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MAINE WOMEN MAGAZINE

HEART MATTERS

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and survivor

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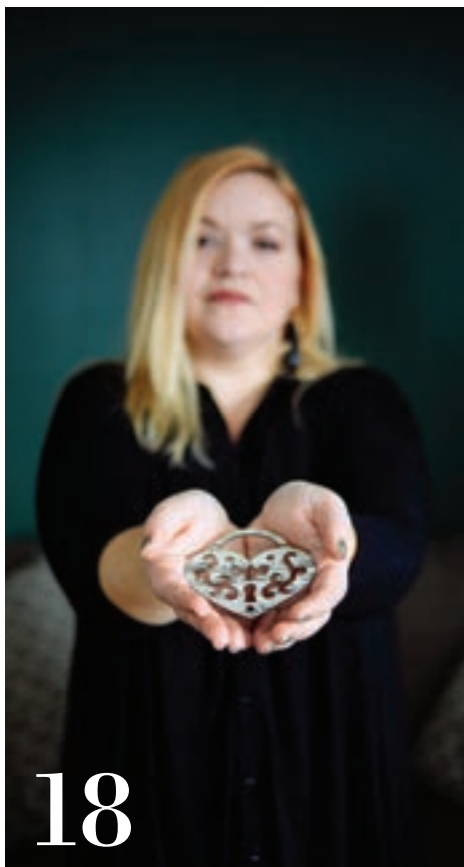


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One Heart



Lee Hews

One woman dies of heart disease or stroke about every 80 seconds.

That's a startling statistic from the American Heart Association. But it's also important to know that up to 80 percent of heart disease is preventable through diet, exercise and knowing your numbers. Now that is an empowering number.

Stroke, a form of cardiovascular disease, is the No. 3 cause of death in women, and the use of birth control pills is a risk factor not every woman is aware of. There's much we can do in the way of prevention, and listening to our bodies and taking action when things don't feel quite right can be a key to surviving and recovering from a stroke, heart attack or other heart disease.

At 43, Jennifer Hill of Yarmouth was a healthy woman. She exercised, made good food choices and was active and engaged with her family. She had no known risk factors for heart disease, yet she suffered a significant heart attack. In retrospect, she says, there were signs that things weren't quite right as much as two months in advance of her heart attack. Read her story on page 16.

Like Hill, Kim Cowperthwaite tells in her powerful personal essay on page 22 how she was active, healthy, mindful and had no known risk factors. Then she suffered a SCAD (spontaneous coronary heart dissection). She was fortunate a Maine Medical Center team made a quick and correct diagnosis and saved her life. She, too, wanted to ignore earlier symptoms, but her kids and husband convinced her otherwise.

Kristina Kentigian (page 18) knew from a very young age she had a congenital heart defect. At 33, she began experiencing what she had been warned about her whole life, and she needed a permanent pacemaker to ensure that her heart kept beating. That was later replaced by a defibrillator. Kentigian has spent time learning more about her body and her condition, and now spends her time being active, making music and writing.

In recognition of American Heart Month, and in a partnership with the Maine chapter of the American Heart Association, we wanted to tell the stories of these women and others in this issue of *Maine Women Magazine*. I have a family history of heart disease, and at age 57, I am just a few years younger than my father was when he had his heart attack. I think I am healthier than my dad, who was significantly overweight, a heavy smoker and a junk-food junkie, but reading these stories helps me to be more aware of needing to pay attention to my body, even if I think I'm at low risk of having heart issues.

If you are looking for fun and healthy things to do to keep your heart in great shape, read our suggestions for "heart pumping fun" on page 44. And don't forget that February is also the month for lovers and celebrating that part of our hearts. We've got great food ideas in our *At The Table* column on page 60, and there are lots of suggestions for things to do with your sweetheart on page 34. You will find the rest of the columns and features that you've come to love throughout this issue of *Maine Women Magazine*. Stay tuned and stay connected!

ON THE COVER

Like many women, Jennifer Hill of Yarmouth didn't think she was at risk for a heart attack. Then, at the age of 43, she had one. Read her story on page 16.

Photo by Lauryn Hottinger



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Food, Fashion & Fundraising

Here are some great events to fill up your social calendar this month

Written by **Amy Paradysz**



Photo by Amy Paradysz

1

Women United Around the World Fashion Show

Saturday, March 3, 6–9 p.m.

*Italian Heritage Center,
40 Westland Ave., Portland*

New Mainers model traditional outfits inspired by their homelands and local designers showcase their spring collections in this empowering fashion show. Make an evening of it, starting with a buffet dinner and silent auction. (womenunitedaroundtheworld.org)

2

‘Babette’s Feast’

Jan. 23–Feb. 18

Portland Stage, 25A Forest Ave., Portland

“Babette’s Feast” tells the story of how a refugee transforms a closed religious community by sacrificing all she has to throw a lavish dinner party. This adaptation from the short story by Isak Dinesen is conceived and developed by local theater artist and Bowdoin College theater professor Abigail Killeen. (portlandstage.com)



Michelle Hurst



Abigail Killeen

3

Flavors of Freeport

Feb. 16–17

Hilton Garden Inn Freeport Downtown, 5 Park St., Freeport

Ice bars make for a cool ladies’ night out, especially when there’s hot stuff inside. Flavors of Freeport has two nights of indoor-outdoor good times at the Hilton Garden Inn. Friday, Feb. 16, is a Chef’s Signature Series with samples of some of the best local food and drink. Saturday, Feb. 17, is a dance party with Motor Booty Affair. These 21+ events are bound to sell out again, so get moving! (*\$30 per night or \$50 for both nights; freeportusa.com*)

4

Old Orchard Beach Winter Carnival

Friday, Feb. 23, starting at 4 p.m. & Saturday, Feb. 24, until 6 p.m.

Downtown Old Orchard Beach

Old Orchard Street is transformed into a giant sledding hill, the highlight of this free, family-friendly winter carnival. They've even got sledding tubes. No excuses. (oob365.com)

6

Girls Rock! Awards 2018

Friday, March 2, 6-9 p.m.

Maine Girls Academy, 631 Stevens Ave., Portland

Join Hardy Girls Healthy Women and National Youth Poet Laureate Amanda Gorman for a catered evening celebrating six Maine girls for their personal, academic, athletic, humanitarian and straight-up awesome achievements at this annual Girls Rock! Awards. (\$40; ghw.org)



Photo by Amy Paradysz



Courtesy photo by Dave Mention

7

Go Red for Women

Tuesday, March 13, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Holiday Inn by the Bay, 88 Spring St., Portland

Everything about the American Heart Association Go Red for Women Luncheon is big: 650 people are hoping to raise more than \$350,000 for research and education aimed at fighting heart disease and stroke here in Maine. There's a silent auction, healthy lunch and inspiring speakers. Wear red for women! (\$125; mainegoredluncheon.ahaevents.org)

5

Connected Movement Dance

Saturday, Feb. 24, 7-9 p.m.

Engine, 128 Main St., Biddeford

You don't have to know "how" to dance to enjoy this workshop with Resurgence Dance Company of Midcoast Maine. It's about connected, improvised movement and dancing as a community. (\$10 at the door/\$8 in advance; resurgencedance.vpweb.com)



8

Bangor On Tap

Saturday, March 3, 1-9 p.m. (two admission sessions)

Cross Insurance Arena, 515 Main St., Bangor

Sample some of the 100+ craft beers from more than 50 breweries from Maine and elsewhere. There will also be food and live music. (\$30; americaontap.com/event/bangor-on-tap)

Queen Bee

Heather Ashby's recently opened coworkHERS, a coworking space designed for women

Written by Mercedes Grandin | Photographed by Molly Haley

Heather Ashby wanted to create a safe and welcoming work space, idea hub and community for women. She also needed to fill the enormous space she and her husband purchased at the historic Portland Masonic building at 411 Congress St. The challenge, as Ashby saw it, was to get people in the door. “What if it was a destination and they had a reason to come? What if it were a women’s-only space, a social club with activities and amenities?”

Ashby’s initial brainstorming began at her family’s kitchen table and grew from there into coworkHERS, a coworking space for women in Portland. Ashby, 50, had a career in marketing and also opened a resale clothing shop in Portland in 2012 before selling her half of the partnership to work for her husband’s real estate business. She was excited about this new idea, but wondered if the model had been tried before.

With help from a Google search, Ashby found several other thriving coworking social club spaces for women, including The Wing in New York City, which had a wait list of 200 women pre-launch and 3,000 women post-launch. The Wing became so popular it opened two more locations in the NYC area. One idea Ashby adapted from The Wing was a library of books by and about women. She also admired The Hivery in Mill Valley, California, for its modern décor and welcoming space, as well as workshops and “the sisterhood it creates” through shared community. Ashby envisioned coworkHERS as female-focused space that caters to women, but welcomes anyone who feels like coworkHERS is where they feel most comfortable, safe, motivated and inspired, she says. “Once I knew I was able to do this, and most likely it would work, I was off and running.”

She decided on the image of The Queen Bee for her logo and WorkHER Bee theme as a concept that would convey the idea of powerful, strong women working together. Currently, coworkHERS offers four different memberships: Queen Bee for \$300 a month, which include a dedicated work space in a shared office; WorkHER Bee for \$100 a month, which includes access to all floating work spaces; Honey Bee for \$85 a month, a discounted membership offered to seniors, veterans and mil-



The coworkHERS space includes floating workspaces, meeting rooms and lounges, plus things like printing services, coffee, wine and snacks. The beehive theme at coworkHERS—including The Queen Bee logo and hive-like decor—conveys the idea of powerful, strong women working together.



support women and the important work they do—work that invariably improves the lives of others,” says Sarah Skillin Woodard, executive director of Emerge Maine. “We couldn’t be more excited to be part of the coworkHERS community.”

Following a grand opening party last Dec. 1, coworkHERS opened its doors for working members on Dec. 4. So far, Ashby says she has had a positive response from the community. “People, male and female, are very supportive and grateful that I have opened up a space where women can feel comfortable and find the support they need to be successful.”

“I joined because I needed a beautiful space to hold meetings and classes for my female clients. coworkHERS has the right resources and ambiance for my needs,” says Kat Frati, founder of grownupgirl.com.

When it first opened, coworkHERS had 22 enrolled members, and Ashby has kept the number low in an effort to gauge how crowded the work space is during different times of the day. “I don’t want to have people mad that they don’t have a place to work when they arrive. As we move along in the next few months, I will probably find that I can add more members to the roster and be comfortable with that. I know coworking memberships fluctuate and I have to keep that in mind, too.”

The launch happened to coincide with news coverage and a growing national movement to expose sexual harassment of women in the workplace. “I was well underway with the space buildout, but it’s ironic and telling of the climate we are in, that this is something women want

itary service members and includes access to all floating work spaces; and Baby Bee for \$40 a month, which includes 20 flexible hours a month and is offered to students ages 18–22. All memberships also include access to meeting rooms and lounges, events, printing services, daily locker use, a mailing address, coffee/wine/snacks, 24/7/365 key card access and a membership profile on the coworkHERS website.

Members also enjoy the company and expertise of women with diverse professional experiences in an inspiring environment.

“So far, we have a digital marketing strategist, a comedian, a dancer, some life coaches, consultants, several nonprofits, an attorney, a real estate broker...it’s a great mixed bag,” Ashby says. “We can have some great conversations and find ways to support each other personally and professionally.”

“Our organization is a natural fit for coworkHERS as we both strive to

more than ever. I didn't have a crystal ball, just followed my gut," she says.

Ashby has faced some challenges launching the business, including the need to, as she says, "break out of my shell a little and reach out to people." She's had to network to find the right people to conduct workshops and events in the space. "I want to have diversity and depth in the group (to) really inspire each other. I think through the members themselves we can find a lot of ways to help each other, but having external experts come in and conduct seminars, roundtable discussions and workshops will ultimately help the most," she says. Those range from a social media series and vision board workshops and pop-up events featuring local artisans and wellness professionals.

Marketing, who she met at a SCORE workshop. "If it weren't for SallyAnn's help on the website and email marketing, I would be in trouble. It's hard to meet with contractors, get quotes from vendors and design the space...it's a lot to do by yourself."

Ashby also advises relying on friends and family for help; her best friend lived with her for a month before the opening of co-workHERS to help Ashby with the day-to-day tasks of being a working mother. Ultimately, Ashby says, "surround yourself with amazing women and you can't fail."

Ashby's goal for the future is to physically expand co-workHERS beyond the existing space into the adjoining space once occupied by the Maine Red Claws basketball team, as well as to occupy the sixth floor of the building. "We have amazing



Ashby's advice to others starting a business is to find a mentor and use the resources available in Portland, such as SCORE, a nonprofit dedicated to the formation, growth and success of small businesses.

"Go to SCORE and find a mentor. It's free and hugely helpful. Then take all the free workshops SCORE offers and meet people and learn as much as you can," Ashby says.

SCORE helped Ashby write her business plan, which "forced me to think through every single detail of the business, and it's a great tool to refer back to, especially when you get frustrated and lose sight of what your original vision was in the first place." Ashby revised her draft business plan seven times, until "the passion I had when I started the process came back."

Ashby's mentor to support her launch has been SallyAnn Gray, founder and marketing strategist at Verve Digital

views of the water all the way to Portland Head Light and views of City Hall, Back Cove and downtown," she says. Fortunately, her husband is her landlord, and they're working on the vision together. "The build-out will be expensive, but if we fill the other remaining vacancies in the building, my husband agreed to help fund the expansion. I am hoping to do some crowdfunding to help raise the additional funds, and since so many people are behind this endeavor, it might be possible to get some of those people to help support this."

Ashby also hopes to open up the space to the public for ticketed and free events.

Mercedes Grandin is a freelance writer, editor, English teacher and tutor. She lives in Brunswick with her husband Erik and their chocolate Labrador Fozzie.



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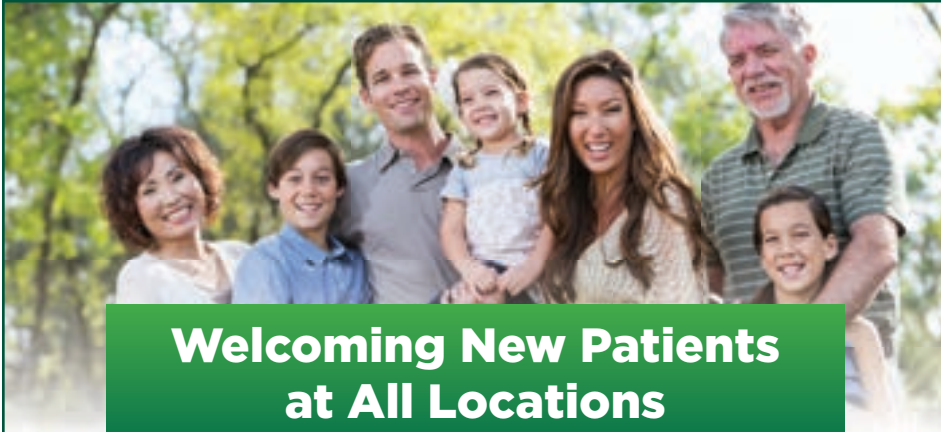
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Everything Right



Active and healthy, Jennifer Hill isn't the kind of person who has a heart attack. **But she did.**

Written by Patricia McCarthy | Photographed by Lauryn Hottinger

When Jennifer Hill of Yarmouth started having “a weird, subtle, hard-to-describe feeling” in her body every few days, it was easy for her to ignore it.

She was a fit, busy, 43-year-old wife and mom juggling a full-time job in human resources for L.L. Bean with coaching her two daughters' sports teams. She skied, ran, cycled, kayaked, ate a diet rich in vegetables and low in processed foods and sugar.

So, she reasoned, those annoying feelings she was experiencing had to be nothing. She chalked them up to a poor night's sleep or something she'd eaten. Only in hindsight, after having a heart attack in July 2016, did Hill realize what a mistake it had been to disregard what her body was telling her.

“Looking back, I can see that I had the first symptoms a couple of months before, but it wasn't one of those things you could easily pinpoint,” she explains. “The feeling was just a strange overall body sensation, tough to put into words.”

As the sensation continued, she tried to detect a pattern, realizing it didn't happen much at work, where she was more sedentary, and it did occur on weekends, when she was active. Eventually, though, it started happening “anytime I was exerting myself—even getting up at work to go to the printer or the bathroom.”

“I noted one night that my resting heartbeat on my Fitbit was really high, like as if I were out for a run or a jog—130 instead of 60.”

The next evening, as she was loading kayaks onto her car, she didn't feel well.

“I got agitated with the girls and went inside to calm down, and that's when I got the telltale signs. I started sweating, felt my heart palpitating. And then pain in my hand. And my jaw started to hurt. I told my husband he needed to take me to the ER, that something was really not right. In my mind, it wasn't a heart issue even then though.”

At Maine Medical Center, tests showed the presence of troponin, a protein released into the bloodstream when there is damage to the heart. She was admitted to the cardiac wing and awakened at 4 a.m. by a cardiologist telling her she'd had a “pretty significant” heart attack.

“I was just in disbelief, in shock,” Hill recalls.

She underwent a cardiac catheterization to diagnose the cause of the attack but had a reaction and the procedure had to be halted. A second catheterization two days later revealed 80 percent blockage in her anterior descending artery and a fairly rare kind of plaque called fibrous plaque (not the type typically seen with high cholesterol). A stent was inserted, and she was diagnosed with fibromuscular dysplasia, an artery-narrowing condition that typically affects the brain or kidneys and not the heart.

Leaving the hospital a week after she first arrived, Hill says she felt a lot of apprehension.

“There is nothing to control or prevent this from happening, and it was a lot to process. I was thinking, how will I exercise? What if this happens again?”

Going to Maine Med's Turning Point cardiac rehab center in Scarborough eased a lot of her anxiety.

“I was hooked up and monitored so that I was working out in a very controlled environment. It gave me peace of mind that my heart was doing OK when I was exercising, and after a few weeks, I graduated.”

She returned to work just a week after leaving the hospital. Soon after, L.L. Bean happened to be sponsoring a heart

walk to raise money for the American Heart Association. Hill added her story to a fundraising web page, and to her surprise, she quickly raised \$1,000. Since then, she's been spreading her message at AHA and other events.

“In the beginning, there was a kind of PTSD. Any little thing I felt, I'd be completely scared that something was happening. But that has subsided. I feel great now. Sometimes it's like nothing even happened, which is strange. But I'm reminded when taking my medications every morning and night.”

“Even if you're really healthy, you have to listen to your body.”

Patricia McCarthy is a longtime writer and editor. She has three daughters, lives in Cape Elizabeth, and also has a photography business (patriciamccarthy.com).



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Offbeat

“Electric lady” Kristina Kentigian is grateful for more time

Written by Amy Paradysz | Photographed by Lauryn Hottinger



Kristina Kentigian of Westbrook was 33, newly married and singing backup for local acts Spose and Kenya Hall when the thing she'd been warned of all her life started happening.

“I had some gigs, and I could tell as I was singing that I was losing breath and getting dizzy,” Kentigian says. It was, she knew, a sign of heart failure.

This had happened before. In elementary school, Kentigian passed out during physical fitness testing and was eventually diagnosed with hypertrophic cardiomyopathy, a congenital heart defect. So she couldn't play sports for fear that she would overexert herself, but other than that, she had a normal childhood, she says.

“Sometimes I became dizzy or short of breath. But it wasn't until 2013 that it took a turn,” Kentigian says. “My cardiologist said my heart was struggling to keep to pace. It was dropping beats.”

A pacemaker was the likely remedy, but Kentigian wanted to try a change in medication first. Meanwhile, her attention was on her father, Martin Kentigian, who had been diagnosed with an ear infection and then, in a sudden turn, lung cancer.

“He went to the emergency room at Mercy Hospital, and they told us he had three weeks to live,” Kentigian says. “At that very same time, I started feeling faint and like I was going to pass out. My sister was looking at me and could tell my face had gone completely

white and my lips were turning blue.”

Kentigian was already in an emergency room, but her heart team was at Maine Medical Center. Kristina's husband drove her those few miles.

“I remember in the car ride feeling like I wasn't going to make it to the ER,” Kentigian says. “What was going through my mind was my dad dying and if I died right then, what would that do to my family?”

By the time she arrived at Maine Med, her heart was beating at only half the normal capacity.

“My heart was stopping for seconds at a time,” Kentigian says. “It was failing me.”

She remembers being in the intensive care unit and blacking out repeatedly, terrified that each time would be her last. An emergency pacemaker was inserted in her neck.

“It's just wires hovering until they can place a pacemaker in the heart,” Kentigian says. “My dad was going into hospice right then, and I felt like my time with him was getting robbed the longer I was in the hospital.”

One day later, she had a “permanent” pacemaker installed and within a few days was able to be at her father's bedside.

On her second visit with her father at the hospice, she got the news that her maternal grandfather, Ken Whitney, was entering the same facility. “His cancer had taken a sudden turn. We thought he had six months,” Kentigian says. “It was



Kristina Kentigian is “super-proud” of her scar as a survivor.

strange, because we had both sides of our family there, while I was also dealing with a little post-traumatic stress from my situation.”

That Christmas was spent at hospice—where both Martin and Ken died within days of each other.

“I struggled the first year with what I would consider fear and anxiety of feeling like I didn’t have enough time,” Kentigian says.

That January, Kentigian met with Dr. Martin Maron, a world-renowned HCM specialist from Boston, and he advised that she have her pacemaker replaced with a defibrillator in case she had an arrhythmia. So, three months after her first “permanent” pacemaker was installed, she underwent surgery again.

“Before all this happened, I was really naïve and didn’t pay attention to my own heart condition very much,” Kentigian says, adding that she now connects with other people with HCM or a

pacemaker through Facebook and Instagram. “They know what it’s like to look healthy but have a really bad day when you really can’t do much, but other days when you can.”

About a year after becoming what she calls “an electric lady,” Kentigian got more

“I’m super-proud of my scar, because it shows what I’ve been through and survived.”

difficult news.

“They said that my heart was not strong enough to have children,” she says. “That was

a hard pill to swallow, especially because for a long time I had been told, ‘as long as you don’t have problems...’”

Kentigian and her husband are considering adoption, but not quite yet.

“We decided we’d take time enjoying each other, enjoying life and traveling a little more,” Kentigian says, talking about a trip to New Orleans. “There’s a little adjustment period when your plan has been shifted, not of your choice.”

Kentigian works at Highland Avenue Greenhouse in Scarborough and writes music she records with music partner Kyle Friday. They are about to release their first record—under the R&B/soul duo name Electric Heart.

Kentigian’s “electric heart” will eventually need to be replaced.

“But I have this amazing team of people taking care of me,” she says. “It’s good to be grateful for time. It’s precious. I appreciate things way more than I used to. I’m super-proud of my scar, because it shows what I’ve been through and survived. It’s a reminder, when I see it.”

Amy Paradysz is a freelance writer from Scarborough.



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Boom

Corinne Bailey is finding her way again after a stroke four years ago

Written by Patricia McCarthy | Photographed by Lauryn Hottinger



When asked the ages of her daughters, Corinne Bailey pauses and sighs.

“Ahh, numbers are so hard!” says the mom of Olivia, 14, and Violet, 10. And asked to spell her own name, her answer further reveals the lingering effects of a severe stroke she suffered four years ago: “Oh, and sometimes words are even harder!”

Bailey wants the world to know that strokes can—and do—happen at any age. Violet had a stroke right after being born (with no long-term effects), and it happened to Bailey even though she was healthy, fit and just 42 at the time.

She says she doesn’t want anyone—especially women, who she feels are more apt to dismiss things when it comes to their health—to delay going to a hospital if they experience anything like what she endured.

On the last day of a February 2014 vacation in Rangeley with her husband Walt and their girls, Bailey happily skied all morning. A few hours later, as she was driving home to Yarmouth, a “stabbing—oh, my God, like nothing you can imagine” headache hit her.

One minute she was fine, the next in debilitating pain. She asked Olivia to call Walt, who was in another car, to tell him to pull over. They went to a local doctor’s office, and the doctor did a neurological screening.

“I wasn’t having any other symptoms beyond this unbelievably painful headache,” Bailey explains. “And he said, if Advil helps, you’re fine, and if it doesn’t, it could be an aneurysm. I still wonder why I didn’t ask more—maybe the pain was clouding my judgment!—but I left saying ‘OK, I think I’m fine.’ I knew I couldn’t drive, and we were nowhere near Portland, so we got a hotel room, thinking if I could just get a hot shower and lie down, this stabbing pain in my head would go away.”

When they headed out again, though, Bailey started to vomit and couldn’t stop. They bee-lined to Franklin Memorial Hospital in Farmington, where a CT scan revealed blood in her brain.

“I had an aneurysm rupture. It was a hemorrhagic stroke, which is less common—30 to 40 percent of people who have a rupture like this die.”

Bailey was taken by ambulance to Maine Medical Center in Portland, where surgeons were able to treat her by inserting platinum coils into the aneurysm to keep blood from getting into it. Then it was time to watch and see.

“They were monitoring all the time to make sure I wouldn’t have va-

sospasms (sudden constrictions of blood vessels that stop blood flow), and a few days later, I did start having them.”

Bailey was given medications to stop the vasospasms and keep her blood pressure high and blood moving. Any exertion would throw that off, so she was confined to bed.

“My husband, parents, sisters were always there, supporting me. The kids had a lot of good support, so they dealt with it very well.”

After about a week of the vasospasms, Bailey’s doctors did an angiogram to put medicine directly into her brain.

“I threw up, passed out, and when I woke up and opened my eyes, they all were looking at me like they were just so happy I was alive. Basically, I had more strokes that took my language away. I couldn’t talk or read or write, and my whole right side of my body was affected. My face was droopy.

“Eventually, the vasospasms finally stopped. The doctors worked really hard to keep me alive. The hard work was then on me.”

After three weeks at Maine Med, she spent a week in a rehab center, getting speech, occupational and physical therapy.

Four years later, Bailey, trained as a speech therapist but not working now, continues painstaking efforts to improve her language abilities. The right side of her body is still affected by the strokes, but “not in a way that keeps me from doing stuff.”

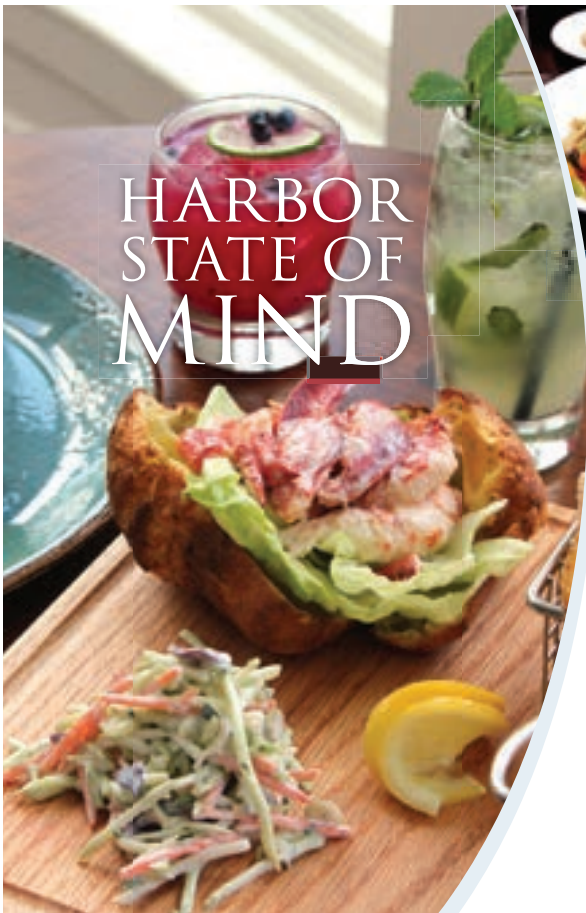
“I’m not as good as I once was with many things, and there are some things I can’t do. I’ve had to work really hard to get my reading and writing back, especially. It’s still challenging. I’ve had to find a different path. That’s been hard to do, and I’m still figuring it out as I go along. But I am figuring it out as I go along!

“I try not to get sad about what I can’t do, because I get to be here for my daughters. I’m lucky that I’m alive.”

Her advice to others after her life-changing experiences is to take action if something strange happens to your body.

“A stroke was so far off my radar, but this wasn’t a normal headache. It was piercing. Just BOOM! If you have symptoms like that, you have to go to the hospital immediately.”

Patricia McCarthy is a longtime writer and editor. She has three daughters, lives in Cape Elizabeth, and also has a photography business (patriciamccarthy.com).



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HEART MATTERS



A New Normal

Healed from her unexpected heart attack, Kim Cowperthwaite still struggles to explain the inexplicable

Written by Kim Cowperthwaite

It's 3 a.m. and I am somewhere between sleep and wakefulness. My mind starts tossing this theory around about what caused my heart attack: It must have been something in the tap water...bacteria...some sort of unfilterable pollutant...something that has molecules that bind to migrating endometrial cells and causes them to adhere to the arteries of women and BINGO! A bulge and a tear in the arterial wall, blockage, heart attack.

It's been almost four years since my heart attack, and still my mind tries to make sense of the inexplicable label: spontaneous coronary artery dissection. It cobbles together bits of information I have collected from reading medical research, talking with my doctors and maybe from reading sci-fi. Most of my theories would be nonsensical to scientists, but it's the best I can do as a writer and English teacher. Besides, even the world's top cardiologists and researchers have been unable to figure out what exactly causes a healthy woman's heart to tear apart.

Spontaneous coronary artery dissection, or SCAD, is an uncommon cause of heart attack or cardiac arrest not related to coronary artery disease, and it happens primarily to women with no risk factors. With SCAD, a tear spontaneously occurs in the lining of a coronary artery and, sadly, can be fatal, especially if symptoms of chest pain are not taken seriously by first-responders and clinicians. I am very lucky that, on the night of May 7, 2014, there was a team in the emergency department of Maine Medical Center that swiftly and correctly diagnosed my SCAD.

My story is much the same as the other

women I have met and chatted with online who have survived a SCAD. We start our stories with "out of the blue" and "I thought it was nothing." My symptoms began when I tasted chili that I was stirring on the stovetop. The spiciness made me cough hard and I swallowed a gulp of ginger ale as I was coughing. A feeling as if I had to burp welled up in my chest and around my back. My throat began to burn, I presumed from the spicy fresh peppers I had just tossed into the pot. I patted my chest a bit and walked around the house with the strange sensation, wondering why I could not get the burp up. I sat down on my bed for a while, but began to feel panicky and a tingling sensation started in my left arm. I'll never forget my son saying, "Mom, those are symptoms of a heart attack." My husband noticed that I looked gray and grabbed the car keys. Racing me to the hospital, despite my protests of "But I just have to burp!" was the first step that saved my life.

To be told I was having a heart attack by the team in the emergency department of the hospital felt surreal. I was 47 years old, had low cholesterol, exercised, was a healthy weight and ate a mostly vegetarian diet. At the catheterization lab, an extensive spiral dissection in my left anterior descending artery was identified and I was off for open heart surgery and an emergency coronary artery bypass graft.

I am grateful that I do not remember much past this point except my surgeon Reed Quin smiling at me afterward when I was still quite groggy and saying matter-of-factly, "Well, we fixed you!"

They did. They fixed me. I healed.

On one level, that's the end of my story. My body healed rapidly. I took the summer to complete cardiac rehab. I walked, I rested, I meditated. I prayed and visualized my heart beating healthy and my bypass graft functioning smoothly. I connected with supportive people and doctors and educated myself on everything related to SCAD. I have even moved past a tremendous amount of residual fear that I believe all heart attack survivors must face. With the exception of the large "zipper" scar that runs down my chest, you would not know I had heart surgery.

But on another level, my story continues. There are pieces of the plot that are my "new normals." I will always be monitored by a cardiologist—one in Maine and a SCAD specialist in Boston. I stay tuned in to the rhythms and sensations in my heart, especially when I exercise. And because SCAD remains idiopathic, cause unknown, I continue to read the research and scholarly articles that are related to women's heart health. The 3 a.m. theories continue to pop into my mind.

Most of all, I am now compelled to educate every health professional I meet about SCAD. While emergency protocols to take all cardiac symptoms seriously in all people are becoming more common and awareness of SCAD is increasing, there is still a long way to go to get the message out: healthy women can have heart attacks.

Recently I met an emergency department nurse who works on the West Coast. I asked, "Do you know what spontaneous coronary artery dissection is?"

"Yeah, it means you're dead," she replied.

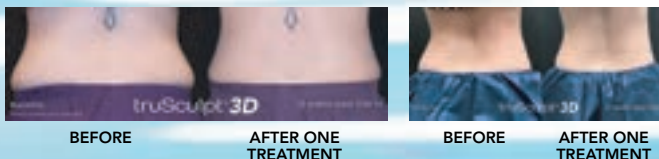
"Well, I'm not." And I told my story again.

Kim Cowperthwaite is a writer, an English teacher, and a survivor of a heart attack caused by Spontaneous Coronary Artery Dissection. She is 51 and lives in Windham. She is writer of the blog Every Open Heart.

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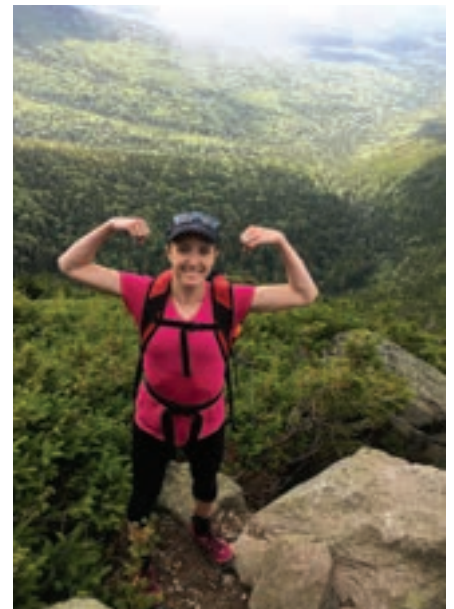
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TOP: An avid runner, Alli Siulinski opted to have surgery in 2009 to repair a hole between two chambers of her heart. In 2010, she finished second in the NCAA Division III Indoor Championships, covering 800 meters in two minutes, nine seconds

BOTTOM: Alli Siulinski doesn't run competitively anymore, but surgery to repair a heart defect nearly a decade ago allows her to be as active as she'd like to be.

RIGHT: Alli Siulinski, pictured with her husband Jack, had no idea she had a congenital heart defect until a routine physical when she was 19.
Courtesy photos

Run for it

Alli Siulinski was a college student and competitive runner when she found out she had a congenital heart defect

Written by Emma Bouthillette

“Too many people are caught up thinking if they have heart disease, they will know. They will feel it; there will be pain or awareness that there’s something wrong,” says Alli Siulinski. “But that isn’t always true.”

Siulinski, a competitive runner in her teens, merely thought her speedy heart rate was a sign of a race well run, not a congenital heart defect. Back in 2009, when she transferred to Keene State for her sophomore year of undergraduate studies, Siulinski needed to pass a physical exam to join the college’s track team. At 19, this was the first time she heard a doctor express concern about her heart and order further tests. An EKG picked up that she had an atrial septal defect—there was a hole in the wall between the two top chambers of the heart.

“At that moment, I realized I am not invincible,” says Siulinski. “My first question after that was, ‘What’s next? What are the challenges?’” Soon after her diagnosis, the cardiologist presented her with two options—continue living with the defect and be ever cautious of her level of exertion or undergo a surgical corrective procedure to close the hole.

“I knew I wanted to continue running, give myself a fighting chance,” says Siulinski. She opted for the surgery.

In simple terms, her doctor inserted a closure device into the hole through an artery. While the procedure was not open-heart surgery, it did lay up Siulinski for a few months in terms of her track career.

“It was hard for me to hold back,” she says. “I wanted to push myself past what I knew I should, but I also knew if I wanted to come back and do it right without complications, I needed to be patient and take it slow.”

When Siulinski was given the green light to run again, her patience in recovery paid off. She shaved 10 seconds off her half-mile pace. In 2010, she finished second in the NCAA Division III Indoor Championships, covering 800 meters in 2 minutes, 9 seconds.

“With the condition I had, oxygenated blood



was skipping a cycle. My extremities weren’t getting enough oxygen,” she explains. “Having a fully functioning (though partially bionic) heart is the reason why I was able to get to the next level in competition.”

Now 28 and living in Portland with her husband, Siulinski no longer runs competitively. She stays active, but has turned her dedication to volunteering with the American Heart Association. Most recently she volunteered at Little Heart Hero Day. While some may consider Siulinski’s own journey inspirational, she was in awe with the children attending this particular event.

“These kids are so strong,” she says, commenting on how they are growing up knowing about their heart conditions whereas she only learned in her late teens. “You realize they are going to accomplish amazing things in their life even though they had this struggle since day one. They’re just so inspiring.”

Emma Bouthillette, a Biddeford native, is the author of “A Brief History of Biddeford.” She loves a good book and walking the beach with her corgi. www.emmabouthillette.com

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MY STORY

LIFTED UP

Ashley Marston was at a low two years ago. Now she's found her voice, her confidence and her independence, thanks to a boss who believed in her. She wrote to us about Jamie Cole and the story warmed our hearts, so we're sharing her story, in Ashley's own words, with you.

Written by Ashley Marston
Photographed by Lauryn Hottinger



Jamie Cole, owner of Maine Home Care Solutions in Scarborough, and employee Ashley Marston go over paperwork at the company's home office.

WHAT'S YOUR STORY?

At Maine Women Magazine, we want to hear your stories about the people who inspire you, the challenges you face, the way you see the world.

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In these pages.**

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Two years ago I moved to Biddeford from Rumford with nothing—no money, not even a place to live. I was staying with my fiancé and three kids in a room at his nana's house. I felt at my worst. Nana told me about a job she thought I would really be good at: taking care of people like my aunt, who is disabled. The job was for a personal support specialist, and she told me to call Jamie Cole.

I was scared, but I called. Jamie asked me all kinds of questions and then said, "Ashley, I think you're going to do great at a job like this." She asked to meet the following week, so I took my last five bucks and put it in my gas tank and went to meet her. I walked in the room and there stood this tall, beautiful woman. She explained every little aspect of the job and took the time to answer every question I had. She blew me away with how smart and compassionate she was. I asked her why she got into this kind of work, and she told me about her sweet sister, who is disabled, and how her family worked hard to take care of her and how they wanted to see other people cared for who couldn't get good help or couldn't find a good PSS. She wanted to give everyone that opportunity. It struck me that this was going to be a great career opportunity and that working for someone who truly cared was where I wanted to be.

So I started the job caring for my aunt and great-grandmother, who also really needed good services. Between the work and getting my PSS certificate, which Jamie helped me get, I felt like I had accomplished so much. I felt like a strong and independent woman. I felt like I had a purpose. Jamie helped me do that. She helped me find answers to every question, and she helped me balance work and family. She would even answer my calls at 8 at night if I needed help. After a few months, I could afford my own place and got to buy a new car. I had things I worked hard for, and I had money to provide for my three kids and fiancé. I felt so amazing.

A year after starting, I went to Nana's house one morning to take care of my aunt and grandmother, as always (Nana did a lot of work herself providing for them), but on this morning, Nana wasn't even able to get out of bed. Later that day she was rushed to the hospital.

For a week I stayed with my aunt and grandmother and did every little thing, working 70 hours and feeling tired and upset and not knowing if Nana was going to be okay. I



called Jamie to let her know and she came right to the house to check on me and see if I needed any help. I had it under control and she saw that and made sure I knew what an amazing job I was doing. She made me feel like what I was doing was what Nana would want.

A week later, Nana passed away, leaving a very big hole in my heart.

That week, I went to get my check and I opened it. Jamie had paid me for every single minute of overtime. She gave me money to get my kids clothes for the funeral and she made sure that Nana had a giant bouquet of roses at her funeral—all on her own dime, all out of her family’s pocket.

Nothing to this day meant as much as that did to me.

After Nana passed away, we had to move my gram and my aunt to my uncle’s house and I continued my care for them there. And then another blow: Not even a month later, my gram passed away in her sleep. I felt so bad and hurt and mad because there was nothing I could do. I felt like I hadn’t done my job well, and I called Jamie. You know what she said? She told me that I made a huge impact in Gram’s life, and that I had done my job above and beyond and Gram passing at the age of 87 was such a full life. She made me feel so much better, and again she made sure my gram had beautiful flowers, too.

The night of the funeral, as I was coming home with tears rolling down my cheeks, a flower guy walks up to me and asks if I’m Ashley Marston.



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“SHE GAVE ME A VOICE. AND I HAVE SEEN HER DO THIS FOR SO MANY OTHER WOMEN, GIVING THEM A CHANCE AND HELPING THEM REACH THEIR POTENTIAL.”

Jamie had sent me a bunch of beautiful plants and a card saying how sorry she was and how proud she was of me. I still have those plants, and when I look at them I see how much I have grown every day, thanks to an amazing lady who saw so much more in me than I did myself.

Six months after Gram passed, my aunt decided to go to a home, and I took a break for a few weeks. Jamie called me one day and said she would like me to help her more on the business end of things—doing intakes and home visits and helping to hire new personal support specialists, since she knew I would know what to look for. I was blown away. This smart, strong business woman wanted me to do an important job like hers? I said yes and started right away, learning how to fill out the paperwork and talk to new people. All my shyness went out the window. Jamie made me speak up and not let anyone question if I could do my job or not.

I have been a supervisor for a year now. I have a title I am proud of, and I have so much more than I ever did. Jamie gave me wings. She gave me a voice. And I have seen her do this for so many other women, giving them a chance and helping them reach their potential. Every time I meet with one of our PSSs for the first time, their stories echo mine.

Jamie is the greatest boss I have ever had, but she’s also one of the greatest friends I could ask for (she also puts the foot down when needed!). She’s the strongest, most moral, most empowering woman I know, and I am so grateful to have her in my life.

Ashley Marston, 30, was born and raised in Maine. She lives with her three kids and fiancé in Biddeford.





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ASK YOUR DOCTOR

We are our own best advocates when it comes to our health, so it's up to us to take care of ourselves and talk to our doctors about our questions and concerns. Of course, we don't know what we don't know, so we asked Jennifer Monti, MD, MPH, director of The Innovation Cohort at Maine Medical Center and co-director of both Cardiac Rehabilitation and Prevention at Maine Health Cardiology, for guidance on what to ask your doctor, what heart symptoms to be aware of, and why trusting your gut when something feels off is so important.

AM I MOVING ENOUGH?

The two most-important topics to discuss with your physician are your level of physical activity and the quality of your diet, Dr. Monti says. "In the era of Fitbits, we are mistaking activity for exercise. We know that the ideal 'dose' of exercise to prevent the development of a range of cardiovascular diseases is 150 to 210 minutes of exercise per week." That's about 30 minutes a day, five to six days a week.

WHAT TWEAKS CAN I MAKE TO MY DIET?

Diet is an essential part of taking care of your heart—and your family, says Dr. Monti. "A balanced diet that derives the majority of its protein from plant-based sources is a great place to start. The average person makes 226 food decisions per day. Finding a way to change or improve even 10 percent of these choices can make a large difference. Also, it is important to recognize that women make the majority of decisions as to what food comes into the home. Those choices will have a ripple effect on the overall health of a family."

WHAT ARE MY NUMBERS?

"It is important to know what your blood pressure, cholesterol level, weight and hemoglobin A1c are. These numbers are general and not useful in isolation, so they should be discussed in the context of your overall health with a skillful provider." While great for screening, Dr. Monti notes that these numbers help inform a realistic plan to drive down the risk of significant cardiovascular problems.

WHAT ARE MY RISK FACTORS?

"In the vast majority of cases, healthy diet, regular exercise and abstaining completely from smoking can fend off several varieties of cardiovascular disease. Genetics is generally over-emphasized as a risk factor. Each time I have a patient tell me 'heart attacks run in my family,' I encourage that patient to think about what else runs in the family. The food ecosystem, the physical environment, levels of exercise and stress—these tend to be more important shared characteristics than genetics."

WHAT SYMPTOMS SHOULD I LOOK OUT FOR?

"Symptoms of obstructive coronary disease are highly variable and can range from crushing chest pain to dizziness and fatigue or a 'heartburn' like feeling. I am a big believer in the sixth sense. If you feel like something is 'off,' reach out for medical assistance."

"Truth is, all the prevention in the world may not completely mitigate the risk of coronary disease. We regularly do interventions in runners. Half of heart attacks happen in people with normal cholesterol. Vague symptoms are real symptoms; pursue them until you are satisfied your concerns have been addressed. Our science is not perfect. Intuition matters."

Dr. Jennifer Monti is director of The Innovation Cohort at Maine Medical Center and co-director of both Cardiac Rehabilitation and Prevention at Maine Health Cardiology.

THE HEART NUMBERS



No. 1

Heart disease (including coronary heart disease, hypertension and stroke) remains to be the No. 1 cause of death in the US.

64%

Almost two-thirds (64%) of women who die suddenly of coronary heart disease have no previous symptoms.

80%

of heart disease deaths can be prevented with education and action.

54%

Heart attacks go unrecognized in women 54% of the time.

Stroke

1 in 5 women has a stroke at some point in her life

Stroke is the No. 3 cause of death in women (No. 4 in men)

Women have more strokes than men, and stroke kills more women than men

According to the American Heart Association



SWEET HEART

*Celebrate Valentine's Day with your better half
or friends who warm your heart*

Written by Bailey O'Brien

The holiday of paper hearts and red roses is upon us once again. While you can't go wrong with a romantic dinner date for two (particularly at one of Portland's esteemed restaurants) or a feel-good movie night with friends, there are plenty of other festive Valentine's Day activities, if you only think outside the heart-shaped chocolate box. Whether you're one-half of a couple or surrounded by your closest friends, here are a few ways to spread some love while having a blast.

Go off the grid for the weekend

Sure, the temperature mid-February in Maine may be sub-freezing, but that's no reason to stay inside. If you and your partner are the outdoorsy types, pack a hiking backpack, strap on your snowshoes or cross-country skis and set off for a Valentine's Day weekend among the trees at Maine Huts and Trails (mainehuts.org). Located north of Carrabassett Valley near Bigelow Preserve, this extensive trail network leads you through the rivers, lakes and woods nestled in the mountains of Western Maine. The four huts, each powered by sustainable energy, are huts in name only. They each boast grand wooden facades, heated bunkhouses and crackling wood stoves perfect for defrosting your toes after a day of exploring. Best of all, the food—included in your overnight stay—is notoriously awesome. After dinner, order a glass (or two) of wine or beer, and lounge in front of the fire with the person (or people) you love. A weekend stay costs \$138 per person per night, but if you can swing a midweek getaway, the rate drops to \$96.

Escape on an after-work adventure

If weekend excursions don't jive with your schedule (or your budget), plan an evening trip after work to a nearby mountain and enjoy some night skiing under the stars. Tucked away in Bridgton, just over an hour's drive from Portland, Shawnee Peak (shawneepark.com) is a small but popular mountain well-known for its night skiing scene. Get in as many runs as you can on their 19 night trails and then head back to the mountain pub, Blizzards, for some après-ski grub and libations. Midweek lift



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Top and above: Get off the grid this February with a trip to one of Maine Huts & Trails huts, where you can spend the day snowshoeing or reading by the fire. *Photos courtesy of Maine Huts & Trails*

Left: Beer and chocolate are perfectly paired during the “Beer Loves Chocolate” event at Allagash on Valentine’s Day. *Photo by Cait Bourgault*

tickets are just \$27 per person from 3:30 to 8 p.m.

Do you prefer skates to skis? Dress warmly and make your way to a nearby ice rink for a night rife with excuses to hold hands with your date. The Rink at Thompson's Point (therinkatthompsonspoint.com) in Portland has all the romantic ambiance you may be after—twinkling lights, a fire pit and a view of the water—but it's also an ideal destination for you and some friends. Either way, you can enjoy a glass of beer while warming up in the on-site yurt. Admission is \$8 per person and \$3 per skate rental, but on Valentine's Day, your date will get in for free. The rink is open from 3 to 9 p.m.

Drop into a dance class

Perhaps you and your friends want to avoid exposure to Maine's wintry elements. Why not warm up with an introduction to swing dance? Portland Swing Project (portlandswingproject.com) offers drop-in dance classes for newcomers every week. This Valentine's Day Wednesday-night



No partner need for an intro to swing class with Portland Swing Project. These classes are great date night, but they're also a chance to learn some neat new moves, whether you're on a date or not. *Photo courtesy of Portland Swing Project*

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Photo by Cait Bourgault

class will focus on Lindy Hop, one of the main ingredients of swing dance. Wear comfortable shoes and be prepared to meet new people; the instructors will have you switch partners as the class goes on. If this reveals swing to be your thing, enroll in one of Portland Swing Project's eight-week courses and master the art of this 1920s dance—or at least have a lot of fun trying. Wednesday classes are held at The Living Room in South Portland from 7:15 to 8:15 p.m. Drop-in rates are \$14 per person.

Indulge in a chocolate-y affair

If your sweet tooth will not be denied on this chocolate-centric holiday, celebrate with Maine's finest chocolates and brews. At Allagash Brewing Company's (allagash.com) annual Valentine's Day event, Beer Hearts Chocolate, you can treat yourself to artisan chocolates crafted by local chocolatiers to pair perfectly with four of Allagash's famously delicious brews. Indulge your palate and toast to your loved ones while swaying to live music in the tasting room. Purchase your tickets, \$15 per person, in advance to reserve some chocolate for you and your date. This event will run from 6 to 8 p.m. on Feb. 14 at Allagash in Portland.

Bailey O'Brien is a Portland-based freelance writer and editor. In her spare time, she can be found in tiny bookstores, on top of mountains or beside the ocean.

Celebrate Valentine's Day

A line of six Buick cars (two convertibles and four sedans) is parked on a snowy mountain road. In the background, there are snow-capped mountains and a faint rainbow in the sky. The text "It Must Be Love" is written in a white, cursive font. To the right, there are three red hearts and the Buick logo with the text "EXPERIENCE THE NEW BUICK".

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Winter skin

Keep your skin looking and feeling its best this winter

Written by Jenn Ross-Boshes

Winter is a challenging time for our skin. Cold, dry air can make maintaining a healthy complexion difficult, but it's not impossible with proper care. Here are some of my best expert tips for keeping your skin looking (and, most importantly, feeling) its best during the winter months.

Moisturize quickly

Applying your moisturizer within 60 seconds of washing your face or exiting the shower ensures maximum hydration. After just one minute lapses, bare skin will begin to dehydrate as dry air extracts its moisture. To best protect your skin, give it an instant boost with a hydrating toner immediately after washing. Toners that include ingredients such as lactic acid can hydrate and help ingredients penetrate better, while brightening and helping to restore the skin's pH after cleansing.

Increase essential fatty acids (EFAs)

They're the building blocks of healthy cellular membranes, which help produce the skin's natural oil barrier. Critical in keeping

skin hydrated, plumper and younger looking, EFAs are easily obtained by consuming foods like avocados, Brazilian nuts and fish or fish oil.

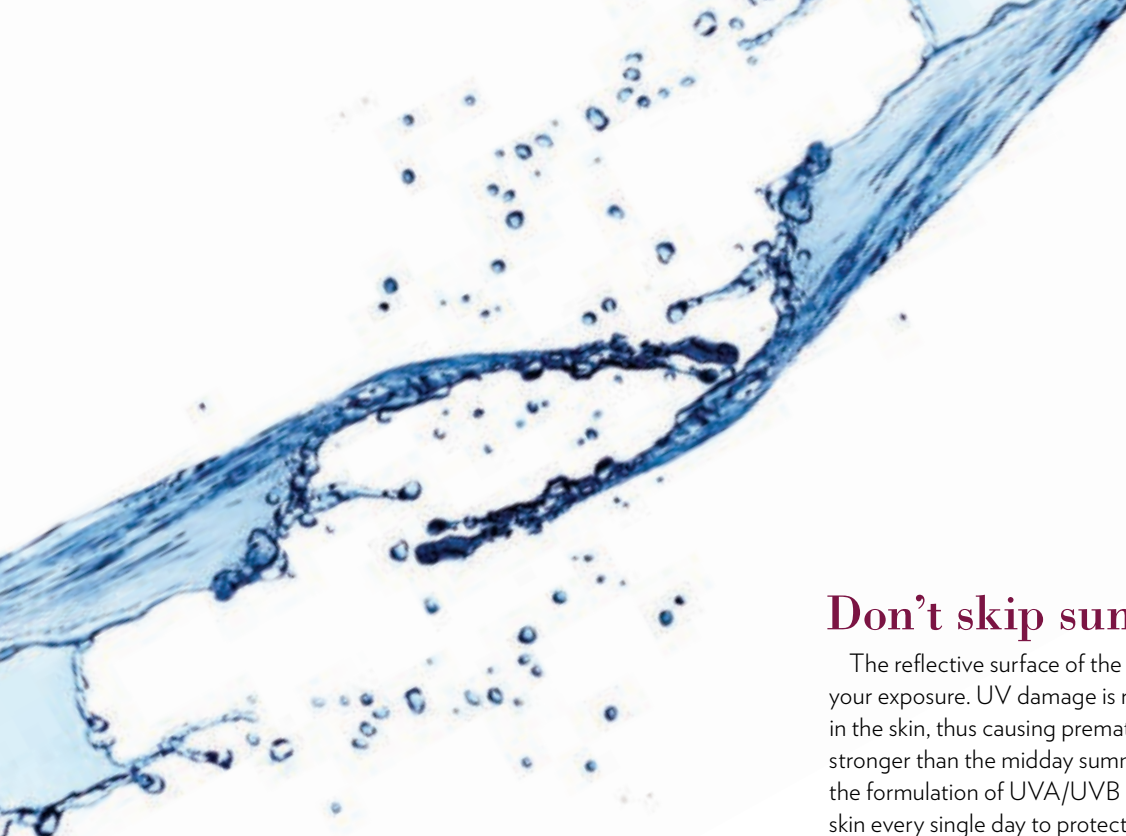
Intensify hydration

You may need more than what you're getting from your moisturizer. If your skin feels tight and dehydrated, consider a gentle enzyme exfoliant a couple of times each week. It'll address dead skin cells and brighten your skin, while allowing your product to better absorb into the skin. I also recommend adding a serum to your regime. Serums are applied directly to the skin after cleansing and toning. They contain more active ingredients that address specific individual skincare concerns, and they can be tremendously impactful. Oh, and you've heard it before, DRINK MORE WATER! It aids in detoxification, keeps skin clear, hydrated and reduces fine lines and wrinkles too.

Use a humidifier and/or diffuser

If you heat with a wood stove or if you feel the air in your envi-





ronment is dry, a humidifier is a great way to add moisture into the air and improve breathing. As an added treat, I love putting essential oils in a diffuser to help relax and unwind. Just remember to clean humidifiers and diffusers frequently with vinegar.

Implement vitamins as antioxidants

There are two levels of cellular damage that occur from free radicals that aggravate many skin conditions: oxidative stress and lipid peroxidation. Oxidative stress is the loss of both oil and water-soluble antioxidants with the immediate environment around the protective membrane. Vitamins A and C are essential as the building blocks of collagen. Collagen is major part of the weave of the skin, its principal function being to help maintain resilience, skin density and structural integrity in the tissues.

Beware of fragrances, dyes and fillers

Most synthetic fragrances and preservatives are derived from petroleum distillates or coal tar. A majority of these individual ingredients can cause a variety of reactions in the skin. Along with essential oils, all of these ingredients can be a real concern for those with sensitive skin. Carefully review the ingredients in your skin care products or speak to an expert for guidance.

Switch it up

As the climate changes, so will your skin care needs. The dryness of winter air requires more intense moisturizer and supporting products, while in the humidity of the summer you may want to switch to something lighter.

Don't skip sunscreen

The reflective surface of the snow can intensify UV rays, increasing your exposure. UV damage is responsible for degrading cellular DNA in the skin, thus causing premature aging. This winter intensity is often stronger than the midday summer sun. Without fail, a moisturizer with the formulation of UVA/UVB protection should be applied to your skin every single day to protect your skin from the damaging rays. SPF should be applied to both the face and the neck every two hours when outside.

Practice proper product order

Products are most effective when properly applied in the correct order: cleanser, toner, serum, eye serum and then moisturizer morning and night. During the day, follow the moisturizer with a SPF.

Skin care is complex, and with such a wide variety of available products, it can be overwhelming. That's where the expertise of an esthetician can be your best skin care ally. During a facial service, estheticians can guide you how to care for your skin at home to maintain healthy skin for a lifetime.

Jenn Ross-Boshes is a licensed master esthetician, certified health coach and the owner of Beauty Mark with locations in Camden and Portland. Jenn is passionate about the skin care industry and continuing education for both herself and her team of estheticians. She lives in Yarmouth with her husband, two children and dog, Domino.





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Even if you haven't skated in years, ice skating is a splendid way to move your body and embrace the cold. Photo by Shannon Bryan



HEART- PUMPING FUN

THIS WINTER

Create your own exercise program this winter that will put you on the path to a heart-healthy new year

Written by **Wendy Almeida**

If you're like the millions of people who made a new year's resolution to join a gym to exercise more and lose a few pounds, that plan may have ended before it really began. The reason might not be your motivation, it might be your approach. Take a page out of your childhood and find something active you like to do—indoors or out. When you actually enjoy an activity, it's easier to make time to do it (and it's even more fun with a few friends along).

In the spirit of February being American Heart Month, it's time to get your game on and your heart pumping. Here are a few ideas for adding exercise back into your life.

ICE SKATING

Ice skating is a bit like riding a bike. Even if it's been years, after putting on a pair of skates and stepping out onto the ice, it all comes back to you. And if you never did get the hang of skating, there's always a wall (or a friend) to grab onto when you're at a rink.

- **The Rink at Thompson's Point** (therinkatthompsonspoint.com) in Portland is outdoors but covered, so you have some protection from the weather. A Zamboni smooths out the ice and rentals are available. Warming huts with food and beverages cap off the trip. And if you time your visit right, watching the sunset over the water is a special treat.

- **The Family Ice Center in Falmouth** (familyice.org) operates an outdoor rink, Lee Twombly Pond, that is open daily from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. The warming hut, skate rentals and smooth, Zamboni ice make it as easy place to squeeze in an hour of exercise into your day.

- **Portland's Troubh Ice Arena** (portlandmaine.gov/388/Troubh-Ice-Arena) is an indoor rink with smooth ice and public skating. They also have an adult learn-to-skate program on Sunday afternoons if you're feeling inspired by the Winter Olympic skating competitors (the games begin Feb. 9).

SLEDDING

Not just for kids, sledding is classic outdoor fun. The ride down is a happy breeze, and that trek back up the hill with your sled in tow will definitely get your heart rate up and remind you how much fun snow can be when you're not driving to work in it. There are sleds in all shapes and sizes (cardboard works just fine in a pinch). All you need to do is scout out a neighborhood hill. (Ask the kids in your life. They'll know.)

CROSS-COUNTRY SKIING

Cross-country skiing is an excellent heart-pumping activity. It's also fun to learn with a friend, if you've never tried it before. There is a trail system in nearly every community in Maine. Sharing the trails with snowmobiles does require some caution but close-to-home, multi-use trails are a convenient way to squeeze in some exercise. If you're looking for groomed trails, which are definitely easier, or you are in need of equipment, there are some great options:

- **Riverside Golf Course** in Portland (trails.org/our-trails/riverside-golf-course) is groomed for cross-country skiing (and snowshoeing) as weather permits. The trails are groomed for both classic and skate skiing with some small hills that make this trail system fun. And there are lights, so a quick after-work adventure is an option. No equipment rentals are available, but it's dog-friendly!

- **Cumberland's Twin Brook** (cumberlandmaine.com/twin-brook) is also a nicely groomed option with trails through the woods and a track in the open field. Dogs are permitted, but there are no rentals.

- **Carter's X-C Ski Centers** in Oxford and Bethel (carterxsxski.com) are full-service with rentals, provide expert advice at their pro shop and have plenty of beginner and intermediate trails. The Bethel trail system offers beautiful views of the Mahoosuc and Presidential ranges, so skiing and stopping to take in the mountains is in order here. Some dogs are allowed on the trails but owners must call ahead to confirm, and a trail pass for your canine friend is required.

- **Pineland Farms** in New Gloucester (pinelandfarms.org/recreation/winter) has groomed trails with a rental shop and a small food market for an after-exercise snack. Lessons are available by appointment but note, dogs are not permitted here.



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WINTER HIKING

Maine state parks (maine.gov/dacf/parks/index.shtml) are beautiful in the winter, offering a uniquely different experience in the snow. Create a goal for yourself to explore as many parks as you can this winter. It makes for a great exercise plan to get your heart pumping and your body moving among some awesome coastal and forest scenery. Although bathrooms and most buildings are not open in winter, many parks welcome visitors all year round. Note that parking lots may not be plowed so call ahead to inquire about conditions.



Get your heart rate up with a pair of skis. Groomed trails abound around Maine. Photo by Shannon Bryan

INDOOR FUN

So the snow and cold isn't your jam? You need some heart-pumping activity inside that isn't in a gym? Here are a few indoor options.

AQUA FITNESS

It might be snowing outside but there are still plenty of places to swim in February in Maine. Community pools offer open swims and many have aqua fitness classes to offer some resistance training to your weekly workout. Portland's Riverton Community Center pool (portlandmaine.gov/673/Aquatics) has water aerobics classes in the morning and evening. There are also adult-only lap swim times. The South Portland Community Center pool (southportland.org/departments/parks-recreation-aquaticspool/south-portland-aquatics-program) has water aerobics classes in both shallow and deep water for different intensity workouts. Saint Joseph's College in Standish (sjcme.edu) has morning classes most weekdays and an evening class on Mondays (no need to be a college student to join a class).

ZUMBA

For people who like to laugh and have some fun with like-minded booty shakers, a Zumba class is a great exercise option. For some classes, dimmed lights and a disco ball are part of the experience. Studio Fit holds classes at Happy Wheels roller skating rink in Portland ([\[maine.com\]\(http://maine.com\)\). There are basic dance steps that are repetitive so you don't need formal dance training to do them. It's a great cardio workout that only cares you are moving and working up a sweat, not how you dance. There are classes all over Maine. Search \[zumba.com\]\(http://zumba.com\) for a class near you.](http://studiofit-</p></div><div data-bbox=)

YOGA

There's nothing like walking into a warm yoga studio on a cold winter day. It may not be an activity associated to get your heart-pumping, but power yoga classes, and even slower moving classes, keep your body moving and help you feel stronger. There are traditional studios as well as pop-up events at breweries and other fun locations. Greener Postures in South Portland and Yarmouth (greenerposturesyoga.com), Gorham Yoga Company in Gorham (gorhamyogacompany.com), Yoga on York in York (yogaonyork.com), Chill Yoga in Lewiston (chillyyoga.net), and Portland Yoga Studio (portlandyoga.com) in Portland are among the many options in Southern Maine.

Wendy Almeida is a freelance writer who has been exploring the Maine outdoors with her kids for more than 18 years and they're nowhere near done yet.

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Heart & soul

Photographed by **Lauryn Hottinger**

There are things we do because we ought to (pay the electric bill, clean the bathroom, shovel the driveway), and then there are the things we do because doing them brightens our world and fills our hearts. Whether it's creating art, teaching children, summiting a mountain or building things in the backyard, these are the things we simply love doing. Photographer Lauryn Hottinger captured five Maine women doing what they're most passionate about.



JESSICA LEA NOLETTE

"Dog mom" to Bella

"Bella makes me want to work harder, always. Her tenacity and willingness to keep moving fill my heart with hope. She's my best friend and biggest inspiration. I've had Bella since she fit in the palm of my hand nearly 16 years ago. About four years ago she lost use of her back legs. My dad built her a wheelchair using PVC pipes, a leather belt and duct tape. She's fearless and hopeful and the reason I started running. If she can do it, minus two legs, I can, too."



JESSICA LAUREN LIPTON

Artist, Pop Killed Culture

"I am a performance and new media artist with a fondness for six-pack rings and human touch. I wholly and fully believe in the power of human touch and connection as a catalyst for change. Physical connection is fundamental to our development and our overall sense of well-being. Touch is a language that is instinctually understood if you know how to listen."



AIMSEL PONTI

Host of Music from 207 on 98.9 WCLZ

"I'm a college radio veteran and love having a show at CLZ, and I absolutely love the Maine music scene. We have so many incredible artists here that it's hard to keep up, but that's a good problem to have. I love sharing new music with listeners while also spinning older tracks as well. Music is by far the thing I'm most passionate about."

JESS TKACIK

Jewelry designer

"Making jewelry is a form of meditation for me. It gives me a platform to send a positive message into the world while providing me with a creative outlet."





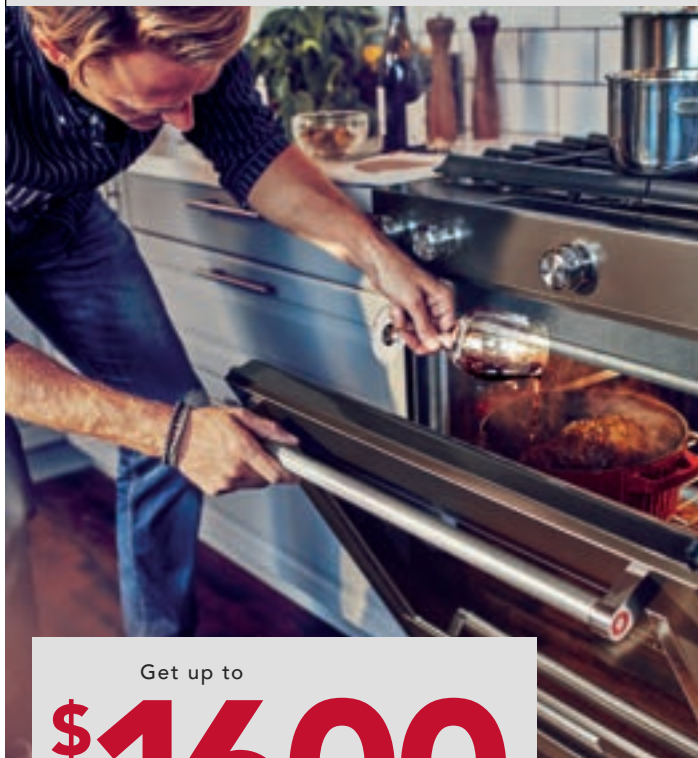
SHANNON JENKINS

Teacher at Opportunity Alliance, Portland

“This work is important to me because it is essentially the very heart of humanity. The little people I teach are our future, and now more than ever it is important to create and foster kind, compassionate and genuine human connections. It is, quite simply, the purest and most rewarding mission to foster confidence, creativity, a sense of belonging to the children in my class.”



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Boots

Much love to the Bean Boot, but these other warm, rugged and sharp-looking boots have our attention

Written by Katie Bingham-Smith

Photographed by Taylor Roberge

In Maine, wearing boots from about October to April is a given. We want our tootsies to stay warm, but we want to look stylish, too. Venturing out to dinner or to a play doesn't stop happening just because it's slushy and wet outside. We all love our trusty L.L.Bean boots—they're great paired with our favorite jeans and bulky wool socks or with a dress and tights—but we also need variety in our life.

Here are some other warm yet fashionable options you can pull on that will keep your feet happy whether you are running errands during the day, or have an evening out planned.

Katie Bingham-Smith is a writer, shoe addict and mother living in Bowdoinham. She pays her kids to rub her feet and never turns down anything with caffeine.



KODIAK SURREY II BOOTS

These Kodiak Surrey II boots have a little bit of a biker flair and will make you feel like a badass. They are waterproof, slip resistant and come with removable memory foam inside. Pair these with a pair of black skinnies and you'll be comfy and sexy—yes, you really can be both! Available at Reny's, \$124.99.



SOREL JOAN OF ARCTIC BOOTS

The Joan Of Arctic Boots from Sorel will keep your feet warm, even when temperatures dip below zero. I wear mine sledding and snowshoeing with my kids and my feet stay toasty and warm. My favorite winter outfit is putting them on with jeans, a leather jacket and beanie. Available at Reny's, \$149.99.

UGG ADIRONDACK II BOOTS

I have a pair of these Adirondack II Boots from Ugg, and they are the warmest pair of boots I've ever owned. You can roll the top down to expose the fur, or pull them up for a taller boot. Available at Lamey Wellehan, \$225.



SOREL SLIMPACK II LACE DUCK BOOTS

The Slimpack II Lace boots from Sorel are perfect to wear with thick tights and a denim or flannel dress or skirt. And if you have a pair of colorful socks peeking out of the top, even better. They are waterproof, rugged and oh so cute. Available at Lamey Wellehan, \$125.



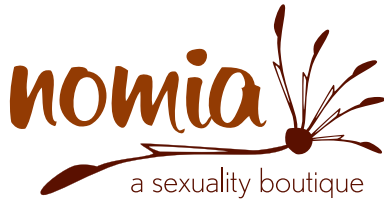
KODIAK BETHANY BOOTS

These mid-calf Bethany boots from Kodiak are sharp-looking. Made with black leather, they're waterproof and have a side zipper for getting them on and off easily, making them perfect for when you want to dress up a bit but you don't want to spend 10 minutes wrangling them on and off. Available at Reny's, \$149.99.



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Turmeric Martini

Written & photographed by Jessie Lacey

Turmeric is all the rage right now. It's the spice that gives curry that beautiful and bright orange-yellow color. A member of the ginger family, turmeric is used in Indian traditional medicine, which is probably why so many peddlers of woo are attracted to it. As with most anything, I had to wonder how it would be in a cocktail. Perhaps you have a burning desire to know if the "it" spice of now can be used for alcoholic purposes. I am here to tell you that yes, it can. And it is delicious.

While it won't cure cancer like so many "totally real" doctors have said on their blogs, it gave my cocktail new, earthy depth. Add



to that the juice of a Meyer lemon (truly the Mercedes of lemons) and you have blessed yourself with the cocktail of the gods or goddesses. Impress your date with this fruity yet sophisticated concoction, or drink it yourself if you find you are alone for Valentine's Day, yet again. Keep the benefits of turmeric—like its anti-inflammatory abilities—all to yourself then. People will wonder how you have gotten less swollen, but you have the secret. Don't tell them.

Jessie Lacey resides at the heart of downtown Portland with her border collie puppy Josie, making cocktails and trouble.

RECIPE

2 ounces Cold River Vodka
 1 ounce Luxardo Maraschino
 1 ounce freshly squeezed Meyer lemon juice
 1/2 ounce simple syrup
 1/4 teaspoon of turmeric

Fill a shaker with ice and all the ingredients above. Shake it real good. Strain into your fanciest glass and garnish with a dehydrated lemon slice.



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Sensual empowerment with Red Hot & Ladylike

Written by **Amy Paradysz**

“This is not your kids’ dance studio!” quips MissE Cloutier, 46, founder of Red Hot & Ladylike burlesque studio in Portland.

A lifelong dancer and instructor, Cloutier was mid-divorce when she took her first burlesque class a decade ago. She was smitten.

“This is not about competition,” Cloutier says. “It’s not about seeing how high you can kick your legs or whether you can do the splits. It’s not about your size or how old you are. Everyone can do this. Some women tell me it brought the spark back into their relationship that they needed. We get older, and we put our kids first, and we forget to take care of ourselves.”

Being sexy, it turns out, is mostly about feeling sexy. Though a Red Hot & Ladylike class is a workout and involves some sweat, the most obvious changes aren’t in the dancers’ bodies but in how they feel.

“I came for the jazz and stayed for the burlesque,” says Heather Hall, a 54-year-old technology professional from Windham. “Doing this has built a lot of confidence. People have commented that I hold myself differently. But it took me a while to tell people I dance with Red Hot & Ladylike. At work, they don’t see me in booty shorts, fishnets and heels.”

One regular dancer had recently lost 100 pounds and wanted to get in touch with her new body—which she does, dancing in a plaid mini-skirt and heels. Others have found a confidence boost after having a baby or getting out of an abusive relationship.

“It’s this really positive environment, just dancing and letting your guard down,” says Vanessa Hill, 31, of Portland. “If you’re needing a lift or someone has made you feel really bad about yourself, coming here is like therapy.”

Red Hot & Ladylike is about sensual empowerment, not stripping—though dancers do shed extra layers as they rehearse or perform.

“My women don’t go down to pasties and thongs,” says Cloutier. “Maybe short-shorts and a bra top. I feel that leaving something to the imagination is sexier. But there’s a lot of sexual innuendo.”

Burlesque shows with more choreographed group dance numbers and less nudity are more audience-friendly and attract larger crowds, Cloutier finds. Red Hot & Ladylike’s annual Give Spanks burlesque show at Port City Music Hall in November featured 50 dancers and 275 tickets were sold. The silent auction raised \$1,400 for the fight against

Far left, the women of Red Hot & Ladylike during the annual Give Spanks burlesque show. Left, MissE Cloutier founded Red Hot & Ladylike nearly a decade ago, and she's been teaching women to dance and feel sexy ever since. *Photos by Dion Brown*

domestic violence, split between Family Crisis Center and Vixens Against Violence.

One of the dancers in that show was Kelsey Stephensen, a 26-year-old teacher from Old Orchard Beach who has been taking classes for a year.

"Your body changes," Stephensen says. "But also, it's about getting out of the house and finding something for me. Girls night."

There's a rhythm to the beginner drop-in classes. Ladies start filtering in a half hour early, pouring glasses of wine, chatting, petting Gracie the studio dog and strapping on their dancing shoes. Soon, they're learning choreography that includes leaning backward in a chair and running their fingers through their hair.

"It's about feeling good—and feeling sexy," Cloutier says. "They embrace who they are and the body they're in, not the one they dream about."

Once a month Cloutier also teaches a Bring Your Human Prop class. "We get the men there by telling them they get to drink and sit in a chair while the ladies learn how to do a lap dance," Cloutier says. But rarely does a man object when, toward the end of the class, they're asked to perform for their partners. "The women scream because it's so much fun," Cloutier says.

Having taught Red Hot & Ladylike classes for nearly a decade, Cloutier has former students across the country who are helping coordinate her Vixens Against Violence fundraising tour next October. Cloutier plans to drive from Maine to California, teaching burlesque along the way.

Freelance writer Amy Paradysz left a beginner class all smiles.

FOR MORE INFO

redhotandladylike.com/classes

Red Hot & Ladylike is on the first floor of 509 Forest Ave., Portland. There's no Red Hot & Ladylike sign outside the building ("to keep out the creepers," Cloutier says) but plenty of signage inside.

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Hot Maine mamas

Reviews: “Not Always Happy”
& “The Salt House”

Written by Amy Canfield

Two books about Maine moms landed on my desk recently. I'm a Maine mom, so I took both home to the reading couch.

The non-fiction “Not Always Happy, An Unusual Parenting Journey” by Kari Wagner-Peck, MSW, and the novel “The Salt House” by Lisa Duffy are two very different, shining exemplars of mothers' love, mothers' wisdom and mothers' struggles.

Wagner-Peck's memoir is the tale of her travails in adopting Thorin, a young boy with Down syndrome, through the Maine foster care system. She and her husband are “older” parents who want to love and raise a child; Thorin is in need and as they come to learn, adopting through foster care is a relatively fast way for parents in the U.S. to adopt. They jump in with hearts wide open and that's where both the joy and the frustration begins.

Red tape and unanticipated speed bumps abound, but Wagner-Peck quickly, as she turns 50, becomes a Warrior Mom. And that's what is so moving about this book. She fights for her son every step of the way, pushing back against long-held barriers, sometimes succeeding, sometimes failing. Public schools make promises they are legally bound to keep but don't. Educators dismiss Thorin stereotypically as “simple and dull and always happy,” which is far from the truth, as Wagner-Peck points out. Still, it's all about the love as she fights for what she knows is best for her child while dodging an open container of applesauce pitched by him at her head and retrieving her keys, which he's thrown into the toilet.

Your child may not have special needs, but we can all learn from this writer and mother who knows her son better than anyone else. She researches, she stumbles, she seeks help from her “village.” But in the end, “I am the mother, do it because I say” is her mantra, a stand all moms could use to their benefit. She writes regularly at the blog “A Typical Son.”

Hope, the fictional Maine mom in “The Salt House” is staggering from the accidental death of her toddler, her third child. She feels negligent, guilty and unhinged.

The story takes place a year after the death and is told from Hope's point of view, along with those of her lobsterman husband, Jack, who throws himself into work to deal with his suffering; and her daughters who are watching the once happy and functional home and their parents' marriage fall apart. To top it all off, an old acquaintance moves back to town, reigniting some long-buried demons and threatening Jack's business.

But at its heart, “The Salt House” is a mother's story of regaining strength, love and power when it seems to be impossible. “Love isn't always convenient,” Hope is fond of saying, but for her, gratefully, it abides.

Amy Canfield is a mother, an editor and a writer who lives in South Portland.



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Heartfelt dishes for the ones you love

Written & photographed by Candace Karu

February is a month that can strike fear and loathing into the hearts and minds of singletons worldwide. Feb. 14—an emblematic celebration of romantic love—can leave those of us without significant others feeling left out.

Having children helped me reframe the meaning of Valentine's Day. For my family, the emphasis shifted from a narrow focus on romance to a day that extols the virtues of love in its myriad forms. When my children were little, it became a day filled with heart-shaped food, heart-themed decorations, token gifts, homemade Valentine cards and general silliness. In my mind it combined all the best elements of other major holidays with none of the attendant pressure.

I've found that not having just one special someone, but celebrating with lots of people I love, makes the day much lighter and brighter.

In addition to Valentine's Day, February is also American Heart Month, a time to think about how to better care for the body's hardest-working muscle.

It is in the spirit of this month, which is short but full of fun and surprises, that I share my family's favorite Valentine's Day foods.

Egg in a Heart

First up is the ever-popular breakfast dish with a twist. Whether you call it Egg in a Hole, Egg in a Basket, One-Eyed Jack or Pirate's Eye, the combination of an egg cooked in toast is a classic. On Valentine's Day, I simply cut the hole with a heart-shaped cookie cutter to make my son's favorite breakfast ever—Egg in a Heart.

HERE'S ALL YOU DO:

Toast whole wheat bread lightly, use a cookie cutter to create a heart-shaped hole and then put it in a small non-stick skillet on medium heat. Drop the egg in the hole and cook over medium heat until the egg white sets. Serve the toasted heart with your favorite jam or jelly. Or to make this protein-rich breakfast even more heart healthy, top your heart toast with a slice of avocado!

Avocado Toast

Which brings us to my own year-round favorite breakfast—avocado toast. Avocados bring so much more than great taste to the table. They are a powerhouse of healthy, monounsaturated fats, which can help lower LDL, or bad cholesterol, levels. They also provide dietary fiber, B vitamins, potassium and vitamin E. Bonus points on Valentine's Day, avocados make pretty hearts in a number of sizes. I sprinkle mine with pomegranate seeds for color and even more great taste.

Love Your Heart Loaded Vegetable Chili

February in Maine calls for meals that warm the tummy as well as the heart, so our go-to on Valentine's Day is chili. But not just any chili, I load mine up with veggies and lean protein to make it the perfect "love your heart" meal.

INGREDIENTS

Chili Seasoning Mix

(or 1 envelope of packaged chili seasoning)

- 4 teaspoons chili powder
- 1/2 to 1 tablespoon crushed red pepper (depending on amount of heat you want)
- 1 tablespoon dried minced garlic
- 1 tablespoon dried minced onion
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- 2 teaspoons ground cumin
- 2 teaspoons dried cilantro
- 2 teaspoons salt
- 1 teaspoon dried basil
- 1/2 teaspoon black pepper

Chili

- 1 pound lean ground beef, chicken or turkey
- 4 tablespoons olive oil, divided
- 1 red onion, diced
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 8 ounces mushrooms, sliced
- 8 ounces butternut squash, 1/2-inch dice
- 8 ounces baby spinach, chopped
- 1 15-ounce can diced tomatoes
- 1 15-ounce can black beans (do not drain)
- 1 15-ounce can cannellini beans (do not drain)
- 1 cup red wine (or vegetable stock)
- Greek yogurt, fresh cilantro and shredded cheese for garnish (optional)



INSTRUCTIONS

In a large Dutch oven add 2 tablespoons of olive oil and sauté protein over medium heat until cooked through. Set aside.

Add remaining olive oil and cook onions, mushrooms, squash and garlic until onion is translucent, about 8 minutes.

Add chili seasoning mix and liquid (wine or vegetable stock) and simmer for 2–3 minutes.

Add all remaining ingredients, including protein, to the pot and bring to a very gentle boil, stirring often, until spinach has cooked down, about 5 minutes.

Simmer on very low heat until squash is fork tender and flavors have melded, stirring occasionally, about 30 minutes. Add liquid if needed.

Remove from heat, cover and let stand for about an hour.

Heat before serving. Garnish with a dollop of Greek yogurt, fresh chopped cilantro or shredded cheese.

This chili is delicious if made a day ahead and refrigerated overnight. You might want to make a double batch and freeze half for another night.



▲ Lazy Girl Truffles

And what is Valentine's Day without a bit of indulgence? I make Lazy Girl Truffles, a fun and easy homemade sweet treat that the kids can help make.

HERE'S HOW:

Using store-bought cookie dough, roll dough into balls and bake according to directions, but cook 2 or 3 minutes less than directions call for so that the middle of the cookies are soft.

Let cookies cool until just warm, about 5 minutes. Butter your hands and reform cookies into balls.

In a glass bowl, microwave 12 ounces of chocolate chips—dark, milk or white—until melted and smooth.

Line a baking sheet with parchment paper. Dip cookie balls into melted chocolate and cover thoroughly. You may have to reheat chocolate as you dip your cookie balls.

You can top with red sugar crystals, crushed peppermints, or cinnamon hearts.

Refrigerate for 10–15 minutes to set.

Serve with ginger ale in festive glasses and add pomegranate seeds or frozen raspberries for color.

Candace Karu makes her living writing about food, fitness and travel. She lives near the ocean in an old farmhouse with two ill-behaved dogs and two hard-working barn cats. Follow her on Instagram: @candacekaru or at www.candacekaru.com.



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I love you more

Written by Maggie Knowles

Unconditional love is a tricky thing. You think you have it with your childhood dog. (Until he poops on your bedroom floor.)

You think you have it with your first boyfriend. (Until he poops on your bedroom floor.)

Yet, you have no idea what loving unconditionally feels like until you have a child—with poop on the floor (and car, bath, hair) and all.

During the season of love, it begs the question, “Is unconditional love something that we teach our children, or is it a biological infusion once parenthood is upon us?”

It is all I can do to get my 9-year-old son to tell me he loves me, despite my telling him like 10,000 times a day. I withhold things, like snacks and clean undies, until he says it aloud. It comes out a mumbled rush through hot cheeks, but it is there and I cling to every forced syllable.

Love = Pretzels.

It’s a good lesson.

Because verbal affection is seemingly unnatural for him, I was concerned that I had overfed him forkfuls of adoration, and now the words were as meaningless as broken Legos. Had I ruined him for future romances? Will he be told he’s an emotional desert by a partner who adores him? Had my overlove create a Love Void?

So I pulled back.

And in my restraint, I saw that all of those words, actions and symbols of my unconditional love started transferring from a place inside of him to those he holds near and dear.

I heard him talking to his plush buddies, as he awoke, telling them he had to go to school but not to worry, he would be back before they

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knew it. He let the cat knead away on his leg as he kissed his ears. He gave our puppy "bellies" as he told her how pretty and sweet she is.

Phew.

Then I waited for this new mushiness to wash over me.

I am still waiting.

It is one of the roughest lessons to learn as a parent, that no matter the endless love we feel for our kids, they just don't feel the same about us. That no matter how many crusts we cut off sandwiches, how many forgotten backpacks we drive to school, how many sleepless nights we endure, our kids don't owe us anything in return. In this lesson of one-sided devotion, how lucky that we get to sit in that purest space of love. That love where we let it flow from us and don't expect it back. It is selfless and true and beautiful.

We have to stop expecting that our children "owe" us love. Kindness, respect, sweetness...of course. But we can't presume for them to match the well of unconditional love that we have for them.

The reward for all of this comes the day when our grandchildren are on the receiving end. It may be decades away, but there will be a time when all of the sacrifice and waiting will be poured into the next generation. In those future moments, we will see the reflection of our own unconditional love, and every second will be worth it...poop, pretzels and all.

Maggie Knowles writes about all things kid.

She and her family live in Yarmouth, where she gardens, keeps bees and refuses to get rid of her stilettos.

“In this lesson of one-sided devotion, how lucky that we get to sit in that purest space of love.”

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when you will celebrate
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as the best parts of you.

And you will bask (delighted)
in the unexpected glory
of accepting yourself
just as you are...

humble and strong,
powerful and sensitive,
gutted and transformed.

And you shall come
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in the fascinating arrangement
of magical things in this
vast and amazing Universe
of which you have
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By Julie Bernier, South Portland

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