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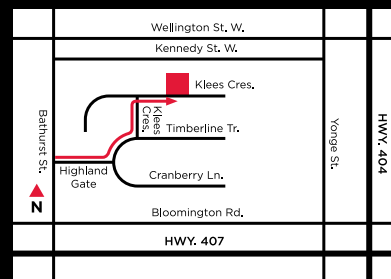




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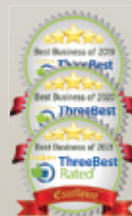
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Michelle Zerillo-Sosa
Publisher/Editor-in-Chief



Fernando Zerillo
Co-Founder/Creative Director

Welcome to our new edition of *City Life Magazine*. As we prepare to enjoy summer and the end of a school year and to spending more time with family and friends over the summer holidays, we hope you take us along with you. Whether that's to your cottage, on your trip or to your favourite chair on the porch, we hope you enjoy the stories we're sharing with you.

As parents there's nothing scarier than knowing that a daughter or son might be influenced into feeling inadequate or losing confidence about who they are by what they're seeing on social media — in other words, learning that their self-worth might be under attack through their social-media consumption.

We have all had experiences as young people of observing, or even being targeted by, a school bully, or know the feeling of being excluded from the in-crowd, or felt ourselves redden when the popular girl or boy would not even acknowledge our presence, sabotaging whatever self-confidence or courage we had mustered to say hello to them.

This was bad enough ... but now, our kids are competing with a different, more pervasive kind of sabotage — the kind that eats at their confidence in the privacy of their rooms. They aren't being ignored, merely being exposed to the perfect, obviously Photoshopped images of celebrities or influencers who have no blemishes, no extra curves ... images that invite them to ask the question, "What's wrong with me?"

An October 2021 study reported by the *Wall Street Journal* found that Instagram was harmful for many users, particularly teenage girls. Fully a third of the teenage girls surveyed admitted that when they felt bad about their bodies, Instagram made them feel even worse.

This issue features an interview with award-winning author and clinical psychologist Dr. Niva Piran, professor emerita at the University of Toronto. Although it is common and acceptable for young girls to try and change their bodies to become more

accepted, Dr. Piran told us, "social media transmits images that have a negative effect on our youth," messages that convey to girls that their bodies aren't OK — that they need to be repaired, whether through weight loss or gain, plastic surgery, skin whitening and more. "The harm is now in the shift of having a focus on changing the body, rather than changing the world," she said.

Our team at *City Life* also conducted a Q&A with the Dove Self-Esteem Project, which aims to counteract the harmful effects of this social-media "beauty culture." Along with providing tools to parents and teachers on how to navigate important conversations with our kids, the Dove #detoxYourFeed campaign has been designed specifically to counter normalized but harmful beauty advice and to encourage teens to unfollow content that makes them feel bad — and to feel beautiful and powerful on their own terms.

As parents, it is our responsibility to help our girls emerge from their teen years as strong, happy and confident young women. In fact, that's a responsibility that lies with all of us as a community — fighting toxic beauty myths will help equip the next generation with the self-worth, confidence and purpose they're going to need one day to make the world a better place for their own sons and daughters, empowering *them* to find their voices in whatever chaos of mixed messages their world will serve up in the years to come.

We hope you find this and other stories in this issue informative and relevant, empowering you to go out and live your best life.

Until next time, we hope you stay happy and real.

Michelle Zerillo-Sosa
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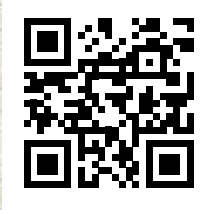
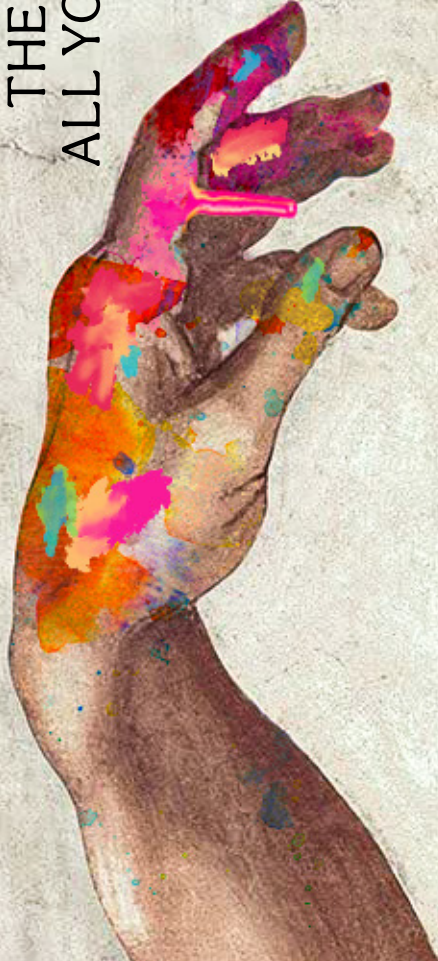
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DESIGN NEWS

From wallpaper with pink lotuses and monarch butterflies to a hand-shaped fruit bowl and giraffe-shaped basket, these design picks scream summer fun! WRITTEN BY ESTELLE ZENTIL

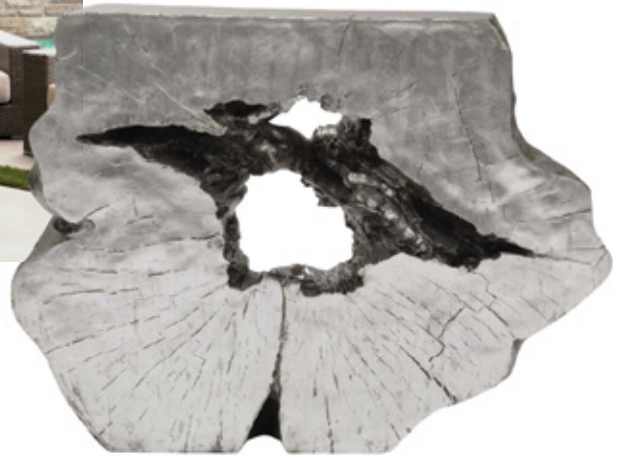


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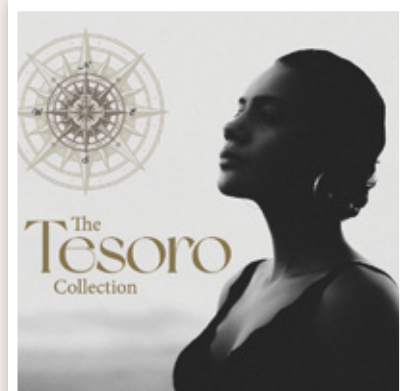


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THE DESIGN DUO STAGING THEIR WAY TO SUCCESS

Following the premiere of their HGTV show, *Styled*, Nicole Babb and Caffery Vanhorne discuss matching outfits and the mottos that keep them moving

WRITTEN BY JOSH WALKER | INTERVIEW BY ESTELLE ZENTIL

The first time that Nicole Babb and Caffery Vanhorne met was in 2000, but from the energy they share when talking with each other, you'd think that they'd been friends forever.

Their new HGTV show, *Styled*, shows the energy of the design duo and puts a distinct focus on home staging and renovation. It follows Babb and Vanhorne as both friends and experts as they meet different people and reimagine their spaces. That could be helping someone turn a house into a place they'll live in forever. Other times, it will be focused on elevating market value.

"The episodes I love most are when people are having a big transition in their lives," Babb shares. "Where we're helping them with their homes because they're newly single and looking to spruce up their space for them."

Before *Styled*, Babb had a successful staging business, R + P Home, preparing properties for sale through the curation of Canadian furniture and accessories. It was this venture that gave her the experience in home staging and acts as the driving force behind the show.

What Vanhorne adds is vision as an award-winning fashion stylist who has launched his own line of clothing and taken his eye for design to other verticals, like interiors and photography. He shares how part of his work with *Styled* plays into the fact that he loves moving.

"I'm living in my 29th apartment," he says. "Moving doesn't stress me out, and I find when I live somewhere, and the decoration is done, I'm ready to move again."

Though their artistic journey to TV has been different, they explain how their views on design align and that they always end up on the same page.

“
The episodes I love
most are when
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their lives
”

They're so in tune with each other that Vanhorne laughs as he shows us photographs where they've met in different versions of the same outfits, having to change when they arrive on set.

At the time of writing, *Styled* isn't even through its first season, but already the pair have noted the impact. "It's been really positive," Babb says. "A lot of people have said, 'My daughter watched the show and sees herself in you and sees that she can have a career in design.'"

For Vanhorne, too, he shares anecdotes of having someone show him photos of their house after meeting him in HomeSense or approaching him to ask where he got his colourful sneakers. "I wasn't wearing any, so I was confused," he says. "But he was talking about the show."

Yet, for all their similarities, their personal mottos shine a light on who they are as people. For Vanhorne, a maximalist at heart, it's "moderation is false glamour," explaining that "more is more is more. If you love it, buy two. If it comes in four colours, buy the other two."

For Babb, "One that keeps coming up for me is that a ship is always safe at shore, but that's not what it was built for. Take risks, get out there and explore. Find true happiness and be fearless."

And, like the way they align with style, they align with how they'd define success for the show. "It's about people getting to see another perspective. We're a Black man, Black woman, Black family, multicultural, multi-ethnic, and they see us shine in a light that hasn't been put forth before," says Babb. "We're people that love fashion, but it doesn't define our existence. We just love beautiful things because we see the effect they have on people's lives."

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Styled hosts Caffery Vanhorne (left) and Nicole Babb



Santino Bernaudo (left) and his father, Joseph

GREENVALLEY FLOORING IS SETTING THE STAGE FOR EXPANSION

As Joseph and Santino Bernaudo prepare to take their brand into a new era, we talk to the father-son duo on getting into the business, sustainability and creating a showroom founded on experience

If you've ever been in the market for flooring, there's a good chance you've heard of GreenValley Flooring. With over 25 years of experience, projects that have garnered awards and a showroom that's as much an experience as a home for its impressive range of products, it's become known as a staple in Ontario's flooring sector.

While Joseph Bernaudo and his son, Santino, are entrepreneurs operating a number of businesses, flooring has always been their mainstay. GreenValley Flooring's story started in 2003, with the

brand positioning itself as an importer of hardwood flooring. "I was very young at the time, and I remember spending Saturdays and Sundays, when I was off school, coming in to help unload containers because the business was really starting to take off," says Santino. "We realized there was a real need for, and a lack of, quality Canadian products."

GreenValley Flooring filled that market. Using their insights into what customers wanted, they evolved over the years to become a business that didn't

just import flooring but manufactured it locally. As the business continued, they started introducing different verticals to please customers.

They implemented custom colour matching and bespoke options so customers could achieve their projects exactly as they had envisioned them. They also, through their Bespoke Collection, offer reclaimed wood products. "It's a shame to have these old structures torn down when you can take the lumber that structurally built them and turn it into a masterpiece that lives in someone's

PHOTOS BY ENAD MOHAMMADI



The GreenValley Flooring team is ready to assist at every stage of your project

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**WE REALIZED THERE WAS A REAL
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— Santino Bernaudo

home,” Santino continues. “That’s the art behind the reclaimed line.”

While all of that still remains today, they both share that the business has been gearing up for the next stage of its growth and has been investing in itself to make that a reality.

One key part of this growth is their newly renovated, stunning 2,500-square-foot showroom featuring larger-than-life samples of some of the most beautifully unique flooring products available on the market. “We have a unique line of flooring products, but it’s more than just that. When a customer first comes in, they are offered an espresso or beverage,” Santino explains. “Our talented staff is trained to take their time with the customer, ensuring that we capture exactly what they want to achieve with the project. It doesn’t matter whether the customer is coming in for a 100- or 10,000-square-foot project, we make sure to give every customer the same experience, regardless of budget or size of project.”

Joseph talks about it coming down to a passion for both serving the customer but also educating them. “There’s a science behind flooring, the different characteristics of wood, and everyone has a different preference. We tie all of

that together to understand what the customer’s needs are so we can deliver what they’re looking for.”

The showroom itself includes a range of options when it comes to flooring. Their solid hardwood is more traditional, constructed from planks milled from a single piece of timber. The engineered wood is a versatile option, constructed with a veneer of hardwood combined with a core typically made of plywood. GreenValley Flooring also offers luxury vinyl options, ideal for commercial spaces or moisture-prone environments, and laminate flooring for a more affordable yet still stylish finish. Alongside all of this, the brand also offers services, like flooring and carpet removal, restoration of antique flooring, baseboards and stair refinishing. In short, it’s a one-stop shop.

Whatever option a customer chooses, there’s a constant focus on sustainability and quality. Joseph shares that the name GreenValley comes from feelings associated with forests and sustainability. “There’s a lot of due diligence that goes into picking our distributors and suppliers,” says Santino. “We hand-pick and cross-reference them for quality and the science behind products, so we can bring the best.”

Coming from a manufacturing

background, both Joseph and Santino understand what compounds could be harmful and what to avoid to keep customers safe. “We don’t carry any products that don’t meet the most stringent guidelines for being green and clean,” says Santino.

Even when it comes to the installation of the flooring, the pair share how all of their installers are NWFA-certified, insured and have a minimum of 10 years of experience. As Santino adds, “We take the guesswork away from the customer.”

Since its beginnings, GreenValley Flooring has thrived, and the entrepreneurs share how that translates to customer satisfaction, with 50 per cent of their business today driven by referrals. However, Joseph and Santino make it clear this is just the beginning. With a revamped showroom, a strong reputation and an ever-evolving line of custom products, they’re ready to take GreenValley Flooring to the next level.

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PHOTO BY ANTHONY DELIA

Katya Moser is an entrepreneur, fashion enthusiast who heads up Maison Femme Boutique



PHOTOS BY EIMAD MOHAMMADI

CURATING PIECES THAT EMPOWER

Following her takeover of Kleinburg Village's Maison Femme Boutique, Katya Moser talks about her vision for the store and how dance influenced that process

When Katya Moser took over Maison Femme Boutique earlier this year, she had a choice to make. Give it a new identity or retain the elements of what's already made it a success. Ultimately, she managed to strike a balance between the two to create a space that exudes refined simplicity, sophistication and femininity.

"My vision for the store was something that felt special and different," Moser says. "When you go to Europe and see those boutiques, they have that special flair with pieces you can't find anywhere else. That's the direction I wanted to take."

As part of that, she kept a number of original brands but added a lot of new ones too, like Cinq à Sept (her personal favourite), LAMARQUE, Joie and Equipment. "It caters to jeans and a T-shirt but also has those special pieces, whether that's a dress, blouse or blazer."

As well as offering a careful selection of pieces that range from casual to more elevated, Moser wants to evoke a feeling. "The pieces are specifically curated for intentional shopping," she notes. "You're not just browsing tons of racks trying to find something. Pieces are displayed in a way that feels airy, light and doesn't

confuse the eye. When you're trying something on, you can feel good about it, take your time and leave feeling great in an outfit."

There are also elements of Moser's life that have made their mark on Maison Femme Boutique, and you can tell it's a project of love. As someone who was born on International Women's Day, Moser believes it was her purpose to do something for women and empower them to invest in themselves. As she says, "It's so much more than clothes."

She also grew up as a trained ballerina and was always captivated not just by the garments the dancers would wear but also the elegance, as they would come to life through movement. "It's also a very disciplined art, and that translates through lots of parts of my life," she continues.

While Moser's time at Maison Femme Boutique has only just started, she's already thinking about the future and has a number of exciting plans in the works. "I'd like my business to be a place where people can come to shop for the full experience of knowing what upcoming trends are," she says. She also plans on starting to create blogs on the website, offering advice to women on how to look good, feel good and, most importantly, stay empowered every day.

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Michael Angeloni is a chef and restaurateur from Scarborough, Ont.

MICHAEL ANGELONI IS A CHEF WHO ENJOYS COOKING OUTSIDE OF HIS COMFORT ZONE

PHOTO BY JONATHAN ADEJII

The Toronto chef and restaurateur shares the kitchen experiences that shaped him and the moment that prompted him to follow a career in food

WRITTEN BY JOSH WALKER
INTERVIEW BY ESTELLE ZENTIL

With an Italian grandmother on his father's side with whom he'd make pasta and a mother who'd cook delicious Polish dishes, Michael Angeloni was never far from good food. But it was when he received Thomas Keller's *The French Laundry Cookbook* for Christmas at the age of 16 that the spark was ignited to follow cooking as a career.

"I was reading through it and couldn't believe people did that with food," he shares. "I said that I need to learn how to do this. So, I got a job at a high-end restaurant the next year, and the rest is history."

For Angeloni, who was born and raised in Scarborough, Ont., that history is made up of notable names offering career-shaping experiences. Grant van Gameren, who founded the acclaimed Black Hoof, let him create his own dishes and helped him creatively, even though he wasn't the chef. Dario Tomaselli at ORO gave Angeloni his start as an apprentice.

Matteo Paonessa, who founded Blacktree restaurant, located in Burlington, Ont., gave Angeloni his first paid kitchen position and taught him what it was like to work in the industry. Watching David Lee, with whom Angeloni worked for four years, stylistically write a menu and design a dish sparked his creativity as a young person.

Today, it all culminates in an impressive portfolio of Angeloni's projects. These include Union Chicken, an eatery serving rotisserie and fried chicken; Amano, which focuses on homemade Italian dishes; and Ray's Food & Liquor, dedicated to Southern-style comfort food.

For Angeloni, they all scratch a different itch. Where Union Chicken was his first restaurant and holds a



PHOTO COURTESY OF MICHAEL ANGELONI

Whatever cuisine Angeloni works with, he focuses on creating dishes with seasonal ingredients from local providers

“
I was reading through it and couldn't believe people did that with food
”

special place for him, he says Amano is “near and dear” to his heart because it's where he currently spends most of his time and is founded on lots of his grandmother's recipes.

It's this range that prompts Angeloni to struggle when it comes to describing his signature style. “Italian, pasta, breads and desserts are things I'm known for and very comfortable with, but I love being uncomfortable,” he says. “I went and ran a Mexican restaurant for four years, not really knowing Mexican food, but I was so intrigued by it and wanted to learn it.”

Even when he talks about future plans, he shares that he has more projects lined up in the coming years. He describes how he wants to go back to exploring classic French cuisine, where his training originated. He also wants to expand his culinary talents. “There's a whole world of everything in Asia I'm so interested in but know nothing about, from Vietnamese and Indian to Japanese,” he notes.

However, there is one flavourful thread that runs its way through everything Angeloni does. “I'm trying to be as seasonal as possible, work with cool, local providers and create a great experience for the guest in whatever environment the restaurant happens to be.”

As is the case with many restaurateurs, the pandemic had a huge effect, closing doors and forcing eateries to rethink their business models. For Angeloni, it shone a light on the people behind the scenes. “The pandemic showed me how much I care, and I try to work hard for the staff and how important they are to us. They make the restaurants what they are.” He continues to note how great it was “to see people's resilience and how hardworking they are in a terrible time.”

He's also one for innovation. Most recently, he started an Italian road-trip dinner series at Amano Notte, the private part of the Amano restaurant, where the space hosts an event covering a different region of Italy every month. At the time of our interview, he was doing his family's region of Le Marche, northeast of Rome.

“It's a five-course meal. You can get wine pairings. We sold out in 30 minutes for this one,” he shares. “Sometimes, there'll be guest chefs. My pasta maker is from Sicily, so we'll do a Sicilian dinner with him and some of his family recipes.”

www.eatamano.com
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DISCOVER THE VINEYARD BRINGING EUROPE TO NIAGARA-ON-THE-LAKE

The co-founders of Two Sisters Vineyards, Melissa Marotta-Paolicelli and Angela Marotta, discuss their exclusive Wine Club and the experiences elevating their Estate, now boasting 130 acres of planted vines throughout the Niagara region

If Two Sisters Vineyards is rooted in anything, it's a story. Founded in 2007 when its first vineyard was planted in the heart of Niagara-on-the-Lake, today it spans 130 acres and produces varietals such as Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Merlot and Chardonnay.

It was started by Melissa Marotta-Paolicelli and Angela Marotta, two sisters

who didn't just share a vision when it came to wine, but in creating an estate that combined comfort and character. Where its St. David's Vineyard, planted in 2017, takes advantage of the region's warm air to offer great ripening potential for late-season reds, its Niagara Parkway Vineyard, planted in 2020, is mostly dedicated to aromatic whites. As well,

the estate, encircled by its incredible vineyards, allows Two Sisters Vineyards to consistently provide exquisite varietals with depth, character and texture.

Then you have the wines themselves: reds and whites, sparkling and icewine, all with their own taste profiles and narratives to tell. The Estate even has its own restaurant, Kitchen76, serving



Melissa Marotta-Paolicelli and Angela Marotta are the co-proprietors of Two Sisters Vineyards

“
WE HOST HARVEST EVENTS AND SPECIAL PICKUP PARTIES FOR OUR WINE CLUB MEMBERS, AT TIME OF THEIR WINE SHIPMENT, THAT BRING MEMBERS TOGETHER SOCIALLY
”

— Melissa Marotta-Paolicelli

Especially as we approach the summer, the sisters have leaned into ensuring Two Sisters Vineyards celebrates that, offering both tiered membership options and events that elevate the wine to the level it deserves, while creating a sensorial experience that touches on taste, smell, visual beauty, and community.

Two particular wine club memberships are the VIP Club and Cellar240, which gets its name from the fact it's capped at just 240 members. Where the VIP Club offers mixed six-bottle cases shipped quarterly, the Cellar240 tier offers red-focused 12-bottle cases. Both come with exclusive privileges such as complimentary tastings and invitations to Wine Club exclusive events on the Estate, such as access to the Barrel Room or Veranda to host private dining events, as well as complimentary dessert and icewine pairing when dining at Kitchen76.

“We also have a TSV Vine Points Program, which is the first in Ontario, where people collect points and can use them to purchase wines,” Marotta-Paolicelli continues.

Whether you choose the VIP Club or the Cellar240 Wine Club, which is currently full and has a waitlist, you can be guaranteed exceptional service. “We know any member that comes to the winery on a first-name basis,” says Marotta. “We host harvest events and special pickup parties for our wine club members, at time of their wine shipment, that bring members together socially.”

“My sister and I are there with our wine club concierge, Erika. Wine club members themselves have created friendships, which is wonderful to see.”

Given the location of the estate and the extensive work the sisters have been doing to the establishment, there's no shortage of event spaces and they have created a packed calendar that again makes the most of that. This summer, that includes a vineyard dinner, a beautiful, romantic meal hosted in the middle of the vineyard and curated tasting experiences hosted on the outdoor patio.

“We also built a pergola out by our pond, where we'll create exclusive events and have movie nights in the vineyard,” Marotta shares. Journey of Flavours is another upcoming special event. Making a comeback on Sunday, the 31st of July, the winery will be reserved exclusively for ticket holders only. Elaborate outdoor food and wine stations will be set up with live music performances throughout the day, offering a multi-sensorial experience around their award-winning wine.

Whatever you choose to do at Two Sisters Vineyards, the sense of it being family-run travels throughout. Marotta herself admits that the two sisters “bounce ideas off one another,” and Marotta-Paolicelli describes the estate's members as an extension of their family. “Members are welcomed with open arms and smiles from our team,” she says.


It's also, for both of them, been built on the current times. “Wine has allowed us to connect and open up with one another again,” Marotta continues. “I think that's what people have been missing and appreciate now more than ever: connection.”

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rustic Italian-inspired dishes that change seasonally, with produce sourced from local farmers or grown on the property at the Two Sisters farm.

While Two Sisters Vineyards has moved from success story to success story over the years, it's come into a new era of appreciation following the pandemic.

“What COVID's allowed everyone to do is discover what's in their own backyard,” Marotta-Paolicelli says. “People who come to visit are doing so because they couldn't get on a plane and travel. They're discovering what Niagara has to offer, which is fantastic wine and wonderful experiences.”



ALUMARAIL MANUFACTURING: Quality That's Made to Measure

Alumarail Manufacturing's founders, Sal Cali and Mauro Mattei, discuss the beginnings of their company and what they do to stay ahead of the curve

In 1983, Sal Cali started his business installing windows, doors and aluminum products. He was running a showroom that specialized in selling glass and mirror products. Then, in 1996, he noticed a gap in the market.

"I saw the need for aluminum railings," Cali says. "Everyone's [railings] were rusty, and we were doing so many improvements around the house, and

that's what was left." After looking into aluminum railings and being introduced to another company that manufactured the product, he experimented with buying and installing them. This went so well that, by 2003, he'd started manufacturing his own product.

It was around this time Sal was introduced to Mauro Mattei. "I was looking for something new, and I had come from Italy not many years

before," Mattei says. "I was already working in the wrought-iron-railing industry, which is how Sal and I were introduced by a mutual friend. That is how I started working as a contractor with Sal. In 2005, we decided to join the two companies together to create the business that exists today, Alumarail Manufacturing."

Alumarail is a business that is dedicated to providing properties with



Sal Cali (left) and Mauro Mattei

“
WE SPEND A LOT OF TIME IN R&D
AND ENGINEERING OUR PRODUCTS
SO THEY’RE SAFE AND CAN BE
INSTALLED ANYWHERE
”

— Sal Cali

are baked, rather than powder-coated, to ensure a UV-resistant finish that will last. The final results strictly follow all federal and provincial building codes, in order to pass safety and inspector protocols.

Everything the business does is with integrity and dedication to the customer. Both Cali and Mattei describe how they go about bringing new products to the market. “We design all of our railings by listening to our customers and builders to see what they want and what they need.” Cali says, “For example, when customers were asking for a wrought-iron railing, Alumarail designed a style that looked like wrought iron, but was made with aluminum.”

Talking about the process that takes place at the start of every year, Mattei adds to this: “We sit down and look at our previous year, what we are missing and the needs of our customers. We try to have one new product every year.”

While continuously developing products as an effective way to stay ahead of their competitors, another way Alumarail innovates is through introducing their do-it-yourself program. “A lot of people were coming to our showroom saying they wanted to install railings on their own,” says Cali. “So, we go out and professionally measure the railings for their house, and we’ll make everything is to size. When they pick up the railings, they install it easily, with nothing extra to cut down.”

It’s easy to see Alumarail as a consistent success story, but like building any business, there were challenges. “At the beginning, it wasn’t

as easy as it is today, because it was a new product,” says Mattei. “We had to push on it and make people believe in it because no one knew about aluminum railings back then. This was a country built on ... wrought iron and wood.” Nonetheless, Alumarail had a fresh take on the products along with swiftly manufacturing the railings. Rather than bring the railings in from elsewhere in the country, everything has aligned for success.

Alumarail Manufacturing’s upcoming venture is to extend its product across Canada and into the United States with the help and support of their distributors. They will continue in to develop new strategic ways to enhance productivity, as well as creating an effective way to help the do-it-yourself program by producing a step-by-step video.

In much gratitude to their dedicated employees, customers and dealers, who have helped to evolve the company, Alumarail can assure it won’t forget what makes Alumarail Manufacturing the business it is today.

“Our customers are our salespeople,” Mattei continues. “If we make them happy, they’ll recommend us to others. For me, every client becomes a friend. I don’t want to get a contract because of the price. We create partnerships that allow us to grow.”

aluminum railings that look like wrought iron, yet require zero maintenance and never rust. All railings need precise measurements to be custom-fit to the different requirements of each project. Cali shares, “We spend a lot of time in R&D and engineering our products so they’re safe and can be installed anywhere.”

The company’s railings are available in seven different colours. The colours



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EDITOR'S PICKS

From exploring fields of lavender to riding on retro bicycles, this summer's picks live up to the season WRITTEN BY ESTELLE ZENTIL



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7



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INSPIRING YOUNG GIRLS
ON THEIR JOURNEY TO
BECOMING
EMPOWERED WOMEN

Social media platforms, such as TikTok and YouTube, have dramatically changed — especially for young girls— the fundamental experience around growing up. Self-esteem and confidence is measured by conforming to false norms that are both unrealistic — and, at times, toxic

WRITTEN BY CECE M. SCOTT

Youth — those fledging years of self-awareness that are beginning earlier and earlier in this interactive society and now represent an age group that begins anywhere from 11 or 12 — is often referred to as the state of being one of the best times of our lives a carefree time with no responsibilities or worries about money or what we want to be when we grow up or how we're going to get from here to there as we navigate through all of life's encumbrances. At the risk of being labelled an old-school fuddy-duddy, I remember what it was like when I and many of our current *City Life* readers were young: Our lives were robustly full of family activities and face-to-face after-school gatherings with our friends and the kids on our block.

Sure, we saw those larger-than-life model-type images plastered on billboards, the sizzling promises of a “better you” on our television screens, the full-colour ads in our newspapers and the 5-foot-tall point-of-purchase promotion boards in our local shops, but none of those things were ever on the scale of today's ubiquitous messaging platforms. In fact, a 2021 survey conducted by PPC Protect (<https://ppcprotect.com/blog/strategy/how-many-ads-do-we-see-a-day/>) estimated that the average person today sees 6,000 to 10,000 ads per day, compared to the 1970s, when the average number of ads seen per day was anywhere from 500 to 1,600.

Online platforms provide significant opportunities for advertisers and marketers to get their messages out to young people. In fact, a November 2021 Forrester Research survey reported that 63 percent of Americans between the ages of 12 and 17 used TikTok on a weekly basis, while 57 per cent of this cohort was on Instagram.

In Canada, according to an August

2021 Media Technology Monitor MTM Junior research study that polled 1,622 households, 74 per cent of Canadian kids aged seven to 17 had used social media in the last month, with girls more likely to use it than boys (80 per cent versus 68 per cent). That number dipped to 58 per cent for kids from seven to only 11, who are more likely to have content and time controls on their social media platforms.

With the widespread adoption of social media platforms, especially the highly popular TikTok, Instagram and YouTube channels, the critical issue for young girls becomes the lack of age-appropriate products and same-age role models, which in turn influences these vulnerable young people to adopt and emulate behaviours that are inappropriate for their age groups.

This is not to say that, before this explosion of social media usage within today's youth cohort whose online and phone interactions have become ubiquitous and often obsessive, there weren't examples of high-profile early celebrity influencers, some of whom imploded. We don't have to look far to find role models that young girls used to look up to — in fact, couldn't get enough of — before their public personas went drastically wrong. Remember when Justin “the Biebs” Bieber egged his neighbour's house in Los Angeles in 2014? Or the very public flameout of the Disney teeny-bopper idol, Miley Cyrus, of *Hannah Montana* fame? News about both of these outsized personalities as they spiralled, crashed and burned were splayed across every newspaper and blasted from every radio station, television channel and social media platform in existence at that time.

Now, however, the problem is that, while many of the issues that young girls are facing today are similar to those faced by this age group in

previous generations, the overwhelming omnipresence of social media has ratcheted up their levels of influence and reach to never-before-seen heights.

Of deep concern to parents, teachers and guardians is the impact and influence that social media have on young people, young girls in particular. In both subliminal and overt ways, they are being taught harmful attitudes and behaviours, ones that illustrate that the body shapes that they must aspire to and need to achieve to look good, fit in and be part of the crowd must reflect the unrealistic posts they are seeing. These “adopter” images portray thin, shapely bodies, age-inappropriate and sexualized outfits and behaviour that should be well beyond the knowledge or comprehension of children and young teens.

The celebrity images and seemingly real lifestyles posted on sites, such as Instagram and Pinterest, are façades, undeniably Photoshopped to remove blemishes, extra curves and any number of other minor flaws unacceptable to “influencers.” How can a young girl *not* be impressed by these seemingly flawless images and wonder what's wrong with herself? Why is her body so different from the images that she sees? After all, with all the thousands of “likes” she sees these posts getting, this is the “look” that must be the ticket to being accepted and loved.

Interestingly, in an October 6, 2021, CBC news article by Mark Gollom (<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/instagram-girls-body-image>), he relates the findings reported in the *Wall Street Journal* of a study conducted by Facebook, the owner of Instagram, conducted to ascertain how Instagram affects its millions of young users. “Instagram can be harmful for a significant number of users, in particular teenage girls,” it openly admitted. About a third of teen



BARBIE'S EFFECT

The effect of playing with this unrealistically thin and busty doll on girls' self esteem.

In a world where the majority of people — specifically, its women — are constantly criticizing our own bodies, our weight, and, indeed, anything else at all about our physical being in the world — at some point the poignant question “Why?” needs to be asked.

Why do women demand so much of ourselves and attach such importance to the arbitrary standards set by fashion houses and leading beauty brands?

Have you seen some of the tag lines attached to those high-gloss full-colour magazine ads? If they weren't so meaningless they would be bizarre. What exactly does “Beauty is a gesture” even mean? Or “The scent of all paradoxes”?

One telling example of how we as a society came to adopt one of the most unrealistic ideals of what we, as women, are expected to aspire to is outlined at <https://study.com/academy/lesson/the-barbie-effect.html> by mental health counselor Gaines Arnold.

In 1959, while on a trip to Germany, American Ruth Handler noticed that the popular “Lilli Doll” possessed adult female features specifically designed to appeal to men. Handler had observed that her daughter, Barbie liked to play with paper dolls that looked like adult women, rather than enjoying traditional baby dolls, and had an idea about how these more adult-like dolls — modelled for male sexual interests — could be adapted for children. First forming the Mattel Corporation with her husband and then partnering with Disney, Handler began marketing her Barbie dolls to young girls.

While there is no denying that these dolls were wildly popular with girls, they always conveyed a subliminal message — to be popular a girl needed to have perfect blonde hair, a killer body, good looks and, effectively, no career. All Barbie had to do in her perfect Barbie world was to dress up and wait for Ken to bring home the proverbial bacon.

Over the decades since Barbie's creation, this idealized — and, some would say, harmful — fashion icon has inspired psychologists to study what is known as the “Barbie Effect.”

It boils down to this: media messaging over the last seventy years has dramatically changed the definition of an attractive, desirable woman.

In the 1600s, double chins and fuller figures whetted men's lust. In the mid-1800s, men also liked their women plump. Beginning in the 1960s, though, with the introduction of supermodels like Twiggy, men's fascination turned to women who were toned, willowy and fit — pretty much a mirror likeness of the Barbies that impressionable little girls aspire to be in their imaginary, idealized worlds.

Writer Samantha Olson reports in an article in the online *Medical Daily*, “According to doctors, Barbie's measurements would force her to walk on all fours. She would be physically incapable of lifting her over-sized Mattel head. She could be nicknamed the ‘impossible woman’ with unrealistic physical proportions that would make her look like she's straight off a spaceship.”

<https://www.medicaldaily.com/pulse/barbies-body-measurements-set-unrealistic-goals-little-girls-sales-plummet-316006>

In fact, Barbie's idealized “perfect” head-to-toe proportions have caused eating and body disorders in young girls who aspire to look like her. There isn't any clear messaging around Barbie engaging in or preparing for a career, either, which — although hopefully not in this increasingly women-empowering world — might lead a young girl to believe that all she has to do to succeed in life is to look pretty.

Mattel has addressed some of these issues in recent years, producing dolls that feature more diverse and truer-to-life looks and body shapes. For mirroring that effects acceptance for all ages is key to actualizing girls' “self-acceptance persona.”

is highly concerning,” she said. “They are young, vulnerable and naïve, and easily susceptible to older male attention.”

Dr. Niva Piran, a clinical psychologist, award-winning author, researcher and professor emerita at the University of Toronto, whose 2017 book *Journeys of Embodiment at the Intersection of Body and Culture* (London: Academic Press) examines the social experiences that shape girls through their development and into adulthood, states that it is important to understand the current struggles of girls.

“Girls now live in a contradictory world,” says Dr. Piran. “On the one hand, they are told that all options are open to them — that they can attain any and all positions if they work hard and get their education. That is one type of message, that equal participation in society is available to them. At the same time, at the physical level, they are exposed to very different messages.”

She goes on to explain that the rates of violence against women, gender gaps in pay and access to reproductive health services, for example, have remained problematic areas for women. Girls at puberty are aware of and can describe such challenges faced by women in their lives. She goes on to state that living in a world of contradictory messages is very difficult for young girls.

“It is common and acceptable for young girls to try and change their bodies in order to become more accepted,” Dr. Piran says. “Social media transmits images that have a negative impact on our youth — messages that convey that the bodies of girls at puberty are inherently deficient and require repair — in weight, breast enhancement, hair straightening, lip expansion or skin whitening. As such, the focus of these young girls changes from one of acting on the world to one of acting on their bodies, which in turn makes them lose power. And from that point onward, no body repair is good enough — the body remains deficient, and it is challenging to get out of that mindset. Secondly, it is really hard to act in the world with power and agency when you experience your body as a deficient site, because, at the end of the day, we interact with the environment through our bodies.”

Catherine Steiner-Adair, clinical

girls in the survey said that when they felt bad about their bodies, Instagram made them feel even worse. The research also showed that the peer pressure the image-focused Instagram generated led in some cases to eating disorders and to thoughts of suicide.

In fact, a story related to me by a

Toronto Grade 6 teacher resonates deeply. Many of the girls in her class, who are 11 years old, can be easily mistaken for 14 to 16. “The physical mirroring around what these girls see on social media, such as heavy makeup and revealing clothing, makes them appear much older than they are, which

psychologist, consultant and co-author with Teresa Barker of *The Big Disconnect: Protecting Childhood and Family Relationships in the Digital Age* (a *Wall Street Journal* Best Nonfiction Book in 2013), also identifies some of the critical issues facing young girls today.

“There is a backlash of misogyny against both young girls and women who come from predominant cultures,” Steiner-Adair says. “The message out there is that what you look like matters more than anything else. Also, there is the endless appearance of unrealistic beauty images that promote dieting and shopping as reasonable ways to cope with life’s ups and downs.”

Many social media platforms, particularly Instagram, where celebrities of every ilk are known to post the minutiae of their lives, strongly influence the mindsets and behaviours of vulnerable young girls who just want to fit in.

“These types of messages direct girls to body dysmorphia, disordered eating and eating disorders,” Steiner-Adair states. (Not all disordered eaters develop into full-blown eating disorders.) “And while it is hard to identify causation, the correlation to body dissatisfaction and eating disorders, such as anorexia, is strong.”

In fact, in a March 18, 2021, CBC news report by Desmond Brown, a spokesperson for McMaster Children’s Hospital stated that referrals to the hospital’s Eating Disorders Program had increased by 90 per cent in the last four-month period. As well, youth admitted for medical support after a suicide attempt had tripled over the same period, compared to the previous year. (<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/hamilton/pandemic-safety-measures-children-teen-health-impact-1.5953326>).

Red flags for young girls and their parents, who should both be aware of and recognize toxic social-media messaging, include the suggestions that a particular appearance is desirable, beautiful and necessary, and in fact, is what girls should strive to emulate. The posts and popular music-based videos

that appear as beauty advice on social media include content that portrays unrealistic ideals of beauty that girls say make them feel bad about themselves, and in fact, sets standards that no girl can reasonably live up to.

A key concern identified both by Dr. Piran and Dr. Steiner-Adair was the ongoing and seemingly growing number of acts of sexual violence targeting girls under the age of 18.

“Sex education is not doing enough to inform young people about sexual

“ IT IS IMPORTANT TO NURTURE SOCIAL PARTICIPATION IN EQUAL-PARTNER GROUPS, ONES THAT ARE MADE UP OF PEERS WHO VALIDATE AND NURTURE EACH OTHER’S STRENGTHS WHILE EMPOWERING RELATIONSHIPS ”

negotiations. Girls are vulnerable to violations — and are not knowledgeable about sexual encounters. The highest rape incidence in the United States — reported at 7.7 per cent — happens to girls who are under 18,” says Dr. Piran.

Dr. Steiner-Adair concurs. “Increased sexual violence toward girls is impacting the younger age groups, and I think that some cultures’ acceptance of violence against women has increased. It is very dangerous. If women don’t have the right to control their own bodies, a highly controversial issue that is embedded in the abortion issue in the United States, it is no longer a women’s issue, it is a human rights one. It is important for the media to feature women on their covers who don’t look like they are hired models — but rather, real women, who are healthy and happy in their own bodies.”

The Dove Self-Esteem Project, which aims to confront the harmful beauty

advice often normalized for teens in their social media feeds, is committed to helping parents navigate important conversations with their kids. In an email Q & A with the team at *City Life Magazine*, Dove summarized the findings of their 2022 Self-Esteem Project survey, which was conducted on girls age 10 to 17 in Canada as a way to understand this group’s social media habits and attitudes they are influenced to adopt as a result of their social media involvements.

The research reveals that, in general, young girls are spending more time on social media than ever before — connecting with friends, finding new communities and engaging with an endless stream of content and advice in their feeds, with one in two girls saying idealized beauty advice on social media caused their low self-esteem. Facing this toxicity head-on, the new Dove #DetoxYourFeed campaign aims to counter the harmful beauty advice being normalized for teens in their social media feeds by providing tools to help parents navigate important conversations with their teens, resources to empower teens to define their own beauty

standards and encourage them to unfollow content that makes them feel bad about themselves. In fact, research found that seven in ten girls have felt better after unfollowing toxic beauty advice and idealized beauty content on social media.

Parents should take note that the Dove research showed that half the surveyed girls spend more than an hour each weekday on social media, more time than they spend with friends outside of school. The majority of girls surveyed (67 per cent) say it would be better for their self-esteem if young girls in general spent less time on social media and that it would be better for their own self-esteem if they themselves spent less time on social media. But the girls also stated that they use social media as a way to express themselves, to share their thoughts (26 per cent) and to express their identity (20 per cent).

So, what can parents do to protect

their daughters from falling prey to completely unrealistic “influencers,” whose looks and “desirable” lifestyles drive their daughters’ all-encompassing interest?

For starters, parents need to be present, available and nurturing to their kids, as well as highly aware of the sites their young people are visiting and the amount of time they are spending on them. Parents need to advocate for policies that empower their children and closely watch not only their child’s online activity but the appropriateness of the people they are interacting with.

It is important that adults in young girls’ lives are supportive, offering guidance, mentoring and an always-present “listening” ear. It is also critical to discuss and help this age group, who are from around 11 years old, become attuned to their needs and be knowledgeable about what healthy development looks like.

“For instance, weight gain during puberty is a healthy and natural process,” Dr. Piran says, but “girls do not learn that. Girls learn to look at weight gain during puberty as a dangerous thing rather than a healthy thing. [But]

weight gain is also important for the secretion of growth hormones and other hormones and for the strengthening of bones during this critical age. This is important information that they should learn.”

In fact, in her clinical psychology practice, Dr. Piran has observed girls who have experienced stunted growth because their parents, and sometimes their physicians, put them on a diet at this critical age and stage of development.

Interestingly, she notes that when girls are going through puberty and begin menstruating, they have to learn what is acceptable within the setting of their own peer groups. “They learn that they need to be small and demure rather than powerful. If girls show their competitive side, they are considered to be a bitch,” she says. “Young girls learn that people don’t want women to be in control, even in the political arena, so the strong voice

that they had before puberty becomes silenced in their quest to be deemed acceptable. We need to nurture girls to be powerful and to respect their strong voices. This will also help protect them from negative media, because social media doesn’t like young girls to be comfortable within themselves — they want them to be self-critical so they can shut them down. Girls often experience a demotion in their social power when they reach puberty because their body becomes more important than their

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voice. It is very important that young girls have social power unrelated to their appearances. Lastly, it is important to nurture social participation in equal-partner groups, ones that are made up of peers who validate and nurture each other’s strength while empowering relationships.”

There are myriad resources available for parents who want to engage with and actively help their daughters invest in their own personal empowerment. While rife with negative influences, the Internet can also be an asset, with many positive and affirming websites that reach out to girls around the world to inspire and empower them.

Sites such as www.sparkmovement.org, an informative and positive online resource recommended by Dr. Piran, is, according to its website, a “girl-fueled, intergenerational activist organization working to ignite and foster an antiracist gender justice movement” to

end violence against women and girls and promote girls’ healthy sexuality, self-empowerment and well-being. For younger girls, the sheheroes.com website profiles apps that embrace key themes, such as championing a passion for learning, being curious and observing the world, appreciating the uniqueness of each person, identifying and celebrating personal strengths; speaking out and being assertive when peers are being picked on, criticized or bullied; being adventurous and bold, trying new things and not giving up when things are hard are also highlighted.

Even the toy-maker Mattel has realized that it has to be cognizant of how its idealistic version of toys impacts their young customers and have introduced, along with the original prototype, a new and more physically realistic line of Barbie dolls that features petite, tall and curvy models.

If parents want to increase their social-media knowledge and ensure that their teen daughters’ online interactions are safe, they can check out Dove’s *Detox Your Feed: The Parents Guide*, a three-minute educational film that has advice

for parents, caregivers and mentors on initiating conversations with young people about the harms of social media. Dove also offers *The Confidence Kit*, a free *Self-Esteem Project* workbook that includes tools to facilitate conversations with your kids about toxic social media advice.

Parents can also help their children decide if the content they follow is right for them by suggesting that they engage in Dove’s #DetoxYourFeed themselves. Easy steps to follow for a more positive and reaffirming online experience include simply encouraging girls to follow content or people that are positive and uplifting and to unfollow toxic content that does not improve their mood or sense of well-being. Teens themselves should be aware of the content that they post and to think about and make sure they understand the impact their own content will have on others.



Rather than looking inward for ways to bolster their self-esteem and confidence, young girls are turning to social media for what they consider the hippest and coolest trends

It is important for adults to be supportive and offer guidance, mentoring and a listening, “present” ear, on an ongoing basis, to their young children, especially their girls. It is also important to discuss with them how to be attuned to their own needs and provide them with information about healthy eating for their optimal development.

“We need to focus on fostering resilience and protecting our youth,” Dr. Piran says. “Considering the targeting of girls’ appearance by social media, it can be valuable, instead, to nurture other physical experiences among girls, in particular, those of functionality and joy in the body. Joyful engagement in physical activities that do not objectify the body can be an important protective factor. It is valuable to continue such engagement during and following puberty.”

It is also their parents’ responsibility — moms in particular — to not pass down messages of body-loathing and negative body criticisms. “Mom has to stop saying, ‘Oh, my thighs and my butt are too big’ or ‘My hair is too thin’ — these kinds of self-criticisms can lead to negative self-esteem,” Dr. Steiner-Adair says. “Also, men have to feel comfortable encouraging their daughters to feel good in their natural bodies — in fact, they should take a feminist position against

anorexic-shaped models. Fathers and male role models should help girls feel that they matter for exactly who they are.”

Helping young girls navigate through the mire of ubiquitous influencer messages — ones that “inform” but actually direct in order to manipulate and sell the latest products — is a responsibility that lies with each one of us. It is imperative that the next generation be equipped with a sense of self-worth, self-esteem, confidence and purpose — attributes that will mature and empower them to become the women that they deserve and are entitled to be.

If they are to emerge from their teen years as strong, happy and confident young women, girls must learn to identify the pitfalls of peer pressure and the negative criticisms around body image. Positive life decisions start early in life and are the ultimate gateway to empowerment for women. Early influences have the potential to either lift up or negatively impact our children’s ability to appreciate who they are and how they look. Our goal as parents and mentors should be to empower our girls so that, ultimately, they can achieve the goal of becoming powerful, self-directed agents within society at large.

It is a fact that young girls who are absorbing the predominant social-

media messages, are susceptible to philosophies such as, “I have an eating disorder” and are liable to adopt them to be accepted.

“Girls describe the power they derive from being accepted without pressures of conformity in terms of their appearance or behaviour. Such a validating environment is important within families, among peers and other social systems, such as schools,” says Dr. Piran. “Becoming accepted starts with the social groups young girls hang around with. They are vulnerable to peer pressure and opinions, and, so, with the right reinforcement and acceptance, they can accept themselves on life’s terms.”

Boards of education can also get more proactive in supporting young girls in the school system. Implementing policies that address sexual harassment, body-based harassment and bullying (such as teasing or comments about weight, for example), with clear consequences for infractions, certainly represents a positive step forward. Ensuring that boys and girls have equal access to physical and sports activities and resources is also important and achievable within the school environment.

“There are a lot of phenomenal girls in the world,” says Dr. Steiner-Adair. “We are just not hearing enough about them.”

Laura Damiani is director of operations and marketing at Damiani Jewellers



As a family-owned business in its third generation, Damiani Jewellers is founded on exceptional customer service, quality products and stories that warm the heart. For Laura Damiani, who's been working full-time for the business since 2015, it's also founded on memories.

She recalls running around the store when she was younger, just tall enough to look over the counter at clients, watching as her grandfather helped them achieve joy at finding the perfect piece. She also recalls sitting at the supplier dinners her grandparents would host, looking at the rows of diamonds that would come out after the food. "I grew up in it, so it's something I'm very comfortable in," she says. "Maybe it's in my blood."

Today, Damiani Jewellers still runs as a family business, selling engagement rings, wedding bands, diamonds and luxury timepieces. While Damiani sees grandparents bringing in their grandchildren to create lasting moments, she's continued honing her knowledge, pursuing a diploma in gemology at the world-renowned Gemological Institute of America.

Spending her days surrounded by clients and beautiful stones, she also gets an insider look at the trends driving the industry. When it comes to jewellery, she talks of chandelier earrings having a moment. "They're

A GENERATION OF JEWELLERS

Laura Damiani, director of operations and marketing at Damiani Jewellers, discusses jewellery trends, success and why diamonds might be in her blood

WRITTEN BY JOSH WALKER | INTERVIEW BY ESTELLE ZENTIL

showstoppers,” she says, “And we’re seeing them at red-carpet events like the Oscars, Grammy Awards and Met Gala.” She also talks about the popularity of tennis necklaces. “They’re dainty, and you can wear them every day. They’re a great starting point for a layered look.”

This fall, as Damiani Jewellers celebrates its 65th anniversary, the company will be hosting its VIP clients for a Track Day with TAG Heuer & Policarco Group. This exclusive racing event will help raise money for Sick Kids Hospital. Damiani will also be offering its Damiani lab-grown-diamond signature pendant that contains a 0.65 carat lab-grown diamond.

Here, Damiani shares some insight on what to look for throughout the engagement process, a few hot trends and her passion for all things jewellery.

Q: How would you approach hinting to your significant other that you’d like to get engaged?

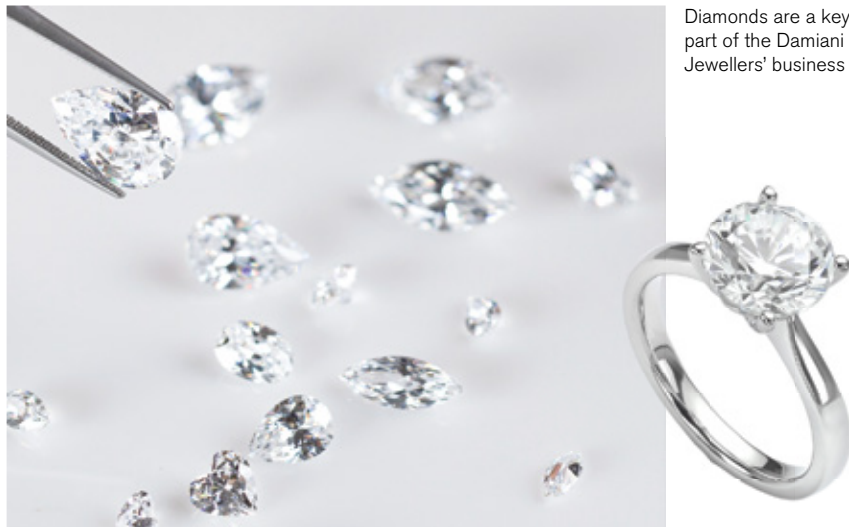
A: I believe that a direct and honest conversation is the best way to go about this. You can remind your partner how happy you are in the relationship and discuss your life goals. If this is too much pressure, maybe going on a romantic getaway will help your partner realize how amazing it is to spend so much time together. Also, enlisting the help of a friend or family member, or talking about weddings or rings, in general, can drop a big hint!

Q: How can you indirectly influence which style ring you will receive without being a part of the process directly?

A: Usually when your partner is ready to propose, he/she will ask family and friends for some advice. Let your friends and family know which ring and diamond shape you like so they can pass the information on when the time comes.

Q: What is the average price of an engagement ring in 2022? Do you advise sticking to the three-month-salary rule?

A: On average, our prices are between \$5,000 and \$15,000 CAD. Our sales associates can show your partner many different rings and work within the person’s budget. The three-month-



Diamonds are a key part of the Damiani Jewellers’ business

“
To me, success means being passionate in what you do and trying your best. It also means being able to give back and make a difference in the lives of our community
 ”

salary rule is recommended, but, at the end of the day, it is whatever they feel comfortable spending! The ring that they first purchase represents where they are at that point of their life.

Q: Can both partners contribute to purchasing a ring?

A: Of course! Nowadays, anything works. A lot more couples are coming in together to choose the ring so their partner can be a part of the decision. And, if the couple feels more comfortable making the purchase together, we are happy to split it for them. Usually, in my experience, one partner purchases the ring as a symbol of their love and commitment. A lot of our customers are traditional in that way.

Q: What has been the craziest engagement story related to a ring purchased from Damiani Jewellers?

A: I have heard such wonderful engagement stories over the years. The craziest would be the proposal that happened right at our store! The gentleman came in with his girlfriend, had her pick out any ring she wanted, and then he got down on one knee in the store! He said that he didn’t want to wait any longer. Our team was ready to toast the lovely couple and got it all on camera. It was quite an event!

Q: If someone is looking to upgrade their ring after X number of years, what would be the first steps in doing so, and what do you see is typically/commonly requested?

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A: If you are looking to upgrade your ring, the first step would be to look online at some ideas of what you like. Go check out our website, damianjewellers.com, for products and trends. The most important step would be to come visit our store in person to speak with a sales associate at your convenience. Our sales associates have been trained and have worked with diamonds for many years; some have over 30 years of experience in the trade. They will be happy to guide you through this important transition. We know there is sentimental value in your ring, so we try to make this process smooth and give you the best information.

I see a lot of people coming in to upgrade their semi-mount into something modern. We help them choose the style that suits them and their diamond, and get it set in-house as soon as possible, complimentary. Also, many people upgrade their diamond by choosing something bigger or a different shape. Many people do not want to part with their first diamond, which symbolizes the beginning of their marriage, thus they opt to keep it and sometimes make a pendant so it's always close to their heart.

Q: Can you share a bit about lab-grown diamonds? What are the pros and cons of natural and lab-grown diamonds?

A: Lab-grown diamonds (or synthetic diamonds) have the same chemical composition (crystallized carbon), durability, beauty and sparkle of naturally mined diamonds. The difference lies in their origin. Lab-grown diamonds are manufactured by or people in a high-tech factory. They did not form naturally in the Earth over billions of years. Because they are manufactured, they are less rare, so they cost less. You get more for your dollar — more carat weight, better clarity and colour!

Pros: the same physical, chemical and optical properties of natural diamonds; cost less; environmentally friendly (no mining).

Cons: do not hold their value like natural diamonds do; because they are so new on the market, we do not know if prices will drop as production gets more efficient/cheaper.

Q: What is your personal favourite piece of jewellery that you own and why?

A: My favourite piece of jewellery ... very difficult to say. If I had to pick one, it would have to be my diamond tennis bracelet. It is a classic piece in my collection that really goes with anything! I can stack it and dress it up or down. It also was a gift for my 25th birthday from my parents, a memorable moment in my life.

Q: What is the definition of success to you?

A: To me, success means being passionate in what you do and trying your best. It also means being able to give back and make a difference in the lives of our community. It is important to stay grounded and be grateful for your family and support system, love and good health.

www.damianjewellers.com

@damianjewellers

PRODUCTS THAT ARE WORTH THE MONEY

WRITTEN BY MURSAL RAHMAN



CHARLOTTE TILBURY BEAUTIFUL SKIN MEDIUM COVERAGE LIQUID FOUNDATION WITH HYALURONIC ACID

Charlotte Tilbury's latest foundation launch is one of her best products yet. The foundation helps blur pores and looks incredibly smooth on the skin. It has a natural radiant finish and hydrating formula that looks absolutely gorgeous on the skin. \$55, [sephora.ca](https://www.sephora.ca)



PHOTO BY DEAN DROBOT



DIOR BACKSTAGE CONCEALER

The applicator for Dior Backstage Concealer looks just like a paintbrush. It allows you to spot-conceal with precision and has a hydrating and creamy formula. It doesn't cling to texture or sit in fine lines. It gives the skin a lovely radiant boost. \$37, [sephora.ca](https://www.sephora.ca)



MAKEUP BY MARIO SOFTSCULPT™ TRANSFORMING SKIN ENHANCER

Ever since makeup artist Mario Dedivanovic started his brand, he has continuously released innovative products that look amazing on the skin. His latest launch is no exception. If you like a glowy complexion, then you can use his SoftSculpt Transforming Skin Enhancer. It gives the skin a natural sun-kissed appearance. \$38, [sephora.ca](https://www.sephora.ca)



KOSAS HOTLINER HYALURONIC ACID CONTOURING LIP LINER

These lip liners have a velvety soft formula that glides onto the lips like a dream. The hyaluronic acid helps plump the lips, giving your lips a slightly fuller appearance. It's pigmented and doesn't bleed outside the lips. \$24, [sephora.ca](https://www.sephora.ca)



NARS LIQUID BLUSH

If you like a natural and glowy-looking blush, then you need the NARS Liquid Blush. It blends into the skin with minimal effort and has a flawless finish. No wonder this product is loved by so many celebrities. \$39, [sephora.ca](https://www.sephora.ca)



HOURLASS PHANTOM VOLUMIZING GLOSSY BALM

The Hourglass Phantom Volumizing Glossy Balms are hydrating and have a cushiony texture. They have a high-shine finish and a subtle plumping effect on the lips. With the lavish packaging and the juicy effect they give the lips, these glossy balms are definitely worth the splurge. \$47, [sephora.ca](https://www.sephora.ca)



Nudestix was co-founded by former MAC product developer and Cover FX co-founder Jenny Frankel (middle) and her daughters, Ally (left) and Taylor

A GENERATIONAL PASSION FOR BEAUTY

Co-founder of Nudestix & Nudeskin Taylor Frankel Shares the Challenge of Creating a Sunscreen and How the Brand Is Staying Ahead of the Competition WRITTEN BY MURSAL RAHMAN

Taylor Frankel was just 17 years old when she started Nudestix with her mom, Jenny Frankel, who is the CEO of the brand, and her sister, Ally Frankel, who is currently in medical school. With their mom working as a product developer at MAC Cosmetics and later becoming the co-founder of Cover FX, the sisters were always surrounded by makeup. However, the duo struggled to find easy-to-use

products with a natural finish. Thus, in 2014, Nudestix was born. Frankel and her team created multipurpose cream products that enhance your natural beauty.

Fast-forward to 2022, and cream products are all the rage and the no-makeup makeup look is trending. Since 2014, Nudestix has cultivated a community of over 500,000 Instagram followers and almost 30,000 followers on TikTok. In 2020, the brand

launched its sister brand, Nudeskin, which sells clean, vegan and fuss-free skincare products. Frankel and her team collaborated with Dr. Jason Emer, a certified cosmetic dermatologist, to create skin-care products that will make the maximum impact with minimal effort. We had the chance to chat with Frankel about Nudeskin's newest launch, the Nudescreen Daily Mineral Veil SPF 30 and about what the brand is doing to stay ahead of the competition.

Q: Were there any challenges in creating a sunscreen?

A: From the start, we knew we wanted to create a 100-per-cent mineral sunscreen. We knew this because we know that mineral versus chemical is so much safer, not only for the body but for the environment — in addition to that, for anyone who has eczema or irritated skin. My sister, Ally, for example, who's also the co-founder, is allergic to all chemical sunscreens. We wanted to ensure that this product was safe for use for all skin types. So that was one of the most challenging things when developing sunscreen because, as most people know, mineral and/or physical blockers typically contain the mineral zinc oxide, which is known to have a white pigment. So, on medium to deeper complexions, it can often look chalky or provide a white cast on the skin. In order to ensure that we were masking the white pigment and creating a product that was suitable for all skin types, we really needed to create and source a formula where the zinc oxide wouldn't leave as harsh a cast on the skin but also develop transparent tints, to ensure that, regardless of your skin tone, you can wear mineral sunscreen.

Q: What are some ingredients you wanted to include in the sunscreen and some ingredients you wanted to stay away from?

A: Seven ingredients that we wanted to ensure were formulated with our Nudescreen Daily Mineral Veil were, firstly, zinc oxide, because that's the mineral that creates the physical blocker from UVA, UVB and blue light. Secondly, we wanted to add additional antioxidants and polyphenols to protect our skin from not only the UVA environmental stressors but also to ensure that we were treating, soothing and hydrating the skin simultaneously. So, in our product, you'll find ingredients like green algae, passionflower, extra passionflower extract and purple tea.

Ingredients that we knew we didn't want in our product, firstly, were oils. We wanted to create an oil-free SPF to ensure that it never left a greasy or thick film on the skin. And secondly, because it's a mineral sunscreen, we knew that we didn't want to add any chemicals, like oxybenzone into our products.

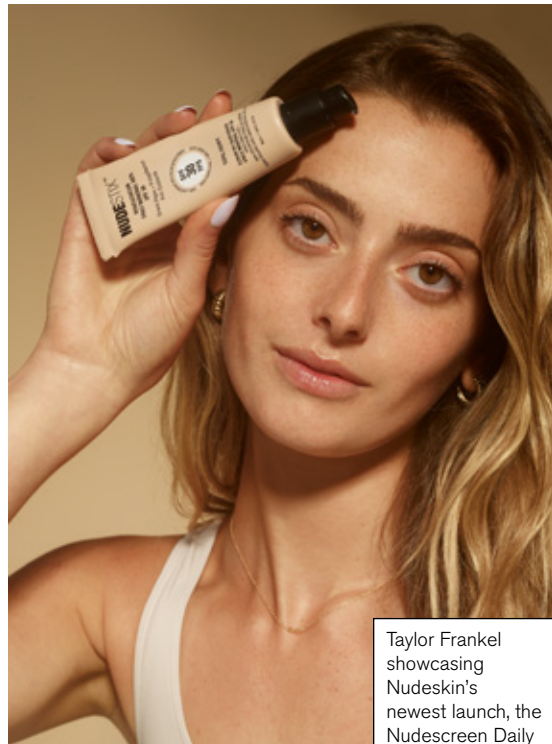
Oxybenzone is not only harmful to the body because of the way it absorbs into the skin and possibly the bloodstream, but it's also harmful to our environment and coral reefs.

Q: What is Nudestix doing to remain ahead of the competition, and how will you continue to differentiate yourself from other brands?

A: In order to differentiate ourselves, we need to continue to stay true to our mission and our philosophy, which is multitasking, minimalist makeup for the modern-day woman on the go. I think, if our content, if our retail presence, if our community reflects that, that will continue to be differentiated. But I also think we need to ensure that we're keeping up with trends. For example, if TikTok is one of the newest social platforms, make sure that we're relevant, and we're speaking to our community on that platform. In addition to that, to differentiate in terms of, like, sticking to our philosophy, it is also so important to innovate. So how are we expanding on our product pipeline? For example, we entered the category of SPF and disrupted that category. How are we entering and speaking to the category of complexion?

Q: A lot of brands haven't transitioned to TikTok. How has jumping onto TikTok increased brand awareness?

A: TikTok has created an increase in social awareness through virality. What's so unique about TikTok versus Instagram is that you're reaching a whole new audience. On Instagram, you're speaking to the same audience every single day, which leads to a fairly stagnant growth, versus TikTok, where you know you can still reach a larger community outside of your existing community quite organically. This can be through creating unique, engaging content through following trends, through engaging with certain TikTok communities, through hashtags, and



Taylor Frankel showcasing Nudestix's newest launch, the Nudescreen Daily Mineral Veil SPF 30

it really allows brands who, don't necessarily or can't pay to play on Instagram the opportunity to grow a lot faster, and then again, drive people to their other platform.

Q: What factors have contributed to Nudestix's success in cultivating a community?

A: Some factors that have allowed us to create a beautiful community are, first, authenticity. When we first launched Nudestix, being a founder was extremely client-facing, media-facing, really serving as the face of the brand to speak to our community directly every single day, whether that was through social media, whether that was through events in real life. In addition to that, we're extremely in tune with what our community's needs and wants are. So, we listen when they request new products, when they maybe suggest editing a formula or product. I think where some brands fail is when they don't listen to their community directly and don't act on the insights that they gain from their customers who are shopping for their products, who are engaged with their content every single day.

www.nudestix.com
@nudestix

Angelo (third from left) and Christina Marzilli (right), with their children, Natalie Papia (left) and Angelo Marzilli Jr. (second from left)



A FAMILY FURNISHING HOMES WITH LOVE

The story for Decor-Rest Furniture began in the '70s, in a small rented building in Toronto. Now, it's celebrating its 50th year in business

WRITTEN BY JOSH WALKER | INTERVIEW BY ESTELLE ZENTIL

Originally from Italy, it was seeing his parents struggle in postwar Europe that prompted Angelo Marzilli to look to Canada as a place with better prospects. As his wife, Christina Marzilli, says, "We were brought in

seeing this as the land of opportunity, so we wanted to create something here."

Where Angelo brought engineering skills in furniture design and manufacturing, gathered from working at a local furniture manufacturing company when he was 16, his wife

brought her aptitude for marketing, accounts and décor. Together, they founded a company that would reinvent and innovate itself over the 50 years it's now been in business.

"We were both young, in our early 20s," says Christina, thinking back

to the business's beginnings. "We've had our challenges. There's been times where we'll have different opinions, and that's healthy. But when it comes down to it, we had the same vision."

In Decor-Rest Furniture's first years, Angelo would spend his days visiting retail stores and introducing buyers to their products. He'd spend his nights at the factory, sewing and upholstering furniture and fulfilling orders.

In 1980, they purchased their first commercial building, expanding from 20,000 to 45,000 square feet. In the '90s, with a team of 100 people, they relocated to a new space: a 111,000-square-foot factory and first showroom in the city. In the 2000s, the growth continued, and the company constructed its first custom-built landmark location in Woodbridge, Ont.

Today, Decor-Rest Furniture is available in stores, including Union Electric Lighting, Arrow Furniture Mart and Decorium, and it offers more than 600 fabrics and 75 leathers, a furniture line with styles that cover both classic and contemporary, a footprint of 400,000 square feet and a workforce of 450 employees.

It has also weathered huge changes in the industry, with Christina commenting on the impact of social media on connecting with customers, striking the balance between manual work and automation, as well as the ongoing challenges of COVID-19.

Christina and Angelo's son, Angelo Marzilli Jr., who took over as the company's president in 2017, has also noted the changes brought on by the pandemic, talking about how our homes have become places not just to live, but also to work and play in. He talks about translating current design trends into the brand's pieces. "Consumers have been looking for multipurpose, functional furniture," he says. "Adding recliners, motion, storage and electronic charging stations."

All of Decor-Rest Furniture's products are made in Canada, another interest in which Christina has seen a recent uptick. "Because of global shortages of materials, everyone is going back to their roots, and they now recognize and appreciate local products."

“
**Consumers
have been looking
for multipurpose,
functional
furniture**
”



Decor-Rest has five decades of experience serving retailers around the globe and, as a family-run business, the Marzillis believe that a beautiful and comfortable home is the foundation of a happy family

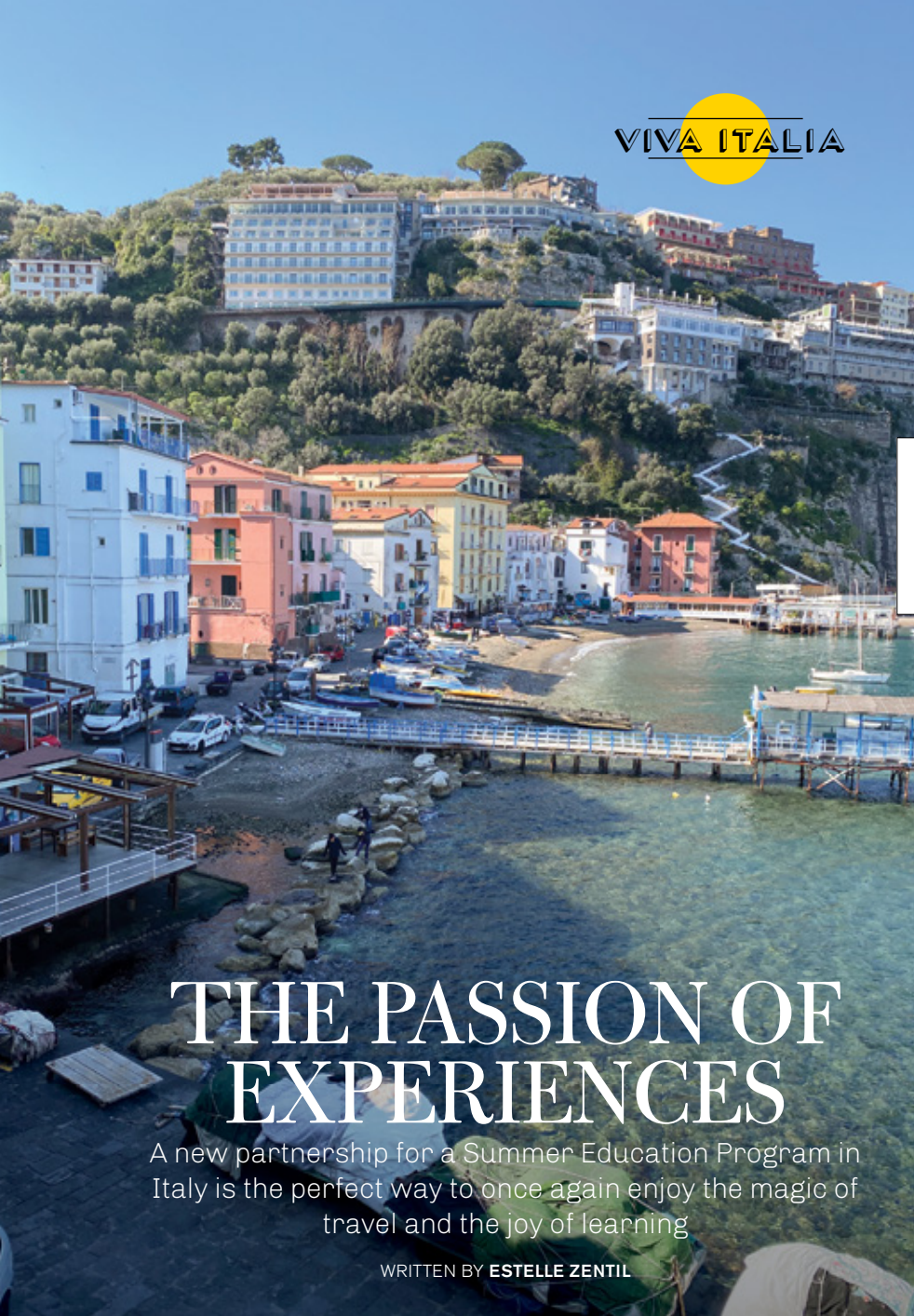
When you speak with anyone at Decor-Rest Furniture, you'll understand it's a family business through and through. Not only is the company itself generational, with Marzilli Jr. as president, and Angelo and Christina's daughter, Natalie previously working in the sales department before launching her own retail venture, Zilli Home Interiors, but the atmosphere is one that speaks to family. The business has a mantra, to furnish homes with love, and

is dedicated to creating furniture that lasts generations.

For Marzilli Jr., that comes down to a balance between art and science. "Design is an art," he says, "from an idea converted to a line drawing to a prototype for testing. When it comes to comfort, it's more of a science, which our 50 years of experience has mastered."

www.decor-rest.com

@decorrest



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WRITTEN BY ESTELLE ZENTIL

really understand everything that is around you.”

The Summer Education Program is offered in both two-week and four-week blocks, with a variety of personal experiences included in both packages, with basic Italian-language courses being the core of both programs. The cost for the two-week package is \$2,830 per person, and the four-week package is priced at \$4,000 per person (accommodation not included).

“We were formed so our forefathers collectively had a voice to be able to move forward with their initiatives to integrate into a society and to be able to contribute to that society by forming networks,” says CIBPA president John Lettieri. “And now, here is the opportunity to visit Italy and to come home and say, ‘I get it.’”

The institute also offers summer terms for college students to study abroad, take classes and earn credits, offered for one-month periods in either June or July, or a two-month term for both June and July.

Perhaps Cristiana Panico puts it best when she simply says, “It’s one thing to hear about where you came from. It is another thing entirely to LIVE where you come from and continue the feeling of being Italian and have an Italian heritage.”

www.cibpa.com
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Personal experiences. We’ve never needed them more.

The last two-plus years have demonstrated how much we have all missed personal experiences. These past turbulent years have deprived us all of the joy and learning that can only come from the simple act of first-hand personal experiences.

An elevated personal-learning experience is the idea behind a collaboration this summer between the Sant’Anna Institute in Sorrento, Italy, and the Canadian Italian Business and Professional Association of Toronto

(CIBPA), which are offering a Summer Education Program to visit Italy and immerse yourself in the culture, heritage and tradition.

“When you can pick up a language, you can better understand the community and the culture,” says Cristiana Panico, president and founder of the Sant’Anna Institute, formed in 1998 to educate, support and assist international students in becoming active citizens of the world. “Attending a school like ours is a way to belong to the community and become a temporary citizen, and then you can

PHOTOS COURTESY OF CIBPA



1

VARIETY OF LIFE

LOVE BITES

Enhance the sweetness of summer with every one of these bites

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2

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3



4



5



6



7

ADVERTORIAL

At Great to Hear, (from left) Kris, Ida and Clara use honesty to help build client relationships



HONOUR YOUR HEARING HEALTH

At Great to Hear, clients are getting all the advantages that experience brings. This year, the clinic is celebrating a decade of serving the community. And everyone benefits — but the first step starts with you

What's the secret to the 10-year success of a hearing clinic? It's simple. According to the team at Great to Hear, it's all about building client relationships "using honesty," says co-owner Clara Russiello, "integrity," adds Ida Massarella, co-owner, and "consistency," affirms Hearing Instrument Specialist Kris Romano.

It's that winning combination that has earned Great to Hear the distinction of being Vaughan's top hearing clinic for the past nine years. As well, they won the Vaughan Chamber of Commerce Business Achievement Award in the Small Business category — and were finalists in the Health and Wellness category! These and other industry-specific awards fuel their drive to expand their community outreach, bringing back sound to their valued clientele.

Although the past few years have proved challenging for us all, it has "called us to adapt," says Romano. "The focus is now on helping people restore their relationships, and this has allowed us to help them understand just how important hearing is in that process," adds Massarella. To emend the feelings of social isolation that may ultimately affect their mental health, "it all starts with providing a welcoming and safe environment," says Russiello.

From hosting community events to running charitable outreach programs both locally and on foreign soil, they've always promoted the importance of maintaining good hearing health — "the way we get annual medical checkups for our eyes, for example," remarks Russiello.

The message is being heard loud and clear, with boomers hitting milestone birthdays and retiring becoming aware

There are more than 200 medications on the market today that are known to cause hearing loss.

of natural hearing loss as they age but actively seeking the latest devices so they "can be in the best of health before they travel and enjoy the world," says Massarella.

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DESIGN

Finding peace in life is paramount: "Being able to stay at peace and feel a sense of calm with all of the ups and downs is the ultimate life goal," says Genovese



INTERIOR DESIGN WE #LOVE

WRITTEN BY DONNA PARIS | INTERVIEW BY ESTELLE ZENTIL

Jaclyn Genovese opened Jacflash, a boutique in trendy Queen West about 15 years ago. People loved the place, and they loved her. She starred in *Jaclife*, a reality show on Slice.ca, and became even more popular. She began hosting parties at places, like Nyood, and Lost and Found, with guest lists including Justin Bieber, Dave Chappelle, The Weeknd and Uma Thurman. One

day, she closed the store and opened an award-winning interior-design consulting firm, Spaces by Jacflash. A few years ago she started a passion project, a fitness and nutrition company for women, with workshops. She fell in love. And brought a beautiful baby into the world. *City Life* sat down with her for an enlightening interview. And we had so many questions for this fireball.



Where do you find inspiration? Jaclyn Genovese finds inspiration in crumbling plaster from an old wall, the pattern of bark on a tree, old and new architecture, furniture shops — and the Internet is full of endless inspiration for her

ON DESIGN

Q: How did you make the switch from a fashion boutique to an interior design consulting firm?

A: I closed my boutique Jacflash after seven years, as I wasn't excited to get out of bed anymore. I had lived above my store, so when I closed, I had to move homes as well. I had a large older dog at the time, so I wanted a backyard, but my budget only allowed me to live on the main floor of what my friends called a "seemingly haunted house." Within two weeks I transformed the space. My friends and family were shocked.

They all began asking for help with their spaces, and, from there Spaces by Jacflash was born.

Q: How do you translate your clients' taste and lifestyle into their space?

A: I analyze how they use their homes every day, I ask questions about their lifestyle — do they have children, or are they single? Do they often host friends and family, or do they want their home to be their own space of refuge?

ON GROWTH & BODY IMAGE

Q: Can you tell us about how the pandemic

was a transformative time for you. Particularly, what prompted you to create a manifestation board?

A: The pandemic made me re-evaluate my lifestyle. I went through a major breakup, had to adapt and economize my business, and the pandemic also gave me the breathing room to learn how I wanted to spend every day. New Year's Eve of 2020, with a couple of girlfriends, we set the intention for our goals, habits and companion for the upcoming year. I could never have known how much that night would change my life. My board was filled



Interior design is important in everyday life: "It can affect everything, from your mood to your productivity, your health and even your energy level," says Genovese

with quotes about wellness, happiness, resilience and peace. I included business goals, finding a true love, and I had even added a photo of a little boy as I really wanted children.

Q: Can you share the struggles you were going through during this time, having come out of a six-year+ relationship and wanting children in the future?

A: I knew I wanted children more than anything, and I felt as though my time was running out as a 35-year-old woman, which I now know is not true! I think I had held onto my past relationship longer than I should have, but I felt too frightened to start over. In my head, if I were to break up with my then-partner at 35, I calculated it would take me a year or two to find a new partner, a year or two to build that relationship, hopefully to then get married by 39. I assumed I would have fertility issues as a 40-year-old woman, so who knows how long it would take

“
To see what a woman's body is capable of is nothing short of a miracle
 ”

me to have a child, if I could at all? None of these stories I told myself were true.

ON LOVE

Q: What do you look for in a partner?

A: Three years ago, I had written a list of what I want in a partner, and, looking back at it, Adrian is word-for-word everything that I had written on this list. This included wanting someone

who is my best friend, someone who does little things for me, who helps around the house (acts of service is one of my love languages!). My ideal partner is someone who I can be silly with and laugh with. Someone who motivates and pushes me with work and my physical and emotional health. Someone whom I can trust on every level.

ON BEAUTY & FASHION

Q: What is your beauty philosophy?

A: My philosophy on beauty is that the energy that you give off shines through you externally. The days when I am positive and balanced I get more physical compliments than the days when I am dressed to the nines.

Q: What are three of your favourite beauty products?

A: Cannabis Daytime Cream Morning Deew

<https://youdeewyou.com/products/morning-deew>

Routine Cream Deodorant
routinecream.ca/
Blue Moon Rejuvenating Beauty Balm
www.massiell.com/face-products/blue-moon-rejuvenating-
beauty-balm

ON BECOMING A MOTHER

Q: What has your transition into motherhood been like?

A: After three months of meeting Adrian, I became pregnant. I did not think that I could conceive after four and a half years of trying with my ex-partner. It was a shock, and the first trimester was a very emotional and hormonal time for me. Adrian and I decided to do couple's therapy to expedite the process of getting to know one another, and this helped us bond and begin to trust one another in such a short period of time. Becoming a mother was even harder. I cried every day for months. I was shocked at how hard it was to balance everything from running on no sleep to caring for a newborn to trying to run my thriving business, all simultaneously. I hired a part-time mother's helper and was able to balance my health, work and family life so much better and was therefore able to be a better mom, partner and boss.

Q: What has motherhood taught you about body image?

A: Motherhood has taught me to honour my body no matter what. It's hard to see your body go through so many changes, but to see what a woman's body is capable of is nothing short of a miracle.

ON AGING

Q: Can you share your philosophy on aging?

A: I think it's about balance: I believe that growing old is a privilege, and there is beauty in it in so many ways. But don't get me wrong – I look forward to the day when I am no longer breastfeeding so I can get Botox again. Doing small things to make yourself feel fresh and more youthful have a great impact on your self-esteem.



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WHAT FILLS YOUR CUP

Sleep – without it, I can't be a good mother, partner, friend or boss.

LITTLE-KNOWN FACT

I studied opera singing in university and actually had a scholarship for the program.

www.spacesbyjacflash.com

@spacesbyjacflash | @jaclyngenovese

www.mycitylife.ca



The one thing that fills Genovese's cup? Sleep – and for that you need a calming environment, whether it's an adult's bedroom (top) or a baby's room (below), just neutral tones and natural textures. And a bit of whimsy...



FOR THE LOVE OF DANCE



Aysia Ianiero grew up in a family that owned a dance studio, Art and Soul Dance Company. Was she thrown into dancing? Yes. Is she grateful? Yes. Does she love it? Yes, yes and yes! Fuelled by her passion, this girl is fire. You could say she's unstoppable — and she has some very big plans for herself. It all starts with the dancing

WRITTEN BY **DONNA PARIS**
INTERVIEW BY **ESTELLE ZENTIL**

Perhaps the most amazing thing about Ianiero is her diverse range of dance styles, including jazz, tap, ballet, hip hop, acrobatics, modern and contemporary

As Aysia Ianiero was growing up, it was almost impossible for her to grasp the truth. Was dancing really her passion, or was it just what she did because it had been part of her family for so long? “Gratefully, I fell in love with it immediately!” she says.

In fact, the older that Ianiero gets, the more her passion grows, and she realizes

just how much having her mom and aunt running the dance studio meant. “I know that, with all of the drive and all of the passion, that I would have created relationships on my own,” she says. “But having people that are related to you that push for you just as much as you push for yourself has definitely opened so many doors for me.”

The 20-year-old has just graduated

out of the competition dance scene, and she's hoping to take her career to the next level. No one can doubt her dedication. When she was just a toddler, her mom enrolled her in pre-ballet and pre-jazz, and she competed with a solo number at a competition when she was only three years old. As she got older, she practised more and more, spending many hours at the dance studio, inspired and motivated by the older kids who were there. “I would start dance at four, and finish around seven or eight, then just sit in the studio and watch the classes for the rest of the night,” she says. “So I was a studio baby for sure — I literally grew up in that studio. I was there more than my house.”

Perhaps the most amazing thing about Ianiero is her diverse range of dance styles, including jazz, tap, ballet, hip hop, acrobatics, modern and contemporary. And that's because she has trained not only with teachers at Art and Soul, but also with teachers and choreographers in the United States and Europe. This has allowed her to

put a few feathers in her cap, winning numerous competitions, appearing in Kenny Ortega's *Julie and the Phantoms* on Netflix, and having the opportunity to dance for pop star Tate McRae at the 2020 MTV VMAs. And Ianiero is good, so good, with all of it. "Something that my mom has told me is to never close any doors," she says.

Ianiero has drawn inspiration from other dancers at the studio, and she has a few icons in the industry whom she finds super-motivating as well, people like Justin Timberlake, his choreographer Marty Kudelka and one of his dancers, Dana Wilson. The list goes on, including Stacey Tookey and Tyce Diorio, choreographers on *So You Think You Can Dance*. She knows that the industry can be cutthroat, so she chooses her heroes accordingly. "They are all humble and hardworking and kind, and this is why people want to work with them," she says. "It's because being a nice person is No.1, nothing beats that in my opinion."

She's proud to be Canadian, and she wouldn't change it for the world.

“
**You know, I would
 fight her on it,
 and sometimes
 I wouldn't want
 to do it, but if
 I hadn't, then I
 wouldn't be where
 I am now**
 ”

"The Toronto community is so family-driven, and everyone has each other's backs," she says. "I think you can pick Canadian dancers out of a room any day. It is the work ethic and drive that sets them apart, because they have to

work so much harder to achieve their goals — They are all grateful and positive and so motivated," she adds.

Currently, Ianiero is teaching dance to kids, but she has big plans for her future. She would love to do more work in film, and she is signed with two agencies, one in Toronto and one in California. She's working on getting a work visa to the United States so she can move to Los Angeles. As for what she'll do when she gets there? "I have dreams of doing award shows, and dancing in scenes of big movies and TV shows, and I love music videos, too," she says. Really, she is up for just about anything.

Ianiero is grateful for many things, but is especially for her mom telling her how important it was to keep going when she was growing up. "You know, I would fight her on it, and sometimes I wouldn't want to do it, but if I hadn't, then I wouldn't be where I am now," she says. "I owe it all to her and the studio."

📷 @aysiaianiero

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For Valerie Azinge, food is more than just sustenance. "Food is also a language for people that I care about and people I love"

A YUMMY THING HAPPENED ON THE WAY TO LAW SCHOOL

It started with a food blog. Just a hobby, really, when Valerie Azinge was a law clerk, and she wanted to try to get healthy and inspire others. Now, she has a desserts catering company, she's the author of *30-Minute Low-Carb Dinners*, and Gordon Ramsay (yes, that guy!) follows her on Instagram. And she survived a tragic motorcycle accident. Her goal now? "To fulfill my purpose in life and to inspire others to strive to accomplish their goals despite what life throws at them!"

WRITTEN BY DONNA PARIS | INTERVIEW BY ESTELLE ZENTIL

The plan for Valerie Azinge was simply to follow in the footsteps of her family, who all work in the legal field. She herself was working at a law firm, studying for her LSATs actually, when she started a food blog on the side.

Instagram was still pretty new, but she jumped on it, posting photos of healthy meals like salmon and vegetables or protein pancakes. One thing led to another. She created a blog, *My Digital Kitchen*. She started to realize this was her passion. She started to get questions, asking if she catered any of her food, particularly her healthier desserts. And so she decided to use the blog to inspire a catering business. "Most people would think the story is, 'Oh, you quit your job to pursue your passion,' but I actually ended up getting fired, so that really pushed me," she laughs.

Perhaps she was really fuelled by her personal story. Growing up she'd struggled with high cholesterol and blood sugar levels, her weight, and other genetic factors, like diabetes, which runs in her family. She wanted to do what she could to become the best version of herself. But once she started getting in shape, she just wanted quick results with weight loss. "I became obsessed, and that toxic obsession drove me into taking drastic measures, such as experimenting with multiple diet pills, the salad diet, thoughts of liposuction and even starvation," she writes on *My Digital Kitchen*. There must be a better way, she thought, and started researching. And she found one. "You can still eat your sugars, you can still eat your carbs and your protein, as long as you're moderating your portions and making healthy substitutions," she says.

Her business started to thrive about four years ago, and things were looking up for Azinge. She had her business trademarked, she had a few pop-up shows, and she even went to Thailand for a vacation. But brutal things happen, and, in September 2018 she was involved in a tragic motorcycle accident. She'd never been on a motorcycle before, but

PHOTOS COURTESY OF MY DIGITAL KITCHEN

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her friend offered to take her home from his daughter's birthday celebration. They were hit by a drunk driver. Tragically, her friend died on impact. Azinge broke many bones in her body, had five surgeries, and sustained a pelvic fracture, which she is still dealing with today.

It was a hard time, as Azinge spent months in the hospital for rehab. But one day, she received a letter from a publishing house. They had come across her Instagram. Would she like to do a cookbook? they asked. "I never told them I was in the hospital when I said yes," she says. "But I thought to myself, This is definitely a light for me."

When she returned home she was in a wheelchair and undergoing hand therapy, as she had almost lost her arm. She had started gaining weight from the food she was eating in the hospital and was unable to exercise, so she started eating her way back to good health. "Basically, I ate my way back to health with a low-carb diet," she says. As for creating the cookbook, *30-Minute Low-Carb Dinners*, Azinge's mom came to the rescue, coming from her home in Nigeria to help her daughter, taste-testing all the recipes and making suggestions, subbing as a food-and-props stylist and cleaning the dishes.

The cookbook itself is packed with low-carb meals that are ready in half an hour. Azinge is adept at creating succulent dishes using creative ways to cut carbs, like substituting cauliflower mash for potatoes and zucchini noodles for regular ones and using ingredients, like low-cal coconut aminos to add loads of flavour. She herself is a pescatarian and a wine aficionado, so one of her favourite recipes is Wine Butter Trout with Asparagus and Tomato. "It's delicious and works for an alfresco dinner in the summertime or even date night in the winter," she adds.

For Azinge, food is more than just sustenance. "Food is also a language for people that I care about and people I love. That's how I express it," she says. "So it's really something that just makes me happy, and I want others to feel the joy that I feel regardless of how difficult life is."

www.mydigitalkitchen.ca
@mydigitalkitchen



WINE BUTTER TROUT WITH ASPARAGUS AND TOMATO

This is arguably fine dining at its best, and it comes together in less than 30 minutes in your kitchen. My low-carb rendition blends all the flavours of butter and wine with a sprinkle of herbs, giving the trout a light and flaky texture and a gorgeous aroma. Using dry white wine in this dish enhances the flavour profile, while making your cooking experience more fun. Weeknight dinner never looked so good.

INGREDIENTS - Serves 4

¼ cup (57 g) unsalted grass-fed butter, divided	1 tsp dried parsley
2 lb (907 g) rainbow trout	1 tsp dried thyme
2 tbsp (30 ml) white wine	¾ cup (112 g) cherry tomatoes on the vine
½ tsp kosher salt	20 asparagus stalks, ends chopped
½ tsp ground black pepper	2 tbsp (30 ml) extra virgin olive oil
½ tsp garlic powder	

Preheat your oven to 400°F (200°C, or gas mark 6). Lightly butter a large rectangular 12-inch (30 cm) cast-iron skillet with about 2 tablespoons (28 g) of butter, or two separate round skillets with 1 tablespoon (14 g) of butter each. This will allow the skin of the trout to crisp when it goes in the oven. Add the trout to the skillet.

In a small bowl, melt the remaining butter, then combine the butter, wine, salt, pepper, garlic powder, parsley and thyme. Brush the mixture on the trout until all areas are coated.

Add the tomatoes and asparagus to the skillet. Brush the tomatoes and asparagus with oil: about 1 tablespoon (15 ml) for the asparagus and 1 tablespoon (15 ml) for the cherry tomatoes.

Transfer the skillet to the oven and bake for 15 minutes.

Serve immediately.

WHAT'S THE BUZZ?

The Spelling Bee of Canada held its 35th national competition live for the first time in more than two years. The goal? To expand the participants' vocabulary, communication skills and self-confidence by providing a foundation for the future generation. And for this organization, win or lose, every child is a winner!

WRITTEN BY DONNA PARIS | INTERVIEW BY ESTELLE ZENTIL



Left to right: Following a series of virtual competitions, more than 40 finalists made it through to the 35th Annual Championships, held in person, at the Toronto Reference Library. Centre: The winners of each of three categories take home their trophies. Right: It takes a village – and so many volunteers to make the competition happen every year

It's quite an honour to take home a national championship — especially when you are a kid. It can buy you a lot of street cred at school and really pump up your self-confidence. Just ask the young winners of this competition, who had to spell their hearts out. In the Primary category (ages 6 to 8), Anhad Singh, from Edmonton, spelled “prelate” correctly; in the Junior category (ages 7 to 9), Kavya Senthil of Markham, Ont., spelled “ecosystem,” and in the Intermediate category (ages 12 to 14), it came down to a tiebreaker: Ryaan Khan from Bedford, N.S., nailed “prelapsarian.” Full disclosure — *we* had to look it up. According to the dictionary, “prelapsarian is characteristic of or belonging to the time or state before the fall of humankind.”

The Spelling Bee of Canada is a not-for-profit organization that focuses on providing youth, parents, teachers and the Indigenous community the opportunity to participate in the education process and celebrate academic achievement. Following a series of virtual competitions, more than 40 finalists made it through to the 35th Annual Championships, held in person, at a very appropriate location (the Toronto Reference Library), for the first time since the pandemic started. In fact, more than 70,000 children have participated in the organization's annual spelling bee competitions across Canada since 1987.

The Spelling Bee has a lot going for it, and the contestants really benefit. Kids get to learn many new words that are provided and practise winning strategies, and it's fun, especially now, in fact, with

a gamified online learning platform. As a non-profit organization, it really relies on donors, stakeholders and parents, of course. And like many parents who get involved in their children's endeavours, Nagina Parmar, the president, became involved. “We heard about it through word of mouth when my daughter was six, and my son was also involved for a long period of time,” she says. “Now they're both in university, and I'm just involved in the organization, for more than 10 years now.”

As an educator herself at Toronto Metropolitan University, Parmar loves the literacy part of the competition, as the kids get to memorize all of the spellings, making sure they know the words and practise with them. It's also very satisfying for Parmar to see the confidence level of the kids soar, from when they first start to the time they

“
Win or lose, it
doesn't matter, you
are already very
successful
”



— Dr. Nagina Parmar

get to the competition. “It is so interesting to see these kids shining ... and it helps them with their confidence, communication skills and vocabulary,” she says.

What is Parmar's favourite spelling bee word? “Awful,” she laughs, telling the story of her son, who was competing for the first time. His first word was “awful,” and he was so happy as he knew how to spell it. Unfortunately, in all the excitement, he spelled it a-f-u-l. At the time, he was pretty upset, but now they laugh about it.

This year's competition was pretty special. It was the 35th anniversary year, and they were able to conduct the competition in person. But there are even bigger plans for the future. Right now, there are 2,000 to 3,000 participants, but the organization wants to increase that to about 100,000, so they want to do outreach to more regions across the entire country, says Parmar. Moreover, they want to have an international presence, too, “as a Canadian invitation, with interest from other countries who would like to send their kids to Toronto to compete at the international level.”

It hasn't been easy through the pandemic. But the kids also get coaching with mental preparation. Parmar likes to start with calming music and impresses upon the students how important it is to get a good sleep the night before and to watch out for distractions. It's also important to be there for the kids and give them a boost if they aren't the top dog in the competition, she adds. “Win or lose, it doesn't matter, you are already very successful,” she tells them.

And that is the cornerstone of the Spelling Bee: Every child who participates in the program is a winner. So, Parmar also tells the participants what she tells her students. “I tell them, ‘Getting an A or B doesn't matter ... It's how you apply that knowledge in the real world, that is your success.’”

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ADVERTORIAL

TRI-HEALTH IS BREAKING BARRIERS WITH AN INTEGRATED APPROACH TO HEALTH



Naturopathic doctors Maria (left) and Jason Granzotto, owners of Tri-Health Wellness Centre

PHOTO BY CARLOSA PINTO

Dr. Jason Granzotto discusses the new addition to the Tri-Health clinic and creating a place that treats mind, body and spirit under the same roof

For Dr. Jason Granzotto, there's a lot we can learn from an integrated approach to health. An approach where healthcare is dealt with collaboratively, with different practitioners communicating in the same place, leading to more comprehensive and effective treatment.

Tri-Health, developed by both Jason and his wife, Maria, is the natural healthcare clinic bringing that vision to life. “The idea is that you don't go to just one practitioner, and they fix everything,” says Jason. “We want to create an environment where you know you're going to have acupuncture, but then we'll refer you to our chiropractor because, as a unit, we understand each other.”

Jason offers the example of someone wanting to lose weight. Typically, they'll have to complete consultations with every specialist, spending time and money travelling to each appointment when they need to see a different expert. At Tri-Health, you have the initial consultation, and then full access to in-house personal trainers, massage therapists, chiropractors and other experts to meet your healthcare needs. There's even laser therapy and cryotherapy to help with pain.

“The person doesn't have to visit different locations where there's a breakdown in communication or you get conflicting information,” Jason continues. “Everyone's on the same page, and it's all for the benefit of the patient.”

While the services on offer at Tri-Health were already extensive, Jason shares they've just added a psychotherapist, offering another level of legitimacy and bolstering the service when it comes to bettering mental health.

“It feels like a good fit,” he continues. “A lot of people are looking for mental-health practitioners and don't know who to pick. Now we have someone who's part of the team, speaking the same language.”



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Pictured at her home, Librach will be singing the national anthems on July 12 at the Blue Jays Game in Toronto



Lily Librach is the whole package. She's a young singer, attending NYU in the fall and has enormous potential. When she's not working on her chosen craft, she's involved in multiple charities. Her foremost goal in life has always been to help those less fortunate

WRITTEN BY MYLES SHANE
INTERVIEW BY ESTELLE ZENTIL

BROADWAY BOUND

Lily Librach recently sat down for an interview with *City Life Magazine*. This beyond-entertaining 22-year-old with a heart of gold and a contagious, enthusiastic personality, filled with an unmatched degree of empathy and altruism, reminded me of a modern-day Mary Poppins. A few days prior to the interview, Lily completed Birthright, a 10-day heritage trip to Israel for young Jews. After having the opportunity to visit her Jewish roots, Lily shared her big news with us. In September, Lily will be beginning her master of music in vocal performance with a specialization in musical theatre

PHOTO BY EMAD MOHAMMADI

“
I don't want to say I'm being
forced into this profession, but I
don't have any other choice! It's
what I love to do
”

and an advanced certificate in vocal pedagogy at New York University.

ZOOMER

The daughter of popular Zoomer Radio talk-show host Judy Librach, Lily has always dreamt of the big lights on Broadway. “When I was five years old, my mom had a launch for her book, and she asked me to sing the song *For Good* from the hit play *Wicked* with her. I just remember the feeling when I sang and looking at everyone's faces knowing that I was doing something good.” Ever since that moment, singing has been Lily's passion. The first show she ever appeared in, at eight years old, was *Annie*, where she sang the uplifting song “Tomorrow.” The previous summer, she had broken her leg and couldn't attend camp with her friends, prompting her mom to sign Lily up for singing lessons. “We found out the show was *Annie*.” Lily rushed home and memorized the entire movie. Needless to say, she nailed the audition.

When Lily's not wowing the world with her voice, she can be seen giving back to the community. In fact, she's involved with a plethora of charities, including the ICRF (Israel Cancer Research Fund). “ICRF has always held a very special place in my heart, and I've performed for them for many, many years. When I'm singing to bring hope to people, that's when I'm my happiest.”

Some of the highlights thus far in Lily's short career have been her memorable performance as Maria in *The Sound of Music* with the 40-piece North York Concert Orchestra. As well, Lily was named a top-10 finalist in Mirvish's worldwide Show Tune Idol competition. Lily recently performed with the Harold Green Jewish Theatre Company, where she sang and did a reading of a new play by Canadian award-winning writer Emil Sher. This spring, she starred as Lillian Holiday in Kurt Weill and Bertolt Brecht's *Happy End* at Theatre Sheridan, directed by Allyson McMackon, with music directed by Jonathan Corkal-Astorga.

JACOB'S LADDER

Lily's favourite day of the week is Sunday. “Every Sunday, myself and so many talented artists have gotten on Zoom and sung for families with special needs in the community. Each week, it is clear that Jacob is with us, and his soul, presence and smile is felt on every Zoom call.”

Lily remembers her friend, Jacob, fondly, who recently passed away from a very rare genetic neurodegenerative disease called Canavan's. “Jacob was only supposed to be alive for a few years, but against all odds, he lived until 21. He is one of the reasons that I went into musical theatre. Music was everything to Jacob, as he did not have the ability to perform many daily

functions, such as eating, talking or walking. Music was really the way in which Jacob connected with people on a deeper level, and luckily I have had the chance to sing to Jacob for many years, and there really was nothing like it.” In 1998, The Canadian Foundation for Control of Neurodegenerative Disease was founded. It's also known as Jacob's Ladder. <https://jacobladder.ca/>

WOMEN OF ACTION

On Sunday, May 15, Lily was back in front of a crowd for the first time since the pandemic reared its ugly head in 2020. She was singing at the 20th Anniversary Women of Action (WOA) Celebration, co-chaired by the ICRF. WOA recognizes outstanding women who have made a difference through their achievements, leadership and dedication in the business, medical and philanthropic communities. Before an enthusiastic crowd, she sang the song *Rise Above* in memory of Jacob.

What's next for Lily? After graduating from NYU, she envisions herself on Broadway and acting in theatre, film and television all across North America. “I don't want to say I'm being forced into this profession, but I don't have any other choice! It's what I love to do.”

@lilylibrach

Grain Loft condominiums, by Gairloch Developments, will be a transformative boutique residential building in Toronto's thriving Junction Triangle neighbourhood in that it is made of cross-laminated timber to increase its aesthetic appearance while reducing its carbon footprint

WRITTEN BY RICK MULLER

NATURAL WONDER

To be located at 1650 Dupont St., Grain Lofts will be in the heart of Toronto's bustling Junction Triangle yet just steps from urban parks and green spaces

Residential real estate is enjoying a renaissance of sustainability in recent years, with more focus on the environmental side of building, and one of Canada's most distinctive new projects, Grain Lofts, now launching in Toronto's uber-hip and growing Junction Triangle neighbourhood, is taking that focus to a new level.

In a city populated by a labyrinth of cold and tall glass towers, Grain Lofts

will stand apart, as it will be made of Cross-Laminated Timber (CLT) – yes, a wooden residential condominium – a building method long favoured in Europe for its environmental benefits and its time and cost-efficiency, and it's now gaining traction in Ontario, where a number of in-progress and proposed timber structures are bringing a welcome new style to urban landscapes.

"It's an incredible alternative to traditional building methods and is a

tangible and effective way to massively reduce carbon footprints," says Andres Griffiths, senior associate at Gairloch Developments, developers of the six-storey, 28-unit mid-rise boutique project to be located at 1650 Dupont St., in the heart of Junction Triangle. Gairloch is an award-winning developer creating buildings that enhance the lives of their residents and the vitality of their communities. It is known for exceptional design, materials,

PHOTOS COURTESY OF GRAIN LOFTS



KITCHEN: Sleek and contemporary in its modern design, Grain Lofts' kitchens will feature custom Italian cabinetry featuring generous storage space, luxurious energy-efficient Miele appliances and quartz countertops



Bill Gairdner, president (left) and Andrew Woods, senior vice president

construction and craftsmanship in each of its projects.

CLT may be transformative in residential construction in future years for many reasons. Made from layers of solid-sawn lumber pieces that are glued together in alternating orientations to form panels that provide superior strength, fire safety and structural integrity, CLT is prefabricated to meet project-specific dimensional requirements and assembled on-site, dramatically reducing construction timelines and expended efforts.

Besides aesthetically pleasing, CLT requires significantly less water and burning of fossil fuels during the manufacturing process than concrete and steel. This can help diminish a building's overall carbon footprint. As a renewable resource in the move toward greater sustainability, wood is also a natural carbon 'sink', meaning it captures and stores carbon dioxide, effectively removing it from the atmosphere.

The CLT at Grain Lofts is made from a combination of spruce, fir and pine woods harvested from local renewable forests and is used in the building as both structural framework and interior finishes. The wood is left exposed inside on the ceilings and as a stunning feature wall, giving each unit a tranquil yet modern Scandinavian and industrial-loft feel and texture.

Beyond its distinctive appearance and future-forward thinking, Grain Lofts features suites that are flooded by an abundance of natural light. Four out of every six suites are through-units, which offer cross ventilation and north and south exposure. The one-bedroom-plus-den, two- and three-bedroom suites range in size from 500 square feet to more than 1,000 square feet, and each suite is appointed with a private outdoor space, with balconies on the south side and terraces on the north.

The suites feature custom Italian kitchen cabinetry, energy-efficient Miele appliances and quartz countertops. The main baths feature single or double-sink vanities and industrial-inspired frameless glass-shower enclosures. Other amenities at Grain Lofts include complete

HALLWAY/COURTYARD:
The Cross-Laminated Timber is left exposed on the interior as a stunning feature wall, and an interior courtyard features a showcase Japanese maple, garden and sculptures hewn from Ontario stone



LIVING ROOM: Four out of every six suites are through-units, which offer cross-ventilation and north and south exposure, allowing for an abundance of natural light



smart building technology, electric-vehicle-charging stations, a parking stacker system and laneway-connected bike racks.

Grain Lofts' building amenities are designed to promote an active and engaged social lifestyle, highlighted by a central communal courtyard at its core. This will be a serene urban oasis ideal for quiet contemplation or social interaction. The internal courtyard will be paved in rich red brick, bordered by exposed concrete and corrugated metal. Highlighted by a showcase Japanese maple, perennial garden and sculptures hewn from Ontario stone, the courtyard ideally reflects the intent of the architect in creating this special environment.

"We really took our time and asked, 'How would I want to live?'" says architect Gabriel Fain. "It wasn't only about maximizing space but

“
We took a design-oriented approach to make the building as enjoyable for the end-user as possible
”

about showcasing the wood as much as possible and bringing out the expression and form of the building. This is unique for a mid-rise; the

courtyard typology is more European. There are few like it in Toronto.”

Steps away from Bloor Station and Dupont Street, Grain Lofts' location is surrounded by shops, galleries, bars, restaurants and the urban vibe of Roncesvalles and the Junction area but also offers access to multiple nearby parks and green spaces and is connected to the tree-lined West Toronto Railpath.

"With Grain, we really took a design-oriented approach to make the building as enjoyable for the end-user as possible yet weave seamlessly into the urban fabric," says Bill Gairdner, founder and president of Gairloch.

Grain Lofts will not only be a desired urban living destination, but it perhaps will be the future of beauty and natural living, as well.

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