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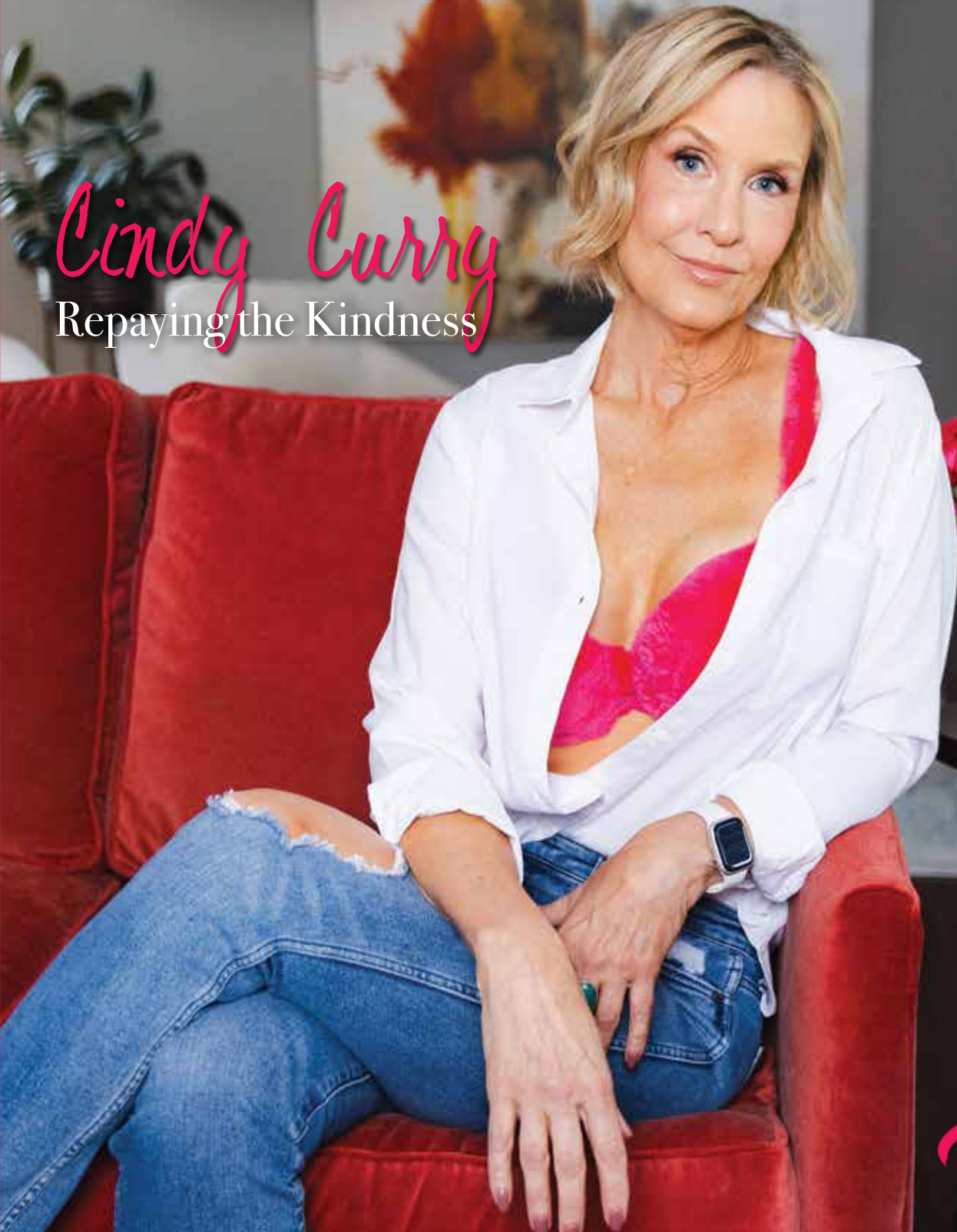
Cindy Curry
Repaying the Kindness

Phones and
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INSPIRATIONS

Cindy Curry: Building a Warrior Network Against Breast Cancer

The bra modeled by Cindy Curry on this month's cover is the first bra ever sold for Bra Couture KC 13 years ago. In the intervening time, Cindy and the organization have raised significant funds to help sustain individuals and families just as she was sustained by the friends, family and medical professionals after her breast cancer diagnosis.



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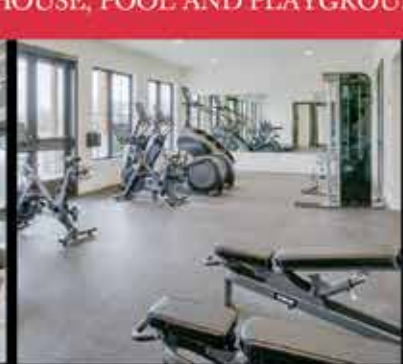
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DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE

Photography by Amber J Deery



The first conversation that I ever had with Cindy Curry was to let her know that she had been nominated to be on our cover. It is a conversation that gave me chills, you know, the ones that spread from your arms, down your back and into your legs. She accepted the nomination and is this month's October Breast Cancer Awareness cover, but that wasn't what gave me chills. It's what still gives me chills to this day, when I think about it.

Cindy was honored and humbled, but her focus was not on herself or what she had been through. She said it was all about the people who helped her in any way and every single day. When I asked her to share her breast cancer story and experience, it was enlightening to listen to her tell it without hearing a word about what she went through or how awful it must have been. She told her story by focusing on all those who helped her and were there with her and for her.

I think we are taught at a young age to retell an event or experience based on what we went through and how it made us feel. Our first instinct is to focus on ourselves. After all, why wouldn't we? That is how we were taught to share them since we began to talk and write.

I know I probably start with the negative, or sometimes the dramatic,

order of events before I shift my focus to the positive or to others. Usually, after the fact, I realize it wasn't just me that was in the thick of it, but all those involved who helped me get through it. I couldn't get through a day without my support system, my village of people.

No matter what we are going through, others are going through it with us, along with their own circumstances. Don't be afraid to ask for help or support and take the time to show gratitude and appreciation.

Cherish It,

Tammy

TAMMY CRYSTAL MCDONALD



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BUILDING Relationships THROUGH Seasons OF Change

Cozy sweaters, changing colors, cooling temps; it's time for a change from sweltering summer. Kids are back in school, routines return, and we take a breath before we gear up for the holidays.

Yet the leaves aren't the only ones changing. With autumn come new relationships—new teachers, classmates at school, new parents and peers at kids' activities—and shifts in schedules with friends and partners. Transitions can bring tension, and it's a good time to review some keys to building new relationships and keeping them healthy.

EXPRESS CURIOSITY AND ACCEPTANCE

Everyone knows the keys to relationships are communication and listening. And inactive listening doesn't invite connection. Concepts around communication are vast and daunting. When we think of what we really crave in conversation, we want others to be both interested in and accepting of our experiences. Simple questions such as "Oh, what was that like for you?" or "Tell me more about that. What happened next?" validate people of all ages.

We as women often protect and support the emotional space of others. We often rush to fix things, either with advice or with trying to let others know they're not alone through sharing our own experiences. There is a time and a place for this. Yet expressing curiosity and acceptance clearly communicates to your child, friend, parent or partner that their experience is worth your time in a busy world.

Remember that accepting someone's experience does not mean agreeing with them or condoning their behavior. This is especially helpful when it comes to understanding children's motivations but is just as crucial in adult relationships. Our friends and partners will also do things that make no sense to us, that rub against our needs and values. We can be curious about what was happening to them while also setting our own boundaries and values.

Thoughtful gestures that connect with others' stories, important dates, goals and stressors let people know that we are thinking of them even when they're not in front of us. A simple text on a big day, sharing a story about a place that a friend mentioned, or snagging an extra pumpkin spice latte for a co-worker goes a long way.

There's another plus. Drs. John and Julie Gottman, researchers in marriage and relationships, talk about the "bank" in all relationships. We unconsciously "store" and weigh positive and negative experiences in relationships, needing more positive to continue. These gestures make the most of the "money in the bank" in all relationships.

LET GO OF RIGID RELATIONSHIP GOALS

Ultimately, we're often too hard on ourselves. Are we being a good mother, daughter, sister, friend, wife, partner? Often when we feel one relationship is going well, we feel as though we're failing another. We get stuck on what we think relationships should like look and compare ourselves to others.

Let go of this. Every person has different needs. While one friend might need to send texts every day and meet regularly, others need time and space. Seek to understand what the people in your life need, even if it's different than what you think, and you are more than enough for those around you.

Relationships also have seasons. It's normal for friendships to change, for once-cuddly children to push away, and for partners to change what you thought were never-ending habits. Over our lifetime, some of our closest relationships with our children, spouses, partners, co-workers and friends will have times of discomfort and conflict. While these times might be signs of trouble, they also are times of personal growth and development for you and your loved ones. Stick to the principles of reciprocal relationships and look for others who will do the same for you. ♦



Rebecca Kline Toy, LCMFT, DBTC, is the senior vice president of clinical services at KidsTLC. The Olathe-based nonprofit agency provides an unparalleled continuum of residential and outpatient care to children and their families facing challenges with mental and behavioral health, developmental trauma and autism.

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Live music, art and food were hallmarks of the fourth anniversary celebration of Jules & Zoa Statement Salon on August 4, in collaboration with local artists, many of whom were family, friends and clients of Jules & Zoa Statement Salon. “We are so blessed to share other talents in one night,” said Jules Moore, owner. Vocalist Devyn Trondson sang the night away while guests mingled and viewed the art. Artists were gracious to give the proceeds of their sales back to the salon’s nonprofit of choice, and the night of celebration raised over \$1,000 for House of Hope KC. ♦

PHOTOGRAPHY BY JULES MOORE & AUDREY MCGINNIS



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FILLERS AND LASER RESURFACING

The Dynamic Duo

BY DELANIE STOECKLEIN, AESTHETIC INJECTOR
& HANNAH BROWN, MEDICAL AESTHETICIAN

Dermal fillers and laser treatments are relatively well-known ways to effectively turn back the clock. Dermal fillers address the loss of facial volume, fine lines and wrinkles; meanwhile, laser resurfacing helps tighten, retexturize and revitalize the skin. Combining both treatments can be a great option for patients who are ready to age gracefully without surgery.

Dermal fillers provide immediate benefits, increasing the skin's retention of moisture by replenishing lost hyaluronic acid. They work beneath the skin, bringing volume back to the face. They are more effective at rejuvenating the appearance of the areas of the face that have become hollow, such as the medial cheek. Fillers are especially useful at smoothing out fine lines in the lips or around the mouth. Dermal fillers

Laser resurfacing is a noninvasive procedure that targets fine lines and wrinkles.

can give a great, natural-looking result.

Laser resurfacing is a non-invasive procedure that targets fine lines and wrinkles. This procedure is an effective way to tighten the skin by using laser light pulses to gently heat and stimulate moisture inside the collagen fibers, while also stimulating the body's natural production of collagen long after the actual procedure. It destroys layers of the skin that are dull, damaged and dead. The procedure is low risk with minimal down

time after treatment.

Dermal fillers and laser resurfacing treatments go hand in hand with one another. A good candidate for these procedures is anyone experiencing the common signs of aging such as static wrinkles, sagging skin, dull skin, brown spots and uneven texture. The number of treatments is specific to each individual. It is our job to give you realistic expectations and education from the start, so that you are fully satisfied with your services and results.

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LONGHOUSE VISITOR CENTER OPENING

The new gateway to the Overland Park Arboretum & Botanical Gardens, the LongHouse Visitor Center, opened its doors to the public for the very first time this September. LongHouse offers 21,000 square feet of space, including a variety of gathering areas, terraces and patios, a gift shop and Café Celeste. Members of the community joined the City of Overland Park's governing body, Arboretum and city past and present employees and the generous donors who have played a pivotal role in bringing this dream to life for a ceremony that included the ceremonial cutting of a beautiful flower garland. Throughout the weekend, more than 5,000 visitors toured the LongHouse Visitor Center and enjoyed the serenity of the beautiful gardens, woodlands, prairie and ponds at the Arboretum. ♦

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ANDREW ROSSI





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NEW BREAST SCREENING GUIDELINES

BY LISA BUTLER

It's official. In May 2023, the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force, or USPSTF, issued new guidelines recommending that women begin having regular mammograms every two years starting at the age of 40 if they're at average risk of breast cancer. That is a significant change from previous guidelines that women should be receiving routine mammograms at the age of 50.

This change comes after an increase in diagnoses of breast cancer among younger patients and a startling number of deaths among Black women, who are already 40 percent more likely to die of breast cancer. In addition, the task force now recommends women get screening mammograms every other year from ages 40 to 74.

WHAT IT MEANS

Each year, more than 43,000 women die of breast cancer in the U.S. The new guidelines would cover more than 20 million women between 40 and 49 who might be at risk, but women with a family history of genetic risk of breast cancer are advised to get screened earlier.

By amending its previous stance, the USPSTF's is providing guidelines that are now more aligned with other groups' recommendations. Other organizations including the American Cancer Society recommend women start screening or be offered the choice to start screening at age 40.

Why hasn't there been consensus on screening guidelines in the past? While it has been an area of controversy many years, most experts say that the differing opinions of various organizations give varying, alternate perspectives that evaluate the benefits of screening versus the possibility of false positives and overtreatment.



Of course, the major benefit of screening is that it helps detect breast cancer sooner. When caught early, breast cancer, according to the American Cancer Society, has a five-year relative survival rate of 99 percent. Women with early-stage breast cancers generally need fewer and less-intense treatments and surgeries reach the five-year milestone.

On the other hand, screening does come with potential risks and harms. Although mammography is the best tool currently used, it is not perfect. Women can receive false positive results that require biopsies and additional imaging, which can cause unnecessary stress. Younger women tend to have dense breasts, which can make it harder to distinguish normal breast tissue from suspicious tissue, leading to

more false positives as well.

Some experts disagree with the USPSTF's recommendation that women get follow-up mammograms every other year from age 40 to 74. These screening guidelines are for women at average risk of developing breast cancer. The American Cancer Society, as well as other societies, still recommend annual screenings, and annual screening has been proven to lower the mortality rates. Having mammograms starting at age 40 should not change women's insurance coverage. In

the U.S., insurers are required to cover annual mammograms for women 40 and over.

Women who have a strong family history, particularly of early-age-onset breast cancer, younger than 45 years old, should discuss with their primary care doctor about the age to start having screening mammography. Experts say these groups should start having clinical breast exams at a much younger age, as young as 25, depending on the circumstances.

For women in their 40s who haven't started screening, it's best to talk to their medical provider about their own personal risk for breast cancer and schedule appointments as necessary. In addition, it's important for a woman to know if she has dense breast tissue, which is crucial for overall breast health as she will likely need additional testing methods.

HIGHER-RISK WOMEN

The American College of Radiology recommends women in higher risk groups, such as those of Ashkenazi Jewish descent and black women, get a breast cancer risk assessment by age 25, to determine if they need to start breast cancer screenings before age 40.

Women of Ashkenazi descent are more likely to carry the BRCA1 or BRCA2 breast cancer gene mutation, which raises their risk. It is still uncertain why black women are at increased risk for breast cancer, but what experts do know is that they present at a much younger age, and often with a more aggressive form of the disease. Survival rates are significantly worse than their white counterparts, with a 40 percent mortality rate stage for stage. Screening these women earlier will help save more lives, but tasks forces on this subject also note that more research is needed to determine if black women should be screened on an entirely different schedule.

Thankfully, the world of breast cancer detection is constantly evolving and growing. The updated recommendations emphasize the serious need to move from an age-based approach to breast cancer screening to a personalized, risk-based approach. This way, the research is focused on improving the assessment of the disease as well as the screening tools that are used to find it. ♦

SOURCES: Sources: bcf.org, cdc.gov, fox5atlanta.com and pbs.org.

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CHOOSE A HEAD COVERING—OR NOT: BACK AT YOU, CANCER!

BY LINDA R. PRICE

Coping with hair loss is one of the most devastating side effects of chemotherapy treatment. Our self-esteem is closely associated with our looks, and our hair plays a major role in how we look. It can really be a blow to one's self-esteem when chemotherapy causes hair loss.



It may be a good idea to start looking for head-gear before chemo robs you of your tresses. First of all, ask your oncologist for a prescription for a cranial prosthesis—med speak for a wig! Many insurance companies will cover the cost of one wig during cancer treatment. Wigs are expensive, but that's usually the first thing that one thinks of. However, there are many alternatives to wigs that cancer patients can use to supplement the wig.

Cancer hats are a great alternative. Wigs can be extremely hot in warmer climates, and hats can provide relief from the sun. Some hats are expensive, but many are not. Breast Friends Hat Project offers diverse programs and projects. even though they are limited at this time because of the coronavirus. The American Cancer Society offers a service called Tender Loving Care. This non-profit service produces a catalog featuring a variety of products for cancer patients.

The National Breast Cancer Society of Australia sponsors a hat project for both men and women living with cancer.

Chemo hats are specially designed hats that take into consideration the dry, sensitive scalp suffered by many chemotherapy patients. Often these hats are made from soft bamboo or silk and are less likely to irritate the scalp of cancer patients.

In addition to wigs and hats, there are many other types of head coverings for cancer patients. Caps, scarves and turbans are popular head coverings. There's a wide variety of products, and since they are much more affordable than wigs, you may be able to purchase several in different styles. These coverings are lighter and somewhat cooler than wigs. Often, they do not cause an itch as much as a wig or a hat does.

You may wonder what type of head covering is best. Actually, it depends on you. Cancer hats are wonderful for both men and women. Women enjoy bamboo hats because they are good for different temperatures and fashionable. For those who suffer from the cold, knit caps can help. Beanies and other sleep caps are good to keep you warm and prevent the stray hairs from covering your pillow at night.

Natural fibers such as wool, cotton and bamboo are often less irritating than the synthetic fibers such as polyester. Each of these three main fibers has its advantages. Wool is an excellent insulator and therefore perfect for cold winter days. Cotton is easily washed and a great alternative to wool. It is lightweight and ideal for warm summer days. Bamboo is soft and breathable. It also has antibacterial properties that reduce the itchiness associated with other fibers or fabrics.

You will probably want some kind of head covering when out-

side. The sun is drying and skin is often more sensitive to sun exposure during chemotherapy and radiotherapy. Certain coverings may cause you to perspire and develop itchiness. If you prefer not to wear head coverings, don't forget to apply sunscreen of 15 SPF or 30 SPF to protect yourself from the sun's rays.

For the bold, bald is beautiful. Skipping head covers altogether can be very comfortable and liberating. Others like the bald look but prefer to decorate the scalp with tattoos. See different Pinterest pages for ideas on how to tattoo your head. There are some crazy ideas, but many feminine designs, too.

If you are an arts and crafts person, sewing head coverings for yourself or others may be an enjoyable task. Melly Sew and See Kate Sew have projects for making head coverings for cancer patients. Check with your local cancer society to determine where you can donate your projects. Even if you don't want to sew a head covering, you may want to add rhinestones, chains (for teens) or a rosette on one side to make your purchased covering truly unique and your own.

Living with cancer and going through chemotherapy and radiotherapy are difficult at best. Many patients find that using a beautiful head covering helps them cope with hair loss. Others throw caution to the wind and experiment with bold coverings and designs that they would never have used before cancer. Whatever you choose, remember, a sense of humor will go a long way in your treatment. ♦

SOURCES: breastfriends.org, verywellhealth.com, cancer.livebetterwith.com, mellysews.com and leaf.tv.



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MAMMOGRAPHY QUESTIONS ANSWERED

BY DR. ALLISON ZUPON



Q

Where can I go to get a mammogram?

A

Wherever you prefer! You do not need a doctor's order to get a screening mammogram. You are free to choose the center that best fits your needs. Some facilities accept walk-ins, but you can always call and schedule your screening mammogram. I recommend you ask whether a breast radiologist will be reading your exam and whether you can get your results the same day.

Q

What do I do if I have dense breast tissue?

A

First of all, don't skip your yearly mammogram; having dense breast tissue puts you at higher risk for breast cancer. Second, ask about supplemental screening. This is additional breast cancer screening made for women with dense tissue or elevated risk for cancer. Choose a breast center that can assess your risk and give you multiple options. Mammograms may not see certain types of cancer in dense breast tissue. Having supplemental screening gives us the best chance of finding cancer at its earliest and most treatable stage. Missouri recently passed legislation mandating 100 percent insurance coverage of comprehensive breast cancer screening. My hope is that with this coverage, we will be able to make sure every woman gets the best screening program for her individual risk.

Q

Will supplemental screening be paid for?

A

Typically, insurance will cover the exams, but you may be responsible for a copay. This summer, Missouri passed legislation mandating 100% coverage of supplemental screening for most health insurance. This is great news! Contact your insurance provider to confirm coverage, as there may be exceptions for high deductible health care plans. The Find it Early Act of 2023 is federal legislation that would mandate coverage with no cost-sharing. Advocate with your lawmakers to pass this bill-women deserve early detection! ♦



Allison Zupon, MD, is a board-certified radiologist at Imaging for Women with an additional year of fellowship training in breast imaging. Dr. Zupon is a national speaker on breast imaging, particularly on high-risk cancer screening. She is a proud advocate of legislation to advance breast cancer screening for all women.

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Cindy Curry

BUILDING A WARRIOR NETWORK AGAINST BREAST CANCER

BY CINDY MCDERMOTT
PHOTOGRAPHY BY AMBER DEERY
HAIR AND MAKEUP BY SHANI OVERFELT
@SHANELISEMUA | SHANELISEMUA.COM

Warriors call upon their body armor to guard themselves from harm when on the battlefield. Leather and metal were used by many in ancient times and now scientifically designed fiber materials or ceramics can be employed for our modern-day protectors. But Kansas City, Missouri, native Cindy Curry donned a pink fur bra as a safeguard for herself and the many others who would follow her. In 2005, Cindy was diagnosed with breast cancer and after surgery, treatment and reconstruction, she showed off this bra as one of the first models for Bra Couture KC.



"The pink Alaskan Fur bra was the very first bra that was ever sold for Bra Couture KC in 2010, so it's the bra that started it all. I still have access to it because Richard and Sabrina Korentager purchased it and have lent it to me again and again. So now I'm 62 years old and still modeling this bra. I'll be doing it next year during the raffle," she remarked. "I went from being a model, then to being the marketing director in the second year to being in a leadership role for a few years. I've always supported Bra Couture KC, and I've brought dozens of guests to the event. Being a part of this organization is a way for me and others to look out for those who don't have a medical safety net."

Bra Couture KC's annual event is a unique and fun auction that showcases one-of-a-kind, hand-crafted bras modeled by breast cancer survivors to celebrate their triumph over cancer. The first Bra Couture KC was in 2010 with a goal of bringing in \$20,000, but the event was so successful more than \$90,000 was donated. In April 2023, \$518,000 was raised and, in total, it's more than \$4 million, despite losing two years due to COVID-19. Bra Couture KC raises money for cancer patients in the Kansas City metro who can't afford medication, transportation to treatment, prosthetics, wigs, surgical supplies, blankets, food, lymphedema garments and more. Cash vouchers can help to sustain an underinsured or uninsured family for up to two months for living expenses while the patient is in treatment. Serving men, women and children touched by all cancers, Bra Couture KC celebrates breast cancer survivors to raise funds for organizations that are aligned with its mission.

WARRIORS AGAINST CANCER

While Cindy hesitates to think of herself as a warrior, this 18-year cancer survivor is quick to point out those that she believes deserve recognition. Inside that group, she lists a diverse group of individuals, such as medical professionals, coworkers, family and friends—the ones who showed up to assist in her battle against cancer.

"People refer to cancer survivors as warriors, and, yes, you have to battle the disease and do what you've got to do. But you're not the only one in battle. There are all the doctors and the nurses, oncology specialists and



“Do not be afraid of finding out that you have cancer. When you feel that lump in your breast, you need to get past the fear,” she said. “Go to the doctor; let them tell you because that saved my life.”

other medical professionals who are working for you. But you've also got your family, whether it's your husband, your in-laws, whomever, and I had an abundance of friends and neighbors," noted Cindy. "But I know that there are people who don't have a large family. Maybe they're a one-car family and their spouse can't take off work to drive them to their appointments. Or maybe they can't afford a wig. That's where Bra Couture KC can give people a helping hand."

Friends are also an important segment of the warriors' network for Cindy. She shares that her pals came together for her first show to lend support and funding. "When they found out that I was included in Bra Couture KC, they came in force to support me," she said. "My girlfriends got together and pooled their money to make sure I had the highest bid on the bra I was modeling. They have continually supported this organization during the hard times and the good times."

While Bra Couture KC does not supply these things directly, the organization provides funding to the nonprofits that do. "It can be nutritional supplement programs and medical equipment and supplies, mastectomy supplies, transportation, wigs and comfort items. Things that just some people take for granted," she listed. "It supports organizations that pay for the mammography screening for uninsured people. I feel like being a part of this organization is a way for me to look out for a lot of people. I want to assist people who don't have the good luck of possessing that safety net of supporters and good insurance."

INHERITING THE GENE

Cindy is a carrier of the BRCA1, or breast cancer gene 1, which produces proteins that help repair damaged DNA. According to the National Cancer Institute, all of us have two copies of BRCA1 and BRCA2, another potentially harmful gene, one copy inherited from each parent. BRCA1 and BRCA2 are sometimes called tumor suppressor genes because when they have certain changes, called harmful, or pathogenic, variants, also known as mutations, cancer can develop. Cindy inherited this harmful variant that increased her risks of several cancers, most notably breast and ovarian cancer. The harmful variant in BRCA1 and BRCA2 can also lead to cancer appearing

in younger people. Cindy discovered a lump in her breast during a self-exam and immediately called her physician for an appointment, exam and potential treatment plan.

"So, I said, 'Just tell me what to do next.' That was really my attitude. I didn't panic. I just asked, 'What next?' Many people told me that I needed to research everything before getting started. But I just wanted to move forward," she remarked. "I'm a little unlike some people who really dive into the details. I felt more like, 'Let's go.' It could have been to my detriment. But, it's all turned out well so far."

Her ability to accept the diagnosis and begin moving on to her treatment plan was a solid idea. The lumpectomy revealed that the tumor had spread quickly to her lymph nodes. "So it's Stage 2 and a triple negative tumor, which, I'm told, is the type you don't want to get," she shared. "My understanding is the recurrence is much higher for that type of tumor." Because she carried the triple negative BRCA1, she also underwent a hysterectomy before her bilateral double mastectomy, which was followed by vigorous rounds of chemo treatments.

SHARING THE NEWS WITH FAMILY

Her children, Emma, now 26, and Patrick, 27, were in third and fourth grade when her cancer was diagnosed. Rather than keeping the news under wraps, Cindy wanted to share as much information as she thought they could emotionally handle to ensure they knew what was ahead for their mother and their family.

"I was on the front porch with them and I said, 'I want to tell you something. I've got breast cancer. I know that if you hear the word cancer, it sounds scary. However, I did the smart thing and I did my preventative breast self-exam and found a lump. I went to the doctor that week to see what it was. They diagnosed it early, so that means it's very treatable. We are people with insurance and the funds to have good doctors and a good team, and I'm a healthy person who has taken care of myself. So this is going to be okay, but before it's okay, I'm going to lose my hair, because that's what the medicine does, and it's gonna make me sick.' I told them the truth and they were prepared." Genetic testing revealed that neither Patrick nor Emma



carry the harmful BRCA1 or BRCA2 genes.

While she will never be cured of her cancer, Cindy notes that her reports were positive after her treatment and that she no longer needs follow-up testing. But she has these words of wisdom to share, spoken by a true warrior.

"Do not be afraid of finding out that you have cancer. When you feel that lump in your breast, you need to get past the fear," she said. "Go to the doctor; let them tell you because that saved my life. If I would have waited for my mammogram that was scheduled four months later, the way that that tumor was moving, who knows what could have happened?"

After a two-decade career at the *Kansas City Star* newspaper, Cindy has taken on the role of a life insurance agent at SelectQuote®, researching plans for individuals that will provide coverage when no other companies will take on the risk. In this role, she has assumed a warrior role for others when they have no one else in their corner. She finds it exceptionally gratifying as she helps individuals with limited insurance options. It seems to fall in line with her life journey as she repays the goodness she has received in her life.

"I have such gratitude for all of the support I've received. I've always appreciated my friends and my life. But that's just magnified when you see who has your back when things are hard," she noted. "I have found that when people are given a reason and the opportunity to be kind, they will do so. The number of people who reached out to me, who did things for our family, was inspiring. I'll always have an appreciation for that, each and every one of them, whether they offered a prayer, held my hand or took my kids to a book fair or shopping for school. I have never forgotten them." ♦

HOW TO BUILD A BEAUTIFUL CHEESE BOARD

RECIPE & PHOTOS BY LAUREN LANE | LAUREN-LANE.COM



THE CHEESE

Pick a variety of flavors and textures, such as cheddar, blue and Colby.

THE ACCOMPANIMENTS

Fruit and veggies: orange slices, grapes, dried apricots, dates, apples, melons and pears, celery, cucumber or carrots.

Nuts: hazelnuts, almonds or cashews.

Meats: Genoa salami, slices of prosciutto or soppressata.

Bread: multigrain crackers, crusty bread or crostini.

THE SPREADS

I have made homemade herb dip for this board and provided the recipes below. You can also purchase varietal honey, jams or chutney.

PUT IT ALL TOGETHER

1. Choose a serving platter. It can be anything, really! A board, sheet tray, pretty plate or a piece of marble.
2. Arrange the platter. Try to add height by piling grapes or stacking bread. Larger clusters of ingredients are more visually appealing.
3. Fill in the gaps. Use fresh herbs, nuts or seasonal fruit for a pop of color. ♦

HERB DIP

4 ounces cream cheese at room temperature
 1/4 cup sour cream
 1/4 cup mayonnaise
 2 tbsp. fresh parsley leaves, minced
 1 tbsp. fresh chives, minced

1/4 tsp. garlic powder
 1/2 tsp. kosher salt
 1/2 tsp. freshly ground black pepper
 Combine all ingredients until blended and serve.



After 25 years in creative design and management with Hallmark Cards, Lauren Lane quit to pursue her lifelong passion for food and entertaining. Lauren has reinvented herself at 50 and now pursues her dream of teaching others how to cook easily and entertain effortlessly. Follow her on Instagram, Facebook and her blog so you don't miss any of her recipes and cooking tips and tricks.

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JJ's is a fine dining tradition, with a contemporary American menu featuring locally sourced produce and meats, house-cut steaks, fresh seafood, and the best thin crust pizza and pork chop in the city. The world-class wine list has earned multiple honors from *Wine Spectator* magazine, and Zagat rates JJ's as one of Kansas City's best restaurants. All the more reason to make JJ's part of your Country Club Plaza dining experience.

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PANACHE CHOCOLATIER

A CELEBRATION
ISN'T COMPLETE
WITHOUT A SWEET
TREAT!

BY SHERYL HAMMONTREE
PHOTOGRAPHY BY AMBER DEERY

Imagine a wedding or birthday without cake, or the holidays without candy and cookies! Now consider a confection that in itself is a celebration; a single bite causes you to close your eyes, pause and savor the texture and intentional flavors, stirring old memories or creating new ones. Do you taste coffee? Spice? A touch of heat or a note of whiskey? And now you understand the difference between eating chocolate and experiencing chocolate. May I introduce, or reintroduce, you to Panache Chocolatier.





You can stroll the tree-lined streets of Leawood's Park Place, shop a variety of locally owned businesses and take a seat on a park bench while experiencing luxury chocolate from Panache Chocolatier. Owner and Grand Master Chocolatier Julie House wakes early each day to create luxury artisanal chocolates one piece at a time. She works with only the finest, natural ingredients. You will never find pastes, extracts, preservatives or sprays in her kitchen. One bite and you'll taste why she wins national and international confection competitions year after year in multiple categories.

Panache chocolate is not purchased in bulk, melted and fashioned into a product with extended shelf life. Julie House created the recipe for Panache's chocolate, sourcing Belgian cacao, known for its smooth mouth feel, and blending it with Colombian cacao, known for its rich notes of coffee, floral and Amazonian botanicals. The result is a next-level canvas for her artistic genius.

My conversation with Julie was simply delightful. We instantly landed on common ground as designers and talked about the joy of creative expression through cooking and the soul-satisfying moment when you've created something you know is special. Our shared belief that the beauty is in the details led to my favorite part of the interview, as Julie spoke with passion and conviction when describing her kitchen process. Patiently whisking the chocolate as it slowly melts. Layering the natural flavors, pouring, dipping and swirling the chocolate with intention, then gently placing dried fruit, crushed nuts, flower petals, the right amount of drizzle or dusting on top, creating a one-of-a-kind luxury, artisanal chocolate ready for you to experience.



TRUFFLES, YES PLEASE!

Julie's truffles are divine and meant to be enjoyed in three or four bites. Take your first bite; as the chocolate melts in your mouth, you notice the texture and flavor. With the second bite, the flavors intensify and notes of coffee or red wine begin to surface. By the third or fourth bite you are fully savoring the complexity; you're satisfied and you just want to sit with it for a bit.

The shop is beautiful and overwhelming in the best way; it's not easy deciding what to taste first! If you like a rich, deeply flavored cocktail, the Classic Cocktail Collection of

truffles is the perfect place to start. It features local spirits from Union Horse Distilling Company, with six truffles in a box, including flavors of Old Fashioned, Manhattan, Mint Julep, Brown Derby and Sazerac. If you prefer red wine with your chocolate, Julie has a box just for you. The Red Wine Collection features delicious reds from Kansas City's very own Amigoni Urban Winery.

RAISING THE BAR

The award-winning Panache Signature Bar Collection has it all, featuring a collection of milk, dark and white chocolate bars with

fascinating and fabulous flavors such as Black Pepper Pistachio, Almond Sea Salt, Sunflower, Espresso and Marble. They are absolutely beautiful and would make a terrific gift or companion to a cup of coffee or after-dinner drink. I chose the Black Pepper Pistachio and Sweet & Spicy Pecan bar. It's as though the spice is patiently waiting until your second bite. It's difficult to describe, but the flavors are layered and arrive differently with each bite.

PACKAGING.

It seems like a small thing, but I believe





this experience begins with the box. It's simple, elegant and it's clear; beautiful details are on display. It's evident each piece is handmade—no paint or decals, just gorgeous rich, dark chocolate with lovely embellishments that have been placed by the hand of an artist who truly cares. Excellence is evident.

GIFT GIVING

As you begin thinking about holidays, consider giving Panache Chocolatiers chocolate to anyone and everyone! Chocolate-covered popcorn, dipped Oreos or chocolate flakes would delight any kiddo (or grownup) on your list. Corporate gifts are a breeze with the boxed sets and rather than bringing another bottle of wine to the host or hostess, surprise them with truffles. Maybe they will share, but don't count on it!

IMPORTANT TIP

Remember, Julie doesn't use preservatives, so her back room is not stacked to the ceiling with boxes of chocolate ready to give. She's going to wake up early and stay up late each day during the holiday season to make sure your gift

is excellent. Get your orders in early!

Keep an eye out for Panache's Seasonal Truffle Collection, available November 20. This is the third year Panache has collaborated with the Kansas City Ballet; the collaboration is based on their production for the year and a portion of sales will be donated to the Kansas City Ballet.

HAVE A SEAT

Stop by the shop and see Julie; tell her you would like an iced mocha, you heard it's made with her signature blend cacao and is the very best around. Order some heavenly bites and have a seat in the tasting room, relax and experience luxury, award-winning chocolate created by one of only two people who have ever achieved the honor of Grand Master Chocolatier for four consecutive years.

Choose Panache Chocolatier for your next girls' night out, date night or afternoon "me time;" Panache chocolate is a celebration in itself. ♦

Panache Chocolatier is located at 11555 Ash Street, Leawood, Kansas. Call 816-931-3191 or visit chocolatek.com for more information.



Art director, illustrator and entrepreneur Sheryl Hammtreee is happiest when creating. As a freelancer, she creates visual styling and targeted messaging to strategically solve challenges for clients. As the owner of Thoughtful Threads, she creates expressive apparel to empower people and build a community of kindness. Sheryl heads outside to find energy, inspiration and calm; whether in the garden or on a trail, her soul is fed by creating memories with her husband, Joel, family and friends.

KC CUSTOM HARDWOODS

LOCAL TREES TRANSFORMED INTO HEIRLOOM TABLES AND ART



BY CHRIS WESTWATER | PHOTOGRAPHY BY AMBER DEERY

You have probably seen the gorgeous live edge wood furniture and wall art that's trending in home and business décor recently. If you're in the market for a dining room table for your home or conference room, a bar top for your home kitchen or your restaurant, or natural wood wall art for your family room or office, visit KC Custom Hardwoods online or in person at their showroom. Every KC Custom Hardwoods piece is one of a kind and created from 100 percent solid wood that is locally sourced, crafted by hand by local artisans and built to last. Their pieces are primarily live edge, which means furniture or artwork that keeps the natural edge of a tree. KC Custom Hardwoods creates a mix of popular epoxy resin pieces and solid wood items.

“We craft everything right here in Kansas City from local trees,” said Jay Norris, co-owner of KC Custom Hardwoods. As the company's name implies, KC Custom Hardwoods does indeed create custom items as well as sell ready-made pieces. “One of the things that's a little bit different about us is that we control the process from start to finish, from a piece of raw inventory all the way to a finished product, which allows

us to have a good handle on the quality of the final product. This way, we can bring our artist's or customer's vision to life.” In the KC Custom Hardwoods Design Gallery and Showroom, customers can see the completed furniture and wall art or peruse the inventory of raw wood slabs that are ready to be turned into a custom piece of art.

FROM TREE TO TABLE

When you walk through the design gallery and showroom, there's no indication

about the amount of time and effort it takes to make a single piece of furniture or art. Jay runs the local production facility and said, “It's about two years start to finish.” First, they obtain a tree from tree removal companies, farmers or others clearing land, the Kansas City Parks Department, organic recycling centers and even homeowners. Second, depending on the species of the log, they either cut it immediately or let it age for six to twelve months. “Aging adds character and color to the wood. A process



KC CUSTOM

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“We love making connections and creating bonds with people and being a part of their lives. We get to make them feel beautiful inside and out,” Jules said. “It’s really a wonderful gift to be able to do every day.”



called spalting occurs where you’ll get variations of color and black striations that run through the wood.” After aging, the trees are cut into slabs at the production facility in Kansas City, Kansas, then they are air dried for up to a year before they’re put in a wood kiln for the final drying stage and to sterilize the slabs. “That’s my favorite part,” Jay enthused. “Once the wood comes out of the kiln and we get it surfaced, we can see what we’re working with. Sometimes there’s defects in the slabs that don’t make for good tables, but they make good wall art or console tables or bar tops or something different. So, my favorite part is really the grain reveal after we flatten that slab. That’s when you can see what it looks like and determine what it will become.” Once each piece is photographed and inventoried with its dimensions, the process of building a table or other product begins.

“Occasionally, customers have a tree that came down on their property and they come to us to make custom furniture from that tree,” Jay said. “It’s a long process, but each of those customers has loved the final product.” If you’ve got a tree and the time, KC Custom Hardwoods can make you an heirloom piece of furniture or art to be passed down for generations.

SPONSORING THE NEXT GENERATION OF WOODWORKING ARTISANS

In addition to donating several pieces to veteran charities including Battle Within KC and the Make a Wish Foundation Bubble Ball, KC Custom Hardwoods helped a local student pursue a dream. “We recently sponsored a high school woodwork student from

Shawnee Mission North who is a very gifted cabinet maker,” Jay explained. “We bought his plane ticket and paid his expenses to go to a national competition for cabinetry where he did really well. He was grateful for the experience and I’m sure he’ll go on to have a successful career. This kid’s cabinets, for being built by a 17-year-old, they’re unbelievable.”

DESIGN GALLERY AND SHOWROOM

A visit to KC Custom Hardwoods Design Gallery and Showroom is worth your while. “When you walk in the door, there is a reception desk that’s made from slabs of wood. It’s a functional piece of art just like everything else we create. As you continue through the showroom, you’ll see epoxy river tables and art pieces,” said Jay. “There’s also a wall of different raw slabs that are ready to be turned into something.” At the showroom in Stillwell near 160th Street and 69 Highway, shop their finished pieces or find the perfect slab of prepared wood for a custom table, bar or wall art for your home or business today. ♦

Visit kccustomhardwoods.com for more details.



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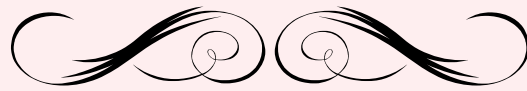


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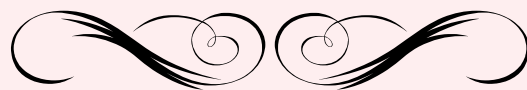
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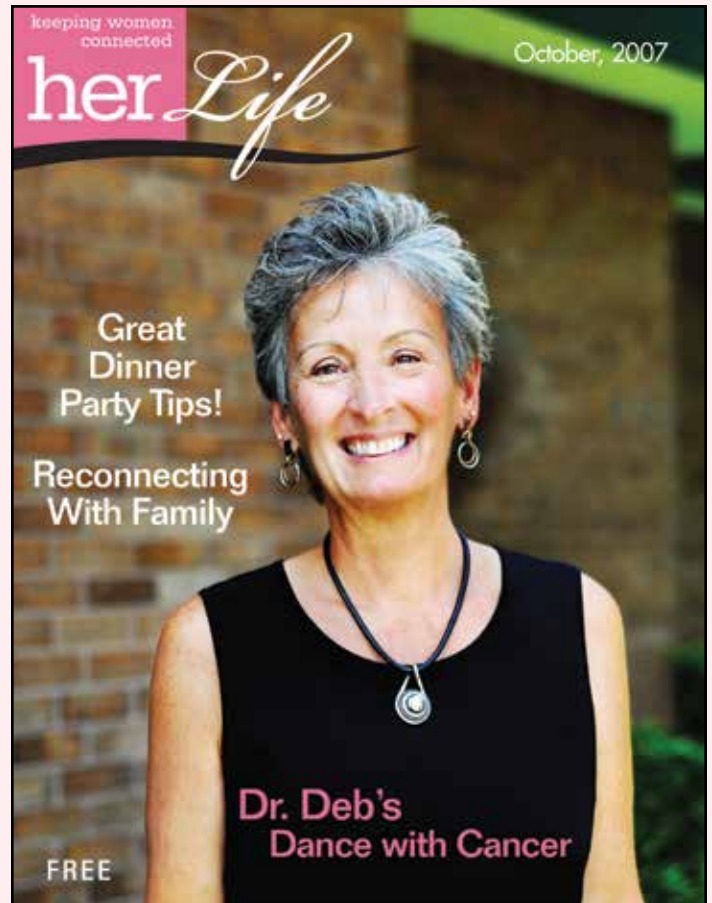
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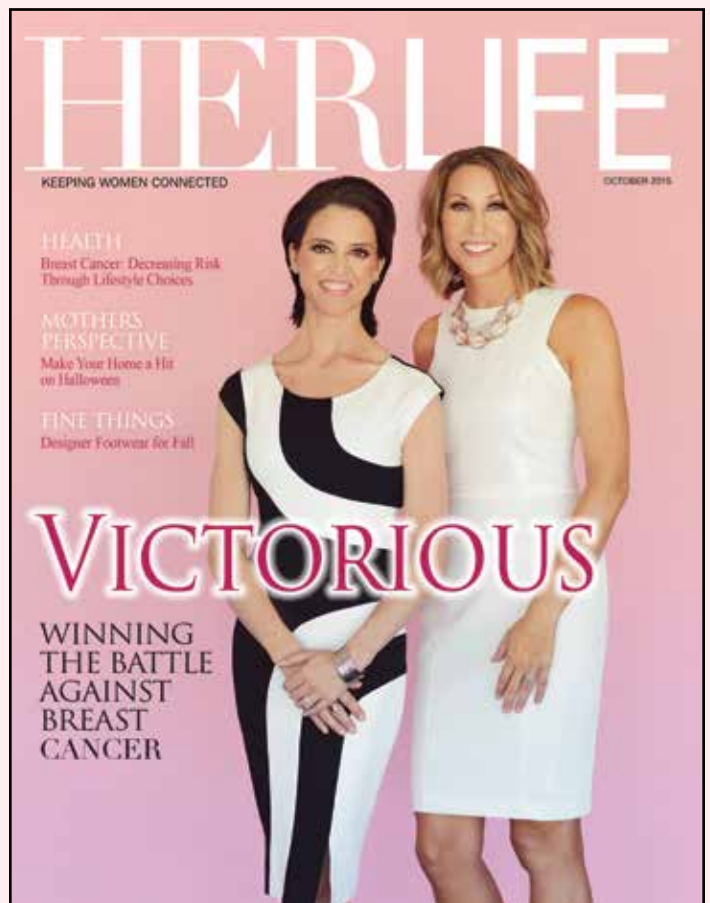
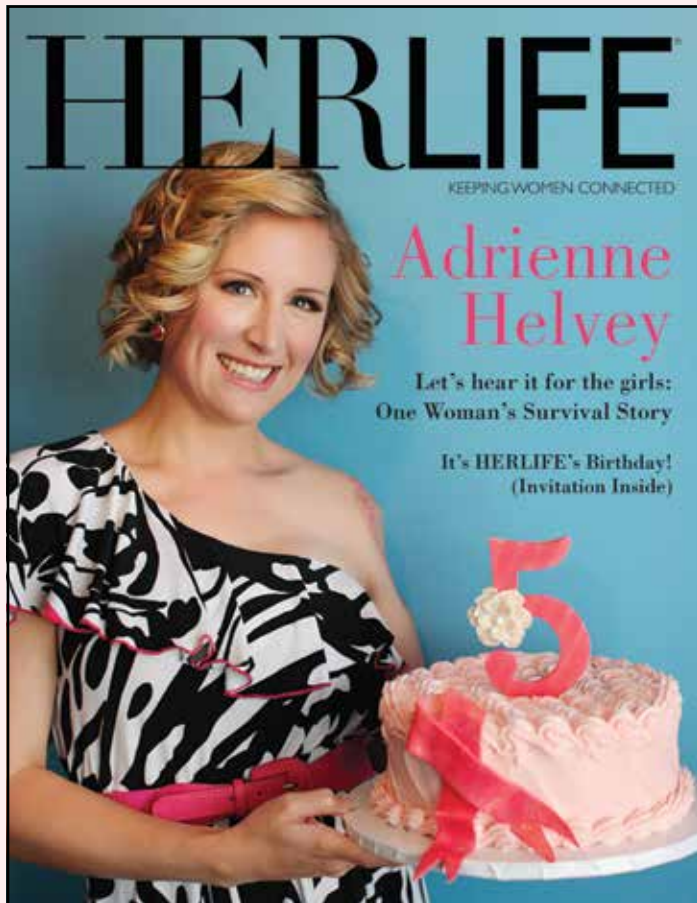
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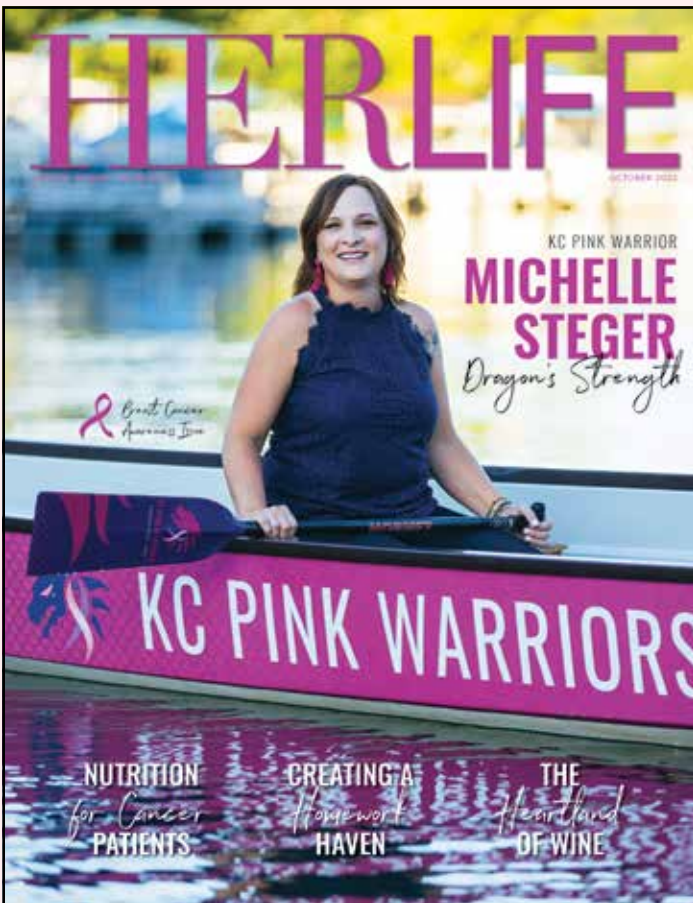
WE HAVE HAD THE HONOR OF KEEPING WOMEN CONNECTED

the last 16 years. It is no coincidence that HERLIFE Magazine's anniversary falls in October, the month we celebrate Breast Cancer Awareness month. These women are prime examples of fighters and warriors, each in their own right, with their own story, that we have had the privilege to share and capture. ♦









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PHONES AND FASHION: ACCESSORIES WITH STYLE

BY LINDA R. PRICE

Every year, new cell phone accessories hit the market, and consumers rush to get the latest gadgets to go with their expensive phones. This year is no exception. Lanyards, pouches, wristlets, PopSockets, port plugs, stands—you name it—someone is making it.



For many products, you need a specific size or your phone won't fit. Other products accommodate different-sized phones with no trouble.

A back pants pocket isn't always the best place to carry your phone. It's too easy to steal or to fall out. A safer alternative is the crossbody wallet or wristlet. Women often prefer stylish fashion pieces to plain black or brown. Bandolier is here to help. Their pieces range from geometric designs to iridescent blue, green or gold. Many can be adapted to wear either as a crossbody strap or as a smaller wristlet. Some of the designs have a slim credit

card holder on the back and a pocket for cash. Lanyards are simpler designs that hold the cell phone from a necklace-like cord, yet the phone can be detached when desired.

PopSockets make holding the cell phone easier with a popup grip that attaches to the back of your cell phone with MagSafe compatible cases and magnets. You will be able to text with one hand, prop your phone up on a table for group viewing, and pop it into a holder for hands-free use. Explore the full range of designs from florals to the Star Wars' Mandalorian to satisfy your personal taste.

Port plugs are practical and fun. These plugs fit into any port on your phone or device to keep out dust, grime, lint or moisture. The utilitarian plugs are practical and may even save you costly repairs to your device. On the other hand, many companies have upped their game and are creating plugs that express the owner's personality in fun ways. With so many options, it's easy to match the port plug to the owner's personality, whether it's for kids who dig action figures or a diehard Hello Kitty fan.

On a more technical side, devices such as the Air Fly Pro are handy. This device pairs your Bluetooth accessories to other outlets. For example, it plugs into the back of the seat on airplanes to pair the plane's audio to your earbuds or earphones for better quality inflight audio. You can use it in your car or a boat to listen to your playlists. It amplifies the soundtrack on a gym device by pairing the treadmill, for example, with your earbuds.

And don't forget the versatility of today's speakers. There are many styles and designs to choose from. One of the smallest is the JBL Clip 4 Speaker. It is waterproof for poolside, spa or beach, and can be clipped to a suitcase handle or the shower rod.

For convenience, portable chargers are indispensable. Nothing is worse than being out of the house, and your cell phone begins to die when you really, really need it. Small chargers that can be stuck in your purse or pocket will alleviate this problem. Alongza makes a slim, lightweight 6000mAh power bank that will handle most cell phone power drains.

If you are a cell phone photography addict, have no fear. The newest accessories for your phone are allowing more creative photography than anyone dreamed of a few years ago when no one took cell phone cameras seriously. The Pocket Spotlight can be used as a handheld light source or it can be plugged into your phone. The charge lasts about an hour and it works well with stills and portraits.

Another handy gadget for serious photographers is the Olloclip® 4-in-1 Lens. The lens has fisheye, wide angle, 10x and 15x settings. The viewfinder reduces glare and allows an accurate view of the frame. Olloclip closed in 2021 and its website notes the company is on hiatus, but the devices are available on the internet. Apexel is another

manufacturer, with a 5-in-1 kit that provides creative freedom.

Stands come with features that provide an extra layer of comfort when viewing a video, cooking or creating content for social media. The Omoton Adjustable is versatile and adjustable. It will hold a cell phone or a tablet and remain stable on your desk. The Lamicall Goose-neck stand is an excellent choice for the photographer or social media producer who needs to film herself while creating content. The clamp attaches to a desk or countertop edge.



If you are a cell phone photography addict, have no fear. The newest accessories for your phone are allowing more creative photography than anyone dreamed of a few years ago when no one took cell phone cameras seriously. The Pocket Spotlight can be used as a handheld light source or it can be plugged into your phone. The charge lasts about an hour and it works well with stills and portraits.

Cell phone accessories run the gamut of practical techie devices to fun, frivolous gadgets. Most are affordable and designed with a specific purpose in mind. Many are designed to fill voids on a specific cell phone model so you must always be aware of your cell phone model number when looking for the best option for your workstation. ♦

SOURCES: popularmechanics.com, digital-photography-school.com, techgearlab.com and providecoalition.com.

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JUST SAYIN'

BY Q104 PERSONALITY JENNY MATTHEWS
PHOTO BY BRANDI WISDOM

When it rains, it pours. I feel like that should be the slogan attached to my life! It seems like I go through periods of time when all is calm, all is bright. Then boom. God and the universe have different ideas.

Over the last couple of months, my morning radio show changed with the departure of my co-host. My precious boxer, Oscar, passed away. He lived nearly 13 years and for a big dog, that's such a blessing. They say bad things happen in threes. I was absolutely terrified that my third thing would be a bad report at my mammogram follow-up scan. My doctor has been watching a suspicious spot on my left breast for a little while. This scan would tell us more. When I got the all clear, I felt like the weight of the world was lifted off my shoulders. At the end of the day, if we have our health, we truly have everything.

But then, life goes on and the days get cluttered with stress and anxiety about things that pale in comparison to someone dealing with cancer. I headed to my annual dermatology check-up after a rough day at work and home. As my provider checked over my skin, she told me that she had recently been diagnosed with stage four lung cancer.

She's a mom. She's a medical professional who has dedicated her life to helping others avoid or treat the very disease that took over her body. My heart broke as she spoke. Then, her assistant nurse came into the room and I found out that she had just received a breast cancer diagnosis and was about to find out her treatment regimen. Two women, fighting battles that I would have never guessed from just looking at them.

My doctor shared this with me as I hugged her and told her I was sorry for dumping my seemingly silly personal problems on her as the appointment started, before I learned of her news. "Struggles aren't always the same size. It doesn't minimize one person's issue versus another's."

I thought that was so incredible and the truth is, she's right. We are all battling something.

Be kind. Always. ♦

Jenny Matthews is the host of *The Morning Drive* on Q104 New Hit Country, weekday mornings from 6 - 10 a.m. Connect at jennymatthewsonair.com.

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Alex & Rishi
Patel

- April 2 & 3, 2022 -

WRITTEN BY MARILYN ISAMINGER

Alex DiCapo Patel, 33, graduated from the University of Arizona in Tucson, Arizona, with a bachelor's degree in communications and political science. Following university, Alex moved to Los Angeles to begin her career in public relations, where she later met her husband. After seven years in sunny LA, Alex relocated with her now-husband to New York, where they reside in Williamsburg in Brooklyn, New York.

Rishi Patel, age 35, graduated from Nottingham Trent University in Nottingham, England, with a bachelor of honors in

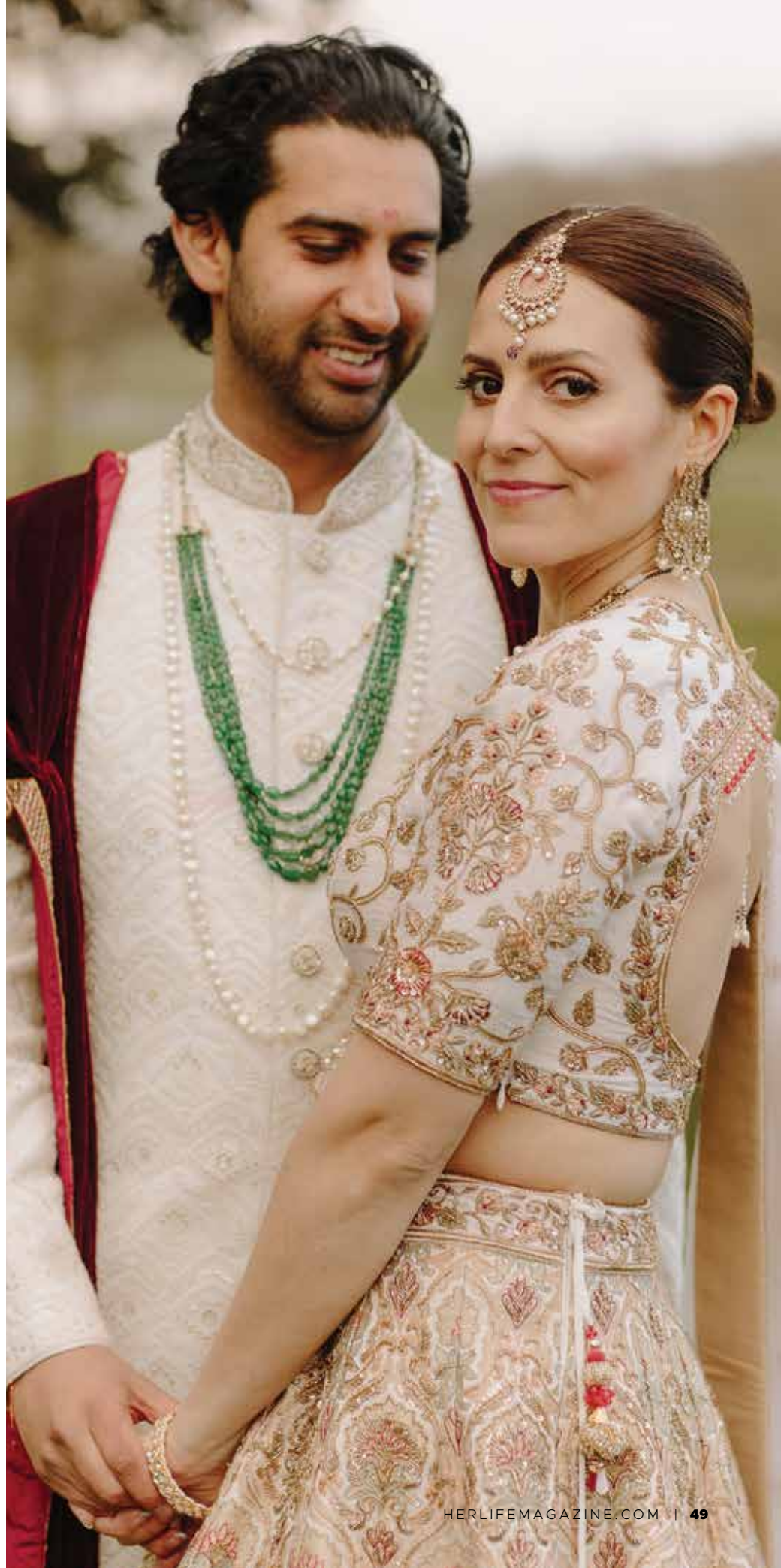
marketing, design, and communication.

"We met on Bumble," Alex laughs. "I sent him a message that said 'Happy Hump Day' and the rest is history!"

For his proposal, Rishi planned the ultimate day date. "I had no idea that we were getting engaged," Alex remembers. "We started our day with brunch at Sadelle's. I am bagel obsessed, so any day that starts with lox and a bagel is already a great day. After breakfast we went to the Museum of Natural History, which was somewhere I wanted to visit since moving here. I had the fondest memories of going with my dad and

sister as a young girl. Then we went for a stroll in Central Park, which is where he popped the question. After I said 'Yes!' our friends met us at Tavern on the Green for a late lunch to celebrate.

Alex and Rishi tied the knot October 9, 2020, April 2 and April 3, 2022. "We were civilly married at Loose Park in the Rose Garden in October 2020, with close family in attendance, and U.S. Representative Emanuel Cleaver as our officiant; he was a friend of my late grandfather Carl J. DiCapo. The plan was to get married in front of our family and friends one year later to the day on October





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Boy Called Ben

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9, 2021, when COVID restrictions ceased. But COVID had other plans,” Alex shared.

“After months of planning, we brought our families and friends together in the U.K. over three days, April 1, 2 and 3, 2022, in Suffolk, England, at the beautiful Wilderness Reserve,” she continued. “On Friday night we welcomed guests with cocktails and casual fare, allowing our friends and family to mix, mingle and become better acquainted.

“We were so excited to bring our two worlds together and celebrate our diverse backgrounds and religions, dedicating a full day of celebrations to both. Saturday was the Jewish ceremony and Sunday was the traditional Indian ceremony. In reviewing the two ceremonies, we saw many parallels. For example, both ceremonies take place under a four-post structure. When working with our florist for the two separate ceremonies we thought it would be lovely to use the same structure, with our chuppah from Saturday redesigned to become our mandap for Sunday. While both ceremonies were uniquely different, we loved having the two tied together by this meaningful structure.

“Sunday, guests were welcomed back to Sibton Park for the Hindu ceremony. Guests arrived in traditional Indian attire and were welcomed with pre-ceremony snacks and music by traditional Bollywood strings. The ceremony involved both families and friends; following the ceremony, guests moved outdoors to enjoy Indian cuisine and traditional Indian dancing until the sun set on another beautiful day.” ♦



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MAKING STRIDES AGAINST BREAST CANCER

the Movement, the Hope, the Future

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ALEX CALNIN



Making Strides Against Breast Cancer is a celebration of courage and hope, a movement uniting communities to end breast cancer as we know it, for everyone.

Female breast cancer has surpassed lung cancer as the most diagnosed cancer worldwide. An estimated 287,850 women and 2,710 men will be diagnosed in 2023 in the United States. This year in Missouri, 5,700 women will hear the words “You have breast cancer,” along with 2,470 women in Kansas.

There is hope! There are more than four million breast cancer survivors in the U.S. today, including those who have completed treatment and those still undergoing treatment. The death rate from breast cancer dropped by 42 percent from 1989 to 2019 because of earlier detection through increased awareness and mammography screening, as well as advances in treatments.

American Cancer Society began Making Strides Against Breast Cancer walks in 1993 as a rallying cry to build awareness and generate funds to help end the disease. Since then, millions of people have participated in Making Strides events in communities such as Kansas City across the country, raising approximately \$1 billion to support breast cancer research, patient programs and direct services.

WE ARE THE MOVEMENT.

Making Strides Against Breast Cancer walks have collectively grown into the nation’s largest and most impactful breast cancer movement, providing a supportive community for courageous breast cancer survivors and metastatic breast cancer thrivers, caregivers and families alike.

Be the movement by signing up for Making Strides Against Breast Cancer of Kansas City. Join us on October 28 at Crown Center and help us save lives, remember loved ones, and fund the future of breast cancer research and programs. Leading up to October, raise

funds to reach a suggested personal goal of \$100 or more, then walk with us on event day in celebration of your efforts.

WE ARE THE HOPE.

Thanks in large part to decades of work, a breast cancer diagnosis does not come without hope, and the breast cancer journey is not one that is traveled alone.

Be the hope by sponsoring the Making Strides movement. Become a corporate leader in your community to ensure we can celebrate together and honor local survivors and thrivers during Breast Cancer Awareness Month.

WE ARE THE FUTURE.

Making Strides Against Breast Cancer funds lifesaving breast cancer research and is committed to advancing health equity through essential programs and services, believing that all people have a fair and just opportunity to live a longer, healthier life free from breast cancer.

Be the future by donating. Help fund our work by donating. Every dollar we receive is dedicated to ending breast cancer as we know it. Visit makingstrideswalk.org/kansascitymo to donate today.

Making Strides Against Breast Cancer of Kansas City walk is a noncompetitive three-mile walk. The event is free for anyone who wants to come out and join in the celebration on October 28 at Crown Center. Get involved by visiting MakingStridesWalk.org/KansasCityMO or contact Ashton Wells at ashton.wells@cancer.org. ♦

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OCT 6 - 7

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OCT 7

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Join KidsTLC for a dreamy evening to celebrate children and families in our community. As the theme lends itself to a sophisticated pajama party, guests will explore the J. Rieger & Co. distillery while enjoying custom cocktails, delicious food stations, creative photo opportunities and virtual and live auctions. Then head to the renowned Benefit After Party for late night snacks, drinks and dancing to a live DJ. Funds raised will help support an undeniable cause: helping children and their families facing challenges of mental and behavioral health, developmental trauma and autism. Details at kidstlc.org.

OCT 14

Brew at the Zoo

6:30PM, KANSAS CITY

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OCT 15

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OCT. 28

Making Strides Against Breast Cancer Walk

7:30AM, CROWN CENTER

The Making Strides Against Breast Cancer Walk of Kansas City is a celebration of courage and hope, a movement that unites communities to end breast cancer as we know it, for everyone. This three-mile walk is part of the Making Strides movement, the nation's largest and most impactful breast cancer movement. Making Strides Against Breast Cancer funds lifesaving breast cancer research and is committed to advancing health equity through essential programs and services. Sign up a team or donate today! Details at makingstrideswalk.org/kansascitymo.

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OCT 6 - 7

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OCT 13 - 15

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OCT 28

Zombie Walk

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CAPRICORN
(DEC. 22-JAN. 19)

Your ruler, Saturn, is in retrograde, so your energy level and confidence levels may be lowered. Nonetheless, this is still a good time to focus on those aspects of your life that are no longer serving you. As you enter into the new season, it's a great time to get your financial and emotional affairs in order.



TAURUS
(APR. 20-MAY 20)

You have a great ability to lead and a great ability to adapt. This is the month to adapt, allowing good things to come to you through others. Trying to bull your way into and out of situations isn't going to give you good results. You are going to have to learn to balance work with home, or at the end of the month things will be rocky.



VIRGO
(AUG. 23-SEPT. 22)

This is the month that you will need to carefully consider all angles before making a decision. You have an equal half of your planets urging you to take action, and the other half urging caution. What this means is that you will need to strike a balance between work and home. Once you gain clarity on an issue, then it will be full steam ahead.



AQUARIUS
(JAN. 20-FEB. 18)

One word: PAR-TAY. Most of the planets are in your Air element, and you will feel happy and at home in almost all circumstances. Communication skills will be acute and your ideas are going to be popular. Ride the wave.



GEMINI
(MAY 21-JUN. 20)

This year has been one of the most productive and happy that you've ever had. That being said, the tendency to overdo things this month is greater than before. Try not to overindulge or you are going to regret it. Neptune moves forward on the 15th, which means that career-wise things are going to look up.



LIBRA
(SEPT. 23-OCT. 22)

You are truly enjoying your life right now. This feeling will remain with you until the end of the month, when you will shift your focus to matters of finance. Make sure that you're using your head and not your heart when making big-ticket decisions. Many Libras are taking the time this month to figure out their spiritual connectedness and to develop a new spiritual practice. Becoming involved in a humanitarian cause will move you forward in your search.

STAR JOURNEYS

BY MELODY BUSSEY

This month will see most signs being warned to proceed with some patience and to adapt to circumstances as they come along. Bringing a balance to work and home is urged as several planets are in retrograde and communication skills will be lessened. Take the time to gain clarity in your life.



PISCES
(FEB. 19-MAR. 20)

The planets are lending their energy toward your career and work sectors, so this is a great time to move forward. You will find that just the right people "appear" to you this month to help, so make sure to thank the universe for the assist.



CANCER
(JUN. 21-JUL. 23)

Saturn's retrograde is shaking things up on the love front for you. This may be the time that you reconnect with old flames or stall out in a current relationship. If you will just allow yourself a space to breathe in, by the end of the month you will be less confused about your heart and what you truly want.



SCORPIO
(OCT. 23-NOV. 21)

With Pluto moving forward and most planets residing in your eastern sector, your confidence level is going to soar. Take advantage of this and truly create the situations you desire. Toward the end of the month you will need to refocus your attention on friends and family, balancing work and home.



ARIES
(MAR. 21-APR. 19)

This is the month to exercise patience and take the time to lay solid foundations for future endeavors. Trying to force anything this month is going to blow up in your face. The full moon mid-month will occur in your sign, giving you some extra energy to handle it all.



LEO
(JUL. 24-AUG. 22)

Mercury will go retrograde in the last part of the month, meaning that you need to have wrapped up any new endeavors by then, and that you need to be particularly careful about how to communicate with others. You aren't going to make the best financial decisions then, either, so put them off until early next month.



SAGITTARIUS
(NOV. 22-DEC. 21)

With two significant planets in retrograde this month, you need to pull back and reassess the direction you've chosen. Is it really working for you? What aspects are good? Which are bad for you? This is a critical time to be extremely, brutally honest with yourself. This is especially true in the area of finances.



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