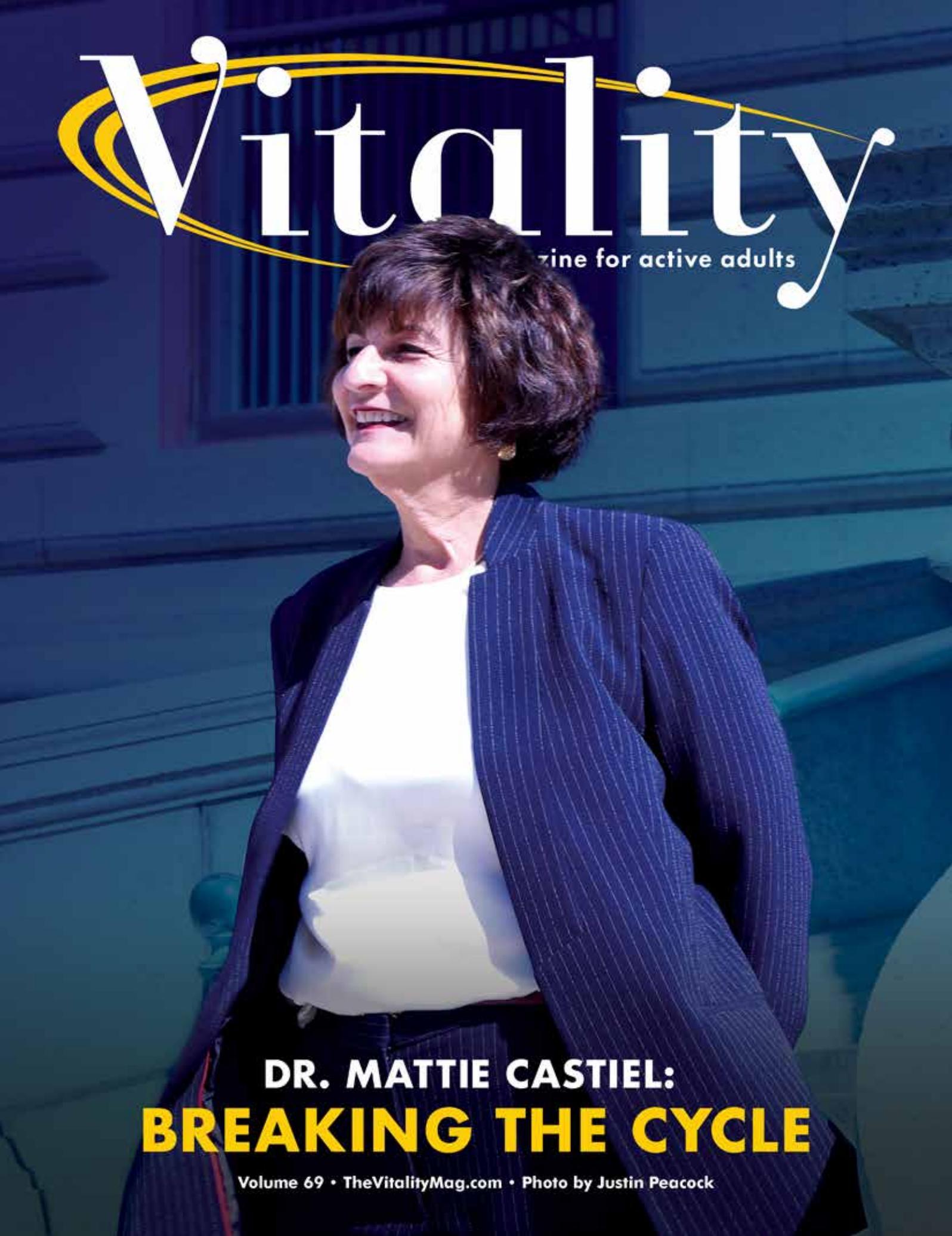


Vitality

Magazine for active adults



**DR. MATTIE CASTIEL:
BREAKING THE CYCLE**

Volume 69 • TheVitalityMag.com • Photo by Justin Peacock

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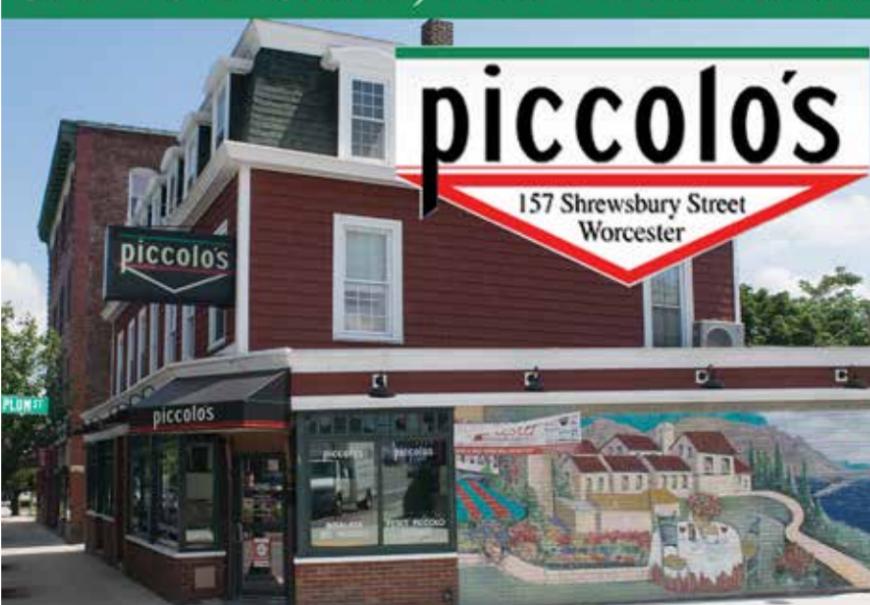


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Paul Giorgio
Publisher
pgiorgio@pagioinc.com

Sloane Perron
Senior Editor
sperron@pagioinc.com

Carl Marzolini
Art Director
cmarzolini@pagioinc.com

David Simone
Vice President, Sales
dsimone@pagioinc.com

Chris Reddy
Account Executive
creddy@pagioinc.com

Bernie Whitmore
April Goodard
Jason Savio
Melinda Myers
Kathleen Trotter
Merilee Kern
Rachel Shuster
Suzanne Karioki
Ryan Cashman
Peter Rosenberger
Amy Dean
Contributing Writers



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Worcester Commissioner of Health and Human Services

DR. MATTIE CASTIEL: BREAKING THE CYCLE



Bernie Whitmore

Impressive things are happening in Worcester. We see this in its innovative development projects and feel it in a growing sense of optimism for the city.

But aren't we more than all that? The gritty spirit many of us encountered when we came here however long ago, captivated and led us to adopt Worcester as our home. I always felt that this attraction was inspired by a community of working neighborhoods.

These things came to mind recently when I spoke with Dr. Mattie Castiel, Worcester's Commissioner of Health and Human Services. There are many loud, often angry, voices that occupy our national discourse and few of them compassionate. Dr. Castiel's calm logic and sense of mission stand in soothing contrast; her belief that communities take care of each other was reassuring.

Q: Let's start with some background. What pathways led you to become Commissioner?

A: I'm originally from Camagüey, Cuba. I left Cuba when I was six years old and came in what was called "Operation Peter Pan". That's when about 4,000 kids left Cuba. Castro came into power in 1959. I left in 1962.

I was supposed to end up in Boston but my mother wrote letters to sponsoring agencies saying, "Look, she's allergic to everything: down; the cold." So I was sent to Lakewood, California and when my parents subsequently came over, we moved and I grew up in Los Angeles.

I certainly didn't know a word of English when I came over and neither did my parents. We came with, essentially, two pairs of clothes and my dolls. I went to school and learned English and figured out how different life in the United States was.

One of the first places we went to was the grocery store. I'd never seen food that you could just pick up and put in a cart and take with you. In Cuba, we only had apples at Christmas, we never saw apples any time after that. Food was rationed; you stood in line

and they gave you whatever a family of four got. So, the grocery store was one of the most amazing things to me.

I went to Cal State Northridge and studied Cellular Molecular Biology. I grew up in a family who believed that women stayed at home; there were certain jobs for women and certain jobs for men. Going to medical school was not something they initially believed in. Ultimately, I applied to med school and got into the University of California, San Francisco.

That was another ordeal because I had to live away from home; and culturally, you don't move away from home! But I moved and I went to med school. My residency was in Saint Louis, which is where I met my husband.

We weren't married yet when he decided that he wanted to get a job. Fallon had scouted him and offered him a job in Massachusetts. He said, "You know what? I'd like to accept it for at least two years." He took the job and then he asked me to marry him.

So, I came to Worcester, Massachusetts. It was supposed to be a two-year stint but we're going on 30 years! Worcester is home and I would not consider moving. Except in the winter. Maybe a place in Florida would be nice because I hate the winter. For 30 years I've disliked winters.

Initially, I worked in the emergency room at Memorial Hospital, then I worked for Family Health for 10 years. Then I went to UMass and I did community outreach clinic through Worcester Housing and Centro Las Americas. I met people where they were living. While I was doing all those community clinics, I got to know the community well and I met a gentleman named Hector Reyes. We were on the board of Centro Las Americas. He was somebody who was in [addiction] recovery. One of his dreams was to start a treatment facility for Latino men because they were unable to access treatment. They didn't feel comfortable in treatment facilities because they didn't speak the language, their customs weren't the same, the food wasn't the same.

Hector and I worked together. He was the community person who knew everybody and I worked to figure out how to put a treatment facility together. In 2004, we started to put this facility together. We went around the community and talked about addiction and how it affected the Latino community, how the treatment, so far, had been incarceration and that we needed to change that process.

We started a non-profit, Latin American Health Alliance, and in 2009 we opened the beginning of the treatment program, the Hector Reyes House. Three or four months later, on July 4th, [Hector] passed away.

We made it a medical facility where we brought treatment from UMass. I was their primary care [physician]. We brought in psychiatry, infectious disease specialists to treat hepatitis, HIV and sexually transmitted diseases. It was a 25-bed facility.

In 2011, we figured out most of the people were homeless and didn't make enough money for an apartment. So, right next door to the treatment facility we bought a transitional house where people who graduate from the program can move into. Then, in 2015, we started a job training program called Café Reyes on Shrewsbury Street. We partnered with Quinsigamond Community College to train them to become prep chefs and how to hygienically handle food.

So, they get trained, they learn how to get job skills, how to get to work on time. Most of the people in the program have been incarcerated for a number of years. That was the process: if you were caught with drugs minimum sentencing was five years; second offense, 10 years; third time, 15 years. People were in prison for a long time, there was no treatment and certainly no job training.

In 2017, we bought another residential program to get more affordable housing for people who graduate the program. Because if they don't have housing, they go homeless and then they start to use [drugs] again. And end up in jail. The cycle continues to spin.

In 2015, Stacey DeBoise Luster, Worcester's first African-American woman to be elected to the Worcester City Council, emailed me an application to the city's Commissioner of Health and Human Services. I thought that this would be interesting to do because by now, the epidemic had really increased. How do we look at the opioid piece of homelessness? The mental health issues? How do we look at it on a bigger scale?

I applied for the job, got the job and have been at it now since September 2015. I oversee the departments of Public Health, Youth, Veterans, Human Rights & Disabilities and the Senior Center.

Q: Which of these issues are the most important to Worcester?

A: That's a tough one, but I would say that my passion - what I like to work with - is the changing of the disparities in health care, bringing equity into the picture. When I look at homelessness, addiction, mental health issues, I see all of it as a cycle.



I would say that my passion - what I like to work with - is the changing of the disparities in health care, bringing equity into the picture." -Dr. Castiel



Dr. Castiel with residents of the Hector Reyes House.

Look at addiction and mental health: they affect kids. It's what we call "adverse childhood experiences". A kid in school may be trying to deal with a parent using substances, who may have just gotten out of jail, have mental health issues and can't get access to care. So ultimately, these problems affect what happens in the school system.

In addition to mental illness and addiction, sometimes people have tough luck. Poverty is another issue. But it doesn't mean that people shouldn't be assured of housing; that should be part of health care. If we actually worked to provide housing for people, to provide them with mental health treatment, with support services that can keep people in housing, our cost of health care would markedly decrease.

As a community, it is all of our responsibilities to invest in our community, to provide jobs for those who are marginalized and can't support themselves with an apartment for their family. The community should invest in those things. There's something called anchoring institutions, which I really believe in, which are those institutions that have money to invest. Part of their investment should be in the community: providing housing for people, providing jobs. Overall, our community would be much healthier if that were the case.

Q: What are we doing about homelessness in Worcester?

A: I think there's great progress in things that have been done. It's hard to say "great" when you still see homeless people around. We have a lot to do, still, but we've made some incredible strides. The City Manager formed a task force last year to look at these issues. They made some recommendations and then we started a coordinating council to look at these recommendations and to follow through.

The method is "housing first", which is putting someone in a house or an apartment and then bringing services to them. You can't say, "I want you to be sober and then I'll give you shelter". It never works that way; people will do better when they're in a warm environment.

Three years ago, we started an overflow shelter for those that are at risk, that don't go to the shelters but are out in encampments in the city. We have a quality of life team that goes into these encampments and tries to get care for these people and tries to get them into housing.

That was one of the ways we found that there were encampments throughout the city, people who did not feel comfortable in the shelters. These encampments are in woods, behind stores and under bridges. It's where people put their stuff and where they sleep.

We joined with faith-based leaders and implemented the Hotel Grace, a shelter that accepts people when it gets below 32 degrees [Fahrenheit]. That continues to be a great experience because of faith-based leaders; that's their belief, their mission: to help everyone. It's run by Pastor Richie Gonzalez. He's treating people with humanity and people will respond when you treat them with humanity.

Q: Who is benefiting from The Worcester Renaissance?

A: Worcester has made some incredible changes; it certainly is now a place to go with a variety of things happening that were never here before. Most people tended to go outside

of Worcester to do anything, whether it was shopping, entertainment or dining; we did it all outside of Worcester.

That has changed completely. At the same time, because of that surge, pricing of real estate has gone up and made it more difficult for people to access housing. We meet the criteria for affordable housing as mandated through the state, but we need more affordable housing. How do we work toward that so everybody is able to access housing? Getting the homeless housed, working to get jobs for people, investment in our community, that is what's going to help those who are marginalized in our community.

Q: What are your goals?

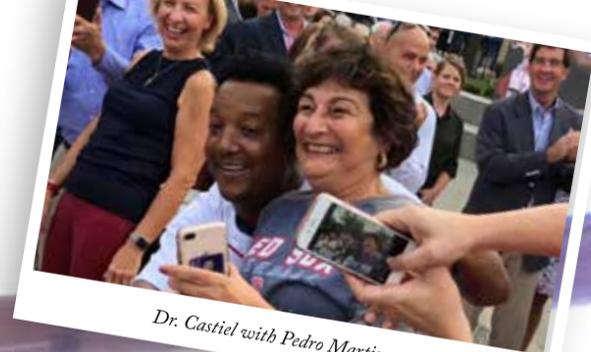
A: I want to make mental health a priority. I want it to stand out as much as cardiothoracic surgery or the other specialties in medicine. Mental health is a huge aspect in our community. Treatment is essential. Seven out of ten of the leading causes of death have a component of mental health issues associated with them: addiction, suicide.

I'm hoping that we bring trauma-informed care into the public schools so that we end the school-to-prison pipeline. Many of those coming out of jail [were there] because of addiction and re-enter our community without assistance, without support, without a job. This makes life for them and their families much more difficult and, in turn, affects their kids.

I think we need to help those families who are struggling and have kids in the public schools. Without it, this cycle is going to continue.



Dr. Castiel with Cafe Reyes and Karyn Clark.



Dr. Castiel with Pedro Martinez.



Dr. Castiel Teaching in Fitchburg.



Dr. Castiel with her husband, sons, and their fiances.



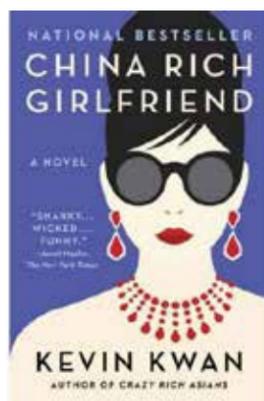
Dr. Castiel with Medical Student Volunteers.



Dr. Castiel on retreat with colleagues.

Reviews written by:
April Goodard

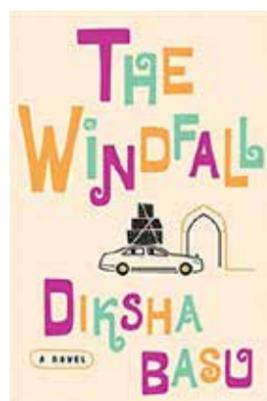
PULSE BOOKS: FROM RAGS TO RICHES



China Rich Girlfriend (Kevin Kwan)

If you loved the novel and recent smash-hit movie adaptation of Kevin Kwan's *Crazy Rich Asians*, discover how the story continues with the sequel and second book in the trilogy *China Rich Girlfriend*. After over two years of not speaking with his 'crazy rich' family in Singapore, the supposed former heir to Tyersall Park, Nicholas Young, is planning a wedding with his professor fiancé Rachel Chu. Although they endured a vast amount of disapproval from Nick's mother and matriarchal grandmother in the previous novel, Rachel and Nick have decided to carry on with their initial plans of matrimony. Meanwhile, blackmailed socialite and mother of the exiled groom-to-be Eleanor Young, has hired a private investigator to look into the life of one of China's most ultra-rich. Eleanor learns far more than she bargained for when she discovers that this obscenely wealthy politician has a strange connection with her daughter-in-law to be...

The finding sends Rachel Chu on a journey to discover who she is and where she came from. As she starts to put together the missing pieces from her past, she learns that she may not be exactly who she thinks she is. Kevin Kwan's *China Rich Girlfriend* visits the fact that nothing is for certain, impossible as it may seem.



The Windfall (Dikshua Basu)

After spending the better half of their lives in the same jobs, routines, and even apartment complexes in East Delhi, the Jhas become privy to a literal change in scenery when Mr. Jha's company becomes unimaginably successful overnight, leaving them much better off than they were before. Through the sale of their company and their new accumulation of wealth, the Jhas have manufactured an entirely new life for themselves after more than 30 years. Their son now attends a university in the United States. The small apartment that they once shared with Mr. Jha's mother was traded in for an extravagant home, shiny new car, and a new place in the wealthier part of Indian society. But as the Jhas find themselves neither here nor there, how will they learn to cope with their newly acquired wealth socially given that they are no longer part of their old neighborhood, and not yet familiar with the nuances of the wealthy?

Follow the story of the Jhas in Diksha Basu's *The Windfall* as they try to navigate new friendships, experiences, neighborhoods, and an ever-changing world.



"WE AND THE DAWG" TAKE A BITE OUT OF THE WORCESTER MUSIC SCENE

Jason Savio

Gail and Dan Hunt know how to keep a good thing going.

The two have been married for 25 years and are also the bass player and guitarist--and founders--of the ever-evolving We and the Dawg, now in its fifth year. Performing a mix of funk and R & B covers, We and the Dawg currently finds itself as one of Worcester's most reliable and entertaining bands.

There are eight members in the group, which features a horn section and the new addition of Johnny Blue Horn (who plays, you guessed it, a blue colored horn). Another recent addition is veteran Worcester singer Bruce Reed, who is the "Dawg" in the band's name. But before there was a "Dawg," there was a "Mrs. Jones."

The group's first incarnation featured Madeline Jones, a singer from Beaumont, Texas, who moved to the Worcester area during her husband's residency to become an orthopedic surgeon, said the Hunts. "Maddy in her own right is a superstar," said Dan. "She could sing the phone book and it would be great."

Playing as We and Mrs. Jones, the group enjoyed success, but it was brief. Madeline and her husband would move back to Beaumont, Texas after about two and a half years, in 2016. There was a brief moment of panic that followed Jones' announcement that she was going to leave. Dan described "Googling 'female singers Central Massachusetts'" and not finding what he was looking for.

The question of who would replace Jones didn't last long. Jim Heffernan, keyboardist in We and Mrs. Jones, knew the perfect man for the job, someone whom he had played with before: Bruce Reed. "(Heffernan) mentioned one day that (Jones) was leaving the band and if I would consider coming down just to listen to them and see if I'd be interested," said Reed. "That they had Jimmy was enough for me. He's one of the best keyboard players I've ever played with and I figured if he's in the band then it had to be good," he added.

Both Hunts agree that the shift between Jones and Reed was seamless and there was no need for a break. Reed and Jones even shared the stage for Jones' last batch of gigs with the band. "Bruce came right in and it was perfect," said Gail. "It almost turned more into a band feeling (when Reed joined). Maddy is an unbelievably professional singer, but it was more like her showcase and now it's just a funk band."

"Plus, coming from a female vocalist to a male vocalist, it's kind of two different sounds," added Dan. "I remember seeing Bruce back in the day and going 'this guy is awesome.' To have him in a band with you is really fortunate."

Reed has his own storied history with the Worcester music scene, having performed as a singer and bass player in the popular Tornado Alley in the 80s and as the singer in Big Dawg during the 90s. Reed said that he retired from music starting in 1997 and had given it up. But after picking up a few gigs around town here and there, including at Greendale's Pub's Blues Jam, he "got the fire back."

"This is my therapy," Reed said. "When the world treats you like a dog treats a fire hydrant, the music just takes all that away."

Despite having some nerves about getting onstage and heading another group - as well as finding his voice again - Reed said that he is having fun with his new band and is grateful for the easy transition. "It was great," he said about his first experience performing with We and the Dawg alongside Jones. "I didn't have all the focus on me which was good because I got to get used to it again. Doing it after all that time was very terrifying, but I knew that I could do it if I could get my voice back. I didn't quite get it (back) but with age comes wisdom, so I can sing around things that I used to just power through."

With Reed now leading on vocals, the "Dawg" is back in town and ready to take another bite out of the Worcester music scene. We and the Dawg have been at it for just over two years, and, with no end in sight, plan on a solid 2019.

"It's too good to stop," said Gail.

Gail and the rest of the band have gigs planned at Bull Mansion and the White Eagle, to name a few. They also have an upcoming show in June at the Worcester Marine Corps League.

The Hunts credit the professionalism and closeness between members of We and the Dawg for the group's sustained success. Dan and Heffernan even went to high school together before playing in separate bands and again finding each other for We and the Dawg. Reed and We and the Dawg's trumpet player, Roger Grover, played together in Tornado Alley.

"Life is funny like that, and not even to mention I play with my wife," Dan said.

The Hunts are clearly the bedrock of We and the Dawg, and their relationship is one that was built on music from the start. Both

attended Worcester State and had a class together, but both eventually dropped out. Gail would later see Dan performing with a band at Tammany Hall.

"He remembered and came over," said Gail, recalling the concert where she saw Dan playing.

"I had a wireless guitar so I went over and I did a solo for her," said Dan.

It must have been a good solo.

"No bad note," he joked.




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HOW TO BRIGHTEN YOUR HOME WITH HOUSEPLANTS THAT BLOOM

Bamboo LED Grow Light Gardens are attractive and have bulbs more than twice as bright as most standard LEDs.



Photo Credit: Gardener's Supply Company

Melinda Myers

Brighten your indoor décor with plants that bloom. Whether growing traditional favorites, flowering tropical plants, or annuals moved inside for winter, their colorful flowers are sure to elicit smiles and months of enjoyment. Just provide the right growing conditions and sufficient light and you will be enjoying months of indoor color.

You may have enjoyed an initial burst of color from traditional favorites like African violets and orchids but struggled to get them to flower again. Maximize your enjoyment and their colorful floral display by providing supplemental lighting. Plants with colorful flowers benefit from brighter or longer periods of light, especially in winter, than what streams through your windows. Grow lights, which provide bright, full-spectrum illumination, are an ideal solution.

You can find many types of grow lights, including simple hanging lamps, DIY fixtures, and metal stands. These are often relegated to the rec room or basement but might be less welcome in your living room. Consider furniture-style light stands like the Bamboo LED Grow Light Gardens (gardeners.com) that will complement your living spaces. They're outfitted with special high-output bulbs, tucked out of sight and more than twice as bright as most standard LEDs. This allows you to grow most flowers and even some fruits without the need to raise and lower the lights to accommodate different plant heights.

Expand your indoor flowering plant collection with a few tropicals. Here are just four of my favorites.

Give flowering maple (Abutilon) bright light and cooler winter temperatures to enjoy their beauty all year long. The solid green or variegated maple-shaped leaves inspired their common name. Plants

may be compact and upright or vining, while the flowers may resemble those of hibiscus or dangling lanterns. Select varieties are known for year-round flowering.

Create a focal point with the unique blooms of chenille plant (Acalypha). The long, fuzzy, cascading flowers resemble chenille yarn. Perfect as a hanging basket, set upon a plant stand or pruned into tree form. This plant needs high humidity and plenty of light to maintain its health and year-round beauty indoors.

Enjoy the coppery, bronze flowers of the shrimp plant (Justicia brandegeana). This long blooming Mexican native performs best in bright light and high humidity. Use it as a hanging basket, prune into a small tree or set it upon a plant stand where the cascading shrimp-like flowers can be enjoyed.

Brighten your fall and winter décor with lipstick vine (Aeschynanthus). The vivid red flowers emerge from dark maroon structures, resembling a tube of lipstick. The glossy green foliage adds needed greenery indoors throughout the year. The more light these plants receive, the better the floral display.

As always, check the plant tags for specific care instructions.

You can boost your indoor floral display by placing annuals you're overwintering, such as geraniums and mandevilla, under lights to encourage blooming. Give these plants bright light, water thoroughly as needed, and enjoy the extra color. Prune if necessary, to keep the plants full and compact.

Incorporating flowers into your living space will boost your mood and reduce stress while livening your indoor décor.

Melinda Myers has written more than 20 gardening books, including *Small Space Gardening*. She hosts *The Great Courses* "How to Grow Anything" DVD series and the *Melinda's Garden Moment* TV & radio segments. Myers is a columnist and contributing editor for *Birds & Blooms* magazine and was commissioned by *Gardeners Supply* for her expertise to write this article. Her web site is www.MelindaMyers.com.



EXERCISE TIPS FOR THE YOUNG AT HEART

Kathleen Trotter

SWITCH YOUR MINDSET: CONSIDER DAILY MOTION A "NON-NEGOTIABLE"

I am sure you are familiar with the adage "use it or lose it." I live by this rule. I consider daily motion a non-negotiable — a "when" not an "if." Moving helps to mitigate typical age-related decreases in muscle and bone mass, metabolism, mobility, stamina, and strength. Now, the caveat ... staying injury free, fit, and spry is not just about motion; it is about what you put into your body and how you recover. Thus, I have amended the platitude to "use, fuel, and properly recover it, or lose it."

USE, FUEL, AND RECOVER IT

Reframe exercise as part of your regular "non-negotiable" routine, prioritize strength training! Strength will: improve your posture, protect your back, allow you to walk confidently and perform everyday activities with ease, improve bone strength, increase lean muscle mass, improve your athletic achievements, and help you maintain independence.

I am not proclaiming you "must join CrossFit" or "grunt in the weight room" (although if that

would be motivating, go for it). Instead, I am saying that you consider some type of strength routine as "non-negotiable."

Four key exercise types are the squat, balance training, multi-direction motion (line dancing or Zumba anyone?), and interval cardio. Progress or regress exercises depending on your fitness level. Intervals could be done in the pool, walking, or jogging. Squats could be done holding weight or simply using your own body. Don't want to do balance work at the gym? Stand on one leg to brush your teeth.

DITCH "DIETS"; THINK "NUTRITIONALLY DENSE"

Appropriate nutrition puts that pep in your step, improves mood and performance, aids recovery, and is a building block for hormones and lean tissue, not to mention bones and teeth.

BE AWARE OF WHAT YOU ARE EATING AND AVOID PROCESSED FOODS

Processed foods are almost never healthy — no matter the label. Prioritize high-fiber, nutritionally-dense foods, such as vegetables, lean proteins, nuts, and seeds. Know that food

is more than simply calories. Food includes micronutrients, fiber, water, phytochemicals, and zoochemicals. Your body requires a variety of these to live and thrive; they protect against free radicals, control inflammation, play a role in protein synthesis and muscle and nerve functions, and tell our body to release (or inhibit) hormones. Everything you eat is a chance to direct, shape, and remake your health.

DON'T UNDERESTIMATE THE IMPORTANCE OF RECOVERY!

Exercise is only a positive stress on the body if you give it the tools it needs to recover. Stay hydrated, sleep, eat well, and do daily body self-care activities like stretching and massage.

FINAL THOUGHTS

A "good" program done consistently is better than the "perfect" program you never do. Don't try to fit a round peg into a square hole — match your workout goals to your fitness "personality." Garden, walk your dog, go to Aquafit. Do you! Something is better than nothing. There is no better time to make a healthy choice than the moment you are in now. Get up, drink some water, and go for a walk!

Kathleen Trotter is a fitness expert, media personality, personal trainer, writer, life coach, certified Pilates and ELDOA instructor, and overall health enthusiast. Her passion is motivating others to "find their fit" and works with clients ranging from endurance athletes to individuals living with Parkinson's disease and osteoporosis. She also writes for the *Globe and Mail* and *Huffington Post*, blogs for *Flaman Fitness*, and makes regular TV appearances. Kathleen holds an M.Sc. from the University of Toronto and a nutrition diploma from the Canadian School of Natural Nutrition. She lives in Toronto where she owns a personal training studio.

Find out more about Kathleen at www.KathleenTrotter.com.

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LUXE LIST: 5 DIGITAL DIET SOLUTIONS SLIMDOWN SUCCESS THIS NEW YEAR



Merilee Kern

With the recent Consumer Electronics Show (CES) having debuted multiple diet-focused consumer technologies, including devices that analyze the gases in people's breath to uncover what diet improvements would be helpful for them, there is much ado about progressive digital solutions fostering slimdown success. With that in mind, here's a roundup of five savvy tech solutions poised to help us shed those stubborn, unwanted pounds easier, more effectively and more sustainably for the long-term:

LUMEN AND FOODMARBLE

Showcased at this year's CES show, both are pocket-sized devices that users blow into. They pair with smartphone apps that tell people things like how well they are digesting food or burning calories. The firm behind Lumen states that their device provides a way for people to monitor their metabolisms. The device also has the capability of determining if the user is burning carbs or fats. Meanwhile, FoodMarble measures hydrogen levels in an attempt to make deductions about a person's digestive health. The thought is that the device can help people avoid foods that cause bloating, abdominal pain and other gastrointestinal symptoms.

TRAQ SMART SHOES

Here's some killer wearable technology for fitness-minded folks. TRAQ, Alegria's first smart shoe, are the world's first comfort smart shoes with a built-in pedometer plus a personalized app community. The designs are made for walking, working and leisure, simultaneously allowing you to accurately count every step thanks to the smart Q-Chip embedded right in the shoe! Easily connect the integrated pedometer in the shoes to the accompanying Alegria TRAQ smartphone app to view your daily and monthly step activity. You can do everything in your daily routine while stepping out in intelligent, blissful comfort. Anyone can track their steps, connect with their friends and compete on a leaderboard. Cheer on your friends and family to walk together through the app! Oh, and there's no need to charge these smart shoes—ever—for the lifetime of the shoes. Traqshoes.com

HEALTHYWAGE

This app actually PAYS you to lose weight! With the HealthyWage app, you determine how much weight you want to lose, how long you want to take to lose it, and how much you want to wager each month. If you successfully reach your goal by the end date of your challenge, you win your prize. The average HealthyWager prize is over \$1,200! You can also join team challenges, jackpot challenges, and step challenges through the app. Participants have collectively lost over 1 million pounds and gained over \$20,000,000 since the company's inception, and over \$13,000,000 in 2018, alone. HealthyWage.com.

ESCALI PRIMO DIGITAL SCALE

Assuredly due to the Escali Primo Digital Scale's accuracy, speed and simplicity, it's twice been rated as a best value product by a leading independent consumer magazine, and was also recently named the "best kitchen scale for most people" by other key media. This device is capable of measuring in increments of 1 gram or 0.05 ounces and has the capacity to measure up to 11 pounds of food at once. Two-button controls facilitate ease of use, and a protective shield on the control panel prevents accidental spills from compromising performance. Battery life is also prolonged with an auto shut-off feature. Amazon.com.

NAKED HOME BODY SCANNER

Leverage the power of infrared light to capture a 3D model of your body with the Home Body Scanner from Naked Labs. The scanner itself is built into an attractive smart mirror with sensors that measure important metrics and calculate measurements. An integrated app allows you to track your progress. The Home Body Scanner is designed to help you visualize your progress and body fat percentage as it happens, with a focus on weight loss, performance, and recomposition. You'll be able to literally watch your body as it changes each day. NakedLabs.com.

Putting a high-tech spin on your weight loss makes the journey more interactive and hands-on, often notably bolstering the success of a weight-loss endeavor. Never before have our efforts, and the results thereof, been so tangible. Whether you're winning money for losing weight or tracking your body's progress in 3D, taking advantage of the digital tools and advancements in the weight-loss arena will surely make slimming down in the 21st Century a more efficacious undertaking.

As a branding pundit, wellness industry veteran, consumer health advocate and influential media voice, Merilee Kern spotlights noteworthy marketplace innovations, change makers, movers and shakers. Also a two-time fitness champion, her ground-breaking, award-winning "Kids Making Healthy Choices" Smartphone APP for children, parents/caregivers and educators is based on her award-winning, illustrated fictional children's book, "Making Healthy Choices - A Story to Inspire Fit, Weight-Wise Kids." Merilee may be reached online at www.LuxeListReviews.com. Follow her on Twitter at [www.twitter.com/LuxeListEditor](https://twitter.com/LuxeListEditor) and Facebook at www.facebook.com/TheLuxeList



THE Lash LOUNGE

NEW AROUND THE WOO: LASH LOUNGE

Rachel Shuster

Located in the Lakeway Commons at 193 Boston Turnpike #6110, Shrewsbury, Massachusetts, Lash Lounge is a salon offering expertise and services related to all things lashes.

General Manager, Lisa Callahan has been with Lash Lounge in Shrewsbury from the start. "John Donahue is the owner, and I started with him last February when we were getting ready to open," she said. The salon officially opened in November 2018.

Callahan was good friends with Donahue's sister and that's where the connection originated. "She said I should work with John in this business, so we met. He explained Lash Lounge's philosophy, culture, the corporate goals, and it sounded fantastic," she said.

Callahan did not always work in the beauty industry, having a great variety of other career experiences. "I am actually a licensed attorney, and even though I don't practice, the skills still come in handy!" she said. "I was also in healthcare at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical center in Boston as a practice assistant and mystery shopper!"

While this Lash Lounge location is in Shrewsbury, Lash Lounge is actually a franchise. "It started in Dallas, Texas in 2006 with Anna Phillips. She opened a salon to do lash extensions and it just caught on and exploded," Callahan said.

From there, Lash Lounge developed franchises and currently has 79 stores across the country. "We were the first to open in MA, but we also have a location at Assembly Row in Somerville and are on target to open another soon," Callahan said.

As for the salon's services, the bulk is lash extensions although other services are available as well. "Most of our services take place right above your nose and below your forehead," Callahan joked.

A set of classic lashes is \$99, and a set of volume lashes is \$139. A lash perm is \$80, while a brow and lash tinting package is \$50 or \$30 each. Brow threading is \$15.

Lash Lounge has even participated in a beauty crawl with other businesses in the shopping plaza. "People come to each business and get a promo which is good for just that night," she said. "We have champagne, snacks, etc. It's a way to get people to see and visit all the businesses here," Callahan added.

Lash Lounge also has Teachers' Night, Nurses' Night, and a Physical Fitness Industry Night which brings various people together to enjoy the salon's services!

Callahan also mentioned that Lash Lounge partners with community organizations, specifically, "Dress for Success" in Worcester. "We have a clothing drive for them," she said. "One client a month gets some lashes before they go out on an interview," Callahan added.

Beyond all the great things Lash Lounge does, one of the most notable is how personal and customizable they and their services are for their clients.

"We would love to explain the process to you," Callahan said. "People can call, have a consultation, and learn about the services. It is completely driven by them. We don't want anyone to walk out unhappy," she added.

According to Callahan, "There is a science to it – it's not just lashes. We ask if they want silk or mink, what length, etc. It's very customized for each person. The biggest goal is to maintain the health of their own eyelashes. There is a huge education piece and our stylists work with people to understand everything."

FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT WWW.THELASHLOUNGE.COM/SALONS/SHREWSBURY OR CALL (774) 462-5274.

LOOK YOUR BBEST

Suzanne Karioki

Whether you're new to makeup or just looking to refresh your routine, we've got the tips you need to transition your winter looks to effortless spring beauty.

MOISTURIZER

You want a light formula with SPF - sun protection is paramount to the longevity of good, healthy skin. Look out for moisturizers with hyaluronic acid and collagen to boost moisture and lessen the appearance of wrinkles.

BB CREAM

If you're looking for a simple addition to your daily makeup routine, BB Cream might be a great choice. Sheerer than regular foundation, BB Cream became popular in Asia before making it to U.S. shores. BB Creams are the best part of moisturizers with some of the coverage of foundation. It won't offer the same customizable shades, but it's perfect if you just want to up your game a little without using heavy makeup.

CONCEALER

Use a moisturizing concealer to reduce dark circles under your eyes. Apply it in an upside-down triangle, starting the base under your eye and drawing the point down, parallel to the tip of your nose. Gently press the product into your skin, taking care not to spread it around too much - you don't want streaks right under your eye. Better yet, take a clean finger and gently pad and blend your concealer into your skin for a natural, lifted look.

MASCARA AND EYELINER

A little can go a long way to make your eyes really pop. Instead of the blackest black mascara, go for a natural black or brown for

a less dramatic look. To add definition, use eyeliner on your upper lid and avoid drawing a hard line on your lower lid - you don't want to make your eyes look smaller. Less is more; draw a very thin line and build up if you need to.

BLUSH

Adding a pop of color can really take your look to the next level, as long as you choose the right color for your skin tone. Light pinks are best for fair skin but don't shy away from color if your skin is darker. Medium skin tones generally look best in peaches and slightly darker pinks, while dark skin glows under dark pinks and orangey browns. Again, it's best to start small and build up, aiming for a barely noticeable look. With practice, you can build up to what works best for you.

EYESHADOW

Whether you're going for a natural day look or more dramatic makeup for a night out, you don't have to totally ditch the sparkle. A nice shimmer in your eyeshadow can add glam without being overpowering. Use a color close to your skin tone to add some subtle daytime glimmer. Choose a darker color to upgrade your look at night.

Don't be afraid to ask for help from a pro, whether you're starting at your local drugstore or stop at a specialty store like Sephora or Ulta. Makeup can be complicated, especially if you haven't changed your routine in a while. Remember, your smile is the most important part of your look; treasure the things in your life that keep it there.



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REUNION TAP & TABLE: A RESTAURANT FOR EVERY SEASON

**Reunion Tap & Table
198 Worcester Street, Grafton
(774) 293-5501
reuniontap.com**

Bernie Whitmore

Not so many years ago, Worcester was a town you had to abandon in order to find a dining experience built on quality, innovation and fun. Then, the Shrewsbury Street dining district coalesced, and creative cuisine returned to town. It seemed a miracle.

The excitement still echoes and now many of us think, "Why leave town? We can get a good meal right here Worcester!"

There is some truth in that, but with each excursion to new restaurants in the surrounding towns, I'm finding this attitude might be a trap. In recent months, it seems that whatever direction we point the car in, we're finding worthy dining experiences throughout the suburbs.

The latest of these culinary treasures is Reunion Tap & Table in Grafton. They've transformed what I'd reckon to be a mundane strip mall space into an oasis of earth tones: dark wood table tops, deep-green glazed wall sections and matte-finished dishware. They've fused cozy with spacious and country with sophisticated.

Sara, our server, seemed as interested in us as we were with the menu and genially brought us up to date with Reunion's brief history. The establishment bills itself as a tap room and their list of drafts is interestingly national in scope. I chose a West Coast IPA, Firestone Walker's Union Jack, and enjoyed its deep bitter hops, a very 'uncluttered' flavor. Although, my preference remains with our New England IPA's and their more complex citrus, herbal and piney tones.

Appetizers feature three variations of Poutine and I was leaning toward "Breakfast": bacon, fried egg and hollandaise sauce. But, in deference to my friend's keto diet, we decided to share the Smoked Salmon. Typically, this dish would take the form of butter-thin slices. However, at Reunion it was presented in a serving bowl: coarsely chopped, mildly smoked salmon was flavored with red onion jam (not too sweet) and a generous toss of capers. All this was topped with crunchy shards of thinly-sliced pretzels. The flavors merged in that bowl formed the

perfect appetizer: a touch smoky, a touch sweet, delicate salmon, and piquant capers. This dish was a delightful introduction to Reunion's wide-ranging flavor palette.

From there, my companion moved to his entrée of equally keto-friendly Prime Sirloin, a ten-ounce club cut sliced across to reveal its crimson center – perfectly prepared! A simple treatment with salt and cracked black pepper gave it honest beef flavor. The kitchen substituted mashed potatoes with a medley of sautéed vegetables: cubed butternut squash, cauliflower florets, shredded leeks and wild mushrooms. The richness of the mushrooms merged with the free-flowing beef juices to form a robust flavor perfectly suited for cold winter evenings.

My entrée, a special that evening, was also designed for mid-winter comfort dining: Braised Oxtail with Gnocchi. It arrived in an earthenware baking dish; dozens of tender gnocchi drenched in a parmesan cream sauce scattered with shitake mushrooms. Every element of this dish spelled richness! Realizing this, the chef draped emerald-green broccoli rabe over the entire affair for color contrast and a welcome punch of bitter flavor.

As I explored my dinner, each time I thought I'd forked a piece of oxtail, it revealed as yet another meaty shitake mushroom. Perplexed, I asked Sara about it. She explained that the oxtail, braised slowly for hours, had turned to flecks that were incorporated into the creamy-rich parmesan sauce.

How do you top that? With a refreshing Crème Brûlée, perhaps! Reunion's version is classic all the way, served in a shallow fluted baking dish, its fragile crust of golden burnt sugar cracked open to a vanilla bean infused eggy custard. Pure, honest flavors.

Throughout our meal I was impressed with the menu's sensitivity to season. And even more excited to anticipate a return in the springtime when the flavors and ingredients should, hopefully, blossom with tender freshness.



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PULSE BREW: SEVEN SAWS BREWING EMBRACES LOCAL HISTORY

Ryan Cashman

In Massachusetts, we're proud of our towns. We reflect that pride in the strength of our communities and the businesses within them, like breweries. The last few years have seen an explosion of independent brewing companies, many of whom are fully embracing the industrial heritage of the buildings which now house their barrels.

Seven Saws Brewing in Holden, however, is a little different. On their website, they quote a 1795 map which states: "There are in the Town of Holden ... Seven Sawmills." Each mill is credited with providing the lumber used to build Holden. Seven Saws honors that history.

Their taproom, at 1148 Main St., is a long and skinny alleyway, the floor packed on each side with rough sawed wood tables and industrial wrought iron chairs. The ceiling is stamped tin and the walls are littered with aged maps and black and white photos of the mills themselves. They take the saw theme even further: the wooden serving boards for a flight of four are carved into the shape of a hand saw.

On a blistering mid-winters day, Kearny (my beer buddy and soon to be father-in-law) and I took a trip to the taproom to see what was what. Kearny, having previously scouted the place, as is his prerogative, knew exactly what he wanted upon entry. He was served quickly, found us a seat by the sun filled window at the front of the taproom, and sipped on a Down Under: a hazy New England IPA loaded with Australian hops.

To provide a broader scope, I ordered a saw of four: Mill Street New England IPA, Sequoia American IPA, Prescott English Maple Porter, and Fog Buster Espresso Stout.

I sipped on the Fog Buster first, which struck with an intense hit of coffee then smoothed into subtle notes of chocolate. I went for the Sequoia next, but Kearny stopped me, recommending I try the Prescott first.

"Why?" I asked.

"Palate cleanser," he said.

It may strike you as odd for a heavily mapled porter to work as a palate cleanser, but, ever the eager student, I gave it a shot. The Prescott is like sipping on fine bourbon, only it's a beer. And, it did exactly what Kearny said it would do. Trying the Sequoia after the Prescott brought out all of its floral and fruity notes that would have otherwise remained hidden by the hops. The Mill Street too, which is very hazy and fruity, took on a smoother, creamier texture after cleansing with Prescott. The Fog Buster even showed a new side of itself, with the maple from the porter exaggerating the chocolate in the stout.

Beer tasting, oddly enough because it wasn't even considered cultured until 10 years ago, has become more akin to a wine tasting, with flavors hidden underneath each other in a maze of alcohol.

For a small operation, Seven Saws has an incredibly diverse selection, showcasing a brewing talent that will hopefully build another pillar of pride for Holden.

FOR THE GRANDKIDS



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Pastels are the only colors you need for all things Easter! Pastel Liners are a set of 8 pastel markers with dual tips. One side is a 5mm chisel tip so you can use it as a pastel highlighter pen. The other end is a 3mm fine tip marker that you can use to sketch, color, draw and write in beautiful pastel colors. **\$9.99; ooly.com.**

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WHEN CAREGIVING IS OVER

Amy Dean

To care for those who once cared for us is one of the greatest honors in life. Being a caregiver taps into a deep well of human kindness, tenderness, and love, and serves to connect us emotionally, physically, and spiritually to those who truly matter.

But such service to our loved ones can take a toll on the caregiver. Anyone who has served, or is serving, as a caregiver knows the life adjustments that must be made, the time that needs to be devoted to the daily care of a loved one, and the profound patience that it takes to show even temperament in the most trying and heartbreaking of times.

When you are a caregiver, you begin living your life differently. Adjusting to devoting a lot of your time and energy to addressing the needs of a loved one becomes the new normal for you. So, what happens when your time for caregiving ends? Time after the loss of a loved one involves grieving the loss, making funeral arrangements, settling the estate, and clearing out possessions. Once you have achieved such closure, the real work begins - on you.

While caregiving, you may have lost touch with friends, stopped pursuing activities and passions you enjoyed, or even suspended self-care activities such as exercising, regular sleep, taking care of your household, and eating a well-balanced diet.

Adjusting to life after caregiving ends means re-establishing normalcy in your life. Just as you helped to pick up the pieces

of a loved one's life, so too must you start to pick up the pieces of your own life and make yourself whole. Some ways to do this include:

Reflect on your experience of being a caregiver. The time spent as a caregiver provided you with a unique opportunity to connect or reconnect with a loved one—or even helped you to strengthen or repair a damaged relationship. This was a highly emotional experience, so it's important to reflect on all that you were able to accomplish.

Accept that you may have mixed feelings about the experience. While it is a blessing to know that your loved one is no longer in pain or suffering, and there is a sense of relief in knowing that you can reclaim your life, you will still need to grieve the loss. Even if the relationship you had with the person you were caring for did not deepen or change in the way you wanted it to, the layers of your grief will be multi-faceted and complex. Grief can be experienced in unexpected ways, so it's important to allow yourself to feel everything.

Give yourself time. There is no magic formula that will help you to readjust to your life after your role as a caregiver ends. After such an experience, you may find yourself adrift and questioning your purpose in life. How you want to live this next chapter in your life is up to you. So give yourself time to reevaluate your life, reconnect or connect with others, reach out for support, and rebuild. Remember, you are in control of the direction you take in your life.

Amy Dean lives in Worcester and is the author of several books, including "Growing Older, Growing Better".



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