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MICHIGAN MAGAZINE

Positive Expectation/Belief

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Red for a Red
Hot Summer**

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Dear Friends,

Summer is finally here and we couldn't be happier! We are celebrating all the ways that sunshine, late nights and flip flops make our days wonderful.

We are introducing you to Lori Taylor, nature's favorite gal and author! She shows us that believing in yourself and your dreams will never let you down. She also knows a thing or two about Poison Ivy which was helpful on this issue's cover feature shoot!

If you are ready to spread your wings and go exploring, then make sure you read "Orlando or Bust" by our very own Sheri Harvey for empowerment. She went on her first solo road trip and she has inspired us to get our motors running!

Tami Sackett gets steamy with "Fifty Shades of Red for a Red Hot Summer" and ideas for going red with hair color. Deborah St. Hilaire shows us how "Filling Your cup...Or Wine Glass" for ourselves and seeing the positives in our lives can help in our own self-fulfillment. We also learn from Lonnie Johnson how "Dressing For Yourself" can make the difference in how we represent ourselves as well as how we feel about ourselves.

This issue will have you armed and ready for whatever the season brings. Watch out world! We are sending out some major "you can do it" vibes to our readers!

Get out there and show the world, or even better – yourself, what you are really made of! We believe you have everything it takes to bring what you want into your life!

Cheers!

Deb & Susan

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MICHIGAN MAGAZINE

Women Inspiring Women for Good!

Our Mission:

Women2Women Michigan was created to connect women with women for good to encourage, support, have fun, do business and provide links for women's resources.

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Contents



Cover >>>

8 Dancing With Life

Hungry for story and curious for adventure, children's author and illustrator/fine artist, Lori Taylor, can be found exploring her silliness in nature looking for her next story to tell.

Features >>>

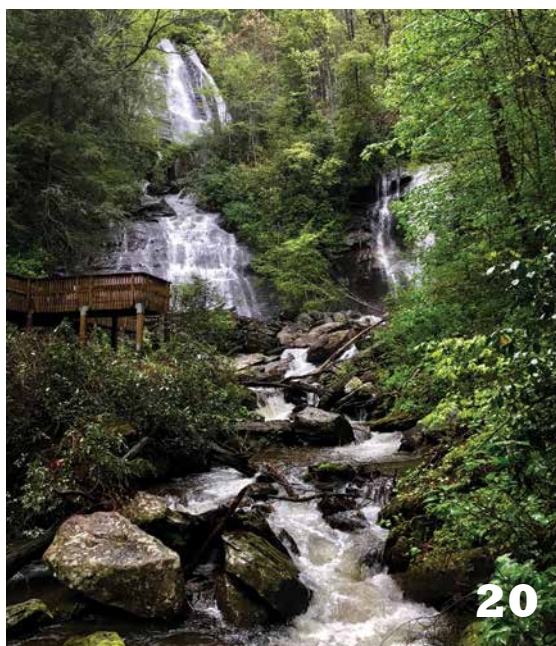
Don't Do It, 11
Don't Put That Test Off Any Longer

Hernias Aren't Just For Him... 18

Discovering The Greatest Gift Of All, 22
The Gift of You

Planning A Barbecue 29

Adapting to What Life Brings Your Way 32



20

Departments >>>

3 Letters from the Publisher & Editor

13 Love Your Life or Live Trying
Playing with a Purpose

14 Mind, Body and Soul
Magnify Your Mindset

15 Love Your Mouth
What's So Different About Holistic Dentistry?

16 Recipe
Fruit Water

20 Travel
Orlando or Bust

23 Sparkle & Shine
Wearing Your True Colors

24 Diva Dialogue
Filling Your Cup.... Or Wine Glass

26 Beyond The Purse
As The Deer

27 Beauty by Design
50 Shades of Red for a Red Hot Summer

28 Style of Attitude
Dress For Yourself

30 She Means Business
Michelle Shook C&L Ward Vice President of Marketing

34 Don't Tell My Wife I Wrote This
Be the T-Baller



24



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Dancing with Life



Hungry for story and curious for adventure, children's author and illustrator/fine artist, Lori Taylor can be found exploring her silliness in nature looking for her next story to tell. A mother of "two awesome, talented grown kids and grandmother to two amazing, talented granddaughters" with a third grandchild, a boy, on the way in August, Taylor is a true Michigander, born in Pontiac and raised in Clarkston. She raised her family in Goodrich, moved to Pinckney and now lives in the heart of the Manistee National Forest in Bitely, Michigan. Her surroundings are the perfect place for her to explore the thoughts that form her next book ideas. She is fierce in love and fierce in her time alone as she loves her solitary moments and days. She claims to be cautious when it comes to outdoor adventure, yet she does things to test her physical abilities. She loves to laugh and loves humor so her silly moments in nature and in public allow her to laugh at herself and give her a unique look at life. She is a storyteller in picture and in word so she wanders in search of tales. She freelances in illustration as well as writing, illustrating and designing all of her books. She markets her books and visits schools to gain exposure. She is a woman in charge of her world.

Taylor grew up on five secluded acres in Clarkston, MI, a virtual woodland and

pond-stomping playground. Her family didn't travel or vacation because they already had the best place to escape from the world right in their backyard. As a teen, Taylor loved science and art and wanted to illustrate. One day, her parents informed her that she would not go to college and that she needed to get a job. She remembers that being a painful wake up call. She realized she needed to shift her focus and so she took medical office assisting in high school, all the while longing to illustrate. After finishing high school, she worked as a laboratory assistant drawing blood. After getting married, the opportunity arose which allowed Taylor to trade the needle for a pencil. She had her kids in her early 20s and loved and shared every moment with them. She took them fishing and into nature, taught them the same things she had learned by volunteering at a local nature center. All the while, she still yearned to illustrate so she self-taught herself in art and ended up freelancing for the nature center. She began to show her artwork at art shows with wildlife art. During all of this new excitement, Taylor still had stories for books that loomed in her mind. After her kids were in high school, she decided to invest in herself and

“Peace
reigns
in my
heart and
life once
again”

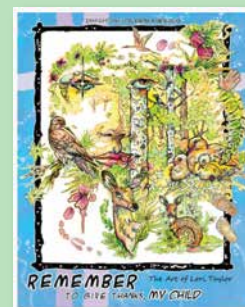
began to take a course at the Institute for Children's Literature. She was dedicated and writing all the time, drawing, observing nature while the kids were in school. She calls this period her, "learning time". She received exhibit making projects from Huron-MetroParks and learned with every project that she researched and created. She was determined to make art a career. It took a long time for her to consider herself an artist, let alone an author when her first book from Publish America came out. Taylor calls that a learning experience, as well. She went on to illustrate another book for a client at the time her first book came out. "I started to feel legit—slightly", confesses Taylor. She decided to join the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators, a fabulous group of people who are interested in writing but don't know where to start. She still belongs to the group and enjoys the conferences and comradely.

Art remained first and foremost for Taylor and helped her as she started going through some life changes about the time her mother died in 2006. She was selected by the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore for the artist-in-residence program in 2007 when her life took "a horrific tumble". Her father died and Taylor was headed for divorce, all at the same time she won the residency. She was in a cyclone of emotions and the residency became three weeks of a solo-solitary test from the Universe. She had never gone anywhere alone. She packed up her entire studio into her van and headed north to Empire.



She stayed in the Park's farmhouse and wandered the shores and waters. She would sit in her kayak in the small lakes and think and try to figure out her life. Taylor did a lot of sketches, took photos, and began creating her art piece that was to be donated to the Park. The art contract gave her a year to complete the project but she had no idea as to where home would be after her stay. Things were that bad. The creating of that art was extremely emotional, something that the public would never know. Taylor created the piece, still on display at the Philip Hart Visitor Center in Empire, with layered watercolor images mixed with her own poetry, "The Legend of the Sleeping Bear". The story of the mother bear, ever watchful for her cubs still makes her emotional. She wrote the entire poem to the meter of the Song of Hiawatha for the public presentation and unveiling of her art. There was not a dry eye in the crowd of aquatic engineers and biologists that day. With her impending divorce on her horizon, this piece...this trip was the beginning of her life and end of her 27 year marriage.

Taylor explains it as a time of peace that she would need before the tumult and death of who she was and had been. She moved to Pinckney with her partners, Marie and Lisa, where they combined their businesses into Bear Track Studios LLC. It was a rough time for Taylor. She was trying to figure out who she was and what her purpose would be and still be grandma and mom. Her family had disowned her during that time and had moved over an hour away from friends. She says it was like being in solitary confinement—but in her mind. She had survived a living death and had to recreate herself. She was still feeling restless and Pinckney didn't feel like home for a long time. She was having a rough time with art and one of her partners, Marie, suggested that she try writing books. Given the green light, Taylor took flight. Her partners are deeply involved with the editorial process as well as being wildlife artists themselves. Marie is a pen and ink artist and Lisa is a woodworker. They travel in a herd or pack and contribute and support each other in their work and lives. They lived together with dogs, cats, chickens, and Taylor's pet snake for almost ten years until this February. That's when the three of them, Lisa, Marie, and Taylor picked up and moved across the state, west and north to settle in an amazing place. Bitely. In the forest, on a lake. Life is supreme. Every day



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is a blessing. “Peace reigns in my heart and life once again,” Taylor confides. The three of them are living the dream and they pinch themselves daily—usually when they are out fishing for dinner in the rowboat on their lake.

Taylor has written many books and is always working on something. When asked to speak on one, she choose her book, *Holly Wild*, her ten-and- a-half- year old heroine! Taylor describes her character of Holly as “adventurous—in her mind most times. She is clumsy, here big feet and heart get ahead of her and she trips and falls. She thinks she’s super cool, times ten. She is me. My inner explorer girl. When I was growing up we girls didn’t have heroines that wrestled gators and climbed “almost” mountains. My older sisters had Nancy Drew, but I had Pippi Longstocking. I wanted someone in the middle. Holly Wild and her friends are out there solving mysteries, in a hilarious way. I learned you can teach by using humor (from my MetroPark farm sign days—Technicolor cow udders!) and Holly teaches well. Like me, she laughs at herself. I call myself the “bumbling naturalist”, I run into nature and then find out what I ran into. I take Holly with me wherever I go. Heck, she was with me when I fell off the dock and into the cold lake here a month ago. I have many Holly moments! But she never lets things get in her way of learning and experiencing life. She is the bull in the china shop.”

Taylor is constantly incorporating elements of her life into her books. She writes about the areas she has been to and the stories that were placed in those areas before her. Her books are filled with little discoveries for her readers. From nature knowledge and tricks all the way to the titles of her chapters, Taylor put treasures in her pages. For example, *The Holly Wild* series chapter titles in order are *Bamboozled on Beaver Island*, *Let Sleeping Bear Dunes Lie*, *Packing for the Porkies* (Porcupine Mountains), and *Questpedition for da Yooper Stone*. Taylor says these came from her vacation experiences and artist-in- residences in Michigan. The titles alone illustrate the humor inside the pages of her books.

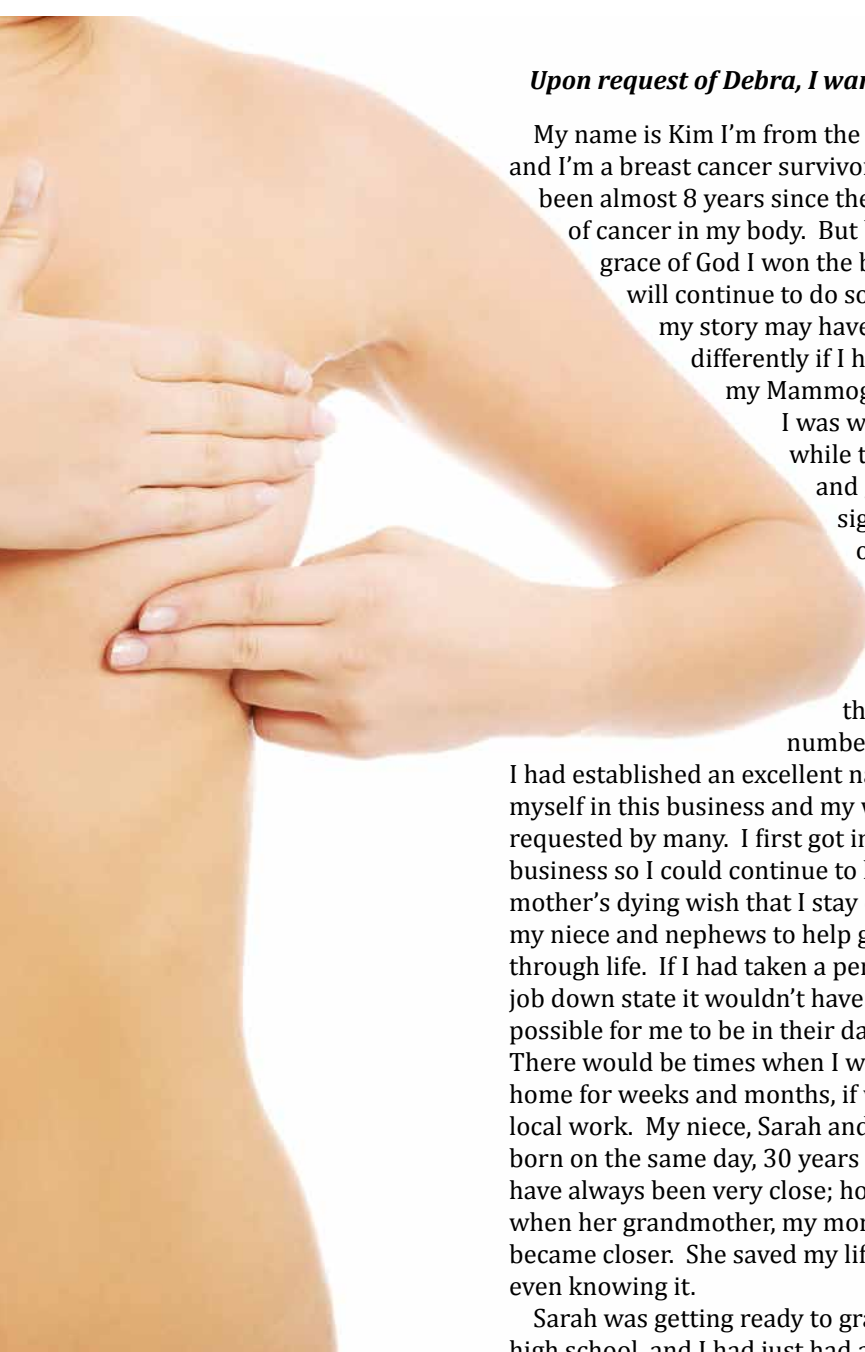
Her books are not just for kids, either. You should buy her books not because you have kids 7—12 years old, but because you like a good story. The stories are funny, they have science, history, myth and legend, flora and fauna of each place—but wait, there’s more! They have heart! Holly’s team of pals and fellow investigators work together, respect each other, learn from other and sometimes disagree. But they support each other. It is good story. Her characters have touched her life, and they touch others. Kids, her biggest audience, tell her often of how much they enjoy her books and characters. She has many 12 year old boy fans of her *Holly Wilde* series. Just because she’s a girl—a girl in hiking boots and hat with a pet snake, boys still like her. She’s handing them life lessons and story. The real way to teach. Lori Taylor’s books and new coloring book are available on her website: www.loritarylorart.com and they are sold in Michigan’s national and state parks, Indie book stores, and gift shops—the list is also on the site. (The books are published by her under Bear Track Press)

Taylor says she would like to do more “big people” art, write and illustrate more books, and keep her amazing life in Bitely going. She claims she “will never—be able to retire since she is a self-employed artist! Being all of this allows her grandma time and she hopes to volunteer in the area after she gets settled. Taylor says her best advice to all is to “dance with life” and we couldn’t agree more.



Susan Lamphier is an Editor for Women2Women Michigan Magazine

DON'T DO IT, DON'T PUT THAT TEST OFF ANY LONGER!!!



Upon request of Debra, I want to share my story.

My name is Kim I'm from the local area and I'm a breast cancer survivor. It has been almost 8 years since the invasion of cancer in my body. But by the grace of God I won the battle and will continue to do so. However, my story may have ended up differently if I had not had my Mammogram.

I was working while traveling and gathering signatures on Ballot proposals across the country. I had done this for a number of years.

I had established an excellent name for myself in this business and my work was requested by many. I first got into the business so I could continue to honor my mother's dying wish that I stay close to my niece and nephews to help guide them through life. If I had taken a permanent job down state it wouldn't have been possible for me to be in their daily lives. There would be times when I would be home for weeks and months, if we had local work. My niece, Sarah and I were born on the same day, 30 years apart, and have always been very close; however, when her grandmother, my mom, died we became closer. She saved my life without even knowing it.

Sarah was getting ready to graduate high school, and I had just had a physical with my doctor and he scheduled me a mammogram. I was requested to come to Arkansas to work on a campaign. So, as we all do, I canceled my mammogram and left the state. I was scheduled to return to Michigan for my nieces' open house; and had rescheduled my mammogram for the Monday following her open house.

We had been working in Arkansas for approximately 4-6 weeks, the campaign wasn't going quite as smoothly as we had hoped. My manager knew I was scheduled to leave to go the open house, however, she needed to get the campaign finished. So, she offered me a \$3000.00 bonus to stay and complete the campaign. I told her it would be up to my niece since it was a very special occasion for her. And, like all of us, gave no thought to the mammogram, that can be rescheduled.

I called Sarah, my niece, and told her, "Wow Sarah they are offering me a \$3000.00 bonus to stay, what would you think if I didn't come to your open house? It sure is a lot of money and I could sure use it." Who would of thought these words would save my life - "if you don't come Aunt Kim, I will never forgive you." So I came home with the promise of returning to Arkansas within 3 days.

Monday was the mammogram and boy did that put everything to a halt. I was diagnosed with first stage breast cancer and had to do both chemo and radiation. Had I not come home I may have never had that mammogram and, who knows, I may not be here to share my story with you.

So please, those of you who say you're too busy, or I just can't make the time, take it from someone whose niece saved her life out of love. GET THOSE TATAS CHECKED!!! If this will help one person get to the doctor, then it's worth it.

Let me end with:

Exodus 15:26

He said, "If you listen carefully to the LORD your God and do what is right in his eyes, if you pay attention to his commands and keep all his decrees, I will not bring on you any of the diseases I brought on the Egyptians, for I am the LORD, who heals you."

Kim Wisenbaugh

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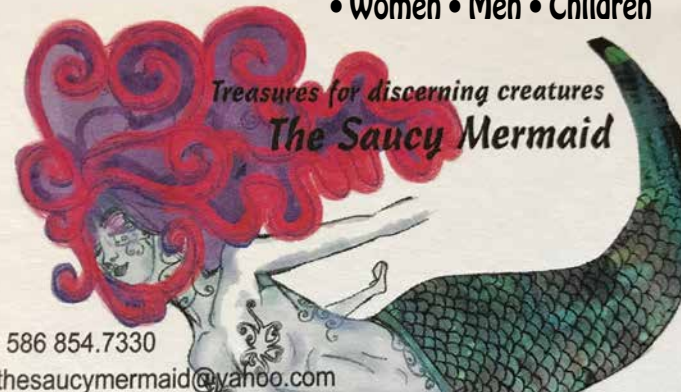
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Play with a Purpose

Playing in a therapy session can be an effective way for children and adults to express themselves.

What is play therapy? According to the Association for Play Therapy (2014), play therapy is an approach to communicating therapeutically with clients using toys, art materials, games, sand trays and other play media, giving clients a safe and nurturing relationship in which they can explore and express feelings, gain insight into their own motivation and into their interaction with others, and learn and practice socially appropriate behaviors.

Why is Play Therapy important? In children, their language development lags behind their cognitive development. Therefore, children may not be able to verbalize thoughts, feelings and

experiences. Play is to the child what verbalization is to the adult. In addition, some adults may not be verbal as well and utilizing play in therapy helps them to share their thoughts and experiences more clearly.

It has been shown that emotionally significant experiences can be expressed more comfortably and safely through the symbolic representation the toys provide. The use of toys enables children and adults to transfer anxieties, fears, fantasies and guilt to objects rather than people. Play therapy is safe because the individuals are safe from their own feelings and reactions. Play therapy enables one to distance themselves from traumatic events and experiences.

By acting out through play a frightening or traumatic experience or situation can symbolically, change or reverse the outcome in the play activity, which helps the individual move toward an inner resolution, and then they are better able to cope with or adjust to problems.

To learn if Playing in Therapy is right for you or someone you know please contact Re-Connect My Life Counseling 810.515.1931 or email your questions to info@re-connectmylife.com



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Magnify Your Mindset

I don't think we can go a day without hearing something about the importance of having a positive mindset. I mean, there are endless different quotes about how it's not what our circumstances are, but our response that matters. While it's certainly true, living that out in practical ways is not easy. And, if you're like me, when you're in a particularly trying season of life it can sound downright offensive.

With all that said, I am a firm believer that mindset is key. As one who naturally falls into negative thinking, I have learned a few ways to keep my thoughts and beliefs on track.

1 Allow yourself to be negative.

Wait, didn't I just say that being positive is necessary? Yes. I also know it's very important to acknowledge any pain, disappointment, grief or just a "blah" day. Pushing our feelings down and trying to mask them will only result in them eventually exploding from the build-up, especially if they are surrounded by deeply troubling circumstances. But there's a difference between acknowledging and wallowing. I once read it put this way and it's always stuck with me- Sit and have a cup of tea together, like two friends. Just you and the negative feelings to talk it through. Listen to it. Learn from it. Then get up, say goodbye and put the tea away.

2 Discover healthy outlets and inspirations that work for YOU.

When we're stressed or feeling overwhelmed, we can fall into habits that keep us in a circle of negative thinking and prevent us from ever moving towards a healthy mindset. You know what I mean- Eating a pint of ice cream, calling a friend to hash it all out, then rehash and rehash it all again over a bottle of wine. Instead, start turning towards exercise, journaling, meditating, painting, whatever it is that gets your brain cranking in a different direction. Even turning on great music and dancing around the living room! It serves to both occupy our thoughts while causing our body to fire those chemicals that lead to happy feelings and problem solving.

3 It's not about the "thing."

Here's another saying about mindset, with a slightly different spin. "It's not who you are that holds you back. It's who you believe you are." In the same vein, it's not really about our specific circumstance or problem, it's what we believe it says about who we are. So, instead of trying to simply "think positive" try remembering that external events do not define us. We cannot control most things, but we can speak truth to ourselves that remind us our identity comes from something other than what is happening to us. Focus on where your identity truly does come from, and you'll always have that steady, calming realization you'll be okay.



◀ *Tamra Klaty is a health and fitness coach and certified instructor for CIZE Live classes. You can learn more about what she does at her facebook page at www.facebook.com/DesignedHealth*

What's so different about Holistic Dentistry?



Holistic dentistry performs all the same services you'd expect from a traditional dentist, but we choose materials and methods that are as individual as you are. After all, every breath and every swallow starts in your mouth.

Think of it this way: someone with an allergy to peanuts cannot eat peanut butter cookies or eat foods processed in even a little bit of peanut oil. That same person may be able to enjoy chocolate chip cookies or foods cooked in olive oil with no negative reaction on their health.

Dental filling materials contain many ingredients, some of which are more biologically compatible than others. We know that nothing is as 100% compatible as the natural tooth that grew into your mouth. We also know that mercury is a neurotoxin, and it is still in use today as half the components in a silver-colored filling.

You can question your dentist about any of the products he or she uses or recommends, and there are many. What's in the prophylactic paste used to polish your teeth? What about any of the smells from interim materials? Products can be chosen for durability and less harmful effects as well as beautiful, youthful esthetics.

It's important to have a truly healthy smile. We believe in helping you achieve it!



◀ *Sherry Regiani has been in the dental field since 1970; first as an assistant then as a hygienist. Over the past 30 years, Sherry transitioned into dental management and serves as practice administrator for her husband, David W Regiani DDS.*

ALL SEW

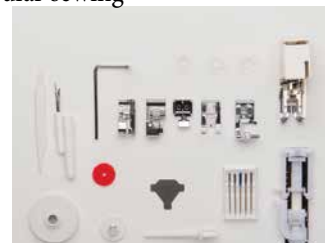
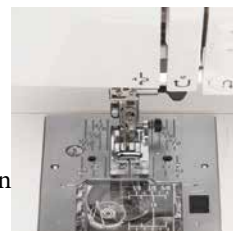
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Refreshing drinks are a requirement for warm summer days full of friends and laughter. Strawberry water sounds like just the right elixir for the job, too! Here's how to make a batch for all of your summer needs.

Ingredients

- 4 cups strawberries, sliced
- 1 cup white sugar or any sugar substitute you wish
- 8 cups cold water
- 8 fresh pineapple mint sprigs (optional)

Directions

1. In a medium bowl, mix together sliced strawberries, sugar, and 1 cup of water. Cover the bowl with plastic wrap and place in the refrigerator for 4 hours.
2. Remove the strawberry mixture from the refrigerator and pour into a blender. Blend on high until smooth. You can also use a stick blender if you have one. Pour the blended berry mixture through a wire mesh strainer set over a large mixing bowl; discard the pulp and seeds.
3. Add the remaining 7 cups cold water to the pureed strawberries and mix well. Place the fruit water in the refrigerator to chill for several hours or pour over ice and serve immediately. Garnish with strawberry slices or pineapple mint leaves. Enjoy!

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HERNIAS

AREN'T JUST FOR HIM...



Women are not typically worried about having hernias. So many health issues are at the top of the list for women to watch out for but when it comes to hernia surgery, it usually belongs on a man's health concern list.

However, Liz Wenstrom-Williams has a different story to share. Williams had to have emergency hernia surgery when she was only 35 years old. As to why she had a hernia in the first place, the cause is unknown. Her doctors had a few theories. One theory was that it may have happened due to weak muscles and tone resulting from when Williams had a C-section done in 2015. Unfortunately, the doctors are unsure as to the specific reason as to why this happened to Williams.

Williams had pain in the lower left side. The pain went on for the first 3 days. Williams goes on to say that it felt like a urinary tract infection but when she felt the lump, she thought it could possibly be an ovarian cyst or even an ingrown hair. The lump did not feel hard. However, when she pushed on it, the pain was intensified which was a huge red flag.

She went to the doctor the day after and he urged her to go directly to Hurley. It was a strangulated hernia on the left side. She was admitted immediately and had emergency surgery the following day. Williams was so grateful of how amazing the Hurley staff and doctors were from beginning to end. She had a very quick recovery and was back to work in a week.

Typical signs of hernia can range from noticing a painless lump to the severely painful, tender, swollen protrusion of tissue that you are unable to push back into the abdomen (an incarcerated strangulated hernia). Abdominal or pelvic pain can be part of the symptoms of many hernias.

The three most common hernias are as followed:

Reducible hernia

It may appear as a new lump in the groin or other abdominal area.

It may ache but is not tender when touched.

Sometimes pain precedes the discovery of the lump.

The lump increases in size when standing or when abdominal pressure is increased (such as coughing).

It may be reduced (pushed back into the abdomen) unless very large.

Irreducible hernia

It may be an occasionally painful enlargement of a previously reducible hernia that cannot be returned into the abdominal cavity on its own or when you push it.

Some may be chronic (occur over a long term) without pain.

An irreducible hernia is also known as an incarcerated hernia.

It can lead to strangulation (blood supply being cut off to tissue in the hernia).

Signs and symptoms of bowel obstruction may occur, such as nausea and vomiting.

Strangulated hernia

This is an irreducible hernia in which the entrapped intestine has its blood supply cut off.

Pain is always present, followed quickly by tenderness and sometimes symptoms of bowel obstruction (nausea and vomiting).

The affected person may appear ill with or without fever.

This condition is a surgical emergency (According to emedicinehealth.com)

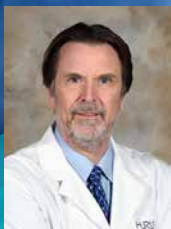
Wenstrom-Williams emphasizes that people should trust the signals that their bodies send them and to not put off getting anything checked! You can never be too safe and you hold the keys to your health.



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Wednesday, June 28

Registration 5:30pm; Event Starts at 6pm

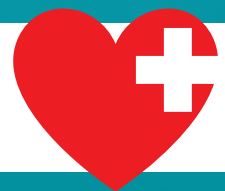
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*All Hurley Hernia Center surgeons are residency and fellowship trained in Surgery, Critical Care and Trauma. Additionally, all are trained and experienced in the use of advanced techniques in the repair of abdominal wall hernias including minimally invasive surgery and robotics.

Call 810.262.4855 to pre-register for this FREE event.

For interpreting services for this event, please call 810.262.7275



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Orlando or Bust

A story from our Creative Director Sheri Harvey about her trip to Photoshop Word

When I received the email, "Congratulations! You've been selected as a finalist for a Guru Award" at Photoshop World Conference in Orlando, Florida. I thought, "I'm just going to drive down. I mean, it's not that hard. People drive every day. I'm a good driver. Albeit, I have never driven that far by myself, but it will be fun...an adventure. I began to forage a plan. I would stop along the way where the mood strikes me and take pictures. "This is actually going to turn out to be fun." I thought. As the days got closer, the anxiety began to build. What seemed like a great idea was beginning to seem a little more like torture.

"It's not the mountain we conquer but ourselves."

~Edmund Hillary

As I started to gather my things up for my trip, my stomach started to do flips. Doubts began to fill my mind. I had never driven that far on my own! I had never been one to go out on a limb very far. But for some reason, I think I need to do this, to push my envelope. At least I have a place to stop half way down at my sister's place. I haven't been to her house and it will be nice to stop there and spend some time decompressing. The weather forecast was looking a little iffy and it looked like I might run into some storms. I was really hoping for some blue skies and sunshine since that always makes me feel better.

I find myself at the night before my trip in a blink of an eye. Where did the time go? As I go over my trip plan and check my lists, my stomach starts flip flopping. While packing, I find one of my shirts that says "It's An Adventure." That's

what I keep telling myself. I have to look at this as an adventure. I know once I get on the road I'll be fine. It was ten hours to my sister's! That sounded like a hike but I kept telling myself, "I can do it!" A text from Sam, my daughter, made me feel better. She was very encouraging. "GPS makes is simple, Mom. You'll be fine."

When I made it to my sister's and I reflected. It had not been a bad drive with beautiful country all around. I did hit a little rain but not bad. GPS, as it turns out, is a very good thing. My sister lives a bit off the beaten path (insert banjo music) but the turn by turn directions were a beautiful thing! I was thankful for my sister giving me a place to stay, dinner and time to relax.



The next day was Atlanta and the part of the trip I had been most apprehensive about.

I started out with a little rain but it cleared before I got to Atlanta. Traffic was pretty light until the bypass but On-Star guided me right through. It was awesome!

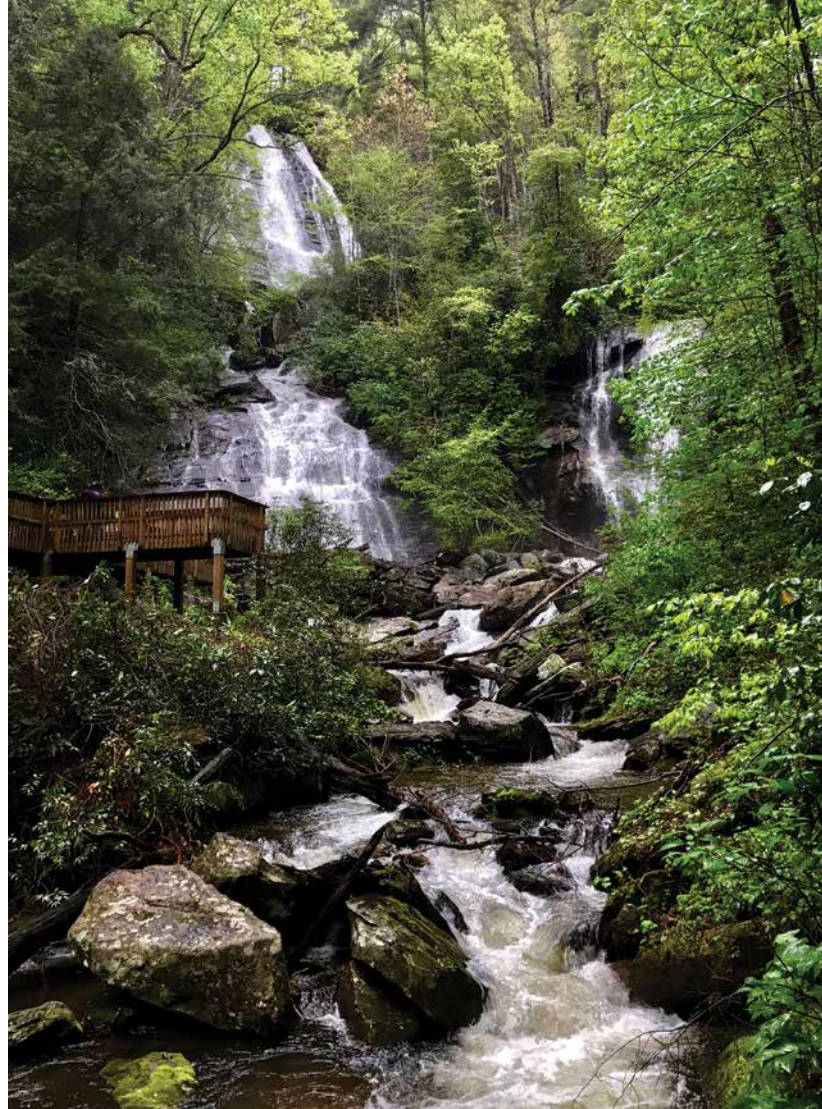
I couldn't believe I was running a little ahead of my schedule so I decided to make a quick stop to see if I could add a day to my registration. No problem. I was on my way to the next leg of the trip. There was a lot of construction in Orlando which was a bit scary. I did make a wrong turn, or should I say, I didn't listen to On-Star. I was Immediately prompted that I had left the designated route. On-Star politely asked me if I wanted new directions and guided me right to the hotel. Thanks for taking care of me On-Star!

The next day, I registered for the event got my little goodie bag and my work book. I had the rest of the day.... What to do, what to do?! So I headed down to the pool area. I planted myself at the bar and got a beer. Andrew, my bartender, who was originally from New York, called me "Luv".... I loved that! I spent most of the afternoon there people watching, then back upstairs for a little nap. I may have had a beer or two too many. Everyone was so pretty. Or at least that was what I was thinking. I went to bed filled with excitement as the start of the conference was the next day.

The opening ceremony was great and I loved their themed video. It was a play off the television show "Cops". The twist was "what'cha gonna do when the photo police come for you" and I was completely into it. I got a chance to look at my entry along with the competition. Amongst such beautiful work, I felt honored to be selected. It turned out to be a great day of learning with an After Hours Party at BB Kings Blues Club. I took a ton of pictures of the band, which was great and my ears were ringing when I left. I headed back to the hotel and off to sleep.

The remainder of the conference was amazing and when it came to closing ceremonies, they announced the winners of the Guru Awards. Unfortunately, I didn't win this year but learned a lot about the tools I use for my profession and, more importantly, I learned a lot about myself.

With the conference over, I headed out for the long drive back home. I made it to Georgia before stopping for the night. I had every intention of getting on 75 and getting home. But after talking with my husband, he convinced me I needed to get off the highway and see the country side. So the next morning I started out. It was sunny but I knew I was headed toward rain down the road. I was hoping it would push through quickly since I had decided to go to
Anna Ruby



Falls in Helen, Georgia. After a small argument with GPS, I got the route I wanted to take. GPS gets a bit feisty when you ignore it. Although it was raining, the falls did not disappoint. It was a calf burning, heart pumping workout to get there but beautiful and worth it.

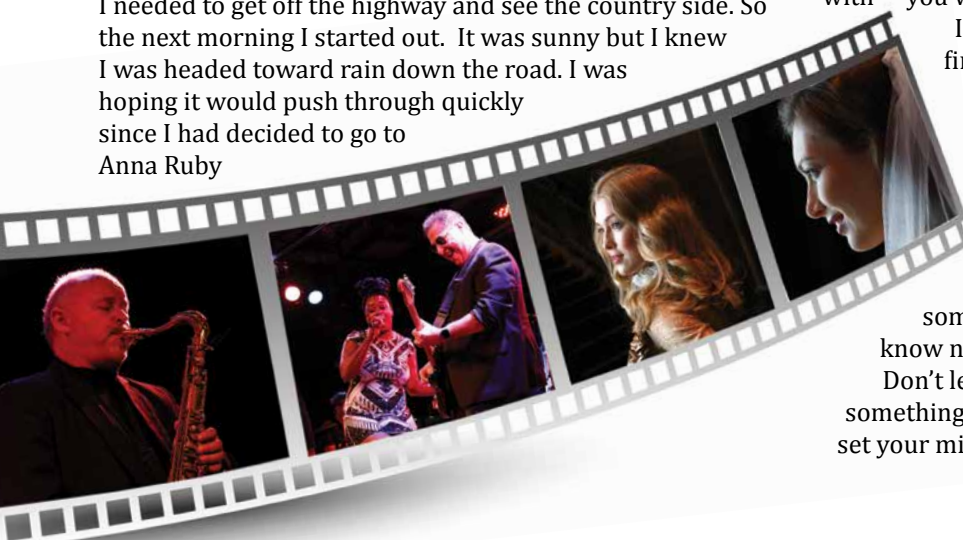
I had to drive through the mountains to get back on 75. It was a wonder I had any nails left by this point. I began to wonder if that was really the shortest route or if On-Star turn by turn was just getting even with me for not listening earlier in the day?!? Your mind starts to really play tricks with you when you are by yourself.

I had one more stop in Kentucky and then I was finally home.

Someone told me once that they had a fear of driving up north but she said she knew that "She just needed to get out of her own head." That was where most of my fear had been born, inside my head. I made this trip by myself and felt empowered to go out and do more.

My advice, see where the road leads and try something that scares you! It was a long trip but I know now there will be more!

Don't let fear limit you! You could miss out on something amazing - your own power to do anything you set your mind to!



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Many years ago, I discovered I had a gift to write and produce plays. I dared to showcase my play at the Whiting Auditorium and against popular belief I sold the Whiting Auditorium completely out. Did you read what I said, I sold the Whiting Auditorium out against popular belief. Me, a young girl who had never written a play before or took a writing class. Can you believe I sold the Whiting Auditorium out and changed lives with a message for Flint that said, The Street Life offers NO RESPECT & NO FUTURE! I wanted to show my friends and family that a life in Christ could be beneficial to our destiny. But you had to "Believe IN Yourself". You had to believe that there was a gift in you that was waiting to be unpackaged and shared with those you love. Many people miss their gift because they are afraid to open up what God has placed on the inside of them. They let their gift go unwrapped for many years wishing they could do the least of what others are doing. But what if I shared with you today, that God has placed a gift in you. A gift of grace to run the race that's been set before you to be successful in your mind, marriage, motherhood and ministry of purpose because the first place the acceptance of the gift starts is in your mind. Do you believe in your mind that you have a gift of speaking, writing, dancing, laughing & loving who God created you to

become without apology? The second place is you have to be married to your gift, I know it sounds weird but you have to know that through better or worse, sickness or health your gift will stick with you. The third thing is you have to carry your gift, nurture your gift and give birth to your gift with a forceful push, pushing past the pain and all the cramps that try to slow down your labor process. Fourth, you have to embrace and enjoy your ministry of purpose, the gift that God has given you to love and take care of with complete confidence, against all odds.

Why is this gift so important? Because this gift is you. God has given us different gifts for doing certain things well. Adapted from Romans 12:11, But the Greatest Gift of All, Is the Gift of You

► *Min. Tarnesa Martin , Writer, Motivational Speaker & Life on Purpose Coach is the founder of Women of Radical Praise & Life On Purpose – "Finding Yourself"*



Life coaching, Self- Development & Empowerment services, which focus on connecting, supporting and strengthening women through life challenges that impact them personally, professionally, physically and spiritually.

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Wearing Your True Colors

Warning
When I am an old woman,
I shall wear purple
with a red hat
that doesn't suit me.
And I shall spend my pension
on brandy and summer gloves
and satin sandals....
and make up for
the sobriety of my youth.

Jenny Joseph

This excerpt is from a poem written by Jenny Joseph in 1961 when she was 29 years old. You really should read it all. This poem became Jenny's most popular one even though she wrote all her life and won several awards and published numerous poetry books.

Perhaps it gained popularity because it speaks of women doing what suits them instead of what others expect of them. A freeing thought to women of the 60s and continues to be even now.

Our clothing standards for "older" women (whatever that means) have loosened some in the last decades, but conquering societal expectations on women is still a struggle. So here is my take on this idea of what to wear:

I'm older—I guess—and I enjoy wearing purple and many other colors. But how I most want to clothe myself is by wearing the honest, true version of my own essence. Not someone's idea of who I am, not anyone's opinion of how I should behave, and certainly not another person's idea of what I should be. Who's with me?

Age has given me perspective and wisdom. Navigating through difficult times—suffering because of wrong choices, persevering through grief, loss, and change—as well as experiencing

wonderful and joyful things like parenthood and being loved, will do that for you.

Age has given me guts. Guts to break free and throw out all that isn't truly my authentic self. Age has liberated me. I finally got tired enough to call it quits. I couldn't take care of everyone else any more. I couldn't be what "they" wanted and demanded. And good Lord, why should I be? How does allowing someone else to frame my character, personality, and behaviors honor myself or my Creator?

As with most of us, the reduction and dismissal of my true self started at an early age when I began believing lies about myself. Experiences in my young life caused me to feel "less than" and that was the filter I used to interpret what people said about me. I heard words and perceived behaviors that convinced me I was, indeed, less than I should be.

For the record, when we hear something, we must accept it and agree with it before it can become truth to us. How we feel about ourselves, often determined early in our lives, affects that.

As I got older and began to dismiss other's opinions and expectations, and tasted the freedom of determining my authentic self, I've discovered lots of treasures in my character. I'm not really those awful things people said about me. I know that they were lies. And I'm fervently hoping that you, too, will make the same discovery of truth.

So what about that purple? Please wear whatever colors make you feel alive and vibrant! But, most importantly, clothe yourself in the dazzling radiance of your perfectly true self.


And, darling, won't we SHINE!!

► Mimi Matthews believes in the power of words to change lives. She calls herself "Passionista At Large" because she is always on the prowl to encourage and empower, inspire and ignite anyone she comes in contact with. Mimi's life experiences have given her rich material and wisdom to help others learn truth. You can read her life stories and uplifting posts on her blog <http://particularpassions.me/> and buy her encouraging and empowering words on unique cards and gifts on her Etsy shop here: https://www.etsy.com/shop/EmPOWordmentCards?ref=hdr_shop_menu



FILLING YOUR CUP...

Or Wine Glass



When you were growing up, say between five to ten years old, did you picture what your life would look like in ten, twenty or thirty years? Did you even care? Did you worry about how you looked, how you were dressed or what others thought of you? Did it matter where you lived, what you ate or how much money your family had or made? Or were you just happy to do what you did every day? Those were the days of changing into play clothes after school and/or church, running outside looking for a play mate, as mothers called out “be home before the street lights come on”.

It was a time when we accepted our life for what it was. There were no expectations, no limiting beliefs, no negative self-talk or lack of self-esteem. We just were. We live free of judgment... for such a very short time of our lives. A mere decade, if that, is lived with unencumbered joy. A time when we instinctively do what makes us happy, what pleases us and makes us laugh.

Then we begin to “grow up” and in the process our innocence evaporates like steam from a tea kettle, slowly, but once gone, never to return. We change our focus to pleasing others, making them happy and before we know what happened, the empty vessel, once so full of laughter and love, begins to fill with the exact opposite, fear. We end up with a pot full of the distasteful tea of self-doubt, insecurity and judgment, which left unattended can steep into anger, the bitterness of hatred, eventually leading to the horrible after taste of resentment. If we sip this bad tasting tea, we risk becoming close minded, refusing to grow and/or change, leading to becoming close hearted and bitter. The exact opposite of childlike.

“That’s life” we tell ourselves. We often blame our unhappiness on those closest to us, our circumstances or lack of possessions. Our culture is focused on pleasing others i.e.: “Happy wife, happy life”, rewards for good grades, gifts from Santa IF we’re good, to name a few. I remember the first time I took a plane trip. I was so shocked when instructed to put my mask on first. “What about the old man sitting next to me or the young mother and baby ahead?” I was 13. Taking care of others, first, was already so ingrained into my very being. It’s true of most of us, I think. We put our own happiness second. We don’t want to be selfish.

This way of viewing the world is very western. We are not taught to seek happiness from within.

Buddhists believe that developing one’s mind is the best way to lead to personal freedom.

Hindus believe in karma, the law of cause and effect by which each individual creates his own destiny by his thoughts, words and deeds.

If we could only wrap our western minds around these simple, pure, no

hidden agenda concepts, our personal power would be much less evasive. If we were taught, as children, not to seek approval for our own joy, we would not be dependent on others for our happiness.

It's easy to say...not so easy to do. It takes consistent work, deliberate unlearning of deep seated behaviors and beliefs. It is worth the work, however, because it brings about a great personal peace.

There are many contemporary western philosophers and teachers who say the same thing. Louise Hay, Wayne Dyer, Iyanla Vanzant, Marianne Williamson, Don Miguel Ruiz and Sarah Ban Breathnach, to name a few, all teach self-empowerment and self-reliance. Public figures, like Oprah, Tony Robbins and Jack Canfield tell us the same things... in different ways. The truth is the truth. Slowly, we are catching on to an alternative way of thinking.

If you find yourself searching for happiness...go within... the joy will be real and long lasting. Read the above mentioned authors. Find videos on YouTube. There isn't an excuse. When you are ready...the information will come flooding.

A Zen proverb says: "When the student is ready, the teacher will appear".

For your own sake, take the first step.

Here are a few tips to get you started:

Stop the negative self-talk RIGHT NOW! Go one step farther and replace it with positive self-talk.

Do not expect the worse because that's exactly what you'll get. Instead, imagine the best case scenario unfolding in front of your very eyes. Feel it, smell it, know it.

Refuse to be pulled into gossip, negativity and petty quarrels by toxic people. Walk away.

Feed your body, mind and spirit.

Learn.

Be kind to strangers.

Volunteer.

Believe.

Do not have any expectations of others.

Your ultimate outcome is to regain that non-judgmental place that you were once so familiar with. Fill your mind with good thoughts. Become reliant on yourself. Refill your own cup...or wine glass. Love YOU.

Stop worrying about how you look, how you're dressed or what others think of you? It doesn't matter where you live, what you eat or how much money your family has. Be happy to do what you do.

Just be home before the lights come on.

Love,

Me

► Deborah St.Hilaire has been a women's empowerment/life coach since 2010. She can be reached for personal and group coaching, speaking engagements and retreats. thedivolution@gmail.com or 419.366.8091



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As The Deer



Last fall I deer hunted during bow season for the first time. My son-in-law had set up a ground blind for me on his property in the West Branch area, wherein my husband and I spent the better part of a weekend. The blind was a camouflage-colored tent-like arrangement with a zippered door and windows.

Inside the blind one chilly morning, a movement through the bare trees captured my attention. As I focused on it, a deer seemed to materialize out of thin air (as they often do), walking directly toward me – or rather, toward the sugar beets and carrots scattered on the ground nearby. Each time the deer looked away to sniff the air or survey its surroundings, I inched my way into position with painful care, lifting my crossbow.

The deer stopped at the edge of the clearing, now its eyes glued on me. It saw me through the open window, knew that

of success. They further suggest that confident poses can decrease the stress hormone cortisol in your body, which helps you feel more confident and risk tolerant.

As I sat in that deer blind in the woods, I was being taught that same lesson only without the data and control groups. You see, whenever a deer is uncertain of something it sees, it huffs and stomps its hoof in an attempt to force whatever it is to move or flinch and thereby identify it. The deer wanted the sugar beets and the carrots, but an obstacle (me) was preventing it. Rather than wander off

“Your Body Language Shapes Who You Are” by Amy Cuddy

I, or at least something it didn't like, was there. In response, it began to huff through its nostrils and stomp its hoof.

I knew what the deer was doing. My husband had apprised me of such behavior previously and it reminded me of something I never expected to connect with while deer hunting. I thought about a Ted Talk I had recently watched entitled “Your Body Language Shapes Who You Are” by Amy Cuddy.

In the talk, Cuddy discusses how body language not only affects how others see us, but how it may also change how we see ourselves. Her studies indicated that “power posing”, which is standing in a posture of confidence even when we don't feel confident, can improve our chances

dejected, though, it used body language in an attempt to make its situation more favorable.

The most important point here is that while the deer appeared pretty confident and even a little fierce, it was neither. In actuality, deer behave this way when they are nervous or scared. In reality, its body language was diametrically opposed to what it felt.

You know where I'm going with this. It's the same idea behind Cuddy's Ted Talk. Invest 20 minutes in watching Amy Cuddy's Ted Talk about body language. I promise it will be time well spent. Then go be a deer. Even when you don't feel it, learn to make yourself look confident – and when necessary, even a little fierce.

► Karen DeVault is a published author who earned her BA degree in English, with honors, from Oakland University in 2007. She lives with her husband in White Lake, with two daughters and grandchildren nearby. Karen enjoys motorcycling, fishing, target shooting, bicycling, and running. She is currently writing her first novel.



50 SHADES OF **RED**

A **RED** HOT SUMMER



Looking to spice up your hair color this season? Why not consider shades of red. While everyone else is jumping on the Bleach Blonde Band Wagon, you could be the stand out with one of this summer's most popular looks.

A rose by any other name is not necessarily a rose, it's Rose Gold. This gorgeous shade of golden red is being seen on many famous celebrities (Examples; Isla Fisher and Emma Stone)

While other celebs like Amy Poehler and Adele are vamping up their tired, over processed Blondes by going all out BLORANGE (a term being used to describe a color somewhere between Blonde and Ginger)

Choosing the perfect shade of red will bring out your complexion and give you an instance face lift. Shades of red can range from soft and subtle peachy tones to sexy, sultry coppers.

If you decide that red is your thing, than keep in mind there are still some basic rules to adhere to:

Reds fade faster than almost any other hair color, so ease up on the hot showers and try shampooing hair less. If you must shampoo daily, than go for a Shampoo that is Sulfate Free.

Condition, condition, condition; whether you prefer a leave-in conditioner or one that rinses out, make sure it is

recommended for color treated hair and has a lower ph.

If you're a swimmer, you should cover your hair prior to diving in. Chlorine and other chemicals used to keep pools clean and germ free will wreak havoc on color treated hair (especially reds).

Sun worshippers or those of you spending most of your time in the sun should also cover your hair to keep those gorgeous locks from fading in the sun. A cute summer hat will do the trick!

To maintain that "just stepped out of the salon" look, hair color needs to be refreshed every 4-6 weeks or as recommended by your professional hair colorist. Reds are NOT a do it yourself hair color job. Leave it to the professionals who can give you the best results and recommend shades of red that will complement and not distract from your skin tone.

I would love to hear from you with questions or successes on your color transformations. You may email me at; tlsackett@yahoo.com. If you send me before and after pictures with your name and contact information, you could see yourself on W2W Michigan's website and/or Facebook page!

I look forward to hearing from you and HAVE A GREAT SUMMER!



► Tami L. Sackett is a freelance writer and a hair and skincare expert with over 30 years in the beauty industry. She is always on the lookout for better products at a value price that keeps you looking young and feeling good. You may reach Tami at her email: tlsackett@yahoo.com



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DRESS FOR YOURSELF

Your personal style and how you dress should be a true reflection of who you are. People will often form an opinion very quickly based on what is presented to them in the form of fashion and mannerisms. What you wear is a form of non-verbal communication to others expressing who you are and how you perceive life, your work, society and culture.

Are you a woman who knows herself and is comfortable with who that is and how you feel? Are you communicating a look of confidence? Do you know your personal style? Have you embraced this style? Your personal style should reflect your personality – your lifestyle – your goals. Knowing and representing your personal style clearly portrays your level of self-esteem. Self-confidence is recognizing and respecting who you are without doubt.

The key to confident dressing is to know you and be true to yourself. Spend less time focusing on a size or the latest trends. Trends are constantly changing and generally not suited for everyone. Well-made classic pieces that fit well will always trump trendy fads. Experiment with patterns, colors, textures and accessories. Find what makes you feel the most confident and beautiful.

If you struggle with building a wardrobe that is truly reflective of your personality and style – ask for help! A personal stylist can often be found in your favorite boutique or through an alternative shopping experience in the privacy of your own home. Finding a line of clothing that matches your lifestyle and fits well can save much time, energy and money in the long run. Start investing in those well-made classic pieces and begin building the wardrobe that makes getting dress everyday a pleasure. Experiment with a new hair cut or color – accessorize with items that match your style and mood. Renew or refresh your look this spring. And remember that beautiful confidence never goes out of style.



◀ Lonnie Johnson – Personal Stylist – Serving women with wardrobe and personal inspiration. Trunk Shows, Personal Shopping Appointments, Closet Audits
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PLANNING A BARBECUE

It's time to get outside and enjoy the weather. What better time than to call some family and friends and invite them over for a barbecue.

Here are a few things to remember:



Are you looking for ideas for recipes for your barbecue? Pinterest.com is a great source. Go to the site and search barbecue. You'll find hundreds of great recipes, tips and ideas for your next get together. The only problem will be narrowing down what you'd like to do with all of the great ideas you'll find.

Just because you are hosting the barbecue doesn't mean that you have to provide everything. Let's break things down and have people sign up to bring things.

Here is a list to help you get started:

- Salad
- Munchies – chips, dip
- Fruit Tray
- Veggie Tray
- Cheesy Potatoes
- Main dish – hamburgers or hot dogs and buns
- Condiments
- Paper Products – plates, utensils, napkins, cups
- Games/Prizes
- Drinks for adults and kids
- Ice
- Crockpot dishes

Hope you enjoy your next barbecue and that you have so much help from family and friends that you all have a chance to relax and enjoy each other's company. That's what summer's about!



◀ Betty Huotari is a professional organizer who services all of Southeastern Michigan. She can be reached at 810-348-1772 or betty@logicalplacement.com. Betty publishes a monthly newsletter. For more information please visit her website www.LogicalPlacement.com.



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Michelle Shook

C&L Ward Vice President of Marketing

My self-confidence has always come and went since I was a kid. Little did I know this would be foreshadowing of how my career would go.



In high school, I always wanted to be a cheerleader. Competition was fierce. They didn't have 30 cheerleaders on a squad like they do now which gives more girls a chance. Finally, tryouts came for my senior year. I was 16, I was ready and I was REALLY good. The coach even told me I was "great varsity material". The day of tryouts, I worked myself into a bundle of nerves and I choked. Everything I had worked for came crashing down. Needless to say, I was devastated. This was my last chance to become a cheerleader and I blew it. This "loss" affected me for a long time. It still upsets me 32 years later. I learned a lesson to believe in myself...or so I thought.

My first job was at Burger King at age 17 for 2 days and walked off the job because I was being ridiculed by a supervisor. (I think I had a little millennial in me back then) I was afraid to go back to get my paycheck, but my mom made me. I then found Ann Lowe, the owner of Lowe Limited Fashions my senior year of high school. She would become my mentor, a mother figure and a life-long friend. I ended up choosing fashion merchandising as a major when I was accepted to Western Michigan. I worked at Lowe's all the way through school on my breaks. I excelled in my classes (for once) in school. I had found a passion.

During my 20's, I was a lost soul. I moved from job to job just kind of wandering around. I was recruited out of college to Hudson's Department Store, which is a job I really wanted. After I was laid off for lack of management openings, I began to head down the path of marketing, thanks to my gig with Enterprise Rent-A-Car I found after Hudson's. I left Enterprise and I found jobs as a community relations

director at an eye clinic, marketing assistant at a fixture display company and spent 4 years at a General Motors contract house. Through all of this, I learned that I hated sales but I was getting good - REALLY good - at this marketing thing.

When I turned 32, I knew I had no passion in what I was doing.

I started looking for a new position. I found my job as Marketing Manager of Prime Outlets at Birch Run, one of Michigan's top shopping and tourist destinations. My passion was back! I loved my job and my job loved me. I was part of a large corporation of shopping malls and I became friends with my peers in other states. I made programs and events there to what they are today and took things to a higher standard.

Four years later, I was promoted to a Regional Vice President. I was awarded the position out of 11 of my peers. I didn't realize I would have such a hard time letting my old position go. Initially, we hired someone to replace me and I oversaw that person at Birch Run. That person didn't work out and my old position was open. I realized I wanted to go back. Before I could make the call, I found out a new person had been hired. At the time, I thought it was divine intervention. Birch Run was taken away from my region and the new marketing manager started under direction of my regional peer. Once again, I felt I was set up to fail. I tried to make it work, but I wasn't allowed to talk about the things that I saw on a daily basis to the center team, yet, I was having to report the same behavior from the teams I was overseeing. I just wanted to fit in. I was traveling and although I still liked my job, it still wasn't the same. Three years went by and I got

My passion was back! I loved my job and my job loved me.

really good at my new role and I thought I left those feelings of longing behind me.

In late 2007, Prime Retail restructured the corporate office. We were reassured that we would have jobs. On January 7, 2008, the carpet was pulled out from under me. I was told that my job was being eliminated under this consolidation. My whole identity was that job. I was offered a demotion at a mall out of state or a buyout. In a gut decision, I decided to stay in Michigan. I was lost and completely destroyed. I took my chances thinking that I could work for another mall developer in Michigan because they always hired with experience. Then a week later one of the biggest mall developers in the world let go most of their marketing managers and no jobs in my field in Michigan became available. It was a real life lesson.

I did what many marketing professionals did during the late 2000's – I freelanced. I went from doing what I loved to finding a job to pay my bills. I went to work for a newspaper running their magazine division, taking a huge pay cut. Luckily I had money in savings. I was laid off 18 months later. I took a job as a Marketing Director at a golf club which was 100K less than what I was making at Prime Retail, and found myself cleaning up after people's Easter brunch. It was probably the lowest time of my career to that point. I was humiliated. I had lost my sparkle. I tried to go back to Birch Run (which was now called Premium Outlets under the Simon company) I, my home, the place that I loved so much when the company was sold. I didn't get hired back. I was devastated. That morning, I sat on the bathroom floor and sobbed the ugliest cry that I think I have cried. I just wanted my old job back and I couldn't have it. I was never one to burn bridges, but apparently I had and didn't even realize it. My husband came in and told me to get up off the floor and get over it. I ended back with the Flint Journal.

It was 2012 and I found myself out of work, AGAIN. My confidence and self-esteem was at an all-time low and I was getting older. I was laid off three times in 3 years by no fault of my own. A new breed of competition was coming into the marketplace and I went to job interview after job interview. I'd make it to the top two candidates and then the company would pick the other person. I cried on the phone to a recruiter when I didn't

get one job. I got teary eyed during a job interview for another job in my field I REALLY wanted because they asked me about passion. That WAS my passion and it was a company that I had tried to get a job with for years. I was the top candidate and I didn't get it because once again I choked. Another shopping center job I interviewed for I was a shoe-in – until I wasn't. The hiring manager told me I needed to sell myself better. In between interviews, I was freelancing odd stuff for whomever would pay me. I had hit another all-time low. I was out of work for a year. I depleted my savings and had started to dip into my 401K. I felt worthless and like no one wanted me. I am sure that showed in my interviews. How could such a self-assured marketing machine come across so bad? Desperation played a part. I needed money and I needed myself back. I've always had a hard time marketing myself. I can market the heck out of someone else's business, but me? Not so much. I needed to develop my own brand. And I tried. I created my own fashion blog. I wanted back into shopping centers so bad, I was trying to will it to happen. And, just like cheerleading, I wanted it so bad that I blew it, time after time.

At the end of 2012, I had applied for over 200 jobs during the year and had 35 interviews and not one offer. I interviewed with C&L Ward for a Digital Marketing Manager. In the meantime, I was offered a freelance job doing PR for the new Cabela's store in Saginaw. I felt a little ray of hope, in my weariness. After my first C&L Ward interview, they told me they were considering me for a VP of Marketing job instead and asked if that would be of interest. I was offered the job over another candidate.

That was 4 years ago and I have gained my confidence back. It had been buried under the rubble of my own self-pity. I felt alive again as I was able to do the things I loved. I was creating a buzz about C&L Ward while rebranding the company. I do miss shopping centers, but I have found a niche in the home improvement side of the retail and real estate business. There are so many parallels to what I used to do and I love improving homes. People I knew said they've noticed a difference in the way that our market presence had been uplifted, so to me, I know I've been doing a good job. That's where my real passion comes from.

I have found a niche in the home improvement side of the retail and real estate business. There are so many parallels to what I used to do and I love improving homes.



Michelle & Ruby
her rescue dog

ADAPTING TO WHAT LIFE BRINGS YOUR WAY

"If you can't change the situation, change the way you think about it."



Writer and poet, Kahil Gibran once wrote, *"Your living is determined not so much by what life brings to you as by the attitude you bring to life; not so much by what happens to you as by the way your mind looks at what happens."*

Changes in the workplace. A new baby. Going through a break up. One minute you feel on top of the world, the next minute you fall off that pedestal of safety and security and in to a world of unknowns.

The ability to adapt to the unknowns can lead you to a more satisfying life or can cause you stress, anxiety and even illness.

We all like stability in our lives. Unfortunately, life has a way of throwing a monkey wrench in our, oh so perfect plans. But how we adapt to the changes around us when we get hit with something out of our comfort zone is what makes us either emotional wrecks or a happy, fulfilled person.

Successful people are skilled at adapting to an ever changing world. So how do they do it?

Don't be frightened by change. Do you know someone who seems to really live

for the moment and is unafraid to take risks? They have learned how to adapt to life and its complicated ups and downs.

Your fears are what hold you back and inhibit you. You have choices on how you handle situations. Stop being afraid and look at those situations as challenges, a chance to grow. Doubt plays a big part in our fear. Think about it as, "What's the worst that could happen?" It isn't a test of your competence, it's a way to change your mindset.

Taking a leap with faith alone is not always easy. But, never taking that first step leaves you immobile, standing on the sidelines while others move ahead. Don't let fear rule you.

Challenge your feelings- It's hard to change the way we feel when we get hit with a situation we weren't expecting. We are products of our genetics, our past

experiences and, often the changes go against our “comfort zone”. Author and motivational speaker, Gayle Lynne Goodwin writes, “If you can’t change the situation, change the way you think about it.”

Looking at the situation from a different perspective often opens up a new world of thoughts and ideas. Don’t be afraid to change the way you feel. Go out of your comfort zone. Try looking at the situation objectively.

Attitude, Attitude, Attitude- Our minds are powerful objects and having a positive attitude when those unknowns hit helps us to handle things more calmly and give us a better frame of mind to deal with the problem. Having a positive attitude when we are going through difficult, stressful times isn’t easy. Despair, depression and negativity can weigh on a person. But keep in mind that when you focus on what makes you stronger and happier, you have started the process of changing that negative in to a positive. Remember that you are “going through” a tough time. Key words, “going through”- two small words that can lead you to a better place.

Just Breathe- when it all seems to be “too much”, step back and take a deep breath. Free your mind. Take a breather from the things causing you stress. Take a walk, go to a movie, read a book. Give yourself some relief from what is causing your anxiety.

Focus on you and give yourself time away from the chaos. Coming back to the problem with a clear head can often times help you realize you can adapt to the situation at hand.

Relieve the Resistance- we all resist the negatives in our life. In today’s world even small annoyances can cause overwhelming tension, headaches and aches and pains in our bodies. Not taking care of ourselves can eventually cause those small annoyances to turn in to health problems. Adapting to a new way of dealing with something is never easy. But, relieving the resistance in our bodies with exercise, meditation or yoga can help to alleviate the physical stress of dealing with the negatives.

Adapting is Adopting- Adapting to things we cannot control is hard. But never the less something we all have to manage. When you adapt to changes and let go of old habits or ingrained perceptions, you are beginning anew. Limiting our vision eliminates the opportunity to grow, to take on new opportunities and challenges. Adapting is really adopting. Adopting a new life for yourself. It isn’t an end, it’s a new beginning to learn and grow, a chance to move forward and turn a new page. Challenge yourself to bigger and better things with a fresh outlook.

Remember, life is for living and learning and you have the chance to make it the best!

► “Charlene A. Kowalski is the Director of Marketing/Customer Service for the Mass Transportation Authority. She can be reached at: www.ckowalski@mtaaffint.org



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BE THE T-BALLER

When my son began his baseball career back when I was a long way from fifty, he played, like most kids these days, on a t-ball league. I, being a foolish young father who wanted to participate in all of my son's activities (and my wife told me I had to) helped coach.

Ever been to a t-ball game? Any resemblance to actual baseball is purely coincidental.

A new t-baller will hit a line drive past the toes of several infielders, then he himself will race out to center field and retrieve the ball, to the wild cheering of both teams.

A new t-baller will turn to the first base coach and say, "Chase me to second base!" I refused. Not that I didn't think it would be helpful, but I was vaguely aware of a rule against such a strategy.

A new t-baller hit the ball three feet, then run to third, then to first, then to the pitcher's mound, where he and the picture will wrestle for ownership of the aforementioned ball.

T-ballers, my friends, know how to have fun.

Then they learn the rules.

Ever been to a little-league game of 12-13 year olds?

They spit.

They throw their helmets when they strike out.

They spend hours every week perfecting their swing. Their pitching. Their stance in the batter's box.

They don't smile unless they win.

Baseball, somewhere between slapping a ball off a tee and puberty, stopped being fun.

Sound familiar?

I originally wrote this for a writer's blog I participate in. For anyone who has ever wanted to write, the analogy is clear. There are few things more frustrating (and I am a parent) than pursuing an art or craft that you truly love and then find out there's a dark side. Writers call it "publishing."

I don't know what your dreams and aspirations are. Few of you have ever seriously chased after those early ambitions. Even fewer have made a real success of them.

For the first group: just do it. Be the t-baller. Do it for fun. Do it because your dad said it builds character. Do it for the snacks at the end. Screw the rules. Just do it. Sew. Paint. Sculpt. Rebuild a '67 Mustang. Start a micro-brewery in your garage. Figure out the rules later. Or not at all.

For those who are struggling along with your chosen vocation, get back to your first love. Return to that first day at the keyboard, at the loom, at the easel. Back when you didn't realize there were rules. When no one was keeping score.

If you can do that, you may just find the strength to keep going.

You may never be the writer's/painter's/microbrewer's version of a major-league center-fielder, but damnit! This is your field today. These are your dandelions. The sun is shining and you don't even know what the rules are.

Romp to your heart's greatest joy.

▶ Ron Estrada resides with his wife, Kelly, two children, two cats, and a terrier-mix in Oxford. When not pursuing the spiritual gift of napping, he's at work on his latest novel or some freelance project (he accepts cash, check, PayPal, or smoked pork shoulder). You can email him at rmestrada@ameritech.net or visit his website at ronestrada.com.



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