

MAINE WOMEN MAGAZINE

NOVEMBER 2020

Leigh Small

reunites with her
birth mother in Vietnam

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Photo by Jason Paige Smith

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A Maine Ambassador for the Women's Memorial in Washington, D.C.



Yes, there is a chill in the air. The shadows are longer, and the days are shorter.

Well, ladies, get a cup of your favorite warm beverage and join us this month with some fascinating stories of the women of Maine—in the areas of art, science, economics, politics, design, retail, farming, and *resourceful living*. We celebrate these women's strength and the caring that abounds.

Every month I am overwhelmed with stories of women who have plowed through difficulties, pursued dreams, helped others, and achieved remarkable accomplishments.

I have seen the myriad ways that people take on their challenges with a “can-do” attitude—looking forward, giving back, and making the best of what life has dealt.

For example, in this issue is the story of a daughter given up for adoption in Saigon—in the struggles at the Vietnam War's end—and of the birth mother who spent 44 years searching for her. They found each other at last, the mother in Vietnam, and the daughter, Leigh Small, in Maine, now a mother herself.

And this month—and every month—we honor our veterans, for the sacrifices they have made for all of us and for their service and dedication. This issue looks at a few of the ways that Maine honors, supports, and remembers our veterans.

This month, please enjoy sharing in the lives of many women who are brave, in many ways.

I thank them . . . and I thank you!

Mary Frances Barstow
Publisher

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

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Cover photo by Jason Paige Smith.

**We love to hear from our readers!
What do you like about Maine Women?
What would you like to see done differently?
Contact us at mary@mainewomenmagazine.com.**

Jacqui Painchaud is a wonderful lady.

Tammy Smith Blake

Love *Maine Women Magazine* and how it celebrates the very cool and inspiring women among ya.

Kate Nicholson

Please know that I look for *Maine Women* every Sunday, and I have been delighted with all of the encouraging and uplifting stories about the strength, creativity, and humanity of Maine women. I have been particularly impressed with the diversity of background, ethnicity, and passions of the women you have featured. In a world that too often sees polarity in diversity, rather than valuing the strength and a broader wisdom that comes from diversity, your publication is a terrific addition to the conversation!

Leigh I. Saufley

(Leigh Served as Chief Justice on the Maine Supreme Judicial Court until April this year when she accepted the position of Dean of the University of Maine School of Law.)

| CONTRIBUTORS |

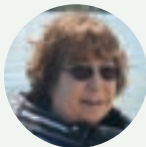


Cyndy Bell started her career in newspapers at the *Sun Journal* in inside sales followed by outside sales. After three years as a credit union marketing director, she returned to newspapers as an advertising account manager for 18 years. She works for *The Forecaster*.

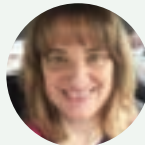
Elizabeth DeWolfe, Ph.D., is Professor of History at the University of New England where she teaches courses in women's history and American culture. She is the award-winning author of several works including *The Murder of Mary Bean and Other Stories* and *Shaking the Faith*. She lives in Alfred with her husband, Scott.



Pam Ferris-Olson, PhD, worked as a freelance writer/photographer/editor/educator prior to relocating to Maine in 2016. The breadth of her experience with natural resources, storytelling and women, and a passion for the ocean inspired her to found *Women Mind the Water*. She is a visual artist who enjoys kayaking.



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



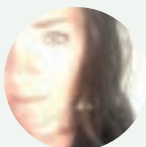
Sheila D. Grant is a freelance editor/writer/photographer, and the author of two books. Her work has appeared in the *Boston Globe*, and been recognized by the Maine Press Association and the New England Outdoor Writers Association.



Jodi Hersey is a freelance writer from Hermon. She has worked in television, radio and print for more than 15 years. She is a military wife, mother of twins and a huge fan of vintage cars, especially Ford Mustangs. When she's not writing or deep into a good novel, you will find her and her family participating in a classic car show or cruise in somewhere in Maine.



Sarah Holman is a writer living in Portland. She grew up in rural Maine and holds a BFA from Pratt Institute in Brooklyn. Sarah is enthusiastic about coffee, thrift shop treasures, and old houses in need of saving. Find her online at storiesandsidebars.com.



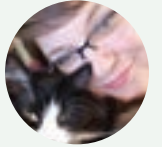
Nettie Hoagland is a native of Midcoast Maine and recent graduate of Saint Michael's College with a Bachelor of Arts in Media Studies, Journalism, and Digital Arts. She has always had a passion for writing, and seeks to tell meaningful stories. Nettie enjoys spending her time in the outdoors, exploring new walking trails, running with her dog, skiing with her family, and hiking and camping with her friends.

Susan Olcott is a freelance writer living in Brunswick with her husband and nine-year-old twin girls. She loves to write about all things coastal, edible, and any story full of life. Every person has a story to tell and she thrives on writing and sharing them.



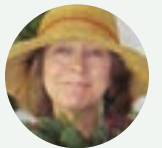
Amy Paradysz is a freelance writer and editor from Scarborough who <3s words and pictures.

Christine Simmonds grew up in Coastal Maine. She was a teacher for many years, but she was always told she had missed her calling as a writer. Now she enjoys being able to dig up local news for *The Courier-Gazette* and investigate fascinating stories for *Maine Women Magazine*. She enjoys spending time with her family and her cats and attending Cross-Fit classes.



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

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



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Holly Martin fills up her propane tank in the Fakarava Atoll on the Tuamotu Archipelago. *Photo courtesy Holly Martin*

Provisioning in Tahiti

BY MARY FRANCES BARSTOW AND JAJA MARTIN

Holly Martin set out last fall from Round Pond Harbor on the Pemaquid Peninsula, in her 27-foot-long Grinde sailboat, which she christened the *SV Gecko*. Holly had purchased this vessel in Connecticut and renovated and refitted it for the long trip ahead. Her goal: to sail alone around the world.

Back in the years 1895 to 1898, Joshua Slocum was the first man to circumnavigate, or as he might have said, “to chase the setting sun and see it rise behind me again.” Now, even in this high-tech era of weather satellites and other modern conveniences, it remains a rare feat, requiring great skill and involving many unknowns. In

Holly’s case, the coronavirus epidemic has proven to be a major unexpected factor, affecting what ports are open and where she can resupply. But she has persevered with good spirit. She is now spending time in French Polynesia, in the South Pacific. We are fortunate that we here in Maine have been able to follow along with her journey into the other, now warmer hemisphere. Holly’s mother, expert sailor Jaja Martin, is in occasional touch with Holly via a Garmin inReach, a two-way satellite communicator. Jaja here gives an update on Holly’s latest news and a sense of life in the Fakarava Atoll in the Tuamotu Archipelago.

WINTER PLANS

Holly will stay in French Polynesia for the cyclone season, which usually extends from November through April. Right now, she is in Tahiti provisioning with groceries and essential boat items. In Tahiti, there are big stores, and food is relatively inexpensive, although it's a lot more expensive than in the States. Holly has buddied up with other cruisers (sailing people) to rent a car for provisioning, which is easier, and a better deal than taking a taxi around the city of Papeete (the capitol of French Polynesia). She's doing a huge provision now, then she'll continue on, traveling among the Tuamotus, Marqueses, and Gambier Islands.

THE COVID SITUATION OVER THERE

French Polynesia has a lot of COVID now that Tahiti has opened its doors to international travelers. The COVID cases are mostly in Tahiti and the other popular islands in the Society archipelago. The remote islands have no COVID cases or very few, depending on the island. After leaving Tahiti, Holly plans to take a COVID test (which is mandatory) and isolate before disembarking on the remote islands. She definitely doesn't want to bring any germs with her. Most islands do not have a mask culture (since they don't have COVID), and Holly says it's nice to experience normalcy.

KITE SCHOOL

Holly has made friends with the couple who own and run the Fakarava Kite school (<http://www.kitetuamotu.com/>). The husband is French, and the wife is American. In fact, the wife spent one summer cruising Maine solo (her mom lives in Harpswell, Maine.) The husband and wife each have their own boat, and they keep their boats in same places. They anchor in Fakarava Atoll for the main tourist season, and during cyclone season they move around to different atolls. They even have an air B&B, so guests can stay on their catamaran while taking lessons. The kite school

also offers free-diving and spear fishing. Full meals are included with their B&B. They get an international clientele. Holly recently met a couple from Maine that was staying with them.

OTHER FRIENDS

Holly has an easy time making friends, and she has a mix of cruising friends and local friends. One week she helped local a family who were leaving their farm for a few days. Holly fed and watered their animals while they were away. She filled the water troughs with cistern water. Holly used her machete to open coconuts for the pigs each day. She also took care of the dogs, cats, and chickens.

"Everyone is friendly," says Holly. She made friends with the local fishermen who also take tourists sight-seeing. "Making island friends is a good opportunity to learn French, since the locals don't like to speak English," says Holly.

ACTIVITIES DAY TO DAY

"My days are full of activity!" says Holly. She spends her time snorkeling, sailing her dinghy to other parts of the reef, walking on the beach, playing with local dogs and cats, hanging out with other sailors, spear fishing, watching the sunrise, accomplishing boat projects, and cooking. Fresh supplies can be limited on the islands, so Holly makes creative meals. She's becoming an expert at making tortillas, naan, and all types of bread.

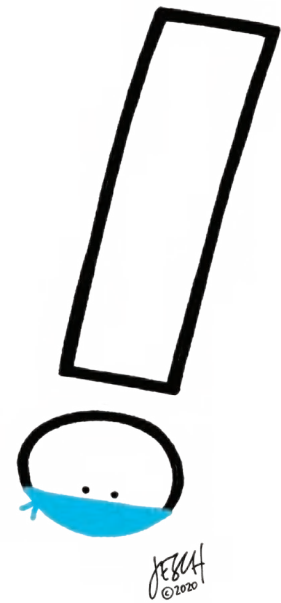
READING

Holly reads a lot. Book trading and swapping is very popular amongst cruisers. The yacht service businesses all have book-trading shelves. "I have two lockers of books," Holly says. "One locker is filled with books to trade, and the other is filled with my favorites which I won't trade. I haven't run out of books yet. Not all the books are good. Sometimes, you get bad books. But there's always something to read." •



MASK CRUSADER

Shinebolt illustrator
Jessica Esch



BY AMY PARADYSZ

Jessica Esch likes to get to the point. “Life’s short,” she laughs. “Use hearts.” That’s what she did in the early days of the pandemic with her first COVID-19 illustration: “I love you. Stay home.”

Jessica shared the illustration with her friends and family on social media, and they shared it with their friends . . . who shared it with their friends. More than 50 illustrations and 1,800 free downloads later, she keeps distilling hard messages in simplistically charming ways. “These illustrations are little conversations that might be uncomfortable to have—like asking people to wear a mask before they come into your business—but the illustrations can say it for you,” Jessica says.

Studying journalism at the University of Maine and earning a master’s degree in mass communications and public relations from the University of Denver, Jessica learned to refine a message to its essence. Over her 16-year career with United Way of Greater Portland, she also employed visual storytelling, often incorporating her own illustrations. “I look at public policy and social issues as communications challenges,” she says, “and ask how I can get you to pay attention to something that is so unsexy.”

Jessica had always described herself as “a writer who draws.” But, at 48, she flipped that script. In February 2019, she formed a partnership with Angela Smith, who had been representing internationally known writer and illustrator Brian Andreas. “I had believed in Jess’s work

for a long time and was in a position to help get it out into the world,” Angela said.

They named their company Shinebolt, out of an aspiration to “make a brighter world by bringing people together, stories to life, and art and ideas to market.” As they got the business going, it was bringing art to market that initially filled their days.

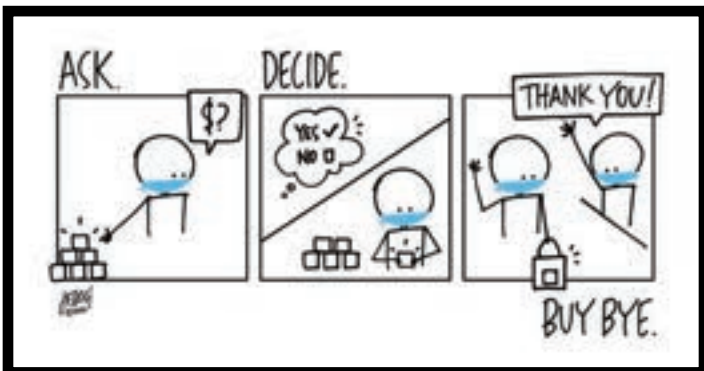
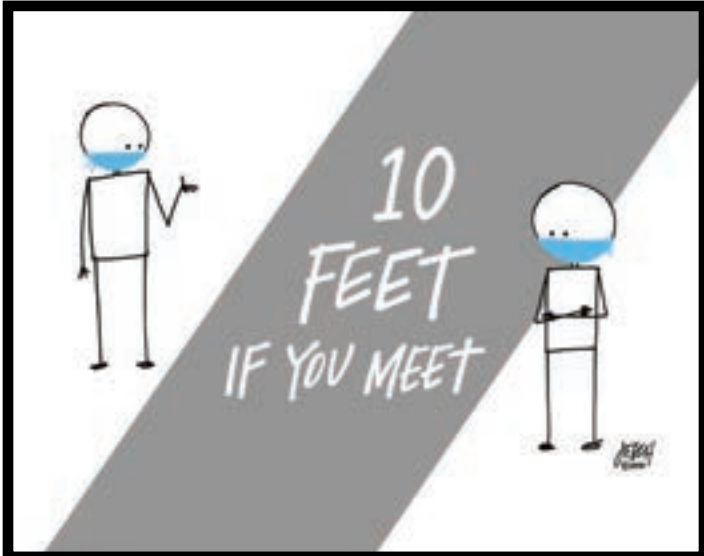
“We had been going all out for three months to be ready for New England Made, a gift show where we could reach thousands of buyers,” Jessica says. Then, COVID-19 hit, and the show was canceled.

“I had been so focused on New England Made that the virus was just in my periphery,” Jessica says. “Then I lost the distraction of the show, and the virus was scary. I just wanted my friends and family to stay home and be safe. The illustrations were my response.”

Jessica drew a simple figure with a mask and a whole lot of love. Then, day after day, she kept illustrating messages that convey new norms of showing community, respect, and kindness—wearing a mask for the safety of others, keeping 10 feet apart if you meet, touching only products you plan to buy.

Thanks to a new Shinebolt website completed for the show that didn’t happen, the company had a way to offer the illustrations as free downloads. That was just the beginning. The *Portland Press Herald* began running the illustrations, sometimes even a full page.





When John Fay, owner of Atlantic Sportswear, saw the “Sloth the Spread” illustration in the paper, he recognized T-shirt potential and a chance to do something good for the community. Jessica, despite some skepticism that people would want a pandemic T-shirt, donated use of the illustration to raise money for Cooking for Community. Shirt sales enabled the nonprofit to produce and deliver 330 meals to people who are homeless, disabled, or isolated.

“Beyond that, Cooking for Community helped to sustain restaurants and their employees, as well as local food producers,” says organizer Ellie Linen Low. “Ironically, a ‘Sloth the Spread’ illustration reminding us to stay apart brought people together.”

Meanwhile, despite saying she doesn’t describe herself as a designer, Jessica’s COVID-19 illustrations made the Top 10 in the International Design Awards. “Sometimes you get going so fast on that wheel of what you think you’re supposed to be doing,” Jessica says, reflecting on those months of preparing for the gift show. “Then, in the blink of an eye, we were in a touchless, socially distanced world. When we had to stay home for an extended period, we had a chance to think about what we really want. Now Shinebolt is evolving into exactly what I’d have wanted it to be but never thought possible.”

One of those things she could barely dream of, Jessica says, is collaborating with Scott Nash and Nancy Gibson-Nash, co-founders of Illustration Institute, a Peaks Island-based nonprofit that raises awareness of and appreciation for illustration. A regular at Illustration Institute lectures, Jessica uses a method of visual notetaking that distills big ideas and captures quotations as “sketchnotes.” In fact, her work is among the samples in *The Sketchnote Handbook* by Mike Rohde.

“Jess takes something that a lot of us do to understand the world—notetaking—and turns it into an art form,” says Scott. “I’m interested in the humble ways in which we use drawing, and Jess’s work is very egalitarian. And, of course, for the past six months, she has been giving her work away.”

Nancy adds, “She’s using her talents for a positive force. Though it seems so simple, it can take a lifetime to learn to draw like that. It takes an insightful person, a critical thinker. And she’s been so generous.”

As Jessica sees it, letting the COVID-19 illustrations go viral via free downloads is only common sense. “We’re in this together, whether people want to believe it or not,” she says. “This pandemic ends when we end it, and to do that we have to do some basic things like wearing masks.”

For COVID-19 illustrations and other works by Jessica Esch: www.shinebolt.com.

Dating in the Time of COVID

BY CHRISTINE SIMMONDS

Any time I speak to my married friends about my experiences with dating, I get almost the exact same response. “Thank God I’m out of the dating pool!”

Yes, thank God you are because it is not a fun swim—especially after the age of 30, and particularly in the age of COVID-19. The bars are closed. Most restaurants have limited seating or are only doing take-out. Social distancing does not really lend itself to snuggling with a new suitor. And the idea of holding someone’s germ-infested hand has me already experiencing a fever and dry cough.

That really leaves only dating apps.

So, I decided to try three dating apps and report back to our *Maine Women* readers. I used the same information and the same pictures for all three. I was honest about being a reporter and a writer for a magazine, and even that I was on the app to write an article. And I expressed a desire to find a lasting relationship. Names have been changed to protect the oddballs.

This was quite the journey! Throughout my month-long experience I was inundated with unwanted messages, semi-stalked, kind-of catfished, sexually harassed, and propositioned. I promise you that I did find true love, though.

To begin, I searched for “dating” in the Google Play store. (If you are an iPhone user, this is your App Store.) I only chose high-rated apps or programs with many downloads that were free. I am already a broke writer, and the pandemic is not helping those circumstances!

The first program I used was Tinder. Tinder is well-known as a dating app that involves “swiping” on the profiles of people. If you are interested in a person, you swipe right. If you are not interested, you swipe left.

I like Tinder because you can access all the features for free, and you have to match with someone for them to be able to message you. I have used Tinder frequently in the past with a variety of luck. I have met boyfriends on Tinder, as well as a surpris-



Christine, 35

Journalist and Writer
University of Maine at Farmington
less than a mile away

ing number of men who turned into good friends. Of course, because this is the internet, I have also ended up interacting with a fair number of weirdos and creeps as well.

I sent a message to every match with a little greeting. I matched with about 30 men. About 20 wrote back. Of those who did, only handful turned into actual conversations, and those were almost all a varying degree of strange. This was a different strange than I had experienced in the past with Tinder, though, as my profile clearly stated I was looking for a relationship. Apparently, some of these guys read that and assumed that I meant at once. As in, from the moment we started messaging.

There was Allen, who immediately began calling me “hun” and “baby.” Allen informed me, after less than an hour of talking, that he thought we could be a “perfect match.” I’m not sure what he based that on, other than that we were both looking for a relationship. After all, what else could a woman over 30 possibly want? Allen informed me he was an independent man who did not need my money to live because

he had his own job. What a relief!

“What makes you think we could be a perfect match?” I asked Allen.

“Let’s talk more and see where this goes,” said Allen. I guess I was moving too fast for him.

I also matched with David, who told me his entire life story from the age of three. This account included how often he used to have sex with his ex-girlfriend and how good he was at it. (For the record, I did not ask for that information.) David also let me know me that he was looking for a “*Healthy and Happy Relationship!*”

My suspicions about David not being the right guy for me were confirmed when he sent me a message telling me he had a very busy weekend, followed by, “I miss u baby,” with a crying face emoji. How can you miss me? We have literally never met and have only been texting for three days.

I also tried Hinge, a dating app that advertises itself as being “designed to be deleted!” Hinge prides itself on really being meant for people searching for a serious relationship. Unfortunately, it is also really meant for people who are willing to spend money on a dating app!

The free version of Hinge only allows you ten “likes” per day. Once you “like” someone, you can send them a message. I probably sent about fifty or sixty messages on Hinge, as I only used it five or six days. I had three matches, and all of them petered out within four conversational exchanges. Including Tony, who wanted to know almost immediately if I was OK with “a kink or two.” I was not!

The final dating app I used was Plenty of Fish, also known as POF. Honestly, this dating platform is my least favorite, even though it is totally free. POF has zero restrictions on whom you can message. This policy means that within an hour of creating my profile, I began receiving unsolicited messages from men. Some were simply polite and friendly, but some were downright unsavory.

Before I continue, I want to take a moment to remind all of you ladies that you do

not owe men on a dating website anything. You do not have to answer their messages, and they should figure out how to take a hint. Of the roughly 30 messages I got from men I was not interested in, three did not accept that I was not answering. One sent me six separate greetings. Most of those were just the word “hey” over and over. At one point he apologized for “bothering” me, but then continued to send me “hey” another three times over three days! #SorryNotSorry?

Another man, and I use the term pretty loosely here, sent me eight messages asking if I was interested in a one-night stand. He insisted he was a “stud” and that I would not turn him down if I met him in person. He got pretty graphic a few times, and I finally got fed up. After he messaged me at 2 a.m. to again insist that I wanted his eggplant emoji (Yes, he literally sent me an eggplant emoji), I had had enough, and I crafted the following response:

“Listen, I appreciate all the effort you’ve put into messaging me over and over and over despite the fact that I clearly have not answered any of them. I am not interested because I do not want a one-night stand. It

doesn’t matter that you have put up an attractive picture because I don’t want a one-night stand. I am looking to date someone and spend time with that person and hopefully enter a relationship. Thanks so much.”

He stopped writing to me after that.

Another fine gentleman sent me a series of messages informing me that he had recognized me from my weekend job as a cashier. Then more messages asking why I was not writing back to him. That one was slightly terrifying. Obviously, you hope that guys like this one are harmless, and most likely they are. However, there is that one-in-a-hundred guy who is not harmless.

Be careful out there, and be aware of the information you put on your dating profile. I live in a fairly safe community, and that experience still spooked me.

At the start of this article, I promised that I had found true love. I was not lying. After a month of this nonsense and not finding anyone, I began to feel desperate. I really wanted to go on a date for this article. But I was not willing to settle for a guy that I was not interested in, and I should not have



to. In fact, nobody should have to. Being in a relationship is great, but it’s not so great that you should lower your standards. Then I realized I had already found an excellent partner: me.

I find all my jokes hilarious. I get to pick the restaurant when I go out to eat. I agree on what to do. I do not hog the blankets or keep myself awake snoring. I get along with all my friends.

So, until you can find that perfect match who lives up to your high standards, ladies? Work on loving yourself. •



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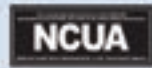
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LAURIE LACHANCE:

A Statewide Leader with a Hometown Heart

BY SHEILA D. GRANT

A native of Dover-Foxcroft, Laurie Lachance has studied the Maine economy from many angles and worked on it in many roles and capacities, over the years. Now she is helping guide the state through some of its most challenging days.

Her background has prepared her well. After graduating from Bowdoin College as an economics major, she obtained her MBA at Thomas College while working as a corporate economist for Central Maine Power (CMP). It was at CMP that Laurie met David Lachance. The couple married in 1989 and has two grown sons. Andrew, 25, is in the U.S. Navy and is attending medical school at Tufts, while Michael, 29, started studying for his Master's in Business Management in the Chicago area this fall.

She then served as the first woman Maine State Economist with Governors John R. McKernan Jr., Angus King, and John Baldacci, and she served as president and CEO of the Maine Development Foundation.

She has achieved many other shining accomplishments. In 2012, Laurie became the fifth president of Thomas College, and its first female and alumna leader. In 2014, she was inducted into the Maine Women's Hall of Fame. She served on the New England Board of Higher Education's Commission on Higher Education and Employability. She is a board member for Educate Maine and the Maine Employers Mutual Insurance Company. And until this past spring, she also chaired the board of Educare Central Maine (she is still a member), and was a trustee at her former high school, Foxcroft Academy.

"Obviously, that [trustee role] was



Laurie Lachance, President of Thomas College and co-chair of the Governor's Economic Recovery Committee.

near and dear to my heart, and it pains me, but I couldn't do it all," Laurie said.

It was this spring, in April, that Laurie was tapped to co-chair Governor Janet Mills' Economic Recovery Committee, a group that was given a big agenda. This committee is charged with developing recommendations to mitigate the damage to the state's economy caused by the pandemic, to jumpstart a long-term economic recovery for the people, businesses, and organizations of Maine, and to position the state to get back on track with the 10-year economic development strategy released in 2019.

"Oh, my goodness gracious, it was all consuming at first," Laurie said. "The Governor wanted us to lift our eyes from the current crisis and find a path forward. Our job was not to deal with the crisis, per se, but to find the very best recommendations to get our economy back on track and accelerate that, if possible."

A SMALL-TOWN GIRL IN A BIG WORLD

Laurie's father, George Gagnon, was a store manager for the Great Atlantic & Pacific Tea Company. Her mother, Mattie Gagnon, was a registered nurse.

"They were two very different people, and I think I embody both of them," she said. "My father was more gregarious and outgoing and wore his heart on his sleeve. My mother, as a health professional, was very steady in her emotions, very calm, and didn't jump to conclusions. I find that I have some of my mother in me. When faced with really big challenges, I can stay calm and get through it."

Her father became ill when Laurie was five. "I have very few memories of that time, but I have a very clear recollection that because he was sick and missed work for some time, it put the family in financial peril," she said. "If my mother had not been working, our story might have been different. As a young woman, I always felt that I needed to make sure I could contribute to my future family, always felt that drive for safety for the family I hoped someday to have, and to be a true partner in the financial part of that."

Laurie had no interest in economics when she arrived at Bowdoin. "I was going to be a math major, but when I got to math theory, I thought, 'This is ridiculous. I need something more practical!' And I fell in love with economics, which seem to apply to everything. Every decision you make is a tradeoff."

In addition to being practical and good at math and economics, Laurie has a knack for getting to know people wherever she goes. As a child, she remembers traveling by car to Quebec, New Brunswick, and occasionally to

see relatives in Massachusetts and Connecticut. It was not until an AFS international exchange program between her junior and senior years at Bowdoin that Laurie traveled by plane and train to stay with a family in Austria.

“I became enthralled with going new places and meeting new people,” she said. Playing on her college basketball team and playing saxophone in the college swing band provided other opportunities for travel.

As a corporate economist with CMP, “I traveled a lot for professional development for industry groups in Washington, D.C., Boston, New York, and we flew out to Washington State—they were on the cutting edge of energy conservation measures. I learned a lot out there.

“And I fully embraced meeting people wherever I went, in airports, at professional development events. I couldn’t stop myself because it was so fascinating to meet other people from different backgrounds,” she said. “I have this incredible curiosity about people and their backgrounds. When I was the state economist, I was learning about people’s businesses and challenges. I was doing that to an even greater extent at the Maine Development Foundation. I just loved it! If I met someone who had moved to Maine, I would ask, ‘How did you get here and what drew you here?’ It became very natural to get to know everyone that I could.”



Laurie at the podium during her inauguration as the first woman president of Thomas College in 2012.

ONE THING LEADS TO ANOTHER

Those relationships she formed—and a deep understanding of Maine’s economy and of what Maine needs to thrive—are the assets that enabled Laurie to take on being a college president, she said. “I am in no way, shape, or form of the pedigree for a college president! I had a very non-traditional route. But what I bring to this little college in central Maine is a great understanding of the needs of businesses for talent, of where we draw our students from, and, as a first-generation student myself, the barriers for folks from more humble routes to achieve all they can and get their careers launched.”

What’s it been like to be at the helm of a college during the COVID-19 pandemic?

“It’s been fascinating,” Laurie said, laughing. “Becoming a college president was a big, hard, uphill climb to understand all that the job encompasses. I felt like different years, things have been thrown at me that were very challenging, not the least of which is trying to grow a small college, with a humble endowment, that serves students of promise, mostly from Maine.”

As Maine’s population ages and fewer children are born, the pool of potential college students diminishes. “And nationally, there’s been an assault on higher education, particularly four-year institutions. They are focused on debt . . . but they miss the point that with a bachelor’s degree or Master’s, your lifetime earnings far exceed what you put in. It’s an investment in your future,” she said.

“So, when COVID came along, all these trends were already making it challenging. And then we have a pandemic and a difficult decision that for the safety for an entire community, we need to send everyone home and refund their room and board money.”

It was almost beyond comprehension how students would safely be brought back to campus this fall. “To do it best, we have to have them on campus so they can have personal relationships with their professors and with the community,” Laurie said. “COVID was a huge barrier we had to get around if we



David and Laurie Lachance with sons Andrew and Michael, at Andrew’s graduation from U.S. Navy Officer Development School.

were going to bring them back safely. We made what I think was a very wise decision to invest in a testing regime that is very aggressive. A month in, we have zero positive results. Our students are stepping up, wearing masks, social distancing, following cleaning protocols. I am so proud of this community!”

As September waned, Laurie was excited about the future of Thomas College. She implied that a big announcement would be coming within a few weeks about a set of grants and gifts of historic proportions “that will enable the college to truly differentiate itself and guarantee the future of this special little place—the college with the ‘can do’ attitude!”

Laurie has never had time for hobbies, but what does sustain and renew her is returning to the family camp on Sebec Lake in Dover-Foxcroft as often as possible. “The traditions of the lake are what keep me sane,” she said. “I do lots of reading, lots of walking on dirt roads and wooded paths. I jump out of bed, make a cup of coffee, and grab a blanket and my camera and go down on



Laurie stands behind Governor Angus King for this photo opportunity during his administration.

the dock to watch the sun rise and take pictures. So much joy comes from family being there, and best friends visiting and the absolute simple pleasures in my hometown. Being very much in touch with nature and appreciating the simple

pleasures every single day is what gives me joy, energy, and boundless optimism . . . not 24/7, but pretty much, I can find a path through anything as long as I have that chance to nurture my soul, so to speak.” •

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Photo by Jason Paige Smith

Leigh Small & OPERATION BABYLIFT

BY MARY FRANCES BARSTOW



In 1975, two years after America withdrew from the brutal Vietnam War, the forces of communist North Vietnam were marching southward. This development created many hardships for those caught up in the war—food shortages and homelessness chief among them. The South Vietnamese ambassador to the United Nations appealed the international community for aid in the refugee crisis, particularly in the capital of Saigon (now Ho Chi Minh City).

The appeal led U.S. President Gerald Ford to take a dramatic step: the U.S. would evacuate over three thousand children from Saigon and relocate them to the United States—all in less than one month. This relocation came to be known as Operation Babylift.

The challenges, both logistical and diplomatic, were immense. Planes normally used for cargo needed to be fitted with seats sourced from all across the United States. Humanitarian organizations were using the same airfields as cargo planes, sometimes without authorization. Needs for fuel, scheduling, and childcare all pressed up against the impending threat of attack.

In the United States, the response was mixed. Many families immediately signed up to care for these children on arrival, but some people had other concerns. Was the evacuation even necessary? Was it in the children's best interest? Were these children all orphans, or were they only temporarily left in orphanages by families that meant to reclaim them once the time of hardship had passed?

The situation was further complicated by safety concerns during the evacuation. One plane carrying over 300 people (including crew) began to disintegrate over the South China Sea shortly after takeoff, requiring a crash-landing back in Vietnam. Many children were saved by the heroic work of the airplane's crew, ignoring their own injuries in their efforts to pull children from the wreckage.

In response to the plane crash, President Ford offered the words, "Our mission of mercy will continue. Other waiting orphans will make the journey. This tragedy must not deter us from offering new hope for the living."

In the time since Operation Babylift, many of these war children, now grown, have reunited with their biological families. Recently I talked with Leigh Small, one of the children in Operation Babylift, now married and with children of her own. She generously shared her story.



was a little older. He had been stationed over in Vietnam three times, and they had kept this relationship going. But he had a wife in the United States. And the last time he was there, he found out that my mother was pregnant. On his way out, he made promises that he'd be back, et cetera, et cetera. She kept sending letters, and they were being returned.

She was the oldest of nine children. In the next three years, my grandmother had passed away. Her father was sick. And with the fall of Saigon she had lost her job. She had worked for the government, the American government, but she lost her job. The promise of my father coming back was dimming. So, she had to make that decision one day. She had heard that there was an organization that was getting children moved out of the country, for fear of the communists coming in and retaliating against any babies or against anyone who helped the United States. For all those combinations of reasons, she made the decision that she was going to give me to this organization.

MARY: Wow. So, she kept you until you were three.

LEIGH: Yes, I lived with the whole family until then. My grandfather apparently helped raise me while my mom worked for the Army. And when he started to get sick and they were running out of money, it was too much for her to bear with everything. And she was also just scared of what would happen when the communists did take over.

MARY: At some point, you decided to search for your birth mom and did a DNA test through Ancestry?

LEIGH: Yes. I was always curious, and as I got older and had kids on my own, the curiosity became stronger. And it's more important to know my medical history with children as well. I put my DNA test in probably four years ago and hadn't really heard anything. The results were pretty vague. I had a lot of third and fifth cousins.

MARY: Please share with me something about your childhood and your growing up.

LEIGH: Yes, I was adopted when I was just over three years old, into a family who lived in Massachusetts. I moved around a little bit in New York City and New Jersey. My dad was in the Coast Guard. I graduated from high school in New Jersey, and then I puttered around there. Then I decided to go to college at the University of Southern Maine. I had a family member up here, so it was just a good connection to do that. My husband is from Maine, so when we met, we stuck around here. We've been married for 21 years, and we have three kids.

MARY: Adopted at three. Do you know why it took so long, Leigh?

LEIGH: Too well. Yes, it was part of my learning everything [about my past]. My mother had fallen in love with an American soldier when she was, I think, 19 at the time, and he

MARY: Then what happened?

LEIGH: Then on the 24th of September last year, I got a <ding> email from a woman named Bonnie who wrote, “I’ve been contacted by someone who’s helping your mother. She has been looking for you for many years. I think I’m your half-sister.” She wrote, “Here’s my number. Call me. I’d love to talk to you.”

It was about four o’clock in the afternoon. I’m starting to make dinner, and I’m not expecting anything of it. I’m resolving it in my head that nothing was going to come of it. It was too out of the blue and shocking, to say the least. Honestly, at first, for the first half hour, I was like, “I don’t know if this is for real.” I was just very nervous.

MARY: But you did decide to contact your half-sister?

LEIGH: Yes, and when we talked, my half-sister had all the right information. She had my Vietnamese name. She had the fact that I was born out of the war. Just knew everything about me. Within 20 minutes, she had sent me pictures that she’d received from this gentleman who was helping my biological mother to find me. The minute I saw this picture of my mother and this two-and-a-half year old child, I knew, “That’s me.”

MARY: Did you talk to your biological mother on the phone?

LEIGH: Yes. That day my half-sister Bonnie said, “I have your mother’s phone number, if you’d like it.” So, that evening, my husband had gotten home, and we called. Here I just randomly got this number, it felt like. When I called, she was on her way to work. You could tell she was out, on the street. She said, “Hello, hello?” And I said, “Hi, my name is Leigh. I got your number from this person. My real name is [Nguyen Thi Phung] Mai. I think I’m your daughter.”

She was hesitant because there had been some American companies helping her, people who had come from the war who wanted to help reunite these Operation Babylift babies to their American fathers and vice versa. She had connected with a child from Canada who had my same name, had the same information, and it ended up not being the right person.



So, she was hesitant. And I said, “No, I can tell you, that picture is me.”

At that point, it was a little awkward, but she said, “I love you. I’ve been thinking about you. I’m so happy.” We had to end it, saying, “I’ll send you pictures. We’ll talk more.” It was really a surreal moment. I don’t think it ever really goes the way you think it’s going to go. It’s not that movie moment. There are so many emotions and so many fact-checks that you both have to do before you really resolve yourself of all those feelings.

MARY: Did she tell you your father’s name?

LEIGH: She did. His name was Joe O’Neal. She had gotten information about him from a local Vietnamese man who used to live in Saigon, who now lives in Florida, and who helped with the research. My mom’s story had become very popular in Vietnam. She had, for the last 10 years, proactively contacted the media, and tried to contact the U.S. government. She was getting older—she is 71 now—and she really, really pushed her search. So, this man said to my mother, “I’m going to help you. I’m in America. I can connect.”

He got my dad’s name from her, found the obituary in South Carolina, and found my half-sister’s name in the obituary. He contacted all the Bonnies [with her last name] that he could and finally connected with the right person. He had to convince her for quite some time to agree to get involved because she had no idea her father had this child. She was hesitant to do it, but finally she did. And within a day, my name popped up.

MARY: So, in finding your biological mom, you learned some things about your father, Joe O’Neal.

LEIGH: Yes. He had died unexpectedly and quickly, about eight years ago, of a blood clot, I think. I learned that my biological dad and his wife had divorced. He never remarried. However, he did have custody of my half-sister, Bonnie. He was, I get the impression, scarred. He had seen a lot that had devastated his soul, had regrets. He pretty much lived on a motorcycle, went to dive bars, hung out with a lot of vets. And



he and my half-sister traveled around a lot. They lived in a lot of places. He had these little jobs that he would take, and then they'd move again. So, he never put down roots. He was in and out of relationships. I think he just never really found his grounding again, after the war. But after COVID restrictions lift, I want to meet more with Bonnie, learn more about him, his personality, and what transpired during those times.

People sometimes ask, "Oh, are you sad over the decisions [that were made about you]? Are you angry?" I can't ever put myself in my mother's or my father's position, and what they both went through and had seen and heard—it is just beyond anything my life even came close to. So, there's no way I could judge any decisions or any lifestyles that happened after that.

MARY: You later went to Vietnam to meet your biological mother? How was that trip?

LEIGH: The initial meeting was odd. We went to the hotel room, she came in, and it was awkward. When I look back at those moments, I realize that she was so nervous and so scared of scaring me away, and she didn't want to be that typical mother who falls to her knees. We ended up going to the house and meeting the family that I was actually raised in until age three. I have an extended family over there of about 50 people. They all were incredibly welcoming and loving. We had a huge lunch that they made us, they played guitar music, and my uncles told me stories of how I'd run down this alleyway. And I'd sleep on this couch. It was really incredible to experience all that.

But my mother, the visit . . . it wasn't all roses . . . She wanted to talk about what she was doing for work back then and how proud she was of the work she had been doing . . . it seemed a bit like she'd become frozen in time back then.

MARY: Do you communicate with her now?

LEIGH: Yes, we talk on Facebook. We bought her a phone when we went over there and set up an account on Facebook, so she could follow our children's, her grandchildren's, activities, and we could be in touch.

She never remarried. She's always had a family, my uncles and my aunts, to be around her, and they're very comfortable

At first, I was happy.
Then survivor's guilt hit hard.
Here I was, living this amazing American
life that she had sacrificed for.

in terms of the lifestyle in Vietnam. She had been still riding her bike three miles a day and working as a custodian in an elementary school, at the age of 70. And it's brutally hot over there. Now she doesn't have a job because of COVID. So, we have just wanted to help and make sure that she didn't feel the pressures of that. They live very simply, and she likes that way that she lives. But I certainly feel some type of responsibility to make sure she doesn't have to work like that anymore.

MARY: Leigh, how are you doing with all this?

LEIGH: I'm better now. It was very difficult for the first three months. At first, I was happy. Then survivor's guilt hit hard. Here I was, living this amazing American life that she had sacrificed for. I had assumed that she had probably fallen in love again and married again. I didn't know she had held onto being abandoned by my father, and then losing me, and then losing the United States government—everything that had been good for her at that time had left or had fallen apart, and it was hard for her to move on.

MARY: How did your parents feel about you visiting your biological mother?

LEIGH: Oh gosh, my mom has been trying to get me to search more into this for years. She's emailed my biological mother. They've talked back and forth, and they've sent letters. I've always felt blessed in that way, that she was appreciative of my biological mother and never felt threatened.

MARY: For you, it has to have been difficult, at that age of 3, to have opened your heart to a new beginning.

LEIGH: Yes. I was fortunate that way. I was always raised with the message, "You were adopted. We chose to



have you in our family. We wanted to have you in our family.” And it was not hard for me to be raised in America. I did not feel different. Number one, I look American. Number two, because of my dad, I was pretty much raised on a military base, so there were a lot of ethnic differences, and there were also Filipino families.

I had such an amazing life in America. I never really thought about the damage that was probably done to me with being three years old and all of a sudden, just getting . . . She literally walked me into Saigon and dropped me at a building and gave me a hug, and that was it. And I guess she came back one other time to see me. And then she realized she couldn't keep doing that. And then, that was it.

I certainly look at some things in my personality and realize that it did affect me, even if I didn't see that outwardly.

MARY: Are you in contact with anybody in the Operation Babylift? Other children?



LEIGH: Oh, yes. It was amazing. I was getting messages from Indonesia, and from many who have heard my story. One person wrote to say, “I was one of those nurses on a plane.” And the DNA is so important to all these stories and all these mothers. My husband's employees, for a Christmas gift, bought 77 DNA kits for one of these organizations that help babies reunite.

MARY: After all this, are you glad you have gone through all that you did?

LEIGH: Yes, I am glad. After all

this, my mother is no longer the woman who's looking for her child. And I think, “Oh, my gosh. I'm actually the woman who did have a reunion with her biological mother, and who did have all those feelings, and went through all this. Now what?” It has certainly given my life a different perspective, which sounds a little hokey, but I just appreciate a lot of what I have and the sacrifice that people made. I'm not going to complain about things in my life, because I've seen what my mother went through. She made that sacrifice, and I got the best of all of it. •

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Elaine Greene, JoAnn Miller, and Carmen Footer.

THE TRIO OF FREEPORT FLAG LADIES

Finding Ways to Be Good Neighbors

BY SHEILA D. GRANT

The Freeport Flag Ladies had been standing with the American Flag on Main Street every Tuesday for the 18 years since the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001. Last fall, they decided to stop their weekly vigil. Their plan was to remain active in patriotic causes but to shift their energies from standing vigil to helping other organizations: Wreaths Across America; the Bangor Troop Greeters; a group training therapy dogs for veterans; and Honor Flight Maine. Then COVID-19 arrived, bringing to a halt the work of those groups and several others with whom the ladies volunteered.

So, Elaine Greene, who turns 75 in November, and her friends JoAnn Miller and Carmen Footer, who will be 84 and 79 soon, stayed busy decorating for the Fourth of July. They put out free red, white, and blue Tootsie Pops for passersby, and provided a big jar of Milk Bones for dogs. They also grew free seedlings and set them out by the sidewalk for anyone interested.

“Our best plan is to be a good neighbor,” Elaine said this fall. “We have a lot more people who walk by now. We try to do things

to be more friendly because everyone is not socializing like they used to. So, we have a big jar of Milk Bones—it’s amazing the smile on someone’s face when you give their dog a Milk Bone! And I have memberships at Sam’s and BJ’s, which some of our neighbors don’t, so I’ll ask, ‘Is there something I can pick up for you?’ We are willing to do things for other people to make their day better, to help them not feel quite so isolated from the world. We can all still do those things. It doesn’t take a lot to help somebody else out.”

Upset by the pandemic, political polarization, and civil unrest, the trio decided to stand again with the American flag on Main Street in Freeport this past September 11, as they had done so often throughout the years. “We just couldn’t let that day go by, particularly in the situation we are in now,” Elaine said. “We have to have people get involved in a positive way with their country!”

Because of the pandemic, the three made the decision not to go public about their plans. “We were just going to do it [stand out with the flag] quietly,” Elaine said. “We called three people

who stood with us so often in the past, but we didn't call the press." Despite this decision to keep their intentions quiet, their plans came to the attention of Wreaths Across America, which was holding an event near Jonesboro that day and was asking everyone nationwide to stand outside and wave a flag for one minute at 8:46, 9:03, 9:37 and 10:03 a.m. These are the times on 9/11 when the hijacked planes crashed into the World Trade Center towers, the Pentagon, and a field in Somerset County, Pennsylvania, in all killing almost 3,000 people and injuring 6,000.

In the end, a sizable crowd formed at the event that the Freeport Flag Ladies had created. Many people were wearing red, white, and blue attire. Musicians and reporters attended, and there was a visit from Senator Collins. "Word just leaked here and there, and we ended up with more people than expected, which was fine," said Elaine. "They all wore masks, kept their distance, and were very considerate of each other."

Elaine said she's distraught about the lack of civility with which Americans are treating each other during this difficult time. "In 75 years of life, I've never seen this lack of civility in our country. It's crazy and so totally unacceptable! Just normal life can get pretty hard, but right now, it's hard for everyone. I wish I could do something. I would tell everyone to join hands and tell them we are going to get through it. It's going to be a bumpy ride, but if we stay together, we'll stay strong."

ONE SIMPLE ACT LEADS TO YEARS OF SERVICE

The tale of the Freeport Flag Ladies is a compelling one. As Elaine related, it all started with a broken heart and a raised flag. "Like any true-hearted American citizen, when I saw the second plane fly into the second tower, I knew we were under attack," she said. "I knew it meant war. I was too old to enlist. I said one of the most sincere prayers that I have ever prayed, and I asked to be shown something that I could do for my country."

When President George W. Bush called for a candlelight vigil on the evening of Friday, September 14, 2001, Elaine Greene had found her something to do.

Elaine, JoAnn, and Carmen decided to go to a hill on Main Street to display their candles. Elaine also brought an American flag. "I wondered if it was right to raise it, but I felt a nudge and I just did it," she recalled. "People starting beeping their horns and yelling 'God bless America!' I told JoAnn and Carmen, 'My prayer was just answered.' I asked them to stand with me on that hill every Tuesday morning between 8 and 9 a.m. for one year to remember the people who lost their lives."

And when troops began to deploy to Afghanistan and Iraq, they decided to stand out with the flag for many years, as well as get involved in civic life and support the military in other ways. Over the past 18 years, the Freeport Flag Ladies have supported soldiers, veterans, and families in many ways.

"Our classmates, brothers, and friends were of the Vietnam era," said Elaine. Not willing to risk that veterans post-9/11 might be "mistreated like Vietnam vets were," she said, "we decided let's not let people forget they are out there laying down their lives, their limbs, and their sanity for the rest of us."

The Flag Ladies would jump out of bed in the middle of the

night to make the 2.5-hour drive to Bangor to greet troops. When multiple flights arrived, they would spend much of the day. "We felt like we were filling in for mothers who couldn't be there because we were doing this out of real love," said Elaine. "We would shake hands, give out hugs, kiss them goodbye, the same as we would have for our own child. And we posted the photos [online] so that parents could pick them up."

The group also sent hundreds of packages to soldiers. They grew and sold "freedom flowers" by donation and held yard sales to fund their efforts.

Shortly after their "retirement" from these activities in September 2019, the trio was invited to a ceremony in Columbia Falls. "Lo and behold, they put in a big flag pole with a big star, an enormous rock with a plaque saying what we did, and an even bigger plaque with a picture of the three of us," Elaine said. "These people took these steps in our honor! Can you imagine? We got a letter from the president and something from both senators. We don't deserve all that! We are just common folks who showed that we cared."

The Freeport Flag Ladies continued to work with Wreaths Across America, Patriot Guard Riders, VFWs, and other veterans' groups, until COVID struck. "We've attended the funerals of our Maine fallen soldiers, which is the hardest thing we've done," said Elaine. "We witness the agony of the parents, and the courage and strength they have in the things they've done afterwards to honor the son or daughter they lost."

The Flag Ladies also spoke with school and church groups, "not to tell you what to think, but hopefully, to inspire you to get involved in service to something besides yourself," Elaine said. "Everyone can do something. Just be a good neighbor. If your neighbors are older, or injured, or sick, help without waiting to be asked. Most people don't want to ask, so offer. Open doors for people. Help a mother get her stroller up over a curb. It's the little things. Each time you do a little thing, without knowing it, you are encouraged to do another, and it becomes part of who you are." •

Each time you do a little thing, without knowing it, you are encouraged to do another.



Elaine Greene and Sen. Susan Collins.

JOY ASUNCION

A MAINE AMBASSADOR FOR THE WOMEN'S MEMORIAL IN WASHINGTON, D.C.

BY CHRISTINE SIMMONDS

From the American Revolution to the present, more than 3 million women have served in the military in some form. Sadly, these women often feel like their service was not important, or did not matter, because they were not in combat situations.

Joy Asuncion's mission is to change that attitude.

"The challenge with women that have served is a lot of times

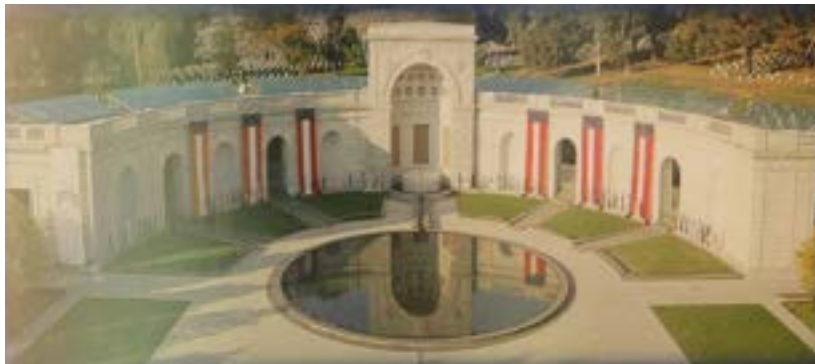
they don't talk about their service," Joy says. "They don't feel like they did enough to warrant any type of recognition."

Joy is a Maine ambassador for the Women's Memorial and a member of the board of directors for Honor Flight Maine. Part of her role as an ambassador is to help these

women veterans see the bigger picture of their service. "We all signed up to serve our country," she insists. "Not everybody went to war, but you did what the military needed you to do at the time. So, you served your country." She adds, "I try to make them feel proud to have done what they did."

The Women's Memorial is the national memorial dedicated to all women who have served in the military, from the Revolutionary War to today. It is located in Washington, D.C., at the ceremonial entrance to Arlington Cemetery.

Honor Flight Maine is the Maine branch of the nonprofit Honor Flight, which facilitates trips to D.C. for veterans to visit the memorials, including the Women's Memorial.



Joy is short and soft-spoken. She has shoulder-length brown hair. She wears a black cloth mask with a United States flag decorating the front, and a fleece jacket with the Women's Memorial logo on the lapel.

Joy grew up in Belfast, where she lives currently in a brown Cape Cod-style

house with a big front lawn and large American flag flying by the front door.

Joy's father had served in the military during World War II, but Joy says she never really knew his story. He did not like to talk about his service, though Joy describes their family as



From left: Joy at boot camp in Orlando, Florida; re-enlisting in 1985 at Pearl Harbor; and receiving the Award of Meritorious Service Medal.



Joy Asuncion at her Belfast home, holding her boot camp graduation photo.

being very patriotic. Joy says she always wondered about his service, and she wanted to follow in his footsteps. "I wanted to give back to my country as well," she says.

At the age of 18 Joy enlisted in the Navy. She went on to serve in the military for 20 years, from 1974 to 1994. Her last duty station was at Pearl Harbor in Hawaii, where she worked at the Pacific Fleet Command Center. "I managed 125 sailors," she says. "We monitored the whole Pacific Fleet region." Joy says her role there was to ensure the sailors were ready for anything that might happen.

Her retirement ceremony took place on the *USS Arizona Memorial*, which marks the resting place of those killed on the ship during the Pearl Harbor attack of 1941.

After retiring from the Navy, Joy returned to Maine in 1995. She was recently divorced and had a son, so she got a job working fulltime at Bank of America. She worked there for 23 years before retiring.

Joy did not feel satisfied with that kind of life, though. "I just always felt like something was missing," she says. She

started a veteran's ministry at her church during that time. This is when Joy felt she had found her calling. She thought about her father and his service while working with these veterans. "I know God placed it on my heart to do that," she says, "and it just kind of blossomed into so much more."

During her time working with the veterans at the church, Joy found a lot of the older veterans had questions about benefits. Joy didn't have all the answers, but she started making connections with people across the country who could assist her in helping these people. "It just got bigger and bigger," she says. "I kept thinking I want to do something more. I felt like 'there's something bigger out there I'm supposed to be doing. I just don't know what it is yet.'"

Once she retired from the bank, Joy contacted the Women's Memorial and asked how she could help. That was how she discovered Honor Flight Maine.

In 2014, Joy went on her first Honor Flight trip as a guardian. She accompanied a World War II veteran she had never met. "That really changed my life," Joy

says. Through these World War II veterans, she could understand her father's experience more. After that trip Joy knew she had to be more involved.

She joined the board of directors for Honor Flight Maine. In 2017 she became an ambassador for the Women's Memorial.

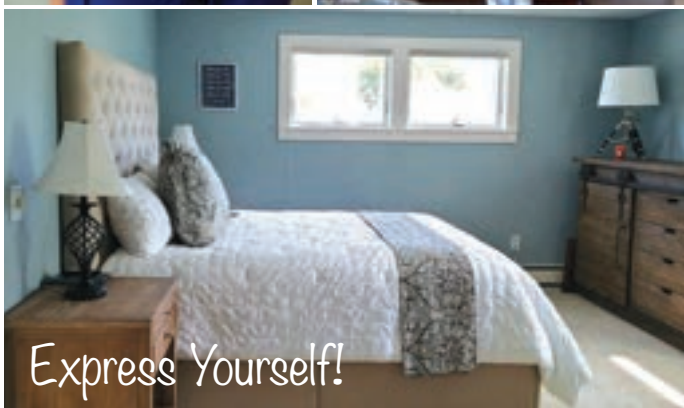
One thing Joy does as an ambassador is to increase the number of women registered with the memorial.

"I try to connect with women veterans and family members of women that may have passed away," she says. "Because we want to get their legacy of their military history registered as well."

She created the Facebook group *Maine Women Veterans*. Currently there are more than 1,200 women in this group. "That was one of my ways to figure out how I am going to connect with these women," Joy says. "You're not going to get a list from anybody."

She puts up fliers to get women veterans to join the Facebook group and then encourages them to register with the memorial. She also does presentations at or-

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organizations like the Daughters of the American Revolution and Historical Societies. "I try to get out in the community as much as possible," she adds.

Often Joy finds she will be talking to men and they will mention that their mother or grandmother served. Joy helps these family members register their loved ones with the memorial. Joy says these family members are so excited to get their loved ones registered with the memorial. "It's a lasting legacy."

Joy's son and grandchildren, who live in New York, were able to go to the Women's Memorial with her on one trip. "My younger grandchildren got to see my registration on the Women's Memorial in Washington," Joy says. "And you can't put a price on that kind of stuff, you know?"

Often Joy accompanies women veterans on the Honor Flight trips. Prior to the trip, she works with their families to register them with the memorial. When they arrive at the Women's Memorial during an Honor Flight trip, Joy has already coordinated with the memorial to have their profiles on display on the big screen when they arrive. "You should see these women cry," says Joy. "It's just an incredible moment. For them to see—here's a national memorial, and there's their picture with their information on it. You can't put it into words. It's priceless."

"We want them to know that what they did counted, and they should be proud of it," Joy says. She wants to preserve the legacy of these many women who blazed the trail for modern women serving in the military.

Joy can be reached at 207-930-5640 or joyasuncion@roadrunner.com.

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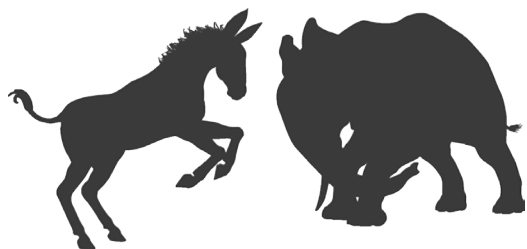


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LUCIA M. CORMIER: AN “ABLE FOE” TO MARGARET CHASE SMITH

And Maine’s First Woman Customs Collector

BY ELIZABETH DEWOLFE, PH.D.

Cormier photo courtesy Maine Historic Preservation Commission/mainmemory.net. Smith photo courtesy the United States Senate/senate.gov.

The airwaves and media abound with advertisements for a hotly contested congressional seat: one candidate an established multi-term senator, the other new to national politics but with years of state legislative experience. Some liken the race to a prize fight between two heavyweight boxing champions, while others opine on the historic significance. The national media closely watches the race. Susan Collins versus Sara Gideon? Not quite. This history-making duel came 60 years ago in the 1960 election, when Democrat Lucia M. Cormier challenged incumbent Republican Margaret Chase Smith for a seat in the U.S. Senate.

The 2020 Gideon–Collins race reflects a long legacy of Maine women’s leadership in national politics. When Susan Collins joined Olympia Snowe in Congress in 1996, it marked the first time two Republican women represented a state. It was just three years earlier, in 1993, that a state first had two women senators—that glass-ceiling moment went to California Senators Barbara Boxer and Diane Feinstein. When Cormier and Smith squared off, they, too, made history. Their 1960 campaign was the first fight for a United States Senate seat between two major-party women candidates.



Lucia M. Cormier



Margaret Chase Smith

Margaret Chase Smith is well known in Maine political history. Born in 1897 in Skowhegan, Smith held a variety of jobs following high school, including work as a telephone operator, teacher, office manager, and newspaper staff-person. She married Clyde Smith in 1930, a local Maine politician who was elected to the U.S.

House of Representatives in 1936. Margaret Chase Smith worked closely with him as his secretary. She entered politics in 1940, taking the seat of her husband, when he died in April of that year. Smith served four terms in the House of Representatives before being elected in 1948 to the Senate, the first woman elected to serve in both houses of Congress. Smith broke many barriers in her career. Her most noted moment might have been her impassioned 1950 Declaration of Conscience speech which turned public sentiment against the conspiratorial agenda of Senator Joseph McCarthy. In 1960, Smith ran for her third term in the Senate. Her challenger was Lucia Cormier.

Lucia Marie Cormier was born November 20, 1909, in Rumford, to French Canadian parents David and Adele Goguen Cormier. Having graduated from St. Elizabeth’s College in New Jersey and earned a master’s degree in French from Columbia University, Cormier taught high school French and Spanish and chaired the modern languages department at Stephens High School in Rumford. She later ran Cormier’s, a stationery and office supply store. She was elected to the Maine legislature in 1947, just two years after attending a Democratic town meeting, the *New York Times* reported, “as something



to do for an evening.” Cormier served six terms as a State Representative and in 1959 was the Minority House Leader in the Maine legislature, the first woman to hold that role. Cormier served as Democratic national committeewoman for Maine and ran for Congress, unsuccessfully, in 1950. A decade later, she challenged Smith.

The national media paid attention. On August 28, 1960, the *New York Times* covered the “Women in Maine Vying for Senate.” Cormier, the *Times* noted in its coverage of the “First Such Race,” was “off to a head start in the campaigning,” as Smith remained in Washington to avoid missing a roll-call vote. (She had not missed a vote since 1955.) Meanwhile Cormier was hustling, shaking hands, giving speeches, and crisscrossing Maine in a car driven by her nephew. The short *Times* article, buried deep within the paper and surrounded by Bloomingdale’s advertisements for Fall fashions, reviewed Cormier and Smith’s biographies, noting their shared history as former teachers. The *Times* concluded that in Cormier, Senator Smith had an “able foe,” reporting that Smith herself conceded that Cormier was “the best candidate the Democrats could have put up.” To 21st century readers, the page layout of the article is ironic. The fashion ad nearby triumphed the merchandise, “Young Adventurers Conquer the Coat World”—while middle-aged women were busy conquering the world of politics.

In September 1960, Smith and Cormier appeared on the cover of *Time* magazine (—this remarkable cover may be viewed by going to <http://content.time.com/time/covers/0,16641,19600905,00.html>). Publisher Bernhard Auer introduced the politically oriented issue, noting that forty years after the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment, *Time* was embracing Maine’s “two hard-at-work women politicians.” Yet, Auer noted how his magazine editors “somehow still find women politicians—and women—an always fascinating, sometimes baffling and ever-changing story.”



Margaret Chase Smith at a campaign event in 1960.

Tacitly supportive of women’s growing role in politics, the article connected the Cormier–Smith contest to the long struggle for women’s suffrage. This struggle had culminated, the article pointed out, in “more bonnets” than ever running for office and more women likely to vote in November 1960. Election day was therefore “very likely [to] go down in history as Ladies Day.” Smith, “a cool, silver-haired, sometimes tart-tongued Republican” and Cormier, “a stocky, even-tempered spinster” of feared Mainers “a remarkable choice.” The writer of the *Times* article finds much to praise in both candidates’ records, even while (in annoying Mad Men-era style language) undercutting their political bona fides by repeatedly referring to the women as “Maggie” and “Lucia.”

Other media outlets followed suit. The *Washington Post* expected a “real fur-flying political catfight.”

Smith won the election with 256,890 votes—62 percent of the votes cast. She won every county in Maine except Androscoggin, which went to Cormier with 57 percent of the vote. Smith retained her Senate seat, one of 20 women in the 87th Congress (18 in the House, 2 in the Senate).

Margaret Chase Smith served over 32 years in Congress, and in

1964 announced her run for president, the first woman to seek a major political party’s nomination. She lost every primary, but at the 1964 Republican National Convention, her supporters placed her name in nomination for president—the first woman to be so nominated at a major party’s convention. Barry Goldwater became the Republican candidate for President that year, but not by unanimous consent of the convention delegates—Smith refused to withdraw her name after the initial polling (placing fifth among candidates), and she remained on the final ballot. Smith retired from politics in 1973. In 1982 the Margaret Chase Smith Library opened in Skowhegan as a center for congressional research and education. Smith died in her Skowhegan home in 1995.

Following the 1960 election, President John F. Kennedy appointed Cormier the Customs Collector of Maine and New Hampshire, the first woman, the first Franco-American, and the last presidential appointee to hold the position. Later in her career, her title was District Director. As historian William David Barry notes on the *Maine Memory Network*, the position of Collector, going back to the eighteenth century, provided a “small but lucrative bureaucracy,” collecting tariffs and keeping tabs on vessels and cargo in the port of Portland. In the nineteenth century, the revenue collected provided the Federal government with a major income source. In her position, Cormier advocated for public recognition of the historical importance of the Custom House, and in 1973, the building was placed on the National Register of Historic Places. Cormier retired in 1974. She died in Florida in 1993 at the age of 83.

Fellow Senator Edmund Muskie appraised Cormier’s contribution to Maine politics with these words: “Her character and wisdom contributed mightily to the emergence of our Democratic party.” Indeed—in races where multiple women run, all women win. •



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Not Afraid to Tackle Large Subjects

*Jill Pelto Studies and Paints the
World's Endangered Glaciers*

BY PAM FERRIS-OLSON



Jill Pelto holding her recent cover for *TIME* Magazine July 2020 issue. She is in the middle of doing fieldwork on the mountain glaciers in Washington state in August 2020, so she is about to backpack with her team to their next field site. She is working with the North Cascade Glacier Climate Project.



Watercolor landscapes have the ability to transport people to faraway places. They have taken Jill Peltó to the ends of the world. Jill, a climate-change artist, has traveled with her portable watercolor kit to ice-covered fields in the mountains of Washington State and remote areas of Antarctica where she has detailed the fragility of frozen landscapes.

“They are so beautiful. You observe so much by spending time out there, and it feels really meaningful to also get to be able to do the research, take measurements of the glaciers, and see how they are changing, or observe how wildflowers are shifting with climate change,” Jill said.

Her love for the outdoors and her adventurous spirit are deeply rooted in family. As a child, Jill, her twin sister Megan, and their older brother Ben spent summers at their nana’s camp on Long Lake in Naples. They enjoyed the fun activities that go with a lakeside vacation. When it was time to play boardgames with her nana, Jill described the matriarch as competitive, not letting the grandkids win just because they were youngsters.

When Jill was 15, her father Mauri took her on her first wilderness backpacking experience. The two hiked the White Mountains, a part of the northern Appalachian Mountains and described as the most rugged mountains in New England.

“Her first response was being concerned, but then relishing the challenge and the experience. That reaction illustrated that she enjoyed adventure and could persist through the miserable conditions that are inevitable working in the mountains,” Mauri remembered. Mauri Peltó is Vice President for Academic Affairs at Nichols College and Director of the North Cascades Glacier Climate Project, located in Dudley, Massachusetts.

Afterwards they agreed that Jill was ready to join her father the next summer when he conducted glacial field work in Washington State. That trip was an intense one for Jill. Among other valuable skills acquired, she learned to climb mountainous ice fields with ice crampons and an ice ax.

During her junior year at the University of Maine in Orono, an opportunity arose for Jill to go to Antarctica. Her previous experience studying glaciers with her father gave Jill the confidence to know she was ready for this new challenge. Jill has subsequently made three trips to Antarctica.

Each time Jill traveled to Antarctica, she went equipped with a portable watercolor set. With her art, she was able to document the landscape, when she wasn’t occupied with scientific research for the UMaine Orono’s Climate Change Institute. The research team’s excursions to study the continent’s ice sheets necessitated travel to and camping in remote areas. The smallest necessities, like access to water—an essential for a watercolor artist—required advance planning.

“Usually we camped near a source of water, like ponds, mostly frozen,” Jill said. “But you could hack through to get water with an ice ax. Sometimes there were little streams. But we could, if needed, melt snow on the stove.”

Jill admitted that living and working in what she referred to as the “deep field” had low points, particularly during bad weather spells. Over time her thoughts were drawn to indoor plumbing, washing her hair, and fresh veggies. But even the low times had



Top: Jill holding up a painting done in August 2020 of an icefall on Easton Glacier, one of many glaciers on Mt. Baker in Washington State. *Bottom:* Jill working on a watercolor painting in August 2020 in the North Cascades in Washington State.

their rewards. “You persevere through them. I think it changes me a little bit as a person in a really positive way. I come back feeling inspired because I just did that. I did something positive to help the environment.” The result? “A sense of accomplishment.”

No argument, Jill is accomplished. A 27-year-old resident of Westbrook, she has degrees in Earth and Climate Science and Studio Art. Her field work in Antarctica earned her a Master’s degree and, like the work of her father in Washington, involved measuring glaciers to document changes in relation to climate. Jill’s job as a scientist is to observe, measure, and understand the collected data. As a climate-change artist, Jill creates watercolors that convey the data in a compelling way. Her glacier-inspired work entitled “Currents,” depicting global climate change over two centuries, was on the cover of the July 2020 issue of *Time*. “Science does not make a ripple unless you can communicate it,” said Mauri Pelto.

Jill is endeavoring to do just that. She incorporates scientific data into her watercolor images. A growing number of artists, like Jill, are collaborating with scientists to make scientific work more accessible to the general public. Jill’s latest collaboration is with paleoecologists from Scandinavia. These scientists study the relationship between ancient environments and the plants and animals that lived in them. The scientists contracted with Jill to create five paintings based on data they had collected on the Norway Spruce. Jill’s paintings will show how the tree has changed over time and might respond in the future to climate change.

She also is working with the Halcyon String Quartet, classically trained musicians, who describe their use of music and the arts as a way “to promote environmental stewardship and respond to the urgency of climate change.” The painting Jill is creating for the quartet deals with sea-level rise in Maine. Her focus is to show how the rise will impact coastal ecosystems like marshes and human-built infrastructure. She plans to include data about Maine’s interest in renewable energy. She wants to include positive progress in her story.



Above: Jill and her dad, glaciologist Mauri Pelto, on Mt. Baker in Washington State in August 2020. Dr. Pelto founded the North Cascade Glacier Climate Project in 1983, and has run it every year since. *Below:* Jill working at her home studio space in Westbrook. She is painting a new piece about sea level rise in Maine.

Climate change is on the minds of both Jill and her father. When asked for examples of how changes in climate will affect Mainers in the future, Mauri said, “The frequency of winter rain events will increase, and the persistence of winter lake ice will decrease.” And he noted that these changes will also impact the availability of winter pastimes. “I taught cross country skiing in the 1980s at the University of Maine,” he continues, “and used snowmobile trails to do so. Both of these activities are becoming less of a consistent possibility, due to the lack of persistent snow cover.”

Even with her scientifically tuned view of the world, Jill believes her reaction to the melting ice sheets in Antarctica and Greenland is similar to that of non-scientists. “It is just so massive. It is hard to really comprehend. You just have to make yourself dwell on it and understand why that is so important, so bad. For me, it really makes me upset because I love glacial environments. They are so stunning. To see the way they are changing irrevocably is emotionally draining.”



For more on Jill’s artistic process and her piece Gulf of Maine Temperature Variability, about increasing temperature fluctuations in Maine’s coastal marine environment, go to Women Mind the Water podcast, Episode 3 at womenmindthewater.com.



Theresa Nash shows Shelley Bickford of Windham some of the features on a camper while her grandson Isaac peeks through. *Photo by Cyndy Bell*
Left photo courtesy Janine Pettit Girl Camper

A Good Time to Fire Up the RV

BY CYNDY BELL

Fall is a beautiful season to be camping in Maine. The air is clear and crisp and offers comfortable, daytime temperatures—perfect weather for hiking, relaxing by a river, lake, or ocean, or experiencing our woods in their spectacular colors. Evenings bring the opportunity to build that fabulous campfire, wrap up in a blanket with a favorite beverage, share stories, and maybe make the last s'mores of the season.

In recent years, more women's outdoor groups have begun going camping and RV-ing, to take advantage of conditions like these. Recognizing this positive trend, Dan Craffey, owner of Lee Family Trailer Sales in Windham, Maine, decided to host "Girl Camper College," an educational forum that was held recently.

Along with Lee's Family Trailer Sales, the co-sponsor of this forum was Girlcamper.com, a website representing an organization with many chapters nationwide. Its founder, publisher, and podcast host is Janine Pettit. An avid camper herself, Janine uses her platform to encourage other "Girl Campers" to explore new places.

The site offers many resources for women RV enthusiasts, such as information from industry experts, stories, photos from the organization's members, and shared ideas on where is good to stay and what is interesting to do. With chapters across the country that target specific regions, Girlcamper.com allows you to find a Girl Camper Guide who lives in an area you are going to. This guide can be a valuable and friendly help to you—someone who can recommend the best places to see and

who can give inside information on activities and establishments unique to that area.

Speakers at the forum included Bob Zagami, Executive Director of the New England RV Dealers Association, speaking on the RV Lifestyle; Janine Pettit, founder of Girlcamper.com, speaking on "From Factory to Fabulous"; and Mike Perry, Dealer Resources Group, speaking on products that can help to enhance the RV experience.

The forum also discussed challenges that might arise as women take to the road. Theresa Nash, from Lee Family Trailer Sales, offered suggestions on preparations, protections, creative ideas, and hacks. Some of what she shared may sound like Camping 101, but these points can still be important to review.

It allows us to enjoy nature, to take time to slow down and enjoy life, especially during these times.

- Know the height and width of your vehicle. Many back roads in Maine have low bridges and could pose a problem. Make sure to include any extended height like the vent covers and slide-out toppers, for example.

- Secure breakables. Use simple tricks for securing things, like sliding an old (or new) winter sock over glass bottles and installing a guard that can be adjusted in the fridge to keep gallons of milk and other items from sliding and spilling.

- Have some nail polish around in bright colors to help mark safety chains, so you can check in a flash.

- Do a run-through, checking tires and hoses. Lubricate to avoid the drying out and cracking that will cause all kinds of issues down the road.

• Check tire pressure often when traveling long distances.

• Plan ahead. Make sure you know where RV dealers are along your route, in the event you need parts or have an issue. They might be able to talk you through it.

• Have a tool kit. It sounds simple, but some tools could mean the difference between having a long delay vs. getting quickly back on the road, or perhaps getting to a dealer for a proper fix. This tool kit should include duct tape (the great fixer), extra fuses, a shovel, surge protectors, electrical adaptors (there are 30 and 50 amp versions), 30A and 50A extension cord, portable air compressor, and a lug wrench that fits. In the case of the wrench, check before leaving to make sure it fits your camper.

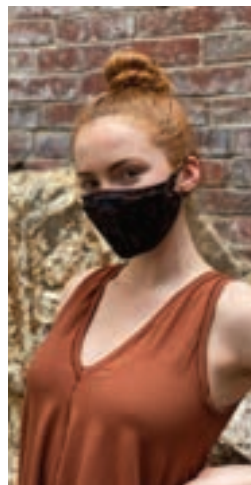
• Make a list of everything you'll need. Make one for yourself and have your traveling buddy make one also. This way, each person can check the other's list, to make sure all points have been remembered and addressed.

• Important: Let someone—or several friends or family members—know where you're going, when you're expected to return, what routes you're planning, and if you make changes on the way, let them know. No need to alarm the authorities because someone doesn't know where you are.

Many new items come out every year to help people with some of the more common challenges. These include a Trailer Aid, which assists in lifting your trailer for flat tires, and solar panels for when you're off the grid, to save on battery life. Check your favorite local RV dealer for aids like these, which can make your travel and camping experiences more enjoyable.

When Jackie F. of Windham, one attendee to the forum, was asked why she loves to go camping, she said, "It's calming. It allows us to enjoy nature, to take time to slow down and enjoy life, especially during these times." A common truism points out that Life is a journey, not a destination. Perhaps those words are especially true on beautiful Fall days, whether your journey is on foot, hiking, or in a well-functioning RV on a well-planned trip.

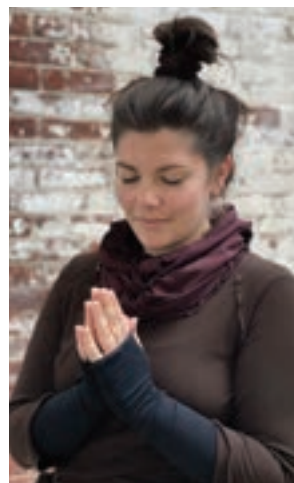
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Shearing the Way

*Fourth-generation sheep shearer
carries on her family's tradition*

BY JODI HERSEY

E dith Kershner honors the heritage of her upbringing. Edie, who was born and raised in Montana, comes from a long line of sheep shearers. Her father, grandfather, and great-grandfather all sheared sheep, and now she's continuing that family tradition from her farm in Searsport. She said of shearing, "It's in my blood. I have two brothers and three sisters, and my dad taught all of us to shear except for my youngest sister because she was too little [at the time]," Edie said. "Now I'm the only one who shears regularly. My oldest brother will do it occasionally."

She is not sure why she's the only member of her household to keep the family's heritage going, but she couldn't live without it. "It's a part of what makes me who I am. There are days that I'm like, 'Why do I do this?' but I can't imagine life without sheep, and I can't imagine my life without shearing," she explained.

This fourth-generation sheep shearer got her start not only watching her dad shear, but also seeing him participate in sheep shearing competitions. "My dad was on a shearing crew at one point, and they had to shear a sheep in 3 minutes and 30 seconds in order to be on the crew," she recalled. "He would go and compete in the Maryland Sheep and Wool Festival every year, and my family would go, pack a picnic lunch, and cheer him on. It was a lot of fun."

However, Edie admitted that she herself would never qualify to be on a shearing crew. "As far as speed, I think the world record is 28 seconds, and that's held by a guy from New Zealand, and that's all he does," she said. "For me, I can do your average sheep in five

minutes. For professional shearers, that's a little on the slow side."

Simply put, shearing sheep is not easy. It's a skill that takes time, practice, and the right equipment. "It's not something you learn quickly. I stuck with it because I was too cheap to pay anyone else to shear my sheep," she explained.

The other reason she kept at it was to pay for the new shears she bought. "I stopped into a lady's place that had sheep and asked, 'Are you looking for a shearer because I'm looking to shear?' She was desperate to have someone shear her sheep because she was trying to do it herself. She had 50 of them at the time, so I got a lot of practice doing hers," Edie said. "She started passing my name out, and I got a lot more practice." Since sheep shearing is something that should be done at least once a year, there were plenty of additional opportunities for practice.

Edie has kept her clippers going for 15 years, with more than a dozen sheep of her own to care for and also other people's sheep to shear. But that's not all she does. She also works as an oil delivery driver for Maine Fuels in Searsport. Both of her jobs are seasonal, which allows her the flexibility to bring one or more of her four young homeschooled sons with her.

"There's only one seat in the truck. So, they will go with me one at a time and ride around. They love trucks and excavators," she said. "I can take the kids with me to shear, and that's hands-on learning. My two oldest, Leland, who is 7, and Bridger, who is 6, will hold the sheep and I'll shear them. And they like it."



Over the years, Edie has participated in the Maine Fiber Frolic at the Windsor Fairgrounds and Sheep for a Cure, a nonprofit that raises funds for cancer research through the fiber arts. “The sheep I have are a dairy breed. They don’t have the greatest wool. I’m not a wool expert, but you have different classes of wool. You have a light wool. It’s maybe like an inch. It’s a short fiber and kind of rough. Then you have medium wool, which is a little longer, but not the nicest. It might be something beginners would use to spin, and that would be off the sheep I have. It’s not bad wool—it’s just not super nice. Then you’d have your nicer wools, which would be a long fiber. Your Romney and Lincoln [sheep] might have more of a longer fiber,” Edie explained.

When Edie’s father passed away, she kept on shearing, driven to keep his memory alive through the lessons and skills he shared with her. “I continued on. It was a pride thing. I’m the one who kept it going,” she said. “You know how people have an addiction to the sea? That’s what sheep shearing is for me. It’s my heritage. It’s a part of me. I feel that pull that is part of somebody, that morphs them into who they are. It’s made me stronger physically, and I’ve drawn a lot of life lessons from it.”

She hopes now, more than ever, her family’s long-standing tradition will continue to grow and that her boys will proudly become the fifth generation of sheep shearers in their family. “They’re still little,” she said. “But I certainly hope they pick it up as they get older and carry it on.” •

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ROXI SUGER

Designing and Making Sustainable Apparel And Giving Back to the Community

BY R. COOK

Inside a lofty 7,000 square-foot space in Biddeford's Pepperell Mill, fashion designer Roxi Suger and her talented team create two sustainable, plant-based apparel lines: Angelrox and Suger.

Roxi has built her business one stitch at a time, and she hasn't let anything stop her from pursuing her dream of comforting women, inspiring joy, and helping others. She embodies the same Maine values that she admires: independence, resilience, honesty, and hard work.

Learning how to sew at the age of eight from her grandmothers in Oklahoma, Roxi's dream took root. She studied apparel design on a scholarship at the University of Alabama and entered New York City's fashion world in 1994, then launched Angelrox in 1999.

Angelrox is now sold to as many as 200 retailers nationwide. Suger, her second line, is more exclusively sold in her two namesake Maine stores, located in Portland and Biddeford, as well as on the company website, angelrox.com. In addition to Roxi's signature collections, Suger also features an array of lovely and nurturing products, many of which are also made in Maine by other independent makers.

Like many other Maine businesses, Roxi experienced the COVID-19 pandemic's fallout firsthand. Forced to dramatically reduce her regular apparel business, her team made hospital gowns and helped coordinate the making of masks, in collaboration with the Partners for World Health. They donated more than a thousand headbands to medical facilities and front-line workers in Maine. They also launched a line of

masks using her signature plant-based fabrics.

During the stay-at-home order, they were able to keep the Angelrox mill going with a reduced staff, all of whom were required to wear face coverings from the start. The company was fortunate to already have a website in place through which they could continue serving their retail customers (or “angels,” as they are called). These online sales continue to help them stay afloat. Both Suger stores were able to reopen in June, and their full team is back to work at the mill.

“I feel very grateful that, in addition to pivoting to make masks, we were also able to introduce (albeit on a delayed schedule) the new designs we had planned for summer,” Roxi said.

In addition, they have continued to support local causes throughout the pandemic, such as the Welcome Immigrant Center in Portland, the Wildlife Center, a local animal shelter, and the Maine Heritage Coast Trust.

Overcoming challenges with determination, hard work, and imagination is nothing new for Roxi. Her journey to Maine has taken many twists and turns. In 2000, less than a year after launching her line, she opened a retail space on Orchard Street deep in Chinatown, with her own elevated runway in the store and production in the basement. Roxi also lived there with no heat, kitchen, or shower. Following the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, she closed the store and next lived in a tiny artist’s loft in Dumbo, at that time a rough Brooklyn neighborhood located underneath the Manhattan Bridge Overpass. This space also had no heat nor amenities.

“Those two years resolved in me I would never be cold again,” Roxi said.

Roxi committed to using only plant-based fibers that make her clothing biodegradable and provide more comfort for sensitive skin. She describes her designs and collections as working well for all ages, and especially for “that sweet time of life where many women juggle demands of family, work, and play, hopefully finding their balance along the way.” She adds, “Our designs support and serve every day needs and are also wonderful for active moms, wellness, and outdoor activities.”

The Angelrox collection is playful and extremely versatile with pieces that can be styled in a myriad of ways. The Suger fashion line is more streamlined for women that prefer smooth classics. Both collections share the same comforting fibers in sophisticated but gentle colors inspired by the earth, so they layer together seamlessly.

The essence of both the Angelrox collection and Suger fashion line is to embrace and support a broad range of body types and sizes, while also inspiring women to recognize their inherent beauty through positive sizing and smart product offerings to suit each individual. The clothing is infused with a spirit of love that

is genuinely felt and portrayed on “real” models that celebrate how unique and beautiful every woman is.

Roxi married her love, Julian, in 2005. Their son was born two years later. The financial meltdown that occurred in 2007 also presented Roxi’s small business with tough challenges. She survived by selling her fashions on the streets of NYC, where she met angels who are loyal to this day. When the markets recovered, she started participating in tradeshows to establish wholesale accounts. She did this while also teaching at Parsons, freelancing for other companies, and caring for their young son. At that time, Julian was working full time in the city in advertising. He and Roxi are now business partners.

Julian introduced Roxi to Maine, and when they would visit his dad, who lives in Saco, the state would be their haven from New York. They set their sights on moving here, but it took five years before they could realize that dream. By working extremely hard, they advanced the business, and Julian joined Angelrox full-time in 2012.

They purchased a house in Biddeford and moved there that same year, working from their new home. In 2013, they opened their first Suger retail store in Biddeford in the hopes of helping to revitalize the downtown and to introduce their work to the community. They produced their fashions and operated the business within the store and committed right away to giving a portion of sales each month to local charities.

A year later, they moved production, fulfillment, and business operations into their current space inside the Pepperell Mill campus, creating a larger retail experience at Suger. This move aligned with the renaissance happening in the Biddeford and Saco area, as more and more creative entrepreneurs relocated to the area and saw

it as a great place to launch their businesses.

With the goal of giving back and supporting great causes as a cornerstone of Roxi’s dream, the couple also organized three Biddeford Balls, fundraisers intended to bring the community together. These events raised \$70,000 for various charities and included lighting the former mill smokestack to create a beautiful nighttime vista for the area.

Once Roxi arrived in Maine, she never looked back. “I felt welcome here.” She identifies with what she describes as “a sense of kindness, hard work, and down-to-earth sensibilities” that Mainers exhibit. She also loves how the people of Maine appreciate the environment, are eager to help one another, and respect their quality of life to achieve a healthy balance.

“There is so much to adore about our exquisite state, but it is the people who live and work in Maine who make it the most extraordinary place.” •



MID COAST HUNGER PREVENTION PROGRAM

STORY BY SUSAN OLCOTT

"Some guests fear the bag of dried beans they pick up from our pantry, but I love talking with them about how they can prepare them really easily and how they can make a huge batch to freeze so they'll have a source of protein that lasts into the winter," says Heather Arvidson, Volunteer and Client Services Manager at Mid Coast Hunger Prevention Program (MCHPP). MCHPP is a nonprofit organization based in Brunswick, Maine, whose mission is to "offer dignity and empowerment by providing all members of our community with access to healthy food." They do this for over 1000 households each year. Heather is one of the many passionate people at MCHPP who make this happen.

Heather had her first experiences helping to provide people with good, healthy food far from Brunswick. You may never have heard of the Kingdom of Eswatini, a small country in Sub-Saharan Africa, but that is where she served in the Peace Corps. She was assigned as a youth development volunteer at a primary school where she did everything from starting a school garden to teaching sexual education in a country with one of the world's highest HIV rates. From there, she moved to Phoenix to work at a non-profit that provided positive behavioral support to children and families. But Maine was calling her back.

She grew up in Massachusetts, but spent plenty of time in Maine as a kid—summers in Belgrade, Maine, with her aunt, uncle, and cousins, her parents, and two younger sisters on Mt. Desert Island, and winters skiing at Sugarloaf



Heather Arvidson. Photos by Sean Marlin

and Sunday River. When she chose Colby for college, "that's when I solidified my love of Maine," she says. "There are so many things to do here year-round—endless adventures and great people to explore with." It solidified her love for connecting with and helping other people as well. Her studies in Anthropology created a base for understanding people with very different needs. "It has really helped me in all the jobs I've had. I'm able to picture what other people are going through and to be more empathetic."

Empathy is certainly a requirement for MCHPP staff. It helps them to connect with a wide variety of clients and also a large number of volunteers of all interests and backgrounds. She was hired in 2017 as the organization's Volunteer Coordinator and was in charge of training and overseeing roughly 1200 volunteers each year in duties like passing out food at the pantry, preparing a hot

meal for the lunch service, or packaging take-home food for schools to pass out to students, to name a few. Her responsibilities have grown to supervise the staff who oversee client-based programs which include the Kitchen, Pantry, Mobile Pantries, Pantry to Pantry, School Pantry, and Summer Food Service Program, as well as continuing to manage the volunteer program. She also recently became the coordinator for the Food Security Coalition.

Given Heather's job, you might think that she has always been a foodie. She says, "As a kid I didn't really like to cook. But food was important to our family. We always ate dinners together even when we were all very busy doing different things," she adds. As she has grown up,

however, food has become a bigger part of her life, both professionally and personally. "I've come to enjoy cooking so much more since working here and have learned so much about food," she says. Heather has been a vegetarian for many years, so healthy eating is important to her and is something she likes to share with clients. "Last week a woman came through our pantry who was dairy and gluten intolerant. I spoke with her about recipe ideas for her and her kids. Right now we aren't able to give many specialized boxes of food due to our no-touch pantry, but I was able to spend some time getting this woman the food she needed, and she was so thankful." Although eating healthy is a big part of her life, she does also admit to having a sweet tooth. "I guess I'd say chocolate ice cream with cake is my favorite food—anything with ice cream, really."

Her job is always challenging, but

the current pandemic has posed new hurdles. The number of volunteers has dropped dramatically due to the changes in their operations, but she has been amazed at how dedicated so many people have been. “We had many volunteers step into new roles and many new volunteers joined the team. Students home from college, furloughed employees, etc., all stepped in to help out. We’ve realized how much we can still do with far fewer hands. I’m more appreciative than ever of volunteers for donating their time and energy to our cause!” They’ve also reorganized the space inside in creative ways. Since they have been unable to use their dining room, they have converted it into storage space. This is critical as they prepare for fall and need to accommodate an increase in donations of dry goods as well as surplus from local farms.

“We will be overloaded with all sorts of fall squashes,” says Heather, “which is one thing a lot of guests don’t know how to cook. It’s fun to educate them on easy and delicious ways to prepare it.” Apples are another bumper fall crop. Volunteers turn surplus apples into applesauce that they can freeze and hand out in the pantry throughout the year. Tomatoes too—they use lots of these in meal preparation and can avoid using canned tomatoes by processing the fresh ones from local farms.

Heather and her fellow staff members and volunteers will be working hard this fall to make sure that no one goes hungry. That includes Heather, who enjoys eating the delicious food that the volunteer chefs prepare. “We have some amazingly talented chefs who cook here,” she says. “And of course, there’s always dessert.” •



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Audrey Lovering. Photo by Christine Simmonds

ONE COMMUNITY MANY VOICES

BY CHRISTINE
SIMMONDS



Imagine your car breaks down, but you cannot afford the repairs. You need your car to get to work. But you do not qualify for any assistance programs because those are for people in crisis. What are you going to do?

That is where Audrey Lovering comes in. Audrey seems like an unassuming woman. She has long brown hair and brown eyes. She wears a black long-sleeve shirt and jeans, with knee-high boots pulled over them. She wears silver earrings and a stack of six silver bracelets that jangle together as she moves.

The reality is that Audrey is a powerful force. She is working to make the world a better place one person at a time, and her two jobs are working in tandem to achieve this goal.

Audrey is a co-founder of One Community Many Voices (OCMV), a 501(c)(3) nonprofit operating out of Rockland. She runs the program from a small office on Tillson Avenue, which she shares with Tammy Rolfe, the Program Manager for OCMV.

Audrey describes OCMV as providing a “hand up” to those in need who do not qualify for crisis programs. The nonprofit

is designed to assist community members with issues that could potentially have a devastating impact on them. “Because at some point in our lives, we all need that little boost,” Audrey says. “And if we could just get that boost, we’re up and going again.”

“If you can’t fix your car, you can’t get to work,” Audrey says. “If you can’t get to work, you can’t pay your bills. And to pay for a taxi while you try to save money... it takes your whole paycheck.”

The concept for the program came about after talking with local organizations who provide assistance to people in crisis. Audrey says they were seeing a population of people who were not in crisis yet and were not eligible for their programs.

The problems these people were dealing with, however, had the potential to snowball until they did become a crisis.

One Community Many Voices is the proactive solution to stop that snowball. They work with a number of organizations and business partners to provide that assistance. In return, the recipients perform self-selected volunteerism to pay it forward.



Many Hands

“It’s also about feeding your soul,” Audrey says. “I always tell people we’re bartering. You might need some cash today to help you overcome this problem. I might need your expertise tomorrow to help someone.”

The Meals on Wheels program is one example. The local Meals on Wheels program found that many of the recipients did not have house numbers. This lack led to new volunteers getting lost while trying to make deliveries.

If a volunteer might get confused, Audrey explains, what happens during an emergency? “That one or two minutes is life or death.”

So, in partnership with the organization Making Community Happen and the Meals on Wheels program, OCMV purchased address numbers, and volunteers put them up on the houses. To pay it forward, the seniors who benefited then assembled the goody bags for the OCMV annual Ragged Mountain Scuttle. “If you’ve ever had to put on an event, the last thing you want to do is stuff 400 goody bags,” Audrey laughs. “That was really cool . . . Those moments make everything else worth it.”

Audrey’s favorite part of working with OCMV is seeing firsthand how their work helps people. Two years ago, the hospitality house reached out to ask about buying new school clothes for children.

“For most people, especially parents, they hate back-to-school shopping . . . It is not fun,” she says. “But what about that little kid who gets on the bus in used clothes with stains or a hole in their shoe? How does that make them feel?”

Audrey’s voice wavers as she continues, and tears fill her eyes as she talks about this project. “Where does that start them off in their year?” she asks. “When they’re already dreading getting on that bus.”

Audrey knows it only takes one person to believe in someone for things to change. “And that’s what we get to do,” she says. “We don’t do emergency stuff. We do the other stuff that strengthens a person.”

Audrey’s second passion project is her bracelet company, Ka Ora. The name comes from the New Zealand Maori people, and it translates to “I live.”

Audrey noticed that women often doubt themselves. “It’s easier to believe the negative versus the positive,” she says. So, she wanted to create a product that would reassure people in that moment of doubt. “Is there something that says yes I can?” she asks. That something was Ka Ora Bracelets.

The bracelets are designed to be durable for the everyday life of the average woman. “I’m not nice to jewelry,” Audrey says. “I wear them to the dump. I wear them doing whatever. I beat the bajeezum out of them.”

The first place Ka Ora advertised was *Maine Women Magazine*, and the bracelets were chosen as a must-have gift in 2017. Audrey says *Maine Women* was instrumental in the company’s slow, steady rise as a small business.

Ka Ora Bracelets come in 31 designs so far, and each one is connected to a positive message to lift up the spirit.

Currently Audrey wears six of the bracelets. She says



Anchors



Reflection



Meander



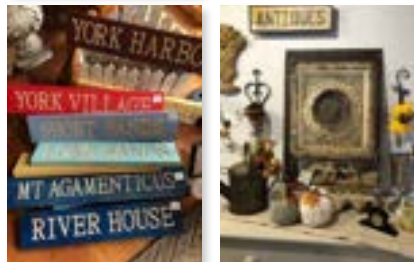
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the 207 bracelet “is a must” because she is a Mainer through and through. She also wears Reflection, which reminds you that “the way you treat yourself sets the standards for how others should treat you.” She wears Adventure Continues to remember her connection with nature. She also wears Meander and Feet, which are reminders to continue on your path.

The final bracelet Audrey wears is the League of Extraordinary Women, Ka Ora’s signature bracelet. “Part of the whole premise behind this [Ka Ora] is I feel I’ve been very blessed in life when it comes to my tribe,” she says. “I have a great network of friends across the world.” The message behind this bracelet is that “behind every successful woman is her league of extraordinary women.” For Audrey, her league also includes Tammy at OCMV and her mother Brenda, who helps her with Ka Ora. “Having an amazing team who also believes in what you’re

doing has allowed me to slowly grow both,” she says.

The latest bracelet design is Many Hands. It is decorated with a series of hands, and 100 percent of the profits go to One Community Many Voices. The design reflects the core belief of OCMV that “people are given two hands because one is to help themselves and the second is to help others.”

The bracelets cost \$35 and are made from a core of jeweler’s brass and plated with pure 925 Sterling Silver. The designs are embossed on the bracelets using traditional jewelry crafting techniques passed down through generations.

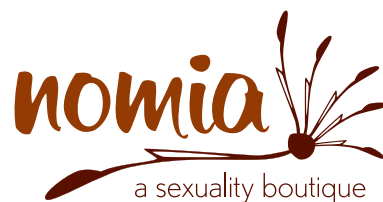
Audrey and her mother work with six different small New England businesses to produce the bracelets, and Many Hands is their first charity design. “I’m a tiny little company. It’s my mom and me,” Audrey says. “So, I can’t write a check the way I want to. But I can do it this way.”



Audrey Loving and her mother, Brenda Loving, at their first Ka Ora Bracelets event.

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Destination: DANNAH in Kennebunkport

*Laura McCullough and Family
Say Welcome!*

BY LIZ GOTTHELF

You could say that Laura McCullough met her destiny when, in 2019, she purchased Dannah, a creative and stylish boutique in downtown Kennebunkport. Laura, 33, is a fifth-generation business owner. Her grandfather, and two generations of her family before him, owned a department store called Starbucks, which for decades was a fixture in downtown Saratoga Springs, New York. Her mother, Diane Carr, for many years owned Poofberry's, a popular toy store in Kennebunk's lower village. "That's where I started my retail experience, working for her, when I was 12 or 13," said Laura.

She enjoyed working at the toy store, and she was also drawn to another store, Dannah. She began working at the boutique right out of high school, continuing to work there off and on for 14 years, until she purchased the store from Dana Schoettner. "I've always loved retail. I especially love this store and all the beautiful things here. And Dana was the best—she was so fun to work with," said Laura.

Laura had switched directions for a time and had gone to massage therapy school, but she missed working in retail. "I've always loved interacting with customers and helping people find the perfect thing," she said.

So, Laura was working in retail management in Florida when Dana approached her about buying Dannah. Laura thought it over for a while and realized it was an opportunity that she couldn't pass up. She moved back to Maine and took over the reins in April 2019.

Laura has stayed true to the foundation that Dana built, while giving the store a younger touch. Dannah is located at 123 Ocean Avenue, Kennebunkport, with a welcoming outdoor display of flowering plants and whimsical lawn décor. Visitors also get a stunning view of the Kennebunk River.

Inside, Dannah is a treasure trove of gorgeous items, showcased in artful displays throughout the store. Luxurious skin-care items, soft socks in fun styles, soaps made in France, stunning jewelry, unique and lovely home goods, and hand-poured candles are just some of the items that a visitor encounters. There's also a wide range of scarves to add a dash of color to your wardrobe.





At Dannah for Men with, from left, Laura McCullough, Diane Carr, and David McCullough.

“People go crazy for our scarves, and we have all different styles of hats,” said Laura. “We also have the best selection of greeting cards around.”

After having many customers ask, half-jokingly, where the men’s section was, Laura added a men’s corner to the shop. She soon realized there was an untapped market for men’s boutique items, and she opened up a second store dedicated just to men’s items.

Dannah for Men opened on July 31, 2020, just down the street at 127 Ocean Ave. No longer do husbands and boyfriends have to sit outside while their partners shop at Dannah. They have a store of their own. Dannah for Men has a more spacious layout than its sister store. The store carries rugged and sophisticated apparel, distinct bandanas, high quality belts, wallets, socks, and other accessories. Visitors to the store also find hair and body care products, bar ware, manly home décor, outdoor guides, and other books.

Despite the pandemic, business has been good. Laura has adapted by offering curbside pickup, shipping items, and making deliveries. And thanks to the help of her mother, Diane, the store has increased its online presence.

The stores have a family dimension that make it a team effort. Diane does all the social media for both stores. She also works many hours at the men’s store and does a lot of work behind the scenes. Laura’s brother, David McCullough, built many of the displays and did the majority of the interior work to transform the former gallery to her vision of Dannah for Men. He also works three to four days a week in the men’s store.

“It’s rare to go in the men’s shop and not see one of the three of us working, and sometimes you get all three of us at once,” said Laura.

It appears that when Laura moved back to Maine, she came home in more ways than one. “I’ve been in retail more than half my life. I don’t see that ending anytime soon,” said Laura. “I love it, I really love it. I can’t imagine not doing it.”



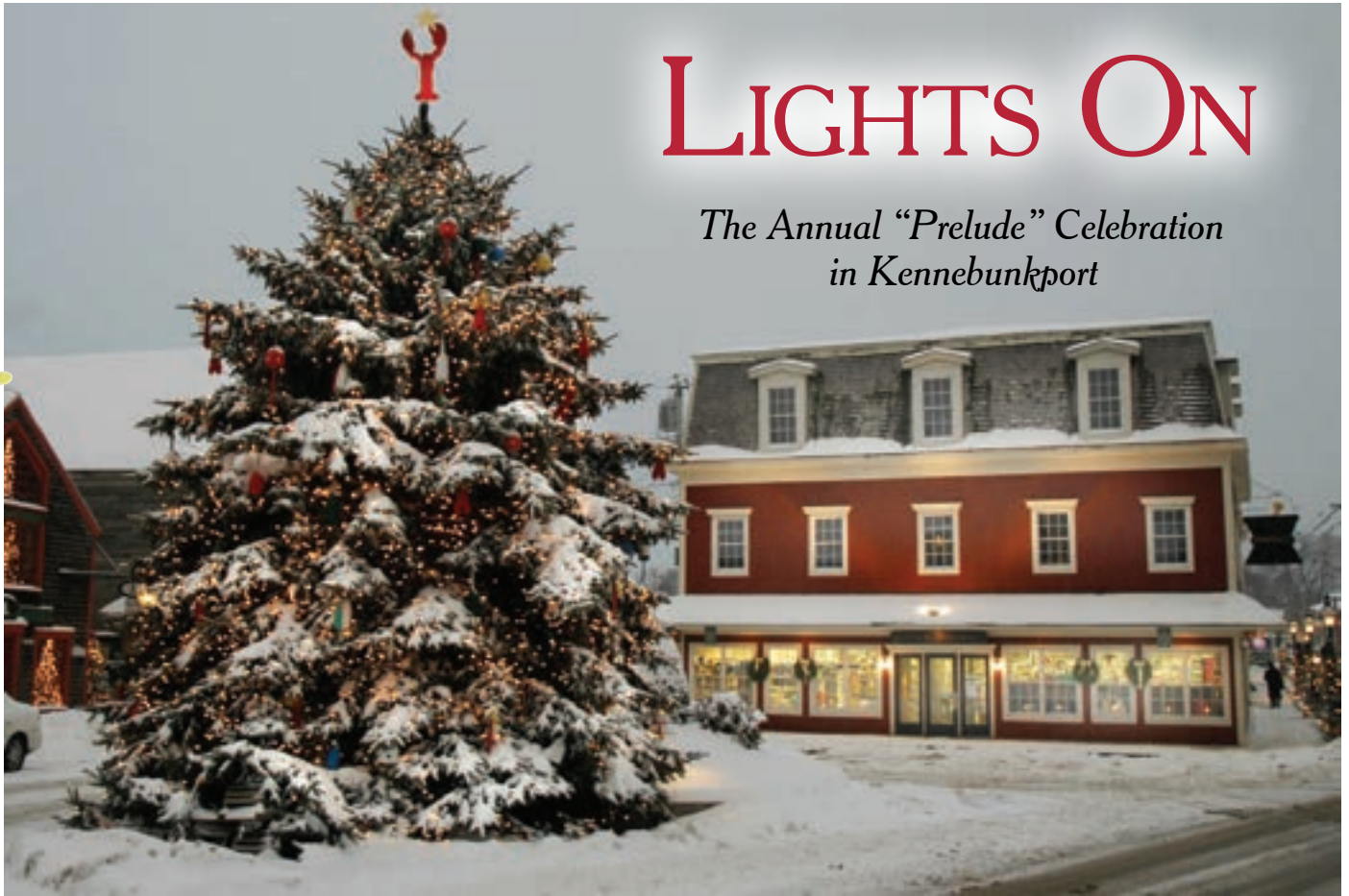
When speaking of Dannah, she said with affection, “You can’t come in for just one visit—you need to come multiple times to see everything. You need time to look at everything. You can’t just pop in. We appeal to people of all ages.”

“There’s something for everyone,” she said, or often, with luck, more than one thing.

Check out Dannah online at <https://www.dannahkennebunkport.com>.

LIGHTS ON

*The Annual "Prelude" Celebration
in Kennebunkport*



BY NETTIE HOAGLAND

Kennebunkport's "Christmas Prelude," a magical holiday celebration to commence the Christmas season, will be held for its 39th year in a row. The Prelude reminds locals and people from all over the world of the magic of Christmas time, when the town is transformed with bright lights and ongoing festivities. Though the Prelude has been forced to adapt to COVID-19, it will not be canceled.

The Kennebunkport Business Association, an all-volunteer, non-profit organization of local business owners, has spent the last three months arranging this year's reimagined Christmas Prelude.

"Rather than just cancel the Prelude, we're reimagining the experience through a virtual lens," said Paul Humphrey, President of the Kennebunkport Business Association.

The main events, such as the tree lighting in Dock Square, Santa reading to the children, and prize-winning events such as best homemade hat and best-dressed pooches, will happen over Zoom and social media. Last year, the tree lighting drew a crowd of 3,500 people in Dock Square and 10,000 viewers on Facebook Live. This year, the tree lighting will be pre-recorded and is expected to draw 15,000 viewers on Facebook Live. The virtual Prelude celebration will start on December 3rd, as planned.



Photos by Chris Becker



Santa and Mrs. Claus arrive during a previous year's celebration. *Photo by Robert Dennis*

Throughout the week there will be virtual cooking classes, cocktail-making classes, and shopping to support local businesses.

"People from all over the world can experience the Prelude from the comfort of their homes," said Paul Humphrey. "No matter what, it will still be magical."

For those who plan to be in Kennebunkport, there will be in-person activities, including a weekend outdoor Christmas Market. The downtown will still be decorated to capture the magic of Christmas Prelude, and people will still be able to enjoy shopping and dining. All businesses and in person events will adhere to strict CDC guidelines.

Further details on event times and dates can be found on christmasprelude.com in the days and weeks ahead. •



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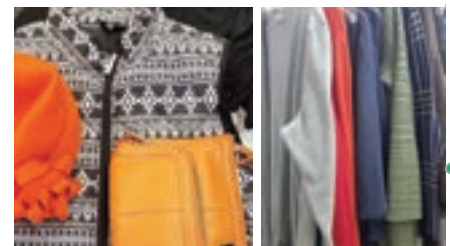
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Contrast and color abound in new varieties of coleus. This tender perennial can be brought indoors for the winter and then replanted outside next spring.

They Aren't Your Grandmother's Coleus

STORY AND PHOTOS BY LYNETTE L. WALTHER

The original colorful foliage plant, coleus fell out of favor for a couple of decades. But new varieties, better growth habit, and versatility make coleus one of our garden favorites today. Coleus is perennial in tropical and sub-tropical climates. However, they are not cold hardy.

My grandmother's pride and joy was a rectangular flower box brimming with colorful coleus. It brightened up her front porch every summer. Come winter, she'd carefully take dozens of cuttings, and place them in jars of water to root. Lined up like brilliantly-uniformed soldiers on the windowsill of her sun porch, the coleus shoots brought color indoors for the cold winter months.

The arrival of spring meant that she'd plant those rooted cuttings in that white-painted wood box for another summer

of interest. Back then her choices of coleus varieties were few, and I suspect her own display of them started from a shared stalk or two of these easy-to-grow members of the mint family. Today we have a rainbow of choices and varieties that shine in full sun or shade. And today's gardeners know that when it comes to infusing color into the landscape, it is about more than just flowers. Colorful foliage shines, proving you don't need flowers for beautiful hues.

But just like my grandmother used to do, you too can bring cuttings indoors, placing cuttings in water or saving potted plants. The coleus plants will add their sparkle and hue to your home throughout the winter. According to the National Garden Bureau (NGB), though coleus has long been considered a shade plant, the best leaf color is



Top: A container planting of two varieties of coleus play a reverse trick for brilliant color contrast all season long. *Center:* Consider coleus for a winter project to fashion a colorful topiary. Careful staking and pruning will eventually result in a stunning garden accent to enjoy indoors now and outdoors once it warms up. *Bottom:* Handsome, brilliant color is the hallmark of today's coleus varieties. Bring that summery color indoors for the winter months to warm up the home.

achieved with morning sun and some degree of afternoon shade. So, your indoor selections benefit from as much sunshine as you can provide now and in the coming months indoors.

Whether the variety is a solid color or has the stunning patterns and variations on color mixes and leaf margin choices (from smooth to fingerling to wavy), coleus is a standout in any container display. Coleus is perfect for a pot or a window box or other planter. And yes, it can do well in the ground also, though container plantings seem to help highlight these brilliant plants and the contrast they can deliver.

Many varieties do well in both shade and part-sun. Some can take quite a bit of sun as long as they are not allowed to dry out, according to the NGB. Avoid overly damp soils, which can cause leaf drop and encourage disease. Plant coleus after danger of frost has passed when soil temperatures have warmed sufficiently and evening temperatures are above 60 degrees F. Feed plants regularly with a water-soluble fertilizer, especially if they are growing in containers.

To maintain plant form, pinch back every



Imagine working this stunning velvety-red coleus into your holiday decorations.

few weeks to prevent flower formation. Pinch just above a set of leaves or branching junction for the best appearance. Don't leave a stub. Some gardeners leave the small flowers, but it's best to pinch them off to direct more

energy into stem and foliage growth. Coleus left to flower will get leggy and may lose vigor as the plant puts energy into seed production.

Enjoy them now and come spring, coleus will truly add color and life all year round. •

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Thanksgiving Centerpieces: Using the beauty of dried flowers

BY SARAH HOLMAN

If you have blooms left over outside or find them on late Fall hikes, you may have the makings for a lovely—and affordable—Thanksgiving centerpiece for the home. Dried flowers make beautiful arrangements, if the drying is done properly. According to the *Farmer's Almanac*, flowers and foliage intended for drying should be picked in the morning, just before the blooms completely open. Strip all the foliage from the stems and secure a bundle of 8 to 10 stems with a rubber band or twist tie. Hang the bundle upside down from a hook or coat hanger in a dark, dry, well-ventilated area away from sunlight (consider a closet, attic, or airy garage). In two to three weeks the plants should be dry, and most will retain their original color.

WHAT FLOWERS TO USE?

The best candidates for drying are flowers that have a small calyx (made up of the small green leaves, called sepals, located at the base of the bud that enclose and protect the unopened flower). Grasses, seedpods, and twigs also dry easily and make wonderful additions to harvest-themed arrangements. Here is the *Farmer's Almanac's* list of the flowers that make the best dried flower arrangements:

ageratum (floss flower)	coneflower	pansies
amaranth	gomphrena	rose buds
artemisia (silvery foliage)	herbs	salvia
astilbe	hydrangea	sea holly
baby's breath	larkspurs	statice
globe thistle	lavender	strawflower
celosia	lunaria	yarrow

ARRANGING THE FLOWERS

To make a dried arrangement, start by gathering all your supplies, including flowers and leaves, a vase or other vessel, and floral foam. Cut the foam to fit inside your vase. It doesn't have to be perfect; its purpose is to create structure and help keep lightweight dried flowers in place. If you're using a wider, shallower vessel, chicken wire can be balled up in the bottom to keep stems from shifting. Start the arrangement by choosing a flower or group of flowers you want to be the focal point. This point can be in the center of the vase or off-center, depending on the shape of the vessel and your intended aesthetic. Work in a circular motion around this point, pushing stems into the foam at an increasingly outward angle to create a curved effect. When you reach the last row, you can push the stems into the side of the foam to hide it. For a less domed arrangement, place the center and edge pieces first, then sporadically fill in the middle area. Finally, work leaves or greenery in between the flowers to fill gaps and create a fuller effect. Dried flowers can be, of course, more brittle and prone to crumble than non-dried flowers, but with a bit of creative experimenting, arranging them can be just as satisfying. For a beautiful Thanksgiving centerpiece you can also mix dried and fresh flowers, filling in with native grasses or some sprigs of evergreen.

In the end, there is joy in arranging the flowers and other foliage that you grow, happen upon, gather, or preserve. The key is using what is near to hand, both in color and texture. Everywhere this time of year are rose hips, hydran-



Debby Hudson | unsplash.com

geas, cattails, honeysuckle vines, mums, seed pods, bright leaves, and graceful grasses. Your natural holiday decorations, whether Thanksgiving centerpieces or other table or home decorations, will have the spirit of place, unique to your area. They will be enchanting because they connect your home to this region and to this season. •



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PUSHING THE RESET BUTTON

BY SHELAGH TALBOT

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Once in a while we need to take time to take a breath and reset. That usually involves getting together with those we love and really catching up. The year 2020 has been a heck of a time for so many of us. COVID has changed the way we interact with each other, the way we travel, and the way we conduct business. If you'd asked me a year ago what "Zoom" was, I would have said it's a way of getting around, fast! Now it's become a touchstone for so many of us since we can only meet virtually. When the platform broke down a while ago people were quite frantic. I found myself longing for real in-person interaction. That's when my daughter and I decided we would run away to Old Orchard Beach in southern Maine for a few days, and we would use that time for resetting and recharging.

We were so fortunate—our room opened onto ocean views, and we were mere steps away from the beach. Like little kids we flung on our bathing suits, grabbed our towels, and hurried toward the surf purling along the shore. The water was surprisingly warm. As we splashed along, we found ourselves talking about everything from playing in Hadley Lake when she was little to trips to Cape Cod where we experienced a warmer ocean for the first time. One memory would trigger another. It was a conversation that eased into discussing more difficult things, but with the sun warming our backs no subject was off limits or too scary.

It was the first time in a long time we didn't need to cover our fears or bury our insecurities about the future. To say the least, it was refreshing, and most of all, easier than we had imagined for us to reveal our deepest concerns and worries. Sometimes all it takes is neutral ground—ideally, beautiful neutral ground like an expansive beach or a woodland walk—to get those important resetting conversations started.

There are other ways too, of course. I was delighted to discover

er that the art of letter writing is enjoying a resurgence. There's something so special about holding a letter from someone you care about—a letter that goes into depth about what that person may be experiencing or doing at the time. It's a form of communication that had taken a back seat until COVID came around. Now, once again it has become an important part of staying in touch with those we love and care about, no matter how many miles might separate you. And it's sure cheaper than an airplane ticket, and probably safer, too!

But, back to my daughter and me. As we strolled the beach, our feet splashing through the little waves at the water's edge, she confessed she had a secret wish to go back to school. We found ourselves excitedly discussing options, figuring out how we could make that work, where she could apply for the courses she needed. The fact that course work would probably be remote was not a hinderance. I had a secret wish, too—to write a book—and we tossed ideas back and forth on how to move that project from wish to actual reality—one page at a time. It was invigorating and exciting to say the least, and because we were in such a beautiful happy environment, the obstacles to accomplishment didn't seem so big, and a path forward was made clear.

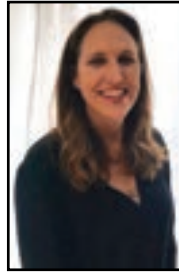
What we took away from that wonderful weekend at Old Orchard Beach was priceless—we both felt more positive and certainly more connected as mother and daughter. Resetting and recharging was the natural by-product of the experience. So . . . what are you waiting for? It's your turn! Make that call, write that letter, or best of all, spend that precious time with those people you love, be it in person or virtual. It's a memory that will last in these uncertain times—golden moments that can never be stolen away and that will nourish your soul. Let the reset begin! •



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| LOVE ON A PLATE |

FISH CHOWDER



BY MARY FRANCES BARSTOW

This hearty fish chowder is perfect for lunch or dinner as the season turns chillier.

INGREDIENTS

- 2 tablespoons of butter
- 2 sweet onions
- 4 large red potatoes
- 3 cups of clam juice
- 1/4 cup water
- 1 tablespoon of thyme
- 1 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon of black pepper
- dash of paprika
- 2 1/2 pounds cod fish, with bones all removed
- 2 1/2 cups of heavy cream
- 2 tablespoons chopped parsley

DIRECTIONS

- Sauté onions in butter. Heat butter in large pot at medium heat, add onions cooked until soft, about 5 minutes.
- Add clam juice and 1/4 cup water, and simmer, on medium-low heat. Add potatoes, thyme, salt and pepper, and paprika. Bring to simmer, then to medium, and cook covered until potatoes are done, about 10 to 15 minutes.
- Heat heavy cream in separate pot until very warm, but not boiled. Add fish and warmed cream to soup.
- Return to stove and cook, on low heat uncovered until fish is cooked through, about 10 minutes.
- **KEEP YOUR EYE ON THE HEAT.** When fish is cooked through, remove from heat. Mix in parsley. The flavors will be extra good if left to rest 20 minutes before serving.
- Serve with wicked crusty bread and fresh butter or crackers. YUMMMMMY YUM!!! •



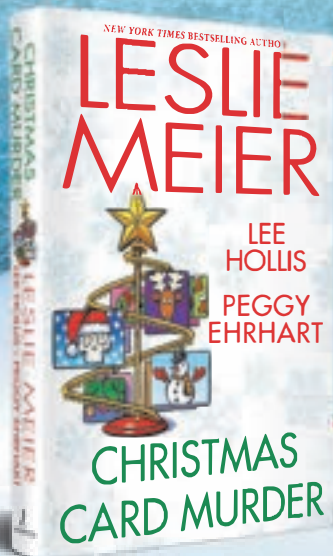
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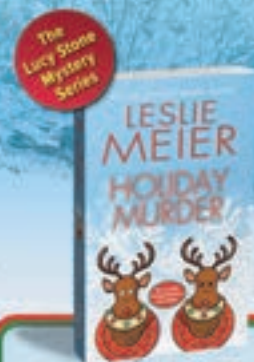
Everyone dreams of a picture-perfect small-town Christmas like those in Maine, but when some holiday greetings are addressed to kill, Maine's top sleuths must follow the clues to hold all the **holiday** cards.

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—PW, STARRED REVIEW



For sleuth, Lucy Stone, Christmas in the fictitious coastal town of **Tinker's Cove, Maine** means gift giving and crime solving.



QUESTIONABLE ADVICE

BY L.C. VAN SAVAGE

I invited my mother to live with me for the duration of quarantine. We have gotten along well, but I keep catching her drinking my wine without permission. I've asked her to stop, but she keeps making excuses, like, "Oh, I only had a bit," and "I was using it to cook for both of us!" Is there a way to put a stop to this?

—Leila

If you are really concerned, inform her that you never tasted it at all in last night's cream-of-beets casserole, but nice try anyway. Then tell her you've looked up the closest address of your local AA meetings, and you'll gladly be her designated driver. These ideas may not work, so my next bit of advice is to stash your hootch in your lawn mower's grass catcher. Also, don't forget this factoid, that during the pandemic, adult drinking is up 14 percent. Is she within that margin of the new normal? If so, consider this plan: have a glass with her, bond, and share.

My company just got everyone new desks . . . standing desks. I don't have a medical problem, but it's still very uncomfortable to stand all day. My coworkers don't seem to mind, and my friends don't think it's that big a deal. Would it cross a line to quit over this?

—Jordan

Quit? Why give up a job you may love and need over this silly issue? Splurge on a nicely padded tall bar stool with arms and a back, have it delivered to your office, and get back to work.

My birthday is coming up, and my husband is trying to plan a big party—virtually, of course! He doesn't understand that I just don't like the attention. Part of me thinks the party is as much for the other people as it is for me, though. Should I just grin and bear it?

—Kate

You've thanked him lovingly and told him "NO THANKS!?" and he still insists you suffer through a virtual-or-not birthday party? No. Do not "grin and bear it." On your birthday, grin and go to Bermuda.



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Photos Courtesy of Good Shepherd Food Bank

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