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SEPTEMBER 2020

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Well, can you believe the summer breeze will soon begin to bring a crisp smell in the air of fall?

As you look forward to your unsettled fall plans, praise yourselves for making it through the summer of 2020 with grace, during these unprecedented times.

You've had days filled with fear of the unknown ... and together, we have learned that the unknown is what we have in common.

One day! Yes, making it through that one day with challenges the world has never seen. Fear of the unknown? We all have it deep within us.

Women teaching their children things they have never themselves learned before ... encouraging them on how to live in a world that is unknown to all of us!

Well, you made it through the summer, and you will make it through the fall. We are such amazing adaptive folks, and the women of this world have always led the way.

Please keep a smile on your face. Remember that there is nothing stronger than a woman's determination and grit.

The fall this year will be different, but you will make it great! Oh yes, I believe in women!

Much love to you all,
Mary

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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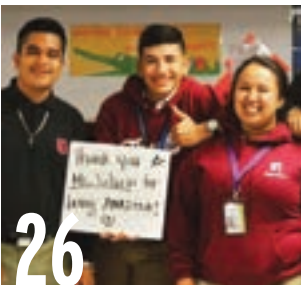
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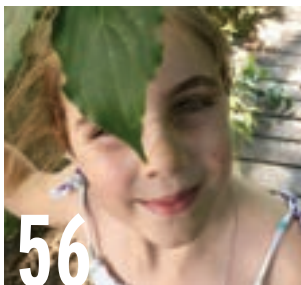
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ON THE COVER

The women of Sea Bags, from left, are: Beth Shissler, Laura Hnatow, Tara Knupp, Carrie Mack, Sokunthy Yean, and Erica Beck-Spencer.

Cover photo by Jason Paige Smith

| LETTERS TO THE EDITOR |

I've been loving following Holly Martin's story in your magazines!
Anna Martinez

Thanks for featuring women who frame Maine in the best light.
heartofellsworth (via instagram)

Love learning about amazing Maine women from this magazine.
kaorabracelets (via Instagram)

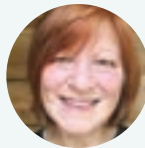
| CONTRIBUTORS |



Lynn Fantom lives in an old house in Somesville, the earliest settlement on Mount Desert Island. During a 40-year advertising career in Boston, Chicago, and New York, she became known for creating diverse cultures at the companies she led.

After retiring, she graduated from Columbia Journalism School at age 65 and now writes about women, the outdoors, fish farming, and sometimes women in fish farming. She spends winters in NYC.

Ruth Feldman, Business Advisor and Director of the CEI Women's Business Center, Northeastern Maine. Ruth has worked in the private, public, and non-profit sectors connecting people with place and with purpose. She has served as a Peace Corps volunteer and as a Fulbright Scholar and is grateful to call Downeast Maine and CEI home.



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



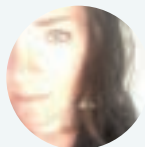
Liz Gotthelf lives in Old Orchard Beach with her husband. She enjoys hula hooping, volunteering at a local horse barn, and finding Fiestaware at thrift stores.



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. For more, visit WriterSheilaDGrant.com.



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.



Cece King is studying Geography and Middle Eastern Studies at Dartmouth College. Cece performed with an aerial circus troupe in New York City and studied Arabic in Morocco. She is a contributor for Straus News publications in New York and is writing for *The Camden Herald* and *Maine Women Magazine* this summer. When she's not writing, you can find her painting or hunting for vintage!

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.



Estefania Silveri of Ogunquit is a high school Spanish teacher, honoring her mother who immigrated from Chile in her 20s. She also collects sea glass for her creative small business Sea Glass by Stefi (@seaglassbystefi). She loves swimming in the ocean year round, scooter rides, running on the beach, and attempting to surf.



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.



Amanda Whitegiver is a Maine native and photographer whose specialty is creating warm, playful, and genuine family and brand portraits. She lives in Southern Maine with her husband, two daughters, and their grumpy cat. Some of Amanda's favorite non-photography things are singing, reading, and spending time outdoors with her family. Photo by Nina Cutter Photography



| CORRECTIONS |

In the July issue, in a story that appeared about the ice cream shop Wicked Scoops, in Damariscotta, owner Jamie Way's name was misspelled.

In the August issue, in a story about Winter Holben Architecture, the owners' names—Elisa Winter Holben and Brandon Holben—were stated incorrectly.

We regret the errors.

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Photos courtesy Holly Martin

The Marquesas Islands

BY HOLLY
MARTIN

*A Report from French Polynesia
in the Central South Pacific Ocean*

Last fall Holly Martin, 28, set out from Round Pond Harbor on the Pemaquid Peninsula, on her way to sail around the world alone. In the pursuit of this dream, she had worked aboard scientific research vessels to earn and save money, purchased and refitted a 27-foot-long Grinde (built in Denmark in 1983), and christened it the SV Gecko. An experienced sailor, Holly had largely grown up at sea and abroad, as partially documented in her parents' fascinating book, *Into the Light: A Family's Epic Journey* (2002), by Dave and Jaja Martin.

Just after passing through the Panama Canal, Holly's global sailing plans were delayed by the global pandemic, which closed harbors and made supplies difficult to get. She spent the time of strictest quarantine near the Perlas Islands, with a small community of other sailors. Eventually, however, she was able to get ashore to buy what she needed, and she set sail for the Marquesas Islands in French Polynesia. Forty-one



days later, she reached Nuka Hiva, one of these small, isolated volcanic islands in the middle of the Pacific. She had been out of sight of land for most of that time. Many of her friends from Panama ended up in the same anchorage, and the sailors enjoyed a big reunion of sorts.

Holly's mother, Jaja Martin, is in occasional communication with Holly via a Garmin inReach, a two-way satellite communicator, and she shared news of the route ahead: "Holly plans to cruise around the Marquesas for a while. On Aug. 2 she left Nuka Hiva and sailed to Uo Pou Island, where she's currently anchored. She hopes to visit some of the other outer islands in the archipelago but is not sure which ones. She's very spontaneous!"

Jaja continues, "After leaving the Marquesas, Holly will head for the Tuamotu archipelago. She's picked out some of the more remote atolls to visit, but her choice will depend on the wind and current at her time of arrival. She plans to bask in the luxury of being remote and completely detached from communications. Eating coconuts, fishing, snorkeling, and walking the beaches are her main goals. After that, Holly will head to the Society Islands and will finally clear into (have her travel documents checked and approved by officials in) Papeete, Tahiti. Right now, French Polynesia will only process paperwork for cruisers in Papeete, but they give a temporary clearance to cruisers landing in islands groups other than the Societies. Because of COVID restrictions, once Holly leaves the Society Islands, she won't be able to land on any other island groups in the Pacific. At this time, Tonga, Fiji, and New Caledonia are all completely closed to travelers. So, the next stop after Tahiti will be New Zealand. It's a long trip--about 2,600 miles!"

Here is Holly's latest report, in her own words.

I arrived in Nuku Hivav on July 11th at mid-morning. The capital town of the Marquesas is on this island, and it's the only place currently open for yachts entering the country. Even though it's the capital, the town is very small—they have only recently paved the roads! Upon arrival, I had to submit an email to the local doctor declaring my state of health. After receiving this email, the doctor responded with a list of questions. He asked me if I was experiencing any symptoms of COVID. Since I had just been completely isolated alone at sea for 41 days, I obviously was fine. After I sent this off, I was cleared to go ashore. Right now, the only place to officially clear myself and my boat into the country is in Tahiti. Boats are allowed to cruise the rest of French Polynesia without clearing in. The understanding is that once we reach Tahiti, we'll go to the officials and fill out the required paperwork.

There's only one cell tower on Nuku Hiva, and it reaches the bay that I cleared into (Taiohe'a Bay), and the surrounding mountains. After a week and a bit in Taiohe'a, I sailed around the corner to a small bay with no connection to the outside world. The only way to get into the very tiny village is by boat, or horseback over the mountain pass (about 4 hours). The locals pass their time fishing and hunting for wild pigs. They sell copra to boats that drop it off on Tahiti. For those of you who don't know, copra comes from coconuts and is made





into coconut oil. It's a way that many of the people in the small villages and atolls around French Polynesia are able to make money. Seeing a whole village of people who have no internet connection or TV is such a beautiful sight in today's world. The children run around and play in the trees. The adults stay busy by working on their fruit trees, fixing hunting equipment, and playing with the kids. One afternoon I went down to the beach to watch the surf. Several families were sitting in the sand looking at the waves and talking with each other. Not a phone

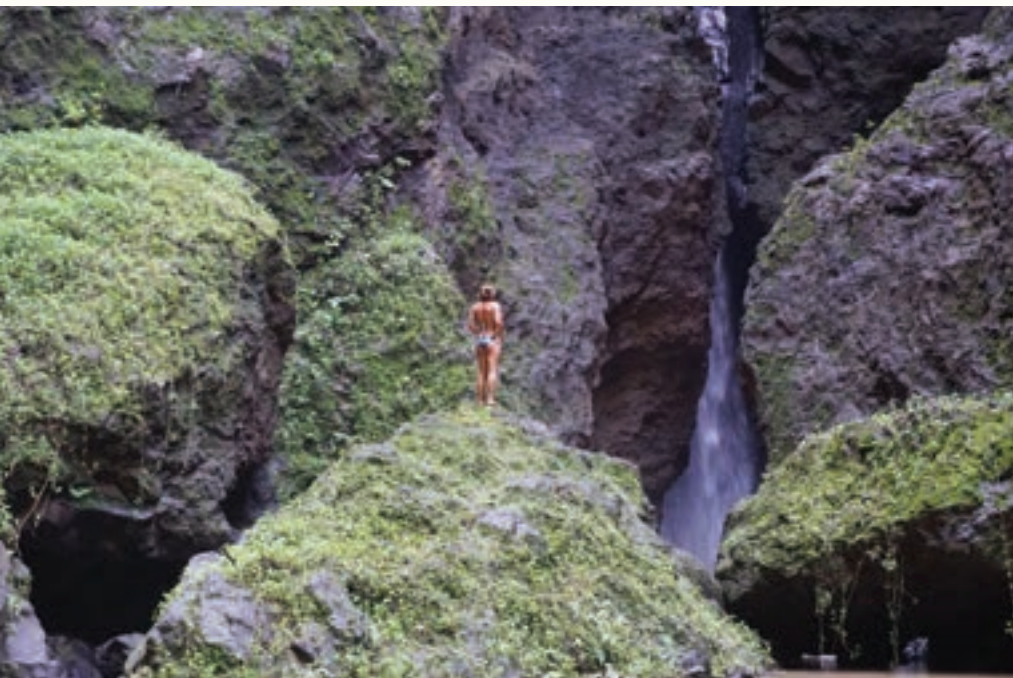
was in sight. Everyone was living in the present moment and engaged with their surroundings.

I was able to trade for and buy as much fruit as I wanted from the locals. One day I hiked two hours up into the mountains surrounding the village. My theory was that I could pick up a cell connection from the tower in the next bay. I was right! Once I got to the top of the mountain around my bay, my cell phone started ping. I was in touch with the outside world! I hung out on the mountain top for about an hour, and

then made the two-hour hike back down to the village.

I was also able to get fresh drinking water in my new tiny bay. At one end of the beach there is a river that flows out into the ocean. At high tide, it's possible to navigate the surf and get a dinghy up into the river. From there, it's a short little stint up the river to the first hut of the village. In front of the hut is a palm tree that hangs out over the water. This also conveniently can be a bollard for a dinghy. Once tied up to my palm tree, I hopped ashore with my jerries and filled them from a spigot near the house. The drinking water comes from the waterfall above the village. Perfection. While I was filling my jerries, local kids shyly came out from the house and started playing in the dinghy and "helping" me to fill my jerries with water. They found my French accent hilarious. The locals here speak French as well as their own local language.

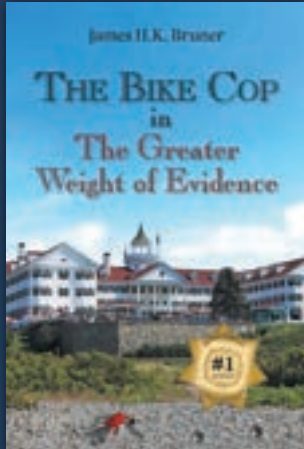
Tomorrow I'm heading to the next island over to do some more exploring. I think some of the bays might have a weak cell signal, but I don't really care anymore. I'm embracing a life without the internet. Especially in today's world, this is a real treat. I think I've finally found paradise. •



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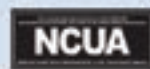
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Tourism and “The New Normal”

BY RUTH FELDMAN
CEI WOMEN'S BUSINESS CENTER



Tourism is one of Maine’s largest industries, supporting nearly 110,000 jobs, or roughly 1 out of every 6 jobs in the state, and tourists spent over \$6.2 billion dollars in Maine in 2018, according to the Maine Office of Tourism. There’s a reason we call ourselves Vacationland.

But what is Vacationland, when many people aren’t leaving their houses, let alone going on vacation? How does this vital Maine industry manage business in the time of COVID?

Lisa Hanscom, a client of the CEI Women’s Business Center, shared how she and her team at Welch Farm in Roque Bluffs, are adjusting to the “new normal” this season. Lisa is co-owner and manager of Welch Farm in Roque Bluffs, a sixth-generation family-owned wild blueberry farm (another iconic Maine industry) that hosts guests for overnight stays and farm tours, in addition to selling blueberries, jams, and jellies. The Welch Farm property has served as a farm since the 1700s and shifted to commercial wild blueberry production in the 1920s.

“Farmers are some of the smartest businesspeople on earth,” Lisa says. “They have to keep changing to stay in business and thrive.” That business acumen, plus the pressure of holding onto the family farm—“You don’t want a generational farm to be lost on your watch!”—drove Lisa to make some changes when she took over as farm manager in 2008, including expanding the farm’s offerings to include agritourism and “value-added” products like jams and jellies. As she continues to collaborate with her father, Wayne, who ran the business he inherited from his grandparents Frank and Mary Welch, they think together about how



to adapt as demands change and harvests shift each season.

“Tourism is an important part of our business model now,” she added. “We’ve revamped ourselves so the farm includes an element of tourism, where it didn’t always. Who thought a farm would be a tourist thing? Visitors like that they can visit a working blueberry farm and get in-depth history about farming and the region. Visitors usually say that they like getting to know about us, the farmers, and the industry up close.” The cabins are booked through September, with many guests from southern Maine, and the rest from Vermont and New Hampshire. She has streamlined the items in the cabins so as not to have as much to clean and sanitize, and most guests are staying two nights or more. Some have done entire 14-day quarantines there. All in all, it’s a very good place for a “staycation.”

Visitors learn about Welch Farm through profiles in *Bangor Metro* and Tripadvisor reviews, by visiting nearby Roque Bluffs State Park, and from readers interested in seeing the setting of their favorite Maine-based mystery novels.

Some of the biggest challenges of the tourism side of the business have been balancing it alongside peak blueberry growing and harvesting. Now COVID-19 has brought new questions. While the delay in the start of tourist season has meant more farm work can be done, Lisa wonders how they’ll manage when the most people arrive. She asks herself questions like: How do we make people feel safe and still engaged in the touring and visiting? How are we going to provide more non-contact curbside pick-up? How do we manage Farmers Markets?

A specific concern comes up regarding the fresh pack shed—“The women working in the shed are in their 80s and very friendly!” Lisa says, realizing it’s both a blessing and, in the current situation, an extra challenge. LouAnn and Hannah, the youngest of the crew and grandmother and granddaughter, are local and new to the fresh pack system. Sonya (age 83) and Connie (age 89) have both been a part of the fresh pack line family for several years. Alex, Lisa’s daughter, has been involved forever as the fifth generation participant along with her son Leom—the sixth generation of Welch Farm farmers. Dot Mae, at age 90 would have returned this season had it not

been for the health of her husband whom she feared would be at risk if she ventured far from home.

Lisa reiterates that, “No blueberry season is ever the same.” There are always little issues that need to be solved. They get solved and then they reappear a few years later in a different way and need new or different tweaks.

COVID-19 is definitely more than the usual little issue, and thus requires more than the usual resourcefulness. The epidemic impacts the total blueberry process. It means longer time to clean and requirements such as masks and extra sanitizer. It has altered access to the pack shed for customer “barn-side” sales. Lisa was always meticulous about keeping a clean workplace, but it does take more time to pick, clean, and pack, and clean up well at the end of every shift. She concedes that it is more draining than usual because extra time and effort is needed for planning and just thinking through strategy.

While the family has seen sales channels shift over generations, and now again with COVID restrictions, somehow blueberries are always in demand, especially as people are baking up a storm. More locals and visitors staying in the area are buying direct. Wyman’s, the state’s largest wild blueberry farmer and distributor, continues to be their largest buyer with a consistent supply being sold as far as New York City by a local purveyor. Lisa and her crew continue to sell right at the farm and through local Farmers Markets by the quart or 5-pound family pack boxes. So-called “rejects” that may look imperfect but are still quite edible go to a winemaker in New Hampshire. And, of course, all of the famous blueberry pies at Helen’s Restaurant on Main Street in nearby Machias are made with Welch Farm berries.

Lisa is determined to meet the challenges head on. “Sometimes you must change direction quickly and adapt. Even though you’re running a family farm, you need to think quickly and be willing to try new things or adapt how you’re doing business. I personally enjoy when people leave here with knowledge and more understanding about the farm and the business. That’s why I started this. I will change the wild blueberry business one person at a time!” •

ENVIRONMENTALIST ARTISTS

Bring the Damaged Gulf of Maine Ecosystem to Dry Land

BY CECE KING



Two years ago, a New Orleans-style jazz band led a funeral procession for Atlantic Cod through the streets of Portland, Maine. The artist responsible, Anna Dibble, had crafted a 7-foot-long papier-mâché sculpture of the cod that rested in the coffin. Anna was part of a climate justice organization named 350 Maine. She had organized this rally to highlight how cod had left the Gulf of Maine in part due to rising sea temperatures. “It was the first time I realized that art-work could come into environmental stewardship,” Anna said.

This revelatory experience led her to found the Gulf of Maine ECOARTS (GMEA). GMEA is a collaborative movement that connects students, scientists, and artists to visually communicate information about the natural world. Their inaugural project will illuminate changes in biodiversity in the Gulf of Maine due to climate change and human impact.

Anna was galvanized to start GMEA’s current installation after learning the Gulf of Maine is warming faster than 99 percent of all the ocean waters in the world. “I came up with this idea of symbolically bringing the ecosystem out of the Gulf of Maine and making a huge sculpture installation that would show the public what was happening,” Anna said. The sculpture will be predominantly made of recycled materials and beach debris.

When Anna heard that the Bigelow Laboratory for Ocean Sciences in Boothbay worked with artists, Anna immediately set up a meeting. She had no sketches when she marched

into the building, but her passionate description of her vision was enough to convince the people at Bigelow to collaborate. Once she had a venue for the installation and the support of scientists, Anna gathered artists whose work focused on the natural world and students to start working on GMEA arts projects.

A partnership with Bigelow was essential. Anna envisions the artistic, scholastic, and scientific communities as having interconnected missions. “You need the arts to communicate the science,” she said, but “the science is behind environmental activism.”

The centerpiece of present projects will be a 24-foot North Atlantic Right Whale, and a documentarian will film the building process. Anna said she is featuring this colossal creature because the Right Whale population, dwindling at about 400, is woefully endangered. Researchers at Bigelow laboratories have found the whales’ primary food sources have become limited, which likely led the whales to forage in areas where they are more vulnerable to getting caught in lobster trap lines and colliding with cruise ships. “We think of the whales as climate refugees,” Anna said.

Pamela Moulton is one of the GMEA artists, and her piece for the installation will be a floating mast made of lobster trap lines and kelp. “I always work with recycled, discarded material,” said Pamela. “The challenge is to turn all that into something quite beautiful so that people will be interested in what’s happening.” As Pamela continued to describe her process, her artist’s hands began taking





FROM TOP: Students from Breakwater School in Portland; Anna Dibble with a grant certificate; and MECA oceanography students.

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apart and molding phantom material, eager to start working.

Anna's goal for the project is to inspire a sense of environmental stewardship. "We are part of the ecosystem. We are the wild. A whale is the same as us. These are our neighbors in the water," she said. The installation itself gets that message across to the public, but for Anna, the process is equally essential. "The collaboration and the making of the art, to me, is the activism," Anna said.

One of the educators involved is Deb Debigun, who teaches at Maine College of Art. "I want information to be more widely understood, so people can understand and care for our natural systems," Deb said. She believes the GMEA project not only inspires her students to be better environmental stewards but gives them hope. "It's been really meaningful for them to be part of a larger project."

For the student outreach program, Anna brought Deb and her college students along with a middle school class to a South Portland beach last fall to clean up the trash. They then recycled the material for sculpture. "We were able to put



Part of a school of Atlantic herring.

it all together and refocus it on making green crabs because of their invasive nature," Deb said.

By early March of this year, Anna was actively working with twelve schools and eight professional artists. She had won \$40,000 in funding. "Everything was going really great. Then the pandemic hit," Anna said. The artists could keep working out of their studios, but when schools went online, the student outreach program was abruptly interrupted.

"It was devastating at first," Anna said. However, the artist rapidly mo-

bilized to create an online program for making endangered bird sculptures out of only household items, so any student could participate. She successfully piloted the program with one school and plans to expand the program this fall.

Although GMEA is two years and one pandemic into the project, the momentum hasn't seemed to die down one bit. When I conducted a group interview with Deb, Anna, and Pamela on Zoom, they often strayed from the questions to excitedly brainstorm ideas for GMEA. This energy may be why the project is still set to open in 2021. •

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THE WOMEN OF SEABAGS ★ MAINE ★

Teamwork Forms the Fabric of the Company

BY LIZ GOTTHELF

Ask Sea Bags President and Chief Sustainability Officer Beth Shissler how long a Sea Bags tote lasts. “I don’t think we know yet,” she said. The company gives recycled sails a new life, transforming them into durable and fashionable tote bags and accessories.

On the wall in her office hangs a bag she affectionately calls the Jeb Bag. It belonged to a fisherman named Jeb, who used it every single day for many years to carry his lunch and supplies to his boat. After he died, his wife gave it to Shissler. It’s well-loved, but still very functional.

Beth, who is also a part-owner, came on board the company in 2006. She, along with CEO Don Oakes, who has been with the company since 2013, has been a push behind the tremendous growth and success of the company. Sea Bags began in 1999 as a hobby business and now has 33 retail outlets in Maine, Michigan, and California, as well as robust online sales.

“We were doing sustainability before sustainability was cool,” she said.

Beth is proud not only of the success of the company, but of the staff, which is 80 percent women. Meetings at the headquarters along the Portland Wharf are bilingual, as there are a number of staff members from Cambodia working in the manufacturing department. Beth envisions the business to be successful for decades to come, and she is the first to tell you that it hasn’t just been one or two people that have helped Sea Bags grow. She has woven together a team of dynamic individuals, all experts in their respective fields, who make up the fabric of a business built to last, just like its products.

Sokunthy Yean came on board as a bookkeeper ten years ago, and after six months she was promoted to finance director. Now, she’s the general manager, and everyone in manufacturing reports to her. “I was very lucky that Beth gave me this opportunity,” she said. Sokunthy said she got to know the company from a numbers standpoint, then learned more about the real “ins and outs” of the business. She took time to study the





Beth Shissler
Photo by
Jason Paige Smith



structure of the company and learn as much as she could, as she saw the potential of e-commerce and retail and had a feeling that Sea Bags was going to grow exponentially.

Since its inception, the company has kept more than 700 tons of sails out of landfills. The sails come from all over the world, as Carrie Mack, Vice President of Sails Acquisition, can tell you. An Army veteran with a 100 captain's license who had been all over the world, she came to Sea Bags in January of 2007, looking for something different. Carrie has traveled throughout Europe, the United States, and the Caribbean acquiring sails for the company. She said it's an amazing experience to meet the people who support the business by providing sails.

"All of the material that we get has a story, and it's really neat to be able to put that to a particular place or event or person, and they can tell you more about it," she said.

Sailing lies at the heart of the business, and Sea Bags sponsors an accomplished women's sailing team. Erica Beck-Spencer, skipper and co-captain of the Sea Bags Women's Sailing Team, was awarded the honor of "Top Female Skipper" in the 2018 and 2019 J/24 World Championships. The team also won a trophy both years for the top female boat.

"It's an honor of a lifetime, sincerely, other than raising my kids," said Erica, who is also an educator. "I wouldn't be able to compete at this level if it were not for Sea Bags." She has been part of the company's sailing team since 2015, and said that Sea Bags has always instilled in the sailors that they were champions. The company offered support by hiring coaches and by encouraging them to excel by running the team like a business and setting goals each year. Beth said one of her goals with Sea Bags was to grow jobs and career paths, and competitive sailing is one of these paths. The sailing team is a distinctive piece of the Sea Bags narrative.

The Sea Bags story has many other layers,

too—about who owned the original sail, where was the sail used, what kind of boat was it on, when was it taken off the boat, and where did it end up before it came to Sea Bags to get stitched into a bag. And finally, the story is about the creation of the finished project at the wharf in Portland, Maine, according to Laura Hnatow, Vice President of Marketing and E-Commerce for nearly seven years.

Telling the stories of Sea Bags is a major part of Laura's job. "Not one of these pieces of sails is the same as another," she said. They have different textures and designs. Some have weathered the elements longer than others. Laura helps customers to better appreciate the sails' background and the bags made from the sails.

While many of the sails come through acquisitions, some also come through the company's barter program, through which customers bring in a sail in exchange for a bag made from the material. Often, the sail coming through the barter program has emotional value to the consumer. It may have belonged to their grandfather, or it may have been on their first boat. No matter where the material came from, a Sea Bag is not just an ordinary handbag. It's got history.

At first, the designs on the bags were created from the insignia from the sails, and outside of that, the designs weren't varied. They may have had an anchor or star added, at most. "When we first started, one of the big miscalculations I had was I really thought our first customers were going to be sailors," explained Beth Shissler. "To my surprise, that wasn't the case. It really was people who were into sustainability and people into fashion."

Tara Knupp, product design manager, came to Sea Bags four years ago with an extensive background in fashion, after moving to Maine to escape the hustle and bustle of New York City. "Never in my wildest dreams did I think I'd be working for Sea Bags," she said. She recalls saving up her money to buy her first Sea Bags tote, and she



knows that for most people who own one, it isn't just a bag bought on a whim, but it's a special purchase.

Tara's guidance has helped Sea Bags maintain itself not just as a maker of durable, sustainable bags, but as a maker of durable, sustainable bags that are also fashion accessories, with fresh nautical and beachy styles. "We're all experts in what we do individually. We don't necessarily know each other's expertise," said Laura. The key is the team's ability to work and collaborate and bring together their knowledge, she said. "It's so authentic."

"Here, there are no silos; it's one big collaborative pot," said Tara. On any given day, she could be working with any member of her team, or all of them. "When I come to work every day, we have a huge studio. It's all open," said Laura. "It lends itself to immediate collaboration." Instead of scheduling a meeting in a conference room, she and her colleagues can gather together and quickly nail down what needs to be done.

Sokunthy said that trust plays an important part of the relationship among the team members. She said she's always been able to sit down with Beth and have open and honest conversations, and the support has been empowering. Beth cares about her employees, said Carrie. "Beth has done whatever she could to make sure that everybody was healthy and well and able to do their best, and that is part of the great success of Sea Bags."

That support has been an integral part of the company's success during the COVID-19 pandemic. Team members were able to continue collaboration and work remotely, while many of them balanced working with home-schooling their children.

The company has continued to move forward during the pandemic, and through Laura's guidance, the company was able to connect with customers through the website and social media.

Immediately after Sea Bag's Don Oakes had a conversation with U.S. Senator Angus King about the need for personal protective equipment,

Sokunthy got to work, getting the materials needed and setting up so that her team could produce face masks.

"We don't have a girls' club at work, we have a go get 'em club," said Beth. •



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Summer reflections from a high school teacher

Starting a new year during COVID-19

BY ESTEFANIA SILVERI

As a high school Spanish teacher, the two questions that everyone has been asking me this summer are, “Are you stressed out about going back to school?” and “Do you know what returning to school will look like?” The answer to both inquiries is no. My personal approach has been not to hyper plan or stress out, especially since I don’t know what school will look like come fall, and I don’t anticipate knowing until much closer to the start of the year. I have been spending my summer in a state of limbo. As I think many of my colleagues would agree, we’re learning all about limbo. For me, it is a state made up of equal parts waiting for news from my school or state, wondering how my career will change this fall, missing my students and my teaching profession, and making peace with concerns I have no control over. It is this last element of the mix I reflect on the most.

COVID-19 has turned the world of traditional schooling upside down. First,



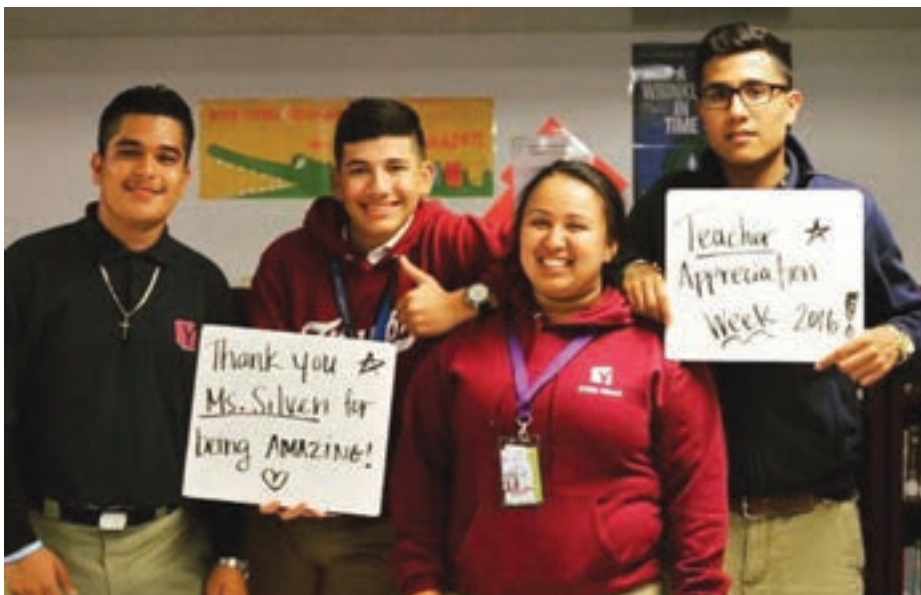
let’s think about the mask and teaching. My favorite part about my job is the daily human interaction with students and other staff members. Let’s face it. Teaching depends on facial expressions and all forms of communication. The thought of teaching Spanish in a mask saddens me. I know it is important for safety, and I will of course follow all guidelines faithfully.

But I still can feel sad about that extra physical barrier the mask adds for my students trying to learn an already foreign language and for me trying to hear them. The idea that my students won’t be able to read my full facial expression makes me worried that building trust will take more time, and that effective teaching will take longer.

Another concern is dealing with the subtle havoc that has already been wrought by the virus on students’ preparedness and level. I already know I will be walking into a situation where students wouldn’t have necessarily had the opportunity to complete the full curriculum of their courses last year, and I feel pressure to make up for this.

Concerns don’t stop there. The pandemic has highlighted inequities across the country in our school systems more than ever before. I am thinking about my coworkers who are also parents to young children, and how they might navigate returning to work while many daycares remain closed. I fear for younger students who will naturally need more guidance if school were to be online, and I wonder how they will be supported. What about students with special needs? What does returning to school look like for them? Not to mention the general health and safety concerns for anyone in a school building this fall.

These challenges don’t scare me or make me overly anxious, but they feel like a swirling number of interrelated concerns that I don’t have much or any control over. And in my state of limbo, they become motivations. They ignite a fire within me to show up for my students, parents of students, and fellow staff mem-





bers even more than before. Amid all this apprehension, I also find immense hope. I have witnessed teachers make creative and hilarious videos at home as a means to connect with their students. I have watched fellow staff members commit to growing their computer skills in order to execute successful online classes. There have been countless online webinars and message boards of educators sharing any and all tools they have. Students have started checking in on each other while taking charge of their own learning. The most visible outcome from this past spring is that together we can navigate through anything.

If you are a student or parent who is feeling distressed, know that your teachers are ready to do everything in their power to help you have a successful school year. I am so eager to meet my students, and I am thrilled to start building community with them. I truly believe that school can offer a mental reprieve from all the uncertainty we have faced lately. My message to students, parents, and staff is that I am rested, I am ready, and I am excited! Let's have an awesome year. The bottom line is this—I miss my students. I want to get back to doing what I love the most: teaching. •

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FINDING CALM AMID CHAOS

How to create intentional spaces at home that prioritize mental wellbeing

BY SARAH HOLMAN



Photo by Tina Witherspoon | unsplash.com

They say home is where the heart is . . . along with everything else these days. The COVID-19 pandemic has put new demands on our sacred spaces, pushing our living quarters to the max and testing our ability to multitask. As the suggestion to stay at home drags on, changes intended to be temporary are starting to feel permanent, yet unsustainable at the same time. Personally, I'm beginning to wonder if my kitchen table will ever not have a laptop on it. It seems unlikely, and what felt like a fine solution to working from home in March now feels uncomfortable.

Given the likelihood that many of us will continue to work, learn, and live from home this fall and winter, it feels appropriate to make our spaces comfortable for the long haul. How can the home environment maximize both physical comfort and mental well-being? While everyone's situation is different, developing a questioning and problem-solving approach can help.

For example, the now-common Zoom meetings that, in essence, bring others into your home, can raise many questions. How does it feel when boundaries between the workplace and the home become this flexible, whether we want them to or not? How do we feel at ease in this new normal? And while some people have no problem Zooming from their bedroom, others may choose to use fake backgrounds or a designated impersonal space, to maintain privacy.

"It can be helpful to remember that you are willingly inviting others into your personal space even when you are using a virtual meeting platform, like Zoom," said Dani Fazio, a licensed therapist and co-owner of Therapy For The People in Portland. Whether you're engaging in a professional interaction, taking classes, attending church, or catching up with a friend, that interpersonal energy is in your space. It may even be in your bed. "If it feels right to answer customer emails or call your kids' teachers from your bed, you keep doing you," Dani says. But if it's feeling too crowded in there, energetically speaking, or you're struggling to sleep at night and waking up with work-related stress, Dani suggests setting intentions and boundaries about where you do what you do all day.

"Our living spaces are designed with routines in mind: retiring to our bedrooms in the evening provides a psychological cue for our brains and bodies to prepare for rest. Without those cues, the transitions between working and not working can become difficult to navigate." If your home-work boundaries aren't feeling sturdy enough, consider using the virtual background feature available through Zoom, asking if you can attend some meetings with the camera turned off, just using the audio feature, or choosing a

"People are just so tired of being cooped up and looking at the same things all day."

—Karen McPhedran,
Tallwood Design in Readfield



space in your house with a nondescript backdrop when you do have to turn on your computer camera.

When it comes to making our overlapping living and working space physically more comfortable, Karen McPhedran, an interior designer and owner of Tallwood Design based in Readfield, says right now her clients are eager to refresh their homes and spaces. “People are just so tired of being cooped up and looking at the same things all day.” She’s also noticed a shift in the areas that clients are interested in creating or updating.

In the past, homeowners often made improvements for the comfort of visitors. Now, Karen says, the design work is more intimate. She’s creating fitness rooms, master suites, plenty of home offices, and even a few saunas, as well as consulting on strategies for organization, decor, and layout of existing spaces. Especially in rooms intended for work, Karen encourages clients to dampen sounds with rugs or drapes, which helps offset other noises from the house. “It’s about creating spaces that make people feel at ease,” she says. She also likes to incorporate framed photos (with happy associations for the client—perhaps of positive people and places from a pre-COVID world) into workspaces, as well as plants.

“Any room I create has to be finished off with plants,” says Annie Kiladjian of Annie K Designs in Portland. “The organic shapes of plants balance out the harsh lines of cabinets and furniture and add an overall softness to any space.” There’s also extensive research pointing to the health benefits of plants, including their ability to remove toxins from the air. If you’re not an accomplished green thumb, choose an easy to care for variety like a fern,



TOP: Peel and stick wood wall treatment inspiration from Stikwood (stikwood.com). BOTTOM: House plants always brighten a space.

Photo by Annie Kiladjian

spider plant, pothos, philodendron, or aloe. Pick a fun, decorative pot for a pop of color or a design statement.

For a more significant design change, Karen often uses peel-off wallpaper and tile sheets to create impact walls and backsplashes (stick to low-splash areas of the home to protect the adhesive). She particularly loves a product called Stikwood. “It’s strips of very thin reclaimed wood planking with an adhesive backing,” she explains. Sustainably produced and available online, it can be cut with a utility knife.

When clients are interested in overhauling a room’s color, Karen uses a tool on the Sherwin Williams website that allows users to upload a photo of their room and virtually apply different paint colors. “It’s a great way to experiment with color before making a commitment,” she says.

In addition to any permanent changes, Karen encourages clients to pay attention to the energy in their homes. “How your house smells and feels can have an impact on anxiety,” she says. Being a little extra organized, simmering something fragrant on the stove, or taking time to enjoy outdoor living spaces while the weather is nice can help combat the stress of balancing home and work life under one roof. “Our world is different,” she says. “It’s making us prioritize our lives differently.”

Dani encourages her clients to actively seek relief from the persistent sense of uncertainty created by the pandemic. The constant feeling of unease can trigger a response from our autonomic nervous system, Dani explains, moving us into a place where control feels out of reach. “We tend to panic, explode, micromanage, iso-

late, or people-please,” she says. However, one autonomic nervous system response that is less often discussed is safe connection. This is a feeling of wanting to approach ourselves and others with empathy, assertiveness, and mindful awareness. “Safe connection can be the resiliency builder we need to care for ourselves and our community as we adapt during these unpredictable times.”

Safe connection can start at home, Dani says, in the ways we show up for one another, acknowledge the emotions we’re feeling, and communicate. Ritualization is also important, especially activities that engage our senses and feelings of comfort in the present moment. Things like listening to music, cooking, reading, gardening, stretching, or going for a walk offer predictability in uncertain times. “Safe connection can also look like reaching out for support when things are feeling out of our control,” Dani says. Hearing a friend’s voice, touching base with family, or connecting with a therapist can provide a lifeline and a nervous system re-alignment when our busy virtual lives leave us feeling depleted or lonely.

With no clear end in sight for the home-work-school-life bottleneck, it makes a lot of sense to devote resources (time, labor, money) to optimizing one of the few things we can still control: our homes. Before you start moving furniture, check in with your psyche and identify the most pressing needs. Then set clear, attainable goals. Whether you’re making small or significant adjustments, the objective is to end up with spaces in your home that provide a sustainable sense of calm and shelter from the storm. •

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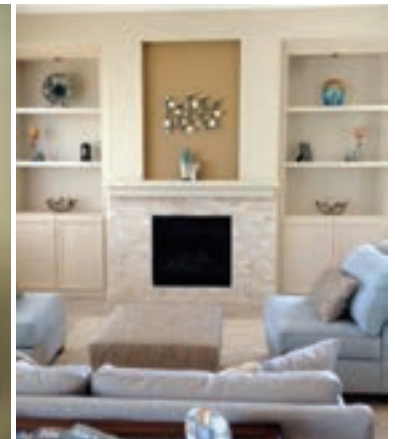
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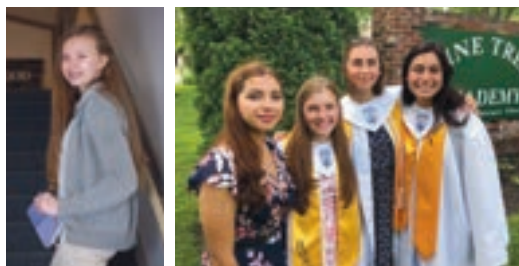
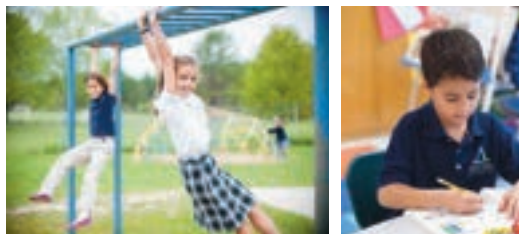


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Elizabeth Polansky on

STAGING MAINE HOMES

*Working with
sellers and buyers*

BY R. COOK

Elizabeth Polansky of The Styled Home in Westbrook. Photo by Molly Breton

Elizabeth Polansky loves her work. She and her all-women team get to create, recreate, and reshape Maine homes that are for sale in a real estate market that continues to be red hot, up and down the coast.

Elizabeth, 59, of Portland is the owner of The Styled Home in Westbrook, the largest real estate staging company in northern New England. Realtors often turn to her when they need to sell their clients' homes, whether those homes are a \$150,000 condo in Old Orchard Beach or a multi-million-dollar seaside home in Kennebunkport. She treats each project and client with equal respect.

Elizabeth began her new career in the home décor field in 2000, when her daughter was in kindergarten. She started working for a small home furniture and design shop when she decided to go out on her own.

She started her first business, named Before and After, with a friend. They offered affordable interior decorating services to busy professionals who neither had the time or knowhow to decorate their homes. In 2002, Elizabeth partnered with another woman as her business expanded. From 2002 to 2015, the business would become The Styled Home. In 2004, staging was added to their list of services, being the very first to bring staging to the Portland area.

As the concept of staging became more popular, they began to invest in inventory. By 2012, the need to acquire

warehouse space was quite evident. They took a leap of faith and leased a 2000 square-foot facility in Portland and never looked back. Within a year they had outgrown that space and had to move to into a 3000 square-foot facility.

In 2014, their first part-time employee—a woman who still works for her—was hired to assist with their increasing number of projects. In 2015 her business partner of 13 years decided to make a career change, and Elizabeth bought her out and took over the company. “In 2016, we were on fire! I hired four additional team members and had to invest in so much inventory to accommodate staging 100 vacant homes that I was bursting at the seams.” In 2017, the company moved to new 6,000 square-foot warehouse facility in Westbrook.

In 2018, Maria Locke, the owner of Upscale Furniture and Consignment, joined her team after closing their store. Realizing the client demand for this service, Elizabeth decided to open a retail division, The Styled Home by UpScale. Here they sell retired staging furniture, new furniture, and very selective consignment furniture.

The Styled Home and The Styled Home by UpScale are housed in her 10,000 square-foot warehouse complex in Westbrook. “During my busiest time, I’ll have upwards of 25 to 30 homes staged at any given time,” Elizabeth

said. It can cost anywhere from \$12,000 to \$15,000 in inventory to stage one home. One thing she doesn't do is minimal staging, placing a few pieces in a room and calling it staged. Her business has been built on the product she delivers to her clients. Now with her retail division, if a buyer likes the furniture they see in the home they want to purchase, "I will sell them one piece, or I will sell it all." "Last year, I sold a half a dozen properties furnished." These sales are win/win: the buyers get a professionally designed home, and she is able to keep turning her inventory.

Elizabeth stages homes from Bar Harbor to Portsmouth, New Hampshire. She also stages homes on Maine's islands and as far north as Bethel. She explained that in today's real estate market, sales are driven by the online photo presentation a Realtor posts of their listings. If those photos don't capture the buyer, that home will not sell or the Realtor will choose to take drastic price reductions. When a property doesn't sell, the problem is usually cosmetic. "It's all about the product that is being marketed," Elizabeth observes. "When you are selling your home, you have to create a viable marketable item that people want to buy and emotionally connect with."

Her number one recommendation to home sellers is painting: "Painting is the magic bullet." It can transform a home that looks tired and dated into a home that looks and feels updated, clean, and move-in ready.

When asked about colors, Elizabeth states, "Yellow is the kiss of death in today's real estate market." She says that buyers prefer soft neutral tones, fifty shades of gray! Not the strong earth tones of the '80s, '90s, and early 2000s. Neutral tones "are more soothing visually," she explains. "They tend to draw your eye to the architectural features of a home as well as drawing your eye outside, as opposed to having a bold color that is hard to get past."

Elizabeth is attracted to cream and light-colored upholstery when she chooses furniture for her staging inventory. She said colors like navy, coral, teals, and soft blues are her accent colors.



From these colors her team builds the overall vision and design of the staging project.

Her team, which consists of nine women (except for her movers) have all been trained by Elizabeth. They make the magic happen after Elizabeth secures the project and selects the furniture. "It's an unbelievable and time-intensive process."

From start to finish it takes her team upwards of 8 to 12 hours and two days per project. It begins with a team walk-through of the home, followed by selecting and tagging all the furniture. Then the team goes to work selecting every

accessory, pillow, lamp, piece of wall art, and bedding, and then packing every item. The movers arrive the next morning and the truck is loaded, unloaded, and the staging begins. "We are walking out the door and ready for the photographer to come in and do the photo shoot," Elizabeth said.

She also provides the service of owner-occupied staging. She and her team work with the owners' furnishings to visually balance each room in preparation of it to be photographed for Multiple Listing Service (MLS). The owner will often comment how much better they like a given room or their entire home

after her team works their magic. “It’s so gratifying when the homeowner comes back to their home and says, ‘I’ve always hated this room. Why didn’t we call you five years ago?’”

The current COVID-19 pandemic presented many challenges for Elizabeth and The Styled Home. She was forced to furlough her team this spring during the stay-at-home order. She did keep busy by offering Facetime video consultations with clients to instruct them on how they should prepare their homes prior to listing. Slowly but surely, her business has returned to its accustomed level, as Maine has begun to reopen.

Throughout the pandemic, the demand for Maine homes, up and down the coast, has never diminished. Elizabeth said some homes were going under contract via just Internet sales with photos and videos, because buyers were not traveling to Maine to see the listings in person. This phenomenon of buying “sight unseen” most often happens when a buyer has to move to Maine for a job.

Reflecting on current changes in

the time of the coronavirus epidemic, Elizabeth said, “For me, one of the hardest things that I struggle with is not being able to shake a person’s hand when I meet them.” But meeting challenges head on is one of her greatest strengths. Her drive and ambition to build The Styled Home have enabled her to seize opportunities to grow her business, in good times and bad, into what it is today.

Elizabeth grew up in Waukesha, Wisconsin, and has lived in several states as her former husband relocated for his job. She’s lived in Rhode Island, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Columbus, Ohio. Eventually, her former husband’s job took his family to Maine in 1998. “I have been here ever since. Maine is my home.”

Her first career was in the fine jewelry business at 16, she recalled. Eventually, Elizabeth managed fine jewelry stores for Zale Corp. “My experience with design and merchandising actually started in that industry.”

Her daughter, Jessica, 25, just graduated from the University of Southern Maine

with a bachelor’s degree in Economics with a double minor in Food Studies and Holistic and Integrative Health. She is eager to begin her career here in Maine.

As retail sales began to open up during COVID-19, Elizabeth decided to give back to the community. For a period of time she offered a 10 percent discount off a client’s purchase, then donated those total dollars in her client’s name to the Good Shepherd Food Bank. “So many people are struggling to feed their families. I just have to do something to help,” she said.

Elizabeth makes no secret of the fact that her company is the center of her universe. “My business is my passion. Once work isn’t fun anymore, that is the time I’ll decide to sell and retire.”

“My job is so gratifying. I get to make homes beautiful every day of the week,” Elizabeth said. “When I’m working in my office and I hear my team laughing and talking while they’re working on a project in the warehouse, it’s music to my ears. I feel so incredibly blessed and just smile.” •



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Top choices for houseplant lovers are an ever-growing number of succulents. Easy care and stunning presence are what succulents are all about. *Photos by Lynette L. Walther*

| GARDENING |

HOUSEPLANTS

The Home Rx for the Coming Months

BY LYNETTE L. WALTHER

Shorter days, cooler nights signal more than just a change in the season. They announce that it is time to get busy, get those gardens tucked in for the long, cold haul to come. And more importantly, they tell us it is time to bring in all those houseplants that have been vacationing outdoors for the summer.

Before you do, take a few minutes to examine each pot and plant. Some may need a “hair cut” to trim back exuberant summer growth. Because many houseplants can be propagated from cuttings, be sure to save those trimmings to root for more plants to share later. Some of your plants may even need to be repotted. A good rule of thumb is to select a new pot a third bigger than the old. Use a good commercial potting soil. It often contains nutrient beads for slow-release fertilizing, and it consists of the right mix of ingredients to provide good drainage. Plus, it does not contain weed seeds nor insect eggs which garden soil might be harboring.

Next inspect each plant, stem to stern and top to bottom. That careful check includes the undersides of leaves, where spider mites or other damaging insects might be lurking or have deposited eggs. Larger plants can be cleaned off with a spray of water from a garden hose. A damp soft cloth or even a soft paint brush can be used to clean smaller and more delicate plant foliage.

Your houseplants will be keeping you company for many months indoors. For the frustrated gardeners among us, they can indeed be our winter obsession. We know they add that vital touch of green (sometimes color and



With clivia, you get luxuriant green foliage and blooms, too. The ultimate houseplant, clivia is a native of South Africa that thrives in a dry environment and low light.



Blooms and more blooms distinguish plants in the begonia family. Low light and tolerance of dry conditions make them excellent choices. Allow houseplants to dry out between watering, being careful to not overwater.



Winter is when the flowering cactus (Cereus) blooms. Cacti make good houseplants, tolerating the dry environments of heated homes.

bloom, too) to light up the dark days of winter, and they look pretty, near windows or on sunny counters. Houseplants have even been found to help elevate our mood.

For these reasons, houseplants are our winter saviors, and they have never been as popular as they are now. But in winter they need a bit of care to keep them healthy and thriving, and they'll pay you back in return. Whether you already have an inventory of thriving houseplants or are looking for a few to begin your indoor garden or add to your collection, here are 10 handy tips from Costa Nurseries (one of the largest producers of houseplants) on caring for your houseplants this coming winter:

1. Pick Your Plant Based on Light. Remember that while nearly all plants prefer bright light, be careful to protect them from intense direct sun. A good rule of thumb: if the sun is intense enough to burn your skin, it will certainly burn a plant's leaves.

2. Be Mindful of Your Schedule. If your absentmindedness is what stands between you and happy plant ownership, pick a plant that thrives from neglect. If you have bright light, try a succulent or cactus, and if you have low light, try a snake plant or ZZ plant.

3. Do Not Overwater Your Houseplant. Beware of overwatering. More houseplants die from too much water than too little. Telltale signs that a plant is overwatered include mold, mildew, and rotted foliage. Telltale signs that a plant is past due for a watering are wilting plant leaves or soil pulling away from the sides of the planter. Always use tepid water to water your plant. Let the potting soil soak up the water for about 15 to 30 minutes, then empty any remaining water from the saucer.

4. Increase Humidity When Necessary. For plants that prefer humid conditions such as ferns, ivies, or tropical plants, mist them using a small spray bottle in between waterings. During the dry months of winter, grouping plants together helps to create a humid microclimate. A humidifier can help, too.

5. Keep Your Plant's Environment Stable. Avoid placing plants near temperature hazards like vents, radiators, and exterior doors, which might create hot or cold spots and drafts.

6. Forgo Fertilizer. Plants get minerals from the air, water, and their potting mix, and they are nourished and energized by sunlight. Now we are in the dormant season for most plants. If you do choose to fertilize, only do so during the growing season, and follow the general rule of thumb that "less is more."

7. Purchase a Healthy Plant from a Reputable Source. Definitely give the plant a once-over before purchasing. Look for yellowed leaves, powdery mildew, leaf spots, brown leaf tips, weak or wobbly stems, insect eggs on the underside of leaves, and other obvious signs of poor plant health.

8. Show a Little Extra TLC in the Beginning. Establish a routine of checking plants every three to four days. A little extra attention can go a long way.

9. Do Not be Afraid to Repot. Repotting does not necessarily mean putting your plant in a new planter, but rather,



TOP: Color-coordinated plants and pots can add a touch of sophistication to any setting. BOTTOM: Houseplants that have spent the summer luxuriating outdoors will need to come indoors now.

changing its soil or potting mix. Plants receive some of their nutrients from their soil so fresh soil can help them. Although one can repot in fall, as necessary, the best time to repot is in early spring, before the growth season starts.

10. Create Drainage. If the planter does not have a drainage hole at the bottom to allow excess water to escape from the soil, it is important to create makeshift drainage. Line the bottom of the planter with rocks and sand. Try lava rocks because they are porous. This added precaution could help prevent overwatering.

Houseplants can be the prescription for our winter blues. Just imagine the lift and color—the life—that a big fiddle leaf fig can add to a room. Go big or go small. The rewards are there, and with proper care your houseplants will be around for a long time. As I like to remind folks, every plant is native to some place. The trick to growing houseplants with success—or any plant for that matter—is to discover the native environment for that plant, and then try to replicate it as closely as possible. •

TREAT YOURSELF RIGHT

*Jacqui Painchaud,
founder of Grampa's Garden,
Helps People Relax at Home with
Natural Herbal-Based Products*

BY R. COOK



When Jacqui Painchaud was a child, she was already familiar with the natural healing power of herbs and oils thanks to her parents' garden and her mother's medical background.

Jacqui recalls with great joy the times she spent creating culinary botanical oils from that garden planted by Paul and Giselle Painchaud that she gave to family members as Christmas gifts. That was back in the early 1980s.

After she spent several years working as a physical therapist in Massachusetts and Maine, Jacqui, now 57, launched Grampa's Garden in 1993 and now sells a vast array of natural herbal-based products worldwide. The business is named after "Gram," her mother, and "Pa," her dad. Jacqui is a single parent with a 12-year-old son, Jacob.

She simply saw a need to provide patients with a healthy alternative. "I saw many patients who were not only battling pain, but also trying to heat up packs that were awkward, bulky, and scalding."

At her manufacturing facility in Topsham, Jacqui displays the very first lap pillow that her friend and former business partner Gloria Hewes made just before they launched Grampa's Garden. Jacqui met Gloria through Gloria's mother-in-law, Jan Hewes, who was Jacqui's colleague at Greater Brunswick Physical Therapy. Jan and Gloria worked with Jacqui to launch the company. The idea behind Grampa's Garden came into focus during a horticulture class at

Southern Maine Technical College. When the instructor, Richard Churchill, asked the class what kind of business they would create, Jacqui knew right away. "Everything came together."

"We made our massage oil that is still used by a lot of therapists," Jacqui said.

Over the next several years, Jacqui attended scores of trade shows throughout the Northeast, Midwest, and the West Coast to market her products. She went door to door to Maine retailers throughout Portland and elsewhere.

Jacqui said her company experienced its first breakthrough moment when QVC came to Portland in 2004 and decided to introduce their home shopping network viewers to Grampa's Garden's body shawl as a special value in the fall. They had 87,000 orders. Jacqui started doing catalogues in 1998 and forged a partnership with L.L. Bean in Freeport to sell her products in their stores. "I always had something to hand out, always."

Eventually, Jacqui's efforts to expand her products' reach to the Midwest paid off, too. "We did a lot of Chicago shows and got Whole Foods interested."

That advancement enabled Grampa's Garden to expand into California where a gentleman from Dubai discovered something that relieved his back pain. He liked the products so much, he opened some Grampa's Garden stores there in the Middle East. She has customers in Germany, Great

Britain, Ireland, France, and Canada. Grampa's Garden has 25,000 retailers and 3,000 wholesalers.

Jacqui would attend at least 10 shows a month to market her products to retailers and wholesalers. "I worked 70 to 90 hours a week and I loved it. It didn't feel like work to me."

She praises her dedicated staff, many of whom have worked for Jacqui for years, including Susan Hatch of Litchfield, who started as a home stitcher 18 years ago and now is head of manufacturing, and Blakley Goodwin of Topsham, who cuts every item, and who has been with the company for 16 years. Blakely manages pre-production work.

Lynn Hewes, Gloria's daughter, has continued to work at Grampa's Garden after Gloria passed away, in manufacturing or in the front office off and on since she was 12 years old.

There are 17 people who work in the Topsham facility and the new Sensory Adventure Spa in Brunswick that is managed by her brother, Michael Painchaud. Jacqui said Michael returned to Maine from Seattle 10 years ago and did a great deal to improve Grampa's Garden warehouse management and organization. In addition, he has contributed a lot to Grampa's Garden marketing and branding. The new store is Michael's brainchild and represents his vision to give Grampa's Garden a brick-and-mortar experience where people can come in and enjoy coffee in the Orange Horse Coffeehouse and herbal teas in the Tea Tree Café.

Jacqui employs 15 remote stitchers. They design and create all of the Made in Maine products. Jacqui credits her success to the hard work and dedication put in by her employees. "There have been a lot of great people putting it all together as fast as they could."

Grampa's Garden's products range from hot and cold therapy pacs, aromatherapy non-heatable pacs, herbal apothecary, and essential oils and blends. Some of those products include weighted blankets, neck wraps, lap pads, and vests for children and

adults with physical and developmental disabilities. Cozy Whimsical Animals and Fidget Pocket Pets help children increase relaxation, improve their focus and concentration, and decrease anxiety and sensory-overload symptoms associated with neurological disorders like Autism. A common denominator is comfort and safe treatment, for people in their homes or elsewhere.

The company also makes a range of other products. The company's heated and cold neck wraps, lap pacs, and eye/sinus pacs help with lower back

pain, shoulder pain, and headaches. Handwarmers, scarves, and slippers for are made for those cold winter months. For dogs and cats, pet therapy products include a Tug N' Pull toy for your dog and Cat Napper Mat and Cat Nip Pillow. Pets can also benefit from Grampa's Garden's cooling and heatable inserts for dog and cat beds.

The company spreads its good energy in a variety of ways. It makes a pink heat/cool heart pac that has a removable cover and is embroidered with the pink breast cancer ribbon. For these, Grampa's Garden donates



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7.5 percent of every sale to the American Breast Cancer Foundation. The company also makes teddy bears that Maine hospitals give to every pediatric patient.

Grampa's Garden products are sold online and to wholesalers who supply schools, hospitals, healthcare facilities, hospice care facilities as well as chiropractors, physical therapists, occupational therapists, and other healthcare providers. "Spas are big with us." And Jacqui said many veterinary practices order the body shawls for dogs.

Grampa's Garden provides support for other Maine companies, such as doing die cutting for Sea Bags, in Portland. Grampa's Garden cuts the applique and then returns the cut pieces to Sea Bags' production teams, who place and stitch them on the bags. It is a win-win for Maine businesses.

Grampa's Garden products are sold on Amazon. "Amazon was huge for us. They doubled our company in two to three years," Jacqui said.

Like many businesses here in Maine and nationwide, Grampa's Garden has been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. They did not have to close during Governor Janet Mills' shut down order in March and April because they were deemed an essential business. Jacqui said they made face masks and whatever other products were needed and in demand by front-line healthcare workers.

Individual online orders have been strong for masks, hot and cold packs, essential oils, and weighted blankets because her customers are seeking natural ways to relieve the stress and anxiety caused by the pandemic, especially while quarantined at home.

One of the challenges is that many of her customers (ones that ordered her products in bulk to supply schools and healthcare facilities) have been closed. Some of those facilities and schools that are open will place individual orders. But figuring out the logistics of how much fabric and herbs to purchase to meet the demand is difficult.

For example, their medical distributors dropped to 30 percent of what they typically order from Grampa's Garden because the hospices and schools those medical distributors serve are not ordering as much product. They may get up to 50 percent later this summer. Before the pandemic, Jacqui said her company was poised to see 15 to 20 percent growth in the first quarter. The pandemic knocked that projection to 50 percent of where they were during the first quarter of 2019. Slowly, but surely, wholesale orders are gradually increasing.

One of the most important lessons Jacqui has learned is having the ability to adapt to the changing marketplace. "One of the greatest assets to have in business is flexibility. Because of the core, we are going to be able to ride through this."

Jacqui's passion to keep developing new products for her customers around the world is a driving force. At the new Sensory Adventure Spa store in downtown Brunswick, Michael summed up Jacqui's vision this way: "She just wants to make people feel better." •

"Pruning" the Home

*CeCe Camacho on
Thriving with Fewer
Things, More Space*

BY SUSAN OLCOTT

“I love a prune smoothie for breakfast after a run. Yes, I honestly love prunes. I know they have a reputation,” says CeCe Camacho, founder of “prune,” with a laugh. CeCe’s business isn’t about eating prunes, though. And it isn’t about pruning your garden. “I am not the one with the green thumb in the family,” says CeCe. “Thank goodness Jeff [her partner] takes care of our garden.” Instead, CeCe’s business is about helping people to “prune” their belongings to make their spaces more functional and beautiful. It is about taking a juicy plum and reducing it to the sweet essence of the fruit. At its essence, CeCe defines prune as, “a lifestyle company supporting people to make space for what matters most in their lives.”

Prune is a verb. It is about paring down the overgrowth so that the other parts of the tree can grow and thrive—to let go in order to grow. CeCe’s philosophy isn’t focused on getting rid of things, though. Instead, she focuses on the positive, on the result of a well-pruned and resilient rosebush, rather than the clippings, so to speak. “Helping people find the things that are meaningful to them and letting others go changes their lives,” she says. “The idea is that we can get weighed down by belongings that don’t help us to fully thrive. They take up our living spaces as well as our mental and emotional spaces. With open spaces come open possibilities.”

Prune germinated in 2014 after much consideration about how to direct her passions and talents. A snapshot of CeCe’s life experiences to date point to her amazing, varied skill set. She has been successful in the academic realm, with a background in social welfare and a Master’s in Education from Harvard. She has abilities in the area of travel and global aid and development, having served in the Peace Corps in Yemen and Gabon and collaborated with colleagues in Rwanda on a social enterprise. She has significant artistic talents and is looking to return to work on her degree in painting from the Maine College of Art (MECA). Oh, and she also currently works at the Curtis Memorial Library, studies and admires poetry, and is a running coach at Fleet Feet.

In recent years, she had been longing to find her way back to art, and she discovered a connection to something functional she could do with it. She grew up with a father who is a landscape architect and she is now married to one, so the intersection between living space and art is natural. “Pruning is like art for me,” she says. “I love helping people make their space more beautiful and inspiring. A home is a canvas in a sense. We have this opportunity to layer it with meaning and memories which create texture.”

She appreciates that too much layering can weigh people

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down, and she draws upon her affinity with poetry to explain the importance of simplicity. “Because of my daughter,” CeCe says of 13-year-old Freida, “I have fallen in love with poetry. Her poetry is beautiful. She also introduced me to e. e. cummings this summer because she thought I would like the visual layout of some of his poems. She was right! Some clients need nudges to get back to that ‘a-ha’ feeling of having a home like a poem with just the right words, spaces, and intention.”

Helping someone to prune is not always easy, though. “Pruning can be an uncomfortable process, like when you start running for the first time. It feels hard when it’s not an everyday activity,” she says. “There has to be a real sense of trust. It is so humbling to be invited into someone’s home—into someone’s bedroom even,” she adds. But, it’s necessary to have that kind of intimacy with her clients in order to help them figure out what might be “impeding things for them in their house.”

That’s where her coaching skills come into play. She has to get to know a person in order to help them to decide what is most important to them. Part of that is learning a person’s story. “I often start by asking, ‘Tell me about a favorite object.’ It could be a painting, a rock, a key, an old t-shirt, or even a pair of shoes.” These are the objects that have meaning for someone. “My mother gave me a rock, for example, when I visited her last summer. It reminds me of her strength and resilience. She embodies these qualities. And, it sits right on top of my dresser with my other sacred objects.”

But, “art is life,” she says. And life right now during the pandemic has resulted in people spending a lot more time in their own spaces. What they are asking of these spaces is different. They have kids running around, while they are working from a home office that may be crammed into the corner of the kitchen, in a bedroom, or in a closet. “Because of COVID, people have had to create new spaces, and some have been really creative. “I have even worked from my car, or from my backyard, for example—anywhere you can create a space that helps you to focus on the tasks at hand. I’ve been inspired by the human spirit and its ability to almost instantaneously adapt and create the space to do what they need to do.”

She remarks on the notable amount of pruning that people have done during this period. “People have taken this opportunity to focus on their home and to prune and reinvent their spaces to serve them in new ways—something they may have been putting off for a long time,” she adds.

CeCe has been pruning things herself. “People may think that my house is perfectly pruned, that my house is like a bonsai tree, but it’s a work in progress.” CeCe, Jeff, Freida, and their dog Mona share an 1,100 square foot house (named Louise) that is over 200 years old in Brunswick, Maine. They bought it in 2005 and have transformed the building and its lot over time, creating a yard as big as the house, thanks to Jeff’s skills, tearing off an old porch to create a dining room, and redoing all the floors.

The pandemic has sparked another round of changes. “One day Jeff was working in the kitchen and trying to be on a Zoom call while Freida and CeCe were trying to make lunch, and he realized it just didn’t work anymore. He’s a designer, so they got together and came up with a design to make an office out of our closet,” she says. “We did it in phases, including moving a dresser, so I had to prune my clothes to make space,” she laughs. They also have a small art studio space in the back of their house that once was a garage. That’s being reconfigured now into a combined creative and exercise space for CeCe’s art, Jeff’s pottery, and Freida’s barre classes.

CeCe is using her creativity to rethink how she works safely with her clients, in this challenging time of the pandemic. She has been participating in “Propeller,” an eight-week course at the Coastal Enterprises, Inc.’s (CEI) Women’s Business Center to shape her “Telepruning” offerings. To meet the needs of those working at home, she is teaching a prune webinar on how to prune your home space to create a new work environment. She has recently received a business mini-grant from the New Ventures Maine to develop social medial outlets in order to connect with people virtually.

CeCe’s emphasis on helping people is already reflected throughout prune’s website. It is a beautiful and amazing resource for inspiration about how to appreciate and improve your home space. It is filled with photos of flowers, leaves, and other objects, all with pleasing space around them. For more information on prune, visit fallinlovewithless.com.

And, if you’re in need of some more literal pruning, you can always try her smoothie recipe (above). •



A WELL-PRUNED SMOOTHIE

2–3 prunes
(adjusting for sweetness though with caution)
1 1/2 cups oat milk
1 scoop Vanilla protein powder
1 T Organic chia seeds
1/2–3/4 frozen banana
2–3 ice cubes

Blend for 2-3 minutes or until all is blended.



Susan Desgrosseilliers: GIVING SMALL BUSINESSES A HELPING HAND

BY ANNE GABBIANELLI

The thing that is amazing about Mainers is they do whatever it takes to get the job done, and if there is a barrier, they find a way around it.”

That’s what Susan Desgrosseilliers, a certified business advisor with Maine’s Small Business Development Center (SBDC), has often noticed, especially as Maine emerges from the shadow of the coronavirus epidemic. Susan has some 30 years of being an entrepreneur and business advisor, and she has lately had a front-row seat to view business conditions during the time of COVID-19.

“Helping clients during the pandemic has been very different because businesses are trying to find ways to survive,” Susan said. When the state put in place shut-down measures in the spring, she and her colleagues shifted into high gear, educating themselves in the Economic Injury Disaster Loan Program through the Small Business Administration and the Payroll Protection Program application process. They created webinars to guide businesses through every intricate application detail and all the subsequent documentation. She said, “There was lots of hand-holding as businesses went into full-on survival mode.”

One of those clients is Erica Archer, president of Wine Wise, based in Portland. She sees how Susan’s energy and work ethic are intertwined. “It was too common for anything COVID-related to be hard to find, slow, not user-friendly, and certainly not leveraging present-day technology. In March, I shared my situation with Susan. I even cried during our first Zoom. Having that rapid one-on-one help from her was a much-needed and welcomed change from the frustration.”



Not all businesses have successfully navigated this uncharted course. “I have had seasonal businesses who have decided to close for good. That is disheartening after they worked so hard to create a successful business, and then out of nowhere, it just stops,” said Susan.

Susan has helped clients complete the applications process under a range of circumstances, and one case in particular

stood out as a gratifying experience. “I have this one client who is an amazing blueberry business owner, but she did not own nor know how to use a computer, so she couldn’t easily apply for the disaster loan,” said Susan. This situation led to Susan handling the technical aspects of the loan application through “lots of telephone work.” In the end, the client was approved for an \$80k disaster loan.

Susan grew up watching her father run a small business and appreciated his rapport with his clients. She went on to own the Fixtures Designer Plumbing Showroom in Rockland. She was also New England Regional Director of Marketing for Ocean Properties, Realtor with Legacy Properties Sotheby’s International Realty, Executive Director of Rockland/Thomaston Chamber of Commerce, and a member of the Board of Directors for Make-A-Wish Foundation. This wealth of experience all led to her role with the SBDC.

The University of Southern Maine administers the Maine SBDC program. A cooperative agreement with Maine’s Department of Economic and Community Development enables the state to match the program’s federal funding from the Small Business Administration. Services are free to those with existing businesses or those wanting to start a new business.

Mark Delisle, State Director for the Maine SBDC, sees Susan’s upbeat attitude blending well with her excellent skill set. “Susan knows many in the business community, and during the recent economic crisis caused by the pandemic she has gone above and beyond to help her small business clients. She is always willing to help.”

Brianna Morrill, former employee and now owner of the Rockland fixtures showroom, shared her perspective—that Susan is an amazing mentor and now advisor. “Sue is an extremely smart businesswoman. She knows the ins and outs of how to truly make a business thrive. Everything she has dipped her hands in has become successful.”

Pete Morse, who owns and operates an audio recording business, discovered SBDC in early 2019. He credits his advisor with helping him recover from losing about 70 percent of his business when a client changed its course. “I attribute Susan in helping me get my act together and re-salvaging my business.”

As a SBDC advisor, Susan guides a variety of clients. “I will help them with their business plan, their financials, their three-year projections, and more.” While Susan contends that she is far from stern, she admits she pushes back a lot. “Sometimes that pushback helps the client really look deep, and some may think, ‘maybe I need to keep my day job.’” She went on, “I don’t want to be the ‘Debbie Downer,’ but sometimes you have to be real with them and drill down to get clients to understand numbers.”

While business is in her blood, her passion lies with the Make-A-Wish Foundation. “I first came to know the organization when I was invited to an event. Having a daughter with type 1 diabetes and seeing children and their families affected by some type of illness, I was blown away to see how this event gave families a break from the day-to-day worries.” She went on, “It’s so rewarding. These Maine children that have their wish granted by Make-A-Wish are so happy, and the parents are relieved to see their kids happy and full of joy and hope.”

In between working with Make-A-Wish and enjoying time with her two adult daughters and their growing families, Susan continues to share her optimistic and positive nature with her clients, as Maine shifts back into gear. As Erica Archer, a client, puts it, “Susan has an innovative mind, and her passion to help, her ‘let’s-get-it-done’ support, and her uplifting energy are what small businesses need right now.” Susan says this style comes naturally to her. “I believe in the people of Maine and the business community, and Mainers do not easily throw in the towel.” •



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Allyson Fuehrer's *Life at Sea*



BY ESTEFANIA SILVERI

A person living in Maine's mid-Coast area might hear for years about Allyson Fuehrer of Freeport and her life at sea, before actually meeting her. In her sphere, this strong, capable, hard-working Maine woman has lived large, found, and made her own distinctive success. For instance, she volunteered for several summers as a crew member on a tuna fishing boat out of Perkins Cove in Ogunquit. She attended Maine Maritime Academy and holds her USCG Second Mate Unlimited Tonnage license. Now employed as third mate for Crowley Maritime, Ally works on the *Washington*, an 800-foot-long crude oil tanker running from Valdez, Alaska, to ports in Washington and California. She is on-duty on the ship for 75 days straight, then comes home to Maine for 75 "Saturdays." She has been working with this schedule for the past four years.

Ally was born and raised in Freeport, where her parents have always had boats. Since Ally is an only child, her parents would simply take her with them on all of their adventures, both at sea and on land. Ally remembers being around seven years old when her mother worked as a fisheries surveyor. During this time, her mother had to drive around to many fishing ports in Maine and survey fishermen on what they caught that day. Ally would ride around with her, which sparked her curiosity for fishing at a young age. A few years later, when she was ten, Ally's father started deep-sea fishing on the *Bunny Clark*, a party fishing boat that still runs out of Perkins Cove in Ogunquit. Ally told her father that she wanted to join him, and after weeks of pleading, she finally did. She immediately liked it. When looking at the trajectory of her life, Ally laughs and says, "Being an only child speaks volumes. This whole thing is their fault."

I sat down to talk with Ally over dirty martinis and nachos. She explained to me, "I like being on the water. Fishing and lobstering is exciting because you don't know what's on the other end of the line. There's that kind of anticipation." After high school in Freeport, Ally's growing passion for fishing and the ocean led her to attend Maine Maritime Academy. At MMA there were fewer than ten women in her regiment, in a graduating class of over 200 people. Despite



being one of only a few women, Ally says she liked the school a lot, and she was easily able to make a good group of friends through soccer and other extracurriculars. To young women who are thinking about attending MMA, Ally's advice is, "You have to want to be there, and know that your school is mostly men and your future job will be mostly men, and you have to be okay with that. The girls that truly want to go there do great things."

Ally, 27, knows what she is talking about. She works in a male-dominated field. The work itself becomes the great leveler. When describing her daily life at sea on the *Washington*, she says she stands a total of eight hours of bridge watch, which includes navigating the ship, followed by four hours of deck work, which includes inspecting life-saving equipment and doing maintenance. When the ship is in port, Ally and the other mates stand cargo watch, loading the oil, and discharging ballast water or vice versa. In thinking about her job, Ally stresses what a difference her co-workers make: "We have a great crew. It becomes your second family. You're living, eating, working, and doing laundry together, so you get to know people quite fast. It's a good ship. I'm really happy there. It makes the time go by faster when you have good people around you."

Ally was thrilled to find her lifelong idol, Linda Greenlaw, on the cover of *Maine Women Magazine's* June issue. Ally has met Linda a handful of times growing up and emphasizes, "She paved the way 20 years ago. She's always been a role model, and I just like how she's a fisherman and just

does the job. It's not about the fact that she's a woman, or that she isn't. It's how it is, and it's okay."

In her "off" months living in Portland, Ally continues to be the inspiring and independent Maine woman that she is. She spends her free time working on the *Bunny Clark* deep sea fishing charter boat, where her love for fishing was born, as their first-ever female deckhand. When asked why she chooses to still work during her time off, Ally says, "I love fishing and I love that boat. That's really what it comes down to. It's hard work, but I have so much fun doing it. Fishing can be intimidating. Many people just assume it's not accessible if they didn't grow up on the water doing it, but on the *Bunny Clark* in Perkins Cove, it is. People get so happy when they catch a fish, both kids and grown adults. You can't help but be excited, too!"

What ultimately attached Ally to the *Bunny Clark* was the people and the community fostered by the boat. The captains and crew members turned from role models to friends whose opinions Ally now values the most. "They taught me the value of hard work," she says. "They embody it."

Last spring, Ally planned a trip for herself, for her off months. She attended an all-female surf camp in Costa Rica, never having surfed seriously before. This particular camp advertised itself as a destination for women who wanted to have a solo travel experience. As a result, everyone at the camp was looking to make friends and meet new people. Ally recalls that every woman had her own story of why they chose to have an individual surfing adventure. "The other girls did much cooler stuff than I did," she remarks. Ally remembers her time in Costa Rica fondly, saying she would absolutely do a similar trip again when it becomes safe to travel. While she was in Costa Rica, she also got her first ever tattoo—an ocean wave, on her foot.

Since then, Ally and I have tried our hand at surfing Maine's southern coast, including during a major hurricane in which we had to convince the lifeguards on duty that we were capable swimmers. One afternoon this past July, Ally and I casually (or so I thought) went shopping at Liquid Dreams Surf Shop in Ogunquit. Thirty minutes later, Ally walked out of the store with a brand-new beginner, brilliantly turquoise surfboard. I continue to be struck by her decisiveness and confidence in the face of such potentially intimidating activities as surfing and deep-sea fishing.

When Ally isn't fishing, surfing, or working, you'll find her on the hunt for the best dirty martini in Southern Maine. So far, the winner is Katahdin Restaurant in Portland. When asked if Ally will stay in Maine forever, she answers with a decisive, "Yes!" It is clear that despite loving to travel, Maine will always be her home, even though, ironically, she is allergic to lobster.

For more information on the *Bunny Clark* deep sea fishing trips, visit their instagram @the_bunny_clark. (Ally runs this Instagram page for the boat.) •





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GAIL GLADSTONE of the National Park Service

*Caring for Historic Landscapes
as the Great American
Outdoors Act Becomes Law*

BY LYNN FANTOM



Gail Gladstone,
cultural resources
program manager of
Acadia National Park.
Photo by Lynn Fantom

Deciding what to wear to work is easy for Gail Gladstone: a gray shirt, green trousers, and straw hat. (Well, a ball cap is an option.) Even without seeing the patch on her sleeve, most people quickly recognize her uniform as connected with the National Park Service. But don't expect to glimpse Gail at a welcome counter or guiding a group of visitors along a trail on Mount Desert Island.

"My job is to care for the historic resources," she said about her position as cultural resources program manager for Maine's Acadia National Park. In fact, the official symbol of the National Park Service—with its Sequoia tree, bison, mountains, and water—takes the shape of an arrowhead to remind us how important historical and cultural values are to its mission. People shape the picture.

"Acadia tells us a story of the last 5,000 or more years of cultural and human history," according to Kevin Schneider, Acadia's superintendent. "There's a rich, rich history."

At the mention of national parks, images of breathtaking natural landscapes and endangered wildlife often spring to mind first. But "cultural landscapes"—that is, landscapes designed by master planners,

architects, and other individuals of historic stature—have also earned a place in our national heritage and are now actively protected by professional stewards like Gail. At Acadia National Park, the lighthouses, carriage roads, bridges, and even motor roads have a long, lively, and sometimes controversial past. Epic controversies seem to go with the territory.

Take picturesque lighthouses, for example—of which Acadia has three. In America's early days, when shipwrecks caused alarming loss of life, budget problems and opaque political alliances had rendered America's system of navigational aids among the poorest in the world. What's more, lighthouse keepers were political appointees, who came and went (and sometimes came again) based on the party in power.

In 1852, Congress finally addressed the situation in a report (of 760 pages!) that recommended a coordinated, national system. It ushered in an era of significant reforms and technological advances.

At about that time, artists such as Thomas Cole and Frederic Edwin Church began visiting Mount Desert Island. Through their paintings and sketches, they

popularized the mesmerizing beauty of the island's cliffs, coves, sunsets, and fog. Their artwork, widely distributed, led to an increase in summer visitors. With more vessels navigating the treacherous coastline, the federal government authorized a new lighthouse, which was built in 1858 high on a granite bluff.

Just this July, that same Bass Harbor Head Light Station was transferred from the U.S. Coast Guard to Acadia National Park, and its rehabilitation becomes a new project in Gail's portfolio.

As Gail and team members develop plans, they will be guided by a report created last February that specifies what features of the light station are "character-defining." Replete with photographs and drawings, this 500-page document notates everything from historic trim in the keeper's house to the lighthouse's "new-and-improved" 1901 Fresnel lens.

For years, America had eschewed the "far superior" Fresnel lens, developed by a French physicist, in favor of a design by Winslow Lewis, a Massachusetts sea captain, whose sway over government officials still baffles historians. "What is clear, unlike Lewis's lenses, is that this relationship





deterred the integration of significant technological advances,” the report stated.

Traveling by both steamboat and railroad, “rusticators” ventured to Mount Desert Island. In 1867, a Portland woman named Clara Barnes Martin wrote the first travel guide to the island. In it she tells how she and her companions “scrambled” through “impenetrable” forests, climbed “rough paths” to mountain tops, and went “rocking” along the coastline. For many walks, “one must have not only stout boots but well-trained feet,” she said.

That kind of vigorous activity limited who could partake in Mount Desert’s beauty, and there begins the story of John D. Rockefeller, Jr.’s singular contribution to the island’s cultural landscape.

In 1913, the wealthy heir to Standard Oil started building carriage roads on his summer estate, a hobby that would envelop him until 1940. What began as “horse roads” on his own property grew to 45 miles of passage throughout the eastern half of the island. Rockefeller himself chose the routes, walking the lines laid out by engineers. Expertly sited, they were almost invisible from mountains or lakes.

About 14 to 16 feet wide, roads were excavated deeper than common gravel roads and built up in layers, from boulders, some as large as a car, to fine rock.

Alongside the edges, crews laid large blocks of granite that served as guardrails, which locals dubbed “Rockefeller’s teeth.”

Gail has been involved in many projects to maintain these roads. A focus has been Rockefeller’s ingenious infrastructure, such as the drains, ditches, and culverts that prevent water on the mountains from washing the carriage roads away. “Infrastructure! Not sexy, but so necessary,” she said.

“The carriage road system would never be built today. The effort, money, and manpower to do something like that could not happen again. But we have it at Acadia.”

The gauze of history, though, has obscured the fact that even Rockefeller’s money could not guarantee those roads would be built. At first, complaints came that the road work was destroying the forest and driving away the birds. Later, a prominent Pennsylvania congressman, also a summer resident, led an all-out attack, asserting the island’s “sense of remoteness” would be destroyed by making it accessible with these roads.

Like sparks from a fire, opinions—for and against—crackled at contentious village meetings and in newspaper editorials. Embers flew down the coast as the Portland Chamber of Commerce and the Maine League of Women Voters expressed support for

CLOCKWISE FROM BOTTOM LEFT: Hikers on the Precipice Trail, 1918. This trail remains popular today. *Photo by HW Gleason. NPS Image.* | Bass Harbor Head Light Station. The 1858 structure represents technological advances in these critical navigational aids. *Photo by Captain Albert E. Theberge, NOAA Corps.* | Hiking party at overlook, 1919. Appreciation of natural beauty is a shared American experience. *Photo by HW Gleason. NPS Image.* | Little Harbor Brook Bridge, rehabilitated in 2019. Each bridge—its span, curvature—fits into its unique place on the carriage roads and becomes part of the landscape. *NPS Image.*



ABOVE: Visitors to Acadia National Park, 1937. Acadia's remarkable motor roads, partially financed by Rockefeller, feature sections designed by Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., whose father designed Central Park. Photo by Bert Call. *Image courtesy of Special Collections, Raymond H. Fogler Library, DigitalCommons@UMaine.* | RIGHT: Civilian Conservation Corps. For nine years during the Depression, "Roosevelt's Tree Army" developed trails, beautified roads, and built visitor areas. But even this unqualified success had some detractors, especially fathers of daughters. *NPS Image.*



Rockefeller's project that would open up the park to a broader group of people.

As the controversy embroiled the National Park Service in Washington, prominent landscape architect Beatrix Farrand weighed in. The only woman among the founders of the American Society of Landscape Architects in 1899, the Bar Harbor summer resident rejected arguments that the carriage roads would permanently scar the landscape. With signature aplomb, she said, "An omelet is not made without breaking eggs." She may well have been describing not only the landscape, but the quietude of communities.

Farrand would go on to design native plantings to heal some of the wounds of construction, as the controversy surrounding these remarkable roads and 16 unique stone-faced bridges also faded.

Farrand is one of Gail's favorite figures in Acadia's historic constellation. Herself a landscape architect with a master's from the University of Texas at Austin, the Philadelphia native brings both skills (how to read site plans, for example) and a professional sensibility (the importance of maintenance and engineering) to her work. She also possesses a trained eye and knowledge of history, having specialized in photography and art history as an undergraduate at New York University. She is now reading *A Black Women's History of the United States*.

For over 12 years, Gail has served in National Park Service positions both in Bar Harbor and Omaha, where she was cultural resource specialist for the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail.

Since March, though, she hasn't been wearing her uniform every day since the coronavirus shifted federal employees to working from home. As she spoke via Zoom on a recent Saturday morning, she warned that her nine-year-old daughter might be passing in the background. Occasionally, her own face almost disappeared from the screen as she dipped down to pet her Whippet mix, a recent rescue who barked vociferously when denied Gail's attention.



Undated photo of horse-drawn carriage at Little Long Pond. Carriage driving was a popular pastime, but one Rockefeller opponent derided the plan to expand carriage roads as "a rich man's hobby." *NPS Image.*

"Cultural resources may be cherished for their beauty or utility or a host of other reasons. Beyond that, these meaningful relationships with the land connect one generation to another," Gail said. "They reveal our shared experience."

Describing Mount Desert Island as a "magical place," she added that "I feel people who live here are all on the same page about how beautiful it is."

In fact, the desire to enjoy and preserve natural beauty binds a larger nation. Though Americans have been divided in many ways—now, as in the past—Congress recently came together to pass the Great American Outdoors Act. Lifting our collective despair for at least this moment, it will pour billions of dollars into U.S. national parks to address deferred maintenance. And Gail Gladstone will be busier than ever. •



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Brianna Johnson at **PINE TREE ACADEMY**

*What a
“Card-Carrying Extrovert”
Learned from
Teaching Online*

BY DUSTIN JOHNSON

The pandemic hit and in a matter of days, teachers across the globe scrambled to transition to online teaching. My fiancée, Brianna, was one of them. As the high school science teacher for Pine Tree Academy, an exceptional Pre-K to 12th grade Christian school in Freeport, she now needed to teach science via a computer screen. Pine Tree responded quickly to the pandemic and was prepared for online classes within two days of school closing. Working from home may sound like fun for many, but Brianna is a card-carrying extrovert. Living by herself and being away from her students—the lifeblood of her job—she did not take the quarantine well.

I was helpless in all of this, working 7,909 miles away in Guam. As COVID was threatening the Pacific islands, I opted to return to the States to “save”



Brianna Johnson and two Pine Tree Academy students. Photo by The Tiffany Studio, Brunswick, Maine.

my fiancée. I can't help laughing here because Brianna is a strong, independent woman. But I was on my way, determined to help her in any way I could. I arrived, and in less than a week, Maine went into lockdown. Realizing our June wedding was not likely to occur, we went into our backyard and said, "I do."

Choosing remote learning instead of ending the semester early was challenging on multiple levels. Pine Tree has a rigorous academic program with a number of extracurricular activities, none of which could happen anymore. Along with the other teachers, Brianna had to find the balance between learning standards and each student's ability to learn from home, while also being mindful of their screen time. Thankfully, Pine Tree

was able to continue offering high quality, online education throughout the pandemic. By the end of the semester though, Brianna's focus went to helping the students who had "checked out" to catch up.

Since then, I've talked to a number of teachers and they all agree: K-12 education does not work well online. Brianna states it this way: "Transmission of information is important, but that can easily happen online. The transformational relationships forged as we manipulate and use that information ultimately comprise an education worth having." This is why she is excited to get back into the classroom this fall. She realizes it will be very different, but at least they'll all be together again.

For many of Brianna's stu-

dents, this time of COVID has been the hardest of their life. I hope they can grow from the experience and jump back into their educations with an open mind and heart.

Pine Tree hopes to continue thriving through COVID because of the small class sizes and the low student-to-teacher ratio. They are located right off I-295 in Freeport. If you know someone within driving range of the school that would like a Christian education for their children, please contact the school and setup a private tour.

Established in 1961, Pine Tree Academy is accredited by the National Council for Private School Accreditation, Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, and Adventist Accreditation Association. •



Light-Bulb Moments in Home Schooling

BY SUSAN OLCOTT

"Ugh," said my daughter Liliana one morning, melting into the limp-noodle position I know so well. It says, "I'm not excited to do any of the projects you suggest today because it is Monday even though I'm still in my giraffe pajamas." This is one side of home schooling. The "Pièce de résistance!" But, looking at the Post-it with "indefatigable" written on it inside a star stuck to the wall behind her head (which is now slipping further beneath the table in an effort to escape), I decide that I will soldier on. Then, moments later, she reappears at the kitchen counter and asks, "Can you try to help me again?" Vindication! And so goes the rhythm of home schooling: try, meet resistance, power on, and often find joy.

Our family's homeschool experience started when my other daughter, Phoebe, Lili's twin sister, became adamant that she did not like Kindergarten. Her dislike wasn't your usual level of protest but instead took the form of severe night terrors. I felt like checking myself into a hospital in order to get some rest. Having my daughter scream, "Where's my mommy?" with her eyes wide-open in the middle of the night and then beat me with her fists is about my most painful memory of motherhood to date. It was pretty obvious she wasn't going to return to school easily.

We had already been thinking about home schooling part-time, and now we got serious about it. I started by sitting down with Phoebe and making a chart of the days of the week. I let her pick which days she liked best at school and what she would want to do most at home on the other days. That schedule of three days at school and two at home lasted the entire year. Going back wasn't perfect, but we had landed on a workable solution. Lili was included in this as well.

Home schooling in kindergarten was mostly about outdoor play, art, and reading. They were all mixed together and on whatever timeline worked with the weather and our day. Things had to evolve, as they got older, with school taking a bit more shape. We stuck with two days in first grade, but decided to work on a yearlong project to give things a bit more focus. They each picked a tree in our yard to observe each week. We worked in math, art, science, writing—the whole shebang. In second grade, friendships and special activities drew their interest more, and so we decided just on a single day at home. That year, they each picked a spot along the rocky seashore to observe throughout the year, tracking weather conditions and also writing poetry inspired by our senses.

Then came third grade, and they were eager to be full-time students, and they braved being in separate classrooms for the first time as well. Things were rough at the start, to be sure,

and they never got to a perfect place. In fact, we went back to a day at home for Lili in the late fall. But still we thought our home school days were mostly over—until COVID-19.

Although we had home-schooled before, ramping up to all day, every day, was not easy. My peaceful writing mornings now required setting up another computer or two, making tea for two other people, and answering invaluable but innumerable questions. While it made my heart sing when both girls began writing for the school newspaper and learned to work on a deadline, it made working on a deadline a bit more of a challenge for me! And when Phoebe took up writing a cooking column as her project, again I thrived on her creativity, but I found myself a bit conked out as I helped clean up and put away the results of her recipe development.

One of the biggest challenges, however, has been to tamp down my enthusiasm for projects. Why wouldn't they want to see how fast an ice cube melts in salt water versus fresh, or go on a bud-collecting expedition in the woods? How could they possibly prefer to play Prodigy instead, on a beautiful day? But then I turned things on their head when I realized that I was the one who would rather get outside—and so I did. I went for a walk and left the girls alone. They are nine, and there are two of them, but this was a new endeavor. Everyone was happy when I got back, including me.

They were curious to see what I'd collected, and we spent the afternoon poking into the seeds with safety pins and smashing them open onto pieces of paper. So, lesson #1: Plow ahead with a neat idea and perhaps your kids will join in. Lesson #2: Foster independence for everyone when possible.

The next light bulb went off for me while helping one of my daughters understand common denominators. After reminding myself what they are, I attempted to explain the idea. I tried again and again, but she repeated, "I just don't get it!" Her brow furrowed, and her head fell down onto her hand. "Can I just be your mom right now and give you a hug?" I asked. "Yes!" she said. "You know, sometimes I don't want to be your teacher. I just want to be your mom," I said. "And I know you don't want to be my student. You just want to be my kiddo." Lesson #3: Define your roles clearly and share your frustrations with your "students."

So, that's where we are with schooling at our home. Who knows how things will shake out in the fall, but we know it will require constant shifting and recalculating, whether we are at home or at school or some of each. Regardless, the lessons we have learned together are lessons that we can carry forward. They will help to turn the "Ugh" into a "Yes!" •



Angela Okafor

BY SHEILA D. GRANT

The move to America from the West African nation of Nigeria has not always been kind to Angela Okafor. Trained as a lawyer over there, at first she could only find work as a dishwasher over here. Yet today, Angela is a practicing lawyer—when she’s not busy raising three kids, running her international food market, sewing, or braiding clients’ hair in her salon. All of the businesses are co-located on Harlow Street in Bangor.

Angela is now an American citizen. She lives in Bangor with her husband, Ben, who owns two pharmacies, and their three children, ages 10, 7, and 5. Last December, she became the first immigrant and first person of color to be elected to the Bangor City Council. She has served on the board of the Maine Multicultural Center, taught as a guest lecturer at Eastern Maine Community College, and been a public and inspirational speaker. Angela is also an occasional columnist for *Amjambo Africa* and a recipient of the Trailblazer award from Empower the Immigrant Woman. She has been appointed to Governor Janet T. Mills’ Economic Recovery Committee. And in August, she was slated to be named one of Mainebiz’s Women to Watch 2020.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES SHAPE A DYNAMO

Growing up in Nigeria had some difficult aspects for Angela. Children did not always have the opportunities there that are provided in the United States, and little people are expected to be seen and not heard. “You know when not to talk, and you dare not talk back to an elder, or call an elder by name,” Angela said.

Angela’s father taught in a Catholic school, and her mother ran a cooking business. She and her two brothers and two sisters grew up in a family without much money, but with plenty of access to fresh foods that would be considered “organic” by U.S. standards. “We would pick mangoes from the trees,” she recalled. And at her grandmother’s house, the children would climb from one type of fruit tree to another, eating their fill along the way. “We ate a lot of very nutritious foods,” she recalled, adding that her mother’s cooking business, “is where I got my love for food.”

Life was challenging, “but everywhere has its own challenges,” she said. For children of families that were not rich, the opportunity to continue in school is “nonexistent,” Angela said. “Tuition fees are high, books are expensive, and the cost to study law or medicine is even more expensive, just like in America. At times, I wasn’t sure if I would be able to go to college.”

For several of her college years, Angela sold food to earn money. “I would make moi-moi (Nigerian bean dough). I also prepared turkey wings and thighs, dipped them in bright red tomato stew, and placed them on a plate with beautifully sliced onions and peppers. I would drop them off with store owners



Believing in Hard Work and Blessings, from Nigeria to Bangor

next to where we lived then and head off to school.”

Store owners would not agree to buy directly from Angela but would sell for her. “I would return by the end of the day. They would give me [money for] what they had sold, and I would take back any leftovers. I would also go shopping for people for cash. . . I would sight things first, way before anyone else.” That sharp vision allowed Angela to select the best wares for her clients. And she worked on holidays, which was not common at the time.

“I would find jobs,” she said. “At times I would help businesspeople. I was pretty much doing a lot of things on the side to help myself.”

Finances weren’t the only roadblock. “My family members did not want me to study law because they were afraid I would not be able to find a husband,” she said. Societal norms dictated that women marry fairly young rather than spending years at university. “I remember in high school, I had a lot of classmates getting married even before they graduated.” Family strife moved her from her mother’s home to the housing provided at the school where her father worked, and then off to live with a friend. But Angela persevered and obtained her law degree.

Her husband, Ben, also grew up in Nigeria. The couple met in 2004 through his nephew, who was visiting one of her friends. They married in September 2006. In 2008, Ben, a pharmacist, was recruited out of Nigeria by Rite Aid to work in the Guilford, Maine, retail location. To say that Guilford, a town of about 1,500, lacked diversity at the time would be an understatement.

“Even Bangor was a struggle,” recalled Angela. “Life here is not just different, but very different!”

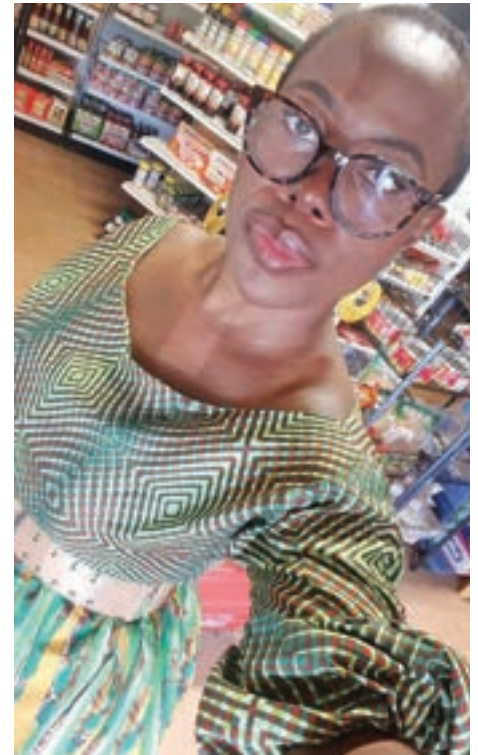
COMING TO AMERICA HAS ITS OWN CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

With her new law degree in hand, Angela was excited to get hired with a local law firm in her new city, but that didn’t happen. “Everything about me was questioned,” she said in a profile for *Amjambo Africa* in 2019. Potential employers did not take her education in Nigeria seriously. She was told she could not sit for the Maine Bar Exam without careful scrutiny of the content of every course she had taken in law school over a six-year period. So instead, she took the New York Bar Exam—and passed. Okafor Law Practice, which specializes in immigration law, was founded in August 2016.

Experiencing any sense of community was also a challenge. Accents and language barriers made it difficult to chat with people, which Angela said she loves to do. Being one of a sparse population of immigrants in a very white region of a relatively white state was also difficult.

Angela explained the difficulty comes in part from “coming from away, not seeing people like myself,” Angela told Maine Public Radio last December during an interview. “And you know, people are still kind of scoping at you, like, ‘Who is that one? Are we even safe around her?’ You know?”

When Angela lacks something, she creates it. To encourage immigrant families to stay and to entice more to the area, she eventually added an international food market to her law practice. She believes that to keep families in Maine, the women need to be happy. Finding a little bit of home on market shelves has helped. But when women had trouble finding ethnic clothing, Angela taught herself to sew and added her clothing line to the market’s product offerings. And then she



heard of women traveling hours to get hair weaves, so she taught herself to do that, adding hair care to the mix.

Angela has always been creative and has a knack for watching and learning new skills. Back in Nigeria, one of her side gigs was as a self-taught makeup artist. “I made brides up and sold cosmetics alongside. I also learned how to tie the Nigerian headscarf, or gele.” While English is the common language in Nigeria, gele is a Yoruba-language word for the large, elaborate head ties that can be worn day-to-day, but that are even more elaborate for weddings, special events, and church activities.

“I’m very good at picking things up,” she said. “I love to cook. I love to meet people and chat. The law is my profession, but everything else here is my hobby!”

And that “everything else” has also created community for Angela and other immigrants in the Bangor area, as well as other residents eager to try flavors from around the globe. The shop, Tropical Tastes and Styles, is a gathering place where connections are made and friendships are forged.

Running for Bangor City Council shortly after gaining her U.S. citizenship was “a crazy decision, but I felt it was a necessary decision,” said Angela. “With my business, I meet a ton of people. We share our struggles. And I hear from a

“I believe in blessings, but at the same time, I believe you have to work for it. I don’t believe in luck.”

lot of other people through my business. Who truly advocates for [other immigrants, minorities, people of color, people from away]? We need to have somebody stand up for us. Basically, there is a need for new perspective. So, I thought, ‘Why not me?’”

Before COVID-19, business was so good that Angela was poised to hire some help. Being shut down for a month and selling only via delivery much of the time has impacted her income, and she is unable to keep regular business hours with three children who are doing remote learning. “It’s been a real struggle, but it is what it is. It has been tough, but we have it better than a lot of people, so we are really grateful

for that. We have a roof over our heads. We have food. We always remember that and are grateful for it.”

Angela doesn’t let much get her down. “I feel like I am a woman who believes I can do anything I want to do, anything I put my mind to. I don’t believe in ‘how things are done’ in the sense of my hometown [belief] that a woman shouldn’t want to study law or do this or do that. I believe in hard work. I am a very religious person, and I believe in blessings, but at the same time, I believe you have to work for it. I don’t believe in luck.”

All women, and especially women of color, face extra challenges, Angela said. “But I try not to self-pity. I think it is not okay to be sad. Know when to stop and pull yourself back up. Make sure you have people around you that can pull you up,” she advised. “One huge treasure I have had has been friends—truly, truly good friends—around when I feel like I’m down, to encourage me. Know the circle you move with. Always believe in yourself. And people ask me, ‘How do you do that with all the children?’ The truth is, it’s not easy, but it comes back to not having self-pity. I just do what I need to do, and when I can’t anymore, I take some time off. Having children does slow you down, yes, but it does not stop you, unless you want to stop.” •

SWANNING ABOUT

BY SHELAGH TALBOT

One of the things I cherished as a child was make-believe. Growing up, we had a rather long window seat in our old house with curtains you could draw, making it the perfect miniature stage. My little brother and I would put on plays from that perch while our indulgent and long-suffering parents would clap and applaud. It made us feel pretty good I recall, and we would spend hours planning our little shows and creating our characters. It was reminiscent of *Little Women* in Louisa May Alcott's "must read" book for so many of us growing up.

My mother had an old steamer trunk that she filled with fabric and old clothes, gowns, costume jewelry, and other fascinating things to try on. There was even an antique brass helmet from a Swiss Fire Department—my brother always claimed that for himself. There were a couple of wooden swords, rubber daggers, and such. In those days, a play wasn't a play without a dramatic death scene. We had such fun. And truth be told, it was one of the best memories because, for the most part I thought my little brother was such a pest—you know how that is—and we only got along really well when we were planning our plays.

After I had children of my own, I kept the tradition up. I still had the old trunk and again, it was filled with fabric, old prom dresses, and all kinds of props to engage the imagination of my two daughters and their young friends. We cobbled together a little make-up table with rouges and lipstick and—oh my goodness—the electric-blue eye shadow. We decided on a new name for the plays because I didn't have a window-seat stage. We called it just "Swanning About." The girls would spend hours getting ready, and then they would swish

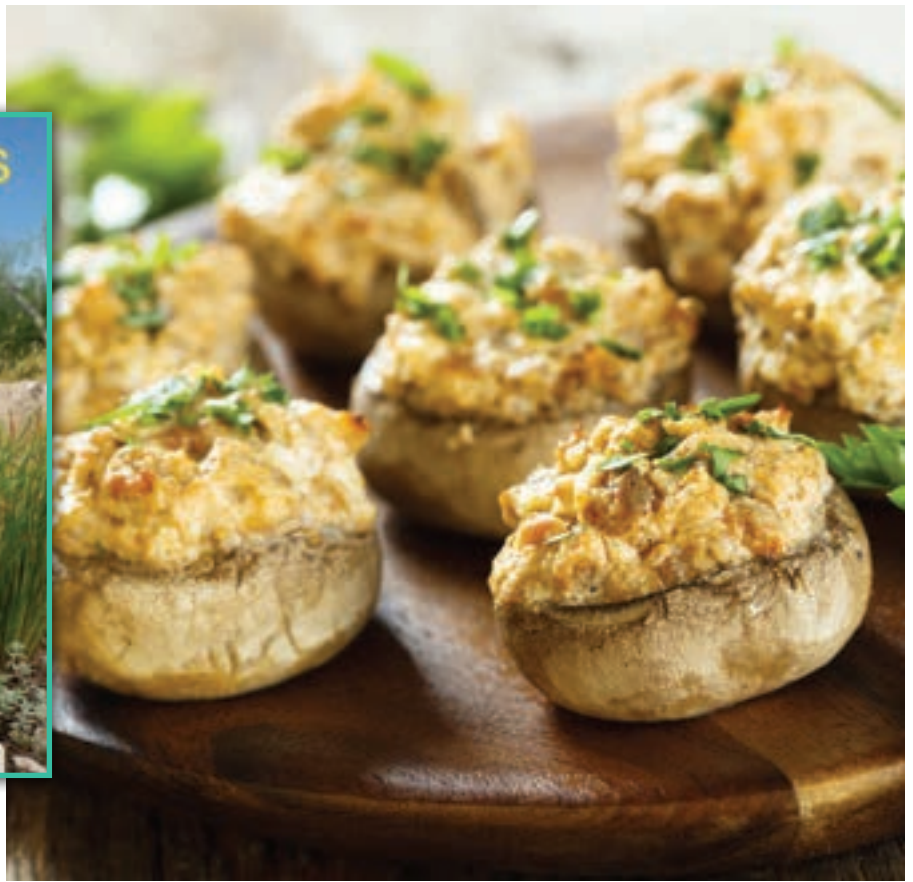
about the house fluffing and tossing their skirts and talking about the latest palace gossip or whatever. They would have tea in tiny china cups and nibble on little chocolate chip cookies. When their plays concluded, high drama and dramatic death scenes were absolutely the best way to end things.

Before you knew it, the afternoon was gone, and all the ladies changed back into their regular clothes and went back to their regular lives. But, for those golden, often rainy or wintry afternoons, they were ladies of the castle, fashion icons, princesses, or whatever they chose to be. One girl insisted on being a knight. I was glad I'd kept that helmet. She would wear an old ratty velvet cape and plunge into the room, sword drawn, asking where the dragon went. It was thrilling.

We have such a tech-savvy and fast-moving society these days that it's easy to forget some of the more important things about just letting your mind take you away. Make believe is essential, especially regarding children's developing minds. Sometimes imagination, such a healthy and powerful tool, gets lost the endless practicalities of life.

Fast forward, and now these girls are all grown up with families of their own. Occasionally I hear from them, and one said she found an old trunk in the attic of a house she and her family had recently purchased. Was it filled with costumes and fabric and such? Nope. But she did say she would remedy that as fast as possible. Swanning About had been one of her best recollections from her own childhood, and she wants to keep the tradition alive. So, here's to the next generation of Swanners. Long may they flounce and swish! •





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SCALLOPS BAKED IN MUSHROOM CAPS

*Recipe from The Maine Summers Cookbook by
Linda Greenlaw and Martha Greenlaw,
sister and mother of Beth Shissler (see cover story, p. 20).*

INGREDIENTS

- 24 white mushroom caps, cleaned
- 24 bay scallops or 8 sea scallops, quartered
- 8 Tbls. (one stick) unsalted butter
- 1 onion, minced
- 1 or 2 celery stalks, minced
- 2 garlic cloves minced
- 1 tsp. minced fresh Italian herb (basil, parsley, thyme) blend
- 1 cup plain bread crumbs
- 1 cup grated Parmesan cheese

INSTRUCTIONS

Preheat the oven to 350° F.

Place the mushroom caps in a single layer, top sides down, on a buttered rimmed baking sheet. Place one bay scallop or one quarter sea scallop in each cap. Melt four tablespoons of the butter in a sauté pan over medium-high heat. Add the onion, celery, and garlic and sauté until tender. Remove from the heat and stir in the herb blend, bread crumbs, and Parmesan. Melt the remaining four tablespoons butter.

Stuff the mushroom caps over and around the scallops. Drizzle with the melted butter. Bake for 10 to 12 minutes, or until the mushroom caps are tender and the scallops are cooked. Makes 24 stuffed mushrooms. •

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ON POINT

*Artistic/Executive Director,
Portland Ballet, Nell Shipman*

WRITTEN & PHOTOGRAPHED BY
AMANDA WHITEGIVER



Nell Shipman may not have grown up in Maine, but it was her New England roots that pulled her back to Portland in 2004. Timing is everything, and the Portland Ballet Company auditions for *Carmina Burana* (in which she landed the lead role) aligned perfectly with her planned return to the East Coast from Colorado.

A “late” starter to ballet in her teens, Shipman started training in dance at the age of four in classic Broadway, Jazz, and Tap, studying “all things performance.” Although she loves to dance, her ability to relate movement to music made her realize choreography was her calling. After joining PBC, she knew she wanted to stick around. Shipman helped out where she was needed, doing office hours, teaching classes, and bringing her creative skills to the company’s attention with a choreographed piece she submitted to Portland Dances. Eventually, an injury led to her dance retirement. Not long after, she received the title of Resident Choreographer.

Shipman assumed the role of

MAKEUP/HAIR

Shipman likes to keep her makeup routine simple with L’Oreal products for her eyes and Burt’s Bees Blush lip shine. Her hair was styled by Acapello Salon in Scarborough.

“I save on make-up so that I can spend on the Aveda hair products which they use there [Acapello Salon]! They smell so good. . .

On that note, I also love Thymes’ Olive Leaf scents.”

OUTFITS

Both include items purchased from Target and H&M.

Artistic Director to the Portland Ballet Company in 2015, and the Director of Portland School of Ballet in 2016. When asked, one of the most satisfying parts of her job is the way it allows her to work with the entire spectrum of dancers within the company. In her role

as both Artistic Director and teacher, she has the opportunity to work across a range of ages, and she can see the breadth of experience and joy in dance they demonstrate. She relishes the exuberance of the smaller children, as they come in to audition for the *Nutcracker* and excitedly share their best moves. Equally as satisfying is working with the dancers in the Company and collaboratively creating the dances that they perform. They bring in ideas that were not originally part of the ballet, and the choreography becomes richer for their input.

During these times of COVID-19, Shipman has been so appreciative of the flexibility of her position. While many classes were moved online for several months, she says it has been nothing less than amazing that she has the ability to bring her two children (entering first grade and fourth grade this year) to work with her. Shipman and her staff have worked behind the scenes to keep the Company running during the pandemic.

This summer saw the Portland School of Ballet opening their Summer intensive program with additional procedures in place, as well as smaller class numbers. This unusual time period has allowed them to do renovations to their space, updating some of the outdated fixtures. While in-person classes have resumed this fall with additional safety restrictions in place, they were also in the process of adding cameras in their rooms at the time of our interview. These cameras will allow families who don't feel comfortable coming in for physical classes to continue their studies from home. Their reopening will also include smaller class sizes and staggered classes so that social distancing can be observed.

During our shoot, Shipman's right-hand woman Milena turned on one of her favorite pieces of music, from *Sylvia*. A blissful smile flitted across Shipman's face as she recognized it. We all have our own ways of coping with life, with stress, and with the gifts which we are born with or have cultivated. Dance is a form of expression, a way of moving our bodies and using them to express our emotions; something that feels even more important than ever while we all deal with the myriad of emotions from life during a pandemic. Dance, and choreographing dance, most surely are Nell Shipman's ideal forms of expression.

Describe your style in one sentence.

I think my style changes a lot, but I love the patterns and silhouettes of the '70s, and you can probably find that hidden somewhere in what I am wearing every day.

Is it "Maine" style? If so, how? If not, how does it deviate?

I don't think so. I have definitely picked things up along the way, so there are parts of Maine in there, but lots of other odds and ends as well.

First outfit you remember picking out and loving, feeling great in?

It was a glorious dark green vest and matching elastic-waist wide-leg pants number with the added bonus of a puffy pirate shirt. I was about 13 and pretty



sure that was the greatest thing that one could ever find in a store, conveniently all on one hanger.

How old were you when you felt like you developed a style of your own?

I am probably still developing one.

Last memorable outfit:

It was a glorious dark green vest and matching elastic-waist wide-leg pants number with the added bonus of a puffy pirate shirt. I am kidding! I think it was a pair of black cigarette pants with fantastic embroidery on them and a simple asymmetrical cream shirt. I am usually somewhat laid back in my approach to fashion and style, but that outfit feels a little more forward for me, so that's fun.

Favorite bricks-and-mortar place to buy clothing in Maine?

Right now, it's anywhere that is convenient. Like I can get batteries, milk, and a dress shirt at the same time. But when I had time to shop, I used to love to go to Material Objects. That place has treasure on treasure on treasure.

Do you thrift? If so, where?

Anytime. Anywhere.

Best clothing shoes or accessory bargain of all time:

I feel like I have a lot of these because I only bargain shop, and I can't pick favorites because my favorites change all the time.

Most you ever spent on something to wear?

Well, I get nervous if I pay over \$26 for an article of clothing, so this answer is less than thrilling. Because \$26.

Who is your style icon of all time?

Part of me wants to say any member of Dr. Teeth and the Electric Mayhem from the Muppets, but really I don't think I have one particular person. I think personal style is fantastic, and there are so many people who express themselves so well through it. So, them.

Who is your style icon in Maine (dead or alive)?

Jenny Frank. She was a dear, dear friend of mine. Her style was perfection.

Mountains or coast?

Yes.

What would you refuse to wear?

Shorts. I don't like them. Never have and never will.

Do you own Bean boots? If yes, how many pairs? If not, what do you wear in the snow?

I do not. I have a pair of Columbia snow boots that are big, clunky, and warm that allow me to wear huge comfy socks. They're magical.

Where you do get your style inspiration? Magazines, movies, social media?

I think I get inspiration from the people I am in contact with, either daily or in passing. It's not necessarily their style but the way they carry it. I think what makes people feel confident is always stylish, and I think it's fun to see what that looks like on different people and then how it translates to me.

What is your current "go to" outfit or item of clothing?

A pair of flare-leg, dark-wash jeans.

What do you change into after a long day?

I wish it were more fabulous, but really just typical things . . . comfy t-shirt and sweats. •

QUESTIONABLE ADVICE

BY L.C. VAN SAVAGE

My fiancé proposed last week, and we're getting married in two years' time. My family was ecstatic, but I've run into a snag. My biological father is looking forward to walking me down the aisle, but I feel much closer to my stepfather, who raised me. How can I let my father down gently?

—Sasha

You could have both fathers strolling up to the altar with you. ("Giving the bride away" isn't done anymore because females aren't traded off like bolts of calico, sides of pork, or sacks of seeds as they were way back.) You and two fathers might be cumbersome, especially if the altar area is small, but it's an option if the two fathers can be cordial to one another. Or the bride could sashay down the aisle solo toward her intended, which is done a lot these days and is rather cool, IMO. If you have to choose one, give the job to stepdad who's earned it, by being there for tantrums, braces, sick times, 3 AM ice hockey games at the local rink, or the like. Talk to bio dad, explain, give him a double boutonniere, and a nice father/daughter dance. Include him warmly in family photos, smiling.

My friend and I were on a long drive and played music to pass the time. Normally, we have a rule: whoever drives gets to choose the songs. We don't share taste in music, but it's usually fine because we take turns driving. This time, though, she refused to let me take a turn at the wheel, so I had to listen to her music for four straight hours! That doesn't feel fair to me. What do you think?

—Wendy

You "had" to listen to her music? Why? If your "friend" (that's a friend?) forces you to listen to her music because she won't give up driving, then be prepared next time. Bring a huge supply of your favorite music, a good set of earphones, and a battery-driven gizmo to play them on. Zone out to your own tunes, making sure you do not "hear" her when she says it's time to split lunch or the gas bills, or that she's queasy and has to let you finally drive, or that she is hopelessly lost and forgot to install her new GPS. Your response? ZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZ.

I'm a recent graduate with a degree in history. My mother was introducing me to some new friends of hers, and she called my degree "underwater basket weaving," like it's useless. I feel so invalidated, like all my hard work for the past four years was for nothing. What can I do to show her how hurtful that is?

—Clair

You can't "show" her. You have to tell her, loudly and clearly. One wonders why she would do such a thing to you—insecurity and underachievement issues, maybe? If however, you've requested she not do that and yet she continues to dismiss you with such nasty faux "jokes" about your rather impressive creds, and in front of others, no less, I think pity, compassion, distraction, diversion, joint therapy sessions, and turning the other cheek might be your best bets here. And you could lecture on the importance of history and taking the long view.

I'm divorced, with three children. My husband and I share custody, but we aren't on the best of terms. When the kids get back from a stay at my ex's house, I've noticed they're often short or even rude with me. I think my sour relationship with my ex-husband is hurting my relationship with my kids. Is there any way to repair this?

—Tiffany

Yeah, there is. First you tell your beloved progeny to knock it off. They do not get to be short with or rude to you. Ever. If they refuse to stop, steal their smart phones while they're asleep. Nothing straightens up a kid quicker than to take his phone away—and I mean really away, hidden where they can't just call it on another phone and find it, like under the piles of their dirty clothes they shove in their closets. They get them back after a strong, convincing apology to you from them, a sworn promise they'll never do it again, and a second sworn promise that they tell their father there will no longer be any negative tirades where your name is invoked. Your ex, by the way, is being a jerkazoid of the first order because everyone knows the granite-clad rule is that divorced spouses never, never, never bad-mouth each other.

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