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—
BENTRICE JUSU
ENGINE COMPANY 3

”

ART & SOUL

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BY MEGHAN RABBITT

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The sudden death of 35-year-old Jamila Irons-Johnson, PsyD, was a devastating blow to her friends and family. But with the donation and transplant of her major organs, she saved six lives. BY SCOTT EDWARDS

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BY JESS DOWNEY, ILLUSTRATION BY MITCH BLUNT

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MASTER CLASS

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REALWOMAN



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everything. It’s a human
thing we share.”

– Dr. Christine Lotto
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from the publisher



Be Your Biggest Fan

I recently spoke at an event as a guest panelist, and I was very nervous. I have a master's degree in public relations and 20 years of experience, so public speaking should come easily to me. I am very good at conducting one-on-one conversations, and I enjoy meeting with coworkers and potential clients, but I have a true fear of public speaking, and the anxiety can be nerve-racking. But after my presentation this time, someone approached me and said, "I am huge a fan girl of *Real Woman* magazine."

She was excited to meet me and to share her enthusiasm for *Real Woman* and her appreciation for all of the amazing women we feature who are not only inspirational but also local. What she didn't know was how much I needed to hear that on that specific day. In that 2-minute interaction, she made my entire day, and for that I am grateful. She validated all that I hope to achieve every day with this publication.

I love when readers share how much they enjoy the magazine and the stories of these incredible women in our community. It continues to make me proud to work for an organization that supports the community, strong women, and the contributions they make toward a better humanity.

Thank you for making *Real Woman* a part of your day, and keep up the good work because I am your fan girl, too.

Kate Stier

Director of Public Relations & Marketing



“What’s nice here is that the patients really *know* who their physician is.”

– Dr. Joyce Varughese
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Our Family of Heroes



This job can be humbling. Last week, as I was wrapping up this issue of the magazine, two previous *Real Woman* cover subjects popped into my news feed. The first was Courtney Banghart, who coached the Princeton Tigers women's basketball team until 2019, bringing her new squad at the University of North Carolina to the March Madness Sweet 16 in impressive fashion. Banghart is an inspiring leader, and her teams believe in her. WNBA player Blake Dietrick, who played for Banghart at Princeton, told me: "She's not a screamer. If you've done something wrong, she will pull you aside and talk to you instead of making you feel bad in front of everyone. She's logical and measured. She's a great coach."

Then on March 16, *Real Woman* alum Kathryn Sherlock, a trauma nurse at Capital Health, helped make history when the legislation she'd been championing was included as part of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA). Kayden's Law, named for her daughter who was killed by the child's father in 2018, will "help protect children by making their safety and welfare the principle focus in any custody dispute." Sherlock was invited to the White House alongside other VAWA advocates, and she and President Biden shared a moment. "The first thing he said to me was that he lost two children. He was crying, and so was I," Sherlock says. But she also shared that the anger that's been leveled against her has taken an enormous toll. "In my heart, [fighting for this law] is the right thing to do, but it comes with a price tag. I'd only do this for Kayden. No one else."

Finally, there's Bentrice Jusu, this issue's cover subject ("Brave Art," pg 38). From her art, poetry, and photography to her service as a Trenton firefighter, Jusu has so many gifts and a courageous spirit. But one thing left an indelible mark on me. In 2016, Jusu and some friends escaped the mass shooting at the Pulse nightclub in Orlando in which a 29-year-old man killed 49 people and wounded 53 more. When I asked her about that night, she cried, and she said, "The man who walked into Pulse and killed and hurt all those people was battling something, and it was expressed through hate. That's deep hate. That's deep sadness. That's deep pain. And we don't do enough to help someone like that."

In response to that tragedy and other personal losses, Jusu introduced The Potential Project in Trenton, which uses "storytelling, visual art, photography, and digital media to acknowledge the stories and lives of those we have lost to violence, and to imagine our community healing."

While I love featuring these women in *Real Woman*, I also just sleep better knowing they are out there in the world.

Jess Downey
Editor
jess@indeliblellc.com

3

THINGS I'M TRYING



Ranch Dressing

In 3 weeks, I gobbled up all four seasons of *Yellowstone*, a drama series starring Kevin Costner. It features one of the most badass female characters —Beth Dutton—to ever grace the silver screen.



Stingray City

I know you're thinking, *Are you crazy? Didn't a stingray kill the Crocodile Hunter?* It's true. But they are actually playful and friendly. At Stingray City in Antigua, nature guides facilitate holding and feeding them safely.



Medicine Ball

You can find the recipe online if you Google "Starbucks Medicine Ball," which I did after being introduced to the tasty cure-all with steamed lemonade, citrus mint tea, and honey. This drink is yummy, and it packs a punch to fight a cold.

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REALWOMAN

VOLUME #9 | ISSUE #2 | SPRING 2022

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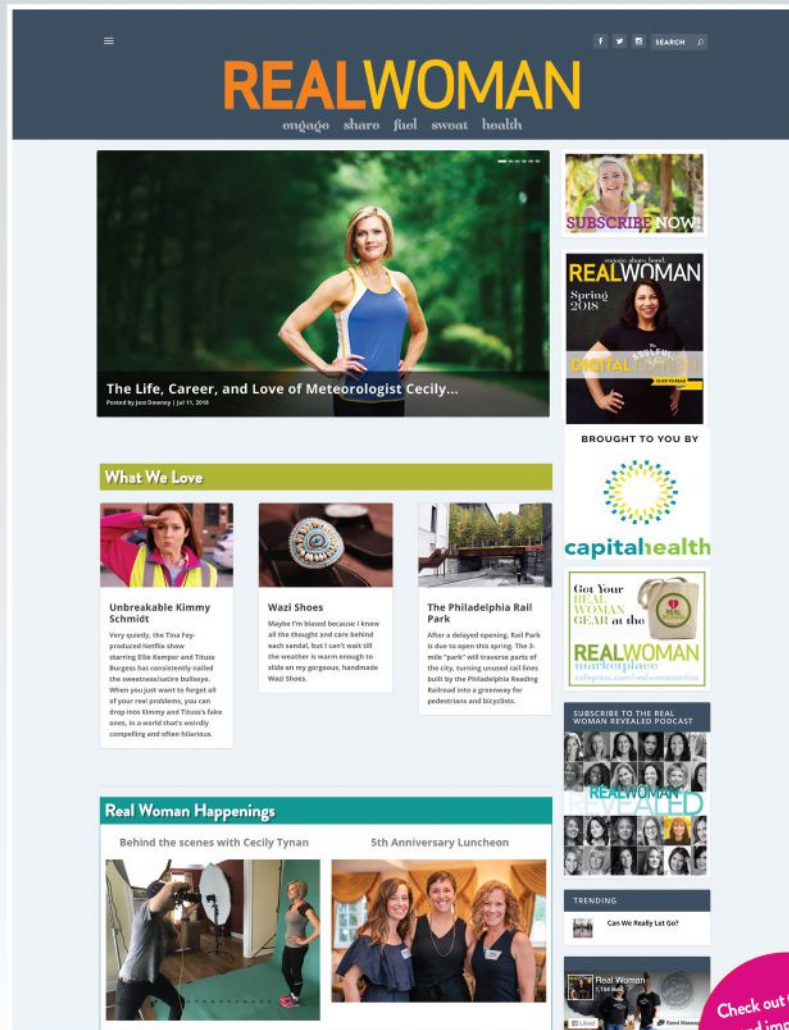
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snapshots

IMAGES FROM THE CAPITAL HEALTH COMMUNITY



STAFF GETS THE BLUES

Ashlee Godshalk Ruggles, MD (third from left) and the Capital Health Surgical Group staff wore blue in honor of Colon Cancer Month.



ECONOMIC IMPACT AWARD

Rep. Frank Farry (Middletown Township, Bucks County, Pa.) presented Al Maghazehe, president and CEO of Capital Health, with the Economic Impact Award. The honor was bestowed upon Capital Health by the Lower Bucks County Chamber of Commerce. Members of Capital Health leadership and the Lower Bucks Chamber of Commerce were present at Capital Health – Oxford Valley to observe the honor.

FAB FIVE

Staff and nurses at Capital Health Regional Medical Center and Capital Health Medical Center – Hopewell recently celebrated achieving Magnet® Recognition from the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC) for the fifth consecutive time!



snapshots

IMAGES FROM THE CAPITAL HEALTH COMMUNITY

SUPPORT FOR POLICE

Dominick Eboli, MD, (far right), medical director of the Bristol Myers Squibb Trauma Center at Capital Health Regional Medical Center, was joined by members of his team to present tourniquets to the Ewing Police so they could be ready to help someone with life-threatening injuries before medical professionals arrive. Thanks to the Ewing Police Department for being great partners in our service to the community.



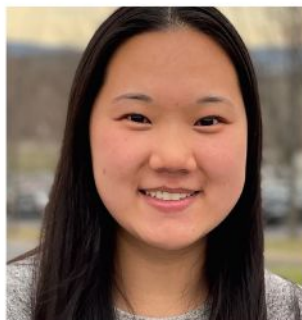
GO RED FOR WOMEN

Capital Health is proud to participate in #WearRedDay to help raise awareness for the fight against heart disease in women. Education and lifestyle changes can help prevent cardiac events in the long term, but today our employees were excited to Go Red for Women and encourage them to start making life-changing decisions now. Visit goredforwomen.org to learn more about how you can participate.

contributors



KENT NISHIMURA / LOS ANGELES TIMES VIA GETTY IMAGES



Ella Castronuovo

REAL WOMAN INTERN

● Ella is studying digital and print journalism at Penn State University. She writes for *The Daily Collegian*, a student-run news outlet on campus, and she hopes to write about social injustices in the future. She loves going for walks around campus and experimenting in her tiny kitchen with new foods and recipes.



Linette Kielinski

COVER, "BRAVE ART" (P. 38)
"TAKING THE WHEEL" (P. 50)

● Linette has a passion for visual storytelling and creating images to help and inspire others. She's spent more than 15 years as a photographer, and she and her husband run a commercial photo studio in Philadelphia.

Kathryn Sherlock

PASSING KAYDEN'S LAW

I could fill both houses of Congress with everything I don't know and will never know about the legislative process. But when a law named for your daughter who was killed and for whom you fight every day becomes the law of the land, it warrants a pinch-yourself kind of moment. It was all a bit of a whirlwind—finding out Kayden's Law was included in the Violence Against Women Act, which was reauthorized by Congress in March, and being invited to watch the President sign the bill into law. Before I knew it I was hugging President Biden

and crying with him over our lost children.

There are so many critics of this law and of me, and I receive more threats than you could imagine, but the goal of this law is to make kids' safety the priority, simple as that. I found out that we have never had any type of legislation signed by a U.S. President protecting the rights of children, so it is a big deal, a historic moment.

Some days I do feel a sense of peace, knowing we did this, but honestly, most days I just want Kayden back. But maybe today someone else won't lose their Kayden because of this bill.



Kathryn Sherlock, RN works in the Emergency Department at Capital Health. She is the mom of five children, including Kayden, who was killed in 2018 by her father.



Meghan Rabbitt

"MY HAPPY PLACE" (P. 18)
"BODY KNOWS BEST" (P. 26)

● Meghan is a writer and editor from Long Island, NY, who has been published in *Women's Health*, *Prevention*, *Good Housekeeping*, and many more. When she's not at her desk creating content, you'll find her traveling, hiking, biking, yogifying, cooking, and generally loving life.



Dana O'Neil

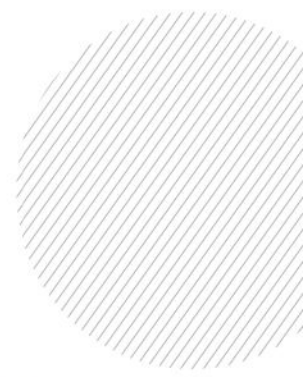
"TAKING THE WHEEL" (P. 50)

● Dana is a senior writer for *The Athletic* and has worked as a sportswriter for more than 25 years, including stops at *The Philadelphia Daily News* and *espn.com*. She also is the author of *Long Shots*, a book chronicling Villanova University's 2016 national championship. She loves spending time with her family in Bucks County and on Long Beach Island.

outtakes

TEAM EFFORT

Everyone brought their A-game to Bentrice Jusu's art studio in Trenton to shoot the Spring 2022 *Real Woman* cover, including make-up artist Timothy "Nitro" Pagan (bottom right), who was working with a broken hand.



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PEACE AT HOME

For terminally ill cancer patients, staying out of the hospital, ending chemotherapy treatment, and dying at home are all associated with a better quality of life, according to a study published in the *Archives of Internal Medicine*.

The study found that though many factors contribute to a patient's end-of-life experience, personal or spiritual connections like praying, meditating, receiving visits from a spiritual guide, and maintaining a good relationship with doctors improved the patients' quality of life.

HAPPY AND YOU KNOW IT

Despite the lingering impact of the global pandemic, the World Happiness Report's annual rankings remain stable. Data from the Gallup World Poll, Lloyd's Register Foundation World Risk Poll, and the ICL/YouGov Data Portal showed that while the United States edged up slightly from 19th to 16th, Finland remained at the top of the happiness scale, followed by its neighbors Denmark, Iceland, Sweden, and Norway—which all ranked in the top 10.



TOSSING AND TURNING

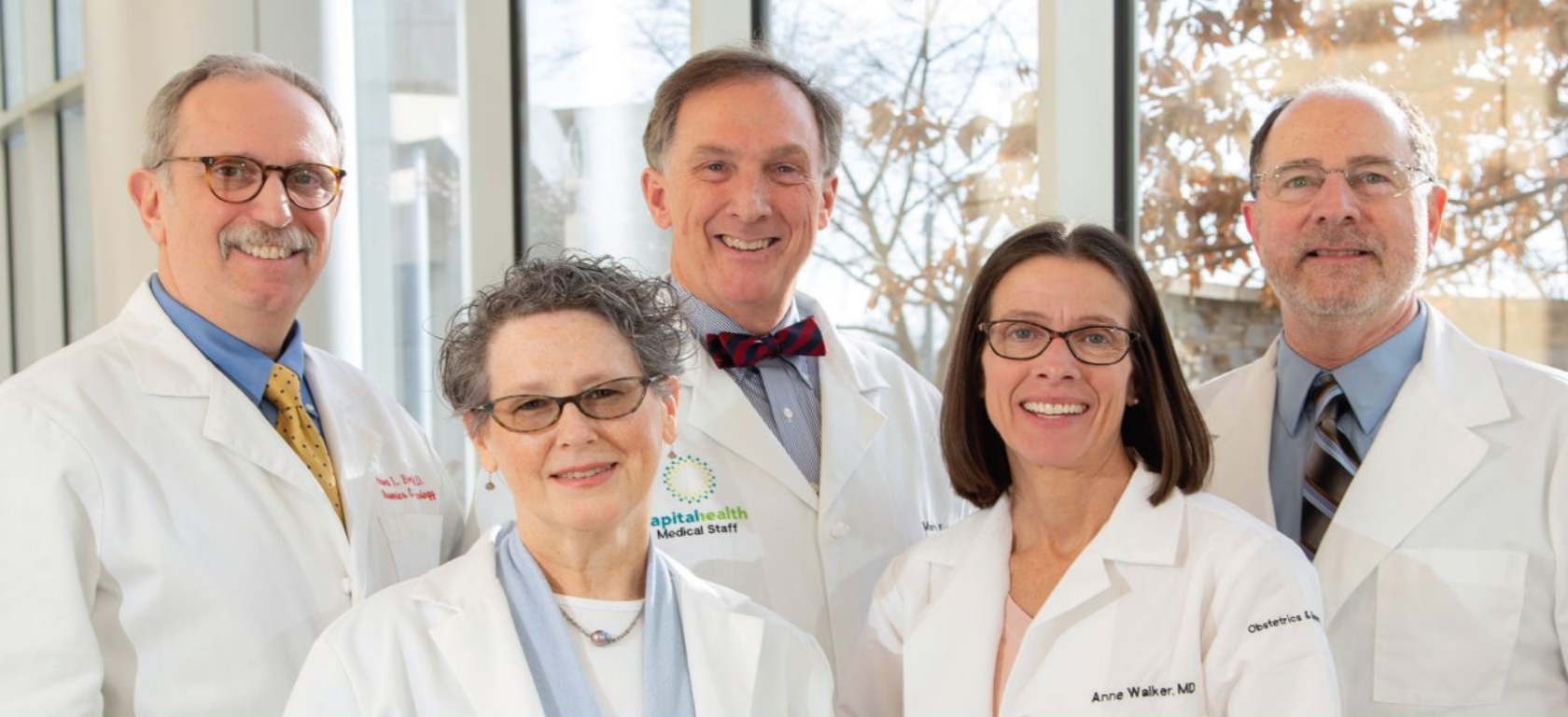


Only one-third of American adults report getting a good night's sleep, according to a web-based study conducted by Gallup and mattress retailer Casper. The study noted that stress was a major factor of restlessness, increasing it by 96 percent, along with factors like poor nutrition, low exercise, and a person's environment and emotional and mental state. Researchers found that exercising daily, incorporating a sleep routine, and using a sound machine can help improve a person's quality of sleep.



DOUBLE MAMMY

Though mammograms are mainly associated with screening for breast cancer, they can also serve to detect early signs of heart disease, according to a study led by Dr. Carlos Iribarren, research scientist at the Kaiser Permanente Northern California Division of Research in Oakland. The team found that those whose mammograms had arterial calcifications were more likely to develop a heart disease by 51 percent and women with calcium buildup were 23 percent more likely to develop a heart disorder.



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"We're all creative beings, and each of us has to find a way to harness that creativity. Cooking is an approachable way to scratch that itch."

Julie Ohana
"My Happy Place"
(page 18)

MY Happy PLACE

Cooking not only nourishes the body, but it also cleanses the soul. Here's how cooking saved me during some of life's most stressful times.

By Meghan Rabbitt

I was 3 days into what was supposed to be an epic European adventure when news of the fast-spreading Omicron variant hit. With Covid feeling like it was finally in the rearview last summer, my husband and I decided to spend the winter months in Malta—a gorgeous little island just south of Sicily, in the middle of the Mediterranean.

Soon after we arrived, I found myself staring at the KN95 mask I thought I'd only be wearing on flights, and I was feeling all the feels—resentment that we're still dealing with this virus, anger over change of plans it'd undoubtedly cause (there goes that long weekend in Italy), gratitude that we were healthy, and fear of our unknown future.

So, I did what I'd done since the middle of March 2020, when Covid became an all-consuming topic of thought and conversation: I put on some music, poured a glass of wine

(Maltese Cabernet Sauvignon), and I started cooking.

Over the course of the last 2 years, I've been one of the many people who experimented with elaborate recipes, baked too-many-to-count loaves of sourdough and banana bread, and generally cooked my way through a pandemic. Spending time in the kitchen quickly became a psychological salve—a way to nourish my husband and me physically, sure, but emotionally as well.

Julie Ohana, a social worker and culinary art therapist who actually cooks with her clients, gets it. "There's a quietness and repetition in cooking that makes it easier to be present in the moment and slow your racing thoughts," she says. "That's what so many of us need during this ongoing pandemic, when we don't know what's going to happen in the world. It goes a long way





to be able to say, ‘Well, I’m going to read this recipe and in a half hour, I’ll end up with something delicious.’”

There’s even scientific evidence that those of us who hightailed it to our kitchens when the world felt especially dark were onto something. Cooking during the many periods of COVID-19 lockdown not only boosted happiness and relaxation, but also helped people realize their own potential, according to one recent study published in the journal *Frontiers of Psychology*. Other research has found that spending time on a creative goal during the day cultivates a more positive outlook; another study found that activities involving repetitive behaviors (hello, chopping veggies or stirring cookie dough batter!) can ease stress and anxiety.

When I think about the many hours I spent cozying up with cookbooks and creating countless dishes and desserts the past 2 years—not to mention the many dollars I spent on everything from a stand mixer to a fancy microplane—I realize I’ve come away from the experience with a lot more than just a slew of new recipes in my repertoire. Here’s how cooking saved my sanity during the most stressful points of the pandemic and why it’s become something I’ll always turn to when times get tough.

It’s a creative outlet with immediate feedback. As a professional writer, my day job requires a hefty dose of creativity. Trying to figure out how to say what I want to say—and the fun of finding my flow once I start figuring that out—makes me count myself as one of the lucky ones who genuinely loves their job. That said, there are plenty of days when I simply stare at a blank page. There are also the agonizing days (sometimes weeks!) I spend waiting to hear back from my editors with their thoughts on my work.

With cooking, I’ve found I can get into a similar groove as the one I find while writing. Chopping veggies, scrambling eggs, measuring flour, and kneading bread are



repetitive, sensory experiences that help me tune out the news, quiet my mind, and focus on the simple task at hand. Even better, I know my efforts are going to produce a finished product pretty quickly—and one I’ll be able to enjoy *and* get kudos for creating, if it’s any good.

“We’re all creative beings, and each of us has to find the way to harness that creativity,” says Ohana. “Cooking is an approachable way to scratch that creative itch.”

It helps me feel connected. A few months into the pandemic, a friend was diagnosed with thyroid cancer. A couple weeks after that, my best friend found out her mother had amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS). The thought of dealing with these kinds of blows on top of what the world was already doling out was unthinkable to me, and I did the only thing I felt could possibly help these important women in my life: I fed them.

I busted out an old, beloved cookbook from my favorite vegetarian restaurant in Los Angeles and made my friend Kerry a veggie quinoa soup, delivering it in freezer-friendly containers so she’d have a stash of easy

dinners the week of her thyroid removal surgery. I brought homemade chicken fingers and veggie tots to my friend Jill, so she wouldn’t have to worry about what to feed her then 3- and 5-year-old kids on top of processing life-changing news about her mom. “Feeding ourselves and our loved ones is a primal need,” says Ohana. “Being able to create something that you know is going to take care of someone you love on the most basic level is more powerful than you might think.”

While I probably would’ve cooked for my friends even if we weren’t in the midst of a global pandemic, the act of making something for them helped me feel some much-needed connection. Even though I had to drop these meals on my friends’ front stoops and chat with them from the recommended 6-foot distance, cooking for them made me feel closer to them—something I desperately needed after feeling so isolated at home.

It gives me a sense of control. So much of what continues to unfold in the world is out of our control. We can dutifully wear our masks and social distance if a new variant



THE JOY OF COOKING

If you struggle in the kitchen or find it more of a chore than a creative outlet, these tips will give you the best shot at experiencing the happy-making effects of cooking up something delicious.

In a time where we lack so much control and there are so many unknowns, cooking offers a respite.

—JULIE OHANA



starts to rage. Still, it's hard to avoid reading the news and feeling powerless. So many people have died. Life as we once knew it has changed so drastically. And as someone who likes to live by her calendar with plans she can count on, this kind of uncertainty is seriously frustrating.

I've come to learn that there's nothing I can do about this uncertainty. (Probably an excellent life lesson, albeit one we've all been thrust into learning pretty abruptly.) However, what I *can* be certain about in these uncertain times is that if I season the heck out of a brisket, wrap it tightly in foil, and leave it in a 175-degree oven for 5 hours, dinner is going to be melt-in-your-mouth delicious. If I spend a little time making Alison Roman's Salted Chocolate Chunk Shortbread Cookies, my husband will look at me as if I'm the most magical creature alive.

"In a time where we lack so much control and there are so many unknowns, cooking offers a respite," says Ohana. "When you read a recipe and follow the directions, there's a good chance you've just very much controlled what the outcome will be. And there's something reassuring and rewarding about that."

START SMALL.

Like, scramble one egg small. "We don't all have to aim for master-chef-level cook," says Ohana. "Starting with the simplest tasks and recipes will help you build up your skills and confidence—and your desire to do more will likely grow, too."

MAKE WHAT YOU LOVE.

If you feel ready to experiment, start with a dish that feels doable and appealing. "If there are five ingredients in a recipe you've never heard of, that's not the place to start," says Ohana. "Not only do you want to start with ingredients and flavors you know, but make sure they're ones you really like!"

FORGET THE FANCY EQUIPMENT.

No stand mixer or air fryer? No problem. "I'm not a big believer in lots of gadgets and tools," says Ohana. The parts of cooking that tend to be the most enjoyable are chopping, mixing, and assembling—and you only need one knife, a cutting board, a bowl, and a pot or a pan, she adds.

CREATE A COOKING RITUAL.

Put on some music. Pour a glass of wine. Light a candle. Do whatever it is you need to do to make your time in the kitchen feel a little special, says Ohana—it gives you the best shot at the whole experience feeling satisfying.



3 ON THREE

By Maureen Petrosky

FRENCH BREAD BURRATA PIZZA WITH ARUGULA

MAKES 24 PIECES

● WHY WE LOVE IT

It may seem a little nuts, but I don't really like pizza. Well, not in the traditional sense of the American version in a box with a less-than-crispy crust and usually enough oil to drench my napkin. When I was a kid, I loved when we got frozen French bread pizza. I thought it was so fancy. So this recipe is nostalgic for me, but also totally decadent and easy to make. For the "sauce" I use tomato butter. It's an old trick I learned in culinary school, where you create a compound butter with leftover tomato paste. It's so simple, makes me feel good not to waste opened tomato paste, and it tastes phenomenal on a freshly toasted baguette. For this pizza, I skip the shredded mozzarella and go for luscious Burrata instead. The act of breaking open a ball of Burrata and spreading the curds across the baguette is therapeutic, not to mention the beautiful bite it creates. Topped with some spicy arugula, a sprinkle of coarse ground salt, and a fine drizzle of really good extra virgin olive oil—that's my kind of pizza.

● INGREDIENTS

- 1 baguette, split in half lengthwise (as if for a sandwich)
- 2 T olive oil
- 1 T garlic powder
- 2 T Parmesan cheese, grated
- 1 stick unsalted butter, softened
- 3 T tomato paste
- 1 T minced garlic
- Coarse Kosher salt, to season
- 4 slices prosciutto, optional
- 2 8-oz. balls Burrata
- ½ cup arugula
- Extra virgin olive oil, for drizzling

● TO MAKE

(1) Place the baguette slices on a parchment-lined sheet pan. Brush both sides of slices with olive oil and sprinkle evenly with the garlic powder and the Parmesan cheese. **(2)** Place tray under the broiler on the middle rack for 2 minutes or until toasted and golden brown. **(3)** Preheat the oven to 450 degrees F. **(4)** In a small food processor add the garlic, softened butter, and tomato paste. Pulse until evenly combined. **(5)** Spread the tomato butter evenly across both sides of the toasted baguette. Place the sheet pan back into the preheated oven for 5 to 6 minutes or until bubbly. **(6)** Put two pieces of prosciutto on each side of the baguette. **(7)** Using your hands, break apart the Burrata and spread one ball over each side. **(8)** Drizzle with extra virgin olive oil and sprinkle with arugula and coarse ground salt to finish. Slice each half of the baguette into 12 pieces.



GREEK SALAD BITES

MAKES 12–14 PIECES

● WHY WE LOVE IT

Anything I can turn into an appetizer brings me joy. These little Greek salad bites are a punch of flavor in an adorable presentation. Getting to put my knife skills to the test on miniaturizing the parts of my favorite salad is fun. Bonus: If I'm making the appetizer size, that means I'm having a party!

● INGREDIENTS

- 1 cucumber, peeled and cut into ¾-inch pieces and scooped with a melon baller, leaving a solid layer on the bottom

DRESSING

- 2 T extra virgin olive oil
- 1 T wine vinegar
- ¼ tsp Dijon vinegar
- ¼ tsp salt
- ½ tsp dried oregano
- ½ tsp garlic powder

FOR THE SALAD

- ¼ cup red bell pepper, cored and finely diced
- ¼ cup cherry tomatoes, finely chopped
- 2 T crumbled feta cheese
- 2 T finely chopped black or Kalamata olives
- 2 tsp fresh mint, chopped

● TO MAKE

(1) Place the cucumber cups on a paper towel-lined sheet pan. **(2)** In a small mason jar or salad dressing container with a fitted lid, add all the dressing ingredients and shake until emulsified. **(3)** In a bowl, combine all the salad ingredients except the cucumber. Add 1 T of the dressing to evenly coat by adding half of it first, then more if desired. **(4)** Fill the cucumber cups with the salad. Transfer the cups, aka Greek salad bites, to a serving dish.



BLUEBERRY LEMON HAND PIES WITH FRESHLY WHIPPED CREAM

MAKES 12 HAND PIES

● WHY WE LOVE IT

Baking is therapy, and baking something you love to eat is my idea of self-care. These adorable hand pies require just enough time in the kitchen for me to relax, and not too much that I feel guilty I should be doing other things. They are just the right size to satisfy my sweet tooth and are easily transportable from my kitchen to my office. Served with a side of freshly whipped cream, these are perfect for brunch or to finish off a spring dinner alfresco.

● INGREDIENTS

HAND PIES

- 1 box refrigerated ready-to-bake pie crust dough, (2 rolls)
- 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ cups blueberries
- 2 T cornstarch
- 1 T freshly squeezed lemon juice
- 1 tsp lemon zest
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup granulated sugar, plus more for sprinkling on top
- 1 egg, beaten
- All-purpose flour, for your work surface

WHIPPED CREAM

- 1 cup heavy whipping cream
- 2 T confectioners' sugar
- 5 sprigs fresh lavender or $\frac{1}{2}$ cup mint leaves, optional

● TO MAKE

THE HAND PIES

(1) Unroll one pie crust at a time. On a lightly floured surface roll out your pie crust to a rectangle shape. Cut into 6 rectangles or free-form shapes. **(2)** Toss blueberries with cornstarch, lemon juice, lemon zest, and sugar. Place a heaping tablespoon or 2 of blueberry mixture into the center of each and pinch the sides closed. The filling should fit snugly in the folded-over pie crust without any open spaces. **(3)** Repeat with the second roll of dough and fill until 12 hand pies are complete. **(4)** Place hand pies onto parchment-lined sheet pans. Pierce the top of each hand pie with a knife for a small vent. One roll of dough will make 6 pies. Place the sheet pans into the freezer for 1 hour or up to a month until ready to bake. **(5)** Preheat oven to 400 degrees F. **(6)** Remove sheet pans from the freezer and coat each hand pie with the egg wash. **(7)** Sprinkle granulated sugar generously over each. Bake for 30–35 minutes until golden brown and bubbly. Cool before serving.

THE WHIPPED CREAM

Using a handheld mixer or whisk, combine the heavy cream and confectioners' sugar and whip until you get medium-stiff peaks. Serve in a bowl with a spoon next to the hand pies.

THE CREAM INFUSED WITH FRESH HERBS

In a small saucepan bring the cream and herbs to a low simmer. Remove from the heat and let steep for 30 minutes to overnight. Strain out fresh herbs. Completely chill the cream. Once chilled, follow the instructions above.

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Body

KNOWS BEST

Exercise may seem like the last thing you want to do when you're dealing with a chronic health condition, yet moving your body can help you feel better—fast. Here's how to rethink your routine when you're not at your best.

By Angelena Minniti, as told to Meghan Rabbitt

I was a freshman in high school when I was diagnosed with ulcerative colitis, a chronic bowel disease that causes inflammation and ulcers (aka sores) in your digestive tract. The disease is vicious, causing serious pain and debilitating symptoms.

Given how active I was as a kid, my colitis diagnosis was particularly tough. I ran cross-country and track, and I also played basketball. I was a good athlete and wanted to work hard, but I quickly learned that my body couldn't always do what I wanted it to—and my new, physical limitations led to some serious mental setbacks as well.

Like most people who deal with a chronic health condition, figuring out how to live with my new reality included plenty of wins and setbacks. I'd spend periods of time acting like I was perfectly healthy, eating the wrong

foods, and pushing my body to its limits. When that would inevitably end terribly, I'd be in a very dark place, both physically and emotionally spent.

In the 13 years since my diagnosis, I've learned how to coexist with my colitis. I also took my love of sports and turned it into a career as a personal trainer. As someone who lives with an autoimmune disease and works with clients who are suffering from chronic pain and other health issues, I've learned a few things about how helpful exercise can be when you're not feeling your best—and about the importance of not pushing yourself too hard.

Here's my hard-won advice about how to adjust your workouts when you're not 100 percent, plus why any kind of movement can transform your body, mind, and soul for the better.



I've learned that doing something is better than nothing. My motto: Movement is medicine. So, I move my body but make sure it's doing nothing too strenuous.

Listen to what your body is trying to tell you. Whether you're dealing with pain, an autoimmune flare, or some other condition that's impacting how you feel, it's so important to listen to your body. I learned this lesson the hard way, by pushing myself through a big flare back when I was in college. What became crystal clear was that by ignoring what my symptoms were trying to say to me and pushing through my pain, I ran my body into the ground and ultimately set myself back months. These days, I don't overdo it. I'm able to look myself in the mirror and say, *Listen, do what you can to move your body, but know your limits.*

Take your workouts down a notch. When I'm dealing with symptoms, my workouts look a lot different than they do when I'm feeling healthy. Yet I've learned that doing *something* is better than nothing. My motto: Movement is medicine. So, I move my body but make sure it's doing nothing too strenuous. Sometimes that means a 30-minute workout instead of my usual hour or 90 minutes at the gym. Sometimes it means simply walking around my

Remind yourself that even a little movement will give you a mood boost. I've always considered fitness a positive force in my life; it just makes me feel good. When I'm dealing with symptoms, life can feel pretty dark. One minute I'm OK, the next minute I'm crying my eyes out or I'm filled with rage. Yet, through it all, I try to remind myself that I never regret a workout. Not only that, but fitness helps me control the mental aspect of my chronic health condition. It's one thing I can do for myself despite everything else that I *can't* control.

Journal how you feel after your workout. This is a great thing to do when you're dealing with a chronic condition because it can help you remember exactly what you did—how you moved, what you ate, and how you felt—on both your good days and bad. If I have a good day during a flare-up of my symptoms, I go back to that journal page and study it for things I can repeat. Did I lift light weights that day? Or motivate myself to take a walk around the block? If I had an especially bad day, I know what I should steer clear of going forward.



Science-Backed Reasons Exercise Helps When You're in Pain

Hire a trainer who understands your situation. I had a track coach my first 2 years of college who was oblivious to the severity of my ulcerative colitis. Then, during my last 2 years of college, I had a phenomenal coach—and went on to be a part of four relay teams who set school records. I think it points to the importance of working with someone who takes the time to understand what you're dealing with—and it's why I offer highly personalized training to my clients who are dealing with a chronic condition. That's not to say I don't push them. But I'm hyperaware when my clients are at their threshold and encourage them not to push past it. I do this because I've been there myself. I understand that if you're not feeling your best, you can still move your body. And you deserve to work with someone who sees that as a win and encourages you not to give up on yourself.

That last point may be the most important: Don't give up on yourself. I'm not saying it's easy. And trust me, I've had my fair share of “screw this” and “why me?” moments. But not giving up on yourself is one of the most important things you can do. The simple fact is that what you're dealing with is on your path because you're strong enough to deal with it. There are others who aren't strong enough for what you're going through. But you are. Give yourself some grace and listen to your body, but don't give up.



Tempted to stay in bed when you're not feeling your best? Turns out inactivity may actually reinforce your body's pain pathways, making you more sensitive to discomfort. Here's the science behind why a workout may be just what you need:

1

IT RAISES YOUR PAIN THRESHOLD. Moderate- to vigorous-intensity aerobic exercise increases pain tolerance, according to one study published in the journal *Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise*. As you work your muscles and they begin to ache, the body releases endorphins (aka natural painkillers) and other substances that can dampen your discomfort.

2

IT REDUCES INFLAMMATION. When you exercise, your muscles release chemicals that prevent pain signals from going to your brain. What's more, it prompts your immune system to increase anti-inflammatory cells that promote healing throughout your body. Even better? Just 20 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise is enough to reduce inflammation, according to one recent study.

3

IT BOOSTS YOUR MOOD. A staggering 80 percent of those with chronic pain report disruptions in mood because of their condition, which is why the happy-making power of exercise is especially important if you're dealing with a chronic condition. Research consistently shows that regular exercise is associated with a lower incidence of depression. Scientists think it has to do with the release of neurotransmitters that prompt the brain to make new connections, possibly improving brain function and easing symptoms of depression and anxiety.





fresh start

LIVE



LADIES AND

Stents

Elective coronary angioplasty gives patients the chance to address blocked arteries and possibly prevent a heart attack from ever occurring.

By Jess Downey

Elective angioplasty has come a long way to become a very safe procedure for patients. Stents in today's day and age are a marvel of engineering.

—HARIT DESAI, DO

Last October, on one of her walks with her dog, Emmett, 76-year-old Eileen Aviss felt tightness in her chest. She went home and Googled the symptoms to try to figure out what was going on in her body, but the feeling went away, and she let it go. But on another walk—one of the hilly ones—she felt the tightness again, and this time she also felt nauseous. “My husband, John, looked over with concern and said, ‘Do you think you’re having a heart attack?’” she recalls.

With a sense of worry and dread, Aviss made an appointment with her doctor at Capital Health, Shaismy Kudakachira, DO, who thought it sounded serious enough to send her to a cardiologist for a series of tests. The doctor ordered an electrocardiogram (EKG) to measure the electrical efficiency



of her heart, which was inconclusive. That was followed by an echocardiogram (echo), an ultrasound of the heart, which didn't show anything ominous. But then the doctor performed a nuclear stress test, which uses a small amount of radioactive material (tracer) and an imaging machine to show blood flow to your heart while you exercise. That's when doctors could see three blocked arteries. Without intervention, they told Aviss, she could have a heart attack.

Doctors wanted to do a procedure called a coronary angioplasty with stenting, in which a tiny balloon catheter is inserted into a blocked blood vessel to help widen it and improve blood flow to the heart. Prior to angioplasty, open-heart bypass surgery was the main option for patients. Angioplasty—especially the refined version available at

“After I got home, I felt really good. I went back to those spots where I had the initial symptoms, and it was such a relief to feel normal.”

—EILEEN AVISS

Capital Health today—offers a much faster recovery time since it's minimally invasive.

First introduced in 1974, balloon angioplasty with stenting has become the most frequently used treatment in cardiac emergencies of the heart. However, to help patients avoid cardiac emergencies, Capital Health endeavored to offer elective coronary angioplasty for more than a decade. The good news for Aviss was that Capital Health was approved last February, which meant she didn't have to wait to schedule the procedure and could have it all done by the time she and her husband, John, planned to head to Florida this February.

“To gain approval, hospitals have to demonstrate that they can do emergency coronary angioplasty and stent placement safely, and we did that,” says Harit Desai, DO, director of the cardiac catheterization lab at Capital Health.

CATHETERS, STENTS, AND WIRES

Heart disease is still the number one killer in the world. In fact, a person dies every 36 seconds in the United States from cardiovascular disease. About 659,000 people in the United States die from heart disease each year—that's one in every four deaths.

Despite those astronomical numbers, enormous effort, resources, and research go into the constant fine-tuning of tools and treatments each year. Angioplasty is safer than it's ever been, which is why Capital Health doctors can perform it on an outpatient basis, says Dr. Desai. “Elective angioplasty has come a long way to become a very safe procedure for patients. Stents in today's day and age are a marvel of engineering. It has come a long way—when I was in training, we were going through the groin—the femoral artery. Now we do most of our procedures through the radial artery in the wrist. It's more technically challenging, but it's better because complication rates are lower, patients can sit up right away, and they can go home.

“This procedure has become quite normal for us at Capital



Heads up



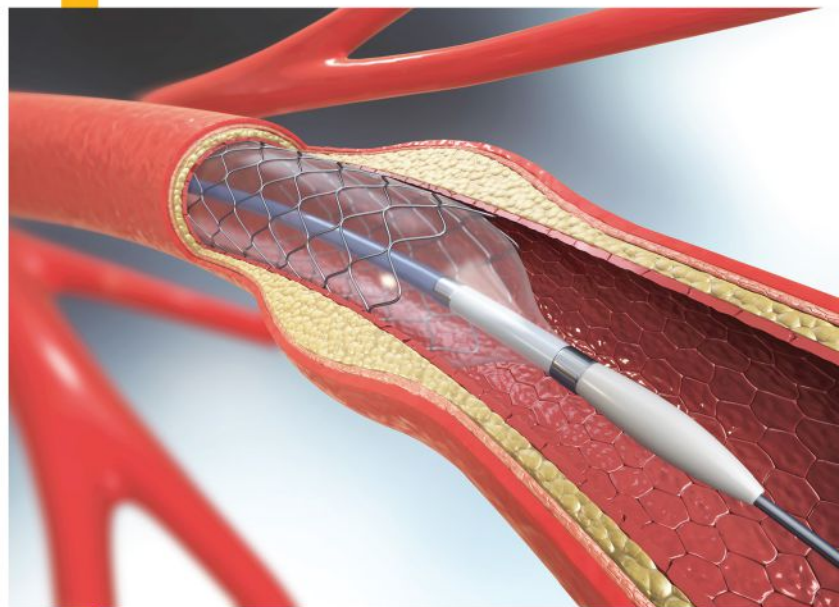
Harit Desai, DO
Capital Health

HEART DISEASE is the leading cause of death for women in the United States, killing almost 300,000 women a year. The disease exacts an even larger toll on Black American women. Almost half of Black women over 20 in the United States

have some form of cardiovascular disease, according to the American Heart Association, even though only one in five Black women think they are personally at risk.

While those numbers are daunting, Dr. Desai says he worries about women because they sometimes have atypical symptoms of a heart attack, which can easily be ignored. “Women should pay close attention to symptoms, even when they seem vague. Symptoms such as chest heaviness, increased fatigue, discomfort between shoulder blades, forearm heaviness, pain just below the breastbone, jaw discomfort, and breaking out into a sweat out of nowhere,” he says. “Those symptoms may seem odd or even unrelated, but they can be signs of a heart attack.”

WHAT IS ANGIOPLASTY PLUS STENTING?



Doctors insert a tiny balloon wrapped in a metal mesh tube (stent) into a blood vessel, typically in the groin or the wrist, and guide it into the heart. Doctors inflate the balloon, which opens the artery by flattening the plaque that was restricting blood flow. Then it's deflated and removed, but the stent remains to keep the artery open.

Health. Within 6 hours, our patients are at home with their loved ones.”

Aviss says she was anxious about the procedure beforehand but was pleasantly surprised by how quickly she was up and moving. “It is a surreal experience in there because you are awake, and they are showing your heart. After I got home, I felt really good. I called the doctor’s office to ask if I could go for a walk, and they said I could,” she recalls. “I went back to those spots where I had the initial symptoms, and it was such a relief to feel normal.”

According to the American Heart Association, cardiovascular disease accounts for 17.3 million deaths worldwide per year, a number that is expected to grow to more than 23.6 million by 2030. Dr. Desai says that makes tools for treating the disease even more important. “Unfortunately, heart disease being the number one killer won’t likely change in the near future until we stop smoking and get control of diabetes,” he explains. “But I do think we can change the trajectory of it with these refined tools.”



Fear AT HOME

While her friends and family fight for their lives in Ukraine, one local Russian-born Ukrainian woman shares her pain and fear. Here's what she wants us to know right now.

By Veronica Grankina, as told to Meghan Rabbitt

“Please, Mommy, stop crying,” my 5-year-old says to me with big, sad eyes. “I don’t like it.”

I don’t like how much I’m crying either, but I can’t help it. For more than a month, I’ve been glued to my phone, waiting to hear news from my family and friends—most of whom live in Kyiv and have been afraid for their lives and the fate of my country since February 24 at 5 a.m., when Russian missiles flew over their heads, waking them up to a new reality.

I was born in Russia and my family moved to Ukraine when I was 9 years old. After graduating from the University in Kyiv, I came to the United States to get my master’s degree. While I was in graduate



Showing your support for Ukraine in any way is more powerful than you might imagine. Wear blue and yellow. Donate to a charity supporting Ukraine. Sign a petition. Protest.



school in Philadelphia, my husband and I got married. He is also Ukrainian, and we both have family members and friends all over Ukraine.

THEY WOKE UP TO WAR

As things began escalating, I called my family every day panicked, begging them to come here. I told them I would pay for it; the cost didn't matter. But my family refused. They said, "There's no way Russia will have the guts to attack Kyiv." It's a big, modern European city. Before this started, people were drinking their lattes and working on their laptops. Then they woke up to war.

My family was able to leave Kyiv soon after the attacks began, and they drove for 2 days straight, headed for the western border. A drive that should've taken 8 hours took 48 hours. The infrastructure isn't built to accommodate so many people from all over Ukraine trying to get their families to safety, so it was very hard to find a place to stay, and there was a lot of traffic. They also had no Internet most of the time, but they were able to turn on their geolocation on their phones, so I was able to see them via the "Find My iPhone" function on my phone. That was the only thing that kept me going—tracking them on my phone.

As I sit with my fear over the fate of our family and friends, I've been blown away by Ukrainian people's unity and courage to fight off the enemy. I am also very impressed by President Volodymyr Zelensky and his leadership. I admire that he's been able to stay there in Kyiv and fight alongside with Ukrainians for our truth and independence.

So many people are asking me what they can do—what I want Americans to know. The first thing that comes to mind is that showing your support for Ukraine in any way is more powerful than you might

imagine. Wear blue and yellow. Donate to a charity supporting Ukraine. Sign a petition. Protest. Drop off nonperishables, clothes, and medical supplies to a donation center that will ship those items to Ukraine. Anything you can do helps—it all matters.

It's also important that we talk about what is happening and share accurate information to help fight the Russian propaganda. Putin would have the world believe that he has invaded Ukraine because Ukrainians are persecuting and killing Russians and Russian-speaking Ukrainian citizens. Russian is my native language, and I have always been welcomed in Ukraine no matter where I traveled. Ask any Ukrainian how they feel about Russians or Russian-speaking Ukrainian citizens living in their country and they will tell you that we all lived in peace until the Russian army came to invade our homeland 8 years ago. It is crucial we share this truth far and wide so misinformation cannot be spread and weaponized.

As frightened as I am, I also hold pride in my heart because I know that Ukrainians are fighting not only for their country, but also for the democracy, freedom, and peace we all want in this world.

Today, my daughter walked over to me and handed me a box, wrapped in construction paper filled with colorful scribbles. She told me it's a beautiful gift she wanted me to have because she sees me crying. She is trying to do what she can.

Now it's our turn.

**This story was shared with the author in the beginning of the invasion. The war has escalated since then, and circumstances in many places have worsened. One bright spot: Veronica's mother made it safely to the United States and is staying with her and her family.*



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As it often does in a crisis, the Red Cross is helping Ukrainians by aiding evacuations and providing shelter, food, and basic necessities. Visit: donate.redcrossredcrescent.org

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*"In art,
there's no
insurance policy,
there's nothing to
hold you beyond
your belief in your
talent."*

Bentrice Jusu
"Art and Soul"
(page 38)

Brave ART

Public service and self-expression don't often go hand in hand. But Trenton artist and firefighter Bentrice Jusu believes she can do anything, and she wears the hats to prove it.

By Jess Downey
Photos by Linette Kielinski

There's no one medium that can fully reveal Bentrice Jusu's humanity. Not her visual arts. Not her sculptures or murals. Not her documentaries or her poetry. Her activism can't fully reflect it. Risking her life in service of others doesn't completely define it either.

Thirty-year-old Jusu is a multimedia artist and activist. She's a photographer. She's a teacher. She's a poet. She's also

a firefighter assigned to Engine Co. 3 in Trenton. If you ask her how she got here, she'll probably laugh, the kind of laugh that starts in her belly and bubbles up through her shoulders to her face and her eyes. She'll laugh because, just three decades in, her life has been a whirlwind of magic and tragedy, and she's doing everything she can to spin that paradox into something beautiful and inspiring. She is weaving a tapestry that is so vibrant and varied that most of us can only admire it, learn from it, and let her colors brighten our own lives.

JOURNEY TO SELF-EXPRESSION

Jusu was the second of seven siblings born in the United States after her family emigrated from Liberia. Her dad, who wanted to be a lawyer, had to drop out of law school to support his family and discovered

“

Not everybody is willing to take that risk to run into a burning building where they could die. And I say that humbly. But there are different kinds of risks. There's the risk of danger and the risk of betting on yourself.

”





“

If my brother goes down in the fire and I'm next to him, I got to get him out. That is my job. So I must be able to lift 180, 200 pounds. It doesn't matter if I'm a woman. I'm a firefighter, and the women I work with are rock stars.

”

a bit of luck when he “stumbled upon a massive load of roller skates.” Inspired by the movie *Roller Boogie*, her dad started a roller-skating company in Liberia, bringing along hundreds of kids, teenagers, and young men, Jusu says. “Then he came to Chicago in the 1970s on a visa to start a roller-skating company here. He was homeless for a while, and then he found his way to New Jersey. When he saved enough money, he sent it to my mom so she could

come with my siblings. A couple years later, I was born.”

Although the Liberian community in West Trenton was close-knit, Jusu says the neighborhood she grew up in, on Hermitage Avenue, was rough. “You have to go through a certain part to get to the schools,” she recalls. “But fortunately, my father would drop us off religiously every single day of my life.”

While her parents could be strict about

being responsible and neat, they also encouraged their children's self-expression. When Jusu was 3 or 4 years old, she drew a picture of her dad, which he hung in his closet so it would be the first thing he saw every day. Later, she drew a sketch of a movie on the wall of the living room, which her mother never erased. “It was there for years, this little doodle,” Jusu says. “She kept it there. She could have painted over it easily because my mom is meticulous like that, but she didn't. To me, that was their embrace of the idea that I could express myself, especially through art.

“From early on, I looked at the world through art. Music wasn't just a hobby or something you listen to. It was about, ‘What are these people saying?’ Images and pictures, it became like a puzzle. I didn't see it as an option. This is how I'm supposed to be looking at the world.”

Jusu attended Trenton Central High School, and even though she showed athletic ability, she quit the basketball team



THE POTENTIAL PROJECT

As Bentrice Jusu marinated in how it felt to experience the terror at Pulse nightclub and lose young people in her life to gun violence, an idea began to form. She sensed the gravity of all the lost potential of those young lives. Out of that, Jusu created The Potential Project. In partnership with the Trenton Health Team, Jusu set about creating public art throughout Trenton to celebrate the lives of victims. The goal is to encourage the hard and painful conversations required to heal our communities and work toward alleviating gun violence. “The Potential Project illustrates the life and the possibilities of those who are tragically taken by gun violence or violence in general, whether



that’s due to preventable deaths, anger, or unprocessed anger from other people. We need to assess why it’s happening in these neighborhoods, in these communities. What is going on? But also, let their lives not be lost in vain, and let’s celebrate them through art.”

For more information on The Potential Project, visit potentialproject.art.

to focus on her poetry. During her senior year, her advisor suggested applying to Wake Forest University in Winston-Salem, NC, and when Jusu learned that SATs were not required and that American poet, memoirist, and civil rights activist Maya Angelou taught there, she was sold.

FOLLOWING HER ART

During her sophomore year at Wake Forest, Jusu built an organization called Both Hands, which helped teens, regardless of personal background or level of experience, find their identity and potential through art. With support from a variety of funding

sources, Jusu brought Both Hands to life. “The craftsmanship, the impact that artistry is and has on humanity is crazy, and there needs to be more institutions and support systems in place for kids, teens, and young adults. That was my dream, and that’s what Both Hands was.”

She dedicated her life to Both Hands Artlet for 7 years, partnering with the Boys & Girls Club to provide a safe space for teens in the Trenton area. While she thrived on the work and the opportunity to mentor young people, a series of traumatic events soon brought Jusu to the brink.

In June of 2016, Jusu flew down to Orlando, Fla. to celebrate her birthday with friends. On Saturday night, they went to Pulse nightclub, and they danced late into the night. Jusu and her friends were among about 300 people in the club at 2:02 a.m. when they heard gunfire. “Everybody went to the floor together when we first heard the shots, and then it went silent, silent and dark. Honestly, I don’t remember if it was because my eyes were closed or because the lights were actually off,” she recalls. “Then we got up and ran to the exit in the back, but there was a vending machine blocking it.”

As chaos erupted inside the club, bodies being trampled as they tried to evacuate, a few of Jusu’s friends kicked out a fence to open a small space that was wide enough to squeeze through. They’d escaped what was, at the time, the deadliest mass shooting in U.S. history. Fifty people (including the perpetrator) were killed and another 53 were injured. “When we got back to the hotel room, we cried—we were in shock. But we didn’t realize how bad it was. We turned on the TV and saw Pulse on the news,” Jusu says, her voice strangled with emotion.

As devastating as the Pulse shooting was, that was just the beginning of a series of traumatic events that changed the course of Jusu’s life. “It was a rough time. My house burned down. I was dealing with a private lawsuit from Wake Forest because I couldn’t pay my student loan. One of my

students, Jahday Twisdale, was shot and killed. He was 16. My childhood friend Cameron was killed. My dad developed early-onset dementia,” Jusu explains. “It was a lot going on that year, and that was my first bout of depression.”

FINDING THE FIRE

While Jusu knew she still had so much to give, she also knew she couldn't keep teaching for Both Hands. Emotionally and financially, Jusu was running on empty. “I couldn't fill my babies' cups anymore,” Jusu says of her students. “I wasn't myself. I hated that I had to do that, but I had to.”

Although Jusu is still working in therapy to excavate some of the pain and work through the trauma she endured, she also had to address her other issue—art wasn't paying the bills. Jusu was in the process of helping a student named Corey Rowell start the process to becoming a firefighter. She was in Starbucks, looking over the application, and the wheels began to turn. “[My friend Ray] put the spark in my mind that I could be a dope firefighter. I was a full-time artist, but I wasn't able to support myself financially. I was basically homeless,” she says. “So I told Corey, let's do this together.”

Jusu did well on the entrance exam for the Trenton Fire Department, and she was hired in late 2019. All she had to do next was get through the fire academy. But life as a “probie” (probationary firefighter) was incredibly taxing, challenging Jusu physically and mentally every single day. “You wake up at 4 o'clock in the morning knowing we're about to drilled to death. You're about to do the most intense exercise of your life. You do ropes; flip tires; do push-ups and sit-ups. You run. It's all for a purpose because you literally have to use everything in you to run up and down eight flights of steps with 120 pounds worth of gear on,” Jusu says. “We studied fire science, talked about HAZMATs, and biology. You have hours of homework, knowing the information you are learning is life or death.”

FIRED UP

In January 2021, Bentrice Jusu was one of 11 firefighters sworn in by the Trenton Department of Fire & Emergency Services.

While less than 5 percent of firefighters are women, Jusu says being a firefighter, going through the training, and preparing her mind and body to do the job has been an equalizer. “If my brother goes down in the fire and I'm next to him, I got to get him out as my job. So, I must be able to lift 180, 200 pounds,” she says. “It doesn't matter if I'm a woman. I'm a firefighter, and the women I work with are rock stars.”

Jusu was among 11 firefighters sworn in on January 15, 2021, by the Trenton Fire Department. In her first year on the job for

Engine Co. 3, Jusu says one day stands out as the most difficult, one that had nothing to do with fighting fires. It started with an emergency call—someone was having trouble breathing, and it looked like there were drugs involved. “We stepped inside the house, and Grandma is crying in the kitchen. We went upstairs and Grandpa is doing the best CPR he can on a man. We took over and my captain and I took turns doing CPR on this guy for about 50 minutes. He was still warm, so we didn't stop. But then finally, he went cold. The





SAFE AND SOUND

According to the Red Cross, the most effective way to protect yourself and your home from fire is to identify and remove fire hazards. Sixty-five percent of home fire deaths occur in homes with no working smoke alarms. During a home fire, working smoke alarms and a fire escape plan that has been practiced regularly can save lives. Here are four steps to follow to ensure your safety in the event of a fire.

- Make a 2-minute fire escape plan for your home
- Identify at least two exits per room in your house
- Establish a safe meeting spot outside for your family
- Test all smoke alarms in your home on a monthly basis

Let Your Family Know You're Safe

If you experience a home fire or any disaster, register on the American Red Cross Safe and Well website available through redcross.org to alert your family and friends about your welfare. If you don't have Internet access, call (866) GET-INFO to register yourself and your family.

minute the medic called it and the cops went downstairs to let the family know, you just heard Grandma wailing. That's hard, man."

As hard as those days are, the deadly fire in the Fairmont neighborhood of Philadelphia in January was a reminder of just how important—and how painful—the job of fighting fires can be. In that fire, 12 people died including nine children when a Christmas tree was ignited by a lighter. "That was heartbreaking. No smoke detectors were working. One of the main

things that the captain and director and everyone else are really focused on is how we as firefighters can be more vocal about fire prevention. That shouldn't have happened in Philly," Jusu says. "We need to be doing more surveys in the apartment buildings, making sure there are working smoke detectors, carbon monoxide detectors, that things are up to date as much as we can as a fire department."

While the act of putting out fires is dangerous and taxing on the body, Jusu knows her job as a firefighter goes well

beyond extinguishing flames and getting people to safety. "I lost my home to a fire, and it rocked my world," she says. "I'm born and raised here in Trenton, so I know as well as anybody that we are not just putting out fires. We're answering EMS calls. We're seeing these people first, right when their worst nightmares are happening. We are at the end of that first call. And I feel blessed to do it." 🗣️

your life

REINVENT

WOMAN OF

Steel

Judith Persichilli is leading New Jersey through the COVID-19 pandemic with a steady, calm demeanor and dogged determination.

By Jess Downey

For as long as she can remember, Judith Persichilli wanted to be a nurse. She entered nursing school right from high school, and, after graduating summa cum laude from Rutgers College of Nursing in 1976, she worked in an intensive care unit (ICU), which was demanding, fast-paced, and high-intensity. Fifty-six years after her journey in health care first began, Persichilli is the 73-year-old general of New Jersey's army battling the COVID-19 pandemic.

When a career stretches that long and covers so much ground, it tends to have



plenty of twists and turns. And although Persichilli's list of career accomplishments is long and formidable, you have to squint a little to see just how long her odds really were. After all, she began nursing school at 17, became a hospital CEO in her mid-forties when less than 20 percent of hospital CEOs were women, and she is running the state's health department during a global pandemic when most of her peers are retired.

Being the health commissioner is not a job for the weak of heart, but the Pennington, NJ resident is anything but that. By wearing so many hats, she learned that health care "is not only about life and death, but all of the facilities and the care that someone needs over a lifespan," she says. "That basic understanding allowed me to focus on the things that are important—access to care and access to quality of care."

As the commissioner of New Jersey Department of Health, she has guided the state through the most critical public health crisis in more than a century, a job that has tested her at every turn.

LIFE ON THE FRONT LINES

Persichilli was confirmed by the New Jersey Senate in January 2020. At that time, the state, the country, and the world were monitoring the outbreak of the novel virus in Wuhan, China. "By March 4, we had our first case in New Jersey, and by mid-April, we were considered one of the hottest spots in the United States," she recalls.

Initially, several of the first COVID cases in New Jersey were traced back to a birthday party of about 25 people. Persichilli says that 15 of the attendees got very sick with COVID and five of them died as a result. "I can remember sitting in my office thinking, *We're dealing with something that we've never dealt with before*. We really knew that we were facing something that was a lot more virulent than we understood or that the nation understood," she recalls. "From there, the team at the Department

I get some tough e-mails, but there are 9.3 million people in New Jersey. If I get 10 e-mails every 2 weeks, it pales in comparison to the number of people who have been patient and gracious about what we're trying to accomplish.



of Health worked for 6 months straight, 7 days a week. I can remember marveling at the time about the effort they put in trying to serve the people of New Jersey. I will never forget that."

The early days of the virus felt a bit like running on a treadmill—as fast as she and her staff were moving and as hard as they were working, they couldn't seem to get anywhere in fighting COVID-19. "We couldn't seem to outrun the virus because we

FACT

Judith Persichilli (MA, BSN, RN) was inducted into the New Jersey State Nurses Association Hall of Honor in April 2013. That same year, *Modern Healthcare* named her to its Top 25 Women in Health Care list.



did not know about the asymptomatic spread at that time. So, by the time someone got sick they had already infected other people.”

As of March 2022, 2.18 million COVID-19 confirmed and probable cases were reported in New Jersey, and the virus was responsible for more than 33,000 confirmed and probable deaths since March 2020. Over time, Persichilli’s developed effective strategies for managing COVID, many of which the state continues to utilize. The first is the COVID-19 Active Level report (CALI), which takes a daily snapshot at positivity rates and emergency room numbers to get a complete picture of the virus in the state. “We use CALI to guide us in making decisions because it points in the direction of disease progression,” she explains. “We are one of the few states in which every single one of our emergency rooms are connected directly to our Communicable Disease Service. So, if someone comes in complaining of symptoms of COVID, we know about it on a daily basis.”

The second tool that proved to be incredibly effective is the vaccine ambassadors assigned to each county. These are individuals from the New Jersey Department of Health whose goal was to go into counties and municipalities and create vaccination programs, processes, and services in an effort to vaccinate as many people as possible. They were extremely successful. Most people in New Jersey in my opinion, have been extremely compliant with public health mitigation strategies and vaccinations,” Persichilli says. “In New Jersey, 90 percent of the eligible population has had at least one dose of a COVID vaccine, and almost 80 percent are fully vaccinated. That is phenomenal.”

FROM PANDEMIC TO ENDEMIC

Persichilli faced plenty of pushback from residents who disagreed with decisions such as school closures, mask mandates, and vaccinations. “I get some tough e-mails, but



GRATEFUL GOVERNOR

“Commissioner Persichilli has worked tirelessly to save lives and protect public health during the greatest public health crisis in our nation’s history.”

—Gov. Phil Murphy

there are 9.3 million people in New Jersey. If I get 10 e-mails every 2 weeks, it pales in comparison to the number of people who have been patient and gracious about what we’re trying to accomplish,” she says. “At the Department of Health, we make decisions now to try to get the state and ourselves personally to the new normal, allowing us to carry on with our lives, measuring and mitigating those risks as much as possible.”

In March, Gov. Murphy announced reduced restrictions and an executive order lifting the COVID-19 Public Health

FACT

PANDEMIC VS. ENDEMIC

Pandemics are a widespread, rapid spread of disease. Endemic viruses, meanwhile, are constantly present and have a more predictable spread. That predictability gives health care systems and physicians the opportunity to prepare and adapt, reducing loss of life.

—ABC News

KIDDO CONUNDRUM



(Top right) Commissioner Persichilli visited Capital Health in 2021; She was sworn in as health commissioner in January 2020.

Emergency. While Persichilli believed it was the right time to make those adjustments, she also offered words of caution. “Conditions have improved in our state—immunity is high, cases have dropped significantly, therapeutics have improved, and testing is rapid and readily available. So, it does make sense to relax restrictions as we learn to live with the virus,” she said in a press conference with the governor. “But taking masks off doesn’t mean that other strategies should be abandoned. In fact, they become more important. So, please continue to wash your hands frequently, physically distance, stay home when you’re sick, and get vaccinated

and boosted to protect yourselves, your families, your friends, and our children.”

Persichilli is wary of this moment in the pandemic when it begins to transform into an endemic, and the public returns to a semblance of “normalcy.” History has shown that a lack of vigilance can be dangerous, she says. “I think about the Spanish Flu epidemic in 1918 where restrictions would tighten and then abate over time. We are learning to live with the virus and in fact, we live with it today,” she says. “COVID is going to be with us for a long time. It’s like Mark Twain said: ‘History never repeats itself, but it does often rhyme.’”

Getting kids through the pandemic has been one of the greatest challenges. Persichilli shares her deepest worries and greatest hopes for our children.

When it comes to COVID-19, one of the things I lose the most sleep over is the impact that school closures had on our children. For so many children throughout our state, the nation, and the world, online learning wasn’t enough. It often resulted in learning loss. It also took away opportunities to socialize, which was also deleterious to our children.

It’s been a constant balancing act because we want to protect children from getting or spreading COVID. Kids were particularly susceptible to the Omicron variant. So we are constantly being attentive to that. We must weigh those risks against what’s most important for children—giving them the potential to grow and learn and live long, healthy lives.



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EXPERIENCE

TAKING THE

Wheel

As vice president of Starr, a family-owned charter and bus tour company, Sandy Borowsky had to face the challenge of steering the business through the global pandemic, when the tourism world was turned on its head.

By Dana O'Neil

Photos by Linette Kielinski

Sandy Borowsky is not the sort to host herself a pity party. She is a doer—direct and efficient—and if she sees a problem, she doesn't fret the issue. Instead, she searches for the solution, crowdsourcing for help, considering her options, and ultimately trusting her gut. While those are good qualities to have when the world is dropped into the chaotic mess of a global pandemic, plenty of self-described efficient doers found themselves curled up in the fetal position, unsure what to do or how to move forward.

Sandy easily could have been one of them. She is the vice president of tours and marketing at Starr, a charter and bus touring company that relies entirely on people wanting to travel in large groups, not exactly a demographic suited for a worldwide shutdown. Like every small business in the country, Starr was overwhelmed by COVID-19. The 75-year-old family business idled for months, its buses parked in a lot, stripped of their tags and their insurance policies. With no other choice as they tried to figure out how to keep the capital-heavy business from shuttering for good, Starr had to let go of all but three of its staff members, and for months





Sandy and her husband, Pete, the company president, didn't take a salary.

It was, to say the least, grim. "You work so hard, the blood, sweat, and tears—anyone that's run a family business knows it's not always easy," Sandy says. "So for this to happen, something completely out of our control, to threaten to take away everything we had built, it was just devastating. We had to find a way."

All of these months later, Sandy can sit at the kitchen table of her Bucks County home knowing that Starr is not only back, but it's bigger and stronger than it's ever been. The company expanded its reach, buying the touring division of a Maryland-based bus company that otherwise would have not reopened post-pandemic. Starr also created an entirely

new operating line—shuttling local college kids to and from a select list of campuses. Starr's is the very definition of a pivot, of a company simultaneously ensuring its existence while still somehow planning for its future.

There is plenty of praise to go around—to a husband and business partner who dealt with the financial nuts and bolts to keep the company afloat; to an incredibly loyal staff, who returned to Starr even after their jobs were temporarily terminated; and to an equally devoted customer base who rode out the pandemic, promising to return to travel as soon as the doors were opened.

At the center of it all sits Sandy. It is her family's business, and she is the hub, connected to all of the spokes on the wheel that kept Starr rolling.



You work so hard, the blood, sweat, and tears—anyone that’s run a family business knows it’s not always easy. For this to happen, something completely out of our control, to threaten to take away everything we had built, it was just devastating. We had to find a way.



LITTLE STARR

Sandy Borowsky is the third generation of her family to run Starr Tours.

ALL ABOARD

Sandy’s grandfather Gilbert ‘Gil’ Sussman started the Trenton-based business in 1947 with a simple line run to and from Hightstown, NJ, and for years that was the essence of the company, shuttling people from one stop to the next. (Starr is the maiden name of Sussman’s wife.) But in 1964, when New York hosted the World’s Fair, Sussman saw an opportunity and offered people not just a ride from one point to the next but an actual packaged trip. That turned out to be the start of what would grow into a lucrative and nationwide touring and sightseeing venture.

Sussman passed away in 1969—just 2 days after Sandy was born—and his widow, along with his son, Mitchell, and son-in-law Alan Glickman (Sandy’s father) took over the

business. Like the company’s founder, they took advantage of good timing. After a few down decades, the Atlantic City casino industry roared to life in the 1980s, with business tycoons opening one gambling house after another. Pitched just 90 miles away, Starr soon regularly began running trips to the Atlantic City playgrounds, offering simple drop-offs and pickups and later overnight stays. The popularity of those trips made growing the geographical reach a logical next step. Starr buses were soon trekking folks to Broadway shows and Lancaster, Pa. and Washington, DC; and eventually every go-to place in the country. From the honky-tonks of Nashville to the bourbon trails of Kentucky, from the lake shores of Mackinac Island in Michigan to the rocky beaches of Cape Cod, Starr covered it all.

Sandy grew up in Washington Crossing, Pa. and although she was aware of the family business, she was not terribly interested. She did, however, like the perks. For one of her childhood birthday parties, Sandy and her best pals climbed aboard a Starr bus for a “mystery bus ride,” and Alan squired the delighted kids away for roller-skating and pizza. Though Sandy worked for the company as a summer job, she had no designs on taking over the Starr helm.

After graduating from Washington University in St. Louis, she took a job as a retail buyer in Missouri, ready to pursue her own career route. When she met her future husband—a Los Angeles native—she transferred the job to the West Coast, confident that she’d found her niche.

But in 1998, Alan and Mitchell needed two big jobs filled, one as a supervisor in the touring division and the other as charter manager. They hired a headhunter, a woman named Francine, to find them a good match. Francine told them she’d found the perfect candidate. “Alan,” she said. “Did you ever think about hiring your daughter?” Alan demurred, certain Sandy was content in California, and not interested in working at Starr. Undeterred, Francine reached out to Sandy, anyway. “I was engaged, and we were looking to purchase our first home, and the prices in Los Angeles were a lot different than back home,” Sandy says. “Luckily my husband had gone to college in the East, so he was amenable to moving back.” Sandy flew home for her bridal shower, but also for a formal interview and wound up landing the charter manager job. “My dad paid the headhunter, too,” Sandy says with a chuckle.

Ten years and three kids later, Sandy switched into the tour division, slowly building a team of 22 tour directors and 15 office staff that suited her style. “The mentality, as it is with a lot of family-owned businesses, is keep things the same,” she says. “But I spent 7 years at this other company, which had a lot of red tape and hierarchy, and I didn’t want that. So I built a staff where everyone works hard all the time, but there’s no watercooler talk. We all support each other, and we work with one purpose in mind: the betterment of the company.”

In a lot of ways, Sandy is like an air traffic controller, managing the tours that are out and ensuring that they all run smoothly. She is on call 24/7, available to put out fires or answer questions for her tour directors. In 2019, Starr enjoyed one of its best years, logging 450 tours, with some 17,000 travelers entrusting their vacations to Starr. As 2020 dawned, Starr was well on the way to matching or bettering it.

And then COVID happened.

NAVIGATING THE PANDEMIC

In early 2020, during a tour in Florida, the world collapsed like a row of dominoes. The goal at the time was simple: Get everyone home safely. Starr did that, but when that bus full of travelers returned, Sandy and her management team faced the impossible question: *What now?* “We were shut down...like we took the plants out of the office because we knew we wouldn’t be back to water them.

“Like everyone else at the time, we thought, *OK, we’ll be back in a few weeks,*” Sandy says. “It ended up being 5 months.” Broken hearted, Pete and Sandy laid off tour directors, drivers, mechanics, and office staff who felt more like family than coworkers. With Pete now working as president, they essentially had all their financial eggs in one basket, and though Sandy was concerned for her own family, she also carried the weight of so many others on her shoulders. “I knew I would find another job if I had to,” she says. “What ate at me was that I had to take away my staff’s livelihoods, people who had been incredibly loyal to us. It was just overwhelming.”

Pete worked with the banks, accountants, and lawyers to postpone the loans coming due for the buses. They parked their fleet of 40 buses, taking off the tags and canceling the insurance. “Basically, we went down to zero,” Sandy says. Every planned tour had to be canceled, but with no income coming in, how could they issue refunds? Sandy simply told her customers the truth, laying out the company’s financial hardships and asking if they could take a partial



I built a staff where everyone works hard all the time, but there’s no watercooler talk. We all support each other, and we work with one purpose in mind: the betterment of the company.

refund or perhaps bank the money for a future trip?

Turns out Starr’s star treatment across all those years wasn’t lost on the loyal travelers. “Our customers were amazing,” she says. “They’d say, ‘Keep it on file. When we can travel, I’ll use it then.’ Some of them said, ‘It’s OK. You need the money more than we do.’ It was because of our customers’ patience that we were able to survive and now rebuild.”

Looking to stay engaged with that incredibly loyal customer base, Sandy launched Tour Tuesday during the pandemic. Taking advantage of everyone’s new familiarity with Zoom, Tour Tuesday gives potential customers the opportunity to watch presentations about upcoming tours and ask questions. “We wanted to keep in touch with our customers who had been so good to us,” Sandy says. “We understood, you are not ready to travel yet. But when you are, here are some options.” An average of 100 people tuned in weekly.



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BIG WIN

Starr Tours was recognized for the 2015 “Operator of the Year” award from the International Motorcoach Group.

headed off to college, his classmates’ parents often kidded the couple about sending a bus to fetch their kids for the various college breaks. Sandy found herself thinking, *Why can’t we?* Prior to the 2019 holiday break, Starr launched its college service, collecting Bucks County area kids at Penn State and University of Pittsburgh. They added a Thanksgiving run in 2020 and eventually added service for Carnegie Mellon, Duquesne, RPI, Syracuse, and West Virginia. “Other bus companies that provided the same service decided not to run during the pandemic,” Sandy says. “So we were able to capture that market.”

Emerging from a near entire shutdown might seem like the absolute worst time to expand a business. Pete saw an opportunity. Eyre Tours, a third-generation family-owned company based in Maryland, was ready to shut down its touring department. Pete suggested Sandy run it from their Trenton office. The family, who were longtime friends, agreed, essentially turning over its tours to Starr. It gave Starr a lot more inventory...and Sandy a lot more work. Along with rebuilding the staff, she now had to familiarize herself with Maryland geography, to figure out pickup and drop-off spots, and oversee another whole group of tours. But she agreed it was good for business and what’s more, “it was a really neat opportunity for us to help another family-owned company.”

Today Eyre Tours powered by Starr operates a full itinerary of one-day trips and multi-day vacations and Starr is back to 80 percent of its trip inventory.

ALWAYS ON THE BUS

The irony is not lost on Sandy. A woman who spends her entire day plotting the perfect vacation for everyone else rarely takes time for herself. She writes all the marketing copy for the company and admits there are days she finds herself salivating over the getaways she’s writing about. She finds her moments on family vacations, day trips to the shore, and the Starr Birthday Bash—this year they’ll visit Louisville and Lexington to celebrate their 75th.

But with two boys in high school and one in college, plus a business to run, Sandy is like a lot of women, just hoping the balls she juggles don’t come crashing on her head. “The one good thing about having the downtime was all of these ideas we’ve had—the college tours, Tour Tuesday, the Eyre acquisition—we could think about how to do it,” Sandy says. “But that means I’ve also got a lot going on.”

She laughs as she says it. After surviving a pandemic that threatened to cripple her 75-year-old family business, having too much to do is a problem she can handle. ☺



The relationship between company and consumer carried Starr for the 5 months it went without a single trip and through the slow crawl back. Though the company had to dip deep into its reserves, the decency of the customers who were willing to wait on their refunds helped ensure that Starr would see its 74th and 75th years.

By late summer, Starr was running quick day trips to the Jersey Shore—carrying masked travelers to safe outdoor spaces, with no overnights. But in August 2020 a nervous Sandy sent her first tour director out for a 7-day trip to Mackinac Island, entrusting Penny Rudolph to guide the 19 travelers through the new normal of a masked tour during a global pandemic. Penny called regularly, reporting that everyone had abided by the mask mandates, and they were having a blast.

While the tour division inched back slowly, Sandy found a reliable resource in another Starr division that she started thanks, at least partially, to her older son, Miles. As he

“This is where people
use their training to have
a *meaningful* impact.”

– Dr. Ashlee Godshalk Ruggles
Colorectal Surgeon



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■ MASTER CLASS ■ ORGAN DONATION ■ GENDER EQUITY

"Think how much innovation is lost because women are dealing with a hostile climate or colleagues who don't think they deserve to be there."

Karen Horting
"The Slowest Climb"
(page 70)



REALWOMAN
**MASTER
CLASS**



THE PANDEMIC FORCED SO MANY OF US TO KEEP THINGS AS SIMPLE AS POSSIBLE, WHICH OFTEN MEANT LEAVING BEHIND HOBBIES OR TAKING TIME FOR FANCY THINGS LIKE LIPSTICK AND JOURNALING. HERE, FIVE OF OUR FAVORITE REAL WOMAN EXPERTS OFFER THEIR BEST TIPS TO HELP YOU FINE-TUNE YOUR LIFE.

By Meghan Rabbitt



WRITE LIKE A BOSS

Whether you want to send smarter emails or bust out a best-selling novel, here are five lessons I've learned in more than 20 years as a writer and editor that'll help you write like a pro.

By Meghan Rabbitt

1. WRITE LIKE YOU TALK. People often ooh and ahh when I tell them I'm a writer. My go-to response is that if you can speak, you can write. Far too many people think that good writing involves lyrical prose and fancy

words. The truth is that excellent writing can be conversational. It almost always includes simple sentences. It feels like the author is talking to you. If you're feeling stuck, just start talking (and type or write madly as you do).

You might even use your phone to record yourself speaking and then transcribe it (and edit yourself later).

2. BE SPECIFIC. There's an age-old phrase you probably heard in your high school English class at some point that truly is ride-or-die advice when it comes to writing: Show, don't tell. Give me specifics rather than talking in generalizations. Tell stories, rather than grandstanding. Not only will this lead to the kind of writing that will engage more readers, but it's also actually way easier to pull off.

3. START BIG. Beginnings are important. Your opening paragraph can either intrigue a reader and inspire her to keep reading—or bore her, and prompt her to move on to something else. This is why I tend to stew over how I'm going to start whatever it is I'm writing before I open a new Word doc. I often think of my best opening paragraphs while I'm walking, or folding laundry, or when I'm in the shower. I find it's much easier to get into the flow of writing when I feel like I've got a great lede—and it's worth the extra time making sure I've got that nailed before I get going.

4. REVISE AS YOU GO ALONG. Many writers will tell you to do a big brain

dump or “free-write” session to get everything you want to say down on paper first and edit yourself later. If that works for you, fantastic—keep at it. But for me, going back to what I've written and fine-tuning it after every third paragraph or so helps me feel like what I'm writing isn't half bad—and helps me gain some serious momentum. Bonus: This makes it easier to revise what I've written when I'm finished, which lets me move on to the next assignment (or whatever you're working on) pretty quickly.

5. SAY IT LOUD. My dad was a high school English teacher, and he gave me this advice after I'd written my first book report in elementary school: *Read what you just wrote out loud to yourself.* Will you feel a little weird at first, reading your own words aloud with no audience? Probably. But I can't tell you how much it will help you edit out all those extra or unnecessary words you tried to jam in there that don't actually help your piece (see Tip No. 1); make sure you're showing, not telling (see Tip No. 2); and also check that what you've written sounds like you. Because in the end, that's why we write, isn't it? To share information, tell a story, and put ourselves out there, hoping it'll help, delight, move, or inspire whoever reads your words.



PAIR WINE LIKE A SOMMELIER

For those of you who love food and wine but haven't the foggiest idea what goes with what, these tips from our favorite sommelier will help you master any wine list.

By Maureen Petrosky

BRIDGING: This is a simple concept of pairing wine used in a recipe with the wine you're drinking. For example, pan seared lamb chops served with a red wine sauce would be served with a cabernet sauvignon.

COMPLEMENTING: Here's where you try to complement what you're eating with the wine you're drinking. Having a rich dish? Choose a full-bodied wine. Eating something more delicate? Go for a light-bodied wine.

CONTRASTING: This technique aims to create contrasts between elements of the wine and that of the dish. For example, with a rich cream sauce or a heavy stew, you'd serve a light, acidic wine to cut through the fat. (Think sauvignon blanc with a beurre blanc sauce or a pinot noir with boeuf bourguignon.)

In addition to these basic techniques, here are my go-tos for perfect pairings:

BIG REDS ARE A BIG NO-NO WITH SPICY FOOD.

If you are about to sit down to spicy Mexican food, avoid big red wines. Wines with a higher alcohol content like cabernet sauvignon and syrah make spicy food even spicier.

SWEET TAKES THE HEAT.

An off-dry white wine, like Riesling, is great with Pacific Rim dishes and spicier fare like curries.

ROSÉ TAKES THE CHEESE.

Rosé is a lightly acidic wine with body and fruit flavors that works well with cheese plates and creamy pastas.

WHEN IN DOUBT, GO FOR BUBBLES. Champagne and sparkling wine work great with *everything*.

THE ONLY WAY to learn about which wines go well with which foods is through trial and error. Take a sip, then take a bite. Take a bite, then take a sip. Take a sip and a bite at the same time. Take note of the changes in your mouth. While there are some tried-and-true food and wine pairings—a big tannic red wine with a juicy steak, for example, or champagne and caviar—there are so many more options than those. Here's the inside scoop on how most sommeliers start the process of finding the best pairings.

First, start with these three techniques:



TAKE PICTURES LIKE A PRO

If you have a smartphone, you've got a pretty incredible camera with you at all times. Now, you just need to know how to use it. Here are five tips to get the most out of your pictures from *Real Woman* cover photographer *Linette Kielinski*.

TIP NO. 1: CLEAN YOUR LENS. While this may sound seriously like an o-brainer, it's an important step that too many of us skip before we start snapping, says Kielinski. "You won't get a decent photo if your lens is

dirty," she says. "Just make sure you wipe your lens on something clean, like a cotton T-shirt or eyeglass cleaning cloth."

TIP NO. 2: SWITCH UP YOUR ANGLE. Most of us

point our camera at our eye level. While that's OK, adding some variety can lead to more unique shots. "If you're taking pictures of your kids, get down at their level and shoot from there," says Kielinski. "Same goes for pets and flowers. Whether it's a bird's-eye view or your child's view or an ant's view, a different angle almost always makes a photo more interesting."

TIP NO. 3: THINK ABOUT YOUR LIGHTING. Before you snap, take a few seconds to look at the light, and the

shadows that might fall on what or whom you're shooting. The basics: You don't want to shoot directly into a bright light source, and overhead lights aren't great either. "I always suggest sticking to natural light when you're using the camera on your phone," says Kielinski. "Think light pouring into your house through a window. That's always beautiful."

TIP NO. 4: AVOID BUSY BACKGROUNDS. When searching for the perfect backdrop for photos, Kielinski looks for textured walls and lots of greenery—and steers clear of things like parking lots, or streets with lots of people walking around in the background. "You want to isolate your photo's subject from the background if possible, which will draw your attention to your subject," she says. "And make sure there's nothing coming out of your subject's head, like a branch or tree or a telephone pole. That isn't a great look."

TIP NO. 5: DOWNLOAD HIPSTAMATIC CLASSIC. If you really want to have some fun with different kinds of lens, color, and film filters, this app is a must, says Kielinski. "You take a photo through the app, and then you can play around with all kinds of filters to give your photo a distinct look," she says.



MAKE OVER YOUR MAKEUP

We asked Philadelphia-based makeup artist *Gina Kay Osborne* for her best advice on looking great (even if your morning routine must be under 5 minutes), her go-to products right now, and more.

Q: WHAT ARE YOUR TOP TIPS FOR WOMEN WHO WANT TO KEEP THEIR GET-READY ROUTINE SUPER SIMPLE?

A: I'm one of those women! I'm about to be a mom of three, and I run a company of 20 people! Thankfully, that fresh, soft, hydrated look is in right now—and there are a lot of great multi-use products that can help you get that look.

My top tip if you're looking for a 10-minute-or-less face: Buy a couple of key multiuse products and remember that less is more. For example, instead of foundation, use a tinted moisturizer with SPF. I love

a great cheek and lip tint as well. They're pigmented, and you can use as lip color and cream blush and even dab a little on your eyes.

For brows, I recommend using a tinted gel instead of penciling. One quick swipe through gives you color, and some shape that lasts. After that, apply some spot powder and use a sealant spray to make sure everything stays put throughout the day.

Q: WHAT ARE YOUR FAVORITE PRODUCTS RIGHT NOW—THE ONES YOU FIND YOURSELF REACHING FOR AGAIN AND AGAIN?

NO. 1: TATCHA THE PEARL.

This tinted eye cream has subtle color, so I'll use it in place of concealer. It's not heavy or cakey and it's brightening. It's literally one of the very few products that I've bought more than once. I'll use it on other spots on my face as well—like if there's a little redness around my nose, or I'll layer it under a little dab of concealer if I need some extra coverage.

NO. 2: ILIA MULTI-STICK.

I love Ilia's entire line, but this duo is so versatile for pigment. I'm a huge fan of cream blushes. As we age, we start to lack moisture in our skin, and this product adds vibrancy and brightness to any complexion.

NO. 3: INNER BEAUTY COSMETICS COCO BALM HIGHLIGHTER.

A lot of women get too crazy with highlighter—or they're scared to use it because they think they'll look like a disco ball! Because this is a cream, it's softer and subtler than most highlighters and adds a fresh dewiness to skin. (I also love this company's lip oil, which is super hydrating without being too oily or sticky!) You can use my discount code for 20 percent off this local line: LOVEGINA.

NO. 4: KOSAS TINTED FACE OIL. I'm obsessed with this lightweight tinted base, which is hydrating and provides coverage without making you feel like you have a heavy product on your skin.

NO. 5: ANASTASIA BEVERLY HILLS BROW FREEZE. I tell my friends and clients that using this product is essentially like giving yourself a brow lift. We're seeing the lamination look, where brow hairs are pushed up into place. This does that, but it can be more contained—so you're not feeling like your brow hairs are standing straight up in the air.

NO. 6: SALTY FACE TANNING WATER. This subtle self-tanner gives you the most natural color that builds, and it's beautiful. You apply it right after your skin-care routine, and it'll make you look like you've just been out in the sun for a few hours and have a little bit of color. No weird foam, no mess, amazing results.

Q: WHAT SHOULD WE LOOK FOR WHEN IT COMES TO FINDING "CLEAN," NONTOXIC PRODUCTS?

The clean beauty industry is really flourishing right now. My favorite online store is Credo—essentially, it's an Ulta or Sephora, but for clean products. They have an entire staff of people who are ingredient specialists, which means they do all of the research for you. It's important to me to use products that work and that I can feel good about putting on my skin. The skin care and makeup lines Credo sells fit that description.



LAND ANY JOB

Want to hone your interview skills and position yourself to land any job you want? Our go-to career and leadership coach has the advice you need.

By Amita Mehta

FIGURE OUT WHAT REALLY LIGHTS YOU UP.

Whether you're a seasoned leader or just starting out, look back at your experiences and define both the contributions you're most proud of *and* the ones that make you want to get out of bed. This exercise is especially valuable when you find that you're not happy in your current role. It will help you figure out if you are running away from something or truly running toward something. For example, if you're running away, you may love what you do but your manager or organizational culture may not fit your values; if you're running to something, there's a good chance you're proud of the work you've done but it's time to move on to the next challenge.

LEVERAGE YOUR NETWORK.

Applying for jobs online isn't the only way to get noticed by employers. Research suggests 85 percent of positions are landed via networking connections, whether it's with someone you already know, a referral, or someone you admire in a similar role to the one you want. Oftentimes, jobs aren't even posted. That's why it's important to always cultivate your network—especially

when you're not actively on the job hunt. You never know when the next dream job will pop up just from catching up with contacts. Make it a point to stay connected and put yourself out there to people you don't know.

DO YOUR RESEARCH.

Once you've distilled the types of opportunities that fuel your passion, develop a target list of roles and potential companies that align to your interests and values. Search LinkedIn and company career sites to not only explore what types of opportunities exist, but evaluate the commitment to inclusion and diversity and the types of employee benefits they offer. What's their on-site and remote work approach? This research will also make you an informed candidate during your networking and interviewing process. Recruiters and hiring managers appreciate the extra effort candidates put in to understanding the company's mission and values. Your research will also help you develop questions for your prospective employer, to see if it is a mutual match. Don't forget, you're interviewing them, too! 🧠

WHEN I DECIDED to leave my job in financial services 3 years ago to become a career coach, I never imagined myself as an essential worker. But during the pandemic and the ensuing Great Resignation, people are making pivots from job to job and career to career. I've become the ultimate job search Sherpa, guiding my clients toward career moves that marry their passions with their lifestyles. If you want to make a change but not sure where to begin on your journey, here's where to start:

REVAMP YOUR RÉSUMÉ AND LINKEDIN PROFILE.

There's nothing worse than getting the "thanks, but no thanks" response within minutes of your online resume submission. Most companies rely on applicant tracking systems (ATS) as the first line of review to suss out key words on résumé before it gets to a human. To get through the ATS, be sure key aspects of the job description are reflected on your résumé. Always quantify results of your accomplishments to demonstrate your value. Remember it's OK to have

multiple versions of your résumé based on the types of opportunities you may be exploring.

As for LinkedIn, it's an important tool that you shouldn't overlook. There was a period of time that I avoided LinkedIn, but I quickly learned that I was missing opportunities to get noticed by potential employers. Think of LinkedIn as free marketing. And when you're updating your profile, think beyond the profile pic. How you present yourself will help you stand out.

ALL

SHE



LEFT

BEHIND



The sudden death of 35-year-old Jamila Irons-Johnson, PsyD, was a devastating blow to her friends and family. But with the donation and transplant of her major organs, she saved six lives.

BY SCOTT EDWARDS

THE MORNING OF JANUARY 23, 2013, WAS AN UNREMARKABLE ONE IN THE JOHNSON HOME.

That said, no morning that entails getting a 2-year-old and 5-year-old ready to go is ever truly mundane. But the family of four said goodbye and went their separate ways, as they normally did.

For Jamila Irons-Johnson,

PsyD, that meant heading to

her office in Princeton, NJ. She was the director of mental health services for the Dorothy B. Hersh Child Protection Center at Saint Peter's Hospital in New Brunswick, NJ, though she also worked as a psychologist at a private practice in Princeton.

On this particular Wednesday, Jamila met with patients and talked with colleagues during the interludes between appointments. If she was stressed or feeling unwell, she gave little, if any, indication. She always exuded calm and a quiet determination. So when a colleague heard a scream come from her office, they ran to Jamila's aid without hesitating.

It was around 4 p.m. when Janice Campbell, Jamila's mother, answered a call from Jamila's husband, Matt Johnson. "It's Jam, and it doesn't look good," he said.

Campbell was completely blindsided. She needed to know more, but all Johnson knew was that Jamila was taken to



Jamila's mother, Janice Campbell, left, with Janice McNamara, who received Jamila's lungs.

Capital Health Regional Medical Center. Campbell hung up and called the only other of her four daughters who was local, Jeannine Irons. "Get home immediately," she told her. "Something's happened to Jamila." Campbell, who works as a public health nurse, then retreated to her supervisor's office, where they prayed and waited.

Campbell says she knew Jamila's prognosis as soon as she saw her. But that doesn't mean that she registered it. At 35, Jamila had suffered a ruptured brain aneurysm, also called a cerebral aneurysm, and was being kept alive with a ventilator.

After several hours, Campbell told Johnson and Irons to go home. With her other two daughters en route from California, Campbell secluded herself elsewhere in the hospital and prayed some more. "I prayed, 'God, show me what you want me to do with all this, because this is a really hard lesson and a really hard experience to go through,'" Campbell says.



Jamila's family agreed that she would have wanted to be an organ and tissue donor.

When she returned to her daughter Jamila's bedside, Campbell was approached by two nurses. Before they could say anything, she conceded, "I know she's no longer here with us." Then she looked past them and noticed two people by the nurses' station. "Are they from organ and tissue transplants?" They were, the nurses said.

When Jamila's husband and her sisters arrived later in the morning, they agreed that Jamila should be an organ and tissue donor if she was a candidate. Yes, she was registered as such. More than that, though, it's what Jamila would have wanted, they concluded.

Once the decision was made, the two people from the nurses' station went to work. They were members of the New Jersey Sharing Network, a federally designated nonprofit that helps coordinate organ and tissue donations with Capital Health and more than 50 other hospitals throughout the state. "Together with the hospital, we ask, 'What does this family need?' It's not just about recovering organs," says Alyssa D'Addio, director of hospital and community services for the New Jersey Sharing Network. "It's also about making sure this family is well-supported throughout the process."

Jamila was evaluated by the network's team to ensure

"Together with the hospital, we ask, 'What does this family need?' It's not just about recovering organs. It's also about making sure this family is well-supported throughout the process."

—Alyssa D'Addio,
New Jersey Sharing
Network

ORGAN TRANSPLANTS REACHED A NEW HIGH IN 2021

In spite of the pandemic, 41,354 organ transplants were performed in the United States in 2021, the first time the annual total exceeded 40,000, according to the United Network for Organ Sharing (UNOS).

That number is so large because, yes, the need is immense. **IN NEW JERSEY ALONE, NEARLY 4,000 PEOPLE ARE ON THE ORGAN TRANSPLANT WAITING LIST**, according to UNOS. At any given moment, the organization says, more than 100,000 Americans are in need of a lifesaving organ transplant. But there are also more organ donors than ever before. **IN 2021, 233 PEOPLE IN NEW JERSEY DONATED ORGANS**, which broke a record set only a year earlier. Sixteen of those donors were Capital Health patients, according to the New Jersey Sharing Network, a nonprofit that helps coordinate organ and tissue donations with more than 50 other hospitals throughout the state. **CAPITAL HEALTH ALSO PERFORMED 54 ORGAN TRANSPLANTATIONS LAST YEAR.**

Nationally, the number of deceased organ

donors reached a new all-time high for the 11th consecutive year, according to UNOS. **LIVING DONOR TRANSPLANTATIONS ALSO INCREASED LAST YEAR**, but the total was lower than those of the years prior to the pandemic.

"New Jersey is often viewed as a tough state, but people here say yes to organ donation in overwhelmingly high numbers, especially when you consider the challenges we've been going through as a community during the pandemic," says Alyssa D'Addio, director of hospital and community services for the New Jersey Sharing Network. **"I FEEL BLESSED EVERY DAY TO SEE FAMILIES SAYING YES TO ORGAN DONATION AND TO HELPING A STRANGER.** These are people experiencing the worst moments of their lives and still choosing to help someone else. It's amazing to be a part of."

“Capital Health is proud to partner with the New Jersey Sharing Network to help families navigate the emotional and logistical challenges of organ and tissue donation to help those who are in need of life-saving transplants.”

—Al Maghazehe, president and CEO of Capital Health

that she met the criteria to donate—surprisingly, less than one-tenth of 1 percent of registered donors do meet the criteria, according to D’Addio. Jamila’s organ donor status was confirmed. Next, they submitted a few critical pieces of information about Jamila, including blood type, to the United Network for Organ Sharing (UNOS), which oversees the national waiting list for patients awaiting a transplant. The UNOS computer system then matched the best potential recipients for Jamila’s organs.

Working with Capital Health Regional Medical Center and the recipients’ transplant centers, the New Jersey Sharing Network oversaw the recovery and placement of Jamila’s heart, lungs, kidneys, pancreas, and liver. It happened quickly and efficiently, unfolding and finishing in less than 72 hours. In all, Jamila saved six lives. And another 75 or so benefitted from her tissue donations.

EVERYONE’S BIG SISTER

“I cannot believe I’m even writing this,” wrote Jamila’s colleague Sarah Seung-McFarland, PhD, on her blog, Trulery. “It was just Tuesday that we were talking and laughing in the office, a highlight of my day. Her last words to me were, ‘Have a good day tomorrow.’ But the end of tomorrow was never to come for her.”

Does the grief from a loved one’s death feel more acute when it happens suddenly and unexpectedly? It’s impossible to measure. But this much is certain: When Jamila died, there was a distinct and irreconcilable void in the lives of those who knew her well, as though an integral piece of themselves had disappeared without explanation.

The Irons sisters are tight. “Supertight,” Julienne Irons says. “It’s disgusting how close we are.”

“One of Jamila’s friends said, ‘It’s very hard to be her best friend because the sisters are so close, they’re each other’s best friends,’” Campbell, Jamilla’s mother, says.

The four siblings were separated by only a few years, Jamila being the oldest. Julienne was 2½ years younger, and Jeannine is 10 months behind Julienne. Jasmine is less than 2 years younger than Jeannine. Each sibling,

however, is very much her own woman. While they grew up in the same household, and they maintained near-constant contact, event from opposite sides of the country, Jamila and Julienne could not have been more different.

“I’m the fiery one and I’ll fight, and she’s the one who was like, ‘OK, let’s just calm down everyone,’” Julienne says. “She always had this peace about her. I say that very sincerely, not just because she passed away. She just had this calmness to her that made you feel very at ease and very comfortable and very much taken care of. But she was not a pushover.”

“She was always the big sister, making sure that everything was OK. You could always trust her to do what she had to do,” Campbell says. “I think they all went to her with everything, not just the girls, but her friends, too. She was always there as the counselor/real good friend.”

Those qualities were also essential to her work: advocating for and safeguarding abused children. Because there were already too few people willing to step into such a critical but difficult role, Campbell established an achievement award at Rutgers, Jamila’s alma mater, to encourage exceptional students

who “exhibit a commitment to working with ethnic minority populations and/or assisting underserved children and adolescents who may have been victims of abuse, encompassed in a foster care system, or struggling with a traumatic event, anxiety disorder, or mood disorder.”

It’s a modest gesture, but it’s encouraging students who could touch the lives of hundreds of kids who have nowhere else to turn.



STRENGTH IN NUMBERS



This is going to come as a surprise: Less than one-tenth of 1 percent of registered donors meet the criteria to donate their organs, according to the New Jersey Sharing Network. Which makes it all the more important that as many people as possible register.

There's a constellation of reasons that could prevent a registered organ donor from donating any of their organs, including blood type. Proximity to a potential recipient is another, but age and a medical condition are not necessarily among them.

There's no definitive age range that makes one organ donor more viable than another, says Alyssa D'Addio of the New Jersey Sharing Network. Organs from donors as young as a few days old to adults in their 90s have been successfully transplanted.

And even with a medical condition, some, if not all, of your organs can be transplanted. All of that will be sorted out during a clinical evaluation at the time of your death. Don't count yourself out in the meantime. "It's one decision that could save many lives," D'Addio explains.

If you're concerned that by registering as an organ and tissue donor, health care providers won't exhaust every measure trying to save your life, you're not alone. D'Addio says it's the most common barrier to registration that the Sharing Network is faced with today.

"We work a lot with our hospital partners, including Capital Health, to ensure that providers are actively dispelling that misconception with their patients," she says. "The reality is that the health care team's role is to try to save your life. When there's no chance for a meaningful recovery, and that's been communicated to your family, that's when the Sharing Network comes in to discuss donation with families. But not before then."

If you're interested in registering as an organ and tissue donor, you can do so when you apply for or renew your driver's license, or at registerme.org.

New Jersey residents can also register at njsharingnetwork.org/register.

A BITTERSWEET EXPERIENCE

While Jamila saved the lives of six people through her organ donations and enhanced the lives of about 75 more through her tissue donations, her impact is much larger than that—because there are 10s of people with ties to those recipients: immediate and extended family members, close friends, work colleagues, and clients. And among them, but not limited to them, is another group—those who were inspired to register as an organ and tissue donor after hearing Jamila's story or one like hers.

D'Addio was a college student studying psychology and business when her father suffered a brain hemorrhage in 2009. A week after witnessing his organ donation process, she called the New Jersey Sharing Network and asked if it had any internships. She's been there ever since.

Campbell was similarly moved. About a year after Jamila's death, the Sharing Network arranged for Campbell and her daughters Julianne and Jeannine to meet Janice McNamara, who received Jamila's lungs. Campbell wrote a letter to McNamara, which the Sharing Network relayed to her. McNamara said she was moved to tears. "She was so accepting of me, it made [meeting] easy," she said.

Prior to her transplantation, McNamara had been on a waiting list for 2 years. She'd required oxygen 24 hours a day and still struggled to breathe. By January 2013, McNamara assumed she didn't have much longer. She invested her precious time in writing letters that she intended for her daughter to open at all the milestones she was going to miss: her graduation, her wedding, the birth of her first child.

"There is no doubt the transplant saved my life," she said 2 years later.

Campbell and McNamara quickly became close. Both also became advocates for organ and tissue donation on behalf of the Sharing Network. Occasionally, they presented together, because their stories were intertwined. They titled their talk "The Call," as in the call from Johnson that forever turned Campbell's world upside down and ultimately righted McNamara's. "It was a bittersweet experience," Campbell says about presenting with McNamara. "But I was happy for her because she had a second chance to live."

(McNamara died last August. She was 63, and more than 8½ years removed from her transplantation.)

In 2018, McNamara, Campbell, and Julianne attended the Transplant Games of America in Utah together. The



Jamila Irons-Johnson, PsyD

second night there, Julianne burst into tears and cried for an hour straight. Spending so much time with McNamara, it was the closest she'd felt to her sister Jamila since her death. Also, everywhere she turned, she met with people like her: family members of organ donors. They were all there because they'd lost someone close to them, and they were trying to keep their memory alive, just like Julianne was doing.

For the first time, she let herself sink into what she was feeling. She was grateful that Jamila helped so many people. But she also desperately missed her sister. Grief is messy. Was there enough room for both? It's a question she's been asking herself ever since. 🧠

THE SLOWEST

CLIMB

The U.S. labor force is undergoing a massive shake-up—more than 21 million Americans quit their jobs since last September. What does that mean for women, the fight for pay equity, and positions at the top of corporate America? *Real Woman* spoke to female leaders about where we stand and where we are headed.

By Jess Downey | Illustration by Mitch Blunt





IN THE OPENING scene of the 2018 biopic about Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, *On the Basis of Sex*, the camera pans across a parade of fresh-faced young men in black and gray suits marching their way toward the 1956 Harvard Law School orientation. Eventually we find a petite, brown-haired woman in a cornflower blue dress—RBG—who was one of a handful of women among more than 500 students in her law school class. It's a sight that RBG described as “all of these men and one tiny woman.”

Today, 54 percent of the Harvard Law School class of 2024 is made up of women. It's a massive leap, but confounding when you consider that just one in three lawyers in the U.S. is female.

Shifting through statistics to get a comprehensive read on gender

STATS

- UNTIL 1972, THERE WERE NO FEMALE FORTUNE 500 CEOS.
- WOMEN STILL ONLY MAKE UP 8.2 PERCENT OF FORTUNE 500 CEOS, WITH WOMEN OF COLOR MAKING UP 1.2 PERCENT.
- WOMEN MAKE UP NEARLY HALF OF THE U.S. WORKFORCE BUT ONLY 27 PERCENT OF JOBS IN STEM (SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING, AND MATHEMATICS).

parity and pay equity in the American workforce is a two-steps-forward, two-steps-back experience.

For example, if you consider the 2020 charts from the Department of Labor (DOL), which show the role of “secretary” as the leading profession among women through 2000 (it still sits in the third position, behind “teacher” and “nurse”), it can feel like things haven’t really changed much. However, if you look closer at the DOL’s numbers, you’ll see that in 1920, just over 8 million women were in the workforce. A century later, that number was close to 80 million women in the workforce.

If you focus instead on the dearth of female Fortune 500 CEOs—41 executives out of 500 (8.2 percent)—the numbers seem sideways. But consider this: There were zero female CEOs of Fortune 500 companies before 1972, when Katharine Graham was tapped to lead the *Washington Post*. By 2000, there were still only two female CEOs. While 8.2 percent is still shockingly low, it does represent two decades of progress.

Pay equity is also lagging; in 2020, the average woman working full-time, year-round earned 83 cents for every dollar paid to her male counterpart. Compared with the average man working full-time year-round, disparities are even greater for Black women, Native American women, and Latinas, as well as certain subpopulations of Asian women.

While the data doesn’t paint a clear picture, it also doesn’t tell the whole story. The last 2 months alone saw a couple of big wins that have no bearing on the numbers. On February 22, U.S. Soccer and a group of current and former players agreed to a settlement that included a multimillion-dollar payment to the players, which came after the players filed an Equal Employment Opportunity Commission complaint over inequality in pay and treatment. But the more meaningful

part of the agreement was a promise by the federation to equalize pay between the men’s and women’s national teams. “For us, this is just a huge win in ensuring that we not only right the wrongs of the past, but set the next generation up for something we only dreamed of,” soccer star Megan Rapinoe said on NBC’s *TODAY* show.

Just three weeks later, on March 15 (known as Equal Pay Day), the Biden-Harris Administration announced 12 actions to

promote women’s employment that range from improving pay equity transparency for federal contractors to issuing an Executive Order to promote diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility across the federal government. While some of these efforts may be mainly symbolic, they are signals to employers that pay equity matters.

With signs pointing in all different directions and with the tectonic plates of corporate America shifting in response

MEET THE MOMENT

Darlene Wilson, a managing principal at Relay Account Management, says we can all do more to open doors for each other, especially from a position of leadership. As a woman who has been the only Black woman in plenty of boardrooms, here are three pieces of important advice.



➔ Show unity in the boardroom

I’ve been in so many situations in which a woman offers a great idea and is dismissed, and then a man swoops in and makes that idea his own. I believe it’s our job as women to give credit where credit is due, so we can make sure we are making a mark. There are subtle ways to help each other. You might say, “I think Darlene has something to say, and I think she’ll have great insight on this topic...”

➔ Be more than a checked box

I’m often the only Black woman in the room, and sometimes I feel like I am there because they have checked a box. But the way I see it is that even if I wasn’t brought there just for my expertise or the value I bring, I am going to make sure my voice is heard so they know why I’m there.

➔ Meet the moment

No matter the reason you’re tapped for a board position, I encourage women to go to the board with every intention to lead. Be visible in those meetings. That’s where decisions really happen, where change is really made. Women have so much to give, so we can’t hold back. We can’t slip back to what we’ve had for many years, which is all-white, all-male boards from the same socioeconomic backgrounds. We must ensure that we are present in every room where decisions are being made.

to the global COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent Great Resignation of 2021, many people in the trenches fighting for equality in the workforce see an opportunity for women to make headway. But even if some of the efforts made toward gender equity are more symbolic than tactical, it's meaningful that corporations get the message out to employees that gender equity matters—and that the public is paying attention. "If people know that revenue or compensation is going to be contingent on their embracing diversity, equity, and inclusion, it starts to become part of what they do," says Karen Horting, executive director & CEO of the Society of Women Engineers (SWE).



Karen Horting,
executive
director & CEO,
Society of
Women Engineers

LEAKY PIPELINE

While the Great Resignation has slowed since late 2021, the Department of Labor statistics reports from early 2022 show ample opportunities for job seekers—the rate of job openings as a share of the labor force was 6.8 percent in January. The fact that we have so many job openings,

coupled with more employers being open to flexible work situations, means opportunities for women will gain ground, says Horting.

The pandemic forced employees to work from home for months, changing long-held beliefs among many employers that bringing people into the office was the only way to successfully keep track of the workforce. In January 2021, PricewaterhouseCooper (PwC) published findings from a study that showed a significant swing in just 6 months. According to PwC, "The shift in positive attitudes toward remote work is evident: Eighty-three percent of employers now say the shift to remote work has been successful for their company, compared to 73 percent in the June 2020 survey."

"With COVID, we've had 2 years of a worldwide research study in which people were forced to work from home, and in many cases, the employers didn't lose anything in terms of productivity," says Horting. "So just 5 years ago, employers who might have said that flexible work hours or work-from-home situations can't work for them are now changing their tunes and that means the rejection of old paradigms and more opportunities for women."

Something else is changing, too. As women begin to see more female faces at work and in school, they are emboldened to reach for more. Tammy Wittren, producing branch manager at NFM Lending, has more than 30 years of real estate and lending experience, but says it took years of being told she was too emotional and that she would fail at managing a branch before she understood how capable she was. "In my past life, I was overlooked simply because I was 'an emotional woman.' I always did more production than any of my male counterparts, but I was not a fraternity brother. And I put up with it because it was normal and I didn't have anyone who pulled me aside and said, 'That is messed up,'" she says. "I finally had to ask myself, *Are you really going to put up with this? This is everything you've*



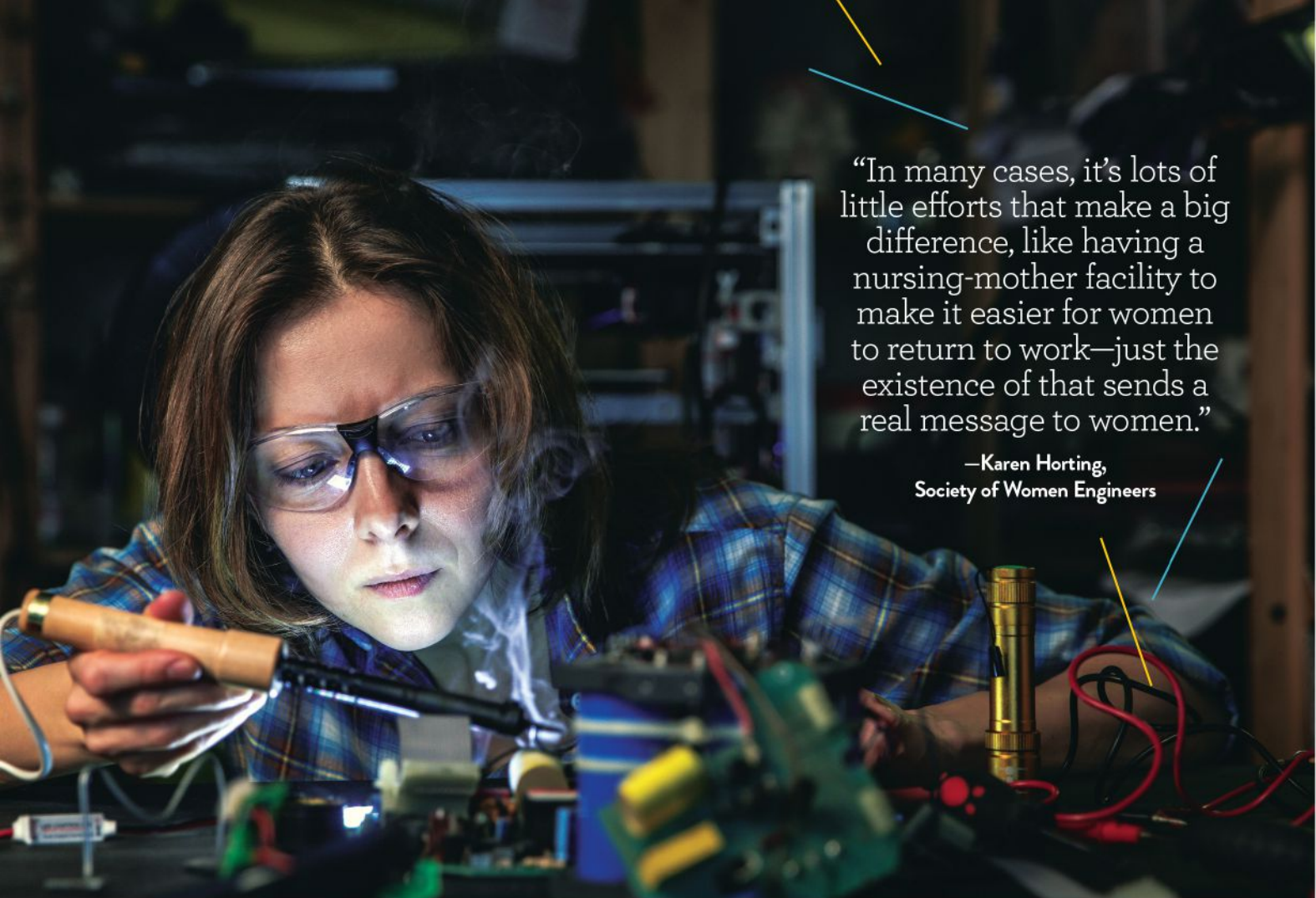
DUST OFF YOUR DEGREE



The Society of Women Engineers (SWE) offers return-to-work programs, which are emerging to help employers reintegrate professionals back into the workforce and help women reengage later in life. These programs create a formal pathway to employment for returning professionals. "They have been so successful. We have over an 85 percent full-time hire rate from the women who go through the program," Horting says. "It's mainly for women who have been out of engineering anywhere from 2 years to several decades. We are finding that after these women are placed, they are moving very quickly into leadership roles."

SWE believes so strongly in the reentry program that it is working with Congress to create legislation to support employers, especially at small and midsize businesses.

For more information, visit reentry.swe.org.



“In many cases, it’s lots of little efforts that make a big difference, like having a nursing-mother facility to make it easier for women to return to work—just the existence of that sends a real message to women.”

—Karen Horting,
Society of Women Engineers

worked to overcome. And then, finally, I was able to take back my career.”

Self-belief and encouragement plays significant roles, especially in fields still dominated by men, says Horting. For example, she points out that 22.2 percent of engineering bachelor’s degrees were earned by women in 2018, but women held just 15 percent of in engineering jobs in 2019. To move beyond that disparity, she says companies need to signify to women that they are valued. “It really comes down to unconscious bias and climate. Think how much innovation is lost because women are dealing with a hostile climate and colleagues who think they don’t deserve to be there, so women are constantly having to prove that they’ve earned their position instead of just filling quotas,” says Horting. “In many cases it’s lots of little efforts that make a big difference, like having a nursing-mother facility to make it easier for women to return to work—just the existence of that sends a real message to women.”

PARITY PARTY

With the job market skewed toward employees and more attention being paid to gender parity than ever before, seizing the moment is crucial, says Sarah Robinson, an executive leadership consultant and author of *Fierce Loyalty: Unlocking the DNA of Wildly Successful Communities*. It’s one thing to see the need, she says. She often refers to the recent McKinsey Global Institute (MGI) report, *The Power of Parity*, which demonstrates how advancing women’s equality can add \$12 trillion to global growth. Getting there is going to require more than employers simply hiring more women, she says.

Robinson says women in positions of power will also play a huge role in shrinking the gap. “I envision a woman who is a female leader, she’s got one hand reaching up to take the hand of the woman in front of her, but she’s also got a hand reaching backward to bring women with her. Women in positions of power must understand that you can’t pull the ladder up

behind you,” Robinson says. “We have to advocate for what women need to succeed, even when it’s not easy.”

Horting points out that for gender parity and pay equity to become a sustainable reality, every link in the chain must be involved from elementary school to the C suite. Grade school and especially middle school are pivotal points for girls starting to develop a STEM identity—it’s really about helping girls build their confidence,” she says. “On the other end of the spectrum, the C suite has to be as inclusive as the workforce. Is board of directors diverse and are we linking compensation to that measurement? Are there employee resource groups in place? Is there a women’s network, and is it linked to business goals of the organization? All these things have to be working for us to get where we’re trying to go.”

Progress can sometimes feel glacially slow, but Ruth Bader Ginsburg knew it would be a marathon. She said, “Real change, enduring change, happens one step at a time.” 🕒



Real Woman/Athleta

HERO AWARD



Uzoamaka

ATUEGWU

CLINICAL PHARMACIST
COORDINATOR,
CAPITAL HEALTH



Everything from Nutella to automobiles has been impacted by the supply chain pinch during the COVID-19 pandemic. But that also includes life-saving medications that hospitals and patients cannot go without. At Capital Health, that problem falls on Uzoamaka (Uzy) Atuegwu, a clinical pharmacist coordinator.

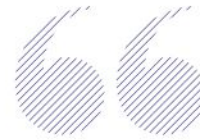
Atuegwu wears plenty of hats, from training and onboarding new hires and managing other clinical pharmacists to running the PGY2 Pharmacotherapy Residency program, but her main focus is ensuring Capital Health has adequate drug supplies at all times. That's a challenging job in normal times, but during the pandemic,



it has been a herculean task. “There’s real pressure to make sure you have the drugs on hand that we’ll need at the hospital, especially during a global pandemic. During COVID, I have learned to be more flexible, adaptable, creative, and resilient,” she says. “During the peak of the pandemic, we had to communicate what drugs we had available to sedate COVID patients, and it was changing day by day. In fact, there were times when we weren’t sure what we were going to get the next day. I wouldn’t have been able to do a lot of these without having the support of the pharmacy department.”

The job was particularly challenging in the early days of the pandemic when the medical community was learning in real time which drugs and treatments were most effective in fighting COVID. “Monoclonal therapies are instrumental. It’s been great to have the COVID therapeutics and even prevent patients from being admitted in some cases,” Atuegwu says. “During the surge, we only ran out for less than 48 hours when other sites were out for weeks.”

Dan Abazia, director of Pharmacy at Capital Health, nominated Atuegwu for the Real Woman/Athleta Hero award because she continues to play an integral role in the department and in Capital Health’s COVID response. “She demonstrated critical leadership for our pharmacy staff during a time of tremendous uncertainty and unpredictability,” he says. “Uzy is a consummate professional and takes her role in improving the medication-use process through effective management of our clinical, formulary, and educational services seriously.”



Uzy is a consummate professional and takes her role in improving the medication-use process through effective management of our clinical, formulary, and educational services seriously.



—Dan Abazia, director of Pharmacy at Capital Health



WHAT IS THE HERO AWARD?

After surviving through the worst of the pandemic for the past 16 months, putting their own lives in jeopardy to care for patients, *Real Woman* wanted to recognize some of the heroes on the front lines. Athleta at MarketFair also wanted to recognize these women for inspiring all of us with their strength and tireless efforts. Together, we created the *Real Woman/Athleta* Hero Award, which recognizes a Capital Health front line worker in each issue of the publication. The winner exemplifies calm and courage under the most difficult circumstances and advocates for the patients first and foremost. Each winner will have the opportunity to visit the Athleta store and receive a complementary outfit of their choice with help from an Athleta stylist.



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- 5. Capital Health Primary Care – East Windsor**
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609.303.4480 | capitalhealth.org/eastwindsor
- 6. Capital Health Primary Care – Ewing**
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609.883.5454 | capitalhealth.org/ewing
- 7. Capital Health Primary Care – Hamilton**
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Hamilton, NJ 08619
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1401 Whitehorse-Mercerville Road, Suite 218
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AL DRAGO/BLOOMBERG VIA GETTY IMAGES



Shining a Light on Star's Plight

The Oscar controversy brought awareness to actress Jada Pinkett Smith's battle with alopecia.

By now, you've probably seen the slap. During the 94th annual Academy Awards ceremony, presenter Chris Rock said to [@jadapsmith](#), "G.I. Jane 2, can't wait to see it, all right?" making a joke about the actress's nearly bald head. Pinkett Smith shaved her hair off last summer after a long and painful battle with alopecia, an autoimmune disorder that causes hair loss. Moments later, her husband, actor Will Smith, walked up onto the stage and slapped the comedian, shocking the crowd at the Dolby Theatre as well as the millions of viewers around the world.

While there was plenty of scrutiny to go around for both Will Smith and Chris Rock,

the Oscar controversy also brought widespread support for Pinkett Smith as well as greater attention to alopecia, which impacts nearly 7 million people in the United States.

Since 2018 when she first revealed her alopecia diagnosis, Pinkett Smith has used her platform to share openly in the hopes of inspiring others. In an episode of *Red Table Talk*, her chat show, she shared how frightened she was when she first noticed she was losing "handfuls of hair in the shower." She said, "It was one of those times in my life where I was literally shaking with fear. That's why I cut my hair and continued to cut it."



SOPHIA BUSH
[@SophiaBush](#)

Violence isn't ok. Assault is never the answer. Also? This is the 2nd time that Chris has made fun of Jada on the stage, & tonight he went after her alopecia. Punching down at someone's auto-immune disease is wrong. Doing so on purpose is cruel. They both need a breather.

ROXANNE GAY
[@rgay](#)

The rest of this show is just very uncomfortable. And I think that Jada's alopecia and Rock's previous jokes about her doesn't justify violence, but I understand what could push someone over the edge.





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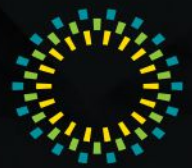


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