

# MAINE WOMEN MAGAZINE

DECEMBER 2021

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MEET

## Erin Ovalle

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& Mother*

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Cover/index photos courtesy of Erin Ovalle

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### How to Have a Blast at Christmas

It was my first time having my family over for the Christmas holiday. My siblings were coming to my house for the first time. Since I was the baby of the family, with my siblings being twelve plus years older than I, this was a big deal.

I know their thoughts were: "The baby. The youngest sibling. She can't do this."

Well, I was going to show them! Boy did I! I was so excited to be able to flaunt my abilities to the entire family.

I had shrimp galore, and every vegetable you could think of. Hors d'oeuvres like you dream about. Yep, I was making an amazing impression during the cocktail hour. There was champagne, wine, and even frozen Margaritas. I did it all.

During the cocktail hour we were all in the main room, all twenty-four of us. They were saying, "Wow, we didn't think you could do this."

I told them that I had been up all night to make this the most memorable Christmas ever...how I made my own stuffing and had a twenty-six-pound turkey in the oven. They certainly were impressed!

As we were all enjoying the cocktails and hors-d'oeuvres, we heard a huge BOOOOOM, like a bomb. Everyone was screaming, "What is that? Oh my God!!!"

The sound came from the kitchen. We all rushed in to find out what was going on. Horrors! We saw the oven door ripped open. Turkey was everywhere.

Then we saw what was left of the turkey. The ass of the turkey had just blown off. Yep, my twenty-six-pound turkey was dripping from everywhere: the ceiling, the cupboards, even from the kitchen clock.

I don't think I've ever heard anybody laugh so hard. I had REALLY stuffed my turkey. In order to have enough stuffing for all twenty-four of us, I had pushed it in firmly with my fist. Really tightly!

I guess I hadn't read the directions too closely: "stuff loosely." So, folks, if you are roasting a turkey for the first time... LOOSE... is the key word!

*Love and blessings and  
happy, peaceful holidays,  
Mary*

*Maine Women Magazine neither endorses or critiques the women featured in our magazine based on their belief system or political viewpoints. We wish that political and personal differences be respected and used to start conversations based on curiosity and learning. We believe in freedom of speech.*

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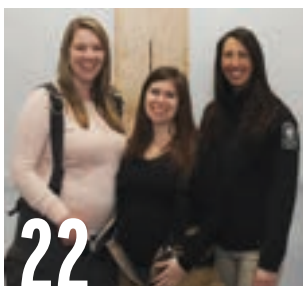
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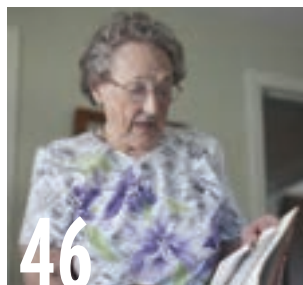
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I know I can obtain your magazine in the Sunday paper, but am a subscriber because I love your magazine and want to support you. Keep up the good work.

—Wendy

I am a clinical psychologist in Phillips. I am finally getting a chance to read this issue of *Maine Women* and was brought to deep tears by your Publisher's Note. Thank you for promoting and supporting all women, across the range of perspectives.

—Dr. Susy Sanders

| CONTRIBUTORS |

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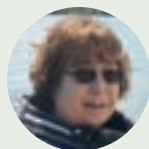


She is the award-winning author of several works including *The Murder of Mary Bean and Other Stories* and *Shaking the Faith*. She lives in Alfred with her husband, Scott.

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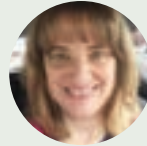
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**Anne Gabbianelli** of Winterport has enjoyed a career as a broadcast journalist and college professor. Adding to her passions, she loves to tell people stories through her writing. She appreciates oral history gained as a hospice volunteer and the many heartfelt memories shared by her patients.



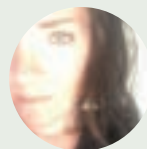
**Liz Gotthelf** lives in Old Orchard Beach with her husband. She enjoys hula hooping, volunteering at a local horse barn, and finding Fiestaware at thrift stores.



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**Teresa Piccari** is a lover of the written word across all genres. A career journalist and native Philadelphian, she has called coastal Maine home for 16 years.



**Shelagh Gordon Talbot** hails from Vermont. She worked in the film and television industry, including on the award-winning kid's show *Jabberwocky*. Looking for a less hectic life, she moved to the Moosehead Lake region and became a journalist. She is a freelancer who also writes music, plays guitar, and sings.



**Lynette L. Walther** is the GardenComm Gold Medal winner for writing, a five-time recipient of the GardenComm Silver Medal of Achievement, and recipient of the National Garden Bureau's Exemplary Journalism Award. Her gardens are in Camden.







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# POSTCARD FROM HOLLY

BY HOLLY MARTIN

**H**olly Martin, 29, is sailing around the world in her 27-foot-long Grinde sailboat, which she christened the SV Gecko. She left Maine in the fall of 2019, from Round Pond Harbor on the Pemaquid Peninsula. Holly sent this "postcard" by satellite from the South Pacific, to the readers of Maine Women Magazine.

I had such a fun time cruising around Tahiti with my folks. It had been so long since I had seen them! We spent a lot of time just relaxing in the sun and catching up. Being able to cruise with them for a whole month was just what I needed. To spend Thanksgiving with them was wonderful! We didn't eat a traditional meal but instead had a feast of fish that we had caught ourselves. I was sad to see my parents go, but it was time for them to sail off to deliver the Hans Christian sailboat back to its owners. The month with them went by so fast, but I am so grateful for the time we had together!

Now I am headed for Makatea Atoll in the Tuamotu Islands. •







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# EMBODY THE RHYTHM

## Celebrating Guinea Dance and Drum

BY EMILY DUNUWILA

“I started off with three students, and one of them was my sister,” Marita laughed as she recounted the early days of her dance classes in 2003. What they lacked in numbers, however, they made up for in passion. “The drummers kept showing up, and I kept showing up,” she remembers, and eventually the West-African dance community grew so large that Marita could host traditional Guinean dancers and drummers in Portland, crowd-fund her first trip to Guinea and hold public performances with the New Moon Ensemble. At a time when divisive tensions abound, Marita Kennedy-Castro shines a light on traditional cultural arts to gather community, share cultural practices, and preserve the richness of the common human experience.

As a young girl growing up in Wabanaki territory with musical parents, Marita had an early affinity for music, dance and nature. She loved the graceful strength of ballet, which would later influence her attraction to the rhythmic fluidity of Guinea dance.





During a visit to the Common Ground Fair, at age 15, Marita heard the drumming group, Inanna Sisters in Rhythm, playing globally inspired rhythms. The band's performance planted a small seed of curiosity in Marita, which continued to blossom as she moved to Vermont.

After discovering West African dance in Burlington, VT in 1999, Marita was captivated. Guinea dance, one of many West African styles, had a soul and a richness that transcended her experience of Western dance styles. She remembers the profoundly healing impact of dancing with community, accompanied by powerful traditional rhythms. This sense of belonging and interconnectedness with others had been lacking for her. "I was grappling with [the question of] 'what is 'US culture' and 'who am I'", Marita remembers, "and I noticed how many other young people seemed lost without culture in this country." In contrast, Guinea dance connected her to a common human experience, where the rich essence of humanity was celebrated. Derived from the villages of Guinea, each dance, song and rhythm accompany celebrations such as births, harvests, and life passages that narrate a collective journey together.

Years later, Marita would travel to Conakry, Guinea for a month-long immersive dance camp. Having built a strong community of dancers and drummers in Southern Maine, Marita was able to pay for her trip through Kickstarter. "It's still one of the most special things that's ever happened to me," Marita says of the community's financial support. She remembers packing all her first aid, supplementary food, and anything she was told she wouldn't find in the village. She spent one month in Conakry, living with her dance teacher, Yousouf Koumbassa and dancing for six hours a day. Despite being in a physically demanding environment, Marita reflects fondly on it. "I didn't have any physical self-judgement," she remembers, "I was so filled up with the love and appreciation of all bodies!" She immersed herself into the local community, even giving away all her first aid supplies to locals. Years later,



Opposite: Performing at Merrill Auditorium in Portland in 2021. Photo by Liany Media LLC

Top: Marita and Namory Kieta. Photo by Sullivan Photography Bottom: A dance class in summer 2021.

on a subsequent trip to Guinea, Marita would bring first aid supplies for the locals, donated by her Southern Maine dance community. Meals were cooked by village women for the entire camp of dancers and drummers. Though there was not always enough food to feel full, due to the volume of people, Marita used it as a learning opportunity. The

experience helped her to understand the lack of resources and challenges Guinean artists face to preserve their arts.

Marita returned home with a determination to uplift traditional artists in the States. "The artists are still really poor," she recalls, "and so they are often times working just for a meal." Many tra-





*Clockwise from top: Drummers practicing/playing in Guinea in 2012, Fatima making lunch, and relaxing between classes. Photos courtesy of Marita Kennedy-Castro*

ditional artists' dream is to travel outside of Guinea to share their culture abroad, where financial opportunity is much greater. Guinean drum master Namory Keita, for example, who came to live in Maine in 2015, was the first traditional Guinean representative in Portland. "Most people don't realize" Marita explained of his efforts, that "how hard Namory works, is for an entire village. It's not just for himself." This reality inspires Marita to support and highlight artists who teach their traditional arts abroad.

Marita uses her platform as an arts educator to introduce schools to African-born artists living locally. With many young generations of Africans attending schools in Portland and Lewiston, for example, arts-in-education programs can instill cultural pride in students. "So many of my friends who are from Rwanda, Burundi, and other countries with rich traditional cultures, are seeing it quickly lost because the younger generation just want to assimilate." Marita explains of the generational shift, "they think they need to shed their cultural traditions in

order to be 'American.'" If there is not a safe and welcoming space for the next generation to explore their familial cultures, then the pressure to assimilate will supersede the preservation of traditional culture. "My hope is to get an international and intercultural dance and music program model for the schools," Marita says of her future plans, "music, dance, food, language—those are some of the key things of culture." Bringing traditional dance and drum from countries around the world into classrooms could be a way to spread awareness to all and support cultural pride for students with family roots across the globe.

Under the name *Embody the Rhythm*, Marita collaborates with drummers and artists to host weekly classes in Portland. All are welcome in the class, regardless of prior experience or funds. With a mission of inclusivity and access, *Embody the Rhythm* offers a community-supported sliding scale. In this model, folks can add a little extra to their class purchase, allowing others in need to access the class at a reduced rate. Not only is this an equitable way to welcome all bodies into her class, but it also strengthens the sense of community. Since the class thrives off the collective energy of dancers and drummers, the rich experience is dependent on the strength and vibrancy of the community.

The *New Moon Ensemble*, a performance group which grew out of the weekly class, is co-directed by master Guinean drummer Namory Keita and dancer/choreographer Marita Kennedy-Castro. *New Moon Ensemble* members represent different countries and ethnicities, including German-born drummer, Annegret Baier, who is a member of *Inanna Sisters in Rhythm*, the group that inspired Marita as a teenager. "It's a really beautiful family," Marita says of the multi-cultural ensemble, "and we've been building our community connection as an ensemble for quite some time." This past September, the *New Moon Ensemble* performed alongside Burundi traditional dance and drum collective, *Batimbo United*, and Rwandan art ensemble, *Ikirenga Cy'intore* in a joyful evening called "Tales of Bells and





New Moon Ensemble backstage at the Merrill Auditorium in 2021. Photo by Liany Media LLC

Drums” at Merrill Auditorium in Portland. New Moon Ensemble has also performed shows throughout the state, spreading the rich and beautiful experience to all.

Marita’s dedication to Guinea dance has grown from a source of personal healing to a vibrant and community-driven cultural preservation effort. Her work with Embody the Rhythm has bolstered the multicultural arts in Maine, served as a model for equitable change, and provided a safe space for all bodies to explore movement. Traditional

cultural arts connect us to a common human experience of celebrating, storytelling, grieving and being in community. When celebrated in a culturally sensitive and authentic way, these practices can teach us, nourish us, and connect us in rich and essential ways.

To learn more about Marita’s offerings, visit [embodytherhythm.com](http://embodytherhythm.com). To learn more about Namory Keita, visit [www.namorydrum.com](http://www.namorydrum.com) and Annegret Baier, [www.annegretbaier.com](http://www.annegretbaier.com).



The Embody the Rhythm community in 2021. Photo courtesy of Marita Kennedy-Castro

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Kim Bennett, owner of Bennett's Gems and Jewelry, doing what she does best. (Masks removed for photo.) Photo by Rosie Curtis

# SLOW STORIES, HEALING GEMS

BY ROSIE CURTIS

**T**all. Willow-like, angular, they weave back and forth between each other at the counter as she tries on rings. “My hands are so big,” she sighs.

“They’re proportional to your height,” says Kim, the diminutive silver-haired owner of Bennett’s Gems and Jewelry. Kim smiles and her face lights up, eyes twinkling. “Let me tell you a story. There was a lady who came in here once, a tall, tall lady, and she was wearing the most beautiful rings, a different style on each finger. And she wore them well. There are not many people who can do that. So, I commented on how lovely her rings were.

“You want to know why I wear these?’ she says. ‘I have big hands, but nobody notices my hands when I wear these rings. They just see the beauty of the rings.’” A wisdom nugget, re-

framing Self, packaged in a little friendly story. Focus on the beauty. Enjoy the illusion. Spin it around and look at it a new way, whatever ‘it’ is.

From the moment Kim walks into the store in the morning until she closes the place up, nine hours later, she’s on her feet, sharing stories with everyone who comes through the door. Folks are often waiting for her to open up at 10 a.m. “It’s my favorite store,” they enthuse. Many people make an annual pilgrimage here when they visit Belfast. Each year, a special rock speaks to them. The gems and the visits become part of the story of their lives.

Couples come in to buy love gifts. Young men order custom engagement rings. Kim can make dreams come true on any budget. Children come in with their grandparents and a



ten-dollar bill for treasures. Dogs accompany their owners at times. We were all on the floor trying to befriend Henry, the timid brown lab rescue, at one point in the afternoon. That was part of an hour-long storytelling session during a quiet spell. Tears for departed pets. Photos shared. The best stories:

“My mother was a model, tall, blonde, blue eyes. She came downstairs one evening, all dressed up in a chiffon halter-top ballgown with a long flowing skirt. Well, the family Doberman snuck under the back of her skirt and then sneezed all over her legs. She had no idea what had hit her.” We fall apart laughing. The whole store reverberates.

One of the unspoken rules in Maine is that if someone is telling a story, you need to wait your turn for the story to be over, before you are served. Kim tells stories with a capital ‘S’ that ramble and teach and engage. It is not fast storytelling. Bread does not rise instantly. They are slow stories.

That’s one of the points of storytelling: to slow you down, get you to look and understand from a different perspective. It’s the same with the gems that Kim sells at the store. If you want to talk rock, you need to slow down and get quiet. Kim is an old-school, Maine storyteller. She takes her time.

So, Kim’s in the middle of an epic generational saga with a dear lady at the back counter: stories of departed loved ones, laughter, and tears on both sides. Business as usual, in other words. They’ve probably known each other for years.

A gentleman walks through the door with a bracelet for his wife that he bought her. She’s expressed a preference for something else and, kind husband that he is, he’s returned to find something more to her liking. He needs to talk to Kim, and Kim is nearing the last chapter of the first book of the oral trilogy that is unfolding amongst the trilobite fossils and diamond bracelets. It’s gonna be a while.

No matter, we can chat. And we do. Of cycling and social work. He’s wearing a T-shirt advertising the annual UFO festival in Exeter, New Hampshire. Yes, it’s a real thing. That kept us deep in conversation for another 20 minutes.

The work here is about learning to connect with everyone, with humility and love. Kim is Yoda-like in her humor, wisdom, and size. I want to be just like her when I grow up. Everyone walks out of the store with a little piece of love. Often, they leave with a special rock or a beautiful piece of jewelry, too. The epic oral trilogy was a healing event for both parties. It also resulted in the sale of a diamond bracelet, but it could just as easily have been a trilobite fossil.

Kim helps Mr. Cycling-and-UFO Enthusiast find the perfect bracelet via a process of texting photos back and forth to his wife. He leaves, a couple of stories later, with a beautiful Maine tourmaline bracelet, boxed up with care, the tissue paper package festooned with multicolored ribbons. Kim delivers it to him with a flourish. The bracelet is a reflection of the beauty he sees in his wife and the value he places on her happiness. It reflects his love for her. She will have a reminder of that love every moment she is wearing her bracelet.

Kim sells jewelry that changes people’s lives. It’s amazing what a story and a special rock can do for the soul. •

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Sadia Crosby pulling up cages. *Photo by Anne Gabbianelli*





Sadia Crosby sifting through her oysters. *Photo courtesy of Jordan Moody*

## From the Coast to the Forest

# MEET SADIA CROSBY

BY ANNE GABBIANELLI

**W**ith little effort and pure driven enthusiasm, Sadia Crosby paddles to her moored boat in Robinhood Cove off Georgetown Island and motors back near shore to offer a lift. That lift gave me a front row seat to this spirited young woman's oyster farming venture and more on a late August evening.

The native of the Atlantic coast area east of Bath is one of nine sea farmers in the local co-op, the youngest at 26, and the only single female in the group. According to the Maine Aquaculture Association, in 2019, the Department of Marine Resources data suggested that 80 percent of LPA (limited purpose license) and license holders in Maine were male. Picking up on this, Sadia calls her business OystHERS. But it's more than a business.

"There is a caring aspect, a nurturing and I refer to them as my oyster babies," she shares with compassion in her voice.

About nine years ago Sadia enjoyed another New England coastline while attending college in Rhode Island, where she earned a degree in Environmental Science. During the summers, she worked with a landscaping company. After graduation, there were no jobs that caught her fancy.

"It wasn't until I was approached by a member of an oyster group to take on a position—I still don't really know what I was thinking. Sea farming came with a lot of self-education. I

read a lot and YouTube was nice because I am a visual learner. So, I just decided it sounded like a new adventure and I grabbed onto it," says the dynamic woman.

Sadia adds, "Talking with other farmers was the best source of info because the seasoned ones can help pick out your rookie mistakes or give you advice before they become much larger problems. Something as simple as choosing the best knots to tie your lines with can be of massive importance later on."

After getting her feet wet, so to speak, Sadia was ready to go into business. This opportunity came about courtesy of Georgetown Aquaculture LLC, co-founded by Robert "Pat" Burns, as a direct response to the negative effects of climate change on Georgetown Island's marine economy.

"Sadia comes from a lobstering family and knows her way around the working waterfront culture here, and she is very ambitious and hard working," he says.

Sadia took advantage of a low-interest loan to start her own farm. This seasonal business started in the summer of 2018 with seeds the size of a piece of grain secured in bags contained in 20 cages. Now Sadia has over 80 cages floating in Robinhood Cove with some 200,000 oysters growing at various stages. Sadia is quick to show a "market" oyster with a cup meaning more meat.



Sadia Crosby suited up while working with browntail moth traps.

*Photo courtesy of the University of Maine*



Sadia Crosby setting up a browntail moth trap. *Photo courtesy of Sarah Nickerson*

She adds, “These oysters are a big hit at local eateries managed by amazingly crafty women who have shown me lots of love and support as I get my business off the ground.”

Motoring in her hometown coastal waters, Sadia hooks on to a floating cage holding four bags and pulls the unit out of the water, up a specially made ramp onto the boat to reveal the “boat load” of OystHERS. She estimates these cages could weigh up to 300 pounds but there is no struggle here.

“I enjoy the physical side of things and there is a great spirit being on the water.” She adds with a chuckle, “Dad would never let me lobster with him because he always said he wanted his daughters to use their heads, not their bodies, so this is like my backwards way of being on the water.”

Sadia’s mom, Lisa, has even gotten in on the act.

“I’ve been able to help her a few times on the farm tending the oysters and I love it. We get a chance to connect and care for her oysters. It doesn’t get much better for a mom, even if I do come in all slimy and weatherworn at the end of the day! It’s been a challenge for her because she’s juggling so much, but she puts a lot of herself (and love) into the farm.”

Sadia’s drive for adventure comes as no surprise to her parents.

Lisa offers, “She was always ready to go, it didn’t matter where, she wanted to go with Dad in the truck. Hunting, fishing, ice fishing. Sadia was always curious and always exploring, and checking out things in the natural world.”

Angus, Sadia’s dad, chimes in, “When she was outside, she was always off doing her own thing.”

While embarking on her oyster farming career, Sadia was also working for a tree service business. She grew into the business as a laborer, licensed arborist and as the company’s Plant Health Care Coordinator.

“At the age of 23, I became the youngest master commercial pesticide applicator in the state of Maine,” she said. “After that first bad season of the browntail moth (BTM) for the mid-

coast area in 2017 and getting the rash several times myself, I knew we needed to look into treatment options.”

It is this unique knowledge that led Dr. Angela Mech of the University of Maine to offer Sadia an additional job beyond oyster farming and tree and pesticide service.

“She offered me a Research Assistantship through a grant looking at the effectiveness of biopesticides on BTM,” says Sadia, who is also pursuing a Master of Science in Entomology.

Mech calls her assistant an amazing person. “The entrepreneurialism and enthusiasm that she brought to UMaine has easily translated into her research, where her insights and questions have helped shape the focus of our work,” she says.

With the same passion as for raising oysters, Sadia is determined to find solutions to the menacing BTM problem, offering recommendations to the Maine Forest Service based on her knowledge and research thus far.

While grading her oysters, she shares, “The last good research about the moth is about 50 years old, and we still have much to learn about the moth’s behavioral patterns and cycles. Right now, it looks like the cycles are getting shorter.”

With weekdays consumed with studies and BTM research and weekends consumed with 12-to-14-hour days tending to her oysters, Sadia sports a sincere smile of gratitude.

“Everything that has happened and all the opportunities have always been at the right place and right time.”

As the sun approached the horizon and our evening came to a close, Sadia Crosby eagerly shared how she loves tackling multiple careers.

“I take great pride in the work I am doing in both fields and am fortunate to have two very appealing career pursuits that allow me to work in some of the most beautiful landscapes Maine has to offer, our forests and coasts.”

*Sadia Crosby and her OystHERS can be found on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/oysthersseafarm/>.*





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# On the Front Lines of Life

BY SHEILA D. GRANT



Amie Owen, Abigail McMahon, and Natalie Ridge.

**A**bigail McMahon, Amie Owen, and Natalie Ridge have more than one thing in common. For the past two years, these friends have been on the front lines of COVID-19 by providing public safety services, and they did it while becoming first time mothers. “We are kick-ass women doing it,” Abigail exclaimed. “We are over here in the pandemic, still working in a job that is physically strenuous and emotionally draining but also incredibly rewarding at the end of the day.” Harper, Ben, and Joshua, named in the order of their mothers respectively, were all born to first responder parents amid a worldwide pandemic that has taken over each of our lives.

These women, however, are no strangers to the stresses and demands of life on the front line, having worked in their fields for at least a decade. A pandemic and their third trimesters

did not slow these hardworking women down. They continued to serve, even if it was done so from the comfort of their own homes. Abigail, paramedic/firefighter with Yarmouth Fire Rescue, spent the two years prior to Harper’s birth teaching at Mid-Maine Technical Center. The third trimester of her pregnancy fell during the early months of COVID, March to May 2020, so teaching remotely fit well with her needs.

During her pregnancy with Ben, Amie, who has been a police officer for about 10 years, went out on light duty just one week before the COVID shutdowns in March 2020. Natalie, who is also paramedic/firefighter, shared a similar story. “I had gone out on light duty at the beginning of my third trimester, but COVID ramped up, so I ended up working remotely from home until I gave birth.” she said. Natalie spent her time up-



dating the department's standard operating guidelines and procedures. "The town had created a senior prescription program, and I was lead on that," she said. "I contacted all of the senior citizens and had people pick up their prescriptions. They were very thankful."

Their ability to continue in their field did not come without uncertainty and challenges. Exposure was a large concern. Abigail's husband, Mark, a paramedic/firefighter with the Augusta Fire Department, was not allowed at some of the appointments. She worried about him bringing the disease home from work, and whether he'd be allowed at the hospital for Harper's birth. The other women shared similar sentiments.

The women also feared losing their jobs, but not due to shutdowns. Amie recalled being pregnant with Ben, "I was getting to the point where I didn't know if I would legitimately be able to keep my job. I remember doing some research and realizing that across the country, women are losing their jobs simply because it's not safe for them to continue doing the jobs they were doing for the short time that they are pregnant." Amie said she is grateful that she never saw the days when being a woman was a hurdle to getting into law enforcement, "but we haven't caught up in terms of women's rights with their pregnancies."

The Cumberland Fire Department, who Natalie has worked for since 2008, recently became unionized. Natalie was placed as a steward and put in charge of creating the union contract that will go to negotiation. "I put in a maternity clause," she said, "In doing the research, there are no maternity clauses that I could find in any fire department contracts." These are some of the issues that women face in public service jobs. "It's getting better, but there are still very few of us. It is hard. We do have things that we have to overcome to get there," said Abigail.

Today, Abigail, Amie, and Natalie are all pregnant again with their second child. Even though the country is still battling the pandemic, the women have more knowledge of balancing life and work this time around. "This time is different, obviously, because I'm not sitting home

teaching from a screen," said Abigail who is expecting a baby boy in February. "It's funny to be back on the front line, especially with a pandemic." However, she said, she feels just as safe as she did at home. "We have the proper protective equipment, and our response mode had changed pretty significantly," Abigail explained. "When someone dials 9-1-1, the dispatchers ask way more questions, so we know what we're walking into."

Amie added that after having a newborn during COVID you have different expectations. "You are not necessarily going to have family over right away, *and that's okay*. We have a 1-year-old who loves family and friends and is just fine not having had that huge rush in the beginning." Although family visits were strained, Amie notes the comfort of sharing this experience with a spouse that understands the stress of public safety work. Support like this, during a beyond stressful time, was paramount for each of these women.

Natalie, who is expecting her second born in April, has begun going out on light duty, this time during her second trimester. "This time of my pregnancy is very different than last time," she continued. "There's been pushback with it, so it's been very frustrating. I would say more of the coworkers are annoyed that I'm pregnant because we're very short staffed."

Despite this, each of these women are proud of their service to their communities. Natalie expressed that the men and women in public safety, "are in it to help others and we enjoy being there, but there's a lot going on behind the doors that takes a lot out of you. I truly think the women in this field are very strong and great role models for younger girls." Amie agreed, "I feel really proud to be in a field where I'm at service to my community, and that we have this amazing opportunity to give so much of ourselves," she said. "I hope that it is something I pass on to my boys, a sense of community and a sense of service to my community." •

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# IVY FRIGNOCA, *Casco Baykeeper*

BY PAM FERRIS-OLSON

Ivy Frignoca peers inquisitively into the converted lobster cage. She's interested not in the chance it might contain a lobster, but to learn what data the Continuous Monitoring Station has recorded. It's one of three such scientific devices that Friends of Casco maintains in Casco Bay. Ivy is the nonprofit organization's Baykeeper. Ivy describes herself "as the 'Lorax' of the Bay, acting as the eyes, ears, and voice of Casco Bay." The Lorax, for those who are unfamiliar with the reference, is a character from the Dr. Seuss children's book of the same name. Written in 1971, the book is a tale about humans and how their actions can cause havoc to the environment.

In her capacity as Baykeeper, some of Ivy's time is spent aboard the R/V Joseph E. Payne, operated by Friends of Casco Bay. She and Friends of Casco Bay Research Associate Mike Doan are out on the bay assessing conditions several times a month from April through October. Her land-based duties involve working with a community of individuals, decision-makers, business owners, and others in collaborative ways to assure the health of Casco Bay.

Ivy feels at home around water. She grew up in northern New Jersey spending "as much time as possible on the water and at the shore." She remembers noticing that streams flowing through her hometown



*Top:* Casco Baykeeper Ivy Frignoca aboard Friends' research vessel, the *Joseph E. Payne*. Ivy is shown lowering a secchi disk into the water, a simple instrument used to measure water clarity. *Photo courtesy of Friends of Casco Bay*

*Bottom:* Casco Baykeeper Ivy Frignoca (left) and Staff Scientist Mike Doan (right) examine one of Friends' Continuous Monitoring Stations. The stations are made of modified lobster traps that house oceanographic instruments which take hourly measurements of multiple water quality parameters in Casco Bay. *Photo by Kevin Morris*



were stained different colors, the result of chemicals being released into the waterways. Ivy also remembers wondering if there was a link between these discharges and the occurrence of cancer among the local residents. Such things kindled her a desire to advocate for clean water.

As an undergraduate at the University of Vermont, Ivy was able to design a major in such a way that it would prepare her to “translate science into information people could understand to improve water quality.” She attended law school as a way to gain the tools she would need to mount legal campaigns to protect water quality. Eventually, she became a senior attorney at the Conservation Law Foundation.

The foundation is a New England nonprofit institution that uses “the law, science, and the market to create solutions that preserve our natural resources, build healthy communities, and sustain a vibrant economy.” During her time at the Conservation Law Foundation, Ivy had the opportunity to collaborate with Joe Payne, the namesake of Friends of Casco Bay’s research vessel, and the original Baykeeper for the organization. Six years ago, Ivy accepted her current job with the South Portland-based Friends of Casco Bay, and this is how she came to speak for the Casco Bay.

At a glance, most people are likely to see Casco Bay as a sparkling blue body of water. However, Ivy knows from her monitoring equipment and reports by those who spend time on, in, or near the water, that the bay faces many health threats and challenges. These threats are largely the result of human activity such as oil spills, trash, storm water discharge, invasive species, and the consequences of a changing climate. One of the most insidious forms of trash is plastic. Ivy notes that plastics kills marine life in a variety of ways. When fish and shellfish inadvertently consume tiny plastic particles, the particles are incorporated into the animals’ tissues. This plastic is eventually passed on to humans when they dine upon the sea creatures.

Other threats to the bay waters come from the growth of toxic algae, invasion of green crabs, and changes in its temperature, salinity, and PH. Changing



Casco Baykeeper Ivy Frignoca presents water quality data from Friends’ Continuous Monitoring Stations at an educational event. *Photo courtesy of Friends of Casco Bay*

## HOW YOU CAN HELP PROTECT CASCO BAY

- **Be responsible.** Casco Bay is a valuable resource. It enhances our well-being and economy and offers many recreational opportunities. The bay deserves our help to protect it. Report any condition you believe threatens the bay or adjacent coastline.
- **Report oil spills.** Maine Department of Environmental Protection’s Oil Spill Hotline is (800) 482-0777.
- **Document nuisances.** Take photos. Report and share evidence of nuisances such as algal blooms, plastic pollution, and dead or dying marine life.
- **Report injured, stranded or dead marine mammals** to Marine Mammals of Maine’s hotline at 800-532-9551.
- **Become a Water Reporter.** This volunteer citizen network uses and shares photographs that help document change and various conditions on and around Casco Bay. Learn more about the free program at <http://www.cascobay.org/our-work/community-engagement/water-reporter>.
- **Contact** Friends of Casco Bay office at (207) 799-8574 or Ivy at [keeper@cascobay.org](mailto:keeper@cascobay.org).

temperature is causing Casco Bay to become more acidic. The result is that it is more difficult for shellfish to grow protective shells. Another consequence, noticed by scientists and fishermen alike, is the geographic shifts in fish populations. For example, lobsters are moving northward or into deeper colder waters while black sea bass, a fish that has previously inhabited more southerly waters, has been showing up with greater frequency in Maine coastal waters.

Ivy and the staff at Friends of Casco Bay are constantly learning about these

changes and how these impact the bay. She says her job requires change, too. She has to be prepared to take into account “the best available scientific projections of future conditions. For example, I now know to consider solutions that work with expected levels of sea level rise.”

As Baykeeper, Ivy loves the time she spends on the bay, and she enjoys working with colleagues to address the issues challenging the bay and work together to seek solutions. She is frustrated when politics get in the way.





Casco Baykeeper Ivy Frignoca speaks with local news crews about the impacts of excess nitrogen in Casco Bay.  
*Photo courtesy of Friends of Casco Bay*

“Ensuring clean and healthy marine waters now and into the future should be something we can all agree on and work together to achieve.”

Her hope is that the things she does as Baykeeper will lead to a bay that is better adapted to deal with the consequences of climate change.

Even when Ivy isn't working, she enjoys spending time on the bay. She particularly enjoys spending time around Orr's and Bailey islands. Even though Ivy enjoys indoor pursuits such as cooking, baking, and reading, she is best described as a person who relishes time spent outdoors. Ivy likes to bike, hike

with her daughter, and explore Maine's geology and flora and fauna. Come winter, she delights in cross-country skiing or a run down the slopes on alpine skis. She admits that her passion is skiing the moguls.

“It's like ballet,” she said. “I get in there and just dance.” •

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# Storyteller of Life

## *Erin Ovalle's Journey from Student to Production Company Owner*

BY MARY FRANCES BARSTOW

**E**rin Ovalle is a woman of many talents. She is mastering the art of being a business owner, entrepreneur, wife, and mother. Her career began shortly after graduating college and it is those experiences that have helped her create her company that highlights the story of the hardworking, beautiful people of Maine.

**MARY:**

So, tell me about you. Now, you're originally from Massachusetts and then moved to Maine?

**ERIN:**

No, my journey is long. I grew up in Massachusetts until I was 10, and then my family moved to Hudson, New Hampshire. In my first year of college, I went to George Mason University, and then two weeks into my freshman year, 9/11 hit, so it was pretty difficult being in the DC area. I ended up transferring and graduating from Gordon College on the North Shore.

**MARY:**

What was your journey after college like?

**ERIN:**

The day after I graduated, I was on a plane to Charleston, Illinois. I was a paid intern for PBS at the time. They had this special program you could apply for, and I got in. You were the anchor, reporter, photographer and the director for that summer, so that's how I kind of got my resume tape ready... Because I didn't study broadcast journalism. I had interned at WMUR in New Hampshire because I was a communications major. One day they said, "You look like a news anchor," and I was like, "Oh, cool. Really?" So, they had me read the news just for fun. They said I was really good, so I applied for that program in Illinois. Only fifteen people were considered, and I got accepted. That was the beginning of my TV career. From there, I got a job, my first real TV job, in Traverse City, Michigan. I was a one-woman band doing my shooting, editing, and reporting. And about two years after that, I got a job in Pensacola, Florida, so I moved there.

**MARY:**

You really had to commit to a continued journey of travel.

**ERIN:**

It was not easy.

**MARY:**

No, that's very difficult.

**ERIN:**

For many reasons. I was a reporter, and then they promoted me to the weekend anchor job, which was awesome because they were a pretty big market. I think they were in the top sixty. I was twenty-four when I was a weekend anchor. I was just about to be promoted to the morning show, which was my dream, and my dad in Boston called. He had been given six months to live. He had tonsil cancer that had metastasized to his bones. He ended up passing almost six months to the day after that. But in an effort to get home closer to him, I just applied for every job near him. That was in 2008, going into 2009, and it was not the best time to be looking for a job.

**MARY:**

Right.

**ERIN:**

I saw an opening at Channel 13 in Portland, and it was the same parent company that I worked for. They hired me over the phone. I packed my U-Haul and I drove to Portland to be closer to my dad. He ended up dying three months after I moved to Portland, but at least I was there for that...Then I got promoted to the morning show on Channel 13. So that was the beginning of my forever journey in Maine.

**MARY:**

Wow. So, you did the morning show and now you have your own production company.

**ERIN:**

I do, yes. I was the morning anchor at 13, then I got a better offer at Channel 8. I was the morning anchor there for five years, and after that contract I started Maine Life Media in 2016.





**MARY:**

Okay. So in your production company, you do everything. You report it, you film it, and then you sell it to the different markets? Is that how it works?

**ERIN:**

I sell it to sponsors and, yes, distribution partners.

**MARY:**

Nice. Good for you. So, you're an entrepreneur as well.

**ERIN:**

Well, it's funny. My dad was, and I never thought of myself as one, obviously when you're younger and you're just climbing the ladder in the news world and then I just had his itch, I think.

**MARY:**

It sounds like a true passion you have for the news.

**ERIN:**

Yeah. Well, the news, as you know, is not the most positive environment.

**MARY:**

No so much today.

**ERIN:**

I got burnt out.

**MARY:**

Then you met somebody and got married?

**ERIN:**

Yes, I'm married. I got married almost two years ago. Both of us are in our mid to late thirties. So that is really what I would say probably kept me in Maine, I think. I didn't really know where my life was going to be. Maine Life Media was becoming successful. I could have moved back to New Hampshire or Boston and still produced a bunch of my shows, but I'm very thankful that my Maine life is happening. It's coming full circle.

**MARY:**

Oh, isn't that wonderful. So, you met your husband in Maine?

**ERIN:**

Yes. He's from Brewer.

**MARY:**

Now, how are you able to take care of a nine-month-old, plus run this company? How do you do all that?

**ERIN:**

My in-laws are awesome. They just retired the month before COVID hit. Mine is the only grandchild in Maine, so they just adore coming down and helping out when I'm filming. I'm so grateful for that. I try to take Fridays to be available for him because last night, for instance, I filmed until 9:00 and I didn't see him all day. So, I try to make up for that on Fridays and the weekends.

**MARY:**

Wonderful. Now what kind of stories do you look for? What has been your most interesting, would you say?

**ERIN:**

Oh, my most interesting story, that's such a hard question because every time I think I meet somebody that's the most interesting, I say, "This is going to be the best show." And then a week or two later, I meet another. For instance, a few weeks ago we were on Jo-mary Island in the middle of the north Maine woods, not a soul in sight for miles. And here I am just like, "Okay now, who knew this was here? Right before that I was interviewing the Wabanaki tribe. My job takes me everywhere. Maine is just full of interesting people.

**MARY:**

What do you see the future for you?

**ERIN:**

Oh boy. There's a lot going on right now, which is exciting. I recently had a conversation with a network in Boston who saw my shows.

**MARY:**

You must have been very pleased all your work was being recognized.

**ERIN:**

I grew up watching them. To get a phone call from them, saying they like my lifestyle content. I say I'm a lifestyle storyteller. I focus on lodging, dining activities, business, real estate, craft brewing and distilling. I think there aren't a lot of independent producers like me who can have the flexibility and freedom to go out and tell the stories that aren't dictated by the news station. It's hard to do this, there aren't a lot of us.

**MARY:**

Right, that's not easy to do and you need the right equipment. You need all the tools to make it happen.

**ERIN:**

I'd say my biggest partnership right now is with WCSH. They are a wonderful partner because they have such a loyal following. For many years Bill Green had the time slot that I'm currently in and he really built such a captive audience. I really do credit him for being such an anchor in the lifestyle storytelling space, just because people have grown to expect that kind of content. I'm very different than Bill, but it's still my perspective on Maine and introducing viewers to Mainers. So that's my anchor, really, is WCSH. And then from there I've been able to expand to New England Sports Network and I'll be working with a woman in the Coastal Carolinas to do some series down there.

**MARY:**

Good for you. That is just wonderful. And you never know, you'll be going national before you know it.

**ERIN:**

I'm working on it.



MARY:

So let me ask you, you strike me as extraordinarily ambitious. Are you going to go across the country, do these stories and sell them to the different stations?

ERIN:

I'm currently working with another Maine partner, Rory Strunk he owns O'Maine Studios. He and I are currently working on figuring out the logistics for our partnership, the legality of it. We are pitching four different TV shows to the national regional networks as well.

MARY:

Good to hear.

ERIN:

I have something else up my sleeve, I can't talk about yet, but it's just another thing that came about. This is a really cool place to be in. We are trying to expand whether they're all Maine shows or whether I take my travel show on the road, everything's kind of on the table right now.

MARY:

It's truly sounds like your on a path to national recognition.

ERIN:

Thanks.

MARY:

Entrepreneurs are a special breed. Your path seems laid before you.

ERIN:

You know it's a hustle.

MARY:

It is. It sounds so rewarding, to have your own thing and create it, it's like a great artwork that you put together. I'm so proud of you, girl, I really am.

ERIN:

Thank you. •

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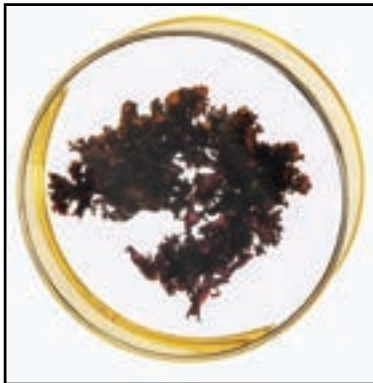
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Carolyn shines in front of the camera.  
*Susan Costa Photography*



# Carolyn Brady

## MISS MAINE WITH A MISSION

BY ALISHA GOSLIN

While watching on TV as Deshauna Barber of Georgia won the crown of Miss USA back in 2016, Carolyn Brady hatched the idea of going into pageantry herself. She was in her second year at Bowdoin College and thought that competing in a pageant might help her to make some new friends off campus.

When she first told her parents about this plan, her father was completely on board, but her mother? That was a totally different story.

“My mother is a feminist, and only saw the pageant world as something women do when they have nothing else to offer the world,” Carolyn says.

“And as for the swimsuit competition? My grandmother would say that the women were walking around in their bra and panties on television!”

It wasn't something she supported, and it caused quite a domestic riff.

“Dad saw it from the other side. He presented it to mom like this: I had been involved in Girl Scouts since I was six years old, so I had the service platform side of it down. He told her pageantry motivated girls all across the country.” But her mom couldn't get past the swimsuit competition. “My mom says that Miss America (pageant association) met her halfway when they got rid of the swimsuit competition, so they ended up on the same page,” laughs Carolyn.

She entered her first pageant with one goal of winning Miss Congeniality. “That means that I have made some friends, right? And I won Miss Congeniality and tried to exit the stage, and they're like, no sweetie, you can't do that. We're not done yet. You've actually made it into the top ten.”

Carolyn placed fourth in that competition, but she was far from done with the pageant world. A former Miss Maine from the Miss America pageant was in the crowd and saw that Carolyn played the violin and was part of a social impact initiative. She asked Carolyn if she would join their association. For the next two years Carolyn competed in several other pageants. In her senior

year of college, she decided to compete for Miss Maine.

“The Miss Maines before myself were natives of the state, and most had a pageant background. I didn't. While they had their families with them at the shows, I was asking people from my college or my spin class to come along and help me. It was very Maine made, so to speak.” Carolyn explains.

Carolyn won Miss Maine on June 22, 2019. She is the first Black woman to hold this title in the pageant's 85-year history. She became the Americorp ambassador for Maine. It was an easy shift for her, and she attributes this to her younger years as a Girl Scout. When the pandemic hit, she was thrust into unknown territory with her state crowned title. But she easily made it work. “I fell right into it, because, what greater a time to serve than during a global pandemic.”

Everything moved to virtual during this time. “I was able to reach parts of the state that I wouldn't have been able to otherwise, since I did still have a full-time job, as well. So sometimes I was reading virtually to a group of kids in Blue Hill, or all the way up in Aroostook County, places that I wouldn't have been able to get to. So, it really expanded the horizon of what I was able to do.”

She was the first Miss Maine to hold the title for two years because no pageant was held in 2020. On June 19, 2021, Carolyn handed over the title to the new Miss Maine, Mariah Larocque.

Carolyn had been hoping to travel with the Peace Corps. She wanted some real-world experience with humanitarian emergencies and refugee resettlement before furthering her education but traveling during a global pandemic just is not an option.

Asked what the future holds, Carolyn says, “Between 24-year-old Carolyn and 65-year-old Carolyn, at 65 I would love to be in the United Nations having larger oversight of the global humanitarian issues that 24-year-old Carolyn is helping with now.”



Carolyn wearing the Miss Maine Crown.

*Matt Boyd Photography*



Jodie York,  
general manager of the Portland Fish Exchange.



Kimberly Gates,  
Bath Area Food Bank executive director.



Mary Hudson,  
MCFA's fisheries program director.

# *Saving Jobs and Fighting Hunger,* **ONE FISH AT A TIME**

BY SUSAN OLCOTT

**M**ary, Jodie, Kimberly. Three women connecting fish, fishermen and Mainers facing food insecurity. Those connections have now turned 210,000 pounds of fish into over 280,000 meals for over 60 recipient groups. These groups range from schools to food banks and community groups, like the Wabanaki REACH and the New England Arab American Organization, from Kennebunkport to Millinocket.

The numbers are impressive, but they don't tell the story. The story is about meeting needs. These three women, along with a complex web of other community partners, have pulled together to serve the needs of Maine communities during the pandemic. But they aren't stopping there.

The program is Fishermen Feeding Mainers (FFM) and the organization behind it is Maine Coast Fishermen's Association (MCFA). That's where Mary comes in. Mary Hudson is MCFA's Fisheries Program director. MCFA is a local non-profit that promotes sustainable fishing practices in the Gulf of Maine and supports small boat fishermen and waterfront communities. Mary works with fishermen along the Maine coast to promote sustainable fishing practices that support them as well as coastal communities and the ecosystems in the Gulf of Maine. FFM addresses all these goals – albeit in a new way for the organization.

“Before the pandemic, MCFA hadn't been involved in addressing hunger insecurity,” says Mary. “But, when the prices of seafood fell to the point that the fishermen we work with no longer could even afford to go fishing, we thought outside the box.” That box included some of the usual players on



the Portland waterfront—those that make up the complex seafood supply chain that links boat to plate. In an oversimplified way, a fisherman sells to a buyer who then sends it to a processor who then sells it to a consumer or a restaurant.

One of the primary links in the “seafood supply chain” is the Portland Fish Exchange. That’s where Jodie comes in. Jodie York took over as the General Manager at the Exchange in May of 2020—not an easy or simple time to work in the seafood industry. The Portland Fish Exchange is a facility on the Portland waterfront where boats can off-load and sort fish. It also provides a platform for buyers from Maine to New York to purchase fish.

On a typical Monday, Jodie welcomes Mary in to bid on the fish that landed that morning. Mary is hoping to bid with a price that is high enough to fairly compensate the fishermen she works with, but also can provide ample meals for the clients for which she coordinates weekly deliveries of fresh seafood. “It’s really a seamless program,” says Jodie. “We provide the platform, and someone picks up the fish and out the door it goes.” The program has also provided a more predictable and stable market for fishermen that has resulted in boats deciding to land in Portland that previously had been landing elsewhere. “Mary has been a great asset for us in terms of encouraging vessels to land here,” she adds. “For sure we have several vessels that wouldn’t have landed here without that encouragement.”

One of the first clients to receive some of the fish that Mary bought at Jodie’s auction, was Kimberly. Kimberly Gates is the Executive Director at the Bath Area Food Bank. The food bank includes a pantry and a soup kitchen that typically serve about 200 families per month. During the pandemic, that number increased to over 500. At the peak of this increase, Kimberly met with Mary, and they coordinated to receive fish through the nascent FFM program. That was part of a larger partnership with the Good Shepherd Food Bank, an area non-profit dedicated to getting nutritious food to those in need throughout Maine. They have the capacity to receive and store the donated fish for distribution to smaller community food banks. The donations have been very popular so far. “Without Maine Coast Fishermen’s Association, we would never have had free seafood,” says Kimberly. We haven’t been able to offer Maine seafood to our clients for the last 20 years because the cost has been too high. We had a woman who came in at the start of the pandemic. We gave her toilet paper and haddock and she cried because she was so happy,” she added.

Fast forward nearly a year and a half and Kimberly was the first to order the newly introduced Maine Coast Monkfish Stew, a value-added product created through a collaboration between MCFA and Hurricane Soup Company in Greene, Maine. The stew utilizes locally caught monkfish, an admittedly ugly and often unrecognized species that can be diffi-

“When the prices of seafood fell to the point that the fishermen we work with no longer could even afford to go fishing, we thought outside the box.”

cult to market but is quite delicious. The idea behind the stew is not only to provide a market for this fish, but also to create a revenue stream that will support the FFM program.

Initially the Fishermen Feeding Mainers program was funded by a combination of great running and individual donations. That totaled over \$1 million dollars - an impressive expression of the generosity of the community to support such an effort. At this point, the interest in the program continues to grow as more schools, food banks and community groups want to participate—in addition to the already-existing partnerships. “The monkfish stew is a way to, once again, address two needs—get a fair price for the fishermen and keep this program going. “One thing about monkfish is that it’s a sustainably harvested fish that yields a lot of meat as compared to other Gulf of Maine species. It’s also a species that isn’t familiar to many people and they might not otherwise try it. So, by making a soup, we can get a lot of value from the catch at a price point that is meaningful to the fisherman, helps us support this program, and introduces monkfish to new audiences,” says Mary.

On a blustery day ahead of a Nor’easter, Kimberley passed out the first bags of frozen Maine Coast Monkfish Stew to its clients. The weather was perfect for a hearty seafood stew, to be sure, but the question was whether people would like it. The initial feedback suggests that they do. “I would order a cup of it at a restaurant,” said one client. “It’s delicious and flavorful,” said another.

From here, the goal is to continue these partnerships and to build upon them. Jodie will be continuing to bring the fish in from the boats to the Portland Fish Exchange. Mary will be continuing to bid on and buy those fish. And Kimberly will be continuing to serve it to Bath Area Food Bank clients as well as hand it out with their grocery order both as filets and as soup. And, this fall, MCFA will be marketing Maine Coast Monkfish Stew to support the Fishermen Feeding Mainers program. To learn more or donate to this program, visit: [www.maineoastfishermen.org](http://www.maineoastfishermen.org). And watch for the launch of the stew on their Instagram account: @mainecoastfishermen. •



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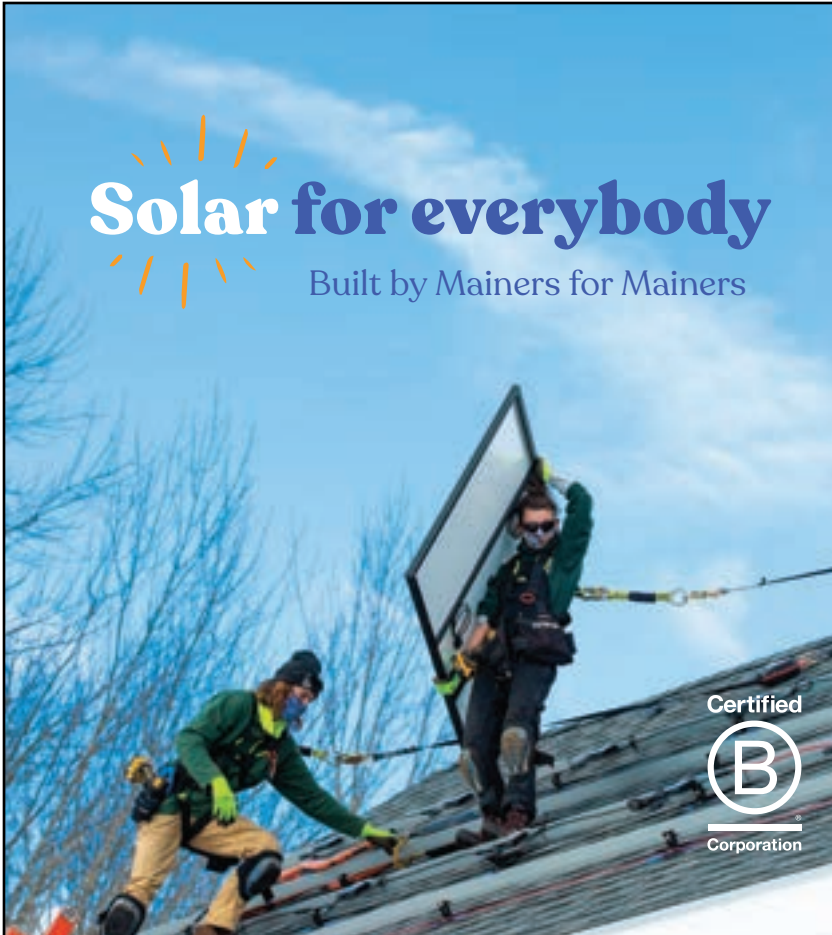


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# *The Making of a* MAINE MEDICINE WOMAN

BY TERESA PICCARI

She may have started swimming competitively at age 6 and breaking state records by 8, but don't expect Cape Elizabeth native Whitney Rockwell to dwell on the sport in which she qualified for the US Olympics, earned All American status and was inducted into the Maine Swimming and Diving Hall of Fame. Today, her life looks really different.


She describes it as an unconventional life, outside of the status quo, in which she has found purpose in being of service and facilitating community. She notes that there is an element of being more courageous and daring. "I taught myself to be that way," explained the 37-year-old medicine woman, who has lived largely out of the states for the past six years, training with various shamans around the globe.

Swimming got her a four-year scholarship to University of California at Berkeley. From there, she did a 10-year stint in New York City, where she translated her art history and studio arts studies (including painting and sculpting) to work in the fashion and interior design industries.

But a seed had been planted during her college years, that eventually changed the trajectory of her life. Each semester she opted to take an elective that introduced her to alternative wellness classes, including yoga and meditation.

While working in NY she began teaching herself astrology, and studied the history of tarot with a curator from the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

"I took virtually every class possible under the



Whitney enjoying the view  
in Vilcabamba Ecuador.

Photo by Angela Costa



Top: Whitney in Maine. Photo by Jen Waite Bottom: Whitney was an invited guest to a sacred ceremony in Peru.

spiritual umbrella,” she recalled. “I had the nice apartment and the boyfriend” who worked for a pharmaceutical hedge fund, but then things changed. “I stopped going out with my friends and my interests shifted.”

She was simultaneously searching for something but not necessarily trusting what she was exploring. “I was trying to make sense of something. I wanted to be moved. There were no highs or lows. I kept on experiencing the same old, same old.” However, she was skeptical of the new modalities and topics she was learning about,

as it is not her nature to believe something unless it can be proven through personal experience.

“One of my friends told me once, the opposite of courage is not cowardliness, it’s living a too-comfortable life. Where you get so comfortable, it becomes uncomfortable. And that’s where I think I was right before I embarked on this journey. I was so comfortable, I had everything I wanted, but it was so uncomfortable, I didn’t want it. I felt ungrateful for not wanting it,” she explained.

“It was a crisis for sure. I had this foot injury, and I literally couldn’t walk. And it was unexplainable. One heel started and then the other heel, and I literally couldn’t walk. It was telling me ‘You’re on the wrong path.’” That would be the shamanic meaning of it. There were all these weird things happening, I couldn’t make sense of. I was having heart palpitations, my heart was out of alignment,” said Whitney.

She recalled there didn’t seem to be a lot of places to find support. After much digging, she unearthed an article about shamanism in Ecuador in *National Geographic* magazine. And that changed everything.

### A WHOLE NEW WORLD

Whitney found a spiritual home in shamanism, which she describes as a Western word describing the ever-evolving connection with nature and learning and understanding the language of nature, during that initial trip to Ecuador. That trip kicked off her 8-year nomadic lifestyle and study of diverse shamanism traditions.

“I feel it’s important to be honest and vulnerable with your path, your story, and it can inspire others.” When asked about the transformation she underwent and if she were a wounded healer, Whitney noted, “I think that’s always the case in these situations where there is going through darkness and pain, the sorrow and sadness to birth the shaman or healer, or whatever you want to call it.”

“This has been my path for many, many years. I did it full time, even during COVID, in ceremony every other day. Very intense training with Samer (Mouawad),” she said of the shaman with whom she trained and established Samadi Healing, a retreat center in Peru’s Sacred Valley, at the base of the Inca Trail in the Andes last year.

“There’s such joy seeing people come in, and I don’t want to say broken, but really in need of help, and not to empathize but to hold their hand. To really be a part of their journey, which is so satisfying at the end of the week. To see them in a completely different way, shining with a twinkle in their eye,” Whitney said of the ceremonies and retreats offered at Samadi (Sanskrit for ‘a deep concentration, or ecstatic state, where one achieves the identity of soul and spirit’) healing, which attracts clients from all over the world.

The center offers transformative experiences through use of the San Pedro cactus, a native medicinal plant. Thousands of years ago, explained Whitney, two shamans combined certain leaves with a certain vine that activates the pineal gland, releasing a naturally-occurring chemical that is typically released when we sleep, are born, and die.

“It’s just a tea. I could open my eyes and have a normal conversation. It’s not like being under the influence whatsoever. You can still have a conversation. You know what’s going on but there’s an invi-





Whitney on the Inca Trail, Peru. *Photo by Anna Petrova*

tability of a meeting of the self which happens that is very powerful,” said the medicine woman.

It is used to treat a broad range of problems, including addictions, depression, emotional, and existential issues.

### THE RETURN

Whitney was interviewed remotely while in Laguna Beach, CA, after she returned to the states from Peru, in July. She was readying to return home to Maine in early October.

“Things here are changing and the attitude toward what I do is becoming more acceptable. Especially in Los Angeles, it’s very common, people seek it out,” she said.

The medicine woman expects to return to Peru a couple times each year to lead retreats. But she is now at work trying to put together healing experiences to be offered remotely and around the country with others in her expansive network, cultivated during her extensive travels and living around the world, including diverse European countries, Mexico, Bali, and Thailand, in addition to Peru. If she were to create a bricks-and-mortar center in the United States, it would be in Maine, or another spot in New England, she noted.

She is in a period of transition. “This past year became more difficult with travel and restrictions. It makes you rethink your life.” Being stateside for a long stretch for the first time in nearly a decade, she is investigating and exploring, she said. “It has been about re-finding my love for my own place.

“I really have grown to respect everything about the United States,” she said, noting political unrest and civil rights problems



Whitney making friends with the local wildlife. *Photo by W. Rockwell*

in places including Peru. “Being back here I feel very blessed to be American. After you see how different parts of the world operate, you realize how fortunate you are to be born here and to be able to come back here, especially at a time like this.”

Connect with Whitney at [whitneyrockwell@gmail.com](mailto:whitneyrockwell@gmail.com).



Images courtesy of Maine Women Writers Collection, University of New England

Dorothy Healy and Grace Dow, founders of the Maine Women Writers Collection, with Westbrook Junior College students, ca. 1965.

# PRESERVING WOMEN'S VOICES: *The Maine Women Writers Collection at UNE*

BY ELIZABETH DEWOLFE, Ph.D.

In 1959, Westbrook Junior College literature professor Grace A. Dow (1901-1995) had an inspired idea. Long before the rise of formal programs in women's studies, or the inclusion of more than a handful of women authors in literature courses, or the incorporation of women's lives as part of American history curriculums, Dow, together with English professor Dorothy M. Healy (1904-1990), saw how Maine women's writing was in danger of being lost. They resolved to do what others had not, to take women's writing seriously and to value, and collect for future generations, the literary works of Maine women.

The Maine Women Writers Collection (MWWC) began with a dream to preserve Maine women's writing and a \$400 budget. Today, the MWWC is one of the country's most important collections documenting women's experiences and is the premier collection of works by and about Maine women. Housed at the library of the University of New England's Portland Campus (the former Westbrook Junior College), the collection today numbers nearly 10,000 items, with works representing women writers of Maine,

Dawnland, the traditional territory of the Wabanaki people, and Northern New England.

Dr. Jennifer Tuttle, UNE Professor of English and Director of the Maine Women Writers Collection, describes the mission as one to collect, preserve, and keep the works safe for posterity. Tuttle notes: "We collect the work of authors and creators who identify as female, femme, transfeminine, or non-binary, and include both published and unpublished material such as letters, photographs, diaries, memorabilia, artwork, and other forms of creative expression." The collection is particularly strong in nature writing, women's education, children's literature, and 19th and 20th century writing, particularly works of prose. Researchers find particular interest in the papers of Josephine Diebitsch Peary (wife of Arctic explorer Admiral Robert E. Peary) and her Arctic-born daughter, Marie Anighito Peary. The May Sarton Collection and the papers of Sarah Orne Jewett, which includes some of her earliest writing, and even her childhood porridge bowl, also draw frequent scholarly attention.

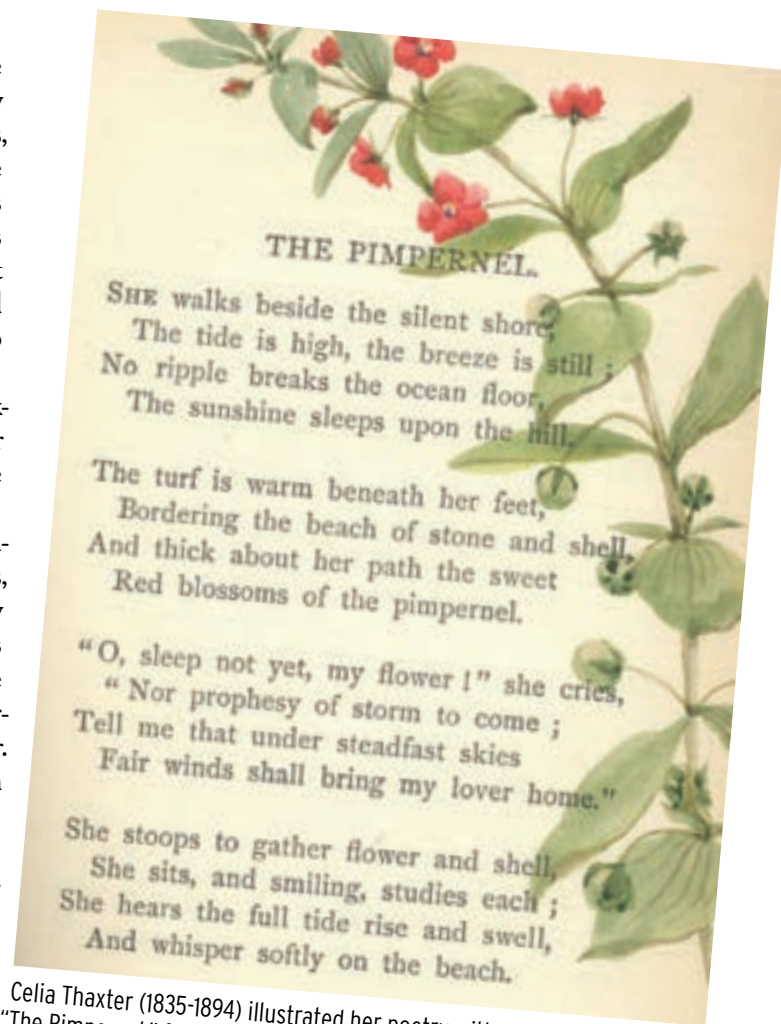


In addition to the well-known women writers represented, the archive also houses the papers of authors little remembered today and those whose writing was private, such as that kept in diaries, day books, or calendars. Curator Sarah Baker, who joined the MWWC in July, is particularly inspired by private writing. Items like women's personal calendars, she explains, are "classified as ordinary or everyday items but are actually extraordinary in what they reveal about the person and their times." The director and curator work collaboratively to identify new areas to collect and to make the collection as representative and inclusive as possible.

Dr. Tuttle noted that, "we have been actively working on expanding our poetry holdings, for example, and on giving greater representation to Native women, Black women, and others whose voices deserve attention, care, and amplification."

The collection reaches beyond what most think of as traditional writing. For example, the archive actively collects artist's books, which Dr. Tuttle describes as "an innovative genre that is not only an important art form but also an accessible way to engage students in the archive." Many of these artistic works encompass multiple themes. Book artist Martha A. Hall (1949-2003) created several powerful pieces in response to her treatment for breast cancer. These are frequently studied by students interested in the health care system, art, patients' narratives, or women's health.

Engaging an audience and making the collection accessible are key values of the MWWC mission. MWWC staff work with faculty to bring items into UNE classrooms, connecting students directly to Maine's rich writing and creative traditions. Maine women writers address a wide array of subjects, providing material for undergraduate classes in Native American Studies, Narrative Medicine, The Painted Book, College Women, and Writing and Women's Health, as well for graduate courses in social work, to name just a few. High school and area college students come to the collection, as do faculty and teachers who want to incorporate original materials into their classes. Academic researchers visit as well as artists, genealogists, local historians, and community members.

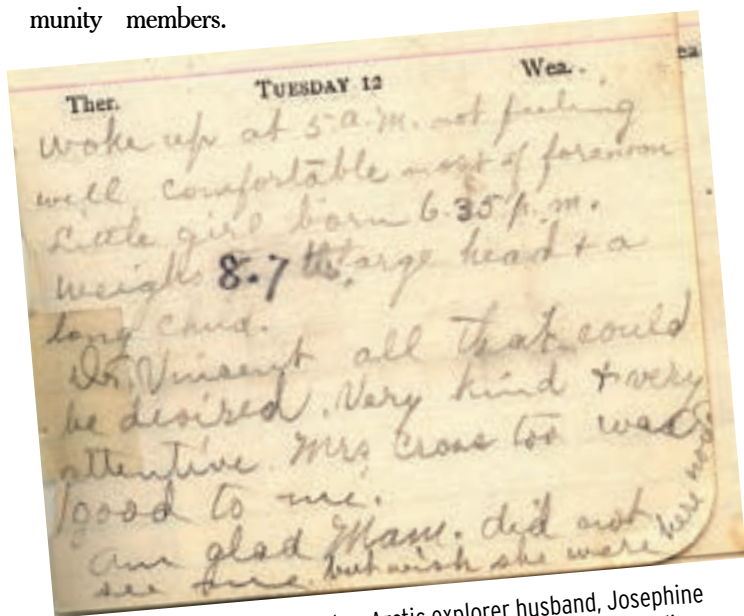


Celia Thaxter (1835-1894) illustrated her poetry with watercolor sketches. "The Pimpernel," from *The Poems of Celia Thaxter*, 1883.

Digitization has increased the reach of the collection, with items such as the Peary Diaries available online.

Open access to the collection is vital for studying the material within and creating new knowledge on women's experiences. The collection hosts several public and academic events which present an opportunity to showcase the holdings, share new knowledge, and amplify the voices of women writers. The annual Donna M. Loring Lecture—a free event open to the public—highlights Native American or aboriginal issues, Indigenous rights, and topics of civil rights, fairness, and equity, particularly as they overlap with the concerns of tribal peoples. Research grants provide scholars—both academic and independent—with funding to visit the archive. Creative Fellowships offer support for non-academic projects which might include finding inspiration in the collection for plays, works of fiction, artwork, or other endeavors. Curator Sarah Baker welcomes anyone who wishes to visit, noting that there's no need to hold certain credentials or have a project in mind—all are welcome to make an appointment to visit and simply explore.

The quest to save women's writing—in all its forms and from a wide diversity of creators—is ongoing. Women's writing and creative expression has been for far too long left out of the historical record, not taken seriously or valued by those who decide what to preserve in an archive or what to include in a literature or history or art course. Grace Dow and Dorothy Healy understood in 1959 the consequences of women's invisibility, and six



In Northwest Greenland with her Arctic explorer husband, Josephine Diebitsch Peary records the birth of her daughter, Marie, in her diary, September 12, 1893.

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Maine Women Writers Collection Curator, Sarah Baker.



Director of the Maine Women Writers Collection, Dr. Jennifer Tuttle.

decades later, the work continues in order to celebrate Maine women, their lives, and their creative endeavors, to document their myriad cultural, historical, and literary contributions, and ultimately, as Professor Tuttle notes, “to render a more accurate and inclusive vision of the world.”

For Curator Sarah Baker the Maine Women Writers Collection is the vanguard of this mission “to make sure we bring women’s writing back into the conversation. Just because it’s 2021 doesn’t mean everything has changed. Having a collection like this is a constant reminder that women’s voices are valuable.”

*To learn more about the collections or to contact the curator, see [www.une.edu/mw\\_wc](http://www.une.edu/mw_wc). Digitized items are available on DUNE (digital UNE) at [https://dune.une.edu/mw\\_wc/](https://dune.une.edu/mw_wc/).*



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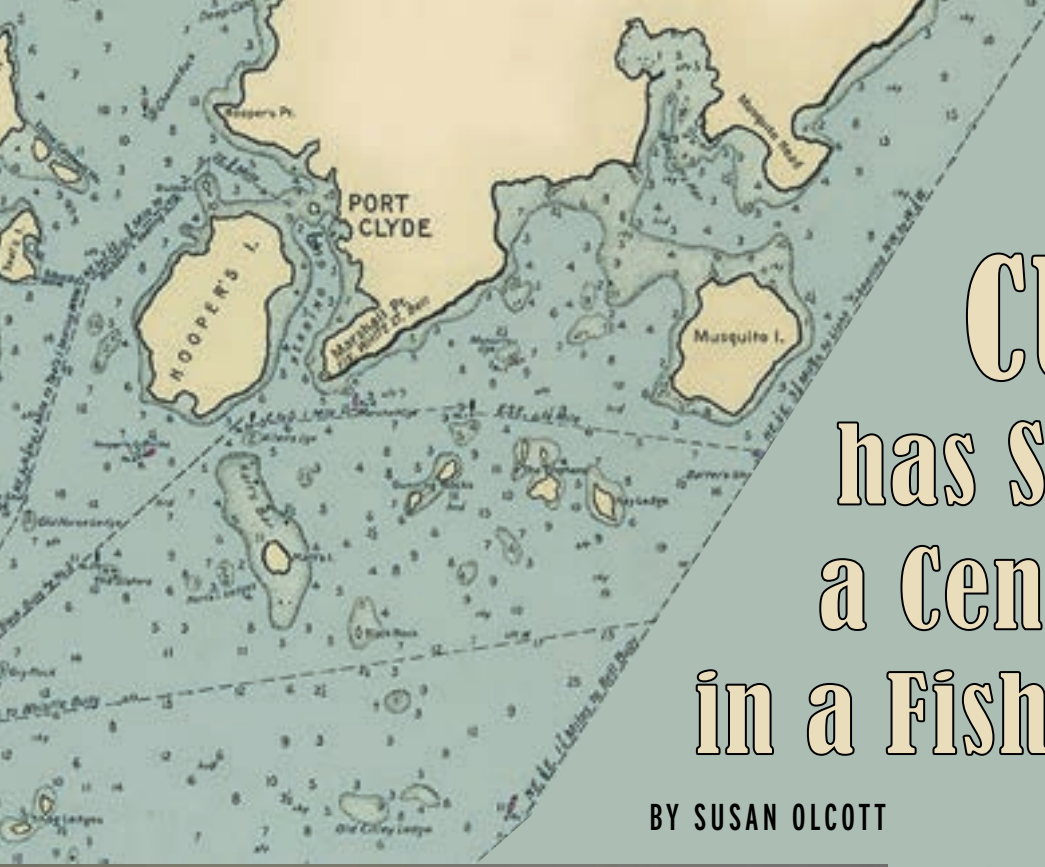
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# EVA CUSHMAN

## has Seen Almost a Century of Life in a Fishing Village

BY SUSAN OLCOTT



Eva Cushman, 97, matriarch of the oldest fishing family in Port Clyde. Photo by Scott Sell

**T**here was always something on the table. I'm proud of that," says Eva Cushman, matriarch of the oldest fishing family in Port Clyde, Maine. She wasn't just a fisherman's wife—she participated directly in the work. And there was always work to be done. Over the 97 years of her life, Eva has knit lobster trap heads, snipped off the heads of sardines, and worked in the town store. On top of that, she grew bushels of potatoes and other vegetables in the family garden, her seven children helping her haul water while her husband was out fishing. He did everything from dragging to clamming, lobstering, and seining. "You name it," she says. "He fished for it."

Now, Eva spends her days doing jigsaw puzzles in the very same house where she raised her children with her husband, Shannon.

"I had to give up knitting a couple of years ago because my hands got bad," she says.

The house where she still lives represents the roots of her family—the roots from which have grown somewhere on the order of 74 family members who are all in the area.

"I can't keep them all straight," says Eva with a laugh. "I've got them all on the calendar somewhere. It's all written down." There are also two brand new members of the family as of this August—two great-great-grand-baby boys. So, perhaps it is now 76.

Among the over seventy family members are Eva's four daughters. She had three boys as well, but sadly lost all three of her sons in their adult years. Her girls all take turns checking in on her. Three of them live locally and one calls daily from North Carolina and visits every summer.



“They are all busy, busy,” she says, “but they help me with my housework, my errands, and my mail.” Eva has always been quite independent, though, and became accustomed to living alone after her husband passed away in 1989. “I broke my leg awhile back,” she says, “but I get by with a walker now. I can still get around alright.”

Many of Eva’s family members are still involved in the fishing industry. Three of her grandsons fish for lobster and another is a ground fisherman.

“Randy tried lobstering for a bit. He had Shannon’s old boat, the *Moby Dick*, but he’s a ground fisherman. That’s what he likes,” she adds. Shannon fished for just about everything at one point or another, including working as a fish cutter for the O’Hara Seafood Corporation. “Fishing has always been our bread and butter here. Still is,” says Eva of the continued heritage in Port Clyde.

Things have changed quite a bit since Shannon started fishing the waters of Muscongus Bay, though. The hauls of fish were much more plentiful than they are now—so plentiful that fishermen would give away their catch to people in town who came down to the docks when they came in from sea.

“The locals would go down and ask, ‘Can I have a fish? Can I have a fish?’” recalls Eva. “They didn’t even pay for them—just gave them away.” That’s when a 10,000-pound haul of haddock wasn’t rare and they had to bring people in to help haul them up. And, fishermen landed right at the dock in Port Clyde. Now, groundfish boats like Randy’s land much smaller catches and have to go to Portland to sell them.

Lobstering was different then as well. Shannon used to collect spruce boughs and bend them to make his traps and Eva would knit the heads and the bait bags. Many of the boats were built right there in town, as well. Now, the traps are made of wire and many people buy them from a trap company rather than make their own.

The town has changed too.

“I knew the Wyeths way back,” says Eva, referring to the now-famous family of artists from the area. “Now the town is full of artists,” she adds. “There are lots of people from away now, too.” But, she also remembers some big names from the past. “We used to watch the Kennedy boys play touch football on the lawn. And, the actor Zero Mostel—he was here too. They all used to come up in the summers.”

Eva saw many of these people come through Port Clyde while she worked at the General Store, a wood-frame building that stands on the town wharf and provides all manner of services to people in town from diesel to milk to lobster rolls. Many people who came from the store were headed out on the mailboat that her husband Shannon ran for a stretch. The mailboat that Shannon captained, the *Nereid*, was used in World War II. That same boat was also used to seine for herring, once plentiful right off the shores of Port Clyde.

“They would fish at night and you could see the phosphorescence in the water.” That fishery sustained a factory in town where Eva was one of some 150 people who worked. “They used to bus people in, there was so much work,” she recalls. She did a bit of everything from snipping the heads off the fish to packing them in tins.



Top: Eva’s grandson, Randy Cushman, with his own granddaughter, Ellie.

Photo by Breanna Cushman Bottom: Eva’s grandson, Gerry Cushman.

Photo courtesy of the Maine Coast Fisherman’s Association

Port Clyde is a rare place in the world—and Eva is a rare woman. She represents Maine’s fishing heritage and the traditions of a Maine fishing family. As she works on her puzzle, fitting together a picture of a hummingbird and flowers, from her family home, she will undoubtedly see any number of family members throughout the day. Down on the wharf, fishing boats including her grandsons’ will head out for the day to fish and customers will go in and out of the General Store. Much has changed, but the history still thrives through the stories of the town and the stories of Eva Cushman and her family.

*Information for this article was taken from a recent interview with Eva Cushman as well as from an Oral History project done in 2017 by the Island Institute and the Maine Coast Fishermen’s Association with the support of the Maine Humanities Council. •*



# Eleven Boxes of Memories

BY BEVERLY LESSARD

With Thanksgiving behind me, it was time to make my annual pilgrimage into the attic, in search of the much beloved Christmas decorations.

“Are you okay?” my husband hollered when I didn’t return in a reasonable amount of time.

Like Indiana Jones trying to take all the treasures in one trip, I had three strings of lights around my neck, a ceramic Santa under one arm and our artificial tree under the other. I was beginning to realize that unless I was willing to put something down and make a second trip, I was not going to get out of the attic alive.

“Do you really need to put up all this stuff?” my husband asked, trying not to sound like Ebenezer Scrooge. “The kids don’t even come home for Christmas anymore, you know”.

“Yeah, I know,” I sighed, “but if we stop decorating, it won’t be Christmassy here.”

I managed to make it to the opening where the attic stairs folded between the floor joists. I contemplated dropping everything through the hole rather than making the several required trips up and down the ladder. I was getting exhausted just thinking about it. I sat down on the top step to rest.

“What happened?” I asked my husband, who was standing at the bottom of the ladder, ready to catch the first load. “I used to love decorating.”

“Well,” he began, “maybe it was more fun when the kids were home. And maybe it was more fun when you had fewer boxes. At some point, a number of years ago,” he continued, “you hit what economists would call the point of diminishing returns.”

“Oh, great,” I stood up quickly, almost banging my head on the four-foot ceiling. “Don’t compare decorating to the economy or I’ll have to get rid of half my boxes.” I meant it as

a joke but suddenly it seemed like a pretty good idea.

“You know,” my husband continued, “times change. Our family has changed. Our children have their own decorations now. It’s okay to cut back a bit.”

I looked at the pile of boxes stacked at the far end of the crawl space. There was a box from my grandmother, some of the ornaments given to her by her grandmother. My favorite was a clown whose body was made from a pack of life savers, a brand that was extinct even when I was a child. I remember hanging it on the tree each year and wondering if I would die if I ate any of them.

There was a box of ornaments I made with our three daughters, crepe paper stars and homemade clay angels. Sure, some of them had taken on a greenish tinge but they were all still special. And there was one box filled with tree tops we had accumulated over the years. It was one of the ways we taught our girls about democracy as we voted each year for the one that would adorn the top of the tree. One year we even used a stuffed snake because it got the most votes.

I suddenly realized that the attic wasn’t filled with ornaments—it was filled with memories, eleven boxes of memories.

“I’ll tell you what,” my husband said as he waited for me to hand him another box, “why don’t we go out to eat and drive through the neighborhoods and look at all the outdoor decorations?”

“You know,” I said, leaving everything right where it was, “that sounds like a great idea and when we get home, we’ll open just one box of decorations. And then next year, we’ll open a different one.”

“Now that’s a plan,” my husband agreed, placing our chosen box in the living room, “but let’s plan on opening the one with all the green stuff on it last...okay?” •



# Ideas for Your Year-End Bonus

By Katie Brann, CFP®

Receiving a year-end bonus is far from a universal experience. However, many people end up with a little extra cash around the holidays. Depending on your financial circumstances, this can be exciting, overwhelming, or some combination of the two. Below is my guide for making the best use of your bonus or any other “windfall.”

**1. Pay off any high-interest debt first, such as credit cards.** In most cases, interest on credit card debt is accumulating more quickly than your money can grow in the stock market or elsewhere. Using a bonus to pay off debt is certainly not fun, but it’ll do wonders for your personal “balance sheet.”

**2. If it’s a large windfall, consult an accountant.** A big bonus probably has income tax implications, while insurance proceeds are generally not taxable. A CPA can explain any tax consequences and help you make tax-smart saving and spending decisions.

**3. Determine what percentages you will spend and save.** There is no universal percentage to recommend here but spending some and saving some allows you to reward yourself while making a responsible decision for your future. If you don’t already have a solid emergency fund, your savings should stay in a bank account.

**4. Avoid unsustainable spending situations.** You don’t want your bonus to backfire by using it to overextend yourself. For example, using the bonus for a down payment on a car doesn’t make sense if you won’t be able to afford the monthly payment with your regular salary. Additionally, don’t rush to



Katie Brann

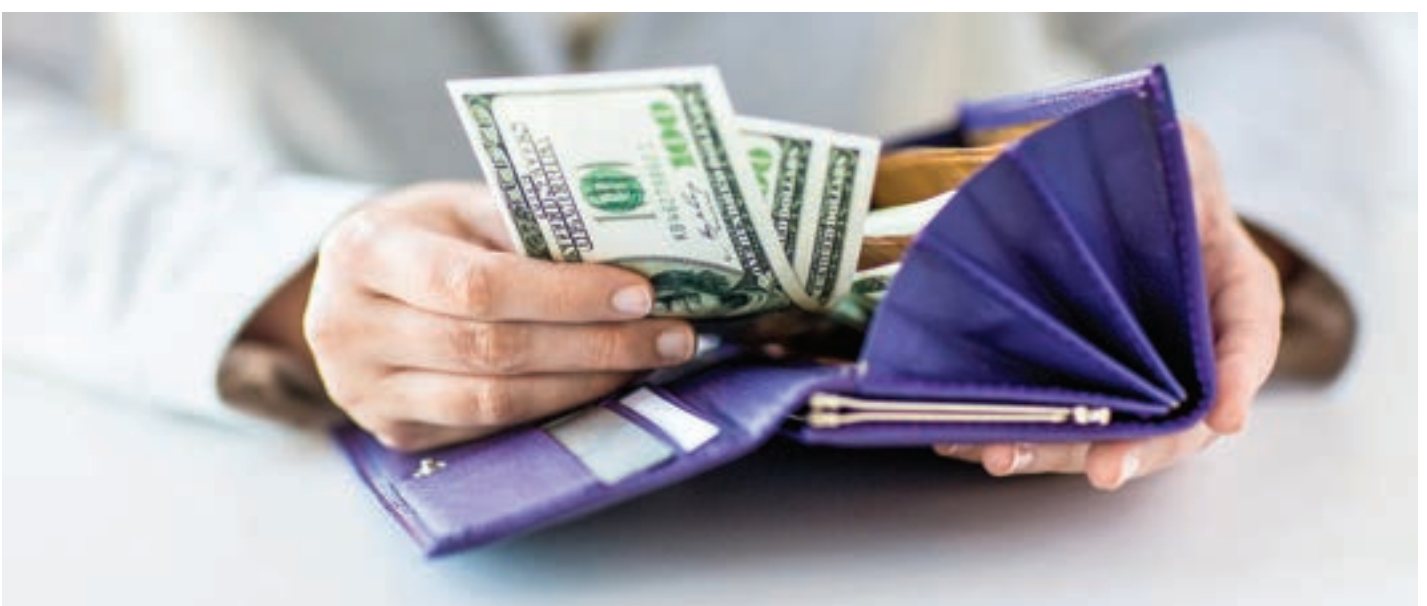
update the income in your budgeting app or spreadsheet. Be honest with yourself about the likelihood of repeated bonuses. Your monthly budget should reflect your “average” income situation.

**5. Consider tax-advantaged accounts for the amount you will save.** Grow your retirement nest egg by adding to your 401(k) or a Roth IRA, if you’re eligible. Investing in retirement accounts generally comes with some type of tax advantage over using a regular brokerage account. If saving for a child or grandchild’s college tuition is one of your goals, invest in their future using a 529 account. If you use the Maine NextGen 529, you might even score some “free money” from their matching program.

**6. Add value to your home that you will enjoy.** This is a “best of both worlds” scenario. If you are a homeowner, you likely have a few home improvement projects on your to do list. Perhaps there is a project that adds financial value AND helps you enjoy your home more: higher end countertops, a new appliance, refreshed landscaping, etc.

**7. Treat yourself.** Let’s be real...it’s been a long few years and you’ve worked hard. You probably spend more time caring for others than worrying about yourself. Set aside some funds to spend on you and you alone, and don’t feel guilty! You deserve it.

Prior to investing in a 529 Plan, investors should consider whether the investor’s or designated beneficiary’s home state offers any state tax or other state benefits such as financial aid, scholarship funds, and protection from creditors that are only available for investments in such state’s qualified tuition program. Withdrawals used for qualified expenses are federally tax free. Tax treatment at the state level may vary. Please consult with your tax advisor before investing. •







# MANDY SUMNER:

# Freediver

BY LIZ GOTTHELF

Water—whether it be in the ocean or a pool—is Mandy Sumner’s happy place. It’s where she’s accomplished physical goals, learned the importance of safe practices and found a peaceful environment to quiet the stress of the outside world.

“I’ve always loved the water. I find it super-healing. Even putting your feet in the water if you’re having a bad day makes you feel better,” she said.

Mandy, who grew up in Sanford, was swimming before she could walk. She joined a swim team at age 5, as soon as she was old enough, and competed through high school. Her parents, who were casual fans of the sport, and not competitive swimmers, began taking Mandy and her brother swimming in a pool at a young age.

“My brother and I just really took to it, and it became our life,” she said.

She spent so much of her time practicing and competing at swim meets that when she started college in 1997, she decided she needed a break and played soccer at the University of Southern Maine.

You can’t keep a fish out of water, and in 2009 she moved to Hawaii, where Mandy met the water sport which would become her new passion – free diving.

Free diving is a form of underwater diving during which the diver relies on holding their breath instead of a breathing apparatus. She tried it on a lark, and was immediately hooked.

“I didn’t even know it was a competitive sport actually, when I started,” she said.

In 2014, Mandy was sailing with some friends, one of which was a free dive instructor, and they

*Top: Mandy diving under the ice. Photo by Aleksander Nordahl*

*Inset from left: Mandy making friends with a turtle in its own habitat. | Mandy exploring a sunken ship. | After a dive.*

*Photos courtesy of Mandy Sumner*





*Top: Diving with the dolphins. Above left: Mandy, in complete bliss, under the water. Above right: Mandy posing with her medal in 2015 at the AIDA Individual Depth World Championships. Photos courtesy of Mandy Sumner*

moored near wreck where she had previously been scuba diving. Having no experience free diving, she wanted to give it a try and see how far she could go. Her friend gave her a few pointers and lent her his dive watch. She went down into the water in a bathing suit and old fins.

“I went down, and it felt normal and natural, and I went down to the top of the wreck. I stood on it, and pushed off and came back up,” she said.

Her friends thought she would probably make it 20 or 30 feet, and couldn’t believe when she told them she went to the top of the submerged boat, which was about 100 feet down. Her friend the diving instructor looked at the dive watch, which confirmed the distance, and suggested she take some courses on free diving.

“It became an instant passion,” she said. “It just took ahold of my life. Everything that I did, I just breathed, ate, slept free



diving, and I just wanted more depth, because that one was so easy.”

She took classes and quickly made her mark in the sport and absorbing all she could by watching other participants in competitions. She said that she was training while she was competing, sometimes going into contests to try depths she wasn't sure she could do, but always keeping safe and knowing when to turn around.

Just a year after she began the sport, Mandy was the first American free diver to earn a gold medal at the 2015 Association for the Development of Apnea (AIDA) Depth World Championships in Cyprus with a 58 meter (190 foot) dive.

While training in Hawaii, Mandy had the opportunity to swim near dolphins and even played the “leaf game” with them. In the leaf game, a diver lets go of a leaf under water, and a dolphin picks it up with their nose or fin, swims around and drops it and waits for the diver to pick it up again.

One of the skills Many learned as a free diver was how to hold her breath. She said she was able to hold her breath for five minutes 30 seconds during a static competition in a pool, which she found ore difficult than holding her breath on a dive, when she had something to focus on.

“It’s really hard for me because your brain just goes everywhere, and it’s harder for your body to relax,” she said.

Students have come to Mandy thinking they can’t hold their breath past 30 seconds, but after getting them to relax and teaching them skills, many have surprised themselves with being able to hold their breath for two minutes.

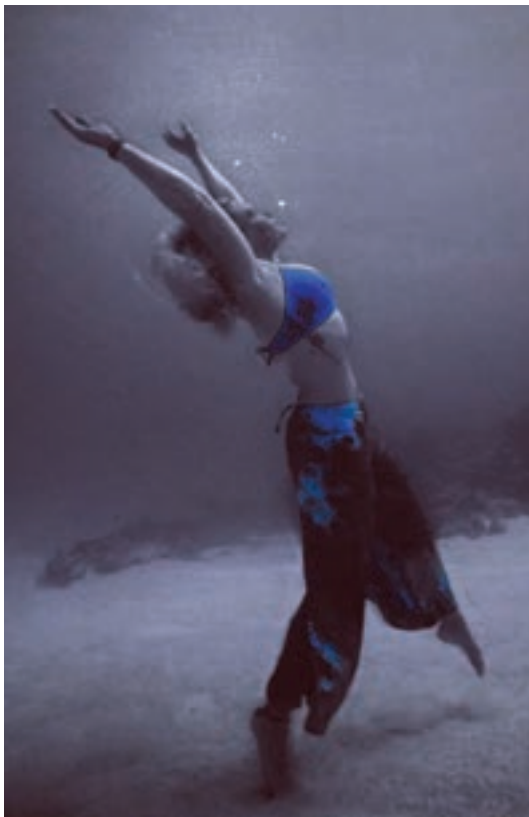
“It’s training yourself to realize that you do have enough oxygen in your body to survive longer than 30 seconds,” she said.

It’s easier to hold your breath in the water than on dry land because of the body’s mammalian diving reflex. This causes reactions in your body such as a lowered heart rate, the release of red blood cells from the spleen and redirecting blood to vital organs to conserve oxygen.

Mandy and her diving fin under the water. Photo courtesy of Mandy Sumner



Mandy in the murky depths, dancing on the ocean floor. Photo courtesy of Mandy Sumner



Mandy wading into the water. Photo courtesy of Mandy Sumner

“It’s really cool, what your body does to protect itself,” she said.

These days, Mandy works remotely as a GIS specialist, splitting her time between Hawaii and her hometown of Sanford, Maine, where she swims at the local YMCA pool – the same pool she swam in as a child. She’s not competing anymore, but she’s keeping in shape and is still involved in the sport, lending her skills as a coach or a safety diver at competitions.

She plans to travel to Norway this winter to participate in a new sport she’s picked up – ice diving. In ice diving, divers wear wetsuits designed for colder waters and are tethered.

Mandy has learned that safety is important, and never goes out in the water alone -whether its diving or an open water swim. She’s also learned it’s critical to be in the right mind set, especially when free diving. You can’t

get frustrated, she said, and you have to be one with yourself.

“It’s you and just you under the water. You can’t really hide from your emotions in free diving. If you are stressed out, and your brain is telling you that morning ‘Why are you going diving,’ and you go anyway, it’s not going to work,” she said. “You really have to feel what’s within you and center yourself. Like I said, you can’t hide. If you’re having a bad day, yeah, you can go in the water, but if you try to go deep, your body’s just not going to let you do it.”

Mandy said free diving can be healing. She said it helped her reduce depression and has heard of many cases where people say it has helped them battle addiction.

“I like the silence, and I like being down there with myself and fish, and anything else you see down there. It’s a different world, and you’re doing it under your own power,” said Mandy. •





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# HEALTHY, HAPPY, AND CALM

*What You and Your Kitchen Need this Holiday Season*

BY SARAH HOLMAN

**W**ith the Thanksgiving feast behind us, it's time to start navigating the winter holidays. Kitchen gadgets are always popular gifts, especially ones that save time, bring joy to our routines, and help us make healthier meals. Local dietitians and nutritionists weigh in on the culinary tools that truly make a difference in their kitchens and lives.

## MILK FROTHER WAND

This small, affordable (around \$15) hand-held gadget is perfect for whipping up a foamy top for your at-home coffee drinks. You'll save big bucks by skipping the coffee shop and making foam at home, especially if you're paying extra at the counter for non-dairy milks. The frother whips up any kind of milk into a foamy mound, and it has nutritional uses too. Kylie Fagnano, an integrative and functional dietitian and founder of Strata Nutrition in Portland, uses a frother to mix gut boosting benefits into her morning coffee routine. "This little gadget is amazing to help blend up protein powders, collagen, fiber powders, or any other supplement you might be recommended to use in daily beverages." It's also small enough to take with you when traveling to keep up your healthy habits.

## GLASS STORAGE

"The days of storing food in plastic are behind us," Kylie says. The dangers of plastic are well documented. "We now know there are endocrine disruptors and other toxic chemicals used in the making of plastic. Over time, those break down and enter our food, our bodies,



Jeremy Tap / unsplash.com

and eventually the environment." Glass is an investment, but with care, these containers last a long time. As a gift, Kylie recommends a variety pack with different sizes for storing prepped food and leftovers, and for bringing lunch or snacks to work. "I use all sizes literally every day," she says.

Kristine Taylor, a dietitian nutritionist at Tidewater Nutrition & Wellness in Portland, is also a big fan of glass storage. "I love both types," she says, referring to the side snap lids and the regular pyrex glassware for cooking. Glass is

also great for batch cooking and freezing because it can go directly into the microwave or, in many cases, the oven when you're ready to reheat safely.

## SILICONE AND MULTI-USE PLASTIC FOOD SAVERS

When glass isn't a viable option for storage, silicone or multi-use plastic is always a better choice than anything single use. Amy Taylor Grimm, a registered nutritionist and dietitian at the Kaleidoscope Eating Disorders and



Diet Recovery Center in Yarmouth, uses an avo-saver made of BPA-free plastic and an adjustable rubber strap to keep cut avocados from turning brown. The pit fits snugly in the saver's hole so it doesn't move around and get bruised, and the tight fit reduces air exposure and slows the oxidation process.

Amy also uses a silicone topper to keep open cans of food, especially beans, fresh in the refrigerator. As for the myth that you shouldn't store food in aluminum cans in the fridge, it's been debunked. According to the USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service, it's fine to leave food in a can and refrigerate it. Keep a lid on so the food doesn't dry out and get funky, refrigerate it, and eat it within four days, the USDA says.

### CAST IRON PANS

Kristine says her top kitchen picks are basics that stand the test of time. "As much as I enjoy trying out new gadgets, these classics get the most use... and avoid the back-of-the-cupboard gadget graveyard in my house." Her cast iron skillet is at the top of her list. "I pretty much cook everything in these," she says. They are versatile, rugged, stick-free when seasoned, non-toxic, and they impart a bit of iron into food, which is a nutritional bonus. "I recently learned they make a good home-made deep dish pizza too," Kristine says.

### PEACH PIT SCRUBBER

Speaking of cast iron pans, some home cooks are reluctant to use these timeless tools because they require a little extra work to maintain. They shouldn't be washed often and never with soap, and they require seasoning to keep food from sticking. So, how do you clean something that you're not supposed to wash and isn't non-stick? "Enter, peach pit scrub," says Kylie. She likes the All-Purpose Spaghetti Scrub by Smallflower Modern Apothecary (online for \$9.99/2-pack). Made with all natural peach pits and 100% cotton backing, these versatile scrubbers last 4-6 months and can be tossed in the dishwasher or microwave for sanitation. When Kylie is

finished cooking on her cast iron, while it's still hot, she pours some water in it and uses the peach pit scrub to scrape the pan. Be sure to dry your pan after rinsing to prevent rust.

### COFFEEMAKER

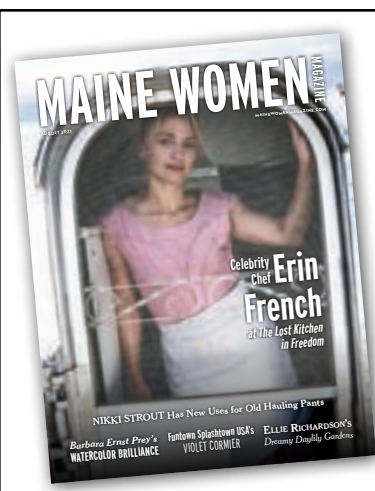
In terms of kitchen gadgets, there aren't many with as wide a variety of options as the coffeemaker. Ranging in cost from under \$20 to well over \$300, these daily staples are in nearly every kitchen. Amy includes her coffeemaker on her list of kitchen favorites because it has features she enjoys. "We can set it on a timer to grind AND brew the coffee a half hour before we get up," she says, which saves time and makes mornings just a little easier. "We even take it on vacation," Amy laughs.

When thinking about the holidays and healthy eating, it can feel like a daunting task to stay vigilant. Many dietitians have historically advised tricks like eating a healthy snack before going out, keeping treats out of sight, and choosing low-calorie cocktails. Now, the advice is leaning more toward mindfulness and acceptance. "Remember that your priorities for 'health' change month to month, day to day, and even hour to hour," Kylie says, "Be okay with this. It's not only normal, but essential." She encourages her clients—and anyone looking for ways to make it through the holiday season feeling healthy, happy, and calm—to accept we are all human. Our needs are not constant, nor are the demands life asks of us. "Be gentle and witness the peace that will follow."

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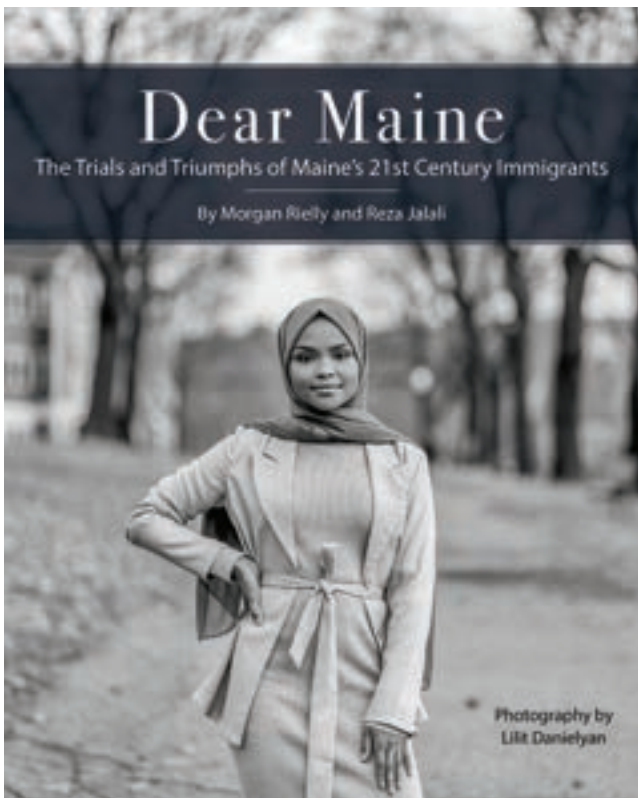


Lilit Danielyan

## DEAR MAINE

### *The Trials and Triumphs of Maine's 21st Century Immigrants*

*By Morgan Rielly and Reza Jalali, photography by Lilit Danielyan*



Maine is home to many people with many different stories—stories of travel and hardship, love and success. Several of these stories can be found in the pages of *Dear Maine*, a new book from Islandport Press, written by Morgan Rielly and Reza Jalali. Rielly and Jalali spent several years interviewing Maine residents who immigrated to America from their home countries. *Dear Maine* amplifies the voices and stories of twenty different Mainers, many of whom are also successful, loving, and interesting Maine women. In addition to these stories, the book features black and white portraits taken by Lilit Danielyan, a young Armenian photographer and documentarian who splits her time between Armenia and the U.S. and grew up in Central Kazakhstan.

The first profile introduces the reader to Safiya Khalid, who also graces the cover of the book. “I did not experience the college life most young Americans have,” said Khalid in her interview with the authors, “I was rushing from work to classes and doing homework in between.” Khalid, like many of the people whose stories are told in *Dear Maine*, underwent a harrowing journey before arriving in the United States. After being displaced by

**\$19.95, softcover, nonfiction**

*Published by Maine's Islandport Press.*



conflict in Somalia, she experiences life-threatening conditions in a Kenyan refugee camp. Now, having graduated from the University of Southern Maine in 2018 with a degree in psychology, after an arduous process of school and work, Khalid is the first Somali American and the first Muslim to win an election to the Lewiston city council—an achievement for which she garnered national media attention.

“Danielyan’s portraits are not only beautiful images of people, but works of art in their own right,” said Dean Lunt, editor-in-chief of Islandport Press. “As is the case with great photojournalism and documentary photography, her photos and her style help capture the essence of her subjects and serve to greatly enhance Morgan and Reza’s text.”

While everyone in the book has a unique story, none of them are boring, or any less exciting to read about than the others. Whether you read about Chanbopha Himm, the co-founder of the Cambodian Community Association of Maine and Unified Asian Communities; Natália Dyer, a woman from Brazil who runs the successful, Portland-based catering company Sampa Kitchen; or any of the other fascinating women that are profiled in *Dear Maine*, you will be learning about someone who has a lot to say that is worth hearing.

*Dear Maine* provides insight into many global and local concerns with a rare, individualized lens. Danielyan’s photographic portraits operate perfectly in concert with the sometimes solemn but always optimistic tilt of each profile essay, capturing the subjects in posed moments that still manage to look comfortable and serene. The essays themselves take their time to introduce the reader to the subject, often providing details and anecdotes that would be difficult to find in any other profile of an interesting person. *Dear Maine* is a must-read, and an especially great book to give as a gift for the holidays. •

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**NINE MILE BRIDGE**

By Helen Hamlin

\$17.95, softcover, nonfiction

In this critically acclaimed Maine classic set in the 1930s, Helen Hamlin writes of her adventures in the Maine wilderness. Hamlin was warned that remote Churchill Depot, an isolated lumber camp located at the headwaters of the Allagash River, was “no place for a woman.” Despite the warning, Hamlin set off at age twenty to teach school at the tiny camp. After teaching for one year, she married a game warden, and moved deeper into the wilderness, where she spent her next three years. Hamlin effectively captures this time in her life, complete with the trappers, foresters, lumbermen, woods folk, wild animals, and natural splendor that she discovered first at Umsaskis Lake and then at Nine Mile Bridge on the St. John River.



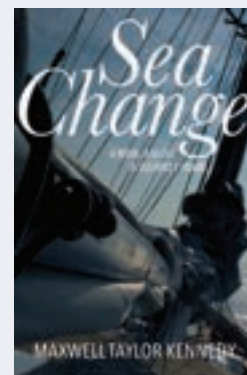
**SEA CHANGE:**

**A MAN, A BOAT, A JOURNEY HOME**

By Maxwell Kennedy

\$16.95, softcover, nonfiction

In this fast-paced and rollicking book, author Maxwell Taylor Kennedy takes readers on a wild ride as he relates the harrowing voyage to deliver his boat, Valkyrien, a 77-foot dilapidated wooden schooner, from San Francisco to Washington, DC. From day one, Kennedy and his skeleton crew face almost insurmountable odds and personal danger in their quest to make the crossing. Rich in nautical detail and humor, Kennedy recounts his adventure—its pleasures and perils—as he encounters never-ending technical problems and a hilarious cast of characters. As everything goes wrong and trouble and losses mount, Kennedy must rely on instinct and a lifetime of sailing experience to endure. He is steered by the love of his family, his respect for the sea, and his admiration for those who dare to venture far from shore.



**SETTLING TWICE**

By Deborah Joy Corey

\$16.95, softcover, nonfiction

In a revelation of memory and unflinching insight, prompted by the death of her parents, author Deborah Joy Corey probes the complex bonds between family, lovers, and neighbors that shaped her sense of identity: then, as a girl growing up in rural New Brunswick, and now as a wife and mother living on the coast of Maine. With astonishing skill and delicacy, she weaves a story of faith and transcendence, of loyalty and regret, and shows us how—despite the passage of time and a world fraught with disillusion—wonder prevails, and love sustains.







*Above:* Drying flowers for herbal cosmetics makes good use of gardening efforts. Always use organically-grown flowers and foliage that have not been treated with garden chemicals. *Right:* Fresh or dried lavender blossoms can be used in a variety of beauty treatments to make at home.

## *Beauty Products from the Garden*

STORY AND PHOTOS BY LYNETTE L. WALTHER

**T**he age-old art of concocting beauty products from natural ingredients reaches back at least to the Egyptian period, when women anointed themselves with perfumes made by steeping the essences of herbs and flowers in oils such as sesame, safflower, almond, and olive — the same oils we use in the kitchen today, according to Renee’s Garden Seeds. Now is the perfect time to experiment with your own herbal concoctions for your own use or to package up and share.

The ancient Greeks felt that in order to aid health and beauty, herbal cosmetics should gladden the senses. Credit the Grecians with cold cream. The pleasure-seeking Romans took the art of the fragrant bath seriously, and spent much time soaking in luxurious flower-scented waters. In the Middle Ages, violet perfume





was made just to cheer one up by simply smelling the fragrance, and chamomile was boiled with honey to clear up skin blemishes.

In the 17th century the American housewife treasured her “still room,” which had her special kitchen where she made the family’s aromatic waters and household cosmetics, gathered from the herbs in her garden. Making your own natural cosmetics by gathering these historical plants for the same purposes is the continuation of a time-honored tradition.

Always use distilled or spring water when preparing herbal cosmetics, and mix your concoctions in stainless steel, enamel, or heatproof glassware. Do not use aluminum, copper, or Teflon pans, as their chemical properties will affect the finished product. Store finished products in glass or plastic jars and containers, advises Renee’s Garden.

In general, herbal mixtures that include flowers and leaves are created in infusions or decoctions. An infusion is made as you would make an herbal tea. Boil distilled or spring water in a non-reactive saucepan, remove from heat, and add herbs to steep for 30 minutes with the lid on. A decoction is made by boiling distilled or spring water in a non-reactive saucepan, then simmering herbs for 20 minutes to extract more of their essential oils for a stronger brew.

All herbal cosmetics can carry the possibility of creating an allergic reaction in certain people. Before using any herbal preparation, test by placing a dab on your forearm, cover with a small bandage, and leave in place for 24 hours to determine possible allergic reaction, Renee’s Garden advises.

Of course, homemade cosmetics have no preservatives, so their shelf life will be shorter than commercial products. Shampoos mixed with an herbal infusion will last for about a week in the refrigerator. Rinses, facials, or other preparations using herbal infusions or decoctions will last up to three days, or refrigerate for longer storage. Beauty products containing vinegar will keep longer. During the growing season, dry your cosmetic herbs so you will have them on hand to make up in the winter months. As a rule of thumb, double the amount of fresh herbs in a recipe specifying dried herbs. Ingredients like calendula and lavender are easy to start from seed and grow.

Here are a few recipes from Renee’s Garden Seeds to try:

### GENTLE HERBAL SHAMPOO

Herbal shampoos give strength, body, and luster to hair, and make it more manageable. Use calendula blossoms for redheads, lavender for brunettes, and chamomile blossoms for blondes.

- 1/3 cup calendula, chamomile or lavender blossoms
- 8 oz. distilled water
- 8 oz. baby shampoo

Bring herb blossoms and water to a gentle boil in a stainless steel or enamel saucepan. Immediately turn off heat, cover to steep, and let cool. Strain out blossoms, pour mixture into plastic container. Add baby shampoo and shake until mixed. Makes 16 ounces.



*Top:* Calendula is easy to grow from seed, plan to start some plants in the spring for use later. *Bottom:* Sage is not only great for seasoning, it can be an astringent ingredient in homemade beauty products.





Dried herbs and flowers can be transformed into beauty products to enjoy and share this holiday season.

### HERBAL HAIR RINSE

Herbal rinses stimulate the glands and tissues of the scalp, and encourage hair growth. Make the following rinse 15 minutes ahead of your shampoo, so it will be cool when you are ready for it.

- 1/3 cup calendula, lavender, chamomile blossoms or sage leaves
- 2 cups distilled water
- 1 T cider vinegar or 1 T lemon juice (if using chamomile)

Select the appropriate herb according to your hair color. Bring water to a boil in stainless steel or enamel saucepan. Add herbs, turn off heat, cover to steep and let cool. Strain herbs, pour mixture into glass jar or pitcher, add vinegar (blondes can use lemon juice). Pour rinse through hair several times, catching liquid in large bowl. Rinse with warm water. Makes 16 ounces.

### HERBAL SKIN CARE

A gentle, cleansing facial steam, an astringent herbal mask to stimulate the skin and tighten pores, a luxurious sweetly scented massage oil are all easily made in your kitchen from your own herbs.

Sage is an excellent astringent. It cleanses, tightens pores, and restores the skin's natural acid balance. Here are some easy ones to use:

Calendula is a healing herb, especially good for oily skin.

Chamomile is a soothing herb which softens and whitens the skin.

Lavender is a tonic herb and gentle cleanser, good for all types of complexions. (*Lavandula angustifolia*)

### FACIAL MASKS

A facial mask draws impurities to the surface and tightens the skin, while stimulating circulation. It nourishes and cleanses the skin, giving the face a restored, fresh appearance. After mask is removed, always wash face with warm water, followed by cool water to close the pores, then apply a thin layer of moisturizer.

#### ***Chamomile & oatmeal mask***

- 1 cup distilled water
- 2 T. chamomile blossoms
- 2 T. instant oatmeal

Boil water in a small stainless-steel saucepan, add chamomile, turn off heat, cover, and let cool. Strain chamomile. Place oatmeal in ceramic bowl, add enough chamomile infusion to make a spreadable paste, using a blender if necessary. Apply mask to face (except eyes and lips), leave on for 20 minutes, remove with warm water. Makes two ounces.

### ASTRINGENTS

Our complexion has a natural acid surface, which gives the body protection against harmful bacteria, so it is essential that this protective mantle be restored after washing your face. Cider vinegar helps to restore the skin's natural acidity, and mixed with herbs, it makes a healthful, fragrant splash.

#### ***Lavender facial astringent***

- 2 cups fresh lavender blossoms, or one cup dried
- 2 cups white wine vinegar, or unseasoned rice vinegar

Place lavender and vinegar in a quart glass mason jar, screw on lid. Place outdoors for three days, shaking daily. Strain lavender and place mixture in plastic container. To use, wash face, pat dry, moisten cotton squares with astringent, apply. Makes 16 ounces. •



# ABOUT MAINE

## Events around Maine this month

BY SHEILA D. GRANT

December's calendar is always bursting with fun things to do. However, with COVID-19 acting the Grinch, it's best to check ahead. Our holiday wish is that there will be plenty of tree lightings, parades, festivals, and visits with Santa this month to be enjoyed by all. Unless otherwise noted, all events follow CDC masking recommendations. Here are a few jolly ways to enjoy Maine this month:

### GARDENS AGLOW

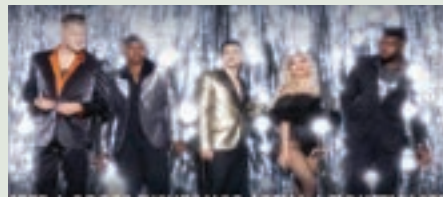
NOVEMBER 20–JANUARY 1

This wildly popular annual light show has been adapted as a driving tour to provide socially distanced holiday fun. Make an evening of it by creating a festive playlist, brewing a thermos of hot beverages, packing snacks for the drive, and downloading a map of the region that includes entries in this year's community lighting contest. Visit [mainegardens.org](http://mainegardens.org) for more information.

### LIGHT UP THE TOWN

NOVEMBER 27–DECEMBER 31

Organized by the Children's Discovery Museum of Central Maine in Waterville, this event invites businesses and individuals to decorate properties with festive holiday lights. Santa and Mrs. Claus arrive by sleigh to Castonguay Square on the Saturday after Thanksgiving to light a huge holiday tree adjacent to a small Santa's village, Kringleville, created especially for the season. Maps are available to help families find all the holiday light displays, and virtual visits with Santa are also available. For more information, follow Kringleville on Facebook.



### PENTATONIX: THE EVERGREEN CHRISTMAS TOUR

DECEMBER 2

Waterfront Concerts and the Cross Insurance Arena in Portland are bringing three-time Grammy® Award-winning artists Pentatonix to Maine this holiday season. Proof of full vaccination against COVID-19 or a negative test is required to attend. Visit [crossarenaportland.com](http://crossarenaportland.com) for more information.

### TOWN-WIDE HOLIDAY KICK-OFF

DECEMBER 3–12

Visit Freeport presents festivities that kick off with a Friday night Parade of Lights down Main Street, and a week full of free horse-drawn wagon rides, visits with Santa, the famous Talking Christmas Tree, and gift card giveaways by the Freeport Stealth Elf. For more information, visit [sparklecelebration.com](http://sparklecelebration.com).

### KRIS KRINGLE FAIR

DECEMBER 4

This annual ticketed event at the town gym in Monson raises funds for local families in need. Festivities include a craft fair, children's activities, and sometimes, baking contests and visits with Santa, though COVID precautions may alter the lineup this year. Follow Monson, Maine on Facebook for more information.

### JAY LENO

DECEMBER 5

The Collins Center for the Arts in Orono is teaming up with Waterfront Concerts to present Jay Leno live. Leno, an acclaimed TV late night show host, stand-up comedian, children's book author, corporate speaker, voice-over artist, car builder, and philanthropist, is widely characterized as "the hardest working man in show business." Visit [collinscenterforthearts.com](http://collinscenterforthearts.com) for more information.

### CHRISTMAS BY THE SEA CELEBRATION

DECEMBER 10–12

This Ogunquit tradition, held the second weekend in December each year, offers a wide variety of activities, including tasting events, Santa sightings, tree lightings, hayrides, concerts, a bonfire, craft show, children's activities, and a parade from Perkins Cove to the Main Beach. Visit [chamber.ogunquit.org](http://chamber.ogunquit.org) for more information.

### 18TH ANNUAL MOUNTAIN HOLLY DAYS

DECEMBER 10–12

The Rangeley Lakes Chamber of Commerce organizes this event, which features free refreshments, special festivities, family activities, and shopping and dining specials. For more information, call 864-5571 or visit [rangeleymaine.com](http://rangeleymaine.com).



### THE LOWDOWN

DECEMBER 11

The Center Theatre in Dover-Foxcroft is hosting this Wayside Grange 2021 Concert Series performance by The Lowdown. David Dodson writes great songs that run the gamut of American styles, including folk, rock, blues, jazz, and country. He plays a mean guitar, tells a good story, sings like a bird, and he's got rhythm. Who could ask for more? Visit [centertheatre.org](http://centertheatre.org) for more information.

### NEW YEAR'S EVE SARDINE & MAPLE LEAF DROP

DECEMBER 31

The Tides Institute & Museum of Art organizes this town-wide celebration that includes dining and shopping specials and programming at multiple locations throughout the day and the dropping of both the giant sardine (a nod to Eastport's fishing heritage) and a maple leaf (a nod to Canadian neighbors just across the narrow). Last year, virtual activities and at-home craft kits were added to celebration offerings for COVID-safe fun. Visit [tidesinstitute.org](http://tidesinstitute.org) for more information.

# CHICKEN OR TURKEY POT PIE

BY MARY FRANCES BARSTOW

**M**any people love chicken or turkey pot pie, and with good reason. It is a meal that harkens back to happy times and the comforts of home. In this recipe, I use pre-made pie crusts, but feel free to make your own, if you have the time. Also, if you have leftover turkey and vegetables from your holiday meal, feel free to throw those in. Enjoy!



## INGREDIENTS

- 4 tablespoons salted butter
- 1 1/2 pounds of boneless chicken breast or turkey, cut into chunks
- 1 cup sliced carrots
- 1/2 cup sweet onions
- 1 1/2 tsp of salt
- 1/2 tsp of dried thyme leaves
- 1/4 tsp black pepper
- 1/4 cup flour
- 3/4 cup heavy cream
- 1 cup chicken broth
- 1/2 cup frozen peas
- 2 unbaked pie crusts

## DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 425 degrees. Add butter in a large skillet over medium heat. Once the butter is melted, add the chicken or turkey, carrots, onions, salt, pepper, and thyme leaves. Cook for 10 minutes, until the chicken is cooked through, stirring often. Add the flour, stir well until no dry flour remains. Slowly stir in the cream, then the chicken broth. Cook until bubbling and thick, stirring often, about 4 minutes. Remove from heat. Stir in the peas. Let this cool for 20 minutes. Fit the pie crust into a pie plate. Put the cooled filling into the pie crust. Then put the top pie crust over the filling. Seal the edges of the pie crusts together with a fork or your fingers. Cut three to four slits on top of top pie shell. Bake in a preheated oven for 30 minutes. Cool for 15 minutes before you serve. YUMMY YUM! •



# SAVORING

BY SHELAGH TALBOT

For me, Christmas has been a transformative event all my life. My mother called it “The magic that anything can happen.” One particular Christmas, when I was ten, I was “waaaay” too jaded to believe that. Although, when I was really little, I believed it completely. We lived in an old house that creaked in the wind and occasionally shifted a bit, so doors were hard to close. It was built in the late 1700s and there was the requisite huge chimney, right in the middle of our home.

There was no question that Santa, even with his pack would have any trouble. When Christmas Eve arrived, we watched as our dad patiently swept the ashes from the fireplace into a metal bucket. It took a few trips, but he put it outside somewhere safe. On the last trip, he returned with a green “Welcome” mat, the word surrounded with berries and holly. We thought Santa might appreciate the ash-free landing and we wanted him to feel very welcome. We hung our stockings on the pegs in the mantel and delighted in the beautiful tree dad had set up and we had decorated the day before.

My little brother and I also had work to do on this special afternoon. Our equally patient mother called us into the kitchen to help make cookies. We thought proudly that we were expert stirrers and took our job seriously. We even helped plop the dough onto the cookie sheets. Mom slid the sheets into the oven and in no time the cookies were done. The kitchen was filled with a wonderful aroma that wafted around as the cookies cooled.

After supper, we’d snuggle on the couch under blankets with our mom, who would read us a Christmas story. Then we brushed our teeth, said fervent prayers to God and Santa Claus, and hopped into bed where our parents came to tuck us in and wish us sweet dreams. We felt so safe and excited at the same time. “Do you think Santa will remember what we want?” my brother whispered. “If he saw our letters, we should be okay,” I whispered back. We were two little balls of tension when we considered what might or might not happen tomorrow. It was hard to fall asleep.

In the morning when we woke, we were allowed only to get our stockings. There was still nothing under the tree. Our dad said that he and mom were Santa’s helpers—any big present they would stash until after breakfast. The stockings were fun and filled to the brim with little things we loved – tiny Steiff teddy bears, candy, some socks, and the requisite naval orange. We always found ourselves speculating after we had gone through our stockings. There was a certain amount of concern. Had we asked too much? Were we being greedy? So, After stockings, we ate our breakfasts dutifully and then our mom shooed us back to our bedroom. “Make your beds and tidy up,” she instructed. “We’ll call you in when everything is ready.” Oh, the sweet shiver of anticipation—my brother and I could hardly wait!

Finally, everything was ready. “Come on in.” Dad grinned. The door to our living room had been closed and Dad flung it wide—there was the tree, all lit up in spite of the daylight, with its trunk buried in big packages wrapped in paper and dressed with a bow. My brother and I took it all in and then hurried to our bedroom where we had little gifts stashed for our parents. With triumphant smiles we deposited our gifts around the tree and then sat down. Mother was in charge—she called who was to go first. And we tried so hard to be patient when presents were being opened. Since there were four of us—the present opening took some time. Our whole family believed in savoring the moment, so unwrapping was one person at a time.

For our family, savoring moments was what Christmas was all about. We tried to make the present opening, going to church, dining with family moments last as long as possible. Sometimes life, and especially holidays, can be such a rushed affair where savoring anything gets lost. These special times in our lives are so short and we easily get caught in too much busyness.

So Merry Christmas, Happy Chanukah, Happy Kwanzaa to all—here’s to everyone, especially those that remember to pause and truly savor! •



# QUESTIONABLE ADVICE

BY L.C. VAN SAVAGE

***My boyfriend and I have been together for five years. We get along great, with many shared friends and shared interests. Every December, I get my hopes up that maybe this will be the year I find something sparkly in a tiny velvet box under the Christmas tree. He knows how I feel about this – a trial run shouldn't take this long! If "Santa" disappoints again this year, should I call it quits? —Getting Scrooged***

Are we sharing the same century? Seriously? You are WAITING TO BE ASKED?? Stop doing that. Women today don't hang around like sweet damsels of the 1800s waiting to give their hands and all other bodily parts, in marriage. Women today take what they want, sometimes politely, sometimes aggressively, sometimes sweetly. You've waited FIVE YEARS? You're kidding, right? You'd better get cracking or you'll end up a withered old stump in a nursing home, still hopeful your swain will stop being a bone-headed imbecile and will hand you something shiny from Tiffany's. Honey, he won't. He clearly knows what you want and he's not gonna produce. Ever. Move on! Go forth and find someone before you totally dry up, a new guy with a better sense of urgency.

***Every year for the neighborhood Hanukkah party, our dear friend Lois brings her swoon-worthy brisket. It truly is the most wonderful recipe I've ever tasted! I don't mean to kvetch, but every year I ask her for the recipe and promise never to bring it to any party she's attending, and every year she refuses to share! It is wrong to keep asking? —Nosh Envy***

Yes, it's wrong to keep asking. You'll be regarded as a pest and an annoyance, and she will stop coming over. Furthermore, don't you know yet that no answer IS an answer? She doesn't want to share. How stupid. I personally think it's just dumb to not pass along great recipes. Why not? Are people afraid their thunder will be stolen? That future dining guests will like you better? People, there is lots of room at the top, especially at the top of the culinary world. I mean come on! What better way to express love and devoted friendship than to share Granny's famous secret recipes? Keeping good recipes a secret is so last century. Besides, most enterprising cooks can find them online anyway.

***The snowplow drivers seem determined to either bury or knock down my mailbox. I've moved it further back from the road. I've replaced the standard black with a brightly colored mail receptacle. I've tried one of those tall flags that shows where the mailbox is post-blizzard, but I think that just gives them a target! Is there anything I can do to make mail delivery less aggravating this winter? —Plowed Under***

Sure, but it'll be costly and ugly, but do it anyway. You hire a guy who builds stuff and commission him to make a nice big bunker out of huge granite slabs leaving an opening just big enough to fit a sturdy steel mailbox. Yes, it may look like a place Johnny Cash used to sing about but so what? I suspect that once that snow plow dude's plow blade smashes into that he'll maybe be a bit more respectful of your mailbox. But remember—the structure has to be big and heavy and immovable. And then there's always this; find out where the snow plow guy lives, and—nah.

***My grandmother is nearly 85, and still lives in her own home. She seems to already have everything she could want or need. What can I get that she'd enjoy for Christmas this year?—Noel Idea***

Oh this one is so simple—you hand her an envelope and inside of that is a nice 8/11 piece of paper signed and dated by you, and on it you've PROMISED to do the following for the next year and add in lots more. Like, mow her lawn, change her light bulbs, sweep out her garage, hire someone to wash the insides and outsides of her windows, clean her sills and gutters, hose down and install her screens and do the reverse when winter comes, take her to Walmart, take her to dinner at her favorite joint, get high with her if that's to her liking, send her funny jokes to her email but NOT OLD PEOPLE JOKES. At 85, they are not in the least amusing but they are incredibly insulting, euthanize her pets (but not her) when it's their time, and come to see her a lot even if she's really boring. It would kill you to hear her stories again? And again? And again? No. Someday Cookie, YOU will be her.



# LIVE-IN HOME CARE

**Despite their health conditions, Ralph and Leah Jane, were determined to stay together in their home!**

Leah Jane Cusack and Ralph Cusack had been married for over 60 years and were active in their community. Unfortunately, Ralph suffered several small strokes and developed mild dementia. Leah Jane had difficulty getting around and needed help caring for herself and her husband.

Despite their health conditions, Ralph and Leah Jane were determined to stay together and remain in their home in Scarborough, Maine, where they had lived for over 50 years. However, the couple's decision posed a dilemma for their adult children: How could they run the family business, take care of their own families, and care for their parents at the same time?

The family heard about FCP Live-In, a New England-based in-home care provider, and reached out to the agency to ask about services for Ralph and Leah Jane. FCP Live-In assessed the family's needs and assigned a caregiver for the Cusacks. Andrew "Andy" Cusack was impressed with the agency's process.

"From the initial contact with the intake coordinator, the arrival of our

care provider, follow-up calls with the main office, and sorting out billing with the account manager, everyone was thoughtful, understanding, professional, and helpful," Cusack said. "They always had the patient's needs and the family's support care at the forefront of conversations."

The Cusacks found themselves in the same position as many families across the country. According to a national

*"Our family's experience with FCP Live-in was positive from the start, and they were our rescue relief when medical changes required us to make quick decisions!"*

*Andy Cusack*

AARP survey, more than 3 in 4 participants, or 77 percent, age 50, and older said they want to remain in their homes and communities as long as possible.

AARP also found that seniors wanting to remain independent places pressure on the "sandwich generation" — the adult children who care for their parents as well as their own children or grandchildren.

FCP Live-In's goal is to be the agency that families turn to when these chal-

lenges become overwhelming. The agency's staff routinely meets with families, searching for answers to caregiving concerns.

"One of the most rewarding parts of my job is helping the adult children of our clients navigate a new season in their parent's lives," said Constance McFarland, an FCP Live-In Care Coordinator.

FCP Live-In helps families navigate the unknown by walking them through the process of live-in caregiving and knowing when to make necessary adjustments, particularly when a loved one's health condition changes.

"Our family's experience with FCP Live-in was positive from the start, and they were our rescue relief when medical changes required us to make quick decisions," Andy Cusack recalled.

"The FCP coordinators did an excellent job sourcing out for a care provider that matched our needs and our family's personality," Cusack said. "He was a perfect fit with us and became part of our extended family."

"The challenge that families and their loved ones always mention is that they didn't want to leave their home, their spouse, their memories," said FCP Live-In Regional Sales Manager Andrea Maroto, "FCP Live-In offers assistance within your home without needing to move like an assisted living facility."

***To learn more about FCP Live-In home care, call 866-830-4443 or visit [www.liveinhomecare.com](http://www.liveinhomecare.com) today!***

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