read novel after novel without growing tired of them; my bedside table held books that stacked two feet high. I told myself that someday I wanted to write a book as amazing as the ones I had to sneak under my covers late at night, hiding from my mother so that she wouldn't catch glimpses of my flashlight as I read into the early hours of the morning.

As an attempt to increase the average reading level of students, our school, along with a few others that I am aware of, established a block called "sustained silent reading," aka SSR. Twenty minutes a day, students would be obligated to sit silently in a room and read our books. At first, I didn't mind the idea. I read so much at home that I figured it would be a nice time to relax and jump into a good book. To my dismay, I quickly realized that SSR made reading seem like a punishment, like it was a "too bad, you have to do it" thing that we were being forced to participate in. I didn't understand why I, being the avid reader that I was, was being lectured to on why we "had to read, whether we liked it or not." I started finding myself resenting those twenty minutes of reading. I would listen to the ticks of the clock, my eyes barely skimming over the words on the pages in front of me, as twenty minutes dragged into an eternity. This system of strict policies and rigid regulations made one of my favorite activities into an obligation. Looking back on it, I can't help but feel a little heartbroken over my lost passion for reading. If I'm being honest, I can't remember the last time I curled up under my covers, flashlight in hand, and just read a really good book.

To be clear, this is not the fault of the school. All public schools simply follow the basic education plans and requirements put into place by the state and federal governments. Not only do schools have to meet all of the standards established by these governments, but they also have to push their students to achieve high test scores in order to receive funding. My school has made efforts to put their students in higher spirits, such as putting "compliment sticky-notes" on each locker for students one morning; however, it is important to understand

that without pushing students to get high standardized test scores, the school wouldn't receive the funding it requires. This is the fault of a government that refuses to acknowledge that the public education system is in desperate need of reform. Since the 1980s, our public education system has put more and more of an emphasis on student achievement. While this isn't necessarily a bad thing, it has taken away from interactive learning and recognizing the strengths of individual students. Schools are expected to base entire classes around passing one final standardized exam. How is one exam supposed to accurately measure the intelligence of someone? This majorly flawed system can make one student's bad day into an entire year, wasted.

How is knowledge tested?

How can we test a student's knowledge if we don't use standardized testing? The issue with our public education system is that we have such a rigid way of determining an individual's intellectual worth. Each student is different. Each student has a different way of learning. Each student excels in different areas. To test each student on the same level with the same material is an idea that needs to be thrown away altogether. Instead of focusing on evaluating each student using standardized tests, schools should be focused on recognizing and encouraging the individual strengths and passions of their students.

Over the past decade, colleges and universities have become more and more selective. Simply having a 4.0 GPA and a clean record won't cut it anymore. To get into their top colleges, students are told they need not only a 4.0, but honors and AP credits, extracurriculars, sports, no referrals, out-of-school accomplishments, and a near perfect score on the SATs. Students are working themselves to the bone, stressing themselves over the smallest quiz grades. The toll this has taken on the mental health of high school students is simply one that cannot be afforded. This year alone, I have seen the amount of depression and anxiety in my class skyrocket. People who used to be full of positive energy, people who I grew up with, I've watched turn

into tightly-wound balls of stress and frustration. My friends, some of the people closest to my heart, have come to me in tears, crying over the amount of pressure being put on them by teachers, parents, and the overwhelming fear of being a failure. I know people who have gotten stress rashes and nose bleeds, people who stay up until one in the morning every night, and people who feel as though they are never going to amount to anything because they aren't getting a good enough grade in a single class. The public education system is one that almost every child in America has to go through, and it is making them miserable. This system should be preparing kids for their futures, it should be shaping kids into valuable members of society, but it's only forcing them into a mold that they were never supposed to fit into. It needs to change.

Students are the future

Our government needs to agree on a complete education reform; the amount of money the federal government puts into public education is despicable. Students are the future of our country. Investing in a good education system that encourages kids to cultivate their passions will, in and of itself, invest in a strong, intelligent, and driven generation of future leaders. To improve student engagement in their education, schools could implement conference-based learning, where students are presented with a topic, and then engage in formal discussion and debate over the topic. Not only will students be actively thinking about what they are learning, but they'll also be forming their own new ideas on topics that would usually be taught through lecture. Students should be working together on real problems to come up with real solutions.

When kids are shown that they are able to make a tangible difference, it encourages them to continue making changes in their own communities, in their own lives. It shows them that they are more than just a statistic, and that they all hold the potential to amount to something. •



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Running outside in the winter

THE JOYS, DANGERS, AND THINGS TO BE AWARE OF

By John Torsiello
info@mainstreetmag.com

Just because the temperature has fallen and snow blankets the roadways and trails, that doesn't mean you have to hold up inside your house and wait until spring to get your running/jogging fix in.

Actually, avid and many recreational runners continue to run outside through the winter months, although it does take some adjustment to routines and expectations from your workout.

Greg and the elements

Greg Diamond, vice president of the Taconic Road Runners Club, has been running for 37 years and he's battled through the various elements weather can throw at him. "I will run on roads and trails until there is deep snow, and then I will move to plowed roads. I have had more difficulty with the cold as I have gotten older, especially my hands. But clothing has gotten better – you can run in very cold conditions with two to three layers now. I use hand warmers in my gloves and wear ski mittens when the temperature is under 30 degrees."

Diamond says running when it is windy during the winter can prove problematic. He chooses to run into the wind during the first portion of his run so he can be running with the wind at his back when he is tired and sweaty. "And make sure you wear a strong outer layer to help block out the wind from your body, especially your core."

Other precautions need to be taken when running outdoors during the winter. Says Diamond, "The

footing can be dangerous if there is ice; when it is cold and misty, etc." Ironically, snow is relatively easy to run on – until it melts and refreezes. "There are things you can put on your running shoes that will allow firmer traction and prevent slipping and even worse falling, when running in slippery conditions."

Keeping hydrated

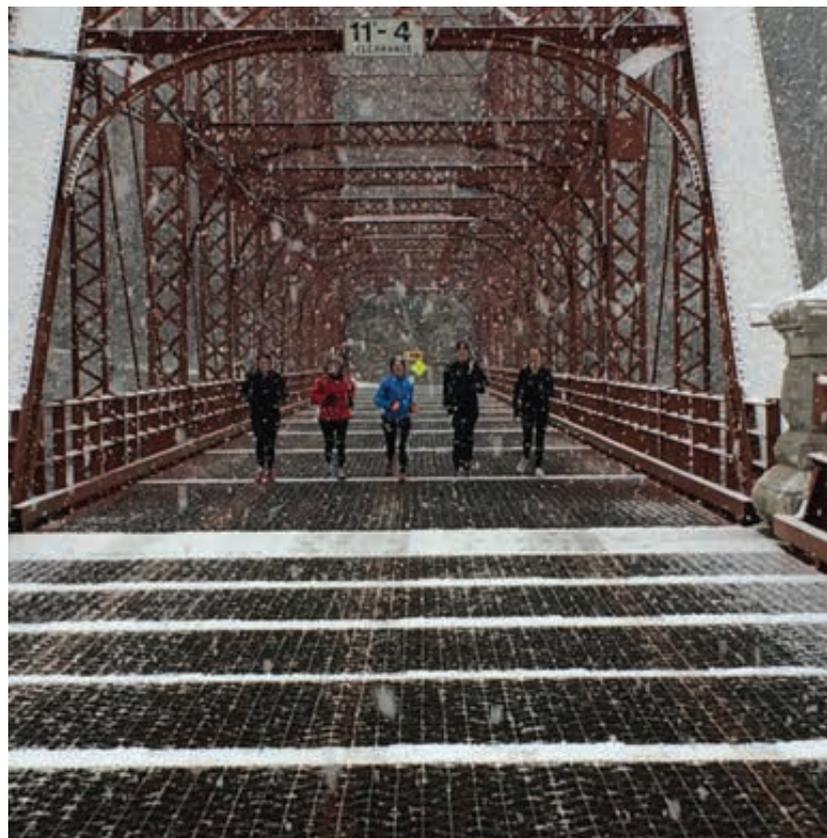
Every runner knows that proper hydration is key to a good workout, although you may need to drink less prior to and during a run during the cold weather.

"Unless you are overdressed and sweating a lot," points out Diamond, "you need less fluid in the colder months. Your body is trying to keep you warm, not get rid of warmth, so you sweat less. If dressed properly you shouldn't be sweating heavily."

Diamond cautions against running when there is ice, and when it is very cold. Cold coupled with wind will send the chill factor plummeting to dangerous levels. "You also have to take into account what drivers are doing. If it isn't safe for them it isn't safe for you. That's why we like to run in Franklin Delano Roosevelt park in the winter; it gets plowed and there are almost no cars."

Tom and the marathoners

Tom Maile, president of the Taconic Road Runners Club, has been running since the early 1970s, spurred on by people like Bill Rodgers and Frank Shorter, elite marathoners who helped spread the word about the benefits of putting on a pair of sneakers and hitting the roads and woodland trails. Maile's longest



single run was 50 miles and he believes he has logged around 120,000 miles over the years, many of them during the winter.

"Winter running needs layers of clothing, a hat and gloves and shoes with good tread, and in snow, something like what are called 'Yak-Traks,'" he observed. "Safe winter running demands shoes with good treads."

Maile's mantra is to not run when the roads are icy because "it's easy to fall and break a wrist or an arm – or worse." He adds, "Winter hydration is probably less critical than during the summer. I don't really know why but that has been my experience."

Continued on next page ...

Above: Runners don't let a little snow stop them as the jog across a bridge.

Kim and Fleet Feet

Kim Caruso, owner of Fleet Feet in Poughkeepsie (www.fleetfeetpoughkeepsie.com) is an accomplished and avid runner who doesn't let snow and cold stop her training. She says, "Running safely outside during the winter months is possible, but does require some preparation as the proper gear is essential to ensuring runner safety."

As for when not to run outside during the winter months, Caruso offers, "This is really a matter of personal preference, however most individuals will probably not want to try running on the roads during a snow storm or other situations where it would be difficult for the driver of a vehicle to see them. Regardless of weather conditions, when running on the roads remember to run on the left hand side of the road so that you are running against traffic."

As a purveyor of running equipment and apparel, Caruso has first-hand knowledge of what's on the market to keep runners warm and safe during the winter.

"Before running in cold winter conditions you will want to invest



in some appropriate apparel items. A mistake that most runners make is that they put on too many layers, rather than buying technical pieces that can help to wick moisture and regulate body temperature. A base layer piece is an essential item. It's thin and moisture wicking, but will also help to keep you from overheating. Hats, gloves and multi-purpose 'Buffs' are also key items that should be considered during cold weather runs."

Caruso says that keeping the body warm is "very important" during the winter, "but making sure that you are visible on the roads to drivers is also essential. She continues, "In terms of visibility products, there are many options, but something as simple as a \$10 clip-on flashing light can make a world of difference. We also recommend buying clothing with reflective detailing whenever possible if you are planning to run in the dark. Many road runners switch to a trail shoe in the winter months if they are planning to run in slippery conditions. The shoes can provide some additional traction. There are also relatively inexpensive traction cleats that can be placed over road shoes to help stop slipping in messy conditions."

So, you don't need to put the sneakers in the back of the closet for the winter and give up running outdoors. Of course, running on a treadmill is an option when it's snowing and cold. But that exercise gets quite boring after awhile and doesn't bring with it the joy of being outdoors. Just take safety and health precautions and keep running outside, even when the white stuff falls from the sky and the temperature drops below freezing. ●

Above: Kim Caruso, owner of Fleet Feet in Poughkeepsie, NY, competes in a race in frigid winter temperatures. Image courtesy of Kim Caruso. Bottom, left: A jogger runs down a country road that has been plowed.



Photo: istockphoto.com contributor vladsoodel

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Olde York has it going on!

By *Dominique DeVito*
info@mainstreetmag.com

Some things just seem meant to be. Could it be any more coincidental that the Newsome family of 21st century New York landed on the property of the Jacob Rutsen van Rensselaer family of 17th century New York? What, you may wonder, is so curious or special about this? Take note:

Van Rensselaer's historic house and mill complex – located at what is now 248 Route 23 in Claverack, was a distillery and cooperage, *circa* 1805. Cooperages are where barrels are made for storing and aging alcoholic beverages. Cooperages are rare. They were then, and they are now. It's interesting to know that right here in Columbia County there was a distillery and cooperage operating in the early 1800s.

How did they get here?

Enter Stuart Newsome, passionate about historic renovation and woodworking, with a dream of establishing his own barrel-making operation. Oh, and with a love of distilling that he developed through years of perfecting homemade vodka. When New York State's craft beverage laws became friendlier to people with his kind of dream(s),

he and his wife, Louise, daughter, Sophie, and Sophie's partner, Rory, thought it might be their turn to give the business a try. Stuart and Louise were living closer to Manhattan, but Sophie and Rory were living in Catskill. Rory grew up in Columbia and Greene Counties and also lived in Albany. They all knew how the area was becoming increasingly popular, and were seeing the explosion of craft beverage businesses in Columbia County and all through the Hudson Valley and New York State. They decided to start looking for where they could establish themselves.

"We didn't actually look that long," Louise tells me when I ask her how they came to be at an address that seemed like it was waiting for them. "This is truly the perfect spot for us." With van Rensselaer's legacy behind them and their dreams of operating both a cooperage and a distillery ahead of them, they bought the property and set about making things happen.

This past October, it became official: Olde York Farm & Distillery opened its restored carriage house to the public, offering tours of the cooperage (on weekends), and a tasting room in which to sample their artisan spirits (open on weekends; hours vary). Even the name they finally arrived at tips its hat to old and new, as Stuart is from Yorkshire, England (old), and is now in New (yes, new) York. I'll drink to that!

How do you get here

Olde York is easy to find. It's on Route 23 leading out of Hudson toward Hillsdale. Pass through the intersection with 9H and it's another mile or so, just before you cross Claverack Creek, on the right.



Above: Rory and Sophie behind the bar. Left: One of the bottles available at Olde York. Images courtesy of Olde York.

The driveway marker is, appropriately enough, a barrel. The old house on the right as you come in is part of the establishment, too. It's an Airbnb called The Distillery Suite.

I visited on a cold, sunny day at the end of December. The entrance to the tasting room was through a side door and then a linen curtain that helped keep the chill out of the room. The bar stretches away to the right as you come in, and everything is shades of brown and grey. It's beautifully done, with a barrel theme throughout (of course!). The tasting room is equal parts cozy and elegant. Sophie and Louise are consummate hosts – and deservedly proud of their fledgling enterprise.

Tasting and tipping

Sophie was front and center behind the bar, looking every bit the part of the proprietress. Her official title



is owner and operations manager, and she laughs a knowing laugh when she says, “I do just about everything.” Not the least of which is coming up with the amazing flavors that distinguish Olde York’s product line. Sophie loves to play with flavors. She cites the influence of Kate Arding at Talbott & Arding, a gourmet store on Warren Street in Hudson where Sophie worked before starting the distillery with her family. “Kate taught me so much about cheese, in particular, but also about flavors and pairings of all different things,” Sophie says, her eyes twinkling. “That’s Rory’s favorite part, too,” she shares. Rory’s title is head distiller and wholesale manager.

Their current list of tantalizing spirits includes:

- Rhubarb & Honey Vodka
- Thai Basil Liqueur
- Nasturtium Flower Liqueur
- Raspberry & Black Pepper Liqueur
- Finocchietto Bronzato Liqueur
- Smoked Maple Bourbon
- Cacao Maple Vodka
- Mulled Peach Whiskey
- Buddha’s Hand Citron Vodka
- Roasted Black Walnut Liqueur
- Diamond Street Vodka
- Apple Brandy

And they’re always exploring new things. “It starts with Sophie’s palate,” Rory confesses. “She has a tremendous ability to taste something and then translate it into one of our distinctive products.” Another factor Rory gives a lot of credit to is the abundance of the Hudson Valley, “We base what we’re doing on what’s available here,” he says. “We let the area be our guide, whether it’s for grains, raspberries, black walnuts, nasturtiums, fennel – whatever. It’s a big part of why we love doing what we do. We’re creating our products, and we’re supporting local farmers and the community.”

When I ask Rory what he’s most proud of, the unhesitating answer is “our team.” He glows, “We’ve come a long way to make this happen.

There were the unanticipated road blocks, and the learning curve, but all of us did it together, and now we are offering a product that’s Hudson Valley sourced and made, and that people seem to dig.”

Oh, and there’s the cooperage, where the barrels they use to store the spirits are made by hand. It’s a meticulous process that isn’t forgiving. Stuart makes the barrels, and he and Rory char them to the level that they want for their spirits. If you want to tour the barn and learn more about the cooperage and how the spirits are made, you can do so on Saturdays and Sundays at 1 and 3 pm. It’s impressive.

Back in the tasting room, it’s obvious that Sophie is always thinking about the experience of taste. Customers come in while I’m at the bar and settle into some of the other stools. “You can taste any of the spirits before deciding what you’d like,” Sophie offers, handing them a list of what’s available, as well as the current cocktail menu featuring seven “tipples.” She’s eager to turn them on to drinks that are both classic yet distinctive – a Fruit & Spice Whiskey Sour featuring their Mulled Peach Whiskey, Raspberry and Black Pepper Liqueur, and lemon; or the Sugar Shack Old Fashioned, with their Smoked Maple Bourbon, bruleed maple sugar, peach bitters, luxado cherry and orange peel.

To make the Old Fashioned, Sophie swirls the maple sugar in the bottom of the glass with some of the bourbon and lights it with a match, tilting and swirling so the sugar caramelizes the bottom. Sophie is like a chemist behind the bar, measuring and mixing, in the “zone” – a mesmerizing mixologist.

When women make it happen

I ask Louise what she likes best about the family’s new undertaking,



Above: Louise and Sophie making drinks behind the bar.

and she brightens and says, “the development of Sophie as a business-woman.” That’s high praise coming from the former VP of programming for a National Professional Women’s Organization, and now business development officer for Trade + Prosper (a social enterprise start-up focusing on supporting small business), and one of the first women to be on the Board of the New York State Distillery Guild (“It was started by a woman, believe it or not,” Louise shares). Louise has seen her share of entrepreneurial women work on start-ups. “Most of all,” she adds quickly, “I like having my daughter close by.” And with that, she’s summoned by Sophie to assist in making cocktails for the growing crowd coming through the doors.

As I watch them in action and think about all they’ve done and are doing to put themselves on the craft beverage map, both in this area and across New York State – most importantly, in people’s well-stocked liqueur cabinets – I think about van Rensselaer and his family and just how amazing it is that a family-run

distillery and cooperage are again alive and well on the banks of the Claverack Creek in Columbia County.

Olde York is, most definitely, a family business. A family as warm as mulled peach whiskey, as interesting as roasted black walnut liqueur, as playful as finocchietto bronzato (smoked fennel) liqueur, as nuanced as nasturtium flower liqueur, or as in the game as Diamond Street Vodka. Discover your own favorites, and come back often, because these curious and crafty flavor lovers are constantly playing with their tipples. And are excited for you to try them. •

Olde York Farm & Distillery, 284 State Route 23, Hudson, NY. (518)721-8209. www.oldeyorkfarm.com. Tasting room hours are Fridays 5-9pm; Saturdays 12-9pm; and Sundays 12-6pm. Tours are conducted on Saturdays and Sundays at 1 and 3pm. The tasting room hosts a variety of events throughout the year. Olde York participates in many markets and festivals in New York State.



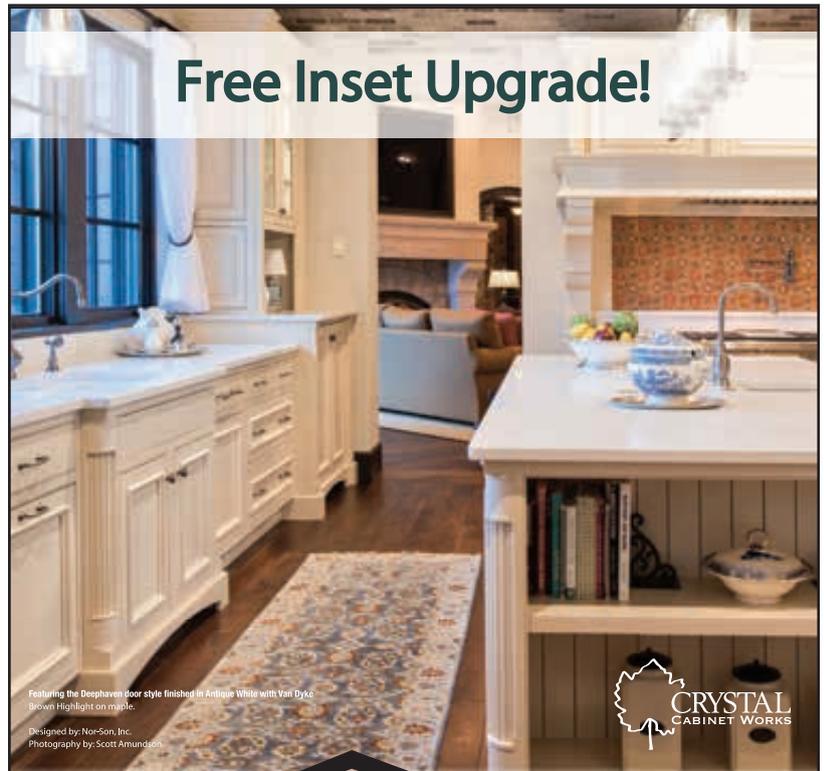
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AUTHOR JENNIFER BERNE & ILLUSTRATOR R.O. BLECHMAN:

Why don't we do something together?

By CB Wismar
info@mainstreetmag.com

The question is not a strange one in this region of artists and writers, musicians, actors, and directors: “Why don't we do something together?”

Perhaps it's spoken across the table at a casual dinner party, or during a chance meeting at the local market. Pleasant conversation turns to the creative idea ... and most of the time, it fades away as the moment passes.

GOD: 48 Famous and Fascinating Minds Talk About God is the exception to that rule. The combined work of two Ancram, NY, talents, the “gift book” from Running Press combines the compilation skills of author Jennifer Berne with the celebrated illustration work of R.O. Blechman.

Motivation in a Facebook post

The book is not an exercise of faith. The effort to move from “I've got this idea...” to holding the finished volume in hand was not cast as a spiritual pilgrimage. “I had seen a posting on Facebook,” recalls Berne, “it was from an old friend, a dancer, who posted this lovely translation of some lines by the 14th Century Persian poet, Hafiz. ‘Every child has known God ... the God who knows only four words / and keeps repeating them, saying / Come dance with Me, come dance.’”

And, that was the creative spark – the trigger for the children's book author who has penned widely celebrated works on Albert Einstein and Jacques Cousteau and is currently working on a biography or astrophysicist Neil deGrasse Tyson, the Director of the Hayden Planetarium.

“In this era of so much prejudice and religious intolerance, it was such an important time to create a book that was the opposite of that kind of bigotry and small-mindedness.” Berne's vision was quite clear: compile a book about how “Famous and Fascinating Minds” address the subject of God.



From idea to finished project

So it was, that in a conversation with neighbor and long-time friend R.O. Blechman, the subject of a book came up and with little warning, but a formidable process ahead, the project began.

Blechman's approach was both direct and profound. “I'm not really a believer, so I may be the wrong artist. But then I thought, ‘well, art, when it's honest and has something to say to people, has a spiritual aspect.’ And what is religion but spiritual?”

“We both talked it over with our agents,” says Berne, “and they agreed it would be an intriguing project. Since my target has been children's literature, we determined that Bob's agent would take the lead.”

The “Bob” in this case is R.O. Blechman whose distinctive illustrations have graced the cover of many issues of *The New Yorker*, garnered him an Emmy Award for production of his animated film *The Soldier's Tale*, received recognition as *ADWEEK's* Illustrator of the Year, made his work the subject of a retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art and placed him in the Art Directors' Hall of

Fame. His clients are a formidable list that includes many of the Fortune 500.

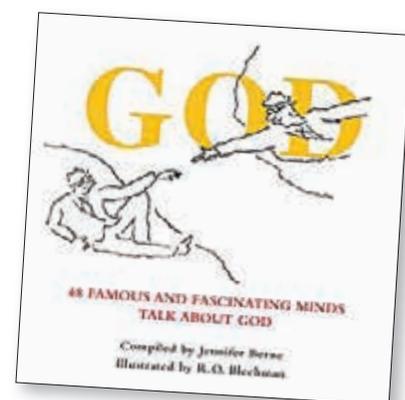
Power ... strength ... global reach ... but God?

“I want to do interesting work,” confides Blechman, “and this was an intriguing idea. 48 different images that would capture the essence of 48 widely divergent quotes – all on the same subject.”

With Berne's selection of five notable quotes, they went to work, with Blechman creating illustrations and assembling the package that would be placed in the hands of the agent for presentation to potential publishers.

We like it. Will a publisher like it?

“The concept was presented to several publishers, almost all of whom thought the topic was too controversial,” recalls Berne. “This is a country that may not be a church-going nation,” adds Blechman, “but it is a God-believing nation.”



Above, top to bottom, L-R: Jennifer Berne (photo: B. Docktor), R.O. Blechman. The cover of their book about God. Image courtesy of Berne and Blechman.

Continued on next page ...

After several rejections, the editors at Running Press found the idea intriguing, and the concept took on a life of its own.

Great idea. Now, get it done.

It was Berne's task to research and select quotes about God. Not a small project. After all, the entire concept of the book was to provide a wide range of thinking ... to make it both an opportunity for reflection and a trigger for personal thought ... not to be dogmatic or to proselytize.

From hundreds of options, 48 were selected, which then required clearances and permissions from individuals, families, estates, trusts, and publishers. While a researcher did that meticulous work, the quotes were turned over to begin the illustration process. Quotes from John Lennon and Albert Einstein, Mother Teresa and Andy Rooney, Thomas Edison and Carl Sandburg.

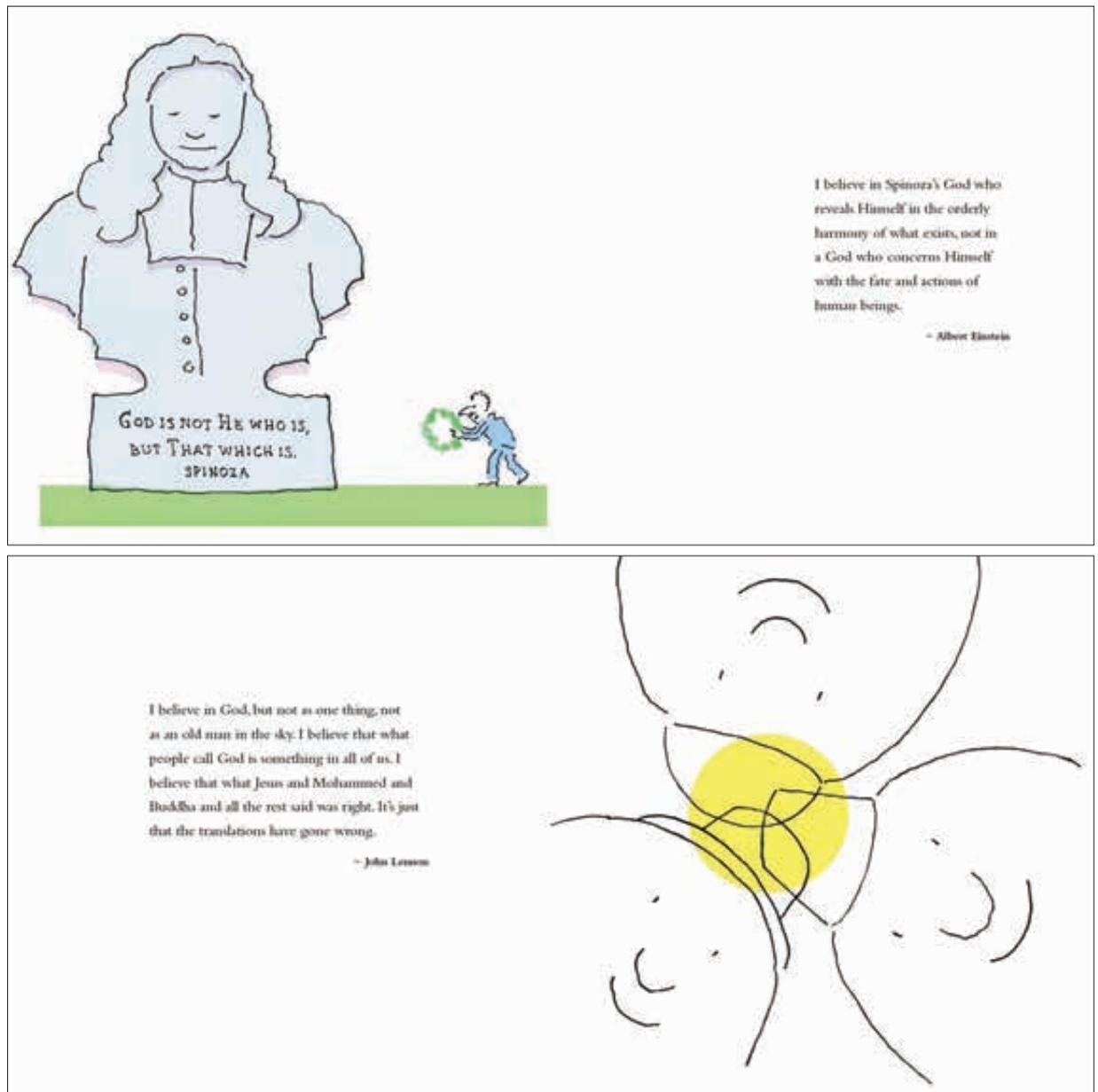
"This was really one of the easiest projects I've undertaken," admits Blechman, who has worked for global brands, major networks, international publishers, and very demanding editors. "I got to spend a summer creating 48 images ... all of which were accepted by the editor."

Considered a "gift book," by the publishing trade, each page spread offers a carefully selected quote on the title subject accompanied by an illustration that captures the essence of the selected text. The quotes bridge 800 years of thought and culture, religion and philosophy, science and the arts. From Mother Teresa and Pope Francis to Malala Yousafzai, Mahatma Gandhi to Lenny Bruce.

Since the range of quoted thinkers is so broad, and the whimsical illustrations allow the reader to smile while savoring the deep thoughts ... but, since this is decidedly not a book about religion ... what is it?

"It's a book about belief," answers Jennifer Berne with ease and authority. "Beliefs have created all the religions of the world, all the philosophies, all the ethics and morals, all the compassions and all the prejudices. The power of belief is stunning."

The result is that captured in its pages *48 Famous and Fascinating*



Minds Talk About God presents 48 different approaches to the same subject. When the insights and imaginations of the book creators are added to the offering, there are 50 ways to contemplate a single subject: God.

Vocation and value

"Being involved in the book has meant that we are both involved in something of worth," echoes R.O. Blechman. "And we were supported and guided by an exceptional team – the editor and the art director had a vision that brought the project to a successful moment of completion."

One curiosity in the evolution of the book is that both the creators live "just over the hill" from each other in Ancram, NY. Jennifer Berne designed her own weekend home in 1978 as a retreat from an advertising career in Manhattan. Her husband added the dominant fireplace and the outdoor masonry that makes the home an

excellent example of casual country living.

R.O. Blechman was also a weekender until a decision to leave New York brought him to "Bobolink Farm" full-time 17 years ago. "I love it here... but I also love New York," comments Blechman. "I'm torn, but enjoy the luxury of being in both places."

The ultimate test of this grand idea, shared by two immensely creative neighbors, will be the reaction of the public ... the ultimate consumers who will pick up the book and decide to own it or share it. Canadian retailer Indigo Books and Music offered this evaluation: "this charmingly-illustrated compendium of quotes will inspire, comfort, and delight anyone who has contemplated the higher power."

Welcome praise for a project that began with, "Why don't we do something together?" •

Above, top to bottom: Albert Einstein's quote about God from Berne and Blachman's book. John Lennon's quote about God with Blachman's illustration. Images courtesy of Berne and Blachman.

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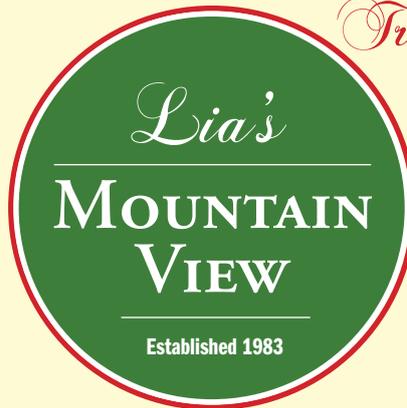
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From the chilly climes of Scandinavia to your home:

Hot and steamy saunas

By John Torsiello
info@mainstreetmag.com

If you like to be warm, actually hot, very hot, and sweat profusely then you've probably had the occasion to use a sauna, likely more than once.

Once found mainly only at health clubs or your local YMCA, in-home saunas have become more and more popular in recent years. While personalized, contractor-built home saunas can cost thousands of dollars, there are a number of companies now offering highly affordable, small saunas that can be incorporated into a home. Some of these saunas can cost between \$1,250 to \$1,750 and work quite well.

Saunas and their origins

According to the website www.sauna.com, saunas have been used by men and women for hundreds of years, first finding popularity in the chilly climes of Finland and Scandinavia. The Finnish word "sauna" best translates into English as "bath;" although its every day meaning in Finnish implies a specific type of bath – one in which a person could escape the cold winter air.

The website says the earliest known saunas were huts or lean-tos, which were dug into the side of a hill/mountain, a large berm, or something similarly convenient. The goal was to create an enclosed space in which one could trap heat. Early saunas were universally wood-burning, and would often take much of the day to become fully prepared and reach a desirable temperature. And one of the significant attributes of a sauna is creating a sense of relaxation through the bodily function of sweating, and allowing the body to rid itself of impurities. Indeed, some



Above: A couple enjoys a sauna. Pouring water onto the rocks will create steam and make the space feel even warmer.

experts claim that a half hour in a sauna will rid the body of the same amount of impurities that it takes it a day to expunge itself of under normal circumstances.

Types of saunas and health benefits

The most popular form of sauna, especially in-home saunas, is a "dry sauna," a wood-lined room with an electric heater that transfers heat to the air in the room by way of igneous rocks, and reaches a maximum of 190 degrees Fahrenheit, although most saunas work efficiently at temperatures below that, usually around 170 degrees. The use of electrically heated rocks allows for the popular tradition of raising humidity in the sauna by pouring water onto the rocks to generate steam; the higher the humidity, the "hotter" the heat in the room feels. A lower-temperature room can rapidly accelerate the sweating process by adding moisture to the air, amplifying the effect of the convection process.

According to www.sauna.com, while not actually a sauna by definition, the modern infrared room or

"infrared sauna" is generally referred to as a sauna in the United States. The infrared sauna is dry, offering no steam or moisture – it achieves the same end result as the traditional sauna in that it raises a body's core temperature to help release sweat naturally.

It is believed by some that saunas allow a person to burn calories and, indeed, lose weight because the heat forces the body to work harder and the heart to pump faster. A sauna increases your circulation; makes you sweat, and helps you shed salt and water, thereby allowing you to lose extra weight. It also helps boost metabolism so your system will be energized to lose weight more quickly.

Some experts claim that a 20- to 30-minute stay in a sauna can burn between 300 to 500 calories and reduce the body weight by several pounds. Of course, it is water weight that is being shed, so, as

Continued on next page ...

soon as a person rehydrates, some of the pounds will quickly come back. It must be noted that the calorie burn of saunas is disputed. Some experts say that a half-hour stay in a heated room burns only about 80 to 100 calories. Either way, you are burning calories, and the truth, as usual, probably lies somewhere in the middle.

Boost the metabolism and detoxify

The website www.livestrong.com states that heat from a sauna will cause the body to raise its metabolic rate by up to 20 percent. This “jolt” to the metabolism will allow you to continue to burn calories for up to several hours after spending time in the sauna. The increase in temperature forces your heart to beat at least 30 percent faster, which means your body has to burn more calories for energy.

As mentioned, people use saunas to help detoxify the body. Sweat is composed of lymphatic fluid, so any toxins in the lymphatic system are expelled when you perspire. The elimination of toxins, such as heavy metals, helps you burn fat more effectively because they are not hindering your metabolism any longer. There are precautions that should be taken. Excessive sweating can lead to severe loss of electrolytes, which can result in kidney damage or death. Exposure to extreme heat can also cause cardiovascular emergencies or heatstroke. To keep hydrated, drink two to four glasses of water after spending time in the

sauna, and remain in a sauna for 15 to 20 minutes at a time and leave upon feeling dizzy or ill.

If you are new to saunas, start by taking a sauna twice a week for 15 to 20 minutes until you can tolerate a 30-minute sauna. Daily saunas are recommended for ideal detoxification and long-term weight loss. Drink lots of water before, during, and after a sauna.

A sauna completes any country retreat

Kate Stiassni of Imagine Design and Construction has elaborate saunas in both homes she owns, in Lakeville, CT, and in Pine Plains, NY. “We have often installed saunas in our homes as they are always a popular draw,” she said. “People love using them for both psychic and therapeutic relaxation. Being able to relax one’s muscles and unwind

is a welcome relief after a day of hiking, snowshoeing, skiing, or after a busy week. Saunas are praised in many languages and cultures. For instance, a Finnish wedding blessing advises newlyweds to ‘eat plenty of oatmeal and take a sauna every season.’” She continued, “We have always built our own saunas so we can customize them to each home. It is not that difficult to buy a heating unit, which comes with very specific, user-friendly instructions and then hire a carpenter to build a unique space.”

Stiassni says, “The size of an in-home sauna is dependent on how many people you want to seat or lounge in the sauna. Two-seat heights allow a variety of temperatures with the higher seating being hotter. Robe hooks and slanted backrests are helpful amenities as well as dimmable lighting.” Some saunas can be equipped with creature comforts, such as piped in music to further soothe the soul.

“An in-home sauna can also add to the value of a home,” explained Elyse Harney Morris, a broker for Elyse Harney Real Estate. “Saunas directly complement our community’s shared value in natural wellbeing. Real estate in this area is so unique because we are not only selling a home but a holistic lifestyle and the year-round outdoor recreation that surrounds; lakes and trails in summer, mountains and skiing in the winter. A sauna perfectly completes any country retreat.” ●



Above: A sauna in a Pine Plains, NY, home offers a sweet winter retreat. Bottom left: A sauna in a home in Lakeville, CT. Images courtesy of the sauna’s owners.



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A florist giving advice on Valentine's Day: “Buy roses, buy roses, buy roses!”... NOT!

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No matter what you decide to get, be sure to place your order early. Not only do advance orders help florists make sure we have what you want, but it saves you time in line. (Less time in a flower shop = more time for romance!)

Keep in mind too, because of the demand for flowers on Valentine's Day, prices are higher than normal – rose prices especially. If you're on a budget, opt for a mixed bouquet of seasonal flowers – you'll get more for your money (and you won't get the silent treatment for not getting your partner any flowers!). Remember the biggest part of Valentine's Day is letting your partner know how much they mean to you, no matter what you do!

Best ways to get your flowers to last:

- Keep flowers in cool place (near a heater is not a good place for a vase)
- Change out water every few days
- Recut flowers anytime their stems are out of water
- Use a knife (NOT SCISSORS!) to recut stems at an angle

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Beautiful homes throughout the area offer opportunities for tenants and landlords alike. The Berkshire region is nature's year-round resort, providing a great place to call home, invest, or vacation. With a high demand for rental homes, the local real estate market embraces shorter term rentals. Rentals are a great way for homeowners to generate income while out of town and for those coming to the area to fully immerse themselves in the wholesome lifestyle.

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The importance of house check-ups

With the winter months (hopefully) coming to a close, and spring just around the corner, it's a good time to take a look at your house's well-being.

The winter months can wreak havoc on your house. Once the snow clears it is a good idea to take a look at the home's exterior and start by checking the roof. This is one of your house's most important weather defensive areas. Often times due to heat loss from your home, ice can build up on the roof edges, causing significant damage to the shingles – and potentially the ice could back up far enough under the shingles and actually penetrate into the house causing severe damage. This damage will more than likely be visible inside your home, too.

Second on your check list should be to examine the siding, windows, and doors. Depending on the style of siding, do a visual check to make sure everything is still tight and has not loosened up over the winter. When checking your windows and doors, look for any sort of ice damage or imperfections that may have been caused from winter elements.

After doing the inspection, if a concern arises, contact a qualified professional to help resolve any issues and help bring the house back up to a healthy home. Preventative maintenance throughout the year is also a great way to ensure issues are less likely to occur.

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Husband and wife Macey and Gloria founded Aglet Theatre Company in 2005. It specializes in staged readings of new and seldom-performed plays. Aglet's debut performances were at Chaiwalla Tea house in Salisbury, CT, but after quickly outgrowing the restaurant's dining room, Aglet was invited to work at the Bok Gallery at TriArts' Sharon Playhouse in Sharon, CT, and in 2009 an additional venue at the Unicorn Theatre at Berkshire Theatre Festival in Stockbridge, MA. Aglet currently performs at Dewey Hall in Sheffield, MA, and The Moviehouse in Millerton, NY. Shows take place in the spring and fall, and offer two showings, an afternoon and evening performance. The types of work they do are oftentimes provocative, not really mainstream, although they have performed some Broadway pieces. An insightful and lively discussion follows each performance about what the playwright intended and how the actors and director communicated that. Although Aglet Theatre Company is a non-profit, their mission is to provide the tristate area with quality theatrical experiences at affordable prices. Tickets need to be purchased before the show date. The first show of 2018, titled *Three Viewings*, is scheduled for March 17. For future events, presentations, programs, and auditions please visit their website.



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John Kipp's, the owner and operator of Columbia Disposal, journey to becoming a business owner started in the fall of 2015. He grew up around big trucks which led to a college degree in diesel mechanics. After graduating he worked as a diesel mechanic where one of his jobs was for a big corporation specializing in garbage removal. John realized that he wanted to create his own business so he and his fiancé, Rebecca, took all of their savings and created Columbia Disposal. They provide weekly residential garbage removal and dumpster rentals, primarily servicing Columbia County, NY (Hillsdale, Copake, Craryville, Philmont, Ghent, Claverack, Chatham, Austerlitz, Valatie, Stuyvesant, and more). "One of the things that sets us apart from similar businesses is that we are locals serving locals" said John. He planted the roots to Columbia Disposal in the neighborhood where he's lived his entire life. "We have created many customer relations, and have become recognizable in our community since inception." John is looking forward to expanding and attaining new equipment, and creating a great foundation for their daughters, Laurysa and Isabelle. "We have a tremendous amount of support from our family, friends, and customers, which I would like to express my greatest gratitude for." Please inquire to see if we service your area!



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